

385TH

BOMBARDMENT GROUP (HEAVY)

Roger:

With sincere
admiration and respect

John G. Ford
CMSgt USAF (Ret)
385th BG RA.

HISTORY
of the
385th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (Heavy)
and its affiliated units
424th AIR SERVICE GROUP
877th CHEMICAL COMPANY (AO)
DETACHMENT 155, 18th WEATHER SQUADRON

FEBRUARY 1, 1943—AUGUST 14, 1945

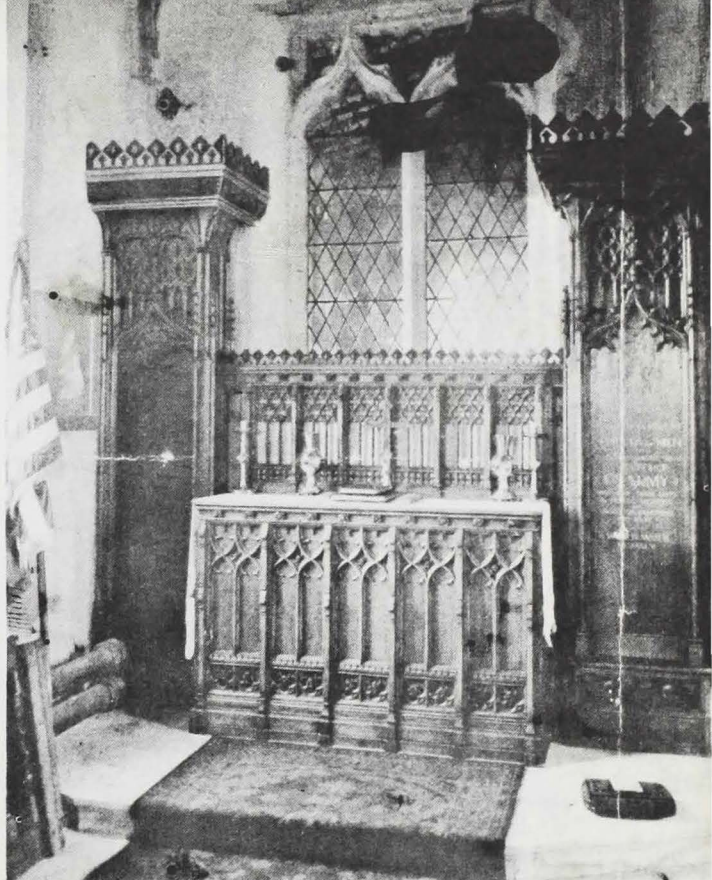
Edited by

LT. COLONEL MARSTON S. LEONARD USAF (Ret.)

IN MEMORIAM

To the
Everlasting Memory of the Officers and Men
of the
385th Bombardment Group, Eighth Air Force
who gave their lives in heroic sacrifice
and
unselfish devotion to duty
this book is humbly dedicated

THE MEMORIAL



DEDICATION

In the picturesque little stone All Saints Church, surrounded by its quiet churchyard in Great Ashfield, Suffolk County, England resides the Memorial to the men of the 385th Bombardment Group. The tiny village of Great Ashfield borders our flying field and from its Station 155 took its name.

The military history of our Group has been bred into the hearts, minds and rich soil of this little community. When we searched for a fitting memorial in tribute to the everlasting memory of our gallant comrades who unselfishly gave their lives in the fight against the common enemy, we thought that the ageless institution of the church would best guard our loving tribute.

Standing at the eastern end of the north aisle of beautiful 14th Century All Saints Church, our memorial consists of altar and reredos, with side panels, all richly hand carved and traceried in oak. The design came from the creative genius of H. Munro Cautley, F.S.A., one of Britain's foremost authorities in church architecture. It stands on random squared stone paving, and makes a charming side chapel, 6 feet in width and 18 feet in length. A beautiful, silk American flag will hang permanently in the chapel.

All Saints Church stands just off a narrow, winding road in a little grove of lovely evergreen trees with its stone decked graveyard spread about it. It is approached by a small bridge over a rippling country brook. Its simple construction consists of the Nave and Chancel, the north aisle and the western tower with steeple. Entrance is gained by a 16th Century brick porch. The benches are topped with hand carved poppy heads and are as old as the church. The church was constructed more than 900 years ago, but was rebuilt 500 years ago and has remained unaltered since.

In the quiet dignity of this holy sanctuary rests our tribute to our comrades, whose names are recorded in a hand embossed volume resting on the memorial altar. Out in the churchyard rests the bronze plaque on its granite base, transplanted to this final resting place from in front of the Headquarters building at Great Ashfield, Station 155.

IN MEMORIAM

Mercer G. Abernathy
 Charles L. Abney, Jr.
 George H. Adams
 Frederick D. Albert
 Willis W. Alexander
 Arlis K. Anderson
 James E. Anding
 Donald J. Andreas
 Charles Armbruster, Jr.
 Delmar H. Arvey
 James B. Atkinson
 Ralph F. Atkinson
 Charles W. Avana
 Robert L. Banner
 Ira M. Barnes
 Richard G. Baary
 Robert E. Bartlett
 Earl R. Bates
 Jack G. W. Batty
 John T. Baum
 Robert H. Bayne
 Albert Beenes
 Adolph Bernacchi
 Walter R. Berosh
 Douglas Binford
 Hubert J. Bivins
 Guilford N. Black
 Robert P. Blakely
 Peter Bobulsky, Jr.
 Bryan J. Booker, Jr.
 Lloyd J. S. Boor
 Lowey I. Boyd
 Robert P. Bozine
 William M. Brick
 Sterling W. Bristol, Jr.
 James E. Brophy
 Edward B. Brown
 Elvin Brown
 Herbert W. Brown
 Gail F. Bruner
 Frank R. Bullen
 George C. Burger
 George E. Burich, Jr.
 Vernon C. Burke, Jr.
 James Burns, Jr.
 William D. Burnham
 Anthony Burroughs
 Darrell C. Bushey
 William H. Butler
 Eugene F. Cahill
 Archie M. Cameron
 Charles C. Campbell
 Robert E. Campbell
 Michael A. Cangemi
 Samuel L. Canter
 Clifford F. Canterberry
 Roy V. Capwell
 Joseph J. Carpinetti
 Reece D. Cartmill
 Charles T. Chambers

Robert G. Chandler
 Hervin R. Charest
 Francis M. Chrisman
 Harry E. Clabough
 Jesse W. Clark
 Melvin E. Click
 William R. Clift
 Thomas N. Cockfield
 Homer C. Comegys
 Elmer F. Congdon
 Charles J. Cook
 Harry R. Coomes
 Emilio M. Corgnati
 John C. Cortez
 Lucien C. Courcelle
 Parker F. Crabtree
 Frank L. Creegan
 Timothy E. Crimmins, Jr.
 John A. Crotty
 Cletus D. Crouse
 Harold P. Crouse
 Charles G. Curtis
 George W. Curtis
 Raymond A. Dahl
 Robert Daleus
 William G. Daniels
 Harvey Dater
 Milton Dawidowicz
 Leonard F. Davidson
 George P. Davis
 Namon T. Davis
 Robert W. Davis
 William L. Davis
 Carl W. Dawurske
 William F. DeElmo
 James A. Deld
 Louis Dentoni
 John A. Dewey
 Edward B. DeWolf
 Leon G. Deziel
 Harold E. Dickaron
 Charles W. Dickman
 Don S. Diefferding
 Louis P. DiNicola
 James E. Dodd
 William J. Dukes
 Glenn F. Duncan
 Woodrow W. Dutt
 Filbert F. Dye
 Walter C. Edlmann
 John R. Egbert
 Russell E. Eichelberger
 John F. Ellingsen
 Thomas N. Ennis
 John E. Epps
 John H. Erhardt
 Herbert G. Evans
 Clarence C. Fahnert
 Junior M. Falls
 John F. Faulkner

Morton H. Feingold
 William J. Feuerstein
 William F. Filter
 William D. Finkhiner
 Robert D. Fitzgerald
 Harry E. Fitzwater
 Patrick J. Flanagan
 Chester B. Foster
 Gordon S. Fraser
 Harold K. Fredericksen
 James J. French
 Regis B. Funk
 Robert G. Funk
 Michael A. Galicia
 Edmond J. Gamble
 Richard M. Garther
 Richard L. Gaston
 Carl J. Giebow
 Edward J. Gildea
 Richard W. Gilder
 William Gill, Jr.
 Clyde C. Gingerich
 Clarence E. Gittins
 James A. Glaxner, Jr.
 Burnie B. Goldson, Jr.
 Isaac L. Goodman
 Edgar E. Griffith
 Bernard T. Gruble
 Stanley D. Gue
 Stanley J. Gula
 Herman M. Gurgel
 Rodolfo Gutierrez
 William F. Hahn
 Russell Hale
 Delbert L. Hamilton
 Victor R. Hammonds, Jr.
 Max Handler
 Delmar A. Harmon
 Steward F. Harrison
 Frank H. Hart
 Leland F. Harvey
 John Hay
 Robert D. Hedington
 Peter J. Heffernan
 James W. Hendon, Jr.
 William F. Henry
 Arthur W. Herold
 Edwin R. Herron
 Herbert A. Heuser
 Jim T. Holley
 Fred N. Howland
 George J. Hrubovcak
 Robert K. Huff
 Willard B. Huggins, Jr.
 John E. Hutchins
 John M. Hutchinson, Jr.
 Carl F. Huwe
 Everett L. Isaacson
 Vernon W. James
 Robert E. Jenkins

William F. Jens
 Orsen E. Jensen
 William E. Johnson
 James W. Johnston
 Charles M. Jones
 Lee N. Jones
 Anthony T. Kalisko
 Bernard Kaplan
 Hyman Kaplan
 Elmo L. Karr
 Paul W. Keefer
 John T. Keeley, Jr.
 Robert E. Keenan
 Bernard M. Kelly
 Lawrence C. Kern
 Roy C. Kitner
 Glen C. Knecht
 Alvin L. Koblitz
 Henry G. Koshemina
 Aloysins J. Kozanecki
 Henbert R. Kozel
 Edward Krengulec
 Olando A. Krupka
 Joseph W. Kunkle
 Charles Lamont, Jr.
 Lee A. Lance, Jr.
 Wallace D. Land
 Francis B. Lee
 William L. Lehr
 Roland N. Leider
 Samuel K. Levy
 Peter Linton
 William Y. Ligon, Jr.
 Sol S. Lipschitz
 Marvin E. Lohmeyer
 William R. Lord, Jr.
 Edward J. Lower
 Stanley Lowitz
 Leo T. Lynch, Jr.
 Robert J. Macaulay
 Daniel J. Mackiewicz
 Roger K. MacLean
 Joseph A. Maltby
 Joseph M. Mandarano
 Charles A. Manzel
 Anthony M. Marinaro
 Leonard H. Marion
 William Martsch
 Ellwood C. Magam
 Ben J. McCall
 Harry L. McCarthy, Jr.
 William J. McCauley, Jr.
 Hugh T. McClatchey
 Harry L. McComb
 Edson H. McCord
 Robert L. McDonald
 James F. McDonough
 Ulysses V. McElhinney
 John T. McErlane
 David T. McGaddy

Joseph D. McGarry
Marion E. McGinnis
Edward H. McGrath, Jr.
Donald T. McGraw
Joseph M. McKenna
James D. McKee
Robert T. McKnight
Jack D. McMann
Walter F. McMillan, Jr.
Daniel J. McMullen
Chester F. Means
Charles G. Melhado
Athel J. Miller
Paul R. Miller
Wm. H. Miller
Ned V. Mirabal
Robert Nixon, Jr.
Fred A. Montgomery
Arthur R. Moore
Samuel K. Moore
John E. Moriarty
Harold L. Morris
William H. Morris
Dalmus Morrison
James E. Murphy
James R. Murphy
Morris Myers
Fred F. Nagle
Arthur C. Naylor
John C. Neely
William R. Nesen
Marvin W. Nieman
John Nostin
Alphonse J. Novetske
Patrick J. O'Brien
Leroy E. Oqline
Edward Osborn
Miles W. Osmer
Franklin C. Owsley
Robert E. Paige
John H. Parrish
Allen D. Patterson
Warren J. Pease

Donald P. Peterson
Demas Petropoulos
James E. Pierce
Frank E. Pifer
Charles R. Pomponio
Ledger Pontius, Jr.
Herbert F. Powley
Richard S. Proctor
Robert C. H. Prolow
Charles E. Propst
Paul Provincial
Marion E. Puckett
Benjamin M. Purdy
Stanley K. Pytko
George H. Ramelot
Frank R. Ranasey
Elwood L. Randall
Douglas R. Randolph
Elvin G. Rankin
Oliver J. Rapps
Dwain R. Rasmussen
Samuel H. Riccio
Leonard Rifas
Francis M. Riggs
James Riggs
Wendel Rish
Robert G. Richie
Lambertus Ritsema
William H. Robbins
Chester A. Rober
Samuel B. Rochester
Jack L. Rock
Richard J. Roth
Walter J. Roth
Theodore R. Rouse
Billy E. Ruby
Richard P. Rudd
Pat H. Ruffin
Alexander Rusecky
Harry S. Rusk
Howard C. Ryan
Stephen F. Ryan
Allan M. Saarnio

Felix F. Sanchez
Edward C. Sanders
Gilbert Sapiro
Grant C. Schaff
Theodore R. Schatz
Joseph T. Schipani
John P. Schley
James M. Scott, Jr.
Alfred F. Seagrane
Edgar L. Seitz
Harry E. Seveck
Gerald W. Shaffer
James Shahan
Raymond H. Shepherd
Wilmer W. Sherwood
Jacob Silverstien
William D. Simmons, III
James S. Sims
John W. Skoff
Charles J. Slavin
Howard F. Sloop
Wm. R. D. Snyder
Paul A. Sommers
James E. Soward
John H. Spencer
Pryce O. Spencer
Richard A. Spencer
Arthur J. Spicos
Berkely I. Springfield
Edward H. Staman
Charles A. Stevens
Russell A. Stevens
Charles J. Stewart
Stanley S. Stoma
William A. Storr
John R. Stringi
Raymond N. Stroben
Walter A. Stuebgen
Joe P. Sturdivant
Harry F. Swift
Robert M. Totaro
Deloy Taylor
John R. Towle

Leo J. Trouth, Jr.
Leon E. Tripp
Chester E. Truox
Levi R. Tucker
Raymond W. Tuley
Vincent L. Verderame
Anthony Vespasiano
Charles Vobroucek, Jr.
Nathan Ungar
Athvian M. Vaughn
Howard M. Tripp, Jr.
Philip J. Vockerath
Thomas W. Vogel
Lawrence H. Vogt
William A. Waggoner
Robert C. Wagner
Harold A. Waldner
Curtis L. Walker
Charles A. Wardle
Leonard W. Wasilewski
Thomas H. Watkins
Clinton A. Weaver
James S. Webb
Lewis P. Weigil
Jerry L. Weir
Norman S. Weiss
Harry Weissman
Thomas K. Welch
Elmer E. White
Richard B. White
Sidney White
Willard C. White
Francis W. Wiemerslage
Charles R. Williams
Robert L. Williams
Frederick E. Wilson
Ponce B. Wilson
Calvin C. Winright
Howard M. Worster
Orvil E. Wright
Paul M. Yannello
Denis J. Ziebarth



IN MEMORIAM

ELLIOTT VANDEVANTER, JR.
Brigadier General, USAF
(1917-1974)

Elliott Vandevanter, Jr., organized the 385th Bombardment Group at Geiger Field, Washington in February 1973. In the short period of five months, notwithstanding the lack of normal training time, he took the Group to Great Ashfield, England and developed a small cadre of professional soldiers together with a large group of inexperienced civilian soldiers, into a well-disciplined military organization which in its first month of operation achieved 97% target accuracy in dropping its bombs on a ball bearing factory at Warnemunde. After being operational less than four months, the Group led the entire 8th Air Force to Marienberg in what General Hap Arnold described as perhaps the most perfect exhibition of precision bombing to occur during the war.

On May 12, 1944 the lead squadron of the high composite group on a mission to Zwickau was knocked out by enemy fighters. Colonel Van., leading the 385th, took over the lead position and notwithstanding devastating German fighter attacks, purposely slowed the entire formation until the other groups in the wing could reform, after which he fought his way to the target despite the intense enemy assault. As the result of Colonel Van's outstanding leadership, the Group received a citation for "determination, devotion to duty, and total disregard of personal safety above and beyond that of all other units participating in the mission."

Elliott Vandevanter, Jr. was a rare leader whose unswerving devotion to duty, awesome courage, fearless resolve, and keen understanding of the needs of others, gave his men the strength and inspiration to achieve the impossible. He is greatly missed. His loss is irreplaceable.

FOREWORD

Our victory in Europe, like every successful venture, was the product of many combined and coordinated efforts. Each unit had its mission to perform. There is no precise method of measuring the value of these separate contributions—only the composite result is discernible. But the fact that there is no yardstick for gauging the weight of each effort does not detract in the least from its importance. We all know that the 385th Bomb Group and associated units played its own vital role in the gigantic air struggle that ended in the complete prostration of the German nation.

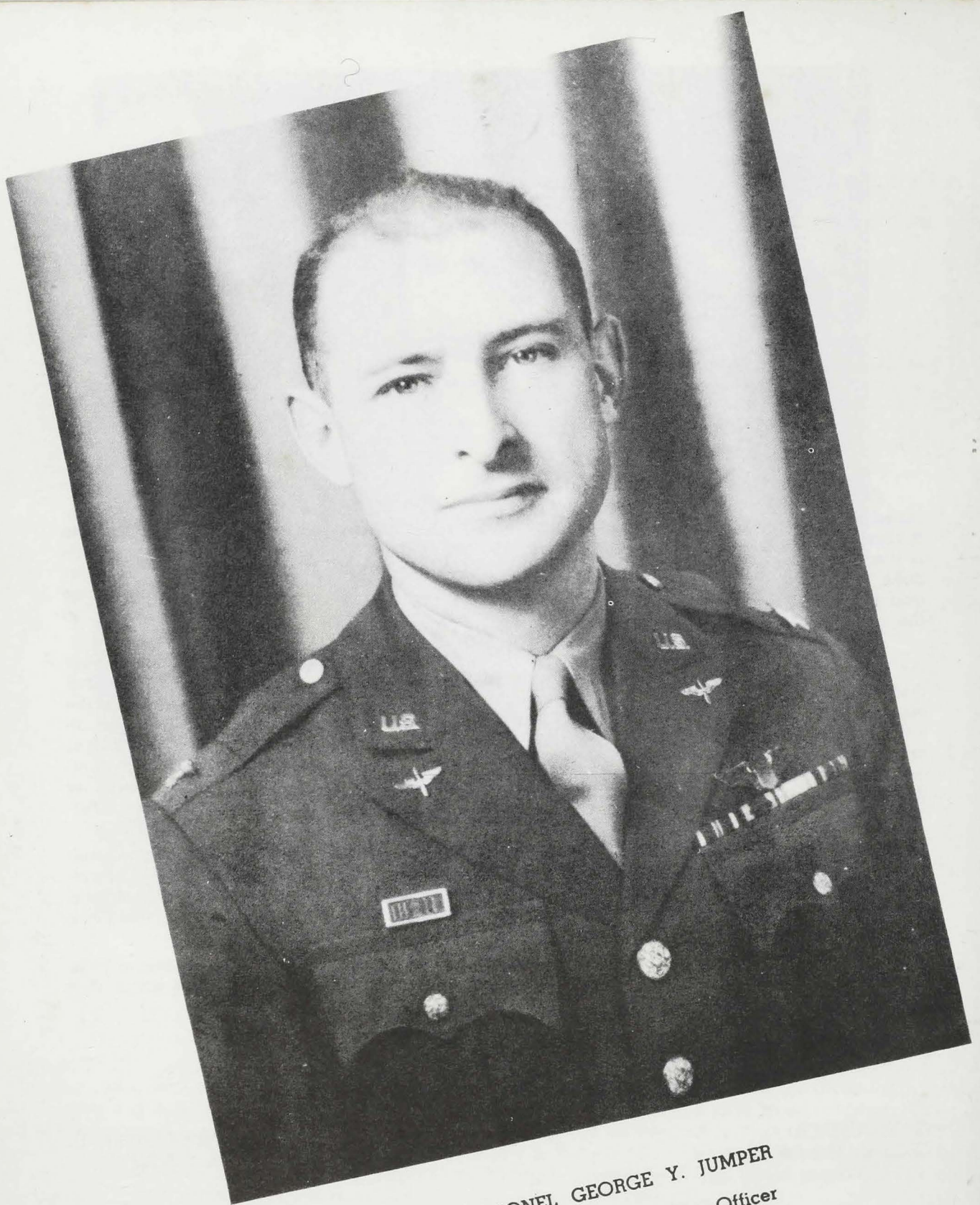
We pioneered in the dismal months of 1943 the ground and air doctrines that meant the success of precision daylight bombing. In the tough uphill battles of 1944 we defeated the Luftwaffe in its own arena and proved that strategic bombing can utterly devastate the economy of a powerful nation. In 1945 we added our accurate tonnage to the massive attacks that administered the coup de grace to the still powerful and effective Nazi war machine. In all of these tasks we of Great Ashfield established ourselves as without a peer,—a highly efficient, smooth-running, fighting team. This effectiveness was due primarily to the industriousness and courage of each of our members and to the high spirit of cooperation which prevailed in our organization.

In the months since the crumbling of Festung Europe our close-knit group has been disbanded and we have separated to pursue our individual courses. The problems of the present have erased the memories of the past. Yet we cannot help feeling that there will always be in each of us a certain nostalgia and pride when we think or talk of our days in the ETO.

If this volume helps you to recall some memories—or if it assists you to explain a little of what you individually or collectively did towards winning the war—then the effort that went into this book has been worthwhile.

G. Y. JUMPER
Colonel, U.S.A.F.

E. VANDEVANTER, JR.
Colonel, U.S.A.F.



COLONEL GEORGE Y. JUMPER
Our Second Commanding Officer
August 1944 — May 1945

OUR PLACE IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS

As the opening gambit in this, our history, we shall make a quick review of the structure of our air strength in Europe. In making this review we hope to show where the 385th Bombardment Group (Heavy), the 424th Air Service Group, 18th Weather Detachment and the 877th Chemical Co., the team which worked out of USAAF Station 155 at Great Ashfield, fitted into the great scheme of United States air power in the European Theatre of Operations.¹

Because over the two year period of our active operations there were changes in the structure of our Air Forces, we shall outline here the organization as it existed on V-E Day. Those of us who had left in 1943, or in early 1944, will note differences, particularly in nomenclature and to some extent in basic organization. They will, we trust, be able to reconcile the organization as they knew it with the finely articulated machine of the closing phases of the war by following the footnotes of this review; the footnotes will point out the major organizational changes insofar as they apply to the Eighth Air Force.

For the record we shall mention in passing the 9th Air Force under the command of Lt. General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, and the Airborne Army, under the command of Lt. General Lewis Brereton. Neither of these two great commands was directly connected to us. The 9th Air Force and the Airborne Army were both tactical organizations and were more closely allied to the ground forces in their missions.

We shall say no more of these two powerful, fine forces; they were the tactical people. We were the strategic people. Our "big boss" was General Carl Spaatz, who headed up the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe, USSTAFE.² Answering to General Spaatz were the Commanding General, Eighth Air Force, Lt. Gen. James Doolittle and the Commanding General, Fifteenth Air Force, Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker.

We were part of General Doolittle's gang,



Lt. Gen. James Doolittle and
Maj. Gen. E. E. Partridge

the magnificent 8th, gladiators in the "big leagues" of aerial combat—masters of intricate formation and precision bombing.

The operating side of the Eighth Air Force consisted of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Air Divisions. The bombardment groups of the 1st and 3rd Divisions flew B-17s; the fighter groups flew P-47s, P-51s and for a time some P-38s. The bombardment groups of the 2nd Division flew B-24s, "banana-boats"; the fighter groups flew the same equipment as the fighters of the 1st and 3rd Divisions. The VIII Air Service Command kept all of us in equipment.

We of Great Ashfield were a part of the 3rd Air Division. We had three great divisions commanders. The first was Maj. Gen. Fred-

1. Early in 1945 all elements on Great Ashfield other than the 385th Bomb Group, the 18th Weather Detachment, and the 877th Chemical Co. were merged to form the 424th Air Service Group under the command of Lt. Col. James H. Lewis. Hence the Q. M. Co., Ordnance Co., Sub-Depot, M. P. Co., Station Complement Squadron, Finance Detachment, Fire Fighting Platoon lost their identity and became parts of the three squadrons of the 424th Air Service Group.

2. This will cause considerable confusion to the lads who left the group early, because it involves a major change in organization. General Spaatz had commanded the Eighth Air Force in England before the North African "show". He took several groups of the 8th with him to Africa, where he worked with General Eisenhower in the African landings and in the invasions of Pantelleria, Sicily and Italy. Meanwhile Gen. Eaker assumed command of the 8th, which then consisted of VIII Fighter Command, VIII Bomber Command and VIII Air Service Command. When Generals Eisenhower and Spaatz returned to England from Italy the major change in organization occurred. General Spaatz established the USSTAFE, which controlled the strategic efforts of both the 8th and 15th Air Forces. Gen. Doolittle, who had also been in the Mediterranean with Spaatz, assumed command of the Eighth Air Force and Gen. Eaker moved to Italy to take command of the 15th.

At the same time, the VIII Fighter Command disbanded, except for its operations section, and the fighter groups were assigned to the Air Divisions (previously designated Bombardment Divisions) for administrative purposes. Hence what had been the VIII Bomber Command became the Eighth Air Force, absorbing the VIII Fighter Command and taking under its wing the Service Command. What had been the Headquarters, Eighth Air Force passed the bulk of its administrative burden to the new Eighth Air Force and expanded to become a policy and planning headquarters for all strategic air power in Europe. By this move General Spaatz integrated the operations of the 8th and 15th Air Forces.



Maj. Gen. Curtis Lemay, our Division Commander, with Brig. Gen. Frederick Castle, our Wing Commander and Colonel Van.

erick Anderson, who left just before the 385th joined the division, to first command the VIII Bomber Command and later to become Deputy to General Spaatz at USSTAF. The second was Maj. Gen. Curtis E. Lemay, who developed "by hand" a large part of the tactics and techniques employed by the B-17s of the 8th; one of the greatest combat air leaders of the war. He was succeeded, on his transfer to the Pacific and B-29s by Maj. Gen. E. E. Partridge. Under the expert guidance of General Partridge the Division grew to its final size of 4 Combat Wings, numbering 14 heavy bombardment groups and a fighter wing, numbering 6 fighter groups, and became a machine of precision such as none of us had ever believed possible. At its greatest strength the Division totalled more than 40,000 officers and men.

The Combat Bombardment Wings of the 3rd Division were the 4th, with four heavy groups, the 13th, with 3 heavy groups, the 45th with 3 heavy groups and the 93rd, with four heavy groups. At the war's end we at Great Ashfield belonged to the 93rd Wing and our "boss", and as fine a "boss" as we could have found, was Brig. Gen. John K. Gerhart.³

The combat groups of the 93rd wing were the 34th, 385th, 390th and the 493rd. Hence we have come finally to the 385th Bombardment Group (heavy) which lived at Great Ashfield, Suffolk in company with its team-mates the 424th Air Service Group, the 877th Chemical Co. and the 18th Weather Detachment. By way of recapitulation the chart below illustrates the echelons of command.



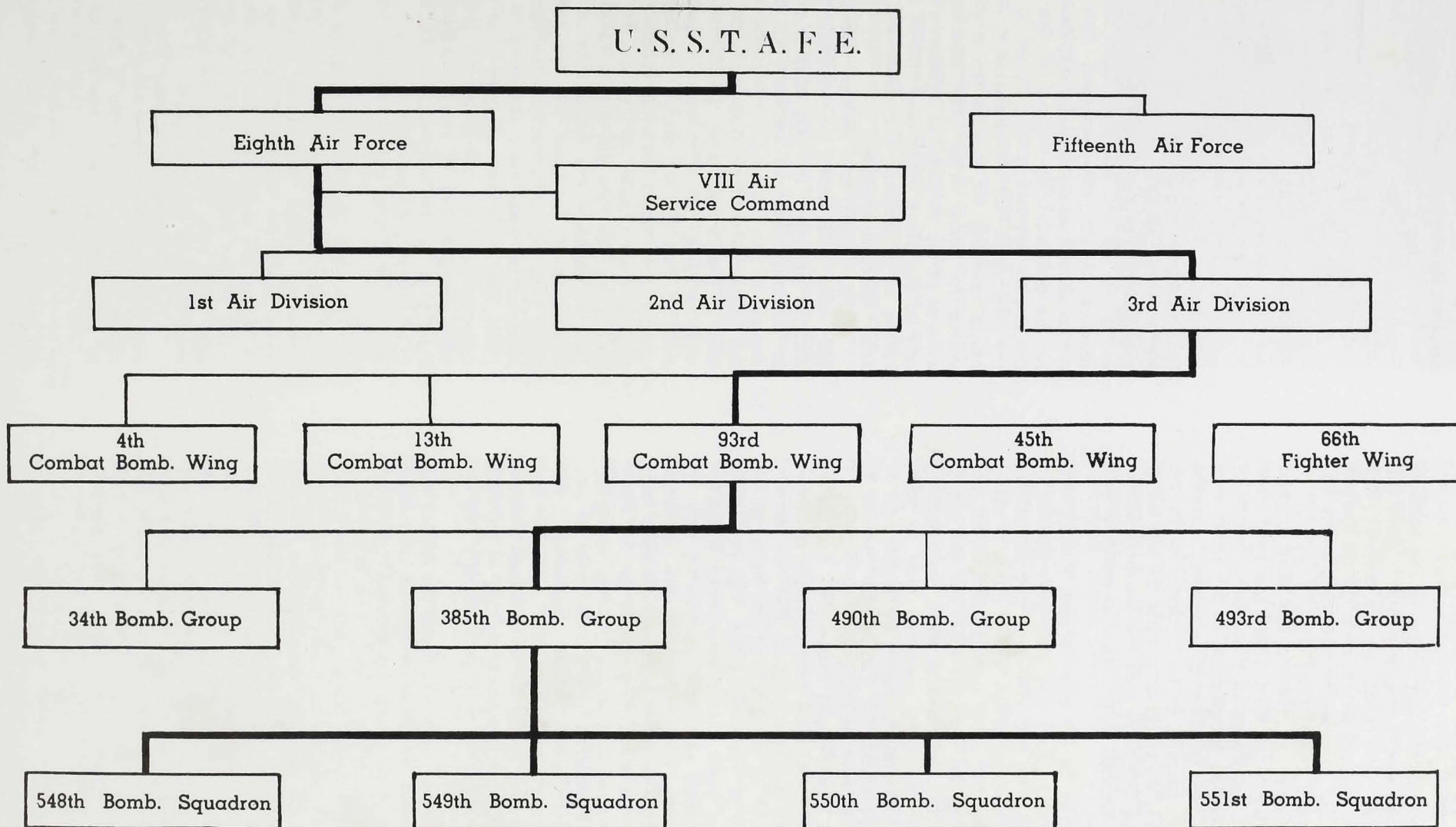
Brig. Gen. Frederick Castle, Col. Vandevanter and Brig. Gen. A. W. Kissner, Chief of Staff, 3rd Division.

3. Here again the "old-timers" will be confused. On arrival in the U. K. the 385th and the 94th Groups were joined to form the 4th Combat Wing. In November 1943, the 447th Group arrived to round out the 3 group combination which was the 4th Wing until July of 1944. Brig. Gen. Russell Wilson, commanded the wing until killed in action in March 1944 while leading the 385th on the first successful mission to Berlin. Brig. Gen. Frederick W. Castle succeeded him and remained in command until Christmas Eve 1944, at which time he, too, was killed while leading the 385th on a mission of ground support during the Battle of the Bulge. In July of 1944 the 92nd Combat Wing, which then consisted of two groups, the 486th and the 487th, became an organization on paper only, the 486th and 487th joining the 4th Wing under General Castle. Later the 4th Combat Wing became the 4th Bombardment Wing (Provisional) with administrative as well as operational control over its bomb groups, the 94th, 385th, 447th, 486th, and 487th. This was the status when Brig. Gen. Robert W. Burns assumed command after the death of General Castle.

Early in 1945 higher authority decided to revert the 4th Bombardment Wing to its previous designation of Combat Wing, and to separate one of the groups of the wing and to assign it to the 93rd Combat Wing. Because Great Ashfield was physically nearest to the headquarters of the 93rd wing, the 385th left the 4th wing, of which it had been a charter member, and joined the 93rd Wing, with no change of station.

U. S. STRATEGIC AIR FORCES IN EUROPE

BELOW ILLUSTRATES THE ECHELONS OF COMMAND



WHAT DID THE 8th DO?

Having defined our place in the scheme of things we might ask, logically, "what did the 8th do?" We shall try to answer that question in general terms. Because the answer is historically progressive, we shall make our first approach a historical one.

In February of 1942, a few men arrived in England with an idea. Those few men were the Eighth Air Force in that bleak month of a bleak year in which most of the news was bad. Their idea was that by precision bombing of German targets, to be undertaken in the light of day, we could so cripple the industrial potential of Germany that the German nation would be unable to continue to wage a successful war.

That idea is not new to you. You accept it as axiomatic. And why not?—We proved it. But at that time the idea was not an axiom. There were those who "knew" that it could not be done. For proof they pointed to the fact that early in the war, the RAF had set out in daylight only to sustain such catastrophic losses that the only recourse was to take cover in darkness, to bomb by night, and to sacrifice precision for "saturation" raids, to burn and destroy axis cities.

Many experienced officers of our Army and the RAF believed that daylight bombing was unfeasible and argued that we should join the RAF at night to add our effort to the destruction of industrial cities. The argument went on for more than a year, even while we were executing successful attacks by day.

The men, who urged that we abandon our precision bombing idea were sincere men who believed what they urged on us. They were convinced that no big bomber, relatively slow and a massive target, could hold its own against determined fighter opposition. Not only the experience of the RAF but also that of the Germans in the Battle of Britain seemed to prove that bombardment by day in the face of fighter attacks was prohibitively uneconomical.

But the few men who were the Eighth Air Force, upheld by General Arnold and other champions of air power back home, countered that we could make it "go"; that in the B-17 we had a weapon developed in the trying years when no one at home believed in air power, which could withstand fighter assault. They stubbornly contended that in sacrificing bomb load to compensate for the installation of defensive armament we had made it possible for ourselves to fight our way in daylight to a pinpoint industrial target, which we could see, and which we could hit decisively with our smaller load, just because we could see what we were aiming at. "We have a well defended airplane," they said, "we have a

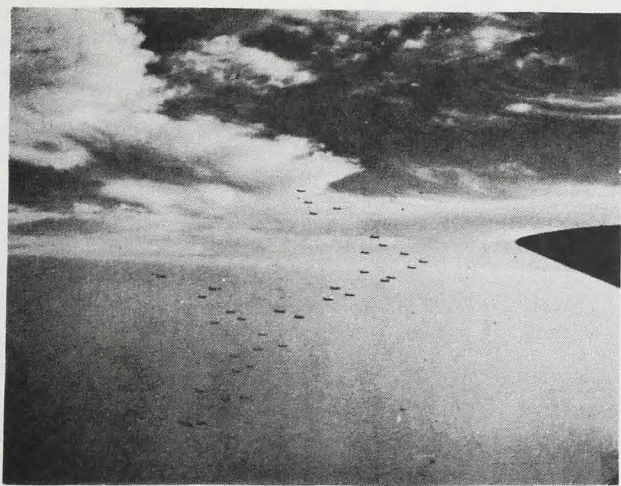
precise bombsight; let us use them!" They got grudging permission which amounted practically to probation.

