The Story of The “Billy Mitchell Group”
468 H-Bomb Group – From the C.B.I. to the Marianas

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EDITOR’S NOTES

This is a journal maintained by Willard W. Holderby during World War II. He kept this journal a secret both during his time in the service and then even after the war ended. For many years after he returned home, no one in his family was allowed to read or even look at the journal. He told the family that it was actually against regulations to keep such a journal/diary during the war. His family thinks that he was fearful he might get in trouble, even after the war ended.

Pictures inserted into the text were added by the Editor and were not part of the original record maintained by Lt. Holderby.

From Colonel James L. Pattillo, USAF, Ret.

“We, his Squadron mates, salute Willard Holderby, a Lead Crew Navigator, 793\textsuperscript{rd} Bomb Squadron, 468\textsuperscript{th} Bomb Group--"The General Billy Mitchell Group"--XX\textsuperscript{th} Bomber Command (Kharagpur, India, Pengshan, China and Tinian Island).

Willard was a great American who willingly did his duty when the chips were down”

GATEWAY OF INDIA

The WWII War Diary of Willard Wayne Holderby

After having trained at Salina Army Air Base for about five months, we were notified on March 10, 1944 that we were to be transferred overseas by boat and Air Transport Command. Our crew, crew #5 of the 793\textsuperscript{rd} Squadron, 468\textsuperscript{th} Very Heavy Bombardment Group of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Bomber Command, boarded a troop train along with three other crews of our outfit on Sunday, March 12, 1944. Our crew was composed of five officers and six enlisted men. Our duties were Pilot, Co-pilot, Navigator, Bombardier, Flight Engineer, Radar, Radio, Central Gunner, Left Gunner, Right Gunner and Tail Gunner. We were all trained to perform these duties on any United States Air Force plane, but in particular for the B-29 airplane. Our entire crew had hoped to be assigned a B-29 to fly to our overseas station. But at this time B-29s were new and our entire Squadron of 15 crews was allotted only 10 B-29s to take overseas. We didn’t get a B-29.

We had been in training at Smoky Hill Air Field in Salina, Kansas for about five months. Most of our training flights had taken place in B-17s (also a four-engine bomber, but considerably smaller than the B-29) although we all had at least one flight in a B-29 with the exception of the Bombardier and Navigator – myself. Now all of a sudden we were going overseas to fly and navigate a plane we weren’t even familiar with. But it didn’t matter much to us because we didn’t know when we would get a B-29 overseas.
My previous adventure with Army life may quickly be summarized by saying that I went to duty as a twenty-one year old 2nd Lt. out of ROTC at Oklahoma A&M College on June 20, 1941, almost six months before Pearl Harbor. My first assignment was as a Platoon Leader in an Infantry Company at Camp Wolters, Texas – an Infantry Replacement Training Station. Our job was to take fresh civilian recruits and draftees and give them about three months of Infantry training.
My next assignment was as an Infantry Officer Student at the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. This was a most efficient place and I learned a lot before being assigned back to my old company at Camp Wolters, Texas upon completion of the course. By August of 1942 I was Executive Officer of my old Company, but I was still a 2nd Lt. and was getting a little tired of the Training Battalion with the same thing being repeated for new selectees every three months. I applied for a transfer to the Air Corps. I was sent up to Sheppard Field, Wichita Falls, Texas for a physical examination. After a struggle with my eyes (too much exe-foria), the physical was finally passed. By December of 1942 I was completing ground school at the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center which adjoins Kelly Field at San Antonio, Texas. We were permitted at this time to take Air Corps training as student officers, thus we still received officer’s pay although we were students. By the end of the first week in February we were completing Primary Flying School at Victory Field located at Vernon, Texas. We flew Fairchild PT-19A’s at Primary with Continental In-line engines.

My next location was Basic Flying School at Enid, Oklahoma and here after three weeks of trying to fly the BT-13, I visited with my classification officer and he said my records and tests showed a 40% advantage over average for Navigation. At this stage I was very
downhearted. I had given up promotion in a few weeks by leaving the Infantry when I did. Now I had decided to go all out to become a Navigator (a very tough course). My next assignment was back to San Antonio to the reclassification center as I had requested not to be assigned again to the Infantry. Again, a classification officer showed me that I had a much higher aptitude for either bombardiering or navigating than for piloting so my next adventure was to ground navigation school at Ellington Field, Houston, Texas. This was normally a three month school, but I was allowed to go on to “Navigation Flying School” in a month’s time because of similar training in the pilot ground school.

My next assignment was the Army Air Forces Navigation School at Hondo Field, Texas. Navigation was my pleasure. Directing a plane’s direction and altitude etc. seemed much easier than flying one. We received our Navigator’s Wings on a hot, late summer day and I was very proud. We would receive flying pay regularly now and to think that I had wanted the wings so badly I would almost have given the flying pay for them. I had no choice in my next assignment other than that a Lt. Holmes and I could go to a B-17 Squadron in Washington state, which was preparing to go on to Europe, or we could go to Roswell, New Mexico and take a course in bombardiering. At this time the Air Corps wanted Navigator-Bombardiers for the B-29s.
The B-29 sounded interesting. We had never even seen one yet so off we went to Roswell. Lt. Holmes, a Bostonian with a sense of humor, gave me almost as much pleasure at the new station as did dropping bombs. Bombing was fun and there was no pressure on us now as there had been at pilot and navigation school. We both came through with flying colors and good records. Our next assignment was to the B-29s at Salina, Kansas. I liked my new outfit and finally I was out of School again and back with the boys in a tactical outfit. At Salina we flew both individual and formation missions. After flying in Primary Trainers, Basic Trainers and Navigation and Bombing Trainers, the B-17 seemed like a pretty good ship and a big one. We flew several long missions and some of them were to Miami, Florida; Santa Ana, California; etc. and short ones to Omaha and Phoenix, etc. We flew one 1,200 mile training mission over water from Miami, Florida to Harlingen, Texas. On this mission we were to locate Arenas Key and its lighthouse and though a very small place in a big Gulf we got a picture of it. By now it is March 10, 1944.

We were all saddened to be saying goodbye to our wives and kids and girl friends but we were all thrilled to be going overseas and our minds were so filled with “wonderings” of what the future held in store for us that we hardly realized we were really saying goodbye for a long, long, long time until days later.

The train trip by Pullman lasted two days. We traveled through St. Louis, Indianapolis, Dayton, Columbus and Richmond. We arrived at Camp Patrick Henry, Hampton Roads, Virginia on a very pleasant morning. We spent four days at this post. We were processed, checked and double-checked for clothing, equipment and health condition. We slept in wooden barracks and ate good Army chow. We bought a few items at the Post Exchanges here and spent some time watching Italian prisoners of war play ball behind wire fences.

On March 17th, we boarded a train with all of our heavy and cumbersome luggage, for a fifteen mile ride down to the harbor at Newport News. As the band played the Air Corps song, we embarrassingly walked up the gang plank on a nice new transport, the USS General H. W. Butner. We had very nice, but cramped quarters. We spent little time in our rooms as we had a fine officer’s lounge and top deck to ourselves.

On March 18th, we pulled out of dock, but remained for the night in Chesapeake Bay. We attended a show on board this evening, Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.

On Sunday, March 19th 1944 we got underway at 0900 AM and steamed out of Chesapeake Bay. We attended General Church services held by the ship’s Chaplain this morning. It was very crowded. We had chicken for dinner today. We spent a very rough night and many got sick. I haven’t gotten seasick yet.
On Monday, March 20\textsuperscript{th}, I used my knowledge of navigation to figure that at noon we were steering a course of 120 degrees and making about 20 knots, thus putting us about 400 nautical miles on our way. The wind is still very high and the riding is a bit rough even though the \textit{Butner} is a large transport. The constant swaying, heaving and rolling gradually begins to get you. We think (we don’t know) we are heading for Casablanca, French North Africa, and we expect to go from there by Air Transport Command to India. Most of the flying officers are now playing cards or checkers or gambling in the lounge. We can obtain Cokes, candy bars and a few toilet articles at the bar in the lounge. No alcohol is allowed or sold on board. Cigarettes are tax free at seven cents a pack.

There is really a contrast in uniforms on this ship since most all branches of the services are aboard (Army, Navy, Air Corps) and totals 5,000 men. We have a piano in the lounge.

