

# LEAP OFF



## 404<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Combat History

*Leap off, leap off, leap off!  
The mission's rough, the flak is tough,  
But we are tougher!  
Leap off, leap off, leap off!  
The guns may puff, that's not enough,  
We'll make them suffer.*

*The formation's perfect with the planes all in place,  
The ships all in echelon are such a pretty sight;  
The target is spotted and the flak's in our face,  
As the leader takes the Group down flight by flight.*

*Leap down, leap down, leap down!  
Release we must, the target's dust—  
My tail is busted!  
Leap out, leap out, leap out!  
Now I'll be stuffed in Stalag Luft  
For the du-ra-tion!*

(Apologies to the popular song, “Amor, Amor,” vintage 1944)

# FORWARD

This book is designed to give those who were members of the 404th Fighter Group during the period 1943-1945 some basis of fact around which they can weave their own fairy tales of personal wartime experience.

It is not an "official" history in the accepted meaning of the term. But it is as true and accurate a history as your editor could compile, based on the documents, notes and verbal testimony of those who prepared the "official" histories of the 404th Group and its squadrons, plus interviews by and personal notes of the editor which do not appear in any "official" history. It also includes a vast amount of photographic material organized to an extent that was impossible at the time the "official" histories of the Group were being prepared.

Scores of individuals in the Group contributed in one way or another to this book; it is the editor's regret that he knows only a few of the contributors by name, and virtually none of those who supplied the humorous anecdotes scattered through the sections devoted to the individual squadrons. The squadron material was compiled by squadron personnel, under the direction of the squadron intelligence sections, while we were stationed at Stuttgart.

An important part of the general Group narrative including the Battle of the Ardennes Bulge was written at Stuttgart by your editor and Al Gelders. Your editor completed the writing of the narrative, captioning of pictures and other associated editorial activities during the period September, 1945-December, 1948, while also engaged in expanding his family from one to three sons and pursuing normal peacetime employment in Buffalo, N. Y. and Detroit, Michigan.

We have tried to mention by name most if not all of the members of the Group, somewhere in the book. We have included certain unflattering nicknames and anecdotes of individuals as supplied by their squadron mates because they provide the authentic flavor of the crude but good-natured humor that entertained us while we were members of the 404th. We intended no embarrassment to anyone, and trust that none is occasioned by anything in this book.

Use of the officers' club fund accumulated by the Group in Europe has made it possible to send complimentary copies of this book to the families of those members of the 404th lost overseas. We trust the full account of the contribution toward victory in Europe made by their loved ones may compensate these families in some measure for the old sorrows which this book unavoidably will renew.

For those of us who returned safely, it is our hope that this book will prove to be a worthwhile souvenir of that period in our lives when we were bound together through the accidents of military organization for one of the most violent periods in world history.

Andrew F. Wilson

(Ex-507th Squadron S-2,  
Ex-Group PRO)

## Emblem of the 404th Fighter Group

### *IGNE FERROQUE HOSTEM ARMATUM CONTERE*

Designed in January 1945, the insignia of the 404th Fighter Group is a heraldic shield, showing a cracked shield, a fallen helmet and a broken sword being struck by a thunderbolt. Background colors are blue sky, and blood-red ground. The Latin inscription, "Igne ferroque hostem armatum contere," on a scroll beneath the shield, may be rendered, "With fire and steel crush the armed (or armored) foe."

It is our understanding that Lt. Col. Leo C. Moon, S/Sgt. Luis M. Henderson and Sgt. Joseph H. Saling all participated in the conception, design and execution of this insignia.

Both the inscription and the symbolism of the shield (the enemy's defensive armor), the sword (his weapons), the helmet (enemy personnel), and the thunderbolt (representing both attack from the air, and the type of aircraft used by the Group), are singularly appropriate.



**History**  
**of the**  
**404<sup>th</sup>**  
**Fighter Group**



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# INTRODUCTION

In November, 1944, when Field Marshal Model, German Army Group Commander, was trying to convince his troops that they still could make a success of things by "limited objective counter attacks" in a defensive battle, he prepared an evaluation of Allied strength and wrote: "Enemy No. 1 is the hostile air force . . ."

In December, 1944, at a special press conference, Lieut. Generals Omar Bradley and George Patton, who commanded the American armies in the Battle of France, emphasized that the tremendous sweeping advance would have been impossible without the help of the Ninth United States Army Air Force.

