

**501ST  
BOMB  
GROUP**

# 501st Bombardment Group (VH)

## Commanders

Lt Col Harvey R. Striegler	14 April 1945 to 26 May 1945
Colonel Boyd Hubbard Jr	27 May 1945 to 26 September 1945
Colonel William Eades	27 September 1945 to 17 October 1945
Colonel James A. De Marco	18 October 1945 to deactivation



Colonel Boyd Hubbard Jr.

## Deputy Commanders

Lt Col Arch G. Campbell Jr.	19 June 1945 to 2 September 1945
Colonel William Eades	3 September 1945 to 26 September 1945
Lt Col John H. Kunkel Jr.	1 October 1945 to 3 October 1945
Major Julius H. Orpen	4 October 1945 to 25 October 1945
Lt Col John L. McCoy	26 October 1945 to deactivation

## Operations Officers

Lt Col Leo R. McGehee	3 June 1945 to 17 August 1945
Lt Col Robert H. Orr	18 August 1945 to 27 September 1945
Major Julius H. Orpen	28 September 1945 to 3 October 1945
Major John R. McDonald	4 October 1945 to 8 October 1945
Major William L. Braun	9 October 1945 to 23 November 1945
Captain Adiai S. Grove Jr.	24 November 1945 to 26 November 1945
Captain Robert N. Cotanch	27 November 1945 to deactivation

## Data

Activated: 25 May 1944, Dalhart

U.S. Training Base: Harvard, Nebraska

Deployed to Guam:

Ground Echelon - 4 March 1945

(arrived Guam April 14, 1945 - USS Exchange)

Air Echelon - April/May 1945

## Squadrons

### 21st Bombardment Squadron, 501st Bombardment Group

#### Commanding Officers

Major Harry L. Young	14 April 1945 to 1 June 1945
Lt Col John H. Kunkerl Jr.	2 June 1945 to 30 September 1945
Major William L. Braun	1 October 1945 to 8 October 1945
Major Hector R. LeBlanc	9 October 1945 to 25 November 1945
Captain Charles E. Tuttle	26 November 1945 to deactivation

#### Operations Officers

Major Gregory O. Hathaway	28 May 1945 to September 1945
Captain Hector R. LeBlanc	27 September 1945 to 9 October 1945
Captain Charles E. Tuttle	10 October 1945 to 16 November 1945
Captain William R. Conger	17 November 1945 to 3 December 1945
1st Lt Adolph Del Pero	4 December 1945 to 11 December 1945

### 41st Bombardment Squadron, 501st Bombardment Group

#### Commanding Officers

Major Bob R. Lockar	14 April 1945 to 3 June 1945
Major Robert H. Orr	4 June 1945 to 17 August 1945
Major Julius H. Orpen	18 August 1945 to 27 September 1945
Major Howard D. Berkely	28 September 1945 to 16 October 1945
Capt Benjamin H. McCrackin Jr.	7 October 1945 to 25 November 1945
1st Lt Howard H. Bloom	26 November 1945 to deactivation

#### Operations Officers

Captain Howard D. Berkely	22 June 1945 to 19 August 1945
Captain George D. Tanner	20 August 1945 to 4 October 1945
1st Lt Ewing F. Mahone	5 October 1945 to 19 November 1945
1st Lt Christopher A. Sulzbach	20 November 1945 to deactivation

### 485th Bombardment Squadron, 501st Bombardment Group

#### Commanding Officers

Major Charles B. Neville	14 April 1945 to 17 June 1945
Lt Col Franklin M. Cochran	18 June 1945 to 26 September 1945
Major William A. Buechne	27 September 1945 to 14 October 1945
Captain Robert N. Cotanch	15 October 1945 to 26 November 1945
Captain Leonard E. Haley Jr.	27 November 1945 to 11 December 1945
1st Lt Adolph Del Pero	12 December 1945 to deactivation

#### Operations Officers

Major George E. Akerson	24 June 1945 to 15 August 1945
Major James Chasey	16 August 1945 to 13 October 1945
Captain Leonard E. Haley Jr.	14 October 1945 to 30 November 1945
1st Lt Joseph G. Soic	1 December 1945 to deactivation

### 28th Photo Lab

#### Commanding Officers

1st Lt William J. Porter	14 April 1945 to 16 September 1945
Captain Malcolm W. Cass	26 November 1945 to deactivation

## History of 501st Bombardment Group (Very Heavy)

The 501st Bomb Group was constituted on 25 May 1944 at Dalhart, Texas, and activated on 1 June 1944. On 29 June 1944, Capt. Henry E. King, AC as Executive, and Capt. George R. Quick, AC as Adjutant, were the first men to join at the East Field, a satellite of the main Dalhart base. The Group became a part of the 315th Bomb Wing on 17 July 1944. The 28th Photo Squadron and a service group were assigned, and strength was authorized at 317 officers and 1525 enlisted men.

During July, Maj. Julius H. Orpen assumed command, succeeded by Lt. Arch G. Campbell, who reported lack of toilet paper as one of the first problems. Three squadrons were organized: the 21st under Maj. Orpen, the 41st under Maj. Robert H. Orr, and the 485th under Maj. Franklin M. Cochran, Jr. Group operations moved from the East Field to the main base and basic training commenced with completion of the barracks by August 1.

The first air crew was assigned to the 485th on 2 Aug. 1944, Capt. James H. Maclean, AC. Following a four-day bivouac, an advanced echelon was sent to Harvard, NE and on 22 Aug. ground echelons moved to Harvard AAF to begin working with the crews of the 505th Bomb Group, already training for combat operations. Col. Boyd Hubbard, Jr. arrived as Commanding Officer on 11 Aug., proceeding the next day to Orlando, Florida, where the air echelon was moved for further training.

### THE WINTER AT HARVARD

At Harvard AAF, makeshift tent quarters had to be erected and for several months overcrowding of base facilities continued until the 505th deployed overseas. In November the 501st took sole control of the field and the remaining air crews were formed as quickly as possible for B-29 transition training of AC's, pilots and flight engineers in B-17's.

