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CHAPTER II

THE LAND DOWN UNDER

On the morning of the 25th of February early risers saw the first flicker of lights from the mainland of Australia. During the breakfast hours an Australian pilot boarded the ship to guide the Bliss up the waters of the Brisbane River. This first sight of Australia was not a pleasant one. Men on the Bliss saw only a large area of waste land on either side of the River, and a short distance away huge rocky cliffs. After not having seen land for four weeks, the men were not pleased with this sight.

At noon the Bliss was tied up alongside some tin warehouses and the process of debarkation began. After all personnel had left the ship, a route march was started to the Doomben race track. Here the Aussies had set up kitchens, supply buildings, and tents were erected under the tracks of the Grandstand. There were no blankets or cots however, but the men did manage to meet the situation by stuffing straw into their mattress covers, and making use of their own.

That evening the men received their first taste of the Australian diet, and their reaction was just the same as when they saw the desert lands on the sides of the Brisbane River. After this fare of mutton stew, bread, jam and tea, the men quickly sought out the eating establishments in the City of Brisbane in search of sodas and hamburgers, but they were doomed to disappointment. In Addition, the men were not able to cable home to their folks of their safe arrival in Australia, for the number of American troops in the Pacific theater was still a closely guarded secret, and Pat Robinson for all the hair he might wish to dramatically pull out of his head could not file a dispatch. When last seen he was fuming and roaring that he was going directly to Gen. Douglas MacArthur's head-



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Ballarat, Australia.... just one big
happy bunch of guys who didn't as yet
know what war was.



Ballarat, Australia... Even the mascot
had to go through channels to get a pass

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Chemical Warfare training kept the men busy - every one took the training seriously.

Even at work, they were trained what to do and when to do it if the occasion should arise.



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The men were taught how to shoot - training covered almost every weapon they would probably use in the case of an emergency.



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The men showed an eagerness to learn even though many of them did complain about being in the Infantry.



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All was not work and training and the men found time to sit around and enjoy lively "jam sessions" - however, the presence of the ever-present gas mask served as a good reminder that they were there for a purpose.



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After having been formed in the United States as a complete unit, the Group shortly after its arrival in Australia was to be broken up into squadrons, some going on detached service to various sectors of Australia, and some, even after a period of time, being transferred out of the Group. Headquarters and Headquarters stayed at Ballarat for a period of six weeks. On 25 April the Squadron was ordered to proceed to Amberly Field at Brisbane. Equipment was packed immediately and personnel were boarded on the slow moving Australian trains. The 1200 mile trip took even longer than what would be considered normal for the movement in the United States, for here in Australia when trains came to the border of one state it was necessary for passengers and equipment to transfer from one train to another, for trains from one state required a different size gauge. The Squadron arrived at Amberly on 30 April 1942. The camp having just been evacuated by the 2nd Service Group, turned into quite a thing with the Squadron having to operate the entire field. Men of Headquarters did guard duty, others were put to work building mess halls.

The next two months at Amberly Field were slow moving; a majority of the men were assigned to various fatigue details while others assisted in the assembling of B-26's for other organizations. It seemed as though this squadron of a "Bomb Group" was going to play the part of a service squadron for the duration of the war.

It was during the squadrons stay at Amberly Field that the Battle of Midway took place, and unbeknown to the squadron at the time, two squadrons of the 38th participated in this battle; meanwhile Headquarters "Sweated it out" at Amberly. While at Amberly every effort was made to get the men off to technical schools but there was no training program established, and with the exception of two men sent to the RAAF radio operators and maintenance school, all movements in this direction were without success.

On 10 June 1942, movement order #16, Headquarters, Army Air Forces, ordered the Squadron to move to Eagle Farm. Here the Squadron made its new home on an area that had just been assigned to the 81st Depot Group and who had just completed plans for an elaborate set-up, but at that time the area was quite threadbare. The 38th was utilized in the installation of all communication lines for the entire Depot. Meanwhile, the mechanics were put to work assembling planes -- P-39's, P-40's, and B-26's --- for other Groups. However, while at Eagle Farm the men were much happier than at Amberly Field. Brisbane was only a few moments away on the penny tram. There were plenty of hotels, restaurants, and motion picture houses. And there was an abundance of women -- enough for the companionship and relaxation for all. Late in July, one-hundred men under the command of Captain Stutts, were marched cross-country to Cleveland, 30 miles Northwest of Brisbane,

