

THE DIARY OF
MAJOR WALTER B. DOSSETT, SR.
497th BOMB GROUP
73rd BOMB WING
20TH AIR FORCE
U.S. ARMY AIR CORPS
1944-1945

Some information on Major Dossett. More is expected.

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OPERATIONS OF THE 497TH BOMB GROUP

After six months of very intensive training, fraught with many difficulties, the 497th Bomb Group (V.H.) (V.L.R.) was ready at the end of August 1944 for overseas movement. I could not help but think that our greatest difficulty was one the Nazis and Japs would have easily overcome. That difficulty was one of security, made doubly hard by the fact that everyone's wife, mother or sweetheart was there to spend the last few months with their soldier boy before he went overseas. I recommended in the future that all training be done outside the continental limits of the United States.

The 497th Bomb Group was the first of 4 such groups under the 73rd Bombardment Wing, headed by Brigadier General "Rosie" O'Donnell who had spent 10 years as a football coach at West Point prior to the war. The 73rd wing was the first of 5 wings to operate under the 21 Bomber Command, which was under the 20th Air Force.

The C.O. of the 497th was Col. "Stud" Wright of Dallas, who was captain of the University of Texas football team in 1926 and had been in the Air Corps since 1928. A V.H. Bomb Group consisted of Troop H.Q. and Bombardment Squadrons. Each Squadron had 20 combat crews, each crew had eleven members. 5 officers and 6 enlisted men. Every man on the crew was capable of performing his special duty and at least one other. In addition to the 220 crewmen in each squadron there were 430 ground personnel, so that the total strength of a V.H. Bomb Group was approximately 2,100 officers and men. Each squadron had 15 airplanes, making 45 for the Group.

We had a very high level of experience in our group. All the Airplane Commanders (1st Pilots) had from 500 to over 2000 hours in 4 engine bombers before joining the B-29 program. A good number of our crew members had combat experience and most of the staff officers and section heads had seen previous foreign service.

Our ground echelon left our training base at Pratt, Kansas on July 15, and sailed from Los Angeles on July 30th. They stopped three days in Honolulu. It was there they were told that their destination was Saipan. The small and already crowded ship took on 500 sailors at Honolulu for Saipan. Alas it was the 11 of September before they set foot on Saipan.

Each Bomb Group had a Companion Service Group, whose duty was to precede us to the combat zone and build a base for us, and service us in every way, that is furnish us with all food, supplies and equipment and do 3rd and 4th echelon maintenance on our airplanes.

Unfortunately it took much longer to secure Saipan than was anticipated, so that our service group as well as our ground echelon was held at anchor in the harbor at Eniwetok for 26 days before being allowed to sail to Saipan. On September 16 our ground echelon together with what supplies and equipment they had was dumped on the beach in a pouring rain. They were shown a large cane field and told that was their base. By begging, borrowing, and stealing and by using unheard of ingenuity the land was cleared, roads made, a large mess hall built for each squadron, Quonset huts for the combat crews, tents for the ground personnel and office buildings were all complete by the time the first B-29 arrived on October 20th. Our group was far ahead of the other groups in this respect.

During this time back in the States we were frantically training to meet our requirements. On September 1st we went to our staging base at Herington, Kansas where the air echelon was processed for overseas, and where we received our fly-away airplanes. On account of the delay at Saipan we were held up about twenty days, during which time we ran three wind missions simulating a run from Saipan to Tokyo with a full gas and bomb load. We were well pleased with the performance of the airplanes and crews.

Finally on the 10th of October orders came to move ten B-29's from each squadron at 3 day intervals. On the 11th of October the ground personnel of the air echelon that was to travel via Air Transport Command left for Hamilton Field, California. This movement had top priority. On the night of 18th October at 10 o'clock I left with the first contingent of 20 in a C-54 with bucket seats. We arrived at Hickam Field, Oahu at 0730 the following morning. We left there at noon and reached Johnston Island at 6 p.m. After an hours stop for fuel and food we took off for Kwajalein, arriving there about 0300 the next morning. In the meantime we had crossed the International Date Line and had advanced our time a whole day. We left Kwajalein at 0500 arriving at Saipan at 0930 on October 21st. That was a grueling trip, but we got no sympathy whatever from the member of the ground echelon who had spent 26 days aboard a ship in Eniwetok Harbor.

