

ISLAND HOPPING – THE 5TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP – 2ND LT. ANTHONY J. GOODE'S FIRST COMBAT MISSIONS - The 5th suffered devastating casualties and equipment damage during the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hickam Field and other targets on the island of Oahu on 7 December 1941. However, the group's aircrews went on to become the first U.S. military forces to take to the air following the attack.

Leaving Hawaii in November 1942 and, operating primarily from Pekoa Airfield, **Espírito Santo** in the New Hebrides Islands with a mix of B-17 and B-24 aircraft, the 5th Bombardment Group served in combat with Thirteenth Air Force during the Allied drive from the Solomons to the Philippines. The group operated out of airfields at Guadalcanal until January 1944 when it moved to Munda, New Georgia. By mid-1943 they were using the longer-ranged Consolidated B-24 Liberator exclusively. The B-24 was better suited for operations in the Pacific, having a higher speed and a larger bombload at medium altitudes. In the fall of 1943 they struck enemy bases and installations on Bougainville, New Britain, and New Ireland.

After significant bombing by B-24 aircraft on 29 February 1944 US Army 1st Cavalry Division landed on Los Negros Island at the extreme eastern end of Manus Island, the largest in the Admiralty Islands. Momote Airfield which had been heavily bomb damaged as seen in these images from early 1944 was captured on 2 March.



Immediately, Momote Airfield was repaired for use by American Army Air Force groups. By 16 March 1944 Momote was in use and further expansions were underway.



LOS NEGROS, ADMIRALTY ISLANDS, BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO

The 5th Bomb Group (H) moved into **Los Negros** scarcely a half month after General Innis P. Swift and the 1st Cavalry Division had invaded the island. First arrivals on the strip could still see the ravages of the battle which had taken place for the control of Momote Field. The pungent odor of dead Japanese lying on revetments and hidden foxholes was sickening. However, ten days after the squadrons had moved to Momote, they started on their first mission. For the first time since peacetime years in Hawaii and following their near annihilation at Pearl Harbor, the whole 5th Group was together on one field and on one island. The family was complete. Cheers arose from men on the ground when they saw for the first time Liberators of all the squadrons in one 5th Group formation.

When the USNS President Polk arrived at Los Negros, a few men disembarked. After looking around they beat a hasty retreat to the ship which, to them, immediately changed from a drab transport to a luxury liner. The men aboard were regarded with envy by the landlubbers. A number of them would occasionally sneak aboard for a good hot meal, Navy style.

The sight of Los Negros Island was anything but welcome for sore eyes. Trucks which transported the men from ships to the 5th Group Area traversed a veritable obstacle course on what appeared to be the wrong side of the road (the island was under Australian mandate — hence the left side). Once in the area the men were greeted by a group of officers who were operating out of the one and only tent thus far erected.

The new camp site lay in a patch of second-growth jungle, on the edge of a coconut plantation and adjacent to the beach. Looking about in all directions there appeared no likely camp spot, but necessity stared them in the face—armed with machetes and axes they set about the task of hacking holes in the densely wooded areas large enough to erect tents. The sun was hot and the job difficult, but soon the familiar pyramidal tent poles dotted the area. This was only the beginning. Stinging epithets were heard throughout the area when it was discovered that the tents pegs couldn't be driven through the solid coral covering the area. With the aid of picks and some well-worn dispositions, the area began to take on some semblance of a camp.

There were even Japanese snipers. Major Glascott, flight surgeon, was fired on while walking through the camp area.

By this time, without straining the imagination, it can be well understood that the new settlers on **Los Negros** were hot, tired, dirty and hungry. The first additional discouragement was the chow situation, which at this time had become rough. The hasty meal came from cans containing the staple well-known army food referred to as "corn-willie," aided and abetted by the hardest hardtack yet encountered. The hot coffee, the best part of the meal, served as a lubricant to otherwise forgotten or purposely postponed calls of nature. Another rude awakening . . . there were no latrines. It was then dusk but a detail was soon rounded up and presented with shovels and picks with instructions to dig a slit trench four feet deep and about six feet long to accommodate those who would be unable to postpone the inevitable another twelve hours. The digging went forward at great speed until about six inches below the surface of the earth a solid coral base was encountered. Needless to say, at this point the digging slowed down to a snail's pace and finally in disgust, after a very game fight, the coral won out. It boiled down to a simple matter of accepting condition as they were.

