



NEWS

A publication of the Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation

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Photo: Travis Air Museum archives

*C-141A Starlifter winging its way over the Benicia Bridge.
It's 4,526 miles from Travis AFB to Wake Island.*

Wake Island

By Bill Markley

December 1966, on radio headset. There is constant flight deck chatter, but I don't seem to hear a word the crew is saying. I am standing behind the left seat pilot and looking out the window of a C-141. The sky is slowly turning orange and blue and seems to extend to infinity. We are at 35,000 feet and have flown nine hours over the Pacific after leaving the California coast at night. My mind is following my eyes as if they are walking together across the orange and blue tinted cloud formations beyond the window. My eyes find a wonderful thick cloud and then my mind wonders about its shape. Yes, this one does look like a face. Then the plane's wing cuts a slice through its forehead. "Wake tower! Wake Tower! This is Air Force 617 descending through 10,000 feet and 50 miles out," laments the copilot. Starting the landing checklist, he calls my name among those of the crew. "Yes sir," I respond, keying the mike, and then make my way to the cargo compartment. I squeeze along the cargo cat-walk. Down the side of this 41-foot monster I go, passing the last Vietnam-bound truck in the fuselage and checking chains and



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Wake Island atoll

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Comments and questions about the NEWS may be addressed to Editor, Jimmy Doolittle Air & Space Museum Foundation NEWS, PO Box 1565, Travis AFB, CA 94535

JIMMY DOOLITTLE AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM Mission Statement

The purpose of the Museum is to portray the history of Travis Air Force Base's contribution to the development of airlift in the Pacific.

It's primary objectives are:

- To provide and maintain an aviation and aerospace, educational, scientific, cultural, historical and inspirational facility for the general public.
- To provide to youth, students and scholars historical research facilities and inspirational exhibits.
- To serve as a meeting place and forum for aerospace oriented organizations and individuals for the benefit of all Northern California.

* In accordance with AFD 64-1, Air Force History and Museum Program.

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CURATOR'S CORNER



By Dr. Gary Leiser

HAILS AND FAREWELLS

There were several new faces at the Museum this summer. We were pleased to have the assistance of two high school Red Cross volunteers (recruited by Maj. Newlin), **Tanya Drummond** and **Kevin Ryan**. Both carried out many tasks, from washing aircraft to answering the phone. Perhaps most important they completed a mural "Welcome Home" as part of her exhibit on the war in Vietnam. We also have three new restoration volunteers, **Tyler Spencer**, **Chavez Zavala**, and **Ken Cox**. **MSgt Joe Inocencio**, our superintendent for more than two years, has "put in his papers" and will go out to pasture in early 2005. We have been recruiting two NCOs to replace him, one of whom is **TSgt Mitchell Danbury**, who joined us in September. I should mention that one "familiar face," **Warren Bailey**, who had held MSgt Inocencio's position many years ago and served on the board of our Foundation for longer than most of us remember, has now officially moved to the wilderness of Texas. We appreciate all that he has done for the Museum over the years and wish him the best of luck on his armadillo farm.

DONATIONS

During the summer the Museum received a number of significant donations. **Donald Yearout** presented us with a beautiful 1/6 scale Curtiss P6-E Hawk that he made from scratch. **Dick Koelling** donated two display cases and 30 model aircraft. **Carol Garcia** donated the papers of her uncle, O.B.



Tanya Drummond at work on the Vietnam in mural.

Taylor, a P-38 pilot in 15 AF during WW II. **Dave Florek** arranged for the donation of a half-scale model of an X-15 engine from AeroJet. And the family of the late **Major General Russell Waldron** (see In Memoriam), the first commander of WESTAF at Travis, donated many of his papers. We also received monetary donations in memory of **MSgt Douglas Kearl** from **Mr. and Mrs. Ike Isaacson**, **Jim and Jane Carroll**, and **Robert and Pat Cooper**.



