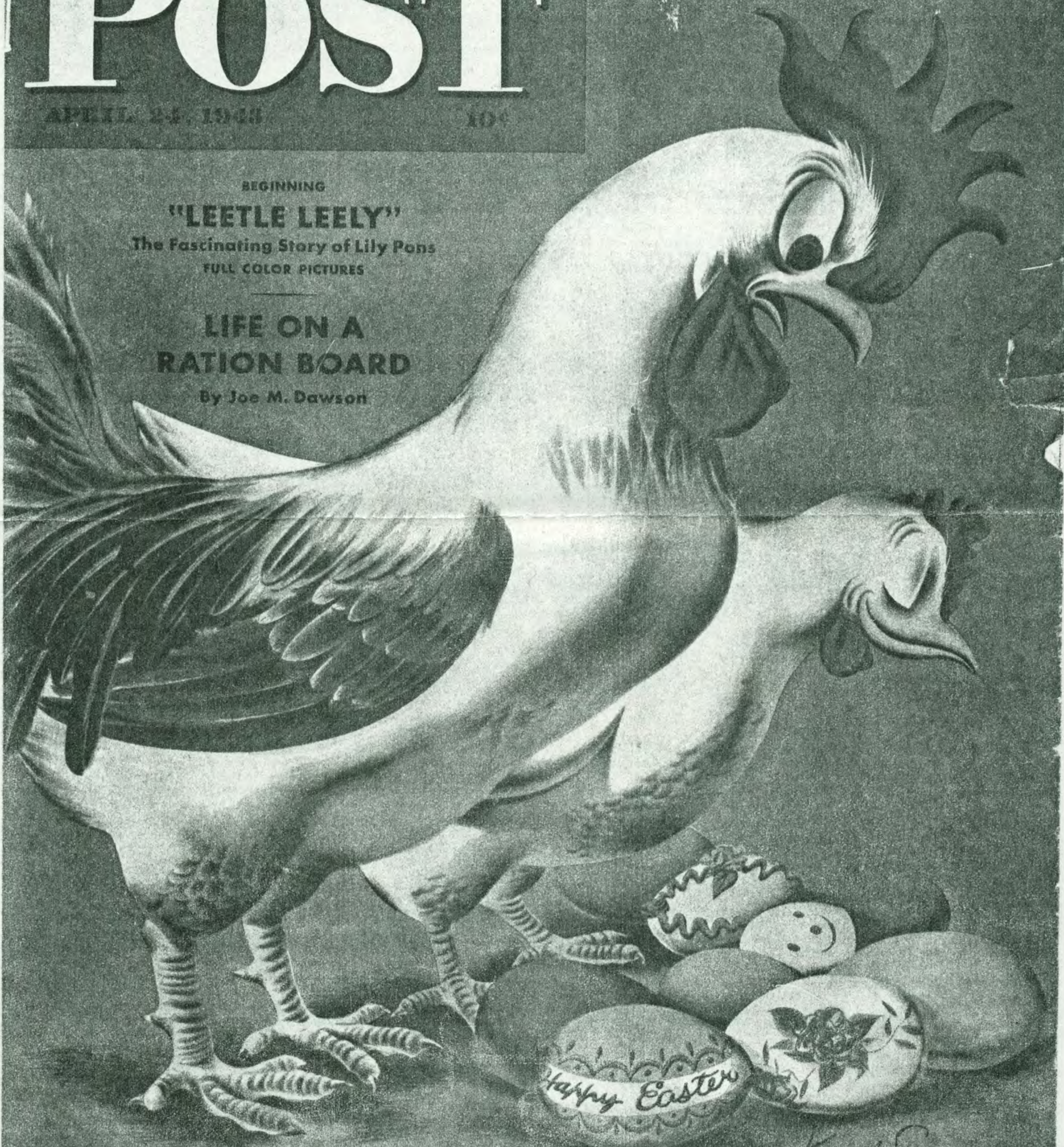
THE SATURDAY EVENING
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BEGINNING
"LEETLE LEELY"
The Fascinating Story of Lily Pons
FULL COLOR PICTURES
LIFE ON A
RATION BOARD
By Joe M. Dawson
Happy Easter
Kenneth Stuart

FOX PHOTOS

The three-year-old London miss enjoying dessert and male admiration is Sweetpea, formerly Maureen. The Clay-Pigeon Squadron adopted her, spoiled her, nicknamed her, then gave her nickname to their newest Fortress.

THE CLAY-PIGEON SQUADRON

By JACK ALEXANDER

AN AMERICAN BOMBER BASE IN ENGLAND.
By Cable.

MAJOR HARRY J. HOLT, a six-footer with reddish hair and a thin sandy mustache, started out in life to pattern after his father, a naval officer, and wound up in the Army Air Corps instead. At twenty-eight, still wearing his Annapolis class ring, he is skipper of a heavy bombardment squadron. Major Holt's career is fairly typical of his generation, and his squadron—which we shall call Squadron K—is typical of the Flying Fortress and Liberator units engaged in raiding Nazi submarine pens, factories and railway centers.

In one respect, however, Squadron K is not typical—70 per cent of its original flying personnel at this writing is dead, missing or imprisoned in Germany. Among neighboring units it has come to be known as "The Clay-Pigeon Squadron."

There is no ascertainable reason for this. The squadron had the same training as the others, its personnel is of the highest quality, and its leadership excellent. Yet, when it goes out on sweep with other units, its echelons are usually the ones that are singled out for concentrated attack by the Focke-Wulf assassination squads. It seems to make no difference what position the Holt Detachment is flying; the F-W-190's almost invariably tackle it and try to isolate it from the bomber pack. This makes for tough, bloody going, as the Focke-Wulfs have begun to fulfill General Arnold's prophecy that sooner or later the Luftwaffe would find a way of breaking through the terrific group firepower of the gun-bristling American ships.

