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COMBAT HISTORY

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T-H-O-S-E D-A-R-N-E-D T-H-Y-N-C-S

-An Historical Narrative
of the 413th Fighter Group (SE)
(16 June -- 15 August 1945)

GP 413- HI (FTR)

16 June 45



WRITTEN BY
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HISTORICAL OFFICER
413TH INTELLIGENCE

W-I-T-H A-P-P-R-E-C-I-A-T-I-O-N

for

MATERIAL SUBMITTED BY:

HEADQUARTERS SQUADRON:

Capt. Don H. Hammerlund
1st Lt. William H. Stout
Cpl. Nat Snyderman

FIRST SQUADRON:

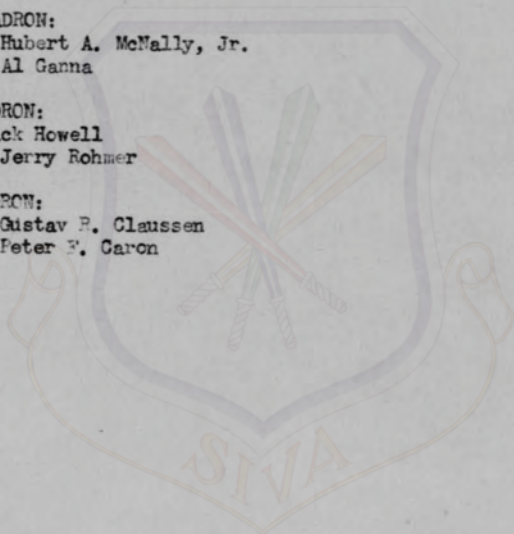
1st Lt. Hubert A. McNally, Jr.
1st Lt. Al Ganna

21ST SQUADRON:

Capt. Jack Howell
1st Lt. Jerry Rohmer

34TH SQUADRON:

1st Lt. Gustav R. Claussen
1st Lt. Peter E. Caron



THANKS

OFFICERS AND MEN of the 413th Fighter Group: this is the greatest day of our lives! We live in peace - our country, our families, loved ones, our homes are safe again. The enemy is beaten and God has seen fit to spare us.

WE MUST NOW help to create our newly-won world with the ideals and hopes of democracy, not forgetting those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Let us thank the Lord and ask him for a greater strength of character and courage to aid us in building this new world.

IN THE PAST months and years since the fateful date of Dec. 7, 1941, each of you has made untold sacrifices but you have kept faith and fought the battle. You have saved your country; the thanks of America's millions and the entire Allied world is your blessing and reward. The personal knowledge that you have done more than your share to the best of your ability to successfully end the war is something you will cherish for the rest of your lives.

IT IS MY FONDEST HOPE that now we will be able to return shortly to our homes and loved ones. We will devote every possible effort toward that end.

I TAKE GREAT PLEASURE in commending each of you for a job well done. I am proud to have been your commander.

- COL. HARRISON R. THING

15 August 1945

T-H-O-S-E D-A-R-N-E-D T-H-Y-N-G-S

)NAPALM SUNDAY(

TO THE 413TH FIGHTER GROUP, 29 July 1945 was Napalm Sunday.

On that day, 16 of the First Squadron aircraft, in the first Napalm attack by fighters on the enemy home islands, had burned out the southern Kyushu town of Makurazaki. The pilots were filled with it. Two ordinary rocket and strafing missions failed to divered chatter from their fearsome new weapon. Between and after missions they spoke about it, exchanging conjectures and impressions, and listening to Tokyo Rose warn the pilots of the P-47's with the black-striped noses that it would not be safe for them to bail out in Japan.

And all day, rumors of a greater napalm attack were bandied about in the Officer's Club and the three squadron operations offices. It was inevitable that an inspired wit came up with the tag, "Napalm Sunday", and that the name was to stick.

Conjectures came to a halt at 2000 when Group Operations received a phone call from Wing, telling him to prepare a maximum effort napalm attack against Sendai, about 70 miles due north of the devastated Makurazaki, at 0530 the following morning. The Field Order (1), Wing said, would soon be forthcoming.

(1) - Field Order, 301st Ftr Wing, 29 July 1945

Group Operations relayed the information to the Squadron Operations and also summoned Chemical Warfare. The latter (2) informed the Squadron Armaments, the Air Operations Company, and the Service Group. Soon 40 men were busy at the mixing area where the product was loaded in 55 gallon drums and guided by the squadron armorers to the various hardstands where the operational planes were parked. Then service group transfer crews loaded the contents of three drums into each wing tank and the armament installed the igniters.

At approximately 2330, Group Operations awakened the CO to tell him of the mission. The CO (3) who once in England had helped to bury the remains of children after a German bombing of a schoolhouse and who had sworn never to bomb non-military targets, grunted and turned over.

At 0400, Monday morning, flight leaders were waking up their men. They straggled into the mess hall (4) where they had breakfast of grapefruit juice, wheatcakes and syrup, bacon and coffee and where they resumed their chatter of the previous day. This was unusual; on all prior early morning missions they had taken their breakfast in a heavy silence.

Group briefing was at 0440. Intelligence (5) gave matter-of-fact instructions to the Squadron S-2's and flight leaders who had assembled. Planes were to drop to 300 feet over the target. They were to fly at 250 MPH before jettisoning their tanks. Enemy aircraft situation, estimated at 165. Emergency procedure....

- (2) - Interview - 1st Lt. Robert Lather 19 August 1945
- (3) - Interview - Col. Harrison R. Thyng 19 August 1945
- (4) - Interview - Sgt. Ray Chellel 20 August 1945
- (5) - Interview - Capt. Don H. Hammerlund 18 August 1945

The CO (6) had something to say on this mission. He had personal aversion about striking non-military objectives. But he was a soldier and he did as he was told. Then, too, it was known that every village, every house, every stone had been or would be used by the enemy for production or for defense. He reminded his men that this and other missions like it would save American lives.

At squadron Intelligence, the mission was briefed in detail to all pilots who then emptied their pockets and made for Personal Equipment. The raw sound of the engines, pre-flighted by their crew chiefs, cut in to the half-dark of the morning.

Fifty-one planes (7) of the three squadrons led by the CO began take-offs at 0525 and were airborne at 0554. The planes rendezvoused at Ineya Retto and set course by squadrons for the target area. A 34th craft aborted at 0600 due to belly tank failure and returned to base. A First Squadron plane, airborne late because of difficulties in taxiing was unable to catch up and returned. The others were well off on what proved to be their most important and effective mission: a mission which climaxed operations from Ie Shima which had begun modestly enough on 18 June.

- (6) - Interview Col. Harrison R. Thyng - 19 August 1945
- (7) - Group Mission 413-14 - 30 July 1945

)CAP MISSIONS(

The 413th started on its first mission from Ie Shima, a combat air patrol flight, briefed to the saturation point. On the previous day Tactical Air Forces had sent over a Major (8) from Okinawa to instruct the pilots on the importance of knowing the location of picket boats which were actually seaborne radar stations. The picket boat crews were on constant edge, he reported, because so many bogies were in the area their crews would shoot any aircraft that looked suspicious.

Because the pilots would have to do a considerable amount of over-water flying, he gave an appreciative account of the air-sea rescue system. The officer also explained the code word systems in use in this area. This created discussion among the pilots in that there were seemingly endless pages of code words to be memorized. The Major further explained the reason for the use of so many code words by pointing out that the theatre worked under a system of combined operations involving both army and navy units; each service employed a code of its own.

Following him, a lieutenant from GCA (Ground Control Approach), a radar homing unit, gave a brief talk on the advantages the pilots could derive from knowing the principles of GCA because of the unusually bad weather conditions prevalent in this area. However, most of the pilots were already familiar with GCA operations.

