

(Retyped from microfilm by Sparky Corradina)

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**HEADQUARTERS 40TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP
Office of the Historical Office**

**APO Number 631
3 April 1945**

GROUP HISTORY

1 March thru 31 March 1945

Despite the five bombing missions and seven weather-photo sorties run during March time hung heavily on our hands. With preparations for the move continuing ground training fell off still more with a decrease of almost 2000 man hours; use of the synthetic trainers was discontinued when orders were received to prepare them for shipment. Maintenance presented no particular difficulties during the month and battle damage was received only on the Singapore mission of 2 March. (See under Engineering)

The two Rangoon missions of 17 and 22 March were of interest because the briefed bombing altitudes were in the neighborhood of 30,000 feet – not because of expected enemy opposition but for the purpose of obtaining data on high altitude bombing operations. It is evidently anticipated that prospective missions against Japan from bases in the Pacific will necessitate higher bombing altitudes than the XX Bomber Command has heretofore used.

The Bukum Island (Singapore) mission of 29 March was also a departure from previous tactics in that bombing was accomplished at night from an altitude of only 5000 feet.

No airplanes were either gained or lost during March and only two combat casualties were incurred; two men were wounded, not seriously, on the Singapore mission of 2 March. (See 44th and 45th Squadron histories for March)

As of the end of the month 174 vehicles had been sent from this base to Calcutta for water shipment to their destination. In addition 4,150 measurement tons of equipment had been sent to the port by rail or truck.

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Late in the afternoon of 1 March the two weather-photo reconnaissance planes which had taken off for Singapore about 2330 IST the preceding night returned safely to Chakulia Army Air Base. These were perhaps the most successful sorties to date; weather in the vicinity of Singapore had been CAVU and enemy opposition nil.

At 2130 that night briefing was held in the War Room for 12 crews who were to take off shortly after midnight for an attack on the shop area of the Singapore Naval Base.

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March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

“In accordance with Field Order #41, XX Bomber Command, dated 26 Feb 45, the 40th Bomb Group on 2 Mar 45 dispatched 12 B-29 aircraft to attack the Work Shop Area at the Singapore Naval Base, Singapore Malaya. The first aircraft was airborne at 011800Z and the last aircraft at 011817Z.

“A total of 11 aircraft bombed the assigned primary target from 19,000 to 24,000' either as individual aircraft or in formation as large as four aircraft in weather ranging from CAVU to 2/10's cloud cover. A total of 88 #500 GP M-64 type bombs with .1 sec delay nose and tail fuzing were dropped with reported results ranging from good to unobserved. Strike photos, however, indicate that approximately 50% of the bombs hit in the water north of the target.

“Antiaircraft fire at the primary target was intense and accurate due to the presence of a substantial number of naval craft in Jahore Strait north of the naval yard and eight aircraft out of the 11 over the primary target sustained varying degrees of flak damage.

“Fighter opposition was weak to moderate. A total of from 15 to 20 enemy aircraft were reported in the area, but most attacks were not close pressed. Our aircraft claimed two enemy aircraft damaged.

“The enemy had a smoke screen at the primary target which was not too effective due only to a fairly strong wind from the northeast which dissipated the screen sufficiently to make visual bombing possible. An additional smoke screen was reported over the Empire Dock area to the southwest of the city of Singapore.

“One aircraft, due to personnel error on the part of the flight engineer who figured the fuel reserve inaccurately, bombed the last resort target visually from 15,000' through 5/10 to 7/10 cloud cover after making three bombs runs. Results were unobserved and no fighter opposition or flak was encountered.

“Aircraft #555 lost #3 engine and turbo on #4 engine in the target area due to flak and proceeded to Akyab. This aircraft was escorted part of the way by two aircraft of another group which left #555 prior to his arrival at the emergency field. Aircraft #718 was badly damaged by flak over the target and proceeded to Cox's Bazaar.

“A total of two crew members on two different aircraft were wounded. In neither case, however, are the wounds considered serious.

“With the exception of the two aircraft landing at emergency fields, all aircraft returned safely to B-4 without incident with the last aircraft landing at 021153Z.*

*Narrative Summary from 40th Group Consolidated Mission Report

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March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

“Strike photos as well as post-mission photos show that the majority of the bombs landed over the A. P. in the eastern section of the target area. More damage was done to warehouses and lumber mills than to the important foundries, machine shops and electrical work shops on the western side of the target. The mission could not be considered entirely satisfactory from the standpoint of bombing accuracy.”

On 5 March the four surviving crew members of B-29 #237, lost over Nanking on 11 Nov 44, returned to Chakulia from China. (The only other known survivor, Maj F. B. Morgen, XX Bomber Command Communications Officer who was a passenger on the plane, returned directly to Kharagpur.)

Following are excerpts from the interrogation of these men by Major Louis E. Scherck, Group S-2. The target referred to is Nanking, briefing instructions having been cancelled by radio due to weather at Omura.

