

HISTORY

CHAPTER I

FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY FIRST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (HEAVY)

Colonel Robert E. L. Eaton, Commanding

August 21, 1943

The 451st Bomb Gp (H) was activated by Paragraph 1, General Order Number 58, dated April 22, 1943, Headquarters Second Air Force, effective May 1, 1943, at Davis-Monthan Field, Tucson, Arizona. The same order assigned to the group four squadrons, namely, the 724th to the 727th, inclusive.

Davis-Monthan Field is still the permanent headquarters of the 451st Bomb Gp.

The group is an O.T.U. organization, flying B-24 type airplanes. It is commanded by Colonel Robert E. L. Eaton, (U.S.M.A. June 1931).

The first officers to report for duty with the group arrived at Davis-Monthan Field in the latter part of May 1943, and within a few days a total of ten officers and one enlisted man was at Davis-Monthan Field awaiting further instructions.

This initial nucleus included the following:

Administrative Officers

Jones, Donald T., Major, A. C., 0-304856
Williams, Charles V., Captain, A. C., 0-197343
Bernstein, Jack, 1st Lieutenant, A. C., 0-567293

Intelligence Officers

McManus, William H., Captain, A. C. 0-394335
Maroc, Herbert F., 1st Lieutenant, A. C. 0-903362
Manoogian, Morris A., 1st Lieutenant, A. C. 0-729641
Sands, Robert L., 1st Lieutenant, A. C. 0-561973
Zraick, Edward A., 2nd Lieutenant, A. C. 0-573874
Arnold, Elliott, 2nd Lieutenant, A. C. 0-566711

Medical Officer

MoFarland, Ward J., 1st Lieutenant, MC., 0-502114

Intelligence Clerk

Bonar, Thomas E., Jr., Sergeant, 11041211

However, when the 444th Group was scheduled to be transferred elsewhere, a new Parent Group for the 451st Group was named. The new group was the 346th Bomb Gp (M), with headquarters at Dyersburg, Tenn. On June 4, 1943, per authority of Special Order 155, Paragraph 5, AAB, Davis-Monthan Field, the ten officers and one enlisted man, together with other officers scheduled to arrive at Davis-Monthan Field, were sent to AAB, Dyersburg, Tenn.

Major Jones, designated as Executive Officer of the 451st Group, was Senior Officer.

Other officers and enlisted men soon reported for duty and Captain James B. Beane, A. C., 0-413562, assumed temporary command as senior flying officer present. On June 5, 1943, Captain Linnon R. Blackmon, A. C., assigned as Deputy Group Commander, per Paragraph 1, Special Order 167 Headquarters Davis-Monthan Field, reported for duty and relieved Captain Beane.

The 451st Group was assigned a small section of the headquarters of the 346th Group for its own headquarters and then was shifted to a corner of the building used by one of the squadrons of the 346th Group. Preliminary paper work was accomplished without delay, despite lack of space, officer equipment and sufficient clerical personnel.

Medical officers obtained some space in the 346th Group Dispensary, and started immediately to check on the inoculation records of the men in the 451st Group. A base regulation at Dyersburg required that all new arrivals at the base be examined every day for the first ten days for signs of communicable diseases, such as measles and scarlet fever, and the medical officers set up a schedule for this series of examinations which was adhered to by every officer and enlisted man in the group.

Intelligence Officers and Intelligence Clerks were attached to various squadron Intelligence Officers and Intelligence clerks in their own work, thus aiding the 346th S-2 sections and at the same time keeping up to date on their own work.

Meanwhile the following assignments were made:

Captain Williams, Group S-2

Captain McManus, Group S-2

Quillen, Monroe, C., Captain, A. C., 0-432123, Group S-3
Leeser, Claton E., Captain, A. C., 0-437475, Group S-4

Captain Beane, Commander, 724th Sq.
Davis, John P., Captain, A. C., 0-433359, Commander, 725th Sq.
Haltom, Charles C., Captain, A. C., 0-438036, Commander 726th Sq.
Evans, Clayton E., Captain, A. C., 0-437435, Commander 727th Sq.