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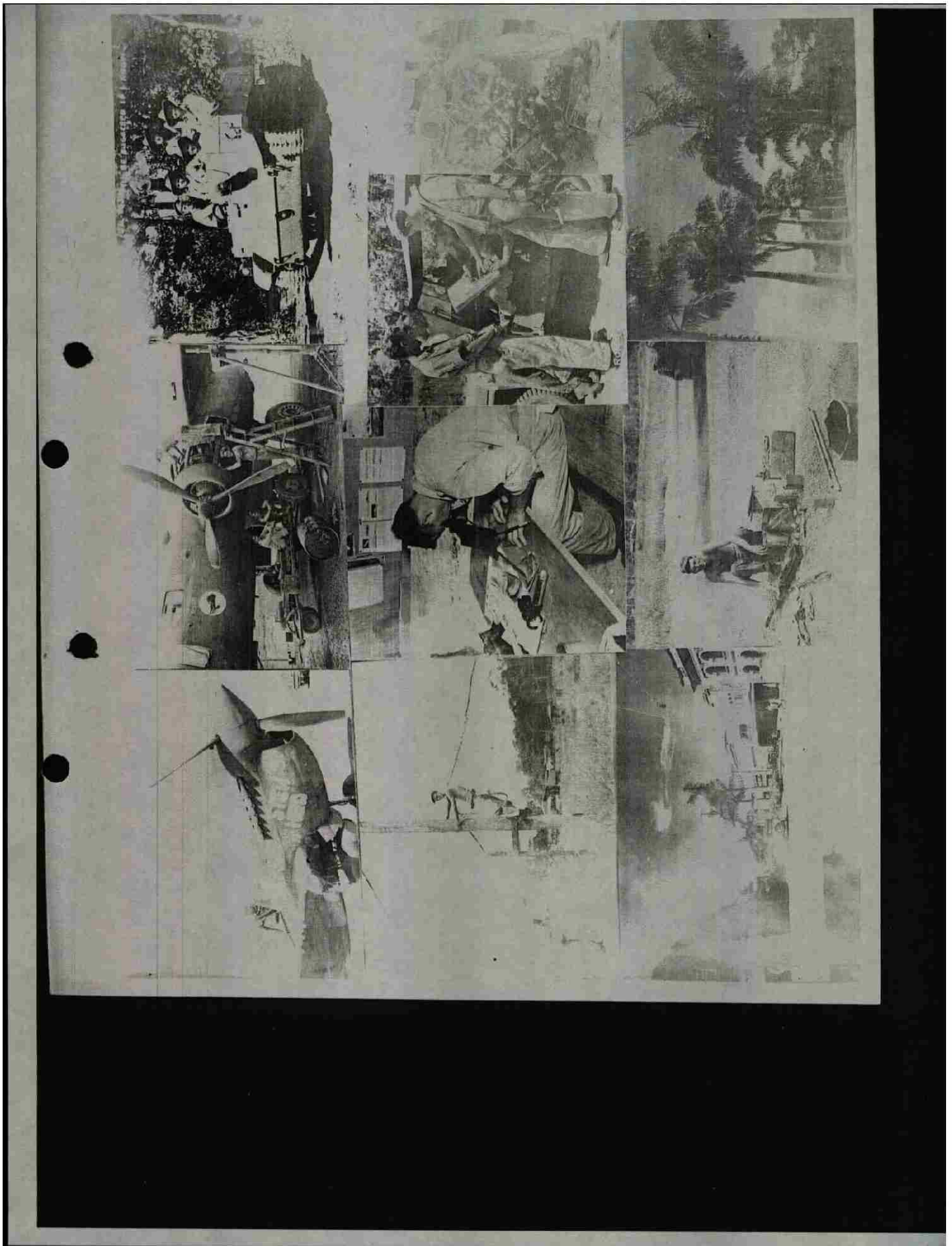
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there a ship was aground on a coral reef and it was believed that the cargo was salvageable. The men prepared a jetty for the task, but after six days of waiting for the rough waters to calm down the task was abandoned. The men were then returned to Amberly Field -- by foot. There was forever something getting off to a bad start but still the men kept going.

On 5 August 1942, official orders stated that the Squadron was to move to Charters Towers, Queensland. However, work of this move had reached the organization on 1 August and on that day an advance echelon consisting of Captain Hart and two enlisted men departed for the new home base. Upon reaching Charters Towers, Captain Hart and his men found a ghost town -- a city of old dilapidated buildings, dusty roads, and abandoned mines. It was the very picture of what one might imagine to be an abandoned mining town in Colorado or Nevada. At the edge of town there was a long dusty strip that had already been occupied by the 3rd Bombardment Group. While speaking to the officers and men of the 3rd, Captain Hart heard of a second strip to the North -- Breddon. After traveling sixteen miles in a northerly direction, the trio found an ideally situated site for a camp area, huge eucalyptus trees surrounded an area covered with soft green grass, and thru the middle of the site flowed the crystal clear waters of the Anna River. A medical check of the water assured that it was as pure as it was clear, and the later installation of a water pump guaranteed an abundant supply of water.

