

## 29<sup>th</sup> AIR SERVICE GROUP



### MISSION

### LINEAGE

29<sup>th</sup> Air Base Group activated, 15 Jan 1941  
Redesignated 29<sup>th</sup> Air Service Group

### STATIONS

MacDill Field, Tampa, Florida,  
Zamboanga, Philippines  
Clark, Philippines, 26 Dec 1945-11 May 1946  
Kelly AFB, TX, 1 Jul 1949-5 Nov 1949

### ASSIGNMENTS

#### COMMANDERS

LTC. Charles T. Skow  
Captain Paul Heffner  
Col Mayer  
Major James H. Reed, Jr  
Maj Melton  
Col Franklin Keith Reyher, May 9, 1942 - July 7, 1944  
Maj Paul Mehrtens

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

## **EMBLEM**

## **MOTTO**

SOLA VIRTUS INVICTA – Courage alone is unconquerable

## **OPERATIONS**

SOLA VIRTUS INVICTA – Courage alone is unconquerable. This motto, inscribed on the official uniform shields worn by men of the 29th Air Service Group is as appropriate today as it was back in the early days of World War II. Thirty-five years after the personnel of this closely knit Air Force organization either returned to their homes and families, or continued their military careers, a small contingency of former members took on the gigantic task of recording its history.

The 29th was created, activated, organized and trained to provide vital services to Army Air Force units and their component support units under any and all conditions.

This it did, despite the lack of proper equipment, supplies and parts necessary to perform assigned and necessary duties encountered in the jungles of South Pacific Islands. The dedication, loyalty and perseverance of all personnel, through their ability to improvise when certain tools, parts and supplies were not available, made the 29th become recognized as one of the best service units functioning in the theatre.

One of the author's most disappointed moments was when it was learned that the book would have to be completed without information or data concerning the 65th Air Engineering Squadron. All efforts to obtain assistance about this unit which replaced the 82nd Service Squadron when it was reassigned to the 6th Air Service Group failed, except for a list of squadron personnel. This was most regrettable, as the 65th joined the 29th and continued to perform in a highly efficient manner making valuable contributions to the continued success of the tactical units it serviced.

The shield of palmetto trees on a background of Air Force blue with 'Sola Virtus Invicta' inscribed thereon, not only symbolized the group's origin, but will live in history as an emblem worn by men from all parts of the nation that came together, accepted their assignment, worked as a coordinated team, and contributed to the success of two Air Forces operating in a most complicated war theatre over an exceptionally long period of time under the most trying of circumstances.

"True Legends" do not occur many times in one's lifetime, but the 29th Air Service Group was, and always shall be, so classified. From its creation by War Department letter dated December 5, 1940, and its activation as the 29th Air Base Group at MacDill Field, Tampa, Florida, on January 15, 1941, the group organized, trained, and performed every possible function in support of combat fighter and bomb groups in both defensive and offensive missions. Tactical air units in training in the United States and later combat units of both the 13th and 5th Air Forces received daily, on-going, essential services from all ten units of the 29th group. From a small, select, element of men out of the 27th Air Base Group Air Corps Detachment, teamed with newly trained recruits, it grew into a complete service machine that carried out duties in the fields of aircraft repair, maintenance, supply, ordnance, signal, quartermaster, transportation, medical, finance, photo, chemical, and administration, with distinction and honor.

From its early arrival days at the newly built Charlotte, North Carolina, Army Air Base, it had the nucleus of only a handful of officers and men out of the 30th Air Base Squadron, the 40th Materiel Squadron and a small Headquarters Squadron contingency. It recruited technicians, mechanics, cooks, supply men, truck drivers, medical doctors, corporals, machinists, carpenters, MPs, welders, sheet metal men, painters, and so on. Strict discipline and training schedules were established and adhered to while the group was trying to fill out its organizational requirements with qualified and capable personnel.

At the onset of war, after the surprise December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor attack, the group was called upon to carry out defensive responsibilities established to protect the east coast. In this regard, some went to Myrtle Beach, Charleston, South Carolina, and Wilmington, North Carolina, establishing distribution points servicing other Air Corps units operating throughout the area. Valuable experience of the group's primary mission was gained by these exercises. As personnel were assigned, others were transferred and/ or reassigned to specialized training schools, to officer candidate schools, or to other squadrons being formulated. The 29th continued to serve the 56<sup>th</sup> Pursuit Group in training at Morris Field which enabled the squadrons to learn their jobs more thoroughly and make the group more cohesive. Similar activity was likewise occurring by 29th units at various other US bases. In these early, hectic days, several people served as Group Commander, including the group's first Commanding Officer, Captain Paul Heffner, followed by Lt. Col. Charles T. Skow, Major Roland Birnn, Colonel William B. Mayer, Major James H. Reed, Jr., Major Harry Melton, and myself. I assumed command of the group May 9, 1942, at the critical time of pursuing complete organization for a future that was unknown. Since I had been with the Base Recruit Detachment from its inception, and had considerable experience with men of the 29th group and its assigned squadrons, this new environment was in keeping with training and experiences already received.

Following the War Department's efforts to speed up unit organizing, the 29th's Headquarters and 40th Materiel Squadron, (later the 40th Service Squadron), prepared for foreign service to an unknown destination. Other necessary squadrons were in training at other bases and camps throughout the States. Two of these units joined the group at Morris Field when the 82<sup>nd</sup> Materiel Squadron and the 2020th Quartermaster Company (Truck) arrived in September of 1942. As

orders came through to move the 29th to the Camp Stoneman, California, staging area, I was informed that six other units were also enroute to join the group at Stoneman, completing the organizational makeup. These included the 1137th Quartermaster Company, the 1021<sup>st</sup> 1653rd, and 1637th Ordnance Companies, the 1932nd Quartermaster; Company (Truck), and the 1003rd Signal Company.

Now the group was ready and an air of excitement was evident as preparations continued for overseas service. Although most thought, due to the type of clothing issued and the type of equipment and supplies being packed, that the group was destined for cold climate duty, most probably the Aleutian Islands, future events soon proved a tropical climate destination was the real objective.

November 3, 1942, has been recorded as the date for all to remember as sixty officers, three warrant officers, and one thousand, sixty-seven enlisted men sailed out of San Francisco Bay aboard the USAT Mormacsea, while a few days later the USAT Thomas A. Edison left the same bay, loaded with some of the bulkier equipment belonging to 29th units. The long Pacific crossing became a unique episode for all.

After setting up original operations November 26, 1942, at Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, with a short stop at the Fiji Islands, the 29th served and performed its assignments until the end of the Japanese war in August of 1945.

Many of its men remained overseas until the closing months of that year, prior to being relieved from World War II active duty. It was one of the longest periods of time served, without interruption in operations, by any organization of our armed forces in the Pacific war zone. A popular misconception about WW II, is that the US Armed Forces had thousands upon thousands of fighting planes available to it. The facts are, that when the 29th group arrived at Espiritu Santo, the U.S. Army Air Force had two heavy bomb groups, the 5th and the 11th, flying B-17 "Flying Fortress" aircraft. They totaled less than one hundred serviceable bombers in the entire area. Also, there were several fighter squadrons, flying independently, with no centralized command, flying out of the New Hebrides and two were flying out of Guadalcanal. Almost a year later, when Major General Nathan F. Twining USA, the Commanding General, 13th Air Force, commander COMAIRSOLS, and was headquartered at Guadalcanal, he could count on only three hundred seventeen Air Corps, Navy and Marine Corps bombers, plus three hundred, fourteen fighters for the strategically important Munda, Bougainville, and Northern Solomons campaigns.

Because of this small number of available aircraft, it was absolutely imperative that every plane be kept airborne, i.e., crippled by enemy guns, takeoff or landing damage, or just worn out from repeated and extended use. This became the principle mission of the 29th Air Service Group, and this the 29<sup>th</sup> did, using every method known to man, and some never before tried. They would machine their own parts in the absence of parts being available; they sealed holes in fuselages and wings with anything made of metal, and, in *extreme* cases, even mashed large tin food containers to repair fuselage areas.

The 29th Air Service Group was more than a highly skilled aircraft repair and supply unit. It normally gave full support services to two tactical flying groups - bomber or fighter. Its three ordnance units, the 1021st, 1653rd, and 1637th performed important tasks, insuring that aircraft armament equipment was in working order. Also, that bombs and weapons were properly cared for and loaded so that they would explode properly when dropped or that ammunition was effective when fired. Further, the two quartermaster trucking companies, the 1932nd and 2020th, were superior performing outfits, composed entirely of black enlisted Americans, whose principal functions were to haul all types of necessary supplies to the flight and support groups each one serviced.

They were units that were well trained and supervised and their efforts enhanced the record of the 29th. Without those "6 Bys-Keep-'Em-Rolling" drivers' spirited performance of most difficult tasks, the 29th's mission would have bogged down.

Communication services and duties were aptly performed by the men of the 1003rd Signal Company, who, despite severe tropical weather, air raids, reptiles, and insects, furnished telephones, TWX and other communications, not only for the 29th, but to the bomber, fighter and satellite units operating in the islands.

The 1137th Quartermaster Company worked overtime, under all adverse conditions, furnishing food, clothing, tents, and petroleum products, in addition to normal requests for equipment. The 1137th made the old adage, "The Army travels on its stomach," a reality.

Enough cannot be said for the 40th and 82nd Service Squadrons. Their hours were limitless. They furnished mechanics, machinists, instrument shop specialists, and the highly skilled supply technicians called upon for thousands of spare parts of every description. Although they were trained to do a 3<sup>rd</sup> Echelon maintenance level of aircraft repair, time after time Air Corps Depot type of 4th Echelon repairs were done night and day to keep combat aircraft flyable - under the most extreme field and wartime conditions possible. The minds of the Air Corps military planners knew their business when they created service squadrons, and the 29th was most fortunate in having the best.

Rounding out the units of the group was Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron. This squadron had much in the line of diversified duty, such as the Group Aid Station, composed of experienced doctors, dentists, qualified technicians and corpsmen, who were, on many occasions, called upon to treat injuries and strange-sounding tropical illnesses. The Group's Finance Section paid, without fail, the total earnings due all Air Forces personnel at each station where the 29th was located. This was to include all combat elements and satellite units that accompanied bomber and fighter organizations on each island.

Smaller, but none the less important in function, were the Photo Section, the Chemical Warfare Section, the Staff Ordnance and Quartermaster Sections, and the component units of the 29th group headquarters. With the varied duties performed by the executive officer, the adjutant, the S-1, S-2, S-3, and S-4 offices, they blended their specialized fields to make a thorough coordinated

effort of all group functions. Also, on several occasions, they took on the expanded responsibility of operating Air Service centers whenever the events of the war required the group to serve many additional units attached, for record keeping, payrolls, supplies supervision and support.

During stepped-up activity, one base - the Army Air Corps' MacDill Field in Tampa, Florida, became the key location that ultimately resulted in the establishment of the 29th Air Service Group.

It was December 5, 1940, that the General Headquarters of the U.S. Army Air Forces in Washington D.C., originated its letter file #322.081 that created the 29th Air Base Group effective January 15, 1941.

Under Special Order No. 11, issued by Headquarters, MacDill Field, Tampa, Florida, the organization was activated with the officers and enlisted men of the 27th Air Base Group, (R) GHQ AF Air Force Detachment, then transferred and reassigned to the 29th Air Base Group.

Captain Paul Heffner, Commanding Officer of the 27th Air Base Group, became the first Group Commander of the 29th, and selected Captain Jerome D. Giddens as his Group Adjutant while William E. Stephens was named the Group's first Sergeant Major. The original contingent of this newly created activated group consisted of three squadrons: Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, 40th Materiel Squadron, and the 30th Air Base Squadron. Total personnel at the time of activation included three officers and fifty-nine enlisted men of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, also commanded by Captain Jerome D. Giddens; one officer, 1st Lt. Robert F. Causey and seventy enlisted men in the 40th Materiel Squadron while the 30th Air Base Squadron consisted of Commanding Officer 1st Lt. John D. Muse and fifty-nine enlisted men. First Sergeant of Headquarters Squadron was Russell L. Chappell; Michael Perrino was First Sergeant of the 30th AB Squadron.

During this formative period MacDill Field Post and Wing Commander, Brigadier General Clarence L. Tinker, took a personal interest in the 29th's future, and gave much of his valuable time assisting with the organizational plans as recruits were arriving each day. Screening of personnel was critical for both officers and men as most were at this point in time either not trained or improperly trained for new assignments. Since Captain Heffner, the Group's Commander, was a senior pilot, much of his time was spent away from the base on other Air Corps business. A great amount of the responsibility of forming the new group therefore rested with Captain Giddens. Rations and quarters for the majority of the men were being provided by the base recruit detachment as training was a basic and fundamental necessity. The task of obtaining required supplies and equipment was, understandably, an enormous one as the hectic pace, connected with the daily arrival of new personnel continued. Some of these men, after careful screening, were assigned to other base components but a sizable number remained with the 29th.

One of Captain Heffner's ordered tasks was to travel to Charlotte, North Carolina, with members of his staff, to establish military relationships with local officials. as the well-known grapevine rumor mill. which usually proved to be correct despite efforts to maintain secrecy, continued to

report the 29th Air Base Group would be moving to this North Carolina city. It was later learned that Captain Heffner's visits were even more involved as he also met and conferred with contractors engaged in constructing facilities for an Army Air Corps training base being built at the Charlotte Municipal Airport.

This construction involved complete installations to train and house various Air Corps units and personnel and to maintain an orderly construction timetable to meet the needs of the 29th and others that would utilize the new base in the months ahead.

Meanwhile, personnel of the 29th were experiencing new and different ways of life as they lived in tents in one of the most undesirable areas of Tampa Bay. Early arrivals still talk about the beautiful sales pitch given prospective enlistees about the wonderful and gorgeous Army Air Corps base at Tampa, Florida, called MacDill Field - "the land of sunshine". Recruiting stations revealed brochures depicting lovely scenes of the fine barracks and surrounding vacation areas to lure young, red blooded, American boys into signing up which many of them did. Upon arrival in Tampa, they were escorted to "tent city" out in the middle of what was later to become airfield runways.

These early arrivals were unable to obtain G.I. clothing issues and consequently slept in clothing they had upon arrival for over a week. It was so cold at night they had to keep dressed for warmth. The mess hall was located over half a mile away in a huge tent. One ex-GI recalls how thick the sea gulls flew overhead - as thick as flies - and nobody dared tilt his head back to look for fear he would get an eyeful of unwanted droppings. Ocean breezes created blowing sand which ended up in their bunks. The men were forced to cover their beds in the daytime to keep out the shifting sand. As one old-timer put it, "This was worse than the Fort Benning maneuvers. When the 29th moved into the area, the rattlesnakes moved out." It was a common sight to see men skinning a rattlesnake during after duty hours.

During the period of new officers and men arriving at MacDill Field, daily records indicate that most of the new recruits were assigned to Base Air Corps (unassigned) and attached to the 29th Air Base Group to train and perform various organizational functions. Several of the men were transferred from the 14th Reconnaissance Squadron, the 53rd Pursuit Group and the 29<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (H) to several units at MacDill Field including the 27<sup>th</sup> Air Base Group that later became the 29th AB Group. These were hectic times with troop movements, officer and enlisted man assignments and transfers very common. Copies of orders during this period were issued and signed by Brigadier General Tinker and made official by R.A. Burnett, 1st Lt. AC, Acting Adjutant.

On March 13, 1941, Captain Heffner was relieved of his command and transferred to group operations as the unit was now growing and its responsibilities shifting to new areas. The new Group Commander was Lt. Col. Charles T. Skow, who then named Captain Jerome Giddens as Squadron Commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron. Also at this time Sergeant Lorry M. Ray became the Group's Sergeant Major.

On March 19, 1941, orders were issued by Headquarters, Fourth Corps Area under file 370.5 along with Immediate Action Letter, Headquarters Third Air Force, file 370.5, that a cadre of detachment Company "C", 91<sup>st</sup> Quartermaster Battalion (LM), consisting of seven enlisted men, ten enlisted men of the 29th Air Base Group, GHQ Air Force that was to include one (1) B-18 mechanic and one (1) radio operator, was to depart MacDill Field by motor transportation and proceed to the new base at Charlotte, North Carolina, on March 31, 1941, for a permanent change of station.

Sgt. Troy J. Thomas of the 91st Quartermaster Battalion was designated to be in charge of the truck convoy while S/Sgt. Otis C. Turner of the 29th AB Group was to be in charge of the enlisted men. The convoy consisted of five trucks supplied by the 34th Quartermaster Regiment (truck) at MacDill. The movement orders further indicated that the convoy would depart from Building B-28, MacDill Field, as soon as the men had received their pay.

Authorized stop-overs were to take place the first night at Camp Blanding, Florida, and at Savannah Air Base, Savannah, Georgia, the second night. No cooking facilities were authorized so the men were paid the going travel rate at that time, in advance, to purchase rations. These allowable monetary allowances were \$2.25 per day for each of the seventeen men for the three-day trip. Supper on March 31, and breakfast on April 1, were furnished by Camp Blanding while supper on April 1, and breakfast on the 2nd were provided by Savannah Air Base. Once again these orders were issued by command of

General Tinker and verified by 1st Lt. James H. Bearly as Adjutant. The personnel of the 29th that made up this advance cadre included: S/Sgt. Otis C. Turner of the 40th Materiel Squadron; from Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, S/Sgt. Arnold L. Grantham, Pfc's Carl E. Smith and Ocie M. Tehell, and Pvt's James R. Cochran and Robert B. Laurents. The 30th Air Base Squadron contributed four men including Corp's Richard G. Derby, James R. Respress, Alphonse F. Jayssek and Pfc. Royce J. Riddle.

The Federal Government through its War Department Land Procurement Division had previously taken over a small, privately owned, airfield in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, as well as several hundred acres of land adjacent to it for the purpose of building an Army Air Corps training base. While under construction the small airport became known as the Charlotte Army Air Base.

Excavating machinery, earthmovers and other construction equipment cleared the wooded areas near the airport to make way for a modern up-to date air base capable of providing a defense for the east coast that many thought vulnerable to enemy attack. The base was to be a site for combat pilot training and a vital link in the USA chain of air defenses. In case of emergency, the base could be utilized for both defense and offensive action.

Construction features of the facility were to provide permanent structures for administrative units, shops and hangars for aircraft maintenance and repair, and living quarters for officers and enlisted men that would provide both comfort and long service.



Plans for the new air base included barracks to house eighteen hundred enlisted men, with each structure providing adequate space for sixty three men on two floors, a base church, mess-halls, recreation and day-rooms for each unit, a PX, as well as outdoor recreation facilities for baseball, volleyball, softball and other forms of outdoor sport. Drill and exercise areas were also part of the layout and a tough obstacle course was to be a part of the rigorous training program.

Along with the Charlotte Air Base construction, the government let contracts for the building and development of a defense housing project in the Queen City that would provide quarters for the officers and men expected to arrive and who would have authority to live off base. Twelve one bedroom units, fifty-two two bedroom apartments and twenty-four units with three bedrooms made up the complex. Each apartment was to be equipped with a refrigerator, oil heat and a stove with a modern water system. Playgrounds were to be installed with the kinds of activities children enjoyed. Goode Construction Company of Charlotte was the general contractor.

When the cadre arrived in Charlotte they were in for a surprise, as they were informed that the base and its facilities were not yet ready for troop occupancy. The men now understood why they were issued canvas folding cots and G.1. mattresses prior to leaving MacDill because they were promptly taken to the Charlotte YMCA and put up in the Y's assembly room. After they were here a few days they all agreed that the base contractor could take all the time he wanted as the Y personnel welcomed the troops and made all of its facilities available during off-duty hours. A base officer came into town once a week to inspect the quarters, but this was no problem as the men were enjoying every minute of this. Sadly, the arrangement only lasted three weeks and soon was back to normal when they moved into the newly opened barracks. In setting up Headquarters operations, it was frustrating to some of the regular Army personnel to find the Charlotte base staffed by female Civil Service employees who seemed to be unfamiliar with usual routine military procedures and regulations. As the rest of the group arrived and additional section activity began taking shape, many of the female employees were phased out.

On April 8th, Captain Giddens, Group Adjutant, left MacDill Field under orders to proceed to Charlotte Army Air Base with the balance of the 29<sup>th</sup> assembling all personnel on April 16th for a rail trip to Charlotte, arriving in the city railroad station at 9:19 A.M. on the 17th of April, 1941.

Lt. Col. Charles T. Skow was relieved as Group Commander upon departure from MacDill, and once again Captain Paul Heffner became Commanding officer of the 29<sup>th</sup>

The 29th Air Base Group, now getting settled in its new home, took up the task of helping to make an integral efficient Army Air Base from one of the many red clay hills of North Carolina. With the exception of one Quartermaster unit and a small Signal Corps detachment, the Charlotte Air Base was occupied only by the 29th Air Base Group.

During this period all troops, both officers and enlisted men, were undergoing extensive basic and advanced training while at the same time continuing to build the 29th into an efficient operating unit. Colonel Clinton W. Howard was named first Charlotte Air Base Commander to

organize and manage the enormous task of putting all pieces together toward properly trained, well disciplined, Air Corps units capable of dealing with whatever future assignments the War Department might order. New arrivals at the base would be assigned and later reassigned or transferred as needs and situations dictated. This was accomplished through the Base Recruit Detachment which was assigned to the 29th Air Base Group.

The Recruit Detachment was under the command of 1st Lt. Franklin K. Reyher, who was later to become the Group's Commanding Officer. Full and complete basic training was organized and implemented for all recruits. These activities included calisthenics, close-order drill and all of its application; M-1 and Carbine rifle instructions and range shooting; twenty-five mile (more or less) hikes, both in formation and informal; gas mask training and exercises; military orders, discipline and procedures as well as regulations.

Lt. Franklin K. Reyher was called to extended active duty in March of 1941, and reported for an active duty examination (physical) to Camp Stewart, Georgia. Following this physical he proceeded to his new assignment location, Charlotte Army Air Base, North Carolina. He became a member of the 29th

Air Base Group upon the group's arrival there in mid-April, 1941. He had been commissioned in the Infantry Reserve Officers Corps in 1933 after graduation from DePauw University in Geencastle, Indiana. While there he was active in basketball and track and was a member of the Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity.

Before and after the arrival of the 29th from MacDill Field, the following Officers were performing various assignments at Charlotte Army Air Base: Col. Clinton W. Howard, Base Commander; Maj. Waldine Messmore, Base Air Corps Supply; Capt. Roland Birnn, Base Executive Officer; Capt. Brice

W. Miller, Base Schools Officer; Capt. William C. Hampton, Base PX; Capt. George F. Wright, Headquarters Squadron Commander; Capt. Paul Snyder, General Mess Officer; Capt. Robert S. Hall, Commanding Officer of the 40<sup>th</sup> Materiel Squadron; Capt. Harry R. Melton, Base Adjutant; Lt. Wesley P. Bare, Base and 29th Group Chaplain; Lt. John D. Muse, Commanding Officer of the 30th Air Base Squadron; Lt. Graham D. Stephens, Headquarters Detachment; Lt. Joseph K. Hamilton, Base S-I; Lt. John W. Marshall, Base Transportation; Capt. Mitchell Borden; and Lt. Robert F. Causey of the 40<sup>th</sup> Materiel Squadron in addition to Lt. Reyher.

New officers were arriving daily which kept base command personnel busy cutting and issuing orders to fill, assign, transfer, and reassign base, group and squadron positions. During this hectic organizational period in the group's early days a senior pilot with fifteen years of service, Capt. Roland Birnn, arrived who previously had been serving as an instructor at the Air Corps Tactical School at Langley Field, Hampton, Virginia. The course was a stepped-up, high-pressure series, designed to enable reserve officers and National Guardsmen the opportunity to complete the training as rapidly as deemed feasible. When this duty was completed, Capt. Birnn (later to become a full colonel), was ordered to proceed to the Charlotte Air Base and assume command of the 29th Air Base Group which also caused Capt. Heffner to be once again reassigned to other

responsibilities.

Upon arrival and taking over his new command, Capt. Birnn set about to mold the 29th into as fine a unit as his broad experience dictated. During this duty, his ideas and objectives at times did not exactly agree with Base Commander Col. Clinton W. Howard. Both were highly respected and experienced men and each was trying to do his best in those most trying times. Capt. Birnn was called upon on two occasions to leave Charlotte and under orders was an official air-umpire for air-ground maneuvers, both in Louisiana and in the New England area.

Capt. Birnn also had a career officer son who earned his wings and was assigned to the ferry command. This son was later killed while flight-testing a new A-20 medium bomber. This was most unfortunate as the young Birnn had distinguished himself as a B-25 pilot with the 3rd Bomb Group which later saw a lot of action against the Japanese aggressors.

In any case, Col. Birnn, after leaving the 29th, saw duty in Italy, then worked in North Africa and received the Legion of Merit. After VE Day, he returned to the States and served on the War Department Decorations and Awards Boards. Later developing hearing problems (which he blamed on his early days of open-cockpit flying) he retired from the military. He later joined the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary assisting the regular Coast Guard in promoting water safety, a "job" that lasted thirteen years. This time he retired for good – after wearing Uncle Sam's uniforms for fifty-two years.

The 29th AB Group was now rapidly taking over new duties. Aircraft maintenance crews were functioning with several training planes on the field while Air Corps Supply was stocking up for stepped-up operations. Group sentries were being assigned to pull guard duty and were challenging curious civilians at the base's two entrances.

Included among the men that came up to Charlotte from MacDill was a service veteran with many years' experience in aircraft maintenance resulting from military service since 1920. Master Sergeant Joseph O. Schreck first served in the Coast Artillery, followed by a hitch in the Army Air Service at Langley Field, Virginia, and later at Nichols Field in the Philippines. When his tour of duty expired, he returned to civilian life to become an ROTC instructor at the University of Pittsburgh, after which he again entered the service with a three year stint in the Navy serving aboard ships that took him to the Virgin Islands, China, and Panama among other places. Out of the Navy, he reenlisted in the Army once again in 1931 and served at Maxwell Field, Alabama, and Barksdale Field, Louisiana, gaining additional experience with military aircraft. In 1939 Joe was placed in charge of a cadre of sixty men ordered to proceed to Tampa, Florida, to help activate a new Air Base called Mac Dill Field. While there he rose to the position of Line Chief and sent to Air Engineering School at Tulsa, Oklahoma. Upon completion of this course, Sergeant Schreck returned to MacDill and was assigned to the recently created 29th Air Base Group. When the Group shipped out to Charlotte, Sergeant Schreck was included to utilize his vast experience organizing and training the many new aircraft technicians being assigned to the 29th. At the time the 29<sup>th</sup> was ordered to leave Morris Field for foreign service, Sgt. Joe Schreck was left behind to continue to train and teach young men entering Air Force service units for the needs of the

future. Line Crews and supply personnel out of the 40th Service Squadron will long remember the talents and abilities of M/Sgt. Joseph O. Schreck.

Three top noncoms in the 29th, Master Sergeants Donald W. Holley, (82nd), Reuben Yarri (40th), and Jahue Baker (40th), later held similar positions of respect due to their experiences and abilities. All used their broad aircraft engineering knowledge to teach those under them better ways to perform maintenance and repair work resulting in the increased serviceability of all types of combat planes.

By the first of June, personnel of the 29th were participating in various training programs and doing morning drills in addition to their normal duties. Preparations were also under way for coming maneuvers as it was expected the 29th would participate in these field exercises as the group now had a complement of twenty-one officers and two hundred and thirty enlisted men. In the meantime, the Charlotte Air Base and its operations had become organized so that the original airport facilities were left intact. It had been agreed that the previous use of the airport by civilians and Eastern Air Lines would continue, as long as they provided two-way radio communications between military units.

The first combat fighter unit to arrive and train was the 56th Pursuit Group. The base began to take on noticeable changes now as the runway was lined with pursuit training planes and newly graduated pilots were arriving daily. Maintenance crews of the 29th were putting in long hours trying to keep all ships in top condition and in the air. In addition, cross-country aircraft had to be refueled and serviced as they set down at Charlotte from time to time, which gave our men much needed experience.

The men of the 40th Materiel Squadron were assigned this work and valuable on-the-job training began with actual combat/training aircraft. These were primarily P-36 fighter planes; , later there were several other training-type planes being used and serviced, such as P-39's and P-40's.

The base also possessed a B-18 bomber which was a smaller, two-engine version of the famous B-17, which was used by flying personnel from time to time to carry out flight orders. During one particular flight, the plane was returning to Charlotte during darkness when suddenly the engines went out. All on board parachuted out over an area near Charlotte and the plane crashed. On board and parachuting to safety were eleven crew and passengers including the pilot, Lt. William Tennille, Capt. Jerome Giddens, Lt. Duncan Muse of the 30th Air Base Squadron and Capt. Robert B. Hall. Nobody received serious injuries; , their pride was damaged as most had to be retrieved from trees and shrubbery in their attempt to find open landing areas. Soon after, in the Report of Survey required to be made for all crashed aircraft, it was determined that the amount of equipment aboard was so extensive that the Base Headquarters could not understand how the plane ever got off the ground.

In addition to the new arrivals, transfers and reassignments previously mentioned, we must not forget the promotions. Here we had a situation in both the officer and enlisted ranks, in a new organization with constantly changing Tables of Organization, where 'opportunities for

advancement were numerous and ambition reigned throughout. Some of the personnel were regular or "old" Army and many were naturally in line for higher rank simply on the basis of years of service.

Group Commander Biron was a case in point who achieved his Lt. Colonel's insignia on July 25, but Col. Biron, as previously mentioned had a long and distinguished career behind him. A few days later, the base as well as the 29<sup>th</sup> Air Base Group Chaplain, Wesley P. Bare, received news of his well-deserved captain's promotion. Capt. Bare was the first chaplain assigned to the base and did a great job of promoting understanding, cooperation and good will between the citizens of Charlotte and the military personnel on the base. chaplain Bare was a very popular figure and highly respected by everyone. He did not accompany the Group to the Pacific. Soon thereafter, the 29th was ordered to participate in area wide maneuvers and was staggering from the weight of additional responsibility and workload on its personnel. It was, for example, handling the administration of personnel on the base (in addition to the 29th) for rations. Its service crews were asked to work nights to keep up the pace while parachute packers were working twelve hour shifts with only short breaks for meals. All passes and furloughs were canceled during maneuvers, all of which stepped up training for the men much faster than planned, but, also caused a high incidence of fatigue.

Additional training was renewed and pursued after the maneuver period when the 29th's personnel were assigned to three new outposts called distribution points, (DP's). These were at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, Wilmington, North Carolina, and Charleston, South Carolina. These distribution points secured supplies for combat units operating in the field. This kind of training was valuable toward the day actual combat areas would be involved. Distribution points was a military term meaning that it may be necessary one day for new air bases to be established at these locations. A large body of the 29th set up at Myrtle Beach with the rest split into two other units, one going to Wilmington and the other to Charleston. Fear of an Atlantic coast attack and even an invasion was growing so these distribution points were considered critical to the defense of the nation.

