



VIGNETTES

Introduction: Personnel of the 40th had some of the wackiest experiences ever endured, and these experiences were spread across the globe from the Caribbean to Tinian. All of these experiences deserve to be told, but many are just vignettes of history that don't lend themselves to lengthy telling. Accordingly, this issue of MEMORIES consists of seven of these vignettes.

Date of event: June-July, 1944

Date written: January, 1994

Written by: Harry Changnon, Elbert Wolfson, Marion Kloster, William Tremain,
James J. O'Keefe

Editor's Note: This is a vignette that is hard to pull together. Fifty years is a long time to hold a story on the memory disc. Contributors have unclear recollections of the exact event, but each one has supplied bits of the story. Some memories conflict. Credit is given to each memory as it is recalled wherever possible.

There were Pigs in India--Well, Maybe One

Members of Garth Doyle's crew (25th) in #237 "Sir Trofrepus," when in China, got the idea of buying a pig from one of the farmers who could be found on the roadways into Hsinching hauling this item of livestock to the village in their wheelbarrows. Members of the crew bargained with this farmer using, in addition to Chinese paper currency, a commodity much more valuable - cigarettes. The transaction was completed and the pig hauled to the plane. It was decided to stash the pig, properly trussed up, in the rear unpressurized section by the putt-putt. This particular porker weighed between 200 and 300 pounds. The crew used ropes to haul him through the rear access door which was seven to eight feet off the ground. Crew members used the five- or six-rung ladder. Needless to say, the pig was uncooperative and engaged in plenty of kicking and snorting.

After takeoff and reaching altitude, one of the crew observed the critter through the window in the bulkhead door and noticed that it wasn't breathing in a healthy pig manner. Garth Doyle advised the crew that they had a lot of yen and rupees invested in the pig in addition to many packs of cigarettes and they better get the pig inside the pressurized area. Meanwhile, due to some mechanical malfunction, Flight Engineer Marion Kloster reported difficulty in maintaining cabin pressure at the 8,000-foot equivalent. Accordingly, crew members were advised to don oxygen masks. But what about the pig? Doyle reminded his crew of their investment which he didn't intend to be lost. Reluctantly, crew members had to share their oxygen with the pig, switching a mask from crew member to pig resulting in a crew joke that ran, "One for me, one for the pig, one for me, one for the pig." The crew used the phrase as their inside joke long after the event.

The "one for me, one for the pig" exchange lasted for almost four hours of the six-hour flight across the Hump. According to Marion Kloster, during the flight, the pig kicked loose and had to be rounded up and trussed down again.

Upon landing in Chakulia, as Kloster remembers, they found some former farm boys in the squadron to help unload the pig. According to Bill Tremain, the squadron flight surgeon declared the pig unfit for human consumption and condemned it. He also remembers that when those orders were overridden and the pig was eaten, it was served only to the officers. Marion Kloster does not recall it that way. As he remembers it, the pig was butchered and was served at a squadron barbecue on the Fourth of July.

What thanks did the crew of "Sir Trofrepus" get for their adventure with perhaps the only pig to touch down in India? They got to clean up the plane. It is to be remembered that pigs are not known to hold back on their body functions, especially when under stress such as making a flight over the Hump and being wrestled on and off the plane.

Members of the crew of #237:

Capt. Garth Doyle, A/C (Deceased)
1 Lt. Myrel Massey, Pilot
2nd Lt. Halloran Soules, Nav. (Deceased)
2nd Lt. Irving Burness, Bomb. (Deceased)
1 Lt. Marion Kloster, FE
Sgt. William Tremain, V
S/Sgt. Joseph Bazar, R
Sgt. Blaine Brokaw CFC
Sgt. Eugene Givens RG
Sgt. Everett Wolfson, LG
S/Sgt. John Higgins, TG
S/Sgt. Albert Balutis, CC (Deceased)

Date of event: 1945

Date written: 1990

Written by: Richard H. Moore

After we got to Tinian, Lt. Wright's crew was broken up, and I was assigned to a crew that had just arrived fresh from the States.

They were indeed fresh and appeared poorly trained with a lackadaisical attitude. The gunners hardly knew how to turn on their gun sights and operate the remote control gunnery system. They threw their parachutes, Mae Wests and other gear into a pile and proceeded to drink the emergency water, eat the emergency rations and go to sleep. There was no sleep for me. I watched the engines and the skies for the entire trip.

Shortly, this crew was scheduled for its first combat mission. Having no faith in this bunch, I went to see Col. Kingsbury. I told him I did not want to go on the mission with this crew. The colonel was telling me that, although he regretted it, I would have to go because there was no replacement when at that moment a CFC gunner came in and announced that he was originally a member of this crew. He had just arrived on the island, and he wanted to make this mission with them.