Meanwhile on 5 August, the Squadron had taken leave of Eagle Farm, and after two days of travel arrived at Breddon. The men had more or less expected a camp that had already been set up, and when they saw just an approved site, they were not as enthusiastic about the situation as was Captain Hart; but after a few days they all agreed that the camp was ideally situated. And it was here, at last, that the air echelon was to join the ground personnel.

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CHAPTER III

THE AIR ECHELON

After having participated in missions out of Savannah Georgia for two weeks, immediately after the declaration of war, as a part of the anti-submarine patrol, the planes and men of the 38th were ordered back to the JAAB for further movement overseas. There the air members found the ground echelon in utter confusion because of the orders and counter-orders that were too common in those early days of the war. Finally, after three weeks of preparation, the group departed for San Francisco.

While at San Francisco the air echelon movement was cancelled, alerted once again, only to have the orders for its movement cancelled a second time. In the meantime the ground echelon departed on 31 January 1942, thus making it seem quite apparent that the air echelon was not going anywhere for the time being. After the water echelon departed from San Francisco the air echelon moved out to Angel Island, staying there for a period of two months, during which time they were constantly alerted for movement overseas. Finally orders did come through, but not for overseas duty -- the squadrons, on Special Order #9, 2 April 1942, Headquarters, POE, Fort Mason, California, were ordered to report to Patterson Field, Ohio for temporary duty. After about a four day trip the entire echelon had reached Patterson Field.

While at Patterson, further training for pilots and co-pilots of the B-26 type airplane was continued. New personnel were added to the Group with the graduating classes from the various cadet schools. It was not long, however, before two of the squadrons took leave of the remaining two with orders for shipment overseas, these squadrons were the 69th and 70th Bombardment Squadrons. They departed from Patterson on the 7th and 8th of May. It so happened that at the time of departure of these Squadrons that the Midway Island Battle started. Upon their arrival at Hawaii, planes of these squadrons were dispatched to the scene of the battle and took part in the smashing victory against the Japanese navy.

Shortly after the departure of the 69th and 70th, the 71st and the 405th began to receive B-25's, and in conjunction with this change in airplanes, personnel of the 21st Bombardment Group (M) who had experience in the handling of the B-25's were transferred to the Group. Personnel of the 38th, who were familiar with the handling of the B-26 bombers were in turn transferred to the 21st. All that was really taking place was a change in the type of airplanes for the 38th and the 21st. Final transfer of personnel took place at McDill Field, Florida.

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Another shift in squadrons and personnel came when the 405th was moved from Patterson Field to Barksdale Field, Louisiana. There, many of the personnel were transferred to the 17th Bombardment Group (M) -- the Group having changed over to the B-26 -- and personnel of the 17th, officer and enlisted, were transferred to the 38th. The 405th meanwhile began accumulating B-25's, and the newly transferred personnel trained some of the new additions made to the squadron by graduates of the cadet schools at Randolph Field.

On the 24th of July the squadron received orders from Third Air Force Headquarters to proceed to the Sacramento Air Depot and thence to Hamilton Field for further shipment overseas. The entire movement consisted of sixty-four officers and forty-eight enlisted men. After the necessary packing and arrangements were made the squadron arrived at Hamilton Field at 1345 hours of the 29th of July. Not much time was spent there for the next day the squadron was at Hawaii. There the men of the 405th met personnel of the 71st. A few days were spent at Hawaii necessitated by minor adjustments being made on a few of the planes, and all personnel took advantage of this break in the different tours of the Island. It was surprising to see the still visible scars of Japanese attack on 7 December 1941. This stay ended all too abruptly however, for in a few days the planes took off once again, going to Christmas, Canton Island, the Fiji Islands, and New Caledonia landing at Breddon strip on August 22nd.

The 69th Bombardment Squadron stayed with the Group at Ballarat until 25 April at which time it received orders for its transfer to Amberly Field. The 69th stayed at Amberly for approximately five weeks when it once again received orders for its transfer to Brisbane and thence to New Caledonia. It was here, New Caledonia, that a rendezvous was made between the air echelon and ground echelon of the 69th. Although the squadron was officially assigned to the 38th, it operated as a separate squadron and was later absorbed by the Seventh Air Force.

