

3 June 1944

History
Period of 1 May to 31 May 1944

Operations:

During the month of May the activity of the Squadron centered on flying and operations. The mechanics of administration began to smooth out, and emphasis switched from "house-keeping" to the job at hand.

On 3 May the Squadron sent its first plane across the "Hump" into China to the advanced Base of the 40th Bombardment Group. Flying the "Hump" was a real experience after hearing so many tales of the most hazardous stretch of flying in the world. The course flown took the plane from Chakulia to Jorhat, India, to Shingbuiyang, India, to Likiang, China, to Hsichang, China, and then direct to Hsingching, the advanced base. Conditions were contact. If instrument conditions had existed the instrument course was the same as far as Hsichang, but altered at that point to I-Pin and thence to the advanced base.

Throughout the remainder of the month of May the Squadron continued to send its planes across the "Hump". A total of 31 round trip missions were completed. All missions were for the purpose of ferrying engines, spare parts, technical supplies, and gas and oil to the forward area.

The missions over the "Hump" provided the men in the organization with an interest that was positive in some respects, but was also a source of speculation and concern. All men in the Squadron were cognizant of the fact that the 14th Air Force was dependent on the A. T. C. for its supply of gasoline. They knew the amount of gasoline required to load one B-29 for a combat mission in China. As operational missions progressed they observed that the amount of gas being ferried by B-29's would be insufficient to provide servicing of the planes for frequent combat mission to targets they thought might be within range of the airplane.

Flying the "Hump" was hard on the airplanes. Bad weather was frequent and the long hours of making a round trip to China was putting time on the engines and creating a demand for spare parts. The B-29 was an expensive piece of equipment, designed

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for combat, and yet it was being used to haul gasoline, which in contrast to the anticipated flood amount to be needed seemed to amount to only a trickle.

All of the men were making their deductions from the face of things that existed. As yet the targets had not been announced for obvious reasons. They did not know whether their ferrying efforts were being supplemented by A. . . C; in a word, not aware of the "big picture".

However, each crew was making every effort to make their "lay" loads as much as possible. A competitive spirit sprung up between crews on the various lanes. "How much gas did your leave" was an often asked question.

Yet, as each mission and each hour of flying was completed, much was being learned about the B-29 that had been impossible to learn at training station in the States due to lack of planes, and flying time.

Figures obtained from the 40th Bombardment Group Statistical Section revealed the results of "Hump" operations in the Squadron for the month of May, as follows:

Flights made-----31
Net amount of gas left in gallons ----28,420
Net amount of oil left in gallons ---- 2,580
Net weight of dry cargo left -----33970 lbs
Total Net weight of all cargo left ---219,970 lbs

Considering the actual job done by the Squadron, the results were excellent. The planes have been heavily loaded with average gross weight of 132,000 lbs. In addition airplane #42-6254 had been stripped of armament, armor, turrets, and radar equipment, and made two of the thirty-one (31) flights in a tanker capacity, accounting for 5,000 gallons of the net gasoline credited to the 45th Bombardment Squadron during the month.

During the month the Squadron also conducted practice radar bombing and gunnery missions. These missions were run to check performance of equipment, as well as to provide crew members with actual practice in operation. Planes from the various other Squadrons in the 40th Bombardment Group combined with the 15th Bombardment Squadron on the same missions, accomplishing practice in formations flying at medium and high altitudes.

From flights made by the organization since arriving in India to the end of May a total of 49,105 hours of transport time and 133,55 hours of training time had been accumulated.

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Engineering:

Maintenance within the Squadron was accomplished under two distinct handicaps. The first was the climatic conditions and the second was spare parts. During the month, according to official figures taken from the records of the Base Weather Station, the highest temperature recorded was 113°F. The average temperature for the entire month was 94°F. These figures were recorded by the weather section under "deep shade" conditions--- the instrument measuring the free air being encased in a boxed cover. An unofficial estimate, volunteered by the Weather Section, placed maximum temperature on the runway at 130°F. Irregardless of the exact temperatures experienced, the metal on the planes would become too hot to touch. Maintenance work could only be effectively accomplished during early morning hours and at night.

Spare parts handicapped maintenance from two angles. First, only a limited supply of parts were stocked on the Base. Second, of some of the parts available, it was found that due to certain modifications made at the last minute, before departure from the states, these parts would not fit, having not been modified. Collector rings was an example of this condition.

Yet at the end of the month the 45th Bombardment Squadron's record was 63.5% planes in commission for the period. Credit was given not only to the Engineering section for this excellent work done, but also to combat crews who had kept the planes in good shape while enroute from the States.

Personnel:

On 8 May the 45th Bombardment Squadron and the 3rd Bombardment Maintenance Squadron were combined and redesignated the 45th Bombardment Squadron per General Order #4, Hq 40th Bomb Op, dated 9 May 1944.

45th Bombardment Squadron

85 Officers

89 Enlisted Men

3rd Bombardment Maintenance Squadron

19 Officers

361 Enlisted Men

In making the amalgamation, immediate benefits could be seen --- reduction of administrative overhead and a better spirit between the ground echelon and the air echelon.

During the month 1st Lt MARVIN W. STOCKETT received notification by letter from the War Department that from March 25, 1944 his rank would be Captain.

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