Bob Zirzow and Jake Jacobson mount the Curtiss P6-E Hawk.

groups and "families with children." The director gave a presentation on the Museum at the Fairfield Senior Center and **Eric Schmidt** did the same for the Rio Vista Lions Club. The social event of the summer was no doubt the **Foundation's 4 July BBQ** in Fairfield which raised more than \$1,000.

continued on next page

CURATOR'S CORNER CONTINUED

NUTS AND BOLTS

Major Newlin made a number of additions to our exhibit on Jimmy Doolittle and the Raiders. **Charlie White** and **Eric Schmidt** devoted their talents to trying to fix the entry door of our B-52. **Charlie** and **Ken Cox** repaired a window on the C-45. **Bob Zirzow** has been doing a terrific job of refurbishing the interior of our C-7. **Charlie Moran** and **Robert Cassero** have almost completed a beautiful restoration of the interior of our C-118. **Joe Tattersall** repainted the floor of the SA-16 and made bird covers for the exhaust pipes. **Jake Jacobson** and **Norm Crombie** have completed the task of putting new sheet metal on the rudder of our A-26. The rudder has been reattached and the aircraft is now ready to be completely repainted by a team assembled by **MSgt**



New rudder for the A-26.

Terry Juran. **Bob Jenkins** has been cleaning the interior of the C-123 and built a display case. He and **Bill Lancaster** also did heavy duty picture hanging in the museum. **Jim Martin** made numerous minor repairs to various aircraft in the collection during his weekly inspections. **Gary Vostry** carried out many tasks, including tire cleaning, and is trying to form a team to restore our

Hound Dog missile (see below). **Ben Reed** has done an exemplary job, worthy of several oak leaf clusters, reorganizing our library, archives, and artifact storage room and making a user friendly data base for our inventory. This will be shown off the next time the museum receives an inspection. Finally, we have a group of volunteers who are eager to begin the restoration of the cab from the old control tower. Our major holdup is finding a civil engineer to prepare the drawings for a simple foundation that we can present to base civil engineering. In addition, a team from LG is interested in repainting our C-141 and putting it on display at a prominent intersection on the base. I hope to have more to say on this in a future newsletter.



Restoration crew planning next project: L to R Norm Crombie, Bill santee, Bob Jenkins, Charlie Moran, Eric Schmidt, Jim Martin and Charlie White.

IN MEMORIAM: 1ST GENERAL OF WESTAF

Major General Russell Waldron

Major General Russell “Gatty” Waldron, USAF, Ret., passed away May 11, 2004, in Fairfield. He was born on April 8, 1910, in Wellston, Ohio. Orphaned at the age of 9, he lived with his grandparents on a farm in southern Ohio. He taught elementary school for two years to all eight grades in a one-room country schoolhouse.

In 1930 he joined the Army Air Corps and was appointed a Flying Cadet from the enlisted ranks. He graduated from the Army Air Corps Flying School in 1932.

General Waldron served for 30 years in the Army Air Corps and United States Air Force. Included in this service was duty in the Central Pacific, Western Pacific and Anti-Submarine Patrol on the East Coast of the United States during WWII. He was Commander of the 31st Bombardment Squadron at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and saw his aircraft go up in smoke when the Japanese attacked. He subsequently participated in the first air attack against Wake Island and became Commander of the 11th Bombardment Group while it was based at Kwajalein and Guam.

After WW II, his duty assignments included that of commanding officer of two heavy bombardment squadrons, a heavy bombardment group, and an advanced training wing. He was also commanding general of a combat cargo division, an airlift division and finally the Western Transport Air Force (WESTAF). He was the first commanding general of WESTAF between July 1, 1958 and 15 February 1960. Located at Travis AFB, WESTAF was the predecessor of 22 AF.

General Waldron’s military awards and decorations included the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, the Distinguished Flying Cross with one Oak Leaf Cluster, the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, the Army Commendation Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster, and awards from three countries - Japan, Nationalist China and Thailand.

He graduated from both the Harvard School of Business, with an MBA, and the National War College.

After retiring from the Air Force, he became a special student at Church Divinity School in Berkeley. He was ordained a priest of the Episcopal Church in 1966, and, under the supervision of Bishop Haden, he initiated and established a new mission in Vallejo, naming it Our Holy Redeemer. He later served as Rector of Ascension Parish in Vallejo. He retired from this second career in 1975. Afterwards, he occasionally served as a supply priest of the Episcopal Church.

General Waldron was a member of the Retired Officer Association, Daedalions, Air Force Association, Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, Fairfield-Suisun Rotary Club, and Disabled American Veterans.

He married 1st Lt. Ruth M. Smith, Army Nurse Corps, on the island of Guam on April 2, 1945.

