

THE 27TH REPORTS

OR

HOW TO GET SCROGGED, BUGGER ALL

C O N T E N T S

This book consists of extracts from diaries, copies of official orders, and stories covering the 27th Bombardment Group from Jan 1, 1940 to May 7, 1942 and it covers the survivors of this Group from May 7, 1942 to Sept. 1, 1942. All holders or owners of this book are hereby notified and warned that under no circumstances whatsoever can any part or parts of this publication be sold, used for publicity, or in any way exploited. The utmost care must be taken during this war that this book does not fall into improper hands. This in no way is an official publication.

The Staff working on this book begs you leniency for the overlapping of periods of time but in order to get as much of the activities of the 27th Group as possible it was certainly necessary. We hope to put out in the future a permanent copy and a much more complete one. In order to do this anyone who can add information or pictures to this book will help a great deal by forwarding same at once to Captain James B. McAfee, 0-23263, U.S. Army Air Force.

The 27th Reports

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To the surviving Officers and Men of the 27th Bomb Group

Being anxious to retain for ourselves a narrative of the activities of the 27th Bomb Group from the time it left America until it was rendered inactive by the War Department due to the almost complete depletion of its personnel in the Philippines and the activities of the few remaining survivors in Australia I have asked Capt McAfee, the Group Intelligence Officer, to allot certain phases or periods of time to you to report on. It will be an unofficial diary solely for us and what you have to say will not be altered in any way by me. The only request I make is that you please refrain from adverse criticism of personnel unless you consider it necessary to bring out some mistake that by so reporting you can hope to definitely prevent its reoccurrence in the future. The resultant chronicle should serve the purpose of preserving for us a closer relationship with the comrades we had to leave behind and between ourselves when time begins to shadow our memories. In addition it should provide us with information that will make better soldiers out of us all in recording the mistakes that caused us so much despair and so hampered our struggle to hit the enemy with something. I would like here to list a few of the gravest mistakes that were most apparent to me and some of you may some day be in a position to prevent such conditions under future similar situations:

1. The sending of personnel in one medium of transportation and their fighting equipment in another should be one of the fundamentals of warfare and history has given us previous examples of disastrous results from not following this doctrine. Had we had our dive-bombers with us when the Japs moved south with their surface craft against the Philippine Archipelago at the outbreak of hostilities the whole situation I am sure would have been vastly different than that in which the South West Pacific finds itself today.

2. When our dive-bombers did arrive in Australia they were lacking parts that prevented their assembly for combat activity until the opportunity to get them against the advancing enemy in the Philippines had gone. The persons in America responsible for sending our dive-bombers over without gun mounts, trigger motors, sights, etc. in my opinion are subject to trial for criminal negligence. Never send equipment into the combat zone unless it can be immediately used for combat.

To that grand group of Officers and men that remained behind, I wish to pay the highest tribute. It grieves me when I recall how our Air Force lacked the authority to move that group to where it could do the job it have been trained for. It would be easier to replace ten aircraft carriers than to replace that group of highly trained specialist which had reached perfection as a result of practical and theoretical training. The enemy achieved a greater success than they will ever realize when they deprived our Air Force of their services. Try and replace men like M/Sgt Saunders with his bombsight maintenance and armament inspection ability. Think what we could do with highly trained and experienced specialist like M/Sgts. Smith, Dunlevy, Green, Hucks, Cox, Cameren, Rushin and others in our rapidly expanding Air Force. To those officers and men all I can say is you formed one of the finest organizations in the Air Force and if our attempts on your behalf had been successful we would be together now doing a job that you were so capable of performing in a superior manner. May we meet again ere long.

To those of you who were able to carry on the fight form this theatre of activity you have my highest praise. Your determination to get something to fight with and your struggle to get it where it could be used regardless of the tremendous handicaps confronting you proved your loyalty to your country. You exemplified the spirit of getting the job done regardless of hardships, heartaches, and apparent lack of support. That spirit is the stuff that our country depends on to accomplish the task facing it today. You are worthy of every praise I can possible give you and I take this opportunity to salute you.

JOHN H. DAVIES
Colonel, Air Corps.

DEDICATION

* * *

To the Officers and Enlisted men of the of the 27th Bombardment Group (L) dead or missing in action in the Philippine Islands, Australia Java, and New Guinea, we dedicate this book and all our efforts to repay, ten thousand times over, the Japanese for every one of our men lost.

* * *

AUTHORS

* *

Colonel	John H. Davies, D.S.C. and Silver Star
Major	Ronald D. Hubbard, D.S.C. and Silver Star
Captain	James B. McAfee, Silver Star
Captain	Robert G. Ruegg, D.S.C.
Captain	Julius B. Summers, D.F.C. and Silver Star
Captain	Harry L. Galusha, D.F.C. and Silver Star
Captain	Thomas P. Gerrity, Purple Heart
1st Lt.	James H. Mangan, Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster
1st Lt.	Henry J Rose, D.S.C. , Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster
1st Lt.	Francis E. Timlin, Silver Star
1st Lt.	Leland A. Walker, D.S.C. and Silver Star
1st Lt.	Howard B. West, Silver Star
1st Lt.	Thomas P. Talley, Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster

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P R E F A C E

“For want of an Airplane”- the reader has only to bear in mind that one phrase and the tragedy, Pathos, comedy, and all other elements of this book are explained for once and all.

This is the story of the ill-fated 27th Bombardment Group (Light) and written by Officers who survived the destruction of that Group. It is not in our hearts to make this a sad story – rather, we hope you will be able, as you read, to live with us, to laugh with us, to understand why those who died did die, to take into account the surge of war against those whom you knew in the 27th, and lastly, and most important, to forever record, for those of us who have up to now survived this war, a story of “The Old 27th”. To those of you who read this and are unfortunate enough to have lost a son, husband, relative, or friend we hope you will understand what it meant for us to lose them too. They were our team mates, every man. None of us in the remnants of “The Old 27th” has ever gotten over the fall of Bataan and with it the 27th.

We were not able to make this as complete as we wanted—we haven’t near enough pictures—we haven’t a true picture of the 27th’s last hour—we have no news from the Red Cross that most of those on Bataan are Prisoners of War—though this seems a wealth of material, we haven’t been able to put in over a half of our experiences due to time and the information not being on hand at the time of printing. Nevertheless, we are not able to figure the value of this book in terms of rate of exchange for it isn’t worth money. Colonel John H. Davies inspired the conception of this book.

The Empire of Japan bought the 27th Bombardment Group. On April 10, 1942, they, the exchequers of the Japanese War Machine, closed the account of the 27th Group and marked it “Paid on Bataan”. Strictly speaking that was a very one sided view to take – a slant-eyed view you might say, for on April 11th, 1942, the survivors of the 27th Gp. re-opened the account and this time it was marked “Bought on Bataan”. The account at this writing is still open and many installments have been paid, but the final installment will be paid by (**Tokio**). (**Tokyo**)

For want of an airplane the 27th Group lost its life—but Tojo, there might not have been enough airplanes in the Philippines for the 27th Group but don’t you wish you had captured us all? God give us Strength.....

FEBRUARY 1940, TO JULY 4, 1941

The 27th Group

The 27th Bomb Group (L) came into being in February, 1940, at Barksdale Field. The birth pangs were suffered solely by the 3rd Bomb Group, who furnished the personnel.

Colonel Clarence L Tinker, lost in action in Midway Battle, was the first Commanding Officer, succeeded shortly thereafter by Lt. Col. W. Wright. In October of 1940, the group moved to a new base at Savannah, Georgia.

Our time at Savannah was spent with B-18's thrown in "for general hell-raising". March 1941 saw the first A-20's arrive for us and from then until August we had an enjoyable time, which was suddenly interrupted by the arrival of the Dauntless Douglas, or the A-24 dive-bomber more familiarly known as the Blue Rock Clay Pigeons.

JULY 4, TO OCTOBER 31, 1941

The 27th Group

It was a beautiful Fourth of July in Savannah, Georgia, and the day found the 27th Group's hangar line quiet. The usual guards stood about the various planes parked on the field and civilian visitors rode through the base slightly awed by the sudden rise of an Army Air Field within their midst. It was quiet then, but in the days that followed the 27th was destined to find all the problems and emotions of life thrust violently upon them. What a really full measure fate had in store for them.

The "Fourth" passed, and the 17th, 16th and 91st Squadrons of the 27th Group busied themselves with training for the forthcoming maneuvers. There were pilots to be checked out on the new Douglas A-24's that had arrived, flight leaders needed training, the squadrons had new commanders to become accustomed to, and the organization as a whole needed a common association to weld them as one. Col. Guy McNeil was now group Commander, Major J.H. Davies was the new Operations Officer, and the 16th, 17th and 91st Squadrons had Capt. William Hipps, Capt. Render D. Denson and Lt William Eubanks respectively for the new Squadron Commanders. All were men who gave the group a new impetus and a new lease for a hopeful future. So with the passing of the July month, the 27th found itself fast becoming a unified unit and the personnel getting trained and eager for the forthcoming maneuvers. A few officers such as Lt. Ruegg, Lt. Rush, Lt. McAfee and Lt. Stafford left to help the Ferry Command ferry DB7s to the English, but in the main the Group lent all its effort to the big maneuvers.

August came and with it the first change. The 17th Squadron was slated to go to Shreveport, La., so Render Denson and his boys left on the 18th. for the Shreveport Municipal Airport. Here they staged a one squadron war, flying for both the Red and Blue Armies until joined by the 8th Squadron and later the 3rd Group. The entire early phase went well with only one or two minor mishaps. "Harry" Mangan on a test flight in an A-20A had one engine go out on the take-off and landed in the Red River, A little wet and a little wiser. "Dick" Birnn tore out six high tension lines and blacked out 7 towns, coming out O.K. except for a power company complaint. Then there was the famous episode told of the 17th when they bombed and routed their own cavalry. But who can tell which side one's on when he's on both.

And so came September and the Lake Charles mud. Many a 27th man will never forget the huge lumps of mud he carried around for days at a time. The maneuvers here were packed with activity. “Rocky” Gause had a forced landing due to oil trouble and “Zeke” Summers landed at Clark Field and was trying to make San Antonio. Being the largest maneuvers ever attempted in the United States, the 17th, 16th and 15th Squadrons had their hands full. But despite this, they turned in an enviable record in that they flew many more missions than the competing Groups stationed with them. Members of the 91st, flew with the 15th during these missions.

September passed quickly and the people of Savannah saw their hardened heroes returning on or about the 31st. The married officers were pleased to be back to their families, the bachelor officers gave forth cries of glee when back in their good old B.O.Q. and (**Remler’s**) (**Remlers**) and the enlisted personnel fast dug out their old “red books” of Savannah gals. Yes, it was back in the groove for all. But a rumour soon started. The 27th was slated for the Philippines. Philippines! Why what started that “deal”? Some wild idea no doubt that would never materialize.

But brother, materialize it did. One week after the Group had arrived in Savannah they were “sweatin” T.B.A.s and loading lists. Everywhere people were packing and preparing to move. Some got married, Talley, Hambaugh, Gouse, Dillard and Stevenson. Cars were sold, families sent home, and whole squadrons checked and re-checked for equipment of all sorts. So packed they did, and on the 19th, of Oct. the officers and men of the Group started for San Francisco, California--the designated port of embarkation. Some officers went by private conveyance and some went with their various units on the train. Lt. “Herman” Lowery, 1st Lt. “Willie” Eubanks and Lt “Floyd” Rogers now had the 17th, 16th and 91st Squadrons respectively. So on to Frisco it was. The Group moved to (**Angle**) (**Angel**) Island, but not before a lot of their baggage had been dumped into the bay by a runaway car, received their physical examinations, and then started down the Angel Island Hill on a dreary, drizzling Nov. 1st. It somehow fitted the mood of the time. Everyone was naturally sad at leaving their friends and families, but each had an inner conviction that he was doing a right thing. Sad – perhaps, but the men were really sure of themselves.

On to the small ferry boats the Squadron passed. Each man was checked as he got on the boat. Finally, loaded, the little vessel poked into the harbor and the first famous words of the 27th were uttered from the wet deck. "Willie" Eubanks spoke, "this rumour has gone too far"! Then at once laughter and jeers broke out relieving the tension. That made the ferry land midst a great deal of kidding and laughter.

Up the gangplanks into the U.S.S. Coolidge poured the 27th Gp., young men, elderly men, eager men, anxious men, sad men, but all men. They were really a wonderful crew and the Group commander had a reason to feel proud.

At last the whistle blew, people waved and the great ship shuddered as her props dug into the water and headed for the Golden Gate Bridge. Everyone craned his neck for a last look and then into the Pacific Ocean the ship slipped. The 27th Group was P.I. bound!

HEADQUARTERS 27TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L)
AIR FORCE COMBAT COMMAND

FORT MCDOWELL,
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.,
OCTOBER 29, 1941.

FIRST CLASS PASSENGER LIST

1.	VANCE, REGINALD F. C.	0-17464		HQ & HQ SQ
			MAJOR'S	
2.	DAVIES, JOHN H.	0-17999		HQ & HQ SQ
3.	HIPPS, WILLIAM G.	0-20787	CAPTAIN	16th BOMB SQ
4.	MARROCCO, WILLIAM A.	0-283009		HQ & HQ SQ
5.	SEWELL, JOHN W.	0-251331		HQ & HQ SQ
6.	WOHLFIELD, MARK M.	0-314054		HQ & HQ SQ
7.	LOWERY, HERMAN F	0-21662	1ST LT	17th BOMB SQ
8.	ROGERS, FLOYD	0-22494		HQ & HQ SQ
9.	EUBANKS, WILLIAM E. JR.	0-22349		91st BOMB SQ
10.	MITCHLER, PAUL E.	0-300044		16th BOMB SQ
11.	HALTOM, WINFIELD S.	0-220194		HQ & HQ SQ
12.	MARVEL, WILLIAM R.	0-350519		HQ & HQ SQ
13.	BACKUS, EDWARD N.	0-303125		HQ & HQ SQ
14.	HOBBS, LEWIS E.	0-249501		HQ & HQ SQ
15.	McCLURE, ROBERT F.	0-327688		16th BOMB SQ
16.	MOERSCH, EDWARD J.	0-342486		17th BOMB SQ
17.	GILLON, JACK A.	0-307167		17th BOMB SQ
18.	SMITH, HORACE A.	0-351722		91st BOMB SQ
19.	SCHULTZ, BLACK	0-363264		91 st BOMB SQ
20.	GALUSHA, HARRY L.	0-373895		91 st BOMB SQ
21.	MANGO, CARL L.	0-357452		17th BOMB SQ
22.	HUBBARD, RONALD D.	0-371850		HQ & HQ SQ
23.	BANK, BENTHAM	0-354455		17th BOMB SQ
24.	DANIELS, CLAUDE P.	0-400963	2ND LT	16th BOMB SQ
25.	HOCHMAN, DAVID	0-420069		16th BOMB SQ
26.	STEVENSON, GLENWOOD C.	0-23138		16th BOMB SQ
27.	SUMMERS, JULIUS B. JR.	0-23271		16th BOMB SQ
28.	MENDER, FRANK P.	0-392735		16th BOMB SQ
29.	McAFEE, JAMES B.	0-378042		16th BOMB SQ
30.	RUEGG, ROBERT G.	0-365942		16th BOMB SQ
31.	SAVAGE, COLUMBUS	0-403816		16th BOMB SQ
32.	SALVATORE, ALEXANDER R.	0-430818		16th BOMB SQ
33.	SCHMIDT, RALPH L. L.	0-403810		16th BOMB SQ
34.	ROTH, HARRY R.	0-403809		16th BOMB SQ
35.	ROSE, HENRY J.	0-403943		16th BOMB SQ
36.	STAFFORD, ROBERT F.	0-431732		16th BOMB SQ

37.	DOAN, OLIVER C.	0-431737	16th BOMB SQ
38.	DILLARD, SAMUEL H. III	0-421739	16th BOMB SQ
39.	DONNEWALD, RICHARD S.	0-421888	16th BOMB SQ
40.	DOWNEY, PHIL R.	0-420575	HQ & HQ SQ
41.	CANNON, CHARLES JR.	0-429145	HQ & HQ SQ
42.	COWART, LEROY JR.	0-420751	HQ & HQ SQ
43.	MILLER, KENNETH G.	0-420648	HQ & HQ SQ
44.	SCHWARE, BERT	0-429144	HQ & HQ SQ
45.	CONNER, HENRY C. JR.	0-393658	HQ & HQ SQ
46.	LANCASTER, OLLIE JR.	0-375788	HQ & HQ SQ
47.	SWENSEN, MELVIN R.	0-311602	17th BOMB SQ
48.	KANE, GEORGE W. JR.	0-370449	17th BOMB SQ
49.	GRAHAM, LEONARD C.	0-403701	17th BOMB SQ
50.	BIRNN, RICHARD R.	0-421599	17th BOMB SQ
51.	CAUSE, DAMON J.	0-393108	17th BOMB SQ
52.	GERRITY, THOMAS P.	0-421600	17th BOMB SQ
53.	GILBO, EDWARD E.	0-393820	17th BOMB SQ
54.	HEISS, GUSTAVE M. JR.	0-403821	17th BOMB SQ
55.	MANGAN, JAMES H.	0-404121	17th BOMB SQ

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56.	TOWNSEND, EDWIN C.	0-388196	2ND LT M 17th BOMB SQ
57.	TUBB, DOUGLAS B.	0-421633	17th BOMB SQ
58.	WALKER, LELAND A. Jr.	0-404097	17th BOMB SQ
59.	WEST, HOWARD B.	0-404104	17th BOMB SQ
60.	McKINNEY, EZRA	0-404121	17th BOMB SQ
61.	STIRLING, WARREN G.	0-28230	17th BOMB SQ
62.	TALLEY, THOMAS P.	0-403948	17th BOMB SQ
63.	TIMLIN, FRANCIS E.	0-403954	17th BOMB SQ
64.	WHIPPLE, ROBERT W.	0-404105	17th BOMB SQ
65.	WEINERT, JOHN C.	0-404107	17th BOMB SQ
66.	THOMPSON, ARNOLD W.	0-360024	91 st BOMB SQ
67.	WOLFE, MICHAEL F.	0-418262	91 st BOMB SQ
68.	SMITH, JAMES R.	0-393156	91 st BOMB SQ
69.	MUSSON, RALPH I.	0-424777	91 st BOMB SQ
70.	DAVIS, GEORGE S.	0-424717	91 st BOMB SQ
71.	JOHNSTON, WILLIAM T.	0-424768	91 st BOMB SQ
72.	DUGAN, PAUL	0-424718	91st BOMB SQ
73.	BRASWELL, HOMER R.	0-424701	91st BOMB SQ
74.	HILLEY, ARTHUR G.	0-421703	91st BOMB SQ
75.	HAMBROUGH, ROBERT G.	0-421691	91st BOMB SQ
76.	STRESE, WILLIAM J.	0-421599	91st BOMB SQ
77.	DALE, EUGENE P.	0-421898	91st BOMB SQ
78.	SCARBOROUGH, PEARLY H.	0-424732	91st BOMB SQ
79.	THOMAS, ROY E.	0-424761	91st BOMB SQ
80.	WOOD, CHARLES E.	0-424786	91st BOMB SQ
81.	BIRD, WILLIAM W.	0-425233	91st BOMB SQ

82.	PATTERSON, HORACE B.	0-424720	91st BOMB SQ
83.	KELSEY, JOHN W.	12025974 (FLYING CADET)	HQ & HQ SQ
84.	RYAN, JOHN A.	15015194 (FLYING CADET)	16th BOMB SQ
85.	WHALLEY, ALVIN L.	11024681 (FLYING CADET)	17th BOMB SQ

NOVEMBER 1, 1941 TO DECEMBER 7, 1941

The 27th Group

At 1:00 PM Nov. 1, 1941, the United States Line's "President Coolidge" chose to run. The 27th Group, less one man, Lt Merch, who missed the boat, was aboard, of course, and everyone stood at the rails and watched Frisco recede into the fog and rain as the Coolidge chugged her way under the Golden Gate and out to sea. The skies were as black as our spirits, but the sea itself wasn't rough so nearly everyone was able to settle their uneasy stomachs in time to do ample justice to a surprisingly good supper.

November 2, 1941, every Officer and Enlisted man knew by dawn of this day that there was no beer or liquor to be bought from the ships stores (the bell boys had a secret stash they sold for twice a bottle's value and they did a box office business), and it was also very obvious to everyone that, with the exception of the two women in the PX and the Doctors Office, that there were only two women passengers aboard. The powers that be (the brains and wheels) met in the lounge and set up a recreation committee to promote boxing, swimming, lectures, deck tennis, etc – Major Davies, appointed Lt Tony Glebis the athletic director and to arrange the contests. Bob Ruegg and Lowery were assistants and judges also.

The Coolidge is an excellent ship. It still being peace time, she wasn't crowded and the Officers were living three to a stateroom and the men all below in tier bunks except for the first 3 graders who also had staterooms.

The mess was extra good – steaks, squabs, cheese of all kinds, salads of all descriptions; all of this continued to be available right on through the trip.

It was sort of funny but the rank and file didn't know for certain what the group's destination was. "Plum" was written on all the baggage and equipment, but no official orders had been seen directly quoting the new station. However, no one would bet a sad sack against the Philippines as the ship's end.

The movies at night were solidly packed with men – The Coolidge sailed alone and there were no restrictions much of a military nature. Brigadier General Lough was the ship's commander, and he wanted us all to be comfortable. We were ! – basking in the sun all day, gorging ourselves at meal times, swimming, writing letters, reading, playing cards, and wearing civilian clothes!

November 6, 1941, the big ship slowly rounded Diamond Head at 6:00 AM and slid into the docks at Honolulu about 8:00 AM. Everyone crowded out early in order to get a look at Hawaii, and most everyone thought the travel ads did an injustice to the beauty of that scene. Major Davies issued passes to everyone, and we rushed ashore about 8:30 to take a good look before the boat sailed again at 2:00 PM.

To those who hadn't seen it before Honolulu was a rather strange and oriental place, but most of the boys found the bars quick enough – there's no difference to be found in the bottom of a glass. We all saw Waikiki, the Upside Down Falls, Pearl Harbor, etc, and the cable and telephone companies made much money during those brief hours.

Back on board at 2:00 and everyone was practically stiff—Stafford looked like he was in a hell of a bad sea. Ruegg, Heiss, Gerrity, and McAfee spent the first hour getting pictures of each other with Hawaii as a back ground as we slipped out to sea. Hubbard was so covered with leis all you could see was his shiny knot. Others had bought fancy shirts and trousers and paraded them all over the ship- we looked quite festive.

It definitely looks as if the P.I.s are our last stop. We blacked out last night but not before we had a peep at the ships steaming along with us. One was the Army Transport Winfield S Scott and the other was the U.S.S. Louisville, a heavy Cruiser.

Everyone was required to draw a silhouette of the Louisville for identification purpose. We could see tanks and men on the decks of the Scott.

The long days from Hawaii on passed somehow without incident. Sonny Walker learned to play bridge and would bet anyone 50-50 whether he had a trump or not--Gus Heiss had similar troubles. Ruegg and Gerrity managed to eat more of the "Good" food in the mess than anyone else. Stephenson, Backus, Major Davies, Hobbs and Haltom got on board at Hawaii with cases of bottled hair tonic, and most everyone attended their usual "Slug" parties every PM. Bert Banks and Lancaster fought nightly and mightily to see who could tell the biggest one--Bert won. At this point, it must be added that as the days passed the two Army Nurses get better and better looking – as a matter of fact, it was rumored that Garbo and Grable were aboard incognito! That rumor started a week out of Hawaii. During the black-out nights several officers who had had previous experience in P.I. gave us valuable advice in lectures in the lounge. It might be noted that some of these officers had seen service in P.I. during the last war!

The liner Meigs was supposed to be en route from Frisco with our planes, but so far we have no news of her.

The group held regular meetings in the morning in the lounge. Officers gave short talks on dive bombing, etc. One in particular was quite a grind. Captain Hipps talked for 30 minutes on wearing metal shin guards while flying in case a bullet hit you on the shin. We expected our planes to meet us then.

The Louisville shoved off one day by rolling over on her side and swinging her guns about as she took off after a dark blot, hull down on the horizon. Everyone said, "A **(Nazie) (Nazi)** Raider"! Time hung heavy – we argued for days as to what the dark blot was. Anyway, the Louisville slipped back into place an hour later with a satisfied smugness about her.

Off Guam, nothing but a small island and we couldn't see much. The Louisville let her planes off by catapult and they flew over us at a maximum speed not exceeding a Sea Gulls. The Scott needed to water so they said.

Down in the mess the Captain put out a small poop sheet every day giving our position and miles covered since the previous day. As we got nearer P.I. everyone took more interest in the poop sheet – we got sort of tired of the boat. “Zeke” Summers was having the time of his life hazing the two nurses and vice versa.

Major Vance lectured us on England--said he thought the Germans had actually tried to invade Britain last fall.

November 20, 1941. Manila Bay – Corregidor – Bataan Field on the left as ship sailed down Harbor – Small boats still searching for survivors of “The Corregidor”, an inter-island boat blown up by a mine in the bay on the 19th – Manila coming into view – ship slowed to a stop and an Army Official boarding party came aboard – all squadrons in group kept milling about until orders came down saying disembark and proceed to Ft McKinley – land under our feet (also natives selling cigars and cokes at 15 centavos) – into trucks and rolling down Dewey Blvd. – Little brown urchins shouted “hi-joe” at the Yankee troops – between the lions at the gate of Ft McKinley – around the officer’s quarters loop to our stopping place – enlisted men to live in tents on the golf course in front of the officer’s quarters where the officers are to live 8 to a house – everyone was hot and tired – our baggage sent up from the boat – some of the stuff was still wet from its ducking in Frisco Bay – Summers scooted off and came back with a cute little Filipino girl (about 15 years old but big for her size) and announced to all that she was his lavendera – a lavendera is short for a woman who will beat all the life out of your clothes and buttons but will wash and starch them at the same time. – The Officers quarters were big and rather like a barn, but they were pleasant at any rate – at lunch on our first day we all got a shock out of seeing the first Iguana (an alligator-like lizard about three feet long) crawl across the officer’s club floor – our first night in Manila was spent touring all the bars, night clubs, dives and what not – there was the Jai Alai Club (bets, beers, babes, broke), the Grass Shack, Casa Manana, Manila Polo Club, Army and Navy Club, Bamboo Hut, Manila Hotel, Tom’s Dixie Kitchen, Oriental Gardens (next to the graveyard going out to McKinley) – Mangan, Talley, West and Timlin made them all several times – and so, an end of the dashes and the first day.