“BAILOUT AND EVASION”

Of Crew of B-29 Aircraft #237 (25th Sq)

Pilot – Lt R. L. Vickery	Radio Operator – S Sgt D. E. Collins
Co-Pilot – Lt B. L. Page	Radar Operator – Sgt J. A. Myers
Bombardier – Lt E. G. Cassidy	CFC Gunner – Sgt F. S. Carlton
Navigator – Lt F. O. Sinicrope	Right Gunner – Sgt W. R. Lankford
Flt Eng – Lt W. G. Warburton	Left Gunner – Sgt C. B. Reigler
Passenger – Major Morgan	Tail Gunner – Sgt G. R. Scherchardt

(The following narrative is based on the interrogation of four crew members of aircraft #237 – flight engineer, navigator, radio operator and tail gunner who, with Maj Morgan, comprise the only known survivors of this bailout.)

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“Just after bombs were released from 21,000’ a flak burst occurred about 10 to 15’ aft of the right wing between the wing and fuselage. Immediately thereafter crew members reported fires in the rear bomb bay and right wing section between #3 and #4 engines. The flight engineer tried to smother the fire in #4 with the extinguisher but met with no success. The pilot immediately requested a heading for the nearest unoccupied territory and was give 300 degrees by the navigator.

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“All crew members realized that in all probability it was only a question of a short period of time before the plane would have to be abandoned and preparations for bailout were immediately instituted. Shortly after turning away from the target the CFC gunner advised that the fire in the rear bomb bay was rapidly getting out of control. The aircraft had a tendency to veer to the right and was difficult to control.

“In the front of the aircraft all equipment was removed from the nose wheel hatch, the nose wheel lowered and the hatch door opened. At approximately 0215Z the navigator, who was kneeling by the open hatch felt a violent lurch and, believing the right wing was coming off, bailed out. When his chute opened he was able to see the plane about 3000' below him in a steep dive to the right and was able to see a violent explosion after which the aircraft disintegrated in mid air. He did not see any chutes.

“All about this time the flight engineer who had an excellent view of the fire in the right wing realized the wing was getting ready to fall off and tried to contact the crew members in the rear of the ship to order them to bail out. Evidentially all crew members except the tail gunner had already bailed out or were in the process of doing so since the tail gunner was the only one who acknowledged the order.

“The aircraft was now at 19,000' and was going into a slow turn to the right and a dive that was rapidly increasing in speed. The flight engineer saw that the right wing was starting to buckle so dropped through the hatch but caught on one of the handles in the well and immediately hung up. He finally extricated himself and dropped clear. When his chute opened he noticed that pieces of aluminum were falling all around him and concluded that the aircraft had exploded.

“The tail gunner, following the order to do so, had started to bail out but his trouser leg caught on some part in the compartment and before he could clear himself he felt the plane start to roll over. He describes the aircraft as turning over twice before he finally extricated himself and dropped clear. When his chute opened he was able to see three other chutes below him. His eyebrows and mustache were badly singed and it is not known whether the plane exploded before or just after he dropped free.

“The radio operator, having sent all necessary distress messages, was kneeling just aft of the wheel well door with Maj Morgan beside him when the flight engineer dropped through the well. Before he could jump the aircraft gave a violent lurch and he and Maj Morgan were thrown in a struggling heap in the flight engineer's compartment. He remembers that the aircraft was in a violent spin and recalls seeing the co-pilot struggling to get out of his seat. There was a violent explosion and he lost consciousness and the next thing he remembers was falling in mid air. He regained consciousness long enough to pull his rip cord then passed out again. When he next came to he was approximately 100' above the ground and remembers hitting fairly hard then once again blacked out.

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March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

“The flight engineer, tail gunner, radio operator and Maj Morgan all landed in close proximity to one another. There were several Chinese peasants in the near vicinity but conversation with them through the medium of the pointee talks was a failure as they could not read and quickly walked away. It was discovered that only the radio operator had his jungle kit as the flight engineer and tail gunner had lost theirs when their chutes opened (although denied by crew members, there is a strong possibility that the kits were fastened on incorrectly and ripped off.) Maj Morgan had landed in a rice paddy and was badly injured about the face. As a matter of interest, the other crew members had difficulty in recognizing him due to the blood and grime. The crew started to bury their chutes in a plowed field when they saw six or seven armed Chinese coming over a ridge about 200 yards away. They heard rifle shots but did not realize that they were the objects of the shooting until bullets started kicking up the dirt around their feet. When this happened they dived into a rice paddy and took protection behind the paddy wall.

“Suddenly four armed men jumped into the paddy behind them, pointed their guns at the crew and by gestures indicated that they should raise their hands which order was quickly complied with. The men immediately disarmed the crew and took all their equipment and then motioned them to move off on the run in a northeast direction. The crew members with what they thought were their captures ran for approximately an hour until almost complete exhaustion of the crew necessitated a halt. When the halt was made all were instructed to jump into a ditch. At this opportunity the crew members indicated to the Chinese that they were American Fliers and friendly to China. When this had been made clear to the Chinese their attitude immediately underwent a change and all were permitted to get up out of the ditch and the party once more started off on the run. As they ran along the party was joined by other Chinese until finally approximately 15 Chinese were in the party. The Chinese dispersed any people who attempted to come near the party by the simple procedure of firing in their direction. After running for about another hour the party stopped at a peasant's home where tea was forthcoming, following which running was resumed. In about another hour the party arrived at a small village where uniformed Chinese greeted the crew members in a very friendly manner.

