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HISTORY
OF THE
77th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (MEDIUM)
ATTU, ALASKA.

15 January 1941 to 31 December 1943

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Attu, Alaska.
Taken 10 June 1944.



FOREWORD

Presented herein is the history of the 77th Bombardment Squadron (Medium) for the period 15 January 1941, to 31 December 1943. The mission of the squadron during this period is three-fold.

1. Training and orientation to northern flying.
2. To attack and destroy enemy shipping in and around the Aleutians, and attack enemy installations on Kiska and Attu.
3. Following the movement of part of the squadron to Attu, our mission was extended to include attacks on shipping in and around the Kurile Islands.

As we enter our fourth year of existence, we find courageous achievements behind us, and we can look forward to more in the future. We find new faces among officers and enlisted men. It is well these changes are taking place, because only through new blood can any organization continue to gain strength and make new accomplishments.


Robert S. Hamby
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Major, Air Corps.
Commanding.



HISTORIAN'S FOREWORD

This is a history of a squadron, one of many in the Army Air Forces today. A squadron who started with too little, too late, and has built itself to a organization second to none.

This is also a story, a story about men and airplanes whose common purpose is the defeat of our enemies. A story about the joys and sorrows, the triumphs and failures, of men living and dead, who have given their all for the victory this nation will win.

In writing this history numerous records were not available and the Morning Report was relied on to substantiate many statements. For the benefit of continuity; personnel changes, morale, health, housing, and welfare have been included in section III, under the heading of "Missions and Accomplishments."


Wiley K. Howard
WILEY K. HOWARD
2nd. Lt., Air Corps.
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SECTION I

Activation of the Squadron

On a dreary afternoon, the 15 of January 1941, the 77th Bombardment Squadron (Medium) was activated as a part of the 42nd Bombardment Group (Medium) 2nd Air Force, at Fort Douglas, Salt Lake City, Utah.¹

The original personnel was obtained by the transfer from the 22nd Bombardment Squadron, 7th Bombardment Group, 4th Air Force, and formed under T.O. 1-127 dated 1 July 1940, for Medium Bombardment Squadrons. The original cadre consisted of one (1) commissioned officer and twenty seven (27) enlisted men. The officer, 1st. Lt. Elbert O. Meals,² was the first commanding officer. In the months from January 1941 until September of 1941, the enlarging of the 77th Bombardment Squadron was in progress.

The Squadron left Salt Lake City and moved to Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho on 3 June 1941, and at this time the Squadron personnel consisted of six (6) officers and one hundred and seventy four (174) enlisted men and 1 B-18A airplane.³ Prior and during this time, training activities were in full swing.

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- (1) 1 Extract from Station and Record of Events Section of Morning Report, 15 January 1941.
 - (2) 2 Extract from Remarks Section of Morning Report, 15 January 1941.
 - (3) 3 Extract from Station and Record of Events Section of Morning Report, 3 June 1941.

SECTION II

Formative Stage

Recruits were transferred in from different fields and, it was at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, the 77th had one of its famous Squadron Commanders, Major Harry Wilson, one time West Point All-American half-back, known to the sports world as "Light Horse Harry", and rated by the immortal Rockne as the greatest halfback of all time. Later in the summer of that year (1941) Major Robert O. Cork took over the assigned duties of the Commanding Officer, with Major Wilson going to the 16th Reconnaissance Squadron. By this time the Squadron was growing, adding a B-18A and a PT-17 to the fleet, making a total of three (3) airplanes. The first new flying officers joined the Squadron in September 1941.

During September 1941, the Squadron departed from Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, to Ontario Airport, Ontario, Oregon, to participate in field maneuvers which began 23 September 1941.

Arrangements were made in advance at Ontario for the Squadron, and the high school gymnasium was used for billeting the troops, and a Japanese community hall used for messing facilities. The ground echelon was moved by truck, and two (2) B-18A airplanes were used to fly the combat air crews to the maneuver area.

The Command Post was established at Ontario Airport and actual

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- (4) 1 Extract from Remarks Section of Morning Report, 26 June 1941.
(5) 2 Extract from Remarks Section of Morning Report, 12 August 1941.
(6) 3 Letter from Commanding General, 2nd Bomber Command, Fort George Wright, Washington, 19 September 1941.


SECTION II (cont'd)

combat conditions were simulated as far as possible. Trucks and tents were dispersed irregularly over a wide area. A bomb dump was established and camouflaged. Airplanes on the ground were dispersed and camouflaged, but no attempt was made at false installations. Chemical defense was made routine by the constant carrying of the gas mask, and a series of attacks employing smoke and CN gas were made. On the first attack twenty (20) men were without gas masks and were immediately declared casualties.¹

The air training consisted of two (2) three (3) hour flights daily, and one (1) three (3) to five (5) hour night flight, under simulated war conditions. The Squadron had only two (2) B-18 airplanes on these maneuvers, and only four (4) first pilots. The Squadron Staff Officers consisted of three (3) of the four (4) first pilots and much valuable training was received by them.

The Squadron was short on everything to successfully hold field maneuvers. Transportation, lumber and late food delivery were only a few of the difficulties encountered. Ground machine guns and side arms were not available, and the usual amount of "red tape" was experienced.

It is interesting to note that three (3) out of four (4) enlisted men who reported for sick call the first day in the field, reported for blisters on the heel of their left foot. Undoubtedly the left foot was used more than the right, or, the men were not used

(7) 1 Report of Field Maneuvers of the 77th Bombardment Squadron (M), AFCC, 6 October 1941.

SECTION II (cont'd)

¹
to wearing G.I. shoes.

A large amount of publicity was given to the maneuvers by the local newspapers, and the citizens of Ontario and surrounding territory were pleased to have the "Battle of Oregon" originate from their city.
²

In October 1941, Lieutenants Meals, Pickard and Tuma went east to the Glenn L. Martin Airplane Factory in Baltimore, Maryland, and were checked out in the Army's latest medium bomber, the B-26. These officers were among the first to pilot "the hottest plane in the world".

After the first B-26's were ferried to Gowen Field by Lts. Meals, Pickard, Tuma and Dencer, Major Cork with his pilots, combat crews, and maintenance crews, started in earnest to build a fine fighting, hard hitting, Medium Bombardment Squadron. At the outbreak of the war, our Squadron was a hustling group of men, training, flying, and developing new tactics under the guidance of Major Cork and Colonel Hart, the latter officer being the Commanding Officer of the 42nd Bombardment Group. Even though our crews were far from being well trained, two (2) days after the formal declaration of war with the Axis, the 77th was found on many fields of the west coast, from Payne Field, Washington to Murock Lake, California. Little did the men realize that of all the Bombardment Squadrons on the west coast,

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- (8) 1 Extract from Sick Book, 23 September 1941.
(9) 2 Actual Pictures of Maneuvers.

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SECTION II (cont'd)

they would be the first to leave the States for foreign duty, to protect the rights of our Government and the ways of the American people.

On the 3rd of January 1942, the Squadron was on its first leg to Elmendorf Field, Alaska.¹ In the following few weeks, due to severe flying conditions, short runways, and the most rugged and uncharted terrain in North America, the Squadron lost five (5) of their thirteen (13) airplanes.² Slight injuries were suffered but no one was killed.

Lt. Doolittle, with three (3) airplanes, departed for Elmendorf Field, Anchorage, Alaska, 16 January 1942, from Edmonton, Canada. The entire flight made crash landings at a position N. latitude 50°52', longitude 126°03'E after losing bearings and getting involved in bad weather and darkness. Two days later the planes were located and crews were evacuated to Watson Lake, Y.T. by ski plane.³ It is reported that the natives of the above position named the valley "Million Dollar Valley", since the crashed planes could not be removed due to terrain.

Upon arrival at Elmendorf Field, Anchorage, Alaska, the Squadron was assigned to the 28th Composite Group.⁴ The first few months of 1942 found the Squadron training and acclimating itself to the weather and flying conditions they were to encounter in the Aleutians.

