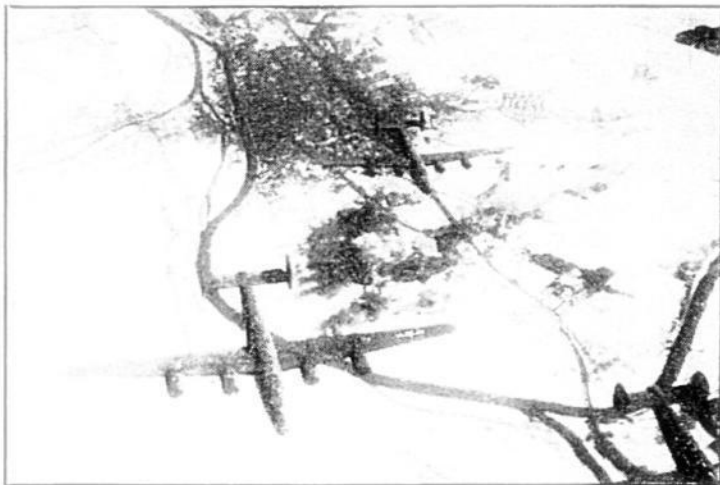


HISTORY

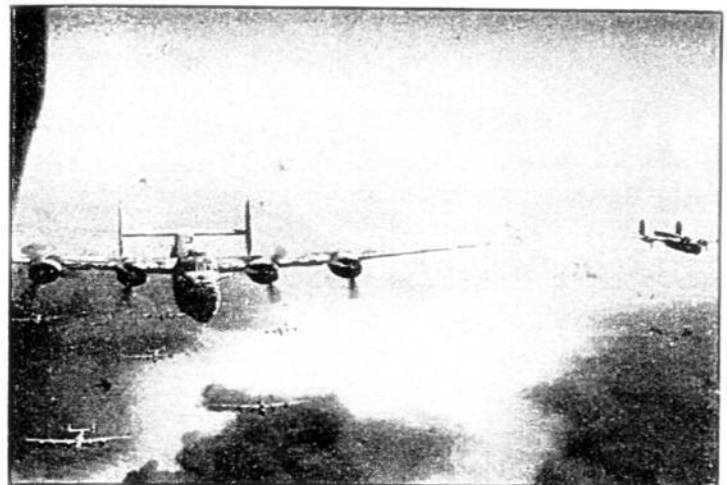
OF THE

451ST

BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)

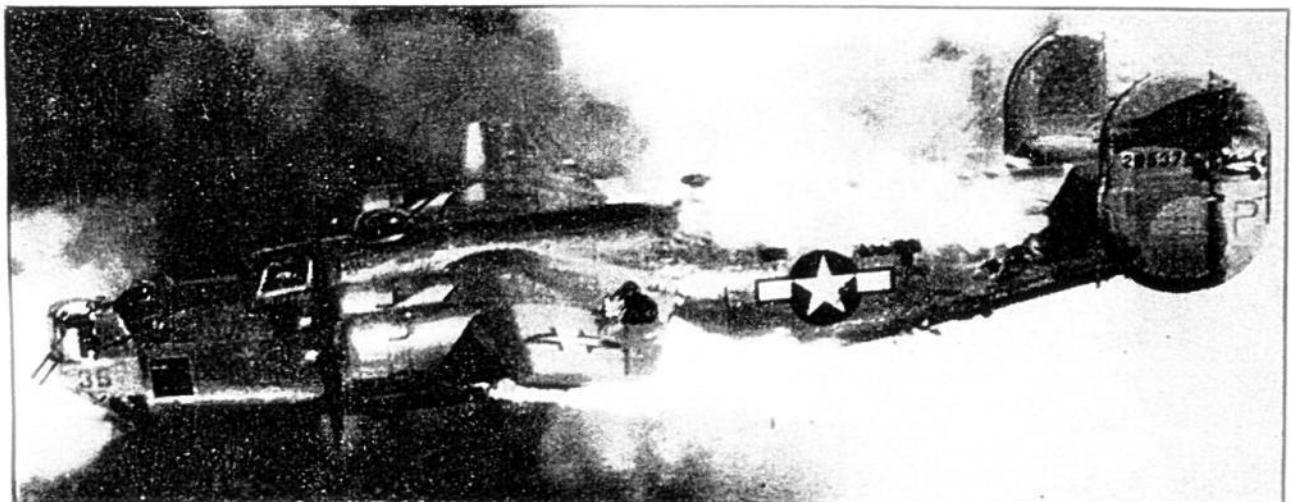


(REGENSBURG, GERMANY)



(PLOESTI, RUMANIA)

THREE DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATIONS



(MARKERSDORF AIRDROME/VIENNA, AUSTRIA)

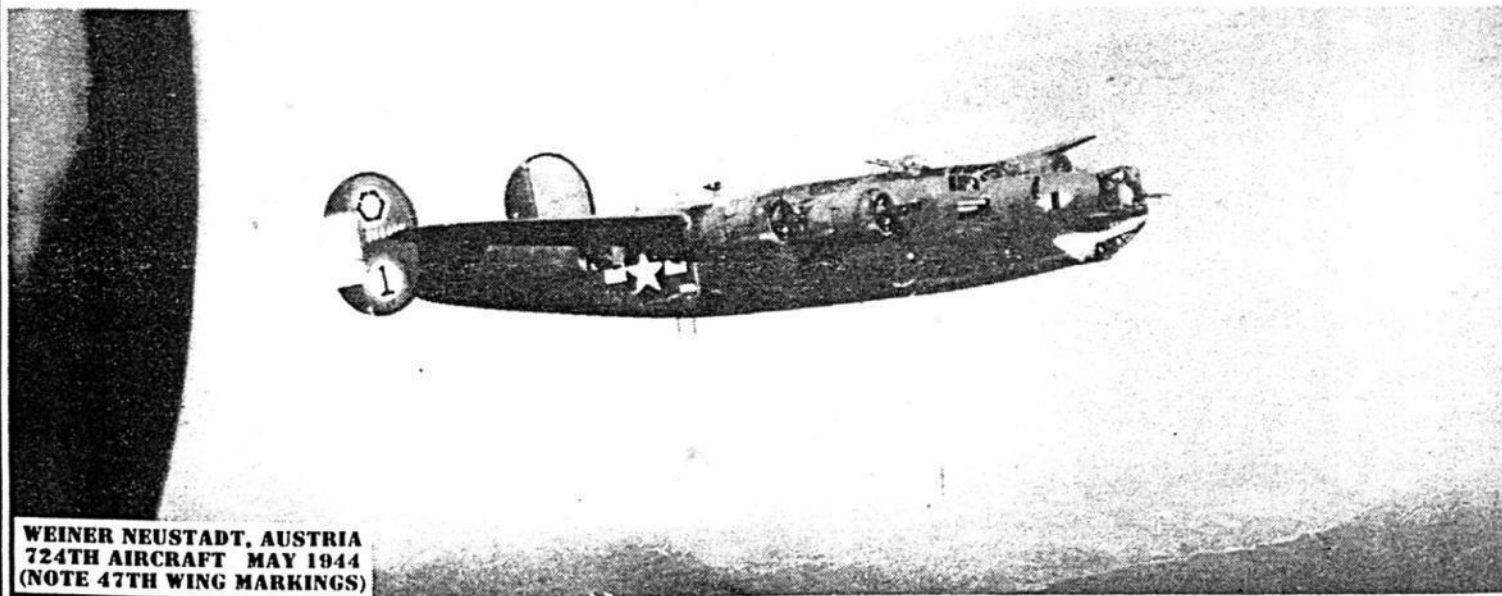
451st BOMB GROUP

COMMANDING OFFICERS

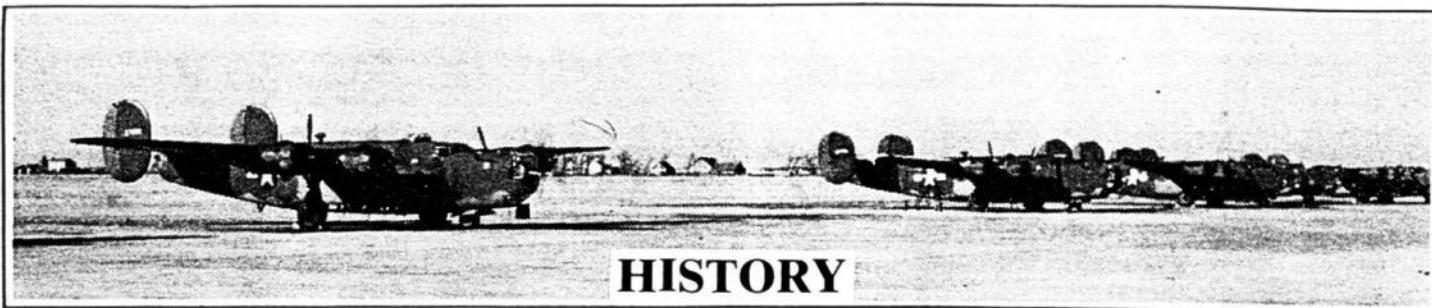
COLONEL ROBERT E. L. EATON	MAY 43 - SEP 44
COLONEL JAMES B. KNAPP	SEP 44 - DEC 44
COLONEL LEROY L. STEFONOWICZ (ANGLICIZED STEFEN)	DEC 44 - SEP 45

STATIONS

DAVIS-MONTHAN FIELD, ARIZONA	1 MAY 43 - 3 JUN 43
DYERSBURG ARMY AIR BASE, TENNESSEE	3 JUN 43 - 22 JUL 43
WENDOVER FIELD, UTAH	22 JUL 43 - 8 SEP 43
FAIRMOUNT ARMY AIR FIELD, NEBRASKA	9 SEP 43 - 26 NOV 43
EN ROUTE TO ITALY	26 NOV 43 - DEC 43
GIOIA DEL COLLE, ITALY	DEC 43 - 6 MAR 44
SAN PANCRAZIO/MANDURIA, ITALY	6 MAR 44 - 6 APR 44
CASTELLUCCIA DI SAURI	6 APR 44 - 4 JUN 45
EN ROUTE TO ZONE OF INTERIOR	4 JUN 45 - 14 JUN 45
DOW FIELD, MAINE	18 JUN 45 - 26 SEP 45



**WEINER NEUSTADT, AUSTRIA
724TH AIRCRAFT MAY 1944
(NOTE 47TH WING MARKINGS)**



HISTORY

(Above Photo — Flight Line at Fairmont AAB)

CHAPTER 1

451st Bombardment Group (H)

Colonel Robert E. L. Eaton, Commanding

The 451st Bombardment Group (H) was activated by Paragraph 1, General Order number 58, dated April 22, 1943, Headquarters Second Air Force, effective May 1, 1943, at Davis-Monthan Field, Tucson, Arizona. The same order assigned to the group four squadrons, namely, the 724th to the 727th, inclusive.

Davis-Monthan Field is still the permanent headquarters of the 451st Bombardment Group.

The group is an O.T.U. organization, flying B-24 type airplanes. It is commanded by Colonel Robert E. L. Eaton, (U.S.M.A. June 1931).

The first officers to report for duty with the group arrived at Davis-Monthan Field in the latter part of May, 1943, and within a few days a total of ten officers and one enlisted man was at Davis-Monthan Field awaiting further instructions.

This initial nucleus included the following:

Administrative Officers

Jones, Donald T., Major, A.C., 0-304856
Williams, Charles V., Captain, A.C. 0-197343
Bernstein, Jack, 1st Lieutenant, A.C., 0-567293

Intelligence Officers

McManus, William H., Captain, A.C., 0-394335
Marco, Herbert F., 1st Lieutenant, A.C., 0-903362
Manoogian, Morris A., 1st Lieutenant, A.C., 0-729641
Sands, Robert L., 1st Lieutenant, A.C., 0-561973
Zraick, Edward A., 2nd Lieutenant, A.C., 0-573874
Arnold, Elliott, 2nd Lieutenant, A.C., 0-566711

Medical Officer

McFarland, Ward J., 1st Lieutenant, M.C., 0-502114

Intelligence Clerk

Bonar, Thomas E., Jr., Sergeant, 11041211

The 444th Bombardment Group (H), with headquarters at Davis-Monthan Field, originally was designated as the Parent Group for the 451st Bombardment Group. However, when the 444th Group was scheduled to be transferred elsewhere, a new Parent Group for the 451st was named. The new group was the 346th Bombardment Group (H), with headquarters at Dyersburg, Tennessee. On June 4, 1943, per authority of Special Order 155, Paragraph 5, AAB, Davis-Monthan Field, the ten officers and one enlisted man, together with other officers scheduled to arrive at Davis-Monthan Field, were sent to AAB, Dyersburg, Tennessee.

Major Jones, designated as Executive Officer of the 451st Group, was Senior Officer.

Other officers and enlisted men soon reported for duty and Captain James B. Beane, A.C., 0-413562, assumed temporary command as senior flying officer present. On June 15, 1943, Captain Linnon R. Blackmon, A.C., assigned as Deputy Group Commander, Per Paragraph 1, Special Order 167 Headquarters Davis-Monthan Field, reported for duty and relieved Captain Beane.

The 451st Group was assigned a small section of the headquarters of the 346th Group for its own headquarters and then was shifted to a corner of a building used by one of the squadrons of the 346th Group. Preliminary paper work was accomplished without delay, despite lack of space, office equipment and sufficient clerical personnel.

Medical officers obtained some space in the 346th Group Dispensary, and started immediately to check on the inoculation records of the men in the 451st Group. A base regulation at Dyersburg required that all new arrivals at the base be examined every day for the first ten days for signs of communicable diseases, such as measles and scarlet fever, and the medical officers got up a schedule for this series of examinations which was adhered to by every officer and enlisted man in the group.

Intelligence Officers and Intelligence Clerks were attached to various squadrons of the 346th Group and assisted the squadron Intelligence Officers and Intelligence Clerks in their own work, thus aiding the 346th S-2 sections and at the same time keeping up to date on their own work.

Meanwhile the following assignments were made:

Captain Williams, Group S-1
Captain McManus, Group S-2
Quillen, Monroe C., Captain, A.C. 0-432123, Group S-3
Leeser, Howard A., 1st Lieutenant, A.C., 0-432475
Beane, James B., Captain A.C., 0-413562, Commander 724th Squadron
Davis, John P., Captain A.C., 0-433359, Commander 725th Squadron
Haltom, Charles C., Captain, A.C., 0-438036, Commander 726th Squadron
Evans, Clayton E., Captain, A.C., 0-437435, Commander 727th Squadron

2. †

On June 19, 1943, 44 officers and 69 enlisted men, comprising the air echelon of the group, departed for Orlando, Florida, to attend the Army Air Forces School of Applied Tactics. The move was made per authority of Special Order 142, Headquarters, Dyersburg, Tennessee, Paragraph 4 covering the officers, and Paragraph 5, the enlisted men. The Special Order directed the officers and men to report for duty at Wendover Field, Utah, upon the completion of their courses at AAFSAT.

At this time the Group Commander was attending the B-24 Standardization School, at Davis-Monthan Field. The Group Commander joined the air echelon at its arrival at AAFSAT.

The air echelon attending AAFSAT included the Group Commander, the Deputy Group Commander, Group S-2, Group S-3, Group S-4, the four Squadron Commanders, Squadron S-2s, Squadron S-3s and a model crew from each squadron to be used in the practice missions to be assigned to the group in the second half of its AAFSAT training.

While the air echelon undertook its courses at AAFSAT, the ground echelon remained at Dyersburg, continuing its task of setting up the records and other paper work of the new group.

The echelon at AAFSAT completed its 10-day series of classroom courses and proceeded to Pinecastle, Florida, a satellite field. There, under simulated combat conditions, it embarked upon a series of over-water mock-bombing and navigational missions designed to prepare the personnel for its ultimate overseas duties.

Four B-24 type airplanes were assigned to the group, but three of these proved inadequate to the demands to be made upon them in the fulfillment of the missions. These three airplanes were equipped for low-altitude long-range missions called for by the training Schedule. It was found necessary to return these three airplanes to Biggs Field, El Paso, Texas, and await the assignment of new airplanes.

This necessary substitution caused delay in the conditioning of these planes.

The officers and enlisted men were housed in tents in Pinecastle. A larger tent, on the line, was assigned to the group and served as Group Operations and Group Intelligence.

The new airplanes arrived, were serviced, and the echelon commenced its series of training missions. Orders for a mission were received by TWX, were studied immediately, by the Group Commander, Deputy Group Commander, and by Operations and Intelligence Officers. A plan for the accomplishment of the mission was formulated; routes in and out were worked out by the Group Commander, assisted by his staff officers, and then the necessary Operations and Intelligence Data was compiled and prepared for presentation to the crews.

Approximately two hours before scheduled take-off, the various staff and specialist officers briefed the crews on the mission. During each briefing the Group Commander carefully outlined the aims for the mission, its importance, and what had to be accomplished in order to adjudge the mission a success.

During this time weather conditions in Pinecastle and vicinity were highly unfavorable. It rained every day with the exception of one day, and frequently rained several times daily.

Mechanics on the line had only three crew chief kits to service the airplanes and were lacking in personnel. These ground crews worked all night, every night, with insufficient tools, and succeeded in making the airplanes ready for the next day's mission.

Despite these difficult conditions, the 451st Group completed successfully 7 out of a possible 8 missions. Previously only one other group reached this average. All other groups accomplished a lesser number of missions, some finishing only 2 or 3 out of the 8 scheduled.

The Group Commander and the Deputy Group Commander alternated in personally accompanying each formation, and both officers saw to it that cameras were taken on the flights and photographs made to prove the successful fulfillment of the specified requirements of each mission.

Base officers personnel of the 9th Group, stationed at the field, complimented the work of the 451st Group, and stated publicly that in some respects it surpassed all other previous groups in the speed and determination of its training.

Besides the benefits accrued from the performance of the missions, officers and enlisted men grew to know each other, and learned of the difficulties of living in extremely hot and damp conditions, working long hours, eating poor food and still, withal, maintaining a rigid flight schedule.

On July 18, 1943, a portion of the echelon, departed, in the four planes, for Wendover Field, Utah. The remainder of the echelon departed for the same base by rail. On July 19, Special Order 172, Paragraphs 1 and 2 authorized the ground echelon to leave Dyersburg to join the air echelon at Wendover.

New difficulties awaited the group at Wendover.

The Group Commander arrived at Wendover just at the moment base personnel at Wendover was engaged in a long-distance telephone call with ground echelon personnel still at Dyersburg, informing the Dyersburg callers that there were no provisions at the field at Wendover to house the 451st Group.

An earlier group stationed at Wendover had not yet departed, it was said, and the field at Wendover was overcrowded. Emergency work and living quarters had to be established for the 451st Group.

A tent area was assigned to the Group to be used for the Group Commander's Headquarters, headquarters for various group officials, and living quarters for enlisted men. The tent area originally was designed to accommodate 400 men. The number of men of the 451st Group assigned to the area was more than double this number.

A single, unfurnished, unpartitioned building at the extreme end of the field, a considerable distance from the tent area mentioned above, was assigned to the group for all its group and squadron activities. A few days later individual tents were constructed on the line for the squadron

activities and single building was retained for group operational and intelligence activities.

It was necessary for the group officers to pursue their work initiating the training schedule while carpenters and other workmen strove to divide the building into some semblance of sections for office separation.

This then, created three separate and widely-dispersed areas in which the group had to function.

The squadron offices set up on the line began to function. High winds sweeping across the field collapsed several of the tents, and continued to collapse others for the next few days. Squadron sections had to work in the open while carpenters sought to re-raise the tents. Papers became scattered and records blown about. Training was started in the face of these difficulties and additional crews arrived.

Ground crews still suffered from a lack of sufficient equipment to service airplanes, and again demonstrated their ability to make the most of what little they had, and their willingness to work under adverse conditions.