During the period that a unit of the 29th was sent to Charleston, South Carolina, a 2nd Lt. by the name of Earl Frink was among the distribution point officers. This young officer was in urgent need of toilet tissue for the supply room so he sent a telegram back to the Charlotte Air Base for a shipment of toilet paper and signed the telegram, "FRINK". Little did he realize that Generals alone were permitted the privilege of using only their last name; so it just happened that a Major General Frink, who was Quartermaster General for the IVth Corps Area, was making a general inspection of the area. When Lt. Frink's telegram arrived, it was everyone's assumption it was sent by General Frink. Anyway, about one thousand rolls of toilet tissue were quickly loaded aboard a B-18 bomber and delivered to the D.P. Center in a matter of hours. When the facts were known later Lt. Frink had his ears pinned back but good and strong by the Base Commander, but his badly needed supplies arrived in good time.

It was during this period that Lt. Col. Birnn was relieved from command and once again the helm was transferred. This time Colonel William B. Mayer, an Army Air Corps balloonist, assumed the

top post on August 18, 1941. In September, 1941, the 29th was once again called upon to provide valuable assistance where needed when a detachment of clerks was sent to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to help the First Air Support Command during its maneuvers. The efficiency and over-all abilities of the group were being recognized by other units, but the field experience proved most valuable.

Also, one of the three original 29th Air Base Units, the 30th Air Base Squadron was reassigned and detached from the 29th leaving it with only two squadrons, Headquarters and the 40th Materiel. Personnel of the 29th never really understood all these transfers, reassignments and movements, but felt the brass knew what they were doing.

During this period, relations between the United States and Japan had become very strained and tense and after several warnings about repeated aggression in Southern Asia the U.S. cut off trade with them.

In December, 29th personnel were looking forward to the possibility that they may be lucky enough to get a furlough for the Christmas holiday. It was announced that one-third of the men could go each ten day period and were requested to sign up for their choice of dates. The first furlough group was approved to begin December 5, so on December 7, 1941, about one-third of the men were either home on leave or on their way home when news was flashed throughout the nation, that without warning the Japanese had attacked and bombed the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and other nearby air bases.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt went before Congress and asked for a Declaration of War against Japan. A few days later war was also declared against Germany and Italy. So now it was no longer fun and games - it was real war and the seriousness of the situation set in rapidly. The American people were shocked and stunned over the brazen and sudden attack against our forces and immediately rallied around the President with their full support.

As a result of this all men on leave were notified to return to their base immediately as orders came down that the 29th was to make ready to leave Charlotte. This meant that all other leaves were canceled and the huge task of packing and crating began. Equipment and supplies began to move to loading areas as men that were on furlough began returning. Movement orders were finalized on December 9th, and all personnel, equipment and supplies were taken to the rail-siding for loading. The train departed at 6:20 P.M., for an unannounced location and as the cars moved away most men were sound asleep from exhaustion.

Prior to leaving, all of the base officers had been transferred from the 29<sup>th</sup> to the 30th Air Base Squadron which remained at Charlotte. Colonel Mayer was relieved as Group Commander and Major James H. Reed, Jr., was ordered to take over the top command when the group left the base. James H. Reed, Jr.'s interest in aviation started as a pilot in 1929 with the 105th Observation Squadron of the Tennessee National Guard as a 1st Lt. and Capt. This led to active duty when the unit was called into service in 1940. He first went to an Army Air Base near Columbia, South Carolina, as a captain.

He served as Engineering Officer in that unit for ten months and on February 29, 1942, was appointed Commanding Officer of the Morris Field Sub-Depot in Charlotte, North Carolina. He was transferred to Lauenburg-Maxton Army Air Base, North Carolina, where he commanded the 229th Sub-Depot and then to Middletown, Pennsylvania Air Technical Service Command for about four months before reporting to Warner Robins Field, Georgia, on November 10, 1944. He had a very broad knowledge of aircraft engineering, and served his country with distinction in this capacity.

When he was released at the end of World War II from Maxwell Field in 1945, he had attained the rank of full colonel after four years of service. In his civilian pursuits, he located in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1918, where he became one of the earliest Chevrolet dealers in the south. Later, he formed the Broadway Motor Co., distributor and dealer of Studebaker and Pierce-Arrow automobiles, but resumed his contract with Chevrolet with the organization of Jim Reed Chevrolet Co. which was to develop into the largest single dealership in the central south. The company won many awards over the years for its sales and service records, during the course of which, Mr. Reed served as president of the Nashville Automobile Dealers Association, and as a member of the Advisory Committee of Alfred P. Sloan, for many years president of General Motors.

Orders received on board the train revealed the Group would go to Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and establish a distribution point to service fighter squadrons now operating up and down the Atlantic coast. The previous tour of duty here helped tremendously to speed up setting up of camp-sites and operations. On December 12th, the Group's first casualty was recorded when Private First Class, Warren Lefkowitz was accidentally shot in the leg prior to reporting for guard duty. The wound was not serious, , and he soon returned to duty. (Lefkowitz was later transferred and served with distinction with the 82nd Service Squadron). The assignment was short-lived as on December 16th, the Group was ordered to return to Charlotte, except for a small detachment at Myrtle Beach, to perform necessary services to planes in the pursuit group. Upon returning to the base, the men found that a Signal Corps unit had moved into their barracks, so temporary quarters were provided until the snafu could be rectified.

With the exception of a few change-of-duty assignments in the officer ranks, one could hardly tell the move had even been made. A lot of fun was had by the men as they told those that had remained in Charlotte of the terrible bloody battles they were engaged in. Two key assignments that occurred during this period included the naming of Lt. F. K. Reyher to be Commanding Officer of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and the 29th Group Adjutant and the assignment of Lt. John Woodward to Group Headquarters. These two officers were to continue to play key leadership roles throughout the growth and operations of the 29th and its various Squadrons. Lt. Woodward was later named Group Personnel Officer, replacing Lt. George D. Bennett who was sent to navigation school.

Lt. John Woodward, native of Vienna, Georgia, was commissioned in the Officers Reserve Corps in

1938, and served one year in the infantry at Fort McClellan, Alabama. Called to active duty with the Air Corps October 1, 1941, Lt. Woodward was assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron of the 29th at Charlotte on the 10th of October, 1941.

Another of the 29th's officers, who was later to become a Squadron Commanding Officer, arrived at Charlotte in March, 1942. Lt. Louis Shepard was a West Point Academy graduate who held a commission in the Infantry Reserve. He had received his War Department orders to take a physical examination on December 18, 1941, after which he was ordered to report to Charlotte Army Air Base on March 1, 1942, and in view of his background and training, was extremely surprised to learn of his assignment with an Air Corps unit, but rapidly became accustomed to his new duties.

The 56th Pursuit Group was made up of young pilots just out of pilot training and commissioned second lieutenants upon earning their wings. Maj or David D. Graves was the Group's Commander. He later became a Brigadier General and was killed in action in North Africa. He set forth a training schedule that kept all squadrons on a seven day a week flight program. The airfield at Morris Field was built so that its runway ended just before a very sharp drop-off that resembled the side of a cliff. If pilots didn't become airborne soon enough during take-off, or if they tried to touch down too soon when coming in for landings, they crashed at this end of the runway and several accidents of this type did occur. Later on another pursuit group, the 20th, on its way to overseas duty in the European Theatre, landed at Charlotte to await the arrival of new aircraft. This was good news for pilots in the 56th, as when the new planes came in and the 20th departed, their previous planes became the property of the 56th, which was a marked improvement over the former equipment.

So, now with the start of a new year, the 29th possessed more confidence in their ability as a result of the distribution point experiences and, if rumors were to come true, they could soon expect more of the same. News from the war areas indicated continued build-up of U. S. Forces on land, sea, and air, and "old-timers" in the outfit were anxious to see the 29th reach full strength.

During February, the 29th, now a well-organized and experienced Air Force Service Group, was called upon to assist in the formulation of another Air Service Group, even though it was not full strength itself. It contributed a cadre of officers and men toward creation of the 302nd Air Base Group which left the 29th short of trained men to carry on its duties.

Lt. Lewis L. Holladay was reassigned as Group Commander of this new unit. Several other officer transfers and assignments took place during this period, one of which was the release of Major Heffner, who was the Group's first Commanding Officer. Major Harry R. Melton became the new Group Commander.

Sergeant Lloyd Brown, personal secretary to the Group Commander was recognized for his outstanding administrative ability and asked to report to Fort Benning, Georgia, to serve as temporary personal secretary to Colonel Howard during important maneuvers being held at Fort



Bragg.

Brown also served Colonel Howard during the Carolina maneuvers after which he returned to Morris Field and resumed his former duties. On May 9, Major Melton was relieved as Group Commander and Captain F .K. Reyher was assigned to fill this post. Officers and enlisted men were constantly being shifted from various duty assignments during this period as the 29th was still maintaining distribution points to gain valuable field experience. Lt. Louis Shepard became Commanding Officer of Headquarters and Headquarter Squadron with Lt. John Woodward taking over as Adjutant. Another new officer, Lt. Donald E. Doud was named Group Transportation Officer.

Amid all of this preparation and training, build-up for movement for war service, transfer and reassignments of personnel, the 29th became officially known as the "29th Air Service Group" on June 25th, and the 40th Materiel Squadron was redesignated the 40th Service Squadron.

War news revealed that on July 4, 1942, Japanese ground forces landed on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands and set about building an airfield that they could use to threaten the long chain of islands leading to Australia which was their ultimate goal.

On August 7th, ten thousand men of the crack 1st Marine Division landed on Guadalcanal in the first American amphibious invasion in the Pacific War Theatre. Very little opposition was encountered which surprised allied commanders on that first encounter. They quickly took over the airstrip (later to become known as Henderson Field). This did not last long , as the next day Japanese airmen returned to harass American supply ships and to cause considerable losses to the U.S. Navy ships operating in the area. The Japs then launched a vicious attack in their attempt to drive the Americans off the island. These battles lasted six bloody months with heavy losses on both sides during which time the Marines were reinforced by the Americal Infantry Division.

Little did the 29th personnel, secure in their Morris Field camp, realize that this and other strange-sounding Pacific islands would one day be their home.

All was not work, training, drilling and calisthenics for the men on the base. Commanders of all levels from Washington on down through various camps, bases, and airfields, realized that maintenance of high morale among the ranks was critical in all military operations. Every effort was made to keep the men occupied and entertained and Morris Field was a beehive of extra-curricular activity. Approximately August 1, 1942, the Base Commander imitated a weekly newsletter which was edited and published for all base personnel. The publication was under the direction of Lt. Mark T. Orr, Base Public Relations Officer with Corporal Dan A. Polier acting as Editor. The publication was aptly called, "The Morris Code," and carried news appropriate to the base and its units as reported by squadron reporters. Corporals Donald Ayan, Eldredge Griswald, Sgt. John Higdon and Pfc. Robert Moore, are a few on record as having provided stories for earlier editions.

An August, 1942, issue revealed that former football All-American, University of Georgia end,

Captain Vernon "Catfish" Smith, who starred during 1929 through 1931, was functioning as the Morris Field athletic director and was organizing a squadron touch-football league. Other athletic programs formed on the base were softball leagues, baseball, basketball, volleyball, ping-pong and horseshoes. Incidentally, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron's Dodgers won the base baseball championship in a close duel with the 40th Service Squadron and were properly recognized with a trophy in recognition of their ability.

Other off-duty activities included men of various units of the 29th participating in entertainment shows. One very successful show, "Jingle-Jangle-Jingle", was put on and staged by the Charlotte Victory Belles in cooperation with the soldiers of Morris Field. This came about in September of 1941, at the local armory after considerable practice and rehearsal sessions made difficult to schedule because of the soldiers' work schedules on the base. The Charlotte Victory Belles was a group of young, patriotic females from various walks of life in Charlotte that participated in other local theatrical productions.

It was Base Chaplain Wesley P. Bare who encouraged men from the base to join in extra-curricular activities whenever possible and enough credit cannot be given to this man that worked round-the-clock looking after the welfare of his boys.

Men of the Morris Field base that had key roles in this production included Louis DiFabbio, Peyton Wells, Sam Cipoletti, Marion Cahn, Thomas Hutcherson, Bill Franklin, Eddie Snyder, Clifton Prickett, Seymour Sussman, Herman Weissberg, Don DeVita, Jimmie Miller, Garnett Russell Acree, G.J. Ferrari, Howard Breiner, George "Shadow" Beatty, and Eugene Tieri.

Chaplain Bare, in addition to his regular duties was ever on the lookout for talent among the troops. During the 29th's Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron's First Anniversary Banquet held on April 29, 1942, Major Bare assembled several talented soldiers to put on a sketch as part of the anniversary program. Acts included were: Spanish novelty dance by Carmen Miranda Marion Turner, a KP pantomime by John Walsh and Alpha Scott, Gypsy Rose Lee by Feldon Reed, and several squadron GIs who performed a ballerina dance number.

It was during this period that four 29th enlisted men became acquainted through the persuasion and encouragement of Major Bare that took them to local church gatherings, various clubs in Charlotte, and base activities, to sing. Three of these fellows were Pennsylvanians while the fourth was from Wisconsin. They immediately hit it off with their singing and clowning ability to the continued enjoyment of not only the base personnel but the citizens of Charlotte as well.

On one occasion, the "Wacky Four" as they became affectionately known, George Beatty, Gene Tieri, Howard Briener and Guido Jack Ferrari, entered a local talent contest at the largest theatre in Charlotte. Despite the fact that all of the other acts were local civilians and each talented in their own right, the Wacky Four came out victorious and returned to the base in high esteem of the entire outfit.

One of the first top-notch professional entertainers to stop at Morris Field was the famous star of

stage and screen, comedian Joe E. Brown. Later on, Bob Hope made one of his tour-stops and the base personnel were overjoyed to be able to see this production.

Most of the old-timers in the outfit always knew that a service group could not function nor serve a combat Air Force with only two assigned squadrons and they were correct. On the 20th of August, 1942, the group commander was notified that the 29th would be completed with its full unit complement through the assignment under General Order 87, Headquarters, Air Service Command, Wright Field, Dayton Ohio, of additional squadrons and companies.

This order assigned Group Quartermaster duties to three units. These included the 744th Quartermaster Company at Dale Mabry Field, Florida, the 184th Quartermaster Company of Barksdale Field, Louisiana, and the 848th Quartermaster Company at Turner Field, Georgia.

Ordnance functions were to be provided and carried out by the 653rd and 702nd Ordnance Companies, both at Barksdale, and the 637th Ordnance Company at Langley Field, Virginia. Signal and radio communications services were to be performed by the 3rd Signal Company of Barksdale Field.

#### 82nd Service Squadron

Last, but not least, a second service squadron was assigned that could carry out the expected heavy work load anticipated and necessary for aircraft repair and maintenance. The 82nd Materiel Squadron located at Turner Field, Georgia, was assigned to the group to fill this need.

Prior to joining its new command, the 82nd was also located at Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Alabama, and was known as the 82nd Materiel Squadron assigned to the 76th Air Base Group. Records of this squadron began in June, 1941, when it was ordered to leave Maxwell Field and proceed to Turner Field, Albany, Georgia. It was at Turner that the name was changed to service rather than materiel. Personnel of the 82nd underwent extensive training for future aircraft repair and maintenance duty and worked on a variety of aircraft types at Turner. Some of the men were trained and graduates of various Air Corps technical schools while others were raw recruits with little or no experience with aircraft. Most of the inexperienced were included in a massive transfer in July of 1942, when one hundred twenty-two men were ordered to proceed to the Wellson Air Depot, Georgia, to join the 68th Air Base Squadron and the 36th Air Depot Group.

While stationed at Turner Field, sports activities kept the men in top physical condition especially in their off-time. Basketball, baseball, softball, volleyball, and horseshoes were a part of the squadron's base life. In the spring of 1942, the squadron entered a softball team in the Turner Field inter-squadron league. Alfred B. Chandler, John Y. Hunter, Wilbur G. Zimmerman, Joseph F. Houseweller; Sgts. Stanley H. Gray, Salvadore Testa, Hugh Young, Stephen Tempka, Robert G. Marshall; Corp's. Herman Colosimo, Sidney Goldstein, Arakel H. Jaffarian, Kenneth L. Jones, Michael T. Sainato, Frank B. Antonini; and Pfc's Sylvester F. Skibinshies, and Allen Hall. This team played nine games within the league and all games were pitched by Sal Testa. It won the first half of league play with an 8 and 1 record, and was leading the second half as it recorded six straight victories with no losses, but orders to break camp and join the parent group at Charlotte

prevented the team from finishing the schedule. Likewise, when it was learned that Turner Field did not have a basketball league the 82nd joined an industrial league in Albany and performed with distinction. Here, too, the team had to forego the balance of the schedule when the squadron moved out. Basketball team members included: Stanley Gray, Edmund Bromley, Joseph Houseweller, John Y. Hunter, Hugh Young, Kenneth L. Jones and Elmer R. Tyler.

On the 15th of August, 1942, when the unit was ordered assigned to the 29th, Staff Sergeant Elmer R. Tyler was appointed First Sergeant. When the squadron was ordered to move to Charlotte in September of 1942, they traveled by truck convoy arriving on the 10th of September and were quartered in the area occupied by the 302nd Air Base Group. Here they readied the squadron by filling its Table of Organization, obtained additional supplies and equipment and became better acquainted with other 29th units.

At the same time the 82nd Service Squadron was stationed at Turner Field, Georgia, another future 29th company, Detachment E of the 34<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Regiment (Truck) was activated during July of 1941. Personnel of this trucking company came out of many other units by transfers, but in addition, there were many volunteers. Bases sending men to their new unit included Fort Knox, Kentucky, Fort Benning, Georgia, Fort Eustis, Virginia, Camp Croft, South Carolina, Fort Francis E. Warren, Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Camp Lee, Virginia. On the 3rd of February, 1942, the name of the company was changed to the 848<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Company (Truck) with Captain Charles Snyder commanding.

On the 27th of August, 1942, Captain Snyder was relieved and was replaced by Lt. Richard Peckinpaugh. The name of the unit was changed one more time on the 2nd of October, 1942, when it became known as the 2020th Quartermaster Company (Truck).

1932nd Quartermaster Company (Truck) Another Quartermaster Truck Company was being organized and undergoing training while the 29th was stationed at Charlotte. This was the 744th Quartermaster Company (Truck) created and activated January 10, 1942, at Bowman Field, Kentucky. Training activities were routine and stepped up each time the company moved to another base, which it did quite often. In February, it was transferred to Columbia Air Base, South Carolina, which duty lasted until June when the unit again moved out, this time to Barksdale Field, Louisiana, for another short stint. Dale Mabry Field was their next duty stop which lasted until October when the company was ordered to join the 29th Group at its port of embarkation staging area at Camp Stoneman, California. This company, like most of the others, again changed its name in August of 1943 when it became the 1932nd Quartermaster Company (Truck).

#### 1637th Ordnance Company

Another of the units stationed at MacDill Field when the 29th was created was a medium maintenance Quartermaster Company known as Company B, 89th Quartermaster Battalion, commanded by a Major Dill (first name unknown). On the 15th of April, 1941, the unit was redesignated 2nd Platoon, Company D, 88th Quartermaster Battalion (LM) and was ordered to proceed to Fort Jackson, South Carolina, to participate in maneuvers. In November of 1941, they were relieved of this duty and ordered returned to MacDill Field where they were attached to the

26th Air Base Squadron for additional training. During the next several months many changes in officers and enlisted men took place in the continued efforts to bring all units up to organizational strength. The name changed again and now was known as the 2nd Platoon, 864<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Company, with part of the company ordered to move to Blumenthal Airport, Wilmington, North Carolina, with the remainder going to Florence Air Base, South Carolina. Upon arrival, the men were rather astonished to see an area of pine trees, abandoned farm land, vacant farmhouses and dirt roads. Since they were the only unit stationed there, they kept busy felling trees, building log bridges over small streams, grading roads, and, in their spare time, developed a pretty fair softball team. Gradually, more troops arrived, and an airstrip was constructed, but the 864<sup>th</sup> did not stay long enough to see it become an operating air base as they were ordered to move once again, this time to Langley Field, Virginia, where their name was changed to the 1637<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Company, Medium Maintenance (Aviation). From tents and dirt roads at Florence to permanent brick barracks, sidewalks, lighted streets, and a real, genuine, noncommissioned officers club at Langley, lifted morale of all the men. Training, procurement of supplies and equipment, and filling its Table of Organization, lasted at Langley until September of 1942, when the company was ordered to proceed by troop train to Camp Stoneman, California, to join the parent group. Lt. William O. Carrow, III, was Commanding Officer when the unit left Langley Field. It later became the 1637<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Company Medium Maintenance.

Barksdale Field, Louisiana, seems to have been the main training area for outfits to become part of the 29<sup>th</sup>. Those future 29<sup>th</sup> units stationed, created, activated and trained at Barksdale, included the 3<sup>rd</sup> Signal Platoon, the 184<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Company, the 702<sup>nd</sup> and 653<sup>rd</sup> Ordnance Companies.

### **1021st Ordnance Company**

These new outfits were to be small, independent ordnance companies responsible only to the individual base commander instead of the traditional ordnance service battalions serving all Air Forces. Under this new system the commanding officer of the separate company would also act as the air base ordnance officer of his particular field. So, at Langley Field, Virginia, the old 51<sup>st</sup> Ordnance Service Battalion was dissolved and from it was organized several of these new ordnance companies. Among these and the first of its kind to be activated, was the 702<sup>nd</sup> Ordnance Company A vn (AB) commanded by Capt. Warren N. Wildrick. A cadre of specialists was assigned including a twenty-seven year ordnance veteran name M/Sgt. Herbert A. Nelson, who was an expert known throughout the ordnance department. By May of 1941, the company had increased from a cadre to almost full strength when orders were issued moving the unit to Dale Mabry Field, Tallahassee, Florida, where it gained valuable experience setting a precedent for efficient ordnance work. It participated in the November maneuvers to everyone's satisfaction. Also, at that time, previously mentioned M/Sgt. Nelson's nephew W.E. Nelson, became First Sergeant and 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. George F. Gales became Commanding Officer when Capt. Wildrick was relieved.

On February 13, 1942, word was received that an Ordnance Company was needed at the newly formed Air Base at Wilmington Air Base, North Carolina, so the 702<sup>nd</sup> (now affectionately referred to as the "7-ohdeuce" by its members) went to this new station. It had barely become

acquainted with its new surroundings when on April 26, 1942, it was again transferred, this time to the Charlotte Air Base, the home of the 29th Air Base Group. While at Charlotte, Captain Gales was transferred and Lt. Meryle E. Branda became commanding officer. Soon the company was ordered to move again, this time to Columbia Air Base at Columbia, South Carolina. Despite the constant movement of stations, the 702<sup>nd</sup> continually established a record for efficient ordnance work, proving that the idea of small, highly specialized, and mobile companies were successful answers to the aviation ordnance problem. This time they were only in Columbia seventeen days when they were ordered to depart and proceed to Barksdale Field, Louisiana, arriving on June 23rd, 1942.

Barksdale Field was a training base for units ready for assignment to complete organization so there were many other ordnance companies present. It was here that Capt. R.B. Baker became commanding officer as the company undertook a heavy training program to bring out its peak efficiency.

During this period many changes were taking place in organizational policies of Air Force and Air Base Groups. The 702<sup>nd</sup> was attached to the 6th Service Group which was undergoing extensive preparations for overseas service, but soon thereafter it received orders assigning it to the 29th Air Service Group which was also filling, its organizational complement for foreign service. Commanding Officer Baker was relieved and relinquished command to Lt. Mason who, after a few weeks, was also relieved, turning the company over to Lt. Ray C. Isaacs. In September, three new officers were assigned and joined the company: Lts. A.A. Burke, Jr., William P. Webster, and T.B. Howard. Old-timer M/Sgt. Nelson was given a direct commission as a captain and transferred out of the unit. First Sergeant W.S. Nelson was then promoted to M/Sgt. And assigned Maintenance Section Chief. Robert L. Murphy then became First Sergeant.

On September 27, 1942, the 702<sup>nd</sup> was ordered to proceed to Camp Stoneman, California, to join the parent group, the 29th. Its name was later changed to 1021st Ordnance Company (Aviation).

All this activity renewed old rumors once again that the group would soon be leaving Charlotte for overseas duty. The media was continuously providing war news stories about U.S. military activity and enlisted men were always ready for rumors especially if they pertained to the 29th. At the time the 82<sup>nd</sup> was ordered to join the parent group, the 848<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Company (Truck) was also ordered to join the convoy for the trip to Morris Field.

It was at this time that regular Army Air Corps M/Sgt. Jahue B. Baker, was singled out for his experience and ability with the 40th Service Squadron, to receive a direct commission as a Second Lieutenant, the first of several enlisted men that would receive this honor without having to attend officer candidate school. This action was a testimonial to the outstanding ability and talent of personnel in the 29th. Capt. Reyher and Lt. Woodward pin 2nd Lt's bars on former M/Sgt. Jahue Baker.

The month of September also saw the filling of vacancies in the officers' table of organization as additional arrivals and assignments were made. Rumors of leaving were fast becoming true as

more men were being assigned special duty building packing crates, stenciling identification marks on all equipment, crates and supply boxes. Personnel not designated for permanent assignment or for other reasons were being reassigned to other Charlotte Base units. The 30th Air Base Squadron, under the command of Lt. Alex Montgomery, was relieved from the 29<sup>th</sup> and reassigned to the Charlotte Base command thus ending the relationship of one of the three original units of the group.

All rumors about moving out were laid to rest on the 22nd of September, when Morris Field Base Headquarters issued Special Order No. 257 ordering a special detail of the 29th to act as an advance cadre and proceed to Fort Mason, California, there to oversee the arrival, storage, identification, and security of equipment and supplies of each of the group's units.

Then on the 24th of September, 1942, Morris Field Base Movement Order No. 2 was issued ordering the rest of the 29th Air Service Group, i.e., Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, 40th Service Squadron, 82nd Service Squadron and the 2020th Quartermaster Company (Truck) to depart the base by rail transportation and proceed to the San Francisco port of embarkation. Quarters, rations and other necessary facilities to be provided at the Camp Stoneman staging area just outside Pittsburg, California.

The order was issued by Base Commander Colonel Gates and verified by U. Col. Warren P. Jernigan, Executive Officer. Capt. John T. Trout, the group's executive officer at that time, was placed in charge of the advance cadre which also included Us. Lawrence Jarvis of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Leonard Mullis of the 82nd Service Squadron, plus John H. Scott and Carl Reese of the 848th Quartermaster Company. Enlisted men included S/Sgt. Dominic Rigg (82nd), and M/Sgt. Michael Perrino (40th). The contingency traveled by C-47 and the men will long remember this flight as most were air-sick the greater part of the trip.

Fort Mason was a small army post located along the San Francisco Bay which housed military personnel that supervised the loading of ships being readied for overseas movement. The men were billeted and ate at the Fort Mason Hostess House. The cadre's mission was to watch for, and keep records of, equipment and supplies arriving at the wharf for holding until the personnel arrived for loading. Lists of organizational equipment were furnished for each of the company units of the 29th so shipments could be checked for storage.

They were required to check all shipping tickets and mark the items received on each list. Most equipment came directly from the manufacturing plants as practically everything received was new. This cadre remained at this post about six weeks and as time went on, there was very little left to do. Consequently, as each day's work was done, they would go sightseeing and explore the many fine restaurants in San Francisco.

Captain Trout kept forwarding reports to the group commander, indicating how busy these men were, but it was later revealed that, if the commander knew how little they were actually doing, he would have ordered them out to Camp Stoneman to join the rest of the troops. Captain Trout was very familiar with the San Francisco area, having spent his honeymoon there a few years

earlier, and was enjoying this special duty so much he apparently embellished his reports with all manner of activities, both real and imagined.

Two days prior to the entire group's arrival for loading, the cadre was relieved, to return to Stoneman, and prepare to depart for the San Francisco Pier loading site. Also, on the same day, the S-3 officer issued the following memo to unit commanders setting forth the required packing procedures for personal gear and clothing. This system was necessary as only part of each man's belongings would remain with him during both the train trip and future troop-carrying transport ships:

Just prior to the issuance of movement orders, Group Commander Reyher's personal secretary, Sergeant Lloyd Brown, while going through the base obstacle course, unfortunately broke his back. He was hospitalized, placed in a full body cast and put on recuperative leave status. When Sgt. Brown heard the news of the group's impending departure, he sent word to Headquarters that he wanted his name left on the roster, pleading with the groups surgeon and commanding officer to do everything possible to bring about his hospital discharge so he could go with the group. After clearing this request with higher command, it was approved subject to reevaluation during the group's stay in California.

Sergeant Brown's dedication to his assignment as well as his refusal to be left behind was indicative of the attitude of personnel of the 29th. Sgt. Brown survived the train trip and made such good progress toward recovery during his stay at Camp Stoneman, that he was returned to active duty, recuperative status, and, still in his body cast, accompanied the outfit overseas, continuing as personal secretary to the commander.

A special train had been made up for the express purpose of preceding the troop trains to carry the group's supplies, equipment and gear previously packed prior to abandoning Morris Field. A detachment of men was assigned to accompany this train to guard the group's properties.

All personnel were alerted on September 24, 1942, to be ready to move out immediately after bread fast on the next day. Reveille at 6:30 a.m., the next morning saw rain, but an air of expectancy prevailed throughout the group. Morale was high as the convoy trucks assembled and personnel boarded with their gear. At twelve noon, the convoy moved out bound for the Charlotte train station. Upon arrival and unloading, a pre-announced system of boarding the train was put into effect which helped the loading to proceed smoothly. The trains moved away from the city most men learned to love, at 1:30 p.m., September 26, 1942. Train Number 1 was commanded by Lt. John Woodward who was assisted by Lt. Floyd W. Clark. Mess Officer was Lt. Robert E.L. Bird while Lt. Vodra V. Baker was Assistant Mess Officer. This train carried all personnel of Headquarters and the 40th Service Squadron.

The 82nd Service Squadron and the 848th Quartermaster Company were on the second train, with Lt. John T. McKinney designated Train Commander. He was assisted by Lt. Trescott N. Hinton. The Mess Officer and Assistant Mess Officer were Lts. George E. Robey and Edward A.



Seitz, respectively. There were fifteen cars making up each train, three of which carried baggage; two were utilized as kitchens; one designated as command car with the remaining nine being Pullman-type passenger cars.

Orders pertaining to this movement carried the following special rules:

- a. The troop train commander will be the sole intermediary between the troops and the railroad personnel. He should be familiar with AR 30-945.
- b. One noncommissioned officer will be in direct charge of each coach, who will appoint a charge of quarters to assist him.
- c. There will be daily stops enroute for the purpose of exercise. The time for these stops will be designated by the group commander.
- d. Men will not move from one coach to another unless they have the permission of the officer in charge of the coach.
- e. No individual will get off the train unless he has specific permission from the troop train commander.
- f. Riding on the platforms and steps of the cars is prohibited.
- g. Extending the head or limbs out of the cars is prohibited.
- h. Because of the gravity of the situation, no intoxicants of any description will be in possession of, or used by, any officer or enlisted man during this move. Confinement under guard upon arrival at destination will be the penalty for any offender. e. The troop train commander will notify the troops of the hour of arrival in ample time to enable them to detrain properly.
- i. When the troops leave the train, the same will be properly policed, and all troops will present a neat and orderly appearance.
- j. Personnel while enroute will not communicate by telephone, mail, radio, or telegraph with anyone, except as may be necessary to the administration or successful completion of the movement. This prohibits all personal communication, oral or written, and applies with equal force to past, present and future movements.
- k. While enroute all men are cautioned not to release any information pertaining to the destination of the trains, or the organization in movement.
- l. All organization insignia will be removed to prevent any information about the organization leaking out.
- m. Each organization will carry six brooms for cleaning purposes on the train.