Those few men who had nurtured the dream of air power in the days when, with a straight face, an experienced soldier and strategist, had declared that there was no conceivable use for an airplane with more range than two day's march of the ground troops (circa 1934), were eager to attempt the first phase of the master plan, the battle for control of the sky. In the halls of the Air Corps Tactical School at Maxwell Field during those trying years of the twenties and thirties, these same men had convinced themselves that the prelude to any decisive air action must be to gain superiority over the enemy in the air. Bombing from England the leaders of the 8th reasoned that the first action should be against the airplane factories on the continent. By cutting off the source of the enemy opposition they hoped to cut down the number of aircraft available to the enemy, hence creating for themselves a situation in which to bomb with little interference the sources of oil, or steel, or synthetic rubber, or any of the other materials vital to the prosecution of a modern war. They ran into two early disappointments.

First, tactical and service elements of the 8th were withdrawn to support the North African invasion, leaving only a small force in England. Second, because of the mortal danger to the United Kingdom engendered by the fierce submarine campaign of strangulation of the British Isles which the Germans were waging, the Combined Chiefs of Staff directed that the 8th attack the German submarine pens along the north coast of Germany and the west coast of France. It is neither within our province nor within our capabilities here to measure the exigencies of that time. In retrospect, however, we can see that our three year air battle became the more difficult because of these two decisions in the year 1942. We can also imagine that American proponents of air power must have been bitterly disappointed at being unable to unfold their plan in the sequence which they knew to be the only logical one if the European War was to be a true test of their doctrines of air power.

However, the fight against the submarines had some advantages for with green crews operating within reasonable ranges of their home bases, the leaders of that time were able to shape the techniques with which we afterward sewed destruction over all of Germany; they were able too to test the accuracy of our bombing, and found it good.

The Germans evidently decided that it was good too, because in early 1943 their high command was forced into a decision, which in retrospect, presaged the end of their tide



Eighth Air Force Bombers over Europe

of conquest, which thereafter slowly, slowly, and then more and ever more rapidly began to ebb. That decision was that thereafter the German High Command would throw all of its aircraft production facilities into the production of fighters, leaving its bomber force to wane and slowly to die for lack of replacements. Why this decision? The primary reason was that the Germans recognized early that unless they could stop the day bombers of the 8th they would lose their industrial capacity to wage war!

Two tenets of our advocates of air power were substantiated by the action of the enemy; first Germany, too, evidently believed that our air power could sap their power to resist; second, in going all out into fighter production the Germans proved by indirection that our most logical target should be their aircraft industry. We were beginning to deliver them a body punch which they could not stand; in fighting grimly to oppose us with an ever increasing number of fighters, the Germans were covering up against our body punch, and thereby losing the initiative.

At that time, the Germans went on the defensive in the air! And, except for the V-weapons of 1944-45, they never again took the offensive in the air. The scales were slightly weighted in our favor, but not decisively. In the months which followed we almost lost our advantage as German fighter strength grew on the western front.

Hence, in 1943, our all-out battle for control of the skies of Europe became a fierce, bloody engagement with no quarter asked or given. Ever increasing numbers of formations of bombers fought their way across Europe to their targets, the aircraft factories of the enemy, destroyed them in fearsome flashes of flame, towers of smoke, clouds of dust, and piles of rubble; all the while the swarms of enemy fighters multiplied, ever giving more skillful and more determined battle, shooting the big bombers out of the sky in tens and

hundreds. Yes, the battle was fierce up there in the high sky. In men and equipment involved, in the ferocity of the struggle, in the damage wrought, it was comparable to any set of engagements in history. The losses were high, for a while almost prohibitively high. It looked as though the Germans held the edge.

We knew that, in our air battle, we had cut German fighter production to a small fraction of what Germany had planned. To that extent we had won. But how barren the victory, when the small fraction which we had been unable to stop was enough to stop us! In the flames and blood which we left around Marienburg, Hanover, Brunswick, Munich, Regensburg, and countless other cities were destroyed untold thousands of German fighters which never took the air because we had demolished the wombs which might have borne them. But these already born, and those few now growing piece by piece in hidden assembly plants, parts filtering in from small dispersed factories, were the margin which took so high a toll of our bombardment fleets.

At that dark moment a miracle happened for us. It was not really a miracle, because the materiel people at home, and the factories at home, had been working day and night for many months to accomplish it, but when it came it seemed to us a miraculous answer to our sore troubles. The long range P-47s and later P-51s and P-38s appeared in our theatre. They could stay with us as far as we could go. We had cover then from takeoff, through the target, and back to landing. Although outnumbered many fold by the Germans, they always headed into every fight, fought like demons, and won!

The battle of the skies went on with a new frenzy and culminated in one three-day fight in February 1944 in which German fighter production was given the coup de grace. Thereafter, the supply of German fighters and parts to keep the aircraft functioning, dwindled rapidly. While our fighters sought the Luftwaffe relentlessly in the air and shot it out of the sky, our bombers embarked on the battle of the enemy's oil.

As that battle raged two developments are worthy of note: one, we had perfected our technique for bombing through the overcast with the "Mickey" radar set; two, the Germans concentrated their flak and improved their techniques of fire control to the point that flak progressed from the category of a relatively minor annoyance to that of a deadly and fierce weapon of destruction.

By way of digression, from November of 1943 the bombers of the 8th had been striking the rocket launching sites in the Pas de Calais area of France whenever the weather would not permit our getting into Germany. An evaluation of damage after the liberation of France indicated that but for these "Crossbow" mis-

sions, the damage to London as a result of the "buzz-bombs" might have been immeasurably greater.

In April, May and June of 1944 the battle for the enemy's oil lulled. In preparation for "Overlord", the invasion of France, the 8th joined the 9th in the destruction of the arteries of enemy communication and in striking airfields which might be employed by the enemy in his opposition to our landings in Normandy. Many tons of bombs laid waste marshalling yards, bridges, aircraft storage parks, airfields, tank parts, ammunition dumps, fuel and lubricant dumps and the like all over France and western Germany. Despite the fact that the number of sorties during those months was astronomical, it was, in a way, a breathing space for the bombers of the 8th. All the target areas were well covered by supporting fighters, and hence, the Luftwaffe did not rise to give us trouble.

As our ground armies rolled across France we again went after Germany's oil. In a few months the output of German refineries became a trickle. All over Europe German tanks, airplanes and automotive equipment sat immobile—they had no fuel on which to run.

Finally, as we approached V-E Day, we turned to transportation. We literally turned upside down every marshalling yard, however small, and every rail junction in Germany.

In addition to the three main targets upon which we concentrated we struck harbors and docks (e.g. Hamburg), tank and automobile factories, rubber (e.g. Huls), ball bearings (e.g. Schweinfurt), steel (the Ruhr), optical works, experimental stations, and many other industrial installations.

In all these operations we became a perfect complement to the operations of the RAF, and they to us. Primarily we destroyed through precision bombing the industrial plants in which the German manufactured his implements of war; the RAF Bomber Command de-

molished the cities in which the German worker lived. Of course occasionally both we and the RAF had a try at the other's business; with our "through the overcast" technique we bombed the German cities when we could not see his factories; toward the end of the war, the RAF Bomber Command went out by day and executed highly successful precision attacks. Working together, the 8th by day and the RAF by night, we reduced the capacity of the German production and German movement to such an extent that he ultimately went down to defeat.

We believe our three cornered team, the 8th, the 15th and the RAF had a sizeable, a decisive share in winning the war in Europe. To those who ask, "Aren't you forgetting our ground armies and the Russian armies?" We answer, "No, we are not forgetting them. They too were essential to victory. But were it not for our virtual destruction of the German aircraft industry our land armies might never have established and held a beachhead in France, nor could the Russians have used their tactical aircraft on the Eastern Front.

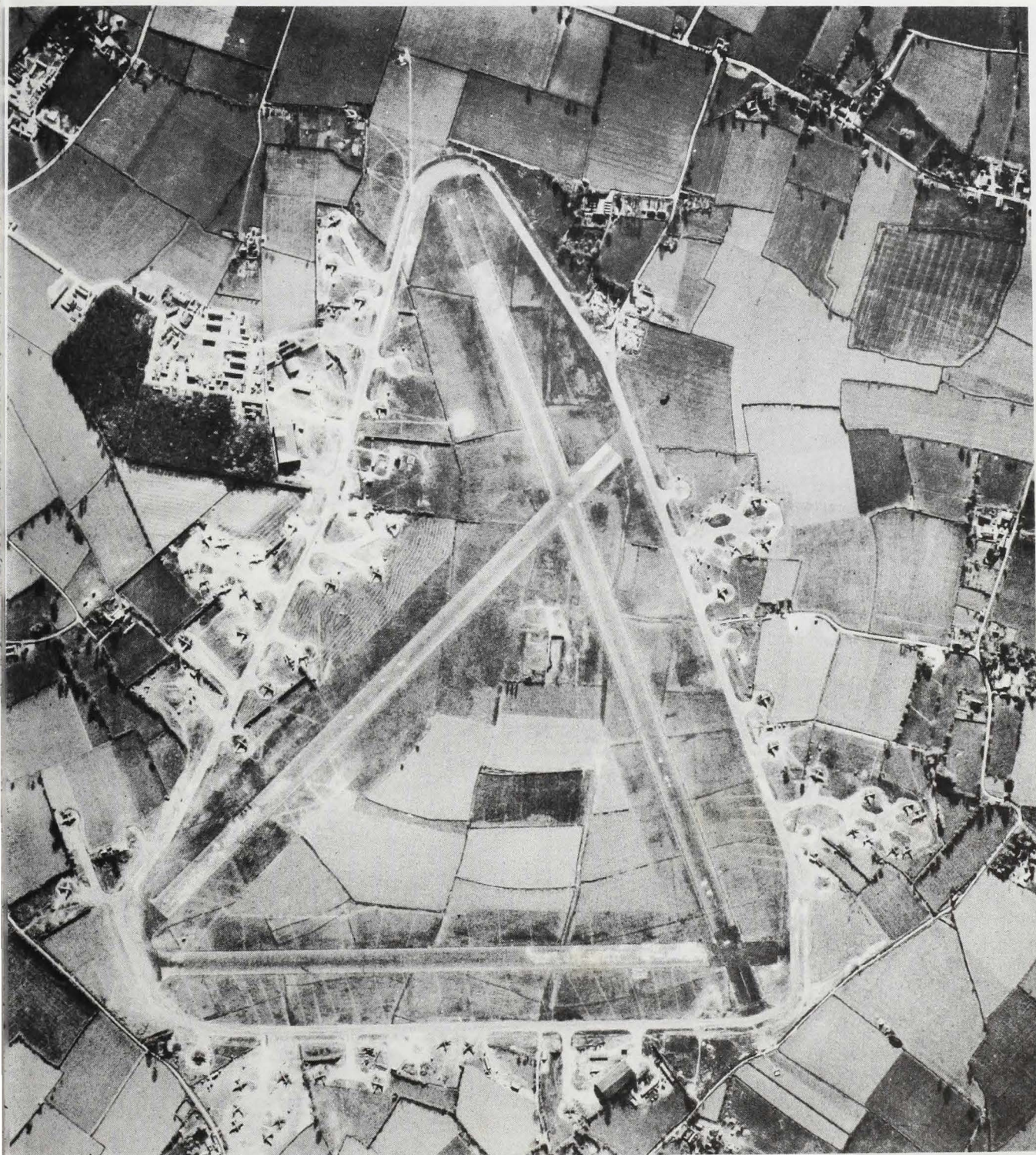
"But for our withering attacks against German oil, the number of tanks and other mechanized weapons, which could have resisted either our land armies or those of the Russians in any given engagement might have been greatly increased.

"But for our complete disruption of their rearward lines of communication, the German armies might have been able to reinforce the Normandy beaches in time to repulse our landings.

"But for the tremendous effort expended in building aircraft to meet our attacks, and in repairing the ever expanding damage of our attacks, and in devising new means of defense against us, the Germans might have been able to muster sufficient strength to meet our land armies and those of the Russians, on terms of more equality."



Chronological History of Events



AAF Station 155 (Great Ashfield) from the air

Our History



The 385th Bombardment Group (H) was inauspiciously activated at Geiger Field, Spokane, Washington on February 1, 1943. No members of the group were present at this nativity. The next day Captain James H. Lewis, Group Intelligence officer became the first member of the group and the following day Major Elliott Vandevanter, Jr. assumed command of the group and both officers of his command. The size of the organization was tripled three days later with the arrival of all four flight surgeons and this group busied themselves making preparations to receive the main cadre the next day. It was no simple job since barracks had to be opened, lights and water checked, bedding drawn, meals prepared, etc.

Early in the morning of February 7th, the cadre of 27 officers and 205 enlisted men arrived from Tucson, Arizona in the midst of a twelve inch snow storm. Many of the men were still dressed in summer uniforms and stiff after the several days trip in day coaches. Fortunately, the group was already divided into skeleton squadron organizations which facilitated rapid orientation, but it is conservative to say that very few of them had ever seen each other before. These groups immediately became the 548th Squadron, Major Jack A. Nendel, Commanding; the 549th Squadron, Captain Berkely I. Springfield, Commanding; the 550th Squadron, Captain William M. Tesla,

Commanding; and the 551st Squadron, 1st Lieut. Daniel F. Riva, Commanding. They settled down rapidly in their squadron areas and started preparing for the expected rush of flight operations.

On February 12th the group received its first assignment of crews. These were hand-picked crews, who had previously completed the training cycle and were sent to serve as models and instructors. We were indeed fortunate to receive such a group and many of them were to remain with the organization for a considerable period and rise to positions of responsibility. The pilots of these crews were 1st Lieut. Frank E. Bexfield, 1st Lieut. Ivon E. Klohe, 1st Lieut. Gerald D. Binks and 1st Lieut. Vincent W. Masters. Unfortunately the planes that accompanied the crews were just as experienced as the crews, having been many times through the training phases, and being just about on their last legs. Keeping these airplanes in commission for enough time to accomplish our training requirements was to be a sore test for our neophyte mechanics throughout the next four months.

The next week saw the new group staff alternating between attending a series of indoctrination and training courses presented by 2nd Air Force specialists and then rushing back to the office in the evening to get the normal day's administrative business done.

The first formal group staff meeting was held on the 16th. With a recent change in the command of the 548th Squadron, Captain James McDonald having taken over from Major Mendel, the group staff lined up as follows:

Operations Officer—Major Mendel
 Intelligence Officer—Captain Lewis
 Statistical Officer—2nd Lieut. James R. Hamilton
 Adjutant—2nd Lieut. John C. Hambrook
 Gunnery Officer—2nd Lieut. William K. McInerney
 Communications Officer—2nd Lieut. Fred J. Harvey

Two more units of approximately 300 men each arrived during the week of the 19th and these men were rapidly absorbed into the expanding squadrons. The ease and rapidity with which these men, arriving on a half hour's notice from training schools all over the United States were processed and assimilated was amazing. On the 26th, Major Vandevanter addressed all personnel of the group for the first time. He impressed on them the seriousness of the task facing them, the need for complete and hearty team-work and co-operation, the opportunities for advancement and his pleasure at being associated with this unit.

The squadrons were assigned their unit colors, which for security purposes would be used in place of numerical designation throughout the remainder of their wartime career. The 548th became the Blue Squadron, the 549th the Yellow Squadron, the 550th the Red, the 551st the Green and the 385th Headquarters drew White as its designation.



Lt. Col. Preston Piper, our first Deputy Commander

MARCH

The weather throughout February was horrible. Even the birds were walking and most people forgot what the sun looked like. All combat crew gunners were sent to the ground gunnery course at Camp Seven Mile.

Several more additions to the group gave us both depth and strength. Major Erwin F. Goldman was acquired from the staff of the base at Geiger Field and was assigned as



Lt. Col. (then Capt.) Oscar H. Davenport, our S-4, as usual, found on the line

Group Executive Officer. Major Preston Piper and Captain Oscar H. Davenport, both from Major Vandevanter's old group at Rapid City, become Deputy Group Commander and Group S-4 respectively. Eighteen new officers and 230 new enlisted men place the group strength at 180 less than that authorized.

On March 25 we received our first large increment of combat crews. Eighteen complete crews reported in, making our combat potential 22 partially trained crews and seven beat-up B-17s. This day we also participated in our first real practice mission, a test of the blackout restrictions in the Spokane area. It was only a partial success since the very pistols flares shot off by our aircraft were hardly discernible from the ground.

The weather remained poor throughout the month but some flying was accomplished. The pilots concentrate on instrument procedures and formation while the gunners were sent to Camp Seven Mile. Organization had now progressed and the squadrons were con-

ducting individual activities: the 548th formed an orchestra, the 548th basketball team defeated the 551th two games out of three.

APRIL

The group was now beginning to take shape. Great progress has been made in all ground sections. The engineering personnel were already showing the ability that is so essential to a bomb group by keeping our training-weary airplanes in commission a large percentage of the time. The squadron S-2s had set up their briefing rooms on the line and every mission that went out was briefed before hand and interrogated afterwards. Squadron Adjutants had accomplished a large portion of the necessary administrative processing such as wills, insurance, shots, etc. Dog tags were completed, distributed and required to be worn by all personnel.

The early part of the month was devoted to arrangements for the group move from Geiger to Great Falls, Montana and its satellite fields. This move was complicated by the fact that so far we had operated as a group and now all four squadrons would be operating independently from widely separated bases. The move began on the 10th when to the accompaniment of a brass band, the 548th and 549th ground echelons marched to the depot and entrained. The 548th went to Lewistown, Montana and the 549th to Glasgow. The air echelon of these two squadrons remained at Geiger and continued flying until the 13th, when together with the aircraft of the other two squadrons they returned to their units. The 550th moved to Cutbank, just 30 miles from the Canadian border, and the group Headquarters and the 551st transferred to Great Falls. Then the air echelons of the 550th and 551st flew to their new bases. In this manner the move was effected without a day's loss in flying.

Old man winter had just vacated these bases before the 385th arrived. At each field



Three members of one of our first crews who became key individuals in the group. Left to right: Maj. (Lt.) Paul Schulz, Lt. Col. (Lt.) Vincent Masters and Capt. (Lt.) Louis Dentoni.

it was a question of rehabilitation and improvisation. Each squadron was on its own. Recreational facilities were established from scratch. Supply was the major problem and it was necessary to establish a regular airplane shuttle run between basis. The group



Our planes on a practice mission just before departure and overseas

staff was supplied a C-78 Cessna for the purpose and spent most of their time in the air visiting the out-lying fields.

On April 27th, Gen. Davenport Johnson of the 2nd Bomber Command inspected the squadrons and was very well satisfied with their progress. Major Nendel was transferred and he was replaced by Captain McDonald as Group Operations Officer with Captain



Lt. Col. (Capt.) James McDonald, our group operations officer getting caught up on his paper work between practice missions.

Septime S. Richard assuming command of the 548th squadron.

Processing began in earnest: physical achievement tests for all concerned; complete personal equipment was issued to all. It began to look like the ETO. Lectures for combat crews by RAF officers on radio facilities in the British Isles followed close on the heels of combat lectures from a returned 8th Air Force crew.

MAY

Everything pointed to the fact that we are not long for the good old U.S.A. Embarkation fever and spring fever were developing at an equal pace. Final furloughs and leaves were being granted with an effort to maintain some semblance of effectiveness. A lot of people found out how far Montana was from civilization. Our fly-away aircraft began to arrive and every evening you could see combat crews making minor modifications or painting up their own aircraft. Likewise our TBA equipment came in. We were now flying squadron formations and performing interception missions. Concentration on high altitude gunnery and formation missions indicate even more strongly that our final destination was Europe. Our aircraft were now flying over 150 hours per day.

On May 14th the group suffered its first major accident. Lieutenant Lindsay, flying the staff C-78 from Great Falls to Lewistown encountered bad weather and was forced off course into the mountains. His four passengers parachuted to safety over a wide area. All available resources were concentrated to locate the missing flyers and aircraft. One by one the passengers were found with the most serious casualty a broken ankle. New fallen snow handicapped the search for the aircraft and it was not found until the following year with Lt. Lindsay's body still in it.

Our life was not without the social side. The local inhabitants were extremely hospitable and we made many lasting friendships in the area. Many wives followed us to the last of our training posts and we always found time for visits with the family. The primary social event of the month was the marriage at "Doc" Bunting's house in Great Falls of Major Piper. Lt. Col. Vandevanter was best man.

The time was drawing near. By the middle of the month all crews but three had received their fly-away airplanes and the time arrived for the final combat readiness check—the 1000 mile over-water navigational flight. Marysville, Calif. was selected as our base of operations and the aircraft proceeded by squadron formation from their individual bases to Marysville. The overwater flight was made that same night without incident. The following afternoon the entire group took off and assembled in 24 ship formation. They then dispersed and proceeded individually toward

home. Bad weather, however, was encountered en route and several planes were forced to land at other bases. That same evening saw our second major tragedy. One plane from the 548th crashed in the mountains of Wyoming killing nine of the crew members. The only survivor was Lt. McDonald, the bombardier. The cause of the crash is still undetermined.

By the end of May the flight echelon was packed and ready. Several farewell parties were held with the usual results. At last the flight echelon left for final staging at Kearny, Nebraska and Major Goldman took over the command of the ground echelon as the first of a series of showdown inspections was held.

JUNE 1943

The flight echelon passed its inspection at Kearny with a few minor discrepancies. Some crews were short on their requirements for high altitude gunnery and that had to be corrected before they could depart on their final 10 day leaves and furloughs.

Final packing was concluded at the home bases and on June 8th the 385th Headquarters and the 551st entrained for Camp Kilmer, followed closely by the other squadrons. Three days later they arrived at the New York Port of Embarkation. More processing, more equipment, more shots—what a way to fight a war! The 548th was first to be pronounced "ready."



Three of our leaders discuss the formation after a mission. Left to right: Lt. Col. (Maj.) William Tesla, 550 Squadron; Lt. Col. (Maj.) Septime Richard, 548 Squadron and Maj. (Capt.) Archie Benner, 549 Squadron.



"Colonel Mac" and "Major Dave"
get a haircut before leaving for overseas



Capt. (Lt.) Henry Stokes busy getting things ready
at Great Ashfield for the arrival of the Group



On our way—first stop Camp Kilmer

In the meantime, the advance party of Col. Vandevanter, Captains McDonald, Lewis and Davenport and Lieutenants Hambrook and Stokes arrived in England and after a short deliberation over Hobson's choice between the two unfinished fields of Rattlesden or Great Ashfield,—chose the latter. And this was our new home.

Two days later on the 19th, the 88th Service Squadron (9 officers and 215 enlisted men) under Captain Henry B. Todd and the 199th Quartermaster Co. (2 officers and 35 enlisted men) under 1st Lieut. William E. Studdard arrived at Great Ashfield. These men were already veterans in the ETO having spent many weeks repairing and servicing B-26 groups which had preceded us.

Captain Davenport's problems began. Over half of the buildings on the field were incomplete. It was apparent that number of barracks were inadequate so pyramidal tents were procured and erected. More new arrivals at Great Ashfield were the 83rd Service Group Headquarters under Captain Totten J. Anderson, the 1735th Ordnance S. and M. Co. under 1st Lieut. Oscar S. Anderson and the 877th Chemical Co under 1st Lieut. Allan L. Brewer. Things were humming now in preparation for the arrival of the bomb group, its airplanes and crews. Col. Van welcomed the new units associated with the 385th and emphasized that there was but one purpose on this base—to get the bombs on the target—and there was no distinction between the men of Great Ashfield regardless of unit designation.

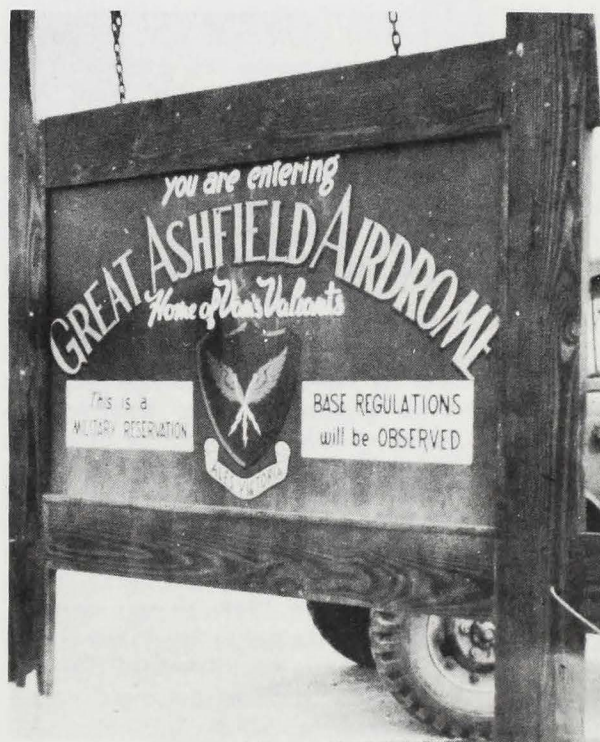
The 548th Squadron sailed from New York aboard the Queen Mary on June 23rd and the remainder of the group boarded the Queen Elizabeth one week later.

The crews of the air echelon had been arriving individually. Aircraft were immediately sent to nearby depots for modifications and the crew members were sent to either Bovington, the 94th Group at Bury St. Edmunds, or to gunnery school. Many were now sick of this training routine. Two crews were lost in the hop across the North Atlantic, and no information was ever received as to their tragic end.

JULY 1943



The ground echelons arrived between July 2 and 8. The next ten days were spent in hectic preparation for what we all knew was coming. It was a rude adjustment. Mud, tents, tannoy, dispersed areas, blackouts,—all this plus practice missions and air raid alerts. COMBAT—Here it is, pay off. Our first mission was assigned while many gunners were still at camp near the Wash. They rode all night by truck to make briefing for Mission No. 1. What mingled feelings of tension, relief, exhilaration, pride and fear were in our hearts as we watched our lumbering beauties marshal for take-off. Here was what we had spent frustrating months of preparation to accomplish. Now we were embarking on that endless cycle of load-em-up, take-em-off, bring-em-back, patch-em-up, load-em-up, again. The continual routine that would end only with complete capitulation of the enemy. So on to Fustung Europa—bring on the vaunted Luftwaffe.



The main entrance to what was to be our home for more than two years

But our first five missions were strikingly unsuccessful and illustrates the difficulties and dangers of daylight bombing in Europe. On our first three missions to Amsterdam, Holland, Bergen, Norway and Warnemunde, Germany, the targets were obscured by clouds. Finally on the third mission, out of sheer disgust and over enemy territory, the 385th dropped its bombs on German territory through the overcast. The fourth was more disastrous. On a mission to Wessermunde, Germany, led by McDonald, bad weather



Tents substituted for barracks for many of us in the early weeks at Great Ashfield



One of the Communal sites with our water tower

partially broke up our formations. Simultaneously the Luftwaffe pressed home heavy and damaging fighter attacks. It was our first experience with this form of opposition and although our gunners claimed 15 enemy aircraft destroyed, our losses were heavy. Three of our ships failed to return and the loss of these valiant crewman—the first of many from our unit—was a savage blow to our spirits. Losses were Major Springfield the 549th C.O., flying with Harris and the crews of Daniel and Duncan.

Mission No. 5 was worse. Colonel Van led again to Oschersleben when the same combination of bad weather and enemy fighters wreaked havoc on our formation. That day four aircraft did not return—crews of Noel, Robbins, Storr and Gurgel. Recapitulation to date—seven crews and not a bomb seen to drop on a target. Morale has hit rock bottom. The apprehension and discouragement of the crews was reflected in the ground personnel. Tempers were short, maintenance was shoddy, nerves on edge, abortions multiplied.

July 29th—our first successful mission and not a day too soon. Richard led 16 aircraft back to the fighter assembly plant at Warne-munde. Weather was CAVU and Captain O. B. Ross, the Group Bombardier guided the bombs of the entire group onto the target with devastating accuracy. 97% of the bombs hit with-

in the 1000 foot circle and all of them within 2000 feet of the aiming point, standards of measuring successful bombing. A near tragedy on this mission was averted when Grodi and crew of the 551st ditched in the North Sea but all were retrieved by the British Air-Sea Rescue Service; tangible evidence of the value of ground training. The boys were studying that ditching procedure.

Our sixth mission in a week was performed on the 30th. We could muster only 7 aircraft in commission and of these, five were forced to turn back before reaching enemy territory. The other two joined another formation. Thank goodness the next day was pay-day and no mission was scheduled.

AUGUST 1943



The brief respite from combat operations that came early in August was sorely needed. It was utilized to overhaul faulty operational and administrative procedures and to put our creaking machine back in order. We found by experience that many of the systems we used in training just do not stand up under the stress of combat. For instance, we discovered that it takes longer to marshal our aircraft in the dark but this was compensated by the fact that it did not take as long to feed crews before a mission. We completely reversed our system of personal flying equipment, pooling it in a central equipment room both for economy and to insure better care. Our barracks, mess halls and ablutions were in terrible shape and had to be put in order. Combat operations had also highlighted flaws in our training, so back to ground school.

Major Archie V. Benner was appointed Squadron Commander of the 549th to replace the fallen Major Springfield and Lt. Merrill J. Klein became Squadron Operations Officer.

Our next combat missions came in quick succession to snap our minds back to why we were here. On the 10th the mission was recalled because of bad weather; the next day, a mission to Bonn where bombing was inaccurate. Mission No. 9, led by Piper, was a highly successful bombing of the airdrome of Vitry en Artois. After much persuasive argu-

ment, several of the ground personnel have been allowed to fly as observers on recent missions. Captain Davenport flew as bombardier to Vitry en Artois and observers on other missions were Capt. Lewis, Lts. Kavalunas and Tuke from S-2 and Levine from Engineering.

The 17th of August saw the longest and most important mission to date—the first England to Africa shuttle mission. The target was the important aircraft assembly plant at Regensburg, Germany located near the Swiss Alps. This factory alone accounted for 30% of the single engine aircraft produced in Germany. The mission was dangerous but the importance of the target, plus the possibility that the first real penetration of the enemy fighter belt would catch their defenses off guard, made the risk worth taking.

All night long the ground crews were busy readying the aircraft for the long flight. The hundreds of vital chores that go into preparing the planes were performed with meticulous care. Engines, gas, bombs, oxygen, flares, flak-suits, ammunition, radio, guns, turrets—each item was checked and double-checked. Meanwhile mess personnel were preparing food to be carried on the long flight.

In the early morning blackness the operations officers started routing out the sleepy crews. The crews immediately sensed that this was something different when they were told to bring blankets and mess equipment. First to the combat mess for cup of coffee and hot cakes or cereal, if your stomach could stand it. Then to the briefing room where the tension mounted to culminate in a surprised roar when the target and destination were revealed.

The initial shock over, the crews proceeded methodically through their pre-mission schedule. Pilots to their special briefing on weather, marshalling, radio procedure and formation. Navigators procured their maps and copied their intricate route instructions and time schedules. Bombardiers got atmospheric data, target folders, checked out their bomb-sights from the vaults, and inspected their bombs. Radio operators received their codes, call signs and frequencies for the day. Gunners gave their 50 calibres a final cleaning; checked the ammunition belts, and inspected their turrets. Each crew member drew his personal flying equipment—electric suits, gloves, boots, helmet, oxygen mask—a malfunction of any would mean an abort of the aircraft—or possibly death in the rarefied atmosphere and 50 below zero cold of 23,000 feet.

Two hours after briefing the entire station vibrated with the rhythmic roar of the lumbering giants as the chocks were pulled and they taxied out in their intricate marshalling arrangement. Orange exhaust flames pierced the dark as the occasional screech of brakes rose above the steady roar of engines. Twenty-one aircraft, led by Lt. Col. Preston Piper flying with Capt. Vincent Masters and crew, lined up, checked the engines at full power,

and slid off into the black. Captain Septime S. Richard was deputy group leader. An hour later as the weary but satisfied maintenance crews trudged back to their mission huts from the mess hall, they could see the group in the gray dawn swing into formation high above and slowly glide off to take its place with the other groups.

Once assembled there was some difficulty in rendezvousing the various groups over southern England because of cloud formations that handicapped visibility—for awhile it looked as if the mission would be cancelled for there was very little gasoline reserve for the long trip. However, assembly was effected just before the gas gauges indicated that the mission must be cancelled, and the long column set out across the English Channel. This was the first time assembly was made above an overcast and it opened up the possibility of bombing in CAVU although England was clouded over.

The enemy did not wait long to show his intentions. The first wing was scarcely inside the French coast when out of the sun swept four ME-109s. And that was only the beginning. Next came the "Abbeville Crowd" with their distinctive yellow checkered noses, pressing their attacks home within spitting distance before rolling over on their backs and diving away leaving only their armor-plated bellies as targets for our gunners. The 385th was flying low group in the second combat wing. Normally the low group in a formation expected very serious losses from the Hun fighter tactics of either diving through a formation or of swooping up from underneath to attack the weakly protected underbellies of our own aircraft. This had given rise to the expression "Purple Heart Corner" for the low squadron of the low group. Fortunately for us today the superior marksmanship of our gunners, plus excellent formation flying, kept our unit from suffering terrific losses, because the entire task force was under almost continuous fighter attack from the French coast through several hundred miles of France and Germany and up to the Alps. As it was we lost two planes from our formation, Reichardt and Summers, before we reached the target.

As our wing neared the target and split up into groups for bombing formation a column of smoke could already be seen rising from the bombs of previous groups. The smoke became more dense as the 385th proceeded on the bomb run and finally was so thick that the lead bombardier, Lt. Louis Dentoni, felt that he could not place his bombs accurately on the target. With the full knowledge that his group would be subject to special fighter attack, Lt. Col. Piper ordered the bombs held and a new run made on the target. This time the bombs were directed squarely into the heart of the blazing inferno and added to the already severe damage inflicted.

Surprised, but not completely thwarted, at the southerly course taken up by our bom-

bers, the German fighters continued to attack until our formation reached the Alps. They had expected rich pickings from our crippled airplanes on the long return route to England. Our formation loosened as we let down to the calm waters of the sunny Mediterranean and skirted the west side of the islands of Corsica and Sardinia. Many had battle damage, others were very low on gas, some had wounded—some had died. One gunner had been killed by the 50 calibre bullet from the gun of a ship in his own formation. This was a sad lesson on gun fire control that we had to learn the hard way.