Upon finding a jeep assigned to me I immediately started to "explore" Saipan. (Incidentally within the next 10 months this jeep's mileage was increased by 30,000 miles.) The island is 15 miles long and about 5 miles across. We were based on the southwestern end, on a coral bluff about 50 feet above sea level overlooking the Strait about 3 miles wide between Saipan and Tinian. On this ledge some 200 yards wide and three miles long the 73rd Wing was camped. The 497th Group, the 498th Group, Wing Headquarters, the 499th Group and the 500th Group were in line. Behind this ledge was an abrupt rise of 50 to 100 feet, on top of this rise was a plateau covering about 4 or 5 square miles. Here was our airfield and the parking place for our airplanes. We eventually had two parallel runways 8500 ft. long, with connecting taxiways and hardstands for 180 airplanes. Leaving

this airfield is a mountain range running down the center of the Island to the north end. The highest peak of this range is 1500 feet. Seeing the dense jungles and the caves and crevices in the mountains make one wonder how the Island was ever captured. On either side of the mountain were fertile valleys and plains running to the shore line. On the western side of the Island about midway was the native village of Charon Kanoa, where there had been a large sugar mill and about 2 miles to the north was the city of Garapan, a port with a population before June 1944 of 10,000. Only a few native huts were standing in Charon Kanoa but not one single building in Garapan was left. The Navy built a new harbor a couple of miles to the north. There was a fighter strip on the east side of the Island. Two Marine Divisions were camped on the east side and were engaged in clearing the central and northern parts.

The temperature ranges from 60° to 100° with a mean of 78°. There is usually a strong wind blowing, always from the east and the nights were cool enough to need a blanket. The annual rainfall is 80". 11 or 12" a month during August, September and October and 3 to 4" a month the balance of the year. Since the Island was sprayed with DDT there were no insects.

During the last week in October B-29's for the 497th and 498th Groups were arriving 8 or 10 per day. As fast as we got them unloaded and serviced we would run a shake-down mission on Truk or Iwo Jima with all available planes. Most of our crews got in four or five of these missions before the first Tokyo mission. The 498th lost one plane on a mission to Iwo Jima. Unfortunately the 499th and 500th Groups did not leave the states until two weeks after we did so their first mission was the real thing.

A combination of a number of things delayed our first Tokyo mission for ten days. In the meantime we had sent several photo reconnaissance planes over Tokyo and had gotten excellent photographs.

Very few of the personnel of the XXI Bomber Command who were to be stationed at Guam, had arrived in the Marianas, however the Commander, General Hansell, his operations officers, his intelligence officers and his public relations officers were staying with us on Saipan. On November 12th, General Hansell called a meeting at Wing Headquarters for all Group and Squadron Commanders and all Operations and Intelligence Officers to brief us on the first mission. Washington had picked as our first target the Mitsubishi Aircraft Factory, eleven miles west of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. At that time we had only 120 B-29's on Saipan. In order to make our strength appear larger, we were to run a second mission against the same target within 72 hours after the first mission and our third mission was to be against the Nakajima Aircraft Plant in Nagoya within 72 hours after the second mission, on each mission we were to fly all available aircraft.

Consequently we briefed the crews on the overall picture and the specific mission a day ahead of the mission. The mission was postponed, we actually briefed this mission four times, and twice the crews were in their planes ready for take-off before the mission was cancelled. The tension was very great during this time.