The 70th Bombardment Squadron did not stay with the group long after the arrival overseas. While the entire Group was still at Ballarat the 70th received orders for movement to Wagga Wagga. In Wagga Wagga the 70th found a provincial town that was a one time trading center with practically no sort of entertainment. If the town of Wagga Wagga presented a lifeless and boring picture, the work assigned to them there was equally so. Personnel were assigned to work at the Young Air Depot, where they worked side by side with Australians in the assembling of Aircraft. Approximately one month later, the squadron was ordered to proceed to Fan Tan. From there the 70th proceeded to the Fiji Islands where they found their flight echelon making shift for themselves. As in the case of the 69th, the 70th operated as a separate squadron, eventually

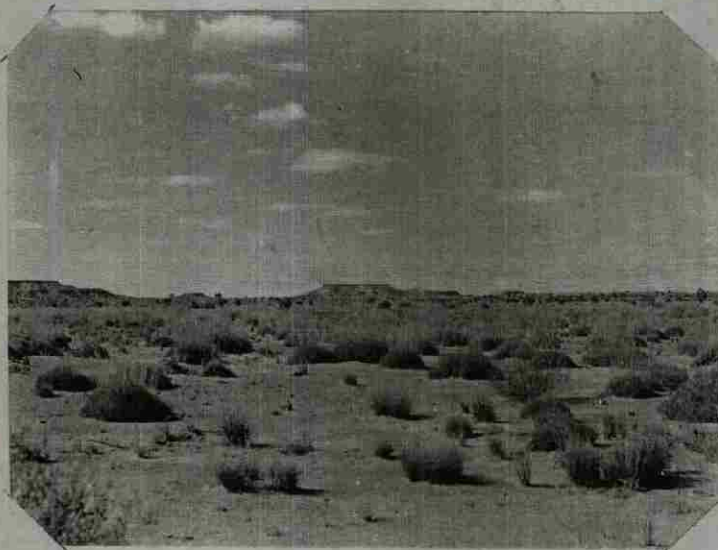
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becoming a part of the 42nd Bombardment Group (M), and being absorbed by the Seventh Air Force.

The 71st Squadron, although did take temporary leave of Headquarters for a period of approximately five months, was to later become one of the main and older squadrons of the Group along with the 405th Squadron. On 15 April the squadron was ordered to Batchelor Field at Birdum, Darwin, Australia. The squadron set out immediately in two echelons, one by train and the other by motor convoy. The trip over the dusty roads with flies almost as thick as the dust and the usual slow moving Australian trains, was completed on 1 May. The young Lieutenants upon reporting at Headquarters was greeted with the following blast: "Who the hell are you and what the hell are you doing in this part of the country?" Orders for the squadron transfer to Darwin arrived two days later.



..... Northern Australia presented a dreary picture to the men - nothing but sand, sage bush, sand and more sage bush. With each little breeze, the air became filled with dust - the flies were just as plentiful as the dust and were constantly around regardless of whether or not the breeze was blowing. Such scenes as the one picture above of the Great Simpson Desert were scenes that greeted the men -- regardless of which direction they looked.

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- On the Way to Darwin by Train -



- - Army Headquarters at Birdum -

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- Birdum -

While at Darwin, the 71st was ordered to set up a transient camp, by order of General Sneed the area Commander. In addition to this the men did all sorts of construction work -- installing a power system, building roads, and setting up tents. It was here that the squadron serviced the B-17's of the 19th Bombardment Group. The men were anxious to do their utmost for these men of the 19th for they were found to be excellent fellows and everyone was anxious to please. Then one day as the men were looking on enviously at the B-17's of the 19th, Lt. Maggart found an A-24 hidden in the brush near the strip. Everyone surrounded the ship, hauled it to the strip, and eagerly pitched in to overhauling of the motor and the patching up of a few minor holes in the fuselage. It seemed that in no time at all, the ship was ready for flight. Lt. Maggart had the privilege of flying this first airplane of the 71st in the overseas area, but on the solo flight engine trouble developed which indicated that the plane was really ready for salvage and any further work on her would be wasted effort.

