

FIRST OVER GERMANY

A STORY OF THE 306th BOMBARDMENT GROUP

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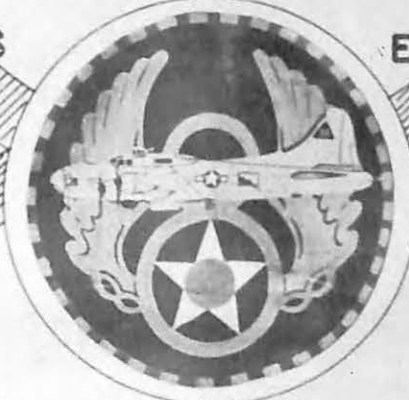
CLAY PIGEONS

368



EAGER BEAVERS

414ASG



369



FIGHTIN' BITIN'

423



GRIM REAPERS

ENGLAND 1942-5



Dedication

To the United States Army Air Forces—to the men who go into the air in ships and to the men who keep the ships in the air—this book is dedicated.

Acknowledgments

In the compilation of this history, I have been much aided in many ways by many people.

I am particularly indebted to hundreds of former members of the 306th and to Mr. Clark Fay, of Sussex, England, for their generosity in placing illustrations at my disposal.

Special thanks are also due former Lieutenant Dwain A. Esper, Jr., for permission to quote extensively from the brief history of the group, which he prepared as Group Historian and to reprint that history in its entirety in the latter part of this volume; to Father Adrian M. Poletti, a Group chaplain, for the chapter which he furnished, and to former Captain William C. Van Norman, who, during the course of his duties as Group Public Relations Officer, did much of the research and gathering of data for the early part of the history, and who, as Public Relations Department head, promulgated such a wealth of publicity stories as to provide the source material from which a large part of this work is derived.

I am grateful also for the help given me in the preparation of this book by Miss Abbie Howard Keith, who read a large part of the manuscript and carefully checked the proofs.

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To the *London Daily Express* for the cartoon, "Taxi," by Giles.

To the Bobbs-Merrill Company for the photograph of Maynard Smith from *Skyways to Berlin* by John M. Redding and Harold Leyshon.

Early Days

This is a story of men.

Courageous, brave men who flew through flak-studded skies to win the Second World War's early air battles.

Men with shrapnel in their sides, flak in their lungs, and high courage in their hearts.

Men forced down into the icy North Atlantic.

Men shot down with their planes, men who died at their guns.

Men who lived dangerously and died recklessly.

Men who tore the Luftwaffe out of the sky to herald the defeat of the Axis

These are the men of the 306th Bombardment Group, who did their gallant part to win the greatest victory in history

* * * *

The story begins on the Ides of March in 1942. Three months previously the civilized world had recoiled at the "dastardly attack on Pearl Harbor." In the Middle East, Field Marshal Rommel seemed to be building up strength for a drive on Suez; Germany was gathering forces for a spring offensive somewhere in Russia; the Japanese had locked up the South Pacific; American soldiers under General MacArthur were making gallant last stands at Bataan and Corregidor at a time when the world had begun to think that the age of heroes had passed, and the United Nations faced the grim possibility that they could lose their war in 1942.

Out of the chaos and confusion of a world at war, the 306th Bombardment Group (Heavy) was born. Unostentatiously it began life at Salt Lake City, Utah, but it was destined, none the less, when it was to come of age to stem the Nazi advance, to prove to the world the value of high altitude daylight bombing and to cover itself with glory, with honors and acclaim.

Lieutenant Colonel Charles "Chips" Overacker was first commanding officer of the group, the nucleus of which arrived at Salt Lake City Air Base on the 16th of March, 1942, and which consisted at the outset of five squadrons: a Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, the 367th, the 368th and the 369th Bombardment Squadrons (H) and the 34th Reconnaissance Squadron (H). First Lieutenants C. A. Polansky, W. A. Lanford, Ralph A. Oliver and J. W. Wilson and Captain Harry J. Holt were given command of the squadrons. With these commanding officers came a few additional pilots, many of whom were to bring renown upon themselves and upon the Group. Among these were Lieutenants Johnnie Regan, Robert C. Williams, "Rip" Riordan, John B. Brady, Charles Flannagan, C. M. Isbell, E. P. "Mal" Maliszewski and R. G. Kahl.

Training started immediately at Salt Lake City Air Base, where three B-18's and one A-17

were placed at the disposal of the group. All available pilots were sent to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to learn the intricacies of four-engined bombers, and the rest, a small group, were assigned to Wendover Field, Utah

Difficulties which these men encountered at Wendover were practically insurmountable. Formerly an emergency landing field and practice bombing target for the more pretentious Salt Lake Base, Wendover was one of those fields which were mushrooming all over the West to accommodate the then greatly expanding United States Army Air Forces.

With characteristic humor, Captain William C. Van Norman, Group Public Relations Officer, described Wendover as a town "boasting 75 inhabitants, one tree, three blades of grass and the Stateline Hotel. The field was situated 120 miles from Utah's capital on the edge of the salt flats. Buildings already there were so few and far between that officers slept six to a room built for two, and if you weren't an officer you did the best you could with tents. Cold nights, snow, and ankle deep mud were the order of the day. Group headquarters, located in the only available shack, was shared by the squadrons, each of which occupied a corner of the room. Group took over the center."

The Salt Flats of Wendover were anything but encouraging to the cadre of men from the 34th Bombardment Group, who viewed forlornly the few tents that had been set up there. In a short space of time, however, an Air Corps Supply Depot was set up, with Lieutenant Butler in charge, and the machinery of operation, set in motion.

The early days at Wendover were given to organization, expansion, construction and training. New arrivals included Lieutenant Colonel Curtis E. LeMay (who was later to become General LeMay and to command the 21st Bomber Command in the Pacific), the Group's first executive officer; Captain D. R. Coleman, the first adjutant; Major Watts S. Humphrey, intelligence officer; Major Delman E. Wilson, operations officer, and Captain C. A. Polansky, supply officer. Found for the first time on the rosters of the group's squadrons are the names of Pervis E. Youree, Maurice V. Salada, Richard B. Adams, Mac McKay, John T. Leahy, W. C. Melton, Frank Watson, Ferguson, Siley and Odle. Before the end of April the Group had received its first B-17 E. It had by then grown in size and in stature; over 400 men were listed on the personnel rosters.

Ground officers from Miami joined the Group, and from technical schools at Lowry, Pendleton, Chanute, Davis-Monathan, Shepard and Yakima fields came specialized ground personnel. The Group's lone B-17 Flying Fortress was in use 24 hours a day.

As May neared its end, there were a few tense days when the Group was alerted, and

some of the combat personnel were assigned to Ephrata for patrol duty at the time of the Jap bombing of the Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians.

Not until June did the 306th bear any semblance to a heavy bombardment group. More pilots and co-pilots, followed in rapid succession by navigators, bombardiers, gunners, mechanics, ordnance men, radio specialists, medics and other varied personnel arrived during the month. By mid-month, the 306th was able for the first time to put up a Flying Fortress with a complete crew. Such names as Bill Raper, Harold Gaslin, Raymond J. Check and Forrest Hartin were added to the rosters and that of Lieutenant Colonel LeMay, subtracted as the last named departed for the 305th Bombardment Group.

Group organization was completed in July. By a new table of organization, the Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and the 425th Ordnance Company, assigned to the 306th, were dissolved and their personnel was absorbed by the remaining squadrons and Group staff.

July, 1942 saw the arrival of intelligence officers, Captain John B. Wright and Captain John A. Bairnsfather, who were later to become the Group S-2 officers. It was a month of intensive flying, training and of the moulding of a heterogeneous body of men into a smoothly functioning unit. More B-17's to work with arrived, and these were run continuously morning, noon and night. Some pilots actually showed an excess of 200 hours of flying time during the month. It was a truly great tribute to the ground crews that this was possible.

At month end there were indications that the Group was ready to assume its war role, to fulfill what the Army euphemistically calls "its primary mission." Royal Air Forces officers visited the base, explained British procedures.

Though they undoubtedly considered it foolhardy to attempt what neither the British nor the Germans had found to be practicable—daylight bombing—they were characteristically British, polite and considerate.

Other preparations pointing to eventual assumption of the 306th war role were the several practice missions to such places as Alamogordo, New Mexico and Muroc, California, where the Group devastated concentrations of simulated enemy forces.

The sure sign came on the 28th of the month when General Olds, commanding general of the 2nd Air Force, inspected the 306th and presented Sergeant's stripes and wings to the aerial gunners. The period of training was nearing the end, the men knew. Movement was imminent.

The orders came through on the 1st of August, 1942, and the Group was divided into air and ground echelons, the former flying with one stop in Illinois, to Westover Field, Massachusetts, and the latter entraining for Richmond, Virginia.

Crews from the air echelon at Westover Field joined the Atlantic submarine patrols

but sighted no subs. In the absence of the ground crews at Westover, all hands pitched in at maintenance and proved to the satisfaction of all that they could take care of the new B-17F's, which were replacing the former E's.

Meanwhile, the ground echelon at Richmond was receiving last minute equipment, a refresher course in basic training and pre-embarkation leaves. On the 14th of the month Richmond personnel were moved to Fort Dix, New Jersey, where they were joined by seventy other officers and men, whose passage with the air echelon had been canceled to lighten the load on the trip across the ocean. Fort Dix meant more drill, more basic training, more equipment.

Orders for embarkation were received on the 30th of August. Leaving behind the 423rd, quarantined because of an epidemic of mumps, the Group travelled by train and ferry to the huge Queen Elizabeth. The 423rd left five days later on the Queen Mary. Both voyages across the Atlantic were without incident, uneventful, that is, from the point of view of enemy action.

The Queens, two liners with a peace-time capacity of three or four thousand each, now housed more than 16,000 men and their equipment. Even with six to eighteen men occupying the various staterooms, only half the men could be accommodated. To take care of the situation, men occupied the staterooms in two 24-hour shifts. One shift occupied E, F and G decks for a day and night. With all port holes sealed, the decks became stuffy and later unbearable when the men, living in smothering juxtaposition, succumbed to seasickness.

On odd days the "steerage shift" moved up to the "sun" deck to brave the wind, the cold and the continuous rain. Preferably for added warmth, the men wrapped up in their blankets in some odd corners in pairs. It was a toss-up which of the two shifts was the more unpleasant.

Only real excitement on shipboard was the radio report emanating from Berlin to the effect that the 306th had been sent to the bottom of the ocean.

The Berlin report that the 306th had gone down to its grave in Davy Jones' locker proved to be as gross an exaggeration as that of Mark Twain's death. If there was any truth in it, as Radio Berlin insisted there was, a wondrous re-incarnation must have taken place, for five days later the Group was rejoicing at the sight of land, the beautiful shores of the Firth of Clyde. The ground echelon disembarked at Greenock, Scotland, and travelled all night by train to Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, arriving there on the 6th of September, 1942.

The air echelon flew by way of Gander Lake, Newfoundland, and Prestwick, Scotland and after a series of unfortunate incidents, reported on the thirteenth of the month at Thurleigh, where the 423rd ground echelon had landed two days previously.

Held up several days by adverse weather conditions, the air echelon arrived minus one

B-17 and its entire crew, lost somewhere between Gander Lake and Newfoundland. No one to this day knows for certain what happened. An explosion was observed 150 miles from Gander Lake, and some regard this as an explanation of the disappearance. In any event, First Lieutenant Leahy and his crew failed to show up at the next stop. The lives of pilot Captain Melton and the crew were saved in a second accident, in which first one, then a second and finally a third engine failed, forcing the pilot to ditch in the Irish Sea.

Thurleigh, which was to be the home of the 306th for more than three years, is located deep in the heart of the John Bunyan country of Bedfordshire. Not unlike Britain's other villages and hamlets, it has its churches and its schools, its pubs and its country lanes, its gardens and green fields. So small a village is Thurleigh that it receives only a scant two paragraphs in the travel book of the King's England series, "The Counties of Bedford and Huntingdon," by Arthur Mee. Mr. Mee says of Thurleigh:

"In this dreamy corner of England sleeps a parson who shepherded his flock through most of the Victorian Era; 60 years Benjamin Trapp was here. Thousands of times he must have looked up at the old windmill signalling to the mighty sycamore on its little hill. The church started by the Normans has still the base of their central tower, and it was the Norman craftsman who fashioned the delightful little sculpture of Adam and Eve about the priest's doorway. They stand by the Tree of Knowledge round which the serpent is entwined. The chancel is 14th century and the nave 15th.

"There is a fire brass showing a knight in armour who may have fought at Agincourt, and an inscription tells us of a vanished picture of Doom from the wall above the chancel arch."

This, then, was dreamy Thurleigh which the 306th was to catapult into Eighth Air Force fame. But the American airmen who were stationed there dreamed not of fame, nor of Thurleigh's Norman church and windmill, but of home and Texas and Maine and California and New York, and they were determined to make the dream come true.

Thurleigh's rich, green acres had been a Royal Air Force field, occupied earlier in the year by a Polish squadron of airmen, who on returning from operations on the Continent inscribed in smoke on a mess ceiling names of the targets they had bombed, a custom which the 306th airmen continued.

The changes required by the 306th's greater numbers and other differences of organization were many. Construction, with all the resulting mud and confusion, went on apace for over six months. Paraphrasing the Churchillian war cry, Master Sergeant James LeGates was wont to refer to those early days as days of "Mud, sweat and tears."

The field was under the aegis of the Royal Air Force, which had left a complement

of officers and men to operate it; to cook the meals and to provide the answers for questions, including the \$64 variety, that might arise. The British liaison officers were of inestimable help and most of the 306th will always remember and appreciate the self-effacing manner in which they gave freely of their knowledge and their experience. Reluctant at first to volunteer information or counsel, they none the less, when specifically asked, were happy to give sound advice based on their years of experience, advice which was sorely needed at the time.

Preparations for the 306th's mission were varied and many. Navigators, for example, had to learn the ways of the British Isles. Splashers, Darky and many other new aids made navigation almost a new science. Operations, flight control, and intelligence officers were assigned to schools and RAF operational stations, and others studied methods of British bomb disposal, chemical warfare, and station defense.

Living conditions at first were crowded, but that was not a new experience for 306th men. Many of the men slept in tents. The officers' mess was operated on a three-shift basis, but only those first in the queues fared well.

FIRST MISSION

The great Fives-Lille locomotive works at Lille, France, was to be the target for the 306th's first mission, and men worked fast and feverishly in preparation for the event.

Following a practice Wing formation flight to the Wash on September 28th, 1942, the 306th was declared to be fully operational. A Public Relations writer, with staccato simplicity, describes the febrile activity that preceded what was to be the biggest American raid up to that time: "Everyone was eager to get going . . . On the night of October 8th, we received the order . . . Ordnance and armament men loaded the ships. Operations, intelligence, navigators, and bombardiers, weather and communications were all worked out until they made a unified pattern. Briefing was accomplished, and by 8:30 o'clock in the morning of October 9, we were ready to take off on our first attack, the great Fives-Lille locomotive works at Lille, France. For the first time the boys learned what it really meant to 'sweat it out'."

Colonel "Chips" Overacker, flying with Captain Johnson of the 369th, took off at 8:30, promptly on schedule. As top turret gunner, he had Lieutenant Colonel Cleveland, Group operations officer. Major Harry Holt, Bill Lanford, and J. W. Wilson led the 367th, 368th and 423rd squadrons, respectively. Other pilots to start out on this historic occasion were Captains Bill Raper and John Regan; Lieutenants Seelos, Smiley, and Smith of the 368th; Major Holt, Captains Terry, Ryan, and Olson and Lieutenants Buckey, McKee and Stewart of the 367th; Lieutenants Isbell, Cranmer and Rioridan of the 369th and Captains McKay, Felts,

Warner, and Barnett of the 423rd. Lieutenant Colonel Delmar Wilson, Group air executive officer, flew with Lt. Brady of the 423rd. Captain Salada was Major J. W. Wilson's co-pilot.

Weather was clear, and the start was auspicious.

Swarms of enemy fighters were observed near the target area, apparently lying in wait for the opening punch. At the target itself, the Thurleigh Forts encountered flak, described in the reports as "intense and accurate." Major Wilson's aircraft received a direct hit on its number three engine. As a result, the propeller started to windmill, and from that moment on, the 423rd, staying with its leader, lagged behind the rest of the Group.

Flak at the target had loosened up the 306th's formation, and the enemy fighters, almost all FW-190's, came swooping down on all stragglers, concentrating on the 423rd squadron, which was of necessity lagging.

The battle was a furious one, in which the Group officially destroyed ten, probably destroyed another 12 and damaged one. It lasted for thirty tense, action-full minutes, this the first big fight encountered by American Fortresses in the European Theater of Operations.

EXPERIMENTS

Results of the Group's first big mission were studied with an eye to future operations, and its successes were weighed against its losses.

Although Barnett's and Bill Warner's planes both came back with over 200 holes in them, no planes were lost to enemy fighters. Rip Riordan made the first of his several consecutive three-engine landings. Captain Olson was shot down over the target by flak.

From a purely bombing standpoint, the Group's first mission was not outstanding, but considered in the light of research into the ways and means of bombing by day, it was a noteworthy success, for it proved that a penetration of enemy territory could be made at altitude by a heavy bombardment group and that Forts could stand up alone against the best of the German fighters.

The Lille mission was the only one accomplished in October. Toward the end of the month, there were many briefings for other raids, particularly for missions on the sub installations at St. Nazaire, but weather, in each case, prevented.

On October 9th, the 39th Service Group, headed by Lieutenant Colonel Johnson arrived at Thurleigh. This group consisted of a Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, the 352nd Service Squadron and the 705th Ordnance Squadron.

November saw the beginnings of our war on the submarine, a war which until the summer of 1943 was to be given first priority in the English-American scheme. The group was briefed for many missions to the sub pens, but weather kept closing in. Men were on

edge, impatient to get going once more. On every clear day attacks were ordered and made. Losses were heavy as enemy fighters learned the sting of the Fort guns.

The 9th of November saw an interesting but costly experiment in low level bombing of St. Nazaire. The mission proved once and for all that the Fort was not a low level bomber against accurate flak. Three ships were lost that day. The remaining crews limped back as far as Port Reath, where they were met by anxious intelligence and operations officers.

Captain Van Norman tells us of a stand-up interrogation there, after which "the crews hit the RAF mess hall and relieved some of their pent-up emotions in the accustomed manner. The English were astounded, and it was some time before American crews were again welcome at that spot. On the next day, those who still had three engines left made the hop back to the home base."

* * * * *

Countless battles filled the skies in the early days, and flak, enemy fighters and the elements contrived to keep combat crews ever on the alert. Historians select a raid on St. Nazaire as an example of what crews faced in those days.

This is the story as recorded in the Group's annals: "At an early stage over the target, Captain Willie William's ship was hit by flak and knocked temporarily out of formation. FW-190's, seeing this, immediately hopped in and attacked viciously. One of the first 20mm explosive cannon shells hit Sgt. Aulenbach, the top-turret gunner, who died before the ship got home. Another shell exploded in the radio room, starting an intense fire. The navigator, Lieutenant Shively, and the bombardier, Lieutenant Ford, started to crawl back to put the fire out. While Shively was crawling along the cat-walk, another 20mm exploded close to his face and knocked him into the bomb-bay, the doors of which had fortunately been recently closed. Ford pulled Shively out, put him on the floor of the radio room and started in on the fire. In the course of pulling the cloth lining from the walls of the radio room, Ford was rather nastily burned but with the help of others finally got the fire out. In the meantime the rudder was shot out of commission, the stabilizers damaged and the flap controls severed.

"It took the combined efforts of Captain Williams and his co-pilot, Lieutenant Junior George, with their feet braced against the stick, to keep the aircraft in level flight. Even then, Captain Williams and his crew might never have made it back had it not been for Lieutenant Wild Bill Casey, another Fortress Pilot, who, seeing the plight of the former, broke formation to provide protective escort for Williams and helped to ward off the attacking FW's. Captain Williams and Lieutenant Ford were awarded the first Distinguished Flying Crosses to be issued to the 306th Bomb Group."

CREWS



Squadrons

As well-known as the 306th was becoming were the four squadrons and their picturesque names: the 367th or *Clay Pigeons*; the 368th or *Eager Beavers*; the 369th, or *Fitin' Bitin'*; and the 423rd or *Grim Reapers*.

Dubbed the *Clay Pigeons* by a *Saturday Evening Post* correspondent, because as one of the members said, "They went down just like clay pigeons, losses were so heavy," the name the 367th had acquired stuck, and by the end of the year 1942 the squadron, in truth, appeared to be living up to it. It seemed for a time that no one could possibly stay in combat in that squadron and survive. Losses were heavy, heavier than those of any other squadron in the ETO at that time, but the calibre of the work of the men behind the planes was evident in the comparatively few turnbacks due to mechanical failure.

During the early part of 1943, the 369th, known as *Fitin' Bitin'*, established the phenomenal record of completing forty-two consecutive missions without loss. This almost unbelievable feat started on the first Wilhelmshaven attack and was broken on the July 29th mission to Kiel. The record stood until after D-Day, when of course, several squadrons in many groups broke it. However, the fact remains that *Fitin' Bitin'* accomplished this remarkable action when the opposition by the Luftwaffe was at its fiercest.

The 368th, or *Eager Beaver* squadron, fully lived up to its name by being the first heavy bombardment squadron in the ETO to drop 1,000 tons on the Nazi war effort. The squadron's semi-official mascot was an old white horse that lived in a field adjacent to the squadron area. Many a time the nag was startled into sudden activity by flare guns fired by exuberant combat men following a particularly successful mission or squadron party.

Most famous of the *Eager Beaver* barracks is the Flak Happy Home and the equally famous inscription over the door, "Through These Portals Pass the Most Flak Happy Men in the World."

The 423rd squadron had a bad time in acquiring a name for itself. Known originally as the *Grim Reapers* it was advised to change the name as it was too grim and the German propaganda department might take advantage of it. The squadron resigned itself to the relatively tame *Fiery Phantoms* until "some high brass somewhere approved the original name." Now it's officially the *Grim Reapers* again. On the 423rd site is the famous barracks building known as *Dingleberry Hall*. Names that will live in the pages of books are scribbled on the walls and doors of *Dingleberry*.



Front Row (left to right) Alexander, ?, W. W. Thomas, "Tom" Legerwood, "Huhey" Toland, Gab Buckey, William Raper (C. O.), "Doc" ?, "Dick" Walck, "Dinnie" Furrmeister, Zias Davis. Between and behind Buckey and Raper—"Johnny" Ryan (escapee). Middle row: "Bill" Tachmeier, Alexander, Larch Robinson, Hugh Phelan, ?, "Tommy" Watt, "C. D." Moore, "Red" ?, "Ras" Rasmussen, Art Titus, Frank Kooima, ?. Rear row: Tillery, C. D. Brown, "Doug" White, ?, "Bill" Cunningham, "Benny" Benson, ?, "X" Pierce, Walt Morey, John Fogarity, ?, J. Brown, "Mac" McKern.





First Row (left to right) Lt. E. Bunnell, 1st pilot; Lt. G. Rawlings, 2nd pilot; Flight Officer D. Holland, Navigator; Lt. H. Bloom, Bombardier. Second row: Cpl. L. Smith, Engineer and Gunner; Cpl. R. Fistos, Radio Operator and gunner; Cpl. T. Dykstra, lower turret gunner; Cpl. W. Gardiner, right waist gunner and assistant engineer; Cpl. V. Ray, upper turret gunner and assistant radio operator; Cpl. R. Boylson, tail gunner, best in his class.



Back Row (left to right) Lt. M. A. Myerson, Navigator; Lt. R. W. Weihrdt, Bombardier; Lt. E. R. Barr, co-pilot; 1st Lt. H. W. Barrett, pilot. Front Row: S/Sgt. C. M. Price, tail gunner; S/Sgt. C. M. Cresswell, ball turret; S/Sgt. A. R. Capen, left waist gunner; S/Sgt. C. L. Lantz, right waist gunner; T/Sgt. H. A. Chavez, radio operator; T/Sgt. D. V. Bouchelle, engineer, top turret gunner.



Front Row (left to right) Lt. Kearney, Lt. Moore, Lt. Blair, Lt. Dickerson. Back row: Sgt Pomykal, Sgt. Thixtun, Sgt. Fredrick, Sgt. Wiley, Sgt. Odstrcil.



Irving B. Pedersen and crew



Top Row (left to right) Lt. Roger S. Lindsay, bombardier; Lt. Byron C. Bryant, co-pilot; Captain Vimneye, pilot; Captain Wiley W. Glass, intelligence officer; Lt. Kermit B. Cavedo, navigator. Bottom row: Harry W. Hoser, tail gunner; Carl E. Trymore, ball gunner; Bill S. Brown, radio gunner; Steven H. Hollesman, waist gunner; and Paul Fowbet, engineer gunner.



Back Row (left to right) Hank Somers, Lt. Fallow, Capt. Schoolfield, Lt. Mazanek, Lt. Kelly (shot down 10/14/43). Front row: Joe Stoner, Bruce Hardy, Bert Perlmutter, Bob Conlwy (wounded 10/14/43)



Left to right: T/Sgt. George A Stephens, crew chief and aerial gunner; 1st Lt. Wallace W. Young, first pilot; 2nd Lt. Dawlton Gray, co-pilot; and S/Sgt. Wymond B. Wilson, tail gunner.



Left to right: William C. Elliott, Morris J. Gecowets, Charles W. Raidline, Joe R. Borgyn McClellan, Patley D. Small, William J. Casey, Edward J. O'Brien, W. H. Owens



Left to right: John W. Coyne, pilot; Robert W. Schroeder, co-pilot; Paul C. Wagner, Navigator; Warren Tryloff, Bombardier. Second row: Cpl. Gardener, engineer; Cpl. Dicker, radio operator; Cpl. Spraggins, waist gunner; Cpl. Brizzi, lower ball gunner; Cpl. Trobaugh, upper local gunner; Cpl. Clement, tail gunner.



1st Lt. James Butler, 2nd Lt. James G. Woolbright, 2nd. Lt. Charles R. Lemon, S/Sgt. Guy E. Bosworth, S/Sgt. Charles R. White, S/Sgt. James A. Feigum, S/Sgt. Billy J. Hensley.



Front Row (left to right) Lt. Charles F. Manning, Pilot; Lt. Jack Ginn, co-pilot; Flight Officer Norman Schmieal, Navigator; Lt. Jack Self, Bombardier. Back row: Bill Nusser, engineer and waist gunner; Vincent Johnson, radio operator; Edwin Dewey, waist gunner; Harry L. Gile, ball turret gunner; John Cox, pepper turret gunner; Vincent Donohoe, tail gunner.



Capt. Jack R. Lewis and crew



Left to right: Whitman, Camerson, Magness, Mostek, Johnson, Pate, Helms, Whitt, Haggerty, Henry, Mills, Nelson, Collier Bates.



Rich, Hodges, Eggleston, Lemmon, Townley, Freeman, Riha, Teets, Ryan.



Kneeling (left to right) S/Sgt. Dick Schneider, engineer; S/Sgt. Stan Pierce, ball gunner; T/Sgt. "Red" Hall, radio operator. Standing: 2nd. Lt. Stan Burns, co-pilot; 1st Lt. Fred W. Mitchf, pilot; 2nd. Lt. Bowen, bombardier; 1st. Lt. Bill Neilson, navigator.



Standing (left to right) 1st Lt. Neal Perkins, co-pilot; 1st Lt. Raymond S. Birdwell, pilot; 1st Lt. Sam Goldberg, navigator; S/Sgt. R. J. Montague, waist gunner; Lt. Tony Baurlich, bombardier; S/Sgt. Tom W. Parker, tail gunner; Kneeling: S/Sgt. Pinson O. Luthi, ball gunner; T/Sgt. Bob Roach, engineer; and T/Sgt. A. A. Burns, radio operator.



F/O Barney Price, co-pilot; Alvin Schuening, Pilot; Robert Glood, Bombardier; Jack Hamilton, Navigator; Sgt. Ashley, Sgt. Ambler, Sgt. Carnisky and Sgt. Leon Curry.



Left to right: Smith, Togalier, Powell, ball gunner; Traeger, tail gunner; Oscherwatz, navigator; Vick, co-pilot; Gooch, pilot. Front row: Balton, engineer; Howard, radio operator.

Standing (left to right) Irwin Frank, tail gunner; Ben Schribner, ball turret; W. P. Lewis, engineer; Herbert Bellet, radio. Kneeling: Jerry Scannell, waist gunner; Bill Murray, bombardier; Harold Trease, pilot; and Jack Snobble, co-pilot.



Top Row (left to right) S/Sgt. Sheldon, S/Sgt. Arbeiter, Sgt. Boersma. Middle row: S/Sgt. Shipley, T/Sgt. Durham, T/Sgt. Hall. Bottom row: Capt. Rozett, Lt. Strode, Lt. Kramer, Lt. Christenson.



Henry Kelling and crew



1942 Inventory

The 306th was fast earning a name for itself as the "fightingest group in England," and as 1942 came to an end, it had become a "veteran outfit" in every sense of the word.

On December 10, 1942, under authority of the British Air Ministry and the Commanding General, European Theater of Operations, the RAF Station known as Thurleigh was officially transferred from the Royal Air Force to the United States Army Air Forces. In a simple but impressive ceremony, the Stars and Stripes were raised on the flagpole, and Colonel Overacker was given responsibility for local defense and command of the station. This was the first instance of transferring an RAF Station to the United States Army Air Forces, a formality which set a precedent.

As the year ended, the Group took inventory of its assets and discovered that they were prodigious.

Systems devised by the 306th were adopted by the entire Eighth Air Force as *standard operating procedure*.

Lieutenant Jimmie Dawson, with the aid of other ordnance officers, devised a method of fusing bombs after they had been loaded on planes, so satisfactory that it was adopted by all groups. For this work, he was later awarded the Legion of Merit.

During the closing weeks of 1942, the 367th Squadron armorer and welder, working together with whatever pieces they could find to put together, fabricated a new type mount for the .50 calibre machine gun, permitting it to fire straight ahead from the nose of the B-17. This mount was later approved at Langford Lodge and adopted by the Eighth Air Force, and the two boys were awarded the Legion of Merit for their work.

The Medical Department had also been ingeniously busy. Not only did they change and improve an RAF stretcher permitting the safe evacuation of wounded from any part of the Fortress but, in addition, they devised a method whereby returning planes carrying wounded aboard could be quickly spotted by ambulances and the control tower. Employing the new method, an incoming plane fires two red flares as it approaches the runway and then keeps its flaps down after coming to a halt. This was soon found to be of great practical value as it saved many precious minutes, and eventually it was adopted by other groups.

