

GERMANY

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

POLAND

SWITZ

# THE **B-25** OVER THE MEDITERRANEAN

VENICE

ITALY

LA SPEZIA

DULON

YUGOSLAVIA

USSR

ROME

ADRIATIC  
SEA

NAPLES

ALBANIA

CORSICA

SARDINIA

GREECE

ATHENS

SICILY

TUNIS

CRETE

TUNISIA

TRIPOLI

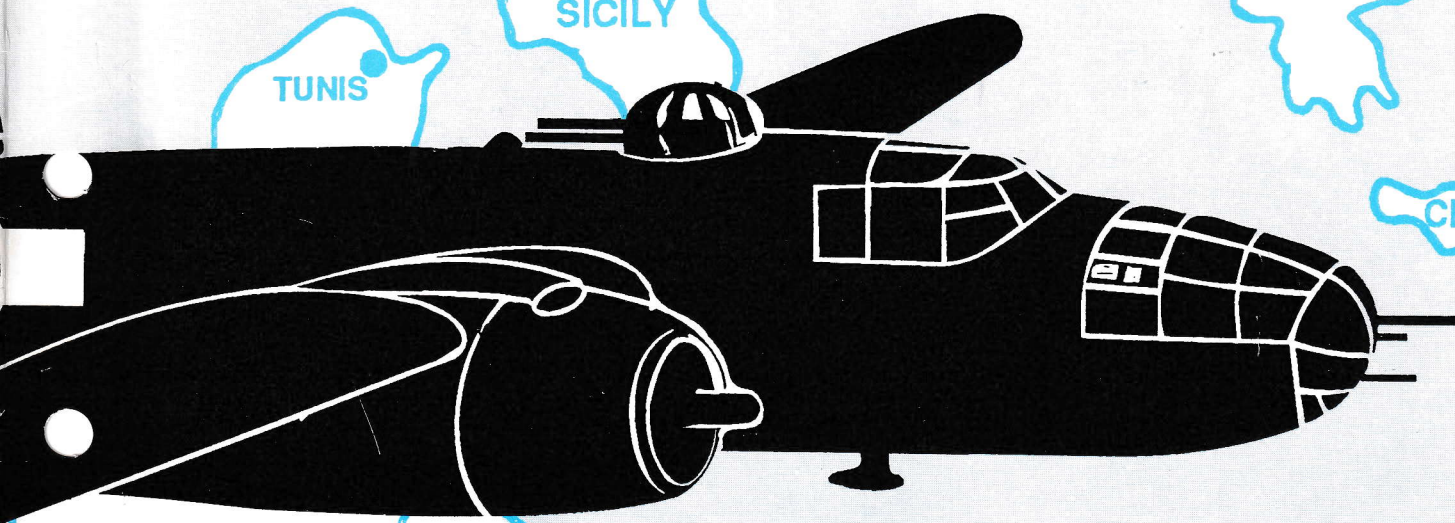
BENGHAZI

TOBRUK

EGYPT

50th ANNIVERSARY

LIBYA







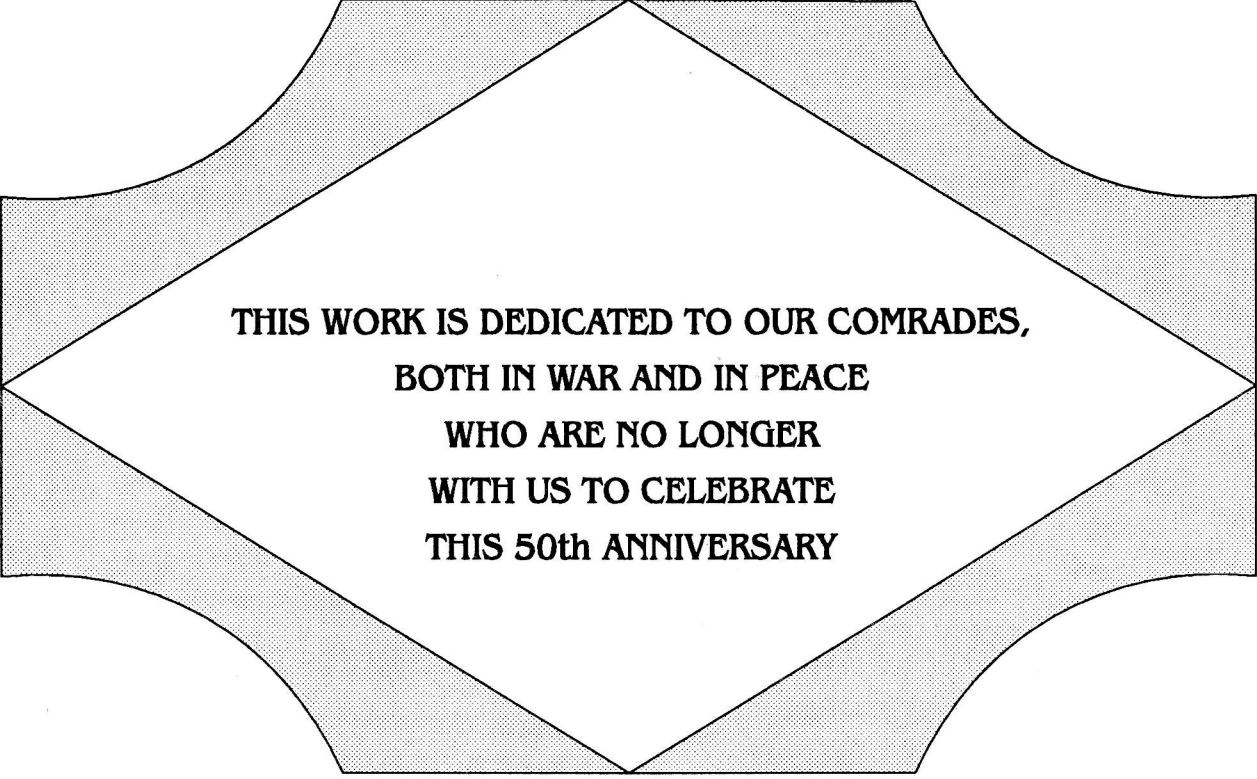


# **The B-25 over the Mediterranean**

About the men and their Mitchell Bombers in the  
Mediterranean Theater during World War II

*To Patricia Chapman Meder, designer of this most interesting and especially appropriate cover for our 50th Anniversary Memory Book, with many thanks from our entire 57th Bomb Wing Association membership.*





**THIS WORK IS DEDICATED TO OUR COMRADES,  
BOTH IN WAR AND IN PEACE  
WHO ARE NO LONGER  
WITH US TO CELEBRATE  
THIS 50th ANNIVERSARY**

**PUBLISHED BY  
57th BOMB WING ASSOCIATION**

**Printed by  
CREATIVE GRAPHICS  
Jackson, Michigan**



OH ONCE AGAIN

*To climb aloft and watch the dawn ascend  
Earth's haze-enshrouded rim. To dally high  
And see the morning ghosts forsake their blend  
For sundry silhouettes. To catch the sky  
Transformed, its fawn and silv'ry tints now rife  
With brilliant hues recast. To ease my craft  
Below as golden darts give birth to life  
And set the world astir. To catch a shaft  
Of beaming warmth, and quickened by its touch  
Assault its course through hills of airy fleece.  
To burst at last above the crests and clutch  
The fleeting freedom - - endless blue, at peace.*

John G. Magee  
1941

(From collection of E.S. Love. Permission to publish granted through courtesy of Mrs. M. M. Waggoner, recipient of the original from the author in 1941. John Gillespie Magee Jr. also authored the esteemed sonnet "High Flight". He was a naturalized American serving as a pilot in the RCAF in England at the time of his death on Dec. 11, 1941. He was 19 years of age.)



# FORWARD

This 50th anniversary book commemorating the birth of the B- 25 Mitchell Bombardment groups that flew in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations during World War II is not intended to be a comprehensive historical reference document. It is intended to be a highly readable, factual, narrative account of the five B-25 Groups, the 12th, 310th, 319th, 321st and 340th Bombardment Groups, highlighting the uniqueness of the experience of each in getting to the war . . getting through the war, . . and getting home after the war.

The book has been liberally peppered with personal accounts of specific events selected for their humor, pathos, shock, or other interest values. Some of the stories have been told, and retold, and are now committed to the written word in perpetuity.

The second part of the book deals with the 57th Bomb Wing Association, which began yearly reunions in 1969 in Denver, Colorado. Again this book will try to avoid the routine and focus briefly on the highlights which are most worthy of remembering. We will include a brief story of the post- reunion trips, tours, cruises, etc., which have a memorable and added attraction for a large number of reunion attendees.

The concept of this book was approved by the Executive Committee at the Colorado Springs reunion in October 1990, and adequate funding was voted. The target date for publication was set as the summer of 1992.

In keeping with the "pleasant memories" aspect of this book, we felt that it would be most appropriate to preserve for posterity several outstanding items previously published in the 57th Bomb Wing Newsletter and Journal. Final selection was very difficult in trying to recognize those individuals who have made significant contributions to the success of our reunions. The cut-off point was dictated solely by space limitations.

**WILLIS F. CHAPMAN, Chairman**  
57th Wing Publishing Committee



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To: The 57th Bomb Wing Publishing Committee (PUB-COM)

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CHARLES BREWTON, ESTHER OYSTER

To: The many individual contributors with credit lines for their work.

To: The members of the 57th Bomb Wing Publishing Committee and the many contributors noted above, I give my sincere thanks and most grateful appreciation for your most generous support of a job well done.

At this point I wish to call the attention of the members of the 57th Bomb Wing especially to the tremendous effort, well beyond the call of duty, contributed by Paul Peck in assembling and arranging the material, preparing the photography, designing the format, computerizing the entire work and preparing it for the printers. In spite of severe health problems in the family, he has devoted an unbelievable amount of time, patience, and effort to insure the success of this publication and keep it on schedule. He has earned a standing vote of thanks from us all.

**WILLIS F. CHAPMAN**

Chairman

57th Bomb Wing Publishing Committee (PUB-COM)

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B-25 "Mitchell" Medium Bomber  
12th Bombardment Group (M)  
310th Bombardment Group (M)  
319th Bombardment Group (M)  
321st Bombardment Group (M)  
340th Bombardment Group (M)  
Mediterranean Allied Air Force (MAAF)  
12th Air Force  
57th Bombardment Wing  
308th Signal Wing (Company)

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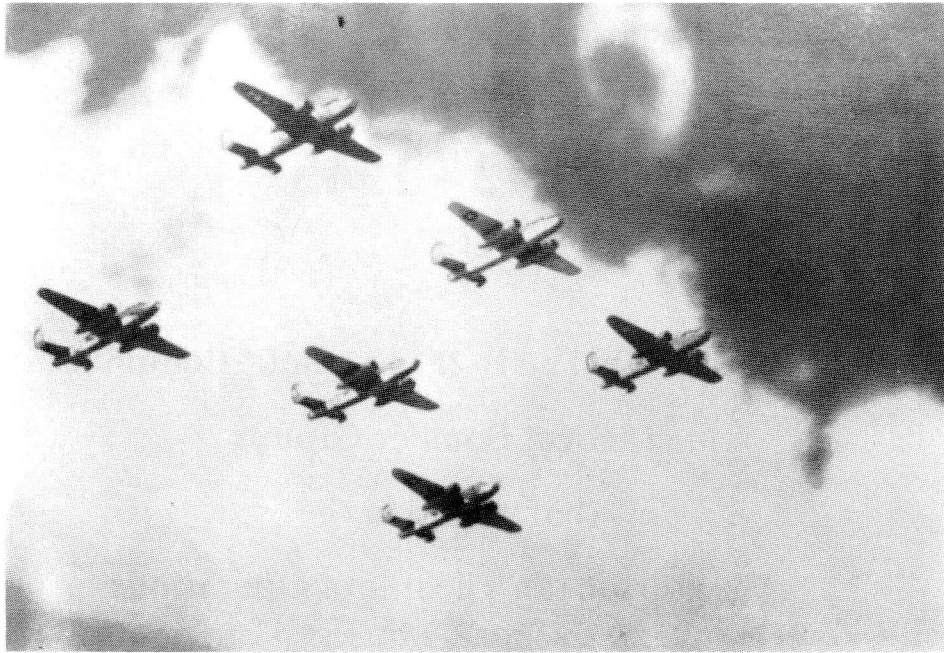
Short reviews of the Annual reunions, bits of reminiscence of the return trips to the Mediterranean, post reunion cruises and tours.



# **FROM THE BEGINNING**

**1942 - 1945**

With Each Of The B-25 "Mitchell" Equipped  
Tactical Bomber Groups  
that served in the  
Mediterranean Theater of Operations





# THERE SHE IS !

by

Paul R. Peck 447

It may be something of a shock to learn that our old girl is fifty plus years old. But it was more than fifty years ago that the United States Army decided that it needed a plane designed for a special assignment. The problem compounded by the fact that we were about to be dragged into a world conflict, for which we were simply not ready. World events would overtake us in any event.

At that time we were technically at peace and pacifists were trying desperately to keep us in that mode. However two historical events, which had not escaped the attention of our military leaders, convinced them that we simply lacked the necessary power to strike from the air in tactical conditions.

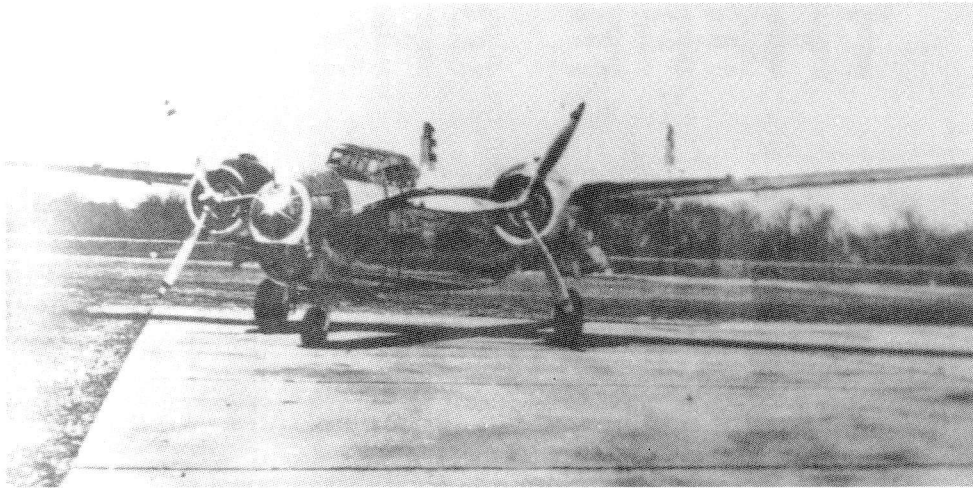
The first of two historical events occurred shortly after World War I. We are all aware of the fight waged by General Billy Mitchell that showed the world that even a battleship was no match for an airplane. We know, too, that he was court marshalled and dismissed from the service for his far-sightedness.

The second historical event came from with the Navy. Remembering the success of the efforts of General Mitchell in sinking the Aufriesland, the Navy began to think about launching an airplane from the deck of a ship to attack another surface vessel. Thus the first "carrier" was the cruiser

USS Langley with a makeshift flight deck built over her deck. Later carriers designed to accomplish the same objective would be built. One of those carriers would be the USS Hornet, from which the first raid on the Japanese mainland, would be launched.

Both the United States Army, and Navy, began to realize that the use of aircraft would be a primary tactic in any future conflict. The conflict looming on the horizon would require weapons of this destructive power. When, in the 1930's, Japan began to expand her empire with extensive use of the airplane. She laid to waste entire cities and villages in China, and Manchuria and struck fear into the hearts of their citizens. In the Spanish Civil War Germany also tested aerial weapons and techniques such as the dive bombing with the Junkers Ju-88 dive bomber, and the Me-109 fighter.

In 1938 the United States Army Air Force issued a circular proposal of requirements and, parameters of performance, for a twin engine medium attack bomber. North American Aviation responded with the design for the NA-40. This design featured twin vertical stabilizers, tricycle landing gear, and the required two engines. The cockpit was designed to be a tandem configuration for two pilots. The nose section would provide space for both a bombardier and a navigator. A dorsal



North American Prototype NA-40-1

turret would allow a radio operator gunner to provide fire power in addition to the two guns that would be operated by the flight engineer. Using two Pratt & Whitney R-1830

engines the aircraft did not meet the speed requirements of the Army Air Corps, when the prototype was flown in January 1939. So it was back to the drawing board where there a number



North American Prototype NA-62

of changes were made: First, the engines were changed to Wright Cyclone R-2600, second, the cockpit was redesigned for side by side seating for the pilots, lowered the wing root to the middle of the fuselage. This

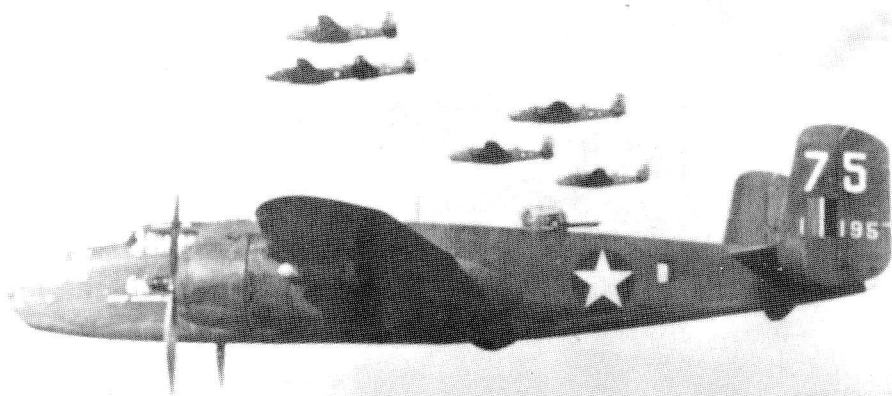
design, called the NA-62, was ready by September 1939 and was immediately placed under contract. The production model was officially designated B-25, and named the "Mitchell."



This airplane was not the aircraft that we flew. The B-25 underwent many, many changes in armament. Changes included addition of waist guns, addition of tail turrets, the movement of the dorsal turret from aft of the wing to just aft of the cockpit, and removal of the lower turret. For the "G" and "H" models a 75mm cannon was added, on some models of the "J" an eight .50 cal gun arrange-

see the planes as lights in the sky. Changing from that system to a single small exhaust stack for each cylinder removed that hazard.

