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(Jun-45) X

HISTORY

462ND FIGHTER SQUADRON (SE)

506TH FIGHTER GROUP (SE)

VII FIGHTER COMMAND, ARMY AIR FORCES,
PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS & TWENTIETH AIR FORCE

P.R.C.

1 JUNE 1945

THROUGH

30 JUNE 1945

DECLASSIFIED
DOD DIR 8200.9

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UNIT HISTORY

462ND FIGHTER SQUADRON (SE)
506TH FIGHTER GROUP (SE) APO 86
VII FIGHTER COMMAND
ARMY AIR FORCES, PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS
&
TWENTIETH AIR FORCE

P.R.C.

1 JUNE 1945
through
30 JUNE 1945

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462ND FIGHTER SQUADRON (SE)
 506TH FIGHTER GROUP (SE) APO 86
 VII FIGHTER COMMAND
 ARMY AIR FORCES, PACIFIC OCEAN AREAS
 &
 TWENTIETH AIR FORCE

1. Negative
2. Missing In Action: Captain Lawrence S. Smith, O-665237
 1st Lt Gale L. Loomis, O-666404
 1st Lt Archie C. Ridley, O-795639

The above-named officers did not return from the VLR mission of 1 June 1945. It is almost certain that these pilots crashed at sea, and if alive, perished in the storms of the following fortnight.

3. Awards: Major DeJarnette, 462nd Commanding Officer, was awarded the First Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal as per GO 31, Hq VII Fighter Command, dated 11 June 1945. This same order awarded Air Medals to Captains Findley, Lee, and Miller of the 462nd Fighter Squadron.
4. Negative
5. Strength, 1 June 1945: 68 Officers, 254 EM
 Strength, 30 June 1945: 68 Officers, 252 EM
6. Planes on hand, 1 June 1945: 28 P-51D's
 Planes on hand, 30 June 1945: 32 P-51D's
7. Losses: Four (4) P-51D's as follows:
 - 1 June 1945 - Captain Smith, MIA
 - 1 June 1945 - Lt Loomis, MIA
 - 1 June 1945 - Lt Ridley, MIA
 - 1 June 1945 - Captain Crenshaw, 506th pilot flying with 462d Ftr Sq, MIA

George H. Olson
 GEORGE H. OLSON
 1st Lt, Air Corps
 Historical Officer

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UNIT HISTORY

462nd Fighter Squadron (SE)

506th Fighter Group (SE)

APO #86

VII Fighter Command; Army Air Forces, Pacific Ocean Areas; Twentieth Air Force
1-30 June 1945COMBAT OPERATIONS

June was the first full month of combat flying for the 462nd Fighter Squadron. A creditable amount of damage to the enemy was wrought in spite of the unfavorable weather which turned back one half of the month's attempted VLR missions to the Empire. On the 5 VLR missions which were completed plus the 3 SR missions to the Bonins, pilots of the 462nd destroyed 4 enemy aircraft in the air and 7 enemy aircraft on the ground. This record was authenticated by the 506th Fighter Group Claims Board which, in addition, credited the squadron with damage to 4 enemy aircraft in the air plus 4 enemy aircraft on the ground.

Although this record was satisfactory, in the light of all the circumstances, and in keeping with the standards of other Iwo-based fighter squadrons, it might have been more impressive. The main improvement could have resulted from the greater willingness of the enemy air force to battle our Mustangs for possession of the "sacred" air over Japan. The Japanese command seemed extremely reluctant during June to attack our fighters with anything but flak.

This lack of strong aerial opposition is emphasized by the fact that not one 462nd pilot was killed or injured by enemy action during the whole of June. Had it not been for the disastrous weather encountered on the very first day of the month it is likely that the squadron would have

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suffered no personnel or aircraft losses during the month.

As it was, the 1 June escort mission to Osaka was tragic. Originally scheduled for 31 May and cancelled because of unfavorable weather, 20 aircraft of the 462nd were airborne at 0745. At a point approximately 31 degrees North and 420 miles on course from Iwo, a weather front was encountered. The full story of what happened in the hours following the breasting of the front can never be known, but certain facts are remembered vividly.

