

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: E.O. 13526

By: NDC NARA Date: Dec 31, 2012

NARRATIVE

availability on the morning of the 18th, and therefore all planes except for VMTB-242 were stationed at West Field before dark on the 18th.

There was a certain degree of excitement and much interest surrounding the landing of the first plane at West Field. Due to the physical difficulties involved many officers and men throughout the Island had believed it would be impossible for the SeaBee Units to have West Field in operation by the 18th. All high ranking officers on the Island were present when Commander Rigsbee of VFB-117 accompanied by Captain Paul Halloran of the 6th Naval Construction Brigade landed in a PB4Y.¹

In spite of the fact that the field was declared operative there were a few conditions existing which were far from ideal. For example, not counting the TBF's and TBM's, there were eighty-four (84) planes to be based at West Field, but only forty-six (46) hard stands in which to accommodate them. This lack of parking area made it necessary to spot many of the planes on the taxiways themselves, and thereby certain difficulties of a serious nature arose. One morning at 0100 a change in schedule occurred, and it was learned that a plane that was due to take off at 0430 was parked on a taxiway with eight (8) planes in front of it and eleven (11) planes behind it. It was necessary therefore to move seventeen (17) planes in order to make the one plane on schedule available. In addition the forty-six (46) hard stands which existed at the time of the move were not wide enough or deep enough to accommodate PV's or PB4Y's. In some places when planes were parked in hard stands there was a distance of only 112 feet through which a

1 See Appendix, Encl. 57 - See Pictures No. 28, 29, 30, and 31.