(8) - Interview - Capt. Don H. Hammerlund 18 August 1945

The first CAP mission, on 17 June, conducted by planes of the 34th Squadron, was without incident. All three participated on the 18th. Pilots of the First saw their first big action on the 22nd (9) of the month. While patrolling the skies in the vicinity of Amami-O-Shima, 14 Oscars were spotted by Capt. Robert H. Allard, leader of the six plane patrol. The Oscars were headed southwest off the west coast of Yedate Shima, flying at 2,000 feet. The First patrol was 1,000 feet above the enemy. Following Allard's order, the planes swooped down and attacked. The patrol leader struck first from the rear of the enemy and blasted two of the Oscars, both of which hit the water. Lt. Haggerty pulled behind and above another Oscar and shot it down. Lts. Frank R. Haggerty, Dean C. Murphy, and Alfred V. Danielson each bagged an Oscar. Lts. Leo B. Redd and Richard P. Shaw, after chasing and destroying two Oscars in a rainstorm, destroyed a third and received credit for one and a half planes each. Total bag was eight planes destroyed as against no planes lost by the First. This mission, to the pilots, was the lone bright spot in dull, routine work. When Group started operating, local skies had already been cleared of daylight raiders. It was apparent at that early date that the Japanese were beginning to hoard their airplanes for defense against invasion of the home islands. The CAPs were dull work but to a number of the pilots they were necessary. Those who had come to the island with the ground echelon had been unable to fly for about three

(9) - First Squadron Mission Report - #2, 22 June 1945

months. These routine patrols permitted them to regain the feel of their airplanes.



)CAP ACCIDENTS(

The CAP were not accomplished without loss. One pilot was killed on patrol; another was seriously injured. On 19 June, 2nd Lt. Albert W. Dusseault (10) was killed while attempting to land after patrol. On his initial approach, his plane bounced and, according to the man on duty at the tower, it appeared that the pilot had pushed the throttle forward in an attempt to gain air speed to make a new approach. The aircraft stalled out between 100 and 200 feet and spun into the ground, immediately bursting into flames, thereby eliminating any possibility of pilot rescue.

A second, though not fatal accident occurred on 21 June 1945, involving 2nd Lt. Winfred D. Arnold, (11) also flying a routine CAP. His first inkling of trouble came when an explosion occurred in the aircraft and fire appeared to flash between the rudder pedals. Lt. Arnold, using his auxiliary tanks, attempted to switch to his main tanks. A second explosion with fire occurred, carrying throughout the engine and the cockpit. While going over the side of the ship, the pilot's chute became snagged and the packing became entwined between the pilot's legs. Six thousand feet of altitude was lost before the pilot successfully bailed out.

He evidenced further trouble when he was able to inflate only one half of his Mae West, and his life raft drifted away in a heavy sea.

- (10) - 21st Squadron History, 16 June to 15 August, Pg. 17
- (11) - 21st Squadron History, 16 June to 15 August, Pg. 19

Arnold was picked up by a naval vessel shortly after and was treated for third degree burns of the face, both arms and legs. Lt. Arnold denied smoking in the cockpit and maintained that there were no gas fumes present in the cockpit, at the time the accident happened.

An investigating board found that due to the absence of the aircraft, a definite analysis of the accident could not be made. It was believed, however, that an electrical short or spark in the presence of gas fumes in the bellows of the main tank liquidometer which also houses the automatic transfer pump from the internal wing tank, might have caused such an accident.

)ESCORT WORK(

The CAPs were not the only type journeyman labor performed by the pilots. They were also involved in escort missions which followed their patrol assignments, and which revealed more fully the enemy's reluctance to commit their fighters in combat, prior to invasion. The bombers which Group aircraft escorted, hit their targets time and time again without encountering fighter interception.

There was one occasion when the enemy came out of hiding to challenge a Group escorted VHB mission. (12) At that time, stateside lessons learned in flying the P47-N, proved to be of inestimable value. This was borne out by the fact that replacement pilots who had not received this type training were less alert and showed a greater degree of fatigue during the mission and upon landing than did the VLR trained pilots.

The enemy attempt at interception occurred on 8 August when 51 P-47's escorted B-29's on a bombing mission over Yawata. Three minutes over the target, about 30 bogies, including Georges, Franks, Jacks, and Zekes were spotted by the First Squadron. The 34th Squadron saw approximately 12 to 15 bogies including Zekes, Oscars, and Georges. Group CO, flying with the 34th Squadron, dove on a Zeke ahead and slightly below him. Closing from dead astern, he fired a long burst, then broke off to avoid ramming the enemy aircraft. Col. Thyng was credited with a probable. Lt. R.A. Jaegers spotted a bogey at 15,000 feet, received permission to attack and with his wing man, Lt. R.J. Ross, peeled off and closed from

(12) - Group Mission Report #413-24, 8 August 1945

astern, firing a long burst. The aircraft, identified as a Tojo, pulled up sharply to the right at which time Jaegers fired a short burst head on, passed, and assumed position on tail of his quarry. He fired a short burst from this position when his guns jammed. Ross got in a snapshot as the Tojo split essed away. Ross observed many hits scored on tail and fuselage of enemy aircraft by Jaegers. He also noted that pieces of the aircraft were shot off. As a result of this action, Lt. Jaegers received credit for one Tojo Probably destroyed.

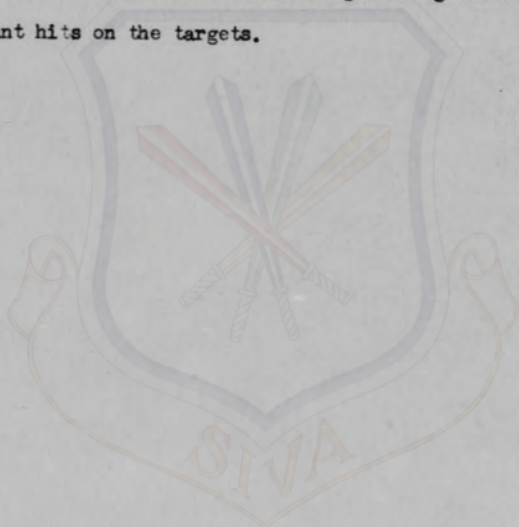
Lt. Colonel Carl W. Payne sighted a lone Zeke at 23,000 feet, but the plane half rolled and dived away. He followed. At 10,000 feet Col. Payne closed and fired three bursts, breaking off as the Zeke made a tight climbing turn to the left. Executing a wing over, Payne got on the tail of the Zeke. Closing to 100 yards, he fired a long burst which started fires in engine, cowling and wing roots. The belly tank of the enemy aircraft exploded, blowing off pieces of cowling and wing. The Zeke rolled slowly, trailing smoke, and crashed into the ground. Lt. Col. Payne received credit for one Zeke destroyed.

Lt. Archibald Gratz, flying Payne's wing, slid off to the left, closed and fired from dead astern at an Oscar. The Oscar flamed and exploded when it crashed into the ground. Lt. Gratz received credit for one plane destroyed.

Lt. Kidd came in to finish off an enemy George boxed in by Payne and Gratz. As George turned to evade attack, Lt. Kidd fired long burst head on, scoring hits in engine and cockpit. The George rolled to the left, crashed into the ground, and exploded.

Lt. E.V. Hollis and Lt. J.W. Sanford spotted two Zeke 52's, painted dark green, flying in the opposite direction from the bombers and to the left. Hollis and Sanford attacked and fired from 300 yards, each selecting one. Both enemy aircraft were seen to crash and explode before striking the ground.

In all, five enemy planes were destroyed, two were probably destroyed and the B-29's completed their bombing without interference and scored excellent hits on the targets.



)DIVE BOMBING(

Analysis of dive-bombing missions (13) performed by Group indicated the need for more intensive training in this field because of the amount of inaccuracy displayed in combat. Because of the greater accuracy and the greatest immunity from AA fire through vertical dive bombing, the need for stressing this type of combat in training was proven.

More training was also needed in low level bombing, with particular stress on bomb release altitudes in correlation with type of bombs and fuse settings to be employed.