The next two days were occupied with locating ourselves with respect to the local gorg shops, tailors, lavenderas, irons, ironing boards, charcoal, (mailing rimes to meet Clippers) ? , meeting old friends (McAfee lived next door to a classmate in the Infantry, Freddy Yeager and Mac, Backus and Hipps ate their meals with him), and generally settling themselves down. General Wainwright chewed the group out for not dressing as neat and clean as the (**Pilipinos**) (**Filipinos**) – otherwise, he welcomed us to P.I..

Ft McKinley was a reception center and the 27th was to stay there until its airplanes arrived. There was still no news of the ships either. All squadrons rolled out of bed at 6:00 AM and spent the morning at close order drill and all the usual squadron duties. Each sq. organized a soft ball team, and we played numerous games on the golf course. The 17th Sq claimed the championship, but their claim was bitterly objected to by everyone else.

We have all been speculating on our move from McKinley to San (**Marcelena**) (**Marcelino**). San Marcelino was over on the west coast north of Bataan Peninsula and so far as we could find out it didn't have anything for us in the way of water, food, runways, houses or any of the essentials necessary to maintain a group. The last two days of Nov. we borrowed four old and very decrepit B-18s from the 19th Group at Clark Field. None of us had flying time for the month so the group arranged a schedule with these four shops so we could all fly our necessary four hours apiece. As stated before the ships were in extremely sad shape – parts were held together with baling wire and other parts held with what appeared to be only gravity. Backus and a pilot from the 19th took off together with a load of 19th pilots. The 19th was skeptical of our flying ability and they had arranged that one of their pilots was to be co-pilots every time we flew. Backus is an old airline pilot by the way. On this take-off Ed Backus's co-pilot forgot to pull up his wheels and as a result they didn't gain much altitude on account of the load. They asked Backus to let them fly from then on – he hit the roof, naturally. Schmidt blew out a tire and Hipps ground looped again. Stephenson and McAfee clipped the tops out of the trees for 100 yards after a scrogged up take-off. But back to San Marcelino, we looked the field over while we were getting our flying time in. It looked sort of wild and wooly so we decided to rent a house in Manila for an Officer's Club. We planned on flying men down for the week-end and officers could sleep and eat at the Club.

Lancaster was given the job of Club Officer and commissioned to rent up a house. He naturally had to collect 10 pesos off every officer before he could start his work, but Bert found a fine house with furnishings which he rented for 50 pesos a month. Most all the Officers put their wool clothing and uniforms in the Club House for storage.

The Army-Navy game on Nov. 29, was certainly a fine event for it gave everyone in Manila a chance to fill up on grog and be very fraternal down at the Army-Navy Club. McAfee was a cheer leader for the Army along with Horace Greeley and Wynekoop. Colin Kelley was supposed to have been the 4th cheer leader, but he was on alert at Clark Field that night. Stephenson worked the lights on the score board. It was a good game so they say – we didn't hear it on account of static interference. The Army lost. Herman Lowery took off cross-country in a jeep going home from the Club, he, Walker and Ruegg ended up in a rice patty with mud up to their ears, almost sober.

On 7th of Dec, we were at peace on account of the difference in Hawaii and P.I. times, the 27th was challenged to a soft ball game by the Manila Polo Club. An all-star team was chosen from all ages and the group left at 1:00 PM for the Polo Club. The game began at 2:00 and by 4:00 PM the score was 19 to 2 in favor of the Polo Club. Hipps and Schmidt had a fine argument over who had made the most errors, and that little tiff was finally well settled. The game gradually shifted to the bar at the club where everyone got stiff in preparation for the dinner the group was giving in honor of General Brereton who was the C.G. of the Air Force – Gen Brereton was the old 3rd Gp. C.O. and our Base C.O. at Savannah at one time.

The dinner was given at the Manila Hotel and was really quite a gay affair. Everyone was on their very best drunken behavior and Gen B had to keep his eyes on the floor to keep from disciplining the lot. Mangan and Townsend kept making faces at their Sq C.O., Lowery, who sat at the head of the table with the General. “Zeke” Summers was giving Hipps hell at the other end, and generally it was the best entertainment this side of “Minsky’s”.

At 2:00 AM the dinner gradually broke up and we felt our way for McKinley. The dawn broke, War broke, we lived from today on, tormented with the old, worn-out phrase – “Where in hell are our airplanes?” Somebody made an awful mistake – we all hoped they were paying for it.

HEADQUARTERS 27TH BOMB GROUP (L)
FAR EAST AIR FORCE

FORT WILLIAM McKINLEY, P.I.
DECEMBER 8, 1941.

MEMORANDUM:

TO: : All concerned

1. The following is a roster of Officer personnel of this group.

Hq and Hq Squadron

MAJ. Davies, John H.	Capt. Backus, Edward N.
Capt. Marrocco, William A.	Capt. Hobbs, Louis E.
Capt. Sewell, John W.	2nd Lt. Kane, George W. Jr.
Capt.. Wohlfield, Mark M.	2nd Lt. Graham, Leonard C.
Lst Lt. Rogers, Floyd W.	2nd Lt. Downey, Phil R.
1st Lt. Haltom, Windfield S.	2nd Lt. Birnn, Richard R.
1st Lt. Marvel, William H.	2nd Lt. Glebis, Anthony L.
1st Lt. Hubbard, Ronald D.	2nd Lt. Miller, Kenneth G.
1st Lt Daniels, Claude P.	2nd Lt. Schwarz, Bert
2nd Lt. Swensen, Melvin R.	2nd Lt. Conner, Henry C, Jr.
	2nd Lt. Lancaster, Ollie Jr.

16TH BOMB SQUADRON

Capt. Hipps, William G.	2nd Lt. Doan, Oliver C.
1st Lt. Mitchler, Paul E.	2nd Lt. Dillard, Samuel III
1st Lt. McClure, Robert F.	2nd Lt. Donnewald, Richard
1st Lt. Hochman, David	2n Lt. Cannon, Charles Jr.
1st Lt. Stephenson, Glenwood	2nd Lt. Cowart, Leroy E.
1st Lt. McAfee, James B.	2nd Lt. Hilley, Arthur G.
2st Lt. Bender Frank P.	2nd Lt. Thomas, Roy E.
2st Lt. Ruegg, Robert G.	2nd Lt. Owen, Woody T.
2nd Lt. Savage, Columbus	2nd Lt. Maccani, Gorden E.
2nd Lt. Schmidt, Ralph L.L.	2nd Lt. Mann, Richard R.
2nd Lt. Roth, Harry R.	2nd Lt. Ose, Alvan S.
2nd Lt Rose, Henry J.	
2nd Lt. Stafford, Robert F.	

17TH BOMB SQUADRON

1st Lt. Lowery, Herman F.
1st Lt. Moersch, Edward J.
1st Lt. Gillon, Jack A.
1st Lt. Mango, Carl L.
1st Lt. Bank, Bertham
2nd Lt. Gause, Damon J.
2nd Lt. Gerrity, Thomas P.
2nd Lt. Gilbo, Edward E.
2nd Lt. Heiss, Gustave M. Jr.
2nd Lt. Mangan, James H.
2nd Lt. Kloster, Leif B.
2nd Lt. Kokjer, Madsen C.

2nd Lt. Stirling, Warren G.
2nd Lt. Talley, Thomas P.
2nd Lt. Timlin, Francis E.
2nd Lt. Townsend, Edwin C.
2nd Lt. Tubb, Douglas B.
2nd Lt. Walker, Leland A.
2nd Lt. West, Howard B.
2nd Lt. Whipple, Robert W.
2nd Lt. Patterson, Horace H.
2nd Lt. Johnson, William P.
2nd Lt. Lassman, Charles E.

91ST SQUADRON

1st Lt. Eubanks, William E. Jr.
1st Lt. Smith, Horace A.
1st Lt. Schultz, Black
1st Lt. Galusha, Harry L.
1st Lt. Smith, James R.
2nd Lt. Summers, Julius B. Jr.
2nd Lt. Salvatore, Alexander R.
2nd Lt. McKenney, Ezra
2nd Lt. Wienert, John C.
2nd Lt. Thompson, Arnold W.
2nd Lt. Wolf, Mitchel F.
2nd Lt. Musson, Ralph I.

2nd Lt. Davis, George S.
2nd Lt. Dugan, Paul
2nd Lt. Braswell, Homer F.
2nd Lt. Hambraugh, Robert P.
2nd Lt. Strase, William W.
2nd Lt. Dale, Eugene P.
2nd Lt. Scarboro, Pearly S.
2nd Lt. Wood, Charles W.
2nd Lt. Bird, William W.
2nd Lt. Bjoring, Rovert G.
2nd Lt. Davis James R.
2nd Lt.

AVIATION CADETS:

WHALLEY, ALVIN E.
KELSEY, JOH W.
RYAN, JOHN A.

By order of Major DAVIES.

G. W. KANE, JR.,
2nd Lt. Air Corps,
Adjutant.

DECEMBER 8, 1942 TO DECEMBER 17TH ,1942

27TH GROUP HQ

The day the war started in the Philippines (Dec 8th as we were across the International Date Line) Hq of the 27th Gp was in quarters #4, Fort McKinley. Later on when the air raids started Hq. was transferred to a tent in the ravine back of the quarters. Here George Kane, the Group Adjutant still managed to keep all of the paper work going in spite of the war. How he did it he didn't know – we used to make paper planes out of his poop sheets just to watch something without a red dot on it fly around.

To be as mild as possible, it was a hell of a situation. No Planes no weapons except a few pistols and lets condense it and just say “No nothing”. Right here was where the 27th had their first run in with that all powerful chunk of paper called the T.B.A. The T.B.A. said no rifles and no machine guns and that the material Sq at an Air Base was supposed to do our protecting for us. What Material Sq and what Air Base weren't specified and that ended that. We learned fast though and with a little aid and some fast paper work that was never proven 450 rifles appeared on the scene and the Group started training. Some of the wilder souls suggested hand-grenades. But on due consideration (After ducking every five minutes when some simple bloke decided that grenades were an inhuman weapon and not for use by the air force.

The first afternoon the Group was asked to furnish three B-18 crews for night bombing on Formosa. The never got to bomb but were later used a transports. We also furnished personnel to run Neilson Field for the Big Shots and for the interceptor command. I never was quite sure what there was to run at Neilson but anyway we ran it-- McAfee can tell about that. We were also called on to furnish men to man a/a machine guns at Nichols Field and a detail to ten officers was to Clark Field. Everyone wanted to be on the last detail because they thought they would fly P-40's. Too bad we didn't get to, we would have shot down the first Nip sooner.

Just before the war started the group had been busy filling sand bags and building revetments at Neilson for our planes when they came (they were always coming around the mountain). We filled 100,000 and Ed Backus went down to draw 150,000. Less than 500 were available. This was two days before the war started. Ed went in to see the Col. In charge of the depot and asked if they couldn't be procured for us. The Col. Laughed and said, “Well, we have authority to buy them locally and local manufactrers can furnish us about 100,000 a week. But I don't think there's enough of an emergency now to justify spending Gov't funds for that purpose”. Ed was always sort of outspoken so we will omit his reply but the Col. Didn't like us anymore. To get back to Neilson though we had the first revetment half built when war was declared and that's as far as it got. The next morning there was a truck backed up against it and they were loading the bags on to stack around the Hqs building.

Our chemical defence plan is worthy of mention also. The Group early acquired the habit of getting our supplies and asking questions afterwards. So about the second or third day a large supply of chloride of lime arrived. Not our full T.B.A. allotment but adequate. One hour later two indignant chemical officers arrived wanting to know what kind of Capitalists we were, trying to corner the entire Philippine lime market! Our lime departed with them. So we ended up with ten gallons of kerosene and some strong soap distributed among the squadrons. Immediately after an attack the boys were to grab the kerosene and soap, sprint for the nearest showers, dissolve the mustard with kerosene, and wash off all traces with the soap. All this to be done, we guess, to the strains of "We're gonna slap the dirty Jap."

DEC. 8, 1942 TO DEC. 17TH, 1942 (CON'T)

27TH GROUP HQ

The first air raid was quite an experience. It came at 0300 Dec 9th with no warning at all and after two of three false alarms. Brother Hubbard got so tangled up in his mosquito net he thought it was made of fly paper and Bert Banks went thru the porch screen without bothering to find the door.

After that when the daylight raids started our main pastime was getting mad at the ACK-ACK. Poor devils – only four guns to cover the triangle Nichols Field, Neilson, and Ft. McKinley. The guns used to get so hot they had to stop in the middle of the raid to cool off.

Col Davies idea on the situation was that the 27th should be withdrawn to some place where they could be equipped with planes. Over half our men were trained specialists and would take years to replace. If we could only get planes the group would be a first rate fighting unit and it was no use throwing technicians away as they were too hard to get already. Swenson and Glebis haunted the docks constantly sizing up each ship and figuring where we could stow the equipment. Everything was ready but we never got permission. Even General B worked on it and finally December 17th came around.

DECEMBER 8, TO DECEMBER 22, 1941

16th Squadron

On December 8, 1941, the 16th was peacefully sleeping in various buildings and tents on the pleasant campus of Ft. McKinley. Our planes had not arrived as yet and we had fully enjoyed our brief stay in the Philippines seeing the sights and trying to tell taxi drivers where we wanted to go in our fluent Tagaleya dialect. The hardest thing about conversing with the Gook driver was the fact that we were usually holding our breath as they more or less skillfully and very luckily piloted their taxis through, over and around calesas, dogs, bicycles, and kids. Lt. Stevenson was more or less at home, having spent a few years here as a G.I. some years previous.

Without planes and our field not ready for occupation, we were unable to do any training or preparation. Everyone was anxious to get our planes and start to work. We were aware that we were sitting on a powder keg and time was precious but with no ships we weren't worth our transportation across the Pacific.

And on December 8th the Japs struck. At 4:30 AM Major Davies, our C.O. got a phone call. Pearl Harbor had been bombed. War had come. 25 years of peace and a phone call at an ungodly hour stating that peace was no more. We were stunned. We couldn't believe it. And all we could do was sit tight and hope our ships arrived. So we went back to bed. At 8:00 AM reports started coming in of other raids and most of them in the Philippines. Clark Field and Iba were hit the hardest. Nobody knew what to do. The only thing we know how to fight with was planes and we had none. Capt W.H. Hipps, the 16th C. O., started the men off on small arms drill and we went about unimportant details in a daze.

About noon three B-18's were assigned our group. Ruegg, Peter Beuder and Salvatore were to take the first mission. Crews were assigned and we waited for the word to go. It didn't come and the next day another squadron took over the shops and we didn't see the ships again for 10 days. The rest of the day was taken up with digging fox-holes and camouflaging. By night we were more or less used to the idea that war was here and spent hours cussing whoever was responsible for the shipping of the 27th Group to the P. I. without planes. We went to bed ready for anything. And it came. About 1:00 AM we had an air raid alarm which got everyone up but nothing happened. At 2:00 we had another false alarm. And at 4:30 we were sound asleep when a terrific blast shook all the buildings followed by a display of fireworks. And 1000 men more or less made a desperate dive for the comparative shelter of a ravine 50 yards away. A 12 foot drop into the ravine was no obstacle and we all piled up neatly at the bottom. Total casualties: One sprained ankle. Sleep was out of the question from then on.

Detachments of men were sent to Nickols and Neilson Fields for duty and the Japs struck Nichols. The first casualty in the Group was Pfc. Chitwood, of the 16th Squadron, manning a machine gun and a bomb got him. Hipps was transferred to headquarters at Neilson, along with McAfee, Stevenson, and Ruegg. Those on day shift couldn't sleep much at night because of the constant fear of night raids, and on the night shift sleeping on the daytime was taboo because of the heat and air raids. So most of us went without. Peter Bender was flying a B-18 somewhere on the island and we would get reports of him every day or so.

On the third day, word came through that some of us would be sent to Clark field to fly pursuit. Everyone wanted to go and have a crack at the Nips but only 10 left, Rose, Stafford, Savage and Birnn were among them.

The next few days were a night mare, and G-2 wasn't the best place to work. Reports started coming of Jap ships landing troops. There must have been enough ships to float Luzon if all the reports were correct.

Lt. Rose, Who had gone to Clark Field with the boys, was heard from occasionally and it wasn't good news. They were all ground officers. Not enough ships.

And rumours. An Army travels as much on rumours as it does on its stomach. One of the best was that the Navy was speeding to our rescue sweeping everything before it. This kept us going at least two days. And before we could get downhearted about it not being true, word came out that Dewey Boulevard was lined with A-20's just waiting for us to come and take them off. And the classic was a call to headquarters last one afternoon stating that our A-24's were on the dock. A frantic rush to the docks revealed nothing except that there was probably a Fifth Columnist or two on Luzon and they had our number.

Blood, sweat, and tears. Now we knew for the first time what the British were taking. Enemy planes overhead, wondering where the bombs would fall next, digging in when they came too close, watching our hopelessly small Air Force forced down by superior numbers of the Nips, eating in a hurry, sleeping in a hurry, doing everything in a hurry, and waiting. Waiting for what? More planes, the Navy, the collapse of Japan or a miracle? The Nips landed on both ends of Luzon and were closing in. Not very fast but certainly steady. What bombers were left moved south and the pursuits were used sparingly for recon and came back to report more Nip ships. Lingayen Gulf was always full of ships, Olangapoo was covered with Nips, northern Luzon was alive with Nips, all closing in.

We still had good days. Buzzy Wagner went out a lone and got 8 or 9 Nip planes, Grant Mahoney on another lone recon strafed a Nip base getting several ships and various other suicide missions came in with cheerful reports. Just enough for us to cling to the delirious hope for a few minutes that 30 P-40's could take on the whole Nip Air Force.

And we had moments of relaxation, if you could call it that. Driving into pitch black Manila to the Officers Club for a good meal and being challenged every few blocks by an itchy-fingered Filipino sentry. And driving home slightly potted and trying to stay in the road.

And going downtown during the day and being asked by everyone if we'd stop them. Sure we would, with 29 planes and 20,000 men.

McAfee was working at Neilson trying to build an air force. Ruegg was released from headquarters and was helping McAfee. Rose, Birnn, Stafford and Savage were still at Clark getting hell 24 hours a day. Bender hadn't been heard from. Doan, Hambaugh, Schmidt and the rest of the boys were running the squadron.

Early one afternoon a meeting was called by Major Davies. We were told to pack 30 lbs of possessions for a ten day trip. Our planes were in Australia and we were to get them. Ruegg, Birnn, Rose, Schmidt, and Doan from the 16th. All very secret, meet at 6:00 PM to go to Nichols.

About 8:15 PM we started for Nichols Field in sedans. To get there we had to pass through a Filipino village recently bombed while the Nips were trying to hit Nichols Field. The stench was nauseating, and with the complete blackout, broken only by the glow of burned Cavite across the bay, we had a sense of forboding about the trip ahead.

We had a short meeting, plane assignments and the news that take off was at 3:00 AM. Heiss and Timlin had one ship, Fred Hoffman and Salvatore another, and Strong another. We slept little that night due to the mosquitos, and partly the macabre appearance of our sleeping quarters. They had been bombed considerably. Doors and windows were missing, shrapnel had ventilated each room and debris was littered everywhere. But we slept some.

We were away at 3:00 AM December 19 for Tarakan. An uneventful trip, but we were weary. Too many Nips around, and the rear gun was out. We'd have been cold turkey for one Nip float plane. Ran into bad weather and had to skim the waves the last hundred miles. Landed at Tarakan where a small Dutch Air Force Detachment made us welcome. We stayed for a few hours and then off for Balikpapan. Shortly after leaving Tarakan, Colonel Jim got very busy on a paper of some sort. Also got a bottle of grog from his bag and as we crossed the equator we signed a very impressive article stating we had crossed and had a drink all around. By this time we begin to think we'd get through. Made Balikpapan without incident and stayed the night in some officers quarters.

We were introduced to Dutch hospitality and beer. Both excellent. Also the "Dutch Wife". Most of the boys kicked the "Dutch Wife" to one side and went without.

December 20 and Tarakan behind. Next stop Macassar, made without incident. Macassen was a good example of Dutch thoroughness. Machine gun nests and barb wire barricades everywhere. A short stop there and on to Koepang. Some miles out of Koepang, a strange ship came up to look us over, everyone was on edge. Plane turned out to be RAAF and brought us on in. Stayed on Koepang that night. Everyone too tired to do more than eat and turn in.

The next morning we got an early start and off on the last leg of the trup to Darwin. A long hop over water and the old crate was on her last legs. Noting radically wrong but just strange noises and wheezes from both engines. But we did make it and landed only to ground loop due to a soft spot, Gus says, causing no damage.

Darwin, with mosquitoes, heat and not much beer. A frontier town of few women and fewer comforts. A few Aussie ships and ground crews. A good field with good quarters. Aussie shorts and hats. More mosquitoes. Wesley admitting now that he hadn't told us before how bad a condition the ship was in. Didn't want to worry us. And the first premonition that maybe our ships weren't quite ready to go. But at least we were in Australia where our planes were and we all felt it would only take a few days to get them in shape and start back. How little we knew.

DEC. 7TH, TO DEC 17TH, 1941

91ST SQUADRON

On December 7th, 1941, everybody had big plans for the training and operation of the 91st Bomb Squadron (L). The squadron was then stationed at Ft. William McKinley, P.I. under the command of Lt. W.E. Eubanks, Jr. All these big plans were suddenly destroyed when news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor was received everything was in a turmoil. Everybody suddenly realized that the squadron was completely out of training in regards to the use of pistols, rifles, and ground machine guns.

Lt. Eubanks was assigned to Intelligence at Headquarters, and Lt. Galusha took over temporary command of the squadron. All officers was given a platoon of men and were told to give their men training in the use of firearms. Everyone had just about as much to learn as the next, including officers. They even went as far as to make plans for evacuation if it came to that.

Lts. J.R. Smith and A.R. Salvatore were assigned to assist in operations at Neilson Field, and Lt. J.B. Summers with other officers was sent to Clark Field for duty.

On December 9th at 3:00 A.M. they had their first night air raid. All the officer's quarters, when the first bomb fell. Lt. Galusha tried to get out of the mosquito bar, and what seemed like an hour, later he finally succeeded during the time he was trying to get out of bed, the bombs were falling, shaking the buildings, and the Filipinos, having set up machine guns throughout the area, were shooting tracer bullets everyplace. The first impression was that the end had come and stars were shooting everyplace. Bits of hot shrapnel was falling all around. It looked like a great Fourth of July celebration.

It must not have taken over a few seconds to get out of bed, because as we were getting out, we were almost stepped on by rushing half naked men. About the time you could get up you'd be pushed back down again by another person.

After about two nights of having to get up and rush outside everyone decided to move into the woods where all one had to do was dive into a slit trench beside the bed. This worked fine until it began to rain, then we were torn between two desires. One to be near a dive trench and the other to be dry. We tried the first one and then the other.

We kept this up until December 17th, when several of the officers were secretly called to headquarters. Zeke Summers, J.R. Smith, Salvatore and Galusha were called from the 91st; they were all half scared to death. No one knew what he had done or what he was going to do. They were told they would all go to Nichols Field about 7:00 o'clock that night, and would receive orders there. Everyone was guessing where they might be going. Everyone had an idea it would be south, but due to the fact that they were only allowed to bring 30 pounds of luggage, they thought it couldn't be very far south. They all expected to be back within two weeks ready with planes and equipment for combat. When they got to Nichols Field that night they learned very little and at 3:00 A.M. the next morning everybody Loaded into 2 B-18's and a C-39 heading south.

December 10, 1941

Major O. L. Grover,

Pursuit Group Commander,
Clark Field, PanPanga, PI.

By order of Colonel GEORGE the following officers of the 27th
Bombardment Group are directed to report to you for duty. They are damn good pilots
and officers:

Capt. Edward M. Backus
Lieut. Warren G. Stirling
Lieut. Thomas P. Talley
Lieut. Richard R. Birnn
Lieut. Robert F. Stafford
Lieut. Henry J. Rose
Lieut. Columbus Savage
Lieut. Robert W. Wipple
Lieut. Leland A. Walker
Lieut. Howard B. West
Lieut. Charles Cannon
Lieut. Julius B. Summers

J. H. DAVIES,
CO, 27th Bomb Gp.

DEC. 8 TO DEC. 17, 1941

17TH SQUADRON

The 17th Bomb Sq was rudely awakened on the morning of Dec 8th by bombing at Nichols Field. The Japs had raided Clark Field that afternoon and this night they gave Nichols a Pelting. One bomb came close to where the 17th was stationed. It hit the P.A.A radio station not a mile distant. The Squadron Hq now moved from the parade ground to the jungle nearby.

The next morning the Squadron quickly issued small arms, ammunition, and gas masks. Everyone was keyed up and an air of tenseness and excitement was about. All dug foxholes.

Major Davies had the squadron C.O.'s in for a short meeting and standing by for orders. Crews were formed to man the B-18's and they had to stand by.

The next day, (9th), found the 17th with some of the crews manning machine gun posts at Nichols Field and with flying crews standing by to man the B-18's. Tom Gerrity and Ed Townsend had one, Pete Bender and Harry Roth of the 16th had the second, and Gus Heiss and F.E. Timlin of the 17th had the third. All had it easy on the 9th but on the 10th all were called out. Tom and Ed were down at Nichols preparing for a bombing mission when shortly afternoon the Nips staged a huge raid. Tom and Ed ran for cover as the Xeros began to strafe the B-18's that they were to use on their mission. Tom unfortunately was hit in the hand by a piece of shrapnel and Ed got to cover just as the B-18's load of bombs blew up. "Tim" and "Gus" ran into a dog fight but finally managed to get to San Marcelino.

In the same raid, several of the 17th gunners at Nichols were strafed and one crew manned its post until blown out by bombs.

The next few days saw the squadron sending "Sonny" Walker, "Pete" Talley, "Whip" Whipple, and others up to Clark Field to fly P-40's. Herman Lowery, C.O. went to Nichols to work in the G-2 section. Several others left to help and Harry Mangan, then a 2nd Lt., was left to run the squadron.

