

GERMANY

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

POLAND

SWITZ

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

VENICE

ITALY

LA SPEZIA

DULON

YUGOSLAVIA

USSR

ADRIATIC  
SEA

ROME

ALBANIA

NAPLES

CORSICA

SARDINIA

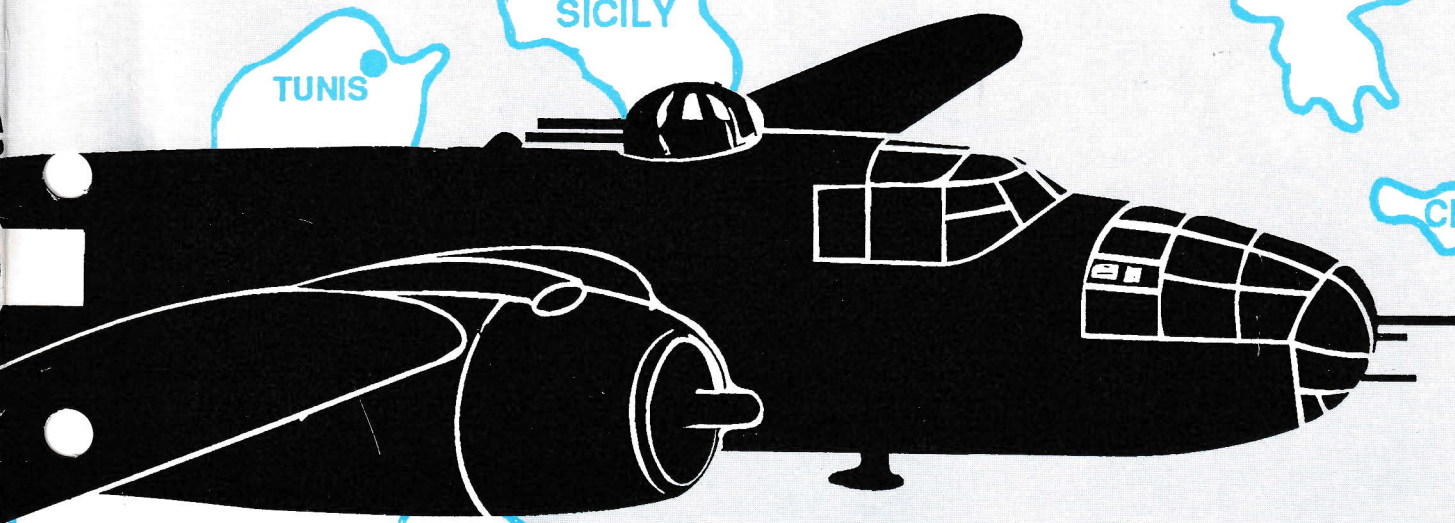
GREECE

ATHENS

SICILY

TUNIS

CRETE



TUNISIA

TRIPOLI

BENGHAZI

TOBRUK

EGYPT

50th ANNIVERSARY

LIBYA





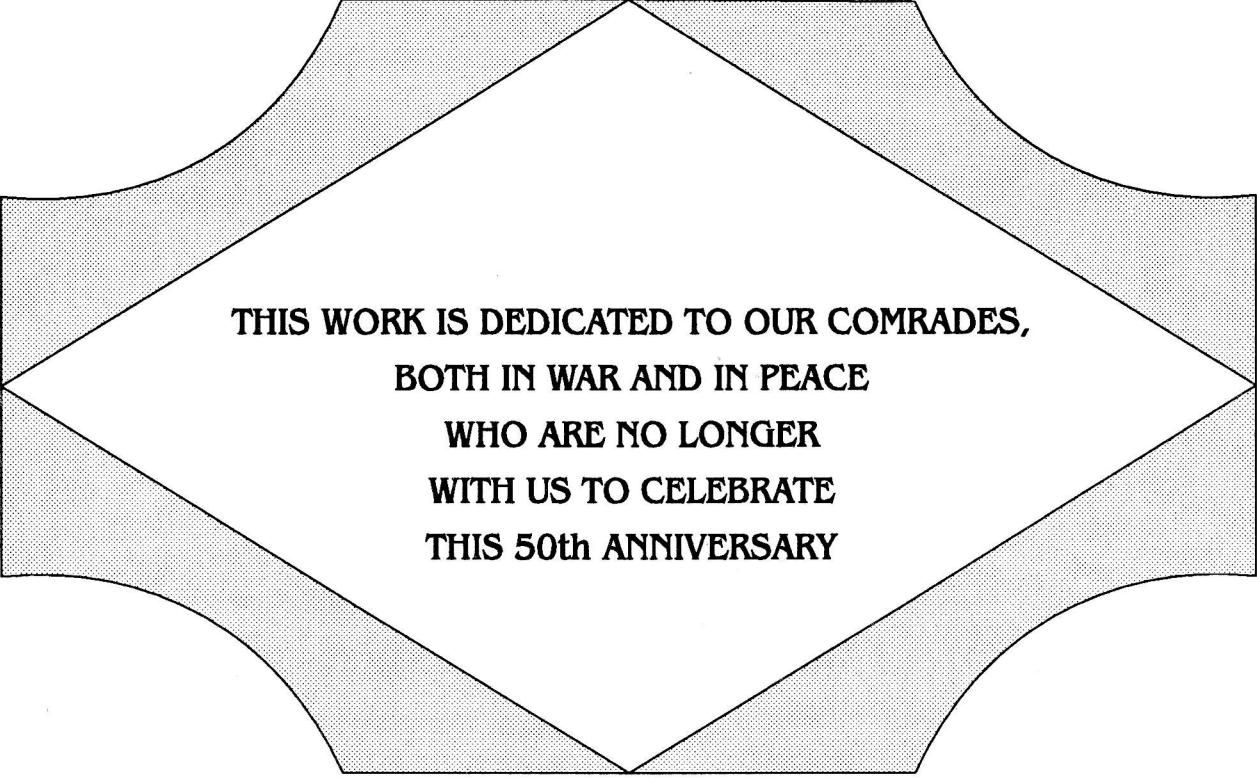


# **The B-25 over the Mediterranean**

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

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





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

**PUBLISHED BY  
57th BOMB WING ASSOCIATION**

**Printed by  
CREATIVE GRAPHICS  
Jackson, Michigan**



OH ONCE AGAIN

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

John G. Magee  
1941

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



# FORWARD

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groups that flew in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations during World War II is not intended to be a comprehensive historical reference document.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

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

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

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

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

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

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

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CHARLES BREWTON, ESTHER OYSTER

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

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

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

**WILLIS F. CHAPMAN**

Chairman

57th Bomb Wing Publishing Committee (PUB-COM)

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

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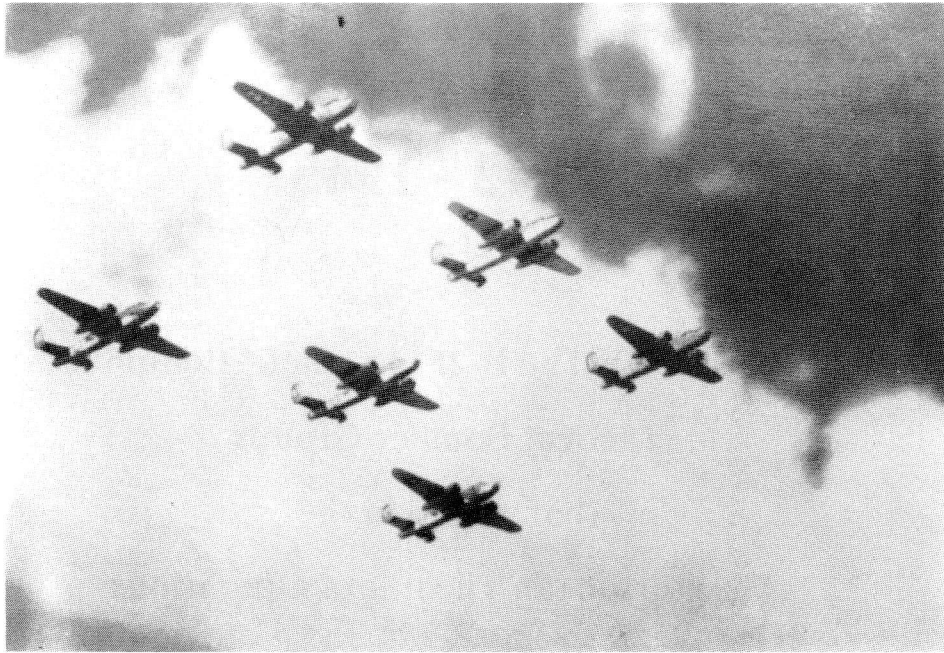
Short reviews of the Annual reunions, bits of reminiscence of the return trips to the Mediterranean, post reunion cruises and tours.



# **FROM THE BEGINNING**

**1942 - 1945**

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



# THERE SHE IS !

by

Paul R. Peck 447

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

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

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

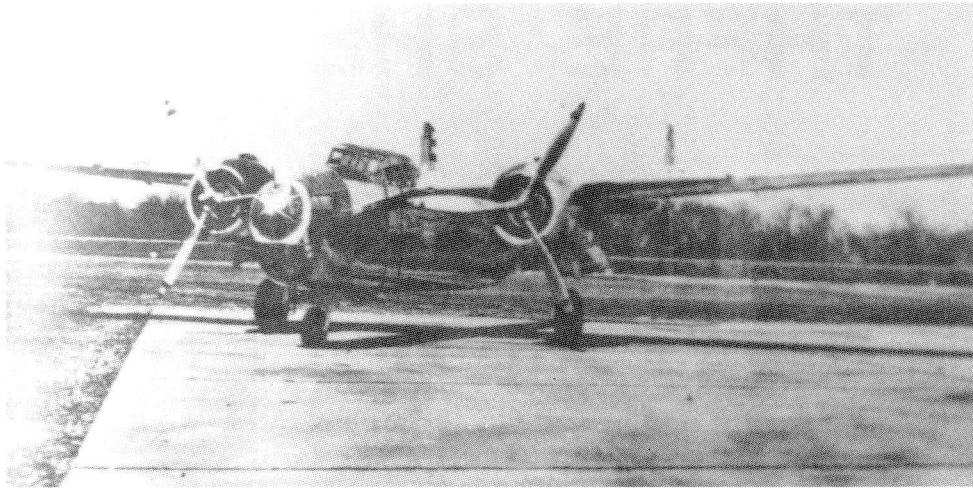
The second historical event came from with the Navy. Remembering the success of the efforts of General Mitchell in sinking the Aufriesland, the Navy began to think about launching an airplane from the deck of a ship to attack another surface vessel. Thus the first "carrier" was the cruiser

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

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

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





North American Prototype NA-40-1

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

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



North American Prototype NA-62

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

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

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

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

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

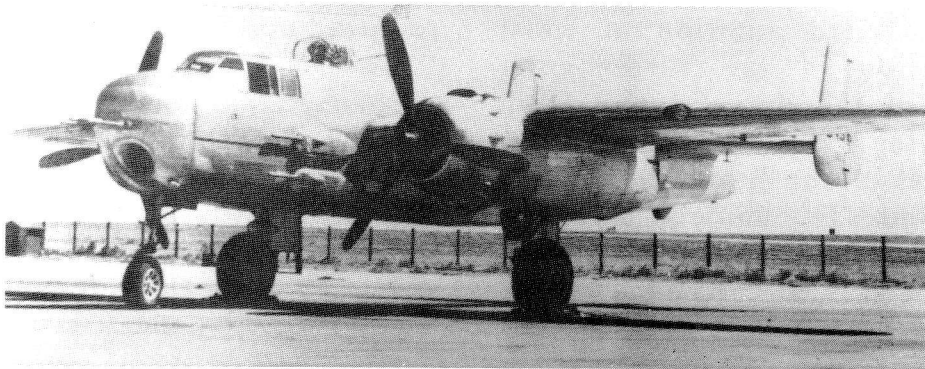


B-25-D

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

anniversary of the commencement of production of our beloved bird

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

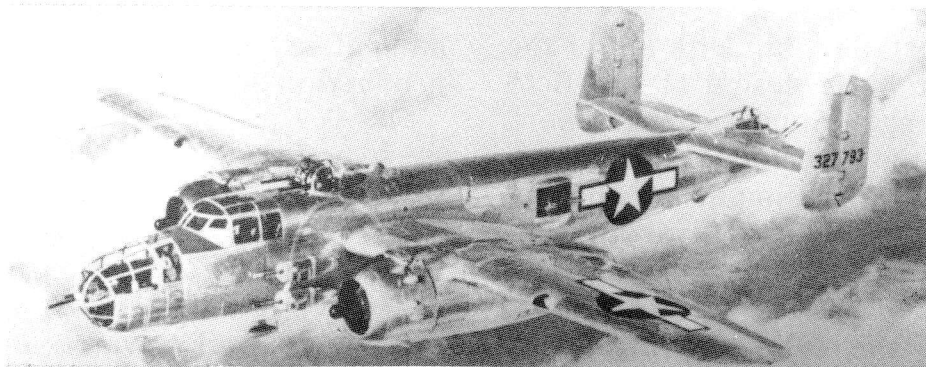


B-25 -G

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

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

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



B-25-J

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

**ACTIVATED**  
January, 1941

**ENTERED COMBAT**  
August, 1942

**DEACTIVATED**  
January, 1946





81st SQ.



82nd SQ.



12th Group



83rd SQ.



434th SQ.

# THE EARTHQUAKERS

contributed by

**Alex Adair 12th Bomb Group**

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



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

Commanding Officer

6 May 1941    16 Sept. 1942

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Colonel Edward N. Backus**

Commanding Officer  
Sept 1943 Sept 1944

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

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

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

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

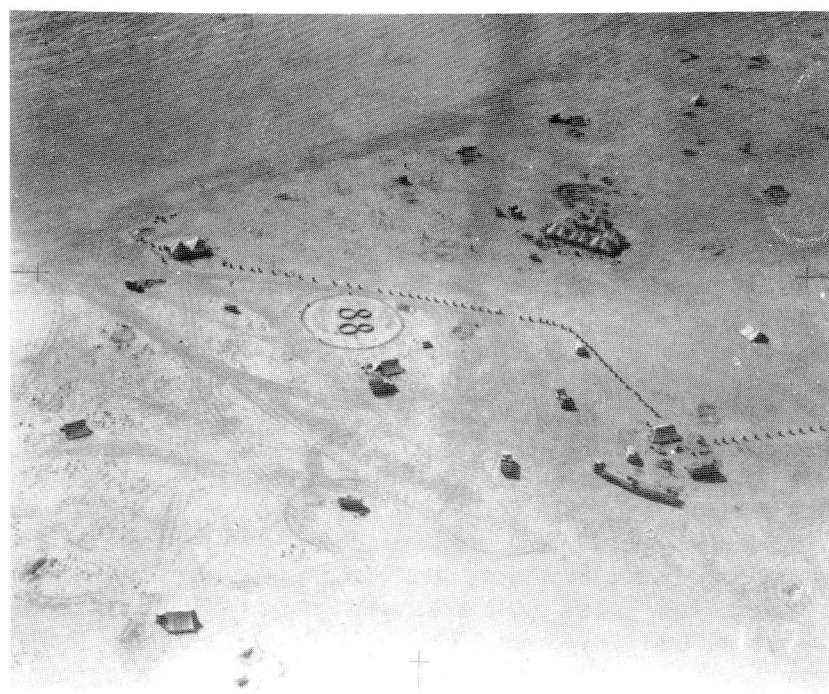
sions with the 3rd Wing, South African A.F., had carried out 21 missions, 144 sorties, and they had lost 6 aircraft.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

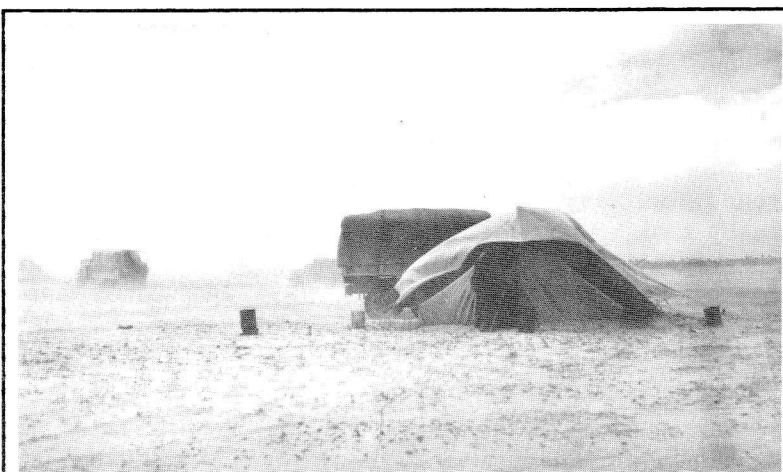
With targets only 20 minutes away, the formations climbed to bombing altitude, 8000 to 10,000

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

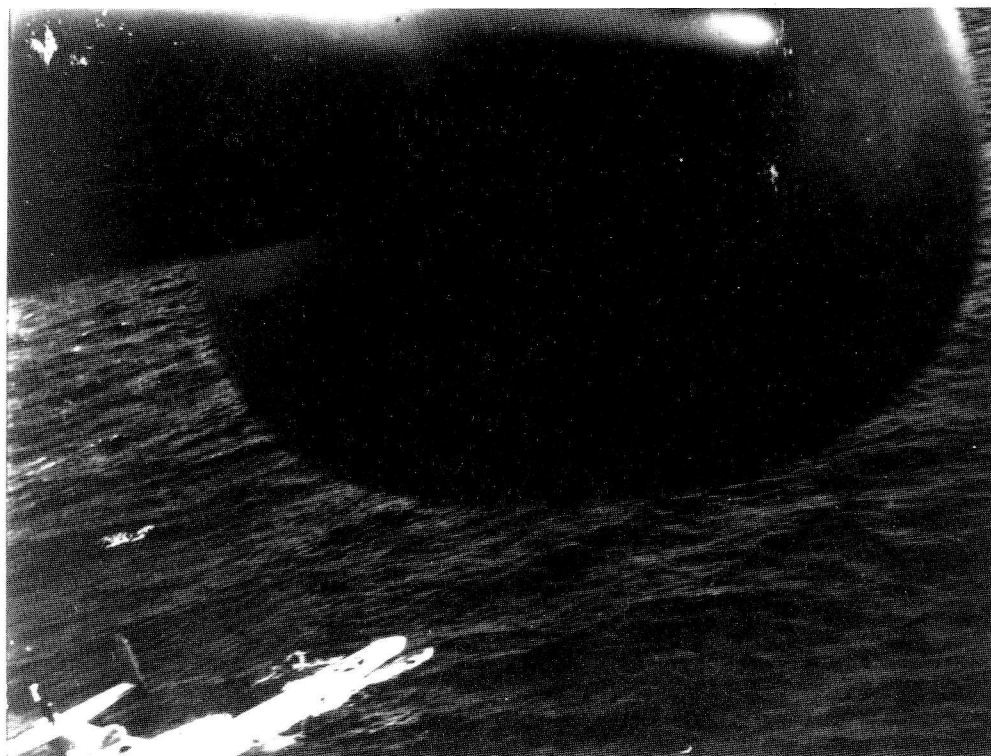
The advanced bases were now approaching Tripoli, in Libya. Landing Ground 142, at Gambut, near Tobruk, Libya, was the most miserable of all the intermediate bases. It was 600 miles from Egypt and 600 miles from Tripoli. Located on a high windswept escarpment of rocky ground and drenched

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

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

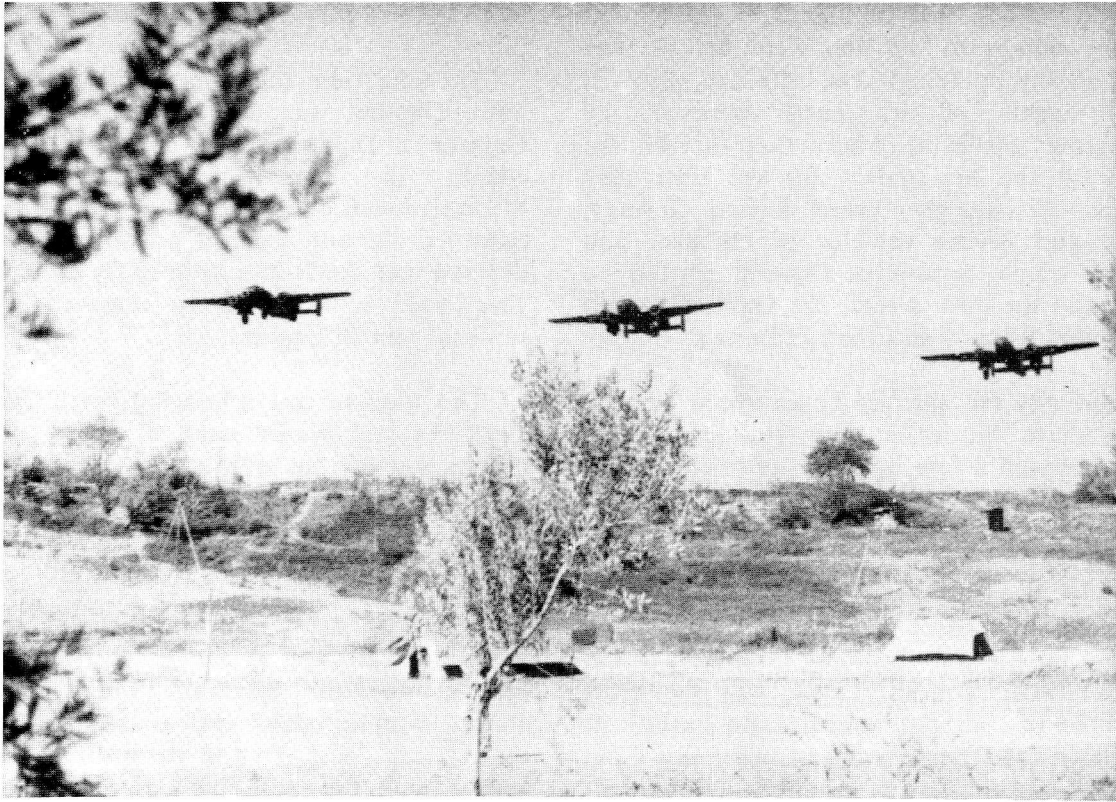
The mission was scheduled for 1 January, 1943. As luck would have it, a few minutes before take off, up blew a dust storm! Only 12 of the 36 aircraft scheduled were able to get off. They milled around in the dust, unable to see each other much less find the runway.

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



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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COLONEL WILLIAM W. WILCOX

Commanding Officer

21 Sept. 1943

29 Sept. 1944

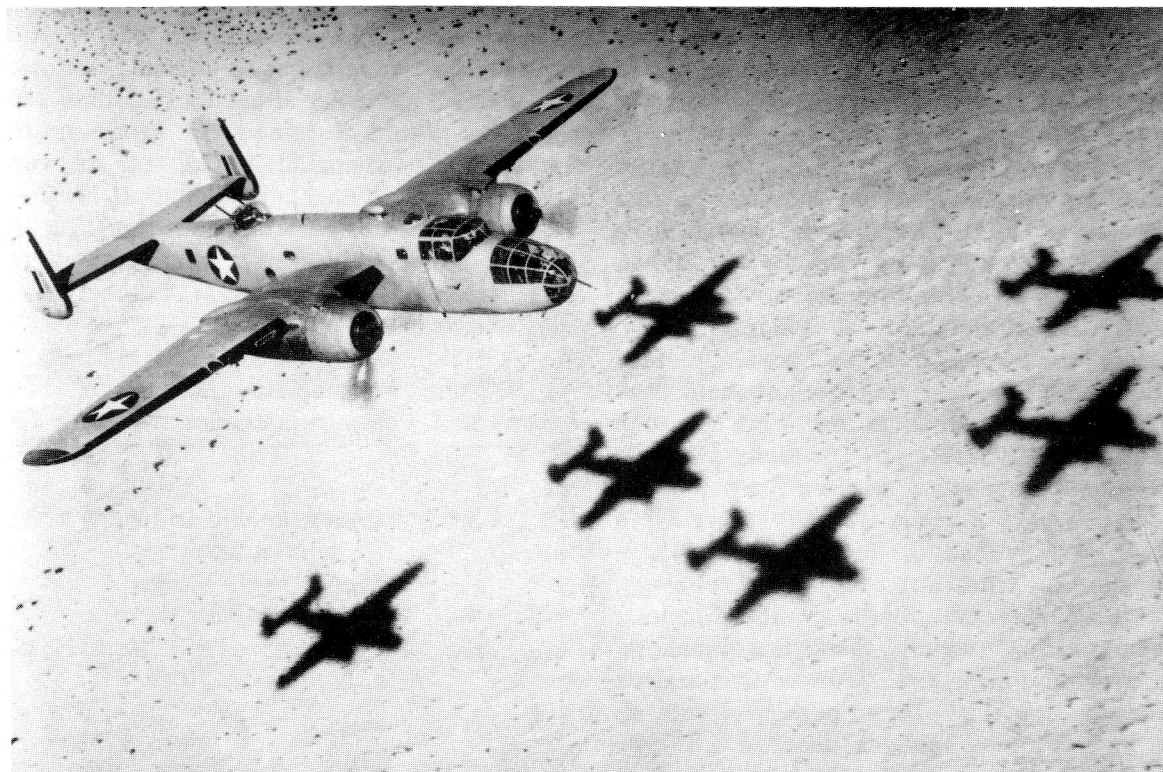
maintained its high standard of air discipline and excellence, under the guidance of a nucleus of veterans who stayed on in key operational positions in the squadrons and group headquarters, as well as all of the ground personnel who weren't rotatable.

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

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

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

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



### RACING THEIR SHADOWS.

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

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

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

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

General Orders.  
No. 23

WAR DEPARTMENT  
Washington D.C., 24 March 1944

EXTRACT

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

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

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

Chief of Staff

Official:

Robert H. Dunlop  
Brigadier General  
Acting The Adjutant General.



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## A WAR BOND DRIVE

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



I.-r. Back row.

Capt. Ralph Lower (82nd),  
pilot

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

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

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

Front row:

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

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

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

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

## **ACTIVATED**

28 January, 1942

## **ENTERED COMBAT**

2 December, 1942

## **DEACTIVATED**

12 September, 1945



379th SQ.



380th SQ.



310th Group



381st SQ.



428th SQ.

# 310th Bomb Group

submitted by John Coffey 380

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

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

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

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



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

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



## JULY TO OCTOBER 1942

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



HEADQUARTERS

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

September 19, 1942

SPECIAL ORDERS)  
NUMBER 92)

E X T R A C T

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

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

\* \* \* \* \*

By Order of Lt. Col HUNTER:

HARVEY H. HINMAN  
Major, AC,

Executive Officer

OFFICIAL:

HARVEY H. HINMAN  
Major, AC,  
Executive Officer

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

## NOVEMBER 1942

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

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

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

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

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

## DECEMBER 1942

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

The next "first" of the war occurred on 30

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

## JANUARY 1943

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

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

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



A CHOW LINE AT BERTEAUX

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

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

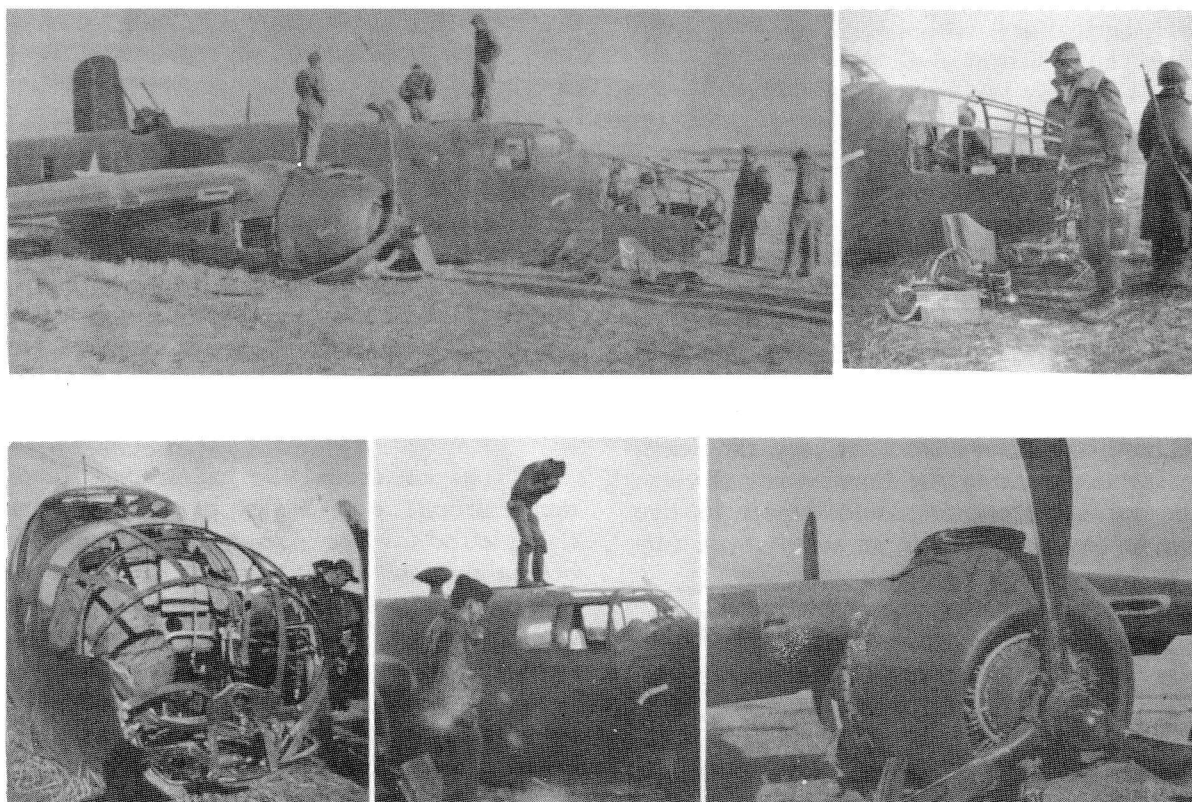


HOW ABOUT A SHOWER??  
Only at Berteaux

## FEBRUARY 1943

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

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



**"POTCH-A-GALOO"**

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

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

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

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



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

## MARCH 1943

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## APRIL 1943

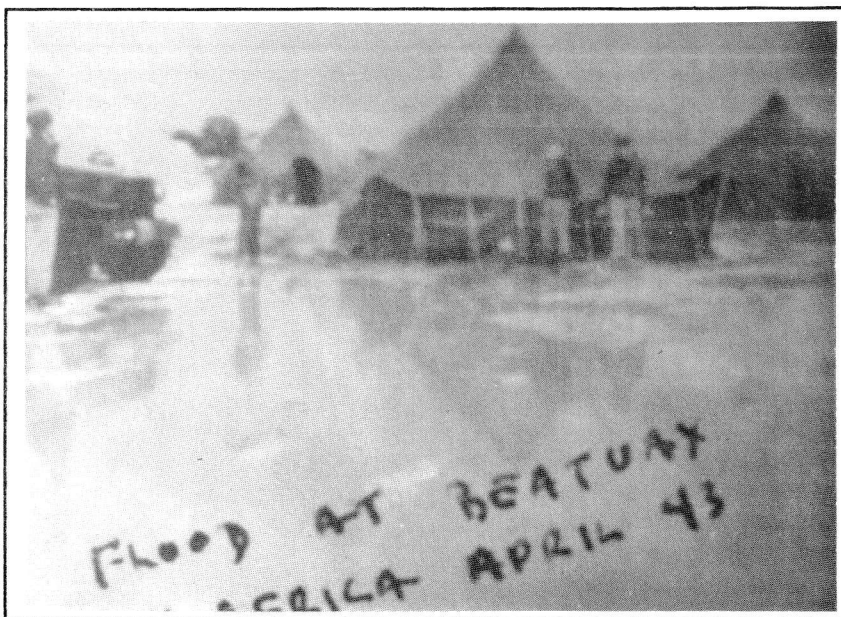
Allied forces continued to squeeze Axis troops toward Tunis and Bizerte, and on 10 April the British captured Sousse while moving steadily on their way northward along Tunisia's eastern coast. Sea Sweeps continued as a normal way of life for our bomber crews, but our efforts also were extended beyond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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

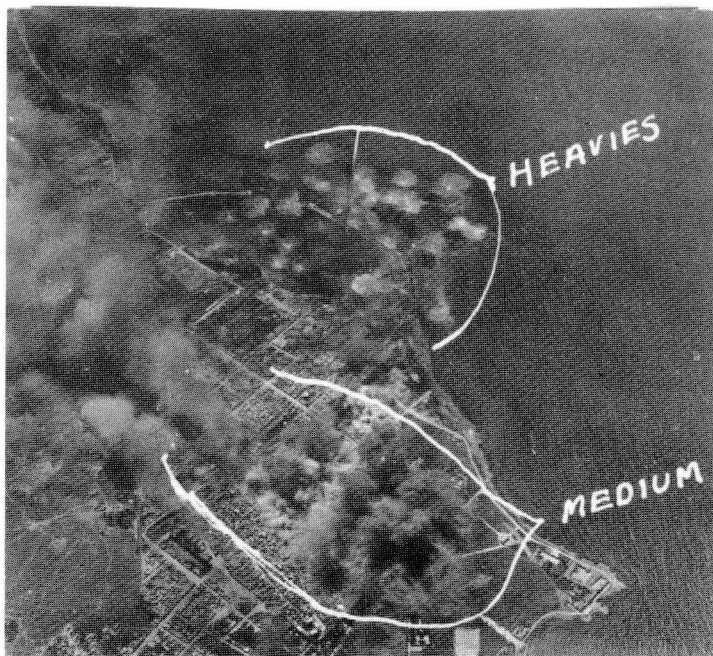
## MAY 1943

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

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

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

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



### A COMBINED ATTACK ON MARSALA

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



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

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



CAGLIARI, SARDINIA

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

## JUNE 1943

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

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

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

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



GARABINI AIRDROME, SICILY



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

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

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

## JULY 1943

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

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

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

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

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

## AUGUST 1943

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

## SEPTEMBER 1943

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

In these few days momentous events

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

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

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

## WAR DEPARTMENT

General Orders,  
No. 75

Washington 25, D.C., 18 September 1944

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

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

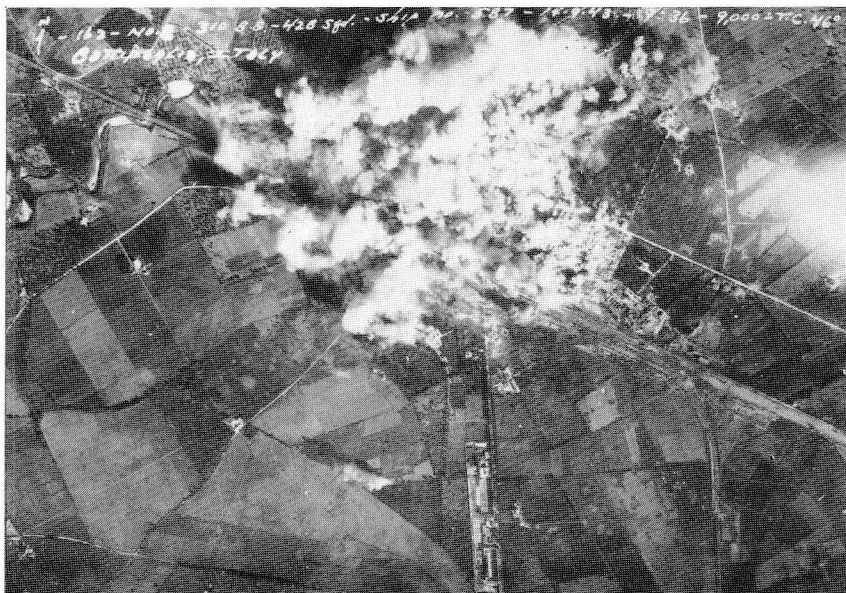
By order of The Secretary of War:

G.C. MARSHALL,  
*Chief of Staff*

Official:

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





**BATTIPAGLIA, ITALY**  
During Battle of Salerno Beachhead

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

## OCTOBER 1943

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

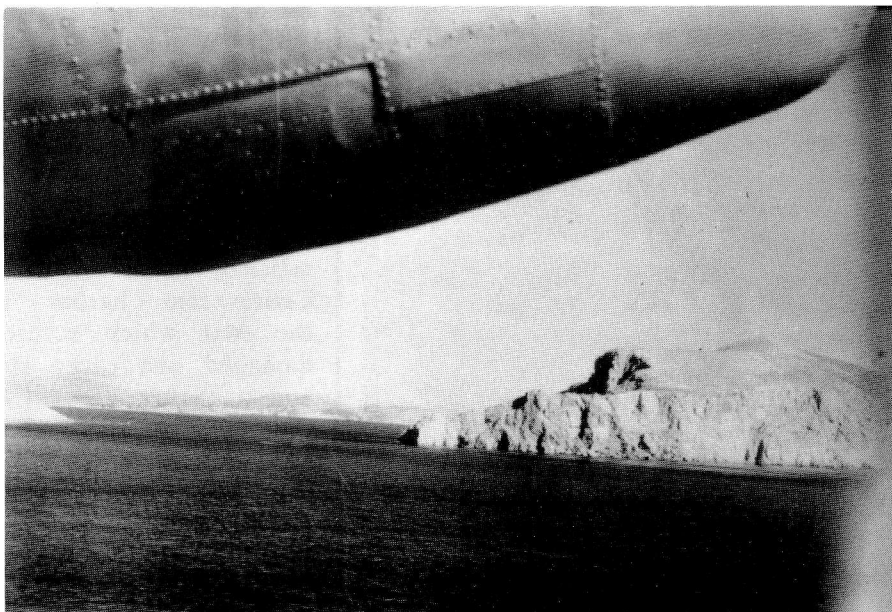
The same weather which had forced the move from Menzel Temime to Oudna also was affecting the Italian mainland. On many days no missions could be flown because of cloud cover over desirable targets. One of the few missions the Group was able to mount during the last half of the month introduced a new

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

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

## NOVEMBER 1943

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



PORTOLAGO BAY  
The Island of Leros in the Dodecanese

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

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

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

## DECEMBER 1943

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

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

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

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



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

## JANUARY 1944

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

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

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

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



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

## FEBRUARY 1944

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



PORTO SAN STEPHANO, ITALY  
Another port denied the Axis



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

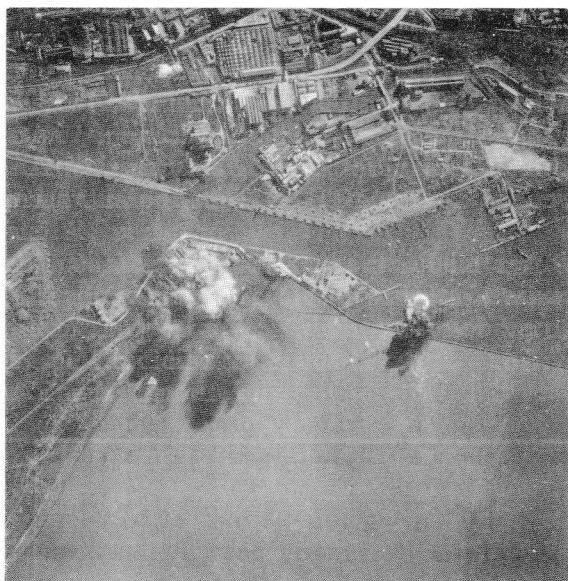
sweep near the island of Leros (Note: proportionately, it was the greatest loss the group had suffered since losing 3 out of 6 on a sea sweep in the Mediterranean on 23 February 1943). The next greatest percentage loss was 5 out of 18 over Gabes, Tunisia on 8 February 1943 ). The Squadron flew 15 more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

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



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

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



LEGHORN HARBOR UNDER ATTACK

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

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

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



HELP ME OUTTA HERE  
More of that good old Mediterranean mud

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

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

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

## MARCH 1944

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

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

its component Squadrons operating from one location.

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

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

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

## APRIL 1944

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

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

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

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

On the other hand fighter aircraft posed no serious opposition.

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

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

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

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



GREEN LIGHT ??

310th Control tower Ghisonaccia, Corsica

## MAY 1944

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

## **JUNE 1944**

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

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

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

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

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

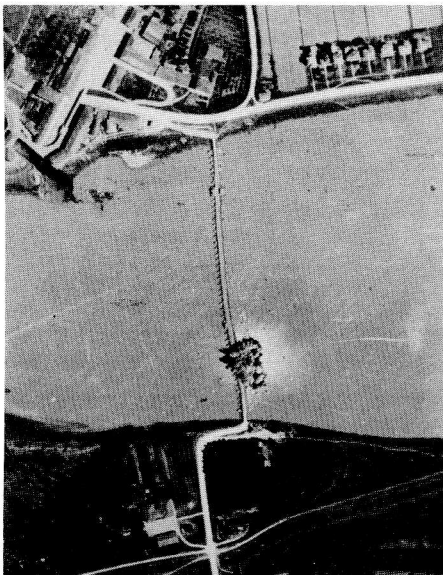
The only exception to the concentration on bridges came when the harbor at Leghorn was attacked in an attempt to close the harbor entrance by sinking the vessels which were located in close proximity to it. The mission was successful, with four vessels of assorted sizes sunk at the harbor entrance, and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

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

## **JULY 1944**

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

#### POLISELLA PONTOON BRIDGE ACROSS THE PO RIVER



Before the bombing



After the bombing

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

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

#### AUGUST 1944

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

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

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



#### INVASION OF SOUTHERN FRANCE 7 AUGUST 1944

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## SEPTEMBER 1944

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

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

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

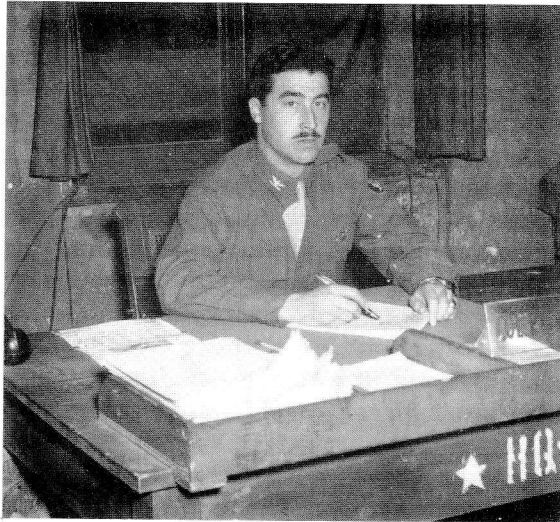
The third generation of combat crews now were arriving to replace the second generation who were being rotated homeward. Additional ground personnel were filtering in and, joy of joys, there were mechanics and armament replacements among them.

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

## OCTOBER 1944

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## NOVEMBER 1944

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## DECEMBER 1944

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## JANUARY 1945

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



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

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

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

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

## **FEBRUARY 1945**

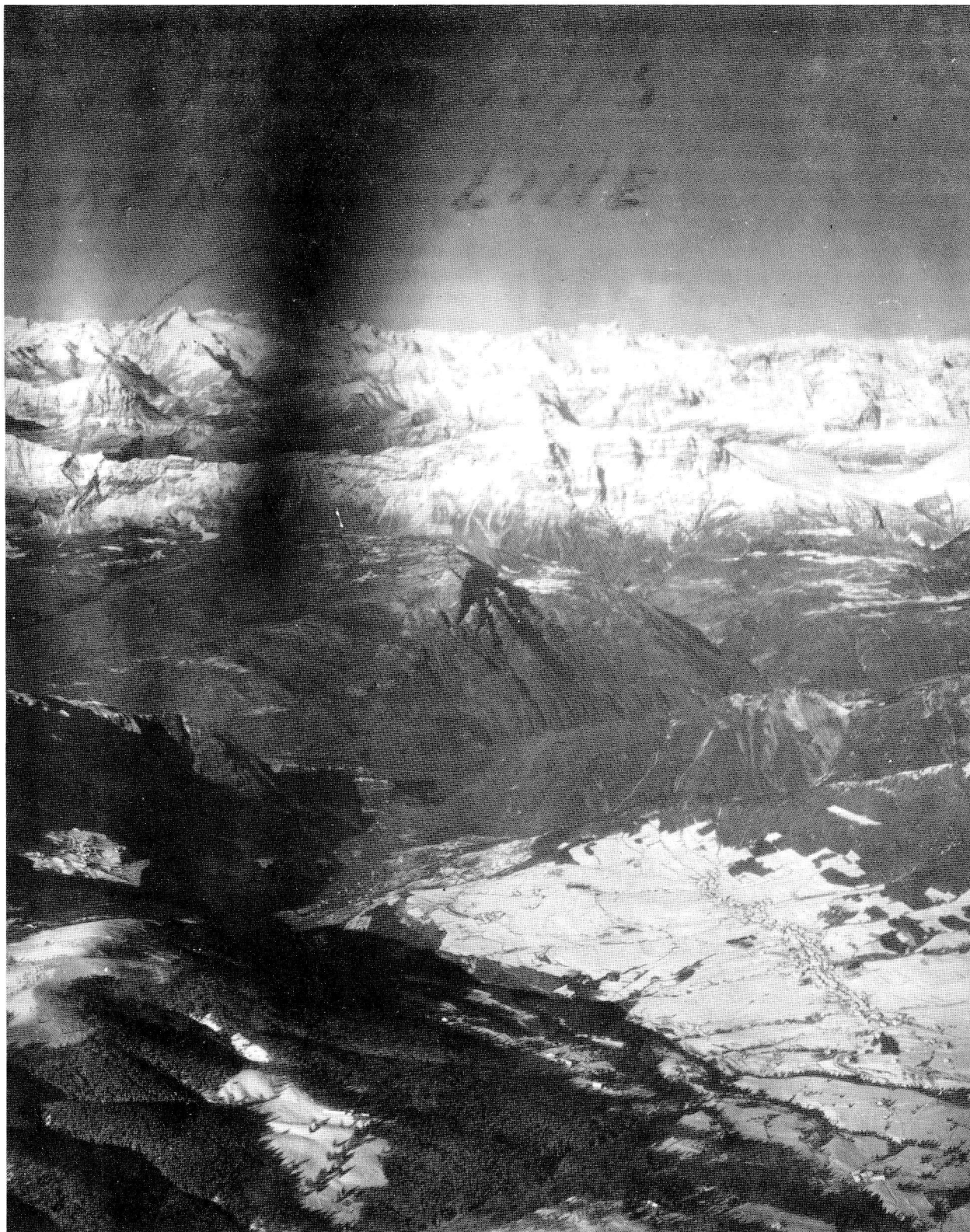
Once again rumors surfaced about a move from Corsica to Italy, but just as before, they never panned out and the group maintained residence at Ghisonaccia. The intense interdiction of the electrified rail line between Bolzano and Verona continued. For the past month or so the Group had been experimenting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

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

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

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





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





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

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

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

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

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

## MARCH 1945

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## APRIL 1945

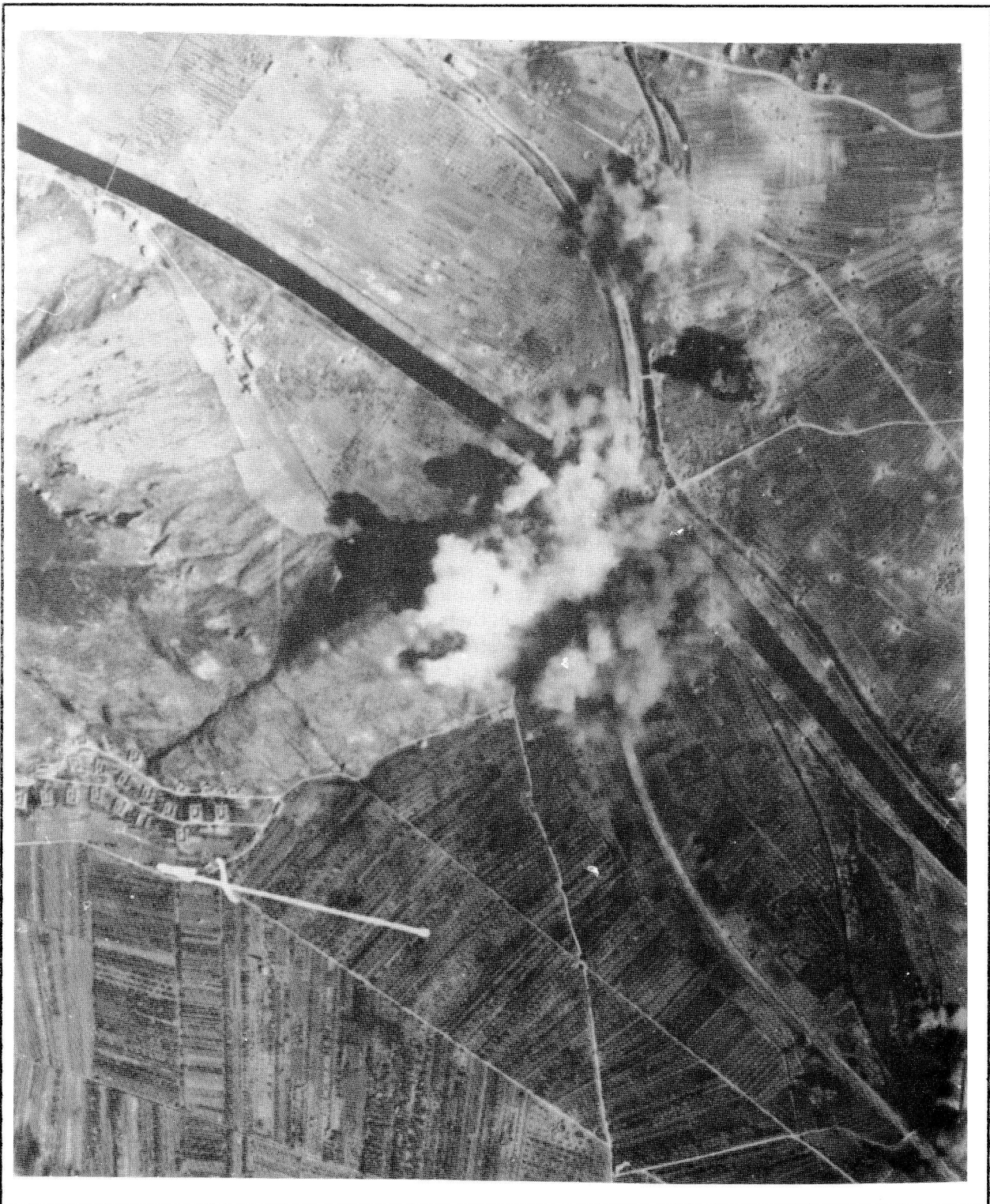
April marked the beginning of the end for Axis forces in Italy. Although no one in the 310th was really sure about this, there was a feeling in the air that maybe, just maybe the end was in sight. The "oldtimers", some of whom now had 30 months of continuous overseas service, were particularly hopeful.