A representative mission of this type occurred on 16 July (14) when, under the leadership of Lt. Col. George V. Williams, 50 P-47's, 18 from the First Squadron, 16 each from the 21st and the 34th--- set out on a fighter-bomber strike against marshalling yards at Tosu, Kyushu. Overcast prevented an attack on the designated target but it did not cover the eastern coast of Kyushu so targets of opportunity were attacked by individual squadrons.

Three flights of the First Squadron bombed a factory north of Nyuta. Pushover was at 12,000 feet, pullout at 3,000. Three direct hits were observed. Two of the flights then strafed while the third provided cover. Lt. Col. Worley's flight then strafed a locomotive in a station, scoring many hits. Capt. Gundersdorf's flight strafed locomotives on a siding at a point north of Hirose. The fourth flight of this squadron provided Dumbo escort.

(13) - Interview - Major John M. Winkler 19 August 1945

(14) - Group Mission Report #413-1, 16 July 1945

Fourteen bombs were dropped by the 21st Squadron attacking a dam. Pushover was from 12,000 feet, pullout 2,000 feet, angle of attack 50°. Of the bombs dropped, eight fell in the water 100 to 200 yards back of the dam, three struck on the east side of the dam near the junction of earth and concrete, one struck the power house or pumping station 200 yards southeast of the dam and started a fire, one struck an unidentified concrete installation on the shore along the lake behind the dam. The last bomb overshot, falling south of the dam. The remaining two bombs hung but were later jettisoned. The squadron then strafed targets in the vicinity, damaging or destroying a fishing vessel, a radar tower, and several luggers.

Upon encountering the overcast between southern Kyushu and the target area, the 34th Squadron headed to a point about five miles east of Miyazaki where it split into two sections of eight planes each. Lt. Col. Williams led one section north to the Hojishima Naval Base and bombed buildings and factories. Pushover was at 10,000, release at 5,000 feet, and angle of dive at 75 degrees. Seven hits were observed on four buildings and three fires were started. Strafing runs were then made on the deck, hitting freight cars in a marshalling yard at Tomitaka, on a train at Mimitou station, an oil refinery at Tsuno, factories northwest of Koebaba, and on railroad cars at Hirose.

Following the strafing, one bomb was dropped on the train at Koebaba, which struck and destroyed three cars behind the engine and heavily damaged the engine. Lt. Col. Payne led the other section to Miyazaki, where town buildings and tracks near the railroad station were bombed.

Pushover was at 10,000 feet, pullout at 5,000 feet, and angle of attack at 75 degrees. Strafing runs were then made from the deck on factories and marshalling yards at Miyazaki and at Tsuma.



)ROCKETS(

An important aspect of Group operations consisted of attack with rockets. On most occasions, the pilots had to learn by the trial and error method the best ways to attack certain types of targets. They received little stateside instruction in rocket firing. A great deal of inaccuracy was displayed on these early missions. The 21st Fighter Squadron made an analysis (15) of a rocket mission directed against enemy shipping. After discussion with pilots who went out on this attack, it was learned that the majority did not realize that in order to sink a large ship, it was necessary that the rockets strike in the region of the water line.

In addition to this, they evidenced great difficulty in discovering the "right" aiming angle. The Group CO, (16) in commenting on "aiming" rockets recommended that some research be done on other aiming mechanisms for rocket firing, to supplant the K-14 machine gun sight now being used for this purpose.

To summarize the 21st Squadron's rocket mission analysis, 12 to 16 aircraft fired at maximum range or what appeared to be maximum range. Most of the rockets fell short.

It was found on this mission that the aircraft while attacking broadside on the deck, ran into flying debris when they pulled up over the ship after releasing their rockets. The Group Commander, in commenting on this, was under the impression that the three inch motors

(15) - 21st Squadron History 16 June - 15 August, Pg 5

(16) - Interview - Col. H.R. Thyng, 19 August 1945

used on the rocket were not powerful enough. If a five inch motor were employed instead, he believed the rocket would travel at sufficient speed to allow the debris time to settle partially, before the aircraft reached the target hit.

From combat experience, the pilots (17) learned that steep dives and a minimum air speed of 350 MPH gave the best accuracy due to the trajectory of the rocket. This type of pass also resulted in reducing the chance of the pilot flying through the explosion of his rocket. It was also learned that a diving, turning high speed pass afforded the pilot the most protection against anti-aircraft fire.

The low level rocket pass has been used and it was found that unless surprise was achieved the plane was subjected to anti-aircraft fire for a longer period than the steep pass, and on several occasions pilots flew through the explosions of their own rocket blasts due to the short range of the rocket fired at low angles.

Accuracy fell off on low level attacks. Use of delayed action fuses will lessen the chance of flying through rocket blasts if it is found necessary to employ low level approach. In conclusion, it was found that rockets were most effective against light frame buildings and factories, radar installations, and small boats such as luggers and fishing boats.

One of the most successful rocket missions took place on 28 July (18) with the CO leading 68 P-47's on a rocket and strafing attack on Tachiaru.

(17) - Interview - Capt. George I. Jones, 18 August 1945

(18) - Group Mission Report #413-10, 28 July 1945

Eight planes aborted, the other 60 hit the target area.

34th Squadron aircraft pushed over from 10,000 feet at 0815 and went to the deck to rocket and strafe the Tachiarai airfield. Four rockets were fired into the dispersal area on the west side of the field, four hit a hangar, three hit a warehouse east of the hangar, 14 hurtled into barracks on the east side. Eight fires resulted.

The formation went on to attack the town of Amgai, blasted and destroyed two large "1" shaped buildings.

Kurume Airfield was the next target. Just outside the southern perimeter of the field, three rockets struck and damaged a factory and another large building. On the field, four rockets damaged hangars on the northwest side. Two Myrts were destroyed on the ground by strafing; they exploded and burned. One rocket damaged a brick factory in the northeast part of the town of Suga and another hit a three-story wooden frame factory in the same town, resulting in a heavy explosion, fire and black smoke. In the town of Kurume, a roundhouse was strafed and damaged and a marshalling area with 70 freight cars and three locomotives were hit. Fires and explosions resulted. A factory in the northeast part of Kurume, a silk mill and a factory across the river from Minamikaza and factories at Okawa were hit and damaged. Debris was observed.

First Squadron Aircraft were on the target 10 minutes later. They pushed over from 10,000 feet and released at 1,500 feet placing all rockets in the target area. Medium flak, barrage type, intense and accurate, was encountered. Aircraft of Lt. S.R. Davidson, F/O Robert G. Cooney, and Capt. E.B. Chamberlain were damaged. The adjacent town

of Mada was strafed and later observation showed 18 large fires and 30 small ones. A locomotive of a passenger train was blown up and a dump containing either oil or ammunition was destroyed. Major John M. Winkler destroyed an unidentified aircraft on the ground at Mada. The plane was camouflaged by what appeared to be a grape arbor.

Twenty-five minutes later, the 21st attacked. Pushover was from 11,000 feet. Capt. A. Evans fired his rockets into the industrial plant at north corner of the field scoring three direct hits. Lt. R. D. Modena put all four rockets into the power unit of the plant damaging the building at the same time with strafing. Lt. W. W. Ennis hit aircraft plant south of the industrial plant with three rockets and strafed simultaneously. Lt. G. A. Hensarling hit the industrial plant with four rockets. Result of attack was fires, smoke and debris in both the plant and the aircraft factory.

Lt. G. H. Von Hollen put four rockets into village of Hongo, one mile south of the airfield. The village burned with smoke and debris visible. As he completed the pass, he strafed 10 barracks buildings on the southwest edge of the field observing strikes on roofs. Lt. S. S. Novaresi put three rockets into Hongo and strafed railroad yards at the aircraft plant. Le. E. D. Scherer fired three rockets onto a highway bridge 100 yards west-southwest of the barracks area. He also strafed a coal bin 100 yards beyond and observed strikes. Lt. Col. William Whinsonant put four rockets into the barracks area and strafed one gun position. The explosions caused smoke and debris while strikes were observed on the gun position. Maj. Cory strafed buildings south of the field and Lt. L. H. Griner strafed the barracks area. The latter two did not have rockets and Lt. W. D. Cullen could not fire rockets because of malfunction.