“Throughout the journey the other crew members had noticed that the radio operator was at times incoherent and believed he was suffering from shock. They managed to obtain some blankets and, wrapping him up in these, allowed him to sleep for several hours. When he awoke he was entirely rational. At this stop the crew had the opportunity to wash out Maj Morgan's face injuries, sprinkle them with sulphur powder and apply bandages. It was discovered that the flight engineer had a badly bruised heel which made walking difficult. During all the excitement this had not manifested itself but now constituted a problem. The party was taken to another village about two miles away where burros were supplied and the party traveled northeast throughout the night. Enroute the men learned that they had come down in an area infested by Jap soldiers and puppet troops, which had accounted for the constant running. They learned they were in the hands of the Chinese Communists and were enroute to the 4th Army Headquarters. During the night they also learned that another crew member had been found and by the description given then by the Chinese (a mustache and no hair), guessed correctly that it was Lt Sinicrope, the navigator. (Lt Sinicrope had shaved his head prior to going on this mission.)

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“At dawn the party stopped at a village where they slept for a few hours and were awakened about 9 o'clock a.m. Although they expected to depart momentarily, it was not until 4 o'clock in the afternoon that the party resumed their journey and traveled until 10 o'clock that night, arriving at a small farm village about a mile east of the largest town of Sledgeno.

“At this small village they were joined by the navigator whose experiences are related in the following paragraph.

“Lt Sinicrope, the navigator, had landed east of the railroad line some little distance from the rest of the party (see sketch of route attached). He was fairly weak from lack of oxygen, having bailed out at approximately 20,000'. Several peasants were nearby but would not approach. He motioned to the peasants and when they approached he tried using his pointee talkie but was unable to make himself understood. They pointed to a Chinese dressed in occidental clothing who was approaching. When this man came up to Lt Sinicrope he showed him his “blood chit” and the Chinese immediately signified that he would help him and started off east motioning Lt Sinicrope to follow. Lt Sinicrope did not have his jungle kit, having left it in the aircraft. He was dubious about the direction being taken by his guide but all attempts on his part to change it were futile so he sensibly followed. Shortly after starting, his Chinese guide indicated that there were numerous puppet troops in the area and the party broke into a run until they had reached a small village where they were met by five uniformed Chinese soldiers. No crowds were permitted near and they proceeded to a village about 5 miles distant where a military headquarters was located. Here Lt Sinicrope was fed and permitted to get some much needed sleep. At dusk the party proceeded to another village about 10 miles distant. During this period Lt Sinicrope was unable to eat anything due to a throat injure received when his chute opened. On 12 November the party proceeded to the town of “Sledgeho” (Population estimated at about 50,000) and there met a Chinese who spoke English. He greeted the navigator very warmly and assured him that he was safe from the Japs. A horse was supplied and Lt Sinicrope was taken to the small village east of “Sledgeho”, where he later joined the other 4 crew members.

“The entire party rested at this village until 14 November when they were taken to the Headquarters of the new 4th army at the town of “NAPA”. Here they were royally welcomed by the military leaders and every courtesy and consideration shown them. While here they learned that Chinese ground sources had reporting the following damage resulting from the 11 November raid on Nanking and Shanghai.

- 1—The RR Ferry on the Yangtze River at Nanking had capsized and about 3000 Chinese killed.
- 2—The dock area had been set on fire and large stores of cotton awaiting shipment to Japan had been burned.

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3—A barracks had been hit, killing approximately 350 Jap soldiers.

4—The RR Terminal had been heavily damaged.

5—2 enemy fighters had been shot down.

6—At Shanghai the central power plant had been hit and the city plunged into darkness.

“They also learned about the balance of the crew of #257 which, partly by inference and partly by reported fact, resulted in the following analysis. It must be realized that any conclusions drawn are very apt to be erroneous and are listed herewith only in an attempt to throw some small measure of light on the possible fate of these men.

(A) 2 crew members were captured by puppet troops. Following their capture they attempted to bribe the troops to take them to the communists and were reported as being successful in persuading them to attempt to do so. However, before this could be accomplished, the party was met by Jap soldiers who took the prisoners. It is believed that these two men were the CFC and the Radar Operator, based upon Chinese description. The prisoners were taken to Nanking where they were paraded through the streets before the populace with a sign hung around their necks. This sign bore a degrading Chinese name. They were then placed on exhibition in a museum where people were permitted to view them but no one was permitted to speak to them. When last heard of, they were being interviewed by reporters of some of the puppet newspapers and, while their ultimate fate is not known, it is believed that there is a strong possibility that they are still alive.

(B) One crew member's body was found along the main RR line and his chute evidentially had not opened. It is believed that this was either the right or left gunner.

(C) One crew member was shot and killed by the Japs while attempting to escape from them. It is believed that this was either the right or left gunner.