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

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

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

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





## WAR DEPARTMENT

Washington 25 D.C., 5 October 1945

General Orders  
No. 84

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

The citations read as follows:

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

By order of THE SECRETARY of WAR:

G.C. MARSHALL  
Chief of Staff

Official:

EDWARD F. WITSELL  
Major General  
Acting The Adjutant General



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

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

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

## MAY TO SEPTEMBER 1945

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

match.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

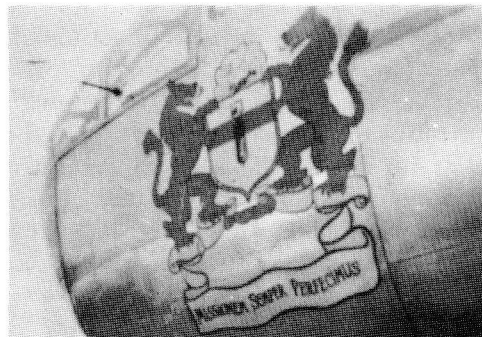
In the middle of August the thinned out ranks that composed the 310th Cadre were assigned to the Army Air Forces Service Command. The Cadre left Fano and re-deployed to Pomigliano Air Field, just outside of Naples. At the end of the month all that remained of the proud 310th Group, which in its heyday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

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

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

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the compilation of this history, great reliance was placed upon research and/or reports produced by Edward G. Betts (379), Frank B. Dean Jr. (380), the late Malloy Miller (310 Hq.) and the late William Pemberton (381).



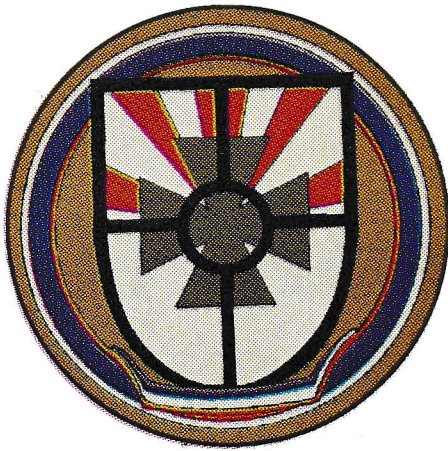
# 319th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (Medium)

ACTIVATED  
26 JUNE 1942

ENTERED COMBAT  
14 NOVEMBER 1942

DEACTIVATED  
18 DECEMBER 1945





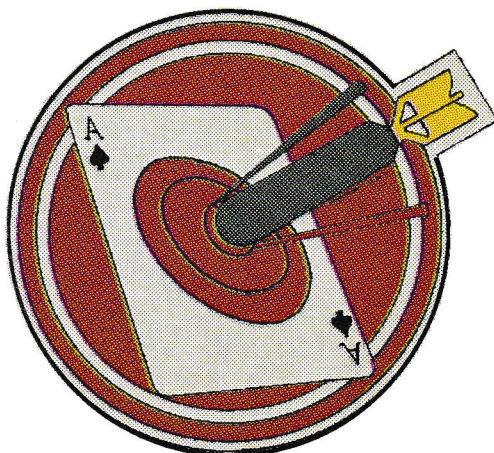
437th SQ.



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

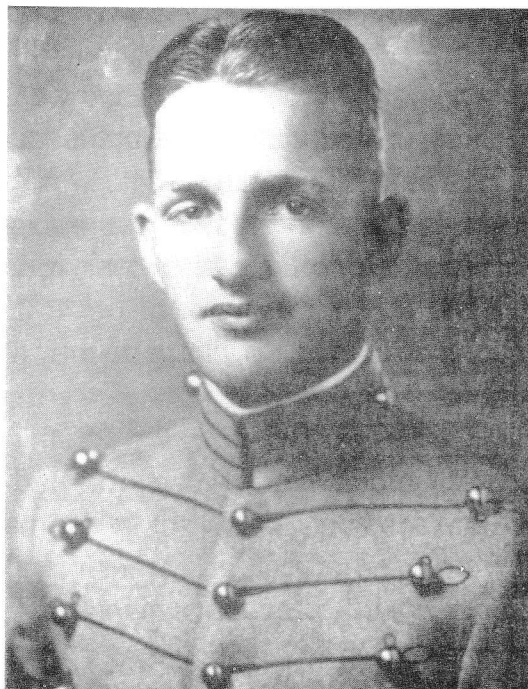
**CHARLES BREWTON 437 and ESTHER OYSTER 439**

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:

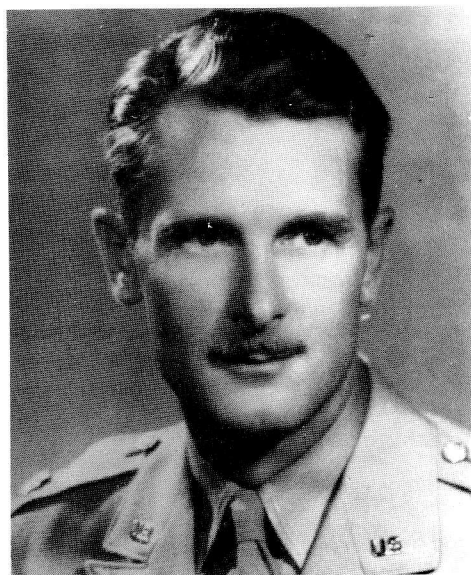
*"The D-8 sight at 7,000 feet is not accurate."*

*"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

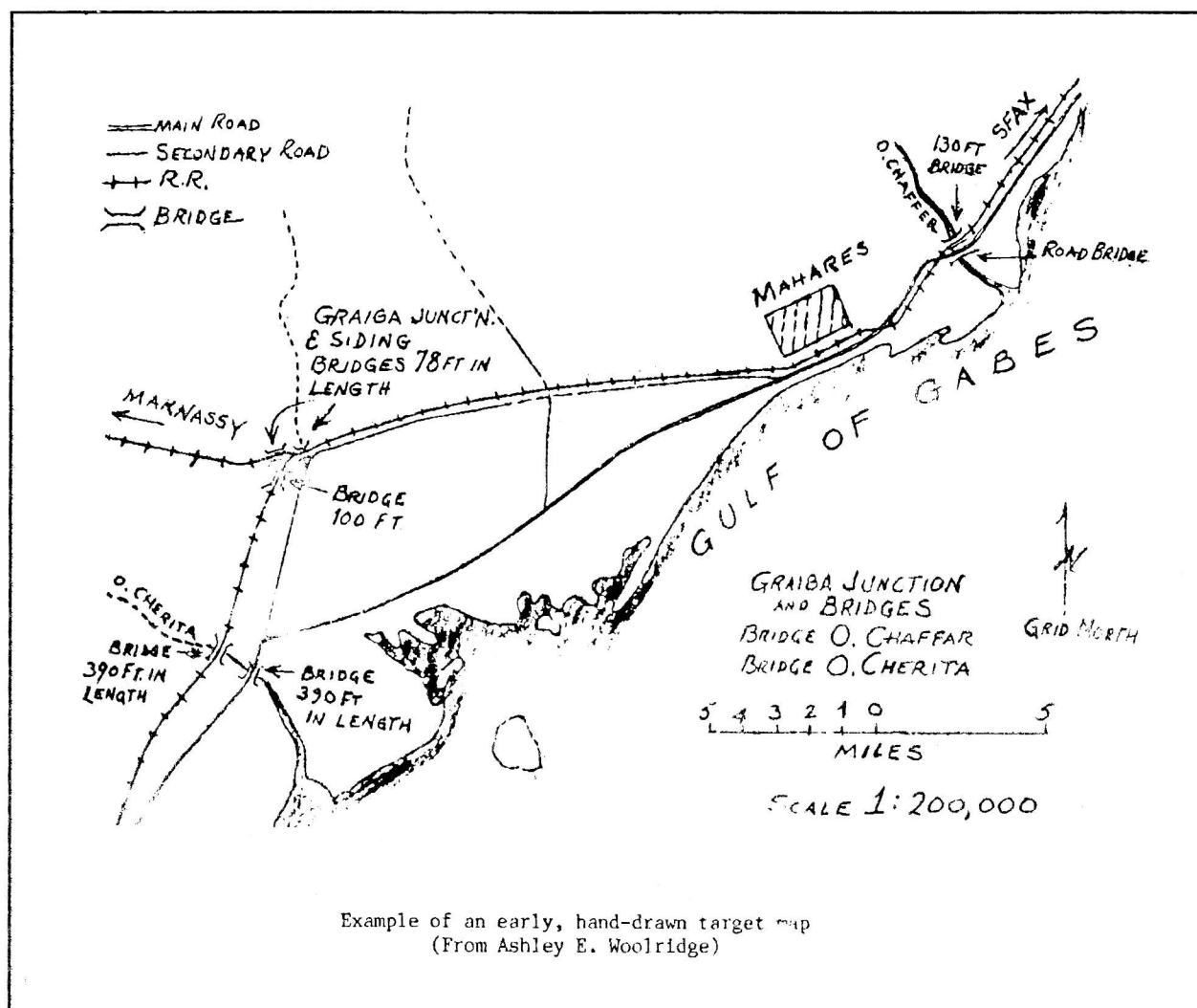


**LT. COL. WILBUR W. ARING**

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.

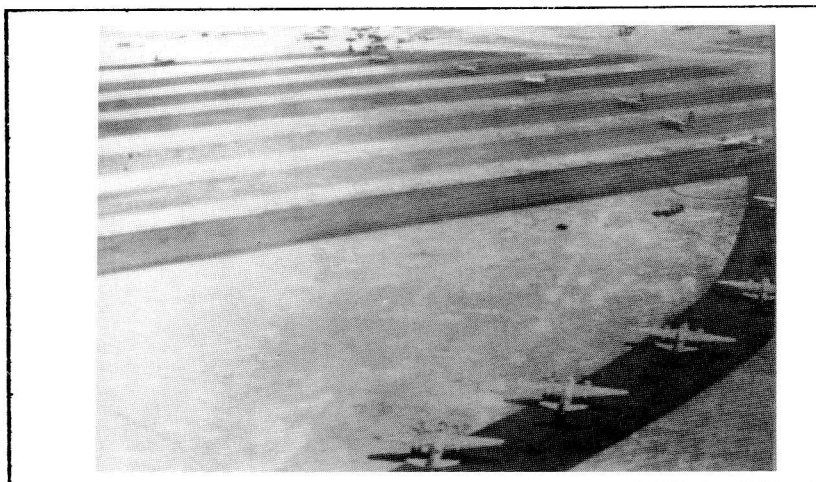
The new station at Sadrata was barren, no running water, no buildings, no more Red Cross and Ice Cream, no movies, no fresh food, no swim in the ocean. As someone said, c'est le guerre

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.

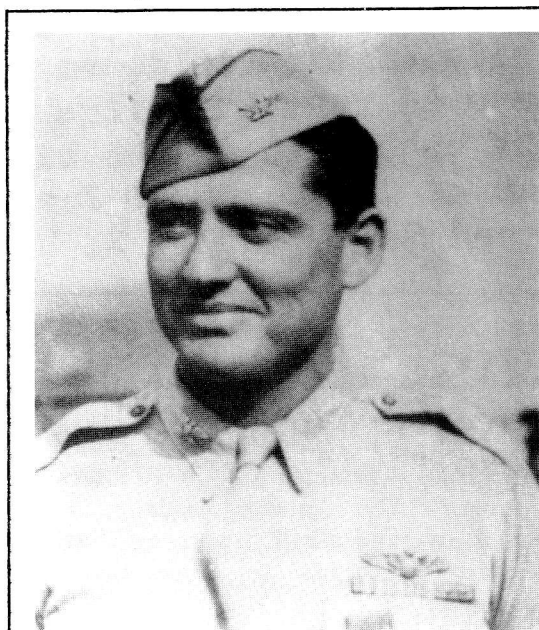
Combat operations commenced 5 June 1943 assisting in the reduction of the islands of Pantelleria and Lampedosa. Operating at or near 10,000 ft. altitude was standard from then on. As a result the casualty rate for the period 5 June '43 to 31 July '44 fell to about six-tenths of a percent.

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.

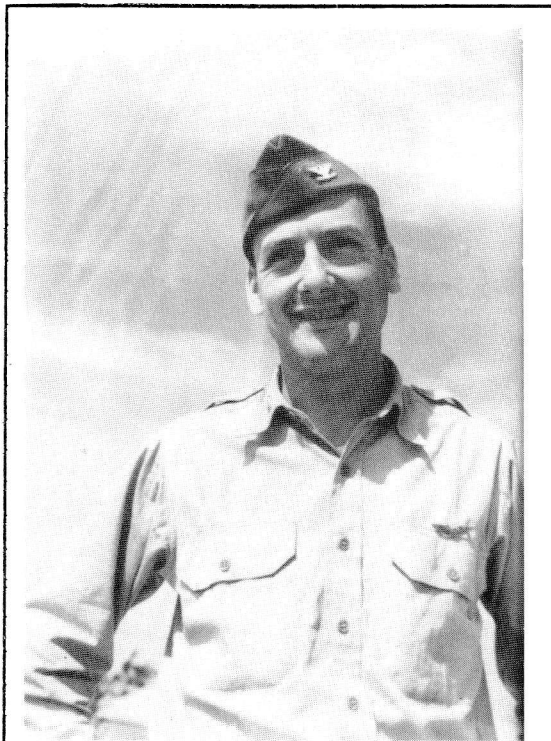
One of the two aircraft that went down that 4th of July was flown by Colonel Aring! For the third time in a little over six months the 319th Bomb Group had lost a Group Commander to enemy fire.

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

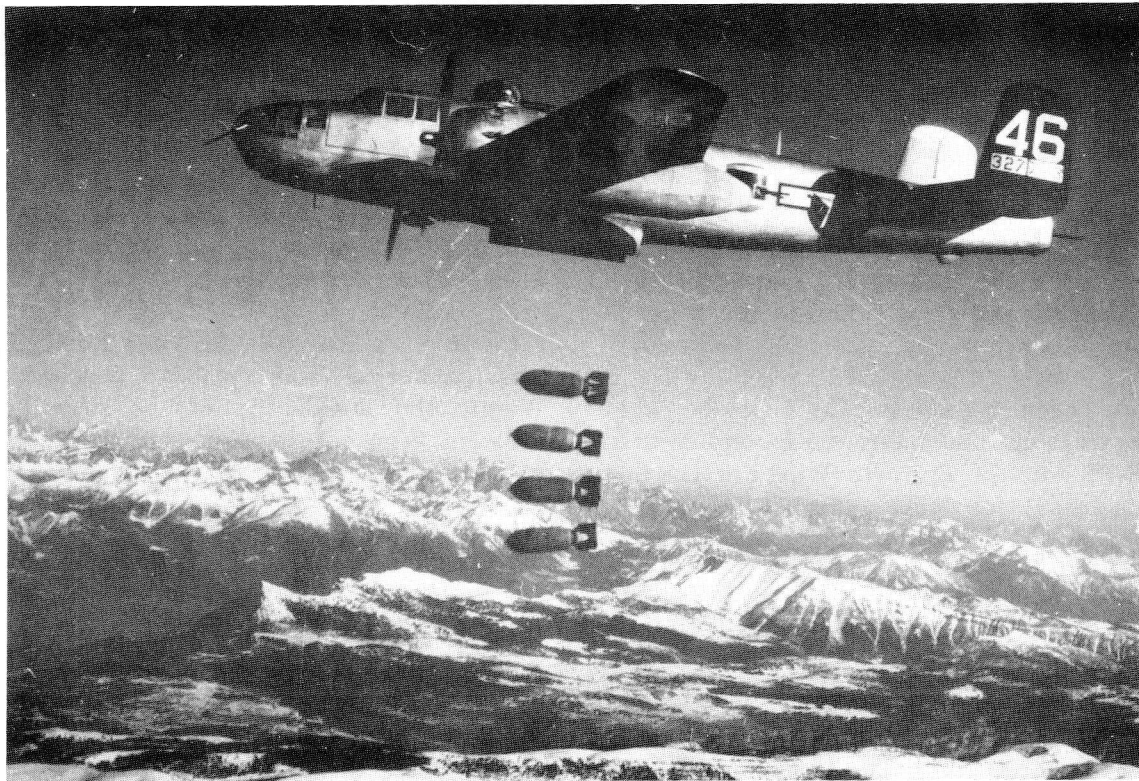
a letter of comendation was sent to all 319th personnel from Colonel Hozapple which states:

*"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 missions 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" who came to the M.T.O. 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**

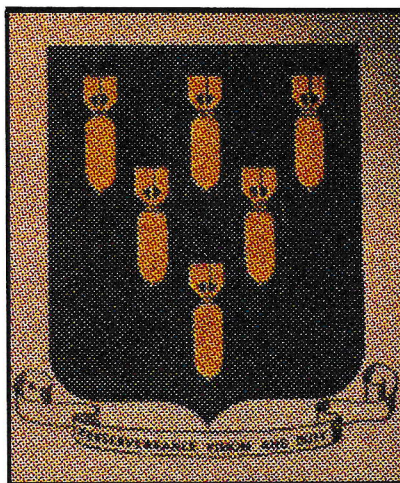
September 1945



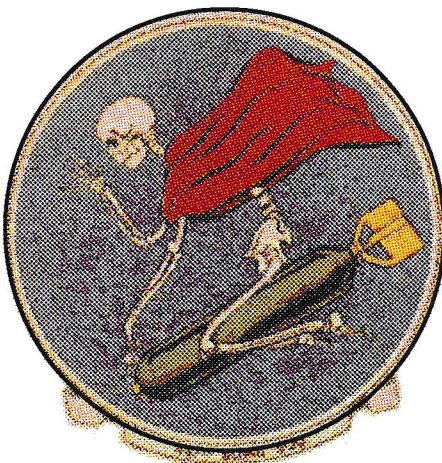
445th SQ.



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.

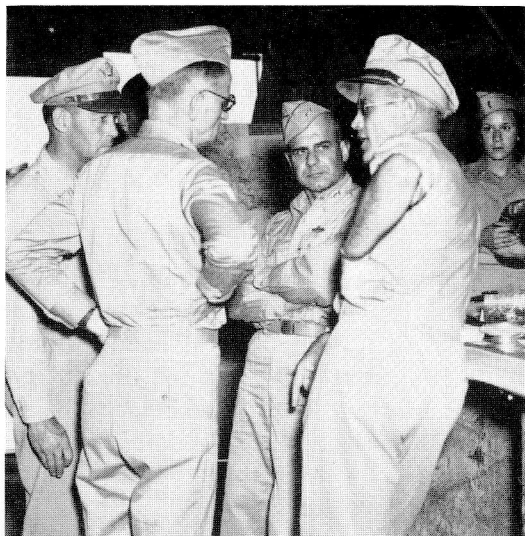
The Flight echelon was placed under the control of the ATC (Air Transport Command) for the flight overseas. Immediately several hassels began between Colonel Knapp and officials of the ATC, the first being over two Squadron Commanders; Officials told Col. Knapp that he would have to leave behind the 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.

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### **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



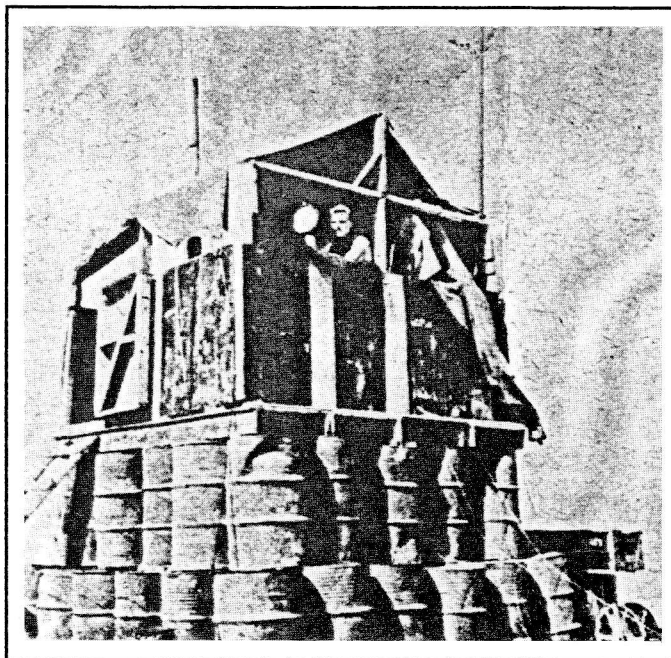
Capt. James P. Bates. Also on 21 June the Group hit the rail facilities at Battipaglia including the marshalling yards and rolling stock with some bombs falling short and other long into the town.

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

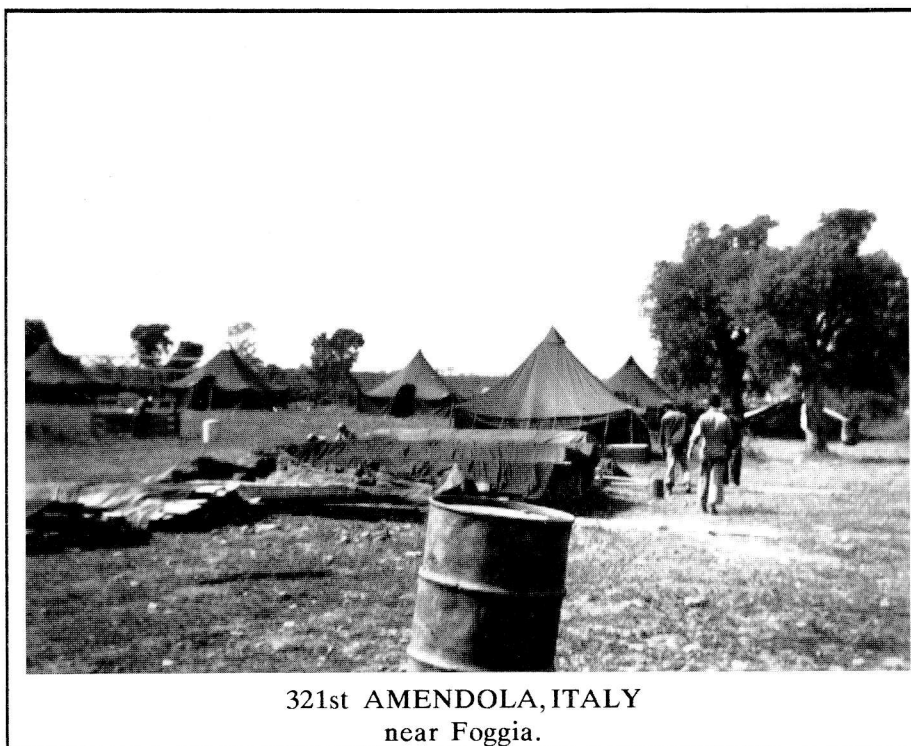
The Group went on the move again on 8 and 9 August. Once again to be closer to potential targets. Operations would now be conducted from a place called Soliman, Tunisia located about twenty-five miles from the town of Tunis. Again, a letter home by Lt. Grau reveals conditions at this place.

" 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".

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## 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.

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## 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** (Vincenzia)

There were no facilities for indoor offices and movie house at Vincenzia, 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

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## 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**



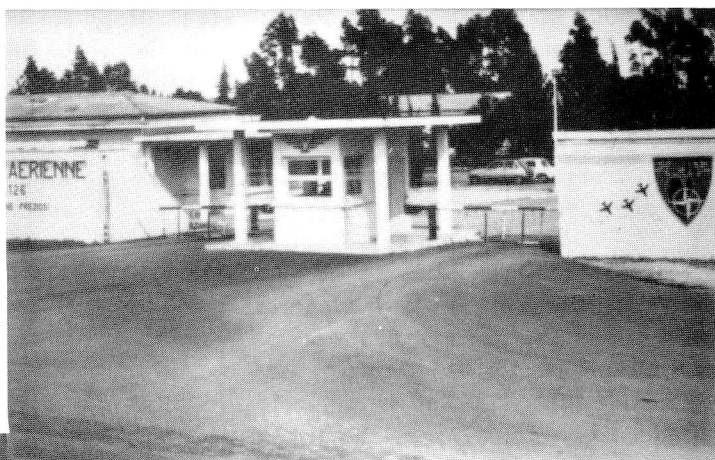
above:

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**

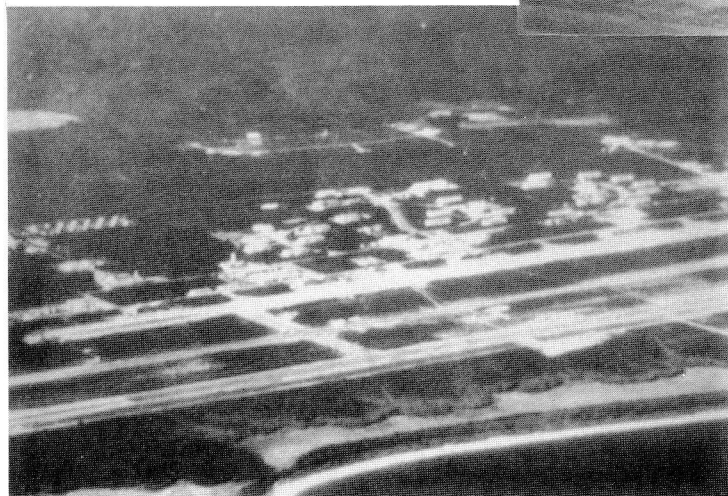


above:

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.

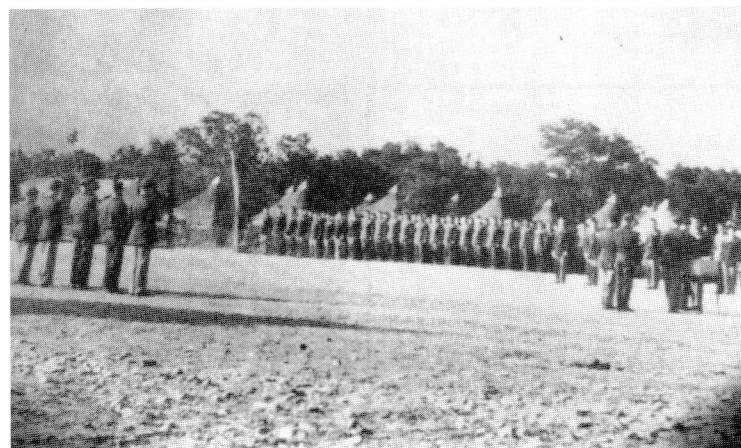
During July the Group installed a Link Trainer in addition to the Bomb trainer. These aids were to help fulfill the aims that Col. Smith had in mind when he took over the Group. All phases of flying, bombing and gunnery were practiced.

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,



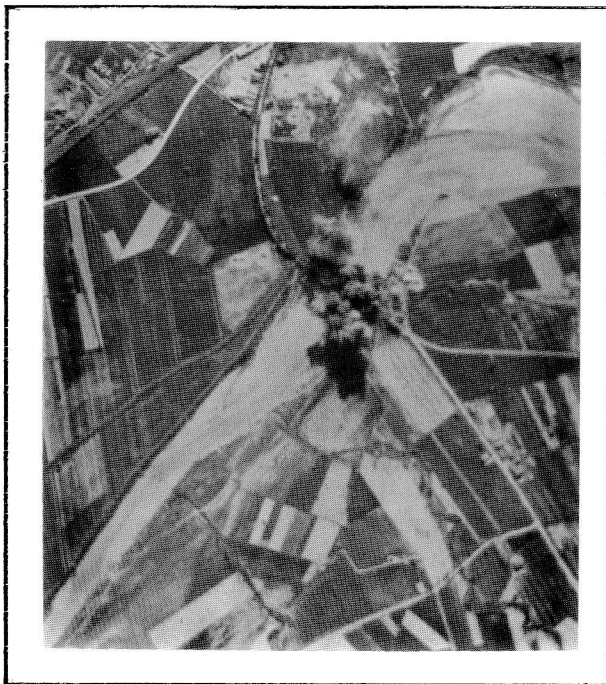
"Doc" Smith and his "MITCHELLAIRES"  
A popular Swing Ensemble from the 321st Bomb Group

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.

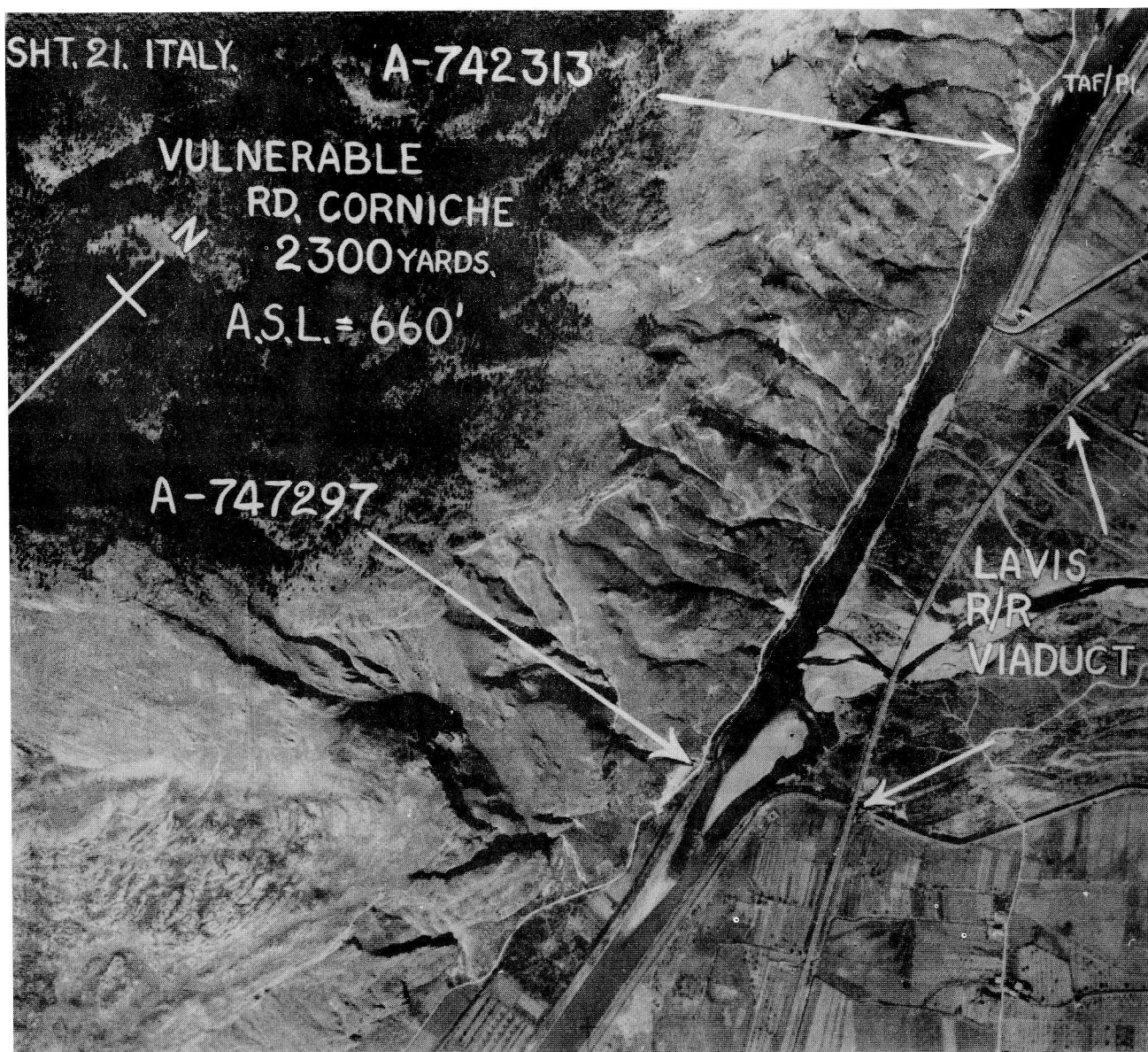
New Years day dinner of turkey and all of the fixin's was enjoyed by all.

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.

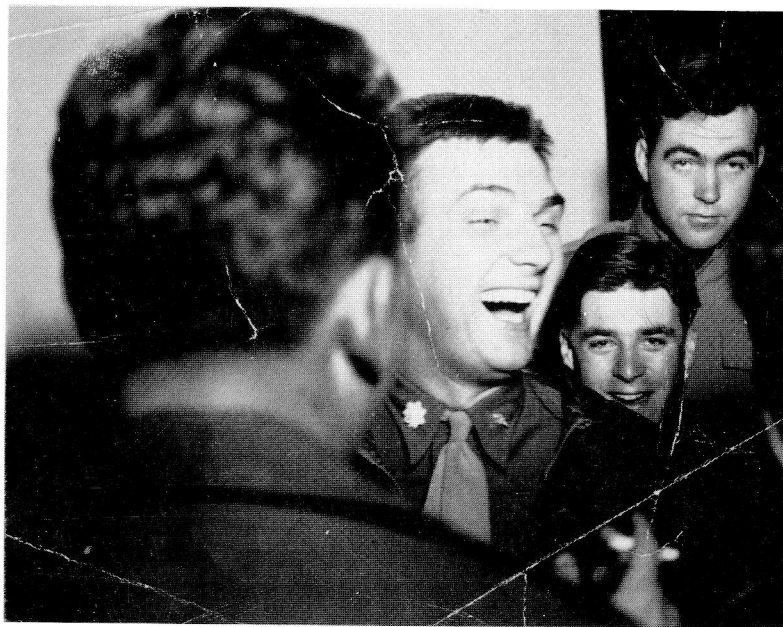
It rained all night and most of the morning of 27 April, and standown orders came from Wing. The weather cleared on the 28th, but no orders were sent down from Wing. The Group had run out of targets. The news was great. The Allies had taken Milan, Turin, and the Italian partisans had taken Venice. Another 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.

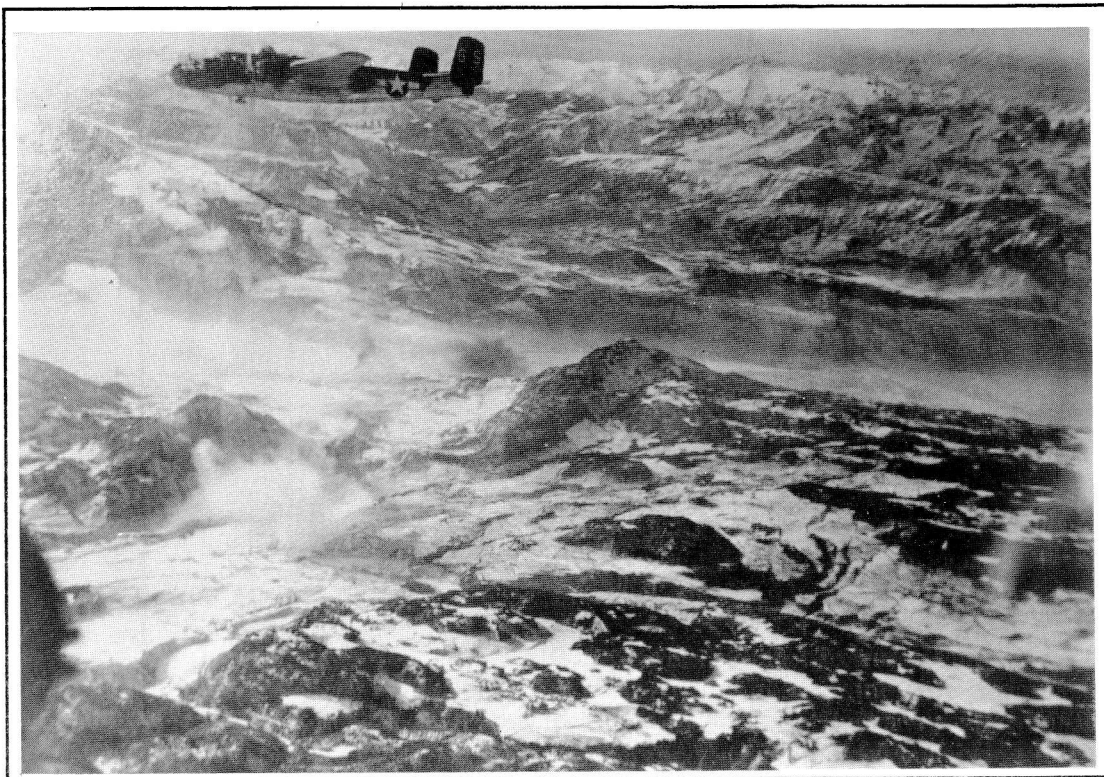
No one really knew what the future held so rumors were rampant. All of these rumors only served to increase the anxiety because

many of the men had been overseas from March 1943.

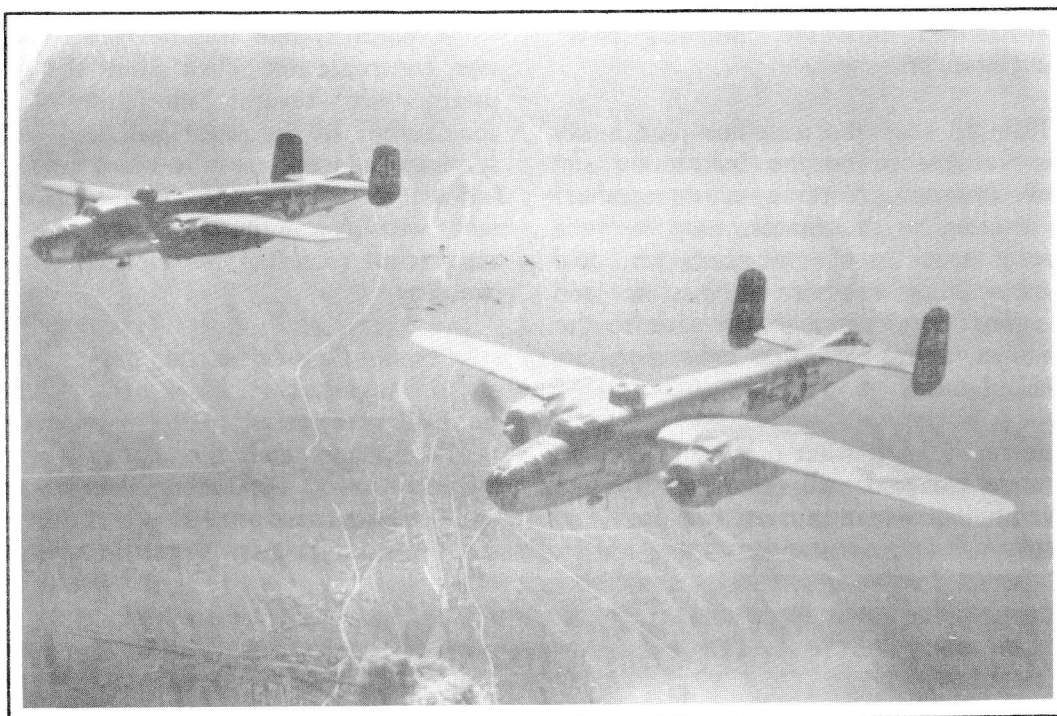
A point system was devised to select the men for rotation. Then came the word that there were several specialties that were considered to be essential and the point system would not apply to these men. A furor followed!! It was resolved by transferring the men with fewer points into the sensitive areas,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



# **340th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (Medium)**

## **ACTIVATED**

25 August, 1942

## **ENTERED COMBAT**

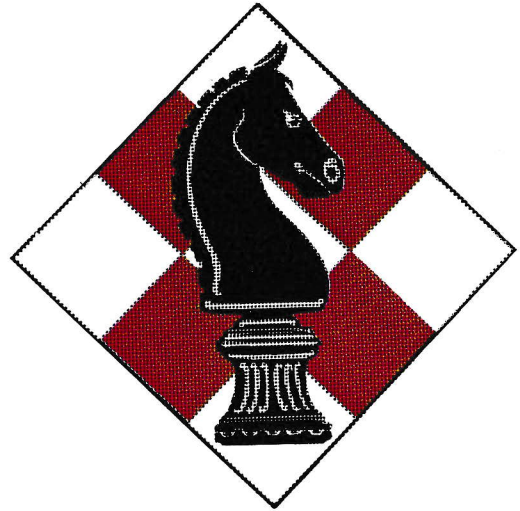
April, 1942

## **DEACTIVATED**

4 October, 1945



486th SQ.



487th SQ.



340th Group



488th SQ.



489th SQ.

# SAGA OF THE 340TH

From material submitted by  
LEONARD KAUFMANN Jr. 489

August 25, 1942 saw the birth of another infant in Uncle Sam's prolific Air Force family. No announcements were sent to Hermann Goering, but chances are that if he did learn of it, his ponderous paunch merely rippled a bit . . . this puling infant not even meriting a good healthy belly-laugh of distain.

As a matter of fact, no particular attention was paid to the event at Columbia, S.C., the birthplace. The birth certificate, CAAB General Order #19 was filed, Colonel William C. Mills appointed guardian, and the 340th was on its way.

At Columbia, the original cadre was quickly brought to practically T/O strength. Officers with shiny bars and popping chests nonchalantly showed the ropes to new arrivals . . . "newer" only by a few hours. Enlisted men popped in from all over but squadron First Sergeants were not too busy to drop their sewing ( they got a new stripe every other day) and help the new boys pick out the best tents, and make sure they were supplied with all home comforts. Things hummed from morning to late at night . . well, the Officers Club was open until midnight.

Squadron S-2's were busy planning mock missions in the best Harrisburg style and detail . . . Squadron operations were racing each other up and down the efficiency charts. September merged with October, October with November, and then Thanksgiving was history.

Came November 30 with orders to move to Walterboro, South Carolina for third phase training. The first day of December dawned at 0400 for the 340th . . . cold . . . overcast. The barracks were all scrubbed, men and baggage loaded on trucks for an early start . . and six hours later the convoy snaked its way down the white sand road, headed for another part of South Carolina. Late that afternoon we stretched our legs in Walterboro. The ships and the Flight echelon did not arrive on schedule since the

night before we left. Columbia was visited by a violent hail storm which did more damage in ten minutes than our flying cowboys would have accomplished in many weeks. The Group lost in all, fourteen planes.

It was the first of three occasions on which the 340th would be been practically stripped of ships through no fault of its own. In the later disasters, we had the coordinated help of the smooth-functioning 12th Air Force to make quick replacements, but this time we were on our own. That "our own" was not too bad is evidenced by the fact that while first estimates of damage repair were up to a couple of months, actually the group was operating in a relatively few days, thanks to the unstinting labor of the loyal ground crews. Maybe we did wage keen rivalry between individual squadrons (with everybody taking a sock at Group) but let anything or anybody tackle this GROUP . . . watchout!

With a shortage of planes, Group thought it advisable to intensify the school schedule and institute a bit of infantry drill to occupy our minds and muscles. Classes were held, and usually the instructor at least was there. We hiked and marched sometimes almost as much as six miles a day and all of five minutes with gas mask on. Group also formed the habit of calling imaginary air raids, alerts and missions at the most ungodly hours. The latter were the delight of our Jeep jockeys . . . total blackout, the windshields opaque with frost but a good excuse for doing better than the official "15 miles an hour on the post."

They loaded us down with equipment, pumped us full of bugs at the Group Dispensary and the smart boys filled us with rumors . . . positive information, we were going to China . . . Burma . . . India . . .England even "Skowhegan"

One afternoon the Flight crews took off into the "Wild Blue Yonder" via truck. It would be two full months . . . months full of sights, strange people and strange smells,



### **COL. WILLIAM C. MILLS**

340th Group Commanding Officer  
Sept., 1942 -- 6 May 1943

We know little of Colonel Mills' background except that he was married, and had a son, and was a full Colonel when he was assigned to command the 340th Bombardment Group when it was activated on 20 August 1942. Prior to that date Colonel Mills served as a temporary commander of the newly activated 321st Bombardment Group.

Most of the men who were assigned to the new group were inexperienced in both flying and military skills, and of course none had combat experience. With skill, Colonel Mills selected the men who seemed best suited for leadership, and with patience, molded them into a combat unit, preparing them for the rigors ahead. When they were needed, ready or not, the 340th moved from the United States to the combat zone during January - March 1943. This, too, was handled with his usual skill and competence.

The 340th arrived and began combat operations on April 1943. His life was to be short lived. On 6 May, 1943 while leading a formation over Furnay, Algeria the aircraft he was flying in received a direct hit of enemy anti-aircraft fire and went down. He perished in the subsequent crash. His death was later confirmed by Captain Marcan, who was flying as pilot in the plane

The name

### **COLONEL WILLIAM C. MILLS**

appears on the "Memorial Wall of the Missing" in the Carthage National Cemetery, Carthage, Tunisia.

prepared by George Wells

before the Flight and the Ground echelon would join up, after circling the globe between them.

On 29 January, the Ground Echelon climbed into waiting trucks headed for a very secret destination which everybody knew was Pittsburg, California.

Camp Stoneman was a beautifully laid out, equipped and operated post with everything from commissary stores to movie houses. followed by some days of stiff tests of physical fitness and endurance what with calisthenics in cold dark dawns, nurses, debarkation nets, an obstacle course and the never-to-be-forgotten twelve-mile hike. The enlisted men were warned to put everything they would need for several weeks into their "A"

bags. Each man sorted out his half acre or so of belongings and found to his surprise that the Army hadn't made "A" bags anywhere large enough, but the "B" bags were far too large for just a gas mask and helmet.

On St. Valentine's Day, every GI and his "A" bag, and officers with his hand luggage marched aboard the GI ferry boat, sailed down the bay to San Francisco, there to board the U.S.S. West Point former luxury liner "America". and converted to a troop ship.

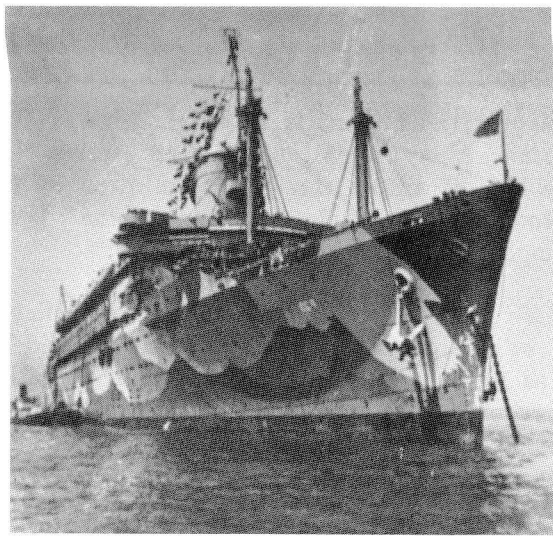
Late in the evening, the last man staggered on board under a load of bags and blankets, rifle, overcoat, mask and helmet. Finally the good ship West Point quieted down as tired men dropped off to sleep in the



various compartments, and in all stages of undress.

For the next forty-two days the men of the 340th "enjoyed" an all expenses tour of the southern hemisphere. All alone on a vast expanse of empty sea where the nearest land was straight down and nobody was in a hurry to get there. The nights were particularly beautiful. It seemed that we had more than our share of moon light under which the music of volunteer orchestras and singing groups took on a nostalgic sweetness.

We touched briefly at Wellington, New



**U.S.S. WEST POINT**

The former Luxury liner U.S.S. AMERICA

Zealand, then on south around the island through the Tasman Sea across to Australia where we were given the hospitality of the townspeople. We headed next for Bombay, India where we smelled the smells and saw the sights. On the third day we pulled out and started a dizzy zig-zagging course across the Indian Ocean into the Gulf of Aden, towards the Straights of Bab el Mandab. The latest rumor that we were doomed to patrol the Red Sea was seemingly confirmed, they gave us pocket guides to Egypt and phonograph records of the Arabic language. The hospital filled up with the first victims of a run of GPs. Much progress was made in learning the new language for among numerous other things, the guide book said that "FAYN-ma-ra-HEED" meant where is the toilet?"



**First Class Lower Deck**

29 March, 1943 . . . SUEZ! End of the route, all out! We anchored in the stream at 1000 hours and went ashore in the rickety native boats about the size of harbor tugs, held together as far as we could see by bailing wire and grass rope. The engineers crowded on all steam the rusty boilers would carry and, amid the hoots and jeers of the winners, the boats raced for shore. Here we were herded onto a dinky, narrow-gauge train for a ride to the field . . . El Kabrit on Little Bitter Lake beside the Suez Canal.

