

318th SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON



LINEAGE

318th Troop Carrier Squadron (Commando) constituted, 1 May 1944
Activated, 1 May 1944
Inactivated, 25 Mar 1946
Redesignated 318th Special Operations Squadron, 21 Oct 1971
Activated, 15 Nov 1971
Inactivated, 1 Jun 1974
Activated, 2 May 2008

STATIONS

Camp Mackall, NC, 1 May 1944
Dunnellon AAFld, FL, 15 Aug 1944
Camp Mackall, NC, 12 Sep 1944
Baer Field, IN, 30 Sep 11 Oct 1944
Nadzab, New Guinea, 26 Oct 1944
Leyte, 15 Jan 1945
Mangaldan, Luzon, 26 Jan 1945
Laoag, Luzon, 19 Apr 1945
Ie Shima, 25 Aug 1945 (operated from Atsugi, Japan, 7 Sep-15 Oct 1945)
Chitose, Japan, 18 Oct 1945-25 Mar 1946
Pope AFB, NC, 15 Nov 1971-1 Jun 1974
Cannon AFB, NM, 2 May 2008

ASSIGNMENTS

3rd Air Commando Group, 1 May 1944-25 Mar 1946
1st Special Operations Wing, 15 Nov 1971-1 Jun 1974
27th Special Operations Group, 2 May 2008

WEAPON SYSTEMS

C-47, 1944-1946
CG-4, 1944
C-130, 1971-1974

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT SERIAL NUMBERS

ASSIGNED AIRCRAFT TAIL/BASE CODES

UNIT COLORS

COMMANDERS

Maj Charles G. Carter, Jr., 1 May 1944-c. 1946

LTC Valentino Bagnani, Jr., Nov 1971

LTC Peter K. Nikonovich, 1 Dec 1973-1 Jun 1974

HONORS

Service Streamers

None

Campaign Streamers

Western Pacific

Leyte

Luzon

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

None

Decorations

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation

EMBLEM

On a disc Sable, issuant from base a terrestrial globe Proper, in sinister a Pegasus volant to dexter Argent, garnished Silver Gray, eyed Vert, in dexter chief a formation of six mullets, five Or and one of the fourth, all within a narrow border Black. Attached below the disc, a Green scroll edged with a narrow Black border and inscribed "318TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQ" in Black letters.

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The winged horse, "Pegasus," represents the rapid transport through the air. The globe and the continents represent the prodigious area in which the operations of the Squadron will embark. The placement of the Pegasus above the globe represents the rapid global mobility of the unit. The grouping of stars represents the celestial navigation to aid the Pegasus in finding its way around the world.

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Transported personnel, supplies and equipment in the Southwest Pacific area, frequently operating from forward bases and evacuating casualties, c. Nov 1944-Aug 1945. Provided unconventional warfare C-130 force to support warfare plans and rescue escapees from safe areas within enemy territory, 1971-1974.

Cannon Has Two: Air Force Special Operations Command now has two operational squadrons at its new western base. Officials of the 27th Special Operations Wing at Cannon AFB, N.M., on May 16 activated the 318th Special Operations Squadron. The 318th SOS will fly light and medium aircraft, including the PC-12, that AFSOC airmen term "non-standard aviation," according to a May 19 release. The New Mexico base received the first of 10 planned PC-12 aircraft in January. The 318th designation is not new to Air Force special operators; its colors last flew at Pope AFB, N.C., in the 1970s, but its earlier history includes duty with the World War II air commandos.

First PC-12 Arrives at Cannon The 27th Special Operations Wing at Cannon AFB, N.M., has taken delivery of the first of its PC-12 Pilatus light intratheater transport aircraft. The wing's new 318th Special Operations Squadron will fly the single-engine airplane, which special operators call the nonstandard aircraft. Cannon tentatively expects to receive a total of 10 PC-12s within the next four years, with two more airplanes scheduled to arrive this year. The PC-12s at Cannon will not have the classified modifications employed on Air Force Special Operations Command's U-28, a version of the PC-12. AFSOC also plans to create an MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial vehicle unit at Cannon. 2008

318 SOS
MC-130
64-0568

Meanwhile, the Troop Carrier Section - 318th Troop Carrier Squadron, Commando and 343rd Airdrome Squadron - were also piling up credits. In the single month of June the Squadron's 18 C-47's flew an aggregate total of 2,9800 hours, and the total weight lifted (including freight, passengers, and air evacuees) exceeded 7,000,000 pounds.

"Biscuit Bombing" was the principal preoccupation of the 318th pilots and crews ever since they began active participation in the Philippines Campaign. Though not Commandos in the original sense, the white-tailed "Rhubarbs" were constantly at the aerial spearhead of our Luzon advances and in the month of February alone - a month of rapid ground progress - the Squadron's planes were the first to land on 10 newly-won air fields. With enemy ground fire still a hazard to foot soldiers - and themselves too - they set first wheels down on makeshift runways at Piddig, Laoag, Luna, Burgos, Parez, Hapid, Resales, Quezon City, and Nichols Field.