Since the end of the war other witnesses high in rank, both on the American and the enemy side, have testified to the tremendous contribution made by tactical air power to the land-battle in Europe. From the German van Rundstedt—from our own General George C. Marshall and others—has come testimony which indicates that the employment of the tactical air arm was the thing that swung the tide - that provided the margin of superiority displayed by the Allied over the German armed forces.

Temperate judgment at this late date, some three years after the end of the second World War, makes it clear that no single arm or service can claim without injustice to others that "we won the war;" obviously the interaction of Army, Navy and Air Force in all theaters accomplished the victory, which none could have won alone.

In Europe the American, British and Canadian armies did the dirty work; slogged through to seize the ground; met the enemy at his strongest face to face. Their land-drives swept the enemy back from the face of Europe, and their occupation of his soil led to the final surrender. We of the air force, whose mission was to support their mission, salute their achievement .

Our story here, however, seeks to demonstrate by example of a single fighter group, how a weapon unique in warfare and perhaps never to be used again, the Tactical Air Arm, could provide the decisive margin in the complete conquest on an efficient powerful land-army by an approximately equal force.

The Ninth Air Force in the Battle of Europe was about one-third medium bombers, and two-thirds fighter bombers.

Before the great buildup, in November and December, 1943, however, the Ninth was almost completely a medium-bomber force. Someone in Washington who knew what the score was, started hustling new fighter groups into operation with the new, tactical Ninth, so that an experienced force of ground-strafting, dive-bombing fighter-bombers would be ready to fulfill its destiny June 6, 1944.

To be adequate, the fighter strength of the Ninth as of the first of the year had to be doubled to meet invasion plans. At the last minute it became apparent that two newly formed and urgently needed groups would be unable to reach the state of training necessary for combat operations in time.

So the Air staff picked on two established units, engaged in the monotonous work of replacement training - turning out dozens of fighter pilots every few weeks for shipment in small batches to outfits already in combat. One of these "replacements training units" was the 404th Group, then stationed at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, where General Jimmy Doolittle's first Tokyo raiders conditioned themselves for their famous one-way flight.

This is the story of the 404th Fighter Group, of how it was "tailor-made" at short notice for the Battle of Europe, and of how it fulfilled its historic commitment.

# Chapter One

## THE TRAINING PHASE

*"Take the star out of the window, mother: I'm in R. T. U."*

If you're ever been in a Replacement Training Unit, you'll know what I mean. An R. T. U. outfit was stagnation plus. Generally you sat in a nice soft spot at an army air field in the states, drove to work like a banker from your apartment in the neighboring town at nine o'clock in the morning, killed a couple of hours between eleven and one, and started yawning and thinking about knocking off for the day about 3:30 in the afternoon.

If you were a pilot, you'd find yourself with a dozen flyable planes and 80 other pilots trying to fly them. If you were a mechanic, you'd find yourself with a gang of 15 others trying to find something to do on a two-man job. If you were a ground officer, you'd find yourself trying to keep records on 800 men with a staff designed to look out for 250.

There always was ground school - interminable, repetitious, a new schedule of the same old stuff every couple of weeks. Aircraft Recognition, Safeguarding Military Information, Use of Oxygen Equipment, Armament, Bombs and Fuses, Chemical Warfare, Camouflage, Maintenance of The RP-0079-53 Type Radial Engine, and little beauties like "The Danger of Icing", a one-hour course in which the instructor, one month ahead of you out of flying school, would scratch his head, spill all he had read out of the field manual on the subject in five minutes, and dismiss the class for a 55-minute break.

There was no such thing as morale, the only people who were around long enough to become organization-conscious were those of the "cadre", a nucleus of ground and flying personnel who served as "instructors" to the passing stream of replacements, while trying to learn themselves.

The replacements, or "reinforcements", arrived in droves, from spic-and-span Second Lieutenants with shiny new wings, to three-month privates just out of Air Force technical schools. The pilots sweated out the morning flying schedules in Operations, hoping to get the necessary four hours each month to earn their flying pay. Some cracked themselves up by tragic, inevitable "pilot errors"; others looked, learned and lived. They moved out as they came, in bunches, to combat theaters direct, or to other more fortunate groups in the states building up strength to go overseas as complete units.

The ground crewmen reported to their Maintenance Chief; he assigned them to a Crew Chief; the Crew Chief, desperately trying to keep his aircraft in commission after nine or ten hours' steady flying by four or five different pilots, gave them rags to wipe down the fuselage or sent them away to get them out of his hair. Some remained "wipers" for weeks, rarely getting close enough even to see an engine or to practice the learning they had picked up at Sheppard and Chanute.