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- (10) 1 Immediate action ltr. WD AGO-AG370.5, 13 December 1941.
(11) 2 Ltr., Commanding General, 2nd Air Force, Fort George Wright, Washington, 31 January 1942.
(12) 3 Ltr., Commanding General, 2nd Air Force, Fort George Wright, Washington, 31 January 1942.
(13) 4 General Order #2, Hdq AF ADC, Fort Richardson, Alaska, 2 January 1943.


SECTION II (cont'd)

The training consisted of practice missions and patrol in the North Pacific.

Two (2) fatal accidents happened during this time. On 31 January 1942, the Squadron had its first fatal accident. A B-26 crashed on the take off from Elmendorf Field, and P.F.C. Ernest P. Everheart, 18015127, was killed. A cash donation was made by each man in the Squadron and a plaque of bronze was presented to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest K. Everheart, in honor and memory of their son with this inscription. "Private First Class Ernest P. Everheart, 77th Bombardment Squadron, Alaskan Air Force; who perished 31 January 1942 while in the performance of his duties as an Aerial Engineer. By members of his Squadron".

On 29 April 1942, a B-26 encountered a "williwaw" just off the runway at Kodiak and crashed in the mountains. Three (3) officers and two (2) enlisted men were killed.

In February of this year (1942) Lt. Meals again became Commanding Officer of the 77th, relieving Major Cork who was transferred to the Headquarters of the 28th Group (C).

Living conditions at Elmendorf Field were good; but the morale of the Squadron was low. The lack of confidence in the B-26 air-

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- (14) 1 Reproduction of Publicity and Grave of deceased.
(15) 2 Memorandum to Personnel 8 February 1942.
(16) 3 Extract Remarks Section Morning Report 1 May 1942.
(17) 4 Extract from Remarks Section Morning Report 15 February 1942.

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SECTION II (cont'd)

plane, and the sudden change from the "USO front" to Alaska, and general confusion, had a tendency to keep the morale down.

SECTION III

Missions and Accomplishments

During this time landing strips were being built at Cold Bay, Alaska, and Umnak, Alaska, and on 29 May 1942, Captain Meals and 6 B-26's flew to Cold Bay, Alaska, and on the following day to Umnak, Alaska.

On the morning of 3 June 1942, a Japanese Task Force was reported in the North Pacific, and a flight of 6 B-26's went on search. No contact was made, and Captain Meals made a belly landing at Umnak; but no injuries were sustained.

On the morning of 4 June 1942, the Japanese attacked Dutch Harbor, and we sent 4 B-26's to intercept. No contact was made. The second flight of 5 B-26's were sent out to intercept, leaving Umnak at 2050W, and Captain Meals and Lt. Northamer made contact and sunk a Japanese Heavy Cruiser with a direct torpedo hit. As a result of this action, Captain Meals was decorated with the Distinguished Service Cross, and Lt. Northamer the Distinguished Flying Cross.¹

The weather during the entire period of 29 May to 6 June was practically prohibitive for flying. No weather reports west of Umnak

(18) 1 General Order #68 Hdq ADC, Fort Richardson Alaska, 1 August 1942.

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SECTION III (cont'd)

were available. The weather was marked by rain and fog. Ceilings ranged from zero (0) to two hundred (200) feet maximum, with visibility seldom over five (5) miles. Flying for the most part was just above the surface of the water. Navigation was all by dead reckoning. The necessity for radio silence precluded the use of radio for hom-
¹
ing.

Weather conditions made take-offs and landings extremely hazardous. On return from the 6 June missions, planes flew for four (4) hours over water at fifty (50) feet altitude or less, in fog. On
²
landing, the far end of the runway could not be seen.

Both personnel and planes were maintained during the period under extremely difficult conditions. Combat crews had to set up their own tents, and until the 3rd of June 1942, cooked their own meals, operating with the minimum of facilities. The bivouac area for the crews was a sea of mud. Water covered the ground inside many of the tents. Crews were on the alert daily from dawn to dark, which at that time of year was from 0400W to 2300W. Crews went with little or no sleep for forty eight (48) hour periods.

Airplane maintenance was performed largely by the officers and enlisted men of the combat crews. Gas was pumped from barrels, and oil poured from five gallon cans. Crews had never previously loaded

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- (19) 1 Operations Summary 29 May 1942, 6 June 1942.
(20) 2 Operations Summary 29 May 1942, 6 June 1942.


SECTION III (cont'd)

B-26 airplanes with torpedoes and did so under supervision of Navy personnel. The clearance of the torpedo over the steel mat runway was only four (4) inches.¹

During this period the danger of attack from the enemy by carrier based planes was a real hazard. On 4 June, Umnak Field, Alaska, was attacked in the morning by four (4) dive bombers and in the afternoon by nine (9) enemy pursuit planes making strafing attacks. No planes or personnel were lost during these attacks.²

During the strain of this entire operation, the Squadron personnel displayed the utmost devotion to duty, indifference to danger and zeal in searching out the enemy.

The remainder of the summer months were filled with extensive training and patrol flying, and the usual adverse weather conditions were encountered.

Orders came in early September for the Squadron to move to Adak, Alaska. The ground echelon left Elmendorf Field on 25 September, 1942 and started on its way to Adak.³

The ground echelon arrived at Adak, Alaska on 3 October 1942. They went ashore in the rain and hiked two (2) miles to temporary tent quarters at the Air Base. On 6 October, unloading was complete, and the Squadron set up camp in its permanent quarters. This was done

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- (21) 1 Operations Summary 29 May 1942, 6 June 1942.
(22) 2 Operations Summary 29 May 1942, 6 June 1942.
(23) 3 Extract Station and Records of Events Section Morning Report
23 September 1942.


SECTION III (cont'd)

in twenty-four (24) hours, working in continuous shifts which included erection of revetted tents, tent mess hall and kitchen, orderly room, dispensary, armament, ordnance, and supply sections, as well as fox holes for personnel and six (6) M-1 machine gun positions for area defense. Complete ground facilities were ready for the use of the 73rd Squadron Air Echelon, which arrived at Adak on 13 October.

On 27 October 1942, Major Pickard took Command of the 77th with Major Meals being transferred to Provisional XI Bomber Command.¹

It was 4 December 1942, that Major Pickard led a flight of six (6) B-25's to Kiska Harbor and made an attack on Japanese shipping. He pressed forward his attack in the face of heavy AA fire and made a direct hit on an enemy vessel. For this action he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.²

The first planes of the 77th Squadron landed on the field on 12 December 1943.³ The ground echelon furnished facilities for both the 73rd Squadron and its own air echelons from 13 October 1942 to 30 June 1943, never leaving this barren, bleak Aleutian Island during this time.

During the period 17 December 1942 to 30 June 1943, attacks were pressed against Kiska and Attu under severe weather conditions.

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- (24) 1 Extract Remarks Section Morning Report 31 December 1942.
(25) 2 General Order #24 Hdq ADC 11 February 1943.
(26) 3 Operations Summary (pp4), dated 3 October 1942, 30 June 1943.

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SECTION III (cont'd)

Missions frequently encountered the dreaded "williwaws". Snow squalls and poor visibility marked most of the winter flying. On several missions enemy fighter opposition was present. During the entire period, missions were continually subject to intense and concentrated AA fire from as many as ten (10) heavy AA batteries on Kiska. The low level missions against Kiska Camp and shipping were executed in the face of heavy enemy opposition. Combat crews at all time demonstrated great bravery, and total disregard for personal safety in pressing home their attacks.

On 17 December the Squadron started missions from Adak to the Japanese-held Island of Kiska. Numerous flights returned to base at Adak due to weather conditions. It was on the 20th of December that four (4) B-25's and four (4) B-26's bombed north and south head on Kiska at low level and strafed installations. A direct hit was observed on a gun emplacement and on buildings in the camp area. On 30 December, an enemy cargo ship was bombed in the Kiska Harbor at deck level. This was the first time we met enemy air opposition. One (1) B-25 was shot down with the loss of seven (7) men. This plane was piloted by Lt. Jules Constantine. Lt. Constantine landed eight miles off Little Kiska and was observed being picked up by a PBV.