Gasoline, incidentally was one of the major cargoes of the 318th Commandos, both at Mangaldan Strip and at Laoag they provided a sort of flying pipe-line from Clark Field's big fuel dumps, and the "beaverishness" which marked all Commando ventures cropped up again here.

With normal C-47 loads running to 12 fifty gallon drums, the 318th looked about for some way to increase its lifts. The obvious, but previously overlooked, fact that the Sky-trains themselves were carrying maximum tank loads proved a solution. The plane's surplus fuel was drained and replaced by added drums - from other planes - and the normal Laoag-Clark shuttle eventually carried 16 full drums on a minimum amount of operating gasoline.

In the first week of September our actual occupation of Japan began with the movement forward of the 318th Troop Carrier Squadron, 343rd Airdrome, and other elements of Group Headquarters and the Fighter sections. Based at Atsugi airdrome, just southeast of Tokyo, the troop carriers set first American feet upon many a Jap airdrome as they evacuated prisoners of war from all parts of the islands and brought them to rehabilitation centers in the Tokyo area and at Okinawa. Among their passengers in the first hectic occupation days were Major JAMES DEVERAUX of Wake Island fame ("Send us more Japs"), Admiral RICHARD E. BYRD, Archbishop FRANCIS J. SPELLMAN, and numerous Russian, British, and other allied "wheels".

318TH TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON

The 318th Troop Carrier Squadron was activated 10 May '44 under the command of Major Charles G. Carter Jr. and assigned to the 3rd Air Commando Group. Training was accomplished at Pope Field in North Carolina covering all phases of training - formation flying, night and daytime navigation, single and double glider towing, paratroop operation and all aspects of supply and maintenance functions.

On 30 Sept '44 the 318th went to Baer Field, Fort Wayne, Indiana where 16 new C-47s waited, each equipped with a 200 gallon auxiliary tank giving the plane 1600 gallons of fuel for the pending flight overseas. On 11 Oct '44 the flying crews led by Major Carter headed west for Fairfield Suisin airport near San Francisco, arriving there two days later.

At 6:15 in the evening of 15 Oct '44 the first plane lifted off the runway and headed west over the Pacific. It was followed every five minutes by another sailing like a flock of elegant swans over the Golden Gate bridge, their flight would take them to Hawaii, Canton Island, Fiji Islands, over the International Date Line, New Caledonia, Guadalcanal and finally Nadzab, New Guinea a total of 15 days after leaving Fort Wayne, Indiana.

The ground echelon joined the other units of the 3rd Air Commando Group at Camp Stoneman where they boarded the USS General Hersey for the three weeks voyage to the island of Leyte in the Philippines. In early January 1945 the flying echelon soared out of Nadzab heading for Leyte where they finally joined their ground echelon again. They set up housekeeping for a short time before moving to the island of Mindoro where it was less crowded.

At Mindoro heavy demands were placed on the Squadron's planes and crews, involving biscuit bombing and re-supply and evacuation missions. The 318th had become the workhorse of the Philippines. In February the 18 planes flew 2,124 air hours, moved the entire 3rd Air Commando Group out of Leyte to Honey Strip at Linguayen Gulf on the island of Luzon. In

addition the unit carried 3,147,250 pounds of supplies to various combat units in the Philippines, transported 331 litter cases, 750 walking cases and over 900 passengers.

Along with the regular missions the Squadron made frequent trips to Australia carrying personnel for R & R leave and bringing back luxury supplies such as gas stoves, radios, canned chicken, fresh milk, cigarettes and Aussie beer. On one occasion a squadron of fighter planes returning from a ground support mission, was approaching Honey strip while below was a lone C-47 circling the field waiting for an opportunity to land. The C-47 pilot called the tower and asked for permission to land. The tower asked "What is your cargo" and the pilot responded "Cigarettes and Aussie beer". Almost immediately the air was filled with responses from the fighter aircraft "Let Him Land, Let Him Land!"

In April '45 the 318th TCS played a major role in the 3rd air commandos first operation behind enemy lines when the Unit took over an air strip from the Japanese at Laoag in northern Luzon. All of the ground personnel, equipment and supplies was largely moved by air from Linguayen Gulf to Laoag. In addition the 318th supplied Air Commando Group with fuel, ammunition, food and endless other supplies and equipment. This was an around the clock operation of supplying the Air Commando Group 150 miles behind enemy lines, completely cut off by land and sea for over thirty days.

With the Philippine Islands largely secure the 318th's next move was to the island of Ie Shima just off Okinawa. This was the staging area for the eminent invasion of Japan. On 6 Aug '45 the first atomic bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima and shortly thereafter the war was over.

With the war over, the mission of the 318th changed but did not diminish. In September the air echelon moved to Atsugi Airbase in Japan and flew many POWs from Toyama, Katchana, Nagoya, Natorna and Chitose to Atsugi for evacuation to the USA. It was also a time for rotation of crews based on points and a well deserved rest. The men left a Unit which had set so many records, had earned eight battle stars and earned the love and respect of the entire Air Commando Group as well as the men of the South Pacific that they had served.