On the 12th, Fort McKinley was blessed with rain and no Nips. The time was well used to get the men settled. Spirit was a little low due to the lack of real activity by the Squadron but thru the efforts of Sgt. Pearsons, Sgt. Cameron, and others it was soon high.

The 13th was a day of raids. Huge formations of 27, 36, and 57 bombers came over Manila and nearby installations. A/A fire engaged them but were only moderately successful. The Squadron in the meantime was working hard to help at Nichols and the 14th passed as the 13th and, more and bigger raids and still no real action for the 17th due to lack of planes and orders.

The 15th passed and then the 16th. Ed Townsend, Pete Talley, Sonny Walker and others returned from Clark complaining that after all the rush they had failed to get to fly the P-40's. Herman Lowery also returned and once more assumed command of the 17th.

On the same 17th, Herman, with some of the boys – Walker, Tubb, Talley, Mangan, and Townsend were picked to go to Australia to ferry the A-24's of the Squadron back to P.I. Lt. Sterling was left to command the Squadron and on the morning of the 17th all the foregoing gang left from Nichols Field for Australia.

Dec. 10, 1941 To Dec. 17th, 1941

CLARK FIELD

The following named officers from the 27th Bomb group were ordered to go to Clark Field to join a pursuit group and fly P-40's. Capt. Ed Backus, Lt's Summers, Stirling, Walker, Rose, West, Talley, Cannon, Whipple, Birnn, Savage and Stafford. Upon receiving orders to depart we grabbed our parachutes and Mae Wests and headed for Neilson Field to fly up in General Brereton's C-49 which was to be piloted by Lt Hampton from Savannah who was the General's aid. We were shoved into one of the operation offices to receive our instructions before leaving. While we were waiting General B. ran past and told us to excuse him that he had a date. Bill Eubanks saved our necks by telling us to scam, that the Nips were on the way. We figured out later that Gen G. had a date with a Bomb Shelter. We were all headed for a ditch when the zeros hit and burned up the plane in which we were going to Clark Field. We never could figure out which was the worse, the Japs strafing us or Wienert trying to hit one of them with his .45.

After the raid we were sent back to Ft. McKinley to go up in a recon car. We were told before departing that para-troops had landed between Manila and Clark Field, so we all left with our pistols cocked and our hearts in our throats. We finally made it safely after riding on the edge of our seats for two hours.

The night was spent by the edge of headquarters which was concealed in a patch of trees south of the field, although we didn't know there was a soul around until daylight. Everyone slept without blankets except Summers, who found a man that had gone for a short walk in the bushes and also a lot smaller than he was. When the man came back Summers was sound asleep all rolled up in a nice warm blanket. It looked like Summers used his head and his size to steal the poor man's blanket. Walker tried to sleep under his gas mask but found it a bit small to keep him warm. All in all we spent a lovely night freezing to death with the ground colder than h--l and the country a bit Nippy.

Next morning we found that our dreams or rather good luck of becoming pursuit pilots was nil due to superior Jap planes and very darn few P-40's. On top of it all we found out that about 100 pursuit pilots were in a rest camp about 10 miles from the field. We were all given jobs around the field in place of the pilots who had been sent to the bush due to lack of planes.

Summers and Rose were to salvage parts of shot up planes and had about 30 planes to work on. Stirling moved into operations. Talley and Walker were assigned to the 24th Pursuit Group as Group Communications officers. Sweet job, all they had to do was sit around and listen to a secret line to headquarters which had a line tapped by the Japs to Gen Tojo and a couple more for his staff and on top of it all they couldn't hear a darn thing. Whipple and Birnn had a sweet job of sitting on top of one of the hangers as look outs. It was a nice job if you didn't care about Jap planes and bombs. Every time they sighted something they had to run up a red flag and then run or fall down about 100 steps and dive into a bomb hole. Whipple used to look at his watch and tell us he had only 12 hours to live. Seems he gured his life from the time he got off duty until he went back to work. One day while getting ready to take Birnn's place as a flag pole sitter on top of the hanger, Whipple watched Birnn put up the red flag and lead his men down the stairs to safety. Always before Whipple had let his men go first, but he decided that Birnn had the right idea about leading his men instead of following them. He thought he could move a lot faster than they could under such conditions. West and Savage were working in transportation. Capt Backus was in charge of the engineering and in his spare time kept his stooges out of trouble if he could find them.

The second day West and Walker went over to the far side of the field to look things over. There was a 2,500 ft ceiling at the time so everyone felt happy about the Japs not being able to find us. About the time the 2 W's were a mile from the field, Jap bombers were heard overhead and about 10 minutes later the air raid warning sounded.

Men started running for fox holes and the rain started pouring down while West and Walker started going through grass shacks getting a rain coat that wouldn't fit. After covering about a mile they got back to Headquarters just in time to have 18 Jap bombers come down through the clouds. They opened their bomb doors where we could all see them and then proceeded to drop their eggs in our area. Some of the bombs had a big sign on them which read "to whom it may concern" and brother they were all for us. At this time same time Birnn and Talley had just finished taking a shower and had started walking home, when the bombs started falling. It looked plenty bad for them at the time because they had one tiny little tree to hide behind and no fox holes. The bombs fell in a perfect line up to about 40 ft. from them and then stopped. It seems that this little raid cured them of taking any more showers. Of course you can't blame them for that. After all, it doesn't make you very happy to get nice and clean and then have some peanut brain cover you up with dust from a yellow bomb.

During the time we weren't working part of the boys use to spend the day in the mts. Away from all the noise and bombs. Heiss, Timlin, Talley, Whipple and Walker during one of these days counted 74 bombers and escorting fighters go by heading for Manila and they were all in one formation .

We kept alive on rumors that our planes were down in Manila and that they were being assembled and flown off of Dewey Blvd. They had everything from A-24's to P-38's waiting for us. We all wondered what the army would be like without General Rumor and his staff to keep us bucked up.

Many humorous incidents during the week kept us from becoming bored with our jobs. We had our mess up in a slaughter house owned by an old negro. He had formerly belonged to the 10th Cavalry, but before the commencement of hostilities he was furnishing meat for the troops at Fort Stotsenberg. Thus we always had plenty of meat for our mess but it was rather disconcerting to miss Porky the Pig from our vicinity and them find him in our mess kit for lunch.

Brinn was continually hungry. He ate early breakfast, regular breakfast, and many times managed to make the line for late chow. This continued through the day. At one particular time during a six hour raid he was kept in a trench from 7:30 till 1:30; all the time in easy sight and sniffing range of the kitchen.

One morning during an early raid Walker and Summers grew bold. They filled their plates with eggs and settled behind the house for breakfast. A hissing noise caused them to raise their heads, not missing a bite. Later investigation showed that a bomb had dropped fifty feet from their table and this destroyed their appetite for the next few hours.

The morning of the 10th we were all in fox holes before 8:00. The Nips buzzed and buzzed above our heads but no strafing or bombing followed. Around 11:30 the old negro who had become our mess Sergeant remarked. "Well Boss, I guess they'll all be going home soon for lunch", however, the buzzing continued. At 1:15 he raised his head and said "Lordy me, they done brung their lunch with them".

On Thursday, Backus was determined to get a bath. He had been doing a great job of repairing and hiding our last 16 P-40's. So--he started out for the showers, which were still intact in the soldiers quarters. Two raids forced him to cover before getting there. However, he got his shower and feeling nice and clean started back for camp. No sooner had he left the shower room then the zeros came. It almost broke his heart to be forced to take refuge in one of the man holes in that vicinity. There after, we heard no more talk about baths.

We thought the high point of the week was the arrival of Gus Heiss and Timlin in a B-18. They landed and about that time the red flag went up on the tower. Both boys Displayed untold courage in flying that old patched crate around. Heiss suddenly remember that he had left his last suit of clean underwear in the plane. So amid the bullets from the strafing planes he made his way back to his plane and then back to our meager, which was 300 yds of open country from where they were caught.

They had no armor plate and only 3 .30 calibre machine guns, of which only the front gun worked with any degree of success.

Heiss and Timlin were standing around telling us their experiences and how fast they could run, when a bomb dropped about 400 yards from the trees we were under. Walker told us later that one minute he saw Heiss and the next second he saw a few trees rustling where Gus had gone through them. About the same time his own legs got into action and he started down the rail to find a hole. Poor Timlin had never been there before and could just keep track of the dust Sonny was kicking up. They finally hit a hole and both lay there shaking so bad they couldn't talk. After it was all over Gus came out of his hole covered with dust and cussing because the laundry he had risked his neck to save earlier in the day had gotten covered with dirt from the trench that was caved in by a close miss. Poor Gus and he tried so hard to keep clean.

One day while Walker, Timlin and Talley were walking from the field to dinner at headquarters the Japs started coming over to bomb. The only hole that could be found was about two feet deep in the blackest dirt in P.I. Walker and Timlin jumped a fence and started digging in. Talley said he always wanted to see what Jap bombers looked like, so he stayed in the middle of the road. The first bomb went off about 200 yds from their cozy little hole and Talley cleared the fence at the same time and tried to get under Walker and Timlin to get protection. In doing this he caved in both sides of the trench and covered the rest of the boys up with dirt so black that it made them like 3/4s' of the population of Savannah, Ga. which is really black. When the bombs started going off Talley yelled "Jesus Christ", and the noise seemed to have some effect of a Philippine woman who came out of her hole after the raid and proceeded to sit under a tree with a cross in her hand and yell "Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ". Talley was cured of watching bombing and Walker and Timlin decided that they knew a new form of preying under fire. On Friday we became decidedly bored with sleeping on the ground. We had also found that the Japs seldom came over at night, so we moved up to one of the houses at Fort Stotsenburg to sleep. The next day Summers went back to the house for some reason or other and saw "Lt. Rosen" printed on the house next to it. He was immediately curious because he had roomed with a Melvin Rosen at West Point. He went in and saw to his surprise a dining room with table set for seven and a half eaten meal on it. However, upon close inspection he noticed that the salad had congealed and ants were running all over the table. At one plate there was a newspaper dated Dec. 8th. Looked as if the boys had been disturbed and rushed to battle stations in a hurry. Luckily they had left about five gallons of Tanduay Rum and two cases of Coca Cola. Life was OK until the nips hit the ice house.

On Dec.17, we were recalled to Manila.... Summers had to fix the radiator on our reconnaissance car which had been hit by shrapnel. He did a hasty job and started back to the hangar to return the tools, and found much to his surprise that he had been working about six feet from an unexploded bomb. We were all back at Fort McKinley by four on the afternoon of the 17th. Something was stirring we could tell but a shower and shave were uppermost in our minds. We figured out later that we had undergone at least 35

raids in five days and that we would never get used to the hissing sound and the blasting effect the bombs had on us.

December 13, 1941

SECRET

SUBJECT: Essential Personnel to Assemble and Move Airplanes.

TO : Commanding General, Far East Aie Force, San Pedro, Makati, Rizal P.I.

PILOT OFFICERS

Major DAVIES
Capt. BACKUS
Capt. HIPPS
Lieut. HUBBARD
Lieut. LOWERY
Lieut. EUBANKS
Lieut. GERRITY
Lieut. STEVENSON
Lieut. GALUSHA
Lieut. J.R.SMITH
Lieut. SUMMERS
Lieut. SWENSEN
Lieut. BIRNN
Lieut. ROGERS
Lieut. MANGAN
Lieut. MCAFEE
Lieut. TOWNSEND
Lieut. BIRD
Lieut. RUEGG
Lieut. BRASWELL
Lieut. WALKER
Lieut. SAVAGE
Lieut. DALE
Lieut. WEST
Lieut. SCHMIDT
Lieut. G.S.DAVIS
Lieut. TUBB
Lieut. ROSE
Lieut. DUGAN
Lieut. GIBBS
Lieut. STAFFORD
Lieut. HAMBOUGH
Lieut. TALLEY
Lieut. DOAN
Lieut. MUSSON
Lieut. PATTERSON

ENLISTED MEN

1. M/Sgt. WESTLEY Inspector
2. M/Sgt. SANDERS Armament
3. T/Sgt. THOMAS Mechanic
4. S/Sgt. INGROW Armament
5. S/Sgt. KNOX Inspector
6. S/Sgt. RUSS Armorer
7. S/Sgt. IRBY CC.
8. M/Sgt. SMITH CC.
9. M/Sgt. DUNLAVY CC.
10. M/Sgt. HICKS CC.
11. M/Sgt. YOUNG CC.
12. M/Sgt. MORRIS CC.
13. T/Sgt. ADAMS CC.
14. T/Sgt. CLEMANS CC.
15. T/Sgt. LOSSET CC.
16. T/Sgt. BUNDY Utilities
17. S/Sgt. HARBIN CC.
18. Sgt. FARMER CC.
19. Sgt. LARY CC.
20. Sgt. GULP CC.
21. Sgt. COX CC.
22. Sgt. SCRUGGS CC.
23. Sgt. TOLER CC.
24. Sgt. BROOKS CC.
25. Sgt. MCDILL CC.
26. Sgt. TATURN CC.
27. Sgt. MOORE CC.
28. Sgt. POPE CC.
29. Sgt. ROBINSON CC.
30. Sgt. O'BRYANT Radio
31. Sgt. GOSS CC.
32. Sgt. BRYANT CC.
33. Sgt. JONES CC.
34. Sgt. KING CC.
35. Sgt. LEEMAN CC.
36. Sgt. LENHARY CC.

Lieut. DILLARD	37.	Sgt. MARTEL	CC.
Lieut. MCKINNEY	38.	Sgt. SHOUSE	CC.
Lieut. JOHNSTON	39.	Sgt. BAKER,R.	CC.
Lieut. DONNEWALD	40.	Sgt. CAUSEY	CC.
Lieut. SCHWARTZ	41.	Sgt. COLOUITT	CC.
Lieut. STIRLING	42.	Sgt. DAY	CC.
Lieut. WHIPPLE	43.	Sgt. HAGAU	CC.
Lieut. SALVATORE	44.	Sgt. HUTCHENS	CC.
Lieut. WEINERT	45.	Sgt. PALMER	CC.
Lieut. GAUSE	46.	Sgt. PEARSON	CC.
Lieut. SCARBORO	47.	Sgt. STRAWN	CC.
Lieut. CANNON	48.	Sgt. TUNEBURG	CC.
Lieut. HILLEY	49.	Sgt. LAWERENCE	CC.

PILOT OFFICERS

Lieut. KLOSTER
 Lieut. THOMAS
 Lieut. MILLER
 Lieut. J.R.DAVIS
 Lieut. WOOD

ENLISTED MEN

50.	Sgt. SWEENEY	CC.
51.	Sgt. INZER	CC.
52.	Sgt. LE CROY	CC.
53.	Sgt. CAMERER	CC.
54.	Sgt. WATKINS	CC.
55.	Sgt. GEARIN	CC.
56.	Sgt. Hester	CC.
57.	Sgt. KNOWLES	CC.

J. H. DAVIES
 Major, Air Corps,
 Commanding.

DECEMBER 18 TO 22, 1941

The Australian Detail

Nichols Field was black as pitch and a rather grim, quiet group of men moved over the small bridge leading to the living quarters of Nichols Field proper. They knew their future hopes and plans. They had been thoroughly briefed that afternoon at a secret session at Fort McKinley. At that table in one of the McKinley officer's quarters, Major Davies had gone over their plans. Ed Backus, Ed Townsend, "Sonny" Walker, "Dick" Brinn, "Pete" Talley, "Herman" Lowery, "Harry" Mangan, "Henry" Rose, "Ron" Hubbard, "Bob" Ruegg, Doan, Hambaugh, and a few others of the gang had been there.

Now that crew moved silently to a chosen rendezvous at Nichols Field. And what a rendezvous ! A set of quarters near the flying field itself had been chosen as the meeting place but it had also been chosen by the Nips as a target. It showed the effect.

A bomb had hit directly in the back yard and had halved a huge tree standing there. The effects of the bomb extended to the house itself and the entire rear had been demolished. Debris lay all about in the living room where the gang was to assemble. The weird glow of a candle disclosed maps scattered on the floor.

"Gus" Heiss and F.E. Timlin had just come in with their battered B-18 and were bending over the maps. Jack Caldwell was speaking softly and the pilots around heard the full plans. "Salvy" Salvatore and Fred Hoffman were to fly the C-39. Strong and his co-pilot the B-18. Plans called for a 3:00 AM take off for Darwin, Australia.

The men went to the various rooms of the house to grab a bit of sleep. The mosquitos were terrific and sleeping hard at best. Some went out in front and stayed awake.

Finally 3:00 AM came. The band moved as one for the field, talking quietly and trying not to notice the stench of dead horses and people buried in the wreckage of native dwellings near by. A broken gas main lent its own odor. The shattered hangars cast a weird framework in the glow of fires on their floors.

Hoffman and "Salvy" led their boys to the C-39 and everyone piled aboard. Ol' Sal had never seen the inside of a C-39 but co-pilot he was. Hoffman studied the engines and Grant Mahoney (pea-shooter of note) went ahead with a flashlight to head Hoffman to the runway. The task was no easy one because of bomb craters and piles of debris. Finally at the runway, Hoffman turned and faced the ship down the runway. Grant crawled in, mags were checked, and everyone tensed for the take-off. After all a blacked out field with a 2500 ft. bomb marked runway and an overload is no breeze. A mechanic stood at the end of the strip and blinked a flashlight – the signal to go. The engines broke into a roar; the ship started moving. Down the runway it thundered and headed for the trees at the far end. An eternity passed and the end of the runway came fast. At last Fred pulled the overloaded ship into the air and the 27th's representatives of hope were Australia

bound. At the meeting they heard their much sought for A-24's were docked in Australia and after them they were. Oh Lord, how the Philippines needed those planes !

An hour passed and the air was getting cold and rough. "Salvy" tried to close the air ventilator in his cockpit only to find where he was trying to close a hole which was, in reality, a six inch shrapnel gash. Later inspection revealed 30 some such holes. Another hour and they began to battle a tropical storm. The ship pitched and bounced and the pilots were taxed to their utmost to get through. The gang in the back wasn't doing to well. The cold was unexpected and none were really prepared for it. Also the constant movement of the ship let no one get settled on the cold and barren floor. And so it went for at least another hour. Constant buffeting and hammering of the plane until dawn came and the Island of Mindano was sighted. The weather cleared and after a little searching the Del Monte plantation was found and then the field. Some B-17's were already there using the field as a base. The 27th lads landed and were asked to breakfast by the B-17 boys. Breakfast was quite tasty. Hardtack and a thinned out mush. As yet everything was still pretty confused.

All that day the C-39 lads waited at Del Monte and managed to catch a few hours sleep.

Early the next morning about 2:00 AM the crew arose and went to the ship. The Nips had succeeded in placing so many warships and planes around or near the island, it was deemed advisable to fly the C-39 at night as much as was possible.

Up from the Del Monte flat the trusty old C-39 carried the 27th boys and headed out for Tarikan, Borneo. The Dutch had a base here and they could service on the way south. At dawn the plane was following a string of islands to the south of Mindano when, Holy Hell! A Jap aircraft carrier was sighted. Time hung heavy and everyone craned his neck to see if dreaded Zeros would soon start to come after us. But they didn't and the crew within the plane breathed easier when the carrier finally was lost from sight. "Herman" Lowery and "Dick" Brinn were fast looking at their maps for an island in case the Nips did attack.

Just outside of Tarikan the weather became terrible again. Rain came down in sheets and the ship was helpless to get into Tarikan. It was decided to continue to Balikpapan, a Dutch base further south. So the "sweat" began. The C-39 had hardly enough gas to make the trip, so all mixture controls were set to maximum lean and the battle was on. Half way to Balikpapan, a huge mountain range was encountered with jungle so dense they could not see the ground. Climbing above was out of the question due to gas so soon a merry chase began between peaks and down canyons. There was a long interval of tenseness when at last the range dissolved and the lowlands were reached. At last Balikpapan came into sight and the C-39 sat down with but 28 gallons of gas ! The flight was a thriller for all.

That night everyone ate baloney and cheese and drank Dutch beer. The Dutch were quite good the the 27th and made the boys feel at home. One thing had the whole crowd puzzled and that was the “Dutch Wife” that one slept with in the absence of the true McCoy !

The next night saw the gang in Macassar and the following night at Koepang, Timor. Here they got their first view of Australians and their speech. “Pete” Talley, and “Harry” Mangan had a big laugh while Hambaugh’s Birmingham drawl was a delight to the “Aussie”. To all it was queer to be called a “Yank”, especially the southern lads.

From Koepang, the C-39 made for Darwin coming in with one engine running very hot and coughing badly. Hoffman made a ground looping landing and the Darwin boys were quite impressed.

Everyone was a little awed by the huge expanse of nothing in Australia. As far as the eye could see was an arid plain of scrub trees and red clay. Also the sun was terrific. 118 deg. In the shade was usual.

A few days passed with the gang getting fitted out in Australian uniforms or shorts and brief shirts. All quite sensible and appropriate for the country. “Ron” Hubbard was the best looking man of the crew, what with his massive chest and bold, hardened legs.

Finally permission was obtained to ride one of the Qantas flying boats of the RAAF. So on December 23rd everyone went up to board the Short Sunderland.

COMMANDING GENERAL FAR EASTERN AIR FORCE
MANILA P.I.

DECEMBER 18, 1941
From Tarakan

No one hundred octane gasoline at Tarakan and no instructions regarding arrival of any stop ninety seven thousand gallons of ninety octane now at Tarakan if you request it by radio to Navy commander in Chief Batavia stop for identification our airplanes on arrival they must circle Light Ship at three degrees fifteen minutes north long one hundred seventeen degrees thirty two minutes east at nine hundred feet altitude and remain fifteen hundred feet off shore until approach to air-port stop Tarakan airport satisfactory for P dash forty and A dash twenty four operations unless very wet stop one hard surface runway eight hundred thirty meters will be completed by January first with contemplated extension to sixteen hundred meters later stop fuel servicing by hand pump from drums stop recommend two power driven field servicing pumps available at twenty seventh bomb be sent by next B eighteen stop Tarakan radio stands by in accordance with page thirty five of Anglo dash Dutch dash United States radio communications instructions.

D A V I E S

Sent by navy Commander

Commanding General,
Far Eastern Air Force,
Manila P. I.

No one hundred octane gasoline available at Balik Papen except for twelve thousand litres in storage for Dutch Army airplanes stop manager of Shell Oil Company expects four thousand five hundred gallons of one hundred octane about December twenty six for use of United States airplanes stop Balik Papen radio can be arranged to stand by on designated frequency stop Balik Papen airport suitable for P dash forty and A dash twenty airplanes stop need power driven fuel pump stop information regards identification of approaching airplanes being sent by return B dash eighteen stop until then airplanes must radio time of arrival from departure point.

D A V I E S

Sent by Navy Commander

December 20, 1941
Darwin.

United States Far Eastern Air Force Manila
Darwin A 470 20/12

For Commanding General stop Information regarding Macassar as follows two thousand gallons of one hundred octane at airport and four thousand gallons in reserve for Dutch Air Force which could be used stop Manager of Shell Company has received information that thirteen thousand gallons arriving soon stop No procedure for identifying airplanes they must radio ahead stop Airport excellent for our operation Stop Information regarding Koepang no one hundred octane at present but local commander expects fourteen thousand gallons Dec 24th for American planes stop Airport excellent stop For identification our planes must approach from one hundred twenty degrees at two thousand feet with wheels down and flashing landing lights stop Both airports need power driven fuel pumps stop Two hundred and ten thousand rounds fifty caliber at Batchelor ready for ferry north stop RAAF at Darwin have Port Moresby at Batchelor stop

D A V I E S

R.A.A.F. FORM A.14
(RAF Form 683)
(December 21. 1937)

SECRET
CYPHER MESSAGE

TO
FOR FLIGHT COMMANDER

Serial No. _____
Receipt Despatch
Time of

FROM CAVITE

System

FOR FLIGHT COMMANDER 2 B – 18 ONE C -39 RETURN

FLIGHT EARLIEST POSSIBLE WITH MAXIMUM 50 CALIBRE LOAD

(.) DELMONTE KNOWN TO ENEMY (.) USE DELMONTE OR
MALABANG FOR REFUEL AND CUSTOMARY UNDER DARKNESS TO
LUZON FOR PREPARATION NEXT ASSIGNMENT

SIGNED BRERETON.

RECEIVED ABOVE MESSAGE

/s/ JOHN H. DAVIES
MAJOR

ANSWER TO ABOVE MESSAGE

COMMANDING GENERAL
FEAF
MANILA P.I.

2 B-18 and 1 C-39 DEPARTING DECEMBER 23 WITH 7000 POUNDS .50
CALIBRE AMMUNITION ARRIVING TARKAN AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER
24TH STOP RADIO COMMANDING OFFICER TARKAN LATEST SITUATION IF
NECESSARY OTHERWISE FLIGHT WILL CONTINUE NORTH ACCORDING TO
YOUR INSTRUCTIONS STOP REMAINDER OF UNIT DEPARTING FOR
BRISBANE DECEMBER 23RD IN RAAF FLYING BOAT STOP CAPTAIN PELL
AVAILABLE HERE WITH B-18 TO FERRY ADDITIONAL .50 CALIBRE AND
RETURN PILOTS IF YOU SO DIRECT END

DAVIES

DECEMBER 18TH, 1941 TO JANUARY 30TH, 1942

27TH IN P.I.

December 18, 1941 – this was the Group's first day with its new Group and Squadron Commanders. Lt. Eubanks was supposed to take command of the Group, but Major Sewall actually did. Eubanks took charge of the 91st, Stephenson the 16th, and Sterling the 17th. All 3 Squadrons were merely sitting at Fort McKinley waiting for orders – 120 men from the Group were assigned to McAfee at Neilson Field. Several of the officers from all Squadrons had various jobs at Air Force Hq, and a few men were manning machine guns at Nichols Field. Corporal Bandish, 16th Squadron, distinguished himself first in shooting down a Zero that was strafing Nichols Field – He didn't hit the zero but shot the pilot through the head and the Zero ended up in the graveyard along the McKinley-Manila road. Several others later got partial credit for shooting strafing Zeros.