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- (27) 1 Operations Summary (pp 5), 3 October 1942, 30 June 1943.
(28) 2 Operations Summary (pp 1), 3 October 1942, 30 June 1943.
(29) 3 Special Orders No. 2 Hdqs 28th Comp Group 7 January 1943.


SECTION III (cont'd)

The PBY was then attacked by Zeros and it was not known whether the men were taken prisoner or killed. They are listed as "Missing in action".

Other battle damages on this raid consisted of rudder trim cables shot out, a total of seventy two (72) holes in the fuselage of one (1) plane and a hole in the gas tank. On the afternoon of 30 December, four (4) B-25's and four (4) B-26's again attacked Kiska and there bombed two (2) enemy cargo ships in Kiska Harbor, deck level. Again heavy enemy aircraft opposition was encountered and the tail gunner, Corporal Donald O. Murphy, 35047294, was killed by anti-aircraft fire. His head was completely shot off.¹ Another plane had a landing gear shot out and a hole in the co-pilot's windshield. The pilot, Lt. DeBord was wounded in the right foot and the co-pilot, Lt. McNarney, was wounded in both hands. With these injuries, the men brought the plane back to Adak and made a safe landing. Another B-25 had an aileron cable shot out and two (2) holes in the pilot's windshield in front of the pilot. Two of the returning B-26's had numerous holes in the gas tanks, oil tanks and fuselage.

On the 5th of January 1943, three (3) B-25's made a deck level attack on a five thousand (5,000) ton enemy cargo ship approaching Kiska from the north. Each plane scored two (2) hits and two (2) PBY patrol planes confirmed the sinking of the ship. Minor battle

(30) ¹ Extract Record Section Morning Report 30 December 1942.


SECTION III (cont'd)

damage was sustained by one (1) returning B-25 from the enemy ships AA fire.

One plane returning from this mission made a belly landing with everyone but the pilot and co-pilot bailing out. A member of the crew, 1st. Lt. Charles H. Back, O-384806, was asked to write about his reactions during the time before, and after he bailed out, and the following is his story:

"It was a dreadful situation to be in. One bomb completely fell through the bomb bays forcing them wide open, and the other three bombs were hanging by one end of the shackle with the fins dangling down into space. Huffhines and myself kicked the other three bombs out and I went up in the nose to close the doors. When my handle refused to close the doors, Captain Larkin informed me that our hydraulic system was out, so Huffhines and myself got busy with the crank to pull the doors up mechanically. At the same time Larkin was trying to get the landing gear down. Lt. Stoltzman climbed to the rear of the ship and started letting the wheels down mechanically, and just as they were about to get into the lock position a distinct "snap" was heard, the wheels fell limp, and Stoltzman said "if they're not down now they're not going down".

It was just a matter of time until we heard those fatal words over the radio, "Pickard to Larkin, Pickard to Larkin, you will bail your crew out." To make sure I wasn't hearing false statements, I

SECTION III (cont'd)

waited until Larkin repeated this message to me. By this time the four of us, Aldrich, Huffhines, Pappano and myself were in the Navigators compartment and I relayed the message to them.

There was a sudden mad rush for parachutes. It was indeed a scramble; and after knocking a couple of heads together and a left hook to the jaw I ended up victorious with four parachutes, but two of the fellows had none. After thinking the situation over and out of the kindness of my heart I finally decided each of those two boys a chute. That left me with only two, a seat pack and a chest pack, which I put on snugly. I began to feel rather guilty for the rough treatment I had handed the boys and suddenly burst out with "O K, fellows, I'll go first". When I said that I noticed a peculiar gleam in every one of those boys' eyes, and a single word written on all their faces: "Revenge"!!! I said to myself, "My God, what did I just say?" It was too late then--all that was left for me to do was wait and get the word from Capt. Joe to jump and take the consequences. Huffhines kicked the hatch off and there, 10,000 feet below me was the ground. "How high are we, Joe?" "Two Thousand Feet". "Oh.!!" That was the longest two thousand feet I ever saw. I had a few short parting words with Joe and then he comes out with those sharp words: "OK, Jump". I looked at the ground again and slowly sat down on the floor, with my feet dangling out. "We must be at least 15,000 feet" I said to myself. Then I dropped my

SECTION III (cont'd)

hips out and hung on to the plane with my elbows. I hung that way half a minute, just resting. At this point the other boys knew that their moment had come! So like clockwork two of them had kicked my elbows loose and the other had his foot on my head pushing me out. "Ok Ok, quit shoving," I yelled, but it did no good. I managed to hold on with my fingers, with the rest of my body flopping against the outside of the fuselage, but the payoff came when those boys stepped on my fingers. I was knocked loose.

After three back flips, two jack knives, and a couple of barrel rolls I figured it was time to pull the cord. I gave a mighty jerk and out popped the little chute, catching me on the lip, followed by the big one. After falling ten thousand of those twelve thousand feet (It looked like I had!) the chute opened with a thud which made me think I had already hit the ground.

Then things started running smoothly and I started my slow descend to the ground. I looked around orienting myself and actually gave out with about half of the song, "Doodle De Doo". I noticed all the people on the hillside above my quonset watching all the excitement, and I said to myself "Why!! Those Blood Thirsty B-----s, just waiting to see somebody get hurt." I fooled them though, and came down like, what I thought, a veteran jumper would except I had two chutes and I kept one hand firmly on the ripcord of the unopened one and the other hand still grasping the other ripcord.

SECTION III (cont'd)

Everything was silent and peaceful until those three P-40's spotted me and came over to give me a buzz. I shook my fist at them and actually believe that if I had had my .45 with me, I would have taken a shot at them. Their prop wash caught me full blast and started me swinging like a circus clown on a long rope. I thought the chute was going to collapse and was all set to drop out of it and use my other one when I realized I was too close to the ground. I thought it settled down again but instead of landing on the runway like I would have, the prop wash caused myself to hit right in the middle of that ten foot wide muddy artificial creek in which I landed on my shoulders.

I wasn't mad though. I gathered my chute, gave it a big kiss, and then kissed that terra firma on which I was so solidly on again.

That night I began wondering who jumped next then next, and then last, so this is the only way I see it could have happened. Aldrich was the next one out. He was the smallest of the three boys left so the two bigger boys chose him. After he had put up a game fight, still in that navigator's compartment, with a few unhealthy blows dished out and many foul punches below the belt the other two boys finally overpowered him and he came sailing out as I had previously done. They tell me Pappano, the boy who went up with us just for the ride, was the third man out. Why he was next still puzzles me because he is larger than Huffhines. The only way I can figure

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SECTION III (cont'd)

it is that he was looking down through the hatch to see if Aldrich's chute opened and Huffhines struck him with a terrific blow on the back of the head with the Bomb Bay Crank and tramped him through the hatch with his feet.

Then came the big problem. Did Huffhines jump of his own free will??? Did he trip and fall out??? That, my friends is the \$64.00 question!!!! The only thing I know is that I saw the plane fly a very crooked and unsteady course for about five minutes before I saw him come tumbling out, so it stands to reason this is what happened:

Larkin gave him the command, "Jump!!!" Huffhines refused. Again Larkin demanded "Jump!!!!" Huffhines still refuses. So Joe climbs a few thousand feet, turns the airplane loose, and lets it fly on its own, and he and Stoltzman get back into the navigator's compartment with Huffhines and challenges him. Huffhines, weak and tired from the three previous battles was not hard to remove. A couple of good hard licks on the chin and one behind the ear was all that was necessary to bail him out.