The following is an account of the train trip according to a diary kept by an enlisted man, Herman Fulp, of the 40th Service Squadron, edited, and rewritten for this document.

Excitement of the long ride ahead and becoming familiar with the train, occupied the men's time as they pulled away from Charlotte. Three men were assigned each Pullman coach compartment so it appeared they would be traveling in reasonable comfort. The southern direction took the train to its first stop at Spartanburg, South Carolina, but was soon moving again. The first meal served relieved a lot of apprehension as the troops were delighted with a new and different, well-prepared meal. By nightfall the train was in Georgia, but regulations required strict compliance with precautionary measures. All blinds on windows were drawn but this did not seem to bother anyone as events of the day had been so tiring that the men were soon sound asleep. Pullman

porters were on board to make up the bunks, a pleasure the men were not expecting.

The next morning found the train northbound from Atlanta to Chattanooga, Tennessee, and while a good breakfast was served, the men were able to enjoy the beautiful Tennessee mountain scenery. At noon, a stop was made at Somerset, Kentucky, where all on board were ordered to fall out along trackside for some welcome limbering-up exercises. The weather was cool, brisk and invigorating and after being on the train for so long all seemed to enjoy the experience. Soon the cars were rolling again with the next stop to be Louisville, Kentucky, where, upon arrival more exercises were taken by all personnel. From Louisville, the route went through the state of Indiana, with a stopover at Princeton, and, to the surprise and delight of all, local citizens were ready for the arrival with treats of cookies and candy. Upon resuming speed the train took several strange directional turns; at least the men noticed a direct westward route was not being followed, but everyone assumed the military minds knew what they were doing. On board, men passed the time as best they could; some playing cards, others reading, carrying on conversations, or simply looking at the passing scenery. On the 28th of September, the train crossed the mighty Mississippi River which was a sight to behold as it proceeded into St. Louis. Kansas City, Missouri, was the next stop where more exercises were taken to enable all troops to remain in their top physical condition.

The train later crossed into Kansas with its flat farm land, reaching Emporia just after the evening meal. Then it went through Newton and Wichita and by the time it reached Oklahoma, most were fast asleep. Texas was reached on September 29th, and it seemed forever before it reached New Mexico. A stop for limbering up and calisthenics was made at Clovis after which it proceeded through what appeared to be endless plains, with an occasional small Indian or Mexican settlement. At Belen, New Mexico, everyone was permitted to get off and buy a cold drink. Here Indian women were selling odd hand-made trinkets, but the men had more fun talking to a few girls that were nearby trying to cheer up servicemen passing through. After leaving Belen, the route went through Laguna, Wingate and a stop at Gallup. By this time, most everyone was ready for some sack-time. The next morning found the train in Arizona and a beautiful sunny day with the mountain ranges visible over the flat Arizona desert land. As it passed over the Colorado River it was another beautiful sight. Porters informed the men they would soon be in Needles, California. They were also told that while they were sleeping, the train had passed near the famous Petrified Forest, and the Arizona communities of Adamana, Winslow and Flagstaff.

As the train arrived in Needles, the men saw their first glimpse of west coast palm trees. It was again ordered vacated of all personnel and after formations were assembled, each unit marched around the town for a few blocks for more exercises. It was quite warm and the men were actually enjoying the experience.

After leaving Needles, everyone noticed the mountains were getting closer and that the California scenery had been worth waiting for. Barstow was the next stop with everyone ordered to detrain for more exercising and a cold drink at trackside. The men were becoming restless now as the trip had been exceptionally long. From Barstow, on to Kramer and Mojave, it seemed as though there was nothing but prairies and deserts and were most anxious to get to their

destination. After the hectic training schedules maintained back at Morris Field plus work assignments, it was difficult to just sit and do nothing all day. Although they enjoyed the sights, everyone realized it was not a vacation and were eager to see the trip come to an end.

Arrival in California As the train went through what seemed to be an endless string of tunnels into the lower regions of western California, word spread that the final destination was not far off which raised spirits once again. Train commanders put out the word to get gear together as the train sped through miles of fruit orchards. During the night it passed through Magenden, Bakersfield, Corcoran, Laton, Calwa, Fresno, Merced, and Stockton. During breakfast, the morning of the 1st of October, all were informed that Pittsburg would be the next and final stop and all should be ready to depart. All eyes gazed through the windows now that the campsite could be seen in the far off distance. As it pulled around the outskirts of this small, industrial city, it slowed down while entering a track-siding and soon stopped ending a week-long trip across the country, to the joy of all on board.

After extensive training, work assignments and duty at Morris Field, and with news of the war all over the world sounding better all the time, practically all of the men looked upon this movement with excitement and anticipation. Many of them had never been far from home before, especially a cross-country trip on a Pullman sleeper train. Coach accommodations were the best the military could provide and the food far better than anticipated. Qualified Pullman porters made up the berths each morning and evening and their courtesies added much to the enjoyment of all.

Each evening from dusk to daylight, all window shades were drawn to maintain required blackouts of troop movement. After departing the train, each unit assembled in formation with their gear and marched about three-fourths of a mile to Camp Stoneman's recreation hall where they underwent another physical examination. Barracks assignments were then announced and the rest of the day was spent becoming familiar with new surroundings.

The next day it was discovered that, although the second train had left about six hours after the first, it had arrived at Stoneman the night before, an obvious result of different routes. Notices were also issued that all other squadrons and companies assigned to the 29th had arrived and the group was now at full strength with ten separate functional operating units.

#### PREPARATION FOR FOREIGN SERVICE

It took no time at all for the 29th to return to normal activities , a big break for all privates came as soon as the train was unloaded and each squadron or company had settled into their new quarters. On this particular day, all enlisted men above the rank of private first class were detailed to KP duty in the camp mess hall. This provided a tremendous lift for the privates as they were usually the first to be called upon for this much disliked duty assignment.

At Stoneman, all personnel were given the opportunity to obtain passes in order to visit San Francisco which everyone signed up for at once passes were issued under a system that allowed a small number to be on leave at the same time. San Francisco was found to be found to be great place to see, with its many visitor attractions including Fisherman's Wharf, Nob Hill, San Quentin

Prison, its famous Chinatown section, and of course, a visit would not be complete without a ride on the popular cable cars. Army personnel were the minority in this city though, as sailors and marines were by far the majority among the military population.

#### Units Change Names

It was at this station that the 744th Quartermaster Company (Truck) was notified its name was being changed to 1932nd Quartermaster Company (Truck) and the 848th Quartermaster Company (Truck) was redesignated the 2020th Quartermaster Company (Truck).

Group Commander Capt. F .K. Reyher was promoted to Stoneman, and other promotions took place, both among enlisted ranks; all personnel in each unit of the group were evaluated once again, with those not needed being transferred out of the Group to the Camp Stoneman Casual Camp for further assignment.

During the month-long stay at Stoneman, all personnel were required to participate in daily training activities which were under the direction of Group S-3. Special schedules included training in activities covered. The terrain around the camp area lent itself to good places for hiking and long hikes were almost a daily occurrence. Other functions now staffed by professionals were lectures and practices of chemical warfare Lt. Robert McGeachin and Lt. Robert Klang, with section enlisted men provided talks and demonstrations that also included hikes activities with gas masks. Other subjects covered were airdrome the use of pup tents, close order drill and calisthenics, use of ting, first aid, and the care and use of rifles.

All was not continuous work, as in the off-hours the men had several choices of entertainment on the base, or, if passes were had, the city of Pittsburg was right outside the camp area where leisure time could be enjoyed. Base dances were scheduled periodically, and those who liked this sort of fun usually attended. The PX was open each night from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., and beer was available to the joy of many. On one occasion, an amateur show was held for men of the various outfits on the base. The 29th's Wacky Four entered and came off with first prize, which was especially appreciated because of the \$25 cash award.

Military training films were also part of planned activities at Stoneman, which provided all sorts of educational subjects, many of which will never be forgotten. Another training activity that took place here, which will live forever in the memories of those who participated, were the marches up the huge foothills just outside camp. After a short breath-catching break, the men followed their Commander's pace to the top of the highest hill. Once on top, which took some time for one thing, as these hikes were usually during the heat of the day, the view was breathtakingly beautiful. From this vantage point, one could see Camp Stoneman, with its buildings standing in rows like GI's at attention. The city of Pittsburg also stood out like a never-ending silver band glistening in the sun, and in the far off distance, one could faintly see the balloon barrages guarding the Oakland Bay area.

After several weeks of heavy training routines, the men once again grew restless and could not understand why they had to remain here so long when the Group appeared to be as ready for

combat service as they would ever be.

At long last, or so it seemed, word was put out to, once again, assemble all personal gear and equipment, making certain every piece was identified and ready to go. Each squadron and company underwent strict, rigid inspections, making sure all was in readiness for any future situations. On the 28th of October, all "B" bags were to be ready for loading on waiting trucks. This was the personal belongings bag that included extra clothing for future use. The other bag, or "A", would accompany its owner and contain all necessary items generally used on regular basis. The next day, brand new rifles were issued which had to be degreased prior to final inspection, so out came rags and pails of soapy water. Everyone realized this was now his own personal weapon and set about to put it into top condition. Needless to say, this inspection was welcome and all passed without exception.

Good news the next day as the troops were all paid their monthly salaries. Following this they were told to go back to their barracks and clean them up as they were to be left spotless when the Group departed. On the first of November, 1942, the squadrons and companies were each lined up according to a pre-announced system to be used to board the train to San Francisco and again later when boarding the ship.

The hike to the railroad station was a rough one as each man had to carry his A bag weighing about sixty-five pounds, his field bag, gas mask, water-filled canteen and rifle. The distance was about a mile, so rest breaks were called every five minutes. At 4:15 p.m., the train was boarded, and at 4:30, all took one last look at Camp Stoneman as they were on their way to the waterfront and its loading piers, specifically Pier 37, on Secret Orders issued by the Operations Division of Camp Stoneman Base Headquarters and signed by Lt. LA. Grossman.

Strength of the Group at departure was sixty-seven officers, three warrant officers, and one thousand, sixty-seven enlisted men.

At the time the Group boarded ship, the Group Commander, executive and Administrative officers were recorded as follows:

Major Franklin K. Reyher, Group Commander;

Executive Officer, Capt. John T. Trout

Adjutant and S-1 Officer, Lt. John Woodward

S-2, Lt. Bennett E. Meyers

S-3, Capt. Lewis L. Holladay

S-4, Capt. Thomas E. Burns

Group Surgeon, Lt. Keith P. Smith

Dental Officer, Capt. Karl Haller

while unit Commanding Officers included

Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Lt. Louis Shepard

40th Service Squadron, Lt. Thomas L. Spradling

82nd Service Squadron, Lt. John T. McKinney

1003rd Signal Company, Lt. Louis P. Browning

1021st Ordnance Company, Lt. Ray C. Isaacs  
1932nd Quartermaster Company (Truck), Lt. Robert C. Dunlap  
2020th Quartermaster Company (Truck), Lt. Richard L. Peckinpaugh  
1653rd Ordnance Company Lt. Roy D. Andre  
1637<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Company, Lt. William G. Carrow III  
184th Quartermaster Company, Lt. Walter Lapinske

Ten officers and twenty enlisted men were detailed to precede the others and act as an advance party to assist in the orderly boarding of the ship. On board the train the men were given a luncheon packet that contained two sandwiches, one apple and a bar of candy. The mood of the troops was one of laughter and gaiety and as the train moved away, many engaged in singing in anticipation of at long last engaging in the real war. After several hours of traveling, the gaiety turned to dismay as nobody could understand why it was taking so long to travel to San Francisco which was only about forty miles away. Blinds were drawn for security reasons again so no one could look out and see where they were. Six hours later the train pulled into the unloading area and immediately the Group went under the command of the Army Transport Service which was in charge of all troop movement to overseas destinations.

The manner of boarding ship had previously been spelled out for all personnel in accordance with the ship's passenger list. As each man proceeded up the ladder to the ship's rail, an officer called out his last name, after which the soldier would say his first and middle initial. All of this was done in a blackout, so, consequently, the men could not really see what the ship looked like as they were kept moving along the deck by loading personnel.

Instructions were belted out to go down a certain hatch and proceed below to assigned area and bunks. Practically everyone in the outfit had never' been on anything larger than a rowboat and soon were settled, falling asleep from exhaustion.

There is not a man in the original 29th Group that can, or ever will, forget the USAT Mormacsea. It was a ship built by the Moore Dry Dock Company in 1940 and delivered for service to the Moore-McCormack Steamship Company on March 10, 1941. She was nicknamed the Sea Panther, but the men of the 29th, during this unforgettable voyage, called her thousands of other names. The ship measured four hundred, ninety-two feet long by sixty-nine feet, six inches wide, with a deadweight of eleven thousand, nine hundred, twenty-six tons. When war was declared, the Mormacsea was converted to a troop transport as part of the steppedup merchant marine involvement.

Captain H.E. Hansen was the ship's skipper and commanded a seasoned and experienced crew. In accordance with Army regulations, all troop transport ships carrying military units to overseas destinations had to be under the command of a designated Troop Commanding Officer. In this case it was Lt. Col. Hicks (full name unknown), a West Point career soldier, out of the class of 1911. Colonel Hicks had a distinguished service record in the field of artillery during WWI. He had resigned and retired from the military, but when war was declared after Pearl Harbor, he re-entered the service and was assigned Troop Movement Commanding Officer aboard transport

ships.

The next morning saw a bunch of very curious men looking over the ship they had so hurriedly boarded the night before. They soon learned that one had to stand in line to do everything; wash up, relieve one's self, eat breakfast, etc. Officers were assigned staterooms on the upper decks and each shared a room with five others. Enlisted personnel were quartered in the several hatches below deck and were severely crowded. Canvas bunks on iron standards two bunks high, were only separated by aisles two feet wide, which didn't leave much room for personal belongings, but they made the best of it under the circumstances. On the 3rd of November, the ship was moved out into the bay by a tugboat, where it remained another four hours, as it was joined by other ships to be included in the convoy.

Smoking was only permitted on deck so those who smoked had to light up when they could, as down below it was strictly taboo. The ship rationed the use of fresh water by turning the fresh water supply faucets on only a few minutes every four hours each day. Everyone had to early learn to carefully guard their share as it had to be used for cleanliness, shaving and for drinking. They also saw the balloon barrage protecting coastal waters and found that the eight other ships nearby were going to be a part of the same convoy. Soon it was learned that the convoy would be escorted by a heavy Navy cruiser, The USS Honolulu. The ships assembled after much signaling between each other and began to pull away about noon, as all aboard viewed the famous Golden Gate Bridge. As the ships moved out into the Pacific, the Mormacsea assumed the right front corner location within the convoy while aircraft patrolled above the ships. The Honolulu kept moving in and around the other ships as they proceeded into open waters. Soon the ship began to roll as the sea became heavy, which caused most men to turn all sorts of strange colors and head for both the railings and latrines. Some were affected by seasickness more than others, but almost all experienced a certain degree of the disgusting malady before getting their sea legs.

USAT Mormacsea; Built by the Moore Dry Dock Company of San Francisco, California, in 1940. Delivered for service to Moore-McCormack Steamship Company, March 10, 1941. Nicknamed the "Sea Panther", the ship was 492 feet long by 69'<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> feet wide with a deadweight of 11,926 tons. Converted to military troop transport ship and used to move the 29th Air Service Group to its overseas destination. The 29th ASG boarded ship November 1, 1942, and sailed from the San Francisco port of embarkation November 3, 1942. Significant dates include: crossed the equator November 12th and all aboard initiated in the "Ancient and Honorable Order of Neptunia", by King Neptune portrayed by the ship's Captain H.E. Hansen; refueled escort ship, Cruiser Honolulu, November 16th; crossed the international date line November 20th and all aboard initiated into the "Silent Mysteries of the Far East", also by the ship's captain; arrived at Fiji Islands stopping at Suva on the 21st and at Lautoka the 22nd; arrived at destination, New Hebrides Islands on November 26th when anchor dropped in Segond Channel, Espiritu Santo. The unloading of the Mormacsea of all 29th ASG personnel, equipment and supplies was completed on December 26th, 1942.

One of the many humorous things that occurred, (it seemed that way at the time, but certainly not to the unlucky GI that suffered the unfortunate incident), was when one day, while heaving

over the side, this unlucky fellow lost his dentures into the drink. Imagine the discomfort of this man for the remaining part of the trip, especially when trying to eat.

He survived the embarrassment, , and upon arrival at the Hebrides, was flown to a military dental clinic in Australia, where he obtained a new set of teeth, after which he returned to his outfit and duty. The first night at sea found a very short chow line in the mess hall, as appetites were, understandably, diminished, to say the least. Poor planning by the crew was also evident when the ship's public address system announced there would be a movie shown in the mess hall. Needless to say, the audience was extremely small.

Escort aircraft remained in the air for the first few days, until the convoy surpassed their range. , the Honolulu possessed two patrol planes that provided this duty from time to time. All troops took daily calisthenics and stood rifle inspection when required. The necessary KP duty was performed by roster assignments for all enlisted personnel. The rest~ of the time was passed in a variety of ways according to the individual Card games (some for just fun) were observed at various locations of the deck, while reading was always popular and books and magazines were traded around until tattered. At other times, special duty assignments included keeping the decks clean, chipping rusted paint and repainting where necessary.

Each evening the Captain would announce that the "smoking lamp was out," at which time each person went to his assigned station, wearing his life jacket, to stand submarine watch. In the morning this was repeated just prior to the break of dawn.

One of the ships in the convoy was a refitted merchant ship used to transport fighter planes to waiting combat units stationed in the South Pacific. All ships in the convoy kept moving in and out zigzag fashion according to orders from the Flag Ship so as to refrain from traveling a straight course. One of the better and more memorable features of the trip was the good weather and general calm condition of the ocean. If this had been a peace-time experience it would have been most enjoyable as the excitement and beauty of an ocean voyage is something most people dream about but few ever realize.

On the 6th of November, after much speculation, word spread throughout the ship that the 29th was bound for the Fiji Islands which gave the men something new to talk about. All aboard saw for the first time anti-aircraft gun practice from some of the ships as a navy plane flew overhead, towing a huge target bag behind at which the gunners sharpened up by shooting at moving targets.

As the trip progressed, it became much warmer and all sorts of activities were held to try to keep the men busy and occupied. Amateur shows were staged after the evening meal, and although the troops enjoyed the effort, most of the acts left a lot to be desired. The 29th's own Wacky Four were always ready to perform to the satisfaction of everyone. Group Surgeon Doctor Keith P. Smith with his able squadron medical officers looked after the health of everyone, and as tradition had it in the military, the usual shots were given to everyone on board. Prior to boarding ship, the men had not really had much opportunity to meet the medical doctors assigned to the



Group, but on board the Mormacsea, it didn't take them long to feel the jab of the needle or obtain a prescription for various ailments. Lt. James Schull, M.D., was to be in charge of the medical duties in Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Lt. Joseph Dobkin, M.D., similarly in the 82nd, and Lt. Constantine H. Kapp, M.D., in the 40th. Most of the enlisted medics, , were acquainted with Lt. Kapp as they had taken their medical training under him at Morris Field.

This training experience occurred during the period the 302nd Air Base Group was being formulated. At that time the 29th had no official medical personnel as all medics on the base were undergoing training while attached to the 302nd. It was Lt. Kapp's duty to teach the men basic instruction in first aid and how to perform various field functions.

When the 29th was reaching its full organizational strength and making ready to leave the Charlotte Base, the medical personnel were reassigned to either Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, the 40th or the 82nd.

Lt. Kapp became Squadron Medical Officer of the 40th. Also included among the Group Medical Officers were Group Dental Surgeon Capt. Karl Haller and Lt. Samuel L. Lieberman, M.D. Medical Administrative Officer.

On board the Mormacsea, medical officers were all busy tending to the ship's crew as well as the officers and troops as professional physicians are more contented when able to practice their vocation while continuously advancing their knowledge. Ironically, the 29th's first serious illness was one of its own medics. A kidney stone attack in one of the boys caused him to be taken off the Mormacsea immediately upon arrival and taken to the Naval CB Hospital on Espiritu Santo. This was quite a memorable experience for Dr. Smith as he encountered an almost unbelievable coincidence when seeking help for the sick boy. He was forced to go to the only hospital in existence at that time. It was Cub #1, a navy installation to which Doc Smith took the ailing soldier to see a urologist. When the Naval doctor arrived to see the patient, it turned out that he was Doctor Smith's professor at the time he attended medical school at the University of Louisville. Needless to say, the patient received prompt, excellent care and treatment.

The experience of finding oneself on a military troop transport ship, in time of war, bound for an unknown destination, far from home, family, and friends, was an unforgettable experience and for many it was terrifying. After the seasickness period passed, all aboard settled down to the voyage, passing the time~ of day as best they could. Some read (reading material soon became worn and tattered as each item passed from man to man), others played card games or just sat and talked and visited some of the newly assigned outfits to become better acquainted. At times it was a joy to watch playful porpoises as they leaped in and out of the blue waters of the Pacific. The food left much to be desired and each day was another event in the ship's mess. Some men were assigned to duty in the officers' mess serving meals and cleaning up afterward. This situation proved to be a boon for hungry buddies below, as each evening, upon conclusion of duty they would bring back left-overs to the joy of hungry, waiting GI's.

Although it still looked to many as a pleasure cruise, most realized the real thing could present

itself at any moment. Since the time had changed by two hours since leaving San Francisco, all personnel had to continually make adjustments as they were required to get up earlier in the morning to stand submarine watch. Having over a thousand men below with all the hatches closed and only a few ventilators, made air thick enough to cut, so upon awakening, everyone was ready to go topside anyway. Usually, when the men were dismissed from early watch, and finished with breakfast, they would attend to their rifles as inspections were held regularly now. The salt air played havoc with weapons and a regular treatment with oil was the only way to keep them in top condition.

The next evening's amateur show presented the Wacky Four and the audience went wild as these fellows always gave their best and more. This group was one of the greatest morale boosters in the entire outfit, especially for the men of more recently assigned units, which had not had the privilege of seeing them at Morris Field. Whenever they were called upon to provide a few numbers they were glad to oblige, and everyone appreciated having such talent in the outfit.

The next morning found each unit taking turns on deck doing exercises and calisthenics on orders given by either squadron or company commanders. With the ship rolling from side to side in a heavy sea, this was most difficult, but everyone did their very best as conditioning was a top priority on board ship.

The radio crew of the ship put out a mimeographed news sheet every other day in an effort to keep all passengers aware of the latest in war news around the world. This always gave cause for much conversation and debate on what the Allied Forces would do next. Troops of the 29th were still wondering where they were going as no official announcements had yet been made.

Then on the 12th of November, all on board experienced a memorable event that shall forever live in their memories. Immediately after breakfast, Captain Hansen proclaimed all on board that had never before crossed the equator, as "Polly-Wogs" and tradition among men of the sea required that all Polly-Wogs were to be initiated into the "Ancient and Honorable Order of Neptunia."

Prior to graduating from the ranks of the Polly-Wogs into a full-fledged "Shellback", one had to undergo an initiation so the Captain began the day's program by requiring the officer ranks to go through a ritual before the royal throne of the King and Queen of Neptune (aptly portrayed by Captain Hansen and his Chief Mate Swanson). A washable paint concoction was brought out and all were properly painted in the most unusual places of the anatomy. Hand paddles were used to whack unsuspecting fannies which stung sharply as all personnel were stripped down to their shorts. Bodies were duly painted many colors, heads changed in appearance as hair was "chipped off" and finally all officers "enjoyed" the trip through the "Sloop Chute", certainly a new experience! When officer ranks had aU been properly initiated, it became the enlisted men's turn. Water hoses sprayed strong streams at the men while paddles stung wet tails causing loud yelling and "expletives" to be heard throughout the deck. Cans of ship's paint from the ship's lockers were used, adding to the misery.

As this was going on, others thought up many other devious methods of getting rid of frustrations brought on by being cooped up aboard ship these many days. Scissors appeared, hair was whacked off, and the last required act was for each man to crawl through a ten-foot sack about three feet in diameter while his rear was paddled with water sprayed at him at the exit end of the tube. This madness went on practically all day, and when it was over, the men were tired, painted, and some short of hair, but satisfied that they pulled through and were now proclaimed qualified "Shellbacks." That night found many drained and empty lighter fluid cans as this was the simplest way to rid themselves of the horrible paint smears. Some time later, all men on board the Mormacsea that day were presented with a suitable proclamation attesting that each had, in fact, crossed the equator. The document was signed by Ship's Captain H.E. Hansen.

As the days passed and the men settled down to daily routines, squadron and company barbers were busy trying to straighten out some of the forced haircuts encountered during the Equator crossing.

Each time another ship was sighted, excitement spread throughout as they all watched the escort speed to investigate, and then find it to be friendly. During the fifteenth day at sea, the heavy cruiser Honolulu pulled alongside the Mormacsea after each had reduced speed considerably, to allow a party of men from the cruiser to come aboard. The two ships then continued as before. The next morning, everyone was able to witness the refueling of the cruiser with fuel oil stored in the lower holds of the Mormacsea. It was an interesting sight to see, as huge refueling tubes were hoisted up and over from ship to ship while the two were tied up side by side. This was considered a dangerous situation and safety measures were critical. Speed to complete the task was also important as both ships were now falling far behind the others in the convoy.

Men of the 29th were now able to talk to sailors and crew members of the Honolulu, each asking for hometown names hoping to hear a familiar one. After about three hours, the operation was complete, tubes were removed and stored, and both ships stepped up speed to join the others as soon as possible.

A welcome diversion from the daily routine occurred one day when the men of the 1637th Ordnance Company were ordered by the Group Commander to break open three crated jeeps, in anticipation of arriving at the destination. One of the hatches was opened by the ship's crew and winches lowered cables down to tie and bring up the crates to a cleared area of the deck. The 1637th men, after removing the packing crates, set about assembling the command jeeps and performed the task in good time despite the fact necessary and correct tools were not readily available.

Many of the men watched as the assembly took place and it turned out to be a welcome sight. This also led to renewed excitement as they now realized the ship could not be too far away from its final destination. Command Officers were also looking forward to unloading the jeeps which would be used initially as transportation to Base Command for the 29<sup>th</sup> Group to report its arrival and obtain further orders.

As the voyage continued, the men grew very tired and disgusted with the chow, bitching and complaining to let off steam. Breakfast was a poor substitute for anything, usually Vienna Sausage and powdered eggs, but sometimes they had to look at, and smell, creamed codfish, a dish that made most men's stomachs turn. Lunch consisted of marmalade spread over a piece of bread which was obtained after standing in line for an hour or so. The evening meal wasn't much better either. This, coupled with the fact fresh water was rationed so carefully, made the men extremely discontented and all contributed to the hopes of sighting land soon. On the 18th, all troops thought that day had arrived when the escort went out to meet a Navy destroyer, but soon learned that the rest of the convoy was leaving the Mormacsea as they were bound for a different destination.

Everyone watched the rest of the ships disappear over the horizon, with the Tonga Islands visible nearby. The Mormacsea now opened up its engines and was traveling much faster than before, being on its own, doing about twenty-one knots. The next day should have been the 19th, but the public address system informed everyone that it was the 20th due to the crossing of the International Date Line, so in effect, lost one day. It was also the day of renewed excitement, as all personnel were ordered to get their personal gear packed and ready, as they would soon be at the Fiji Islands, which occurred early in the morning of the 21st.

The Fiji Islands contained numerous harbors and bays with many coral reefs on its perimeters. Their location was ideally suited for American Forces to establish bases for supplies necessary when the American offensive operations would begin in various tropical islands now occupied by the enemy. The island provided a route across the Pacific for Allied troop and equipment movement. Fiji, therefore, was chosen as an air base which was rushed to completion by a task force of Allied engineers and named Nandi Air Base when finished and ready to receive heavy bombers. By the time the 29th stopped at Suva, the Fiji capital, the island base and garrison were fully protected by forces from the U.S. and New Zealand, plus their own Fiji troops. Several Air Force units, including medium bomb squadrons, reconnaissance planes of the Royal New Zealand Air Force and a few B-17 bombers, were stationed there.

During the formative months of the 29th at Morris Field, Group Commander F.K. Reyher was ordered to attend and participate in many sessions conducted at various Command Headquarters to receive training and instructions related to troop movements, coordination with other units, travel regulations, etc. All of these seminars were geared to organizational Commanders being properly prepared and ready whenever orders were received to move their respective units. In each of those meetings he was led to believe that the 29th should be prepared to relocate to a cold climate area such as the Aleutian Islands. He therefore notified appropriate Group and squadron officers to obtain arctic-type gear, such as lined leather jackets, mukluks, woolen socks, underwear, overcoats, winter-type hats, etc. This equipment and supplies were requisitioned, crated and shipped along with the Group when it received movement orders and departed Charlotte for Fort Mason, and Camp Stoneman, San Francisco Port of Embarkation.

All crates and boxes were appropriately marked for the 29th ASGP. About this time, the battle of Guadalcanal became a major Pacific front with the Marine landings and resulting vicious battles.

Subsequently, while attending the final top echelon briefing at Fort Mason, California, Major Reyher was informed (and directed to keep the information Secret), that the 29th would not be sent to the Alaskan-Aleutian area, and he realized it was too late to stop the cold weather material already loaded on the two vessels assigned to carry the Group overseas. The Major learned the day before the Mormacsea left that the Group would go to the Fiji Islands, but again was ordered to keep this information Secret. He personally felt this news sounded worse than the Aleutians, but had to keep it to himself until the ship had left the mainland. Once at sea, he would open his Sealed Orders and reveal the Fiji Island destination to other officers. So now the Group was destined for the South Pacific and a climate unsuitable for issued clothing.

Another factor important to the Group's overseas mission was soon learned at the Fijis. The type line equipment issued to each of the aircraft repair units, the 40th and 82nd, was all geared to servicing fighter planes.

Training at Morris Field and also during the distribution point experiences was also provided to fighter aircraft, and now it became known that the 29th would be servicing all type aircraft, but mainly heavy bombers already operating at some of the U.S. bases.

The Mormacsea was now easing into Suva Bay after traveling over six thousand miles from San Francisco. As the ship neared the tie-up area, native islanders, some barefooted, either wearing shorts or skirts, were yelling "bula-bula" meaning Hello! After the ropes had been secured along the wharf, the men were anxiously waiting for instructions on departing, but as time passed, only a few officers went ashore, and more guessing took place. Non-29th Casual Troops aboard were alerted to gather their belongings and soon men, supplies and equipment were debarking, but then word went out that the Mormacsea would move around to the other side of the island. Ropes were untied, the anchor was raised and the ship began moving away.