Luckily we were not molested further by the enemy and the more fortunate straggled on to North Africa. One aircraft in our group, Lt. Keeley and crew, was forced to ditch, but all members were picked up by an air rescue unit after a night in a rubber dinghy. There was utter confusion in Africa because of the empty gas tanks and the break-up of the formation. Several of our aircraft landed at the first field to come into view. Communications and other facilities were already taxed to the limit in this theater and for several days it was impossible to ascertain which aircraft were missing and how many. Most of the 385th airplanes had landed at Telergma. Capt. Arnold Levine, Group Engineering Officer, who had voluntarily made the flight, immediately organized his section to start preparing the aircraft for the return trip. Repairs were most difficult as every article had to be begged or scrounged and the mere process of getting from the line to the mess demanded great effort.



Col. Van accepts the deed to Great Ashfield from the R. A. F. and Squadron Leader Ned King

Meanwhile things were moving slowly at Great Ashfield. We scraped together 6 aircraft for a composite group to attack Woensdrecht but bad weather again prevented bombing. On the 20th, the field was officially transferred from the RAF to the USAAF. In a ceremony in front of the main hangar, Squadron Leader Ned King presented Col. Vandevanter with the deed to the field—the Union Jack came down and Old Glory now flew from



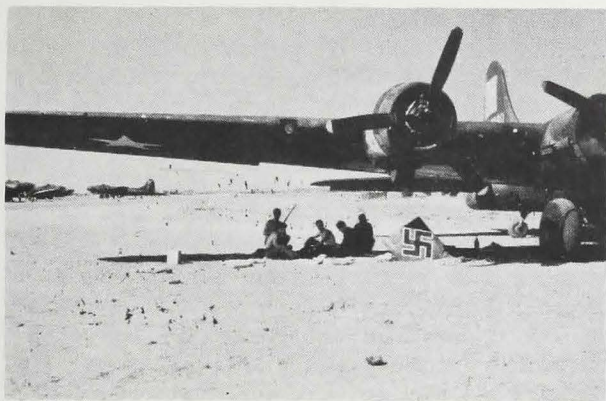
Crossing the Alps on the Africa Shuffle

the new flagpole. Squadron Leader King and his small group of RAF men, who had struggled against great obstacles to get our field in shape reluctantly bid farewell.

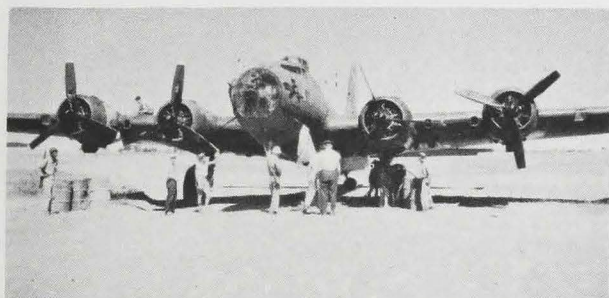
On the 24th Piper led the 13 serviceable aircraft in an attack on the submarine pens at Bordeaux on their return from North Africa. In their poor mechanical condition the airplanes barely were able to make England. Grodi was forced to abandon ship over France and the lead airplane with Piper and Masters was forced to ditch near Lands End, England.



Resting in Sunny Africa after Regensburg



Trying to keep cool in the only shade there was



Getting ready for the return home from Africa

After a hectic night in the water, eight of the crew of ten were rescued and taken to the hospital at Torquay.

The returnees brought souvenirs and great tales of Africa. However, we at home got the impression that they were glad to be based in England.

Two more missions completed our efforts for August. On the 24th six aircraft participated in a diversionary attack on the air-drome at Conches in conjunction with the return mission from Africa and on the 27th Mc-



One of the lads had to try a ride on a ship of the desert

Donald led 12 aircraft in an attack on what later turned out to be a V-2 site at Watten.

We were now getting some semblance of order around the field. The new mess hall near Site #7 had been opened to relieve the crowded mess conditions, but it also required more K.P.s. The 31st Station Complement Squadron under Capt. Eben Cleaves arrived. The officers club was organized and held its first dance to the music of a British Army band—a howling success. Captain Richard was elected President of the Officers Club with Chaplain Jim Kincannon, Vice President and Lt. Robert Belcher as Secretary-Treasurer. The emplacement of mud guard-rails along the major roads alleviated the mud situation. Our greatest concern was now many men were still quartered in tents with winter not far away.



Souvenirs from the Africa shuttle exhibited by Maj. (Lt.) Ruel Weikert and crew



More souvenirs from Africa

SEPTEMBER 1943

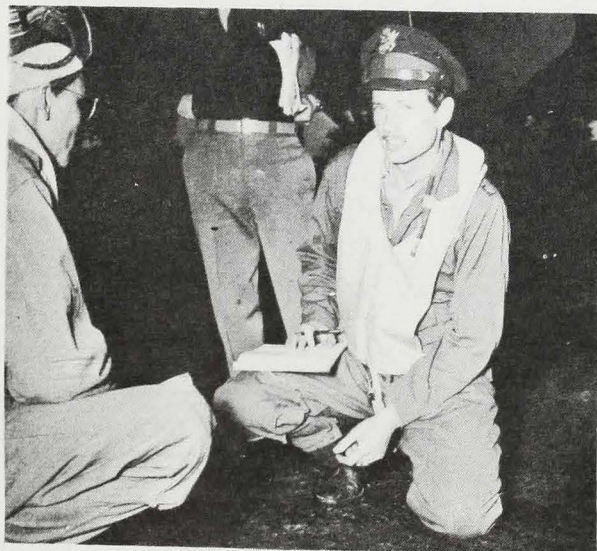


Mission No.	Day	Target	Leaders	No. of A/C	Crews Lost
15	6	Dieppe-Stungard	Vandevanter	21	
16	7	Watten	McDonald	21	
17	9	Beauvais	Riva	21	
18	11	Paris	Piper	22	
19	16	Chateau	Tesla	22	1 Sawyer
20	23	Kerlin-Bastard	McDonald	22	Yannello
21	25	Reims-Champaigne	Tesla	22	3 Keeley
22	27	Essen	Vandevanter	20	

The most impressive event in September was a result of our own bombs—but not against the enemy. In the pitch black early morning of the third, the crews and ground men readying the aircraft for a mission saw a sudden tongue of flame leap from Lt. Gregg's



All that was left as one of our ships blew up on its hardstand



Col. Van just returned from a mission

"Round Trip Ticket II" parked near the main hangar. The fire fighters arrived immediately but were unsuccessful in extinguishing the flame which spread from the oxygen in the upper turret, to the flares, to the gas and finally, to the bombs. Corp. Edward B. De-Wolf of the Fire Fighting Platoon was killed in brave performance of his duty by the explosion. The terrific impact sent a tower of flaming debris hundreds of feet in the air and the concussion affected every building on the base. The hangar, which had just been com-



Capt. (Lt.) Wayne Horr supervises the chalking up another enemy fighter shot down by the crew of the "Million Belle."



General Lemay presents the Silver Star to Lt. Col. Piper for his part in the Regensburg raid

pleted was stripped of both doors and much of the roofing. All aircraft within several hundred yards became total wrecks. The mission was scrubbed and the day spent in investigating damages and making stop-gap repairs.

Our morale was somewhat raised on the 5th by two performances of Adolphe Menjou and his USO troupe. We received several replacement officers. Major Ruffin C. Barrow was assigned as Base Adjutant, Capt. Wahl reported as Summary Court Officer and we received a Catholic Chaplain, Capt. Joseph Scherer.



Some of the members of the Ground Crew of "Slo-Jo" show off their pride and joy



Our ships begin to get their names that are soon to become well known

Two mid-air collisions, one on the 16th and the other on the 26th, were costly to the group when the crews of Schley, Yanello and Keeley were lost. S/Sgt. Adams of Yanello's crew was the only survivor. Schley's ship collided with a B-17 of another group returning from a mission, while Yanello and Keeley came together on let down from a mission to

Reims-Champagne. Lt. Sidney White, Operations officer of the 551st was flying with Yanello's ship. Both Yanello and Keeley had completed 11 operational missions. Both collisions occurred over England on the return and resulted from sudden fogging of windshields while flying in close formation.

Major General Ira C. Eaker of the Eighth Air Force made an inspection tour of the station with his party during the month and we seemed to pass muster.



Two admiring Ground Crew members inspect one of Annie's drawing on a ship



A Crew Chief checks battle damage with his Pilot—a close call that time

		Target	Leaders	No. of A/C	Crews Lost
23	4	Emden	Richard	26	
24	4	Dzier	Klein	26	
25	8	Bremen	Benner	22	
26	9	Marienburg	Wilson	23 1)	Bell
27	10	Manster	Hamilton	21 2)	Pettenger Whitlow
28	14	Schweinfurt	Vandevanter	22 1)	Vock- erath
29	16	Duren	Tesla	21	
30	20	Duren	Klein	22 1)	Fryer

OCTOBER 1943

This month was marked by a number of personnel shifts. The group began to get in the groove, although living quarters were still being built. Lt. Paul Schulz took over as Group Navigator early in the month to replace Capt. John A. Dewey, the outstanding original Group Navigator who was drowned in the ditching on the return from North Africa. Shortly afterwards Major Riva became Group

Training officer, a newly organized position necessitated by the strenuous training routine, with Capt. Herb Hamilton assuming command of the 551st. In order to improve the quality of our messes, Lt. Steve Bowen was appointed Station Mess officer to supervise all of the messes.

9 October 1943—This was our first bid for lasting fame in the "big leagues." Leading the whole Eighth Air Force effort to several targets in the East Prussia area, the 385th turned in what has been described by Gen. H. H. Arnold as the "most perfect exhibition of precision bombing." Our target was the important aircraft assembly plant at Marienburg. The group leader was Col. Russ Wilson, C.O. of the 4th Combat Wing, but the man of the hour was the ace squadron bombardier of the 551st, Louis "Little Doc" Dentoni. After a long, low altitude trip across the North Sea, Denmark, and the Baltic, Lt. Paul Schulz, the navigator brought the group in on a perfect course at 12,000 feet. Then Dentoni took over. The assembly plant, clustered in a compact area, presented an ideal target. The center of impact of our group, first over the target, was squarely on the assigned aiming point, and excellent formations provided a good bomb pattern. Only one string of bombs was out of the building area. Succeeding waves of bombs pulverized the target and destroyed its effectiveness for many months to come. Very little enemy action was encountered en route,



The 548th Bomb Squadron's combat men in the early days overseas



The 549th Bomb Squadron's combat men, led by A. V. Benner, stood long enough for a picture

but one of our aircraft was forced to turn back and crash land in enemy-held Denmark due to engine trouble over the North Sea.

At last the Red Cross Aero Club was complete and on the 11th it was opened. Appropriate ceremonies marked the occasion with Mr. Skarren, our Red Cross Director accepting the club from Col. Van. This addition to our recreational facilities was a big help to on station activities for the men. Caroline Buehler and her girls made their place attractive to the men and the Aero Club was crowded from morning to night.

October 14, 1943—a day long to be remembered in the annals of the 8th Air Force. The target was the vital ball and roller bearing factory at Schweinfurt, deep in the heart of the Fatherland. A destructive blow at this main source of German ball bearings would seriously affect production of all types of machinery. Especially picked lead crews had been briefed in great secrecy several weeks in advance, and they had studied the target until they knew every house and street corner in the town by heart. This was to be the second deep penetration of Germany and the first time the entire force had gone in and out through the German fighter defenses. Again

adverse weather handicapped assembly and almost succeeded in cancelling the mission. Assembly was finally made and the 3rd Division proceeded across the channel into a cloudless sky. The 385th, lead by Col. E. Vandevanter, flying with the crew of Capt. Sam Jordan, headed the third and last wing in the task force. Enemy fighters were on hand to greet the formations as they entered France. Swift ME 109s and Focke-Wulfs dashed in and out of our tight formations, their guns flashing explosive 20 millimeters. The ferocity of the attacks sometimes approached the fanatical as the Nazi fighters pressed them home to suicidal ranges. The attacks were almost continuous throughout the mission, lapsing for one group only when the enemy turned his entire attention momentarily to some other unit. It seemed like ages before we finally reached and crossed the Rhine. Smoke and heavy flak pointed out our target from some distance away. As briefed, the group made a long and precise bomb run, in spite of heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire. Lt. Brown, Squadron Bombardier of the 549th, dropped his incendiary bombs right in the middle of the smoking city, and the group preceded back over the long tortuous route home.



The 550th Bomb Squadron's combat men with their leader, Bill Tesla



The 551st Bomb Squadron's combat men, under Danny Riva, soon became identified as the Wolf Squadron.

On the mission the 8th Air Force suffered its heaviest losses to date—60 heavy bombers from a force of approximately 300. But these losses were not in vain. Schweinfurt was left a flaming chauldron from the bombs and incendiaries of successive waves of B-17s, and the specific targets were heavily damaged—some beyond repair. In addition, 8th Air Force guns claimed the destruction of more than 250 enemy fighters.

The 385th itself was extremely fortunate. All our aircraft returned safely. Our morale received a definite boost as we began to see some tangible results. This highly successful mission, coming on the heels of Marienburg, dealt the enemy a second disastrous blow, and our own group suffered only minor damage. Furthermore, our record among our own forces had been outstanding.

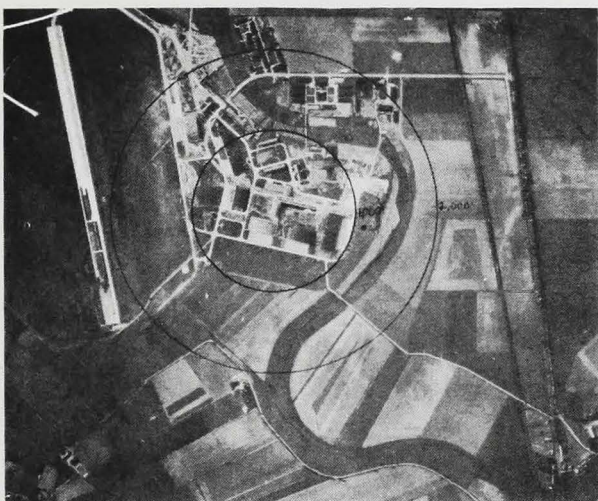
Several acres of farm land inside the perimeter were turned over to neighboring farmers for cultivation. The British certainly

made every inch of this tight little isle count.

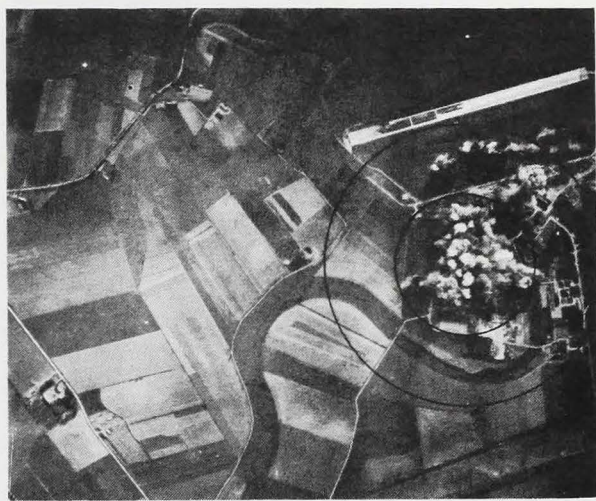
Lt. Ralph E. Robinson became the Station Police and Prison Officer on the 27th and the medics discovered that our water supply was below standard necessitating the installation of a chlorinating unit.

NOVEMBER 1943

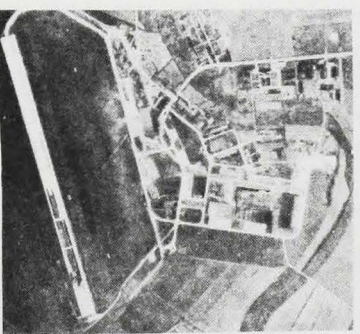
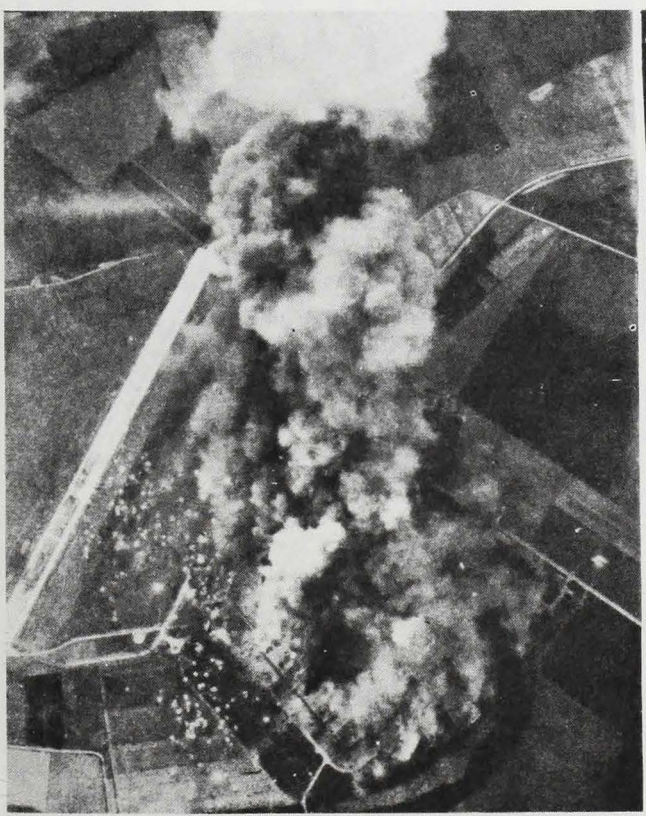
Mission No.	Day	Target	Leader	No. of A/C	Crews Lost
31	3	Wilhelmshaven	McDonald	27	
32	5	Gilsenkirchen	(Benner)	27	
33	11	Munster	(Richard)	20	1) Mc-Gowan
34	13	Bremen	Masters	21	1) Dawur-ske
35	16	Rjukan, Norway	Vandevanter	21	
36	18	Gilsenkirchen	Hamilton	22	
37	26	Paris	Castle	22	
38	29	Bremen	Klein		Yoder
39	30	Solingen	Riva	21	2) Swope



Marienburg before "Little Doc" Dentoni set his sight and let his bombs go followed by the Group and the rest of the Eighth Air Force.

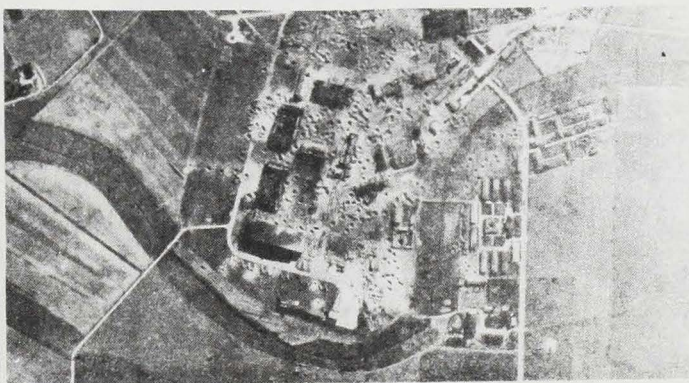


"The finest bit of precision bombing yet seen in this war" was the verdict of this job by the 385th



BEFORE: Approximately 150 planes were reported to be just before each air attack on Marienburg.

DURING: The bombing was a success.



Even the press acclaimed and explained the Marienburg raid



The Aero Club opens its doors and the snack bar is popular from morning to night

Several noteworthy events occurred in November ranging from the inception of Pathfinder bombing (radar bombing through overcast) to the temporary assignment of two flight nurses to the medics. It would be nice to be able to say that the introduction of PFF bombing was a huge success, but the opposite would be nearer the truth. There were many details to be worked out, not the least of which was the additional training of lead crew personnel in its proper use.

Early in the month Jerry paid the neighborhood one of his periodic visits, and although Great Ashfield went without damage, the surrounding countryside was lit up by flares like a Christmas tree and the railroad in Ipswich and a power plant in Stowmarket were hit.

Captain Marston S. Leonard joined the group to take over personnel duties, and just in time to help Lt. Frank and his crew celebrate the completion of their 25th mission and



Caroline Buehler, our Red Cross Aero Club hostess, with a group of her many admirers



S/Sgt. Lonsway receives the first of his decorations from then Col. Russ Wilson, our first Wing Commander. Lonsway later received the D. S. C., the country's second highest honor.



Earl Mazo, our P.R.O., congratulates Lt. Frank and the officers of the "Raunchy Wolf" for being the first crew to finish an operational tour with the Group.

their combat tour. This was our first crew to graduate and the event was marked emphatically. Besides Frank, Lts. Watson, Westerman and Farrel and T/Sgt. Moomaw all became charter members of the "Lucky Bastard Club."

Our group seemed destined to suffer from mid-air collisions, which always lower morale more than losses from enemy action because they seem so unnecessary. On the proverbial 13th, Lt. McCall's aircraft flying on a mission to Bremen collided with Lt. Dawurske's, McCall's tail clipping Dawurske's wing. Tail



The Red Cross Clubmobile pays us one of its regular visits



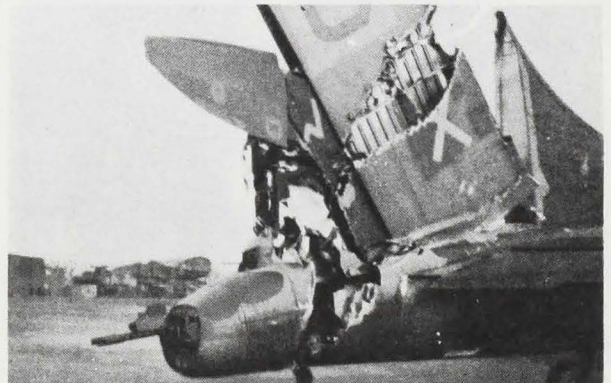
Ground crewmen "sweat-e'em-out"



Another Red Cross service was furnishing refreshments to the crews after they returned from a mission.



Another artistic triumph is viewed by Ground Crewmen



How this ship got back is hard to tell



The missions begin to pile up as the bombs on the noses of our ships tell



A scene fast becoming familiar to those on pass evenings

Gunner Sgt. William H. Butler was knocked out of McCall's ship. After continuing on the bomb run and dropping the bombs on the target, McCall and his copilot Pete Ginn managed to get the ship back to the English Channel, but at that point they had to ditch. All of the crew got into a dinghy with Ginn's help. McCall was reinjured in ditching and died shortly before the crew was picked up by Air Sea Rescue after seven hours in the water. Lt. Dawurske's crew went down on the collision.

The loss of four more crewmen came on the last day of the month when Capt. Smith's ship caught fire while assembling and the crew was forced to bail out over England.

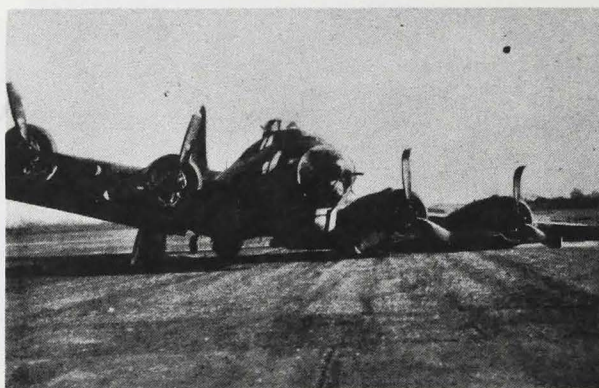
The continual cold weather resulted in a rapid dwindling of our coal supply and a general conservation program had to be instituted. General Mud was still in command, and remained so during the wet weather, but some progress was made with the use of a steam jenny on vehicles, roads and sidewalks. Our first Thanksgiving in the ETO was a success even if there wasn't enough turkey to go around.

DECEMBER 1943

Mission No.	Day	Target	Plane	No. of Crews
40	5	Bordeaux	B-24	21 1 Klueser
41	11	Emden	Wittgenstein	22 3 Jennings Poore Pollock
42	13	Kiel	(McDonald)	36 1 Fowles
43	16	Bremen	(Klein)	23
44	20	Bremen	Riva	21
45	22	Munster	Riva	20
46	24	Noball	Vandevanter	21
47	30	Ludwigshaven	Klein	21 2 (Edwards)
48	31	Caen	Tesla	2

Rain, fog and MUD predominated the opening days of the month and flying was restricted with the exception of one abortive attempt to bomb Bordeaux. Marryonovitch and crew ditched off Portugal on this one and a few days later were the envy of all their friends when they reappeared at Great Ashfield decked out in civvies complete with gray fedoras and top coats.

Christmas preparations were underway, particularly those to entertain a group of British War Orphans at the Aero Club. The Training section was extremely busy as the powers that be had "double-grouped" us, giving us twice as many crews and aircraft as our original Table of Organization called for. This put the pressure on our ground crews as we had no increase of maintenance personnel to take care of these additional planes. Beyond the initial grumbles heard, the boys were quick to realize that this meant many more bombs



This one made it in the hard way



The living sites are beginning to be more livable



Christmas approaching and Jack Frost paints the surrounding countryside in more festive garb for the season.

going down on German industry and a sooner return home.

Besides the increased number of ships to maintain and repair, Engineering had been faced with the wet season and the problem of rust and freezing of damp parts at high altitudes. The longer we were here the more we were impressed with the ingenuity of the American soldier.



The Catholic Chapel is appropriately decorated for our first Christmas in the ETO



Even a touch of Christmas in the corner of a barracks



These long winter nights find the men staying close to the little stoves. Capt. John Murray and Maj. (Capt.) Charlie Hirt enjoy a game with barrack mates kibitzing.



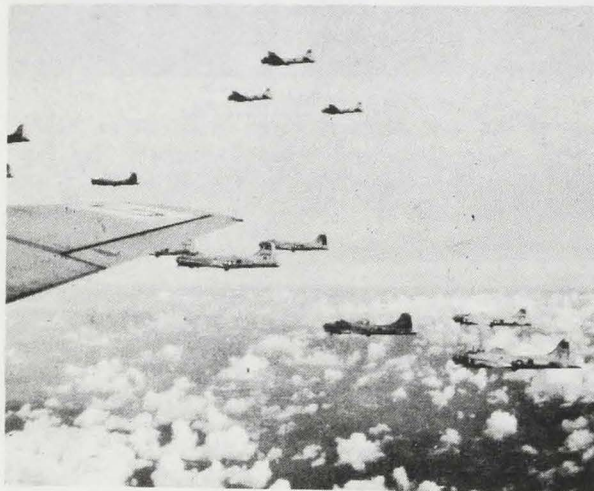
Two of the war orphans given a Christmas party at the Aero Club and later "adopted" by the 538th Bomb Squadron. Shown here with First Sgt. Joe McLavish.

We seemed to be making some progress in handling PFF missions. Our lead crews were all at Snetterton Heath where all the 3rd Division's Pathfinder ships were located temporarily. Eventually each wing would have its own and still later we were due to have both our crews and ships back on our own base. There just weren't enough ships and trained personnel to go around to handle them at the moment.

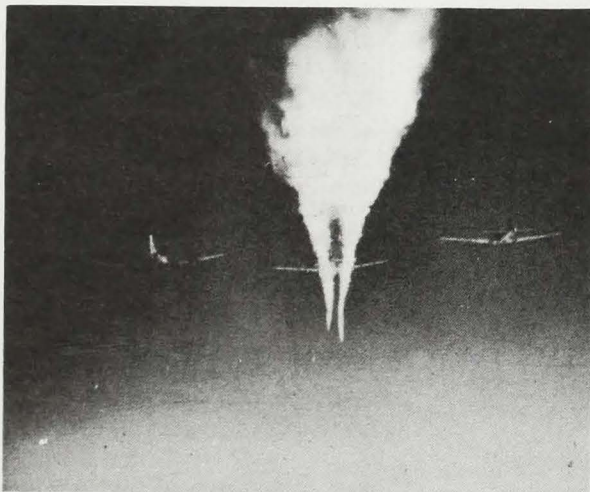
Our first Christmas in the ETO. How many more sacred birthdays were we to spend far from our beloved families? The entertainment for the War Orphans was a great success with improvised fun, movies, Santa Claus and turkey highlighting the event. It was hard to tell whether our lads or the kids had the better time. This was a social month finally coming to a close with the usual celebrations to see the New Year in. The Officers Club held a dance and there was a USO show in the theatre wing of the mess hall. It was a wet night all around.



It's a slow process assembling and climbing steadily



Formed at last and headed across the coast of England bound for Germany



Target markers from the Pathfinder ship

Mission No.	Day	Target	Leader	No. of A/C	Crews Lost
49	4	Kiel	(McDonald)	26	1
50	5	Bordeaux	(Horn)	18	1
51	7	Ludwigshafen	Richard	22	1
52	11	Osnabruck	(Riva)	41	1
53	14	Belmeuil	(Witherspoon)	24	1
54	21	Nobell	Walls	36	1
55	24	Frankfurt	(Bexfield)	41	1
56	29	Frankfurt	(Klein)	41	1
57	30	Frankfurt	(Masters)	41	1
			(Hamilton)	41	1
			(Klein)	41	1
			(Vandevanter)	41	1
			(Jorden)	41	1

The calendar isn't the only thing that changed this month for it marked several changes in the 385th "line-up". Lt. Col. Goldman was the first to leave with Jim Lewis taking over as Ground Executive. Capt. McWilliams assumed Lewis' duties as S-2. Later in the month Col. Piper left to return to his old love—fighters, and Col. McDonald stepped up to become Deputy Group Commander. Danny Riva moved over to be Group Operations (S-3) and Sep Richard took over Training from Riva. We were lucky to acquire Major Tom Kenny from the 96th Group and he took over the 548th Squadron from Richard. Another of the "originals" to leave for new assignments was Earl Mazo, our capable Public Relations Officer, who joined the staff of the "Stars and Stripes".

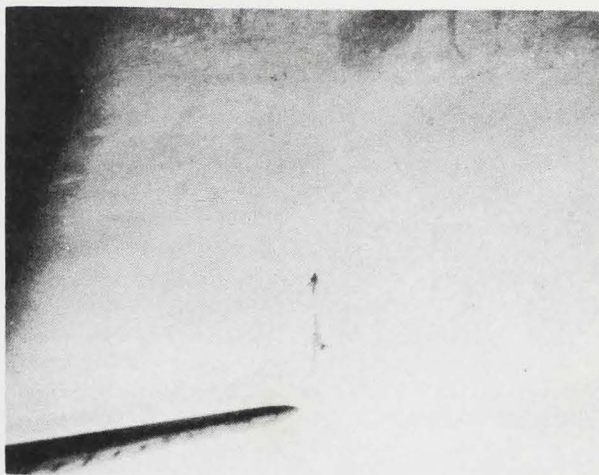
The tempo of our missions began to increase, not so much in number but rather the number of aircraft we were putting up on each mission. Thus, our number of sorties was greater to say nothing of the all important tonnage of bombs dropped on the enemy. We were lucky to get in a visual bombing or two this month and the bombardiers again had satisfied smiles on their faces. Again "Little Doc" Dentoni gave evidence of his aiming



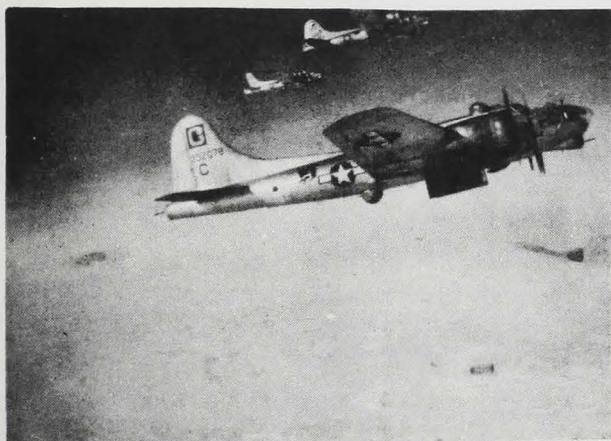
The planes of the Group begin assembly on a mission

ability by making a perfect score on a mission to Belmesnil on the 14th. Lt. O'Brien also racked up a good score for the group earlier in the month when we returned to Bordeaux.

The middle of the month saw another spell of wet, rainy, foggy weather when all flying was done on the ground. It did give us a chance to get caught up on our maintenance and inspections. Administrative procedures were overhauled, particularly our personnel system. With the increase in crews and airplanes without additional ground personnel, our manpower situation had become critical. The Personnel section undertook a complete study of every job on the base and an analysis of how our available manpower was being utilized. There were so many jobs on the base that required men and for which no provision was made in the Table of Organization of any of the fourteen units on the station that a well organized system was mandatory. Another obstacle to our full use of those we did



This one didn't get home as it broke in two pieces. The tailgunner rode the tail section down and lived to tell the tale in P. W. Camp.



Bombbay doors open and we're on the bomb run



Our ships come home and begin to peel off preparing to land



Bombs away!

have, was the manhours lost from respiratory infections. The cold damp weather, particularly on the line at night took a heavy toll on our already small number of maintenance personnel. Crew chiefs and their assistants had to take care of two instead of just one airplane with the result that sometimes our maintenance was shoddy in spite of every effort to the contrary.

Mission No.	Day	Target	Leader	No. of A/C	Crews Lost
58	3	Wilhelmshaven	(McDonald Jacques)	41 2	(Morse Heuser)
59	4	Frankfurt	(Benner Witherspoon)	39 2	(Horstman Mac-Adams)
60	5	Villacoublay	Tesla	21	
61	6	St. Andre	Masters	21	
62	8	Weisbaden	Hamilton	21 1	(Papich)
63	10	Brunswick	Riva	19	
64	12	Noball	Witherspoon	36	
65	20	Tutow	Richard	36 1	(Ruby Patches)
66	21	Diepholz	(McDonald Bextfield)	31	(Pease Hutchinson)
67	24	Rostock	(Kenny Tesla)	33 2	(McIlveen Terrace)
68	25	Regensburg	Benner	34	
69	28	Noball	Klein	21 2	(Mark Kenman)
70	29	Brunswick	Martin	22	

Although this was a short month, there was plenty of action crammed into its twenty-nine days. Twelve missions were run and fortune smiled on the bombardiers as five of them were visual targets and we made the most of them. Lts. Runyan, O'Brien and Wheaton turned in some fine bombing on Villacoublay, Noball and Regensburg. At last we received some long range fighter support and the long jaunt to Regensburg was not the running battle it had been last August. Our own fighters partooked the sky all the way in and out with the result that we didn't lose a single crew on the mission.

Besides the usual raids to "Happy Valley" we had two long hauls to Tutow and Rostock, with the balance for the month be-



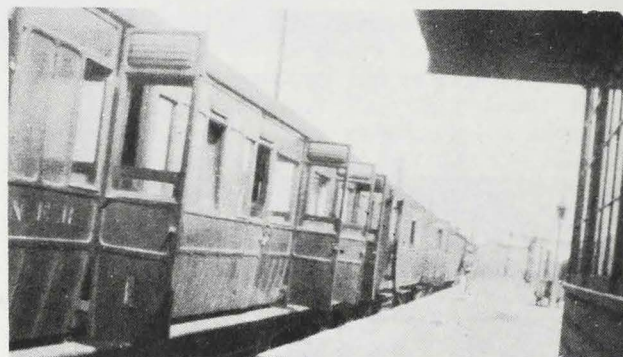
One year old!

