Dear Thirsty 13th members, relatives, and friends,

Since the newsletter March 11, the squadron history advanced yet again, due to the kindness of others. My friend Leo Clevenger found two photos. John Little, the son of a Marine pilot, shared scans of his dad’s flight log, listing three of our C-47s, and mailed me documents.

The nephew of our mechanic Aubin Lamb emailed me a photo and stories. The daughter, Michal, of radio operator Lenard Davis emailed me photos of his diary. The daughter of radar mechanic Gunderson mailed documents. The sons of Cleere, Heatherly, and Zechar shared discharge paper information. Ewan Stevenson of Archaehistoria found a commemorative stamp.

To each of you, on behalf of the members, relatives and friends of The Thirsty 13th, thank you!

Seth P. Washburne, Squadron Historian
April 23, 2018

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1. Additional History

a. 1942: C-47 Lady Eve named after a Movie Title

On March 18 my friend Leo Clevenger in Fort Worth emailed me the photo above left on Vella Lavella of a marine driving nurses from the 801st MAES, and in the background is our C-47 “Lady Eve.” Leo added: “I was curious as to why the guys named their plane ‘Lady Eve,’ so I watched the movie on YouTube.”

In the book on page 110 I write that the pilot, Bergstrom, referred to his girlfriend as Lady Eve, and this explains where he got her nickname. Our nose art is shown above center, and the lettering is the same as on the movie poster at right, with block letters, leaning to the right, and with a similar A and Y. The snake has a white collar, and black bow tie, similar to Henry Fonda, and a monocle.

The movie was released February 25, 1941, titled “The Lady Eve,” and was one of the top-10 films of 1941. It is about a card shark and his daughter, also a card shark, who plan to con a wealthy beer company owner’s son, who is a snake expert, but the daughter falls in love with him. Her name is Jean, but at one point she pretends to be aristocratic Lady Eve Sidwich from England.

The poster above right was used in Australia, and the U.S. one is at right, with different lettering. Some of our first 13 planes had their nose art painted on in San Francisco, and so perhaps an Australia poster for this movie was dropped off in San Francisco, or a second U.S. poster has this lettering. Alternatively, the nose art for this plane may have been painted on overseas, e.g. in New Caledonia. Thank you, Leo, for determining the original source of the name of this C-47!


On March 30 I received an email from a John Little, who was trying to find airplanes his father flew during WWII. His father was Major Joseph R. Little, Jr., a pilot in marine squadron VMJ-253, and a top officer of Marine Air Group 25 (MAG-25, which included VMJ-152). John emailed me scans of his dad’s logbook entries, below, showing that on 10/15/42, his dad flew our C-47 118576, The Nomad, to Espiritu Santo, with MAG-25 executive officer Marshall, and two days later flew it roundtrip to Guadalcanal. The next day he flew our 118590, Billie, back to New Caledonia. 10/14/42 was a busy day, as noted on the next page, and perhaps on 10/15 the other marine planes were away or down for maintenance. It was surprising a Marine flew our planes only 6 days after we arrived in New Caledonia, but nice to see this cooperation between branches.
I found the note at right that, on 11/1/42, MAG-25 had only 20 R4Ds, so our 13 C-47s were 39% of the combined 33 planes. [John found the R4D his dad flew to New Caledonia in August 1942 is now N193DP. Coca-Cola bought it in 1952, and again in 2012.] On 2/6/43 Maj. Little flew our 118581, Comanche Belle, from Espiritu Santo to Guadalcanal.

On April 4 I received in the mail from John Little many articles by Marines about South Pacific Combat Air Transport, abbreviated SCAT, to which the Marines and 13th TCS were assigned from late 1942 until July 1944. These had many details relevant to the 13th TCS.

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**From “SCAT,” by Maj. Gen. Norman J. Anderson and Col. William K. Snyder, both USMC:**

“When flying to Guadalcanal in 1942] Electronic navigational aides were of little help. Rudimentary transmissions, without identification, were emitted at each airfield for homing purposes, but low power drastically limited their usefulness over ranges in excess of 15 miles. In many critical instances, these transmitters were found to be idled for unscheduled maintenance, forcing reliance on dead reckoning [to islands] bristling with lofty peaks.