On March 21\textsuperscript{st}, I awoke about ten and missed breakfast. The clock was advanced one hour at midnight as we are going east. Today the sea was very beautiful; very blue and very calm, compared to the black appearance it had yesterday. A Navy Lieutenant told me that we had passed Bermuda at 3:00 AM this morning. The day was uneventful except for a four motored Navy PB 2 ½ which swooped over us at mid afternoon. Dinner toady was roast pork and well-baked potatoes. The Navy serves this food in a neat manner on their polished silver plates. This salt air gives me a very good appetite, and I’m sure now that I won’t be seasick. We saw another show last night; I am getting to enjoy the trip!

On March 28\textsuperscript{th}, 1944 we arrived in Casablanca, North Africa. The 5,000 men on board were hauled by Army trucks to Camp Don B. Passage which lies four miles south of the city. Here we exchanged all our money for francs or gold seal American currency. The exchange rate on francs was fifty to one, thus the French franc is only worth two cents each. Near our camp was a disciplinary camp. They marched men all through the day here. The natives of Casablanca were mostly Arabs and Frenchmen. The Arabs appeared very queer to us as they would ride camels or lead donkeys as slowly as if they had no purpose at all in mind.
Today, Sunday April 2\textsuperscript{nd} 1944, Lt. McCann and Lt. Shirar and I attended the Post Chapel. It was Palm Sunday. I got a letter off to Danta today. We drank a little beer at the Officers' Club this evening and went to bed. We are now confined to the Post so we have formed a softball league and have a lot of fun playing with the other Squadrons. We are waiting for the Air Transport Command to take us on to India. We have very good food here, exported from the States.

On Friday, April 7\textsuperscript{th}, we boarded an ATC (Air Transport Command) C-54 and departed for Tripoli, the first stop on our way to the Orient generally and India actually. We arrived in Kharagpur, India (our present base) on April 11\textsuperscript{th} 1944.
“IN INDIA”

We are now in Kharagpur, India. We head all our letters, “Somewhere in India”. On leaving Casablanca, we were notified only four hours ahead of time. We had been entertained the night before in the Red Cross Officers’ Club in downtown Casablanca by 100 Army nurses who had just recently arrived from the States. We flew by ATC C-54s, a four engine ship carrying a crew of 5 and 29 passengers. Our first stop was Tripoli, where we had a midnight lunch of Cockney food and a good chat with the English. They told us all about the tank battles for North Africa (the English and Americans fighting the Germans) and we could see the wreckage strewn along on our way to Cairo. We arrived here at 0730 and had lost another hour going east. The airport here was very similar to the Kansas City Municipal Airport and much different in appearance from the bullet riddled hangars we saw in Tripoli. We ate breakfast and had our money changed to Egyptian pounds and piasters. The pound was worth $4.13 each and the piaster, 4 cents. We were hoping to see the Sphinx and pyramids, but didn’t have time.

We left Cairo at mid-afternoon and had a very good view of the Suez Canal and Red Sea on our way to the Middle East. We also flew over Bethlehem, Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. From 1,000 feet of altitude, Palestine looked very rocky and unproductive. We flew over the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys and landed at Abadan, Persia (Iran) at dusk. Coming in here from the air we saw many irrigation ditches and date and fig trees. We ate supper here and marveled at the fine Officers’ Club shared by Russian, British and American soldiers. We changed some money here for rials, which are worth 3 1/8 American pennies. Here at the base were 50 to 100 P-39 fighters with a huge red star painted on the fuselage. They were going to Russia lend-lease, and were picked up here by them.

We flew ten hours from Abadan to Karachi, India where the time was 6 ½ hours ahead of Greenwich Civil Time. All of India is in one time belt. The time here is 11 ½ hours ahead of Central War time in the States. Applying the 15 degrees of longitude for one hour time change rule to the 11 ½ hours we figure to be over 172 degrees or almost halfway around the world from our departing point (Salina, Kansas). We arrived in Karachi just before dawn. But I believe Kipling is wrong about it “coming up like thunder”. Here in Karachi we did some window shopping and got a shave and haircut by an Indian barber. I had to have another typhoid shot on being processed into the CBI (China, Burma, India) theater of war. We flew into Kharagpur on that same afternoon of April 11th 1944 after a long trip of 12,000 plus miles and after being on the way for thirty days.

We are one of the first combat crews to arrive at our new base (Camp Salua or B-1) so we are now doing much physical labor. The Japs have warned by radio of a bombing and strafing attack to be held during April 16th, 17th or 18th. So we are digging slit trenches. The ground is hard as rock and the sun is hot as hell and the sweat comes off in rolls. We are making some rough tables and chairs for our thatched straw roof barracks. We
have had fair food and received a few rations of beer, tobacco and candy from the Post Exchange.

We sleep in British, “Indian-built barracks”, very quickly being eaten by wood ants. We have a wood and sawdust icebox for which we seldom get ice. We drink bad tasting, heavily chlorinated water. We have an Officers’ shower for which we are all very thankful. We are sleeping under mosquito nets. Most food and supplies are brought in from American ships docking at Calcutta, by plane. The roads are all very poor here except for a few railroads. We use rupees here as a medium of exchange. One rupee is worth 30 cents in American money. I haven’t heard from Danta and Kay for five weeks.

On Monday, April 17th 1944, Mac, Bill and I worked pretty hard digging trenches. We got ice for the icebox today and so had cold fruit juice, beer and water. We also attended a briefing up the 20th Bomber Command headquarters on weather and route conditions for “Hump flying”. We plan to fly gasoline, engines and equipment into China. It sounds like a fairly rough job. The last few days I have been sharpening up on my navigation.

On Sunday, April 23rd 1944, Bill, Mac and I got up early and attended Protestant services at 7:30. The Church services here are very profound and sincere even though the chapel is rough and everyone is pretty unkempt in their unionalls. It has now been six weeks.
since kissing Danta goodbye and still I haven’t heard from her. I am now getting quite a suntan. Temperatures are up to 120 degrees F. On April 26th, we flew a local B-29 mission and logged transition time.

May 4th 1944. I have been very sick the past few days from diarrhea and today Doc Mitchell (our Flight Surgeon) sent me to the hospital with severe colitis and possible amoebic dysentery.

May 9th 1944. The Doc says I have a severe case of amoebic dysentery so I am taking the 5:00 AM train to the 112th Station Hospital in Calcutta.

June 22nd 1944. Since being in the hospital I have failed to keep my diary so I will make a brief summary. I was in the 112th Station Hospital until May 24th. The hospital was very nice. The nurses were very kind and helpful. The fruit juice was especially good. A Lt. Hutchinson from Oklahoma City and the 794th Squadron and I spent a lot of time playing checkers. I was treated with paregoric, bismuth and emetine, which finally whipped the amoebas. My hip got sore as hell from the emetine shots there. Hutch and I returned to B-1 on a C-46 after a 25 minute flight from Calcutta on May 24th. The fellows all welcomed us back and had whiskey rations waiting. My legs and hips were still very stiff for about a week. I got back on the softball team again and we had some pretty fine games. We have now completed two “Hump flights”. The “Hump” is supposedly a dangerous flight. In the weather now you must go to 23-24,000 feet of altitude. Our first Hump flight was very smooth and uneventful. On the second flight of June 16th, we encountered a terrific thunderstorm. It seemed it would tear the plane to bits. Tanks were broken loose in the rear and a huge hole was cut in the floor. The climb indicator once showed us to be climbing at the rate of 4,000 feet a minute, while both the Pilot and Co-pilot had the stick all the way forward. We were all thankful to land in one piece at our forward base in China.

The first announced raid on Yawata, Japan had just been completed and returning planes had just landed a few hours ahead of us. Our Squadron had lost two planes and one crew. Our first raid on Bangkok was unannounced and went off as a B-24 raid as it was actually a shakedown mission. Lt. Frank Holmes, my roommate in Bombardier School, and all of the Les Sloans’ crew and B-29 42-6314 have been unheard of for about two weeks now. They were on a return ferry trip over the Hump. On return from my first Hump flight in B-29 42-6333 on Sunday, June 11th 1944 I had about 25 letters waiting for me. My brother Louis had just graduated from Brooks Field at San Antonio and received his pilot wings. Being my first home mail, I was damn well excited and read and re-read them all. I was also very happy to have a letter from the War Department announcing my promotion to 1st Lieutenant as of March 17th 1944 (just one day before we left the States). I had been a 1st for 3 months and never knew it. This brings me again to the current date.