Col. Hubbard received colors and standards for the Group on 7 Dec. at Peterson Field, Colorado, while the Advance (Ground) Echelon completed overseas training under severe weather conditions in Nebraska. By year's end, readiness and movement orders were received and the holidays were celebrated in anticipation of the challenge ahead in the New Year. Group strength reached 349 officers and 1548 enlisted men. Flight training continued in B-17's as no B-29's were available.

### FLIGHT TRAINING IN JAMAICA

Long-range navigation and camera bombing proceeded in January, while radar operators trained at Boca Raton or Victorville on the new APQ-7 "Eagle" equipment. Ground echelons packed and crated 175,000 pounds for overseas movement. In February, they were alerted to move and by March were enroute through Seattle to Guam. Meanwhile, the flight crews trained at Vernam Field, Jamaica, and experience mounted. AC Chuck Miller and crew recount:

*There is the haunting memory of the flight to Jamaica for maneuvers when we lost our number three engine just out of Galveston, Texas and I made the decision to continue on to Jamaica on three rather than try for an emergency landing at night on a strange base. We had our engineering officer aboard as a passenger and he kept insisting that we turn back, and I finally had to tell him that he knew where the back door was and he could leave any time he chose. As we approached Jamaica, we radioed a Mayday request for emergency clearance and were informed to use caution as there was another B-29 on the approach with an engine out. Just S.O.P., I guess. We were informed of a 45 degree cross wind gusting to 30 knots. What we didn't know about in those days was 'wind shear', (this term came along years later.) Just as we were about to break the glide, we got blasted by a wind gust that ballooned us off to the left of the runway approach and over a jungle of trees. Oh, how many times I have thanked my Primary Flight Instructor for teaching me how to side slip the little PT 22. I have relived this approach thousands of nights, cross controlling with full left aileron and full right rudder and we slid right back over the landing pad just clearing the wreckage of the plane in front of us as it had crashed strewing the runway with parts.*

Not all of the crews were so fortunate. On 10 March 1945, AC Valentine Tulla and crew crashed during landing at Alexandria (LA) AAF taking ten lives from the Group. Again, on 10 April, Capt. Charles Hynds and four crew mates died in a crash at McCook, Nebraska. Weather as well as engine failure were frequent hazards during training. AC Glen Clark recalled: "So, we went to Jamaica for overwater navigational, bombing training missions. Our flight plan called for Fort Worth, Texas; Galveston, Texas; Miami, Florida; and then Jamaica. When approaching Fort Worth, we could see a tremendous thunderstorm in our flight path. I requested Air Traffic Control for a change of flight plan to fly around the squall line. They would not approve a change, and ordered me to climb to 27,000 feet where we could then fly over the storm. We climbed to the designated altitude but the storm towered above us at least eight to ten thousand more feet. We tried to get higher but a stubborn turbo said uh-hhh. We proceeded on course to Galveston. I have flown through a lot of severe storms but never anything like that one. We were up 6000 feet per minute, then down 6000 feet per minute. I told Woody, the radar man, to stay with me very

*close and pick out the light and dark spots on the radar scope and steer us through the dark spots. We finally maneuvered through the storm and came out at Galveston. I believe had we not had the radar and a good operator, all our flying careers would have ended right there in that storm.*

In March, AC Allen Titensor and his crew baptized the first of the Group's combat B-29's ROADAPPLE as the craft was received from the Bell-Marietta factory in Georgia. AC William Braun and crew dubbed the second one BEEGAZBURD. Other crews continued to pick up planes or received them later at Harvard AAF. All crews finished training in Jamaica and returned to Harvard AAF, then moved on to staging at Kearney, Nebraska, making some shakedown flights before leaving for the Pacific Theater of Operations in May.

### MOVEMENT TO GUAM

The ground echelon, under command of Lt. Col. Harvey Striegler, arrived on Guam 14 April 1945, and proceeded to Northwest Field where only one latrine was in evidence. That night they ate K-rations and slept on the coral. The next morning, tents were erected and water trailers procured. Within five days, prefabs were erected, including showers. Everyone worked vigorously with the Army Engineers and the Navy Seabees to ready the base for the air crews.

ROADAPPLE arrived on Guam on 26 April and commenced flying from North Field. On 8 May the aircraft was reported missing in action on a daylight mission over the Kawanishi Aircraft Plant at Kobi, Japan, with another B-29 of the 16th Bomb Group, possibly due to icing. Maj. Tom Garrett and Allen Titensor, along with Capt. Luther White, Lts. Sam Chambers and Don Williams, Sgt. Charles Babitsky and Cpls. Perry Florio, Arthur Wilson, Louis Dombroski and Stephen Kaczowka were lost from the 21st Squadron.

As other aircraft transited the Pacific to Guam through Hawaii, Johnson Island and Kwajalein there was a variety of near-mishaps and surprises with the new planes. FOR THE LUVVA OF MIKE had a flaw that the crew picked up on the flight to Hawaii — the right wing was three degrees lower than the left, and the right horizontal stabilizer was three and one-half degrees lower than the left, causing lift on the right side first. AC Miller recalls:

*A test flight was scheduled for the next day and I was to bring along only the necessary crew, radio man, engineer and scanners. We met with a full bird Colonel who was the test pilot, and as I sat in the right seat next to him, I said 'better watch her on take-off Colonel, she'll kick off to the left on you.' You should have seen the look he gave me. The very silent glare spoke loudly as if to say "Don't tell me how to fly an airplane." As we started down the runway, we were suddenly on the taxi strip and that is what we took off from and as we became airborne we were in a bank to the left. The*

*Colonel's startled statement was, "Jesus Christ! This plane is dangerous!" At this point, I regained my confidence and felt I really knew how to fly and no one was going to get into my brain again.*

A decision was made to junk the plane, but the AC refused to allow it and went on to Northwest Field. Other crews encountered a variety of structural and maintenance problems enroute to Guam but all managed to complete the flights. On arrival, most crews had to erect their own tents, for quarters and many basic facilities were still under construction, including runways. American ingenuity and determination quickly converted the jungle habitat into stateside luxuries — easy chairs crafted from bomb crates, showers and a theatre during the interim between arrival and combat. Even the chaplain got into the spirit by whittling the sharp edges off the latrine seats with his knife.