Col. Kingsbury smiled at me and told the new man that if it was agreeable with me, he could go. I magnanimously consented.

The crew went down on that mission, and only one man was ultimately rescued.

Date of event: Spring-summer, 1943
Date written: 1989-90
Written by: Matt Sarich and Bennie Slonina

Editor's Note: This event was only lightly touched upon in Issue #19 of MEMORIES in which a team of supposedly expert ex-miners got together to reengineer the outhouse facilities on "The Rock." Sarich was a miner from Montana; Slonina and "Pop" Conners were ex-miners from Pennsylvania.

The New Outhouse for the Rock

The conventional Rock outhouse was a three- or four-holer placed over a pit. Since the entire base was built on lava rock, any outhouse pits were necessarily not very deep.

Very early on after the 45th was transferred to the Rock, it was determined that the pit under one of the enlisted men's outhouses had fulfilled its purpose, and a new pit had to be created. Pits in lava rock were "created," not dug. To accomplish the creation of a new pit, Matt, Bennie and Pop volunteered to lead the effort since they were supposedly ex-miners with some experience in this sort of thing. Many other volunteers with little or no experience in such matters participated.

They got the necessary compressor, jack hammer and dynamite. Matt Sarich tells the story: "I didn't quite agree with Pop Conners and Bennie that we drill vertically into the rock for our charge. We made our shot and only created fissures of red dust while rocking the adjacent outhouse a bit. I suggested for the next shot we drill at an angle and to increase our formula of TNT by about three sticks which I was sure would be much more effective. We didn't anticipate just now effective. Indeed it blew a hole in the rock to a satisfactory depth, but it also blew the adjacent outhouse out of sight."

Date of event: May-June, 1943
Date written: 18 March, 1984
Written by: O.O. "Zero" Townsend

Editor's Note: Several people who eventually became important members of the 40th Group were involved in the B-29 from its very earliest days. Among these were Vic Agather, Col. Leonard "Jake" Harman and O.O. "Zero" Townsend. Zero tells of some of his experiences in those early days of the B-29.

The B-29s Diaper Days

I was in Hq. and Hq. Squadron of the 58th Wing. We flew out of Boeing Field at Seattle at first. You probably remember that the aileron controls were crossed, and we almost lost the ship on the first attempted takeoff. (*Editor's Note:* The crash of the plane being flown by Boeing test pilot Eddie Allen, wiped out Boeing's test crew. The Air Force had to take over subsequent testing. Col. Harman was the pilot for the next B-29 test flight. In assembly, the aileron controls were accidentally crossed. On takeoff, at nearly takeoff speed, the right wing dipped, and the B-29 slewed off the runway. With the cables crossed, a movement of the controls intending to raise the right wing caused it to be lowered instead.) After repairs were made to a wing tip and a new engine and prop were installed, they decided it was necessary to have a man in the rear compartment since no one in front had a good view of the ailerons or gear.

I was the lucky one chosen, and it was my duty to take care of the putt-putt, check the ailerons and check the gear and flaps. Col. Harman came back to me before takeoff and said, "Sergeant, do you know how to use that chute?" I said I did, and he said, "After we get airborne, if that bell rings, get out fast. Don't wait for it to ring a second time 'cause there won't be anyone up there to ring it."

The flights at Seattle were complete in June, 1943, and XB 118335 was released by Boeing. The crew was to proceed with test flights. With two others, I was sent ahead to Boeing at Wichita where we worked on final assembly with the Boeing people. We were there when they flew the first of the YB models.

On one of those YB Models, someone failed to install a gasket on a prop governor, and they had a bad oil leak on the first flight. They feathered the engine and came back in with no damage except to the pride of the guy who didn't install the gasket.

Soon after that General Wolfe, Col. Harman and M/Sgt. Graham came from Seattle and picked us up for a flight to Marietta, Georgia where we were to be stationed. Flights out of Marietta included the checking out of a lot of "The Brass." I will always remember two of the flights. One was the check flight of Gen. LaVerne "Blondie" Saunders. He made a something less than a perfect landing coming in with the nose gear first. I was in the Flight Engineer's seat and when we got out of the ship, I took a look at the nose wheel gear. I was bent over it when Gen. Saunders walked over and said, "Sergeant, you could at least wait until I leave before you look it over for damage." I sure was glad he was smiling when he said that.