Capt. G. F. Hutto put four rockets into the burning aircraft plant and followed through with strafing of a truck on the bank of the Chikugo river, 1 mile SE of the field. The vehicle was hit and damaged. Lt. G. C. Hoppel put four rockets into a brick building with a tall chimney at the intersection of the highway and north fork of the Chikugo river, 1½ miles SE of field. His attack knocked down the chimney and collapsed one wall in a cloud of dust and debris. Lt. R. J. Manning hit the aircraft plant with four rockets and strafed. Lt. E. O. Ball who flew with Maj. Winkler's squadron, placed four rockets into the flaming barracks.



)AIR, SEA RESCUE(

Of all the divers aids available to the pilots during their combat flying hours, Air, Sea Rescue facilities were considered of paramount importance for a number of reasons. First was the long overwater routes the planes traveled to reach their targets. The Jap home island of Kyushu, against which the majority of Group attacks were directed, is over 300 miles from home base. There are only a few small islands between Ie Shima and Japan; these are enemy held. The rest of the route is over water. Poor weather information made "getting lost" an easy matter during the early phases of combat operations. During the closing stages, increasingly accurate Jap AA over the target areas made it imperative that Air, Sea Rescue Dumbos be over water near the target area whenever possible.

The subject of rescuing fliers who had gone down on the Jap homeland was studied by the Group Commander and his Deputy (19) when the pilots showed concern over the prospect of being shot down over Japan. Finally, a plan was worked out whereby certain designated mountain tops were designated as goals in the event a flier was shot down or bailed out over Japan. The plan proposed the use of signalling devices, mirrors, etc. to flash locations. The downed flier was to proceed to the coast where a submarine would be waiting off shore. The plan seemed quite feasible due to the fact that southern Kyushu, over which most of the missions were run, appeared to be densely wooded and lightly populated. However, the occasion never arose that would necessitate putting the plan into effect.

There were instances where the smooth operation of Air, Sea Rescue
(20)
may have been hampered seriously. Breach of radio discipline was the main demon. To begin with, during the earlier missions, ASR had its own independent communications channel. This arrangement was not foolproof because pilots indulged in constant radio chatter which cluttered up the channels and lessened the chances of rescue for pilots who might be in trouble. This was ended when squadron commanders warned that pilots who indulged in promiscuous chatter while on combat missions would be dealt with administratively upon landing.

During later missions, due to the exigencies of the service, the channel normally used for ASR had to be utilized for bomber to fighter transmission. There were many R/D violations committed by the bombers. Fortunately, we had no avoidable losses due to the breach of R/D on the part of the bombers.

413th pilots had two occasions to see at first hand the work of ASR. Although both were unsuccessful in their rescue attempts, Group pilots gained comfort and granted respect to the men engaged in that work and were also more willing to go on Dumbo escort missions.

Enroute to a mission over China, Capt. Cecil Meierhoff (21) had trouble with his engine about 200 miles out from base. He was forced to bail out. The rest of his flight orbited his position and saw him hit the silk, although they did not actually see him in a dinghy below them. A rescue Dumbo was dispatched to the point where his flight was orbiting; they saw the rescue ship approaching.

(20) - Interview - Capt. Daniel Laffey, 21 August 1945

(21) - 21st Squadron History, 16 June-15 August 1945 - Page 18

A few minutes later, the Dumbo pilot called to Meierhoff's flight and informed him that he had spotted the downed pilot and was going down to pick him up. It later developed that the man spotted and rescued was a P-38 pilot and not Meierhoff.

The following account of a successful rescue of one pilot and the difficulties he encountered and solved before the ultimate rescue came is set forth.



)AIR, SEA RESCUE OF LT. GRATZ(

Lt. Gratz was a member of the Fighter-Bomber strike that hit Kyushu on the morning of June 22nd. The trip to the target was uneventful. At 0820, the formation released their pair of quarter tonners and started the return trip to base. Shortly afterwards, while flying at 12,000', Lt. Gratz developed turbo and prop trouble. He could not maintain sufficient speed to keep up with the remainder of the formation but in an attempt to do so dropped down into the undercast which, was at that time about 8,000. He did have contact with his flight leader at this time.

Lt. Gratz tried to follow the Ie Shima beam and was successful until about 1015 at which time the beam was turned off. Next he tried to get a "homing" on VHF. He could hear other traffic on the air but apparently no one was able to receive him. At 1030, his radio went out entirely.

Gratz dropped down to about 1,000' trying to get out of the weather. He followed his last known heading until he was one half hour past his ETA at home base, and then headed west toward the China coast.

At about 1200' Gratz could see that he was running into more bad weather ahead and, as he knew that he would have to bail out very soon, decided to bail out before hitting it, which would have forced him to bail out while on instruments. He pulled up to about 2000' and turned the plane over. He experienced no trouble what-so-ever in his bail out.

Before hitting the water, he unfastened all of his straps but in trying to hold on to the chute after landing, was pulled and tossed around quite a bit before he was able to spill the air from the canopy. He broke out his dingy and cut the chute from the harness and next began to take stock of his emergency supplies. He had a desalination kit, knife, fishing kit, and empty canteen, poncho (old type), smoke flares, small can of oil, first aid kit, and one can of water that had been bent and the contents lost some time prior to his bail out. He had no emergency rations at all.

The first night he caught some rain water in his poncho but did not drink any as he had made up his mind to refrain from eating or drinking anything for the first 24 hours. That night it grew very cold and the salvaged parachute was used to good advantage as a cover to supplement his poncho.

The second and third days passed uneventfully. He did drink some of the rain water he had collected the first night though and did see quite a few birds (later identified as albatross) around. He began to be bothered with salt water sores about this time also.

Gratz at this point, had not suffered from thirst or hunger and had no doubt as to his subsequent rescue. He found that from about 1600-2000 were the best hours for sleeping. After that time the sea would begin to run rough and sleep was fitful.

On the fourth day he caught some more rain water in his poncho which he stored in his canteen. He also caught a bird weighing about two pounds that had lit on his dinghy. The bird was killed by wringing

its neck. The only part of the bird that he liked was the breast which was reported as tasting "as good as chicken". (The rest of the bird was saved and later used as fish bait). Gratz also found four or five pre-digested fish in the neck of the bird which he swallowed whole. In the opinion of Gratz, the more digested the fish become, the less palatable they are.

The next few days were somewhat vague to recall but he does remember trying to fish, with no success. He also recalls a large fish (later identified as a sunfish) that persisted in staying around the dingy. The fish did not attack but hit the raft with his fins several times. Gratz did not try to frighten him and the fish later disappeared. (The fish was probably after the numerous small fish that had collected in the shade of the dingy). At night he had vivid dreams that, although he knew them to be dreams, seemed almost too realistic to be so. The night before he was spotted by the PEM, he was most certain he had heard the crew being briefed that morning to go out and get him. Consequently, he had the ETA of the PEM figured out to be 1115. When the plane did arrive at about 1200, he was not too surprised. This was June 29th. The waters were rough, much too rough to make a good landing.

Lt. Gratz signaled the plane with his mirror (Navy type), set off a couple of flares and put out his dye marker. The signal from the mirror was picked up immediately. The plane circled, but in attempting to make an open sea landing, broke a wing float. Before the plane was abandoned the position was sent and predicament made known to its base.

Gratz paddled over to the additional survivors and they all prepared to wait out the rescue sub that they knew would be a short time coming. (The sub was notified by the Squadron).

The next morning, squadron mates of the PEM came out and circled the downed men until the sub SEA DEVIL arrived on the scene. The rescue was effected at 1830. The survivors were returned to Guam July 16th.