Squadron K, which consists exclusively of Fortresses, bags more than its share of German pursuits, but by various whims of fate loses more than its share of B-17's too. And every time a B-17 goes down, its whole crew usually goes to destruction with it. Even if a few crewmen succeed in bailing out, the Nazis scream down at their parachutes like bullet-spitting hawks, and not many American bomber men become prisoners of war. This is, indeed, bitter, murderous warfare, full of flame and sudden death, and a far cry from the training fields of America. But when one hears griping in the Nissen huts, it is not of this, but of the public men at home who snipe at the war effort, of civilians who seem to think that bombing work is just a series of clean-cut triumphs, of the dearth of spare parts with which to patch up the flak-riddled planes, and of the relatively insignificant size of the American bomber forces here. Compared to the RAF, this has been true, but Maj. Gen. Ira C. Eaker has promised that by midsummer the Americans will assume equal partnership with the British.

U. S. SIGNAL CORPS

Squadron skipper Major Harry J. Holt, shepherd of the hard-luck group.

The burden of command has begun to show on young Major Holt. A thoughtful forward pitch to his shoulders makes him look a good deal slighter than he is, and his jaw has a hard set to it, as if he had spent much time clamping his teeth together. Of a crew of ten men he took over the Channel not long ago, only one besides himself survives. The three nearest neighbors he had in an officers' billet, where he lived until recently, have been killed or otherwise lost to the squadron, and he has seen them all go down over enemy territory. The replacements report bright and eager, and soon the vacancies begin appearing among their bunks too.

I met Major Holt in the officers' club during the first night of my visit here and walked with him over a mud-smeared concrete road to his new quarters, a small brick one-room structure. He was quiet and he kept his head low and his hands buried in his mackinaw pockets. At the entrance to his quarters he kicked off his muddy arctics and stepped across the threshold to inspect his blackout curtains by the light of a hand flash before turning on the electric light, as there is no telling when the Nazis may drop over for a nocturnal strafing. He tuned in the radio to a BBC program. Tossing his gloves and garrison cap on the iron cot, he lighted a fire in a cast-iron stove, a boxlike affair invented by Benjamin Franklin and clung to ever since by the British.

"One in the water today," the major remarked, as if thinking out loud as he watched the kindling catch slowly and exhale smoke through the damper into the room. "One in the water" meant that one of Holt's

Fortresses, unable to limp home that afternoon, was down in the dark somewhere in the ocean between France and England. One Fortress, ten men. Reports kept coming in by telephone all evening, but it wasn't until next day that the final depressing word was to arrive. Launches of the British Air Sea Rescue Service, searching all night, had found only a yellow leather seat cushion of the type used in the bombers.

Sleep is always difficult for aviators in wartime, but especially for a squadron leader whose chickens have not all returned to roost. Major Holt pitched a few pieces of coal onto the kindling and got down on one knee to prime the draft with a hand bicycle pump. Then he got up and lighted a portable oil stove and

What's life like at a bomber base? What do the Fortress crews talk about? Do fliers have nerves and superstitions? Our London correspondent tells you in his story of Major Holt and his tough-luck command.

placed a pot of water on top of it for coffee. He seemed fumbling for little tasks to keep his hands occupied.

As midnight struck, the BBC signed off urbanely and Holt worked his dial carefully through a field of squeaking and whistling. Then soft music came through clearly—German *Lieder*, followed by lively jazz selections. This was the regular two-hour midnight *Nachtmusik* program broadcast from Berlin for the purpose of raising the morale of night workers in the Reich's armament factories. There was no propaganda, just announcements of song titles, delivered in unctuous gutturals. It may be news to the Berlin radio management, but its *Nachtmusik* does as much for the morale of the American Air Forces as it does for the Krupp workers.

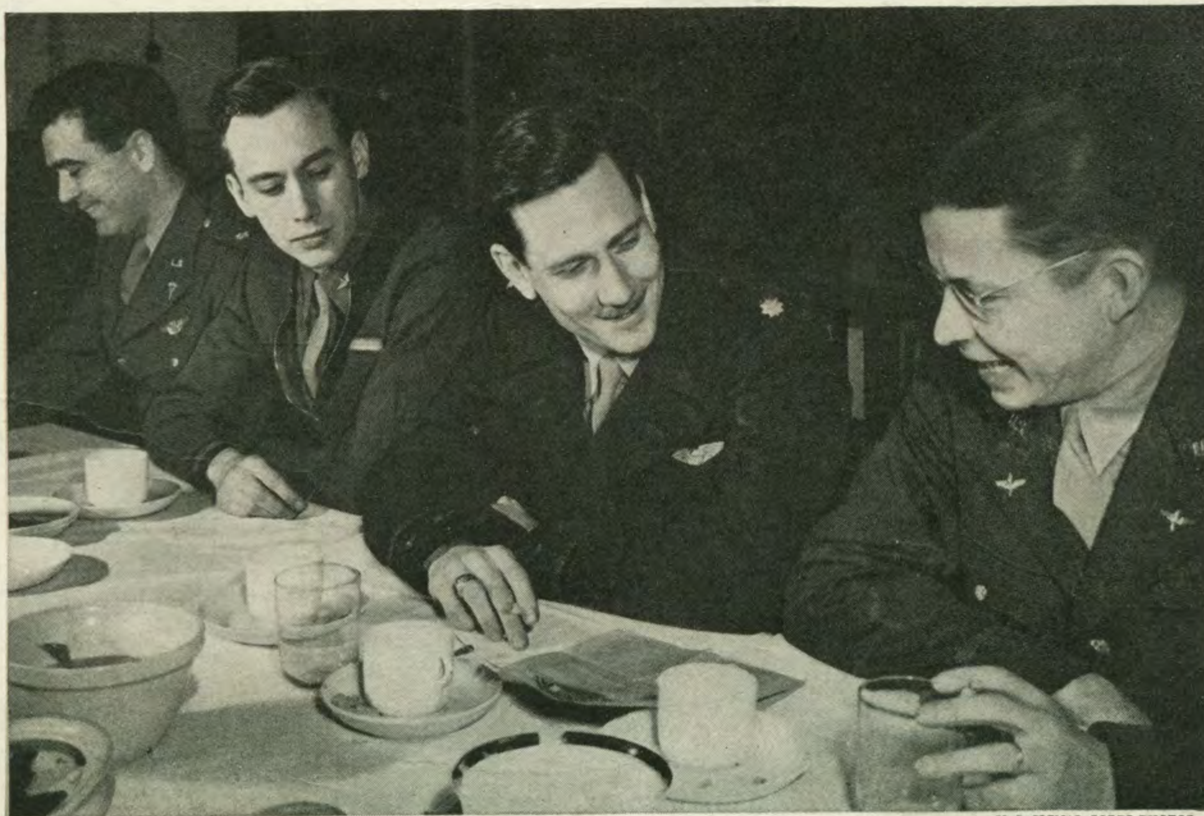
"The Hun puts out good jazz," the major said, with the impartiality of a man sampling a cheese tray, adding, "American recordings most likely." He sat down and lit a cigarette, putting it aside after taking a few puffs. He looked into the pot to see if the water had come to a boil, then walked over to his foot locker, whose lid bore a death's head daubed boyishly in red paint, and pulled out a pair of ebony bones, a small concertina and harmonica. Sitting on the foot locker, with his left hand held high, he skillfully rattled the bones in time with a recording of Jingle, Jangle, Jingle. The mood was a brief one. He put the articles back in the foot locker with the air of a man replacing mementos in a safe-deposit box.