Everyone watched the scenery until the smoking lamp went out and the evening submarine watch was over, then returned to the familiar bunks down in the hold for another night at sea. The next morning, , anchor was dropped about 11:00 a.m., at Lautoka Bay after traveling another one hundred, twenty-five miles. Major Reyher had previously been ordered to depart ship here and set up the Group's camp area at Nandi Airfield at Lautoka and prepare to service the fighter squadrons stationed at Nandi, but upon receipt of his Mail and Orders Packet he was notified of very sad personal news through telegrams forwarded by the American Red Cross, that his one-year old daughter had passed away thirteen days prior to the ship's arrival at Suva. This was a shocking and difficult period for the Major, but he continued the responsible job at hand in spite of his great sorrow.

At Lautoka, men in the first two grades were allowed to go ashore with some of the officers and upon their return told of what the town looked like and of the people they observed. As crates began to come out of one of the hatches, the men thought this would be the 29th's new home, but it turned out that the supplies and equipment unloaded here were items related to cold weather, such as wool OD's and other clothing. Spirits were raised tremendously , when it was announced there would be a "mail-call" as a result of a postal forwarding out of California.

Shortly after the mail had been distributed among each of the units, it was announced that orders had been changed once again, and the new destination would be Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides Islands.

Now all personnel were anxious to get going again, but before leaving they took advantage of natives selling fresh fruit and coconuts alongside the ship. Money was freely thrown over the side to waiting native hands, who in turn tossed whatever they had available, to outstretched hands on deck. At noon of the 24th, the Mormacsea was on its way once again with only a small sub-chaser looking out for its safety. The ship zigged and zagged through dangerous waters while the escort used every tricky maneuver known to the Navy.

On the 26th, which was Thanksgiving Day, a very good turkey dinner was served, and in most everyone's judgment, the best meal of the entire trip. Everyone soon turned their sights to the horizon when the word went out that the ship had been passing near mountainous islands. When an aircraft alert sounded and turned out to be an American plane from what was now the new destination, all aboard heaved a sigh of relief. The ship's public address system announced that the island was Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, and shortly all kinds of ships appeared: Navy, merchant and others, while aircraft flew overhead. The Mormacsea dropped anchor at 10:00 in the morning, November 27th, in Segond Channel after traveling another eight hundred miles in approximately forty hours. The men soon learned that, prior to their arrival, another troop transport, the USS President Coolidge, had been sunk in this same channel with the loss of four lives and all equipment on board after striking a mine. Personnel of the 29th provided clothing, rations and medical assistance to the survivors of a regimental combat team that had been aboard the sunken Coolidge. The location was also where the American aircraft carrier USS Lexington was sunk on the 4th of May, after being severely damaged by the Japanese.

Excitement turned to gloom again when Major Reyher and his staff returned to the ship after a visit to Island Headquarters only to report that due to a shortage of barges, the Mormacsea could not be unloaded until further orders. So now, after being on board ship for almost a month, the troops were resigned to remain on for an indefinite period which caused additional frustration. The weather was hot, the ship's holds were crowded, the movies were getting old and stale and there was really nothing new to occupy one's time. Clothes were dirty and could not be washed in salt water so when rains came the men ran around in their birthday suits taking showers and catching fresh water in their helmets for future uses.

The Group Commanding Officer and his staff had, in the meantime, received Island Command designation of the 29th's campsites, and barges began to be released to begin the unloading of the ship. Only a few men were detached to begin the task at first, so most of the men remained aboard.

Whenever a boat of natives came nearby, the men would do whatever they could to obtain fresh fruits which were plentiful. It was also difficult to see what the island looked like as all that was visible from the ship was densely wooded areas and many coconut palm trees. The New Hebrides Group of islands was discovered in the year 1606 and given its name by Captain Cook in 1774.

Early settlers included French, Portuguese, and Spanish. Espiritu Santo was a tropical island that had not been accustomed to much civilization prior to the war years. The U. S. Navy had long ago determined this channel was a good location to establish not only a Navy base that fleets could use as headquarters, but also for the repair of ships that were shot up or damaged in action.

The channel was ideal for a deep-water port that military minds knew would protect Allied shipping from submarines. Navy Seabees with their mighty construction equipment and men, cleared areas, built buildings and roads, and were constructing a new airstrip at the time the 29th arrived. Ships were necessarily unloaded onto barges for transport to shore areas as there were no docks available.

The island was seventy-five miles wide and seventy-six miles long-the largest of the New Hebrides group. Mountains were on the west coast while the east side contained broad fertile valleys. Early plantation workers were imported; Tonkinese who grew copra - cocoa and coffee. It was said that a native's wealth was measured by the number of pigs and wives a man possessed.

The men of the 29th had been lectured and alerted to the new life that they were about to begin, but human nature being what it was, they found out much of it the hard way as is so often the case. It was going to be like learning how to live all over again. Insects, especially flies and mosquitoes, would be everywhere, as the dense jungle was cleared to make space for new campsites. Sanitation was not available and latrines and bathing facilities had to be built. Drinking water was to be tested to make certain it was safe. The well-known "lister bag" would be used throughout all campsites and medical men were to locate, install, and fill them as fast as possible. Living quarters were set up to make the most of shade from the trees as the high humidity and torrid heat were difficult to adjust to. Bunks were to be protected with mosquito netting to keep the pesky biters away as much as possible. Repellent was to be used during working periods and the medics advised everyone to keep their bodies covered even though it was hot enough to do without.

Time seemed to drag now as it seemed as though it was taking an extremely long time to obtain the required barges and amphibious ducks necessary to disembark. Finally on the 7th of December, the anchor was raised and the ship moved around to the other side of the island to Palikula Bay. Orders were issued the next day that the Group could begin the gigantic task of unloading the ship and start setting up camp areas. Now the 29th would have to perform as this was the first time the Group would function with all of its assigned squadrons and companies. While there was a lot of work to do and orders to be carried out, most of the men had never even met each other prior to boarding the Mormacsea. It didn't take them long to get acquainted, , and soon they all acted and performed as though they had been buddies for years. Departing ship down rope ladder to waiting barge below.

Group Chemical Officer Capt. Robert McGeachin was placed in charge of the unloading operation. Tents, cots, medical supplies, and other necessary items were taken off first and the men at long last were able to use the rope-ladder training received back at Camp Stoneman. From then on and for the next several weeks, unloading trucks, campsite clearing, and camp building was the

order of the day (and night) as all personnel pitched in to get the job done.

Details were organized to perform the most urgent jobs like unloading barges, loading and unloading trucks, setting up temporary kitchens and tents and digging sanitary facilities. All this occurred under tropical conditions never before experienced. The sun would be shining brightly one moment, but soon turn to a heavy downpour of rain, leaving the island one big mud heap. Material, supplies and equipment had to be guarded with watchful eyes as other island personnel were always looking for something they needed and would 'borrow' without hesitation. One such situation developed during one of the unloading trips when several cases of Coca-Cola brought over from San Francisco, came into view of curious sailors and marines. Since the Santo water was quite flat, our men weren't about to let any of the cokes get out of their sight. A big morale booster arrived on the 15th with the delivery of mail forwarded from California which, although several weeks old, was welcomed by all.

Upon arrival at the Island Base Command, Commanding Officer Reyher received orders to detach a small contingency of men to the island of Guadalcanal and further to have this advance detachment set up camp near Henderson Field. The Group Commander in turn issued orders alerting certain officers and men for the movement on the first available water transportation bound for the "Canal." A consignment of equipment and supplies was also ordered set aside to accompany the men.

Supplies, equipment and men continued to be unloaded daily throughout the month of December with all units busily engaged in clearing and developing their own campsites. Machetes were the tools of the day at that time - a tool none of the men had ever seen before and at first sight it looked like a frightening weapon. Island natives soon taught the men how to use it, as it was the most effective method of clearing out the heavy, thick jungle growth. While whacking away at this difficult, hot job, thoughts were reflected to books, articles and movies of days gone by that depicted the beautiful, peaceful South Pacific as the garden spot of the world. The real world was being faced now, a world changed by the ravages of war as military units raced from island to island trying to stop Japanese advances. The men of the 29th had to adjust to this new life in a hurry and adjust they did. They put up with the sight of strange and ugly looking insects-snakes-wild jungle boars-as well as, on the pleasant side, some very beautiful, colorful, and exotic birds.

On December 19th, the previously alerted advance detachment of officers and men of the 29th boarded the U.S. Army Transport "Foamahaught" bound for the Solomon Islands, specifically Guadalcanal, where the most publicized island warfare to-date had been raging. The U. S. Forces had driven the enemy back to the point of bringing in additional troops, particularly, Air Force units that could utilize Henderson Field so as to initiate bomber strikes at reachable Jap forward bases. Lt. Charles Holtsclaw out of Headquarters Squadron was delegated acting Advance Group Detachment Commander. Capt. Joe Dobkin, the 82nd Flight Surgeon, was assigned Acting Group Surgeon. Lt. George Sagli, an experienced officer of the 82nd was named acting squadron CO.

Two platoons of the 1932nd Quartermaster Truck Company and the 1653<sup>rd</sup> Ordnance were



included as well as the following other enlisted men: Robert McMillan (acting First Sergeant), Alvin Thompson (acting Sergeant Major), Elwood Rineheimer, Floyd Hotchkiss, "Candy" John Gurganis, from Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron. Out of the 40th Service Squadron were: Acting First Sergeant Frank Roberts, Frank Jowett, William Boyers, Davis Sims and Robert "Pete" Callander. Men of the 82nd on this mission were John Avery, John Torres, Raymond Thomas, John Vesperman, Jack Fortner, Nick Renoni, Wayne Clark, Robert Britton, Dick Haines and John Buchanan. Group Commander Reyher, along with each squadron and company Commanding Officer, came down to the loading area to see the detachment off and wish them Godspeed.

As the "Foamahaught" weighed anchor and moved away, the men were alerted to the dangerous waters they were traveling through. They were told that a Jap sub had been sunk in the waters over which they were traveling. This could not be confirmed but there was an oil slick all over the surface. Also aboard ship were fifteen to twenty Fiji Island Commandos. These were truly great soldiers - the men were impressed with their great sense of smell and sight they could detect an arriving ship more easily and better with their eyes than most could with binoculars. They later proved to be the greatest U.S. Allies and the worst enemy of the Japanese. They performed many valuable missions - obtained information from the Japanese camps. They were superb soldiers.

Island native holding a machete used to help in gigantic task of clearing jungle growth. Crates along road side while tents are erected for Laundry hangs outside supply building. enlisted personnel. Meanwhile, the task of unloading the Mormacsea continued on until the 26th of December when the job was declared complete and all men went ashore to their new camp. A few days earlier , all personnel received their pay on the afternoon of Christmas Eve. This was a mixed emotion day for all as thoughts of home and family dominated their minds. Time was passed in many ways as nobody in the outfit had ever dreamed they would spend the Christmas holiday season under these circumstances.

The unloading and departing of the Mormacsea then closed another chapter in the saga of the 29th Air Service Group. The ship delivered the Group where it was supposed to be, but the memories of her and the voyage would linger in the hearts of the men forever.

Later on, during searching for research material to put this document together, a Memorandum written by one on the 29th's key officers at the time, was found that contained several suggestions to improve troop movement conditions on board ship for future use as a result of experiences on the Mormacsea. The following are excerpts from that memo: That a Mess Officer be required to board ship at least five

days before sailing time. He would be required to coordinate food supplies and trip menus with the Ship Steward. Possible shortages could be found and corrected prior to leaving. The system of delegating Mess Officers and Assistants be reorganized to better provide adequate supervision round-the clock. The system used on the Mormacsea voyage could not adequately handle all duties of the kitchens, rations, equipment and supplies, sanitation of wash-rooms and eating utensils, garbage disposal and troop eating schedules. Future organization of this detail should place additional Commissioned Officers in responsible areas so that morale is maintained at the highest level.

That all foods served that had unpleasant odors, such as cabbage and fish, not be served unless the ship's ventilation system is in proper working order. In addition, perishable foods such as potatoes, etc. not be permitted to be carried over from one trip to another. These foods should be disposed of at the conclusion of each crossing. The last recommendation was that the drainage systems in the kitchens be inspected prior to leaving port and properly repaired into A-I working order. A former Officer out of the 82nd Service Squadron, Leonard Mullis, took a sightseeing trip following the Group's Reunion in Richmond Va., and while visiting the East, unexpectedly spotted the Mormacsea tied up at a Baltimore Wharf. After much prodding of a guard on board, he succeeded in being able to look her over. Mullis found the ship apparently to be in good condition, except for some rust on the main deck. His thoughts immediately went back to 1942 and wondered if there were any of the original 29th willing to volunteer to chip rusty paint once again. He also thought it might be a good suggestion to take up a collection among former members and buy her to use as a cruise ship, returning to all the "exotic" islands the outfit served on during the War. His bubble was quickly broken when the guard informed him that the Mormacsea was bound for the scrap heap and its final voyage!

The Group Transportation Section had the responsibility of transporting all equipment and supplies to the proper squadron or company camp area. This was a gigantic operation made especially difficult by bad roads and mud. Wet, damp weather was common at the island, but the 1932nd and the 2020th Quartermaster Companies performed admirably in these trying times. Not only was it necessary to set up temporary campsites so the men could get some rest, but their own equipment had to be unloaded, and, in many cases, assembled as it was new and still in original crates. These trucking companies eventually put fifty-seven trucks and other useful vehicles into shape along with other vehicles assigned to the Group Transportation Section. All men were required to work night and day under all conditions; heat, rain, mud, etc., and fatigue was common, not to mention back aches. The men's spirits were high, and everyone pitched in, realizing the sooner the ship was unloaded, the sooner campsites could be cleared and set up, which was to everyone's advantage. The health of the men was of prime concern to each unit Commander. Dysentery was one of the early ailments that took many men out of duty for days at a time. Being in tropical territory was almost as strange to the medical officers as it was for the men. Group Surgeon K.P. Smith and the other medical officers did a fine job dealing with everyday complaints, and most of all, providing clear instructions as to how best to protect the health of all personnel.

A Group Medical Aid Station was established just as soon as possible in tents equipped with tools, supplies, and needs of doctors. Medical supplies had to be located and separated from among the many boxes and crates arriving from the ship. First aid supplies plus items needed the most to treat dysentery and dengue fever, were among the first items unpacked and used.

Being unaccustomed to actual combat experiences, during the first air raid, several men received injuries from running into coconut trees, and cut feet from coral turf. As no foxholes or bomb shelters had been constructed as yet, any cover available was sought by everyone. The medics therefore spent several nights patching up wounds, none of which came from falling bombs.

As soon as Group Command Headquarters had been established, (temporarily in tents), the 1003rd Signal Company went to work on its specialty to set up communications systems between unit areas and at the bomber strips where mobile aircraft repair shops were starting to get organized.

The code name for Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides, was designated as "Buttons" and as soon as the 1003rd had set up switchboards and telephone communications, the 29th Air Service Group was given the code signal of "Palm Tree", a tag that remained with the Group throughout the war, and for years following the war.

Guadalcanal was designated as "Cactus" for code purposes and the name was used for all dialogue and communications concerning the base. Due to the lack of an island signal construction battalion, the 1003rd had to improvise and provide power line construction. They were severely handicapped in this job as they were not prepared nor equipped to perform construction duties. The 1003rd found that their Table of Organization did not fit the real world they were faced with in actual day-to-day experiences.

Some sections were overmanned while others were woefully shorthanded. Men of 1003rd Signal Co. begin stringing communication lines. Poles are cut. erected and lines installed.

As the 29th's doctors quickly found, the most medical ailments included diarrhea, dysentery and fungus infections resulting from the humid jungle climate conditions. After some time, it was learned that the fresh water rivers and streams were contributing to severe ear infections which caused orders to be issued to refrain from swimming in these waters. Although the dreaded malaria fever was prevalent on the island and all troops were made a ware of it, it was dengue fever that was the most common illness to strike the men. During the months of January and February, approximately one-third of the personnel were sick with dengue, regardless of the fact proper mosquito control measures were being used. The camp at Bomber #1 was so situated that it was virtually impossible to control these pests, especially during the rainy season. The fever was spread by mosquitoes and struck very fast. It became know as "back- break" fever with symptoms of headache, pains throughout the back, arms and legs, accompanied by high fever. Aspirin was the prescribed medication plus complete bed rest. The illness lasted several days and those contracting it were usually returned to duty in about two weeks.

Because the Base Army Hospital was still under construction, the most severe cases were sent to Cub #1 Naval Hospital, but as the number of cases increased, it was difficult for Naval personnel to accept new cases. As a result of this increase in cases, high level talks between the services took place, resulting in a stepped-up effort to open parts of the new army hospital. Soon the new facility was able to accept patients, and the heavy bed needs leveled off.

Group Surgeon Doctor K. P. Smith continued his efforts to provide equipment necessary to operate an authorized Group Aid Station where doctors could confine sick men to bed if necessary. Due to the lack of beds and cots, this was difficult, to say the least, but Doc Smith was

persistent and left no stone unturned.

While the island was swarming with new unit arrivals; Navy, Army ground troops, Marines, Seabees and Air Corps components, the men of the 29th were making friends of all branches in order to establish relations designed to barter for things needed, but unavailable through normal channels of supply. One might imagine, for example, how precious a single can of paint might be on a remote island in the Pacific that had heretofore never ever been heard of by most of the men. The 29th's very resourceful surgeon was ever on the alert for anyone that might be able to help obtain necessary items. He had already "obtained" mattresses, pillows and bedding through various trades. When he learned that the Navy was building a large new hospital complex, he checked around and found that they had a good supply of cots that the 29th's Aid Station could use, so set out to make a deal, impossible.

He was told that they were in dire need of a gallon of white paint to finish the captain's quarters. Doc desperately wanted to obtain twenty cots from the Navy personnel as he had previously found twenty mattresses, so now he began his search for a can of paint. It appeared for awhile this would be a lost cause, but by chance mentioned his plight to a fellow 29th officer. This man just happened to know that Commander Reyher had some paint he was saving for his own use later on. Doc Smith contacted Major Reyher with his problem, and after much discussion and arm-pulling, managed to get the " gallon of paint, and white to boot. The 29th Aid Station got its beds (steel ones at that) and the Group Commander slept on a nice comfortable mattress from that day on.

Shortly after this incident, the Air Force Inspector General, while inspecting the 29th's area, called upon Captain Smith at the Group Aid Station. The first thing he noticed were purple curtains which were a genuine surprise to him, and at once proceeded to raise the roof eating out everyone within earshot. When Captain Smith finally calmed him down explaining how his ingenious medics had dyed old parachute cloth with medicinal gentian violet, made their own rods and hung them to spruce up the aid station, the inspector general grinned, then enjoyed a good laugh and actually complimented the surgeon and his medical section for their improvisation.

The 29th soon learned that the problems facing it on Espiritu Santo would be more difficult to overcome than those of a similar nature at the staging area back home. During the training period in the States, the points which were impressed on the minds of all was speed and mobility in setting up shops. It was with these thoughts in mind that the Group embarked upon its venture, only to learn on landing, that speed and mobility back in flat country and on good roads, was not the same thing as when setting up in the jungles, with practically no roads, and where every inch of usable space had to be cut out of the jungle itself. The slogan, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going," aptly described the men of the 29th as they recognized the situation and acted accordingly.

As most of the 1653rd Ordnance Company was sent on the Advance Detachment to Guadalcanal, this left the 1637th Ordnance Company to take on added duties. When they first departed ship,

they pitched in with the other units to unload and help deliver supplies, as well as perform all sorts of functions not previously anticipated. During the process of assembling crated vehicles, it was necessary to improvise a block and tackle and also an "A" frame to aid in the work.

The 29th's Ordnance outfits were well-trained units and equal to the task. The absence of a Diamond T Wrecker did not stop the assembly line, although it did slow down the work considerably. A tall tree was used for the block and tackle which afforded a means of lifting the heavy chassis of GMCs while wheels, bodies and cabs were fitted together. This ingenious method proved extremely satisfactory. A vast majority of the vehicles in the 29th Service Group were thus assembled.

Parts and supply tent for ordnance operations set up in nearby jungle. Next in line was the erection of a suitable shop for maintenance work. This consisted of three departments, namely, Chassis and Heavy Units; Engine Overhaul; and Body and Fender. The Parts Department building underwent construction at the same time. The construction of the various departments necessitated roaming the thick jungle seeking suitable building materials. In order to facilitate the handling of parts, four, one ton cargo trailers and one, two-and-a-half ton GMC cargo truck were converted into parts trucks. The building of bins for these parts was accomplished in such a manner as to enable loading them on the trailers and made ready for shipment at a moment's notice.

Upon arrival at Espiritu Santo, they set about erecting tents, supply buildings and a repair shack. They hauled coral to cover the mud to provide working surfaces and were soon able to function as a good ordnance maintenance and supply organization. While at Santo records disclosed that the automotive section functioned efficiently under the most adverse conditions. Approximately six thousand parts of all descriptions were issued by the Parts Department, of which four thousand, five hundred were consumed by the maintenance shop for repairs. The Chassis and Heavy Unit Department, along with the Body and Fender Shop were credited with the majority of repairs. Both departments were in constant demand. A brief summary of repairs completed consisted of six thousand vehicle inspections, repairs and replacement of transmissions, repairs to clutches, water pumps, bodies and leaking radiators; the replacement of oil seals for wheels, transmission and transfer cases, complete paint jobs and replacement of crankshafts. In some instances, it was even necessary to make studs for springs and bushings for tie rods.

A permanent Group Headquarters Quonset hut-type building was completed on the 3rd of January, and in addition to the 29th Command Operations, part of the building was being utilized by the Island Air Base Command headed by Colonel Henry R. Baxter. In order to establish the campsite many factors were considered and in the end the decision was to locate in the southeastern part. It was shaped something like a nose extending into the sea, similar to the state of Florida, only much smaller. In fact, the width of the nose was not more than six miles at the center. On the eastern-most coastal side was the old landing field, commonly referred to as Bomber #1, from which the heavy B-17 bombers had been giving the Japanese forward bases plenty of trouble. On the opposite side, another field was under construction that would contain larger dispersing areas with huge storage bunkers, and would become known as Bomber #2. ,The

29th established its camp areas next to the latter. It was a heavily wooded section with thick jungle growth that required a lot of hard work clearing it out for tents and other buildings to be erected. Huge Banyan trees with hanging vines later made havens for safety during bombing raids. Coconut palm trees were everywhere. Shifts of men took their turns pulling various duties including the hauling of coral and sand to try to keep the mud from taking over after every rain shower. Soon mess halls were built and showers set up, to the joy of all men. Empty gasoline drums were set up on platforms made of palm tree logs. Ingenious mechanical minds in the outfits figured a way to attach sprinkler heads to the apparatus and soon showers were in use at each unit. Group mechanical equipment included portable electrical generators which enabled electrical service to be installed in Headquarters and the Dispensary.

The two officers that accompanied the 29th's other equipment aboard a second ship out of San Francisco named the USS Edison arrived at Santo. Very few men of the 29th ever knew about the details of this trip. It departed San Francisco on the 21st of November, with that part of the Group's equipment unable to be shipped on the Mormacsea, and a mishap occurred as the ship neared the Fijis. Us. Lawrence Jarvis and John Scott and four enlisted men, had been detailed to watch over the Group's properties and accompany them to the Hebrides. As the Edison neared Fiji, she suffered damage from a hurricane-type storm which destroyed and separated the forward section of the ship, resulting in sizable loss of critical maintenance machinery. The Edison's remaining stern section was able to make port, and equipment thereon was later salvaged. Us. Jarvis and Scott returned to Headquarters at Santo to file their report and obtain further orders, while the enlisted men remained at Fiji with the salvageable equipment. Subsequently, the officers returned to Fiji to have the 29th's property transferred to the USS Elcho Yale, another Liberty Ship bound for the Hebrides and Espiritu Santo. Some of the smaller equipment disappeared into other organizations at Fiji, but the salvageable larger items arrived at the Group's base on the 8th of January.

Meanwhile, the Advance Detachment at Guadalcanal, was functioning near Lunga Point which was very near Henderson Field. Air Force activities were being stepped up resulting in the need for good service squadron personnel. Medium and heavy bombers as well as fighters were constantly in need of maintenance and repairs. The men of the 82nd and 40th provided as much mechanical repair and supply services as was humanly possible.

Naval victories of the Coral Sea and Midway were decisive turning points that enabled American units to establish, for the first time, a genuine air offensive against the Japanese. Enemy Navy operations, , continued to attempt to land fresh troops at the Canal as they wanted to retake Henderson Field and continue striking American bases.

Ground forces of the Marines, the Americal and 25th Divisions bravely and gallantly repulsed their every attempt. Some of the needed work performed by our mechanics should have been depot "4th echelon maintenance", but because it was impossible to get them back to a rear depot base in their condition, the 29th's men tackled the jobs. Some aircraft were returned to combat duty while others were sufficiently repaired to enable them to be flown back to a rear depot station in New Caledonia for additional work. During the period prior to the 29th Advance

Detachment arriving, there had not been any Air Service Groups or squadrons on Guadalcanal, and as a result several planes had to be grounded for lack of repairs.

Prior to arriving at the Canal, aircraft parts were difficult to obtain with the main source of supply coming from parts salvaged from planes wrecked beyond repair. Several tents were put together to make a supply warehouse for storing these badly needed parts. As time went on, previously requisitioned parts and other supplies started to come in more regularly which enabled the men to maintain a better pace of repairing planes and keeping them in the air.

After a short period, Acting Commanding Officer Lt. Holtsclaw was relieved and returned to Espiritu Santo. Lt. George Sagli, an experienced line engineering officer in the 82nd, was named Acting Commanding Officer of the detachment.

The men of the 1932nd Quartermaster Truck Company were put to work driving and hauling ammunition and gasoline for aircraft at both Henderson Field and a fighter strip constructed after taking the island, and manned by the 38th Air Service Squadron commanded by Major Fred Taylor. Service squadron personnel served the 5th and 11th Bomb Groups which were delivering punishing blows to Japanese bases on Munda, the Northern Solomons and Rabaul. This duty was round-the-clock as the need never ceased, resulting in many men suffering from exhaustion. At times they were up all, or most of the night, in foxholes when Jap bombers came over. The action against Henderson Field also saw shrapnel falling all around the area. One night, shrapnel killed a soldier in a nearby bomb group, while two tents of Headquarters Squadron also were hit. The men appreciated their foxholes more than ever after this experience.

The shrill of an air raid siren, the bright searchlights of anti-aircraft battalions illuminating enemy aircraft, the firing of their guns, plus the explosion of enemy bombs, can be a very traumatic experience, especially so if the bombs fall nearby. This was the scene when the advance detachment experienced their first real exposure to extensive enemy bombardment. After the all-clear was sounded, it was out of your foxhole, into your cot and mosquito net. Before you were really asleep, the siren blew again. By the following morning, Capt. John T. McKinney was visited by several individuals who wished to discuss their future Air Force duty in the capacity of conscientious objectors. Evidently the "grass cutter" or finger bombs had fallen within a few feet of their foxhole. After due consultation with Capt. McKinney and Doctor Joe Dobkin, they were persuaded to give it another go. Evidently the consultation was 100% effective, as all remained and became men of whom everyone was extremely proud.

On one occasion an American plane was shot down near Henderson Field. Some of the men of the 29th were able to reach the spot and rescue the pilot, but when they tried to get the tail gunner out, it burst into flames. The men gazed in horror at this terrible sight but were informed later that the gunner had died of a broken neck before the fire. This did not, , alleviate the feelings they had after watching what they thought was his fiery death. Stories later told by these men included their frustrations at the Canal over not being able to fight back, but instead having to dive for a foxhole and pray it would not be hit. They each understood , that their mission at the Canal was to pave the way for the rest of the Group.

As more Air Force squadrons began operating out of Henderson Field, along with necessary support units, it became obvious that this base required an Air Service Center with adequate administrative experience to carry out a complete and efficient operation. Commanding Officer Reyher had been notified of this need and was preparing to put it into operation as soon as the entire Group moved up to the Canal. He and other officers flew back and forth when necessary to maintain a closer coordination between the two bases. Each time they were about to return to Santo, men at the Canal wished they could go back with them. All of the 29th's personnel that served with the advance detachment at Guadalcanal were authorized to receive the Guadalcanal Campaign medal with one bronze star, a medal not awarded to the remaining men back at the Hebrides. Congratulations to the detachment were also issued by the Chief of the US Armed Forces; Commanding General, US Air Forces; Navy Admiral William "Bull" Halsey, and the Guadalcanal Island Command under General Order #33, XIV Corps, Dated February 12, 1943. 12,1943.

When the Group first arrived at Santo, aircraft units stationed there operated out of Bomber Strip #1, but a second strip was under construction. Naval Construction Battalions were busily engaged in felling trees, pulling stumps, clearing underbrush, etc. B-17's had been operating out of Bomber #1 for strikes at Guadalcanal and Munda prior to the American invasion there as well as other forward bases. Pekoa Field contained a base of coral, but was being covered by Marston pierced plank metal matting that could be used for other purposes as the men soon discovered. One such use (after considerable horse-trading) was to construct a vault that could be used to store and protect Air Force combat whiskey which was part of the medical section's supply inventory as well as certain narcotics which had to be accounted for according to regulations.

The service squadron men primarily, as well as other personnel assigned to work the detail, will remember the original length of the runway was extended considerably in order to accommodate the big bombers. The original fifty-five hundred foot length was lengthened to seventy-four hundred feet.

Both the 40th and 82nd Service Squadrons that remained at Santo set up their operations as soon as possible relieving the 5th and 11th Bomb Group crews from doing tasks better suited to a Service Organization. The 40th and 82nd therefore established operations in Bomber #1 and Bunker #4 near Bomber #2.

The sound of an air siren (sometimes it was the clanging of a tire iron against an iron ring), and the bright searchlights of the anti-aircraft battalions scattered around the island illuminating enemy planes while firing their guns, were frequent experiences of the Group. Foxholes were dug in strategic locations in all unit areas. Huge palm tree logs were cut up and used to top off the holes which were later covered and camouflaged with huge palm fronds. At first this was very traumatic for practically everyone, especially when the noise of exploding bombs were heard. Later, as the incidents of raids were less frequent, some of the braver (?) men would stay outside with helmets on and watch as the lights followed the action. Foxhole safety and security was later verified when several tents were riddled by shrapnel and made believers out of everybody.



One of the largest jobs to be undertaken was the storage and handling of aviation gasoline and oil, which was received in fifty-five gallon drums and fed to storage tanks by a spillway system. When taking over this job there was slightly over one million gallons of gasoline on hand, which was stored in two, four hundred thousand gallon storage tanks at four gasoline dumps, located in the jungle. During the next seven months, the 40<sup>th</sup> issued approximately thirty-five thousand gallons per day to all types of aircraft. When they were relieved from this work, they had over three and one-half million gallons of aviation gasoline stored in the two storage tanks and in seventeen gasoline dumps. Aviation gasoline and oil were also handled for the Navy and Marines, as well as other Army units stationed there.