June 23rd 1944. We played a fast game of volleyball today with Lieutenants McCann, Shirar, Greenwald, Fauth, Falkenham, Madden, Damron, Malloy, Klein, McComas, Stolz, Burton, Light and Starnes participating.
On June 24th I find myself back at the hospital again. Now it’s malaria. I am taking atabrine and sulfa. Lt. Jones of our Squadron is here with me.

July 4th 1944. I got out of the hospital today and still feeling pretty weak. July fourth was just another day here in India.

July 6th 1944. We took off over the “Hump” for China today. There were lakes and lakes of water from Calcutta to Sylhet, India due to the tremendous monsoon rains. In the Khasi Hills of India and Burma, we saw many beautiful lakes and falls. Jorhat was clear and we also saw the large L-shaped lake at His-Chang and continued on coming out of an overcast near advanced base at Pengshan near Chengtu, China. This China from the back door is a very beautiful, serene and quiet country. All of the coolies work from daylight to dark in their green rice paddies. China is very full of inflation now. Two hundred Yuan are only worth one American dollar. The natives are crazy over American cigarettes, soap and face creams. A carton of cigarettes can be sold for ten dollars in American money and (though against regulations) often is. I bought some fine silk by bartering and will send it to Danta. We arrived back in India on Saturday. Lt. Damron and I attended Church this Sunday, July 9th, and went over to the S-2 building to check up on the latest news and war front situations.

July 10th 1944 (Monday). Today has been a very wet, dismal, sweat-giving day. It seems to rain all of the time anymore. Nothing new is happening and time drags by very slowly. We have little to read or do and thus few things to absorb our thoughts except home and what a “Shangri-La” it is, and our wives, children, new homes, new hopes and a war-ridden world.

July 11th 1944. We got up at 4:00 AM; cleaned up, had a hot breakfast, rode a truck to the line, were briefed and off on our fourth mission over the Hump. Captain Meints is now Pilot on crew #5, instead of Captain Michalzyn. The weather was good and the trip very scenic. The Khasi Hills, 1st Ridge, and hump proper were all very beautiful. In China, we heard the good news that Lt. Sloan, Holmes and Crew were all “walking out”. They had been down in the Lo-Lo country near I-Pen for over a month. They had to bail out as B-29 42-6314 exploded. They had gobs of mail waiting on them. All had lost weight. Frank Holmes had lost about 60 of his 200 pounds. They were all pretty sick, liced up and had dysentery. After bailing out they were attacked by Chinese bandits and had the jungle kits, watches, rings, etc, stolen. Parts of the clothing they were wearing and their pistols were even taken from them.

July 12th 1944. Today we got up early again and came straight back on a new course (a direct route to Kharagpur) over unmapped and unsurveyed country. We saw three mountain peaks, well snow-capped and towering up to 22,000 feet. Their sides were so sheer they appeared as huge icicles turned upside down.

July 13th 1944. Today I received 5 letters from Mrs. Holmes, Mother, Louis, Evelyn and Danta. All were very welcome and sweet. Mrs. Holmes was inquiring of me about Frank
and was very worried. It is still raining every day around the clock, very monsoon-like consistently.

July 17th 1944. Made our fifth “Hump mission”. We went via Chabua, India this time. Up in China I bartered from some silk (2 silk scarves) and an opium pipe. The rice and corn were really growing and were green as grass. Our trip back was uneventful except for one engine cutting up on takeoff.

July 22nd 1944. I sent packages to Danta. We heard of landings on Guam, of the Russians passing Brest-Livosk and Livow, and of uprisings against Hitler and his execution of 100 officers. Lt. Archie Damron (of Rio Grande Valley, Texas) and I visited the compound and our 793rd softball team played and defeated the 794th Squadron 7-0.

July 23rd 1944, Sunday. Went to Church, played ball, heard war news and watched the monsoon blow and rain like the dickens today. We have named our tanker B-29 42-6333, “Camel Caravan”.

July 26th 1944. Have been both Officer of the Day and Airdrome Officer the past few days. Have been playing ball and checkers. We are still hearing good news. Russians are 40 miles from Warsaw and 26 from East Prussia. Americans landing on Guam, Saipan and other islands in the Marianas.

July 27th 1944, Thursday. We made our sixth Hump trip today. I now have 72 operational hours. The procedure is now to award the Air Medal for 100 operational hours. Our group has only lost about Five B-29s in the Hump so far. We landed at A-3 this time instead of A-7 and left 3,100 gallons of gasoline. We flew back to A-7 over Chengtu and landed to leave spare airplane parts. Our Squadron had a record number of eight B-29s at forward bases this time.

July 28th 1944, Friday. Upon arriving back in our rear bases here in India, Captain Hughes (acting C.O.) told us we were to have a three day pass to Calcutta.

July 29th 1944, Saturday. We got a partial pay (I got $200) and our Crew (Captain Hal Meints, 1st Lt. Bill Shirar, 2nd Lt. McCann, First Officer Hank Schultze, and Sergeants Bill Foley, Tom Murray, Bill Egan, Ed Sullins, Vreeland and I boarded the 0800 Kharagpur to Calcutta train. We arrived in Calcutta four hours later after having covered the short distance of 70 miles. We got a Sikh cab driver (bearded Sikhs have a complete monopoly on Calcutta taxis) to take us from the RR station at Howrah to the Grand Hotel. We got ourselves rooms and meals on the European plan at the cost of 25 rupees for two days and nights. We shopped at the New Market. I bought the following articles: seven ivory elephants for 40 rupees, a sandalwood box for 30 rupees, two Kashmir wool blouses for 115 rupees, a star sapphire for 200 rupees and a white sapphire for 30 rupees. I probably got rooked all to hell on the stuff, but I wanted them for souvenirs. The Indians make you bargain for everything. On Sunday we hired a cab and went sightseeing. We visited the burning “Ghats” (where the Indians cremate their dead) and several Hindu and Moslem
temples. On our way back to town, a tall Indian girl ran across the street stark naked. Her body was beautiful (for a black one) and her breasts and all purely visible.

On August 1st we were assigned a combat B-29, a Bell made job, 42-63356. We named her “Lassie”.

August 8th 1944, Tuesday. The monsoons are still on in full blast and it rains unceasingly. We flew a gunnery training mission out over the Bay of Bengal and bombed Holiday Island. Our group has now completed four missions: Bangkok, Thailand; Yawata, Japan; Sasebo, Japan; and Anshan, Manchuria. I was on none of them as all our flying has been ferrying gasoline and parts over the Hump up to now. Each crew takes their turn and it fell our lot first. We are attending many briefings for future missions. Haven’t received any mail for over a week now – so haven’t heard from Danta and home for three weeks. In the last letter she wrote me of Kay undergoing a successful tonsillectomy. Our Group is now leading the Wing, and our Squadron leading the Group in operational hours. Bill Shirar, our Co-pilot, is pretty sick with malaria tonight. But all in all I guess life over here isn’t too bad. The food is good, we have an Officers’ Club, play softball and keep busy working, but the missions are all pretty dangerous and it’s hard to keep from getting sick. We all want to get home – and soon!!!

August 9th 1944. We got our ship ready, but were held as a spare for both the Palembang, Sumatra and Nagasaki, Japan missions – which were run simultaneously. So we flew B-29 42-6333 full of 9,400 gallons of gasoline over the Hump again. The trip “in the soup” was instruments all of the way. The Radio Compass went out about
Calcutta. Thus we could not make contact at Jorhat, India (461 nautical miles out) so I made a D.R. turn in the soup. So we flew on to His-Chang, China still in the soup at 20,000 feet for 442 more nautical miles. The free air temperature was -5 degrees centigrade (23 degrees F) and we started icing up. We turned for Penang and broke out of the soup after 1,200 miles of flight and 7 hours of instruments. We spotted A-7 after about a 20 minute search and came in. The rice is now turning yellowish-brown in the Chengtu valley and it is approaching harvest time. Our diet here still consists mostly of eggs and our homes at this advance base remain to be English tents. The Chinese, against regulations, buy, and the Americans, against regulations, sell, such items as a carton of cigarettes for $10.00 and a bar of Lux soap for $1.00. We have now completed seven Hump trips. Today I got out some money I have collected and am sending it to Danta. I have the following bills glued together end to end and signed by many of the fellows: the US dollar, a hundred franc note from Casablanca, a pound and ten piaster note from Cairo, Egypt, a rail from Abadan, Persia, a five rupee note from India and a ten Yuan note from China. The barrage balloons are out over the field again. They are quite a menace to local flying.

