



**90th Bomb Group (H) (WWII)**  
*The Best Damn Heavy Bomb Group in the World*

**"JOLLY ROGERS"**

**90TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION**



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February, 2010      Volume 125

**THE BEST OF THE BEST**  
HEADQUARTERS  
V BOMBER COMMAND  
APO 713, Unit #1

9 May 1944

TO: All personnel of the 90<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group,  
APO 713, Unit #1

According to newspaper and magazine stories, people don't know whether the Fifth Air Force is part of the "Jolly Rogers Air Force," or the "Jolly Rogers" part of the Fifth Air Force. Seriously, I'm proud of your bombing record -- as proud as you yourselves are. When bigger and better bombs are dropped on bigger and better targets.... the "Jolly Rogers" will drop 'em.

J.V. CRABB  
Colonel, Air Corps,  
Commanding.

**2010 National Reunion**  
(From our President Dale Bates)

"Please plan to attend the 2010 National Reunion, October 6<sup>th</sup> thru the 9<sup>th</sup>, to be held at the Holiday Inn Express Hotel and Suites, 3131 N. Scottsdale Road, Scottsdale, AZ 85251. The location is on the south edge of "Old Town" Scottsdale with its many restaurants and shops.

The room rate is \$99.00 per day, + tax and includes a nice breakfast. They also have a twelve passenger van with which they provide transportation to and from Phoenix International Airport as well as transportation for small groups to and from places of interest within three miles of the Hotel.

One idea for the location of the Saturday Banquet has fallen through so we are proceeding with a plan "B".

There is also discussion about the possibility of offering some tours for ten, twelve or fifteen people with fewer tours for the whole group.

Stay tuned for the Reservation form in the May issue of the Newsletter."

**From SECRET 400th Squadron records for Feb 44.**

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of February we almost got ourselves a boat. An ill fated small "Maru" happened to anchor of

shore in Bastion Bay at Alexishafen near a ground target we were bombing. The lead bombardier rolled the cross hair back and got astraddle on the vessel which was about 100 feet long. The Squadron leader sent a message which sounded as if it were designed to rival "Sighted Sub - Sank Same" when he radioed "Small vessel capsized by near miss". The vessel must have been loaded with cork, however, since it was still afloat 20 minutes later, but listing badly, and surrounded by oil - definitely out of commission. In all modesty it was chalked up as "One coastal lugger severely damaged."

The bad luck story of the month happened to a crew on February 20<sup>th</sup>. The target was shipping near Kavieng. Target found: One Fox Tare Baker (a cargo vessel of 5,500/7000 ton). Hard luck: Cable on bombsight broke as the bombardier starts to turn the glory knobs. Results: One broken bombsight and one sadly disappointed crew.

On 23 February the squadron began moving from Dobodura, APO 503, Unit 1 to Nadzab, APO 713, Unit 1. We were moved by C-47 transports and the move was completed on the 29<sup>th</sup> February.

We only had a couple of days off from operations on the 26<sup>th</sup>, one crew thought the day of a long walk home (or better still, a ride in a Catalina, bless the Navy and the good steak and eggs we hear they eat) had arrived when a 75mm shell plowed directly thru the #4 engine. However, it just made material for writing a letter to the people on the home front. The shell didn't explode.

February marked the baptism of Tadju, an enemy base between Wewak and Hollandia. (Let's forget that one squadron from another group which bombed Tadju when it was mistaken for But at Wewak some time ago). With no anti-aircraft fire or interception, the boys dropped the "eggs" right in the basket although they were displeased no end upon arrival to find some enemy planes smoking on the ground after the strafers had worked them over. We shall always wonder who DID get there ahead of us, as no one seems to know.

Unreported elsewhere, the ride of one crew must be entered here. Forced to feather one engine and turn back from the primary target on a mission, this crew dropped its bomb load from 5,000 feet on the alternate target.

Then they made three strafing passes (one for each goo engine) from 2000 feet over the target. (Medium bombardment outfits please note).

Unless the war lasts four more years, the 400<sup>th</sup> Squadron did something this month which it will do only once during this conflict – they flew a mission on the 29<sup>th</sup> of February.