On December the 21st, all Squadrons were notified from Hq that they were to move to new stations to prepare fields for the reception of A-24's which Major Davies and 17 other pilots had gone to Australia to fetch. This was quite a joke, though a very serious one, to us we felt that the new stations would all be occupied by the enemy very shortly since the war in northern and southern Luzon was going badly. The 16th Sq was supposed to go to Lipa (40 miles south of Manila), the 91st to an Marceleno, the 17th to San Fernando (the latter two Northwest of Manila). The situation was this - south of Manila on the tip of Luzon the Japs were forcing our troops back and north of Manila 80 Jap transports had pitched off about 50,000 troops in Lingayen Gulf and from the North and South we were being rapidly pushed into a sack. Anyway, during an Air Raid on December 22nd, the Squadron's left Manila and took camp at their new stations.

All that was left in Manila was George Kane and a few Hq men and Officers, McAfee and 120 men at Neilson Field, and Major Sewall at Air Force Hq. Gerrity was air liaison with General Wainwright's Hq in the field.

However, the whole works collapsed on Dec. 24th. The Japs had constantly been raiding Manila every day for some time. But they had done no appreciable damage to anything but Nichols Field and Cavite. This didn't damage anyone's morale to a great extent though. Anyway, this December 24th was at once the wildest and most fantastic day in the annals of the 27th Bomb Gp. It was the day before Christmas and all through Manila, not a creature was stirring (during the bombing hour), not even a Jap--up until one o'clock. At this time Stephenson got up from lunch at Lipa and ordered his Squadron to pack up and depart for Manila again--he had just gotten orders to evacuate Lipa and move to the docks at Manila where he would get more orders. Stirling and Eubanks got no orders for their Squadrons at San Marceleno and San Fernando. Kane was ordered to have his men move from Ft. McKinley to the docks by 7:00 P.M. and McAfee got orders to have his men join the 16th and Hq Squadron at the docks. Not a word of explanation was given other than Manila was an open city. This meant one of two things either the Japs had broken thru in the North and were plowing down towards

Manila if we were sailing somewhere. Neither turned out to be true--not exactly but both were partly true.

Anyhow, the greatest haste (amounting to nearly a rout) and speed were urged. You couldn't take anymore luggage and equipment than you could carry and no specific things were designated to be taken. Air Force Hq just quit work and disappeared all at once. Every officer and enlisted man had to leave behind all his personal belongings and nothing but the barest essentials were taken.

At four o'clock 9 P-40's from Clark Field landed at Neilson Field and one poor devil flew through the hangar wall and caught fire. The pilot got out OK. Another landed on the barricaded runway and tore his ship all to pieces. All Personnel with the exception of McAfee, Dillard, Stanfford and Owen and four enlisted men had left the field, but they helped gas up the P-40's to get them away. At the same time the gas storage and houses at Nichols were set afire and other demolition work was going on. Pappy Gunn flew in and then out when he found General Brereton wasn't there. Dillard, Stafford and Owen took off in 3 O-49's on a road behind the field - the road was lined with trees but they all made it ok. Their destination was Corregidor. No one knew whether they would make it or not without being shot down. McAfee was going to stay on the field until the A-27 out on reconnaissance came in and take it to Corregidor. When the A-27 did come in the pilot cracked his left aileron and tail against the revetment -- Mac thought for sure he was caught in Manila by the Japs since his plane was cracked up.

The 16th pulled into the Manila dock area at 8:00 P.M. and Stephenson had (against orders) brought all of his food and equipment in the Squadron, this turned out to be a big break later. Steve and McAfee got together on the docks and decided that since everything was so tied up that they would just take care of themselves. The situation was that the Group was supposed to evacuate to Bataan. This move was to be accomplished by boat. Steve and Mac decided to H--I with this since it meant leaving all the trucks and equipment on the docks. Steve took the trucks and half the men around to Bataan by road, and Mack took the other half of the 16th over to Bataan by boat. The men in the trucks got through safely except for an accident on the road which hurt no one. The boat crowd got caught in a bombing raid without life vests and the Gook Captain got lost in a mine field, otherwise the rest of the 16th made it to Bataan ok too.

By 5:00 P.M. the entire 16th Squadron had assembled in a ravine close to Cabcabbin on Bataan and proceeded to have their first meal (Christmas Dinner) since noon the day before. It consisted of bread and hot coffee. Everyone's spirits got a lift from the coffee, and a little Christmas cheer crept into the crowd. During this "coffee hour" a rabble of men piled out of trucks and out on the road and descended upon the 16th. This rabble turned out to be the 17th, led by "Goon" Stirling.

It turned out the 17th had just gotten "unofficial" wind of the "rout" from Manila and had just sailed right on back to Bataan after advising Eubank of the situation. Willie Eubank also moved in a camp with the 91st and Hq Sq about 5 miles from the 16th.

So Christmas day found the entire 27th safely out on Bataan. The 17th left so hurriedly that they brought no stoves of food so they began to live of the 16th for the time being.

It was a terrible Christmas day from every angle--no food, no idea of the war situation (which didn't get desperate until a week later so the "rout" wasn't necessary). No place to sleep, no orders, the Group scattered t the 4 winds, and prospects for getting airplanes and into the war were NIL.

Some of the officers had brought a bottle of grog or two and they all had a round, wishing Merry Christmas to the Group.

December 26th the Group spent in getting their two camps organized--Major Sewell had the 91st and Hq Squadrons at a camp about a mile from Limay and it was certainly a fine place. A fairly large creek of crystal clear water ran through the area and there were huge trees all about the small valley in which the Squadrons were encamped. The 16th and 17th Sqdns were at Cabcabin and were not so well off though they had a creek of sorts and tree cover of a sketchy type. The Group was so used to being bombed that in everything they did they kept an eye peeled at the sky--tree cover was a necessity.

On the 27th the nips bombed Corregidor for 3 hours--most of the Group sat on the beach about a mile and half away and watched the destruction. It didn't seem as if anything or anybody could have survived it. We heard later that 31 men were killed.

On December 28, 1941,--Stephenson and McAfee went up to Air Force HQ and talked to Colonel George about getting a job for the 16th Sq. They had success as Col George assigned that Squadron to Bataan Field and ordered the 16th to take charge of the servicing and maintenance of some P-40's that were coming in, also, big joke, they would be on hand if the dive bombers came in. They were to build revetments for the expected A-24's ---- really!

Everyone had begun to realize that there wasn't a great stock of food in reserve on Bataan so Stephenson sent the 17th Sq on up to Limay to live off the Hq and 91st Sq. Those three squadrons then began to dig in and really made up a fine nest back in their valley. They built a dam and everyone built themselves a miniature Shangri-la out of leaves and branches. It was certainly cool and fine there, and Major Sewell felt that they would stay in their hide-away until Major Davies and the boys got back with their A-24's ---- that the a-24's would arrive was doubtful though.

The 16th took over Bataan Field on the 29th--Stephenson was in charge of the Squadron and the field--McAfee was the field operations officer--Bender was the Engineering officer--Dillard took over the building of revetments. The other 3 Squadrons felt they had the laugh on the 16th since all they had to do was be comfortable and wait. 12 P-40's came in and landed at Bataan Field and were immediately shoved away in the trees.

Corregidor in the meantime was being regularly pestered from the air by formations of 80 Jap bombers. On the 30th the 16th got their first "working over" by the Jap Zeros. During the time from Dec 25 to the 30th all Sqdns had been sending trucks back into Manila to bring out supplies. This later proved to have been the only thing that kept the Group going after food got very short.

New Years -- the outlook of all concerned on Bataan was not bright to say the least. The last bit of whiskey gave out and numerous toasts were drunk to this and that, mostly to wives and families back home. Simply, the 27th Group knew its future was dark, and no one expected to get out of it alive or at best P.O.W. The men ignored that and carried on as if everything was O.K.

The Japs entered Manila on Jan 2, 1942. We were all praying that they wouldn't go in on the first. Manila was still burning on the 2nd but a day or so after that all fires were out. There were, however still other fires to be seen--an oil dump on Corregidor was still burning after 4 days.

Also on Jan 2 the order came from the rock that all Air Corps units would immediately begin training as infantry units. Major Sewell took this in hand and throughout the 27th amp area there were infantry classes going on. The 16th being occupied with Bataan Field, just issued rifles to all men and kept on as usual, nursing the remaining 9 (3 flew to Del Monte) P-40

On January 5th, the Hq., 91st, and 17th Sq moved to the 2nd reserve line on the east side of the lines. They made anti-tank bombs out of beer bottles filled with gasoline, put up barbed wire, and generally dug in as if they were seasoned troops from the German Army. They kept this position for two weeks and never saw a Jap, but they got in much valuable training which was to bear on their future.

Through the period of Jan 1 to Jan 25th the 16th Sq on Bataan Field suffered 32 bombings with no casualties to themselves although four men from an engineer outfit were killed. Their record on Bataan Field was the best yet since through all that bombing not a man was hurt (except by shock), not one airplane was scratched, nor a single piece of equipment damaged. The 16th drew a bug white circle in the middle of the runway so that the Japs would have a target to shoot at--they never hit it but they came too damn close for comfort.

Upon the reserve line the other 3 squadrons got their first taste of the Nip dive bombers when the Japs put a bomb in the 17th Squadron's kitchen, so for the 2nd time on Bataan the 17th was kitchenless. The 27th was beginning to feel like a veteran outfit though. All night long the 155's pounded the Japs and all day long the Japs pounded us.

On the 15th Tokyo radio stated that the defenders of Bataan would be driven into the China Sea by the 20th. That gave everyone a laugh, but it also made everyone think twice. The 20th came and went with no swimming parties.

The food situation was very bad. Since the first of the year everyone had been on half rations and the meals were cut down to two a day. Each meal was virtually the same, consisting of bad rice and what the boys called "slum gullion", I.C. Hash. The bread was scarce and coffee ran right out, no butter, milk, meat, fat, or otherwise. That was the worse thing anyone had to bear, the food was sickening and Damn little.

The enlisted men stood up well and were in the best of spirits, as best as could be expected under the circumstances. No one gave much of a hoot what kind of a job they did as long as it was a job. They didn't care if they were bombed or shot at as long as they were working or helping. They were brave men to a man and their example was a credit to everyone.

One Corporal Allen, 16th Sq, wasn't at all perturbed when a bomb hit 12 feet away from him as he manned a .30 calibre machine gun against bombers at 28,000 feet! M/Sgt. George Smith and Ruskin put P-40's together as if they had worked over them all their life.

All in all, January was a hectic month. The Group settled itself down in jobs that they held, up until Bataan fell. On the 30th of January, Stephenson, McAfee, Bender, and Stafford left Bataan for Corregidor and sailed on the U.S.S Seawolf, a 315 foot submarine, for the south. Savage took over command of the 16th and that Squadron continued as before. The four officers on the Seawolf sailed (or rather chugged along under water) through the Macassar Straits while that big Jap fleet was being sunk and scattered to the four winds and eventually on Feb 9th. they landed at Soerabaya, Java. Their new job was to run another pursuit field and this they did until the day before Java fell. Another sub wasn't available so they left this time by a C-49 and landed at Daly waters, Australia. McAfee left 17,500 guildens in the bank at Soerabaya; he was an acting Finance Officer among other things. He, Bender and Stafford (Stevenson went to Australia via B-17) held babies and took care of two expectant mothers during the trip out from Java. At Daly Waters they wired Col Davies that they ere present for duty from the P.I. Col Davies ordered them to Brisbane, where they went post haste, eager to get to a little civilization after Bataan, Java, and the flies of Daly Waters.

DECEMBER 18, 1941

The 27th Group Commander, Major Davies and a number of pilots left early this morning by plane for Australia. They plan to pick-up the 27th's A-24 dive bombers, and ferry them back to the Philippines. In the absence of Major Davies, Major Sewell acted as Group Commander with Captain Whoffell as executive officer and Tom Gerrity as group Material Officer.

Due to the lack of aircraft and the dis-organization of the entire situation, the 27th was left high and dry. A complete air corps unit with no airplanes with which to fight. The "Powers the be" later turned the Group into an infantry outfit.

On December 20th Tom Gerrity was assigned to the North Luzon force as Air Corp Liason Officer. On the way north he stopped off at Stotsenberg. Clark Field was a shamble. Wrecked airplanes lay burned all over the field.

On the 22nd of December the "Nips" effected another landing. This time they came in at Damortis with 80 to 90 transports. Headquarters requested an attack by the B-17's but for some reason the big fellows never arrived.

The green, untrained Filipino troops took a terrific beating at Rasario. The entire 71st division was routed after a short skirmish with Jap patrols. Gen Wainwright had the U.S. withdrawn to a line running East and West thru Mount Arayat. Rumors were running rampant throughout Manila. No one seemed to know exactly what the situation was. Possible this fact had more to do with the Japs successes than anything else. The calmest people were those on the front lines.

All the Far Eastern Air Force Hq, was evacuated to Australia at this time and installations and equipment in and around Manila were destroyed. General McArthur's Headquarters moved to Corregidor, and Manila declared an open city. General George was then in command of all Air Corps in the Philippines. About this time all the troops on Bataan were so ill-informed, and rumors so plentiful, that they expected the "Nips" to come popping over the hill any minute. The North Luzon Forces covered the retreat of the Southern Luzon Forces, so that the latter had the opportunity of retreating under cover to Bataan.

In the hurried evacuation of Clark Field, the Air Corps left several P-40's and P-35's on the field. Tom Gerrity flew over to Corregidor to acquaint Headquarters with the situation. Major R.F.C. Vance was Air Officer on General McArthur's Staff.

Corregidor suffered its first bombing on December 28th. Many troops were caught on "top side", the casualties were not heavy.

By December 29th the evacuation to Bataan had grown to such proportions that the roads were jammed from San Fernando to Marinles. The Japs missed an excellent target. However, they did hit a supply train loaded with 75 M.M. and every bit of it was

destroyed. By two A.M. on New Year's Day personnel were still in Manila destroying installations. This personnel was later evacuated by boat to Bataan just as the Japs were entering the city. General Wainwright conducted a masterly retreat to Bataan. The Filipino's had a tendency to run (except for Filipino Scouts), but nevertheless the General got his forces on to Bataan with a minimum of losses.

On the night of Jan 25th, the American Forces were pushed back to the final defence line – any point further would result in the collapse of our forces since the formation of the terrain permitted no further withdrawal. At this point the 27th Group (part of the Air Corps Provisional Regt.) took up a front line position. On this same date a force of 700 Japs landed behind the lines on the West Coast. The situation was critical.

A major Jap effort on the front developed at the same time and so Jan 25th was a bleak day for Bataan. After heavy fighting this critical stage was cleared up by Feb 12th. Artillery duels kept on and patrol skirmishes were frequent, but outside of this, fighting was nil. Our Air Force at this time consisted of 5 P-40's. On the 1st of March 3 more of these 5 were lost and our air strength was down to two ships.

On the front, the 27th was having a time. "Rocky" Gause was the Communications Officer and was still as cocky as ever with his beat up garrison cap on the side of his head. He was trying to get a radio gong to send cables home. Warren Stirling had a long beard and was doing a good job with the 17th. Gilbo, Patterson, and Whipple were the backbone of the 17th --they were always out on patrols. Once during an artillery barrage, whip fixed hot cakes for everyone regardless of the shells.

During most of March everything was fairly peaceful – food was scarce and the boys were gathering the remains of the already harvested rice crop and shooting monkeys and anything else they could find to eat. Mel Swenson was over on Corregidor helping an A/A outfit and often he sent tid bits of food that helped out a great deal.

Roth and Savage were still with the 16th at Bataan Field and that Squadron was doing a great job still. Ollie Lancaster was operating the supply depot for the group and was still handing out that pre-election poop. Tony Glebis was doing a fine job with the 21st pursuit helping to keep the 2 ships flying.

When the Nips finally took Bataan it was thru the 27th and the Air Corps Regiment that they made their way. Their positions was on flat level country along the East Coast and was most difficult to defend. For a week preceeding the break-through the Nips bombed the Regt continually – even at night. Weak and lack of food, Malaria, and harried from the ceaseless bombardment the 27th fought bravely and fiercely and extracted a heavy toll from the Japs before finally going under the yellow tidal wave.

What happened to the 27th we don't know until Tokio gives up--We do know this though, it would be a cruel and insane enemy, who, after victory could not treat such a brave and honorable foe as gentlemen and brave soldiers. Never before in U.S. history has the Air Force been reduced to fighting on its feet, and never before did any Group of

men fight more bravely and heroically. Those of us who left you during the early stages of the war are proud to have been a part of that gallant band.

DARWIN TO BRISBANE

DEC 22 TO DEC 24, 1941

At a weary, listless, quiet 0400 A.M., the 27th was on the move again, lights flicked on, Aussie trucks rumbled up and yawning dive bomber pilots stumbled around piling themselves and their baggage eager to leave the heat and mosquitos of Darwin for the civilization "down south".

On the way out of the post the trucks stopped at Aussie Operations, where unexpectedly "Buck" Rogers and Alex Salvatore were left behind. They were to take the C-39, loaded with .50 calibre, back to the Philippines. Hoffman was to keep on going south with the rest.

Hardly any of the 27th landlubbers had ever flown in a flying boat but Ed Backus late of Pan-American, Portugal Clippers, knew what to expect and looked forward to it accordingly--a bit distastefully. Nevertheless, as the sun crept up over the horizon amid such Chatter and speculation the 27th boarded a Qantas Airways' Short Flying Boat and roared away on the first leg of the flight at 100 MPH.

The crew of five with Twenty-six passengers put such a load on the ship that all seats but five had been removed. But floor space was plentiful and there the 27th deposited themselves and their spare gear.

Tropical heat being particularly bad "down under" that time of year the pilot climbed to 10,000 feet where it was really quite cold, but still the air was horribly rough. Everyone, especially those in the tail, slowly turned the various shades of yellow and green--in fact a sicker bunch of pilots--pursuiters and bombardment pilots alike were never before congregated in one place.

At last about 11:00 o'clock the Short sat down at Groate Eylandt and resting on the smooth water under the scorching head of a midday tropical sun in a cloudless sky, refueled. Here Major Davies and Capt. Backus reconnoitered for food but returned empty handed, while everyone else aboard ship-waterbound. For 45 minutes the flying boat lay afloat in the sweltering heat, during which time these hardy sons of the states were introduced to the British theory that hot tea makes one cool on a sweltering day. No one was convinced.

The rest of the day's trip being uneventful, the flying boat landed at Townsville, only to find civilization had gone to bed. The bars were all closed at 0800. The city was nearly completely blacked out. However, the Queens Hotel reading room furnished unending pleasure with complete files of local newspapers ---December 7th to date, for which each and everyone was starved.

To say the least much shoe leather was wasted searching the streets of Townsville for that rare creature an honest to goodness white woman.---To no avail.

DECEMBER 24,1942.

Unevenfully the short with its passengers left Townsville--and after refueling at Rockhampton arrived over Brisbane. Near armed ships of an American convoy, it landed in the Brisbane River.

A sadder bunch has never been seen walking up the sidewalk to the Lennon's. And they were stared at from every angle. Two days of living on the floor travelling made what had been clean Aussie uniforms mere greasy filthy rags. Unceremonially unloaded from six cabs onto the sidewalk, the boys piled everything in piles. Each had gasmasks, tin helmets, and pistols that we either carried or wore and to the Brisbanite who realized for the first time that the War was really on, they were quite a shock. Shocked also was one each G.I. Colonel---Johnson by name who, being C.O. of the Brisbane area, happened along. His expression, at seeing our U.S. insignias, our raunch looking appearance, and our recently aquired Australian shorts. was indescribable. He immediately demanded of Major Davies and explanation of our "non-regulation" attire and was promptly set right by the diplomatic but forthright explanation. But the refugees were now in civilization again, a wonderful modern hotel, and it was Christmas eve--even it was hot as hell and they were hardly in a Christmas mood.

S-E-C-R-E-T

HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR CORPS TROOPS
Amberley Field

January 4, 1942

SUBJECT: Progress and situation report as of 1800 January 4, 1942.

TO : Major General Brereton.

1. Airplanes.

a. Amberley Field.

(1) P-40's

There are a total of 18 to be assembled. All have been uncrated and 85% of assembly completed. Four have been tested and 2 are ready for test. Lack of Prestone has slowed up the testing of these planes. It is expected that 2 to 3 planes will be turned out each day from now on.

(2) A-24's

There are a total of 32 to be assembled. Fourteen have been tested and tree ready for test. Approximately 3 per day from now on.

2. Flying Training.

(1) A-24's

There are forty five casual officers attending the flying schools now operating at Amberley and Archer Fields. Of the above 22 have completed ground study of airplane and cockpit controls, operating instructions, pilots hand book performance data charts etc. Twenty have completed 3 hours transition flying and are now ready to begin simulated dive bombing practice. It is estimated that flight training in bombing and gunnery will be conducted as soon as armament situation permits.

(2) P-40's

There are 34 casual officers now attending the pursuit flying school. The all are receiving ground instructions in operation of P-40E and employment of pursuit aviation in combat. Actual flying for these officers will commence as soon as Prestone is made available.

(3)

Instruction in identification of air and surface craft to include silhouettes and lantern slides provided by the Australia Forces at Amberley is being conducted.

This instruction is part of the requirement of the training syllabus.

3. Armament.
A-24's

One airplane has been test fired and guns working OK, six more ready to be fired when trigger motors are installed. No sights were received. The Australian Force at Amberley provided one ring and post sight which is installed on the airplane that has been fired. They have requisitioned from their supply depot fifty one ring and post sights which can be used.

There are 24 trigger motors. Need 80 to equip all airplanes. They have been requisitioned but no information when or where they will arrive. Have not been successful in attempting to have them manufactured locally. There are sufficient trigger motors to equip 12 airplanes with forward guns.

There are no solenoids. Trigger cable to manually operated is being rigged up and will work.

Continued – Progress and situation report as of January 4, 1942

Need fifty-two adaptors for .30 calibre flexible gun.

Need fifty-two front and rear sights for .30 calibre flexible gun.

Twenty bomb release units were short and being rigged up by our armament section.

Twenty-one external bomb racks still missing.

All bombs will have to be modified by putting a lug in the center before they will fit the A-24 navy racks.

4. Personnel

The following is the absolute minimum of personnel necessary to operate three tactical squadrons if messing, housing, servicing, supply and communications facilities are made available to us wherever we may be based:

Enlisted men.

4 Line chiefs	1 per Squadron	1 Hq.
4 Inspectors	1 per Squadron	1 Hq.
15 Armament Men	5 per Squadron	
1 Armament Inspector		1 Hq.
50 Crew Chiefs	15 per Squadron	5 Hq.
50 Rear Gunners	1 per Airplane, These to be young volunteer Men of the 7th Bomb Gp.	
6 Communications Men	2 per Squadron	

1 Communications Inspector	1 Hq.
2 Clerks, Administrative	1 Hq.
133 Enlisted Men	

These men available from the 7th Bombardment Group.

Officers:

54 Pilots	18 per Squadron
4 Pilots	Group Headquarters
3 Non-Pilots	2 Administrative and 1 communications.

There are 20 pilots of the old 27th Group here and sufficient casual pilots to make up the pilot requirements...the non-pilot officers to come from the 7th Bombardment Group.

5. Estimated time of readiness:
 - a. 27th Bomb. Group.
One squadron of 15 airplanes with pilots who have completed training requirements of the attached training syllabus by approximately January 12th with one squadron each 10 days thereafter. This estimate is based upon the assumption that necessary armament supplies will be found, made or forwarded.
 - b. Pursuit Squadron:
Approximately January 20th 1942. this estimate is based on the assumption that Prestone will be made available tomorrow.

J. H. DAVIES
Major, Air Corps,
Commanding.

1-Incl.
Syllabus of flying training.

JHD/own

HEADQUARTERS 27TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L), AFCC,
Office of the Commanding Officer,
Amberley Field, Australia

January 15, 1942

SUBJECT: Commendation of S/L H. J. F. Le Good.

TO : commanding Officer, Amberley Field, Australia.

1. It is desired that the assistance rendered to this group by S/L H. J. F. Le Good be brought to your attention.

2. Without his excellent support in outlining the flying training program, locating target ranges, arranging for quartering facilities and generally assisting in the operation of the Flying School the fine results obtained would not have been possible.

JOHN H. DAVIES
Major, Air Corps,
Commanding.

DEC. 28TH – ARCHERFIELD, BRISBANE, Q.

After flying down to Brisbane from Darwin on a Qantas Flying boat, the Officers of the 27th proceeded to unload the A-24's and haul them to Amberley and Archerfield Airdromes. Both of which were near Brisbane, Qld.

Harry Galusha, along with J. R. Smith, "Zeke" Summers, Harry Mangan and Doug Tubb composed the staff of officers at Archerfield. All the ships had to be assembled, and crews were put to work, three shifts 24 hours a day.

A new material outfit, the 8th, which had just landed from the States did the work with some help from the Aussies.

As soon as a few of the ships were assembled, a Dive Bomb School was organized. The students were U.S. Pilots fresh out of flying school who left the States bound for P.I.. However, they ended up in Australia for obvious reasons.

About a week after things got rolling out at Archer, Gus Heiss and F.E. Timlin came roaring in from Darwin in their dilapidated B-18. They had attempted to go back to the Philippines with a load of .50 caliber ammunition, but were stopped by the Japs in Borneo.

Gus and Tim then joined the Archer lads, and acted as instructors at Galusha's "Little Randolph".

Everything went along alright as far as the actual school was concerned, but numerous other troubles were encountered. Zeke Summers (Armament Officer) cursed everything and everybody, because he couldn't get triggers, solenoids, practice bombs, gun mounts and ammunition. Doug Tubb ran around frantically all day in his Jeep trying to collect spare parts, and wildly beat his head when none were available.

Harry Galusha gave daily lectures on low flying, Acrobatics over the field and buzzing. Apparently his well meant effort was expended to very little avail. Lt Lee Alverson thought the Summer Resort of Southport should be given a proper first class buzz, he tried it and ended up by hitting a wave with his prop and crash landing on the beach.

While at Archerfield the 27th lived in barracks furnished by the Aussies, and ate at the R.A.A.F. Officers Mess. The R.A.A.F. Pilots were friendly and the 27th gang soon made numerous friends.

The days were spent working on the ships, training new crews, and trying to organize a bomb squadron. The work was hard, and sometimes a bit strenuous, but the boys had a goal in mind and all were only too glad to do their part.

Occasionally they'd take a trip into town for a bit of Australian night life, and one might expect to see a couple of lads at the "Princess" with a "Brisbane Beauty" on a Saturday night.