On June 19, 1943, 44 officers and 69 enlisted men, comprising the air echelon of the group, departed for Orlando, Fla., to attend the Army Air Force School of Applied Tactics. The move was made per authority of Special Order 142, Headquarters, Dyersburg, Tenn., Paragraph 4 covering the officers, and Paragraph 5, the enlisted men. The Special Order directed the officers and men to report for duty at Wendover Field, Utah, upon the completion of their courses at AAFSAT.

At this time the Group Commander was attending the B-24 Standardization School, at Davis-Monthan Field. The Group Commander joined the air echelon at its arrival at AAFSAT.

The air echelon attending AAFSAT included the Group Commander, the Deputy Group Commander, Group S-2, Group S-3, Group S-4, the four Squadron Commanders, Squadron S-2s, Squadron S-3s and a model crew for each squadron to be used in the practice missions to be assigned to the group in the second half of its AAFSAT training.

While the air echelon undertook its courses at AAFSAT, the ground echelon remained at Dyersburg, continuing its task of setting up the records and other paper work of the new group.

The echelon at AAFSAT completed its 10-day series of classroom courses and preceded to Pinecastle, Fla., a satellite field. There, under simulated combat conditions, it embarked upon a series of over-water mock-bombing and navigational missions designed to prepare the personnel for its ultimate overseas duties.

Four B-24 type airplanes were assigned to the group, but three of these proved inadequate to the demands to be made upon them in the fulfillment of the missions. These three airplanes were equipped for low-altitude, short-range, first-phase work only, and were deemed unfit for the high-altitude long-range missions called for by the training schedule. It was found necessary to return these three airplanes to Biggs Field, El Paso, Tex., and await the assignment of new airplanes.

This necessary substitution caused delay in the conditioning of these planes.

The officers and enlisted men were housed in tents in Pinecastle. A larger tent, on the line, was assigned to the group to serve as Group Operations and Group Intelligence.

The new airplanes arrived, were serviced, and the echelon commenced its series of training missions. Orders for a mission were received by TWX, were studied immediately by the Group Commander, Deputy Group Commander, and by Operations and Intelligence Officers. A plan for the accomplishment of the mission was formulated; routes in and out were worked out by the Group Commander, assisted by his staff officers, and then the necessary Operations and Intelligence data was compiled and prepared for presentation to the crews.

Approximately two hours before scheduled take-off, the various staff and specialist officers briefed the crews on the mission. During the briefing the Group Commander carefully outlined the aims of the mission, its importance, and what had to be accomplished in order to adjudge the mission a success.

During this time weather conditions in Pinecastle and vicinity were highly unfavorable. It rained every day with the exception of one day, and frequently rained several times daily.

Mechanics on the line had only three crew chief kits to service the airplanes and were lacking in personnel. These ground crews worked all night, every night, with insufficient tools, and succeeded in making the airplanes ready for the next day's mission.

Despite these difficult conditions, the 451st Group completed successfully 7 out of a possible 8 missions. Previously only one other group reached this average. All other groups accomplished a lesser number of missions, some finishing only 2 or 3 out of the 8 scheduled.

The Group Commander and the Deputy Group Commander alternated in personally accompanying each formation, and both officers saw to it that cameras were taken on the flights and photographs made to prove the successful fulfillment of the specified requirements of each mission.

Base officer personnel of the 9th Group, stationed at the field, complimented the work of the 451st Group, and stated publicly that in

some respects it surpassed all other previous groups in the speed and determination of its training.

Besides the benefits accrued from the performance of the missions, officers and enlisted men grew to know each other, and learned of the difficulties of living in extremely hot and damp conditions, working long hours, eating poor food and still, withal, maintaining a rigid flight schedule.

On July 18, 1943, a portion of the echelon departed in the four planes, for Wendover Field, Utah. The remainder of the echelon departed for the same base by rail. On July 19, Special Order 172, Paragraphs 1 and 2 authorized the ground echelon to leave Dyersburg to join the air echelon at Wendover.

New difficulties awaited the group at Wendover.