He is survived by his wife in Fairfield; daughters and sons-in-law, Shirley and Frank Nied of Honolulu, Bonnie and John Copeland of Vacaville, Patricia and Joe Walsh of Santa Rosa; sons and daughters-in-law, Matthew and Belinda Waldron of Oklahoma City, Jonathan and Jan Waldron of Oak Hill, Va.; son, James Waldron of Fairfield; 11 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild.



WAKE ISLAND CONTINUED

*Wake is only
three miles of
island,
a "V" shape
ringed by seven
miles of reef,
looking full
circle from the
sky.
Lost in the
Pacific, it seems
to wait for
another
soul-mate to
drop by for a
visit,
to feel and
listen to her.
Wake will talk
to you.*

straps. So far so good. Nothing has come loose during these long airborne hours. "Yes sir. Yes sir," I say over the headset, "Check completed."

Only ten minutes of flying time left. We begin our slow descent toward Wake. What an Island! Wake, she knows. Approaching this "dot" in the middle of the mighty Pacific at day break, the sky is now bright orange. We have left all the cloud faces behind as we descend. Despite its miniscule size, an insignificant particle in the surging vastness of the Pacific, this island speaks loudly to all who have set foot on her and felt her soul. Wake is only three miles of island, a "V" shape ringed by seven miles of reef, looking full circle from the sky. Lost in the Pacific, it seems to wait for another soul-mate to drop by for a visit, to feel and listen to her. Wake will talk to you.

Landing on one leg of this "V" shaped island, we taxi to a stop. The pilots hit the breaks so hard that I am thrown forward, banging my elbow on the door handle. I'm ready to open the aircraft. My gloves are on, for bare skin sticks to the door handle in the coldness of high altitude. When I turn the door handle and crack open the door, a blast of vicious hot air rushes to embrace the cold interior.

As I step outside, my sight is stolen by the intensely blazing sun. My sunglasses are smashed, for I have stepped on them. I try to balance myself by holding my left arm by the elbow. The pilots used both feet, hard on the breaks, stopping 318,000 pounds of Air Force and Army inventory on Wake's only runway. Savoring the salty air, I feel my clothes tighten and pull at my skin. I am spellbound and standing under the nose wheel trying to adjust my eyes. The sun and heat pierce my clothing like darts. Someone is tapping on my shoulder. I pull back my headset and ask, "Yes? What is it?" The pilots want to know if they can take their feet off the breaks. Are the wheel blocks in? They can't hear me because we've been disconnected since I unplugged myself opening the door.

Wake has only one small terminal. Walking through the door, I look back through a window. Jet engines scream as another C-141 flies past,

shaking the ground in front of me. The building trembles and its ceiling fan swings violently, almost falling. One of my pilots sees the fan and laughs, saying sarcastically "I'm glad we are flying jets instead of propellers these days." The out-bound loadmaster looks back at me as the C-141 strains for altitude. We wave. After our aircraft has been refueled and taken on a new crew, Vietnam will have its trucks in six hours. Tomorrow I will pass by this window at over 100 miles per hour. I hope someone waves and notices the fan.

In the crew housing I change into the skimpiest clothing possible, a T-shirt and shorts. My Air Force "boots" are now beach sandals. It seems as if the sun is closer after we landed. I haven't walked more than two feet yet I'm hot, hot. I hear the song "Ride Sally Ride" and walk past Japanese bunkers from WW II. I wonder what the Japanese listened to some twenty years ago? Wake knows. Today Wake is only a stopover for flight crews and a site for military relay communications. Only 200 people live here full time, most from the Philippines. As I walk along the shore, roaring waves lash the island's flanks while tiny crabs race each other to the water. I wonder which one is fastest? Could Wake know? It is hot, very hot. I think of a cold beer. It is time to go to Drifter's Reef, Wake's one and only bar. It attracts everyone on the island, often all at the same time. The bar sits in the middle of the island and on the edge of its lagoon. The tide flows right into the bar! Amazing!