On 28 July, according to Movement Orders #42, 10 August 1942, USAFSWPA, the squadron received instructions to move to Charters Towers. Although the area around Darwin was desolate, the men were quite reluctant to leave because of the excellent area that had been built up -- for up to this time it seemed as though the squadron was continually moving and starting up new camps and strips throughout Australia. However, a rumor that there was a possibility of meeting the Air Echelon at Charters Towers, made the parting with this base somewhat easier and hastened up the process of packing to get to Breddon. Upon arrival at Breddon, 12 August, the squadron once again settled down with the 405th

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..... DARWIN, AUSTRALIA: Lt. Maggart

and Headquarters and Headquarters Squadrons. And, the rumor of meeting the Air Echelon was fulfilled, for one week after the arrival of the ground personnel, the B-25's of the 71st lowered their wheels to land at Breddon strip.

In the case of the 405th Squadron, there was not much moving about the Australian countryside. The stay at Ballarat of this squadron lasted for about five months during which time the men of the outfit did fatigue details, digging ditches, building roads, and digging slit trenches. All of this time, as in the case of other squadrons of the Group, the 405th anxiously awaited the arrival of its air echelon.

On 7 May 1942, the squadron, which up to this time had been known as the 15th Reconnaissance Squadron and being only attached to the 38th Group, was officially redesignated the 405th and assigned to the 38th. Then in conjunction with the movements of Headquarters and the 71st, the 405th received orders to proceed to Charters Towers for rendezvous with the Air Echelon. One week later when the air echelon did arrive, the ground personnel of the

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405th found that their beliefs of meeting entirely new air personnel from those they had left in the states was correct. For in the States many transfers and reorganization of the air echelon had changed the bulk of the personnel completely.

So, at Charters Towers the 38th Bombardment Group (M) once again regained a semblance in appearance to a Bombardment Group. For the first time in months three squadrons were together, and most important of all, the Group had its own airplanes.



- Camp Life at Breddon Drome -

On the following page are a few scenes of every-day life at Breddon Drome.

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... The Take-Off ...



... Gasing up at Breddon ...



... Frequent Visitors in the Camp ...

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CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCTION TO WAR

With the arrival of the second water echelon at Charters Towers on 29 August, the Group was in the highest state of completeness it had been since the original water echelon's departure for overseas. Although the 69th and 70th Squadrons were not with the Group their absence was not really felt for it was assumed by all that these two squadrons would eventually leave the Group officially, which they did do. The arrival of the air echelon gave the Group the necessary planes and crews for participation in combat duty. It was fervently hoped by all that the days of servicing the planes of other squadrons and having personnel of the Group assigned to such tasks as digging trenches and building roads were over. The men were most anxious to have the 38th take a definite role in the Pacific War.

Soon after the arrival of all elements of the Group at Charters Towers, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron was disbanded per General Order #31, Hq. SWPA, 1 September 1942. Line members of the squadron were transferred to the two remaining squadrons of the Group, while the administrative personnel were absorbed by the Group Headquarters. The Group now had only two squadrons.

On 9 September, orders were received for an advanced echelon to depart immediately for an unknown destination. The planes were made ready for a mission, but when no bombs were to be placed on the planes, the air of mystery increased. Finally when three transport planes landed and were immediately loaded with supplies, word was received that this was an advanced echelon of the Group to Proceed to Horn Island -- this Island was to be used as a base for operations against the Japanese. It seemed that at long last the Group would be officially introduced to WAR.

At 1130 hours of the same day, the three transport planes took off for Horn Island. The transports were immediately followed by four B-25's and these planes all arrived at their destination that afternoon. Two other B-25's took off in the afternoon, stopped at Meereba, stayed there overnight, and proceeded to Horn Island the next day. On 10 September, the remaining air-planes took off from Charters Towers and arrived at Horn Island that afternoon.

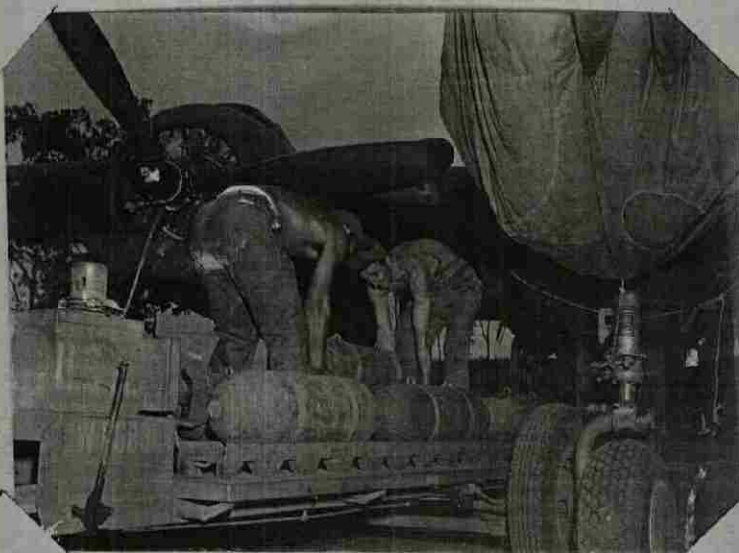
The most urgent duty after arriving at this new base was the setting up of a mess-hall and the finding of a place to sleep, and in sleeping the absolute necessity of putting up mosquito bars, for these insects were more than abundant. Sleeping facilities were very few and the men were forced to sleep on the floors of some old abandoned buildings, and in some cases right on

