

THE FIRST  
300



*Hell's Angels*



North Sea



English Channel

ID-DAY (INVASION)

# Achtung! FLYING FORTRESSES!

AIR OFFENSIVE : EUROPE  
SOME OF THE IMPORTANT PRIORITY TARGETS  
ATTACKED BY 'HELL'S ANGELS' BOMB GROUP.





DEDICATED  
TO  
THE GALLANT AMERICAN AIRMEN  
OF THE  
303RD BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)  
WHO HAVE SACRIFICED THEIR LIVES  
IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY

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## FOREWORD

AIR POWER as we know it today is the greatest weapon yet conceived by man to carry death and destruction to the enemy. The United States Army Air Force is the greatest example of that weapon. This infant organ of armed force, without centuries of tradition behind it, is the deciding factor which will give the Allied forces an overwhelming victory over the enemy. It is an organization in which the morale is the highest, the *esprit de corps* unequalled and where each man, regardless of his assigned duty, whether in the air or on the ground, is an important cog in the wheel of progress.

The United States Army Air Force is making history and its own traditions in this global war. It is an aerial force made up of men from all walks of life ; boys just out of their teen-age whose only thought should be to become men and settle down and enjoy the community spirit and freedom of our great nation, men with wives, and children who had already taken their place in our way of life. They were students, executives, laborers, men with professional backgrounds, and others who have all joined in a common cause. Men who are trained to the best of our nation's ability to do the job ahead of them. Men who work endlessly to see that whatever must be done is done. Men who are not killers or haters, but who realize that this war is a question of the survival of the fittest ; that it is a serious business in which they, as Americans, have their very existence as a nation at stake and are willing to sacrifice their lives to see that our great nation will forever have those liberties and equalities that have made it a great nation. God fearing men who enjoy life ; who work hard and play hard. The men who actually fly the planes live through a lifetime of thought, action, and emotion every time they strike against the enemy. They carry this battle into the very heart of the enemy without flinching or despairing. There is no thought of defeat, and though they have seen their best friends and companions blown out of the skies in front of their very eyes, **THEY HAVE NEVER TURNED BACK IN THE FACE OF THE ENEMY.** These are the men of the United States Army Air Force.

This is the combat story of the first 300 missions of men of the 303rd Bombardment Group who worked, fought and died gloriously to write an honorable and brilliant chapter in our nation's history.



## INTRODUCTION

THE 303RD BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) was activated at Gowan Field, Boise, Idaho, on 3 February, 1942, and lost no time in getting into training for combat duty. Because of the submarine scare on the U.S. Pacific coast many of the original air crews were sent to Muroc, California, to patrol for Jap subs. Many of these crews did not return to this organization, but others soon replaced them to bring the Group up to strength. The 303rd was alerted for overseas combat duty almost immediately, and training began to prepare the entire organization for the struggle that was eventually to come.

In June of the same year, the Group moved to the wide open spaces of New Mexico and settled at Alamogordo Air Base where it remained until the early part of August. Biggs Field, El Paso, Texas, was the next and last stop for the ground echelon before the movement overseas on 23 August, 1942. The ground echelon sailed from New York aboard the unescorted Cunard liner, *Queen Mary*, and disembarked in the British Isles on 11 September, 1942. The air echelon went from Biggs Field to Kellogg Field, Battle Creek, Michigan, then to Dow Field, Bangor, Maine, and flew overseas, arriving at their base in England in the latter part of October.

For the first seven months of our stay in England, the 303rd operated from their United Kingdom base with the help of R.A.F. personnel. These experienced R.A.F. officers and men gave the Group their wholehearted and untiring co-operation which reduced, considerably, the tremendous task of operating the base. In April, 1943, the base was formally turned over to the United States Army Air Forces in a dignified but brief ceremony.

On 9 January, 1945, the 303rd completed its 300th mission, becoming the first heavy bomb group to complete that number of combat missions from an American base in England. On that day Col. Raper sent the following message to his men :

SUBJECT : "Hell's Angels" 300th Mission

TO : All personnel, this station.

10th January, 1945.

1. "Hell's Angels" has now completed its 300th mission. We are the first heavy bombardment group having completed this number of missions from American bases in England. The importance of this figure is that it represents our share in the total war effort of the United States Armed Forces and those of our Allies.

2. We had our beginning with that small force of American heavy bombers that proved to the world that daylight, high altitude, precision bombing would play a major role in the destruction of the German war machine. During the period this group has been stationed in England its Flying Fortresses have dropped hundreds of thousands of bombs—a total weight of over 20,000 tons—on the enemy. We know the damage and devastation of our bombing has been tremendous. The 372 enemy aircraft that our gunners have destroyed, the 101 probably destroyed and the 180 damaged, have proven that we have been ready to defend ourselves at all costs and at all times. There is another notable fact to remember. Regardless of the number of planes with which the enemy has attacked our formation, or the type of attack they have used, they have never stopped us from bombing the target. They have never made us retreat.

3. You have every reason to be proud of our fine record and of our war effort to date. You have all worked very hard, putting in long hours under trying and adverse conditions. Your teamwork has been magnificent and without it our accomplishments would never have been possible. However, this war is not over and we must all continue to do everything in our power to keep this excellent record intact and to improve it when and where we can. Our goal is a common one—total defeat of the enemy so that we may again return to our families, our homes, and our normal way of living.

*William S. Raper*

Colonel, A.C., Commanding.



# GROUP COMMANDERS

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## COLONEL JAMES H. WALLACE

*Washington, D.C.*

JUNE 1942—FEBRUARY 1943

COLONEL WALLACE, commander of the 303rd Bomb Group when the organization came overseas, is an old-timer in the U.S. Army Air Corps. He attended Georgia Tech for three years before leaving to join the army in 1928. He graduated from flying school in 1929 and received his wings. Colonel Wallace holds one of the few Distinguished Flying Crosses issued in peace time, awarded for extraordinary achievement while he was stationed in Panama. He holds a Command Pilot rating.

The Editor  
regrets  
that no photo of  
Colonel Wallace  
is available

## COLONEL CHARLES E. MARION

*Detroit, Michigan*

FEBRUARY 1943—AUGUST 1943

COLONEL MARION joined the 303rd in February, 1942. He soon became deputy group commander and assumed command when Colonel Wallace went to 8th Bomber Command. He graduated from the University of Michigan as an aeronautical engineer and enlisted in the army as an Air Corps cadet in 1935. He flew on some of the toughest of the early missions with the 303rd before leaving to become Deputy Chief-of-Staff in charge of operations at 1st Bomb Division. He holds the rating of Senior Pilot.



## COLONEL KERMIT D. STEVENS

*Eugene, Oregon*

AUGUST 1943—OCTOBER 1944

COLONEL STEVENS assumed command of the group when Colonel Marion left for higher headquarters. Prior to his assignment to the 303rd he was deputy operations officer at 8th Bomber Command. He graduated from the University of Oregon and was a salesman for the Union Oil Company before entering the Air Corps as a cadet in 1935. Upon graduation from flying school he was commissioned in the Officer's Reserve Corps and has been on active duty since that time. Colonel Stevens was returned to the U.S. to command a B-29 training base in the Second Air Force. He holds the rating of Senior Pilot.



## COLONEL WILLIAM S. RAPER

*Wheeling, West Va.*

OCTOBER 1944

COLONEL RAPER assumed command of the 303rd after Colonel Stevens left for the United States. Prior to coming to the "Hell's Angels" group he was deputy commander of the 306th Bomb Group and Chief-of-Staff of the 40th Combat Wing. He attended Wittenburg College, after which he worked as a foreman for the Wheeling Steel Corporation. Colonel Raper entered the Army as an Air Corps cadet in 1940 and graduated from flying school as a pilot in 1941.





# FORTRESSES ON PARADE

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*This symbolic picture shows a formation of Flying Fortresses of the 303rd Bombardment Group (H) returning from a bombing mission to Germany with the Stars and Stripes waving in the foreground above their base in England.*



# GROUP STAFF OFFICERS

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LT. COL. EDGAR E. SNYDER, Jr. *Van Wert, Ohio.*

*Deputy Group Commander*

Arrived in the E.T.O. with the 303rd as 427th squadron operations officer. Later he assumed command of the 427th squadron. Assigned as deputy group commander in October, 1944. He graduated from Wittenburg College in 1939 and joined the sales staff of W. F. Robertson Steel and Iron Co. Entered Air Corps as cadet in 1941 and graduated as pilot the same year.



MAJOR FRANK J. DOHERTY *Hoquiam, Wash.*

*Ground Executive Officer*

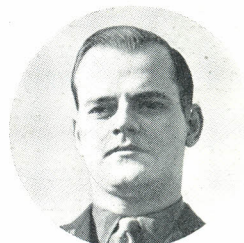
Arrived in E.T.O. with 303rd as group adjutant and held that assignment until December, 1944. Graduated from Washington State College in 1933 and became sales agent for Prudential Insurance. Commissioned in R.O.T.C. in 1933 and entered active service in 1940. Assigned to 38th Reconnaissance Squadron prior to joining the 303rd.



CAPTAIN RICHARD P. VINAL *Baltimore, Md.*

*Group Adjutant*

Arrived in E.T.O. with 303rd as assistant group adjutant and held that assignment until December, 1944. Graduated from Benjamin Franklin University in 1941 and became internal revenue agent for U.S. Bureau of Internal Revenue until entry into Army in 1942. Graduated from officers candidate school in August, 1942, and was assigned to the 303rd.



CAPTAIN CHARLES D. McQUAID *Boston, Mass.*

*Group Intelligence (S-2)*

Assigned to 303rd as a squadron intelligence officer in August, 1942. Was intelligence officer of the 360th squadron until assigned as group intelligence officer in December, 1944. Graduated from Harvard University in 1928 and joined the Traveller's Insurance Company. Held an R.O.T.C. commission and was entered on active duty in May, 1942.



MAJOR GLYNN F. SHUMAKE *Franklin, Ga.*

*Group Operations (S-3)*

Arrived in E.T.O. with the 303rd Group as pilot in the 358th Squadron. He became assistant group operations officer shortly thereafter and was appointed Group Operations officer in August, 1943. He attended West Georgia College, after which he worked as a civil engineer for his home state. He entered the Army in 1940 and transferred to the Air Corps as a cadet in 1941. Graduated as a pilot from flying school in 1941.