Together with the 82nd, they took over the Island Air Corps supply which up to this time had been operated by combat Groups and a few men on detached service from the Hawaiian Air Depot. At this time a metal warehouse, forty by one hundred feet and a Quonset hut had just been completed, but the warehouse had no shelves or bins so the supplies were still dispersed in the surrounding jungle by classes and covered with tarpaulin. Due to the lack of lumber, it was necessary to salvage packing crates for construction of bins, and the combined squadrons pitched in with vim and vigor. They were very fortunate that a large portion of the supply section had worked in the Sub-Depot at Morris Field, North Carolina, and were well qualified to handle the situation. Both squadron supply men worked diligently to help sort and re-arrange the stock, which was in a jumbled state, due to lack of personnel to handle the receiving, storage and issue of the large quantities of stock that were arriving on the island. Because of the great demand for Air Corps parts in this area, the supply sections were kept extremely busy, day and night.

After Pekoia Field was put in operation, it was good to see the big flying fortresses being put in top shape day and night, for bombing raids over Jap-held island bases. These aircraft flew missions over thousands of miles of water to reach targets spread out in many parts of the Pacific. Upon their return, the ground crews would anxiously wait to see if they all made it. For those returning with problems, there were medical technicians from the 40th, 82nd and Headquarters on duty in Group ambulances. Other crews trained in the use of fire-fighting equipment also were on hand. As time went on, the two service squadrons were able to improve their capabilities as additional supplies and equipment arrived.

Early in the war, US Armed Forces in the South Pacific Area Command (USAFISPA) had determined as part of its strategy, that the New Hebrides Islands were ideally located to fill requirements for supply and aircraft repair between the Fiji and Solomon Islands.

Efate, the most central and heavily populated island of the group, became the first Air Force Supply activity centered around Bauer Field. Espiritu Santo, , was chosen as the island base to build up Allied strength for bomber and fighter planes to attack Japanese installations at Guadalcanal, Bougainville and Rabaul. The 29th's assignment here was to serve all Air Force units with supplies and aircraft maintenance repair. The latter was divided into four echelons depending on the type of work required and amount of time estimated to complete the work. Generally, , 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> echelon work was performed by the bomb or fighter squadron ground

crews as these only consisted of daily inspections, changing plugs and/ or adjusting carburetors to keep the aircraft in top condition between missions.

When additional repair work was required, it fell into the 3rd or 4<sup>th</sup> echelon category, which was the responsibility of the 40th and 82nd Service Squadrons. This work involved more extensive, major repairs such as engine changes and overhaul, body and sheet metal work, hydraulic and electrical systems, wing and tail assemblies, propeller replacement, and anything else necessary to put the machine back into top condition. The group or squadron engineering officers would decide, after a careful survey, to either salvage the plane or take on the repairs. In the early days the 29th repair crews took on many jobs that should have been sent back to depot group repair stations because of the dire need to keep planes in the air. Parts were difficult to obtain in the field so the mobile repair shop crews often turned them out.

Each squadron's equipment included mobile repair trailers that were self-contained and could be moved from place to place rather quickly. This enabled the many skilled mechanics and technicians to perform repair jobs not generally done by a 3rd echelon crew. The men of the 29th's Service Squadrons were especially skilled in all phases of mechanical work. They could repair or rebuild motors, do electrical work, weld, paint, apply fuselage fabric, fix instruments, replace glass, weapons, and other necessities, machine parts, and most important, "improvise" in order to return planes to duty as rapidly as possible. The 29th performed many 4<sup>th</sup> echelon jobs at the initial stages of operations, but whenever an aircraft could not be put back into service by either the 40th or 82nd, it was returned to a rear base Air Depot group.

As days passed, aircraft of several newly arrived outfits were serviced, including the 307th B-24 Heavy Bombardment Group plus P-38 and P-40 fighter planes. From time to time transient aircraft came in for repairs which added to the workload. In April, the 40th was ordered to send another twelve men to Guadalcanal and again in June, twelve additional men went to Henderson Field to assist overworked personnel. Sections of the 82nd were busily engaged in other necessary activities while the line operations were functioning at Bomber #2.

The Group transportation section, particularly heavy duty equipment drivers, played an important role in rendering assistance to both the engineering section and technical supply. The engineering section needed additional manpower especially in sheet metal duty. Consequently several men ' out of the transportation section attended training classes in the trade and soon became very capable at helping out sheet metal personnel.

As B-17's were returning to base from strikes in the Solomons and other Jap-held islands, many of them were badly shot up by Jap Zeroes and anti-aircraft fire. Mobile repair units had to be adequately equipped to lift heavy aircraft wings, fuselages, motors, etc., but a C-2 wrecker which was supposed to be included in the engineering section's equipment, had been lost on the second transport at Fiji. To eliminate this handicap, Master Sergeant Gerald V. Hardy and Technical Sergeant Jack R. Sowers, Supervised by Lt. Reuben Yarri, began assembling parts from salvaged equipment and giving directions to the machine shop to manufacture needed items. They mounted an "A" frame to the bed of a large two-and-a-half ton truck with a power take-off

winch. By an ingenious system of pulleys and cables designed by these three men out of the 40th, they were able to lift anything up to a weight of four thousand pounds. After being operational for awhile, the men decided to build another of these hoisting units and keep the C-2 wrecker for heavier jobs. Plans for this piece of equipment, built entirely from scratch, in the field under anything but normal circumstances, were forwarded to the commanding general of the Air Materiel Command and commanding general of the 13th Air Force with a recommendation that it be considered for use by all field service organizations.

In addition to the crane, three, one-fourth ton trailers were equipped with power plants and compressors so that a mobile repair trailer could be dispatched quickly to aircraft in need of work at the bunker where it was parked. Floodlights were included so as to continue repair work under darkness, enabling repair crews to keep working with only breaks for meals. These activities proved the value of the mobile repair crews as the 40th worked on thirteen B-17's at one time, making wing changes, repairing damaged fuselages and a variety of other necessary jobs. The excellent training and experiences gained at Morris Field were evident as the men of the 40th tackled all assigned repair needs with rapidity and excellence. Their training was further verified by the record. In a six-month period, 40th mechanics alone, performed 3rd echelon maintenance on one hundred, sixteen aircraft, most of which were bombers - B-17s, B-24s, 8-25s, and 8-26s. Fighter and other type aircraft serviced included P-38, P-39, P-40, P-70, LB-30, C-86, L-48, and L-38s. This work was accomplished without benefit of enclosed hangars or similar shelters.

Machine shop personnel with nothing more than a mobile shop trailer received high recognition for performing the first bomb rack modifications in the Pacific Theatre. It was found that the twenty bombs carried by the B-24s could be increased by modifying the racks in the bomb-bay so the 40th set about to tackle this job through specifications worked out by the engineering section. This small crew of 40th machinists turned out a B-24 capable of carrying forty bombs every fifth day, which increased the amount of destruction that could be dealt to the enemy.

After considerable experience of the mobile repair units through trial, error, and daily aircraft needs, the engineering section decided to store airplane frames in a set-aside bunker. The engineering office found that aircraft framework was very valuable and much time was saved by reclaiming all serviceable and repairable parts. In this way they either used them as needed or turned them into Air Corps Supply for shipment to the supply depot for other units to use. As planes were damaged by crash landings or combat action, they could be put back into service more rapidly by using repaired frames, fuselages or wing panels as salvaged by the men and stored nearby.

On one occasion, repair crews of the 40th noticed a disabled flying fortress setting in one of the storage areas with her nose completely destroyed as a result of enemy action. "Madame X" was painted on her side and stories began making the rounds of her terrific combat record as part of the 98th Bomb Squadron operations. Some of the men made a list of necessary repairs and parts and wished they could tackle the job, but the Commanding Officer felt this was a 4th echelon repair job which would have to be done by a depot group. The crew of the Madame X also felt the job could not be done and that she would never fly again. The men of the 40th didn't give up,

and finally convinced the engineering officer to let them try to fix her in their off-time. Permission was granted provided the work did not interfere with regular daily service needs of other combat aircraft. Charles Rust, Edell Hardy, and other machinists improvised parts, replaced inner and outer panels, rebuilt the nose from salvaged parts, replaced necessary wiring, and put the four power plants into top condition. Robert "Bullneck" Bishop, E. M. Hardy, and others on the line, changed all props and serviced operating systems until they all agreed no more could be done. The Group and Squadron Commanding Officers and Engineering Officer inspected the work as well as the Bomb Group Commander to which the plane belonged. He was amazed at what he saw and soon authorized a test flight. Word of this spread throughout the camp and, needless to say, every man who could get a way, went down to the runway on the appointed day and cheered loudly as the Madame X soared off into the blue. This was one of several significant achievements that caused the 29th to become recognized as a mature, capable and efficient service organization.

The Madame X made several missions after it was released and added more Jap Zeroes to its credit. After each mission, service crews would give her an inspection as they were especially proud of her. When she did not return from a mission over Bougainville a few months later, they felt as if part of the Squadron had been lost.

Later, when the balance of the 82nd was ordered to join the advance detachment at Guadalcanal, the 40th was left on Santo to perform on its own, In picking up the additional work left by the 82nd's departure, the supply section had a much bigger job than before because additional units were arriving, and the 40th was responsible for providing them with necessary supplies. A Photo Reconnaissance Group came in, plus the Royal New Zealand Air Force. Additions were soon made to the warehouse area when three additional Quonset huts were obtained. All aircraft requiring complete overhaul were returned to the 13th Air Depot Group stationed at Tontouta Field, New Caledonia. This group possessed equipment and parts not available at forward bases and could undertake extensive repair jobs. Both the 40th and 82nd drew upon this installation for parts often, and, at times, flew down to obtain them personally.

As time went on, units became more settled and campsites more organized. Foxholes were finished which gave everyone a more secure feeling because of night air raids being made by "Washing Machine Charlie", a lone Jap plane that continued to harass everyone on Espiritu Santo as he repeatedly tried to knock out ships, equipment, planes, and airstrips.

The Group was extremely fortunate, especially the 1637th Ordnance Company, when on the 23rd of February, a lone Jap bomber came over the island apparently intending to blowout some of the Naval and merchant ships anchored in the bay, or damage the bomber strip. Whatever its target was, it dropped its load of five hundred pound bombs near the 1637th Bivouac Area, barely missing General Twining's plane as well as other B-24s parked in nearby bunkers.

One of these bombs entered the ground, penetrating without exploding, and left only a hole. Not realizing the bomb had exploded in deep coral, 13th Air Force Commander Twining felt the bomb should be dug up and defused, and immediately ordered the 1021st Ordnance Company to

provide the detail for this dangerous task, as there were no bomb disposal units on Espiritu Santo at the time.

Lt. Andrew A. Burke led a crew of volunteers, none of whom had ever had any experience or knowledge of working with unexploded bombs. They immediately roped off a large danger area and close the taxi-ways to the bomber strip. With pick, shovel, and muscle, these men set about to dig through the hard coral. They worked in two man shifts, not knowing if each swing of the pick might not only blow away themselves, but everything in the surrounding area. The sides of the hole were shored up with scaffolding as they went deeper and deeper. Finally, when they had gone down twenty-nine feet, the floor dropped out, revealing a small cavern. It was at this point that the crew and officers decided the bomb was of the armor-piercing type and had been equipped with a delayed fuse. When it blew, it did not contain enough power to blowout a crater from its twenty-nine foot depth of solid coral. Everyone involved including the rest of the company, and Group Headquarters, heaved a giant sigh of relief and soon filled in the hole.

All volunteers on this detail were out of the 1021st Ordnance Company whose Commanding Officer at the time was Captain Ray C. Isaacs. Lt. William P. Webster was Company Maintenance Officer and Lt. Andrew A. Burke, who headed up this crew, was Company Ammunitions Officer. Volunteers included First Sergeant Robert L. Murphy, *T/5* George W. Bell, Sergeant Kenneth C. Bryson, Pvt. Fred H. Donaldson, *T/5* Marvin E. Duckworth, Pvt. Sigmund O. Grabowski, *T/Sgt.* Lynn P. Martin, Pvt's Paul I. Surin, William "Pete" Dooley, Orville "Red" Davis, Charles W. Christian and Alex M. "Red" Hart.

Later, Espiritu Santo Island Base Commander Brigadier General B. C. Lockwood Jr., issued a special commendation to each of these men for the excellent manner with which they had handled this delicate and dangerous mission.

After the raid, Japanese Radio News, through their infamous "Tokyo Rose" broadcasts, announced that, "----- as a result of a raid on the 29<sup>th</sup> Air Service Group at Espiritu Santo, tremendous damage to enemy planes was inflicted and a destroyer anchored in the harbor was sunk."

Toward the end of the month, nine men of Headquarters Squadron, the balance of the 82nd Service Squadron, the 1932nd Quartermaster Truck Company, and the 1653rd Ordnance Company, were alerted to make ready to move out and join the advance detachment at Guadalcanal, and in mid-February were "ducked" out to the USAT Elihu Yale which was in the channel being loaded to join a convoy bound for the forward base. After waiting for twenty-one days, the Elihu Yale finally weighed anchor and pulled away on the 27th of February. 1653rd Ordnance Co. men make ready to depart for Guadalcanal.

Orders sending these outfits to join the others at the 'Canal also relieved Lt. George Sagli as Acting Advance Unit Commanding Officer and named Major John T. Trout to replace him in the same capacity. Lt. William Bray was assigned Adjutant and Quartermaster Officer, Lt. Robert Klang was designated Chemical Officer while Lt. Joseph Dobkin was named Acting Advance Unit

Surgeon. Lt. George Sagli was returned . to his original assignment as Engineering Officer of the 82nd, remaining at the Canal.

Prior to this, the other units at Santo were swamped with all sorts of rumors about the entire Group leaving soon, but the jobs that required doing were carried on with the same fervor as before. It was in late February that Group Commander Reyher was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, while several other officers also received advancement. Most significant of these was Captain Trout who became a Major, but was on his way to Guadalcanal. Lts. Shepard and Doud became Captains, Capt. Holladay became a Major and likewise, it was now Major John Woodward. Enlisted men of the outfit were pleased to hear that two of their own, Master Sergeants Reuben Yarri and Norwood Gray were both given direct field commissions to the rank of First Lieutenant resulting from their outstanding abilities and experience.

More men of the 29th were taken a way on the 27th of February, when Colonel Henry R. Baxter, Commander of the Island Base Air Command, requested, and received, six officers, one warrant officer and twenty-six enlisted men to beef up his staff. This sort of activity would end soon because word was received by Group Headquarters that the 29th Air Service Group was officially assigned to the 13th Air Force as of the 4th of March. So the days of the Group being attached or temporarily assigned were over. The 29th now belonged to a genuine combat Air Force. The 13<sup>th</sup> Air Force was "born" overseas on January 13, 1943, with units put together from the early guardian aircraft units protecting Australia in the critical days of 1942 when Japanese forces were penetrating along New Guinea.

The first officer named to command the 13th Air Force was Brigadier General Nathan F. Twining, who at the time was assigned to Headquarters USAFISPA, located in Noumea, New Caledonia. His duty was Chief of Staff under Lieutenant General Millard" Miff" Harmon. He was moved to Espiritu Santo January 21, 1943, where the 29th ASG, with its many talented craftsmen were called upon to build his first set of quarters. This they did in record time, creating the building on a beach area, primarily out of rose mahogany and teakwood, which was being cut as the main supply of lumber by Air Corps engineering units. General Nathan Farragut Twining, one of this nation's leading pioneer Air Force officers, was held in the highest esteem by members of the 29<sup>th</sup> Air Service Group.

For the next year, General Twining ably directed all units of the 13th, which included those elements composing the XIII Bomber Command, XIII Fighter Command, and XIII Service Command. He also became Commander, Aircraft Solomon Islands (COMAIRSOL), which included all units of the Army Air Corps, Navy and Marine Air Units, and New Zealand Air Force, operating in the Solomon Islands.

The 29th became well known to General Twining at an early date, as his first set of living quarters on Espiritu Santo were constructed by 29<sup>th</sup> technicians, primarily out of tropical lumber, cut on that island. Further, he became keenly aware of the fine quality of service rendered by units of the Group, as it continuously repaired badly combat-damaged aircraft, and provided services and supplies of all types to Air Corps units located in the New Hebrides and Solomon Islands. Many

times he directed recognition to various elements and personnel of the Group for their skilled performance in keeping the maximum number of combat aircraft available for their primary duty performance - destruction of the enemy and his installations.

These included the 11th Bomb Group commanded by Colonel La Verne "Blondie" Saunders. The group included the 26th, 42nd, 98th, and 431st Bomb Squadrons, all B-17 aircraft. This officer was soon to be transferred to the China-Burma-India Theatre and the 7th Air Force. Also on the island at this early time, was the 5th Bomb Group, commanded by Colonel Brooke Allen, and consisting of the 23rd, 31st, and 394th Bomb Squadrons, also a B-17 unit. 8-26s of the 42nd Bomb Group, with its 69th and 70th Squadrons, were also flying missions out of Espiritu Santo at this time. Group Commander of the 42nd was Colonel "Lighthouse" Harry Wilson.

Fighter units located at Santo during this early period included the 67th, 68th .. 70th, and 339th Squadrons of the 347th Fighter Group, plus the 18th Fighter Group, made up of the 12th and 44th Fighter Squadrons. Commander of the fighter units was Brigadier General Dean Strothers while Brigadier General William Matheny Commanded the XIII Bomber Command.

One of the early morale boosters for the Group, was a surprise USO show, headed by movie star Jim Burke, who had become famous playing humorous roles, particularly those depicting a policeman. Others in his show included a singer and a very clever magician. They ate in the 29th jungle mess hall, talked to the men and played a major factor in raising morale, as it had been a very long time since real, professional, entertainment was seen by anyone.

On the 18th of June, the Group's Santo operation was reduced in size again, when the 2020th Quartermaster Company, the 1137th Quartermaster Company, and the balance of the 1932nd Quartermaster Company, left for Guadalcanal. This made over half of the entire Group at the Canal. At this time, Lt. William Devine was named Commanding Officer of the 1137th when Lt. Walter Lapinske was reassigned as Group Quartermaster Officer. Another enlisted man, Technical Sergeant David Faden, received a discharge in order to accept a direct appointment as a 2nd Lt. in the 1137th Quartermaster Company. This contingency traveled to the Canal aboard the U.S. S. John Adams.

The men remaining at Santo were becoming quite proficient at improvising and trading for needed articles. Comforts and items not available became ideas for pursuit by the ingenious improvisers. The men soon discovered that they were capable of performing all sorts of jobs if the end result would mean a more comfortable and pleasant environment for their tent. Benches, tables, stands, shaving areas, and clothes-racks, were a few of the things made up, even though tools and lumber were difficult to come by. Men who previously never even thought of being hustlers or beggars, became professional promoters, skilled at the art of bargaining for needed items. It was nice while it lasted, but all had to be left behind when a move to another base was ordered.

All functional sections of Group Headquarters were operating as best they could under island and tropical conditions. The mail orderlies of all units had to set up and begin processing mail at once

even though incoming deliveries were slow in arriving. Letter-writing for delivery back home was an ever-present and on-going activity. All mail returning to the USA was censored by Group officers but that didn't stop the men from writing. After awhile, it was possible to send a package home as well as money orders, as there was no real need for cash except to buy a few necessities or to gamble. Sending it home was the safest way!

Group Commander Reyher had established Group Headquarters adjacent to Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, as the primary purpose of that Squadron was to serve as the organizational and administrative support body for the Group Commander and his staff, both officers and enlisted men. In addition to the Group Commanding Officer these included: Capt. John T. Trout, Exec. Officer; Lt. Woodward, Adjutant and S-1 Officer; Lt. Bennett A. Meyers, S-2 and Public Relations; Capt. Louis L. Holladay, S-3 and Operations Officer; Capt. Thomas V. Burns, S-4 and Materiel Officer; Lt. Vodra V. Baker, Statistical Officer, Lt. H. E. Weidemer, Air Corps Supply; Lt. Charles Holtsclaw, Engineering Officer; Lt. Fred W. Aupperle, Assistant Adjutant; Lt. Robert E. L. Bird, Special Services Officer; Lt. Keith P. Smith, Group Surgeon; Capt. Karl W. Haller, Group Dental Officer; Lt. Donald E. Doud, Transportation Officer; Capt. Roderick H. Fitch, Chaplain; Lt. Robert L. McGeachin, Chemical Officer; Lt. Floyd W. Clark, Finance and Disbursement Officer; Lt. Trescott Hinton, Assistant Finance Officer; Lt. William Bray, Assistant Quartermaster Officer; Lt. Louis Shepard, Commanding Officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron; Lt. Lawrence Jarvis, Adjutant, Headquarters Squadron, Lt. James E. Shull, Medical Officer of Headquarters Squadron; Lt. Samuel L. Lieberman, Medical Administrative Officer Headquarters Squadron; Warrant Officers Robert 1. Arnett and James W. Maples, both of the 40th Service Squadron. Functions necessary for Group operations were performed by various sections of Headquarters Squadron. These included the Medical, Quartermaster, Finance, Chemical, Engineering, Transportation, Ordnance, Photo, Information and Education, and Special Services. S-2 Lt. Bennett Meyers makes graphic point explaining area to others.

Group Adjutant Lt. John Woodward was responsible for both Adjutant and S-1 activities. As Adjutant, he directed all administrative functions of Group Headquarters. Such things as Unit Morning Reports, Medical Reports, Historical Reports, Army Regulations Interpretation, and Court Martial hearings, were processed through the Adjutant's office. S-1 responsibilities included the records of all personnel of Group Headquarters and each assigned squadron and company.

The Intelligence Section, otherwise known as Office of S-2, was under Lt. Bennett A. Meyers. This section was responsible for several functions including inspections of Group units and public relations. Intelligence matters were related to the officers and men by the distribution of classified information contained on maps of various war fronts. This morale booster enabled all personnel to at least feel as though they were a part of a much larger operation and not merely an isolated little service outfit somewhere in the Pacific.

At first, it was very difficult to obtain up to date current material, but after the Group was on Santo for awhile, this improved substantially. Enlisted men were able to review this information in orderly rooms, day rooms or on certain bulletin boards. Local mapping of troop location on the



island was constantly being updated as several of the units of the 29th had to maintain continuous contact with many other Air Force units, many of which were attached to the 29th for one reason or another. Other information available in S-2 included a good deal of reading material such as Technical and Field Manuals, non-fiction books dealing with the war, foreign policy, and old copies of the New York Times, which, although out-of-date, were like today's paper to the news hungry men on the island.

Censorship was another of the S-2 responsibilities. To prepare for this new duty, officers were required to attend classes aboard the Mormacsea to receive instructions on Army Regulations pertaining to censorship. Practice exercises were carried out on actual mail ready to be processed so that all unit officers were prepared to take on this required task. The S-2 office also contained an Administrative Inspector who conducted an inspection of each unit every two weeks. Although these reviews were not as strict as those back in the States, they did examine all latrines, mess halls and equipment, weapons, tent areas and certain company records. Also each of the Company Fund Council books were examined for accuracy, proper entry, discrepancies, if any, and conformance with Army Regulations.

One other primary responsibility of the S-2 Officer was his designation of Postal Officer and as such had to establish a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for each unit mail orderly to follow. These were completed and issued as early as April of 1943. Despite the less-than-modern facilities to work out of, the 29th's Mail Section was considered to be very efficiently managed, and all incoming mail was delivered as promptly as possible. Likewise, all outgoing-censored mail was handled with dispatch. Office of S-3

The office of S-3 began operating as soon as the area had been set up and Headquarters established. Captain Louis L. Holladay, who was in charge of this section, initially and quickly, established a program designed to enable all personnel to be aware of educational opportunities available, and how and where they could obtain the latest information about the war or the island in general.

Training films were shown at convenient hours to permit maximum participation by both officers and men. At other times, lectures were given in a variety of subjects, some of which were required attendance, while another division of this office conducted classes for those seeking to obtain educational benefits. Courses available were military correspondence, beginners and advanced bookkeeping, English and mathematics. Later, when the section became better organized, foreign language classes were given. After additional supplies were received, and a Quonset hut obtained and erected, a Group library was opened. This soon became a favorite off-duty place for the men to obtain all sorts of goodies heretofore unavailable. The latest news of the world was posted on a bulletin board daily, and books and magazines were received periodically. One of the methods for self-improvement available to the men was correspondence courses offered by the U. S. Armed Forces Institute. These could be examined in the library where a representative collection of textbooks of courses offered, was on display.

The section also activated a Group Newsletter patterned after the "MORRIS CODE" publication

distributed at Morris Field. A staff of enlisted men, under the direction of Special Services officers Ben M. Zeff and Ed Merlin, began writing and publishing a weekly edition about the first of November, 1943, with the first issue called "SOUTH PACIFIC FREE PRESS." It later was called the "JUNGLE JOURNAL," selected through a contest open to all 29th personnel who were encouraged and given the opportunity to suggest a more appropriate title. Sergeant Lyle A. Otterness out of Headquarters Squadron, submitted the winning entry.

Although the name remained the same throughout the war years and was published at each and every base occupied by the Group, the Masthead was altered several times as shown by the pictured examples. Early editors included A. J. Maciejewski, and Russell Acree, to be followed later by Joe Heinowitz. Each squadron and company reported unit news of interest to the editor plus various functioning sections such as Chaplain, Finance, etc., contributing articles. Group as well as island sports and other recreation programs were reported in detail. John Heaney was the paper's first Sports Editor with several other men filling this assignment as time went on. Art work was provided by John Martin and Pete DeStasio. Many men were involved, and made substantial contributions to the typing, mimeographing, collating, stapling and distribution, over the years, some of whom included D.E. Borge sen, Stanley Addison, David Dzuik, Anton Vanic, Ray Tetrault, George Young, Marvin Wolf, Benjamin Hein, Chet Jansen, LeRoy Nelson, Bob Marshall, Bob Kacisin, Gerald Shaw and Henry Rico.

Much later, the 40th Service Squadron had been transferred to another group and missed the Journal so much, it organized a staff and published its own Newsletter called 'UNDERDOG.' Sergeant R. I. Coppenbarger was its editor with Wayne McKinney serving as publisher. Others on the staff included: John I. Keasler, L. T. Hollingsworth, Frank Plesko, Charles Felder, Clyde Sizemore and F.S. Brazil.

Shortly after the Group had begun full-scale operations, established its identity, set up supply areas and tents, and was recognized for its ability to perform all assignments, it found a need for transportation to other island bases to obtain vital supplies and parts. In those critical times, parts for vehicles and aircraft were difficult to find, and the XIII AFSC came forth with authorization to use their plane. The use therefore, of a C-47, piloted by Lt. Max Schneider, was a cooperative venture that assisted the Group to perform more efficiently. The plane was also used to transport officers and men to Guadalcanal for business trips to the Advance Detachment, take or bring supplies, parts, and men, and any other reason deemed appropriate to the war effort.

One of the most interesting episodes performed monthly was Finance Officer Floyd C. Clark's trips to Noumea, New Caledonia, to pick up the monthly payroll for all Army Air Corps (and attached units). Not many men have picked up bags containing one to three million dollars and boarded a plane bound for a remote South Pacific island base so that troops could be paid on time.

Another important division of S-3 included the Chemical Section, headed up by Lt. Robert L. McGeachin, who was ably assisted by Lt. Robert S. Klang. This group of men first began formulating a program for the 29th when they arrived at Camp Stoneman. Prior to that

encounter, eight of the enlisted men had been in Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and received some training at Morris Field.

In general, the work of this section was to process all requisitions for chemical warfare material from all island Air Force units including those not assigned to the 29th. Training of all troops was one of the chief functions of this unit, as very few men had received much training at all, except for the use of their gas masks. Defense against chemical attack was taught, along with the methods used to properly store and handle military chemical supplies. Since there were no other chemical units organized at Santo, the 29th's Chemical Section set up and maintained a chemical warfare equipment repair shop. The unit coordinated all issuance and storage of chemical supplies in the 13th Air Force operations at Santo. Gas mask canisters deteriorated rapidly in the hot, humid, climate, which required regular inspections be made, and replacements issued when necessary.

Lt. Robert McGeachin, group chemical officer, explains equipment to Sgt. Ed Snyder. Hq. personnel stand gas mask inspection as Sgt's Snyder and Acree check masks. Lt. McGeachin, and two other officers of the Chemical Section, vividly recall one night at Santo when they luckily escaped injury, and, perhaps death. It seems that they were planning to attend a movie at another theatre near Bomber #1. They changed their minds at the last minute, and heard the sad news later, that an unused bomb, used as a seat by several unsuspecting men, exploded, killing twenty-five men and wounding several others. Lt. McGeachin, Lt. Klang and Lt. Vodra Baker were the fortunate three that decided to go to the 29th's theatre that night to see "Random Harvest." In later years, repeat showings of this all-time classic, brought back memories of that tragic incident. Men assigned to the Chemical Section included: Russell G. Acree, Edward Snyder, Joe Coykendall, Edward Stefanski, Woodrow Wildman, Fred Jones, Alfred Spriggs, Ernest Cook, John Ward and Donald G. Sypal.

#### Medical Section

Shortly after the Group Aid Station, Squadron Dispensaries, and Medical Supply became operational, Group Surgeon Smith was called upon by General Nathan F. Twining, Commanding General of the 13th Air Force, and his Flight Surgeon, Major Fred J. Freese, to solve a serious problem existing on all aircraft. General Twining had become very concerned after being forced down in the Coral Sea in his B-17 due to a severe tropical storm. The general, his aides and crew survived six days in a rubber life-raft. Fortunately, all were rescued by the crew of a Navy PBY, but the so-called "Survival Kits" aboard the plane, were judged inadequate to handle emergencies. He therefore requested that a more functional and practical kit be designed and issued to all flight crews as soon as possible. The design and contents of this vitally needed item were developed and agreed upon by the two flight surgeons, after which Captain Smith called in his medical section with specific instructions on this emergency task. All available men of the section were assigned to work on this job, which was completed as ordered. Distribution was then made through the 29th's Medical Supply Division and through each of the 13th Air Force Squadron Medical Officers. After all units received their supplies, the 29th maintained these kits on hand for all future needs.

The kit container was a four-ounce ointment tin which measured approximately two-and-one-eighth inches in diameter and one inch deep. Contents included four folding tablet boxes, containing aspirin, Poly vitamin, sulfanilamide, and salt tablets, In addition, one tablet box was cut in half, filled with atabrine tablets, after which the open end was sealed with tape. Two iodine swabs, five Band-Aids and "direction sheet" completed the contents. Each tablet box was labeled on its side as to content, while the directions as to how, and when, to take them, were printed on the face of the box. The aspirin box contained twelve, five grain tablets, the sulfanilamide box twelve, five-grain tablets, plus fourteen polyvitamins. The Atabrine box contained five, eleven grain tablets for malaria fever prevention, with the iodine swabs and Band-Aids completing the list. Finally, the kit was sealed with masking tape, making it waterproof (as best available material would allow at that time).