August 15th 1944, Tuesday. My Indian bearer, Roger (some call the Wogs or Guks) makes out my laundry list now days. I have quite a hard time making out his Hindustani. Today is again very hot. The boys are painting sketches on the mess hall walls now, symbolic of each mission flown.

August 20th 1944. We flew our eighth mission to China yesterday and made the takeoff this morning with our Group to make the first daylight mission on Yawata, Japan, but due to losing an engine, had to abort about half way out to the China coast. We were all very disappointed. We came back into the field sweating, as our ship was out on three engines for 600 miles. Upon landing, we were immediately interrogated and given refreshments of cookies, pineapple juice, hot coffee and whiskey. On this mission, we lost four ships: Colonel Clinkscales and Captain Stauffer were rammed by a Jap fighter over the target. Lt. Pickett was shot down by flak and Major Gus Askounis washed out a plane after making a fine belly landing at A-7. The Bomber Command lost twelve ships (combat and operational) so we all considered this third Yawata mission the most disastrous so far. On returning, I received three fine pictures from Danta.

August 29th 1944. I started numbering my letters to Danta today.

September 7th 1944. Flew the Hump to the forward base.

September 8th 1944. Today we were awakened at 03:00 AM China time. We ate a good breakfast of pancakes and scrambled eggs. We attended weather briefing, made a final check on “Lassie” and took off at daybreak with our flight and Squadron to bomb Anshan Steel and Ironworks in Manchuria. The 20th Bomber Command had about 100 B-29s on the mission. We bombed at high noon and landed just before dusk, twelve hours after takeoff. Flak at the target was light and our ship had only three fighter attacks.
September 9\textsuperscript{th} 1944. Still in China. We got up late today as we were all very tired. In the afternoon, we had a lot of fun playing touch football in the China mud. Tonight we were awakened at about 12:00 PM with a “two ball” alert which quickly changed to three balls as enemy bombers came overhead. We hit the trenches. A few bombs were dropped, mostly hitting harmlessly in nearby rice paddies. We didn’t make Church this Sunday as we were too tired.

September 11\textsuperscript{th} 1944. Lt. Vister bought us a radio today for 500 rupees. We all chipped in 40 rupees each. We really get a bang out of it. We have had a bit of a shake up in the Squadron and General LeMay is now commanding the 20\textsuperscript{th} Bomber Command. We have three crews of fine fellows in our barracks as follows:

**Crew Five:**
- B-29 42-63356 “Lassie”
- Capt. Hal Meints
- 1\textsuperscript{st} Lt. Bill Shirar
- 1\textsuperscript{st} Lt. W. W. Holderby
- 1\textsuperscript{st} Lt. F. McCann
- F/O H. Schultze

**Crew Ten:**
- B-29 42-6265 “Raiden Maiden”
- Capt. Bob Berman
- 1\textsuperscript{st} Lt. H. Madden
- 1\textsuperscript{st} Lt. J. Evans
- 1\textsuperscript{st} Lt. A. Damron
- 1\textsuperscript{st} Lt. Malloy
- CP C. Vester

**Crew Eleven**
- B-29 42-24487 “Bengal Lancer”
- Capt. C. Joyce
- 1\textsuperscript{st} Lt. B. Greenwald
- 1\textsuperscript{st} Lt. H. Fauth
- 1\textsuperscript{st} Lt. E. Faulkenham
- F/O Passieu

September 24\textsuperscript{th} 1944. Flew “Lassie” to forward base in China

September 26\textsuperscript{th} 1944. Bombed Anshan, Manchuria.

September 27\textsuperscript{th} 1944. We revived ourselves today.

September 28\textsuperscript{th} 1944. We returned to India.

September 29\textsuperscript{th} 1944. Relaxed and received mail from home.

September 30\textsuperscript{th} 1944. Today Capt. Bill, Capt. Meints, our enlisted men and myself flew to Calcutta via a C-46 for a three day pass. We booked up at the Grand Hotel and saw a show at the Lighthouse this evening.

October 1\textsuperscript{st} 1944. We really relaxed and took in two more shows, one each at the Metro and the Lighthouse. While shopping yesterday, I bought a Chinese Blood chit (a flag), a 20\textsuperscript{th} Air Force leather patch, and a souvenir CBI pillowcase for 30 rupees.
October 3rd 1944. It is raining and blowing again today. We saw the show “Roger Touhy, Gangster”. The boys are playing quite a lot of bridge and cribbage in their spare time.


October 5th 1944. We flew “Lassie” for about five hours locally. Flew down past Calcutta and bombed Holiday Island out in the Bay of Bengal. Then came back up to Mindapore (north of here) and Mac and I calibrated our airspeed meters on a six nautical mile stretch of railroad track. We ate dinner in the new Chinese restaurant here and paid $1.25 for some poor rump steak and eggs. We hear lots of rumors, today’s: “We are going home after two more missions and will be home by Christmas at the latest” and that we “combat crews were going to start taking old ships back to the States for transition use”. Every time I start to believe one of these rumors, my better sense reaches up and slaps me.

The following article was placed by Captain John Hechinger (our 793rd S-2 Officer) in the Squadron history:

“WEEKEND IN SICHUAN”

By 1st LT. W. W. HOLDERBY - 793rd BOMB SQUADRON

On the Formosa mission of October 14th, Capt. Hal Meints and Crew Five, in “Lassie” developed engine trouble on the return trip over the China coast near Amoy. Two bombs were hung up in the bomb bay, which “subtle as an avalanche” Schultz and 2nd Lt. McCann tried to release as #1 engine gulped and swallowed a valve. Hal immediately pressed his calloused feathering finger to the button, but nothing happened. The ship began to vibrate like a trip hammer. Capt. Hal turned to Schultz (who by this time was back in his Engineer’s seat, but no longer reading the “Case of the Lucky Legs”) and asked how much gas was left. Henry calmly replied, as he bit his cigarette in two, that we would have to set down someplace quick or bail out.

We were just now about abeam of Sichuan Air Field in eastern China and took a heading for it. The charts showed the field to have a very long runway, but we didn’t want to land unless we had to, as the field was about 120 miles behind the Jap lines running down to Kweilin. Over the soupy undercast at 15,000 feet we made radio contact. The field had homing but no beam and mountains on all sides of it, towering to 7,000 feet.

The Sichuan tower gave us the instrument landing procedure, including a letdown at 120 MPH, so Bill figured out their own letdown procedure and told the tower we were coming in as soon as we had gotten rid of two hung bombs. About this time T/Sgt. Bill Egan and FO Schultz had fastened 3 seat belts together, and were lying on the catwalk freezing while Mac kept the doors open at their request. They pulled the bombs loose and allowed both belts and bombs to fall harmlessly. We made the “sweat blood” letdown through those mountains on the radio compass and at about 1,000 feet came out in the
clear over a river bed which adjoins the field. We landed on three engines after being warned by the tower not to fire at fighter protection, which would cover our approach. No enemy fighters followed us through the soup and we landed safe and sound.

The Field CO and Hal immediately decided to camouflage the ship, so the 3 Officers and 10 Enlisted Men on the airfield and our complete crew, with the help of 100 coolies furnished by the resident engineer, painted the ship from tip to stern with mud: covered the wings with rice straw and broke up the lines of the ship with poles and bamboo webbing. The CO afterwards told us that the Japs would get the ship anyway if the weather cleared up. Our Crew accounted for almost as many white men as the permanent Field Personnel, who treated us graciously and wined and dined us as best they could for the next 6 days. That evening, as the Officers were opening their grape wine for us and apologizing for not having flight whiskey, we heard over the radio from Frisco by short-wave that two B-29s of the Formosa raid were “down and safe in eastern China Air Fields”. We were a little perturbed at this for the Japs would surely be looking now. For the next 6 days we worked on the ship, ran like hell or rode 17 miles in a Jeep (as we did one day) when the “Jingbow” Chinese air raid alarm was sounded. Fighters from nearby Kanchow were sent to cover us and took to the air just about the time we were able to make it to and man the Lewis guns.

