

48 MATERIEL SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

2 Materiel Squadron, 35 Air Base Group (Reinforced) constituted,
Activated,
Redesignated 48 Materiel Squadron,
Inactivated

STATIONS

Barksdale Field, LA
Savannah AAF, GA

ASSIGNMENTS

35 Air Base Group

COMMANDERS

Capt Joseph T. Hall

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

It was the fall of 1940 and blending in the cool breezes of Barksdale Army Airfield near Shreveport, Louisiana was the smell of aviation fuel and the drone of aircraft engines warming up for a day's schedule of training. Being one of the principal army air bases in the country it became quite busy with planes such as the B-18 taxiing into position, fueling up or being serviced in one of the many hangers that protected them in bad weather.

Times were changing not only at Barksdale but throughout the entire world. War was engulfing our allies and most believed it was a matter of time before we would also be part of it. Our armed forces were gearing up but not at the rate we should have been. The Air Corps was hard at work especially training a large number of recruits arriving daily. New recruits were needed especially in the materiel division which was so vital to the upkeep of Uncle Sam's aircraft. Two materiel squadrons stationed at Barksdale were the 1st and 2nd Materiel Squadrons of the 35th Airbase Group. On 6 October, 1940 the 2nd Materiel Squadron commanded by Captain Joseph T. Hall had orders to embark by train to Savannah Army Air Base in Savannah, Georgia. Its objective would be to support the 17th Wing and aid in the building of new barracks.

A materiel squadron is a unit that gives direct support to a larger fighter or bomber group in a ground echelon role. It supplies maintenance work such as mechanics of all types, parachute riggers, radio men, sheet metal workers, armorers and welders. It supplies needed parts and many other important roles.

On arrival at Savannah the 2nd Materiel went into tent city which was to be their home until the new barracks could be constructed. Twenty-one tents were on each side of the company street did each tent normally housed one NCO and four enlisted men. As the 2nd Materiel settled into their new home there were many details such as K.P., guard duty and instruction on weapons, gas masks, etc. Hard work was performed as new recruits started pouring in.

The 2nd was mainly comprised of men of the southern United States and many of the recruits were from the New England area.

The work continued and on 17 January, 1941 the 2nd Materiel changed designation to the 48th Materiel Squadron.

As Christmas day came some men were given the opportunity to visit home while the men at Savannah Army Air Base were treated to a great outdoor Christmas Dinner at tent city. The squadron area consisted of three large barracks, No. 's 39, 40 and 41, a large mess hall, a supply room and a day room: There were a few inconveniences such as using mess kits in the mess hall, but that was soon to change.

The Air Corps was going through a great change of organization. It was forming new units as higher command realized it needed to do so. The birthing pains of the 48th were strong it was hard to get to know, the men for personnel were arriving and leaving. Solid organization would

come later and strength would boost to around 226 men. At this time a number of the men were sent to be trained in their field and then were sent back to the squadron to carry out their skills. In early March a fire started in a new barracks area and the men of the 48th were sent to help fight it. At the same time one of the new A-20A Medium Attack Bombers was being checked out and the pilot could not find the release to put his landing gear down. Not having a radio, or possibly having a malfunctioning radio, another plane was sent up with a large sign explaining how to lower the gear. With a few minutes fuel left he got the ship down. Excitement did have its part; the A-20 was safe, the barracks fire was out, and life at Savannah Air Base went on. Around 12 March, 1941 the first casualty of the 48th was experienced. A Private Woodburn from Massachusetts was being inspected for guard duty. During inspection of the .45 automatic pistol it accidentally was discharged, instantly killing Private Woodburn.

Late March of that year brought the opening of the squadron day room which consisted of chairs, reading lights, a radio, phonograph, lots of magazines, ping pong table, and a real fine pool table. Besides day room activities the post opened a new theater and movies were shown; "Penny Serenade", "Ringside Masie", and "Charlie's Aunt" were a few of the titles. Off-post entertainment was also available. As soldiers will be soldiers, the men of the 48th upheld the tradition of hitting the night spots and chasing the girls of Savannah. There were some black eyes and aching ribs due to too much "booze" but this was to be expected. By April tile mess hall was being equipped and quite nicely. curtains were being hung; even the wooden walls were burned with a blow torch to bring out the grain. Area beautification was beefed up at this time and shrubs and palm trees were planted which some still adorn the base which is now known as Hunter Field.

If you don't remember, the post telephone number was 35-786 and the orderly number was 357. As the summer of '41 came along, the 48th was becoming more and more experienced at their duties. First Sergeant Leroy Lucas, commonly known as "Bullet Joe", worked close with Capt. Hall along with PFC Steve Raymond of the personnel section and PFC Charles Fuhrman as clerk, keeping the pay rosters and morning reports going. Humors were spreading about the squadron shipping out to Ireland, Iceland, and even Trinidad. Two Army transports arrived in Savannah Barber and the rumors could only increase. But the rumors of that period suddenly ended with orders to convoy by truck to Barksdale Air Base for training in the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers.

On 22 August, 1941 the convoy departed and set d pace of 200 miles per day. Seventy-two vehicles of various squadrons made up the convoy which occupied about four miles of road space. The first night was spent at Camp Wheeler in Macon, Georgia; the second night at Montgomery, Alabama and the third night in Jackson, Mississippi where showers and other facilities were set up. The convoy continued to Vicksburg and on to Barksdale Field. The only incident was a collision of two trucks near Monroe, Louisiana which produced a smashed up radiator but no casualties. The 48th would now be part of the "Red" Army under the familiar "Red-Blue" maneuver confrontations. A Major Burkhalter was in command of the squadron during the maneuvers and he assigned the 48th to support the 3rd Bomb Group. Barksdale was

familiar to many of the old 2nd Materiel boys which gave them an advantage towards off-duty hours.

On 15 September, the maneuvers officially started. Klaxon horns were set up and helmets and other field gear were issued. A complete tactical situation was the order. On one day, the 48th was "bombed" by the Blue Air Corps and quite a bit of damage was done, theoretically of course. Shreveport was taken by the Red Army and they continued south towards Alexandria. Around 25 September a storm was raging in the Gulf of Mexico and was moving inland toward Shreveport. Preparations were made by tightening down the tents, elevating the equipment on bunks, etc. The storm did hit and the kitchen tent was wrecked. Pots and pans were scattered everywhere and the food was ruined. High water was a problem and some of the men moved into nearby hangers. There were some discomforts here" but unforeseen future events would make Barksdale seem a paradise.

The maneuvers were over and there was some slack time for the men. No doubt the 1941 maneuvers did provide some valuable lessons for the upcoming World War. The 48th arrived back at Savannah Army Air Base not to unload but with orders to prepare to move on. The 48th Materiel Squadron instead of the 47th had been picked as part of Operation Plum. The men had no idea where they were going but they were to support the 27th Bomb Group. This was a light bomb group consisting a A-24 dive bombers, the Navy version of the SBD Dauntless. It didn't take long to figure out the code name PLUM as Philippine Islands, Luzon, and Manila. For most men, this was a very quick move leaving no one time to see family or friends. Five troop trains, one for each squadron, were loaded and were to travel different routes because of sabotage possibilities. Captain Hall was to stay stateside and Captain Patrick J. Byrne was now Squadron Commander and 1st Lt. Theodore C. Bigger was assigned as supply officer. Three reserve officers also staying stateside were 1st Lt. Dean A. Rhody, 1st Lt. Howard C. Robins and 2nd Lt. Harvey o. Mitchell.

