

**331ST  
BOMB  
GROUP**

# 331st Bombardment Group (VH)

## Commanders

Major Williard W. Wilson	July 1944
Lt Col Hadley Saehlenou	July 1944
Col Hoyt L. Prindle	August 1944
Col James N. Peyton	January 1945

## Deputy Commanders

Lt Col Roland J. Barnick	12 May 1945 to 6 November 1945
Lt Col Coleman Stripling	6 December 1945 to deactivation



Colonel James N. Peyton

## Operations Officers

Major Harold E. Moore	12 May 1945 to 24 September 1945
Lt Col John L. McCoy	24 September 1945 to 25 October 1945
Major Harold L. Brown	25 October 1945 to 28 November 1945
Captain Parker F. Jones	28 November 1945 to deactivation

## Data

Activated: July 1944  
U.S. Training Base: McCook, Nebraska  
Deployed to Guam:  
Ground Echelon - April 6, 1945  
(arrived Guam May 11, 1945 - USS Cape Newenham)  
Air Echelon - April/May 1945

## Squadrons

### 355th Bombardment Squadron, 331st Bombardment Group

#### Commanding Officers

Lt Col Willard W. Wilson	12 May 1945 to 10 October 1945
Major Harold L. Brown	10 October 1945 to 26 October 1945
Captain Roy C. Dossey	26 October 1945 to 26 November 1945
Captain Herbert B. Olson	26 November 1945 to deactivation

#### Operations Officers

Major Henry A. Laughlin	12 May 1945 to 1 October 1945
Major Harold L. Brown	1 October 1945 to 10 October 1945
Captain Daniel D. Smith Jr.	10 October 1945 to 26 November 1945
1st Lt Douglas E. Strong	26 November 1945 to 3 December 1945
1st Lt Jack R. Armstrong	3 December 1945 to deactivation

### 356th Bombardment Squadron, 331st Bombardment Group

#### Commanding Officers

Lt Col Andrew F. Gordon	12 May 1945 to 25 October 1945
Captain Berthold F. J. Kuehler	25 October 1945 to 26 November 1945
1st Lt Harold G. Slipp	26 November to deactivation

#### Operations Officers

Major Russell F. Ireland	12 May 1945 to 18 September 1945
Captain Herbert E. Hentschel	18 September 1945 to 28 November 1945
1st Lt George M. Withee Jr.	28 November 1945 to 6 December 1945
1st Lt Forrest W. Jewell	6 December 1945 to deactivation

### 357th Bombardment Squadron, 331st Bombardment Group

#### Commanding Officers

Lt Col Gerald J. Crosson	12 May 1945 to 13 October 1945
Major Howard R. Blomstom	13 October 1945 to 26 November 1945
Captain Malcolm L. Morton	26 November 1945 to deactivation

#### Operations Officers

Major Robert E. Bohan Jr.	12 May 1945 to 13 October 1945
Captain Fay E. Allen	13 October 1945 to 27 November 1945
1st Lt John D. Hayes	27 November 1945 to 14 December 1945
1st Lt Paul V. Mooty	14 December 1945 to deactivation

## HISTORY OF 331ST BOMB GROUP

by  
Clarence M. Juett—Group Historian

### IN THE BEGINNING THERE WAS DALHART, TEXAS—

The 331st Bombardment Group (VH) was activated at Dalhart, Texas, on 7, July 1944 and for Mobilization and Specialized training purposes attached to the Second Air Force.

Colonel Hoyt C. Prindle was our first CO. From July to November we grew from a cadre of 280 to a sizable 1400. Both the spokes and wheels rolled in, and the Group staff and staffs of the 355th, 356th, and 357th Squadrons were nearly complete; the 30th Photo Lab was attached, and personnel rosters of the ground echelon were almost filled. In fact, all we lacked were the B-29's and crew to put them in the air.

Second Air Force called the first six months the development stage. We gave it several other names at the time, according to our mood. There was basic training, including a bivouac and close order drill. (We found the same old name for that). On the other hand, there were many cross-countries and the Ice Follies for the lucky ones, and a little TD or DS all over the country. Everyone and his dog went to at least one school, even the cooks, at least that's how it looked in the locator.