The 318th's last move was to Chitose, Hokkaido, Japan where they again joined the 3rd Air Commando Group. On 17 May '46 Major Charles Carter after a most distinguished tour of duty was killed flying a P-51 over the South China Sea.

The 318th ceased to exist except in the hearts and memories of those who served and loved her.

IT'S A SMALL, SMALL WORLD by Michael R. Somerday 318th T. C. Squadron

When the 318th, 343rd and other units landed at "Red Beach", Tacloban, Leyte, there had been little sleep the preceding night as everybody was busy checking their gear and weapons. Early on at the morning of 1 Dec. 1944 after a sparse morning breakfast on the General M.L. Hersey, plans were made to use the "Jacob Ladders" for boarding one of the Navy Ducks.

Over the PA system came an alert call and for all Navy personnel to man their battle stations. The guns were banging away and since we were all inside, we could not see any of the action. I

remember F/O George Polovich saying, "I'm not going down with an empty stomach if this tub sinks!" He went behind the food counter followed by many of our bunch and we began to punch holes in assorted fruit juice cans and cracking eggs for the grill. In no time the mess area looked like a landfill. When the Navy personnel returned to the mess area, we were really dressed down by the Mess Officer with all kinds of threats. But we did have a full stomach by that time.

We went topside and scampered down the "Jacob Ladder" into the Ducks and headed for "Red Beach". As we approached the beach area we could see the pounding the area had taken from the big guns. The Duck scrapped the bottom and came to a halt with the front drop splashing into the water and we then waded ashore to dry land. The beach area itself was a beehive of activity and confusion but we were able to form at the designated assembly area. At that time I noticed that I had lost my mess gear and found a Quartermaster area which had a good supply of extra equipment. I opened a large burlap bag and pulled out a paraffin wrapped mess kit. with the use of sand, I was able to scour the pan and remove the paraffin. On the bottom of the pan I noticed that someone had carved his name and on further examination it read "F/O Leon Ghezzi, Shamokin, PA". This was someone from my hometown who had scratched his name on the mess pan. It was unbelievable to recognize a name from my hometown!

In 1948 I met Leon in Shamokin and told him about finding the mess kit with his name on it. He indicated that while at an Air Force Base in Missouri he was told to turn his equipment in to the Quartermaster.

So much for this unusual incident back in 1944. I still have the mess kit with the markings plus a log of our island hopping jaunts. It makes a good story to relate at a party.

Unfortunately, George Polovich mentioned above was killed on 19 Feb 1945 on an air drop on Luzon along with five others from the 318th T.C. Squadron.

MANY FIRSTS FOR THE 318TH

Throughout late 1944 and early 1945, the 318th Troop Carrier Squadron hopped from base to base throughout the South Pacific, often landing on rough air strips hastily carved out of the jungle or on makeshift runways adapted from country roads, sandy beaches or grassy fields.

Ty Nelson, then an Air Corps Captain and a pilot of a C-47 cargo plane, was the first to land a plane at Clark Field in the Philippines after the airfield was retaken from the Japanese in February 1945.

Nelson, flying a C-47 was the first to land at Nagasaki, Japan, after the atomic bomb was dropped there August 9, 1945.

Nelson was unaware that he made history when he landed at Clark Field, until soldiers and Filipino guerrillas unloaded the plane and told the crew. "It was just the luck of the draw", he said about getting the assignment to deliver the supplies to the recaptured field.

The assignment was not without risk as the pilot was advised to make a sharp turn after takeoff to avoid artillery fire aimed at Japanese troops still in the hills overlooking the airfield.

Even the end of the War did not signal an end to the troop carrier pilot's job. They continued to ferry equipment and supplies to various units and also flew to sites in Japan to bring out American prisoners of war.

It was one of those flights that led Nelson to Nagasaki, Nelson flew over Hiroshima, where the first atomic bomb had been dropped. The devastation was so widespread it was impossible to tell that there was once a city there.

Though the bomb dropped over Nagasaki was more powerful there was less destruction because the city was located in a valley.

The most memorable flight made by Ty Nelson was what should have been a routine flight carrying personnel and their baggage. In heading down the runway he noticed the plane was not attaining takeoff speed. At the end of the runway at only 65 mph instead of the usual 90 mph take off speed, the crew managed to get the plane airborne by lifting the landing gear and heading out to sea. The plane was so close to the water that the prop wash left a wake in the bay.

It was several miles over the bay before the plane gained enough air speed to gain altitude. Later he would learn that the cargo bay had been filled with mechanic's tools weighing about 14,000 pounds, or about 9,000 pounds over the recommended load.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A 318TH TROOP CARRIER CREW CHIEF

by John Joseph 318th TCS

More and more, I indulge myself to recall the days that I have to classify as four of the best years of my life, as a member of the United States Army Air Corps. Especially the last year - the year of overseas duty.