To summarize our activities of February: we flew 31 combat missions, in 23 days for a total of 138 sorties and a total of 877 combat hours flying time. We dropped a total of 969 bombs (463.5 tons), and scored 808 hits on the target, which is excellent bombing.

#### **From Secret 320<sup>th</sup> records from Feb 44**

The Squadron moved from its temporary station on 20 February, 1944. Moving was accomplished in three days, all combat crews being moved in two days. Missions were flown by this Squadron on the 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup> February, indicating the speed with which the ground personnel adjusted themselves and began the necessary maintenance functions. An advanced detail headed by Captain TRUETT SLEDGE, Executive Officer, had left Dobodura on 15 January. Much credit should be given to Captain Sledge and First Sergeant LOWELL F WASHAM for the fine work which they did in directing the work of the advanced detail. By the time the Squadron was transferred, a camp area had been cleared of kunai grass, an excellent Mess Hall had been completely constructed, a dispensary started, and a combined Orderly Room, Intelligence, Operations building well under way toward completion. Drainage facilities for the Mess Hall had been dug, and latrines constructed. Five days after arrival the camp was completed, and a water line is to be added to provide drinkable water from the mountains. (This Water Line was finished in March). The men in the advanced detail were subjected to several raids by enemy strafers, and were required to wear sidearms on leaving the camp area. A reported landing of enemy parachutists in this area kept the advanced personnel in a state of suspense for a week.

PAUL W GOTTKE  
Major, Air Corps,  
Commanding.

#### **From March 1944**

During the month our former Squadron C.O.'s, Majors C.P. Whitlock and P.W. Gottke were relieved from duty in this area and returned to the United States for a rest. They had flown combat in this area since November, 1942. However, they were both very reluctant to leave and had to be ordered by the Group Commander, Col. Brandt, to leave for this much needed rest.

The main highlights of the month were the ferrying in of ice cream for the members of this squadron on two different occasions. On the mornings following these two important occasions, the line at the dispensary was longer than usual with most of the men displaying

various bruises and contusions sustained during the rush to the mess hall for the much coveted ice cream.

JOHN W. KLINE  
Captain, Air Corps  
Commanding

#### **From Secret 321<sup>st</sup> Records for Feb 44**

The actual movement of the organization was on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February and lasted for three or four days thereafter. This operation functioned very smoothly, and the previous location was left in excellent condition – approved by the inspector. Improvements continued on our new area after the arrival of the squadron and is rapidly nearing completion. One new undertaking of the squadron, which is surely to be greatly appreciated by all members, is the establishment of a laundry. Its operation is expected soon and will indubitably boost morale of those who have had the experience of doing their own washing for the past year and a half.

During the month, some of the ground officers have assumed greater responsibilities. Captain Hasell was appointed Executive Officer vice Captain Enloe, Lt. McFadyen was appointed Supply and Transportation Officer. Several combat men were returned to the States during the month. Among them were Captains Bearskin, Berry and Hallett and their crews. All had experienced some rough engagements and had proved themselves to be worthy. As a result of their faithful service, the reputation of the squadron has been greatly enhanced. Lt. Zonnis, jokingly called “the leading Navigator of SWPA”, also departed for home. He had received credit as a crew member for the destruction of more enemy aircraft than any member of the squadron, and was also one of the most decorated.

On the last day of the month the organization suffered the loss of a crew. Lt. Buford and all his crew were killed when their aircraft crashed into a mountain shortly after take-off on a night strike to Hollandia. These men were especially well liked by their fellow members and their absence will be felt by all. However, they will be remembered as fine fellows and good soldiers.

During the month missions were flown to such enemy positions as Alexishafen, Madang, Tadjji and the Wewak area. These were intended to reduce enemy air strength, and to hinder enemy defense against our ground forces. Operations also included strikes on Momote, Kavieng and Panapai prior to the invasion of Los Negros Island. During the actual invasion, one of our crews relayed messages between New Guinea and the landing forces. No interception was encountered on these missions, consequently, the squadron did not increase its total of enemy aircraft destroyed. However, in a strike on shipping at Kavieng Harbor, Lt. Savage and his crew, including Lt. Little as bombardier, sank a Fox Tare Charlie that was bringing reinforcements to the area.