Sometime later, 13th Air Force Flight Surgeon, Colonel Fred J. Freese, received a commendation and award of merit for this work. The men of the 29th Medical Section were proud that they were instrumental in achieving this successful cooperative program which added to the safety and health of all Air Force personnel in the South Pacific Theatre. Privately, the men of the 29th Group Surgeon's Section knew it was Captain Smith's brainchild and response for quick action that resulted in this effective accomplishment. The Medical Section was most fortunate in acquiring a third Quonset hut received by Group Headquarters and promptly put it to good use.

29th Air Service Group at Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides Islands, to be placed on board all aircraft of the 13th Air Force and those assigned and attached units. Medical Supply Sgt. Jansen displays contents of AF emergency kit assembled by 29th medics. Group Surgeon Smith's office took up some of the space, while the balance was utilized by the ever-busy Group dental office manned by Captain Karl Haller and his Aide, Corporal William Dean. Aid Station supplies and storage were kept in the remaining space.

Another of the Group Surgeon's responsibilities involved the storage and issuing of combat whiskey which was used by medical officers of flying squadrons. Each crew member was authorized to obtain an issue of rye whiskey from his flight surgeon upon completion of each mission. A great deal of breakage occurred at the ship unloading areas, and often-times shortages were noted at the receiving room of Medical Supply. The Inspector General was requested to provide advice on this matter as each bottle had to be accounted for in the records. It was decided to issue this item by the case only, and each flight surgeon would survey his own breakage. At one time, the 29th's Medical Supply had over forty-three hundred quarts of whiskey on hand. Years later, after the war, stories of this were related at Group reunions to the surprise of both officers and enlisted men, who never knew that the 29th had all those supplies so close, yet so far away.

Another of the Section's functions was to devise ways and means of holding down the ability of mosquitoes to breed. Since these little devils that caused so much trouble spreading sickness, bred in stagnant pools of water, one of the medics, Corp. Harvey Cessna, experimented with various methods to control this menace. Corp Cessna finally devised an idea that utilized an H-20 airplane smoke tank converted into a spray apparatus. He designed, and helped to build, a unit

that could be carried easily and withstand high air pressure. This resulted in a spray extending as far as sixty feet away, enabling the operator to reach water pools within the dense jungle without having to traverse the thick growth. As a result of this unit and its success, it soon was adopted by others on the island and recognized by the Malaria Control Engineering Unit as most effective.

One of island's most feared natives shown by Medics Norman Smart and C.W. Truitt. Group Dental Officer Capt. Karl Haller works on patient as Ass't. William Dean stands by. Capt. Karl Haller, Group Dental Surgeon and Corp. William Dean, were also an integral part of the medical team and provided dental services to all that needed them. The men were not too thrilled by a dentist using a foot-pedal-operated drilling machine, but what other choice was there? Doctor Haller's skilled and efficient methods dispelled fears at once and he had the admiration and respect of all the men.

Enlisted medical personnel in Group Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron included Harvey Cessna, Howard Coveney, William Dean, Biagio Benny DiBlasi, Chester Dylong, Chester J. Jansen, Robert Marshall, Ralph Miller, Minter Orcutt, John Peecksen, William Petrauskas, Wilson Puckett, Isadore Schulman, Norman Smart, Claud W. Truitt, Arthur Warchus, Fred Williams and Joe Wilson.

The 40th Service Squadron Medical Section included James C. Clark, Sidney Friedman, Merle J. Graves, Raymond F. Johnson, Carl Kohlbacher, Howard P. Shirley, Richard J. Sullivan and James Valentino.

The 82nd's Medical Section included Donald J. Fortner, and Nick Renoni on duty with the Guadalcanal advanced detachment, William R. Brewster, Alex Damron Jr., Joseph A. DeLillo, Everett M. Guilliams, Carl E. Platou, Fleetus N. Strader and Leslie L. Trefethen.

Another important function of Group Headquarters was its Finance Section operation. WD Orders were very clear in requiring that all personnel receive their pay on time, irrespective of what else may have been going on. Personnel in this department were required to clear their camp areas the same as all other men, yet they always managed to set up a work area adequate to prepare the monthly payroll, and see to it each unit received its pay allotments on time.

After being on the island a short time, this section, staffed by three officers, Us. Floyd W. Clark, Finance Officer, Trescott N. Hinton, Assistant Finance Officer and Julian Adler Jr., plus fifteen enlisted men, performed all necessary work for the 29th Group, as well as many other military organizations stationed on the island. At times it became necessary to send an officer and/ or enlisted men to other islands to assist short-handed units with their payrolls. Many of the men in this section had been together since the Morris Field days and had vast experience in handling financial matters. They handled all required work with distinction, and, at times, were processing payrolls involving anywhere from twelve hundred to ten thousand men scattered among some thirty-eight separate military units. They also promoted and sold War Bonds to the men as this was a good investment for those on the islands who had no place to spend the money, anyway. In addition to the officers mentioned above, the section included the following enlisted men:

Section Chief Walter Cope, Irion G. Craig, John J. Deemer, Lawrence Duffy, William J. Feeley, Donald E. Green, Charles Hall, Edward J. Illersich, Allison P. Johnston, Franz Layer, Russell G. Moyer, Robert L. Shave, Andrew J. Soellner, Donald J. Tevlin, Dalton D. Wishon, and Truman S. Youngblood.

The Group Chaplain was another of the many sections within Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron. Back in the early organizational days of the Group at Morris Field, Chaplain Wesley Bare, a most popular and devoted chaplain, established a religious program for others to follow, after he was transferred. At Santo, the Group Chaplain, Capt. Roderick H. Fitch, and one enlisted man, quickly established an office where men of all faiths could talk to the chaplain. Later, as material became available, several men constructed an altar and pulpit. Again, the ability of men of the 29th to use imagination and improvise with native materials, came through, as the outfit's place of worship was adorned with bamboo, salvaged parachute cloth and other amenities, that provided a jungle church that served all troops regardless of backgrounds. Later, a choir was organized with volunteers, and Bible classes were established.

Services were held each Sunday, and after a week of hard work, the spiritual relaxation went a long way to keep the troops in good spirits. Special services were always held during Lent, on Easter Sunday, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.

Another key element within the Office of S-3, organized during the Morris Field training period, was the Group Photo Section. Captain Mitchell Borden was its first officer, assisted by T *Sgt.* Russell Chappell as section Chief and S/*Sgt.* Roland Carroll as Lab Chief. Other personnel included Herman Knebel, Charles Pine, Robert Bayless, James Griffin, Steve Krenciprock, Glenn Stafford, Clifford Nelson and Russell Hild. As a result of organization transfers Lt. James Fries replaced Captain Borden, while Sergeants Chappell and Carroll were reassigned to other units. Personnel in the unit had little or no experience in photography, but a training program was established that quickly provided basic knowledge in camera use and film development and printing. Lt. Fries was replaced by Lt. Hale, who had received his military photo training at other bases and schools, and became the section's first full-time photo officer.

Training included all phases of military photography while at Morris Field, but its work consisted mainly of taking ID pictures for public relations, doing copy work, and later, photographing plane crashes whenever they occurred. Sabotage was always suspected, so movies were made of every take-off and landing of training-aircraft, as well as still pictures that provided inspectors with helpful information regarding crashes. On one particular occasion, a P-40 took off around noon, and after reaching an altitude of about four hundred feet, began to sputter. The pilot attempted to return to the field for an emergency landing, but when it reached the end of the strip, it struck a pole, spun around, turned over, and to everyone's amazement, the pilot walked away, unhurt. This was the section's first recorded on-site crash, and provided excellent field training and experience. It was at this time, that to fill a vacancy in the Section Chief's position, Sgt. Joseph Moretz was transferred out of the 302nd Air Base Group, also at Charlotte, and reassigned to the 29th to take over this assignment. Other enlisted men in the division at this time were James Perrillo, Charles Pine, Russell Knox, Florian Tillman, James Bonatati, Charles Sutphin, and Russell

Hild.

After the Group arrived at Santo, it learned that it had no equipment except the personal camera of Sgt. Moretz, so they had to search for film, which was found among some of the PX supplies. Another lesson was learned quickly, when the hot tropical climate's effect on film was discovered, and ways to protect the valuable film had to be devised. Certain needs of the section were hand-made by the men, but in order to obtain cameras, equipment, and supplies, they resorted to trading with Marine and Navy outfits on the island. In order to establish a Group movie theatre, it also bargained for one of its two 16mm projectors.

In return, the 29th was able to obtain two movies a week. Shortly thereafter, they discovered that 35mm movie projectors were available through a Navy supply outfit, so Colonel Reyher approved the requisition (and trade) for four such projectors, two of which were given to the 40th Service Squadron. This enabled the section to show movies every night (weather and air raid alerts permitting), Movies were obtained by the Special Services Section, another subdivision of S-3, and considered vital to the well-being and morale of the men 29th's movie theatre, open air style, with seats made of coconut tree logs.

#### Special Services Section

This unit used every means possible to keep the men supplied with whatever was available in recreational equipment, If it wasn't available through normal channels, they scouted the island for it, Baseball, softball, volleyball and fishing, were early activities made possible for all personnel. As areas became more built up, and the Photo Section obtained additional movie projectors, Special Services men moved about the island, making friends with other units that had movie film for trading.

As long as the weather man cooperated and no air raids occurred, men could enjoy these shows when off duty. Working through the Air Force Island Command, attempts were made to bring live entertainment to the Group Theatre. Some of those providing great and welcome shows included Herb Shriner, a harmonica-playing comedian, and Jim Burke, who was a movie portrayal of humorous cops.

About this time, the 29th Group was most fortunate in obtaining famous tenor, Lanny Ross, who had been commissioned an officer in the Special Services Division, and sent out to entertain troops wherever they may be located. On this occasion, he and his troupe were on their way to join General MacArtHur, and took a side-trip, stopping at Espiritu Santo. Ross made friends very quickly, and while on stage, called upon the Group's own Wacky Four to join him in singing some old favorites, to the delight of everyone.

Shortly thereafter, another big-time stateside entertainer, Jack Paar, arrived on the island with his traveling troupe, and had the audience in stitches until the ever-threatening rains came and interrupted the performance. The show was cancelled, but the men were now becoming used to this sort of thing. To make up for the loss, the 28<sup>th</sup> Special Services unit staged another bang-up show, but it, too, was washed out, which caused some of the OI's to suggest the name of the

28th be changed to the 28th Rainmakers Company.

Organized athletic programs were also established as soon as areas could be cleared, and courts set up for those who liked to play' volleyball. Baseball and softball fields were set out and equipment distributed to each squadron company. Officers also joined in and gave the enlisted men stiff competition. As time went on, this activity spread to other areas of the island and additional games were booked between Marine and engineering outfits.

In the month of May, S-3 stepped up its training programs by initiating a six-week course in the basics of infantry and jungle warfare. It was felt, that, although the 29th was not a front-line combat outfit, the day could come when it might be necessary to protect itself against Combat infantry training in jungles. Combat infantry special training program prepared by S-3. Basics of jungle warfare taught in stepped-up six week course.

Japanese attacks, and all personnel should be prepared for any eventuality. Ordnance Officer Andrew A. Burke, Jr. was detailed to establish the program on a schedule designed to enable work to proceed uninterrupted. The course lasted six weeks and included instruction in Carbine rifles, machine-gun loading and firing, hand grenades, and field problems and situations. A former coconut plantation area was selected as the site for the exercises that also included some sessions on sandy beaches. Upon completion, each man that took the training, was awarded a Certificate, duly signed by the instructor, the S-3 Officer and the Group Commander.

To keep the various Group units in proper equipment, materiel and supplies was the main duty assigned to the Office of S-4, under the administration of Captain Thomas V. Burns. The layout and building of camp areas and the erection of necessary tents and work-area buildings were the initial priorities of the Office along with building roads in order for vehicles to move about. As soon as men and equipment were available, a water-well was dug and placed in operation, so the water delivery trucks could begin serving each camp area. It was difficult to find necessary pipe to sink a well one hundred, twenty feet deep plus find a deep-well-pump to operate it, but once it arrived, the trucks supplied this necessary item throughout the entire island. Through methods utilized by other Group officers and enlisted men, vital equipment was found that enabled S-4 to take on critical work. One example would have to include the clearing of a large jungle area to set up a sawmill and logging operation.

This detail, in effect, was under the XIII Air Force Service Command and consisted of one officer and twenty-four enlisted men. Their equipment included two D-7 bulldozers, four, two-and-one-half ton trucks, and the usual logging equipment, which enabled this detachment to cut, not only logs, but up to seven thousand board feet of lumber each working day. From this the Group was able to build semi-permanent mess halls, latrines, showers, supply buildings, a chapel and other necessary structures. S-4 also obtained sorely needed island coral, making it available for camp areas, roads, and airstrips. Without this coral topping, roads would have been impassable due to the sudden rain showers and resulting heavy mud.

Group Quartermaster and Ordnance The coordination of all operations of the three



Quartermaster Companies was also a part of the S-4 operations, and capably administered by Captain Walter Lapinske, This task presented special problems for Capt. Lapinske, as most of one Quartermaster Company (1932nd Truck Company), was made a part of the advance detachment at Guadalcanal. Communications were therefore made more difficult and frequent trips between the two bases 'were necessary.

Ordnance activities included in S-4 were coordinated by Lt. Ray Isaacs, and, once again, since much of the 1653rd Ordnance Company was at the Canal early, the other two Ordnance units were required to take up the slack. 1137th QM company area and construction of needed facilities. Group Transportation Group Transportation, under Lt. Donald Doud, also a subdivision of S-4, was ever ready to undertake whatever duty came its way. In addition to serving its own vehicles, the section was called upon to serve 13th Air Force Units consisting of the squadrons assigned to the 11th and 5th Bomb Groups, 20th Airways Communications, and Island Command Headquarters.

A system was devised that enabled the section to work round-the-clock and take care of emergencies as well. Unfavorable island road conditions and the health of the men seriously affected operations, but this group of men soon learned that when parts were needed, but unavailable through normal channels, they had to do the next best thing - go and find them. By trading, borrowing, and other means, necessary parts could usually be found somewhere on the island. Their most difficult problems were a shortage of brake shoes, brake linings, and axles, but by improvising, they were able to provide axles from welded shafts, and, believe it or not, some very ingenious mechanics" manufactured" brake shoes out of wood - and they worked!

#### All Units Move to Guadalcanal

It was getting to be time for the 29th to move on and not get too comfortable at Santo, as word came through camp areas that the 321st Air Service Group was in the harbor, and that they were to become the 29th's replacement here. It would be easier for them as they could take over campsites without the necessity of clearing jungles. Orders were issued to all units to again pack up gear, equipment and supplies, stencil and identify all crates, and make ready to depart the island. On July 3, 1943, all personnel, except a few remaining to bring up the rear, were taken out to board the USAT Jane Adams for the trip to Guadalcanal. The Jane Adams was similar to the Mormacsea in looks only, and since this was to be a much shorter voyage, no one expected any of the previous aggravations. In any case the journey was made in two days without incident with the ship anchoring off Koli-Point after traveling 550 miles. Now the gigantic task of unloading, transporting and clearing camp areas was about to begin once again.

A rear echelon of a few officers and enlisted men remained at Espiritu Santo to watch over items left behind, and clear up all island unfinished business. Entire group ordered to break camp and depart Espiritu Santo for new station at Guadalcanal. Henderson Field was named after Major Lofton R. Henderson, USMC, by airmen of the Marines who fought so gallantly to capture and secure the base. It is the opinion of every knowledgeable veteran of the Pacific War, that Guadalcanal was the turning point that stemmed the Japanese efforts to continue their conquest.

Both the Japanese supreme adviser to the emperor, and Lt. General Kawabe, Deputy Chief of the Japanese General Staff, admitted during post-war interrogations, that the battle for Guadalcanal turned the tide for the Allied Forces. Later, Major Henderson, in command of Marine Scout Bombing Squadron 241, was killed at the Battle of Midway, on *Juve 4*, 1942. During the battles for the island in 1942 and 1943, Colonel William J. Fox, USMC, was Commanding Officer of the Marine Corps Air Base, and also Officer in Charge of construction of Henderson Field, i.e., Fighter One and Fighter Two (Kukum Strip). Colonel Fox was wounded during a night bombing attack and evacuated on February 13, 1943.

Having already experienced clearing jungle growth, the job of setting up at the Canal, although difficult, was handled much better than at Espiritu Santo. Air Corps Supply brought out some very large tents which were used initially to provide temporary housing for all personnel, and, to no one's surprise, an air raid alert welcomed everyone the very first night on the island. So now the 29th was rejoining the advance detachment that had already been stationed on the island for more than six months, and embarked upon another phase of its career.

#### 1021st Ordnance Disbanded

One very significant organizational change occurred on the 5th of July, when the 1021 st Ordnance Company disbanded for efficiency reasons, with all personnel being reassigned to either the 1637th or 1653 rd Ordnance Companies. This measure changed duties somewhat as the two units were designated as Medium Maintenance Ordnance Units. They were to perform 3rd echelon maintenance, and furnish automotive parts and supplies to all ordnance vehicles, either in the 29th or for those attached. Aircraft ammunition was also to be stored and supplied to all units served, as well as the operation of two bomb dumps to store and serve all combat aircraft of the 13th Air Force, Navy, Marine and Allied Air Force Units. Subsequently, the 1653 rd took over the motor vehicle duties, while the 1637th's main responsibilities included bomb storage and handling.

Other noteworthy personnel changes at the Canal included the Command of the 82nd Service Squadron. Capt. John Woodward was relieved as Group Adjutant to take over the squadron when Capt. John McKinney was transferred to the 5th Bomb Group also stationed at the Canal. Lt. Fred W. Aupperle then became Group Adjutant. During the early days, many air raids kept the men scampering about, and foxhole completion had high priority while setting up campsites. Some of the men would take a chance and watch, as enemy planes were picked up in searchlights, to see if our anti-aircraft gunners could knock them out. Loud cheers would be heard each time a score was made. Night fighter planes could be seen each time their tracer bullets lit up the sky. No injuries were recorded in the 29th as a result of enemy air raids, but a lot of needed sleep was lost. By the 5th of August, exactly one month after arriving, all campsites were in place, and all service shops and offices were functioning.

#### Air Service Center

Unlike the operation at Espiritu Santo, the 29th was designated to create and operate what became known as an Air Service Center located just off Carney Field. Carney was the new airstrip constructed by Navy Construction Battalions, and 873rd Aviation Engineering Battalion

commanded by Lt. Col. Joe Smedlie, after the island became secure, and during the period the advance detachment was stationed there. This new system caused the 29th to take on many additional units which were attached to the Group for various services and supplies. Group Commander Reyher was designated Commanding Officer of the 29th Air Members of 14th Naval CB's work on Koli and Carney Fields at 'Canal. Graded runway shown after jungle cleared.

Service Center, in addition to his regular duties, which brought him into contact with the personnel of many additional outfits. The total strength of the Air Service Center soon reached three hundred twenty-five officers and six thousand enlisted men, either assigned or attached. The orders designating Colonel Reyher as Commanding Officer of the Air Service Center also assigned the Colonel as Base Commander of Carney and Koli Fields.

Now that great progress was being made in the Allied Forces' aggressive actions, the 13th Air Force was operating from several bases. This necessitated additional service units to repair planes, furnish parts, procure and store bombs and ammunition, repair vehicles for hauling supplies, equipment and personnel, establish signal communications, and to repair radio and radar equipment. In the early days of organizing Air Force tactical groups and prior to the creation of the 13th Air Force, all units stationed throughout the South Pacific were under the supervision of the Air Section of Services and Supply. To better organize and provide a separate headquarters for all service outfits, the XIII Air Force Service Command was activated in June of 1943, at Santo. Personnel of the previously mentioned Air Section of Services and Supply, South Pacific area, were reassigned to form the nucleus of this new command which was placed under the capable leadership of Brigadier General (then Colonel) George McCoy, Jr. The 29th was one of the Service Groups assigned to the XIII AFSC and operated the first Air Service Center after the entire Group arrived at Guadalcanal. In addition to the 29th, the XIII AFSC later administered additional Service Centers in the Theatre as well as one Air Depot Group functioning at New Caledonia.

Due to the availability of better equipment and supplies, the 29th was now able to erect and organize more comfortable and efficient campsites than previously. Tent flooring made from aircraft wing packing cases, as well as native lumber cut by men of the 873rd Aviation Engineering Battalion, was available to the men, as was screening to enclose each tent for greater protection against the dreaded mosquito. Additional Quonset huts were obtained for use of various offices and supply operations.

More stable and functional structures were erected for each unit's mess halls. Cooks of the 29th Group were becoming quite proficient at camouflaging items available to them to serve. Anything tasted good after a diet of C-rations, but without refrigeration in tropical climates, it was no simple matter to be at their best, day in and day out. There was little or no fresh food available, but the troops managed to survive. A good sense of humor helped, along with the expert improvisation of the cooks. Those who served under these trying conditions, eating out of metal mess kits, main courses and dessert all mixed together on the same plate, keeping his own personal eating kits clean and sanitary, may not have enjoyed it at the time, but have since been eternally grateful for the medical officers' strict rules requiring the most rigid sanitation

throughout all Group areas.

It was during these early days at Guadalcanal that the efforts of the enemy to discourage enlisted men, were brought to light. Those who possessed radios, would tell of hearing "Tokyo Rose" broadcasts, reporting that there were not supposed to be any Americans left on the Canal as a result of the latest Japanese air attacks. When some of the men heard of this, they went on sick-call, asking the medical officer for passage back home as a corpse. , when they heard about the embalming procedure, they quickly withdrew their requests.

Upon arrival of the entire Group, the balance of the 82nd Service Squadron joined crews already established at Henderson Field, while the 40th Service Squadron set up at the Metapona River area off Koli Point. Increased activity by bomber and fighter squadrons on the island required service as rapidly as possible. The squadron living area was set up in a heavily wooded area near Henderson while the Engineering Section set up its shops and mobile repair units near an abandoned Japanese hangar which was ideal for engine changes. Air Force Supply quickly set up its operation and the 82nd was now in a position to prove its worth as a complete squadron.

The Squadron had some of the finest Aircraft Maintenance and repair crews anywhere. Such men as *MI* Sgt. W. H. Bill Slay, one of the best aircraft sheet metal fabricators in the Islands. One of his feats accomplished at the Canal was on a Navy Admirals personal plane that had lost six feet of its right wing. Bill Slay and his men rebuilt the damaged wing in record time and the aircraft was able to fly once again.

Another incident involved a "totaled out" B-17 that was lying in a jungle at the edge of the landing strip. A General Officer saw it and ordered it to be repaired. 82nd men got the plane out and found it had no engines or wiring, no windows, plus one outer wing panel was missing. After completely working the craft over, it was returned to the field for a test flight with *M/Sgt.* Don Holley aboard. Despite having a left wing from a B-17E and a right wing from a B-17F, it successfully made the flight and was returned to duty at a rear base and used as a tow-target aircraft.

Personnel assigned to the various shops were always able to produce anything needed from lifting booms to making special gadgets for one of the South Pacific Theater's most illustrious Bomb Group Commanders and pilots, Col. Marion D. Unruh, CO of the 5th Bomb Group (H), which was serviced by the 29th at Espiritu Santo and now at Guadalcanal. Unruh was CO of this Group from early 1943 (Feb.) after former Group CO, Col. Brooks Allen was returned to the States for a well deserved rest.

During completion of one mission, Col. Unruh's Squadron was returning to the Canal, but were unaware, due to darkness that two enemy planes had followed them. When they reached the Island one of the Japanese pilots turned on his landing lights and successfully bombed and sank an Allied transport ship. Anti-aircraft crews quickly responded and downed the enemy planes, , Col. Unruh's plane was also hit and suffered severe damage but they managed to bring it home to

Carney Field. 29<sup>th</sup> repair crews worked over the entire craft including the engines, hydraulic system, fuselage, tail assembly and wiring before the "Pretty Prairie Special" was able to fly again.

Daily duties of the service squadron men were performed under extremely adverse conditions. Heat, rain, mud, malaria, dengue, and interrupted nights due to the constant return of Washing Machine Charley and his nuisance raids. Esprit-de-corps was always high as everyone realized aircraft had to be kept in good repair if pilot and crews were to carry out their missions effectively. This outstanding work resulted in several commendations issued by Higher Headquarters.

Henderson Field was an area of continual surprises for the 82nd. Time after time they watched badly damaged aircraft limp into the field on wing and a lot of prayers. Damages included shot up and broken electrical and hydraulic systems, engine outages and other major components, , when the full strength of the Squadron was realized, work was started on an enclosed aircraft hangar so that the newly arrived B-24 Bombers could be repaired under roof. When complete this new Hangar, used by the Engineering Sections of both Squadrons could accommodate two B-24's as well as necessary equipment to take on any job that came along.

This required the men to put in many overtime hours but the end result proved worthwhile. Shortly thereafter upon completion of a mission and return to its Base, the pictured "Scotch and Soda B-24" proceeded to land but when doing so its left landing gear hit a pile of loose dirt just at the edge of the runway causing the gear to collapse. This caused the left wing to drop which in turn broke off the left inboard propeller which spun into the Pilot's compartment. Several witnesses to this accident shall never forget this horrible experience as both of the pilot's legs were severed. All other crew members were uninjured and the ship, after repairs, continued to deliver destruction to the enemy.

On another occasion the 82nd's repair shops were called upon to rebuild parts of a B-24 that had returned from a mission over the Japanese Airdrome at Kahili with extensive damage that made repairmen wonder how the aircraft ever made it back to base. The Liberator was piloted by Squadron Commander Lt. Col. Joseph C. Reddock Jr. of Luverne, Alabama who became 5th Bomb Group CO succeeding Col. Unruh. He recalled later that the mission was successful with 20 enemy planes destroyed and two fuel and storage dumps set aflame. As they turned away from these targets they were intercepted by Japanese fighter planes in a battle that caused the death of the Colonel's waist gunner.

Col. Reddock ordered the co-pilot to take over the controls while he went down to the dead mans gun station. With the dead crewmember at his feet, Col. Reddock helped other crew members shoot down zeroes before the battle ended. The planes controls were shot up so badly it was necessary for the co-pilot to return to the Canal on automatic pilot, but when they reached the landing strip, it took both pilots using all of their facilities, to make a normal landing. Soon the 82nd went to work on the bomber which required new cables, Plexiglas, hydraulic system and most all of the fuselage and wing had to be rebuilt. Warrant Officer Don Holley supervised the operation and M/Sgt. William Slay was in charge of the Sheet Metal Shop that made the ship look

like new again.

The 82nd Service Squadron had also acquired a gigantic bell, found in nearby hills in a cave by Sgt. John A very. The bell was used to summon the men working on the line for meals. The Squadron also had many visits from Coast watchers who played such a vital part in relaying information about enemy installations that helped Americans take the initiative during August of 1942 when combat troops landed on the beaches of Guadalcanal.

On one of these visits Coastwatchers Australian Lt. Donald MacFarlan and Cadet Martin Clemens stopped by to see Capt. John T. McKinney, CO of the 82nd and brought along with them Father Emery DeKlerk, who was the priest at the mission on the Island. Father DeKlerk recognized the bell hanging in the area at once and claimed it. It was taken from its frame loaded on a truck and returned to the mission to a grateful priest. In August the Group Commander notified all units of the 29th Group that a Letter of Commendation from Colonel Brooke Allen, former Commanding Officer of the 5th Bomb Group had been received. Col. Allen stated that the 29th Air Service Group had accomplished repairs to aircraft that normally would be performed in well established depots, despite many difficulties.

He cited outstanding engineering and technical supply services were rendered by the men of the 29th as well as the exemplary cooperation it gave to combat squadrons played a vital role in their achievements. An endorsement to the commendation by General Jamison of the XIII Bomber Command stated: "The Officers and men of the 29<sup>th</sup> Air Service Group are deserving of the highest commendation and unquestionably have contributed greatly to the success of our Bombardment Groups in the South Pacific" .

The publishing and distribution of this letter did much to establish a renewed sense of pride among the Group's personnel which was highly important in an organization that does not come in actual contact with the enemy.

Mail Call by the 82nd's Mail Orderly, Santoriella, was one of the more pleasant things to occur, even receiving V-Mail in bits and pieces. A package was a Prize, and shared grudgingly. Since Spam and Vienna Sausage were the usual meat entrees for the Mess Halls, imagine receiving a package from a loved one who had saved ration coupons for months, only to find the box contained not one, but two cans of Spam.

Even the mess hall crews would display a desire to deviate from the norm. One morning, after SOS and Atabrine, the Mess Officer and a select crew of men boarded a recently appropriated "Duck" , and headed for fresh water fish, equipped with the necessary gear, including a little dynamite. With visions of fresh fish for the entire squadron, they neglected to install the stopper in the Duck's bottom and before they could regroup, the Duck filled with water and slowly sank to the bottom. Fortunately, the members of the crew were good swimmers or waders in the fairly shallow water and there were no casualties. It was the final voyage for the Duck and back to dehydrated eggs and Spam for the warriors.

The 82nd's Dispensary tent was manned by Dr. Captain Joe Dobkin, ably assisted by Sgt. Donald Fortner. Doc Dobkin was highly trained Obstetrician, but his talent in this area proved to be 100070 unused. He quickly adapted to his assignment, as he could be heartless when one was looking to ride the Sick Book or possibly seeking a dash of medicinal spirits. The medicinal alcohol was 190 Proof and would only pass tongues with the aid of G.1. grapefruit juice, cut half-'n-half. While the 40th was establishing its repair crews at Carney Field, the 82nd continued to serve Henderson, but had been alerted that it too would soon move over to Carney. Prior to leaving Henderson, they were ordered to completely overhaul a B-17 with an outstanding record and its unbelievable ability to limp back to base no matter how badly damaged. She was called the Old Maid by her flight crew and was now being made ready to return to the U. S.A. and participate in a War Bond Drive and a final resting place. Also pursued by the 82nd was the pictured Bessie the Jap Basher another B-17 piloted by Lt. Charles Norton, that had been shot up and crashed in the waters off Doma Cove in late 1942.

To assist the mechanics and other technicians to properly care for certain types of aircraft the Wright Aircraft Engine Company sent over some technical representatives to confer with Engineering Officers. B-25 Medium Bomber instruction was emphasized by these Factory Representatives and all of the repair crews were grateful for the advice. On the night of March 23, 1943, an enemy air attack resulted in the destruction of a few bombers and damage to many others. Fourteen of these planes were turned over to the 82nd for third and fourth echelon repair.

After careful examination of damages, all available personnel were put to work the next morning and by evening four of the B-24' s were certified ready to resume missions. A few days later a Lockheed Hudson plane crashed on landing and caught fire. The depth charges it was carrying exploded and consequently flying fragments re-damaged several of the planes previously repaired. When the Bomb Squadron Commander and Engineering Officer declared these planes unrepairable, the men looked upon it as a challenge and set about to salvage parts and repair as needed.

One of these ships required the replacement of over 100 square feet of outer skin as it had shrapnel holes all over the fuselage and wings. To the amazement of the Bomb Squadron CO, all of these aircraft were returned to duty. An important factor contributing to the success of the repair crews was the close cooperation established between other Island units including Navy and Marines. This enabled them to secure needed parts quickly without going through normal supply channels.

