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SG-FI-458-M1
APR 1945
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Frontispiece

H I S T O R Y

458TH FIGHTER SQUADRON (SE)

506TH FIGHTER GROUP (SE)

A P O #86

VII FIGHTER COMMAND

ARMY AIR FORCES, PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS

and the

TWENTIETH AIR FORCE

1. Ground Detachment arrived Eniwetok on 5 April 1945, departed for Saipan on 16 April 1945, arrived Saipan 20 April 1945. Departed Saipan for Iwo Jima on 21 April 1945 and arrived at Iwo Jima on 24 April 1945.
2. Negative.
3. Negative.
4. Negative.
5. Strength of Flight Detachment on 1 April 1945 - 55
Flight Detachment on 30 April 1945 - 58
Strength of Ground Detachment on 1 April 1945 - 263
Ground Detachment on 30 April 1945 - 260
6. Strength, Airplanes, on 1 April 1945 - 22 P-51Ds.
Airplanes, on 30 April 1945 - 22 P-51Ds.
7. Negative.

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H I S T O R Y

The Squadron had few if any objectives during the month of April except to arrive at their destination, join the Flight Detachment and commence operations. To accomplish this aim it was necessary, in the customary Army manner, to "sweat out" the time. All personnel of the Ground Echelon and members of the Air Echelon travelling with the Ground Echelon were bored with shipboard life and anxious to be on our way.

The M. S. Bloemfontein arrived at Eniwetok on 5 April and did not leave this port until 16 April 1945. Very few shore parties were permitted, one on 8 April and other shore parties were conducted merely to run the roster of personnel in order that each man might have an opportunity to stretch his legs. Enlisted Men and Officers went ashore in everything from lighters to Higgins boats and for the first time since leaving Oahu, were able to get a few cans of beer, a "coke" or two, and to stretch their legs for the first time in twelve. Swimming, "cokes", beer and ball games were the order of the day and the return to shipboard was accompanied by man burned noses and other severe cases of sunburn.

Our boat laid in the lagoon at Eniwetok until the 16th sailing in the afternoon for an unknown destination. The usual "scuttlebutt" or "latrine rumors" went around the ship as to our ultimate destination, and needless to say they ranged anywhere from the China Coast, the Phillipines, and Okinawa, to Iwo Jima. No attempt was made on shipboard to accomplish anything other

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than complete and utter rest. Daily voluntary physical training was carried on on the after promenade deck and the balance of the time spent reading, sunbathing, and discussing the progress of the war.

Admiral was dropped in Haipao on 20 April and several members of the organization were transferred ashore to assist in flying planes, which until then had been stationed on Tinian, to our ultimate destination, Iwo Jima. Many of the Flight Detachment came aboard ship and added to our apprehensiveness by recounting actual combat experiences on Iwo and adding to our confusion as to the date of arrival, the type of installation we could expect, and last but not least, the day we would contemplate commencing operations.

The Navy was treated to several beautiful "buzz jobs" by members of the group who had been lucky enough to be with the Flight Detachment and get in a little flying time. But our meeting with Friends at Saipan was short-lived as we weighed anchor from there on the 21st and arrived on Iwo Jima on 24 April after an uneventful trip.

To be able to set one's feet on dry land for awhile was pleasant to contemplate but first there was work to be done. The ship had to be unloaded and just as soon as arrangements had been made to ferry the supplies and equipment ashore, unloading started. Working in four hour shifts, it took but 24 hours to empty all holds and the men who were first ashore were those detailed to guard the organization's equipment as it was piled on the beach. The rest of the men had to "sweat it out" until

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the morning of the 25th for it was not until then that we disembarked, wading thru the surf with bag and baggage, then being loaded onto trucks and driven to our new area, a levelled off space at the foot of a cliff, ten feet deep in lava ash. Tents were raised amid a mass of confusion, dust and later, rain. Many of the men occupied their shelter halves throughout the first few days until some semblance of order could be brought out of the confusion. Every man slept with his gun at his side due to tales passed on by personnel who had been on the island for some time, and this did nothing to decrease our apprehensiveness. Slowly a semblance of order rose out of the chaos and the area was put in order, messhall built, officers' area completed, and tents pitched.

In the meantime the Air Detachment on Tinian enjoyed comfortable and dry quarters, the appointments of an officers' club, good food, and the opportunity of flying. Their operations for the month consisted of Combat Air Patrol over Tinian and Saipan, flying a total of 473.5 hours in 217 sorties, with no casualties or damage to the aircraft.

Many lessons were learned which will stand us in good stead in operations of this type in future. Naturally corrections will be made and it is believed that on future occasions of bivouac in it's roughest form will at least be made in a greater semblance of order and convenience will be arranged for which at first were not believed possible at the start of the Organization's first tour of combat duty.

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