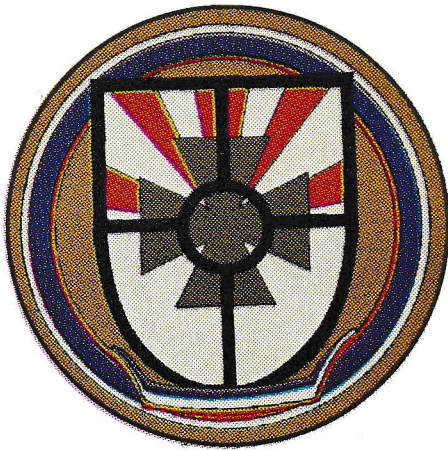


319th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (Medium)

ACTIVATED
26 JUNE 1942

ENTERED COMBAT
14 NOVEMBER 1942

DEACTIVATED
18 DECEMBER 1945



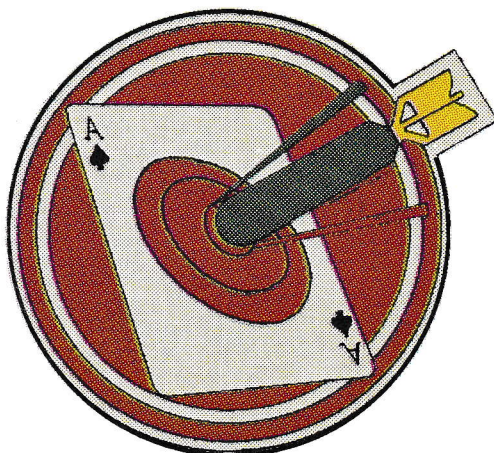
437th SQ.



438th SQ.



319th Group



439th SQ.



440th SQ.

SPECIAL NOTE

The inclusion of the 319th Bombardment Group in this work presented some problems. These problems were due to two primary factors. First, they were members of the 57th Bomb Wing for only about two months after converting to B-25s, and then rotated the United States, with subsequent service in the Far East. Second, 319th was equipped with the B-26 Martin Marauder for the greater part of their tour of duty in the Mediterranean, and the title of this work being "B-25s in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations." So where do they fit into this story?

We are including the 319th's early days to help us understand the problems of those who had to learn to compensate for lack of details such as lack of target maps and bomb sights that could not be used at altitudes other than low level. After all none of us had ever worked at this business of war.

So the first part of this dissertation about the history of the 319th Bomb group will show us the trials and tribulations that they conquered. But we will not dwell, in great detail, on the interim period of their operations until about the time they converted to B-25 Mitchells.

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

57th Bomb Wing Association

319TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP

from material submitted by

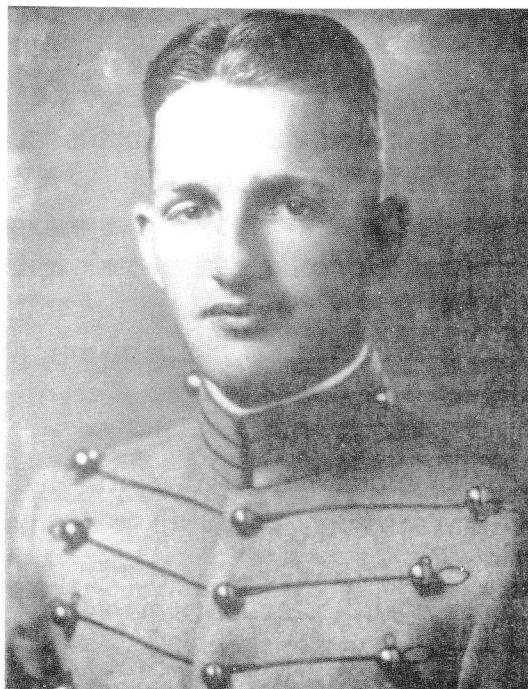
CHARLES BREWTON 437 and ESTHER OYSTER 439

The 319th Bombardment Group (Medium) was activated on 26, June 1942, at Barksdale Field, Louisiana. The Group, was composed of the 437th Bombardment Squadron (M), 438th Bombardment Squadron (M), 439th Bombardment Squadron (M), and the 440th Bombardment Squadron (M). Major Alvord R. Rutherford assumed command and appointed Major Robert A. Zaiser as Deputy Commander and the following men as squadron commanders: 1st Lt. Raymond H. Lipscomb 437th; 1st Lt. Donald L. Gilbert, 438th; 1st Lt. Frank M. Tuttle, 439th; and 1st Lt. David J. Jones, 440th.

The main cadre of the new 319th Group was transferred from the 17th Bomb Group with the addition of some experienced personnel from the 305th Squadron of the 38th Bomb Group. A large number of newly commissioned officers and newly trained enlisted men joined the Group. The difficult problem of organization and training for combat began

The aircraft assigned to the Group was the Martin medium bomber, the B-26. Its reputation as a hot and fast bomber preceded it, and in the initial stages of training the B-26 lived up to its reputation. The new pilots were introduced to the aircraft by experienced flyers, and the ground crews were made aware of the problems of maintenance.

The first major accident occurred 16 July 1942 when Lt. Lipscomb crashed 2 miles south of Barksdale Field, killing one gunner and injuring the rest of the crew. 1st Lt. Ellis E. Arnold assumed command of the 437th Squadron. On 29 July, five officers who had accompanied General James H. Doolittle on the first Tokyo mission joined the Group, and the 319th was proud of their presence, little knowing that in less than a year they would all be dead or prisoners of war. They were Major David M. Jones, 1st Lt. Donald G. Smith, 1st Lt. Griffith P. Williams, 2nd Lt. Richard E. Miller and 2nd Lt. Thomas C. Griffin.



LT. COL. ALVORD G. RUTHERFORD
319th Commanding Officer
August 1942 27 December 1942

There has been very little written about Colonel Alvord Rutherford. So little in fact that the only photograph that has been found by the 319th Association is this formal graduation photograph from the United States Military Academy in June 1937.

Col. Rutherford guided and shaped the 319th through its formative days. But destiny had not reserved a place for him in the annals of combat history. For on 22 November 1942 the plane in which he was a passenger strayed over Cherbourg, France and was shot down. They were on their way from England to Algeria to begin combat operations.

Major Jones was appointed 438th Squadron Commander

On 8 August the Group moved to Harding Field, Baton Rouge, Louisiana where it began



"ZERO 4"

ZERO 4 flew 146 missions before she was assigned to a War Bomb tour

Her crew: Dick Bushee, pilot; Blake Palmer, co-pilot; and Bob Whitten, bombardier

She is shown carrying many signatures of the 437th men before coming home Photo loaned by W. Don Oliver

twenty-four-hour-a-day ground and air training, in preparation for the real test . actual combat conditions..

Having made rapid progress in its training program, the 319th was alerted for overseas duty. The movement would be made in three echelons, namely The air echelon, the Ground Echelon, and the Flight echelon.

On 14 September, 1942, the Air echelon of the 319th Bomb Group was assigned to the Twelfth Air Force and XII Bomber Command. (Letter, Hq. VIII AF 11 Sept. 1942).

The 27th of August saw the Air echelon, composed of 29 officers and 131 enlisted men, leave Harding Field for the Fort Dix Port of Embarkation in New Jersey.

On 6 September the Flight echelon began their movement to Baer Field, Fort Wayne Indiana, which would be their Port of Embarkation. But before they left they suffered two accidents. On 31 August one 440th Squadron aircraft crashed near Independence, Louisiana. all personnel es-

caped injury. On 1 September one aircraft of the 437th Squadron, piloted by Lt. Pigni, crashed near Angola, Louisiana, with total fatalities.

On 10 September the excess crews were transferred to the 335th Bomb Group at Barksdale Field, and the last of the Flight echelon left for Baer Field. On 21 September the Ground echelon entrained at Harding Field for Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, Port of Embarkation.

Since the Group moved overseas in various sections, the story will have to be told separately until they all are reunited at Tafarouri Airdrome, south of Oran, Algeria, in French Northwest Africa.

THE AIR or ADVANCE ECHELON

The Air echelon left Harding Field on 27 August 1942, and arrived at the staging area, Fort Dix, New Jersey, on 29 August. After

rapid processing and equipping they boarded the Cunard White Star liner, Queen Mary, along with approximately 16,000 others, and on 5 September at 1500 hours sailed down the Hudson River for Europe. On the morning of 11 September, it was announced the destination as being the Firth of Clyde in Scotland. The Queen Mary dropped anchor off Gourock Scotland, and debarkation began. Squadron went to the satellite field at Attlebridge.

On 12 September the Air echelon arrived at the RAF Station Shipham in County Norfolk about 20 miles north of Norwich. On 7 October another move was made, and the Air echelon and the some of the Ground echelon met for the first time since leaving Louisiana.

On 21 October the Air echelon packed up again, entrained for Gourock, Scotland, and the following day boarded the "Orbita", with destination unknown. During the following five days the convoy was formed, and at 2300 hours on 26 October the convoy sailed down the Firth of Clyde.

Early in the morning of 7 November the convoy passed through Gibraltar into the Mediterranean Sea. It was the first day of the invasion of French Northwest Africa, 8 November 1942. The Air echelon debarked onto the beaches of Arzew, east of Oran. They lived for a week in the heat of the day and cold of the night in a vineyard south of the little town of St. Leu. Then on 18 November the Air echelon moved to Tifarouti Airdrome.

NOW, THE ADVENTURES OF THE GROUND ECHELON

On 21 September 1942 the Ground echelon left Harding Field for Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. Two days after their arrival, with processing and equipping complete, they boarded the Queen Mary for their ocean voyage to Europe. At 0700 hours on the morning of 27 September 1942, the Ground echelon sailed from New York harbor. On 2 October the "Queen" experienced her only

mishap of the war, when she rammed a British destroyer while traveling a full speed. Although the destroyer sank almost immediately with heavy casualties, the Queen Mary, with a gaping hole in the bow, cut her speed and continued to Gourock, Scotland, dropping anchor late on 3 October. Debarkation and entrainment took place, and on 5 October the Ground echelon arrived at Horsham St. Faith Airdrome, with the squadrons splitting between Gorsham St. Faith and Attlebridge.

The 437th Squadron and the 438th Squadron went to Horsham St. Faith Airdrome just north of Norwich, and the 439th Squadron and the 440th went to Attlebridge.

They left Norwich for the port of Bristol on 22 October where they boarded the "Mooltan". Leaving Bristol on 24 October, the ship joined the invasion convoy in the Firth of Clyde and sailed on the 26th. Although the "Mooltan" was a part of the same convoy as the "Orbita", neither knew that the other was present. The initial invasion operations at Arzew were watched from the decks of the "Mooltan" as the Ground echelon did not debark until 10 November. Going to the same Air Corps Assembly Area, they joined the Air echelon in the vineyard south of St. Leu, and on 18 November they moved to Tifarouti, Algeria. We will now leave the Ground and Air echelons at Tifarouti and attempt to follow the Flight echelon as they make their way to the Mediterranean Theater of Operations.

WHERE IS THAT FLIGHT ECHELON??

A total of 57 crews and aircraft were assembled at Baer Field, Fort Wayne, Indiana, to process for the movement to England. They would proceed via Presque Isle, Maine; Goose Bay, Labrador; Blue West 1, Greenland; Reykjavik, Iceland; and then to Prestwick, Scotland. One aircraft of the 440th Squadron, piloted by Lt. Murphy, crashed on a routine flight out of Fort Wayne, killing the entire crew. They were replaced by Lt. Popovis. Lt. Mealy was taken sick, and so Cst. Hozapple 438th Ops. Officer piloted it.

In considering the movement of the Flight echelon it must be noted that the movement did not occur as a united body, but the individual aircraft made each leg of the flight when maintenance and weather permitted.

Fifty-seven B-26's, fourteen each from the 437th, 438th and 440th Squadrons, and fifteen from the 439th squadron, left Baer Field on the first leg of their overseas flight. One aircraft of the 437th Squadron, piloted by Lt. Newton, crashed two hours out of Baer Field, killing the crew. This loss was replaced by Lt. Peppin who shortly joined the Flight echelon.

Some aircraft were forced to land at Westover Field, Massachusetts, but eventually all 57 planes completed the flight to Goose Bay, Labrador. Lt. Marshall of the 439th had mechanical trouble and was forced to remain at Goose Bay. Lt. Krone of the 438th Squadron reached Greenland only to find that weather prevented his landing and damaged his aircraft. Hence, upon his return to Goose Bay, he was unable to continue. Fifty-five planes eventually arrived in Greenland. The first part of the Flight echelon to try the trip to Iceland made it in good fashion. But as winter approached the difficulties mounted, and many of the planes were unable to continue, or were lost. Three aircraft, Lt. Danison of the 439th and Lt. Hodge and Lt. Hearn of the 440th Squadron, were lost in their attempt to reach Iceland. Thirty-five B-26's did complete the trip to Iceland safely. Thirty-four planes eventually landed safely in Norfolk County, England. The 35th one, Lt. Wall of the 437th, continued across England and landed in enemy territory.

On 12 November 1942, ten B-26's of the 439th Squadron started across England on their first leg to Africa and encountered bad weather. Five returned to their base, but disaster overtook the other five. Capt. Smith, of the Tokyo raid, crashed in England killing the entire crew. Lt. Bloom and Lt. Hollingsworth, with Capt. Tuttle, 439th Squadron Commander, and Lt. Col. Rutherford, Group Commander, as passengers, got lost in the weather and were shot down over Cherbourg peninsula in German-occupied France. It is not known whether Col Rutherford was killed in the crash, for it is told that he died while a POW.

Since this incident was caused by enemy fire, they became the first war casualties for the 319th Bomb Group. Lt. Craddock and Lt. Gross both crashed, but the crews escaped injury.

Twenty-five planes completed the long flight from Land's End, England, over the Bay of Biscay, around Spain and Portugal, through Gibraltar, to La Senia and Tafarouri Airdrome at Oran, Algeria.

Lt. Craddock and Lt. Gross obtained new aircraft. When the four planes which were left in England for repairs were completed, all six planes finally completed the flight to Africa, although one was delayed until March. Thus a total of 31 crews completed the flight from Baer Field to Africa via the northern route.

The crews of the 17 planes stranded in Greenland and the two in Goose Bay returned to the United States. Lt. Daniels of the 438th Squadron, Lt. Floyd of the 439th Squadron, and Lt. Gammon and Lt. Baker of the 440th Squadron were transferred from the Group before the flight started across the southern route. Fifteen planes started from Morrison Field, Florida, and all fifteen arrived safely in Casablanca, traveling through Trinidad, Natal, Ascension Island, the Gold Coast of Africa, to French Morocco, finally arriving at Tafarouri airdrome, Algeria on 14 November 1942. The stay here would be short, for on 24 November the Group moved to Maison Blanch Airdrome, Algeria. Here they would begin operations. Of the 57 aircraft and crews that left Baer Field, Indiana in October 1942, 46 finally arrived in Africa by June 1943.

The 319th Bombardment Group (M) was at least now in the combat zone and the enemy would have now to bear the impact of the brand new type of aircraft.

AND THE 319th BOMB GROUP!

AT LAST . . . INTO THE BATTLE

Planes began arriving at Tafarouri from England on November 19th. There was no organization: planes were parked at random; no "quarters" as such so the men slept on the ground under the wing of their planes. Comments made by personnel of the 319th revealed a bit of the "living" conditions at Tafarouri. It was warm during the day but got cold after the sun went down. Water was scarce, and drinking water even scarcer; food was rough. The Arabs were dirty dressing in whatever rags they could find. They would barter for anything and only spoke Arabic.

For that first week Major David M. Jones was the ranking officer, and so assumed temporary command on 20 November 1942. He began to set up an organization. Captain Donald L. Gilbert was appointed C.O. of the 438th Squadron.

On November 23 the 439th Squadron moved to Maison Blanche Airdrome to begin operations. Conditions at Maison Blanche were no better than they had been at Tafarouri. The 26th was Thanksgiving day, but no different than the other days as far as the weather was concerned, for it rained incessantly; everything was soaked.

On the morning of the 27 November Lieutenant Colonel Sam Agee Jr arrived and assumed command. He met with all staff officers to get acquainted. The routine now became less routine and more of a pleasure.