Upon reaching the front the navigator B-29's executed a 360 degree turn as did the accompanying fighters. At this time radio conversations were garbled by an unwarranted maximum of discussion. Captain Lumpkins, leading the 462nd, heard a report on "Nan" channel, "Oranges are sour". Unidentified remarks such as, "It is clear at our angels plus one", and, "It is clear underneath", were heard by many pilots.

The front was entered at from 10,000 to 11,000 feet. It was soon apparent that the front was solid from the deck to the highest operational altitude. The 506th, under the leadership of Lt Col Scandrett, became completely disorganized. To add to the confusion in the impossible weather, the proximity of the 15th and 21st Fighter Groups gave cause for alarm.

With all pilots flying on instruments and with visibility almost non-existent, it was inevitable that radio communications would become snarled by the many pleas for directional help. So bad was the weather that it was almost impossible for a pilot to keep contact with

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his wing man. P-51's churned around in the "soup", climbing, diving, spinning and even flying inverted, with no organization even as to direction. It was an "everyman for himself" proposition and some very good pilots were unable to survive the melee. 3 of the squadron pilots got through to the target by following a B-29. They returned to Iwo by following the ship very closely on the return route.

The first general knowledge of the catastrophe reached Iwo when the first of the fortunate ships landed about 1300. The "sweating out" of pilots became a grueling ordeal. One accident was known to have occurred, a mid-air collision by the ships of Captain Crenshaw, a Group pilot flying a 462nd airplane, and 1st Lt McClure. Damage to the tail section of Captain Crenshaw's plane forced him to bail out at sea. Lt McClure made base safely in spite of damage to the propeller of his ship.

The passing of successive hours diminished hope for the return of all pilots. More than a few arrived with but a thimbleful of gasoline. After a definite maximum time during which all gasoline would have been expended, it was necessary to face the grim task of counting the missing of the squadron. These were Captain Crenshaw, a Group pilot flying a squadron aircraft, Captain Lawrence S. Smith, O-665237, 1st Lt Gale L. Loomis, O-666404, and 1st Lt Archie C. Ridley, O-795639.

Hope was high, however, for the eventual rescue of these men. Anxiety increased with the days lengthening into weeks as air-sea rescue facilities failed to find any trace of the pilots. Very persistent bad weather hampered the work of search, and caused the loss of one search plane engaged in the work of rescue. After a proper lapse of time the

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ill-fated pilots of the squadron were formally declared to be "Missing in Action." The loss of 2 flight leaders and one assistant flight leader was a sadness to all personnel of the squadron, and a hurt, the like of which, the enemy could not inflict during the month.

Confidential Mission Report 167, Hq VII Fighter Command, dated 1 June 1945 indicates clearly the extent of loss to the three P-51 groups of Iwo as a result of the deadly weather. 25 pilots and 27 aircraft were lost. Subsequent to this report several pilots were recovered in spite of the continuance of the front.

As a result of this mission, the 506th Group, after interrogation of its squadrons, submitted three recommendations to VII Fighter Command for the future conduct of missions: (1) that navigational B-29 crews be housed with the fighter squadrons they serve, (2) that any weather front higher than 20000 feet and lower than 500 feet be automatically avoided, and (3) that the senior officer flying on a mission involving two or more groups be given over-all command as to weather decisions. As a result of lower echelon suggestion VII Fighter Command housed navigational B-29 crews with the fighter squadrons and groups came to be dispatched from Iwo at intervals instead of simultaneously.

Between the 1st and the 7th of June no mission were flown since the weather interfered.

On 7 June a second escort to Osaka was planned. The 20 aircraft of the squadron were to share in area protection for the B-29's. Enemy aircraft were scarce. A lone Jap single engine aircraft was spotted at 16,000 feet, apparently directing AA fire on the American

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bombers. Lt Col Brown's flight and 1st Lt Zagorsky's flight dove on the Jap from 20,000 feet. Most of the 8 aircraft of the 2 flights got in a burst and the Jap went down in flames. All 20 aircraft of the 462nd returned to base without further incident.

The following day 20 aircraft of the squadron took off on a projected strike against Meiji and Hamamatsu airfields on Honshu. 60 miles from Iwo a weather front extending from the deck to 28,000 feet was encountered and all aircraft returned safely to base, as this front was virtually impassable.