“Low cloud cover made drift estimating unreliable. A flight from Guadalcanal to a speck in the ocean such as Efate, with no fuel taken at Guadalcanal, required something on the order of 6 over-water hours. Landfall had to be made at low enough altitude to pick up the white strip of a coral beach. This was often difficult due to poor visibility.

“If visual contact with land was not established within 10 minutes after estimated landfall, only one saving procedure remained: a change of course to the center of the nearest major island. In this case, New Caledonia, 2 1/2 hours away, became the emergency destination. [Our pilot Cecil Petty who landed on a coral reef as described on page 172 may have headed for New Caledonia because he was following this procedure.]

“Because of the urgency of the task, in September and October 1942 no coherent or comprehensive record exists of MAG-25 [i.e. there are no war diary flight lists for these months].”

**From “The Story of SCAT, Part 1,” by Capt. Robert Joseph Allen and 1st Lt. Otis Carney:**

“In October, 1942] an immense number of aircraft, engines and fuel were needed at Guadalcanal. An acute gas shortage developed on October 13. If gas were not flown into Henderson on the 14th, combat ships wouldn't fly, leaving the whole beachhead at the mercy of the Jap air strength. In that October alone the SCAT pilots flew into Guadalcanal more than 105 tons of ammunition, gas, and supplies, five tons of mail, and 339 passengers. On their trips out they evacuated 498 wounded, who would not have lived if they remained at primitive field hospitals.

“There came dire need for engines and other spares with the increase in air combat in the fall of ’42. [SCAT] flyers saw ships grossing up to and sometimes in excess of 30,500 lbs. In contrast, commercial airlines of the same type under CAA rules are permitted a gross 25,200 lbs.

“Guiding Wildcat fighters and Douglas dive bombers gave the SCAT pilots a new role. Transport pilots led 65 combat planes to Guadalcanal [in Oct. 1942]. It became a regular part of the SCAT schedule to lead flights of fighter craft to the ever-widening Northern battle fronts.

“SCAT now [estimated in May 1944; this published in December 1944] has a timetable with numbered trips: No. 2, departing on the hour for Munda, Treasury Island and Bougainville; No. 4 for all the Solomons airports; and No. 6, leaving Munda for Sydney and Auckland; with 72 scheduled plane arrivals and departures in one recent day. SCAT had an average of 14 trips a day between Espiritu Santos and Guadalcanal, and 30 round trips a day between Guadalcanal and the combat areas. For a time, on the combat zone runs, the boxcars were not out of sight of one or another between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.”

**Unidentified Source:** “From a high-ranking officer in the South Pacific command: ‘SCAT [MAG-25 and the 13th TCS] saved the ‘Canal, and don’t let anyone tell you anything different.’”
c. 1943-1944: Stories Retold from Aubin B. Lamb, Mechanic, 12/43-8/45

Aubin Boulware Lamb was from Richmond, Va., born in 1921, and is shown at right from the squadron book “Two Years” in April 1945, at Biak. His nephew, Bobby, recently emailed me several stories and a photo.

Lamb (Airplane Mechanic, per nephew Bobby): “I remember my uncle saying that when he flew from the USA John Wayne was on the plane. He walked down the aisle asking if anyone wanted to play chess. My uncle, who liked chess, always regretted that he didn’t have the nerve to accept his offer.

“That plane for a time lost its radio bearing, and the pilot warned that they might have to ditch in the ocean. I think he said that they landed on Christmas Island. John Wayne’s ultimate destination was Australia to entertain the troops. [Wayne performed there around December 27, 1943, and so Lamb is estimated to have joined the 13th TCS in December 1943, at Espiritu Santo in New Hebrides.]

“In January 1944, my father, Brockenbrough (“Brokie”) Lamb, Jr., was a Navy lieutenant and on his way to Naval Advanced Base 156 on Efate in the New Hebrides. He surprised his brother when my uncle was in his barracks on his bed reading a Popular Science magazine. A naval officer my father had known at the University of Virginia named Johnny Simpson took the photo [at right, with Aubin on the right] outside of Aubin’s barracks [estimated by the shrubs at the top of page 377].

“My uncle said that on a holiday he and a couple of others in his unit, perhaps including an officer, drove all around New Caledonia.

“He told me on several occasions that First Sergeant Giokaris asked him if he wanted to be the crew chief for General Kenney [appointed Commander of the Far East Air Forces in June 1944, over the Fifth, Thirteenth, and Seven Air Forces, and considered the best Air Force leader ever], but he liked his present unit and declined the appointment out of loyalty to his unit [the 13th TCS].