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ground. The food was the typical Australian diet of mutton, mutton, and more mutton. The main source of amusement was the motion picture showing that was held nightly on Thursday Island. The fact that motion pictures were shown on such a remote outpost was of tremendous morale value, for here, it seemed that all contact with the civilized world was gone. The Tokyo Radio, through the efforts of "Tokyo Rose" was also another source of entertainment.

On 10 September after all of the Group's planes had arrived on the Island, the Group was immediately alerted for a mission, the planes were checked, bombs loaded, and the crews stood by -- the mission was called off. This being alerted was a daily affair until 15 September when the Group did actually take off on a mission. On the night of the 14th the outfit had received word to be ready by 0630 hours of the 15th.



..... Loading for the first mission

Early morning of the 15th found personnel of the Group arising at 0400 hours, eating a hasty breakfast, and making last minute preparations for this long awaited day. At 0606 the first planes left the runway followed by others until 0650 hours when the twelfth and last plane took off. One plane that would have been the thirteenth, developed engine trouble at the last moment and did not take off. The planes proceeded to Port Moresby, where the crews were briefed and last minute instructions were given. Again at Port Moresby, engine trouble cost one more airplane but the remaining airplanes took off for the mission. This was the formal introduction to War.

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The first element of the formation approached the Buna Area at five thousand feet and encountered only moderate ack ack fire. The bombs of this element fell just short of the target; however, a bomb dropped by Captain E. W. Johnson, the bombardier of Col. Castles plane, was seen to hit close to two anti-aircraft gun positions, and as there was no more fire from these batteries it was believed that they had been knocked out. Small fires were started by the other bombs, and after these were dropped the planes went down to strafe the entire area -- pouring bullets into a few buildings and forcing the Japanese to run in all directions. After each element had finished its strafing run the formation returned to Port Moresby safely.

The second element was to attack landing barges at Salamaua, and upon reaching Buna the flight preceeded up the coast to the designated target but the barges were so dispersed in coves that effective bombing was impractical. After three dry runs, the target was given up and it was then decided to make an attack on Bunax airdrome. Coming over the target the formation encountered heavy and fairly accurate ack ack fire, but a good run was made for bombs were seen to hit the strips in several places and one hangar was destroyed.

In proceeding to and from the target area, each formation was escorted by P-40's and P-39's. During the entire mission no Japanese planes were encountered in the air, nor were any seen on the ground.

At Port Moresby the pilots and crews were interrogated, notes were taken, and the formation proceeded to Horn Island. Again the lack of adequate facilities made itself felt and those pictures made during the attack were not developed for the time being. First, the films had to be developed in RAAF laboratories then sent back to Charters Towers for printing. This was done on the following days.

Following this first mission of the Group, the aircrews were blessed with a day of rest. Some went hunting, some washed clothes, and others just rested. Another day of rest followed but on the third day after the mission, the Group was asked to participate in a search for a B-17 that was reported lost somewhere between Townsville and Horn Island. After a seven hour search, the planes returned and reported that the B-17 could not be found. But on the next day, the B-17 was found and one of our planes took off with food for the stranded men.

It was the policy while on Horn Island for all crews to meet twice a day for instruction in "Call Signals", aircraft recognition, and instructions in attack procedure. On the days when there were no missions, pilots practiced formation flying in the vicinity of

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the island. It was not long before a few minor defects in formation flying were ironed out and the B-25's of the 38th, now known as "Sun Setters" were flying overhead in a perfect formation.