He sat down again and we talked, over coffee and fig-newton cookies from the post exchange. He spoke of his wife, Jean, whose portrait had the place of honor on a table which served as his desk; of her skill at drawing funny pictures, and her letters, which let him know he was missed, but made it plain that she was with him in the work he was doing; of the technique of shooting a pistol from the hip; of his pride in his younger brother, who is helping to develop important naval instruments at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; of a basement workroom he used to have which was equipped with a lathe and hung with tools of all descriptions.

There was a place in the desert out in California, named Twenty-nine Palms, and after the war he said he intended driving out there with an automobile trailer and living in it until he could build a home for his wife and himself. In a photograph-viewing apparatus, which stood on the table, he placed color films of the Twenty-nine Palms site taken from many angles. By means of a filter arrangement, he was able to alter the lighting to simulate the different stages of the day. "There you see her at high noon," he would say, and "Now you catch her around sundown when all the colors soften up. It's the loveliest place I ever saw."

Then he got down to the subject which was weighing most heavily on his mind—his men who have gone down before his eyes, and the letters he writes home to the mothers and fathers and wives, trying to console them as much as he is able to. He expressed a determination to pay a visit to all of them after the war if, as he puts it, God lets him come through it alive, and to give them the final details (Continued on Page 70)

The score goes up in smoke. Major Holt stands by, Captains J. L. Lambert and G. R. Buckey lend support, Capt. J. L. Ryan does some smoke writing.



U. S. SIGNAL CORPS PHOTOS

Work of a heavy bomber squadron is hard while it lasts, but off-duty hours are garnished with excellent meals and seasoned with companionship.

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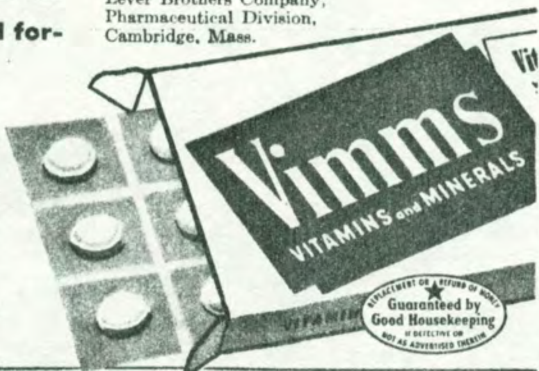

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20 pats BUTTER	1⅓ PORK CHOPS	⅜ QUART MILK	5 oz. TOMATO JUICE	1½ tsp. COD LIVER OIL	⅓ lb. HAM	1½ oz. AMER. CHEESE	1½ EGGS	⅔ lb. STEAK

THE CLAY-PIGEON SQUADRON

(Continued from Page 15)

they all seem to hunger for, many of which must now remain secret for military reasons. I read some of the replies he had received. It was wrenching to note how, after the deadening impact of the first shock had passed, the people back home begged for all possible information about the terrible last moments, to wear as the cloth of patriotic mourning.

Publication at home of letters written by soldiers to their folks is common enough, but people who have never been on the receiving end of a War Department telegram rarely see the side of the picture disclosed in the correspondence of a man like Major Holt. It is with a view to furnishing this insight that a few excerpts from his mail are herewith given. There is, for instance, the couple who write that they have erected a flagpole in their front yard in memory of their son, and fly from it daily the flag which draped his casket when he was brought home.

Then there is the letter from Lt. Forrest Patterson's mother in Dallas. Patterson was killed in a training-flight accident in England. "The loss of our son has been a paralyzing shock," Mrs. Patterson writes. "My mind refused to move far from the devastating realization that when the war is over and the boys come, Forrest won't be with you. And I was so sure, so very sure, he would be. We do not worry much about his welfare, for he was a Christian, fine and clean and strong, with much to give. Other parents our country over have suffered and are suffering this same loss. Their lads were doubtless just as fine, with as much to give to a postwar world. Many must fall, but more will be spared and the best in those who fall will live on for good in the lives they have touched. We have been given no details of the accident. We suppose they were on a routine training flight with Forrest at the controls and Bob Cameron and Bill Kuhlman two of the crew. There must have been others. Who were they? Where were their homes? What caused the crash? These are only a few of the countless questions we might ask. If it is really necessary to wait until the war is over, of course we will do so willingly. But who can tell us then?"