The first B-26 operations in North Africa were carried out by the 319th Bomb Group (M) from Maison Blanche, Algeria against the port of Sfax on 28 November 1942. On November 30 nine B-26's (4-437th, 3-438, and 2-439) took off to bomb Gabes Airdrome escorted by eight P-38's. They bombed the airdrome, hangars, fuel storage, military camp, railroad stations and yards, and post. The hangars and fuel storage were left burning. Intense flak was encountered; one B-26 was seen to crash north of town. Eight planes returned to base. Thus operations began for the 319th Bombardment Group (M).



LT. COLONEL SAM AGEE Jr
Commanding Officer 319th Bomb
Group

27 November 1942 4 December 1942

Colonel Agee, a Military Academy graduate, and close friend of Colonel Rutherford, was Deputy Commander of a B-17 Unit in England with B-17's previously he had no experience with low level operations and he was determined to learn about these operations first hand.

The mission on 4 December was to be over the facilities at Bizerte, Tunisia. The mission took off as scheduled and made the target area where they met heavy and intense flak. Only one aircraft was lost, and that was the one flown by Colonel Agee. Major Jones, Lt. Mikolaski, Lt. W.O. Myers, S/Sgt. Hillman and Corp. Herwig.

The plane was seen to crash near the target, and only five parachutes were seen from the stricken plane. Colonel Agee received some injuries and was taken to a French Naval Hospital in Bizerte by his German captors.

continued

Agee continued:

Late in December he was transferred to a Prisoner of War camp in Italy. It was here that he rejoined part of the crew, Lt Mikaloski and Lt. Myers.

When the Italians surrendered on October 1943 the Germans began to move the POW's from Italy to the various Stalags in Germany. As they were moving them by train some of the prisoners found it relatively easy to escape from the train. Colonel Agee and Lt. Myers were two of those who succeeded. They found their way back to Allied positions without contacting the Italian Partisans. As a result they were sent back State-side.

Colonel Agee spent the balance of the war working in the Pentagon.

On 30 November Colonel Agee spoke to the entire group, introduced himself as C.O. and asked for a continuance of their support.

On 2 December twelve aircraft participated in an attack on El Aouina air post at Tunis, Tunisia. All twelve planes returned to base, although some were damaged, one crash landed.

On 4 December 1942 eight B-26's took off to bomb Birzerti, Tunisia. One B-26 had an early return with propeller trouble. Flak was intense and accurate over Ferryville harbor and Bizerti. One B-26 was seen to crash between the sea and the phosphate dump. This plane was piloted by Colonel Agee and Major Jones. Five parachutes were seen.

The 319th was without a commanding Officer for the second time in about three weeks. Major Cunningham assumed temporary command of the group. He would remain in "temporary" command until 11 January 1943. Operations could not stop because of this loss, but it was not until 12 December that the 319th resumed flying missions, because of the weather. It rained almost incessantly making life miserable. There was no fire, no heat. The mud created by the rain was almost as sticky as taffy candy.

But on 12 December they were able to get back into the air, with a raid to bomb the harbor at Sousse and a railroad bridge north

of La Hencha. The flight ran into bad weather; contact with their escort was never accomplished. Seven B-26 returned to base, and one was lost.

On 13 December eight B-26's took off from Maison Blanche to bomb the railway bridge three miles north of La Hencha. There was only light flak. One plane turned back to base early, another landed at Telergma and the rest returned to base.

The last mission from Maison Blanche was flown on 14 December when six B-26's bombed the docks and shipping at Sousse bombing at an altitude of 900 to 1200 feet. Moderate flak was encountered, but all planes returned safely.

Then it became moving day for the 319th. Operations were set up at Telergma, Tunisia which is only twenty-five miles from Constantine. A French Army garrison with Algerian soldiers and French Officers was stationed there.

Trained for low level bombing and equipped with D-8 (low level) bomb sights, the Group attacked Sfax at a height of 1,000 feet and continued to operate at comparable altitudes for a period of about four weeks, the last half of which the Group was stationed at Telergma, Tunisia.

It was obvious that many things had to be learned if we were to succeed in this business of war, some of them are pointed out in these early mission reports.

Report #3: "In case of a damaged hydraulic system while the bomb bay doors are open, a manual device is needed to close the bomb bay doors."

Report #4: "Crew members suggest that the time over target (TOT) should be varied from 1100 hours as the enemy seems to anticipate this timing."

It is apparent the altitude was varied but timing was not, as is revealed in this report

"There was no surprise element in

members believed that the practice of scheduling of missions for approximately the same time each day may have contributed to the lack of surprise. "The accuracy and intensity of the flak can be measured by the fact that four bombers that returned to this base (out of each six sent out), were hit from three to ten times each."

Without supplies the ground crews became quite ingenious at patching holes. Casualties for the two missions carried out in November were slightly less than one percent, but for the nine missions executed in December the casualty rate exceeded nine percent.

On about 26 December 1942, Brigadier General James H. Doolittle ordered B-26 units to henceforth operate at medium levels, or about 10,000 feet, against land targets. This order did not, however, apply to sea sweeps. In an effort to put more aircraft over the target by combining B-26 Marauders with B-25 Mitchells prompted this comment in Mission Report #9:

"The crews of both type of aircraft can operate to the best advantage jointly with each other, but separate . . . The B-25 crews prefer to bomb at an altitude ranging from 6,000 to 8,000 feet, whereas this bombing was done at 800 to 1,200 feet."

After the 14 January '43 mission this comment appears:

"At 7,000 feet, over the Mahares, it is difficult to distinguish the difference between a road and a rail road bridge, cameras would be useful for observation."

The bombsight came in for comment, too, for on the 14 and 15 January 1943 mission reports, these comment appeared:

"The D-8 sight at 7,000 feet is not accurate."

"The D-8 sight is not suitable for precision bombing."

A detachment of the 319th went to Biskra airdrome, Algeria about 28 December to train and experiment with skip bombing procedures, and to carry out attacks on enemy shipping. Because of the special nature of the targets and bombing procedures, these raids had been at deck level. In the event a mission found no shipping targets it was to attack specified land targets as alternates (ports, rail installations, bridges etc.) remaining at low level.

The 319th's mission on 31 December against bridges and railroad near Takruns was one of this nature. As alternates to shipping, which required low flying, such land targets constituted exceptions to General Doolittle's order.

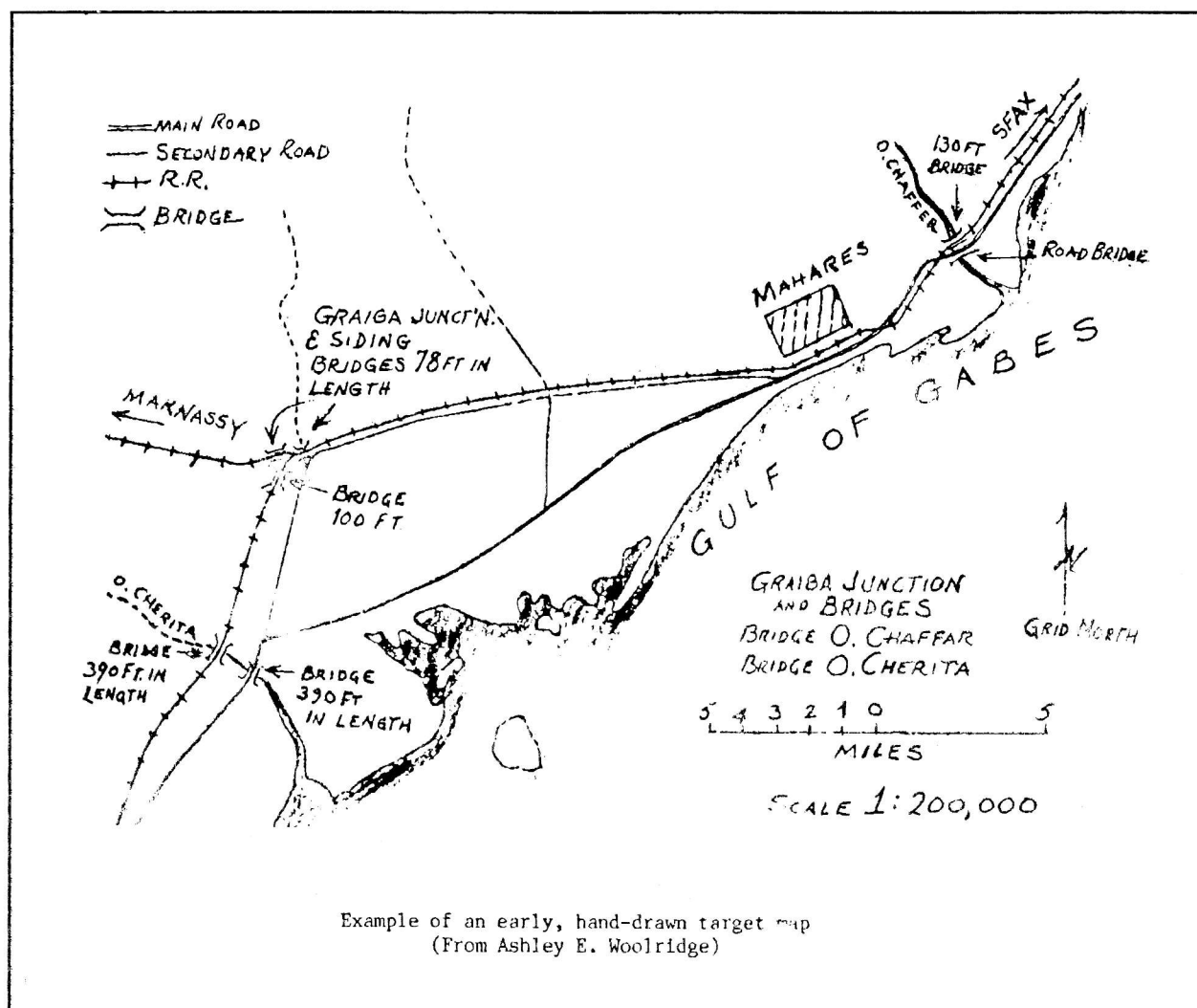
It was 11 January 1943, when Lt. Colonel Wilbur W. Aring arrived to take command of the Group, and Colonel Cunningham returning



LT. COL. WILBUR W. ARING

319th Commanding Officer
11 January 1943 4 July 1943

The native of Dayton, Ohio and a career Air Force Officer, Col Aring was shot down on his 13th mission. It was a mission over Gerbini, Sicily on 4 July 1943. He spent 21 months in various German Prisoner of War camps, finally escaping in April 1945. Col. Aring continued to follow a career with the USAF retiring in 1965 after 34 years of active duty, in the grade of Brig. Gen.. The above picture was furnished by Mrs. Aring.



to the post of Deputy Commander. It would be Col. Aring guiding operations through the spring and early summer. The 319th's operations for January and February 1943 constituted, principally, of attacks on shipping. The January casualty rate was about two-and-a-half percent, but for February it surged to more than eleven percent!

On 13 February, bombing El Aouina air-drome was bombed from 10,000 feet using Norden sights borrowed from heavy bombardment units. There were five B-26's on the mission and were attacked by 30 - 40 enemy fighters. Two of the Marauders were shot down.

Because the 319th had started operations considerably under strength with airplanes stranded along the northern ferry route, the

subsequent losses of men and airplanes and the effect of these losses on morale necessitated retirement of the Group from combat at the end of February for retraining and reorganization. The group's last mission before it's temporary retirement, was flown 13 February 1943. The Ground echelon left Telergma, Algeria on 27 February 1943, headed for Oujja, French Morocco, boarding a train for a long cold ride with poor chow and at irregular times.. The French Red Cross did provide food at several of the stops. The ride continued until 3 March. It is said that the trip was made bearable only by a short stop beside a train filled with American nurses. The echelon arrived in a mild dust storm. Trucks transported the men to the field about eight miles away. Tents were set up in a straight line, and showers were available in the living area. This was a first since arriving in Africa.

Meanwhile the Flight echelon had flown to Tafarouri where some of the combat crews who were left in the States rejoined them. The new crews flew transition and practiced flying formation flying in the few airplanes available. New crews were trained in the "niceties" of war.

Training, inspections, even drill sessions continued all through March and April and into May. New airplanes, new crews and new personnel arrived.

Finally on 31 May 1943 an order was posted that all combat crews and B-26's were to fly to a new combat location on 1 June. The "vacation" and all of the luxuries was over.

On 1 June 1943 the combat crews left for Sedrata, Algeria which was located about eighty miles east of Telergma. The Group was at full strength, the morale was high, and the men seemed happy to return to combat duty.

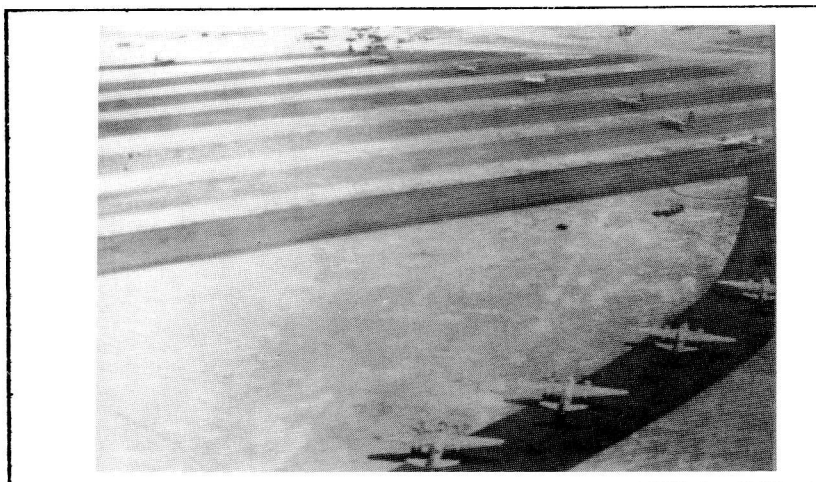
The new station at Sadrata was barren, no running water, no buildings, no more Red Cross and Ice Cream, no movies, no fresh food, no swim in the ocean. As someone said, c'est le guerre

The 319th "shuttle service" was instituted to transport the ground personnel to Sedrata. Tents and equipment went by train to arrive much later causing still more hardships.

Combat operations commenced 5 June 1943 assisting in the reduction of the islands of Pantelleria and Lampedosa. Operating at or near 10,000 ft. altitude was standard from then on. As a result the casualty rate for the period 5 June '43 to 31 July '44 fell to about six-tenths of a percent.

On 26 June '43 the 319th was moved to Djedieda, Algeria. Since ground fighting had moved to Sicily, then on to Italy, the move shortened flying time to the targets in Italy. The 319th resumed where they left off back in February except that they were now working at medium altitude levels.

The Group became known during their stay at Djedieda for their six-ship take off and



landings. This practice had come about from the thoughts of Major Hozapple regarding shortening the time it took to join-up and get to the target. He felt that if the join up time could be reduced, their radius of action could be longer. This was a practice that the 12th Bomb Group used in the desert.



LT. COL. GORDON H. AUSTIN
319th Commanding Officer
6 July 1943 13 August 1943

Col. Astin was a man between assignments at the time Col. Aring went down. His previous command was the 325th Fighter Group, and was in the process of moving to Headquarters 42nd Bomb Wing as A-3.

A mission over Gerbini Satellite Airfield with 31 aircraft was flown with less than ideal conditions on 4 July 43. The target was

partly obscured, but open enough to make the strike, and for the flak batteries to put up heavy and intense barrage flak. In addition they encountered enemy fighter opposition. Of the 31 aircraft that went over Gerbini that morning two went down, twenty nine returned to base, but only nineteen of those were servicable.