The song I heard was playing on the juke box in the bar. No charge for music, simply pick your play and punch the number. The juke box was sitting on a crate to keep the tide from shorting it out. Some say the island has blacked out a few times. All bar stools are bolted firmly to the floor. Salt water has rusted their legs (and everything else) over the years. No keys are given to lock the doors because all the locks are rusted. I don't think there ever were any keys. The bartender sleeps in the bar, when he sleeps. You can have your choice of beer, Pabst Blue Ribbon or Pabst Blue Ribbon, but you can't have it cold. If the bottles have been sitting in the water the labels float away. As the tide comes in, I put my feet a

continued on next page

little higher on the stool. I finally take off my five-pound beach sandals and place them on the bar. Soon there are as many pair of sandals as bottles of beer. Suddenly, someone gives a hell of a yell. He has just played the juke box and, while standing in the water, has gotten shocked. Everyone laughs. "He must be a first timer," says the Filipino bartender, who tells him to grab a stick and punch the records again. The bartender adds "The only doctor on the island is gone. He went to the Philippines just now on that plane." We all look out to sea for the aircraft that had just passed. "You shock dead, you stay dead," he says in broken English. Anyway, he says that there are only about ten songs on the juke box (the record door latch rusted shut years ago) and most of this crowd sings better. We all laugh. This may account for all the beer labels floating everywhere.



Everything about Wake is wet and hot. The island revels in it. The regular afternoon rain squall starts to move in. Strong and with heavy rain, the storm blows shut the only "door" in the Drifter's Reef bar. But then, the crowd doesn't think the door has ever been closed except to see if it fit when the bar was built. All the bars customers, or should I say captives, give a round of applause. Simple things like a closed door to the beach are serious events.

I asked what the movie was this evening and was told it was the Disney thriller "The Shaggy Dog," which would be shown under Wake stars against one side of the bar. This side of the bar was painted for this purpose many years ago. The projector actually stands in the building next door on higher ground to keep it from getting wet. It stands in the garbage exit door for the mess hall! At movie time it was truly astonishing to watch million-dollar pilots struggle to keep their balance while placing one hand over their foreheads to keep the rain off their faces and the other over

their bottles to keep it out of their beer. I'm not doing any better than the pilots.

Soon more beer labels float by and one sticks to my leg. Wet sand is up to my ankles. Damn, I wonder if I'll remember what my boots look like. They are on the bar with dozens of others.

The next morning I explore Wake, seeking treasures left behind by the outgoing tide. At one end of the island the hull of a WW II wreck rises from the water only a few feet off shore. As I

look at it, images of a "war sinking" flash through my mind. Only Wake knows the story. The island had heard the crying sounds of death. They will remain with the island forever. I soon reach a wooden bridge over the lagoon. I stand and gaze

at a beautiful aquarium that captivates me. What vivid colors! There are hundred of fish of every color and size. They parade past me. They are the island's ambassadors. I am seduced by Wake's tranquility and stillness. What a beauty! My eyes follow a brilliant yellow fish swimming slowly. It moves in a circle next to an old decaying war bunker. I am reminded again of death and destruction. Reflecting on the tragedy of war is unavoidable. The island forces you to do so. The fighting here was fierce with many men killed. Who can the island tell? Who will listen? Who will feel? I wonder what it was like for the Japanese, looking out to sea from the tiny slits in these bunkers? They were waiting for American troops to come ashore. Some say that all who lived and died here remain on the island forever. Suddenly, I hear the song "When I was Seventeen" coming from Drifter's Reef. It is accompanied by a piercing scream. Someone forgot to use the stick to punch the numbers. It is time for me to hurry back before I miss my plane.

I am seduced by

Wake's

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stillness.

What a beauty!

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Reflecting on

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The island

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THE 7TH BOMB GROUP OF THE 10TH AF

Fighting on Three Fronts

By Marvin Riehl

In early 1942 Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's panzer divisions were rapidly approaching Alexandria, Egypt in their drive across North Africa. In desperate straits, the British asked for help. Consequently, General Brereton, the Commander of 10th AF in India, was ordered to proceed to Cairo to take command of the US forces in the Middle East and to take planes and crews of the 7th Bomb Group to support them. Ten combat crews with 115 support personnel proceeded to Fayid, Egypt on orders dated 28 June, 1942. Subsequent orders dated 2, 7, and 23 July directed nine more crews plus twenty support personnel to go there. They were to fly 11 B-17s, 4 B-24s, and 1 LB-30. The LB-30 was the first to arrive at Fayid. It was then ordered to refuel and go to Lydda, Palestine (now part of Ben Gurion International Airport) because the Germans might break through the defenses at El Alamein. All following planes were diverted to Lydda from Habbaniya, Iraq.

