



The following text appears in the opening pages of the Pictorial History and provides "the history of the Group from date of activation to the beginning of operations in the European Theatre of Operations."

The 447th Bombardment Group (H) was activated in accordance with War Department letter AG 320.2 (4--4-43) OB-I-AFDPU-M, dated April 6, 1943. The order of activation was published in General Order No.58 from Headquarters of the Second Air Force, Fort George Wright, Spokane, Washington, dated April 22, 1943 and our station of activation was Ephrata Army Air Base, Ephrata, Washington. Key Officer personnel were assigned as follows: Colonel Hunter Harris, Jr. from Second Air Force, Fort George Wright, Washington. Colonel Harris attended the Virginia Military Academy, University of Georgia and was graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1932. Since that time he has seen service in the Philippine Islands from 1937 to 1940 and formed and commanded the Harris Provisional Group here and in England before his assignment, to the 447th. Colonel Harris' home is in Athens, Georgia. Colonel Harris assumed command of the 447th Bombardment Group under 447th Bombardment Group General Order No. 1, dated May 23, 1943. Lt. Colonel Robert D. McDonald was assigned from 18th Replacement Wing, Salt Lake City, Utah, as Group Executive Officer. Commanding Officers of Bombardment Squadrons within the 447th Bombardment Group were assigned as follows: 708th Squadron, Captain Frank M. Newman, from 88th Bombardment Group, AAB, Walla Walla, Washington; 709th Squadron; Captain Lloyd W. Sheppard, from 383rd Bombardment Group, MB Rapid City, South Dakota; 710th Squadron, Captain Clarence L. Elder, from 383rd Bombardment Group A AB, Rapid City, South Dakota; 711th Squadron, Captain Edward J. McRay, Jr. from 383rd Bombardment Group, Rapid City, South Dakota. Further key personnel assigned during the month of May included: Captain Alva F. Cleary, Group adjutant, from the 395th Bombardment Group, AAB, Ephrata, Washington, Captain John S. Blyth, Group S-2, from the 383rd Bombardment Group, Rapid City, South Dakota; Captain William H. Walker, Group S-3, from the 88th Bombardment Group, AAB, Walla Walla, Washington, (Major George Y. Jumper replaced Captain Walker in September as Group Operations Officer.) M/Sgt. Clyde P. Vandergrift and T/Sgt. Charles Lockridge assisted the above officers in establishing our first Headquarters in one end of a former mess hall at Ephrata which was shared with the 401st Bombardment Group, undergoing activation at the same time. The original mission of this Group was to form a Heavy Bombardment Group, B-17, to begin training in the Second Air Force as an O.T.U. unit.

Our schedule for acquisition of strength, set down in General Order, Second 1 Air Force. No.58, was as follows:

By June 1, 1943: 25 percent of strength was to be gained.

By July 1, 1943: 50 percent of strength was to be gained.

By July 25, 1943 the Group was to be at full or 100 percent strength.

The following figures reveal actual progress made in the development of the 447th Bombardment Group from a 20 percent cadre as of May 23, 1943 to full strength on October 9, 1943. May 23, 1943, 20 percent cadre of Officers and Enlisted Men; July 5, 1943, 83 officers and 181 enlisted men; July 31, 1943, 102 officers and 1105 enlisted men; October 9, 1943, 2,024 officers and enlisted men.

To enable operational training to begin without delay, key personnel of both Group and Air Echelons were ordered to the Army Air Forces School of Applied Tactics, Orlando, Florida. Lt. Colonel Robert D. McDonald, Group Executive Officer, remained at Ephrata in charge of receiving, assigning, and processing officers and enlisted men being daily assigned to bring the Group to full operational strength. On May 30, 1943 and May 31, 1943 respectively, ground and air echelons comprised of 59 officers and 89 enlisted men left Ephrata for Orlando. Upon arrival thereat intensive ground school classroom and lecture work was begun on June 9, 1943. *Brigadier General Hume Peabody* addressed the entire Group of Officers and men at 0800 on June 9, 1943, before the first class started, outlining the purpose of AAFSAT and describing its facilities. The first two days of the course were devoted to orientation lectures in the Bombardment Auditorium attended by all. Lecturing officers presented the latest set up of Naval, Army and Air Forces organization; stressing the interrelationship between Air, Ground and Naval forces as they had been developed and found expedient in actual theaters of operation in World War II. After these first two days of orientation, class schedules were arranged according to a plan which enabled key personnel to carry as "major" subjects lectures and classroom exercises and demonstrations relating to their respective departments and duties. An average of one class or field trip per day brought the entire cadre together for such activities as camouflage tours, ordnance weapons demonstrations, synthetic devices exhibitions, and displays of Heavy Bombardment equipment. Outstanding among the above was the ordnance demonstration and synthetics tour. Great personal freedom was allowed while at AAFSAT and officers and men alike enjoyed the hospitality of the city of Orlando. The Amherst Apartments in Orlando became "provisional" group headquarters for the officers of the 447th Group.