Wait a Minute

IS YOUR UNIFORM OK?
ARE YOUR DOG TAGS AROUND
YOUR NECK?
HAVE YOU AN ETO CARD?
IS YOUR PASS SIGNED?
HAVE YOU A SUPPLY OF PROS?
4 OUT OF 5 HAVE IT.
BE CAREFUL



A gentle reminder to those going out
the main gate on pass



A familiar sight by now—the train at Elmswell
for Ipswich and London



Or is your choice Stowmarket for your pass?

ing visits to rocket sites in France. In spite of our good fortune in weather, the group still seemed to be jinxed with mid-air collisions. Four more crews were lost in such accidents over Europe. On the 3rd the crews of Lts. Morse and Heuser went down on a raid to Wilhelmshaven while on the 21st, Lt. Pease and crew were lost when their ship collided with that piloted by Lt. Hutchinson. Hutch and five members of his crew were flying the last mission of their operational tour before returning to the States. Three days later we lost another 25th mission crew when Capt.

Clarence McIlveen and crew went down on the mission to Rostock. The 550th Squadron lost another key man when their Operations Officer Capt. Gerald Binks went down with Lt. Punches and crew on the raid to Diepholz.

As if the fates weren't satisfied with all this, like Leap Year and the extra day this month, they added two ditchings for good measure. Lt. Inglis and crew were luckier than Lt. Herron's crew as Inglis' were all picked up by Air Sea Rescue. On the 13th,



Social life on the station is in full swing—
on Aero Club dance



Last minute strategy for an important
mission with the lead crew

Herron's ship suffered a direct flak hit which wounded several crew members, knocked the co-pilot unconscious, put two engines out of commission along with shattering the instrument panel, interphone and oxygen system. With these useless and several control cables shot away, the third engine went out over the French coast so that ditching was necessary. Herron made a good landing in the channel but the wounded were unable to care for



Ground Crew men talk over things before
take-off of their ship



Capt. Gerald Binks, 550th Squadron's Operations
Officer who went down this month

themselves. Herron systematically pulled six men into the dinghy after he inflated it. For 2½ hours he gave first aid to the wounded although his own hands were wounded by flak. Finally Air Sea Rescue picked them up after three crew members were lost at sea. For his heroic action, Lt. Herron received the DSC, the second highest honor our country awards.

With the exception of one day when our water system went on the blink, we settled down into a steady routine all geared into operational requirements. We did celebrate our first birthday as a group with a cake to mark the occasion, and Jerry paid a visit to the vicinity. If it were not for the slight covering of snow on the ground when Jerry came, you'd have thought it was Fourth of July night, for there was a great display of pyrotechnics by the ack-ack batteries in the surrounding neighborhood and Jerry added to it by dropping several spectacular flares.



MARCH 1944

The speculation that had run rampant through the group for the past several weeks, finally was ended when we made our first appearance in the skies over Berlin. In fact before the month was over "Big B" took its place as a regular and frequent run, although by no means an easy one. This month we lost several personnel, including such key people as Bombardier Dentoni and Navigator Jack Crotty, over Hitler's capitol.

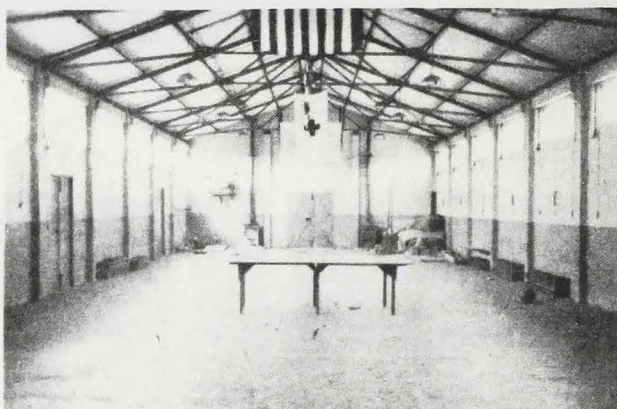
The honors for the first to visit Big B went to Herb Hamilton and Frank Bexfield when they led our ships there on the 3rd. Weather forced the mission to be abandoned but excitement ran high among the crews just as if the bombs had been dropped on the Unter Den Linden. For three successive days the 385th led the Eighth Air Force to Berlin, finally successfully bombing on the third day. Altogether we visited Berlin six times during the month including one visual bombing run on the 8th when Dick Wheaton, flying with Witherspoon in the lead ship, scored 82% within 2000 feet of the aiming point.

Three other missions were accomplished in CAVU weather and the bombardiers made the most of the opportunity with Wheaton, Runyan and Beveridge doing particularly effective jobs. Eighth Air Force tabulations for the past three months showed that the 385th led the Air Force in bombs within the 2000 foot circle while we were second in the 1000 foot circular error class.

With better weather in sight and spring just around the corner, operations picked up considerably and continued to do so from here



"Big B" at last feels the weight of our bombs



The gym completed at last and ready for use



Chaplain Jim Kincannon welcomes Capt. Ray Williams to the Group as the two of them sweat home the boys on the line.



Teacher and pupil hold a reunion in the Air Force. Lt. Jim Hestand greets his old teacher in civilian life, S/Sgt. Jimmy Beaver.



The boys gulp their coffee after returning from "Big B"



Our leading Bombardiers check over the bomb run, Maj. O. B. Ross, Group Bombardier, talks it over with Capt. Beveridge, Runyon and Stetson.



Lt. Hart displays his fondness for "Chicago"



A fine bit of bombing, being careful not to land on innocent Frenchmen, to say nothing of the Chartres Cathedral.

on. Now that we had our extensive fighter support and could penetrate deeply into Germany effectively, morale hit a new high so that the increase of the length of the operational tour to 30 missions from 25 had but few grumbles from the crews.

The social season of Great Ashfield was in full swing and Special Services, the Red Cross and the Officers Club were very busy in arranging entertainment of all sorts. With the completion of the gymnasium on the sixth, a basketball tourney among the units on the base got underway very quickly and the rivalry was keen. Two Aero Club dances, three Squadron parties, two Officers Club dances and a weekly Bingo Party filled our spare time. A Hill-Billy Band which Special Services had been sponsoring played at Wetherden's "Salute to the Soldier Week" celebration.

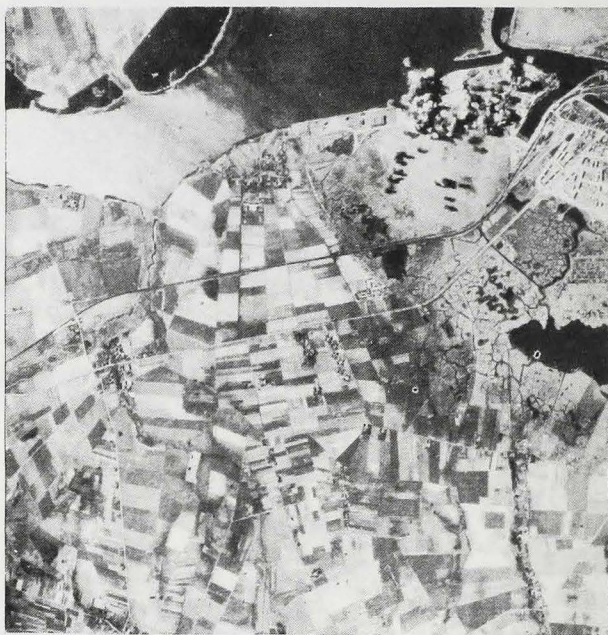
Capt. John Martin, the genial flight Surgeon of the 551st left us to become Asst. Division Surgeon with Capt. Ray Williams joining us and taking over Martin's old job. Lt. Jesse Ashlock had a little extra work one night just after he took over as Senior Flying Control officer, when 11 RAF Lancasters landed at Great Ashfield when weather had closed in their home base before they could return from a mission. The big ships of the RAF caused quite a sensation among those on the line and the boys crowded around for a closer view.

APRIL 1944

Mission No.	Day	Target	Leader	No. of Crews
86	7	Beck	Hamilton	35
88	8	Quackenbruck	Bestfield	30
87	9	Handorf	McDonald	31
89	10	Warnemunde	Kelley	31
		Deerst-Schal	Wanderer	35
89	11	Wunsburg	McDonald	29
90	12	Wunsburg	Wilterspoon	32
91	13	Wunsburg	Masters	34
92	14	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
93	15	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
94	16	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
95	17	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
96	18	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
97	19	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
98	20	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
99	21	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
100	22	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
101	23	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
102	24	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
103	25	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
104	26	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
105	27	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
106	28	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
107	29	Wunsburg	McDonald	36
108	30	Wunsburg	McDonald	36

In spite of the month opening with poor bombing weather, good weather rapidly approached and the bombardiers anticipated more visual bombing. Our bombing in recent weeks had been excellent and the boys were anxious to keep their place as one of the top groups in the ETO on that score.

The tempo of missions stepped up with even a doubleheader on the 27th. This increase in number of missions had everyone talking and guessing when the invasion would take place. On the 10th, everyone was sure that D Day had arrived as all passes, leaves and furlough were suddenly cancelled, but after 48 hours the ban was lifted. 18 missions with 12 of them visual kept Flying Control



Back to Warnemunde to hit it again!



The 100th mission party in the hangar was a quiet one after the day's mission



Our bombers against the English sky
on their way out

busy. 471 aircraft were dispatched on operational missions while an additional 435 took off on non-operational flights. Beveridge, Runyan, Ross, Stetson, Thornock and Cole all turned in some very excellent bombing to keep our record high. The fact that such a high percentage of our bombs were dropping so close to the aiming point also meant that our formation flying was better and much tighter so that the bomb hits were concentrated to say nothing of much better defense



Friendly fighters at long last to escort us all the way—an 8th Air Force P-51 escort on our wing



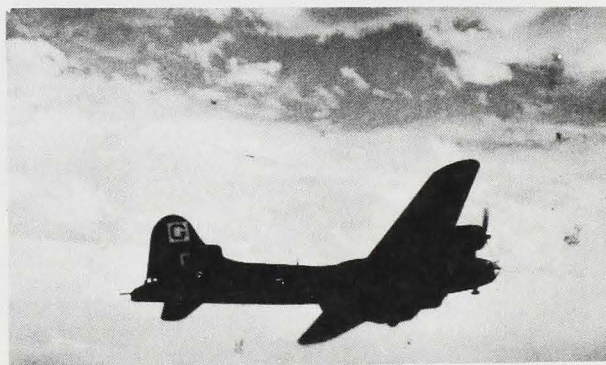
For the 100th time—bombs away!



A few tried to whoop it up at the 100th mission party to cheer things up

against enemy fighter attacks. The vaunted Luftwaffe had not been so bothersome lately after the shellacing he took during the winter months and the extensive cover given us by our own fighters.

Early in the month construction was started on a 35mm. projection booth for the theatre so that we could discard our very much over-worked 16mm. projectors. We were anticipating the premiere of these machines and screen.



A ship comes home as the sun fades

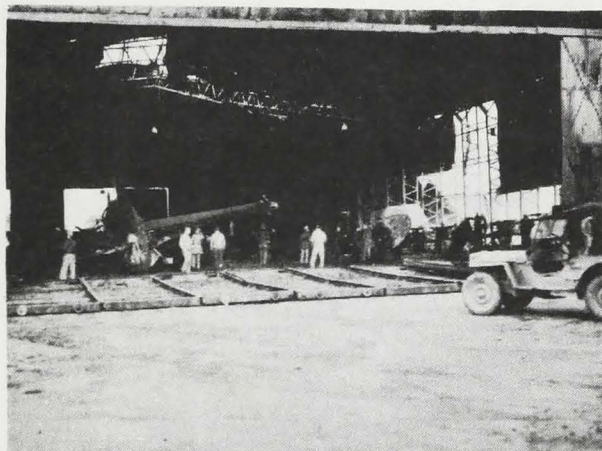


The last of the Group's formation peels off to come in for a landing

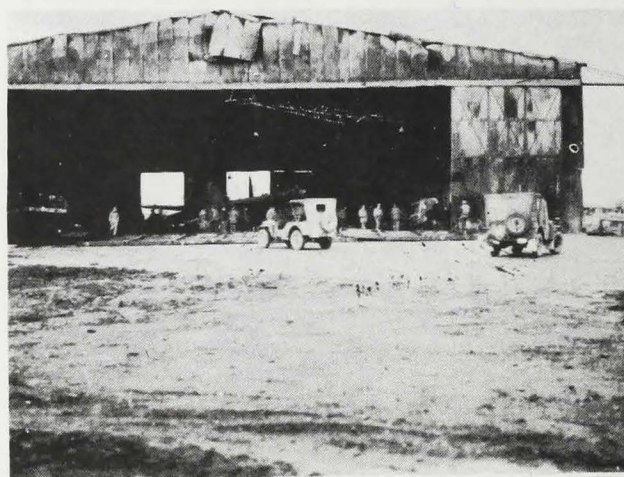
Preparations were made for a 100th mission celebration toward the end of the month to be held in the Number One hangar. That day seemed doomed from the start, first with our entertainment being unable to journey from Ipswich because of a pre-invasion embargo on transportation. Then Mission No. 100 turned out to be the worst licking the group had ever suffered at the hands of the Luftwaffe. Seven crews went down this day, the 29th. Now we knew how the 100th Bomb Group must have felt on some of their missions. Our difficulty stemmed from the fact that a Pathfinder ship from another group was substituted for one of our own. The navigator, apparently inexperienced at leading, wandered some 40 miles out of the bomber stream while navigating over the overcast on the way in to "Big B". Jerry fighters took swift advantage of our greatly outnumbered force although our gunners claimed 48 enemy fighters destroyed. With no friendly fighter support, our formation was out in left field and Jerry rarely misses such an opportunity. The beer party celebration fell flat and spirits were exceedingly low over this loss, but it did re-emphasize that we could not afford to make such mistakes for the Luftwaffe was far from finished.

No.	First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Leader	No. of C.
101	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Hamilton	22
102	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Oliva	21
103	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	Shaw	21
104	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	Chapman	21
105	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	Chapman	21
106	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	Chapman	21
107	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	Chapman	21
108	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	Chapman	21
109	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	Chapman	21
110	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	Chapman	21
111	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	Chapman	21
112	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	Chapman	21
113	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	Chapman	21
114	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	Chapman	21
115	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	Chapman	21
116	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	Chapman	21
117	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	Chapman	21
118	120	121	122	123	124	125	126	Chapman	21
119	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	Chapman	21
120	134	135	136	137	138	139	140	Chapman	21

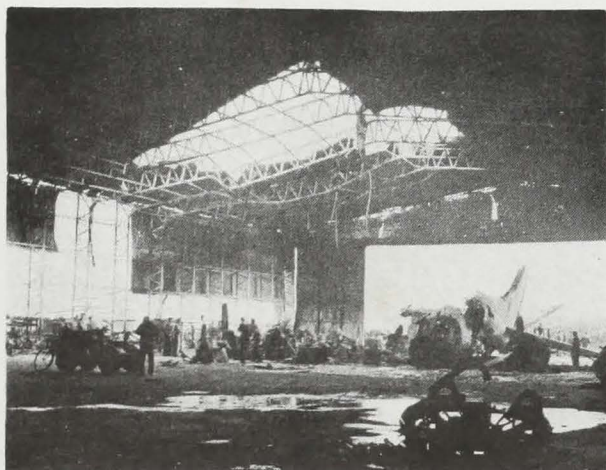
MAY 1944



Bomb damage done by enemy sneak raider to Hangar No. 1



Everyone eagerly inspects the damage to Hangar No. 1



Interior of Hangar No. 1 after enemy bomb landed on it



The remains of the B-17 the Fire Department couldn't get out

The month started out much poorer for bombing than last month and we ran only one mission during the first week and that one resulted in no bombing as the weather turned against us. A Division recall and then more bad weather before we really began to roll. For seven days in a row our planes took off and we bombed on all but one mission. The pressure was really on. We were roaming the skies of Europe from Brussels to Zwickau, from Leon-Couvrant to Berlin. The longer daylight hours were a big help to our overworked ground crews and our percentage of aircraft in commission had risen rapidly. Maintenance had been one of our biggest problems during winter months. In addition to the factors of dampness and cold, there was dark-



Our bombs landing on the target at Zwickau—
a mission for which we were cited



Another blow to the enemy—this time Königsborn

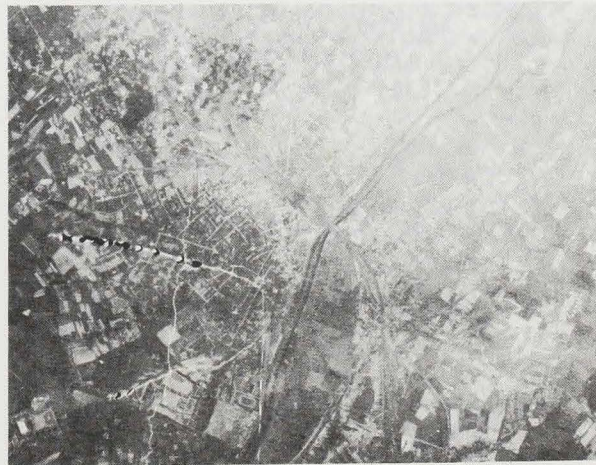
ness. The planes would fly most of the daylight hours, leaving the repairs and servicing to be done after sundown—if there was a sun.

The hanger space was so limited that only a few aircraft could be handled in them. And of course the blackout restrictions prevented anything but the most meagre lights around the airdrome.

What was still difficult for the hard pressed ground crews though was missions that were scrubbed at take-off after all the night's work had been done. This happened for four successive days after a week of missions, just doubling the amount of work for the Ordnance crews who had to unload as well. Three more missions in quick succession and rumors were flying.



The target at Zwickau is left a smoking ruin



The great marshalling yards at Hamm receives a
thorough going over

One of our most outstanding missions occurred on the 12th. This was the mission to Zwickau, Germany, in which the group battled through heavy opposition to bomb an important target successfully. It was led by Col. Vandevanter and for our job we received the following citation:

The assigned high priority target on this date was the aircraft repair factory of G. Basser, K. G. On this highly successful eight hour operation, the 385th Bombardment Group (H) led the Division forces and the 4th Combat Bombardment Wing. The flight was a distance of twelve hundred and seventy (1270) miles at an altitude of 18,000 feet. Nine hundred and sixty-five (965) miles, consuming four hours and forty-six minutes flying time, were over strongly defended enemy territory. Of the 95,000 pounds of bombs dropped on this visual operation by the nineteen (19) aircraft comprising the lead group, 97% struck within 2000 feet of the preassigned aiming point, 51% within 1000 feet and 18% within 500 feet.

Between 100 to 150 hostile fighters began to attack the force just south of the Coblenz Area. So determined were their head-on attacks, in waves of 20 to 30, that friendly fighters were unable to break up their formations. The lead airplane of the lead squadron of the high composite group of the 4th Combat Wing was knocked out of formation. Flying in the high squadron position, the deputy leader with nine airplanes of the 385th Group, quickly took over as the lead squadron and reformed the high group, thus preventing the formation from breaking up and falling prey to attacking enemy fighters. A wing formation, trailing the 4th Combat Bombardment Wing, was broken up and dispersed by these same hostile fighters. While skillfully and courageously maintaining its own aircraft in close defensive formation in the face of this fierce enemy opposition, the 385th Group purposely slowed down the entire division formation until groups of the straggling wing could reform. As a result of these attacks and anti-aircraft fire from enemy ground positions, eighteen (18) out of the twenty-eight (28) airplanes belonging to the 385th Bombardment Group sustained battle damage. All participating aircraft of the 385th Group bombed the target. On the return journey, two (2) B-17's were lost as a result of enemy action. Thirteen (13) officers and men are missing in action. The 385th Bombardment Group (H) is officially credited with destroying fifteen (15) enemy aircraft, probably destroying three (3), and damaging two (2) more.

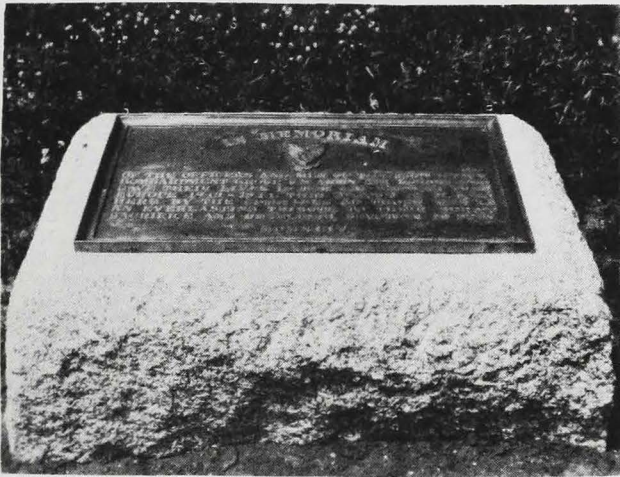
Undeterred by the vicious enemy fighter attacks and anti-aircraft fire, the officers and enlisted men of the 385th Bombardment Group (H) displayed extraordinary heroism in fighting their way to the target. The determination, devotion to duty and total disregard for personal safety above and beyond that of all other units participating in the mission are in keeping with and add notably to the highest and most cherished traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States.

Early in the morning, of the 23rd, before dawn and as the ships were being loaded for a mission and the crews were finishing briefing, we had a surprise visitor. A German sneak raider came in over the field without warning and dropped seven 500 pounders along the perimeter track apparently using the guide lights as markers. Only one bomb did any real damage and that one landed on poor old Number One hangar that had previously been damaged from our own bombs exploding and had just been repaired. Jerry's bomb destroyed one ship that was in the hangar while another one was saved through the courageous efforts of Lt. Barone and his Fire Department. The base sounded like Fourth of July with all the 50 calibre ammunition going off in the hangar from the ship that was hit and set fire to. Several narrow misses were made by the other bombs the raider dropped, one of them just missing a hardstand and a loaded gasoline trailer parked there. Some ships on the 550th's cloverleaf hardstand were spattered with clods of earth blown high by the bombs landing in the surrounding fields and these ships were withheld from the mission to be checked carefully. Other planes were quickly loaded in their place and the mission took off on schedule. We were extremely fortunate, for if Jerry's bombardier had dropped a little to his right, on the crowded briefing room, the results would have been tragic for us.

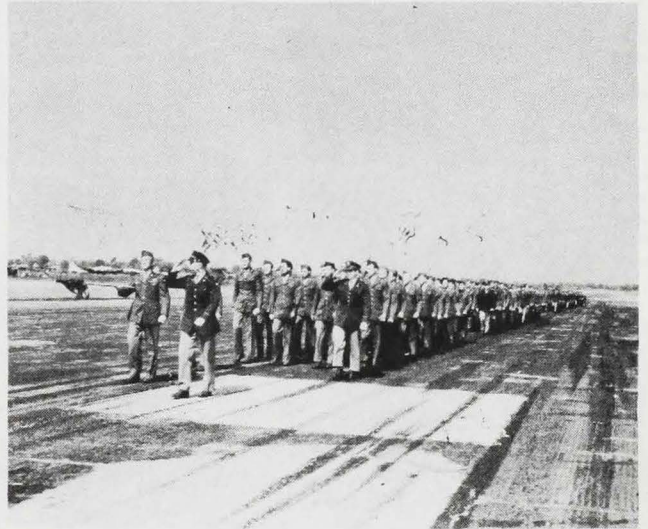
Two more missions followed without interruption, making it six in seven days without a rest for anyone. Excitement was high but the added work did not seem to bother anyone, for the big day seemed near—the day we all had been waiting for. On the 26th, we got a much needed stand-down, although the rest of the Division was out in force.

We closed out the month of May with five missions in a row, hitting particularly the German transportation system some hard knocks. Everyone was on edge with the tension and expectancy mounting each day. On Memorial Day, we dedicated a memorial plaque in front of Station Headquarters to those from our group who had given their lives in this all-out war. The dedication was preceded by a large parade and review attended by Maj. Gen. Lemay and participated in by all personnel on the station. Music was provided by

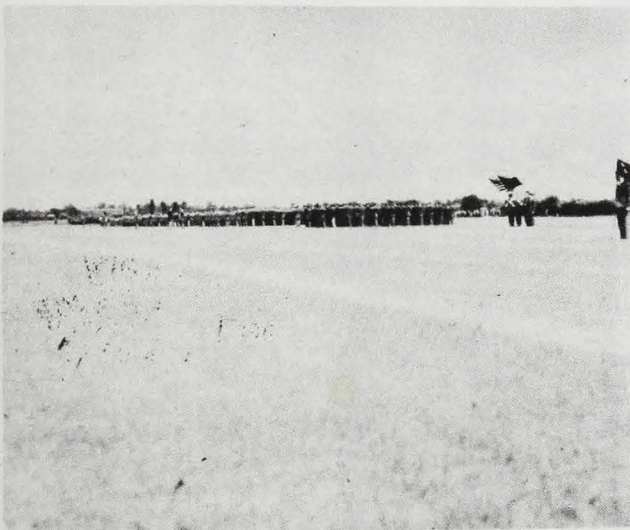
British Army Band from Bury. The spectacle was quite impressive and amazingly well performed considering that it was our first parade in the ETO. Such ceremonies had previously been banned due to the possibility of enemy bombing and strafing.



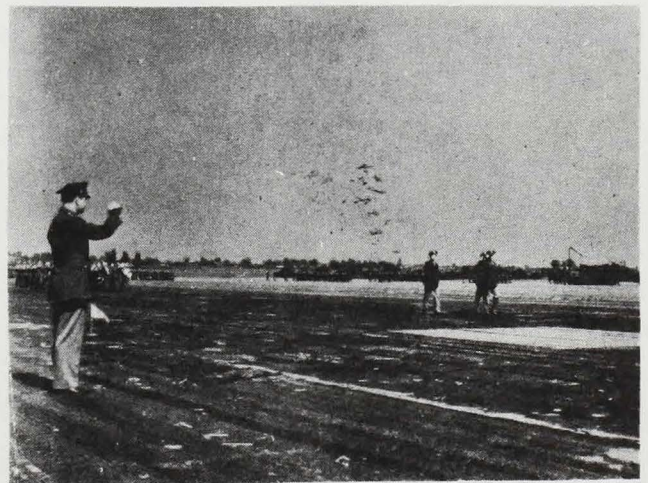
The Memorial Plaque dedicated on Memorial Day, 1944, with Gen Lemay present. The Plaque was transplanted to the churchyard in Great Ashfield for a permanent memorial to those of the Group who gave up their lives. The stone for the monument was quarried in Cornwall and brought to Great Ashfield.



One of the Squadrons passing Gen Lemay with eye right during the Memorial Day parade



The group prepares to pass in review by Maj. Gen. Lemay



Gen. Lemay returns the salute of Col. Vandevanter during the Memorial Day parade

VAN'S VALIANTS

MAY



ELLIOTT VANDEVANTER JR.
COMMANDING OFFICER



L. E. KENNY
Maj. SAC, Operations



A. D. BUNN
Maj. SAC, Operations



W. H. SLA
Maj. SAC, Operations



H. H. TON
Maj. SAC, Operations



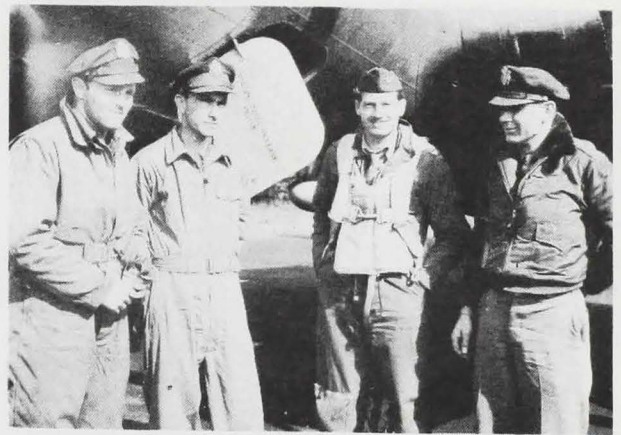
D. H. TON
Maj. SAC, Operations

ROSTER of OFFICERS

1944



Mission No.	Day	Target	Target	No. of A/C	Crews Lost
120	2	Bouhen-Winne	Benner, Tesla	29	
121	2	Everour-Conches	Richard	19	1—Schock
122	3	Le Postal	Cerrone	13	
123	3	Bulogne	Witherspoon	11	
124	4	Versailles	Shankle, Faroe	20	
125	5	French Coast	Herron, Le casse	26	
126	5	Coen	Vandevanter	37	
127	6	Angelen	Bexfield	37	
128	6	Angelen	Masler	10	
129	6	Angelen	McDonald	23	
130	6	Angelen	Tesla	23	
131	6	Angelen	Hamilton	18	
132	6	Angelen	Faroe, Benner	18	
133	11	Le Tou	Richard	24	
134	11	Le Tou	Cerrone	24	
135	12	Montalder	Witherspoon	23	
136	14	Flammar	Shankle, Ben	30	
137	14	Juanne	field, Locasse	30	
138	15	Harover	Castle, T	29	
139	15	Harover	Herron	29	
140	15	Harover	Benner	29	
141	15	Harover	McDonald	29	
142	15	Harover	Richard	29	
143	15	St Jean d'Angely	Cerrone	18	
144	20	Fallerstien	Hamilton	38	
145	20	Wingsborn	Shankle	38	
146	21	Berlin	Vandevanter	37	2—Lohmeyer
147	21	Berlin	Bexfield	37	2—Lohmeyer
148	22	Paris	Tesla	26	
149	23	Edenay	Faroe	26	
150	24	Western Front	Benner	13	
151	24	Western Front	McDonald	16	
152	25	French Special	Hamilton	35	
153	25	French Special	Bexfield	35	
154	28	Le Bourget	Witherspoon	17	
155	29	Bohlen	McDonald	17	
156	29	Bohlen	Tesla	17	



Col. Van and Capt. Jack Batty wear satisfied smiles on the return from the first mission on D-Day



Another of our ships blew up on its hardstand. This damaging Hangar No. 2



Debris is scattered for some distance. The B-17's in background are only war-weary ships being scrapped.

If it may be said that a bomb group can "come of age" and assume the characteristics of maturity, then June is the month in which our change to adulthood took place. This is not to say that the group had not functioned well and efficiently in the past and that the change was noticable only because operations were well carried out, but rather that in June the group experienced its busiest month without flurry, fuss or even momentary breakdown. The invasion of Normandy early in June meant more numerous and varied types of missions. However the group met new procedures and problems with the dispatch, efficiency and coolness of a mature and experienced veteran.

The records from Flying Control give striking evidence of the drastic increase in operations for the month: 717 aircraft were dispatched on operational missions, an increase of 154 over May's previous high of 563. Since the effort, care, experience and preparation put in to readying each plane for flight is a process of almost infinite detail, such an increase is in reality a figure whose connotation is as different from the bare term as night is from day.

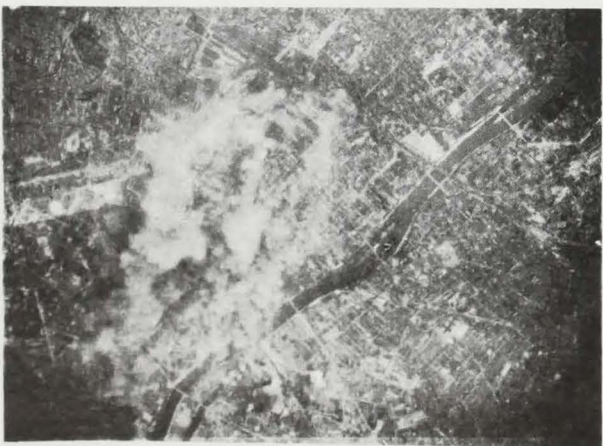
One of the problems precipitated by the beginning of the long awaited invasion—that of briefing two, three or even four missions in a single day was met by S-2 and S-3 by the creation of four briefing teams to handle the new situation. With so many missions in a single day it was found that the preparations of one mission inevitably overlapped that of another.



Our living sites are now beginning to look very trim

The confinement of all personnel to the base just before D Day gave a hint as to what was to come, although such restrictions had occurred before. D Day was a great satisfaction to all and fostered a great surge of morale. As each plane returned that day to be reloaded for another mission, ground crews surrounded the combat men with eager questions. Some disappointment was felt because an almost complete undercast prevented much view of the invasion forces approaching the beachheads. Subsequent to D Day there was a noticeable slump in morale when inclement weather hindered our aid to the ground forces and a general feeling that we were not doing our share in the invasion.

The flying of the short type of tactical missions to bomb specific military targets in the moving pattern of the invasion plus the need for every available man called for a revision of the tour of operations standards as set up for the pre-invasion strategical heavy bombardment missions. Some confusion resulted for a few days as the period in which the tactical missions were flown coincided with a wave of completed tours of operations.



An industrial plant in Paris gets a pasting



Another accurate piece of bombing—this time Königsborn in Germany

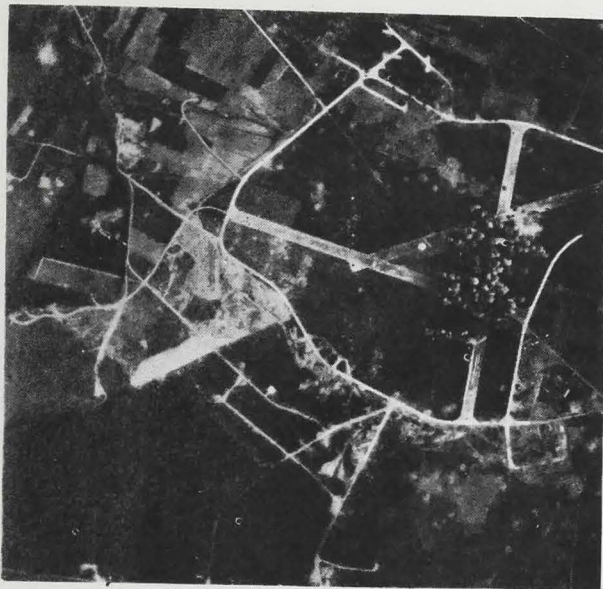
Finally the operational tour as such was eliminated and it was left to the discretion of the Group Commander to relieve combat personnel from combat status.

June also marked the creation of an Enlisted Mens Council to develop "the extra curricular activities of the enlisted men of this station and to act as a Liaison group between the enlisted men and the officers." The Council under T/Sgt. Martin A. Beske made several contributions of note; from the opening of a Coca-Cola Bar to improvements in shower rooms and mess halls. The tightening of discipline and regulations was found necessary as a year on foreign service naturally made for laxity on the part of everyone. Transportation regulations in particular were strengthened to conserve our all important fuel whose consumption had been skyrocketing and emphasis was placed on the defense of the station against the possibility of enemy counter-invasion parachute attacks.

Although we had no recurrence of enemy bombing attacks, the night of the 7th saw hostile planes overhead as a mission was returning and preparing to land. This time the Ger-



The French port and installations of Nantes again is hit



A fine straddling of runways with our bombs as an assist to invasion forces in Normandy

man raiders were discovered in time and our planes were ordered to scatter and land at stations in central England. Our ships returned to Great Ashfield after the all-clear. We did lose one of our aircraft later in the month when an accident similar to the one of almost a year ago, caused the ship, loaded with bombs for a mission, to catch fire and blow up on its hardstand. Fortunately the crew abandoned the ship and no one was injured. This time it was Hangar Number Two that suffered the effects of the blast; and the repairs on the other hangar were not yet completed from the damage by the enemy last month. Continued experiments and tests by Capt. Tom Harrison and his Armament men apparently located the cause of these quick fires and subsequent explosions and steps were taken to remedy the trouble to eliminate any future accidents.