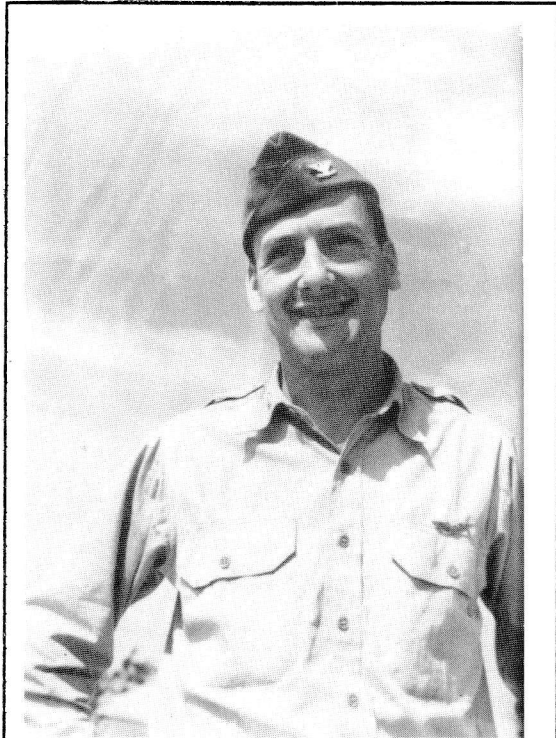
One of the two aircraft that went down that 4th of July was flown by Colonel Aring! For the third time in a little over six months the 319th Bomb Group had lost a Group Commander to enemy fire.

On 6 July 1943, Colonel Gordon H. Austin assigned as Commanding Officer of the 319th Bombardment Group.

One of the several changes in staff that Colonel Austin implemented upon assuming command was to appoint Major Hozapple as Group Deputy Commander. Then, as expected, on 13 August 1943, orders assigned Major Joseph Randel Hozapple to duty as Commanding Officer of the 319th Bomb Group. This would be a post at which he would remain until the Group was inactivated in 1945. During the period of 1 November to 9 November 1943 they packed and moved to Decimomannu, Sardinia. Here they would stay for almost a whole year, an almost unheard of event for a tactical bomber unit.

Another permanent change of station was in store for the Group. The constantly changing almost fluid fighting front required frequent moving for the air units, and the 319th was no different than any other. As was stated at the beginning of this short history, we will not stress here the achievements of the 319th as a B-26 Medium Bombardment Group, except to state that they performed with excellence the tasks set before them by the conditions of war. And to add that they performed with brilliance throughout the period of "Operation Shingle" or from 1 January through the middle of June. This period saw the reduction of Monte Cassino and the break-out from the Anzio beachhead and the fall of Rome.

On 1 March 1944 the 319th Bomb Group was relieved from assignment to XII Bomber



COLONEL JOSEPH R. HOZAPPLE

319th Commanding Officer
13 August 1943 late 1945

Joseph Randall Hozapple, a native of Peoria, Illinois was born Sept 7, 1914. He graduated from Bradley University in 1938 with a B.S. in Business Administration, entered Aviation Cadet training in December 1940, and received his wings and the commission as Second Lieutenant, in 1941

He served in various flying assignments until assigned to Barksdale Field to duty with the 319th Bombardment Group. His assignments with the 319th included Squadron duties and Group Operations Officer, rising in rank until Colonel Austin appointed him as Deputy Commander of the 319th and to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Upon the reassignment of Colonel Austin in August 1943, Colonel Hozapple became Group Commander of the 319th Bombardment group, a position that he held until 1946. He guided their combat operations and subsequent field conversion from B-26 type aircraft to B-25's, and finally to A-26 Douglas Invader and duty in the Far East.

Upon the return of the 319th from their far east assignment late in 1945, and subsequent inactivation, Colonel Hozapple returned to the United States and an assignment to Headquarters U.S. Army Air Force in Washington, D.C.



IT AIN'T SAFE OVER FRANCE

The above photograph was loaned us for use in the article by W. Don Oliver 319-437. This spectacular photograph was taken over Toulon, France August 1944. It is believed that it was taken from the aircraft in which Don was flying as bombardier.

Command and assigned to the 42nd Bomb Wing

The 319th Group earned a Distinguished Unit Citation for their work accomplished on 3 March, 1944 for the accurate bombing of the Rome marshalling yards. On this mission the participated with two other Medium Bomb groups. And the 319th earned a second citation for a mission performed on 11 March to Florence, Italy. Once more with their pin-point bombing of a marshalling yard very near great art treasures, with no damage to those treasures. The accuracy of the 319th's bombing was the pride of the 42nd Bomb Wing. This is proven by the number of Letters of Commendation received by the 319th Bomb Group from the 42nd Bomb Wing and higher commands.

Shortly after the first of September '43 the rumors again began to fly. They were going home . . . they were going to France . . . or to China like the 12th did? Where then? Colonel Hozapple called a meeting of all Group personnel and announced that the group was indeed moving, but they were not going back to the 'States yet! They would be going to plans . . . further research had proven that the Viterbo base was not suited to operations by the B-26. Instead the change would be to Corsica.

So on September 21, 1944 they packed their goods, boarded LST's and left their base at Decimamunni, Sardinia headed for Corsica. The new base was located at the town of Seraggia, Corsica.

There were many things that they had to get used to. In line take-offs and landings on

the single strip covered with steel matting. A runway was so short that sometimes the wheels of the B-26's brushed through the trees at the end of the strip. Living conditions were not the best for the time being because all of the equipment had not arrived from Sardinia.

Almost before the tents were set up, Colonel Hozapple called a meeting of all personnel. He made an earth shaking announcement. He said that since production had stopped for the B-26, and parts were becoming very difficult to obtain, a conversion was inevitable. Further the group would be converted to B-25s within the next few weeks. The conversion was to have been to the new A-26 Douglas Invader, but that production was not sufficient so that an entire group could convert to it.

How could they?? Anything would be better than that! **Why us???**

Then Colonel Hozapple expressed his own opinion. He said that the B-25 presented a challenge to the B-26 people. That way they, the 319th could indicate to the world that they were the best Medium Bomb Group regardless of what equipment they were using!

Training would commence in a couple of weeks. They would be getting some B-25's for flight crews to check out in and develop their proficiency. Some selected specialists would be placed in the three B-25 groups to learn the mechanical intricacies of the airplane.

There would be NO MIXED MISSIONS!. When proficiency was sufficient, and aircraft available, only then would they begin flying missions in the B-25.

FIELD CONVERSION

by
ESTHER OYSTER

Note: Esther Oyster, widow of Harold Oyster, past President of the 57th Bomb Wing Association wrote this article for the 319th newsletter. In it she covered all of the aspects of the rapid change that the 319th Bomb group made from B-26 type aircraft to B-25 type.

When Colonel Holzapple made the announcement on 5 October 1944, that the 319th Bomb Group, was to be converted to the B-25 Mitchell, there were some moans and groans from the audience. Having flown the Marauder for over two years the fellows had

PRESIDENTIAL CITATION
11 March 1944

GENERAL ORDERS)

WAR DEPARTMENT
Washington 25, D.C., 16 May 1944

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E X T R A C T

3. As authorized by Executive Order No. 9396 (Sec. I, Bull. 22, WD, 1943) superseding Executive Order No. 9075 (Sec. III, Bull. 11, WD, 1942, citations of the following unit by Commanding General, Twelfth Air Force, in General Order No. 44, 14 April 1944, under the provision 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, are confirmed. The citation reads as follows:

The 319th Bombardment Group (M) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy. Repeatedly demonstrating superior achievement in precision bombing during critical periods in the Italian campaign, the 319th Bombardment Group was in a large measure responsible for the complete interdiction of rail communication between Florence and Rome which resulted from a supreme effort by our medium bombers. On 11 March, the 319th Bombardment Group distinguished itself by conspicuous battle action when its group formation of 25 B-26's excelled others in the same mission by dropping 96 1,000-pound bombs with pin-point accuracy on the marshalling yards at Florence. Of the 250 units of rolling stock in the yards approximately 50 were damaged or derailed. Thirty locomotives in the repair yards were destroyed or damaged. All tracks in the target area were cut, and a concentration of craters in the south half of the area completely isolated the Central Station. Heavy damage was inflicted upon buildings of a chemical works, upon repair sheds and warehouses. A string of bombs fell in the Old Fort where 60 motor vehicles had been parked and several adjoining buildings were destroyed. Photographic reconnaissance on 16 March confirmed that all through lines were still cut at many points and that the yards were impassible. Realizing that the carrying of a maximum bomb load on a mission of maximum range involving a hazardous overwater route under adverse weather conditions demanded flawless mechanical performance, the ground personnel displayed untiring zeal and devotion to duty in preparing and servicing their aircraft. Despite errorless navigation, two of the bombers were forced to land at friendly airdromes to refuel. All other reached the home base safely. The success of this mission, which struck such a devastating blow to the enemy, exemplifies the highest type of leadership, team work, and flying skill, and is in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service of the United States.

By Order of the Secretary of War:

G.C.MARSHALL, Chief of Staff

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developed a real attachment to it. And the combat crews had great confidence in its ability to take a beating and yet bring them back. Besides, the B-25 was the arch rival of the B-26, but it was a friendly rivalry between the two Wings in the 12th Air Force from the first.

The records show that the 319th was "picked" to be the first to make the conversion, but the Colonel's brother once told us that the three Group Commanders had been called into Wing Headquarters and had drawn straws. Colonel Randy was very chagrined at having drawn the short straw, but decided to accept it as a challenge. That is how he presented it to his men.

Normally it took several months for a unit to make a conversion to a different aircraft, but because of the critical need for air support in Italy, it would not be possible to take the Group out of operation for that length of time. The Colonel set the goal for making the change-over at about six weeks without losing one day of combat! This is the challenge he presented to his men.

Once the shock of the announcement was over, most of the men agreed that if they had to change planes, they preferred the Mitchell over any other ship.

Work began in earnest. On 7 October 1944 orders were cut scheduling the ground crew to the B-25 units of the 57th Wing for training over the next three weeks, a third of the

number (approximately 25 men) from each squadron going each week. This would mean extra duty for the Crew Chiefs and Mechanics maintaining the B-26s.

On 10 October the Group received the first four "second-hand" B-25s for training purposes, but new ships began arriving almost daily, in fact there were almost daily trips to Tunis to secure more. By the 16th each squadron had four planes. Men from the B-25 units had moved in and were versing the men in all phases of the operations. All pilots were being checked out on the Mitchell.

Crews tried to get in as much flight time as possible, weather permitting. Some pilots logged as much as six hours a day of formation flying. Meanwhile combat missions continued to be flown in the B-26.

By 1 November the 319th was sufficiently equipped with the new airplane and well enough trained to make the conversion. Hopes were dashed, however, when the weather did not cooperate, and it wasn't until 4 November that their first operations in the B-25's were carried out. Each squadron sent a mission of eighteen aircraft against railroad bridges with excellent results.

On 10 November 1944 the 319th Bomb Group was transferred from the 42nd Bombardment Wing to the jurisdiction of the 57th Bombardment Wing, Brig. Gen. Robert D. Knapp Commanding.

THE SECOND BEGINNING

4 November . . . ! The beginning of a new era! The same old targets, but a different airplane.

The crews had been practicing with the B-25 for a little over a month, and on the 4th they could see how much the practice worked. The weather was good. The 319th put up four separate missions: a 24 ship formation against the Piazzola Rail bridge, which got good

coverage on the target, another 16 ship formations against the rail bridge at Montebello, Italy with a cluster covering the east approach; a 18 ship flight against a bridge at Ponte S. Pietro Bergamo, with all bombs striking long; and finally a 17 ship flight made a strike on the Orio Litta rail bridge, with excellent results knocking out two spans. These missions were numbers 418, 419, 420 and 421 for the group. On 14 November 1944

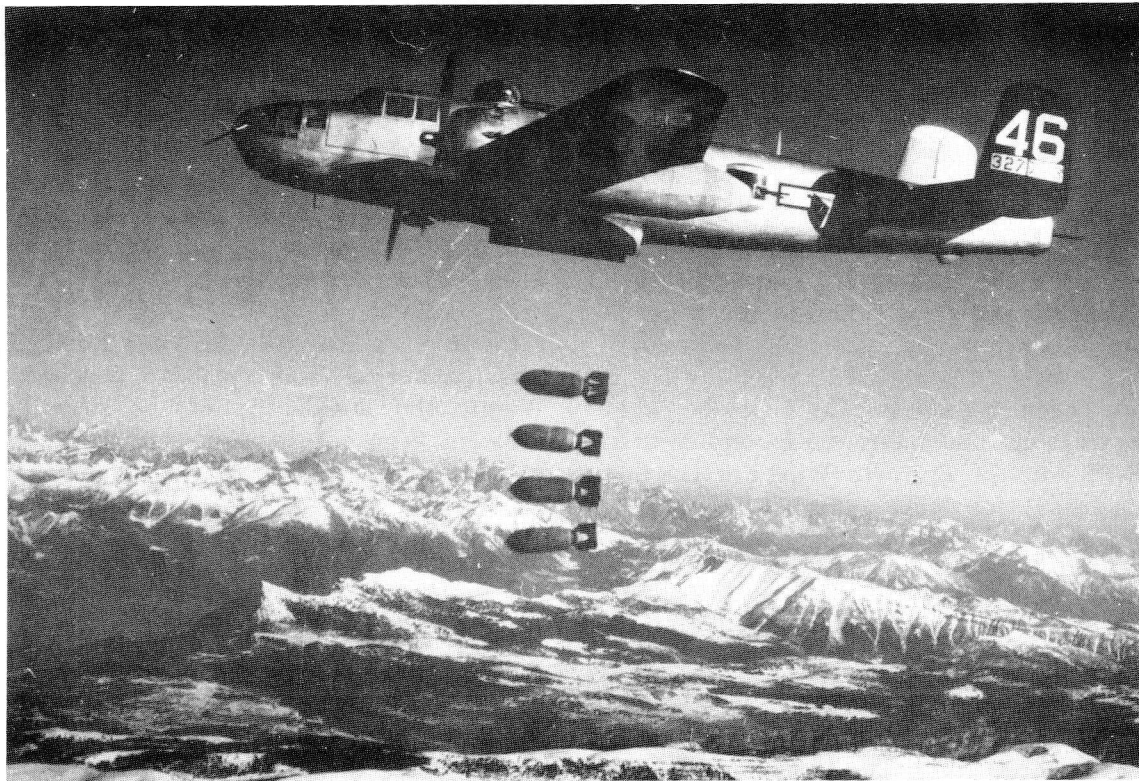
a letter of comendation was sent to all 319th personnel from Colonel Hozapple which states:

"I wish to extend my heartiest congratulations to all members of this command for the superb job done by you during our conversion from B-26 to B-25 type aircraft, and also during the initial phase of their employment. The hard work and real cooperative spirit shown by everyone has again confirmed my belief that the 319th has no equal in "this or any other theater. This is the first and only example known to me where a combat unit in the field has made a complete conversion without losing any operational time. To a real outfit I am proud to be one of you."

Not only had the challenge been met but completed in record time. Missions were flown each day, weather permitting. Of the remaining twenty-six days in the month of November the 319th flew missions on seventeen of them flying a total of 40 separate mission, and had no losses, but some of the B-25's were damaged.

Thanksgiving Day came and went like any other day, except that it was the third that they had spent overseas.

On 28 November 1944 the 319th flew it's anniversary mission. Their third year of operations began on the 29th. December proved to be a wet month, with only fourteen days operational. Despite the rain the Group



THE NEW LOOK

was able to fly 32 separate missions. Targets reached as far as Pescheria, Yugoslavia.

On 10 December over San Michele the 319th lost its first B-25. Number 60 went down, on fire with HERMAN, STEPHENS,

PIZZEFERRATO, STODGILL, and SMITH on board, only two 'chutes were seen. 22 December saw the loss of two more one over San Ambrosio and the second caught fire in the return trip near the Isle of Capri and the crew bailed out into the sea.



MERRY CHRISTMAS 1944

Some of the guys with Colonel Hozapple (center front) on Christmas day

Christmas Day 1944. The weather was lousy! Cloudy all day. Some of the guys went duck hunting. Another group shot a wild pig and brought it back to their mess hall for dinner. Christmas Dinner was a formal affair, Class A's, .. Blouses and all.

On Dec 26 the group went back to work, flying three separate mission all with good results. Got some flak, and some damage. On 31 December Same usual weather. Sometimes fair over Corsica, but closed down in the Brenner. The first two flights sent up encountered this over Chiusaforte. Another flight went to Piazzola and had no problem with the weather. No losses. These completed mission numbers 490, 491, and 492.

At 1600 hours on the 31st, Colonel Hozapple called a meeting of all personnel. Standing on the bed of a truck he announced that the 319th had flown its last mission in this theater and would be returning to the continental United States.

Official documentation for the 319th being relieved from assignment to the 57th Bombardment Wing is not available. This occurred on 31 December 1944.