Early September, 1944 after a memorable three days and four nights in a troop train rolling across the Gulf Coast, key personnel of the group arrived at Orlando, Florida. Group and Squadron Staffs with their enlisted section chiefs, sweated out two weeks in Very Heavy bombardment tactics, staff planning and individual departmental refresher courses. Then we moved down into the fetid swamps of Pinecastle (foregoing most of the Orlando night courses), where under simulated combat conditions, we flew the B-24's and went through the whole routine of a bombardment mission from the Field Order to the Mission Report Stage. A special AAFSAT staff served as a higher headquarters and issued our Field Orders, and critiqued our effort. We learned staff coordination and got to know one another better in the process.

### Somewhere in the Second Air Force

We moved from Dalhart and trained at McCook, Nebraska North Platte 72 miles—Denver 240 miles on 27, November 1944 the first crews checked in from Alamogordo training base, and on 7 December, at a ceremony at Colorado Springs, Wing Commander General Armstrong received the Wing colors, and in turn presented the colors to the 331st Bomb Group.

The Ninth Bomb Grp. 313th Bomb Wing still had all of the B-29's tied up in December, but ground school schedules were relentlessly pursued. Many of us got leaves at Christmas, and some put our holiday in on the base.

Personnel filtered back from the specialist schools and we were waiting for 1 January, 45, when the last of the Ninth would be gone and we could begin our training.

The base facilities became ours on 1 January. On 24 January, 1945, Colonel James N. Peyton came from Clovis Army Air Base to relieve Colonel Prindle as Group Commanding Officer.

We received the new 315th Wing Directive and some of our crew members were scratched. We learned about the Super ship and Wing's startling mission. (So did everyone in McCook). Radar, 3000 milers, and later, Kansas City Kitty became our primary concerns. A 'round the clock' schedule of briefings and interrogations began and training hours flown looked impressive despite the snow and Nebraska weather. Our camera bombing at 30,000 feet called for as many as four targets in four cities, keeping the crews long hours at altitude. We were told to get it down — to twenty-five and twenty thousand feet. The number of scheduled missions increased steadily, complicating both ground and flying training. We were assigned Radar Observers, who, as they started flying with their crews, were pulled out again for a special course at Victorville, California. And so it went....

### AND JAMAICA, TOO

While adjustments in ideas and tactics were being made an advance party went to Vernam Field, Jamaica, to check the area for the proposed Gypsy Task Force set-up, of which we were to be a part.

Group flying was limited by the prohibition against night use of the field because of the mountainous terrain. By March the plan was in effect and engineering crews flew down to set up shop. On 9 March the first crews flew to "Handicap", as we called it, and began round-robin missions to the Gulf and Atlantic Coasts, simulating tropical conditions of operation and the radar approaches to Japan.

We flew an experimental Wing Mission for the first time with some success. Most of the time was piled up in gunnery and radar bombing through the dense cumulus of the Caribbean.

Four shillings worth distant by trolley was Kingston, a city under a hot sun, providing a portion of the color and romance of the West Indies — it says here in small print. The

Riverside Club was a source of never-ending entertainment for crews on pass.

## MANY WERE EXCEPTIONAL

One example (of many) was S/Sgt. Chet Dewey — in the cold miserable, snowy, winter nights at McCook, Nebraska, working outside on the B-29 aircraft was rough — Chet (a person with strong convictions and good common sense) saw how difficult it was for the fellows. He arranged a rotation plan for his shift whereby they worked a while, then went to the hangar for hot coffee for a while. In spite of problems with Superiors and protocol, he stuck with his plan and produced real, on time, quality maintenance. In civilian life after the war, he became a very successful member of the Industrial Engineering division of the company for which he worked.

The real heartache in the development of this history is being unable to tell of all the great guys who did such terrific jobs, and made possible the outstanding record for which the 331st is known. Some of these men later built space shuttles (French and McCarthy, engineering & quality control) and other outstanding things that speak so well of their skills, courage, and determination to do work in spite of any obstacle that might limit the operation to do on time real time quality work! This was true of all sections of ground support. Captain Charles E. Shain as Historian and Group Intelligence officer had this to say of training at McCook at that time:

Not long ago, a group engineering officer told a gathering of his airplane commanders and flight engineers, "This base considers this group as being very cooperative, and God help us if they don't." Men of the McCook Air Field Permanent Party might well have answered: "This base considers this group as being very cooperative and God help us if they don't." Capt. Shain also stated: "The group feels that they have received about the best support offered by any B-29 used in the country. McCook Air Field personnel really knuckled down on the job enabling our group to break all existing training flying time records."