That left the Pilot and Co-Pilot in the plane with the choice of either jumping or landing it. Joe elects to land it; not because he is afraid to jump, but because there might be a chance to save the ship. The landing was beautiful considering the circumstances and


SECTION III (cont'd)

the plane will fly again.

I loaded the parachute on Pinney's B-18 to be taken back for re-packing. On the Packing Data Card I wrote a little note, "It opened
¹
nicely, thanks--Lt. Back".

From this date on, weather permitting, Kiska was pounded daily by flights of from six (6) to ten (10) B-25's and some days as high as three (3) missions were run, making attacks on AA installations and the camp area.

On 9 March 1943, part of the Air Echelon moved to Anchitka to press attacks on Attu as well as Kiska. Missions from Anchitka, until 30 May 1943, were conducted from the 2700 foot fighter strip which had
²
been hastily constructed to permit the basing of fighters.

Take offs with full bomb loads and landings were often extremely hazardous due to the short runway as were the high hills rising abruptly from the west end of the runway, and the cross winds of high velocity.

It was on the 16th of March of this year that Lt. McCurdy and three (3) other planes again bombed the camp area on Kiska and Lt. McCurdy with his crew of five (5) men are "Missing in Action". They arrived over the target at 1700W and dropped all their bombs. AA fire was very heavy and Lt. McCurdy's plane was last seen in a div-
³
ing turn after all the bombs were dropped.

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- (31) 1 Report of 1st. Lt. Charles H. Back, O-384806.
(32) 2 Operations Summary (pp 1) 3 October 1942, 30 June 1943.
(33) 3 Extract Records and Events Section, Morning Report 16 March 1943.

SECTION III (cont'd)

It was during this time that the 77th had one of its famous 1&2
Commanding Officers, Major Salter, who assumed command 7 March, 1943.
The Major was born 27 February, 1917, in Angus, Texas, and, although
little is known about his early childhood, it is assumed that it re-
volved around high kickin' horses, and the ropin' of those long horn-
ed, Texas steers.

He attended the local grade school, and Emhouse Texas High School,
where he starred at such sports as baseball, basketball, and track.
After completing high school, the Major attended Texas A & M, and
four (4) years later he left Texas A&M to "fly the big ones".

27 July 1940, he started flying school at Santa Marie, Calif-
ornia, and graduated 14 March 1941, from advanced flying school, at
Stockton, California.

After flying school, the Major joined the 73rd Squadron, and
was one of the first in that Squadron to pilot the famed B-26. In fact
the Major made history in that type of plane in October, 1942, when
he successfully led an attack with B-26's against a force of enemy
destroyers at Kiska, definitely sinking two (2)³. The Major was wound-
ed in this action, and even though badly shot up about the face and
hands, and also a piece of shrapnel in his leg, he brought the plane
and his crew safely back to Adak. He was awarded the Distinguished
Flying Cross and the Purple Heart for his gallantry and injuries

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- (34) 1 Extract Remarks Section, Morning Report, 13 March 1943.
(35) 2 Picture of Major Salter.
(36) 3 General Order No. 141 Hdqs. ADC 7 September 1942.


SECTION III (cont'd)

1&2
in this action. After a brief lay up at Barnes General Hospital, he returned to the Aleutian Theatre, and, upon arrival was assigned to the 77th as Commanding Officer. Shortly after taking over the assigned duties of Commanding Officer, the invasion of Attu was about to begin and the Air Echelon of the Squadron left for the farthest and newest advanced base at Anchitka to be in on the big push when it started. The Major personally led his Squadron on all missions out of Anchitka, both over Kiska and Attu.

On the 11th of May 1943, six B-25's took off for Attu to give support to the invasion force on that Island. During the month of May, our planes, based at Anchitka, flew daily missions, weather permitting, to support the invasion force. These flights were executed in the face of low overcast conditions which made flying through the passes and ravines of the Island extremely hazardous. Pilots exercised skill and initiative in bombing and strafing so as to afford maximum assistance to our ground troops.

After the fall of Attu, our Squadron again attacked Kiska. Flights of from three (3) to nine (9) airplanes made daily attacks, weather permitting, and the last attack on Kiska was on the 13th of August, 1943.

Airplane maintenance was a major problem throughout this period,

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- (37) 1 General Order No. 141 Hdqs ADC 7 September 1942.
 - (38) 2 General Order No. 40 Hdqs 11th Air Force 19 April 1943.
 - (39) 3 Operations Summary (pp 3) 3 October 1942, 30 June 1943.

SECTION III (cont'd)

and the men of the Squadron proved equal to every occasion. No spare parts for planes were available except those brought in from cracked up planes at other stations or from Elmendorf Sub-depot 1300 miles distance at Anchorage, Alaska. For two months the only tech supply for the B-25's was from parts taken from two B-25's which had cracked up at Adak. Tech Supply was housed in pyramidal tents, with mud for flooring. Of one shipment of spark plugs only 30% could be used, because of water damage.

Maintenance work on planes was necessarily conducted out of doors, in the severest weather. Engine changes and repair of battle damage was done in wind and storm, throughout many nights, with only flashlights and the headlights of trucks for illumination. Rain and snow, which blew in horizontal sheets, hindered the maintenance work a good deal of the time. No inspectors were at the field to give assistance. The ground crews displayed ingenuity and fortitude in their never-ending task of keeping the combat planes flying. No planes repairable, locally, were out of commission for more than 24 hours.

The runway and plane parking areas were often covered with water from storms. During the frequent periods of high wind planes were tied down with oil drums. Two boards and a bolt were used to keep the rudder from blowing loose, for the interval locks would not hold.

~~SECRET~~
SECTION III (cont'd)

To summarize the missions flown in this period, the following is
self explanatory:¹

	<u>Missions</u>	<u>Sorties</u>	<u>Planes lost in action</u>	<u>Planes damaged in action</u>
Kiska attack from Adak	33	205	1	18
Kiska attack from Amchitka	10	40	1	6
Attu attack from Amchitka	13	74	0	0
Sea search and attack	6	22	0	1
Miscellaneous	8	13	0	0
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Totals	70	354	2	25

Deck level missions, included in above totals were: one (1) on enemy cargo ship in open sea (sunk); two (2) on shipping in Kiska Harbor; five (5) on Kiska Camp and AA batteries.²

During much of the period covered by these operations, crews of the 77th Bombardment Squadron were standing shipping alert in their planes from dawn to late afternoon. This tedious assignment was borne cheerfully by all personnel.

Numerous correspondents were with the 77th during the Kiska and Attu operations and publicity was given in national magazines such as Scribners, Colliers, Saturday Evening Post, and all of the press services were represented.

(40) 1 Operations Summary (pp 5) 3 October 1942, 30 June 1943.
(41) 2 Operations Summary (pp 5) 3 October 1942, 30 June 1943.

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

Several books have been written about the Aleutians and the 77th is included in all:

Bridge to Victory by Howard Handleman
The Pacific is My Beat by Keith Wheeler
Short Cut to Tokyo by Cory Ford

On the 10th of July, 1943, eight (8) B-25's led by Capt. James L. Hudelson carrying 4-500# General Purpose bombs, took off from Attu, Alaska, to attack the Japanese Naval Base at Paramushiru in the Kurile Islands. At this time this was the longest bombing mission in which land base medium bombers were used. The elapsed time of the mission was 9½ hours. The distance between Attu and Paramushiru and return is 1600 miles. Upon arriving, the target was overcast and the results of the bombing was not observed. As a result of this action, this Squadron was the first Squadron to bomb the Kurile Islands, Tokyo lying only 1300 miles beyond Paramushiru and Hokkaido is about 900 miles range. The North Pacific route is the road to Tokyo and was opened in due time to our long range bombers.

Throughout the month of July, bombing missions to Kiska were made daily, weather permitting, and the only losses this Squadron sustained during this month was one airplane damaged beyond repair which was loaned to the 73rd Bombardment Squadron.

On the 22nd of July, 1943, our advanced air echelon moved to Alexai Point, Attu, Alaska, and our crews were on constant alert for enemy shipping.