Lt. Gratz was not as well equipped as he will be on future missions. He will add another desalination kit and more signaling equipment - especially the orange flares.

Gratz was never particularly conscious of hunger. The only food he had until he was joined by the crew of the PEM was the one bird he had caught and the fish found in the neck of the bird. He believes that if he had had a weighted line, the albatross would have been easily caught. They hovered around continuously.

There were many fish around but Gratz was not very successful in catching them. (He tried colored cloth, bird flesh and prepared bait.) There were many small fish of the minnow type under his raft which would have made either good bait or emergency food.

In the whole period, Gratz drank only one and one half to two quarts of water. He took advantage of every squall that came up and was prepared at all times. It was necessary to rinse the encrusted salt from the poncho each time. (Along this line Gratz suggests that small collapsible cup be added to all emergency survival equipment to be used to scoop out the rain water caught in the poncho. He used the top of a plastic cigarette case successfully).

With the exception of some salt water sores, Gratz was in pretty good condition. His morale was very high, never doubting that he would be rescued eventually. At night he used his parachute to good advantage trying to keep warm and also keeping some of the water out of his dingy. (He had the old type poncho). The sky was overcast most of the time but when the sun did come out, he kept covered to prevent sunburn.

Gratz did not tip over once, but as a precautionary measure, kept the raft fastened to him at all times.

He believes that inverting the plane is the best way to get out.

Because the dingy is almost always in a trough, he does not believe the radar screen to be as effective for a one man raft, possibly, as some sort of kit reflector.

Gratz's waterproff pouch was not waterproof. Some kind of screw top container would be more effective, or one of the flasks of the E17 kit.

As previously mentioned, the survivor believes that the small cup would be an asset to the emergency survival kit.

)ENGINEERING(

The first two weeks after operations started were difficult. (22) Power plants for electric lighting had not been set up. Crew chiefs and maintenance men had to work with flashlights of which there was an inadequate supply. Also during the early weeks of operation there were many air raid alerts plus a sufficient number bombings on the island to keep a steady stream of line personnel commuting all night long from their beds to foxholes. Oft times when ships had to be readied for early morning takeoffs, the maintenance personnel worked right on through the raids in the dark.

There were problems during daylight hours, too, namely there was a very strict water rationing program in effect those first few weeks. There were days when the crew chiefs sweated for hours under the sun, with lister bags empty because of strict water rationing. When the coral taxi ways were hot and dry, taxiing airplanes would throw up clouds of coral particles that stung and caused great discomfort to the crew chiefs working on nearby taxi ways. There was always the danger present of flying particles finding their way into the unprotected eyes of personnel working on the line.

An inadequate amount of maintenance equipment, a greater number of A/C assigned than there were mechanics assigned to crew them, an inadequate number of replacement parts on hand, all played their part in making it difficult for the Group to maintain a low accident and high maintenance record. (23)

(22) - Interview, M/Sgt Frank Kutch - T/Sgt John Blair, 19 August 1945

(23) - 21st Squadron History - 16 June - 15 August, Pg 8.

1st Squadron History - 16 June - 15 August, Pg 7.

For the period of combat operations, a total of 14,177 hours were logged, 12,740 of this number were combat hours. Despite the difficulties, Group had a total of only 21 accidents. One of these occurred on the ground, six on take-off, five in flight, one on landing, and eight while taxiing. Only four of the total were due to mechanical failure. Tabulation shows the amazingly low accident rate of 1.5% per 1,000 combat flying hours. This percentage indicates an excellent standard of maintenance by the Thynghmen.

The report of the 21st Squadron Engineering Section appears to be typical of all three squadrons. A summary (24) follows:

The engineering department of the squadron started operations on Ie Shima with 85 EM and 36 P-47N-2s on 17 June. Since the TE/O was set up for 25 airplanes, the problems of shortages immediately arose. The lack of crew chiefs was relieved by taking mechanics out of the maintenance crews and throwing more work per man in the heavy maintenance section. This shortage of men in the engineering maintenance crew required a great amount of extra time and ingenuity on the part of the section. Eighteen engines were changed during operations, some of them over-night when the call for airplanes was great. Wings were changed, and the hoisting slings had to be made by the men in the squadron since the only type available were not suitable for the type of aircraft in use.

The new type supercharger regulator and automatic pilot used on the "N" model plane was a great source of trouble and men had to become thoroughly acquainted with the intricacies of the new units with no tech orders or publications to guide them.

(24) - 21st Squadron History - 16 June - 15 August, Pg 8.

Perhaps the most serious of the early problems was the lack of Methanol, a necessary ingredient in the anti-detonant mixture used in high power operation of the R-2800 C engine. With the short runways and the large external gas loads carried by the ships, it was necessary to use horsepowers of 2100 and above to get the ship off the ground. Without Methanol this type of operation was injurious to the engine and was a constant source of worry.

Due to the many uses of the P-47N, the external loading of the ship varied a great deal from mission to mission. Bombs or tanks could be placed on all of our ships and all but five were equipped to carry rockets. The nature of the next mission was often not known until late in the evening and it sometimes was changed before the flight took off the next morning - this condition necessitated loading and fueling the aircraft late at night and getting up early to preflight. During the last month of operation Napalm was used on many missions and this again involved many extra and late hours of work since only new wing tanks could be used for the Napalm and a special crew and equipment were necessary to place the Napalm in the tanks.

During two months of operation the location of the engineering and associated tents and equipment was moved three times (and is about to be moved again) and the hardstands upon which the aircraft were parked were changed four times. This moving was accomplished with no loss of flying time and the mission went on as scheduled.

Since the ships were going on VLR missions all the time, the inspection periods on the aircraft came up very frequently. Yet a maximum number of ships in commission was often asked for and given. To accomplish inspections with a minimum loss of flying time a system of progressive inspection was installed. Only three types of inspection were pulled, daily, 25 hour, and 100 hour-- the 50 hour being eliminated and the full 100 hour inspection substituted to provide as safe a plane as possible. The more important components of the 100 hour inspection substituted to provide as safe a plane as possible. The more important components of the 100 hour inspection were staggered away from the time the rest of the inspection was due. Thus, if a ship came back early from a mission and had 10 hours to go to an inspection, the spark plugs might be changed or the landing gear system given a retraction check. Then when the aircraft came due for its normal 100 hour, a minimum of time was lost with the ship out of commission.

This system of progressive inspection called for a thoroughness on the part of the crew chief not necessary when the entire inspection was pulled at one time. To make certain that no component of the inspection was overlooked, a complete 100 hour inspection form was made, listing all work that had to be done on the inspection. This form had to be signed beside each unit of the inspection and a check made by the Squadron inspectors before credit could be taken for the inspection. Our 100 hour inspection form was highly praised by the I.C. inspecting team and copy of it was taken by them to be used as a reference for a standard guide to be used by all activities using the P-47N.

Among the most serious of equipment shortages was the lack of authorized refueling equipment. The total of the refueling rolling stock tanks is 5,450 gallons, normally the squadron would fly at least 16 ships to a mission. The P-47 carries 556 gallons of gas internally and can carry two 165 gallon tanks under the wings and a 110 tank under the belly. Thus, our refueling tanks would run dry before one flight could be serviced. Often times it took four to five hours to get the gas trucks filled with gas due to the many operating units on the island and only one pumping plant to serve them. Again, this pumping plant sometimes ran dry and it was necessary to pump the gas out of 55 gallon drums by hand, a long and backbreaking process when the totals involved are in the thousands of gallons. One solution to this problem was to borrow refueling units from other activities on the island when we were rushed and a sizable store of gasoline and oil was kept in drums close to our operating area.