The Group Commander arrived at Wendover just at the moment base personnel at Wendover was engaged in a long-distance telephone call with ground echelon personnel still at Dyersburg, informing the Dyersburg callers that there were no provisions on the field at Wendover to house the 451st Group.

An earlier group stationed at Wendover had not yet departed, it was said, and the field at Wendover was overcrowded. Emergency work and living quarters had to be established for the 451st Group.

A tent area was assigned to the Group to be used for the Group Commander's Headquarters, headquarters for various group officials, and living quarters for enlisted men. The tent area originally was designed to accommodate 400 men. The number of men of the 451st Group assigned to the area was more than double this number.

A single, unfurnished, unpartitioned building at the extreme end of the field, a considerable distance from the tent area mentioned above, was assigned to the group for all its group and squadron activities. A few days later individual tents were constructed on the line for the squadron activities and single building was retained for group operational and intelligence activities.

It was necessary for the group officers to pursue their work initiating the training schedule while carpenters and other workmen strove to divide the building into some semblance of sections for office separation.

This then created three separate and widely-dispersed areas in which the group had to function.

The squadron offices set up on the line began to function. High winds sweeping across the field collapsed several of the tents, and continued to collapse others for the next few days. Squadron sections had to work in the open while carpenters sought to re-raise the tents. Papers became scattered and records blown about. Training was aggravated in the face of these difficulties as additional crews arrived.

Ground crews still suffered from a lack of sufficient equipment to service airplanes, and again demonstrated their ability to make the most of what little they had, and their willingness to work under adverse conditions.

The Group Commander regarded these difficulties of installation as being beneficial in one sense. He felt it aided the group to work under disadvantages. It aided group and squadron officers to function under disadvantages, and brought out traits of ingenuity on the part of the officers and men. Combat conditions will be met with more fortitude, it was felt, due to the lack of conveniences now being enjoyed.

At this time, four Major officers arrived for duty, and were assigned as follows:

Rohrs, Leonard J., Major, A. C., 0-305378, designated Group S-1, vice Captain Williams, assigned as Executive Officer, 725th Squadron.
Reynolds, Robert L., Major, A. C., 0274166, Executive Officer, 724th Squadron.

Marshall, Raymond H., Major, A. C., 0-336972, Executive Officer, 726th Squadron.

Captain Williams was detailed to special duty in Salt Lake City to select filler personnel for the Group.

First phase training proceeded without delay. Bombing missions were flown. Medical officers began a careful check of all officer and enlisted personnel to determine fitness for overseas duty and to see that inoculations were up to date. Men were assigned regularly to the various gunnery ranges to qualify in small arms. Engineering, Communications, Armament, Operations, Intelligence and weather sections performed the necessary group and squadron training duties. Ground school classes were conducted along the lines specified by the Second Air Force.

The tent area assigned to the group proved totally inadequate, and finally the Group Commander offered to set up another tent area at the eastern extremity of the field using personnel from the group. Although the group is still far from assigned strength, the area was completed without interfering with training, and on the evening of Aug. 16, 1943, the newly-completed area was occupied and all equipment and records were shifted to it.

On the same day the group concluded the first phase of its training and on the next day, Aug. 17, started the second phase of its training. At this time the strength of the group totaled 123 officers, 980 enlisted men.

Inspired with the prospect and expectancy of overseas service in the not too remote future, officer and enlisted personnel continued to perform all duties with high morale and zest, knowing that each day brought the outfit closer to its dreamed goal of combat with the enemies of the United States.



Colonel Robert E. L. Eaton

Colonel Robert E. L. Eaton, Commander of the 451st Bomb Gp, was born in Hettiesburg, Miss., on Dec. 22, 1909.

He attended high school at Greenville, Miss., and studied at the University of Mississippi in 1926-27.

He received an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point and entered the academy in July 1927. He was graduated a 2nd Lieutenant, assigned to the Infantry, in June, 1931.

Interested in flying more than anything else, he became a student flying officer at Randolph Field on Sept. 11, 1931, and finished his primary and basic training there. From there he went directly to Kelly Field and on Oct. 14, 1932 won his wings as a pilot observer.