### MORE TRAGEDY IN MAY

On the 25 May, four men of the 485th Squadron were returning from the beach in a weapons carrier. When they entered an area of fumes escaped from a broken aviation gas line, there was an explosion and fire. Pvt. Martin Lantosh and Pfc. George Barna, James McCarthy and R. L. Phillips all died and were buried in Military Cemetery 2 on Guam.

### NORTHWEST FIELD OPERATIONAL

On 1 June, the Group participated in dedicating Northwest Field. Gen. Frank Armstrong landed FLUFFY FUZZ III, the first B-29 on the completed runway. On 15 June, Col. Hubbard's FLEET ADMIRAL NIMITZ was the center of attraction during the visit of Admiral Nimitz and General Arnold to the field. The crew showed the Admiral through his namesake and were honored with five-star insignia on the pilot's upholstery. The five-star insignia on the plane nose commanded fighter-escort respect on subsequent missions.

AC James Mitchell and crew received red carpet treatment at Kwajalein on 11 June, as the 1000th B-29 to deploy from the States to the Marianas. June 15 was a big day at Northwest Field. The enlisted men's barracks, showers, latrines and Mess Hall were completed and occupied. Backup lines and crowding were common at the Mess Hall, however, until the Officers' Mess was completed several months later.

### BRIEFING FOR COMBAT

As the crews arrived they commenced ground school and shakedown missions over Rota, Pajoros and Truk. The field Service Center G was rapidly completed to ready the planes for combat operations. Pilot John Lotter recalls the

briefing room drama as the Group prepared for takeoff:

*"On the 26 June, the Wing mounted its first attack against the Utsube River Oil Refinery at Yokkaichi. The target assigned was one of the three most important oil refineries in Japan, including an oil storage depot and a hydrogenation plant for aviation gasoline.*

*The flight plan, as set down in the Wing briefing went as follows: The Wing Commander, Brig. Gen. Frank A. Armstrong, announced the target. The Operations Officer followed with the strength of the effort to be employed (number of planes), altitude, and type of bombs to be carried. The Intelligence Officer followed next. Behind him was a map with the route to the target laid out upon it with colored lines. Along the route, check points were given — not many in the Pacific. The landfall was next and generally, in our case always, this point coincided with the initial point (I.P.). From here on in, the ship was on its bomb-run and in the hands of radar man and bombardier. The crew was also given pertinent information regarding every defense to be expected. The Weather Officer then briefed the Wing on the weather to be expected on the way up and over the target. After this general briefing, members of the crew were called into specialized briefings. The pilots were given a run-down on take-off procedures, weather, enemy opposition, etc. The navigator went into conference with the Group Navigator on courses and altitudes. The radar operator and bombardier received final radar pictures and target information. The flight engineer received his instructions pertaining to cruise control practices to be employed on this mission."*

## FIFTEEN MISSIONS OIL BEGINS IN JUNE

At 1700 hours on 26 June 1945, Col. Hubbard led 19 of the Group's planes during the first Wing mission against Japan. The Utsube Refinery at Yokkaichi was partially destroyed and no planes were lost. Then the Group led the attack on the Nippon plant at Kudamatsu 29-30 June and other targets thereafter in regular succession with the Wing and without loss of aircraft. Details are covered in the earlier text of this history, as well as in the anthologies of the fliers. Pilot Lotter, who became Intelligence Officer of the 21st Bomb Squadron after the Japanese surrendered, evaluated the effort later:

*"All the Wing's missions were night attacks. This gave the crews the benefits of daylight take-offs and landings. No formation flying was employed by the Wing. The attacks were all by individual aircraft using what was called the compressibility factor. Planes were staggered on their altitudes going to the target. The last ships, in what amounted to each element of three ships, were given the altitude with the most favorable wind. Then all flew according to the cruise control practices, they would reach the target area at approximately the same time, thus giving the effect of formation flying. This type of attack was extremely successful as attested to by the damage assessment reports and the*

*lessened physical strain."*

The Wing flew 15 missions between the 26th June and the 14th of August, or one almost every three days. In this time, nine targets, consisting of the backbone of the Japanese oil and refining industry, were destroyed. Each one of the targets visited by the 315th Wing covered less than 0.6 of a square mile.

Among the targets in addition to two visits to the Utsube River Refinery, were the important refineries and the petroleum center at Kawasaki, situated between Tokyo and Yokohama, which was visited three times. The reason for returning three times is not because of poor effects the first two times, but due to the fact that the area contained not one but 12 precision targets. Other targets hit on subsequent missions were at Kudamatsu on Southeastern Honshu Island (twice), Amagasaki in the suburbs of Osaka (twice), and the Maruzen Refinery southeast of Osaka (twice).

Following the second raid on the oil refinery at Maruzen, the following message was received from General LeMay: *'Successful strike is subject PD. I have just reviewed the post strike photography on your strike on target one seven six four CMA the Maruzen Oil Refinery at Shimotsu CMA the night of six slant seven July PD. You achieved ninety five percent destruction CMA definitely establishing the ability of your crews with Able Peter Queen (APQ) dash seven to hit and destroy precision targets CMA operating individually at night PD. This performance is the most successful radar bombing of this command to date PD Congratulations to you and your men PD'*.

The Ube Coal Liquefaction plant at Ube provided another interesting case of the effectiveness of the 315th Wing's new techniques. This target was a leading producer of synthetic products and as such ranked high on the priority list of oil targets. It produced synthetic oil and tar from coal by hydrogenation. With the blockade making crude oil unavailable to the Japanese war effort, this type of installation, and this particular installation, became highly important strategically.