There were promotions at this time: Sgt. Leroy Lucas was promoted to Technical Sgt.; PFC Charles Fuhrman replaced TS Lucas as 1st. Sgt. At age 23 he was possibly one of the youngest first sergeants in the Army. At 6:05 p.m. Tuesday, 22 October 1941, the 48th Materiel Squadron departed Savanna, Georgia moving west in route to San Francisco. Mixed emotions were prevalent; some eager for adventure, others missing their families and friends and still others more interested in the card games on board than anything else. The train continued through Shreveport and the flatlands of Kansas but the scenery soon changed as they reached Colorado and ascended the 10,000 ft. Tennessee Pass. Here the train stopped for a while and allowed the men to disembark. More than one snowball fight erupted during this break. The train then continued to Salt Lake City, Bonneville Salt Flats, through Nevada, and on into California.

Conditions on the train were fair. Being that each squadron had its own separate train, it also had its own medical detachment. A mess kitchen was set up in a baggage car using four gasoline stoves for cooking and an adjacent car was used for food storage. Food was carried to the men in large containers. Paper plates and cups were used to avoid washing problems. Ice

was unavailable and lack of stops for exercise began to wear upon the men. At last there was some excitement, next stop San Francisco!

It was the night of 28 October that they off loaded and proceeded to Fort Mason for an immediate medical checkup and then to their quarters. The next morning, they all boarded small boats that ferried them across to Angel

Island to Fort McDowell, where they stayed until the morning of 1 November. At this time, they returned to San Francisco to board their ship destined for Hawaii. Eleven men of the 48th remained stateside for various reasons including one man who was found to have a spot on his lung and was kept back and another with a serious knee injury received in a bar fight. Also at this time 1st Lt. Theodore C. Bigger was promoted to the rank of Captain as Executive Officer of the 48th.

The President Coolidge, one of the most luxurious passenger ships in the world, had a government contract to serve as a troop ship. She was 654 feet in length with an 81-ft. beam, a 34-ft. draft and weighed in at 21,636 tons. On board with the 48th Materiel Squadron would be the other squadrons of the 27th Bomb Group; the 16th Bomb Squadron, 17th Bomb Squadron, 91st Bomb Squadron, and Headquarters Squadron, plus the 454 Ordnance Squadron, and a chemical detachment. Also on board would be the following units: 5th Air Base Group and the 21st and 34th Pursuit Squadrons. All officers and the first three graders had their own cabins, mainly on A-Deck. The President Coolidge started sailing out of San Francisco Bay at 0030 hours on 1 November 1941. It was a beautiful sight as she sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge and out into the open sea, a sea of unknown destiny. Everyone adapted well and the ever familiar card games resumed. There were ways to find "booze" on board although this was against regulations. Many plans were made for Hawaii if shore leaves were to be given. The food on board the Coolidge was great and everyone took advantage of the many different choices available. There were four men per table with their own waiter. Never had or would the men of the 48th live as luxuriously as they did on board the Coolidge. During the day, there were few details such as K.P. and other odd jobs, but the men finally got time to catch up on letter writing, etc.

No escort ships were placed near the Coolidge but plans were made to have them waiting in Hawaii, although large American flags were painted on the sides of the ship. After an uneventful 2,091 miles, the Hawaiian Islands came into view. The Coolidge arrived in Honolulu at 0600 hours on 6 November and the men were given shore leave from 0700 until 1400 hours. Time was short and there was a rush to the bar rooms, tours, beaches and some visited our fleet at Pearl Harbor just a month before it's "Day of Infamy". Staff Sgts. Harold E. "BUZZ" Bryant, Samuel T. Derryberry, Crayton Burns and 1st. Sgt. Charles Fuhrman hired a car which drove them around the island and to the top of Mt. Poli and then to the beaches of Waikiki.

At 1400 hours, all were back on board in various states of condition. By 1600 hours the Coolidge was on her way headed for the Philippine Islands. In Washington D.C. negotiations with the Japanese were not going well at all. This leg of the journey would be different, being in more

hostile waters. A sea escort for the Coolidge was necessary and blackout regulations were to be enforced. The flotilla now consisted of the president Coolidge, the Army Transport Hugh L. Scott, and the heavy cruiser U.S.S. Louisville. Adequate protection was needed at such an uncertain time in history.

On Sunday night, the 180th meridian was crossed and they lost a day in time. The days wore on and there were lifeboat and fire drills. Planned and advertised boxing matches and concerts were held composed of men from all the squadrons. It was during one of the boxing matches that an incident happened where an unidentified ship was sighted. The Louisville signaled the Coolidge who reduced speed and allowed the Scott to come abreast of the passenger liner. The Scott was carrying the 192nd National Guard Tank Battalion with M-3 light tanks on board. The Louisville with turrets turning, then resumed full speed across the stern of the Coolidge and to the south to investigate. German raiders were the talk of the times but the Louisville soon identified the ship and its destination and everything was back to normal. The following is an excerpt from the deck log of the Louisville, "1540 Sighted ship bearing 202 (degrees) T & G., distance about 12 miles.

1540 Commenced maneuvering on various courses and at various speeds while investigating vessel, identified as M.S. TALISMAN of the Wilhensesen line, Norwegian registry". Sabotage was always possible with the movement of ships, trains, etc. and the Coolidge was no exception. Being a heavy reinforcement for the Philippines, the Coolidge was a prime target. Some secret materiel on board had been broken into and certain high graders or men with German names were investigated. Finally, a German steward from B-Deck was cornered for asking too many questions relating to group movements and pro-Nazi conversation.

After days at sea the island of Guam was finally reached and the flotilla remained in port there for twelve hours. The Scott took on water and the Louisville launched her two reconnaissance planes for added protection. No shore leave was available and the island itself was shrouded in fog. At 1400 hours, the ships departed for Manila. The men at this state were getting restless and had great interest in where they were going. Although they were never informed officially, most were certain the Philippine Islands were their destination. The payroll was being readied at this time so that the men would have spending money on their arrival.

It was Wednesday morning, 20 November, and the first glimpse of the, Philippine Islands was sighted. Island after island was passed as the ships sailed through the straits some 200 miles south of Manila. At one point the Coolidge had to swerve hard to starboard to keep from running down a small sailboat. One can only wonder how many Japanese spy boats were sailing the waters disguised as Philippine fishermen. Finally, the bastion of the orient was sighted, Corregidor, the old fortress guarding the entrance to Manila Bay.

As Manila came in sight the men became very excited and each squadron was trying to organize itself for off-loading at Pier 7. After three hours of offloading procedures the men were disembarked off the Coolidge as a Philippine military band was playing patriotic music. Trucks

were lined up waiting to transport the men to Fort McKinley. The Coolidge was the last desperately needed reinforcement for General McArthur.

But would McArthur receive enough in time Troops in the Philippine Islands had already been on alert. stories of spies prevailed everywhere. "Watch your mouth especially in the night clubs" as the word of the day to the men.

Through the gates of Ft. McKinley went the 48th, tired and weary and glad to have their feet on the ground. It was tent city again for the enlisted men located on Range A. Orders were to stay at Fort McKinley until the planes of the 27th arrived. The 48th Materiel stored its equipment at nearby Nichols Field, the main fighter air base in the Philippine Islands. The long awaited off duty hours finally carne and the men frequented such places as the Santa Ana Cabaret, Casa Manana, the Manila Hotel and many others. Private Walter Stefanski of Providence, Rhode Island stated, "I was lucky, I 'had two bucks after the trip on the Coolidge. So, I got in a Black Jack game and won 100 pesos, that was 50 bucks in those days and a lot of money to me. Me and my buddy PFC Charles Buchanan went to Manila twice on it". Some of the men bought Christmas gifts for their families and others were just sampling what the Philippines had to offer.