The Group Commander regarded these difficulties of installation as being beneficial in one sense. He felt it aided the group to work under disadvantages. It aided group and squadron officers to function under disadvantages, and brought out traits of ingenuity on the part of the officers and men. Combat conditions will be met with more fortitude, it was felt, due to the lack of conveniences now being enjoyed.

At this time, four Major officers arrived for duty, and were assigned as follows:

Rohrs, Leonard J., Major, A.C., 0-305378, designated Group S-1

Reynolds, Robert L., Major, A.C., 0-274166, Executive Officer, 724th Squadron.

Marshall, Raymond H., Major, A.C., 0-336972, Executive Officer, 726th Squadron.

Captain Williams, Executive Officer, 725th Squadron.

Captain Williams was detailed to Special Duty in Salt Lake City to select filler personnel for the Group.

First phase training proceeded without delay. Bombing missions were flown. Medical officers began a careful check of all officers and enlisted personnel to determine fitness for overseas duty and to see that inoculations were up to date. Men were assigned regularly to the various gunnery ranges to qualify in small arms. Engineering, Communications, Armament, Operations, Intelligence and Weather sections performed the necessary group and squadron training duties. Ground school classes were conducted along the lines specified by the Second Air Force.

The tent area assigned to the group proved totally inadequate, and finally the Group Commander offered to set up another tent area at the eastern extremity of the field, using personnel from the group. Although the group is still far from assigned strength, the area was completed without interfering with training, and on the evening of August 16, 1943, the newly-completed area was occupied and all equipment and records were shifted to it.

On the same day the group concluded the first phase

of its training and on the next day, August 17, started the second phase of its training. At this time the strength of the group totaled 123 officers, 980 enlisted men.

Inspired with the prospect and expectancy of overseas service in the not too remote future, officers and enlisted personnel continued to perform all duties with high morale, and zest, knowing that each day brought the outfit closer to its dreamed goal, combat with the enemies of the United States.

CHAPTER II

Period Covered:

August 22, 1943 to September 30, 1943

The night of August 28, 1943, will always be remembered by the Group as the Night of the Big Wind.

Tents had blown down before, both in the tent area and on the line, but this night it seemed as though the elements really were out to sink the Group. A gale swept across the Salt Lake Desert, and while it was just wind, as far as other outfits, comfortable housed in wooden buildings were concerned, it was plain trouble for the Group. Tents went down like ten pins, crashing down wooden supports, flopping, full of salt and sand and dirt, over sleeping men, who thought they were perhaps being bombed.

There was no stopping the cavorting tents. The wind steamed up until it was hitting a howling high, and it showed no favorites. Men woke sleepily, climbed out of their tents to aid disgruntled companions, only to turn their backs — and hear their own tents sigh tiredly and collapse. Bed and belongings were playthings before the wind, and a man's fresh-washed socks usually ended up in the quarters of a total stranger, who thanked the Gods for gifts bestowed.

Over on the line Second Lt. Eli Zinn, Engineering Officer for the 727th, was supervising a crew of men accomplishing an acceptance check on a B-24. The crew had accomplished the check in a 12 hour period some days before on another plane, were complimented for their industry, and were keen on repeating or even bettering, if possible, the performance.

Then came the wind. The men looked hopefully at Lt. Zinn, and he yielded, and permitted them to hurry to the tent area and see what was happening to their belongings, especially those new pictures of their girl friends and wives. When they got there they howled in misery. Their prized possessions were scattered half across the Wendover Air Base, the wind was getting worse, if anything, and there was no time for cleanup. Sadly they returned to their duties, their hands ready but unwilling, their minds on beds overturned and sand-filled. Under the drive of Lt. Zinn, however, they plunged ahead and finished the check well within the 12-hour limit they set for themselves — and then, finished, rushed back to the tent area to retrieve what was retrievable.

One enlisted man indicated the terrors and sounds of war will never interfere with his night's slumber. He woke at 0520 as was his wont. His tent was blown down and he had been sleeping unprotected under the cold Utah dawn.

4. †

Half his clothing was blown away. His bed was covered with sand. He sat up, blinked his eyes, and asked: "What happened? Was it windy during the night?"

It was a testimony to forbearance that he was not broken in half by groggy friends.

In all, 100 tents were blown down. But by 1400 that same day every tent was back in place, the area was cleared of all debris, and work continued. There was not a single minute lost in the training progress due to the devastation of the wind.

On Saturday, September 4th, Brigadier General Eugene L. Eubank, the then Commanding General of the Second Bomber Command, inspected the Group. He was treated, inadvertently, to a spectacle of close cooperation between a group plane and group control officers in the tower. The cooperation averted what might have been a serious, perhaps fatal, accident.

First Lieutenant Kendall S. Young, Operations Officer of the 727th, was flying a B-24 in a training mission, when he discovered, on coming in for a landing, that he could not lock his landing gear in place. He radioed the tower for instructions. It so happened at the time that General Eubank, the Commanding Officer of the Group, the Deputy Group Commander, that the Group Operations Officer were in the tower at the time.

The Group Operations Officer began a careful and painstaking conversation with Lt. Young, advising him, calming him, and in so doing, talking him into a perfect landing. The gear was lowered, although it was impossible to lock it, and then, talking all the time to the Group Operations Officer, and in full view of the visiting General and other Officers, Lt. Young brought in the plane. The weight of the plane and the impact of the landing locked the gear.

An investigation later disclosed that the actuating cylinder was still unlocked, and jammed, and that until the plane landed the gear was not locked.

The landing was made so beautifully, the teamwork between the tower and the pilot so perfect, that General Eubank expressed great satisfaction, and then walked out onto the ramp and personally commended Lt. Young for his skill and calmness. He requested the name, rank and serial number of the officer for his own records.

Early the following morning the Group Commander, accompanied by his Executive Officer, Engineering Officer, and other assistants, flew to Sioux City, and then proceeded to the Fairmont Army Air Field, to which base the entire group was about to be transferred for continued training.

Facilities were inadequate at Wendover. The group Commander inspected the new base, made plans for the disposition of personnel and equipment, and then returned to Wendover. Plans for the transfer were developed without interfering with the training scheduled, which went on unbrokenly.

On September 8th, the Ground Echelon of the 724th and the 725th Squadrons departed Wendover by train. The Group Executive Officer was the Train Commander for the 724th, and his command comprised 44 officers and 295 enlisted men. The Executive Officer of the 725th Squadron, was the Train Commander for his own squadron, which included 29 officers and 305 enlisted men.

The two squadrons remaining at Wendover continued to fly and service the planes for the entire group. On September 11, both the Ground Echelons of the remaining two squadrons, and the Air Echelons for the entire group, departed for Fairmont.

The Group air echelon, comprising 93 officers and enlisted men, under the command of the Group Commander, left Wendover at 1100 hours, in 11 airplanes and arrived at Fairmont at 1700 hours, CWT.

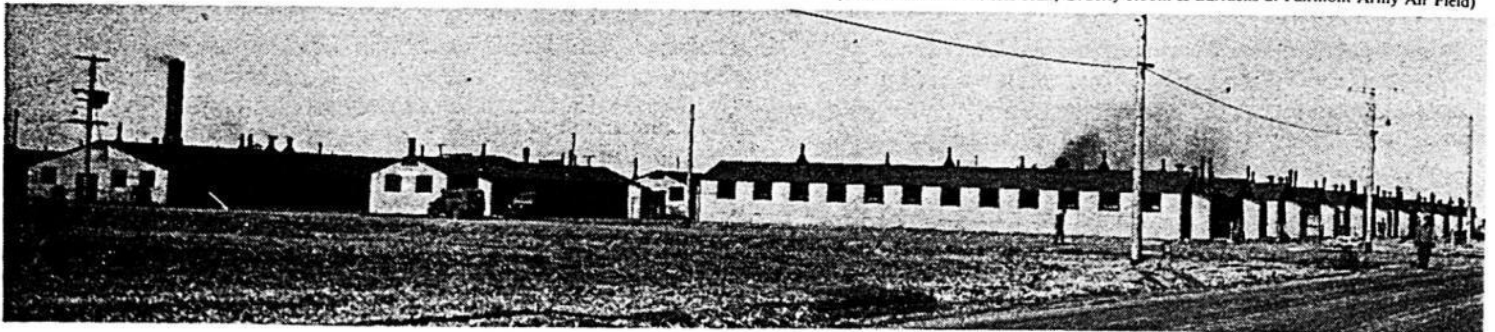
The ground crews of the two squadrons who left three days earlier were waiting on the planes, and set to work conditioning them for flight as soon as they landed. That same afternoon, every one of the planes was taken aloft again by crews in training. The 11 planes flew a total of 79 hours of training missions on September 11, the same afternoon and evening they arrived from Wendover.

That same evening the Ground Echelons remaining at Wendover, departed. The Executive Officer of the 726th was train commander over his own squadron, comprising 42 officers and 290 enlisted men. The Executive Officer of the 727th Squadron commanded the 37 officers and 258 enlisted men of his own squadron. The Group Adjutant, traveling with the 726th, was in command of the entire echelon of both squadrons.

The train movement, both on the 8th and the 11th, was made as a model train movement, with secrecy and security emphasized. The enlisted men and officers were impressed with the fact that the group now was alerted for overseas movement, and that secrecy was of paramount importance in connection with all moves made from then on out.

The entire personnel were given strict lectures on security and secrecy by squadron intelligence officers prior to departure, and the articles of war, were again read to the enlisted men.

(Pictured below — Mess Hall, Orderly Room & Barracks at Fairmont Army Air Field)





Training Mission
over Fairmont, Nebraska

The movements were made as troop movements. Kitchens were aboard all trains. Food, service and efficiency were rated excellent by all persons who took part in the movement.

Quarters at Fairmont were deemed greatly superior to those of Wendover. Instead of tents, subject to the whims of the weather, roomy buildings were provided for the entire personnel, both to work and live in. Quarters on the line were spacious and well built, insulated against the cold of oncoming winter. Living quarters were substantial and roomy.

The group found itself the only tactical organization on the field, and able at last to proceed with training without interference from any other quarter. On September 17, 34 more crews arrived, and were distributed among the squadrons.

By the end of the month 18 more airplanes were allotted the group, including 7 of the new B-24 H's, with a new gun turret in the nose. The group then had, in all, 29 airplanes.

An atmosphere of excitement was gradually increasing among the personnel, both officers and enlisted men, as the training began to sharpen itself to a fine and recognizable edge.

Lecture by intelligence officers were inaugurated as a weekly feature in the huge war room, and aided by maps and electrical projections, the intelligence officers kept the group up to date on all war developments throughout the world, in all theaters.

Enlisted men were continued in ground school, trained in security and secrecy, Articles of War. Their physical training was not neglected, and drill and calisthenics three times a week in the post gymnasium.



Geneva, Nebraska

Staff Officers
Group Headquarters

October 1943

The goal of overseas combat seemed closer than ever, and the feeling electrified the men and sped up the interest in training in the air and on the ground.

CHAPTER III

Period Covered:

October 1, 1943 to October 31, 1943

The month of October was marked in the 451st Group by a series of rigid and painstaking inspections on a scale and to a degree beyond anything the Group had hitherto sustained.

A second characteristic of the month was one of tragedy: nine officers and fourteen enlisted men were killed in training flights which also saw the destruction of three airplanes. These were the first fatalities suffered by the Group since its organization.

A third note in the month was a happy one: promotions inaugurated in the Group came through.

By far the most important of these occurrences was the series of inspections, designed by higher echelons to ascertain whether the Group was in condition to go overseas to perform its combat mission. The Group received a final report of satisfactory.

The inspections started on the first day of the month with a visit by an air inspecting party from the 15th Bombardment Operational Training Wing. This unit then made a series of suggestions designed to enable the Group to pass the oncoming *Preparation for Overseas Movement* inspection, which was to follow shortly.

A pre-POM inspection was made by the Second Bomber Command on October 8th as a further preparation for the POM inspection.

The POM inspectors from Headquarters, Army Air Forces arrived on October 14th and made a thorough and detailed inspection of every phase of activity in the Group — training, equipment, personnel, maintenance, etc, and pronounced the Group in readiness for service overseas.

At the same time the POM inspectors recommended a few days extension for further specific air training.

On October 18th the Inspector General of the War Department surveyed the Group and found it "satisfactory" for overseas movement.

At this time the Administrative Inspector of the Wing Air Inspection Department returned to the Group and remained with the organization since that time, working with it daily. On October 24th the Wing Air Inspector returned and also stated that he deemed the Group in a state of fitness for combat overseas.

On October 18th the Wing Commander and the Group Commander conferred and the comments made by the Wing Commander regarded as highly encouraging. He made additional recommendations and suggestions, and the Group set out immediately to comply with these. The Wing Commander was adjudged as pleased with the progress of the Group to date.

These inspections, from beginning to end, were exacting to extreme, and tested the metal of the Group as much, or perhaps more, than anything that had occurred to it since its formation. Knowledge of the presence of the officers from the higher echelons proved exhilarating and the entire personnel of the Group, from its senior officers down through the enlisted men, sensed that in these inspections passage overseas was being expedited.

While officers and enlisted men worked tirelessly over long hours to accomplish the requirements of the inspectors, the wave of surveys seemed in the end to raise morale to its highest peak. The Group began to get the feeling that it was "hot" and this thought tingled the spine of every man in the organization.

On October 1st the Group Executive Officer summoned the key staff officers from Group and all the Squadrons to the War Room for an introduction to and an analyses of the various sections of the POM Manual. The manual was gone through from beginning to end, part by part, and those officers of the organization whose experience with various sections gave them some additional knowledge of those sections, presented their information to the Group. Many problems and questions were ironed out in the informal meeting, and staff officers took notes on those portions of the manual which effected them and their department.

On October 16th the Group Commander again called a meeting of the key Squadron and Group Staff Officers, and in key with his policy of translating the wishes and directives of higher echelons to those officers whose duty it is to enforce them, discussed portions of the results of the POM inspection which could be related without violating security measures.

The Group Commander pointed out some of the things the POM inspectors criticized and then added his own thoughts on how the defective points might be improved. Then the Group Commander concluded by again emphasizing his desires for strict military discipline throughout the organization, and reiterated that it was his belief that discipline was the basis of any military organization, and that before an organization could proceed to combat this fundamental quality must be achieved.

In line with these heightened preparations for overseas movement an investigation was undertaken by several Group Staff Officers to ascertain the basic requirements of the 21st Wing, which as scheduled to make the final inspection for the air echelon of the Group, prior to the immediate flight overseas.

The Group S-3 was in charge of the investigation, and he, together with the Group S-4, 1st Lt. Lynn J. Bartlett, acting as Air Echelon Adjutant; and 1st Lt. Ralph A. Byers, the Group Navigator, went to Topeka on September 29th and remained there for several days conferring with officers of the 21st Wing.

Upon their return, the four officers reported to Group and Squadron staff officers on their findings, and each investigation officer detailed his own department.

The Group S-4 reported all essential shortages would be filled by the 21st Wing provided every attempt had been made at previous stations to fulfill these requirements. Air-

craft would be processed at the 21st Wing, he stated.

Flyaways would be calibrated and checks for correct functioning of all parts would be made at the 21st Wing, he continued. The 21st Wing would pack and load all aircraft before departure and conduct a showdown inspection of all clothing, he concluded.

Lt. Bartlett then continued the report with the administrative requirements, and listed the various forms and other paper work that would have to be accomplished before the air echelon arrived at the 21st Wing. Squadron Commanders and Executive Officers set out to do the job immediately.

Lt. Byers' investigation disclosed that an Air Inspector's Department has been set up at the 21st Wing Processing Headquarters to check the training of all combat crews before they are released for overseas duty. All flight training records will be checked, he ascertained, and each crew must have completed certain basic requirements of training before they can go overseas. These requirements fall into five parts, as follows, he reported:

- (a) All combat crew personnel must have fired a prescribed course in marksmanship with their basic ground weapon, and at least 50% of the personnel must have qualified.
- (b) All combat crew members, except the pilot and co-pilot, must have fired at least 200 rounds at a towed target at an altitude above 20,000 feet.
- (c) All crews will have flown at least 20 hours of formation above 20,000 feet.
- (d) All bombardiers will have dropped at least 20 bombs individually released at a precision target from above 20,000 feet.
- (e) All crews will have completed a 1000 mile navigational flight before arriving at the 21st Wing.

At the processing headquarters each crew member is then given a questionnaire and a series of tests to determine the amount of training he has received and if he is qualified in his necessary specialties.

The pilot is given a Link Trainer check and an instrument check. If he does not pass, the crew does not leave the 21st Wing.

The radio operator is given a thorough check on all his equipment and code checks. If he is not qualified, he is replaced.

All flight personnel is then briefed on escape procedure and the route to be flown overseas before being sent to Port of Embarkation.

Training through the four squadrons in the Group was more and more firmly shaped around these requirements to make certain that each crew and each member of each crew would be fully trained in those things deemed necessary for overseas movement.

The first fatal accident in the Group occurred at 0730 October 10, 1943, when Crew 42 of the 726th Squadron was flying a routine training mission, high altitude over Wayne, Nebraska, about fifty miles from the FAAF. There were three officers and three enlisted men aboard. All were instantly killed.

The dead were:

- 2nd Lt. Cecil Clayton Burr, pilot
- 2nd Lt. William Earl Harnish, co-pilot
- 2nd Lt. Melecio M. Apodaca, bombardier
- S/Sgt. Alfred C. Dublin, right waist gunner
- Sgt. Wilfred Wood, assistant engineer and tail gunner
- Sgt. Paul Ztkowski, left waist gunner

The navigator of the crew, 2nd Lt. Merle Fitzgibbon, had been grounded a day earlier because of respiratory infection. Two of the other crew members, enlisted men, had been grounded permanently and were waiting on reclassification, and the third enlisted man was in the hospital.

The S-2 of the Squadron, to which the men were attached, was named Summary Court Officer for the three deceased officers and Lt. Fitzgibbon was named Summary Court Officer for the three deceased enlisted men. The two Summary Court Officers made the necessary arrangements for the settlement of the estates of all the deceased, made inventories of their effects, and then prepared and shipped everything to the homes of the dead men. Three officers and three enlisted men were assigned to accompany the bodies home and to serve the relatives and friends of the deceased in their bereavement.

The Group Commander and the Squadron Commander sent letters of condolence to the families, expressing their sorrow at the tragic accident.

The tragedy was hardly forgotten by the Group when, at 1615, 25 October 1943, two airplanes assigned to the 724th Squadron collided in midair during a formation flight near FAAF. Both A/C crashed to the ground and all personnel, save one, was killed.

The dead were:

Crew 16

- 2nd Lt. Charles L. Brown, pilot
- 2nd Lt. Henry C. Frye, co-pilot
- F/O Achille P. Augelli, bombardier
- Sgt. William C. Wilson, engineer
- Pfc. Andrew C. Bivona, radio operator
- Sgt. Albert R. Magavero, assistant engineer
- Sgt. Arthur O. Boria, third engineer
- Sgt. Eugene A. Hubbell, gunner

Crew 12

- 2nd Lt. James H. Williams, pilot
- 2nd Lt. William E. Herzog, navigator
- 2nd Lt. Kenneth S. Ordway, bombardier
- Sgt. William D. Watkins, engineer
- Sgt. Wilbur H. Chamberlin, radio operator
- Sgt. William G. Williams, assistant engineer
- Sgt. Edward O. Boucher, gunner
- Sgt. Ursulo Galindo, gunner

2nd Lt. Kenneth Boggs, navigator on Crew 16 and Sgt. Walter H. Hagen, Jr., gunner, were in the hospital at the time. 2nd Lt. Ralph L. Merrow, co-pilot, awaiting assignment to a crew was substituting for him.

By one of those inexplicable miracles, Lt. Klein alone of all the officers and men, was plummeted out of the cockpit of the plane, while unconscious, and regained consciousness while plunging to the ground. In a semi-awake

state he automatically pulled the ripcord of his parachute and the silk opened in time to drop him safely to the ground. There he was picked up by a passing motorist, taken to a nearby city, and there he telephoned his Squadron Commander and reported the crash. He stated he had no recollection of anything after the crash and the downward plunge of the plane until that moment when he came out of his unconscious state and pulled open his chute.