Looking back over our overseas itinerary, I feel as though I owe the U.S. Army Air Corps some money to pay for a Far Eastern vacation. Our overseas tour started October 15, 1944, when we left Fairfield Suisin Air Base, California, in a Douglas C-47 airplane, and headed West across the Pacific.

We headed for NEW GUINEA, with five overnight stops en route. (1) HAWAII - We saw the ruins at PEARL HARBOR, and walked barefoot on the beach at WAIKIKI. Saw the Lagoon at (2) CHRISTMAS IS, and the coconut trees on (3) CANTON IS.

Our respect for the U.S. Marines grew as we walked between the 1009 white crosses at (4) TARAWA, and felt the steamy heat of (5) GUADALCANAL. Finally, NADZAB, New Guinea..

While based at NADZAB, we covered much of New Guinea; HOLLANDIA, MILNE BAY, and MOUNT HAGEN to name a few, plus the islands of BIAK, PELILEU, and BOUGAINVILLE, the latter too deeply imbedded in Marine Corps History. We "buzzed" a herd of kangaroos in AUSTRALIA, and slept in a modern hotel in SYDNEY.

PHILIPPINES - - LEYTE, MINDORO, LINGAYEN, LAOAG. We dropped supplies on just about all of Northern LUZON. Our C-47 landed on Quezon Blvd in MANILA to pick up the wounded, and at a later date, we walked on its streets. Flew over BATAAN, passed CORREGIDOR and MANILA HARBOR. Witnessed the White Jap bombers landing on IE SHIMA, to discharge the Jap surrender contingent, en route to Manila. Said a prayer at the spot where Ernie Pyle lost his life on IE SHIMA, and walked on the shores of OKINAWA. We saw the Sun rise (and set) in JAPAN, flew past Mt. FUJI, walked the streets of TOKYO, YOKOHAMA, and KYOTO, flew over the ruins of HIROSHIMA, and came to a halt at CHITOSE AIR BASE, on the isle of HOKKAIDO, a couple miles away from RUSSIA. All within 13 months - the 3rd Air Commandos really kept on the move.

Left TOKYO BAY, October 25, 1945, on a sea going vessel named the Pennant, arrived in Seattle on November 7. Train ride to Indiantown Gap, PA., discharged Nov. 17, 1945. Being an Air crew member on a C-47 in the 318th, gave us the opportunity and privilege to see and participate in all of the above, plus the many small airfields and cow pastures, upon which we landed in New Guinea, the Philippines, and Japan, in the performance of our duties. We were able to see all those far-off Historical places - free of charge. As a matter of fact, we were paid to go on that trip. Considering the fact that before the War, I had never been out of the State of Pennsylvania, never been more than 105 miles from my home, I have to recall those days with feeling of Pride, Appreciation and Wonder.

If I ever hit the Penna Lotto by myself, I am going to ask the United States Army to send me a bill for the Fantasy Island trip they sent me on, and I will gladly pay it.

HOW MANY PILOTS DO YOU WANT By Hank Beaird - 318th Troop Carrier Squadron
When I landed at Nadzab, New Guinea there was a tall Major in operations from Memphis, Tennessee. He said "I'm looking for some pilots for the 3rd Air Commando Group". I asked "How many to do you need?" He said "Five or Six" and I said "I'll be right back". We boarded his DC-3 and were shortly enroute to Lingayan Gulf, the location of the 3rd Air Commando Group.

While on our way to Luzon the crew chief told us a few stories about the Group that we were about to join. Major Walker Mahurin the 3rd Fighter Squadron Commander had been flying P-17s in Europe before returning to the States to join the Air Commandos under Col. "Oley" Olsen the Group Commander.

Maj. Mahurin got his first Japanese airplane while the group was in southern Philippines. His crew chief was carefully painting a Japanese flag on the left side of his airplane. One of the older chiefs came by and saw him painting on the single victory flag and remarked "yeah, when these new pilots get a victory, they want 'em painted on quickly and neatly". The young painter didn't even look up but said "Sarge look on the other side". The old sarge walked around to the right side of the Mustang and there he saw 21 Swastikas. Without another word the old Sarge just walked away.

One of the other stories we listened to was not so pleasant. The 318th Troop Carrier Squadron had been making supply drops in the upper Cagayan Valley of Luzon. A number of Liaison

and Glider pilots decided to go along with the four man crew to observe the parachute drops of supplies and ammunition to the Filipino guerrillas. While the plane was circling a cone shaped hill and dropping supplies in the valley, the Japanese were busy firing mortar shells at the slow moving C-47 as it made 2 or 3 circles around the hill. The mortar crews were near the top of the hill and were firing at near point blank range. One of the shells hit the airplane and knocked it down very quickly, killing all eight commandos. Observing the site on a later mission in the area, we saw the airplane laying next to the hill and with all of it burned out except the outer wings and the tail section.