We were in uniform, but felt no closer to the war than the civilians in town; we got our information from the local newspaper, as they did, and like them, turned quickly to the sports section and the comics after a glance at the headlines. The old crack about finding a "home" in the Army got too true to be funny.

We started out with great expectations, but got tangled up in a change of air force-tactical principles. When they formed the group in February, 1943, they called it a Dive Bombardment Group, and the Army Air Forces quickly soured on dive-bombers as such. We started flying A-35's—big two-seaters with an odd, crooked wing. Our outfit was one of the first to try the ship out, and after reading our reports, Air Force headquarters rejected it. Then they gave us A-24's, the old reliable Navy Dauntlesses, which we flew regularly until November, 1943, except for a brief two-week session with P-39 Aircobras in July.

We were supposed to be training for combat as an operational unit - three months to build up full strength, three months to get used to flying together, then maneuvers, then overseas. Somewhere between the maneuver and the shipment stage they jettisoned the dive-bomber program, and in November we heard the sad news. All our veteran dive-bomber pilots were to go to fighter schools for retraining, and the Group was to convert to R. T. U. But THEN . . .

Up in the A-3 section of the Air Staff in Washington, they checked progress reports on another Group, an "operational training unit", and shook their heads. A readjustment was made in assignments, and in January, 1944, outstanding fighter pilots, instructors from the fighter schools of Florida, began to arrive at Myrtle beach. A new commanding officer, Lieut. Col. Carroll W. McColpin, 29 year-old red-headed Eagle Squadron veteran, assumed command.

"Overseas— overseas." Rumors tingled in every barracks. Things were looking up for the 404th.

## Chapter Two

### "OFF WE GO . . ."

*. . . Swollen arms, the red eye, chills and fevers . . . First it was typhus. then cholera, then smallpox, tetanus, typhoid, and to top it off, yellow fever. Saluting was at a minimum; arms hung sore and heavy . . . "Open your mouth. Do you wear a prosthetic appliance? All right now, take a deep breath . . . Are all your clothes marked in accordance with AR 850-5? What do you know about censorship? Keep your mouth shut! Where's your paybook? Your Form 81? Have you stenciled all your baggage? Do you have two pairs of G. I. glasses? Have you 10,000 dollars insurance? Any allotments today? Want to make out a will or power of attorney? Have you been through the gas chamber? Have you fired all of the weapons? Report back in five minutes for another lecture on how to make a U-Pack!"*

Warning orders placing the 404th Group on an alerted status for movement overseas were issued January 20, 1944; ten days later the actual movement orders were dispatched under the cryptic military title, "Movement Orders Shipment Number 1404, AAF. OB-S-E-M War Department". Private automobiles were sold at high wartime prices, wives and families were kissed and packed off in buses and trains. A final round of parties was held for officers and enlisted men, and Captain Dudley W. Conner, Group Intelligence Officer, followed soon after by Lieutenant Colonel James K. Johnson, Deputy Group Commander, Major Charles M. Hood, Group Operations Officer, and Captain Raymond M. Lucas, Assistant Group Materiel Officer, left for England in February as an advance party. After countless checks and inspections, Group personnel boarded a troop train bound for Camp Shanks, staging area for the New York Port of Embarkation, March 13.

Poker games highlighted the trip north in dirty 1918-vintage coaches; one two-bit game in particular persisted throughout 22 of the 24 hours aboard the train.

We stepped off the train with our packs along the Hudson River, near Nyack, New York, and started up a long curving camp street. The hill was steep and the crying was loud before we reached our assigned block in the barracks-city that was Camp Shanks. There were barren, dismal transient barracks, lectures, passes to New York City; censorship of mail was started; it snowed. On the coldest day of our stay, the Group attended outdoor lifeboat drill, descending a rope net from the top of a platform built to simulate a ship's side, into a rowboat floating in an artificial pool. In long lines we filed into big bare halls for physical examinations; stripped down we wandered from examiner to examiner. If we successfully made it all the way around the hall, we were physically fit and ready for shipment.

March 22 we moved off by train down the west bank of the Hudson, across to Lower Manhattan by the Weehawken ferry, and on to a 20,000-ton modern cargo liner, the British "Sterling Castle".