The Squadron S-2 officer and two other Squadron officers, 2nd Lt. Marc Ostinato and 2nd Lt. George Kelton, were appointed Summary Court Officers and performed their last duties for their deceased comrades. Again the Group Commander extended his sympathies to families in bereavement, and he was joined by the Squadron Commander.

The Group was visited by the Safety Committee of the Army Air Forces in connection with this second accident, and the committee sought to determine the cause of the accident, in an effort to prevent similar tragedies in other training units throughout the country.

The first promotion to arrive in the Group, on recommendations made from the Group, befell 2nd Lt. William L. Finley, the Group Weather Officer. A few days later the returns on the other Group recommendations arrived, causing the usual run on the Post Exchange for cigars.

CHAPTER IV

Period Covered:

November 1, 1943 to November 30, 1943

Appropriately enough, this was the month for thanksgiving by the personnel of the Group; but it was also a month of sweat and toil, sweat in the physical and the army sense of the work. It was the month of Victory as far as the training program was concerned, both administratively and tactically.

The continual inspections became more and more earnest as the time for "shipment" drew near. Days and nights were spent bringing all administrative records of each individual of the Group to their completion; final physical check-ups were made to ascertain the fitness of the men for overseas service; supplies of clothing and equipment were issued according to the rules set-down, and each piece marked or stenciled. Whatever personal luggage, excess clothing and equipment, and unnecessary articles there were, were shipped to the men's individual homes. The required baggage for overseas movement was prepared, properly marked and stenciled. So on the ground.

Meanwhile, the requirements of the 21st Wing and the 2nd Air Force for flight training were completed during the first part of the month, partly in Group formation flights, and partly in individual missions. Flyaways kept coming in, and were "broken in" during the training and inspection programs; a full total of sixty-two planes was acquired by the Group, and meted out sixteen each to the 724th and 725th Squadrons, and fifteen each to the 726th and 727th.

It seemed clear from the type of formation flying of

which the Group showed itself capable, that the 451st was ready. On November 11th a practice POM mission was staged. A photo target was selected, and bombs were to be dropped on the Stanton Bombing Range from an altitude of 20,000 feet. The crews participating were not told at briefing, and were still unaware at take-off time, that Major General St. Claire Street, Commanding General, 2nd Air Force, was present in the company of the Group Commander, to witness the take-off, assembly and return of the planes. Despite difficulties, due largely to an extremely cold-spell of weather, and the fact that emergency landings were necessary in between take-offs of planes, the mission was flown as briefed, although complete cloud coverage prevented the actual dropping of the practice bombs carried. General Street addressed the participants in the mission after they had landed, and complimented their work under the difficulties.

He commented that the Group had shown itself prepared for action against the enemy, commending the Group Commander and his men, and declared himself convinced that we would successfully meet the actual POM inspection which was to be held on November 16th. Needless to say, the men looked forward with redoubled energy to the completion of all requirements, both on the ground and in the air.

The intervening period between the 11th and 16th of the month, were beyond doubt the most hectic the Group had seen yet. The procuring and dissemination of supplies, clothing and equipment provided the larger share of headaches. A good example: orders were issued by inspectors of the 21st Wing to the effect that two barracks bags would be issued to each man of the organization. The same was done, almost instantly, and the various squadron supply officers immediately set about stenciling and properly marking the bags. They finished in record time only to find out that the orders had been changed so that one duffel bag would replace one of the barracks bag. Other matters that took quick and accurate work included the weeding-out of those physically and otherwise unfit, and the preparation of records to accompany the crew of ten and the four passengers who would make the overseas trip in each of the sixty-two planes.

The various departments were faced with the necessity of packing those things which they would take with them, while still leaving at hand's reach the required items for daily operations. For flying continued as usual, with concentration on formation flights by the Group; individual flights in furtherance of the training program continued. It was not considered that we had any time for rest and relaxation. And the program worked; for the 16th found an eager bunch of men ready to prove their worth to join their fellows against the enemy overseas.

And the big air inspection went off well. The briefing assimilated an actual combat mission, having been carefully selected by the Group Commander and the various inspectors from several submitted by the S-2 section. The mission was of about five hours flight, with a simulated target of which pictures were to be taken to demonstrate the accuracy of the bomb run, and practice bombs were to be dropped on one of the ranges. The mission was carried out flawlessly. As a matter of fact, the formation assembly

was of such a nature that many department heads decided then and there that final packing and crating should be done instantly.

That evening there was relaxation. And with it a stag party given by the Group Commander for all officers of the organization. Amidst flowing liquors and beer, delicious foods and hearty songs, the Group Commander professed his pride in the accomplishments of the unit and thanked all concerned for their work. He stated that we were on our way, but his last words were drowned out in hurrahs.

Meanwhile the enlisted men of the organization celebrated with their own party, held in one of the hangers. For the first time since the formation of the Group, there was only a handful of the two thousand odd members on duty.

On the morning of the 17th there was new work to be done. Advance notice indicated that part of the air echelon would be leaving the following day for staging at Lincoln, Nebraska, only sixty-five miles away from Fairmont. As a result, there was a mad scramble to pack up all clothing and equipment, and to place each piece in the proper baggage, while any excess was sent home or given away as the individual owner saw fit. And there were good-byes to be said to wives and families, suddenly aware that this finally was to be the real parting of the ways. On the morning of the 18th, eleven planes of the 724th Squadron, their baggage racks crammed with the luggage of the crew of ten and the four passengers, took off for Lincoln. The Group Commander accompanied this movement, which for the purpose of overseas movement became known as Flight "1," and similarly each morning for the next five days, until November 23rd, a flight of ten or eleven planes took off for Lincoln to be staged, until the runways and aprons were cleared, and the ground echelon alone remained at the base.

However, flights for the remaining planes was not discontinued and while on a fuel-consumption test on the night of November 20th, plane number "084" of the 727th Squadron with 2nd Lt. Paul R. Pfau as pilot and 2nd Lt. Arthur Wartman, co-pilot, had two runaway props which necessitated feathering of the two outboard engines. The plane was at the time approximately 100 miles from Grand Island Air Base. Because of the fact that one of the in-board engines was acting up, and the plane was fast losing altitude, Lt. Pfau ordered eight members of his crew and the two passengers, both of the armament section, to bail out. They did at altitudes between eighteen and fifteen hundred feet, leaving the two officers alone at the controls.

Despite their difficulties, a successful landing was made at the strange field at Grand Island. Immediate searches led by Captains Kendall S. Young and Joe W. King, Operations Officer and Flight Surgeon of the 727th Squadron, who flew down to Grand Island upon hearing of the emergency, resulted in all ten men who had parachuted being found safe before the next morning.

The 23rd of the month found all of the six flights with all members of the Group who were to make the voyage overseas by plane, under the command of the Group Commander, at Lincoln Army Air Base. The Ground echelon

was left commanded by Major Donald T. Jones, Group Executive, while the four Squadron Executive Officers assumed command of their respective squadrons pro tempore. From this day until January 20, 1944, when both echelons were once again brought together in Italy, the history of the air and ground echelons must be told separately. The Air Echelon was taken into hand by the 12th Heavy Bombardment Processing Headquarters which did a magnificent and well coordinated job in staging the planes and personnel for departure to overseas destination.

A major tie-up was caused by the fact that several new major technical order compliances necessitated serious modifications on the planes. Consequently, only one-fourth of our planes pulled out of Lincoln for Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida, our jumping off point, by the end of the month. Nevertheless, all other items were covered during this period, such as the final processing of the personnel, the separation of equipment and clothing which was to go by boat and that to accompany the fourteen men on the plane, final physical inspections, and the examinations of the qualifications of the various members of the crew. Not one member of the Group was deemed unsatisfactory for his relative position because of a lack of training.

While the majority of the air echelon took good advantage of a relatively easy and free period at Lincoln, the number one ship of the Group, piloted by 1st Lt. Claude U. Vail, of the 724th Bombardment Squadron, departed the United States from Morrison Field on November 27, 1943. Meanwhile the Group Commander was detained a few days at Lincoln, and consequently was not, as scheduled, on the first ship of the Group.

There were no incidents of note insofar as the air echelon was concerned for the balance of the month, unless it was the fact that the only concern of all, beyond the fulfillment of the necessary requirements of staging, was in enjoying the hospitality of Lincoln.

The ground echelon was not so fortunate. For this period was spent by them preparing for the departure for the P.O.E. at Hampton Roads, Virginia. The enlisted personnel of each squadron were divided into platoons, each squadron being supplied with one troop train for itself. All troop trains were boarded on November 26th, and Dyersburg and Wendover and Fairmont became things of the past. The entire Group was now on its way.

The trip by train to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, the staging area for the P.O.E. took two days, the ground echelon arriving during the dark hours of the night of the 28th. The next two days were spent requisitioning supplies and organizational equipment in furtherance of show-down inspections, in final physical inspections, and in filling in vacancies of personnel of the Group. The entire echelon was kept under censorship and restricted to the Camp itself until departure for P.O.E.

And so ended the month, with major part of the Group personnel awaiting patiently and with great anticipation, the order to move on. It was best that way. That this month of severe stress and strain, of labor and accomplishment, should have ended in a peaceful and lazy note, the rest was well needed.

CHAPTER V

Period Covered:

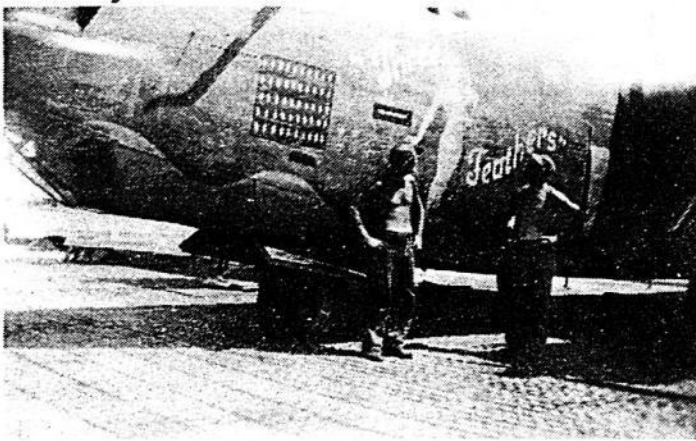
December 1, 1943 to January 20, 1944

During the greater part of the month of December, the 451st was literally, spread all over the map. The ground echelon, having met the various requirements of staging, embarked squadron by squadron on four separate vessels on December 3rd, and began a pleasant but uneventful boat trip which consumed most of the month. Two squadrons passed Christmas Day in camp areas set-up on the hills of Oran, Algeria; while the other squadrons (724th and 727th) remained on the respective boats in the harbor of Naples, Italy from the 24th to the 27th, on which date they disembarked to be quartered at Ciano College.

Meanwhile the air echelon was neither here nor there, but all over. Several of the crews and passengers remained at Lincoln until December 7th, where as by that date many of the eleven ships of the "first flight" had progressed as far as Marrakech or Casablanca. The first crew to leave the States was the number 1 crew of the Group, that of 1st Lt. Claude U. Vail. They departed from Morrison Field, Florida on November 27th and landed at Dakar, French West Africa on December 3rd. On the whole, the trip by air for all of the planes followed the same general pattern, Morrison to Borinquen, Porto Rico, or Waller Field, Trinidad, to Atkinson Field, British Guinea, to Belem, Brazil, to Natal or Fortaleza for the JUMPING OFF point, to Rusisque Field, near Dakar; from there to either Tindouf, Algeria or Marrakech, Morocco, from which point all took off for northern Africa, some hitting Casablanca, others Oran, and still others Algiers, from which points all were briefed to their final destination at Telergma Field, Algeria.

But while the routes were uniform and stereotyped, individual experiences varied greatly. By far the most important phase of the entire movement, which was not actually completed until January 4, 1944, when the last of the Group planes reached Telergma, was that all of the sixty-two planes reached their final destination without mishap or accident, and without loss. Of course, there were narrow escapes: the most astounding of these involved the plane piloted by Captain Sidney Winski, and carrying the Squadron Commander, Captain Charles Haltom and Flight Surgeon, Captain Marshall Kremers. Captain Winski was flying from Morrison Field to Waller Field, Trinidad. While outside of the sight of land, three engines of the plane failed, and the fourth alone carried the ship and its fourteen passengers. The mechanical failures had developed without notice, and nothing could be done since the closest land was some seventy miles away. Captain Winski gave the order to prepare to ditch while maintaining altitude as well as possible on the one engine; everything loose was thrown overboard, including all baggage carried, guns, chutes, etc, and the men prepared to take their positions, for which they had rehearsed well at Morrison. But as the plane came down through the clouds towards the water below, one of the men saw land in the distance and gave the cry. It was the lovely island of San Lucia, and lovelier to the men because of Beane Field which was situ-

ated immediately on the coast. The pilot succeeded in reaching the field, and was able to unfeather one of the three bad engines to land the plane safely. It was an act of extreme courage and confidence which had pulled the plane and its fourteen passengers through to safety: Captain Winski proved his ability.



"THREE FEATHERS"

Victim of multi-engine failure enroute to S. America. All aboard survived when ship made landing at remote base.

By the end of the month, all ground echelons had arrived in Italy, and on the 2nd of January they received orders to proceed to the new permanent base at Gioia del Colle. The movement was made by truck and train. Upon arrival it was seen that there were no accommodations, and that it was up to ourselves to make the most out of nothing. Areas were immediately assigned to the various squadrons, and the business of construction started. Tent cities arose in all corners of the area, while immediate preparations were made for mess halls and the like. Meanwhile the muddy conditions made all work difficult, to say the least. What pushed the work on was the possibility of the arrival of the air echelon and the beginning of operations at any time.



"NORTH AFRICA"

Members of 727th enjoy "camel break" while delayed in Africa. (l.-r) G. Wheeler, J. Haldane, Unknown, E. Zraick, Local Native.

Actually the air echelon was not to arrive at the new base until January 20th. For upon arrival at Telergma, a new policy was instituted by higher headquarters which required our Group to fly a number of practice missions before taking part in actual operations. Hence the Group flew seven such missions while at Telergma, each of which simulated an actual combat mission, with targets assigned

for dry bomb runs, and practice bombs being dropped on an assigned area in the desert. The Group Commander emphasized the standardization of operational procedures and good tight formation flying. Briefings were held in shifts in a small tent in the muddy Group area, and critiques were held each evening in which the Group Commander reviewed the mistakes and discrepancies of the mission. The benefit was clearly demonstrated later on. Horrible muddy conditions existed which afforded to all a nastier prospect of overseas duty than actually deserved. On January 16th, after consultation with staff in Italy, the Colonel decided that the engineers had progressed sufficiently well with the runway at Gioia to warrant moving up to our permanent base. He flew up to Italy on that day to meet the Commanding General of the 47th Wing to which we were assigned, and after reviewing the situation at Gioia, called upon the air echelon to leave Africa.

CHAPTER VI

Period Covered:

January 20, 1944 to June 30, 1944

On January 20th, the Air Echelon arrived at Gioia del Colle, Italy from Telergma, Africa, 60 planes flying up in formation. Conditions were not good with plenty of mud and no conveniences, but preparations were immediately begun for operations. On January 23rd, the first practice mission was flown in Italy, followed by others with the 98th and 376th Groups, both battle veterans. We looked good and flew good formations.

The first mission, a real milk run, was against Fier Radar Station, Albania. No flak, no fighter opposition, no damage to the target, despite two runs. At that, it was impossible to see anything, and we were by no means expert. Our next mission was much better, on two radar stations near Durazio, Albania, our bombing being as good this time as the other was bad. Two men from the 727th were wounded by flak on that mission.

February 8th was a bad day for the Group. The nose gunner, in the lead ship, was killed by flak on the mission to Piombino, Italy and Lt. Hunt crashed after take-off and all except two crew members were killed. More missions were flown but towards the middle of the month, heavy rain kept us grounded and the field was getting in bad shape. Operations were becoming very difficult, especially take-off and landings.

On February 23rd, just after briefing, a terrific fire destroyed the Group Communications building, along with two TWX machines, typewriters, etc, as well as all of the Chaplains equipment.

The famous Regensburg missions, the one which gave the Group its first Unit Citation, took place on February 25th. Our first attack unit, lead by Major Haltom, was first over the target and smashed it to bits.

Our losses were heavy, however, the 724th losing two, 725th three, and the 726th one plane. One of the planes lost had Captain Quillen, Group Operations Officer aboard. Coming back from the target, only a few ships

were able to land at Gioia because of muddy runways which had made take-off extremely difficult. As a result, our ships were strewn all over Italy. The field was closed to operations and repairs on runways started, causing half of our planes to remain away from the base.

Major Theodore E. Wilhite was named Group Operations Officer on March 1st and Lts. Hughes, Bartlett, Bradley and Steinwinter were all promoted to Captains. The runways were still impassible and the Group was still spread out over Italy, when the Wing C.O., General Atkinson visited us, March 3rd. The 726th and 727th Squadrons were alerted to send 12 planes, crews, etc, to San Pancrazio and Manduria, respectively, to allow operations from these bases. The movement was made on March 3rd and 4th, the Group CO joining the unit at Manduria. On the next day we were informed that the 724th would go to San Pancrazio and the 725th to Manduria.

The movement was made in a driving rain and kitchens were set up during the night after a long trip by truck with part of the Group continually on the road from Gioia for the next 10 days. The unit at San Pancrazio under the CO was known as the advanced unit while the unit at Manduria, under Deputy CO Linnon Blackmon was known as the rear unit.



“LOOSENING UP”

727th Pilots enjoying the hospitality of Doc King's therapeutic Whiskey table.

Operations continued, despite rain, mud, and difficult living conditions. On the mission to Toulon, France, March 11th, Lt. Claude Vail's plane, with Crew #1 from the 724th, exploded over the target, resulting in loss of all, including Major Wilhite, Group Operations Officer. Major Alex Burleigh was appointed to take his place. The rains continued, resulting in more mud, but most of the missions were carried out, regardless of weather.

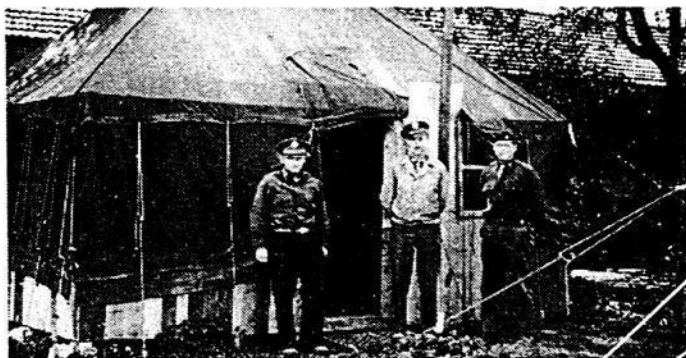
On the mission to Klagenfurt, Austria, Lt. Ralph Darrow of the 725th was forced to ditch in the ocean, with three men lost, the others picked up by Air Sea Rescue. An accident on March 21st resulted in the total loss of Lt. Sunmann's plane and crew when it cracked up on take-off, with bombs aboard. This mishap caused the cancellation of the mission for that day. The mission to Ploesti on April 5th was a disastrous one for the Group resulting in the loss of five planes and crews. Major James Beane and Captain Robert Stone were in one from the 724th, while four from the 727th were all wiped out, in low flight. In addition, one

from the 725th crashed on take-off at Manduria, all but one dead after a terrible explosion and fire.

Major Burleigh was moved to CO of the 724th replacing Major Beane, while Captain Tom Walkey was made Group Operations Officer. April 6th the Group starting to move to its new field at Castelluccio by motor convoy and planes. The move was completed April 9th and the field looked good. The first mission, April 8th was cancelled just before take-off, but a practice mission was flown in the afternoon. The next day the first mission with the 49th Wing was flown to Zagreb, Yugoslavia. Other missions followed, some good, some not so good.