A curious feature of this target was the fact that it had been built upon reclaimed land, and as such, it had dykes surrounding it on three sides to keep out the sea. The second attack finished the destruction of the target, but it also breached the dykes allowing the sea to reclaim its lost possessions. From this, the photo-interpreters were able to report 100% damage and add as they did so succinctly, *'This target destroyed and sunk.'*

## COMBAT OVER IN AUGUST

The last mission of the Wing was flown on the night of 14-15 August against the Nippon Oil Company refinery at Tsuchizake near Akita on the northern coast of Honshu Island. This mission was the longest combat flight ever made — a distance of some 3740 statute miles round trip. The mission had been postponed for several days due to the peace negotiations then underway. However, it was finally

decided to release one last giant effort by the 20th Air Force to try and force some decision. The Marianas-based B-29's were joined in this last all-out effort by the aircraft of the refitted 8th A.F. that was now arriving on Okinawa. The whole effort fell just short of the planned effort of 1000 Superfortresses over Japan during one raid. Pilot Lotter continues:

*Even while the last formations of this giant armada were raining their bombs down upon the Japanese, the enemy radio announced that the Imperial government was willing to accept the Potsdam Declaration as a basis for terminating hostilities. However, this was not official and it was not until we were well on our way home that the official announcement from President Truman came over the air. The fifteen missions flown by the 315th Wing were not many when compared with those flown by other Wings of the 20th Air Force. However, in the comparatively short time that the Wing was employed in combat, it revolutionized heavy bombardment procedure by showing that it was possible to destroy small, difficult targets — many times without even seeing them visually, through the use of the AN/APQ-7 radar synchronous bombing technique. Another record set by this new Wing was in accomplishing its task with the lowest combat losses on record. Of the 1200 sorties flown by its aircraft, its losses were three, or 0.25% of the aircraft that were airborne. It is interesting to note that all three of these aircraft were lost over Tokyo, at a time when this city had long since passed out of consideration as a target for the fire raiders.*

*In the cumulative totals for the operations of the Wing, the work of the ground crews can be best expressed and appreciated. In fifteen missions, 1225 aircraft were scheduled to participate. Out of this total 1220 became airborne. Of this latter total, 1114 ships bombed the primary target. This figure represents 93% of the total sent off. This is indeed a tribute to the men who worked almost 48 hours out of every 72 to see to it that their mechanical charges were in readiness to make the long haul to and from Japan. It was in these men that we placed our trust. Each one of these men knew and appreciated the responsibility that he owed to the men who flew his ship. They did not shirk their duty. They did all they were called upon to do and then a little bit more. They are the unsung heroes of the air war against Japan.*

### SUCCESS IN SPITE OF HANDICAPS

Group Historical Officer Arnold Holme recorded that:

*To carry out the successful completion of the combat operations was not as easy as it may have appeared to those who were not present on the scene. The thousand 'little things' and the numerous main factors that were stumbling blocks against the efforts of the personnel are pushed to the background by the exhilaration of success. Now that it is*

*over, these difficulties are forgotten by the people who experienced them, but for the purpose of record — the landing strip at Northwest Field was not completely constructed at the outset of operations; one runway was used for several of the first missions. No buildings were instant upon the arrival of the Advance Echelon; the unit was required to commence operations while still constructing living quarters, mess facilities and operational buildings; air crews, while participating in combat and because of the lack of normal and authorized buildings, were required to aid in construction; enlisted and officers mess were combined, congesting one mess hall; necessary parts and tools for line maintenance were slow in arriving upon requisition; transportation was limited; administrative set-up was undergoing formulation under a new command which entailed countless perfection of details necessary to comply with higher headquarters policies.*

*Coping with the difficulties was performed by various means. Most of it was due to good, honest, American GI sweat, ingenuity and a will to do the job. When aircraft parts were needed, they were borrowed from other ships to put the necessary aircraft in commission, until such time as the parts could be obtained. Men (specialists in one line) pitched in to make possible construction teams; command functions outlined courses to be taken to accomplish not only the combat operations required, but adjusted the program to include the completion of the numerous jobs necessary for living. Briefing and interrogations were performed in tents; clerks, pilots and mechanics built floors and platforms and pitched tents; medics cared for sick under field conditions; we shaved and showered out of our helmets. We bitched, but we did it — and performed well enough to come through all 15 combat missions without loss of personnel or aircraft (one combat operational loss not considered — 8 May 1945, crew flying out of North Field before our operations commenced).*

### REWARDS AND MEMORIES

On 30 July, Col. Boyd Hubbard, Jr. received the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross in recognition of his courage and leadership of the Group during its highly successful performance with the new radar bombing technique.

There were many traumatic experiences never to be forgotten as AC Chuck Miller explains:

*I also remember that it wasn't all fun and games, and these memories still haunt me after some 46 years. I remember the flights over Kawasaki and the green radar light that caught us on the start of our run. Twelve minutes of terror that seemed an eternity. Looking at each other in the cockpit with our ghastly green complexions from the light, watching the tracers coming up from the ground and the feeling of the flack bursting under us and Al Ham, our Bombardier, calling out the enemy gun placements until we finally had to*

shut him up. Finally, it was over, Bombs Away, and we got the hell out of there. When we arrived back at Northwest Field, we were examining the LUVVA MIKE for flack holes. Nary a one! Guess who caught all of our flack! Lucky Dan Garrett. He was just behind us and feeling sorry for us catching the green light and all the fire only to find out that they missed us and hit him. C'est le Vie!

Fighter encounters were limited and generally ineffective, one reason being the amazing speed of the stripped-down bombers, as George Green on the Belle of Martinez recalled:

*On the mission to Kudamatsu we found out that the B-29 could outrun the Jap fighters. They followed us to the target and then swung away and attempted to pick us up after we dropped the bombs. I, as the engineer, I closed all the flaps, etc. and put the fuel mixture control in auto-rich and the pilot put the throttles to the firewall and we just plain outran those four fighters. We were sort of surprised that we could do this but became firm believers after that.*

Complete records are not available to account for all of the Group's air crews but the following listing of aircraft commanders and numbers recalls most of them (the reader is urged to write in any others known):

Alexander (721)	Frey (669)	Morlan (618)
Arnold (714)	Garrett (674)	Mott (670)
Baker (726)	Haley (720)	Nispel (639)
Baldwin (680)	Huset (725)	Norton (627)
Berdan (607)	Jones (601)	Orpen (684)
Bloom	Joseph (723)	Rayher (664)
Braun (615)	Juhasz (696)	Reagle (650)
Byrne (675)	LeBlanc (668)	Rock (665)
Campbell (718)	Leche (689)	Roth (906)
Chapman (709)	C. Lee (682)	Schahrer (640)
Chasey (724)	W. Lee (683)	Stapp (671)
Clark (749)	Mason (719)	Tanner (717)
Conger (681)	McCrackin	Titensor (600)
Cotanch (705)	McDonald (663)	Tone (652)
Davis (702)	Miller (641)	Warner (599)
Emry (694)	Mitchell (710)	