By 2 January 1945 Air Corps equipment was turned in to supply in preparation to leave Corsica. Men had begun to move to Pomigliano, near Naples. They boarded the "West Point" and were homeward bound on 15 January 1945.

This brings to a close the story of the 319th Bombardment Group (M). They were a group of "boys" was back in the summer of 1942 when they came to the M.T.O. They were molded and tempered in the flames of battle. Now they were returning a group of seasoned veterans.

But they must endure more of the heat of war before they can return "HOME."



Drawn by Captain Jack G. Mair, Pilot
340th Bomb group 489th Squadron

321st BOMBARDMENT GROUP (Medium)

ACTIVATED

3 August, 1942

ENTERED COMBAT

12 March, 1943

DEACTIVATED

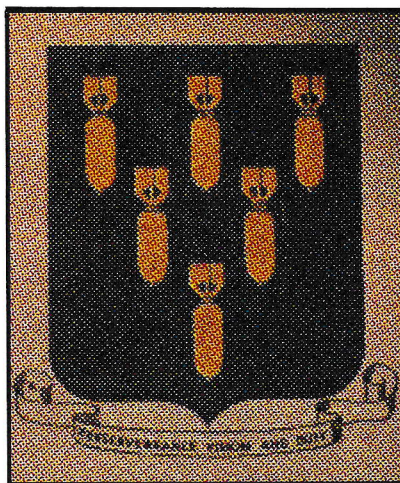
September 1945



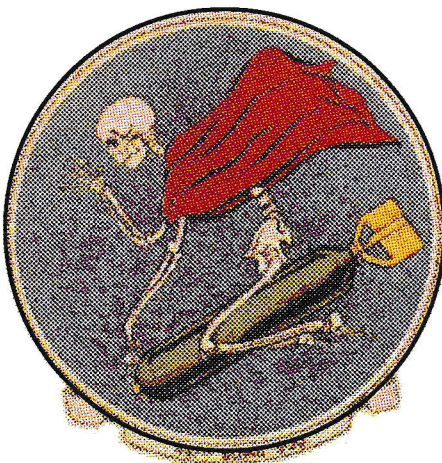
445th SQ.



446th SQ.



321st Group



447th SQ.



448th SQ.

THE 321ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP

On June 19, 1942 orders were cut authorizing the organization of a medium bombardment group. The new group would be organized with the same table of organization as the standard medium group. The new group would carry the number 321st the four squadrons numbered 445, 446, 447, and 448.

A week later, on 26 June 1942 the orders were cut placing the 321st Bombardment Group on active duty, unfortunately the earliest records of the group have not been preserved. The identity of the commanding officer who served from 26 June until 3 August has not been found, so the first commander, of record was Colonel William C. Mills who held the command until an unrecorded date in September 1942. On that date Colonel Robert D. Knapp was appointed to command the 321st. He would guide and nurture the group of young men who soon began to arrive in Columbia, South Carolina. These were not experienced flyers as we learn from Bob Grau 445 who says, "We arrived at Columbia AAB via C-47 from Victorville, California scheduled to be co-pilots in the newly formed 310th Bomb Group. But shortly after we arrived a group of us were pulled out to become the nucleus of the 321st."

A short time later the Group was sent to Walterboro, South Carolina to begin the training that would prepare them for the job ahead: formation flying, gunnery of all types, bombing from both low level and medium level. It meant practice, practice and more practice. Then, nearly at the end of the training, the 321st was assigned duty with the Army ground maneuvers. They were fortunate to be picked to participate in this operation for it added training that they could not have obtained otherwise. The maneuvers simulated some of the experiences that they would not have had until actual combat.

It was during these maneuvers that several shortcomings in the armament of the B-25



COLONEL ROBERT D. KNAPP
321st Bomb Group Commander
September 1942 July 1945

Colonel Robert D. Knapp a native of Alabama and a career Air Force officer dates back to World War I. He received his Commission as 2nd Lt. in 1918 and was trained to fly Handly Page bombers, but never entered combat. Col. Knapp holds pilot's license #185 signed by Wilbur Wright.

During the years between WWI and WWII Knapp had varying assignments in most all phases in the growing Air Force. In September 1942 he assumed command of the 321st Bomb Group, guided it through training and led them overseas.

On December 5, 1943 Colonel Knapp relinquished command of the 321st Bomb Group and assumed command of the new 57th Bombardment Wing (M). At that time he was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General.

were revealed. . In January 1943 the 321st moved to Macon, Georgia to have modifications to correct those shortcomings. Lt. Robert Grau, a pilot in the original 445th cadre, tells us about those shortcomings . . .

"The B-25 at that time had a Bendix turret which could be raised and lowered in the belly of the plane. While it would turn 360 degrees, the eye-piece for it viewed through a prism which reduced your arc of vision to about 40 degrees, so not much of that 360 degrees was covered. The chances of seeing an enemy plane were almost nil." He continued, "We took out the turret, and covered the hole in the floor, then cut a hole in each side of the plane and put a .50 cal. guns in the hole, then we put a .50 cal. in the nose for the bombardier to cover that section. The engineer could fire a .50 cal. through the tail end of the fuselage. We had almost every area covered by at least one gun."

After modifications were completed the Group moved to Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida, their Port of Embarkation.

Meanwhile the Ground echelon moved to Staten Island prior to boarding the USS Elizabeth E. Stanton which was to take them overseas. On 7 February they boarded, and at dawn the following morning they shoved off for a destination unknown to them. Apparently the 26 ship convoy had no particular problems in the crossing, for the "Stanton" docked at Oran at dawn 21 February 1943.

About eleven miles outside of Oran was a bivouac area where the Ground echelon of the 321st Bomb Group camped for a few days after arriving. The area covered the top of a hill and was given a variety of names, none of which was complimentary and many were not even printable, one of the milder being, "MUD HILL". They reached that desolate barren location in the dead of night of February 21, 1943, after marching four miles in the rain with full equipment from the nearest rail station. They fought their way to the top of the muddy slope and attempted to pitch their wet pyramidal tents in the dark and without tools. "SNAFU" was the mildest

expression to describe the state of affairs. There was little sleeping that first night, but the sun came out the following morning. The camp was put into order and the men buckled down to life overseas.

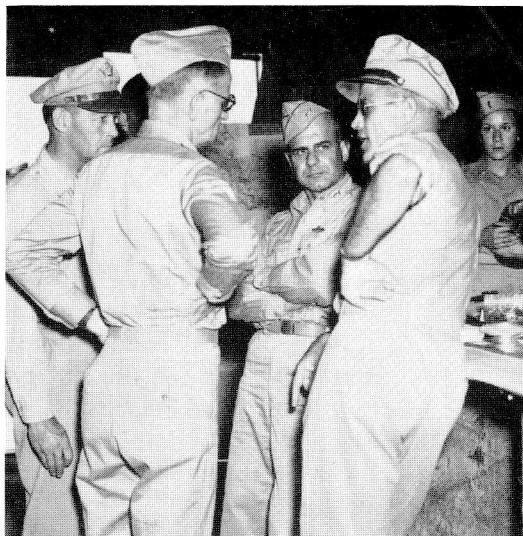
The Flight echelon was placed under the control of the ATC (Air Transport Command) for the flight overseas. Immediately several hassels began between Colonel Knapp and officials of the ATC, the first being over two Squadron Commanders; Officials told Col. Knapp that he would have to leave behind the two men in question. They said that their performance against the Germans was doubted. Both men were sons of German Officers during WWI, who had immigrated to the U.S. Colonel Knapp stood his ground, "I told them that these two are very fine officers, and I have every confidence in them, and I am taking them with me!" The second problem occurred with the number of aircraft that were scheduled to make the trip as one flight. ATC had never handled that many aircraft in one flight before. Colonel Knapp was told that they would only clear one Squadron at a time. And that various stations commanders along the way did not have the facilities to handle that many aircraft. Once more Colonel Knapp stood firm and said, "They don't have to 'handle' them; all I want is gas, oil and food. We will take care of any maintenance that occurs, and if necessary we will help man the gas pumps. I have an extra Crew Chief with each plane, so we can handle everything except housekeeping. We will even sleep on the floor if necessary. But we are going to stay together." On 11 February the 321st Bomb group moved out of Morrison Field as one flight under the control of ATC.

We will rely on one of Robert Grau's letters home to learn about some of the adventures he encountered on the trip overseas.

"We were briefed for our overseas flight Each pilot was given \$1,500.00 cash because Colonel Knapp had declared our quarters inadequate and therefore each crew member was entitled to per diem to be paid by the pilot. A quart of booze was also given to the pilot, but ours mysteriously disappeared.

"We flew the approved southern route . . . Puerto Rico. . . British Guiana (where the Jonestown massacre occurred many years later) . . . then on the Belem, Brazil . . . Natal, Brazil. . . We took off for Ascension Island at 30 second intervals, briefed on a heading and the winds aloft as best they could, and a radio frequency at the island. We were told that they changed this frequency often for security reasons. Since I had no navigator on board, I relied on the bombardier for headings. We flew for several hundred miles with no reading from Natal radio, but eventually we picked up Ascension radio and were mightily relieved when the peaks of the island came into view. Landing was another unique experience . . . the runway seemed to be short, and located between a couple of mountain peaks, and was 50 to 100 feet higher in the center than it was on either end. The taxi strips were gouged out of the walls of the mountain; it seemed that your wingtip was going to hit the wall.

"There were no further incidents in the flight on the Marrakech, Morocco, except there we lost a plane. When he landed his nose wheel struck a rock and folded; the plane just plowed on down



WHERE DO YOU WANT US?

L-r: Gen. Spaatz, Gen. Doolittle, Col. Knapp.

the runway on its nose. No one was hurt. The date was 22 February 1943.

"The next day we flew on from Marrakech to Oujda, French Morocco where we stayed for a few days. Then on to Ain M'Lila, Algeria which was our first battle station."

The Ground echelon boarded "40 and 8" cars on the railroad and made the trip from Oran to Oujda on 6 March 1943. This was the first time that the Ground and Flight personnel had been together since 21 January at DeRidder, Louisiana.

At a meeting with General Spaatz and General Doolittle it was decided that the 321st would be assigned to the 47th Bombardment Wing of the North African Strategic Air Force, and that they would begin operation from Ain M'Lila, Algeria. The entire Group soon settled in on that dusty Landing Ground, just a short time after the battle of Kasserine Pass.

AIN M'LILA, ALGERIA

The date for commencement of operations for the 321st Bomb Group was scheduled to be 12 March 1943. But their first mission did not come off until 15 March 1943. It was an attack on a landing ground (airfield) at Meouna, Tunisia. 15 aircraft led by Colonel Knapp, and escorted by P-38's encountered heavy and accurate flak over the target. They dropped several strings of fragmentation bombs on the dispersal area of the field. A number of fires were observed. All planes returned safely. The first mission was under their belts.

Five days after their first mission the 321st B-25's had a chance to teach the enemy fighters that they were not to be taken lightly with. They were on a sea sweep in the Sicilian Straits when they were attacked by about thirty fighters from bases in Tunisia. Seven were downed, four of which were bagged by the modified gun positions. Tail gunners accounted for one Me-109 and one Me-210, left waist gunner also accounted for one Me-109 and one Me-210. One B-25 was lost and one crash landed. Both had been damaged by flak, and were attacked by fighters.

Little has been recorded of life there at Ain M'Lila, but a glimpse can be seen in a letter written by Lt. Robert Grau 445 to his parents.

March 18, 1943.

" Dear Mom and Pop:

...Really wish I could be there to enjoy a nice warm house and bed with you. Here it is moderately warm on sunny days and chilly and damp on rainy days. We are living in pyramidal tents which are ok, but the sloping ground is not so good. We hope to get cots later. I'm feeling fine and we get fairly good grub. It is mostly of a hash nature, but is good anyway. We buy eggs from the Arabs to lunch on. They cost us 4 cents apiece but money isn't much good to us anyway, and we enjoy the eggs. If one bargains with the Arabs long enough a pretty good deal can be made, but it takes a lot of patience, which you know I don't have a great deal of.

"Right now I'm writing by the light of a flashlight, my bombardier is strumming on his guitar and the squadron Doc. is humming a melody. It sounds pretty good at times."

The 321st was active during March and April 1943. By 13 May 1943 they had flown 51 missions, thirty-one of which were directed against shipping in the Sicilian Straits, fifteen against enemy air bases, four against the vital communications center at Mateur, and one against a railway junction. The initial combat assignments for the 321st had been very successful.

When enemy resistance in North Africa ceased, targets became more distant. So during last day of May and first two days of June 1943 the Group moved their base of operations closer. It was to a base at Souk el Arba, Algeria that had just been vacated by an A-20 group.

SOUK el ARBA, TUNISIA

The 321st's move from Ain M'Lila shortened the flying time to the newly attacked islands

of Pantelleria and Lampedusa. These small but heavily fortified islands remained occupied after the fall of Tunisia, and stood in the path of an invasion force that would soon be going into Sicily.

Starting on 6 June 1943 the Group began working over the anti-aircraft batteries on the two islands. Individual gun batteries were assigned for an individual mission with results being mixed. The 321st was operating with the other medium groups as well as fighter-bombers.

Pantelleria and Lampedusa were the first heavily fortified locations to surrender because of aircraft attacks alone. . . without a manned occupying force.

General Arnold sent the following message to General Spaatz:

"The entire Air Force joins me in congratulations to the Allied Air Force of North Africa upon highly successful completion of the Pantelleria operations. The tremendous number of bombs dropped and negligible losses of planes speak well for planning, preparation and execution. Northwest African Air Forces have achieved a notable victory. This victory has been made possible only by the enthusiasm, skill, determination and bravery which all elements of the force have displayed. We have maintained and improved time standard which was so vital a factor in the fall of Tunisia."

During a mission to the landing ground at Sciacca on 15 June the Group encountered heavy flak along with several enemy fighters. Two B-25's were hit, one of which crash landed at Mateur. The bombing results were mixed with some of the bombs failing to release. Hits were observed on aircraft parked in an olive grove.

On the 15th Major Heinlen, Commanding Officer of the 448th Squadron was transferred to Headquarters Northwest African Air Forces. His command was taken over by

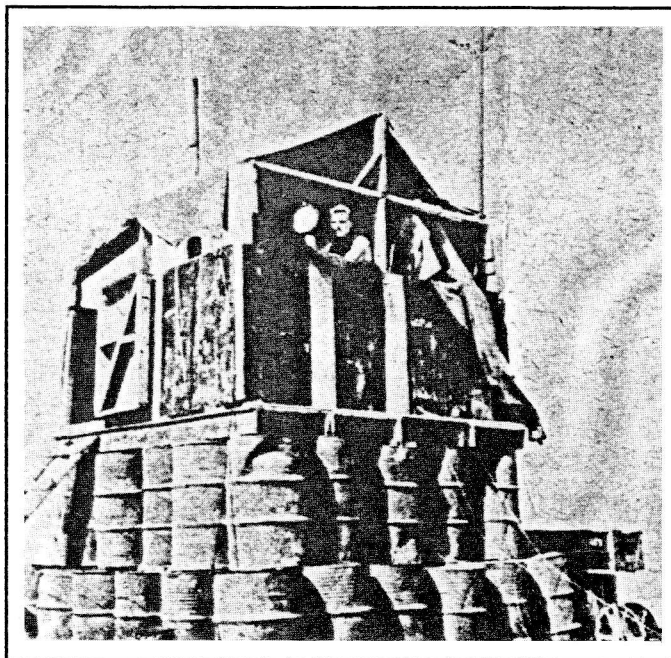
Capt. James P. Bates. Also on 21 June the Group hit the rail facilities at Battipaglia including the marshalling yards and rolling stock with some bombs falling short and other long into the town.

On June 24 the target was the Olbia-Venafiority Airdrome. This installation was hit by a thirty-six plane formation. On this mission there were two enemy aircraft destroyed, with one probably destroyed with 2 more damaged. In addition to the line damage, barracks and administration buildings were set on fire. The 321st went back to Sciacca Airdrome on the 28th, inflicting more damage to aircraft and facilities.