On the mission to Bucharest, April 21st, the 1st attack unit led by Colonel Eaton turned back on recall. The 2nd attack unit led by Captain Kendall Young failed to hear recall and when separated from the others continued to the target, bombing on ETA. The participants were later commended by the Chief of Staff.

On April 14, 1944 Captain Beverly Pearson, working in Group Headquarters as Civilian Personnel, Postal, and P-X Officer, received a promotion in a transfer to the 726th Squadron as Squadron Adjutant, replacing Lt. William McGuire who went to Group Headquarters and subsequently to the U.S. for training as Gunnery Officer.



“WEATHERMAN'S PLOTTING TENT”

W. Finley (Hdq) Weatherman; B. Pearson (726) Sqdn Adjutant; W. McGuire (Hdq) Supply Officer.

Major Blackmon, the popular and well liked Deputy CO, was transferred to the States on April 18th, the cause being sickness.

On April 23rd the Group bombed the airfield at Bad Voslau, Austria against heavy flak fire and aggressive fighters. The target area was well covered with fragmentation bombs.

The 33rd mission was flown on the next day against the marshalling yards at Bucharest, Rumania with great damage being done to rolling stock, choke points, and the yards. Beaucoup fighters and beaucoup flak.

April 28th saw us attempting to hit the Orbetello Seaplane Station, Italy. Results were indefinite since clouds barred accurate bombing.

Meanwhile, since arrival at Castelluccio Air Field the Group, as a whole, became fairly well arranged. Some Squadron staff sections began to build caliche (limestone) block houses for better protection against the dust storms that swept across the field. Group Headquarters was lucky in having an old villa belonging to an Italian Admiral for

housing and office space. Outlying barns were converted into a briefing room and school building. A former chicken-coop became the barber and tailer shop. Extensive repairs and modifications were underway constantly to better our conditions.



"GROUP HEADQUARTERS"
Requisitioned Villa of an Italian Admiral



"OFFICERS ROW"
Home for the 726th Officers



"ENLISTED MEN'S QUARTERS"
Ambitious effort of the 724th Ground Crews

April 29th we hit the sub-pens at Toulon, France against little opposition but doing extensive damage to a munition factory and marshalling yards.

April 30th Colonel Eaton led his Group to Alessandria, Italy, and devastated the marshalling yards against no opposition.

The Orbetello Seaplane Station, Italy and La Spezia were aimed-for on May 2nd but with no damage to the Hun.



"KIA'S OVER PLOESTI"
F.M. Boyle, Pilot (727th) F.S. Moore, Co-Pilot
Distinguished Service Cross posthumously awarded to Mike Boyle

Another Ploesti Mission came up three days later. Good results were achieved against vigorous flak and fighter resistance. Lt. Michael Boyle of the 727th was lost to flak, but eight of his crew returned in September from a Rumanian Prison Camp.

In direct support to the Red Army, and in order to cripple transport for reinforcement at the front, we hit the yards at Pitesti, Rumania on May 6th with good results.

May 7th saw us again at Bucharest doing damage to the Hun. The next day was a stand-down. "Gas House," of the 724th, blew up due to a short circuit. The ship was a total loss. Others taxied to safety. The weather on the 9th precluded flying so ground school came up with much disgust to crews hoping to run off to Foggia.



"ENLISTED MEN'S GROUND SCHOOL"

May 10th we bombed Wiener Neustadt Airdrome Austria. The 727th lost a ship to enemy aircraft, while the 724th and 725th each lost one to unknown causes. Lt. Hammer of the 725th was killed by an enemy bullet; but bombardier Lt. James Strich helped the co-pilot return and land the ship. Others of the crew were wounded.

Mission #42, two days later, resulted in a target of opportunity, Piombino, Italy being hit by only 17 aircraft when the 2nd attack unit was cut off on the bomb run.

The next day we hit Faenza M/Y, Italy, but part of the formation hit Imalo, Italy. Results were fair.

A good mission to Padua M/Y, Italy took place on the 14th. Lt. Booker and Sgt. Seinfeld of the 727th were wounded by severe flak, which damaged many planes.

On the 16th Captain Howard Leaser, Group S-4, was transferred to the 15th Air Force in the Assistant Chief of Staff, A-4's office. Captain Steinwiter, Group Armament Officer, took over Group S-4.

The next morning our planes bombed Porto Ferrajo, Italy with very good results and damage to harbor installations.

We were turned back from Ploesti on the 18th, due to cloud conditions, but the 19th saw us making near misses at the Recco Viaduct, Italy. Only 16 aircraft bombed, and the others returned early due to weather.

Very satisfactory bombing despite 9/10 cloud cover resulting from our mission to Marina de Carrara, Italy on the 22nd. The next day, supporting a ground drive, we attacked the roads at Subiaco and Avenzzano, Italy, the latter being well hit.

Clouds forced us to bomb Weiner Neustadt by Pathfinder on the 24th.

From the 25th to the 27th, we hit France, running excellent missions to Carneules M/Y and the airfield at Salon de Provence.

Despite intense flak and fighters we lost no aircraft at Weiner Neustadt A/C factory on the 29th. A really good concentration of bombs.

Another four star mission against Wels A/C factory, Austria, May 30th, without loss. Then we hit Ploesti again on the 31st.

June 1st saw General Atkinson decorate Major Burleigh, CO of the 724th Squadron, and the lead bombardier and navigator with the D.F.C. for the job done at Wels.

Our bombing score is going up. Szolnok M/Y, Hungary was plastered on June 2nd.



"MAJOR JOHN M. ANDERSON COLONEL JAMES B. KNAPP"
724th Squadron CO 451st Bomp Group CO

Captain John Anderson, Assistant Group Operations Officer replaced Major Burleigh as CO, 724th Squadron on June 3rd. The Major came up to Group as Security Officer and left us eventually.

More great bombing at Gad Railroad Bridge, Italy on the 4th. A repeat performance against the Rimini Bridges, Italy the next day.

Ploesti, the nightmare, came up on the 6th and Lt. William Harris of the 724th was lost.

The following day we pulled a "SNAFU" at Antheor Viaduct, France. A poor bomb run spilled all the bombs past the target.

Two days later we went to Munich, Germany but weather forced us back, so we hit an alternate, Porto Marghero, Italy, with good results. Actually we had been over Munich, but clouds prevented our bombing.

Again Porto Marghero O/R was bombed, and with good results, on June 10th. Lt. Herbert Guinness, of the 726th ditched in the Adriatic and two men were killed.



"SNAFU MISSION"
Giurgiu, Rumania

Giurgiu Oil Storage, Rumania on the 11th was missed, and we lost Lt. Charles Haun of the 724th from enemy aircraft.



"MISSING IN ACTION"

Standing: Saurin, AEG; Cahill, WG; Dehart, TG (KIA); Chused, BG; Carter, WG, (KIA); Livesay, NG
Kneeling: Keech, CP (not on mission); Egbert, B; C.R. Haun Pilot; (Woolhouse and Ginder, replacement CP and N not pictured)

The 13th we set out for Munich Neuauubing plant, but bombed Oberpfaffenhoffen A/D, 8 miles west. Enemy aircraft ruined the 15th Air Force operation, but we got off without a scratch.

One of our best bombing jobs was the next day against Szony Oil Refinery, Hungary.

Major Raymond Marshall was transferred on the 15th of June, to Headquarters, from the 726th. Captain Pearson, Squadron Adjutant, took over as Executive, and Captain Albert Ogg, Supply Officer, became Squadron Adjutant. Major Marshall left two weeks later for Staff and Command School in the States. From the 15th to the 21st, bad weather set in, cancelling missions and bringing ground school for everybody. Ground school had been in force continually despite missions, and new crews were always being briefed for combat flying.

The 22nd we fly again, starting for Trieste we ended up hitting Rimini Bridge and Marshalling Yards, Italy.

The next day we hit Giurgiu again with fair bombing. Lt. Charles McCutchen bailed out his crew over Yugoslavia, when mechanical failure forced his plane down.

Our 1st attack unit did a great job at Le Pontet, France — a German Telephone Building. Accurate flak, as usual.



"LT OAKES' CREW (KIA, EVADEE & POW'S)"

Standing: Mildrum, UG (POW); Hazelton, AEG (POW); Reebie, RO (KIA); Anderson, NG (POW); Turmmire, TG (POW); Creech, BG (POW)
Kneeling: W.F. Oakes, Pilot (EVADEE); Booth, CP (POW); Colgate, N (AWL); Cavin, B (POW)

At Korneuberg Oil Refinery, Austria, a poor job was done on the 26th. Lt. Walter Oakes, of the 727th, bailed out his crew over Yugoslavia and later got back himself, alone. His plane was hit by enemy aircraft. "Easy Does It," of the 724th crashed after returning to land a few minutes after take-off. One crew of the 726th made a one (1) engine landing at a fighter field in Italy. The pilot was on his 50th mission.

An uneventful, but good mission to the marshalling yards at Bucharest on the 28th. Stand-down on the 29th.

Mission to Blechhammer on the 30th, but we were recalled just north of Lake Balaton, Hungary, due to weather.



"CHAPLAIN WILLIAM McNEIL"
Group Spiritual Leader

During the entire period from the moment of arrival in Italy to June 30th, the Chaplain held services in many and odd places. First, at a cold dreary overseas staging area, then on a train, and in the mud of Gioia and San Pancrazio. Native priests helped to give Mass to our Catholic men. Jewish Chaplain came sometimes, but more often one of the Hebrew men officiated with the Chaplain. During May the Chaplain had 13 Services with a total attendance of 1613. The other faiths were also well organized and numbers attended. During June seven hospital visits to wounded or sick men took place. Chaplains from higher headquarters came down to observe and to suggest. Fourteen services were held with a total of 1634 in attendance. Five weekly devotions with 43 attendances; and 5 Jewish services with 43 present.

CHAPTER VII

Period Covered:

July 1, 1944 to July 31, 1944

July was a busy month for the Group, with twenty two (22) missions completed, results ranging from fair to superior. They were certainly not milk runs, the targets being some of the roughest ones in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, France, Rumania, Albania, Hungary and Italy. Ten (10) planes were lost and 103 crew members were MIA during that period, the roughest mission being #92, over Ploesti, Rumania, on July 28th where we lost four (4) planes and 41 crew members were MIA. However, the Luftwaffe paid heavily for the planes lost, as we destroyed twenty-nine (29) enemy planes and probably destroyed six (6) more.

Bombing accuracy for the month was not all it should have been since our figure of 29.9% was the lowest in the Wing. The Wing average of 32.5% was 4th in the 15th Air Force, while the Air Force average was 33%

Personnel changes were numerous during the month. 164 Officers and Enlisted Men left the Group while 109 Officers and Enlisted Men came in to take their places. The changes were due chiefly to completion of the fifty (50) missions required in this theater for rotation and return to the States. Many Staff changes were made in the Group



"'FERP FINESCO' (725th) LOST ON 28 JULY 1944"
(Airman in foreground unidentified)



"727th OFFICERS CLUB"

L to R: C. Evans, Sqdn. CO; K. Young, Ops Officer; J. Bernstein, Exec Officer; Unknown; E. Zraick, Intelligence Officer



"726th (GROUND, AIR, & ATTACHED UNIT)"

L TO R: B. Pearson, Executive Officer; T.E. Walkey, Squadron CO; H. Seymore, Exec Officer with attached Service Group

and the turnover in this category was above average. Captain Thomas Norton reported on July 8th to take over the duties of Captain Ed Zraick as Group Historian, Captain Robert Sands was transferred from the 725th to Headquarters as Public Relations Officer. Major Clayton Evans, CO of the 727th, left for the States to be succeeded by Majors Edward Bowen and Kendall Young. Major Tom Walkey took over the 726th vice Major Charles Haltom, MIA. New Operations Officers included Captain Lloyd Ryan in the 724th, Captain William Tuney in the

725th, Captain Sidney Winski in the 726th and Captain Hershel Mahon in the 727th, and Captain Edward Wilson as Assistant in Group. Lts. Pat Collins, Woodward Davis and Robert Kimball took over as Squadron Bombardiers in the 724th, 726th, and 727th Squadrons, respectively, while Lt. Alvin Woods became Squadron Navigator in the 725th and Lt. Henry Ford succeeded Lt. Curtis Skinner of the 726th, KIA on 22nd of July.



"LLOYD RYAN, OPERATIONS OFFICER, 724th SQUADRON"
Captain Ryan was Original Pilot with 725th before transfer



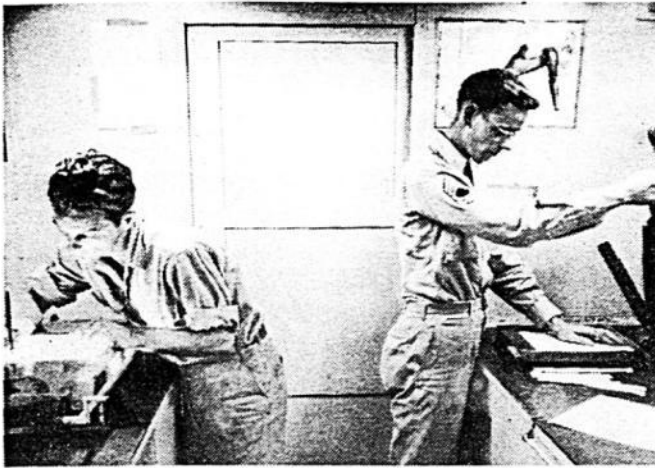
"PAT COLLINS, 724th SQUADRON BOMBARDIER"
(Transferred from 725th squadron)



"726th STAFF OFFICERS"

L TO R: R. Whiting, Sqdn Navigator; Unknown; J. Reichenbach, Sqdn Co; B. Pearson, Sqdn Exec; H. Pascoe, Asst Ops; H. Ford, Ops Officer

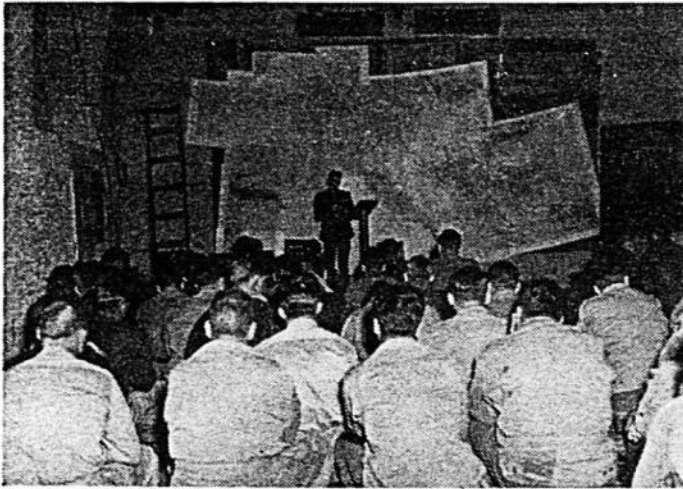
Production in the PRO, under the able direction of Captain Robert Sands, hit its full stride in July. A steady four month climb brought the Group to the top of all Air Force Groups. 1006 articles, 70 features, and 82 pictures were turned out during the month, but the emphasis from now on



"PHOTO LAB"

R. Barton (727th); W. Humphries (724th)

will shift to more and better feature stories, with production leveling off at between 1000 and 1500 stories a month. Clippings of stories sent out in earlier months began to drift back in July. They were still only a small percentage of the total output, since so many clippings were never sent back. The clippings quickly filled one bulletin board set up in the office. Home town stories sent out by PRO covered 45 of the 48 states. Each combat man received an average of one or two stories a month, from Air Medal to promotions, or in the feature line. Mission side-lights or 50 mission stories, in addition, a number of aerial target photos were radioed back to the States.



"CHURCH SERVICES"

Briefing Room at Castelluccia Air Base

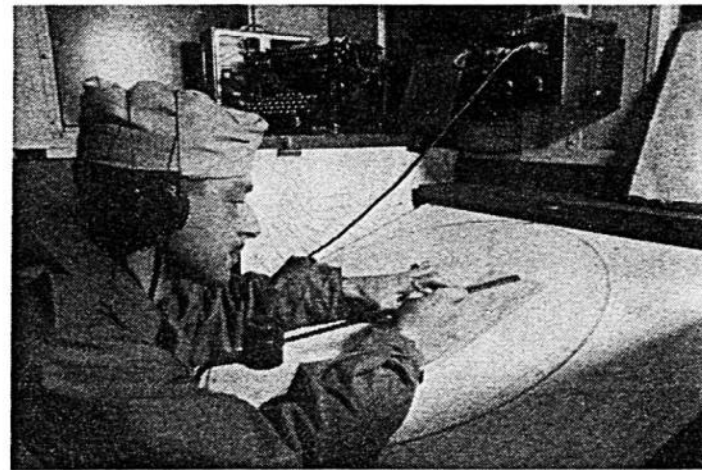
Religious activity, under Captain William McNeil's direction, was concentrated in the increase of facilities for holding of services. The Briefing Room was improved by covering the floor, fixing the seats and constructing a raised platform for the Altar Table with a white screen background. Attendance declined during the month, mainly because of hot weather. The week day services of Protestant men was omitted and Jewish service was changed from Friday night to Saturday morning.

The Group received a Unit Commendation on July 12th from the Commanding Officer of the 49th Wing, Colonel William Lee, for the outstanding performance for the period from 26th February to 6th June 1944.



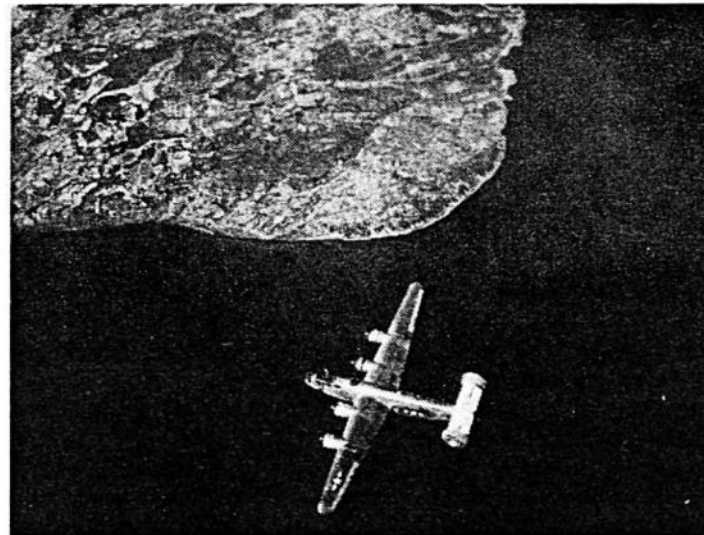
"CHECKING THE BOARD"

Daily event for Squadron personnel
(Persons & Squadron unknown)



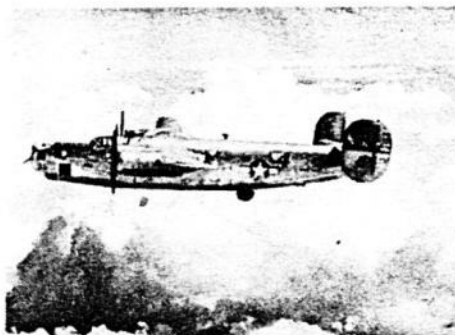
"LINK TRAINER TECHNICIAN"

Ground Schooling for Pilots

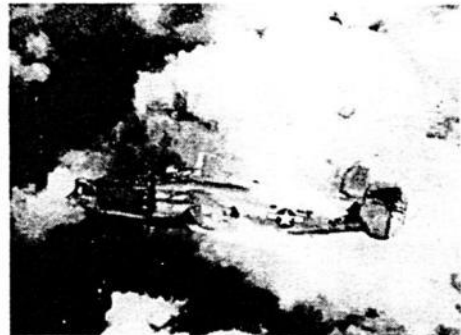


"B-24 OVER CORSICA COASTLINE"

EXTRA JOKER (725th) nears Corsica on mission return



Markersdorf A/D, Aus.