Any inventory of 1942 should include mention of the clever and resourceful work of the men on the line. Spare parts were for the most part unavailable in those first months of oper-

ations. Lacking those parts, these boys were forced to take what was needed from more badly damaged plane wings, engines or other parts to patch up planes which had perhaps suffered less damage and could be repaired in a shorter time. It was a common sight to see a damaged plane slowly disappear, part by part, "devoured by the battle activated appetites of the others." It was in truth a cannibalistic system with only the strongest surviving and living off the wings, engines and other sections of the weaker.

A summation of the year's accomplishments should also include proof, that despite the fact that only 50 to 72 aircraft participated in the missions, the 306th had succeeded where both the RAF and the Germans had failed, in the matter of daylight precision bombing. "We had proved, irrefutably," the Group commander said, "that we could meet the best the Luftwaffe could put up against us, we could pierce the fighter belt, including those wizards of the sky, the yellow nosed *Abbeville Kids* and could bomb our targets and get back. We had proved our case by the end of the year 1942."



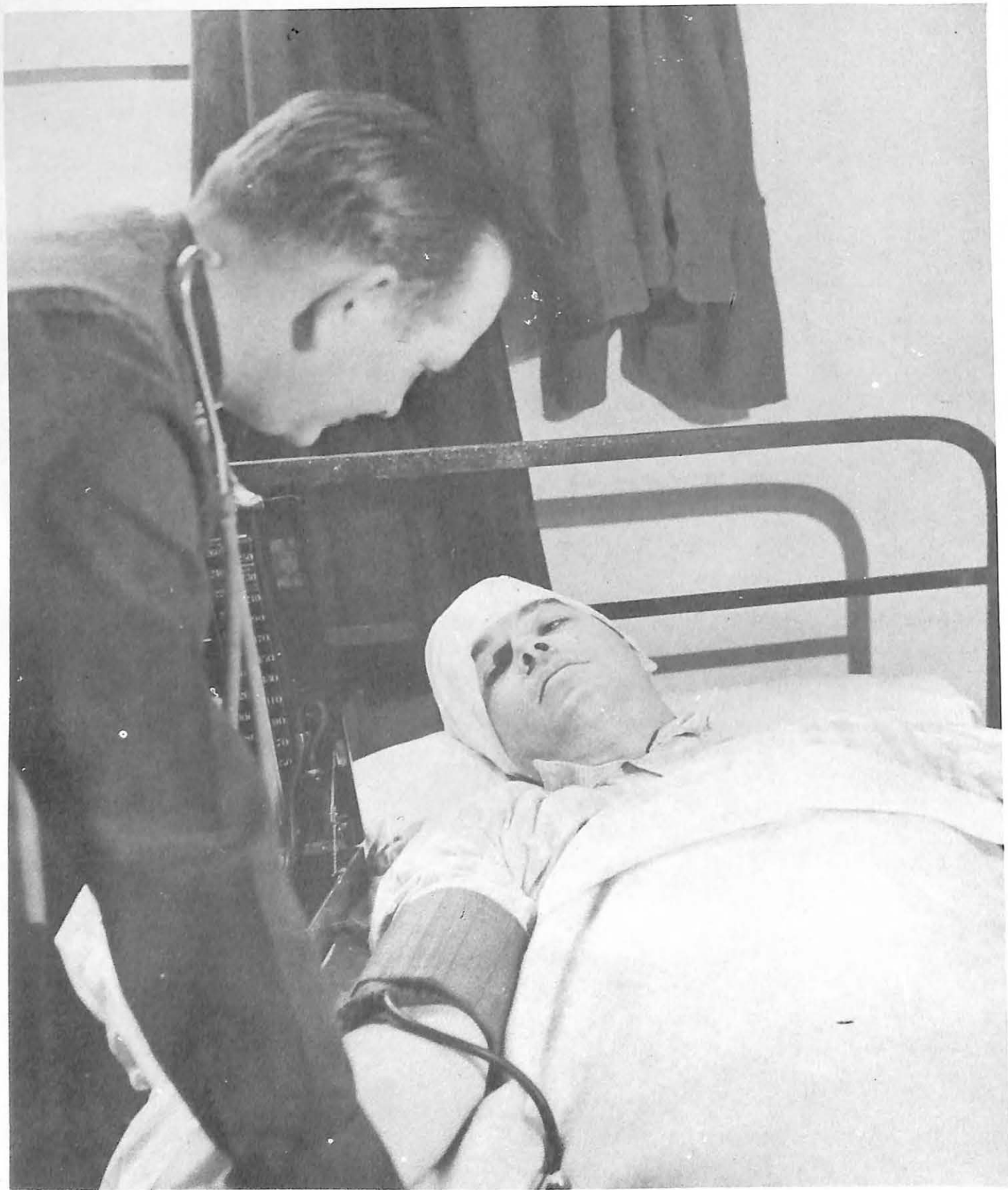
Many precious lives were saved by the flare-warning method of announcing returning planes carrying wounded. At the signal, medics rushed into action. The photographs on this page and the one immediately following were selected by Eighth Air Force Public Relations for inclusion in a directive of suggestions for all Public Relations Officers in the Eighth. They depict medics awaiting the return of bombers; the two-flare warning; first-aid administered in the plane; the gunner being carried from the plane in a Neil-Robinson litter; the Group surgeon treating the patient; the patient convalescing.



U.S.

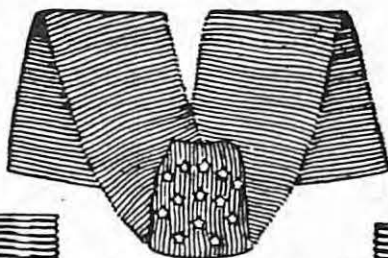






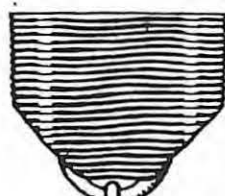
Decorations

America's
highest award
for Individual
heroism



**OAK LEAF
CLUSTER**

For each additional
award of any one
decoration.



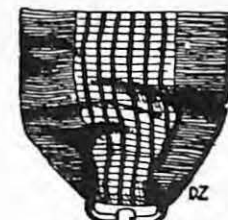
DIST. SERV. CROSS



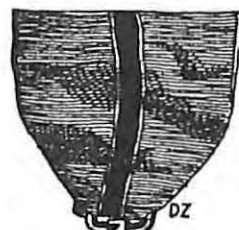
MEDAL OF HONOR



DIST. SERV. MEDAL



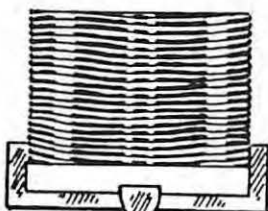
SOLDIER'S MEDAL



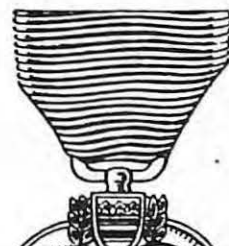
BRONZE STAR



SILVER STAR



DIST. FLYING CROSS



ORDER PURPLE HEART

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

Congressional Medal of Honor:	1	Air Medal	:	14,094	
Distinguished Service Cross	:	7	Soldier's Medal	:	5
Legion of Merit	:	5	Purple Heart	:	447
Silver Star	:	39	Foreign Decorations	:	10
Distinguished Flying Cross	:	1,511			
Bronze Star	:	65	TOTAL		16,184

**AIR OFFENSIVE, EUROPE
NORMANDY
NORTHERN FRANCE**



**ARDENNES
RHINELAND
CENTRAL EUROPE**

Heroes

"One of the most outstanding acts of bravery ever demonstrated by any man was accomplished on January 3, 1943," says Historian Dwain A. Esper, Jr. In an attack on St. Nazaire, the Fortress piloted by Lt. Granner received severe damage from fighters and flak. FW's kept driving in for a kill as the plane was on its return journey. Granner was forced to ditch in the Channel, and as the crew members climbed out of the sinking aircraft, the enemy fighters began machine-gunning the helpless men. Suddenly, the top turret guns of the submerged bomber began firing at the murderous FW's. Technical Sergeant Arizona Todd Harris, engineer, had climbed back into his turret and was firing his guns in an attempt to protect his crew. When last seen, the Fortress was slipping under water and two smoking guns were still firing. Arizona Harris drowned at his post manning the guns. The Group's first Distinguished Service Cross was awarded posthumously to this boy from Arizona, whose name was never forgotten on the station.

The citation accompanying his award read:

Award of Distinguished Service Cross. Under the provisions of Army Regulations 600-45, as amended, a Distinguished Service Cross is awarded the following enlisted man:

Arizona T. Harris Army Serial No. 6296272. Technical Sergeant, 306th Bombardment Squadron (H), Army Air Forces, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an armed enemy of the United States. While on a combat mission over enemy-occupied Continental Europe, the airplane in which he was serving as top-turret gunner was badly damaged by enemy anti-aircraft fire and forced out of formation. A large force of enemy fighter planes then concentrated their attacks on this lone airplane, finally driving it to a crash landing in the sea. Throughout the descent, and as the airplane disappeared beneath the waves, Sergeant Harris was seen to be still firing his guns at the enemy airplanes. The dogged determination to fight against all odds and sheer bravery displayed by Sergeant Harris upon this occasion uphold the highest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States.

Another act of heroism which goes unsurpassed in the brilliant annals of Eighth Air Force history took place on the Group's seventh attack on St. Nazaire on May 1, 1943. This is the story as recorded in Group history:

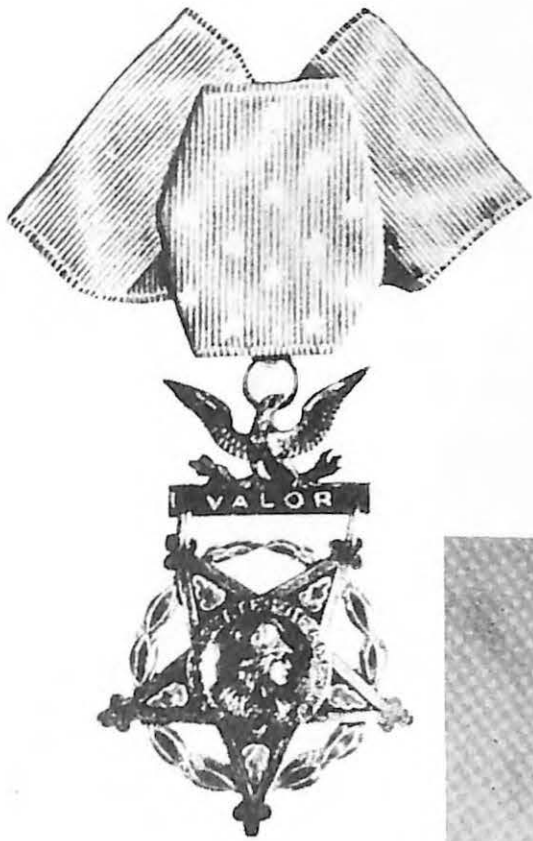
Heavy undercast caused a gross error in navigation when the 306th led by Colonel Putnam, mistook the Brest peninsula for Land's End on the return. Having let down over enemy occupied territory to 500 feet, the formation encountered intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire. The aircraft piloted by Lt. Johnson of the 423rd received crippling hits

by flak. The ship was burning in the radio room. The tail gunner was badly wounded. The radio operator and the two waist gunners, believing the plane doomed, bailed out. Left alone in the rear part of the ship, separated from his comrades in this nose by the raging fire and with a badly wounded man on his hands was a ball turret gunner on his first mission, Sergeant Maynard H. "Snuffy" Smith of Caro, Michigan. "Snuffy" took quick stock of the situation and immediately, without a thought of his personal safety, went to work. He worked on the fire with hand extinguishers until they ran dry. Then in angry desperation, he urinated on the flames and finally beat on them with his hands. Simultaneously, Smith was jumping from waist gun to waist gun, firing effectively at attacking FW's and rendering excellent first-aid to the wounded tail gunner. He heaved overboard .50 calibre ammunition that was exploding from the heat. Coolly and continuously working at all these jobs, Smith kept it up until the ship made an emergency landing at a British field on the coast. In the words of his pilot, Lieutenant Johnson, "It was God's will and Smith's courage and tenacity that kept my ship from burning in half in the air." In July, 1943, Secretary of War Stimson arrived at Thurleigh and, on behalf of the President and Congress of the United States, bestowed on Sergeant Smith the Congressional Medal of Honor.

A popular figure on the station was Captain William J. Casey, who impressed everyone with his courage and determination to go to the aid of crippled ships. On several occasions, *Wild Bill*, seeing a B-17 in trouble or straggling, would leave the comparative safety of the formation and exposing his aircraft to the Luftwaffe, come to the aid of the stricken ship. His actions saved many lives, and his name became legend on the station. He was shot down over Bremen, in one of the Group's roughest missions, on the 17th of April, 1943, but the Group soon rejoiced when a card was received from Casey himself stating that he was a prisoner of war in Germany.

The Group suffered a great blow on June 26th, 1943, when Lieutenant Colonel J. W. Wilson flew Captain Raymond Pappy Check to Tricqueville on the latter's 25th and final mission. Lieutenant Esper reported that the "Luftwaffe attacked on the bomb run, and a 20mm explosive shell smashed into the cockpit, killing Check instantly. Col. Wilson who had volunteered to fly 'Pappy' was severely burned. Fortunately, Lieutenant Bill Cassidy, Check's regular co-pilot, was flying as waist gunner that day just for the ride, and he managed to bring the ship back with the assistance of the badly burned Wilson. Personnel on the station mourned the death of Pappy Check for many months. Lieutenant Colonel Wilson was subsequently awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and Purple Heart."

Congressional Medal of Honor



Sgt. Maynard H. "Snuffy" Smith

VIII·US·BOMBER·

COMMAND·ENGLAND·



CAPT·R·J·CHECK·
MINOT·NORTH·DAKOTA·
1943·



Clark Fay

VIII·US·BOMBER·

COMMAND·ENGLAND·

STAFF·SGT·M·H·SMITH·
CARO·MICHIGAN·
1943·



Clark Fay

VIII U.S. BOMBER COMMAND ENGLAND

I LT RALPH W JONES
LOS ANGELES
CALIFORNIA



Clark Fay

VIII U.S. BOMBER COMMAND ENGLAND

I LT
E W FORD
SILOAM SPRINGS
ARKANSAS
1943



Clark Fay

VIII·U·S·BOMBER·

COMMAND·

ENGLAND·

CAPT·J·H·DEXTER·
LITTLE·ROCK·
ARKANSAS·
1943·



Clair Fay



VIII·U·S·
BOMBER·COMMAND·
ENGLAND·

II·LT·
L·C·SUGG·
HUNTSVILLE
ALABAMA·
1943·



Clair Fay

VIII·U·S·BOMBER·COMMAND

ENGLAND.

STAFF·SGT.

W·W·FAHRENHOLD

McKEES·ROCKS·PENN.

1943



Clark Fay

VIII·U·S·BOMBER·

COMMAND·ENGLAND

II·LT·ROBERT·M·CALLUM

OMAHA·NEBRASKA·

1943.



Clark Fay

VII·U·S·BOMBER·COMMAND·ENGLAND·

LT·ROBERT·SMITH·
LEMESA·TEXAS·
1943·



Clark Fay

VII·U·S·BOMBER·COMMAND·ENGLAND·

MICHAEL
ROSKAVITICH·
FAYETTE·CITY
PENN·
1943·



Clark Fay



First Over Germany

A date long to be remembered by the old timers of the 306th is January 27, 1943. It marked the first American attack on Germany proper. It was, in fact, the date of the "first offensive action by any American unit, in any branch of the service, in any war against German soil." It was with a feeling of pride that the news that the 306th was to lead the Eighth Air Force on this particular mission was received by the Group.

The plan called for crossing the enemy coast over the Frisian Islands and attacking the U-boat pens at Vegesack, as the primary target. Once over Germany, however, it became evident that cloud cover over the vicinity of Bremen would prevent any kind of a bombing run; so, General Armstrong, leading the Group, headed the force of 55 B-17's towards the last resort target at Wilhelmshaven. Even here the weather was poor, but the Group bombardier, Lieutenant Frank Yaussi, taking advantage of a small break in the clouds, and followed by others in the Group, dropped his bombs with generally good effect in the dock area.

All types of German fighters, including FW-190's, JU-88's, ME-109's, ME-110's and a few ME-210's, came up to meet this first threat against the Fatherland, but it was evident that the Nazi pilots were not made of the same stuff as the veterans encountered in the "Fighter Belt." Lieutenant Esper reports an interesting comment by 306th crews to the effect that the fighter opposition in the Reich was not of the same calibre as that, for example, of the *Abbeville Kids*. Although there was a running fight a good half way across the North Sea, the Group lost not a single plane on this mission.

Pilots participating in this raid were General Armstrong, leading, with Major Putnam as co-pilot, Lieutenant Bill Warner, Lieutenant Raymond Check, Captain Johnnie Regan, Captain Jack Ryan, Lieutenant Buddenbaum, Lieutenant Buckey, Captain Mac McKay, Lieutenant R. W. Jones, Lt. Mal. Malzewski, Lieutenant Warren George, Lieutenant Hennessey, Lieutenant Bill Rober, Captain Rip Riordan, Captain Gillogly and Captain R. W. Smith.



Distinguished Visitors

First of the Group's distinguished visitors were King George, VI, Queen Elizabeth and Princess Elizabeth of England, who visited Thurleigh on November 13, 1942, toured the various sites, mess halls, and clubs and chatted with ground men and combat crews. The royal visitors headed a long line of notables who have been guests at the station, a list which was to include King Peter of Yugoslavia; British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden; Roman Catholic Archbishop (now Cardinal) Francis J. Spellman of New York; Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War; Robert A. Lovett, Assistant Secretary of War for Air; General Carl Spaatz, Commander of the United States Strategic and Tactical Air Forces in Europe; General James H. Doolittle, Commander of the Eighth Air Force, and General Jacob L. Devers, Commanding officer of the European Theater of Operations, now head of the Army Ground Forces.

Present at Thurleigh for the opening on the 21st of February, 1943, of the first of the Red Cross Aeroclubs in the British Isles was Major General Ira C. Eaker, Commanding General, at that time, of the Eighth Air Force, who accepted the club on behalf of the men from Harvey D. Gibson, American Red Cross Commissioner.

The first plane named for Princess Elizabeth, daughter of the King and Queen of England, was the ill-fated *Rose of York*, christened in July, 1944 at Thurleigh by the Princess in a ceremony attended by King George and Queen Elizabeth.

Rose of York, on a daylight bombing attack against Berlin on February 3, 1945, was struck by intense anti-aircraft fire. An engine was shot off and gasoline leaked from a second engine. The crippled Fort began to lag behind the formation and headed for home alone.

Last news of the plane was that shortly after leaving the enemy coast, the pilot radioed that he was flying on only two of the four engines but that he had the machine under control and hoped to reach England. The hope was vain.

Guy Byam, British Broadcasting Corporation war reporter, who jumped with the British parachute troops on D-Day and later at Arnheim, was a passenger on the plane. Byam, slim and youthful, flew with the *Rose of York* to make a recording for broadcast by the B.B.C. He previously flew with the R.A.F. Bomber Command in an attack on the German battleship *Tirpitz* and survived the sinking of the *Jervis Bay* after it had been torpedoed.

A guest at the station at the christening of *The Rose of York*, Guy Byam knew and understood the Fortress crews and he knew the bombers too. In tribute to the popular newspaperman, a new ship was named *For Guy Byam*.



Just before the christening of "Rose of York." You can see the bottle hanging behind the head of the Queen. Princess Elizabeth with bouquet, is walking toward the nose of the ship. The plane's combat crew is lined up on this side, the ground crew on the far side



The Queen and the Princess surrounded by rank in one of the hangars. The King was also present for this christening.





History Made By Day

In 1943 the 306th went on to new triumphs in the skies.

Night and day bombing by the RAF and AAF, respectively, was to prove its effectiveness. "The bold and uncompromising American doctrine of dealing strategic blows at the enemy's economic and industrial support of the war effort by means of daylight precision bombing seemed to run counter to experience of air warfare in Europe," but the Eighth had achieved sufficient results to convince the Combined Chiefs of Staff that it would provide a powerful daylight partner to the RAF's night assaults.

The Eighth had an opportunity to prove its point on the 23rd of January, 1943, when the 306th bombed Lorient. That night the RAF attacked the same target, hurling bombs upon fires still burning as a result of the daylight action of the 306th. This mission termed the "first Combined Operations" was the first test of a new deal, of teamwork between the air forces of the two Allied countries, of a method of bombing which, in May of 1943 at Hamburg, and, after that, at Berlin, Leipzig, Stuttgart, Kassel, Brunswick, Frankfurt and many other German cities, was to be applied so effectively and devastatingly.

Major Raper led the 306th on the first Schweinfurt raid on August 17, 1943, in which 180 Eighth Air Force B-17's participated and

dropped 485 tons of high explosives and 88 tons of incendiaries on the German ball-bearing plants, which the Eighth was determined should be destroyed. That day also initiated the shuttle missions, with the Eighth dispatching other aircraft to Regensburg, South Bavaria, thence to Italy. The Group sustained the operation without a loss although it was one of the costliest affairs in the air campaign.

The Group participated again in a Schweinfurt raid on October 14, 1943. The 306th, led by Captain Schoolfield, took off with other groups and headed for the target. Opposition was terrific as the Germans fanatically defended the vital factory. Bombers, fighters, and parachutes filled the sky. Planes were going down by the scores, but the bomb run was made, and the high explosives cut down the ball bearing production by 75 per cent. The price was high. This group alone lost half of the ships dispatched. Twenty bombers took off that morning. Only ten returned. Group Leader, Captain Schoolfield of the 369th, who received four Distinguished Flying Crosses during his combat tour, was awarded one of his clusters on that day.

The First Air Division, of which the 306th was a part, received the Presidential Unit Citation on January 11, 1944, for an attack on heavily defended Nazi aircraft factories in central Germany. Heavy bombers of the Eighth dropped 1,258 tons of bombs on JU-88 factory



at Halberstadt, ME-100 assembly plants at Brunswick and Focke-Wulf factory at Oschersleben. The 306th was on its 100th mission and the Group's commanding officer, Colonel Robinson, was flying the lead. The target for the day was Halberstadt. Very poor weather conditions caused a recall in the fighter support. As a result, the Luftwaffe rose in force to intercept. A violent air battle ensued, but despite terrific losses, the First Air Division's Flying Fortresses fought their way to and from the targets. The excellence of the bombing results and the courage of the crews brought about the citation.

The Group received a First Air Division citation for its part in the Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces' co-ordinated attacks on Halberstadt, Oschersleben, Bernburg, Regensburg, and other German targets of opportunity.

The citation follows: THE 306th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) is cited for extraordinary heroism, determination and esprit de corps in action against the enemy on 22 February 1944. On this date the 306th Bombardment Group (H), utilizing B-17 aircraft, took off from base in England to attack an enemy aircraft assembly plant located at Bernberg, in central Germany. In accomplishing assembly into combat formation persistent condensation trails and dense clouds were encountered up to 18,000 feet. This unit exhibited a high degree of skill and persistence, successfully completing assembly and continuing on course across the English Channel in the face of adverse weather conditions. Many units were recalled and a number of formations to the rear were observed to turn back at the Dutch coast. Displaying exemplary determination and esprit de corps, the 306th Bombardment Group (H), without support of a rearward bomber stream or escorting fighters, maintained course and position over 200 miles of enemy territory to the Initial Point. In the face of opposition from enemy anti-aircraft fire this unit executed, with marked timing and co-ordination, a highly effective bomb run on the target. Bombs were dropped in a concentrated pattern causing widespread damage to the enemy aircraft assembly sites and buildings. Shortly thereafter a formation of German ME-109's, flying approximately 3,000 feet above, initiated diving head-on attacks which continued unrelentingly for half an hour. Exhibiting exceptional skill and gunnery, the 306th Bombardment Group (H) warded off these attacks and proceeded on until, in the vicinity of Koblenz, Germany, a large force of FW-190's opened fire on the formation. Despite the courageous defense maintained, the enemy fighter aircraft repeatedly carried out sharp and vigorous attacks until the Dutch coast was reached. The remainder of the flight to homebase in England was negotiated without further incident although all of the twenty-

three (23) aircraft returning received battle damage, twenty of major proportions. In the performance of this operation the 306th Bombardment Group (H) suffered the loss of seventy officers and men and, notwithstanding, displayed the highest intrepidity and determination. The gallantry, courage and esprit de corps demonstrated by this unit in overcoming extremely hazardous and adverse combat conditions to execute successfully its assigned tasks reflect the highest credit upon the 306th Bombardment Group (H) and the Armed Forces of the United States.

Word was going around that Berlin, or the Big-B, which had its first AAF bomber attack on March 4, 1944, was soon to feel the full weight of the Eighth Air Force. Following several abortive briefings, the Group finally took off on March 6, 1944, led by Captain Thompson, and attacked the heart of the Third Reich. The bombers met surprisingly light opposition over the capital, and only one ship, piloted by Lieutenant Smith, of the 367th, was damaged and forced to make an emergency landing in Sweden. This attack proved that the Eighth could and would attack targets in Germany in spite of any opposition. It had air superiority.

D-Day came suddenly, June 6, 1944. The air was charged with something electric. "This is it!", men half-whispered as a tense, quick briefing took place in the morning. Three ground support missions were flown during the day, with many crews flying two out of the three. Bombers, fighters, and gliders streamed over the station hour after hour, in a never-ending procession. Radios blared the news of the assault on the Continent of Hitler's once vaunted Fortress Europe, the invasion coasts of which had taken a terrific pounding for two weeks before the big day. "It was a great day for the Air Forces," men declared when the news that the beachhead was secure was received at Thurleigh. Men landing on the beaches were loud in their praise of the heavy and accurate attacks by the co-ordinating Air Forces.

In a tremendous combined assault on German oil production, the 306th went after the huge refinery in Hamburg on June 20, 1944. Lieutenant Colonel Chalfant led. Jerry flak was intense; bombardiers, Lieutenants Franze and Lieutenant Tannella, however, laid their eggs right on the aiming point. Smoke from the burning refinery rose to 10,000 feet. Pilots, Lieutenant Raster and Lieutenant Switzer, and Bombardier, Lieutenant Tannella, all received the Distinguished Flying Cross for performances on this attack.

Lieutenant Colonel Chalfant led the group on September 12, 1944 to Ruhland when the last great air battle between the 306th and the Luftwaffe occurred. As the formation passed near the northern outskirts of Berlin on the

route in, German fighters attacked in quick passes. Losses for the mission were high, and Lieutenant Donkin's aircraft received very severe damage, necessitating a crash landing. His skill in bringing the Fortress and crew back to England netted him the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The months following saw a succession of attacks against the Nazi war effort: submarine pens, oil storage depots and refineries, transportation facilities, communications systems, aircraft manufacturing plants, V-weapon factories and launching sites; and tactical attacks in co-ordination with ground troops.

Men were coming and going, leaving stories behind them . . . Captain Isaacs, bombardier of *Fitin' Bitin'*, had a morbid fear of falling into Gestapo hands. Isaacs had three sets of dog tags. When flying over occupied France, he wore tags lettered "Francois D' Isaacs;" Over Germany, it was "Otto Mac-Isaacs." He wasn't taking any chances . . . Captain Klette, the only pilot in the group to land a B-17 with one engine and a flat tire . . . Captain Claeys, the boy who loved to fly—combat or slow time, it meant no difference to Claeys. On his day off, he would haunt the operations section for a practice flight. He never took a pass or left the station while he was overseas. Claeys finally was ordered to the *Flak Home* and dragged off under protest. He wound up with 70 missions . . . Sergeant

(later Lieutenant) Roskovitch, the *Mad Russian*, the first man to complete a tour of operations in the ETO. "Rocky" was killed in a tragic accident several months later . . . Captains George, Patton, and Owen, ground officers, were shot down while flying as observers. All three bailed out and spent the rest of the war in Stalag Lufts . . . Sergeant Cordery, the ex-first sergeant, a six-foot tall tail gunner . . . Sergeant Rodgers, ex-Hollywood stunt man, and his almost human dog, *Mister*. The dog flew with Rodgers wearing a specially made oxygen mask and completed five missions before it was discovered and stopped . . . The hefty mess sergeant, for some reason called *Goat*.

As the war was drawing to an end in early 1945, the 306th pointed the bulk of its efforts to the destruction of the Wehrmacht's communications lines. The tempo and effectiveness of the attacks reached an all-time high. Major D. R. Ross, Group bombardier, led the way with a series of excellent results, most notable of which was the attack on Bohlen, March 2, for which he received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

"In the mounting fury of the combined attack on the armed forces of the Third Reich, one thing stood out," said Historian Dwain Esper. "The complete crushing of the enemy was made possible by teamwork."

General J. H. Doolittle, during the closing



months of the war, said, "We can be certain that the aerial bombardment carried out by the Eighth and other Allied Strategic Air Forces has been a major factor in preparing the way for victory in Europe . . . I want to congratulate each and every member of the Eighth Air Force for his part in making this organization one of the greatest military teams in history. Whether an individual is a combat crew member, ground crew member, planner or administrator, as long as he does his job to the best of his ability, he is an equally important member of the team and shares equally in speeding final victory."

At Thurleigh the teamwork pointing to victory has never been questioned. It extended through all echelons from top to bottom.

A list of the sections, outside of the four bomb squadrons, that have done so much during the three operational years at Thurleigh and without which the 306th could not have functioned, is given below:

Under the Deputy of Administration: Finance, Personnel, Statistical, Public Relations, Courts and Boards, Special Service, Awards and Decorations, and Postal.