Our new home was a vast expanse of sand which made pitching our tents no easy task, but by supper time the camp was pretty well shaken down, and we took our first look around. We saw our first evidence of war in the gaping roofs, and shrapnel-perforated walls of the hangars, and were suitably impressed when the Flight echelon . . . old timers who had been there a week or so . . . casually mentioned that Jerry raids were a daily occurrence. They further pointed out that the prisoner-of-war camps across the lake were brightly lighted at night and served to guide the Stukas to our location.

We heard the saga of the Flight echelon, . . . how they traveled by train in accommodations to which they were not accustomed, nor expected, as "The Cream of the Crop". . .

how Captain Bailey practically tore to shreds an engineering officer who had ideas about the kind of planes he was going to turn over to the crews for the long ocean hop. Naturally, they snowed us under with their tales of difficult navigation, beautiful gals and wild parties, and the final mad dash to Cairo with thirsty engines consuming gallons of oil.

Most of the boys made it, but to the grief and sorrow of their comrades in some of the squadrons: there had been a few losses . . . boys who had left the States with high endeavor in their hearts, and while they had not seen actual combat, had in fact sacrificed their lives to the cause in which they believed. Can any of us do more?

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## EL KABRIT, EGYPT

Kabrit was an immense camp with many buildings housing the Post Office, PX, the combat crews and of course the Group. There was a movie theater where "Mr. Shifty Shafto" sold Ballantyne's for 63 cents a can. The walls and roof were well ventilated with shrapnel holes, and with the place being equipped with wide rafters, it did double duty as a bird sanctuary. These birds, although without benefit of schooling in the theory of bombing, still did mighty well in practice.

There was sand everywhere, and not a tree in sight. But we had air conditioned latrines and washrooms with the most invigorating cold water assisted by the ice-cold breezes blowing right off the lake.

We had our first "mail call" . . . one that made a lot of us fathers, and from the way some folks acted, you'd think that it had never been done before. Those who didn't rate babies began to adopt Egyptian chow hounds.

A shave and a haircut cost all of 12 cents, and took two minutes for the haircut and fifteen seconds for the shave. It was asserted, but never proven, that we bought back the skin in the form of leather souvenirs.

On 4 April we had a rip roaring sand storm, the wind blowing a howling gale, the visibility about 25 feet and powder fine sand seeping



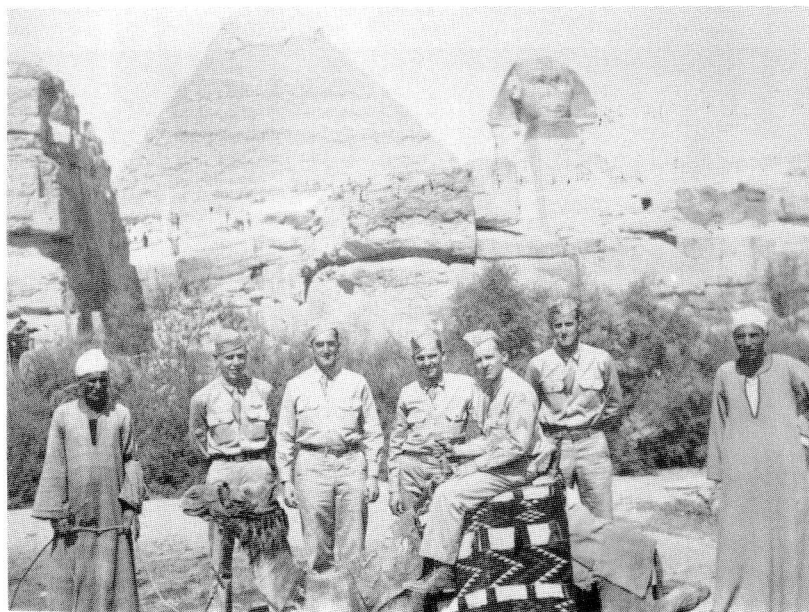
**THE WIND, SHE  
BLOW, BLOW, BLOW!!**

into everything no matter how tightly it was closed. Many tents pulled their stakes and ambled off across the desert followed by the belongings of their occupants, the latter bringing up a cursing rear.

Life at El Kabrit was mostly routine relieved by swimming in the lake or baseball and by trips to Ismalia, Cairo, Televiv and Palestine. Then one morning the Group told us that there would be parties for all . . . A, B, C and D. The combat crews were "A Party" and flew off to Medenine, Tunisia. Some of the elite of the ground personnel were "B Party" and, in C-47s, waddled along above the desert in the prop wash of "A" party.

Some of the men stayed behind to play baseball, swim in the lake and take three day passes to establish the custom, which is still followed of throwing water on the heads of Gheri drivers from the windows of the Grand Hotel. Others had their pictures taken on camels in front of the Pyramids.

By far the largest party however was that which threw its baggage into an assortment of war-weary Canadian and British trucks and pursued Rommel across the desert from Alemein to Sfax while the British Army got all of the credit. Fifteen days after leaving Kabrit, the convoy unloaded at Sfax and the combat crews more or less reluctantly, returned to them the privileges of guard duty and KP details and other odd jobs.



### 340th GUYS'S and "FRIENDS"

L-R: John Gilliam, 489yj Crew Chief; Cliff Williams, 489th Line Chief;  
John Paariberg, 489th Crew Chief (John was killed in the air raid on Corsica)  
Orville Estil, 489th Crew Chief.

## MEDENINE, TUNISIA

Meanwhile the Flight echelon and the DC-3 boys covered the distance to Medenine in a few hours, and were nicely settled into that dusty hole. They had pulled off several missions under the tutelage of the 12th Bomb Group and felt like veterans.

At Medenine we dug a long series of slit trenches and tent "cellars" but never afterward, with the possible exception of Hergla, did we find harder ground. This being our first experience and knowing that this was a cleared (?) minefield did not add any enthusiasm to our shovels.

After getting nicely settled, the next thing was, of course, to move on. In the early dark of 16 April camp was struck. It was a bright and sunny day and fairly warm, except for occasional thick dust, we enjoyed a Cook's Tour of the so recently contested battle ground. There was evidence all around in the form of wrecked equipment, vehicles, fieldpieces, piles of land mines, etc. We hustled by the piles of mines beside the road but hoped the sappers had left none for our

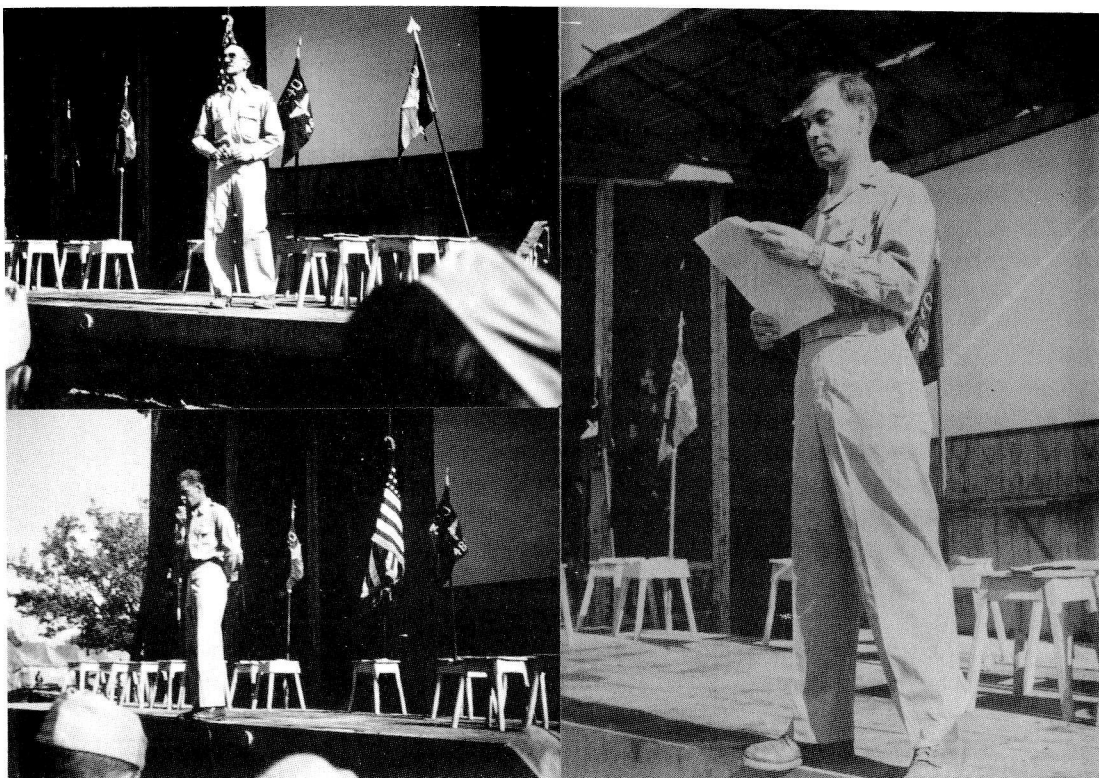
truck wheels to find as Limey road-hogs forced us over.

## SFAX, TUNISIA

Our new home was in the midst of an orchard of almond, peach, olive and apricot trees as well as some whose fruits we did not recognize. We found lima beans, giant peas, scallions and wheat all ripe and ready for picking.

The dirt and grass landing field was in pretty good shape although there were craters and unexploded bombs over the whole area. Wrecked Me-109s and Italian planes were plentiful, evidence of the efficiency of the raids by some of our boys not so many days before. Souvenir hunters had a field day.

While the group was credited with seven missions flown with the 12th Group at Medenine, it was at Sfax that we really began to function, but briefing was still done by the 12th who were located only about a mile or so away, but using the same field.



Photos from Tokaz collection

Easter Sunday 1943 was a black day for the 340th. It dawned bright and fair with no hint of the tragedy to come. Church was held in a field of bright red Poppies under the wings of the planes. Just after noon we were briefed for a run to Soliman South, the planes took off an hour later. While they were circling to join up two of the ships collided, plummeted to the ground and burned, killing both crews . . . eleven men in all.

6 May. Another bad day! On an early morning mission, the plane flown by Colonel Mills took a direct hit over the enemy lines. There seemed to be no hope for any of the crew. Later, after Tunis fell, it was learned that Captain Marcan was found convalescing in a former German hospital and vacuated to the States. Eventually word was received that Lt. Zarega, Group Navigator, survived also.

In another plane, also a lead plane, the pilot was killed. Major Bachrach, Group Operations Officer, brought the plane back, with bombs hung and no landing gear, to a crash landing. Another ship came back with no hydraulics and the crew bailed out, the plane crashing about a mile from the field.

Upon the death of Colonel Mills, Lt. Colonel A.E. Tokaz assumed command of the 340th. Things at Sfax settled down to the business of war, although we chafed at the policy which kept us tied to the apron strings of the 12th Bomb group. We dug slit trenches in the orchards and wheat fields just as the ack-ack started.

On 9 May, having driven the enemy into the Cap Bon Peninsula, we left the mopping up to the infantry and turned our attention to the island of Pantelleria, the stepping stone to Italy. The reduction of their vaunted island





**LT. COL ADOLPH E. TOKAZ** 340th

Group Commanding Officer  
7 May 1943 to 8 January 1944

Adolph E. Tokaz, was born in Walpole, Massachusetts in 1913. His wife is the former Frances Jones of Saluda S.C. They have two sons and a daughter. Tik received his B.S. degree from Massachusetts State College (Now the University of Massachusetts) and furthered his education with a Masters Degree at Duke University. He has since completed post graduate studies at University of South Carolina, Iowa State and Florida State Universities.

He received a commission as 2nd. Lieutenant in the Cavalry Reserve in 1936, After completing flight school in June, he was commissioned in Army Air Corps in

1938.

When the 340th Bomb Group was being formed Maj. Tokaz was assigned as Group Executive Officer, as primary duty, and Group Operations Officer as additional duty. On 2 November 1942 he was assigned as Group Operations Officer and promoted to Lt. Colonel.

Col. Tokaz was serving as Operation Officer on 6 May 1943 when Colonel Mills was shot down. He immediately took command of the devastated unit, reassigned people to fill the slots that were vacated by loss, and continued operations.

On 8 January 1944 Lieut. Colonel Adolph "Tik" Tokaz left the 340th Bomb Group being assigned as Assistant Operations Officer at TBF (Tactical Bomber Force). And on 15 January 1944 he was assigned to XII Bomber Command as Assistant A-3. His next assignment was with the 57th Bomb Wing as Operations Officer under Brigadier General Knapp. When Colonel Charles Olmsted was moved to 57th Wing Headquarters as Operations Officer, Col. Tokaz served as assistant until 11 May 1944 when he returned to the ZI. Upon his return to the United States he was assigned to the Columbia, S.C. AAB as Deputy Commanding Officer, and on 6 October he became Director Of Training.

Adolph E. "Tik" Tokaz retired from the USAF in 1961 as a full Colonel. He and his wife now reside in Columbia, S.C.

Prepared by George Wells

fortress was entirely a matter of pinpoint destruction . . . coastal defenses on the island perimeter while the airfield and harbor were practically ignored. One after another the coastal batteries were destroyed in the smothering crescendo of falling bombs. The bombing destroyed practically all defenses. After this, the first all out aerial offensive, white crosses of surrender were displayed on the ground and out ground forces were able to occupy the island in a matter of minutes.

When we transferred the pressure to Pantelleria from Cap Bon, the German 90th Light took heart and continue to give trouble

around Enfidaville. They were warned that unless they agreed to surrender, the "Golden 18's" (their name for our B-25's) would be over in twenty minutes. They didn't . . . we did . . . and the Battle of Africa was over! The newspapers didn't play it up exactly that way, but you'll note that in six weeks after the 340th, as a unit, went into action, the Axis folded up in Tunisia. The bloomin' British Eighth Army did, but we didn't mind.

13 May became a memorable day for the men of the 340th. A bountiful breakfast was served . . . grapefruit juice . . . cream of wheat . . . hot cakes, with syrup, bacon and jam.

hot cakes, with syrup, bacon and jam. What did we do to deserve this?

The rest of the stay at Sfax was practically a social affair, except that everybody was at this time busily catering to that horror of war known as the GI's. Two elements in this sport are speed and accuracy. Some made it, some didn't and some simply gave up trying and bought new underwear and pyjamas. The net result was a more frequent relocation of targets and a general loss of twenty pounds.

The remnants of the 340th which had been left at El Kabrit showed up at the end of May 1943, and as soon as they got their tents up, somebody discovered that the war wasn't over after all. The orderly rooms were rolled up, the latrines knocked down and it was moving day again. The new stomping ground would be at a place called Hergla, Tunisia.

## HERGLA, TUNISIA

Hergla was and probably still is barren expanse of sand and thistles. It was near the sea, and in the background, we had a mountain at the foot of which lies Enfidaville, the last hold out of the 90th Light which we would like to think we had a hand in blasting out. There were nice cool breezes from the sea, when they weren't hot breezes from the desert.

Life at Hergla wasn't too dull. In the mornings there were the gnats that drove us crazy; during the day the flies, lizzards, giant grasshoppers, scorpions and mice contested for every inch of space; in the night, malaria laden mosquitos gave close support to desert rats on patrol.

After supper one night, the Group softened Lampedusa and the next day the Navy swam in and took over. With some help from the RAF and the rest of the AAF, we had cleaned up Africa and Pantelleria right on the button, and now Lampedusa. It was time for a breather. For the next three weeks, we worked hard at eating watermelons at a buck a throw, putting in sack time and listening to rumors of the great concentration of ships and men all up and down the coast.

On 2 July, TBF let us in in the secret . . . we were to start working again, with Sicily as the target. So on the third, we inaugurated the Sicilian Shuttle Service and on successive days, staged a Roman Holiday over Comiso airdrome, making hideous skeletons of the buildings and plowing up the runways. Nobody told us that a month later, we'd have to clean up the mess, or we might have been less enthusiastic.

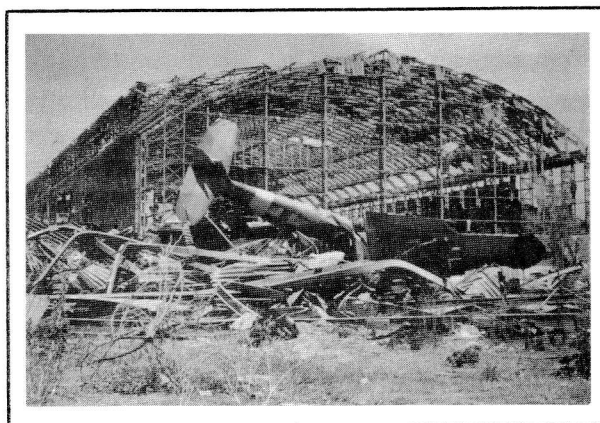
While we rustled eggs and melons and cursed the blowing sand and lack of mail, the bomb line was creeping across Sicily and promising another Cap Bon at Messina. So to be nearer our targets as well as to the foods, which we heard were plentiful in Sicily, we packed up and moved again.

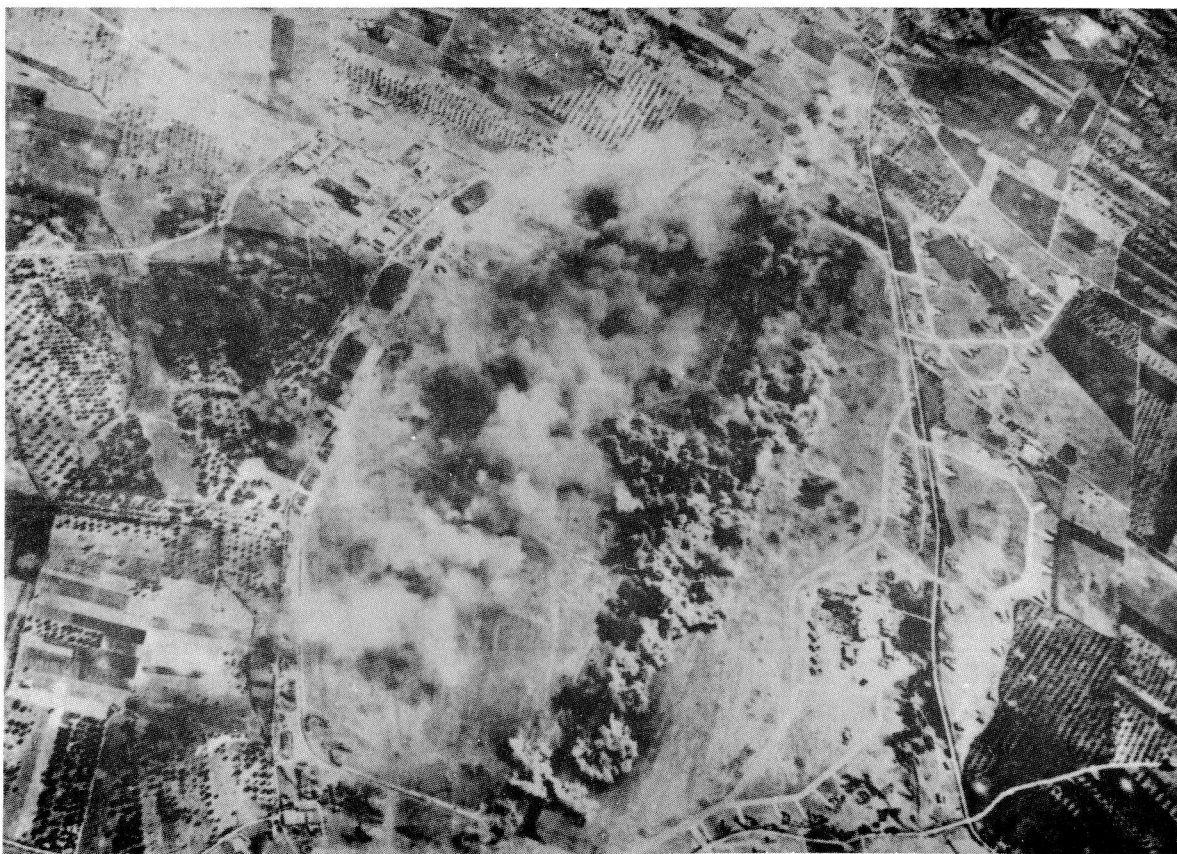
## COMISO, SICILY

Comiso had been a regular field for the Italians, and was well equipped with permanent buildings, that had been designed as permanent when Mare Nostrum was still the fond dream of Mussolini. When we moved in they were mere shells of their former grandeur . . . a bit of destruction we'd had hand in.

We found more than a score of Me 109s in perfect condition and plenty more Italian and German planes which had made their last landings. The boys had a field day stripping souvenirs and collected so darned many parts they decided it would be easier to fly them than to cart them around.

After sweeping up the "crowsfeet" we had





**DIGGING POST HOLES**  
July 3, 1943 Comiso Airdrome, Sicily

dropped some time before, clearing a few mines and filling a few holes, we settled down to enjoy Sicily. Our areas were plumb in the middle of tremendous grape orchards where Concord type blue grapes and luscious big white Malagas were just getting to their best. There were almonds and peaches just ready for picking, but it was a continuous race with the owner who also had the wish for the fruits of his labor.

Between missions to such familiar spots as Randazzo, Adrano and the unforgettable Messina, which at that time was the most heavily defended spot in the world, the flak happy combat crews and the sand happy ground personnel relaxed in the grape arbors while native labor dug in the tents, hacked out slit trenches. After the dust and "C" rations of Hergla, the free fruit and clear air of Sicily, made Comiso seem like a GI paradise. And the good people of Sicily were

fairly friendly inspite of our rather rough treatment of their town.

Came 25th August and Group staged a birthday party. There were the usual ho-hum speeches and the usual absence of timed brass hats. Music was furnished by a 10-piece native orchestra which was really good. A picnic supper was served and was followed by a magician, some talent from the squadrons and in the evening, a movie. The affair went off in grand style and was all to the good from both the entertainment and moral-building standpoints.

We knew what to expect when things came to such a pass that they were giving us free entertainment and eats . . and sure enough the next day came the orders to move. The scouting party came back with harrowing details of dead bodies tied to booby traps, mines so thick that only the skinniest sappers





**FRIENDLY ???**  
A Captured and Converted-109

were sent in to locate them, and similar comforting information. We just knew that we'd enjoy this new spot . . . Catania, A/D

## CATANIA, SICILY

At Catania we found everything SNAFU. The British Eighth Army was camped all over the place. Having found the field practically one continuous crater and all the buildings mere shells from our bombing, they had decided nobody in his senses would try to use this place for an airfield. They just didn't know our experience and ability with a pick and shovel. After considerable urging, we nudged them over to give elbow room for our people and planes.

We were going to miss the orchards and vineyards, but figured that this loss was offset by a nearby sandy beach.

Jerry welcomed us with a raid just as we sat down to supper. Nobody spilled his coffee, but the guns on the line, and all around the area, in spots we didn't know about, opened up. We hit the ditch as one man. Supper was "meat and vegetable stew" again anyhow. Little damage was done although some of the folks up at Group headquarters were chased around a shelter by fragments.

We had frequent Jerry visits but on only one was there any real excitement . . . the afternoon the ack-ack got one Jerry, the Spitfires another and one of our barrage balloons was sent down in flames, all in a space of a few minutes.

Through September and into October, the missions to Italy were mostly milk runs and we had stand downs for days on end. The frequent trips to nearby towns began to pall, heavy rain and frequent showers dampened our spirits. Everybody was bored and restless, the only bright spot being the receipt of orders for the first boys to go

home.

Again came orders to move and the "A" Party" left taking most of the tents and equipment with them. For three days the rest of us huddled into the little shelter we could find, because, as soon as the tents were gone, the heavens opened up and unloosed a veritable flood.

## SAN PANCRAZIO, ITALY

Except for the fact that it was a bit blacker, we simply exchanged one mud hole for another by our move. Some people contended that San Pancrazio mud had better sliding qualities.

San Pan came to be famous for its fine plumbing, hot showers, inexhaustible lumber piles, yellow jaundice and MUD.

The really good point scored was the fact that for the first time we were out of tents and into buildings. It was true that some had no roofs, some no floors, others no walls but we patched and plugged. The weather was definitely on the coolish side and cans of every kind were converted to use as stoves and stove-pipes and some weird designs were there.



We ganged up with the 321st Group for raids on Sofia and Kalamaki and struck a hot one on the second raid to the second place. four Me-109s were claimed, while losing one of ours. The mission had bucked strong headwinds and everyone being low on gas and some mechanical problems, the landing became a rat race.

The first Christmas packages began arriving, but so did our orders to move again. We were on our way to Foggia, Italy

## FOGGIA, ITALY

For a week, the 340th was scattered all over southern Italy. Rain and more rain grounded the air echelon and greased the roads. Trucks with flooded ignition systems stalled along the roads, other skidded into the ditches. Nobody wanted to feed us or bed us down. We truly were orphans of the storm.

With the first sunshine, a few hardy souls straggled into Foggia. Leaving the highway was like stepping off a dock at low tide. Mud came halfway up the radiators of heavily loaded Jeeps, and acres of water were unexplored seas to which one hoped there was a bottom.

Some lucky ones found quarters in former farm buildings where the refuse was nearly as bad as the mud outside. For the next few days everybody was either digging out, or digging in.

The front looked a long way off on the map, but at night the booming of the guns on the Adriatic sector still sounded too close for comfort.

Our planes finally got in after some days and the boys went sight-seeing over Sibenik, Jugoslavia; Port Gruz, Albania and Guilianova, Italy.

Christmas packages came piling in. Thanksgiving came and went. An epidemic of fires broke out as makeshift stoves belched flame in Foggia winds.

New Years Eve. . . Yup, you guessed it, it rained. At midnight every gun and rifle let

loose in honor of 1944 but plenty of folks didn't hear them. We siphoned them out of the trenches next morning. And what a morning! Few gasoline stoves were safe in the gale that swept in off the sea. Our tents were down or on the way as the swearing occupants wallowed in the mud fighting playful canvas. Mess tents threatened to take off momentarily and might as well have since the water and mud inside wouldn't have been much deeper. But 1630 hours found the chow lines a quarter of a mile long as usual and ankle deep in mud.

In a few days good weather set in, the absorbent ground quickly dried out, the various clubs were doing a thriving business and we were more or less comfortably settled for the winter, S-o-o, we got orders to move.

Next stop Pompeii L/G

## POMPEII, ITALY

Pompeii Landing Ground was a brand new field cut into the grape orchards and vegetable farms of Terzigno at the base of Vesuvius and completely surrounded by hills. Eighteen feet high. Most of them were probably built by their occupants, or ancestors, all had the usual individualistic designs and elaborate designs in colorful motifs.

On 8 January, 1944 Lt. Col. Tokaz was transferred to Tactical Bomber Force Headquarters. He was replaced by Colonel Charles D. Jones who became known as "CD"

Wherever you lived, you had but to step outside your door to view old Vesuvius, the world's most publicized volcano. There was always a halo of smoke over it, and at night the bubbling lava sent orange spurts skyward smoke. But we felt much safer from Vesuvius than from the threat of the German bombs which several times fell in Naples, twenty miles away.

Then the Fifth Army opened up on the Anzio beachhead. None of the combat crews will ever forget the "heavy, intense and accurate" flak over the "wooded area", or practically any area of the sector a plane ventured to visit. At this period of operations,



### **COLONEL CHARLES D. JONES**

340th Bomb Group Commander  
8 January 1944 ----- 16 March 1944

Colonel. Jones landed on the beach at bailed Casablanca in the invasion of North Africa. He was assigned to organize and command the Fighter Training Center which was responsible for operational training of fighter pilots before assignment to combat units.

On 8 January 1944 Colonel Charles D. Jones ("C.D." to everyone who knew him) was assigned to command the 340th Bombardment Group upon the reassignment of Lt. Col. Tokaz. It is told that he made an excellent impression on the personnel of all the units of the 340th, and that he visited every unit on the base, asking questions about conditions supplies etc.,

always making the interests of the men his top priority.

His tour with the 340th was short lived, for on 10 March 1944 Colonel Jones was shot down while leading a mission over Vitorio, Italy. He bailed out successfully, and was captured by the Germans. He remained a POW for the duration of the war.

A story is related by Joe Reubel, (340th Group Operations Officer) as was told to him by a fellow POW of Colonel Jones. Oddly enough the man also was named Jones. He was Col. David Jones, a B-26 pilot who was shot down over North Africa. He told Joe Reubel that during the terrible march of American POW's from Germany to Poland which was made in the dead of winter in sub-freezing weather. He said that after the short rest periods some of the starving and nearly frozen prisoners would just give up and not get to their feet. Then "C.D." would walk up and down the column pleading, cajoling, prodding and in some cases beating them, doing whatever it took to get them to their feet. Col. David Jones spoke in awe of "CD" because he was as emaciated and frozen as all of the rest. Without a doubt many lives were saved because of C.D. Jones.

After his repatriation Colonel C.D. Jones was assigned, in 1951 to Langley AFB, VA, paradoxically replacing Colonel Chapman who had replaced him when he was shot down. Colonel Charles D. Jones was killed in the crash of a B-57 at Bolling AFB. Virginia in the mid 1950's

Prepared by George Wells

the Group as a whole lost better than a dozen planes on the Anzio beachhead operation After much hesitation, because of political and religious complications, Monte Cassino Abby was then given as a target because the Germans entrenched there. It was causing the loss of too many American lives. We went at it with the heavies and the 26's. The boys on the ground at the front were most enthusiastic and word was passed later to us that the B-25's had stolen the show. But as usual in the publicity the heavies got all of the credit.

"Rainy weather continued to force standdown during much of February and early March. But on the 10th we got a mission to Littorio marshalling yards. It was one of those days. . . the formation ran into flak. . . two of the ships of the 340th collided, but got back to the field . . . one of the ships in the following box dove to duck the collision, two of his bombs broke loose and went through the bomb bay doors. . . Colonel Jones, riding as co-pilot with the 487th, went down. That was a real loss, Colonel Jones had earned everyone's

respect and liking and had raised the our morale to its then highest peak.

On 15 March the Allies must have really gotten mad at the Germans who, in spite of bombs and shell fire, were still holding out in Cassino making it tough for our slogging infantry. We were told to level the damned place. Four other medium groups and eleven heavies were sent along to help us. That must have made the Germans mad in turn because that night some thirty five of their bombers scooted low over our heads to bomb Naples. Under cover of this excitement, our new C.O., COLONEL WILLIS F. CHAPMAN slipped in without fuss or fan fare.

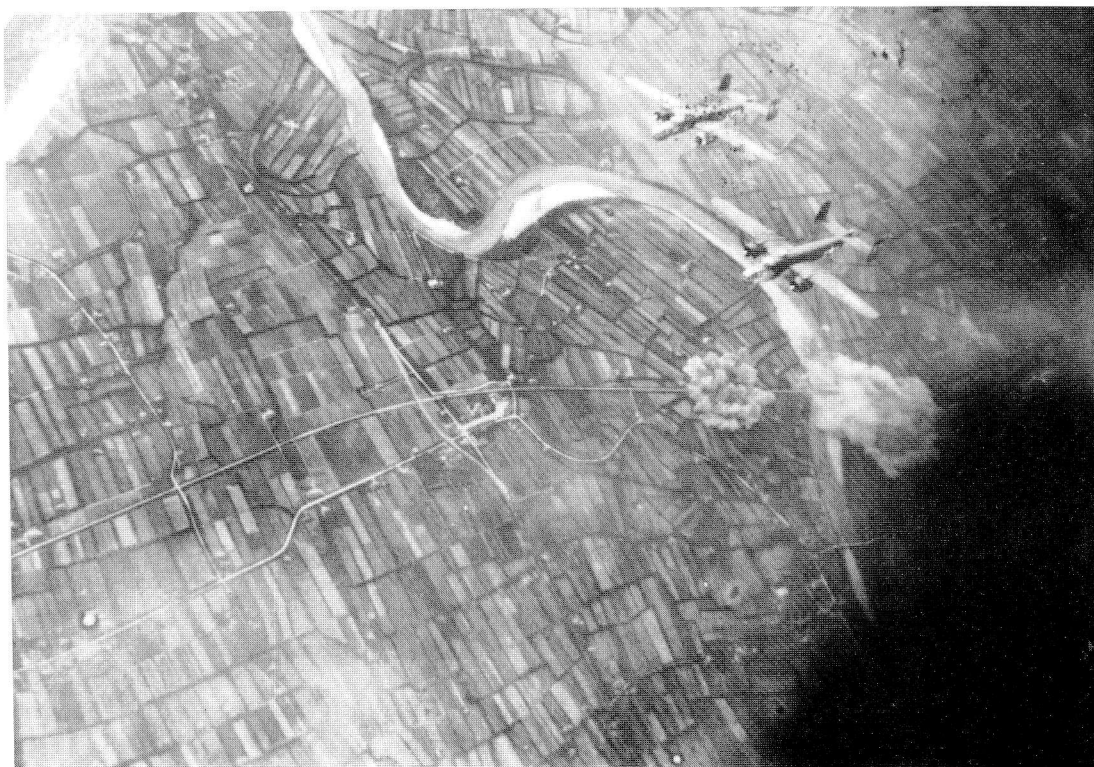
For several days Vesuvius had been acting up a bit more than usual and in the morning of 22 March it woke ups up with its rumbling and roaring. It was snowing cinders about the size of BB shot with a sprinkling of tennis balls, which by mid-morning were helped out by other sometimes as big as melons. Many

of the latter, while crusted with ice on the outside, showed a white-hot core when open. It was impossible to move the planes and early in the afternoon, when roofs of building were going down under the weight of the stuff. Preparations for evacuating were hurried and most of the personnel got out from under.

Axis Sally and her boy friends gleefully announced that the 340th was Finito. And so it must have seemed, but she did not know the 12th Air Force. In three days we were back fighting that much harder as "The Best Damn Group There Is."

## PAESTUM, ITALY.

With our move to Paestum, it seems that we changed the weather as well as location. Instead of the continual rain and cold, we now had balmy, spring days, plenty of sunshine. and compared to the wet cold days at Foggia seemed idyllic by comparison.



## COLONEL WILLIS F. CHAPMAN

340th Group Commander  
15 March 1944 7 November 1945

Colonel Bill Chapman, born 15 November 1912 in Jackson Michigan, graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York June 1935. After graduation he married the former Charlotte Chapel, also of Jackson. They have two daughters, four grandsons, and one great-granddaughter.



After two years in the 72nd Bombardment Squadron at Luke Field in Hawaii; three years as a flying instructor at the Advanced Flying School at Kelly Field, Texas, he was transferred to Midland AAB, Texas as Director of Flying for the Bombardier School in January 1942.

Bill departed the U.S. on Thanksgiving Day 1942 flying a B-25 leading 6 A-30's destined for the British, via the South Atlantic. He arrived in Algiers on 9 December, 1942 and was assigned to the staff of the Director of Operations and Intelligence, Col./Gen Lauris Norstadt, of the Northwest African Air Force. This Headquarters moved to Constantine in April, La Marsa, Tunis in June, and then on to Caserta, Italy, in December 1943. The name of this command was changed to The Mediterranean Allied Air Force (MAAF) on 1 January 1944. In addition to being a Senior Pilot at that time, Bill was also a rated Navigator and a rated Bombardier.

Bill was promoted to Colonel in December 1943, to Brigadier General in February 1961. He retired from the USAF in July 1965.

prepared by George Wells

Baseball teams sprouted. . . sacks were dragged outdoors and sunbathers conditioned their hides.

Based on previous experience in getting ordinary supplies, we figured on several weeks vacation before our lost planes could be replaced. But in three days, we were operating again on full scale and very shortly we had more and better planes than ever before, and, in addition, new crews were assigned.

Under Colonel Chapman's guidance we switched from the British Mark IX to the American Norden bomb sight. The crews put in long hours of practice with it resulting in formations tightened up and our already excellent record began to climb to higher levels.

From close support work we switched to transportation and communications targets and went in for a weary round of tunnel, railroad and highway blasting. The crews felt like commuters on the same old route to the same old targets which we socked as fast as Jerry could repair them, or even if he didn't. Interrogations brought out such gossip as what day Mrs. Pomiglian hung her wash out and the state of Mr. Ficculle's vegetable patch.

An impressive ceremony was held in the ruins of the ancient Greek Temple of Hera, wife of Zeus. It is probably the best preserved Greek ruins in the world today.

We finally had found "Sunny Italy." The sunshine was good for the frazzled, war weary



nerves. The food was looking up, eggs were plentiful, and we seemed to have the best combat location we'd ever had.

Group was probably literally correct when on the 14th, they told us we'd stay put indefinitely but on the 15th, it became definite and on the 16th, after a 0430 breakfast, everybody except a few of the ground personnel and the combat crews left for Naples to catch the 2 o'clock LST for Corsica.

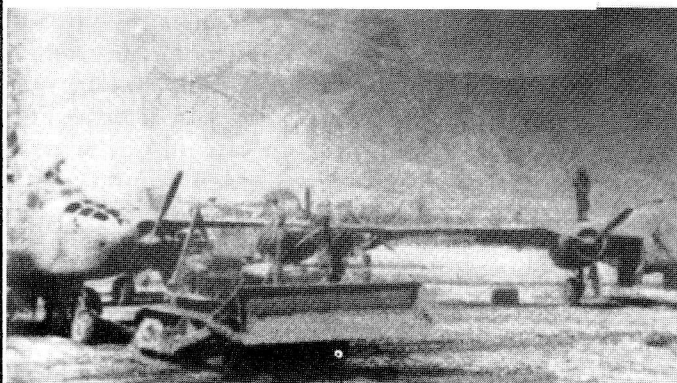
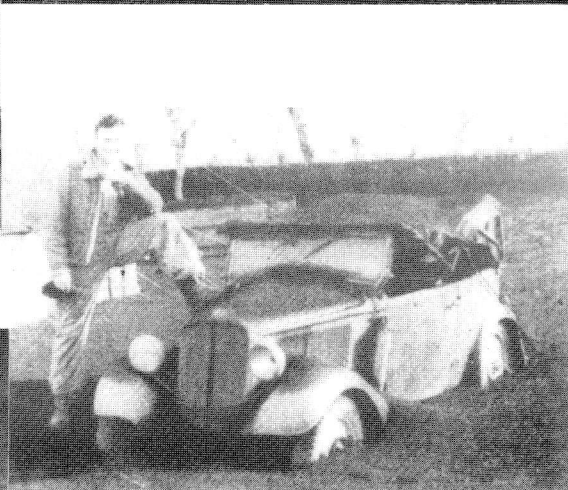
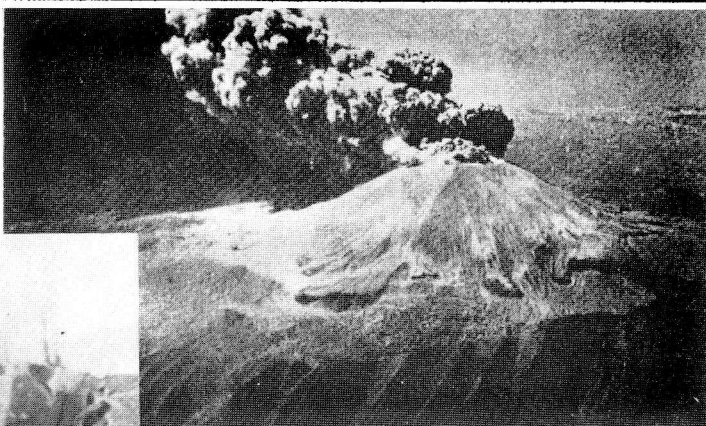
## ALESAN, CORSICA.

For fourteen months we had looked for it and here it was . . . the next best thing to

home. Everything you find in the travel books from warm ocean bathing on a clean sandy beach to mountain scenery, hunting and fishing. When the Colonel comes back with some farmer's fattened sow he's still been "hunting wild boar."

The low level volunteers who started their legalized buzzing at Paestum, have inoculated the whole group. Now when a beautifully perfect echelon, or even the whole damn formation, comes over low enough to blow the sugar off the American Red Cross donuts, we know without listening to the radio that they're saying, "Mission completed, bridge finito."

**DON'T FIGHT OLD MOTHER  
NATURE**



**THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN  
WIN!**



And while we're on the subject, let's give the Red Cross a great big hand. We got our first regular installation at Pompeii and it has been a permanent institution ever since.

With bombs away, it's "So long, flak; hello donuts and coffee". And were they life savers after those long, paralyzingly cold rides of last spring! And the generous portions of smiles, conversation and wise-cracks served along with the coffee and sinkers, by three dainty bits of femininity (American) to pep up the moral no end.

If we seem to be more or less content with our lot at present, don't get the idea that it has been the balm of Gilead here. Jerry welcomed us after our first few days with an

all out raid that set even the combat crews to emulating the mole. Picks and shovels were at a premium and many were the designs of shelters.

Once again we were practically wiped out of ships and other equipment as well as heavily hit on tentage. But, by energetic patching and scraping, by mid-afternoon we had a mission in the air and the grim desire for revenge simply gave added accuracy to the bombardier's aim.

Sadly, here were personnel losses too. Again the 12th Air Force came through fast and handsomely, and before the Jerry Todt battalions could patch a bridge, we were back over the bomb line in full force.

Early in August saw the beginning of maximum effort missions on targets in Southern France. These missions reached a peak on 15 August when the Allies invaded Southern France. On the 15th two missions of 18 aircraft from each squadron went to Southern France. History records that the invasion was very successful, and proceeded very rapidly. During that time it was indicated that the 340th might be moving to France after the invasion was secured. It would appear that because of the rapid pace of the Allies that it would be unnecessary for the 340th to move. Instead the 42nd Bomb Wing of B-26 Marauders, which was based on Sardinia, moved. The 340th stayed on Corsica.

Missions shifted back to the interdiction role in Northern Italy, the Po River and the

Brenner Pass. It was unusual for the 340th to stay at one location for an extended period of time. Prior to coming to Corsica our stay had been brief, one or two months at the most. As we stayed on in Corsica there were more and more indications of permanence in our area. The Group Officer's club and the Group Service club were of frame construction, with slab siding. Some of the squadron facilities were of similar construction.

After the disastrous German air raid in May, improved dispersal was pushed for the aircraft. Before the raid the planes were lined up in a row because the area for wider dispersal of the aircraft was not completed. Another result of that raid was that we were almost completely re-equipped with new B-25-J aircraft.

Note....

Vesuvius, the move to Corsica, and the air raid in May, together with an intensive training program plus the developments of tactics for the use of chaff and phosphorous bombs against AA positions to reduce the losses served to tighten the 340th as a fighting unit. From unspectacular bombing with the British bomb sight before the Vesuvius eruption, bombing results rapidly improved until July which was a perfect month - 30 missions - 30 strikes - no misses. Aug. '44 saw continuing successive blistering strikes in support of the invasion of southern France which included this unique mission. The 340th was assigned 16 separate gun positions well hidden in a wooded area to be hit before the invasion. Since the targets could not be seen, only latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates

were given. Each squadron was given 4 gun positions and put a flight of six aircraft on each position using off-set bombing. When all the smoke cleared and the post strike intelligence was received, 13 of the gun positions were knocked out completely, and the other 3 badly damaged. September saw the attack on the Italian cruiser Taranto, in La Spezia harbor which is aptly described in the Distinguished Unit Citation on the next page. This was followed by a long unbroken series of bridge strikes, 62 was mentioned in General Eaker's letter to me (attached), but this series eventually extended to 77 consecutive bridge strikes, almost exclusively on the Po river and Brenner Pass.

Bill Chapman.

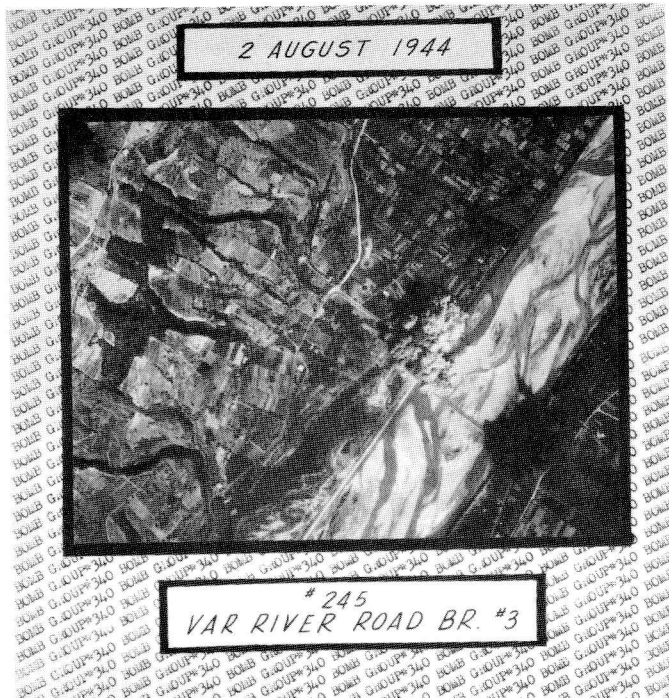
Weather was a constant factor in our missions, both at the base and over the target areas. In spite of the weather there was no let up in activity. Our Group Commander Colonel Chapman kept a level high of activity on projects to improve efficiency in accuracy.

Two innovations are worthy of note here:

FIRST, the commencement of the use of

RADIO RELEASE BOMBING. Previously, for a formation of six aircraft to bomb on the lead bombardier's release, the other bombardier's had to wait until they saw the bombs drop from the lead, causing a split second delay between the lead aircraft and the





VAR RIVER ROAD BRIDGE #3 SOUTHERN FRANCE 2 August, 1944

VAR RIVER ROAD BRIDGE #4, SOUTHERN FRANCE, 2 August, 1944





HEADQUARTERS  
MEDITERRANEAN ALLIED AIR FORCE

3 October 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation

TO: Colonel Willis F. Chapman, A.C.  
Commanding Officer 340th Bombardment group (Medium)

1. The sinking of the Italian cruiser, Taranto, was the culmination of a long and unbroken series of successful attacks on pin-point targets. General Cannon has advised me that your group has attacked sixty-two successive pin-point targets without a single miss. I know of no achievement in this war which exceeds this record. I have recently advised the Commanding General, Army Air Forces of your outstanding accomplishment and am recommending that your Group be individually cited therefor.
2. I wish you would say to your staff, and your Squadron Commanders, and your hard working and courageous crews that I have observed their operations with the greatest admiration and enthusiasm. I am well aware that such marked success is not accidental. It shows the high state of training and the individual hard work prevalent in your whole organization.
3. I wish you would extend my congratulations to all members of your organization who have contributed to this superior performance and say I wish them continued success against the enemy in their future operations.
4. A copy of this commendation will be filed with your official record.

/a/Ira C. Eaker  
/t/Ira C. Eaker  
Lieutenant General, U.S.A.  
Commanding.

2nd Ind. A-RDK-rfg

201- Chapman, Willis F. (O)

HQ. 57TH BOMBARDMENT WING, APO 650, US ARMY, 20 October, 1944

TO: Colonel Willis F. Chapman, Air Corps, Commanding Officer 340th Bombardment Group (M),  
APO 650, US Army.

It is with extreme pleasure that I forward this Letter of Commendation.

The Officers and men of the 340th Bomb group have every reason to be proud of this unbroken record of successful strikes on enemy installations.

/s/ROBERT D. KNAPP  
/T/ROBERT D. KNAPP  
Brigadier General, USA  
Commanding

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS TWELFTH AIR FORCE  
APO 650

GENERAL ORDERS )

27 December, 1944

NUMBER 281 )

Under the provision of Circular 333, War Department, 143, and circular 89, North African Theater of Operations, 10 July 1944, the 340th Bombardment Group (M) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations on 23 September 1944

Culminating a long and unbroken series of flawlessly executed bombing attacks on pinpoint and area targets, the 340th Bombardment group (M), in sinking the enemy light cruiser Taranto on 23 September 1944, distinguished itself by such extraordinary heroism and professional competence in the face of vigorous enemy opposition as to set itself above and apart from other units participating in similar operations. On 22 September 1944, when aerial reconnaissance disclosed an enemy plan to scuttle the Taranto at the entrance of La Spezia Harbor in Italy, the 340th Bombardment Group was ordered to destroy this warship with all speed before it could be moved into position. Acting swiftly and with utmost thoroughness, the Group's operations, intelligence and maintenance personnel skilfully planned the attack, briefed the crews, and readied their planes for the assault. At 0300 hours on 23 September, 24 B-25's of the 340th Bombardment Group took off from bases in Corsica for the heavily defended La Spezia area. Despite heavy anti-aircraft barrage from the ring of powerful enemy batteries which encircles the harbor, gallant pilots, displaying outstanding courage and flying ability, resolutely held their aircraft in tight formation throughout the attack. Highly trained bombardiers, undeterred by the hostile fire, expertly synchronized their instruments and released their thousand-pound bombs with unerring precision, scoring numerous direct hits on the target. Compact patterns from the first three flights covered the bow and stern of the cruiser with devastating effect, capsizing it before the last flight could release its bombs. This outstanding achievement, made possible by unsurpassed teamwork which combined exceptional planning with indomitable courage, flying skill and precision bombing, completely frustrated the enemy in his attempt to block the entrance of this strategic harbor and naval base. The heroism and extraordinary professional skill displayed by the 340th Bombardment Group in this action reflect highest credit upon themselves and the Military Service of the United States.

By command of Major General Cannon

CHARLES T. MYERS  
Brigadier General, USA,  
Chief of Staff

OFFICIAL

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

/s/ THOMAS B. MYER  
Captain, Air Corps.