We did not realize what a news story this first mission was to make until all the top ranking news correspondents began arriving on Saipan. They told us it would get the next largest spread of the war, being second only to the Normandy landings. Sam Wood of the Waco News Tribune was the 73rd Wing Public Relations Officer. He did a remarkable job of handling those correspondents and their news releases.

Six news reporters and one Columbia Broadcasting technician were allowed to fly this first mission – all other “would be “ passengers were scratched at the last minute by General Hansell.

At daylight on November 24th the first Tokyo mission against target #357 finally got off. 110 aircraft were led by Bob Morgan C.O. of our 869th Squadron with General O’Donnell, as Wing Commander aboard. Colonel Wright was in plane number two and each Squadron Commander led his Squadron. We received a strike message at 2 p.m. Saipan time saying they had hit the primary target with good results. No more news until the planes started returning about 8:30 p.m. The crews were hilarious on their return. They had that satisfaction of having accomplished something that up to this time had been doubtful in the minds of many of them. *Only one plane was lost on this mission. Unfortunately it was in our Group. It was rammed by a Tony and went down just a few miles off the Jap mainland. There were about 150 enemy interceptors airborne but we got surprisingly few attacks. The flak was heavy but inaccurate. About midnight when we started getting the strike photos the results were most disappointing. We had scattered bombs on course from two miles before reaching the target to a mile on the other side. Only a few bits could be seen on the target.

The next two missions went off as scheduled. The enemy fighters increased in number and got more aggressive with each mission and the flak got more accurate. Our bombing got worse. “Tokyo Rose” was just a G.I. myth, however Radio Tokyo had several English speaking women who broadcast, none of these called herself “Rose” but one called herself “Little Orphan Annie”. In early November, “Orphan Annie” said “we know you have B-29’s on Saipan, the day after your first mission against the Japanese Mainland, we are going to blow Saipan off the map.” Had we known

* Pencil Note: “11/24/44 870th Sgd 497th Bomb Group
A □26 42-24622
Lucky Irish

about the atomic bomb then, we might have been worried. Up until then we had 2 air raid alarms, one was a lone enemy reconnaissance plane at midday which was shot down by our fighters, the other was a bomber which was shot down by AA fire, but unfortunately landed on a tent killing 6 E.M. of an Engineering Battalion. On midnight of November 26th a day after our first mission three enemy bombers came over the airfield at about 500 feet one of them made a direct hit on a B-29. This was just six hours before our next take-off. All the planes were loaded with 8,000 lbs. of bombs and 8,000 gallons of gas. The fire and explosion from the hit B-29 was terrific but luckily no other planes were damaged. Our take-off was delayed by one hour, but we got 97 planes off on our second mission. At noon I was startled by steady machine gun fire, on running out of my office I could see a steady stream of Zekes coming up from the water level going over the ledge and strafing the airfield. My first thought was that an enemy carrier had slipped thru our defenses and that we were in for another Pearl Harbor disaster. I did not have time for a second thought before 3 Zeke's wheeled over our area at about 100 feet off the grounds spitting lead over everything. By the time they turned and started back over our area our AA had gotten busy and we could see all three planes go down in flames. Two hit in the water but one hit in the 500th group area, severely burning about 80 men. During this time you could see columns of smoke rising from the airfield and finally tremendous fires and explosions. When the official count was made our defenses had shot down 17 E/A but they had destroyed or badly damaged 8 B-29's. The only thing that saved us was that we had 97 planes out on a mission. These fighters had flown down from Iwo on a one way suicide mission and had stayed just above the water level so as to slip in under our radar net. Our radar screen was relocated on the highest peak and adjusted to scan the water for a radius of 30 miles around the Island. Besides the 80 men that were burned (all recovered) we had only 1 person killed by machine gun bullet, but the 73rd Wing had 2,000 casualties in sprained and broken ankles, scratched hands and knees, caused from running and falling on the rough coral. For the next 40 days we would get air raid every second or third night. Aside from the loss of sleep only two of these raids inflicted any damage and in every case we shot down by 8-61's or AA every enemy plane that showed up. The Japs got tired of these suicide missions and after early January we had no more air raids.