On none of the missions flown from here was it possible for the pilots to leave their wing and belly tanks on when they were dry. This required a great stock of external tanks to be kept in the operating area. These tanks had to be obtained from a central dump on the island and hauled to our area by our own crew chiefs, thus little rest time for the men was possible while the ships were flying. During the last month of operation, a large flat bed trailer was obtained which allowed us a large hauling capacity for tanks and on two occasions trucks of the troop port command which were unloading the tanks off the ships in the harbor were routed direct to our operating area, solving the external tank problem for many days.

With all our difficulties, the mission schedule was met and a few large mistakes were made. When the problems got bigger and more complex, the mechanics always rose to the situation and saved their objections until the work was accomplished. The job could not have been done without the great display of energy and resourcefulness shown by the enlisted men of the entire engineering department.



)TECH SUPPLY PROBLEMS(

Like most units in a forward area, Thyngmen experienced supply (25) difficulties, which handicapped Engineering in its maintenance and operational work. One of the persistent handicaps which confronted the Tech Supply Officer has been the lack of many items authorized by the TO/E and known, through experience, to be essential in maintenance.

The problem originated in Bluethenthal AAB where the Group trained and was intensified in the Seattle Port of Embarkation. Air Corps Supply wareh uses at Bluethenthal were inadequately stocked to permit a reasonably high percentage of TO/E equipment to be shipped TAT. Group Materiel officers, however, through various methods including flying to other bases for tools, equipment, and expendable parts, managed to supplement the stock of each squadron tech supply with essentials which aided in the maintenance of the P-47N airplane.

Much of this necessary equipment was not authorized by the table of equipment. Despite that, some was packed (26) and brought along against the objections of over-zealous crating "experts" who assured supply officers that all equipment was subject to a careful check by port authorities who might invoke disciplinary action against the supply personnel for breaches of the TO/E. This resulted in their leaving behind some tools and equipment known to be highly useful in the maintenance of the N type airplane.

(25) - 1st Squadron History - 16 June - 15 August, Pg. 10.

21st Squadron History - 16 June - 15 August, Pg. 12.

(26) - Interview - Capt. Parker P. Tyler, Jr., 23 August 1945.

At the port, the Tech Supply officer and EM representing the Group had ample opportunity to observe the methods used by the various services to supply the TO/E shortages which were to be filled at the Port. After six weeks' observation they formed the opinion that the Air Corps was inferior to the other services in supplying both information and actual equipment.

The Quartermaster, Signal, and Ordnance Sections, they observed, not only had vouchers to show that the equipment had arrived, but also the equipment itself was stored in warehouses at the port, awaiting arrival and selection of the ship. This permitted a personal inspection of the property.

All Air Corps equipment, on the other hand, was shipped from the specialized depots to the Intransit Depot at Tacoma, Wash., where it was stored until Seattle called for it, at which time it was floated on barges to Seattle.

The equipment was called for during the last few days before embarkation, making it impossible to check the equipment in the rush to load. The Tech Supply representatives therefore could only check shipping tickets for the equipment as far as Tacoma only. This was accomplished and it was learned that all TO/E equipment assigned to the Group had been received at Tacoma.

Since no physical check could be made of the equipment between Tacoma and the Port, the Port Air Office was asked for a check list, but that office maintained that it had never received one from Tacoma. Up until

embarkation time, no list had been received at the sailing office and there was no confirmation that the barges had even arrived.

When the Air Corps equipment was unpacked, several serious shortages were found. Kits were either missing altogether or were missing component parts. Most serious among the shortages were fuel servicing units and cletracs. Throughout operations, it was always a problem getting aircraft refueled in time for scheduled missions. In many cases, refueling for two missions a day was made possible only because refueling units could be borrowed from squadrons not included in the mission or from adjacent groups.

As previously stated, the Tech Supply sections of each of the squadrons had packed critical materials not authorized. Had this not been done, Group aircraft would never have flown for almost a month because the Service Group brought no parts with them, relying on the pack-ups which did not arrive until the squadrons had been in operation for three weeks. Attempts to requisition critical items from another Service Group were discouraged through delays and red tape.

AOEP's were high during the first period and were kept down through reclamation of parts and barter between the 413th Tech Supplies and those of other groups. Cessation of hostilities found the Tech Supplies in good condition in regards to aircraft parts which finally became available through the Service Group. AOEP's were at a minimum. Shortages of TO/E equipment were never rectified. New Tech Orders were never received. Supply of material in Class 13 was very limited and there had been little replacement on pilots' personal equipment. The same holds true in regards

to Class 17-B hand tools which were never received.



(COMMUNICATIONS)

Squadron communications sections (27) agreed that the Service Group was not properly supplied with either equipment or spare parts. This resulted in a long delay in setting up shops for the servicing of communication sets and it was only overcome when all three sections loaned the Service Group sufficient equipment to maintain a minimum number of work benches.

Because of faulty design for this climate, a great deal of maintenance was found necessary to keep the communications sets in satisfactory working order. When sets are required to operate for long periods of time in tropic heat with a high percent of humidity, the delicate condensers and the working voltage of the part is too low.

This problem was overcome by installing new parts of higher working voltages as they became available. Unsatisfactory Reports on these particular assemblies were sent to higher echelons.

Excessive coral dust and sand particles, blown about by prop wash, made it impossible to protect sets properly. As a result, relays, tube sockets, and slide switches were frequently being sent back to third echelon for cleaning.

Also, not all equipment was made impervious to moisture and fungi. There was no preventative maintenance against these problems in this zone of operations.

(27) - 21st Squadron History, 16 June - 15 August, Pg. 14.

)ARMAMENT(

The main problem of the armament sections (28) was that of changing from one type mission to another. To the groaning armorers it sometimes seemed as though they were forever preparing for a bombing mission which was changed to rockets which was changed to bombing again. What made it more difficult was that since bombs and rockets could not be stored in the flight area, changes of mission load were delayed until delivery could be made from the ammunition dump by Ordnance personnel.

Napalm missions took a long time to prepare due to the inexperience of the men and the lack of loading equipment. The armorers had been given no previous training in the equipping of aircraft with Napalm tanks.

A number of the rockets dropped by the pilots were duds for reasons which were not determined, although it was assumed that the malfunction was due to some error in manufacture. One cause for failure which was uncovered was the locking pin on the adopter "A" assembly being worn, thus causing the pigtail to pop out, leaving an incomplete circuit. A suggestion for improvement was to have the locking pins slightly longer and a deeper locking slot cut in rear launcher.

When operations began, a number of planes were not equipped with sway braces for the belly bomb rack. This caused a great deal of extra man hours to be expended in removing and transferring them from one aircraft to another. However, during the final weeks enough sway braces were obtained.

(28) - 1st Squadron History, 16 June - 15 August, Pg. 9
21st Squadron History, 16 June - 15 August, Pg. 15

The supply, loading and maintenance of .50 caliber machine guns presented no problem. Spare parts were plentiful at all time, the ammunition was in good condition, and ample supplies of cleaning equipment were on hand.

Cooperation between armorers and engineers was greater here than in stateside training. Because there were more airplanes than the TE/O called for and just enough personnel to maintain 25 aircraft per squadron under ordinary conditions, armorers usually served as assistants to the crew chiefs. The latter, in turn, assisted the armorers in their work.



)COMBAT LOSSES(

Of 12 aircraft lost between 17 June and 15 August 1945, only four were lost in combat. One of these aircraft was piloted by Major George D. Vigue. (29) missing in action, who was shot down by enemy flak over waters adjacent to Chou Shan Island which lies off the China Coast near the city of Shanghai. The target consisted of one transport, three DE's, one DD, and two flak ships. The ships were arranged in a rough circular pattern, obviously prepared to meet an attack from any direction.