On the 10th of June, 22 aircraft of the 462nd completed an escort mission to the Tokyo area, the squadron providing our bombers with top cover. A Japanese squadron of Tonys, lying in wait for the bombers, was engaged by the 462nd. Major DeJarnette, Captain Lee, Lts Bash and Rosebrough each scored one aerial kill with no loss to our squadron. The 506th Group total was 10 enemy aircraft destroyed, 4 probably destroyed and 2 damaged. The squadron and group record was good, but the following day in a critique by Major DeJarnette, the mission leader, the "poor air discipline" was stressed and recommendations made to prevent a repetition. The Major noted that squadrons flew too close to one another, pilots were too individualistic and not watchful enough, and that wing men were not attentive enough to their leader's flying.

On 11 June thirteen ships of the 462nd bombed and strafed Radio Stations #6 and #7 at Chichi Jima. 16 bombs, 8 instantaneous and 8 delay-type, were unobserved as to results obtained.

The following day a change in policy regarding Bonin missions

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was announced. A VII Fighter Command teletype gave each fighter group permission to dispatch "training missions" to the Bonins as determined by each group commanding officer.

On the 16th, consequently, 12 ships of the 462nd attacked Radio Stations #5 and #6 on Chichi Jima. For the first time in the history of the group 5 inch rockets were employed. Each of the 2 rocket craft carried 6 rockets apiece. The mission was successful and all aircraft returned safely to base.

On the following day the squadron loaned 2 of its rocket ships to the 458th which tried a similar attack on Chichi Jima.

On the 19th the scheduled strafing mission against Meiji and Hamamatsu airfields was turned back by a weather front 250 miles on course from Iwo.

Once again on 23 June the 462nd struck the enemy a solid blow. 20 aircraft of the squadron were dispatched to strafe Hyakurigahara airfield in the Mito area. An unusually high percentage of ships aborted, 7 in number, and 1 failed to take off. The 12 pilots who did complete the mission obtained excellent results. The mission was poor in the early part of its execution however. Rendezvous with navigational B-29's over Kita Iwo Jima was delayed due to a confusion of orders, the B-29's waiting on the west of Kita and the fighters waiting on the east of it. The 506th Group was delivered at a DP 10 miles further north on the coast line than called for in the field orders. To make a perfect day of snafu operation the B-29 leading the 462nd came very close to being hit by flak.

Once over the target the 462nd was deadly, racking up a score of 5 enemy aircraft destroyed, 6 probably destroyed, and 4 damaged, all on the ground. 2nd Lt Buzze set the pace with 2 Tojos destroyed. 6 types

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of enemy aircraft were observed: Georges, Nicks, Tojos, Tonys, Topsy's, and Zekes.

1st Lt Sullivan had a close call when his ship's canopy was shot away over the target. One 7.7 mm machine gun bullet hit the left wing of 2nd Lt Buzze's plane. No pilots received any injury from the mission.

A new technique of attack developed from this mission, which technique was later adopted by the group. The use of 5 degree flaps on the strafing pass was the idea of 1st Lt Willis, 462nd flight leader, a former A-36 pilot in the Mediterranean theater. Better sighting and a longer time of fire were the advantages obtained.

On 25 June a weather front at about 31 degrees North on course from Iwo was encountered and the escort mission to Osaka was forced to abort. All planes and pilots returned without injury with but one exception. 1st Lt McClure made a 7 or 8 point landing with heavily loaded wing tanks, thereby buckling the wings and necessitating wing changes. The two accidents of the month were both by this pilot, he having previously damaged the propeller of his ship in a mid-air collision on 1 June.

20 aircraft of the squadron participated in the 26 June escort mission to Nagoya, 18 completing the mission successfully. One ship failed to take off and one spare returned prematurely. A medium front 100 miles this side of the Empire was encountered and it was necessary to go to 21,000 feet to get over it. Several enemy aircraft were sighted, too distant to attack as the mission was an escort.

Two Georges 1500 feet below Captain N.T. Miller's flight were attacked. Captain Miller and 2nd Lt Colley sent one down in flames while

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the other escaped into the clouds. Two other aerial encounters occurred during the mission but the passes yielded no favorable results.

On 27 June a front just south of Hachijo Jima prevented the completion of the mission. The squadron climbed to 23,000 feet in an unrewarded effort to get through to the target.