# 23 September 1944

## La SPEZIA ITALY

### Target Cruiser Taranto



The RADIO RELEASE technique provided for a radio signal from the lead aircraft to release bombs from all aircraft simultaneously. This provided for a much more compact pattern of bombs on impact with greater destructive capability. The Radio Release equipment was designed and developed by two airmen in the 340th under the supervision of the Group Signal Officer. They cleverly utilized some unused circuitry already in the B-25. It worked properly the first bomb run and ever after.

Bill Chapman

The SECOND innovation was the introduction of SHORAN (Short Range Aid To Navigation). This involved equipment in the lead aircraft which would interpret radio signals from two ground stations which allowed precise distance measurement to the bomb release point. It was possible to do accurate bombing when the target was obscured from the aircraft by a layer of clouds below the aircraft.

As the targets became more and more distant from Corsica the need for another base location became evident. The 321st had already moved to the east coast of Italy, so the chances of the 340th moving somewhere along the same coast was a good possibility.

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## RIMINI, ITALY

The long awaited move for the 340th to Italy began in early April 1945. We began moving, by increments, to the town of Rimini. Since the airfield is just outside of the village of Riccioni arrangements were made to house our personnel in the village of Riccioni. They found the arrangements a great improvement over their previously accommodations. They were in living buildings! After all those years in tents!

Once established in Rimini, routine combat missions were resumed. Being closer to the combat areas made our missions shorter in duration. Most of the missions were in close support of the British 8th Army during their push northward.

Note ...

We couldn't resist one more nose-thumbing mission at the Jerries just before V-E Day. The target was close support anti-personnel in front of the British 8th Army. We flew a closely timed pattern of 72 B-25's, in trail, toward Yugoslavia from Rimini. Each ship was timed to make one 180 degree turn and fall into place in the returning formation with the group leader at 1,000 feet. As this large formation returned over Rimini the last B-25 off pulled up into formation, and the formation headed north. In 18 minutes at a 45 degree turn to the left by the squadrons placed all the squadrons on a parallel course so that all bombs hit in a parallel drop zone at the same time. A beautiful piece of precision flying which I am sure jarred a lot of Jerrie's teeth.

Bill Chapman

V-E Day, on 8 May, 1945 effectively halted all combat missions. We soon learned that we were scheduled to deploy to the United States for a re-training period, and then deploy to the Far East. It was indicated that we would re-train with the Douglas A-26 Invader aircraft. The hitch came when we couldn't move until early July because of movement schedules. This delay resulted in a fairly elaborate program to keep us occupied. Morning were allocated for flying training, and afternoon athletics, ground school programs consisted of rather extensive educational schedules. Qualified instructors were selected squadron level and classes were set up on a wide variety of subjects. Athletics were no problem since a near perfect beach was within sight of the squadron areas. An A-26 aircraft was made available for each squadron and all pilots were scheduled for a one hour check out.

This relaxed schedule after V-J day allowed for a well deserved rest and relaxation period.

None deserved it more than our hard working ground crews, most of whom had been with the group since activation. They worked a most strenuous schedule for two and a half years or more. Recreation facilities were highly developed. Officer's clubs and Enlisted Men's clubs were available throughout the Group, and most were very fine facilities.



# DESTINATION U.S.A.

Departure for the U.S.A. finally approached. The Group flight echelon was scheduled for departure on 3 - 6 July 1945, with one squadron leaving each day. The departure procedure was known as the "Green Project" and aircraft were routed back home on the southern route. Stops were made at; Tunis, Marrakech, Dakar, Roberts Field (Liberia), Ascension Island, Natal, Belem, Atkinson Field, Borenquin, and finally Morrison or Savannah, Georgia.

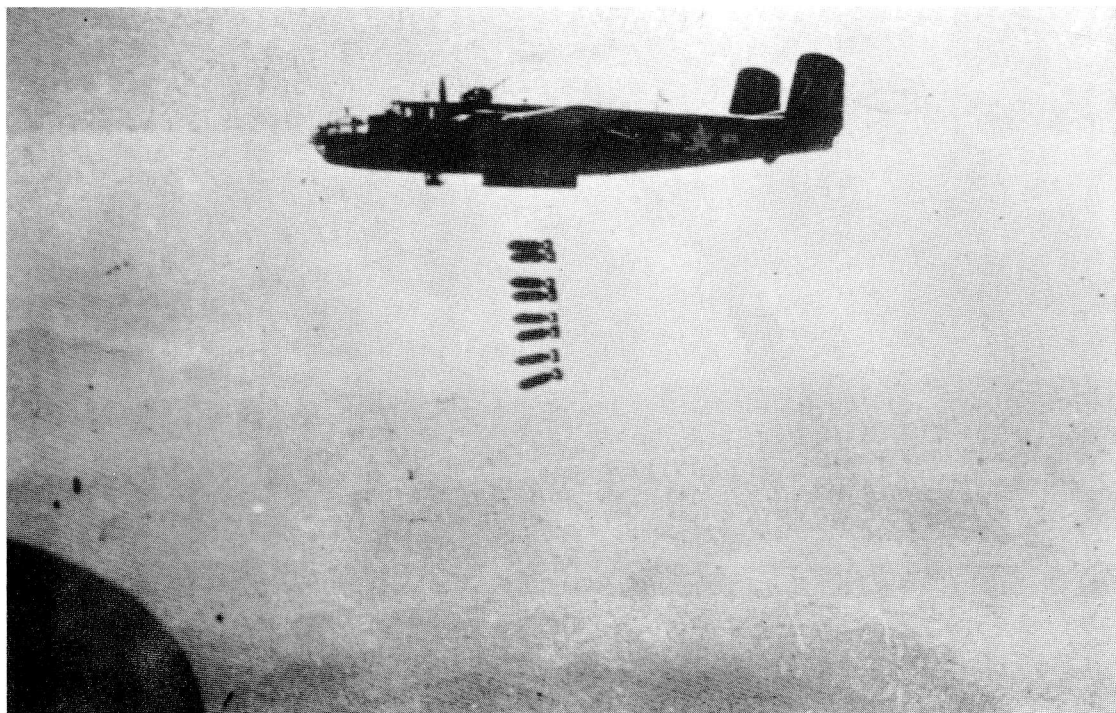
Our final squadron, the 489th arrived at Savannah on 19 July. All of our aircraft were left at Savannah.

The ground echelon boarded ship and sailed for the Virginia Capes on 27 July.

Both flight and ground echelons were sent to various processing centers. Some with high

point scores were discharged at an early date. Others were sent home on leave with orders to report later to Seymoure Johnson Army Air Base, South Carolina. After arriving at Seymour Johnson, having enjoyed a 30 day leave, we found that the whole picture had changed because of V-J Day. Plans to deploy us to the Far East were cancelled. The 340th was transferred to Columbia, South Carolina for eventual inactivation. The period at both Seymour Johnson and Columbia was one of uncertainty. Many more were discharged and some were transferred to other stateside bases. It was also a period of re-orientation to stateside duties. It came as a shock to many of our men that they owed for U.S. Income Tax, some as far back as 1942.

The inactivation procedure was carried out at Columbia Army Air Base, and was completed on 7 NOVEMBER, 1945.





<sup>N</sup>  
7-8-310 86.-380 sqd. - ship no. 338 (8.7.43 - 16:00)  
24" - 7,500 - MARINO DI CATANZARO - R.R. Bridge

# **HIGHER COMMANDS**

**MEDITERRANEAN ALLIED AIR FORCE  
M.A.A.F.**

**TWELFTH AIR FORCE  
XII A.F.**

**57th BOMBARDMENT WING  
(Medium)**

## **MEDITERRANEAN ALLIED AIR FORCE M.A.A.F**

In late 1943 the strategic forces, B-17's, B-24's and appropriate fighter, et al were split off from the 12th Air Force. These formed the 15th Air Force, with headquarters in Bari, Italy

The headquarters Mediterranean Allied Air Forces was formed to assume overall

command and direction, of all Allied Air Forces in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations.

Lt. General Ira Eaker was designated Commander, with a British Officer, Sir John Slessor, Deputy Commander



Lieutenant General Ira Eaker  
Commanding Officer  
M.A.A.F.



# 12th AIR FORCE

Bompendium "B"

Submitted by **JOHN J. SUTAY 486**  
Historian 57th Bomb Wing



The 12th Air Force, which from D-Day in North Africa until V-Day in Italy, provided Allied ground forces with strategic and tactical support, was America's first invasion air force and the first to help attain a final victory.

From the onset the keynote of the 12th's support was its versatility. At the height of the North African campaign it was the world's largest single Air Force and remained that way until its heavy bombers were separated and grouped under what became the 15th Air Force.

After that fighters, fighter-bombers and night fighters, light and medium bombers of the 12th were used to blast the Luftwaff from the Mediterranean skies, isolate the enemy by severing his lines of communication, and provide Allied ground units with close co-operation to carry out the three-fold purpose of a tactical air force.

In the 905 days the 12th Air Force was in combat, its planes flew 408,343 combat sorties and dropped more than 218,000 tons of bombs. Its fighters and bombers destroyed and damaged almost 5,000 enemy planes. Its C-47s hauled tons of supplies, thousands of paratroopers and evacuated almost 200,000 wounded to rear hospitals. In the last year of

fighting alone, it destroyed and damaged almost 35,000 enemy motor vehicles, more than 25,000 railroad cars and 2,100 bridges.

It sunk 263 enemy ships and boats damaging 650 others. Its photo reconnaissance squadrons turned out millions of prints for ground and air intelligence. Its Catalina flying boats rescued scores of Allied airmen forced down at sea.

4 The 12th became the first air force in the world to be given full credit for the surrender of ground objectives when the Mediterranean island of Pantelleria was occupied in June 1943, after terrific aerial attacks had resulted in its surrender.

Types of aircraft employed by the 12th Air Force were as diversified as were the types of combat work that it was called upon to perform. Its fighters included P-40 Warhawks, P-39 Airacobras, British Spitfires, A-36 dive bombers, P-38 Lightnings and P-47 Thunderbolts.

After losing the B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberators with the organization of the 15th Air Force, The 12th struck blow after blow at enemy forces and installations with B-25 Mitchell and B-26 Marauder medium bombers, and A-20 Havoc and A-26 Invader

2light bombers. The Mitchells and Marauders were employed for their pin-point" precision, while the Havocs and Invaders were used as night intruders that permitted the enemy no respite even when darkness cloaked his movements. To this night venging force was added the fighter punch of the British Beaufighter and Mosquito, and the potent American P-61 Black Widow. This destructive

force was augmented by the C-47 "Goony Bird" transport which played their utilitarian roles, while the OA-10 Catalinas served as "mercy" air sea rescue planes. Small unarmed aircraft such as the Piper Cub, Aeronca, C-61 Fairchild, C-45 Beachcraft and C-60 Lockheed were used as couriers in this versatile amalgum of aerial might.



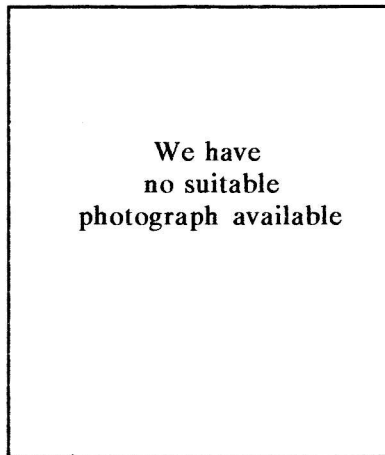
General Carl A. Spaatz



General James H. Doolittle



General John C. Cannon



General Benjamin W. Chidlaw

The principal components of the Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force were made up of American, British, Brazilian, Canadian, South African, Polish and French airmen. The 12th Air Force was commanded by some of the most famous air tacticians in military history:

Throughout Americas far-flung air fronts, before the fall of Germany and Japan, tactics developed by America's first invasion air force, the 12th, were employed to subdue enemy forces, knock out his installations, block his lines of supply and seal off his lines of escape.

# 57th BOMBARDMENT WING

## (Medium)

### Editor's Note:

Due to the difficulty in tracing the background of the command unit we knew as the 57th Bombardment Wing before it became operational we are condensing the material that we have found, into a simple diary form. We have divided the narrative into three sections which we have labeled "The PAPER STATUS; ADMINISTRATIVE STATUS, OPERATIONAL STATUS. The first and second portions will have few details. Only the most important known facts are included for the period up to 1 March 1944, when the Wing became operational.

## PAPER STATUS

It should be noted here that recorded histories of the various commands to which the 57th Bombardment Wing was assigned, during its paper-status years, provide very few details about the activities of the unit we knew as the 57th Bombardment Wing.

During this period the "Wing", controlled no subordinate components and consisted of few personnel. The only Commander known during the period 1942- 1943 was Colonel Thomas C. Darcy who seems to have been in command by at least March 1943, but for an unknown tenure. The unit had been assigned to many various commands such as: 8th Pursuit Wing; III Air Force; IX Fighter Command; IX Air Force; etc.

### 6 April, 1943,

While the Wing was assigned to IX Air Force, IX Fighter command, it was re-designated "57th Bombardment Wing" by War Department authority.

### 15 May 1943:

Ninth Air Force implemented the change. It was here that "Medium" designation was tacked on without War Department authority (there-fore illegally).

### 15 June 1943:

The Wing was moved to Deversoir, Egypt.

### 23 August, 1943:

Ninth Air Force ordered the WING to move to Tunis, Tunisia, with assignment to the Twelfth Air Force upon arrival there. It did so with only two people assigned ... A Captain John J. Darmody and an unnamed enlisted man.

### 31 August 1943.

Twelfth Air Force assigned this "Paper Unit" to it's XII Air Support Command.

### 4 September, 1943:

The WING was moved to Lentini, Sicily. It was there that personnel began to arrive for assignment. The Wing remained at Lentini until,

### 4 October, 1943

Boarded a ship bound for Naples, Italy, reaching there on the 7th.

### 5 October, 1943:

Colonel William S. Gravely assumed command from Captain Darmody.

### 6 October, 1943

The 47th Bombardment Group (L) and the 308th Signal Wing Company were assigned to the 57th Wing for administrative purposes, operational control remaining elsewhere.

### 19 October, 1943

The Wing was moved to Foggia, Italy.

## ADMINISTRATIVE STATUS

### 1 November, 1943

A number of operational units were assigned to the 57th Wing, but again only for administrative purposes. Once more operational control remained with the Tactical Bomber Force. The additional units assigned

included the following:

- 2th Bombardment Group (M)
- 57th Fighter Group
- 79th Fighter group, with the 99th Fighter Squadron attached.
- 340th Bombardment Group

**4 November, 1943**

The 321st Bombardment Group (M) was assigned to the 57th Wing under the same conditions as the other components.



**Brig. Gen. Robert D. Knapp**  
Commanding Officer 57th  
1 Jan. 1944 to 23 June 1945

General Knapp dates back to World War I with his enlistment in the Army Flying Corps. He completed his flight training and pinned on his wings, and 2nd Lt. Bars, on 18 March, 1918. He was immediately ordered to England to fly Handley-Page Bombers over France. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, the aircraft had no propellers and could not be flown.

Returning to the United States, Lt. Knapp chose to remain in the service. Duty was not always choice, so he had many different assignments ranging from flying border patrol on the Mexican

**10 December, 1943.**

The 47th Bomber group (L) left the Wing and returned to the Tactical Bomber Force.

**1 January, 1944,**

Approximately 1 January, 1944, Colonel Robert D. Knapp replaced Col. William S. Gravely as Commander of the 57th Bombardment Wing.

The XII Bomber Command was reactivated

border, to flight instructor. He was a pioneer in flying the United States Mail.

At the outbreak of World War II Knapp was stationed at Langley Field, Va. as Executive Officer of the 1st Bomber Command. With much insistence, on his part, that he was going to fly in combat, and with some reluctance of his superiors, he was given command of the new 321st Bomb group.

Taking command in September 1942 he directed its training, lead the group overseas and through the first eleven months of combat operations.

On 5 December, 1943 Col. Knapp was reassigned to the Tactical Bomber Command (TBF), and on 1 January, 1945 he assumed command of the new 57th Bombardment Wing. At this time he received his Star of a Brigadier General. General Knapp commanderd the 57th throughout the remaining part of the War in Europe.

During his long career Gen. Knapp earned several decorations from the United States among which there was a Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross and from the British he was awarded the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, and from the French the Croix de Guerre.

Gen. Knapp retired from the USAF in 1951 after 33 years of service. He now makes his home in Auburn, Alabama, (the home of his youth). He devotes his time to the community. At the age of 94 he still drives his own car, works on his farm raising cattle. His daughter Dorothy Spain makes her home with her father.



as an administrative headquarters, consisting of the personnel of the 57th Bomb Wing, which once more was reduced to a retaining cadre. Assigned to the XII Bomber Command were the 42nd Bomb Wing and its groups . . the 57th Bomb Wing, with the 12th, 321st, and 340th Bomb groups. The 57th Wing and the three groups were all located in the Foggia, Italy area.

All six of these medium bomber groups, the B-26's of the 42nd Wing and the B-25's which had been under the 57th Wing, were attached to the Tactical Bomber Force for operational control. Tactical Bomber Force was a combined headquarters, almost entirely British in personnel, which operated under the higher operational control of Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force.

**1 March, 1944**

## **OPERATIONAL**

**Note:**

From this point in the narrative we will drop the diary format and tell it as a story of the operational history of the 57th Bombardment Wing as we knew it.

The Bombardment Wing was an intermediate level administrative unit. It, as a unit, flew no combat missions. It provided the intelligence, both pre-mission and post mission, for the targets. It also maintained liaison with the ground forces so that close support missions could be provided by the combat units within the jurisdiction of the Wing. Missions were received from higher headquarters and then the Wing assigned them to the various combat Groups

In this narrative whenever the statement is made regarding flying sorties, or the tons of weapon expended, and the damage inflicted by the Wing, it is in reference to the combat units within the Wing.

Editor:

On 1 March, 1944, the XII Bomber Command was reduced to paper status and all of its resources were assigned to the 57th Bombardment Wing (Medium), bringing it to Operational Status for the first time in its

history. When 12th Bomb Group was transferred to the China Burman India Theater, the 57th Wing was left with only two operational bomb groups.

321st Bomb Group, with four squadrons

340th Bomb group with four squadrons

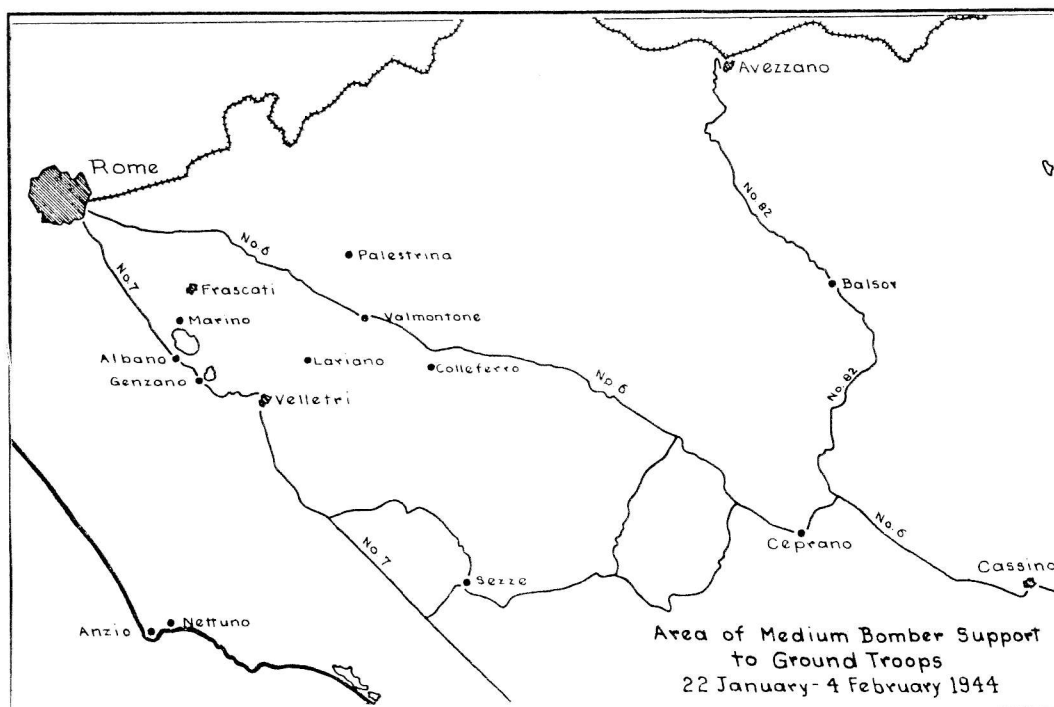
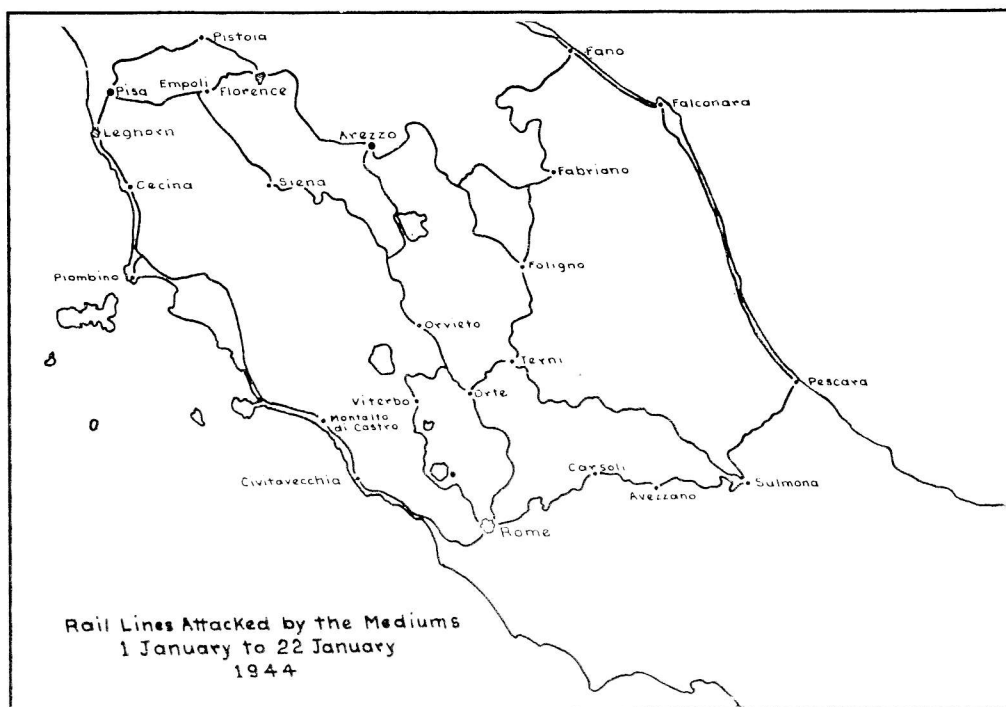
On 15 March, 1944, the 310th Bomb Group which had been assigned to XII Fighter Command, and was operating under Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force was assigned to the 57th. Wing. The 310th, at that time was located at *Ghisonaccia*, Corsica, and remained there. This placed all of the Twelfth Air Force B-25s under one command. All of these units were combat experienced before being assigned to the Wing. During its paper-unit inactive period the 57th Wing had moved from *Foggia* to *Troccia*, on the slope of Mount Vesuvius (not far from Naples), and it was there that it became operational under the command of Brig. Gen. Robert D. Knapp, who was destined to head the 57th Bomb Wing for the remainder of its World War II combat period.

By 1 March, 1944, when the 57th Wing finally commenced operations, ground operations in Italy had reached a stalemate roughly along a line between Cassino and the Anzio beachhead. Allied forces were trying desperately to secure control of lines of communication in the area south of Rome in order to facilitate the capture of that strategic city.

All of the combat units that had been assigned to the 57th Bomb Wing had been working under "OPERATION" SHINGLE". A plan to cut railroad transportation lines north of Rome to reduce the supply efforts of the German Army. This operation had extended over the period from 1 January, 1944 through 4 February, 1944. Targets that were under attack during "Shingle" are shown on the next page.

The 57th's initial combat mission, flown 2 March, 1944, was a close support action aimed against enemy troops and gun emplacement in the Anzio area, particularly at Citerio.

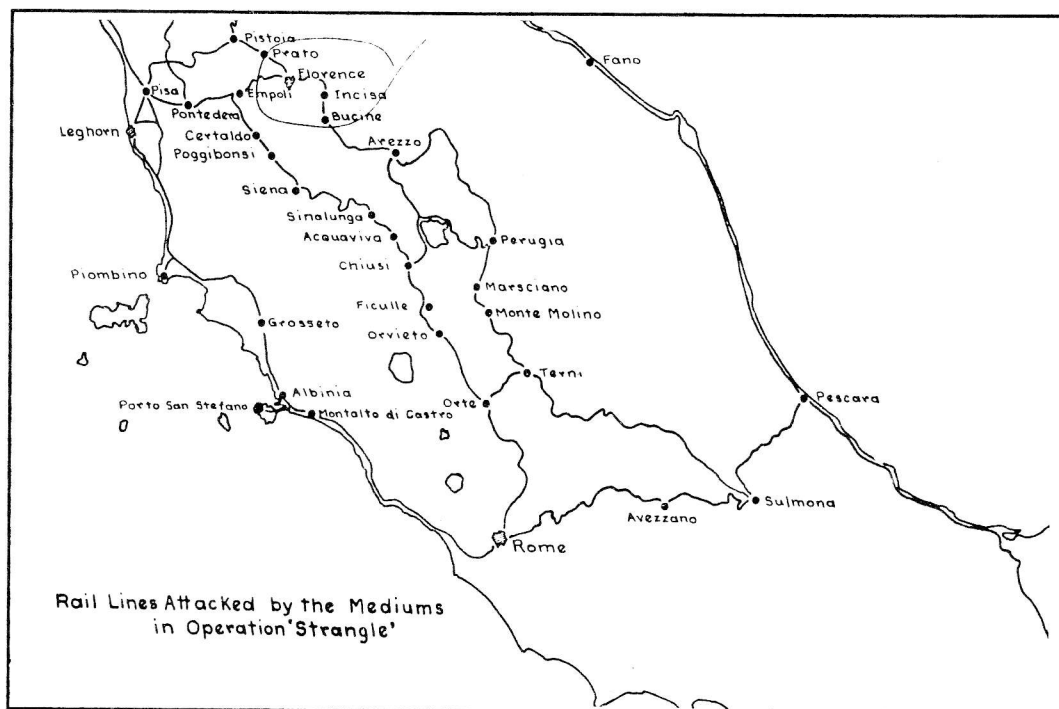
An operation called "STRANGLE" was implemented over the period 19 March, to 11 May, 1944. It not only involved the B-25s of



the 57th Wing, but the B-26's of the 42nd Wing, and Fighter - Bomber aircraft from the XII Air Support Command. The Medium Bombers were charged with creating, and maintaining major blocks in the railway system. The primary task of the 57th Bomb Wing was to destroy active marshalling yards, railroad repair facilities and other rail targets which would effectively disrupt rail movement south of Pisa- Florence- Pontassive line.

Emphasis was to be on bombardment of railway bridges, tunnels and viaducts.

There were only 13 non-operational days during Operation Strangle. During the 40 operational days the Wing's tactical squadrons flew 132 missions (2,540 effective sorties) and dropped 4,517 tons of bombs. 92 of these missions, and 2,070 tons of bombs expended on rail targets. The efforts of the



57th. Wing coupled with those of the other wings involved resulted in effectively blocking practically all of the rail traffic into Rome

In addition to the efforts expended on Operation Strangle, units of the 57th Wing flew 9 missions against harbors and shipping, at Leghorn, Piombino, Porto Ferrario (on the island of Elba) and San Stefano 4 missions against Viterbo airdrome, 7 missions to drop leaflets, 2 mission on fuel dumps west of Lake Trasimeno and a supply area at Piedmont.

Enemy fighters had been no particular threat during Operation Strangle. Flak proved to be more dangerous, particularly after the operation began blocking the rail lines, and more flak guns were moved in to provide added protection.

On 15 March 1944 an all-out effort had been made by Allied ground forces to break out at Cassino, but the effort failed. The stalemate continued while preparations were made for a second effort.

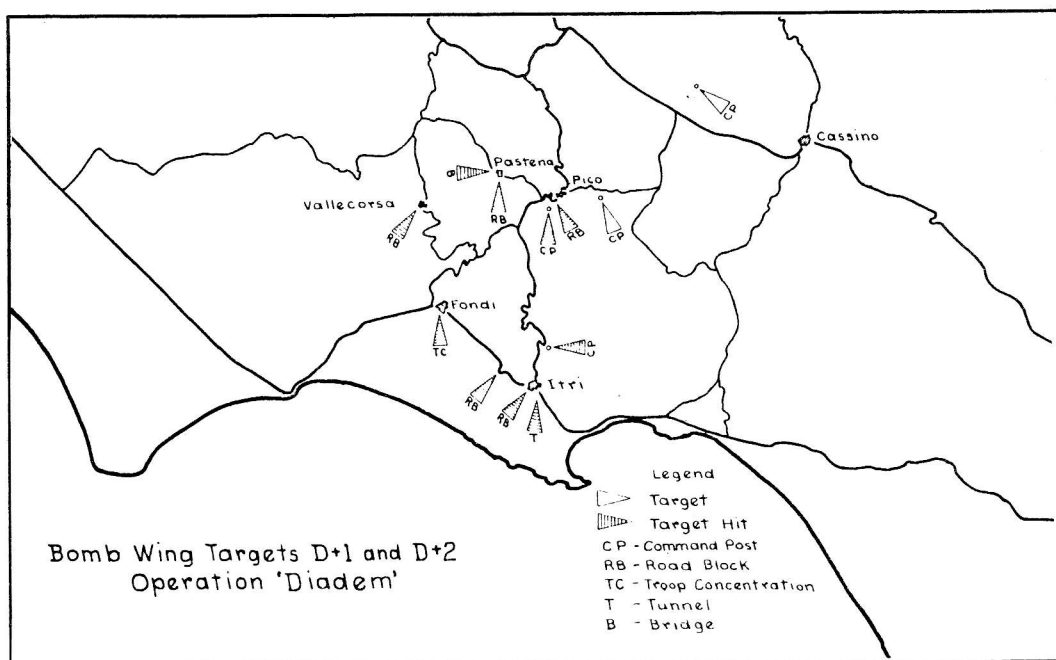
Between 19 and 29 April, 1944, 57th Wing Headquarters and the 321st and 340th Bomb Groups all moved to Corsica. The Wing to *Prunelli*, the 321st to *Solenzara*, and the

340th to *Alesan*. With the 310th already stationed at *Ghisonaccia* all of the units of the 57th Wing were on Corsica.

On 11 May, 1944 a major offensive was opened along the Rapido and Garigliano Rivers with the objective of establishing union with the forces in the Anzio beachhead and of effecting the capture of Rome. Operation Diadem was implemented to give aerial support to the ground forces.

On D-Day +1 the 57th Wing was called on for 13 missions against 6 different targets, ten of which were actually flown. The 310th Group flew 4 missions: Three for the purpose of creating road blocks at Pastena, the fourth created road blocks at Pico. Three missions were flown by the 321st; Two to create roadblocks at Vallecorsa, the third flown with forty-four sorties flown against enemy command post at G-638167. The 340th Group flew three missions: two against the 94th Division Command Post at G-638027, the third mission created road blocks at ITRI.

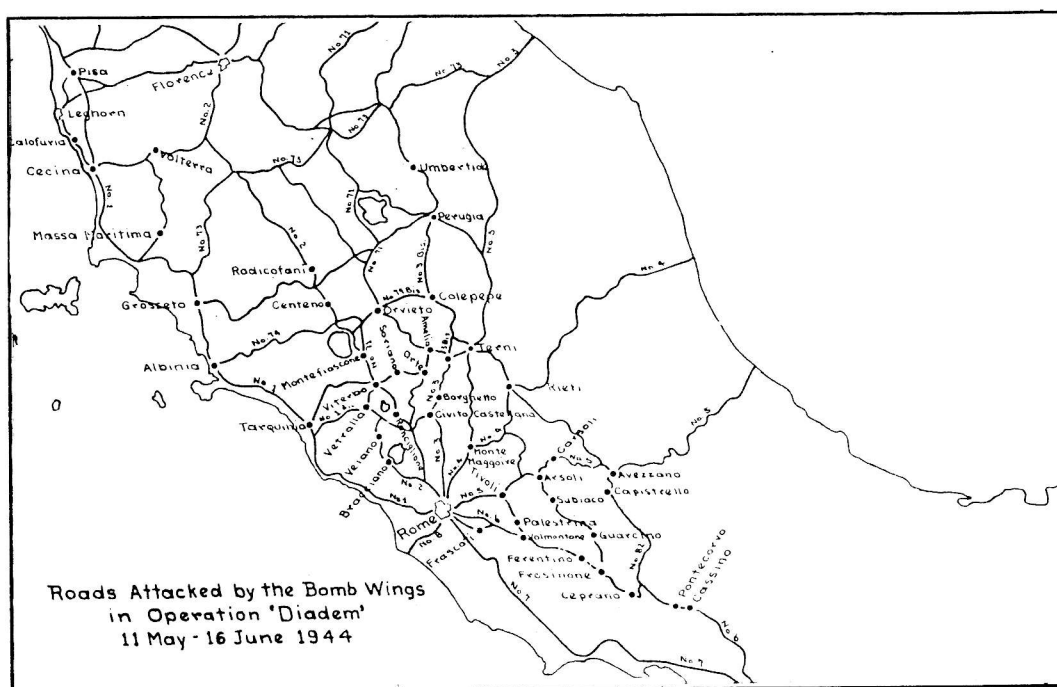
On D+2 the 57th continued its close support activities of the day before, being called upon for six missions against five named targets; road block at Pastena; road blocks at Pico; block a rail tunnel at ITRI; road blocks at



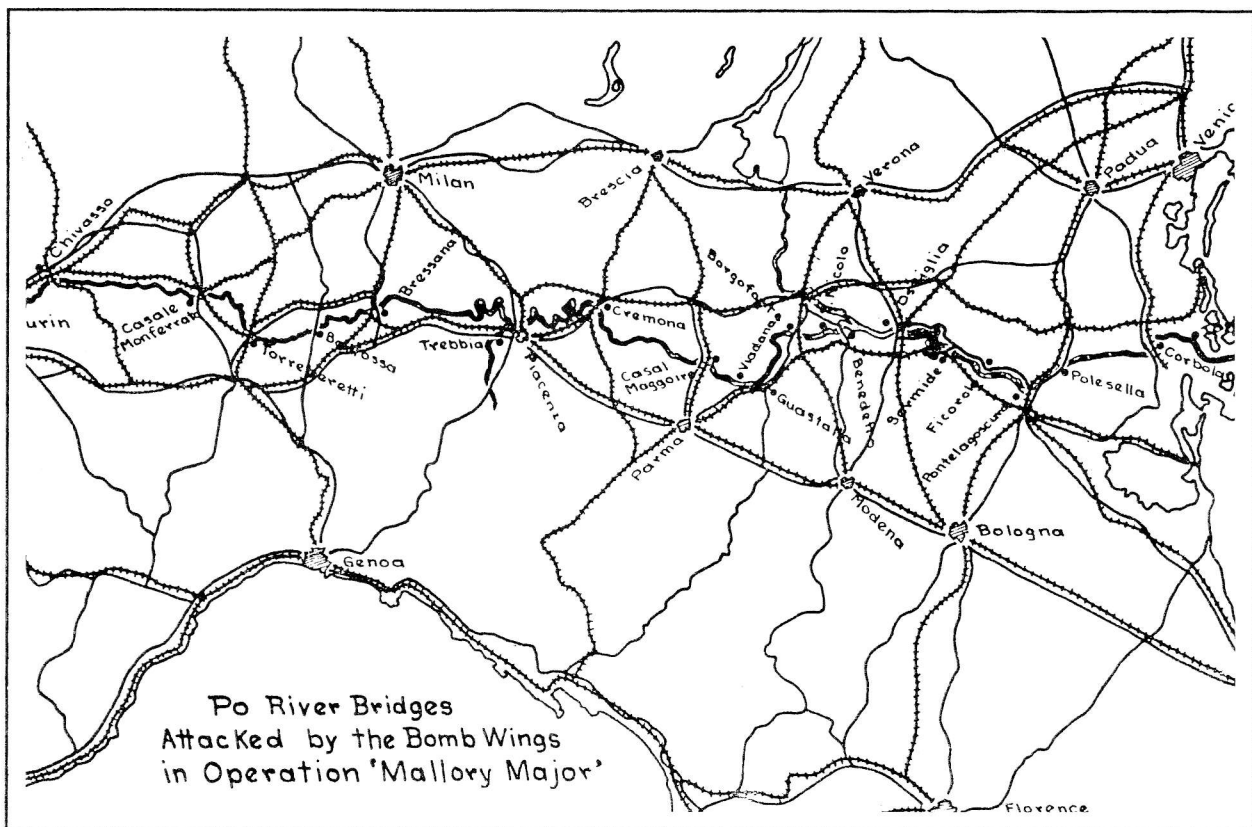
ITRI; road blocks at VALLECORSE. The 57th Wing was able to fulfill its obligations in spite of the fact that the 57th Wing was called upon for three additional missions on D+2, but only one was carried out. That being an attack on the mouth of the tunnel at ITRI.

During the period of 11 May to 23 June the tactical units of the 57th Wing flew 129

missions (2,529 effective sorties) against all assigned targets, and dropped over 5,000 tons of bombs. Interdiction missions accounted for 55% of the Wing's missions, with 61% of the sorties and 62% of the weight of the bombs dropped during operation Diadem. Rail targets included those attacked during Operation Strangle, but also a number of lines running north for Spezia - Rimini dividing line







June to August 1944, saw the Po river valley opened to Allied attack, and the weight of the medium bomber was turned further northward. The responsibility for the interdiction in the north central part of Italy below the Spezia-Remini line fell largely to the Fighter Bombers of the Tactical Air Force. Their base locations along peninsula were more favorable for short range operations that could be mounted as needed sometimes on very short notice.

During the last week of June and the first week of July the combat operations of the 57th Bomb Wing's tactical squadrons were almost entirely concentrated in the Po River Valley. There the operations took two distinct phases. There were interdiction missions against stock targets on 19 different railroad lines in the general area.

Then came Operation MALLORY (12 to 30 July). The 57th and the 42nd Wings joined in an all out effort to destroy all rail, road, and pontoon bridges, across the Po River itself. The 57th's assignment included 14 specific structures, against which the tactical Groups flew a total of 34 missions. As a result of this concerted combined effort all

bridges across the Po were either destroyed or rendered temporarily impassable

During August 1944 the 57th Bomb Wing's tactical squadrons began working on targets in southern France with raids on 2, 3, and 4 August flying 34 effective sorties dropping 64.5 tons of bombs on a Var River highway bridge in southern France, 38 effective sorties on a rail bridge at Nice, and 11 sorties on a rail bridge at Fanton, France. These attacks started the interdiction of communication part of the total invasion plan. The Wing flew no missions on 5 August, the first day of the invasion due to poor weather, but the remaining four days of Phase I of DRAGOON saw 15 missions flown during which 319 sorties dropped 569.92 tons of bombs on communications targets (all except one were rail bridges) which would prevent the movement of enemy supplies and reinforcements from other areas. The greatest weight was directed against bridges on the rail lines in the Rhone valley; at Avignon, La Voulte, Livron and St. Espirite. The rail bridge over the Var river was attacked twice and bridges at Nice, France, and Ventimiglia, Italy, were each attacked only once.

The participation by the 57th Wing in Phase III ("Yokum") of the DRAGOON operation was brief indeed, lasting from 0350 hours to 0730 hours on D-Day, 15 August. During that brief time the squadrons of the 57th Wing flew 6 missions with 137 sorties and dropped 108.8 tons of bombs on the Antheor beaches, plus 12 missions on coastal gun defenses at Point des Issambres, St Tropitz, Agay and Cap Roux. Phase IV ("DUCROT") the assault landing commenced about 0800 hours on 15 August.

After completing its "Yokum" attacks the 57th's bombers returned to the invasion area to make three attacks on bridges at Avignon. There were 58 sorties flown dropping 91.67 tons of bombs.

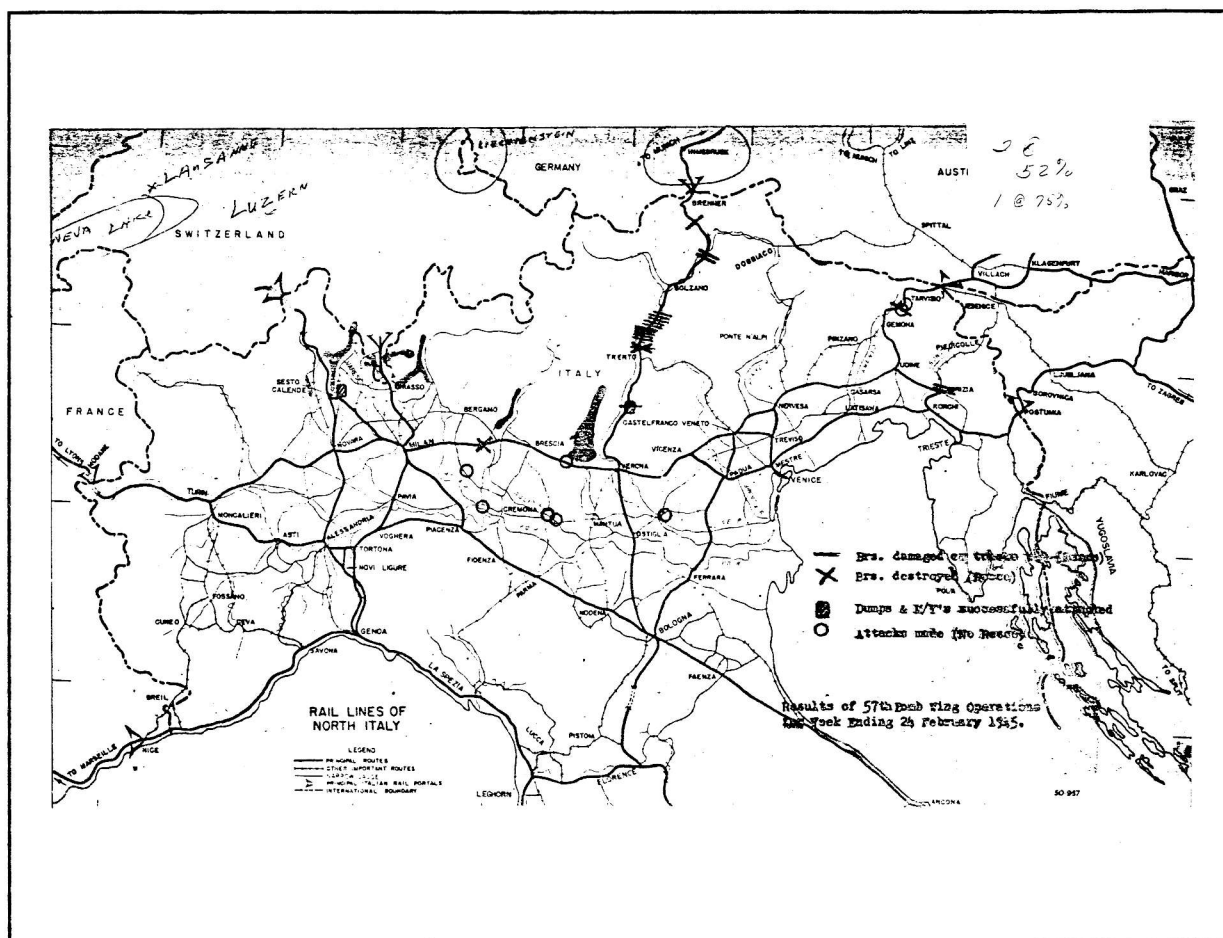
Following D-Day the 57th continued to support the invasion until 28 August, with interdiction bombing in the inland area of France, with bridges across the Rhone River and its tributaries as principal targets. This

served to hamper the retreat of the Germans, and helped cut off their reinforcements and supplies.

The work load performed by the tactical units of the Wing during the post invasion period involved the following: 74 missions (994 effective sorties) dropping 1,856.12 tons of explosives on 18 different French rail bridges, 4 Italian rail bridges, 9 different French road bridges; additional targets included gun positions, harbor facilities, Valence airfield, and naval installations at Toulon, where a battleship, cruiser and a submarine were sunk.

The targets attacked on 28 August were the last in France for the 57th Wing's tactical units since no targets remained within range of the B-25s.

The Wing could now give its full attention to the Italian campaign. The Allies had established a more or less stable battle line



that ran from Leghorn to Pisa to Florence to the Adriatic coast. So interdiction, once more, became the primary mission for the Wing's B-25 medium bombers. The ground forces still required some close support. The weather was seldom good from 29 August 1944 to 15 November. Of those 78 days effective missions were only flown on 37. In spite of the short number of days the tactical units of the Wing completed 251 mission (4,558 sorties) dropping about 8,290.87 tons of bombs. About 24% of the missions and 25% of the sorties were expended upon close support.

Close support missions supporting the ground forces who were trying to push through the German Gothic Line and into the Po valley. Gun positions and defense positions were the principal targets, especially to the north and east of Florence. There were troop concentrations, ammunition dumps and supply depots, including the Bologna area.

During later September, all of October and well into November the Wing's tactical squadrons were kept busy with attacks on railroads leading into Italy from the north, including those in the lower reaches of the Brenner Pass Line. Those running generally east and west within Italy, between large cities, and those running north and south over which supplies were being transported to the battle areas.

On 6 November, 1944 a one day schedule of bombing was set up to reduce the flow of supplies into the country by destroying the electrified railway system of the Brenner Pass Line. The three tactical groups, of the Wing, each were assigned a transformer station, which were located at Trento, Ala and Domegliara. All three were destroyed.

The 57th Wing gained another tactical group during early November. The 319th Bomb Group had been converted from B-26 type aircraft to the B-25. For a short time the Wing would operate with four tactical groups. Late in December the 319th Group was ordered back to the United States for



retraining before moving to the Pacific Theater. The 319th's assignment to the 57th Wing terminated on 10 January, 1945.

During the final months of 1944 the efforts of the 57th Wing were devoted to interdiction bombing attack, concentrating on the Brenner Pass Line. Mission after mission of its B-25s took off in an all out effort to destroy that vital link in the transportation system that linked the enemy's homeland and their forces that were engaged in the Italian campaign.

On several different days, notably during November and December, well over 200 B-25s, from the Wing, were dispatched on missions. Targets in Yugoslavia were also pounded on 18, 19 and 20 November, 1944. On 10 December the Wing's Groups began using Shoran-precision Radar which greatly helped bombing accuracy.

February 1945 was a banner month for the Wing. The Wing's bombers destroyed 17 bridges, and damaged 13 additional, cut or blocked another 42. During this month, for the first time, the B-25s penetrated beyond Bolzano in northern Italy. During March the toll of bridges destroyed totaled 40, and the attacks continued during April.

From November 1944 until late April, 1945 the Wing's bombers flew about 6,850 sorties, most involving the Brenner Pass area, and dropped a total of over 10,250 tons of bombs. As a result of these attacks (combined with those of other units) the line was cut in January, 1945 and remained closed to through traffic to the end of the war.

Between 1 April to about 10 April the Wing and all of its tactical Groups, moved from

Corsica to the east coast of Italy. . . .

The 321st. group moved from Solenzara, Corsica to Falconera, Italy.

The 310th group moved from Ghisonaccia, Corsica to Fano, Italy.

The 340th Group moved from Alesan, Corsica to Rimini, Italy.

Wing Headquarters moved from Prunelli, Corsica to Fano, Italy.

The 308th Signal Wing Company moved from Migliacharo, Corsica, to Futa Pass, Italy,

The last wartime missions flown by the Wing's tactical squadrons were flown 3 May, 1945. These were leaflet drops in areas where isolated pockets of German resistance still existed in northern Italy, advising the garrisons about the surrender of their leaders and ordering them to lay down their arms.

Brigadier Robert D. Knapp, who had commanded the Wing since it became operational on 1 March, 1944, left on 23 May 1945. He was succeeded by Colonel Anthony Hunter, who continued in command until at least early July, perhaps longer.

On 15 August 1945 the 57th Wing headquarters, now reduced to two Officers and one enlisted man, was reassigned from the 12th Air Force to Army Service Command, MTO. And on 20 August the 57th Wing was attached to the Air Force Staging Area No. 2, Pomigliano, a separation and processing center of the Service Command, and was there inactivated on 12 September 1945.

The 57th Bombardment Wing had completed its World War II mission, its last wartime mission flown by the Wing's tactical squadron was flown on 3 May, 1945.