Col. Harry Halverson was commander of a special B-24 unit that trained for a special mission to bomb Japan from China. When his intended Chinese base was overrun by the Japanese, his unit was also diverted to Egypt. It then bombed the heavily defended oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania on 12 June, 1942 from Fayid. On their return, they moved to Lydda on 30 June where the 7th AF crews from the 9th and 436th squadrons joined them. Halverson's raid on Ploesti was the first American action against the Germans since the US declaration of war. It was not until 17 August that the 8th AF in England launched its first heavy bomber raid against German occupied Europe with 12 B-17s. The men of the 7th Bomb Group, often omitted from the history books and always short on awards, had been in combat for more than eight months before the well known "Mighty Eighth" completed its first mission.

The hard-fighting ground forces with the help of these bombers crews were instrumental in stopping Rommel at El Alamein by cutting off his flow of supplies at the harbor of Tobruk and attacking shipping in the Mediterranean. On 8 August, the crews were given a two-week pass with a per diem advance. This gave the ground crews a chance to repair the aircraft for the next big flight that they knew was coming. The night of 13-14 September, the Allies were to land 40,000 commandos from the Long Range Desert Group at the ports of Tobruk and Benghazi in an attempt to capture them. Brereton's B-17s were to be part of the 101 (35 heavy and 66 medium) British and American bombers making a seven-hour shuttle bombardment

of Tobruk; 20 B-24s were to hit Benghazi and the attack would continue until 3 am on the 14th.

Of the five B-17s that hit Tobruk, all survived, but several had engine failure because of corrosion of their new engines during shipment. The British lost 22 planes on Tobruk. Apparently, the anti-aircraft guns couldn't reach the altitude at which the B-17s were flying.

In addition to the hundreds of commandos killed, 600 were captured by the Germans. The British also lost two of the six cruisers and destroyers used in the attack. The commandos did great damage to the installations on the ground in addition to the damage by the bombers. The British Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East sent a message congratulating the US bomber crews for their participation in this effort.

On 1 November, 1942 the 376th Bombardment Group was activated in the Middle East with four squadrons, 512th, 513th, 514th, 515th. Those flying B-17s went into the 513th and those of Brereton's detachment flying B-24s went into the 515th.

The records for this period give the B-17s credit for 21 missions but do not include Brereton's B-24s. They bombed Tobruk on 11, 13, 25, and 30 July, on 11, 14, 16, 23, and 26 October, on 2, 6, and 10 November, and on 13 December. They attacked convoys in the Mediterranean on 9 July, 28 August and 26 October, Benghazi on 8 and 11 July and 14 and 18 November, and the docks on the Greek island of Leros on 27 November. At the end of 1942, eleven surviving B-17s transferred with their crews to the 12th AF in Biskra, Algeria.

No longer members of the 7th Bomb Group, the men who had come from India continued their war. They moved to Sueir, Egypt on 8 November to follow the retreating Germans. The air base was 10 miles west of the Suez Canal near Ismailia, about 70 miles east of Cairo. The British turned the base over to the Americans. With tennis courts, movie theater, green trees, irrigated lawns, good living quarters, and electric lights, it was the best base encountered while in the Far East. Tobruk was captured on 12 November and the bombers could then use its airfield as an advance base. By refueling there, the bombing range was extended several hundred miles.

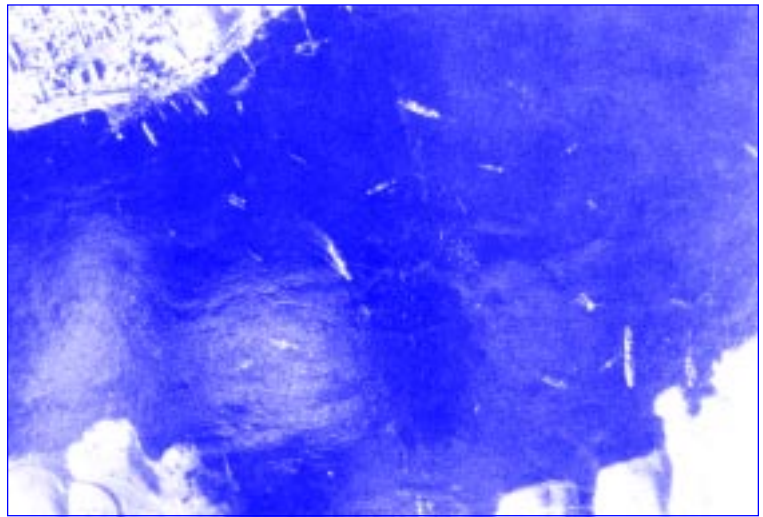
Although 1 November, 1942 is the official cutoff date for the 9th Squadron in the Middle East, it became obvious that they would continue missions as needed. On 8 November, General Eisenhower landed in North Africa in Operation Torch. The Germans were then caught between the Yanks in Algeria and the British in Libya. A 9th crew was selected to take nearly all