Under the Deputy for Services: Air Corps Supply, Ordnance Supply, Quartermaster Supply, Signal Supply, Chemical Supply, Utilities, Medical, Fire Fighting, Religion, Motor Pool, Guard, Post Exchange, Chemical, Enlisted

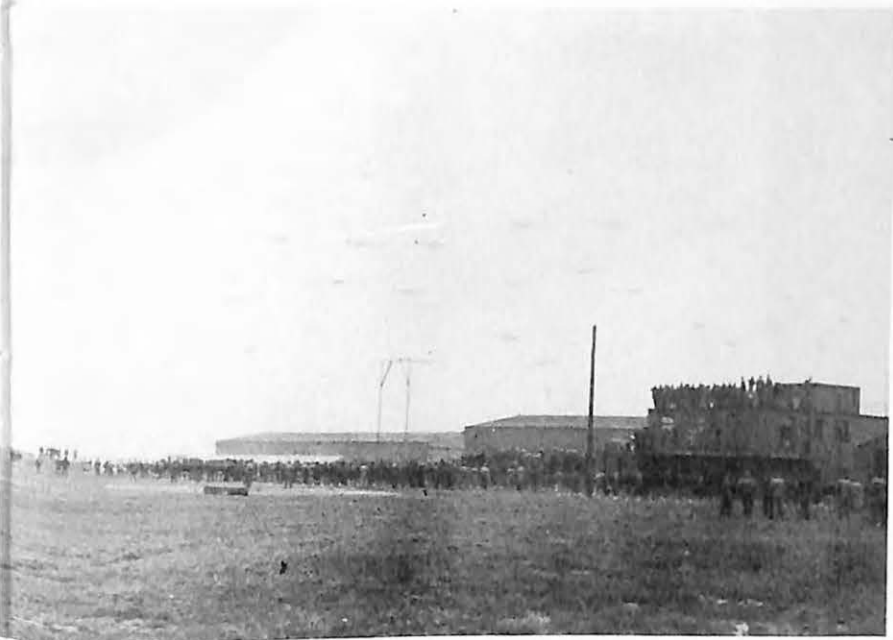
Mess, Officers' Mess, Enlisted and Officers Clubs, Aircraft Maintenance, Vehicle Maintenance, Bombsight Maintenance.

Under the Deputy for Operations: Plans and Training, Navigation, Bombing, Communications, Intelligence, Flying Control, Personal Equipment, Armament, Ordnance, Gunnery, Engineering and Photo.

Of necessity, a great deal of this history deals with the men who fly the planes, and in the bright light of their sensational achievements in the air, details of the work of the ground personnel may seem to be jaundiced. Paradoxically, the airmen are inclined to minimize their own exploits and laud the work of the ground staff. They whose lives are aglow with adventure and daring are first to sing the praises of the men to whom are entrusted the more prosaic jobs of maintaining the ships.

An example of a tribute paid to the ground personnel is the naming of a plane *Weber's Wagon* for Master Sergeant Elmer J. Weber, crew chief. One can be sure that when a crew names its plane for the man responsible for keeping it in the air, it is no idle compliment. It is a sincere and deeply felt tribute, and, in addition, recognition for a job well done. It is likewise typical of the glowing reciprocity and co-operation that existed between ground and air men.





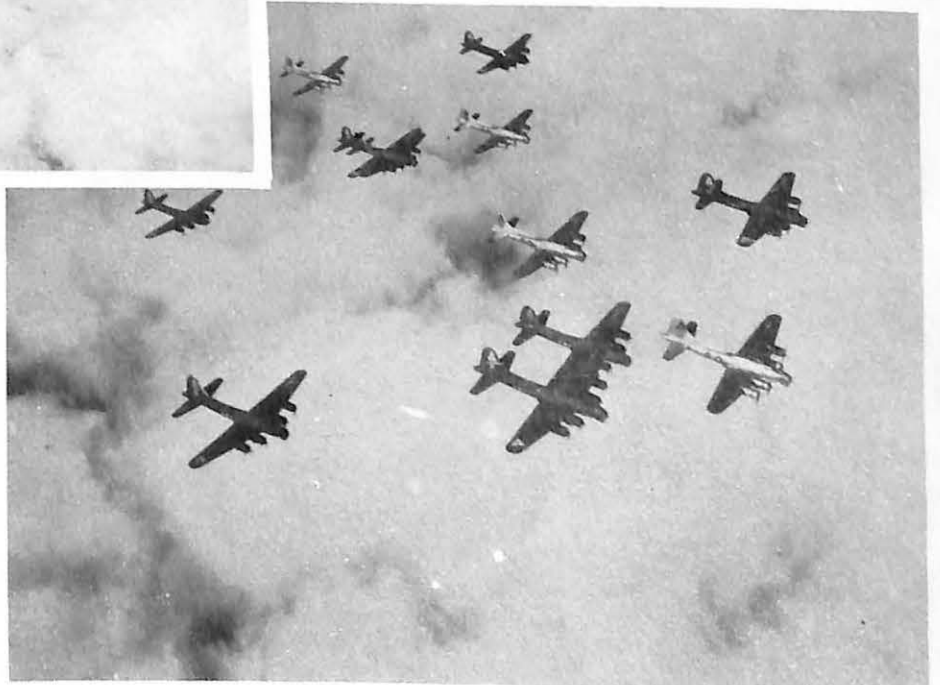
Shot of mission returning from area

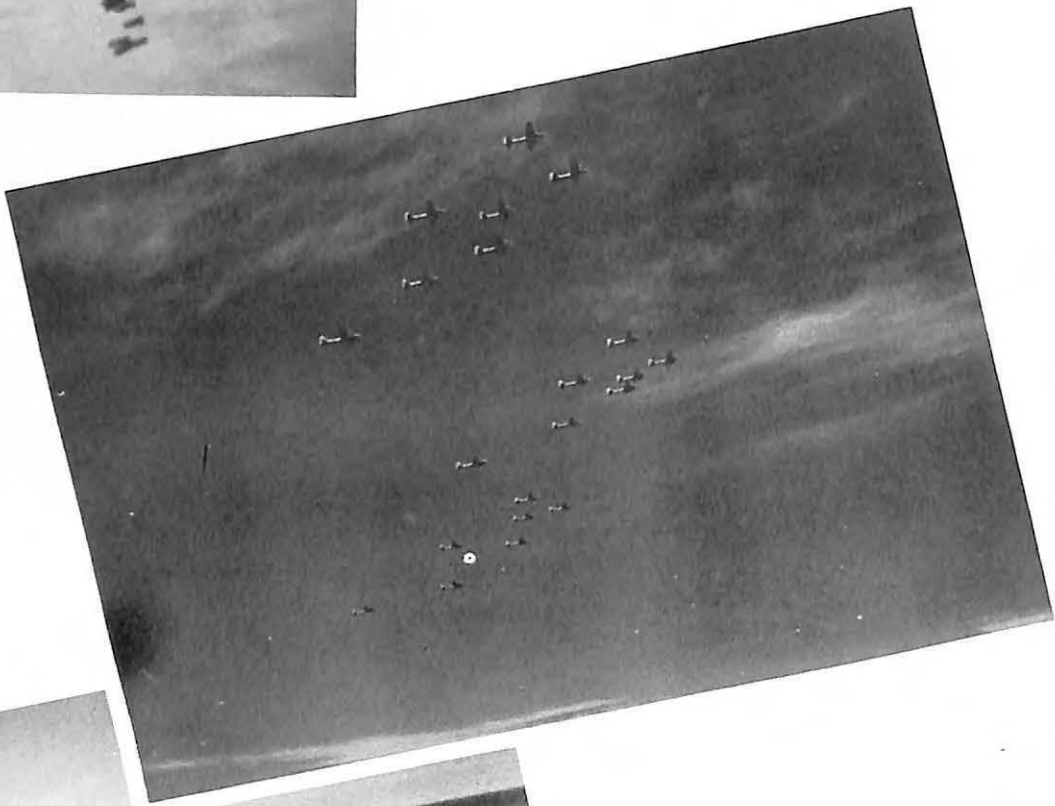






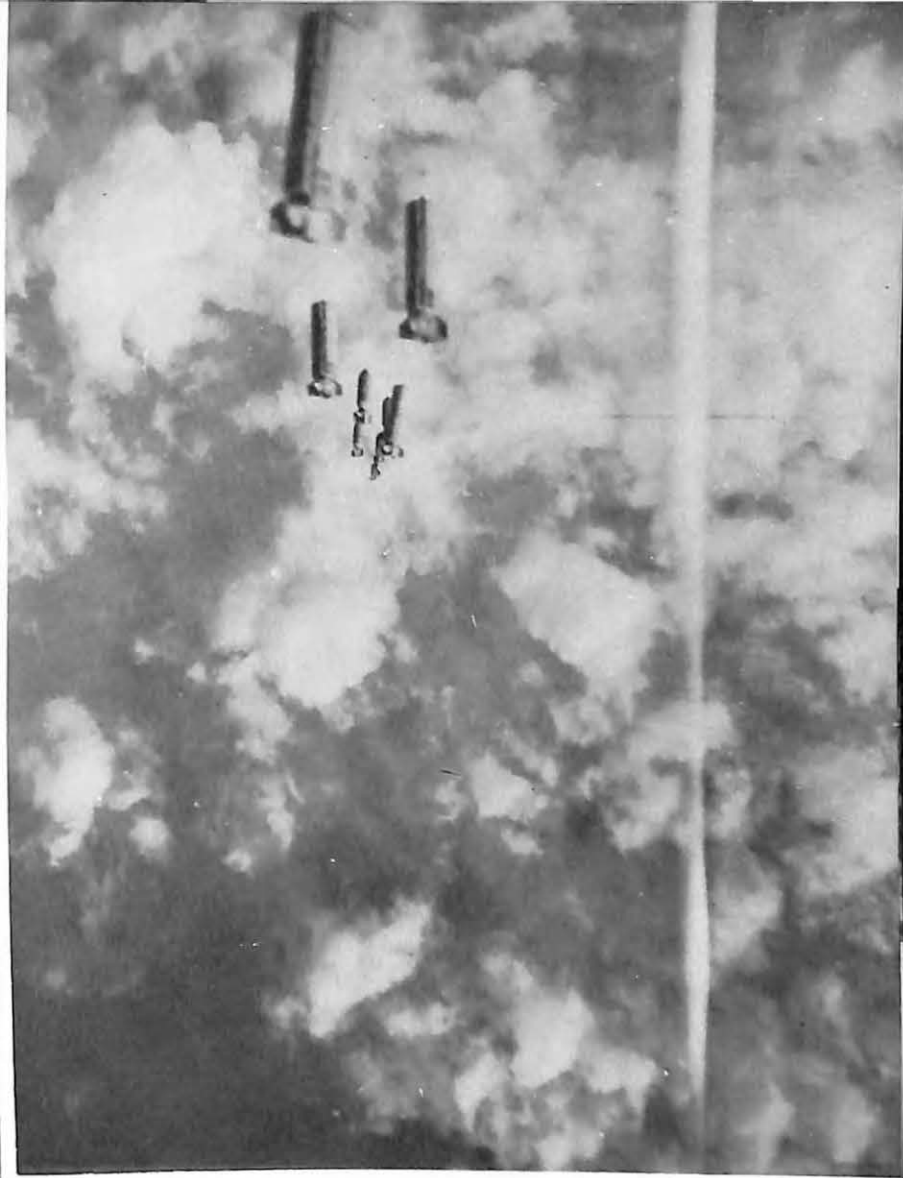
D-Day





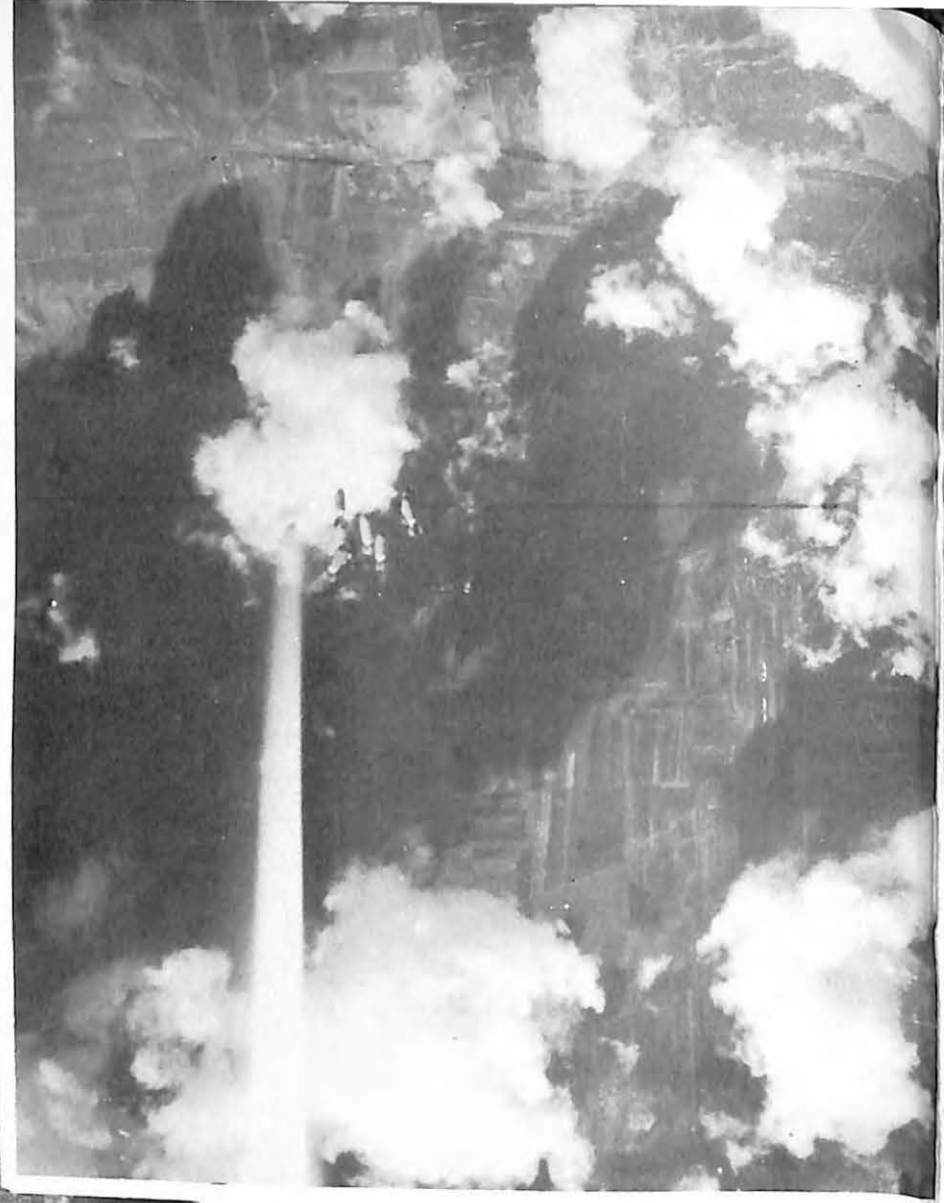


















Tour of the Ruhr

The most magnanimous gesture of the Army Air Forces came at War's end in Europe: the opportunity for ground staff to fly over Germany.

The following is the author's account of a VE-Day trip in *Weber's Wagon*, piloted by Lt. John A. Pinchback, Jr., of the *Clay Pigeons*:

An observation flight at low altitude over Germany for ground personnel of this station, who for nearly three years watched the Flying Fortresses take off on bombing missions, gave me the opportunity to view at first hand the effectiveness of strategic bombing in Europe.

The death and destruction dealt out to the Nazis and upon their cities is almost indescribable. Unforgettable are the scenes of rubble and ashes of what was once the proud Third Reich.

It was a clear, mild May day when I made the trip over the Continent—over Le Havre, Paris, Aix-la-Chapelle, Cologne, the Ruhr towns, then Brussels and Boulogne, and England again.

Just before we took off, the pilot gave us "ditching" instructions and "bailing out" instructions.

When we got up, England below us looked like the truth out of any number of bad, slushy poems; she was filled with neat little churches and many Hawthorn hedges, white with bloom, separating her fields. Throughout the trip, we were always close enough to see details fairly distinctly on the ground.

The Channel was very, very green-blue

beneath us; and then France stood up in hard, rather grey-white cliffs. I watched the land very closely as we wove up the Seine from Le Havre to Paris, for I wanted to see how different the land looked from England's. It didn't seem to have the hedge-rows in that section; the fields are apparently separated more by fences, with, frequently, high hedges of trees between them. The colors were more intense, not so softly blended as England's. Here, there were rich shadings of browns in the new-planted fields, vivid greens set against them in the meadows or where the crops were high.

In the harbor of Le Havre, the boats were decked out from stem to stern with pennants, and some little fire boats chugged about, with long cat's-whiskers of water spurting out from either side of their bows; and all over France was the tri-color.

There were no bridges left across the Seine from Le Havre to Paris; and one could see where the bombing had hit the factories and docks of Rouen. Occasionally, one could see a sunken ship, though not very many of them. One tanker had only her stern and part of her smokestack sticking out of the river.

Paris is like London on a smaller scale in one respect; her outskirts run endlessly into the country. And, apparently, much ugly manufacturing on the outskirts—much red brick. Then, after a while the first real Parisian view: the Arc de Triomphe, the center in a star of avenues. Paris is almost completely untouched by bombing; both it and Brussels were capitals



Oil Refinery—Misburg



Seine Bridge

of friendly nations; and we confined our bombing to the strategic industrial targets on the outskirts. So, the beautiful city is hardly marred a all. We circled about it in several long, leisurely circles; and I got an enormous thrill out of picking out buildings that I recognized.

The Eiffel Tower stood out clearly, familiarly. Notre-Dame sat on the Ile de la Cite just as I had suspected all along, right in the middle of the Seine, in the heart of Paris, although I hadn't suspected that it would have so many buildings along with it on the rather tiny island. However, they are dignified and government-looking; and there is a great square in front of the cathedral and a grass patch along one of its sides by the Seine.

The Sacre-Coeur, an enormous white marble Byzantine church, built between 1870 and the early 1900's, stood distinctly out on the hill of Montmartre, its central dome and its smaller domes twisting around fantastically as we circled it. Then I picked out the Invalides; it is an old soldier's home founded by Louis XIV, and in its chapel Napoleon was later buried. The biggest surprise was St. Sulpice; it floated out from under us at an angle with no warning; but it floated so dreamily, with its octagonal tower and its round tower, that it seemed like a loose page out of Stoddard's Lectures or the Seeing Europe Series.

Paris was alive with life; and, looking back, we were most of all impressed by that, for it was the last time we were to see life in the cities below us for a good long stretch—a stretch that would end over Brussels. From Paris we wound our way above the land over which the Germans had run into France in

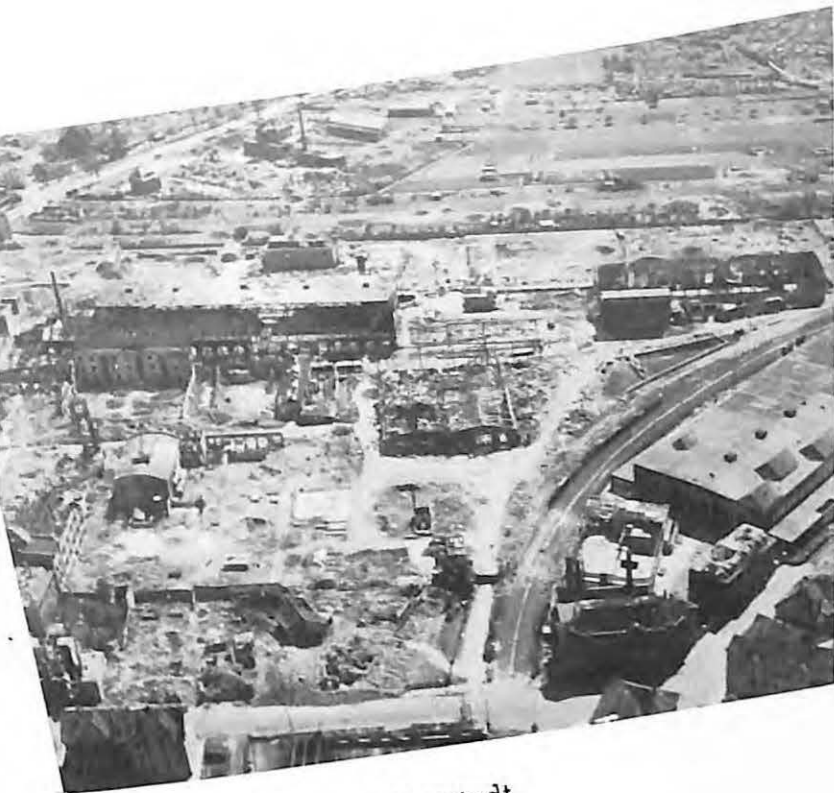
1940 and run out again in 1944-45. And on one side of us was the Forest of Compiègne, where the Armistice was signed in 1918; and underneath us was Liege, one of the goals of Von Runstedt's December offensive. Then, we got to the German boundary.

I had been told that the pattern of bombing would change there. France and Belgium were our friends; and we bombed definitely to hit and spare—to hit the factories and strategic military emplacements; but as much as possible to spare the cities and civilians. But in Germany, our aim was to destroy the enemy's will to fight. And so everything went.

I am not entirely sure how much of the damage we saw was Air Force damage, how much Artillery. But certainly, the more organic damage, which cut under and prepared the way for all the rest, was Air Force. The Russians are said to be tremendously impressed by the air bombing of Berlin.

When you look down on Aix-la-Chapelle and Cologne and so on into the Ruhr, your impression is that the cities have been long dead, but by some miracle they have been kept so that they seem to have been destroyed only yesterday. You can see almost no one anywhere. Cologne had over a million before the war; Essen stood high on the list of big German towns; Wuppertal and Dortmund and Duisburg and other manufacturing centers whose suburbs almost meet were crowded factory towns. Now, you look down on them; and the best you can see are walls without roofs, the worst, a brick-and-plaster-looking rubble. No one is anywhere.

Occasionally an Army vehicle and a few



Halberstadt



Oberhausen

soldiers creep beneath you; in one obscure part of Cologne, there was a curious scatter of civilians. Otherwise, no one. Where are the people who lived in the Ruhr? Certainly, the rest of Germany can't absorb them for very long. It makes you feel as though you were looking at something weird and not quite real. Imagine, if you can, a whole industrial region, roughly sixty miles long (including its bend down through Cologne) its towns almost reaching out and joining, its products some of the most famous in the world, now almost nobody there, hardly a single chimney smoking, even feebly.

The country land around the region seems very beautiful and green but you will see little isolated farmhouses, quite unstrategic, minding their own business, but smashed to bits. They must have been enemy headquarters or they were caught in the artillery duel. The lasting impression you get is that nowhere anywhere was safe from the destroying fire and bombs.

You can't see the evidences of ground fighting as you can that of the air. You think at first that some airplane has jettisoned its bombs in an open field, making enormous craters, and then you realize that this was the artillery, and there were troops near the craters, to be smeared out of existence. In the field, one occasionally sees tank tracks. But there is nothing of the obviousness of air

bombing, nothing to make you stare at once at the bloodiness of the fight that went on below. Even the Siegfried Line looks like a neat little zigzag of dragon's teeth; and there is no hint of the enormous fortifications and the traps and the guns.

Of particular interest to students of precision bombing is Cologne Cathedral near the center of the city. It stands surprisingly intact in contrast to the burnt-out walls and rubble of the completely devastated railroad station nearby and the wrecked Hohenzollern Bridge a short distance away.

When we swung around back through a corner of Holland and then back to Belgium, things began to look better again; and Belgium, like France, was rather gay looking again. Brussels was a whole city, like Paris. We could see the big white building, the Palace of Justice. We could also see St. Gudule's Cathedral, for the churches are still the skyline of European cities, no matter how large they are.

And then, back to England.

From the vast stores of historical record has come this story of the 306th Bombardment Group, born in Utah over three years ago and reared in Thurleigh. It is a story written out of the lives and experiences of courageous and strong men and will live as long as there are men who believe in freedom and truth.