He was sent almost immediately to Luke Field, Hawaii where he served with the Fifth Composite Group from Dec. 1931 to Jan. 1935. Meanwhile, in January 1933, he was transferred to the Air Corps from the Infantry.

In April 1935, he was assigned to the Ninth Bomb Gp., at Mitchel Field, New York and there became Operations Officer of the Fifth Squadron. He became a 1st Lieutenant in August 1935.

In June 1936, he took a one-year special Army course in meteorology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and upon completion of the course was rated a Weather Officer.

He served in that capacity at Scott Field, Ill., from June 1937 to December 1941. Meanwhile he was made a temporary captain in September 1940, a permanent captain in June 1941, a temporary major in July 1941.

In December 1941, he was transferred to Patterson Field, Ohio, as Regional Control Officer of the Second Weather Region. On January 23, 1942 he was made a temporary lieutenant colonel (AC/HA).

In September 1942, he was sent to the Command and General Staff School for the G-3 course and upon completion of the course was assigned, on Oct. 26, 1942 to the Headquarters, AAF, Office of the Director of Weather in Washington, D.C.

On Dec. 22, 1942, he was made a lieutenant colonel (AUS), and on Jan. 5, 1943, was promoted to colonel (AUS/AC).

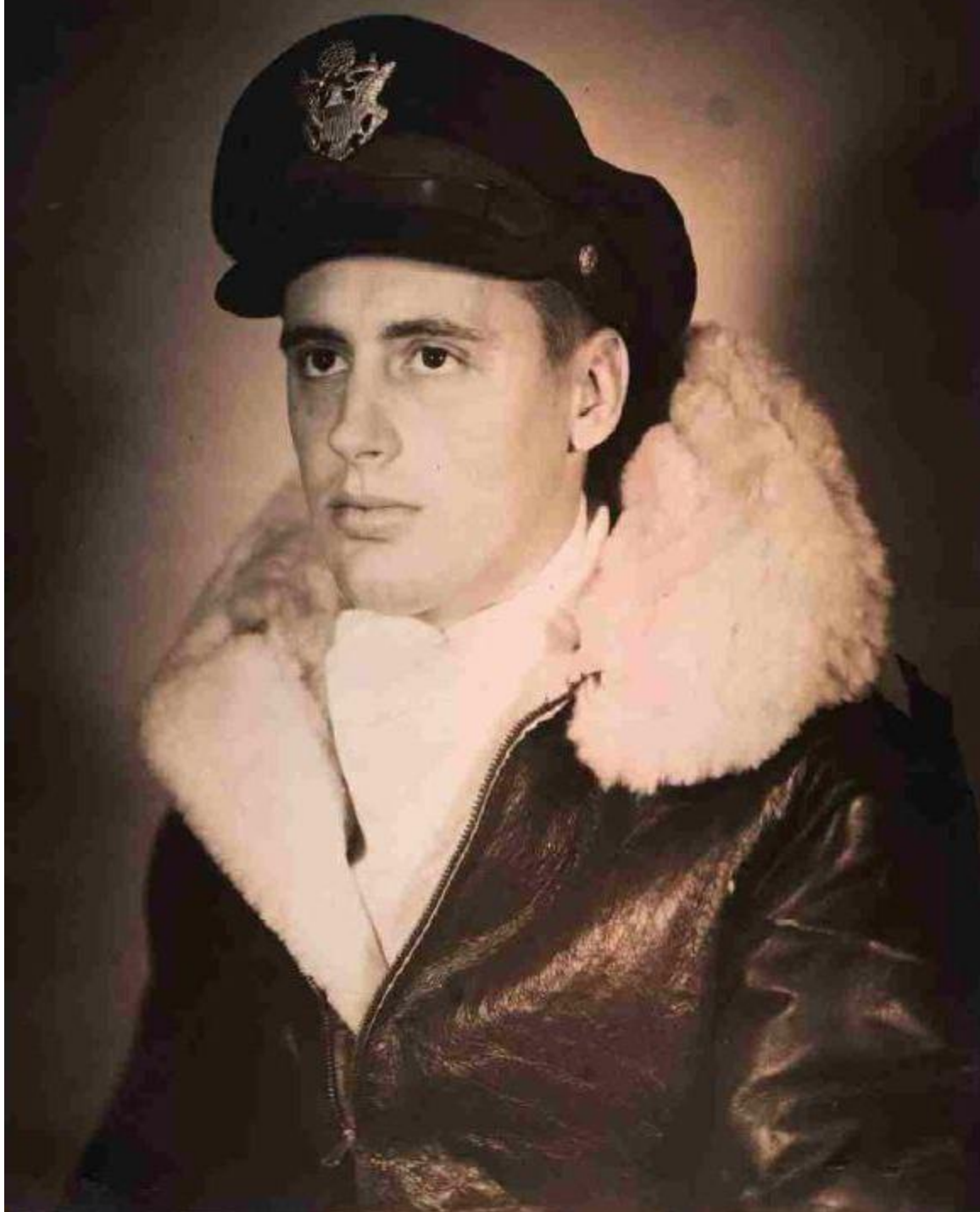
On Nov. 23, 1942, he was assigned to the Headquarters of the Second Air Force. He attended the four-engine flying school at