The field with barracks, hot and cold showers, fine food and flush toilets (which Bill Shirer and S/Sgt. Tom Murray preflighted right from the start) gave us a new slant on the airfields in China after the conditions at A-7. Under all the runways were 500 lb. demolition bombs ready to be blown at any moment, and our “Lassie” was parked by the CO directly over one of these bombs.

We repaired our ship, with the aid of Crew Chief M/Sgt. Eddie Lehman, who was brought in along with parts by a C-46, and were back in A-7 after 6 fine days spent in a “bit of Chinese heaven” after what could have been a very terrible calamity for us.

Editor’s note:

This is a companion story of the Sichuan “adventure” as taken from the CBI Roundup magazine, from the collection of the New England Air Museum, courtesy of Yates C. Smith, 794th Bomb Squadron.
Crew members of the Super-Fortress Lassie, aided by Chinese, are shown camouflaging the bomber at an emergency field behind the fluid Jap lines in China. Hidden by clay and
rice straw, the big plane was repaired and flown to its XX Bomber Command Base after five days, being literally snatched from the Japs' very nose. The plane since has been retired from combat and is now in the States. The crew is flying “Lassie Too”.

XX BOMBER COMMAND, B-29 BASE, INDIA - The story of how the Super-Fortress Lassie came home after a five-day emergency sojourn at an isolated airfield behind the fluid Jap lines in China has been disclosed here.

Aided by Chinese troops, the crew camouflaged the bomber with clay and rice straw, repaired it as Jap aircraft vainly searched for the carefully concealed plane, and later flew it to safety.

Lassie, piloted by Capt. Harold L. Meints of Grand Mound, Ia., was returning from a XX Bomber Command mission when loss of an engine and a diminishing fuel supply necessitated an emergency landing. "We let down through 10,000 feet of solid soup and squeezed past some high hills to land at the field," Meints related. To hide the conspicuous silver bombers from the eyes of Jap "Photo Joe" reconnaissance planes and strafing fighters, the crew, aided by 100 Chinese, daubed the shining fuselage with dull clay and spread rice straw across the top.

"To blend the plane with the rice paddies, some of the boys stacked small bundles of rice along the wings and arranged them as though they were planted in furrows," Meints said.

Tools and spare parts were flown into the field along with the crew chief, M/Sgt. Edward H. Lehmann, Eagle Bend, Minn., and the crew alternately worked on the plane and scattered for cover as Jap planes roared nearby searching for the bomber.

"A low ceiling hung over the field most of the time and the Japs never did locate us," the pilot added. Three C-47 Skytrains hauled thousands of gallons of gasoline in barrels to the field. The fuel was pumped into the bomber by hand. Five days later the plane was stripped of its camouflage and flown to its Billy Mitchell Group base in Western China, literally snatched right out from under the Japs' noses.

"I guess they would have liked to grab a B-29 intact," Meints said. "But we thought of that, too. We had parked Lassie over a 1,000-pound bomb and would have blown her sky high if the Japs had threatened the field."

Other members of Lassie’s crew who participated in the mission are:

Lts. William C. Shirar, Lehighton, Penn., copilot; Francis McCann, Jr., Maplewood, N.J., bombardier; Willard Holderby, Byron, Okla., navigator; F/O Henry F. Schultze, New Haven, Conn., flight engineer; Sgt. Henry M. Compton, the Bronx, New York City, special radioman; S/Sgt. Glenn R. Muir, Union, N.Y., radio operator; T/Sgt. William Egan, Bridgeport, Conn., senior gunner; S/Sgt. Thomas J. Murray, Newburgh, N.Y., left gunner;
December 8\textsuperscript{th} 1944. Friday. To catch up again on my diary:

Up to now during the remainder of October, and November and the first part of December, we were on the Singapore mission, Omura, Japan mission (in which we all wound up bombing Point Island at Shanghai, China as Omura was overcast), Bangkok, Thailand mission and just returned from bombing Kaishu, Korea after originally starting out for Mukden, Manchuria. We went up to China on December 3\textsuperscript{rd} briefed to bomb the Jap aircraft factory at Omura, but the weather was continually staying closed in there. So after freezing ourselves for five days in “cold, cold” China, we were briefed a second time and started out in B-29 42-63356 “Lassie” to bomb the aircraft factory at Mukden, Manchuria. We reached the first AP (aiming point) at about 9:00 AM after flying since 2:00 AM on the night of December 7\textsuperscript{th} 1944. We were all wearing our electric suits. The free air temperature was a minus 32 degree Centigrade (minus 26 F) and we were iced up so badly we couldn’t fly in formation. So we left formation to bomb the docks at Darien. We couldn’t bomb there by radar so we wound up bombing Kaishu, Korea. We then departed for A-7 and after bucking 70-80 mile per hour head winds, arrived there at dusk after 15 hours of flying. We were all so tired we could hardly answer questions at briefing. This was our longest flight, except for the 17 hours we flew on the Singapore mission. To date I have been in eight combat missions, averaging around 14 hours each and 15 round-trip “Hump missions” which now gives me a total of 282 combat and operational hours. We are still sleeping in tents up in China and freezing as it is both cold and damp. The food up there is prepared by Chinese coolies and is both poor and dirty. We eat K-rations at time to avoid it. While waiting up there we played bridge around a fire in our spare time. Upon returning today, we all cleaned up and have been busy reading mail from home. I received nine letters. One from a cousin in Hawaii, three from mother and dad and six from Danta. Tonight we saw the show, “Up in Arms” for the second time.
December 12\textsuperscript{th} 1944. Tuesday. Today we returned from a three day pass to Calcutta. Upon returning I had received a Christmas package from Arnold and Evelyn and several letters from Joe, mother and Danta. Mother had sent me a picture of Louis and a newspaper clipping of Oklahoma A+M playing TCU in the Cotton Bowl this New Year’s.

Also some drawings made by Kay Frances. The rumors again were hot and heavy and most of the fellows were pretty discouraged. It seems that they think their stay here may be as much as six months longer and that we will make a move soon to some one or another base. Both the Philippines and Australia were mentioned. Our old ship 42-63356 “Lassie” was gone. At ATC crew had taken it home. We had always hoped to take it, but never really thought that we would get to. We stayed at Brabourne Rest Camp in Calcutta. Had a good time seeing shows, and going night clubbing out to the state side British-American club. 10:30 PM. I just came from the Post Office after mailing letters to both Danta and the folks. I had a package there for me. The second Christmas package from Danta. The first was a fine fruit cake which we all enjoyed. This one I really got a kick out of. It contained an assortment of fruit, pecan bars, candy, Christmas cards, soap and a Bob Hope booked from “Phil”. I also received a fine box of soap from Arnold and Evelyn today and sweet letters from Danta, Joe and mother.

December 22\textsuperscript{nd} 1944. Friday evening. Today we returned in our new ship B-29 42-63460 (“Lassie Too”) after making our first Hump trip with it and two missions from our advanced base at Pengshan, China. On December 18\textsuperscript{th} we bombed (with our 793\textsuperscript{rd} Squadron and Group) Hanchow, China. We dropped 144 one-hundred pound incendiary bombs from one plane alone. The fire was miles across and the smoke was miles high. The weather in China was again cold and very noticeable as it is still very warm and nice here in India. On December 21\textsuperscript{st} we bombed (along with nine other B-29s from our Group) the Manchurian aircraft factory at Mukden, Manchuria. This was a rough and tough mission, our roughest by far. The flak was moderate, low and inaccurate, but the fighters were thick and deadly in earnest at firing and ramming us. Captain Benedict and crew, flying on our right wing were rammed over the target by a Jap “Nick” fighter. We watched them go down in a barrel roll. One chute was seen to open at 5,000 feet. The ramming Jap fighter blew up into pieces. Lts. Deacon Dailey, T. Evans, Bugs Bale and Mahoney were all well liked by us all.
In the mail today I had six packages. I received fine boxes of soap from Evelyn, the C.S. Hendersons and the Charlie Spicers. Also received a nice card and letter from Mable Spicer. Also received nice Christmas packages from Joe’s and Arnold’s and a fine leather writing case from Danta. Received a letter from Danta today written December 6th and I received a fine letter from Dad today, mentioning that he had bought me $175 of bonds for Christmas. After getting back, I got a fine bath (the first in six days).