EDWIN R. JOHNSON  
1<sup>st</sup> Lt., Air Corps

## 90TH BOMB GROUP WESTERN MINI – MAY 19-23, 2010

Bob Handley is again hosting the Western Mini Reunion with help from Grace Van Elderen. They have planned a relaxing reunion at the Grand Vista Hotel in Simi Valley, California ([www.gradvistasimi.com](http://www.gradvistasimi.com)). The hotel has offered us special reunion rates of \$70 per night including breakfast and a beverage coupon each evening. This rate will be honored three days before and after the event as well. Parking is free and the hotel will provide free shuttle service within a three mile radius of the hotel. The Grand Vista has a restaurant and a bar and they are providing us with a Hospitality Suite. Please call the hotel directly (800-455-7464) to make your reservation and mention "90th Bomb Group" to get our special rate. The hotel does not provide airport transportation. A ride from the Burbank Airport is approximately 30 miles - \$40, and from LAX, 45 miles - \$60. The Metrolink Simi Valley Train Station ([www.metroinktrains.com](http://www.metroinktrains.com)) is about 5 miles and a \$10 taxi ride away. We have made plans for lunch and a tour at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum on Friday afternoon. There is plenty of seating throughout the museum and wheelchairs will be available. The lunch and tour will be from 1:00 – 4:30 p.m. but the shuttle will bring you back to the hotel earlier if you so desire. As always, the Hospitality Suite will be open except during events (and to allow for a few hours sleep ;-). We are looking forward to a relaxing time filled with reminiscing and REALLY hope you have a great turnout! **Registration is due April 19, 2010.** Please send, with check made payable to 90<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association, to Grace Van Elderen, 10900 Hutchinson, Ripon, CA 95366 (email: [gvaneld@aol.com](mailto:gvaneld@aol.com) phone: 209-599-2832).

### WESTERN MINI REGISTRATION FORM

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Spouse/Friends \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Wednesday, May 19  
 12:00-10:00 p.m.

Registration and Reminiscing - Hospitality Suite

Thursday, May 20  
 All day  
 6:30 p.m.

Hospitality Suite Open  
 "Casual" Banquet  
 # \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken Marsala  
 # \_\_\_\_\_ Yucatan Salmon  
 # \_\_\_\_\_ New York Steak # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$23.00= \_\_\_\_\_

Friday, May 21  
 All day  
 1:00 p.m.

Hospitality Suite Open  
 Lunch/ tour of Reagan Museum # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$25.00= \_\_\_\_\_  
 # \_\_\_\_\_ ham sandwich  
 # \_\_\_\_\_ turkey sandwich

Saturday, May 22  
 All day  
 6:30 p.m.

Hospitality Suite Open  
 "Formal" Banquet # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$27.00= \_\_\_\_\_  
 # \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken Picatta  
 # \_\_\_\_\_ Seared Salmon Filet  
 # \_\_\_\_\_ Roasted Prime Rib

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

### TAPS

*These buddies, wives, friends and comrades-in-arms  
 forever remain heroes*

Bill Racette reported the passing of **David Herrmann**. Dave was the bombardier on the Charles Brown crew in the 319<sup>th</sup> Squadron. Dave lived in Wichita, Kansas.

**Kenneth E. Engle** passed away on November 5, 2009, in Abilene, Kansas. Ken was a tail gunner in the L. Stanley crew in the 319<sup>th</sup> Squadron. Ken returned to the Philippines and spent over 20 years there as a missionary.\*

Stella Balotsky notified us that her husband **Edward**

**R. Balotsky** passed away on July 2, 2009. Edward was a pilot in the 319<sup>th</sup> Squadron. Edward lived in Ocean City, NJ.

Walter Seidel notified us that his wife **Kay Seidel** passed away on July 10, 2009. Walter lives in Phillipsburg, KS.

**Elwood T. Steel** passed away on November 19, 2009, at Jenner's Pond, West Grove, PA. Elwood was a sergeant in the 319<sup>th</sup> Squadron.\*

Deloyce Van Elderen notified us that **Albert M. Knight** passed away on June 4, 2009, in Roseville, CA. Al was a member of the Groseclose crew in the 400<sup>th</sup>

Squadron.

We were notified by the Postal Service that **John G. Zorick** passed away on September 26, 2009, in Windsor Locks, CT. John was a member of the D. Simons crew in the 319<sup>th</sup> Squadron.