*.... "Wakey, wakey, wakey! Latrine details will please report to B-deck aft." . . . Uneasy and cramped, slung in a bunk hung between framework of pipe. Four bunks vertically from steel floor to steel ceiling, no room to sit erect between bunks, aisles between rows barely an arms length wide, hundreds of men with packs and barracks bags squeezed among a forest of pipes. Three hundred second lieutenants in a sardine box known as compartment E-4. Breakfast and supper only, no noon meal, featuring unfamiliar English cooking, flat and odd to American tastes. Hungry enlisted men at night dickering with the ship's crew for tins of salmon and fruit from the ship's stores. Sandwiches, one dollar . . .*

The "Starvation Castle", as we christened her a couple of days out, appeared to be in the center of a convoy of about 30 ships. A four-stacker American light cruiser appeared to be the flagship, and a British escort carrier hovered to starboard throughout most of the trip, its deck loaded with P-51 fighters. The majority of our pilots trained in P-51's in Florida, stared and smiled and hoped—"our planes, our planes!"

After several days of unusually warm weather, bright days and bare-chested sun bathing on deck, sighting of land-based birds, and rumors that we were off the Cape Verde Islands, the convoy took a generally northward bearing. First sighting of land was the North Irish coast about April 2nd, and as the ships moved into the Irish Sea, the convoy split up into three lines, some heading apparently for a Scotch port, and our group heading south. Appropriately enough the waters of the Irish Sea were the greenest we ever had seen.

The evening of April 3rd we pulled into the mouth of the Mersey River, the water calm as glass and the air still but for the cries of sea gulls and the banging of anchor chains. The Welsh mountains, peaks cloud-masked, bulked up on the southern shore.

The following morning we moved upstream to Liverpool, passing miles of docks enclosed by crenelated walls like medieval castles. Every man lined the rails to inspect our flat unloading dock, cheering at a serenading British Army band, waving at first sight of English bobbies in their long blue coats and tall domed helmets, whistling at female lorry drivers, and loudly howling when American MP's appeared, spic and spotless in bright white helmet-liners, white gloves, and white leggings. An elevated train-line curved between a row of buildings two blocks away, and every now and then a three-car orange painted train would go dragging by, very much like the old South Ferry "El" we had left two weeks before in Manhattan.

The ship was unloading all day, but we did not go down the gangplank till almost midnight. Then we filed off into a covered, stone-paved, weakly-lit alleyway. struggling and grunting with carbines, tommy-guns, barracks bags and suitcases, huffed and heaved along for a few hundred yards into a dark railway station and right on to a waiting train. American Red Cross women and girls were there with very welcome refreshments, and after 14 days without seeing a woman, every man on the train was eager just to have the girls stop by the compartment windows and talk. A large masculine-looking woman in uniform and cap, with determination showing in the set of her chin, kept striding up and down trying to keep us all in our places. She finally caught Captain Bob Manss. assistant Group Intelligence Officer, hopping out of his compartment and in a voice like a young bull she hollered, "GET BACK ON THAT TRAIN!"

He got.

All night we traveled past Manchester, Derby, Birmingham and Bath, straining our eyes to see as much of this new, strange land as possible. We marveled at the smoothness of starting and stopping, unlike the jolting and jerking of American trains. It was daylight again when we reached Bath, and while we lingered in the railroad yards, a friendly conductor pointed out the first signs of bomb-damage we had seen - holes in the station roof, and dwellings in nearby streets knocked to rubble.

The word passed down along the train that we were going to a place called Christchurch, on the south coast of England. We wound along further south, heads sticking out of windows, necks craning for a look at every plane that passed by. "That's a Sunderland . . . There goes a Wellington . . Hey, Spits! . . . Look, Typhoons!" . . .

We moved through Bournemouth to Christchurch, and there detrained. Trucks took us through narrow twisting streets and on out into the country past a little village road junction, which we later learned was called Winkton, then off the main paved road onto a dirt road through a farmyard and out onto a bumpy driving

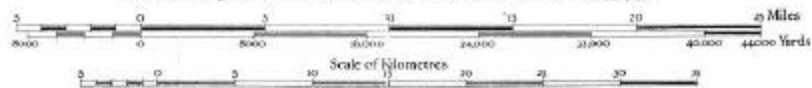
strip, paved with chicken-wire and tree branches. We circled a grassy field and were finally dumped off at the edge of a clump of trees.

English air bases, we had always believed, were all excellent permanent stations, with hard-surfaced runways, and comfortable buildings for quarters. Tired as we were, the realization that the tree-lined, empty cow-pasture was our operational field enlivened no one's spirits.