CAPTAIN QUENTIN W. HARGROVE *Shreveport, La.*

*Group Engineering (S-4)*

Arrived in E.T.O. with 303rd as 427th squadron engineering officer. Assigned group engineering officer in March, 1944. Became section head of S-4 in December, 1944. Graduated from Louisiana Polytechnic Institute in 1941 and entered Army upon graduation. Graduated and commissioned from Air Corps Engineering School in March, 1942, and was immediately assigned to the 303rd.





# AND THE ANGELS STRUCK!

**O**N NOVEMBER 17, 1942, the 303rd Bomb Group first went into action. Following a feverish night of activity during which all traffic to and from the base was halted, the few bombers on hand took off with a load of bombs for St. Nazaire. The excited crowds of ground men that lined the perimeter waited for breathless hours for the return of the formation, halfway expecting never to see them again. In the afternoon when the first hum of engines reached their ears they raced out to the runway, eager for news of the mission. What they heard was not especially encouraging. Unable to find the target due to bad weather, the Forts had returned with their bombs without seeing any action. It was a terrific letdown for everybody.

The next morning when the planes again zoomed off the field, led by Colonel James H. Wallace, the group commander, pilots and crews were grim in their determination to make up for the previous day's abortive effort. The target was La Pallice, but again weather and inexperience played a hand, and when the planes returned they learned they had hit the submarine pens at St. Nazaire. This one hadn't been as easy as the day before. The Germans were tired of letting these newly arrived Yanks fly about their territory at will, and showed their resentment by sending up a fierce flak barrage over the target. Then about 30 of the Luftwaffe's best fighters—the Goering Yellow Nose outfit—piled into the formation. The 303rd had their first taste of combat—and they won the first round of the long battle to come. Gunners tallied one fighter destroyed, four probables and three damaged. All of our planes returned.

The 303rd was new to the business, but the men learned fast. Their classroom was the sky over Lorient, St. Nazaire, Brest and La Pallice, and their teachers were ace German pilots and the pick of German flak gunners. Fighter escort consisted of a pitifully small number of short-range R.A.F. Spitfires, designed for the defence of England, which buzzed out to the middle of the Channel to support the Forts as they fought their way back to England. More than one straggler, given up for lost, gained new strength and courage when the fast little Spits zipped in to drive off the murderous M.E.109's and F.W.190's.

Here, in the early days of the aerial war, was born the *esprit de corps* of the 303rd—the spirit among men without which no outfit can rise above the mediocre. This spirit was such that pilots and crews defied all rules, regulations, and faced the almost certainty of death, to leave the formation and add their fire power to that of a crippled, floundering bomber struggling to make the English coast while angry Nazi fighters queued up to

try to shoot it down. Thus died, among others, Lt. Larry Dunnica, 358th pilot, who when last seen was matching his skill in a four-engine bomber with that of several German fighter pilots in a lop-sided dogfight. Here was the spirit that spread to the rest of the Eighth Air Force—"No matter what is the opposition, no matter what are the odds, we shall never turn back until the target is bombed."

In the fall of 1942, it was a question of men, mud and machines. The group needed more men and machines—and less mud. No one was sweating out the end of the war because, for the 303rd and the Eighth Air Force, it was only beginning. Allied forces were still on the defensive, although R.A.F. heavies were in the process of stepping up their nightly attacks on the larger German industrial cities. Our men and machines were going to have to prove to the world that daylight, high-altitude, precision bombing would be what it takes to destroy the Nazis. The odds were definitely against a bright outlook. Both the Krauts and the English had tried it and had taken a beating. The Germans alone lost more than 2,000 aircraft over England in the Battle of Britain.

Things didn't look too good, especially when two Fortress groups were sent from England to Africa to activate a new air force. The remaining force of four Fortress and two Liberator groups were going to have a monumental task to perform. The fact that two necessary items—men and machines for reinforcement—were not forthcoming, made that task seem almost hopeless.

However discouraging the outlook, these pioneering young Americans went to work on the problem with an enthusiasm that embarrassed the most optimistic. The plight of the 303rd was aptly summed up by one ground crew. With a touch of subtle American humor they named their Fortress "AOG—Not in Stock" because it was "Always on the ground, parts not in stock." But somehow the ground crews made their planes airworthy, and in spite of the odds the 303rd and the other groups continued to pound the German naval bases in the West in a desperate effort to save Allied shipping from unbearable losses.

It was during this period that new combat formations were devised to protect the planes in the air from fighter attacks and to produce a more concentrated bomb pattern on the target. The new B-17G with its nose turret and other improvements was the direct result of the hard-won experience of the group's original flyers who found much room for improvement in the old planes and didn't hesitate to say so. Men of the 303rd



were among the first to install two caliber .50 machine guns in the tip of the nose as a surprise to the Jerry fighters who thought they had found a soft spot in the Fortress armor.

This pioneering and experimental spirit that kept men busy was about all that kept the morale of the officers and men from taking a nose dive. The 303rd was paying a heavy price in the battles over France. At the base, combat men were trying to ignore the growing number of empty bunks in the Nissen huts. Airplanes were wearing tin-can patches over ragged holes and flying on parts that made crew chiefs prematurely gray. "Moonlight requisitioning" of parts from shot-up planes by ground crews was, naturally, frowned upon, but nevertheless it did happen frequently. Some Pilots would not allow their planes to be brought to the hangar for repairs because they were sure they would be stripped for parts. They had good grounds for argument, too. A badly shot-up Fort might sit in the hangar for weeks while less badly damaged planes flew on its parts. The 303rd was at low ebb.

Then in January, 1943, Lt. Colonel Charles E. Marion, the deputy group commander, flew General Eaker to the Casablanca conference where it was decided to increase the strength of the Eighth Air Force. Immediately there was a noticeable change. New combat men began to arrive to fill the empty bunks. New planes fresh from the factory in their drab camouflage landed in groups of seven and eight. The number of "not-in-stocks" at supply diminished. And old-timers craned their necks in awe as the size of the formations over the field increased daily. In everybody's mind was the thought, "Now, by God, we've got an Air Force and we'll really give it to them!"

January 27, 1943, was a day of excitement on the base. In spite of close security, word leaked around that today's target was in Germany itself! For the first time the 303rd, with Colonel Marion leading, roared over Germany, bound for the shipbuilding yards at Wilhelmshaven. When the crews piled out of their planes that night they were jubilant. They had bombed the shipyards, shot down several German fighters and come home unscathed. In the first battle of the Reich they had the Germans hanging on the ropes.

All of the invasions of the Reich were not so bloodless. Rare indeed was the day when our formations could penetrate the German border and report no losses. The Luftwaffe bitterly contested the occupation of the sky over their homeland, and in these savage battles men of the 303rd proved that they were made of the stuff of heroes. Some returned to wear their medals—some didn't. Such a man was First Lieutenant Jack Mathis, 359th bombardier who flew in the squadron lead plane "The Duchess". As the formation neared Vegasack, Germany, on March 18, 1943, Mathis was bent over his

bombsight, making the minute, careful corrections that meant success or failure for his squadron. Around and through the formation zipped vicious Nazi fighters, determined to break up the close formation before they could loose their deadly loads. Mathis paid no attention to these or to the ugly black puffs of flak that blasted the air around him. He saw only the cross hairs of his bombsight creeping slowly toward the shipyards. Seconds to go. And then there was a terrific blast. The plexiglass nose of the bomber splintered. Mathis flew to the rear of the compartment, dazed, bleeding, badly wounded. With superhuman effort he crawled back to his bombsight, made last minute corrections and released his bombs. Then Jack Mathis died. For the 303rd and the Eighth Air Force it meant the best bombing job so far in the war. For Mathis it meant the Congressional Medal of Honor—posthumously.

In the Spring of 1943 the 303rd, now under the command of Colonel Charles E. Marion, was growing fast. With the rest of the Eighth Air Force their bombers were defeating the German submarine menace by blasting the German shipyards and naval refitting bases. Antwerp, Bremen, Lorient, Kiel and Wilhelmshaven felt the full force of our bombs. At the same time, when weather permitted, the airmen of the "Hell's Angels" group were crippling the German factories at Paris, Rouen, Huls and even to Heroya in Norway.

Finally, in August, 1943, the Eighth was ready to branch out. The 303rd was under the leadership of Colonel Kermit D. Stevens now, and it was an outfit trained to the pink of condition. On the 17th of August, while one task force hit Regensburg and flew on to Africa, the 303rd struck at one of Germany's most important and vulnerable industries: the ball bearing plant at Schweinfurt. It was rough. More than 300 German fighters came up to contest the mission for more than two hours. Our gunners used up over 120,000 rounds of ammunition. Thirty German fighters went down. The group went on and bombed the target. All of our aircraft returned.

Now the lid was pried off the Reich. New long range fighters flew out with the bombers and the 303rd left mementoes in all the better German cities. Stuttgart, Emden, Frankfurt, Anklam, Munster—all these had their heaps of rubble where the "Hell's Angels" had passed. On the 14th of October they returned to Schweinfurt to tear down the plants that the Germans had been frantically rebuilding. Again there was a savage two-hour battle with the pick of the Luftwaffe. One bomber did not return, but the route was marked with the smoking remains of German fighters. Bombing results? "Simply smashing," said one bombardier.

In December the 303rd was to get its second Congressional Medal of Honor. For several days they had been dishing it out to Bremen, reducing the docks and business center to ruins. The Germans weren't taking



it lying down. Over the target fighters flew into their own flak to attack the Forts. The 358th "Jersey Bounce Jr." was in trouble. Two engines were gone and the crippled bomber had fallen behind the formation. Fighters singled it out and queued up to take their turns in swift passes, machine guns and cannon spitting bullets. On the first pass the tail gunner collected a parcel of 20 mm. shell fragments. In the radio room a tall, shy kid, T/Sgt. Forrest L. Vosler, looked down the sights of his single machine gun. His turn came next. A 20mm. shell exploded in the compartment, splattering his legs and hips with fragments. Unable to stand, but not ready to quit the fight, he propped himself on the edge of the table and kept his gun hot with a steady stream of fire at the M.E.109's streaking in at the tail. A second cannon shell exploded inches away and this time steel particles tore into his face and chest and embedded in his eyes. And still Vosler fought on. Unable to see more than a blur, he fired at the blurs until the Nazi pilots gave it up as a bad job and turned back. Things were bad. Gas was low and ditching was going to be necessary. Calmly, working by feel, Vosler repaired the damaged radio set. Then, between periods of unconsciousness, he tapped out S O S's that alerted Air-Sea Rescue. His job was done and, knowing it, Vosler prepared to make one more sacrifice that might save the bomber and crew. Turning to the engineer he asked him, feebly but earnestly, "Throw me out. Maybe with my weight gone you can make England."