# **308th SIGNAL WING**

## **(Company)**

### **ACTIVATED**

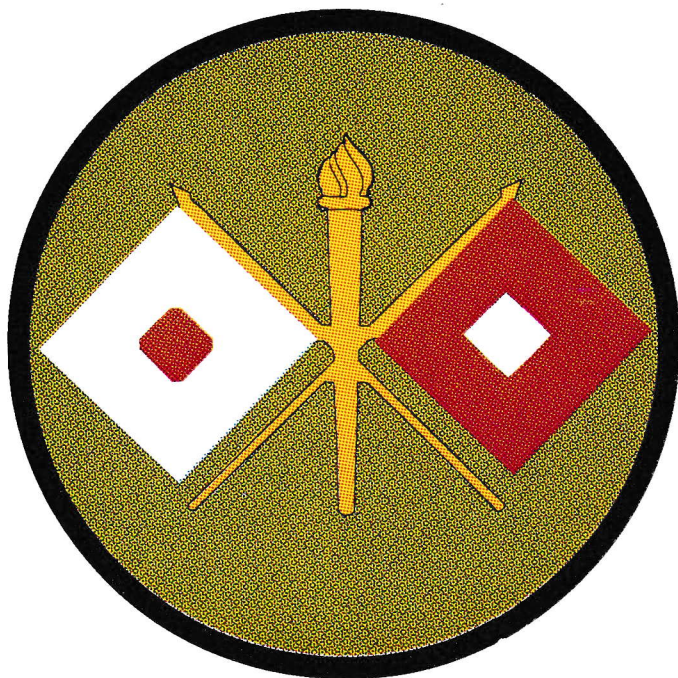
28 Julyt, 1942

### **ENTERED COMBAT**

15 February, 1943

### **DEACTIVATED**

August, 1945



# THE ODYSSEY OF THE 308TH

from material furnished by

EDWARD BRITT and KENNETH TORGESDN

**NOTE:**

AFTER CONSIDERABLE SEARCHING BY ED BRITT, AND OTHERS, WE FIND THAT THE 308TH SIGNAL COMPANY, WING, WHILE IT FURNISHED COMMUNICATIONS TO THE VARIOUS COMBAT UNITS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS, IT OPERATED AS A SEPARATE ENTITY AND WAS NEVER ASSIGNED OR ATTACHED TO THE 57TH BOMBARDMENT WING. THEY HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE 313TH SIGNAL COMPANY THAT HAS BEEN MENTIONED IN SOME OF THE 57TH BOMB WING'S PERIODICALS. THE 308TH HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED ON VARIOUS PLAQUES AND MONUMENTS FOR THE 57TH. THE 308TH GIVES MANY THANKS FOR OUR ADOPTING THEM.

First, this is a synopsis of the 380th's activities over three years of war.. The Company was activated at Drew Field, Florida on 28 July 1942, where they spent about four months in training for their mission and -were very briefly assigned to the 63rd Fighter Wing.

The 308th Signal Company (Wing), strictly a communications company, was sent to Egypt to assist the British 8th Army in beating the Krauts in North Africa. It was here that they made contact with the 340th Bomb Group and the 57th Fighter Group. While in Algiers they provided communications for the 22nd Air Defense Wing.

After about six weeks of being seasick, jammed into hold of a ship among other unmentionable tortures, we disembarked from the ship onto crude barges that had been sent out from shore. We were at the north end of the Red Sea.

The docks at the place amounted to no more than a few wooden loading platforms. The barracks bags were loaded on to trucks . . but not us! We hit the road with full equipment. There was no singing, and very little conversation. It was the old lift 'em up and

put 'em down. After a couple of hours of this we all agreed to hunt down and eliminate the maker, or designer, of our pack harnesses, which took a bite out of our shoulders with each step.

At a place called Heliopolis, Egypt, about ten miles from Cairo, we spent six weeks studying the British radio procedures. Then it was off to the war for the 308th.

We didn't know where we were going . . . when we would get there . . or why . . and we probably cared less as long as we were going. We finally arrived! after a torturous trip from San Francisco, California to Tripoli via Australia, India, Egypt across Libya. It had been a ---(censored)--joyride- until at last we were here in Tripoli, a city which war had stripped of its beauty. For all the publicity this old city had had, it was disproportionate. It is small, the buildings are quite small, in fact it was disappointing to us. We were glad to leave.

We had traveled by (censored) Luxury Liner, Toonerville Trolley, Six-by-Six, and the oldest means of transportation known as putting one foot in front of the other, finally by "Gooney Bird".

We had been as seasick as possible aboard the "West Point", had dysentery in Egypt, tried to pick the worms out of the stew and bread fed to us by some "Tommies" in Lybia. But at least we had survived.

From Tripoli we moved to a small village called Zavia, Libya, about ten miles from Tripoli which would be our first base of operations. Zavia was a small village of white walls and date palms. Near the center of the town, behind a large wall, were the public buildings which the Army had occupied. We bunked down in a large concrete building, while the mess hall was being set up in a former church. Transmitters and receivers were checked out. Telephone switchboard,

cryptograph machines, and a message center were organized. We were in operation at last! We were in operations for the 9th Air Force, being in contact with Benghasi, Castel Benito, Tripoli and Sfax.

As hot day after hot day went by we began to feel somewhat at home. We even adopted a puppy which the boys called "Blackout", as he was black from flea to flea. Italian prisoners were doing our KP, which was tre's bon, as far as we were concerned.

But then new orders came in. Every one was in a criss-cross of activity, . . . packing . . . loading last minute conferences and instructions. Trucks line up, assignments are given, and an arm was raised . . . good-bye to our home of only a few days.

Six of us settled down into the seats of a weapons carrier, equipment piled in a heap on the floor. Top down, shirts off, dark glasses, the cool morning breeze and the warmth of the rising sun on tan bodies, we were on our way to Tunis. Overhead we heard the approach of planes. They're ours . . . B-25s and P-40s. What a beautiful sight. They're headed for the Krauts with a few gifts.

The main road, through Gabes, Sfax and Sousse, was covered with an endless stream of trucks going in both directions. After miles of dust, cacti, palms, donkeys, camels, Arabs, vineyards, and Eucalyptus trees, we reached Tunis. It is impossible, now, to describe the smells, the filth, the sick and the hungry, the dust storms, the vast Sahara desert, the booby traps and the carnage of war.

In Tunis we were to be the inter-locking link between the different airfields and the front line troops. A huge garage, which the Germans used extensively as a repair and supply house, became our headquarters. A field with British desert tents became our barracks; it was located near Ben Arous.

The radio station went on the top of a nearby hill where three of us radio technicians had an excellent view of the countryside. Around our radio tent we found hundreds of caves blasted out of solid rock. Those Nazi nests had contained thousands of soldiers just two weeks earlier. We went exploring very,

very, carefully, avoiding stepping on or touching anything until we respectfully gave it a long distance test. Rifles, helmets, ammunition, gas masks lay abandoned. Some of it was brought back as souvenirs. There were no booby traps set in those caves, probably because of the quick surrender in this area.

While there were no German booby traps, we did learn very quickly that you never, never lay your mosquito net flat over you, as some of us did at first. Some ten million, or more, mosquitos punctured us on the face and exposed parts. We looked like a sixth grade case of chicken pox.

We finally got into operation and began those "lovely" shifts. Daytime it was hot, windy, and flies everywhere, straw in the mess kit, Atabrine, but you didn't mind all that, just the monotony. At night was the lonely darkness, sand fleas, scorpions, mosquitos and and more mosquitos. Explosions occurred at all hours and in every direction. Bullets whizzed by the tent, from where? You didn't know. Planes roar overhead constantly. Arabs slink about in the dirty hills or sit about in the dirty shacks in hunched circles.

The fourth of July 1943 came and went with just sweet memories of home. The Sirocco blew from the Sahara with heat beyond description, 100 to 140 degrees in the shadows. Any piece of metal, even in the shade became so hot that you could not handle it.

On 11 July 1943 we packed up, said good-bye to the French, and spent the next two days touring through the Atlas mountains in a convoy of British lorries, to Algiers. Late in the afternoon of the second day the lorries bounced and scratched to a stop amongst a sparse grove of dwarf cork trees and briar bushes. The Mediterranean is only a half mile away. We were at our new home in Algiers.

Because of the cork trees we called our tent village "Cork Hill." Our new camp consisted of about 25 tents pitched in a grove of cork trees. There was some scrub timber and brush. We hacked brush for about three days, set up a company street, the supply, chow, and administration tents and got organized in a short time. Oh yeah!, We set up a shower from





left 1-r

RICE, BACHMAN, WHITE

below: 1-r

Capt. TYLER, Lt. JACOBS,  
Lt. BRITT

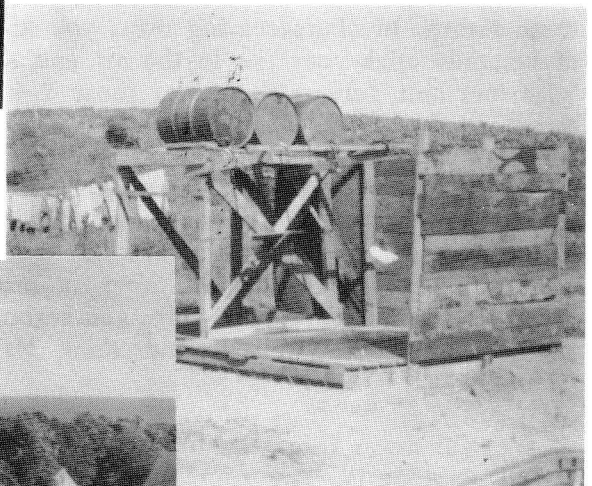
below

LAURENCE MILTON  
on the switchboard at Cork Hill



below

BIVOUAC at CORK HILL, ALGERIA



above:

MODERN SHOWERS  
in N. Africa

two barrels. All was a very pleasant "set-up" which if you didn't think about it was almost like home.

Then we strung the light wires for the tents, put a radio in the mess tent. A message center was put into operation with Jeep couriers to other units and airfields. Telephone switchboards were installed and the teletype and radio sections awaited further orders. From the base a few miles from the Maison Blanc airfield outside Algiers, the 308th served the 12th Air Force from July to 23 October 1943.

The 308th was then attached to the 12th Air Force and became a part of the 62nd Defense Wing guarding the coastline and the shipping in the Mediterranean. It seems funny that during a war what a small cog you are, or your company is, in the great machine that is the Army or the Air Force. Here we were, a Signal Company, so small yet so vital to the Air Group you are attached to. It was our job to keep the telephones, teletypes, message center, radio receivers and transmitters in operation at all times. We knew, that despite the small part that we were playing in the big picture, we were keeping the fly boys in the air. We had heard of the squadrons of the 57th Fighter Group, called various things . . like "Black Scorpions", "Fighting Cocks" and "Exterminators". When you see a bunch of these fighter bombers roaring over, you kind of mentally stick your fist in the air and say "give 'em hell, fellows"!! Besides those P-40s, there are the C-47s, which were such a great support for everybody, flying everything everywhere. It was fly out the wounded and fly back with a new bunch of men and supplies. There were the bigger boys, B-17s and B-25s, and the speedy P-38s giving them support. They were raising havoc with ships and harbors and bases of the Italians and their Nazi friends.

We will never forget the day our fly boys raided Pantelleria. For four days the skies were filled with our fighters and bombers. From 8 June until 11 June they flew in an endless stream roaring overhead. They kept coming and going relentlessly with no let up. Then as suddenly as they started, it ended. We heard that Pantelleria had fallen.

The invasion of Sicily began on 10 July. We heard how the Air Force had pounded the bases at Catania, Reggio Calabria, Palermo, Messina, Gerbini, and many many others.

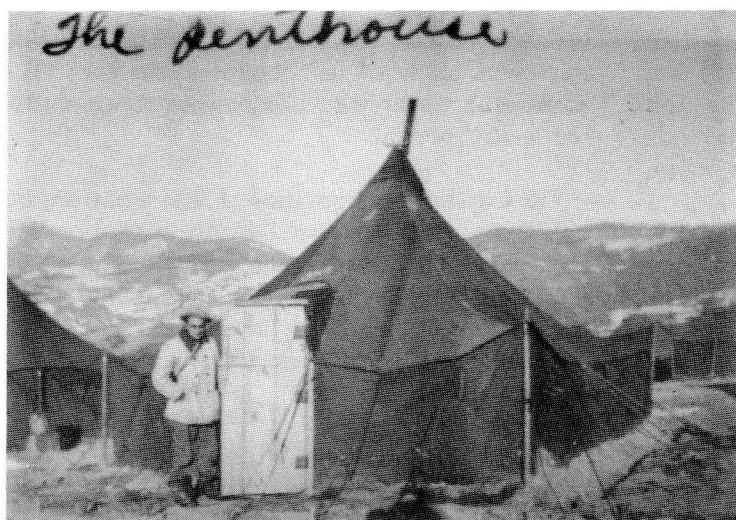
On October 21st we began our move to Bastia, Corsica. This was made possible with the fall of Sardinia on 18 September and then Corsica fell to the Rangers on 5 October. The hills of Corsica would make a better point to communicate from since the Allies were beginning to move northward.

Many of us in the 308th Signal Company, Wing, flew to Bastia on the 21st. Some of the Company went by boat through some very dangerous waters even in the harbor of Bastia. There were dozens of German mines still guarding the approaches. It was here one of the ships hit a mine which blew the ship apart with a great loss of life. War had come to the 308th!

Fifteen C-47s, with British Spitfires as cover, had taken off from Algiers, and they skimmed along close to the water. Landing at Bastia airfield was hazardous because of the many bomb craters.

We settled down to the routine of a signal company. Headquarters had moved into a stone building up from the harbor area. Here the technicians set up the teletypes, telephones, a message center, secret code division, and radio receiving areas. The cooks moved in supplies and set up their kitchens and dining area for 200 men. The telephone technicians strung cables up the mountain for about a half mile for the radio transmitters. We used a stone building, vacated by the Germans, for the high frequency transmitters. Antennas are set up high above. We are in business.

When we first made Corsica our home, the Krauts decided we needed a shakeup, so they bombed some buildings on the waterfront, then they began an attack on the 13 PT boats in the harbor. Every evening the PT boats would take off in a roar toward Italy to attack the German shipping along the coast. In the morning they would return to our harbor to rest up, refuel and get the boats in good order for the next night. One day the



left:

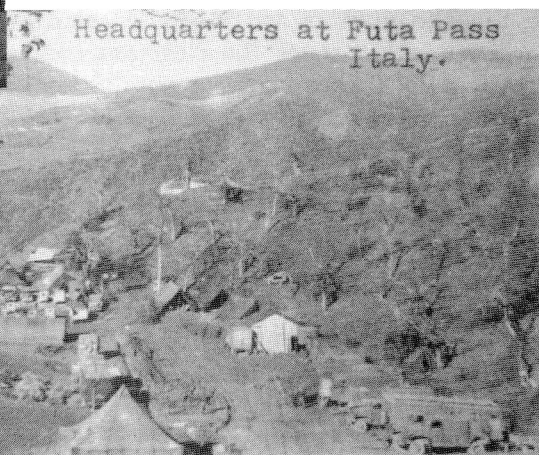
**SNUG AS A BUG**  
Futa Pass, Italy

right:

**HQ 308th SIGNAL WING**  
in the Apennines north of Florence, Italy

below;

**1944-45 WINTER BIVOUAC**  
Futa Pass, Italy

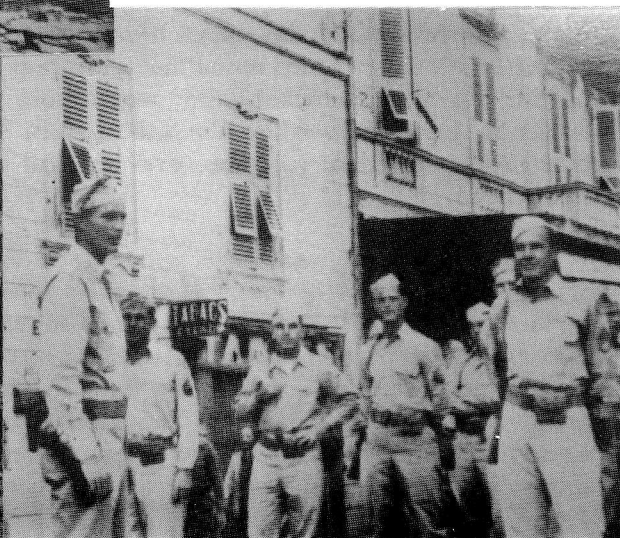


lower left:

**CHOW TIME** for 308th  
Futa Pass, Italy

below

**A LITTLE FREE TIME**  
On the streets of Bastia, Corsica





German dive bombers came over and tried to knock out the boats, who scurried out to sea and zig-zagged speedily as the bombs fell among them. As far as we could see nobody was hit. Like swatting a fly with your hand, somebody said.

Next door are the British signal operators, and some of the French. The British and the French are very friendly, but the "Limey" tea is syrupy with too much sugar, but we say "OK".

The guys in the radio transmitting group move into a shack the Germans had occupied. The fleas were bad, but our "sick - call" boys came to the rescue with "Kill - 'em - powder"

The diesel engineers set up a huge engine for our electrical power for our transmitters. We found that the power was also adequate for boiling eggs in a hurry.

The 308th Signal men working steady shifts "round the clock" needed time to relax and keep in shape, so basketball teams were organized and many "hot" games were played. Some chose to swim in the clear water of the Tyrrhenian, or go for long walks around Bastia, or in the countryside.

If we went swimming we had to be very cautious because of the Black Sea Urchins hidden in the grass in the shallows. They had spines about three inches long, which had to be removed by the doctor.

Stationed on Corsica with us were the French reserves called "Goumiers Marocaines". Dressed in striped army uniforms they are quite colorful. One day, next to our transmitter station, on the mountain they were playing a game of "chicken". One would hold a dollar in his fingers while the others shot it out. You guessed it! . . . one "bravado" got it in the hand.

The Red Cross was there and put on an afternoon dance for us plus the local populace. Each girl brought her family along. Music sounded Italian. Doughnuts, sandwiches coffee and cake were served. The lunch is the great part of the party for the Corsicans. Everyone seemed to smile and have a good time. White bread, especially the cake, are

luxuries there. While we were enjoying ourselves many of us thought about the "GI's" across the water who are bogged down during the "static" period.

On Corsica the activities of war went on, but not like in Italy. The fighters and bombers from Corsica roared off to defy death, drop their bomb loads, destroy planes in the air or on the ground, to blast important targets. . to do their job, and then try to get back to Corsica all in one piece.

The radio operators clicked off their coded messages twenty-four hours a day to unknown G.I. receivers where translation took place and the messages were delivered. The signal corps technicians of the company kept all phases of their work in continual night and day operation. Other troops helped in the many phases of supporting the whole effort.

The infantry, in Italy, was moving north and there were rumors in the Bomber Wing that we may be next to change our home. We had made friends with many of the Corsicans. They had treated us well. The old lady and her daughter, Rosie, who washed our clothes in the icy spring water . . the old man who, on New Years eve, took us to his basement and shared his bottles of good wine. It was with reluctance that we left this friendly island, but the fighter and bombers would be moving up to new bases. We had to be prepared to leave also.

As the fall and winter of 1944 began in the high Appenines the armies came to a halt. It was time for the 308th to move. On 3 October, 1944 the Company flew to Livorno, Italy on the west coast of Italy. From there we convoyed to Pisa along the Arno river. Here was the famous "Leaning Tower of Pisa", which we promptly climbed, and like Galileo, dropped objects to recall history of 1589.

The convoy moved on to Firenze (Florence) and then north on highway 65 into the Appenines. This is where the great armies were head to head. We went past the Gothic Line where the heavy defenses had been blasted from the air and the ground. We knew that indirectly we had had a hand in that.



Some of the transmitter group set up tents along the busy highway. To the northwest a great artillery battle was taking place. Our mess kits hanging on a rope jumped up and down with each concussion. At night the sky lit up like day, good enough so that you could read the Stars and Stripes!

In a few days, the battles subsided and we were convoyed to a high knoll where the transmitters were set up. We could look down into the valley below for at least ten miles. Small farms dotted the landscape and pines covered the mountains above us.

The 308th Company settled in a few miles back along highway 65. A small tent city began to appear. Each pyramidal held from four to six GI's. Larger tents became the "mess" and Headquarters, motor pool, supply, message center, radio room, etc. We were set for the winter, perhaps.

The rains came and trucks chewed the slippery earth into deep soupy ruts that stalled everything, at least until gravel could be brought in.

German planes came over with leaflets telling us to go home, you've lost, etc. Along the highway the Krauts flew over and dropped bombs trying to knock out the convoys. Near our transmitters, some outfit with .50 cal machine guns tried to knock down the low flying bombers. We could see the red tracers miss their targets, and the Germans got away. But our planes got mad like bumble bees, and we didn't see another Kraut overhead for a long time.

At Futa Pass, our home near highway 65, our transmitters are now in several trucks for fast movement. Our electrical supply is by motor generators on trailers. Down at the main company a large contingent of headquarters personnel, including a General had been installed not far from the 308th tent city. We heard through the grapevine that our communications would be involved also with the 22nd Tactical Air Force which would blast the Krauts with P-38s, Mustangs and others.

The GI's of the company got busy building stoves out of any available material. Grapefruit and other juice cans, and used

150mm shell casings served as chimneys. Five gallon cans became stoves. Gasoline from barrels is led into each tent by one quarter inch copper pipe.

As the rain and snow fell and the Appenine winter descended upon the 308th, men checked every nook and cranny of their tent to keep out the cold. Some built doors, doorways, wooden floors, or partial floors.

We, the transmitter crew, were next to a company of engineers at Futa Pass. They told us the heavy snow got to be a menace. Sometimes during the night the whole tent would come down from the weight of the snow, with a great "whomp", and they would have to dig their way out. They looked at our paper quonset hut with jealousy and said, "You guys got it made. How did you pull that off?"

The 308th was kept busy with the vital communications tapping out coded messages to airfields and other strategic areas. Our transmitters transferred messages through the air. The radio operators at the tent city received the coded messages which were delivered to the code room for interpretation then to the recipients at headquarters. Night and day the information flowed all over the area for hundreds of miles.

The snow began to melt in March. The wind and the rain increased, but finally spring came to the Appenines. The great armies, a few miles to the north rustled to life with a steady roar of heavy artillery. The big push began on the night of 14 April, 1945. In five days Bologna fell . . . and on 23 April the 5th Army moved into the Po valley

The 308th Signal Company prepared to move all its personnel and equipment, by convoy, to the Po valley. The trucks moved slowly at night with only slits of light emanating from the covered headlights. A large radio van missed a turn. In the morning they found Frank, the driver, sitting by his overturned truck frying Italian eggs over a bonfire. As we moved down the last foothills to the valley of the Po, we could see the great bridge span hanging useless in the water. Trucks were crossing on the pontoon bridge built by our forward engineers.

In convoy, the 308th passed through Bologna and other cities until it reached Verona, where we bivouacked. We waited and watched as the war developed around us. Thousands upon thousands of prisoners were marched by. So this was the end for Hitler's Elite?

The WAR IS OVER! . . THE WAR IS OVER!! Some of us were moved to a rest camp west of Verona to Lake Garda where we spent a luxurious summer at a hotel. We

were in HEAVEN! Beds with white sheets . . Meals brought by servants in white coats . . Go sailing on Lake Garda. We drove northward toward the Brenner Pass and visit some relatives of Sergeant Gianniville of our Company. Some of the Company moved back to Florence to await orders. Finally the 308th is bivouacked in a park in the city of Florence. Orders came through --

"Prepare to convoy to Naples to board ship for the U.S. A."



**THE 308th WAS NO MORE !**

# **MEMORIES**

**Stories, Anecdotes and**

**Memories From**

**Members of the 57th Bomb Wing  
Association**

**Editor's Note:**

This section of the anniversary book consist entirely of contributions from members of the association. I have had to do some editing, but in most cases the stories are in the words of the member who went through the experience.

Some of the best stories were much too lengthy to use in this publication. It was our intention to include as many stories as possible in the allocated space. In most cases I have had to restrict stories to about two pages. It would not be fair to print a few stories of five or six pages. Too many would have been eliminated.

As we promised at the inception the stories that are not included in this book will be used in the quarterly "Journal". Since space is somewhat limited in that publication it may be some time before your particular story is printed. So please be patient.

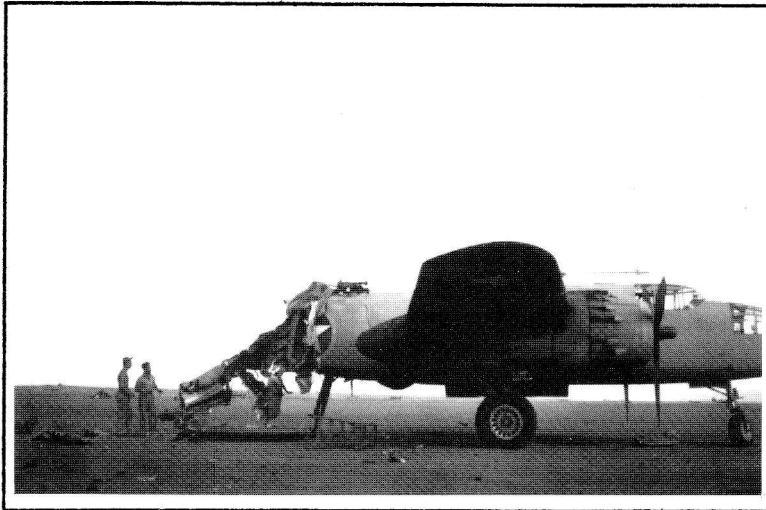


# OH! OH!

by  
SANDFORD N. ARONECK

These are the recollections of Sanford Aroneck, pilot of "The other plane" involved in the amputation of the tail of the B-25 pictured below. The man named "Bob" mentioned is not identified.

"You may well remember it, Bob, Monday



April 26, 1943. We left Sfax at 1230 hours and were coming back from the mission where two 18 ship formations did a job on Soliman airdrome, near Tunis. A 340th ship, being badly shot up, landed cross runway (at right angles) to the active (primary) runway. I was following traffic, and saw him just a couple of seconds before crossing the intersection. I had just enough flying speed to pull up, my wheels having already touched down. My landing gear caught the 340th ship just aft of the top gun turret and tore off the entire tail.

"There I was . . . 50 to 75 feet off the ground, hanging by my earphones . . . we stalled in and completely washed out #49."

"Fortunately the only casualty was one crew member with an injured foot."

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L.-R: Howard "Bid" Egbert, pilot; Robert J. "Moose" Sather, bomb/nav.; Harley Anderson, pilot; Nate Crane, turret gunner; kneeling: "Mickey Swartz, radio.

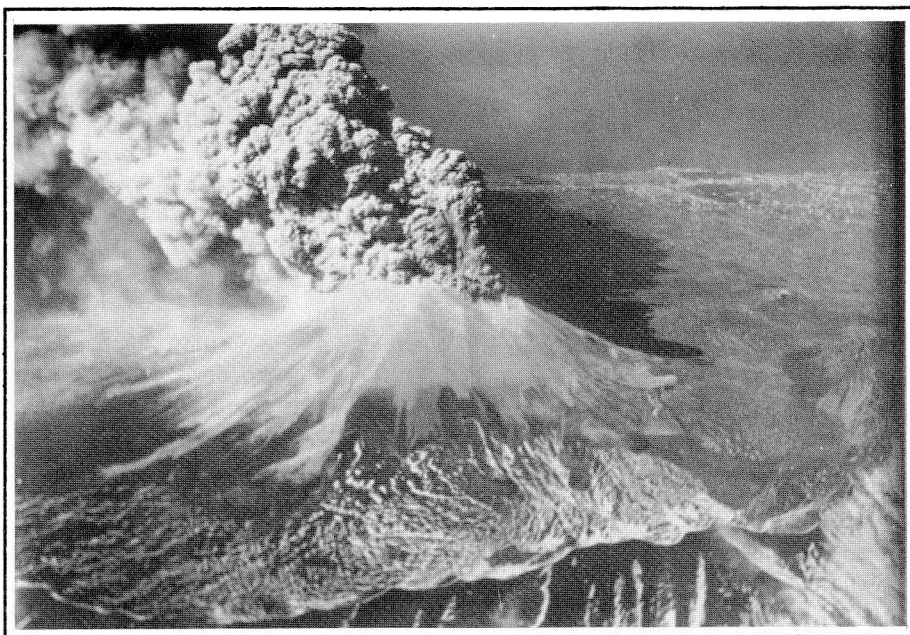
(note: This photo was take the night before a mission on which they were shot down. Harley Anderson was killed and they buried him on the island of Lampedusa.

# VESUVIUS BLOWS HER TOP

by  
James Cooper 340th Chaplain

On August 24, 1979, exactly 1900 years had passed since Vesuvius blew up, with what is now known as the most destructive eruption in recorded history. The city of Pompeii, Italy, near the bay of Naples, disappeared completely. It remained entombed for almost 1700 years. Only within the last 200 years have we pieced together the tragedy! The excavation is not yet complete.

It isn't that the people of Pompeii and surrounding countryside were not warned before the tragic day. There had been tremendous damage from an earthquake just 17 years before. But the city and the seaside homes were reconstructed with even more splendor and luxury. People settled back, unheeding of a possible recurrence.



Shortly before August 24, 79 A.D., there were strange rumblings in the ground, huge build up of tides, in the bay, and ominous cracks developing in the surrounding land. Many people fled from the city by ship, or horsedrawn carriage . . . with few possessions, family and animals. Those less frightened, but perhaps thinking it would be safer in the house, stayed on. For whatever reason, those remaining were completely unprepared for the deafening "explosion" which shook their world and doomed 2,000 of them that morning.

Archaeological explorations within the last 200 years, plus a graphic description of the event written by the "young Pliny" have now given us a picture of that fateful day. The

ferocity of that explosion tore the whole top of the volcano, pushing a dark cloud into the sky that can only be compared to the mushroom effect of the exploding atomic bomb. The sky rained debris from the heaving crater; red hot lava poured down the mountain-side burning vineyards, trees, farms, and villages, and then poured into the sea.

For the estimated 2,000 people who perished that morning, some made a last desperate effort to escape, while the rest huddled together in their homes hoping that the walls and roofs would protect them. The relentless accumulation of lava, cinders and ash, in places 30 feet in depth, however sealed, their fate.

Sulfurous gases mercifully put them to sleep. The grotesque life-shapes of those caught in their death-throes have been recast from molds formed when the lava and mud cooled around their bodies. Many of these figures can now be seen in the excavation portion of Pompeii and the museum in Naples. It is almost impossible for us to imagine the horror and panic of such a catastrophe. Yet there are many Air Force Service men from World War II who have a very good idea of the lethal power of Vesuvius!

It all began quietly enough in March 1944. Our Bomb group, the 340th, (and other Air Force groups) were stationed around the base of Vesuvius, engaging in bombing Italy. Our airfield, near Pompeii, was bulldozed out of the lava and ash deposited 19 centuries before.

Pilots returning from missions day or night could easily find our airstrip by locating Vesuvius! In daylight the white wisps of smoke rising from its cone, and a red glow at night from the crater made an easy landmark

Two other officers and I drove a jeep up the mountain as far as the road went. We then walked to the top. The terrain was rough and quite ugly. We were amazed at the raw, jagged and awesome appearance of the volcano's cone. From fissures, a slow bubbling red flow of lava, while not threatening, persisted slowly toward the outer rim.

A few enterprising native children were dipping out small globs of lava on sticks, pressing small Italian coins into the soft but quickly hardening liquid stone, and charging a dollar. This was our first trip to the top.

Two days later there appeared to be more smoke than usual coming out of Vesuvius, and at night there was an obvious red glow at the top that had not been evident before. The next morning we returned to the top. This time we had to pick our way around and over swollen streams of molten stone. You could walk on the spongy, black surface of the fast cooling lava but underneath was a deep red glow. As these streams struck trees or bushes, there was a match-like spurt of flame, then

the tree, or twig simply disappeared with a little puff of smoke.

We were still not alarmed, for the slowly advancing streams seemed to pose no serious problem for the farms and villages further down the mountain.

The next night, however, we were awakened by a severe shaking of the ground, a deep rumbling and roar and explosion! Rushing outside the stable in which we were sleeping, two officers and I discovered that the sky was filled with shooting red flashes, a great glare of light, and huge streams of lava coursing down the mountain.

The falling debris . . . ashes, cinders of great size, and acrid smoking clinker, made the wearing of helmets mandatory. Natives living on the higher elevations of the mountain in villages and farms streamed down the volcano's side taking refuge in churches where there was much wailing and praying. There were some small villages, farms and vineyards destroyed.

In the dark before dawn we could not assess our damage, but it became quite clear when morning arrived! Every airplane was riddled with gapping jagged holes in wing and fuselages. Ashes were built up to the top of the landing gear. For those sleeping in tents, it had been a frightful night. In their tattered and sieve-like condition, tents were no protection.

Our planes were thus ruined, and a volcano of indeterminate length raging above us, a quick decision to evacuate was ordered. As quickly as possible we fled as the Pompeians had done 19 centuries before. Only in our case we fled in trucks and jeeps going down the coast for many miles to an area that had once been a Greek colony, and where still stood a Greek Temple . . . Paestum.

The irony of it all, despite our losses in material and usefulness ( for 4 days) was that the Axis Powers had been trying to put us out of business for a long time. But what they had not been able to do in many months, Vesuvius accomplished in one night!









# OPERATION DRY BEEF

by

Dino A. Brugione 446th

When one thinks about how battleships were sunk during World War II, tremendous endeavours and heroic feats come to mind, such as . . . the maximum effort put forth by the British in tracking and destroying the BISMARK . . . the audacious attack by the Japanese on Battleship Row at Pearl Harbor . . . The death of the Yamomoto from the merciless attack by U.S. Navy aircraft off Okinawa in April 1945.

Yet, virtually unnoticed in history, equal skill and daring of a B-25 Group resulted in the loss to the Axis, of a battleship, a cruiser, and a submarine in the south of France on 18 August 1944.

I was assigned to the 321st Bomb Group, (M), 57th Bomb Wing, 12th Air Force stationed at Solenzara, Corsica. at the time, and took part in that raid.

It was no accident that the 321st was called upon to perform that mission. The Group had the best bombing accuracy in the Mediterranean theater, placing more than 90% of all its bombs within the designated target area. Bombing precision in those days was computed on the basis of an imaginary circle that covered an area 600 feet in radius drawn from the ends of the target objective.

The group had flown more than 500 missions and was highly regarded for its excellent formation flying. The 321st frequently was chosen to demonstrate these skills for visiting dignitaries. But it was the accuracy of our pin-point bombing, the bridge-busting, the command post hits, the runways cratered, rail yards leveled, and the close support of the ground troops in Italy that won the praise of those who inspected the aerial photos of our raids.

Preparations for the invasion of Southern France were well underway following the

invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944. There was one unknown, however. In the harbor of Toulon, protected by eighty-two heavy anti-aircraft guns, were the remnants of the old French Navy that constituted a considerable threat to the Allied fleet and invasion forces. French seamanship was well regarded by Allied naval commanders. During the invasion of North Africa, the battleship Jean Bart, with just one of her turrets operational, still sought to challenge the Allied forces. She fought with great gallantry against overwhelming odds.

On 17 August, the third day of the invasion of Southern France, aerial reconnaissance revealed the French warships: "STRASBOURG", a battleship; a cruiser, "LA GALISSONNIERE"; a LaHarve Class destroyer; and a submarine had been repositioned in the harbor. Their firepower was a threat to the Allied forces nearby.

In the evening we often gathered along the road leading from the bomb depot to see what type of bombs were being dollied to the airfield. This gave us a good idea as to the mission we would be flying the next day. On the evening of 17 August we saw 1,000 general purpose bombs being trundled to the airfield. We knew that the next day's mission would be an interesting one.

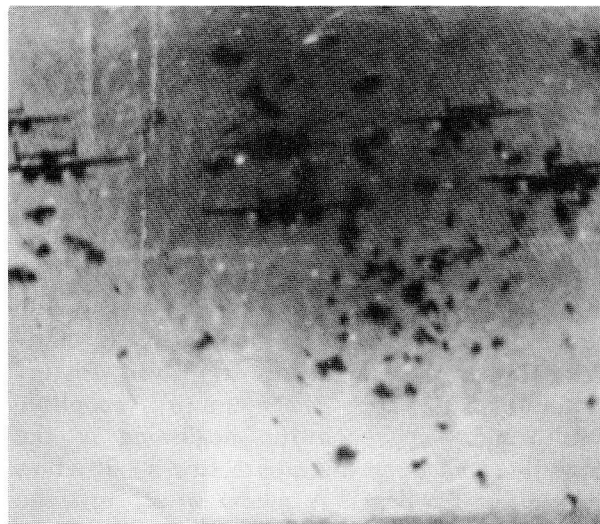
The following morning we were briefed on Mission No. 489, code named "DRYBEEF". The order was to "neutralize the firepower of the heavy naval units at Toulon at all costs." We were briefed on the threat posed by those naval units; about the anti-aircraft defenses; and informed that the weather would be CAVU, but there was bad weather all around Corsica.

We took off at 1300 hours, assembled at 1326, and began our flight to the target at 13,000 feet. At that altitude our formation of thirty-six B-25's was extremely

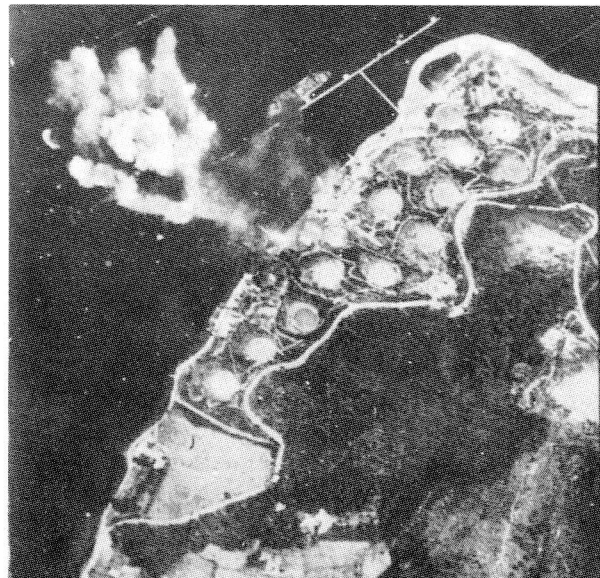


vulnerable to the heavy AA guns defending the harbor.

Although "window" was used on the bomb run to mislead defensive radar, the flak was



extremely intense, both barrage and tracking, on the bomb run and the break away. By the time we had cleared, eleven men had been wounded, and twenty-seven of the B-25's had at least some damage.

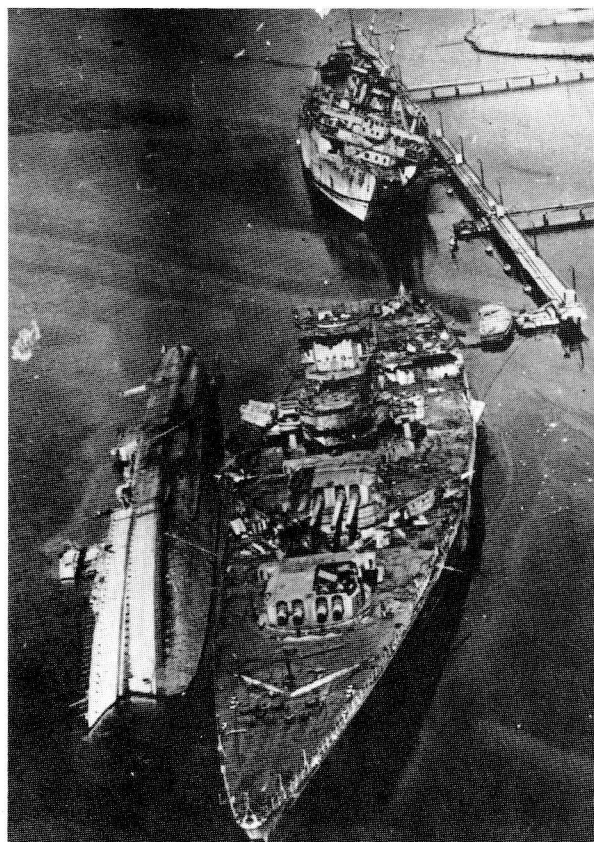


"Bombs away" came at 1246 hours, and the pattern was an excellent one. There were eight direct hits on the STRASBOURGH'S, deck igniting fires. A near miss opened a large hole below the waterline, and she listed to port with her decks awash. The submarine was sunk, keeling over on its side causing the ship to list to starboard and settle to the bottom. The cruiser was also hit

The destroyer had departed prior to the arrival of the B-25's.

On our return from the target, we were required to pass over the invasion fleet. Heavy squalls forced us to descend below 1,000 feet, with the risk of being fired on by mistake. So we used our flare guns, and emergency radio channels to inform the fleet of our predicament. Because of the wounded airmen, and aircraft damage the Group dispersed to land at three separate fields.

The mission was later rated as one of the most destructive ever carried out by a group of medium bombers. The 321st Group was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for



what was described as extraordinary heroism and proficiency that was demonstrated during the attack."

The next day, we were back out "bridge-busting" for the Seventh Army who was moving inland from the beaches, and on up into the Rhone valley of Southern France.

# THE 310th GOES ON THE PILL

by

Frank B. Dean 380

Those of us who were in the 310th Bomb group during the early part of the North African Campaign, had been graced with a chronic shortage of the "good things" and a shortage of the "bad".

Lack of creature comforts, pup tents shelters, food shortages, rain, mud, ice, snow, freezing weather, lack of heat, inadequate fuel trucks, enemy dominated skies, air raid scares, paratrooper alerts, nightly guard duty, acute homesickness, lack of bathing facilities were just some of the "bad".

By the end of February, 1943, more of our B-25s arrived at Berteaux, Algeria, from England and increased our mission capability, work load, minor injuries and body odors.

By March, increased mission quantity and effectiveness had hurt the enemy but the price had been heavy. We had flown 52 mission and lost 13 aircraft to enemy action. This was the "bad, sad, part."

While most of our discomforts, during this period, were due to poor planning, inadequate transportation, and enemy action. None until now had been deliberately induced by our own people, "for your own good".

In March, 1943, the 310th "went on the pill". It was a small, round, yellow pill that was difficult to swallow. It was atabrin, 310th pronunciation "atta-brine".

The medical department had warned us that the spring would bring mosquitos and malaria, and that preventative measures would be taken. Having spent my childhood in the low delta lands of Arkansas, I was acutely aware of malaria and the resultant fevers and chills that sent one to bed freezing to death one minute and burning up the next. I had taken quinine capsules by the hundred. It was nothing new to me.

We were informed that the normal supply of the cinchona tree bark that produced the bitter quinine was now under the control of the Japanese, and in short supply. This new chemical derivative was to be its replacement. Most of us had never heard of it.

The pills had been handed out at the evening meal. Because of the bitterness, many had thrown them away. The doctors countered with the "open mouth" reception. One would approach the beginning of the chow line and open his mouth like a baby bird waiting for a worm. A medic would toss the pill to the back of the throat so it would be swallowed. I feared the malaria more than the atabrin so I downed it, as required.

Though the pill was designed to prevent malaria, its side effects was a delayed cathartic action. It started in the early morning with a cramping in the stomach that dragged me from the relative warmth of my blankets, into the cold night. It rushed me to our primitive slit trench latrine. There I would join Conrad, or George, or would meet them coming, or going on our pilgrimages from tent to slit trench and return. This same narrative was being played between other holes at other airplanes.

In the morning we would join practically the entire camp waiting at the door of the medical dispensary, seeking relief. Those waiting would stand "cross legged" in a long line whose occupants disappeared into the dispensary or gave up their place to make required, high speed, runs to the nearest slit trench.

Inside, harassed and busy medics dispensed spoonfulls of liquids or large white pills to soldiers who wanted instant medical miracles. It was not to be.

Effects of the disastrous "Atibrin Trots" was evidenced during the day by men in various



The "hard-to-remove" coverall gave way to wool or khaki pants that offered quicker access in cases of emergency situations. Poor planning or fumbling fingers at fly buttons caused cold bath water to be carried from distant headquarters for a bath that had not been pre-planned.

Even more to be pitied were those who made long sea sweeps over the Mediterranean or flew to some Tunisian target. They were confined to an aircraft that required the removal of a parachute harness and a long crawl over the top of the bomb bay to reach the chemical toilet that was located in the rear of the fuselage.

NOTE: Below is a translation of the message on the pamphlet, shown at right. Thousands were dropped among the Italian soldiers during the latter part of the North African campaign

" The last hour of battle has sounded . . . It is now necessary to choose between life or death. The British Eighth Army has broken Rommel's line in the south of Tunisia. The British forces have joined with the Americans. Now they are advancing together. Other powerful allied forces are progressing in the southern and central sectors of the front. Each day more than 1,000 allied planes darken the skies of Tunisia. Each day you and the Germans are being machined gunned. Night and day, the troops and armored cars of the Axis are stricken with fatigue. Night and day, the streets that lead to the north are being bombarded. The Germans are in full retreat. They are trying desperately to arrive at the southern ports. As usual they are abandoning the Italian soldiers, to cover their retreat. Once more you have been betrayed! You know better than we do. Do you want to escape from this hell? There is only one way out. Come to us, and the war for you will be finished. Take this pamphlet to the American and English lines. It will not be considered surrendering on your part, but just as an indication that good sense and wisdom are instinctive qualities of the Italian people. The pamphlet will insure safe conduct. If by any chance it is not possible to bring it with you, come anyway. You will be welcomed as a brother."

On some occasions "call to surrender leaflets" were dropped along with the bombs. We always suspected that the Germans and Italians used the leaflets more for toilet paper than to wave as a surrender flag.

Though history has been silent on this subject, it is not unreasonable to guess that, under these circumstances, the enemy did find a few second-hand leaflets in his paper supply.

However, I am not aware that they ever lodged an official complaint.

## L'ULTIMA ORA DELLA BATTAGLIA È SUONATA ... Bisogna scegliere ormai tra **LA VITA** **o** **LA MORTE**

L'ottava armata britannica ha spezzato le linee di Rommel, nel Sud della Tunisia.

Le forze britanniche si sono congiunte con quelle americane. — Adesso, avanzano insieme. Altre potenti forze alleate progrediscono nei settori settentrionali e centrali del fronte.

Ogni giorno, più di 1,000 aeroplani alleati oscurano il cielo di Tunisia.

Ogni giorno, voi ed i Tedeschi siete mitragliati.

Notte e giorno, le truppe, i carri armati, le autoblindate dell'Asse sono senza tregua colpite.

Notte e giorno, le strade che portano al Nord sono bersagliate. I Tedeschi sono in piena ritirata. Essi si sforzano disperatamente di raggiungere i porti settentrionali.

Come al solito, abbandonano i soldati italiani, per coprire la loro ritirata.

**ANCORA UNA VOLTA SIETE STATI TRADITI !  
LO SAPETE MEGLIO DI NOI.  
VOLETE SFUGGIRE A QUESTO INFERNO ?  
VI È UNA SOLA VIA DI SCAMPO.**

Venite da noi, e la guerra per voi sarà finita.

Portate questo manifestino nelle linee americane ed inglesi : ciò sarà considerato non come la resa da parte vostra, ma come il frutto che il buon senso e la saggezza sono le qualità istintive del popolo italiano.

Questo manifestino è un salvacondotto. Se, per caso, non vi sarà possibile portarlo con voi, venite egualmente : sarete accolti lo stesso in modo fraterno.

# How About a Tune?

from material furnished by  
Robert Zulauff, 381, Edward Bugbee 487  
Paul Peck 447

The urge to have fun . . . dancing . . . good old American music fills the soul of every red blooded soldier. The Special Services Officers in each group was well aware of that urge. So it was only a matter of time, at least in Corsica, before all of the Groups organized a band. In fact some were even organized at the squadron level.

But the presence of an organized musical organization was not necessary for some of the guys to make a little music, harmonizing was very popular too. Sometimes this took place in the shower . . . sometimes in the EM Club or O' Club. All it took was one guy to start humming a tune, and presto, other voices began joining in.. I will have to admit that sometimes it sounded more like a bunch of kids and less like Barber Shoppers, but it was fun.

Bob Zulauff (381) tells about some of the trouble that was encountered in locating instruments and people to play them. Here is his story, . . .

"About a month after I arrived in Ghisonaccia Captain Fisher. 310th Special Services Officer announced that a dance band would be organized. The plan was to locate musicians from among the flying and ground personnel to make up a band that could play for dances, and to entertain the Group.

"From its inception, I was very involved in getting this band organized. I worked with Captain Fisher in locating the necessary instruments, music, music stands and sound equipment. I recall that I searched for instruments in Naples, Rome and Bastia. In a letter to my wife I told her about finding a trumpet in Bastia. That story is worth telling here. . .

"I stopped in at the Red Cross Club to inquire about a trumpet. I really didn't expect to find one, but I did locate an old relic in a kitchen cabinet at the enlisted men's club. This horn had an enormous bell, a real monstrosity made in Italy. I had fun playing a few melodies on that horn while all of the kitchen help (old women and children gathered around. They especially like the "Beer Barrel Polka". I was allowed to check out the horn for an indefinite time. There was no case for

it so I carried it in an old sugar sack.

"About 4 pm I left Bastia to return to Ghisonaccia. I rode part way with a Lieutenant that I had met in town. There was very little traffic on the road and I thought that I would never get back to the base. Soon it became dark and there I was stranded alongside of the road with two other guys. It was cold, so we built a fire and waited for a ride. Moral was low . . . we all felt that we were stuck on this lonely road all night. I pulled the trumpet out of the bag and began playing 'Tuxedo Junction', 'I'll get by' and 'Stardust'. That seemed to cheer us all up.

"Well, after riding in all kinds of trucks and Jeeps I finally managed to reach a point about two miles from base, so I walked the rest of the way."

That story gives us an idea how much trouble that some endured to give a little music to the guys.

Ed Bugbee wrote and told about the start of the 487th Squadron Band . . . . .

"The 487th Squadron Band started in August 1944 at the urging of Special Services S/Sgt. Francis Bains and Major Edwin Bugbee (who had a band prior to his entering service). Seven members with old instruments started practicing without much quality at first, but with lots of enthusiasm. By early October we had some better instruments and additional talent from other squadrons. We finally had the "Big Band 16 pieces."