On 5 April, crew 5A 1 was ordered to Grand Island Nebraska. They were to work on the project "Kansas City Kitty" a code name for the secret "Eagle Project" to test the APQ-7 radar bombing equipment. Their testing was so successful that they received a commendation for a job well done!

## THE GROUND ECHELON LEFT FIRST

### ONE REALLY WANTED TO GO WITH US EVEN THOUGH UNCLE SAM SAYS NO

#### AND HE DID TOO:

S/Sgt. Harry Rudolph, 66, was a veteran of three wars (Philippines Insurrection under Gen. MacArthur and in World War I as a bayonet instructor in France). According to the medical officer, "The sergeant is as fit as a man 30 years his junior." Permission was granted to the sergeant's request by Gen. H. Arnold upon the condition he was physically qualified. He passed with room to spare. He was a mess sergeant and when the ground echelon orders to sail were cut, HE WAS ON THE LIST.

On 7 April 1945, two trainloads of ground echelon, commanded by Lt. Col. George Mackey left McCook, Nebraska bound for Seattle, Washington for overseas processing. After five days of train travel we walked up the gangways to the cramped quarters of USAT Cape Newenham to begin the thirty two day voyage to the theater of operations.

Shipboard duties were assigned, but no one was kept so busy as to be neglectful of griping under the crowded conditions. The blare of the ship's loudspeaker, boat drills, salt water showers and the continuous chow line became routine, and monotonous.

After ten days the ship rounded Diamond Head and dropped her hook at Pearl, where all hands had a look at Honolulu. Five days later the ship moved on to Eniwetok and Guam, to the surprise of those who were prepared to disembark on Tinian.

Morale problems were no greater than anticipated. The usual shipboard rumors of trailing submarines, the Captain's leprosy and the high life of the officers went the rounds. Nerves got ragged, and the contrasts between officer and enlisted conditions became greatly magnified, but all survived the trip safely.

At Apra Harbor, LST's dumped us in the water to struggle ashore with equipment. The well developed port prepared everyone for a well-built area, but Northwest Field was only a hole in the jungle. No vehicles were available at first and things were rough. There wasn't even any icewater! The necessity of making camp raised flagging morale and the men set to work with a will and machete to clear the jungle for a camp area.

Latrines and a tent-top mess had been set up in

advance along with the wall tents which were to serve as homes until the main area had been finished. The greatest problem was obtaining necessary lumber for construction, after moonlight requisition was officially frowned upon. Bomb crates became the chief source of lumber.

We were on "C" rations for the first six days, but as ranges and mess gear arrived we went on the "B" rations and the food improved considerably. An officers' mess was set up, as well as a PX where coke and beer rations were distributed. As routine overcame newness and we became accustomed to shortages, life became less irregular.

Ingenuity in adapting to conditions was exhibited in the tent area. Helmet wash stands, chairs, bureaus, fancy beds and other conveniences were built in the evenings and in time off.

A tent chapel was set up and regular services held by both Chaplains. The various organizations set up their own headquarters and began to function as units.

Work on the new area, mess halls, barracks, etc., had begun and was well under way by the time the first air crews were leaving Mather Field. The ground echelon had fulfilled its function and was prepared to start the combat group into action.

## **THE AIR ECHELON ARRIVE!! COL. JAMES (JUNGLE JIM) AND CREW ARRIVE**

It was early afternoon of 23 June, 1945, along the one completed strip at Northwest Field, waited four jeeploads of Group ground echelon officers and men. A virgin B-29 without markings swung into the traffic pattern, settled to the strip and taxied to the ramp. The jeeps, led by Lt. Col. George Mackey, trailed the ship to a halt.

An airman dropped through the plane's nose wheel well, grinned at the welcoming committee, and greeted Col. Mackey, "George, that ocean's big!" Col. Peyton had arrived on Guam.