Vosler lived to receive his medal from the President, but he doesn't see very clearly. One eye is gone.

In 1942 and 1943 the 303rd had suffered some rough times from the German air force. With the dawning of 1944 came the time of retribution. The Eighth Air Force was out to smash the Luftwaffe and the 303rd men were to play a brilliant part in the program.

The first blow fell at Oschersleben on January 11. Leading the First Division, the 303rd moved toward the target through bad weather. Many of the Eighth gave it up as a bad job and turned toward home. So did most of the fighter escort. In the lead plane of the 303rd, the old "Eight Ball", Brigadier General Robert F. Travis and Lt. Colonel William R. Calhoun of the 41st Combat Wing, saw the weather break near the target and decided to go on, determined to hit the vital aircraft assembly plant. The target was bombed and devastated. But the First Division and especially the 303rd paid a high price for their success. More than 300 German fighters swarmed over the formation, attacking in groups and attacking singly. It was the fiercest, bloodiest aerial battle ever fought in any war. Forty-two bombers from First Division did not return. Ten of them were from the 303rd. For this the Luftwaffe gave more than 300 fighters destroyed, probably destroyed and damaged. That day the men of the

303rd helped earn that blue ribbon, the Presidential Citation, that is worn on the right side of the chest.

In February, the Eighth broke the back of the Luftwaffe. For its share the 303rd went to Aschersleben, Leipzig, Augsburg, Bernburg and Wern. It was visual bombing at its best and when the smoke had cleared away, the Germans had but a secondary air force.

There remained but one new frontier in Germany—Berlin—which the Germans had sworn could never be attacked by daylight bombers. On March 6, with Lt. Colonel Richard H. Cole, 359th commander, leading, the 303rd helped the Eighth Air Force shove that statement down the Nazi throats in one of the first of many successful assaults on the Nazi citadel. There were no more closed doors in the Reich. The 303rd sent their bombers farther and farther in search of new and better targets—to Posen, in Poland, and Marienburg, in East Prussia, where Captain George T. Orvis, 427th bombardier, did one of the most remarkable bombing jobs of the war.

Few men of the 303rd will ever forget the night of June 5, 1944. At dusk it was obvious that something *big* was in the air. Something so big that those who did not know the answer were almost afraid to guess and the few who knew were afraid to sleep. Armed guards appeared everywhere about the dispersal areas, perimeter tracks, bomb dumps and administrative buildings. Operations officers flew about in jeeps attending to small details usually entrusted to clerks. On the line mechanics and bomb loaders chatted in small groups, asking each other "what's up" and finding no answer.

It was still dark when sleepy combat men were awakened and handed special red briefing passes. The tenseness grew through breakfast and it was a quiet lot of gunners, navigators, bombardiers and pilots who filed into the briefing room past armed M.P.s. There were no loud "Hurrahs" when the briefing officer rose and said "This is it, boys. Today we are bombing in support of ground troops who are landing on the Normandy coast." There was a moment of excited chatter and a few low whistles. Then silence, as the full import of these words sunk in and the flyers realized that even while they were sitting in that room other Americans were crouched in landing barges in the Channel and dropping through tracer-filled skies by parachute. In the first few moments came the stupendous realization that this *was it*. The next few hours would decide the success or failure of the war in Europe. The men who left the briefing room that morning left with grim determination in their hearts and a prayer on their lips for the success of the boys on the ground who were facing the hell of gunfire on the Atlantic Wall.



That day the 303rd flew three separate missions between dawn and dusk, blasting bridges and communications to take a load off the infantry. D-day was only the start. In June the "Hell's Angels" men flew 29 missions, a thousand sorties—and fired only 1,400 rounds of ammunition for the entire month, compared to Schweinfurt's 120,000 rounds. On the ground the infantry moved about without fear of attack from the air. The Luftwaffe was down for the count.

After D-day the 303rd divided its efforts between tactical and strategic targets. When the ground forces called for help they went out to bomb bridges, ordnance depots, gun emplacements, forts, oil dumps and troop concentrations. They turned marshalling yards into twisted masses of wrecked locomotives, cars and rails. They bombed road junctions in the path of a fleeing German army so that light bombers and rocket-firing fighters could pound the stalled vehicles into the ground.

They went out to help defeat the new threat to Britain—the buzz-bomb that started its flight from thick, concrete bases that were cleverly camouflaged and hard to destroy. They went after the oil on which the Panzer units depended for freedom of movement. To Magdeburg, Harburg, Bottrop, Gelsenkirchen, to Brux in Czechoslovakia and into the horrible clouds of flak over Merseburg. And where they went, black, oily smoke towered five miles from the burning dumps and refineries. Word began to come back from the front that enemy tanks and trucks had been found abandoned—out of gas. The 303rd was doing its job well.

In August, 1944, the 303rd had completed a solid year in which it was always among those in the top position in the Eighth Air Force records of bombing efficiency. Ruined factories at Dresden, Munich, Cologne, Mannheim, Ludwigshafen, Kassel and Berlin were mute evidence of the skill of "Hell's Angels" bombardiers. Rare was the day when bombardiers had to report "Visual bombing, poor results" when they returned from a mission where they could see their target in the bombsight.

The record of efficiency still stands when bombardiers are able to line the target with the crosshairs of the sight. Now, newly improved instruments allow almost pin-point bombing through solid clouds, and though results are not so easily catalogued according to groups, the 303rd men have seen their work in reconnaissance pictures and know it is good.

In the fall of 1944 the Luftwaffe, which had been struck such a paralyzing blow in the spring, began to stir in its lair. They had sacrificed their cities and their troops during the long summer in order to build back their air strength, slowly, and at a terrific cost to the war factories and the morale of the German people and army. By August they were ready to strike out a little—and by August, after more than three months of flying

without being attacked, the gunners of the Forts were prime for a surprise attack. Most of them believed, in spite of the advice of intelligence officers, that the German Air Force was done for. On long missions they relaxed their former vigilance.

Then, on August 15, the Luftwaffe came to life. As the group formation roared out toward their German target, the fighter escort spotted a small formation of enemy fighters in the distance. They moved over to intercept the German fighters before they could reach the bombers. In a flash, 50 German fighters hit the Forts from the opposite direction in a lightning attack that lasted but minutes and caught gunners with their guns down. In those few minutes nine Fortresses tumbled out of the sky. It was a sober and enlightened bunch of airmen who returned to the base that day.

A little more than a month later practically the same thing happened, except that this time the Krauts didn't bother with any deceptive tactics. Out of the sun, just as the bombers were steady for the bomb run, dove approximately 150 F.W.190s. With unerring precision they found their targets with blazing guns and in the brief, savage attack, eleven Fortresses were shot out of the sky. The planes that did return were badly shot up.

These battles were fierce and casualties were high, but they were not the long, running fights of the old days. A weaker Luftwaffe was trying new tactics in desperation, but there was to be little salve for its wounded pride in these minor successes. Its primary purpose was to turn back the formation, and no amount of opposition has ever turned back a formation of "Hell's Angels" bombers. It succeeded only in alerting gunners as the 303rd kept piling up the missions, day after day.

At 300 missions "Hell's Angels" was leading its closest competitor by more than a score of missions. In combat and on the ground it was one of the top-flight groups of the Eighth Air Force. After nearly two-and-one-half years of combat it had grown from a pathetically green outfit to an experienced, smooth-running organization. Operations, intelligence, engineering, ordnance, down to the cooks and supply, all functioned perfectly to the last detail. In the constant turnover of combat men, the old-timers passed on to the newcomers the priceless "know how" that comes only with experience.

The 303rd, under the command of Colonel William S. Raper, is not resting on its laurels. Day after day the bombers roar up the runways, sometimes in fog, snow or rain, to make every German city a part of the front line, and to make the front lines a hell for German troops. With the help of every man, flyer or ground, they intend to continue the methodical destruction of the German ability to wage war until, perhaps, some day they will hear the magic words: "Return to base. Enemy has surrendered."



# FAMOUS FLYING FORTRESS GIVES THE GROUP ITS NAME

IN 1943, FOLLOWING SEVERAL weeks of suggestions, debate and argument, the name "Hell's Angels" was adopted by the 303rd Bomb Group. At that time the numerical designation of bomb groups in England was still on the secret list, and the men of the 303rd wanted some name that was simple, descriptive and appropriate for one of the Eighth Air Force's top organizations. The name was taken from the old B-17F, "Hell's Angels," one of the group's original planes that had already made an impressive record of dependability, endurance and mechanical efficiency.

The old Fort helped make the group famous by running up a total of 25 missions without returning early—the first heavy bomber in the Eighth Air Force to reach that mark—and went on to the 40th mission before a slight mechanical failure forced an early turn-

back. At 48 missions "Hell's Angels" and her ground crew of six men were selected from the Eighth Air Force to return to the U.S. for a tour of the war factories.

On this tour "Hell's Angels," both as an airplane and a group, became famous over the entire United States as the crew told hundreds of thousands of war workers of the trials and hardships of the early days of daylight bombing missions and pointed out the patches that covered the old Fort from nose to tail. They were very proud of the fact that no member of its air crew was ever wounded in action.

Although this record has been surpassed many times by many aircraft during the last year, "Hell's Angels" was the champion of the early days and always will be the champion in the eyes of the 303rd.