It was on July 19, 1943 that our four model crews together with ships from the 9th Bombardment Group, Signal Hill, Orlando, Florida, ferried the 447th Bombardment Group personnel from AAFSAT to AAB, Brooksville, Florida, where we joined the 1st Bombardment Squadron of the 9th Bombardment Group for our field training period. Officers and men were quartered in a simulated "theatre of Operations" set-up at a distance from the line, operations building and tower. Life and work at Brooksville has proved to be one of the most profitable as well as agreeable periods of training which this Group has experienced. A total of nine simulated bombardment missions were run during

the period from June 19 to June 30. Valuable experience was gained by all personnel. An operational set-up was established for us by the 9th Bombardment Group and the 1st Bombardment Squadron to simulate methods and procedures employed by the VIIIth Air Force in England. Field Orders were received at Brooksville by TWX at any during the day or night to be carried out in accordance with the order. Usually this was within a few hours after receipt. Objectives were heavy bombardment targets in southern cities such as New Orleans, Charleston, Mobile, etc., and simulated Naval targets in the Gulf. Missions were flown with the 448th and the 449th, B-24, Bombardment Groups stationed at other AAFSAT stations. The "real thing" developed during one mission when our aircraft were ordered to abandon mission as planned to conduct a sea-search patrol off the coast of Florida. S-2 and S-3 worked in closest cooperation in planning, briefing and reporting the results of each mission. The outstanding lesson learned in these operations was the necessity for closest cooperation between S-2 and S-3. Formation flying was practiced, discussed, and practiced again by the flying personnel. The night our planes ran the radar controlled search-light belts around AAFSAT proved to all the outstanding tactical importance of that weapon.

To improve facilities for training and development of strength while part of our Group was at Orlando, the personnel remaining at Ephrata moved, by rail, for Camp Rapid, South Dakota, for training under the 17th Bombardment Wing Cadre Training Command, arriving there at June 13, 1943.

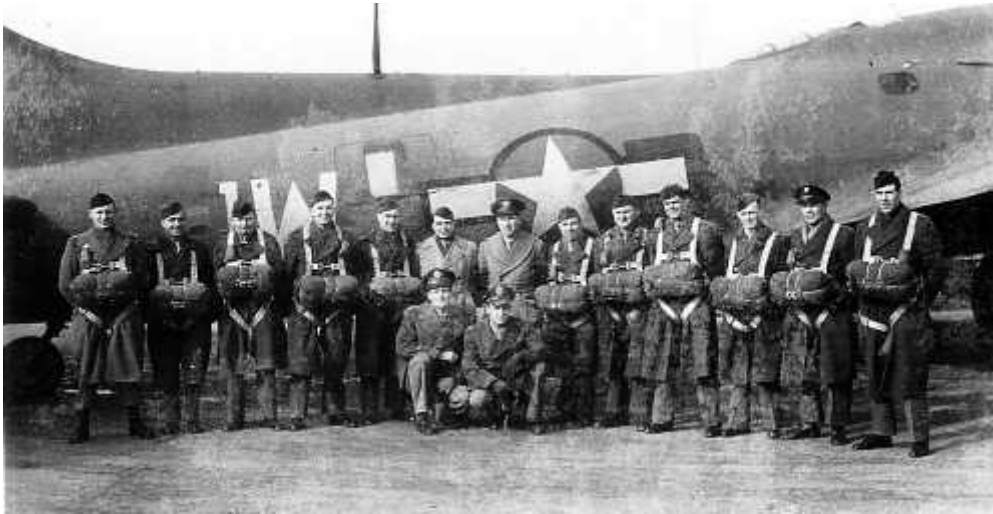
Having completed training provided by AAFSAT, the key personnel left Brooksville on July 1, 1943 for Camp Rapid. The air echelon arrived at Rapid City Army Air Base, South Dakota, on July 4, 1943 and the ground echelon arrived at Camp Rapid July 5, 1943.

Camp Rapid and the cadre training command thereat was established to enable Heavy Bombardment Groups to amalgamate strength and to give all personnel training in use of Air Corps weapons, to stress military discipline and bearing and to instill the "going to war" spirit into the minds of all. Enlisted men and officers alike entered into a commando training routine of close order drill, calisthenics and body building exercises and training practice with rifle and pistol. Reveille sounded at 0430 each morning and by 0700 every man and officer was engaged in strenuous activity. Major Cyril Carmichael, post commander, ordered formal Retreats three days a week and at these times the drill practice of the men and the command and formation courses pursued by the officers produced the smartest sort of military appearance. The military esprit de corps of the 447th was at top form by the end of July. We were thinking as a Group with a tremendous job ahead of us, and we were eager to get going.