With him, 6000 miles and 28 Superfortress hours from the USA, was the Group's first combat crew to reach the base, a 356th crew flown by Captain Julius H. Baughn. The event meant the Group was almost ready to start its aerial offensive against Japan.

Through July and into August, they kept rolling in, one by one. By June 30th, eight crews had flown in from Sacramento's Mather Field. It had been a long time since the start from Herrington, Kansas, for staging and the beginning of the momentous journey, but now we were on the way

toward fulfillment of the Group mission, begun at Dalhart and Florida, prepared for in Nebraska and Jamaica, and to be completed at Guam.

## **PATTERN OF A MISSION**

At 1000 Guam time, X XXXX 1945, two teletype messages came in from Wing one, a Warning Order to begin intensive target study on the Ube Coal Liquefaction plant; the other a bomb-loading order. Operations, Intelligence, Engineering and Ordnance went to work. Jobs were assigned the briefing teams who went to Wing Photo Intelligence to prepare the target material while Operations planned details. Target classes for bombardiers and radar observers were scheduled for that evening; mission folders with maps and radar scope photos were prepared, and at 2000 a Wing Briefing took place, where Group staffs got details of the Wing effort. The mission had begun in the planning room of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of allied nations in Washington, where priority targets, selected on the basis of their importance to Japanese war economy by experts in economic and strategic warfare, were assigned to 20th Air Force, and in turn to the 315th Wing for destruction.

Aiming points, axis of attack and target identification were stressed in target study classes by Bombardment, Radar and Intelligence. All the night crews sweated over ships on the line, 16 and far into the daylight Ordnance was loading the last bombs. Then, at noon, crews piled into trucks for Wing Briefing, where final details were briefed by the staff. Specialized briefings and the late chow followed.

The mission was set — with Zero Hour 1630. By 1500 crews were on the line checking equipment and running up engines. By 1615 a long line of aircraft stood poised on the ramp, fans turning, and at 1630 the line began to move slowly into position. Men watched them move onto the runway, ducking the pulverized coral blast from the prop wash. On the two runways — 30 seconds apart, ships lumbered down the asphalt, lifted off and disappeared in the distance over the cliff and out to sea and the Empire. Over the sea forever, past Saipan, Tinian and Iwo — point of no return — with only ASR somewhere below, you roared on in the blackness; then, in from the sea, picking your way through searchlights, groping in the night. Flak bursts followed your flight — then the first blaze of the target, if you were early, or the red glow if you came late. Steady on course until bombs away, with a quick turn and drop — back that long, black alley to the first dawn over Iwo and home after seventeen hours. By eight o'clock you were shuffling up with Hot News into interrogation past the Red Cross canteen for doughnuts and coffee with that medicinal shot. Questions finally answered, you tried to get back to the tents and sleep. That's how it was, and two hours afterwards, with the last report filed, the Ube Mission had become a matter of record. Eighty-six percent of bombs found target, target

smashed and sunk, no losses....NEXT.

## NEWS OF THE END OF THE WAR COMES TO THE GROUND PERSONNEL

Even though most men were asleep when the news was received, the good news spread like wild fire through the camp. In the surrounding area, flares were being fired and small arms cracked. To avoid any possible danger, Col. Peyton talked to the men on the Public Address system.

The talk began, "This is 'Jungle Jim', men." This was all that was needed. The group was pretty proud of their "Jungle Jim" and they listened. Col. Peyton thanked them for a job well done, told them that it still wasn't the end and much work lay ahead. The camp quieted down immediately and people went back to bed, each one thanking God in his own way and dreaming of home. Yes, a new high in morale had been reached.

## THEN THE WAITING AND SPECIAL MISSIONS:

### The Wilson Brothers to the rescue of their Father

Section "B" Chief M/Sgt. Clarence (Whitey) Juett and the Slicker 4's crew was called up by their CO, Lt. Col. W. W. Wilson, and given instructions to prep. the airplane for a special mission to the Far Eastern Air Force at Manila.

Lt. Col. Wilson's Father had been taken prisoner of war at Bataan and was held in a camp at Muckden, Manchuria. Wilson's brother, Col. A.T. Wilson who was Gen. LeMay's Chief Communications Officer had received an OK to take a B-29 and crew to locate and pick up their father.