(D) Three bodies were found in or near the wreckage. It is believed that these were the Pilot, Co-Pilot and Bombardier.

“The party remained in the area until 12 December, during which time the Communists continued to treat them as honored guests and tried to negotiate with the Central Government for the return of the crew to Chungking. On 12 December the Communists told the crew members that they had received word from the Central Government that they would not accept any American Fliers coming down in Communist territory. Arrangements were therefore immediately started to pass the crew members on to the 8th Route Army to get them to Yennan. The 8th Route Army advised that they would welcome the crew members, so on 26 December the journey

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toward Yennan was started.

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“All crew members were unanimous in their praise of the Chinese Communists. On every occasion they were treated as honored guests and it would be difficult to create a better impression of a people and their way of life than that which the crew members have of these Chinese people. While in their hands they were given the opportunity to talk to and interview people from all walks of life ranging from high military leaders to peasants and including jap prisoners of war. To these men the best in China is represented by the Communists and this best in the minds of these men is very high indeed.”

On 7 March at 2337 hours a Weather-Photo Recon B-29 took off from Chakulia to observe weather at Singapore and obtain photographs of the Victoria (RR) Bridge in the southern part of the Malay Peninsula. The flight was without incident (though photos of the bridge were not obtained due to weather) and the plane returned safely on the afternoon of the 8th.

Shortly before midnight of 8 March another plane took off also for the purpose of weather observation and photographing the bridge. This B-29 returned safely the next afternoon but again photos had not been obtained of the bridge, this time due to either to personnel error or camera malfunction.

At 2330 hours on 10 March a B-29 took off for the same purpose again, with additional instructions to obtain photographs of the RR Yard at Kuala Lumpur on the Malay Peninsula. Again the sortie was without incident (no fighter or flak were encountered on any of these sorties) and again no photos were obtained of Victoria Bridge, this time due to 8/10 cloud cover.

On 11 March 15 crews were briefed for a mission to Samboe Island south of Singapore Island. This island is covered largely with oil and gasoline storage facilities and no other group was to attack it. Take offs began at 2337 IST.

“In accordance with field order #42, XX Bomber Command, dated 6 Mar 45, and subsequent amendments thereto, the 40th Bomb Group on 12 Mar 45 dispatched a total of 15 B-29 Aircraft to attack oil storage installations on Samboe Island, south of Singapore, Malaya.

“Of 15 Aircraft, only 12 were Airborne due to last minute mechanical failures. The first Aircraft took off at 111707Z and the last aircraft at 111724Z. One Aircraft aborted shortly after take off due to a bad oil leak in #2 and #4 Engines.

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March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

“The remaining 11 Aircraft all bombed the assigned primary Target with a total of 65 #500 M-64 and 22 #500 M-76 type bombs from 22,000 feet through 8/10 to 10/10 cloud cover. Bomb releases were “BLIND” and results unobserved. Bombs were fuzed M-64 nose .1 sec delay, non delay tail and M-76 instantaneous nose and non-delay tail. Aircraft bombed in two formations of three aircraft, one formation of four aircraft and one aircraft bombed individually.

“No anti-aircraft fire was encountered and, although some enemy aircraft were sighted in the Target Area, no fighter opposition was forthcoming.

“All aircraft returned safely to Base without incident with one aircraft stopping at Cox’s Bazaar for additional fuel. The last aircraft landed at 1212Z.” *

*Narrative Summary from 40th Group Mission Report.

Although there was visual evidence of some hits on the island, post mission photographs did not show any damage to installations.

On 14 March a review (Photo 5) was held at the “Cactus bowl” and approximately 400 decorations were handed out by Col William K. Skaer, CO of the Group. The majority of the orders governing these awards were enclosed with the Group History for February.

On 16 March Capt Donald L. Stumpff was transferred from the 44th Bomb Squadron to Group Headquarters and appointed Group Radar Officer vice Maj William M. Hilt who has been transferred to Headquarters 58th Wing. (Incl 1) However Maj Hilt will remain with the Group until the completion of the move.

At 0600 hours on 17 March 15 crews were briefed for a mission to one of the ammunition and supply dump areas near Rangoon, Burma.

“In accordance with Field Order #44, XX Bomber Command, dated 14 Mar 45, the 40th Bomb Group on 17 Mar 45 dispatched 15 B-29 aircraft to attack Dump Area “B” north of RANGOON, BURMA. All were airborne with the first aircraft taking off at 0200Z and the last at 0221Z.

“Two aircraft were forced to jettison bombs in the BAY OF BENGAL due to mechanical failures and returned safely to base.

“The remaining 13 aircraft bombed the assigned primary target from 28,000’ PA with a total of 689 type M-81 fragmentation bombs with instantaneous fusing obtaining from good to unobserved results. Cloud cover in the target area ranged from 2/10 to 6/10. There was no fighter opposition and anti-aircraft fire was generally meager and inaccurate.

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“RCM picked up definite evidence of gun laying radar equipment in the target area and one aircraft which bombed approximately half an hour later with aircraft of another group reported antiaircraft fire as moderate and generally accurate.