We were doing pattern bombing; that is, the leader of each squadron formation of 9 to 11 planes would adjust his bomb sight for range and deflections, the others would adjust for deflection only. When the leader dropped his bomb all others would drop on the leader thereby getting a good pattern if the formation was flown properly and if the timing was accurate. The greatest difficulty we encountered was the winds at 30,000 feet and above. They were so fantastic that the navigators and bombardiers would not believe them at first and would not make proper calculations for them. Over Japan at 30,000 feet there was a prevailing wind from the northwest

ranging from 115 to 200 miles per hour. This meant that we could bomb only down wind or up wind, because it was impossible to go cross wind. It meant in going down wind we had to make a large circle of the target, pick an initial point well up wind from the target and go over the target at the ground speed of from 300 to 450 miles per hour. It was impossible to accurately figure the wind velocity in time to make proper calculations for accurate bombing and if we went up wind our ground speed was only 50 to 150 miles per hour and we were "sitting ducks" for the flak.

In heavy bombing the object was to get as many planes as possible over the target in close formation in as short a time as possible. We were taking off 100 or more planes on one runway at 1 minute intervals, each Squadron of 11 planes would assemble and fly formations for 1500 miles to the target, frequently several would abort on the way or we would have to penetrate a front and the planes would get scattered so that we were getting from 7 to 11 planes in groups over the target at 5 to 10 minute intervals with a lapse of over an hour between the first and last group. This gave the enemy fighter time to concentrate on each formation. They got more numerous and aggressive with each mission. Some missions over Tokyo and Nagoya the Wing encountered as many as 500 enemy aircraft and some B-29's got as many as 50 attacks. Except for the remarkable fire power of the B-29 and the cool headed gunners our losses would have been much greater. The B-29 could take lots of punishment and still fly. Most of our losses from fighter attacks were by the fighters ramming the B-29. Some were accidental and others were intentional.

During December we inaugurated a series of weather missions. Every day we sent three planes to Honshu primarily to get weather data, but we times these planes so that one would arrive about 10 o'clock to midnight, one about midnight to 2 a.m., and one around 4 a.m. They would drop bombs on one of the large cities. Aside from getting weather data, we calculated to keep the Japs awake and in air raid shelters all night. This was kept up until the end of the war. The boys' likes these raids for it gave them an easy mission credit. These missions were rotated among all the Squadrons in the Wing.

During January and February our losses were terrific and our morale got very, very low. The first of February General Curtis LeMay relieved General Hansell of Command of the 21st Bomber Command. He immediately set about making changes. He started a lead crew school and promised promotions and decorations to lead crews that did the best bombing. He dropped the bombing altitude from 30,000 to 20,000 feet. Everyone thought that was suicide, but even though we got much more flak damage we lost fewer planes because the airplane and the crew were under less strain in climbing to altitude and we did not have to fight the terrible winds. Our bombing improved.

On the 19th February the Navy with carrier planes strafed all the air fields around Tokyo and destroyed over 600 Jap fighter planes, and at the same time landings were made on Iwo Jima. These two things helped us wonderfully.

At this point I would like to explain the details of running a mission. From 24 to 36 hours before take-off time a "readiness order" would be sent down from Wing to Group operations. This order gave the number of air planes expected, the gas load and bomb load required. This information was relayed to the squadrons and each crew assigned to the mission got busy testing its airplane, checking the instruments, loading ammunition, etc. The lead crew of each squadron had to flight test its plane, the others were ground tested. From 10 to 24 hours before take-off, the Field Order came from Wing operations giving the target, the actual take-off time, the position in formations, the altitude and all other pertinent data. The briefing time was set to 2 hours and 45 minutes before take-off. The crews were notified and transportation was notified, as a truck had to be assigned to each crew since we were 4 miles from the planes.