Smyrna, Tenn., and later attended the B-24 Standardization School at Davis Monthan Field, Tucson, Arizona, dated June 19, 1943.

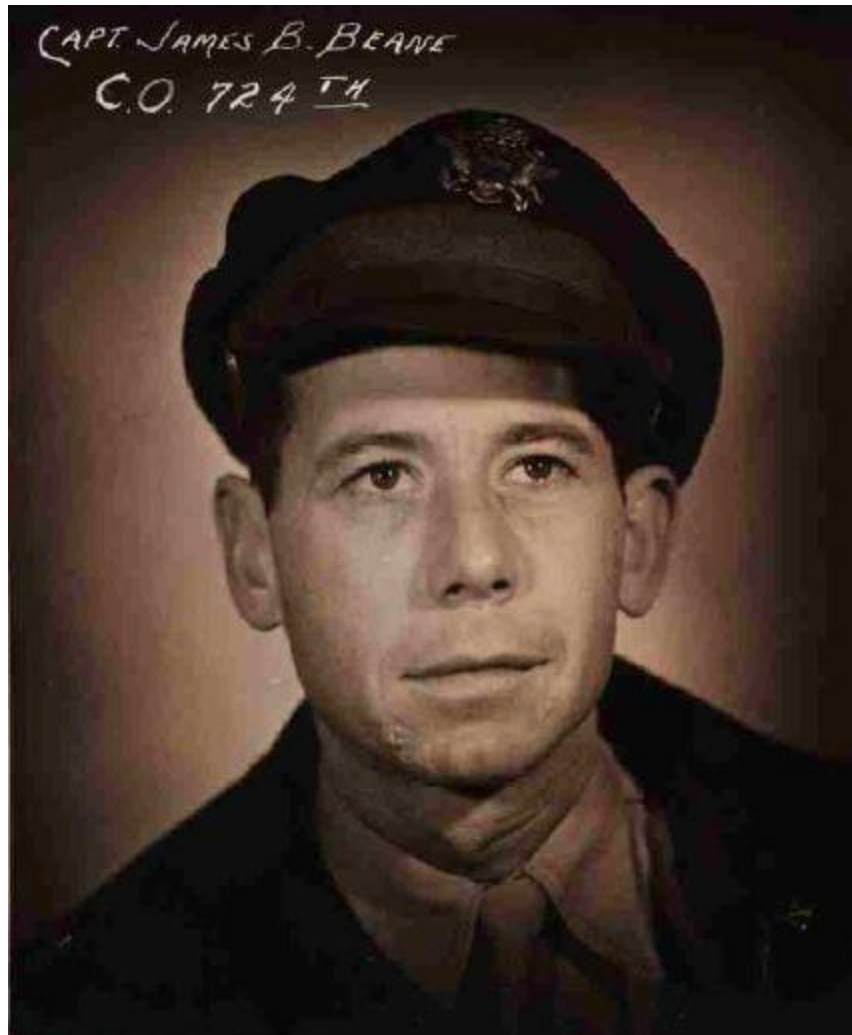


Major Donald T. Jones

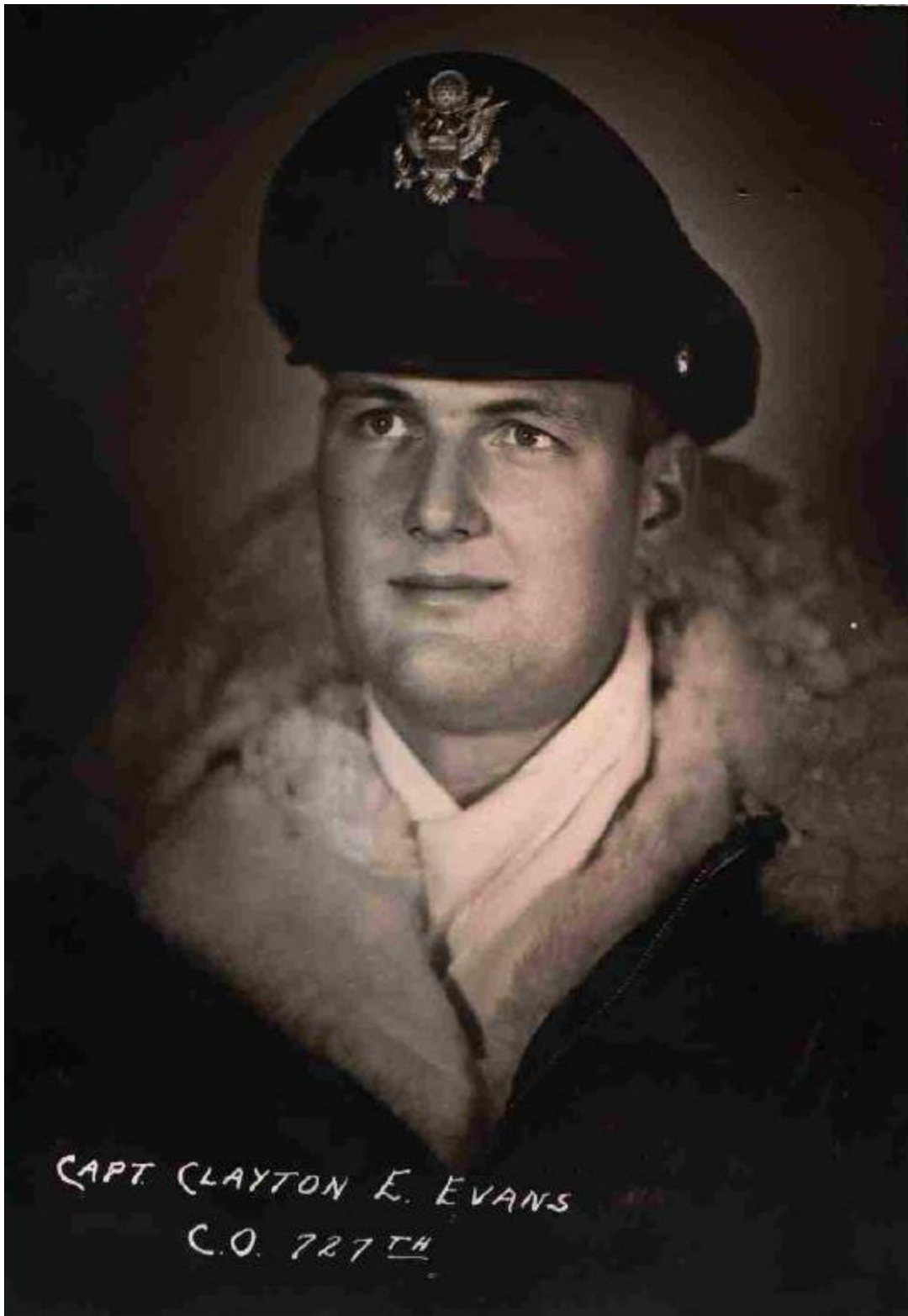
CAPT MONROE C. QUILLEN
GROUP OPERATIONS OFFICER.