"We are proud of Bill," writes the mother of Lt. William F. Gise, of Yoakum, Texas. "It was so gratifying to read what you wrote of him. He had so much courage and determination. He made up in courage what he lacked in size. His smile! I can see him all the time. We are praying constantly, as are all of Bill's friends. He would be pleased if he knew that our whole town is saddened and so eager for any news of him. Bill was the most serious thing in life to us, and the joy of our home. His place can never be filled in our hearts. We must carry on and be the good soldier he was. He never wanted me to cry.

"Bill told me many times that he didn't feel he was going to live very long and he was not afraid to die. I wish we knew the raid he was in. We have an idea, and from all accounts he didn't have much chance. Thanks for taking care of his effects. I would love to have his wings. He was so proud when he won them. When Bill went down he gave them all he had. We will appreciate any further information. 'May God keep you safe,' is our prayer."

Bill Gise, a navigator, was in a plane which was flying wing to wing with Major Holt's in Squadron K's first raid on Lille. The Nazi pursuits came in on Bill's side and their incendiaries set the No. 3 engine afire, causing his ship to drop out of formation and fall behind.

Holt and another pilot tried to stay with him, but the lamed Fortress continued to lose speed and finally fell off in flames, downward and to the right. No one saw Gise after that, and he and his mates were given up for lost, but word has since come that Bill Gise is alive in a German prison camp. A few other members of his crew bailed out safely, too, but have not been heard from.

"Certainly killed the afternoon, didn't it?"

Lt. William P. Erickson, of Braintree, Massachusetts, who was Major Holt's bombardier, was killed by a 20-mm. cannon shell as he crouched over his bombsight to lay a packet on the submarine pens at St. Nazaire.

His mother writes Holt: "In this terrible turmoil and hell on earth, I was wondering if you could give me some more details as to how and where Bill died. Also how and where he is buried." This is followed by a request that temporary interment be entrusted to an uncle living in England, whom Lieutenant Erickson had visited on arriving here. "His Christmas parcels, which are many, I wish to be opened." The letter continues: "Any personal things please forward to me, as I will prize them, but cigars, cigarettes, stationery and such, give to his companions. I wish to have returned to me his silver wings. . . . God never gave a better son or brother to anyone. Why does this cruel war take the best of the world? Bill, in life, could never harm any person. . . ."

Harry Holt is the wrong person to ask for a rationalization of the cruelties brought on by wars. He takes the tragedies as hard as do the families back in the States.

"I guess I shouldn't," he says, "but I can't help it. It does something to you when you come back without them. You hate to think of anybody being left behind."

British winter weather is wretched for flying, and for every sweep that goes through, from six to a dozen are canceled before departure time, or "scrubbed," in bomber lingo. When a mission is scrubbed, the problem of the flying personnel is how to spend the time intervening until the next one. The fresher replacements sit in the intelligence library studying the recognition charts of enemy aircraft. This is old stuff to the veterans. Some of them play darts or ping-pong in the recreation room. Some head for the nearest village in quest of entertainment.

Major Holt's spare hours, when no administrative duties interfere, are spent in various ways. He may get out his tools and affix a pair of miniature silver wings to a mate's cigarette lighter, or use the initialing dies he bought in the London junk shop to stamp his name on articles of equipment, or he may repair watches belonging to members of the squadron. He has a regular watchmaker's eyepiece through which he squints as his tools move inside the delicate movements.

"I guess I am a tinkerer of gadgets," he says.

A Spanish Naval Victory

Major Holt's strong points from childhood were mathematics, firearms and mechanics, and ultimately these interests were to swing his life line across that of the Clay-Pigeon Squadron. When seven years old, Harry made a crystal radio set which actually worked. This was when his father, now Capt. Fred W. Holt, of the Navy Compensation Board, Washington, was stationed at an abandoned World War I naval-training ground at Norfolk.

If it hadn't been for the Spanish language, Holt probably would be in the Navy instead of the Army today. Languages bothered him, and in 1938—his final year at Annapolis—he drove himself to concentrate on Spanish. This took up most of his time, and as a result his grades in other subjects fell and he was "busted out." He had already made up his mind what he would do in such a crisis, and he acted promptly.

Buying a secondhand automobile, he threw his luggage into it and headed straight for Randolph Field, Texas. He made the distance in two and a half days of straight driving, which were interrupted only by stops for food and benzedrine tablets. After he had been accepted into the Air Corps, he broke the news by long-distance telephone to his father, who was then stationed in Chicago. All Captain Holt could say for a few seconds was, "Oh, Harry; oh, Harry." There was a long naval tradition in the family, but after a while Captain Holt got used to his son being in the Army.

In due course, Harry Holt moved on from Randolph to the advanced school at Kelly Field, receiving his wings on February 1, 1939, and getting married the next day. His bride was Miss Jean Snavely, a pretty brunette from Texas, whom he had met six years earlier on a blind Halloween date in Washington, where she was attending school. After training in various tactical squadrons, Holt helped to ferry Lockheed Hudsons from Burbank to Montreal, where other ferry pilots took them to England under Lend-Lease. Then he was sent to Fresno, California, where he stayed for eight months. It was a happy period for the Holts. Mrs. Holt had a receiving set which could be tuned in to the frequency of her husband's plane radio, and by listening in she could tell when he was coming home to meals. The Jap attack on Pearl Harbor broke up the idyllic Fresno scene.