"FAILED TO RETURN"
"Extra Joker"

23 August 1944

CHAPTER VIII

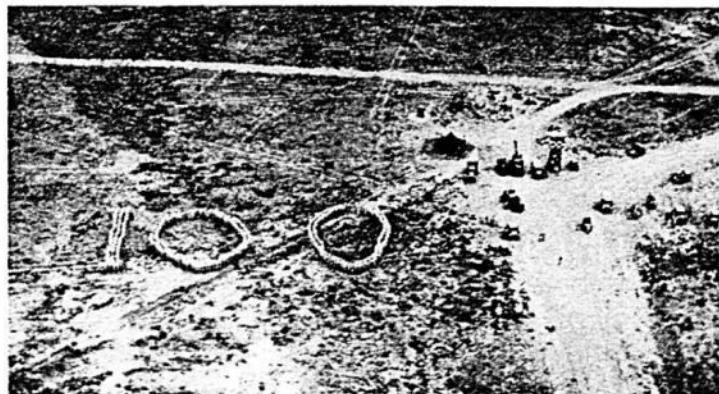
Period Covered: August 1944

August was a memorable month for the Group for it was on August 10th that the 100 Mission was completed and it was August 22nd and 23rd, that the Group completed the most disastrous missions in its history. On these two (2) missions, 108th and 109th, fourteen (14) planes were shot down by aggressive enemy fighters and another plane was so badly damaged that the crew had to bail out rather than attempt a landing. In addition to these losses, two (2) more planes had to be salvaged. 140 crew members were MIA as a result and it must be assumed that some did not survive to become POW. The Luftwaffe paid heavily again for its victories, since our gunners destroyed thirty-three (33) planes, probably destroyed fifteen (15) more and damaged nine (9). The Lobau Oil Plant and Markersdorf Airdrome at Vienna, Austria were the targets on those two missions and the enemy reaction proved conclusively that the Luftwaffe was not dead. Returning crew members told of waves of enemy fighters attacking without regard to losses, in waves of ten (10) or more. Fighter cover was not available at the time and it was inevitable that our losses would be heavy.



"100th MISSION LEAD CREW"

Standing: Lt. Kacena, Lt. Taussign, Maj. Byer, Maj. Hughes,
Capt. Tuney, Col Eaton
Kneeling: T/Sgt Komegay, T/Sgt Petrovic, T/Sgt Rhoads, T/Sgt
Dieter, S/Sgt Westerburg (725th Sqdn)



"WELCOME BACK"

With white over the head placards announcing their return, the mission of 10 August 1944 receives unusual greeting.

The month's operational summary showed twenty (20) missions completed, with ratings from SUPERIOR to SNAFU, on targets in Germany, Hungary, Rumania, Yugoslavia, France and Italy. Twenty (20) planes were lost and 184 crew members MIA. The enemy losses during the two (2) missions over Vienna were the total for the month, few enemy fighters being encountered on the other missions, although flak was, as usual, intense, accurate and heavy on most of them.

The Group actively participated in the invasion of Southern France. For a week before August 15th we bombed coastal gun positions around Genoa as a feint, and defenses east of Marseilles. The 15th saw our formation winging over the invasion fleet bound for France.

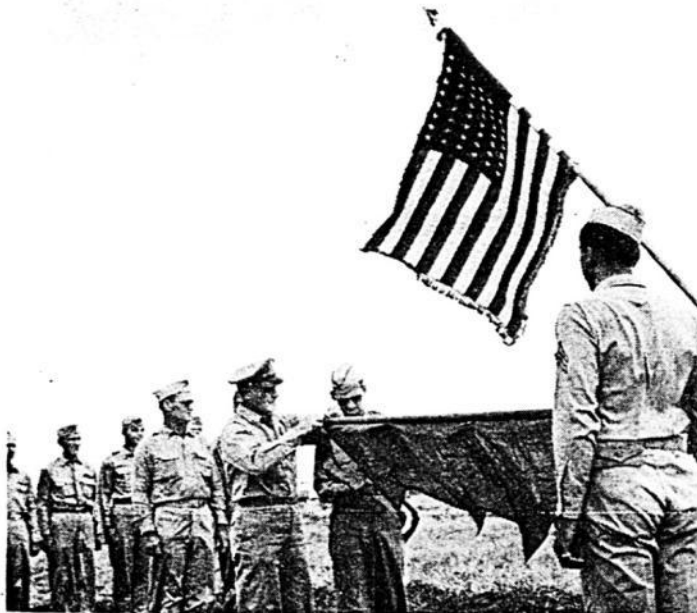
Bombing accuracy for August showed a marked improvement over the previous month. Our figure of 50.3% was the highest in the Wing. The Wing average of 46.2% was 3rd highest in the 15th Air Force, which averaged 43.9%.

During the month 124 Officers and Enlisted Men left the Group and 167 Officers and Enlisted Men came in. On August 1st Major Frederick Lawton, 724th Operations Officer, left for the States after completing fifty (50) missions. On August 5th Captain George Reynolds, Group Finance, P.X. and Civilian Personnel Officer was transferred to the States to be relieved from active duty at his own request. Thomas Norton took over his duties. Major Charles Bentley, 724th Executive Officer was transferred to Group August 10 as Adjutant, vice Major Leonard Rohrs was transferred to the United States, for school. Major Morris Drobeck reported from Wing August 16th

to take over Major Bentley's duties. Lt. Robert Kacena reported from Wing August 12th to be Group Mickey Navigator. Lt. John L. Sharp, 726th Assistant Engineering Officer was MIA on the 18th and the 31st Lt. Colonel Ellis Eno, Deputy CO was transferred to Wing.

During the month PRO turned out 1046 articles, 153 features, 87 pictures and two additional bulletin boards of clippings. Captain Coe, Air Force Photo Officer, sent a letter of commendation on the consistent excellence of PRO mission photos. Ten Group pictures made "Front Page," a weekly layout put out by MAAF. These ten ranked with the best of thousands submitted each week by various Group PRO sections. The walls of the PRO office are literally papered with several hundred pictures our own photo section had taken. The Photo Section continued to hold its record in being the first Group to report the results of the days mission and send the finished pictures to higher headquarters.

On August 16th the Group was awarded a Distinguished Unit Citation for its outstanding work in the bombing and destruction of the Messerschmidt Airplane Factory in Regensburg, Germany, February 25, 1944.



"GENERAL TWINING ATTACHES 2 DUC RIBBONS"



"WELL DONE!" FROM GENERAL TWINING TO COL EATON"



"TROOPS OF THE 451st BOMB GROUP PASSING IN REVIEW"

Other awards during the month consisted of: 46 DFCs, 4 Oak Leaf Clusters to the Silver Star, and 4 Soldier's Medals. Many Air Medals and Clusters went to combat crew men, while some Purple Hearts and Clusters were also awarded.

CHAPTER IX

Period Covered:
September 1944

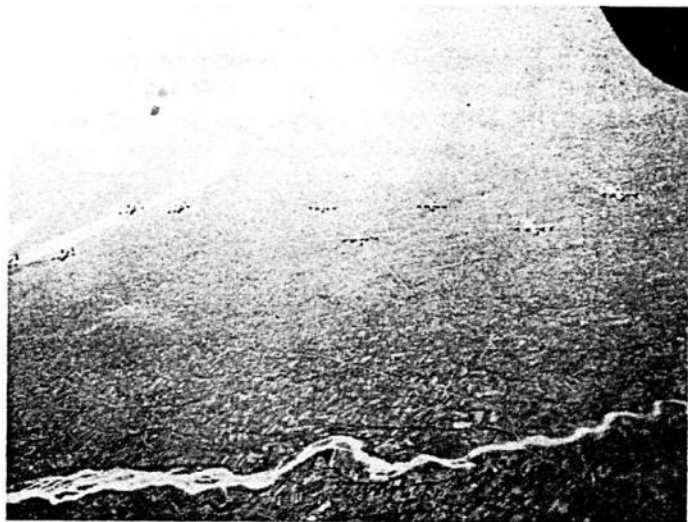
The month of September for the 451st Bomb Group was filled with momentous happenings. The 3rd of the month saw Major General Nathan F. Twining fly down to officially present two battle streamers representing two Distinguished Unit Citations to the Group for its unforgettable achievements at Regensburg (February 25, 1944) and Ploesti (April 5, 1944). Lt. Daniel Coffee read the citation to the massed squadrons, the General pinned on the ribbons, and Colonel Eaton lead his Group in review before his Commanding General.

The first of the month saw Major James Beane, Captain Robert Stone and many others return from prison camp in Rumania. They had much to say but the PRO release tells the lurid story.

During the month the Group flew fourteen (14) missions of which eight (8) were supply missions to Lyons/Brons airfield, France to supply gas, oil, bombs and drums for the Tactical Air Force.

On September 1st we hit Ferrara Railroad Bridge, a vital communication point to the Axis defense system, but our results were negative due to weather. Mitrovica Railroad Bridge, Yugoslavia came up the next day. Damage was done to the bridge, M/Y and choke point. On the 5th and 6th we attacked Belgrade Seva East Railroad Bridge. The first time no bombs fell since the target was obscured by clouds, but the second time we hit the bridge and marshaling yards fairly well.

From the 10th to the 22nd we flew our supplies to France, then on the 24th we attacked the airfield at Athen/Eleusis, Greece, destroying eleven (11) aircrafts on the ground. the 25th we pull a SNAFU at Skamanranga Harbor, Greece. Our bombs were spread out and there was little damage to the Hun.



"451st OVER GREECE, 24 SEPTEMBER 1944"

From the personnel point of view a number of changes occurred. One hundred twenty five (125) officers and men left the organization, and one hundred and sixty eight (168) came in. Nineteen (19) new aircraft built up our strength replacing lost and war weary planes. Some sixty three (63) crews were on hand September 2nd: (724th-15; 725th-17; 726-16; 727th-15). A shortage of Bombardiers and Navigators existed, but the crew situation was better than before. By the end of the month we had sixty nine (69) crews on hand. We lose an aircraft on the 3rd which crashed on take-off and blew up shortly afterward.

Major Raymond Marshall was transferred on the 4th to a higher echelon, and Major Jack Reichenbach joined the Group as Assistant Operations Officer. Captain Lynn Bartlett, Executive Officer of the 725th, returned to Group Headquarters as Adjutant on the 5th. Captain Morton replaced him as Executive Officer of the 725th, leaving his post at Group as P.X., Postal, and Historical Officer. Captain Roderick MacLennan, 725th Bombardier, was wounded in action and transferred to the hospital on the 6th. Major Ralph Byers and Major Frederick Hughes, Group Navigator and Bombardier respectively, left for the States on the 8th. Captain Quincey Tucker, 727th Squadron, and Captain Patrick Collins, 724th Squadron, took their places. The 11th saw Captain David Gould, come to the Group to be Squadron CO of the 725th, to take over when Major Edward Bowen left on rotation.

Colonel Eaton completed his 50th sortie on the 13th. Captain William Tuney, 725th Operations Officer, finished his 50th sortie and left for the States on the 14th. Captain John Biggs become 727th Operations Officer, having recently come from Wing. Major Kendall Young, 727th C.O., and major Sidney Winski, 726 Operations Officer, left for the States on the 15th, after completing their missions. Very rapidly we are losing our key man.

Major Charles Bentley, Group Adjutant, was transferred to the 26th General Hospital on the 16th and would probably leave for home very shortly.

To celebrate Colonel Eaton's 50th sorties and to honor his period of command, a party was held at the Headquarters Officers Club (Saddle Club) on the 18th. Colonel William Lee, Wing Commander and part of his staff attended. A number of nurses provided excellent entertainment after a magnificent banquet. Lt. Colonel's James B. Knapp (formerly of the 461st) and Robert Applegate joined the Group on the 19th to be the new C.O. and the new Deputy C.O.



"SADDLE CLUB AT GROUP HEADQUARTERS"
Col. Eaton and B/Gen. W. Lee sipping drinks

Lt. Voss transferred to Group Headquarters on the 22nd to be Personnel Equipment Officer vice Captain Fred Kley who became Supply Officer. The Engineering Officer vacancy in the 726th was soon filled by Lt. Seymour Richmond, 725th Personnel Equipment Officer and the 22nd. The 26th saw the two new Lt. Colonels assume command in their respective positions. Major Leland Younkin, Group Operations Officer, finished his 100 sortie and was relieved by Major Edward Wilson, former Assistant Operations Officer.

A number of promotions to officers and enlisted men livened things during the month. Cigars and free drinks become very free.

P.R.O. put out a total of 1286 stories including 5819 releases to date to individual papers. Of these 93 were feature stories, and the photo picture total rose to 123 being the highest total achieved. During the month we led every Group in the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces for the stories released. Four officers and two enlisted men went to Rome to put on a radio transcript to the States. They told about ditching, prison life in Rumania, and our activities in the last months. A remarkable story about a remarkable feat came out when Lt. Garland Jarvis of the 724th brought his ship through a thunder head. Quite a hair-raising story it turned out to be. Staff Sergeant Walter A. Summey, 727th gunner had a story written of his duties with the 8th, 9th, and 15th Air Forces in almost 18 straight months of combat. He had five fighters to his credit.

CHAPTER X

Period Covered:
October 1944

Of the many happenings to the Group during October the most outstanding event occurred when approval came from the 15th Air Force and NATOUSA for the third citation. This was for the attack on Markersdorf A/D on August 23rd when our aircraft accounted for twenty-nine enemy planes in the air and twelve on the ground. We suffered heavy losses as nine of our bombers were shot down by enemy aircraft.

Thirteen missions were flown during the month ranging from good to no good. Eight of these missions were washouts due to weather at the target or enroute weather that halted any serial penetration of enemy territory. On October 4th we scored hits on railroad stations, marshalling yards, and the town; but, a Latisana we failed to hit the target due to weather. Three days later we sent out a Red Force to Vienna Winterhaven Oil Refinery Depot and managed to destroy some installations instead; our Blue Force went to Komaron, M/Y, Hungary and did considerable damage to the target. One of our bombers was lost to flak at Vienna.

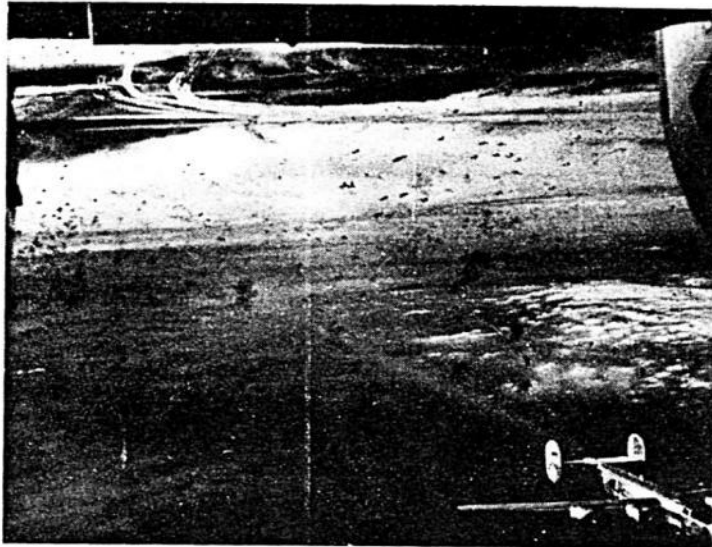
On October 10th we took off the Castelfranco R.R. Junction Italy but weather stopped all bombing that day. Mission #132 the next day was scheduled for Gras, but weather and bad luck played a major role. We hit an unknown town near the target. Supporting a ground assault on Bologna by the 5th Army we bombed troop barracks at that city on the 12th. Good results were forthcoming and two large explosions were seen at the target. The next day we came out with a three star mission at Vienna destroying our part of the motor works. However, it was a heavy cost since flak knocked down eight of our bombers.



"ENROUTE TO VIENNA"
13 October 1944

On October 14th we flew to Odertal Refinery, Germany and destroyed our objective with loss of one aircraft. The Hermann Goering Works at Linz, Austria (an old favorite for the higher planners) came up on October 16th. Clouds

prevented assessment of bombing damage. One aircraft was hit by flak, but the crew was able to bail out. Mission #137, October 17th, to Vienna/Vosendorf Oil Refy., Austria proved to be another victory for German bad weather. On October 20th we went to the Milan Breda Works, Italy and two ships managed to hit the target while the other planes left their bombs all over the Po Valley. It was a Snafu and did the 49th Wing let us know about it!



"LEAVING VIENNA"
13 October 1944 - 8 Aircraft Lost



"COL JAMES B. KNAPP ASSUMES COMMAND"
Second Group Commander for the 451st Bomb Group

Mission #139 was composed of Red Force which went to Munich, and Blue Force had the honor to avenge our humiliation three days before at Milan. Weather ran us off the Milan target and at Munich we had to bomb by Pathfinder for the same reason. A last minute hat-trick briefing and preparation for a mission on two hours notice sent us to bomb troop concentrations at Podgorica, Yugoslavia. Bad weather and command Sanfued us on the whole deal. Flights were wandering all over the sky (not that the icing helped), two runs were made over a target 10/10th obscured by clouds and formation straggled back in flights quite some time apart. All in all October was a mediocre month for bombing.

Personnel activities included the following: Four key officers were promoted to captain on the first of the month, they were: Captain Henry Richardson, Group Statistical Officer; Captain Wilbert Jacobs, 725th Squadron S-2; Captain J.W. Ramsey, 725th Engineering Officer; and, Captain William McGuire, Group Gunnery Officer. Major Herschel Mahon, 727th Operations Officer, finished up his missions and being "war-weary" went to recuperate in the States on the 2nd of the month, Lt. William Finley, Group Weather Officer, left for the 99th Bomb Group on the 4th and Lt. Williams who joined us last month took over his duties. Lt. Finley had long been one of the most remarkable characters in this organization.



"COL KNAPP BRIEFED ON GROUP EFFICIENCY BY COL EATON PRIOR TO TAKING FULL COMMAND"

Colonel Eaton, former C.O., left for the United Kingdom on the 6th. Major Leland Younkin, former Group Operations Officer, veteran of 100 sorties in North Africa and Italy, and a popular officer departed for the States on the 8th after doing a buzz job to end all buzz jobs. Lt. James Golden became Group Navigator coming from the 725th with Captain Tucker leaving with Captain Kimball, 727th Bombardier, for the U.S.A. on the 12th. The next day saw four flying captains join us directly from the States and after a weeks indoctrination they were assigned as follows; Captain Ward to Group Operations; Captain Douglas Sanford to 724th Staff; Captain Lather to 725th Staff; and, Captain Pool to the 726th Staff. Captain Janesch took over as Commanding Officer of the 725th Squadron vice Captain Gould, who was transferred to the 26th General Hospital on the 10th and 18th respectively, Captain Johnson, 725th Operations Officer, was M.I.A. on the 16th after the mission to Linz, Austria.

Captain Norton, 725th Executive Officer, was transferred to headquarters pending reassignment. Captain McSween joined the 725th on the 21st taking Norton's place. Lt. Beitman, Assist. S-2, 726th Squadron, was shifted to Group as Photo Intelligence Officer on the 17th while the former P.I., Captain Herbert Marco, went on special duty to the 726th as Construction Engineer and at the end of the month had the added responsibility to Provost Marshal. The 23rd saw Captain Luther Bradley, former Group Communications Officer, who had been on D.S. to Air Force since March 9th, finally transferred on paper. Major Edward Bowen, C.O., 725th Squadron, departed for the United States on 29th, and Major James Dooley took over his duties on the 31st, Major Dan

Kauerauf, former Operations Officer and C.O. of the 726th Squadron returned on the 30th from his rest in the States. He would probably take over a squadron in the near future.

During the month one hundred and forty-nine officers and two hundred and fifty-five enlisted men came into the Group, and ninety-two officers and one hundred and sixteen enlisted personnel were transferred out. Some thirty-one new crews replaced war losses and transfers, and eighteen new aircraft made up for our losses at Vienna and accidents. The new crews were immediately indoctrinated into the new methods that they will have to know in this theater of war.



