

month of December 1943 the squadron began its second phase of training; shaping up and tempering into an overseas B-24 Heavy Bombardment Unit. The personnel had increased to 78 officers and 377 enlisted men, with various groups of men on detached service (ds) to specialist schools, and the squadron maintaining 13 B-24s for training, the first of which was long to be remembered and cursed : Aircraft #41-28537 received from the Fairmont AAB on 15 November 1943

With Captain John B. Paine at the head, the following key personnel formed the nucleus for the training of the squadron:

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| Executive Officer | Capt Walter V Hogan | - Calif |
| Operations Officer | 1/Lt Abner O Mc Daniels | - Ohio |
| Intelligence Officer | Capt Robert L Cole | - Ariz. |
| Sq. & Flt. Surgeon | Capt Jack Shepard | - La. |
| Squadron Adjutant | 1/ Lt Elmer C. Martinson | - Mass, |
| Navigation Officer | 2/ Lt James H. Albertassi | - Mass. |
| Communication Officer | 2/ Lt John W Mc Gregor | - Pa. |
| Bombardier Officer | 2/Lt Charles R O'Leary | - Mass |
| Armament Officer | 2/ Lt Harry L Collins, Jr | -Cal |
| Ordnance Officer | 1/ Lt John L Crandall | - NY |
| Engineering Officer | 2/Lt Norman F Sieh | - ND |
| Personal Equip Officer | 2/ Lt Louis Patlogan | - IL |
| Supply Officer | 1/Lt Raymond Ewen | - NY |
| First Sgt | 2/Sgt Francis J Gillespie | - Pa |
| Line Chief | M/Sgt William A Pekala | - Mich |
| Flight Chief | M/Sgt Carl Williams | - Tenn |
| Flight Chief | M/Sgt Robert Miskimen | - Mass |
| Flight Chief | M/Sgt Joe A Ratigan | - Ill. |
| Squadron Inspector | Sgt Richard B Ross | - NY |
| Communications Chief | M/Sgt Raymond L Snyder | - Pa. |
| Armament Chief | S/Sgt Louis Romanelli | - Pa |
| Operations Chief | Sgt Andrew C Mc Kay | - Pa, |
| Intelligence Chief | Sgt Lee R Lucas | - Wis |
| Supply Chief | Cpl Harry Bradley | - NY |
| Tech Supply Chief | Sgt Richard P Fulbright | - N.C. |
| Transportation Chief | S/Sgt Henry B Kazmierski | - Pa. |
| Cemical Warfare Chief | Pvt Sandgo Robbins | - N.C. |
| Ordnance Chief | T/Sgt Raymond V. Snyder | - Pa, |

By Christmas time, the men were becoming well acquainted with one another. The combat crews were flying, attending classes and lectures, and for the purpose of getting to know one another they were sleeping and messing together in a separate section away from the ground crews, Harvard had been explored and passed up for Hastings, Nebraska, 18 miles away, where the Wintergarden, The Blackstone, The 40 & 8 , The Hunt Club, and The Clark and Carter Hotels became familiar places. Whiskey was hard to get; and when obtainable, one had to purchase a bottle of rum to obtain the whiskey. On the base, Betty Lou and Mary Anne made the Air Corps Supply Section of the Air Depot the most popular place in the daytime. The civilian mess served a mammoth t-bone steak with french fries for one dollar; hot coffee and sugared doughnuts were served in the engineering office on the line every morning, and the service club put out a giant chocolate ice cream sundae for fifteen cents.

January revealed the squadron as a sturdy well-melded overseas tactical unit and the outstanding squadron in the group. The full strength of the squadron had been attained; and as of the end of the month and entering into its last phase of training, the 826th had 97 officers and 107 enlisted men.

2/ Lt Fred A Meier, Jr of New York replaced 2nd Lt. Norman F Sieh as Engineering Officer. Captain Claude A Trotter, Jr of Alabama took over as Squadron Operations Officer. Captain Hogan in lionizing the squadron had acquired the nickname of "Court-Martial" Hogan, and paradoxically, had captured the admiration of the entire personnel for inaugurating and taking an active part in the successful get-together squadron beer parties. By the end of January 1943 all the men were back from the various specialist schools and furloughs, the line was functioning efficiently on duty 24 hours a day. Even though the winter was severe, the men were qualified in arms, gas drills, aerial combat and ground defense tactics, and were inoculated with all the shots required for overseas service such as malaria, typhus, and dysentery. The men were physically qualified for overseas duty; after learning about camouflage, the perils of unsafe sex, through the medium of lectures and movies. Misfits had been weeded out. The morale was high; February ushered in the last phase of training, new flyaway planes replaced training ships and they filled the ramp, lined up wing to wing, combat crews and ground crews functioned in a coordinated teamwork manner, all the elements - personnel and equipment, organization and training, supply, maintenance were geared smoothly in an increased tempo of activity that reached its climax at the POM inspection which took place on 14 February 1944,

With the POM inspection over, the 826th squadron was decreed fit and qualified for overseas duty, Then came the hectic days of preparation of movement - crating, clothing issue, allotments, wills, powers of attorney, and farewells. The squadron administrative staff was awarded a plaque as the outstanding administrative section in the group. Captain Frank E. Oliver of Pennsylvania was assigned to the squadron as a Bombardier. The squadron was alerted on 20 February and it threw its farewell dance and beer party on 28 February. Rumor prevailed that the group was going to India. On the morning of 2 March 1944, 10 officers and 292 enlisted men comprising the ground echelon under the command of Captain Walter V. Hogan, departed from Harvard as per Par. 14 SO #61 HQ. AAF Harvard, Neb. dated 1 March 1944, leaving behind the air echelon under the command of the Squadron Commander, who were to join up with the ground echelon overseas.

Traveling east, the ground echelon arrived at POE, Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia in the dark of a rainy night on 4 Mar 44. While the stay at Camp Patrick Henry, was short, it will be remembered for its PX, the infantry and air force flare-ups, the KP detail which no one was excluded from and where a Master Sergeant and a Buck Private ran the China Clipper or mopped the floor. There was Lt. Mc Gregor's spill in the mud at the mock ship to remember, Sgt Newton D Baker's beery bayonet evasion, and Captain Hogan's remark of "I don't want you to go looking for a fight, but I don't want you to walk away from one either."

The infamous prewarned and precautioned clothing inspection took place on 11 Mar 1944 and the final (and rough) physical took place on the 12th. On the morning of 13 March, 9 officers and 296 enlisted men (2/Lt Bernard Stern was left behind), in