**William Earl Jones** passed away on February 18, 2010, in Mingo Junction, Ohio. William was a bombardier for the D. McDonald crew in the 320<sup>th</sup> Squadron.\*

**HC 'Mike' Lamoreau** passed away on November 20, 2009, in Maine. Mike was a member of the Wm Martin crew in the 321<sup>st</sup> Squadron.\*

**John D. Gomes** passed away on November 4, 2009, in Westbury, NY. John was a member of the 321<sup>st</sup> Squadron but never listed on the Association roster.\*

**Frederick A. Schulze** passed away on October 7, 2009, at his home in Carverton, PA. Frederick was a German immigrant that was a nose gunner in the 320<sup>th</sup> Squadron and wounded and shot down twice. He was not listed on the Association roster.\*

Gerald Rogan notified us that his father, **Albert F. Rogan**, passed away on November 19, 2009, in Sacramento, CA. Al was a navigator in John Farrell's crew in the 319<sup>th</sup> Squadron.

**Lyle W. Barden** passed away on August 6, 2009, in Alpena, Michigan. Lyle was a member of the 319<sup>th</sup> Squadron but never was listed with the Association.\*

**Gordon H. Bixler** passed away on April 3, 2009. Gordon was a member of the Gentry crew in the 320<sup>th</sup> Squadron.\*

We were notified by his wife that **Frank M. Papa** passed away on November 28, 2009, in Heritage Valley, PA. Frank was a member of the R. Riley crew in the 321<sup>st</sup> Squadron.

A family member doing research on John T. Walsh notified us that **James R. Hentz** died on December 21, 2008. "Big Jim" was the copilot of the Archie Young crew in the 320<sup>th</sup> Squadron.

**Robert C. Wack, Sr.**, passed away on February 14, 2009, in Affton, Missouri. Robert was a member of the J. Jones crew in the 320<sup>th</sup> Squadron.\*

**Oswald R. Campbell** passed away on October 4, 2009, in Milton, Florida. Oswald was a member of the 321<sup>st</sup> Squadron.\*

**Raymond B. Spezeski** passed away on February 1, 2010 in Springfield, Massachusetts. Raymond was a member of the Weeks crew in the 320<sup>th</sup> Squadron.\*

**Paul C. Harmes** passed away on September 16, 2009. Paul was a radio operator with the 1041 Signal Company attached to the 90<sup>th</sup> in New Guinea and the Philippines.\*

**Charles Stewart** passed away on November 20, 2008 in Riverside, California. Charles was a member of the Bogan crew in the 320<sup>th</sup> Squadron.\*

**Peter Ewanyk** passed away on December 27, 2008. Peter was a member of the 319<sup>th</sup> Squadron but was not on the Association roster.\*

**Earnest E. Carls** passed away on December 31, 2009. Earnest was a member of the 321<sup>st</sup> Squadron but he was not on the Association roster.\*

**Clarence J. Giacomini** passed away on April 21, 2009 in Sterling Colorado. Clarence was a member of the 319<sup>th</sup> Squadron but not on the Association roster.\*

\*Contributed by Kenneth Sheats.

## NOTICES

**DUES** Year 2010 annual dues of \$10 per year are due if the date on your newsletter address label indicates 09 or before. If you have the letter W, H, or L instead of a date you do not need to pay dues, just update your address when needed. Make dues checks payable to: 90<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association and mail them to 273 Wellington Cutoff, Wellington, NV 89444  
The newsletter is available online on John Barrett's website at <http://www.jollyrogersweb.com/>  
May 15<sup>th</sup> is the deadline for the next newsletter.

## From SECRET 319<sup>th</sup> Squadron Records in Feb 1944

Early in the evening of February 28, 1944, orders were received from V Bomber Command directing three airplanes from this squadron to participate in a raid on Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea, that same night. Hurried preparation was made and the unusual bomb loading barely completed in time for the take off at about 2300. This was the first mission of this squadron against Hollandia and was later reported to be a diversionary mission to cover the impending invasion of the Admiralty Islands.

Take off was tense but uneventful, as those participating in the mission had never been on a night mission. The last that was seen of Lt. Tilden and his crew was his running lights fading away in the long night blackness of the Markham Valley.