“None of our aircraft sustained any battle damage and all returned safely to base without incident with the last aircraft landing at 0906Z.”*

*Narrative Summary from 40th Group Mission Report.

Strike photos indicate that the 40th Group formation dropped an excellent pattern north of the aiming point, but still within the target area.

On 18 March shortly before midnight a Weather-Photo Recon plane took off for Singapore but was forced to return with one propeller feathered a few hours later.

On the evening of 19 March a British ENSA troop gave a fine show at the Amphi Theater. The appearance of five girls in the cast more than made up for the few gags that were incomprehensible to an American audience.

At 2330 that night a B-29 took off for, once again, weather and photo reconnaissance of the Singapore area. Unfortunately it was necessary to feather one prop and turn back when only 80 miles from Singapore. The plane landed safely at Chakulia at 1640 that afternoon after a flight of almost 1800 nautical miles on three engines.

By Twentieth Air Force Special Orders No 12, dated 19 March (Incl 2) Maj Joseph D. White, Group Air Inspector, was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and Capt Michael T. Reid, Group Navigator, and Capt Richard J. Seebach, Group Bombardier, were promoted to the grade of Major.

Early in the morning of 20 March four B-29's flown by lead crews took off from Chakulia for the Marianas via Luliang, China. It is expected that these crews will be able to pass on all they have learned from the XXI Bomber Command when the 40th arrives in the POD. Later in the month it was learned that one of these planes, piloted by Maj Donald A. Roberts (45th Squadron), lost two engines on take off from Luliang (thought to be due to water in the gasoline), necessitating the jettisoning of all loose equipment including every bit of personal luggage. Maj Roberts, who is considered to be one of the best pilots in the Group, managed to bring the plane around to a safe landing; however, it was said that the crew took off again later with little more in their possession than the clothes they were wearing.

At 0400 hours on the evening of 22 March 24 crews were briefed for another mission to the dump area near Rangoon. Takeoffs began two hours and 40 minutes later.

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March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

“In accordance with Field Order #45, XX Bomber Command, dated 20 Mar 45, the 40th Bomb Group dispatched 24 B-29 aircraft to attack dump “C” and “E” in the area north of Rangoon, Burma. All 24 assigned aircraft were airborne with the first aircraft taking off at 220010Z and the last at 220040Z.

“The assigned primary target was bombed by 24 aircraft from 30,000’ pressure altitude in one 12 aircraft formation, one eleven aircraft formation and one individual aircraft in CAVU weather. Due to the large amount of trail inherent in the M-18 type bomb added to the difficulty of distinguishing bomb bursts from this altitude, there were no accurate observations of bomb impacts. Strike photos, however, indicated that the 735 M-18 type incendiary clusters, fused instantaneous nose and tail with clusters fused to break 471/2 seconds after release, covered the target area which was completely hidden by dense smoke.

“No fighter opposition was encountered and antiaircraft fire while moderate in intensity was generally low.

“All aircraft returned safely to base with the last aircraft landing at 220722Z.”*

*Narrative summary from Group Mission Report.

It may be noted from the above that the 24 B-29’s were airborne in 30 minutes, all 24 bombed the primary target and all 24 returned safely to Chakulia without incident despite the strain put on the engines of climbing almost continuously from take off to the assembly point.

Photographs taken from the planes of another group which arrived over the target area about two hours after our attack indicated extensive damage. (The 40th alone was assigned one particular section of the dump area).

On 27 March another Weather-Photo Reconnaissance sortie was flown to Singapore. The plane returned safely to Chakulia without incident.

Similarly another sortie was flown to Singapore on the 28th. Again there were no unusual occurrences and the plane returned safely to base.

By Twentieth Air Force, Special Orders No 12, dated 28 Mar, (Incl 3) Capt Frank W. McWalters, Group Adjutant, was promoted to the grade of Major.

At 1556 hours on 29 March 15 planes were dispatched for a low-level night attack on the oil storage facilities at Bukum Island just south of Singapore Island. This was to be the Group’s first night bombing attack since the Palembang and Nagasaki missions of 10 August 44.

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March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

“In accordance with Field Order #49, XX Bomber Command, dated 26 March 45 the 40th Bomb Group dispatched 15 B-29 aircraft to attack oil storage facilities on Bukum Island SSW of Singapore, Malaya.

“Of 15 aircraft assigned 14 aircraft were airborne in 21 minutes with the first aircraft taking off at 0926Z. One aircraft started take off but was forced to cut engines on the roll due to drop in manifold pressure and delayed take off approximately 5 minutes.

“Of the 14 aircraft airborne one was forced to jettison bombs in the Bay of Bengal and return to base due to mechanical failure.

“13 aircraft bombed the assigned primary target from 5000' pressure altitude dropping a total of 115 M-64 fused .1 sec nose, non-delay tail and 24 M-76 fused non-delay nose and tail. Observed bombing results were excellent and it is felt that very considerable damage was accomplished.

“No fighter opposition was encountered and only meager and inaccurate antiaircraft fire was reported.