June saw the departure to a bigger assignment of Major Oscar Davenport with Capt. Harry Monfort taking over Dave's duties as Station S-4. Another of the "originals" left us for bigger endeavors when Sep. Richard became Wing Operations Officer with Capt. Harlan K. Inglis assuming the job as Training Officer.

A unique mission was performed on the 25th when Hamilton led our group to the Grenoble area of Southern France to drop weapons and equipment in special containers to the French Maquis who were doing yeoman work behind the enemy lines. Our Armament and Ordnance sections had already conducted extensive tests on the loading and dropping characteristics of the containers and the mission was highly successful, all equipment being dropped within the designated pasture. It should not go unmentioned that the 385th had its personal representatives who took part in the invasion with the ground

forces. Capt. W. C. Huff, the 550th's Flight Surgeon along with S/Sgt. George Ives and Cpl. Joseph Boll participated in the Normandy invasion as Medical men operating on the beachhead.

Personnel finally completed its exhaustive survey of our manpower situation and the resultant manning table was put into effect. The purpose of this manning table was to allocate personnel and ranks to each section on the base, many of which were not represented on any Table of Organization. With a minimum of change, all personnel of the many units on the base were then assigned to their manning table position. The new system insured that personnel would be assigned and available where they were needed most, and that ratings would be distributed more on a basis of job importance and responsibility.

JULY 1944

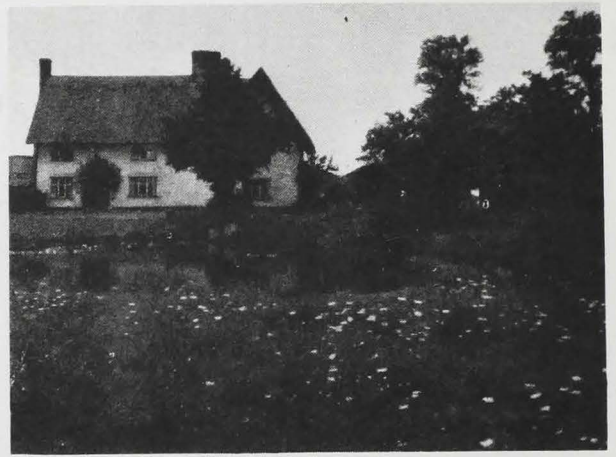
Mission No.	Day	Target	Leader	No. of A/C	Crew Lost
145	2	Crepy	Herron	18	
146	5	Stuttgart	Vance	18	
147	7	Kallieda	Shankle	32	
148	8	Conches	Faroe	33	
149	11	Munich	Hamilton	26	1-Henderson
150	12	Munich	Faroe	22	2-White, R. McDonald
151	13	Munich	Masters	22	1-Turner
152	14	"Caddis"	Shankle	36	
153	16	Stuttgart	Wotherspoon	29	1-Robbins
154	19	Ebelsbach	Emmons	30	
155	20	Merseberg	Tesla	34	
156	21	Regensburg	Herron	24	
157	24	Ground Support	Lear, Emmons	42	
158	25	Ground Support	Wotherspoon	42	
159	28	Merseberg	Hamilton	41	
160	28	Merseberg	Vandevanter	40	1-Bene-field
161	30	Munich	Lacasse	38	

A comparison with July 1943, our first operational month in the ETO is in itself a fitting testimonial to the progressiveness and efficiency of the personnel of the group.

July '43 saw an embryonic organization to the tremendous advance of allied air power, settling at a half completed base in a new theatre of operations. Everything was strange to them and the most simple task assumed



Station Headquarters



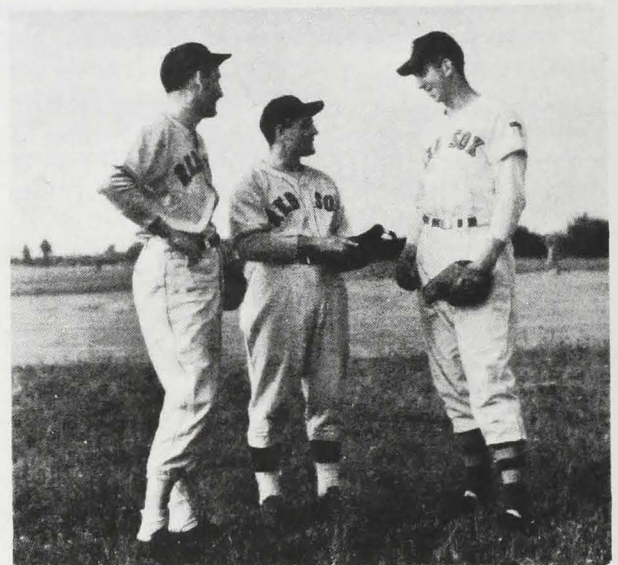
Even surrounding British farm houses on the station look trimmer



Picket fences, cement walks and shrubs are a far cry from a year ago when we first hit Great Ashfield.

gigantic proportions. Most of the personnel were housed in tents, eating in two small and incomplete mess halls. There were no recreational facilities, operations block or station headquarters. Many of the buildings had no lights or telephone. In addition there was a difficult personnel problem to solve; for it was necessary to amalgamate the four bomb squadrons which had operated from separate fields in the States with nine other organizations assigned to this station. Each operation was performed only after much planning and laborious checking of details.

July '44—in one year the base had been completely transformed. All personnel were living in comfortable barracks. We had four large mess halls in operation, a theatre, Aero Club, gymnasium, ops block and many other conveniences. The personnel of the base through work and understanding of the other man's job had been welded into a homogeneous unit. The performance of operational missions meant merely setting in motion the many standard practices and established procedures. We were now a well-balanced combat team.



Baseball furnishes a lively interest for off duty hours and regular scheduled games are played on the diamond inside the perimeter.



The genial player coach of our ball team, Jim Hamilton

Statistically the group dropped seven times the tonnage of bombs in July '44 that it did in July '43. We put over the target eight times the number of aircraft and suffered only one-tenth the percentage of losses. All this was done without any increase in ground personnel. A brief summary of the two months is of interest:

July '44		July '43
17	Missions	7
596	A/C Airborne	142
34	A/C Aborts	20
474	A/C Attacking	59
1111.8	Tons of Bombs	155.5
543	Sorties Flown	120
6	Ships Lost	8
51	MIA, KIA, etc.	81
0.93%	Attrition Rate	6.7%
15930	Nautical Miles Flown	6950
65	Enemy A/C Claims	9
110	Fighter Attacks	3
1205 A/C	Fighter Encounters	27 A/C



Golf had its devotees—with Tom Kenny, and Don Hunter of the 584th about to tee off on the course Bury St. Edmunds.

Apart from such conveniences as clubs, theatre, beer hall, gym, social and cultural activities, dozens of little services which the men of the base performed for each other all made the station characteristic of a community in itself. If a watch needed repair, there was a man who could fix it; a strap needed for a wrist watch, a former leather worker was ready to supply one; an ex-tailor obtained a sewing machine and made repairs on uniforms; another made rings to send home for gifts. From useless chunks of plexi-glass, new crystals for watches were fashioned. The photo lab was set up to take personal pictures. And so it went. All these extras were just that and did not interfere with operations, but added so much to the comfort and convenience of all.



Old "Rum-Dum," one of the originals, still goes out and comes back to score another mission



Maj. Frank Bexfield and lead pilot, Capt. G. A. West, look satisfied with the mission from which they have just returned.

Mission No.	Day	Target	Leader	No. of A/C	Crews Lost
162	1	French Special	Tesla	31	
163	2	Paris (Gennevilliers)	Benjer	30	1—New-comer
164	4	Hamburg	(Lear) (Lancaster) (Witherspoon)	32	1—Master-son
165	5	Magdeburg	Faroe	28	
166	6	Berlin	Bexfield	17	
167	7	Compiègne	(Emmons) (Castle) (Castle)	13	
168	8	Ground Support	(Van) (Shande)	29	
169	9	Paris	Lacasse	28	
170	11	Belfort	(Kenny) (Walla) (Hamilton)	26	
171	13	Ground Support	(Faroe) (Herron)	41	
172	14	Mannheim	(Tesla) (Emmons) (Witherspoon)	31	
173	15	Münster-Han	(Lear) (Matuna) (Bexfield)	40	(Lear) (Herrington)
174	16	Reims	Faroe	20	
175	18	St. Dieler	(Lacasse) (Jumper) (Faroe)	30	
176	23	Brux	(Kenny) (Emmons) (Walla)	33	
177	25	Reichlin	(Hamilton) (Kenny) (Lacasse)	33	
178	26	Brest	(Lear) (Lacasse) (Witherspoon)	33	
179	28	Berlin, Reichlin	(Lear) (Lacasse) (Witherspoon)	33	
180	30	Bremen	(Herron) (Coadville)	40	



What we saw as we looked down on Big D



Another marshalling yard—Belfort, feels the weight of our accurate bombing

August marked the end of a phase. The man who had put the group together had gone. The phase just ended was a glorious one. In over a year of combat, the 385th had rained destruction on the enemy throughout the length and breadth of the Fortress Europe. In that year the group had grown into a strong, smooth-running purposeful organization. It had become a monument to the man who built it and who guided it from its infancy. And now that man had gone.

On the early morning of the 24th, after our planes had taken off on a mission to Brux led by the new Group Commander, Lt. Col. George Y. Jumper, a lone B-17 lumbered down the perimeter to the runway and soon was roaring its way into the sky. In it went Colonel Vandevanter, who, for over 18 months had been our inspiring leader through the ups and downs of our existence. A small group, with mixed feelings, stood by the control tower watching the ship slowly circle the field. Jim Lewis—with him Col. Van had worked many long hours since the first days at Geiger to fashion what had become one of the finest combat units in the Air Force. Herb Hamilton, the acting Air Exec., watched silently thinking of the air battles over Europe



Amid whistles of appreciation, the Windmill Girls perform for us on a special stage built in Hanger No. 1.



Col. Van expresses our appreciation to Maestro Vandamm and his Windmill cast for giving up their free time to come from London to put on their show for us.



Col. Van about to review the troops for the last time just prior to his leaving the Group. He is chatting with Brig. Gen. A. W. Kissner, 3rd Division Chief of Staff, while our new C. O., Col. Jumper and our Wing Commander Brig. Gen. (then Col.) Castle look on.



Group Staff Officers line up for the review. Left to right: Lt. Col. Lewis, Majors Anderson, McWilliams, Leonard, Capt. Huff, Maj. Monfort, Chaplains Scherer and Kincannon.

that he had flown with Col. Van and realizing that we were losing a superb combat leader. And Sgt. Jimmy Catania, the Colonel's ever present driver and confidant, who, forsaking all personal pleasures, had given himself completely in unstinting service—he had lost a friend.

And our new Commander, Col. Jumper, coming from the neighboring 447th Group—what of him? The new C. O. thought to himself that the intense loyalties which troops hold for a strong man make life a miserable thing for a successor. So thinking he walked softly, almost apologetically, into the confines of the office which bore the awesome notation, 'Commanding Officer'.



Vandevanter, Kissner and Castle ready to review the troops



Pass in review! Col. Van takes the salute while Lt. Bon, of the 161st Motion Picture Unit records it.

But the new boss found that his fears, if fears they were, were without foundation. Of course, there was Jimmy, his driver and self-appointed upholder of the dignity of officers. Jimmy, who, when he'd disapprove some departure from custom, never hesitated to say with just the right amount of deference, 'Sir, the Colonel, never used to do that.' And there was Sam, the resplendent headwaiter in the staff mess, who was at first a little niggardly in his customary flourishes. But with a little subtle psychology the new boss got them on his side. The new boss became 'the Colonel' to Jimmy and Sam's flourishes were as harmoniously unrestrained as ever they were. The entire organization like the good soldiers they were, were as loyally at hard work as ever. The group moved on into the new phase, strongly, on the sound structure welded in the fire of war.



September also saw the return for Col. McDonald and Major Bunting, the Group Surgeon, both of whom had been on a visit to the States.

Almost nightly during the last two weeks of the month from 2200 to 2300 hours and from 0400 to 0500 hours, two to six buzz bombs crossed our field at low altitudes but fortu-



One less bridge used to support the enemy against our Ground Forces—this one was at Coblenz



It's hard to recognize No. 1 Hanger after Capt. Bernie Paski, Cpl. Ploss and their assistants get it ready for the 200th mission party.

nately with sufficient fuel to carry them several miles beyond. At first there were many sceptics who refused to budge out of a warm bed on the alert, but when the first of these low flying infernal machines whizzed over the top of the Officers' Club while a dance was in progress, everyone became a Christian.

Under Col. Lewis, preparations were in progress for the 200th mission party. A traveling carnival was scheduled to be set up near the control tower inside the perimeter, augmented by booths sponsored by each unit. Number One Hangar, now repaired from the bomb damage was converted to a stage and

auditorium. One end of the hangar was to have a large stage 75 feet by 52 feet constructed out of bomb boxes. The show in the hangar was to be built around Glenn Miller's Band. Invitations were sent to Generals Spaatz, Doolittle, Partridge and Harbold. What appeared to be building up to a tremendous affair, began to fall apart as some of the entertainment notified us that they could not be present: Bea Lillie had to return to the States, Marlene Dietrich to France and Ben Lyon could not make it. But we still had the carnival and Miller's Band—Sans Miller.

OCTOBER 1944



The 200th Mission Party was a large success in spite of the fact it was beset with complications of cancellations of guest stars and a temporary breakdown of the public address system. The extremely effective job of Lt. Paski and Cpl. Ploss assisted by a group of the men in transforming the hangar was an outstanding feature. It was difficult to recognize the hangar as such once you stepped inside. The two large decorative clowns that appeared to be holding back the curtains of



The lady guests begin to arrive for the 200th mission party



Lady guests having lunch in one of our mess halls



The lady guests from London seem to enjoy the chow line



The 548th Squadron's exhibit of a B-17 in the Carnival was very popular with the younger generation in particular as evidenced by one of them leaning out of the pilot's seat.



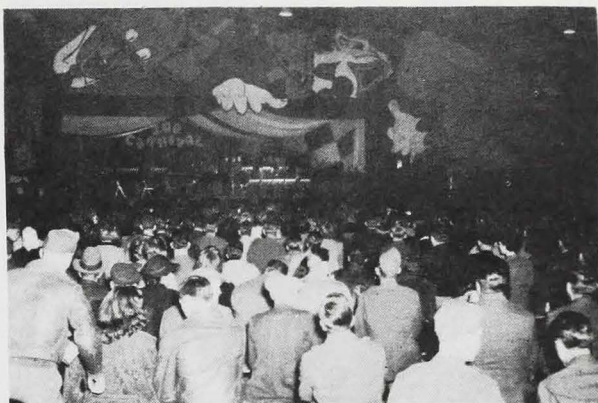
The Carnival is set up inside the perimeter



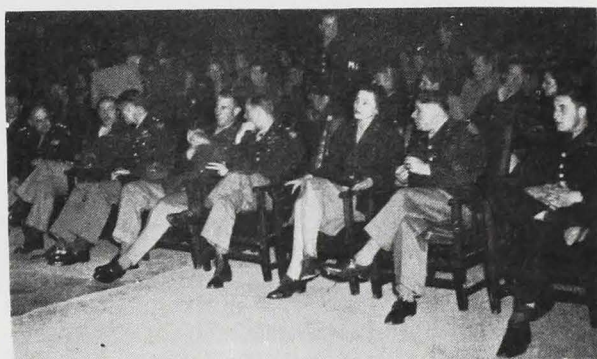
Fun for all and for one day we all became kids again

the stage lent a carnival atmosphere. Major Glenn Miller's Band of 50 musicians with Ray McKinley, Mel Powell, Johnny Desmond and others shared the spotlight with Paula Green, the BBC songstress and Alan Paul, piano virtuoso who were wildly acclaimed. Through the efforts of James Dyrenforth, Production Manager of the BBC, a part of the program was broadcast to the States. More than 1500 girls were guests of the men of the base, 200 of them coming from London by special train. Although every booth of the midway and the merry-go-round and dodge-'em cars were crowded from the opening in the morning, the presentation by the 877th Chemical Co. of "Lulu, the Wonder Girl" enacted by Pvt. John Stack was the most popular.

With the 200th Mission Party over on the first day of the month we went back to business. It was a month of change. Many old timers moved on. Lt. Col. James McDonald, an original staff member, long our well-liked and tremendously respected Air Exec., moved to 4th Combat Wing to become Chief of Staff.



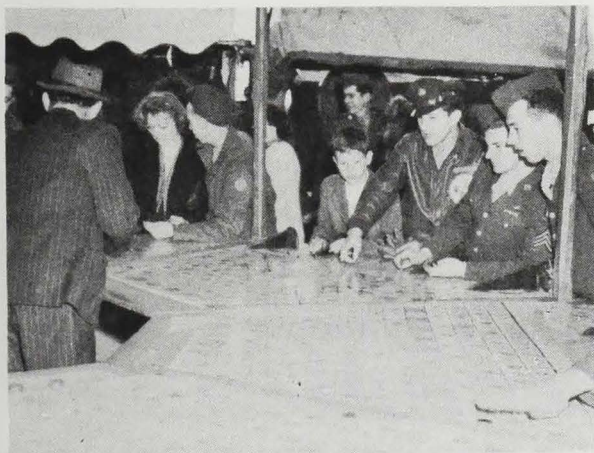
Part of the crowd of more than 3000 who saw Glen Miller's band perform in the hanger



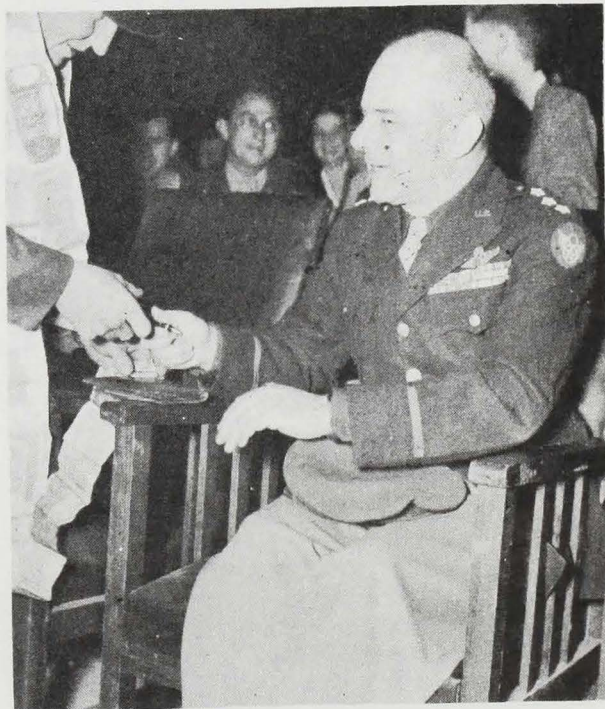
Some of the celebrities—brass to you—attending were Lt. Gen. Doolittle, Col. Jumper, Maj. Gen. Partridge, B. G. Harbold, B. G. Castle, Capt. Visman, Lt. Col. Lewis, Lt. Col. Kenny.



Pitch a copper—try your luck—Wils Welcher and some of the others try theirs



Three NCO's look very concerned over their chance in another booth in the carnival



Jimmie Doolittle smilingly signing a shortsnoter bill

When he left, one of the colorful characters that had made the 385th what it was was gone. Then another able and efficient old timer moved on—Lt. Col. Herb Hamilton who began as a lead crew pilot, rose to a Squadron C. O., then progressed to Group Operations Officer, and finally Air Exec. returned to the States. For a year and a half he had worked ceaselessly, driving, fighting, and compiling brilliant combat and administrative records. He, too, was part of the soul and spirit of the organization that Col. Van had created. The pace of change was accelerating.

Also among those who had served their term was Lt. Col. William M. Tesla. Bill had finished his combat tour and he was the only original Squadron C. O. still with the group. With his going the change in the spirit of the organization refused to be ignored. There were other changes coming. Before long most of our people in the air echelon were new. The ground personnel, of course, was about the same and constituted a stabilizing influence, a tie to the past and to the people who built with toil and courage the record of the past. The change was inevitable in spite of a nostalgic wish for the preservation of this fraternity of struggling men. Nothing can exist without change, a change in evolution and with that evolution comes generally something a little better, more efficient, born of past experience than before, provided, of course, that the evolutionary forces bend the product of evolution in the right direction. The old timers who left had built well. Our technique, our methods, our equipment might improve but our guiding principles, our morale, our policies were built on the firm foundation they had established.

Poor flying conditions marked a curtailment of visual bombing. The group ran only 14 missions and on only three was the target sighted. The results from visual bombing ranged from good to excellent which indicates that the strong emphasis placed on lead crew training has finally begun to pay dividends again.

On the mission to Berlin, October 6th, the group suffered its biggest loss to date. All 11 ships of the high squadron were knocked down by a mass attack of nearly 75 enemy fighters. The German Air Force was far from licked and was adopting new tactics in attacking bombers. On this mission the enemy aircraft massed for attack from 5-7 o'clock high, with each fighter picking out a separate bomber. Our only defense was to keep our small 11 ship formation in a tight defensive group. The loss of veteran Capt. Ed Herron, flying with Capt. Jack Batty was keenly felt.

Preparations were started to anticipate the problems which the approaching winter months would bring with particular emphasis

on transportation equipment and heating facilities. Several steps were undertaken to overcome the tendency for morale to decrease with the increase in the number of months overseas. Contributing to the changing picture personnel-wise, was the greatest graduation of combat crews we had ever had in a month—32.

NOVEMBER 1944



As the group went into its second English winter, it was a far cry from a year ago when we were buried in mud. Mud; if there is any subject, any thought, that will remain in the minds of us synthetic citizens of East Anglia, it will be mud. A year ago, mud was in our shoes, on our clothes, on our hands, even in our hair. Mud was in our airplanes, even in our quarters.



Herb Hamilton just before he finally left the Group. One of the first of the originals to go during the winter of '44-'45.



The last of the original squadron commanders to return home was Bill Tesla, hard-working C. O. of the 550th.



Tom Kenny, the 548th's mentor who doubled for a spell as Deputy Group Commander



Capt. Joe Matuna looks skyward at some of his lead crews on a practice mission

This winter of 1944, although there was still plenty of mud, it no longer really troubled us. In a year we had widened our roads. We had a complete station. All around the base walks of cinders or concrete slabs replaced the slippery mud holes through which we trod last winter on our sloppy way.

Mud wasn't the only source of confusion last winter. There was another. The 385th had been operational only for four months and had just become an augmented double strength combat group. The engineering and operations sections were still trying desperately to find the solution, the magic formula which could keep the airplanes running and in the air. Everybody stayed up all night; Everybody in trying to help, got into the way of everybody else. Now we knew the magic formula. The line at night was a quiet, orderly business place. In the operations office the methodical precision was actually soothing. Thinking of last winter's frenzied rushing around, it was hard to realize that, in all the clatter and tearing of hair we had not been accomplishing any more than we now were so calmly and by routine doing.

The temper of the crews too was different. Last winter there was a quiet, despairing sort of resignation evident in the combat men. The escort of long range fighters, a new thing, was still too meagre to cover us completely. On

every mission we expected, and usually got, a terrific reaction from the fighters of the Luftwaffe. Our losses were high. Of those who went into action few ever got back home to the States. This winter of 1944 fighters still hit us occasionally, more often than we liked, and the flak was still bad. But with the advent and the increasing effectiveness of radar bombing through the overcast, each mission had a much higher chance of being successful. Bombing through overcast also decreased the effectiveness of enemy fighters and flak.

But the loss rate was low and the men felt that their chances were good. Their winter psychology was good.



Old "Hard Life" himself, Capt. Jesse Ashlock, whose voice, as Senior Flying Control Officer, was well known to all flying personnel.



Two "Poisonalties," Hymie and Scoop



One of our originals, Ed Faroe, Operations Officer of the 549th Squadron



The 548th's crack golfer and operations officer, Jim Emmons

Weather limited the group to 12 operational missions. It was not an easy month on our personnel. Combat crews had many missions scrubbed and all the missions were PFF. Weather also made things very difficult for ground crews. Extensive battle damage resulted in the ground crews working unusually long hours, very often at night and usually in rain or snow and without cover. Their efficiency and spirit remained high in spite of these obstacles.

Several more personnel changes took place during the month. Major Archie Benner left for the States and Major Charlie Reid took over the 549th Squadron as C. O., Major H. T. Witherspoon also went home, but Spoon came back with us after a short rest. Major "Moon" Mullin took over the 551st while Major John Thrift assumes Bill Tesla's command of the 550th. Tom Kenny doubled as Air Exec. as well as commanding his 584th Squadron. With the creation of the 4th Bomb. Wing (Provisional) out of the 4th Combat Wing Major O. B. Ross, our Group Bombardier and Capt. William Studdard, Station Quartermaster both joined the Wing with Francis Stetson taking over for Ross and Wally Moore for Studdard.

DECEMBER 1944



Winter comes again to Great Ashfield



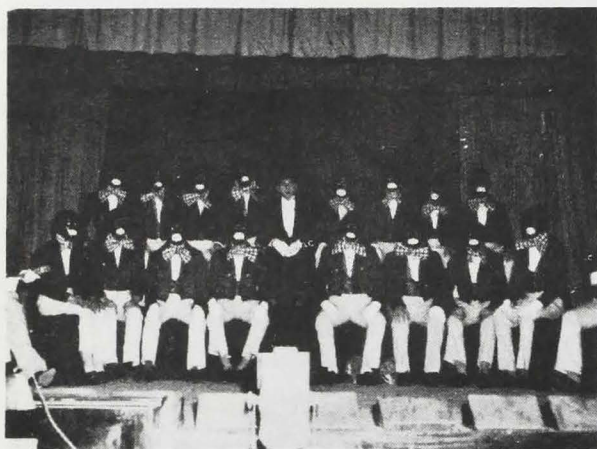
Station Headquarters in winter garb



Chapel services are well attended

In December all of us were busy fighting the war. We had little time to think of much else, which was probably lucky. When we did think, most of us thought of home. Of all the year, Christmas is the time when men are most homesick. This year the second for most of us, we were very conscious of the fact that Christmas was here and we were still far from home.

On the 16th, came the Battle of the Bulge. On the first day the Luftwaffe came up in

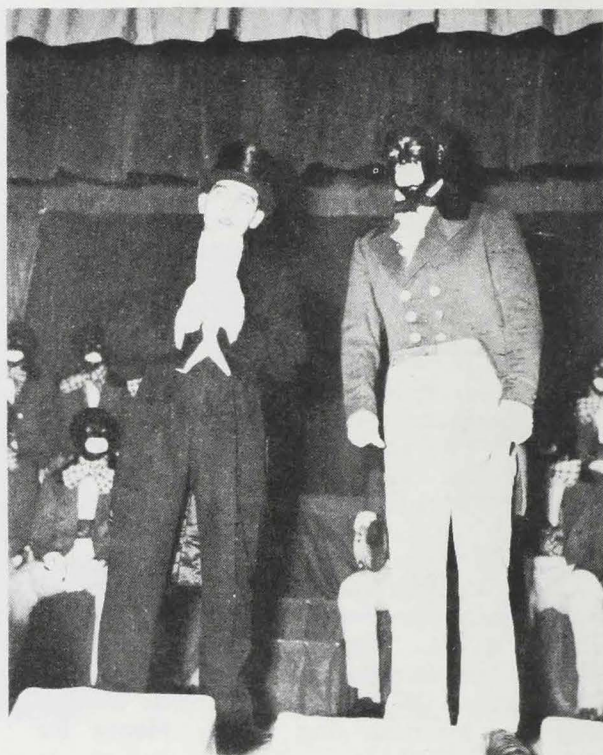


Under Special Services, a minstrel show is presented

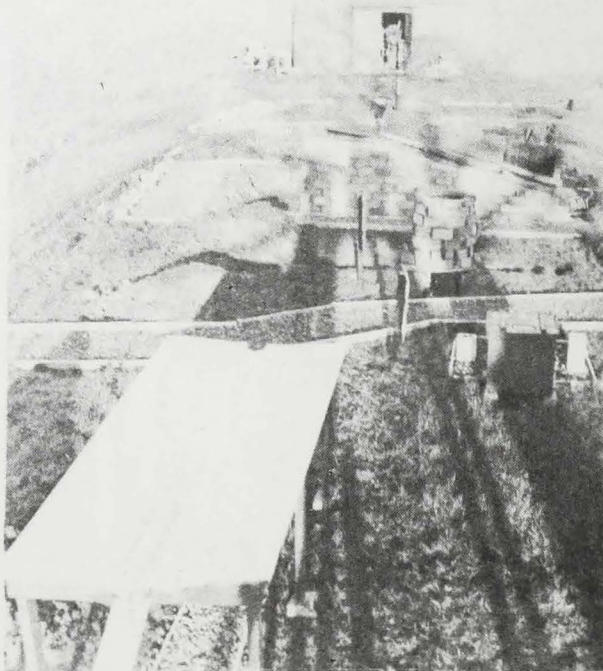
strength and dealt a smashing blow to the ground forces in several surprise assaults. The next day fog closed in over the battlefield and airpower was grounded. At Great Ashfield airmen read the news and cursed, knowing that our bombers could have upset the enemy's progress and attack. Indeed airpower was the only force which could have been brought to bear on the situation with anything like the required speed of massing. But as the airmen looked into the sky their eyes saw nothing but fog. Visability on the ground did not exceed 50 feet. In the air it was less. Bombers stood poised on their hardstands, bombs rested with silent grimness in the dumps and fliers scanned the skies for a break in the weather, their nerves taut and strained from the chains of inaction in a time of crisis. Day after day went by and still the fog hung thickly over the land. "What good are we doing here" was the sentiment on all sides of ground as well as combat crews. Had a convoy passed the gates headed for France calling for volunteers to go to the front, the base would have been emptied as fast as men could have been transported out. For the first time they were feeling the war. The fliers, of course, had tasted battle, but to the ground personnel who had been servicing in relatively peaceful atmosphere, the machinery of air power the past 18 months fighting was a spectacle they read or heard dramatized over their radios. But now their own countrymen were being pushed around by the enemy. There was fight in everyone's eye.

When, on the night of the 23rd the fog lifted a sigh of relief seemed to pulsate throughout the entire group. Men walked about with a springier step, and a "This is it" spirit was in the air. When the alert was passed around the field, men were eager to go to their jobs. Some ground men even reported to duty before they were summoned.

The next morning an armada of 57 bombers rose from Great Ashfield in grim stately pro-



The interlocutor and an end man carry on a snappy repertoire in minstrel show



The Medical Dept. set up a permanent exhibit of field sanitation methods



A Christmas party was given by the men in the Aero Club for the children of a nearby orphanage complete with Santa Claus.



The Christmas spirit is everywhere

cession. They were carrying a record load of bombs—100 tons of bombs racked for a devastating plunge on the enemy. All over England, at the myriad bases dotted here and there, the scene was being repeated. More than 2000 bombers and a 1000 escorting fighters of the Eighth Air Force rose that day to do battle in support of their comrades on the battlefields of France.

As twilight came on this Christmas eve, our bombers returned—all but one—and with them came 36 B-17s from the 1st Division diverted to Great Ashfield because of bad weather in the Midlands. One by one, our aircraft landed while our 36 visitors flew the pat-

tern in formation with their landing lights on like lighted Christmas trees suspended in the sky. From the Control Tower all over East Anglia the same sight met the observer's eyes. It was a spectacle long to be remembered.

That night in the Officer's Club was very quiet. There was a party. There were girls and music and half hearted dancing. But the stag line was short. The lads were sitting alone in the corners, nursing a beer, staring off into space and thinking of their girls or their wives and kids at home. Much of the sadness this night was due to the loss of Gen. Castle who had been a very familiar figure at G. A. On the line there was little time for such thoughts for ground crews were busy servicing and repairing the 36 additional aircraft.

JANUARY 1945

Mission No.	Date	Target	Leader	No. of A/c	Crews Lost
229		Halle	(Kennedy) (Smith) (Thompson) (Thill)	37	
230	3	Stettin	(Metting) (Nieman) (Mullin)	36	
231	5	Kaiserlautern	(Hart) (Hart) (Hart)	36	
232	5	Worms	(Hart) (Hart) (Hart)	27	
233	7	Hannover	(Hart) (Hart) (Hart)		
234	8	Frankfurt	(Hart) (Hart) (Hart)	26	1 - Riles
235	10	Karlsruhe	(Hart) (Hart) (Hart)	36	
236	13	Mainz	(Hart) (Hart) (Hart)	31	
237	14	Magdeburg	(Hart) (Hart) (Hart)		
238	16	Dessau	(Hart) (Hart) (Hart)	31	
239	18	Kaiserlautern	(Hart) (Hart) (Hart)	36	
240	20	Heilbronn	(Hart) (Hart) (Hart)	23	
241	21	Manheim	(Hart) (Hart) (Hart)	26	1 - McErlane
242	28	Duisberg	(Hart) (Hart) (Hart)	12	
243	29	Kassel	(Hart) (Hart) (Hart)	34	

The new year saw a crisis in our manpower situation. We were being called upon to send personnel as replacements to the infantry and the usual winter sicknesses were further sapping our already depleted manpower. Although the Russians had dispelled the gloom of the previous month, all was not rosy. The call up of Air Force personnel to serve as infantry replacements had met with a mixed reception. The majority spoke about the new program with the loquacity of men who felt the sword of Damocles hanging over them. Everyone wondered who was to go

JUMPER'S VALIANTS

JANUARY



GEORGE V. JUMPER
COLONEL
COMMANDING OFFICER



ROSTER OF OFFICERS

1945



The Ground Officers and Staff Officers of the Group as of January, 1945

next. Almost half of the 56 who went were volunteers and several more who tried to go were disapproved because of their peculiar technical skills.

The further inroads on our thinly spread ground personnel called for further evaluation of every job on the base. No stone could be left unturned in the conservation program. A Ground Safety program was set-up under 1st Lt. Robert Knight in the Personnel section to study and analyze the causes of accidents on the ground and develop an active safety program to reduce and eliminate such accidents with the resultant conservation of man-hours presently lost as a result of them. The Medical Department extended the prophylaxis treatments from respiratory infections to all ground personnel to reduce the number of man-hours lost from colds, grippe, etc., particularly on the line among the ground crews. In spite of our relatively comfortable living,



The men in the Photo Lab put strike photos in the "soup"



Col. Jumper inspects the Aero Club
with Caroline Buehler



The social season at Great Ashfield is in full sway.
One of the dances at the Officers Club

we were more susceptible to this type of infection this winter of 1944 than in 1943—and when we could ill-afford the time lost.

Engine changes and recovery from battle damage were points that came under most careful scrutiny. Time studies on engine changes showed that efficiency depended upon organization and pressure. Last month's average of nine hours lost between the time the plane was called out for an engine change until the change was started, was reduced to a mere three hours this month. The actual time for an engine change to the point where the plane was ready to be slo-timed last month was 52 hours on the average; this month it was 32½ hours. The best individual record was an elapsed time of 11 hours.