Some 15,000 would be built by North American Aviation in two factory locations, Los Angeles, California, and Kansas City, Kansas. Production would cease in the spring of 1945. The year 1989 celebrated the 50th

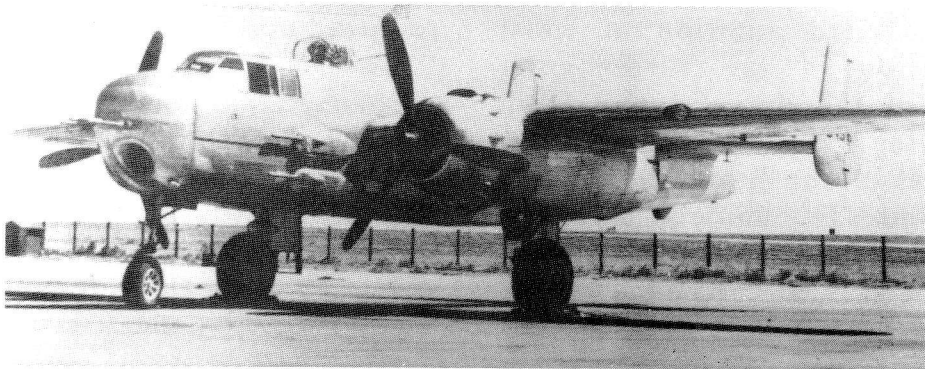


B-25-D

ment was installed, but with all of the changes the basic design of the B-25 did not change. Some changes were inspired by the men under actual combat conditions. One important change, other than armament, was the redesign of the engine cowlings and exhaust system for the Wright engine. The use of the collector ring which "collected" exhaust from each cylinder discharging it from a single port was found to be a dangerous situation on night missions. Enemy gunners could

anniversary of the commencement of production of our beloved bird

Even after fifty plus years the Mitchell refuses to succumb to the rigors of time, for there are still some three dozen of the gallant ladies still on active duty. Those which have survived are all privately owned, and all have been given many different assignments since being retired from active duty with the USAAF. Some have helped fight forest fires, others

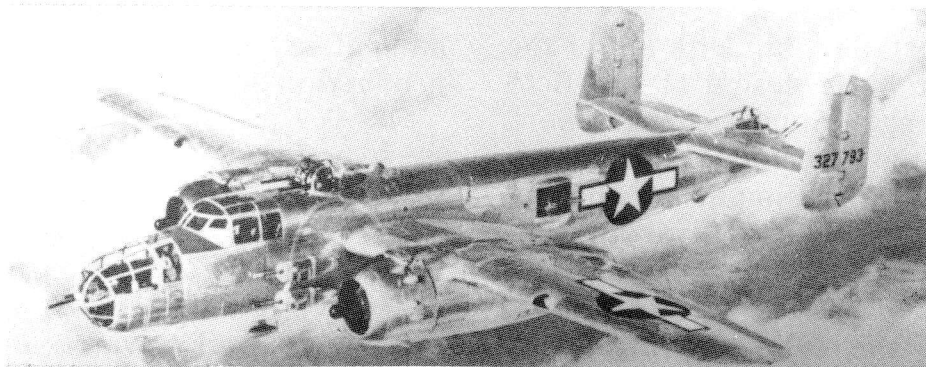


B-25 -G

have assisted executives to complete their duties, while some others have introduced new pilots to the thrill of flying. Many are standing in review in static display so that everyone will remember her. But most are owned by people who simply love the old lady, and are helping renew the memories

of those of us who trusted her to bring us home safely.

It matters not what duty she may be asked to perform, we can trust that she will perform it with the same valor she showed when she carried us to battle fifty years ago.



B-25-J

# **12th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (Medium)**

**ACTIVATED**  
January, 1941

**ENTERED COMBAT**  
August, 1942

**DEACTIVATED**  
January, 1946





81st SQ.



82nd SQ.



12th Group



83rd SQ.



434th SQ.

# THE EARTHQUAKERS

contributed by

**Alex Adair 12th Bomb Group**

In June, 1942, while in the United States for a conference with President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill received word that the British Army had been badly defeated in a tank battle with Rommel's Afrika Corps. The battle, which took place near Tobruk, Libya sent the British in full retreat toward the Egyptian Delta. Churchill made an urgent plea for military aid to stop Rommel from over-running Egypt and the Arabian oil fields.



**Lt. Col. Charles G. Goodrich**

Commanding Officer

6 May 1941    16 Sept. 1942

Lt. Col Charles Goodrich, from Augusta Georgia graduated from West Point in the class of 1928. He was responsible for the training of the 12th Bomb Group and led them to the MTO in August 1942. Col. Goodrich was shot down on 16 September 1942 over Libya. It was reported that he was taken prisoner by Axis troops.

As a result of this plea, the French liner "Pasteur" sailed out of New York harbor on 16 July, 1942 with the ground personnel of the

12th Bombardment group (Medium), along with the 57th Fighter Group, the 98th Bombardment Group (Heavy), and the 323rd Service Group. This started them on a month long cruise around South Africa and up the Indian Ocean to Suez, arriving there on 16 August 1942. There are about as many horror stories about the food on that trip as there were American troops (5,000) on board.

During this time the air crews were flying their B-25s and B-24s from Florida to Egypt by the way of Brazil, Ascension Island, across the hump of Africa to Sudan, and north to Egypt. The 57th's P-40s were ferried across the Atlantic on the aircraft carrier "Ranger". They took off the carrier about 100 miles from Africa to fly the rest of the way to Egypt following the same route as did the bombers.

The 12th Bomb Group was a regular Army outfit that was split off from the old 17th Bomb Group in January, 1941 at McCord Field, Washington. Equipped with about a dozen B-18s and B-23s, they were the only bomber group on the Pacific coast north of San Francisco when the war started. They immediately began flying anti-submarine patrol in these antiquated airplanes. In March of 1942 the 12th was transferred to Esler Field, Louisiana, equipped with new B-25s, and provided with a couple of hundred pilots, navigators and bombardiers right out of school. After three months of intensive training, they were classified as combat ready and sent to Egypt.

The 12th completed the movement of 55 B-25s without losing a plane. As soon as they arrived in Egypt they began training under a South African Air Force A-20 (Boston) Wing in desert warfare tactics and navigation. On their arrival at Suez the ground personnel experienced a rude introduction to life in the Middle East. When they awoke the next morning in a British transit camp on the Suez canal, they had the feeling something was

wrong, and they were right. A trickle of early risers to the latrine quickly became a stampede as "Gypso Tummy", as the British nicknamed dysentery, struck. The Egyptian fly is the culprit. After buzzing around in filth all day, the flies would move into the mess hall for lunch, landing on food, dishes and utensils, spreading dysentery everywhere. It wasn't until they could set camp with their own mess halls, with strict fly control and boiling water for washing mess kits, that the 12th overcame that enemy.

Once the air and ground echelons were re-united, with two squadrons at Deversoir, and two at Ismalia, about 15 miles apart on the Suez canal, the 12th made rapid progress in training and adapting to their new environment. After flying a few missions in combined 18 ship formations with the A-20s and British Baltimores, made a substantial contribution to the defeat of Rommel's final effort to break through to the Suez Canal at the Battles of Alam Halfa, August 31 through September 4, 1942.

British Air Vice Marshall Coningham, who was the overall Commander of the RAF in the Middle East, sent the following personal message to Colonel Charles R. Goodrich, 12th Bomb Group Commanding Officer:

*"Many thanks for your assistance in a record days bombing. We are full of admiration for the grand work of your crews, and I know your squadrons are delighted. Well done and good luck!"*

During the first part of the operation, the 12th Group, was ordered to join in the night attack with the South African Air Force. The Group protested, to no avail, that it was not advisable to carry out night operations until it had installed dampers for the exhausts of the B-25's. Without them the B-25's looked like fire-flies during a night mission. Two weeks later six B-25's were dispatched on this mission anyway and the protest proved to be well founded! On a night mission to Sidi Hanish four B-25's from a flight of ten were shot down! Colonel Goodrich was one of the casualties. Because of the large single exhaust stack on each engine, the B-25s were highly vulnerable at night. No more night

missions were scheduled until smaller finger exhausts were installed. Colonel Goodrich was taken prisoner and spent the rest of the war in Stalag III.

We have been unable to locate a  
photograph  
of  
Col. Backus

### **Colonel Edward N. Backus**

Commanding Officer  
Sept 1943 Sept 1944

Colonel Ed Backus, former C.O. of a dive bomber squadron in Java replaced Colonel Goodrich. Colonel Backus had accompanied General Berenton from Java to India, and then on to Egypt, when the crisis developed in the Middle East.

At this time the US Army Middle East Air Force (USAMEAF), under General Lewis H. Berenton, consisted of the 12th, 57th, and 98th Groups, plus a few B-17's of the 17th Bomb group that had escaped to India from The Philippines and Java, also the Halverson Provisional Detachment (B-24's) which was enroute to China to bomb Tokyo, but was diverted to Egypt when the Japs captured the Burma Road. General Berenton had been the Commander of the Far East Air Force under General McArthur and had accompanied the B-17's to India. On 12 November, 1942 the USMAEF would become the 9th Air Force.

For operations the 12th Bomb group flew in a tight 18 ship formation - - 3 flights of six, each with two vee's and javelin down. These formations were soon referred to by the 8th Army as the "18 unper turbables" -- so smooth and unbroken were their formations as they attacked the strong enemy positions.

By the end of September, '42 the scope of the air activity had mounted considerably. The 12th Bomb Group, flying tactical mis-



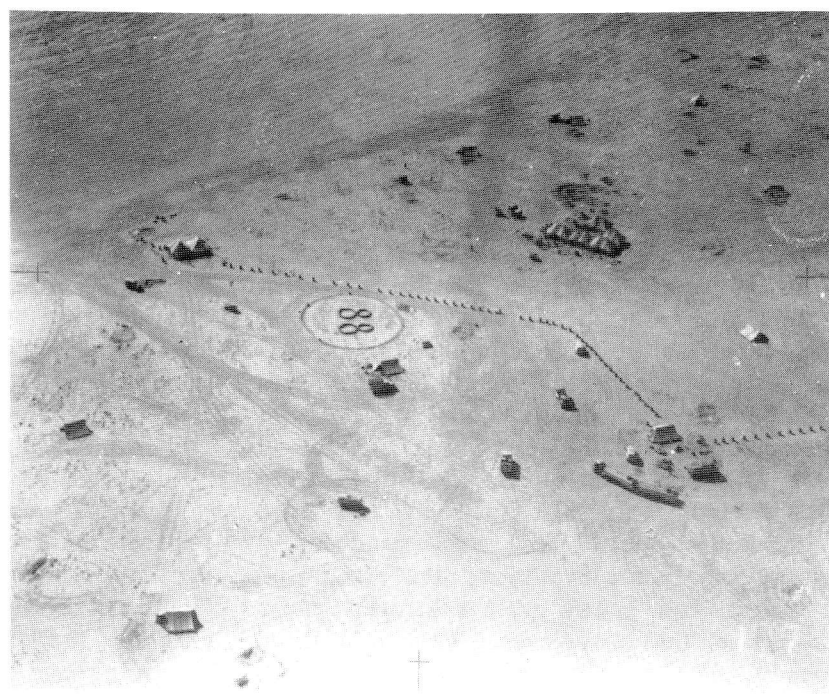
sions with the 3rd Wing, South African A.F., had carried out 21 missions, 144 sorties, and they had lost 6 aircraft.

On 14 October '42 Part of the ground echelon began moving up to LG-88, about 50 lines.. There they set up camp in the desert. Four days later, 34 B-25's arrived at the new base with the flight personnel. They could now be immediately available for air strikes requested by the 8th Army. The bulk of each squadron remained at their bases near the Suez Canal.

Life in the desert was no picnic for the personnel of the 12th Bomb group. It was oppressive heat, with no shade, a quart of water a day for all purposes, dust storms and the inescapable flies, not to mention British rations . . which made "C" rations a treat.

Dispersal was the order of the day to minimize damage from aerial attacks. No two tents could be closer than 50 paces, and aircraft had to be parked 250 paces apart. They were furnished British "180 pounds" five man tents and large modular "EPIP" tents for offices and mess halls. As soon as tents were pitched in a new location, slit trenches had to be dug by each tent for protection against bombing and strafing by enemy aircraft. The ground was usually hard and rocky, and it usually took several hours to dig a trench a foot deep.

Because of the large area covered by the dispersed tents, a tent camp could be a half mile in diameter. So another requirement was that each tent have a urinal next to it. This consisted of a square, topless five gallon gas can set on some rocks in a hole, with a second can set on top of the first at a 45 degree angle. Both cans had perforations in their bottoms, which were small enough to keep flies from getting through them. These



Landing Ground 88, from which the 12th operated during the Battle of El' Alamein, Egypt, October 1942

devices were known as "Desert Lilies", and probably still dot the landscape in Egypt and Libya.

Another unique feature of the desert was the airfields, called "Landing Grounds" . The whole desert was one big landing ground, so an individual "LG" was established by positioning four 50 gallon drums a mile apart to form a square. By the start of the Battle of El' Alamein the desert a few miles behind the 8th Army was covered with these LGs as American, British, South African and Australian fighter and bomber units moved into position. Finding the correct LG became a problem for returning aircraft, for they all looked the same. These fields were identified by a number, such as LG 88, from which the 12th Group operated.

With so much space, it was standard practice for all of the aircraft on a mission to take off at the same time. It was a frequent sight at 12th Group locations to see 18 B-25's roaring across the desert abreast. They would be echeloned into the wind to avoid being blinded by each other's dust. After one 180 degree j



turn they would be joined up in three boxes of six planes, heading for the target. This, and the short distance to the target, saved so much gasoline that the B-25s were able to increase their bomb loads considerably. They would hang four 300 pound bombs under each wing, in addition to carrying 3,000 pounds in the bomb bay.

Because the Germans maintained the same dispersal discipline as the British, pin-point bombing was futile. There were no clusters of tanks, vehicles or troops to aim at, consequently, a new technique of bombing was developed in the desert known as "Pattern Bombing", whereby the target was a rectangle  $1/4 \times 1/2$  mile in size, and the bombs were dropped from all planes when the lead bombardier dropped his. This produced a "pattern" of bomb explosions that saturated the target and pretty well destroyed everything within the boundaries. This, of course, depended on the skill of the lead bombardier. With such big targets the results were usually good, and the consequences to the enemy catastrophic. The 8th Army would frequently call in targets less than a fourth mile from their own position.

At 2140 hours on 23 October, 1942, the largest concentration of artillery ever assembled lit up the sky, and shook the earth for miles around. The Battle of El Alamein was under way. The British Empire troops attacked German lines from the Mediterranean to the Quattara Depression 32 miles to the south.

The next day the 12th Bomb group, operating from LG 88, began a week long shuttle service of 18 ship formations taking off every daylight half-hour, attacking targets phoned in to 8th Army ALOs (Air Liaison Officers) attached to the Group. There was no rest for anyone as ground crews rushed to refuel, reload bombs and ammunition, and patch flak holes, in time for the next mission.

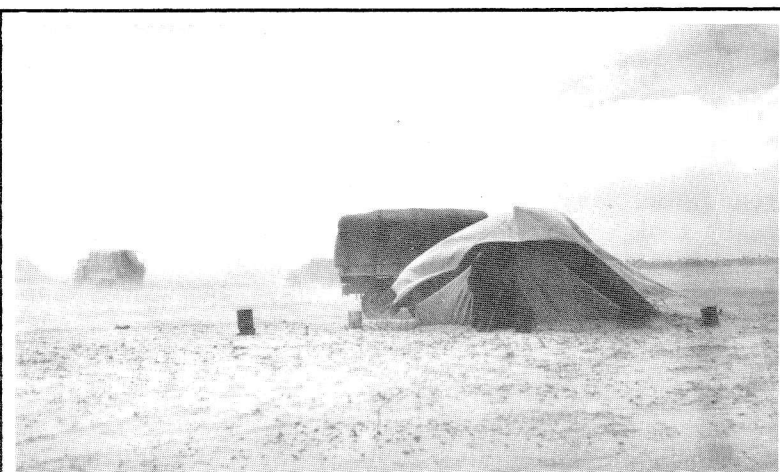
With targets only 20 minutes away, the formations climbed to bombing altitude, 8000 to 10,000

feet, over the water before lining up with their targets. In spite of the devastating heat, dust, and primitive facilities, the 12th maintained a very high rate of planes in commission, and never failed to carry out an assignment. Combat crews routinely flew three or four missions a day. At any given time all day long there was at least one squadron up on a mission.

On October 28th the 12th supported an attack by the 9th Australian Division near the coast by breaking up two counter attacks by the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions, dropping 90 tons of bombs without one hitting friendly troops a stone's throw away.

By November 4th the targets suddenly became mammoth columns of tanks, trucks and troops retreating to the west, and the Battle of El Alamein was over. The war now entered the pursuit phase with Rommel retreating as much as 50 miles a day, only stopping to fight a delaying action when he reached some favorable terrain. He was continually getting out of range of the 12th Group's B-25s, and there would be periods of no missions until the 8th Army had cleared a captured German landing ground of mines close to the front.

Then, an advance party of combat crews and essential ground personnel would set up camp and begin flying missions from there. Transportation was so scarce, and one road



Here comes the dust storm.  
Notice the difference in visibility for the right side of the picture compared with the left side

along the coast was so jammed with traffic that the B-25s had to make several trips ferrying bombs to the new field before they could do any bombing. The 12th had acquired some wheels of its own, however, by scavenging repairable trucks that littered the desert by the hundreds. By the time they reached Tunisia, they were driving German, Italian and British vehicles of all sizes and shapes, which prompted General Patton to ask, "Who the hell is that, the Oakies?", when he saw their convoy on a road in Tunisia.

Eventually the advance bases would become intermediate bases, as new advanced bases were occupied a few hundred miles further to the west. During all of this time the bulk of the group was still back in Egypt, 1,200 miles to the east.

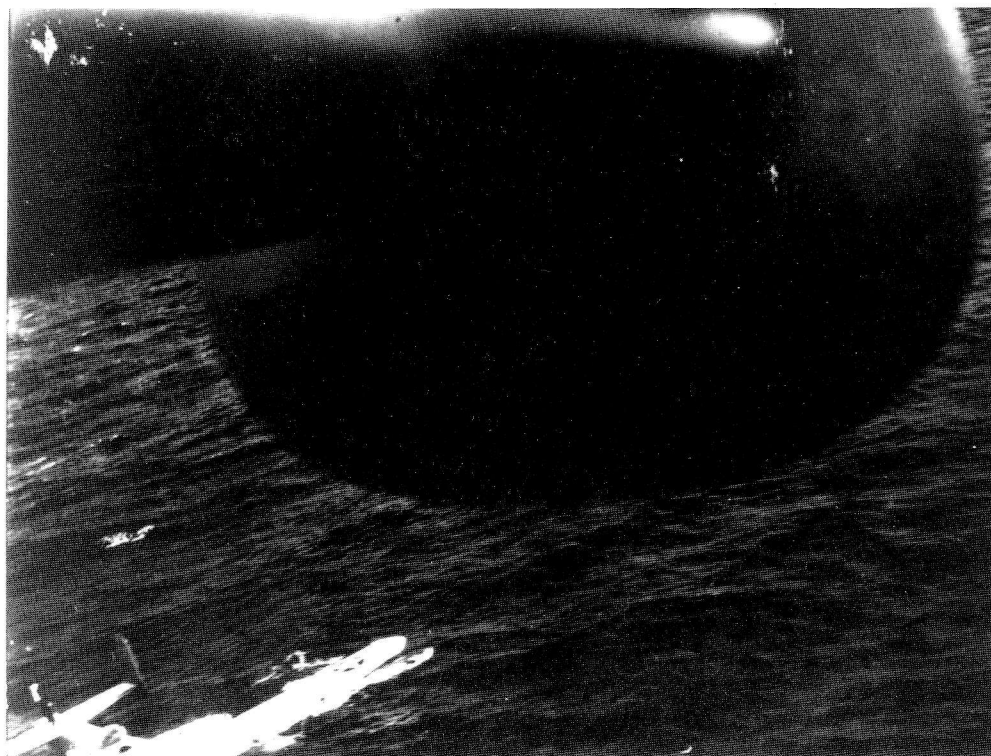
The advanced bases were now approaching Tripoli, in Libya. Landing Ground 142, at Gambut, near Tobruk, Libya, was the most miserable of all the intermediate bases. It was 600 miles from Egypt and 600 miles from Tripoli. Located on a high windswept escarpment of rocky ground and drenched

with rain during the winter months. The men there felt like they were on the moon.