Only one of the three ships ever reached the target. A driving rain and very heavy weather was encountered en route. One ship turned back and lost its way completely. Morning found them over Cape Gloucester where they made a landing with only thirty minutes gas left. The ship that reached the target flew through the heaviest weather the pilot had ever encountered and was about to drop their bombs on ETA when a few scattered bursts from enemy A/A revealed their nearness to the target. They dropped their bombs through a heavy overcast, turned for home and landed safely at Nadzab at 0900 on February 29, 1944. The other ship, flown by Lt. Tilden was never seen again. The assumption is that ship and crew were lost in the weather and crashed in the mountains. Forty 120 lb. clusters of incendiary fragmentation bombs were dropped on the target. Forty 100 lb. demolition bombs were jettisoned at sea.

Missions were flown even as the organization moved. Once moved, the missions were concentrated on targets in the New Guinea Campaign, gun positions, supply

areas, dispersal strips and areas of Hansa Bay, Wewak, Tadj, and Finchafen.

WILBURN H. KEEFE  
1<sup>st</sup> Lt., Air Corps  
Stat. Officer

**More on the move to Nadzab from SECRET Group Headquarters records from Feb 1944.** (The move seemed to dominate the histories of all the units for the month of February except for the 319<sup>th</sup> which mentioned it in one line.)

Group Headquarters moved from APO 501-1 on 22 February, 1944. Prior to this date, however, an advance echelon had been clearing a camp site, building a mess hall and numerous other tasks usually assigned to such echelons. Upon arrival the main cadre found a fine mess hall was waiting for them. An elaborate shower was also built and is ready for use, the only requisite lacking is water. Group Operations, during this recent move, functioned every day prior, during and after the change of station. During the period of change and for some time after, "Corn Willy", the internationally notorious food, was the basic subsistence but at present under the able supervision of Captain Joseph Black meals have made a great improvement and fresh meat is taken as a matter of course. The Group sincerely regrets the loss of Lt. Colonel Bullis former C.O. but has obtained in his place a man of proved abilities and who promises to be a worthy successor for Lt. Col. Bullis. The 90<sup>th</sup> has had a great deal of experience in moves so routine is hardly effected by them, today thoughts of last stations are merely history and strikes and all other duties of a heavy group are functioning smoothly and efficiently.

BERNARD E. STOECKLEIN  
1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Air Corps,  
Group Historical Officer

#### **Recollections of Jim Brooks, 319<sup>th</sup> Squadron**

About the article on William Barr and his reference to the airlift of POWs after the shooting ended. I too was at Ie Shima and participated in that effort taking two groups from Naha to Nichols Field in Manila (we may have gone to Clark). Barr's comment about the former prisoners being in "poor shape" was putting it mildly. Most were so frail that we were concerned they might not be able to cope with their excitement over being "free." As I recall (and again I could be wrong as it was a long time ago) we did not have any make shift seats our bomb bay. Something to do with an unfortunate incident while we were "experimenting" with seat design before the mission. The exPOWs (about ten in each plane) rode in the rear. We couldn't fly above 5K as it was felt it would be too cold for the passengers and at 5K the air was so bumpy that most all of them got sick. I recall one poor lad that had a #10 can of tomato catsup that had been opened with a beer can opener. He kept

dragging on that can while holding it for dear life. No sooner had he taken a big swallow than he got sick and after a few minutes repeated the whole routine over again. Also, he got cold so he popped a chute and wrapped up in it to stay warm. Needless to say we had a mess to clean up after the flight but we were all so happy about the effort we didn't care. The one truly pleasant experience I had in the 90<sup>th</sup>.

#### **James E. Polzin**

In the last newsletter we reported the death of Jim Polzin. Edward Weber has been trying unsuccessfully to contact his family. If anyone has any contact information for any of Jim's family please let Ed know or send it to the Association and I will get it to Ed. Ed's email address is: [exweber@isomedia.com](mailto:exweber@isomedia.com)

#### **RECORD BREAKER**

From all available statistics of all heavy bombardment groups in any United States Army Air Force, this plane is believed to be the record breaker having completed 161 combat missions in as many attempts.



(90<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group History August 1945)





**90<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association**  
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