The first few days were spent organizing and performing regular squadron duties. Various squadron baseball teams were formed to provide recreation. As December came, there were more alerts and growing tensions. Sgt. Louis Kolger states, "About a week before the war broke out we carne back from seeing the movie 'Sergeant York' and were told that we were going on alert and to report to the supply tent. Arriving at the supply tent Sgt. Wiley was issuing ammunition for .45 and .30 caliber weapons, helmets, gas masks and other field gear".

Rumors were that plans were in the making to move to an airfield at San Marcelino about 17 miles north of Subic Bay and above the Bataan Peninsula. This was a remote area and only crude barracks and facilities were available. War was on the horizon and still no A-24's had arrived for the 27th Bomb Group. The 52 A-24's were on board the S.S. Meigs which was part of the Pensacola convoy. The convoy consisted of five other ships escorted by the heavy cruiser U.S.S. Pensacola. The other vessels carried 18 P-40 fighters, 340 trucks and jeeps, 48 75mm guns, 600 tons of bombs, 3 1/2 million rounds of ammo, 9,000 drums of fuel and 4,600 men. Later, this convoy was diverted to Australia from near the Fiji Islands due to the opening hostilities of the Japanese in the Philippines. The U.S.S. Meigs was later sunk in Darwin Harbor by Jap bombers. Her planes were already delivered and being used in Java.

It was around 0300 hours, Monday morning 8 December 1941 that news was pouring in that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. Some believed it; some didn't. Private Edward Sheehan said, "I was on guard duty that night and someone said Pearl Harbor was bombed. I went and woke up S/Sgt. John I. Brown. Sgt. Brown told me, 'Sheehan you son of a bitch, it better be good or I am going to kill you'. It was then that Private George V. Marquez and few buddies returning to camp were told that a war was on. But these rumors were everywhere.

Just as Pvt. Marquez got in his bunk a sergeant came by yelling for everyone to fall in. From this point on for the next three and one-half years' things would not be the same.

Before daylight came preparations were made to move the squadron into a wooded area which would provide better protection than the vulnerable tent city. Men were immediately put to work filling sandbags near the tent areas and digging foxholes. Some men were sent to Nichols Field to help set up defenses and to disperse equipment. At 1215 hours, the Japanese struck all the major fields in the Philippines. Nine hours and 20 minutes after McArthur heard of Pearl Harbor's misfortunes. Nine hours and 20 minutes that General Brereton, Commander of the Far East Air Force, practically begged McArthur for a strike against Formosa from where the Japanese aircraft would come. It was Pearl Harbor all over again. There was no air support for it was burning at Nichols, Iba; and Clark. When that Air Force was destroyed, the hopes of victory were gone. It was just how long the Americans and philippinos could hold out. Luckily the 48th's equipment at Nichols was not hit, but tent city was. Strafing by Japanese fighters row by row, the men sought cover in a deep ravine near camp and fought back as best they could. The heavy 20 mm cannon fire of the Zero fighters was tearing into everything.

One fighter even dropped his empty fuel tank which bounced through the squadron area. Sgt. Louis Kolger said, "the Jap dropped his empty fuel tank between tent city and the mess hall. No one would go near it because they thought it was a bomb. After the raid, we had to take gas out of it and sent it off for evaluation". private Stan D. Durgin of Paris, Maine stated that, "at the height of the strafing, Lt. Milton Geismann, an officer of the 48th, jumped up with his movie camera and filmed part of the attack"; a daring move and priceless film that still lies buried in the Philippines. private George V. Marquez from New Orleans could not help but take pot shots with his Springfield at the huge formation of Japanese bombers as they flew overhead unopposed. private Kenneth Calvit said, "The raid had just ended and along came an American O-52 Observation plane. pretty soon Philipinos and Americans opened up with everything they had. I would see the fabric flying off the plane and soon the pilot bailed out. I can remember it was a red parachute. Of course, he was dead before he hit the ground".

General McArthur's first plan of action was to stop the Japanese on the beaches but there were many landing points and this meant spreading his forces very thinly. On 22 December 1941 the Japanese landed at Linguyan Gulf and were driving forward even though it was a slow and costly movement for them. For McArthur's forces to move around without air cover and being strafed repeatedly by enemy aircraft, it would be impossible to hold on. While this delaying action was being fought McArthur changed his theory of beach defense and ordered his secondary plan into action called War Plan Orange. This plan was to defend the peninsula of Bataan in conjunction with the island fortress of Corregidor and deny the Japanese the use of Manila Bay for as long as possible. General Homma, Commander of the Japanese forces in the Philippines, was given one month to conquer the Philippines. Little did he know it would take five months of brutal fighting with heavy losses to his own forces.

Between 17 December and the evacuation to Bataan on the 25th, many details were sent from the 48th. The first and largest was a detachment of 52 men under the command of 1st Lt.

Warren C. Baggett to be sent by ship to San Jose, Mindoro. The second was number of men commanded by 1st Lt. Pope L. Brown sent to distributing points at the auxiliary airfield at Tanuan. This detail reported back to the squadron about 29 December, 1941. The third detail was sent to the Philippine Air Depot under command of 2nd Lt. Leon Williams. The fourth detail was sent to the Philippine Ordnance Depot under command of Staff Sgt. Malcolm Crowe and Corporal William J. Allen. The fifth detail was sent to the 21st Pursuit Squadron commanded by staff Sgt. John R. Simpson with nine other men from the 48th. The sixth and last was a mess detail sent to La Salle College under command of Lt. R. O. Bennett. This detail reported back to the squadron before the evacuation to Bataan.

The 48th as well as the 27th Bomb Group, unable to work in their usual field, were given numerous and difficult duties which was part of the successful evacuation to the Bataan Peninsula.

A special note to men of Lt. Leon Williams' detail working with Colonel Fellows of the Philippine Air Depot: these men of the 48th and other units successfully moved from Nichols Field many valuable parts for the P-40s and stored them in the Santa Ana Cabaret, a large dance hall and night club in Quezon City. Four P-40s were put together there and flown off the streets of Manila to Bataan. Even when orders were to leave, this band of men moved complete engines and other valuable equipment across the Bay on the steamer Dos Hermanos. Without the hard work and dedication of this group the remaining P-40s on Bataan would never have survived as long as they did.

Another dedicated group of the 48th was Staff Sgt. Simpson's detail mentioned above. This detail consisted of Staff Sgt. Simpson; Sgt. Lloyd J. Daudson, an excellent stenotype operator; Pfc Charles C. Buchanan; Pfc William J. Edmondson; and Privates Dominic Giantonio; George Piccirillo; Walter Stefanski; James Courtney; William Whit~; James E. Holcomb—all of these under the command of a Lt. Braswell of the 21st Pursuit Squadron. These men served with the 21st Pursuit Squadron at the first air field that was set up by the army engineers near the town of Lubao south of San Fernando. Christmas day was spent here and the men enjoyed their last good meal for the next three and one half years. The 21st pursuit Detachment stayed and serviced this field until the Japanese had pushed down from Lingayen Gulf to within two miles of the field. They then evacuated along with the rest of the army into Bataan.

With the Mindoro detachment gone, the remainder of the 48th Materiel was ordered to evacuate to Bataan peninsula. It was Christmas day and there was a fortunate lull in the air attacks. This lull would last for a couple of days. Manila was burning; Cavite Naval Base was a total loss. The air bases were in shambles. The order of the day was to report to the docks carrying just the bare necessities. Every available ship was transporting troops and materiel across Manila Bay to Mariveles and other points along the eastern shore of the Bataan peninsula. The 48th, had different orders. They were to take any trucks they could find, load them with necessary equipment and drive around the bay to Bataan. Food, medicine, clothing, boots, booze and anything of value was crammed into the backs of the trucks. Their personal

gear was also loaded including footlockers containing extra clothing which would come in handy later during the siege.