~~SECRET~~
SECTION III (cont'd)

enemy shipping.

During the month of August, 1943, bombing missions to Kiska continued, weather permitting, and it was on the 13th of August that the last mission was made.

77th

In September of 1943, the Squadron Headquarters moved from Adak to Amchitka, Alaska, arriving on Amchitka the 11th of September 1943. It was on this day that the Squadron had its biggest operational loss in its history. A deck level and strafing mission was made on enemy shipping in the Paramushiru straits, Kurile Islands. Five (5) B-25's (D's) and seven (7) B-25 C's using wing and bomb-bay tanks each had a fuel load of 1212 gallons. Bomb load (4) 500 lbs. demolitions fused with M113 4-5 second delay tail only. Flight Leader Major Salter in plane #0502, Deputy Flight Leader Major Hudelson, plane #3349, Lt. Savignac, plane #0473, Captain Rhees, plane #3356, Captain Dennis, plane #4784, Lt. Standiford, plane #3354, Lt. Hurst, plane #3260, Lt. Temple, plane #9891, Lt. Harrier, plane #0171, Lt. Berecz, plane #3345, Lt. Wilson, plane #4564, and Lt. Rodger, plane #3352.

Major Salter took off at 0830W; balance of flight airborne at 0845W. The following planes returned to base: #3349, at 1735W, #3356, at 1806W, #9891, at 1815W, #4784, at 1825W, and #4564, at 1827W.

(43) 1 Intelligence Summary #2, 11 September 1943.

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

Weather out to the target was low scattered ceiling 500-3000 feet. Indicated air speed was 160 miles per hour and the altitude was 500 feet and less. Eleven (11) of the planes reached the target, Major Hudelson returning to base because of his bomb bay doors jamming. As the planes went into the target they hit a large transport, strafed barges and fishing boats and numerous small cargo ships, and then strafing everything in sight. The anti-aircraft fire around the target was intense and accurate from both land batteries and surface craft in the straits. Even small fishing boats were reported as having machine guns. A total of 20 Japanese fighters were observed. Three (3) passes were made at Lt. Temple's plane from the rear and one closed pass at about 100 yards opening fire at about 300 yards. A Nate made a diving rear attack to about 300 yards on Lt. Wilson's plane and when breaking away, Lt. George Aamon, bombardier, hit the enemy plane with machine gun fire, and the fire from the enemy plane ceased. Capt. Dennis, while turning east after run, was attacked from rear and front quarter by two (2) Rufes and one land type Zero; three passes were made from the right side, one front and one rear to about 200 yards. A single Rufe was shot down in flames by top turret gunner T/Sgt. A.J. Olsen. All enemy aircraft observed were airborne. Three followed Captain Dennis and one Lt. Temple's plane to vicinity of Koukatan Cape.

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

All stayed out of range and no passes were made. Battle damage to the returning planes was as follows: Lt. Wilson, Plane #4564, nose glass broken, about 40 MG and schrapnel holes right ring and fuselage mostly to the rear of the armored door; Lt. Temple, plane #9891, one hole behind armored door. Lt. Berecz was seen by Lt. Wilson attempting to make a water landing east of Cape Minimi, his right engine was on fire, upon contact with water there was an explosion and the plane sunk.

On run down the straits, a plane (identity unknown) was seen to disintegrate in the air after an explosion. Major Salter's plane was seen by Capt. Rhees to crash into the water about five miles east and somewhat north of the rally point, Cape Lopatka, Kamchatka. The following officers and enlisted men were listed as interned in Russia or missing in action:¹

INTERNEED

Richard D. Salter	Major	0-407124
Harry J. Koepp	1st. Lt.	0-724320
Edward H. Taylor	2nd. Lt.	0-736577
Kenneth I. Wair	S/Sgt	17056622
Paul U. Graham	S/Sgt	14053511
Irwin L. Lans	Pvt	16034237
Wayne A. Marrior	2nd. Lt.	0-731617
Valadimir P. Sabich	2nd. Lt.	0-736570
Albert W. Hahn	2nd. Lt.	0-668908
John A. Billingsley	S/Sgt	37068995
Joseph A. Dunwoody	S/Sgt	19051559
John T. Rodger	1st. Lt.	0-862496
Norman E. Eastmore	2nd. Lt.	0-668908
Loyal W. Fry	F/O	T-187479
Clarence W. Overby	T/Sgt	14039486

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

Gerald J. Green	S/Sgt	19055907
Russell E. Hurst	2nd Lt.	0-731588
John M. Taylor	2nd Lt.	0-736578
James R. O'Dair	2nd Lt.	0-733347
Robert W. Wilcox	S/Sgt	27272504
Harry B. Huber	S/Sgt	1J049192
Charles H. Fields	Sgt	35366493
Norman R. Savignao	2nd Lt.	0731675
John L. Keithley	2nd Lt.	0-523210
Harold H. Hodges	2nd Lt.	0-668950
James A. Fawcett	S/Sgt	12096582
Grady (NMI) Vickers	Sgt	6920610

MISSING IN ACTION

Albert W. Beracz	1st. Lt.	0-662429
George W. Spuhler	F/O	T-187488
Robert L. Smith	S/Sgt	39303760
Daniel R. Williams	S/Sgt	14054073
Robert (NMI) Waldo	Pvt	16043337
Quinton D. Standiford	1st. Lt.	0-662504
Vernon P. Shellabarger	2nd. Lt.	0-738267
Thomas B. Merrill, Jr.	1st. Lt.	0-725027
Anthony H. Newsom	T/Sgt	18033098
George W. Wales	Sgt	39165481
Francis L. McEwen	S/Sgt	15085927

The elapsed time for this trip was ten (10) hours and the crews returning from the mission were highly fatigued and nervous.

Several of the officers and men are still in the 77th, who were on the 11 September mission and the following is their narrative accounts of the action, and their reactions during the time over the target.

1

Narrative of First Lieutenant William P. Middleton, 0-660507:

(45) 1 Narrative of 1st. Lt. William P. Middleton, 10 June 1944.

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

"At 14:20 we were just outside the Straits and Major Salter (in the lead plane) gave the signal to shove everything forward. Those 11 B-25's seemed to just leap over the water. Captain Rnees (my pilot) spotted a fishing boat directly ahead and we opened up on it with our five nose guns. Those poor Japs just fell in all directions. Then the Jap shore batteries began to open up on us and it seemed like all hell had cut loose. We were caught in a regular cross fire from both sides of the Straits. Directly ahead lay two Merchant Ships. Major Salter went in on one and Captain Rnees took the other. We let all four bombs go and our tail gunner, Sgt. Cochran said he saw both ships blow up as we pulled away. Lt. Stanford was flying behind and to the right of Major Salter's ship. Just before Lt. Stanford started his bombing run he received a direct hit and I saw his plane disintegrate in the air.

Just as we pulled over the Jap ship, the Japs really began to give us the works. They had three cruisers at the lower end of the straits and they opened up with everything they had. Captain Rnees started using evasive action and as he pulled up he spotted a cannery just to our left. We went in and strafed it and also a small boat just off shore. About this time I noticed my mouth was so dry that I could hardly talk, but I remember counting 10 planes as we came out of the Straits. Then we ran into zero trouble. The heavies had gone over high a few minutes before in the hope of drawing off fighters, but there were still plenty left for us. One Nate got


SECTION III (cont'd)

on our tail and opened fire. Sgt. Cochran fired one burst at him from the tail gun and then his gun jammed. Our top turret was ineffective because Mr. Jap was too low so Capt. Rhees pulled back on the stick and Sgt. Bowles (in the top turret) got in a good burst. This scared the Jap away. Lt. Al Berecez got hit in the engine and had to make a crash landing just off Shimushu. Five of the twelve B-25's returned and five are believed to have been interned in Russia.