The last mission of the month was flown on 29 June when 11 P-51's of the 462nd attacked Haha Jima in the Bonins. Bombs were dropped on a Sugar type vessel and 17 rockets were fired at Radio Station #1, all results being unobserved.

The records of the Operations section reveal that 1581 hours were flown during June, 1333 hours of which were actual combat time. A further breakdown shows that 148 CAP sorties, 38 Bonin sorties, and 119 VLR Empire sorties were made during the period.

The faults of the squadron during June were anent gunnery for the most part. Much of the inaccurate gunnery was due to a general tendency to fire out of range at both air and ground targets and a disposition to break away too soon. During the month some of the pilots did fire at an aerial sleeve target towed by a B-26. Plans for additional gunnery training were being formulated at month's end.

INTELLIGENCE

Research, briefing and interrogation improved during June. Still greater improvement had been contemplated but shortages of work material remained to hinder progress. No detailed up-to-date photo coverage of Japanese home airfields and flak installations was available and pictures were seldom provided in stereo. Correct target identificat-

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ion for ground strafing missions was thus handicapped. At no time during the month, however, did the squadron err in identifying specific ground targets called for in VII Fighter Command Field Orders, a distinction which was not shared by all squadrons of the group.

Oblique and approach shots of objectives from several different headings were frequently unobtainable and it is hoped that such photos will soon be available for use by the Intelligence section.

Several lectures were given on aircraft recognition and naval recognition by S-2 Officers. Two lectures on "Escape and Evasion" were provided for the benefit of the pilots who might be forced down over enemy territory.

During the month all classified documents with interest for the pilots were bound in books and made available to them on a check-out basis. A noted increase in the reading of combat information by the pilots was observed during the month.

The historical program was faltering throughout June due to the lack of a clerk-typist. No help was forthcoming from the Orderly Room in this regard though request for same had been made previously.

In the latter part of the month 5 incoming pilots were advised by S-2 officers so as to acquaint them with current combat conditions. On 28 June they were taken to the 21st Fighter Group for a lecture on "Escape and Evasion". The conscientious efforts of the Intelligence section and others made this task of orientation a fast process.

On 29 June an inspection by 506th Fighter Group personnel was conducted. An excellent rating of 75% was given the Intelligence section at this time.

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The section received an excellent rating of 78% at the time of the monthly inspection by Group personnel.

TECHNICAL SUPPLY

June was a busy month for this section due to full-scale flying operations. In addition, one enlisted man was hospitalized for the entire month; at the end of that time his ailment had been diagnosed as stomach ulcers and he was en route to the States.

Within the squadron, standardization of procedure for the turning in and drawing of parts and supplies to and from Tech Supply was brought about. During the month an attempt was made to fill every existing shortage of tools, equipment, and publications, requisitions being submitted to obtain: (1) OEL property authorized but never received by the squadron; (2) hand tools, short in kits as per physical inventory; (3) AAF Technical Orders; (4) AAF Stock Lists; and (5) AAF Regulations. The physical transfer of tools and equipment to other sections was completed, and hand tools, formerly kept in Tech Supply, were transferred to a tool crib under the supervision of the Engineering Officer. By the end of June all property records had been transferred to the Squadron Administrative Supply Officer, 1st Lt Alexander, as per directive from higher headquarters.

On the 25th of June an inspection of Tech Supply was conducted by 506th representatives, at which time the section was given an excellent rating of 72%.

ARMAMENT

The K-14 gunsight continued to present few functional problems. A modification, the K-14A, was introduced during June and the squadron

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was given the honor of conducting a special test for the group to determine the most efficient setting of the piper and diamond in relation to the target image. The difficulty of working with the K-14 and K-14A was in the procurement of replacement parts which were critical on Iwo. Driving springs for the gunsight were a particularly difficult item to obtain. To insure preservation of these sights the thorough overhaul of each gunsight was made mandatory at the completion of every 25 operational hours.

An innovation of the month was the employment of five-inch aircraft rockets. On the first day of June 2 aircraft were modified by the 81st Air Service Group for the use of rockets. It was not until 16 June, however, that rockets were fired at targets in the Bonins. The rocket installations presented no special problem to personnel of this section as smaller rockets of similar type had been used extensively during training at Lakeland, Florida. Throughout the month rumor had it that all planes of the squadron were to be equipped to carry rockets, but like most rumors this one was not borne out by subsequent developments.