Many of the planes were named by the crews and decorated with insignia appropriate to the names. Some appear on the inside back cover of this book, as does some squadron insignia on the front inside cover. AC Clark's plane was named BELLE OF MARTINEZ in honor of the California community whose warbonds financed the plane. Others were christened with names suggesting less lofty purposes. A few other examples are: DOTTIE'S BABY (719), LATE DATE (710), LIBERTY BELLE (714), ROADAPPLE (600), THE MOLDY FIG (601), PUNCH 'N JODY (723), SWEET CHARIOT (627), FLEET ADMIRAL NIMITZ (650), REBEL RAIDER (721), THE STRAINED CRANE (599), FOR THE LUVVA MIKE

(641), NOCKABOUT, OL' MATUSALEM (674), 20th CENTURY FOX, and DRAGIN' LADY. Capt. Bloom's crew never kept a plane, but named every craft they flew in GIGGY WAGON.

It was not unusual for crew members to find notes and inscriptions inside the planes from builders and well-wishers. Other crews found names and addresses of aircraft workers, sometimes from females, inviting correspondence and even postwar visits from the airmen. These were welcome finds and great morale boosters on the long flights to and from the Japanese Empire. AC Campbell's crew flew the longest one — 3600 miles in 19 hours.

## IWO HAVEN OF REFUGE

Iwo Jima proved to be a welcome haven for many crews low on fuel or experiencing engine trouble. Only one aircraft (680) suffered serious enough battle damage to require landing at Iwo for repairs. Lt. D. Barkley, the navigator, received the Purple Heart for wounds inflicted by enemy flak. The entire Group received a Distinguished Unit Citation which reads as follows:

*The 501st Bombardment Group (VH) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. During the period 6 July 1945 to 13 July 1945 that organization delivered devastating attacks against Japanese petroleum installations on the island of Honshu to demonstrate the revolutionary capabilities of a new radar bombing instrument which was undergoing its first test under battle conditions. Personnel of the 501st Bombardment Group (VH) demonstrated efficiency, courage and devotion to duty in long flights over enemy waters and through adverse weather conditions which often cut off all visibility. B-29 aircraft of this unit had sacrificed defensive fire power for speed and bomb-carrying capacity by stripping the planes of all armament except three .50 caliber tail guns. With this bare protection, aircraft were more than usually vulnerable to enemy fighter attack and anti-aircraft defenses. On the night of 6 July 1945, the 501st Bombardment Group (VH) attacked the Maruzon Oil Refinery at Shomotsu, considered one of the most important refineries and oil storage points for the enemy in its home islands. Flying more than 1500 miles from their home base, aircraft of this Group attacked the target in single bombing runs without defensive escort. Despite an undercast which completely obscured the refinery, 95 percent of the installation was destroyed. On the night of 9 July 1945, the 501st Bombardment Group (VH) attacked the Utsube Oil Refinery at Yokkaichi, one of the three most important oil refineries in Japan. This installation produced a significant portion of the aviation gasoline used by the enemy's air forces, and while it had undergone previous attacks, it was still capable of production. Radar photograph plots showed that 100 percent of the Group aircraft had passed directly over the target against enemy anti-aircraft fire and unfavorable weather conditions. The*



refinery was left in ruins. On the night of 12 July, the 501st Bombardment Group (VH) attacked the Kawasaki Petroleum Center located in the heart of Japan's most important and most heavily defended industrial district. This target comprised the facilities of four leading oil companies and had a combined daily refining capacity of 7,000 barrels. Despite intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire, 82 percent of the Group aircraft that were plotted passed directly over the target, and smashed warehouses, tanks, furnaces and other vital equipment, thus delivering a serious blow to the enemy's ability to produce petroleum products. On all of these missions, ground personnel of the 501st Bombardment Group (VH) displayed outstanding ability, willingness, and ingenuity in carrying out their assigned tasks, under extreme handicaps. They improved equipment and methods of work while maintaining the aircraft on a base still under construction and lacking many facilities. The achievements of the 501st Bombardment Group during this period contributed greatly to the destruction of the major oil refining and storage capacity of Japan and drastically reduced the power and ability of the enemy to continue the war, thereby bringing honor to the United States Army Air Forces and to the entire military service.

The unit's personnel were awarded battle stars for the Air Offensive, Japan; Eastern Mandates; and, Western Pacific.

## END OF CONFLICT AND MERCY MISSIONS

The war ended on 15 August 1945. The announcement coming in the middle of the night awoke the entire base and set off a wave of celebration that continued for days. But immediate concern turned to the prisoners of war still held hostage. Many flights were made to procure and deliver supplies to Allied prisoners in Japan, China, Korea and Manchuria as well as storm-stricken bases in the Phillipines and on Okinawa. The crew of the LUVVA MIKE was especially gratified to discover the whereabouts of a famed wartime captive flier. Stan Nightengale got a great picture of Pappy Boyington's Here on the roof of a Tokyo prison compound, which later was published in Air Force magazine. George Green was astonished and delighted after the war to learn that one of the barrels that BELLE OF MARTINEZ dropped was recovered by an Illinois neighbor:

*I was raised on the farm in central Illinois and just across the pasture lived a family I went to school with. Their second oldest son was in the army and was captured by the Japs on the fall of Corregidor and was held all through the war and was on part of the death march. Before we took off on the POW mission, Lt. Clark put a piece of paper with his name and home address of Odessa, Texas on it. After the war was over and I had returned home and so had this neighbor son. When we met and talked he told me he had opened one of the*

*barrels and found the paper with Lt. Clark's name on it. Quite a fate of happening.*