"ENLISTED MEN'S HOME IMPROVEMENT EFFORT (724)"
Back Row: Ray Watson, Jim Preston, Harold Esser
Front Row: Ray Champaign, Virgil Burch, George Rasmussen

The winterization program went into full blast with scores of new limestone buildings going up in Headquarters and in the Squadrons. Ingenuity and resourcefulness played a large share in getting the buildings finished since native labor was notoriously (and still is) slow. Other changes in the landscape included four warning red lights for aircraft placed on top of Headquarters Officers Quarters giving the "castle" a new nickname as "the red light district". A homing beacon was installed at headquarters with antenna and wires stretching from the S-3 office to the briefing room. A searchlight beacon arrived minus cables so has not been installed as yet at the tower.

At Headquarters the physical training program was being carried out with the Commanding Officer leading the Officers personally in the morning exercises. The enlisted men had their P.T. in the afternoon. Three times a week was compulsory and no one seemed eager to volunteer for more.

In the middle of the month a party was held at the "Saddle Club" (Hq-Officers Club), and the building was filled with eager young nurses and Red Cross women. A rather discouraging moment took place when the squab turned out to be as hard as rock, but the banquet returned to normalcy when ice cream was served for dessert. It was the historical first time at our base. Parties for officers and enlisted men were held at varying times during the month in the Squadrons, but a "stand-down" night was invariably a party night for bachelors. Movies continued to be held out of doors almost every night, and every other night in the Headquarters Officers Club. An Italian stage show at the end of the month gave a little impetus to our limited entertainment program.

PARTIES / FESTIVITIES / EVENTS



"GENERAL LEE & LT.COL NELSEN (49TH WING)"



"BEV PEARSON - NURSE - UNKNOWN"



"UNKNOWN - UNKNOWN - RED CROSS GIRL"



"RED CROSS GIRL (BELIEVED TO BE SALLY BROWN)"



"TWO UNIDENTIFIED REVELERS"



"USO ENTERTAINMENT"

An innovation took place on the 31st when the Guard Squadron received orders to leave. The Group instituted its own plane and gate guards and Captain Marco become Provost Marshal. The guards are now on for twenty-four hours with four hour shifts, and suitably armed. The white helmet of the Military Police was adopted for easy recognition on dark night.



"451ST BOMB GROUP HEADQUARTERS"
Upper photo, "Across the commons"
Lower photo, "View from the garden"

CHAPTER XI

Period Covered:
November 1944

Undoubtedly the most entertaining event of the month of November was the Turkey Bowl football game on Thanksgiving afternoon. Despite the absence of mink coats, colorful bands and the pomp and ceremony so familiar to the days of the past, the spectators were avid in their cheering and support of their favorites. The game between the Rank - HQ Officers, and the File - HQ Enlisted men, was excellently played and at no time was the Rank assured of the victory, which they finally eked out. Our distinguished visitors included, Col. Lee, Commanding General of the 49th Wing, his staff and war correspondents.

"THE RANK"

11- REICHENBACK-LE	
99- BERRY	C.
00- LIPKE	C.
55- WYRICK	G.
44- BARTLETT	G.
77- WILLIAMS	RE
66- COFFEY	QB
33- WAGNER	L.H.B.
22- WILSON	R.H.B.

PROGRAM
YOU CAN'T TELL THE PLAYERS FROM THE PAESANOS WITHOUT A PROGRAM.....10 LIRE
Thanksgiving Day... Challenge

WHO FEEDS WHO

"THE FILE"

6- SHRICK	L.E.
1- KING	L.E.
0- BORECKY	C.
7- NICHOLS	G.
9- KAUFMAN	G.
4- HUENNEKENS	G.
3- FREEMAN	RE
2- WAGNER	QB
8- BECKES	L.H.B.
5- ENNIS	R.H.B.

THE LOSING TEAM IS TO SERVE DINNER TO THE WINNING TEAM.

451st Bombardment Group H.

EAT AT JOES

"TURKEY BOWL PROGRAM"

Sixteen missions were flown during the month; result running from very good to poor. On several mission assessment was impossible due to heavy cloud coverage over the target area. On November 1 we had probably our most successful mission of the month when we bombed the Vienna Ordnance Depot, Austria. Hits were scored on the choke point and rail lines. Several direct hits scored on the choke point and rail lines. Several direct hits scored on the town Electric Power station and scattered strikes on Rail and Port installations at the Aspern A/D. Our excellent results were not without cost however, for we lost two planes to accurate anti-aircraft fire. The next day we sent four planes to bomb by PFF the Klagenfurt A/C factory, Austria. Heavy cloud coverage prevented bomb damage assessment. On November 4th we took off for Kafstein M/Y, Germany on mission number 14. Results were satisfactory, but we lost two planes to intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire. On the 5th November we sent two forces out, one to Vienna and the other to Sarajevo. Again bomb assessment was impossible due to cloud coverage but the mission to Vienna was believed to have been successful. On the 6th we again divided our forces, sending 28 ships to Vienna Ordnance Depot and 9 to Salerno, Italy. Results of the Vienna raid are not known, but at Salerno, we inflicted severe damage to installations in the target area. On the 7th we bombed Ali Pasin Most M/Y, Yugoslavia and scored excellent bomb strikes in the target area inflicting severe damage to enemy installations. On November 11th we lost one plane to flak in an attack on Aviano A/D, Italy, in which the result were just fair.

On November 15th we flew to Innsbruck M/Y, Germany. Cloud formations prevented bomb assessment. On the 16th the 451st reached another mile post when it completed mission number 150 to Munich M/Y, Germany. As was rapid:

becoming common, weather again prevented observation so the bombing was done by PFF. On the 17th we again sent out two "teams". The red force bombed by PFF at Blechhammer Refinery, Germany and the blue force duplicated the efforts of the red force at Vienna Florisdorf, Austria. Each force lost one plane which hardly compensated for the good results obtained. On the 18th of November we flew our blue-ribbon mission to Villa Franco A/D, Italy. The results were excellent though the bomb loading prevented scoring the strikes. November 19th we "crossed-up" wing and air force when we hit Maribor M/Y in Yugo when assigned to destroy Vienna Vosendorf, Austria. The results were rated good; strikes being recorded on trackage, sheds, and work shops.

Blechhammer S. Oil Refinery was the recipient of a return engagement by our forces on November 20th and this trip paid dividends in damage to the enemy. Several explosions and large fires were observe and the results were reminiscent of previous attacks on Ploesti. The 21st of November witnessed a new use of strategic bombers for on that day we collaborated with fighters and fighter bombers in attacking MT convoys at Novi Pazar, Yugo. Results were rated good by again no score could be given for bombing efficiency. Munich continued to lead a "charmed" existence on the 22nd for we again encountered 10/10 cloud coverage and dropped on PFF on the west M/Y. November 25 was the last date in which we were able to fly a mission, we flew two planes to Innsbruck Germany. Weather was 10/10 and the results were only fair. Summarizing, we might say the month was average for bombing results. We had our share of very good and also SNAFU missions.

Personnel changes and activities included the following: Major James Dooley was assigned to the group and assumed command of the 725th Squadron. Major John Anderson of the 724th joined the "51 Club" and departed for the States, leaving Major Tom Moran in command of the 724th Squadron. Major Francis Hoermann became Group Operations Officer, Captain Leslie Westberg the assistant, Captain George Morris the Group Bombardier and Lt. William Blue the Group PFF Navigator. Major Jack Reichenbach assumed command of the 725th Squadron replacing Major Tom Walkey who departed for



"COL ROBERT APPLGATE (DEPUTY GROUP C.O.)"

the Zone of the Interior. Col. Robert Applegate, Major Edward Wilson, and Captain James Golden departed for the States after observing the traditional feast of Thanksgiving Day. Lt. Col. Leroy Stefanowicz, formerly 49th Wing A-3, joined the Group and took over as Deputy Group Commander.

During the month we were assigned 32 replacement crews, six complete crews left on rotation and our combat and operational losses totaled 13 crews. Three complete crews returned after being listed as MIA. On November 1 we had 49 planes; but by November 30 that total had dropped to 38 in spite of replacements.

The winterization program continued to have a top priority in the building program. Stone buildings are daily mushrooming throughout the group and squadron areas and the results lend emphasis to the limitless ingenuity of the American G.I.

At Headquarters the physical training program continues to plague the aching muscles of the Rank and File alike. Apparently the program has payed off for the Officers as witness the Football game on Thanksgiving Day when the File payed their debt by serving the bird at the evening meal.

Additions in the "Castle" area include a new Group Dispensary and twenty bed hospital with operating facilities and accommodations. The hospital had previously been a grain storage shed, but under the guidance of energetic Major Clyde Wagner, it assumed the sparkling appearance, characteristic of such institutions. Plans have been made to do minor surgical operations plus routine physical work.

Monday November 27 the Group Headquarters Staff entertained at a dinner dance for invited guests which included several of the fair sex from the Red Cross and Hospital Staffs. "Ma" Davidson again excelled in serving the finest and most appetizing of foods available. In the Squadrons parties were held by the Officers and men at Thanksgiving time and reports are all satisfactory. Of course "stand-down" nights invariably mean party night for combat personnel. Movies still are held out of doors but the attendance had dwindled considerably, few preferring to "SWEAT 'EM OUT" in the Arctic blasts on the Plateau.

Thanksgiving Dinner

- TOMATO SOUP
- GRAPEFRUIT ^{and} LETTUCE-MAYONNAISE SALAD
- ROAST TURKEY - DRESSING - CRANBERRY SAUCE
- FRESH MASHED POTATOES - JUNE PEAS
- PARSLEY-BUTTERED CAULIFLOWER
- HOT ROLLS - BUTTER - JAM
- MINCE PIE - CHEESE - ICE CREAM
- NUTS - CANDY - APPLES
- COFFEE

45/st. BOMB GROUP - ITALY - 1944.

CHAPTER XII

Period Covering:
December 1944

December undoubtedly was the most notable month for our Group in quite some time. Notable for the many changes in the Squadrons and in Headquarters and also for the series of holiday parties. Probably our most important change occurred the last week of the year when Lt. Col. Stefonowicz assumed command of the Group.



"COLONEL LEROY L. STEFONOWICZ (a.k.a. STEFEN)
ASSUMES COMMAND OF GROUP"
December 1944 to September 1945



"COLONEL HOPPOCK LEAVES 727th SQUADRON FOR DEPUTY
GROUP COMMANDER'S DUTIES"
J.S. Hoppock and E.A. Zraick - Squadron Intelligence

Lt. Col. Hoppock, former commander of the 727th Squadron, moved to the "Castle" and was appointed Deputy Group Commander. Col. Knapp, our former commander, departed for a "job" at MAAF.



"COLONEL JAMES B. KNAPP GROUP COMMANDER -
SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 1944"

Eighteen missions were flown during the month; results running from excellent to SNAFU. On the larger percentage of the missions assessment was impossible due to cloud coverage over the target area. On December 3rd we sent 3 planes to Innsbruck M/Y, results were only fair. A three day lay off did not improve our results for on the 6th, 30 planes were no more effective against Maribor M/Y. On the 7th our "trials" received their just reward for results were rated good. A brief respite the next day against Graz limited our results to fair but on the 9th we again were on the beam in plastering Villach M/Y, Austria. Mission #164 we had 34 aircraft and the results were rather startling: 34 early returns. On the 11th we again flubbed against Vienna but of the 15th Linz was the recipient of a plastering from 26 aircraft of our Group with good results despite 10/10 coverage. It would appear that we were resting on our laurels on the 16th for our results were miserable, through 10/10 again.



"ONE OF FOUR CREWS SHOT DOWN 11 DECEMBER 1944
OVER VIENNA"

Standing: L.L. Jensen, P; W.S. Blankenship, CP; H.N. Corona, N;
P.E. Strippgen, B;
Kneeling: J.T. Bourne, TG; D.J. Murray, RO; J.M. Markowitz, WG;
S.E. Schaeffer, E; G. Clausen, NG; W.J. Weber BG.
(F/O's Corona and Strippgen only survivors)

The week ending December 23 saw our best bombing for the month. Four missions were flown: the net results being good on three and fair on the 4th. On the 17th we had good results but we lost 2 planes. On the 18th Blechhammer took the beating through 10/10, a condition which was rapidly becoming prevalent. On the 19th 10/10 cloud coverage proved somewhat an obstacle for the results were listed fair at Blechhammer; however this weather condition was no hindrance on the 20th at Linz for we achieved excellent results.



"451st OVER VIENNA AUSTRIA"



"451st OVER WELS, AUSTRIA"

On the 25th we had best day of the month, excellent at Wels, M/Y, Austria. 40% of the bombs dropped within 1,000 feet of the briefed aiming point, a beautiful Christmas present for the enemy. On the 26th under ACVU conditions we achieved good results at Oswiecim Oil Refinery, Poland. On the 27th and 28th under good weather conditions only fair results were achieved against Venzone RR viaduct, Italy. However we had the satisfaction of smashing one span of the bridge on the 2nd day. On the 29 fair results were gained at Udine factory area, Italy despite CAVU conditions. Summarizing we might say the month was average for results. We had our share of poor missions but they were overshadowed by the long list of good missions.

Personnel changes were many and included the following: On the 2nd Major Moran joined the "51 Club" and he departed for the States on the 15th. On the 4th Captain Peck, Ass't S-2, was placed on DS to the United States, the results being a

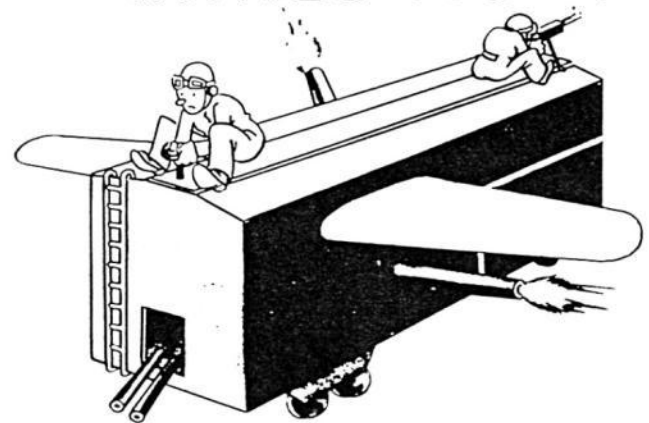


"724th SQUADRON COMMANDER, MAJOR T. MORAN, REMOVES ITALIAN MUD BEFORE RETURNING TO U.S."

linguist in French. On the 5th Major McManus was placed on orders to the 29th Wing A-2 section. We all are looking for big things for "Mac". Major Hodges, formerly Ass't A-2 at Wing, took over as Group S-2. Lt. Roberston of the 724th Squadron was placed on DS to replace Captain Peck. On the 15th Captain Sanford took over at the 724th as Squadron Commander and Captain Rollins became Operations Officer.



**BOMB SQUADRON
— INVITES YOU —**



**TO THE
"BOX CAR GIN MILL"
1ST ANNIVERSARY DANCE
THURSDAY — DEC. 14 — 7 P.M.**

The "Party Season" began on the 14th when the 727th Officers help open house. There is no doubt about the success of the evening for it is still under discussion amongst those who attended. On the 18th the Group Headquarters Staff entertained at a dinner and dance. Guests included General Lee of the 49th Wing and members of his staff. Christmas Eve was observed in traditional style. Midnight Mass was held by Chaplain Coughlin and Chaplain McNeil observed Christmas Day with services at 1000 Hrs.

CHAPTER XIII

New Year's Eve was the occasion for informal parties within the Squadrons and reports circulating attest to the fact that all members of the Group did their best to make it a memorable one.



"JACKSON'S CREW - 724th"

Standing: E.E. Alcorn, RO; R.W. Mochamer, NG; DeWitt Macey, E;
G. Ziener, AG W.D. Brashear, TG; J. Mahon, BG
Kneeling: S.W. Jackson, P; S. Winner, CP; C.V. Williams, N; R.L. Cash, B.



"ROLLINS' CREW - 724th"

Standing: H.G. Rollins, P; J.H. Dilks, N; E.G. Snow, CP; H. Miller, B;
Kneeling: E.F. Morrill, BG; F.C. Gardner, E; A.J. Paonessa, RO (KIA);
L.J. Cegla, TG; R.M. Karstensen, NG; A. Kalik, TG .

December 26th was a bad day for 724th Squadron for on that date the entire operations staff was last seen heading for Russian territory. Includes were Captain Sanford, the C.O., Captain Manoogian, S-2, Lt. Gibbons, Squadron Navigator, Lt. Emmerling, Squadron Bombardier, and Lt. Frazier, PFF Navigator, Captain Rollins, Operations Officer took over the Squadron and he in turn was assisted by Lt. Custer who was appointed Operations Officer.

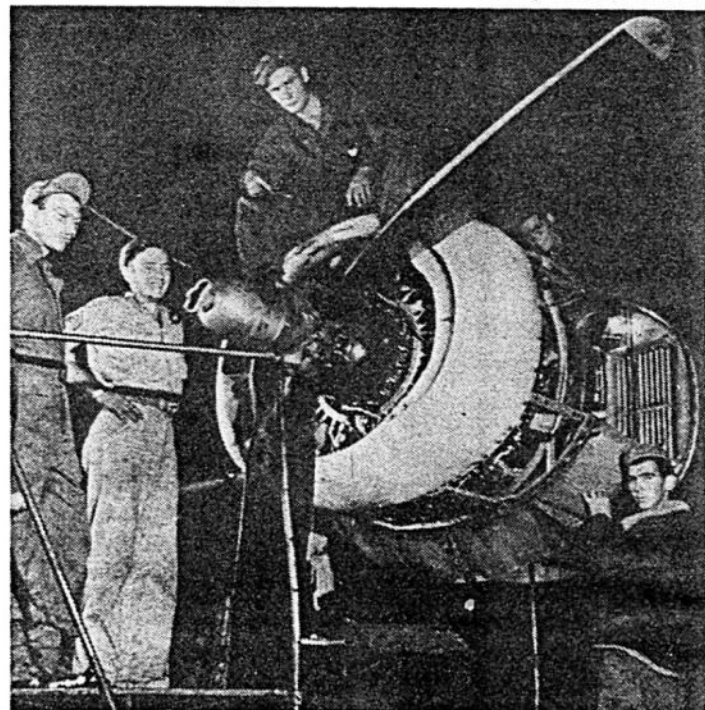
Changes in the "Castle" are included the construction of a new club building for the enlisted men. The old club was converted into a theatre, a project in sore demand. The new club was dedicated during Christmas week with appropriate ceremonies.

Period Covering:
January 1945

Beyond a doubt January was the least "interesting" month we have had since the group has arrived in the Theater.

On only seven days were our bombers airborne; the remaining days of the month we spend in disgusted and disgruntled remarks by all and sundry against the weather and weather men in general. Three of the missions were not scored; bombing was done by PFF through 10/10 cloud coverage. On the other four missions the Group was successful in that we dropped our bombs with an average amount of them hitting the target, thereby contributing directly in our efforts to aid our Russian allies.

On January 4th we dispatched our planes to Trento marshalling yard, Italy. Several direct hits were made on the choke point and on goods, wagons and installations. On the 5th of January our target was Zagreb marshalling yard, Yugoslavia. However, 10/10 undercast prohibited accurate bombing or any observation of results. Mission #180 was flown to Linz south main marshalling yard, Austria. No results were observed due to the 10/10 cloud coverage. On the 15th of the month, after a weeks vacation, the campaign against the enemy's communication and rail facilities continued with an attack through 10/10 cloud coverage on Florisdorf Vienna Locomotive Work. On the 19th we had our flub mission of the month; our target was the Brod rail bridge, Yugoslavia. One near miss was observed but the rest of the bombs fell far short and into the residential and built-up areas of the city. Mission #183 was flown on the 20th and on this date Linz north main marshalling yard, Austria "took it". Hits were observed on the choke point and numerous goods and wagons were destroyed in addition to installations and warehouses. Mission #184 was the last mission flown during the month and fittingly, it came on the last day of the month.