Out of these studies came a new procedure: Replacing these engines with serviceable engines from war-weary, training, excess PFF and planes out for major battle damage, thus eliminating the time lost pending accomplishment of engine slo-time—many times held up in the weather we've been having. In such a manner a plane coming back from a mission in need of an engine change could be



Flak is still just as bad as Crew Chief M-Sgt. E. N. Hallisey discovers in checking his ship, just back from a mission.



The Medical Staff, as usual, parked on the line
as the ships come home from a mission

made ready over night for the next day's mission.

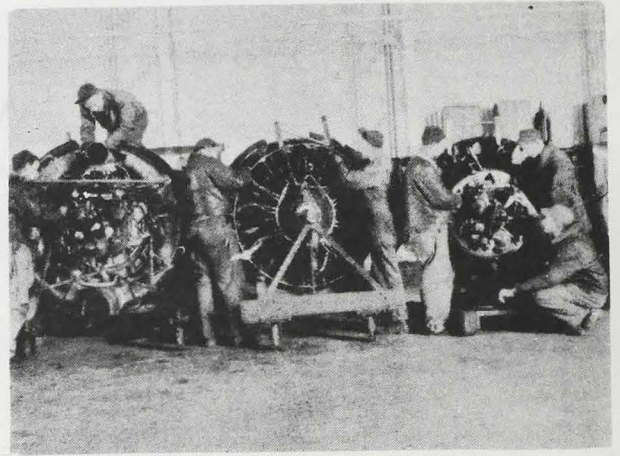
Extensive discussions were held among S-4, S-1 and line personnel to develop standards from which an accurate Rate of Battle Damage Recovery could be established. A tentative standards list was drawn and subsequent revisions made as more data became available. This served to make the engineering status board on available aircraft for operational missions much more accurate.

With all this going on we still had 18 missions to prepare for, 15 of which were airborne. Of these only four were visual. Capt. John Nejedlik replaced Paul Schulz who returned to the States as Group Navigator, while Capt. Frank Walls on his second tour took over as Group Training Officer.

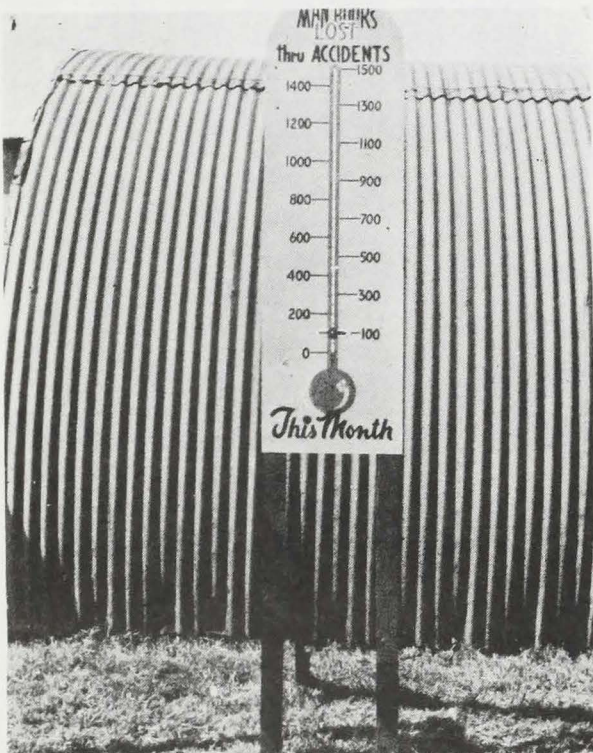
Our group was picked for several experimental tests on doubled bomb loads for shorter missions where the fuel load was not so great—more work for our hard pressed ordnance and armament personnel. We had several days of unusual cold and so much snow that



A little business for the Medics as one of the lads got a piece of flak for a souvenir



Depot Engineering keep our engines overhauled and ready for rapid engine changes by Squadron Engineering.



The first of a series of signs and posters to make us safety conscious in the interest of saving manpower.

even our snow plows were put in action. On the 16th a high wind and electrical storm destroyed our main intake electric switch cutting off our power for three days and forcing us to use our auxiliary system.

Toward the end of the month we were honored with the return of the USO company of "Blythe Spirit" which had made such a big hit during their presentation in the fall. Headed by Peggy Wood, all of us not only enjoyed the company's performance but found them to be a wonderful group of people.

FEBRUARY 1945

Mission No.	Day	Target	Leader	No. of A/C	Crews Lost
244	1	Wesel	Thrill	7	
			Randall		
			Thompson		
			Field		
245	3	Berlin	Wolman	41	
			Elbert		
			Mullin		
246	6	Chemnitz	Weikert	36	
			Madsen		
			Walls		
247	8	Chemnitz	Lasher	35	
			Horn		
248	14	Chemnitz	Thrill	38	
249	15	Rheine	Shankle	9	
			Field		
			Wolman		
250	16	Wesel	Wolman	38	
			Wolman		
251	17	Wesel	Wolman	38	
			Wolman		
252	20	Wesel	Wolman	38	
			Wolman		
253	21	Wesel	Wolman	38	
			Wolman		
254	22	Wesel	Wolman	38	
			Wolman		
255	23	Wesel	Wolman	38	
			Wolman		
256	24	Wesel	Wolman	38	
			Wolman		
257	25	Wesel	Wolman	38	
			Wolman		
258	26	Wesel	Wolman	38	
			Wolman		
259	27	Wesel	Wolman	38	
			Wolman		
260	28	Wesel	Wolman	38	
			Wolman		
261	29	Wesel	Wolman	38	
			Wolman		
262	30	Wesel	Wolman	38	
			Wolman		

February brought the end of the British winter and poor flying weather and we were able to make visual sightings on a number of targets. With this better weather the Eighth Air Force stepped up its drive against the enemy. The intensity of the effort was reflected in the fact that we flew 11 missions in the final 13 days of the month.

This was the month of inspections from top side. First Maj. Gen. Partridge, our C. G. of 3rd Bomb Division visited us, followed by the War Department Manpower Commission and finally the Air Inspector General from Washington. It was an honor rather dubiously accepted to have been selected one of the very few installations to be visited by the last



Mustaches became the rage and here are two of our finer products, Bill Filter and "Shorty" Inglis



Maj. Kenny and Col. Jumper "sweating 'em in" on the control tower

two groups for inspection in the entire Eighth Air Force.

Strength figures reflected a considerable drop in ground personnel due to a second increment shipped out to the infantry and this necessitated a radical curtailment of some "luxury items" and the readjustment of house-keeping overhead on a much broader basis.

After flying 250 missions with the 4th Combat Wing, the group was switched to the 93rd Combat Wing under B. G. John Gerhart on the 17th. A few days later, the first piloted intruder aircraft was spotted in the vicinity since June 7th of last year. Our sleep had



Genial "Spoon" who succeeded Herb Hamilton as Deputy Group Commander and Air Executive



Two "Paddlefeet" discuss some problems. Harry Monfort, the Group S-4, visits with Ed Stern, the 550th Exec. at the Red Squadron's living site.

been peaceful the past few weeks as no buzz bombs had come our way, although we did have a couple of V-2 rockets in the neighborhood.

Basketball was going full blast this month with 37 station league games and eight Division league games. Competition was keen and the rivalry at such a high pitch that a stranger would have wondered which enemy we were fighting. Capt. Wilson Walcher moved over into Special Services, with Bill Grist taking over the duties as 551st Exec. Of-



Old Man Winter gives us one more blast and the Ground Crews make the most of the snow

ficer. Johnny Sotak took Grist's Adjutant post.

At long last an NCO Club was established in the old Officers Club building and proved a welcome addition to recreational facilities on the station. In addition, the much talked about broadcasting station has become a reality. A direct tie-line with the American Forces Network pipes their broadcasts directly to us. With the installation of loud speakers, in barracks, messes, recreation centers,



"Doc" Savage, Adjutant of the Sub-Depot, and his inseparable bicycle

etc., we were enjoying these programs without interference.

After much discussion as to which section should have the responsibility of them, the much maligned flak suits finally were given to each Squadron Ordnance Section to store and service. With this decision the mobile "flak shacks" came into being to collect and store the suits from each aircraft.



The much maligned flak shacks that finally became the responsibility of the Squadron Ordnance Sections.

MARCH 1945

Mission No.	Day	Target	Leader	No. of A/C	Losses
260	1	Ulm	Witherspoon	38	2 Arm cruster
261	2	Dresden	Jumper	30	Jacky Tipton (Krahn) (Tripp) (Vaadi)
262	4	Furth	Mullin	38	
263	5	Chemnitz	Emmons	36	
264	8	Dortmund	Shankle	36	
265	10	Goslar	Cerrone	37	
266	11	Hamburg	Thrift	38	
267	12	Swinemunde	Reid	38	
268	14	Hanover	Kenny	38	
269	15	Oranienburg	Wells	38	
270	17	Bitterfeld	Mullin	36	
271	18	Berlin	Emmons	36	1 Cerrone (Blood)
272	19	Jena	Cerrone	36	1 - Loss
273	20	Hamburg	Elbert	36	
274	21	Zwischenahn	Witherspoon	38	
275	22	Rattingen	Reid	37	
276	23	Herdecke	Thrift	38	
277	24	Zwischenahn	Shankle	37	
278	26	Planen	Kenny	38	
279	28	Hanover	Wells	36	
280	30	Hamburg	Jumper		
281	31	Brandenburg	Mullin		



General Partridge decorates Col. Lewis and a Tech. Sgt. from another base, with Silver Stars

A new problem cropped up this month—the problem of being unable to train new crews. The situation developed out of the fact we flew 22 operational missions amassing a total of 794 aircraft sorties and 7146 crew personnel sorties. On the basis of 35 sorties per crew 23 crews completed operations during the month. The actual record shows 19 crews did complete and were no longer available for missions with 20 new crews assigned.

For 22 days we set out to dispatch 38 aircraft each mission. Battle damage, engine and mechanical failures were about normal. The average number of aircraft on the station each day was 58.6 while the number out of commission averaged 4.6. With a balance of 54 aircraft, 11.7 of which were Pathfinder ships which had to be used in training lead crews only, there were no aircraft with which to train the replacement crews. Eight more missions and 15 more crews would graduate; at this rate we would soon have had only untrained crews to do the job.

For the first time in a long while, the group was subjected to a concentrated enemy fighter attack on the mission of the 2nd to Ruhland and four crews were lost. A steady increase in the number of enemy jet fighters had been noticed.



Although this ship managed to get home after a mid-air collision, the Bombardier and Engineer baled out before the pilot rescinded his bail out order.



A forced landing on the English coast

The first of several former Ground Forces personnel joined the group this month and were most welcome. A one day indoctrination program was instituted to familiarize these men not only with the Air Forces but particularly the 385th and the functional organization of the station.

The downfall of Germany was becoming apparent with S-2 removing the data on so many of our former targets to their inactive



Lt. Louis Des Cognets of the 549th, who came back to the Group for a second tour after he had completed one back in '43.



Ground Crew men throw a ball around on a hardstand waiting for takeoff time for this ship

files. It did not seem so long ago that the deep penetration raids to these now over-run targets were greeted with anxiety over the safe return of our crews.

A major change in the engineering personnel was made, necessitated by the departure of Capt. Arnold Levine, the group's Engineering Officer since training days in the States. Capt. Levine left for a new assignment on the Continent and Major Charlie Hirt, the Sub-Depot Engineering officer assumed Levine's duties with Capt. Edward Pratt, the 549th Squadron Engineering Officer taking Hirt's old job. 1st Lt. Allan Chealand replaced Pratt in the 549th.

Major Francis Stetson, the Group Bombing officer had been faced with the problem of conserving his available bombardiers. The problem arose not from any enemy action but from the fact that a large number of bombardiers were completing their tours and many replacement crews coming from the States had Toggliers instead of bombardiers. To remedy this, bombardiers were flown only in bombsight positions except on new crews on



Maj. Frank Walls, who took over training, goes up for practice mission

their first operational missions and never as navigators.

The broadcasting station began its first broadcasts this month piping both AFN programs and local record playing shows to the personnel of the station. So popular did it become that the Communications section under Capt. Fred Harvey was swamped with requests for speakers to be installed all over the base.

The first of several scheduled special airplane visits to Paris was made with the lucky officers and men enjoying a 48-hour pass in the gay French capitol. From all accounts the men had SOME time.

The death of Sgt. Jim Ezell of the Link Trainer shop was keenly felt by all. His link trainer "Ezell Deeziel" had become a very familiar spot for the pilots of the group to hang out and get in some link time between operational missions.

APRIL 1945

288	18	Wustermark	Mullin	37	Crews
289	17	Wustermark	Kenny	38	Long
290	14	Boyan	Emmons	38	Crimmins
291	15	Boyan	Reid	38	(Ritchie)
292	16	Boyan	Cerrone	38	Burich
293	17	Boyan	Thrift	30	Walls
294	18	Kohn	Gerhart	30	Horns
295	19	Austin	Mullin	29	
296	20	Wustermark	Walls	29	

Although the Supreme Commander had not yet seen fit to call the war over, for us in the Eighth Air Force, the month of April marked the end. It was a glorious end. Weeks of incomparably good weather left all Europe open to our bombsights. As the patterns went down surely and inexorably, factories and marshalling yards, troop concentrations and storage depots disappeared from the face of the earth in hundreds and thousands. Yes, it was a glorious end. The troops on the ground had yet to walk in with bayonet, but the air war of the Eighth Air Force in Europe was over.

What now? Probably the answer was lying in a file in Washington, waiting for just the right moment to transfer us across the face of the earth to the targets and new battles of the Pacific. Meanwhile we feverishly prepared to move on—modifications, records, property. In a month all would be ready. Then, if we were still here, we planned to start an educational institution, military and academic. At least we could learn while we wait. It was a good show, but the curtain was down.

There were 13 missions in the first 20

days with excellent bombing results on almost every mission. On the 7th the German Air Force made its last fanatical attack against our formations using both jets and conventional fighters in un-coordinated desperate attacks during one of which they rammed a ship in our formation. With little or no opposition, plus the good weather, bombing was done for the most part by squadrons and at a lower altitude thus affording a field day for our bombardiers. It was not unusual under these conditions to find most all of a formation's bombs within 500 feet of the aiming point. It was a poor day when all of our bombs did not land within 1000 feet. Eighth Air Force statistics show the 385th leading all 3rd Bomb Division groups in percentage within both the 1000 and 2000 foot circles during the first three months of the year. After the 20th we were relieved of strategic duties except for a few tactical targets to attack in support of our ground forces.

The administrative activities of the station were concentrated upon two objectives: (1) Preparing all units for possible redeployment, and (2) Making living conditions as



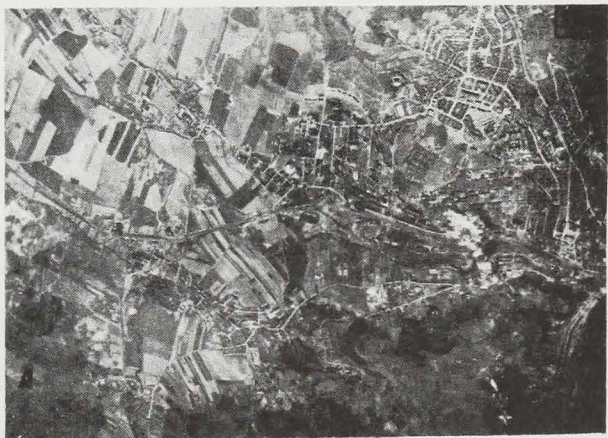
We roamed Europe, putting the final touches to the defeat of the enemy. Here the Transportation at Ingelstadt gets a going over.



The Royan Area receives a shellacing



More Bombs on the Royan Area



More transportation disrupted—this time at Russig

pleasant as possible during the interim from VE day to redeployment.

In connection with the former two major operations occurred. (1) The activation of the 424th Air Service Group and the disbandment of all service units on the station with the exception of the 877th Chemical Co. and the 18th Weather Detachment. The personnel of the 424th came almost entirely from the disbanded units.

(2) From the 19th to 22nd inclusive, the S-1 section assisted by the Medical department conducted a processing center in a wing of Mess Hall #1. All personnel from Col. Jumper to the inmates of the guardhouse were processed in order to bring their personnel and immunization records up to date. Shortly after this was accomplished Major Marston S. Leonard, chief of the S-1 section, left for 60 days DS at Camp Lucky Strike in France as a member of the Air Force Liaison team processing liberated PW's back home. Capt. Bert Marshall took over Len's duties in his absence.

A new Air Inspector's staff had been organized in accordance with directives from above with Capt. Dexter Lasher becoming Air Inspector; Capt. Blackwell, Technical Inspector; Capt. Seabright, Administrative Inspector, and Capt. Jonas Rosenberg, Medical Inspector. Major Totten Anderson so long head of this efficient department moved to the Group Executive slot.

Strangely enough April saw the group receive its largest number of replacement crews assigned to us in any one month—40. Class room space was at a premium for indoctrinating these crews. Much of their flying training fortunately could now be conducted at night with the additional daylight hours.

Athletics were in full swing—baseball games were a daily feature. The station played host for all the 3rd Bomb Division for a Soldier Show Demonstration team. This team gave a demonstration of organizing and producing soldier shows and their visit was climaxed by a production put together and acted by the personnel attending the demonstration.

The 1735 Ordnance S. & M. Co. was awarded the Meritorious Service Unit Plaque for "superior performance of duty in the accomplishment of exceptionally difficult tasks and achievement and maintenance of a high standard of discipline from 1 Jan. 1944 to 29 Nov. 1944."



Food and supplies are dropped to the Dutch at Utrecht and other points



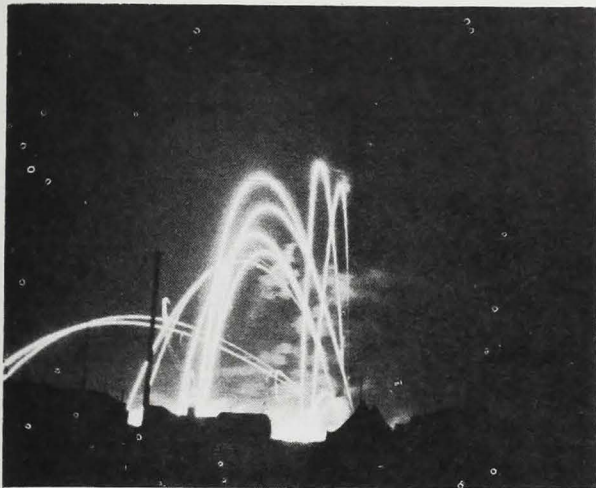
The newly formed 424th Air Service Group holds a party attended by their C.O., Lt. Col. Lewis

No operational missions were run this month before the declaration of VE Day, but we were busy dropping food to the Dutch, flying ground personnel on sightseeing tours over Germany and hauling liberated French prisoners of war back to France. An intensive training program was established for flying personnel on ATC regulations and orientation to the Pacific Theatre. The Combat Training School and the Ground School programs were adopted by the 3rd Bomb Division as recommended SOP for all stations in the division.

With the conclusion of operational missions it is interesting to note that the group had 609 officers and 843 enlisted men operational graduates. 442 were missing in action, 231 killed in action, 458 became prisoners of war, 13 were interned, 252 returned, 30 injured and 11 wounded in action.

This was a month of inspections—inspections in preparation for our moving. Col. Estells from the Air Inspector's office in Washington felt that we were far advanced on our administrative affairs as we had already completed processing while other stations had not yet even begun.

Some of our personnel was scattered all over Europe on detached service. Flying



V-E Day is celebrated at Great Ashfield appropriately



A group of our wandering men in Linz, Austria, on Detached Service after V-E Day

Control had a Control Officer and three men in Austria; Capt. Warren of S-2 was with the U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey; Major McWilliams of S-2 had joined Major Leonard at Camp Lucky Strike and others are expected to be off on junkets too.

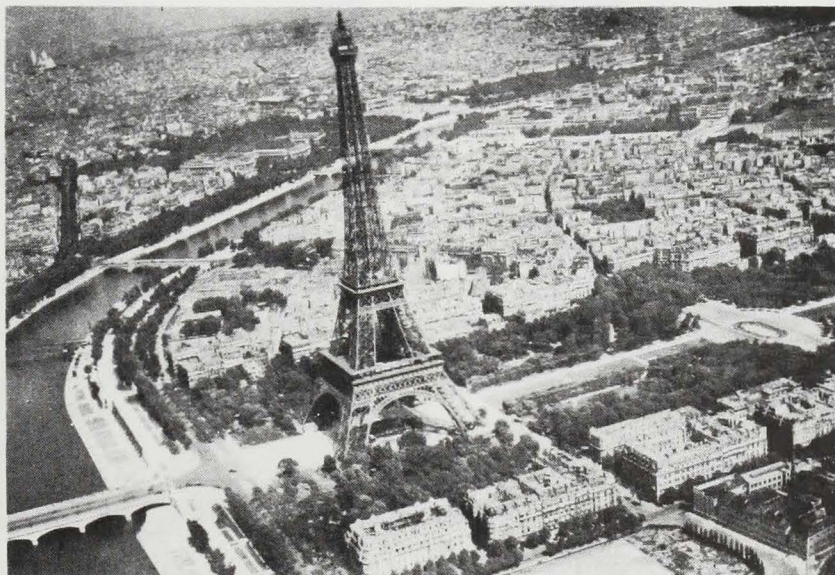
Toward the end of the month Col. Jumper along with Col. Lewis and Col. Shankle got ready to return to the States for a new assignment. On the 28th, the Staff gave Jump a farewell dinner. With their departure, Col. Witherspoon assumed command with Major Anderson and Col. Thrift taking over Lewis' and Shankle's jobs.

On Memorial Day a simple Memorial Service was held in front of Station Headquarters in commemoration of the members of the group who gave up their lives in the war.

The group was saddened by the accidental death of the 548th genial Navigator, Bill Filter who was fatally wounded in a shooting accident on the 20th.



Two of our wandering men, Majors Leonard and McWilliams, caught by the camera at Camp Lucky Strike in France.



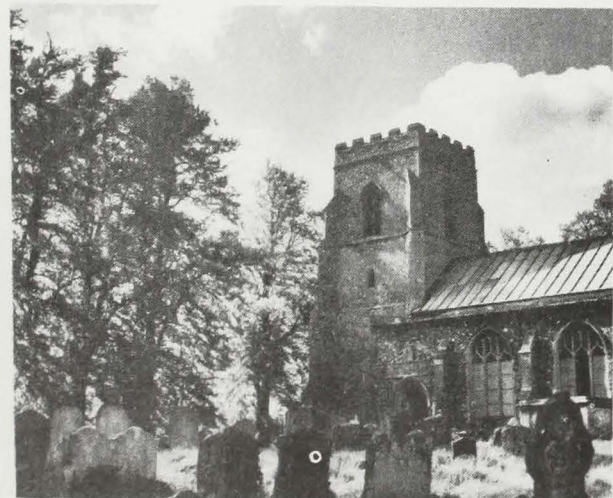
A view of Paris as seen by some of our touring men after V-E Day

With Jump gone and 'Spoon serving as acting Commander, on June 2 Col. William H. Hanson assumed command of the group with the express purpose of taking us back to the States and eventual re-deployment to the Pacific. Coming as he did from the States and completely unfamiliar with our group it is interesting to note some of his comments and reactions.

"Two impressions are outstanding as I had formulated definite opinions relative to these impressions prior to leaving the States. First my impression of general discipline and military courtesy exhibited in combat organizations. Contrary to popular opinion held in the States, I have found that there is no laxity in these departments. These military attributes in these combat units that I have had opportunity to observe are the equal of and, in many cases, superior to their manifestations in the States.



Interior of the Great Ashfield Church where the permanent memorial to our fallen comrades is located.



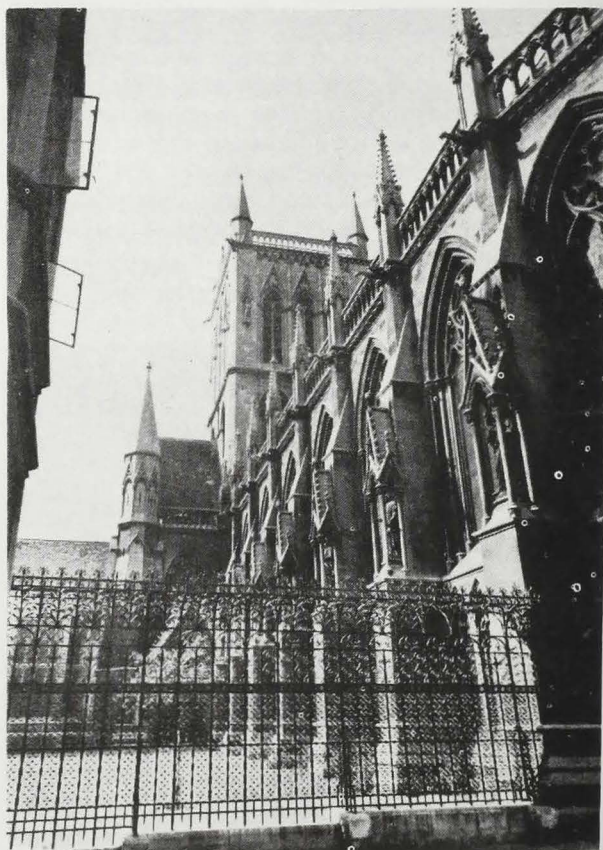
The churchyard of the Great Ashfield Church to which the memorial plaque was transplanted before the Group left England for home.

"The second impression contradicting a predetermined opinion is the excellent morale apparent in the men and officers with long combat experience. Their desire to see any post-hostilities or re-deployment task efficiently executed in order that they may more quickly take their battle gained experience into another active theatre is evident with very few exceptions.

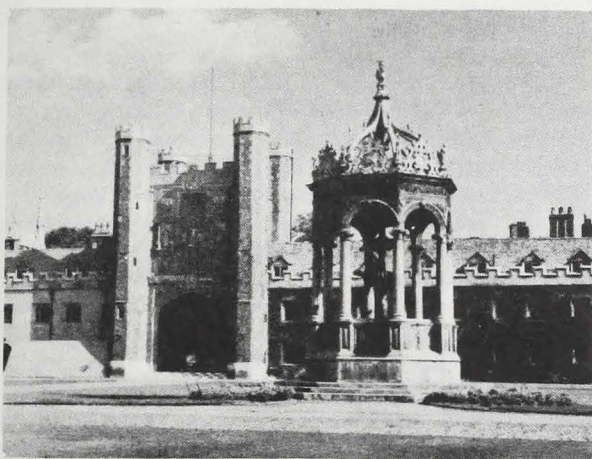
"A very brief though comprehensive inspection of this Bomb Group leaves me with the impression that the organization is sound and must have been well coordinated during the operational period."

Activity for the month centered about preparing and despatching the Air Echelon for re-deployment to the Zone of Interior. On June 11th General Archie Old, our Wing Commander, made a complete inspection of the station. From the 11th to the 18th all flying personnel finished processing on ATC flying regulations and the engineering section completed readying the planes for the trans-Atlantic hop.

On the 19th the first 50 aircraft with 20 men per plane left Great Ashfield on the first leg home, flying as far as Valley. One plane overshot the runway at Valley and the personnel had to return to this base to start over again as their aircraft had to be salvaged. The 23rd saw 13 more aircraft loaded and depart for Valley and on the same day the Ground Echelon was alerted for movement on or about July 10th. The next day the ship-



A familiar scene to those who took their passes in Cambridge



More of Cambridge



A quiet walk in Cambridge

ment numbers and readiness orders were received.

Our wandering staff officers were beginning to return from their junkets, Leonard and McWilliams finally got back from La Belle France and as suspected they had finished their detached service cavorting for five days on the Riviera.

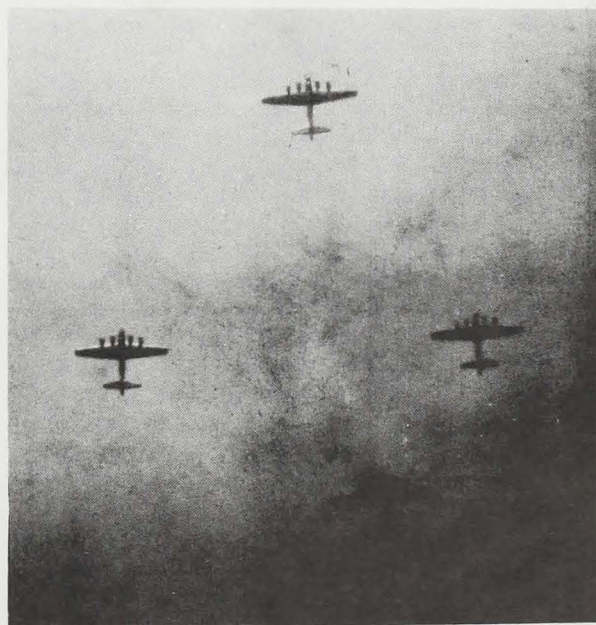
On the 28th, the Holding Party which was to remain behind and turn the station back to the British, was established with our recent bridegroom, Major Frank Marano in charge. The very next day, the last of the Air Echelon departed with Col. Hanson heading the nine planes, except for the poor unfortunates who smacked down too hard at Valley. The line was deserted—all but one lone plane being readied for this last crew and passenger load. With the departure of this plane the group had sent 72 ships carrying 1440 persons back to the States.

Major Todd served as Station Commander as well as C. O. of the 424th Air Service Group, Major Totten J. Anderson commanded the ground echelon of the group with the following squadron commanders; Capt. Stephen Bowen, 548th; Major Oscar S. Anderson,

549th; Major Edward Stern, 550th and Capt. William Grist the 551st. All was in readiness, we just sat and waited for our marching orders.



A scene nearby Great Ashfield



The last of our planes leave Great Ashfield and head home to the States

JULY 1945

With the departure of the last plane on the 8th and subsequent final inspections by those from USSTAF, we spent the month playing baseball, sun-bathing and waiting. The final Officers' Club party was held on the 8th and later in the month the furnishings were auctioned in Stowmarket. The Post Exchange was also liquidated after two weeks rations were issued to all.

Various reports, rosters, etc., were being forwarded to proper authorities at regularly scheduled intervals. Finally on the 24th and 424th Headquarters and Base Services Squadron under Major Todd left Great Ashfield for Southampton to board the transport "West Point" for the States. They were followed by the 674th Air Material Squadron and the 850th Air Engineering Squadron under Captains Gail Spears and Edward Pratt respectively. These squadrons were less fortunate in their assignment of boats to carry them back to the States as they drew Liberty ships. In fact a detachment from the latter organization had to go to Scotland to help convert their ship before the rest of the organization could board her for the return.

On the 26th the group finished loading its Air Corps OEL equipment on 65 wagons (freight cars) at the Haughley station and four days later eight wagons were spotted at Elmswell and the TAT equipment was loaded with this train leaving for Glasgow at 0410 hours on August 1st.

The last day of the month saw the receipt of our orders to leave on August 5th for Glasgow and the Queen Elizabeth and home.

AUGUST 1945

Station 155 (Great Ashfield) was policed up to the extent that there was very little to indicate that a garrison of 3000 men and officers lavished two years of the most rigorous portion of their lives within its borders. It is certain that when the last Yankee departed, Station 155 was known only to United States records and Great Ashfield remained to the British in appearance as well as in fact. What remained of us were bits of B-17s and shell cases trampled into the earth. The grass had already nearly obliterated our pathways between our living and work areas.

The early evening of the 5th saw great activity as everyone lugged his personal baggage to designated places for it to be picked up. Last minute policing of barracks and the grounds were completed and all that was left to do was to take last looks at the many familiar scenes and landmarks of the past two years.

The most striking contrast was to be found on the line. Instead of the usual bustling activity and the great lumbering B-17s and the many trucks, jeeps and other vehicles it was

completely deserted. The hardstands were empty, no vehicle circled the perimeter, no planes were coming in for a landing, no engines roared and the control tower stood alone like a silent sentinel surveying the scene.

As the evening wore on the men began to climb into waiting trucks and shortly they moved off down past the main picket post that held the sign "The Home of Van's Valiants" then left to the sleepy little town of Elmswell. That night it was far from sleepy, the whole town was there chatting with their American friends. In darkened corners the boys said their fond good-byes to their English girl friends. Motherly English farmers' wives were openly tearful as they wished good luck to the lads for whom they had done so many friendly chores and with whom they had hospitably divided their meagre rations. And the kids—by this time fast asleep in their beds, no longer troubled by the drone of enemy aircraft overhead and the wail of the siren; although not present in person they were there in spirit. The group will always remain indelibly remembered in the community by its memorial altar and the bronze tablet in the little stone church and its churchyard in Great Ashfield, but the deepest memory possessed by the British folk surrounding the base will probably be our American soldier's relationship with the children.

With little confusion the train was loaded and the shrill whistle we had long since identified with English trains, sounded and we were off. Glasgow—Greenock and the Queen Elizabeth.

The following morning found us aboard ship and there we sat in the Clyde for a day and one-half while the rest of the troops came aboard. 1700 hours on the next day we steamed slowly down the river and headed home. As we steamed down the Clyde, whistles could be heard wishing us bon voyage and little launches dwarfed by the mighty Queen circled and followed us. Four and one-half days later once again we saw that majestic lady in New York harbor.

It was a fine welcome home. A mixture of flashing scenes, noises, tastes, smells and feelings. Camp Kilmer again. What a change! Now a smooth efficient post through which we were processed in 30 hours and then we boarded our respective trains for the reception station nearest our homes.

Although many of the members of the group later turned up at our originally scheduled assembly point at Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the 385th ceased to function as an organization with our departure from Kilmer. The sudden collapse of Japan and the declaration of V-J Day wrote finish to the glorious history of the 385th. Well done!

FUNCTIONS

of the

SECTIONS and ORGANIZATIONS

Our base at Great Ashfield was run in a manner surprisingly similar to the way any community of 3000 population would be run in the United States. The primary difference was that our officials were appointed rather than elected. There were two main functions, one administrative, the other operational.

On the administrative side we had a police department, fire department, postal service, doctors and hospitals, bus lines, restaurants, churches, clubs, stores and theatres—all the activities essential to life and many which made our existence more palatable. Our little community was even further subdivided into living sites, housing people in many instances engaged in the same type of work. The business or operational side of our life was quite different than what most of us encountered in civilian life but even then many skilled personnel such as radio repairmen, machinists, mechanics, cooks, projectionists, etc., fitted right back into jobs similar to what they had done at home. Our operations were run on much the same principles as a large business concern except that when mistakes were made it was not profits that were lost, but human lives. In fact when you consider that on our base our eighty-odd aircraft alone represented a capital investment of over thirty million dollars, the magnitude of our "business" becomes apparent. We had our production line for servicing and repairing the airplanes, we had our personnel office administering their definite policies—we even had a sales department whose difficulties in selling the product of our efforts to the Germans were even greater than those of the average insurance agent.

ADMINISTRATIVE

The City Hall, Mayor's office and county records section were located in the Station Headquarters building. This was the focal point of all station activities for from it emanated all the laws and decrees regulating life on the station. All official correspondence going to higher headquarters or coming down to our station passed through the message centre presided over by Sgt. Nelson, under the watchful eye of our Sergeant-Major McCarthy. It was the duty of our able adjutant, first Johnny Hambrook and later Dave Oakley, to be sure that the order of the Mayor (or Commanding Officer) were properly circulated and executed and that all orders published for the station met with the Mayor's approval.

