

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

3 November 1944

Narrative History from October 1 to October 31, 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/F 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 started for Munich, Germany; and Latisana R.R. Bridge, Italy. At Munich we scored hits on railroad stations, marshalling yards, and the town; but at Latisana we failed to hit the target due to weather. Three days later we sent out a Red Force to Vienna Winterhaven Oil Refy. 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 for Castelfranco R.R. Junction, Italy but weather stopped all bombing that day. Mission #132 the next day was scheduled for Graz 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 at heavy cost since flak knocked down eight of our bombers. On October 14th we flew to Odertal Refinery, Germany and destroyed our objective with a loss of one aircraft. The Herman 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.

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 snafued us on the whole deal. Flights were wandering all over the sky (not that the icing helped), two runs were made over a target 10/10ths obscured by clouds and the 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 Richardson, Group Statistical Officer; Captain Jacobs, 725th Squadron S-2; Captain Ramsey, 725th Engineering Officer; Captain McGuire, Group Gunnery Officer. Major 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. 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.

Colonel Eaton, former C.O., left for the United Kingdom on the 6th. Major 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. Golden became Group Navigator coming from the 725th with Captain Tucker leaving with Captain Kimble, 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 week's indoctrination they were assigned as follows: Captain Ward to Group Operations; Captain 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 Marco, went on special duty to the 726th as construction engineer and at the end of the month had the added responsibility of Provost Marshal. The 23rd saw Captain Bradley, former Group Communications Officer, who had been on D.S. to Air Force since March 9th, finally transferred on paper. Major Bowen, C.O., 725th Squadron, departed for the United States on the 29th, and Major Dooley too over his duties on the 31st. Major Kauerauf, former Operations Officer and C.O. of the 726th Squadron returned on the 30th from his rest in the States. He will 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.

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 the Headquarters Officers Quarters giving the "castle" a new nickname as "the red light district". A homing beacon was installed at Headquarters with antennae 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 mornings exercise. 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" (Headquarters 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 the 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 Officer Club. An Italian stage show at the end of the month gave a little impetus to our limited entertainment program.

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 became Provost Marshal. The guards are now on for twenty-four hours with four hour shifts, and are suitably armed. The white helmet of the Military Police was adopted for easy recognition on dark nights.

/s/ ROBERT B. N. PECK,
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