All of the men were fit subjects for baths, but there was no fresh water to be had for such purposes. It was either take a dip in the ocean or be content to sleep dirty. Four lister bags were installed in front of Group Supply to furnish drinking water which had to be hauled from a well several miles away. Because the infrequency which water carriers were able to make their run, a guard was posted at the lister bags to prevent wastage.

Early chow and then to details. Several of the officers were designated to specific jobs and each assigned a detail to render him assistance. Much had happened to this spot in the past 24 hours. Daily, officers



The 5th Group at Los Negros, Admiralty Islands; Seeadler Harbor in upper right; Hyane Lagoon where 1st Division landed, appears in upper left; beach in foreground fronts Bismarck Sea

and en-listed men were arriving from other squadrons and were greeted with cat-calls and good natured "You'll be sorry" greeting or the "You should have been here when it was rough" greeting. The daily routine for the next several days was a simple one, even though the job was difficult . . . chow, detail; chow, detail; chow and then to the "sack." The only interruptions were the rains . . . that welcome fresh water from the skies provided water for future shaves and baths at the moment and for the future.

An outdoor mess provided the food. The men ate their meals, balancing their mess kits on their knees while sitting on the ground or on miscellaneous equipment which was scattered about.

The proximity of the camp to the surf was a feature greatly enjoyed by all. Bathing and swimming in the ocean was thoroughly enjoyed despite the fact the men had to wear shoes in order not to cut their feet on the coral.

As the days dragged on with nary a variation in the twice daily hash diet, with powdered scrambled eggs (termed Hen Dust by the men) one breakfast and hot cakes the next, appetites started falling off. This, plus the hot sun, led to a reduction in vigor. One pilot remarked that he was too weak to fly the required distance on missions, only half-jokingly.

Following the "It never rains but pours" tradition, a wave of diarrhea swept through the camp of one squadron. At night the trail to the outdoor latrine bore a heavy traffic, and shadowy figures could be seen making a desperate run for it, with catastrophe frequently overtaking them before the mission was successfully completed.



5th Group PX



Latrines showers were all outdoors

A poor mail situation also caused much concern, this situation remaining for nearly the entire stay at **Los Negros**.

After several weeks a Group Theater was built and nightly movies were shown. Here the "Morale Busters," a 5th Group Hill-Billy band made its first appearance. The Group Band, called the "Coral Dusters," frequently entertained the group personnel.

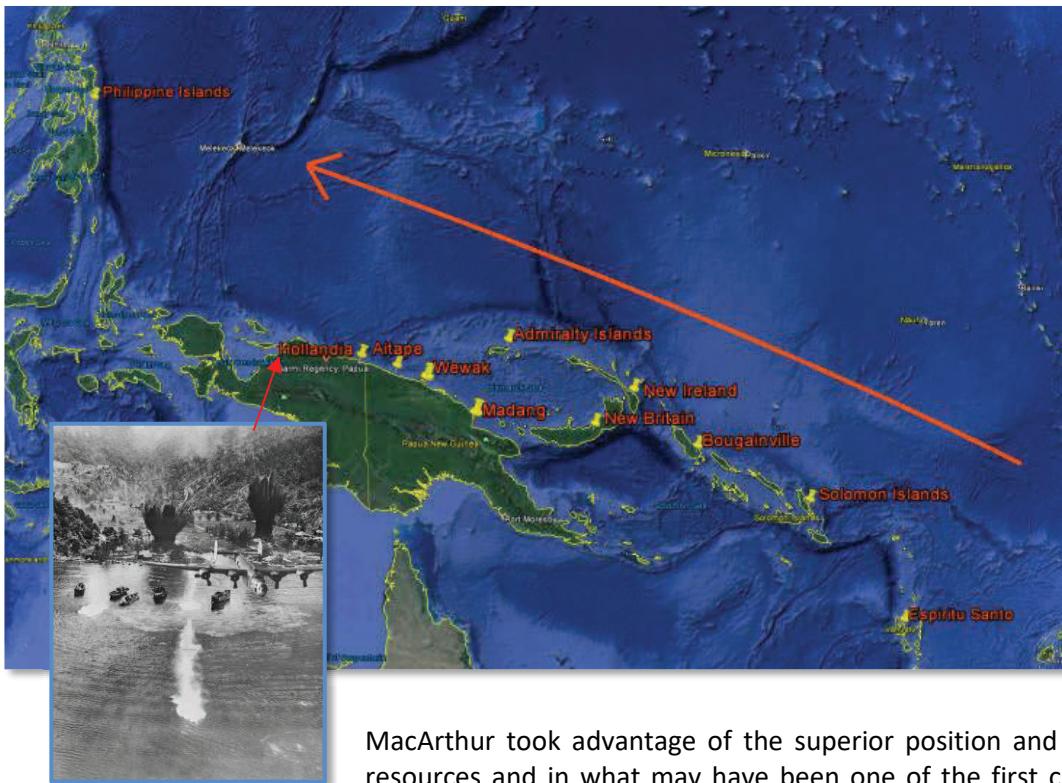
In front of the 72nd Squadron area at **Los Negros** perhaps the most important off duty activity took place. This area was a baseball diamond. From early morning to dusk, officers and enlisted men played baseball. Rain or heat was no deterrent. And the umpire's decisions were heatedly challenged.