Also in this building were located the offices of the "vice-president in charge of operations," called the Air Executive and the "administrative vice-president," called the Ground Executive. These two men supervised the two different types of activities in which the station was engaged. Also located in headquarters,

the Air Inspector whose duties were to report directly to the Station Commander as to how things were going on the station. Activities under his cognizance included everything on the field from latrines to airplanes, from postal service to morale, and back again. To assist him in surveying these varied activities he had two assistants known as the Administrative inspector and the Technical Inspector. The Air Inspector's duties were most ably performed throughout most of our history by Lt. Col. Totten J. Anderson with Capt. Seabright, Major Harry Monfort and Capts. Gaul and Blackwell as his assistants during our tenure at Great Ashfield.



Capt. Dave Oakley, the Station Adjutant



Jimmy, driver, valet, errand boy and confidante of our Commanding Officers

Since the section was one of the largest on the base, it would be difficult to single out individuals. It was the splendid teamwork of our cooks, bakers and their assistants that made our meals enjoyable.

No less important than our food, was our health. This was under the supervision of our Medical staff, which was pooled from all units on the station. All injuries and illnesses not requiring hospitalization at the 65th General Hospital which served our station, were treated in our station Sick Quarters. Ambulances staffed by Flight Surgeons and Orderlies met each returning mission to remove any wounded, while a medical orderly room was operated at each briefing and interrogation. Attached to Sick Quarters was our own Dental Clinic, fully equipped for dental care.



An injured gunner is taken out of the ship by the medical orderlies, assisted by his crew mates



The Medics watch a ship return from a mission



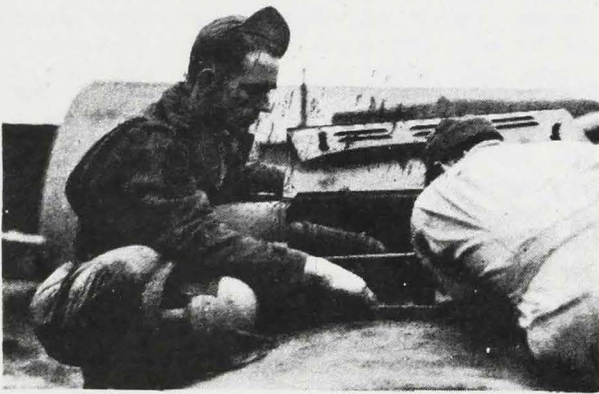
Capt. Huff and Bard check a flyer at briefing

The Medical Section was the product of the efforts of our Group Surgeon—Bill Bunting. Constantly striving to improve the medical service to our personnel, "Doc" Bunting endeared himself to all our men for his personal interest in their welfare. Whether our wounded landed at Great Ashfield or at some remote RAF base, he was soon marshalling the best medical skill available in the ETC. Such efforts quite naturally brought forth the best from such high calibre assistants as Cloyce Huff, Bob Kuhn, Johnny Martin, Ray Williams, Don Hunter and Norm Eide. Bob Holmberg, who succeeded Bunting carried on the same ideal. Docs Taubkin, Freed and Reed operated our Dental Clinic with the same high standards of service.

From our first day at Great Ashfield until the very day we left, transportation was a vital cog in our machinery. In order to do the job, it was necessary to bring all our vehicles, drivers and mechanics into a single Transportation section, popularly known as the Motor Pool. With such a centralized agency despatching our vehicles, our motor transport was stretched to accomplish the job. Under Capt. Charlie Smith, assisted by Lt. Zittleman, our many vehicles of all sizes and descriptions were operated and serviced by the many skillful men of the section, headed by M/Sgt. Thompson. It was their endless task to keep this rolling stock available so that we could remain operational. The section even ran a bus line on the base, serving the far reaches of the perimeter track on a regular schedule. In spite of the many difficulties, not the least of which was the need to conserve fuel, the section proved itself again and again.



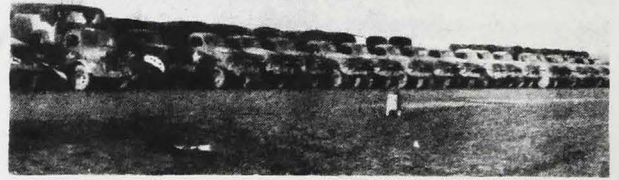
Capt. Charlie Smith, our Transportation Officer, and one of his mechanics check a jeep



M-Sgt. Thompson, Transportation Chief, checks a job



Cpls. Cerillo and Tripi, dispatcher and driver, go over a trip ticket



Trucks in the Motor Pool awaiting calls for their services

Like any city, we had our police and fire protection. The Provost Marshal ran our police force which maintained law and order. It was a large task for our small force of approximately fifty men. They guarded the numerous access roads to the field, patrolled the entire area during the hours of darkness to insure against sabotage, regulated traffic, guarded against thievery and operated the station guardhouse or jail. The Provost Marshal's duties fell upon the broad shoulders of Capt. Ralph Robinson, assisted by Lt. Federico. Friend and counselor to every G. I. "Robbie" commanded their respect, and with the able help of Sergeant Tully, our police force was molded into most efficient minions of law and order.

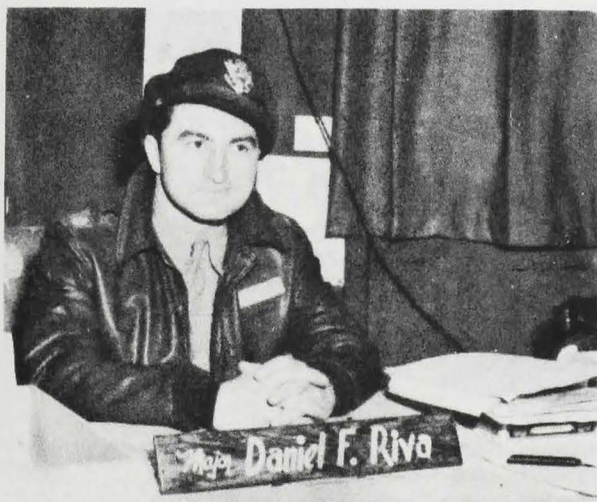
Companion to the police was our Fire Department under the Fire Marshal. They maintained and operated our fire fighting apparatus from the two fire houses—one next to the guardhouse and the other adjacent to the Control Tower on the airdrome proper. They attended the take-off and return of each mission in particular, but a crash truck and crew was always on duty. More than once our Fire Department extinguished fires in British farmhouses located on our station.

If there was an officer who gave every indication of enjoying his Army assignment, it was Joe Barone, our jovial Fire Marshal. It was therefore not surprising that his section was so outstanding and their efforts when disaster struck us so superb. The section made a record of which every member can be proud and from which the rest of us at Great Ashfield gained reflected glory.

Because there was always the possibility that we might be subjected to enemy counter measures, it was necessary for us to have a plan for the defense of the station. Without fear of contradiction, no doubt the most thankless task on the base was performed by the 16 uncomplaining AA gunners which formed the foundation of our Station Defense. The monotonous hours that these gun crews spent in the gun pits scattered about the perimeter, were enough to try the patience of any man.



Maj. Ed Stern, 550th Exec., looks pleased at winning the Site Award of the Week



Danna Riva, the first C.O. of the 551st

The 551st Bomb Squadron or Wolf Squadron, as it was popularly known, had four Squadron Commanders: Danny Riva, Herb Hamilton, H. T. Witherspoon and Vernon "Moon" Mullin. Probably no squadron had any more intense squadron spirit and wore the pride of the organization on their sleeves more prominently than did the members of this unit. This characteristic of the squadron was reflected in a great measure from its leaders—not only the Commanding Officers but its Executive of long standing, Will Walcher, its competent Bill Grist and such NCOs as



Herb Hamilton, the 551st second C.O., congratulates one of his pilots with Frank Walls looking on



H. T. "Spoon" Witherspoon, the third 551st C. O. and later Air Exec. of the Group

First Sergeant Joyce, Sgt. Smith and others.

The close cooperation between ground and combat personnel, so essential to a fighting machine, was no greater exemplified than in this unit. This cooperation was evident throughout the station, but it was more noticeable in the 51st, perhaps because its personality was so positive in character.

Late in becoming an organization as such, the 424th Headquarters and Base Services Squadron quickly integrated its personnel comprised of former members of such service units as the Station Complement Squadron, the Military Police Company, the Fire Fighting Platoon, Sub-Depot and Finance Detachment. Guided by Major Henry B. Todd who had built the 455 Sub Depot into such a fine organization, the 424th was rapidly making a history of its own when hostilities ceased in Europe. Coming from the Station Complement Squadron, for which he had performed the same duties, First Sergeant John Gormley ran the Orderly Room in a quite thoroughly competent manner with genial "Doc" Savage serving as Adjutant.

Formed late in the war from the Sub Depot, Ordnance and Quartermaster Companies, the 764th Air Materiel Squadron rapidly proved to be an efficient organization. The manner in which its personnel supplied the station with material—from the aircraft we flew to the food we ate, reflected the able leadership of Capt. Gail Spears and his Adjutant Capt. Ora Sage. The Orderly Room was run by First Sergeant Conley, who had gained his experience as the capable top kick of the original Ordnance Co.

The third of the Service Group's squadrons was the 850th Air Engineering Squadron led by Capt. Ed Pratt who had started his Great Ashfield career in our early days as an Assistant Engineering Officer of one of the bomb squadrons. His own fine technical knowledge coupled with his initiative and thoroughness, served to carry on the fine record that the 850th's personnel had made as members of Major Todd's Sub-Depot. Possessing some of the finest technicians and skills members of the squadron proved themselves capable of solving the most difficult practical engineering problems and of devising new and ingenious methods for doing so in the shortest possible time. Capable First Sergeant Brigman and Adjutant Lt. McBride supervised the Orderly Room.

Food and clothing are important items in

everyone's existence and no less so in our community at Great Ashfield. Supplying these was the function of our Quartermaster section, manned by personnel from the Materiel Squadron. Regularly, without a hitch, these necessary supplies were always on hand when needed. In addition to these more personal supplies the Quartermaster handled the supply of all office and housekeeping equipment and bedding. Our most essential and precious coal supply was likewise the section's responsibility. A great many of these activities necessitated dealing with British agencies so that Quartermaster personnel became accomplished diplomats.

Under Captain William Studdard and later, Capt. Wally Moore, the section was a model of efficiency and no small part of the credit must go to the men who did the work, headed by non-coms like First Sergeant Walker and T/Sgt. Martin Beske.



S-Sgt. Canney and his buddies about to enjoy their Christmas dinner in one of our four messes

The feeding of nearly three thousand men was a tremendous task. Four complete mess halls were operated, two of them twenty-four hours a day. These messes were: the Combat Mess—for all combat personnel; Enlisted Mess No. 1 and No. 2; and the Officers' Mess—for ground and staff officers. Since food was dear to the heart of every American soldier and subject to his first gripes, the Mess section was constantly striving to improve our mess facilities and the meals served. This was no easy job, particularly when two of the mess halls had to operate around the clock. The Combat Mess, because of varying schedules of operational missions, had to be particularly flexible as their meal times might come at all sorts of hours, day or night, for those crews flying, while the rest of the crews still had to be fed at the usual meal hours.

This gigantic task was the responsibility of Capt. Steve Bowen, capably assisted by Capt. Richter and Lts. Hubbard and Ziegau.



Some of the 850th's specialists busy repairing a wing panel



Lt .Col. Tom Kenny

Beucus, Capts. Pollack and Belcher served as Executive officers while Jim Wilson, Belcher and Henry Dworshak were Adjutants at one time or another. The 548th had another distinction as it had among its First Sergeants a man who had flown a complete operational tour—Joe McLavish. It was under McLavish the squadron adopted a war orphan and raised sufficient funds for the youngster's education and to help him through life.

Three Commanders headed the 549th Bomb. Squadron through most of its history, Berkeley Springfield, Archie Benner and Charlie Reid. Trained under Springfield at Glasstrong esprit de corps during their six weeks' rigorous training in this isolated part of the States. It was here that the squadron insignia—the devil riding a bomb, was selected.

Under Frank Marano the squadron moved on to Camp Kilmer and the good ship "Queen Elizabeth," while the air echelon hopped the Atlantic by plane.



The 549th surrounds its Commander, Archie Benner, and gives three cheers for another successful mission.



The 549th's Exec. Frank Marano, who remained behind at Great Ashfield to return the station to the British.

Arriving at Great Ashfield, the 49th was up to its collective ears in mud while awaiting completion of the unit's permanent housing accommodations in Site Eight. The strong spirit of the organization often times brought it in conflict with existing rules and regulations such as the attempt to make over wash-rooms to include showers. The many squadron parties were other manifestations of this spirit and no holiday season passed without some celebration of some kind.

Some of the squadron's colorful personalities likewise possessed a flare for flaunting the run of the mill routine and their escapades in Ipswich and developed "gold bricking" to a fine science. The squadron's ability to be in the proverbial "dog house" may not have caused it to become the adopted home of every stray dog in the vicinity, but at times there appeared to be more four legged animals than the two legged variety belonging to the squadron. Cocker spaniels seemed to be the squadron favorite from Major Bexfield's litter of pups to the one that sailed the Atlantic and after losing several masters in combat finally returned to the States with Sergeant Rude.

In spite of its "characters"—human and canine, the 549th had many outstanding men who were most conscientious to duty and an inspiration to all. Its top NCO's like First Sergeant Guy Riggs, M/Sgts. Pfeiffer, Goble, McNeese and S/Sgts. Hunter and Cirringione were second to none. With Frank Marano and Paul Jones serving as Executive Officer and Adjutant, the squadron performed smoothly as a member of the Great Ashfield team.

The 550th Bomb squadron had only Bill Tesla and John Thrift as its Commanders and Ed Stern as its Executive Officer throughout its combat history and this lack of change set the even temper of the unit's operations on the ground and in the air, day in and day out.



Capt. Paul Jones, the 549th's Adjutant



Lt. Col. Bill Tesla

Also throughout its history, from the hectic days at Cutbank, Montana, to those at Great Ashfield, First Sgt. Halstead called the rolls and ruled supreme in the Orderly Room.

Each new combat crew or ground man that took his place among the Red squadron's ranks soon caught the spirit of the organization so that even when the morale of the unit suffered such hard knocks as the loss of Hutch and Clarence McIlveen and their crews on their last mission of a tour, the outfit recovered quickly and went on its way.

Housed opposite the 549th in Site Seven, the 550th set the pace in making its living quarters most attractive. Picket fences, flagstone walks and artistic use of the squadron color easily identified its living site to those passing through the station back gates to Haughley and Stowmarket.

In "City Hall" also was our legal advisor and District Attorney, the Courts and Boards officer. This office administered all cases of military justice, handled all investigations and claims, and assisted our personnel in legal matters. Except in the severest cases, all cases were tried before juries appointed from among the officers on the base. These local duties were handled first by Capt. Wahl and subsequently by Dave Oakley and Bob Woods assisted by S/Sgt. Reese.

Probably the most popular section on the base in headquarters, particularly at the end of each month, was our bank—the Finance office. This section handled all our financial transactions including payrolls, allotments and war bonds and was supervised by Lt. Gordon Cohn and later Lt. Walter Culp.

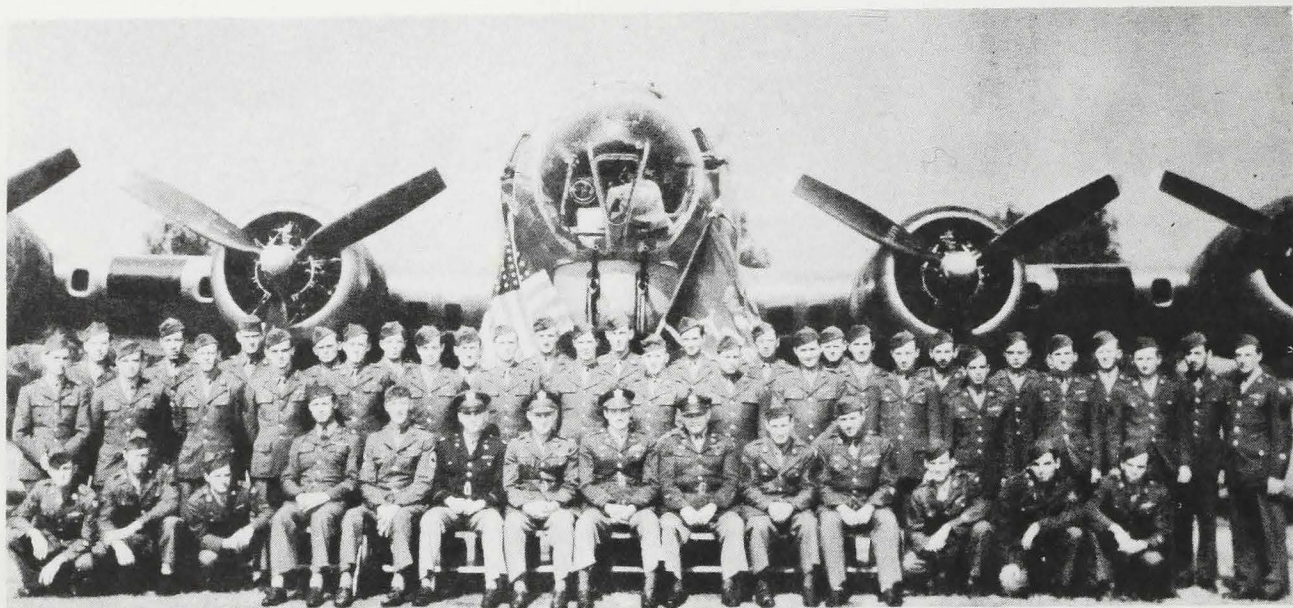
The final and largest section in headquarters was our Personnel office. From the moment a man joined our organization until he left us for one reason or another, everything that happened to him was recorded in the vital records administered by the section. His pay, promotions, classification, job assignments, awards and combat record all were duly recorded. The section was subdivided into an officers section, personnel section, combat section and ground safety section. These activities were under the efficient direction of Lt. Col. Marston Leonard and his assistants Capt. Bert Marshall and Bob Knight.

All the working personnel of these Station Headquarters sections came from almost every unit on the station but a large number of them belonged to the 385th Group Headquarters in particular. This was a small unit composed principally of skilled administrative enlisted personnel. The fact that this group had little supervision from its officers yet maintained such a high state of discipline and morale, speaks volumes for the character and leadership of such NCO's as Master Sergeants Lapine, Unruh, Chivers, Farley and McCarthy.

Each Officer and enlisted man belonged to a unit for administrative purposes. No matter what his duties or where he worked on the field, this unit was his family and his home. His unit saw to it that he was properly housed, fed, paid, clothed, etc. Originally there were in all fourteen administrative organizations at Great Ashfield, but in the latter days of the war in Eupore these were amalgamated into ten, with the four squadrons of the bomb group (the 548th, 549th, 550th and 551st) and the three squadrons of the service group (424th, 674th and 850th) being the largest. Each of these units occupied a separable living site with the smaller organizations occupying the remaining space. There were eight of these living sites and two so called communal sites dispersed about our station for camouflage and protection against enemy attack. The communal sites contained facilities used by



The Personnel Section minus its head, Major Leonard and Sgts. Fitzgerald and Nielson, who were on the continent or elsewhere when this picture was taken.



The 385th Headquarters with both its Commanding Officers

Front: Turnbaugh, Meeks, Harvey, Unruh, McCarthy, Barrow, Jumper, Van, Lewis, Farley, Miller, McGuinness, Stone, Terry

Middle: Mauger, Chivers, Nilson, Hess, Rogers, Amolsh, Manning, Bice, Bassing, Heie, Daugherty, Holland, Feske, Beal, Fantry, Cann, Romero, Lapine.

Rear: Bergman, Aguilar, Bennett, Gaisinger, Freeman, Boltrokonis, Anderson, Witt, VanWageror, Kampa, Roch, Kaufman, Nicholson, Stephenson (hidden) Daggett.

all such as mess halls, showers, clubs, theatre, gymnasium, chapels, etc.

The 548th Bomb. Squadron had only two commanders during most of its lifetime, Sep Richard and later Tom Kenny. Richard started with the squadron in Lewistown, Montana, then in the spring of 1944, when he moved up to Wing, Kenny took over until the end of the war. In Lewistown the squadron insignia, "Bugs Bunny" was selected. It was here, too, that the crews not only worked up their flying, bombing and navigating proficiency, but as if in preparation for things to come in England, the squadron fought its first battle with the mud.

Things functioned smoothly at Lewistown, but the squadron did have a couple of unfortunate happenings. The first was on the return from the Marysville overwater training flight when Lt. Roy Thompson and his crew crashed into a mountain at Yellowstone National Park. The other accident was the crash of the C-78 piloted by Lt. Lindsey, the story of which is chronicled elsewhere in this volume.

Upon arrival at Great Ashfield, the 548th was assigned the living site closest to Elmswell, our railhead. This was a convenient location—it was just a short stretch (the back way) to the highway and Elmswell. As if to compensate for this convenience the 548th was assigned the hardstands, Armament and Engineering huts, farthest around the perimeter track.

The men of the 48th were a hard working, conscientious group of soldiers, and not satisfied with just doing what was necessary to get along. They took pride in their work. For this, the squadron received recognition from the Wing Commander when it was commended for the most aircraft dispatched on missions and the least number of abortive aircraft during a particular period.

Although many of the squadron's accomplishments were made by particular sections, such as Engineering under Capt. Kratzer and Master Sergeants Vance and McDonald, the squadron life centered around the Orderly Room where the Executive officer and Adjutant supervised the activities. Major Elmer



Capt. Ray Fordyce and his Chief examine some of their work in the Photo Lab.

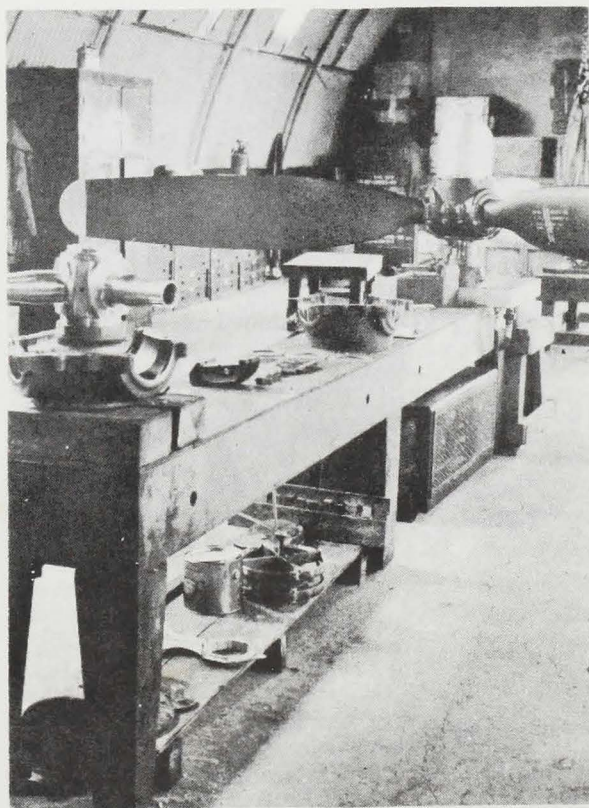


Three of our intrepid aerial photographers get set to take off on a mission

of bombing strikes were often produced before the crews had finished interrogations. S-2 also monitored all Public Relations—our newspaper releases. This was an effective method of maintaining our morale and under the guidance of Earl Mazo, Rally Dennis and Bill McKnight, publicity prospered. There were very few members who did not receive some mention in their home-town papers. S-2 had assorted other duties such as the maintenance of a war room, photo interpretation and indoctrination on evasion and escape methods. All

these duties were performed by Squadron Intelligence officers under the direction of the Group S-2. Group Intelligence had two outstanding heads, first James H. Lewis and then M. Clovis McWilliams. M/Sgt. Farley headed the enlisted staff and kept things running smoothly. Squadron Intelligence Officers and their assistants were: Murray, Patterson, Kavalunas, McMicking, Warren, Wagner, Cavan, Torrance and Whited.

While the operations and Intelligence people were assigning the crews working up the formation, waking, feeding and briefing the crews, the line personnel were busily engaged in readying the aircraft. All of these technical activities came under the supervision of S-4 (Maintenance and Supply) and involved engineering (Repair and service of airplanes), armament (guns, bombsight, etc.), ordnance and chemical (bombs) and all types of supply. These were the people who made our continuous operations possible. They groomed and cared for our great mechanical battle-ships of the air. Day and night through all kinds of weather they performed their arduous tasks to "keep 'em flying" so that our crews would have the best possible chance of survival.



One of the technical facilities under the watchful eye of our S-4—the Prop. Shop



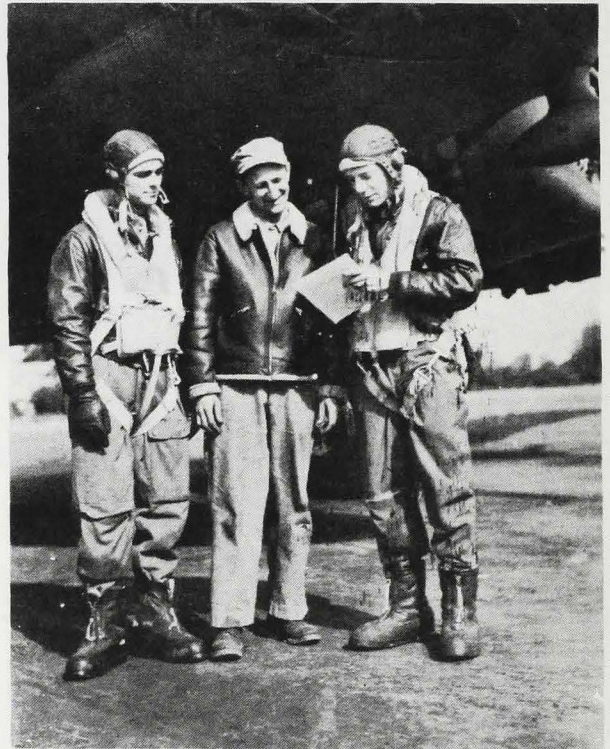
Capt. Dick Wilson and Crew Chief Callahan inspect a ship of the 550th



A Ground Crew of Squadron Engineering checks the pilot's report on the ship's functioning

"Dave" Davenport was our genial but tremendously capable S-4 until replaced later by Harry Monfort. Dave's 26 years in the Army and Harry's 13 years, had given both of them a fine background of experience for the job and they handled ably the task of moving our unit, setting up operations in a new theatre, keeping us in supplies and making our airplanes operate. Arnold Levine and Charlie

Hirt were the Base Engineering Officers. Their job was to supervise all maintenance and to see that the most possible aircraft that could be put in safe shape to fly were gotten in the air. The actual work was performed by the individual Squadron Engine ring sections located around the perimeter of the airdrome. Each section had an Engineering Officer, generally one assistant and an Enlisted Line Chief.



A pilot goes over things

Among these key men were:

- 548th—Capt. Kratzer, Lts. Grimes and Larri-viere. M/Sgts. Vance and McDonald.
- 549th—Capts. Gaul and Pratt, Lt. Chealander. M/Sgts. Pfeiffer and Goble.
- 550th—Captain Wilson.
- 551st—Capt. Meyer and W/O Kinley.

The heavy repair work was done by the 455th Sub-Depot—later called the 850th Air Engineering Squadron, originally organized and commanded by Major Henry B. Todd. These men operated around the field, in the hangers and in their extensive machine shops. There was nothing they could not do on an airplane. In many cases they stripped disabled aircraft to practically build new ones.

The complicated task of supervising the marshalling, the take-offs, landings and parking of our many aircraft was the responsibility of the Flying Control section. The nerve center of this activity was the Control Tower, located within the perimeter and adjacent to the three runways. These operations were directed by means of ground to air communication. All traffic, vehicular as well as airplanes

and type of bombs to be loaded, the time for briefing and take-off and a multitude of other details. There was also an Operations section in each bomb squadron which scheduled the crews and airplanes of that squadron that were to fly on the mission. The Squadron Operations Officers and their assistants were the real work horses of the system. They had to know and understand each individual crew member. Their work was never done. They woke up the crews, saw that they got to breakfast and briefing, checked their instructions and equipment, stood by for take off, and when they were not flying on the mission themselves, met them on the return of the mission. Much of the success of our unit was due to the untiring service of the Squadron Operations personnel and it is only proper that we mention some of them in passing.

548th

Frank Bexfield
W. M. Shankle
James H. Emmons Sgt. Bloomer
Leo Lacasse
Charles Mellinger

549th

Merrill J. Klein S/Sgt. A. Cir-
Edward E. Faroe ringione

550th

Gerald Binks
W. E. Cerrone
W. W. Richards
W. T. Vance
Dexter Lasher

551st

V. W. Masters
E. R. Herron
W. E. Cerrone



One of the "Originals" who came up the hard way, Lt. Col. Shankle, "Shank" to all, who ended up our Operations Officer.

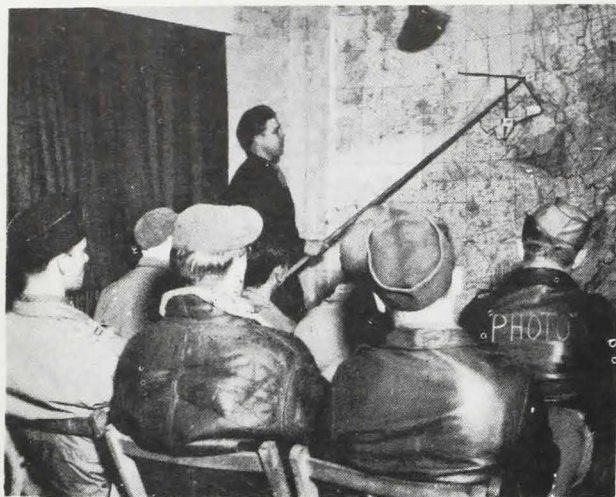


"Colonel Mac" for so long our Operations Officer and Deputy Commander

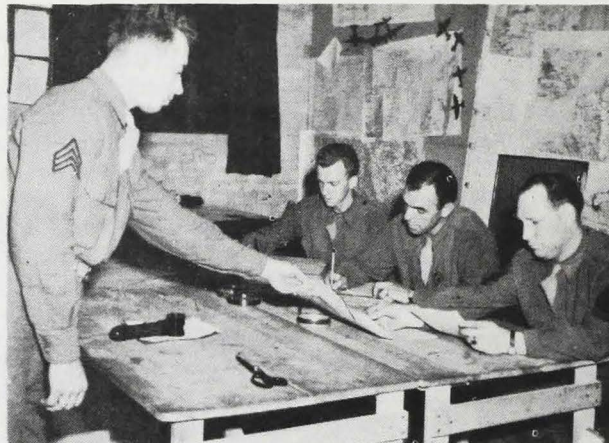


Bill McKnight assists in giving some literature to some new crews

The Group Operations Section was staffed by a corps of our most efficient enlisted personnel drawn from all the squadrons and presided over by M/Sgt. Miller. Connected with operations was the Statistical section under Captain James Hamilton—lawyer and player-coach of our station baseball team. Also part of operations was the training section responsible for all flying and ground training of



Lt. Cavan briefing the crews for a mission



The Intelligence Chief NCO, M-Sgt. Farley and some of his colleagues prepare the S-2 reports of a mission.



Capt. McMicking interrogates a crew on their return from a mission

our combat crews. This training task reached tremendous proportions in the latter day of operations when we were receiving an average of 25 crews per month. The section was organized by Danny Riva and later run by Sep Richard, Frank Walls, Harlan Inglis and W. W. Smith. Assisting in planning operations and directing training were Group Navigators Dewey, Schulz and Nejedlik and the Group Bombardiers Ross and Stetson.

The primary function of Intelligence was to collect and disseminate information about



"Me" is Rally Dennis with the P.R.O. Staff. Bill McKnight must have been chasing a story at the time.

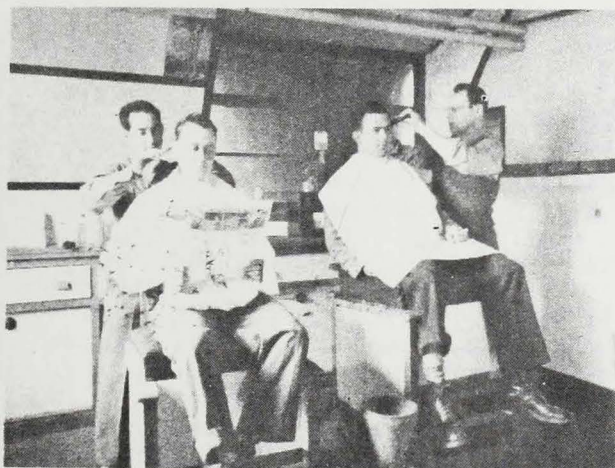
the enemy, although they had a great many duties besides. Their task in preparing for a mission was to provide all the data on enemy flak and fighter defenses and information on the target. They maintained exhaustive folders containing this material on each target. They also maintained our combat crew briefing room and a combat crew library showing the latest tactical developments.

Another function which came under S-2 was the Photo Lab. whose mission it was to provide photo coverage of all bomb strikes and take all other photos required by the group. Lt. Ray Fordyce, our photo officer developed one of the outstanding photo sections in the ETO and the section received several commendations for its work. Photos

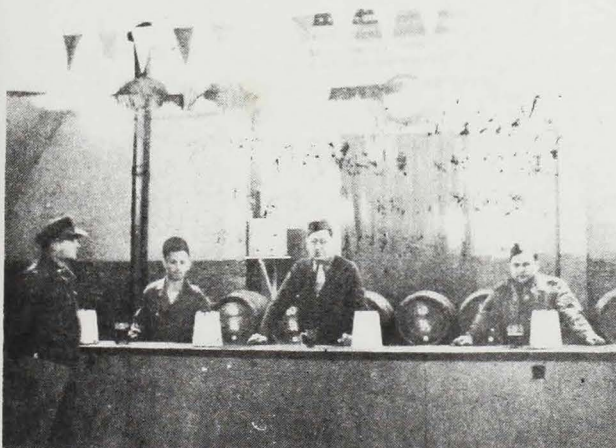
the most part by Lt. Warren Ziegaus, with M/Sgt. Smith as his right hand. Headed by M/Sgt. Ray Lapine and T/Sgt. Martin Beske, a group of NCOs finally overcame their difficulties and established and operated a worthy Non-Coms Club which filled a great need and relived considerable pressure from the over-taxed Aero Club.



Our "coke" bar



One of our two tonsorial parlors



The enlisted men's beer hall ready for business



Officers' Club bar with some of Annie's Murals

Speaking of the Aero Club brings us to the last, but by no means the least agency which cared for our lighter moments—the American Red Cross. The war activities of the ARC were many and there was much evidence of this at Great Ashfield, but most prominent was the Aero Club. Its extremely popular, efficient and hard-working hostess was Miss Caroline Buehler. It was around this club that the social activities of the enlisted men were centered. Dances, Bingo parties, snacks, snooker, hobbies, a library and many little services all were available. It was also through the Red Cross that contact was maintained with those at home when trouble of a personal nature arose. Although we had two Red Cross Field Directors, Messrs. Skarren and Butler, to us the ARC was personified by Caroline Buehler. It was a fitting tribute to her that when the 385th returned home on the "Queen Elizabeth," Caroline was with us to share the welcome extended by the citizens of New York.

