

HEADQUARTERS
451ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
Office of the Intelligence Officer
APO 520 US Army

NARRATIVE HISTORY
August 1944

August was a memorable month for the Group for it was on Aug 10th that the 100th mission was completed and it was on Aug 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 these two missions and 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.

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 Aug 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 Aug 1st Maj. Lawton, 724th

Operations Officer left for the States after completing fifty (50) missions. On Aug 5th Capt. Reynolds, Group Finance, P.X. and Civilian Personnel Officer was transferred to the States to be relieved from active duty at his own request, and Capt. Norton took over his duties. Maj. Bentley, 724th Executive Officer, was transferred to Group Aug 10th as Adjutant, vice Maj. Rohrs transferred to U.S. for school. Maj. Drobeck reported from Wing Aug 18th to take over Maj. Bentley's duties. Lt. Kacena reported from Wing Aug 12th to be Group Mickey Navigator. Lt. Sharp, 726th Ass't Engineering Officer was MIA on the 18th and on the 31st, Lt. Col. Eno, Deputy C.O. was transferred to Wing.

During the month PRO turned out 1046 articles, 153 features, 87 pictures and two additional bulletin boards of clippings. Capt. 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 has taken. The photo section continued to hold its record in being the first group to report the results of the day's mission and send the finished pictures to higher headquarters.

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

Other awards during the month consisted of: 46 D.F.C.s, 4 Oak Leaf Clusters to the Silver Star, 4 Soldier's Medals. Many air medals and clusters went to combat crew men, while some purple hearts and clusters were awarded.

/s/ THOMAS E. NORTON,
Capt. Air Corps,
Ass't. Group S-2