

GP-447-11
JULY 1945

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P.R.C.

HISTORICAL DATA

Narrative History

of

497TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP

(73rd Wing)

XX AIR FORCE

Period: 1 July to 31 July 1945.

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Historical Division AAFPOA

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1. Chronology

3 July - Crew of Major Merrill's plane never heard from after taking off on night raid against Kochi. Passengers were Lt. Colonel Griffith, Deputy Group Commander, and Lt. Lamoglia, Group RCM Officer. The plane's tail gunner was T/Sgt. Hermann II who had participated in raids against Rome and Berlin, and had requested Pacific service.

9 July - Major L. Trickey, Commanding Officer of the 870th Squadron, is promoted to Lt. Colonel. A number of other promotions of rated personnel is received.

12 July - Three (3) Airplane Commanders completed their tour of duty at the conclusion of a night mission: Capt. Crowder; Capt. Bowry and Lt. Veters.

16 July - Notice received that 21st Bomber Command had been redesignated as 20th Air Force.

19 July - 15th Photo Lab personnel strike their tents, and physically move to the 73rd Wing bivouac area.

- Three (3) more Airplane Commanders complete their tours of duty: Major Ted Morgan; Major J. M. Campbell and 1st Lt. Robert Allen.

- Lt. Rodge and crew ditch on mission to Hitachi.

24 July - Seven (7) new crews participate in their first mission.

28 July - 869th Squadron runs Practice Mission against Marcus, to test Crawfish equipment. Equipment works satisfactorily, but Japs fail to cooperate, as accurate A/A fire wounds one (1) man and damages nine (9) of ten (10) aircraft participating.

- Night incendiary mission against Ichinomiya. Raid was preceded by a leaflet raid the night previous, listing that city, among eleven (11)

2. Frontispiece

a. Arrivals and Departures

None

b. Losses in Action

The following members of Major Merrill's crew of the 870th Squadron, and including two (2) passengers, one (1) being Lt. Colonel John H. Griffith, Deputy Group Commander, are missing from the night raid of 3 July against Kochi. The plane was never heard from after take off.

- Major Keith N. Merrill
- 1st Lt. Walter H. Fike Jr.
- 1st Lt. Buford P. Johnson
- 1st Lt. William D. Wilson
- 1st Lt. Patrick B. Quinn
- S/Sgt. Harry R. Hill
- S/Sgt. James E. Keenan
- T/Sgt. Edward F. Gawron
- S/Sgt. John L. Powell
- Sgt. John T. Jenkins
- T/Sgt. Kurt T. Herrmann II
- 1st Lt. Joseph V. Lamoglia
- Lt. Col. John H. Griffith

The following members of Lt. Rodge's crew were killed when the plane ditched shortly after take off on a night incendiary mission against Hitachi, on 19 July.

- 1st Lt. Werner S. Leu
- Cpl. Robert J. Plotka
- Sgt. David C. Studdard

The following men are listed as Missing in Action from the same action.

- 2nd Lt. William E. Mc Carthy
- 2nd Lt. Marvin E. Reinhardt

This man later died of injuries received in the same ditching.

- 2nd Lt. Camile C. Callewaert

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heard from after take off, and the cause of its loss is unknown.

At this point, a review of the highlights of each mission is in order. The raid of 1-2 July was against Kumamoto, on Kyushu. Forty planes were airborne, setting a new Group record. The raid was hampered by 10/10 undercast, and results were no better than good. 1/ Lt. Voigt ditched on return, but everyone was rescued including two crew members who parachuted out.

Two nights later Kochi was the target. For the first time in quite a while, the Group found good weather over the target. Excellent results were achieved. Thermal currents tossed some aircraft one thousand feet. Lt Col Davis who was riding as a passenger was cut and bruised, and he received severe neck injuries necessitating ten days hospitalization due to the sudden updraft. Four other men received lesser injuries from the same cause. 2/

One aircraft was lost on this mission. Major Merrill and his crew, flying their 33rd mission as a replacement crew, took off, and were never heard from again. One passenger on board was Lt Col John H. Griffith, Deputy Group Commander. Also aboard as a passenger was 1st Lt Joseph Lamoglia, Group RCM Officer. On Major Merrill's crew, as Tail Gunner was T/Sgt. Kurt Hermann II. The latter had received considerable publicity in the States, because he had flown over both Rome and Berlin, had completed a tour of duty in the European Theatre and had volunteered for B-29 duty in the Pacific.

1/ 497EG S-2 Preliminary Mission Rpt for Gp CO, Mission No. 71, 1-2 July 1945.

2/ 497EG S-2 Preliminary Mission Rpt for Gp CO, Mission No. 72, 3-4 July 1945.

He had ridden his luck and gunnery skill just a trifle too hard, and with three missions to go, he and the rest of the crew disappeared. It is trusted that they are safe somewhere, and are being reasonably well taken care of.

The raid on the night of 6-7 July was against Akashi. There was nothing unusual in the raid, which destroyed 24 percent of the built-up area of the city. 3/

The fourth mission of the month was the usual night incendiary type, this time against Sakai. The weather was clear, and excellent results were achieved. 42 percent of the built-up area of the city was destroyed. Capt Moore of the 870th Squadron had a difficult time. He piloted a special weather and radar jamming ship. He flew over the target for 40 minutes and thus drew the attention of many searchlights and flak guns. His plane was badly shot up, but he and his crew returned uninjured. 4/

The next mission was the one really unsuccessful mission of the month. The target was Ichinomiya, just northwest of Nagoya. The target did not lend itself to accurate radar bombing, and results later showed that only eight-tenths of one percent of the city was burned, indicating, as General O'Donnell later said at a Group briefing, that only two or three planes in the whole Wing dropped on the target. 5/

The next city to be attacked, was that of Oita, which was hit on the night of 16-17 July. The weather was clear and excellent results were

3/ 497BG S-2 Preliminary Mission Rpt for Gp CO, Mission No. 73, 6-7 July 1945.

4/ 497BG S-2 Preliminary Mission Rpt for Gp CO, Mission No. 74, 9-10 July 1945.

5/ 497BG S-2 Preliminary Mission Rpt for Gp CO, Mission No. 75, 12-13 July 1945.