"We opened at the Enlisted Men's Club in mid-October, followed by opening, the next night, at the 487th Officers Club. It was a very busy schedule from then on with performances at many of the clubs of the 340th Group, and then in the clubs of other 57th Wing groups and Wing headquarters.

"A couple of memorable performance were at the luxury hotel at I'lle Rouse. We had more engagements than we could handle up and down the eastern Corsican coast. The band belted out, with gusto, 'In The Mood'. . 'Strings of Pearls' . . 'One O'Clock Jump' and the all out favorite when we put down the instruments and sang? - shouted? - or yelled? 'Pennsylvania 6-5000'. That always was good for three or four requests on any given night.

"The Skyliners, as we were known, had a short and successful career finishing at Radio

Rome to play and record. Every member of the band did a great job. As we left Corsica early in the spring of 1945 the band members dispersed, and the Band phased out." .....

The 321st Band was organized by Captain "Doc" Smith, 445th Flight Surgeon. This band

entertained under the name "Mitchellaires". As with the other bands the Mitchellaires were made up of members of the various squadrons in the 321st Group. Without a doubt they probable scrounged instruments and equipment with the same enthusiasm as did the others.



Above:

**THE  
"WINGMEN"**  
The 57th Bomb Wing  
Band



above

**THE  
"MITCHELLAIRES"**  
321st Bomb Group  
Band

below:

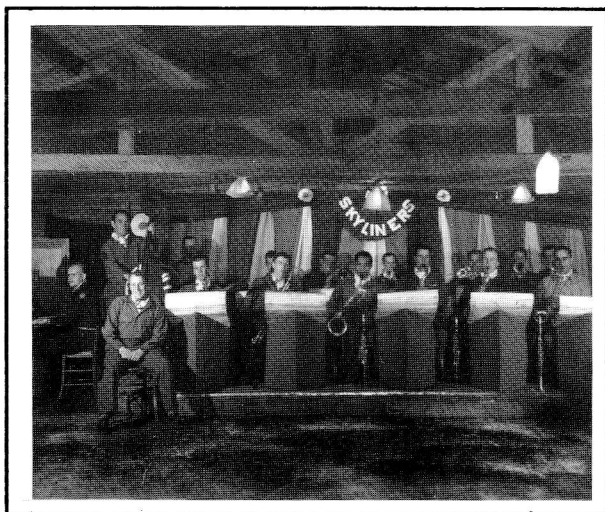
**"THE  
SKYLINERS"**  
The 487th Squadron  
Band

left:

487th EM Club dance  
floor (Riccione, Italy)

below:

A bit of harmonizing  
447th Sqn. Officers Club  
Faconera, Italy



# DURING EARLY OPERATIONS

submitted by

ESTHER OYSTER Historian 319th Bomb Group

Incredible as it may seem the following statement appeared on the 319th Bomb Group. Mission Report #1 "For future missions the bombardiers would like to have altimeter settings and the altitude of the target."

Rushed into combat with a new aircraft straight from the drawing board, the combat crews had to evolve their own bombing techniques. True, the B-26 had seen service in the Pacific and Alaska, but for some reason bombing procedures did not filter through from one theater to another.

Things were rough in those early days as is revealed in Mission Report #3: "In case of a damaged hydraulic system while the bomb bay doors were open, a manual device is needed to close the bomb bay doors."

As to repeat performances, Mission Report #4 suggests: "Crew members feel the time over targets in the future should be varied from 1100 hours, as the enemy seems to anticipate this timing. Altitude should be varied also."

Crews received very little information about the target during briefing. Comments on the subject are revealed on Mission Report #7:

1. Pilots would like to have photographs of targets, as this would greatly facilitate identification and make for a proper bomb run.

2. Only two target charts of Sousse Harbor are available for this mission; crews are anxious to have charts for each plane.

3. The change in bombing altitude (900 to 1200 feet) provided a surprise and believed to be generally effective. Flak was late in being sent up.

Efforts to put more aircraft over target by combining B-26 with the B-25s in the area prompted this comment in Report #9: "The

crews of both the B-25s and B-26s feel strongly that neither a/c can operate to the best advantage jointly with the other...The B-25 crews prefer to bomb at altitudes ranging from 6000-8000 feet."

Whereas this bombing was done at 800-1200 feet. Although altitude had been varied, apparently timing had not been: "There was no surprise element in the raid. Flak was intense even before the bombing runs were made. Crew members believe that the practice of scheduling missions for approximately the same time each day have contributed to the lack of surprise. The accuracy and intensity of the flak is indicated by the fact that four of our bombers which returned to this base (six were sent out) were hit from three to ten times each."

Without supplies the ground crews became quite ingenious at patching holes.

After the 14 January 1943 mission this comment appears:

1. "At 7000 feet it was difficult to distinguish the difference between a road and a railroad Mahares, cameras would be useful for observation.

- 2: "The D-8 sight at 7,000 is not accurate." and is not suitable for precision bombing."

On 13 February, bombing the El Aouina airdrome from 10,000 feet, the Norden was used. There were five B-26s on the mission, and they were attacked by 20-30 enemy fighters which shot down two. It was at this point when the 319th was pulled out of combat for regrouping.

When the Group went back into combat on 5 June, after reorganization, Aircraft were being equipped with the K-20 camera seven photographs were taken by two cameras., On 11 June the first photo analysis was made.





It is not difficult to understand the problem that crews of the 319th Bomb Group and 12th Bomb Group had in identification of their targets. The above photo is graphic in detail but shows very little contrast between the sand of the desert and the road way. A road bridge would be very difficult to pin-point especially from a higher altitude. At low level reaction time would be limited.

# A DEEPLY ETCHED MEMORY

by

GLENN BLACK 381

February 8, 1944 may not have been a memorable date for the world generally, but it was the last day on earth for the crew containing my good friend, Bill Callery.

Naviagtors didn't fare well on my crew. The first one assigned to me at Greenville, South Carolina was a prince of a fellow, but he got air sick in turbulence and was transfered to B-17s. Taking his place was Robert Butler (who liked to be called "Rhett Butler") who flew with us until shortly before we went overseas in the fall of '43. On the day he got married, (the second time to the same woman), he was injured seriously in an auto accident. The last I saw of him was in the base hospital. Bill Callery had been serving as a navigator instructor. He volunteered to be our navigator and left the States with us.

In North Africa we spent some time in Telergma, then in Phillipville practicing for low altitude missions. Bill had quite a bit of stick time in B-25's in the States. Several times he flew as my co-pilot while we were flying out of those two places. We hunted wild boar and did a number of things together. I was 19, I think that he was 26 or 27 but the age difference didn't seem to matter. I was a Protestant, and he was a faithful Roman Catholic, and our moral standards were rather similar. In short, we got along very well together, and I considered him to be my best friend in the outfit.

Late in January 1944 we moved to Corsica. On my first mission I flew one of the two B-25H's our group had at that time (serial# 42-4231). These two had no co-pilot's seats or controls. I led the second element of two in our flight of four. Since only the flight leader had a navigator Bill did not fly with me. On my second mission I flew as a wingman on a medium altitude mission, so again Bill didn't fly with me. On my third mission Bill was to fly his first mission, a

navigator for the flight leader, 1st Lt. Dorman, who was flying the other "H" (serial # 42-4223). Again I was to lead the second element of the flight of four. A second flight of four was led by Flight Officer James L. Peplinski. With Dorman was a fighter pilot, Gen. Graves, who went along to see what our missions were like. Our target was shipping in San Stefano Harbor.

We attacked in our two ship elements, Dorman and his wingman leading, and I with my wingman some distance behind them. Soon I was concious of Dorman's turning to the left with his plane blazing fiercely, the fire apparently originating in the navigator's compartment. I would hold my plane steady to aim and fire the 75mm cannon, then do evasive action while my engineer, Pete Cardimino, would reload the cannon. While doing evasive action I would watch Dorman's progress. He completed a 180 degree turn and headed away from the target, evidently under good control. One time as I looked at him, before firing the cannon, he appeared to be about 50 feet in the air flying straight and level. Next when I looked back he had just hit the water, evidently at very high speed. All I saw was black specks of the broken up airplane in white foam. That was the last that I saw of the plane and the crew.

When I got out of our plane back at Ghisonaccia, I was met by both our group and squadron C.O.'s, if I remember correctly. I told them that I didn't believe that anyone on that airplane had survived. Did they have to answer to higher authorities for allowing General Graves to go on that mission? I don't know.

Later our C.O. asked my opinion. Rumor had it that shortly before Dorman crashed his wingman had seen the General attempting to pull Dorman's body up and back from the controls, over which he had just slumped. It was theorized that a more

successful ditching might have been accomplished if there had been a co-pilot's seat and controls. I was asked if I thought that the remaining "H" should be removed from combat flying. I liked the "H". It had a cannon weighing only a little more than half as much as those in the "G's". It was much better balanced than the "G". There was power boost on the controls which made it more responsive. It was a pleasure to fly it. I expressed the opinion, however, that it would be better to take it off combat flying, and it was done.

We flew a few more low altitude missions, attacking ships that were not in

harbors where shore based anti-aircraft could join the guns on the ships seeking to ward us off. Not long after 8, February we ceased the low altitude sea sweep missions and hit all of our targets from medium altitudes. The cannon carrying "G's" flew on the wings of the "C's" and "D's", releasing their bombs as they saw the bombs drop from the element of flight leader's plane. I expect that ultimately they were all replaced by "J's".

One mission.... One crew...

One deeply etched memory.





# FIRST TIME OUT

by

R.M. JOHNSON 488

The intercom blurted out loud in my ears. Almost screaming, the voice, running all the words together, yelled, "FLACK LEVEL NINE O'CLOCK!" Before I could jerk my head around to look past the pilot and out his window, to see my first burst of enemy fire, we were in a verticle bank to the left and going downhill. The lead ship was pulling away when I heard a sharp crack of flak on my right. In that blurred instant the pilot yelled something that was lost in the din of roaring engines.....But, I'm ahead of my story!

That day I was a lowly Flight Officer, having been forced to take the promotion to F/O, or continue as Sgt./Pilot and go fly gliders with the foot sloggers. Back in Walterboro, S.C., when they gave us Flying Sergeants the choice, the 488th Bomb Squadron was poised to launch for an unknown destination outside CONUS. Departure date was just a few days away. There had been no time to find and tranfer to a single engine outfit. It had to be now! As a qualified 1st pilot, IP, with an instrument card and high time in type, there was no way I wanted to keep those three stripes and rocker, and haul a bunch of dough-feet through endless nights, shooting nothing by engine out landings, for the duration plus six. I gave up my hard earned stripes and took the non-rank of F/O.

So now there I was in the right seat ten thousand above Wadi Acarit, with Rommel's Afrika Corps down below and a hard bitten old Captain as my pilot, who probably had forty-five missions, and was as "flak happy" as they come.

I had arrived the day before at this sand strip twenty-five miles west of Tripoli. I had been one of the first two pilots sent up to fly with the 12th Bomb Group to get some combat experience. Not having the faintest idea of what it was all about, I was an original of the innocents abroad.

The strip was at a place called El Assa. The name was a perfect description of where to give the western desert an enema. It was endless sand, sand dunes, sand runway, sand storms and blowing dust with a constant temperature of one hundred twenty degrees.

At the briefing that morning we had been given a nodding introduction to the squadron, as if we were expendable 88mm fodder that wouldn't be around long. With a casual finger point during briefing, the pilot that I was to fly with was pointed out. He looked indifferent. At the Hack time. I walked to my pilot to introduce myself. As I remember, all he said was "Humph!" That translated out to "Look what th' hell they're givin' me...Christ!...A damn junior birdman with home made bars ... Th' bottom o' th' barrell!" In those days no one was sure what F/O bars were supposed to look like. You couldn't buy them, so you made your own.

The dusty, truck ride out to the aircraft was hot and very quiet. It seemed unusual that everyone was so quiet and deep in thought. This I would understand months later. As each crew jumped off the truck at it's aircraft the shouted comments were subdued. Not like the spirit we had in the 488th.

At our plane the pilot did a casual walk around which consisted of urinating on the nose wheel. I heard later that that was for luck. I did a more thorough walk around, and was not too certain that this old, scarred and patched bird was up to snuff for we were about to go into harm's way. From what was said at briefing, harm's was consisted of the 15th Panzer's flak.

When the double green flare shot up from the operations tent and was lost in the waving mirage across the runway, we saddled up and quietly got on board Without a word to me the Captain started the engines. In a cloud of pink dust blowing away from the runway, we



silently sat, sweltered and waiting for something of which I wasn't aware. When the pilot kicked the brakes off, I saw another green flare arching down into the mirage. We were quickly turning to taxi parallel to the wind toward some stacked barrels that, I was to learn later, marked the end of the runway.

**"Wheels!"** It was the pilots's order for "wheels up" as we broke ground. His last comment had been a talkative "Humph!"

We leveled off at two hundred feet and slid into the number two slot as the lead made a slow 360 degree turn to the left. With the first box in tight formation, low to hide our own shadows, we buzzed across the strip. Minutes later we were slanting up into a maximum climb, clawing for altitude.

At ten thousand feet the Captain pushed over, holding tight formation on the lead, as he throttled back slightly. Feeling like unnecessary baggage, I was trying to watch what was going on with our aircraft, and the tank battle on the ground below. Next we were diving and breaking right when the lead jerked violently level at ninety five hundred feet. I thought, "This must be what they call evasive action!" It turned out to be mild by comparison!

The intercom startled me out of my confusion,

**"FIGHTER! FOUR O'CLOCK..."**

The voice added, "High!" It was almost whispered as if the fighters would hear.

Another voice assured, "P-40's!" and was blotted out by a voice running it all together in one word,

**"FLAK LEVEL NINE O'CLOCK!"**

The lead ship whipped into a verticle left bank and started downhill. The Captain slammed us over and jammed the throttles to the firewall. I watched the lead ship pull ahead. Instantly there was a sharp crack of

what I thought was flak. With it came the sound of pebbles splattering across the right side of the ship.

In that racing, mad mayhem, the pilot yelled something that was lost in the din of the screaming engines,

**"WHAT?",** I yelled back.

**"HIGHBLOWER!!"** he bellowed.

His eyes glued to the lead. I grabbed a handful of throttles and started pulling back power to 1000 rpm, just like the "Dash One" says. Instantly he damn near broke both my wrists as he karate-chopped my hands off the throttles. In the same sweep he banged both the throttles forward against the stops, and slammed both engines into high blower!

The engines chocked, gasped for a second, then, with a massive, explosive belch, burst into a banshee wail that I had never heard before. Before I could realize what was going on, the lead ship had snapped out of the turn level at nine-thousand feet as his bomb bay doors popped open. My pilot frantically jerked both engines out of high blower and chopped his throttles as he fish tailed into position on the lead ship for a fifteen second bomb run.

As the lead dumped his bombs, the intercom whooped,

**"BOMBS AWAY",**

and we were again in a vertical bank to the left when the bomb bay doors banged shut. Like scared rabbits, we were diving at top speed back across the bomb line.

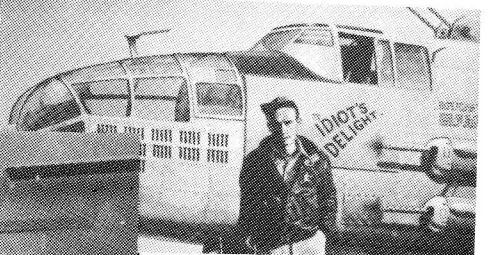
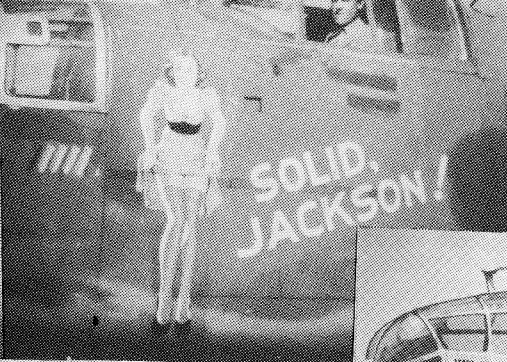
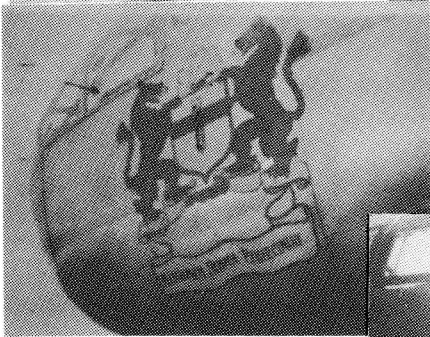
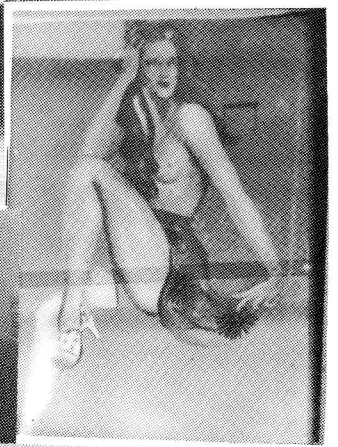
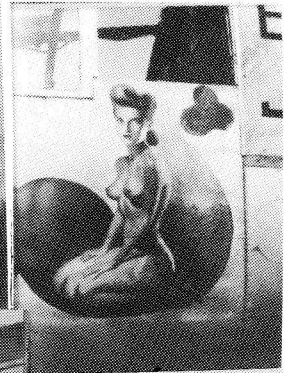
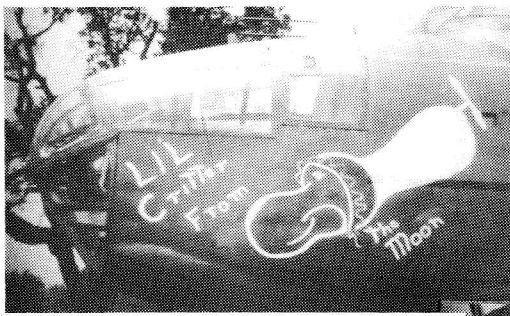
The return and landing was in silence. The pilot didn't say another word. My first combat mission had taken only twenty hair-raising minutes. I had sat there, useless, but I did make a resolution.....

**NEVER WOULD I DO THAT TO MY  
ENGINES!**

# Just a few of the GIRLS







# THE "MOUSE" AND ME

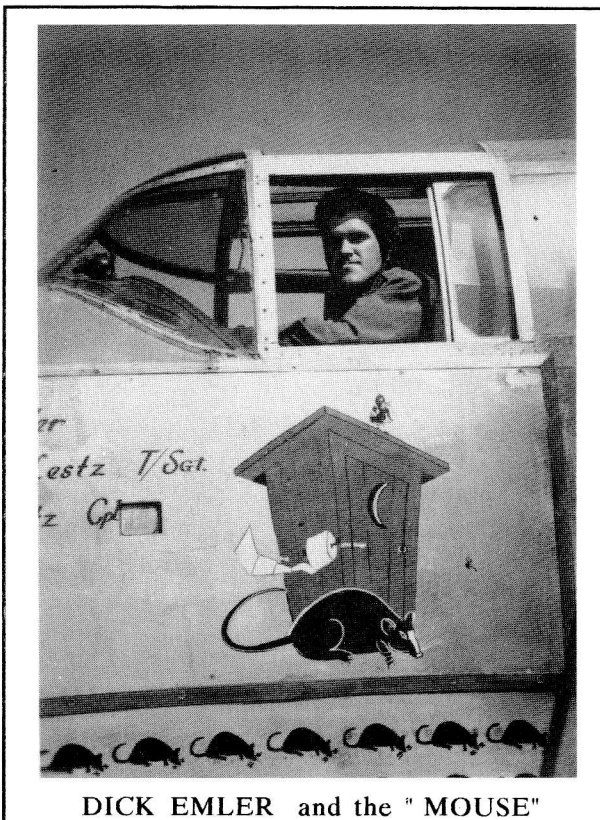
by

Richard Emler 445

Little did I know what the fates had in store for me when I arrived at the 445th in August 1944, as co-pilot for Max Poteete on our flight from the States.

My first mission was on 4 September 1944, flying as co-pilot for E. P. McLaughlin. The target was a bridge at Pavia, an easy one. My introduction to flak was on 10 September . . the target a bridge at Naizzano, and I was flying co-pilot for John Richardson.

On 3 October, again flying with E.P.McLaughlin, we went to Galliati. This turned out to be "flak city" for the day. I believe this is where the lead plane was disabled and the 445th temporarily lost Danny Gahindo and L. Russell. Our engineer sustained a bad leg wound. While he was under going emergency treatment I was petrified at the sight of blood.



DICK EMLER and the "MOUSE"

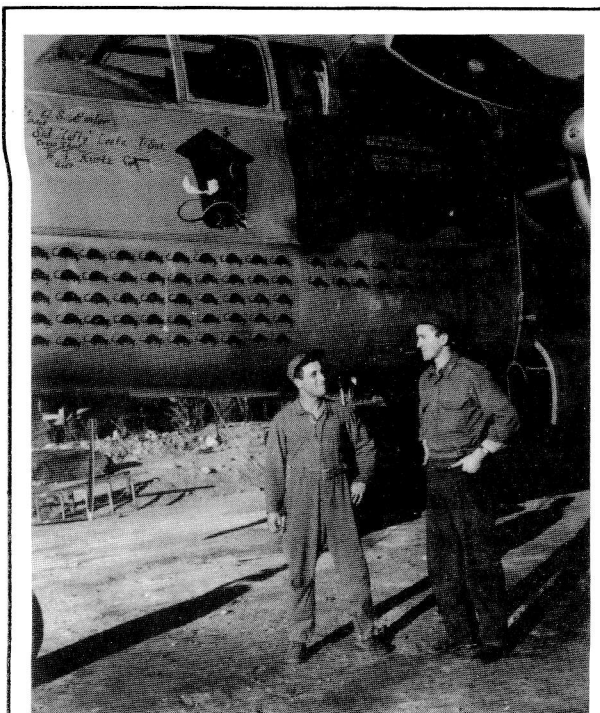
On and on, through other missions as co-pilot for Kendall, Poteete, McKay, Placve, Monger, Weld and so on. In mid-November, 1944 I was assigned to the left seat and the "Out House Mouse". This, for me, was a time for rejoicing . . my own airplane !! To the best of my knowledge I was the third pilot to fly the "Mouse" in combat. I felt that if the other two who preceded me were fortunate to survive, perhaps I could too!

So, up and away to places like Padua (where it was reported that 5 FW-190's made one pass), Crema, Torroborreti, Faenza, and of course the Brenner Pass. During these missions Lady Luck seemed to be smiling on the "Mouse", and crew. Despite the repeated exposure to flak the "Mouse" sustained no hits. Then came Rovereto on December 29, and the rail bridge there.

We had safely negotiated the final run and "bombs away", despite the very intense fire from the German 88's and 105's. As we were peeling off the target the "Mouse" was caught in a very near-miss, apparently from one flak battery. She lost part of the windshield (egads, mine!!) and sustained other hits, fortunately none of which were crippling. After our safe landing, back on Corsica, Sid Lestz and I counted the holes, 37 in all; the "Mouse" had come through once again. None of the crew sustained a wound. I still have a piece of the flak.

We returned to Rovereto again on about 4 January; the rail bridge again. On this trip the "Mouse" was in number two slot of a flight aimed at hitting the flak batteries. Hopefully we could eliminate them and reduce the flak on the flight headed for the bridge. On our final run the flak took out the lead plane. I immediately intercommed my bomb dropper/gunner, Sgt. Robert D. Knapp, to salvo! I felt the load go and we vacated the premises quickly, sort of like "got the hell out of there."





L-R: Sidney Lestz, crew chief  
Warren T. Kurtz, engineer

We spotted six 'chutes come out of the stricken aircraft, and we all felt that the crew had a fighting chance. We later learned that the pilot, Hughes, and the co-pilot, Crutchfield were shot by the Germans after they landed. Crutchfield had worn his Texas boots, and broke his ankles on touch-down. Hughs was seen to assist him and both were shot. This was reported by the Partisans. I can verify the wearing of the boots by Crutchfield, because he "tented" with me, along with Donald McKay and Lee Hutchingson.

The Partisans also reported there had been a great deal of damage inflicted on the Flak Batteries. This led me to believe that my timing of "Salvo", and the ready thumb of Sgt. Knapp was a blessing again. Once more the "Mouse" served us well; despite the intense flak we sustained no holes.

The "Mouse" and crew flew on to targets, such as Caliano where we collected a few holes; Crema, which was a "Milk Run", and

back to the Brenner many times visiting Bolzano, Campo, Lavis, San Michelle, La Cave. The "Mouse" even went as far as Muhlburg, Austria.

Following the move to the eastern side of Italy the "Mouse" continued taking care of the crew despite the defenses at places like Longastrone, Lake Commancio, San Ambrogio and Bologna.

The "Mouse" and our crew were extremely fortunate that she was never damaged to a point where it required more than a week to repair. The "Mouse" and I flew together for the last time on my final mission number 70, on 19 April 1945. Even though I had some regrets about no longer being physically associated with the "Mouse", crew chief, Sid Lestz and his assistant William Kurtz, I sure as hell did not volunteer to stay in the left seat.

If I remember correctly, and I don't always due to "old-timer's disease", the "Mouse" was taken over by Rudy Rice, who had flown with me as co-pilot on a number of missions.

My original feelings about this grand old airplane were realized; the "Mouse" had been a very lucky airplane, and "took care" of those who took her into battle.



"MOUSE CELEBRATES HER 100th MISSION  
Dick Emler, standing 2nd from left, and Sid Listz on his left are the only crewmen identified

## Good-by "Mouse"

# MISSION TO CIVITAVECCIA

81st BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (M)

2 January, 1944

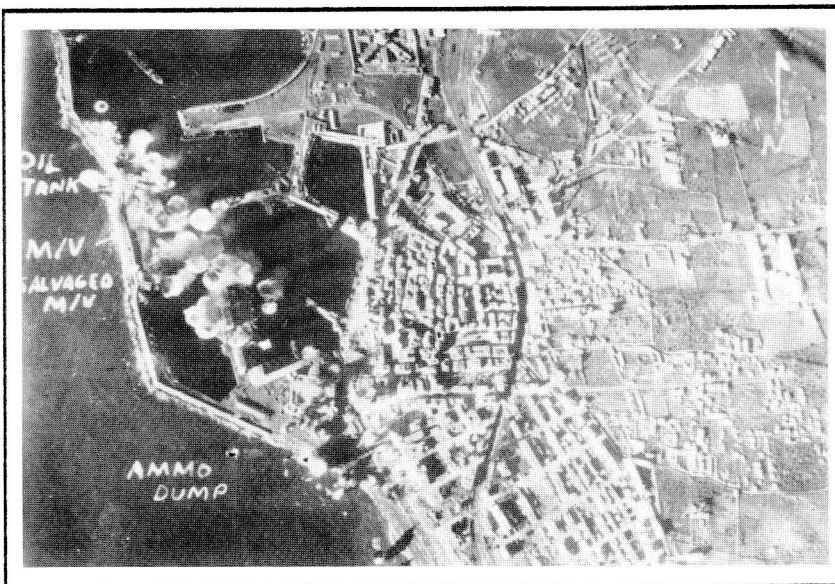
TO :GROUP S-2  
SUBJECT:SPECIAL ARTICLE WRITTEN  
DURING DECEMBER 1943

STORY ON MISSION OF DECEMBER  
7th ON CIVITAVECCIA, ITALY

On December 7, 1943, the 12th Bombardment Group (M) was briefed for a mission on the harbor of Civitaveccia, on the west coast of Italy, about 45 miles northwest of Rome. This port is a principal point of entry for supplies from the depots in the northwest of Italy. From here the railroad goes not only north to Leghorn and south to Rome, but also goes inland to such important towns as Terni, Spoleto and Arezzo. As our strategic bombers had been making transportation of supplies by land more difficult and dangerous, the Germans had been taking to shipping their supplies by water more and more. Reconnaissance had shown that there were two large ships along the loading quay and it was extremely important that they be destroyed. One was unloading and the other was a formerly disabled ship which was being put back into operating condition. With boats so difficult for the Germans to replace throughout the Mediterranean the loss of two, or even one, would be a great blow.

The 81st Squadron was to lead the mission and upon them rested the responsibility of the success or failure of the entire effort. In the event that the ships were gone by the time the formation reached the harbor, the men were briefed to drop on the very important marshalling yards southeast of the

docks. Despite the fact that the weather had not been good around the airdrome, the ships took off at 12:30 and set course for Casserta at which place they were to rendezvous with Spitfire escort. The cloud coverage was very heavy and ground observation was practically nil, but the rendezvous was made and the formation started out over the Tyrrhenian Sea. The clouds were heavy even over the sea, and although the course was only 15 miles off shore, most of the time the coast could not be seen, so navigating was extremely important. Fortunately, as they neared the target the clouds thinned out. The navigator and bombardier, after agreeing on the general target area, pointed it out to the pilot



and from then on the bombardier took over. He led the formation to a point slightly past the target so that if there were enemy fighters sent out they would be thrown off the trail. Also by doing this he had a look at the target and could make his plans for the run.

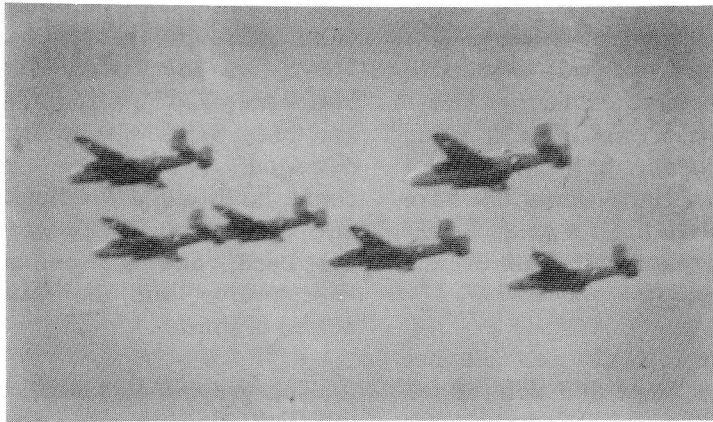
Suddenly a right turn was made, then a dive, and another sharp right turn and they leveled off for the bomb run. With almost unerring precision the 500 and 250 pound

bombs dropped and made their pattern. The accuracy and timing were such that the pattern started just short of the two ships, ran through both of them scoring direct hits on each and continued on to the other objective, the marshalling yards. In between the harbor and the marshalling yards was an old fort, as the bombs ran through it an explosion was seen. It was found out later that the fort was being used as an ammunition dump. The entire mission was a perfect example of the cooperation and coordination which exists between the pilot, bombardier and navigator.

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Not only this particular pilot, bombardier and navigator, but all pilots, bombardiers and navigators in the U.S.A.A.F.. In this particular case the pilot was **Lt. William Gause**, 23 years of age, of Anson, Texas; The Bombardier, **Lt. Marvin J. Sherman**, 21 years of age, of Sacramento, California. These men, and many other, flying with them, and last but not least, the ground crews of this unit are responsible for the excellent results which the picture of this mission shows. This and many similar mission they go on almost daily from their base in Italy.

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## THOSE AIR CORPS "SOLDIERS"

by

**Sgt. J.D. Cook 81st**

It was a beautiful spring day in 1943 at Castel Benito Airdrome, near Tripoli, when our morning was rudely interrupted with an announcement, that directed us boys to dress in Class "A's" and stand inspection from some General.

Thirty minutes later we assembled at the Orderly Room dressed as good as our limited wardrobes would permit, with our rifles all ready to stand parade. The Captain in charge

brushed us up on our "Manual of Arms", which we hadn't had for a year or so, and then marched us to the orchard where the presentations were to be made.

Then began the unusual ceremony. General Bereton arrived with Colonel Backus ready to make awards. The first set back was that none of the flyers, due to receive the awards, were present. We troops were given the order to present arms, and right then and there was a sight to behold! Some came to "Right Shoulder Arms", some to "Left Shoulder Arms", and some to "Order Arms" with even a few to "Present Arms". General Bereton immediately burst into laughter, and Colonel Backus' face became very red, only to change to a sly smile when he noticed the General's laughter. So ended the perfect ? presentation with the General probably thinking, "These Damned Air Corp Soldiers."

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# THE LUFTWAFFE CLOBBERS THE 340TH

by  
GEORGE WELLS 488

The evening of 12 May, 1944 started off like all of the evenings in the past few days with an air raid alert, about which we had become a little complacent. This night, around 1100 hours, was different because there was a lot of fireworks up towards Bastia. Then in the early morning hours of 13 May, another raid took place on the British Spitfire base at Poretta Airfield, near Borgo, Corsica, about 18 miles north of our field at Alesan. At around 0300 hours everyone was awakened when, with no warning, three chandelier flares burst right over the base, just after a plane thought to be a Beaufighter, had passed over our heads. The German flares could not have been more perfectly placed. It was as bright as day. At the same time our anti-aircraft unit put up a curtain barrage.

We found ourselves under an all out bombing raid by very capable and determined German airmen. Their effectiveness was enhanced by one of their first hits being the radar and gun control section of the anti-aircraft unit, knocking out the communication lines to the gun firing positions. The gunners were then firing on their previous barrage settings instead of having updated tracking information. The Germans were home free, as far as our defenses were concerned. They kept making bombing and strafing passes and dropping more flares. They had no trouble seeing what they wanted to hit as the fires that they started added to the light from the flares. They took their time and did it up right. The length of the attack was over 46 minutes, but to the men in our aircraft dispersal areas it seemed forever.

A minimum of 15 Jerry planes, (FW 190's He-111's and Ju-88's led by a previously captured flare dropping British Beaufighter), took part in the raid. Later reports included Me 109's and Do 217's as well. And with a higher total number. They dropped demolition bombs, anti-personnel bombs, and butterfly bombs, then they strafed at their

leisure. They hit the bomb dumps, the fuel storage drums and fully loaded aircraft ready for an early morning mission. Our bombs blew up from being hit, as did some of the aircraft. One ship 8T of the 488th simply disappeared leaving only a blackened hole and a few parts. They even destroyed the group operations building, which was about a half mile from the air strip. Flat tires on both planes and vehicles were common throughout with those not blown up being riddled with shrapnel and bullet holes. The Group had about 90 aircraft at that time, nearly all of which were damaged. There were only about 18 that could be brought to flying condition by the next afternoon. Twelve were completely destroyed, and a number of others were unreparable, and the rest repairable over a period of time.

The ground personnel, especially those on the flight line, sleeping near their planes took the brunt of the attack. Many were caught with slit trenches not deep enough. The length of the attack made it a terrifying situation for them. Things were blowing up, or on fire, near them. They knew that fuel and ammunition was all around. Many were wounded needing medical help, and those not wounded could hear people calling for help. What a horrible experience it was for them. All squadrons were involved. The Group had 22 killed and 70 hospitalized, and a total of 219 casualties.

The situation at the hospital about 5 miles north of Alesan was a mad house due to the earlier bombing of the British Spitfire outfit 18 miles up the coast. Their injured had arrived just ahead of the 340th's, and they didn't have enough doctors and nurses to handle all of the injured at one time.

Two of the 488th ground personnel, Burns Day and Dewey Fox, recall some of their experiences during that dreadful night in May 1944.



## BURNS DAY RECALLS 3 MAY, 1944

"About 3 A.M. for about 1 1/2 hours we had regular bombs and anti-personnel bombs dropped on the airfield. That's beside the strafing runs between the bomb runs. It was "pucker time !!!"

"Into the slit trenches we went with whatever clothing we could grab in a hurry. I had a trench all to myself, since my tent mate, Lee Hanlon (who had helped dig it), had been killed a week before in a crash in the mountains. I, like a dummy, laid down full length and tried to make myself invisible. By doing that I was being pounded in the belly by every shock to the ground anywhere close to me. I felt every shot from the ack-ack gun across the taxi strip from me, and every bomb close by gave me a shot to the stomach. When 8T got a direct hit and disappeared, the concussion sucked me up and slammed me down in the hole again. Just after that I heard running and looked up to see Dewey Fox. I yelled at him and he said he was hit, but I couldn't find a scratch on him. After the raid was over we found an American bomb laying on the edge of his slit trench that was to be used on the next mission. When his plane, 8T blew up, the bomb had hit him in the middle of the back. No wonder he thought he was hit! I'm surprised it didn't break his back.

"During a short lull in the bombing, Fensterman, also my tent mate for a short time, dashed into the tent and got his camera. he got some good pictures of planes burning, etc. Then came some more bombers and it was back into the hole with Dewey Fox and me this time.

" After the raid was over, we climbed out of our holes and looked around. By now it was daylight and our field was a hell of a mess! Airplanes burning, blown up, tents riddled, wounded men and some dead. Line Chief Len Hanten (488) went by with his jeep loaded with wounded. The jeep making more noise than usual because of the flat tires.

"We went into our tent very carefully. Maybe some of the anti-personnel bomb had not exploded - but, fortunately everything was O.K., including 2- 1/2 bottles of whiskey I had in the pocket of my bed-roll. We helped ourselves to a drink. Then I looked over at the ack-ack crew. They had their guns leveled at the beach and were still at their guns. Some of them were injured and had been bandaged up, but they were still at their guns. So to show my appreciation for their efforts I took over a full bottle of American whiskey, to help settle their nerves. They really appreciated that for they hadn't seen any for several months. Believe it or not, one of them had a shot glass and measured out a drink for everyone.



"The casualties were taken to the squadron area for immediate attention, before being transferred to the hospital. The rest of us tried to eat breakfast, but not many could eat much. My stomach was so sore from all the pounding it took by my laying flat on my back that coffee was all I could manage.

"So it was back to the flight line to see what we had left to work with. Not much!! As I remember, the whole group put up 12 planes that day. The debris on the hard stands, taxi strips and runway had to be cleaned up first. What a mess! Whole planes were gone, other partly gone, others with lots of holes and flat tires. Some new planes, which had arrived the day before, were ruined before they were completely unloaded."

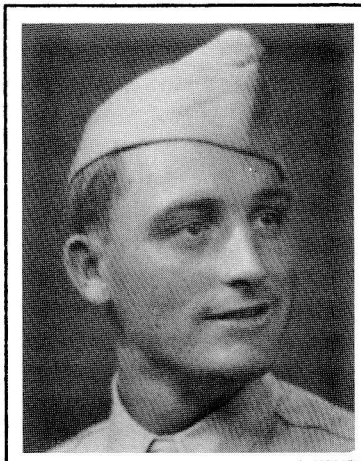
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### DEWEY FOX'S EXPERIENCE.

"The raid was most horribly frightening experience of my life. On the evening of 12 May, 1944, when the Jerries hit the British nightfighter unit a few miles north of the 340th, it came over me, and I couldn't shake it off the thought that they were destroying the night fighters and they will hit us next.

"I couldn't find my helmet, so I got my

overcoat out. I just couldn't sleep, listening and waiting, for the droning sound of German planes. Then after four or so hours, I heard a plane coming. There was no mistaking the sound. I yelled at Earl Anderson and Jim Welling, my tent-mates, and who had help dig our fox hole. None of us had undressed. I grabbed my overcoat and they grabbed their helmets. As we ran out of the tent the first flare lit up the sky. I jumped into the slit trench and yelled at them to get into the hole. They were just standing there looking up. I got as low as I could with my knees under my stomach, and my head against the end of the hole with my face in the dirt. I had my overcoat on top of me.



"We didn't have long to wait. The first plane over dropped large bombs. When they were released they made a whistling sound which increased in pitch, as it fell, until it was ear shattering. Then, as the bombs hit the ground, there would be a tremendous blast that would make the ground shake. Then all hell broke loose, with planes strafing and bombing with both demolition bombs and frags. They would come in one, two or three at a time.

"I remember Earl and Jim raised up for a quick look after a pass was made. I looked up and told them to keep down. I remember noticing how close to our fox hole the wing tip of 8T seemed to be, and that worried me if it should blow up. Their passes didn't seem more than a few seconds apart.

"Then 8T got hit and blew up with a full load of bombs and fuel tanks. The blast was devastating . . . the ground shook violently . . . the concussion hit with such force that I felt that my ribs were broken. I knew that my friends were being wounded or killed, but I couldn't do anything but lay there and beg God to have mercy on me. The Jerries kept right on bombing and strafing us. The fear took complete control of me. I have never felt

so totally helpless before, and have not since. I tried to force myself to lay still. Because I couldn't do anything but wait, fear seemed to consume my whole body and came over me in waves. I remember asking God to let the next bomb or bullet find its mark so I could escape the fear. Then my mother's tear stained face, my dad's face and my wife's face came before my eyes. I knew then that their fear for my safety, which they lived with every day, was greater than mine. I was then filled with shame for my weakness. I knew I couldn't ask for myself, I said "Oh God, I'm so unworthy, I can't ask for myself, but I beg of you that their hopes might be fulfilled." It was then that revealed to me that those German pilots also had loved ones at home with the same

hopes as me. I said, "Oh God, I beg of you that the hopes of their loved ones might be fulfilled." This took place in a few minutes of time. I was filled with peace, fear was gone.

"The bombing and strafing continued. When it finally seemed to stop, I hear Earl and Jim saying, "Dewey there is a bomb ready to fall on your head." I looked up and there was one of our bombs laying right on the edge of the hole. We got out of the fox hole. Our tent was completely gone! We started for the road and all at once we heard a plane coming toward the field, and we took off for the nearest cover available. When it was finally over it was just breaking daylight. I don't remember how I got to the squadron area that morning, and I don't remember eating breakfast. I knew I was shell-shocked, and was unwinding from that long period of hell on earth. I was really in a state of confusion (others confirmed this). I lost everything I had except the clothes on my back. But I found my wife's picture which had been in a wooden box. It had a small hole through the left breast made by a small piece of shrapnel. My overcoat was ruined by hot objects landing on my back and burning holes in the coat





# 100 MISSIONS OR ELSE

by

Bill Chapman 340

The 340th had two outstanding pilots, Major George L. Wells, and Fred W. Dyer, both were Assistant Group Operations Officers. Both were determined to have the honor of flying the most bombardment missions as pilot, in WWII. Each was trying to outfly the other and their mission rate was increasing too fast. At about the 80th mission point, I got the two together and told them that while I admired their objective, from here on out I did not want either of them to get more than one mission ahead of the other.

After a mission briefing several weeks later, I noted George and Fred, both in flying gear, walking out together. This struck me as very unusual since both were used as Group Command pilots, and I did not expect them to be flying the same mission. I asked Joe Ruebel, our Group Operations Officer about this. He said, "Oh, haven't you heard? They have arranged to fly their 100th mission together with other crew members flying their 100th mission in a B-25 flying its 100th mission." I refused to be quoted on exactly



**The 100th MISSION CREW and the 100th MISSION B-25**

The "Crew" grouped together are: back row, l. to r. **Major George L. Wells, Major Fred W. Dyer**  
**Major Richard Nash**; front row; **Capt. Vincent M Myers, 1st Lt. Vernon L. Lyle**  
T/Sgt. Robert L. Helferich and T/Sgt. John S. Wisanowski were not included in the photo

what I said at this point, but told Joe to jump into the Jeep and we headed for their hardstand. We caught the crew just as they were about to board, and I told them to forget it! I also told them that I liked their idea, but no way were they going to take this special mission into the mess of flak that was briefed earlier, and if they wanted to set it up on the next milkrun, it would be ok with me. I could just visualize the headlines in STARS AND STRIPES, "Group Commander court-

martialed for allowing 100th mission crew members to be lost to flak over target in a war weary bomber."

**NOTE. You ssee that sometimes a Group Commander has to look after himself.**

Majors Wells and Dyer both flew 102 missions before being sent back to the U.S. for 30 days Rest and Recreation. It is believed that this is a record for bombardment pilots in WWII



# I AM 7-K

## The early Bird

by

Ward Laiten 487

I was a B-25-C S/C 42-32278, assigned to the 340th Bomb Group, 487th Squadron, on a cold, snowy, icy field at Battle Creek, Michigan (Kelly Field) on February 12, 1943. Seven men came up to me and walked around looking me over. They looked inside my wheel-wells and bomb-bay, then opened up

the hatches and got in, looking me all over inside. I found out the names of these men a few days later. They were to be my crew. The crew included: Marshall E. Lambert, pilot; Harley H. Anderson, co-pilot; Robert Sather, navigator-bombardier; Theodore Handzel, engineer; Maurice M. Schwartz, radio-gunner



l-r: Paul Spencer, Me (Early Bird III), Ward Laiten

Woodrow W. Peterson, armourer-gunner; and Ward Laiten, would be my crew chief.

The next few days found the men all over me, cleaning guns and loading supplies. The crew-chief's inspection found that my right outer wheel bearing was missing. This had to be installed.

As the wheel bearing was being replaced one of the men noticed that I was painted "pink", which meant that we were all headed for the Desert War Zone.

It was below zero the morning that we were

to leave Michigan. I hadn't been test hopped. My crew climbed aboard and tried to start my engines. From 7:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. the men took turns cranking my engines until they finally turned over. We were off for West Palm Beach, Florida (Morrison Field); temperature, 65 degrees. My pilot set me down on the ground and while some of the others loaded me (even replacing my guns), the crew chief changed my gaskets in order to repair my oil leaks. On a sunny morning we took off for Puerto Rico, but the weather turned bad and we flew through, over and under thunder storms before we made the island.

I few more oil leaks were discovered, and when my crew chief removed my bottom rocker box covers he found the rocker arms had been so hot they turned blue. While we waited for parts, Andy had the crew's names painted on me and I was named "The Early Bird." The new gaskets finally arrived and the crew chief worked all night to install them.

The next morning the crew headed me for South America, landing in Trinidad for fuel and changing one of my voltage regulators. Then on to Atkinson Field, Georgetown, British Guiana. When we were getting ready for take off the next morning, I blew my right starter. The crew had to change a new one.

Finally, on 1 March, 1943 we left for Belem, Brazil. Heavy rains kept us from landing until late in the afternoon. After a couple of days rest we took off for Natal, Brazil. About an hour out my left engine began to backfire, so we turned back to Belem. The crew changed my spark plugs and discovered some one had put a lot of water in my tanks. They drained my sump was wondered who had done this to me. We finally made it to Natal where I had a fifty hour inspection.

On 8 March we took off to cross the BIG pond, leaving a lot of my equipment behind, as well as my crew chief and one gunner. We had to cut down on the weight for it was a long trip to the Gold Coast of Africa. I waited there until my wing racks were installed. The gunner installed .30 cal guns in my tail cone, hooked to the top turret. It watched my tail.

On 20 March I took off for my first flight over Africa, flying over sand storms and landing at Maiduquria, Nigeria. We gassed up and left for Kartoum, landing there with one of my engines running very rough. The crew changed #5 cylinders plugs in my right engine and it smoothed out. The day after the crew did a twenty-five hour inspection.

We landed at Wadi Halfi on the Nile River, gassed up and installed new plugs in the #5 cylinder. A few miles after taking off again, the engine began acting up forcing us to return to Wadi Halfi. After a few days wait, the crew got a set of rings and gaskets to replace the old ones.

The next day we headed for Heliopolis, Egypt, but before we reached our destination the engines got rough again. The crew found that I was burning oil very badly; all my plugs needed to be changed again. The crew unloaded all the weight possible and off I went to join my sister ships at Al Kabrit on the Red Sea. I smoked like a steam engine and the flying got rough again. The right engine and the oil in the left engine was changed between sand storms, and then I flew on to Costal Bisito (Tripoly) near the war zone. That night the crew chief and engineer began sleeping under my wings at night in the sand and the heat. They could not touch me during the day as I would get so hot from the sun. On 2 May, I took the crew from the hell-hole to Sfax and rejoined the squadron and prepared to do my duty.

10 May, 1943! I, 7-K, the "Early Bird, flew my first mission carrying eight 250 pound bombs. I carried these English bombs over the island of Pantillaria. My second didn't come until 30 May. I had become known as old stand-by, having my bomb load changed many times a day.

I moved to Hergla on 3 June, making two trips to haul equipment. Some "Brass" spotted my tail guns and because he hadn't approved them, had them removed. It had worked great in the past to keep the enemy off my tail.

I began to fly missions over Sicily on 4 July and took my first flak hit on 29 August. On the 29th the crew and I moved to Catania, Sicily and the next day I flew over Italy for the first time. We continued to fly missions as assigned to us. We learned , on 9 September, that Andy Anderson, who had named me, "The Early Bird", was found dead in the water after a mission over Naples. My crew felt very badly about this news.

We endured the mud, rain and all of the other ills of a combat operation, moving from base to base as required. So, on 3 January I moved the crew and all of the equipment again. Everything had to be moved, when I moved. The crew even loaded some of the equipment on my wing racks. What a load! I was to land at Pompeii, Italy, but first we circled Mt. Vesuvius. Our airfield was just east

## **THE EARLY BIRD III**

**7-K 43-4011-B-25-J**

INSERT PAGE 187

On April 19, 1944 I landed at Aleason Airfield, Corsica. There I was met by three ground crewmen that were going to take care of me. They worked to correct my problems and to get me ready for combat. I was to be the lead ship into combat.

I flew my first mission on April 25, 1944.

At 0200 on May 13, 1944 all "hell" broke loose! The Germans were bombing our airfield. The raid continued for forty-five minutes. Many of my sister ships were destroyed; three of the ground crew were killed. I was very lucky to survive with only a gouge in my windshield. That noon the group put up only seven airplanes to go on missions. I was put on stand-by and then turned back. After landing, a pilot and my Crew Chief boarded and flew me to Salerno, Italy. We picked up a flight crew plus three other men and all their flight bags, parachutes, etc. What a load I had! I also had a full bay of 1000 pound bombs. The new flight crew had doubts that I could get them off the ground, but I did with a Crew Chief as a co-pilot. After that I flew nearly everyday--either missions or practice bombing with new bombardiers.