January 4th 1945. We haven’t flown now since December 22nd as our airplane B-29 42-63460 is still in the Sub Depot being repaired. Lately we have been playing a lot of bridge. Lt. Holmes, Lt. Fauth, Lt. Greenwald, Lt. McCann, FO Schultz, Lt. Wechel and Capt. Sloan and I play together most. We are to move into new barracks in about two weeks with individual rooms and more conveniences, so everyone is looking forward to that.

Today we got some pictures taken with “Lassie” just before she went home. This being the winter season now it is cool enough to wear a jacket at evenings and sleep under blankets at night, but everyone still runs around in light shirts and khakis during the day.
January 6th 1945, Saturday. When we woke up this morning it was raining so we all turned over and went back to sleep. This is the first rains we have had since the monsoons quit in late September.
Up too late for breakfast, Greenie, Faulkenham, Holmes, McCann, Shirar and I had fruit cake, cookies and tuna fish from our food locker in the Day Room next door.

Today I am writing Danta and sending her some pictures of me. We plan to play bridge this afternoon as we are not flying. Hal has been checking out some replacement pilots lately and I checked out a new 2\textsuperscript{nd} Lt. Anderson on navigating over the Hump a few weeks back.

January 10\textsuperscript{th} 1945. I just returned from flight line where with several other combat members not going on the mission, we watched our Squadron and Group’s ships make a night takeoff for Singapore. They will not return until around 5:00 tomorrow afternoon. It was quite thrilling to watch the heavily loaded ships (weighing 135,000 pounds at takeoff) speed down the runway and slowly climb into the air at around 135 miles per hour and then one by one turn onto course and then their navigational lights would fade away in the distance. Our CO Major Don Humphries, Captain Al Bores and Major Schonlau were the only ones to make the mission from our Squadron. After takeoff, Lt.’s Fauth, Holmes, Captain Doc Joyce, Hal Meints and I loaded into our Jeep and returned to our barracks.

January 11\textsuperscript{th} 1945. All ships returned in our Group and Squadron except our CO Don Humphries and Colonel Billings and crew. We went over to the snack bar and had Vienna sausages and cheese sandwiches and coffee. Current rumors are 500 hours individual time for each crew member before returning to “Shangri-La” and another 400 for 1\textsuperscript{st} Pilots and at least 300 for each crew member. I received two letters from Danta today. I haven’t flown now since December 22\textsuperscript{nd} except for a flight last Sunday. I went over to Agra, India with Capt. Doc Joyce, Lt. Fauth and crew. The flight was in B-29 42-63354 and lasted seven hours. We enjoyed it quite a bit and flew around the Taj Mahal four times. With the sun shining on it and from 500 feet of altitude it was very beautiful. It is located right on the river bank. On this flight we were only 240 miles south of Mt. Everest and passed over Jodispur, India which is a huge steel mill town. We could see the open hearth blast fumes 25 miles away at night while returning. Major Kenny Baile, our Squadron executive officer and strictly a ground man, but a nice fellow, made the flight with us.

January 12\textsuperscript{th} 1945, Friday. Still no word from B-29 42-24704 (“The Gear Box”) and Don Humphries. It’s beginning to look as though we have lost our Commanding Officer. We are all still hoping to get news from them that they are OK. Our ship, B-29 42-63460 is still in Sub Depot being repaired and we are still loafing and hoping for good news of going home. Last night we attended the concert held in the 22 Air Depot open air theater. We were favored with some of the world’s very best singing by Lily Pons and good music under the direction of Andre Kostalanetz, both world renowned stars of Metropolitan opera, stage and screen. This is the second excellent USO show we have seen. Jinx Faulkenberg and Pat O’Brien and troupe in China were the first.

January 24\textsuperscript{th} 1945. Today we returned from a round trip Hump flight. We flew B-29 42-24487 “Bengal Lancer” over the Hump. We were bringing the boys back from China on the return trip; we had 22 men and all their luggage in the ship. We stayed overnight in China. Since it’s so cold up there I am hoping I never have to go back.
January 26th 1945. Today we went to the show and spent the earlier part flying B-29 42-63460 on a test hop. Last Monday I received the “DFC” or “Distinguished Flying Cross” along with several other officers and men of our Squadron and two others on our crew. I plan to send it home in a few days.

March 11th 1945. Not having written in my diary for awhile I will recall some of the more important events during the last of January, February and the first of March. Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten was here in February to give us a speech. We flew several missions mostly over 16 hours. On a Rangoon mission we were hit by flak and the nose glass was broken.

Today I got up late, as I just got back last night off a 16 hour mission to Kuala Lampur about 150 miles north of Singapore. I now have in 17 round trip Hump missions; 14 combat missions and a total of over 400 operational and combat hours. 400 hours makes me eligible for the 2nd Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal.

March 30th 1945. Since the last writing I have been on two missions, #15 and #16 for me and I now have in 18 round trips over the Hump. We flew an uneventful 6 hour mission to Rangoon on reconnaissance, to obtain strike photos.

On February 28th we took off from here and flew 5 hours to Luliang, China. Out of there we flew to some islands off the coast of China and then layed 12-1,000 pound mines in the harbor and Yangtze River at Shanghai. I navigated out by Celestial and radar. We took off from Luliang Airfield surrounded by 10,000 foot mountain peaks. The field itself was over 6,000 feet, so the air up there seemed very invigorating, especially since it had recently rained. We took off at 5:45 China time so the 6 hour trip out was fairly hard navigation since it was dark and also very cloudy. The navigation back into those mountainous bases is what is really rough though. So when we spotted the field we were all very happy. Major Marbury and Lt. Cobb did a fine job of piloting and I like flying with them very much. Lt. Mat Healy was our Engineer as Schultz was still in the hospital. We returned to our bases here at B-1 the next day so we figured that we flew 21:45 hours in the last 30 hours. This was our last mission both out of here and China. We have known that we were going to move as a Group for a long while, but where we don’t know, nor when we don’t know, but we anticipate soon.

All of the old crews (original and early replacements) who have not been to rest camp are going April 1st. We are going to Darjeeling for 15 days. We understand it to be in the foothills of the Himalayas and nice and cool. We are planning on going big game hunting and are getting prepared for it. I now have in a total of 430 operational hours and 16 missions and 18 Hump round trips or a total of 34 completed missions.

Lately it has been extremely humid and hot again and we are all looking forward to being on Saipan or the Philippines after returning from rest camp at Darjeeling.

May 3rd 1945. Rest camp at Darjeeling was fine. We spent almost two weeks there and returned to Calcutta April 18th. That night we stayed at the Karnaini Estate (Lt. Healy and I) in Calcutta and returned to our base by C-46 April 19th 1945. The remainder of April we didn’t do anything, but play ball and bridge and read and write letters and let the time pass.
On May 5th we are leaving for Luliang, China. We plan to leave here early in the morning, arrive there about noon and takeoff before dark that evening on a 12 or 13 hour flight 2,500 nautical miles to Tinian in the Marianas. Today I have been working and checking on my compass and the ship's navigation instruments and drawing up maps.

May 9th 1945. On May 5th we arrived at Tinian in the Marianas Islands. We flew here non-stop from Luliang, China a total of 2,500 nautical miles. We flew over the southern tip of Formosa and north of the Philippines. Navigation was still all celestial as we came at night. We were awake from 4:45 AM until 2:30 PM May 6th or a total of 33 ½ hours. We flew 17 hours from our base in India to here. We were only at Luliang, China for time enough for briefing, eating and gassing up again.

Here at Tinian it looks pretty nice to us. My first view of the islands is something that really sticks in my mind. We were on a 90 degree heading east and directly before us in a north and south direction were Guam, Saipan, Tinian and Rota. We saw them about 50 miles out. These islands are quite impressive. Located generally at 15 degrees north latitude and 145 degrees east longitude, they have a semi-tropical climate. The islands abound with coral, which is used for runways and roads and tent floors. We have tents for quarters now, but will soon have Quonset huts. The water around this island is very clear and very deep. I have been swimming once so far on a coral beach. You could dive in from the shore from any height you wanted as the water is deep and clear and the beach gradually slopes up to a cliff. Japs are still on this island, but live in caves and cause practically no trouble now.