Scale: Quarter-Inch to One Statute Mile -  $\frac{1}{253440}$



The Vertical Interval between the Contours is 200 feet



So, we got to work to make our areas livable. All personnel cleared out under brush, dispersed tents, dug foxholes, wove floor-mats from branches and twigs, and built clothes racks. We had our first experience with black iron buckets fitted with wooden seats and hidden behind roofless canvas shelters, which an old man in a dirty brown truck emptied daily. We had cold-water washes from bare pipelines in our tent-areas. Finest plumbing effort was produced by Captain Ed Petosky, Tech Sgt. Eldridge Maxsy, Sgt. "Pop" Winters and Corp. Augie Sudekum of the 506th Squadron, who built a shower with an oil-burning water heater and an auxiliary wing tank. Other showers were discovered at the nearby Royal Air Force station, Holmsley South, and "bath runs" were organized by truck daily to the American Red Cross at Bournemouth, ten miles away. Enlisted men were received at the Marsham Court, a swanky sea-side resort hotel on cliffs overlooking a smooth curving beach lined with barbed wire and steel anti-landing obstacles, while the officers were directed to another swank hotel, the Ambassador, about a block from the cliff.

To the chagrin of the P-51 Mustang boosters, the Group began to receive P-47 Thunderbolts a few days after our arrival; by April 16 the Group had some 75 aircraft, one-third of which were sub-types ranging from C-1 to D-20; the rest were all D-22's, brand new, the first all-silver Thunderbolt series. After deciding to concentrate all the older-type aircraft in one squadron, Lieut. Col. Carroll W. McColpin, Group Commander, had the squadron commanders toss a coin to decide the partition. Major Harold G. Shook, commanding the 506th, was the loser, and his squadron received all the olive-drab older-model planes.

Until the end of April the pilots flew continuously on "check-rides" and familiarization flights, trying to get acquainted with the "Bucket of Bolts". Veteran P-47 pilots were brought in to lecture on the combat performance of the aircraft; its toughness and durability was emphasized, and the comparatively greater vulnerability of the liquid-cooled P-51 was brought out. In the end it was their own personal experience in the plane that "sold" every man in the Group on the Thunderbolt; after a year of combat, not a man would have traded it for any other fighter-type in tactical operations.

The Engineering sections were probably the busiest of all, running through stripped-down inspections on every aircraft, manufacturing belly-tank and wing-tank feed-lines, and sway-braces for bomb-shackles. By April 30, 90 per cent of the Group's planes were operational, and ready for battle.

Squadron staff officers were scattered all over England in various indoctrination schools, flight leaders were sent to other Ninth Air Force fighter units to fly a few operational missions. Everyone was riding a bike, visiting pubs, comparing English pound notes rather indelicately with toilet paper, getting used to censorship, enjoying American cooking again after the long session with "kippers-for-breakfast" on the transport, and getting acquainted with the species W. A. A. F.

*"... Like everyone else, I had to have a bike, so I went downtown and got myself a second-hand job. As is the case with all new things, I had to give it a test hop immediately. I went out into the street and started racking it around, split-essing, riding no-handed, and showing off all over the place. I had just set course for home, when I spotted a WAAF on a bike pedaling up behind me. So I throttled back to what I thought was a nice ladylike cruise so she would catch up. The first thing I knew she was past me and practically out of sight up ahead. So I poured on the coal and started after her. Straight pedaling wasn't enough, so I stood up and pumped. After maybe a mile of this, I just managed to ease up alongside her. And do you know, by this time I was so pooped I couldn't even say hello" ...*

## Chapter Three INTO COMBAT

<i>Date</i>	<i>Mission</i>	<i>No. A/C Off</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Attacking</i>	<i>Results</i>	
<i>30 April</i>	<i>Fighter Sweep</i>	<i>54</i>		<i>P-38's</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>Successful</i>
<i>1 May</i>	<i>Fighter Sweep</i>	<i>246</i>		<i>P-47's</i>	<i>235</i>	<i>Successful</i>
		<i>104</i>		<i>P-38's</i>	<i>103</i>	<i>Successful</i>

*(Ninth Air Force Intelligence Summary, 4 May 1944)*

Whether or not the Luftwaffe was aware of the fact, May 1st was an important day for the Ninth Air Force. Overnight, tactical fighter sorties tripled, as new fighter groups, recently added for the invasion of Europe, went into preliminary action. Among the newcomers was the 404th.