After receiving approval from Gen. Kenney at FEAF and having made an unsuccessful attempt to clear with Gen. MacArthur (who was far too busy at the time to talk with the Wilson Boys (their father had served with him), and the Aide remarked that if it were he, he would load up supplies and go! They took off and eventually found their father, Col. A.T. Wilson, Sr. and returned with him along with other POW's.

### POW SUPPLY MISSIONS

All POW missions were flown by wing directive but there was considerable planning necessary at Group level due to the individual briefing and planning necessary.

The first stage of planning these missions involved sending aircraft to the Philippines to pick up cargo chutes

used to drop supplies. These chutes were then flown to Saipan and all ships were loaded there. The ships then flew back to Guam and were assigned targets on which to make their drops.

The following table will show the statistics involved in these missions for the group:

Planes loaded at Saipan — 34

<u>Targets</u>	<u>No. of planes</u>	<u>No. of Packages</u>
Niigata Sub Cam #5	4	144
Narumi	5	180
<u>Targets</u>	<u>No. of planes</u>	<u>No. of Packages</u>
Mukaishima	36	1
Minato-Ku	324	9
281	36	1
276	36	1
Ube #1	162	6
Ube #2	180	6
Ube #3	18	1

The operation from the Bombadier's view point, presented quite a shift from the war time bomb drop. A case in point, Clayton Bisnett said that he feared those drops more than any he had made, due to the fear that he might make a drop which could injure or kill POW's.

## AND OTHER CHANGES WERE MADE

### SCHEDULED INSPECTIONS SECTION (PLM)

Shortly after cessation of hostilities, a point system for rotation was devised. Many personnel packed their barracks-bags preparatory to "going home".

In Mid-October of 1945, the rotation system was effected and personnel began to head stateside

The effect of this movement was to seriously drain ground crew manpower necessary to maintain the Super-Fortresses (B-29). No longer was it possible to effectively provide each aircraft with its own maintenance crew and perform their normal functions.

To lessen the impact on the maintenance crews, an area previously occupied by the old Section B Maintenance Section was utilized by a new unit to be known as the Scheduled Inspections Section. All inspections to be performed on aircraft assigned to the 331st Bomb Group were to be performed by the new unit instead of the individual crew assigned to a particular aircraft. The new unit was placed under the direction of Lt. Paul L. Wickham and Technical Sergeant Chester R. Dewey. Manpower from the 355th, 356th, and 357th Bomb Squadrons were joined in this unit.

The unit served its purpose with distinction and received numerous favorable comments from aircrew who had approached the idea of such a unit with trepidation.

As the rotation system gathered speed and manpower of all manner continued to deplete the ranks of the 331st, it became necessary to increase the functions of the Scheduled Inspections Sections into that of Production Line Maintenance.

The PLM System remained in effect until manpower losses decreed the deactivation of the 331st Bomb Group and its remaining personnel were assimilated into the 501st Bomb Group.

In February 1946, all 331st Bomb Group airplanes were transferred permanently to the 501st Bomb Group (Reference par. 1, Operations Order 8, 315th Bomb Wing, dated 23 March 1946.) Transfer was actually made before formal orders were issued.

I. AIRCRAFT LOSSES. NEGATIVE!!!!

28 February 1946 331st consisted of 1 Officer & 1 EM  
31 March 1946 331st consisted of 4 Officers & 4 EM  
15 April 1946 —————INACTIVATED—————

## POSTSCRIPT

This history does not even come close to giving credit to the ground echelon for their hard work, dedication, application of good common sense to their work, (sometimes to the point that they were in violation of protocol and at odds with superiors) in order to get jobs done safely, well and on time.

One only needs to look at the record the Group set in no aircraft losses, etc. That could only be done with the best

of maintenance & Aircrews. To do that under the conditions which they had to work, coupled with the B-29 being a new aircraft and having engines that were prone to cylinder failure and other new development type problems, is proof that the ground crews did an excellent job.

Also, there are all the other support sections that have received very little praise for a job well done — that is the real heartache in doing this job, not being able to really do justice to all.

The content of the history of the 331st Bombardment Group (VH) are not those exclusively of the Group Historian, but are an amalgamation of his efforts combined with those of a history prepared by Group Intelligence in 1945. Additionally, a good number of Group Members made contributions for which we offer our appreciation.