Some difficulty occurred with the frequent refusal of droppable 110 gallon wing tanks to drop. The employment of the all-purpose sway brace was the answer to the problem, and these were used whenever available.

To insure safety, it became compulsory that all solenoids be disconnected while machine guns were being serviced in the aircraft. No instance of accidental firing occurred during the month, a record which could not be claimed by all squadrons of the group.

It was directed by higher headquarters that 2 hours of Chemical Warfare training per month be given all members of the squadron. A lecture reviewing basic chemical warfare concepts was given by 2nd Lt Bumgardner

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In every major regard the month of June was successful for the squadron and the 462nd Fighter Squadron seemed well along on the air trail to Tokyo.

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The standards of maintenance during June were high. 86% of the planes assigned the squadron were operational throughout the month as compared to 85% for the 458th and 77% for the 457th. A total of 240 aircraft were scheduled for combat missions throughout June. Of these, 15 aborted due to alleged mechanical failure. Three airplanes of those aborting bore no trace of malfunction during exhaustive tests conducted subsequently. The squadron percentage of aborts was only 7% whereas the percentage of aborts for the group, as a whole, was 10%.

One problem demanding special attention was leaky propellers, caused by unsatisfactory seals. UR's on these seals were submitted through channels. The lack of propeller test equipment on the island was acute. Props could not be tested for leakage after assembly by the 81st Air Service Group before installation on the plane. Rough engines, cracked coolant header tanks, malfunctions of automatic mixture control aneroids, landing gear mechanisms, and flap selector valves were among the other problems experienced. Volcanic dust was very instrumental in the last three difficulties mentioned.

Closer routine cleaning and inspection were the only answers to the problems confronting the mechanics and a weekly maintenance program was instituted to that end.

8 new replacement P-51D's were ferried from Guam to Iwo by 462nd pilots during the month. The enlisted crew chiefs who accompanied the pilots generally had quite a time with the Chamorro women and their good luck became a sort of vicarious furlough for their tent mates.

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who had previously been appointed Chemical Warfare Officer. In addition, a gas chamber was established wherein each man was given an opportunity to check his mask.

An over-all rating of 83% was accorded the section by Group inspectors at the time of the monthly inspection.

ORDNANCE

Certain standard practices and procedures were formulated during June. Inspection of aircraft weapons every 50 hours by gauging and visual methods proved very satisfactory. All machine gun springs were gauged on scheduled inspections. The policy to relink all ammunition before putting it in the ship paid big dividends as no malfunctions due to improper linkage occurred during the month. A weekly inspection of all small arms was put into effect. To insure the smooth functioning of the section a weekly section meeting was held during which any problems could be thoroughly threshed out. One joint meeting with the Armament section was held during which a film on VT fuses and rockets was shown. Some special tools for work with rocket ships had to be manufactured within the section.

Some dented primers in .50 caliber ammunition were discovered. Firing pin springs were found to be short, and upon change of these for longer springs no further difficulty was noticed.

During the month 36 complete rounds of 500 lb GP bombs, 27 five-inch rockets, and 41,247 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition were expended.

Group inspectors found no major discrepancies during the monthly inspection and the section rating was excellent.

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COMMUNICATIONS

The most noteworthy event of the month apart from the routine work of servicing VHF, IFF, and DU equipment was a visit paid the section by Major General Junius Jones, Inspector General of the Army Air Forces. So impressed was the general with the set-up of the 462nd communications section that he recommended to Group that the other squadrons adopt the 462nd's methods for maintenance and care of equipment.

It was decided that a so-called 100 hour inspection would be made every 15 days on VHF sets. A similar inspection of IFF sets was to be made only when the ship had an actual 100 hours of operational time.

Possibly the Group inspectors did not share General Jones' enthusiasm at the time of the monthly inspection, for the section was given only an excellent rating of 74%.

PHOTO

Dust became a rather serious problem to this section at the beginning of the month. After the drying of film with the A-8 dryer, it was found to be dust laden. It was therefore necessary to build a drying box, with shelves to hold the spindles of film. At the rear a portable UH-2 heater ventilator was installed. For ordinary drying of film only the ventilator was used. On excessively damp days the addition of the heater was needed, drying being complete in approximately 20 minutes.