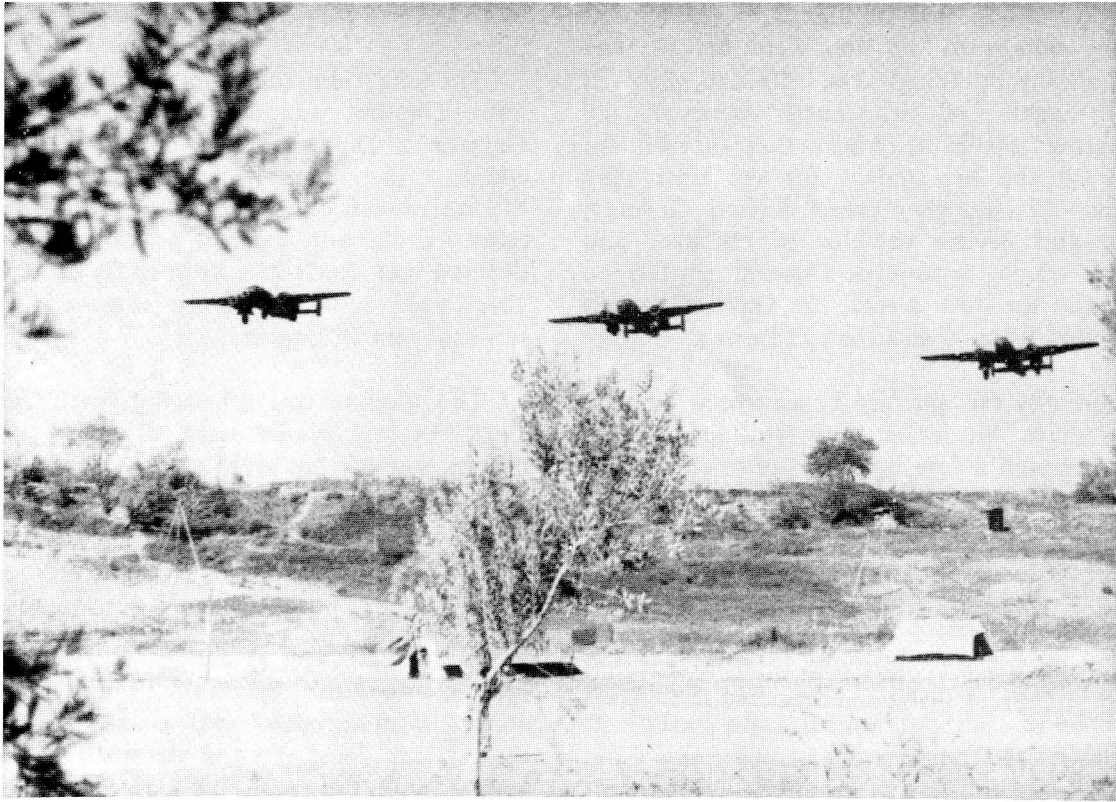
The one time that the Group was divided when Gambut was used for a strike at the German airfields on the island of Crete, a couple of hundred miles across the Mediterranean. Because of the distance fighter protection was not possible. So it was decided that the B-25's were to fly at 19,000 ft. This made it necessary to remove the dust screens from all engines.

The mission was scheduled for 1 January, 1943. As luck would have it, a few minutes before take off, up blew a dust storm! Only 12 of the 36 aircraft scheduled were able to get off. They milled around in the dust, unable to see each other much less find the runway.

Eleven of them made it to the target and bombed. Because of the gas wasted on the ground, and the maximum range, they all started running out of fuel as they approached the African coast. Two of them ditched in the water, and the rest landed wherever they could. ONE made it back to base. RAF Air



A 12th Group B-25 ditched in the Mediterranean after running out of gas while returning after bombing German airfields on the island of Crete



A typical formation take-off from Gerbini Airdrome, near Catania, Sicily. You can see the nose of the bombs carried under the wings. Note the dispersed tents in the foreground. Why is it that the bivouac always is located at the end of the runway?

Sea Rescue saved the crews of the ditched planes, so there were no casualties. But it was necessary to change 60 engines because of the storm. Such was life in the desert. While this was going on, Allied forces under Gen. Eisenhower landed in Algeria, and Morocco. They were met by fresh German divisions from Europe, that were also put under Rommel's command. The result was predictable and the situation soon became desperate as they drove the Americans back through Kasserine Pass. To reinforce the badly shot up 12th Bomb Command of the 12th Air Force, the 81st and 82nd squadrons of the 12th Bomb group on 3 February 1943 were ordered to fly immediately from Gambut to Berteaux, Algeria, where they were attached to the 310th Bomb group for rations and administration. These two squadrons contributed substantially to Rommel's defeat at Kasserine Pass. They continued to operate under the 12th Air Force until the fall

of Tunis in May, they then returned to the 9th Air Force.

By the middle of March the Germans opposing the 8th Army on the Eastern front had retreated clear through Libya and into Tunisia. Rommel chose to make his stand in the former French fortification called the Mareth Line. Here the two remaining squadrons of the 12th Group, the 83rd and the 428th, broke up the German attack, clearing the way for a New Zealand division's flanking attack. This six day climactic battle sealed the fate of the Germans in Tunisia.

By this time the 12 Bomb group had acquired "EARTHQUAKERS", as a nickname. It was a term used by German POW's when referring to the B-25s that had bombed them. After the fall of Tunis, the squadrons of the 12th were reunited at Hergla, Tunisia, 60 miles south of Tunis. All of the personnel

of the 12th were together for the first time since their advanced parties moved out into the desert eight months earlier. From February to May the "Earthquakers" had been spread over 2,500 miles from Egypt to Algeria, and had operated under two Air Forces at the same time, the 81st and 82nd under the 12th AF, and the 83rd and 428th under the 9th AF.

It was at Hergla that the men experienced their hottest day in Africa, when a hot wind blew up from the Sahara Desert. All activity was suspended in the afternoon when the temperature reached 130 degrees. That day the "Earthquakers" acquired a new hero. . . the manager of the 81st enlisted men's club, Cpl. Angus Anderson, rolled in with a 2 1/2 ton, from Tunis, and had on board a large keg of ice cold French beer.

Another nice thing about Hergla was that there was no K.P. duty. Some pilots, in a truck, intercepted a long column of Italian POWs and asked for volunteers to work in an American Air Force mess. A whole company, including the officers, volunteered, so they picked the six huskiest and brought them back to camp. They did all of the work for one squadron until the 12th left for Sicily a couple of months later. They became very popular and made many friends. Many tears were shed when they had to be taken to a POW camp the day the 12th departed for Sicily. After three pleasant months on the beach at Hergla, during which the "Earthquakers" bombed Pantellaria, and Sicily in preparation for the invasion. The ground personnel with all their baggage and vehicles boarded LSTs in Tunis on 9 August, 1943. After an overnight cruise, they landed on Sicily and set up their first base in Europe at Ponte Oliveo. The combat crews had already arrived and set up their tents.

Some very hot ground fighting was going on around Randazzo in northern Sicily. In supporting that action the 12th picked up many flak holes, and lost two ships before the town was secured by the US 7th Army. This was the last significant action of the Earthquakers as a part of the 9th Air Force, for on 22 August, 1943, the 12th Bomb group was transferred to the 12th Air Force. The 9th Air Force was moved to England.

The co-pilot of one of the B-25s shot down over Randazzo, Lt. Winton K. Sexton, bailed out and was captured, and wound up on a POW train passing through northern Italy. In spite of a painful leg wound he jumped off the moving train, and was taken in by some friendly Italians. He spent the next nine months hiding and walking half the length of Italy until he was opposite the Anzio beachhead. Being unable to cross the lines, he returned to Rome and turned himself in at the Vatican, where he was interned until Rome was liberated.

By the time Sicily fell nearly all of the 12th Group's original combat crews had completed their required missions, and had been rotated to the ZI including about 25 Canadian radio - gunners who had joined the group in Egypt and had participated in all of its combat missions. Also on 21 September 1943, Colonel Bacus, who had commanded the 12th since taking command a year earlier, rotated. He was replaced by Lieutenant Colonel William W. Wilcox.

Despite a complete turnover of combat crews and a new commander, the 12th Group

we have been unable to locate a  
photograph  
of  
Col. Wilcox

COLONEL WILLIAM W. WILCOX

Commanding Officer

21 Sept. 1943

29 Sept. 1944

maintained its high standard of air discipline and excellence, under the guidance of a nucleus of veterans who stayed on in key operational positions in the squadrons and group headquarters, as well as all of the ground personnel who weren't rotatable.

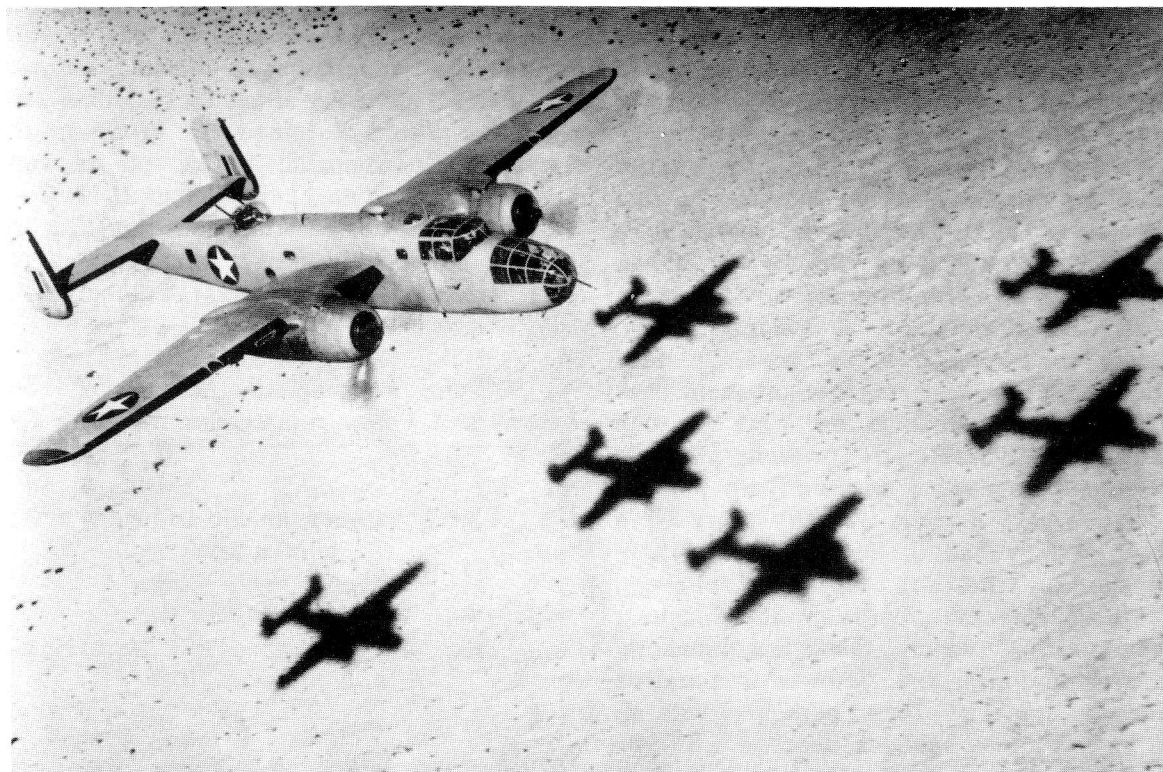
About this time the 12th received word that it had been awarded a Presidential Unit



Citation "For outstanding performance of duty against the enemy in direct support of the British 8th Army in the Middle East Campaign, from the Battle of El Alamein to the capitulation of the enemy in Tunisia, and Sicily."

About the first of November the 12th was alerted for a move from Gerbini, Sicily, to Foggia, Italy, hopefully before the rainy season arrived. The weather didn't cooperate and a miserable time was had by all.

Tents were taken down and put back up, as rain thwarted movement by air. It was almost impossible for vehicles to move in the sticky, slippery Sicilian mud, even with 4 wheel drive. Even Jeeps had to be pushed by hand to get started, and the pushers quickly learned that there were two bad things about pushing Jeeps in the slippery mud . . . they got sprayed with mud by the wheels, and they fell on their faces when their feet slipped out from under them.



### RACING THEIR SHADOWS.

B-25's from the 12th Bomb Group race their shadows across the battle scarred Egyptian desert on their way to bomb Panzer divisions of Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps, during the battle of El Alamein, October 1942

Everyone going by air finally got loaded in the B-25s and took off for Foggia, except for six B-25s that were left stuck in the mud until the rain stopped. There was considerable debate as to which was worse, a desert sand storm, or the Sicilian rain. The conclusion, BOTH!

Once at Foggia, the Earthquakers settled down for the winter and used all of their

ingenuity to make themselves comfortable. A lot of wood was available from bombed buildings for tent floors, and every tent had a home made stove that burned 100 Octane gasoline in a little can of sand. There were surprisingly few tent fires in spite of the volatility of the fuel. Before long the Appenine Mountains were covered with snow, and the wind from the mountains was constantly blowing through the camp. Lucky



General Orders.  
No. 23

WAR DEPARTMENT  
Washington D.C., 24 March 1944

EXTRACT

VII - - - BATTLE HONORS- - As authorized by Executive Order No. 9396 (Sec I Bull. 22 Ed, 1942), citations of the following units by the Commanding General Ninth Air Force, in General Orders No. 39, 25 February 1944, under provisions of Section IV, Circular No. 333, War Department, 19 February, 1943, in the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction are confirmed. The citation reads as follows:

The 12th Bombardment Group (M). For outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in direct support of the British Eighth Army in the Middle East Campaign from the battle of El Alamein to the capitulation of the enemy forces in Tunisia and in Sicily. This group operating from advanced landing fields directly behind the front lines under the most difficult of weather and terrain conditions, carried out continuous and devastating bombing raids against enemy airdromes, ground installations, troops, and supply lines as well as repeated aerial engagements with enemy aircraft. The airplane crews of this organization exhibited the greatest bravery and resourcefulness, while its ground personnel, in the face of repeated enemy attacks, performed all duties with utter disregard for their personal safety. By the superior courage, initiative, untiring efforts, and devotion to duty all of the personnel of this organization, despite personal hardships and the most difficult and hazardous conditions, the 12th Bombardment Group (M) contributed greatly to the defeat of the enemy in the Middle East in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army.

By order of the Secretary of War:  
G.C. Marshall

Chief of Staff

Official:

Robert H. Dunlop  
Brigadier General  
Acting The Adjutant General.

combat crews got leave to the Isle of Capri for R&R, but the ground personnel had to tough it out in not so sunny southern Italy.

Operating out of Foggia until January 22, 1944, the "Earthquakers" attacked German targets in support of the American 5th Army in the battle of Cassino, and in eastern Italy supporting the British 8th Army as well as important enemy ports. Forays were also made to Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Greece, to bomb airfields and ports used by the Germans. For the last few days of January the 12th operated out of a small airstrip with a steel matting runway at Gaudo, on the coast a few miles from the ancient city of Pompeii.

They were abruptly removed from combat and ordered to prepare for an overseas movement, which turned out to be to India to help the British 14th Army repel a Japanese invasion over the mountains from Burma at Imphal, India.

After a freezing trip across the mountains in snow the group boarded two ships (British troop ship "Dilwara" and the Polish ship "Batory") and sailed out of Taranto, Italy on 9 February, 1944. To the dismay of many who had bet that they were going home, the ships headed east, arriving at Port Said, Egypt on February. 13, 1944.

After two weeks at Camp Huckstep, just out of Cairo, with passes to town every day where they visited old haunts and friends, they were trucked to Port Tewfik at the eastern end of the Suez Canal. There they reboarded their ships and sailed down the Red Sea obviously headed for India, on 29 February, 1944. They arrived at Bombay on 12 March, and boarded a tiny Indian train for a four day trip across India to bases near Dacca, in eastern Bengal (now Bangladesh).

The 12th Bomb group spent the next 18 months supporting the British 14th Army as it drove the Japs down the Burma valley, through Mandalay and on to Rangoon. They were equipped with new A-26 Douglas Invaders just before the war ended, but never used them in combat.

When the war ended, the air echelon flew their A-26's to Germany, and the ground echelon, after several months of waiting, sailed from Bombay, India on 24 December 1945. They arrived in Seattle on 21 January 1946, where the 12th Bomb Group was deactivated at Fort Lawton, 50 miles from McChord Field where it started its round the world journey five years earlier.

## A WAR BOND DRIVE

A 12th Bomb Group Crew with "Desert Warrior" in summer 1943



I.-r. Back row.

Capt. Ralph Lower (82nd),  
pilot

1st Lt. Clarence Seaman (81st),  
Co-pilot

1st Lt. Floyd Pond (434th),  
Navigator;

1st Lt. Theodore Tate (83rd),  
Bombardier.

Front row:

S/Sgt. James Garfalo (83rd),  
Gunner;

F/O Anthony Martin. RCAF (82nd),  
Radio gunner

M/Sgt. John Dawdy (81st)  
Crew chief.

# **310th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (Medium)**

## **ACTIVATED**

28 January, 1942

## **ENTERED COMBAT**

2 December, 1942

## **DEACTIVATED**

12 September, 1945



379th SQ.



380th SQ.



310th Group



381st SQ.



428th SQ.



# 310th Bomb Group

submitted by John Coffey 380

The story of the 310th Bomb Group (M), from its creation on 1 March 1942 to its inactivation on 12 September 1945, is a composite of hundreds of events remembered by many hundreds of young men who were part of the Group during this eventful period of our country's history. Some (primarily members of the combat crews who joined the Group overseas) served only six or eight months in their squadron before finishing their combat tours and returning to the United States. Others who were not crew personnel, and they were many, covering the whole gamut of the Army's Military Occupation Specialties (MOS), may have spent three years or more with the great majority of that span overseas. It was these vibrant, dedicated, patriotic youngsters (few were over 23-24 years of age) whose day to day works and deeds comes the living history of the group that follows.

On 7 December 1941, the day which President Franklin D. Roosevelt called the "Day of Infamy," the U.S. Army Air Corps comprised 67 active Groups none of which, it can be safely said, came close to TO/E strength in personnel and assigned aircraft. It was from this nadir that the massive buildup began which was to bring the personnel numbers of the U.S. Army Air Forces, at the zenith of its strength, to well over 2,500,000 men (and women of the WAAC serving with the USAAF) and thousands of aircraft of all types by early 1945. The 310th Bomb Group was a part of that growth.

Upon the declaration by Congress that the United States now was in a state of war, the War department ordered the immediate creation of ten fighter groups and a dozen or so bomber groups (light, medium and heavy). In January 1942 the 310th Bombardment Group (M) came into being, but only on paper, for it was not until 15 March 1942 that the unit was activated at Davis Monthan Army Air Field, Tuscon, Arizona, through the assignment of a commanding officer, Lt. Col. William E. Lee. At the same time the 309th

Bomb Group (M) also was activated at Davis Monthan. Now, an oddity occurred, which apparently has no explanation. The 309th becomes the 310th, and the 310th assumes the designation of the 309th - - - this occurred sometime during the April - June 1942 time period. At any rate both groups wound up, in June 1942, at Lexington County Airport (soon to become Columbia Army Air Base, South Carolina).