Shortly after the arrival of the Group on the island the first casualty took place. Although the person hurt was not a member of the group, everyone felt quite badly about it and all were deeply interested in the outcome of the case. Pfc. Robinson, a member of the crew on plane #702, had removed the machine guns from the plane in order to clean them. Both of the guns had been charged and left charged and Robinson not knowing this failed to check the guns. He placed them on a canvas stretched over the ground and began to work the mechanism on one of the guns. Suddenly the gun fired, the bullet struck the ground, ricocheted, and hit Pvt. John Clark, an onlooker in the abdomen. Pvt. Clark was a member of the 91st Coast Artillery. He was immediately picked up in an ambulance, and then rushed to the hospital on Thursday Island. After undergoing operations, Pvt. Clark began to improve and did eventually recover.

On another occasion the Group narrowly missed having several of its personnel severely injured or killed in the confusion resulting because of a mix up of plans at the time of an alert. The B-25's were to taxi down the right hand side of the runway and take off into the wind; however, one of the fighter pilots from another organization was not aware of this plane and came taxiing directly into the path on an on-rushing B-25 taking off. The pilot of the B-25 tried to raise his ship off the ground, but in doing so had one propeller hit the propeller of the P-40. The propeller of the P-40 was bent back over the cowl and the B-25 not having enough speed to stay in the air dropped to the ground and plunged into a ditch filled with trees and fallen tree trunks. By some strange fate no one in the ship was seriously hurt.

On 28 September the Group received orders to furnish protection for a convoy until it reached its destination, Port Moresby. Three planes were to participate in the mission, one intercepting the convoy, and the others going to Port Moresby, refueling and from there, the planes would relieve one another. But just as these plans were completed, orders were received for another mission, and the first mission was to be completed with the participating planes waiting, after the completion of the mission, at Laloki for rendezvous with the other planes of the Group.

There was an early rising of the personnel who were to make the hop to Laloki and at 0600 hours the planes took off from the Horn Island strip. The six planes found the flight quite uneventful, and the only fact worth mentioning was the weather ---

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low stratus clouds and rain squalls forcing the flight to stay just above the water.

Upon arrival at Laloki the personnel were greeted with a camp area that was much better than anything on Horn Island. The Group was attached to the 8th Photo Squadron for messing and the Commanding Officer of that Squadron had tents pitched and slit trenches built for the men. Also the abundant supply of water from the Laloki River was a welcome change after the weeks of bathing in salt water and drinking water that had a tinge of salt in it.

The day after the arrival of the Group at Laloki the crews were alerted to go in readiness for a mission at 0730 hours, the target was to be a bridge over the Kumisi River near Waiyopi. After waiting the major part of the day, the mission was called off at 1530 hours. Meanwhile at Charters Towers the entire Group was preparing for a move from Breddon to Townsville preparatory to shipment to New Guinea. The Group, under the command of Major Statts, left Charters Towers on the 29th of September and arrived at Townsville the following day. Here they were billeted at the Armstrong Paddock for approximately twenty days.

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CHAPTER V

PACIFIC WAR

Time was no longer moving backwards and October came into being with the Allies holding the initiative. Pearl Harbor had secured for the Japanese the ranking power in the Pacific - by March of 1942 their strength had carried them through the Netherlands East Indies and had lost for us the Philippines. A thrust in May against Port Moresby was smashed in the Coral Sea and for the first time America could fight back. Those early days of the war were heart-breaking days - there just wasn't enough to fight a war with. The air force was a pitiful sight but what it lacked in airplanes, the valiant men made up for in guts. During the month of September, the 38th Bombardment Group became of age and took a leading part in the spearhead of the Fifth Air Force. This early date was the beginning of the end of a strong, always numerically superior foe.

During the months of October 1942, the operations of the 38th were increased ten-fold over the activities for the previous month. Each passing day saw the role of the 38th assuming more importance as the Pacific War passed. Although the bulk of the missions for this month were reconnaissance missions, the fighting arm of the "Sun Setters" was being felt by the Japanese enemy. In operations from the Laloki strip, the group participated in 28 reconnaissance, 3 attack, and 1 patrol mission. The score at the end of the month was six enemy planes shot from the skies and one probable, and two destroyed on the ground. The Group unfortunately lost one airplane with its crew of seven men, but the lessons of combat they had learned during this one month had made veterans of the men.

On 3 October, two planes piloted by Lieutenants Tanberg and Johnson, took off from the Laloki strip for the first mission of the month in an attack on the Wairopi Bridge. After a short flight the B-25's approached the target area. Circling the area to pick up the target, the two planes made four runs dropping bombs each time as they crossed the target. At least three of the 500 pounders scored direct hits completely demolishing the bridge, and three additional near misses contributed still further to the damage. The Nips failed to show their hand and offered no resistance of any type. As the two airplanes withdrew from the target area, the pilots sighted a camouflaged area of approximately 150 square yards, which was assumed to be a supply dump, and farther up the river another bridge similar to the one they had just destroyed. After the planes had returned to Laloki strip, their findings were immediately reported and efforts were made to have another mission take off and bomb these targets. However, difficulties in contacting the necessary officials to secure permission to make the

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attack resulted in too much time lost, thus making it too late for another mission on that day.