“This was the first bombing mission in which this group has employed such low altitude levels and results were very gratifying. All aircraft returned safely to base without incident, although one aircraft was forced to land at Chittagong and one at Kharagpur for additional fuel. The last aircraft landed at B-4 at 0804Z.”*

*Narrative Summary from Group Mission Report.

Post mission photos revealed nine storage tanks destroyed with probably five to seven damaged, bearing out the crews observations of flames billowing hundreds of feet into the air during the attack. Some damage was also inflicted on miscellaneous buildings and wharf facilities.

The state of morale in the 40th Group can best be exemplified by quoting a paragraph of a letter received from the Office of Chief Base Censor, India Burma Theater, subject Information Report, dated 3 April 1945:

“The personal opinions expressed by members of your Command indicate that food and mess facilities are good. Religious facilities, PX supplies, quarters and hospital and medical care appear to be adequate. The Red Cross establishment in the area drew very favorable comments. Movies are highly spoken of and the recent picture, “To Have and Have Not”,* seemed to be a favorite. In general, the morale of your men seems to be very good.”

*Staring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall.

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March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

Enclosed with this installment of the History are Special Orders having to do with personnel of this Group not mentioned above (Incls 4 & 5) and General Orders having to do with awards made during March. (Incls 6, 7 & 8). Also enclosed are snapshots of Red Cross personnel at this Base (Photos 1 & 2), a photograph of Group S-2 personnel, (Photo 3) and a print showing the Group Officers Club (Photo 4). All photos are fully identified on the backs of the prints.

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TRAINING

a. The following listed subjects were taught during the month of March to personnel as indicated.

<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>PERSONNEL</u>
B-3 Drift Meter	Navigator
Emergency Ditching Procedures	All Combat Crew Members
Flight Engineers Manual	P, CP, FE.
Tactical Doctrine	All Combat Crew Members
Celestial Navigation	Navigators
Weather	Pilots & Co-Pilots
Output and Endurance	P, CP, FE
Cruise Control	P, CP, FE
Weights and Balance	P, CP, FE
Parachute Over Water Bailout	All Combat Crew Members
Orientation	All Combat Crew Members
Icing	Pilots and Co-Pilots
Radar Orientation	Radar Operators
Operation of Aerial Cameras	Radar Operators
General Procedures and Tactical Missions	P, CP, N, RO, B.
Ditching – One Man Life Raft	All Combat Crew Members
Operating Procedures & Emergency Procedures	P, CP, FE
Smoke Grenades	Navigators
Aircraft Recognition	P, CP, N, B, FE, CFC, RG, LG, TG
Mission Preparation	Bombardiers
Radar-Nav-Bomb.-Co-ordination	N, B, V.
Pneumatic Bomb Bay Doors	All Combat Crew Personnel
Flt Maint. On AN/APQ-13	Radar Operators
Three Engine Operation	Flight Engineers
Bomb Handling and Fuzing	Bombardiers
IFF	P, CP, N, B, V, R.
Aerial Cameras & Bomb Run Procedure	Radar Operators

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March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

SUBJECT

In Flight Weather Reports
Drift
Corner Reflector for Life Rafts

PERSONNEL

Co-Pilots
Radar Operators
Radar Operators

(1) Approximately 85% of all personnel scheduled for classes attended. Those not attending were either doing priority maintenance on aircraft, on pass, or preparing for a mission.

(2) Total Man Hours for class held in March was 4608.

(3) Synthetic Trainers were only operated part of the month of March. The Gunnery Trainer was discontinued as of 7 March, the 7-A3 Bomb Trainer and the A-2 Bomb Trainers were discontinued as of 17 March 1945. All Synthetic Trainers were discontinued due to orders for packing and shipping of same. Man Hours for each trainer for March 1945 were as follows:

7-A3 Bomb Trainer – 69 Man Hours
A-2 Bomb Trainer – 43 Man Hours
Gunnery Trainer - - - 86 Man Hours

b. Notable changes in Air Training during March were the Formation Practice Bombing Flights consisting of twelve (12) ship formations. Also, newly inaugurated in March were the Night Practice Missions with the end in view of perfecting procedures for night operations. A total of 1800 practice bombs were dropped on 165 practice bombing missions. Hours of flying training totaled 840:30.

c. Special emphasis was placed this month on Aircraft Recognition and Emergency Ditching and Bailout Procedures Over-Water.

d. There was only one course conducted during March by instructors from outside of the Group. A class on IFF was conducted by Capt Mitchell of the XX Bomber Command on 20 March 1945. Class was attended by all combat crew members except Flight Engineers and Gunners.

c. No particular difficulties were noted during March.

PERSONNEL

Maj William M. Hilt, 0393018 (0141) asgd Hq 58th Bomb Wing – SO 73 Hq XX Bomber Command, dated 14 Mar 45.

1st Lt Chester M. McKinney, 0856093 (0141) asgd 40th Bomb Group from 444th Bomb Group per SO 73, Hq XX Bomber Command, dated 14 Mar 45.

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March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

Capt Donald L. Stumpff, 0855558 (0141) asgd from 44th Bomb Squadron per SO 52, Hq 40th Bomb Group, dated 16 Mar 45.