There were exciting and dangerous times. On June 10, 1944 a piece of flack hit the top of the right wing and came through the side of the fuselage and hit the top turret gunner in the leg. One mission I came back with the leading edge of my right stabilizer smashed where a cluster bomb rack from another ship moved over me and hit me. Another day I came back with every stringer in my green-house (bombardier compartment) cut in two and half the glass broken. My crew removed the damaged green-house and replaced it with one they salvaged from a plane that had been damaged during the air field bombing. I was back flying the next afternoon.

On November 29, 1944 the ground crew changed both my engines as they had flown 444 hours and 40 minutes.

In December, 1944 I flew the weather run every day at 0400 hours over Northern Italy as well as my regular missions. I was hit with a piece of flack between the fuselage and the right engine nacelle, fraying the propeller cable. My Crew Chief worked all New Year's Day (January 1, 1945) to change the cable.

On April 7, 1945 we moved to Remini, Italy. We continued to fly daily missions; sometimes two flights a day.

The flight crew came out on April 25, 1945 and said that it would be their last mission as the war was about over. The engineer gunner wanted to run up the engine as he hadn't started an engine since he had come overseas. He started the engine, ran the right engine up to its maximum RPM, threw the high blower in and blew the engine. It had less than 200 hours on it. The ground crew changed the engine and did a 100 hour inspection to make me ready to be transferred back to the states. I left May 24, 1945, having flown 748 hours and 152 combat missions.

**THIS IS DEDICATED TO ALL THE MEN OF THE 340th BOMB GROUP,  
487th BOMB SQUADRON WHO WENT WEST DURING THIS WAR AND SINCE.**

**INSERT AT PAGE 187 IN YOUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY BOOK  
"THE B-25 OVER THE MEDITERRANEAN"**

**THIS IS THE COMPLETION OF THE STORY:**

**I AM 7-K  
THE EARLY BIRD**

**BY**

**WARD LAITEN 487**

(Inadvertently deleted from the original publication)

of the mountain. Up to this date I had dropped 223,260 pounds of bombs on our enemy. I saw many of my sister ships go down as I flew over the Anzio Beachhead.

Because my Crew Chief didn't like oil on my engines, cowlings or landing gear, the ground crew always changed my gaskets every time I returned from a mission. One of them was always cleaning my guns keeping them oiled. I learned that my Crew Chief was a farm boy from Omro, Wisconsin. One day I learned that my Assistant Crew Chief left to become a Crew Chief on one of my sisters. I'll miss Ted Handsel, he was a good assistant.

The installed a Norden bomb sight on March 1944 and I became a lead airplane. This meant flying many times a day as a practice ship getting the bombardiers used to the new bombsight. I also flew my share of missions.

Then came disaster! On 22 March, 1944 at 2:30 a.m. Mt. Vesuvius blew up. Ashes drop-

ped on me, putting small holes in my fabric controls. At 4:30 a.m. another eruption occurred. More ashes put bigger holes in the fabric. About 6:30 a.m. red hot cinders about the size of a crewman's fist dropped on me.

Orders were given to remove all my controls, but before the crew could get all of the cotter pins out of my bolts, the mountain thundered and red hot ashes as big as a man's head flew through the air. Everything was covered with two feet of ash. It was the end of all the my sisters on the field. We had holes in our wings; windows and windshields were all broken.

I, 7-K "Early Bird" had flown 90 missions, some 444 hours, with only one flak hole. This day was a sad day for the ground crew who had taken care of me. The ground crew moved off to the 321st field near Paestum. My Crew Chief and five other men stayed behind to dig equipment out of the ashes. My Crew Chief cleaned the ashes off my wings and took my clock out of the panel. Then, he left me for others to take care of.

SEE INSERT  
It was the end for me . . . . .

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## #14 "SNAFU"

### She came back

by

S/Sgt HENRY MASON 81st

If there's anything left flyable, they'll always bring them back. Take the case of number 14, "Snafu", in North Africa. She was a jinx ship from the word go. If there was one burst of flak anywhere in the sky, Snafu came back with two or three holes in her. At that time the 81st was stationed at Canrobert, in Algeria, March and April 1943. I was crew chief on 14, and had my share of trouble. To illustrate, in four missions, 14 came back all shot to pieces three times.

The third was the worst. A brand new prop with 20mm holes in the trailing edge of one blade. One punched a hole in the leading

edge of the right wing and severed several engine control cables, one being the throttle cable. The entire hydraulic system from the nose to the bomb bay was a mass of bent and holed tubing. There were flak holes over the entire ship . . . the tail had to be replaced, the horizontal stabilizer on the right side had several holes in it, one of which you could stick your head through. All of the right elevator that remained was the twisted ribs and a couple of pieces of fabric. We patched several hundred of the worst holes, the other being too small to bother with.

It took Sgt. Dietz and myself nearly two weeks to get the ship back in commission again. At that time we had one crew chief to a ship, and an engineering force of four men.

Lt. Orrin Jensen, of Fresno, California was the pilot on this particular mission, which happened to be his second as first pilot. He brought the ship back with his right engine drawing 12 inches of mercury. He made a beautiful landing and only cut the engines because he wasn't able to taxi.



# SORRY OLD CHAP

by

Sherrel Powell

This is a belated writing of an action over the African Desert, but better late than never, here is how I remember it.

I do remember attending a brief hearing in a tent somewhere in the desert with two or three 8th Army, or RAF brass. I believe the only one representing us was Colonel Low. It took a matter of a few minutes to relate my story...

We were returning from a night bombing mission in the Marsa Matruh area, where we had successfully bombed the target and were descending from 10,000 feet so as to be below a certain altitude, which was specified as maximum, upon reaching Wadi Natrun.

It was a clear full moon in the desert, and we had the night beacon at Wadi Natrun in sight, about 30 minutes away. At this point we were intercepted and shot down without warning. During the brief interview (briefing) there was no mention about IFF emissions. So far as I and my crew were concerned, we were within the altitude limit upon reaching the Wadi Matruh beacon. The glitch is that we never got there; a fact which is easily evidenced by the big round black mark on the desert made by our Billy Mitchell, and the two graves of our crew members, Reed and Shannon. We stood silently as they were interred the next day.

As for the eternal two minutes, or so, when our quietude and relaxation was rudely interrupted by the fire power of four 20mm cannons and 6 .303 machine guns of a Beaufighter. From this point on the details are more vivid, and I can give you a more accurate account.

"Dub" Hatton called out on the inter-phone reporting an intruder below and behind us. His call was interrupted by the blast of what sounded like all of the guns in the desert. The B-25 shook and gyrated, and started down.

The flight instruments were spinning, and there was only a slight action of the elevator. I flipped the alarm switch and ordered the crew to bail out.

As soon as the crew was gone, I didn't entertain much hope of getting out. The altimeter was spinning downward. There was nothing to lose by trying. As I left my seat, the plane went into a spin, and I remember my head being shoved up into the astrodome. By placing my hand on the roof of the plane and holding the inner hatch open with my foot, I shoved off. I felt myself whooshing out the hatch, thinking that old terra-firma must be close at hand, so I jerked the rip-cord. Maybe just a second too soon. I saw the silk blossom out in the moon light.

It seemed almost simultaneously, but may be a few seconds later, the B-25 crashed directly below me and exploded. I pulled on the risers on one side to slide away from it, and made a nice two point landing with a head roll.

I remember thinking as I was coming down, the best I could expect would be a couple of broken legs. When I recovered my senses, a second or two later, I had a hard time convincing myself that I had gotten out of all of this with only a minor cut on top of my head.

A British lorry arrived within what seemed like just minutes. You can imagine their surprise, and disappointment, when they rounded up the crew to find, not a prize of Rommel's Afrika Korps, but a bunch of scroungy Yanks.

These Desert Rats were jolly good hosts. Most of the night they plying us with Carew's booze, song and jokes in the warmth of their tent. Needless to say, when we were rounded up, and could see that at least four of us had escaped the debacle unharmed, this sort of

entertainment was just what we needed. At this time we could hold out hope the Shannon and Reed, for, yet they had not been found.

About two days after the incident, I was in Cairo with the crew for a couple of days R&R. We were staying at the Shepard Hotel. Soon after we landed there I was greeted by a young (22 -23, same as me) RAF Pilot Officer White. He was there to apologize for shooting me down. Quite decent of the chap, don't you think? He confirmed that he reported shooting down a Heinkle 111. The only similarity to a B-25 being that they both have two engines. I remembered that in that full moonlight you could literally read a newspaper.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The crew of A/C #41-12886, Lt. L.P. Redburn's crew reported. "This crew mentions that the beacon at Wadi Natrun was working on the route out, but positive it was not working on the way back . . ." The General Berenton Diaries state, "Cairo, Egypt, 23 August 1942. Word has been received that a B-25 was shot down by the RAF. The planes commander, instead of following the sea corridor from Tobruk area turned south over the Alexandria Delta Defense area. He gave no identification signal, did not show lights, did not fly at the prescribed altitude for friendly aircraft in distress. AVM McCoughry came in to offer his apologies.

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## Just A Day's Work

by

S/Sgt. DON BUCK 81

I suppose that the most renowned spot of the 12th group's past is a place called Gambut, I was there. Gambut was a desolate spot on the edge of an escarpment. One couldn't possible dig a slit trench (Fox Hole), for the top soil was only about one and a half feet

deep, then you hit solid rock. Our slit trenches were built up, not down. This was alright for we never had to use them anyway.

It was during our first few days at Gambut that Colonel (Then Major) Wilcox decided we should have at least one latrine in our dispersal area. The task of digging it was assigned to Dale Burnet, Ralph Gross and myself, all husky men and all fairly clever with a pick and shovel. Col. Wilcox himself supervised the job, with Captain Lavery and Captain Keany as assistants. They watched, and we worked

We worked a whole day in fact, and then stepped back to survey our day's work. We had a hole about three feet long and one foot deep. This would never do! At that rate it would take us three days to dig our latrine and maybe more, because the further we went the harder it got. Besides, the day's work had been about too much for all of us, especially me.

Colonel Wilcox finally solved the question by calling on the British Engineers to dynamite the whole which took about one hour. I know you may not believe this story, but honest,

**Gambut was Hell!**

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# THE SEA SEARCH

by

John Conway 448

Probably the most dangerous missions scheduled during my tour of 50 missions in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations were the sea sweeps. I was scheduled on three of these on 25th, 26th and 31 st of March, 1943 during the final phase of driving Marshall Rommel out of North Africa.

The purpose of conducting "Sea Sweeps" was to locate and destroy the convoys leaving Tunis for Sicily carrying troops and equipment during his retreat.

No convoys were located on the first two of the sweeps we flew, but on the third we got lucky ?? We sighted several ships flanked by flak barges. Our attacking force was split into two elements. The high element was to come in around 10,000 feet and drop their bomb load. The lower element was to skip bomb 500 pound bombs into the sides of the ships. I was flying co-pilot for our Operations Officer in the lower element on this day.

We stayed out of gun range until the upper element dropped their bombs, which hit near the ships but caused little damage. As we made our run, all of the guns on the ships and flak barges were fired in our direction. We were flying the lead plane of the lower element, with Lt. Charley Ford on the left wing, and Lt. Robert Hess on the right wing. I'm not sure who were flying the other planes. We paired off, two planes attacking each of

the three ships. Just after releasing our bombs we pulled up to clear the ships masts and antennas. I looked to the right to see how Hess was doing. At that moment he must have received a direct hit in his right wing. . he just rolled over and crashed into the water. We fire-walled it to clear the area as soon as possible. About two or three miles away from the ships, our gunner reported another plane had landed in the water and blown up. The tail gunners of the other ships reported that two ships were sinking and a third appeared to be heavily damaged.

Of the six crews on this mission we lost 2 crews and three aircraft. Our crew was lucky,



no one was hurt and the plane had only minor damage. Lt Ford made a wheels up landing at the first friendly field he came to. Those were the only aircraft and crew losses suffered by the 448th during my tour of fifty missions from March through November 1943.

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## A Day (or Night) in The Life of AN ARMORER

by

ROBERT SILLIMAN 380

Our crew leader came through the tent area yelling: "Come on you guys! We've got to go out and drop the 1,000 pounders we loaded

last night, and replace them with 500's." We boarded our weapons carrier and headed for the line.

This was just another day in the life of the 380th armament crew! This one turned out with a little different twist, at least as far as I was concerned. This would be my last day as an armorer. Four 1,000 pound general purpose demolition bombs had been loaded in the aircraft the night before. Fuses had been screwed into the front and rear of each bomb, and arming wires affixed to the bomb shackles after all four bombs had been cranked up and hung in place. In order to fit this bomb load into the bomb bay the bombs had to be hung alternately; first one side then the other starting at the top and working down to the bottom one. This left no space, vertically, in the center of the bomb bay as the bombs actually overlapped each other from top to bottom.

A textbook change of bombs required that hoist cables be strung, and each bomb lowered to the ground, in a sling, then rolled out from under the bomb bay for ordinance to pick up. We learned, early on, in North Africa that this was a lengthy, time consuming method, and that there was a quicker way your get the job done so could get back to bed. Armorers, especially when targets changed and different bomb loads were required, did a lot of their work at night. The fastest way to empty the bomb bay of general purpose demolition bombs, from 250 pound up to the 1,000 pounders, was simply to remove the two fuses, then manually trigger each fuse loose from it's shackle. They would strike the ground with a dull thud, and then were easily rolled away from the aircraft. Four 1,000 pounders could be dropped and rolled away in 20 minutes. Using cable, and going by the "book", would take close to an hour. While armorers felt comfortable using this method of accomplishing a bomb change, the crew chiefs and engineers would always find an excuse to leave their aircraft, and return when they though all of the bombs had been safely dropped!

Getting back to our 22 September, 1944 bomb change. . . This one turned out to be anything

but routine! We arrived at the aircraft finding that Ordinance had been there and gone, leaving the new bomb load of eight 500 pounders piled neatly just outside the bomb bay area. One of our armament crew members went up into the cockpit and opened the bomb bay doors. I bent over and entered the area directly under the four 1,000 GP's that were hung within the aircraft. My job to start removing the arming wires from the shackles, then remove the two fuses so that the bombs could be dropped safely to the ground, one at a time. After removing the fuses from the lowest bomb, I checked to see if it was all clear, triggered the manual release and the bomb dropped to the ground.

The next thing that I remember was coming to, lying on my back about six feet outside the bomb bay area. I learned later that the top bomb had apparently accidentally been released, and had forced its way between the other two bombs still in place. We had always believed that there was no way the top bomb could drop past the other overlapping bombs. How wrong we were!

Although I have no recollection of the instant that the accident occurred. I apparently heard the bomb release and dove to get out of the way from whatever had happened. I almost made it! The tail fin of that 1,000 GP caught me between the shoulder blades, knocking me out, and sending me sprawling. The nose fuse to the falling bomb struck the first bomb that had been dropped. I was later told by Charlie Brust that the nose fuse had been cut in half, like it had been severed with a sharp ax, exposing the firing pin. Charlie was awarded the Soldier's Medal for removing that damaged fuse.

I was shipped off to a field hospital, and was unable to walk for three days, but returned to Ghisonaccia after ten days. But because of the injury I was transferred out of the armament section, and spent my final 11 1/2 months overseas in the 380th personnel section. I left Fano, Italy, in early September 1945



# ONE ENGINE

## And a Prayer

by  
GEORGE MERCEA 447  
and  
ERNEST "Hod" HUTSON 447

November 1944 gave us our first indication of what to expect from Mother nature during the coming winter months. One morning we were assigned a weather recon mission to determine if the conditions would allow the main combat mission to reach its target.

With Hod Hutson as Pilot, John Dickson as co-pilot and me, George Mercea as flight engineer, and several unidentified weather observers on board, we took off toward Genoa, Italy. Our fighter escort never did meet us.

Staying under the overcast we could easily see that the cloud ceiling was continuing to lower. This would make it nearly impossible to penetrate with a larger formation. We continued to climb, heading northeast into enemy territory. At about 11,000 feet the flight became interesting. There was a loud CLANG in our right engine, followed by a oil slick streaming out of the nacelle. We had blown a cylinder head. Feathering the prop, Hod made a 180 degree turn and headed for home.

Even the B-25 couldn't maintain this altitude on one engine, so we descended gradually into the undercast, flying on instruments most of the way back to Corsica. Not wanting to find one of those stoney clouds we let down over the water, breaking out a little north of Cape Corse. With clear going the Cape looked great as we paralleled the coast to our field near Solenzara.

Everything for the landing was in our favor . . . about a 15 MPH wind from the south . . . so Hod decided to make a straight in approach. The tower cleared us and we started in. When we lowered the landing gear the nose wheel and the left main came down and locked. The right main did not lock! The sylsyn indicator indicated that it was not locked, and visual

examination by me also indicated that it was not locked. I'll let Hod continue . . .

"As pilot I had to make the decision whether to retract the gear, that was down, and belly her in, or to GO AROUND ON ONE ENGINE, and save the ship. We had full power in the good engine, and most of all God pulling for us, we cruised by the tower lower than fifty feet and disappeared behind the scrub trees at the end of the runway. That is the way it was described to me by my friend Bill Ingram who was tower operator that day.

"Well, with the good left engine we continued to make a shallow left turn out over the water. Meanwhile George was busy in the navigator's compartment, pulling handles on the emergency system, and pumping the gear into the down and locked position. From then on it was all go and we had a routine landing."

Later when I (George) was asked what I thought was wrong with the hydraulic system, I said, "I don't believe that there was a great enough time lag between lowering the flaps and the landing gear. I don't believe that the single hydraulic pump was up to what was asked of it. We did have flying speed to get us up to a good altitude for another approach. I don't think that the weather observer, who shared my compartment during that crucial period of time, took kindly to my pushing him around a bit. Especially when I was taking off my parachute harness and told him that I didn't want anything to hold me back if we had to ditch."





# HIGH HONORS

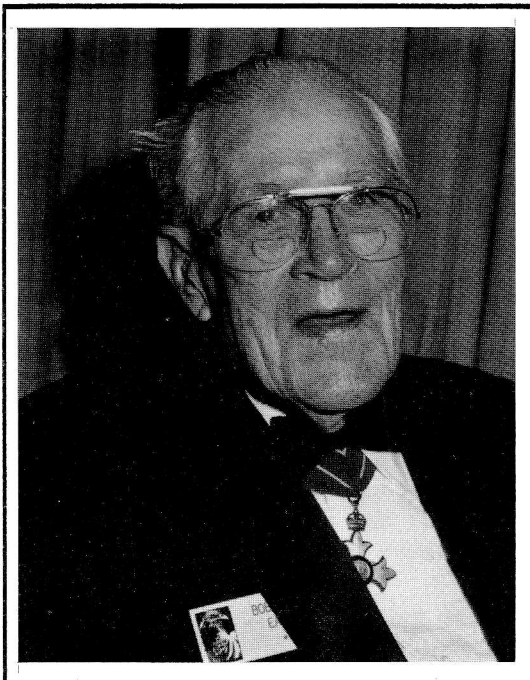
CENTRAL CHANCERY OF  
THE ORDERS OF KNIGHTHOOD.  
ST. JAMES PALACE, S.W.1

The Secretary has the honour to transmit a Warrant of Appointment, under the King's Sign Manual, to the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, and to request that the receipt of the Warrant may be acknowledged on the attached form.

The Secretary would be glad to receive notification of any change of permanent address, and in the event of the decease of persons holding such Warrants Executors are earnestly requested to notify the Secretary.

## C.B.E.

Brigadier General Robert Duane Knapp (0-10707)



General Knapp displayed a fine spirit of co-operation and untiring efforts during the vital period January - April 1945, when the Desert Air Force was hard pressed. Under this officer's guidance very valuable support was given to the 8th Army in the final stages of operations. General Knapp's determination to attack the enemy at every possible opportunity was an inspiration to all.

Note: The award was made in the name of the King of England by Lord Iverchapel, British Ambassador to the United States, at the British Embassy Washington D.C., on 11 July, 1946. General Knapp's wife Frances accompanied him for the presentation. In the photo he is wearing the medal on the ribbon around his neck.

# THE UNLUCKY 13th

by

**BILL KAILER 448**

At the time of this "unlucky 13th" mission, the 321st was based in the desert of Libya at a place called Souk-el-Arba. The date was 10 July, 1943 and was invasion day in Sicily. We had an early morning mission and didn't encounter any opposition of any consequence.

In the afternoon we made a second mission over Trippani Milo airdrome. We had just dropped our bombs when all hell broke loose! We took a hit in the engine and tail on the right side. The burst took all of the plexiglas out of the nose, and blasted it back on Eddy Klunk, our bombardier, hitting him in the chest. He was a bloody mess. I don't know if it was the same burst that got the guys in the after section or another one at the same time. Quintin, and Fehr were the turret and waist gunners, while Kenny Krause was the tail gunner. Quintin received a minor wound as did Fehr, but Kenny Krause was hit in the leg just above the knee.

We were flying at about 10,000 when we took the hit. The rest of the group went off and left us when we lost ground. We could only make about 150 mph going down hill. When we got down to about 5,000 ft I decided to go back and check the crew in the rear. I crawled over the open bomb bay to the radio compartment. As I said Quintin and Fehr were hit but too badly. When I got back to Kenny he was bleeding profusely. I put a tourniquet on his leg as tightly as I could and gave him a shot of morphine from the first-aid kit.

Raymond Rudolph was flying the plane while I was in the rear and had done a fine job. In order to keep the plane on a fairly close heading we had made a couple of 270 degree turns and had lost a little more headway. The seas were with about eleven

foot swells so we decided to put her down parallel to the swells.

With the nose out, wheels down and bomb bay doors open we stopped with a bang! The life raft inflated ok except one section had been hit by flak. After the boat inflated we counted noses and found that Kenny was missing. So I went back in and dragged him out of the waist window. He weighed 190-200 pounds and I was only about 160 but I got him out and then the plane went under.

We floated around out there all night and finally about 5 am we were picked up by an LCI which was bringing wounded back from the beach. They were headed for the hospital at Bizerti. They just added six more to their wounded list. Kenny was badly wounded, but the rest of the crew just needed a few patches and were as good as new. We started to walk back to Souk-el-Arba from Bizerti as soon as we were released from the hospital. We got a ride with a weapons carrier which took us all the way. Everyone was glad to see us, they all thought that we had had it. That's the way it went on my 13th mission with the 321st 445th.

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## HERE'S A SOLUTION

by

**FRANK J. FLOWERS 447**

One morning, in early November, we were sitting around the tent discussing our health problems. We came to the conclusion that most of the problems was; CRAB LICE were abundant. It also seemed that we had obtained them from the nearest latrine. That latrine had no running water, hence no showers or shaving facilities. What the h\_\_\_ this is war! The latrines was constructed with very rough sawed lumber, was unpainted. It's a wonder that no one received the Purple Shaft, or did they? Only the Medics know.

Some one volunteered to go to the Medics with our problem and request some magical ointment. The reply was, "No shave, no salve!

We all declined as it would be very uncomfortable flying with all of our winter and flying gear.

The idea was presented to bathe in strong booze, hoping that the crabs would get drunk and fall off. That idea was great but we didn't know where there was enough available, besides it was a shame to waste all of that good liquor.

It was decided to try to drown our little friends. So we took clean clothes, soap and towel and headed for the swimming hole about five miles away. With our dog "8-Ball", we hitched a ride on a G.I. truck hauling gas in 55 gallon drums. There was a little gas on the top of the one that 8-Ball sat on. When we got off the truck she scooted & scooted all

the way to the swimming hole, where she was immediately thrown into the water.

We jumped in clothes and all. That water came from the mountains and was ice cold, but we stripped, bathed and turned blue. Our little friends either drowned or committed suicide because of our blue skin.

After we dried off and put on the clean clothes and headed for our tent, with a happy 8-Ball, and proceeded to air and sun our bedding.

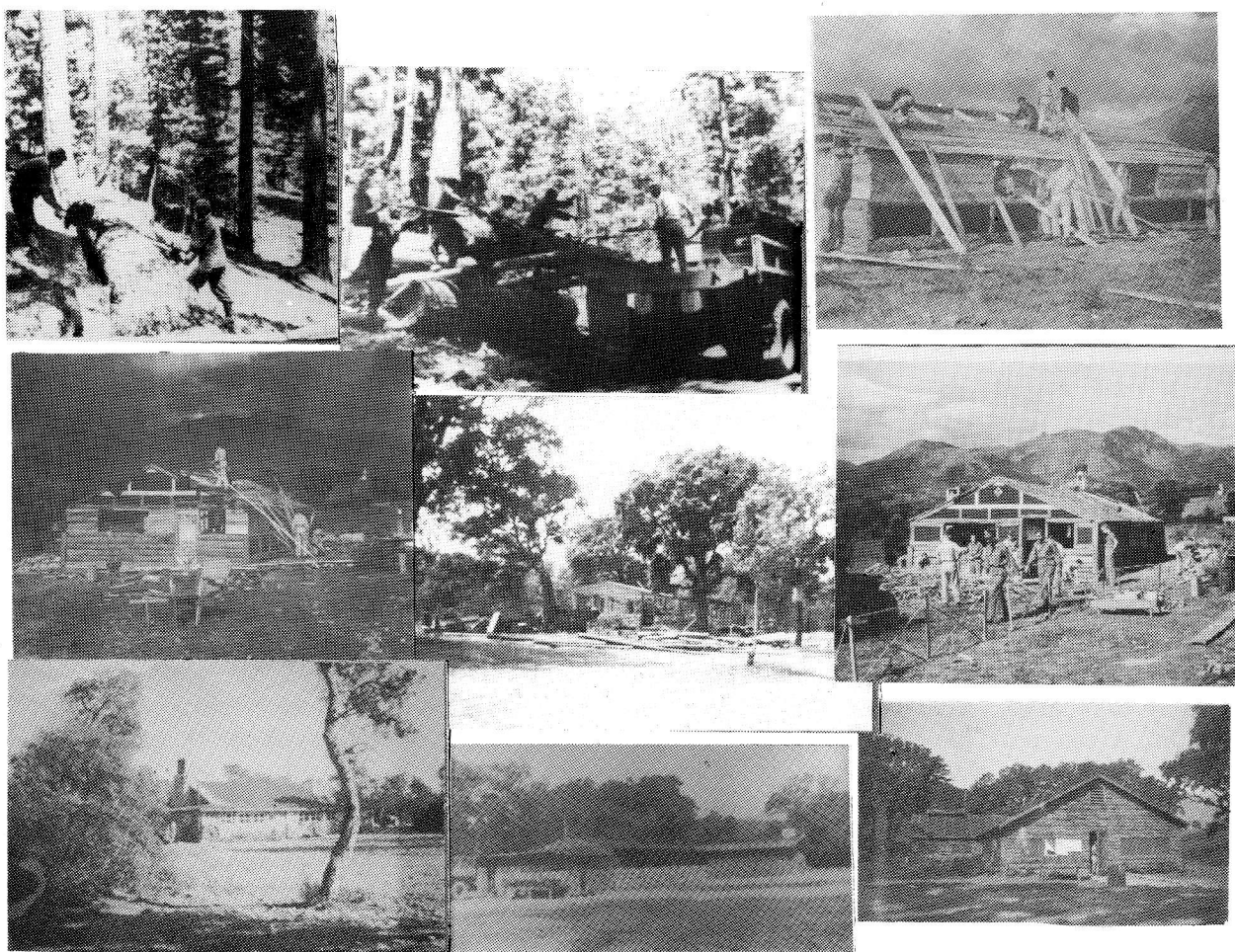
Just remember this remedy, you never know . . . .

Names are withheld because we didn't get a Battle Star for that campaign.

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## Y'all want it? . . . Do it Yourselfs





# B-25 SPECIALISTS

by

JOHN BLUE 447

After a short Christmas visit I was on my way back to work at the Glenn Martin plant in Baltimore. I decided to stop at the Harrisburg Army Recruiting Office for a second opinion on information given me at the Baltimore Recruiting Office. I wanted to find out about my chances of getting into the Army Air Force. I was told that they were excellent, that nearly every recruit at this time was going into the Air Force. I got assurance in writing, and so never made it back to Baltimore. I spent my first night in the Army Depot at new Cumberland, Pennsylvania.

The next two weeks were spent getting a new wardrobe, taking various tests, attending lectures, and some Army courtesy and discipline training. Then we were moved out secretly.

After several days of huffing and puffing, blackened by smoke we arrived at Wichita Falls, Texas, and assigned to the newly built Sheppard Air Base. There we were immediately assigned to the new Condensed Army Aircraft Maintenance School. This was a several year Army maintenance course that had been shortened to eleven ten day phases.

It took a while to get used to the Texas weather, especially trying to keep from eating the sand that would often fly around in blinding storms. We were cautioned to be prompt and not miss a day of classes or we would be reassigned. I was getting along just fine in school and was not missing any time in class.

One morning we were rudely awakened earlier than usual. Everybody was ordered to get breakfast, pack his belongings, and be out on the drill field ready to ship out. Rumors flew around as fast as that Texas sand. It turned out to be our first encounter with military SNAFU.

The school had eleven phases with ten days to a phase. We were the eleventh class to start in the school, and were about mid-way through. North American had completed setting up a special school to take trained mechanics for special training on B-25 aircraft. It seems that Washington, D.C. had sent quick orders to pull the eleventh class. The intention was to pull the eleventh PHASE, and send them to California. Of course this was all kept secret from the soldiers, so rumors kept flying. We fell out ready to go at daybreak, and promptly got involved in the famous Army game of hurry up and wait. We stood all day in the sand on the drill field. Finally, in late afternoon, we boarded a train and started westward. We awoke the next morning to the fragrance of orange blossoms. We were now sure we were in California.

We were put up in the beautiful Santa Monica Hotel. Rumor had it that we would be going to school at the North American plant in Inglewood. Would it be possible to make a B-25 specialist out of half-trained mechanic?

We learned special things about the B-25, and about a month later we had finished. Not quite! During this time North American was working to expand the school. About ten percent of the class with the highest grades would get extra special training. This group was kept at Santa Monica, while the rest were secretly moved out. Since I was among the upper ten percent I wasn't disappointed.

Two weeks later these super B-25 Specialists filled two cars on a train along with two cars of Sailors and two cars of Marines, and started on a secret trip. The next morning we awoke in an unknown station where there was a half inch of snow on the ground. A rumor started that we were in Alaska. Well we might be . . if this Army could make B-25 specialists out of half-trained mechanics they probably could

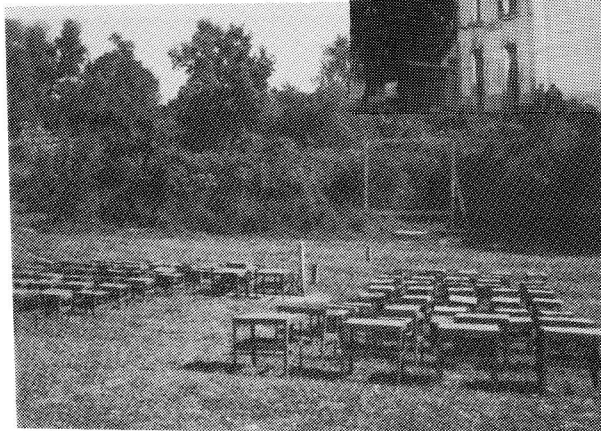
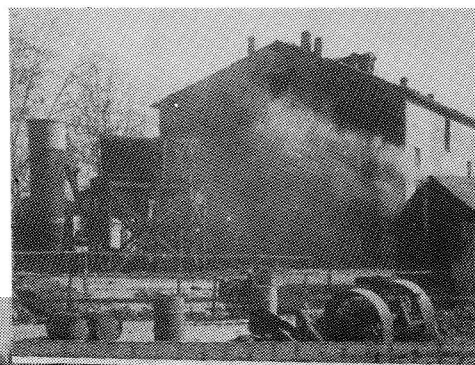
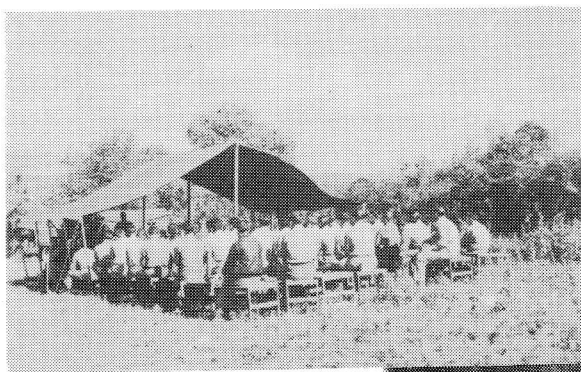
get us to Alaska on a train overnight. We found that we were in Las Vegas with no free time.

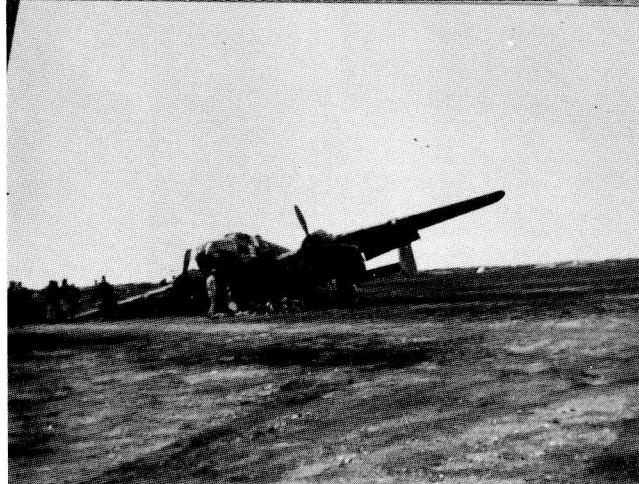
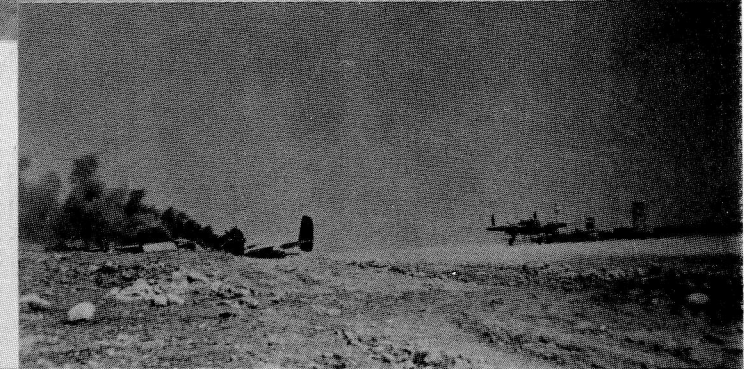
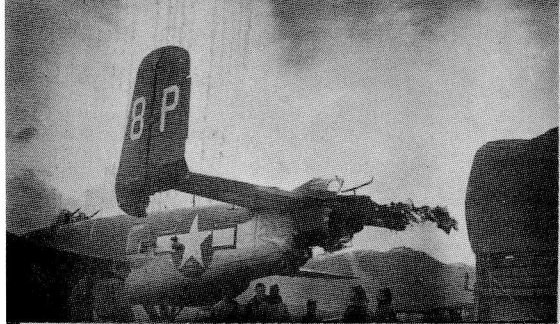
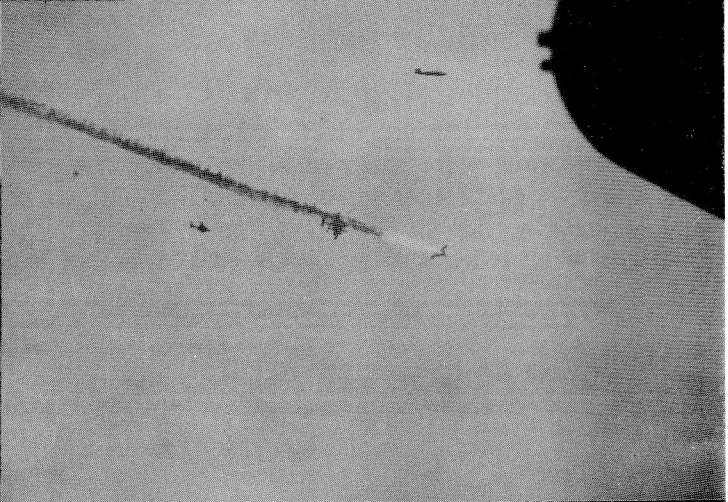
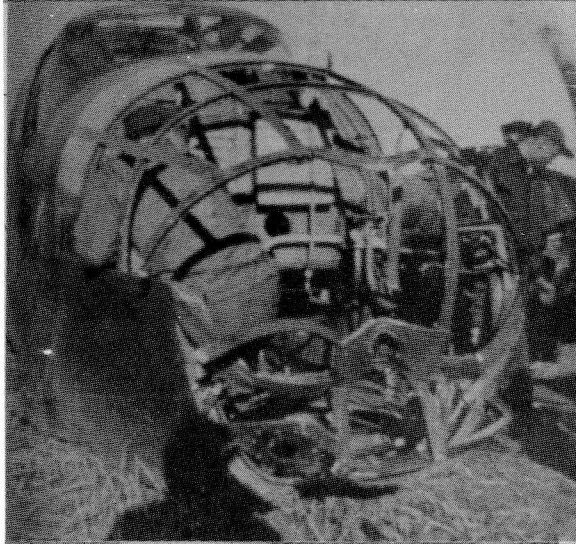
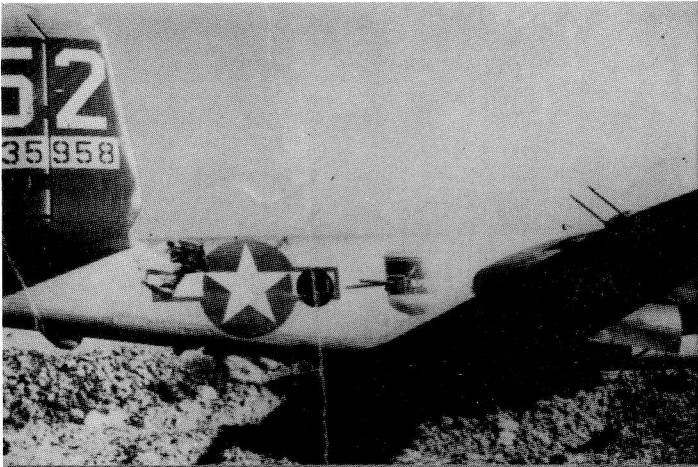
Another train ride and we arrived in St. Louis, Missouri where we had a short lay-over. A couple of days later we were in Pittsburg. Another train-ride and we arrived at our destination which turned out to be Columbia, South Carolina. Here we were told, "This is it, your ride is over." We were taken to a hillside where there were several large circus tents that were to be our home. That night it rained pitch-forks and hammer handles, and we spent most of the night trying to keep our worldly belongings from washing away.

After several aimless days two B-25 soldiers from the U.S.S. Hornet, which had completed the Tokyo raid, were assigned to the group of us B-25 Specialists, to organize the engineering section of the 321st Bomb Group. M/Sgt. W.C. Horn was made Line Chief and

M/Sgt. D.P. Smith was made Aircraft Inspector. Although we had no aircraft as yet, plans were started to form the 447th Bomb Squadron. It was to be organized as a standard strength of 16 aircraft. Each airplane would have a Crew Chief and several mechanics. The sixteen airplanes were to be divided into four flights of four, with each flight to be headed by a Flight Chief. In a squadron up to full strength management and control went from Line Chief to Asst. Line Chief, to Inspector, to Flight Chiefs and finally to the Crew Chief.

B-25 aircraft slowly began arriving in the squadron. I was among the first to be assigned a Crew Chief and this required a little more rank than Buck Private. So I became a wild and dangerous Corporal. As planes kept coming into the squadron I moved up to a Flight Chief. That boosted me to S/Sgt. In about three months the 447th was nearly full strength.







# A FEW MEMORIES

## FROM A LONG TIME PAST

by  
RICHARD "DICK" BRIGGS 447

I remember spending my last night in Savannah, Georgia, with my wife of three months, leaving her and getting back to base to catch a train to Newport News, Virginia and getting aboard ATHOSIS III (a former French liner) at midnight, then sailing for fifteen days to Naples, Italy. I remember only two meals aboard ship, and hot sea water to shower in! I remember my first use of my helmet ... for my first "Cat-bath".

I remember a large fleet of ships with escort, then finally passing Gibraltar and the opening of the sub nets to let us into the Mediterranean Sea ... and the Navy patrol planes overhead, looking for subs! ... Docking at Naples where masts of ships were sticking out of the water all over the place, and not a reflection of light from buildings on the waterfront, ... not a single pane of glass to be seen! The Germans had blown the docks sky-high, with only a narrow strip about the width of the Jeep that backed up to the ship to take luggage back to the beach area, to be picked up by us. I remember piles of metal, parts of trucks, planes etc. all over the area. Welcome to the war zone!

We stayed in a roped-off area, in tents, for two days. Later we flew to Corsica in a B-25 to our home base, Solenzara. First I stayed at the 321st, 448th and remember seeing people on crutches and arms in slings, a result of combat flying? No, I found that it was a result of "touch" football and volleyball!

I was split up from my crew and sent over to the 447th Squadron, to Lt. Col. Strenger. It was windy and raining, and as I found no one around, I put my bags in this large tent, just as the wind blew it over. Lt. Bullion saw me and invited me to stay in his tent. Richard "Snag" Murray was a Captain and Flight Leader, and

the oldest one in the tent, and about to go home after a few more missions.

My first mission was with Kieth Murchland, and was a "milk-run". My third was co-pilot for Major Wigginton, and to Ostiglia. We were the first flight in and we lost several planes! We stopped counting the holes after ninety. The four 1,000 pound bombs crossed in the bomb bay, malfunctioned. Two were laying on the bomb bay doors and we couldn't dislodge them mechanically or manually. There were holes in both wing tanks and gas streamed down the wing into the bomb bay among those bombs! We were the only lead ship to get back to base. "Wig" dead stuck it in and with no radio contact. I thought that we had "bought the farm". I never saw six people emerge from a B-25 so fast, before or after.

I was just getting comfortable with combat flying when I encountered my twelfth, and worst, mission of the fifty-five I flew. It was to Lavis, a Brenner Pass target, and the one my friend Roland Bullion was killed in the left seat, right beside me. That is a whole separate story in its self.

I remember going back to Lavis, soon after that twelfth mission. This time "Herb" Barrett was my pilot, and it was "hot" again, lots of flak. He said to me, "you've got it", and after the bombs were away, I broke off the target and flew out of the flak with the formation. I never knew of a pilot doing that before, or since. Barrett knew that this was a return mission for me. I'll never forget that, and will always be grateful for the kind gesture.

Not long after that I checked out as first pilot and felt good about it, 'cause I had graduated from Fighter Advanced Flying School in Marianna, Florida. I had been



hoping for P-51's and somehow ended up in B-25s and was still in one piece! Finally I flew my fifty-fifth and last mission in combat.

I flew with the best crews a fellow could ask for, and I appreciated each one, and was honored to have served in combat with them.

In late June I took off for the U.S.A. in my old #56 ("Fearless Fosdick"), renamed "GW Special" for my wife Georgia. As I left, and said "good by", my old crew Chief came up to me and said, "I wish that I was flying home with you," That was the best compliment I ever got for flying.

We took the southern route, with Tokyo tank in the bomb bay. We hit the worst storm on

the last leg home. A hurricane had passed through three days before. We caught rain, thunder and lightening, rough winds. The sea was running 75 foot waves. We lost 500 to 1,000 feet, first up then down. My co-pilot, Havens with three missions, helped me hold that B-25 right side up! We got permission to go down to 2,000 feet from 8,000 and soon after we broke out into bright sunshine, with both engines running and both wings still attached.

Came into Savannah, Georgia, where I made the smoothest landing of my life. And in front of six C-47 troop carrier pilots at that! When they towed my B-25 away, I had a lump in my throat as big as an apple. Even to this day, I don't think it's all gone away! I was lucky, for God more than once rode as my co-pilot.

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## GOT 'EM BOTH

487th

(The story is written on the reverse side of the photograph in pencil. The author did not identify himself.)

"On the afternoon of April 28th, we ran a 2nd mission, with the same crew, Hank Schreiner, Birn, Luke and myself leading. The target was a small R.R. bridge over a stream at Orvieto Station. The bridge had been hit by the 321st a few days earlier, and was still down, so Luke aimed at the road bridge across the river. The first bombs hit the bridge, knocking out a whole span. The second squadron hit the primary target, scoring direct hits on the bridge and repair equipment. We also covered roads and road junctions. I was Lead Navigator for the whole Wing on this mission. The other units split off at the I.P. to go to different targets."

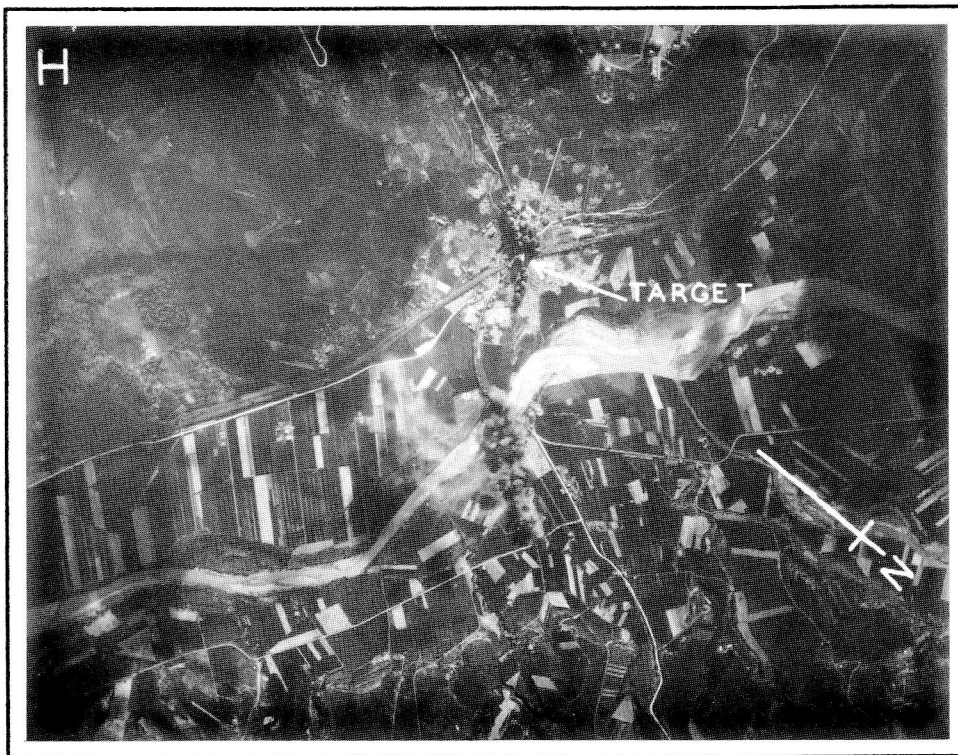


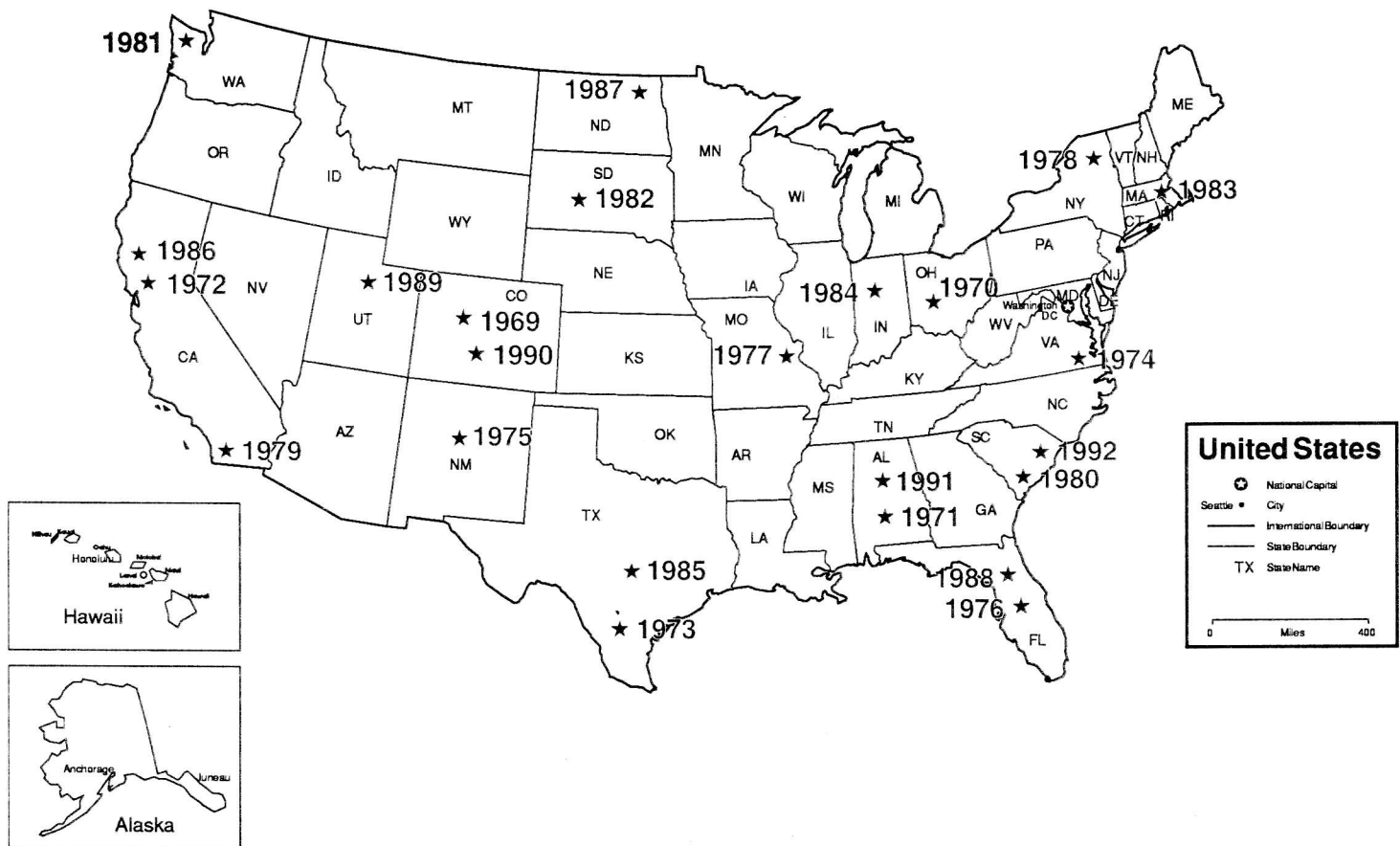
Photo from the collection of Paul Spencer 487

# **The 57th Bomb Wing**



**Association**  
**1967 - 1992**

# 57th WING REUNION SITES



1969 Denver, Colorado  
 1970 Dayton, Ohio  
 1971 Montgomery, Alabama  
 1972 San Francisco, California  
 1973 San Antonio, Texas  
 1974 Williamsburg, Virginia  
 1975 Albuquerque, New Mexico  
 1976 Innisbrook, Florida  
 1977 St. Louis, Missouri  
 1978 Lake Placid, New York  
 1979 San Diego, California  
 1980 Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

1981 Seattle, Washington  
 1982 Rapid City, South Dakota  
 1983 Danvers, Massachusetts  
 1984 South Bend, Indiana  
 1985 Fort Worth, Texas  
 1986 Sacramento, California  
 1987 Grand Forks, North Dakota  
 1988 Orlando, Florida  
 1989 Salt Lake City  
 1990 Colorado Springs, Colorado  
 1991 Huntsville, Alabama  
 1992 Columbia, South Carolina

# Had A Humble Beginning

Over the years, starting in 1969 members of the 57th Wing have held gatherings, or reunions, mini-reunions, overseas trips, cruises, and bus trips to scenic places.