V-I Site France



River Rhine



Brunswick



Coblenz

Dortmund



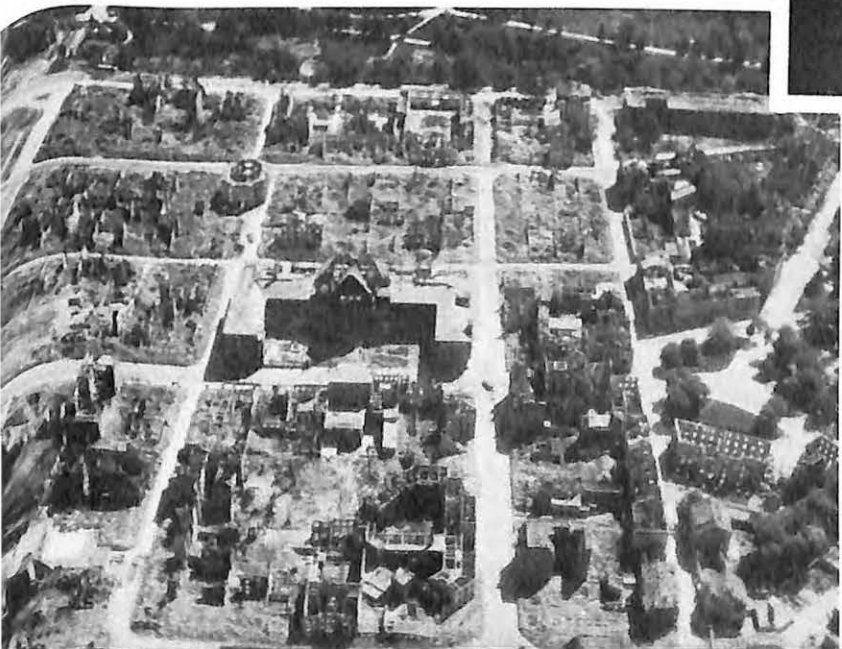
Essen

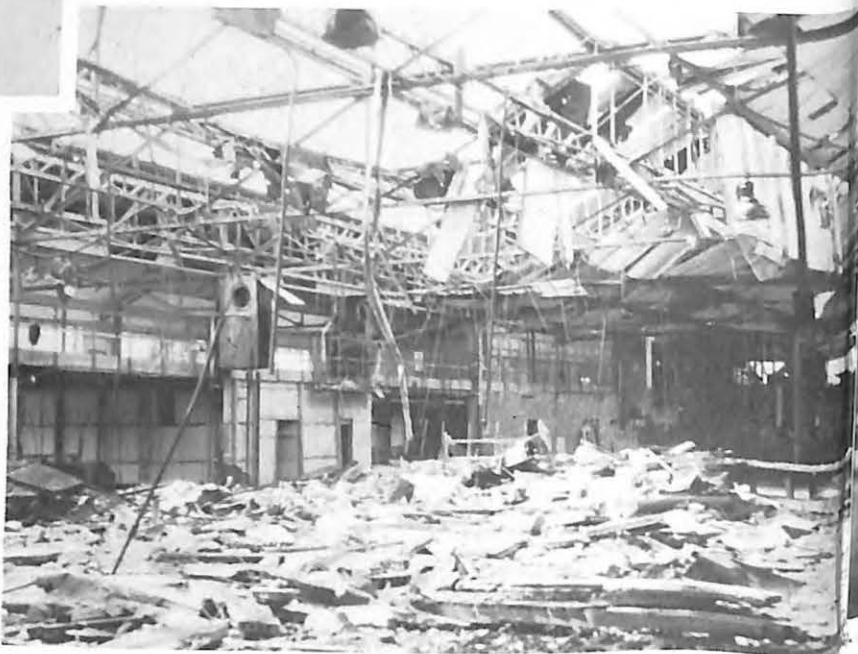


Kassel



Mulheim

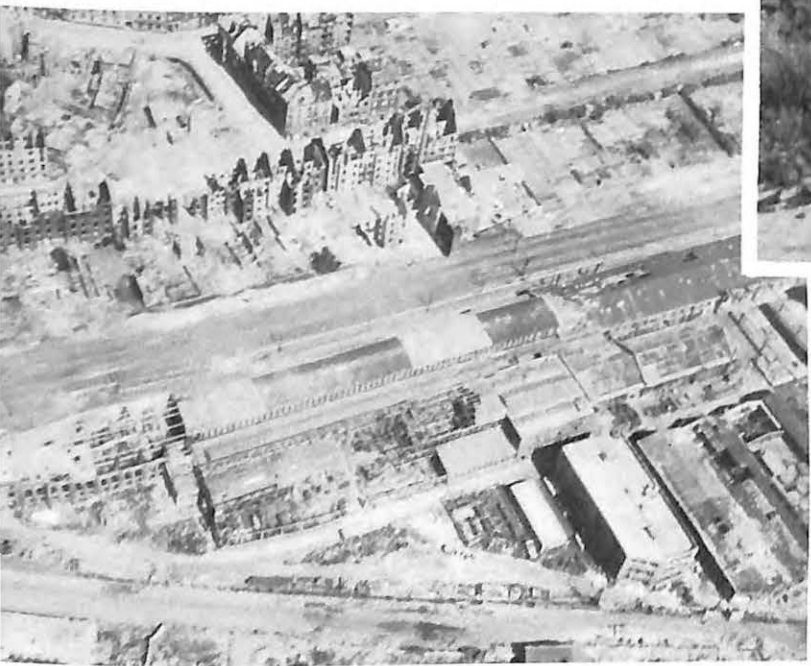








Dortmund

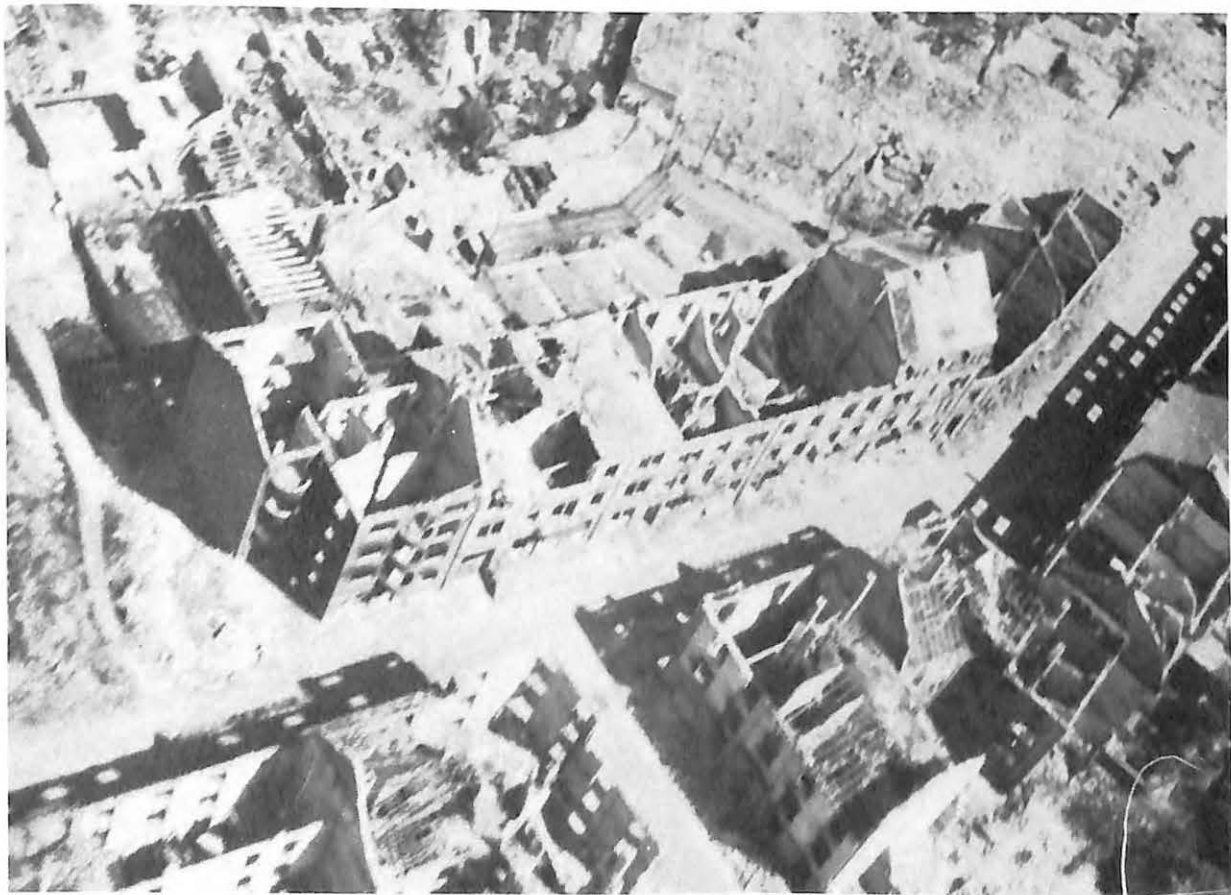


Bochum

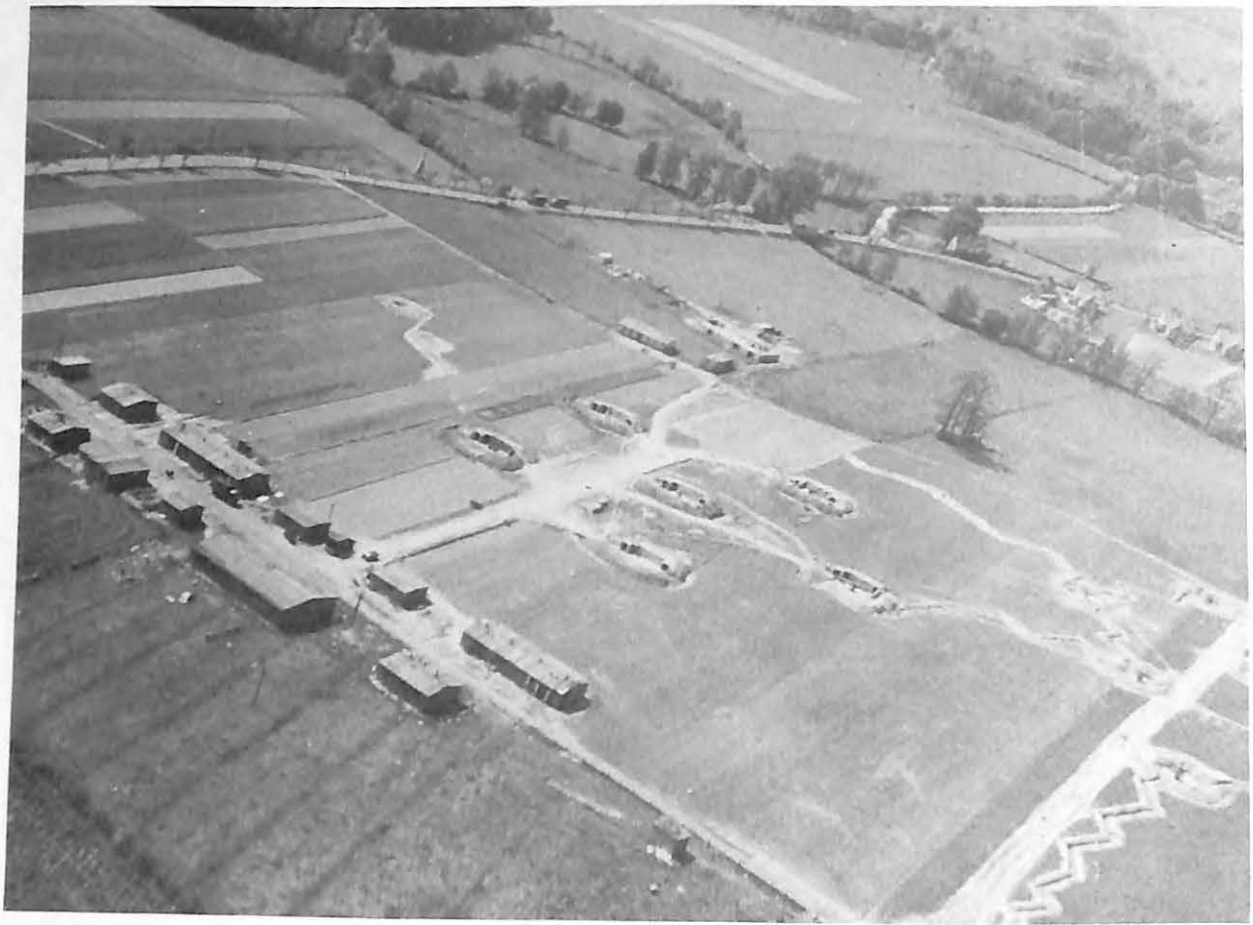




Osnabrück



Mannheim

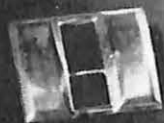


Flak position—Osnabruck



Osnabruck

IN COMMAND



Commanding Officers

306th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)

COLONEL CHARLES B. OVERACKER —16 March 1942 to 4 January 1943.
BRIG. GENERAL FRANK A. ARMSTRONG— 5 January 1943 to 19 February 1943
COLONEL CLAUDE E. PUTNAM —20 February 1943 to 19 June 1943
COLONEL GEORGE L. ROBINSON —20 June 1943 to 22 September 1944
COLONEL JAMES S. SUTTON —23 September 1944 to 14 April 1945
COLONEL HUDSON H. UPHAM —16 April 1945 to 8 March 1946

367th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)

MAJOR HARRY J. HOLT — 3 March 1942 to 4 March 1943
CAPTAIN WILLIAM S. RAPER — 5 March 1943 to 18 August 1943
CAPTAIN GEORGE R. BUCKEY —19 August 1943 to 2 May 1944
MAJOR ROBERT C. WILLIAMS — 3 May 1944 to 18 July 1944
MAJOR CHARLES E. FLANNAGAN—19 July 1944 to 14 October 1944
MAJOR EARL W. KESLING —15 October 1944 to 22 April 1945
MAJOR THOMAS F. WITT —23 April 1945 to 30 May 1945
LT. COLONEL JOHN S. CHALFANT — 1 June 1945 to 17 June 1945
MAJOR JAMES A. DARBY —18 June 1945 to V-J Day

368th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)

MAJOR WILLIAM J. LANFORD —18 March 1942 to 19 January 1943
MAJOR MACK McKAY —20 January 1943 to 8 April 1943
LIEUTENANT COLONEL JOHN M. REGAN— 9 April 1943 to 13 April 1944
LT. COLONEL MAURICE V. SALADA —14 April 1944 to 24 October 1944
MAJOR THOMAS M. HULINGS —25 October 1944 to V-J Day

369th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)

Lt. COLONEL RALPH L. OLIVER — 1 March 1942 to 6 December 1942
LT. COLONEL HENRY W. TERRY, III — 7 December 1942 to 22 June 1943
LT. COLONEL ROBERT P. RIORDAN —23 June 1943 to 18 April 1944
MAJOR CHARLES E. FLANNAGAN —19 April 1944 to 9 July 1944
LIEUTENANT COLONEL RYRDEN —10 July 1944 to 1 October 1944
MAJOR JAMES A. MCKINNEY — 2 October 1944 to V-J Day

423rd BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)

MAJOR JAMES W. WILSON — 5 July 1942 to 19 February 1943
LT. COLONEL JOHN L. LAMBERT —20 February 1943 to 5 May 1944
LT. COLONEL JOHN S. CHALFANT — 6 May 1944 to 28 November 1944
LT. COLONEL EUGENE C. LAVIER —29 March 1944 to 19 March 1945
MAJOR JOHN H. BUIE —20 March 1945 to V-J Day

414th AIR SERVICE GROUP

LT. COLONEL HENRY J. SCHMIDT —15 April 1945 to V-J Day

Many of these officers were in command beyond V-J Day, but Group could not furnish inclusive dates at press time.

MISSIONS



Summary of Operations

8 October 1942 to 12 May 1945

	367th	368th	369th	423rd	(TOTAL) 306th GP
Sorties	2466	2590	2533	2508	10097
Credit Sorties	2337	2456	2425	2402	9620
Effective Sorties	2152	2212	2228	2215	8807
Non-effective Sorties (A)*	93	106	78	84	361
Non-effective Sorties (B)**	221	272	227	209	929
Tonnage of Bombs — HE	4953	5037	5020	4985	19995
Tonnage of Bombs — INC	656	713	735	761	2865
Tonnage of Bombs — Total	5609	5750	5755	5746	22860
Leaflet Bombs	420	431	1495	446	2792
A/C Lost	60	34	44	39	177
E/A Destroyed	83	71	76	92	322
E/A Probably Destroyed	6	15	23	24	68
E/A Damaged	26	36	36	31	129
Flying Time (Operational)	18133	19141	18856	18637	74767

* (A) Non-effectiveness due to material, mechanical or equipment failure.

** (B) Non-effective due to any reason not covered by (A) (Enemy action, Personnel error, recall, etc.)

Raid Scores

DATE	TARGET	E/A Destroyed	DATE	TARGET	E/A Destroyed	DATE	TARGET	E/A Destroyed
10- 9-42	Lille	10	8-15-43	Flushing	0	3- 4-44	Bonn	0
11- 7-42	Brest	1	8-16-43	Le Bourget	1	3- 6-44	Berlin	2
11- 8-42	Lille	9	8-17-43	Schweinfurt	16	3- 8-44	Berlin	0
11- 9-42	St. Nazaire	0	8-19-43	Brussels	0	9- 9-44	Berlin	0
11-14-42	St. Nazaire	0	8-24-43	Villacoublay	0	3-16-44	Gessertshausen	0
11-17-42	St. Nazaire	1	8-27-43	Watten	0	3-18-44	Lechfeld	0
11-18-42	La Pallice	2	8-31-43	Amiens	0	3-20-44	S.W. Germany	0
11-22-42	Lorient	0	9- 3-43	Romilly-Sur- Seine	1	3-22-44	Berlin	0
11-23-42	St. Nazaire	9	9- 6-43	Stuttgart	3	3-23-44	Hamm	0
12-12-42	Rouen	14	9- 7-43	Brussels-Evere	0	3-24-44	Frankfurt	0
12-19-42	Romilly	12	9- 9-43	Lille-Vendeville	0	3-26-44	Pas de Calais	0
12-30-42	Lorient	0	9- 9-43	Lille-Vendeville	0	3-27-44	La Rochelle	0
1- 3-43	St. Nazaire	0	9-15-43	Romilly	0	3-28-44	Dijon/Longvic	0
1-13-43	Lille	0	9-16-43	Nantes	0	3-29-44	Brunswick	1
1-24-43	Lorient	2	9-23-43	Nantes	0	4-10-44	Brussels/Evere	0
1-27-43	Lilhemshaven	0	9-27-43	Emden	0	4-11-44	Stettin	1
2- 2-43	Hamm	0	10- 2-43	Emden	0	4-18-44	Oranienburg	0
2- 4-43	Emden	5	10- 4-43	Frankfurt	5	4-19-44	Kassel	0
2-14-43	Bremen	0	10- 8-43	Bremen	15	4-20-44	N.W. France	0
2-16-43	St. Nazaire	3	10- 9-43	Gdynia	2	4-22-44	Hamm	0
2-26-43	Wilhelmshaven	1	10-10-43	Munster	0	4-24-44	Oberpfaffenhofen	0
2-27-43	Brest	0	10-14-43	Schweinfurt	4	4-25-44	Nancy, France	0
3- 4-43	Hamm	1	10-20-43	Duren	0	4-26-44	Brunswick	0
3- 6-43	Lorient	6	11- 3-43	Wilhelmshaven	0	4-27-44-a	Pas de Calais	0
3- 8-43	Rennes	3	11- 5-43	Golsenkirchen	0	4-27-44-b	Nancy, France	0
3-12-43	Rouen	0	11-13-43	Bremen	0	4-28-44	St. Avord	0
3-13-43	Amiens	0	11-16-43	Knaben	0	4-29-44	Berlin	0
3-18-43	Vege sack	7	11-26-43	Bremen	0	4-30-44	Lyon, France	1
3-22-43	Wilhelmshaven	2	12- 1-43	Solingen	1	5- 1-44-a	N.W. France	0
3-28-43	Rouen	1	12- 5-43	LaRochelle	0	5- 1-44-b	Reims	0
3-31-43	Rotterdam	0	12-11-43	Emden	0	5- 4-44	Berlin-Recall	0
4- 4-43	Paris	7	12-13-43	Kiel	0	5- 7-44	Berlin	0
4- 5-43	Antwerp	5	12-16-43	Bremen	0	5- 8-44	Berlin	0
4-16-43	Lorient	3	12-20-43	Bremen	0	5- 9-44	Thionville	0
4-17-43	Bremen	8	12-22-43	Osnabruck	6	5-11-44	Saarbrucken	0
5- 1-43	St. Nazaire	8	12-24-43	N.E. France	0	5-12-44	Meersburg	0
5-13-43	Monulte	0	12-30-43	Ludwigshafen	0	5-13-44	Stettin	0
5-14-43	Kiel	11	12-31-43	Cognac A/F	0	5-19-44	Berlin	0
5-15-43	Heleligoland	17	1- 4-44	Kiel	0	5-20-44	Orly, France	0
5-17-43	Lorient	2	1- 5-44	Kiel	4	5-22-44	Kiel	0
5-19-43	Kiel	3	1- 7-44	Ludwigshafen	0	5-23-44	Metz	0
5-21-43	Wilhemshaven	23	1-11-44	Halberstadt	16	5-24-44	Berlin	0
5-29-43	St. Nazaire	0	1-14-44	Pas de Calais	0	5-25-44	Thionville	0
6-11-43	Wilhelmshaven	7	1-21-44	Pas de Calais	0	5-27-44	Mannheim	0
6-13-43	Bremen	0	1-29-44	Frankfurt	5	5-27-44	Fe Camp, France	0
6-22-43	Huls	4	1-30-44	Brunswick	0	5-28-44	Ruhland	0
6-25-43	N. W. Germany	3	2- 3-44	Wilhelmshaven	0	5-29-44	Cottbus	2
6-26-43	Tricqueville	4	2- 4-44	Frankfurt	0	5-31-44	Liege, Belgium	0
6-28-43	St. Nazaire	3	2- 5-44	Chateaudun A/F	0	6- 2-44	St. Cecily	0
6-29-43	Villacoublay	0	2- 6-44	Nancy A/F	0	6- 2-44	Mass-Palaiseau	0
7- 4-43	Nantes	7	2- 8-44	Frankfurt	0	6- 3-44	St. Cecily, France	0
7-10-43	Caen	0	2-11-44	Saarbrucken	0	6- 4-44	Equihen, France	0
7-14-43	Villacoublay	6	2-20-44	Leipzig	0	6- 6-44	Arromanches	0
7-17-43	N.W. Germany	3	2-21-44	Rheine-Hopston	1	6- 6-44	Caen, France	0
7-24-43	Heroya	3	2-22-44	Bernburg	6	6- 6-44	Thury-Harcourt	0
7-26-43	Hannover	4	2-24-44	Schweinfurt	2	6- 8-44	Rennes, France	0
7-28-43	Kassel	10	2-25-44	Augsburg	3	6-11-44	Illiers L'Eveque	0
7-29-43	Kiel	6	2-28-44	Pas de Calais	0	6-12-44	Lille/Vendeville/ Cambrai-Epinoy	0
8-12-43	Gelsenkirchen	1	3- 2-44	Frankfurt	0	6-14-44	Etampes/Mon De-	
			3- 3-44	N.W.Germany	0			

DATE	TARGET	E/A Destroyed	DATE	TARGET	E/A Destroyed	DATE	TARGET	E/A Destroyed
	sir/Bretigny/Le-Plessis Pate	0	9-10-44	Stuttgart	0	1-17-45	Bielefeld	0
6-15-44	Nantes	0	9-11-44	Eisenach, Lutzkendorf	0	1-20-45	Rheine	0
6-17-44	Noyan	0	9-12-44	Ruhland	1	1-21-45	Aschaffenburg	0
6-18-44	Hamburg	0	9-13-44	Meersburg	0	1-28-45	Cologne	0
6-19-44	Noball	0	9-17-44	Volkel Area	0	1-29-45	Koblenz	0
6-20-44	Hamburg	0	9-19-44	Unna	0	2- 1-45	Mannheim	0
6-21-44	Berlin	1	9-22-44	Kassel	0	2- 3-45	Berlin	0
6-22-44	Ghent	0	9-25-44	Frankfurt	0	2- 6-45	Fulda	0
6-24-44	Bremen	0	9-27-44	Cologne	0	2- 9-45	Lutzkendorf	0
6-25-44	Joigny, France	0	9-28-44	Magdeburg	0	2-10-45	Dulmen	0
6-28-44	Laon/Athies	0	9-30-44	Munster	0	2-14-45	Dresden	1
7- 2-44	Noball	0	10- 2-44	Kassel	0	2-16-45	Dortmund	0
7- 6-44	Noball	0	10- 3-44	Nurnberg	0	2-19-45	Bochum & Munster	0
7- 7-44	Leipzig	0	10- 5-44	Koln & Koblenz	0	2-20-45	Nurnberg	0
7- 8-44	Corbie near Amiens	0	10- 6-44	Stralsund & Stargard	0	2-21-45	Nurnberg	0
7- 9-44	R.R. Bridge, Angers	0	10- 7-44	Ruhland	0	2-22-45	Wittstock	0
7-11-44	Munich	0	10- 9-44	Schweinfurt	0	2-23-45	Plauen	0
7-12-44	Munich	0	10-14-44	Cologne	0	2-24-45	Hamburg	0
7-13-44	Munich	0	10-15-44	Cologne	0	2-26-45	Berlin	0
7-16-44	Munich	0	10-17-44	Cologne	0	2-27-45	Leipzig	0
7-17-44	Hamm & Jussey	0	10-19-44	Mannheim	0	2-28-45	Hagen	0
7-18-44	Peenemunde	0	10-22-44	Hannover	0	3- 1-45	Neckarsulm	0
7-19-44	Augsburg	0	10-25-44	Hamburg	0	3- 2-45	Bohlen	0
7-20-44	Kothen	0	10-26-44	Bielefeld	0	3- 4-45	Ulm	0
7-21-44	Ebelsbach	0	10-30-44	Munster	0	3- 7-45	Giessen & Siegen	0
7-22-44	Bremen, Kiel, Hamburg	0	11- 2-44	Meersburg	0	3- 8-45	Gelsenkirchen	0
7-24-44	St. Lo Area	0	11- 4-44	Harburg	0	3-10-45	Dortmund	0
7-25-44	St. Lo Area	0	11- 5-44	Frankfurt	0	3-11-45	Bremen	0
7-28-44	Meersburg, Germany	0	11- 6-44	Hamburg	0	3-12-45	Swinemunde	0
7-31-44	Munich, Germany	0	11- 8-44	Meersburg	0	3-14-45	Hildesheim	0
8- 3-44	Merkwiller, France	0	11- 9-44	Metz Area	0	3-15-45	Zossen	0
8- 4-44	Anklam, Germany	0	11-16-44	Eschweiler Area	0	3-17-45	Molbis	0
8- 5-44	Dollbergen	0	11-21-44	Meppen, Leeuwarden & Merseburg	0	3-18-45	Berlin	1
8- 6-44	Brandenburg A/D	0	11-26-44	Misburg	0	3-19-45	Plauen	0
8- 7-44	Montbartier-Loubes	0	11-29-44	Misburg	0	3-21-45	Rheine	0
8- 8-44	Caen Area	0	11-30-44	Gera, Germany	0	3-22-45	Dorsten	0
8- 9-44	Ulm, Germany	0	12- 2-44	Koblenz	0	3-23-45	Coesfeld	0
8-12-44	Chamant, France	0	12- 5-44	Berlin	0	3-24-45	A-Vechta	0
8-13-44	Rouen Area	0	12- 6-44	Merseburg	0	3-24-45	B-Hespe	0
8-14-44	Florence & Chevres	0	12- 9-44	Stuttgart	0	3-28-45	C-Twente	0
8-15-44	Frankfurt/Eschborn	0	12-11-44	Frankfurt	0	3-30-45	Berlin	0
8-16-44	Bohlen, Germany	0	12-12-44	Meersburg	0	3-30-45	A-Bremen	0
8-24-44	Merseburg & Vorden	0	12-15-44	Kassel	0	3-31-45	B-Farge	0
8-25-44	Peenemunde & Parow	0	12-18-44	Kaiserslautern	0	4- 3-45	Halle	0
8-26-44	Gelsenkirchen	0	12-24-44	Nidda & Giessen	0	4- 4-45	Kiel	0
8-27-44	Wilhelmshaven	0	12-28-44	Siegburg & Koblenz	0	4- 4-45	Fassberg	0
8-30-44	Kiel	0	12-29-44	Bingen	0	4- 5-45	Weiden	0
9- 3-44	Ludwigshafen	0	12-30-44	Mainz	0	4- 6-45	Leipzig	0
9- 5-44	Ludwigshafen	0	1- 1-45	Limburg & Kassel	0	4- 7-45	Wesendorf	0
9- 8-44	Ludwigshafen	0	1- 2-45	Kyllburg	0	4- 8-45	Halberstadt	0
			1- 3-45	Hermulheim	0	4-10-45	Oranienburg	0
			1- 5-45	Niedermendig	0	4-11-45	Kraiburg	0
			1- 6-45	Cologne	0	4-13-45	Neumunster	0
			1- 7-45	Euskirchen	0	4-14-45	Royan Area, France	0
			1- 8-45	Speyer	0	4-15-45	Royan Area, France	0
			1-10-45	Gymnich	0	4-16-45	Plattling	0
			1-14-45	Cologne	0	4-17-45	Dresden	0
			1-15-45	Freiburg	0	4-18-45	Rosenheim	0
						4-19-45	Falkenberg	0

B-17's which have completed 100 missions or more

SERIAL NO.	NAME	CREW CHIEF
(367th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON)		
42-97133	<i>Pretty Baby</i>	M/Sgt. John A. Halzell
42-102578	<i>We Promised</i>	T/Sgt. Jackson W. Van Dever
42-97129	<i>Skipper</i>	M/Sgt. Russell J. Lamonica M/Sgt. Adolphe L. Visconti
(368th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON)		
42-97323	<i>Begin the Beguine</i>	M/Sgt. Donald Dougan
42-102512	<i>She Has To</i>	T/Sgt. Earl Diebert
(369th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON)		
42-97181	<i>Steady Hedy</i>	T/Sgt. Everett V. Daniels
42-97297	<i>How Soon</i>	T/Sgt. Lawrence C. Foster
42-31143	<i>Satan's Lady</i>	M/Sgt. Harry Tzipowitz
43-37619	<i>Flak Shack</i>	M/Sgt. Bernard Hagen
(423rd BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON)		
43-37616	<i>Solid Sender</i>	M/Sgt. Joseph Terrana
42-97505	<i>The Dingleberry Kids</i>	M/Sgt. Sigyr Gustafson
42-31418	<i>(Unnamed)</i>	T/Sgt. Ernest Gaul
42-97397	<i>Unavailable Mabel</i>	M/Sgt. Calvin Cooley



Personnel Casualties

KILLED IN ACTION	:	483
MISSING IN ACTION	:	305
WOUNDED IN ACTION	:	145
PRISONERS OF WAR	:	884
TOTAL		<hr/> 1817
306th MEN WHO HAVE ESCAPED FROM GERMAN PRISONS	:	108



Post-War Supplement

After VE-Day came celebrations and Victory parades and a growing number of other Anglo-American ceremonies, but life for the Group was not all cakes and ale. During operations, men, working day and night to blast Germany off the map of Europe, were too busy for daily drill, weekly reviews, reveille and other concomitants of Army programs in peace time. But with war's end came all this and more too. The men have a word for it and seemingly writhe under it.

When Saturday reviews became the occasions for awarding a Bronze Star or a Purple Heart to deserving Thurleigh men, the Awards and Decorations boys, recalling the febrile operations days when there was little time for fanfare, told how awards were handed out in the office, with neither pomp nor circumstance.

Before the "old" men—the three year men—had had a chance to become too rancorous about the situation, to regret seeing a once gallant record go the way of "poultry", redeployment was set into motion, followed by demobilization, and the main topic of conversation for those destined for the foreign shores (America) seemed to be "When are we going home?" To those to whom home was not in the offing, "Where are we going?" seemed uppermost in the mind.

Everyone hazarded a guess as to the destination of the Group. Even the Official Daily Bulletin became risqué and guessed wrong in predicting that the Group would go to the lush, former Luftwaffe aerodrome at Furstenfulbruck.

Before the eventual movement of the Group took place, however, the veterans, the men who had been with the Group since Wendover, were at home or on their way, and "low point" men from other bombardment and fighter groups in the European Theater of Operations joined the Group to participate in photo reconnaissance and occupation.

For administrative purposes, the Group was losing its sponsorship by the Eighth and was being assigned to the Ninth Air Force. This necessitated going to the Continent for demobilization. Many men spent weeks at Mons en Chaussee or Estrees en Chaussee near Peronne, St. Quentin or Meharicourt and other places before going to Le Havre and to New York.

Detachments were sent to Istres in the South of France; to Gibraltar and to Marrakech, Africa. During this time, furloughs to these places as well as to Scotland and Bournemouth on the South Coast of England were made available to the men. The Office of Information and Education provided college courses for Thurleigh men at British and Continental universities and also at United States Army University Centers at Biarritz, France and Shrivenham, England.

From every indication morale was high at Thurleigh. In any event, everyone did the utmost to contribute to it: Red Cross, chaplains, the EM Clubs, Special Services, and, especially in the summer and autumn of 1945, the office in charge of arranging information and educational trips to Stratford-on-Avon, Cambridge, London, and the nearby leave towns, Bedford, Luton, Leighton Buzzard, and Bletchley.

As the time to leave Britain neared, men harked back to the days of their arrival, recalled the many adjustments to be made in those early days: the money, the language, the customs. All these, despite the fact that the Army had provided guides to Britain. Blackjack and poker helped in the familiarization process as far as money was concerned, but fortunes were made and lost before most men realized that there was any difference between dollar bills and English pound notes.

The newcomer to England was startled by the variance of speech and the differences in expression. He was amazed when telephoning to hear the operator say, at the ready signal: "You're through" (i.e., you're connected) when he hasn't even started. Tires are tyres, trucks are lorries; cigarette butts are cigarette ends; radio is wireless, and tubes are valves.

If he drove—and there were few civilian vehicles along Britain's winding country roads during the war—the Englishman used petrol in his gasoline tank.

An aisle is a gangway except in church, where an aisle remains an aisle. One "books" (reserves) tickets for the cinema, for passage on trains or boats, for concerts. These were only some of the countless differences, minor though they were, which sometimes confused the 306th men at first.

* * * * *

Men from the 306th participated in a number of Anglo-American celebrations during the first summer of peace in England.

When the historic town of Bedford, in whose jail John Bunyan wrote his *Pilgrim's Progress*, bestowed the honorary freedom of the Borough on Major General Howard M. Turner, commanding general of the veteran First Air Division of the Eighth Air Force, the 306th was represented at the exercises, and a holiday was declared at Thurleigh to enable the men to attend a dance at the Corn Exchange in Bedford.

Busloads of 306th men went to the ancient English university town of Cambridge when England's great center of learning awarded the freedom of the city to the entire personnel of the United States Eighth Air Force—all 200,000 of them. The Americans entertained the English with an exhibition game of baseball, and the Thurleigh *Gremlins*, unofficial American



champions of the United Kingdom, added another victory to their imposing list of wins.

Both Americans and British laughingly commented on the fact that the Americans, who long had free reign in Cambridge and other towns which they "invaded," had the freedom of the city of Cambridge long before it was officially handed over to them.

When the Army Air Forces celebrated its anniversary on August 1st, still another opportunity was given for the cementing of relations between the United States and Great Britain.

Following is the author's account of the Thurleigh observance:

More than 8,000 residents of Bedfordshire who for three years heard the roar of Flying Fortresses in the air above them, got a closer glimpse of the B-17, as well as an intimate picture of life on a United States Army Air Force airdrome on August 1, 1945, when Thurleigh, in common with other American bases in England, threw open its gates in a gala open house ceremony marking Air Forces Day, the 38th anniversary of the activation of the Army Air Forces.

The early attendance figure of 600 increased gradually until by nightfall, Military Police at the Thurleigh chapel gate had recorded the 8,256th visitor.

Young and old, men in the forces as well as civilians poured into the station from 1:30 p. m., until 6 o'clock. Babies carried in their mother's arms or wheeled in carriages were among the thousands who turned out to see in action the men of the air forces whom they had met on leave in Bedford and surrounding communities and to get a closer view of the Fortresses which roared out over their heads for three years in 341 raids over the Continent.

Children scrambled into planes, into jeeps, into hangars, into tea queues. The queue is familiar to the Briton, but none had previously stood in such long ones as those that formed in front of the American Red Cross in Bedford to await transport to the station or those that waited at the Control Tower for the return journey. Drivers from the Transportation Section worked endlessly operating what was tantamount to a shuttle service. The section announced that 206 trips were made in the afternoon and evening and a total mileage of 3,100 was reported. A total of 6,788 passengers were transported by truck. An average load consisted of 33 persons.

Visitors crowded the flying field, inspecting the Fortresses and Fighters. Members of the crews were on hand to explain the various mechanisms and other pertinent data.

The celebration began formally at 2 o'clock with a mass assembly of station personnel and guests. Before the thousands assembled in front of the Central Tower, Colonel Hudson H. Upham of San Francisco, California, commanding officer of the veteran 306th Bombardment Group, read the order of the day.

Visitors were told that August 1 marked the 38th anniversary of the Army Air Forces;

that the Eighth Air Force was a little more than three years old, and that the Eighth was the pioneer of daylight precision bombing.

There were two showings in the base cinema of "Target for Today," a film depicting the history, activities and functions of the Eighth Air Force.

A pictorial record of the station and of the 306th, which covered itself with glory in its three year history, was on view in the games room of the Aero Club, which also housed exhibits of air force equipment. Central point of the exhibit was a complete ball turret from a Flying Fortress.

Refreshments were served to guests and station personnel at the Red Cross Aero Club from early afternoon until 5:30 p. m.