**COLONEL ANTHONY G. HUNTER**  
310th Bomb Group Commander from  
June 1942 to October 1944

Lt. Col. Anthony Hunter was designated Commander of the 310th Group. Personnel, both air and ground began to filter in from various sources. A handful of people, no more than that, may have had a year or more experience as pilots, crew chiefs, cooks, prop specialists, medics etc., but most all who reported to Columbia in June and July 1942 came directly from flying, gunnery and technical schools. The Squadron Commanders were all in their mid-twenties. They were; Capt. Travis Hoover, 379; Capt. Rodney "Hoss" Wilder, 380; Capt. Ivan Ferguson, 381; and Capt. William "Bill" Bower, 428.



## JULY TO OCTOBER 1942

Training started, and it was training in earnest. With few aircraft assigned, six per squadron, flying time for the individual crews was limited, and so each minute in the air was precious. Practice missions incorporated everything that was possible to squeeze in: navigation, bombing, gunnery, formation flying, emergency procedures etc.. All of these were supplemented on ground training equipment. Meanwhile crew chiefs, mechanics and other specialists were learning the ins and outs of their airplanes. Orderly room personnel were coping with personnel records, routine orders, and payrolls. Supply technicians were busy controlling everything from laces, shoes. GI; belts, waist, web, and cans GI, 5 gallon; to cylinder heads and tires for the aircraft. Armament people were maintaining and accounting for gun turrets, .50 cal. ammunition and 100 pound (blue monster) practice bombs.

On 14 August 1942 the Group moved to Walterboro, SC. where training continued unabated. During these few months the 310th became intimately acquainted with the natural phenomenon which was to track us wherever we went .. RAIN!

We didn't know then, but we know now, that this was to be the first step in the overseas deployment of the four squadrons (379, 380, 382, 428 ) which composed the group, but it didn't take long to find this out.

On 28 August 1942 the Air Echelons of the several squadrons departed Walterboro for Fort Dix, NJ. On 4 September 1942 they boarded the HMS Queen Mary in New York harbor and sailed for some place unknown to all but the ship's Master and a chosen few. "Someplace" turned out to be Currock, Scotland. From there personnel moved southward into England to RAF Hardwick, all except the 428th Squadron which went to RAF Bungay, both in Norfolkshire, on 14 September 1942. There they waited, day to day, for the group's airplanes to arrive, to begin what was expected to be advanced operational training.

Meanwhile, during 5 - 7 September, the flight echelons were enroute from Walterboro

AAB to Westover AAF in western Massachusetts, just north of Springfield. The 379th and 428th crews flew the Group's airplanes while the 380th and 381st made the trip by rail. There the crews picked up 54 brand new B-25's in the 41-13xxx series with the flight leader's airplanes equipped with the then hush-hush Norden bombsight, a piece of equipment which was so hush-hush that it could not be left in the airplane unguarded. Bombardiers and Navigators will remember strapping on a .45 caliber pistol in order to convoy the sight head from the airplane to a vault for overnight storage and repeating the operation, in reverse, prior to their next flight.

In mid-September, flying the new airplanes, crews began departing Westover for England via Presque Isle, Maine, Goose Bay, Labrador, BW-1 in Greenland, Reykjavik in Iceland, and finally into Scotland. They were loaded down with all sorts of equipment, including torpedo racks, and "Tokyo" tanks in the bomb bay. Two aircraft were lost at Presque Isle, enroute, and two sustained damage in a ground accident at BW-1, but the rest touched down at RAF Prestwick, or Stornaway, before moving on to Hardwick.

Many of these crews also took along a convoy of A-20's of the 47th Bomb Group (L). Weather beginning in October ranged from fair, at best, to absolutely lousy on the legs eastward from Goose Bay with the consequence that many, many, crews piled up at Goose Bay waiting to get out. If the weather between BW-1 and Reykjavik precluded flight there, it meant that no one could leave Goose Bay so as to avoid overloading the facilities at BW-1. Thus, for some crews, it meant a stretch of 35-40 days before their arrival in Scotland after leaving the United States. "If you've time to spare, go by air." became our motto.

Weather forecasting, particularly between Goose Bay and BW-1, posed a real problem because there were so few reporting stations to provide observations from which to create a weather map. One particularly harrowing experience was that of Lt. Bob Grow (380th) who, leading a flight of six A-20's at minimum altitude into a fjord leading to BW-1, was advised that he couldn't land because the

HEADQUARTERS

310TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (M), AAF  
GREENVILLE ARMY AIR BASE, GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

September 19, 1942

SPECIAL ORDERS)  
NUMBER 92)

E X T R A C T

19. Par 1, SO #83, Hq. 310th Bombardment group, Walterboro Army Air Base, Walterboro, South Carolina, is amended to read:

"1. PAVC in Immediate Action Ltr, WD, Washington, D.C., August 24, 1942 (Sub: Movement Orders, Flight Echelons, Shipment 1605) File AG370.5 (8-23-42) MS-AF-M, the personnel on the enclosed annex No. 1 of Gp. Hq, 310th Bomb Gp (M), AAF, 379th Bomb Sq. (M), 390th Bomb Sq (M), 381st Bomb Sq (M), and 428th Bomb Sq (M), WP fr this sta on or about September 5, 1942, to Westover Field, Mass. The 379th and 428th will proceed by military aircraft, the 380th and 381st by rail, for the purpose of receiving airplanes and participating in a period of temporary duty pertaining to matters of preparation for movement to overseas destination. Upon arrival at Westover Field, they will report to the Commanding General, AAF I Concentration Command."

\* \* \* \* \*

By Order of Lt. Col HUNTER:

HARVEY H. HINMAN  
Major, AC,

Executive Officer

OFFICIAL:

HARVEY H. HINMAN  
Major, AC,  
Executive Officer

field was completely covered by fog which had poured unexpectedly down off the nearby ice cap and was expected to remain indefinitely. Faced with this fact, Lt. Grow had to turn the formation around, in fog, which already had channeled down the fjord, while hemmed in by higher elevations on both sides. This he did, and with throttles pulled back and mixtures leaned out to the maximum, they headed back for Goose Bay on the deck. Luckily, although he had not been authorized to do so, Grow's engineer, S/Sgt. Byron F. "Bud" Link, had stashed an extra 200 gallons of gasoline in the Tokyo tank. It was this extra gallonage which got them back to where they had taken off earlier in the day. Meanwhile the A-20's were having problems, one crash landed just as he reached the Labrador coast, another with both engines coughing from impending fuel starvation on final approach managed to get down safely, the other four pulled into their hardstands with only "quarts" of fuel left. Lt. Grow put 9:30 hours for flight time into the airplane's form 1.

## NOVEMBER 1942

While the flight and air echelons of the various squadrons were proceeding to England in their own designated ways, the ground echelons were still in the States, having moved in mid September to Greenville AAB, South Carolina. Here the individual ground echelons were divided into two parts, the first of which left Greenville in mid October for Fort Dix, New Jersey. On 1 November they boarded the S.S. Monticello and sailed from New York harbor early in the morning hours of 2 November. After 18 days on shipboard, personnel disembarked at Casablanca, French Morocco on 19 November and moved on to Mediouna airport.

And now, all of the personnel who had wended their separate ways from Walterboro began to reunite, to create the seeds of a cohesive fighting organization that was later to distinguish itself over the next three years in combat operations against the enemy. The first two priorities of the air echelons which left England a week after the North African invasion (8 November) were at Mediouna to greet their compatriots of the ground echelon. The third priority of the air echelon traveled by ship (SS Derbyshire) later in November, via

Gibraltar to Oran, Algeria, where they arrived on 6 December.

The first airplanes of the Flight Echelon, from the 379th and 428th Squadrons, left England on 11 November, arriving at Casablanca on 12 November with Lt. John Beatty (428) being the first to land on the soil of French Morocco, only four days after the invasion had taken place. Aircraft continued to arrive sporadically, as weather conditions over the Atlantic permitted. Many of these aircraft led flights of light bombers and fighters on the long trip over the Bay of Biscay, along the Atlantic coast of Spain and Portugal, past the Strait of Gibraltar and into Casablanca, or Port Lyautey in Morocco.

On 24 November came the order for the aircrews which had made it to North Africa to move to Maison Blanche, Algeria, to start achieving the purpose for which they existed, ---taking the air battle to the enemy.

## DECEMBER 1942

Since the first two priorities of the Air Echelon and the advance party of the Ground Echelon had not yet moved out of Mediouna, the aircrews were strictly on their own. But with the help of the Royal Air Force and the Free French Air Force, they mounted their first mission on 2 December . . . an eight ship formation, four from the 379th and four from the 428th, to hit an ammo dump near Gabes in Tunisia. The group suffered its first combat casualties on its very next mission on 6 December to Sidi Ahmed airdrome near Bizerte. Here Lt. James Bishop (379th) and his crew were lost over the target. Then on 14 December the six remaining aircraft (one having crash landed at base after returning from a mission on Sousse harbor) moved to Telergma as a temporary operating location while work continued on the preparation of the group's more permanent base at Berteaux. At Telergma they were joined by those members of the air and ground echelons who had travelled by rail or in a motor convoy from Mediouna. At the same time nine more aircraft, three from the 380th and six from the 381st, and their crews arrived at Telergma more than doubling the Group's strength.

The next "first" of the war occurred on 30

December when all four squadrons were represented in a twelve plane mission to bomb the railroads yards at Sousse, Tunisia, from which all aircraft returned safely. This closed the activity for the year 1942 in which the Group, starting from literally nothing in the late spring, had received its aircraft and personnel, deployed overseas in several different segments and had flown its first eight combat missions.

## JANUARY 1943

The year 1943 began with the move, on New Year's Day, of the Group from Telerma to Berteaux where a former French agricultural school was to be home until June. A runway had been scraped and graded from a flat winter wheat field set among the low lying hills. Once in operation, the runway was "finished" through the takeoffs and landings of our aircraft. The last weeks of 1942 had been marked by rain and/ or low clouds. The normal Algerian winter weather pattern continued.

Living conditions were, to say the least, "deplorable", from an Air Corps point of view. While Infantry "grunts" could expect to live either in or on the earth, as they moved for-

ward or backward with the tide of battle, the Air Corps operating from fairly static locations expected something better. Many of the people spent day after day in pup tents covering jerry-built shanties created from God knows how many odds and ends, and the combat crews lived in luxury sleeping on cots



A CHOW LINE AT BERTEAUX

underneath pyramidal tents. Two blankets were the issue norm, and they were completely inadequate as protection against the North African winter. Every one ate from mess kits and complained about powdered eggs and dehydrated potatoes.

All four squadrons now had at least some of their aircraft and began to intensify their flying efforts. The Axis ground troops were beginning to be pinched by General Montgomery's "Desert Rats" moving from the east and the U.S. Army's II Corps pushing from the west. Operating against Axis airfields in Tunisia and the sea lanes from Sicily to harbors on the Mediterranean coast, our bombers flew 28 missions despite difficulties that rain and mud interpose against seemingly routine operations of maintenance, fueling (from 5 gallon cans), arming and loading that constantly had to continue. Three aircraft and 2 crews were lost. In return, we claimed 12 enemy aircraft destroyed, 2 merchant ships and 2 naval vessels sunk. "Bill" Bower was now advanced to Major, and moved to Group Operations. He was replaced by Capt. James "Jimmy" Walker, a Flight Commander in the 428th



HOW ABOUT A SHOWER??  
Only at Berteaux



## FEBRUARY 1943

Intensive activity continued in February, but the group began to pay the price. Five aircraft and crews were lost during the first ten days of the month, four of these on one day, the 8th of February, over Gabes airdrome, victims of heavy flak. In addition, Lt. Eric Linden's "POTCH-A-GALOO" from the 381st was severely damaged over the target. With bomb bay doors collapsed in the open position, the lower turret extended (it couldn't be retracted), no instruments, control surfaces damaged, the plane barely flyable, Lt. Linden still managed to get the aircraft on the ground at Berteaux in one of the most spectacular crash landings that the Group had ever seen. All the crew emerged from the

against their reinforcements which were coming in to Algeria from Sicily. On three consecutive days, 21st, 22nd and 23rd, we suffered a total loss of six aircraft and five crews during a concerted effort to prevent the arrival of the fuel and ammunition which could be deployed against our troops fighting so desperately to hold the Pass. But we were successful, and on the 24th the German Army began to pull back from the Pass in the direction of Tunisia. On our side of the ledger, against ten aircraft and eight crews that were lost, ten enemy aircraft were destroyed and a tanker (most important because of its fuel load), a freighter, a destroyer and eight Seibel Ferrys were claimed. On the one for one basis, this might not seem to be such a good trade, but the



**"POTCH-A-GALOO"**

With bullet holes in both props, eight 20mm rounds in her self sealing fuel tanks, and no instruments, and other major damage, Eric Linden still flew her home to Berteaux.

aircraft with understandably great alacrity, and with all limbs in place

The German attack on our troops in the Kasserine Pass which began on the 14th called for even more stepped up activity

Group did contribute to a major degree to forcing the German retreat. In one of the aircraft that was lost, the operational hierarchy of the 381st Squadron suffered a mortal blow. Major Ferguson, who was the Squadron Commander, went down, and with him went



Commander, went down, and with him went his Squadron Navigator, Squadron Bombardier, and a Flight Commander. Captain Alpheus W. White, of the 379th squadron was transferred to replace Major Ferguson as 381st Squadron Commander.

## MARCH 1943

In March the weather continued to hamper our efforts. During the first six days, three Sea Sweeps were put up but not a bomb was dropped. . . rain squalls. . . poor visibility worked against us. Some naval vessels were sighted, but no worthwhile merchant targets were seen. Then on the 7th, six aircraft on a sweep, spotted and attacked a convoy, hitting a large freighter which was left sinking, and another smaller freighter and two auxiliary vessels which were sunk. Although we didn't lose any aircraft all were damaged in varying degrees by enemy fire.

We lost another aircraft on 12 March in a Sea Sweep which produced great results. Out of a convoy of 12 Seibel Ferries, three were sunk and three left badly damaged and low in

the water. Our cost was one aircraft and crew downed during the attack.

During mid- March, our sister Group, the 321st arrived and was deployed at Ain M'lila, some 10-12 km from our base at Berteaux. During this same period the Group stood down from operations, and many of the individuals on the crews which had been flying combat since December were granted 10 days R&R at rest camps in the mountains near Fez, Morocco. However, it was continued work, work, work for the mechanics, sheet metal men and other specialists in order to get damaged, and badly needed, aircraft back into operational condition. Some lucky people got the opportunity to travel in road convoy to Constantine, where hot baths (albeit in public bathhouses) could be taken prior to sampling whatever delights the city offered in the short time available before climbing back on the truck to return to Berteaux.

Overall, March was not a very productive month although Gabes fell to the British Eighth Army on the 29th. Flying weather was miserable a great deal of the time. Only nine



SOME PILOT SURVIVORS WHO MADE IT TO STALAG LUFT III  
l to r. R.M. Brown, C.M. Barnwell, J.E. Doddridge, R.A. Lacy, Frederick Loomis,  
Harvey Doss

missions were flown and on five of them no bombs were dropped. We lost one aircraft and crew.

## APRIL 1943

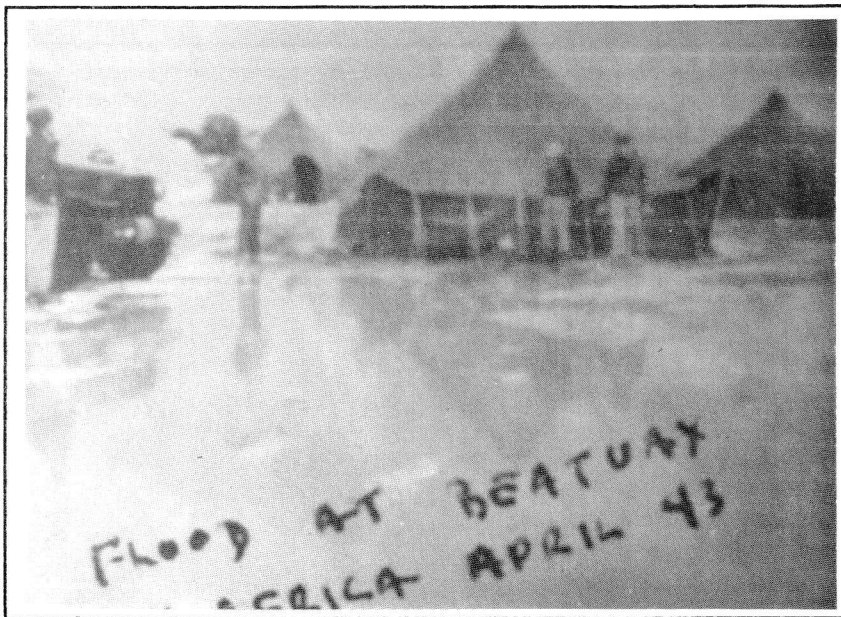
Allied forces continued to squeeze Axis troops toward Tunis and Bizerte, and on 10 April the British captured Sousse while moving steadily on their way northward along Tunisia's eastern coast. Sea Sweeps continued as a normal way of life for our bomber crews, but our efforts also were extended beyond the harbors and airfields of Tunisia to similar facilities in Sicily in order to abate the flow of personnel and materiel, reinforcements which were being delivered from there to Africa. On 5 April the Group mounted its first 36 plane mission.

One Sea Sweep turned into a "Turkey Shoot". Eighteen B-25's protected by 24 P-38's and loaded with 500 pound bombs, having searched without success for shipping targets, ran into a Luftwaffe aerial convoy off Cape Bon. The convoy of 25 JU-52 transports, accompanied by a dozen or so ME-210, JU-87 and JU-88 aircraft, was completely routed. The B-25's ranged up and down the sides of the enemy convoy, firing all .50 cal. guns that could be brought to bear. Pilots and co-pilots alternated, one flying the aircraft and the other crawling up into the nose to take a stint on the flexible .50 in the bombardier's compartment. All told, our gunners claimed 10 of the JU-52's and a JU-88. Our P-38 escort accounted for another 14 of the convoy and a ME-109 interceptor while off Bizerte enroute to home base.

In the latter part of the month, specifically starting on the 22nd and continuing on into the 24th, the Berteaux area was inundated by a continuing series of torrential thunder-

storms. The rains slackened off only to make way for extremely heavy hail. The rains flooded all the low ground including the dug-outs which many of our ground personnel called home. The roofs over their heads in most cases were nothing more than pup tents which did absolutely nothing to keep out the water. Everything that didn't sink floated away and good many of these humble abodes had to be evacuated as they filled up.

Frank Dean (380) tells a story, amusing now but most uncomfortable and depressing then, of spending the three day storm period with two other members of his ground crew, huddled within his aircraft, sheltered from the storm, except when the wind driven rain would penetrate the aircraft's seams, shivering and shaking in his wet clothing which he couldn't change because there was nothing dry and with nothing to eat. But his good humor prevailed, and as he wrote of the fourth morning, "the sun was shining, we were with friends and soon to be fed. There was laughter at our common plight and life was



lovely. It was the next thing to being home."

Operations had been extended in mid-month to Sardinia, and by the end of the month the group had flown 19 missions, sinking three freighters and damaging two, destroying 19 enemy aircraft, but losing five B-25s and their crews. Despite these

outstanding efforts, Axis records reviewed later indicated that their Air and Navy forces had managed to land some 2,000 troop reinforcements, 18,700 tons of various classes of supplies, 26 field guns and 46 tanks. The cornered enemy continued to fight on with desperation, but the end was in sight!