The Bad Luck Begins

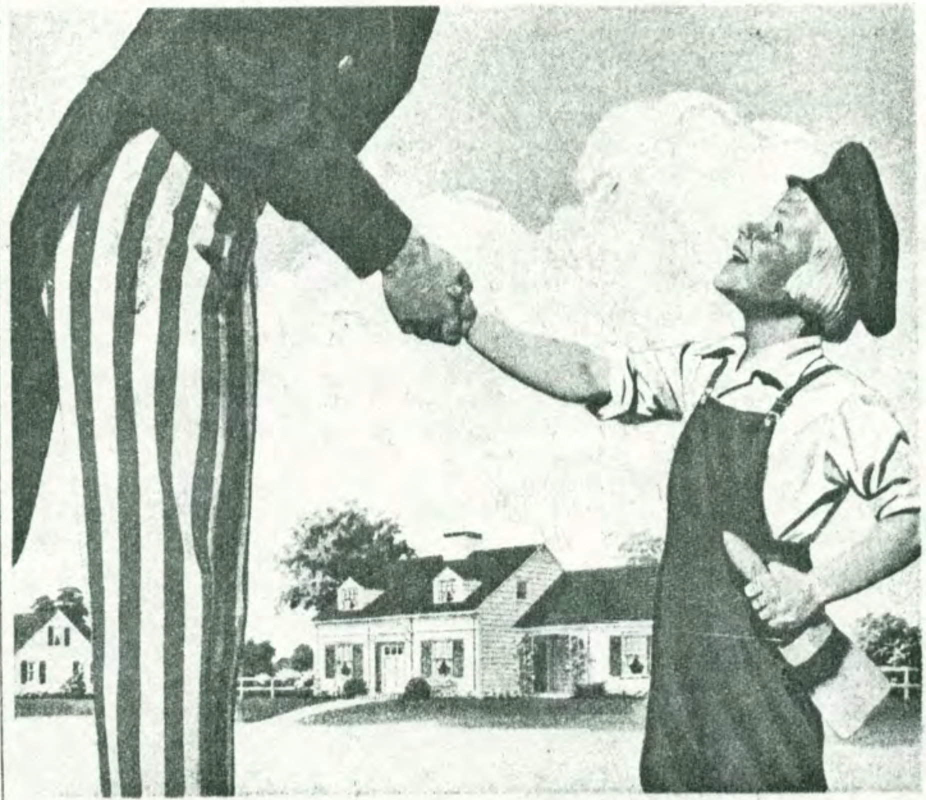
Late last summer the squadron Holt now commands, set up quarters at this airdrome, which formerly was used by the RAF. On the day the group got here a lone German plane was shot down by RAF fighters within view of the field. The war seemed close. The crews settled down to practicing formation flying and to getting acquainted with the local topography.

Messes were established, the squadron commanders seeing to it that the enlisted men's mess got the best cook, the junior officers' mess the second best, and the senior officers' mess the third best. For a few weeks when supplies were slow in coming, the food was makeshift, but now it is the best served anywhere in England. Besides meat and butter and a variety of vegetables, it is no rarity for the messes to have freshly made doughnuts, hot biscuits, cinnamon buns and layer cake all on the same day.

Staff Sgt. Norman L. Johnson, one of Major Holt's men, endeared the new arrivals to the residents hereabouts by saving a girl from drowning in a river. Then the bad luck started for Holt's squadron. Early in October, during a practice formation at high altitude, something went wrong with the oxygen line of a waist gunner in the Fortress piloted by Lt. William W. Ely, of St. Paul, Minnesota. The gunner keeled over and his face turned blue. The other waist gunner gave the alarm over the intercom, and Ely nosed his Fortress over steeply into a dive, hoping to reach less rarefied levels before his gunner died from lack of oxygen. This was an error of the heart and a costly one. The Fortress crashed, killing six officers and men, including Lieutenant Ely and his copilot, Lt. Forrest Patterson, whose mother's letter was quoted earlier in this article. Two crewmen managed to bail out and land without injury. One of them, Staff Sgt. Raymond E. McAskill, of Syracuse, New York, had to be restrained from diving into the burning wreckage after the bombsight, which was buried several feet in the ground.

The bad luck hung on when the squadron took part in its first action—a big daylight raid on Lille, on October ninth. It was singled out by the Focke-Wulf 190's as it turned to make its target run. The Fortress piloted by Capt. John W. (Swede) Olson, of Hyde Park, Massachusetts, began to lag with its No. 3 engine afire. Then other areas of the ship

(Continued on Page 73)



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(Continued from Page 71)

burst into flame and the plane lost altitude rapidly, falling in a spiral with the Nazis screaming down after it. The Fortress exploded on striking the ground. This was the plane from which Navigator Bill Gise escaped by parachute. One or two other chutes billowed out on the way down, but the top turret gunner, Technical Sgt. D. H. Wissenback, of Klamath Falls, Oregon, stuck to his guns, determined not to miss his first chance at an enemy plane. His twin .50 calibers blazed all the way down and his bullets found and destroyed an F-W 190. In the squadron record he is credited posthumously with one enemy plane.

For weeks thereafter impossible weather caused scrubbing of mission after mission, and the squadron diary notes that there was "lots of grousing at lost sleep and chafing at inaction." On November third, in a raid on Brest, the squadron came through without a loss, knocking down one enemy plane for certain, getting four probables and damaging four others. On November ninth, it took part in another raid on Lille with a Spitfire escort. This was a successful raid, except that Major Holt's bomb release stuck over the target and he was unable to unload his explosives.

Then came a raid on the machine shops of St. Nazaire, where the flak batteries are especially strong. Within Squadron K a superstition had started to grow up around the right-wing position. Olson had been shot out of this spot and others had been badly mauled there. Determined to break this feeling, Holt flew the position himself this time. This was the sweep in which his bombardier, Lieutenant Erickson, was killed. A flak shell pierced the greenhouse and struck him squarely. The plane itself was not seriously damaged and Major Holt quickly pulled his salvo handle and Erickson's bombs fell away.