By 1 July the Group was well established at Souk el Arba and were carrying out damaging blows against the enemy. While there was not much time for recreation the men found some time to visit Tunis, Bizerte and Bone. The hot baths were especially inviting. A Roman hot bath consisted of two large stone tubs, one with hot water and the other with cold water. The heat for the hot tub was maintained by burning dried camel dung. While the odor was very offensive, the hot bath felt great. With

transportation being somewhat less than great, men still were able to travel to the excellent beach at Tebarka. Then there was a peasant little village, Ain Draham, in the mountains which had a little restaurant - hotel Beau Sejour and a Hotel Bellvue. A chapel was set up for Sunday Services at Souk el Arba with the seats being discarded bomb-fin cases. Wires were stretched overhead to support a tarpaulin which could be hurriedly pulled over in case of rain.

Some time late in the month of July a detachment of B-25-G's were assigned to the 321st. They were to operate as a special detachment to fly special type missions, as well as with the main body. The "G's" flew missions against shipping with their 75 mm cannon in addition to the medium altitude missions. Sea sweeps were a daily diet for the 321st. The "G's" flew their first mission on 5 August against Guspini Switching Station (electrical). It was a medium altitude bombing mission, and several hits were scored on a sub-station adjacent to the target. There was no enemy opposition.



321st "TOWER"
Souk el Arba

August 1st was a big day. . . the Group was one year old. The Group had come a long way in that year. They had played a large role in the reduction of Pantelleria and Lampadusa, the heavy bombardment of Sicily which forced the abandonment of the island by the Nazi forces. They also had handed the Axis some heavy blows on Italian soil.

So a celebration was in order! On Sunday August 1st a program was held with Gen Ridenaur, C.O. of the 47th Bomb Wing, and Col. Lund, 47th Wing engineering Officer as guests of honor. Colonel Lowell served as Master of Ceremonies which helped the ceremony from becoming too serious. Gen. Ridenaur addressed the gathered group. He praised the high achievement and enviable record that the Group had attained. Colonel Knapp presented Purple Heart Medals to twenty men who had been wounded in action against the enemy. He also presented several hundred Air Medals to the Squadron Commanders for presentation to their personnel who had earned them. The program closed with the playing of the National Anthem. The balance of the day was declared a holiday.

SOLIMAN, TUNISIA

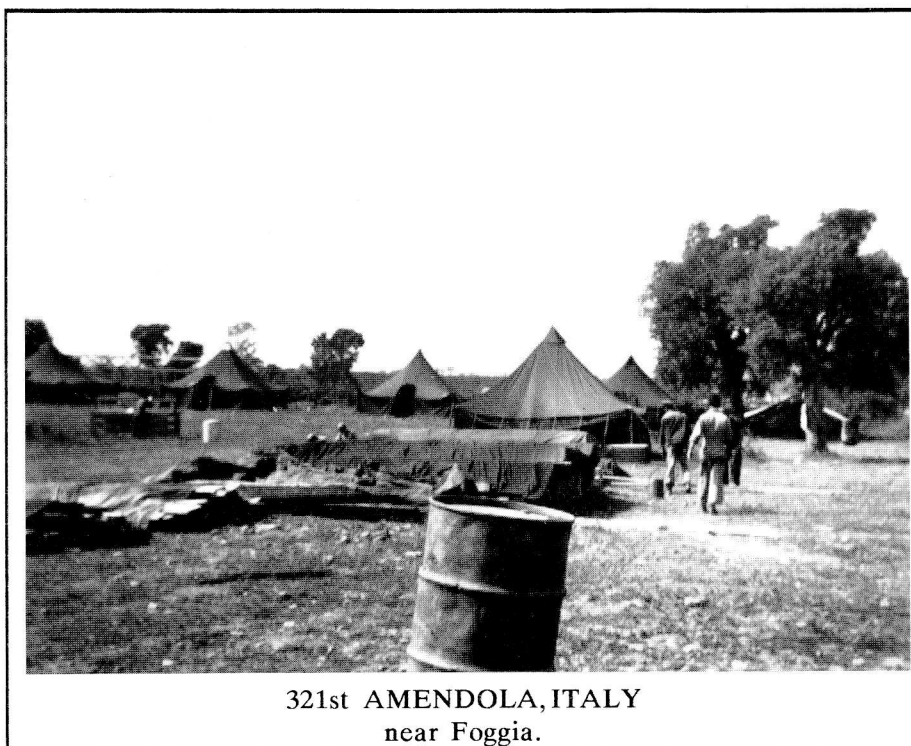
The Group went on the move again on 8 and 9 August. Once again to be closer to potential targets. Operations would now be conducted from a place called Soliman, Tunisia located about twenty-five miles from the town of Tunis. Again, a letter home by Lt. Grau reveals conditions at this place.

" 12 August 1943

Dear Mother and Dad:

You should see our tents now . . by the way where do you get this 'Living in a tent again' stuff. We've lived in tents ever since we entered combat . . sometimes pup-tents but most of the time in pyramidal's. At any rate, we are pitched in between sand dunes; no dust and protected enough so the sand doesn't blow and have the entire tent floor covered with a rough fiber matting. We swim every day since our tents are right on the beach next to the Mediterranean."

Conditions were a bit different than those at Souk el Arba, but tents were still the means of shelter. The only "permanent" buildings were the usual Quonsets. Here the men devised a system to get rid of the "chow line",



HEADQUARTERS FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE
APO 520 U.S.ARMY

18 November 1943

AG 201.22

SUBJECT: Commendation

TO : Commanding Officer 31st Bombardment Group (M)
THRU: Commanding General 47th Wing.

1. The 321st Bombardment group (M) has been in this Command since March 15, 1943. During that period the Group has flown two hundred thirty-three (233) missions totalling four thousand two hundred thirty three (4230) sorties and has successfully dropped four thousand five hundred thirteen (4513) tons of bombs on a wide variety of land and naval targets. Twenty-six (26) of the group's aircraft were lost in combat as against seventy-eight (78) enemy aircraft destroyed, probably destroyed or damaged. During this period the group has consistently maintained the lowest record for early returns of any unit in the Command.

2. This record is one of which every man in the organization can well be proud. It reflects great credit upon the Group Commander and upon the individual work of each officer and man. Furthermore, the record is all the more creditable in view of the operating conditions which frequently presented almost insuperable difficulties.

3. With the transfer of the 321st Bombardment Group from this Command, I desire to express to each officer and man my appreciation for the contribution he has made toward the splendid record achieved and to wish the Group continued success in its new assignment.

J.H.Doolittle
Major General, UAS,
Commanding

A TRUE COPY:

THOMAS W. ASHTON,
1st. Lt., Air Corps.

men standing in line in the sun, they reserved a place by putting their mess kits in the line, and then sitting down in the shade until chow was called. The new location was close to the blue Mediterranean so the men spent as much "off" time as possible in the cool clear water. And being near the larger city of Tunis they were able to visit it whenever transportation was available.

During the month of August 1943 the Group continued working on both sea borne and land targets, all with mixed results. The "G's", using both skip bombing techniques and their 75mm guns, scored many hits. The mission of 18 August is a good example of this effort. Four "G's" took off at 1100 hours on sea sweep in the Gulf of Eufemia. The first target, located at 1310 hours, was a large landing craft north of Ficumefreddo. Three hits at the waterline were scored. The second target, located at 1325 hours about eight miles north of Pizzo, was a medium merchant vessel. At least one hit at the waterline was seen. Then the flight skip-bombed it, and the ship broke into two pieces.

It is told, that on 6 August 1943, while on a mission to a road junction a mile north of Gesso, Sicily, one of the escorting P-38's was seen to splash in a crash landing at sea. One of the Group's planes dropped a dinghy and the pilot was seen swimming toward it. Could have been a "Thank You" for the assistance that was rendered by the P-38 pilots to a 321st aircraft on 4 July 1943 After an attack on Gerbini?

The month of September saw a continuation of the attacks on Axis shipping in the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian Seas. The B-25-G's continued the low level attacks using the 75mm weapon average in effectiveness. They were also used with the "C's and D's" on medium level attacks. This was more difficult for the pilots since there was no bombardier to ready the aircraft for the drop. So details like opening the bomb bay doors. . . setting the arming switches, etc while still trying to stay in close formation (close formation was the primary objective for a wingman) in order to keep the pattern close and then dropping in accordance with his lead aircraft's drop..

Air opposition was very heavy with several

different types of enemy aircraft, both German and Italian. At one point a green colored P-38 with red spinners and American markings, showing a white cross on belly, fired on the B-25's but was driven off with no damage to the bombers. At another point five single engine enemy aircraft slid in under the escort, closed to short range, made one pass and peeled off when attacked by escorting P-38's.

The weather was good during the month of September allowing 21 medium altitude missions plus 7 low level sweeps by the "G's".

GROTTAGLIA, ITALY

The month of October brought many more changes to the 321st Bomb Group. They became the first medium bomb group to be based on the mainland of Europe when they moved from Soliman, Tunisia to Grottaglia Airdrome, Italy.

This new base would be very different from the North African bases that the Group had occupied. A separate mess was set up for headquarters for the first time, and Officer's Club was established in the building in which Group Headquarters was situated. In one of the two rooms a bar was set up which became very popular. The Club was used nightly. It even had a feminine touch. Nurses from the Air Evacuation Unit stationed at the field added that touch and made informal dances possible.

Grottaglia, located on the heel of Italy about twenty miles from Taranto, brought the 321st even closer to the lines. The airfield was crowded by aircraft, both British and American. The change in location also brought a new target area and almost a whole new campaign.

The effort to get operations under way was almost herculean. Heavy rains, and the resulting mud hampered the movement of the rear echelon. Trucks bogged down, mud on the "runway" prevented transport planes from flying with a full load. Since Soliman was one of the few fields open, because of the weather, it was clogged with aircraft. All of this slowed the movement. Sometimes pilots

of the transports couldn't get out and had to stay overnight. But eventually everything got moved. This effort is illustrated by this short passage from another of the letters from Capt. Grau to his parents:

"October 1943

Dear Mother and Dad:

We moved the Group to Grottaglia, Italy. We flew all of the line personnel in the airplanes. I think that we carried about 17 men in each plane. Their personal belongings came later."

The first mission flown from Grottaglia, Italy was flown on 4 October against Argos Air-drome in Greece, where it was reported that several fires were started, and that there were several hits on aircraft on the ground. The 447th lost one plane soon after take off. Lt. Brinkley lost an engine and was unable to return to the field. He crashed landed a few miles from the base. Lt. Shaw, co-pilot, was killed in the crash. The rest of the crew escaped but were hospitalized for various injuries. Luckily the plane did not catch fire, nor did the bombs explode.

Visibility was very poor, requiring bombing through a hole in the cloud formation, when a frag mission was flown on 5 October against the Salonika/Sedes Airdrome. But in spite of the poor visibility hits were seen on parked aircraft, and on hangars and revetments, causing explosions.

All wasn't the greatest in the new base as Captain Grau tells his parents:

"16 October 1943

Dear Mother and Dad.

Here in the balmy clime of southern Europe it seems to rain most of the time. Italy is rather interesting with all of the stone fences, olive orchards, clustered cities, narrow crooked streets, etc. But personally I haven't seen anything overseas that can even begin to compare with our USA. Perhaps there is something worthwhile in northern Europe, but I don't have any desire to find out."

"At this time many of us are coming down with yellow jaundice. That is

miserable! Can't keep anything down, have diarrhea, just walking 50 feet makes you completely exhausted. I think that it is caused by our diet, no fresh vegetables, or fresh meat, only C rations, U rations and I rations, all canned food that supposedly contained a balanced diet of vegetable and Spam. I really detest it all".

The 8th of October saw a mission back to Athens/Eleusis airdrome using fragmentation bombs. Coverage was excellent with several fires and a flak battery on the edge of the field hit.

Nearly every day that there was flying weather, a mission was flown against enemy air installations in Greece. Some of the targets were hit multiple times.

The B-25-G unit was sent on detached service on October 15 to Gambut #3 to function under the British Coastal Command in Tobruk. This was an attempt to quell the threatened German invasion of the Allied controlled Dodecanese Islands. Captain Donald A. Bell as Commanding Officer of the detachment, and Lt. Sergius P. Neprash as his Adjutant and Intelligence officer.

The 321st's B-25-C & D series continued to fly missions over Greece. The targets continued to be enemy occupied airfields. However, on 16 October they flew a mission against the marshalling yards at Ancona, on the east coast of Italy. On the 18th they bombed both the east and west ends of the marshalling yards at Skoplje, Yugoslavia. Hits were seen on the east end, and sheds were set on fire on the west end. They returned to the same yards on the 20th with excellent results.

The group then returned their attention to the airfields in Greece, hitting Athens/Eleusis and Larissa airfield, Tirana airfield, and again back to Soloneka/Seles, all with frags, and excellent results. The 447th lost a plane with the crew listed as missing in action. The crew was: Lt. Baxter, pilot; Lt. Jordon, co-pilot; Lt. Muirhead, bombardier; Sgt. Newhouse, Radio; S/Sgt. Gregory, engineer; Sgt. Wagner, gunner; and Cpl. Leon, photographer.

The 321st Bomb Group was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for the efforts in assisting in the reduction of the German efforts in Greece and the Dodecanese Islands

On 27 October Colonel Knapp called a meeting of all of the Staff personnel of the Group and surprised them all by announcing that sometime after 1 November he would be leaving the 321st. He said that he would be transferred to TAF or similar organization. He also revealed that with the beginning of the month the Group would be changed from a strategic unit to a tactical one, and that operations would be different than before

November 1943 brought the changes, in the command structure, that Colonel Knapp mentioned. Two General Orders, the first from the General Air Support Command, and the second from the Twelfth Air Force, implemented those changes.

General Order #43, Air Support Command, dated 3 November 1943 effected the reassignment of the 321st Bomb group from the 47th Bomb Wing to the 57th Bomb Wing, Tactical Bomber Force, Colonel Gravely, commanding. This unit was located at Foggia, Italy. The Group was assigned to the 57th Bombardment Wing for administrative action only, while the operational activities were assigned to a British unit, the Tactical Bomber Force.

General Order #84 12th Air Force Headquarters, dated 4 November 1943, transferred the 321st Bombardment Group (M) from the 15th Air Force to the 12th Air Support Command.

These two orders changed the operational activities of the 321st from a strategic command to a tactical command.

The group flew two missions against rail facilities on the eastern side of Italy, one to Rimini and the second to Ancona marshalling yards, but for the most part the operations of the 321st did not change very much. They still bombed airfields, bridges and made sea sweeps. However, some of this began to change early in the month.

14 November 1943 saw the first raid by any Allied unit into Bulgaria. On that day the Group bombed marshalling yards at Sofia, Bulgaria. Hits were made on both choke points, locomotive shops, and on an overpass. Explosions were seen at the repair shops, with flames rising several hundred feet in the air. Two of the Me-109's were hit, one probable and one damaged. All planes returned safely. A letter of congratulations was received from Gen Ridenour, Commanding Officer of the 47th Bomb Wing, which simply said:

"Congratulations to all your aircrews for the excellent raid you carried out today. Please convey my thanks to all concerned."

Hopes of those flight crews who were nearing the 50 mission mark were dashed when Colonel Knapp announced that the custom of sending all combat crew members out of the combat zone after fifty missions would no longer hold. Instead upon reaching fifty missions it would be up to the Flight Surgeon to determine if the man was fit for further combat duty.

Once more it was time to move. Let the packing begin! But before the change of station was accomplished the B-25-G series aircraft, assigned to the 321st, were transferred with crews to the 310th Bomb Group. In return B-25-C&D series aircraft with crews were transferred from the 310th to the 321st.

FOGGIA, ITALY

Amendola Landing Ground

The Amendola Landing Ground was one of the satellite fields around Foggia, Italy. Advanced echelons began moving by truck to Amendola where there were no conveniences compared to Grottaglia. By the 24th all four squadrons were situated at Amendola and preparing themselves for operations.

The first mission was aimed at Sarajevo, Yugoslavia but was aborted because of weather, instead, the Ancona marshalling yards were hit. The following day the harbor and shipping facilities at Sibenik were hit, with good results. Several missions were flown between the 24th and the end of the month.

They returned to Sofia, Bulgaria and several of the other targets that had already been hit, some of them several times.