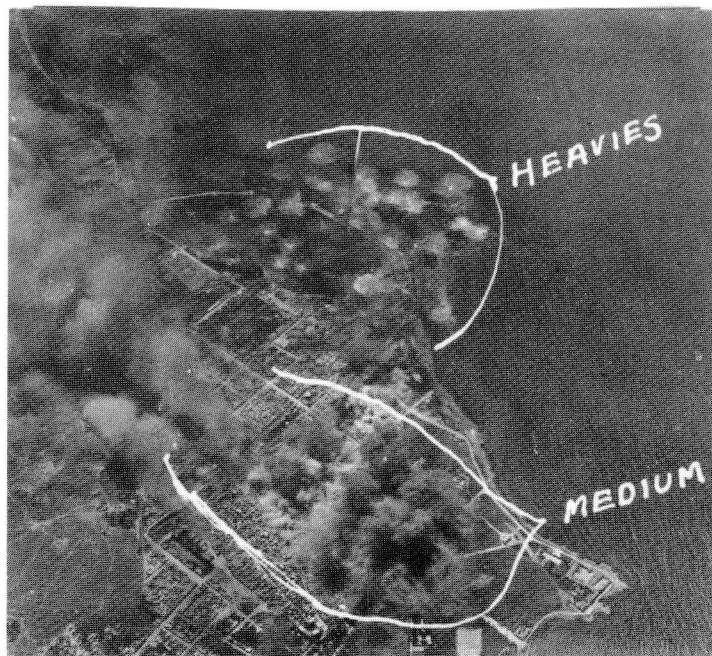
## MAY 1943

In early May the Axis forces had been squeezed into the Maiouan (Cape Bon) Peninsula with the British forces having occupied Tunis and the American forces taking possession of Bizerte. The 310th flew its last mission over a Tunisian target on 8 May driving the Axis troops from Hammamet further toward the Cape. On 12 May the German General Von Arnim, who had relieved Field Marshall Rommel in early March, surrendered his Afrika Corps to the British. The campaign in North Africa could finally be declared over when on the following day the Italian General Messe surrendered his forces.

The Allies now began preparation for the next step of the war - - - the invasion of Sicily. However the 310th was still operating from Berteaux, and the aircraft, when bomb

loaded, did not have the "legs" to reach the Italian mainland. So targets had to be restricted to Sicily and Sardinia. Major harbors, both in Sicily and southern Sardinia, were attacked in order to destroy their capability to provide, or accept, seaborne reinforcements of men and materiel. By now the Group was able to put up 36 aircraft on a single mission and a major coordinated effort, together with B-17's and B-26 aircraft flying out of Algeria, was directed against Palermo. Two days later, once again in coordination with B-17's and B-26's, Marsala was hit, and in a running fight with enemy interceptors we lost two aircraft, both of which crash landed in friendly territory and thus the crews were saved. Another two days later, on the 13th, Cagliari in Sardinia was the next target, the harbor facilities, railroad yards and surrounding industrial complex being severely damaged. And on the following day, two ships were sunk and one damaged in Olbia harbor, in Sardinia.

From mid-month onward the group's attention turned to the airfields and landing grounds in Sicily and Sardinia from which aircraft could be staged against the seaborne invasion, whenever it might come. Two of



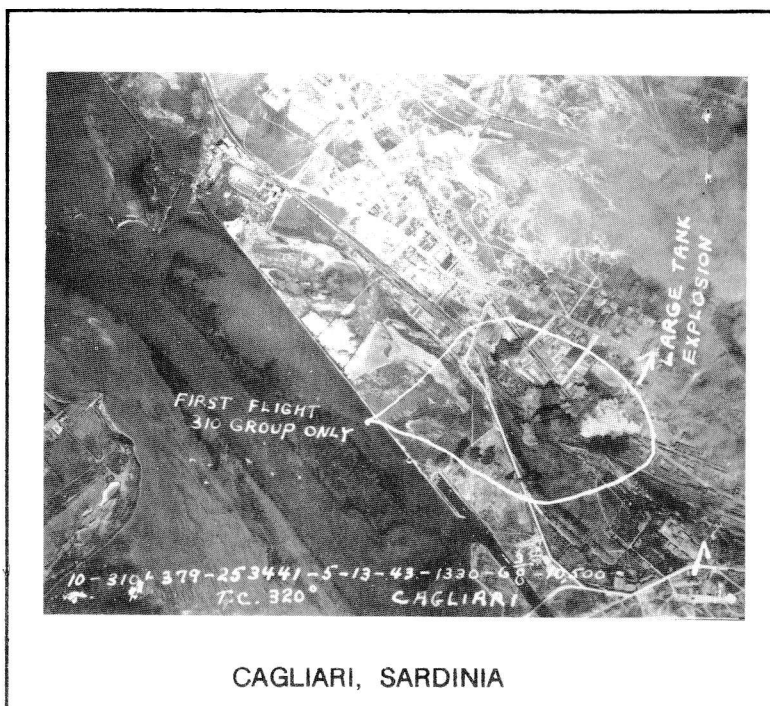
### A COMBINED ATTACK ON MARSALA

The B-17 bomb plot is the upper one, near the breakwater, and the Medium bomb plot is the lower one, on the land facilities



our aircraft were lost over Villacidro Airdrome, Sardinia on the 21st, and another went down in the Mediterranean off Gela, Sicily on the 26th.

occupied by enemy forces and had to be neutralized. Thus began the campaign against Pantelleria designed to force the Italian defenders either to evacuate or surrender.



CAGLIARI, SARDINIA

By the end of the month the 310th had flown 18 missions, losing six aircraft and three crews while inflicting serious damage on enemy shipping and installations and accounting for the destruction of 48 enemy aircraft in the air and on the ground.

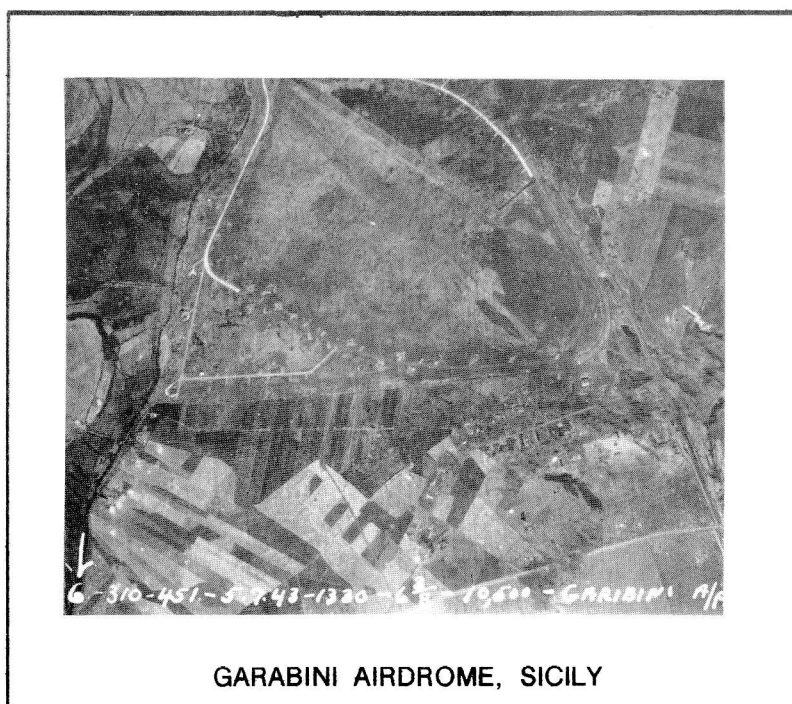
## JUNE 1943

Early in the month of June, the 5th and 6th to be exact, the 310th moved from Berteaux to Souk el Arba (Kings Cross), still in Algeria but 150 miles further to the east. This meant that not only could the Group strike further north in Sardinia, but it could also for the first time attack the Italian mainland. But first things had to come first.

In addition to the major islands of Sicily and Sardinia there were other smaller islands in the Mediterranean which were

Day after day the Group's aircraft continued to mount attacks on the island, from its new base. Searing heat coming off the Sahara to the south brought mid-day temperatures ranging up to 115 F. This so affected work on the ground that for a period of a week or so all daytime work, other than emergency, came to a halt. Flight operations, scheduled either in the early morning or late afternoon into dusk, continued unabated on the Islands massive gun positions. Finally, after a devastating raid on 11 June which blew up an ammunition dump, Pantelleria surrendered without a ground fight. So did Lampedusa, Linosa, and Limpione on the following day. Air power alone had done the job. With the neutralization of these islands, the sea lanes from

Gibraltar to Alexandria, in Egypt, were open and shipping freed, to a major degree, from the possibility of interception.



GARABINI AIRDROME, SICILY



Now that control over the sea lanes south of Sicily and Malta had been assured, the Group could afford to turn some of its attention to the mainland. On the 21st the marshalling yards at Salerno became our first target. The Group must have surprised the enemy because, miraculously, no flak or fighters appeared. We did, however, lose one aircraft which developed engine trouble, attempted to land as soon as friendly territory had been reached, and crash landed when its landing gear could not be lowered.

However, our concurrent responsibilities with respect to support of the upcoming invasion continued. Sciacca Airdrome, on the south coast of Sicily, and the Gerbini complex of landing fields were prime targets for repeated visits. Porto Aranci, in Sardinia, was hit twice within a week.

At the end of the month, the 310th had flown another 17 missions at the cost of 2 B-25's. At this point, six months into, '43, the Group had flown 116 missions, and had lost 28 aircraft and 42 crewmen to enemy action.

## JULY 1943

By July summer had really set in at King's Cross. However, despite intense heat, multitudes of flies and bugs, abundant dust and breezes which broiled rather than cooled, missions had to continue. The Group's efforts in the early days of the month were directed to neutralizing enemy airfields in Sicily and destroying as many enemy aircraft as possible in preparation for the Allied invasion of that beleaguered island.

No one knew, at least at Squadron level, when that actual event would occur, but from the intensity of our operations everyone knew it would come soon. On the 10th of July American and British forces stormed ashore from American and British naval vessels. It might be said, perhaps, in hindsight, that the ultimate death of the Axis had begun. For the next week or so the 310th continued its missions in support of the ground invasion, attacking airfields and lines of communication within the island.

In mid-month, the Group flew its last mission over Sicily and then extended its range of primary operations into mainland Italy. On the 17th Naples was hit by a massive raid of over 400 aircraft. Staging out of North Africa, first the B-24's, then B-17's, B-26's and finally B-25's delivered devastating blows to the railroad marshalling yards, engine repair shops and roundhouse, a nearby arsenal and ammunition plant. Then on the following day the Group put up its largest effort of the war. Scrounging qualified crew personnel from every available source (replacement depot, higher headquarters staffs, etc.) 72 aircraft took off for Ciampino Airdrome, south of Rome. The heavy bomb groups attacked targets within Rome or its immediate environs, while the mediums were assigned targets a little further away from the city, in a time coordinated raid in which 500 aircraft sorties were flown.

A point is to be made here. At this time, mid-July, replacement aircraft and crews which had been arriving steadily had pushed the group's resources to a point at which each squadron now had 18 - 20 aircraft and crews. However, there had been no concurrent increase in the number of ground maintenance personnel. Each airplane had its crew chief but only one or two other mechanics . . . the specialists (hydraulic, propeller, instrument), and sheet metal workers, armorers, etc.... all had to stretch themselves nearly to the limit to keep our aircraft combat ready. The aircrew personnel knew this and were unstinting on their praise of the men who, despite overwhelming pressure, managed to "keep 'em flying".

For the rest of the month, because aircraft did not have sufficient range to go north of Rome, targets on the Italian coast southward from Salerno were battered in what had been the Group's most intensive and concentrated period of operations since its first mission the preceding December. In a span of 19 Group missions, 706 sorties were flown. In addition to inflicting major damage to aircraft on the ground and to varied types of installations and facilities, we had accounted for 4 enemy aircraft in air battles. The Group lost a total of six aircraft . . . four aircraft and their crews were lost to enemy action, while 2 others had to be scrapped after crashing due to combat.

## AUGUST 1943

August brought another move of the Group's operational base. The Maouin peninsula east of Tunis, at the northern tip of which stood Cape Bon, had been cleared of Axis fighting forces in mid to late May. Now that the ground fighting in Sicily was winding down (the surrender occurred on 17 August) the time was propitious for taking advantage of the fact that missions to the Italian mainland could be shortened by some 300 round-trip miles. The Group could now reach to the heel of the Italian boot as well as north of Rome. So in the first few days of the month, the Group shifted eastward to Menzel Temime on the peninsula, and combat operations began again. Looking ahead to the time when Sicily would be taken, thus freeing out troops for assaulting the Italian mainland, the group's efforts were directed toward isolating the extreme south of Italy (the toe of the boot) by interdicting lines of communication (railways and highways and associated bridges) in order to cut off the potential for any northward reinforcing movement of Axis troops and

materiel. So with one exception, when marshalling yards near Rome again were hit, all of the Group's missions in the first half of the month were directed toward this effort.

It was during this period that the Group was favored by the appearance of Bob Hope and his troupe including Frances Langford, Carol Landis and Jerry Colonna. Typical of his thoughtfulness and concern for his "troops", Mr. Hope delayed his show from early morning until late afternoon so that 36 combat crews, who had been on the marshalling yard mission, could complete their mission and de-briefing and still have the opportunity to see the show. Thanks for the Memory, Bob!

With the evacuation and ultimate surrender of Sicily on 17 August, after 5 1/2 weeks of intensive ground warfare, the Group's attention focused on rail targets in the Naples/ Salerno area. One of these missions, that to the Benevento railroad yards, was particularly notable. Thirty-six of the Group's aircraft, while climbing from deck level over the Mediterranean to cross the Italian coast



**LUCKY . . . LUCKY . . . LUCKY**

15 July 1943 after Frag mission over Gerbini #1 Sicily.

Left to Right: Lt. Dougkas L. Fidler, Co-pilot; T/Sgt. T. Valentine, Radio gunner; S/Sgt. Rovielt R. Seckermest, Gunner; S/Sgt. J. Urrable, Photographer; Lt. Harry R. Logan Jr., Pilot; Lt. Kenneth M. Schlasinger, Bombardier; Lt. L. Gates, Navigator

just northeast of Naples, were intercepted by some 50 enemy aircraft (a mixed batch of ME-109's, FW-190's, Macchi-202's, and Reggiani - 2001's). A running fight ensued from the coast to the target and again on the return to the coast. Despite this opposition and the intense, accurate flak which inflicted damage on nearly all of our aircraft, the Group pressed home its bombing attack and did major damage to the yards. Three of our aircraft went down over the target, two landed back at base so severely shot up they were salvaged, and ground crews had to set to work immediately to patch up engines, fuselages, and control surfaces whose damage attested, mutely but strongly, to the intensity of the Axis defenses. For this mission, the Group later was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation, and all personnel then assigned could proudly wear, as a permanent part of their uniforms, the blue and gold bar symbolic of this award.

The month closed with a mission on the yards at Civitavecchia, a port north of mouth of the Tiber river west of Rome. Despite all the damage suffered at Benevento, we were able to put up 60 aircraft for this mission, just three days later. In 14 missions we lost four aircraft and crews over, or enroute home from, our targets and three others through crash landing back at base. The Group had now flown 172 combat missions.

## SEPTEMBER 1943

On 3 September British forces staging from Sicily across the Strait of Messina invaded the Italian mainland at Reggio di Calabria at the toecap of the boot.. Meanwhile the 310th's aircraft were concentrating intensely on targets, primarily airfields and bridges just north of Naples on the Benevento-Caserta-Capua axis. Grazziness and Capua airfields were hit by 54 plane raids and on successive days the three railway bridge complex in the vicinity of Trebisacce was almost totally destroyed in the face of intense fighter and flak opposition. Three of our aircraft were downed and their crews lost. One of those lost was that of Major Jimmy Walker, C.O. 428th Squadron. Major Elmer Epperson was appointed to replace him,

In these few days momentous events

occurred. On the eighth Italy surrendered, and immediately the German forces took over the whole of the country. Then on the ninth the United States Fifth Army joined by the British X Corps invaded the mainland at Salerno. The ground fighting was intense, each attack was met by a counterattack, and each counter attack by another attack. The group's mission now was to isolate the battlefield. One particularly productive mission on a highway junction at Castelnuovo helped trap hundreds of enemy trucks, which later were destroyed piecemeal by the Allied Tactical Air Force.

However, the German forces continued to press their counter attacks with such great vehemence to the extent that on the fourteenth the message was issued that the ground situation was critical with pressure being exerted on our forces from all side. The 310th Group's response was immediate attacks on the town of Battipaglia, some 25 km. south of Salerno. Morning and afternoon missions were flown, and while our morning formation was approaching the initial point for the start of its bomb run, it was passed by an enemy formation of JU-88's, escorted by ME-109's, going in the opposite direction to attack Allied shipping in the Gulf of Salerno. In both missions, the bombing attacks were pressed home in the face of intense flak concentrations and severe damage was inflicted on ground targets including an ammunition dump which was blown sky-high.

The air support of our ground troops continued unabated with one or two major missions each day. (Some crews had flown for 11 straight days on targets ranging from below Salerno northward to Rome.) Their work, together with the rest of the Allied Air Forces, obviously had great impact on the German Defenses, because by the 20 Sept. the American ground forces, from their beachhead at Salerno, and the British forces coming from the south, had linked up at Eboli. On the 23rd the American forces had taken Battipaglia. Although bad weather kept the Group from flying from the 26th to the 29th, the two prongs of the ground attack were able to turn their attention to the move toward Naples, occupying Castellammare and Pompeii on the 29th. Naples itself fell on 1 October 1943.

## WAR DEPARTMENT

General Orders,  
No. 75

Washington 25, D.C., 18 September 1944

As authorized by Executive Order no. 9306 (Sec I, Bull. 22, WD, 1943), superceeding Executive Order No. 9075 (sec. III, Bull. 11, WD, 1943), citations the following unit in General Orders, No. 100, Headquarters 12th Air Force. July 20 1944, as approved by the Commanding General, North African Theater of Operations, is confirmed under the provisions of Sec IV, Circular NO. 333, War Department, 1943, in the name of the President of The United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction. The citation reads as follows:

Par. 5: The 310th Bombardment Group (M) is cited for outstanding performance in action against the enemy in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations on 27 August 1943. Following the Allied conquest of Sicily, the major efforts of the Allied Air Forces in this theater were directed toward the destruction of enemy supply, communication and transportation facilities on the Italian mainland in preparation for the invasion of Italy. Priority targets were the large marshalling yards of the principal cities and the 310th Bombardment Group was assigned the task of smashing the heavily-defended rail yards at Benevento, Key transportation Center of the Naples - Salerno Foggia area. With their crews painstakingly briefed, thirty-six B-25's prepared and serviced so perfectly that none were forced to return early, took off from Memsel Temime, Tunisia, on 27 August 1943, instructed to complete the mission at all costs. The formation made landfall north of Naples and immediately were intercepted by forty to fifty enemy fighters which made desperate attempts to turn the bombers off course, continuing their attacks throughout the approach to Benevento, during the entire bomb run and even after the B-25's had left the target area. Distinguishing themselves through extraordinary heroism and unswerving resolution, in the face of intense anti-aircraft fire and fighter attacks so persistent that three bombers were shot down and two others so heavily damaged that they were forced to crash land in Sicily, the combat crews of the 310th Group destroyed eighteen of the attacking planes and bombed the marshalling yards with devastating effect. Restrained from taking evasive action by their resolve to maintain the compact formation required for maximum bombing accuracy, all pilots held true to course despite the terrific opposition and even though both engines of one of the bombers were on fire and the entire aircraft was enveloped in flames, the pilot held his plane in a controlled glide until the bombardier had released his bombs on the target from an altitude of 1,500 feet. The marshalling yards, containing a great amount of rolling stock, were completely destroyed, three main rail lines were cut, high fires were started and the locomotive shops were rendered useless. The gallantry and combat proficiency exhibited by the personnel of the 310th Bombardment Group in striking this decisive blow, which hastened the collapse of the enemy in southern Italy, have reflected highest credit on their organization and the Military Service of the United States.