On the twenty-third of January, Capt. Ed Backus (former 27th Gp Materiel Officer) moved to Archerfield to organize and take command of the 91st Bomb Sq. of the old 27th gang. Harry Galusha, Zeke Summers, J.R. Smith, Doug Tubb, Salvy Salvatore and Hambrough were in the 91st. the rest of the gang moved to Amberley Field where the 16th and the 17th Squadrons were being organized with Capt. "Buck" Rogers, and Capt Herman "Snake" Lowery, respectively, in command.

P-40-E

CONTENTS

GROUND INSTRUCTION

GROUND STUDY OF AIRPLANE AND CONTROLS

1. Each student will spend a minimum of one hour in the cockpit of the P-40-E to familiarize himself with all controls, and instruments and their location. In addition a minimum of one hour will be spent in familiarization operating data.

ARMAMENT FAMILIARIZATION

1. Each student will be given two hours instruction concerning gun operation, sighting, gun bore sight-pattern, and loading. Also operation of bomb controls.

COMBAT TECHNIQUE AND FORMATIONS

1. Two hours will be given on types of combat normally employed and types of formation used.

TRANSITION AND ORENTATION

TWO HOURS

1. The first period will be devoted to handling and flying characteristics of the airplane.
2. The second period will be devoted to familiarization of the surrounding country.

ACROBATICS

1. Four periods will be devoted to different types of combat including two-ship team work.

GUNNERY

FOUR HOURS

1. Two periods without camera and without firing will be devoted to making attacks on twoed sleeve target. Attacks will be from front quarter, beam, and astern.
2. Each pilot will fire 100 rounds in two periods using only one gun.

NIGHT FLYING

TWO HOURS

1. Two consecutive periods with one landing at the end of each period.

UNITED STATES AIR CORPS TRAINING SCHOOL
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER
AMBERLEY AERODROME

December 30, 1941

SUBJECT: Syllabus of A-24 and P-40 Pilot.

TO : Commanding Officer, No. 3 FTS.

1. In accordance with verbal instructions your office. The following syllabus of training is submitted:

CONTENTS

GROUND INSTRUCTION

Ground study of Airplanes and Controls.
Ground study of Handbook and Charts.
Armament.
Signals.
Bombing Technique.
Link Trainer.
Identification of Silhouettes.

AIR EXERCISES

Conversion or Transition.
Simulated Bombing Individual.
Simulated Bombing Formation.
Bombing.
Gunnery -- Air to Air.
Gunnery -- Air to Ground.
Night Flying.

A – 24

GROUND STUDY OF AIRPLANE AND CONTROLS

1. Each student will spend a minimum of one hour in the cockpit of the A-24 on the ground to familiarize himself with all the controls and instruments and location.

GROUND STUDY OF HANDBOOK AND CHARTS

1. Each student make a thorough study of the pilots handbook and performance data charts before beginning the conversion period.

ARMAMENT

1. Each student will spend one period with a qualified instructor on the operation the fixed 50 cal. machine gun.

SIGNALS

1. One hour will be given on signals for normal formation, and these signals preparatory to dive-bombing.

2. Each student will attend the above and take such notes as are necessary to keep him thorough familiar with same.

BOMBING TECHNIQUE

LECTURES

1. A comprehensive lecture will be given on the technique of dive-bombing.

SYLLABUS (Cont'd)

- (A) Routine procedure before diving.
- (B) Bombing.
- (C) Recovery from dive.

LINK TRAINER

1. Normal training when available to include:
 - (a) Normal Blind Flying, turns, etc.
 - (b) Radio beam exercise.

SILHOUETTE – ONE HOUR

1. One period will be devoted to identification of silhouettes of friendly and enemy naval vessels and aircraft.

CONVERSION AND TRANSITION

THREE HOURS

1. Each pupil to be given a three hour check by a qualified instructor on airmanship and technique.
2. One period to be devoted to familiarization of surrounding country.
3. One period to be of exercises on take-off and landings.

SIMULATED BOMBING INDIVIDUAL

TWO HOURS

1. One period to be devoted to maneuvering of formation prior to different type dives.
2. One period to be devoted to diving from formations giving practice in anticipation signals, keeping proper interval, and prospective assembly after dives.

BOMBING (LOW LEVEL)

FOUR AND HALF HOURS

1. Each pilot to drop 12 bombs.
2. Six periods to be devoted to this practice. Two bombs to be dropped each period.

GUNNERY (AIR TO AIR)

ONE HOUR

1. Front camera gun practice against towed sleeve target. Quarter beam and astern attacks to be carried out in accordance with form 406A.

GUNNERY (AIR TO GROUND)

ONE HOUR

1. Each pilot to fire 100 rounds from one front gun against ground target.

NIGHT FLYING

1. Each pilot to carry out at least three successful landings on standard flare path with the aid of floodlights or aircraft headlights.

CONFERENCE ON FURTHER TRAINING TO BE GIVEN PILOTS OF U.S.
AIRCRAFT

THOSE PRESENT - Air Commodore BLADIN, R.A.A.F.
Major NICHOLS, United States Air Corps
Major DAVIES, “ “ “
Squadron Leader LE GOOD, R.A.A.F.
Capt PELL, United States Air Corps,
Lieut. LOWERY, “ “
Lieut. KEENAN, “ “

Air Commodore Bladin stated that this conference was called to arrange detail arising out of an agreement by General CLAGETT and Air Chief Marshal Burnett yesterday, 28th December, 1941, on the measures to be taken to train pilots of United States Air Corps, and, if necessary, Royal Australian Air Pilots, to make up any deficiencies which may have to fly P-40's and A-24's.

Group Captain LACHAL is to be responsible for the organization and recording of the training carried out, but the Senior United States Officer is to be responsible for the standard of the training. Major DAVIES, United States Army Air Corps has been detailed by General CLAGETT to be the Senior Officer (U.S.) in charge of training.

INSTRUCTORS:- The responsible United States Officer is to detail one instructor for each type. They can be helped by selected pilots from the R.A.A.F at Archerfield and Amberley, provided that the Operational Squadrons are not rendered immobile thereby.

Group Captain LACHAL had detailed Squadron Leader LE GOOD to assist Major DAVIES and has requested that the services of Flying Officer JACKSON, ex-Tomahawk Pilot of No. 3 Squadron be made available.

Major DAVIES intimated the Lieuts. LOWERY and KEENAN, United States Air Corps, would be made available for instructors on A-24's and P-40's, respectively. Squadron Leader LE GOOD will assist Lt. LOWERY at Archerfield in the organization and the training of pilots on A-24's.

Flying Officer JACKSON, if and when available, will be detailed to assist Lt. KEENAN on P-40 training.

SYLLABUS:- Major DAVIES will give Group Captain LACHAL the desired syllabus for training for each type of aircraft to include air to ground firing (front gun), night flying and dive bombing, for pilots. In this regard it is the considered opinion of Air Corps and R.A.A.F. Officers that a maximum of 100 rounds per pilot should be allotted for front gun firing and six bombs per U.S.A. pilot for dive bombing. It is to be noted that none of these U.S.A. Pilots has previously fired front guns.

ASSEMBLY OF PUPILS – Major DAVIES requested that the responsible United States Air Corps Officer arrange for the assembly at Amberley of pilots who are to fly P-40s, and at Archerfield of those who are to train on A-24s. In the event of there being more United States Pilots available than there are aircraft, the distribution of the surplus between P40s and A-24s to be arranged by Major DAVIES in consultation with Group Captain LACHAL. In the event of there being deficiency of U.S.A. Pilots, Group Captain LACHAL is to notify Air Board of the number of deficient.

ACCOMODATION OF PILOTS:- The Officers Commanding Archerfield and Amberley are to make the necessary arrangement for accommodation and messing of pupil pilots and instructors. Any coordination necessary will be ordered by Group Captain LACHAL.

PETROL, BOMBS AND AMMUNITION:- It is estimated that the average flying per pupil on each type will be 15 hours and in this regard it is requested that the necessary 100 octane petrol for aircraft be arranged by the Air Corps supply Officer together with the necessary bombs and ammunition.

TRAINING OPERATIONS AT AMBERLY FIELD

On January first the 27th Group started its official training operations in the new theater of war. Lt Lowery was acting operations officer and had so many assistants that all he had to do was learn to play hearts, which was soon to become the main amusement on rainy afternoons.

A good number of pilots, fresh from West Coast training schools, were assigned to the Group and came out to Amberley to take up their quarters. They were all eager to get in a combat aircraft and proved, with few exceptions, to be very capable.

With much careful planning, a training schedule was made out. The new pilots were given transition time, formation, night flying, and finally practice in bombing and gunnery. An island just south of southport was used as a target and was riddled with Aussie practice bombs during the next few weeks. The training proceeded quite favorably, and with few accidents, all of them leaving the crews alive and in most cases with only slight injuries. Dean made a belly landing one day when on returning from a bombing mission found he could get only one wheel down. On another occasion Armstrong made an emergency landing at Archerfield and in the excitement neglected to lower his wheels. The powder charge in the practice bomb was set off, and this had all the bystanders in a sweat until they realized that the shop wasn't on fire after all. As the days passed rapidly by, the boys became better and better until finally it was decided that they were ready to be placed into individual squadrons. The Squadrons were formed and soon the 91st was making itself ready for the push north. They based at Archerfield and 16th and 17th continued training at Amberley. After a few more days the 16th moved out to the rolling prairie called Lowood, leaving the 17th at Amberley, and the Group plans and training office was dissolved.

April 1, 1942

1. Need eight (8) Navigator officers (3 per flight).
2. Need eight (8) officer Bombardiers.
3. Need two (2) North American Factory reps.
4. Must train gunners on use of power turret, None know anything about them.
5. Casual B-25 experienced pilots.

Necessary you send message to 3rd Bomb Gp saying 27th Bomb Gp personnel in Australia are assigned to the 3rd Bomb Gp so we can operate properly. I have spread my officers and men to three 3rd Squadrons. But unless they receive some directive. Only 20 members of the 27th Bomb Gp in Australia. 27th is in Manila.

(Copy)

TO: HQ USAFIA MELBOURNE

US 532 1/2

YOU WILL ORDER A SQUADRON OF THE TWENTYSEVENTH LIGHT BOMBARDMENT GROUP WITH FIFTEEN A-24 AIRPLANES TO DEPART FEBRUARY 3 FOR JAVA. YOU WILL ORDER THE TWO REMAINING SQUADRONS TO DEPART ON FEBRUARY 10 AND 17 RESPECTIVELY FOR DARWIN. YOU ARE DIRECTED TO REPORT BY RADIO TO THESE HEADQUARTERS BEFORE DEPARTURE THE NAME COMMA RANK COMMA SERIAL NUMBER AND ORGANIZATION OF ALL PERSONNEL AT BRISBANE ASSIGNED TO EACH OF THESE THREE SQUADRONS. PART TWO YOU WILL DIRECT COMMANDING TWENTYSEVENTH LIGHT BOMBARDMENT GROUP TO HAVE MANUFACTURED LOCALLY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THE ADAPTORS NECESSARY FOR THE A-24 TYPE AIRPLANES TO CARRY ALL SIZE ARMY BOMBS. THE MANUFACTURE OF THESE ADAPTORS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO AS MANY MANUFACTURES AS POSSIBLE. AND EVERY EFFORT MAKE TO EXPEDITE THEIR MANUFACTURE IN ORDER THAT ADAPTORS MAY ACCOMPANY ORGANIZATION.

BARNES

SECRET
27TH BOMB GROUP
AMBERLY FIELD, Q.

Feb. 12, 1942

SUBJECT: Movement Orders and Instructions.

TO : Commanding Officer, 16th Bomb Sq., Archer Field, Q.

1. The 16th Bomb Sq., with 15 A-24's, 15 Officer pilots and 15 enlisted men will move to Java Feb. 13, 1942 or as soon thereafter as possible.

2. Route out: Archer Field – Charlesville – Cloncurry – Daly Waters –Batchelor Field. At Batchelor Field. At Batchelor Field you will contact the air Corps Headquarters at Darwin and inform him of your arrival and await Batchelor Field for further instructions regarding your movement from that headquarters.

3. You will send departure and arrival messages commencing at Archer Field to include number of planes and personnel.

4. You will submit a roster of all personnel departing with the 16th Sq to this office prior to departure.

16TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON
BATCHELOR FIELD
NOMINAL – ROLL

OFFICERS

ROGERS, F.W.	Captain	821
HUBARD, R.D.	Captain	783
RUEGG, R.G.	1st Lt.	816
BIRNN, R.R.	2nd Lt.	801
ROSE, H.J.	“ “	784
SCHMIDT, R.L.L.	“ “	797
DOAN, O. C.	“ “	774
HEIDINGER, V.A.	“ “	811
PARKER, J.C.	“ “	815
ANDERSON, J.E.	“ “	813
WILKINS, R.E.	“ “	795
EMERSON, D.K.	“ “	775
HILL, J.M.	“ “	793 Kath.
HOLCOMB, T. T.	“ “	790
SWARTZ, H.G.	“ “	798
SALVATORE, A.R.	“ “	---
JACOBS, J.W.	“ “	Hosp. Brisbane

GUNNERS

BURCH, S.D.	Sergeant	774
VANCE, D.R.	Sergeant	797
KEHOE, G.F.	Corporal	784
BROWN, L.V.	Corporal	Hosp. Brisbane
ROBIN, F.D.	PFC	Hosp. Brisbane 801
GIVSON, E.H.	“	813
SAM, R.	“	775
THORNOCK, R.A.	Pvt.	790
CARTER, J.A.	“	821
ALLSOP, R.J.	“	816
NELSON, A.T.	“	795
BEECHER, E.F.	“	---
COOPER, K.A.	“	783
STEPHENSEN, J.J.	“	798
WORDERN, H.C.	“	---
ROWE, M.L.	PFC.	---

CREWS

HOCKAILO, M.F.	Sergeant	784
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KIEMEN, H.H.	Sergeant	816
GENARLSKY, B.W.	Corporal	775
CLATWORTHY, P.	“	790
GOLDMAN, S.J.	“	798
DEAN, H.J.	Pfc.	783
SLAYTON, W.F.	“	774
HERBEY, A.	“	Prop.
HATTER, J.H.	“	821
HARTMANN, E.	“	***
HAWKINS, O .M.	“	---
DAVISON, J.F.	PVT	Elect.
FRESQUEZ, N.	Corporal	Radio.
GAYDOS, S.F.	Corporal	Radio.

ARMOURERS

STAYE, E.P.	S/Sergeant	Chief Arm.
WALLACE, C.E.	Sergeant	783
KRAUSE, W.R.	Sergeant	821
WAGNER, D.H.	Corporal	784
RICH, J.R.	Corporal	813
PASQUELLA, G.	PFC.	774
KENNY, J.P.	“	816
CHAPMAN, J.W.	PVT	798

OFFICERS

LOWERY, H.F.	Captain	819
HEISS, G.M. JR.	1st Lt.	807
FARR, G.C.	2nd Lt.	750
WALKER, L.A. JR.	“ “	751
DEAN, C.L.	“ “	752
TALLEY, T.P.	“ “	758
MANGAN, J.H.	“ “	763
BECK, W.J. JR.	“ “	768
TIMLIN, F.E.	“ “	769
TOWNSEND, E.C.	“ “	772
KITCHENS, G. JR.	“ “	773
WEST, H.B.	“ “	785
MCGILLIVARY, R.	“ “	---
JACKSON, J.D.	“ “	Cloncurry
DeJARNETTE, T.D.	“ “	Cloncurry
ALVERSON, L.C.	“ “	Brisbane

GUNNERS

THOMPSON, A.M.	S/Sgt	773
DUCLOS, B.V.	PFC	807
AXT, H.	CORPORAL	772
HAYES, W.J.	SERGEANT	819
FOSTER, H A.	“	799
HILL, W.C.	“	751
YOUNG, L.G.	Corporal	768
DAEMS, R.J.	“	785
ALLPORT, L.M.	Pvt.	763
MONGRAIN, R.C.	Corporal	750
KIERGER, K.R.	“	769
MINKLER, J.I.	“	752
HARTMAN, A.L.	Sergeant	758
HUNTER, A.D.	Pvt.	Spare.
WRIGHT, C.J.	“	Cloncurry
REILLY, R.J.	“	Cloncurry

CREWS

DERTING, H.L.	S/Sgt	Line Chief
GINNER, O.	Sergeant	758
MEYER, V.E.	“	751
PLECKER, C.E.	“	752
STEIN, J.W.	“	807
GREGGO, J.J.	Corporal	769
POWELL, L.W.	“	763
LANGFELDT, W.E.	Pfc	785
LEWIS, A.R.	“	772
WILLIAMS, D.J.	“	768
BEAN, F.Y.	Pvt.	799
SEALY, K.W.	“	819
LECHOWICZ, E.J.	Pvt lcl	750
TAYLOR, S.L.	Corporal	Radio

ARMOURERS

ELGIN, N.E.	S/Sgt	819
ECKSTEIN, J.B.	Sgt	807
VAUGHN, B.A.	Sgt	751
SHIPES, E.A.	Corporal	799
THORSEN, F.P.	“	752
MILLER, H.R.	Pfc.	763
TERRYBERRY, S.J.	“	769

SECRET

27TH BOMB GROUP
AMBERLY FIELD, Q.

1500
Feb. 3, 1942

SUBJECT: Movement Orders and Instructions.

TO : Commanding Officer, 91st Bomb Sq., Archer Field, Q.

1. The 91st Squadron with 15 A-24's, fifteen Officer pilots and fifteen enlisted men will move to Sourabaya, Java, Feb. 4, 1942 or as soon as possible thereafter.

2. Route out: Archer Field – Charlesville – Cloncurry – Daly Waters Darwin RAAF Field. At Darwin you will contact the C.O. American Air Unit (Captain Connelly) and request a signal be sent to the commanding General American Air Forces in Java announcing your presence and request information as to your exact destination in the NEI and the route thereto. You will send departure and arrival messages commencing at Archer Field to include number of airplanes and personnel.

3. You will take advantage of the pursuit squadron due to depart Amberly Field, Feb. 5, 1942, for the purpose of fighter protection enroute north from Darwin. Their destination is the same as yours and use of this unit for this purpose has been granted. You and the C.O. of the pursuit squadron will arrange for the type of protection best suited for this purpose at Darwin. Do not leave Darwin without this fighter protection unless so directed by the Commanding General American Air Forces in Java. Notify this department at Amberly field upon departure from Darwin.

4. Air Force Melbourne states sufficient Navy type bombs for A-24 bomb racks available at your destination.

JOHN R. DAVIES
Major, Air Corps,
Commanding.

SECRET

3 Jan. 42.
1200

Col Hoyt by Pilot C-53

On instructions from C.O., American Forces in Brisbane, the 27th Bomb Gp. loaded bombs on all combat A-24's commencing at 0200 3rd Jan. (just after talking to you) which required all armament personnel to be occupied at other than armament installation necessary to equip the sq. going north tomorrow. This was a result of information that a carrier was operating off Brisbane.

We will unload bombs this PM and hope to consolidate one squadron of 15 airplanes to depart tomorrow 4 Jan 42 by noon.

The only personnel we have are recruit rear gunners which we have not been able to train due to lack of rear gun mounts and ammunition.

Necessary that crew chiefs, one per plane, and qualified armament men 1/2 per plane be made available.

Request C-53 be made available to also transport essential spare parts for A-24's north.

If possible would like P-40 squadron to depart Darwin at same time as A-24's for necessary protection. A-24's practically helpless if encountered enemy opposition which I understand can be expected enroute

- -

north of Darwin.

Manufacture of bomb adaptors has been discontinued in Brisbane.

Need additional armament men, with tools, here to complete installation of armament equipment. They could help here and then be transported north with last squadron.

DAVIES

CONFIDENTIAL

HEADQUARTERS U. S. AIR CORPS TROOPS
AMBERLEY FIELD, AUSTRALIA

January 1, 1942.

SUBJECT: Progress and situation report as of 1200 Jan. 1, 1942.

TO : General CLAGGETT.

1. Airplanes:- At Amberley Field, 8 A-24's have been tested with 4 more ready now ready for test. One P-40 has been tested with one more ready for test. Nine have wings on. eleven have tail assemblies on, three have props on and eight have guns checked and ready to go. At present there is only sufficient Prestone for two airplanes. It can be drained from one airplane to another for test purposes.

At Archer Field, 5 A-24's have been tested with 5 in commission ready for test.

A status report will be in your office at 8 AM and 4 PM daily to include both P-40 and A-24 progress.

The assembly of airplanes is progressing as well as can be expected. The spirit and application of the mechanics is excellent. It is to be noted that a few instances of lack of enthusiasum had been apparent among the civilian mechanics enroute to China which has been corrected.

2. GASOLINE:- Requisition for gasoline requirements for testing and conducting flying training both at Amberly and Archer has been submitted to include 90 octane in the A-24's with non-self sealing tanks with one tank of 100 octane for take off and emergency.

3. AIRDROME defense and dispersion of airplanes:- All airdromes defense plan using available defense facilities is in operation. Copy of airdrome defense date and alarm signals attached for your information.

All airplanes not being assembled or on line ready for test are concealed in woods near the airports at both Amberly and Archer Fields.

4. PERSONNEL:- The housing and messing facilities are adequate at Amberley for the officers and men now here. All personnel now at Amberly are essential.

In accordance with your memo desiring all Air Corps troops being stationed on flying fields a survey was made at Amberley with Group Captain LACHAL and sufficient space is available. Anticipating this move additional showers and latrines are now under construction by our troops which will be sufficient to take care of all Air

Corps troops now at Ascot. The Headquarters Squadron, 7th Bomb Group has adequate messing equipment set up another mess at Amberly for these additional men. Additional personnel is not required at Amberley as all mechanics are now working on airplane assembling. However if you direct their movement to Amberly they can be properly taken care of.

5. FLYING TRAINING:- Flying training starts tomorrow morning both at Amberly and at Archer Field. The necessary organization to conduct this training is complete. A copy of the training directions is attached for your information. All officers scheduled for P-40 training at Amberley Field will be quartered there. There is not adequate housing and messing facilities for all trainees at Archer Field at present. Until they can move out to Archer ground school will be conducted at Ascot and students will be transported from Ascot to Archer when schedule for flying instruction. There are forty-five officers scheduled for P-40 training at Amberly and fifty-six officers scheduled for training at Archer Field.

6. ARMAMENT:- The parties responsible for providing armament supplies and equipment for the A-24 airplane should be charged with criminal negligence. Without delicate machine shop work neither the front guns or the rear guns will fire. No bombs will fit the racks with adding another lug. No sights were sent and no solenoids.

By using improvised methods one airplane has been rigged to fire the forward guns. Sufficient material is available (24 trigger motors) to have a total of twelve airplanes equipped with forward guns. A requisition for items such as trigger motors, solenoids, etc. which can be procured or manufactured satisfactorily, is being prepared for forwarding to the United States.

No armament trouble is anticipated on the P-40's.

JOHN H. DAVIES.

MESSAGE FORM

TO : U S A I A Melbourne.

FROM : 27th Bomb Group, Amberley.

Request authority to send units consisting of three dive bomber squadrons and three pursuit squadrons north (.). Units to be sent north will be one squadron of pursuit and one squadron of dive bomber together as soon as they are ready (.). Personnel of the 27th Group will be used to augment experience level of pursuit units (.). Pursuit to be used as protection for dive bombers and practice working together prior to departure (.). Total planes will be forty-five (45) dive bombers and seventy-five (75) P-40s (.). Fifteen (15) dive bombers per squadron and twenty-five (25) P-40s (.). Tactical control to remain with squadron commanders of dive bomber squadrons (.). It is essential that the dive bombers have pursuit protection (.). This can only be accomplished by pursuit and dive bombers working as a unit (.).

JOHN H. DAVIES

COPY OF ORIGINAL ONLY

SECRET CYPHER MESSAGE

TO BATCHELOR

FROM NORTH WEST AREA – Z.613. 8/3/42

FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM AIRBOARD (.). BEGINS (.). TO
COMMANDING OFFICER U.S. FORCES BATCHELOT FROM HEADQUARTERS
U.S.A.F.I.A. MELBOURNE U.S. 1455 8/3 (.). PASS TO COMMANDING OFFICER
27TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (.). BITE

A.C.S 3-776 YOU WILL MOVE YOUR ENTIRE GROUP IMMEDIATELY TO DALY
WATERS FOR STATION PERIOD BRETT (.). ENDS TIME OR ORIGIN 0001/Z/8.

I M M E D I A T E

(COPY)

SECRET

TO: CO US FORCES DALY WATERS (PASS TO SEVEN BOMB GROUP) CO
US FORCES BATCHELOR FIELD CO US FORCES BRISBANE (BNE WT PASS)

FROM: USAFIA, MELBOURNE

UX 1906 18/3 IMMEDIATE SECRET
CITE ACS THREE DASH ONE FOUR FIVE ORDER ALL (AVAILABLE) DASH
TWENTY-FOURS TO PROCEED TO TOWNSVILLE AT ONCE AND REPORT TO
ACH THERE FOR IMMEDIATE OPERATIONS PERIOD COMBAT CREWS AND
ADAPTOR BANDS WILL BE CARRIED PERIOD

BRETT

TO BATCHELOR

FROM A.C.H. DARWIN

ALL A-24 AND WIRRAWAYS TO TAKE OFF AND PATROL AREA FROM
BATCHELOR TO DARWIN UNTIL DUSK 4/3 (.) OBJECT PREVENTION OF
DESTRUCTION ON GROUND.

TO: BATCHELOR REPEATED C.W.R.

FROM: A.C.H. DARWIN

A.891 3/3

A-24 TO PATROL COAST TEN MILES EACH SIDE OF DARWIN IN FLIGHTS OF
SIX EACH PERIOD UNTIL 0900 Z/3/3 (.) OBJECT COAST FAMILIARISATION
AND PROTECTION DARWIN FROM ENEMY BOMBERS (.)

OPS IMPORTANT. TOO. 0307/
Z/3

DEC. 24TH TO FEB. 1942

We arrived in Brisbane early in the afternoon of December 24th, Christmas Eve, on a Short Flying boat. Soon we were settled at Lennons and were impressed by its modern style and comfort. A big dinner was organized and a few dates lined up. Doan was the first one to be picked up by an Aussie and she wasn't bad to look at.