December brought bad weather to Italy either cancelling missions, or not being able to reach primary targets, and sometimes not even being able to reach the secondary. A mission was flown against road bridge northwest of Chieti, a town about 25 miles from the British Eighth Army lines. The formation was scattered when the lead plane was hit by flak just before the drop time. The east approach was believed to be hit. Two planes failed to return, both being shot down. Major Bates was pilot of the lead ship, with Lt Clark, co-pilot, and Captain Brown, Group Bombardier. A second mission was flown against the same bridge later in the day with better results.

On 5 December 1943 Colonel Robert D. Knapp was transferred from his command of the 321st Bomb Group to the Tactical Bomber Command. He had led the 321st from its inception, through all of the training, and for nine months in combat. Colonel Knapp sent the following letter to all personnel of the group:

"During the past 16 months that included three phases of training, Army maneuvers, and combat, I have enjoyed a degree of loyalty and support that has been most gratifying. In modifying our airplanes for combat, flying them to North Africa without loss and modifying them again with armor plate, waist and tail guns you have accomplished a marvelous job. The B-25 airplane as modified by this group undoubtedly save many lives and resulted in the destruction of many enemy aircraft. All B-25 airplanes now being manufactures are patterned from the modifications that originated in the Group.

"The combat record of this Group is one of which I am proud, and reflects great credit upon the individual work of each officer and enlisted man in this Group.

"I am extremely proud of the 321st group and will always feel in my heart that I am a part of it."

Lt. Colonel Charles T. Olmsted was appointed Commanding Officer as replacement for Colonel Knapp. Col. Olmsted had been Deputy Commander of the group.



Lt. Colonel Charles T. Olmsted

321st Commanding Officer

5 December 1943 17 March 1944

Colonel Olmsted had served as Group Operations Officer, and was instrumental in implementing the armament changes. In March 1944 he moved to the 57th Wing Headquarters. No more is found

A vote of thanks went out to Lt. Kneisel for the delicious Christmas dinner that was served. . . turkey and all the fixin's.

Bad weather and low clouds continued for most of the month of January. In spite of the weather 12 missions were flown against road bridges and some against shipping facilities.

AOC Sinclair, Commander of the Tactical Bomber Force talked to the combat crews and intelligence officers in the "granary" today, giving them a summary of his activities in the war, and then went on to explain why they had been hitting certain targets, and what the ground forces immediated objectives entailed.

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS TWELFTH AIR FORCE
APO 650

GENERAL ORDERS)
:
NUMBER 95)

16 July 1944

CITATION OF UNIT

Under the provisions of Circular 333, War Department, 1943, and Circular 26, North African Theater of Operations, 6 March 1944, the 321st Bombardment Group (M) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy.

The 321st Bombardment Group (M) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations on 8 October 1943. When the Allied invasion of the Italian mainland and simultaneous operation in the Aegean Sea dangerously exposed our extended supply lines to enemy air action from Luftwaffe units stationed in the Balkans, the 321st Bombardment Group, then in Africa, was ordered to occupy bases in southern Italy and immediately attack and neutralize the hostile Balkan airfields. On 8 October 1943 a formation of forty-eight B-25's, refueled by hand from five gallon cans and serviced only with such equipment as could be transported by Air from Africa, flew from Grottaglia, Italy, in a raid on the heavily defended Eleusis Airdrome near Athens, Greece. As the formation approached the target, a swarm of hostile fighters attacked, drawing off the escorts and permitting more than thirty enemy interceptors to engage the bombers unmolested. Distinguishing themselves in the ensuing battle by extraordinary heroism and unswerving determination in the face of desperate assaults by enemy fighters and anti-aircraft so intense that twenty-six B-25's were damaged and two were shot down into the sea, the bombers combat teams worked in perfect coordination to complete their mission. As the gunners kept up a withering fire that destroyed eight enemy fighters and disabled four others, the pilots resolutely maintained a compact and level formation, enabling their bombardiers to cover the assigned areas with a devastating pattern of fragmentation bombs on the dispersed aircraft and started a number of fires. During the critical days which followed, despite almost insurmountable difficulties which kept comparable units inoperative during a part of this period, the 321st Group continued uninterrupted and extremely effective bombing operations for the reduction of the original Balkan strength of the German IXth Air Force from 300 aircraft to 114, and lending invaluable support to the moral of the Yugoslav Partisan resistance, The gallantry, esprit d corps, and outstanding proficiency in combat displayed by the personnel of the 321st Bombardment Group have reflected the highest credit upon themselves and the Military Service of the United States.

By Command of Brigadier General Webster

OFFICIAL:

JOHN W. MONAHAN
Colonel, AC
Chief of Staff

/s/ William W. Dick
William W. Dick
Colonel, AGD
Adjutant

This explained the variety of targets, rail bridges, road bridges, shipping facilities and airfields.

Twenty-seven missions were flown during the month of January, 1944. This was a bit of a surprise because the first day indicated bad weather for the future. Just after mid-night on the first a heavy wind came up, more than usually seen in the Foggia area. It was so strong that even the center poles in the pyramidal tents began to bend. Some people who thought they were secure suddenly found their roof was gone. Then came the rain, hard rain, which continued without let up until late in the evening. The wind had also continued making things even more uncomfortable. The cooks moved their stoves into the group theater and managed to prepare their best meal. Main course. . . Roast Turkey.

After that the weather improved greatly. So they could start flying missions on 2 January. The first was against Terni, Yugoslavia marshalling yard. Terni's photos show two groups of bombs west of the choke point, and one cluster hit the main line near the choke point on the west end.

The following day Lt. D.G. Dobbins left his duties as Group Historian and Assistant Group S-2 and was assigned to 12th Air Force Headquarters. Lt. Serge P. Neprash assumed those duties..

The attacks continued along the Yugoslavia coast against both shipping and troops concentrations, barracks and other facilities.

After only one month and twenty days another move was imminent. This seemed reasonable because the Amendola base was becoming crowded with B-17's and B-24's, so much so that it was difficult to even park the planes, let alone taxi out. The 57th Fighter Group and the 321st were the only two Twelfth Air Force units in the area surrounded by 15th Air Force heavies. The new location was only 18 miles away from Amendola so moving equipment was no particular problem.



USO TROUPERS
With Humphrey Bogart and wife

FOGGIA, ITALY (Vincenza)

There were no facilities for indoor offices and movie house at Vincenza, so it was back to tents again.

A sheep-shed near the headquarters tents showed promise of becoming an Officers Club if much elbow grease was applied. It got a good dusting and swabbing and after a few chairs and tables were added along with a bar, and a radio and a heater it was almost like "home".

U.S.O. Shows with Hollywood stars were beginning to appear. Joe E. Brown's show on 27 January with his baseball pantomime made a hit with the troops. Two day later Humphrey Bogart, his wife (Mayo Methot) and Don Cummins had a case of trooper fatigue, but they put on a great show.

During the month of January the Group lost six planes, and some key people were claimed by the Twelfth Air Force. This, with a steady rotation of combat crewmen, made a shortage of personnel. Bombing accuracy began to slide, and morale dropped. When these problems began to become known, new crews came in. Things began to look up a bit even though some of the crews only had B-26 time to their credit. Most of them had no combat experience at all. Transition and

training was instituted to help overcome this problem.

Early in the month a new program was adopted. "At the end of each month the Group Commander will select one mission that was been outstanding during the month's operations and present a photo of plotted pattern of that mission. The "Raid of The Month for January: . . . Rieti Airdrome, 40 Miles northeast of Rome. Attacked on 19 January with eighteen aircraft.

Results: . Three elements covered the center of the landing ground with a heavy concentration of burst and a good pattern #2 One element dropped its bombs on N/E part of landing ground carrying across the road to TERNI. One element dropped on the northern corner of the landing ground and walked its bombs across the road to Terni into open area. Several hits were observed on the road to TERNI which forms the northern perimeter of the airdrome..

Group Commander Olmsted called the crews together, when he returned from a meeting at Tactical Bomber Force, and told them of the plans for a Fifth Army bridgehead south of Rome, at Anzio-Nettuno, that was to be made on the morning of 22 January. He explained the part the 321st would play in the overall plan.

On January 22 the 321st was assigned to bomb the Valmontone road junction almost in direct support of the ground forces who had just landed on the coast south of Rome. The first mission blocked the road so that 60 trucks had to turn back. The second mission against the same target did not pick up the aiming point soon enough and the formation bombed the road and railroad at Palestrina.

For the balance of the month, when weather permitted flying, the Group worked in support of the ground forces, except on the 27th when they bombed the town of Velletri with the loss of two aircraft.

The month of February was a dismal month for the 321st Bomb Group. They had been on location at Vincenzo for only about a month when another move was in the air. Rain and more rain drenched everything early in the month, in fact, the weather was so poor all

month, that only fourteen days of twenty-nine had decent flying weather.

They got missions in on 1 and 2 February and then the runway was so muddy that no missions got off until 8 February. But even that mission did not come off because visibility over the Orte marshalling yards was so poor that they could not drop.

Group headquarters enlisted men organized a party on the 9th. They called it "A Year and a Day Dance" in honor of the year and a day overseas. For the necessary women-folk the men "dragged" to the party an assorted group of Wacs, Nurses, Red Cross girls, and native girls from the Foggia area. Somebody spiked the punch with medical alcohol, so the less said about those details the better.

The weather did not clear enough for flying until 14 Feb. On that date they did bomb Perugia marshalling yards.

PAESTUM, ITALY (Gaudo)

The Group got the word on 14 Feb that they were going to move again. This time to the west coast of Italy on the old 12th Bomb group airfield (The 12th had been reassigned to the China Burma India Theater). The new base was of the all weather variety with plenty of hardstands, three of which were reserved for the Italian Air Force planes.

On the 18th planes took off for a mission to Campoleone and were to land at Guado on completion of the mission. The mission was aborted due to weather over the target, but they landed at Guado. The ground echelons had moved by truck.

The 19th of February was a dark day for the 321st Bomb Group. They flew two missions in direct support of the Anzio-Nettuno beachhead, and, five aircraft were lost on that day. Two of the five crews lost on the 19th were safe having crash landed at friendly bases. But five aircraft lost on a single day was the worst single day loss since the beginning of combat operations at Ain M'Lila. Much of the flak sent up by the Germans was

from the front line troops. This was compensated slightly by our downing nine of their fighters. about 25 miles south of Salerno.

The base at Guado was located about 25 miles south of Salerno and was more or less isolated, but points of interest were abundant. The town of Capaccio was a quiet little town inviting the visits of the men of the Group. Just down the road were the ancient Greek ruins at Paestum, of the "Temple of the Goddess of Hera". Ancient Greek architecture, still in good condition. And a half-mile from the runway was the beach on which the 5th Army landed in September. There were beached landing craft, fox holes and bomb craters to attest to those days.

For the greater part the targets assigned to the 321st during the month of March were of interdiction type, railroad bridges, road bridges, marshalling yards, anything that would help disrupt the German supply efforts. The main road from Florence to Rome was especially important. It looked as though the "sea sweeps" were ancient history for the 321st.

The month of March completed a full year of operations for the Group, and saw many changes, some surprising, come about for the 321st Bomb Group. On 1 March the 57th Bombardment Wing became operational, General Robert D. Knapp, Commanding, (formerly C.O. of the 321st). The Wing was now responsible for both Administration and Operations. The month of March also saw a change in Group Commanders. On 17 March Colonel Olmsted was moved from the Group to become Wing A-3. Lt Col. Remington was appointed temporary C.O. until the new man could get there. The "new man" was Colonel Richard H. Smith. He arrived on 26 March, and Colonel Remington reverted to his assignment as Deputy Group Commander.

Colonel Smith soon made it perfectly clear, to all of the combat crews, that 35% was NOT acceptable for the bombing accuracy for the 321st!. It was not long before the average began to rise. Weather still played havoc with the schedule. Missions would be scheduled, perhaps they wouldn't get off the ground, or perhaps they would reach the target area, but an underlayer of clouds would prevent bombing either the primary or the secondary.



COLONEL RICHARD H. SMITH

321st Group Commander

26 March 1944 28 January 1945

We have very little information about Colonel Smith. He was born in Texas 25 April 1910 and graduated from West Point in the Class of 1932.

Before taking command of the 321st on 26 March 1944 Col. Smith's was C.O. of the 68th Tactical Reconnaissance Group in the MTO.

We have no more information about his military career except that he retired as a Colonel.

Colonel Smith died 12 April 1989

On days that the weather was good enough to fly locally, they practiced, practiced and practiced. Mock missions were set-up even to briefing, join up, bombing with "Blue devils", return to base and finally debriefing.

On 15 March the group was scheduled to be a part of a mass bombing of the Abbey at Cassino with 36 aircraft. They were to be the 2nd group over the target, and smoke had already covered the target area making aligning to the aiming point difficult. The photos showed some strings hitting the town's southern sector, and others were short. The second mission that day attacked a troop and gun concentration west of Piedimonte. The area was fairly well covered, but many fell south and east of the town.

A mission flown on the 16 March was a disaster. One box of six dropped their frags on our ground forces. One man was killed and 5 seriously wounded. This was an expensive lesson for the Group.

On the 22nd the weather was miserable, Adding to that, Mt. Vesuvius forty miles away blew up burying the 340th Bomb Group. They made their way to Gaudo for shelter. The 340th, with borrowed airplanes (some from the 321st), flew missions from Paestum. It appeared that they would be operating from Guado. Squadron areas were selected for the 340th, as more and more men kept arriving from their wrecked installation at Vesuvius.

For the balance of March the 321st Group flew missions against such places as the marshalling yards at Perugia, supply and bivouac areas near Piedmonte and Castroceilo, the railroad bridges at Orvieto, and at Perugia. They made a little innovation in the way they carried their fragmentation bomb load. By double racking, or hanging two clusters on a shackle, they increased the load to twenty-two clusters per plane instead of sixteen. This was the first time this had been accomplished in combat.

The target for the month of March, chosen by Lt. Colonel Peter H. Remington, was Orvieto marshalling yard. This target was attacked on 11 March, 1944. Twenty-four planes went over the yards with very good results. At the time of this raid there were several cars on the siding with one or more carrying ammunition. There was a terrific explosion when the bombs hit. Damage was extensive to several warehouses and to the station.

As time moved on the 321st went back to Orvieto south bridge on 1 April. Photos showed the approaches hit, but the bridge intact. Another attack was in order. So on 10 April 24 aircraft went back and smothered the target, destroying the bridge and doing extensive damage to the tracks.

The group had an unusual incident on 13 April . . . At the Marsiano bridge just as the 321st started its bomb run a flight of aircraft from another group, approached on a collision course. As a result only 14 of the 26 aircraft

dropped, the remainder dove to avoid the other flight. Result . . . no bombs in the target area.

Much attention was given to the communication lines in and around Orte, Italy. Several missions were flown against all of the bridges in that area, some with good results, and some poor. The Group lost Captain Crowell and his crew on the 17th over Orte bridge. Four 'chutes were seen before the plane crashed.

It was evident from the crowded conditions at Guado that another move was in the works, but where? On 17 Lt. Col. Remington flew Major Moon, the advance echelon commander, to Corsica to locate a site for the 321st on the island. The speculation was over, Corsica was the next base.

For the first few days the 321st had aircraft operating from Ghisonoccia airdrome, home of the 310th Bomb Group. It was crowded for there were two other Groups operating there, as well as several small units. The 310th was very cooperative with maintenance and men. On 23 April the last boat load of "A" echelon docked at Porte Vecchio which is about 30 miles south of the proposed base at Solenzara

SOLENZARA. CORSICA

The new location was just north of the village of Solenzara, Corsica on the east coast of the island. This was the first "permanent" base the 321st had had since going overseas, and would be "home" for the 321st for about one year. The word "permanent" did not fit the situation at Solenzara completely for there were no buildings except the Quonsets that Group brought in. The runway was carved out of the briar brush along the edge of the Tyrrhenian. On each end of the runway a steel mat provided a run-up area but nowhere else. The runway itself was a clay surface so when it rained (which was often) the runway turned to slippery goo. It was necessary to hit the brakes immediately after lift off so the tires would not foul the inside of the wheel wells, perhaps jamming the landing gear.