Perhaps some mention should be made of Annie Hayward, for it was this English girl who gave so much of her time and talent, when not working in the Aero Club, decorating the noses of our airplanes, the back of many a flying jacket, the Aero Club walls, the Officers' Bar and countless other places.

One final word about the Red Cross, words that can only be expressed by our combat men who became Prisoners of War. Without the ARC and their regular packages to our PWs, they would never have survived their imprisonment so well.



The Snack Bar in the Aero Club



A happy group of English kiddies leave the Aero Club after Caroline and "her boys" have given the kids a party.

OPERATIONAL

So much for the home life side of our existence. We also had a job to do. Every activity on the field contributed either directly or indirectly toward the performance of that job. These activities which had a direct bearing on preparing the aircraft and crews for their missions were called operational functions. They were complex and interwoven for many activities were performed both by a consolidated station section and by a squadron section.

The focal point of all operations was the Ops Block, a large stone bomb proof, gas proof building located adjacent to the Station Headquarters. In it were located the Operations, Training and Intelligence sections and the offices of the Group Navigator and Bombardier. It was connected by a normal telephone, a secret wire and by teletype to our Wing Headquarters at Bury St. Edmunds and the Division Headquarters at Elveden Hall. It also had direct telephone connections to all important operational sections on our base. This building was the planning and control center on our base of all missions. It was in continuous operation but assumed an additional activity during the planning and execu-

tion of a mission. Notice of impending missions (alerts) were first telephoned from Wing Headquarters to the Operations Officer on duty. It was immediately flashed to all sections concerned on the field, also to the bar and the Aero Club. From the alert on, the operational controller kept a continuous running check on the status of preparations for the mission, a report on how it was progressing and a final summary on results.

All functions dealing with the performance of missions were supervised by the Air Executive. We were extremely fortunate to have a succession of extremely capable officers serve in the capacity. All had at one time or another been Squadron Commanders and Operations Officers and were well versed in all activities of the group. Our Air Execs. were in turn Preston Piper, James McDonald, Herb Hamilton and H. T. Witherspoon.

There were three major problems concerned with running any mission—the organization and planning of the mission, the preparation of the crews and the preparation of the airplanes. The first two jobs were handled jointly by S-3 (Operations) and S-2 (Intelligence). S-3 directed all arrangements from the control centre in the Ops. Block. They specified the number of aircraft, the number



**Capt. Ralph Robinson, our Provost Marshall
and his right hand man**



An MP on the job

To them, there was no satisfaction of completing a particular job—just hours spent on the alert to spring into action. Although the section had several chiefs, it finally fell upon Capt. Ralph Robinson to direct.

Although Great Ashfield had many of the services a normal community had, for some time it was a station incomplete and it was in constant need of repair. This presented one of our most difficult problems. Although the British Air Ministry had a resident Clerk of the Works and some maintenance men on the station, it was not until we had established a full fledged Post Utilities section that we began to make progress in completing our station and improving its facilities. After Major Henry Todd had begun to bring order out of chaos, the task fell to two men, who completed the herculean job—Capt. Paul Cooper and M/Sgt. Chambers. Because they had to manage for the most part with untrained personnel detailed to help from time to time, it made the efforts of these two the more remarkable. One thing that aided them in training these itinerant neophytes with whom they had to get the job done, was the ability of Chambers to operate personally any piece of equipment yet devised. The comfort of our living and working accommodations can be attributed to the untiring efforts of the section.

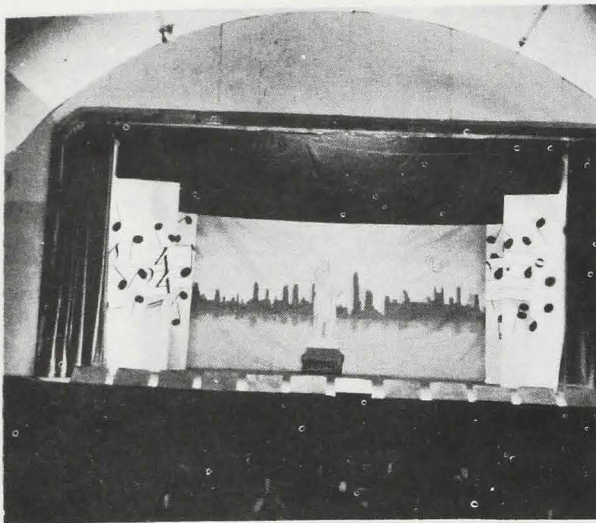
So much for the material side of our life. In spite of the long, crazy hours we spent at our work, we had our moments of relaxation on the station. Our spiritual welfare was in the hands of a Catholic and Protestant Chaplain, both of whom conducted services regularly. In addition we were served by a roving Rabbi. Our two regular chaplains were kept busy visiting those in the hospitals, Sick Quarters and handling the many individual personal problems of the men. We had but two chaplains throughout our history, Chaplain Jim Kincannon and Father Joe Scherer. That simple fact alone speaks volumes for the affection and esteem with which these two men were held by us all.



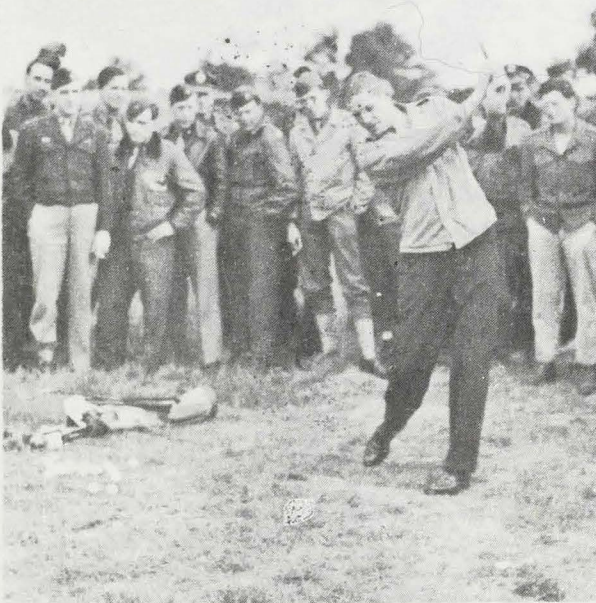
**Chaplain Jim Kincannon talks with some members
of the crew of the "Mission Belle"**



"Father Joe" Scherer



The stage of our theatre set for a USO show



Joe Kirkwood exhibits some of his trick shots

The Special Services section was responsible for organizing and running a very complete program. Our athletic program included football, basketball, baseball, boxing, wrestling, handball among others. Both inter and intra-station leagues in several of these sports were operated. One of the greatest sources of recreation was our theatre in which three movie shows were given daily except when touring USO, Red Cross, ENSA or soldier stage shows visited the station. The gymnasium was also a great source of entertainment. The little things in life are so often taken for granted until they are no longer there and then we become conscious of their value. This was true of Special Services. Under Capt. Walcher and



Touch football game on the field inside the Perimeter Control Tower in background

Lts. Osborn and Earle, men like Ellis, Kinne-man and Farmer, to name a few, brought a great deal of pleasure to us in our free moments.

As our overseas stay lengthened the "extra" services were added to the already functioning Post Exchange and Post Office. Barber shops, an Enlisted Mens Beer Hall, a "Coke Bar" and an Educational Center all added to our off duty pleasure and comfort. These functions, with the exception of the Education Center, were under the managerial eye of Lt. Frank McDonald, who became quite an entrepreneur before our two years overseas were up. The Education Center was under Lt. Carl Bahmeier.

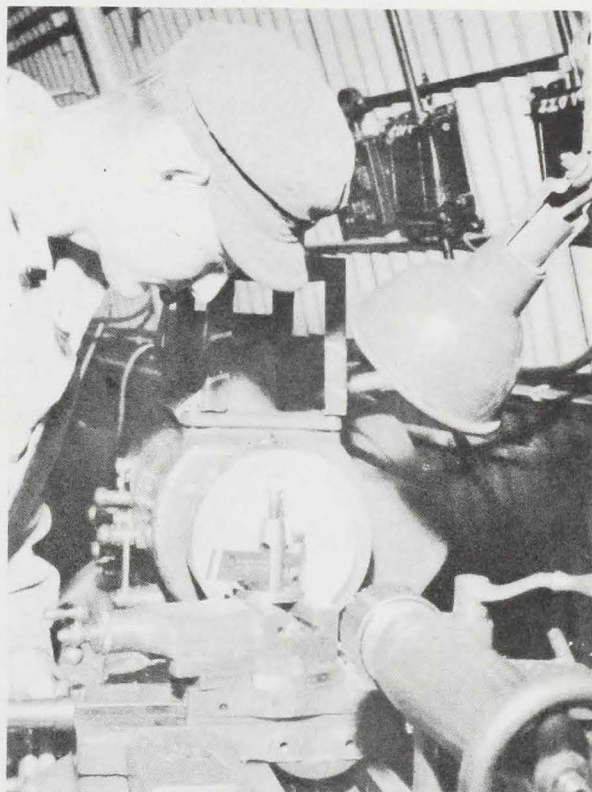


Lt. McDonald and his PX Staff ready for the usual weekly rush for rations

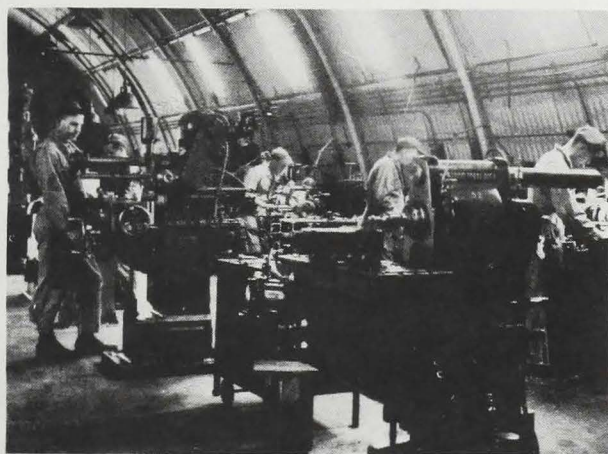
Two other places that were very popular in which to spend our free time, were the clubs operated by and for the Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers respectively. Dances were held regularly as well as informal entertainment. The former club was managed for



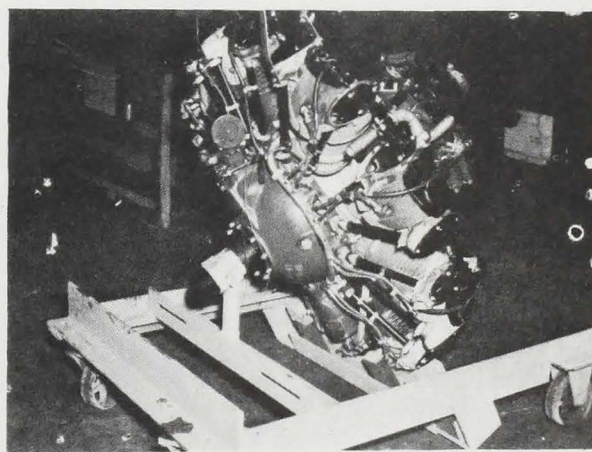
A welder at work in the depot



Lathe operator at work in the machine shop

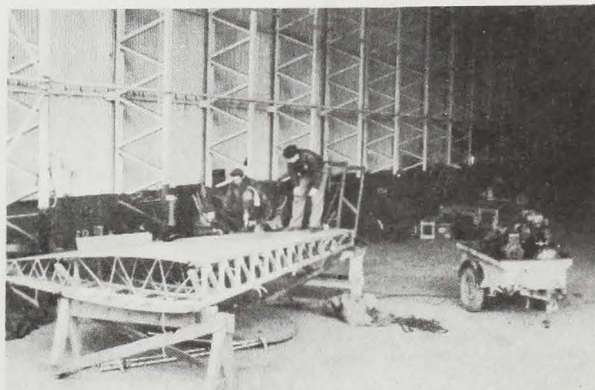


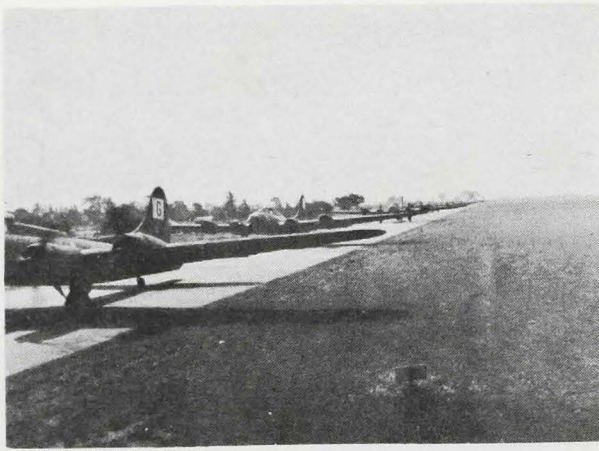
A corner of our machine shop in which our machinists could turnout some remarkable pieces of equipment.



An engine build up stand engineered by the Sub-Depot to facilitate the handling of engine overhauls.

Wing panels being repaired from battle damage in No. 2 Hanger by Depot Engineering Personnel





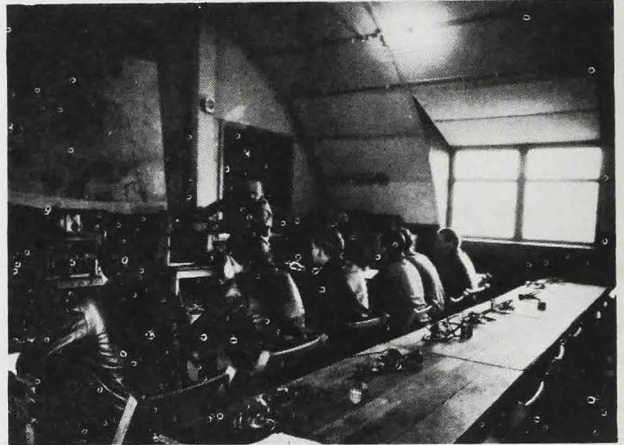
Marshalling our lumbering beauties for take-off was only one of the many important functions of Flying Control.

on all runways and the surrounding perimeter, and the airplanes overhead were controlled by this section. Such navigation aides as markers, runway and perimeter guide lights, and the wind-sock were operated by Control Tower personnel. In addition the section maintained what was known as a Q-Site, a dummy airfield designed to confuse the enemy and also operated the enemy aircraft warning service on the station.

To the flyers, when in the air, Great Ashfield became identified as "Hard Life", our call sign, and "Hard Life" meant also our capable Senior Flying Control Officer, Jesse Ashlock. Ably assisted Jay Sponberg and the men of the tower, the section was on the job around the clock and in most efficient hands.

Another occupant of the Control Tower was our Weather Section. Like each Eighth Air Force Bombardment station, a Detachment of the 18th Weather Squadron maintained a complete weather service in cooperation with our Group Weather Officer, recording meteorological data as well as forecasting. Our weather station was linked by teletype with the extensive service of the Air Force maintained throughout the United Kingdom and surrounding territory. Weather briefing was given by the section for each operational mission as well as weather information for local flights. Although Captain Pyle was our original Weather Officer, this section became identified with those two quiet, unassuming officers, Bernie Paski and Paul Moore. Their men were as unassuming and as competent as their chiefs and it is doubtful if any but a few could name these fine technicians. Two men of the section should be mentioned, however, in particular, because they performed duties beyond their normal call. Wendell Anderson and the section chief, M/Sgt. Smith. Anderson regularly flew with the weather ship when it was Great Ashfield's turn, and relayed the last minute weather data back to

the ground. The Weather ship took off before dawn often on days when the mission never became airborne. As for Smith, he had the doubtful distinction of becoming a PW briefly while flying a regular bombing mission as a weather observer.



The Harwell Radio School where our operators were indoctrinated into the intricate communications system of the airways over the U. K. and Europe.

Because of the tremendous volume of air traffic over England on operational missions, one of the most extensive and complex sections was Communications. With thousands of aircraft in the air simultaneously assembling or returning from a mission, often times in overcast weather, our communications system was of necessity intricate and highly developed. Our Communications section was divided into five principal parts—Station Communications, which included our telephone service, teletype service and codes and cyphers; Operational Communications, including our HFDF broadcasting station; Maintenance, which included all communications equipment from the VHF sets in our B-17s to the Tannoy system on the station; Training, which consisted of our Radio School where combat crews were indoctrinated with the complicated procedures of the ETO; and finally, Radar, whose function it was to keep our "mickey sets" in our Pathfinder aircraft in proper operational condition.

Heading up all these functions was Capt. Fred Harvey, ably assisted by such men as Emanuel, Phillips, Gomberg, Sethne, Glass, Eisenberg, Hestand and Fenton. The high calibre of enlisted men in the section like Thompson, Hanson, Leonard and many others, made it possible for our extensive equipment to be operated and maintained efficiently.

The Armament, Ordnance and Chemical sections were the men who were responsible for loading the bombs into the bomb-bays and fusing them. They had many other duties besides but without their smooth team-work on bomb-loading our main job would not have been accomplished.

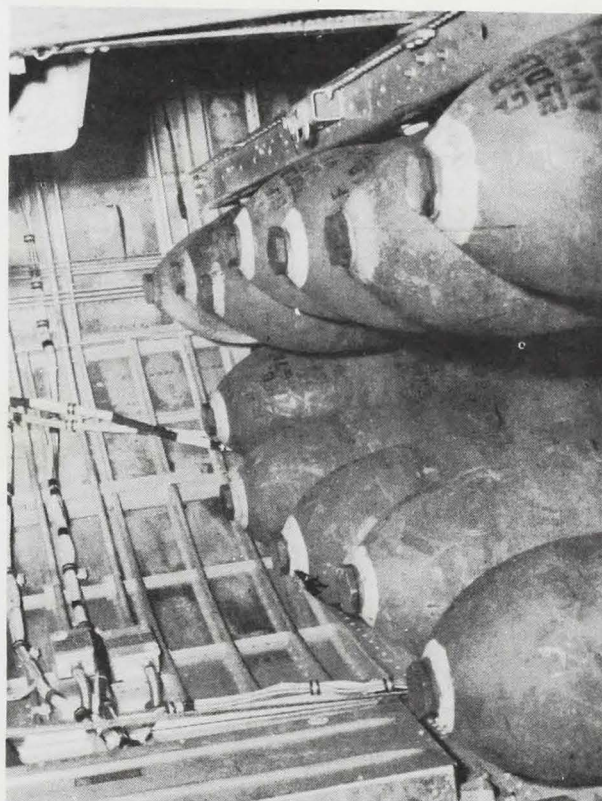


One of the many shops under the guidance of Tommy Harrison and his Armament men



Gunners testing assembling and cleaning their guns in the Squadron Armament Shop before take off

Like Engineering, we had a Group Armament section which supervised its squadron counterpart in each of the four Bomb Squadrons. It was these squadron sections that day in and day out had to deliver the goods. The fact that our B-17s carried so much fire-power did not make the Armament men's job any easier either. There were other vital subdivisions of Armament, all of which functioned as consolidated units serving all four bomb squadrons. These were Bombsight Maintenance, Turret Maintenance, AFCE (Automatic Flight Control Equipment) and Gunnery Training. Dick Beavens originally organized and developed the section and then passed the mantle to Tommy Harrison. Some very outstanding work was done in particular by Armstrong on AFCE, Dentinger on Bombsight Maintenance, and by Sergeants Walker and Smith. The important Squadron Armament officers were Haaf, Oehlert, Thompson and McInerney, with Lts. McDermott and Wilson serving well as Gunnery Officers. We



Bombs loaded in the bomb bay and ready for business

cannot pass by without a salute to the several combat graduates who remained overseas with the group after completing their tour in order to pass on their experience to new crews.

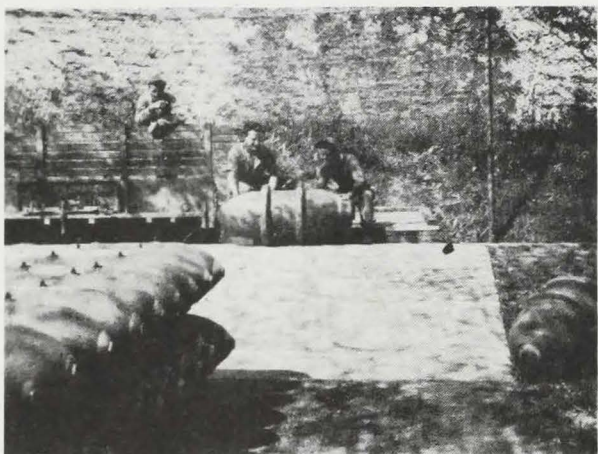
Although each had its own particular tasks to perform, the Ordnance and Chemical sections worked together as closely as any two sections on the base—they had to, or our ships never would have been loaded in time for take-off. It was back breaking work and often times discouraging, particularly when a mission was scrubbed at take-off and the bombs had to be unloaded from the ships. Twice the work and nothing to show for it! Although we had a Group Ordnance section directing and coordinating these operations, the work was done by the Squadron Ordnance sections. Major O. S. Anderson was our original Ordnance officer and later he was succeeded by Henry Stokes. The Squadron Ordnance officers were: Lts. Hausman, Lenz, Kinney and Mossholder.

By no means, were loading bombs on airplanes the only task of Ordnance. All our bombs were trucked onto the station and stored in a camouflaged bomb dump which only the sharpest eyes may detect in the aerial view of the station elsewhere in these pages. The men of the Ordnance Company—later to become a part of the Air Material Squadron, were responsible for the storage of these bombs with Charlie Flesh serving under Capt. Ora Sage in charge. Ordnance also

operated three maintenance shops—the small Arms Shop, the Bicycle Repair Shop and the 3rd Echelon Automotive Maintenance Shop. The latter in particular, was of vital importance and under Charlie Hazelwood, did a remarkable job in keeping our many vehicles of all sizes and descriptions, rolling.



The Small Arms Shop



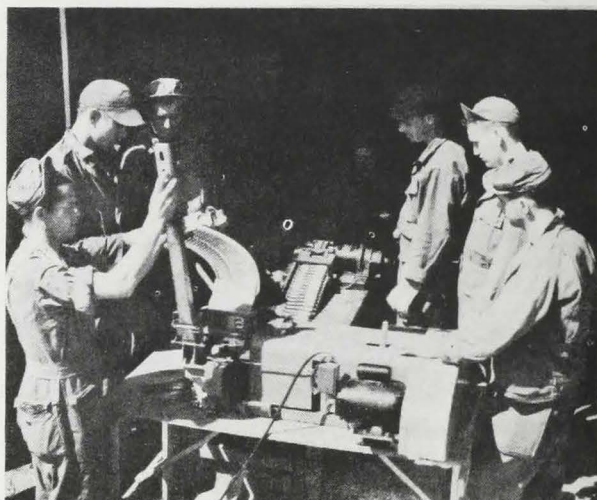
Stacking 1000 pounders under the camouflage of the bomb dump



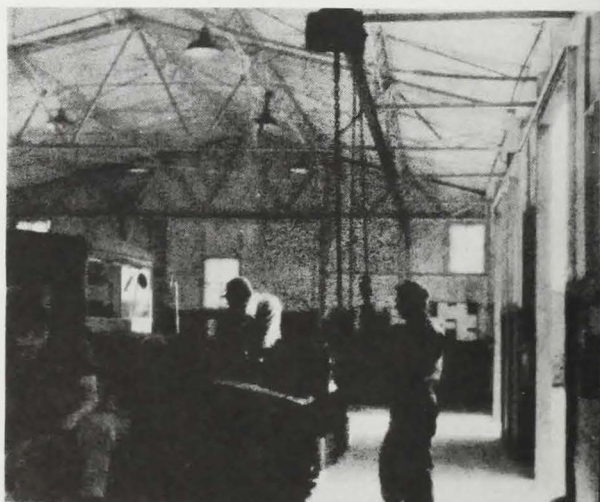
Loading practice bombs with sand



Inspecting bombs in the bomb dump



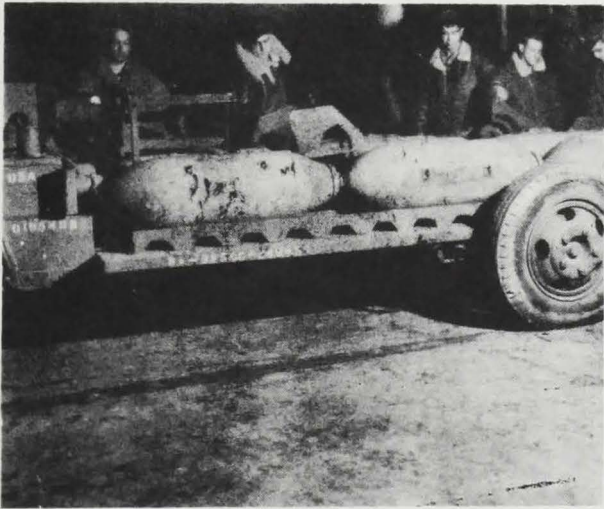
Linking the 50 calibre ammunition for our guns in the B-17



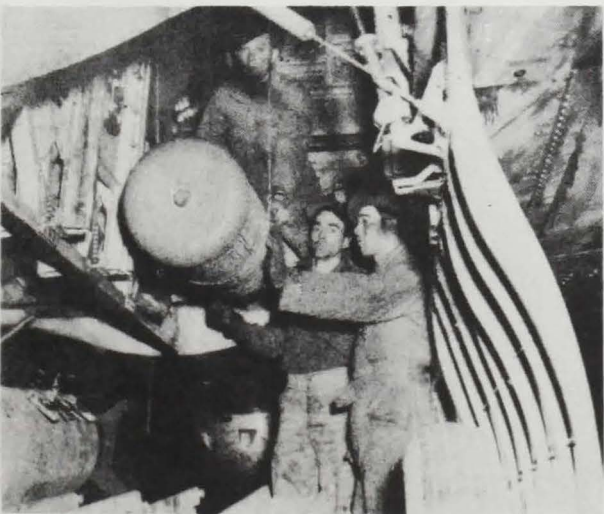
The 3rd Echelon Auto Repair Shop



The Bicycle Repair Shop



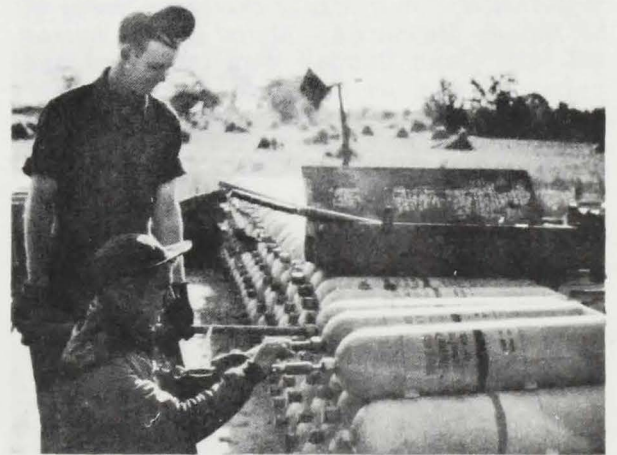
The Ordnance men ready to load the bombs from the trailer into the bomb-bay



Loading the bombs into the bomb-bay

In addition to cooperating with Ordnance on loading and unloading bombs, our Chemical section maintained their part of the bomb dump containing incendiaries. It was also responsible for the gas defense of the station, this last being a part of our overall station defense plan. These chemical functions were performed by the men of the 877th Chemical Company under Capt. Allan Brewer, assisted by Lts. McKenzie, Borchers and Halle. They were a quiet thoroughly efficient team doing an essential job.

In the Air Force, there are many items of supply that are peculiar to the Air Force and its units alone. To supply this equipment and materiel we had a large section called Air Corps Supply. From our airplanes and the fuel that made them fly to flying jackets and parachutes, it was this section that furnished these supplies to those who used them. Because of the thousands of items handled by the section, there was ample opportunity for mistakes, but



Fusing incendiaries in the bomb dump



Practicing chemical defense of decontamination

but Air Corps Supply under Capt. Gail Spears and W/O Dick Lydon did an outstanding job for which the men of the section were more than once commended.

Speaking of flying jackets and parachutes, brings us to our last section—Flight Equipment. For some time this was one of our "problem sections" because no provisions were made for such a section while we were training in the States. With almost 1000 combat men on the station, all of whom had to be furnished personal flying equipment for the high altitude missions we flew, heated clothing, oxygen masks, parachutes, etc., all had to be stored, maintained and issued. The section also operated the Parachute Shop where the chutes were packed and inspected and the Dinghy Shop, in which the emergency dinghies carried on the planes were repaired and equipped. This Dinghy Shop also conducted training in proper ditching procedures in the event a crew was forced down in the North Sea or the Channel. The eventual assignment of combat graduates to the section augmenting the permanent staff finally overcame many of the earlier difficulties. Major Elmer Beucus and later Capt. Daggett with Lts. Dunn and Poplin assisting, were able to develop a proficient organization.



A corner of the flight equipment building where all flying equipment was stored, maintained and issued to the crews.

FLIGHT CREWS



Crew 5. 548th Squadron.



5th mission of Pregnant Portia



1st Lt. W. Grodi's crew



Capt. H. L. Jordan's crew
549th Bomb Squadron



Lt. J. H. Mudge's crew, 549th Bomb Squadron



Lt. Sommer's crew, 548th Bomb Squadron



Capt. W. G. Jacque's crew, 548th Bomb Squadron



Lt. Robbins' crew, 548th Bomb Squadron



1st Lt. J. F. Pettenger's crew



Lt. Weider's crew, 549th Bomb Squadron



Lt. Storr's crew, 550th Bomb Squadron



2nd Lt. W. B. Whitlow's crew, No. 18
549th Bomb Squadron



1st Lt. Richey's crew checking target



2nd Lt. P. M. Yannello's crew



Lt. Weiker's crew, Great Falls, Montana
551st Bomb Squadron



1st Lt. S. P. Dixon's crew



Crew 4, 548th Bomb Squadron



Crew 9, 548th Bomb Squadron



Crew 12



Crew 24



Crew 26



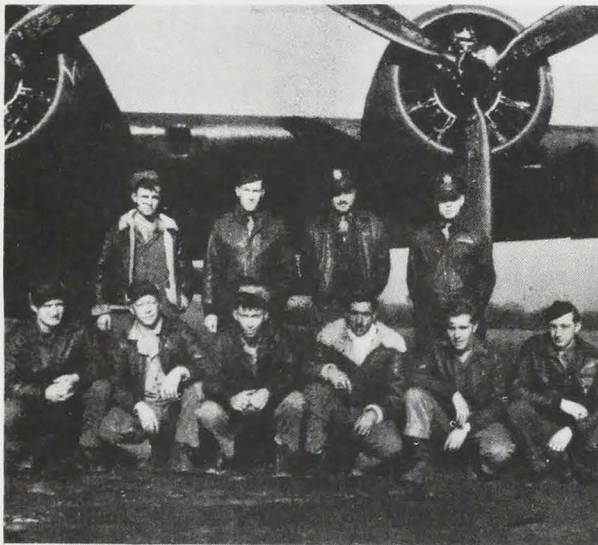
Crew 35



Crew 27



Lt. Harris' Crew, 548th Bomb Squadron



Lt. M. Persechini's crew, 549th Bomb Squadron



Crew 18

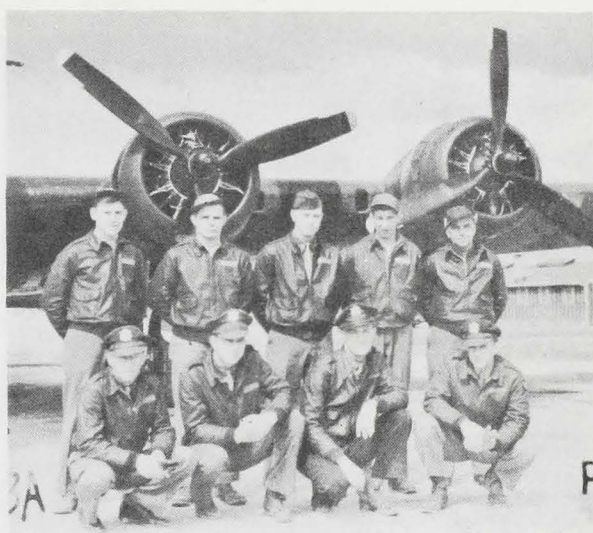


Crew 19





Maj. S. S. Richard's crew, 548th Bomb Squadron



Crew 25



Crew 3



Lt. Horn's Crew



Lt. R. S. Vandiver's crew, 549th Bomb Squadron



Crew 21



Crew 12



Crew 27





Lt. R. M. Taylor's crew, 549th Bomb Squadron

Air and ground crew of "Raunchy Wolf"



Crew 23



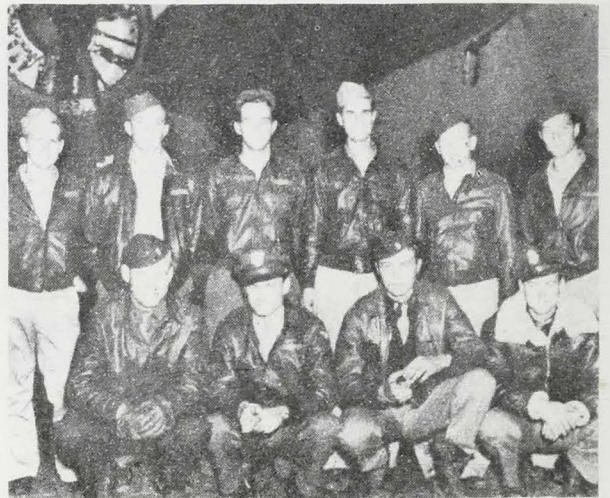
Herb Hamilton's original crew





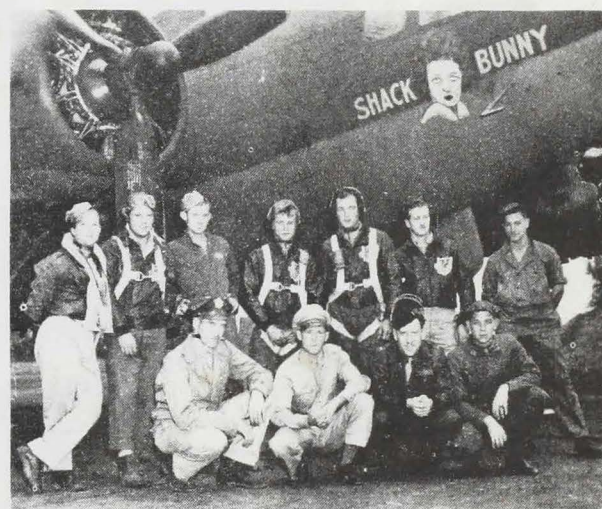
Lt. D. E. Jones' crew, 551st Bomb Squadron







Warren Cerrone's crew of the 550th



Frank Wall's crew of the 551st



Capt. Wayne Horr's crew