The other flight also included a general. (It was Gen. Oliver P. Echols, I think.) He had on a dress uniform with light-colored slacks. He said he wanted to go through the tunnel to the back compartment. I told him it was pretty dirty in that tunnel, and he said, "I'll fix that," and proceeded to take off his pants. I waited until he was in the tunnel and called the two guys who were in the back and said in just a minute there will be a general coming out of that tunnel without any pants on so don't laugh when you see him.

We finished our flights out of Marietta in the middle of July, 1943, and I was sent to Salina for the accelerated service testing on the YB-29s. I was glad to get through that and Lowry Field and Clovis and finally get on a combat crew in the 40th.

Date of event: Early 1942
Date written: 21 August, 1985
Written by: Bradford H. Prince

Editor's Note: This is a vignette of one of the earliest experiences that occurred to any of our guys in WW II. As was the case in the Caribbean at the time, individuals were frequently transferred from one outfit to another as their specialties were needed. (In Neil Wemple's book, he records being transferred from B-18 bombers to peashooters during this time.)

B-18 Ditching Somewhere East of Cuba

One night while on anti-submarine patrol in a B-18 out of Key West, Florida, while in the 17th Anti-Sub Squadron, I was with a crew that was thrown together for the patrol. I was a radar mechanic-operator. I was a total stranger to the rest of the crew. The navigator got turned around 180 degrees, and we were totally lost. Our pilot wisely used up as much of the gas as possible before ditching. He did a

great job setting the old "Digby" gently in the water. When we splashed down, everyone did flips, then managed to get out of the plane and onto emergency rafts. The only member of the crew who was hurt was the pilot. He cut his head while bravely hanging his head out the window to see the oncoming waves.

We quickly swam and paddled away from the old Digby to avoid being pulled down. Much to our amazement, the old plane remained afloat, and so we went back and stayed on the wings for over 36 hours until rescued by a navy destroyer escort. We entertained ourselves shooting sharks and trying to get the emergency radio working before the navy arrived. I still have one of the antenna balloons.

We had a great trip back to Key West only to find that our unit had shipped out to San Antonio De Los Banos airfield near Havana. The crushing part of the experience was when we arrived at Key West, we found that we weren't even missed. Incidentally, the navy had to sink the B-18 to remove it as a navigational hazard. They used 30-calibre machine gun fire to do it. From Key West, we straggled into Cuba where we enjoyed the best duty of the war. After that it was into the 25th Squadron. That meant Pratt, India, China and Tinian.

Date of event: After March, 1944 and through 1945

Date written: 16 March, 1990

Written by: John Backes

Editor's Note: We have seen how individuals get lost in the shuffle as in the case of Brad Prince. Here is another story but with a kicker ending. (There is irony in these stories. These guys are lost and not even missed but should one of us have missed a formation, depend on it, we would have been listed AWOL that minute with guardhouse threats hanging over us.)

Pratt After We Left

There were 13 of us that reported to the 40th Group in Pratt on 18 August, 1943 direct from B-29 school at Boeing in Seattle. After a few days of deciding what to do with us, we were split up to the various squadrons. Clifford Bell, Ernest Bickendorf and I went to the 44th. We started working nights from 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., seven days a week. We worked on the YB-29 plus any other assignments that came along. I finally became part of the ground crew on a B-26 in addition to working on a B-17. Mostly it was engine changes on the B-29s.

I spent Christmas 1943 and New Year's going to R3350 school in Patterson, New Jersey. We stayed in an old silk mill and took our meals at an engine plant. I returned to Pratt to continue the battle. (What battle? The Battle of Kansas, what else?)

I don't remember anything outstanding during the summer except the preparation for going overseas. In October I was rushed off to Wright Aeronautical again for direct fuel injection school. When I returned to Pratt, the Group was gone.

A new chapter opens. Base headquarters didn't know where I belonged and ran around several days inquiring at various units. They finally ran into a first sergeant from the Group who was gathering up stragglers since there had been others like me who had been on detached service. Word was that we were in the 40th pool and assigned to temporary duty with a maintenance squadron of a new Group coming in. I worked on B-29s. One day while working on the line, a runner from the orderly room came by and said drop everything and report to the orderly room. They said get a haircut, draw

partial pay from finance, draw a carbine from supply and move to another barracks. We were told we were leaving in less than 24 hours to join the 40th in India. There were 102 of us--two lieutenants, one master sergeant, two staff sergeants, one buck (me). The rest were corporals and privates. The 24 hours came and went. We were relieved from duty and restricted to the base. We had clothing inspection and rifle inspection about twice a day for about two weeks and one trip to the firing range to try out the carbines. Next we had to evacuate the barracks we were staying in, and we were moved to a hutment area at the north end of the base past the end of the runway next to a creek. After a month someone thought we should do some work. So, we broke up clots of ground in a newly cleared area, cleaned up some barracks for the WACs that were coming to Pratt and kept some boilers fired up. Finally, a small number of us were given passes to go to town for two hours. Not many got to go at once.