We had promised each other we'd meet after the war, no matter where we were. These were friendships forged in battle and which would last until the end of our very lives.

Ask a 57th Bomb Wing veteran what he remembers most vividly and he'll get a far away look in his eyes and tell you about the times he and his friends were the closest, especially during danger. He will cover the times they tried to bring a little joy into each others lives, when they talked to each other of the girl they married, and then had to leave all too soon for war, it was common to confide our hopes and dreams to our tent-mates and friends.

These "gatherings" truly have served the same purpose helping us to remember those days, some "good" and some not so good. They help us remember those who did not return.

John W. Dillin, a staff officer assigned to the 57th Wing headquarters during WWII, is THE PERSON who deserves our ever lasting gratitude for the establishment of our Bomb Wing Association and for starting our annual reunions.



The birth of our getting together with former wartime comrades began in 1967, when John Dillin located John B. Fenner, a war time friend, also a former officer with the Wing headquarters. These two old friends thought it would be a good idea if they got more wartime buddies involved. Fenner produced a list of names and addresses he had from the war. This is when Dillin went to work and did us

all a great favor.

John wrote letters to everyone on the above mentioned list. Gradually he began to receive responses. One person led to another. To offset his personal expenses, such as postage and later a newsletter, he established a two dollar membership fee. After two years of corresponding, and with fingers crossed, he scheduled the first reunion for June 1969 in Denver, Colorado. The 57th Bomb Wing Association was off and flying, thanks to John's untiring efforts.



# Holds Annual Reunions

## DENVER COLORADO

2 - 4 June 1969

John Dillin and his wife Marie, did all of the work from planning to the end of this first reunion, twenty four years after the end of WWII. It was such a success that there has been one every year since. Marie, a pilot, flew John around the country to organize this first one, as well as the next two.

The Denver reunion was held at the Brown Palace Hotel, during graduation week of the U.S. Air Force Academy. Originally 42 persons made reservations. John and Marie sat at the registration desk and started to sign people in. By the time of the first dinner, they had 78 persons registered. What a tribute to John and Marie for their efforts.

The events arranged for the evening were a film provided by Martin Marietta showing old, as well as new, aircraft in flight, and an exciting Air Force Academy football film. The next day they all went to the Academy where General Knapp presented a copy of "The Battle of the Brenner" for the Academy Library. After attending the Cadet graduation parade, they drove to Fort Carson for a luncheon meeting. At the luncheon Colonel Raymond F. Johnson from the current 57th Air Division gave a presentation on the history of the "57th" since World War II. John had to leave, due to a death of a close family member, and Marie took over all of the responsibilities for the rest of the reunion.

The biggest event during this first reunion, and due to John's efforts in obtaining tickets, was the graduation ceremonies at the Academy which drew a record crowd partly due to President Nixon being the commencement speaker. The Thunderbirds flew a show at the graduation.

The delegates voted John Dillin to be Chairman of the 57th Bomb Wing Association, a tribute well earned. They also voted to have a reunion the following year at Wright Patterson AFB, Dayton, Ohio.

## DAYTON, OHIO

18 - 20 June, 1970

The second reunion was held in Dayton, Ohio, home of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. The headquarters hotel was the Sheraton Dayton in the downtown area of the city. John Dillin, again, was the Reunion Chairman even though he lived in Florida. He was assisted by Colonel Richard Tipton, a former 57th man, stationed at Wright-Patterson AFB.

One hundred and forty-eight 57th men and women were in attendance for this occasion. Special activities included, a day at Wright-Patterson AFB complete with luncheon at the Officers's Club, and a visit to the Air Force Museum.

A Dayton newspaper, in announcing the arrival of the 57th Bomb Wing, referred to us as the "Zany World War II Wing" depicted so graphically by Joe Heller (488th) in his best seller book "Catch 22".

General Robert D. Knapp served as guest speaker at the Fellowship Banquet, with Ned Heilig (489th) as Master of Ceremonies. Ned Heilig was elected Chairman of the Association replacing John Dillin, with John Dillin (57th) being elected Secretary/Treasurer. Later the title "Chairman" was changed to "President".

General Willis F. Chapman (340th) also spoke at the banquet

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## MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

8 - 10 July, 1971

The Governor's House Motel in Montgomery served as headquarters for our third reunion. A former 57th man, Colonel Walter Cook, of Maxwell AFB, and John Dillin were responsible for local arrangements for this reunion.

Many of the activities were held at Maxwell AFB. Our guest speakers were Brig. Gen. Richard N. Ellis, Commander of the Civil Air Patrol, and Colonel Jack Cassidy, Southeast Region Commander of the C.A.P. There was an informal golf match, at Maxwell AFB. Harry Logan (379th) was elected President and Hal Lynch (489th) was elected Secretary/Treasurer.

At the Fellowship banquet on July 9th, our guest speaker was Wayne C. Clinton his topic, "The 747". The banquet program closed with a special multi-media show, produced by Hal Lynch, entitled "The Sights and Sounds of Yesteryear." We had one hundred and sixty men and women in attendance.

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### **SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**

3 - 6 July 1972

The Oakland tribune devoted a full page of its regular edition, in mid-July, in tribute to the 1972 reunion of the 57th Bomb Wing. The article was entitled, "Flyingest Outfit Vets Relive World War II."

This was the first reunion planned, and directed, by Hal Lynch, Secretary/Treasurer, and his wife Dottie. 270 men and women attended the four-day event which was headquartered in the San Francisco Hilton. "The City by The Bay" was a great attraction for the 57th men and their families. Local chairman for the San Francisco Reunion was Ned Heilig, 489th.

Tours included Chinatown with a complete dinner, the Gold Coast, Fisherman's Wharf, Hamilton AFB, The Hamilton AFB visit was especially interesting since a B-25 was on display on the flight line. The highlight of the sight-seeing was the boat cruise around San Francisco Bay.

Wing President, Harry Logan (379th) presided over the business meeting.

Russ Ball, a 9th Air Force man, served as Toast-master at the Fellowship banquet. With his marvelous repartee, had his audience laughing from start to finish. President Logan presented General Robert D. Knapp with a

painting of the general, painted by a well known Massachusetts' artist. Guest speaker at the banquet was Colonel Norris Overly, a former P.O.W. in Vietnam. His talk was timely and informative.

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### **SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

11 - 15 July, 1973

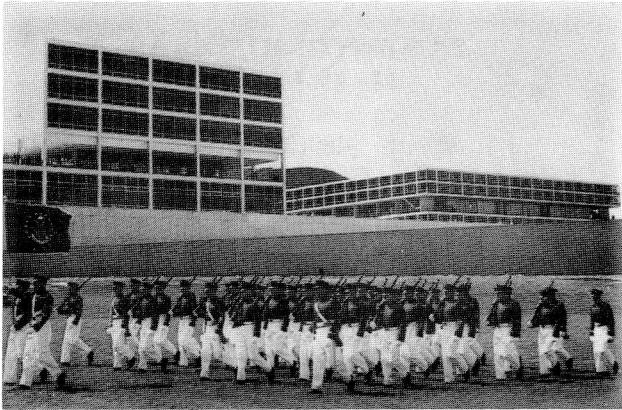
J.J. Walsh (489th) served as Reunion Chairman for fifth reunion held in San Antonio, Texas.

Over 300 men and women, and a few young people, were in attendance at the Alamo City Reunion. With the Hilton Palacio del Rio, located directly on the famous River Walk, as headquarters, the reunion was destined to be outstanding. Tours included a dinner-theater ("Born Yesterday"), and outdoor riverside show called "Fiesta Noche del Rio, The Alamo, the Mexican Market, the Japanese Tea Garden, Hemisfair Plaza and the Tower of the Americas, the Spanish Governor's Place, tour and lunch at Randolph Field ("The West Point of the Air"), all added up to an enjoyable time in San Antonio.

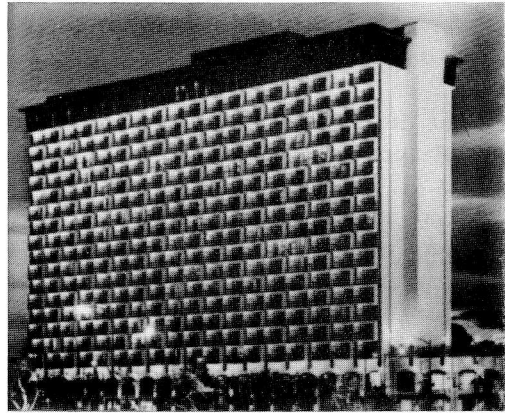
A special feature of the reunion was a huge reception in honor of former crew chiefs. At Randolph AFB 57th members saw, for the first time, a color slide show called "The Way We Were and Are." The show depicted 57th men in photos as they appeared in 1943-'44-'45 and as they appear today, with appropriate commentary. At the business meeting Byron Link (380th) was elected President.

The Fellowship banquet, always a highlight, is remembered largely because of the Toastmaster, Jack Casper (489th) was excellent. Another feature was the showing of a 16mm film entitled "The 57th Bomb Wing Remembered." This film, a 40 minute production, was edited, and narrated, by Bill Blume a 340th man. The program was compiled from official World War II films of the Wing in combat

We must apologise for not being able to present at least one photograph from each and every site where our annual reunions were held. Shown here are a few of the places where a grand time was had by all who were able to be present. We have not shown any of the sites where the "mini-reunions were held. Space simply was not available.



Air Force Academy Cadets  
Denver, CO 1969



Hilton Palacio del Rio Hotel  
San Antonio, CA 1973



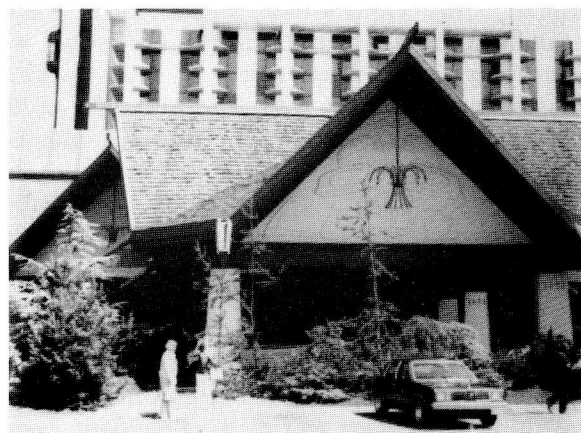
Chase-Park Plaza Hotel  
St. Louis, MO 1977



Lake Placid Country Club  
Lake Placid, NY 1978



Town and Country Hotel  
San Diego, CA 1979



Red Lion Sea-Tac Motor Inn  
Seattle, WA 1981

## WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

24 - 28 July, 1974

Headquarters for the Williamsburg Reunion was, the attractive Hilton 1776 Inn. Local chairmen for the reunion were A.A. "Bud" West (448th) and Harry Logan (379th). "Bud" also served as Toast-master at the Fellowship banquet.

The Williamsburg Reunion was highlighted with a couple of 57th Bomb Wing "firsts". For example, the first Robert D. Knapp Golf Tournament, now a tradition, was played at Langley AFB golf course. The winner, incidentally, was Harry Norris (487th) with a sparkling 77.

An outdoor barbecue was one of the outstanding features, and is remembered as one of the best in all of the 57th's reunions. There was a Dixie-Land Band concert, a Broadway stage show entitled, "An Evening With Cole Porter," a day was spent at Langley AFB.

In the absence of President Bud Link (380th) the business meeting was presided over by Vice-president Leonard Sansone (489th). Harold Oyster (439th) was elected to the Presidency.

Bud West served as Toastmaster for the Fellowship banquet which featured the first presentation of the "Men of the 57th", an 18 minute multi-media program featuring color slides, a 16mm color cinema production, background music, and a narrative written by Hal Lynch (489th). This program received a standing ovation from the gathering of 386 men and women of the Wing.

General Ira C. Eaker, former Commanding General of the Mediterranean Allied Air Force was the guest speaker, being introduced by General Willis F. Chapman. In retrospect, those who attended the Williamsburg reunion recall, with pleasure, the delicious Plantation dinner (Peanut soup).

## ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

16 - 20 July, 1975

Thanks to the tremendous turn-out by the 319th Bomb Group which was due to the diligent efforts of Harold and Esther Oyster, the Albuquerque Reunion attracted over 600 men, women and young people of the 57th. The local chairman was Jim Nichols (379th).

This reunion, headquartered at the Hilton Hotel, saw the introduction of the individual group dinner program on the reunion's opening night. Following these dinners all in attendance gathered together to see a new B-25 film entitled, "On Final Forever." John Neel (446th) was responsible for the 57th having the opportunity to see this beautiful film.

Special reunion programs included a cable car ride to the top of Sandia Mountain range for lunch, a bus trip to the "Barn" for dinner, and a Broadway comedy, a day at Kirkland AFB for a tour of the Atomic Museum and lunch, the R.D.Knapp golf Tournament, and a reception in tribute to former P.O.W's in attendance. At the business meeting, Harold Oyster (439th) was re-elected President for the coming year.

Guest speaker at the Fellowship Banquet was former 340th Flight Surgeon, Dr. Albert Brussell. Arthur Knievel served nobly as Toastmaster.

The 319th Bomb group, the best represented group at the Reunion, held a special business meeting at which time they appointed a committee to look at the suggestion of holding their own annual reunion, apart from the 57th Reunions, however. all 319th members were encouraged to attend both annual meetings.

### NOTE-

The 319th conducted a survey of their members, and they decided prior to the 57th reunion in 1976, to hold their own separate reunions.



## **INNISBROOK, FLORIDA**

14 - 18 July 1976

We were most fortunate to have the opportunity of holding our 1976 Reunion at the famous Innisbrook Resort, one of the nation's most spectacular resort areas. 450 Men and women, and their families were in attendance to live in the lap of luxury throughout the reunion.

Tours included visits to Busch Gardens, the Tom Sawyer dinner cruise on Tampa Bay, a Country Dinner Theater production, a visit to Weeki Wachee Springs, and Disney World. Also included was a pool party, a barbecue and Rock night for the many teenagers who were present. The Robert D. Knapp Golf Tournament was held on the outstanding Copperhead Course, one of Florida's most attractive golf courses.

At the 57th business meeting Arnold (Ben) Bodine (447th) and Charles Hartenstine (310th) were elected President and Vice-president respectively. Also the Secretary/Treasurer reported that the Wing was not only solvent, but in excellent financial condition.

Once more John Dillin was the local representative for the Reunion. George Ghetia (447th) served as Toastmaster for the fellowship Banquet. Astronaut Donald K. "Deke" Slayton was guest speaker at the Fellowship Banquet. This 340th and 319th man made his first space flight as Apollo docking module pilot on the well remembered Apollo-Soyuz mission in 1975.

Another feature of the Innisbrook Reunion was the distribution of a new 57th Bomb Wing publication called "Remembrances", edited by Hal Lynch. This book contained a collection of World War II memories written by 57th men, as well as a brief history of the Wing and each group within the Wing.

## **ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI**

14 - 18 July, 1977

Perhaps one of the enduring memories of the St. Louis Reunion has to do with the heat. The 104 degrees took its toll of the golfers.

Thanks to the careful planning of Byron and Helen Cary (489th), this reunion was one of the Wing's best. Some 500 men, women and their families attended. The headquarters Chase-Park Plaza Hotel. Ben Bodine (447) was re-elected President.

Tours included visits to such places as Six Flags Amusement Park, The Gateway Arch, The Old Cathedral Church, the Jefferson Monument, the Anheuser-Busch Brewery, A Mississippi River Boat Cruise and dance, and a tour of Scott AFB. At Scott AFB we were entertained by the Air Force "Band of Mid America" and by a remarkable young singer, named Angelo Ponti. We also dined at Stan Musial's Restaurant, and "Stan the Man" himself stopped by to chat with our most dedicated baseball fans.

Chaplin Jim Cooper (340th) was Toastmaster at the banquet where the first 57th BombWing Service Award was presented to John Dillin, founder of the Wing Reunion Program in 1969. Four 57th members, Charles Lungren (447th), Anna Glasford (445th), Lynn Montgomery (son of John and Jenny (489th), and Dorothy Beagan (daughter of Dan and Dorothy (489th) captured the hearts of all in attendance at the banquet with stirring presentation entitled "Thank you, 57th Bomb Wing." Dancing followed the banquet program.

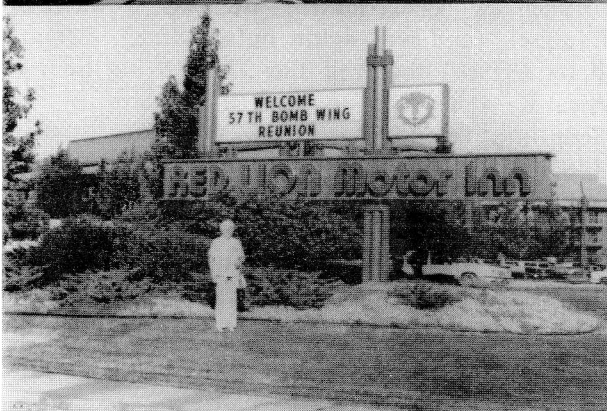
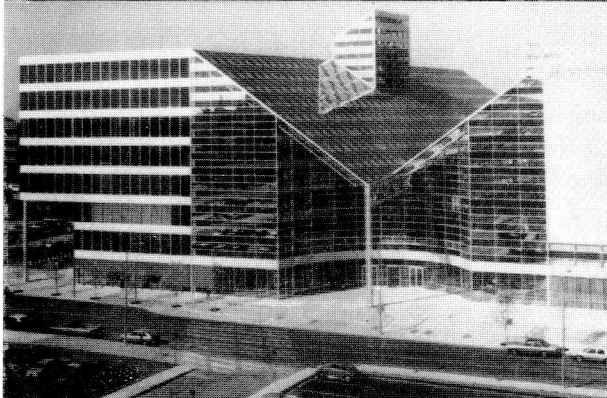
## **LAKE PLACID, NEW YORK**

21 - 25 June, 1978

Peter Remington (310th and 321st) served as host to the 509 men and women who arrived at Lake Placid. It was just a few months before the Winter Olympic Games, so we had a chance to see the Olympic Village and all of the preparation for the games.

The weather was ideal for the sight-seeing tours and all of the things planned for our pleasure. A 488th man, Bill Shealy, and his wife "Pinky, came all the way from Wiesbaden, Germany.

The city of Plattsburgh, New York proclaimed June 23rd as "57th Bomb Wing Day". and generously displayed signs and newspaper articles to emphasize it. While one



#1 A trip to Mount Rushmore  
from Rapid City, SD 1982

#2 Sightseeing in  
Danvers, MA 1983

#3 South Bend Marriott Hotel  
South Bend, Indiana 1984

#4 The Green Oaks Inn,  
Fort Worth, TX 1985

#5 Red Lion Motor Inn,  
Sacramento, CA 1986

#6 Delta Queen River Boat  
Grand Forks, ND 1987

#7 Red Lion Hotel  
Salt Lake City, Utah 1989

of our busses was being refueled, before taking us to Plattsburg AFB for lunch, a local man was looking up at the big "57th Bomb Wing" sign on the side of the bus and said, "What is this 57th Bomb Wing?", we explained to him that we are the organization that flew B-25's in the Mediterranean during WWII. He said, "I flew a B-25 in the Mediterranean." Someone asked him, "What Group were you in?" "I don't know. All I remember is that I was in . . . . squadron. Bill Chapman asked him if he was married, he replied, "Yes", so Bill told him to go home and get his wife and join us at 12:00 o'clock at the Officers Club for lunch. When he and his wife arrived, Hal Lynch had arranged for them to be seated at the head table next to General Knapp. They were treated as the prodigal son returned.

**Note:**

The man identified himself as Paul Maicus 381st. (p.s.. He joined up and is still a member)

A. A. "Bud" West (448th) was elected President of the Wing at the Mens Business Meeting.

Forest Nettles (447th) served as Toast-master for the Banquet. The 57th Wing Service Award was presented to General Robert D. Knapp for his many contributions to the growth and development of the Wing.

A highlight included the Fellowship Banquet guest speaker Dr. John Nestor, (Flight Surgeon for the 489th). It was Dr. Nestor who blew the whistle on the drug Thalidomide which produced defects in new born children.

A few weeks after the reunion a letter was received from a college student who was a waitress at the Lake Placid Club, where we stayed. She wrote, *"Just a few words to extend my appreciation for your kindness during your stay at Lake Placid Inn. You were by far, the greatest people I've seen here yet. I only wish that you could have been with us a lot longer. The 57th Bomb Wing will always remain in my heart. Thanks again for making my job such a pleasure."* Suzy Mack, Waitress, Lake Placid Inn

There couldn't have been a nicer compliment to the 57th Wing.

## SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

10 - 15 July, 1979

Again we surpassed the 500 mark in attendance. Two Doolittle Raiders, Trav Hoover (379th) and Bill Bower (428th) added much to the event by their attendance. Over 40 states were represented on the roster at the Town and Country Hotel. This hotel had the largest jaccuzzi any of us had ever seen.

San Diego, one of the nation's most attractive cities, had much to offer the men and women of the 57th. Local Chairman, John Coffey, ably assisted by his wife Marjorie, lined up the Miramar Naval Air Station, and golf at the famous Torrey Pines Golf Course. At the men's business meeting, A.A. "Bud" West was re-elected president for the coming year.

Once again 9th Air Force man Russ Ball served as Toast-master at the Fellowship Banquet, (and was again outstanding). Edward Betts (379th) received the 57th Wing Service Award, which was presented to him by his longtime friend Art Barny. Alex Stewart (489th) led the entire group in a marvelous song fest.

On Sunday morning, at the farewell Brunch the eleventh reunion came to a dramatic finish as Charlie Brewton (437th) reminded all of us why we were at this reunion, and why our Nation was worth fighting for.

The first edition of the Wing Directory of Members, "Men of the 57th " was distributed at the San Diego reunion. This book lists each and every member alphabetically, geographically, and by unit. The book was subsidized through the Wing treasury.

## MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA

8 - 13 July 1980

560 men and women of the 57th attended the Myrtle Beach reunion, which was held in

the beautiful Hilton Hotel located right on the beach.

While there were many enduring memories of this reunion, the most lasting had to be the appearance of a B-25 (9-D) flying over the hotel and along the beach on its way to the Myrtle Beach AFB. Thanks to F. Gene Fisher of Pennsylvania, owner and pilot of the plane. In the crew was Don Porter (489th) and his attractive daughter Tina

Special features of this reunion included an All Wing program featuring the showing of the Frank Capra film, "War Comes to America", luncheon at Myrtle Beach AFB, a dinner program with squadron friends, and a 57th Wing Luau.

The Fellowship Banquet was highlighted by the appearance of Colonel Travis Hoover (379th) as the guest speaker. Colonel Hoover was the second man off the carrier, USS Hornet, on the famous Doolittle Raid on Tokyo in April 1942. At the conclusion of his talk he was recognized with a standing ovation from the entire audience. Charles Brewton (319th) served as Toastmaster at the Banquet.

The 57th Service Award was presented to Ned Heilig (489th) by President A.A. "Bud" West. When former president Heilig received the award, he stated that this was the greatest honor he had ever received.

Local Chairman for the Reunion was Charles Hartenstein (310th). At the annual business meeting, Art Barny (379th) was elected president. A special award was given to Jack Goodhart (445th) for traveling from Kwajalein Island, part of the Marshall Islands in the Pacific, to attend the Reunion. The Reunion closed on Sunday morning with the Farewell Brunch following a stirring talk by Ed Dombrowski of the 487th.

#### **SEATTLE, WASHINGTON**

13 - 19 July, 1981

Speaking at the Farewell brunch at the Red Lion Inn on Sunday, July 19, Sam Monger (445th) commented that "the warm friendship demonstrated by all 57th men and women

made our annual reunions more than worthwhile for everyone fortunate enough to attend these events".

It may well be that Sam's comments best describe the entire spirit of the Seattle Reunion. Well over 500 men and women were in attendance at this Reunion. Ken Jones (381st) local chairman lined up a series of tours and programs for those in attendance. Tours included visits to the Boeing Plant, Tillicum Indian Village Cruise and dinner, and a tour of the city of Seattle.

The Fellowship Banquet was especially memorable for three reasons, the third appearance of Russ Ball of the 9th Air Force as Toastmaster, the talk by General Robert D. Knapp on his experience on the Mexican Border with General Pershing. The Service Award was presented to James J. Walsh (489th). Art Barny was re-elected President at the Wing business meeting.

The Seattle Reunion will long be remembered for the feeling of friendliness which permeated the event from start to finish. Local chairman Ken and Betty Jones planned a marvelous 57th Reunion, up to the standard of all previous 57th Reunions.

The sudden death, during the reunion, of Al Solkovy (489th) came as a shock to everyone

#### **RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA**

7 - 11 JULY 1982

Over 500 57th men and women attended the 1982 Reunion, in South Dakota, with headquarters in the Howard Johnson Hotel. Reunion Chairman, Homer Swan (381st) was assisted by Jewell Parker (445th) in making the local arrangements. They planned a number of exciting tours in this dramatic area.

For example. . . An evening at the race track, . . . A tour of Mt. Rushmore (Where we were greeted by the Hill City Fife and Drum Corps), The Black Hills Passion Play (with John Dillin as a member of the cast),. . . the Black Hills, Deadwood City, . . . and the Flying T Chuck Wagon . . . all of these events were part of the overall Reunion program. A new event, the Squadron get-together, was introduced at



this reunion. Nick Loveless (486th) was the man who suggested this feature.

At the annual business meeting Edward Dombrowski (487th) was elected President of the Wing for the upcoming year, and Sam Monger (445th) as vice-president.

The Fellowship Banquet, with Ed Dombrowski as Toastmaster, featured two young Rapid City High School students, a lady soloist and a young male pianist, who dedicated a song to General Robert D. Knapp. The song was, "Mister Wonderful". The 57th Wing Service Award was presented to Byron Cary (489th), of Jerseyville, Illinois. Byron and Helen Cary have dedicated years of work and love to the 57th Bomb Wing. A surprise presentation was made by General Knapp of a plaque to Hal Lynch and wife Dottie for their years of work on behalf of the Wing.

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#### **DANVERS, MASSACHUSETTS**

19 - 24 July, 1983

The Danvers Reunion is remembered not only because of that delicious clam bake held at the Radisson-Ferncroft Hotel, but for a number of other reasons, including the fact that this was the best attended 57th Reunion to date. Over 700 men and women were registered at the annual Fellowship Banquet.

The most memorable event of the entire Reunion had to be the wonderful air show put on by the "Blue Angels" of the United States Navy. Etched against a back ground of white clouds, the demonstration by the Navy pilots was doubly dramatic.

Tours of picturesque Cape Ann and the historic Quincy Market Place in downtown Boston were part of the Reunion program, as well as a visit to the USS Constitution "Old Ironsides."

At the Fellowship Banquet, two 57th men were honored. General Robert D. Knapp was presented with a large photograph, properly engraved. It now hangs in the Daedalian Room of the Maxwell AFB Officers Club. And Charles Brewton (437th) was presented the annual 57th Bomb Wing Service Award.

Fred Harlan (488th) led us in song and comedy as the Fellowship Banquet Toastmaster. Following dinner we danced to the music of Ted Herbert's 16 piece orchestra. Band leader Herbert also introduced a new song, "Bomb Wing 57" written by James R. Centorino, son-in-law of Hank and Dorothy Fallone (447th). At the business meeting, presided over by Ed Dombrowski, John Sutay (446th), Wing Historian, introduced a plan to have a bronze plaque, in tribute to the 57th, installed at the Air Force Academy Cemetery. Approval was given for the purchase, through the 57th treasury, of the plaque. Sutay announced that the plaque would be installed at a ceremony at the Academy in the spring of 1984, with 57th members and Air Force Academy.

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#### **SOUTH BEND, INDIANA**

11 - 16 September 1984

Headquarters for the South Bend Reunion was the beautiful Mariott Hotel located in the heart of downtown South Bend. Joseph Semanak (487th) was the local chairman.

Perhaps the highlight of the Reunion was the presentation by a group of Notre Dame University Glee Club on Wednesday night. These young men entertained the 57th men and women present with a variety of choral type music, including the famous Notre Dame Fight song "Cheer, Cheer for Old Notre Dame", and the "Air Force Song". Notre Dame University was an important part of the Reunion with a tour of the campus, complete with guides, and the Robert D. Knapp Golf Tournament being played at the University golf course.

Other activities included tours of Grissom AFB, the University Mall, St. Mary's College, and a marvelous Air Show at the Municipal Air Port with four B-25's on display, three of which put on a flying demonstration.

Arthur Barny (379th) received the Annual Service Award at the Fellowship Banquet. A former Wing President, Art has been one of the Wing's strongest and most loyal workers. Art was also the Banquet Toastmaster. Dancing to the "Nostalgics" followed the dinner program which featured a showing of

"The Men of the 57th". At the business meeting Sam Monger (445th) was elected President for the coming year.

In his final appearance as Executive Director of the Wing after 14 years of service, the speaker at the Farewell Brunch was Hal Lynch (489th). His subject was "Enduring Memories of the 57th". Shortly after the South Bend Reunion the functions formerly handled by Hal Lynch were split with Robert Evans (487th) as Wing Coordinator, Dave Mershon (487th), as Membership chairman and Arthur Barney (389th) Wing Editor.

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### **FORT WORTH, TEXAS**

25 - 29 September, 1985

Ben Kanowsky (488th) was the original site chairman for the Fort Worth, but due to failing health, he resigned. Ben passed away on July 12, 1985. Due to Ben's untimely death, a group including Mary Marth Hackney, J.J. Walsh, Bob Schauffler, Bob Evans, Bill Chapman, Frank McGowan, and Millard Harper all pitched in and pulled off a very fine reunion at the Green Oaks Inn. That sort of cooperation is what the 57th Bomb Wing Association is all about.

Events at the reunion, for the 573 people who attended were: The R.D. Knapp Golf Tournament at Boaz, a municipal course; the Mexican Patio Dinner Party, visits to the Fort Worth Stockyards, and shuttle bus tours to many places of interest..

At the business meeting Vernon Schmoke (447th), displayed an architect's rendering of a 57th Bomb Wing Memorial to be installed at Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio, with approval of the membership. Schmoke, who spearheaded this program, announced that the project would cost about \$10,000.00. Thanks largely to the efforts of Joseph Semenak (487th), over \$10,000.00 was collected from 57th members privately for this project. The memorial was installed and later dedicated in a special ceremony at Wright Patterson AFB in September 1986, with a number of 57th men and women present.

Brigadier General Joel McKean, USAF, of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C.

was the guest speaker at the Wing Banquet. Sam Monger completed his term as President of the Association and turned the gavel over to George Mercea (447th). Bob Evans (487th) received the Wing Service Award.

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### **SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA**

6 - 10 August, 1986

The Sacramento Reunion, handled by Bob O'Clock (486th) and Paul King (445th), was held at the Red Lion Motor Inn. Neither of them lived in the local area and had to travel many miles to put together a wonderful week of activities. What the two men packed into each day of activities is remembered by all who attended, as it had something for everyone. Some of the events included the Robert D. Knapp Golf Tournament, shuttle bus tours, and the Groups dinners followed by Wing presentation of "The Men of the 57th".

There was an all day tour to the wine country as well as the all day tour to lake Tahoe and the casinos. We also visited Mather AFB for a briefing and lunch at the NCO Club, followed by a static display of aircraft. A number of our members had trained there during World War II as pilots, navigators and maintenance personnel. One evening we had a grand time at a Hawaiian Luau Buffet, pool-side at the Sacramento Inn.

At the 57th Banquet, our own "Deke" Slayton, one of the original astronauts, was our guest speaker. Charles Brewton (437th) was elected President. There were three Wing Service Awards . . . Sam Monger (445th) . . . Ed Dombrowski ( 487th) . . . Joe Semenak (487th) (in memorium), were the deserved recipients.

Added excitement at departure time on Sunday had everyone running out to check their cars as Bob Evans had two tires ripped off, J.J. Walsh had a lock broken and Ed Dombrowski had his Alabama legislator license plate stolen.

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### **GRAND FORKS, NORTH DAKOTA**

21 - 25 July 1987

The reunion was scheduled to coincide with

the dedication of the B-25 "FLO" for permanent display on the Grand Forks AFB, and with the arrival of the new B-1B bombers assigned to the 319th Bomb Wing. The Commander of the 321st Strategic Missile Wing also stationed there, conducted the B-25 dedication ceremonies, with Bill Chapman (340th) giving the invocation. The Base held an "open house" which gave us all a chance to see the B-1B bomber, as well as many other interesting pieces of military equipment. It was a real thrill for our members to visit a base where two of our war time Groups, now called Wings, were currently based, and to have a B-25 permanently displayed there.

Four motels closely located were used by 450 members with the Ramada as our headquarters. Everyone enjoyed the scenic River Boat Cruise on the Red River of the North which divides Minnesota and North Dakota. The ride included a fine dinner especially arranged by the co-chairmen John O'Keefe (445th) and Ernest "Hod" Hutson (447th). These two did a great job of furnishing all of us a really nostalgic time. The highlight of the Wing Banquet was the two songs, "The Lords Prayer" and "God Bless America" sung by Robert Hutson and Linda Johnson, son and daughter of "Hod" Hutson.

Burns Day was elected President for the coming year. A first occurred at this reunion . . . Loren and Annie Glasford were awarded the Wing Service Award, the first time it has been awarded to a couple.

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### **ORLANDO, FLORIDA**

21 - 25 September, 1988

The Orlando reunion was the largest the Wing ever had. There were 688 advance registrations and 53 "walk-ins" for a grand total of 741 people signed in, for nearly a week in the sun while staying at the Holiday Inn. The number of 57th people actually making an appearance was even greater. Some of those living in the nearby area, but not registered, dropped into the hospitality room for a bit of camaraderie at the Holiday Inn.

There was plenty to do for everyone, such as the R.D. Knapp Golf Tournament. Seaworld,

Epcot and Disney World, the tour of the Kennedy Space Center was considered by many as outstanding.

The Wing program following the group dinners provided a most unusual surprise for every one. Bill Chapman (340th) had arranged to have an unidentified person as the speaker for the evening. Bill introduced him as a Russian, employed by the Soviet government and working out of the United Nations and the Soviet Embassy to promote trade between the United States and Russia. The man spoke very good English with a Russian accent, and was very straight forward in his strong presentation. He had a question and answer session after the speech. A lot of questions were about the Berlin Wall which was still up at that time. In conclusion, he received a fair applause. Bill then call him back to the mike to add something he hadn't covered in the introduction. He said the speaker was born and educated in the U.S. and was not a Russian at all. Further he was Dr. Charles Vetter who had been used by various U.S. Agencies to present his controversial talk on the U.S. and Soviet relations, while assuming the position of being a Russian diplomat. The main point was "not to believe everything that you see and hear". The experience was very enlightening to all of us.

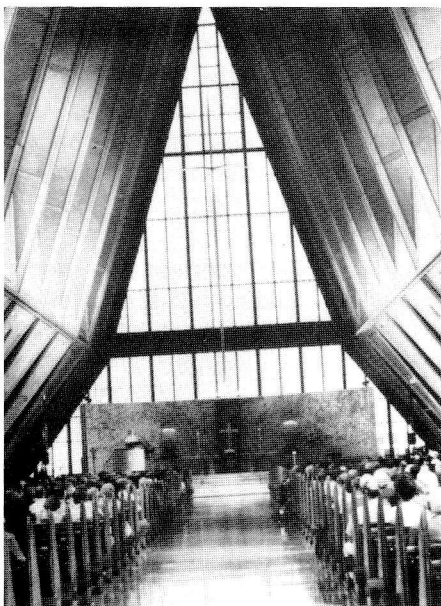
Charles Brewton (439th) was the local chairman for our biggest reunion. John Coffey (380th) was elected President of the Association replacing Burns Day (488th). Dave Mershon (487th) was awarded the Wing Service Award. It was announced that for health reasons Art Barny had resigned as Wing Editor, and Paul Peck (447th) had been appointed in his place.

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### **SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH**

17 - 23 July, 1989

The Association met in Salt Lake City at the Red Lion Inn where LaVar Reese (487th) and Bob Hammar (445th) and their wives put forth a great deal of effort coordinating the Wing's activities with local events. The reunion coincided with the annual Utah Pioneer Days Celebration and especially the "Pioneer Days Parade" featuring many beautiful horses and riders as well as many Conestoga wagons.



Our memorial service  
U.S. Air Force Academy Chapel  
Colorado Springs, CO 1990

**BUT, HERE'S WHERE IT ALL  
COMES TOGETHER.**

The Salt Palace, an arena, was filled with our people to see the rodeo where special mention was made that the 57th Bomb Wing from World War II was in attendance. This resulted in a loud applause. A bus trip was made to Wendover, Utah for games of chance. Also large numbers of people spent time researching their family trees at the famous Latter Day Saints Genealogy Library. The Mormon Tabernacle Choir in rehearsal was another event a large group attended. Here again the Wing was mentioned as being present. City tours were available to the Capital, the Mormon Temple Square and also to the great Salt Lake. The main downtown area is clean and neat with unusually wide streets. The city really did make us feel welcome in every way.

At the reunion, Nick Loveless (486th) was elected president of the Association replacing John Coffey (380th). Bill Chapman (340th) received the Wing Service Award.

A highlight of this reunion was the



The Von Braun Civic Center  
Huntsville, AL 1991



investment of General Knapp, and John Dillin as "Fellows" in the General Jimmy Doolittle Educational Fellowship Program by Jack C. Price, President of the Air Force Association.

## **COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO** 1 - 7 October, 1990

The reunion was held in the scenic splendor of the Rockies at the Sheraton Hotel. John Dillin (57Hq) was the chairman for the affair. This was no easy task when one considers that he lives 1,500 miles away in Florida. Howard Bettinger (445th) and his wife Lee, provided vital local assistance. Local tours were available plus a tour of Pikes Peak. One day was spent at the Air Force Academy with a welcome at Arnold Hall, a Remembrance Day service by Rev. Glenn Black (381st) in the beautiful and unique Cadet Chapel. The cadet formation, and parade at noon, was followed by lunch at the NCO Club, and a visit to the Academy Cemetery which contains our own 57th



cemetery was later than scheduled and had to be shortened due to the burial ceremony for General Curtis LeMay

Of the 634 members at the reunion, 275 spent Saturday afternoon at Falcon Stadium cheering the Air Force Cadets to a 21 - 7 victory over Navy. The weather was great that day, as it had been all week. Some people didn't leave until Monday and when they got up they found about 6 inches of snow had fallen.

All in all it was a very good reunion, enjoyed by everyone, Great events, great scenery and most of all, great fellowship!

Vada Westbrook (445th) was elected President of the Association for the ensuing year and A.A. "Bud" West awarded the 57th Wing Service Award.

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#### **HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA**

7 - 12 October,, 1991

Once again we had a great reunion with close to 550 people in attendance. Old soldiers may pass away, but we airplane drivers just keep going, going, going, going, g o i n g, a n d g o i n g ..

How fortunaste we were to have Charlie Collins and his wife Jane handling the local arrangements. That was no easy task with them living in Birmingham.

The trip to the Space Center was enjoyed by a large number of people. The ladies enjoyed the shopping tour. The antebellum tour in Huntsville was a big attraction. While the Wing banquet was a success, the Barbecue and informal dance at the Jack Daniels Distillery was the highlight event.

At the Men's Business Meeting the body accepted the slate of officers headed by Ken Nelson (379) as President. . John Coffey (380) was presented the Wing Achievement Award.

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#### **IN ADDITION.**

For the members who cannot attend the national reunions the 57th Wing Association holds annual "MINI" reunions. The country is divided into three areas (Eastern, Central and Western). Each year a site is selected in each area for a "MINI". In this manner members who are not able to spent the time or resources, or who are not able to travel greater distances, have a chance to renew their wartime friendships.

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#### **COMING ATTRACTIONS**

##### **COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA**

22 - 27 September, 1992

##### **PORTLAND, OREGON**

6 - 13 September, 1993

##### **OVERLAND PARK, KANSAS**

1994

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## **Travel Together**

Several times, after the reunion was over, a group of members went on a trip or tour. Four times it was back to the Mediterranean area. Other years it was simply a scenic tour of a place of beauty in the United States, and three times they traveled by ship on a cruise.

#### **1973**

A group of forty 57th Bomb Wing people

returned to the Mediterranean on a sentimental journey in October 1973. They returned to the places that had remained in their memory for almost thirty years. Four days on the island of Corsica, a side trip to the Isle of Capri, a lunch on the shore of Lake Garda, a drive through the Po Valley, a visit to Rome. How the memories flooded back! Some of them lunched in the village of Cervione where they found Corsicans who remembered them.

## 1976

Following the reunion the 57th Wing conducted "Operation Friendly Invasion", a return to the Mediterranean. They visited all of locations of the bases, on Corsica, used during the war. They then visited Nice, France, and continued on flying to Milan, Italy, then through the Po Valley as far as Verona. On to Venice the next day, and returning to Verona, Italy to travel northward through the Brenner Pass and on to Innsbruck and Salzburg, Austria, with a visit to Berchtesgaden (Hitler's Eagles Nest) and finally an evening at the Hoffbrauhaus in Munich before the flight back to the U.S.A.

## 1979

Following the reunion a group flew to Hawaii. The purpose of this post reunion trip was purely R & R. A visit was made to the hallowed ground of the Punchbowl National Cemetery.

## 1980

Following this reunion a group of 57th men and women flew to the island of Bermuda for a period of Rest and Recuperation.

## 1981

Following the Seattle reunion fifty men and women flew from Seattle to Victoria, B.C. They then boarded the Cunard Princess for a seven day cruise on the inland waterway to Alaska, and return. The scenery was unbelievably gorgeous.

## 1982

A post reunion trip following the Rapid City reunion was a trip to the Canadian Rockies. On this trip they visited the famous Lake Louise, the Canadian icefields, and took a raft trip on Toby creek. Then returned to Calgary and attended the famous Calgary Stampede, and Chuck Wagon races.

## 1983

Following the Danvers reunion a group flew to Ireland and England. They visited many of

the beautiful places in Ireland, including Blarney Castle with many kissing the "Blarney Stone". Some returned home after the first week, others stayed and visited England during the second week.

## 1984

Following the South Bend Reunion a group once more returned to the Mediterranean area visiting Corsica, Italy and North Africa. While in Tunisia they visited the National Cemetery at Carthage, where they placed a wreath by the "Wall of The Missing" paying homage to Colonel Mills and all of the others who did not return home.

## 1985

Following the Sacramento reunion a number of members and spouses returned to Alaska, via the inland passage aboard the Pacific Princess. While on the trip they had a chance to visit the Vancouver, B.C. and spent two days at EXPO 86.

## 1988

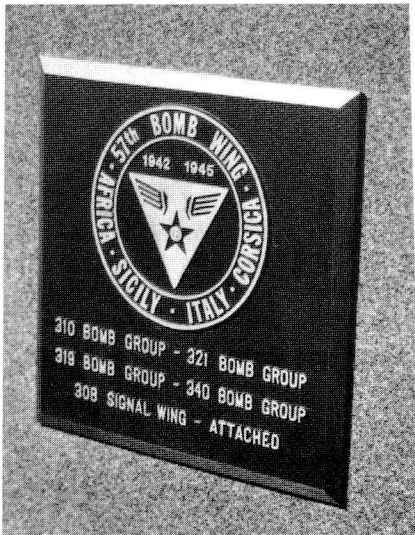
A Post reunion trip to the Panama Canal was in store for those who wished to go following the Orlando reunion. Eighty people who chose to make the trip. After a trip through the locks and a short tour of Lake Gatun, and they went to Cartenega, Columbia for some shopping before flying back to Orlando.

## 1991

In April 1991 a group of members returned once more to the Mediterranean. On this trip they visited the National cemeteries at Anzio and Florence to pay tribute to our fallen comrades. The trip included a short visit to the airfield locations on Corsica. During the visit to the airfield at Solenzara (formerly home to the 321st) where they were treated to a tour of the base (which is now a United Nations Base with French Mirage fighters). The trip continued on to Sicily for a short visit before the flight back.

# AND COMMEMORATES THE PAST

In 1985 the 57th Bomb Wing Association installed a bronze plaque on the Commemorative Wall at the United States Air Force Academy cemetery. The plaque is dedicated to the bombardment groups which were assigned to the 57th Bombardment Wing serving in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations during World War II



Air Force Academy Chaplin  
during dedication 1985 ceremony.

below and right

On 12 September 1986 the 57th Bomb Wing Association dedicated a black granite monument to the Men of the 57th in the Memorial Park at the Air Force Museum Wright Patterson Air Force Base.

left to right

Burns Day 488,

1987 Association President.

Leonard Kaufmann, 489

Master of ceremonies

General Robert D. Knapp 57th Hq.

57th Wing Honorary President

E.V. Johnson 321

Chaplin

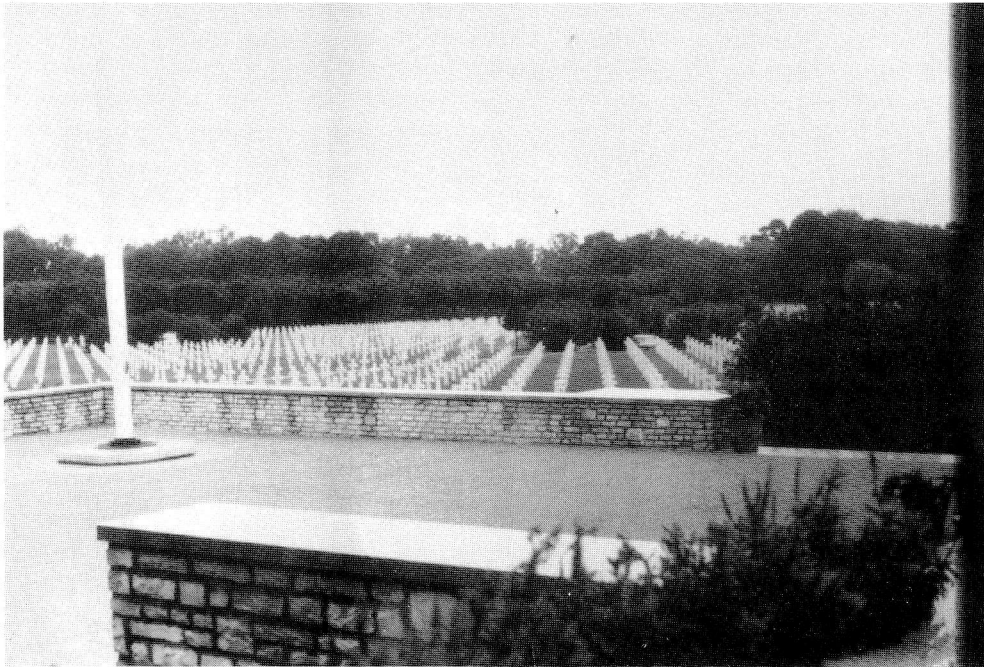
Mr. R. Baughman

Air Force Museum

Harold G. Lynch 489

Speaker









FRANCE

SPAIN

PORTUGAL

MEDITERRANEAN  
SEA

NORTH ATLANTIC

MOROCCO

ALGERIA