The party was a big success from the start. The punch was weak but the bartender caught on fast and it was soon OK. Drinking and singing far into the night with melody sweet and hot. Smitty buying champagne by the case and West always ordering more. Hambaugh being a capable M.C. by answering the telephone with "Sell American, Buy Japanese".

The next day it was found our ships were in Brisbane all right. Still on a shop in the Brisbane harbor. We would get them assembled at Archer. Backus was to have charge of Amberley Field engineering with Ruegg, Walker, Townsend and Schmidt helping. Ruegg, Townsend and Smitty followed a day later.

The A-24's were soon found to be in rather a bad way, Instruments were bad, engines using oil, tires defective, and numerous other things were wrong. Packed carelessly, or in a hurry, the controls cables were not anchored, making the job tougher still. And the armament was a mess. Hub and West went into a flat spin trying to find solenoid and trigger motors, guns, and brackets.

On December 29th, Ruegg flew the first A-24 and probably the first American warplane assembled on foreign shores by American crews. Soon, a sizeable number were flying, waiting only for armament before they were ready for combat.

The 7th Bopmb Gp was the assembling force and though they had been working on Flying Fortresses for a year, soon had the A-24's mastered.

It was a mad mixup trying to get the ships together, finding parts training pilots, fixing crackups and sweating against time. The solenoids and trigger motors finally started from the states, by air and water.

Time ran out for us to return to P.I. and we started sweating Java and more delays, and more shortages. Even Colonel Jim got discouraged. Always at the last minutes, we either had the part made locally or found it in the hodge podge of the Air Corps Supply. Sgt. Westley knew more about what they had in Air Corps Supply than the men supposed to be running it. Everyone forgot about red tape and if we had to have something we just signed our name to an order--or stole it.

Towards the latter part of January some drugs were urgently needed in Mindinao. Ruegg started for Darwin in one of the Clay Pigeons and learned something about dead reckoning and a land where checkpoints were a matter of hours apart. Landed at Winton for gas and no gas. The Allied Air Forces started calling long distance and "Snake"

Lowery, back at Amberley, tore out what hair he had left. Ruegg finally went on into Cloncurry and got gas there. Finding that an A-24 could go 1000 miles in one hop, he headed for Darwin direct, and got himself thoroughly lost and flew over the brush for 2 hours looking for a place to set down and just at dusk finding Daly Waters—which is probably the first and last time Daly Waters looked good to any member of the 27th Group. Off the next day early and into Darwin just in time to give the medicine to “Shorty” Wheless taking off for Mindinao. And all the way back to Amberley on seven cylinders or less, with one hand on the rip cord and one eye on the oil pressure.

Colonel Davies was still getting deadlines that couldn't be met due to lack of parts, and Ed Backus was gradually losing his hair.

“Buck” Rogers finally returned from flying a transport back through the Indies, and Salvo returned with him.

February the fourth, the 91st finally got under way with 15 ships with Backus leading and Harry, Zeke Summers, J.R. Smith, Hambaugh, Tubb, and Salvo and the new boys following.

February sixteenth and the 16th left with Buck, Hub, Ruegg, Smitty, Rose, Doan, Birnn, and the pilots. At Cloncurry, 5 were using oil and other troubles so Buck went on ahead leaving Ruegg to bring up the wrecks. One night in Feb., fighting flies, everyone had his ship fixed. Buck and his outfit had dropped from sight, landing neither at Daly Waters or Batchelor so Ruegg and the boys kept sharp lookout for them. Found them at Katherine and went in to Batchelor.

Ruegg went on in to get the trip for Java straightened out by Gp Captain Scherger who said no dice today. The Nips were too close to Koepang and we'd have to wait at Batchelor till to-morrow to find out the score. This wasn't the last time that G/C Scherger saved our necks. A damn good man. So we spent the night at Batchelor and the next day early the Nips hit Darwin with everything but the sink, and were attacking Koepang. So we didn't get to Java. Buck and the rest of the boys got into Batchelor with 2 ships.

So the 16th settled at Batchelor with dysentery, poor food, and the heat. The 17th joined us shortly and Colonel Jim got his boys out and we found beer, gin, ice boxes, and a few other things to make life easier. In between times we bombed up, evacuated, dropped our bombs, bombed up again, flew patrols, wrecked a few ships and generally kept busy.

Taking off one morning early to hit a nip carrier, Schmidt rolled his ship over taking off with a 500 lb. egg. Smitty and his gunner kit rolling and never stopped till they were in a dive trench. No explosion.

More alerts, patrols, cancelled missions, and evacuations. To Daly Waters with flies, no water, no beer, no food, and hot as Hades. A good place to avoid.

And more A-24's in Brisbane so the Colonel, Hub, Ruegg, Sonny and Ed headed south to get them. Ruegg, Sonny and Ed by Qantas Flying Boat again with a shipful of wounded Yanks from a boat that tried to make the P.I. To Brisbane March 10 and we take over 15 A-24's from 3rd Group.

J. B. McAfee, and Stafford. March 24th, Ruegg, Sonny, Ed Townsend, and Jacobs start north and land at Townsville where the 89th Sq. was. D.P. Hall and Chris Petri and colonel Jim and Snako were there so quite a get together. Off the next day to Charters Tower. The 27th will go into the 3rd Bomb Group. B-25's are available and a few A-24's. Buck Rogers, ruegg, Doan and the new pilots are in the 8th Squadron and keep dive bombers. Such a life!

FEB. 4, 1942 to JAVA

91st Squadron

On Feb. 5th, the first flight of A-24's under Captain Backus, headed north. The flight took off appropriately enough in the rain. The following day, Lt. Galusha followed with the remainder of the Squadron. Both flights, on day's distance apart, flew to Darwin by way of Charleyville, Cloncurry, and Daly Waters. They left Lt. Alverson and Sgt. Gaydes at Charleyville with a bum engine.

One thing amazed the whole flight all the way across Australia. The Australian grapevine told the people that the planes were coming long before they arrived. At each place they landed, all the natives knew of the arrival and where they were headed.

By February 8th, fourteen of the fifteen original 91st planes had arrived at Darwin. Summers' plane was out because of excessive use of oil, and Jacob's plane had three bad cylinders. Salvatore and Jacobs were left at Darwin to repair the planes, if possible. Salvatore had already been over the country in a C-39 and was considered capable of leading the two planes up after they were fixed.

ON Feb. 9th, Captain Backus left Darwin for Koepang with Lts, Abel and Criswell flying on his wing. He was Scheduled to follow one LB30 and 8 p-40's. Being unable to keep up he followed his own course and reached Timor all right. The LB30 however go lost and the 8 P-40's were forced down in the wilds of the Island. Of course, Backus only having flown for the air lines for seven years couldn't miss the Island.

Arriving without any announcement at Koepang, the three A-24's received a warm reception. The Australian Ack-Ack cut down the flight and succeeded in puncturing the gasoline tank on Backus's plane and neatly removing the stabilizer on his right elevator. The three planes made Koepang all right and did a job of pulling hair on the Australian operation officer.

The next day Backus in his patched up plane went on to Pasirian, Java. Abel and Criswell returned to Darwin

On Feb. 11th, Galusha with eleven planes left Darwin and followed an LB30 to Koepang. All planes arrived safely, the 530 miles of open sea, with a ceiling of fifty feet at times were not conducive to peace of mind. Tubb solved the situation by smuggling four bottles of beer aboard and before we were 100 miles at sea he was flying some tight formation.

The eleven ships were refueled, and the crews spent the night in some barracks about one mile from the field. Everyone was dead tired and the next days' flight promised plenty of action so the whole crew went to bed early.

The next morning, Feb 12th, Summer and Launder took off at daylight for Den Passar, Bali. Galusha, Larronde, Tubb, Hambaugh, and Haines took off five minutes later for Maingapore, Soemba. Smith, Ferguson, Abel and Criswell followed after five minutes and headed for Den Passar.

At Maingapore, Haines overturned his plane in landing and cracked a couple of ribs, Haines and his gunner was left behind. After pulling the ship out of several mudholes, and straining all over, they managed to get off the ground again after about three hours. The two flights that went to Bali, made the hop OK except for the slight excitement caused when Summers and Launder landed at Den Passar. The field appeared deserted and they thought that the Japs had already taken the Island. However, after several anxious minutes the Dutch refueling detail came out of the bushes and filled the ships with gas.

Between Den Passar and Paisirian, the flight had its first sight of the Jap Navy. Summers and Launder flew almost directly over four Jap destroyers.

Smith's flight sighted the same ships a few minutes later and had an anxious five minutes before he found out that the ships were not accompanied by aircraft. Unfortunately the A-24's were not loaded with bombs at that time and could not attack the ships.

By three o'clock in the afternoon of the 12th all ten airplanes had joined Captain Backus at Pasirian. He greeted each plane as it came in and personally supervised the dispersal of the planes, and he looked glad to see them.

Summers with Launder and Ferguson flying wing positions took off for Modjokerto, near Seuraboja in northern Java. The flight found Modjokerto airfield OK and was followed by the other flights in quick order.

You can imagine Summers surprise upon landing to see a familiar figure guiding the airplanes to revetments. That familiar figure was Stevenson, who had been left behind in Manila. I don't think tahy two guys were ever more glad to see each other. Steve, wearing Captain's bars, reported that Colonel Vance, Bill Eubanks, McAfee, Pete Bender, and Old Goat Stafford had gotten to Soerabaja by submarine. The other boys were scattered all over Java, but Steve with two Dutch Officers and 1200 Javanese natives had been building the airfield.

This airfield had formerly been rice fields but the natives had built bamboo mats covere them over with four inches of dirt. The field was servicible, but very sticky. Several of the planes stuck in the mud and could only be lifted out by main strength.

Steve took over all eleven pilots and their gunners to a nearby sugar plantation called Bangsol, there he had made arrangements for the crews to be housed in the homes of the supervisor and his assistants.

It was a motley crew that finally reached Bangsol, just at dark, however, the welcome they received was beyond any expectations. Those Dutch people, took the boys right into their homes and hearts. Good baths, good food, good whiskey, good beds, had become rarities to the boys. At Bangsol, they had all and more too.

Just imagine the luxury of having someone to look after every need after the hardships at Daly Waters and Batchelor Field. Each household had at least five servants and all were eager to serve. Backus and Summers were housed with the Supervisor and the place resembled nothing so much as the Army-Navy Club outside of Washington. Galusha and Hamgaugh were living in a private home. Launder and Larronde had the only air conditioned room in Java. Smith, Ferguson, and Tubbs were just around the corner with the plantation engineer. Criswell and Abel were nearby with the accountant. Everyone at his best to make them fell at home.

The crews spent four pleasant days at Bangsol repairing the planes. Having only two qualified mechanics, the work was necessarily slow. Everyone worked with a will and it was unusual to get away from the field before 12 o'clock midnight.

Steve was hobnobbing with the javanese Princess and Dutch Army Bigwigs, and he did a magnificent jpb of getting needed things done. He got American cheese, ham and eggs from Soerbaya.

On February 15, Backus and Steve went to Bandoeng which was the Bomber Headquarters. They telephoned back for the remainder of the Sq to get to Batavia, Java's capitio city.

On the morning of the 16th, the remainder of the squadron with the exception of Abel and Larronde and the gunners flew to Batavia. Larronde's ship was out because of engine trouble and had been stripped to repair the other. Abel nosed over on the take-off and bent his propeller. He later repaired it, but on a test flight the wheels of the plane stuck in the up position and he was forced to land in the bay at Soerabaya where he was rescued by the Navy. Both Larronde and Abel joined the squadron at Malan.

-42-

At Batavia, Backus rejoined the outfit. He was wearing Major's bars and had Captain's bars for Galusha. The whole squadron ate in town and slept that night in abandoned officers quarters near the field.

The next day Galusha with four other planes flew to Djombang, the pursuit Hqs. Backus and Summers tried to find Malang field but with a thirty foot ceiling were unable to locate it and flew to Pasirian.

At Djombang, the outfit found McAfee, and Stafford holding down ground jobs and were glad to be alive. McAfee appeared to be a wee bit teched in the haid and he and Bender were determined to make their last stand around the Heinikens Brewery in Soerabaya.

The following day, February 18th, all seven remaining planes assembled at Malang Field, the new bomber headquarters. Col. Eubanks was in command and immediately got our planes loaded with gas and bombs.

It seems proper to mention Lt Bill Coleman and the great help he gave the outfit in having bomb shackles and adaptors made. As procurement officer for the whole of Java he gave valuable service.

On February 19th, all the planes were loaded and awaiting orders to attack the Jap invasion fleet approaching Den Passar, Bali. Backus's plane and four other ships were in revetments in the eastern border of the field. Galusha and Summers had theirs on the western border.

About 3:00 P.M. all ships were warming up awaiting take-off when an air raid warning sounded. The five ships on the eastern border were put back in revetments. However, due to a mix up on orders, Galusha and Summers were ordered to take off and fly around for an hour to the south of the field. Someone yelled, "Take-off, you are on your own".

The planes took-off and flew south. Galusha called to Summers and asked, "shall we go over Bali way and see what we can see?" Summers knowing full well what Galusha was thinking about and replied, "You're the man with a wife and kid, let's go." So----they headed for Bali.

It was known that 30 zeros were in the vicinity so Galusha and Summers tried to stay just under some clouds. Luckily, there were two layers of stratus clouds at 10,000 feet and the other at 12,000 feet. They stayed between these two layers all the way over.

Their luck still holding, the lower clouds thinned out just over Bali. There, nestling in the harbor were two ships, a cruiser and a transport. With fear in their hearts and those same hearts held in only by their teeth, the pilots dived on the two boats. Galusha picked the transport and Summers the cruiser. Lady Luck still being with them the make shift sights were just enough off the line to make 660 lb. bombs drop short of the 110 pound ones. Both pilots recorded direct hits with the 110 pounders, but near misses (so they thought) with the 660 pound jobs.

The surprise was evidently complete. The Japs had never seen any Army dive bombers before because those two were the first ones to ever make a dive in actual combat. The lack of ack-ack fire showed that. The Jap's only hit was a small shrapnel hole in the fuselage of Galusha's ship.

The tow planes returned safely to Malang and an Anxious Backus. He hadn't been fooled a minute as to the pilot's intentions when the two ships took-off. He was really worried about what Col. Eubanks would say.

However, two hours later the PBY Navy flying boats reported that both transport and cruiser had sunk. Strangely enough the near misses had been perfect shots for success. By hitting in the water the bombs penetrated below the line of armor plate before exploding, therefore having a terrific buckling effect and breaking the bulkheads of the boats. Strangely enough too, Col Eubanks never got around to mentioning that the raid had carried out without official sanction or orders.

The boys were a happy lot that night. They went into Madang and ordered a big dinner at Toko Oen. Needless to say Galusha and Summers were too proud to eat.

The following morning Backus led seven ships with 16 escorting P-40's under Col. Sprague to the same place. Backus and Ferguson and Launder for wing men. Galusha had Tubb and Hambaugh. Summers was tail end Charley.

Upon approaching the target area it was observed that there were two ships in the harbor and four more steaming into the harbor. (All fighting boats). Backus crossed over to attack the four approaching and Galusha the two stationary ones. Summers being undecided fiddled around and finally dived on one of the biggest ships he claimed he'd ever seen.

The 16 P-40's were attacked at the same time by 30 Zeros and the dog fighting that ensued kept the Zero's off the A-24's.

Tubb didn't pull out of his dive and crashed into the water. He was the only casualty from the dive bombers, but it isn't possible that anyone could have been better liked or missed more. He was a right guy.

Launder had an oil line shot away and his engine started cutting out. He wasn't sure as to his whereabouts and when he saw a field he was confident it was a Dutch airport. However, when he saw rising suns painted on the airplanes he realized his error. He had almost landed on the airport at Den Passer just taken over by the Japs. He was forced down in the sea, however about 8 miles north of the Japs. He and his gunner, Sgt. Lovenichen walked 58 miles around the west coast of Bali keeping away from the Japs and just ahead of them. At each town the Balinese burgermeisters would come out to greet them. They were also given tea and bread. At one place Launder asked for beer. Nodding OK the burgermeister snapped out an order. Thirty minutes later a tired dusty native entered with a bottle of hot beer under each arm. After 58 miles of walking the two men finally procured bicycles. However, they were both so worn out that they couldn't pedal up the hills. They could only coast down.

After 3 days walking Launder and Sgt Lovenichan reached a fisherman's village on north western Bali. There they were given an outrigger canoe with two natives to paddle for them. For thirteen hours they paddled across water separating Bali and Java. One native paddler was Mohammodan and kept wailing the heaven to give them good weather. Finally after nearly four days of hardship the men were put ashore near a Dutch outpost. After convincing the Dutch officers in charge of their identity they were given money and clothes and sent back to Soerabaya.

Five of the seven A-24's reached home safely. Of the five were lost but in turn shot down 15 zeros.

Observation planes that afternoon reported that of the six ships bombed, two were definitely sunk. One cruiser was seen pulling a crippled destroyer and one destroyer was seen pulling one crippled cruiser from the harbor. Later subs got all these four ships as they tugged along.

Inspection revealed Summers ship was no longer fit for combat. However, Backus had been called as General Brereton's Aid and so Summers inherited Backus's old wreck.

There followed three days of comparative inactivity. Malang had nine bombing raids and three strafing raids. Launder and Ferguson drew Dutch .32 calibre pistols for all the personnel and during the raids the boys had target practice in the front yard of the house. Abel, Larronde and Stephenson rejoined the outfit at Bangol. Summers annexed himself a garrison cap from a pilot who no longer needed it and tried to get a shower without having it interrupted by the Japs. Galusha caught up on his lost sleep.

On the night of Feb 23, Galusha and Hambaugh made a moonlight raid on Bali. Results were unobserved. They finally located Malang Field on their return with a 400 ft ceiling and an 8,000 foot mountain on either side.

On Feb. 27th word came through that a Japanese invasion fleet was 60 miles north of Java, Galusha, Summers, Ferguson and Hambaugh prepared to take-off. However, Hambaugh's hydraulic system went bad and he couldn't take-off. The other three took-off and headed north.

Sure enough about 60 miles to the North they encountered the Allied fleet engaged with the Japs. Our fleet consisted of six cruisers and five destroyers heading southwest. To the north of them and heading in the same direction was a line of six cruisers, three destroyers, and three battleships. Immediately to the north were six Jap cruisers also heading southward. Still further north in a double line were 43 troop ships, protected by 15 destroyers. The sum totaled was 33 fighting ships and 43 troop ships.

Galusha, according to Summers, displaying more nerve than brains flew over the whole business. He had orders to dive on troop ships and he was looking for the biggest ones. Later when Summers questioned him as to the reason for reviewing the whole fleet, Galusha admitted that he was looking for an aircraft carrier.

The three ships dived and knocked out three troop ships. Needless to say the ack-ack was terrific. Even the troop ships had ack-ack that would go up to 14,000 feet.

All three ships returned safely. Summers and Ferguson lost Galusha and then Summers lost his maps. Reports say that with Summers maps went his mind too. When returning the pilots found the Malang Field deserted except for the two officers and the men of their own outfit. They received orders to fly the remaining planes to Jekjakarta with other personnel going by car.

On February 28th, the next morning, Summers flew Galusha's ship and Launder flew Ferguson's ship over. Galusha led the motor convoy. This flight, by the way, cleared up a big mystery for Summers. He had been wondering why his ship was slower than Galusha's. Upon getting into Galusha's ship, Summers saw that Galusha had only three flight instruments remaining; a compass, manifold pressure gauge, and air speed indicator. Galusha had removed his altimeter, flight container equipment, his oil temperature, and pressure gauges, and lots of other equipment to make his plane lighter. Small wonder that it was faster.

On the night of Feb. 28th, all the remaining men of the outfit were evacuated to Broome, Australia in LB-30's and B-17's. From there they went to Perth and so on around the coast of southern Australia. They were reassigned in Melbourne and sent to the Third Bombardment Group in Charters Towers.

FROM: Squadron Leader B.R. Walker (94), 12 Squadron, R.A.A.F.
TO : The Secretary, Air Board (D.T.S.) Victoria Barracks, S.C.I.
DATE : 5th, April, 1942.
REF:

ATTACHED REPORT

An engine Wright Cyclone R1820-65 was removed from a crashed Frotress B-17D and installed in a Douglas A-24-783 to replace and unserviceable R1820-53 oil burner by Privates HAWKINS, HERBEY, AND DAVIDSON of the U.S. Air Corps. This engine was installed complete with Hydromatic airscrew under very rough conditions with practically no tools and an examination made by W/O Engineer No. 12 Squadron revealed that an excellent sound transfer had been carried out and although certain installations appeared a trifle rough they were of adequate strength and quite serviceable.

All A-24 pilots were transferred from this vicinity before installation was complete and under authority was given me to carry out tests if I so desired by Engineer Officer, 27th Bombardment Group.

Thes were carried out as per attached report and aircraft behaved in a very satisfactory manner although it is considered that without the turboblower the airscrew is too heavy and a small Hydromatic of about original size would be more desirable as the pre and aft controls is made alittle heavier and great care has to be exercised when taxiing and landing not to lift the tail. The large airscrew has about 8 inches slearance in the flying position. Rough moments taken from C.G. to the airscrew which was considered about 250 lbs. heavier and from C.G. to reak locker indicated that about 120 lbs. of sand ballast would be sufficient to balance. In practice this was almost correct but the aircraft flew about 3 to 4 degrees on the trim tab indicator, nose heavy, through out the tests in level flight.

Special commendation must be given to Privates HAWKINS, HERBEY, AND DAVIDSON for the excellent work they carried out through their own initiative and enthusiasm and it is requested that this report be forwarded, if thought fit, to the U. S. authorities for perusal.

The aircraft is being taken to BRISBANE by Lieut. Schimdt of the U.S. Air Corps so that it can be usefully employed, leaving BATCHELOR 5/4/42.

TAXI-ING AND FLIGHT TESTS OF A24-783 WITH R 1820-65 ENGINE AND
HYDROMATIC AIR SCREW

1. 30/3/42.

Engine started and aircraft taxied up and down runway at various elevator trim settings. Max. speed 60 knots. Aircraft felt nose heavy and tail had tendency to lift when taxiing over rough ground. During these tests Approx. 120 lbs. in snad bags was carried in rear locker.

An a-24 oil burner was then flown to get the real feel of aircraft in air over a period of 2.15 hours during that afternoon and morning of 31/3/42/.

2. 31/3/42.

XA-24 was given two or three more runs and then brakes allowed to cool off for 30 minutes.

At 1540 hours aircraft was taken off on 40" HG and 2500 RPM with all tabs normal and approx. 120 lbs in rear locker. Aircraft was airborne in approx 400 yards.

Aircraft felt a little nose heavy but was climbed up to 10,000 ft. on 30" HG and 2100 RPM. Turns were normal and stall normal.

Ins HG	R.P.M.	Indicated Knots	M.P.H.	Computal
26	2000	140	162	190
28	2000	147	170	198
30	2100	158	185	217
35	2300	171	200	234

Maximum boost obtainable was 35" HG at 8000 ft. Aircraft landed normally and brakes used carefully. Tail could be kept down.

1.30 Mins.

3. 1/4/42.

Consumption tests carried out at 7000 ft.

- a. At 30" HG 2100 RPM mixture auto rich consumption was 60 gals./hr.
- b. At 28" HG 2000 RPM mixture auto lean consumption was 47 gals./hr.
- c. Take off, climb, descent and landing indicated 50 gals./hr.
During this flight propeller over-revved in a dive.

4. 3/4/42.

- a. Aircraft was given a short flight to check airscrew. Airscrew OK.

.45 mins.

- b. A cross country flight was carried out.
Batchelor – Wyndham 260 miles. Time 1,18.

Ground Speed – 200 miles per hour.
Night flight – Wyndham – Batchelor. Time 1.25.
Ground Speed – 182 miles per hour.
Average consumption at 5000 ft. 28” HG,
2000 RPM. auto lean was 48 gals./hr.

5. 4/4/42.

Aircraft was given aerobatic and spit test and performed satisfactorily during all normal aerobatic maneuvers and left and right spins up to six turns.

Climb at 35” HG and 2300 RPM auto rich averaged 1500 ft./min. up to 8000 feet.
Climb at 30” HG and 2100 RPM auto rich averaged almost 1000 ft./min.

Time 1.20 mins.

17TH SQUADRON

The remnants of the original 17th Bomb Squadron gathered in the office of the operations officer at Amberley Field, Brisbane, to reform another 17th. It was January 24th. The 91st was ready to go to Java. The 16th was soon to move to Lowood and soon the 17th would be Java bound. It had to organize quickly.

Herman Lowery looked over his old 17th gang of Gus Heiss, Sonny Walker, Ed Townsend, Harry Mangan, Pete Talley, T.E. Timlin, and Howie West, and realized his experienced men were rather few. But with his usual efficiency, Herman rounded up a number of promising trainees, namely Gus Kitchens, J.B. Jackson, George Farr and Mac McGillivery. A little team work with this crew and the 17th was one again looking pretty good. Simply because the A-24's they were flying had truck tires on the wheels and triggers on the guns, armored seats that restricted control stick movement to a few inches (that was the cause of one serious accident) no self sealing tanks, oil burning engines, and unreliable guns, was no sign they couldn't do a dirty job, and it looked like a dirty job then. Java was in danger and the planes were needed if the Dutch were to survive.

Two weeks passed, the 91st left for Java, Lowood claimed the 16th. the 17th worked hard patching planes, doing gunnery, and dive bombing.

Soon the 16th went North and then Feb 17th rolled by. Everyone was North bound by now and the 17th with Maj. Davies was to bring up the last of the A-24's. It was quite a gathering of ships. Everyone painted his name on the cowling and attempted to make their ship as fit as possible. You could see “Texas Tornado”, “Wild West”, “Your ol' Uncle Harry”, and what not. Yes, if nothing else the gang had guts and spirit. They knew what their chances were against a pack of Zero's.

At last everyone was ready and at 10:00 AM sharp the 17th was java bound, the A-24's climbing and forming formation quickly.

And so it was to Charleville, then Cloncurry, and Daly Waters. Here they suddenly heard that Koepang, a refueling base in Timor, was now in Jap hands and the door to Java had been closed. The 91st had gotten thru, part of the 16th was ready to go and the 17th was at Daly Waters. A day passed when finally the order came for the 17th to consolidate with the 16th at Batchelor Field, just outside of Darwin. On the 22nd of Feb. the two squadrons joined outside of Darwin and dug in with the Aussie to combat the heat and dust. Darwin itself had just suffered a huge raid.