The 318 TCS was stationed on Honey Strip near the Lingayen Gulf where numerous other types of aircraft were also located. One night we were awakened by an air raid alarm. We piled out of our tents with our flack helmets, clad only in our under shorts and jumped into the nearest fox-hole. As the planes approached the field, four went out to sea while a lone plane came directly over the airstrip. We watched as the search lights crossed on the single plane and as the ack-ack guns opened up. It was great sport to see each plane shot down and we cheered as each spiraled into the ocean. We were get-ting ready to go back to our tents when a twin engine fighter buzzed directly overhead with an American P-61 night fighter close on his tail. That was the only air attack we had while at Honey Strip.

After about a month at Honey Strip, we moved up to Laoag on the north west coast of Luzon. Laoag was the home of Ferdinand Marcos the guerrilla leader who later became president of the Philippines. We got an unusual attack on the area early one morning when a couple of two-man submarines surfaced off shore and began lobbing shells toward the airplanes. None of the shells hit their mark since the subs had very small guns. Four P-51s were in the air shortly and the pilots had a field day dive bombing the two tiny submarines.

After three months at Laoag, we moved north to Ie Shima, a small island off Okinawa. This was the staging area for the final assault on the Japanese mainland and got a lot of attention from the Japanese air force. The Japanese would raid the Naval ships around Okinawa with Kamikaze attacks every night. Ie Shima was never hit. It was so small, that perhaps the Japanese didn't realize that there were three landing strips and three groups of planes stationed there. The Okinawa ports were hit unmercifully and each morning we would learn how many ships were blown apart by the Kamikazes. Nearly all of these planes were Mitsubishi Zeros.

One day while driving around the island looking for a good movie, we saw a small obelisk that was on a raised grass area just off the road. We stopped and read the inscription on it: ON THIS SPOT THE 77TH INFANTRY DIVISION LOST A BUDDY - ERNIE PYLE April 18, 1945. The monument was honoring the famous war correspondent who was killed by a sniper bullet on Ie Shima.

Every day as we flew between Ie Shima and Okinawa we could see the increased number of C-54s gathering for the impending invasion of Japan. We were dreading the battles that would take place on the main-land. Then one day the Kamikazes attacks stopped abruptly. Then we heard of a tremendous bomb that had been dropped on Hiroshima. The Air Force Times came out with headlines that the US was negotiating for an unconditional surrender of Japan. It was

difficult to believe that we had dealt such a blow with one bomb. The Japanese did not respond until a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki a few days later.

A few days later a squadron of P-38s escorted two Betty bombers onto our strip on Ie Shima, where a C-54 had come to meet them. It was the surrender party that Gen. MacArthur had ordered to come to Manila to agree to our surrender terms.

The Japanese delegation was escorted from the Betty bombers to the C-54 to fly on to Manila. We didn't realize, at the time, what an historic event we were witnessing.

On 20 Aug 45 the 3rd Air Commando Group moved to Atsugi Airport near Tokyo. After several weeks on Atsugi Airport, the Air Commandos began looking around for a more suitable base with more room and better facilities. The Air Commandos finally decided on Chitose, Hokkaido, which had been a Japanese Naval Aviation training base. The runways were adequate and the quarters were good. It was about as far north and as far from the 5th Air Force Headquarters as we could get. There was the heavy snows to contend with which turned out to be somewhat hazardous at times but also provided great sport for men with time on their hands.

It was there that many learned to ski. With equipment and a ski instructor from the local Japanese many hours were spent on the small slope. A ski tow was even constructed by using a stationary jeep with a pulley on one wheel and lots of rope.

During the early months of 1946 most of the original pilots and enlisted men returned to the USA. For many pilots who came home the chapter of flying was closed, but not for Hank Beard. The following are excerpts from the Reno Gazette-Journal by Susan Voyes.

Hank Beard is a mild-mannered real estate agent in Sparks, Nevada. Most of the time. When he gets a chance, he turns into a hell-bent-for-leather jet pilot out to break another speed record.

Two weeks ago the former test pilot climbed into the cockpit of a Lear jet in Portland, Oregon and set a new world climbing record. It was his 22nd climbing record in more than 40 years of flying. Most of those records are still standing. And he is ready and willing to set more records if anybody wants to lend him a Lear. Beard took his first Lear jet into the sky 25 years ago in Wichita. And at Stead airport he piloted the first Lear Fan, the world's all-plastic airplane. He was also the first to fly the OMAC, the first plane built with the horizontal stabilizer forward of the wings since the Wright Brothers.

Beard, a fighter pilot in World War II, also spent four years testing the F-105s, a fighter-bomber used in Vietnam. In all, he has been the first test pilot for more than 20 military and civilian airplanes throughout his career.

He worked with test pilots such as Gordon Cooper, Scott Crossfield, Deke Slayton and Chuck Yeager all of whom are characterized in Tom Wolfe's book, "The Right Stuff."

Beaird, a founder of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots, plays down the danger of his work — he considers it safer than driving a car. "You live with that airplane a couple of years before it gets off the ground, you know it pretty well."

He's also a graduate of aeronautical engineering at the University of Alabama. At Auburn University, he got his first taste for flying when a P-38 buzzed the foot-ball field, forcing the team to drop to the ground. Then the pilot did three or four rolls going straight up. Beard signed up for the Air Force, flying Mustang Fighters in the South Pacific in WW II.