“He was very proud of his WWII service, and often mentioned the islands on which his unit served, including Biak. I have his uniform.” [Aubin’s brother in 1945 became the commanding officer of NAB 156.]


d. 1945: Diary of Lenard E. Davis, Radio Operator, 12/44-11/45

In December 2017 I was excited to find the daughter, Michal (“Mike”), of radio operator Lenard Davis, pictured at right at Biak in May 1945, and to learn he had a diary. Michal typed this up, and her daughter-in-law emailed this to me on March 30. He is the first person I have seen to have written down the cargo on each mission, and had other helpful notes.

He joined the squadron December 7, 1944, at Biak, and in January flew 51:40 hours. His notes start in February. He logged 19:30 of combat time. For March he had 112:30 hours, including 6 hours of combat time.

Highlights of his diary are on the following two pages.
2/28: “Oro Bay to Biak hauling truck [jeep]. [This is the first mention of the 13th TCS landing at Oro Bay, located where shown at right.]


3/6: Mindoro to Clark Field. Passed over Manila, Corregidor & Bataan.

3/7: Went to San Fernando & Angeles. Paid $2.50 (5 pesos) for chicken dinner. The people are half hostile. You can't trust them, and we don't.

3/8: Clark Field to Mindoro to Dipolog. Traded for straw hat, knives, eggs. We were hauling infantry [to Dipolog, page 638] to help ground troops [local guerilla militias].

3/9: Dulag to Mindoro to Dipolog. Hauled gas drums. I traded for a monkey, three more hats, and another knife.

3/10: Dulag to Dipolog, hauled more gas, then to Morotai and Biak. Really glad to get back.

3/19: Biak to Middleburg to Morotai to Leyte. Hauled mail.

3/23: Biak had air raid. Wrecked two P-38s, one C-54, and Air Transport Command hangar. 70 killed, about 150 wounded. Four of our planes damaged [this on page 629].

3/25: Went to Sunday School, pulled a 50-hour inspection [on the radio equipment].

3/27: Grounded for a while so some old men could go on flying pay, believe it or not.

3/28: I am very happy, really glad I got time off. Dipolog was taken back by the Japs.

3/29: Took 18-word code check and 10-word Blinsen [?] check. Passed both.

4/2: Morotai to Biak. Evacuated wounded on ship 900 [provides a date #900 was in 13th.]

4/3: Pulled 100 hour on ship radio.

4/4: Had two red alerts.


4/11: Heard I was signed [sic] to a C-46. Everyone scared of them.

4/12: Assigned to C-46. They have really been cracking up around here.

4/26: Dulag to Badian to Mindanao to Biak. [This is the first mention of Badian airfield, near the red marker at right, about 15 miles east of Dipolog. The exact airfield location has not been found.]

5/12: Flew 50 min in a C-46. Local flight.

5/14: I guess the C-46 is a good ship.

5/16: Points system. I have a total of 79 points, but they are not going to let any air force men out anyway. I have three battle stars. [This is the earliest mention I have seen of the point system.]

5/19: Biak to Morotai in C-46. The weather was really rough. We had an engine cut out in the rough weather. I really thought we were gone.


6/7: Meat run Tacloban to Malabang [in an aerial photo in the February letter; this the first mention of us getting food there] to Morotai to Biak: Got about 8 pounds of steak.

6/8: Had steak. It was really good.

6/11: Meat run from Tacloban to Malabang, back to Tacloban to Cebu.

6/12: Broke flap. Stayed in Cebu. It was really a bombed-out city.

6/14: Dulag to Cebu, Iloilo, Bacolod, Badian, Davao, back to Dulag.

6/16: [Unreadable] to Dulag. Hauled about $2,000 of whiskey.

6/17: Dulag to Malabang meat run, to Morotai to Biak. Had steak this evening.

6/20: Slept [sic].

Notes missing until July 29.
7/29: “[Mechanic Ron] Darling's C-46 crashed. He went to hospital with us to see Brian [?] and another man. Foote got out. Only one got out alive. It really left an impression on the guys around here.

7/30: Became first operator signed up to new ship 24, C-46 8349 [pictured on pages 8 here].

7/31: Only one guy out of the crash, but died a day later. No one knows how he got out.