Many visitors on Air Force Day had the opportunity for the first time of witnessing an American baseball game. In a 10-inning contest, the Gremlins, Thurleigh nine, defeated the team representing United Kingdom Base by a score of 8 to 7.

Newspapermen from Bedford joined the Station Public Relations Department and the Photographic Section in giving complete coverage to the celebration.

The scheduled events went off without a hitch, and when the program was over, Army Air Force Day had proved to be more than a gesture of Anglo-American friendship. It was a well planned, comprehensive attempt to educate, to make station personnel as well as visitors keenly conscious of the contribution of the Air Forces to ultimate Victory in Europe. And happily, in the process, English-American relations were cemented.

* * * * *

Of all the ceremonies, none was more genuinely stirring than that attendant upon the gift from the men of Thurleigh to the Mayor of Bedford of an inscribed silver loving cup.

The affair is best described by the editor of the *Bedford Record and Circular*, who wrote: Ever since the summer of 1942, when the Americans first appeared in Bedford, there has been a healthy, flourishing friendship between the townsfolk and their Western cousins. Final victory has brought about a thinning in the ranks of these "buddies" of ours who have been stationed so long in the neighborhood, and now that large numbers of them have gone there is an emptiness in many of our hearts.

As a lasting symbol of the strong bond of friendship that exists between the Americans stationed at Thurleigh and the people of Bedford, Col. Hudson H. Upham, Commanding Officer of the 306th Bomb Group, U.S.A.A.F., presented a silver rose bowl to the Mayor (Mr. J. A. Canvin) at a happy ceremony held at Thurleigh Camp on Saturday morning. It was only a few weeks ago that the Mayor conferred the Honorary Freedom of the Borough of Bedford on Major-General H. McMath Turner, Commanding General of the 1st Air Division of the Eighth Air Force.

The bowl, which is of solid silver, bears

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orate Seal of the Borough of Bedford
insignia of the 8th U.S.A.A.F. It is in-

"To the Borough of Bedford, with
preciation and everlasting gratitude to
ble of this town and the surrounding
ities who during the period 1942-5,
freely of their friendship and hospi-
is token is presented. Officers and
e U.S.A.A.F. Station, Thurleigh."

le will be able to see the bowl all
k in Messrs. John Bull's window in
High Street.

colours flying and a band at their
o thousand of the station personnel
past the group of Bedford Town Coun-
d Corporation officials while Col. Up-
ompanied by the Mayor and high-
American officers, took the salute.

Hospitality Recalled

when the squadrons had re-grouped,
n Adjutant read the daily orders in
s embodied Col. Upham's address.

he said that the men of Thurleigh re-
Bedford's hospitality during the
s of their arrival in England. They
ll Bedford as it was before they had
ies of their own set up for the troops'
ent, and in so doing they remember-
e doors of Bedford's canteens were
ide to them; how the W.V.S., the
e Information Bureau, and the May-
ittee increased their efforts to pro-
merican Service men with the same
ey had been furnishing to the British
es throughout the war. They also
d how the people of Bedford took
eir homes to share limited rations
oy the family life that they had
much.

arm hospiality touched us deeply,"
d, "and at times, when we reflected
ner in which our presence here was
g the already over-burdened lives
ns of Bedford, made us feel rather

"Hardships Recognized"

men of Thurleigh were eager to
the people of Bedford, and as they
uainted, they came to understand
ans' problems and to recognize
os they had suffered during the
f the war.

tter where they go when they
ad," the message concluded, "the
06th Group will long remember the
of Bedford's citizens and their
nsideration for the welfare of the
They will retain in their hearts
n for the people of Bedford and
get the unique and splendid ges-
ship you made towards ali Amer-
area when you conferred upon
ding general, Major-Gen. Howard
er, the Honorary Freedom of the
edford."

Mayor's Reply

The Mayor, replying, assured them that
Bedford people would treasure the gift very
greatly, but they would appreciate even more
the kind thought which prompted the Ameri-
cans to make the presentation. It had been a
great experience for Bedfordians to meet so
many of them, and to realize how much they
had in common and how easily they had lived
together.

That knowledge would do so much to
strengthen the good neighbourly feeling that
already existed between their two great coun-
tries, whose men had fought, died, and con-
quered together in the cause of freedom.

"I understand that many of you will short-
ly be returning home," he said. "It is our very
earnest wish that you will take back with you
happy memories of your stay in John Bunyan's
country."

Afterwards the whole group inspected a
B-17 Flying Fortress and showed great interest
in the intricate controls and mechanism of the
plane, which proved such a tough adversary
for the German night-fighters during the war.

At the end of the morning, refreshments
were served in the Red Cross Club on the
camp and then the visitors returned to Bedford.

The Visitors

Among those present were the Mayor and
Mayoress of Bedford (Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Can-
vin), the Deputy Mayor (Mr. A. L. Nicholls,
M.C.), Alderman M. J. Stapleton, A. M. Dude-
ney, Col. G. H. Wells, and S. B. Morling, and
Councillors A. E. Osborne, Dr. W. P. Meldrum,
F. C. Reynolds, A. Braggins, A. Mitchell Innes,
C. Wickings-Smith, L. Francis, F. P. H. Gower,
Mrs. H. M. Young, G. T. Mann, E. G. Eeles, and
W. Davison.

Officials present were Mr. C. W. Collard
(Borough Treasurer), Mr. R. A. Gray (Assist-
ant Solicitor), Mr. C. H. Blakeway (Borough
Surveyor), Mr. F. C. Haynes (Senior Sanitary
Inspector), Dr. G. K. Bowes (Medical Officer
of Health), Mr. R. Crewdson (Housing Man-
ager), Mr. H. J. Colson (Borough Organist), Mr.
T. Cooper (Borough Librarian), Mr. E. Nugent
Christie (Chief Constable of Bedford), Chief
Inspector L. B. Loveridge, Mr. E. Joy (Mayor's
Sergeant), and the Rev. D. V. Reed. Many of
the Councillors and officials were accom-
panied by their wives. Representatives of the
Women's Voluntary Service, the British and
American Red Cross Societies, and the Toc H
were also present.

Senior officers of the U.S.A.A.F. who at-
tended the ceremony also included Lieut. Col.
R. H. Cole (Air Executive), Lieut. Col. Frank
B. Edelbrock (Station Executive Officer), Lieut.
Col. Henry J. Schmidt (Commanding 414th
Service Group), and Lt. Col. Earl W. Kesling
(Deputy for Operations).

* * * * *

The last big celebration in which Thur-
leigh men participated in England was a

Thanksgiving for Victory parade held in Bedford on Saturday, September 22, 1945.

Picked troops from the 306th paraded with British Army, Navy and Air Force men and women and civil defense workers in the town's most successful post-war program. The procession marched from Bedford Park to Russell Park by way of High Street and the Embankment. The salute at the Bandstand in Russell Park was taken by Lieutenant General Sir Alan G. Cunningham, K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C.

The 306th men did "get on" with the British and their customs. If any doubt existed about the attitude of the Americans toward the British, or vice versa, it is only necessary to look at the record of Anglo-American weddings. Several hundred Thurleigh men were among the 50,000 Americans, mostly Eighth Air Force men, who have married British girls.

Throughout October and November the Group, stripped of all "old men", planned to move to the Continent. The convoy was scheduled to leave on the 15th of November but orders were cancelled on the 14th. All departments worked at Thurleigh with skeleton staffs for the remainder of that month.

The 306th was one of the first groups to arrive in England and one of the last to leave. Headquarters of the Group were established at Giebelstadt Army Air Base in Giebelstadt, Germany. A wag says of the Group's new home: "A glance at the map of South Central Germany will show a city now completely demolished called Wurzburg. We are in this little mud-hole, Giebelstadt, approximately 12 miles south, and the latter will probably not be on your map unless your map is very detailed."

Group moved there between December 1 and December 15 and observed its first peacetime Christmas and New Year's while former members of the Group were celebrating on the high seas in mid-Atlantic, in Atlantic ports or at home.

To a writer of history, the vantage point is important. Having been on the scene of action—Thurleigh—up to October 26, 1945, where official sources of information were available, the author feels that the account of the 306th's activities up to that point is accurate and authoritative. Since that date, however, only meager information has been available. This record must, therefore, content itself with whatever bits of news were forthcoming.

Just as the edition was going to press, some details of the Group's activities on the Continent were received in a letter from Colonel Hudson H. Upham, 306th commanding officer, from April 16, 1945 to March 8, 1946.

He describes the "nearly impossible living conditions" at Giebelstadt, coupled with "unusually strong pressure from higher headquarters on the Casey Jones project." Heavy losses of personnel, due to redeployment and re-adjustment, made it necessary to screen

officers remaining and to assign several to duty as typists in headquarters.

Throughout this period, detachments were operating at Port Lyautey, Dakar and Istres, near Marseilles, France. Living conditions, communications and transportation at Giebelstadt were so inadequate that the Group was moved February 28, 1946, to Istres, where it absorbed into its numbers men from the 384th and 92nd Bomb Groups.

Lt. Germann was Group S-2 from December until the Group left Giebelstadt, and to him goes most of the credit in headquarters for the handling of the Casey Jones project.

Colonel Upham pays tribute to the Group as a whole during the trying period. "No praise," he says, "can be high enough for the air crews and ground personnel in the detachments who carried on despite terrific odds." He returned to this country March 8 and was succeeded by Colonel R. Harris. Lieutenant Colonel Kesling departed for the Zone of Interior directly from England. Lieutenant Colonel Cole remained Deputy, and Major Nickloff was operations officer. Captain Winslow was Group operations officer during the "Giebelstadt nightmare."

To the 306th's last Group Navigator, Lieutenant Victor Lisec, we are indebted for a description of the final days of the 306th. There was something of the tragic quality of *La Derniere Classe* in the tone of his letter written on July 11, 1946. He writes:

"As all good things must come to an end, the 306th is in its last week of existence . . . We are to be deactivated before the week is out . . . I hate to see the Group break up, as do the few other old boys that are left. Right now there are possibly ten men who were with the Group a year ago . . ."

Only ten men of the original 306th saw the death of the Group which had lived so gloriously. The "old men" are proud of their past achievements in war, just as the new 306th is proud of its contributions toward a just and durable peace.

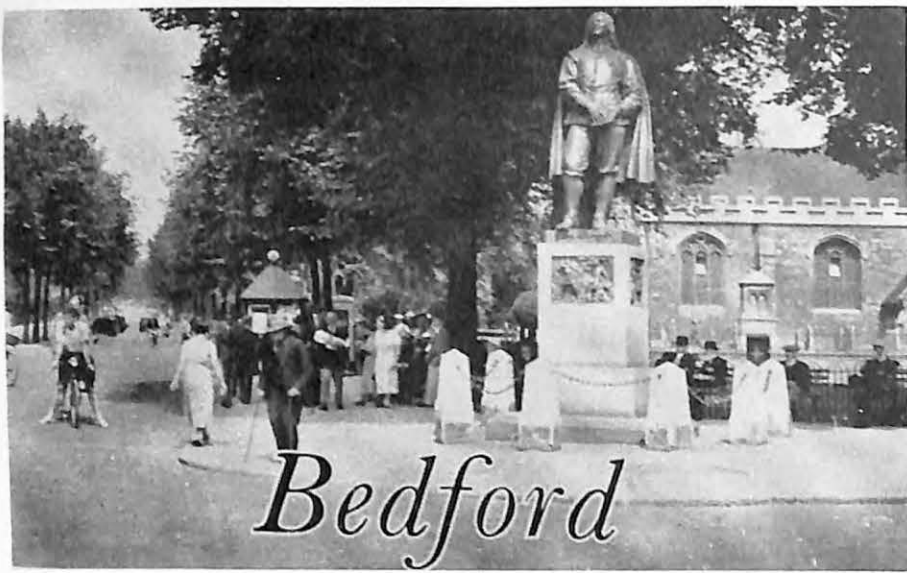
The 306th is dead, but it will live long in the hearts of men.





Luton,
Thurleigh
and
Leighton Buzzard



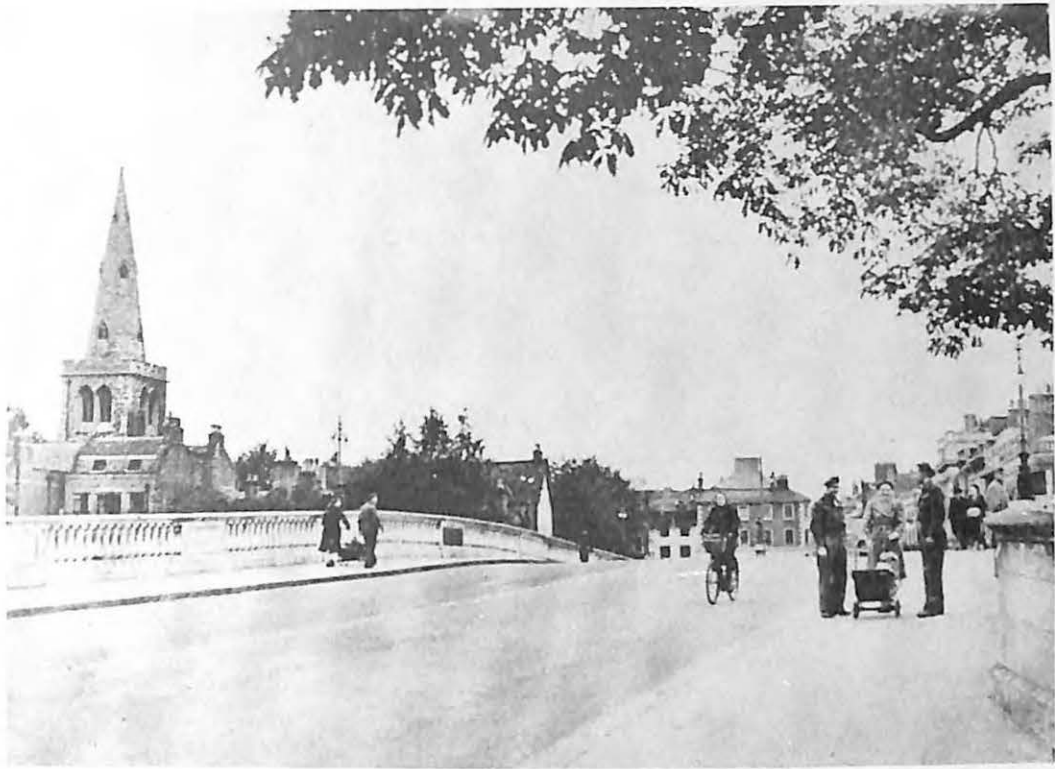


Bedford



Bedford







Tower Bridge



"Big Ben"



Trafalgar Square



Buckingham Palace



Tower Bridge

Piccadilly Circus



The Castle

Scott Memorial



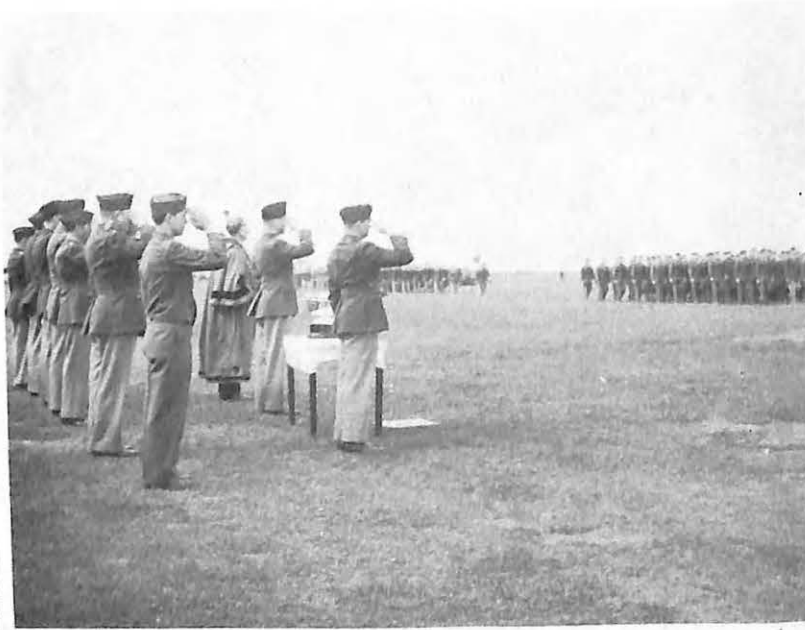
London and Edinburgh

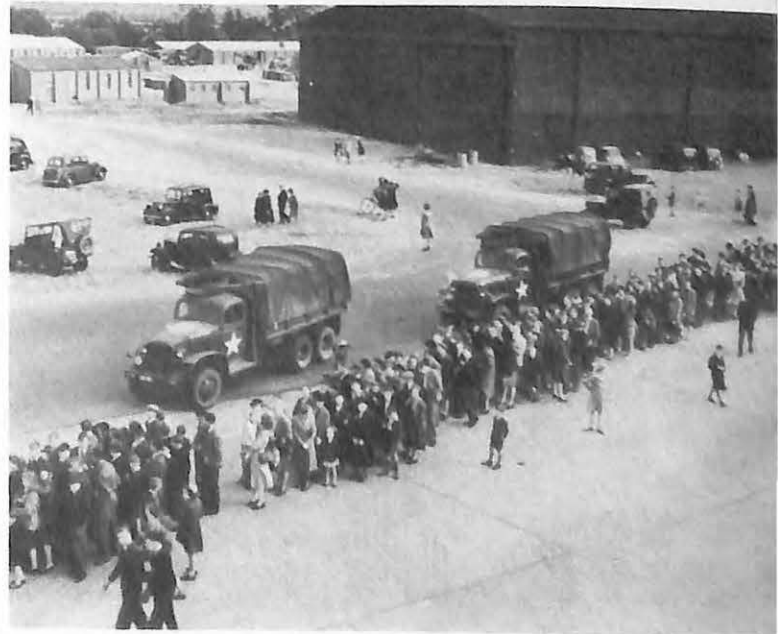
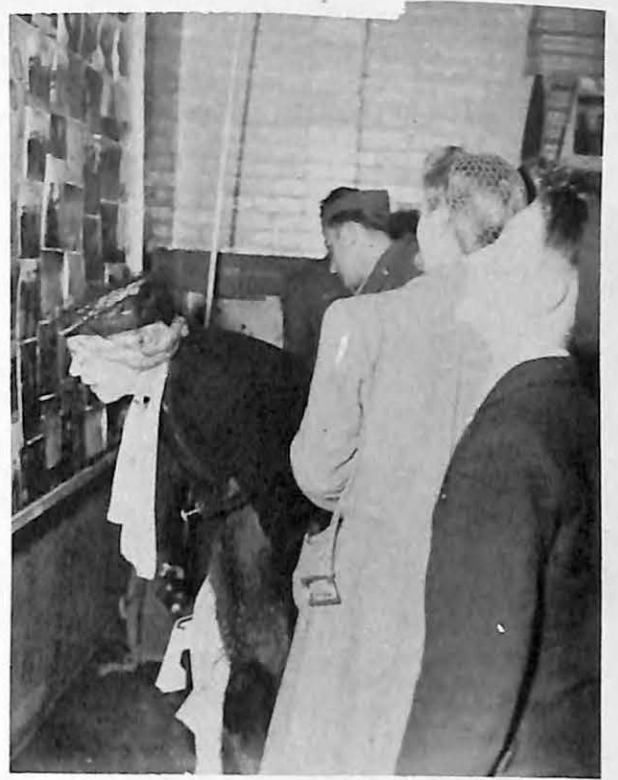
Thurleigh's
Gift to
Bedford

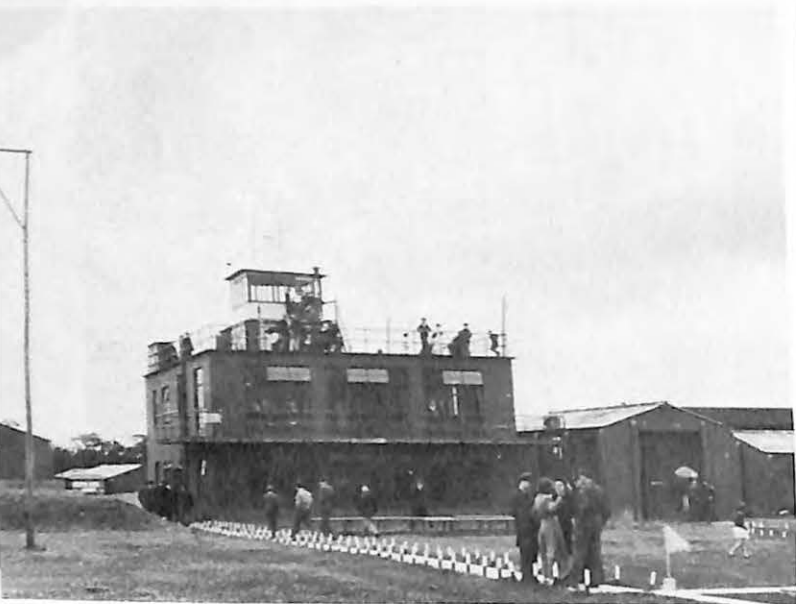


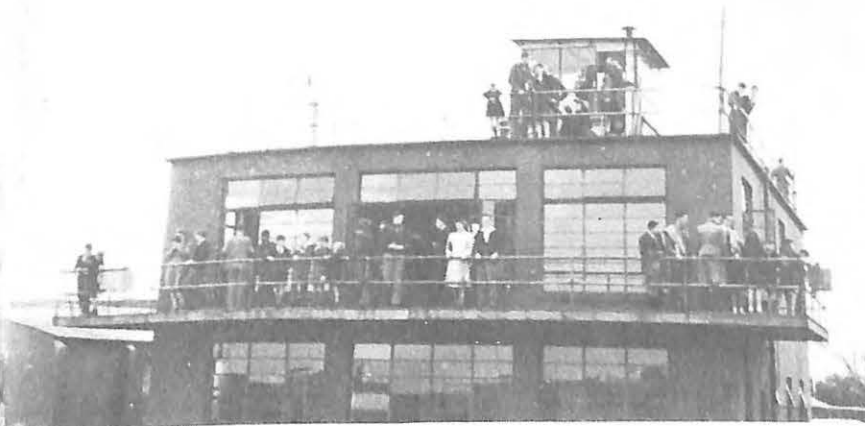


306th Hosts to British on Army Air Force Day









ENGLAND 1944

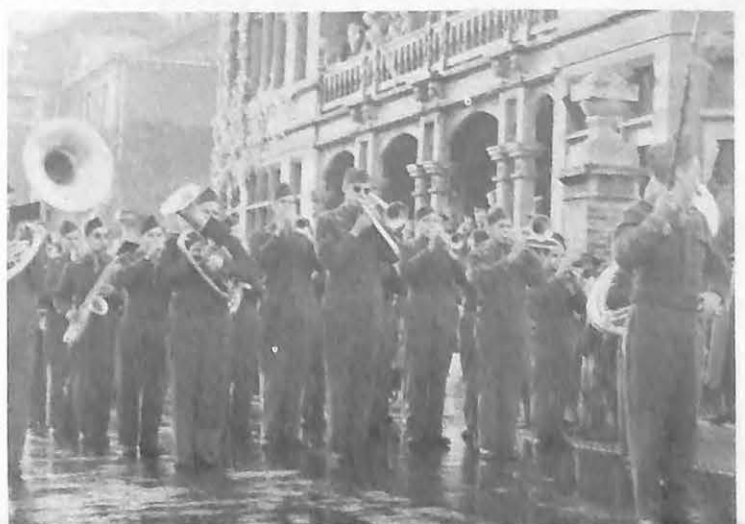
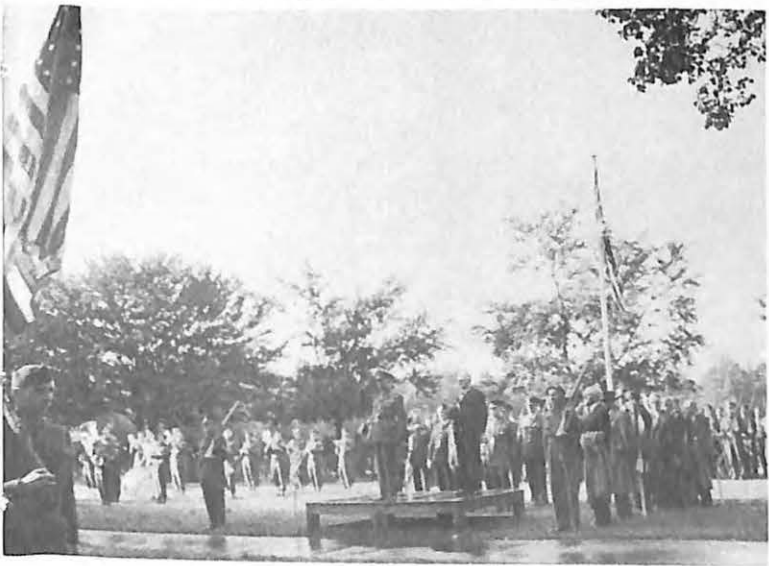


Scars of War

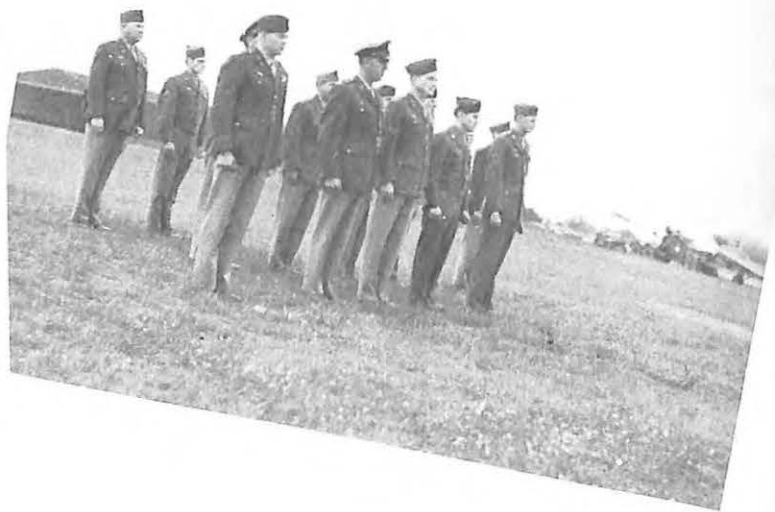
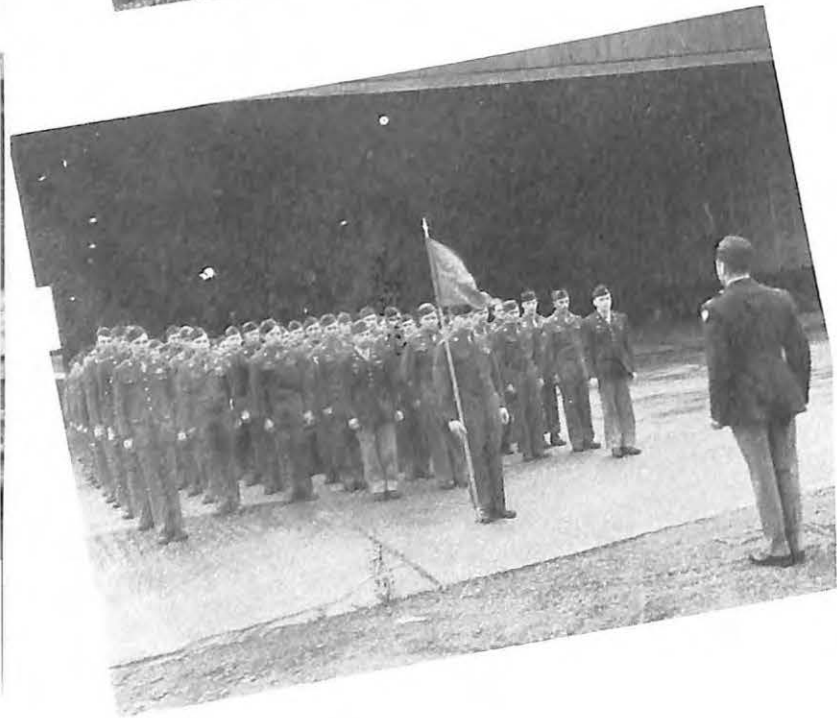
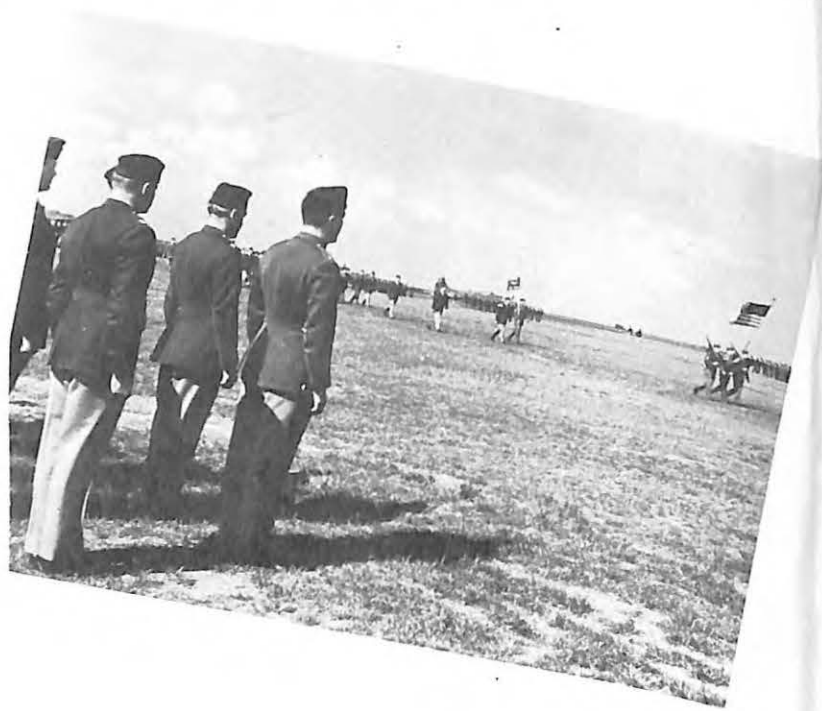


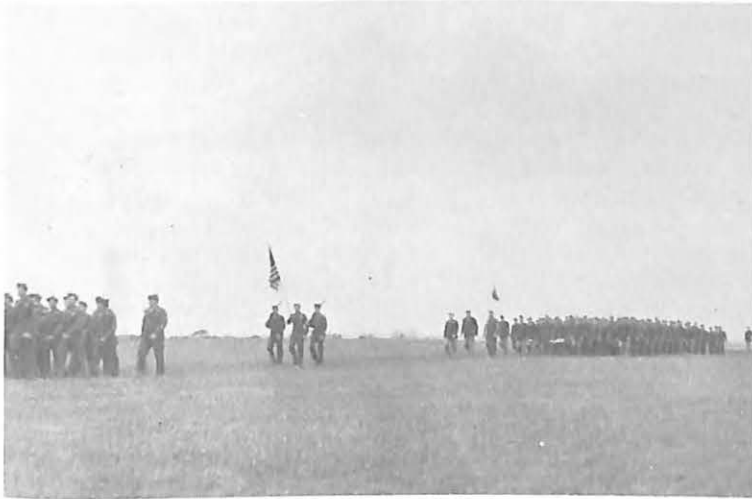
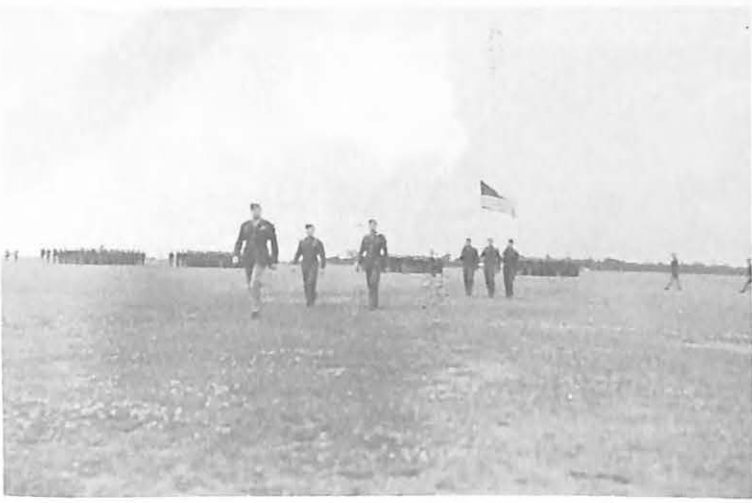
"959" after RAID ON
Villa Coublay 7-14-43
1/Sgt GOLOBERG - Tail Gun
1LT THOMAS - Pilot

Thanksgiving for Victory Parade



Parades and Reviews







The Chaplain Speaks

There were many chaplains at Thurleigh, of all religious denominations, but none was with the Group as long as Captain Adrian M. Poletti. At the request of the author, he has consented to contribute an "In Memoriam," to this book.