After the War, his knowledge of the F-105 saved him and the plane from becoming a plume of smoke on the desert at Edwards AFB. He tested the plane for four years, starting in 1955.

Late in the testing program, a jet engine blew at 45,000 feet. As the plane fell from the sky, Beard tried to restart the motor as recommended by Pratt & Whitney engineers. It didn't work. Then Beard tried his own way. He stuck the nose of the plane down at a 60 degree angle and the plane restarted, only 7,000 feet above ground.

In a later flight, Beard landed the F-105 on its belly on a dry lake bed. In 1967 Bill Lear wrote about Hank's landing of that plane: "His engineering capabilities plus his coolness...make him the one man that I would want to be at the controls of any aircraft I were in if it were in any kind of trouble."

Beaird followed Lear from city to city as the inventor developed the Learjet.

His most exciting adventure was the first trip around the world for a business jet in 1966. Bill Lear had caught wind that television personality Arthur Godfrey was making such a trip in a Jet Commander, a competing plane. Within a day and a half, Lear pulled together all the permits to make the flight and Beard, Lear's son John and Rick King took off. They covered the globe as fast as possible, several times running nearly on empty. At the airfield at Shemya Air Force Base in the Aleutian Islands, the plane's tanks were empty when it was refueled.

At the base, the crew also inspected the honor guard in full white dress, that had been assembled to greet Godfrey.

Also on this leg of the journey, the crew was intercepted by a Russian Mig. "My reaction and almost instinctive movement was to throttle back to keep him exactly abreast of us." Beard wrote. "He had missiles under his wing ... I wasn't going to let him get behind me and I knew I could out-manuever him." The Mig cruised with the Lear-jet for a few moments, with Beard filming the plane with his Super-8 Bell & Howell. Then as suddenly as he appeared, the Mig pilot banked his plane and descended toward the nearest island.

The Learjet became the first business plane to fly around the world on May 26, 1966. For a small business jet class Beard still holds the record time for the 23,000 mile trip: 50 hours and 20 minutes. Beard last May was one of the several test pilots to present the Collier Trophy, aviation industry's highest award, to Jeana Yeager and Dick Rutan for their record flight around the world on one tank of fuel.

Rosalind, Beaird's wife of 37 years flatly refuses to discuss the stress involved in being married to a test pilot. We're just real fortunate she said and with four boys there are other concerns too.

THE 318TH TROOP CARRIER SQUADRON

On 10 May 44 the 318th Troop Carrier Squadron was activated under the command of Charles G. Carter Jr. and assigned to the Third Air Commando Group. The 343rd Air Base Group which was to support the Air Unit was assigned at same time. The 318th Troop Carrier had previously been designated the 31 Oth Troop Carrier Squadron of the 443rd Troop Carrier Group and had extensive training in towing gliders, snatching gliders, carrying paratroopers and transporting all types of equipment. Training also included instrument flying in all kinds of weather, formation flying, night and low level flying and short field take-offs and landings. This was a unit that was well trained and contained the cream of the crop, typical of all the Air Commandos.

The 318th was stationed at Camp Macall, NC located just west of Pope Field (Fort Bragg) and the home of the Army's Air Borne Division. Through the months of June and July training continued in all phases of troop carrier operations, including day and night formation, single and double glider towing, low level navigation, paratroop operations and all aspects of maintenance and support functions. Also included in the training were the eagerly awaited week-end cross country navigation flights to New York, Milwaukee, Mobile, Indianapolis and even Canton, Ohio.

On the night of 21 June, the 318th and two other squadrons from Camp Mackall joined three squadrons from Pope Field to take part in Experience Under Fire. The formation of six nine-plane squadrons in trail was scheduled to fly over the Atlantic for a set period of time, turn north for so many minutes and then turn back and cross the coast through a two-mile-wide corridor lined with anti-aircraft guns firing live ammunition. As the formation, with the 318th in tail-end-Charlie position, departed the coast out-bound, a dense fog swirled in from the sea. The elements in the lead instead of flying their scheduled pattern turned back and headed directly into the planes behind them. Chaos!

It is a testimony to the pilots of the 318th that all of them returned safely while three planes of another squadron didn't. They were never heard from again!

At Mackall the 318th developed into a functional, integrated, effective and professional squadron which was to serve them well in the months ahead. During August the 318th moved to Dunnellon, Florida for training with the other units of the 3rd Air Commando Group. The 318th returned to Camp Mackall combat ready.