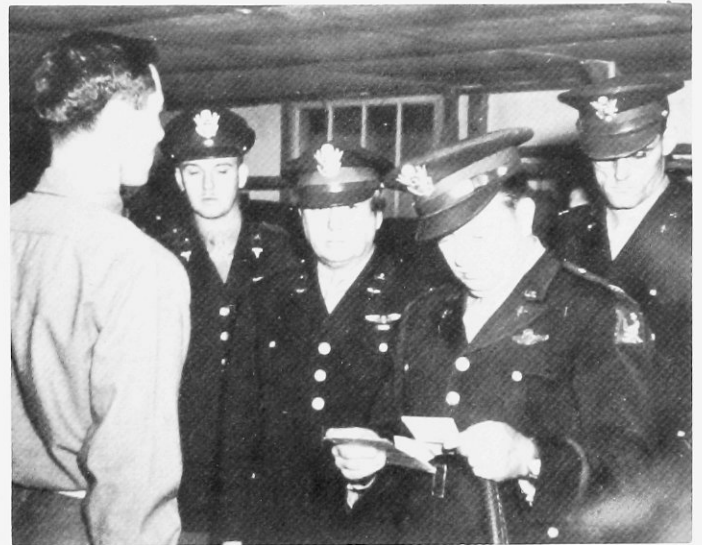
The following helped with this project: My son Dusty Baker — without his help with the word processing, I could never have made it. Chet Dewey, whose leadership and guidance carried me through — and others who provided input (pictures, orders, etc.) for the air crews — Ray Buechel, Hugh T. Dutter, George Withee, Clarence A. Rick, Ted Incontro, Joe Levin, Howard Blomstrom, Charles R. Frey, Herb Olson, John M. Harkins, Ed Murray, Larry McCarthy, Pete Ziner, William A. Duncan, Harold Alford, Henry L. Arkesteyn, Russell L. Bolin, Arthur W. Brown, Paul E. Carey, Leo Griffieon, Robert F. Griffin, Howard R. Paul, William F. Dovalovski, Bill Harlan, Herbert E. Hentschel, Jerry Lantrip, Harold Lyle, John MacAllister, Thomas L. Williams, William F. Scott and others that have helped with pictures and other things, but I have forgotten in the years spent in accumulating this data.

Clarence M. (Whitey) Juett





To New Mexico for Some Rough Training



Group Inspection at Dalhart Texas



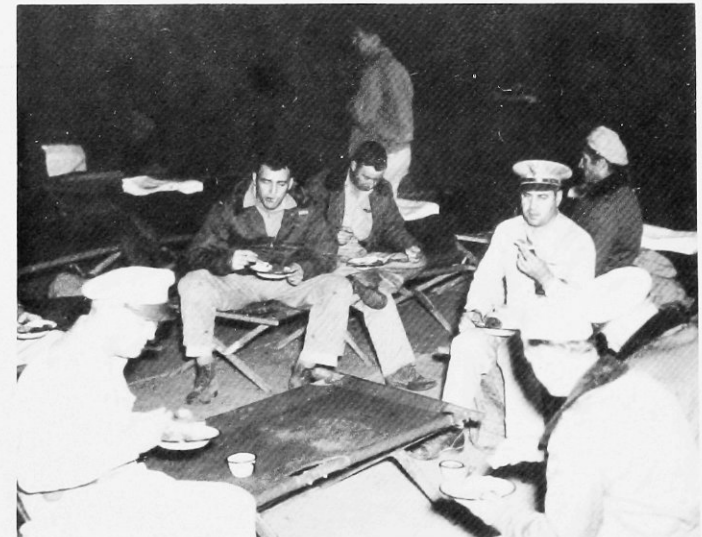
Kansas City Kitty - Test Crew Eagle Project



Chow and Quarters at Hokkaido



Serving it up



Bunk House Hangar Style and A Bit of Nourishment

## 331st Bomb Group



### Kansas City Kitty - Test Crew Eagle Project

(R-L) Capt N. L. Brown, 2nd Lt. E. J. Kirblen, 1st Lt P. E. Carey, 1st Lt Harold Alford, 2nd Lt. W. Dovalosky, Sgt Bob Huffman, S/Sgt J. Hays, Sgt. Aley Putz, Sgt O. v. Buchlew, Sgt E. Brownell. (Lower Row) M/Sgt Joe Levin's Ground Crew