TO ALL FORMER MEMBERS OF THE 306th BOMBARDMENT GROUP:

I arrived in England August 17, 1942, and shortly found myself at Poddington with the 15th Medium Bomb Group. A few weeks later there came a 'phone call from Division that a new Group was due at Thurleigh and would I arrange for the Catholic Services there. But where was Thurleigh? Getting a map I finally located the place and Sunday morning set out to find it. At the field no one knew where anything was, but we came to the NAAFI (British USO) and there found Chaplain McLeod, Group Chaplain, who had the place already arranged for services and about two hundred men waiting for Mass. A few weeks after that I was assigned to the 306th, and the next three years were some of the happiest of my life. Working for and with the men of the 306th, 39th Service Group and 4th Station Complement and associated units was not work or hardship but a pleasure.

There was always a Protestant and Catholic chaplain at Thurleigh, the Jewish men being sent to their own services in town and later having services in the chapel Saturday mornings conducted by a visiting chaplain from Division. Because of the co-operation and support of our C.O.'s I doubt that any group received better religious attention than ours. As the NAAFI was unsuitable for services, Chaplain McLeod and I went to Colonel Overacker and asked for a building that could be fitted up for a permanent Post Chapel. He at once agreed and we were soon set up in a wing of what was later to become the Red Cross Aero Club. An altar was built, suitable benches installed, daily services inaugurated until it was a fair approximation of what the men were used to back home. There we remained for about ten months when a larger place was required and we moved across the street, with the help of Colonel Putnam, into a large Nissen hut, built for a recreation hall accommodating up to four hundred. Post Utilities lent a hand by installing a raised platform for the altar, putting in a beautiful altar rail and making improvements until the place was more like a parish church than a chapel. Finally a small steeple complete with bell was erected on the front, and here the Post Chapel remained until the 306th left Thurleigh.

Many happy memories are associated with our Post Chapel. I recall our first High Mass overseas with Sgt. Lehman at the organ and Sgts. Praederio, Arruda, Cassidy, McHale, Bob, and Sweeney and Joyce as the choir. The first Catholic mission for American troops in England was conducted in this chapel. Following the closing exercises a communion breakfast (arranged with the always gracious cooperation of Captain Hull) was served to over three hundred men. Seated at the head table was General Armstrong who had just received word of his promotion that day. He had promised to be present if it was possible but when I heard the glad news of his promotion I honestly did not expect him. However, true to his word General Armstrong walked in just as we were sitting down; an officer and a gentleman in the truest Army sense. When the General rose to speak amidst a thunder of applause, he modestly began,—“Men, you all know me so there is no use pretending, but I honestly want to say that I was never mixed up with so much religion in my life.” (And he pointed to the ten chaplains at the head table). He then seriously told the men that he admired them for making the mission every night of the past week and urged them to continue living up to their faith, for it would make them better men and better soldiers, and he would do anything he could to encourage them to this end. So enthusiastic and successful were the results of the mission that eventually every field in 1st Division followed suit, as well as many in 2nd and 3rd. Once again the 306th had led the way.

The first Protestant revival for Americans in England was likewise held in the Post Chapel of the 306th. Arranged by Chaplain McLeod, it was scheduled for Holy Week, 1943. The last night, Chaplain Maurice Reynolds, Chief of Chaplains, Eighth Air Force, delivered the closing address. Shortly after Chaplain McLeod was promoted to a higher position and reluctantly left the 306th after having been with it since it was organized at Wendover. His place was taken by Chaplain Denleger, who was with us only a few months, and was followed by Chaplain Ralph E. Simester. Chaplain Simester stayed with us until June 1945 and endeared himself to all by his jovial disposition and his genuine desire to help everyone.

Also on the pleasant side of the ledger are the many Christmas parties for evacuated children made possible by the generosity of the men of Thurleigh. Three parties were given that first Christmas 1942 and were such a suc-



cess not only for the children, but also so gratifying to the men who went along to help, that they increased each year. The second year six parties were conducted in Bedford, Kettering, and nearby area. The third year there were eight Christmas parties, entertaining over two thousand children, and then it was necessary to announce at Sunday services that no more candy, crackers, or gum was desired as there was already more than sufficient voluntarily contributed from the men's weekly PX rations; all of which speaks volumes for the charity and generosity of the Americans and particularly the men of Thurleigh. These parties were not only the best means of solidifying Anglo-American relationship, but what they mean to the children can be gathered from an article from a Kettering paper headed: "Father Christmas Safe". Sgt. Joseph Fiddes, 367th, played Santa Claus at the Christmas parties and some weeks afterward failed to return from a mission over Germany. Hearing of it the children immediately began praying for his safety and inquiring constantly for news. When word finally came through that he was a prisoner of war, they had a celebration as though their own long lost brother had just returned.

How easy it would be to go on and on recalling the many happy incidents that filled those three years: the missions on which no ships were lost (not even from the 367th); the day of the two hundredth mission and party that followed; the three pilgrimages to Walsingham, the last from the whole Division led by the 306th, on which occasion the first mass in four hundred years was said on the original site; V-E Day and the grand party on the ball-field; the many nights I enjoyed bacon and eggs with Sgt. Sweeney and his gang in the EM Club; the numberless fine friendships with the men of the Group, etc., etc. But there is something much more important. For us, the fortunate ones, who came back home, these are all pleasant memories but many of our companions did not come back. In the hundreds of missions flown by the 306th, two hundred ships were lost, which means that approximately two thousand men went down. Final records showed that about half of these had been killed, the rest were fortunately prisoners and now safely back home. The war is over. England, Thurleigh already seem like a long time ago, and I wonder how often we give a thought to the hundreds of our Group, our buddies and friends, we left "over there." Personally, I never think of Thurleigh, and that is often, without thinking of two in particular, Capt. "Pappy" Check and Lt. J. Becker of 367th. Both were killed on their last mission. The *Stars and Stripes* described "Pappy" as the most popular man on the base, and no one would dispute the statement. He did not have to die to be a hero, for he was just that to his crew, the ground crew, and everyone who knew him. I recall it was a Saturday morning. It was a late briefing and about eight when we came out, and the men stood in front of

Headquarters (the briefing room was then directly behind Headquarters) waiting for the trucks. Five or six of us were talking with Check; several had wanted to go as his co-pilot and Colonel Wilson had won the honor. There was a party scheduled for that night, and one of them said to Check, "Boy, will you celebrate to-night, bet we'll have to carry you home." I said, "Don't forget to-morrow is Sunday and Mass is as usual." Check just looked at me with his perpetual smile and said, "Don't worry, Father, I haven't missed yet, and I'll be there to-morrow morning." The ships took off and they came back, not one missing; not a flare was fired as they circled the field and everyone awaiting their return was in high spirits. The first one in, "Chenault's Pappy 111," touched down, ran the length of the runway and turned off on the grass. I was with Captain Manning standing in front of one of the ambulances and we watched puzzled. Then two men dropped out of the nose and motioned to us. We drove over and with electrifying finality, they said, "Check is dead." The news raced over the field, and a pall descended on Thurleigh. The day we lost ten ships over Hamburg did not affect the rest of the men nearly as much as this. Check, who loved life so much, who was everybody's friend, "the finest pilot and greatest guy on the field." He's dead? No, we don't believe it. But a fighter coming out of the sun had caught them unawares and a bullet just nicked Check's head enough to be fatal. The straight-living, lovable Raymond J. Check was honored by more than men; he had run a long course in a short time, he was ready for a heavenly reward, and so the Great Pilot had called him home. There was Mass as usual the next morning and while Check wasn't there (at least visibly) it was said for him, and many of his squadron attended.

I remember Lt. Becker graphically too, because he used to wake me up for briefings and was always the first one in the chapel. He received Holy Communion before every mission and then would devotedly kneel before the Shrine of Our Lady in the Post Chapel and light a candle. Toward the end of the war, the custom began of the combat men's leaving their wings here when they finished their missions and went home. It was the morning of the first daylight and first big American raid on "Big B," it was also Becker's last mission, his 35th. He came to me before he left the Chapel and said, "Well, Father, this is it, my last one; to-night you can pin my wings up there with the rest." The ships took off with Becker flying "Rose of York." The ships came back, and among the missing was "Rose of York." It had blown up over Berlin and the crew didn't have a chance.

These were but two out of the hundreds, but every one of us can recall these and many more similar incidents. This is what Victory cost. Because it is human to forget, a perpetual bequest of masses has been arranged at Holy Cross Monastery, Dunkirk, N.

Y., in memory of all the men of the 306th who made the supreme sacrifice. Long after we forget, even when everyone forgets, masses and prayers will still be said for our comrades as long as the world goes on. I know that all the men who contributed to this Memorial Fund will be glad to know that it went over the top and final arrangements were completed three months ago. May they all rest in peace.

In closing, may I hope that this finds all former members of the old Group well and happy in whatever line of civilian occupation they have chosen. It will always be a pleasure to meet any of you and talk over the old days, as just happened last week when I joined the American Legion in Greenville, N. C., and met Sgt. Lewis of the old 39th and 4th Station Complement. But in thinking of those days and our friends who didn't come back may we also recall the prayer that was read over their grave—

"Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that whilst we lament the departure of our brother out of this life, we may bear in mind that we are most certainly to follow him. Give us grace to make ready for that last hour by a devout and holy life, and protect us against a sudden and unprovided death. Teach us how to watch and pray that when Thy summons comes, we may go forth to meet our Heavenly Father and enter with Him into life everlasting. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

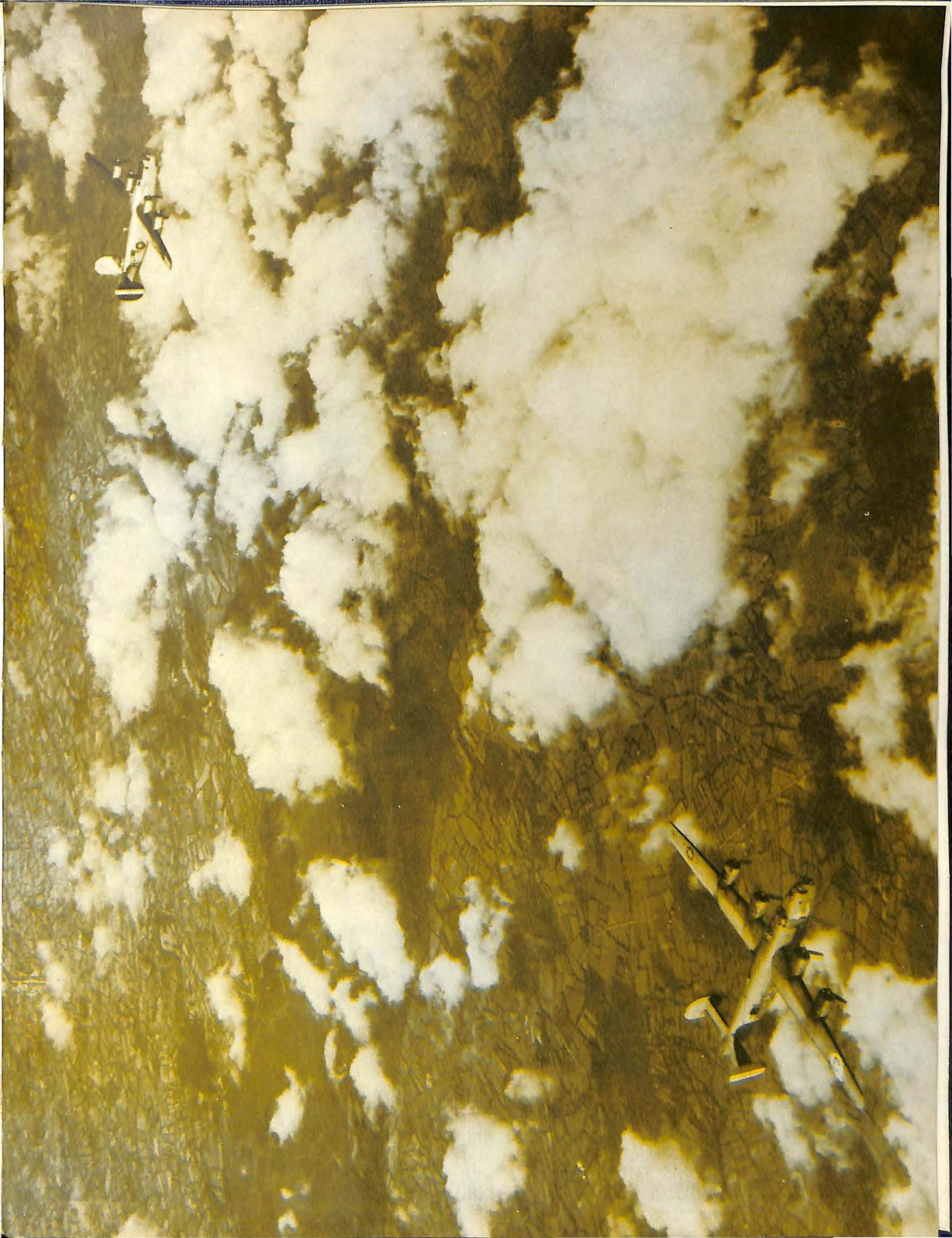
Asking God to bless you and yours, I remain,

Sincerely yours,
Father Adrian M. Poletti, C.P.
Box 403, Greenville, N. C.

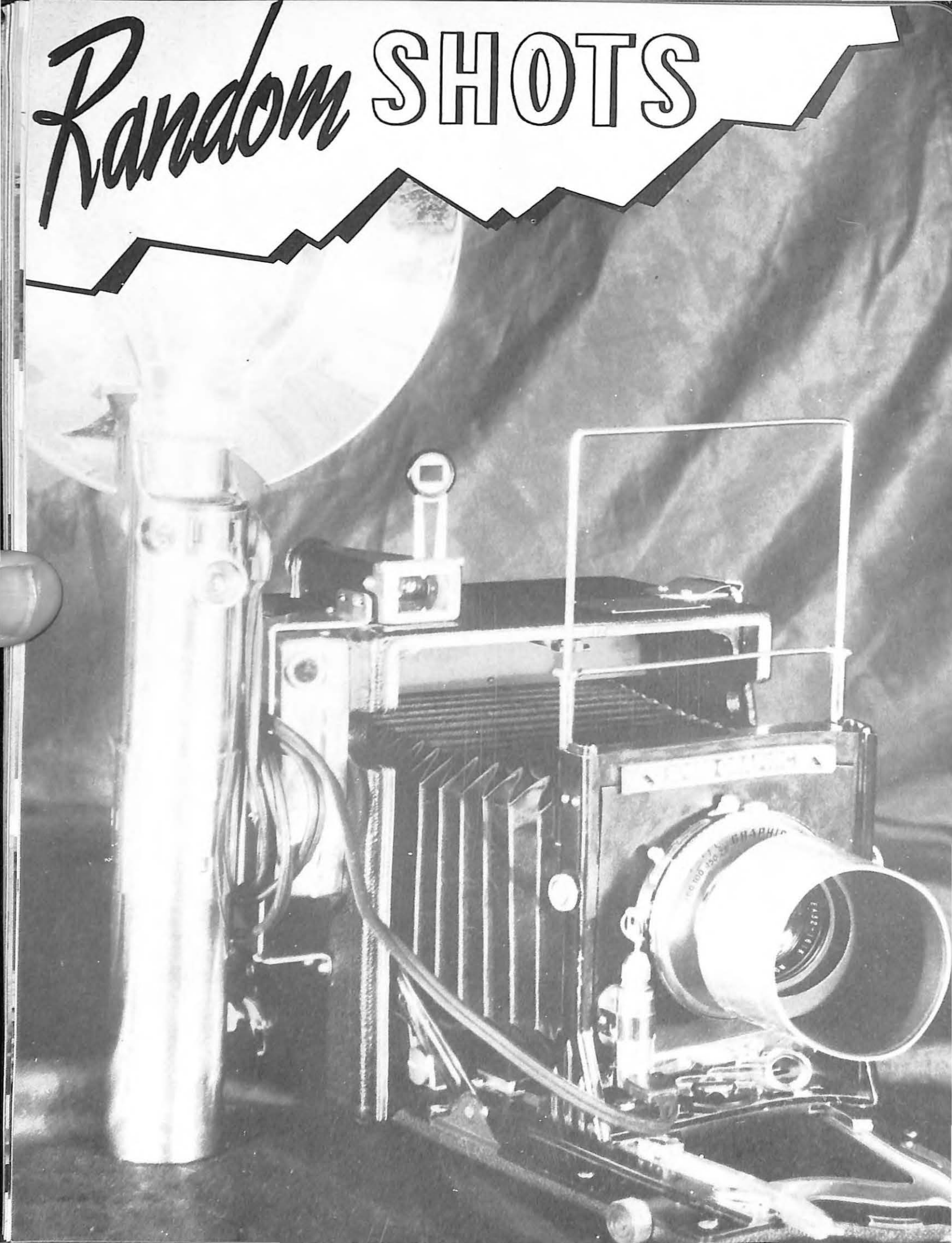
Former Chaplain of 306th
Bomb Group.







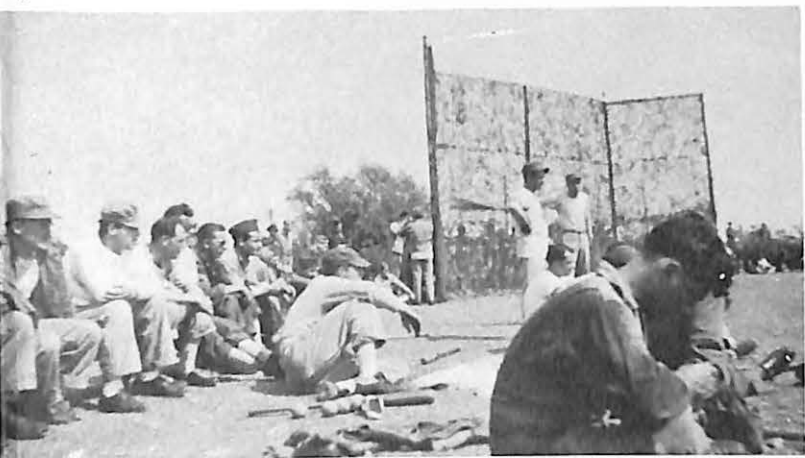
Random SHOTS



USO Entertainers

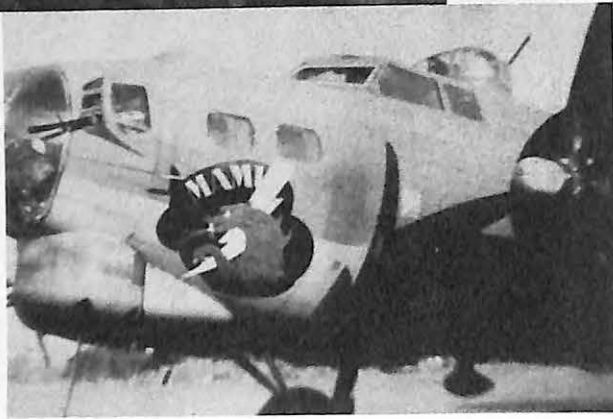










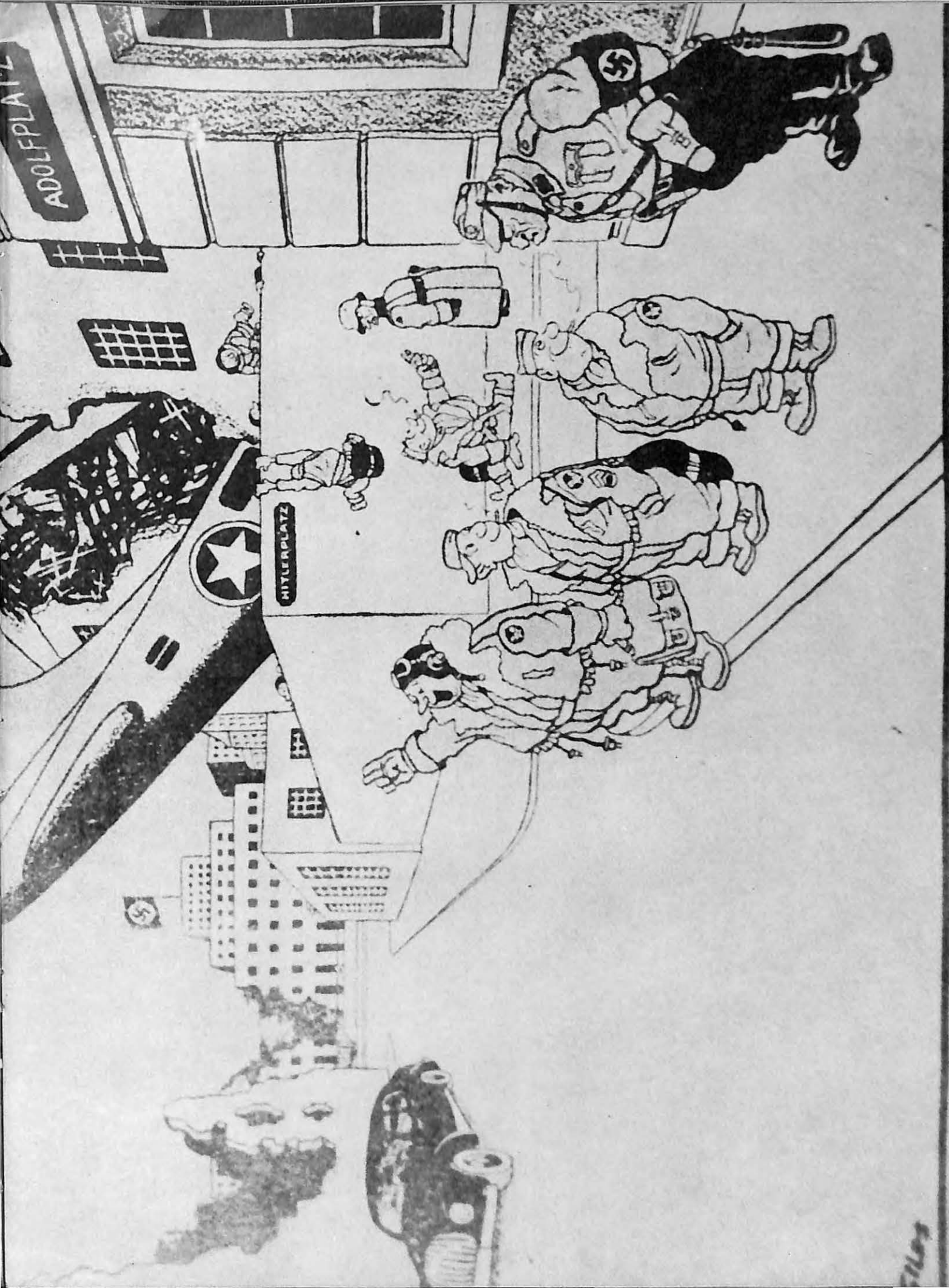












"TAXI!"

FILED



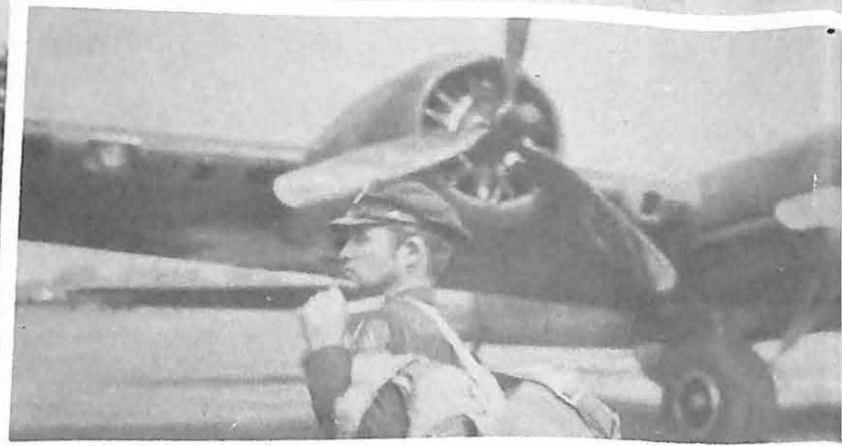
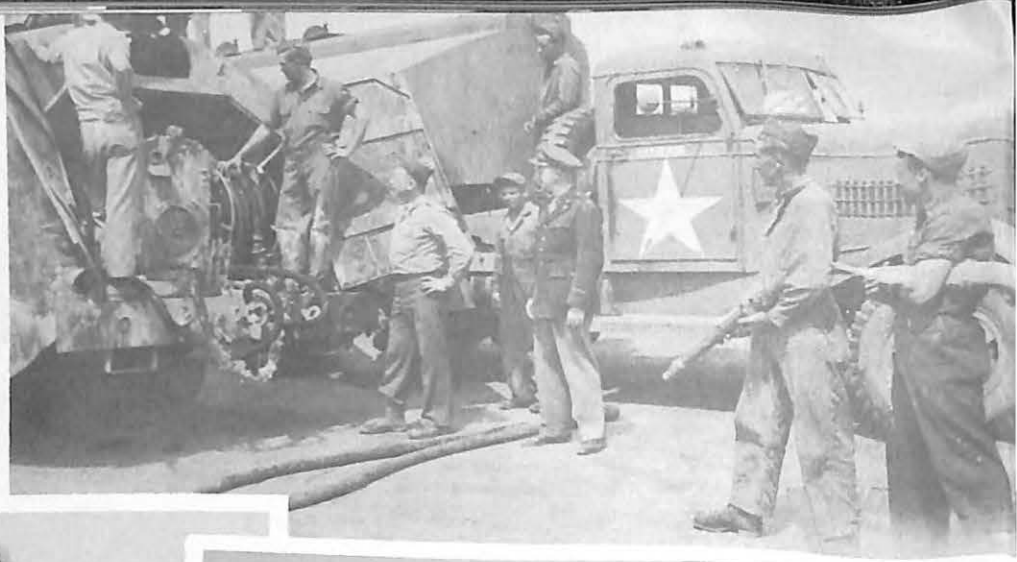