The truck convoy traveled along the crowded highway leading across the Calumpit Bridge. They proceeded south barely missing the Japanese forces moving down from Lingayen Gulf. Some men of the Squadron did go to Bataan by ship. Pvt Erwin Johnson, "About 15 of us with just a duffle bag each boarded a vessel. This was Christmas Day". Manila was now declared an open city and the men of the 48th barely had a chance to enjoy its offerings. The time had come to take a stand and it would be a stand that would never be forgotten.

MINDORO DETACHMENT

With war raging all over Luzon, high command quickly made a chain of airfields south to Australia. One of these airfields had to be able to provide refueling, maintenance and armament for all aircraft from the fighters to the B-17 Bombers. Orders came to Fort McKinley in Manila for an all-volunteer detachment of 52 men of the 48th Materiel Squadron to service this field. Time was not wasted and the volunteers were there. Those chosen were armorers, mechanics of every type, medics and cooks. Lt. Warren C. Baggett was in command of the entire detachment and Sgt. Louis Kolger became his 1st Sgt. Weapons were a high priority for men on Luzon as only thirty '03 Springfield and some 45 Cal. pistols were brought along: no machine guns, grenades nor other weapons needed for an airstrip defense. What transportation awaited them was uncertain but it had to be done under the cover of darkness because of enemy air superiority. Tools, food, armaments and barrels of aviation fuel were brought to the docks on a sight to behold the 'Palawan', an old inter-island steamer totally vulnerable if detected by Japanese aircraft.

On 13 December, the Palawan, loaded to capacity, started out across Manila Bay going through appropriate clearance signals with Corregidor. Arriving at Corregidor a guide had to be used to direct the ship through the huge network of sea mines guarding the entrance to the harbor. Suddenly, and to the surprise of everyone, a submarine surfaced next to the Palawan. For a while the men of the 48th were not sure which navy it belonged to but shortly it identified itself as friendly and went on its way. It being one of the 29 subs of the Asiatic Fleet, it was definitely a relief to a group of men armed only with rifles and pistols. The Palawan had gone through the Verde Island Passage and continued on the northern side of Mindoro to the Tablas Strait and then south to the southeast corner of Mindoro. During the journey a Jap two engine float plane came in as if to bomb the Palawan. Straw hats were on hand and many of the men suddenly were acting out the role of Filipino fishermen. The plane looked them over good and to everyone's amazement continued on its way.

Another incident was off Tablas where the Palawan received some ineffectual machine gun fire from shore. It was a miracle no fuel was hit as this would have ended the expedition. The only harm done was the breaking up of a good black jack game on the fantail; the players going for cover and leaving the money to the mercy of the winds. They finally arrived at San Jose, a small village based around a Philippine sugar plantation, near the airfield. The village boasted a commissary, bowling alley and an alcohol distillery where 200,000 gallons of alcohol were

stored. But now the primary objective had to be accomplished and that was to establish the airfield and be ready. The fuel on the palawan was off-loaded, put on the cars of a narrow-gauge locomotive and carefully camouflaged with sugar cane. The rest of the fuel was to be part of a most unique airfield. As a means to stop the Japanese from landing troops on the airfield, the men placed hundreds of drums of fuel in a scattered pattern all over the field leaving empty ones in the center. When needed, the empty drums were kicked away forming a runway so the aircraft could land, be serviced and continue its mission. This was a crude but effective method of defense of an airfield.

At one end of the field the men began, as best they could, to dig foxholes, set up sleeping quarters, a command post and mess facilities. The men were camped in ravines in groups of four or so along the length of the runway so the empty barrels could be quickly moved at one time. Also, coke bottles with kerosene were used for lighting the runway for nighttime operations.

Guard, wood, and food details were always active. Procurement of food was a problem, but thanks to Pvt Carl N. Comeaux, detachment cook, food was always available through the help of the Philipinos and other means. Staff Sgt. Louis Kolger, "Comeaux would go out early in the morning and would come back with enough eggs for 52 men. He worked like a dog to feed the men".

The airfield, now established, was composed of two strips on ridges crossing each other in a most natural and unique fashion. The strips were long enough for the large B-17 bombers of the 19th Bomb Group. A radio operator from Headquarters Squadron with a radio was flown from Luzon to San Jose. Sgt Louis Kolger, "I remember this plane. It was an old Waco, painted black with orange stripes on it". San Jose was not a busy airfield but an eager one and finally her services were needed. One of the first planes to be serviced was a B-17 piloted by a Lt. Edward C. Teats, 14th Squadron of the 19th Bomb Group, which landed at San Jose on 24 December, 1941.

This plane was part of a four-plane raid that left Del Monte airfield on Mindanao in a predawn raid on the Jap invasion fleet at Lingayen Gulf. After many hair-raising experiences with flak and Jap fighters, Lt. Teats plane became separated and after the attack had no way of landing at pre-planned San Marcelino, for Jap fighters were in sight. The other bombers made a quick return to the south to a small Dutch airbase at Ambon on southern Moluccas. With fuel dangerously low, Lt. Teats' lumbering B-17 had to try San Jose airfield where eager men were waiting to pump precious fuel into her tanks. As the B-17 landed the men of the 48th believed her to be part of the expected reinforcements but they soon realized it was one of few surviving bombers from Del Monte. Very quickly the big bomber was serviced and put on her way where Lt. Teats joined the other bombers at Ambon.

P-40s on patrol from Bataan at times landed at San Jose and were quickly serviced. During one incident on 19 January, 1942 three P-40s, one with engine trouble, buzzed San Jose and were

greeted by the men of the 48th waving and clearing fuel drums from the runway. The fighters landed, were serviced and readied for their flight back to Bataan.

On 3 February three P-40s made a reconnaissance flight from Bataan to unmanned Waterous Field on the northern end of Mindoro to determine if the Japanese had captured the field. The three pilots were Lt. David L. Obert, Lt. Wollery, and Lt. Hall of the 17th Pursuit Squadron. Finding the field secure, they flew to San Jose. After landing and being refueled they obtained several 100 pound sacks of sugar which they stored in the P-40s to bring back to the men on Bataan. On the return flight Wollery and Hall made an attack on the Japanese near Bataan. For unknown reasons the two aircraft were engaged in a disastrous mid-air collision and both pilots were killed. This was a serious loss to the remnants of the Far East Air Force. In other unrelated incidents at San Jose Field a Philippine pilot landed an old P-26 and had his machine guns resynchronized by Pvt. Donald Lucas. Again, the skill of the 48th Materiel Squadron was shown and the daring Filipino pilot in his obsolete fighter was back in the air to fight as best he could.

Pilot Jay Harrelson flying a PT-13 bi-plane trainer landed at San Jose and took on fuel. He stated, "It was a two-seater aircraft. On the trip back to Bataan I sat in the rear seat and the front was filled with sugar and some of that distilled alcohol". On one other occasion a B-17 landed and men like Pvt. Calvin Hogg using hand pumps for refueling had a long, hard job to refuel the huge tanks of the B-17 fortress. As the days wore on fewer planes came and the lookout for Japanese landing craft was always a top priority. During leisure time the usual Blackjack games continued. Some of the familiar players were Pvts. George Marquez, Holly "Sunshine" Hendrickson, Morris McGehee, and Staff Sgt. Sam Derryberry. Cpl. Leroy Keinert seemed to be the unit photographer and with his camera he probably never realized he was taking the only pictures of his rugged little detachment.

