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SQ BOMB - 822 - HF

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P.H.C.

ADMINISTRATION

The 822d Bombardment Squadron Medium, 38th Bombardment Group Medium was activated 16 April 1943 by authority of AG Letter 320.2 (March 28, 1943) O.B.1-A.F.D.P.U.M. and 29 March 1943 first wrapper indorsement. The initial station was Port Moresby, New Guinea, APO 929.

The first commanding officer of the Squadron was Major Walter Krell who was transferred from Headquarters 38th Bombardment Group. The first sergeant was Lewis A. Gastley. The rest of the men in the original complement of the Squadron arrived overseas from Camp Shanks, Orangeburg, New York. There were also men transferred from the 71st and 405th Squadrons of the 38th Bombardment Group, who were to form the backbone of the new organization.

The 2 sergeants, 19 corporals, 22 privates first class and 89 privates, along with 12 officers, who were to eventually form the ground personnel of the Squadron, completed their training in the States and on 15 May 1943 sailed from New York Port of Embarkation on the U.S.A.T. Henry Gibbons and U.S.A.T. Thomas H. Barry. The trip was made through the Panama Canal with stops at Colon and Balboa. After leaving the Canal Zone the next stop was Bora Bora in the Society Islands. On the 14th of June the boats docked at Brisbane, Australia, which everyone hoped would be our station. This was not to be the case, however, and 36 hours later all personnel from the U.S.A.T. Barry were transferred to the Gibbons and on the 23rd of June 1943, landed at Port Moresby.

The arrival at Port Moresby created quite a sensation, both for the personnel already there and for those just arriving. As at every other base, the "old" boys lined up and commented aloud on all the hardships and every subject that is the newcomer's lot to receive when he is all worn out from travel and definitely not at his best. Everyone took the kidding in stride and we were finally loaded on trucks and driven to our home. The following day everyone was hard at work building a Squadron area. Here in New Guinea - the land of the "hot, steaming, malaria-ridden jungles" - we found that the C.B.'s and army engineers did not always go in ahead of all Air Force units and construct a camp for them. But we were all so new to the jungle and overseas that we pitched in and actually worked until the mess hall, administration building and other section huts were finally finished.

When the necessary construction was completed the interview of personnel began and through this process we were able to set up the various sections needed to operate the Squadron. The enlisted men and officers who had been transferred to us from other organizations proved invaluable at this time and all the new boys found out just how much we had to learn. Finally all the sections were set up and the next job was to train the men so we would have a smoothly operating organization when we started our first combat flights. While this training of the ground crews and personnel was going on everyone was

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wondering about the fellows who were going to fly the airplanes they told us we were to have.

The combat personnel received their basic training at Keesler Field, Mississippi and Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. From there they went through various technical schools until graduation when they were sent to Columbia, South Carolina for training in medium bombers. Part of the crews came from Hamilton Field, California while the rest of them came by boat as far as Honolulu and from there the enlisted men came by transport and the officers flew the B-25's to Charters Towers.

On 24 August, they were met by Lieutenant Colonel O'Neill who was the Group C.O. and by Major Krell who was to be our Squadron C.O. After outlining our program for us the job of training the crews began in earnest and the very next day we were flying formation and from then on it was practice bombing, low-level tactics and transition until we were sure that we were already the best in the Southwest Pacific.

Although the villages were quite small most of the fellows found enough to keep them busy during their off duty hours and it was with quite a few downhearted back glances that we finally took the last step that was to take us from here to our first action against the enemy. The air echelon arrived at Ward's Drome on 11 October 1943 and a few days later the airplanes were ferried to Durand Drome - affectionately referred to as '17 mile' - which was to be our base of operation. Transition flights were flown to familiarize the crews with the Port Moresby area.

On the 14th our first scheduled flight took place, a courier to Marilinan, Madsab and Lae, which was completed 100%.

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