On 30 September the squadron left Camp Mackall for Baed Field, Fort Wayne, Indiana, where 16 new C-47s waited, each equipped with a 200-gallon auxiliary fuel tank, giving the planes 1600 gallons of fuel for their pending overseas flight. On 11 October 44, six months after being activated, the flying crews of the 318th, led by Major Carter, soared off into the west, banked and returned to fly gracefully over the field in formation. An observer commented, "That's the

finest formation flying I've ever seen." The Squadron arrived at Fairfield Suisun Airport near San Francisco two days later. At 6:15 the evening of 15 Oct. the first plane lifted off the runway and headed west over the Pacific. It was followed at five minute intervals by the others, sailing like a flock of elegant swans over the Golden Gate bridge. Nearly 18 hours later the planes eased down on the John Rogers Field, Honolulu, Hawaii. The next stops were at Christmas Island, Canton Island, and the Fiji Islands. Then over the International Date Line, New Caledonia and Guadalcanal, arriving at Nadzab, New Guinea, 15 days after leaving Fort Wayne.

The ground echelon left Baer Field 27 Oct by train, arriving four days later at Camp Stoneman, Pittsburg, California. On 6 November the Unit boarded the USS General Hersey for a three week voyage across the Pacific ocean, landing on Red Beach, Leyte, Philippines on 1 December 1944. The men spent a rainy night on the beach, dug up a rotting skull and three days later went by Navy boats to San Roque. At this time the Japanese made a parachute attack with 300 paratroopers, some dressed as civilians, and destroyed 20 planes, mostly L-5s and a few vehicles. The 318th came out unscathed.

In the meantime, the flying unit was having its problems in Nadzab, New Guinea. The replacement depot at Nadzab had no orders for the 318th so they claimed the planes and placed all the personnel in the replacement center. Some claimed the CO of the Base was crazy, and they may have been right. — Too long overseas! , Colonel Olsen, Commander of the 3rd Air Commando Group arrived and set things straight. Not to allow a resource to sit idle, the 318th planes and crews flew dozens of missions while waiting for the ground echelon to arrive. In early January 1945, they all soared out of Nadzab, heading North to Tacloein on Leyte of the Philippines.

The 318th had all come together again. It set up housekeeping in tents, along two "avenues," one called Larua Lane, and the other Anopheles. Planes were dispatched to Australia to bring back generators, kerosene refrigerators, and beer. The 318th had found its home in the service.

Because of the intense fighting in the area, fighter planes were as thick as honeybees in a clover patch, and the 318th moved to a small Philippine island of Mindoro. There the main worries were field mice and a "black panther," supposedly living alongside a creek which flowed through the trees and bushes, past the latrine and down a path for several hundred yards.

As the C-47s transporting the men to Mindoro landed, it was reported that one plane had crashed on takeoff. It was learned that the plane lost power, winged over and came to a halt when the right side of the fuselage smashed into a heavy road grader. Six men were treated at the 118th General Hospital and released without serious injury. Two men from an antiaircraft unit, ; were killed as the wing of the plane plowed through their tent as they slept.

At Mindoro heavy demands were placed on the Squadron's planes and crews, engaging in biscuit bombing, re-supply and evacuation missions. The 318th had become the work horse of the Philippines. In February the 18 planes flew 2,124 air hours, moved the entire 3rd Air Commando Group out of Leyte, dropped and landed supplies to the Philippine guerrillas,

carried 3,147,250 pounds of supplies and transported 331 litter and 750 walking patients and over 900 passengers.

The 318th left Mindoro, the black panther still at large, for Honey Strip near Lingayen Gulf on Luzon. The first night, at the new location, the Japanese dropped anti-personnel bombs in the area. While no one of the 318th was hurt, there was a flurry of foxhole digging the very next morning.

Missions on Luzon included the dropping of supplies to the Guerrillas, hauling gasoline and bombs and evacuating casualties. It took skillful flying and navigation to find the many drop zones, avoid enemy ground fire and the mountain peaks. The C-47 was called on to do things that would have caused a commercial pilot to shudder.

All was not without incident, ; one of the planes took off from Antipolis on a drop mission, was caught in a narrow valley and pancaked against a mountain coming out. Killed were Pilot Thomas Snecker, Co-pilot Jack Deacon, Crew chief David Browne and Radio operator Freeman Stanton. Also lost were observers Jack Yates and George Polovich of the 318th and two army spotters.

The 318th had the distinction of landing the first planes at a number of liberated and new air strips in the Philippines: Piddig, Tuao, Luna, Burgas, Paros, Quezon City, Nicholas, Resales and Hapid. Major Carter and Captain Tompson made most of the landings and gave recommendations to the engineers. Pilot Nelson landed the first plane on Clark Field after it was liberated from the Japanese.

During March 45, the 318th evacuated 2902 patients and drew the choice assignment of transporting nurses from Honey Strip to Clark, Resales, Quezon, and Camp Dau. The same month the 318th moved to Laoag in northern Luzon.

During the month of April the 318th roamed the skies for 1836 hours and a total of 323 missions.

A mild epidemic of polio, ear fungus and jaundice attacked the Squadron. S/Sgt. Dwayne Welch was evacuated and one man of the 343rd died from polio. A plane was equipped with spraying bars to eliminate flies and mosquitoes and in time Laoag became a pleasant place. Tents were constructed with bamboo frames and floors. Also clubs were built for officers and enlisted men, providing recreation and relaxation from the hard every day routine.