These mercy missions were not flown, however, without considerable risk and even loss of life. AC Howard Bloom and the crew of GIGGY WAGON encountered the same storm that took the lives of Bomb Group 502's Captain William Pananes and crew during the night of August 31 enroute to the Phillipines. Pilot Bill Cooper recalls:

*We were briefed that the typhoon would be off to our right, or to the north, and that we would be only in scud on the perimeter. The three planes took off fairly close to each other and we were in contact with each other. When we encountered the weather, and severe updrafts and downdrafts to the point that we would lose and gain 20,000 feet in altitude, sometimes with full power on to keep out of the water. Through some sort of an agreement it was agreed that we would continue on a straight course, the plane on our left would take a 5 degree left heading for a specific time and then go off on course, and the plane to our right would do a similar right heading. The plane to our right was never heard from again. We had severe damage to our airplane and it was never to fly again after we returned it to Guam but was used for a parts plane. I can recall that the radar wing was completely stripped of all but its ribs and tips. The leading edges of the glass on the nose was cracked. We encountered St. Elmo's fire that was so vivid it lighted up the entire cabin. It was the worst weather I have ever flown through, and I have now been flying for more than forty years.*

Another special assignment the Group shared was searching for downed aircraft at sea, including General Loutzenheiser in September and Maj. Gen. James E. Parker, former CO of the 20th AF, the following March. Each required several days of tedious overwater scanning. The last search was halted when the General's plane wreckage was discovered on Formosa. Also in September, several flights were made to Chitose Airfield in Hokkaido near Sapporo with gasoline for the nonstop flight from Japan to the United States by Generals Giles and LeMay. In October, several planes made similar flights to provide gasoline for the Japan to Washington flight led by General Armstrong. Col. Boyd Hubbard, Jr. also volunteered the Group for continuing service to provide police action. But many men were becoming far more interested in returning to the States and his proposal lacked support. Serpentine dances were carried on outside of his quarters, together with chanting and smoke bombs! Shortly thereafter, he was succeeded by Col. Bud Orpen, coincidentally or otherwise.

## GOING HOME

The wartime team began to disintegrate when the point system was instituted for separation from the service.

Men began to go back to the States in a variety of ways — by plane or boat. Some would have walked, if possible. Life on the island became mostly boring, although there were still moments of surprise and even terror. One quiet evening after mess, a bomb dump suddenly exploded, sending the entire Group pancaking to the floor and even blowing out the screening in barracks. Apparently some jungle-holdout Japanese had entered the depot and gotten even with at least a few men who were never found. Jap hunting continued to be a daily or weekend sport for a few bloodthirsty and/or concerned servicemen on Guam. Many kept a wary eye on the jungle border and weren't surprised when laundry hanging out to dry disappeared overnight. But gradually, caution waned as incidents trickled off to rare. Japanese prisoners even joined in Group activities, such as the construction of the officers' club. Lts. Beacher and Ellies were gratified one day to have a Japanese engineer assist with the stage and patio-enclosure design, using his USA-college education. The highlight event at the club, other than opening night, was the 'Starlight Dance' on 4 May 1946 featuring the 20th Air Force Band.

The Sunset Project gradually drained the Group airfleet. Some were flown by high-point combat veterans like Chuck Miller. But many were ferried by crews from the States on detached service (Second Air Force to ATC and thence to 20th Air Force) with 315th Wing high-pointers as passengers. By Christmas, the Group fleet was reduced to 30 or less planes and consolidation of the Groups became an impending probability. There were rumors and even planning to move the 315th to Hawaii which didn't materialize. Men continued to work on area improvements including the theater, which wasn't done until February, when all groups were consolidated into the 501st.

One of the characteristics of service during the wait to go home was the uncertainty of assignments. Departing high-pointers left vacancies in many key jobs. Radar observers became power plant operators, forklift operators and photolab assistants. Combat pilots became test pilots. Aircrew members drew mess hall assignments. All was well intended to keep healthy men off their backs and out of their bunks during the seemingly endless days of waiting. Some signed up for continuing service and went on to life-time military careers, often gaining quick passage to the States. Flying schedules tailed off to minimums, as aircraft maintenance suffered from short hands. Flying training was limited until March 1946 to transition work for pilots and copilots.

Actual merging of the 16th, 331st and 502nd Groups with the 501st did not occur until their inactivation on 15 April 1946. However, the three initially ceased to exist after mid-February and the 501st focused on (a) processing and returning to the States all Sunset aircraft; and, (b) cleaning up the supply situation of all four Groups (records, property, etc.) for possible movement to Hawaii. There was more than a little excitement and some damage when the island was struck by a typhoon lasting several days.

Col. Vincent M. Miles, Jr. assumed command of the 501st on 15 April. At the end of the month, Lt. Gen. Ira C.

Eaker and Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower inspected the base and were well satisfied with what they saw.

## THE LAST FLIGHT

On May 5, many of the remaining veterans signed for "any conditions of travel" to get home and ended up bound first for Saipan, then onto the overcrowded troop carrier Cape Medocino, arriving three weeks later in Oakland, where troop trains scattered them for points of discharge close to their homes. Remaining personnel witnessed one final achievement by the 501st Group on 15 May 1946, the day that General Orders No. 61 20th AF, relieved the 501st from assignment, reverting to Headquarters 20th AF. A provisional Northwest Field Air Base Command assumed control of Northwest Field on 15 May as Gen. Frank Armstrong's Fluffy Fuzz IV set one more record for the 501st — soaring to an altitude of 45,600 feet with a payload of 1000 kilograms and Major Ross, Ops. Off. of the 501st, as AC. Not surprisingly, one engine gave constant trouble and finally blew a cylinder. A cabin fire broke out and was extinguished. Trim tabs froze up and the turbo charge plagued the pilots. Nevertheless, the flight received worldwide publicity as an International Record.

## OVER AND OUT

A final tribute must be paid to the spiritual leaders of the Group who so ably and selflessly counseled and consoled many of the fliers and ground crews during periods of great stress and eased homesickness. Father William Dorney and Chaplain Walter G. Batty are fondly and respectfully remembered for stimulating crews returning from combat as well as helping all Group men in their spiritual "downs", whenever needed, day or night. Gratitude was appropriately expressed in the construction of the fine chapel at Northwest Field and other volunteer services by personnel assisting the chaplains on many occasions, including Sgt. Paul Newton who so ably provided music at the services.