March, dust, heat and Hqs settled in the combined 16th and 17th. There was a series of Hqs in the Darwin Area and in event of excitement they all gave varied orders. Unfortunately, the 17th proved to be the goat for the majority of the excursions until Major Davies managed to straighten affairs. For a while the 16th and 17th made a run between Daly Waters and Batchelor regularly for some false alert. Then there was the classic day when the A-24's went out to "protect" Darwin from the Jap Zeros.

But as March moved on, the gang got used to living conditions where a can of cheese was divine and beer \$2.50 a bottle. Finally Maj. Davies, Herman Lowery, Ed Townsend, and Sonny Walker went down to Townsville to see if a merge couldn't be arranged with the 3rd Bomb Gp that we heard had arrived, understrength and way short of equipment. The day passed and finally word came for the remainder of the 16th and 17th to go to Townsville. "Buck" Rogers gathered the crew that was left and on March 24th we started down to join the 3rd Bomb Gp. Timlin and Harry Mangan were left in a cloud of dust in Daly Waters and lost Buck. Not to be undaunted, they returned to Daly Waters, got a map out of a National Geographic Magazine (Maps were terribly scarce) and made it alone. Quite a feat, for rough desert and almost 700 miles.

At least the gang reached Townsville and then to Charters Towers where the sight of many friends in the 3rd Bomb Gp was most welcome.

APRIL 1942 TO SEPTEMBER 1942

Most of the 27th gathered at Charters Towers about the last day of march. Everyone ostensibly was after a 100 hr inspection on their airplane but there were other plans afoot. Out of a clear blue sky the 27th was attached to the 3rd Bomb Gp awaiting orders to be assigned. The 3rd Gp had no ships and they were even glad to get our old and rickety A-24's.

Col. Davies was ordered on the 2nd of April to pick up 15 B-25's from the Dutch at Brisbane, so he sent 30 pilots and 15 enlisted men right down to Archer Field to get some. Numerous troubles ensued - - the Dutch were not informed of the exchange -

when they did find out the straight dope they hid most of the spare parts. Eventually the ships were ferried to Charters Towers and two of the ships were torn up on landing though no one was hurt.

By the 6th of April the 3rd Gp had its first mission in World War II. The target was Gasmata, New Britain, a landing strip, where the Nips had a few airplanes. Herman Lowery led the flight with Col Davies on his wing. It was a successful mission - - no interception, light ack-ack, and the bombs went right up the runway.

The heroes returned to a hot bed of rumors – there was a big secret mission on the fire. Col Davies and Lt McAfee set sail for Melbourne in a hurry. They were there for 4 hours in a super-secret conference with General George and several other high ranking officers. The Colonel got back to Charters Towers on the 10th leading 9 B-25's who had gone to Brisbane for gas tank installations. The secret is out - - next target: P.I. T.O. - - 0100 AM April 10th. T.A. Darwin 0800AM. Col Davies, Hubbard and McAfee got lost enroute to Darwin and they landed two hours after everyone else. They got the ha-ha from the bunch.

This was the situation - - originally the plans called for 10 B-25's and 3 B-17's to go to Bataan and operate from there until the Nips found our hiding place. But on the 9th of April Bataan fell so we couldn't go there and our objective was changed to Mindanao. The crews of the 10 B-25's consisted mostly of ex-27th pilots who begged to be a part of this flight.

The 27th pilots by airplane were:

<u>Ship No.</u>	<u>Pilots</u>	<u>Co-pilots</u>	<u>Bombardier</u>
483	Davies	McAfee	Hubbard
441	Lowery	Walker	
443	Smith	Talley	
442	Heiss	Townsend	
511		West	
472		Mangan	
486	Schmidt	Birnn	
498	Gunn	Bender	

Note: McAfee was president of the Co-pilots Union.

Out of 20 pilots, 15 were from the old 27th. The flight and staff assignments were Flight No. 1 Col Davies, Flight No2, Lt Strickland, and Flt. No 3, Captain Lowery. Operations, Captain Lowery, Intelligence and Asst. Operations, Lt McAfee, Material, Lt Schmidt, Supply, Lt. Heiss, Housing and Messing, Lt Walker, Armament, Lt Strickland, Communications, Lt. Talley.

April 12, 1942. No 1 T.O. 0630 – Target, Surface craft Cebu Harbor. Results one 7000 ton transport sunk, near misses on the others, 2 seaplanes shot down. Message at 1145 from Royce to Davies - - “A Nip Aircraft carrier at Jetane at North end of Bajol. If no carrier dispatch 6 planes to attack Nichols Field” Ah Me!

No 2 T.O. 1330 – Target Air craft Carrier, Jetane. Results – no carrier found. Bombed Shipping Cebu Harbor again. One 16000 ton transport left listing to left and down by stern from bomb hit at stern, smoke from burning docks, warehouses.

April 13th. No 3 T.O. 0600 – Target, Cebu (5 ships) and Davao (f ships) Results – Installations, Pappy Gunns Airport, set on fire at Davao. Col Davies shot down a seaplane after Hub got his gun stuck. Cebu heavily bombed.

No. 4 T.O. 1745 – Target – Davao – Results – Docks blown up – fires in dock area – one boat sunk.

Total results – 3 transports sunk, 4 damaged, and 3 seaplanes shot down – docks at Cebu and Davao extensively damaged.

T.O. 0100 – Destination – Darwin – ETA Darwin 1000 _____ (Almost).

Pappy Gunn’s gas tank blown up – He arrived the next day with 2 B-18 tanks instead.

The results of this flight didn’t help the 27th on Bataan 0 it probably caused the Japs to invade Mindinao sooner than planned. But it was a surprize to Mr Nip at any rate and surprise was the safety factor in the whole operation. Nine-tenth surprise and one-tenth luck.

Col Davies and McAfee went with General Royce to Melbourne, and there Col Davies was given the DSC for leading the raid.

On April 20th the 27th lost its first pilot while operating with the 3rd Bomb. Stephenson and Keeter flew into Mount Bartle Frere. This wasn’t to be the only loss either for in the months that followed Herman Lowery, Gus Heiss, Buck Rogers, Doug Tubb, Dick Birnn, Ralph Schmidt and Ed Townsend were also lost. Pete Bender was so seriously injured as to become incapacitated for further operations.

The ex-27th Officers acquitted themselves bravely to a man. Their injection by the 3rd Gp raised that Group's experience level and also gave them capable officers the like of which no other group in Australia had.

No officers or enlisted man from the 27th ever forgot he was from the 27th. The work they did was done with the 27th in mind, always. Those of us left were lucky in that they had the finest leader in all the U.S. Army. All Col Davies had to do was to speak and every man would have given his life for him. Through all the trials and tribulations that his men had to endure Col. Davies was right with them sharing every hardship. He cared for his men in every thing he did - - he flew on their missions, he saw to it they got leave to rest, he went on their parties, he fought to see that not one of his men was hurt for an unjust cause, and always he was available to talk to anyone about anything. Col Davies' men respect and love him and for good cause - - he lived with his men.

It was only through the efforts of Col Davies that his men from the 27th made such a fine showing. When it seemed in January, 1942, that nothing could be done to get the A-24's in service Col Davies so managed that even the toughest Aussie opposition came to heel. In Manila he fought to have the 27th sent out by boat but was unable to fix it. Col Davies got us B-25's and A-20's and maintained a continuous struggle to see to it that they were used properly. His men gave their lives willingly for Col Davies because they knew he would give his life for them. The highest tribute Col Davies' men can give is - - WE LOVE HIM.

M/Sgts Wesley and Hewitt form the main body of the enlisted men brought out of Manila. Wesley is known all over for being the finest airplane technician in the Ari Force. Like wise Hewitt has a fine name in radio. To Wesley's honor his Group Commander has recommended he be promoted to the rank of Captain.

The destruction of the 27th Bomb Gp was a terrible loss to the US Air Force - - one that can never be replaced, all for "Want of an Airplane"...

3RD GROUP – 13TH SQUADRON

After being transferred to the 3rd Bomb Group the last of March, the 27th pilots along with the old 3rd Group boys spent the first few days of April familiarizing themselves with the B-25C with which the Group was being equipped. After being bounced around the skies for months in the a-24's the B-25 felt like a ball of fire to the fellows for the first few hours until they became reaccustomed to the extra speed and power.

The old 27th men now flying for the 13th Squadron were Captain Lowery, Heiss, Mangan, Townsend, Talley, Timlin, Walker, and West. On April 7th, Rumor got around that a trip was in the offing --- a long overwater haul. No one knew the destination --- guesses were New Caledonia, the Philippines, and India. The next day it became a certainty that something was in the wind, when the 13th ships, along with some 90th Squadron ships, took off for Brisbane to pick up bomb bay tanks and auxiliary nose tanks, and on the morning of April 10 all the ships hopped back to Charters Towers double time. Here the pilots were given the dope on the long flight, which was to be a secret mission against targets in the Jap-held Philippines 3000 miles away. Take off time for the first hop, up to Darwin, was set at 0100 the next morning, final instructions were given to all the pilots, and everyone hit the sack for a few hours sleep. Up again before midnight, a last cup of coffee, and at 0100 April 11th, three B-17's and 11 B-25's roared off into the darkness on the longest and most daring mission our Air Force had ever planned. The first light of dawn found the ships circling the RAAF Aerodrome at Darwin. A quick breakfast, refueling the ships for the long overwater hop, then off to Del Monte on the island of Mindanao, nearly 2000 miles north. General Royce was in the leading B-17, Colonel Davies was leading the first flight of five B-25's, and Captain Lowery was leading the second flight of five. One of the B-25's was forced to remain at Darwin because of a bad cut in one tire. The pilots-Lynn Schmidt and Dick Birn - - made no effort to hid their disappointment at being left behind.

Discreetly detouring around Jap-held islands along the route, the B-25's flew high and sighted the southern coast of Mindanao late in the afternoon. The weather had been remarkably good thus far, but over the island formidable black cumulus rain clouds, towering up to 20,000 feet, barred the way. The formation was forced to spread out and more or less fly independently, but forced it's way on around and through the clouds-one moment glimpsing the rugged mountains below, the next moment on instruments in the blinding, driving tropical rain - - one moment flying a loose extended formation, the next moment isolated into single ships all on their own. The formation was finally broken up by the weather and each ship found it's own way into Del Monte. J.R. Smith and Talley lost the flight first and realizing that it would soon be dark, decided to let down from the clouds. They broke out over a harbor and were somewhat embarrassed to recognize the field ten miles to the north as Davao, Strongest Japanese air base on Mindanao. Convinced that the climate there was unhealthy, they wasted no time in doing a quick 180° vertical turn and making a fast trip back across the island on the tree tops. Natives on the ground, accustomed to enemy planes only, scattered for the bushes as they roared overhead. Just as the sun was setting, the ships located Cagayan and then the Del Monte

plantation and field. The last ship in – Gus Heiss and Ed Townsend, found the field after dark, twelve hours after leaving Darwin. Captain Lowery took his flight of five ships over to Valencia, a dispersal strip cut out of the jungle forty miles away; the other flight of five, headed by Lt Strickland, remained at Del Monte for the night. Under cover of darkness the ships were dispersed, bomb bay tanks were removed and bombs were loaded. The combat crews were briefed on the dawn mission for the next day, and then all rolled up in blankets under the planes for a few hours of much needed rest. As the sun came up on the morning of April 12, Strickland's flight was assembling out over the water for an attack on the shipping in Cebu Harbor; Lowery's flight was assembling over Valencia. One flight consisted of "Strick" and Major Hipps in the lead, Maull and Howie West, Smitty and Pete Talley, Peterson and Harry Mangan, Feltham and Linn;

Capt Lowery's flight had "Snake" and Sonny Walker in the lead, Col. Davies and McAfee, Gus Heiss and Ed Townsend, Pappy Gunn and Pete Bender, Wilson and Keeter. On the way to Cebu City, Strick's AFCE went out and Smith and Talley, without benefit of maps, led the flight on into the target. Both flights hit their target, the dock installation where left in flames, several ships were sent to the bottom. A Jap float plane recklessly ventured too close to the formation and was disintegrated by the .50's from 5 lower turrets. After five months in the war, the old 27th, although now flying under the colors of another group, had struck it's first blow against the enemy in the air. Many were to follow.

Lowery's flight returned to Valencia, Strickland's landed at Maramag, another well concealed strip in the rugged jungle terrain around Del Monte. The dense jungle at the edges of the strip afforded the perfect concealment from aerial observation for the ships - they were invisible from a few yards away. The same day the B-25's struck Cebu Harbor again and Davao. The American officers stationed at Maramag eagerly gathered around the pilots for news of operations around Australia and in turn related tales of their contacts with the natives of Mindanao. The next day two more missions were flown by each flight. Cebu Harbor and Davao was heavily bombed. Anti-aircraft fire was heavy on all missions, but the Japs consistently underestimated the speed of the B-25. After the last mission both flights landed at Del Monte, and under cover of darkness bomb bay tanks were reinstalled and the ships were serviced for the long hop back to Darwin. Up at the clubhouse, the 27th Pilots welcomed back into the fold, two 27th men who had made their way down from Bataan bare hours before it's fall.

The faces of Tom Gerrity and Jack Wienert clearly showed the strain of four months on beleaguered Bataan. They could give no information about the men of the 27th who remained on Bataan to the last, except that all the officers were still alive up to the last day and that the casualties among the men had been small.

Take-off time was set at 2300, and shortly before midnight ten B-25s, each overloaded to capacity with officers recently evacuated from Bataan - took off from Del Monte, bored up through a low overcast, and headed south toward Darwin, 2000 miles away in the darkness. The scourge of the tropic "old man dengue" had smacked Talley squarely between the eyes just before the last mission, and Pete gladly let Jack Wienert

take his place as co-pilot during most of the return trip. All the ships landed at Batchelor Field, forty miles south of Darwin, after daylight the morning of April 14, staying only long enough to gas up, and taking off immediately. Night found them back in Charters Towers, more than a little weary from nearly fifty hours of hard flying in four days, and asking for nothing but a bed.

After a few days of rest, the group was called on to furnish ships for constant patrol out of Port Moresby. J.R. Smith and Talley – now recovered from his battle with dengue - - took two ships up April 23 and spent the usual four or five days, running a nine hour recon flight every day over all Jap bases from Kavieng in the North to the deboyne Islands in the south. The recons were long, lonely, and dangerous, but the pilots who flew them gained an intimate knowledge of the entire combat area which was to be invaluable to them later on.

May 1, 1942

Lt. Col. J. H. Davies

Dear Sir:

General George decided we would stay here which necessitates some changes. Buck is sick and the Doctor here said he should be kept in bed for several days regardless of what Buck thinks.

We have four ships in commission and seven bombs, 24 adaptors. With one engine we could have six in commission. We are taking the engine from one of the wrecked ships to fix up one.

Also we are in fire need of personal clothing, etc. The following officers and men are here with a list of what they need.

Lt. Ruegg	Personal Clothes.	8th Sq or
	Personal Clothes.	Lt. Twonsend.
Lt. Wilkens	Personal Clothes.	See Lt. Heidinger.
Lt Holcomb	Personal Clothes.	See Lt. Anderson.
Lt Emerson	Personal Clothes.	See Lt. Doan.
Lt Swartz	Personal Clothes.	See Lt. McGillivery.
Lt Hill	Personal Clothes.	See Lt. Larrond.
Lt Deane	Personal Clothes.	See Lt. Beck.
Sgt Gaydes	Personal Clothes and Tool Kits.	
Sgt Thorneck	Personal Clothes and Tool Kits.	
S/Sgt Vance	Personal Clothes and Tool Kits.	
Pvt lcl Lennon	Personal Clothes and Tool Kits.	
Sgt Stevenson	Personal Clothes and Tool Kits.	
Cpl. Mongrain	Personal Clothes and Tool Kits.	
Cpl LaRogue	Personal Clothes and Tool Kits.	
Cpl Larronde	Personal Clothes and Tool Kits.	

The following is a list of supplies needed and anything else Sgt Wesley can think of.

- Plugs and plug pencils.
- Hydraulic fluid.
- Booster Pump (urgent).
- Wheel and Wing jacks, if possible.
- Grease, wheels and guns.
- Tires, front and tail.
- Batteries and acid.
- Engines, unlimited supply.
- Patches, cleaning rods and brushes (.30 and .50 cal)
- 12 new Curtis Dive Bombers or Brewsters. (Urgent).

Our first mission wasn't so much, but we at least had the pleasure of dropping bombs where Japs had recently been. We expect to do better.

We also need 12 crew chiefs and 8 armorers and lots of mosquito eradicator, they're terrific.

Respectfully,

BOB RUEGG.

FROM: 3D BOMB GP (L), CHARTERS TOWERS, QD.

TO : CAPTAIN GUNN, AMERICAN OPERATIONS OFFICE,
ARCHER FIELD, BRISBANE

3BG____5/26/42 HANDPICK 15 AMERICAN CO PILOTS FROM 22ND
TRANSPORT SQUADRON AND SEND BY TRANSPORT PLANE
IMMEDIATELY TO 3RD BOMB STOP I WILL PUT 15 AUSTRALIAN CO
PILOTS ON TRANSPORT AND SEND STRAIGHT BACK TO TRANSPORT
COMMAND IN PLACE OF THE 15 AMERICAN STOP VERY URGENT
STOP

VIES

HEADQUARTERS CHARTERS TOWERS AIR BASE
CHARTERS TOWERS, Q.

MAY 18, 1942

RADIO

RADIO

RADIO

TO: USBAD BRISBANE

FROM:

USCT M315Y 18/5 STOP CONFIRMING TELEPHONE CONVERSATION
WITH YOU ON SATURDAY MAY SIXTEENTH COMMA IT IS FURTHER
REQUESTED THAT IN THE FUTURE NO AIR CORPS TECHNICAL SUPPLIES
ISSUED TO ANYONE IN THE NORTH EASTERN AREA WITHOUT A PROPERLY
EXECUTED REQUESTION FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DEPOT SUPPLY
OFFICER ADVANCED AIR BRANCH DEPOT COMMA CHARTERS TOWERS
COMMA QLD STOP EXTREME DIFFICULTY IS BEING EXPERIENCED IN

MAINTAINING A RECORD OF SUPPLIES DILIVERED TO ORGANIZATIONS IN THIS AREA PERIOD YOUR COOPERATION WILL BE APPRECIATED STOP REQUEST ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF THIS COMMUNICATION STOP BERRY END.

FATOR

The remaining survivors of the 27th Bombardment Group still in combat and now members of the 3rd Bombardment Group are:

Major RONALD D. HUBBARD	Distinguished Service Cross and Silver Star
Captain JAMES B. MCAFEE	Silver Star
CAPTAIN JAMES R. SMITH	Silver Star
Captain THOMAS P. GERRITY	
Captain GUSTAVE M HEISS	Silver Star
Captain ROBERT G. RUEGG	Distinguished Service Cross
Captain JULIUS B. SUMMERS, JR.	Distinguished Flying Cross
Captain HARRY L. GALUSHA	Distinguished Flying Cross
1st Lt. HENRY J. ROSE	Silver Star
1st Lt. LELAND A. WALKER	Distinguished Service Cross Seriously Wounded
1st Lt. JAMES H. MANGAN	Silver Star
1st Lt. FRANCIS E. TIMLIN	Silver Star
1st Lt. OLIVER C. DOAN	Missing in New Guinea for six weeks
1st Lt. ROBERT F. HAMBAUGH	
1st Lt. HOWARD B. WEST	Silver Star
1st Lt. THOMAS P. TALLEY	Distinguished Flying Cross
2nd Lt. ALEXANDER R. SALVATORE	
M/Sgt. WILLIAM H. HEWITT	
M/Sgt. WILLIAM A. WESLEY	

Although none of them have approached me on the subject I would like to recommend they be replaced and returned to the United States.

They are the very highest type of officers and men and should be returned with the understanding that their combat experienced is to be used to train units in the United States to beter further the war effort. The 3rd Bombardment Group can continue to operate as usual requiring some personnel replacements. I would like to see this happen before the 27th becomes completely destroyed. Eight of these officers are fully qualified to command medium or light bombardment groups now. The remainder are qualified Squadron Commanders. They have been in the thick of it since hostilities commenced an

it is believed that their value to their country, as a result of their experience, in the capacity of commanders of newly formed units warrants their being returned.

JOHN H. DAVIES
Colonel, Air Corps,
Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS 3D BOMBARDMENT GROUP
ARMY AIR FORCE

Charters Towers, Q.,
15th May, 1942.

SUBJECT: Conditions reported which may result in lowering of units morale.

TO : Headquarters North East Area, Townsville, Q.

General, a Lieutenant of mine came in to see me this morning and said, "Colonel, we are being dumped on". He had just returned from Townsville.

Here is his story.

Some of his pals from the South told him that they are receiving continuous per diem of \$6.00 per day and by several of them getting a house together they were having a grand time and piling up the dough. The officers on combat duty here have \$15.00 a month extracted on their pay vouchers for food plus what they put in to augment the field ration with items such as dry cereals, etc. that are not issued. No member of this Group has received any per diem since last March when the Group Commander had the authority to write per diem orders. At the present time we will receive a telephone call or radiogram from Brisbane or Melbourne stating that an A-20 or B-25 is ready for delivery. Immediately send a crew to get it resulting in expense to themselves which under the present set up requires at least two months for reimbursement. I send the order to Base Section No.2 which states that in accordance with such and such the following pilots and aerial engineers will proceed etc. Evidently it is necessary then for base Section No. 2 to write Brisbane for orders to this Group that each action was necessary. Anyhow so far no per diem has arrived. At the present time I have 20 mechanics and 2 officers at Eagle Faras, Brisbane, erecting A-20's and being unable to get orders on them, they are living at their own expense. If procurement authority of the combat member's morale dropping off would be lessened. I could issue the necessary order, quote the per diem authority, make out the per diem vouchers and the nearest finance office would pay it.

This reimbursement of required expense while traveling under orders us serious enough to injure their morale but this Lieutenant told me that First Lieutenant so and so, who is not on combat duty but a staff officer on this continuous per diem, who he says rank him by one class is now Major and arrived in Australia from the United States, since my first recommendations for promotion were submitted. After hearing this I agreed with his opening remark, and realized that it was my duty to do something about it.

Since April 21st, less than one month, there have been 22 officers and men killed in action in this Group and two dive bomber crew missing over Lae since April 12. Being directly responsible for the morale of this organization, which is exceptionally high, I feel it necessary to bring the above situation to your attention for remedial action before it becomes necessary to have to make any replies as to the probable falling off of this Groups splendid morale.

Respectfully yours,

I remain,

JOHN H. DAVIES,
Lieut. Colonel, Air Corps,
Commanding.

89TH SQUADRON

About the first of May, Lts West and Talley and Capt Smith wer transferred from the 13th Sq to the 89th Squadron. Lts West and Talley were then attached to the 90th Sq for flying. The 89th at that time had only one A-20A and 11 pilots. As more A-20A's came to Charters Towers, the 89th didn't have to depend on other Squadrons for flying time.

On the first of May the third Group started running patrols from Charters Towers east over the Great Barrier reef and out over the Pacific towards New Calidonis. Three of four planes went out each morning. The crews would get up at two o'clock for a cup of coffee and would then be briefed by Captain McAfee. Take-off was usually at four-thirty. Then a long eight or nine hours of searching for enemy shipping. These patrols were sent out until the end of the Coral Sea battle.

Along about the middle of May the group armament officer with the assistance of the 89th Sq armament officer, had a brain storm, and conceived the idea of putting four caliber machine guns in the nose of the A-20's. This meant that space in the pilots cockpit had to be found to put the bomb control levers and bomb release switches. Work was started on an experimental ship. But before it could be totally completed, shops were

set up at Amberley Field near Brisbane to make the installations. It took all of June to get the first few ships ready when enough ships with nose guns came back to Charters Towers, the 89th started to teach their pilots in the use of the guns as well as to teach them how to drop bombs.

The 89th armament officer was sent south on the 15th of July and Lt West was made armament officer for the squadron.

The headaches of trying to keep the guns working soon began. On each flight difficulties arose with either the guns from operating properly. IN two cases the broken hydraulic lines caused crash landings.

Finally the troubles were ironed out and the squadron did a lot of practice firing and bombing at the gunnery range.

Twice the A-20's were used as pursuit to fight the B-25's. The B-25's would fly in formation while the A-20's dived at them giving the pilots of the B-25's practice in defensive tactics against enemy fighters.

Thru the months of June, July and August the 89th Squadron was preparing for combat. In August a Squadron of Australian Beaufighters worked with the A-20's in combined operations. The tactics developed were to be put in use against the enemy. After running three practice missions with them, the 89th Squadron was ordered to move to Port Moresby, on August 29, where they are now stationed at Kila Kila Field.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Replacement of Australian Sgt-pilots now assigned to 3rd Bomb with co-pilots of Air Transport Command.

1. A tactical unit must have co-pilots who in one month will be 1st pilots and in two months flight leaders. This can not be done with foreign co-pilots without the unit becoming a foreign organization.
2. These Australian Sgt-pilots could not replace American co-pilots without disrupting an old established tactical unit.
3. There are 20 American co-pilots in Air Transport Command in Brisbane who these Australian Sgt-pilots could replace.

Installation of Bomb Bay tanks in A-20's.

1. 10 will be equipped with B-26 self sealing wing tanks. Now being installed at Archer Field. About May 30th. Will be a total of 688 gallons = 400 MR/A.
2. 4 to be equipped with B-25 wing tanks. About June 2nd. 700 gallons = 410 MR/A or 1 B-25 tank = 588 gallons with rear bomb bay free for bombs.
3. B-26 Bomb Bay tanks no-self sealing available in Melbourne. One being installed in Laverton and being flown to Charters Towers. If OK sufficient will be ordered for all A-20's without tanks. Col. Conner knows about this.

Installation of .50 cal. guns.

1. One completed at Charters Towers (heavy). One being made at Amberley, looks good. If proven OK mounts will be manufactured in Brisbane for all planes. One installation about completed at Charleville. Hope Amberley job OK so mounts can be made which would then allow complete equipping by about June 2nd. This depends on getting the guns. Maj. Blodgett, Ordnance. Melbourne, forwarding guns to Brisbane.

No of airplanes group can maintain and operate.