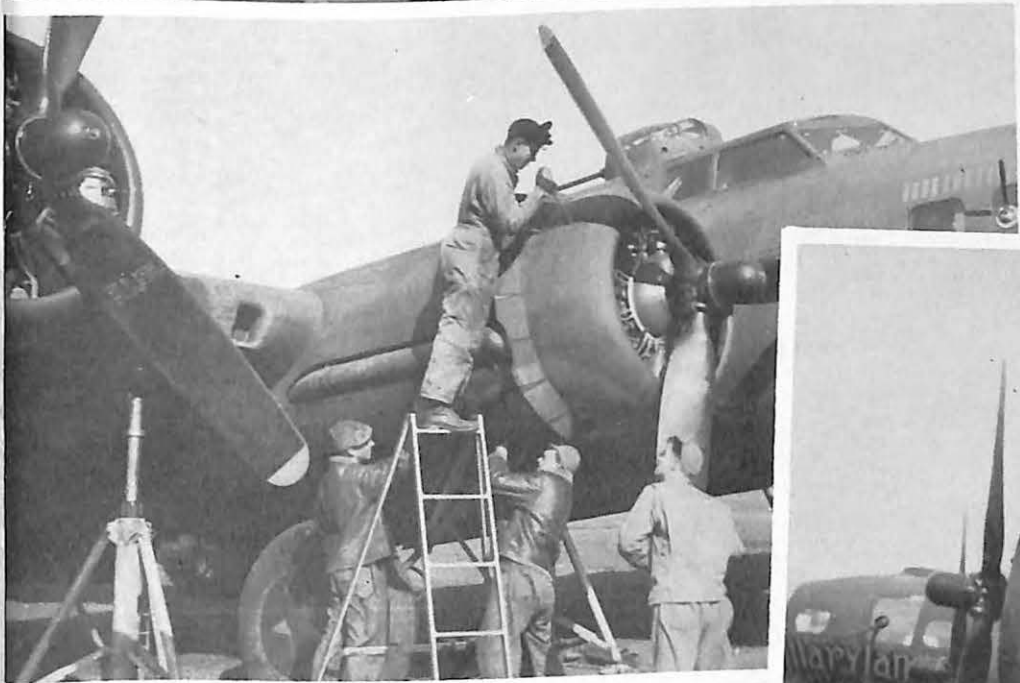


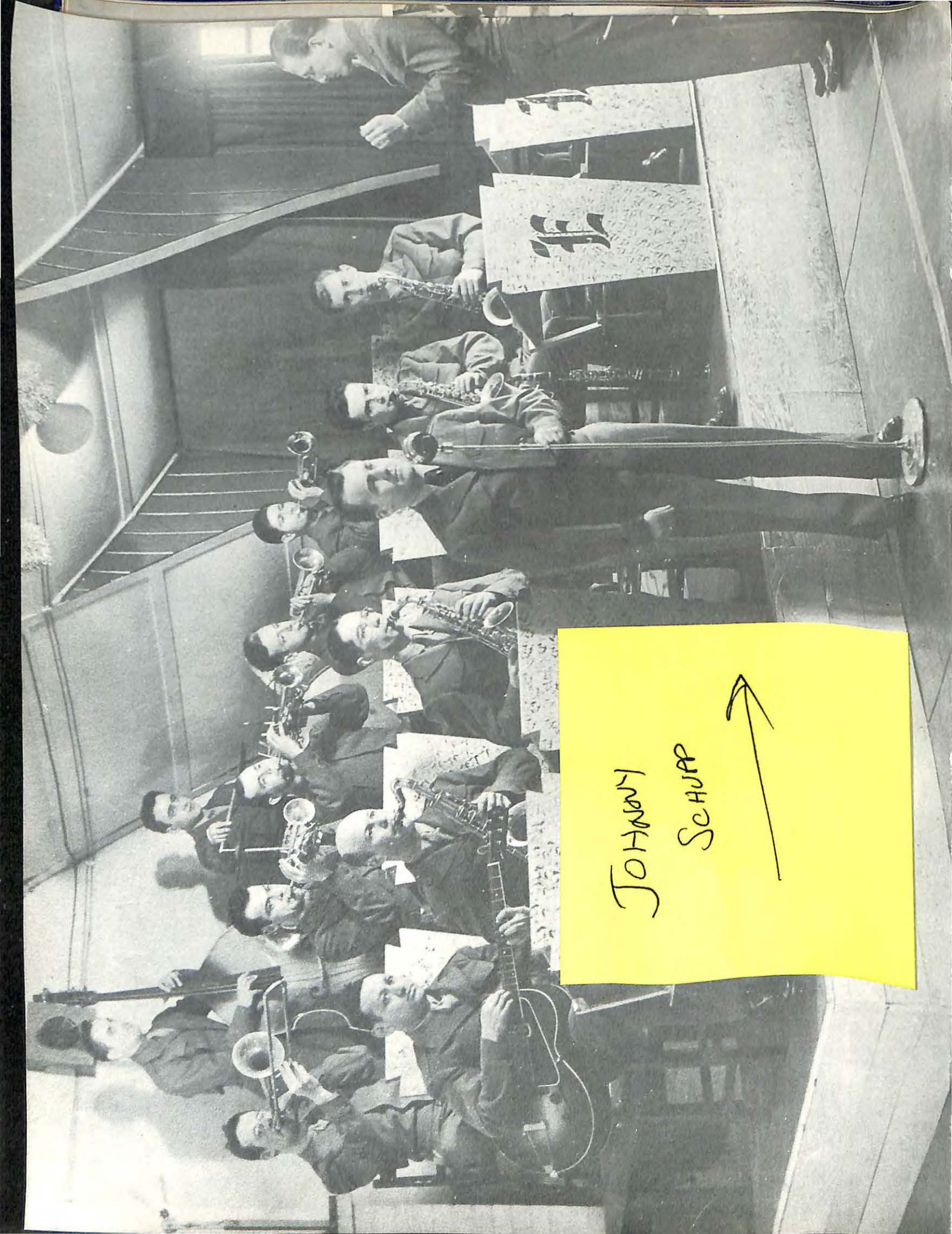












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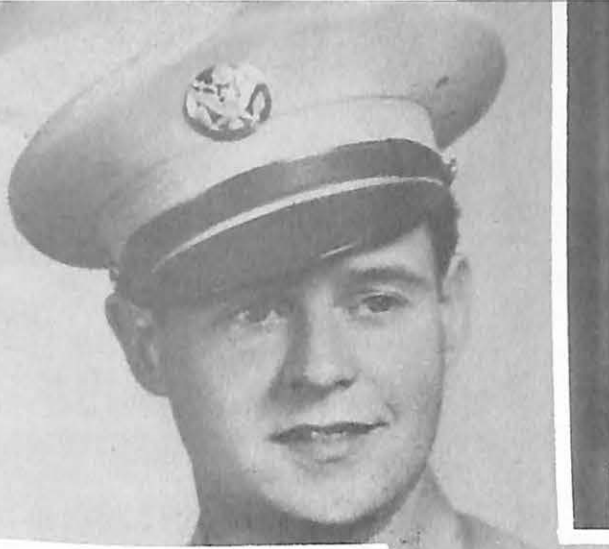




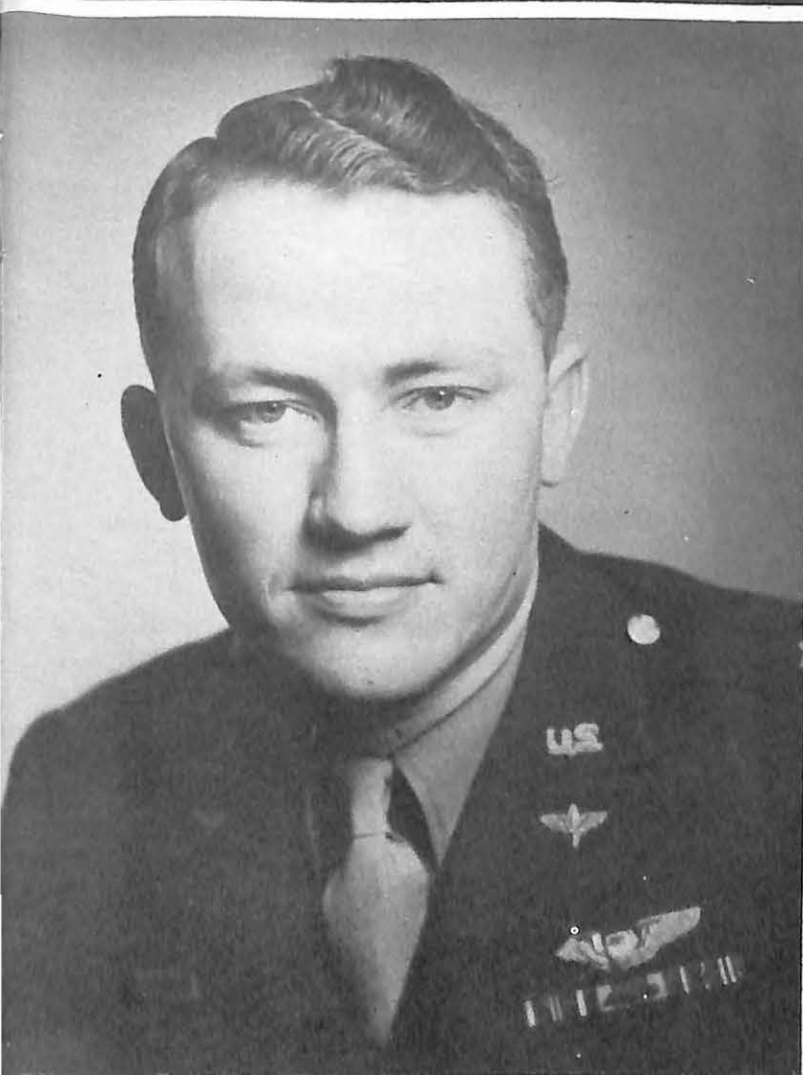






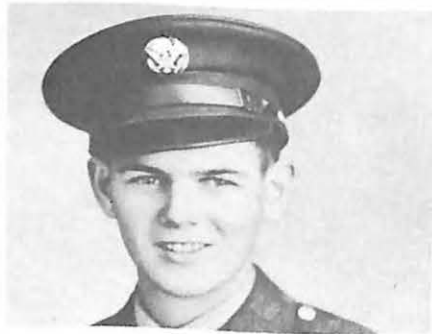












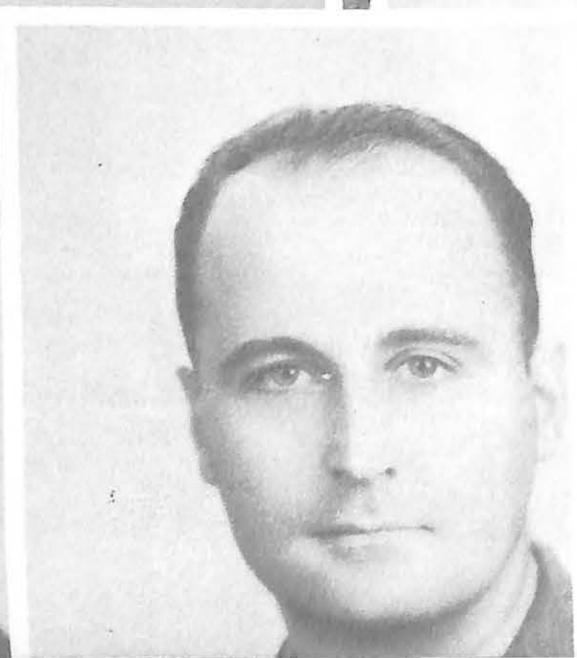




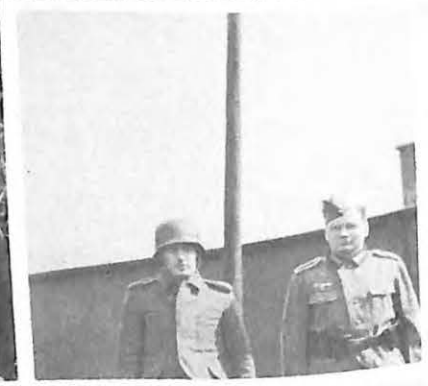
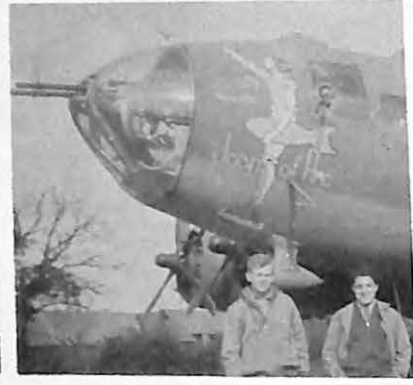






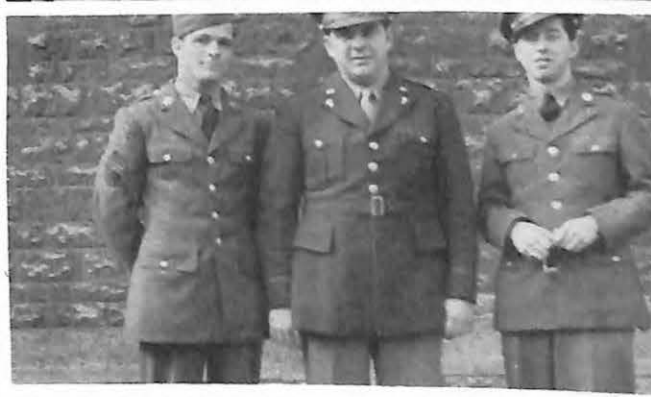
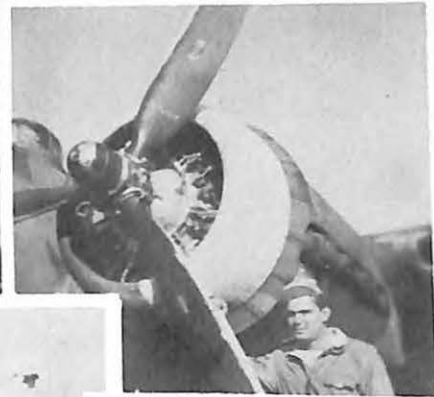














Night Pass



The Fortress group formerly under the command of Col. George L. Robinson, of Los Angeles, is now commanded by Col. James S. Sutton, of Findlay, Ohio. A command pilot, Sutton is a graduate of West Point.

THE STARS AND STRIPES

Daily Newspaper of U.S. Forces

in the European Theater



I/LT. Bruno N. Latic, of Putnam, Conn., was piloting his Fortress Cocaine Bill on the first leg of a Russia-Italy-England mission when one of the crew was badly wounded by flak. Latic sought the nearest airfield in Russia, and set the B17 down at a fighter base where Mustang escort-fighters had already landed. There he met 1/Lt. William S. Davis, P51 pilot from Camilla, Ga., his buddy during flight training days at Tampa, Fla.

M/Sgts. Walter and Edward Bergeron, brothers from Newmarket, N.H., enlisted the same day and were promoted to corporal, sergeant, staff sergeant and technical sergeant on the same orders.

Walter is a line chief in the Fortress squadron, commonly known as the Eager Beavers, commanded by Maj. Maurice V. Salada, of Dubois, Pa. Edward is crew chief of the B17 Chooz-Suzy. Each has received the Bronze Star for "meritorious service."

Notes from the Air Force

SEVERAL hundred newly-arrived radio operator-gunners have received instruction in combat radio procedure at the 306th Bomb Group radio training school.

The school is under the direction of 2/Lt. William E. Foose, of Landisburg, Pa., a former lead radio operator. The instructors, all of whom have served as lead radio operators in combat, are: T/Sgts. Edwin H. Rees, of New York; Richard A. Craig, of Waterville, Me.; John P. Zamora, of Los Angeles, and Willard M. Colvin, of Erie, Colo.

THE Fortress Ice Cold Katie in the squadron commanded by Capt. James A. McKinney, of Walla Walla, Wash., has completed 557 hours' flying time on its original set of engines, going 40 missions without an abort. Crew chief is Sgt. Melvin W. Schrader, of Quincy, Ill., assisted by Cpl. Orville Karsteadt, of Newton, Wis., and Cpl. Mason A. Novinger, of Phoenix, Ariz.

THE instrument maintenance section of the B17 Clay Pigeons squadron commanded by Maj. Charles E. Flanagan, of Union Town, Ind., has checked its 200,000th instrument. In charge are T/Sgt. John R. Kalb, of Chicago; Sgt. Vernon A. Kuhl, of Wilmont, Minn., and Sgt. Kenneth E. Ludolph, of Rockford, Ill.

LINK trainer and automatic-pilot procedure operators at the Fortress base commanded by Col. George L. Robinson, of Los Angeles, have given 7,706 hours of instrument training to 1,120 combat pilots and navigators. The instructors include S/Sgts. Beryl Harris, of Colfax, Ill.; Milton Novinsky, of Brooklyn, N.Y., and Harry Zafuta, of Arma, Kan., and Sgts. Norman A. Davis, of Lowell, Mass., and Sgt. Forrest F. Egbert, of Windsor, Mo.

Combined Operations is the name of a 306th Bomb Group Fortress built out of the front half of a flak-damaged Boeing and the back half of a battered B17 under the supervision of M/Sgt. Carl S. Hays, of Ozark, Ark. Sgt. Roy A. Van Drew, of Rock Falls, Ill., is crew chief of Combined Operations.

2 Lt. Paul H. Martin, of Detroit, pilot of the Fortress Pretty Baby, on a recent mission to Ruhland, Germany, suddenly lost all power from all four engines. He dove 9,000 feet before he got three of the engines going and followed down by Me109s within 100 feet of the plane. At the end of the dive the fighters were gone and Martin was able to bring Pretty Baby home.

THE Fortress group commanded by Col. George L. Robinson, of Los Angeles, recently marked its second anniversary in the ETO.

In 230 operational missions, the group has unloaded 11,735 tons of bombs on targets in Germany and enemy-occupied territory. The gunners have destroyed 337 enemy planes, probably destroyed 113 and damaged 134.

bagging an FW190. . . The 306th Bomb Group Fortress Satan's Lady, operational since October, 1943, has finished 78 missions without an abort. M/Sgt. Harry Tzipowitz, of Philadelphia, is crew chief, assisted by Sgt. James Towns, of Livingston, Tex.; Pfc's Shirley Dobbs, of Oneida, Tenn., and Dale W. Baker, of Long Bottom, O.

The Fortress group commanded by Col. James S. Sutton, of Findlay, Ohio, has completed 245 operational missions.

Welded Brass



Capt. Katherine E. Young, of Provincetown, Mass., commanding officer of the WAC detachment at Eighth Air Force headquarters, and Major Thomas E. Hulings, of Marienville, Pa., commanding officer of a Fortress squadron in the 306th Bomb Group, leave St. Saviour's Church in London after saying "I do" recently. Both returned to duty following a wedding trip.

Mouse Piles Up Points, Shoots for an Air Medal

A FORTRESS BASE, Oct. 31—High over Hamburg, Lt. Herlihy J. Morere, co-pilot of the Fort Miss America, felt something run up his arm. It was a mouse. Turning over the controls to Lt. Roy E. Trask, Morere shook his visitor loose.

The tiny intruder, obviously enjoying a plexiglass-filtered sunbath, stayed with the ship. At the completion of its first mission the mouse scampered out of the bomber and disappeared into a haystack.

Princess Visits First U.S. Unit, Christens Fort Rose of York

By Gene Graff
Stars and Stripes Staff Writer

AN EIGHTH BOMBER STATION, July 6—Princess Elizabeth, Britain's smiling, 18-year-old queen-to-be, paid her first visit to a U.S. unit in the ETO today as she accompanied her royal parents on a tour of this Fortress base. And everybody had a good time except 2/Lt. Frederick Reardon, bombardier from Holyoke, Mass. He was the first man approached by Queen Elizabeth after she and the princess and King George VI attended a mock briefing. Painted on the back of Reardon's brown-leather jacket was the name of his plane—Queenie—and Queen Elizabeth couldn't miss it.

"I sure was sweating it out," the embarrassed Reardon sighed afterwards. "I guess I'll never hear the end of this." Princess Elizabeth, who made a hit with the GIs with her shy smile, christened the Rose of York, a gleaming silver Fortress named in her honor, by smashing a champagne bottle filled with English cider on the plane's nose.

Then she toured several Eighth Air Force bomber bases, inspected personnel and equipment and watched the huge planes rendezvous for a mission. Lt. Gen. Jimmy Doolittle, Eighth Air Force chief, was host to the official party. "This has been a thrilling day," Princess Elizabeth said. "I never realized the preparations for a bombing mission were so involved."

Although the King and Queen spent most of the day exchanging pleasantries with swarms of officers and EMS, the Princess' only long conversation was with M/Sgt. Edward S. Gregory, of Salt Lake City, Utah. It was Gregory, crew chief of the Rose of York, who suggested naming his ship in honor of the Princess.

"We were hunting for an appropriate name a few weeks ago when the papers were filled with stories about Princess Elizabeth's birthday," Gregory explained. "So I submitted the name. But I never thought I'd get to meet the Princess."

The Queen was extremely interested in flight equipment, including a flak suit.

The veteran 306th Bomb. Group now has 26 Fortresses with over 50 combat missions accomplished. Top plane of the group is the Dingleberry Kids with 82 missions. Its crew chief is M/Sgt. S. R. Gustafsen of Norwood, Mass., a Bronze Star Medal winner, who is assisted by Cpl. Kirtland Coburn of Magadore, Ohio, Cpl. Leslie Gedney of Rye, N.Y., and Pfc Aaron St. George of Ripon, Wis.

THE maintenance unit at the Fortress base commanded by Col. George L. Robinson, of Los Angeles, made 83 engine changes in August, and 537 since June. It takes the 31-man team of specialists 30-man hours to make a complete engine change, from the stripping of the original engine to the installation of the last accessory on the new one.

In charge are M/Sgts. William Cavinness, of San Antonio, Tex., hangar chief; Arnold Gunderson, of Grand Forks, N.D., installation inspector, Clair Emeigh, of Wilkinsburg, Pa., strip-down crew chief, and T/Sgt. Hugh F. Smith, of Bisbee, Ariz., assembly chief.

FIRST sub-depot shop to repair flexible fuel tanks is the one at the 306th Bomb. Group base supervised by T/Sgt. Ralph D. Brown, of Ashtabula, Ohio, assisted by S/Sgt. Robert Reichers, of Modesto, Calif., Sgts. William J. McNaughton, of Port Huron, Mich., Ernest G. Michel, of Hollywood, Calif., Dewey Stewart, of Salt Lake City, Utah., and Cpl. John Kovac, of Larimer, Pa.

Fliers Share Their Smokes

Special to The Stars and Stripes
306TH BOMB GROUP, England, Nov. 28—In a voluntary "Share Your Smokes" move inspired by the current cigarette famine, combat airmen of this Fortress station, commanded by Col. James S. Sutton, of Findlay, Ohio, held a meeting today and unanimously voted to let noncombatants share in the limited cigarette ration.

Under the plan, which will go into effect immediately, combat fliers will get only three packages of smokes a week, while noncombatants will get one pack.

As has been the case throughout the Communications Zone for more than a week, combat fliers previously got five packs a week while noncombatants got none.

Following today's meeting, the fighters will voluntarily take only three packs of American butts when they visit the PX. As noncombatants outnumber the others about two to one, this will leave one package for every other man on the station.

ETO SPORTS MIRROR

S/Sgt. Warren Sellen, of Lindhurst, N.J., was the whole show yesterday as the 306th Bomb Group Gremlins rolled to a 25-0 victory over the Bomb Group Terriers. He scored two touchdowns on runs of 40 and 60 yards, passed 40 yards to Adolf Visconti, of New York, for a third, and capped his day's work off with a ten-yard scoring heave to Lt. George Bowers, of Boston. . . . The

The Stars and Stripes Scrapbook

There were many good stories which appeared in the pages of the London edition, and there were a few great ones. We don't know how well we have succeeded in picking out a few of the great ones. When it came right down to it, it was a fielder's choice in dozens of cases . . . so we stabbed and came up with these. We think, however, that they are as representative as any selection can be of the type of war coverage The Stars and Stripes tried to give its readers.

'Snuffy' Quits KP to Get CMH

By Andrew A. Rooney

A U.S. BOMBER STATION, England, July 15—They took Maynard Smith off KP and gave him the Congressional Medal of Honor yesterday. Henry L. Stimson, U.S. Secretary of War, draped America's highest award around the little 8th Air Force gunner's neck, while Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers, ETO chief, Maj. Gen. Ira C. Eaker, 8th Air Force commander, and a squad of brigadier generals stood in the background. S/Sgt. Maynard Smith rates a salute from all of them now. The recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor is entitled to a salute from a four-star general.

July 15
1943

The dour little ball turret gunner, who comes from Caro, Mich., took the ceremony in stride yesterday. All the brass which had come to honor him for his hour-and-a-half battle with flames and enemy fighters over France and the Channel was just so much brass.

He stood quietly at attention while Secretary Stimson read the citation for the second Congressional Medal of Honor won in this theater. (2/Lt. Jack Mathis, who died as he released his bombs over the target, was posthumously recommended for the C.M.H.)

THE men on the station don't know Smitty too well. They haven't made up their minds about him yet. "He's a character," they say, and that's all they're sure about him.

Several weeks ago he came in after a pass a little late; and a week later he did it again. He was put on KP as a mild form of punishment, and for the last week he's been peeling potatoes in between raids.

After the ceremony someone asked Smith if he had any plans for the night. He didn't have any special plans. "I haven't got a pass for tonight, but I think I can arrange for one," he said.

The general opinion of the ranking officers that were there to congratulate him was that he probably could arrange for one.

Combat crews here are hardened to heroism, but the story of "Snuffy" Smith on his first raid May 1 over Flak City (St. Nazaire) is still talked over in Nissen huts at night. They talk about "Snuffy," himself, too. He is a character—not the typical American hero folks picture.

On May 1 Maynard Smith started out on his first raid. He was flying in a numbered but nameless ship piloted by 1/Lt. Lewis P. Johnson, who had been on 24 missions before.

Maynard Smith tells the story of the trip that won him the Congressional Medal this way:

"WE had left St. Nazaire and headed out to sea with some FWs tailing us. I was watching the tracers from a Jerry fighter come puffing

by our tail when, suddenly, there was a terrific explosion.

"My interphone and the electrical controls to my turret went out, so I hand-cranked myself up and crawled out of the turret into the ship. The first thing I saw was a sheet of flame coming out of the radio room and another fire by the tail wheel section.

"Suddenly, the radio operator came staggering out of the flames. He made a bee line for the gun hatch and dived out. I glanced out and watched him hit the horizontal stabilizer, bounce off and open his chute. The poor guy didn't even have a 'Mae West.' I think it was burned off. By this time the right waist gunner had baled out over his gun and the left waist gunner was trying to jump but was stuck half in and half out of his gun hatch. I pulled him back into the ship and asked him if the heat was too much for him. All he did was to stare at me and say, 'I'm getting out of here.' I helped him open the rear escape door and watched him bale out. His chute opened okay.

"The smoke and gas were really thick. I wrapped a sweater around my face so I could breathe, grabbed a fire extinguisher and attacked the fire in the radio room. Glancing over my shoulder at the tail fire. I thought I saw something coming, and ran back. It was Gibson, the tail gunner, painfully crawling back, wounded. He had blood all over him.

"LOOKING him over, I saw that he had been hit in the back and that it had probably gone through his left lung. I laid him down on his left side so that the wound would not drain into the right lung, gave him a shot of morphine and made him as comfortable as possible before going back to the fires.

"I had just got started on this when that FW came in again. I jumped for one of the waist guns and fired at him. As he swept under us, I turned to the other waist gun and let him have it from the other side. He left us for a while, so I went back to the radio room fire again.

"I got into the room this time and began throwing out burning debris. The fire had burned holes so large in the side of the ship that I just tossed the stuff out through them.

"I fired another burst with the waist guns, and went back to the radio room with the last of the extinguisher fluid. When that ran out I found a water-bottle and a urine can and poured those out.

"After that I was so mad I urinated on the fire and finally beat on it with my hands and feet until my clothes began to smolder. That FW came around again and I let him have it. That time he left us for good. The fire was under control, more or less, and we were in sight of land.

"Lt. Johnson brought the ship in okay, and by the time we stopped rolling I had the fires completely out. It was really a miracle the ship didn't break in two in the air."



CONQUERING HERO: Sgt. Maynard (Snuffy) Smith, who won the Medal of Honor two years ago for heroism in a flaming Fortress in a raid over France, takes a modest bow as he rides down the main street of his home town, Caro, Mich. In back seat with Snuffy are his mother and Gov. Harry F. Kelly of Michigan. State Budget Director Fred Striffler rides in front with driver.

Fliers Welcome An 'Extras' Role

By Bud Hutton

Stars and Stripes Staff Writer

306 FORTRESS GROUP, Oct. 17—Heavy-bomber airmen, who before June 6 were the prima donnas of the war in the ETO, resumed their spear-carrying extra's role today with their third major blow in four days at Cologne—attacks aimed at making American infantrymen's job easier.

The rail and supply center which feeds Nazi resistance along the Rhine was hit through cloud by more than 1,300 Fortresses and Liberators.

The heavies were covered by a force of more than 800 Thunderbolts and Mustangs. The only enemy air opposition encountered was directed against a straggling bomber that had become separated from its formation. Some pilots reported seeing enemy jet-propelled planes—but only in the distance. Ack-ack fire over Cologne ranged from meager to intense.

Thirteen bombers and three fighters were lost in the operation.

Just as almost everyone else, your correspondent, who used to fly with the bombers, chased off after the ground forces when the invasion started. Today I went back with the bombers to see how they felt about a supporting role. The crews—who used to be the glamor boys, who reaped all the publicity there was—say they don't mind the spear-carrying a bit.

2/Lt. Bob Mox, Hollywood, pilot of the B17 Lily Marlene, summed it up:

"Our hats go off to those infantrymen. They've got a dirty job. If wading through the flak at Cologne (Mox lost an engine to flak there the last time out) is going to make foxhole living easier for those guys we're all for it."

That was about the way Mox' crew and the rest of the airmen from this old "First Wing" station felt about it. Once upon a time, when the bomber crews were fighting all the war there was in this theater, some of them used to be a little touchy, probably rightly so, about due credit. Today they figure they have just as tough a job as infantrymen, but they can get back to a hot meal and a warm bed at night, and anything they can do to make the ground-force Joes' stay in foxholes shorter is all right by them.

The rest of Mox's crew: 2/Lt. Warren Borges, Arlington, Mass., co-pilot; 1/Lt. Marcel McCartney, Inglewood, Cal., bombardier; F/O Stanley Gencher, Brooklyn, navigator; T/Sgt. Ed Marquez, Denver, top turret; B. A. Wilson, Palo Alto, Cal., radio operator; and Joseph Schomber, Akron, Ohio, waist gunner; and S/Sgt. Dan Sweeney, Worcester, Ohio, ball turret, and Reed Miller, Tyrone, Pa., tail gunner.

115th Mission—Fort Returns On One Engine

306TH BOMB GROUP—The Fortress How Soon returned from its 115th mission on one engine.

Approximately ten minutes from the target—an airfield in the Oranienburg area of Germany—the bomber ran into heavy tracking anti-aircraft fire. Close concussion of flak bursts bounced the Fort, striking No. 3 and 4 engines.

The pilot, 2/Lt. Robert E. Woods, of Memphis, Tenn., was hit in the right hand. The co-pilot, 1/Lt. John S. McDonald, of Rockford, Mich., was knocked out by a chunk of metal which tore through his helmet.

"When I came to, the cockpit was full of smoke, powdered glass and debris," McDonald related. "Three engines were out."

The battered Fort unloaded its bombs and went into a dive, plunging 10,000 feet before pulling out. Crewmen were alerted for the bail-out order.

Eight Mustangs suddenly appeared, four staying with the crippled bomber and four hitting the deck, silencing enemy flak batteries.

All equipment was jettisoned. The ball turret jammed, however. S/Sgt. Clarence W. Hunter, tail gunner from Graham, N.C., and Sgt. Edward J. Maliszewski, radio operator from Schenectady, N.Y., each grabbed one of the two tail guns and kept beating on the ball turret until it dropped.

"We staggered all over the sky—but made it back to base somehow," the co-pilot said. Despite one more obstacle—a flat tire—the pilot landed the Fort smoothly.

Press

More has been written and published about the 306th than possibly any other group in England. Articles have appeared in as diverse publications as the *Saturday Evening Post* and *The Sign*, a national Catholic magazine; *Stars and Stripes*, the U. S. Army newspaper, and the *Bedford Record and Circular*, Bedford, England; the Baltimore (Maryland) *Sun* and *Skyways to Berlin with the American Flyers* in England, a book which devotes considerable space to men and activities of the 306th.

In the pages that follow are reproduced—either in montage or in their original form—a few of the many published articles.

In addition to those mentioned above, the following have carried Thurlough or 306th stories:

Rushden Echo & Argus, Rushden, Northamptonshire.

Windham County Observer, Putnam, Conn.