This editor expresses gratitude to those who provided personal anecdotes and other information for this Group History as well as encouragement. Regret is expressed for oversights, errors and omissions which are inevitable in a saga of this magnitude and unavoidable because of the passage of time and advancing age of all. Long live the memory of the 501st Bombardment Group (VH) and God Bless America!  
Bruce Beacher

**501st Bomb Group - 485th Squadron  
Armament Section**



Ed Hering



**CFC-Armorers-Bomb Sight**  
(Back Row [L-R]) Altieri, Fox, Henry,  
Laskey, Heuvelhorst, Schobert, Sterms.  
(Front Row-kneeling) Raasch, Voyles

(Rear Row [L-R]) Voyles, Sterns, Hering, Van Norman,  
Baron, Kurmas, Laskey, Raasch, Stevens, Richardson,  
Connolly. (Seated) Fox, Thierry, Cartella, Maxworthy.  
(Front Row) Hanna, Henry, Hanney, Williams, Pritchard

# 501st Bomb Group



(L-R) Samuel "Sam" Phelan, Earl "Snafu" McCall, Isidore "Rosie" Rosenfeld, Dale Stoner, Albert Snidow



Crew 824's navigator Gordon Phillips tends bar in Club 35 for another going home party at Northwest Field.



Crew 816's Ivan Newman and Bill Cooper are all smiles on V-J Day at Northwest Field in "Tent Town."



(L-R) Sgt Gordan E. Turner, Sgt Francis J. Murphy, Sgt Donald R. Mvers, Sgt William M. Sweaten



Walter Poole



Flt Officer Isador Tarowsky



485th Bomb Squadron beer party, 5 February 1945. (L-R) Sgt Doss, Sgt Pankey, 1st Sgt Bergen, Cpl Fournier.



Albert Trapp, Orville Carroll

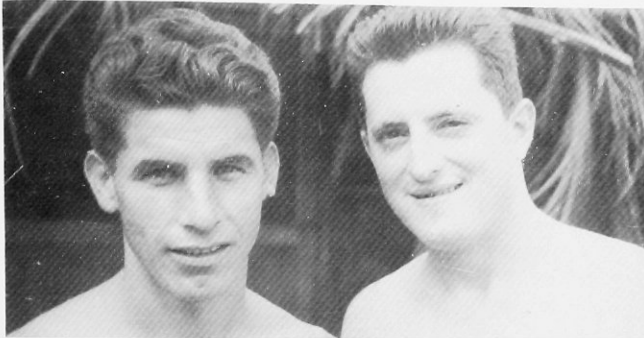
# 501st Bomb Group



(L-R) Sgt Isaac Gearhart, F.O. Chuck Schroeder, Sgt Sam Gillespie



Carey, Carroll



Brenner, Cammack



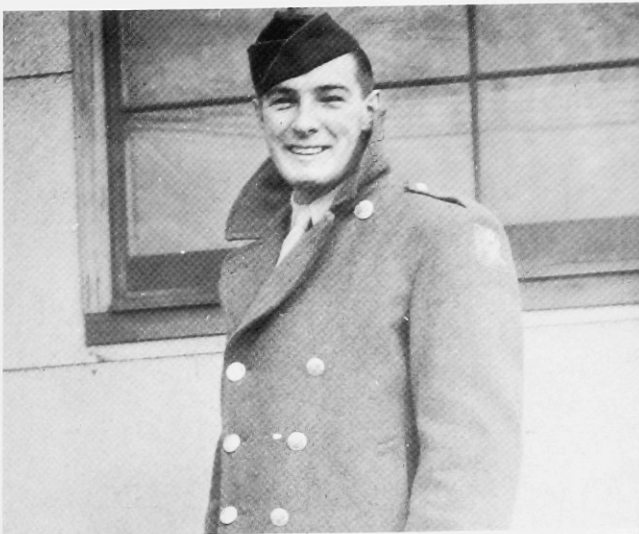
J. C. Cagley



Murray Singer



Oliver Perry

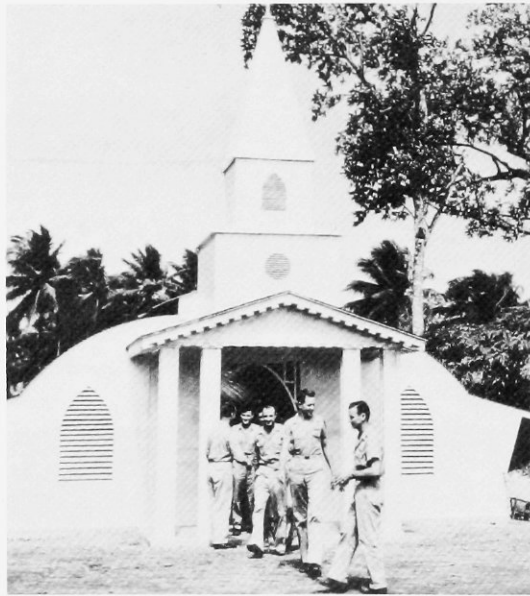


Frank Belverde



Lt Col Edward J. Sandy

# 501st Bomb Group



501st Chapel



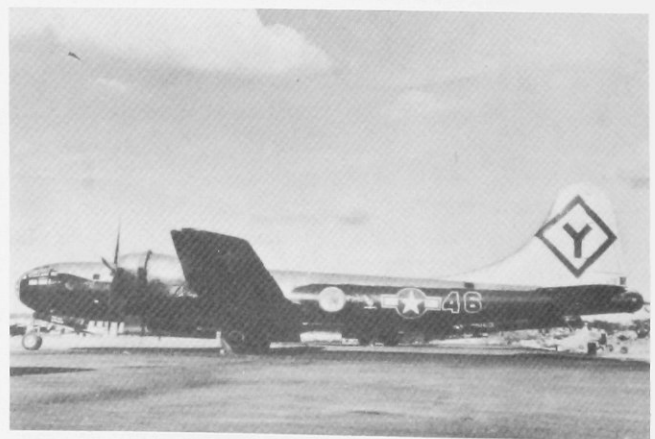
41st Squadron Operations



41st Squadron Operations



Skeet Range Control House  
Sgt Sam S. Gillespie



Aircraft 46  
41st Squadron, 501st Bomb Group

## 501st Bomb Group



Aircraft Mechanics - 21st Bomb Squadron  
(Top L-R) P. Mitchell, E. Frank, D. Seigelman, R. Kriger, V. Wolf, R. Duggan. (Middle) A. Fomly, G. Ferran, H. Kolodny, I. Ampolsky, E. Rapp. (Front) J. Konczak, H. Kydick, A. Bostom.