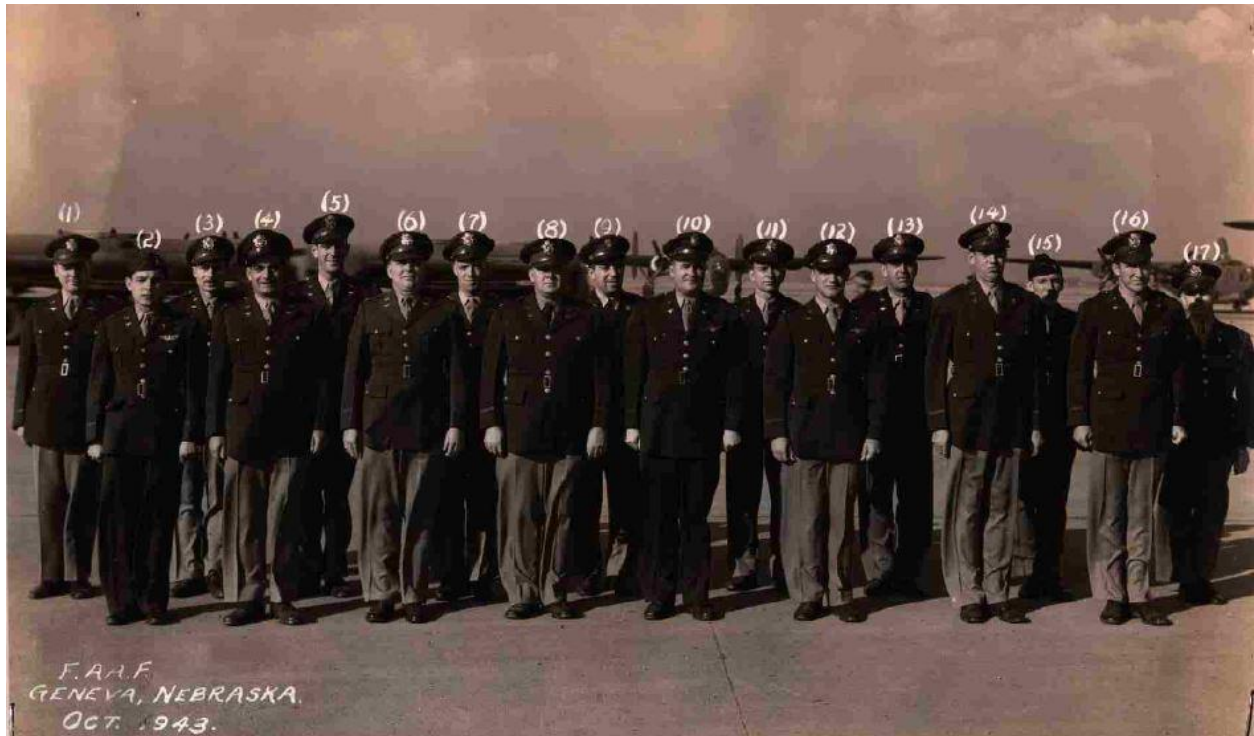
Captain Monroe C. Quillen



Captain James B. Beane



Captain Clayton E. Evans



L-R: Lt. Robert B. N. Pack; Lt. Frederick W. Hughes; Lt. Wm. N. Dwyer; Lt. Herbert F. Marco; Lt. Howard A. Lesser; Maj. Leonard J. Rohrs; Lt. Daniel J. Coffey; Maj. Donald T. Jones; Mr. Edward Reich; Col. Robert E. L. Eaton; Lt. Howard D. Steinwinter; Capt. Linnon R. Blackmon; Lt. Luther W. Bradley; Capt. Clyde L. Wagner; Lt. Ralph A. Byers; Capt. Wm. H. McManus; Lt. Wm. McNeil