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## HERE'S WHY "HELL'S ANGELS" WEAR PRESIDENTIAL CITATION

ON JANUARY 11, 1944, THE 303rd Bomb Group led the First Bomb Division in a mission to attack an aircraft factory at Oschersleben, Germany. Most of the Air Force, assigned to other targets in the vicinity, turned back because of adverse weather, leaving the First Division to face the might of the Luftwaffe practically alone. There ensued one of the fiercest aerial battles of the war in which the First Division fought so brilliantly and still bombed the target, that it was recommended for and received a citation from the President of the United States. Following is the text of the citation :

"The 1st Bombardment Division (H), is cited for extraordinary heroism, determination, and *esprit de corps* in action against the enemy on 11 January, 1944. On this occasion the 1st Bombardment Division led the entire Eighth Air Force penetration into central Germany to attack vital aircraft factories. After assembly was accomplished and the formation was proceeding toward Germany, adverse weather conditions were encountered which prevented effective fighter cover from reaching the 1st Bombardment Division. Taking full advantage of the relative vulnerability of the lead division, the enemy concentrated powerful forces against

it. The scale of the enemy attack is graphically indicated by the fact that 400 encounters with enemy aircraft were recorded by units of the 1st Bombardment Division. The gunners met these continuous attacks with accurate fire, and the division continued toward the targets as briefed where bombs were dropped with excellent results. On the return trip the enemy continued to concentrate his efforts on the 1st Bombardment Division. Figures of enemy aircraft claimed by our gunners indicate that the heroism of this division inflicted heavy losses on the enemy in the air as well as on the ground. Two hundred and ten enemy aircraft, the largest number ever claimed by any division of the Eighth Air Force for any one mission, were confirmed as destroyed, 43 probably destroyed and 84 damaged. The division lost 42 heavy bombers and many of those which returned were heavily damaged. Four hundred and thirty officers and enlisted men failed to return, 2 were killed, and 32 others wounded. The extraordinary heroism and tenacious fighting spirit demonstrated by the 1st Bombardment Division in accomplishing its assigned task under exceptionally difficult conditions reflect highest credit on this organization, the Army Air Forces, and the Armed Forces of the United States."



# ALL WASN'T HELL FOR "HELL'S ANGELS"



*Glasses and lassies make for a merry time*



*'Ow's for a pint o' bitter, chum?*



*That isn't quite cricket*



*Home was never like this!*



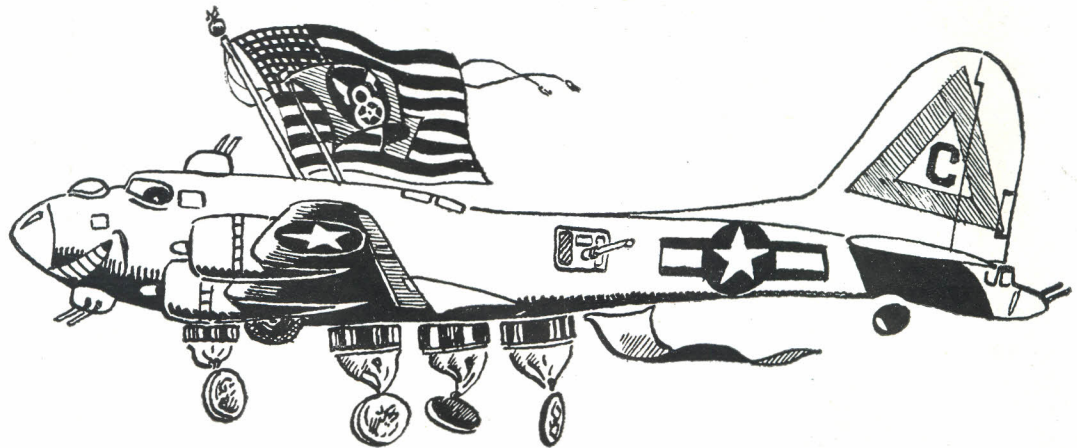
*Chowhounds, chow bound*



*The big day in a flyer's life*



# FAMOUS FORTRESSES



IT IS DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE the intangible quality in an inanimate object that constitutes a basis for fame. A man can become renowned because of superior intelligence, strength, valor or ability. A bomber, being made of aluminum and steel instead of flesh and blood, is limited to only two of these qualities—strength and ability—yet many Fortresses of the “Hell’s Angels” group have found their way to fame, sometimes even eclipsing the men who flew them.

One of the most famous Forts to come out of the war is old “Hell’s Angels,” from which the group took its name. With the group from the start, “Hell’s Angels” was the first heavy bomber in the Eighth Air Force to complete 25 missions and ran on up to the 40 mark without returning early for mechanical reasons. Although many planes have passed that mark with a large majority now, it was an outstanding accomplishment at a time when the air force was just learning how to do a job and the ground crew had to work with an absolute minimum of spare parts and tools.

Despite all the difficulties of maintenance on the ground and the hazards of flying in the days before fighter escort was available, “Hell’s Angels” went on to complete 48 missions. Then, in view of her extraordinary record mechanically, the War Department sent her and the ground crew back to the U.S.A. where she did a million-dollar job of publicising the work of the ground men of the Eighth Air Force.

After her fling at glory, “Hell’s Angels” was retired from combat and, when last heard of, was at Roswell, New Mexico, where she was teaching new combat crews to fly.

The “Knockout Dropper,” another of the group’s original planes, won the E.T.O. race to be the first Fortress to complete 75 missions. Less fortunate than “Hell’s Angels,” the “Dropper” seemed to exist only for the amount of work she could accumulate for the ground crew. Engine changes were as common as pre-flight checks, and toward the end of her tour of ops there were little patches on the big patches covering the flak holes.

“S for Sugar,” with the drawing on her nose of Bugs Bunny, the squadron insignia, was in the three-way race of the first plane to do 50 missions. This rugged old character started with the group’s first mission and dished out plenty of destruction before a German fighter pilot claimed her as destroyed on the Oschersleben mission.

Perhaps no other plane in the Eighth Air Force has won so many decorations for her crewmen as the “Eight Ball.” Nearly always flown as a lead plane, her airmen had ample opportunities to win decorations at Anklam, Oschersleben, Hamburg and Frankfurt. There were several Silver Stars, a galaxy of D.F.C.s and an uncountable number of Air Medals worn by men who flew the “Eight Ball.” There were also five purple hearts, picked up in the flak clouds over some of Germany’s best targets.

The “Duchess,” veteran of 59 missions, played a big part in the early history of the group. She toured Europe from St. Nazaire to Schweinfurt and fought in the historic mission to Oschersleben on January 11, 1944, when the group took part in the toughest aerial



# FAMOUS FORTRESSES



battle of the war. In spite of the tough targets visited by the "Duchess," however, only one man was ever injured in her crews—Lt. Jack Mathis, who was awarded the first Congressional Medal of Honor in the E.T.O. after he had died at his bombsight over Vegasack.

Another Fortress which helped win a Congressional Medal for the group was "Jersey Bounce Jr." Over Bremen in December, 1943, it was hit by flak and crippled. Then fighters swarmed over it, covering the plane with a hail of 20mm shells that seriously wounded the tail gunner and T/Sgt. Forrest L. Vosler, the radio operator. Although Vosler was blinded and wounded in the chest, he stayed at his radio-hatch gun firing at the blurred German fighters until they left. Then, working entirely by touch, he repaired his damaged radio transmitter and pounded out an SOS between periods of unconsciousness. When the pilot announced that the plane would have to ditch, Vosler begged to be thrown out to save weight. "Jersey Bounce Jr." struggled almost to the coast before running out of speed and altitude, but came to her final resting place in the cold English Channel.

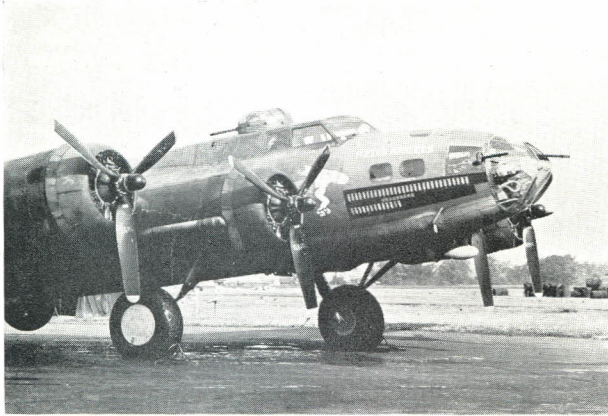
There are many others. The "Sky Wolf," a gallant old fighter that accounted for more than 20 German fighters before going down on the Oschersleben mission. "Yankee Doodle Dandy" with a box score of 19 fighters before she was retired from combat back to the U.S. At one time "Yankee Doodle Dandy" came back with twenty 20 mm. cannon holes from a fierce battle. The tail gunner was dead and the waist gunner dying, but the Yankee brought them home and flew again.

"Miss Behavin' " put in 39 tough missions during her career and didn't misbehave at all. Twice she brought the crew back from Germany on one engine to an emergency field along the coast. Once it was forced to a crash landing with a wounded co-pilot and radio operator, but the ground crew was able to patch up the damage after weeks of work.

Perhaps the Fort with the toughest record of battle damage was the old "Black Diamond Express." Inherited by the Eighth Air Force from the R.A.F., the plane collected major flak and cannon damage on every



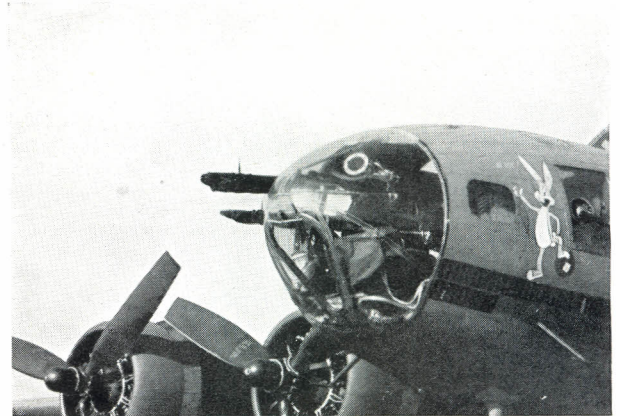
# FAMOUS FORTRESSES



one of her 10 missions. It was S.O.P. for the "Express" to go to the hangar after every mission, and it was a relieved ground crew that saw it leave for training grounds in the States.

One of the most recent Forts on the station to become outstanding is the old "Floose," crewed by Master Sergeant George Ham. Starting out in May, 1944, the Floose piled up the amazing total of 100 missions before the end of December. In all this time it did not have even one mechanical abort, although it took part in more than two-thirds of the total missions flown from the base. On its 101st mission the "Floose" was loaned to another group and was crash-landed on its return to England.