The first mission was just a shallow penetration sweep into Normandy. Weeks later, such a flight would have been laughed at as a cinch, a "training flight", but May 1st it was important and exciting. This was definitely IT. The briefing at Group took at least half an hour; Captain Conner, the Intelligence Officer, showed all his pictures of the French coast through the balopticon; Captain Crosthwait, the Weather officer, projected his weather charts on the screen; Lt. Col. McColpin carefully covered the take-off, formation procedure, and flak evasion. And at the subsequent critique, the colonel, all smiles, had to reverse himself and caution the gang about over-evasiveness.

According to Lt. Russell S. Fredendall, "When we crossed that French coast the sawdust really hit the fan. One minute we were flying along in perfect formation, and the next minute there were P-47's all over the sky. We were trying to throw the enemy predictors off before the guns opened fire—like the colonel told us. No, we never did see any flak! The course home brought the Group back right over Carpiquet airdrome, near Caen, at 20,000 feet. Lt. Col. McColpin seemed surprised when no one else reported the "two Focke Wulf 190's four miles straight down in the corner of the field". Fly specks on canopies were "bogies", "bogies" were undoubtedly "bandits". The interrogation was a confusion of exuberant tales. But when the fast talk had cleared away, the mission finally was recorded as an uneventful fighter sweep.

Another uneventful sweep, deeper into France, was flown in the afternoon; like the first, all three squadrons were represented, in a 48-plane formation. Taking off and forming up, the Group flew what was called for no explainable reason, a "pansy" formation; four ships in a flight, in a shallow vee; flights arranged in trail, one behind the other. each succeeding flight lower than the one ahead. The four flights within a squadron were "stacked" close together, with a definite break between squadrons. In enemy country however, the Group broke out into "battle" formation, rear flights moving out to each side of the leader to form a shallow squadron vee, and the two rear squadrons moving up and out, forming the whole Group into a rough flat vee.

Obviously the first missions were studiously planned to be easy, for training purposes. But as each one grew more difficult, you kept wondering when trouble would come—when some would fail to return.

Weather closed in for five days, postponing our first dive-bombing mission till May 7. Target was the marshaling yard at Bethune, in northern France, obviously selected by higher headquarters as a good "operational training" target because of its relatively light defenses, and modest importance. Lt. Col. McColpin fed the 508th and 506th on the dive-bombing runs, while the 507th Squadron, bombless, flew top cover.

Bethune seemed to be a very popular target with higher command; in the early weeks the Group was sent there no less than three times. The similarity between Bethune and Arras caused repeated argument at the post-mission critiques: the marshaling yard lay along the southern edge of town in each case, and each had a large roundhouse in the center of the yard. Bethune's best landmark was a small canal that made a slender U-curve north of the city. On the second Bethune attack, which the 508th Squadron insisted hit Arras, Major Moon and Lt. Bob Johnson of that squadron cleared the target area of flak by dropping clusters of

fragmentation bombs before the rest of the Group came in. They flew so low they had to break away sharply to miss a tall water-tower.

May 8, a day of rejoicing throughout the world a year later, was one of dismay for the 404th. In its first encounter with enemy aircraft, the organization suffered its first combat loss. The mission was a deep fighter sweep over the World War I Marne battlefields, southeast of Paris. From the start, things didn't go quite as planned. The first two squadrons hurried off on course early, and the 507th Squadron, last to form up, remained out of sight of the rest of the formation for the entire flight. "CASEY" (IX Tactical Air Command radio controller) called and warned that "many bogies were rising" ahead of the Group in the Chalons area. The formation passed Paris on the south, and made a left turn. Far to the rear and out of sight, the 507th saw a group of unidentified planes, specks in the sky up ahead.

*. . . Recognizable sounds broke in on the spitting static of head-phones . . . "Break right!" . . . Back to static, then in tones of triumphant excitement, "I got one of the b.... s!"*

Out of the sky and out of the sun black tracer-streams flew among the Thunderbolts of the last flight of the 506th Squadron, following the 508th in a wide turn northwestward near Soissons. Lt. Robert F. Bealle, flight leader, called for a "break" into the attack. Confused, Lt. Chester L. Dunsmore broke left instead of right. In front of him three bullet-nosed Messerschmitt 109's flashed sharply down and away to the left. When the third passed his sights, he squeezed his trigger, and saw bright flashes and smoke as his 50-caliber bullets struck. Pieces flew and a body fell out and away from the plane. He shouted into his throat-microphone.

In a matter of split-seconds, the enemy aircraft were gone But "Speedy" Bealle's "TUBA Yellow" Flight was one plane short. Jimmy Jones in the next flight saw Yellow Four roll over on its back and start down in a long dive. Harvey Baker, Yellow Three, saw a plane spiraling aimlessly far below, which might have been a P-47. No drifting parachute chute, no evidence on which to base a forlorn hope. In the evening Lt.. John B. O'Rourke squadron adjutant, made out the first "Missing in Action" report on Second Lt. Charles Clonts.