1

Narrative of First Lieutenant Elmer P. Scalet, O-434009:

" On September 11, 1943, I went on Temple's crew as Navigator on the deck level raid on Paramushiru Straits. Twelve planes took off one of which later turned back because of mechanical trouble.

We sighted Kamchatka about 30 miles south of Petropavlovsk. After flying parallel to the coast for a short while we parted company with the B-24's who proceeded south while we turned west. We flew into the Sea of Okhotsk until we were lined up with the Strait and then turned due south.

We were now flying on the water and the roar of the engines made any kind of conversation almost impossible.

We were now a flight leader since Major Hudelson had turned back. Our five planes were to fly along the south shore of the Strait about 30 seconds after the other flight went by the north shore.

(46) 1 Narrative of 1st. Lt. Elmer P. Scalet, 10 June 1944.

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

The coast line of Shimushu and Paramushiru were now visible as was a column of smoke caused by the B-24's who had gone through a few minutes before. I was riding in the nose of our plane, which had five (5) fixed guns and to be sure that all guns fired they were continuously charged. I also had with me my own camera. We were now within range of their larger guns and black umbrellas were appearing in ever increasing numbers. Any hope we might of had of pulling a surprise attack were soon gone. The water seemed full of small craft all of which seemed determined of shooting down our particular plane. We were now in the Strait and all semblance of a formation was gone. Temple was now putting the plane through violent evasive action altho it seemed impossible to escape being hit--I heard some one shout over the inter phone to look left and glancing that way beheld a black cloud; all that was left of one B-25. To our right in a little bay (Kashiwabara Wan) we saw 3 large cargo ships. Temple picked out the biggest, made 3 direct hits and as we skidded around a mountain we saw it belch out fire and smoke. As we emerged from the Strait, two cruisers lying at anchor ahead and to the right of us opened fire. All this time I had been busy keeping the guns going and snapping pictures and damning myself for ever insisting on coming on this particular mission. We were indicating about 260 m.p.h.

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

but even so we were the last plane out of the Strait. The last plane to pass us was Berecez who went by us on one engine leaving a trail of smoke. He crashed a few minutes later exploding upon contact with the water.

There were only 3 planes in sight and our defensive formation was conspicuous by its absence.

A Zeke made a diving pass at us from 10 o'clock passing within a hundred feet of our plane. I could see his tracers chopping the water coming closer to our plane but just when it appeared that we would pass through his fire he ceased firing. Temple tried to get on his tail as the Zeke pulled away but before we could turn over 30 degrees, the damned Jap was on our tail hammering away. About two more passes were made at us but they did not approach too close, and they soon dropped behind. It was now 1430--we had been under fire for a total of about 20 minutes altho it seemed like a lifetime.

Checking on our remaining gas we found that we had 435 gallons remaining. We also had a 25 MPH tail wind so we decided to try and make our base. Two other planes were on our wing but they both turned towards the alternate base. We turned towards home 4 hours away with $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours gas available. Everything moveable was jettisoned including the parachutes in order to make the plane lighter.

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

We kept our eyes glued on the white caps for with any wind shift we knew we would be unable to get back. Half way back we intercepted 3 B-24's who were 25 degrees off course so they followed us in. To top matters off, the weather turned bad. The first land sighted was Murder Point and what a relief it was for by now the visibility had dropped to less than 2 miles. We landed at 1820 over ten hours after we took off. A few minutes later 3 more planes came in making a total of 4 who returned out of the 11 which started through the Straits. On our side of the ledger we chalked up 3 cargo ships sunk and several smaller craft damaged. A fitting climax was that the roll of film I had exposed was ruined by the person developing it so that I didn't get a single picture of the raid."

1

Narrative of T/Sgt Larry A. Moore, Asn. 37370353:

"I don't believe that there were ever any two enlisted men in the Seventy Seventh who sweated more than Mac and myself during that deck level run through the Straits of Paramushiru on September 11, 1943. "Sweating" is a term that one hears all the time in the Air Force but we never knew the full meaning of that word until we went through that ungodly hail of fire. Mac (Lofton D. McDougald) was the top turret gunner and I (Larry A. Moore) was the radio operator, on our Mitchell which carried the name of "Little Durette", lucky for us she "dood it" alright.

(47) 1 Narrative of T/Sgt Larry A. Moore, 10 June 1944.

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

We were on the alert the whole way over with Mac and myself taking turns riding the turret. Our seats were pretty sore by the time we got there for that bicycle contraption on a Bendix turret isn't the most comfortable place in the world. The weather was socked in most of the way over and although we sifted that fog with our eyes we didn't see a ---- thing--our eyes were to have their fill a little later. For about two hours on the way over we had to work on the guns to get them in firing shape--at the last minute we were forced to change planes and the guns in this one weren't in any too good shape. Well, we cussed like the devil about this for we had never heard of a Zero who had been shot down by a gun that wouldn't fire. However, thanks to Mac they were finally put into shape where they would fire smoothly by the time we got there.

The ships began to jockey into formation, lining up wing to wing so Mac and I knew that the time had come. As we came roaring down on top of the water, black gardenias began to burst around us. We were now on top of the water and our nose guns were strafing the small fishing boats at the mouth of the Straits. Even those little ----- had machine-guns firing at us so we knew darned well that this was going to get rough when we got in a little further. It was a game of keeps and we sure weren't playing with marbles. Mac and I both found out later that our last sensible

~~_____~~

SECTION III (cont'd)

thoughts before we entered that inferno were of our wives.

Then we were in the straits which was full of ships. Mac had that turret spinning around like a top and there I sat with only a sub machine gun in my hands. All hell suddenly broke loose. Those ships of the rising sun and the shore batteries threw a hail of fire that we didn't even think a bird could get through. Mac and I felt like elephants riding through there on a kittycar. One of the planes off our right wing suddenly blew up in midair but he got his ship which blew sky high. The whole harbor was on fire and the tracers were cutting zippers in the water directly below our plane--up just a little higher and---well, we'd rather forget about that. In that upper turret with that plexi-glass dome it appeared to Mac as though every tracer was coming directly at him and he was really grabbing for that seat as we bounced up and down with evasive action. After we got back Mac discovered that the seat of his pants was full of holes. He was still for just about a second and I was afraid that they had got him when that old turret began to revolve again and I breathed a sign of relief.

I was about to go nuts having all those ----- firing at me and not being able to throw anything back so I took the sub and started back towards the rear where I could be able to fire through the windows out both sides. Mac had the turret swung around to such

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

a position (thank God for that) that I couldn't get passed him so I stuck the gun out the window right at my side trying to get a shot at something. If I would have been able to get to the rear, I would have caught a twenty millimeter right through my head. Our plane was really catching flak now and Mac and I could feel each hit upon it as though it were a stab in the heart. How could anything get through a wall of fire like that we still don't know. We got our ship--Mac saw it blow up as we passed over it. We were now about passed all the shipping; pulling out of range of the shore batteries when Mac and I began to believe that the miracle might happen when the devil itself loomed up off our right side in the form of a Jap Cruiser. Our bombs were all gone so all we had to do was get past him--yeah, that's all! That dirty ----- made Mac and me so sick as we saw him blinking at us from stem to stern-- that Jap cruiser had more guns than a dog has fleas. Somehow we got past that mess and as we came to the end of the straits we were greeted by about fifteen zeros at two o'clock. Mac thought his big opportunity was at hand for we had often said back in the states that it was our big ambition to get a Zero or two. However we were still on the deck and a pretty tough target and here's where we found out that they weren't the "do or die" fighters as we had always supposed them to be. Only one ship came within reach of Mac's guns and after the nose guns and Mac's upper turret put a burst

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

into him he took off like a turpintined dog. I saw about five Rufes off at fifteen hundred yards and let them have a burst of my wicked sub machine gun—all I can say is that I have shot "at" a Jap plane. We pulled away from them and Mac and I knew pretty well for sure that this time the fireworks were over but there was one more sickening sight which we were yet to see. Another Mitchell off our right wing had an engine on fire and began turning into us. He was making for Russia so we pulled up as he went under. Mac and I were praying for those boys for we had a lot of buddies in those other planes with whom we had been with back in the states. The ship was losing altitude and it was evident that he would have to make a water landing before he reached the coast. With frozen thoughts we watched as he eased the ship into that icy water. He slid along for a few seconds and then exploded--we looked at each other without words. As we took our course to return to Attu, Mac and I felt as though there wasn't a thing in the world that could bother us. Although we felt pretty sure that our gas would run out and we would have to make a water landing, we took that as a joke after sweating our way through that hell. We made it okay however with very little gas left and later that night, we gazed with drunken eyes upon those seven empty revetments.