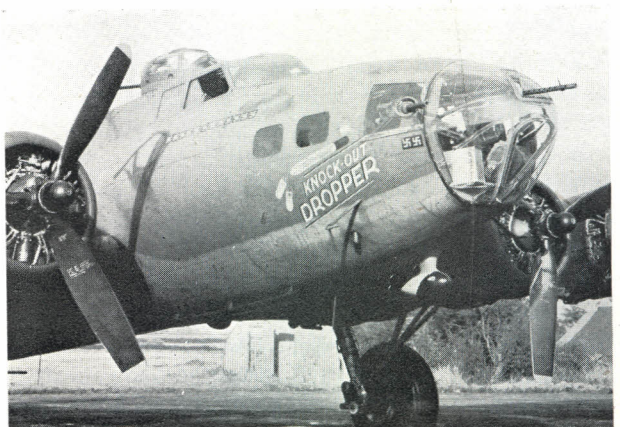
Some of the early planes in the group were well known at home from the numerous press dispatches telling of the countless aerial battles in which they took part. "Yardbird," "Thumper," "War Bride," "Bad Check," "Qui-Nine," "Connecticut Yankee" and the "Vicious Virgin" were all grizzled veterans of many



scraps with German fighters before they finally fell to enemy guns over Germany, France, Poland and Czechoslovakia. And when they went down, their crew chiefs sent out their successors proudly carrying the names of "Yardbird II," "The Duchess' Daughter," "Izavailable Too," "Thumper Again" and "Eight Ball, Mark II."

With the passing of time, new names have come to the front, not surpassing the old ones, merely adding to the history and traditions of the group. Now it is the "Princess Pat," "Daddy's Delight," "Queen of Hearts," "Sweet Pea," "Thunder Bird," "Scorchy," "Sack Time," "Earthquake McGoon," "Miss Lace," "Aloha," "Buzz Blonde" and "Shoo Shoo Baby" that take off at dawn to carry the war into the heart of Germany.

They have played a great part in the war, these planes with a name and an individuality of their own, and their names will remain in the memories of the men who serviced them and flew them long after they have forgotten the names of their own hut-mates and crewmen.





# HELL'S ANGELS HALL OF FAME

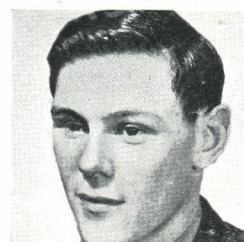
## CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR *1st Lt. Jack W. Mathis* (Posthumous) *San Angelo, Texas*

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy over Vegasack, Germany, on 18 March, 1943. Lt. Mathis, as lead bombardier of his squadron, was just starting his bomb run when he was hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire. His right arm was shattered, a large wound was torn in his side and abdomen and he was knocked to the rear of the bombardier's compartment. Realizing that the success of the mission depended upon him, Lt. Mathis, by sheer determination and will power, though mortally wounded, dragged himself back to his sight, released his bombs, then died at his post of duty . . . . ."



## CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR *T/Sgt. Forrest L. Vosler* *Livonia, New York*

"For conspicuous gallantry above and beyond the call of duty . . . . . on a mission to Bremen, Germany, while serving as radio operator of a B-17 aircraft. Enemy aircraft attacked Sgt. Vosler's plane, seriously wounding the tail gunner and disabling two engines. At the same time Sgt. Vosler was wounded in the legs and thighs. Unable to stand, he sat on the edge of his table, keeping up a steady stream of fire. Another exploding 20mm. shell wounded him in the eyes, chest and face. Almost blinded, he stayed at his gun, firing at blurred shadows. When the attacks had ceased and it seemed that ditching was imminent, Sgt. Vosler repaired his radio by touch, sent out an S O S and then begged to be thrown from the crippled plane to save weight in the hope that the ship could make the English coast minus his weight."



## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS *Col. Lewis E. Lyle* *Pine Bluff, Arkansas*

"For extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States while serving as B-17 pilot from the period 17 November, 1942, to 15 June, 1944 . . . . On all occasions he has demonstrated exemplary and courageous leadership, employing skilful and effective counter measures against whatever fighter opposition he has encountered and bombing enemy installations with consistently excellent results . . . . Colonel Lyle's heroic and fearless leadership and his continued determination to fulfil his assigned task in the face of all odds has reflected highest credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States."



## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS *S/Sgt. William T. L. Werner* *Lebanon, Pennsylvania*

"For extraordinary heroism . . . . while serving as tail gunner on a mission to Germany on 22 February, 1944. Before reaching the target Sgt. Werner was seriously wounded by a 20mm. shell. He realized that with most attacks being made from the tail the ship would be doomed unless a steady stream of fire was maintained from the tail guns. In spite of his painful wounds he stayed at his post and destroyed at least one enemy fighter. Although wounded again by anti-aircraft fire and becoming weaker from loss of blood, he heroically stayed at his guns until all fighter attacks ceased before letting crew mates give him first aid."



## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS *2nd Lt. Thomas J. Dello Buono* *New York City, New York*

"For extraordinary heroism . . . . while serving as bombardier on a mission to Germany, 13 April, 1944. Before the plane reached the target it was viciously attacked by enemy fighters, and Lt. Dello Buono was seriously injured by a 20mm. shell which exploded on contact with his flak suit. Despite the seriousness of his wounds, Lt. Dello Buono manned his nose guns until the target was reached, and then dropped his bombs squarely in the group's pattern. He then returned to his guns and, ignoring his pain and the danger of frostbite from the cold air blasting through the nose, refused to leave his post until fighter attacks had ceased and the enemy coast had been passed on the way home."



## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS *2nd Lt. Charles W. Spencer* *Peoria, Illinois*

"For gallantry in action . . . . while serving as bombardier . . . . on 26 November, 1943. A 20mm. shell exploded in the nose, killed the navigator, seriously injured Lt. Spencer, and destroyed the plexiglass nose. The flight engineer removed Lt. Spencer to a position of safety, but Lt. Spencer, realizing that enemy fighters were attacking and thinking only of protecting his crew members and the plane, crawled back to his guns to ward off the attacks. Exposing himself to the extreme cold blast through the nose, and facing the possibility of being thrown out by evasive action, Lt. Spencer remained at his post until the attacks ceased. In doing so, Lt. Spencer sustained frost-bite so severe that only by the barest margin were surgeons able to save his life."





# 358<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON



**W**ITH 300 MISSIONS under their belts, members of the 358th Squadron can look back on a great many occasions and things that stand out in the making of those 300 missions.

The Squadron's first claim to fame was the possession of the famous old Fortress "Hell's Angels," from which the group took its name. "Hell's Angels" and the "Sky Wolf" and "Jersey Bounce" and the men who flew them set examples of heroism, dependability and stamina that were an inspiration to the group and the Eighth Air Force in the early days in the E.T.O. They were a matter of pride to the men on the ground as well as the combat men, and it was with the pride of possession that the 358th boys would say "Yep. That's *our* plane," when the names came up in NAAFI or Red Cross bull sessions.

There have been many outstanding "characters" in the squadron. All of the old-timers remember Lt. Robert S. O'Connor who always flew into battle wearing the English bobby's helmet presented to him by the local constable. It was his good luck piece, but his luck finally wore out and he went down over the continent. Captain Jack Watson made the headlines when he flew the "Meat Hound" back from Germany alone in the plane after the crew had bailed out. When he landed in Southern England only two engines were still turning

over and one of them was blazing so fiercely that it took crash crews two hours to extinguish the flames.

Men of the 358th have had their share of honors in the war. The nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor, went to T/Sgt. Forrest L. Vosler, radio operator, who fought from his radio gun position when wounded and nearly blinded and then begged to be thrown overboard to save weight on the battered bomber. The Distinguished Service Cross was awarded to Lt. Charles W. Spencer, bombardier, after he nearly lost his life in the blown-open nose of a Fort from frost-bite and wounds. The Silver Stars, Distinguished Flying Crosses and Air Medals won in the early days by 358th flyers are too numerous to count.

Ground crewmen, too, have distinguished themselves. Legions of Merit have been awarded to M/Sgt. Carino Colancecco, M/Sgt. Fabian S. Folmer, M/Sgt. Everett W. Emery and M/Sgt. William C. Woodman for their outstanding jobs of getting Fortresses in the air when they were needed so badly. Several other men have won the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service after putting in long hours in all kinds of weather to make certain that their airplanes could fly when the need arose.

The 358th need not take a back seat to any other outfit for flying ability and leadership. Their crews have always been ready to fly any place, any time and in any position. Their Forts have led the way to Berlin, Merseburg, Aschersleben and the other "toughies," and have been in the roughest fighting to claim their share of enemy fighters.

Morale has never sagged. Even after the Oscherleben mission when the 358th took the brunt of the losses, the remaining crews were ready to go again the next day. Sixty empty beds might have wrecked the morale of a lesser outfit. It just made the crews of the 358th a little madder. As a matter of fact, more than a score of ground men have left the comparative safety of line jobs to volunteer for service as gunners.

The 358th has done all right for itself in the matter of squadron commanders. First was Major (now Colonel) Clemens K. Wurzbach, a tall, easy-going Texan. Succeeding him was Major Kirk R. Mitchell from Oklahoma City, who led the 358th on some of its roughest bombing missions. Present commander is Major George T. Mackin of Portland, Oregon, who has been with the group since its arrival in England.

Commanding Officer,  
**MAJOR GEORGE T. MACKIN**  
Portland, Oregon

Major Mackin is one of the old-timers in the 303rd, joining the group at Boise, Idaho. On the first of April, 1944, Major Kirk R. Mitchell, the 358th's C.O., finished his operational tour and returned to the United States. Captain Mackin was appointed squadron commander and received his gold leaves shortly thereafter. Major Mackin has consistently instilled the



spirit of complete co-operation and a high spirit of *esprit de corps* in the squadron which has resulted in an excellent combat record.

Major Mackin graduated from the University of Oregon in 1941, with an R.O.T.C. commission as a second lieutenant in the infantry. Resigning his commission, he transferred to the Air Corps, graduating as a pilot in February, 1942. He arrived in the E.T.O. a 2nd Lt., but rose rapidly to 1st Lt. and Captain because of his ability to handle operations procedure and men.