For tactical reasons, the St. Nazaire raid was made at a level of from six to eight thousand feet and Major Holt had the misfortune to be assigned to the final wave. By the time it approached the target, the flak batteries, already well alerted, sent up a withering fire. Besides killing Erickson, the flak sent the plane of Lt. James M. Stewart, of Moscow, Idaho, spinning into the harbor. In an adjoining squadron, heavy flak blew away the nose of a Fortress, tearing it off cleanly back to the upper turret, and it went down with one man dangling from the bomb bay by his parachute shroud lines. There were no pursuits up that day. They weren't needed.

On November eighteenth, flak disabled the plane of Lt. Ralph J. Gaston, of Los Angeles, four minutes after Squadron K had unloosed its bombs on the submarine base at La Pallice and was homeward-bound. Gaston notified his unit leader that his No. 3 engine had failed and that the ship seemed to be vibrating apart. He was already a mile behind and the squadron slowed down to give him a chance to catch up. Then it ran into heavy clouds and Gaston was seen to turn north toward the Brest

We Can Curb Tooth Decay

IN PORTLAND, OREGON, and San Diego, California, representative groups of children underwent a special kind of medical test. The two sets of youngsters might have looked much the same to a casual observer, but one striking difference became apparent to the examiners. For 95 per cent of the Portland children showed some of the symptoms of rickets, against 73 per cent of the San Diego group. And more than twice as many of the San Diego children had no decayed teeth.

Why? San Diego, located farther south, gets about 3000 hours of sunlight a year, compared with 2200 for Portland. And the sun's ultraviolet rays convert certain substances in the skin into vitamin D, essential for turning the calcium and phosphorus we get in our food into strong teeth and bones.

This is no isolated example. Army rejection rates for defective teeth—which accounted for 20 per cent of the first 1,000,000 rejections in this war—are highest in the New England States and lowest in the South; the Army has had to institute the expensive practice of rehabilitating draftees' teeth whenever possible. A nation-wide survey of more than 500,000 children showed that tooth decay decreased in areas receiving more sunshine.

This same study also revealed that the proportion of poor teeth was greater in the larger cities, which have more impurities in the air—and higher buildings—to obscure the sunlight. Nature evidently intended us to get our vitamin D from the sun, for none of our ordinary foods—not even milk—contains enough to meet minimum needs. But generally speaking, it just hasn't worked out, with the sun's effectiveness being diminished by such obstacles as clothing, clouds, dust and smoke.

The only answer is to add vitamin D to the diet. Infants generally get it in the form of fish-liver oils, although this is usually discontinued by the time the child enters school. The dairy industry is increasingly going in for the addition of vitamin D to milk, which, "of all the common foods available," according to the Council on Foods of the American Medical Association, "is the most suitable as a carrier of added vitamin D."

This was recently tested among a group of school children near New York City. All got the same basic diet—with vitamin D being added to the milk of one set. Tooth decay increased twice as fast among those who drank ordinary milk as among those who drank the vitamin D kind.

—STATE SEN. THOMAS C. DESMOND.

Chairman, New York State Joint Legislative Committee on Nutrition.

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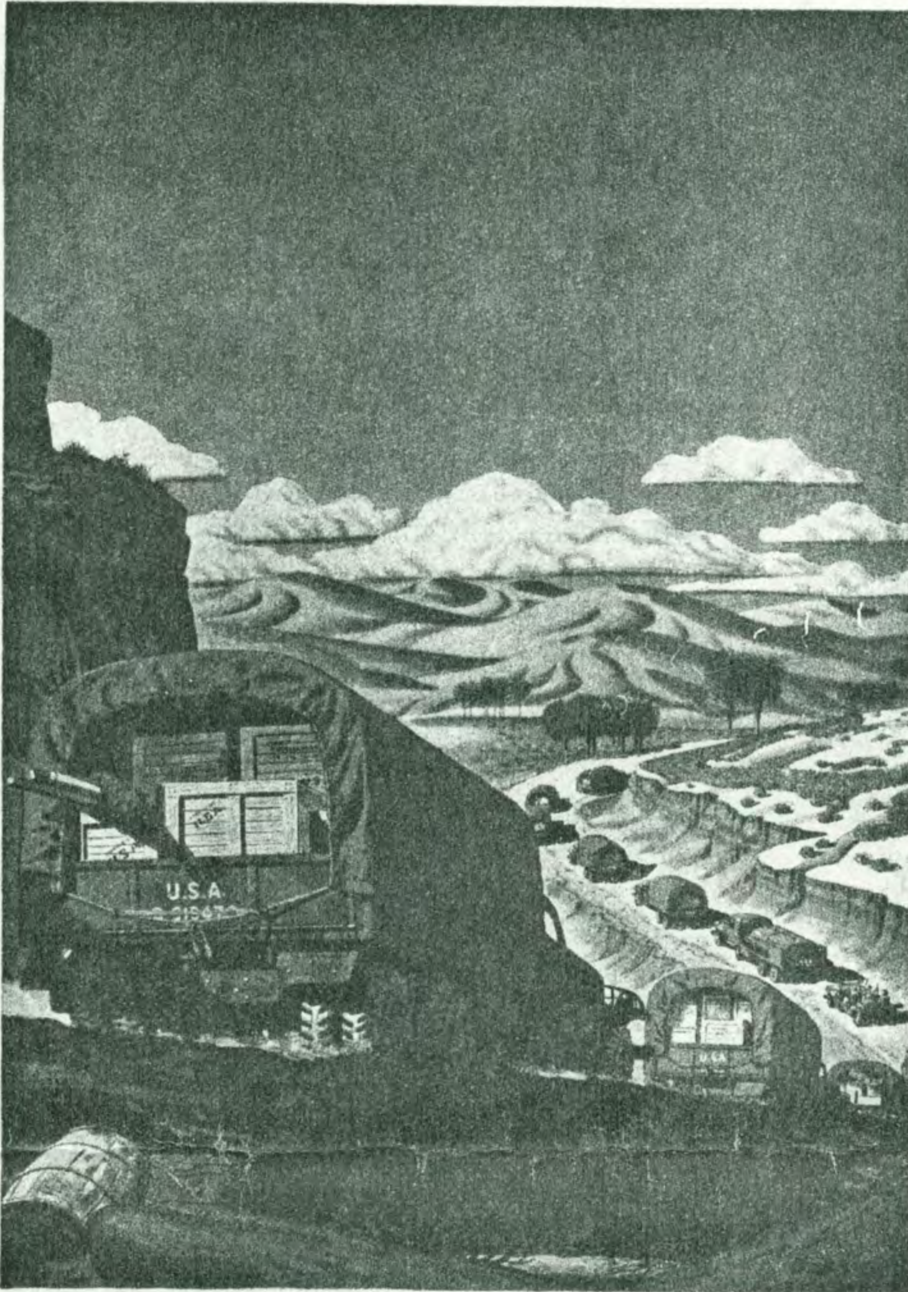