There was no call for glider operations and the glider pilots grew restless. Some glider pilots were sent to the 3rd Air Commando Group's Liaison Squadrons and some remained as co-pilots on C-47s, while others were placed in administrative jobs within the Group. The mechanics were well used in various jobs within the 318th. All were available in the event a glider operation materialized.

The 318th had the job of completely supplying the entire Commando Group at Laoag, which was behind enemy lines and cut off from land sea. In June the 318th hauled over seven million pounds of food, fuel, ammunition and equipment to keep the Group in business. Additional flight crews were assigned to the 318th to give some relief to the over worked regulars.

In July, T/Sgts Mike Konig and Charles Thinnes, crew chiefs, went over the 900 flying hours mark, and on July 16 Capt. Ty Nelson topped the 900 hour mark, followed closely by Mac Richman, Jack Perkins, Fred Blosser, John Bradley, Aubrey Brim, Ed Brown and Jim Gorman. Also navigators Arthur Budich, DePierro and Pete Covasso exceeded 900 hours, much of which was combat time. One of the glider pilots, Robert Hutchinson, died while on detached service flying an L-5 for the 159th Liaison Squadron.

With the Philippine Islands secure another move was in store, this time to the island of Ie Shima, a small island just off Okinawa. Ie Shima was where the famous war correspondent Ernie Pyle died. As usual, the 318th was the first of the Air Commando Group to land on the island and as usual a large party of the Groups advance personnel and equipment was moved by the C-47s. This was the staging area for the eminent invasion of Japan. , on August 6, 1945 the first Atom Bomb fell on the Japanese city of Hiroshima and shortly thereafter another A-Bomb completely devastated Nagasaki. It was quite apparent that the War was over.

During August, Major Carter and other 318th pilots began flying missions over Japan and on August 20, 1945 pilots Fred Blosser and Ed Brown flew communications equipment into the island of Honshu and then flew on to Atsugi Air Base, landing there the same day. This was eight days before Charles 'Rush' Russon claimed to have been the first to land in Japan after the War. , Fred and Ed conceded that they were not the first to land in Japan, since a Colonel flying a P-51 was already there.

Men of the 318th lined the runway of Ie Shima on August 19, the day a pair of Betty bombers landed carrying the Japanese peace envoys. The envoys were quickly transferred to waiting C-54s and were flown on to McArthur's Headquarters in Manila.

Soon thereafter Major Carter and a flight of five planes flew communications equipment and technicians into Japan to provide for the arrival of General MacArthur.

In September Captain Nelson landed the first plane at Nagasaki, flying in high ranking officers to arrange for the evacuation of prisoners. The pilot of the 318th also were the first to land at Sapporo, Osaka and many other cities in Japan. Other 318th planes flew Rear Admiral Richard E. Bird, Archbishop Francis Spellman, General Eikelburger and the News media throughout Japan.

In September the air echelon moved to Atsugi Air Base in Japan and flew many POWs from Toyama, Katachana, Nagoya, Natorna, and Chitose to Atsugi for evacuation to the USA. This month also saw the beginning of the rotation of air crews based on points and a well deserved rest. The men left a Unit which had set so many records, had earned eight battle stars and had earned the love and respect of all the Third Air Commando Group as well as all the men in the Southwest Pacific that they had served. Flying their C-47s the 318th truly deserved the distinction of the best Troop Carrier Squadron in the Theatre and the workhorse of the Air Force.

What remained of the Squadron moved to Chitose on the island of Hokkaido, Japan, and there the 343rd Airdrome Squadron was made a part of the 318th Troop Carrier as one unit. Major Carter moved up to Group Headquarters and soon most of the original personnel were gone.

On 17 May 46, Major Charles Carter after a most distinguished tour of duty was killed flying a P-51 which exploded over the South China Sea. His remains were brought back to Memphis, Tennessee in 1949 and interred there.

The 318th ceased to exist except in the hearts and memories of those who served and loved her. Men who even now gather frequently to remember and relive those days in the Southwest Pacific. Through the days of trial and hard work the men of the 318th developed a bond and comradeship which holds them together to this day.

(Another story of the Air Commandos, "Air Commandos Also Laugh" by James Cortese, is available from Castle Books, Box 17262, Memphis, Tenn. 38187)

The last two C-145As assigned to the 318th Special Operations Squadron at Cannon AFB, N.M., flew to their new home with the 6th SOS at Duke Field, Fla., announced Cannon officials. The special operations transports left Cannon for good on March 28, according to Cannon's April 1 release. "A handful of C-145 personnel have already relocated to Duke Field after being selected to join the 6th SOS," said Capt. Scott Whitmore, 318th SOS executive officer. He added, "Our crew members are sad to see these planes go, but with that comes an eagerness to see what new opportunities will be available." The 318th SOS will continue operating PC-12 special-mission aircraft, according to the release. The unit deployed with the C-145 for the first time in March 2011-to Afghanistan-and later supported US special operations forces in Africa, states the release. 2013

Air Force Order of Battle
Created: 8 Apr 2011
Updated:

Sources