It was found more practicable to process film at night as the chemicals in the processing could then be kept at a more even temperature. Daytime processing was abandoned in favor of the night work.

Gun camera mounts proved unsatisfactory and a UR was therefore submitted. Investigation had revealed that when the GSAP camera was bore

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sighted at 900 feet the camera plug hit the bulkhead. By cutting the rear bulkhead lower the camera could be mounted and dismantled without difficulty.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

A prime need in June was a mock-up to check pilots' oxygen masks for leakage. This mock-up was created in short order by the men of the section and proved very satisfactory in pre-flight tests.

The first modification of the month was of the recharger assembly used in recharging the oxygen supply bottles of P-51 aircraft. This consisted of re-routing the high pressure line from the recharger cart bottles to the oxygen pressure regulator so as to relieve excess pressure in the dryer.

The other modification of June was the general abandonment of the C-1 emergency supply vest, as emergency supplies in a container were fitted on top of the life raft. Some pilots, however, chose to retain the C-1 vest in preference to the new arrangement.

During the third week of June the first B-10 type parachutes were made available. This back type chute had certain advantages over the seat type parachute then in use by the squadron pilots. Of especial value was the new quick-release feature and the lighter weight. With the new chute, a pilot clearing the cockpit prior to bail-out ran less chance of fouling the parachute. By the end of June one half of the pilots had been fitted with the B-10 parachute.

At the very end of the month "Permutit" kits to make salt water potable arrived.

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More wooden containers for the storage of pilots' oxygen masks and helmets were constructed, so that every pilot was provided with an equipment locker. A large status board was built which showed at a glance pertinent data regarding inspections, past and pending.

The section was visited officially by the Group Personal Equipment Officer during the month, and an excellent rating of 83% resulted from this inspection.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPLY

This section had only one change in its routine work during the month of June. This change was a major one, however. All Tech Supply records of non-expendable AAF property were transferred to the Administrative Supply Officer. Unfamiliarity with the AAF property involved was an initial difficulty but this was soon surmounted. The work load at the end of June was appreciably greater than heretofore and the need of another enlisted man for work in the section was felt. Request was made for the assignment of an additional supply clerk in the latter part of the month.

ORDERLY ROOM

The first court martial in the history of the squadron occurred on 6 June 1945. Special Court Martial Order #1, Hq 506th Fighter Group, confined Private Benjamin J. Greico, 462nd Fighter Squadron, to the Island Stockade for a period of six months at hard labor. Private Greico had been AWOL from 25 December 1944 to 28 February 1945.

Almost simultaneously as the door of the stockade closed on one member of the squadron the door of the squadron day room opened to all men

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of the squadron. A radio, picnic-type bench tables for writing, and a library were the main features of the day room, located in the Quonset hut containing the enlisted mess. Appointments were crude but most welcome. Plans were underway at month's end for further finishing of this social room. The 462nd Officers Club was flourishing by the close of June, with a bar as a main feature.

Many personnel changes occurred during the month. 5 new pilots joined the squadron. A complete navigational B-29 crew of officers and men was attached to the squadron for quarters and rations. 1st Lt McClure was transferred from the squadron to VII Fighter Command where he assumed the duties of an Assistant A-3. Sgt Head of the Tech Supply section was transferred to the 232nd General Hospital, a step in his return to the United States for medical treatment. Cpl Chapman who suffered a leg wound shortly after arrival at Iwo and was transferred to Guam was dropped from the roster during the month.

Special Order #43, Hq 506th Fighter Group, dated 1 June 1945, substituted Captain Lee for Major DeJarnette as 462nd member of the Claims Board. Special Order #46, Hq 506th Fighter Group, dated 12 June 1945, authorized 165 men of the squadron to wear AAF Technician Badges and clasps according to their skill specialty.

Some packages and magazines from home arrived to relieve the monotony of life on Iwo. A Quonset hut mess hall, the general improvement of the living area, and the procurement of up-to-date movies went far to improve morale. On the opposite side of the ledger the continuance of a 7 day work week tended to lower morale. A sizeable number of air raids and air alerts placed an additional strain upon personnel.

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