At the General Briefing the Intelligence Officer called roll and gave to each pilot, navigator, bombardier and radio operator an elaborate mission folder with instructions, route sheet, pictures of the targets, charts, code books and all pertinent data necessary to the accomplishment of the mission. All these had been prepared by operations and intelligence clerks before the briefing. The Intelligence Officer then announced the target and called on the Commanding officer for a short pep talk. Next the Intelligence Officer gave the importance of the target, the location and description of the target, the enemy situation, the friendly situation, the air sea rescue facilities to be employed and any other intelligence available. The Operations Officer then explained in detail our part of the mission, such as times to start engines, taxi positions, position in formations, altitude to fly, etc. He then called on the Group Navigator to explain the route, timing, etc., and to synchronize the watches. The Group Bombardier explained the bomb load, told the planes at what point to open bomb doors, pointed out the arriving point in the target and told them when to release. The Weather Officer gave the weather forecast in detail. Other specialists, such as communicators, radar, flight engineer, gunnery officer and flight surgeon talked at times in case any special instructions were necessary, the General Briefing was then broken up and each crewman then went to a Specialists Briefing, where he got specific data concerning his position. The C.O. and Group Operations Officers always gave last minute instructions and advice to the pilots and co-pilots.

After the mission was underway we awaited the strike reports which were sent in code by each squadron leader immediately upon leaving the Jap Coast. It gave time over target; primary, secondary or alternate target; bombing results; good, bad or unknown fighter opposition; heavy,

light or nil; flak: caliber, intensity, accuracy; number of planes in his formation; number of planes from his formation seen to go down over Japan. Before the target all planes maintained strict radio silence. After the target, except for strike reports and emergency messages, radios were silent.

The intelligence office was always open for interrogations. Any planes that scratched before take-off or aborted after take-off had its crew thoroughly interrogated for reasons, and this report was immediately sent to the C.O. and to Wing Operators. Investigations were made and unless the abort was justified the C.O. usually "dressed down" the pilot.

When the planes completing the mission returned intelligence officers interrogated each crew. This consisted of filling out a long questionnaire that took 10 to 15 minutes, except in case of heavy fighter oppositions, where the interrogation would take about 30 minutes. After the interrogation the intelligence officers got busy on a series of consolidated reports that all had a deadline to meet and were sent to Wing Intelligence. Within one hour after the last plane landed we sent a preliminary report, mostly statistical. Within 3 hours a Group Commander reports sending a copy to the C.O. and a copy to Wing. This was statistical and narrative report giving any unusual incidents and making specific recommendations suggested by crew members. With this report went the first copies of strike photographs. The other photographs followed soon as they were ready, all had to be completed within 22 hours. Within 24 hours the negatives were on their way to Guam to B.C. Headquarters.

Within 24 hours from the landing of the last plane a complete consolidated mission report was due. This was the most elaborate report you could imagine, consisting of bombing results with photo interpreters reports and bomb plot, a compilation of all enemy aircraft attacks; airplane losses; claims on enemy aircraft destroyed, probably destroyed or damaged; personnel killed; missing or wounded; gas consumed; ammunition expended; bombs dropped on targets, bombs jettisoned, bombs brought back; and crew suggestions. While intelligence was responsible for all these reports, operations personnel compiled much of it from the data we had collected at interrogation. All this finally got to be routine, but at first before we had adequate buildings and office space it was a nightmare. We were frequently trying to finish up reporting one mission, while we were preparing the briefing for the next mission.

Prior to March 9, 1945 we had run 28 main missions, besides a large number of individual weather and reconnaissance missions. Up to this time we had lost in our group, 22 aircraft with over 242 men aboard. From eight of these planes we had rescued 55 men. Between March 9th and July 26th on 50 main missions plus numerous individual missions, our losses were only 12 aircraft and from six of these we rescued 41 men. After securing Iwo Jima, over one thousand B-29's made

emergency landings there because of fuel shortage, battle damage, or mechanical failures. A large percentage of these would never have reached home base, so you can see how necessary Iwo Jima was to our operations. For every marine lost on Iwo Jima, at least two airmen's lives were saved.