Seven weeks later Lt. Clonts walked back in on the Group, fresh and happy, newly-uniformed on his way back to the States.

*. . . The French, he said, the French saved me. I remembered those lectures and made a delayed jump close to the ground; that's why nobody saw my chute open. I landed a good distance from my plane, and lay on my back in a ditch all day, at the edge of a small woods. Later I approached a farmer working by himself in a field; he fed me and gave me some clothes for a disguise. I was lucky and finally made contact with members of the underground, who put me on a train heading into southern France. Near the Spanish border I joined a small party of evaders like myself, and with French guides, we walked across the Pyrenees, through snowdrifts and along the edges of steep chasms. One man slipped and was gone; we couldn't stop. On we went. into Spain; then back to England . . .*

A terrain model appeared in the Group briefing barn. It showed roads, and tiny trees, a couple of simulated concrete buildings, one square, the other oblong, and two inclined skeletal structures, long and straight, with a gentle curve at one end. Secret documents arrived, describing it as a typical "rocket-gun" site, or "ski-site" (from the shape of the two inclined runways). From site to site along the "rocket-gun coast" from Calais to Dieppe, the arrangement of the buildings and the ski-slides might vary, but the four components were the same. "NOBALL" targets they were called in code on our operations orders, and on May 9 the Group was dispatched against its first "NOBALL" target.

All three squadrons were airborne, each with a separate site in the triangle Dieppe-Rouen-Neufchatel, 20 miles in from the Channel coast. The 507th and 508th Squadrons reported good hits in and around the "ski-sites" with 500-pound semi-armor piercing bombs, carried with delayed-action fuses to pierce the heavy concrete of the target buildings. But because of an error by the briefing officers in reading a geographical coordinate, the 506th searched in vain for its target 15 miles east of its true location, finally dive-bombing the

railroad yard at Serqueux, 20 miles northeast of Rouen. Flak was intense over the yard, and Lt. Joseph C. Joyce Jr., received heavy damage on his plane. According to Capt. Harold W. Freemantle, leading a flight behind Lt. Joyce, the latter's plane began to lose altitude and throw black smoke. Capt. Freemantle kept his flight over the smoking plane until Lt. Joyce announced that his engine had cut out completely and he was going to jump.

At the interrogation everyone was confident that Joyce was safe; if not in the hands of the French, nothing worse than in a German "stalag luft". Three days later came a reassuring report from the 50th Fighter Group, flying fighter cover in the target area, that an opened parachute had been sighted.

Eight months later a letter from higher headquarters, without details and in cold statistical language, announced a change in Lt. Joyce's status from "Missing in Action" to "Killed in Action".

A second "NOBALL" strike took off in the afternoon, the 508th Squadron flying top cover for eleven aircraft of the 507th Squadron. Five of the bombing planes hit a site at Vacqueriette, in the Pas de Calais area, 20 miles northeast of Abbeville. Unable to locate their target, the last six planes bombed a heavily-defended woods near Lillers.

The first of five heavy-bomber escort missions came up May 11—a run to Saarbrücken in cooperation with the Eighth Air Force. The last heavy escort went in to Metz May 31. All five were long, tedious, and uneventful; planes were in the air anywhere from three to four hours, carrying two 110 gallon auxiliary wing-tanks for extra endurance. The heavily loaded Thunderbolts just staggered off our short pasture-runway, and there were two serious but luckily non-fatal accidents. Harry Nystrom of the 508th could not quite make it May 29th on the third heavy escort mission, crashed at the end of the runway but escaped without a scratch. Ray Langford of the 507th had an even worse experience.

Bumps in the runway threw him into the air with inadequate flying speed. He wobbled and munched across the treetops and finally crashed down out of sight. His wingtip had hardly disappeared when a huge column of bright flame exploded up. Nobody gave him one chance in a thousand.

Lt.. Dike Piseana from Group Headquarters hopped fences and ran across fields to the scene and found—two shattered gas tanks and a scorched area in someone's backyard bean patch a twin-row radial engine steaming in a backyard, an intact fuselage, nose down on top of a truck, with the tail just clearing the side of a house in a small village and Ray himself sitting in the living room of a house his plane had just hurdled. He was badly burned about the face and wrists, and shocked and ready for a long stay in a hospital, but he was still with us.