8/1: [Reached total time] 500 hours. Biak to Morotai to Dulag.

8/2: Dulag to Samar to Dulag: flew short hops from Dulag to Samar [for supplies].

8/3: We had another ship crash in Dulag, a C-47. No one was hurt; they were really lucky.

8/6: The squadron is getting ready to move to Dulag.

8/10: Dulag to Peleliu in Palau. This is really a beautiful island.

8/14: Rumors about the war being over are coming thick and fast.

8/15: Today the war is over, though I still find it hard to believe. I hope my luck holds out till I get home.

8/16: C-46 cracked up, killed engineer and pilot [not in the 13th TCS, squadron not known].

8/18: Dulag to Laoag to Okinawa (Owasi).

8/19: Owasi to Naha to Dulag. We hit a storm; I thought it was curtains for sure; fell 3,000 ft.

8/20: C-47 _______ over down on the strip.

8/21: Dulag to Clark.

8/22: Clark to Motobu strip on Okinawa, and back to Clark: Hauled a 2 1/2 ton truck [jeep].

8/23: Clark to Motobu [written as Motubie, also on prior day]. We landed so hard we busted the tail wheel. I really thought I was a goner.

8/24: Okinawa to Dulag.

8/25: I don't care for the place here on Dulag.

8/26: Biak was really a nice place. The Flips are dirty, say what some may, and they have that peculiar smell which I can't stand. The men are the laziest form of animal I have ever seen; the women seem to be rather ambitious, though. I just can't like them.

9/3: Saw a C-47 blow tire on takeoff. Left with her pilot sweating out landing.

9/4: Dulag to Clark to Okinawa Kadena strip. Carried air corps supply equipment.

9/5: Kadena to Clark to Laoag. Crane broke and they couldn't load us so were there a day. Went to tour, and it [Laoag] is really a modern little town. Running water, a theater, electrified, and ice cream and hamburgers, etc. Just like hell, though.

9/7: Laoag to Kadena: hauling trailer and wheels to Tokyo.

9/8: Kadena to Tokyo air field. Flew over Tokyo and Yokohama.


9/10: Got sick of typhoon all the way. Stayed in Laoag all day, weathered in.

9/11: Laoag-Clark-Laoag

9/12: A C-47 [not ours] burst into fire on takeoff. Pilot was real burned. Laoag to Okinawa (Garnet strip) to Kadena to pick up prisoners of war. Saw a C-46 crack up.

9/13: Carried POWs to Nichols Field. Then back to Dulag. Almost flew into another plane.


10/15: Dulag to Luna [west coast of Luzon, north of Baguio] and [Nanolia?].”

This was the last diary entry. Lenard Davis arrived home January 3, 1946.

These stories provided new destinations, cargo descriptions, and other great observations. Davis also has some helpful photos. I hope to visit his daughter, Michal, at some point, to see the original diaries, and to scan the photos. Thank you Michal.
e. 1945: Documents from Norton A. Gunderson, Radar Repair, 1/45-9/45

On April 7, 2018, I received in the mail a package of documents from the daughter, Joann, of 1945 radar mechanic Gunderson. She included a January 15, 1945, order from the 92nd replacement battalion at APO 714 in New Guinea transferring nine men to the 403rd TCG, four which went to the 13th TCS: Epperhart, Friedman, Getter and Gunderson, who were all radar mechanics. This provided dates these four joined the squadron.

Joann included a poem, written by an E. Andrew Platt. I did not have his name before, and on Ancestry.com found his draft registration card from 6/30/42, with his father’s name and address, but Ancestry has nothing else about either of them, e.g. the 1940 census does not list his father at this address. I have not added him to the roster yet. The poem refers to the four names above, with Gunderson as Gundy and Epperson as Eppie, plus Clyde Arthur, Stanley Nogaj, and Boyd Wiseman. The poem confirms they were all in radar repair, and all there at the same time.

The Eight Balls
by E. Andrew Platt

Sure they are the radar crew
They’re but eight men tried and true,
Busy as they do their work
From which task they do not shirk.
This they do all the day through.

Wiseman is their radar chief
And his job is no relief,
Always busy at some task
Answers questions, they may ask.
Then listens to every beef.

Dapper Nogaj, he’s the boy
To all he spreads his own joy
Like we smear butter on bread;
War is hell – one day he said.
Then turned right around in bed.