"724th GROUND CREW WORK INTO NIGHT TO REPAIR ENGINE"

J.E. Drumm at left, other unknown

Thirty-five aircraft were assigned to destroy Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery but inclement weather forced us to attack the alternate, Graz marshalling yard, Hungary. Direct hits were made on the briefed aiming point; many hits were seen throughout the target area, in goods, wagons and installations.

Personnel activities included the following: key officers receiving promotions included Colonel Stefonowicz, Major Morris, who completed his tour and is at present awaiting orders. Captain Williams, Group weather officer was promoted on the 29th of the month, one day before Captain Roemer of the 726th S-2 department received his. Captain Peterson our dentist was transferred to Air Force Headquarters at the beginning of the month. At present we have not received a replacement for him.

The major portion of the month was passed in an intensive period of ground training. Group S-2 instituted supplementary training amongst the Squadron Intelligence departments.

During the month one hundred officers and one hundred and seventy-two enlisted men came into the group and sixty-six enlisted men and forty-five officers transferred out. New crews were immediately indoctrinated into the Group and Air Force methods and policies used in this Theater.

The winterization program received a revival after the night of the "big wing". Roofs departed for parts unknown and stone walls crumbled under the buffeting from the almost hurricane blasts that assailed the plateau. Repairs were rapidly begun and homes and administrative buildings that were damaged are now once again in shape.



ATTEND ITS ANNUAL PRESIDENTIAL BALL, TO BE HELD IN THE OFFICERS CLUB ON SATURDAY EVENING JANUARY 20, 1945.

Extra-curricular activities were confined to one party and dance. The 726th made merry on the night of January 20th, when they celebrated the President's Birthday anniversary and made a substantial contribution in the March of Dimes.

On January 8 the wandering Staff of the 724th Squadron returned to the fold after being listed MIA over Poland. Stories were plentiful but the information brought back was in inestimable value to our new and untried combat personnel.

Probably the busiest department during the month was the PRO section under the able and competent direction of Sergeant Schrick. Over on thousand stories were released to the press in addition to sixty-seven radio broadcasts.

Period Covering: February 1945

February witnessed a resumption of bombing by the Strategic Forces on a scale heretofore unparalleled prior to this month. The 451st shared in the record breaking efforts by sending its forces out on twenty one missions. Included in this momentous, all-out effort was the two hundredth mission flown by the Group on 24 February.

Leading off for the month the Group flew mission number 184 on 1 February to Moosbierbaum. 10/10 coverage precluded observation of results though "mickey" operators reported a good run on the target. From the 1st until the 5th we were non-operational as a result of weather. On the 5th, however, we flew a SNAFU mission to Regensburg, Germany. Again with 10/10 coverage the bombardiers were forced to relay on the "mickey" — to their chagrin. On the 6th we rested but on the 7th were again out in force; this time to Korneuburg Oil Refinery, Austria. Intense and accurate flak proved too tough and despite CAVU conditions bombs were strewn over half of Austria. The tough defenses thrown up by the Hun accounted for seven (7) of our force and sixty-three (63) of beating at Bratislava and we lost two planes and could show no appreciable damage to the enemy. Mission number 187 was again to the Vienna area — this time to repair shops. 8/10 cloud coverage prevented accurate bombing, so we again rated a failure.

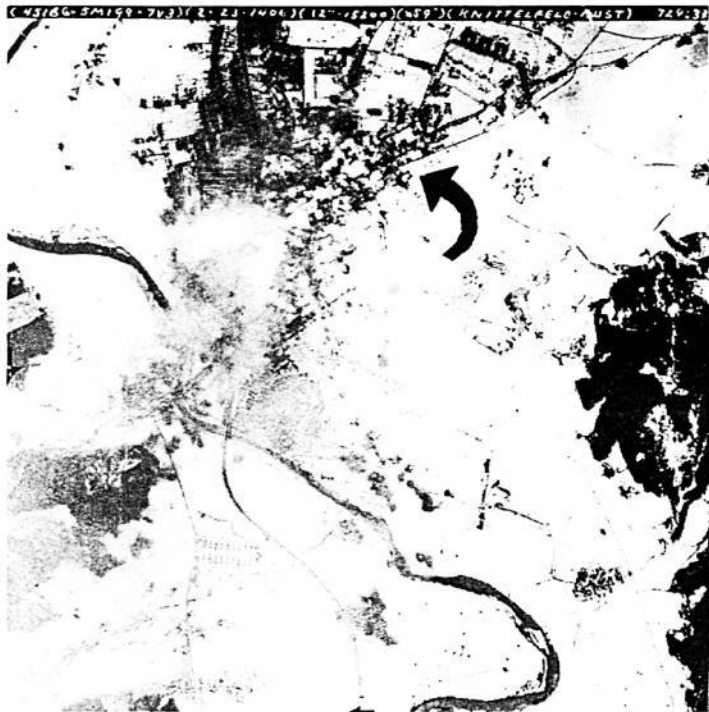
Not until the ninth did we have a mission to "shout about". On the date we hit Graz, M/Y, Austria with everything we had and came home with that old self-satisfied feeling. Results? Excellent.

On the 13th two forces were detailed to repeat at Vienna but conditions prevented completion of the job so both units attacked Maribor, M/Y, with poor results. Bombs were observed falling beyond the target area. On the 14th our luck improved somewhat at Moosbierbaum, Austria, when we obtained fair results with 2/10 cloud coverage. Vosendorf Oil Refinery escaped unscathed on the 15th when we again distributed our bombs on every spot except the assigned MPI. On the same date the Blue Force reported a good "mickey" run over Vienna, M/Y, so the rating was fair.



"726th STAFF OFFICERS"
L to R: H.B. Ford; R.J. Whiting; J. Reichenbach; B.J. McKinnis

From the 16th until the 28th we were operational daily and our results, while leaving much to be desired, did improve and were consistently better. Several missions were rated as excellent, some were fair, and only a very few were poor. On the 16th we hit Neuburg, Germany A/D, with good results. Mission number 193, on the 17th, was to Wels, Austria and excellent bombing was done. On the 18th, twenty eight (28) aircraft were airborne and twenty eight were early returns -- all because of impenetrable weather conditions. The next day we "fouled-up" at Graz, M/Y, under ideal conditions; but came back with good results at Pola on the twentieth. On that day we bombed in boxes rather than attack units and each box "smacked" their target. On the twenty first we again probed Vienna under ideal conditions, but the "Big V" held its charm and results were poor. Seven airplanes attacked targets of opportunity with unreported results.



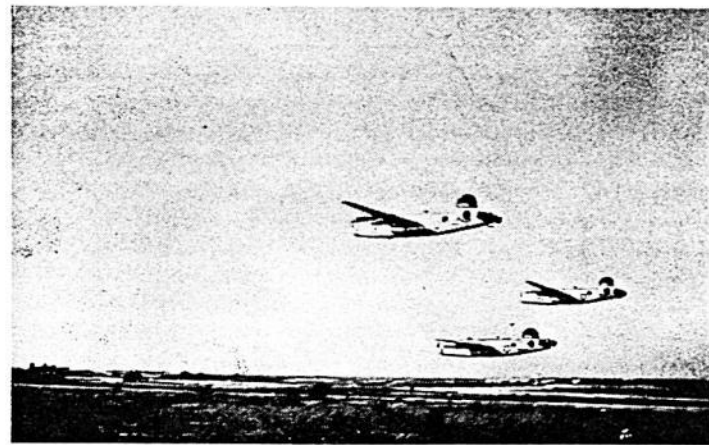
"Knittelfeld M/Y, Austria Bombed on 23 February 1945"
(Note bomb strikes above and right of smoke)

Mission number 198 was to Rosenheim, Germany, but half of the force attacked targets of opportunity with results reported as fair. On the 23rd, Knittelfeld, Austria, M/Y served as a target of opportunity and the Group "clobbered" it with very good results. We reached our second century mark on the 24th and did ourselves proud by smearing the M/Y at Klagenfurt all over the landscape. The weather was CAVU and the tormented "bomb-aimers" didn't spare any feelings as they dumped them with monotonous precision.

It seems we might have rested on our laurels on the 25th, for we missed completely at Linz -- maybe it was the celebration the night before; however we came up with a 0%. Twenty six ships were called back from Caprag, Yugoslavia, when the weather took a turn for the worse on the twenty sixth. We obtained fair results at Augsburg, M/Y on the twenty seventh, then sent two forces to Bolzano on the twenty eighth and both dropped their "eggs" smack on the target. Thus concluded a momentous month -- one which will live in

the records of every Group and one which the Air Force can be justly proud.

Personnel changes were few but included the following: First Lieutenant Arthur A. Pecoraro joined the Group on the fourth and assumed the duties of Group Dentist. Major Jack Reichenbach was MIA on the seventh with his staff, and he was succeeded by Captain Burdette McKinnis as C.O. of the 726th. Major James Dooley was seriously wounded by flak on the thirteenth and Major Gorton of the 484th replaced him as C.O. of the 725th. Captain Robert Peck returned from the States and returned to his duties as Assistant Group S-2; Lt. Lawrence Robertson, who had been pinch-hitting for him was returned to the 724th "fold."



"200th Mission Salute"

Upper photo: Non-flying personnel greet mission returnees by forming the number 200 on ground and holding white card overhead.

Lower photo: Mission aircraft make a victory sweep in acknowledgment.

The big events of the month were centered around the 200 Mission. Included were the dance at Headquarters, the 200 Mission war baby contest sponsored by PRO and the "zaney" Group Show. Too much credit cannot be given to the men who worked long hours in preparation and then "layed them in the aisles" for five consecutive nights. Enthusiasm reached a new high amongst all personnel as a result of the antics of the "artists."

Special Services fulfilled a crying need by editing a weekly paper, the AD LIB -- giving the inside info on the doings about the field and other squadrons; it promises to be on the "looked for" list.

All squadrons were busily engaged in running off their



"Sgt Alton C. Little, 726th, Winner of Baby Contest"

respective ping pong and card tournaments, and keen rivalries have been observed. Although there is much championing of favorites, no bets have been observed, possibly the "smart" money will be laid when the EM play the Officers for the squadron championships.

The PRO department continued its splendid job under Sgt. Raymond Schrick. Almost 800 stories were released to the press and twenty four (24) recordings were made for radio release in the States. In addition two men appeared over the Air Force Station at Foggia and narrated their combat experiences.



CHAPTER XV

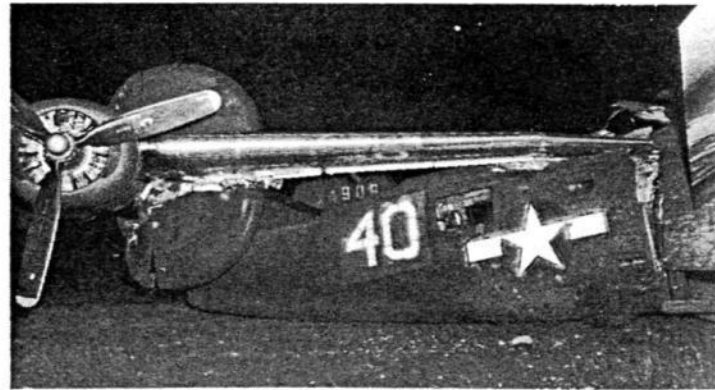
Period covering:

March 1945

The Group continued its steady bombing efforts during this month, flying every day on which weather permitted operations. As a result, several of the twenty (20) missions flown necessitated bombing by instruments, with unobserved

results. Generally, when the crews were able to get a glimpse of the target area, good jobs were done, and the feeling arose that the Group had begun to find itself once again. One of the outstanding features was the only two entire crews, and part of a third were lost through-out the operations. An oddity was that all three crews came from one squadron, the 725th.

Two 9 March 1945 Aircraft Casualties



"#42-94908, 725th - Crash Landed at Base"



"#42-51372, 725th - Severely Damage Upon Landing"

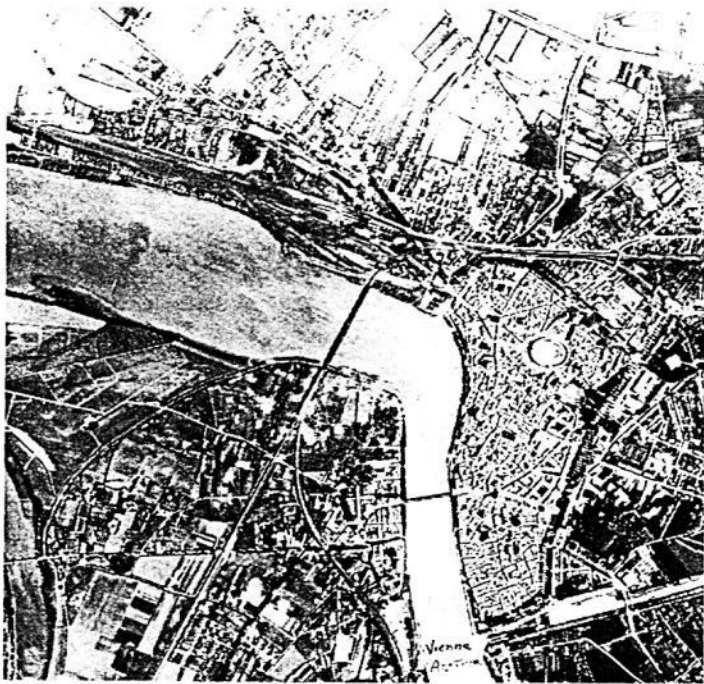
On the 1st and 2nd, bombs were dropped by "mickey" on Moosbierbaum and Linz, and nobody had the satisfaction to see the bomb hits. Of course the "mickey" men claimed excellent runs, and since no one could check on the results, the answer was "could be and we hope so." On the 4th, again a solid undercast interfered with the bombing of Graz Marshalling Yards; however, even without interference from clouds, two flights attacked an alternate at Celje, Austria, without causing any damage. It was a sad day, and since we "stood down" for three (3) days following, nothing could be done to redeem the situation. However on the 8th, thirty eight (38) planes dropped with a good deal of accuracy on Hegyeshalom Marshalling Yards in Hungary, and smothered practically every bit of the large and important installations. It was the first of a series of good visual jobs that the Group was to do; but we still had to wait for the chance, since on the 9th a solid undercast prevented the bombing of Bruck. One attack unit hit

Graz by pathfinder methods, and the other returned the bombs to the base. There was no flying again until the 12th. On that day and for the following three days, weather forced the Group to drop on instruments without seeing a bomb hit. The first of the four missions was against the Vienna Florisdorf Refinery; the first attack unit had a bad run, and as a consequence bombed an alternate at Zeltweg, with insignificant damage. While the second unit dropped by instruments at the target. Flak was, as usual for Vienna, rough, and gave the boys a hard time. On the following days, Marshalling Yards at Regensburg, Weiner Neustadt (as an alternate for Bruck) and Klagenfurt (as an alternate for Pragersko, Yugoslavia) were hit. On the 16th, in another raid against the Moosbierbaum Refinery, the clouds weren't so bad, and the boys dropped all over the place. There was a good concentration in the northern part of the plant, doing good damage, but the remainder of the bombs were scattered, although a great many hit installations of importance. Every plane in the formation was hit by flak, and the damages were heavy. One aircraft with its crew of ten (10) men failed to return.



"The Ever Formidable, Weiner Neustadt M/Y, Austria"

Again on the 22nd, in a mission against the Vienna Kagran Oil Refinery, clouds interfered, with the result that only fifteen (15) aircraft bombed, using both PFF and offset methods. There was no damage to the target. The remainder of the formation struck an alternate at Graz, and scored well. Kagran Refinery was again the target the following day, March 23rd. This time there were no heavy clouds, but the lead bombardier of the Group was hit by flak on the bombing run; He bounced back over his sight after being knocked down and hurt severely, but his bombs hit just to the right of the small target area. It was a rough break. Again the flak was terrific, and practically all aircraft suffered damages. On the "milk run" the following day, to Budejovice, Czechoslovakia, one hundred pounders were dropped with good results. This was followed on the 25th by one of the most effective and destructive missions ever flown by this Group.



"The 'Big V' - Vienna, Austria"

On the 17th and 18th of the month, the Group stood down. Operations were resumed on the 19th, however, and eight (8) missions were run off consecutively. It was during this period that a vast improvement in the bombing was noted, with a consequential increase in damage to the Hun. On the 19th excellent results were obtained against the marshalling yards at Muhldorf; the 29th saw good results at Wels. One hundred pounders were dropped, so there was no scoring on the missions. However a good score was attained at Bruck on the 21st with one thousand pounders. The Group deserved good credit for this mission, since clouds seriously interfered with the bombing run, and one flight actually had to drop on "mickey"; it was the only one not to cover the target. An oddity of this mission was that eight (8) men bailed out of one ship in the target area, when the aircraft developed mechanical troubles, however, the pilot, copilot and engineer stuck with it, and safely landed at a friendly field.

The Wing was assigned an area on the Prague Kbely Airdrome, in Czechoslovakia, to frag. Twenty eight (28) planes from our Group were the only ones in the Wing to hit the assigned area. But such a magnificent job was done that the entire area was covered excellently, and the results from bomb strike photos, and borne out by reconnaissance, showed that at least twenty five (25) enemy planes were destroyed and eight (8) damaged. These results were equal to the efforts of an entire Wing of six Groups, fragging an area adjacent to ours, and the feeling was that a superior job had been done. General Twining commended the Group for this mission.

The 26th saw the eight consecutive day of operations when the Straszhof Marshalling Yards, near Vienna, was hit with good results. Again one hundred pounders were used, and there was no scoring.

Following this mission, bad weather returned to our area, and the Group was "stood down" until the 30th. On that date four (4) aircraft took off on a "lone wolf" operation, assigned to attack by PFF communication targets in Vienna. However, for a change, the weather was too good, and according to instructions the aircraft attacked alternates at Klagenfurt and St. Veit, Austria. Results were only fair. The operational work was brought to an end for the month on the 31st, when the

Linz Benzol Plant was the target. Again clouds made bombing by instruments necessary; but bomb strike photos showed that a good part of the bombs ended up to the northwest of the target. It was not the best way to end a month which showed consistent improvement in our bombing, although not sensational results except in the case of the Prague mission. It was manifestly evident, however, that the bombing was improving rapidly, and it predicted well for the future.

Personnel changes remained rather stable, except at Headquarters. Major Stanley Robinson left for the States on TD and Captain Ralph McBeth took his place as Group Communications Officer. Captain Robert Peck became the Squadron S-2 of the 727th, interchanging jobs with Captain Edward Zraick who was detailed Assistant Group S-2. The "cop" or Provost Marshal, Captain Herbert Marco, one of the first men to join the Group, was transferred to MTO on some "secret deal," and the new "cop" was Captain McSween.

Lt. Colonel John Hoppock finished his missions, and set sail for home; Lt. Colonel Francis Hoermann took his place as Deputy Commander, and Major Edward Rasmussen was "demoted" from the luxuries of Wing to take over as Group Operations Officer.

The big social events centered around the completion of the competitions for Squadron and Group "indoor sport" championships, and all winners won trips on the Riviera for their performances. Group Champions were: Major Beverly Pearson (726th) - Cribbage; Major Howard Steinwinter (Group) - Chess; Captain Pritchard (Group) - Checkers; Lt. Meskind (727th) - Ping Pong; Sgts. Adolph Imperato and William Petrosky (727th) - Pinochle; and Majors Douglas Sanford and Morris Drobeck (724th) - Bridge.