Major George D. Vigue led the formation to the north of the target and ordered his flights to execute flights abreast, with planes also abreast. The angle of attack was from north to south. All planes came in together and started firing at 3,000'. Maj. Vigue went for a flak ship on the left and Lt. B.H. McCartney lined his sights on a ship a little to the right. All of Maj. Vigue's rockets were seen to hit the ship that he was attacking, one striking the bridge, the other three reaching the water line. The flak ship was left in flames with a column of smoke spiralling up from it. As he passed over the target, Vigue's plane was hit by flak and enveloped in flames. His plane zoomed upwards, did a left wing over, and splashed straight into the sea. McCartney stated that he did not see Maj. Vigue bail out nor could he see him in his cockpit after the plane caught flame.

In the same area, Capt. Robert H. Allard's plane (30) was hit by

(29) - 21st Squadron History, 16 June - 15 August, Pg. 17.

(30) - 1st Squadron History, 16 June - 15 August, Pg. 11.

flak which came from Chou Shan Island. The other pilots in Allard's Flight saw him bail out and get into his dinghy. Later a Navy Privateer pilot reported that he had seen Allard board what appeared to him to be a Chinese Junk.

Capt. Allard was picked up by a junk belonging to a Chinese fisherman, a resident of a small village a short distance from the point. His plane was shot down on 2 July, and on 11 July, through the help of friendly Chinese, the flier had reached a certain point where arrangements were made to evacuate him to Guam, after which he returned to his organization.

The third (31) lost in combat was piloted by Lt. John Heathcote, II, who was flying on a rocket mission against the Matsuyama Airfield, located on the northwest coast of Shikoku. During the run over the target, Heathcote's plane was seen to roll to the right, the tip of his right wing apparently shot off by flak. After the run on the target, Lt. Heathcote's flight tried to contact him by radio but received no answer. At this writing, he is carried as missing in action.

The last of the 413th planes lost to enemy action was piloted by 1st Lt. Robert W. Faas (32) on the same mission. When Faas' plane was hit by AA fire in the target area, he was able to maneuver successfully his aircraft to a point off the southeast coast of Kyushu, where he bailed out. At the time, Lt. Faas' ship was observed to be covered with oil, and holes in the fuselage were noted by two other pilots who escorted

- (31) - 1st Squadron History, 16 June - 15 August, Pg. 6.
- (32) - 1st Squadron History, 16 June - 15 August, Pg. 11.

him out of the target area. The pilot of the downed ship was immediately rescued by a Dumbo.



)MORALE(

The most consistent offensive against high pilot morale (33) were the steady, frequent "night heckler" missions conducted by the Japs. These attacks were effective not because of any material damage done to life or property in the organization, but rather because they caused pilots to lose sleep, occasioned by frequent trips from bunks to foxholes. A number grumbled about having to fly long, over-water missions to Kyushu when they had had only a couple hours sleep. However, the air raid problem was partially solved by their going to bed shortly after supper before a scheduled mission.

This system worked well during the last month of operations as the Japs usually came only late at night or during the very early hours of the morning before daylight. There were two other major problems encountered, both of which were partially solved prior to the cessation of hostilities. One of these involved the weather. Back in the States, the pilots seldom flew in inclement weather. In this theatre, at times it was necessary to do so. Because weather information was not always accurate, flying units often had rough times making it back to base. Sometimes, when they went through bad weather a good part of the way back, they even found home base closed in. If some provision had been made for "poor weather" flying in training, the pilots would have had more confidence in their individual ability to bring a ship back safely, despite adverse weather conditions.

Thyngaen suffered only one airplane loss, that of Lt. Gratz due to weather, a loss which might have been avoided through proper poor weather pilot training.

Still another point concerning pilot morale concerns the extremely hot conditions of the cockpit at flight level. After each mission pilots climbed down from their planes literally drenched in perspiration. Several gadgets were conceived whereby the air induction system was utilized to introduce cold air in the cockpit. These met with a moderate amount of success. URs have been submitted.

When the unit first entered operations, the pilots flew only CAP missions and many of the ground crewmen felt they were not doing an important job. They felt that they were putting in many long hours servicing the aircraft, keeping them in "fighting trim" and that they weren't being used to the fullest combat advantage. They didn't see actual concrete results being derived from their efforts. To them, actual results meant enemy aircraft destroyed in aerial battle, enemy installations and troop concentrations destroyed on the ground. CAPs on the other hand, meant routine uneventful patrolling of the skies in the vicinity of the home base. Then, too, our accident rate was a little high in the beginning due to factors mentioned earlier in this history. The crew chiefs worried about their ability to do a good job of crewing. They worried about the findings of accident investigation boards.

At times they struck comparisons between field conditions back in the states and flying conditions out here. Too, they had little experience crewing the P-47N as against a longer association with the P47D. Their confidence in their ability to do a good job suffered by the relatively high initial accident rate. However, as they became more accustomed to working on the "N" and as the accident rate rapidly declined and when Group started flying good combat missions, the ground crew morale soared to a high level where it remains at present.

)RECORDS(

The Group lays claim to two records. In an unofficial letter to Yank magazine members of the 413th cite the fighter sweep over Nagoya, Osaka, and the Inland Sea on 14 August (34). Over Kaneyama, the First Squadron left the formation and started back to base by way of the Inland Sea. Two pilots, Lts. L. B. Redd and R. P. Shaw, climbing up, observed five Franks and made a pass at them. At a higher altitude they saw three bandits spring out and again they fired at the enemy. As a result of their pugnacious efforts, the pilots got a probable and some hits on other enemy planes. They also got lost. The rest of the squadron had left for the home base. With visibility restricted by the haze, Lts. Redd and Shaw flew around on an exploratory expedition. They pulled into their home base almost nine hours after they had taken off. This, the 413th archive excavators maintain, was the longest combat mission ever flown by fighter planes.

The other record concerns the use of Napalm which caused more damage in a single mission, that of 30 July, than any other inflicted on any nation by a single fighter group. The destruction dished out this particular mission as estimated by pilots on their return varied greatly, but all agreed that the results were fantastic. Some conservatively estimated that this single sweep caused more damage to the enemy than the total amount of wealth spent by the U. S. in organizing, training and equipping the entire group since its inception. Others said that the damage inflicted was three times as great. But more will appear on this raid in succeeding pages.

(34) - First Squadron Mission Report 8-11, 14 August 1945.

)NAPALM(

The initial Napalm attack (35), effected by the First Fighter Squadron on 28 July, was directed against Makurazaki. Sixteen planes, led by the squadron CO, took off at 0538 and reached the target 0740. The attack was made N-S, IAS 250 MPH, and the release at 300 feet.

All 32 bombs were dropped in the target area with excellent results. Fifteen to 20 large fires, including fires in the railroad station north of town and on docks just south of town were observed. Smoke rose to 3,000 feet. The town was destroyed.

The big mission, possibly the climatic attack performed by the Thynghmen was the one following Napalm Sunday, the mission directed against Sendai, (36), the beginning of which was described in detail at the start of this narrative.

After leaving the rallying point, 21st squadron aircraft sighted Koshiki Retto on the left at 0650, changed course to 45 degrees, and started to let down from 5,000 feet. Landfall was over village of Tosaki Hana (3142N-130 15E) where light flak (7.7mm) was encountered. It was meager, inaccurate, continuously pointed and caused no damage. The formation swung around to southeast of Sendai and attacked at 200 feet on axis of 330 degrees with flights in line astern and planes in each flight in line abreast.

The 21st Squadron attacked first. Group CO, acting as Red Flight leader, dropped his tanks along the south bank of the river near the center of town, throwing flames over the whole dock area and causing huge fires which rose to 150 feet, bursting out of dense smoke clouds.

(35) - First Squadron Mission Report 7-23, 24 July 1945.

(36) - Group Mission Report 413-14, 30 July 1945

His wingman hit buildings along the south river bank near the center of town causing flames that quickly spread over the block. Leader of 2nd element, Red Flight, hit buildings east of the railroad station and caused large fires that rapidly spread to the station. The latter's wingman dropped his tanks on the south end of a highway bridge which sent flames racing across the town and enveloping the bridge in flames. The bridge, however, was made of concrete and resultant damage could not be determined.