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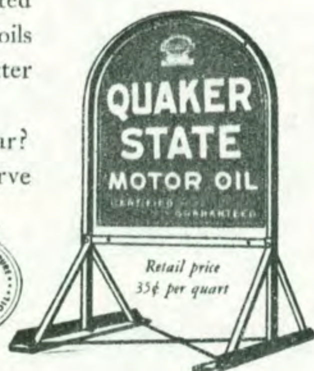

peninsula. He wasn't seen by his mates again, but word reached the squadron that he and his copilot, Lt. Don. H. Eldridge, of Chicago, were prisoners of war. The other crew members have not been heard from yet, but they may turn up in prison camps, as the pilot and copilot are always the last to leave a crippled plane.

The enlisted men of the squadron got together and began talking of getting a mascot. Pooling their money, they raised more than $400 and gave it to the British Orphans Fund conducted by The Stars and Stripes newspaper in London. In exchange, they were permitted to "adopt" a three-year-old girl named Maureen, whose father, a former stonemason, had died in service and whose mother was working as a charwoman at ten shillings a week to supplement her widow's pension. They nicknamed Maureen "Sweetpea" and painted the nickname on one of the squadron's new replacement Fortresses. Sweetpea was to visit the airdrome personally on December nineteenth.

That morning the squadron, in company with several others, took off in crisp and cloudless weather, perfect for high-level bombing.

When the formation was fifty miles inside France and still on the way to its objective, the Fortress piloted by Lt. Lewis R. McKesson, of Pasadena, was shot down. The formations kept on going and as they reached the target—an aircraft plant at Romilly-sur-Seine—they were attacked by about fifty Nazi pursuits. The Eiffel Tower in Paris was clearly visible to the crews as they began circling the target preparatory to making the bombing run. The Fortresses threw out plenty of lead and the F-W 190's fell like flies, but it was a tragic mission for Squadron K.

During the melee, flak and Nazi pursuits knocked down two more of its planes—those piloted by Lt. John R. McKee, of Barrington, New York, and Lt. Danton J. Nygaard, of Buffalo. The Sweetpea got home with one engine out of commission, a wing ripped by a chunk of flak, a supercharger shot away, and the rubber dinghy hanging in shreds from the horizontal stabilizer, which itself was almost destroyed. A 20-mm. shell had blown it there. The bomber group had shot down forty-four enemy fighters. It had lost three Fortresses, all of which belonged to Squadron K. And so it goes.

Almost every time a raiding party returns, there are newly vacant bunks in some of the barracks. A missing man's comrades hold what is called a "summary court," sorting out his effects, taking out official papers and making an inventory of personal things to be sent home to his survivors. It is a disheartening experience.

Under such circumstances and considering the nerve-racking nature of bombing work, it is not surprising that some of the men should get premonitions of death. Lieutenant Olson, for instance, told his mates calmly, on the night preceding the squadron's maiden raid, that he felt positive that he was going to "get it." He did. On the night preceding a raid on St. Nazaire, Lieutenant Stewart's copilot gave all his money to his mess sergeant. "I'm not going to be needing it again," he explained. He crashed in the harbor with Lieutenant Stewart.

One of the most popular men in a near-by squadron was a wealthy New York youngster who liked fancy clothes. In his locker he kept a London-tailored uniform and a pair of expensive English flying boots. On the evening before one of the St. Nazaire sweeps, he announced that he had a feeling it would be his last trip across the Channel.

"I'm going out in my fancy duds and be the best-dressed prisoner or corpse in Germany," he added. His plane failed to return. It is probable, of course, that most premonitions fail of fulfillment and are forgotten, and that only the ones which are borne out are remembered.

Most fliers, as in Major Holt's case, hope for a break from the law of averages and take little stock in premonitions. Holt is quick to spot signs of burgeoning superstition and to do his utmost to demonstrate the fallacy of it. When he was about to take off on his first raid, a ground-officer friend gave him a good-luck piece to carry. It was a small ivory elephant in which a tiny compass had been embedded. After seven or eight sweeps, Holt found himself beginning to believe in the charm and quit carrying it.

One of the most difficult things a squadron commander has to contend with is the extreme sensitivity of his men. Any pilot gets the blues if, for example, he is forced, by engine trouble or other unavoidable mishap, to abort during a sweep—that is, swing out of formation and head for home without having bombed the target. It gives him a feeling that he has deserted his mates.

Lieutenant McKee, who had been a shipbuilder in civilian life, was one of Holt's most dependable officers. It was

"I was out with a fellow like that once when I was sixteen."