It would seem from the records set by the



ALL ABOARD

Loaded and ready for the trip to Corsica from Italy.

by the 321st during the month of May, that they had gotten their act together. They flew 50 missions breaking all precedents in the number of sorties flown, targets hit and final the number of bombs in the "target area". It should be pointed out that having all of the bombs in the "target area" did not necessarily mean that the target was destroyed. At least one of those bombs in the "target area" had to hit the bridge, main line tracks, or the choke point directly.

After the 100% bombing on the Tedi road bridge on 25 May, General Knapp sent the Group a letter of congratulations for the improvement that they had made. He visited the 321st several times (almost weekly), and on several occasions other Generals visited the Group.

May 13 brought two unusual occurrences. First: Wing phoned a report of a submarine being sighted about 100 miles east of Corsica, and the 321st was to track it down. After flying a sub-search pattern for about an hour it was sighted, but it crash-dived to safety. That night the 340th Bomb Group received an all out enemy air attack. It was the first that any of the groups had

received. The day after the raid on the 340th there was a great increase in the depth of the fox holes that had been dug in the area.

The listing of the targets and the results of the raids on those targets would require several pages. It can be told that the B-25's (all three groups) of the 57th Bomb Wing hindered considerably the German conduct of the war in Italy. It nearly stopped the flow of material which the Nazi's needed to prosecute a war, and also hindered their retreat because of the lack of rail rolling stock.

Building projects began to show in all of the areas. Major Moon, who headed the advanced party scoured the area around Solenzara looking for both available material, and help, by which buildings could be built. He located a semi-abandoned saw mill. The owner agreed to saw logs into lumber for a percentage of the lumber. The catch was that the G.I.'s had to furnish the logs. So details of 321st men began to cut timber and haul it to the mill. Like a miracle permanent buildings began to appear.



LOOKING BACK

From the stern of the HMS Boxer we are looking back towards Italy while sailing to Corsica. The ship behind is the HMS Bruiser

SOLENZARA, CORSICA 1944 1991

Many changes have taken place in
the 47 years between.

1944

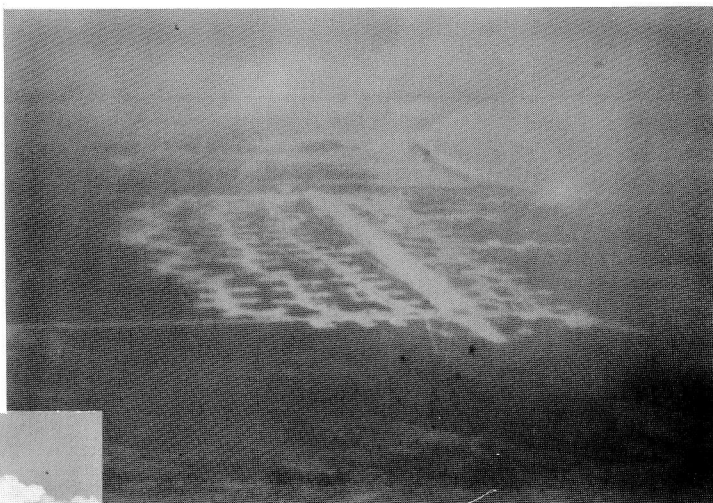


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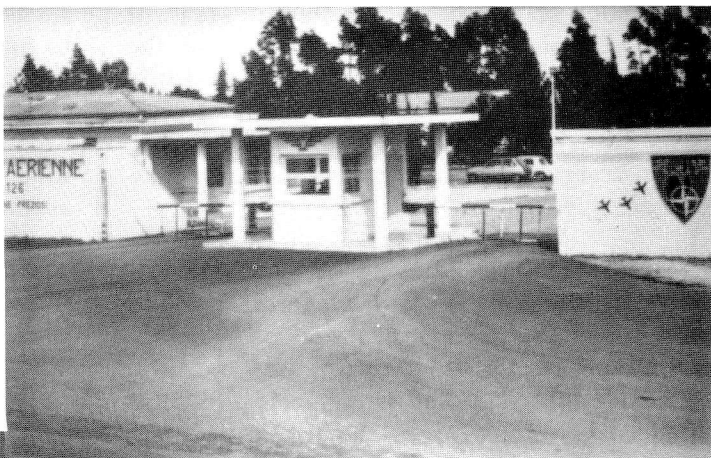
321st base at Solenzara, Corsica in 1944
viewed from about 1,000 feet looking north.
The hard-stands on right are 447th, those on
left are the other three squadrons.

left:

A view from the south end of runway at
Solenzara looking westward. A 446th aircraft
in background.



and 1991



above:

Entrance guard house at United
Nations air base at Solenzara
Corsica. This entrance is located at
same place as the entrance road to
field in 1944. This photo was taken
in 1976

left:

An aerial view of the base in 1991.
At that time the French Air Force
was operating the base and using
Mirage Fighters.



The raid of the month for May, 1944 were triple targets, all of which were 100% precision bombing. The target were the TODI road bridge; The VADO Viaduct; and The MASSA

down from Wing. There were never any attacks from anyone who might be classified as a "saboteur."



LET THE HAMMERING BEGIN.

north road bridge. Photographs show the excellent coverage of the target area.

Targeting during the months of June and July continued under the tactical operation "Mallory Major" to interdict all of the supply routes for the German Army. Bridges, road and railroad, viaducts, tunnels, fill for roadbeds all were targets for the B-25's of the 12th Air Force. Many letters of commendation and congratulations were transmitted to the 321st during these months. Their bombing average remained at the high level demanded by Colonel Smith. There was no more misses and no acceptable excuses for not hitting the target as briefed.

During the months the installations of Group headquarters and all of the squadrons became as close to permanent as possible in a combat zone. Life became almost routine. There were rumors about rumors. On 2 and 3 June it was rumored that German saboteurs had been landed by submarine north of Porto Vecchio, about 30 miles away. A bit later, on the 7th, parachutists dressed in khaki, at least five of them, were reported to be carrying sub-machine guns. Both of these reports came

The "Raid of the Month" for June was selected by Lt. Col. Charles Cassidy, Deputy Commander. Once more the selector yields to a perfect (100%) mission. The raid was on SASSOFERRATO rail bridge, attacked by 19 aircraft on 13 June 1944. All bombs fell in a very compact pattern well centered on the bridge. On this mission an act of heroism and determined action took place. Lt. Green of the 448th Squadron who was leading an element, took a direct hit in the nose section of the airplane, removing most of that part of the airplane. Of course the bombardier

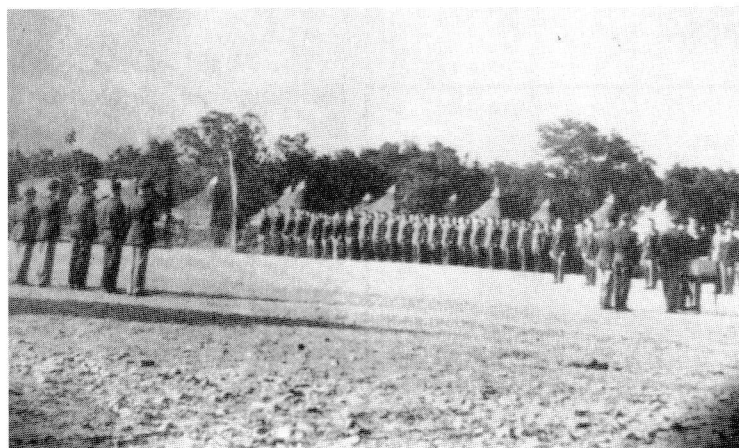
and the navigator were both killed. Lt. Green salvoed his bombs and flew along with the formation and most of the way back to Solenzara. The crew bailed out and let the plane crash.

During July the Group installed a Link Trainer in addition to the Bomb trainer. These aids were to help fulfill the aims that Col. Smith had in mind when he took over the Group. All phases of flying, bombing and gunnery were practiced.

Rumors of another invasion began to circulate. Activities indicated that it would come sometime in August. And while the Group was not aware officially of the invasion, it was not hard to surmise where it would occur when the Group began to fly missions over southern France. The Group flew no direct support of the ground forces in July. This was the first month that they did not fly at least one of this type of mission.

1 August 1944 was Organization day for the 321st, and no missions were flown. It was the second anniversary for the Group. The only formal activity of the day was a presentation

ceremony presided over by General Knapp, Colonel Smith, Major Gaffney and Lt. Gregory



AWARDS PARADE

The rumors that there would be an invasion of Southern France became a reality. The Group flew its first mission over France on 2 August hitting the Var river road bridges, west of Nice. From that date until D-Day efforts of the 321st were directed in two directions. They continued to support Operation Strangle in Italy, north of Rome. Interdiction was still the name of the game, and would be as long as the German Army was still active. But the Group also attacked many targets in the Var river valley of France. The day before the invasion General Wilson, the Theater Commander, and Admiral Cunningham and General Knapp made an extensive tour of the Group.

The biggest mission of the invasion for the 321st occurred 18 August, 1944. On that date the 321st was assigned a very difficult target, from a precision standpoint and from the difficulty-to-knock-out standpoint; a near miss wouldn't do the job. In the harbor of Toulon, France were several French waships: a destroyer, a cruiser, a battleship and a submarine. It was thought that the guns of these vessels were a severe threat to the landing forces and the city of Toulon and it was also thought that the city could not be taken under the threat of those guns. They had to be taken out.

The 321st was chosen for the job, and mission was scheduled for 18 August 1944. Thirty-six aircraft (4 flights of nine) took off from Solenzara, Corsica bound for Toulon.

The mission was accomplished as assigned. All except the destroyer, which had left the mooring before the arrival of the 321st., were sunk. The flak was heavy, intense and accurate. Eleven men were wounded and 27 of the 36 aircraft were holed. It was fortunate that these vessels were moored close enough so that a single aiming point could be used with saturation on the target the result.

The weather on the return trip worsened. So bad in fact that one of the flights landed in Sardinia, and the other three landed at separate fields. For this mission the Group received a Unit Citation.



PLANNING THE ATTACK ON TOULON
General Knapp, General Wilson, and
Admiral Cunningham

The next obstacle for the Allied Armies was the vaunted Nazi Gothic Line in Italy. So targets from Florence to Rimini had to be the next on the list of interdiction. The destruction of their supply and communication lines along with a heavy application of anti-personnel bombs on the troops, forced the Nazi forces to pull back even further.

RESTRICTED

HEADQUARTERS TWELFTH AIR FORCE
APO 650

26 February

GENERAL ORDERS)
:
NUMBER 40)

CITATION OF UNIT

Under the provisions of Circular 333, War Department, 1943, and Circular 89, North African Theater of Operation, 10 July 1944, the 321st Bombardment Group (M) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in the Mediterranean Theater of Operation on 18 August 1944

On the third day of the invasion of Southern France, when aerial reconnaissance disclosed that the battleship Strausburg, the cruiser La Gallissoniere, a destroyer and a submarine had been moved to a new location in Toulon harbor and placed in such a position as to constitute a serious threat to combined Allied operations in the Toulon area, the 321st Bombardment Group (M) was ordered to attack and neutralize the fire power of these heavy naval units at all costs. Despite the fact that under normal circumstances only high-altitude bombardment aircraft are assigned to attack such heavily defended targets, the urgency of the order to remove this formidable threat to ground forces made it imperative that a Corsica based medium altitude precision bombers be assigned to the task. On 18 August 1944, overcoming weather conditions which caused other medium group to turn back without completing their missions scheduled for the same area, the 321st Bombardment Group's thirty-six plane formation negotiated the long-over water route by dead reckoning and accurately turned on the planned axis of attack from an imaginary initial point over the sea. Exhibiting utmost gallantry and determination in the face of extremely intense anti-aircraft fire from eight-two know heavy guns, surrounding the harbor, which damaged-twenty seven bombers and wounded twelve personnel, the B-25 crew men executed a precision bomb run at the vulnerable altitude of 13,000 feet. With the p[ilots] courageously holding their aircraft on course through this terrific barrage, the bombardiers skillfully dropped a devastating pattern which sank the battleship, the cruiser, and the submarine; the destroyer having departed prior to the attack. With the threat of the warships' heavy guns removed, through the accomplishment unprecedented in a single attack by medium bombardment aircraft, Allied forces were able to plan and successfully execute operation in this area without interruption. The extraordinary heroism and proficiency demonstrated throughout the entire hazardous attack and the outstanding flying skill displayed on the returned flight when thunderstorms and a low overcast forced the damaged to land at scattered friendly fields, reflect the highest credit upon the 321st Bombardment and the Military Service of the United States.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL CANNON

OFFICIAL

CHARLES T. MYERS
Brigadier General, USA
Chief of Staff

/s/ William W. Dick
William W. Dick
Colonel, AGD
Adjutant General

OFFLET\citatn04

The weather during the month of September began to turn toward the sour side. The number of inoperative days began to increase especially toward the end of the month. Successful missions were flown against targets such as Pavia, Feltre RR and Rd. bridges and several more. Proof of the ability the German repair crews is shown in the number of times that there had to be a repeat mission.

Probably the greatest achievement attained by the 321st was the improvement in their bombing accuracy as evidenced by the day by day photos of targets with the bomb plots. When Colonel Smith took over command of the Group, it was averaging about 35% in bombing accuracy. While none of the flight personnel would agree with Colonel Smith's handling of people, they all would agree that the training methods certainly got results: the 321st's bombing averages rose dramatically.

The weather over the mainland continued to worsen while it seemed good flying weather over Corsica. There continued to be practice flying formation, bombing, workouts on the link trainer and the bomb trainer. But there always is a problem of the men working off excess energy during off times. Since it was football time back in the States the natural thing to work off energy was a football league in the 321st. Two leagues were formed, an Officers league and an Enlisted Men's league. The games were "touch football", but even so excellent games were played. The winner of each league would meet in a "Turkey-Day Classic" the "Finger Bowl" to be played on the Group field at Solenzara.

October saw the Group maintain its excellent bombing accuracy. Targets continued to be in the Po valley. As the Germans withdrew northward they, of course, took their anti-aircraft guns with them. This increased the concentration of guns and the

flak became more severe.

The targets attacked in October, when the weather permitted, included such places as Piacenza, Galiate road bridge, (where two aircraft were lost), Torreberetti road and railroad bridges. On 12 October only 18 of the scheduled 54 aircraft were able to attack a fuel storage dump at Casalecchio because of bad weather. There was another rough one on 20 October when the Group attacked the Calliste road bridge. The flak was very heavy, intense and accurate with one aircraft downed and 29 holed.

The month of November saw the Group continue to improve their bombing. After a nearly two-week lay off they attacked Vercelli and were assigned Pontetidone rail bridges. Vercelli was well hit, but they couldn't reach Pontetidone. So they attacked Arda rail bridge as an alternate. Results bridge rendered impassable. When Ostiglia was attacked on 10 November the group sustained 32 casualties, the most ever sustained on one mission.

Another "first" was added to the Group's long list . . . this time in the field of entertainment. With the very material aid of Captain "Doc" Smith and his "Mitchellaires", the group's swing band, and Lt. Jeffery Lynn,



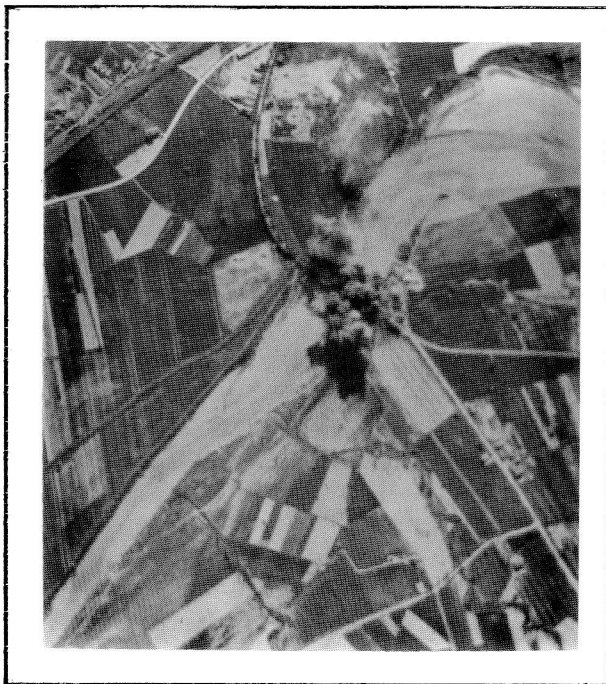
"Doc" Smith and his "MITCHELLAIRES"
A popular Swing Ensemble from the 321st Bomb Group

Hollywood cinemactor, paced a half-hour variety show which was presented over Rome Radio on 14 November. The show was well received by all who heard it.