White flight followed and found the flames so high and blowing smoke so heavy that it was forced to pull up. The flight leader dropped his firebombs on buildings near the south bank of the river which caused one three story building to burst into flames with such violence that it almost seemed to explode. His wingman's bombs struck a new large wooden building on the north river bank at the highway bridge causing the building to flame and collapse. 2nd Element Flight Leader dropped his tanks in the center of town which sent flames through the buildings adjacent to the railroad station and enveloped the station itself in huge flames and smoke. His wingman hit buildings near the north end of the highway bridge with fire and smoke rising immediately.

Blue Flight followed White on the same axis of attack. The leader struck coal and freight cars, estimated at 16, which were standing on the siding near the station. His bombs caused large flames which spread to all the cars from which thick black smoke arose. His wingman's tanks hit the railroad yards. The 2nd element leader blasted the plant on the north bank of the river west of the highway bridge into smoke and flames. His wingman, adding to the destruction, dropped his bombs on the same plant.

Yellow was the last flight of the squadron to wing over the target. The leader fired buildings in the south end of Sendai. His wingman struck ten buildings in the center of town which belched out flames in all directions. The 2nd element leader struck a lone building on the north river bank opposite the highway bridge, sending it up in flames. His wingman burned out a grey, three story building slightly northeast of the highway bridge.

21st pilots reported that at the conclusion of the attack that at least 16 large fires were burning in Sendai with great clouds of billowing black smoke coming up from it which were visible for miles.

The 34th Squadron came in on the target shortly after the 21st had retired. Visibility was difficult because of the smoke rising from the target. Red Flight hit the RR yards on the east side of Machi Town, with the full force of their bomb load dropping all Napalm tanks on the yards. White flight of the 34th went on to the center of the town, dropping their loads. The leading element of Blue Flight scored four hits on the west side of Machi, the other half of the flight crossed the Sendai River and dropped four tanks on the north bank near Sendai. Following close behind, Yellow flight continued on past Blue flight and dropped their tanks in the center of Sendai, increasing the fires raging there.

All fire bombs dropped by the 34th Squadron exploded and caused large fires.

Still 50 miles from the target, First Squadron pilots saw dense smoke rising over the target area to a height of 5,000 feet. Approaching from the north they flew over water, then turned into land. They passed the target located south and slightly to the west of them.

Making a 180 degree turn, the flights flew down a sheltered valley which they used to their advantage for protection against flak at the target area. The squadron found half of the town was a roaring inferno. Smoke, haze, and a 6/10 cloud cover made it virtually impossible for them to pick out specific targets. Thirty-two Napalm bombs were dropped in the vicinities where some fires had already been started.

When the Group mission over Sendai was completed, about 70% of the city was destroyed.

Thyngmen flew other combat missions up to and including 15 August. But by this single attack, more than any others, their entire thinking about the war changed. Prior to this date, they had heard of a number of enemy peace feelers, but they believed the war would not end until Japan was invaded and conquered.

From 31 August---before anyone in the Group had heard of the existence of a practical atomic bomb --- 413th pilots were betting that the enemy would capitulate before ground forces landed on the Japanese home islands.

NOTES ON COMBAT OPERATIONS((37) & (38)

Although this unit started out as a VLR escort for B-29's, actually only one mission of this type was flown by this group. However, a number of B-24 escort missions were flown which were long range operations.

Of 2263 P-47N's airborne against the Japanese mainland 88.1% were effective and 15 enemy aircraft were destroyed against 6 P-47N's lost - a ratio of 2.5 to 1. However our losses were due to weather plus mechanical failure and enemy AA rather than to air opposition. All enemy aircraft were destroyed in air opposition.

Total sorties averaged 20.5 per aircraft assigned, 29.7 per aircraft operational, 12.2 per combat crew assigned, and 13.0 per combat crew available.

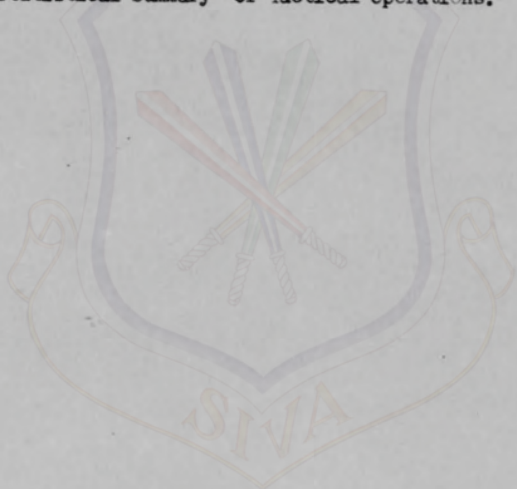
Thyngmen flew 71 daylight tactical missions, directed against airfields, ground installations, and industrial power, on Kyushu and shipping around the China Coast. The number of rockets fired on these targets totaled 1956, and 208.5 tons of bombs were dropped on targets.

Types of missions flown were distributed as follows among the Squadrons:

	1ST FIGHTER SQ	21ST FIGHTER SQ	34TH FIGHTER SQ
Barrier CAP	9	3	2
Kyushu CAP	2	2	
Calibration Escort		1	1
Photo Escort	8	6	7
Rocket Strafing	11	13	10
Dive Bombing	10	8	11
Dumbo Escort		5	6
Top Cover	5	1	5
Fighter Sweep	3	3	3

	1ST FIGHTER SQ	21ST FIGHTER SQ	34TH FIGHTER SQ
Escort Bomber	7	7	6
Strafing		1	1
Napalm Bomb	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
TOTAL	60	55	57

- (37) - Chart, Damages to Enemy Installations
 (38) - Statistical Summary of Tactical Operations.



)STATIONS OF 413TH FIGHTER GROUP(

DATE OF ACTIVATION: 15 October 1944 (General Order #96 First Air Force)

PLACE: Seymour Johnson Field, Goldsboro, North Carolina

Arrived: 25 October - 30 October 1944

Departed: 9 November 1944

MISSION: Very Long Range Escort

STATIONS OF TRAINING: Bluethenthal Field, Wilmington, N. C.

Arrived: 9 November 1944

Departed: 7 April 1945

PORT OF EMBARKATION: Fort Lawton, Seattle, Washington.

Arrived: 12 April 1945

Departed: 17 April 1945

OVERSEAS STATIONS: Ie Shima, Okinawa Gunto

Arrived: 19 May 1945

Departed:

)PERSONNEL STRENGTH, OFFICERS & EM(

	<u>OFFICERS</u>	<u>EM</u>
Date of Activation	4	5
Arrival at Wilmington	27	317
Departure from Wilmington	130	734
Arrival at Seattle Port of Embarkation	130	734
Arrival at Ie Shima	114	700
Start of Combat Operations (16 June 1945)	149	759
End of Combat Operations (15 August 1945)	233	815

)DECORATIONS & AWARDS (RECOMMENDED)(

	<u>SILVER STAR</u>	<u>DFC*</u>	<u>BRONZE STAR</u>	<u>AIR MEDAL*</u>	<u>SOLDIERS' MEDAL</u>	<u>PURPLE HEART</u>
Group Hqs.		3		21		
1st Squadron		8	15	107	2	3
21st Squadron		2		132		
34th Squadron	1	1		122		1
GROUP TOTAL	1	14	15	382	2	4

* - & Clusters (In Lieu of Additional Air Medals)

)LOSSES, PILOTS(

<u>NAME</u>	<u>SQ</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>COMBAT- NON-COMBAT</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
2nd Lt. Alfred W. Dussault	21	19Jun45	Non-Combat	Killed in landing
Maj. George D. Vigue	21	4Jul45	Combat	MIA
Capt. Cecil E. Meierhoff	21	22Jul45	Non-Combat	MIA(Operational Loss)
Lt. John Heathcote II	1	9Aug45	Combat	MIA
Lt. Sheldon C. Whittemore	34	11Aug45	Non-Combat	Killed in takeoff

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