Our Airsea Rescue consisted of several picket boats and crash boats around the islands at take-off and landing time. Two destroyers stationed at intervals between Saipan and Iwo Jima and four or five subs between Iwo Jima and Japan at intervals along the route of our mission. These vessels were referred to as "life guards". Over the destroyers was a Navy Catalina known as "Dumbo" and for every two subs was a B-29 circling known as "Super Dumbo". The airplanes would keep in touch via radio with any aircraft in distress and try to get the exact location where the plane ditched then circle until the surface vessel was honed to that position. The Navy did a wonderful job in picking up ditched crews. The most discouraging thing was to have a plane missing with no word from it and no clue as to where to search except the 1500 mile route to the target or back. Many life rafts were picked up after several days and in one case a whole crew was picked up on the tenth day. Frequently crewmen were picked up in an hour or two.

Whenever we lost an airplane or a crew, replacements were immediately started from the States. When a replacement crew arrived, we put them thru a week of strenuous ground school, then a week of familiarization flights before they were sent on a mission. These were the boys I felt sorry for, because they had to fly 3 to 4 missions before anyone paid much attention to them and before they felt that they were one of the gang. Some of our best work was done by these crews.

It was the Flight Surgeons duty to ground a crew that became war weary or jittery. All of the staff officers and particularly the older men tried to watch out for this, because it was impossible for the doctors to observe all cases. When you noticed a crew or particularly a pilot slipping, becoming careless, or indifferent it was sometimes difficult not to become too soft, and insist that that crew be grounded. On the other hand it was not fair to the crews who were taking their mission turns regularly and doing a good job, to let some crews get away with too many aborted missions or skip too many missions. In a couple of cases where crews were lost, I severely criticized myself because I had seen evidence of battle fatigue in the crew, but had not suggested that the crew be grounded. Between the 15th and 20th mission, each crew was sent on a two weeks rest leave to Hawaii. This proved most helpful in restarting their morale.

In March two more wings arrived in the Marianas. The 313th at Tinian and the 314th at Guam. On March 9th we had the first raid with all three wings participating and it was a unique raid. It was the first maximum effort night incendiary raid and the altitude was dropped to 5000 ft. The 314th Wing went over the target between 5000 ft. and 6000 ft., the 313th Wing between 6000 ft. and

7000 ft. and the 73rd Wing between 7000 ft. and 8000 ft. Every crew member honestly believed it was suicide and that it would be his last mission. Our group had 42 planes take off and 42 to over the target. 350 planes went over Tokyo in 110 minutes each dropping 7 tons of fire bombs. Fortunately our wing did not lose a single plane. The crews came back elated with the success and results of the mission. We were then told that we would run one of these missions every other night hitting Nagoya, Osaka and Kobe. All the missions were most successful, although Nagoya was damaged less than the other cities so the tenth night we ran a second mission over Nagoya. The results were the following areas burned: 16 square miles in Tokyo, 8 square miles in Nagoya, and 6 square miles in Osaka and 9 square miles in Kobe. In Tokyo alone we completely burned out 10 important targets that would have taken at least 10 daylight precision bombing missions to destroy.

After a few days rest we ran one more night fire raid on Nagoya, then beginning March 27th we started a series of raids on airfields on Kyushu in support of the Okinawa landings. These raids were broken down to each group attacking one airfield and we kept this campaign going until April 30th.

In May we started back on bomber command formations. We bombed Kume' Naval Base, Hiroshima, Osaka Arsenal and targets in the Tokyo area with G.P. bombs, and Tokyo, Nagoya and Yokohama with incendiary bombs. The Nagoya and Yokohama missions were daylight raids. We now had four wings operating, and on the Nagoya mission of May 14th 550 planes went over the target in 55 minutes. That was our biggest effort to date. We got heavy flak, but no air opposition.