If there was laughter to be heard there was a good chance it was the kidding around of Pvts. Alfred Boccuzzi and Frank Valenzano, two good reliable airmen trying to keep the spirits up. Master Sgt. Roy Wilfon worked very hard to insure the success of the mission as well as Staff Sgt. Louis Kolger.

At San Jose Airfield, a plan was made to establish a secondary camp up in the hills to the north. This plan was made in case a sudden arrival of Japanese troops. Around 5 March this evacuation became necessary as the Japanese did arrive and a quick and daring move was made.

Before evacuation a necessary task was accomplished. The 200,000 gallons of distilled alcohol was drained from the storage tanks and all tools and valuable equipment were buried to prevent capture. Pvts. Marquez and McGeehee acquired a Caraboa including a sled in which they loaded the radio, rice and .30 cal. ammunition. The detachment moved out to the north in small groups with the caraboa sled in the rear. Three fuel drums were also brought along. Two drums contained gas and oil to operate the generator for the radio and the third drum contained rations and ammunition. Pvt. George Marquez: "As we went along we found

equipment which some of the men had discarded ahead of us. Some of this was bandoleers of .30 cal. ammunition which we quickly stored on the sled."

As the detachment finally moved away from San Jose, PFC William Hammons, known to everyone as Shorty, positioned himself looking down on the airfield. with grim determination and plenty of tracer ammunition Shorty began methodically firing at the fuel barrels, exploding one after the other. He then turned his '03 Springfield on the fuel that was stored on the train sending it up in a roar of flames, leaving nothing for the Japanese to use in their occupation of San Jose. When the secondary camp was finally reached guards were immediately posted and the camp was improved as best as could be expected.

About a month and a half was spent at this camp and forays were made back to the airfield area to see what the Japanese were up to. At this camp food became very scarce; only a little rice and brown sugar remained so plans had to be made. One faithful and energetic Filipino named Tigre Cantada was a guide and a man who knew the jungles. He knew where wild caraboa were plentiful and after a few hunts they bagged a cow. Once again meat was available and Pvt. Comeaux was busy preparing food for the men. Besides food, the men procured tobacco from patches of tobacco gardens that the natives grew on the hill sides. Some distilled alcohol was brought along but one jug was broken as its carrier stumbled and fell one day.

On 5 Maya message was received on the radio which shocked everyone. The message said: "This is Corregidor. We are surrendering. You are on your own. God bless you." Then only static was to be heard. The next three days were spent faithfully waiting to hear another message in hopes of instructions or orders but nothing was ever to be heard. Efforts were even made to raise San Francisco trying to let someone know their situation. But staying on the radio could prove dangerous for the Japanese were always trying to pinpoint enemy radio transmissions.

Japanese troops would eventually come into the hills after them. With the approach of the rainy season when hundreds of jungle streams would become impassable a move had to be made. A decision was made to move north to the coastal town of Bularocou. The Mansalay area was reached instead of Bularocou and outrigger boats were obtained from the Philipinos.

Plans were made to head south in hopes of finding other friendly forces possible on Mindanao or Cebu. It was night; a storm was raging and out across the sea went the 52 strong towards the island of Tablas. The island of Tablas was reached in spite of the storm, the shark infested waters and the Japanese naval vessels.

Some food and water was obtained at Tablas but the journey continued south to the island of Panay. The boats were crowded and some men had to ride on the extended outriggers of these boats. Sickness was starting to set in. During the journey the wind came to abrupt halt. Not a sound was to be heard and the sea looked like glass. The Philipinos to everyone's surprise started whistling and asked everyone to do so. According to their beliefs whistling brought on the wind and eventually the wind did come. The island of Panay was finally reached where an airfield was found at Berranga. Then they sailed a few miles farther to the town of

pandan. At one point smoke could be seen where the Japanese had burned out some other barrio. There were discussions whether to go to the hills of panay or to continue on to a more remote area. A decision was made to sail west to the island of Cuyo which was part of the palawan islands. Leaving Pandan a voyage of 83 miles was traveled until they reached the shores of Cuyo. The men had traveled from Mansalay to Cuyo in outrigger boats and the total distance traveled was about 175 miles.

One-hundred seventy-five miles of hot blazing days, rough seas and the ever constant danger of the enemy. After traveling many of the men had become sick. As the detachment landed, the people of Cuyo helped as much as they could and the sick were taken to a small hospital. 20 May was a day of decision as Japanese landing craft were spotted heading toward them. Cuyo was a small island and if the entire detachment went for the hills they would have been tracked down one at a time. Resistance was useless as the salt water had taken its toll on the Springfield. A quick decision was made that half of the more able bodied men would go for the hills and the sick would have to stay along with the others. Staff Sgt. Louis Kolger states, "I felt my duty was to stay with the men, especially the sick, since I was the first Sgt. of the detachment". As the Japanese Marines captured this group they were convinced they had them all. Pvt. George Marquez barely escaped by jumping out the hospital window. An estimate of 22 men escaped to the hills and 30 men surrendered. For the men who went to the hills it was more sacrifice. pfc George Lear was captured and killed in 1943 Cpl. Clayton Kronen died of malaria Pvt. Morris McGehee died of malaria and was buried on Brooks point, palawan by his close friend Pvt. Marquez; and Pvts. Boccuzzi and Valenzano drowned in the Sulu Sea attempting to cross to another island. The men who survived numbered about eleven. Survival was not possible without the help of the people of Cuyo who hid them from the enemy, fed them and taught them the ways of the islands. One of these was a girl named Remy who later became the wife of Pvt. Calvin Hogg.

The savior of many of the men were the submarines which, through intricate communication, were able to rendezvous at a pickup point to bring them to safety. Pvt. Torn Leblanc of Morganza, Louisiana was one of these men who was rescued by submarine. The submariners made sure these men were given the best of treatment. Master Sgt. Roy Wilfon was not so lucky for after he was rescued, the submarine which picked him up was sunk.

The Mindoro detachment completed its mission as ordered to the end. Under trying conditions they proved, through hard work and dedication, that a small group can be most effective. Many grounded pilots and important personnel were flown out of Bataan through San Jose and on to Australia to be given new assignments to help stem the Japanese onslaught. This detachment upheld the spirit of the 48th Materiel Squadron as did the rest of the American and Philippino armed forces fighting in such desperate times.

Bataan peninsula is roughly 30 miles long by 20 miles wide bordered on the East by Manila Bay and on the West by the South China Sea. More than 100,000 troops crowded onto Bataan-- 80,000 American and Philippino troops and 26,000 civilians: 106,000 people crowded into a dense jungle peninsula.

All air corps units which no longer could work in their capacity were officially changed to Air Corps Provisional Infantry Regiments. The 48th Materiel became part of the 2nd Battalion of the 2nd Air Corps Regiment which in turn was part of the 2nd Corps under command of Major General George Parker. The 48th along with other squadrons were trying to get organized as best they could. Some training was given on weapons and infantry tactics. On 31 December Captain Byrne and 2nd Lt. Broulliard drove back to Manila by staff car as Japanese troops were closing in on the east side of the city. On their return trip they discovered that a small force of Japanese bicycle troops had cut off their return route. stepping out of the car and coming under fire, Lt. Broulliard was hit and killed. Captain Byrne barely escaped with his life by driving around the blockade and made it back to the squadron. Lt. Broulliard was the first casualty of the squadron in the Philippines.