Capt Donald L. Stumpff, 0855558 (0141) appointed Group Radar Officer (Primary Duty) per SO 52, Hq 40th Bomb Groups, dated 16 Mar 45.

Maj Joseph D. White, 0398590 (2161) and 1st Lt Daniel Reuther Jr., 0582299 (0200) DS enroute DUVA.

PROMOTIONS

Maj Joseph D. White, 0398590, promoted to Lt Col AUS, per para 1 SO 12, 20th Air Force, date of rank 19 Mar 45.

Capt Michael I. Reid, 0438233, promoted to Maj AUS, per para 1 SO 12, 20th Air Force, date of rank 19 Mar 45.

Capt Richard J. Seebach, 0431756, promoted to Maj AUS, per para 1, SO 12, 20th Air Force, date of rank 19 Mar 45.

ASSIGNMENTS

Capt Robert G. Gresham Jr., 0433510 (1093) asgd and jd fr XX Bomber Command Area Det #1 per para 9 SO 78 – Hq XX Bomber Command – EDC – 14 Mar 45 Camp AC.

1st Lt Chester M. McKinney, 0856093 (0141) asgd 44 Bomb Squadron per VOCO 14 Mar 45 – CMR by SO 54 Hq 40th Bomb Group, dated 18 Mar 45.

Capt Robert G. Gresham Jr., 0433510 (1093) asgd 25th Bomb Squadron per VOCO 21 Mar 45 – CMR by SO 56 Hq 40th Bomb Group dated 21 Mar 45.

Total Strength of Group 31 Mar 45

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OFFICERS: 394

ENLISTED MEN: 1739

MEDICAL

a. The health of the command is excellent. There has been a very minimum of illness among the personnel during this period.

b. On 21 March 1945 while the combat crews were loading bombs for a mission on the next day, five men were injured when bombs accidentally released dropping from the bomb bays.

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March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

Four such accidents occurred. Two of the men were hospitalized for treatment. 1st Lt Sam J. Duva of the 45th Bomb Squadron was seriously injured. He incurred a fractured skull, fractured nose and multiple fractures of the facial bones. While his condition is still serious he has progressed favorably and the prognosis is good. 1st Lt John H. Dannan of the 44th Bomb Squadron received a laceration of the cheek which was sutured and has healed nicely. The other men received only minor injuries.

c. There has been no improvement in medical facilities during this month. The Base and 28th Service Group Dispensaries are still operated with limited supplies and facilities because most of the medical equipment and supplies have been shipped.

d. The sanitary conditions about the base are satisfactory. Mosquito and fly control are good.

e. There were no medical problems or difficulties encountered.

ORDNANCE

1. The activities of the Ordnance Section 40th Bombardment Group during the period of 1 March to 31 March 1945 included the following:

A. Bomb Loads for Missions.

1. 2 March 1945: 96 500lb G.P. demolition bombs.

2. 12 March 1945: 72 500lb G.P. demolition bombs and 24 500lb Incendiary bombs.

3. 17 March 1945: 836 260lb Fragmentation bombs.

4. 21 March 1945: 764 500LB aimable clusters of 386lb incendiary bombs.

5. 30 March 1945: 128 500lb G.P. demolition bombs, and 28 500lb Incendiary bombs.

B. Use of Combat Crews in "BOMBING UP" operation. On all of the missions mentioned above combat crew members were used in bomb handling and loading operations. In cases where 500lb G.P. and incendiary bombs were employed bomb trailers were loaded by machinery in the ammunition area by munitions workers under the supervision of the Group Ordnance Officer. Whenever cluster and fragmentation types of munitions were employed the job of loading trailers were undertaken by combat crew personnel. Ordnance munitions workers of which there were four (4) available prepared the fuzes and other required components under the supervision of the Group Ordnance Officer.

Loading of bombs into airplanes was accomplished by combat crew members under the supervision of the bombardiers. Fuzing of bombs after completion of loading operation was accomplished by both Ordnance personnel and combat crews.

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March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

C. MALFUNCTIONS

1. Ammunition.

a. Two similar malfunctions occurred with the T39E-1 mechanical time fuze used with the 500lb incendiary clusters. The malfunctions occurred when bombardiers were removing seals and cotter pins after take-off. During this operation two time release plunger brackets were pulled from the fuse body allowing the time mechanism to function. As both of the fuses were unarmed, no functioning occurred. One fuze was disposed of by unscrewing it and throwing it from the aircraft. In the other instances, the bombardier being unfamiliar with the action of the fuze advised the pilot to release the entire bomb load from the bomb bay in which the incident occurred.

b. Although not caused by material malfunction several 500lb incendiary clusters were dropped during loading operations in preparation for the mission on which they were used. This cluster due to its unusual center of gravity present difficulty in loading. During loading operations hoist cables were allowed to foul the release arms on clusters already hung, thereby releasing them. One member of the crews engaged in leading operations was seriously injured by one of these falling clusters. All personnel were warned and instructed in safety precautions to be observed before loading operations were resumed.

2. Weapons.

No malfunctions reported.