McKee who, with Holt, had dropped back in an unsuccessful attempt to cover the lagging Olson during the squadron's initial sweep. In a subsequent sweep, McKee, through an error, had aborted for the first time. The lead ship of the element in which he was flying a wing position developed engine trouble on the way over and turned off to abort. His breakaway signal had not been plainly given and McKee, thinking his lead man was merely changing course, turned off and followed. He was chagrined when his leader took him directly back toward the home airdrome and it was too late to rejoin the formation. On landing, he hurried to the control tower, where Major Holt, who had not gone out on the sweep, was waiting for the raiders to return. Soon the other Fortresses came winging homeward in perfect formation.

"Gosh," exclaimed McKee with relief, "it looks as if nobody got hurt after all."

As the formation crossed the airdrome, red rockets burst from the pilots' compartment of one of the planes. A red rocket means "wounded men aboard."

"It looks like someone really did get it," remarked Holt as he scrambled down the stairs to help unload the wounded. Lieutenant McKee mistakenly took the incident and Holt's innocent remark to heart. He was heard to say at the officers' club that evening that even if all his guns jammed on the next mission, he would proceed toward the target "as long as those four fans keep turning."

The next mission was the Romilly-sur-Seine raid on December nineteenth. Approaching the target, McKee's plane developed enough mechanical trouble to justify aborting, but his props kept spinning and he stuck to formation. Over the target, the F-W 190's got in bursts which crippled the controls and McKee's ship fell off into a spin, followed by the Focke-Wulfs. He managed to flatten out once and give the crew a chance to escape. Seven parachutes billowed out into a hail of machine-gun bullets. The ship twisted into another spin and once more flattened out, and two more parachutes appeared. They were probably those of McKee and his copilot, as the plane carried only nine men that day. Nothing has been heard from any of them since.

Most aviators take up flying for the fun and beauty of it. Pure flight is thrilling, and no matter how dark or stormy the weather may be at ground level, it is sunny and cheerful up above the cloud layers. But combat flying is cold homicide of a peculiarly brutal sort, and there is no fun in it, except for a few hardy souls to whom peacetime flying seems to lack something. Most of the bomber men I talked to said that they wouldn't abandon the job for anything, but added that if they survived the war they would settle down on a Midwestern chicken farm and never look at an airplane again.

No reason has been found for the jinx which clings to the Clay-Pigeon Squadron. But Major Holt has a theory, the principle of which was originally enunciated in his presence by a friend in Twenty-nine Palms, California, who is a doctor of philosophy. For years, the friend had been observing the frequency with which accident befell a woman neighbor who lived alone on a neighboring strip of desert. Wolves were few on the desert, but if one turned up at night and killed a dog, it was sure to be the woman's dog. If a fire broke out, it was sure to break out in the woman's dwelling. If a rare species of reptile strayed into the neighborhood, it was sure to take shelter under a rock in her yard. Everything happened to her.

"My friend," says Major Holt, "has reached the conclusion that the incidence of accident falls more heavily upon some people than upon others. I guess it is as good an explanation as any."

HATS OFF TO THE 1-B's

(Continued from Page 25)

As for Major Krigbaum himself, he first studied mass psychology and the reorientation of physical maladjustments in 1918 as a captain in the 33rd Division. Among other degrees awarded him that year is a D. S. C. for fancy use of captured German machine guns in a counterattack emergency. Then, after the war, he pursued his studies as a professional footballer alongside George Halas on the famous Decatur Staleys. His only decoration from that is a broken nose. When called up from the officers' reserve this time, he was an electrical contractor in Decatur, Illinois.

Innocent of six-bit words and graduate-school ideas, he has done this job better than most experts could have done it. Mother wit and dead reckoning constituted his formula.

To get the 1-B label from your local board and have it hastily confirmed by overworked doctors at a reception center does not necessarily mean that "general service"—meaning potential fighting—is ruled out for you. Going all out with a policy followed by other outfits handling 1-B's, Camp McCoy checks back religiously on the disabilities of its 1-B's. Officers look searchingly for a chance to move a man up to 1-A status or, when necessary, a disability so tough that it means the man had better be sent home. Upgrading to 1-A is much more frequent than a discharge. You get a fine cross-section of what 1-B's are like and how keen they are to prove as much as possible when you sit in with the board of three doctors on this job of reclassification. Carefully balancing rigid requirements relative to missing big toes or glass eyes against considerable discretionary powers, the board has its hands full.

The atmosphere here would puzzle a Prussian officer. Not a heel click, not a sharp command in 1000 interviews per week. It's all as informal as the way one of the school's young lieutenants will come up behind a 1-B, limping along way behind his platoon, take his arm and say, "What's the trouble, soldier? Dogs give out on you?"

Facing the doctors, for instance, is a husky, pink-cheeked kid of twenty-one from Tennessee. He "sho would like a crack at them Japanese." His board called him 1-B because, years ago, he lost the upper joint of both right index and right middle fingers. Eyes are 20-20, no other disabling defect.

"Do any shooting with that hand at home, son?" asks a doctor.

"Yes, suh," says the boy with emphasis. "Pappy was a great squ'll shooter and he taught all us boys to shoot pretty good. Rifle, shotgun, pistol, it don't make no difference to me, long as I got something I want to hit."

The doctor again considers the hand in question—plenty of finger left to reach and squeeze a trigger. The boy goes 1-A.

Enter a former bellhop with a history of an old injury and consequent stiffness in an ankle joint. The doctor wants to know how he's stood up so far under route marching at McCoy.

The boy looks disgusted.

"On my job," he says, "I was standing around or walking up and down all day. This ankle never bothered me then."

He passes into 1-A too.

The same goes for the underweight boy—six feet three, only 160 pounds, but with an iron-man record in high-school basketball. He has put on enough weight after ten days of Army food and Army hours to make him a likely piece of salvage. At this rate, within a couple of weeks, the major will be saying again with satisfaction, "Well, we shipped a

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