One day everyone will always remember was the spectacular Japanese daylight air raid of June 16, 1943, when 120 enemy aircraft tried to deliver a knockout blow to the troops on Guadalcanal. Every available American fighter plane of the Air Force, the Navy, Marines and Royal New Zealand Air Force became involved, intercepted and shot down 75 enemy planes. This was a tremendous morale booster to those stationed there as it made the long hours of toiling in the jungle heat, putting up with jungle disease and sickness, the shortage of supplies and equipment all seem worthwhile and a renewed desire to keep going to get this job over with.

Widespread damage to parked 13th AF planes after Jap air raid. 29th crews returned most to flight duty after making repairs. All the new B-24's, upon arrival from the U.S. were being processed with radar installation and change of the Navigator's section to the flight deck. One new hangar was used exclusively for this modification, and a mass production system had been inaugurated. With the active cooperation of the 905th Signal Co., the production line consisted of work on six B-24's broken down into six stages, progressively. In the past, working on one plane at a time, 5 days were required to complete the modification.

Under the present production line system, a modified B24J left the hangar every 2 days, ready for flight and combat. Another item brought to the attention of the Group Engineering Officer by the 2nd Central Medical Establishment Special, (a research organization) was that an instrument was available to the pilot or co-pilot that would lock the controls of an airplane in any desired position if the APCE failed. An example was cited when a B-24, flying a mission over TRUK was rammed by a Jap Zero, damaging the rudder assembly and elevators.

The power required to hold the airplane in flight was too much for the APCE, therefore, the full strength of the pilot was necessary. Two hundred miles from their home base fuel ran out, the crew was ordered to jump, but the pilot couldn't let go of the controls and went down with his plane. Immediately, a clamping device was designed and manufactured by the 82nd organization which was simple in design and, with a few turns of the fingers locked the control column in any position the pilot desired. The item consisted of a hose clamp riveted to 3 aluminum angles, which in turn was riveted to light metal on the control column which covered the rollers.

This clamp could be manufactured and installed in approximately 30 minutes. Another locking device was designed and manufactured that enabled the pilot to lock the rudder pedals. This was also simple in design, consisting of a thin locking pin placed thru a hole in the rudder pedal, and then placed in anyone of a series of holes drilled into the base plate of the rudder pedal, thereby holding the rudders in any position the pilot desired. The Group Engineering Officer, in discussing the problem with co-pilot, Lt. Mavell, who fortunately jumped to safety, was told that this device would have enabled the pilot to jump and save his life also.

It was the policy of the 29th Engineering Section to become interested in any problem that affected the operations of combat Squadrons. Suggestions for problem solving were always welcome and regardless of rank, the 29<sup>th</sup> Engineering Section assisted all those with good ideas, whether they were civilian or military. The net result was an ever-increasing number of modifications and aids, both for the crews safety, and the combat efficiency of the aircraft. Many ideas submitted failed, or were found to be unnecessary, but an audience was always granted to whoever desired to submit an idea. Even in those instances where it was apparent that an idea on the surface was impractical, work was nevertheless started.

After establishing its camp area at Metapona River off Koli Point, the 40th Service Squadron noticed a marked decrease in Dengue fever due to the screening of all tents and the fact wood flooring was installed. Malaria fever increased despite the Atrabine prevention program required



by Group and Squadron Surgeons.

Air Force supplies were now becoming more abundant so the Supply Sections of both the 40th and 82nd obtained and erected additional steel warehouse buildings, constructed shelving and parts bins and served the entire Service Center with badly needed aircraft parts. A shipment of California Redwood arrived on the Island about this time and the bins to handle the thousands of aircraft parts and components were soon to be located in these new 40 by 100 foot metal parts supply structures.

Meanwhile both Squadron Engineering sections erected a huge metal hangar and were now in a better position to perform needed work through any kind of weather. Sites were cleared for all mobile shops and the two Squadrons performed as one unit except for one flexible mobile repair unit that functioned at Henderson Field whenever necessary. Instrument repair was one important function of the 40th and it became very proficient with any type aircraft they came into contact with. They repaired not only units of the 13th Air Force, but Navy and Marine craft as well.

Whenever flight crewmen were stymied on repairing instruments, the crew in the 40th were usually called upon to solve the problem. They were even issued I.D. cards which enabled them to draw supplies from Navy units and the Island Air Transport Command. One notable achievement recorded was the invention of a new tester that enabled them to speed up the process of testing equipment. This workable apparatus replaced a 400 pound tester that required trucking to the site of damaged aircraft. The new tester was easily carried in the pockets of repairmen.

One particular day the crew of a B-24 was frustrated over their inability to maintain the manifold pressure on one of its engines, until the 40th was called in. After carefully checking everything without being able to detect the trouble, one of the men noticed that a new wing had recently been installed. This was the clue they needed as it was soon discovered the Cannon plug through which all wires were routed was pinched so that the manifold wires were not contacting. The flow was corrected and a happy flight crew returned to their squadron and resumed missions.

On another occasion, the instrument shop encountered a Pilot that had just returned from an overhaul job at a rear Air Depot Group and was disturbed that his automatic pilot and other instruments were not functioning. He offered several bottles of scarce spirits if the men could find the problem, take on the repairs, and put him back in the air. Needless to say, Russell Myers, George Fort, Dick Chiseling and Frank Borgia found and repaired the problem areas. Although the men at first refused the gift from the grateful Major, they did accept three quarts of whiskey and a rum bottle which were later put to good use to celebrate the New Year. Later, when the war was over, Russ Myers was offered an opportunity to take over the Instrument Shop Facilities at the Philadelphia Navy Yard, and a promise of a Chief rating at the Willow Grove Naval Air Base by a Naval Commander that had watched his skillful work. The offer was refused as Russ, like so many others with long jungle service wanted to return to civilian life.

During the period in which research material was being gathered, meetings were being held and interviews with former members conducted, one story stood out as worthy of a place in this documentation. This tale was given voluntarily by an enlisted man of the 40th who wanted everyone to know how he discovered that Officers had the welfare of their men at heart although it was seldom displayed openly. It was during the Guadalcanal period when this man, who shall remain nameless, had been called to the Group Commander's office by his 1 *st*/Sgt. The man wondered what he had done wrong as he had never even been called into his Squadron CO's office, let alone the Group Commander.

Not being able to guess what he had done, he bravely entered Headquarters and reported his presence. The CO assured him he had done no wrong and tried to relax him with plain conversation - not the usual military style. It seemed that the CO had been informed that this soldier's Mother had passed away and wanted the G.1. to know he had his sympathy.

He remarked that. this was a shock to anybody, especially one so far from home who had been working so hard with many hours of overtime. "Why don't you take a few weeks off and fly down to New Zealand . for some rest and relaxation? This will help to take this sorrow off your mind". The G.1. thanked him, but declined saying he did not need it, it wasn't fair to the others and although he appreciated the offer, he felt he should stay with his Squadron. The CO thereupon said OK, but asked him to think about it some more as the offer remained open.

The next day the CO sent his Jeep and an Orderly over to the Soldier's tent asking that he pack-up, get ready and prepare to go on a rest leave. That was all he needed to hear, he packed his gear, got in the Jeep and took off. The Orderly stopped at Group Headquarters where the happy man received some welcome spending money, compliments of the Commander and departed for a very enjoyable leave in Auckland. After he returned, he realized how glad he was the CO had insisted he take the opportunity.

Years later he relayed this incident to the Author so that others would know that the 29th Officers were great people and really were concerned about the welfare of the men. Meanwhile, over at the 40th's camp area the men were becoming tired of being awakened every morning by blowing whistles and kept hoping they could find a bugler. They thought they had found one but learned he was being transferred to Navigation School. 1 *st*/ Sgt. Scowden learned that another man had played trumpet back home in a dance band so approached him with an offer to become Squadron Bugler in return for excuse from guard and KP duty.

Naturally he agreed but did not have a bugle. A search began throughout the Island for an instrument and it turned out that one of the cooks located a trumpet and successfully made a trade. The man started his new career on a trumpet and often times, as a diversion, instead of the usual and normal Military fare, gave out with songs like, "All the World is Waiting for the Sunrise", "Oh What a Beautiful Morning" and "Dark Town Strutters Ball". Many of the Squadron men did not appreciate this bugling, but they became used to it and accepted it just as they did so many other things.

The bugle assignment came to a sudden halt the night he decided to play "Taps" in his own style, which sounded more like Reveille. When he returned to his tent that night several angry G.I.'s were waiting for him with fire in their eyes, as they were sound asleep during this rendition and thought they heard Reveille, got up, went to the mess hall only to find it locked up.

After he was officially removed as Squadron Bugler, he was promptly detailed as Latrine Orderly. One day he was ordered to burn out the Latrine, but wasn't sure just how to go about this. He figured there must be an easy way, so procured some 100 Octane Aircraft fuel and poured some down each hole in the latrine. Next he poured a line of gas along the ground about 75 feet away as a fuse. When he ignited the gas -O-W - and took off with tents, mosquito bars, etc. flying throughout the camp. Disciplinary action resulting from this fiasco included digging another latrine (alone) and in the Islands hard, Coral Base, this was no easy task.

All other units were functioning in a more organized manner at the Canal due to the availability of additional and better supplies and equipment. The 1003rd Signal Company established and provided all necessary communications and radio links between the Group and other Island organizations. Radio repairs were carried on extensively for all aircraft under the Service Center including Navy and Marine units and the Royal New Zealand Air Force. In order to maintain quality service several men were sent to training schools at New Guinea, one at Port Moresby and another at Oro Bay. A school at Sydney, Australia provided instruction in servicing Australian manufactured radios. Personnel were assigned to work in the Group message Center and telephone exchange, store and issue Signal supplies, repair crews for telephones, teletype and radar equipment and manned two mobile radio and radar crews on the airstrip.

Five enlisted men were sent to Noemfoor Island to assist 13th Air Force Headquarters in the operation of a radio station. With the help of the 40<sup>th</sup> Engineering Section, technicians from the 1003<sup>rd</sup> installed a new type aircraft interceptor radar in P-38 night fighters as an experiment. When it was found to perform satisfactorily, all aircraft of the 419th Night Fighter Squadron received the installation which greatly improved their ability to search out enemy aircraft.

The two Ordnance Companies were operating cooperatively at the Canal, as shortly after the 1021st had been disbanded, Capt. Ray Isaacs was relieved as CO and assigned as Group Ordnance Officer. This change enabled close coordination of all Ordnance activities. A large bomb dump was built near Koli Point to facilitate the efficient handling of all types of bombs. First/Sgt. Robert Murphy was recognized for his outstanding ability by receiving a direct field commission to 2nd Lt. and at the same time former Supply Sgt. Jerome Yach also received a direct 2nd Lt. Commission. Unloading and temporary storage at Lunga Beach near Henderson Field.

Company Commander William Carrow was relieved being replaced by Lt. William Webster. A newly assigned officer also joined the unit in the person of Lt. Claude Leduc. Lt. Webster soon had the outfit operating smoothly. A small arms section, an armament supply and mobile machine shop were added to better serve all situations. Two bomb dumps were being maintained which required a great deal of work to provide drainage from the periodic tropical rains. Bombs stored here were also being shipped to forward bases and periodically Lt. Murphy would accompany the

load bringing back tales of war at Munda, Vella LaVella and other bases.

Improvisation being the name of the game in these islands, Ordnance men were responsible for several ingenious projects. These included a power driven mill-work saw made from salvaged parts and hand made components. T/4 Henry Hielsberg was the brains behind this piece of equipment that enabled lumber to become available for all sorts of uses. Another of the improvised rigs was a bluing device to help resist rust on small arms and armament parts. Sgt's Philip Forfa and Thomas Gretz of the 163 7th were chiefly responsible for this invention.

The need to provide a sanitary method of cleaning cooking utensils was a vital necessity in the heat of the tropics, but again the ordnance men came through thanks to Sgt. Robert Free and T 15 Harry Bender who successfully utilized used oil drums, manufactured valves and fittings fueled with oxygen and oil.

Several of these units were copied by other units on the Island and proved to be highly successful by Sanitation officers. The constant wearing down of brake shoes on all vehicles was a serious problem for the Ordnance men as supplies were difficult to obtain. Resourceful personnel devised a way to utilize natural island wood to manufacture brake linings which also proved successful.

On another occasion the 1653rd was called up to help out a Naval Officer in need of emergency help. He had come off a cruiser which had been damaged by enemy action leaving the ship in need of eleven brass rods four feet long and tapered from  $1/4$  to  $1/8$  inch from end to end. No such parts were available anywhere in the Theatre and unless help came quickly, the ship would be sent back to the States for repair. Machinist William Roden came forward and said if they could supply the brass, he would do his best to machine the rods.

The brass was sent over and twenty four hours later the job was finished and the cruiser returned to sea duty shortly thereafter. A grateful Navy Officer proved his appreciation by donating a 7500 Watt Diesel Generator to the 1653rd plus the services of a sailor who remained long enough to build an ice machine for the outfit.

In mid February, two men out of the 1653rd were awarded the Soldier's Medal for meritorious deeds above and beyond the call of duty after a harrowing incident during a water trip delivering supplies. Five men were detailed to deliver flares and ammunition to another Island. Two sailors were in charge of the small craft which was traveling through very rough and choppy water. About two miles off-shore, one of the flares somehow became dislodged and fell to the bottom of the boat. Soon there was sputtering, smoke and flames which could not be controlled by the men aboard.

Needless to say there was confusion and excitement as the men were forced to attempt to swim to shore as the boat was doing all sorts of bouncing and veering due to the rough condition of the water. One of the men, Cpl. John Straub, was the last to leave as he apparently could not swim. When Pfc's Eli Goldsmith and Sigmund Grabowski noticed Straub's struggles, they both swam to

his rescue. Fortunately by this time the noise and smoke had come to the attention of others on shore who quickly sped out to rescue the entire party. Although frightened and thoroughly soaked, all were brought to shore without injury. During the Award Presentation at Company Hqtrs, all personnel assembled to participate and pay tribute to Pfc's Goldsmith and Grabowski.

Later, in June, the 29th experienced its first casualty when the Group Incinerator exploded fatally wounding Pvt. Alex T. Freidus of the 1637th. It seemed that Pvt. Freidus was in charge of the incinerator detail on that fateful day and the record indicates a freak accident occurred resulting in severe burns to Freidus. A nearby buddy, Pvt. Robert J. Jacisin of Headquarters Squadron, pulled Freidus from the burning area but it was too late for Medical personnel to save him. A proper military funeral was held by the Group with burial in the Guadalcanal Island Cemetery.

Group Executive Officer John Trout was ordered to establish an advance 29th ASG Detachment at Munda in the New Georgia Islands. Accompanying Lt. Col. Trout was Assistant Chemical Officer Lt. Robert Klang and twenty enlisted men who were to locate a site for a larger detachment to follow later. At Munda, dense Palm trees successfully hid a Japanese Airfield used to harass American installations. Allied forces shelled coastal areas continuously in anticipation of landing invasion troops. American forces eventually took over the Island and the Airfield, but events of the War changed and the 29th never sent a larger force to the Island.

A memorable and proud day for the 29th particularly the 82nd Service Squadron occurred on September 8, 1943, when Sgt. Joseph L. Myers was awarded the coveted Soldiers Medal for heroism. On this day all personnel assembled at the large hangar at Carney Field to witness General Nathan F. Twining, Commander of all Army Air, Corps, Navy and Marine personnel in the Solomons (COMAIRSOL), pin the award on Sgt. Myers. General Twining was accompanied by his Aid-de-Camp Captain Dean Yount. As 29th Group Commander Colonel EK. Reyher, Major John Woodward and Capt. Yount approached the squadron formation, First Sgt. Elmer Tyler called the squadron to attention and made his report to Captain George Sagli, Acting Commanding Officer for this special occasion. Sgt. Myers was standing in front of the formation a few paces in front of Capt. Sagli. General Twining moved forward and read the Citation for Sgt. Myers as follows:

JOSEPH L. MYERS, 15112869, Sergeant, United States Army Air Corps, for heroism on March 23, 1943, at Henderson Field, Guadalcanal. On his own initiative and at great danger to himself, Sergeant Myers left his assigned cover during an enemy air raid and removed four very valuable pieces of equipment, a C-2 wrecker, an auto-car tractor, a forty foot trailer and one twenty-five foot trailer from an area in which certain destruction was threatened by the flames from a burning plane set afire by an enemy bomb. This heroic deed saved equipment extremely difficult to replace. Home Address: Farmington, West Virginia. The 13th Air Force Chief then moved forward pinning the medal on Sgt. Myers. After each returned salutes, General Twining addressed the assembled formation. "Sgt. Myers, Officers and men of the 82nd Service Squadron and the entire 29th Air Service Group, my hat is off to you". The General went on to comment that USAFISPA Commander Lt. General Millard Harmon had personally sent his congratulations on the fine job the 29th had done since arriving overseas. He added, "---and I'm telling you I think you are doing a Damn fine job and we all appreciate your performance toward the combined war

effort in this Theatre".

Another new installation at the Canal became effective in August of 1943 when a Post Exchange was built and stocked. A building containing 800 square feet of storage space was constructed next to a 600 square foot store. Initially supplies were very limited being mainly necessary personal items such as tooth paste, brushes, razors and blades, shaving cream and stationery. As time passed , limited amounts of candy bars came in along with cigarette lighters, watches, pens, lighter fluid and tobacco. Now and then 4 to 6 month old magazines would arrive and although not current, were quickly taken by the men. Sgt. Kenneth Spaulding was non-com in charge of the PX for quite a long period until Lt. Ed Merlin was assigned to administer the program. It continued as a Group Function until it was ordered to merge with the 709-1 Sector Exchange in September of 1944.

The Medical Section was also a major operational function in the Service Center with many more supplies being stored and issued. Shortly after establishment of Medical Supply, Air Force Headquarters sent an emergency request for needed supplies by the 13th Air Force at Los Negros and within 24 hours three tons were shipped to that forward base. Under the leadership and direction of Major Keith P. Smith, in addition to the Group Aid Station, Dispensaries of Headquarters, 40th and 82<sup>nd</sup> Squadrons furnished round-the-clock medical aid to not only men of the 29th but to many other attached organizations. Combat crew liquor was stored and guarded in the 29th's Group Medical Supply area as only authorized Flight Surgeons could draw this much sought after item.

Major Smith was relieved as Group Flight Surgeon in June of 1944 after receiving orders to attend Flight Surgeons School at Randolph Field, San Antonio, Texas. Major Smith continued his Military Service in the States following his graduation, but after the War, returned to his home in Corbin, Kentucky, where he resumed his Medical Practice. In the year 1979, Dr. Keith P. Smith was honored by the citizens of Corbin when they named him Man-of-the-Year.

Capt. Joseph Dobkin was promoted to Group Surgeon replacing Major Smith, as Dr. Vincent Amatrano was assigned to the 82nd. Shortly thereafter Capt. Norman Sartorius was named Squadron Surgeon as Dr. Amatrano was relieved.

Maj. Joe Dobkin MD smiles approval as he is named Group Surgeon upon departure of Maj. K.P. Smith MD. Medical personnel had their hands full with all sorts of unexpected requests for assistance. One such situation involved a G.I. out of the 40<sup>th</sup> who every now and then would run over to the Squadron Fox-hole and repeat over and over, "Quack, Quack", like a duck. After several weeks of this, 1 st Sgt. Sherman Scowden sent him to the Squadron Dispensary to see Capt. Hege Kapp. After careful examination, the doctor found nothing wrong and sent the man back to duty. The duck quacking was heard no more!

As time went on additional medical equipment became available enabling the Doctors to provide more extensive service to patients. X-Rays could be taken and laboratory tests made to help diagnose ailments. The Group Dental Clinic also took on additional patients with the Island

Service Center Expansion. Malaria Control as well as sanitary inspections continued as both were on-going and necessary duties in the tropical climate.

It was at Guadalcanal that the Group's Medical Administrative Officer, Lt. Samuel L. Lieberman, M. D., received approval of a previously requested transfer and was reassigned to the 43rd Infantry Division, engaged in New Georgia Island Campaign at the time. It was later reported that Dr. Lieberman received special recognition and commendations for outstanding achievements in Field Surgery and Anesthesiology.

The Photo Section was now happily set up in a new Quonset Hut which enabled the men to perform many additional photographic work items and do it more efficiently. New cameras were received that provided the necessary tools to produce work for not only the 29th, but all 13th Air Force units including the XIII Bomber and Fighter Commands as well as the Service Command. 16mm film was now being processed and developed that was used in B-24 Bombers to aid in the training of new aircraft gunners.

Photo Reconnaissance units were also bringing their work to the 29<sup>th</sup> for processing. During the Guadalcanal episode, Sgt. Joe Moretz, who had been in charge of the section for a long period of time received orders relieving him from the 29th and returning him to the States to attend Officers Candidate School. Sgt. Russell Hild, one of the original enlisted men in the section back at Morris Field, was elevated to take charge of the section.

Since more film and cameras were now available, Group CO Reyher requested that the Photo Section establish a schedule with each Squadron and Company Commanding Officer in order for each unit to have a group picture taken. This was done and each outfit let all of its personnel know in advance that on a certain day and time they would assemble for a unit picture. As usual the pictures all came out very well, but unfortunately, individuals were not identified at the time, and when this document was being prepared, it was very difficult to obtain names of each person. Those that were obtained were used, but we regret that many were not, so the decision was made to use an alphabetical list of the men known to have been in the unit.

After the Chemical Section had established its operating area at Guadalcanal, a large shipment of Mustard and Lewisite gas arrived which required that a Gas Dump be set aside. Fortunately for everyone, Caustic Chemical Agents were never used despite how vicious the War became at times. One incident recorded by the Section involved the delivery, in late 1943, of a shipment to the 29th of 1000 Five Gallon containers of Lewisite and Mustard Gas.

During this particular shipment, a bad storm came up while the canisters were on the unloading barges, so the barges were anchored near shore with an inventory count taken as a precautionary and safety measure. In the morning, after the storm subsided, those working in the Section went down to check on their shipment, only to discover that one container of Lewisite had disappeared and was lying at the bottom of the Channel. Since the water was too deep to use grapple hooks or to recover the container by other methods, it was left there. The container was never recovered, and may still be lying about 500 yards off shore at Koli Point.

When the Group left Guadalcanal another shipment of five-hundred 100 pound Mustard Gas bombs were left behind. In November word was received that Lt. Col. Reyher and Major Trout both received promotions to Colonel and Lt. Col. respectively with Reyher also given a ten day rest leave in Auckland, New Zealand accompanied by Major John Woodward, Major K.P. Smith and Major Ray Isaacs.

While they were gone the Ammunition Dump (not under the 29th Service Center) at Hellspoint caught fire with shells and other ammunition going off all day and night. The 29th Camp area was over twelve miles away but the smoke, noise and fire made it appear much closer. The coconut grove in which the dump was located was completely burned with surrounding tent areas, vehicles, tires and other equipment also being destroyed. No explanation nor estimated loss was ever provided to the men.

In December of '43, Captain Louis Shepard, CO of Hq. and Hq. Squadron since Morris Field days was relieved from the 29th and returned to the United States. He was replaced as CO by Capt. Norwood Gray.

Sad news shocked the Group in late 1943 as word spread throughout camp areas that another fatality had occurred. The 40th Service Squadron had received some newly assigned enlisted men and three of them decided to take advantage of some free time one day and go exploring up river. Being unfamiliar with the island hazards, especially during the rainy season, they were unaware of the speed with which the rivers could swell and travel down from the mountains. The three had gone up quite a distance from camp, built a raft and were traversing the river current back to camp when they were caught in the river's rising and rapid current. The raft capsized, two of them made it to shore, but Herbert S. Morris lost his life unable to handle the menacing river. After searching for their buddy in vain, the two returned to camp reporting the incident to First Sgt. Sherman Scowden, who immediately sent a search detail to the scene. The body was located and returned to the 40th's area. A full military funeral was held and attended by all Group and Squadron personnel that were able to be away from assigned duties. Interment was in the Guadalcanal cemetery containing hundreds of white crosses marking the resting place of fallen US servicemen. Morris' parents were properly notified by Squadron Commander Thomas Spradling.

In order to accommodate the restructuring of Headquarters as a result of The Service Center Operations and changes rapidly taking place in the war, a position entitled Plans and Training Officer was added. Major Tom Spradling was chosen to fill this spot and Captain Donald Doud was then appointed to take over Command of the 40th Service Squadron.

December also was the first anniversary of the Group overseas and the occasion was recognized during the Christmas period when the Colonel allowed lights to remain on for parties which were observed in all unit areas. A beer allowance was distributed to make the party more festive and on Christmas day a special turkey dinner was prepared by all mess halls. Shortly thereafter, the flooding of rivers began which proved the native warnings during camp construction correct, as



most of the tents were flooded so bad the men had to move their belongings. Island natives had warned everyone this would happen, but the camp was built anyway. The theatre area was so severely flooded that the movie projection equipment had to be removed to safety by boat.

After the rains stopped and the waters receded, a lot of cleaning up was necessary, but all was restored to normal soon thereafter. It was a good thing because at long last real genuine females appeared at a USO show headlined by movie star Ray Milland. The theatre area was jammed that night as three young ladies in the Milland show put on their acts and even invited some GI's on the stage to dance with them. Singer Francis Faye, Rosita Moreno and the 'hit' of the show Mary Elllott, gave the group one of its best shows seen to date. Other shows and performers to appear either at the 29th's theatre or other entertainment centers on the island included: Shirley Wolcott, George Rabone, Frederick Jagle, Polyna Stoska, Robert Weide, Isaac Stem, Alexander Zakin, accordionist Buddy Cassanova, baritone Pop Maysant, juggler Lew Fernand, 13<sup>th</sup> Army Air Force Band, Kenneth Spencer of 'Cabin in the Sky' fame, Julie Gardner and dancer Anne Lewis.

Shortly thereafter the Jack Benny Show arrived thanks to the Island Service Command. Because of the anticipation of another huge crowd, this presentation was coordinated by Lt. Helmig of the Island Service Command and Lt. Ed Merlin of the 29th Special Services Section. The show was staged at the North end of the Koli Field runway so that the audience could sit on the concrete runway aprons. The 40th Service Squadron along with the 13th Air Depot Group furnished 40 foot trailers to be used as the stage which was put together by the 873rd Aviation Engineer Battalion. The 1003<sup>rd</sup> Signal Co. provided a small arms truck to be used as a dressing room by the performers that included Carol Landis, Martha Tilton and harmonica virtuoso, Larry Adler in addition to Benny.

Lights and amplifiers were supplied and erected by the 905th Signal Depot, while guards were furnished by the 923rd AB Security Section. Trucks out of the 29th picked up soldiers, sailors and Marines for rides to the show. The next day the area was policed by the 3rd Marine Division. Other entertainers to appear later included Metropolitan Opera star Agnes Davis, movie cowboy star Randolph Scott, dancers Margaret Jackinoff and Henry Jackson and Rand Smoth, baritone.

Randolph Scott was a genuine joy to the officers and men of the Group, as he not only provided good entertainment, but along with Joe DeRita, a comedian traveling with Scott's show, spent a good deal of time with the men during the daylight hours. They visited the men in the shops, ate in the mess halls and talked with personnel as if they were old friends. During one of the work details ordered to take down a huge tree that had been considered dangerous to surrounding areas, Randy Scott went up on the scaffold to help the men fell the tree. This was no small job as it had to be cut so as to fall in a precise location. With superb skill, the crew managed to drop the tree without touching any of the nearby tents and no one was injured. Scott and DeRita even had an opportunity to autograph one of the huge B-24's being repaired in one of the Squadron's mobile repair areas. Randolph Scott was not only a fine actor, but a real gentleman that scored a big hit with the men of the 29th.

In plane doorway J. Benny clowns with Carole Landis, Martha Tilton and June Bruner. Liltin'

Martha gives out with favorite song. Benny introduces harmonica great Larry Benny, Landis and Tilton join together for big number. Adler.

In one particular show a soldier out of the 6th Photo Squadron name Cpl. Landau gave an exhibition of hypnotism to the amazement and enjoyment of everyone. Capt. Bob McGeachin, Group Chemical Officer, had enough nerve to submit to Cpl. Landaus' hypnotic spells. Capt. McGeachin, that night, sang at the Metropolitan Opera and made love to Lily Pons while he was portraying Harry the Cook in the officers' mess. Whatever effects the hypnotist had on him were revealed the next day when the Captain developed a dislike for steak (believe it or not).

One of the most entertaining acts on the entire island was not among the USO shows nor other professionals, but right within the 82nd. Every once in awhile, when properly persuaded, Cpl. Francis McGrath would get out his Coke bottle, place it on the floor and to the amazement of all spectators, proceed to stand on his head on the tiny bottle. It is said that persuasion often times was induced by products out of Bonner's distillery, a beverage that became famous throughout the outfit. Whether or not this was true the sight of Cpl. Francis M. McGrath standing on his head on that small end of the bottle shall long be remembered by all that were privileged to witness the act.

All of these things contributed substantially to a good level of morale in the 29th despite their long, hard overseas duty. One of the newer officers, Lt. Vernon Siefert undertook the formation of a group orchestra in mid 1944 and had response from 15 men. They held practices whenever possible and planned on playing concerts as fill-ins between shows given by USO troupes.

The 29th also saw one of its men involved in boxing matches. Pvt. Bonnie Armijo out of the 1637th Ordnance Company had been a boxer in civilian life and when this activity was initiated by the Island Service Command, Pvt. Armijo obtained gloves, undertook training and entered every tourney held, usually winning his bouts.

One day in September, all personnel heard the news that Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the President would arrive to tour the island. She waved to everyone as her motor convoy rode about various installations. In addition to the first lady the 29th also got a glimpse of U. S. Senators Lodge of Massachusetts and A. B. "Happy" Chandler of Kentucky as the group was escorted around the island by Admiral William "Bull" Halsey and other Navy officers.

Shortly after these visits, an air raid by Jap planes inflicted considerable damage to PBX's and B-25's parked off Carney Field. Also hit were two fuel trucks and a gasoline tank storage area which caused fires but the enemy did not return that night. A few nights later, Lt. Henry Meigs, II, flying a P-38 shot down a Jap bomber over the island and as the men watched and cheered, another plane appeared in the lights which also was quickly destroyed. Casualties from that episode included two Americans killed and six wounded, but the bodies of six Japanese Navy pilots and crewmen were recovered from the wreckage.

During early October of 1944, Major Spradling, Capt. Harris Underwood and six enlisted men of

the 40th Service Squadron flew to the island of Morotai in the Mollucas section of the Netherlands East Indies as an advance echelon to prepare for the group to move up to that base. They were also to select and outline a suitable camp area and send back information about the island for future reference.

At this same time news came through that Allied Forces had landed in the central Philippines off Leyte Island. One of the greatest Naval battles of the war occurred here as the U.S. fleet encountered the Japanese Navy. This victory enabled MacArthur's land forces to strike and split the enemy in two and quickly capture strategic air strips at Tacloban and Dulga. The U.S. Navy lost a carrier in this battle, but sunk five Jap battleships, one aircraft carrier, two cruisers and several destroyers plus 150 enemy aircraft were destroyed by allied airmen.