To facilitate administrative routines for our rapidly developing training program, several changes and additions to the staff were made. Lt. Colonel McDonald was relieved of his duties as Executive officer, and Major Wilfred Beaver assumed that office. Major Beaver saw active duty with the RAF during World War I. After graduating from the RAF Training School at Oxford, England, he was commissioned Captain in 1917. Captain Beaver was credited with destroying 19 enemy planes and subsequently awarded

the Military Cross. Captain Beaver came back into active duty June 25, 1943. Squadron executive officers were assigned as follows: 708th Squadron, Major Harald T. Lund on June 20, 1943; 709th Squadron, Major Royal R. Stewart on June 21, 1943; 710th Squadron, Major Lee C. Wood on June 30, 1943; and 711th Squadron, Major Arthur H. Bell on June 15, 1943.

On July 31, 1943, the 447th Bombardment Group left Camp Rapid, a hardened and high spirited body of officers and men, and arrived at AAB, Harvard, Nebraska, August 2, 1943, to begin first phase training. During the first week of our stay at Harvard every hand took up the task of whipping empty shells of buildings into proper shape for getting down to the job of training. Group Headquarters and Operations were partitioned a railed off, and desks were shunted from side to side since the business of administrating a Bombardment Group abides not a day's delay. Group S-2 took the War Room building in hand, and in short order had a shop declared by all to be "Outstanding."



Lt. Col. Harris (center) with command staff
(photo courtesy of Col. E.D. Bigelow)

On August 5, 1943, Major Charles H. Bowman was named deputy Group Commander. Major Bowman graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1939 and did five months service in Australia and Java immediately after our entry into war against Japan. In recognition of his activities in that theatre, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Major Bowman remained on DS with the Bowman Provisional Group from August 5, 1943, to August 30, 1943 at AAB, Pendleton, Oregon.

Among the outstanding achievements of individuals during training was that of Captain David Rowland who as pilot of one of our aircraft displayed great courage and proficiency in making a forced landing of his ship which was involved in an accident, Captain Rowland has been recommended for citation by Colonel Harris. Two major flying accidents occurred during training. On August 28, 1943, two aircraft were destroyed in a mid-air collision. Six officers and eight enlisted men were killed. On October 22, 1943, five officers and nine enlisted men lost their lives when a B-17 crashed due to foul weather encountered on a routine flight.

Approximately forty promotions were granted to group officers during September and October; Captains Cleary, Newman, and Sheppard received their Majorities; Major Bowman was raised to Lt. Colonel; and Lt. Colonel Harris was made full Colonel.

During the training phases, prominent staff officers visited the base for inspection tours. *General Eubank*, Acting Commanding General, II Bomber Command, visited the base August 15, 1943. The General inspected the Officers' club, Officers' mess and living quarters of both Officers and enlisted men of combat crews. The General stated that he was pleased with the condition and arrangement of the combat crew quarters. Staff officers, Squadron Commanders, and Executive officers met in conference with General Eubank. On August 7, 1943, *General Peck*, Commanding General, 17th Bombardment Operational Training Wing, with Colonel Rinehart, Colonel Barton, and Major George Dent made a brief inspection visit. On October 7, 1943, Colonel Reed, having replaced General Peck as Commanding General of the 17th Bombardment Wing, made an inspection for the purpose of observing the development and progress of our training program. (*newspaper clipping courtesy of Art Durante, Jr.*)



Due to the isolated location of the Harvard base, recreational facilities were almost entirely those offered on the Post. The Service Club was opened early in August under the supervision of Miss Mary Kerns. Facilities included an up-to-date library and periodical collection and a snack bar. Special Services arranged weekly dances and athletic competitions for the 447th Bombardment Group personnel. A "Wema" fund was procured by the special services officer for athletic and recreational equipment which will be the permanent property of the Group. National Service Life Insurance drives succeeded in signing up approximately 98 percent of the officers and men and War Bond Subscriptions and allotments are carried by approximately 25 percent of the officers and men.

As third phase training neared completion, Air Force inspections made a series of thorough going investigations of our tactical skill and administrative and maintenance routines. The reports made by the inspecting officers assisted each department in correcting deficiencies. Our over-all status was declared superior and our spirit and diligence commended most highly. On October 24, 1943, Major John J. McNaboe,

recently returned from duty with the 91st Bombardment Group in England, spent three days with the 447th Bombardment Group conducting discussions and demonstrations in VIIIth Air Force procedures for briefing, interrogation and intelligence routine.

Today, at the end of our formal training period, we await the tomorrow which will demonstrate to all with what deadly effectiveness the inspired leadership of our commanding officer, our careful training, and determined spirit shall lead our B-17G's over the roofless fortress of the enemy.