By order of The Secretary of War:

G.C. MARSHALL,  
*Chief of Staff*

Official:

ROBERT H. DUNLOP  
*Brigadier General*  
*Acting The Adjutant General*





BATTIPAGLIA, ITALY  
During Battle of Salerno Beachhead

In support of this effort, the Group had flown 22 missions but at the cost of seven aircraft and six crews. One of these missions was to Magnano on the 25th. It marked the time first time that the aircraft had carried a 4 x 1,000 lb. bomb load.

# OCTOBER 1943

October brought different problems. With Naples taken our job was to make the northward withdrawal of German troops, toward Rome from Naples and Benevento, as difficult as possible. But continuing rains, high winds and flood waters had rendered the field at Menzel Temime unuseable. . . 30% of the field was under water a foot deep. So between the 12th and the 15th, the Group, with its aircraft and personnel moved westward to Oudna, Tunsia (some 20km. from the capital city of Tunis) where it was located with two B-17 groups.

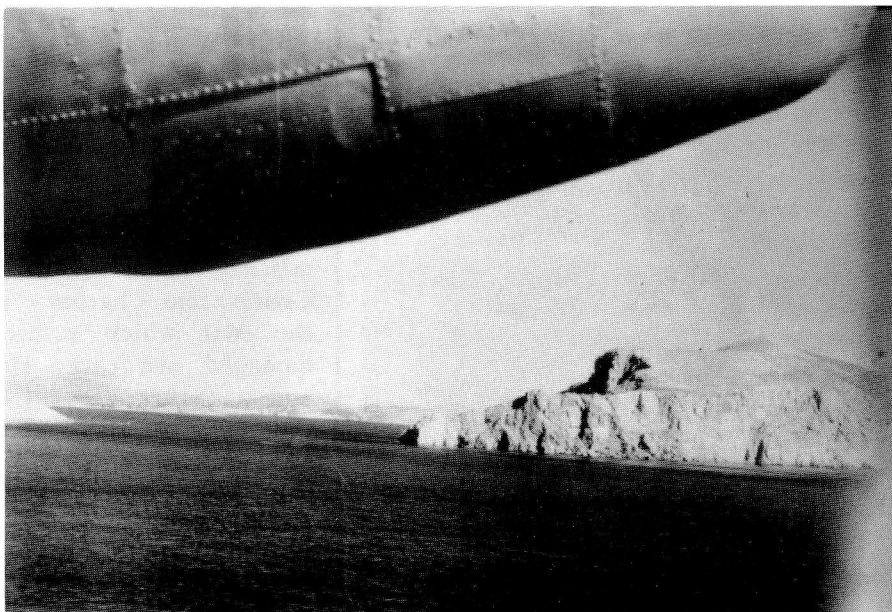
The same weather which had forced the move from Menzel Temime to Oudna also was affecting the Italian mainland. On many days no missions could be flown because of cloud cover over desirable targets. One of the few missions the Group was able to mount during the last half of the month introduced a new

enemy threat . . ME-109's and FW-190's equipped with stand-off air-to-air rockets fired from 600 to 1,000 yards, none of which managed to impact on our aircraft. However, other than the last mission of the month, to Civitavecchio harbor on the 31st which severely damaged one cargo ship and a tanker as well as the port railroad yards and other installations, the few missions the Group could fly were not overly productive. During the month 2 missions were flown at a cost of 2 aircraft and their crews. The final mission to Civitavecchia was the last of the 184 missions that

the Group had flown from North Africa. In fact, for three of the squadrons (380, 381, 428) it marked the last mission for the year 1943.

## NOVEMBER 1943

November brought with it the move of the 389th Squadron to Gambut in Lybia, about 40 miles west of Tobruk; from there, newly equipped with B-25G's (fixed 75 mm cannon firing from the nose of the aircraft), they flew sea sweeps in and around the Dodecanese Islands (Kos, Leros, Samoe, etc.) which had been Italian garrisoned until the British captured them on 8 September. But the British, in their turn, had been ousted by German forces by September 22. The 379th mission, usually flown in conjunction with RAF Beaufighters, was to interdict all shipping, both naval and commercial, that they could find in order to isolate the German island garrison. Day after day a small flight, usually 3 or 4 B-25s and a couple of Beaufighters, swept the sea. On most days they saw nothing, and except for some scattered flak when too close to one of the islands, the enemy appeared to be non existant. On the few occasions when shipping was intercepted, the 75mm shell fire proved



PORTOLAGO BAY  
The Island of Leros in the Dodecanese

85% of the missions, no shells, no bombs were dropped. The tedium was dissipated on those few days when some worthwhile targets were sighted. In retrospect it seems an exercise in futility to have flown 25 missions (albeit 3-4 aircraft were involved in each) to have produced such scanty results. 2 100-ton barges and 9 small craft sunk and 3 other craft of various sizes damaged, in return for 193 rounds of 75mm cannon shells expended. Although no aircraft were lost, a

be effective. Over the course of the month 58 shells were fired on 14 vessels. A destroyer and 2 E-boats were claimed as probably sunk, and another destroyer suffered medium damage. However the group did not lose an aircraft, and for the first month since December 1942, not a single bomb was dropped.

Meanwhile, the rest of the group was deployed at Oudna and at Philipville on the north coast of Algeria awaiting orders. No one knew what those orders would entail, or where those orders would take the 310th, but everyone knew that somehow, someday, something would happen. In the best tradition of the U.S. Military everyone took advantage of the stand down to rest and recuperate from the strenuous protracted effort that had been mounted since the preceding December.

## DECEMBER 1943

Training continued at Philipville for the 380th, 381st, and 428th Squadrons while the 379th was operating from Gambut in Lybia. A almost daily pattern of sea sweeps over the Aegean Sea and the Dodecanese Islands continued. December brought no change in the pattern established in November. On

co-pilot was killed and 4 other crewmen were wounded by enemy gun fire.

Back at Philipville, North Africa, the move to Corsica began. The ground echelon of men, vehicles and equipment shipped from Bizerte, while the advanced echelon proceeded by C-47's to Ghisonoccia, Corsica where they put down on the ninth, on a former German fighter field. Shortly before Christmas began the project to widen and lengthen the landing strip, a project which had been held up by the seemingly incessant rain that had been coming down ever since the echelon's arrival. It had caused mud slides on the only road over which material and equipment could move. The meager personnel sources available to do the job of getting ready to accept the Group's aircraft as soon as possible were finally augmented on the 30th with the arrival of approximately 300 men of the ground echelon and their vehicles. Thus 1943 came to its end.

The Group had flown a total of 223 missions, losing 44 aircraft and 35 combat crews, some of whom became POW's, to enemy action. The Axis forces knew well that the 310th Bomb group was around and about in the Mediterranean Theater of Operation



**GHISONACCIA GARE, CORSICA**  
These buildings were occupied by the 310th Bomb Group

## JANUARY 1944

When the year began the Group was well and truly dispersed. The 379th Squadron (Wetzel's Weasels) was the only one of the four engaged in operations. They were still flying "G's" out of Gambut in Libya carrying on their missions of harassing the enemy forces in the eastern Mediterranean, and the Dodecanese. Meanwhile, the other Squadrons were continuing the deployment begun in December 1943, which finally moved the Group out of North Africa into Corsica. Ground personnel assisted Army Engineers in preparing facilities to receive the unit's aircraft at Ghisonaccia which would become the home of the 310th for well over a year. This location, only about 85 miles from the coast of Italy, reduced considerably the distance that had to be flown to get to enemy targets in Italy and France, and thus another stage in the Group's combat history was about to begin.

At this time the Group had become part of the Allied Air Forces Coastal Command, and in that role, had been tasked with the interdiction of enemy shipping and harbors in the Tyrrhenian and the Ligurian seas. The first 12 of the Group's aircraft to fly in from North Africa arrived at Ghisonaccia on 10 January, and then on 13 January the Group's

first mission from Corsica, a nonproductive (nothing sighted, nothing attacked) sea sweep along the southern coast of France, was mounted. On 14 January another sweep of the same area set fire to a tanker off Cannes. The Group was now flying 3 to 4 missions per day (usually 6 aircraft) on various targets, both shipping and ports, in an intense effort. The purpose of which became clearer when, on 22 January, Allied ground forces made their landings at Nettuno and Anzio, leap frogging the German forces stubbornly defending Monte Cassino against Allied forces who were inching steadily northward after their September 1943 landings at Salerno.

Day after day the three squadrons (the 379th was still busily engaged in the Eastern Mediterranean) continued their interdiction efforts over the Tyrrhenian and Ligurian Seas. This pattern continued through the remainder of the month. Operating in two separate and distinct areas, the group flew a total of 48 missions (231 sorties) sinking 15 assorted vessels and shooting down two and damaging one enemy aircraft, while suffering the loss of only one of its own planes which crash landed at Ghisonaccia on returning from a sea sweep. Some interesting anecdotal material can be gleaned from individual diary entries made during the month. On 6 January 1944 a huge



supply of G.I. shoes arrived, and some individuals were able to obtain replacements for boots which had done daily duty since their owners had left the United States in the fall of 1942. On 11 January, wonder of wonders, the first issue of beer occurred. . . three throwaway bottles. (This is not to say that this is the first beer that had been quaffed since leaving the States. . . U.S. Airmen are more self-reliant than that . . but the first to come through the P.X). Then on 29 January the first replacement ground personnel since the Group left the United States arrived much to the joy of the overworked ground crewmen. And then on 30 January the Group's fuel dump burned with the loss of several hundred barrels of aviation gasoline, along with a tanker truck, a jeep and other pieces of equipment which were incinerated by the intense flames.

## FEBRUARY 1944

The 379th Squadron was still at Gambut, Libya harassing shipping in the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea (in and around the German occupied Greek islands of the Dodecanese). On 1 February, their first mission of the month, the Squadron lost 2 out of 4 planes which had been sent on a sea



PORTO SAN STEPHANO, ITALY  
Another port denied the Axis



PORTO ERCOLA, ITALY  
"E" boats evasive action not enough.

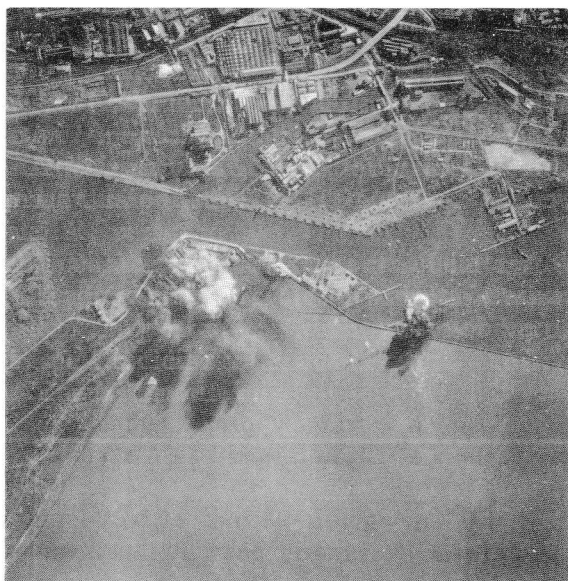
sweep near the island of Leros (Note: proportionately, it was the greatest loss the group had suffered since losing 3 out of 6 on a sea sweep in the Mediterranean on 23 February 1943). The next greatest percentage loss was 5 out of 18 over Gabes, Tunisia on 8 February 1943 ). The Squadron flew 15 more sea sweeps during the month. While most of those fell into the category of "No shipping sighted, all aircraft returned to base safely", there obviously had to have been action on some of them. Sketchy records indicate that, during this period, the Squadron had sunk a 300 ton freighter and 4 other vessels of various configurations before flying its final mission from Gambut on 22 February after which they began moving westward to rejoin the remainder of the Group in Corsica.

There three other Squadrons had been actively making life miserable for the enemy. The harbor and associated port facilities at San Stefano and its subsidiary port of Porto Ercole on the Italian mainland were hit by a total of 14 separate missions, some of which were B-25G cannon missions, during February. The port of Livorno (Leghorn) also came in for a good deal of concentrated attention, being visited on 7 occasions by flights of 18 aircraft.



The Group's missions out of Corsica were varied. Normal bombing missions over the ground targets were carried out using B-25C and D aircraft. In addition to the routine sea sweeps which were normally flown by 6 to 8

any and all shipping, regardless of size or type, which could conceivably support the German ground forces. For a period of days (15 through 19, when the German drive was blunted and then repelled) the Group mounted a total of 20 separate missions (some 205 individual sorties).



LEGHORN HARBOR UNDER ATTACK

cannon firing B-25G and H models, these beauties were also flying anti-submarine patrol and even on some of bombing missions in order to enhance the Group's attacking strength. On these missions, the G and H aircraft, because they had no facility for bombing from the nose of the aircraft, flew as "wing" on their element or flight leader. The aircraft had been rigged so that the pilot aircraft commander could open the bomb bay doors from his position and toggle his bomb load when his leader made his drop.

The ground situation at the Anzio-Nettuno beach-head had become desperate with the German forces launching repeated heavy attacks, from inland positions, on Allied troops who had their back to the sea. The Group's efforts were focused on destroying, damaging, or at least diverting

It is also interesting to note that, about this time, two concepts governing the employment of aircrew personnel were changed. The first, and by far most important to the individual air crewman, was that the completion of 50 combat missions no longer marked the end of a combat tour and an automatic ticket for a return trip to the United States. Now, it was the responsibility of the Squadron Flight Surgeon to determine whether the individual could continue to fly combat operations or should be relieved of combat duty. The second was more important from an operational standpoint. Up to this time, the concept of crew integrity had prevailed right from the Group's departure from Columbia. Usually one crew (pilots, navigator/ bombardier and gunners) flew together in the same plane for all of their missions. The only routine exception was when the co-pilot was up-graded to replace a departed aircraft commander, and took over what would become his own crew and aircraft. Now, the surge of operational activity, each Squadron putting up aircraft for 3 or 4 missions a day,



HELP ME OUTTA HERE  
More of that good old Mediterranean mud

demanding more flexibility in crew and aircraft utilization. Consequently it was not unusual for the crew members to have to introduce themselves to each other either at briefing or at the plane prior to takeoff.

During the last few days of the month, heavy rains rendered the airfield so useless because of the mud in and around the hardstands and taxiways, that the 379th Squadron aircraft, which were coming from Gambut to rejoin the group, had to over-fly the base and land at Bastia. They would remain there until conditions at Ghisonaccia permitted landing there.

During February the Group had mounted 59 missions, dropped 1,650 tons of bombs, fired 1,100 75mm shells and 102,000 rounds of 50 cal. They had lost 3 planes and crews.

## MARCH 1944

The ground war in Italy had come almost to a stop along the line from Monte Cassino to Anzio, where our forces had landed in the latter part of January. While our sister B-25 Groups, the 321st and 340th, were operating from Italy essentially in a close support role, the 310th continued its operations almost exclusively against enemy shipping and harbors. During the early part of the month, our concentration was on targets north of Rome so as to interrupt to the greatest degree possible the flow of men and materiel southward to the Monte Cassino - Anzio battlefield. Just as in the previous month, the harbors of San Stefano, Livorno, Telemone and Piombino were battered continually despite weather and cloud conditions, 9/10 to 10/10 coverage, which made bombing most difficult. Intense flak protecting these harbors accounted for three of our aircraft, but could not prevent major damage to assorted ground installations, shipping and naval vessels.

By this time the 379th airplanes and flight crews which had been marooned at Bastia had been able to land at Ghisonaccia where they joined the ground elements of the Squadron which had been arriving in increments from their sojourn in Libya. Finally, after a hiatus of over four months from the end of the preceding October, the Group had all four of

its component Squadrons operating from one location.

On 15 March the Group, which had had several different parents since its creation two years before, now was assigned as a component of the 57th Bomb Wing (Medium) to join the 321st and 340th Groups which were still operating from bases on the Italian mainland. On 9 March, Operation "STRANGLE", designed to create and maintain major blockages in the Italian railway system, began. Everything associated with rail movement on the line southward from Leghorn to Rome became our targets. Rolling stock, marshalling yards and repair facilities, bridges, tunnels and viaducts, were destroyed or damaged. This intense effort was abated, intermittently, in order to mount an occasional extremely productive mission to the harbors at Leghorn and San Stefano.

It was during this period, 21 to 24 March, that Mount Vesuvius, near Pompeii on the Italian peninsula, convulsed in a gigantic, volcanic eruption which wiped out most of the 340th Group's planes on the ground. Because of smoke, ash, lava, flying cinders, etc. associated with the eruption, the aircrews were unable to get to their aircraft to fly them out of danger. As a result the 340th was reduced to a non-operational status for several days until they could be re-equipped at their new base at Guado, near Paestum. As an incidental note, one of the aircraft assigned to the 381st Squadron at Westover as part of its original complement of aircraft, was at Pompeii when the eruption occurred and came to an untimely end.

For the month of March the group flew 698 sorties in 27 separate missions destroying almost 50 assorted naval craft, plus railroad rolling stock while doing major damage to bridges and highways. We paid a price for these achievements . . . three aircraft and their crews downed over the target.

## APRIL 1944

From the beginning of the month our support of Operation "STRANGLE" had moved a little further inland as targets along the railway line from Florence through Siena, Chiusi and Orvieto to Rome came in for

attention in addition to the strikes which were mounted against the port of Leghorn and its associated facilities.

Historical records indicate that, on one day in five, weather precluded any operations at all. On some other days the cloud cover was such that targets were obscured and the aircraft had to return to base with their bomb loads intact. Despite these conditions, however, the group pressed on relentlessly against railway lines of communications. A sampling of mission reports during this period, shows for example: "Eighteen R.R. cars and the choke point N. of RR yards obliterated", "One end of bridge observed to be down", "... 325 to 350 items of rolling stock hit,"... "large fires started",... "many hits on buildings adjacent to RR tracks" ... "Bomb pattern concentrated on N. end of bridge and approach, and 200 yards of track destroyed", etc. However, although railway bridges seemed easy to damage, they proved extremely difficult to destroy and, consequently, individual bridges which were highly important from the point of view of their strategic positioning along the railway line, had to be attacked repeatedly. The bridge at Ficulle, between Orvieto and Chiusi, was a case in point. Since we couldn't vary our bombing tactics, because of terrain and other conditions, it meant that the German flak gunners were ready and mission reports bear that out.

Although all aircraft returned safely from every mission, many came back holed; 7 out of 36 on one mission; 12 of 34 on another; 15 of 36 on still another, and had to be patched up and repaired by devoted ground personnel.

On the other hand fighter aircraft posed no serious opposition.

During the month, Headquarters of the 57th Wing was deployed out of Italy to Corsica and took station near us at Ghisonaccia. The 340th Group, now wholly restored from its disaster at Pompeii, moved from the mainland to Alesani, and the 321st was in the

process of its move, which would be completed in early May, to Solenzara. The 57th Bomb Wing, in its entirety, was now concentrated in Corsica.