This Group can operate and maintain the following:

	<u>Total</u>
8th Sq and 89th Sq18 A-20's each =	36
13th Sq and 90th Sq.....12 B-25's each =	24

A-24's to Australians.

Supply

Instead of being all out to keep up supplied with everything we need, supply organization make obvious efforts to obstruct our getting anything. For example, one of our officers in Brisbane obtained 5 commercial radios which he signed for with Col Davies signature, and addressed them to 3rd Bomb Gp Charters Towers. The radios were sent by air transport but on arrival the base took charge of radios and gave us 3 and kept 2 claiming that the Air Base has charge of distribution of all supplies to this area. The base also sent a wire to Brisbane stopping the sending of any supplies to 3rd Bomb. We had a case similar to the radio case with 300 flashlights sent to us.

North American and Bendix representatives.

Request that Mr. Parsons of the Bendix corporation, USA, be sent to 3rd Bomb Gp to take charge of the maintenance of our power turrets. Have Mr. Carson and Mr. Fox assigned to this group to take care of the maintenance on B-25's since these men are B-25 North American factory representatives.

Dispose of the A-24's.

Promote M/Sgt. Wesley to rank of Captain.

Request that the girls dormitory of the Blackheath college, Charters Towers, be commandeered for use of 3rd Bomb Gp as a recreation building and grounds for pilots.

Dr. McKenzie is the principal in charge of the school here.

Promotions, citations, medals.

Trips South for Pilots.

HEADQUARTERS 3D BOMBARDMENT GROUP (LIGHT)
ARMY AIR FORCES

A.P.O. 922
1 August 1942.

Headquarters Allied Air Forces
North Eastern Area,
Townsville, Queensland.

Dear General,

Received your letter regarding the A-20A today can assure you that everything is being done to get as many of them ready as soon as possible. The 89th Squadron has been designated and informed that they are to go north and have been working on their equipment and training with that in view. The 8th Squadron has eleven of their officers now up north with the A-24's and consequently are so handicapped by lack of personnel that I have attached what pilots are left to the 89th Squadron for A-20 training and participation in combat.

As a result of your discussion with me regarding 3 mile I flew up there the other day escorting a flight of P-39's. The engineer informed me that it would be ready in about three weekd with dispersal strips and bays. I have a maintenance crew set up that will be essential to send to keep the equipment flying. This I believe would be the most suitable if housing and messing facilities are available. These A-20's are not new by any means. They have been through four maneuvers in the states and consequently the maintenance problem is acute.

Training progressing as fast as equipment permits. We have fired at night on our area target three nights in a row until the A-20's were grounded yesterday due to hydraulic line failure requiring a change of all planes. The nose wheel collapsed on landing putting that plane out for several months.

We should be ready with nine any time after tomorrow night (August 2nd) and with luck three more by August 4th. I am anxious to have all pilots fire at night so they can hit those "Zero's" on the ground at night. I believe they can do it. What we need now is the parachute bomb to make a proper attack. The 89th Squadron Commander knows the limitations and capailities of the A-20 and has had tactical experience in their operation. If he were given a target you can rest assured that he will carry out the necessary instruction to his flight leaders to hit it with best tactics and the best time unless it is a co-ordinated attack.

I would like to go north prior to their departure to make the necessary arrangements for their arrival and operations.

General, there is one situation I would like to bring before you while I have the opportunity. As you know I had the 27th Bombardment Group in the Philippines at the outbreak of hostilities consisting of 1000 officers and men. The only survivors of this

group with the exception of perhaps 3 or 4 that General Brereton brought out with him are the 20 that I brought out by order of General Brereton to assemble the A-24's in Brisbane. I picked each one of them for their dependableness and ability. Since our arrival in Australia they have participated in almost every air battle. They sank surface craft in the Java Sea battle and have been continuously participating in the New Guinea air operations. Of the 20 that left Manila on December 17, 1941 eight have been killed or missing in action since their arrival in Australia. Two of these officers were Squadron Commanders in the 27th Bombardment Group. The following is a list of them:

Major	HERMAN F. LOWERY	Distinguished Flying Cross
Major	FLOYD W. ROGERS	Distinguished Flying Cross
1st Lt.	RALPH L.L. SCHMIDT	Silver Star
Capt	FRANK P. BENDER	Silver Star
Capt	GLENWOOD G. STEPHENSON,	Purple Heart
2nd Lt	DOUGLAS B. TUBB	Distinguished Flying Cross
2nd Lt	EDWIN C. TOWNSEND	Silver Star
1st Lt	RICHARD R. BRINN	Distinguished Flying Cross

89TH SQUADRON AT PORT MORESBY

At 1600 on the afternoon of August 29th, the 13 A-20's of the 89th Squadron broke through the threatening rain squalls around Port Moresby and landed at 7 mile aerodrome. Immediately upon landing, the squadron was ordered to drop bomb bay tanks and load up with bombs for a mission that night. Ten minutes later this order was recinded and the squadron was sent over to the mountain ringed field at 3 mile. Here the ships were loaded with bombs and ammunition in readiness for a dawn mission the next day. "Little Moose" Salvatore's ship was left at 7 mile and loaded there. Later he brought it over to 3 mile, but when the heavily overloaded ship hit the rough runway the left tire blew out. But Salvy with a steady hand on the throttles held the center of the runway and gradually brought his limping ship to a stop without further damage.

The dawn mission was called off, but later in the morning 8 A-20's took the air to work with the B-26's in an attack on Lae. At high noon the B-26's dropped their load on the Jap base, and before the bomb explosions had died away the A-20's, flying on the treetops, flashed over the crest of a hill into sight, and before the startled and confused Japs could make a move, swept across the aerodrome and camp at 300 miles per hour spraying lead from all eight guns. Planes on the ground were riddled and ack-ack guns making a vain effort to hit the flying planes were blasted into silence. A group of Jap Officers and men, trapped on a porch, fled in wild confusion as one of the ship's eight poured lead into them. The A-20's, untouched, raced away at zero altitude – the Japs had felt the baptism of fire of the "new" A-20.

In the next three days the “A-20’s” bombed and strafed Jap jungle troops along the rugged peaks and gorges of the Owen Stanley Range.

On September 3rd, seven ships took off to attack the pack trail between Mubo and Alamau. Twenty miles out from the target the flight was advised by radio that the target was closed in by weather but went on into the target to see for themselves. The weather was a bit rough, but 5 ships dropped their bombs in the target area, causing the native carriers pressed into service by the Nip’s to take to the hills. The other two ships, losing the flight in the clouds, didn’t feel like taking their bombs home, so laid them across the aerodrome and camp area at Salamaua.

During the next seven days the A-20’s ran seven successful missions including one sixteen ship sortie against the field at Buna Bay which laid the place low. On September 11th the squadron suffered its just loss when a flight pressed home an attack on Buna Bay in spite of bad weather. Two ships ran out of gas on the way home but both pilots landed in the water and escaped.

On September 12th the 89th again struck Buna Bay, with devastating effect. Several hundred parachute frags were laid across the target and then six strafing passes were made across the target. Seventeen Jap planes were caught on the ground and destroyed by the hail of lead laid down by the A-20’s.

8TH SQUADRON – MARCH 30 TO PRESENT

March 31, 1942 the A-24’s were ordered north. Buck Rogers leading with 13 planes. The number was unlucky because 5 were left at Cooktown due to one reason or another. Due to a wrong report from Cooktown as to sundown in Port Moresby, we got in after dark and lost 2 more ships due to bomb craters on the runway. Buck was sick and ordered to the hospital by an M.D. and Ruegg took over. A short brief with Sq L/ J.F. Jackson and an early morning raid was planned. 75th Squadron, and Aussie fighter Sq, flying P-40’s was our escort. Weather bad at Lea so dropped our bombs on Salamaua and home. No trouble, except the boys were careless about staying in formation.

We were supposed to return to mainland but General George came by and decided we could kill more Japs by staying at Port Moresby, so we stayed. And the Mosquitos were terrible. An air raid now and then but the Nips were not too accurate. April 5th, Schwab will be in early tomorrow, with 6 A-24’s from Charters Towers and we plan a good one for the next day. April 6th the A-24’s arrived and we have a brief with Sq/L Jackson and get wet. We’re to pick him up at his airdrome at 11:00 A.M. So we were there and circled for a few minutes and no pursuit. Get ready to go back and land when we saw some bombs drop a mile or so from drome and look up and saw 17 heavy bombers and quite a number of “O”’s overhead so we went out over the ocean until things

quieted down. We landed and spend the rest of the day moving into the 3 mile drome at Kila Kila and Koki quarters. A pretty good set up.

April 7th, we got an early start with 9 A-24's and 6 kittyhawks. One 24 turned back due to engine trouble but 8 got there and found lots of Nip ships lined up. Some ack-ack and a few "O's" in the air very busy with the 75th Sq. Ruegg, leading, saw 5 "O's" in a circle being refueled so changed his target and takes them.. Bombs hit them so 5 less zeros to worry about. All the rest hit where they should, and looking back over the field as we left, smoke, fire, flying debris, and dust pretty well covered everything. Chudoba came tearing into formation with a "O" on his tail shooting him up but when all the gunners cut loose on the Nip, he collapsed into the ocean with a most satisfactory splash. From there on, there was no more loose formation. We went back over the mountains as one ship. Hank Schwartz didn't get back. 75th Sq knocked hell out of the Zeros trying to get us and also lost one pilot and ship. We got credit for about 20 planes in the air and on ground and everyone was ready for more. A big celebration in the RAAF club in Moresby that night with Schwab bringing down the house with his renditions of any songs suggested.

We got to work on our drome, scattering our ships, digging foxholes, patching up bullet holes, and waiting for the next mission.

April 10, Sq/L Jackson failed to return from recco and his brother Les Jackson took over the 75th.

April 11th, we started over with 9 A-24's and 7 P-40's. Pop Woods leading the 75th. A bit cloudy and we catch the Nips asleep. Ruegg, first down sees 3 zeros taking off right beneath him. A small boat is his target and one of the zeros wheels around and fastens on his tail, the other two zeros doing the same to number 2 and 3 of our ships being Gus Kitchen's and Long John Hill. When the first Nip opens fire on Ruegg, he dumped his bomb and flaps and scoots. Johnny Piper comes down in his Kittyhawk in a screaming dive and puts the Nip right smack back where he started from only the Nip made a rather abrupt landing, going in nose first, straight down, and off fire. The rest of the boys laid their bombs carefully among the planes and Ack-Ack and hit them. Dean and Anderson got tangled with a Zero but when they got in formation, the Nips scoots one way and we for home, leaving the 75th Sq to handle the Zeros. Gus Kitchens didn't get back. One of the first "O's" must have gotten him. Another very successful raid, causing much damage at Lae and fires that burned for several days.

April 13th, we headed back; supposed to be a tanker at Lae. When we got there, no tanker so we took our time. Finally an Ack-Ack opened up on us and Ruegg took that. No more ack-ack after we started down and no more A/A from that station. Schwab took another A/A station and the rest took grounded planes. The 75th Sq ran into some "o"s up above so we headed for home. The clouds were high over the mountains but we finally found a hole at 14000 and staggered through. A successful mission, getting several bombers on the ground and the 75th Sq got 2 zeros. They lost one pilot, though. More reinforcements, Hesselbarth bringing in several A-24's

The 75th Sq is running low on planes so we can't go until they're reinforced. Japs raiding pretty steadily, every other day or so but no damage. 75th Sq got a few, even with only 5 or 6 ships in and things are pretty well under control.

April 17th, Captain C.A. Baumhauer and some 70 men arrive. We are getting settled. Our own cooks and ample men to maintain ships.

April 20th, General G. H. Brett arrived and had lunch with us. We put the pressure on him for faster dive-bombers but he didn't promise them right away.

April 21st, the nips came over and tried to put out the D. B.'s but all their eggs landed just off the runway in the bay. The 75th Sq. got to them and knocked down 4 or 5.

S/L Jackson is sage at a little airfield back in the hills, Ruegg's going after him in an A-24.

Ruegg was sick the next day so Schawb went instead. Weather bad and couldn't get through.

April 23rd, was a big day; A heavy Jap raid early in the A.M., V.A. Schwab got Sq/L Jackson back and an "O" (from where?), jumped him as he was buzzing 7 mile and he finally got away and landed at 3 mile. S/L Jackson had slight wound but says He had it coming as he had stowed rear gun before they had parked the ship. We had a sub mission but couldn't find it. Buck gets in with Galco, Zeke, and Hambaugh. Zeke couldn't get his wheels down so brought it in on it's belly, and we have another parts ship. A very busy day and a big celebration at the club that night for Galco, Zeke and Hambaugh.

The 75th Sq. is so low on ships that they can't spare any to escort us so we work on our ships and watch the dogfights. The Nips are coming over regular these days and only 5 servicable P-40's to stop them. It was an Inspiration to see 4 or 5 Kittyhawks go up day after day against 15 to 20 zeros and fight them to a standstill. Our Bofors and machine guns discourage any nips from straffing us but they started in several times.

April 26th the nips came over above the clouds and laid a stick right through our dispersal area. 3 of our ships burnt up, and they were bombed up so it makes quite a splash. No one hurt.

April 27th S/L J.F. Jackson leads 5 P-40's against 12 bombers and 15 zeros and a nip finally gets him. A very good, capable leader and a good fellow. 8th Squadron felt his loss very keenly. We have a sub mission but it gets away.

April 29th was a day of raids. Zeros and bombers over all day. No serious damage and were getting our A-24's patched up. Buzz Wagner arrived with a P-39 and we have a mission planned. Too late so we wait for tomorrow. They arrive April 30th but by the

time they're ready, the clouds are so high our A-24's won't go over them so we stayed behind. The P-39's run into a hornet's nest over Lae. The next day there are not enough P-39's in to go so we stay home.

May 1st, Buck Rogers, Bob Ruegg, V.A., Zeke, Harry and Hambaugh also McGillvary go over to 7 mile to bring some A-24's back to 3 mile and get caught in a zero raid. Much excitement and a funny incident. Two pursuit boys jump into a latrine up to their necks thinking it a dive trench. We finally get the A-24's back to 3 mile during a lull.

May 2nd brought more zeros but the cobras took good care of them. Buck, Bob, and V.A. had an alert for night fighting but it was just a stray Cataliner wandering back.

May 3rd the nips started south with a fleet so we were very busy getting every A-24 in condition to carry a bomb. More raids and less Nips going home. Jap fleets getting closer.

V.A., Bob, Zeke, Galco and Hambaugh went over to 75th for a farewell dinner. Very good affair and everyone had plenty to drink. Bob didn't get home.

May 6th and the Nips are close and we're ready with 19 dive bombers. The next day we have an alert and evacuate out to sea and watch a dogfight. 3 zeros down and no losses. And our navy is socking the Jap convoy plenty. Peter Bender got out of the Woods and looks used up.

May 8th standing by from 5 A.M. on. About noon a B-25 staggers on one engine and cracks up out on fisherman's reef. Sonny Walker, chases by a 109 clear back to PM, couldn't get in either field, and crashed landed on the reef. Got all his crew out before it blew up. 2 of them dead. Bob, Doc, and McGillvary took Sonny to 17 mile hospital.

May 9th, the Jap fleet is dispersed and sunk, and so Ruegg, Chudoba, Larronde, Emerson, and some P-40's are to go south for a rest. But before we got off the "O's" arrived and we spent 2 hours in a slit trench dodging bullets. 4 zeros came through at our ships lined up on the runway and 3 of them go down. Finally go away, with Les Jackson in the one P-40 still flyable and head south. Stop at Horn where we leave Chudoba and on to Cairns with good beer and breakfast in bed. On to Townsville and then to Charters Towers.

May 12th, Sonny, Gus, Tom, Smitty and Harry lead for Brisbane for B-25's and A-20's. The next two weeks were spent trying to get the necessary parts to put guns and tanks on A-20's. Ruegg replaced Pappy Gunn on the A-20's mainly because Pappy gets things done regardless. Delays, lack of authority, no parts, no men, no supplies and other things. May 27 we were all ordered to Charters Towers for decoration by Gen Brett and a day or so later back to Brisbane. Pick the gun installation by Lt. T.R. Tompkins engineering officer at Amberley and start to work in earnest. Ruegg goes to Melbourne

to check ships and Celby tanks. We are to get 21 ships. All the parts are ordered and a quick job is expected. Back to Brisbane June 2.

And for 3 months trying to get the A-20's going, shortage of parts again and more planes. We have 39 finally. No guns and finally guns but no solenoids, Solenoids and no brackets, brackets and no chargers, and so on. And finally all but 4 planes ready and Ruegg goes back to Charters Towers followed the next day by Sonny and the Colonel.

PORT MORESBY – FROM MAY 9TH

After the departure of Capt Ruegg and his flight, the 8th Sq settled down to a normal routine of working over the remaining A-24's in an effort to get them all into combat condition. Very little flying was done in the next few days, except for a few test flights. Once our twice headquarters requested them to go out on a mission but Capt Rogers refused unless pursuit protection was provided. Not being able to get the pursuit cooperation, nothing was done. Finally after another attempt by the Nips to bomb our dispersal area, Buck sent all but five planes back to Charters Towers on May 14th. Two other pilots besides Rogers, Holcomb and Doan remained, also Capt Baumhauer and Lt Thompson. Having very little to occupy their time, the men were allowed to take one of the trucks and visit the rubber plantations and Roana Falls. A few men went out on this little tour almost every day.

On May 20th, Capt Rogers was sent, with pursuit escort, to look over the field at Wau, in preparation for the air transport of Australian Commando troops to that field. Because of bad weather, Rogers became lost. As he was flying around trying to locate Wau, he saw a B-25 on the ground at a tiny landing strip in the hills. His curiosity got the better of him, and he landed to see who it was, also, to find out where he was. It turned out to be a 90th Sq. ship which had run short on gas and made a forced landing at Aiyura. After talking with the crew for a few minutes he took off and found Wau, inspected it and then came home to turn in his report. This report was soon to become the cause of much tragedy and worry in the Squadron. May 24th Sunday and a phone call from headquarters to take 3 A024's to Aiyura and remove some of the crew of the B-25. So at 8:30 they took off. After an extensive search, Aiyura was finally found and the three ships dove into the valley through a hole in the clouds. It was at this inopportune time the engine on Capt Roger's ship cut out forcing him to crash land on a hillside, and beating him up considerable.

On attempting to land at Kainante, near Aiyura Doan nosed up in a mud hole in the field. Holcomb then went to Aiyura and landed. On the next day Holcomb was killed in an attempt to take-off from the small field and Rogers survived, his second accident in as many days with only slight injuries. Within a period of the next seven weeks, plans finally succeeded and the lost party was rescued.

In the meantime, the ground crews, left to Baumhauer and Thomson got their command, whiled away the hours until orders came on June 3rd, sending them back to the base at Charters Towers, where they arrived June 10th.

90TH SQUADRON HISTORY – 27TH MEN

Having been attached to the 90th Squadron; Birnn, Schmidt and Rose proceeded with a fervor to the task of catching up on lost months of good old G.I. American cooking, flying a real airplane again and contemplating the wonderful days ahead when they could retain those nice little explosive gifts which the Nips had so gracefully donated.

Schmidt got the first call – with Birnn as his copilot. He started out with nine other B-25's. However, Lady-luck was frowning and as he landed in Darwin in the way to Mindanao, P.I. a tire blew out. Replacement being unavailable at once the ships departed leaving Schmidt and Brinn, cussing and unhappy.

But their desire to get into action was held I check only for another short week. With the return of the expedition to P.I., Schmidt and Brinn were sent to Port Moresby for reconnaissance work. After 3 or 4 missions they returned, Schmidt returning after a couple of days rest with Richards as co-pilot. Brinn returned with Poire as his Co-Pilot, both doing reconnaissance work.

On April 28th, Lt Schmidt after photographing Salamaoa as ordered decided to photograph Lae - - it being so close. Having accomplished this he saw a Jap fighter preparing to intercept him. Ducking into the clouds he flew for some fifteen minutes before coming out again. Just after he left the cover he was attacked by a Messerschmitt 109 and his first knowledge that he had been followed was his gunner screaming over the interphone that both turrets were out while simultaneously tracers flew past both sides of the cockpit. Schmidt however so skillfully maneuvered his plane that the German (?) never got another burst into him and returned to Port Moresby where he found he was so badly shot up it was necessary to utilize the emergency landing gear devices and air brake. Unable to repair the damage there he returned to Australia with his wheels down. For this very nice piece of combat flying Schmidt later received the D.F.C.

Meanwhile Capt. (now Major) R, D, Hubbard with Rose as co-pilot started out to Port Moresby leading five planes. Pete Bender, Barker, Maull and W. R. Johnson as pilots. The weather was very bad, the flight became separated and Bender, Barker, and Johnson were forced to land in the water about 100 miles S.E. of Port Moresby. Bender's and Johnson crews surviving in tact, however Barker's crew except for his top gunner were instantly killed. These men all returned after five weeks of close association with the natives,-happy but to a man infected with malaria.

Hubbard and Maull having reached Moresby safely they were ordered to bomb Lae, N.G. the morning of the 25th of April. Just as they were preparing to take off an air raid alert was sounded. Major Hubbard unable to start his engines ordered Maull to proceed to Horn Island. Finally, after minor maintenance Hub got his engines started and took off. Once air borne he decided there was little use to carry 3000 pounds of bombs around aimlessly so why not drop as planned. In a clear sky, Hub flew to Lae and no more beautiful bombing run has ever been made. With unlimited visibility the bombardier set

up his sights some fifty miles out at 12000 feet. Then with ack-ack breaking like firecrackers he layed his six "eggs" squarely on the supply houses and Japanese Headquarters buildings. Luckily the constant 3 plane fighter patrol was just changing shifts and Hub prevented all but one ships interception. This ship however carried on a running fight for 35 minutes and but for the skillful flying of Hub would undoubtedly have shot down the B-25. Hubbard was decorated with the D.S.C. for his flight, and each member of his crew received the Silver Star.

It was at this time that the 90th learned the fate of a missing ship flown by Lt. J.J. Keeter and co-piloted by Capt. G.G. Stephenson. The ship had been flying reconnaissance missions at the same time as Lt. Schmidt and when returning to his base ran into very bad weather and crashed into a mountain. Capt. Stephenson had just come to Australia from the Philippines and the battle of Java and was on his first combat mission.

As it does to all men on reconnaissance work trouble came to Dick Birnn on April 30. Returning from Lae, N.G. he was intercepted by five zeros, each intent on his extermination. Mild mannered Dick had other ideas and by perfectly coordinating with his guns he succeeded in not only returning safely to Port Moresby but in destroying two of the five and starting at least the conversion to Christianity of the other 3 Nips. Birnn received the D.F.C. for this flight and his crew received the Silver Star.

Schmidt having returned with his ship quite perforated, Henry Rose was sent to replace him. Ordered to reconnoiter Bougainville Island the first day his ship was some 2¹/₂ hours out of Moresby when the right engine objected strenuously with three loud barks. Slightly repulsed at the idea of scirmming home Rose started his return to Moresby. Dodging through thunderstorms he was suddenly surprised at the beautiful yet ugly sight of a Japanese sea going submarine fully surfaced about a mile ahead. Without bombs, probably as surprised as the Jap lookout on deck, he attempted to sink a sub with machine gun fire - - his success remaining a master of complete speculation except that the answer could only be a loud NO!

Engine repaired, the morning of the 3rd of May he was ordered to fly across course search with J.R. Smith. Lost slightly bewildered already Rose was first finding himself by buzzing Buka passage when a four-engine flying boat came crusing by. Having identified it as a Jap not a U.S. Navy ship Rose proceeded to try to use a B-25 as a P-Shooter, Makes one pass and then is joined by J.R. Smith. Together they made pass after pass at the Jap, but after 35 minutes running fight during which some 3000 rounds were fired by both, the flying boat remained air borne and they were forced due to lack of gas and some very large holes in Smith's ship to return to Moresby-sadder than wiser...

Birnn, having returned to Moresby with another ship, asked to be sent to a quiet area on his mission for the 4th because his lower turret was out. On the mission he was suddenly started to see three three uncharted islands ahead. Which on closer investigation turned out to be the Japs largest aircraft carrier and two very heavy, heavy

cruisers. Returning to P. M. he flew over a sub tender, alongside of which there were two subs. Both crashed dived before he could strafe them.

The morning of the fifth, Rose was ordered to locate Shadaio, and report the position of the carrier Birnn had seen. Then he was to circle sending a steady signal so that the B-17's could home on him and bomb the Jap ships. These orders were carried out and he remained in the immediate vicinity for slightly over an hour dodging Jap Zero fighters by hide and seek tactics through the clouds. Forced to return to P.M. Rose found the B-17's had never taken off.

On May 28th General Brett visited the 3rd Bomb Gp and presented Capt Hubbard and Lt Rose with the D.S.C. Lt Birnn and Schmidt with D.F.C. for their as fore mentioned exploits. About 5 days later their long awaited promotions came through – each to the immediate rank higher.

These four pilots then were confined to periodic bombing raids on Lae, Salamaua, and Buna Bay, N.G.. Lt. Birnn having run up a total of 14 combat missions without a casualty in his aircraft - Lady-luck frowned again. On July 5, while in Brisbane on official relief from combat zone, Dick was testing an A-20A and from undetermined causes crashed to his death.

Three weeks later, ever willing, capable, conscientious, Schmidt was shot down in flames near Buna, N.G. Schmidt had amassed the amazing record of 25 combat missions, 188 hours of flying without injury to his men in the air. His supposed death came after he had voluntarily assumed leadership of a very hazardous mission through 3 hot beds of Japanese pursuit to bomb Gasmata, New Britain.

On the same mission Capt. F.P. (Pete) Bender, just recently returned to combat status after a long battle with Malaria, was also shot down in flames.

By some miracle Pete's ship exploded as he lay suspended in the cockpit by the force of a violent spin and finding himself sailing through the air he pulled his rip cord. Injured by frags, on one foot, the other ankle broken Capt Bender performed his last duties to the deceased members of his crew.

Three weeks later, taken again with malaria, with both legs infected he arrived in Port Moresby accompanied by his surviving crew member, top gunner T/Sgt. Thompson. Bender was carried in a litter made of parachute silk, cords and rough poles over the impassable trails of the Owen Stanley Range by friendly natives. Certainly Pete can feel he's had his full share of luck – good and bad. (Twice town in G.G.) in three missions – to return very much alive and kicking.