On 5 January, 1942 the squadron moved to KM 166 under orders of Col. Laughinghouse. On 8 January orders were to form a secondary defense line called the Orion-Bagac Line. The entire Battalion marched westerly toward Mt. Samat and halted near the Barrio Catassen. From here they turned north and marched another 1,000 yards to the defensive position that was chosen.

The 2nd Battalion was in line with the 48th Materiel Squadron on the West boundary; it's left flank next to the 32nd Philippine Regiment. To the right of the 48th in order was the 91st Bomb Squadron, the Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron. A 300 yard gap was left for the 16th Bomb Squadron which stayed at Bataan Airfield. This gap was later filled .by the 2nd Observation Squadron. The last position was held by the 17th Bomb Squadron. All of these composed the 2nd Battalion which butted against to its right the 1st Battalion. Both Battalions held the area called Sub-Sector B. Total frontage of both Battalions was about 3,000 yards.

On 20 January, 1942 the Provisional Regiment moved out to the first line of defense and halted near Puerto Rivas, The 2nd Battalion formed a column of twos and moved westward up to Mt. Natib. At daylight, fortifications were constructed on Guital Ridge overlooking the confluence of the Abo Abo and Modica Rivers. This first line of defense was known as the Moron-Abucay Line. There was firing here, but it was mainly Japanese diversionary tactics. On 26 January due to a breakthrough on another part of the Moron-Abucay Line, the 2nd Battalion withdrew to its original position on the Orion-Bagac Line which was reached at nightfall. This would be their position for the next two and one-half months.

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The 'Out Post Line of Resistance' (OPLR) was anywhere from 1,000 to 2,000 yards in front of the 'Main Line of Resistance' (MLR). To the rear of the MLR at a distance of 100 yards was the Orion-Bagac cut-off road. A short distance away on a high piece of ground was the squadron Command Post. Five-thousand yards behind the MLR was an uncompleted and unmanned regimental reserve line. The MLR was a strong position and had good fields of fire. The weak point would be the left flank if the Japanese were to take Mt. Samat.

WEAPONS

The 48th Squadron may have been armed before the rest of the 27th Bomb Group. A good portion of the 27th was armed with short stocked M1917 Enfield rifles designed for Philippine troops. It appears that the 48th was basically armed with M1903 Springfield .30 Caliber rifle. There was one Browning automatic rifle issued and at least two .30 Caliber Air Corps type machine guns. The Air Corps machine guns were taken from various aircraft and provided with improvised ground mounts. Some of the mounts were possibly made by the crew of the Submarine Tender USS Canopus. All officers and a good many enlisted men had Colt automatic pistols, Caliber .45. Bayonets were scarce and there were no anti-tank weapons nor land mines.

Thirty caliber ammunition was issued in bandoleers that could easily be slung over one's shoulder. Grenades were issued but many were found to be unreliable due to age and being improperly stored. The 48th was given up-to-date equipment before departure from the states. Brand new M1 Garand rifles, still in crates, were brought over on the Coolidge. These rifles were off-loaded at Pier 7 to be issued later. According to Sgt. Louis Kolger, the rifles were acquired through unscrupulous means by the 4th Marines who later used them in the defense of Corregidor. Pvt. Albert Katool said, "I know that Sgt. Lucas and myself each had a M-1 Garand rifle. I got mine from Nichols Field during a strafing attack".

The uniforms worn by the 48th on the front lines would vary. Footgear and most leather goods were prone to deteriorate rapidly from tropical humidity. Steel helmets were rarely worn

except during attack due to the heat it produced and the noise it made in the brush. Coveralls were the Air Corps main work garment but were soon found to be a nuisance for field duty, especially when one had to relieve oneself. Many were cut at the waist and made into a two-piece uniform. But this usually left an exposed gap at the waistline, a temptation for mosquitoes and flies. Canvas leggings were worn by some but this proved to be too time consuming when putting them on and off. The uniform worn by most and that which seemed to be most useful was to wear no underwear, no socks, a shirt, trousers, field boots or oxfords and a baseball cap. The Philippine sun helmet was a luxury but due to air passing through the vents at the top, a whistling noise was created. This noise could prevent one from hearing an attacking aircraft--a situation which was becoming a way of life on Bataan.

Food was always on the top of the list. There was never enough. The men were fed twice a day--morning and evening. Rations were cut lower as the days went by. A typical ration would be a few ounces of boiled rice and some canned salmon or tomatoes. Any edible animal was fair game such as snakes, wild pigs and monkeys. In the rear, near the 'Rear Line of Resistance' (RLR), was Mess Officer 1st Lt. Melton B. Geissmann and pfc R.E. Lee, Jr. with the chow truck. They constantly tried to procure food through various ways for the men on the front using any method that they could get away with.

The Medical Officer of the 48th was 1st Lt. Joseph Ginsberg. Working under him were the Medics, privates Daniel E. Arnold, Odell Bullock, PFC Cecil Williams and privates Walter E. Martinat and Edward I. Wagner. Most squadron aid stations were in a bunkered area behind Regimental Headquarters. Malaria was becoming common among the troops and if found not to be severe the soldier was sent back to the front. If a wound or sickness was very serious he was usually transported on the mess truck back to a hospital. The medics also made sure that the drinking water was treated and issued quinine tablets if they were available. Intestinal disorders were common as were skin fungus, heat prostration, tropical ulcers and wounds from enemy fire. There was one regimental dentist from HQ and HQ Squadron, 1st Lt. Claude Daniels, who had more than enough patients as he also took care of mouth wounds.

The 48th Materiel Squadron was organized into three platoons. The First platoon was commanded by 1st Lt. R. O. Bennett; the Second Platoon by 1st Lt. pope L. Brown and 2nd Lt. Stanley Aaron; and the Third platoon by 1st Lt. A. A. Amron. These three platoons would operate in shifts--one day on the MLR, the next day on the OPLR and then back to the command post area to be held in reserve. Due to previous details, the Squadron's strength was probably down to around 130 men. Patrols became numerous and the airmen were catching on to the ways of the infantry very quickly. In fact, there were volunteers for these patrols because it was a way to acquire extra food. These patrols were small and ranged out into enemy territory and ranged behind the lines where Japanese infiltrators or patrols were also lurking. Capt. Bigger stated, "There was an enterprising Filipino that ran a store out beyond the lines and the Japanese and American patrols would patronize him". Pvt. Albert Katool, "Goods were brought across Manila Bay by the Philipinos to this store. They made me a cake one day and as we were leaving you could see a Jap patrol at a distance waiting their turn to trade".

Around 27 January, 1942 the Battle of Kapot on Trail 21 was raging. The 9th and 141st Japanese Infantry Regiments were attacking the Filipino units of Sector c. Some Japanese elements of this attack were encountering the 48th Materiel. As firing subsided, Regimental Headquarters sent out a patrol towards Sub-Sector C. On its way there it passed through the village of Catassen which was in the 48th's area. The patrol encountered Japanese infiltrators and managed to kill a few who were hiding under some nipa huts. Lt. Amron and two squads went to investigate this firing but arrived after the skirmish had ended. These Japanese were stragglers who had slipped in from Sector C. The next day this patrol returned by way of the front of the 48th. Capt. Mark Wholfeld shouted the password, "Lilliput" and was greeted by several shots from the 48th. Capt., Wholfeld ordered his patrol to take cover as the whole left flank of the 48th opened up with heavy fire that tore up the jungle around them. Finally, a whistle was blown and some profanity was heard and the firing ceased.

