

Barb and Tristan,

I have sent this and the attached photos to you, Barb, and also to Tristan directly.

I just phoned Dexter Baker Sr (pilot of B-24 "Golden Goose") and asked him Tristan's questions. These are his recollections. They may not be completely accurate and may differ somewhat from the remembrances of other original vets and crewmembers. The info he gave me was based on his crew. Dexter flew the Balikpapan mission (I think it was the first one, although evidently he was not the pilot—the commander flew as pilot of Golden Goose and Dexter flew as co-pilot on that flight).

1. Talk with crews who can tell me exactly what crews did on these super long combat flights in flight. For instance at night did they play cards, read a book, sleep?

The crew variously did all of the above throughout the flight (not only at night). When they approached a known "hot" spot (Japanese base, airfield, etc) enroute or the target area, the pilot would call the crew to their stations. When they initially took off and got to altitude, the first thing they did was test-fire the guns. Dexter says the waist gun doors were usually kept open most of the time, unless the weather prevented it. They used oxygen occasionally, but tried not to stay on it very long. Their cruising altitude was seldom very far above 10,000 feet. (I have a photo of my father's B-24 "Dauntless Dottie", taken from another aircraft, over Roti Island, on the Koepang, Timor mission, at 12,500 feet and the waist gun doors are fully open).

2. Establish what the crews wore in flight.

Dexter said that they wore "flight suits" (zip-up, coverall type). However, the photo of my father & crew, taken just after returning from a long mission, does not show flightsuits, but khaki slacks/shirts and A-2 jackets and Mae Wests. They did wear Mae West flotation devices. Parachutes were not worn throughout the flights, but were stowed within easy reach. They also wore their flight jackets if available, or other cold weather gear if needed. (I think the garb probably varied from crew to crew and mission to mission).

3. What did the crews take with them onboard, food and drinks?

Food/drink were provided by the Quartermaster for each mission. Consisted of sandwiches, water, and coffee. Sometimes a crew member would bring a personal camera. Some flights had official photographers aboard to record the mission strike(s). The Navigator had charts of the areas, and the pilot/copilot carried cloth/silk survival maps (see attached photos). The other crewmembers did not, according to Dexter.

4. Do any crews have any old maps or other props to help make the filming more realistic.

I have enclosed 3 photos of silk survival maps I have that my father saved from Fenton. They are double-sided and measure approx. 22"x28". They are of the Philippinean and China areas.

5. What language was used between crew. Did they call the Commander Doug, Craig, Lt or what?

Dexter said his crew was on a fairly informal basis. However, the enlisted crewmembers were not on a first name basis with the officers. When using the intercom, they would say, "so and so to Pilot...or Navigator", etc.)

Hopefully, other 380th veterans will provide more in-depth information. I hope this helps you a little.

Bill Shek (Jr)

P.S. I flew aboard the Collings Foundation B-24 on 4 different occasions. What a great experience!!