November also saw the initial attempts of the Information and Education program to present a varied schedule of activities prepared to help the men spend their time profitably. Classes were held in German language, Mechanical Drawing, Bookkeeping and Discussion groups.

During a presentation ceremony Major. Paul T. Cooper, the 446th Squadron C.O. and Major William D. Cameron Jr. received promotions to Lieutenant Colonel. The two Colonels were congratulated by the Commanding General of the 12th Air Force, General Cannon

Bad weather that plagued operations in November continued on into December. Missions that were planned sometimes had to be aborted because of weather over the



target. Other times there were "standowns" for several days in succession. There were some missions flown in spite of the weather. The bridge at Torreboretti, over the Po, received another pasting on 1 December. Two chaff ships and P-47's helped reduce the flak damage. Even though the flak was heavy,

intense and accurate (HIA) there were only eight planes holed and no one injured.

The most important event, except Christmas, for the whole month of December occurred on the 9th when the championship game of the touch football league was played off. Before a large enthusiastic crowd, Ordnance and the 448th Enlisted men played a hard fought game which was a showpiece of good blocking and interceptions. The score of 19 - 14 in favor of the "Bomb Loaders"

Finally, after several days lay off the targets around Bologna were treated to some work by the 321st. The effort was rewarded by successfully wrecking the barracks area north of Bologna, and the Castel Bolognese Defense area was saturated.

The Rovereto railroad bridge was chosen as The Raid of the Month for December. The mission was flown on 30 December with 21 planes participating. The first flight hit the south approach, and second flight walked their bombs across the south end of the bridge. The anti-flak element dropped incendiary bombs on the guns emplacement. Flak was heavy, moderate and accurate. ten plane were holed.

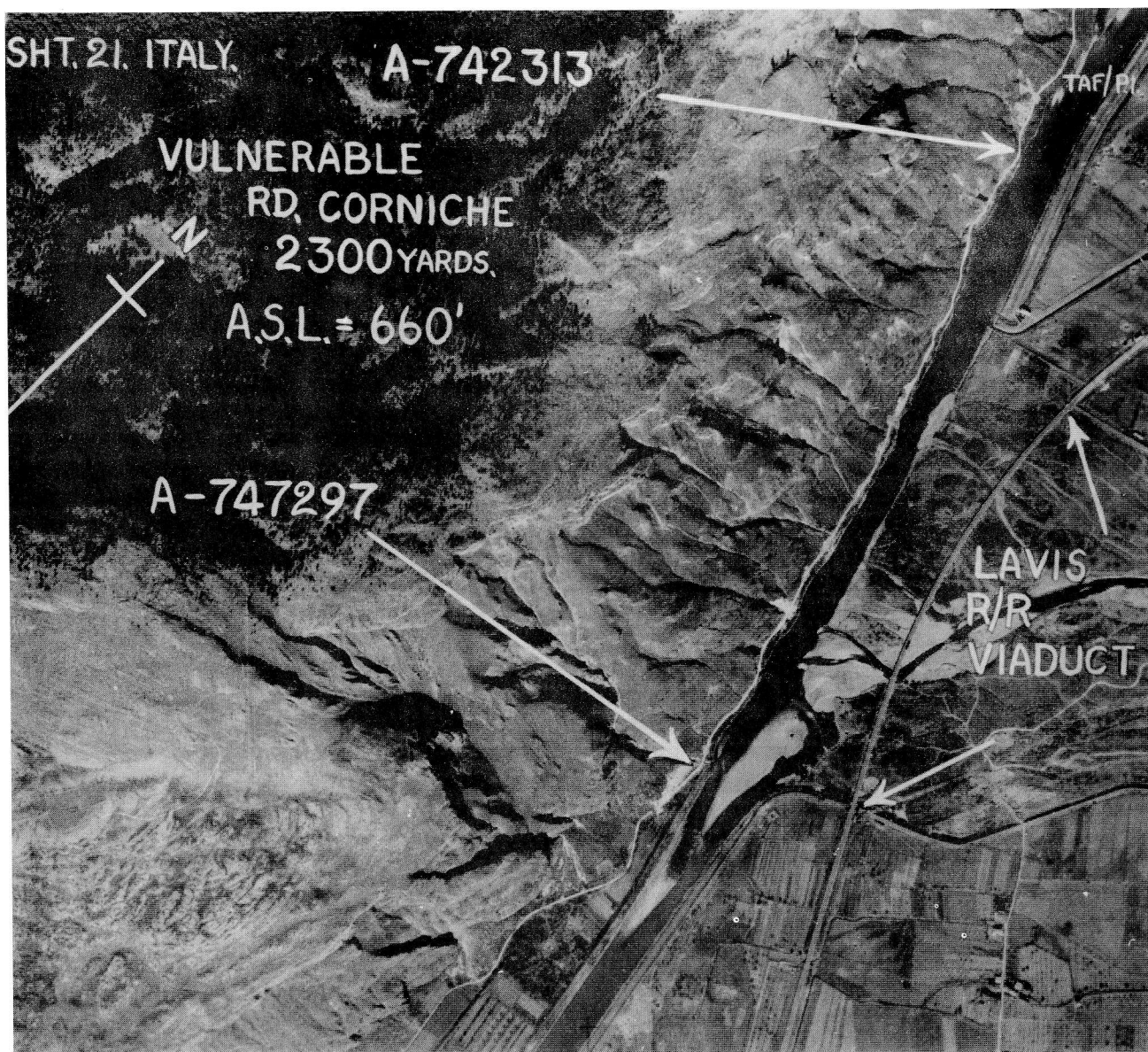
Christmas day was a rainy day, but with a good supply of excellent food, good liquor and good cheer no one seemd to mind. Captain Doc's "Mitchellaires" played for several of the clubs and a good time was had by all.

New Years day dinner of turkey and all of the fixin's was enjoyed by all.

1944 ended on that sort of note:

The new year opened literally with a "BANG": the 321st Bomb Group opened the new year with its 650th mission against a German ammunition dump at Pavia. The place blew up in a gigantic explosion, leaving as crater about 150 feet wide and 50 feet deep. Captain Joyce, lead bombardier for the 448th Squadron made this a fitting end to his tour of 68 missions.

There were to be several changes in the 321st during the month of January. One of the changes was not the weather, which continued



just as foul as it has been in the past few months. But in spite of it there were 39 missions flown. Among the principle targets were the Padua north rail diversion; Ala Railroad bridge; Lavis rail viaduct; Chairi Rail bridge, and Voghera rail bridge. While attacking these targets the Group lost five aircraft, and one crew too was lost all to flak

It was learned that Colonel Richard H.

Smith who has commanded the Group since March 1944, was ordered to the United States. He was replaced by the Deputy Group Commander, Lt. Col. Charles Cassidy, and Lt. Col Earl B. Young assuming the duties of Deputy Group Commander. Under Colonel Smith's tutelage the 321st pulled itself from a mediocre bomb group to one of the best in the theater.

The "raid of the month", chosen by the group Navigation Officer, Arthur E. Franklin



Lt. Col. CHARLES F. CASSIDY Jr
321st Group Commander
26 March 1945 16 August 1945

Colonel Cassidy, a native of Colorado was a citizen first and a soldier because he was needed.

Charles Cassidy graduated from Notre Dame University in June 1938. He earned his wings and Commission in the USAAF in the class of 41-1

Prior to his assignment as Deputy Group Commander of the 321st he was Group Executive Officer of the 86th Fighter-Bomber Group and held the rank of Lt.Col.

With the reassignment of Col. Smith Col Cassidy assumed command of the 321st. He left the 321st in August 1945, and left the service at the end of the war. Returning to Denver. Mr. (Colonel) Cassidy died 12 April 1974 age 57 years.

was the raid on Pavia on 1 January Smoke columns rising to 7,000 feet were observed from 60 miles distant. Photos revealed another successful mission. Flight leaders on this mission were: Lt. Swanson (later Captain), 448th; and Captain Murray, 448th.

During the opening days of February the weather began to break somewhat. While there were standowns they became less frequent. Targets assigned to the 321st during February were almost entirely interdiction type and ranged farther north into the Brenner Pass. As has been noted before, the farther the Germans retreated northward the more concentrated the anti-aircraft guns became, thus more flak received.

On 1 February '45 there was no mission; instead an awards parade was held with General Knapp presenting two Silver Stars, one to Colonel Cooper and one to Major Neuman. In addition he presented twenty Distinguished Flying Crosses; twenty Bronze Stars, and numerous Air Medals. These awards were indicative of the courage and dedication of the men of the 321st Bomb Group.

Targets assigned during February became more difficult to hit because of the terrain. Some were visited more than once, and some to which other Groups had visited before. They were targets like the Calliano rail Bridges #2 and #3 in the Brenner Pass; the Mantua bridge and causeway; Rovereto marshalling yards; Piacenza Bridge; San Michele rail diversion; Lavis rail diversion; Bressenone south rail bridge; Campo rail bridge, and many others that were vital to the restriction of movement of the Germans, were hit time and time again, almost every time with excellent results. It was only by the perseverance of the German Engineers that some of the lines were reopened. When a main line was closed or damaged beyond repair, the Engineers built a diversion around the ruined bridge. If that one was also destroyed still another was built only for it too to be destroyed.

On 24 February a mission was flown to Sesto Calende one of the few remaining factories in Northern Italy. Intelligence reported that the Germans were producing a torpedo with a little seat. These torpedoes could be catapulted with a pilot. The hull was loaded with explosives, and was about eight meters long and two meters wide. This target became the "Raid of the Month" for February.

The "Battle of the Brenner Pass" during the

month of March saw 16 bridges destroyed by the 321st; 63 missions and 1179 sorties were flown against those targets. This brought the Group's total to 770 missions. The bombing accuracy for the month was 82.7%. The targets included targets as far as Steinach, and Muhlberg, Austria. The names of the individual targets are too numerous to name them all here

The increased usage of white phosphorous bombs as an anti-flak method reduced the number of losses sustained during the month (two aircraft and one crew lost).

The "Raid of the Month" for March was selected by Group C.O. Col. Cassidy. He chose the Rovereto rail bridge which was attacked on 8 March, 1945.

Rumors began to circulate once more that the 321st was going to move again. This proved to be more than a rumor when on 31 March the Advance Party, consisting of half of the headquarters personnel, along with the 446th and 447th squadrons left for a new base at Falconara, Italy. This was located north of the town of Ancona on the east coast of Italy. From six to twenty transports were utilized between March 26 and March 31. The move was completed by April 7 without interrupting operations.

The missions for the month of April would be a mix of ground support and interdiction. The first mission, with eighteen bombers loaded with 1,000 lb. bombs and six bombers with white phosphorous left for the Ala rail bridge. A few minutes later eighteen bombers left to bomb the San Margherita north rail bridge. Both targets were steel-girder bridges, damaged but reported as passable.

On 2 April a Shoran mission was flown against the Foronovo di Taro rail bridge, and in the afternoon a mission was flown against the Matrei rail bridge. The Shoran system of bombing uses two radio signals of different frequencies transmitted on a narrow line or beam. The intersection of these two beams defines the drop point for the bombers. This system allows bombing through an undercast of clouds.

The British Eighth Army jumped off from the battle line just north of Rimini on 10 April. This signaled the all-out effort to reduce the German Army. The Germans had been driven out of their famed Gothic Line and had no place to hide.

The work days became longer and longer; the missions sometimes were very short in time from base to drop and return to base. Fragmentation bombs were used extensively against the rapidly moving German Army. But attention to their escape route was not forgotten, and missions were flown against some coming and going, often. Ground crews worked feverishly to refuel and rearm the planes for the next flight which would follow quickly.

It rained all night and most of the morning of 27 April, and standown orders came from Wing. The weather cleared on the 28th, but no orders were sent down from Wing. The Group had run out of targets. The news was great. The Allies had taken Milan, Turin, and the Italian partisans had taken Venice. Another standown on the 29th and still another on the 30th. The 321st Bombardment Group had flown its last combat mission.

At this point rumors began to fly thick and fast. The Group was going to the Far East. . . the Group was going back to the United States. . . then to the far east. If anyone knew for sure they were not telling!

THEN CAME THE REALLY BIG NEWS

THE WAR IN EUROPE WAS OVER !

An awards parade was held when General Knapp presented the 321st with its second Distinguished Unit Citation. It was awarded for the sinking of the Strasbourg, and Glassennier and the submarine Aurora in Toulon Harbor on August 19, 1944. Every Squadron dressed in Class A's passed in review.



A HAPPY HOUR FOR REAL

The 447th Officers Club Falconera

A good time was had by all

This day was V-E day, and with all of the celebration all personnel were confined to the compound. The camp stayed under compound restriction until the "morning after" effects had worn off.

With little to keep the men occupied heavy emphasis was placed on the Instruction and Education Program. Veteran crew members began rotating to the States. Late in June crews were made up of members who had completed a high number of missions and were assigned an airplane to fly back to the United States. There were new crew members to be checked out.

No one really knew what the future held so rumors were rampant. All of these rumors only served to increase the anxiety because

many of the men had been overseas from March 1943.

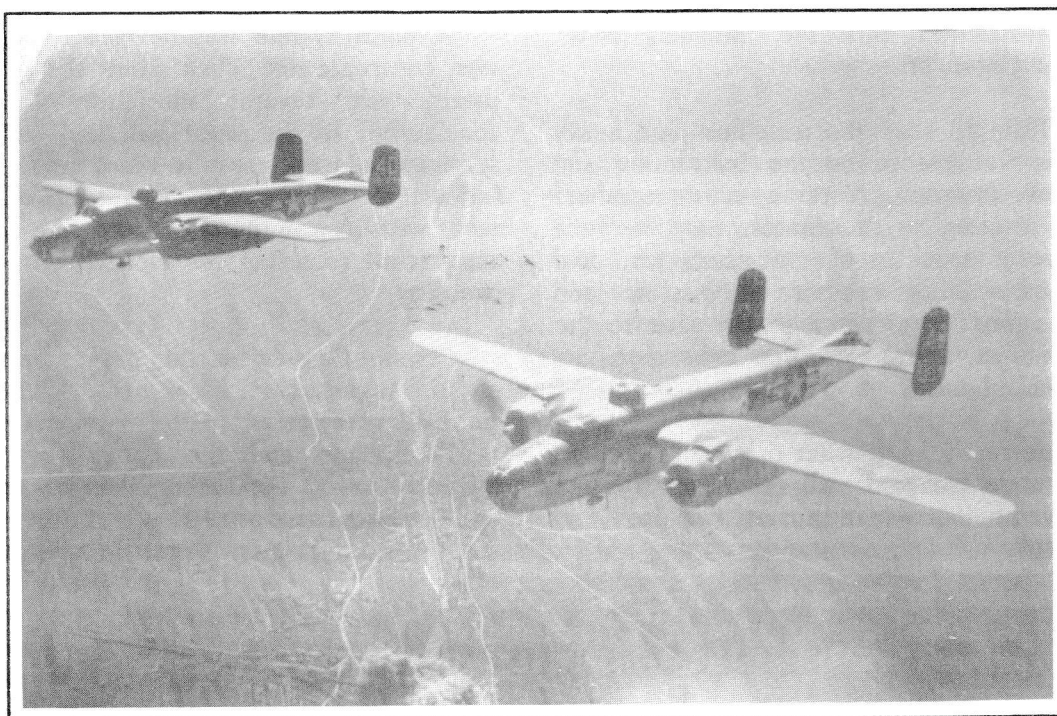
A point system was devised to select the men for rotation. Then came the word that there were several specialties that were considered to be essential and the point system would not apply to these men. A furor followed!! It was resolved by transferring the men with fewer points into the sensitive areas, thus releasing the men with more time overseas.

Colonel Cassidy left the 321st Bomb Group on 22 August 1945. The men of the Group were all transferred to the Service Command at Pomigliano and the books were closed officially on 12 September 1945 on the 321st Bombardment group.

321st BOMBARDMENT GROUP PASS IN REVIEW



447th OVER THE ALPS



446TH OVER THE PO