THURLEIGH FORTS WERE FIRST OVER GERMANY

(From the *Rushden Echo and Argus*,
England)

CANDLE FLAMES INSCRIBED AIRFIELD HISTORY

STORY OF THE 306th

Candle flames have written a strange but glorious document which may soon be removed from the American air base at Thurleigh—A few miles from Rushden on the Bedfordshire side—and taken to a national museum in the States.

In its early days the Thurleigh airfield was occupied by Polish airmen who went over Germany in Wellington bombers. The Poles carried out two operations on Cologne and Essen. Each time on returning they took a lighted candle and holding it close to the ceiling of the Senior Officers' Mess inscribed with smoke the name of the place they had bombed.

With the arrival of the 306th Group, U.S. A.A.F., the custom was continued, and now the ceiling is completely covered with names representing 341 missions in which the Group has become the most-decorated one in the 8th Air Force. Plans are going forward for the entire ceiling to be transported across the Atlantic.

From the arrival of the 306th on September 6th 1942, Thurleigh—the first 8th Air Force station to fly "Old Glory" in England—became the headquarters of the 40th Combat Wing. Fortresses and their personnel flew over from the States; the ground personnel came by liner, and no time was lost in preparing men and machines for what has been an extremely colourful chapter of the air war on Germany.

COSTLY EXPERIENCE

When the Thurleigh Fortresses went off for their first mission on October 9th, 1942, all the Fortress work was being done by the 1st Wing from Bassingbourne, Chelveston, Thurleigh and Molesworth. It was the work of these four Groups, at first regarded as experimental, which convinced Churchill and Roosevelt that daylight bombing from England would be a sound policy.

In that first raid on a railway marshalling yard at Lille, the Thurleigh Group lost one ship. The Americans knew little or nothing about the technique of daylight bombing, and their only means of learning what methods to employ was to go out and see what happened. It was costly experience, because the R.A.F. Spitfires could fly no further than France on escort work, and the Forts came up against tremendous fighter attacks.

Fortunately the Luftwaffe was baffled by the Americans' massed fire power. Sixty-six Forts went on the first mission and claimed 54 enemy aircraft destroyed. Thurleigh sent 23 ships and claimed 10 victims.

LOW-LEVEL ATTACK

Concentrating on the submarine pens in an effort to destroy Hitler's most threatening weapon at the source, the Forts went to St. Nazaire on November 9th, 1942, with orders to attack at low altitude. There was terrific A.A. fire, but the Thurleigh Group, led at that time by Col. Overacker, went in at zero level and bombed with good results. They lost three ships, however, and the mission showed that low-level bombing was too costly.

On January 27th, 1943, the 8th Air Force bombed Germany for the first time, and Thurleigh was chosen to lead the whole force. The target was Wilhelmshaven, and in the lead ship—the first plane of the 8th Air Force to cross German territory—the pilot was Colonel (now General) Armstrong.

As the campaign developed the targets changed in succession to oil production, marshalling yards and Luftwaffe factories.

The Thurleigh men soon got to know and respect the Abbeville Kids—the yellow-nosed German fighters stationed at Abbeville in France. These were manned by excellent pilots—Goering's pride and joy—who almost became "friends of the family," so persistent were they in their attentions.

THE "CLAY PIGEONS"

At the same time the four Thurleigh squadrons were earning significant names for themselves. One of them in the early days seemed to have nothing but bad luck and suffered terrific losses. An American correspondent, writing in the "Saturday Evening Post," said that the squadron reminded him of a bunch of clay pigeons. That stuck, and the quarters of the squadron still display the "Clay Pigeons" sign.

Another squadron, first in the Group to drop 1,000 tons of bombs, became the "Eager Beavers" in recognition of its liking for work. A third, rather partial to a "scrap," became the "Fitin' Bitin'," and the fourth, called the "Grim Reapers," has a death's head with a fiery scythe as its insignia.

During the early part of 1943 "Fitin' Bitin'" made 42 consecutive missions without loss—a record which stood in the 8th Air Force until D-Day and was achieved at a time when opposition was fiercest.

CO-OPERATION

Just to touch the fringe of Thurleigh's wealth of action stories we go back to the first mission and picture a Fortress limping back to England in badly damaged condition. Scarcely knowing what course to choose, the pilot noticed a Spitfire which came close and wobbled its wings. This was taken correctly as a signal to follow, and the Fortress was led to the landing field at Manston. The Spitfire dropped its landing gear. Again the Fortress

followed suit, and by this admirable co-operation the craft was saved.

On January 11th, 1944 the Group was on its 100th mission, with Halberstadt as the target. Bad weather caused the recall of the fighter escort, and the Luftwaffe promptly came up in strength; but the Group, led by the C.O., Col. Robinson, shot its way through and hit the target, so earning, with others of the 1st Division, the Presidential Unit Citation.

TWO HEROES

One of the most magnificent things ever done was on January 3rd, 1943, when the Group attacked St. Nazaire. One of the Forts, badly crippled, fell into the Channel, and as it went down was still being attacked by enemy aircraft. When the ships hit the water, Sgt. Arizona T. Harris remained at his guns in the top turret, trying to drive off the enemy and allow his comrades to escape. The last thing seen of the aircraft was the two top-turret guns sticking defiantly out of the water and still firing. Sgt. Harris was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Sgt. Maynard Smith known to all as "Snuffy" won the supreme award, the Congressional Medal of Honour, during a mission to St. Nazaire on May 1st, 1943. The ship he was in caught fire after being hit and was divided in half by flames. Three of the crew bailed out and some were killed, leaving Smith as the only unwounded man in the rear part of the ship. While still under fighter attack Smith put the fire out, at the same time jumping from one gun to the other and driving off the Germans. He also gave first-aid to the tail-gunner, who was badly wounded, and saved his life. Thanks to Smith, the plane landed in England. Its control wheel is now mounted on the P.R.O.'s desk at Thurleigh.

"PAPPY'S" LAST RIDE

Capt. Raymond J. Check, known as "Pappy" had a wonderful personality and was a universal favorite. On his 25th mission (intended to be his last) a 20 mm. explosive shell burst in the cockpit, killing him instantly and setting fire to the ship. He was the pilot. His co-pilot that day, Lt. Col. Wilson was so badly burned that it was impossible for him to fly the ship home. By a stroke of luck Check's regular co-pilot, Lt. William Cassidy, had gone along for the ride as waist-gunner in order to be with Check on his last mission, and he was able to take the craft home bearing the body of a remarkable man whose death was mourned on the station for months.

Capt. Richard H. Claeys, previously with the R.C.A.F., had a passion for action and flew 75 consecutive missions without going on leave or taking a single day's pass. He could not be persuaded to take a rest. Another rare character was Technical Sergeant Roskavitch ("Rosky"), who was called "the Mad Russian," al-

ways wore a Russian fur hat and was the first man to complete 25 ops. He was afterwards killed on a passenger flight.

"ROSE OF YORK"

In 1944 the King and Queen and Princess Elizabeth visited the field and with a bottle of champagne the Princess christened a new Fortress "Rose of York." The royal party stayed to lunch, the King enjoying his favorite dish of fish salad and Princess Elizabeth eating ice-cream with great enthusiasm.

Guy Byam, the B.B.C. correspondent, was present that day, little realizing that he was to meet his death while flying in "Rose of York." The plane was hit over Berlin and crashed into the North Sea on February 3rd, 1945.

The King first visited the station on November 13th, 1942, and was accompanied by General Spaatz. Other visitors have included Mr. Stimson, U.S. Secretary of War.

When the final mission to Falkenberg was completed on April 19th of this year, Fortresses from Thurleigh had dropped 23,381 tons of bombs for a loss of 175 planes and a casualty toll of 1,807 killed, missing and prisoners. On one occasion 64 planes were dispatched on a mission, and on D-Day three missions were flown.

The first attack on Berlin was on March 6th, 1944, and the only loss was one plane which landed in Sweden. The Group has raided Berlin 15 times in all.

HELPED "MONTY"

On March 25th, 1945, the Group flew three missions to attack airfields in Holland and N. W. Germany in direct support of Montgomery's assault across the Rhine. On March 30th, at the request of the British Admiralty, it sent rocket-propelled bombs hurtling on to the submarine construction pens at Fargo. It was the first Group to use these weapons and the lead pilot, Major Thomas F. Witt, received the Silver Star.

On its 300th raid (February 22nd, 1945) the Thurleigh Group led the largest force ever sent out by the 8th. The target was Wittstock, and on their return the Forts gave a display for the benefit of the ground men, whose resourcefulness and zeal, especially under the makeshift conditions of the first winter in England, are freely praised by the flyers.

Schweinfurt was first raided on August 17th, 1943, no losses resulting, but in the second raid, on October 14th, 10 planes went down out of 20 dispatched, and only five reached the target.

The list of Commanding Officers has the names of Col. Charles (Chips) Overacker, Col. (now General) Frank Armstrong), Col. Claude E. Putnam, Col. Geo. L. Robinson, Col. James S. Sutton, and the present C.O., Col. Hudson H. Upham.

Bicycle-riding had added to the Thurligh casualty list. Some of these rides must have been amorous expeditions, for the Group has captured no fewer than 148 British brides. Capt. Van Norman, the Public Relations Officer, had a twinkle in his eye when he told us this—he himself married a Bedford girl.

A HISTORY OF THE 306th BOMB GROUP

By Lt. Dwain A. Esper, Jr.

Outstanding in the aerial war waged by the 8th Air Force against the Nazi enemy is the record of the 306th Heavy Bombardment Group. Starting operations on the 9th of October, 1942 with a mission to Lille, this veteran outfit was one of the first to engage the Hun in combat. A series of exceptionally successful bombings during these early days stamped the 306th as one of the most dependable groups in the theater. Although losses at the time were great for the entire command, the amount of damage and destruction inflicted on German targets was so tremendous that the existence of the 8th Air Force passed from an experimental to a standard war-making organization.

An interesting but costly mission occurred November 9, 1942, on which date higher Headquarters ordered a 7,000 foot job on the heavily defended submarine pens at St. Nazaire. In spite of the terrific anti-aircraft fire encountered over the target, the 306th, led by Col. Overacker, plowed through and bombed with good results. It was this raid that definitely established high altitude as the most practical method of attack.

One of the most interesting acts of bravery ever demonstrated by any man was accomplished on Jan. 3, 1943, when the group again went to St. Nazaire. Major Lanford led, and enemy fighters gave plenty of opposition. The Fortress piloted by Lt. Cramner couldn't make it back across the Channel and consequently ditched. As the big bird settled in the water, attacks by the German aircraft continued on the hapless B-17. T/Sgt. Arizona T. Harris, flying in the top turret, kept firing his guns as the plane slowly sank below the surface of the water. His action, besides driving off the fighters, brought to him, posthumously, the Distinguished Service Cross.

On January 27, 1943 the 8th made its first assault on an objective in Germany itself. To lead this mission the 306th was chosen and Col. (now Gen.) Armstrong flew at the head of the group. Wilhelmshaven was the target and an interesting comment by crews was that the fighter opposition in the Reich was not of the same calibre as that of the "Abbeville Kids". The operation proved that it was possible to bomb, eventually, any spot on continental Europe.

Another act of heroism which probably goes unsurpassed in the annals of the 8th Air Force history occurred on the group's seventh

raid to St. Nazaire, May 1, 1943. Heavy under-cast caused a gross error in navigation when the 306th, led by Col. Putnam, mistook the Brest peninsula for Land's End on the return. Having let down over enemy occupied territory to 500 feet, the formation encountered intense and accurate A.A. fire. In the course of the confusion that naturally followed, three members of Lt. Johnson's crew in the 423rd Squadron were injured seriously and three baled out of the plane, then on fire. S/Sgt. M. H. "Snuffy" Smith displayed the greatest gallantry and self sacrifice in putting out the fire and giving first aid. He was given at a later date the nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor.

A popular figure on the base was Capt. William J. Casey, who impressed all with his courage in helping buddies in distress ward off German fighters. On several occasions "Wild Bill", seeing a B-17 in trouble or struggling, would leave the formation and expose his aircraft to continuous attacks by the Luftwaffe. His actions saved many lives, and Casey was legend on the field. Great sorrow was expressed when this character went down in one of the group's roughest missions, Bremen, April 17, 1943. However, the group was soon to find that Casey was a prisoner of war, which fact brought about considerable elation.

The group suffered a great blow on June 26, 1943 when Lt. Col. Wilson flew with Capt. Raymond J. "Pappy" Check to Tricqueville on the latter's 25th and last mission. The Luftwaffe attacked on the bomb run and a 20 millimeter shell exploded in the cockpit, killing Capt. Check. Lt. Col. Wilson, having volunteered to fly with "Pappy", was severely burned but managed to bring the plane back to base with assistance from Lt. Cassidy, pilot flying in the waist. Personnel mourned the death of "Pappy" Check for many months. Lt. Col. Wilson was subsequently awarded the Distinguished Service Cross and Purple Heart.

During the early part of 1943, the 369th Squadron established the phenomenal record of completing 42 consecutive missions without loss. The string started on the first Wilhelmshaven raid and was broken on the July 29th mission to Kiel. This record stood until after D-Day, when of course, several squadrons in many groups broke it. However, the fact remains the "Fightin' Bitin'" set up a most remarkable standard when the Hun was viciously trying to turn back American Fortresses.

Major Raper led the 306th on the first Schweinfurt raid August 17, 1943. This day also initiated the shuttle missions with the 8th dispatching other aircraft to Regensburg, thence to Italy. This group sustained the operation without a loss although it was one of the most costly affairs in the air campaign.

On August 24 the group attacked Villacoublay A/D near Paris. Major Riordan led, and A.A. fire was very accurate, damaging 17

out of 18. Lt. Klette of the 369th had two engines knocked out over the target, but he carefully managed to bring the plane back to friendly territory. As Klette approached the field, a hush fell over those gathered in front of the tower 'sweating him out.' Suddenly a gasp, and fire was seen to start from one of the two remaining engines. The crippled Fortress weaved crazily in the air. However, Lt. Klette meticulously guided his craft safely to its landing and for this display of high skill he received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The 306th participated again in a Schweinfurt raid Oct. 14, 1943, led by Capt. Schoolfield. Although the 8th was highly commended by both British and American Air leaders, the group suffered one of its greatest losses. Some crews reported that the scene looked like a parachute invasion because so many men were forced to bail out. However, the damage inflicted on the ball bearing plant in the town cut production 75%. Capt. Schoolfield, of the 369th, who received four Distinguished Flying Crosses during his combat tour, was awarded one of his clusters on that day.

First Air Division received the Presidential Citation for the Jan. 11, 1944 attack on factory airfields in central Germany. The 306th on its 100th mission bombed Halberstadt with Col. Robinson at the head of the group. Poor weather caused a recall in the fighter support, and as a result the Luftwaffe rose to intercept. A violent air battle ensued, but despite terrific losses, the 1st Division B-17s fought their way to and from the targets. The excellence of the bombing brought about the aforementioned Citation.

After being briefed for several days to go to Berlin, the group finally made it, along with the rest of the 8th on March 6, 1944. Capt. Thompson led and the formation encountered comparatively moderate opposition. Lt. Smith of the 368th was the only crew lost and his plane landed in Sweden.

The month of April, 1944 proved to be distinctive in the fact that two of the "old-timers" finished up. Lt. Col. Regan, C.O. of the 368th and Lt. Col. Buckey, C.O. of the 367th, both completed their operational tours and went home. Lt. Col. Lambert, holding a similar position in the 423rd, duplicated their action in May.

The 306th did its share on D-Day by flying three ground support missions. Several crews engaged in two of the operations, but there was little complaining as the Hun stayed out of the air. The invasion coast had taken a terrific pounding for two weeks before the big day, and ground forces were highly impressed by the great destruction wrought by this now powerful implement of war.

In a tremendous combined assault on German oil production the 306th went after the big refinery in Hamburg on June 20, 1944. Lt. Col. Chalfant led, and the Jerry A.A. fire was intense. Bombardiers Lt. Franze and Lt. Tan-

nella, however, laid their eggs right on the aiming point. Smoke from fires, started by bombing on the target, rose to 10,000 feet. Lt. Raster, Lt. Switzer, pilots, and Lt. Tannella each received the Distinguished Flying Cross for their performances on this raid.

Lt. Col. Chalfant led the group on Sept. 12, 1944 to Ruhland when the last great air battle between the 306th and the Luftwaffe occurred. As the formation passed near the northern outskirts of Berlin on the route in, German fighters attacked in quick passes. Losses for the mission were high, and Lt. Donkin's A/C received very severe damage, necessitating a crash landing. His skill in bringing the Fortress and crew back to England netted him the D.F.C.

As the war was closing out against the Nazis in early 1945, the 306th pointed the bulk of its efforts to the destruction of German communication lines. Many successful missions were completed, and the group's bombing record soared to unapproachable heights. Maj. D. R. Ross, group bombardier, led the way with a series of excellent results, most notable being the attack on Bohlen, March 2, for which he received the D.F.C.

On many occasions the station has been honored by visits from high-ranking personnel. The King and Queen have inspected the various units and were present when Princess Elizabeth christened the 367th aircraft, "Rose of York", July 6, 1944. Too, Major General Ira C. Eaker, former commander of the 8th Air Force, has been on the field several times. On Feb. 21, 1943 he witnessed the inauguration of the first Aero Club in Great Britain. Again on the 15th of July of the same year Gen. Eaker, accompanied by Secretary of War H. L. Stimson, presented the Congressional Medal of Honor to "Snuffy" Smith.

And so it has been with the 306th, commanded in succession by Col. C. B. Overacker, Gen. F. A. Armstrong, Col. C. E. Putnam, Col. G. L. Robinson, Col. J. S. Sutton and Col. H. H. Upham, always striving toward the final victory. The group has been impressive with its record in both the strategical and tactical campaigns, and has been highly instrumental in the great progress of the 8th Air Force. To all its members go the congratulations and admiration of the United States Army.

HEROES COME WHOLESALE

By Andy Rooney in "Stars and Stripes"

If gallantry came in cans there would never have been enough shipping space to get all the Eighth Air Force has used to England.

Heroism has been buried by heroism here. Heroes have come wholesale and there have been more than America could digest. Stories which in normal times would be headlined in every paper in American end up as two paragraphs in someone's hometown paper. In U. S. military history no fighting unit the

size of the Eighth Air Force ever performed with a higher percentage of work-a-day heroes; not heroes in name, but men who have actually been warmed by comradeship to do more for their fellow men than they need have; men who have unnecessarily risked their lives to save others and men who have performed with an intelligence and courage to save their own lives when it would have been easier to die.

Had the men of any one of ten U. S. heavy bombardment groups operating from fields in England performed with commensurate heroism in battle actions which caught the imagination of the American public as did Guadalcanal, that group would be the most celebrated in American military history.

Here, briefly, is the story of one Fortress group which has been operating against the German for a year and a half. It is a story of American boys which could be a book: there are other groups with the same story and people don't want to read that many books.

The group has never had a name which stuck. The boys know it is a number or by the name of the small town near the field. Both are restricted information.

Its first haul was last October 9 when it went into Lille, France. From that day on the group was at war and it didn't take the men long to find out that heavy bombardment of targets on the Continent was no picnic.

Principal objectives in the early days were German U-boat pens. Again and again they struck at St. Nazaire, Lorient and La Pallice. On the second trip into St. Nazaire, the one Nov. 9, the group participated in one of the Eighth Air Forces' most successful experiments—the experiment proved to everyone's satisfaction that medium level was not the altitude at which to send in Flying Fortresses. They got the hell shot out of them.

The group went in that day at about 8,000 feet and the ships that did come back that day came back looking like collanders. There are still a few veterans left in England as gunnery instructors who will tell you about that raid. They may have been to the heart of Germany since that day but when they have bad dreams it is the flak that day over St. Nazaire they dream about.

The group has completed 135 missions and dropped about 6,000 tons of bombs in Germany and German targets in occupied countries. Like too-short or too-long artillery fire, some of the 6,000 tons fell in kraut fields and potato patches, but a lot of it has fallen in the middle of some of Germany's best industrial plants.

The group is made up of four squadrons, The Eager Beavers, the Clay Pigeons, Fitin' Bitin' and one which has never adopted a name that stuck. One they picked held too much blood and thunder and was forbidden. In anger the fliers dubbed themselves "The Buttercup Boys."

Of the four, Fitin' Bitin' and the Clay

Pigeons squadron gained most of the early fame. A story appeared in the Saturday Evening Post dubbing the one squadron as "The Clay Pigeons" because in those early days they had lost so many men. Time after time they returned, and while squadrons on each side of them would be lossless the Clay Pigeons would have lost two or three ships.

What made the thing even harder to understand was that flying in the same group with the bad-luck squadron was the Fitin' Bitin' outfit. The Clay Pigeons set up an attrition record at the same time Fitin' Bitin' was starting a lossless streak that was to extend to 43 raids. Today the Clay Pigeons have been 20 raids without a loss.

There were heroes in the group. First of the long line was a young lieutenant by the name of Bob Riordan. Riordan piloted the first really famous ETO Fortress named Wahoo and on three successive occasions he brought the ship back under circumstances which when set down on paper set the style for the thousands of wing and a prayer stories which have come out of the Eighth Air Force since. Riordan went on to finish a tour of operations. Now, more than a year later, he is several years older and a lieutenant colonel who shows no signs of stopping at that rank. Last week Riordan went home for a 30-day rest.

Because of its early start on operations the Group had the first officer and the first enlisted man in the theater to finish. Mike Roskovich was the first man in the ETO to complete a tour. He was a tech sergeant radio gunner at the time with a penchant for cutting off people's ties whether they were colonels or corporals.

Rosky went a long way towards being one of the happiest men who ever lived and his was almost a completely happy story. He was commissioned soon after he finished his ops and assigned to a nearby station as gunnery officer. As a non-flying officer he made more trips than anyone knows of and possibly completed more than any other man in the Eighth Air Force. Unofficially he had 33.

The colorful Rosky came to a tragic death last February. In Scotland on furlough he was in a plane taking off for home. For reasons which are not altogether clear, the pilot was trying to take his B-17 off with three motors. The plane crashed and all were killed. After 33 missions over the most dangerous enemy territory in the world Rosky died in an ordinary accident.

The first officer in the ETO to finish a tour was 1st Lt. Eugene J. Pollock, of New Orleans, La. Pollock was a navigator.

The group's most popular legend and hero is Arizona Harris. Arizona Harris was a gunner's own gunner, a hero's hero. He hated the Army and at the same time he was one of the best combat men in it. In the States the boys in the group knew him as a spirited red-head who was afraid of nothing and who didn't

want to do much but get back to his home in Tempe. Once in England Arizona was one of the most conscientious gunners of the war. No armorer touched Arizona's guns or the guns of any man in his crew.

Returning from a haul to the U-boat pens at St. Nazaire Harris' plane with Charley Crammer at the controls was forced down in the Bay of Biscay. German fighters kept up the attack as the plane eased down to the water. In another ship Bill Casey, pilot of the famous Fort Banshee, pulled at his stick and wheeled the Banshee out of formation to help protect Crammer.

The ship finally hit the cold waters of the bay but in the tail of Casey's ship P. D. Small could see Harris still firing away from the top-turret. As the plane settled and the water crept up over the wings they could still see Arizona Harris at his guns in the turret firing away at the FW-190's which dived in to strafe any possible survivors. The last thing they saw of the ship was Arizona's smoking guns as he drowned at his post.

That story and Arizona himself is a legend at the base and when the story comes up there is always an old timer who will swear that if any man ever deserved the Congressional Medal it was old Arizona Harris.

In the first days Col. Frank Armstrong was the group CO. He was promoted to brigadier general, and Col. Claude B. Putnam, a tall, slim pilot with a brain like a whip moved in. The present CO is Col. George L. Robinson.

Like men from any bomber outfit, the boys are proud of theirs. Talk to any one of them for ten minutes and he will be listing for you the things the group has done first, most and best. They'll tell you:

1—"The Eager Beavers were the first squadron in the USAAF to drop 1,000 tons of bombs on the Germans—or on anybody. They passed that mark the last day of 1943."

2—"Fitin' Bitin' went 43 missions without a loss in the days before fighter escort."

3—"We have the only enlisted man who ever got the Congressional Medal of Honor here, 'Snuffy' Smith."

4—"This base was the first in England to be turned over to the U.S. from the British . . . we had the first Aero-club."

5—"We had the tallest tail-gunner Hank Cordery. Used to be a first sergeant. He was six feet five inches."

6—"Only ship in ETO which shot down 11 planes and had them confirmed. Lt. Bob Smith's crew got them May 21 over Wilhelmshaven."

The three-man awards and decorations section at Col. Robinson's station have done a lot of work. They have handled the paperwork for one Congressional Medal of Honor, four DSCs, 18 Silver Stars, five Legion of Merits, 467 DFCs, 200 Purple Hearts, 4,500 Air Medals and Clusters and four Soldiers Medals.

The station's heroes today are men like

Gilbert Roeder. Roeder's got 25 in now and he's come back on one, two and three engines more times than he's come back on four. He's got a knack for flak. The boys will swear, though, that there's not a better pilot in the Air Force than Roeder. He and his crew could have been living in Switzerland, Sweden, France or Germany now if they'd chosen the easy way out, but instead they chose to fight it home the hard way, take a chance of going down in the North Sea or blowing up in mid air, or of crashing over England. They've taken chances and they're paid off.

One of the group's favorite wing and a prayer stories is the one they tell of Capt. Purvis E. Youree and LeRoy C. Sugg his co-pilot. Their Fort was badly damaged in the best tradition of flak riddled Fortresses. It was in danger of spinning out of control any minute because the cables on one side had been completely shot away and Youree had little control over the ship.

Sugg looked the situation over and without a thought for his personal safety stripped his parachute off and used the harness to tie to one end of the frayed control cable. The other end he gave to Youree and that way the pilot guided the plane home—pulling on one end of his co-pilot's parachute harness.

Two of the station's favorite characters were Jewish boys. The story of one was a happy story. Capt. Arthur Isaac was a character from Brooklyn in every sense of the word. He ditched once, crashed once and came home on countless occasions in a ship full of holes but always he came home. Now that its over the secret of Isaac's dog tags is out.

He carried three pairs. On one was his right name. On another he had printed "Otto McIsaac." That set was in case he was shot down over Germany.

On a third pair of dogtags he had stamped "Francois d'Isaac," to be used in the event he went down in France. The Brooklyn bombardier always swore that the first thing he would ask for if he was shot down in Germany was the nearest church where he could hear a Catholic mass said over him.

The other Jewish boy was Eric Newhouse (nee Neuhaus) an Austrian gunner whose family owned a little chocolate shop in Vienna when Hitler began making European Jews uncomfortable.

Eric joined a band of kids—he was 15 in 1937—and with them slugged German police and tore up German rails. He made his way from Germany to Yugoslavia, to Greece, to Palestine, to Syria. Still 15, he convinced British authorities that he was 19 and joined the British Army there, where he fought with the Kent regiment against the Arabs. Travelling on, he bribed a German consul for 3 pounds at Jaffa, Palestine, for a visa and finally got to Gibraltar in his fight to get to America.

Newhouse was broke, but on the boat he met an American nurse. As a souvenir the

nurse gave him a dime, and when he got to Boston that was all he had. He didn't speak a word of English but he was so thrilled with America that he spent the dime on two trolley rides. He went to the end of the line for one of the nickels and came back with the other.

On Dec. 7, 1941, Newhouse was not yet a citizen. The minute he heard of the Jap action he volunteered for the Army. He was rejected and for 120 consecutive days he heckled his enlistment office at Wausau, Wis., until they finally took him. He was assigned to the Air Force and became a gunner.

Once in London he met a French refugee girl and became engaged. The day before he was to be married, Newhouse was shot down. Dave Scherman, Life photographer who had planned to picture the happy ending to Newhouse's story, was left with a tragic finish and no pictures.

Men on the field will tell you that Newhouse was the only man in the group who ever hated the Germans with the intensity that drove him to kill and kill. Emanuel Klette, a pilot on the base, finished a tour of operations and crashed at his home field after his 28th raid. He has been in the hospital recovering for several months and has recently been put back on operations at his own request, but Klette loved flying more than he hated Germans.

The happiest story that the Group PRO, China-born Capt. Bill Van Norman, ever handled was that of S/Sgt. Maynard Harrison Smith. Smith occupies a unique place in the annals of Eighth Air Force heroes. Not only is Smith the only enlisted man in the Eighth Air Force ever to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor but if there had been 20 awarded there would never have been another recipient like Maynard Smith.

Smith's right to America's highest award for gallantry was beyond doubt. What set him apart from other heroes was that he conscientiously played the part of a Congressional Medal of Honor winner. He realistically admits that not everyone would have done the same thing in similar circumstances; he concedes that his metabolic processes were just right for the job.

Capt. Raymond Check, of Minot, N. D., was one of the group's great heroes, and the circumstances of his death were tragic. Check was on his last mission. Col. James Wilson, air

executive, flew with Check as co-pilot and Ray's regular co-pilot, 1st Lt. William P. Cassidy, refusing to miss Check's last haul, went as a waist gunner.

Check was killed instantly. A 20mm. shell struck him in the head. A fire started in the cockpit and Col. Wilson stayed with the controls until the rubber of his oxygen mask melted on his face. His hands were so burned that he could not let go of the wheel. Finally, Cassidy came up from the waist and helped Wilson. In the ship that day they were luckily carrying a flight surgeon who wanted practical experience, and had it not been for his work on Col. Wilson he might not have lived.

There had been a party planned that night at the officers' mess and Check was to have been the guest of honor. A cake was baked and his name was inscribed on the top. When Check's ship flew into the field with Cassidy at the controls there wasn't a man on the field who felt like eating cake or having a party.

The ground personnel at the field was unsung as is the tradition and knowing they would live to tell their own story they had no objection. Maj. Thurman E. Dawson and his crew of bomb loaders have put every last pound of the 6,000 tons the group has dropped into the bomb bays. In addition they have done the work that hurts. The work that has to be undone a few hours later when the report comes through that the mission has been scrubbed, bombs must be unloaded.

That doesn't tell all the group's story. It doesn't tell about the officer whose greatest delight is to take a Very Pistol and a pocketful of assorted green and red flares and chase the old white horse in the pasture next to his Nissen hut around in circles; it doesn't tell about Harold Rogers and his dog "Mister," who went on eight missions with his gunner master who used to be a Hollywood stunt man, and it leaves out completely the hundreds of ordinary Joes in crews who have stood around their pot-bellied stoves at night worrying and throwing 50 caliber shells into the fire for excitement. It doesn't tell any of that; it would take a book.

You can tell, though, from these few people, why the Germans haven't got a chance. You can tell why the U.S. Air Force can make a lot of mistakes and still somehow struggle to the top of the heap of world air forces.



"ALL THE BEST" TO THE 306th ARTHUR P. BOVE