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

Narrative of First Lieutenant Wallace (NMI) Wickham, O-736441: ¹

"A narrative of our attack on the Straits of Paramushiru should start at the conclusion of our uneventful flight over. The first indication we had that we were approaching the target was an increase in speed, as we let down on to the water, we throttled forward to forty (40) inches and needled the RPM up to 2400. The extensive formation formed a line of planes for our push on the water and the planes jumped ahead in a surge of power like a train in the final stretch.

After what seemed an eternity, Lt. Claude Wilson pointed through the haze and brought our attention to a couple of ships on our right. We didn't vary our course, however, we were after bigger game. Lt. Wallace Wickham unlimbered his camera and gave a nod to Claude. Lt. George Amazon, the bombardier-navigator, was on or rather in the nose taking care of the nose gun and gave us a reassuring call of readiness. We were all set.

Suddenly we popped out of the haze and for a fraction of a second stood still. Surprise? Hell no. The little ----- were waiting for us. Sunday morning too, and not a darn Jap in church.

Claude looked at the black wall in front of him and "Lil Duetto", our plane, started finding holes. How we got through even the first wall of that hellish barrage we'll never know. The Strait was alive

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

with ships of all sizes, little ones, big ones, war ships, merchant ships, and a myriad of auxiliaries, everyone from tiny craft to 10,000 toners throwing up a constant stream of lead. We were being thrown around like a chip in a storm. Holes began to appear miraculously all over the plane. "Termites", screamed Claude over the roar. Wick grinned and went on frantically firing his camera. Our flexible nose gun was chattering so we knew George was on the job. Claude started looking for a target. By God if we were going to go through that inferno we were going to get a big one. Looking everywhere at once we saw Mort Staniford's ship disappear in a puff of smoke. No time for sentiment, it wasn't till later that we remembered to say "tough" in tribute to Mort, and happy go lucky "Big Tom Merrill", the squadron humorist--- well, Tom always said he "didn't" come out here to start to college".

Seconds later a big merchant man loomed in front of us--our baby. Claude toggled a couple of 500's right in the side of the big black -----, and we knew he was a cooked goose--(Mac, our gunner, saw him blow sky high).

We hopped over the ship and popped back on the water. It seemed as though we had been in the same place a lifetime, they were throwing everything at us--even the big coastal guns were laying stuff in front of us, chucking towering water spouts, hoping we

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

would crash into them.

Claude kicked it off to the right, and there in front of us-- hot dog--another big one. We started after him strafing as we went-- came the dawn--it was an enemy cruiser, which turned red all over, and the whole plane shuddered in every bolt. That was the time we were wishing the Baker dash two five had a reverse gear. It was too late though, we had committed ourself and had to complete our run.

Slugs crashed through our nose shattering the plexi-glass, and the whole front of the plane seemed to disintegrate. Lead was popping all over the cock-pit. Wally caught a slug in his left boot numbing the leg up to the knee as though he'd had the pin shot off. Afraid to look he felt down as far as his ankle--found it all there--reassured he grabbed his camera trigger again then stopped.

Looking at him, Wilson knew the same thought had struck him. Our nose gun that had been firing since we entered the strait was silent---poor George. Looking over our shoulder we saw his helmet roll back through the crawlway, we thought it to be the omen of the tragic conclusion of a boy's Army career.

The two in the cock-pit looked at each other, and Wally slid his seat back to see if there was anything he could do for the young bombardier. Bingo, out of the tunnel comes George, not only alive but very active.


SECTION III (cont'd)

Lets get out of here", he bellowed, "they just shot the devil out of the nose," Wilson grinned and pointed to the air speed, wavering near the 300 mark, "Bub, we ain't parked", said Wilson, and George returned to the nose and his guns were spouting again.

From there on out it was gravy. Sure, we had fifteen or twenty Zero's on us, and incidently we sent a Nate smoking to earth. We had a rough touch sweating our gas and landing in zero-zero stuff with fifteen minutes lee-way, but as I say that was gravy--after the hell of Paramushiru Strait, anything would be."

After things settled down again after the Paramushiru mission further questioning was conducted, and every possibility was investigated to eliminate any further recurrence of 11 September.

The following is an interview conducted by Major William A. Herold, A-2 XI Bomber Command, with Major James L. Hudelson and Captain Robert Dennis:¹

QUESTION: Was there a synchronization of watches between the medium and heavies before takeoff?

ANSWER : I believe there was between Major Salter and Major Gash, but no synchronization of watches generally among all pilots.

Q: Did the mediums follow the heavies out?

A: Yes, we were in visual contact with them.

(49) 1 Interview with Major Hudelson and Captain Dennis 30 September 1943.

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

Q: Describe the route followed after landfall until the attack.

A: After landfall was made, the mission proceeded directly across Kamchatka at an altitude of 7,000 feet; went about 15 miles west of Kamchatka, turned south, and started letting down for the attack.

Q: Did you hear radio silence broken?

A: (Major Hudelson) My radio operator picked up a message on 5735. (A copy of the message was secured. Message sent by B-24 #891 at 1340. Radio silence broken).

Q: Did you see an enemy fighter trailing you prior to the attack?

A: No, we did not.

DURING THE ATTACK

(All questions in this section answered by Captain Dennis)

Q: What were the power settings used and I.A.S. during the attack? How long before the actual attack did you attain this speed?

A: Five miles before entering Paramushiru Straits, I started using full throttle, pulled 40 to 44 inches, (even saw 51 inches once) using full rich. My speed was 250 miles per hour.

Q: How long a time did you use these settings?

A: Between 30 and 35 minutes: All during bombing runs and during the attack by enemy fighters.

Q: What was your altitude of attack?

A: Between 10 and 50 feet.

Q: Did you see the heavies attacking?

A: No.

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

- Q: Did you see any ship on fire or any smoke pots in the straits prior to your attack?
- A: No.
- Q: What was your impression of the shore lines of the straits and the general terrain near the shore?
- A: I had the general impression that the shore lines were sheer cliffs ranging from 200 to 500 feet in height. The terrain generally rose very quickly to high altitudes back of the Paramushiru shore line.
- Q: What AA fire did you receive?
- A: We received fire from the top of the shore cliffs and I also had the impression that we were receiving fire from dug-in positions half way up these cliffs. The last AA fire we received was from a battery on Suno Cape.
- Q: Was there anything to the report we received that some 500# bombs exploded on contact?
- A: Yes, Major Salter dropped one on a ship and there was an immediate explosion which threw my ship 200 feet in the air to the right rear. This caused the strap of the bombardier's gun to break. The gun hit him in the face and stunned him which prevented him from dropping his last two bombs. He later jettisoned these bombs. (See supplementary report by Ordnance Officer on this)
- Q: Was any fire received from the east and north sides of Shimushu?
- A: Yes, we received fire from the vicinity of Suno Cape.
-


SECTION III (cont'd)

- Q: When were you first attacked by enemy fighters?
- A: We were attacked just after we turned left and left the strait. Enemy fighters dove on us from 2,000 feet, we were still on the deck.
- Q: What was the duration of their attack?
- A: They attacked for about 20 minutes.
- Q: Did the missing planes show any evidence of battle damage or signs of distress?
- A: Yes--Marrier couldn't close his bomb bay doors. One plane looked like it was hit on the left side by AA. I saw Rodgers last at Suno Cape and I believe he followed Major Salter.
- Q: Did anyone have contact with Major Salter?
- A: Rhee tried to contact Major Salter and Fry, Lt. Rodger's co-pilot, answered saying that Salter was hitting the water.
- Q: Do you know if anyone saw Salter hit the water?
- A: Yes. I saw him go down. There was a flash of flame from the leading edge of the wing and from the bomb bay but he made a good landing and skimmed along the water. No more flames were seen.
- Q: Do you think there is any possibility of the missing planes having ruined engines from pulling too much mercury?
- A: No, I don't think so. My plane wasn't at all affected.
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[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

Q: Did you see an enemy fighter with fixed landing gear?