The password was given again and the answer, "Gulliver" was heard and the hedgehog guarding the trail was quickly removed. Capt. Bigger came out to see what was up and welcomed them back. Two trail guides were assigned to lead the patrol back to Regimental Headquarters. The Squadron's detail attached to the 21st Pursuit Squadron was now stationed near the west coast servicing the few remaining P-40s at an auxiliary field. The Japanese had made a landing by barges and had a foothold. A fierce battle was raging with heavy casualties and reinforcements were needed. Pvt. Dominic Giantonio stated, "We were told we had to go down to the beach and help mop up a few Japs".

This "mop-up" was an engagement called the Battle of Aglaloma and Quinauan Points. This encounter lasted from 19 January through 9 February. This was a costly battle and some 600 Japanese were killed with only one captured. Only after the use of naval launches from the 'Canopus' armed with 37mm anti-tank guns were the Japanese routed out of their caves on the rocky shores. The fanatical ways of the Japanese were being learned day by day. Still a good number of men were sent on various details from the front line. Cpl. Robert L. Baltzer was on detached duty with the 75th ordnance as a welder. "Red" was an energetic young man, an expert welder, and made a name for himself all over Bataan. He was liked by everyone and more than once welded vital equipment while under fire. Cpl. Baltzer also had a way of horse trading pistols, rifles or Japanese grenades made into cigarette lighters for cigarettes or food.

Pvt. Sam C. Johnson, a parachute rigger of the 48th, was sent to Bataan Field near Cabcaben to help support the few P-40s that were mainly used for reconnaissance. Pvt. Johnson states, "I've seen boys trying to keep the airfield level with caterpillars and as Jap fighters came into strafe, the men would dive under the machine. As soon as the fighters passed they would be back on working just as hard as before". Pvt. Johnson did excellent work and as the last P-40s were eventually lost, he was sent back to the Squadron on the front lines.

It was February and rumors were everywhere--"Help is on the way". Thousands of men and hundreds of planes were anticipated. The men of Bataan were optimistic even though their backs were to the wall. They would have to fight and hold on as long as possible. Holding on was becoming an instinct and holding on they were, but for how much longer no one could say.

In the trenches were men who no longer needed training. They had plenty of on-the-job training. Learning to survive was common place.

Manning the B.A.R. was Corpl. Charles Houston. pfc Stanley Durgin, pvts. Leon Gray, Albert Katool, and Elbert T. Hampton were doing their duty as best they could. Master Sgt. Marcel Remy, who joined the Air Corps in 1921, knew how to lead men and keep them going. He proved to be a great asset in the defense of the Squadron.

About this time there was a constant threat from dive bombers and artillery fire. Pfc Stanley Durgin, "During an attack I dove for cover. When I reached up for my Springfield; I found it to be blown in half". In one attack, two bombs landed on either side of the Command Post but did no damage except for, shrapnel tearing into the lister bag and draining the water. Aircraft were not as lethal as artillery fire and the men learned to distinguish whether a shell was coming into the area of or not. Capt. Bigger states, "Japanese artillery would fire a barrage every evening about chow time as the mess truck would come in stirring up dust, and you didn't have to be much of a spotter to indicate where the truck stopped". The trucks were parked between large bamboo thickets which provided excellent protection from the shells. A shell came in one day at chow time and thanks to a large mango tree, one man was saved as he rolled behind it just in time. March brought on a strange silence. The lull had come because General Homma, commander of Japanese forces, needed more men. He was allotted 57,000 men but it was not enough. The "Battling Bastards" of Bataan were taking their toll of the enemy.

On 26 February, 1942 Regimental Headquarters sent orders for Lt. Arthur A. Amron of the 48th to lead a 20 man patrol consisting of men from all squadrons. Their objective was to scout the area around the church at the town of Balanga which was used as an artillery observation post. Equipped with '03 Springfield rifles, most without slings, and unreliable grenades, the patrol left under the cover of darkness. After traveling 6 Km beyond the OPLR the patrol arrived at Barrio Cupong. Barrio Cupong had already been destroyed but Lt. Amron checked the area to insure a safe route of withdrawal if needed. Balanga church was in sight and Japanese equipment could be seen on the steps outside. Leaving the patrol as a covering force, Lt. Amron and staff Sgt. Marshall entered the building. Once in the church on the first floor they killed two Japanese soldiers with rifle fire. Immediately, hostile relief fire could be heard outside.

On the way out Lt. Amron decided to search one of the cloakrooms. As he kicked in the door he was met with machine gun fire. Critically wounded he staggered and fell and was dragged outside the church and propped up against the wall. Sgt. Marshall returned inside and threw grenades into the room killing the enemy within. Other men of the patrol came running up to help Lt. Amron to safety. Thinking of the situation and the safety of the men, he cried out, "Damn it! Get the men the hell out of here. I can't make it". Lt. Amron died while he was being carried and due to the heavy action his body had to be left behind.

His body was abandoned and never recovered. Due to increased Japanese resistance, the patrol had no choice but to withdraw back to the OPLR. Great courage and sacrifice was shown here by all the men. After the war, on April 17th, 1948, Lt. Arthur A. Amron was posthumously

awarded the Silver star. Lt. Amron came from a wealthy family of Rockaway, New York. It has also been said that he had half interest in the Jack Dempsey Cafe. After the death of Lt. Amron the 3rd Platoon was then commanded by the Mess officer, Lt. Milton B. Geissmann.

Unrelated to the Amron Patrol one night, probably in March, Lt. Brown was injured by tripping and falling into a trench. His platoon was taken over by Sgt. Stanley Aaron. On 6 April, 1942 Capt. Byrne was ordered back to the hospital area and Capt. Theodore Bigger became Squadron Commander.

It was on 3 April that General Homma with fresh troops again planned an all-out offensive. His target was the high ground of Mt. Samat. There was heavy shelling and bombing of the Philippine units in front of Mt. Samat and the situation was becoming critical. The men were totally exhausted from lack of food and sleep. Sickness was rampant.

On 6 April Regimental Headquarters sent word by field phone that the Japanese were close on the 48th's left front and to be prepared for an attack. preparing for a breakthrough on the 32nd Regiment's left, Capt. Bigger pulled the OPLR back to the south side of the San Vicente River about 150 yards in front of the MLR. That night Capt. Bigger and the three platoon leaders discussed the situation and made a plan of defense. It was agreed, on orders, to pull the OPLR back to the command post area and down the hill to a dry stream bed and deploy the men facing west. The platoon already in reserve would take the center between the dry stream and the MLR and would also face west. The MLR platoon would remain in place straddling the road to Orion.

The 48th Materiel Squadron was the apex of a short-lived line called the San Vicente Line made up of other units that had been broken through on Mt. Samat. The Japanese by 6 April had taken Mt. Samat and were facing a new Philippine/American line of resistance. opposing the 32nd Philippine Regiment and eventually the 48th Materiel would be regiments of the Nagano Detachment under command of Major General Kamerchiro Nagano. The Japanese regiments were possibly the 32nd and 83rd Infantry Regiments of the Nagano Detachment.

At daybreak on 7 April at 0600 hours, explosions of mortar rounds were heard in the 32nd Philippine area. Everyone took his position and captain Bigger sent runners to each platoon to initiate the plan made the night before. Captain Bigger states, "We could hear the Banzai yell and the return fire of the Philipinos". A wounded American advisor from the 32nd was brought through the command post area carried by a Filipino stretcher crew. They were headed for an aid station.

A strong line was formed extending for about 400 yards. Heavy underbrush was in front of the Squadron and the Japanese could be heard but not seen. At about 1000 hours, Regimental Headquarters called all squadrons with a plan to pull back. All squadrons started to the Regimental Reserve Line (RRL) with the 48th as a rear guard. Fighting started before the Squadron moved out and there was heavy fire from Japanese small arms and knee mortars. The fire from the 48th did stop the Japanese advance temporarily. During the knee mortar attack

Staff Sergeant Emanuel Lefkowitz was seriously wounded and later died at one of the aid stations. Another good man from the 48th was lost.