# HOW LONG WILL WE REMEMBER . . .



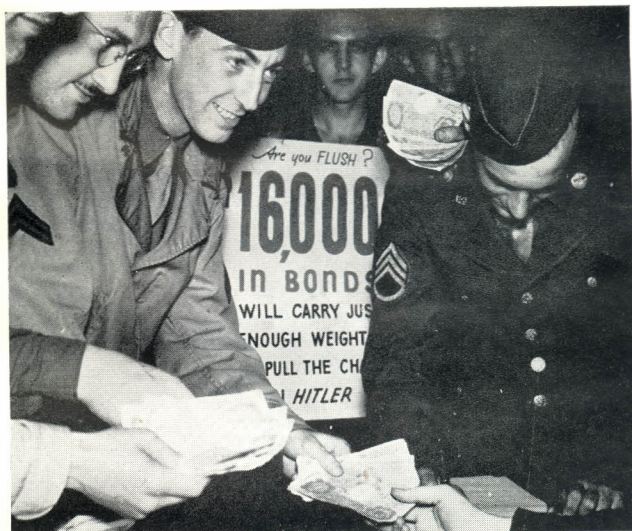
*Evenings in the "centrally heated" barracks*



*Tea at the N.A.A.F.I.*



*Sweating out mail call*



*The Periodic War Bond drives*



*Where There's Life There's Hope*



*Painting your name on "Hell's Angels"*



# 359<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON



THE 359<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON has had a lot of "firsts" during its first 300 missions. The first Congressional Medal of Honor awarded in the E.T.O. went to a 359th bombardier, First Lieutenant Jack Mathis, who died over his bombsight in the nose of the "Duchess" after dropping his bombs on Vegasack. As squadron lead bombardier he helped the Eighth Air Force do its first real precision bombing of its young career.

The Squadron's next claim to fame was in the old "Knockout Dropper," which was the first heavy bomber of the Eighth Air Force to finish 50 and then 75 missions. The old Fort lasted more than a year and a half of tough combat before it was finally retired to training centers in the U.S. along with the rest of the 359th's older planes.

The group's first mission to Berlin was led by the 359th with Lt. Col. Richard H. Cole, the present commander, flying the lead.

The first gunner in the E.T.O. to complete 75 missions was T/Sgt. Kurt J. Hermann III, who flew 50 missions in Africa before being assigned to the 359th where he completed his next 25 hops.

To movie-struck girl friends, 359th men can claim that the great Clark Gable, complete with ears and

white silk muffler, flew his first mission in the old "Eight Ball."

With such a large air force in operation now, it is hard to draw a fine line that proves that one outfit or another is first or best in anything. The main idea is to keep in the top section and there the 359th has always been. The engineering section has done its part by turning out an enviable record of mechanical efficiency in its aircraft. Longevity of service is the password here and is reflected in the records of planes like "Knockout Dropper" with 75 missions, "The Duchess" with more than 50, and "Thunder Bird" and "Old Black Magic" with more than 100 missions each. No other squadron can boast of so many old-timers as these, and there is no reason to suspect that the "Thunder Bird" and "Old Black Magic" will not keep going indefinitely.

Several members of the engineering department have won the Bronze Star and Legion of Merit for outstanding work in all kinds of weather, mostly bad. The Soldier's Medal for heroism was awarded to S/Sgt. Kenneth Shanahan and Pvt. Clyde V. Engholm of the refueling unit for extinguishing a fire in their refueling truck that threatened to engulf the base fuel dump.

Even with the pressure of 300 missions and countless "dry runs," however, the 359th men have found some time for fun. Taking an active share in sports, the 359th furnished star men for the baseball team. They include Sgt. William (Red) Craddock who pitched the "Hell's Angels" team to victory for the Eighth Air Force championship in 1943, and Lt. George Zitzler who hurled the team to the division championship and to the semi-finals in the Eighth Air Force in 1944. T/Sgt. Carl Murphy played first base for the team.

Some of the credit for the 359th's success in combat can be traced to its outstanding squadron commanders. Colonel Eugene A. Romig, now with the 94th Combat Wing, led the squadron through the early days when the flyers were first taking part in the aerial war on Germany. He was succeeded by Lt. Col. William R. Calhoun, who flew many long and tough missions with the 359th until he was relieved by Lt. Col. Cole. Each of these men has been partly responsible for the accomplishments of the 359th in combat and have played a great part in making the squadron the efficient, smooth running organization it is today.

## *Commanding Officer*

LT. COL. RICHARD H. COLE,  
*Elizabeth, N.J.*

Lt. Col. Cole was assigned to the 303rd in the fall of 1943. At that time he held the rank of major, having been previously a Group Operations Officer with an anti-submarine command group stationed in Newfoundland. Col. Cole was well qualified to take over the squadron and lost no time in getting into the



swing of things. He is a fighting commander and has led his squadron on some of the most outstanding of the 303rd's missions. He is well into his second operational tour and will continue until the war in this theater is concluded.

Col. Cole graduated from Rutgers University in 1938. He entered the Air Corps as a cadet and was commissioned a 2nd Lt. in May, 1940.



# HOW TO KILL TIME IN THE E.T.O.



*Some repair bicycles*



*The "Knockout Dropper's" crew strike a pose*



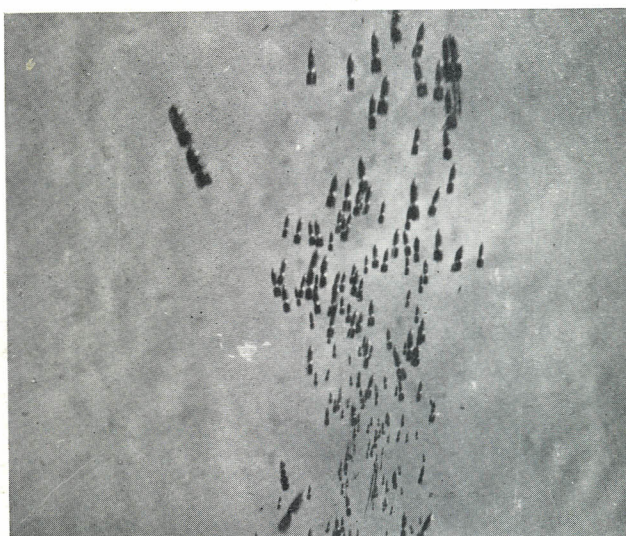
*These guys earn their pay*



*These guys try to increase theirs*



*You can set up an appetite this way*



*Make things hot for the Germans*



# 360<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON



THE SUCCESS of any organization depends upon the caliber of the men in the organization. With that fact understood, it is no mystery why the 360th Squadron has played such a big part in the success of the group. Back in 1942 when the squadron was still a pup, four combat crews were assigned to it. They included three first pilots—1st Lt. Lewis E. Lyle, 1st Lt. William S. Raper, and Captain Charles E. Marion—and a co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Walter K. Shayler. With Lts. Lyle and Raper, now full colonels and group commanders, Colonel Marion, deputy chief of staff for operations at 1st Air Division, and Lt. Col. Shayler commanding the squadron, it would be unusual if the rest of the squadron had not advanced accordingly—if not in rank, at least in efficiency and ability.

This efficiency is evidenced in a comparison of the first mission in which the 360th took part and any one of the last of the 300. Where the armament section took four hours to load the planes for St. Nazaire, it now takes one hour. Pre-flight time for a line crew is now numbered in minutes. Operations can turn out their flight plans with the ease of writing a letter home. After 300 missions each man in the squadron has found his job and can do it with professional skill.

It is only natural that with a record like this, the 360th Squadron has been given the responsibility of leading some of the most outstanding and successful missions.

Their planes led the group when we bombed Germany for the first time. They were at the front of the formation on D-day when the group blasted a way for ground troops. They were the first of the group over Heroya in Norway, Posen in Poland, and the huge Nazi oil refinery in Brux, Czechoslovakia. On all of these missions 360th planes set the pace for close, destructive bombing patterns that crippled these German war plants for months.

In the process of completing 300 missions, 360th men have also picked up a few medals. The first Distinguished Service Cross ever awarded in the E.T.O. for consistently outstanding heroism and an over-all superior job was given to Colonel Lewis E. Lyle, former squadron commander. Another D.S.C. was won by 2nd Lt. Thomas J. Dello Buono, bombardier, who survived a direct hit by a 20mm. cannon shell. Undaunted, Lt. Dello Buono stayed at his nose guns, firing at the enemy fighters until target time forty minutes later. Then he released his bombs squarely in the bombing pattern.

Captain George V. Stallings, Jr., won the British D.F.C. when he baled his crew out over the English coast and then flew his crippled bomber "Quinine—the Bitter Dose," out over the Channel before baling out himself.

The Silver Star was awarded to Captain John A. Long, killed in action, who kept his blazing Fortress in formation long enough to drop his bombs in the squadron pattern before going down out of control.

Engineering men who have won Bronze Stars for outstanding work include Master Sergeants Walter Melton, Mike Abraham, Norman Bossie and Alexander Borque, Jr.

The 360th has had its share of colorful aircraft. Although none reached the national fame of "Hell's Angels" and "Knockout Dropper," men from the base made special trips to view the pictures on "Iza Vailable," "Ida Liza," "Sack Time," "Miss Umbriago" and that masterpiece of warped imagination, "The Witches Tit." These names might not mean much to the outsider, but to the men of the 360th they are a sign of high morale. As long as the ground men have the spirit to name their planes and the combat men grin when they fly them, the 360th Squadron will continue to be one of the group's top-flight squadrons.

## Commanding Officer

LT. COL. WALTER K. SHAYLER  
*Riverside, California*

Walter K. Shayler, then a 2nd Lt., was assigned to the 303rd shortly after its activation and came overseas with the 360th Squadron. He was squadron operations officer during the early trial and tribulation period of combat. When Colonel Lewis E. Lyle was relieved of command and assigned



as deputy group commander, Captain Shayler was appointed commanding officer of the squadron and has continued to maintain a high degree of efficiency and morale ever since.

Colonel Shayler attended the University of Washington and after graduation worked for Montgomery, Ward and Company. He left this position to join the Air Corps and graduated as a pilot in February, 1942.