A: Yes, I did. I don't know what it was. It had long, rather slim landing gear.

Q: Did you see anyone parachuting?

A: No.

Q: Did you have any communications difficulties?

A: No, none at all.

A lot of men were lost the 11 September, and we would like to pay homage to one in particular, Major Richard D. Salter. This writer has asked numerous officers and men to tell him about Major Salter, and what they knew about him. On every occasion the answer was, "no one knew him, no one could figure him out, all we know is he was from Texas, and one of the best Commanding Officers this Squadron ever had. Yes, he was tough, when he said dig a fox hole, he meant dig a fox hole, and the next day he personally looked to see if it was deep enough." When the officers were going to mess early and eating the bread and jam before the mess hour began, he told them the mess hours were so and so, and not to go to the mess hall before the designated time. He was tough, but he was honest. If he sent in a promotion for some officer in his Squadron, and any question came up about it he would say, "if he is good enough to be in my Squadron, he is good enough to be promoted, and if you think that he isn't worthy, I don't

SECTION III (cont'd)

want him." He never asked anyone to do anything he personally did not do.

The Major was awarded the Silver Star for his gallantry in action on 11 September 1943.

As a result of the loss of Major Salter on the 11 September, Major Hudelson took command of the 77th on the 12 of September 1943. The remainder of the month consisted of shipping alerts, ground school, and radar navigation and bomb trainer.

On the 13th of October, 1943, the Japanese attacked Attu by air at 1952Z. 3 B-25's were airborne; the other planes didn't get into the air because the attack was already in progress. A total of 9 bombs were dropped. One (1) fell into the water near the west end of the East-West runway, four (4) landed in the water near one of our cargo vessels and one landed on the north bank of a new road to Massacre Bay.

Casualties to personnel were three (3) slightly wounded; two (2) aboard the cargo ship and one (1) in the Seabee area, no other damage was received to either property or personnel. The entire raid lasted about seven (7) minutes, all enemy bombers using cloud cover for a hasty withdrawal. The Jap Bombers were "Betty's" and there were a total of eight (8). Our three (3) B-25's who took off to

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- (50) 1 General Orders #177 Hdq ADC 22 October 1943.
 - (51) 2 Extract Remarks Section Morning Report 8 October 1943.
 - (52) 3 Picture of Major Hudelson.
 - (53) 4 Intelligence Summary #1 14 October 1943.


SECTION III (cont'd)

intercept the enemy, returned to base failing to make contact with the enemy due to weather.

In October, 1943, replacements for the crews lost on 11 of September 1943, mission arrived, and a training program covering all phases of aviation was started.

During the month of November, 1943, the Squadron was standing shipping alert at Attu and Anchitka. One plane and crew was lost during the month of November. ¹ Lt. Roy (NMI) Robinson and crew was on an operational flight to Elmendorf Field, Alaska to attend instrument school. The plane went down between Umnak and Adak and nothing more has been heard of it. 1st. Lt. Irwin G. Price, from the S-2 Section, was a passenger enroute to Anchorage, Alaska for a much needed rest, was also lost.

Weather prohibited flying daily and training missions were flown when possible. Ground school classes were conducted including navigation, recognition, bomb trainer, and link trainer.

The transportation section was lost due to a fire that broke out on the night of 9 November 1943. ² Sgt. Ponder sleeping in a stout hut next to the garage was awakened when the fire broke into the walls of the hut next to his bed. He aroused the other men and Sgt. Jones called the Base Fire Department and then called Lt. Lynett, the motor officer at the time.

(54) 1 Extract Records and Events Section Morning Report, 30 November 1943.
(55) 2 Ltr. Transportation Fire, 9 November 1943.

[REDACTED]

SECTION III (cont'd)

When Lt. Lynett arrived the garage was covered entirely by flames and the stout hut was burned to the ground. Vehicles parked near the garage were on fire and these included a command car, a 3/4 ton pick-up, two jeeps, and a weapons carrier. Cpl. Batey suffered burns to his hands when he tried to drive the command car from the garage.

Three investigations were held by the Base Commander, APO 986 and the causes of the fire were determined as unknown, and the damage amounted to \$5000.00.

In addition to the vehicles lost, there were losses of personal equipment to the men, a complete second echelon tool kit, welding equipment, small arms, and all the records of the transportation section.

During the month of December, Major Hudelson flew to the mainland of Alaska to get a necessary amount of Christmas cheer for the men who would be thousands of miles away from home on this stormy, bleak island of Anchitka.

On Christmas Eve, a party was held for the officers and enlisted men in their respective mess halls, and even though everyone was thinking of home, a good time was enjoyed by all.

When Kiska had been taken
 and the fight at last was won,
 Who stayed behind to guard the "chain"
 against The Rising Sun?
 While other boys went eastward
 For merriment and fun,
 WE took the westward run!

Chorus:

Oh, when the rain beat viciously
 and fog had closed in, too,
 We sweated out the Nippon fleet
 in stout huts on Attu.

When we were sleeping peacefully
 — away down "in the sack,"
 Some joker came and pulled us out
 with "Get in the air -- attack!"
 So bound then for the line were we,
 a night so very black
 We had to go on instruments
 to find the briefing shack...

Chorus: --

"The big ones have priority,"
 we were then addressed,
 "First go get the carriers and
 then go get the rest.
 "And never mind their A-A fire
 it's sure they've been outguessed."
 All spoken with great nonchalance
 while we hoped for the best.

Chorus: --

"Don't drop them all on just one run,"
 they said before our doom,
 "For when you've sunk your first one
 a cruiser may then loom.
 "So strafe and bomb and sink her, too,
 for victory mighty soon!"
 Meanwhile we had to contemplate
 a "Mitchell" for our tomb.

Chorus: --

"Never mind their batteries,
 pom-poms and even higher,
 "For your nose guns will insure
 a neutralizing fire.
 "If 'Zeros' jump you on the way,
 then just send us a wire.
 "We'll notify your next of kin,
 we've lost another flier."

Chorus: --

Perchance those not so fortunate
 land in Russian wilds,
 A goodly distance still from home,
 at least a thousand miles,
 Then we settle by Tashkent
 amid the Near-East styles,
 Sweating out internment,
 still on the "missing" files...

Chorus:

Now let the rain beat viciously
 and fogs may close in, too,
 Because we're through with Nippon's fleet
 Since we left Shumushu.

The reason we're all over here
 no petrol left to burn,
 Our S-2 had reported
 "You'll never be interned,
 "And if you land in Russia
 you'll surely be returned."
 Now by our example
 a lesson they have learned.

Chorus: --

We've seen the smoke of battle
 and felt the kick of flak,
 Watched never-ending tracers
 from enemy ack-ack.
 And though the scenes looked dark before
 they'd never seemed so black;
 But on just like the Light Brigade
 We pressed home the attack.

Chorus: --

A sheet of flame and wreckage
 in the center of that hell
 Marked where the flight had ended
 for some we knew so well.
 With but the scream of tracers
 to tell their parting knell
 They wished to go down fighting.
 That's exactly how they fell.

Chorus: --

They wished to go down fighting.
 That's exactly how they fell.

courtesy, Jim O'Dair
 RT 10, Hattiesburg MS

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