C. AUTOMOTIVE

Shipping of vehicles to new location has resulted in a rather serious shortage of transportation in the organization. Also preparations for movement has definitely curtailed maintenance and inspection facilities for the remaining vehicles in use.

D. NEW DEVELOPMENTS

No information to be reported at this time.

TECHNICAL INSPECTIONS

1. Due to the impending move inspection reports were only submitted on airplane inspections.
2. Irregularities noted on the line area and within the other activities were taken up each day during the staff meeting with the Group Commander and the Squadron Commanders.

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March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

Follow-up inspection proved that this method obtained excellent results. It was noted that airplane maintenance generally was on an upward trend.

3. The following discrepancies were the most commonly noted on the airplanes:

a. Rudder and elevator tabs universal and bushings worn, causing excessive play in tabs.

b. Vacuum air filter intake screen dirty. T. O. requires internal elements to be removed and cleaned.

c. Cabin pressure regulator screens not cleaned at 100 hour inspections as instructed on Page 522 of T. O. 01-20EJ-2. It is believed that the accomplishment of this preventive maintenance will eliminate irregular cabin pressure.

d. End straps were found loose on bomb bay tanks. In reference to T. O. 01-20EJ-Z, the cables should be adjusted evenly to tension of 85lbs.

e. Failure to comply with T. O. 01-20EJ-96 and TWX #459, XX Bomber Command, was noted on most of the airplanes.

f. Loose bolts and bolts with burned and broken safety wire on turbo superchargers flight hoods was most common defect on all airplanes.

g. On engine change inspections a large number of loose locknuts were found on the throttle and mixture control connecting rods.

RADAR

Personnel:

1. Two replacement crews arrived with Officer Operators, Navigators, MOS 0142 as the assigned Radar Operator. Future replacement crews will have commissioned officers as Radar Operators.

2. Six officer operators, Navigators, MOS 0142 arrived to replace the operators removed from crews already returned to the States.

3. One Navigator - Bombardier – Radar Operator MOS 1038 was re-assigned from primary duty as Navigator to primary duty as Radar Operator.

4. One Navigator MOS 1034 was reassigned as Radar Operator in accordance with his desire.

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March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

Equipment:

1. The maintenance problems of the AN/APQ-13 are becoming nil. Some difficulty was experienced with pressurization of three aircraft on Mission 45 thirty two thousand (32,000) feet true over Rangoon; however, this was the first time the sets were required to operate at that altitude. One pressurization system was modified and operated satisfactorily on a test at 32,000 feet.

Operation:

1. The use of the AN/APQ-13 as a navigational instrument thru storm areas while on bombing missions to Singapore was experienced during the past month. Two to three hours of instrument flying at nite was a common occurrence.

2. The low level attack at 5000 feet on the Bukum Island Fuel Storage at night was conducted as Mission 49. The AN/APQ-13 established the course over the I.P. and the run to the target until it was seen visually at approximately 10 to 15 miles before fires were started. Corrections in course of only one half degree was necessary by several bombardiers. One aircraft developed a bombsight stabilizer malfunction which necessitated the Radar Operator establishing the course while the Bombardier established the rate; the center of impact was 300 feet at three o'clock with only two bombs outside the target area.

The average CE of all radar operators on Halliday Island for the past month was approximately 500 feet at 21,000 feet.

ENGINEERING

1. The following is a brief account of engineering activities for the Month of March 1945.

2. Battle Damage.

a. Mission #41, 2 March 1945.

1. On this mission seven airplanes were hit by flak, six were repaired by the sheet metal department of the 28th Service Group. It was necessary to send airplane #42-24718 to the 22nd Depot Group for repairs because it was hit in twenty-one (21) different places and in every case a structural member was damaged. This airplane will be back about 5 April 1945. The sheet metal department of the 28th Service Group deserves a great deal of credit for the speed and manner in which they repaired the damage. During this time they were short of men and equipment.

3. Parts and equipment giving trouble.

SECRET

SECRET

March 45 History, 40th Bomb Group, APO 631, 3 Apr 45 (Cont'd.)

a. The propeller Governor still is the worst offender causing more aborts than any other one item. Several different modifications and changes in the propeller Governor head are being made at the 22nd Depot Group and in the States.

4. Maintenance Problems.

a. There is nothing outstanding to report on this. The main problem has been shortages of men and supplies.

5. No new planes have been received from the States this month and no new modifications have been made.

6. Operational Damage.

a. While on a practice bombing mission, airplane #42-63555 lost a life raft. The raft hit the horizontal stabilizer and to the right elevator and both were damaged beyond repair.

7. Engine changes during March totaled 37.

8. As of the end of the month 27 of the 38 B-29's were in commission.

GUNNERY

Gunnery this month has very little to report. Five missions were run during the month and fighter interception was nil on all except the Singapore mission of 2 March. Fighters were sighted but they were for the most part low and out of range and did not attempt to intercept the formation.

The Group school has been closed due to movement of the Group; training facilities for gunners are very limited.

The Central Fire Control equipment has held up very well but all equipment is in need of calibration and inspection.

No changes or modifications have been made during the current Month.

F. G. WOOD JR
Captain, Air Corps
Historical Officer