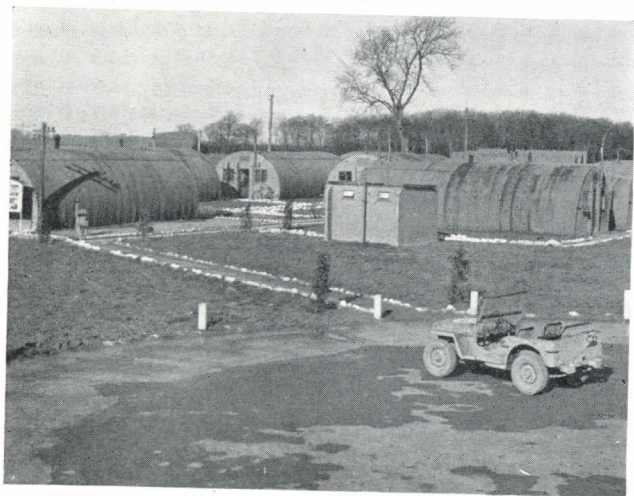
# LIFE IS LIKE THIS IN THE 360<sup>TH</sup>



*The King, Queen and Princess Elizabeth pay a call*



*Occasionally there is excitement*



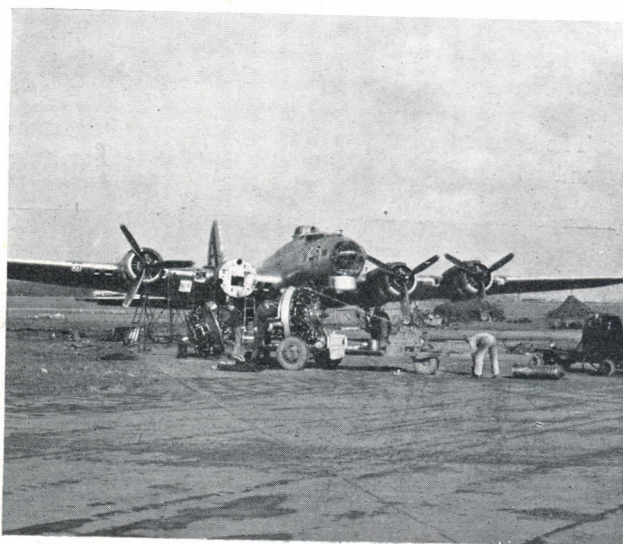
*Modern homes on pneumonia hill*



*Complete with maid service*



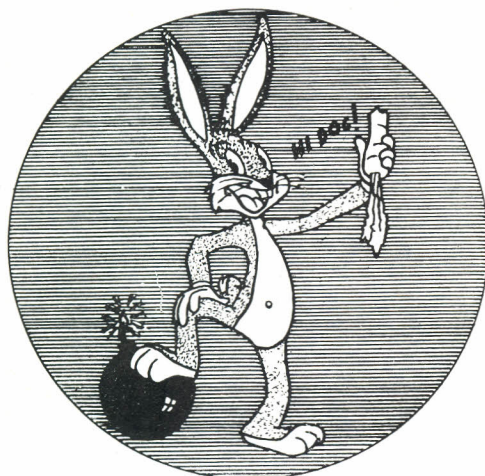
*On the other end is the spam*



*Usually, life is like this*



# 427<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON



**T**HE 427<sup>TH</sup> SQUADRON almost didn't make this end of the war. Originally the old 38th Reconnaissance Squadron which was incorporated into the famous 19th Bomb Group, part of the squadron personnel were on their way to Hawaii the day the war began. Their ship turned around, headed for the U.S. and they became part of the now famous 303rd.

From an unsettled beginning, the 427th has done all right for itself. Its planes have led some of the toughest missions, including the one to Marienburg, where Bombardier Captain George T. Orvis, Jr., put down one of the most destructive bombing patterns of the war. Its gunners have accounted for more than 150 German fighters destroyed, probably destroyed or damaged. Old "S for Sugar," crew chiefed by M/Sgt. Fred Kuhn, was one of the squadron's original Fords that vied in the race to be the first to hit the 50-mark before German fighters destroyed it on its 49th mission. On the doubtful credit side is the fact that 427th combat men were the first of the group to ditch in the Channel and be eternally grateful to the British Air-Sea-Rescue organization.

The squadron has had its share of squadron commanders. Starting with Major Charles Sheridan, who

was shot down at St. Nazaire in January, 1943, the squadron had Major Glen Hagenbuck, who was killed in an accident after he had turned his command over to Lt. Col. Edgar E. Snyder, now deputy group C.O. Following Colonel Snyder was Major Robert W. Sheets, present commander, who first gained fame by buzzing the Yankee Stadium during the 1943 World Series and arousing the ire of one Mayor LaGuardia, not to mention numerous Army officials.

Highest award made to a 427th man was the Distinguished Service Cross to S/Sgt. William T. L. Werner, tail gunner from Lebanon, Pennsylvania. On a mission to Aschersleben in February, 1944, Werner's plane was attacked by Kraut fighters an hour before target time. Most of the attacks were coming from the tail and Werner was wounded in the hip and thigh by a 20mm. shell on one of the first passes. Keeping his wounds a secret, he fought on from his tail gun spot until bombs away, when flak wounded him again in the knee, both arms and stomach. Even then, when he was deathly weak from loss of blood, he kept firing his twin guns until the last fighter had turned away. Many flyers have earned Silver Star and Distinguished Flying Cross—and the undesirable Purple Heart. The Soldier's Medal for heroism was awarded to Cpl. Russell P. Shupp after he had risked his life to extinguish a fire in a gasoline truck when flames threatened to spread to surrounding, bomb-loaded aircraft.

The 427th has had some outstanding personalities among its airmen. There was Major Billy Southworth, son of the manager of the St. Louis Cardinals, who flew the "Winning Run" on many rough missions. The R.A.F. gave them Captain Edward M. Woddrop, pilot, and T/Sgt. Charlie Baggs, tail gunner, who made a hot team on the old "City of Wanette." Most of the old-timers remember Captain Donald Stockton, one of the squadron's original pilots, who was killed on his next to last mission by a 20 mm. cannon shell.

In bombing, flying and mechanical efficiency, the 427th Squadron has always done its share in helping the 303rd attain its high rating in the Eighth Air Force and, according to the men in the squadron, it will be in there fighting until the Germans toss in the towel.

*Commanding Officer*

**MAJOR ROBERT W. SHEETS**

*Tacoma, Washington*

Major Sheets joined the 427th Squadron in October, 1943, as a 2nd Lt. Because of his flying ability he soon became outstanding and it wasn't long before he was leading the squadron and then the group formations on missions. When Lt. Col. Edgar E. Snyder was relieved of his command of the squadron to become



deputy group commander in November, 1944, Captain Sheets took over, receiving his promotion to major shortly thereafter. He has done a superior job in keeping the squadron's excellent record intact.

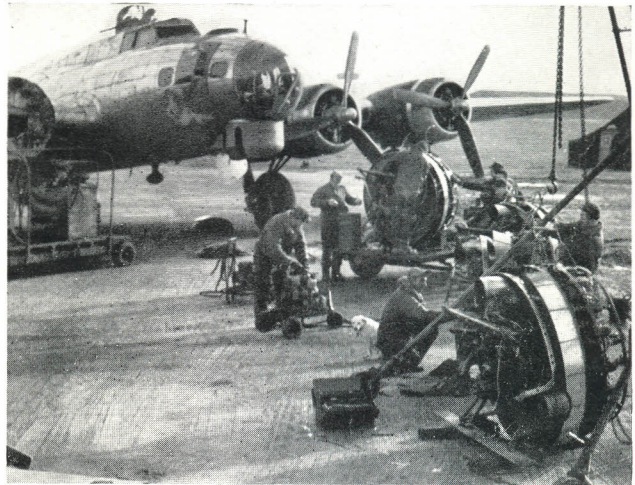
After attending the University of Oregon, Major Sheets worked in the Philippine Islands for some time. He entered the services as a private in the armed forces and later transferred to the Air Corps as an aviation cadet. He graduated and received his pilot's wings in April, 1943.



# LIFE IS RUGGED IN THE E.T.O.



*The tent stove is the centre of interest*



*After working on the line in winter*



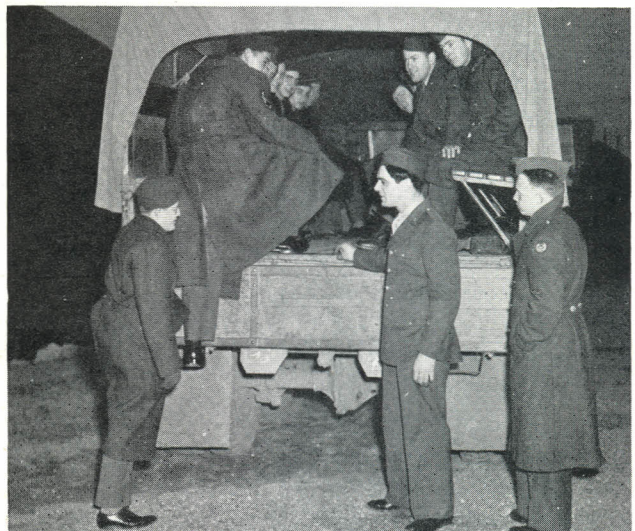
*It's rough for combat men, too*



*You never had it so good before*



*What the well-dressed "sack-timer" wears*



*A 30-mile ride for an evening out*



# SMALL OUTFITS DO BIG JOB

## 444th SUB. DEPOT

The magnificent accomplishments of the 303rd Group would never have been possible without the assistance and close co-operation of the hard-working officers and men of the 444th Sub Depot. Given the job of making repairs to Forts with major battle damage, the hangar crews have consistently turned out badly damaged planes in record time.

Very few of these jobs have been easy. With nearly every mission to some heavily defended Nazi target, the hangars have filled up to overflowing with Forts needing new engines, wing sections, tails, fuselage repairs or sheet metal work. This meant working under pressure when the group needed all the planes as soon as possible to keep up their formation strength. Sometimes the hangar crews were working around the clock and more than once all passes were cancelled until the big job was completed.

T/Sgt. Walter Nieman and his crew outdid themselves by almost rebuilding one Fort, involved in a perimeter crash and classified "Salvage," in only 21 days. This job required putting on a new tail section from the tail wheel well, and rebuilding the trailing edge of the left wing. In between times, they also did a major repair job to another Fort.

Repairs to aircraft is not the only job done by the sub-depot. The air corps supply section is responsible for seeing that no Fort stays on the ground long for need of a new part, and furnishes the thousands of gallons of aviation fuel and oil needed by the bombers. The transportation section provides the rest of the organization with everything but roller skates and pogo sticks for transportation of supplies and personnel where they are needed. The headquarters section co-ordinates the efforts of all the other departments.

Although personnel of the sub-depot haven't had much of an opportunity to meet the enemy in combat,

they have managed to win a few decorations. The Soldier's Medal for heroism was awarded to T/Sgt. Lewis A. Maresh and Sgt. Orvel O. Burnett after they had extinguished a gasoline fire in the hangar that might well have reduced the hangar and all the planes in it to a mass of burned wreckage. Major Melvin T. McCoy received the Bronze Star medal for development of maintenance devices and exceptional effort in connection with the repair of airplanes after a mission on which the group suffered very heavy battle damage. M/Sgt. Victor A. Dietz received the Certificate of Merit for developing various maintenance devices and for an excellent job of repairing a crash-landed Fortress.