As the squadrons moved out with the 48th in the rear, men would discard unnecessary equipment which gave the Japanese an easy trail to follow. The 48th was now the strength of the Regiment. If the Squadron could not hold, the rest were doomed. The author's own personal feeling is that this swinging movement that Captain Bigger had executed was a most important move for if the Japanese forces had continued they would have rolled up the entire Regimental line which would have been disastrous by preventing a well executed withdrawal.

When the Squadron reached the RRL it was learned that the rest of the Battalion was going towards Manila Bay. At the junction of Trail 38 and the RRL, the 48th formed a defensive line as a delaying action. Their last meal had been at noon the previous day and an attempt was made by Lt. Bennett to reach the kitchen area. He returned shortly and reported that Trail 38 had been cut off by the enemy.

By 1330 hours the Japanese could be seen down the trail and closing in. A group of Filipinos came by and were heading towards the Japanese with the appropriate propaganda papers needed to surrender. Captain Bigger talked to them for a while and convinced them to stay there that night. By morning they were nowhere to be found.

Orders were then received to move south along a newly constructed trail in a column of twos with five yards distance between men. Finally, the Regiment reached the Demalog Trail by late afternoon and raided a pineapple patch in the area. This gave some relief to the pains of hunger. At dusk the Squadron moved down the Demalog Trail towards the main highway at Manila Bay. Once the highway was reached an artesian well was found and all canteens were filled and the men moved out towards the town of Limay.

They closed ranks as Japanese observation planes flew overhead. Flares were dropped and orders were given to stop and not a move to be made until the flares had burned out. Captain Bigger says, "We saw planes with anti-aircraft search lights shining on them but no anti-aircraft shells were bursting around them. We wondered why, for these planes were sitting ducks."

As all retreating pushed on lines were confusion, the battle. Filipino and American troops were south, the Japanese relentlessly behind them. A series of defenses were made and eventually abandoned as sickness and hunger were winning. When the Squadron reached Limay orders were to go 3 KM south to the Alongan River. When they reached the river orders were given to countermarch back to Limay and once again reaching Limay, orders were to go back to the river. The Squadron reached the Alongan River about dawn where another line of resistance was to be made. Finally, some food was acquired which consisted of one cup of milk and one cup of rice "lugau" (mush) per man. Orders were to move 2,000 yards down the river and rest until further orders. Roll was called and another mess was issued that consisted of one can of tomatoes and one can of corned beef per five men. Orders were then received to move to a

new position. This meant traveling over some very rugged terrain with little cover and Japanese dive bombers overhead.

There was a discussion whether to cross the open ground or to stay under cover as much as possible. It was decided to cross open ground and in doing so enemy dive bombers made an attack. As incendiary bombs were dropped captain Bigger yelled for everybody to get down. The bombs exploded with great impact setting the grass on fire. Two men were killed from the 48th and two were wounded during this attack. Those killed were private Robert L. Brooks and private Walter E. Scofield. The two wounded were private John L. McIntyre and one other, name unknown. The two wounded men were taken back to the hospital by Lt. Geismann and Sgt. William K. Davis along with at least a platoon of men.

The dive bombers continued their pounding of this position and Regimental orders came to continue south. Darkness came and the squadrons became separated from one another. Through the knowledge of Lt. Bennett in the use of a compass a passage was made to Trail 20. Heavy fire was heard in the direction of Cabcaban and a decision was made to continue down Trail 20. Most of the night was spent marching through the jungle. The night of the 8th was a nightmare where exhausted hungry men continued, only to experience a severe earthquake which rocked the entire Bataan Peninsula adding to the confusion. At one place and further on a brilliant light could be seen where ammunition dumps were being blown and ships filled with Air Corps bombs were being destroyed. Time was running out for the men of Bataan.

On the morning of the 9th they ran into elements of the Philippine Scouts under Command of Lt. Colonel Granberry who informed the men that there was a surrender to take place at 1100 hours. Lt. Col. Granberry also said that the Japanese were in front and in the rear of the Squadron. The best thing to be done was to pull off the trail and let the Japanese forces go by until the difficult task of surrender would take place. The Squadron was pulled off the trail about 100 yards into a ravine. Captain Bigger and the other officers explained the situation to the men. Captain Bigger states, "The men were tired, hungry and sleepy. Some shed a few tears and others went to sleep".

About one hour later Japanese tanks came by spraying the jungle ahead of them with machine gun fire. The fire from the tanks was going over the heads of the men in the ravine and this caused some confusion but they soon settled down. After the tanks had gone and some rest was acquired it was decided to take all the bolts out of the rifles and all the slides out of the pistols and discard them.

After the weapons were destroyed and considering the condition of the men and General King's orders to surrender, Captain Bigger and Lt. Bennett decided to find out what was going on at the trail. After the two officers destroyed their weapons they continued down Trail 20. Capt. Bigger noted that they were concerned about what they might expect. They sighted a group of soldiers where the Philippine Scouts had been previously and they made plans to join them. Much to their amazement, the Philippine Scouts really turned out to be Japanese troops. Suddenly the Japanese spotted them and came running up the trail towards them. Capt. Bigger

had a white handkerchief and started waving it. He states, "I felt rather stupid doing so, but I thought it was the safest thing to do. The Japanese immediately started searching them and relieved them of their watches and cigarettes. To their surprise some of the enemy could speak English and Capt. Bigger told them of his unit being down the trail. Someone was sent to bring them out. They followed this Japanese unit to the coastal highway near KM 166.

After being taken prisoner the first incident was an encounter with a Japanese Mountain Howitzer unit. These men were very large and each carried part of the howitzer, such as the wheels, the barrel, or the trail. The Japs took the canteens from the men and began also hitting them with racks. It didn't take long for the men of the 48th to realize that the future was going to be tough. After the surrender came the infamous Death March where 10,000 American and Philipinos died from the atrocities of the Japanese. Many men of the 48th died at camps with names such as O'Donnell, Cabanatuan, and Billibid.

As the war went on prisoners were moved to Japan and Manchuria by means of ships known as the "Hell Ships". American submarines and aircraft had no way of knowing that when they were attacking these ships they were killing thousands of their own countrymen. The survivors were then put to slave labor in copper mines, tanneries, dockyards and other places that proved to be too dangerous for Japanese workers. Some of these camps were Camp No. 1 Moji, Fanatsu, Kosaka, Hanawa, and many others.

The story of POW days can be read in many books and all are brutal stories, but there are also stories of great courage and sacrifice in the never-ending quest for survival. To the men of Bataan this was just the beginning of the story but this is a squadron history and 48th Materiel Squadron remained in the Philippines in name only.

Then it was officially inactivated on 2 April 1946. Having never been activated again, the designation was finally disbanded and not removed from the Air Force list until 15 June 1983. Its history may have been a short one but it was a most active one. The 48th Materiel Squadron had honorably earned the Philippine Islands Campaign streamer, 7 December 1941 to 10 May 1942: the Philippine presidential unit Citation 8 to 22 December 1941: and three U.S. Distinguished Unit Citations for the periods of 6 January to 8 March 1942. Highly skilled men of the Army Air Force were given rifles and sent to the front as infantrymen, but they fought, learned from their mistakes and continued on. Bearing the pains of hunger, thirst and disease so prevalent in the rotting jungles of Bataan and Mindoro, these men helped slow the timetable of Japanese conquest.

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency, U.S. Air Force, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

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