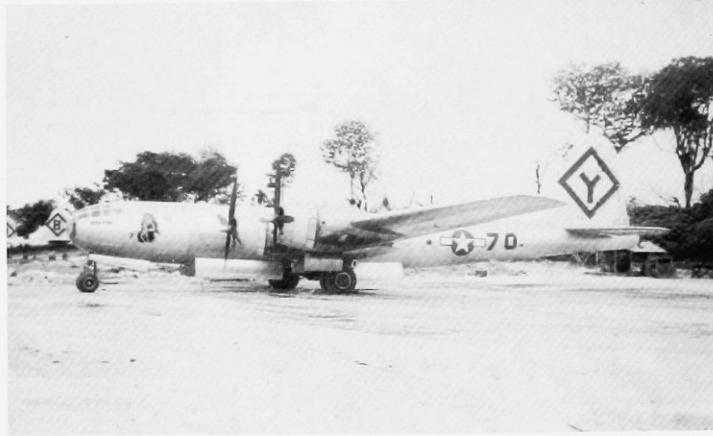


Aircraft Mechanics - 485th Bomb Squadron



Aircraft Mechanics - 485th Bomb Squadron  
(Back L-R) Wolfe, Posthoumus, Gardner, Trapp, Ford, Brown.  
(Front) Love, Cull, Perry, Hall, Cline, Peter

**501st Bomb Group  
Crew of Liberty Belle**







1945 - F/O John E. Sartain



H. Ayres, J.C. Cagley, O. Carroll



First Quarters - N. Terrel and C. Rushing



Crew Chiefs - 485 Bomb Sqdn.



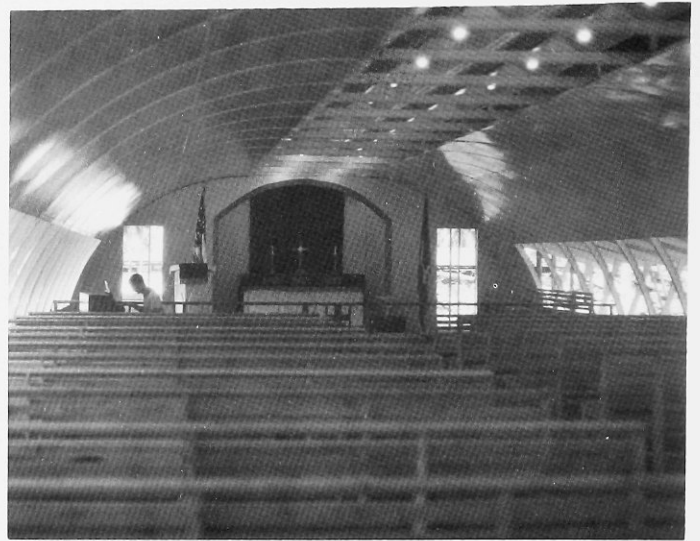
Crew Chiefs - 485 Bomb Sqdn.



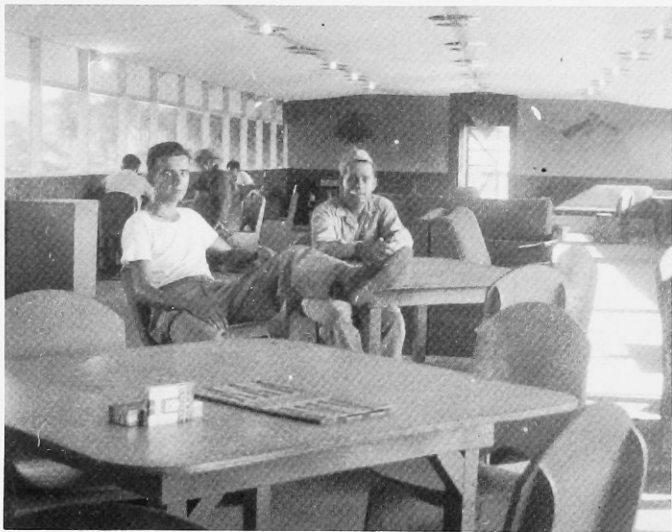
Flt. Eng. Myers - 485 Bomb Sqdn.



501st Chaplain, Cardinal Spellman



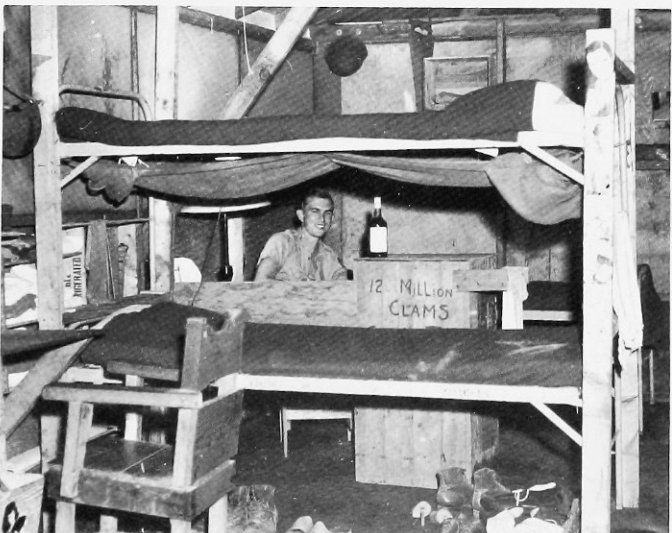
All-Faith Chapel



501st E.M. Club



Tumon Bay R&R



Officer's quarters - Jake Coughlin



Officers' Mess