Personnel of the sub-depot first arrived in England in October, 1942, as the 328th Service Squadron. A year later the 444th was formed under the command of Lt. Col. Horace G. Cotton, now returned to the United States. It is now commanded by Major Benjamin B. Ramsey, former Group S-4 officer.

Work of this service organization began with the group's first mission in November, 1942, and has progressed at an increasing pace ever since. It is almost impossible to estimate the total work done by men in the organization, but here is a short summary of output during a recent six-month period: Crews repaired 569 battle damaged Fortresses, set up 298 engines, accomplished 1871 work orders and packed 5,000 parachutes. The air corps supply section issued 15,000 serviceable items, shipped 8,426 repairable items to depots, issued 283 engines, returned 308 old engines to depots and issued more than 200 airplane fuel and oil tanks.

## 3rd STATION COMPLEMENT SQUADRON

Every organization on the station owes a great deal to the 3rd Station Complement Squadron for its unceasing efforts to make the base a comfortable place to live, and to better the working facilities.

The primary duty, performed by the Utilities Section, has been maintenance of the base. The electricians, carpenters, painters, engineers and general handy-men have combined their efforts to construct new buildings, remodel old ones, build roads, repair runways, keep a

*Commanding Officer*  
MAJOR  
BENJAMIN B. RAMSEY  
*Marshall, Tex.*





*Commanding Officer*  
MAJOR  
ROLAND M. COWAN  
*Rogers, Ark.*



steady flow of water and electricity, and do the thousand-and-one things that need attention on a large base.

The extra little services which mean so much to the men—barber shops, tailor shops, gymnasium, showers, etc.—are operated entirely or in part by 3rd Station men. Without supervision or advice of an engineering officer, ten men under the direction of T/Sgt. George Thompson have taken the responsibility for the maintenance of as many as eight various types of planes at one time. The Communications Section has done an outstanding job of installing and maintaining the complicated telephone and teletype systems without which it would be almost impossible to operate.

One of the most important sections is the Control Tower, with its clerks and radio operators and men who maintain the flare path, caravan, beacon and searchlights.

With Major Roland M. Cowan, squadron commander, as base administrative inspector, it can justly be said that the 3rd Station has had a hand in the high standard of administration in all of the squadrons. The squadron itself has consistently received an excellent rating from higher headquarters in administration, area maintenance and conduct of personnel during the time it has been in existence.

## 1681st ORDNANCE COMPANY

One of the most active, useful and versatile organizations on the base is the 1681st Ordnance Company. Faced with the dual job of supplying bombs and ammunition to the squadrons, and at the same time maintaining all the vehicles on the base, the ordnance boys took both jobs in stride and did them efficiently and without muss or fuss.

In the armament section over 20,000 tons of bombs were delivered to squadrons for redistribution over Germany and the Occupied Countries, along with nearly



*Commanding Officer*  
CAPTAIN  
JOHN H. KASS  
*Portland, Ore.*

5,000,000 rounds of caliber .50 ammunition which helped the group put holes in over 600 Kraut fighters. In addition to this they scrounged parts for machine guns, kept up to date on new methods and materials for cleaning and oiling guns, and passed out flak suits to combat crewmen.

The maintenance section in the meantime repaired nearly 2,000 vehicles, mended countless bicycles and invented a crane that was copied by many other ordnance outfits. The boys in the machine shop and garage became popular with the rest of the group as a result of their skill with tools, and rarely refused a GI who came in with a request for help in building a lighter or picture frame or putting a gadget on a jeep.

At the present time the 1681st Ordnance is under the command of Captain John H. Kass, formerly of the 358th Bomb Squadron.

## 1199th MILITARY POLICE COMPANY

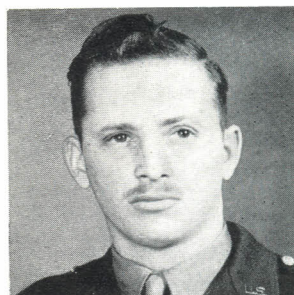
The rather thankless job of guarding the base, controlling traffic and checking the credentials of personnel, military and civilian, entering the base, has been given to the 1199th Military Police Company.

The Company, at present commanded by 1st Lt. Francis R. Gorman, also maintains a constant patrol to guard the aircraft and look for suspicious persons or activities. They furnish guards at briefing and interrogation to keep out unauthorized personnel. The low accident rate on the base can directly be attributed to the manner in which the M.P.s have enforced traffic regulations, and prevented absent-minded jeep drivers from wandering in front of taxi-ing or landing Forts.

On special occasions, such as the visit of high-ranking officers or the Royal Family, the company has furnished



Commanding Officer  
1st LT.  
FRANCIS R. GORMAN  
Danbury, Conn.



Commanding Officer  
LT.  
WALTER J. SAUCIER  
Cotton Port, La.

efficient guards-of-honor, demonstrating just how military an American soldier can be and, at the same time, furnishing real protection to the visitor.

The 1199th boys have been on the station since March, 1944.

## 863rd CHEMICAL COMPANY

For an organization basically designed to carry on a chemical war defense if such warfare developed, the 863rd Chemical Company has strayed far from their original goal. Finding no immediate prospects of a gas warfare, the company was split up among the squadrons and assigned the task of handling incendiaries and sky markers.

Teamed with the other "grunt and groan" artists who muscle the high explosives into the bomb bays, the Chemical boys help load the bombers with every type of incendiary bomb the Air Force uses. Most of the work is done at night in all kinds of weather, but the men under the command of First Lt. Cosby D. Thomas have always been on hand when loading time came around.

Their efforts have borne fruit for a long time, blossoming out in huge fires at Hamburg, Berlin, Merseburg and some of the other prize German targets. The bombs loaded by the 863rd Chemical Company have played a large part in the destruction of many German factories and, according to the boys who do the loading, will continue to do so until the Nazis cry "Uncle."

Commanding Officer  
1st LT.  
COSBY D. THOMAS  
Drexell Hill, Pa.



## 18th WEATHER SQUADRON DETACHMENT 107

One busy group of men on the field is the 18th Weather Squadron. It is their job to furnish weather information of any kind or description for almost any purpose, and any one who has lived in England for any length of time can understand the magnitude of this task.

Every three hours of the day the weather forecasters in the control tower draw a new map of the changing weather conditions, and from this the weather, temperature and wind direction at any altitude over England and the Continent. This information, naturally, is invaluable to pilots and navigators who like to have a general idea of what they are liable to encounter on local flights and on return from missions.

No formation leaves the field for missions to the Continent without full information as to the type of weather they will fly through, around or over *en route*. A weather officer attends briefing and, with slides, explains in detail to pilots, bombardier, navigators and gunners the conditions of temperature, clouds, icing, con-trails and winds over the target and enemy territory.

The weather squadron's activities are not limited to furnishing information to flyers. The motor pool needs to know the possibility of frost or fog conditions for liberty runs. Someone else wants to know how deep the mud is on a certain corner of the field. Pub crawlers call up to learn the wind direction and velocity before venturing out on bicycles. Men going on leave ask if they should take a raincoat.

The one thing that no longer amuses the weather men is the nasty cracks made by disgruntled sun-lovers. "After all," they say, "we don't manufacture the stuff. We just try to guess what it's going to be."



*Commanding Officer*  
1st L.T.  
ARNOLD E. DREAGER  
*Atlantic City, N.J.*



## 2097th ENGINEERS FIRE-FIGHTING PLATOON

The 2097th Engineers Fire-Fighting Platoon has been a busy organization in the few months since they were activated here on the station. In 10 months they have extinguished 10 fires, ranging from burning Forts loaded with bombs to haystacks in fields near the base. No less than three dispersal tents have burned to the ground, and one Nissen hut fire had to be subdued after a GI had tried to start a fire in the stove with oil.

Perhaps the biggest job was when a Fort loaded for a mission caught fire in the wing tanks. With the burning high-octane gas dripping on to the ground, the fire-fighters had a battle for nearly two hours before the blaze was brought under control. So successful were their efforts, however, that the plane was in the air again in a few days. The platoon can be credited with saving the Air Force a valuable bomber and preventing what might have been a disastrous explosion on the field.

## 1114th QUARTERMASTER COMPANY

Since the middle of October, 1942, the 1114th Qm. Co. has had the headache of obtaining groceries and clothing for the thousands of men on the base. Under the leadership of Captain Edwin Barry, the company has done an excellent job of catering to the many and varied demands of a combat group in spite of a shortage of personnel and transport.

In addition to feeding the populace, they have fought pitched battles with rationing boards in efforts to get more coke and coal for barracks and speed up the turn-



*Commanding Officer*  
CAPTAIN  
EDWIN BARRY  
*San Francisco, Cal.*

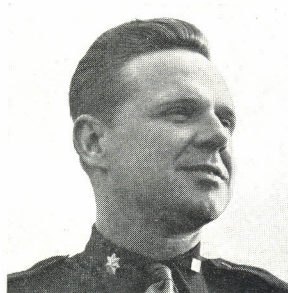
over of laundry and shoe repair. Other duties include handling of lend-lease supplies and obtaining gasoline for the motor transport and aircraft.

The 1114th Qm. Co. has followed the 303rd Group since both organizations were activated in 1942 at Gowen Field, Idaho. When the group moved, the Qm. boys were only a jump behind them and finally landed in England a month after the group's arrival at its base.

## 202nd FINANCE SECTION

One organization on the field that has constantly retained its popularity is the 202nd Finance Section—the boys who provide the pretty brown and blue pound sterling notes on the first of the month.

Under the leadership of Major Tom C. Hawkins the finance section has always managed to scrape up enough money to go around on payday, in addition to the enormous job of completing pay vouchers, advancing partial pay and attending to the thousand-and-one minor details that a paymaster is heir to. This job was carried out in spite of the shortage of equipment and supplies. In all, the finance section has handled about a million dollars of business a month with a staff of only fifteen men and one officer.



*Commanding Officer*  
MAJOR  
NORMAN JOHNSON  
*(Acting Commander)*  
*San Francisco, Cal.*



# THIS IS HOW THE BOMBS GET TO THE TARGET . . .





# BUT NOT ONE BOMB COULD FALL WITHOUT THESE . . .





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