Other men devoted themselves to making trinkets and the regular off-duty pastime of "hitting the sack." It was here at **Los Negros** that the 5th Bomb Group was nicknamed the "Bomber Barons,"



All squadrons remained at this station until the sudden move to Wakde later in 1944.

Capture of the **Admiralties** at the end of February 1944 isolated **Rabaul** and gave MacArthur a forward air base that extended his fighter range past **Wewak**. It was around this time **2nd Lt. Anthony J. Goode** arrived in the Southwest Pacific Theater. His combat crew was assigned to Momote Air Field, under Major Gerald Cass, Commanding Officer of the 72nd Bombardment Group.



MacArthur took advantage of the superior position and battle resources and in what may have been one of the first combat missions for 2nd Lt. Goode by ordering a change in plans that would leapfrog 400 miles up the New Guinea coastline to capture the major Japanese affair and supply base at Hollandia, in the Humboldt Bay area. Sixty B-24 heavy bombers escorted by long-range P-38s, went against Hollandia on 30 March, demolishing nearly all the Japanese aircraft and ending any threat to the Allies from the sky over New Guinea. A well-designed deception effort kept the Japanese expecting a blow at the Madang-Hansa area while the true focus shifted to the west at Hollandia and Aitape, splitting the Japanese forces on New Guinea in half. On 22 April, three landings were made by the U.S. Sixth Army, two in the Hollandia area and one to the east at Aitape. On 26 April the pincers closed on Hollandia and the few surviving Japanese fled to the jungle in hopes of reaching Sarmi, about 150 miles to the northwest.



During the first four months of 1944, while the 5th Group was blasting targets on New Ireland, New Britain, Bougainville, Truk and knocking out Rabaul, the Japs were beginning to roll rapidly backwards. Our forces invaded Eniwetok in the Marshalls and Manus and Los Negros Islands in the Admiralties. In April the 5th Group received the following commendations for a job well done:

Subject: .Message of Congratulations To: CO'S, all units, 13 AAF

With the announcement of the virtual completion of the South Pacific campaign, except for mopping up and starving out operations, I can tell you that no greater fighting team has ever been put together. From the desperate days of Guadalcanal to the smooth steam-rolling days of Bougainville and the easy seizure of Green and Emirau, all U.S. and Allied services put aside every consideration but the one goal of wiping out the Japanese. As you progressed, your techniques and teamwork improved until at the last Amphibious, Sea and Air Forces were working as one beautiful piece of precision machinery that crushed and baffled out hated enemy in every encounter. Your resourcefulness, tireless ingenuity, co-operation, and indomitable fighting spirit from a battle pattern that will everywhere be an inspiration. And a great measure of sky blazing, sea sweeping, jungle smashing of the combat forces goes to the construction gangs and service organizations that bull-dozed bases out of the jungle, brought up the beans and bullets and supplies. You never stopped moving forward, and the Japanese never could get to launch a sustained counterattack. You beat them wherever you found them, and you never stopped looking for them and tearing into them.

Well done,



ADMIRAL HALSEY.

"To the nine Liberators who fought through weather without their cover, and plastered the city of Rabaul. Well done."



GENERAL MITCHELL - COMAIRSOLS



Rabaul Harbor – April 1944