On 7 July, 1944 orders were issued relieving Col. Reyher as Commanding Officer of the 29th and further transferring him to the XIII AFSC Headquarters. This news spread quickly throughout all units of the 29th, as most of the personnel both old timers and newly assigned never knew any other Group Commander in the 29th than Col. Reyher, and had difficulty believing this or accepting it. , it was not rumor, and all Lt. Co!. John T. Trout, new group Co. soon learned that Executive Officer Lt. Col. John T. Trout was named to succeed him as Group Commander, a position he was fully qualified to assume after the many months previously experienced in the group. Col. Trout had been detachment CO over the advanced detachment during the early days at Guadalcanal. Col. Reyher had been with the group since its arrival at Charlotte in April 1941 and was CO longer than any other person.

The 29th was brought up to full *TIO* strength in October 1942 at Camp Stoneman, California, and shortly thereafter shipped out for overseas duty and began the pursuit of its mission under actual combat conditions.

His new assignment was made immediately upon reporting to the XIII AFSC when they re-assigned him to Headquarters, 13th Air Force with specific duty as Ass't. Chief of Staff, A-4 which in simple terms meant "Director of Materiel". At his new environment he replaced Brig. General George McCoy who was holding down two posts at the time, that of CO of the XIII AFSC and AC of S, A-4, in Hq. 13th Air Force. A special edition of the group's newsletter, "The Jungle Journal" was published and distributed containing a write-up of his departure and wishing him well. Officers and guests of the group also held a farewell dinner at the officer's mess and during the after dinner festivities, the following resolution was read and presented by newly appointed Group Commander Lt. Col. John T. Trout:

When Col. Reyher went to 13th Air Force he replaced General McCoy who was then rotated back to the States. Maj. Gen. St. Clair Streett, CG of the 13th Air Force reassigned Reyher to handle A-4 for the 13th, and sent him to Los Negros in the Admiralty Islands. Col. Harry Kendall was transferred out of the 321 st Air Svc. Gp. and was assigned as CO of the XIII AFSC. In this transfer of duty Col. Reyher had two 29th officers reassigned to work in his division, Capt. William Devine took charge of the QM Section while Maj. Ray Isaacs handled Ordnance duties. This new 13th Air Force duty took Reyher from Los Negros to Hollandia, then Noemfoor in New Guinea, and

Morotai, Netherlands East Indies. This was a result of Pacific Commander General Douglas MacArthur's strategy of bypassing Japanese installations in New Guinea. Headquarters of the 13th Air Force and two bomb groups were established at Noemfoor, while the 5th Air Force Hq., which was the other air component of the Far Eastern Air Forces (FEAF) set up Headquarters at Biak.

On August 23, 1944, one of the 29th's original units, the 82nd Service Squadron was relieved under orders of the XIII AFSC and ordered to join the 6th Air Service Group at Cape Sansapor, Dutch New Guinea. This change in organizational operations left the 40th to administer and operate not only the group's engineering section, but also the shops and repair activities at the Service Center. 13th AF Fighter Command and Fighter Squadrons were sent to Sansapor, New Guinea which was the reason the 82<sup>nd</sup> Service Squadron was reassigned to this forward air base. While 13th units were at Noemfoor and Sansapor, a new airfield was being built at Morotai to be used by long range bombers.

In September of 1944 the 13th Air Force Headquarters sent an advance party to Morotai that included Col. Reyher. The airfield was not ready at this time so a seaplane was used to transport the cadre. The Japanese were reluctant to give up this important base and sent bombers to attack it daily. The first night the advance detail arrived, their newly established mess was totally destroyed by an enemy air raid. For several months heavy bomber strikes were conducted from Morotai against large Jap held refineries at Balikpapan and Tarakan, Borneo.

Shortly thereafter, on October 24, 1944, Col. Reyher went to the Leyte Gulf area in the Philippines with an advance party, headed by *BIG* Thomas D. White Dep. Cmdr. 13th Air Force to establish an area for the 13th Air Force and XIII AFSC Headquarters. It was revealed later that numerous Air Force personnel, for the first time in the Pacific War, engaged in actual ground combat activities assisting Army ground troops in driving the Japanese deeper into the island. The American forces had landed at Leyte Beach and Tacloban Airfield on October 20th in Gen. MacArthur's return.

After the move to Leyte in late 1944, the 13th AF was engaged in strikes against Jap held pockets in many Philippine areas, but by early '45 all islands were generally secured. In early 1945, due to his past experiences with Service Groups and the Materiel Directorate of the 13<sup>th</sup> AF, he was named Deputy Commander XIII AF Service Command, also located at Leyte. Duties with this command were involved with staff visits to units of the Service Command in the Philippines, primarily the new "Streamlined Air Service Groups" . During this period he was also named Chairman of a Command Committee that was to prepare and assemble data from its various units, for a chronological study of support services of an Air Corps nature from the fall of 1942 to the summer 1945, titled the "XIII Air Force Service Command Critique".

Col. Reyher was relieved from active duty on April 30, 1946 and returned to his pine tree farms in Georgia. He was recalled to active duty early in the Korean Conflict, and assigned to the 40th Air Division, Strategic Air Command at Turner Air Force Base, Ga. For several years he served with other SAC units including 2nd Air Force Hq., Barksdale AFB, La. and as Base Commander of Sedalia

AFB, Missouri, a B-47 Med. Bomber Base. He again was sent overseas in January of 1955 as Dir. of Materiel of SAC's 5th Air Division and stationed at Sidi Slimane, French Morocco, a desert base. This responsibility lasted until December of 1956 when he was reassigned to 45th Air Div., a B-52 Hq. at Loring AF Base, Limestone, Maine. Mrs. Reyher and their two sons were with the Colonel in Morocco and returned home when he developed a sudden severe illness that took him to Walter Reed Medical Center, Washington, D. c., instead of Loring AFB. Surgery was performed successfully, and after recovery and recuperation, Col. Reyher was given a physical disability retirement which ended his military career in Sept. 1957.

While the 29th was at Guadalcanal, Col. Reyher somehow obtained a female Australian Silky dog which he promptly named "Chico". He and others soon grew fond of this new pet and enjoyed her company. Another pet named "Cactus", owned by Capt. John Machovec, and of the "Heinz 57 Variety" had, unbeknown to the others, carried on a romance with Chico and soon two fine looking pups were on the scene. Because of their appearance they were appropriately tagged "Miss Brown" and "Miss Black".

Col. Reyher and Col. Trout look over garden near quarters. Note thick jungle to right. Home grown pineapples proudly displayed by group officers Reyher and Trout. When Col. Reyher was packing up his belongings to move over to his new assignment, he left Chico in the hands of Col. Trout, who was periodically traveling back and forth to Morotai. While away he left Chico in the care of Sgt. Russell Acree. During one of his trips, Acree took all three dogs to a pet show being staged by the Red Cross and in the typical 29th competitive tradition, Chico was named Best-in-the-Show, while Misses Brown and Black came off with Most Pleasing Personality trophies.

Competition at the show included monkeys, parakeets, cockatoos and an assortment of other dogs. Later, Chico moved to her new home at Morotai. When Col. Trout went there to establish the group's new camp sites. Miss Brown was given to the Group Veterinarian for his personal pet, but Miss Black remained with Sgt. Acree. When it came time for the entire group to move up, Acree had to devise a way to take her along and at the last moment talked Capt. Schneider, the group's C-47 pilot to take her up on one of his trips. Col. Trout just happened to be present when the plane was being unloaded so the pilot told him it was a gift from Sgt. Acree! He reluctantly took the dog to his quarters, all the while thinking up proper words to use to chew out Sgt. Acree upon his arrival, but by the time the ship anchored, the Colonel was so attached to Miss Brown he wasn't about to give her up and Sgt. Acree was all of a sudden a great guy!

While the group was preparing to leave the Canal, some units were stenciling crates and equipment for loading aboard a ship called the USAT Cape Tryon, but in typical Army fashion, when the time came to depart, all personnel were taken out to load aboard the USAT Harry Taylor. Here they found a very clean, neat and well managed transport ship and morale grew to a new high once again, as most had become quite weary at being stationed at the Canal for such a long period. The Harry Taylor pulled away from Guadalcanal with the 29th Air Service Group bound for Morotai on November 29, 1944. Majors Holladay and Clark; Captains Machovec and Jarvis plus Lt. Vernon Siefert and sixteen enlisted men were detailed to remain to look after the groups remaining property and dispose of all items to be left at the island in accordance with War

Department Regulations. Trucks loaded for trip to beach area.

Upon arrival at their new station, Morotai, Netherlands East Indies on December 12, 1944, everyone went about unloading, transporting and setting up camp areas like professionals as they were now used to the tasks related to moving. Island conditions here, presented quite different challenges as Morotai contained a very hard coral base that created problems in erecting necessary buildings. In typical 29th fashion, they managed to get the job done despite serious odds such as huge boa constrictors slithering about camp and construction areas. Side arms were worn by bulldozer operators and used quickly when encountering one of these monster reptiles.

Morotai, a small strategically located island of the Molucca Group, was situated in the Netherlands East Indies and lay at the northeast tip of the Halmahera Islands. It measured 25 by 45 miles and contained many banana groves. Natives were a mixture of Papuan, Malaysian and Polynesian. When the war broke out Morotai was under control of the Netherlands, but the Japanese had occupied it as well as the Halmaheras for some of their main air bases locations.

Although the island was declared secure prior to the 29th arrival, the 31st Infantry Division was maintaining a perimeter to keep remaining Japanese troops from infiltrating allied lines. Across the bay at Halmahera, it was necessary for our planes to carry out raids in an effort to drive the enemy off, thereby removing further threats to Morotai.

Two airstrips, located at the southwest plain called Pitoe and Wama Fields enabled 13th Air Force units to carry out strikes against Jap installations in the Philippines, particularly Palawan, Zamboanga and Manila.

Foxhole digging was a major priority for all units upon arrival as enemy planes carried out almost continuous raids against our air fields. The hard coral made this work most difficult, but everyone pitched in to obtain the feeling of security these holes provided.

Col. Trout had previously established the nucleus of an Air Service Center here and now that the full group was set up complete operations were resumed. The 1137th QM Company took over the Class II, III and IV warehouse operations at the center while the 321st Air Service Group QM Company was operating the Class I Warehouse. Enlisted men of both groups were combined to operate the office in the Service Center QM Depot.

Ice was being produced to supply ten different outfits on the island while the laundry processed cleaning requests for over 2000 men. Group Quartermaster Officer Major Walter A. Lapinske, in addition to his regular duties, was ordered to conduct QM property inspections at several forward air bases at which 13th Air Force units were operating. All other 29th units were functioning at the Morotai Service Center in similar fashion to previous assignments. A different problem was presented to the Finance Section, as at other bases all troops were paid in American currency, but at Morotai the payroll was processed with native Netherlands Dutch Indies money which required much more time. The Finance Section performed its mission and

assigned duties at Morotai until September of 1945. At that time they were ordered to cease operations. Those officers and men not relieved for return to the states were reassigned to other Air Force units. The 29th then received financial services from the 198th Finance Disbursing Section.

Other group sections such as Chemical, Photo, S-I, 2, 3 and 4, Engineering and Transportation set about their normal activities with excellent results thanks to experiences gained previously. The two QM Trucking Companies continued to serve both air strips and all combat units stationed there. Conditions at Morotai were less severe on both drivers and trucks as the distances traveled were much shorter. Since Japanese troops were still on the island, tight security had to be maintained and all necessary precautions were observed.

Special Services once again established recreational programs including baseball, softball, volleyball, horseshoes, badminton and other leisure activities to all personnel.

A movie theatre was also completed that could hold about 2000 men and provide shows seven nights a week. A stage was built for live entertainment presented by USO troupes. The 13th Air Force Band gave concerts periodically and a good production of the Musical Comedy "Petticoat Fever" was presented starring Muriel Hutchinson and John Baragrey. Other USO performers giving shows at Morotai included Phil Rich, Bud Smith, June Hammond and a ballet duo of Simone and Joanne Dawn.

Male leads from "Mexican Hayride" musical pose with Sgt. John D'Arco of XIII AFSC. Scenes from "Mexican Hayride". Medical section personnel were now functioning at the Service Center with additional manpower out of the 321 st Air Service Group. A huge Medical Supply structure had been constructed and stocked with a full inventory that enabled the processing of requisitions from not only Morotai units, but forward bases as well.

On the night of March 22, 1945, during a Jap bombing raid, this building received a direct hit resulting in total destruction and loss of supplies, but by some strange miracle, the storage room containing combat whiskey remained standing after resulting fires had been extinguished. Metal Martson Pierced Plank runway material used by CB's to construct air strips had been used as outer walls for the room and apparently provided necessary protection from the fires. In addition to the Air Force Combat Whiskey, all narcotics and alcohol were stored in the room, and since it was now standing all alone, armed guards were assigned to protect the contents. Emergency requisitions were processed while a new supply building was erected in a record ten days. Upon receipt of a new inventory of supplies normal operations resumed.

Service center medical supply crates ready for shelving. Structure later took direct bomb hit, all destroyed except AF combat liquor protected by marston pierced planking. It was at this time that *T/Sgt.* Chester Jansen, author of this document was transferred out of the 29th and reassigned to the Surgeon's Office of the XIII Air Force Service Command under Major Claude W. Kirby.

Over at Pitoe and Wama Airfields, Engineering and repair work to aircraft was being performed again by the 40th, but now they were operating with the 65th Air Engineering Squadron, which became a unit of the 29<sup>th</sup> when the 82nd Service Squadron was relieved. Personnel in the 65th took up the fine tradition established by the 29th and carried out all work with distinction.

In January, Lt. Robert E. Flanders became Commanding Officer of Hq. and Hq. Squadron when Norwood Gray was transferred to the 40<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron as CO relieving Major Donald Doud who returned to Group Headquarters. Also at the time, Chemical Section veteran *M/Sgt.* Russell Acree was relieved and sent to Air Corp Administrative School in Australia and good news for everyone raised morale 1000% when the first men out of the original 29th were relieved and returned to the States on Temporary Duty. These were Maj or Reuben Yarri, *S/Sgt.* Wilbur Petsick and Corporal Alvin Thompson.

Previous rumors passed along over the last several months also became true at Morotai when the announcement was made that a Rest Camp had opened in Australia for the use of 13th Air Force personnel. This was welcome news for the 29th who had been serving in the jungles for over two years without any breaks or even glimpses of civilization. The new camp was operated jointly by the American Red Cross and the Army and located at Mackay in the Northern Australian Coastal area.

The Red Cross managed a hotel for all men lucky enough to receive orders for a rest leave as little military restrictions were placed upon their time. They could come and go as they pleased with many recreational activities available, including bicycle riding, badminton, tennis, fishing, swimming, and the ever popular horse back riding. The food served was a real treat after digesting the field menu prepared by unit cooks for such a long period of time. Among the first to receive orders for a rest leave included Major Floyd Clark, Capt. Lorry Ray, Capt. Reuben Yarri, Capt. Robert McGeachin and Capt. Vodra Baker. Enlisted men were Sgt's. Walter Cope, William Thomas, and T 15 Joseph Hill. Elwood Rinehimer, also scheduled to leave on this trip unfortunately came down with the dreaded malaria fever. Others listed on the orders to make this flight included former 29th Sgts. Orrie Morris and Chester Jansen of the XIII AFSC plus men out of the 319th Fighter Control Squadron, 557<sup>th</sup> Signal AW Battalion and 6th Combat Camera Unit. Rinehimer was later included after release by medical officers.

The flight was made by C-47 with a one night stopover at Hollandia, New Guinea. Early the next morning they took off again for the long trip across New Guinea to Northern Australia and finally Mackay. Each leave was for a ten day period and returning men had mixed comments about the leave. Most were extremely pleased and happy they could get away while others were disappointed, chiefly because of the high percentage of soldiers to women in the area and the fact liquor was difficult to obtain as most of it was black market and overpriced. Although a large number of personnel were afforded rest leaves, the camp was only open unit March of 1945 which was a disappointment to those not receiving permission to go.

What could have been a very serious disaster for the 29th was fortunately averted during the stay at Morotai, when a huge tree broke about half way up its trunk and crashed into one of the



Headquarter tents occupied by Thomas Morgan, James Flamm, Edward Latonis, Alonzo Hernandez, Harold Hawks and Louis Buccilli. Fortunately all escaped without injury, but the incident caused a lot of tree trimming to occur throughout the rest of the camp.

A memorable military event at Morotai took place when the U.S. Navy intercepted a Japanese ship at sea that appeared to be a hospital or medical craft. Navy ships ordered the enemy craft to stop so a U. S. boarding party could check it out. It was found to be anything but a hospital ship with all sorts of weapons on board. The ship was taken into the harbor at Morotai with all crew and personnel promptly locked up in a stockade especially constructed to handle prisoners.

Events of the war were now accelerating to the point that it became necessary to re-evaluate Air Force needs. Both the 13th and 5th Air Forces had continuously inflicted massive damage to Japanese bases to enable ground forces to move up more rapidly than previously expected. As a result of all this progress, top command orders came through to create additional Service Centers in the Philippine Islands and because of the tremendous record and experiences of the 29th, its Headquarters was ordered split to form the nucleus of two new streamlined groups that would serve specific tactical organizations.

The 82nd Service Squadron had previously been reassigned to the 6<sup>th</sup> Air Service Group and was operating at Cape Sansapor in New Guinea in August of 1944. Located near the west end of the airfield, they set up their mobile repair shops, Air Force Supply and other functions near the bivouac areas carved out of dense jungle of hardwood trees unlike those on previous islands. Being old hands at this sort of thing, the men took this new assignment in stride. To help keep morale up, several people tried their hand at being Mess Sgt. Lamb, spam, powdered eggs and dehydrated potatoes were difficult to disguise but, each new cook had a slightly different way which gave the men something to talk about.

At Sansapor, Engineering was in the hands of Capt. Sagli and Warrant Officer Holley. Key shop, maintenance and repair assignments included: Sgt's. Slay and Jones in sheet metal; Welding, Sgt. Clarence Smith; Paint and Dope shops in capable charge of Sgt. May and Sam Counts; Carpenters were Sgt's. Zak and Hindman; Sgt's Van Tassle and Wojacki took care of Parachutes; Communications by Sgt. Alley; Technical by Sgt. Payne; Sgt. Parry cared for Bomb Sights; Electrical work was handled by Sgt's Perkins, Antonini and Parker; Transportation by Sgt. Peacock; and Mobile units were in charge of Sgt's. Radecki, Swartz, Manning and Cooley.

**In** January of 1945, Commanding Officer John Woodward CO of the 82nd was transferred back to the 29th at Morotai and assigned as Group Executive Officer. Veteran Squadron Engineering Officer, George Sagli was promoted to commanding officer.

The first casualty in the 82nd Squadron occurred at Sansapor. The squadron test pilot, Lt. Charles Wells, (Hot Shot Charlie), had been requested to fly a group of Infantry Officers on a reconnaissance flight over selected areas to pin point the location of small groups of the enemy. The flight was necessarily conducted at low levels and unfortunately resulted in a crash in a mountainous area.

An aerial search, headed by Maj. 'Red' Running, *W/O* Donald Holley, *M/Sgt.* Virgil Manning, *M/Sgt.* Oscar Swartz, and other squadron members was conducted over an extended area without success. Finally, after several days a surviving Infantry Officer appeared who had ridden a log down river, successfully eluding the Japanese on his return to his base, traveling mostly during darkness. He stated that he was the only survivor. Upon regaining consciousness after the crash, he made a thorough search of the area and found that Lt. Wells aircraft was completely covered by jungle growth and could not be spotted from the air. Lt. Wells shall always be remembered by members of the 82nd, as many had flown with him and found him to be a most likeable and respected pilot and officer.

The squadron continued to use its improvisation abilities and experiences gained at previous stations. The men built a cleaner apparatus for mess kits and cooking utensils that was served with steaming hot water for sanitary purposes. It put its best men to work designing and manufacturing another truck mounted boom capable of lifting heavy motors and other aircraft parts, and its shops were continuously turning out items not available through normal supply channels.

Not to be outdone by athletes at this location, the 82nd's fine baseball team continued its stellar play winning the Sansapor Island Championship. Volleyball players Leslie Niedenthal, Joe Houseweller, Clarence Smith, Stanley Gray, Kenneth Jones and Frank Antonini provided excellent competition in the island leagues, as did Sal Testa and the softball team. In May of 1945 the 82nd was again ordered to break camp and move up to Palawan with one-half of the 6th Air Service Group that was also designated to operate two Service Centers there. Other units assigned to this half of the 6th which would provide services to the 62nd Bomb Group were the 1655th Ordnance Company, one-half of the 1154th Quartermaster, the 1943rd QM Truck Company and the 1034th Signal Company.

Upon arrival at this new station, they experienced a first time wade ashore-with-barracks-bag-on-head type landing. As they proceeded to set up camp, details were working on necessary projects including the construction of a squadron latrine. This assignment was in charge of a certain unnamed Lt. who had been equipped with explosives to aid in breaking up the coral. The officer had been cautioned by his Commanding Officer to stop all traffic and activity nearby, but apparently wasn't paying attention, because just at the time of detonation of the explosive, the island Commanding General drove by. His jeep as well as himself and driver were promptly and thoroughly drenched with bits of coral and dust.

When the mess had cleared up, the General went through the area until he located Major George Sagli and immediately gave the CO a most vocal and memorable tongue lashing welcome to Palawan. Under the circumstances, Major Sagli would not have had it any other way. After the General left, the welcome was passed on to the deserving Lt. While at the Palawan Base, the 82nd was recognized for its exceptional technical skill and devotion to duty demonstrated by officers and enlisted men, as it was awarded the Meritorious Service Unit Plaque on General Orders #1816, dated August 15, 1945.

The 29th's 1637th Ordnance Company was ordered to depart Morotai and proceed to Leyte with one-half of the 29th Headquarters who had been designated to serve the 403rd Troop Carrier Group. This contingency also included the 344th Air Service Squadron, one-half of the 1123<sup>rd</sup> QM Company, the 1960th QM CO. (Truck) and the 1069th Signal Company. Much later, in October of 1945, the 1637th was disbanded and deactivated with personnel of the unit disbursed among the 572nd Air Service Group, the 100th Bomb Squadron and the 42nd Bomb Group until relieved and sent to casual camps for travel to the States and return home.

The other half of Headquarters of the 29th commanded by Lt. Col. Lewis L. Holladay was sent to Zamboanga also in the Philippines to serve the 18th Fighter Group. Units making up this new streamlined group included the 65th Air Engineering Squadron, the 1620th Ordnance Company, the other half of the 1124th QM Company, the 1984th QM Company (Truck) and the 1079th Signal Company.

Meanwhile, the 321<sup>st</sup> Service Group was also split with one-half of its Headquarters setting up on the island of Samar across the gulf from Leyte to serve the 5<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. Its service units included the 71st Air Service Squadron; the 1653rd Ordnance Company (out of the 29th), one-half of the 29th's 1137th QM Company, the 1913th QM Truck Company and a detachment of men obtained from various Signal Companies. The other half of the 1137th QM Company along with the 2020th QM Truck Company and the 1003rd Signal Company remained at Morotai in the other half of the 321<sup>st</sup> Group where the 40th Service Squadron was still tending to the needs of the 307th Bomb Group. The 1003rd Signal Company under the Command of Lt. Carl Glover was disbanded and deactivated June 1, 1945 at Morotai. Company personnel were reassigned to other units, most went to the 570th Air Service Group. On the 15th of June, 1945, the 29th lost another of its original units when the 1932nd QM Truck Company was relieved from assignment with the group. The company was disbanded and deactivated with personnel disbursed among several other companies.

Also on June 1, 1945, another change in command of the 29th took place when Lt. Col. Lewis L. Holladay was relieved and reassigned Group Commander of the 321st Air Service Group at Samar, as Major Charles E. Pannell was named Group Commander of the 29th at Zamboanga.

While at Zamboanga, Commander Pannell installed a saw-mill and soon all tents in the outfit had flooring out of genuine mahogany. An ice-cream making machine was also acquired to the delight of jungle weary troops who hadn't tasted this delicacy for far too long. The 29th was also honored while at this station for having the "best-in-commission-rate", which meant that it had an excellent record of keeping the P-38's it serviced in top flying condition.

Also on this date, veteran Group Executive Officer, John Woodward was relieved from duty with the 29th much to the sorrow and regret of all who served under or with him. Lt. Col. Woodward was transferred and reassigned Group Commander of the 570th Air Service Group, which was one of the new streamlined groups and still stationed at Morotai. Lt. Col. Woodward therefore returned to his former base and all who knew him were pleased that at long last his leadership

and administrative abilities were being recognized as he became a well deserving group commander.

Great news to reach all personnel at this time was the announcement that the allied forces in Europe had received word that Germany was surrendering. To the men in the Pacific this meant that the War Department could now devote every effort at its disposal to defeating the Japanese. The previously announced rotation plan designed to return personnel back to the States under a point system was disappointing to most of the men as they felt that length of service in the islands was not given enough consideration. They therefore viewed the surrender of Germany as a giant step forward hoping that the Japanese would do the same, and soon, enabling everyone to return home.

All other units of the 29th had by this time been either disbanded and reassigned, or moved up to bases in the Philippines, leaving only the 40<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron and the 2020th QM Truck Company behind. This left the 2020th the only trucking company on Morotai to serve remaining Air Corps units. At this time, Commanding Officer Gregory T. Skarupa was relieved from his command of the 2020th and returned to the States to attend another military school. Lt. Harold E. Claussen was assigned to take over this command in May of 1945.

The 2020th was chiefly serving the needs of the 5th Bomb Group, as was the 40th. 5th Bomb Group aircraft were carrying out strikes on Borneo and the men always felt they should be entitled to recognition for this action as they sweat out every take-off and landing of returning planes just as they did for other campaigns.

Soon orders were received for all units to move to other bases with both the 40th and 2020th included. They were both relieved from duty with the 29th Air Service Group in June, 1945, and reassigned to the 570th Air Service Group which had been organized into one of the newly created streamlined groups and sent to the Philippines. None of the men were looking forward to another move, and while packing and making ready to leave Morotai, orders were issued on the 5th of August to standby on "alert", as orders were being changed for each of these units to move up to Okinawa. Morale dropped to an all time low for a time, as everyone was by now looking forward to a trip back home, what with the rotation plan and the long period of time spent in the islands. Then, out of the blue, came the exciting news of the Air Force strike against the Japanese homeland and the drop of the first atomic bomb.

Shortly thereafter, a second atomic bomb raid caused such terrible destruction to life and property over a wide area that the Japanese command announced their unconditional surrender.

This unexpected situation changed command strategies throughout the entire theatre of operations and orders to move to Okinawa were rescinded. All equipment and supplies were returned to original camp areas and each unit resumed normal operations. , on the 24th of August, both units were ordered to pack once again and make ready to move out on a LST bound for the Philippines. On September 5th, after an uneventful voyage, the 40th and 2020th arrived

and disembarked at Subic Bay, Leyte. Almost immediately, orders were issued for the 2020th Truckers to participate in an 80 vehicle convoy between Subic Bay and Clark Field at Manila to transport men and equipment to the new base of operations.

Daily convoys continued for over a week covering the 70 mile trip and upon completion, both units became part of the 570th Air Service Group. When they learned that Lt. Col. John Woodward was group commander, they went about their tasks with renewed enthusiasm knowing that they were in friendly territory once again.

After being in the jungles for almost three years the men were looking forward to the possibility of seeing something that resembled a city or town with civilization, but found that war destruction had practically demolished these areas. There was practically no forms of recreation, while civilian eating establishments and bars were "off-limits" to military personnel. A few dances were held and all enjoyed themselves as best they could, but it was a far cry from the back home dances they remembered and longed for. When movies were shown there were more Filipinos on hand than soldiers and their constant chattering throughout the film made it difficult to enjoy. Fresh fruits were available and souvenirs could be found everywhere. Most G.I. conversations sooner or later got around to griping about the rotation point system, as most felt that the high volume of Bronze Stars earned by ground crews of tactical organizations which gave them additional points, was unfair in view of the fact the 29th was located at these very same bases and at the same time.

So, personnel that were in the original group that arrived overseas back in November of 1942, had one thought in mind, and that was to receive their orders to return home to their families and loved ones. Events began to move rapidly now that the war was over as the War Department was doing its best to relieve weary troops as rapidly as it could. The 2020th, while at Clark Field, learned that all personnel in the 2001st Q M Trucking Company were ordered to join the 2020th, an obvious move to speed up the rotation system, yet keep the company fully operational.

All men with less than 70 points or under 35 years of age out of the two companies were assigned to the 2020th, while those over 35 with more than 70 points were assigned to the 2001st. Lt. Harold E. Claussen was transferred to take over command of the 2001st and Captain Jeremiah J. Hegarty became the new commanding officer of the 2020th. September saw most of the original complement of 2020th relieved from duty under the rotation plan and reassigned to the 22nd Replacement Depot that was already full of men from other 29th units awaiting transportation back to the States. While stationed at the replacement depot, men of the 2020th looked with sadness upon the sight of some of their prize vehicles being moved to the island's salvage depot and taken out of service. Those that witnessed this had a heavy heart as they had lived and worked with these trucks for the most part of 35 months through tough and difficult times and were going to miss the grunts and groans they had become so accustomed to hearing.

So, with the relief from duty and reassignment of the 2020th QM Truck Company, another of the great operating units of the group would soon become just a memory. In August the 29th saw

another change in group commander when Charles Pannell was relieved and reassigned. Named to the top position in the group was Major Lawrence F. Jarvis. This appointment was short-lived as on September 20th, Major Jarvis was relieved and returned to the States.

Major Paul Mehrtens took over the group at this time and remained through the period covered by this document. In September, Lt. Col. John Woodward was again relieved from his command with the 570th Air Service Group and transferred to the 8th Air Service Group, again as group commander. He was not alone in his new surroundings as most all former 29th men in the 570th, including the 40<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron, were also reassigned to the 8th. This duty lasted until November, when the 8th Air Service Group was deactivated and ordered to return to the States, although during the period September to November most of the original 29th personnel had been relieved.

By the end of 1945 all personnel of the original 29th had been returned to the United States. The group, lived on and eventually moved to the Japanese mainland to serve the needs of the 5th Air Force, a duty that lasted until 1949. Upon release from foreign duty, it returned to the States and was reassigned to provide air base services for the San Bernardino, California Air Materiel Area until 1951.

The 29th was truly a service organization that handled each and every assignment with distinction. The spirit of the men - their loyalty and dedication to serving combat pilots and crews of the 13th Air Force as well as other airmen of the Far Eastern Air Forces and their allies, was outstanding. Its performance, accomplishments and skills achieved under most difficult working and living conditions are deserving of the highest recognition. It took all eleven units working together as a cooperative team to achieve its goal and we proudly conclude this report by saluting each unit. Commendations awarded to the group, its men and units, in addition to those set forth in the text are included in Chapter X.

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Air Force Order of Battle

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#### Sources

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