Then Friedman is quite a lad
Who makes me always feel glad.
His double talk, his best bet
To confuse this poor L’il Vet.
He’ll be the death of me yet.

Cautious Arthur is the man
Who forever has a plan
To do the job for today
In the only correct way
For the horseplay, he does ban.

Getter always gets better
With every change of weather
Quiet and quite capable
He writes to Betty Grable
In many a good letter.

Gundy with his curly crop
Is a guy you cannot stop
Quality is his best trait
He is never ever late
To be sure, he’ll hit the top.

And this man Eppie, he knows his stuff,
Radio theory, that is tough.
He checks out most all the boys,
Answering questions with cool poise.
Truthfully, that is not bluff.

Seven men I’ve told about,
Woe is me, I’ve left me out.
All I do is think at night
’Bout my slim girl, held so tight.
God, perhaps, she will grow stout.
f. 1945: C-46 #24 in Manila, September 29, 1945

On March 28, 2018, my friend Leo Clevenger in Fort Worth emailed me the photo above. Leo works at a hospital, and found this photo on a WW2 Medical Research Center website, med-dept.com (with a dash). The caption states: “WC-54 & WC-64 [the ambulance model numbers] 3/4-ton 4x4 ambulances in front of C-46 transport plane preparing to unload its patients, Manila, Philippines, September 29, 1945.” Manila usually meant Nichols Field. The 24 on the tail identifies this as belonging to the Thirsty 13th. In the May 2016 letter I noted that radio operator Amelang identified #24 as having serial number 44-78349.

The date is almost 4 weeks after the surrender was signed September 2, and so it is unclear what patients we would be hauling, but perhaps these were POWs from Japan, or moving men from hospitals at other bases. The two in front might be our aircrew members.

2. History-Related Activities

a. 1943: Vanuatu WWII 50-Year Anniversary Stamp Honoring C-47 Squadrons

On April 3, 2018, our colleague in New Zealand, Ewan Stevenson of Archaehistoria, emailed me he bought stamps issued by Vanuatu (previously named New Hebrides) to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of WWII. These were issued in groups of five, being four regular size stamps such as below left for Part 1 in 1992, and one larger one such as below center of a C-47, in Part 2 in 1993 (the 1980 reference is their year of independence). The Marines flew R4Ds, so the C-47 would represent an Army plane, and so this stamp honors the 13th, 63rd, and 64th TCSs.
3. Members and Relatives

a. Chance Encounter

On March 14, 2018, the daughter, Georgie, of propeller specialist Lee Knoll, emailed me she was attending a class at a senior center in North Carolina near where she now lives, and in chatting with another person in the class, Kenneth, “somehow our conversation turned to the South Pacific and our fathers, and it turns out his father was also in the squadron!” This was Kenneth Foster, son of mess cook Russell Foster. They both joined the squadron in late 1943, in New Caledonia, and both are on an order 9/22/45 in Dulag in the Philippines, and so were in all of the four main camps together. I found Georgie around 2009, and found Kenneth in May 2017. Georgie added: “We shared personal information and our fathers’ names so as to check them out in the book. It was an instant bonding due to our mutual history with the Thirsty Thirteenth. We will no doubt see each other again at classes there and look forward to visiting more.”

b. Latest Dashboard

The latest dashboard is at right. We added Dorman E. Cone, in the motor pool, for 738 total. His name was found on an order May 1, 1944, shared in March by the son of Vaughan. I contacted his relatives and sent information. Our “Need” number of births and deaths has not changed since January.

New contacts were also made with sons of Heatherly and McDowell. Heatherly was listed in “Enlisted Unspecified,” and his son read his discharge paper to me which said he was in the Motor Pool, so it was great to move him to his actual role, and reduce the unspecified to 15.

Relatives of two other squadron members were also great to share info:
- The son, Kevin, of Joseph Cleere, emailed me his dad’s discharge paper.
- On March 8, 2018, the son, Tim, of mechanic Zechar, emailed me his dad’s discharge paper.

c. Karl Peters turns 98

On March 17, I received the photo at right of our most-decorated pilot, Karl Peters, in Faxon, Okla., on the day he turned 98 years old. He is our second oldest. Our 20 still-living are listed below. Our oldest, navigator Walter Moritz, is 99.8, and his birthday is June 3.