Here on Tinian there are more airplanes based than on any other base anywhere in the world. There are over 1,000 B-29s, Army and Navy fighters on Tinian alone.

We are having ground school now and briefing on the Honshu (the main island of Japan) and expect to fly our first Honshu mission around the 14th of May (six days). Last night we flew locally. The islands here in the blue Pacific are very beautiful and with the 50,000 watt Tinian radio jazz, everything seemed pretty nice.

We are given credit for 1 mission for every 28 Hump hours (4 ½ trips over and back), so with my 16 missions plus this I now have 24 missions. It is rumored that we will be home in 3 months now as Germany just surrendered; the goal is to knock Japan out of the war in a 3 month fire and bomb blitz so we are expecting to fly as many as 10 missions a month. I hope to stay alive and be home by August. We still have to use our India APO 793 as part of the fellows coming by boat won't be here until June 15th.

May 15th 1945. We got to change our APO today to APO 247 c/o PM San Francisco, California. We still can't mention that we are in the 21st Bomber Command instead of the 20th or mention that we are in the Marianas Islands and on Tinian. We can say that we are in the Pacific. I received two letters from home yesterday through my old APO in ten days time. Mail should come in 3 or 4 days now with the new one.

(Occurring earlier) On May 11th, we took off with our Squadron on a mission to Kobe, Japan. We made a night takeoff and were pretty heavy at 136,000 pounds (68 tons). We saw lots of flak and received one hit in the wing. We had lots of fighter attacks.
mission lasted 15 hours. We made a night takeoff at 0300 AM hitting Kobe at about 10:00 in the morning.

(Occurring earlier) On May 14th we went out in the biggest formation of B-29s yet – over 600 B-29s. We bombed Nagoya, Japan with incendiaries and flew 16 ½ hours from and to our base here at Tinian.

Today the Seabees here started construction of Quonset huts so we may be able to move out of these tents in a few days.

It rains here almost every day, just a shower, and although the temperature isn’t so high for this latitude, the humidity is high, but we generally have a good breeze. We went to a movie at the Seabees night before last. We saw a good movie and it almost seemed stateside. Major Marbury is now Operations Officer, placed on non-flying status.

On May 16th at 08:30 PM Tinian time, we took off for Nagoya, Japan on an individual mission. Over 500 B-29s participated, but we went out individually and over the target individually as it was at night. We bombed Nagoya just before daylight with 32 500-pound incendiary clusters (8 tons) type bombs. We were pretty heavy for takeoff at 137,000 pounds. Our Wing lost one ship and most of the crew as a ship from another Group crashed into the cliff at the end of the runway and exploded after returning from an abort. We now have in 27 missions and almost 500 hours of combat and operational time. 35 missions have been set up as making one “eligible” for rotation in the 21st Bomber Command of Major General Curtis LeMay’s. This now consists of all B-29 units overseas, including ours (the 58th and oldest Wing), the 73rd Wing located on Saipan, the 313th Wing located on North Field here at Tinian (we are at West Field) and the 314th Wing on Guam. Yesterday we saw C-46s mothering in several flights of the Navy’s hottest fighter, the F4U. We went swimming in the clear coral bedded ocean again yesterday. It rained on us while swimming. Today I wrote several letters home.

There is a beautiful little cemetery on this island (if you can say that about any cemetery). There are row upon row of white crosses and American flags towering high above them all. A very high price it seems for so small, though beautiful an island. Many gun emplacements, shell holes, and evidence of the battle for Tinian still exist around here. On our way to Japan, no matter what city we are to strike, we always go by way of Iwo Jima. It is also a beautiful little isle from the air and is also full of fighters, bombers, and gas dry or battle damaged B-29s, forced down on their way home to Tinian, Guam or Saipan. Flags throughout all of this part of the world are still being flown at half mast in remembrance of our late President Roosevelt.
May 23rd 1945. Tinian Island, Marianas Islands. Yesterday we were rationed two Coca Colas. The first we have had in 14 months.

Today, General Ramey, our 58th Wing Commanding General, talked to our Group for about ten minutes telling us that we were eligible for rotation after 35 missions, but that it was very possible that we wouldn’t have replacement crews and that we might have to continue to fly combat missions, reconnaissance missions, take staff jobs or be sent back to the States and be instructors at Muroc Lake B-29 Lead Crew School. We expect to fly a mission to Tokyo tonight. We are now moved into our Quonset, prefabricated houses, made of screen, tin sheeting and plywood and fiber board. They are very cool and fine. I have built myself a rough desk and set of shelves and a stool. We are sleeping on cots and making good use of our air mattresses.

May 27th 1945, Sunday. Yesterday morning at 0900 o’clock we returned from bombing Tokyo. It was my 28th completed mission and I felt very happy about being able to complete it. We took off from West Field here on Tinian carrying 180 100-pound incendiaries at an hour before dark. We flew past Iwo Jima and then on to Japan through a bad raining night. We were in soup and clouds all the way over the water until we hit the mainland of Honshu, when the undercast disappeared. Without radar, our navigation would have been very difficult, but we kept our radar set working fine, and not getting any celestial shots didn’t worry me. We picked up one of the large islands in the “Nan-Po Shoto” chain (just south of Tokyo, Kawasaki and Yokohama) and made a course correction directly to the tip of Honshu mainland, where we made our landfall. We passed a few miles east (still on a northerly course) of Mt. Fujiyama. Although we were receiving a little ack-ack and some small arms fire, all of the crew took a few seconds time out to look at beautiful snow-capped Fuji. We were flying at 10,000 feet so we were looking up a couple of thousand feet at the volcanic crater of Fuji.
Continuing on to our Initial Point, we made a radar turn here and held an 84 degree magnetic heading into the Palace area of Tokyo. The crew was told that the target area was five minutes away. With a 30 miles tail wind we were now making a ground speed of over 300 miles per hour which now seemed “slow as hell” now that several searchlights had us pinned. We had been able to see the red glow of Tokyo over a hundred miles away, and now that we were over it the burst of incendiary bombs, bursts of ack-ack, small arms fire and more small arms fire with tracers coming by and searchlight batteries feeling through the sky by the hundreds it kinda seemed like an outside or maybe an inside look at hell. Our 180 bombs were away in a few minutes and one of the gunners screamed over the interphone that another B-29 was directly over us. In spite of the fact that hundreds (over 500 in all) of B-29s were coming in on the same course as ours we had to turn off course (in front of their path) to get out from under that B-29. That we did! Then we turned back on a south-east heading. Searchlights were still on us and a burst of flak hit our wing. #4 engine was hit and on fire and the gas tank in the right wing had a hole knocked in it. We went out across Tokyo Bay and the searchlight batteries went off on us. (The searchlight batteries just pass you on, from one battery until another until it is pretty hard to get out of them even by evasive action.) We struck out on course and got some flak and small arms fire from the pickett boats off the coast. Part of our navigational equipment was out but we made it OK. Dawn came as we neared Iwo Jima and we landed here at Tinian at 8:40 in the morning. The Bomber Command lost 19 ships over the target and had 30 operational losses. Our 58th Wing lost nine ships and we lost two ships and crews in our Group. Our ship is in sub-depot being repaired and will be out according to the “paperwork” in three days. This morning we fellows when to
Church. We expect to take another ship, possibly B-29 42-69977 (“Miss Piggy”) on the next mission, probably Yokohama.

On May 29th we flew B-29 42-63415 (“Jolly Roger”) to Yokohama. We got minor flak hits but considered it our easiest mission yet. On June 1st we made a navigation escort mission from Iwo Jima leading fighters to Osaka, Japan. We were sent to Iwo Jima to escort fighters and be the navigation ship for them but we only flew one mission before being ordered back. It is about 642 nautical miles from here to Iwo Jima, but we usually fly it in about 2 ½ hours. At Iwo – we landed at Central Field and then were taken by truck to our tents. Iwo Jima is eight square miles in area and is a rocky and sandy island with a small mountain, Mt. Suribachi, at the southern end. We toured the island in a jeep with a local Captain Zola showing us around. We saw radar installations on Mt. Suribachi, the Marine invasion beach, the destroyed amphibs, the ashy beaches and landing crafts. The beach was strewn with wreckage. All trees were black and not a leaf on them anywhere. We visited the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Marine cemeteries. There were thousands of white crosses and it all seemed terrible. Dead Japs still litter the islands in many places and some of the boys got souvenirs from them.