the high-ranking Air Force officers from Cairo to Algiers to confer with Eisenhower. Passengers included Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, Commander of all air forces in the Middle East (later Eisenhower's deputy commander for the Normandy Invasion) and several other British and American officers. After 6 hours they landed in Malta where they spent the day in conference with Lord Gorst, Governor General of Malta. The following morning, Thanksgiving, they departed for Algiers. Malta was completely surrounded by German controlled waters, so caution was advised. The fighter escort for this trip did not arrive. They were directed by radio to cross the African coast at Sfax, Tunisia because it then was in British hands. They crossed at an altitude of 2,500 feet and passed over Tunisia unmolested. Once, three fighters were spotted about a half mile on the right. After landing at Maison Blanche airport at Algiers, they discovered that the British had not yet captured Sfax and they had flown over 300 miles of German territory at an altitude of 3,000 feet as well as over several hundred miles of the Mediterranean that was also under German control. As luck would have it, the Germans couldn't believe an enemy plane would venture across their land at this low altitude, so they didn't attack them. The crew thought the three planes they saw were P-51s of our forces but they were later informed they were German ME-109s. Imagine the results if the Germans had been more alert! The flight crew doubted that their high-ranking passengers were ever aware of the danger on that trip. The return trip was made at a much higher altitude. On a later trip in a B-24, they flew into the Sahara far south of German activity.

Military authorities stated that the combination of the RAF and American B-24s, B-17s and B-25s had sunk two of every three ships trying to supply General Rommel's forces, thus causing him to retreat hastily.

By now our aircraft were in need of extensive maintenance, so they were ordered to go to Gura, Ethiopia where the Douglas Airplane Company had established a maintenance depot. The planes and crews were there for a month. Then they flew to Biskra, Algeria where they joined the 301st Bombardment Group. By 13 March, 1943, the crews flew 25 bombing missions. The crews were broken up by the transfers to the 513th Squadron. This created uneasiness as crews broke in new members. They were now shifted from B-17s to B-24s. Wilber Mayhew was one of these crew members. He was originally with the 88th Recon Squadron when we left Salt Lake City in November, 1941.

On 20 March, 1943, orders were issued relieving the crew



An aerial view of a portion of Toruk Harbor, Libya, after it was captured from the Germans for the last time. The objects in the harbor are the remains of both British and German Ships. (Keith McJunkins. 1942) 7th Bombardment Group/Wing, Turner

members of the 513th Bomb Squadron of the 376th Bomb Group of duty and directing them to report to the 18th Replacement Wing, Salt Lake City. Four officers and 20 master sergeants were excluded but finally received orders on 9 June, 1943 to report to Salt Lake City. Some men who had reached India on the *US Holbrook*, as members of Project "X" crews, or any other project, had returned to the States, while others would continue to serve with the 376th Bomb Group. The few that returned to India would again serve with the 7th.

The officers and enlisted men of the 9th who came from India had a unique role in the war. Some of these men covered six continents. They helped save India, fought in China, helped stop Rommel in Egypt, fought through the Middle East, and in western North Africa they helped prepare the invasion of Southern Europe. They traveled over 200,000 miles during their combat tour. Maintenance crews had changed 240 B-17 engines. In October 1942 some of the personnel began to return to India. Bill Shelley and Bill Mayhew formerly from the 88th were among them. Shelly was in the photo section and flew some missions with Captain Berkeley's crew. I was flight engineer and top turret gunner on this crew.

Those of us who remained in India and were flying missions against the Japanese in Burma were about to phase out the last of the B-17s. We would soon be equipped with B-24Ds. But that is another story.

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