We were at this for about two and a half months when word came to break up the pool. The officers and master sergeant were the first to go followed by the two staffs with about 12 men each in tow. One batch went to Oklahoma and the other to Nebraska. (I heard later that the batch that went to Nebraska were locked up for carrying guns.) The rest of us left in groups of five or six, and I was slated to go to Dalhart but orders were changed to Clovis and then canceled. It was getting late on a Saturday afternoon, and about a dozen of us were left with no place to stay as the beds and everything had been picked up. No one to report to, no orders, nothing. We went to Base Headquarters and talked to the sergeant major. He didn't know what to do as the base was shut down for the weekend. He suggested we report there at 8:00 a.m. Monday. At the hutment, we found our old passes and spent the weekend in Pratt.

Monday we were assigned to various units at Pratt. I ended up at a ground school that was being organized. I had done some teaching before enlisting. We took over the south end of the 40th Headquarters building. Gunnery school took over the north end. Records show that I was in the 93rd Bomb Group, 330 Squadron. We made training aids, cutaways of R3350 engines, carburetors, fuel injection systems, hydraulic and electrical systems, a working nose and main gear. A flight engineer's station was hooked up to four Waukesha putt-putt engines with all the gauges working. The engines really made a racket with straight pipes going up through the roof. There were six or seven officers and seven or eight enlisted men assigned to the school. We taught cruise control, navigation, flight engineering and all B-29 systems.

In enlarging the school during the fall of 1944, we closed in the open porch of the building, partitioned the large central room into classrooms and cleaned out a junk room in the southeast corner of the building. There we ran across some crates of 40th Group records. Word and samples of the records went up the line as to disposition. The word came back about two weeks later: destroy. We sat there for days--officers and enlisted men--tearing all the papers into four pieces (official destruction) and then hauled them to the incinerator and watched them burn.

We had lots of visitors in the office as it was the coolest place on base. We had resurrected the old evaporator cooler that was in the south wall, and that was used to run the flight engineers station.

After VJ Day, things tapered off pretty fast with people leaving for discharge daily. A few of us held the school down until December when three of us were declared essential. A lieutenant, a sergeant and I were sent to Roswell, New Mexico. One of the COs there had been one of the pilots from the 40th back from overseas. In January of 1946 we received word that the Fourth Air Force was going to take over the base from the Second Air Force, and we were to get orders to go to Ft. Worth. The lieutenant got his orders and left. Jack Sager and I didn't and became part of the Fourth Air Force. The Fourth wanted to know what we were still doing in the Air Force? They said we were not essential and sent us to Santa Ana, California for discharge. We were processed, but within two hours of being out, we were handed orders to report to Ft. McArthur at San Pedro. They were full at Ft. McArthur, and we were told to stay away from the base for at least a week. We got a hotel room

and took in Hollywood and the nearby area for the week. We were processed out in three days and headed home. During our out-processing, we met one of the guys from the 40th who was out and was processing back in.

When I was being discharged and went for a records check, they asked me if I thought it funny that I never went overseas. I said yes, they were always looking for people with time in the service who had not been overseas. They tossed me a letter from my file that said I was assigned to a General and was not to be moved without written orders from him. I told them this was the first I knew of it. They said the letter had been rescinded when they broke up the 40th pool and someone didn't pull it so whenever they got to the letter, they dropped me like a hot potato.

Date of event: March-April, 1945

Date written: June, 1988

Written by: George Lowry

Remember When?

Remember when the 40th arrived on Tinian and cleared a cane field to build a tent city below the navy landing strip? And remember how that field sloped away from the shore and back against the foot of the cliff? And remember, at first, there was no road for getting directly down that cliff? But then the navy Seabees came along and bulldozed a road down from the top and shoved the dirt out onto the flat? Then, the very night the Seabees bulldozing closed off the drainage, the rain poured down for hours. And the next morning everything, including the mess hall, was under a full foot of muck.

I woke up just before daybreak that morning because someone in the tent was yelling about the water soaking into his mattress and now everything was afloat. At about that time, as I was pulling my footlocker back from a trip to the next tent, I heard someone yelling at Lt. Alan Hunt (flight engineer): "Hunt! Hey, Hunt! Wake up. Your shoes are floating away!" Hunt yawned, turned over slowly, reached out and pushed his shoes straight to the bottom of the water. Turning back to his sleeping position, he mumbled, "There. That'll hold 'em for a while," and then he picked up another few minutes of sleep.



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