We had fresh steaks from the States at Iwo – a boat came in while we were there. We are scheduled to takeoff on a mission tonight, probably Osaka.

June 12th 1945. The Osaka mission was OK. We landed from over an overcast by Radar so everything worked out OK. No flak and no fighters, as our P-51s had already been in and gave them a working over. This gave us 31 completed missions. On June 10th we went out on another mission, this time to bomb the Tomoika aircraft engine plant which was a few miles south of Yokohama. We again bombed by radar and had no fighters or flak, so the total is now 32. I am slowly sweating out my missions. Three more to go. Tonight we are schedule to go to Yawata or Nagasaki. As always, we’re hoping everything goes well.

#33 June 15th-16th – mission to Osaka

#34 June 17th-18th – mission to Omura

#35 coming up! I’m wondering and hoping and praying a little to boot. We are planning on going on a mission to Osaka on Tashi Kawa (northwest of Tokyo) tonight and if all goes well I will have in 35 missions. Colonel Hatfield, our Squadron Commander told me he would have my leave orders ready for me in a few days. So I am hoping to get home during the first half of July.

July 1st 1945. I now have 35 missions so my tour of combat duty is over, and I am waiting now for my orders home. It is really a wonderful feeling not to have to worry about sweating out any more heavy takeoffs, flak at targets, fighters over the Jap homeland, and the gas the airplane on the long last half of those 15 hour flights on missions to the Empire. Our last target was Okayama and we really set it on fire. Smoke rose 7,000 feet or so above us and we were flying at 12,000 feet on a moonlit night...the city seemed to be bubbling and baking in fire. I even feel sorry for the Japs. I now have in over 600 operational hours (Hump trips and combat) and over 1,000 hours of navigation time. That is quite a lot of time – for a navigator. I have decided to go
home to stay which meant giving up my job as Squadron Navigator and the advancement therewith, but I at least will not have to come back overseas now and get back to my lovely wife, LaDanta, and my cute little six year old daughter, Kay.

Unless we can fly a B-29 home, we expect to fly by ATC to Hawaii via Kwajalein in the Marshall Island Group and take either boat or plane from there to Hamilton Field, California. Since the Air Force was temporarily through with me (or vice versa) I was assigned individual orders to proceed to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas where I would receive further orders for a month’s leave and recuperation.

I boarded a United Air Lines DC-4 which took us to Hickam Field in Hawaii (via Kwajalein in the Marshall Island Group and to Johnson Island, which is 1,000 miles west of Hawaii).

On arriving at Hickam Field I was assigned to bachelor officer’s quarters and remained at Hickam for about six weeks as most planes and ships were being used exclusively at this time to return the American wounded home from the battles in Okinawa to American hospitals. I really enjoyed Hawaii, visiting Pearl Harbor in Honolulu.

BOMBING AND BATTLE MISSIONS
W. W. HOLDERBY

Out of India and China
Includes 20 Hump missions/39 crossings

1944

August 20th  Yawata, Japan  Incomplete due to lost engine; aborted
September 7th-8th  Anshan, Manchuria
September 26th  Anshan, Manchuria
October 14th  Formosa  Lost engine from ack-ack over target
November 5th  Singapore, Malay Straits
November 21st  Shanghai, China  Harbor mining mission
November 27th  Bangkok, Thailand
December 7th  Mukden, Manchuria
December 18th  Hankow, China
December 21st  Mukden, Manchuria  B-29 airplane on our right wing was rammed by Jap fighter

1945

January  Singapore  Reconnaissance
February  Singapore, Malay Straits
February  Rangoon, Burma
February  Georgetown, Malay Straits
March  Kuala Lumpur, Malay Straits
March  Rangoon, Burma  Reconnaissance
March  Shanghai  Harbor mining
### JAPAN HOMELAND MISSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mission Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Kobe, Japan</td>
<td>Demolition bombs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 14&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Nagoya, Japan</td>
<td>Day fire blitz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Nagoya, Japan</td>
<td>Night fire blitz</td>
</tr>
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<td>May 25&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (#28)</td>
<td>Tokyo, Japan</td>
<td>Night fire blitz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 29&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (#29)</td>
<td>Yokohama, Japan</td>
<td>Day fire blitz</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; (#30)</td>
<td>Osaka, Japan</td>
<td>Navigated fighters</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 7&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (#31)</td>
<td>Osaka, Japan</td>
<td>Precision attack</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 10&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (#32)</td>
<td>Tomoika, Japan</td>
<td>Precision attack</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 16&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (#33)</td>
<td>Osaka, Japan</td>
<td>Radar at 20,000 feet in soup</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 18&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; (#34)</td>
<td>Omura, Japan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>July 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; (#35)</td>
<td>Osaka, Japan</td>
<td></td>
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Was credited for 1 mission for 5 Hump trips

Made 21 trips over the Hump; made 20 back = 40

40/5 = 8

On last flight over from Calcutta flew to Luliang, China, then 5,000 miles non-stop to Tinian Island in the Marianas Group. WWH

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From The Enid News

Willard Wayne Holderby

Willard Wayne Holderby died Friday, May 23, 2008 at the Cherokee Manor nursing home. He was 88 years old.

The funeral for Willard Wayne Holderby, 88, of Cherokee will be 10 a.m. Wednesday, May 28, 2008, at the First Christian Church, Cherokee. Dr. Ron Hansen will officiate. Burial will be in Byron-Anmorita Cemetery. Arrangements are by Lanman Funeral Home, Inc., of Cherokee. Visitation will be 10 a.m. - 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 27, 2008, with the family present from 6 - 8 p.m. at the funeral home.

Holderby was born January 1, 1920 in Byron, Oklahoma, the fourth of five sons born to Joseph Otto and Edith Smith Holderby. He graduated from Byron High School in 1937 as Valedictorian. He later attended Oklahoma A&M College, where he obtained a Business Administration degree in 1941. He was a member of Blue Key, Student Senate, Who’s Who Among Students in American Colleges, and Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity.

Upon graduation, Holderby took a job with Standard Oil in Tulsa, Oklahoma, but was soon called to active duty, just a few months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He went through infantry training in Fort Benning, Georgia, which was commanded at that time by Major General George S. Patton, Jr., and was in the infantry for eighteen months before transferring to the Army Air Corps. He participated in bombardier school...
in Roswell, New Mexico and was later sent for training at Salina, Kansas Army Air Base, which was the base for the B-29 bombers.

He served as a 1st Lieutenant and was a squadron navigator with the 793rd Squadron, 468th Very Heavy Bombardment (VH) Group, 58th Wing of the 20th Bomber Command, also known as the “Billy Mitchell” Bomb Group.

He flew a total of 35 missions over the Himalayas, before flying bombing raids off Tinian Island into Japan. He received numerous commendations, including the Distinguished Flying Cross. He was discharged from the military with the rank of Captain.

After completing his military service, Holderby returned to Amorita where he coached high school basketball and served as Superintendent. He started in the car business in Cherokee in 1954, and when the original Ford building burned in 1962, he built a new Holderby Ford dealership in 1967 and continued selling automobiles until 1990. In 1975, he purchased the John Deere dealership and constructed a new building in 1978 for Holderby Farm Equipment, which he operated until March 1999. He and his son, Stephen, farmed his lands in northern Alfalfa County, raising wheat, alfalfa and cattle.
Biographical data

Marriage

1937-09-09  (Age: 17)  
LaDanta Ione Jack

Marriage

1977  (Age: 57)  
Marjorie M. Richter

Death

2008-05-23  (Age: 88)

1930 Census

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Willard W Holderby</th>
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<tr>
<td>Home in 1930:</td>
<td>Byron, Alfalfa, Oklahoma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birth Year:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father's Name:</td>
<td>Otto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----</td>
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<td>Mother's Name:</td>
<td>Edith M</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Members:</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Otto Holderby</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Willard W Holderby</td>
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<td>Louis L Holderby</td>
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