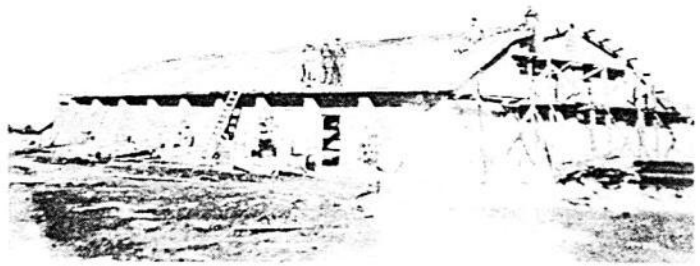
"Unidentified 'Big Leaguer' Warms Up"

Now the spotlight turned on soft ball, and numerous teams in all units started to get into shape for league competitions. Competitive spirit in and between all Squadrons and Headquarters ran high, with many promises from one team to another "to beat the HELL out of you."

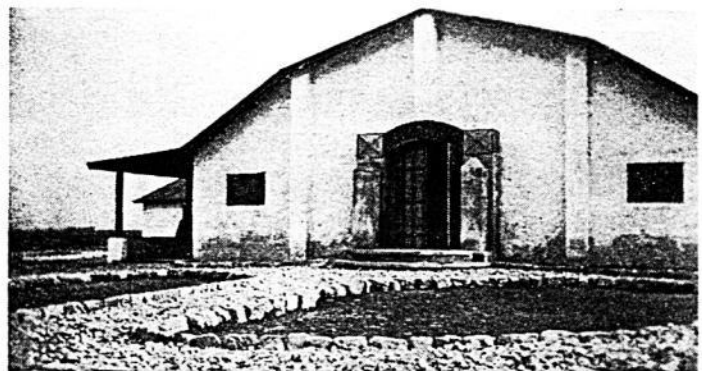
Special services arranged a number of good U.S.O. shows at the Base, the outstanding featuring the Kim Loo Sisters who did a good job in songs A'La Andrews Sisters. Dooley Hall, the 725th's emporium for all uses was completed, and the

Squadron members put on a show for opening night. It is truly an impressive place, far superseding any structure yet seen by any bomb group in this theater, and a nice tribute to Lt. Colonel James Dooley, who, incidentally returned from the hospital recovered from his wounds to see it finished, before departing for the States.

Dooley Hall



"Under Construction"

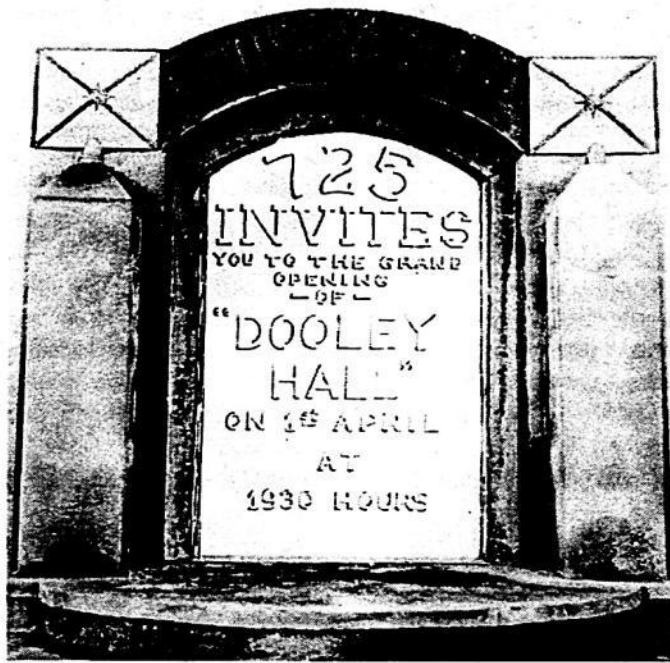


"Exterior View - Completed"



"Interior View - Completed"

PRO continued its impressive work, running first once again in the Wing and Air Force for number of features released to the Press, and sending many more members of the Group to broadcast over the radio stations at Rome and Foggia.



"Dooley Hall: April 1st Grand Opening"

CHAPTER XVI

Period Covering:

April 1945

The final month of operations in the European Theater proved to be the busiest (21 missions flown in 26 days) and the most efficient to date. The bombing had never been any better, and the unit took its rightful place amongst the leaders in the 15th Air Force.

But the start wasn't too auspicious, for on the first day of the month, the target at Bruck, Austria was found to be cloud covered, and the bombs were returned to base; however, on the 2nd the Group redeemed the situation by doing a devastating job on the St. Bolten Marshalling Yards which were pulverized beyond description. The success of this mission was the keynote for some of the most accurate and destructive bombing ever witnessed. The next raid wasn't flown until the 5th, when the Brescia Marshalling Yards in Italy was severely smashed. On the very next day the Brescia Arms Plant, just to the north of the Marshalling Yards, was given a similar treatment and was obviously put out of operation. On the 7th the Group went after the Bressanone Railroad Bridge, but clouds over Italy forced the return of bombs to base. Again on the 8th clouds prevented the bombing of the primary target, but the Gorizia Marshalling Yards was hit with highly satisfactory results.

On the 9th we began close support of the ground forces, and the Group Commander led a maximum effort against troop concentrations just beyond the British 8th Army positions. The assigned "Area Apple" was smothered with frags; an adjacent area "Baker" was hit the following day, again with superior results. On the 11th the Branzolo Marshalling Yards was hit

with fair results, one flight hitting an alternate at Ora because of smoke. All of their bombs landing in the target. On the 12th a pattern was set for bridge busting when the St. Veit Railroad Bridge in Austria was hit and knocked out with some magnificent bombing. The 13th was a day of rest, but on the 14th the Malcontenta Ammunition Factory, Italy, received rough treatment and was hit soundly. Returning to close support work on the 15th, Colonel Stefonowicz led the Group against enemy targets just beyond the 5th Army front with superior results. At the same time another force hit the Nervesa Railroad Bridge with good results. The Group had fifty-four (54) aircraft over these two targets. The following day another area south of Bologna was the target, but since strict orders were given to return bombs in the lack of positive assurances of safety for our own troops, the bombs were returned when clouds interfered. The same area was the target the following day, and this time was hit squarely; the conclusion of the bombing on this day, the 5th Army jumped off in its drive which finished the Italian campaign in short time. Our efforts continued in support of this drive, cutting off avenues of retreat for the enemy. On the 19th the target was the Avisio Viaduct and Diversion. The latter was well hit, but smoke covered the viaduct, and the bombing by offset methods showed poor results.

On the 20th came the "perfect mission." Thirty seven (37) of our aircraft dropped one thousand pound bombs on the Lusia Road Bridge. Every one of the bombs went into the target area, and the bridge collapsed completely. The bombing was almost as good the 21st against the Attang-Puchiem Marshalling Yards in Austria, and practically a duplication on the 23rd when the Badia Road Bridge was hit with near perfect accuracy. The primary target, Rovereto Marshalling Yard, Italy, escaped with little damage on the 24th; two of the four flights, however, encountering difficulty of identification on the bomb run because of haze and smoke, did an excellent job on an alternate, the Peschiera Supply Depot.

Thus far the Group had not lost an aircraft throughout the operations for the month. On the 25th, however, in attacking the Linz Railroad Yards, with very good results, one ship received a direct flak hit and went down; another, badly damaged, took a course towards Russian lines. The final mission of the month, and in view of the subsequent collapse of the enemy, the last mission flown by this Group against a European target, came on the 26th. The primary was again in Northern Italy. However, weather interfered, and an alternate, consisting of Marshalling Yards at Sachsenburg, Austria, was attacked. The results were again excellent.

And so, after having flown two hundred and forty-five (245) missions against the enemy, we came to the close of our operations. The end could not have been more fitting, for precision bombing had never been so well demonstrated. Individual commendations were too numerous to cite; however, the Commanding Generals of the Air Force and the 49th Wing sent message after message of congratulation. The job had been well done, during this month especially, but also in the past, and the 451st Bombardment Group had done its share

in contributing to the collapse of the enemy. Our purpose had been accomplished beyond question.

Other events, outside of operational activities, were of a similar high nature. Outstanding was the presentation of the 3rd Distinguished Unit Citation, formally presented by Major General Nathan F. Twining on 2 April 1945. Following the impressive ceremonies, the General toured the 725th Squadron area, and attended integration there. He was particularly impressed with Dooley Hall, and declared that he had not seen such a structure within his Air Force.

Personnel changes saw an increased tempo. Captain Morris Mannogian and CWO C.E. Campbell both left for the "Blessed Shores" (i.e., the U.S.) early in the month. Lt. Charles Miller was transferred from the 726th to Group to take CWO Campbell's place as Administrative Inspector. The Group Adjutant, Major Lynn Bartlett, left on TD to MAAF, and Captain Henry Richardson took over his duties, leaving the "stat" section in the capable hands of Lt. William Evans.



"Captain Manoogian"
724th Intelligence Officer



"Major Bartlett"
Group Adjutant



"C.W.O Campbell"
Administrative Inspector

Colonel R.P. Todd, Wing A-3 was assigned to the Group (to take over Command upon the completion of Colonel Stefanowicz's tour), and took part in several of the missions. He also joined the Group Commander in soft-ball games, showing a good wallop at the plate.

Lt. Col. Francis Hoermann finished his missions along with Captain William "Mickey" McKenna. Whereas the latter departed for the States, being replaced by Lt. Igielski, Lt. Col. Hoermann remained with us. Former Lieutenant, now Captain George Millinix, also finished up, but remained with the Group. Others promoted included Major William McGuire, Group Gunnery Officer; the Group Bombardier, Captain Robert L. White; and the 727th Operations Officer, Major Marshall Word. The latter was transferred to the 726th and Captain William Fenton took over as Operations Officer of the 727th.

Several crews with very few missions to their credit were sent out to units of the 47th Wing, and in turn we received crews which had an average of approximately Twenty-five (25) missions. That was all that was needed to start extensive speculations and rumors, and they flew fast and thick.

The soft-ball leagues enjoyed great favor. Lt. "Dizzy" Greene of the 725th proved to be outstanding as a pitcher, but the 727th Officer's team were all-around best. The 724th enlisted men showed the way to the others.

Several of the men and officers were able to get to the rest camps on the Riviera, and returned extolling the virtues of "La Belle France." They brought back heaps of perfume, knowing only that they smelled, and not whether they were good or bad.



"Victory Flight Over Bari, Italy"
1945

In general there was an undercurrent of excitement in the view of the rapid advances of the Allied Armies into Germany, with expectation of the end at a high pitch. Morale was never higher, primarily because of the high degree of efficiency in bombing, but nerves were on edge, and the end would be welcomed. That thought dominated all minds at the close of this historic month.

(Written portions of the proceeding history were accomplished in 1943, 1944, and 1945 by Captain's Thomas E. Norton and Edward A. Zraick, and 1st Lieutenant's Robert B.N. Peck and Lawrence E. Robertson)

(Epilogue by History Compiler; Bob Karstensen)

Thus ended the operational tenure of the 451st Bombardment Group (H). After close to 19 months of overseas service (mostly under combat conditions); dropping an estimated 13,000 tons of bombs on enemy positions; running 7 supply missions to Lyon, France in support of the 3rd and 7th Armies; seeing an estimated 8,000 men over the course of its existence assigned at some time to the Group, the unit prepared to depart for the Zone of Interior - the United States.

Unlike the flights from the States to Italy, where no aircraft or lives were lost, the flights back suffered one aircraft fatality, 44-49596 (725th). In that incident, 4 June 1945, all lives aboard the ship were lost. This happened on take-off from Mallard Field, near the coast of Dakar, Africa. The aircraft, under command of 1st Lt. William N. Silliman, carried a crew of nine 451st men and two passengers from the 465th Bomb Group, and were enroute to Hunter Field, Savannah Georgia.

A strange quirk of circumstances was that on 21 March 1945, 1st Lt. Silliman, copilot 1st Lt. Carl Roberts, and engineer T/Sgt Forrest Millis managed to bring their ship back from a disastrous mission. On that occasion Silliman ordered the rest of the crew to bail-out over enemy territory because of mechanical difficulties. As a follow-up to that mission, all, save one - Richard F. Morton - who was KIA, became POWs and survived the war.

Throughout May, as plans were formulated for the movement of men and material, into June when the actual transfers were accomplished, the Group was extremely busy tearing down structures and packing what had to be taken.

Upon arrival of the ground echelon into Naples the troop ship, USS General Meigs was readied and loaded. On 4 June the balance of the troops departed Italy, again following the air echelon, for the trip home. This time, unlike their coming over, they maintained a fast 22 knot clip, were allowed the luxury of deck illumination, and were not required to do the zigzagging that had prevailed the first trip.

Port of debarkation was Newport News, Virginia. From there the troops were taken to Camp Patrick Henry, and later, in more diminished numbers, sent to camps nearest their homes for furloughs.

Thirty day passes were given to most all the men of the 451st Bomb Group, and they were told to report to Dow Field, Bangor, Maine upon return. The Group was to be assimilated into the Army Transport Command (ATC), and dispersed across the United States. Those that had garnered enough points for separation from the service, were processed and discharged. Now they wore another well earned award; the Honorably Discharge Lapel Button ("Ruptured Duck").



"Officers and Spouses 'Fairwell Party'"
Dow Field/Bangor Maine

The final episode was carried out on 26 September 1945 when, then; Commanding Officer, Major William B. McGuire signed and accepted the instrument of deactivation. At that time the 451st Bombardment Group (H), with its outstanding military record was officially terminated.

Henceforth; Its legend - Its heritage - Its accomplishments, are to be remembered by the men that stood strong and tall before our nation's enemies.



Col. Robert E.L. Eaton
1st Group Commander

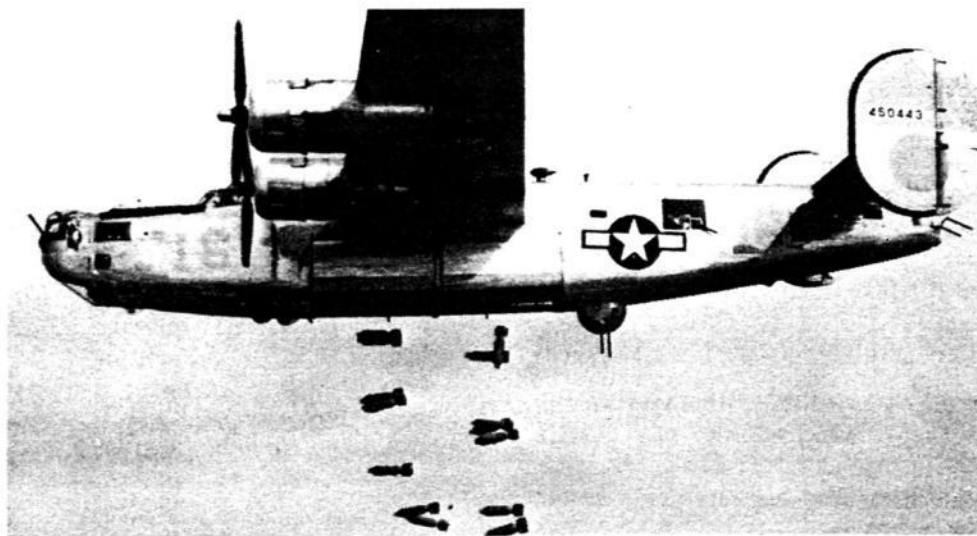


Col. James B. Knapp
2nd Group Commander



Col. Leroy L. Stefanowicz
3rd Group Commander

OUR MISSION



OUR PEOPLE



"726th Orderly Room"

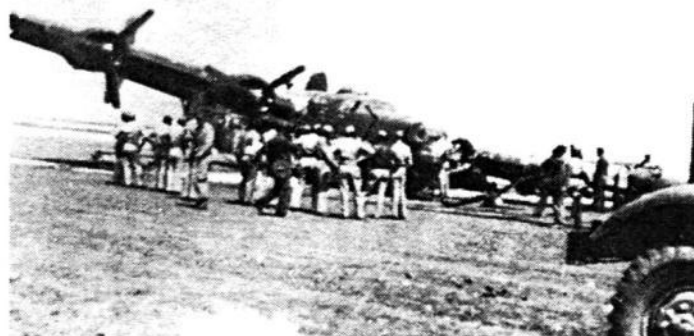


"Group Briefing"

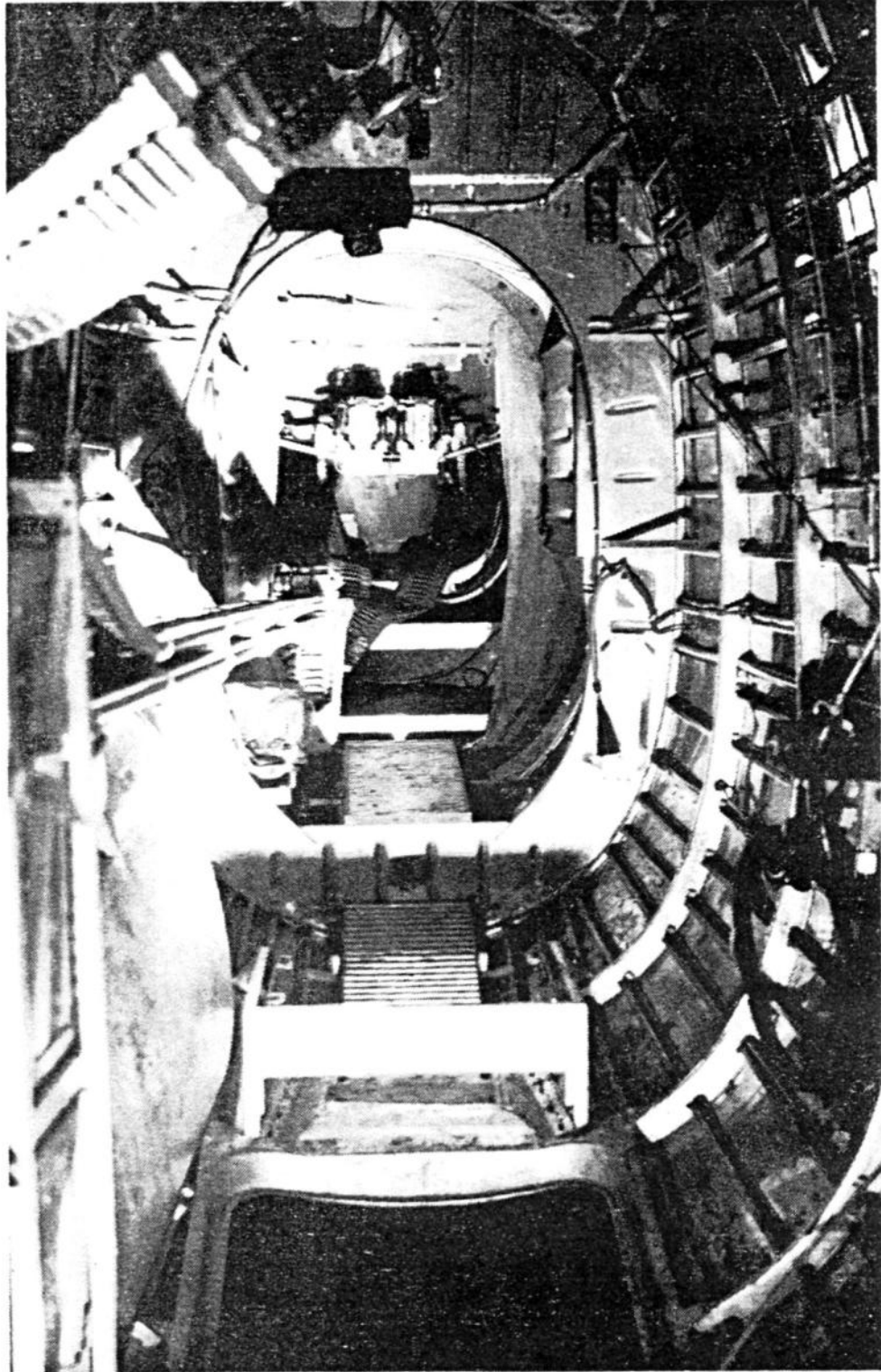
OUR LOSSES



"Bodacious Critter -- 26 June 1944"



"Little Butch -- 17 May 1944"



WAIST SECTION
LOOKING AFT
TO
TAIL TURRET