Because of the weather conditions which the Group had encountered, only 23 missions were flown. Even at that April 1944 should be counted as one of the group's more productive months, as it contributed significantly to the blocking, under Operation STRANGLE, of practically all the through rail systems leading into Rome from the north.

A note of interest for heraldry buffs . . . The Group's airplanes now wore horizontal yellow stripes on each vertical stabilizer above the aircraft's serial number.



GREEN LIGHT ??

310th Control tower Ghisonaccia, Corsica

## MAY 1944

For the first ten days the Group's operations were focused on railway bridges between Chiusi and Orvieto. Ficulle was visited on successive days and Orvieto twice in a week with good to excellent results. The bridges and their approaches were severely damaged. Although the bridges still hadn't been dropped, major delays in resupply were brought about by the necessity for the German forces to complete repairs so that traffic could move.



On 11 May, the Allied Ground Forces on the Italian mainland began their belated spring offensive after having been stalled since mid-March on the Cassino-Anzio line. The goal of Operation "DIADEM" was, in basic

three of them fell out of their cradle. One of the armorers managed to capture two of them but the third hit the ground and detonated, cutting down six personnel and setting the aircraft ablaze. Two heroic medics from the



**A MISSION BEGINS**  
Aircraft lined up ready to go

381st., Corporal Charlie Parker and Private John Palsma drove to the scene, ignoring the fact that everyone else in the immediate neighborhood seemed to be heading away from the aircraft as fast as their legs would bear them. Parker and Palsma grabbed a stretcher and set about evacuating the first casualty they spotted. While moving at full speed back to their ambulance, the airplane, the four 1,000 lb. bombs and the load of frags all blew up in a terrible blast that threw both aircraft engines a half mile down the taxiway, and demolished the ambulance, which was

terms, to achieve a breakthrough along this line, to advance on and capture Rome, and then continue on up the peninsula. In support of this operation, the 310th was to continue its mission of interdicting the enemy's lines of communication, but now highways and other roads were added to the inventory of railway targets.

50 yards away from the explosion. It dug a huge crater in the ground and wrecked the other two aircraft which were on either side. Miraculously, Parker and Palsma were merely bowled over by the blast. Each survived to earn the Soldier's Medal for heroism. The Group lost more aircraft (three) in this accident than it did in the whole month of May (1) to enemy action.

The Group's efforts seemed, at this time, to intensify. Day after day, now that the weather was more benign, at least one and sometimes two or three 36 plane missions were flown, a schedule made easier by the fact that the missions were no longer than two to two and a half hours, and flak and fighter opposition was not as intense. However, the continuous pressure on ground crews to turn aircraft around "in twenty minutes" ultimately had its effect. On 23 May 1944, when an armament crew was downloading a load of fragmentation bomb clusters from a fully-fueled 379th aircraft, as a prelude to uploading four 1,000 pound bombs, due to a change of mission, the inevitable catastrophe occurred. While the 1,000 lb. bombs were lying fully fused, on their dolly, underneath the aircraft, the banding around a cluster of frags broke loose and

The German Luftwaffe, even though putting up only a token opposition to our bombers on their flights, were not to be counted out. On the night of 12 May they hit the RAF base at Poretta, north of Ghisonaccia, destroying or damaging 25 Spitfires and several Beaufighters which had performed so well as our mission escorts for so many months. Early the next morning, the 340th Group, still licking its wounds from the damage sustained when Vesuvius went into its frenzy, was bombed at its base at Alesani. The Group sustained severe losses, both in aircraft and personnel.

Monte Cassino finally had fallen (18 May) to Allied forces, and the road to Rome was open! It was essential that German resupply efforts, both men and materiel, be



intercepted and interrupted to a maximum degree so as to diminish the ability of the German Wehrmacht to impede advances of the U.S. Forces. In the ten days from 22 May through 31 May, 21 separate missions, totalling 355 sorties, were flown on railway and road bridges and viaducts to the north of Rome. By this time the Wehrmacht was falling back toward Rome, and on the last two missions of the month, 31 May, almost 8,000 frag bombs were dropped, with devastating effect, on two troop concentration areas immediately to the south of the Eternal City.

During the month all B-25G and H aircraft had been phased out of the several squadrons and now the Group's aircraft complement comprised only C's, D's, and J's. The silver unpainted J's which had come into the squadrons in late April had to be covered when on the ground, by camouflage netting, much to distress of ground personnel who would rather have seen them painted like the rest of the aircraft even if they had to do the job themselves.

The Group was honored late in the Month by a visit from General "Hap" Arnold, Commander in Chief Army Air Forces, and General Ira Eaker, Commander of all Army Air Forces in the Mediterranean Theater of Operation who presided jointly over an awards ceremony

## **JUNE 1944**

The Allied Ground Forces continued their push northward to Rome, and on 4 June General Mark Clark's 5th Army made it's triumphal entry into the Eternal City. The air support of the ground mission continued unabated. Then on 6 June Allied Forces under General Dwight D. Eisenhower invaded the European continent, at the northwest coast of France. This made it imperative that we keep the German forces in Italy pinned down to the greatest possible degree in order to preclude their being used to reinforce German units in France.

At just about this time there was another slight change in the group's allocation of resources to its air missions . . . to the extent practicable all aircraft on a single mission would come from one squadron. With two or

three missions being flown every day, it made sense to concentrate mission preparation efforts such as refueling, rearming, bomb loading, etc. in smaller areas on the airdrome.

Our targets continued to be bridges, bridges, bridges and then other bridges. With few exceptions these lay across the Italian peninsula below the Leghorn - Florence - Rimini line. The enemy countered our increased efforts with an increase in the intensity of its own defensive counter efforts. The further northward they moved, the more concentrated their defenses became. There was, however, an anomaly. On many of the missions there was no fighter interception, and the anti-aircraft fire from the ground was reported to be scant to moderate. Then there were the missions with flak being reported as intense to very intense. And on these days, the Group had to pay the price.

A torrential rain which flooded the airfield at Ghisonaccia forced the Group to stand down from operations for five days in mid-month, but then our major efforts continued on to the end of the month.

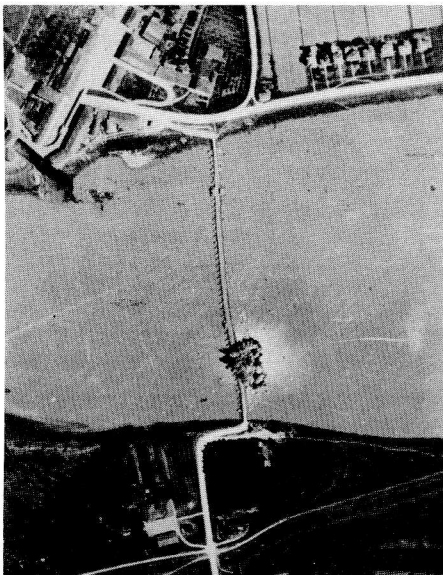
The only exception to the concentration on bridges came when the harbor at Leghorn was attacked in an attempt to close the harbor entrance by sinking the vessels which were located in close proximity to it. The mission was successful, with four vessels of assorted sizes sunk at the harbor entrance, and other small vessels further inshore were also sunk. Three aircraft and two crews paid the ultimate price for the mission.

For the month, in a total of 52 missions which either destroyed or damaged 12 major railway bridges, the group lost 5 aircraft at, or while coming off the target, and 5 others which, although they returned to base, were damaged beyond repair. Thirty-eight other aircraft also suffered some damage from flak.

## **JULY 1944**

OPERATION "DIADEM", now in its second stage, continued with our emphasis turning even further north. Rail targets (bridges, tunnels, rolling stock) were hit all through the Po River valley. It was during this period that the 310th flew it's 500th mission, the most

#### POLISELLA PONTOON BRIDGE ACROSS THE PO RIVER



Before the bombing



After the bombing

most at this time of any Bomb group in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. It was a source of great pride and satisfaction to everyone, whether oldtimers or newcomers, who had had any hand in this splendid achievement. From mid-month onward the Group joined operation "MALLORY MAJOR" whose purpose was the complete destruction of all railroad and highway bridges, including temporary pontoon bridges, spanning the Po River, as it made its way to the Adriatic Sea south of the arc from Cremona-Mantua-Ferrara. Later intelligence assessments showed that every bridge which had been targeted during "MALLORY MAJOR" had been destroyed or severely damaged. The effect of this strangulation of supply and communication routes became quite evident as Leghorn fell on 19th, and within a few days more, the Fifth Army was inching toward the outskirts of Pisa in its push northward to keep the pressure on the German forces.

One of the by-products of this compression of Germans was an even greater intensification of anti-aircraft fire as their artillery pieces became more concentrated geographically. Although the Group suffered no losses during the month's 31 missions, many of our aircraft, which by now were almost exclusively "J's", suffered damage.

#### AUGUST 1944

Suddenly the direction of the thrust of the group's mission turned dramatically from northeast to northwest into France. In fact of the 61 missions the Group was to mount in August, 52 were flown against targets in the south of that country.

In preparation for the Allied amphibious invasion of Southern France.(initially known as operation "ANVIL" and later as Operation DRAGOON"), the Group's aircrews during the first ten days of the month flew interdiction missions against the type of targets with which over the preceding four months they had become quite familiar . . whether in Italy or now in the Rhone Valley of France, railway bridges, marshalling yards, rolling stock, etc. were much the same. From about the 10th of the month, attention was focused on more direct preparation for the up-coming invasion . . a dual mission to neutralize the enemy's main coastal defenses ( including radar sites ) and through prolonged harassment of repeated bombing raids designed to drastically reduce the capability of enemy troops to successfully oppose our landing forces.

When the invasion finally did take place on 15 August, it was most successful and our



#### INVASION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE 7 AUGUST 1944

Note the Landing Craft on the beach, and alongside the LST's

troops immediately pushed inland. The group plastered targets to the northward up the Rhone Valley accomplishing a two-fold effect, not only hampering the withdrawal of German forces toward inland France, but also severing communications and cutting off reinforcements of personnel and materiel. Within two weeks, our invading forces had progressed beyond the B-25's normal operational radius

so the group's attention now was returned to the targets in Italy which had been left relatively untouched for almost a month.

At this point in time, British forces which had been progressing up the Adriatic Coast breached the German's Gothic Line at its easternmost point on the Adriatic south of Rimini. Our ground forces were continuing

their pressure on the western flank of the line near Pisa.

The second generation of our combat crews, those who had arrived in the fall and winter of 1943 to replace the "originals", now, in their turn, were finishing up their combat tours and were being rotated back to the United States. Not so for the rest of the personnel, many of whom had left the U.S. in September 1942 with the Advance Echelon and were about to complete their second year of overseas duty without a break.

In flying 61 missions during the month, losing only two crews despite intense flak opposition, the Group had now flown a total of 582 since its memorable first mission of 2 December 1942 over Gabes in Tunisia.

## SEPTEMBER 1944

In returning to its assaults on targets on the Italian mainland, the Group missions were flown in support of the U.S. Ground Forces push northward. The first step of that push at this point in the campaign was to help them to get through the Gothic Line in the Apennines and ultimately, having done that, to move speedily up the peninsula across the more favorable terrain of the valley of the Po River. Pisa fell to them on the second day of the month.

The Group's targets at this stage became somewhat more diversified. Gun positions, supply and ammunition dumps, troop concentrations were added to the usual menu of rail and highway bridges. Repeated missions were directed at such targets in the Lombardy Plain, beyond the northeastern shoulder of the Appennine Range, along and northeast of the Piacenza-Parma-Bologna-Rimini line. This effort was intense, two and sometimes three missions a day on specific targets. As an example, the heavy gun and troop concentrations in and around the port of Rimini were the targets, on 17 and 18 September. Six separate missions involving 106 aircraft dropped almost 10,000 twenty pound anti-personnel (frag) bombs, as well as another 200 tons of heavier munitions. These attacks played a significant role in the fall of

the city to British forces on 22 September. The operations, during the month brought the Group's total missions to 629, and cost us 3 aircraft and crews.

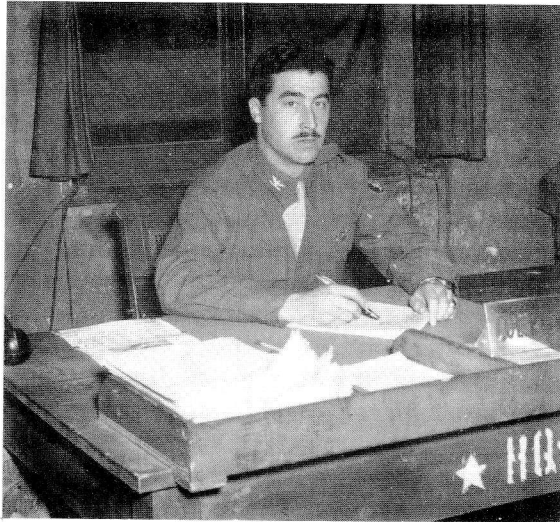
The third generation of combat crews now were arriving to replace the second generation who were being rotated homeward. Additional ground personnel were filtering in and, joy of joys, there were mechanics and armament replacements among them.

Toward the end of the month, there occurred an event which, according to the degree of one's personal involvement, was somewhat humorous to many but painful and agonizing to a few. Somehow or other, slaked lime got into the pancakes at the 379th Squadron's Officers Mess. Great was the use of all available latrines and while a few individuals had to be hospitalized for a short time, there were no fatalities and life at Ghisonaccia proceeded.

## OCTOBER 1944

The pattern of September's attacks continued uninterrupted except by weather forced stand downs for days at a time. When missions could be flown, emphasis was placed on rail communications from the north into Italy from the Brenner Pass which when reaching the Lombardy Plain funneled northwest linking major cities of great historical interest. More importantly, however, this linkage provided the vital supply route which armed, fueled and fed the withdrawing German forces. This withdrawal had now reached the stage at which it was considered timely, not only from the operational but also from a humane aspect to "bomb" major areas with leaflets. These tracts, urging capitulation, fluttered down over Bologna, Ravenna, Ferrara and Faenza, among other population centers and while there was no evident diminution of the Wehrmacht's will to carry on fighting, the leaflets did serve to hearten the Italian Resistance who now might hope for at least the beginning of the end. However, two weeks of atrocious weather set in and the ground attack came to a halt, mired in the mud below Bologna and, with that, hopes for an early end to the war in Italy sank in





**COLONEL PETER H. REMINGTON**  
310th Commanding Officer  
October 1944 September 1945

Col. Peter H. Remington graduated from Princeton University R.O.T.C. in 1934. and was commissioned in the Field Artillery Reserve. After transferring to the Army Air Corps and completion of pilot training in October 1935, he served in various pilot and squadron duties at Mitchell Field, NY until 1939.. from then until 1943 he served in

several operations and squadron command duties at Borenquen Field, Puerto Rico, and San Jaun, Puerto Rico.

In 1943 he became Deputy C.O. of the 321st Bomb Group under Colonel Knapp, When General Knapp took command of the 57th Wing, Col. Remington moved to Wing with him. Following Colonel Hunter's return to the United States, He assumed command of the 310th Bomb group

Following the war Col. remington served his country in many important capacities, including Chief of Operations and Training for the Air National Guard . . . Air Attache, U.S. Embassy Oslo Norway . . . Deputy Commander 32nd Air Div. . . Dir. of Training and Administration Hq. North American Defense Command (NORAD), and Director of Operations Hq. USAFE, Wiesbaden, Germany

Colonel Peter "Pete" Remington retired in 1968 with 33 1/2 years of service. After retirement he still served his community on the Watertown Airport Commission for 10 years. He lives in Upstate, NY summers, and Florida during the winters.

despair. (It would be Spring of 1945 before the stalemate was broken.) No missions were flown after the 20th and the group's total inched up to 653.

Early in the month, Colonel Anthony G. Hunter, who had commanded the 310th since its infant days at Columbia, S.C., in June of 1942, moved up to Wing Headquarters as Deputy Commander. The Group Commander's hat was donned by Colonel Peter H. Remington who came over from the 321st.

## NOVEMBER 1944

The weather-caused hiatus in flying activity dating from the 20th of October came to a temporary end, and on November 4th the attacks on railway targets resumed. The railway line which ran southward though the Brenner Pass into Italy was electrified, an intense effort, in which all of the Wing

participated, was directed against power stations and transformers at several locations along the line. The 310th mission against the transformer complex at Domegliara was completely successful and the complex destroyed.

With the prospect of winter and its associated weather patterns looming in the near future, prudence dictated that predictions of weather over the target areas be as well founded as possible so as to avoid the problems, either diversions or totally aborted missions, which occurred when the target was so obscured that it either could not be identified at all or the bombing conditions were so poor as to preclude a successful mission. So, one single unescorted aircraft would boldly fly over enemy territory to the designated target area and radio back a "GO-NO GO" message.

In mid-month, a new target opened up . .

Yugoslavia. German forces which had been there for four years were pulling back toward their Fatherland and the same imperative applied - disrupt their lines of communication. Missions were flown to five separate targets, three railway and two road bridges, on consecutive days and, although they were highly successful, the Group was never called to go back.

Despite the fact that air activity continued strongly, the ground stalemate persisted. Infantry patrols and artillery duels, reminiscent of the trench warfare days of World War I in France, were the order of the day. And so, the Group prepared to carry on as well as possible in the face of the inclement winter weather that was to come.

In flying 52 missions, for a total of 705, the Group had lost three aircraft and their crews.

## DECEMBER 1944

On the second day of the month, the Group began its third year of sustained combat operations which had begun, as noted previously, with a raid over Gabes, Tunisia two years before. Much had happened in the interim.

The campaign against rail and road lines of communication continued. The Group was also paying attention, because of the stalemated ground situation, to static targets such as ammunition, fuel and supply dumps and on the forces incorporated in the Wehrmacht's various defense areas.

Enhancing our ability to carry out bombing despite adverse weather was the introduction of SHORAN which, without getting into its technical aspects, afforded an electronic assist in the navigating of the flight to its assigned target and on the bomb run there. Because the device was so scarce at this time, only one aircraft per squadron was so equipped. On 10 December, each of these aircraft led five of its squadron mates in four successive missions, in series, against a railroad bridge at Fidenza. Results could not be assessed because of a 10/10 cloud cover over the target, but SHORAN had proved its worth merely getting

the formation to the target. Similarly organized combined missions were flown on the 14th against a railway bridge at Parma, on this occasion the bridge could be seen to have been downed.

Other SHORAN missions, particularly one on an ammunition dump near Bologna, were equally effective. In this case, although the target could not be seen through the undercast, a tremendous explosion jolted the entire formation. More direct evidence of the destruction of the target in the form of a 2,000 foot high column of flame and smoke.

Rain and cold permeated the base at Ghisonaccia and the "troops" were most happy with their newly issued sleeping bags, and slept comfortably in the tents which they had winterized themselves. Christmas mail, which began to dribble in during the early part of the month, was capped by a large delivery of Xmas packages on Christmas Eve. This together with a wonderful turkey dinner prepared by the squadron cooks, and the fact that everyone could dine peaceably because no operations could be scheduled because of the weather made Christmas (the third overseas for some men) a relatively happy one.

In the month the group had flown 43 missions, losing 4 aircraft. Three of these were known to have been victims of enemy anti-aircraft fire, the fourth simply disappeared on a weather reconnaissance flight and was never heard of again. The wreckage of the aircraft and the bodies of its crew were spotted later scattered on a Corsican mountainside close to base.