On missions to the eastern part of Honshu Island we were now getting fighter cover when the weather permitted. Two groups of P-51's were based on Iwo Jima. They would meet us off the Japanese coastline and give us 30 to 40 minutes top cover. On the first of these missions the P-51's shot down 38 Jap fighters while the B-29's shot down 26. After this the enemy fighter opposition was almost nil. During the whole of our operations the B-29 gunners accounted for over 750 enemy aircraft shot down, besides a much greater number of probable or damaged enemy aircraft.

During June and July we were interspersing daylight H.E. Bomb raids on industrial targets with night incendiary raids on Jap cities. Except for the 5 large cities of Tokyo, Nagoya, Osaka, Kobe and Yokohama, we assigned one city to one wing and would hit four cities simultaneously. Over 50 cities with populations of from 75,000 to 300,000 were attacked the last three months of the war.

By this time we had learnt to cut our gas load from 8,000 gallons to 6,500 gallons and to increase our bomb load, on some missions, to over 9 tons. In March General LeMay notified the Navy that by June he would need 50,000 tons of bombs a month and 50,000 gallons of gas a month. They

told him it was impossible for them to haul it and impossible for him to use it. But they delivered it and we used slightly over those figures.

It July it became very evident that we would run out of targets by the last of September and that no Jap city with over 50,000 inhabitants would be untouched, with the exception of Kyoto, which was Japan's third largest city. Because it was a cultural center, with no manufacturing whatever, it was never bombed.

In June we started sending propaganda leaflets to Japan. These were dropped in bomb shells to explode 500' above the ground. We believe these leaflets were very effective.

In July we started advising the Japs thru leaflets, the cities that would be bombed with incendiaries and advised the civilians to vacate. Whether they vacated or not we do not know, but by then their defenses were so poor that we did not mind telling them our next targets.

Our group did not lose a plane during June, only two in July and none in August until after V - J Day.

Generally speaking the morale of our troops was good. There are three subjects that caused most of the "Gripes".

1. Censorship
2. Mission credits to establish a tour of duty.
3. Awards and decorations.

Most of the men resented their mail being censored and many of the regulations were inconsistent.

Most crews had flown 25 missions before the Bomber Command ever announced the exact number of missions required to constitute a tour of duty. It was finally decided that 35 missions were necessary. We thought that entirely too high because the VIIIth Bomber Command had established 25 missions for Heavies over Europe and because we thought the 73rd Wing crews that survived the early missions, which were so tough, should be given special consideration. Most of the other Wings arrived after Iwo Jima was captured and after the enemy fighter opposition had been licked. We were not given credit for any of our shake down missions to Truk or to Iwo Jima. We finally got the required missions for original crews in the 73rd Wing only, reduced to 30.

The VIIIth Bomber Commander had given the entire crew an Air Medal for the first 5 missions and an Oak Leaf Cluster for every 5 missions thereafter. Then a D.F.C. at the end of 25 missions. Our crews were given an Air Medal for the first 8 missions, an Oak Leaf Cluster for every 8 missions

thereafter and the D.F.C. for 25 missions. Many other D.F.C.'s and Silver Stars were given for acts of individual heroism, with which I was thoroughly in accord. However, I think the Air Corps as a whole gave out entirely too many decorations.

From October 1944 thru July 26, 1945 (when I left Saipan) our group had flown 78 main missions and in addition innumerable individual missions for weather, photo reconnaissance, radar, airsea rescue and propaganda leaflets. A total of over 2100 sorties.

No one arm of the services can claim credit for winning the war in the Pacific. The Navy, the Marines, the Ground Forces, and the other Air Forces all did a superb job that was well coordinated. However, I will claim that without the V.L.R. B-29's the war against Japan would have lasted much longer and it most likely would have been necessary to land on Japan proper, with a very heavy cost in American lives.