On the following day, one plane took off for a run over the Buna Area. Aboard the plane were four Infantry officers and the mission centered around them. They were anxious in finding a suitable area in which to drop supplies when American Infantry got into the area. Again the Nips failed to challenge the intruder and the mission was very uneventful.

October 5th proved to be the most exciting - and most tragic day of the month for the men of the advance echelon. Orders had been received for two planes to fly to Cape Waria, make the coastal patrol to Oro Bay, thence back and strafing the track to Wairopi. While making this patrol the planes were to drop their bombs on the supply dump and bridge sighted on the 3rd of October. And lastly, they were to drop medical supplies to Australian troops in the Sangai Area.

Most of this did not come off however, for the two planes piloted by Lt. Brandon and Lt. Carey sighted two destroyers and one troopship off the Buna coast. After radioing in the position of the convoy to the base the two pilots decided to attack the convoy.

Lt. Carey went in over the target first, but he did not have a chance for suddenly from over head out of the clouds swooped six Zeroes jumping right on his tail. He was last seen heading for the water with his engines smoking. Lt. Brandon, in the meantime went in over the target, and in dropping his bomb made a very near miss on the transport. Before he could drop the rest of the bombs, the Zeroes were coming in for the attack. This forced Lt. Brandon to abandon the attack and head for home. Over land he salvoed his bombs in order to gain more speed and a running battle was on. During the course of the battle, the B-25's gunners shot down two of the Zeroes and there was a good possibility that a third went down for its engine was smoking as it left the scene of the attack. To add further discomfort to the situation, the Japs on the ground took a part in the fight and began throwing up ack ack, none of which did any damage. Finally as they reached the mountains, the remaining Zeroes broke off the attack and the surviving B-25 landed back at Laloki at 1930 hours.

There a report was turned in, the position of the convoy verified, and six planes were made ready for the attack. At 0930 hours the following day the six planes took off. One of the planes failed to function properly and although he could not keep up with the rest of the flight, he tried to continue on to the target area alone. The convoy was still in the same area and upon reaching the target the five planes went in for the attack. Again the enemy

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fighters came out of the clouds and the planes were forced to salvo their bombs without regard to the targets and fight back. Another running fight ensued and after return to the base the tally was taken and it was found that four Zeroes were definitely shot down and one probable. All of our planes were holed and some of the crew members were injured but no losses were sustained. Fighter protection was supposed to have been given for this mission, but because this protection did not materialize, the entire mission was considered a failure. If the fighters had been there, there is no doubt that the results of the mission would have been different.

For the next few days there was a lull in missions and up until the 9th of the month the bulk of the missions were of the reconnaissance type and a few scattered patrol missions. On October 9th orders were received to send all planes to the Rorona strip for an overnight stay - the Third Group was to come into Laloki strip and the B-17's were to use 17 Mile for a raid against Rabaul. The planes returned to Laloki the following day.

It was not until 24 October when one of our recon planes made an attack at Lae that anything of any importance happened. While flying over the Lae-Salamaua area, the plane piloted by Lt. Cox, sighted four twin engine bombers lined up wing-tip to wing-tip on Lae Airfield. This target was too "juicy" to overlook and Lt. Cox went in for the attack. He made two runs over the target dropping three 500 pound bombs on each run. The first three bombs dropped on the runway doing comparatively little damage, but the last three were seen to drop among the planes and it was certain that at least two were destroyed and the other two partially damaged. While this was going on, another airplane covering the Vitiaz Straits area sighted a white square at the West end of the landing strip at Ioma. This was the signal that all of the Japs were out of that area and that the allied forces were in full control.

On 26 October, word was received at the advance echelon Headquarters that the Ground echelon had departed Townsville on the S. S. Wingate and were enroute to Rorona Strip, New Guinea. Further orders were received telling the Squadrons to move out of Laloki, the 71st was to go to Townsville and the 405th to Rorona. Upon arrival at the Rorona, conditions were so bad that it was found advisable to send the planes of the 405th on down to Townsville and continue operations out of there. Only two of the airplanes remained behind and these were kept for the purpose of transporting supplies in to Rorona.

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