Paul Mooty



Leo Fox



John Molitor



J. Famous

## 331st Bomb Group



Beer Bust



Dave Wilson, Walt Fulley, Evil Kanter, Hank Sampson, Herb Dettmer, Marv Raffell, Orlin Ellis



Christmas Eve 1945

# 331st Bomb Group



Ray Montgomery



J. B. Terry



Franz Dettmer



R. W. Moore - POW Work Crew in Okinawa



Lyle



Eben Cook, Ivan Gulick, Joe Flynn and ?

# 331st Bomb Group



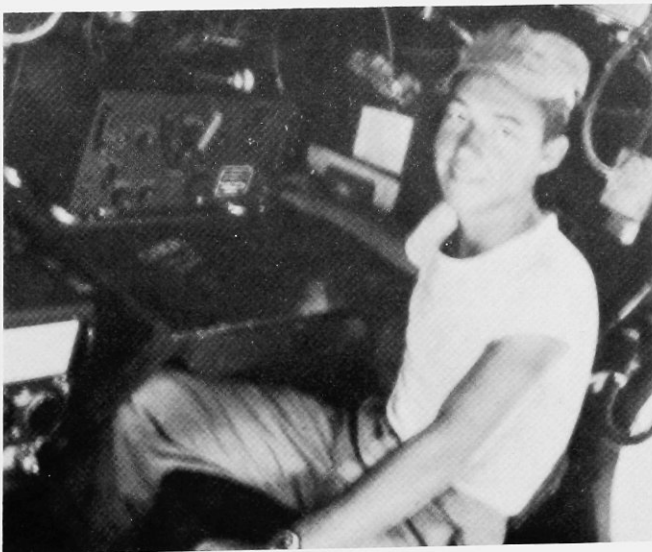
Lt Col Willard Wilson



R. W. Moore, Leo Fox



Joe Dolan



Charley Neal



(Back) Franz Dettmer, Hank Sampson, Walt Fuller, Olin Ellis (Front) Dave Wilson, Earl Kanter, Marv Raffell, Bill Garrett

# 331st Bomb Group



Brown Memorial Theater



331st Group "Moonshine Raiders"



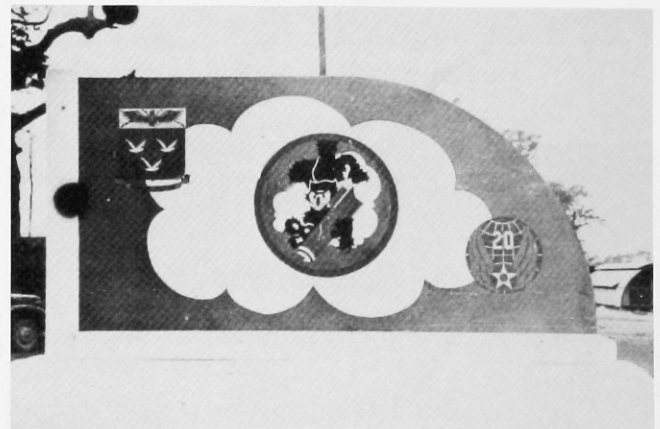
Group Headquarters



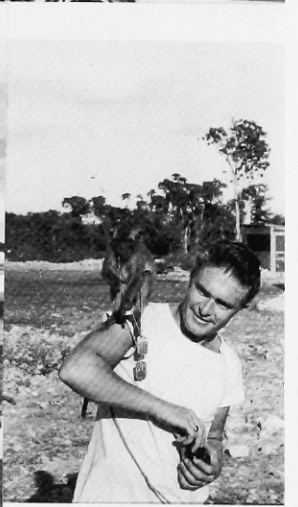
Herb Dettmer, Hank Sampson, Walt Fuller, Olin Ellis  
Dave Wilson, Earl Kanter, Marv Raffell, Bill Garrett



357th Squadron sign



355th Squadron Insignia





GOT TO THE AIRFIELD AND SAW THE MEN



ALSO



HOME ON GUAM-IN THE BEGINNING