## JANUARY 1945

Winter had really set in at Ghisonaccia - cold winds, heavy rains, and snow made life uncomfortable. There was a period of a week just before mid-month when operations had to be shut down, and on other single days when only target weather recon flights were flown but for the most part the group's effort was maintained. Railway bridges and marshalling yards as far west as Chivasso, just north of Turin, as far east as Chiusaforte and as far



**A BIT OF THE WHITE STUFF**  
A winter's day at Ghisonaccia

north as Trento in the valley of the Adige River which carried the main railway line south from the Brenner Pass, were particularly hard hit as were the main targets in the 50 km stretch from Verona to Trento. SHORAN provided a major assist on these missions.

At this time, the 310th Group with all of six weeks acquaintance with SHORAN was considered by higher headquarters to be "experienced" enough to train other combat crews. So a school was set up at Ghisonaccia to give ground and air training to personnel from all bombardment units in both the U.S. and Allied Air Forces. By the end of the month, two groups had passed through this two week course.

In the 19 days on which the weather did not interfere with flying operations the Group flew 43 missions losing 2 aircraft and their crews to enemy flak which was becoming more and more intense as the Wehrmacht forces compacted.

## **FEBRUARY 1945**

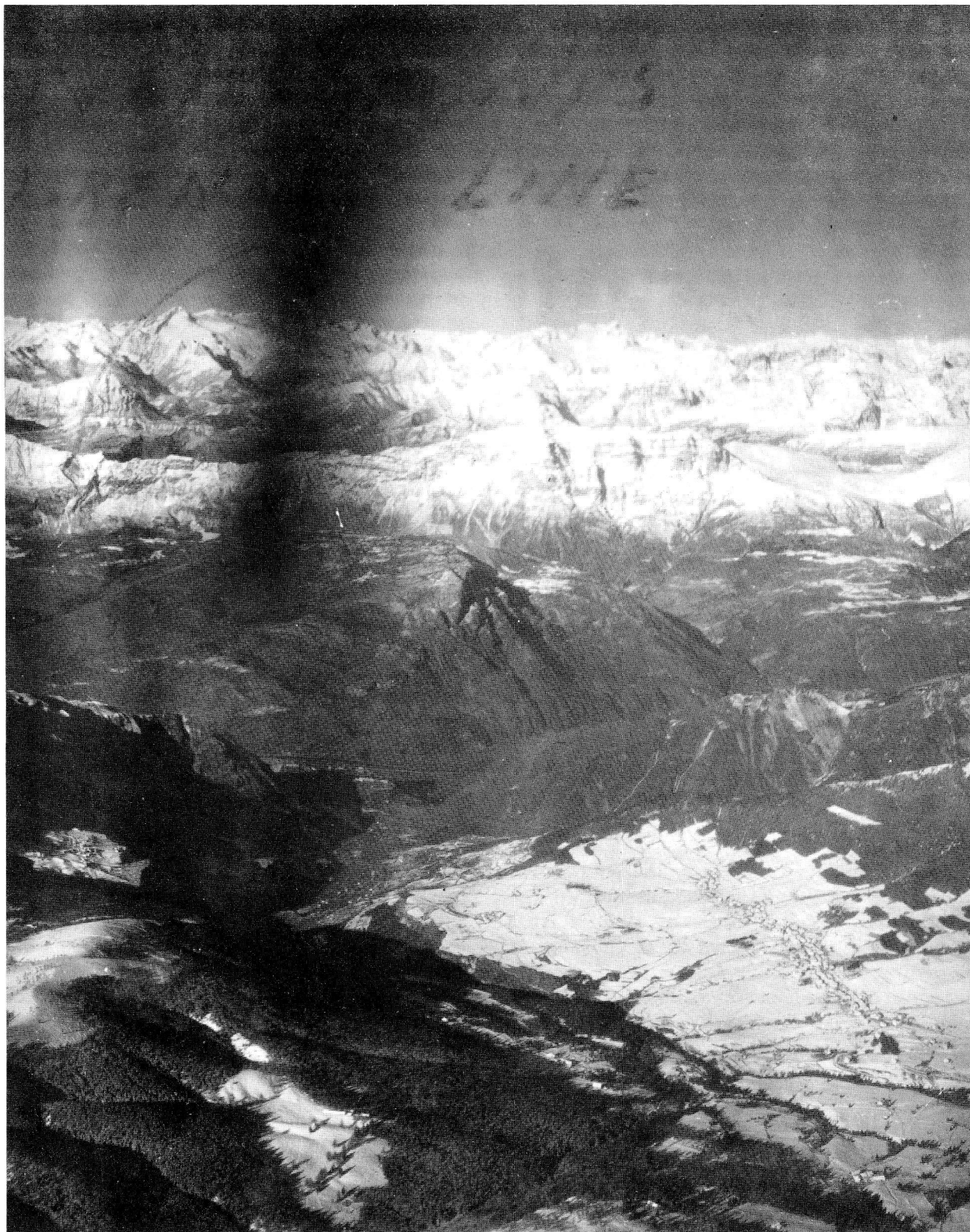
Once again rumors surfaced about a move from Corsica to Italy, but just as before, they never panned out and the group maintained residence at Ghisonaccia. The intense interdiction of the electrified rail line between Bolzano and Verona continued. For the past month or so the Group had been experimenting with Chaff (or "window") as a means of confusing German anti-aircraft fire and now it became a regular part of the group's bombing procedure. In addition, to the aircraft which constituted the element designated to attack the day's target, a flight of three or six aircraft was designated the anti-flak element. Working in coordination with and just ahead of the attack element, these aircraft dropped chaff to confuse the enemy's gun laying radar and 100 lb. white phosphorous bombs not only to interfere with visual gun laying, because of the dense smoke they produced, but also to inflict personnel casualties. This procedure proved quite effective against heavily defended targets.

For the first time in months enemy fighter interception was encountered on a mission to the railway bridge at Ala on 6 February. Although 10 of the 18 aircraft on the mission suffered damage, all returned safely. Coincidentally, this was the group's 800th mission. There were other interceptions during the month but the story was the same each time . . . several of our aircraft damaged, but none shot down.

In the face of this intense opposition, our crews did remarkably good work over the mountainous terrain in which the targets could not be picked up until the veritable "last second." The number of bridge spans left lying on the ground or straddling the river bed bore silent witness to this good work.

The efficiency of SHORAN assisted missions is visibly attested by the accuracy of air attack on the 15th on an ammunition dump at Spilimbergo. In spite of a complete undercast a major portion of the target was largely destroyed as attested by the two towering columns of billowing smoke ultimately reaching 8,000 feet which rose through the clouds which obscured the target. The group made its first run into still another country, Austria, on the 24th to a railroad bridge near Arnoldstein on the Vienna - Venice route





**THE BRENNER PANORAMA**  
A view familiar to all who were there





**NEUTRALIZATION OF FLAK BATTERIES**  
White Phosphorous Anti Flak strike on gun positions

but no bombs were dropped because, unfortunately, weather intervened.

The second "first" occurred on the 27th when a single aircraft, commanded by the Group Executive Officer, carried out a moonlight attack on a sugar refinery near Reggio in Italy (The Germans were reducing sugar to a form of alcohol to fuel their trucks.) The stock of alcohol was depleted for some days.

In a month in which weather permitted operation on 21 of the 28 days, 54 missions were flown. While many aircraft suffered damage

from enemy action, the Group lost only one aircraft, and that was lost on takeoff from Ghisonaccia. Its fuel load caught fire and the resulting heat cooked off the 500 lb. bombs. Fortunately, the crew escaped and there were no casualties among the ground personnel nearby.

## MARCH 1945

This was the month in which, on separate days, the Group would attain several remarkable levels; 900 missions, 15,000

individual aircraft sorties, 50,000 aircraft combat hours, and 29,000 tons dropped. It was a month of record operations, all previously established records were broken.

The mission had not changed. The railroad line from Innsbruck, Austria through the Brenner Pass to Verona, Italy had to be kept under constant attack and the group was up to its task. In addition, targets farther east on the lines around Venice also were hit. Throughout the month enemy opposition both flak and fighter, was intense and determined. There were only a few missions in which our planes got off scot free. Intelligence reports early in the month alleged that there were 517 heavy (88mm or larger) flak guns along the corridor between Innsbruck and Verona. In addition, there were numberless guns of smaller caliber and the personal weapons of the troops. Sometimes it seemed that all of these had been gathered within a mile radius of the target. A particular mission mounted on 10 March by 18 aircraft against an important railroad fill at Ora, just to the south of Bolzano, is a case in point. Despite losing four aircraft over the target, severe damage was inflicted on the temporary fill and one span of the RR bridge was dropped. Seven of the remaining aircraft were damaged in various degrees and two of these, although they returned to base, would never fly again. For this mission, the Group was later to receive its second DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION.

On 11 March the first productive mission to Austria was flown to a railroad bridge at Drauberg, and another on the 24th reached Steinach. Both of these targets were on the north side of the Brenner Pass and this gave the enemy forces another consideration to think about.

Later in the month, in a SHORAN attack on the railway bridge at Pordenone, our formation was jumped by approximately 20 Me-109's and FW-190's, and while our gunners accounted for four enemy aircraft, they shot down one of ours. Records indicate that this was the Group's first loss to enemy aircraft since September 1943.

During the 24 operational days of the month 61 missions were flown. Our bombing had

been most successful but that success was not without cost . . . six aircraft and crews went down over their targets.

## APRIL 1945

April marked the beginning of the end for Axis forces in Italy. Although no one in the 310th was really sure about this, there was a feeling in the air that maybe, just maybe the end was in sight. The "oldtimers", some of whom now had 30 months of continuous overseas service, were particularly hopeful.

In the early part of the month, target concentration was still on railway and road bridges on both sides of the Brenner Pass. We suffered the unfortunate loss of two aircraft and crews over Drauberg, Austria when on our second mission to that target within three days, a box leader and his right wingman matched the wingman's left engine and the leader's right vertical stabilizer while on the breakaway after the bomb run. Both aircraft plummeted to the ground. Targets at Matrei and Steinach in Austria were hit on the 5th and 6th and then the Group concentrated on the railway line south of the Brenner.

Meanwhile, beginning on the 4th, the long expected and hoped for move from Ghisonaccia finally came to pass. The advance party of the air Echelon carried by C-47's of the Troop Carrier Command, supplementing our own aircraft which were not otherwise engaged, moved into the Group's new base at Fano, on the Adriatic coast of Italy between Ancona and Pesaro. The U.S. flag came down at Ghisonaccia at noon on the 6th and was simultaneously raised at Fano by the personnel there.

Even while this was going on (the move was not completed until the 15th) we commenced operations from Fano in support of the British 8th Army's spring offensive which was kicked off on the 9th. With the distance to its targets reduced by a hundred or more miles compared to the operations from Ghisonaccia, the tempo of the group's effort could be stepped up. On that opening day, the group mounted its largest single mission of the War (78 aircraft) which dropped almost 10,000 20 lb. frag bombs on one enemy troop area. On the 10th and 11th, another series of missions

**TARGET: ORA, ITALY**  
10 MARCH, 1945





## WAR DEPARTMENT

Washington 25 D.C., 5 October 1945

General Orders  
No. 84

**BATTLE HONORS**, - As authorized by Executive Order 9396 ( Sec. I, WD Bul. 22, 1943) superceding Executive Order 9075 (sec. III, WD Bul. 11, 1942), citations for the following units in the general orders indicated are confirmed under the provisions of section IV, WD Circular 333, 1943, in the name of the President of The United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction.

The citations read as follows:

Par. 10. The *310th Bombardment Group (M)* is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations on 10 March 1945. During the aerial preliminaries to the spring offensive which defeated the German armies in Italy, the *310th Bombardment Group (M)* was called upon to attack the main rail bridge and railroad diversion bridge at Ora, Italy, the one remaining section of the Brenner Pass line which was open and the hub for the enemy transportation lines then attempting to bring supplies and munitions to front-line troops fighting in the Appennines Mountains. On 10 March 1945, the *310th Bombardment Group (M)* marshalled its full striking force for the blow against Ora. In complete defiance of their full knowledge that they would meet the stiffest opposition of which the enemy was capable, an opposition which had inflicted heavy losses on crews and aircraft in the preceeding weeks, 48 gallant air crews unhesitatingly took off in attack. Even though antiaircraft were sent in ahead of the formation to saturate the anti-aircraft positions with phosphorus bombs, so heavily massed were the enemy batteries that the hail of fire which enveloped the formation was heavy, very intense, and extremely accurate at both targets. Although they could see the destruction awaiting them, the resolute determination of the airmen to fulfill their mission removed all thoughts of self-preservation. In an extraordinary display of heroism, the entire formation continued unwaveringly to its objective, with each succeeding box watching their comrades ahead buffeted and tossed by the terrible enemy fire. Of the 48 participating aircraft, all of which dropped their bombs on the target zone, 4 were shot down in flames, 10 were so badly damaged that only exceptional determination and skill enabled their crews to bring them back to base, and almost all of the remaining aircraft were holed. Undismayed ground crews, grimly surveying the damage, immediately began the work of repair, and as a result of their well-neigh superhuman efforts, 46 aircraft were airborne on the following day. The gallantry, resolve, and unmatched heroism of the personnel of the *310th Bombardment Group (M)* in making this magnificent attack in the face of hazards surpassing those normal to aerial combat reflect the highest credit on themselves and the military service of the United States. (General Orders 177, Headquarters Twelfth Air Force, 16 August 1945, as approved by the Commanding General, United States Forces, Mediterranean Theater.)

By order of THE SECRETARY of WAR:

G.C. MARSHALL  
Chief of Staff

Official:

EDWARD F. WITSELL  
Major General  
Acting The Adjutant General



involving 220 aircraft, kept up a steady downpour of frags on the hapless Axis troops.

Then it was back to the bridges. At Rovereto, where a bridge span had been previously dropped into the river, the Wehrmacht, with typical ingenuity, had created a diversion around the wrecked bridge. Destroying this diversion became a "must" and on the 19th, 24 of the Group's aircraft did the job, but at a very high price. Two aircraft and their crews were lost over the target, one crashlanded at base and was immediately consigned to salvage and 18 of the remaining aircraft sustained damage in varying degrees.

The Allied spring offensive had finally started to move, and on the 19th our ground forces had enveloped Bologna and had taken the city. However, the Group's ground support efforts did not diminish, and on the 24th they put on a remarkable demonstration of operational capacity and ability. Eight separate missions, each composed of 12 to 18 aircraft, hit ferry stages where the Wehrmacht forces were attempting to cross to the northern shores of the Po River and salvage some of their combat ability. But that salvage was not to be! And, although it was not known on that day, the mission over Revereto was to be the last bomb-dropping mission of the 310th Group's war. The German Command signed a cease fire at Caserta, Italy on the 29th which, however, did not become effective until 2 May, 1945.

## MAY TO SEPTEMBER 1945

The war, at least in Italy, was over . . . FINITO!. Still, flight missions had to be carried on, although they were no longer as dangerous as on the day before. In the true sense of the word, Germany was still in a state of war, but now the end was just a matter of hours, or days at most. Nickeling (pamphlet) missions were flown for two days over areas in which there were dispersed concentrations of German troops. And then, as of the 4th of May 1945, when the last of the pamphleteers had landed at the base, the Group never again would fly in a combat mode. The 989 missions flown since December 1942 put up a number which no other bombardment group in the theater could

match.

On the 8th, having been battered to its knees in its own country, the nation of Germany capitulated, surrendering all its forces to the victorious Allies. V-E day was proclaimed. A natural letdown set in among the personnel of the Group, but it was a most welcome one after the intense, high pitched concentration of their efforts during the preceding two months . . . 61 missions, 1,142 sorties in March and 73 missions, 1,537 sorties in April.

With no combat missions to be prepared and flown daily, everyone found himself at loose ends. Volleyball, touch football, softball on the beach and swimming in the Adriatic occupied some of the men's idle time. But it was important for many, particularly those who had come into service directly from high school and whose only career had been in their military occupational specialty, to prepare themselves for their return to civilian life. So, under the aegis of the Group, the Army Educational Program was instituted at Fano. Classes were offered in a variety of professions and trade fields, all taught by instructors who had been identified among personnel already assigned to the Group.

All of a sudden the number 85 started dancing before people's eyes . . . the number of points required for prime consideration under the Army's program for rotation to the ZI and eventual discharge. Points were accumulated under several categories, months of overseas service, awards and decorations including campaign battle stars, dependents, etc. . . matched against the criticality of the individual's specialty. Personnel with fewer than 85 points could expect to be transferred to some unit destined for redeployment to the Pacific Theater, where the war against Japan was still going on with great ferocity, swapping places with those who had the requisite 85 points. Personnel staffs at all levels were going crazy trying to keep up with manning situations which were changing by the hour as personnel reported or departed.

One situation, which periodically added additional increments to the group's strength during May, was a cause of great

rejoicing. Air crew personnel, who had been carried as missing in action, since as far back as September 1944, began filtering back to the group after spending the interim hiding out under the protection of the Italian civilian population. In all a total of 15 returned to friendly hands.

During June all of the group's aircraft, except those which had suffered too much combat damage, were prepared for return to the ZI carrying five-man crews. Tokyo tanks were installed to increase the aircraft's range stepped up. On that opening day, the Group mounted its largest single mission of the war (78 aircraft) which dropped almost 10,000 20 lb frag bombs on one enemy troop area. On the 10th and 11th, another series of missions, involving 220 aircraft, kept up a steady downpour of frags on the hapless Axis troops.

Then it was "back to the bridges". At Rovereto, where the bridge span had previously been dropped into the river, The Wehrmacht, with typical ingenuity, had created a diversion around the wrecked bridge. Destroying this diversion became a "must" and on the 19th, 24 of the Group's aircraft did their job but at a very high price . . two aircraft and crews lost over the target, one crash landed at base and immediately consigned to salvage and 18 of the remaining. And then off they went, day after day. With the departure of the combat crews and their aircraft, ground personnel eagerly awaited their own deployment when a bombshell hit . .

all crew chiefs, most specialties included in the generic term "aircraft mechanic" and armorers were declared essential, and no matter how many rotation points that had accumulated, none would be "going home". Their "bitching" kept on at a rising crescendo and finally it was heard at higher headquarters where, eventually, common sense and equity prevailed and the order was rescinded.

Personnel, among them Colonel Peter Remington, the Group Commander, continued to transfer out daily. With Colonel Remington's departure, Colonel William Bower, who earlier had commanded the 428th Squadron, transferred from Wing Headquarters to replace him. By the end of July most of the high point men had left the group

whose strength by now had dwindled to fewer than 600 officers and enlisted men.

In the middle of August the thinned out ranks that composed the 310th Cadre were assigned to the Army Air Forces Service Command. The Cadre left Fano and re-deployed to Pomigliano Air Field, just outside of Naples. At the end of the month all that remained of the proud 310th Group, which in its heyday had numbered almost two thousand personnel, was the cadre of five officers and three enlisted men. One of these, Captain John Beatty, was the same John Beatty then assigned to the 428th Squadron who was the pilot of the first of the Group's aircraft to land in North Africa at Casablanca on 13 November 1942. Another was Staff Sergeant Greve E. Moltke, a member of the Danish nobility and known all of us as the "Count", who had chosen to serve the whole of the war with the Group.

On 12 September 1945 taps sounded at Pomigliano for what all who served in it proudly call the best damned bomb group in the Army Air Forces. That statement may find some to argue it, but we believe it.

The 310th Bomb group (M) had been deactivated and its earthly remains, a box containing historical paper records, eventually made their way to the United States there to be interred in the War Department archives.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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