Though squarely into regions where our intelligence charts showed operational enemy fighter bases, the long escort missions never drew any attacks; in fact throughout the Group's year of combat, a good 90 per cent of all missions were flown without sighting any enemy aircraft. Capt. Joe Sherwood, then Operations officer for the 508th Squadron, summed up the attitude of the pilots by commenting:

"Where the hell is the Luftwaffe? If I have to wear out my seat for four hours, the least old Goering can do is to send up some of his boys to relieve the monotony."

May 13 the Group dive-bombed the marshaling yard at Tournai in southwestern Belgium, scoring good hits among sheds. The railroad yard was an important triple junction through which funneled main lines from Germany to the Calais rocket gun coast, and from Holland to Northern France. After five days of bad weather, another dive-bombing mission was laid on, against a fighter airdrome at Beaumont-sur-Oise, north of Paris. Weather prevented an attack, but the 508th had its first encounter with enemy aircraft and came out one Messerschmitt-109 to the good. Six 109's jumped Red Flight (second flight); and broke away without causing any damage. Lt.. Ben F. Kitchens caught one after a 13,000 foot diving chase and shot it down.

".... I saw one enemy aircraft half-roll roll and go down," Ben said ... "I chased him from 14,000 feet to about 500 feet before I got in range and shot about a two-second burst. Tracers converged directly into the

fuselage and almost instantly he burst into flames; I flew through pieces of the aircraft and got some of his oil on my windshield." . . .

First crack at escorting our own Ninth Air Force medium bombers came up the next day, when the Group took 60 B-26 Marauders safely out and back, to Evreux-Fauville airdrome, south of Rouen. After several more runs with the mediums to Caen, Liege, and Chartres, sitting up above, watching the bulky twin engined Marauders in tight "boxes" fly without deviation through clouds of black flak-bursts, Lt.. Jim B. White of the 506th expressed a unanimous opinion when he said:

"I sure give those bomber-pilots all the respect of the world; it takes plenty of guts to sit there on a bombing run and catch all that flak."

By the end of its first month of operations the Group had flown 25 missions, of which the 508th Squadron had participated in 22, the 507th, 21, and the 506th, 19. Four missions were fighter sweeps, five escort to heavy bombers, eight escort to medium bombers, and eight dive-bombing. From now on the Group was to become almost exclusively concerned with ground-attack missions—bombing and strafing. The first days of June highlighted the trend.

June 2 all three squadrons were up, operating individually, attacking transportation targets in a strip of Northern France 100 miles deep and 50 miles wide. The 506th penetrated farthest east, to Chauny, south of St. Quentin; the 508th went farthest north, to Hesdin, northeast of Abbeville; the 507th operated between the two from Bapaume, deep inland south of Arras, to Pavilly, northwest of Rouen. The Group attacked eleven different trains and marshaling yards, and the 506th for good measure took a crack at barges in the Oise Canal, important water-link between Western Belgium and Paris. Ten separate rail lines were hit, including main north-south lines to Paris and lateral east-west lines connecting the Channel coast with Germany. We weren't aware of the master plan at the time; but while the mediums and heavies were knocking down the Seine bridges to isolate Normandy on the east, we were helping to disrupt the lines over which the German Fifteenth Army would have to assemble and move from Northern France and the Low Countries to meet a Normandy Invasion.

June 3 the Group dive-bombed a highway bridge across the Seine River northwest of Paris, between Gaillon and Courcelles-sur-seine. Good hits were obtained on the bridge and its approaches with 500-pound delayed-action general purpose bombs, but the bridge, a heavy concrete-and-steel structure, was still standing after the attack. Top cover was provided by the 507th Squadron.

After 20 operational days, the Group was respectful of flak but confident, still wondering where the Luftwaffe kept itself—and ready for invasion.

"I know just where they're going in", said Lt.. Floyd "Ramblin' Wreck" Blair. "They're going to land on both sides of the Cherbourg Peninsula and cut that thing off. There's all kinds of good beaches around there."

*" . . . There may be a time - I can't say any more than that - when some painting will have to be done on the planes, and done quickly. We will probably get the word to start, and exact details on what to do, some evenings; when that happens, each squadron must finish painting its aircraft in 24 hours, even if it is necessary to work all night. This is vital, and want all you Engineering officers to be planning to meet such a demand . . ."*  
(Remarks by Colonel Carroll W. McColpin, Group up Commander, to members of the Group and Squadron Staffs at a closed meeting the night of June 1.)

The last plane touched down Saturday June 3rd at 1610 hours. Interrogations wound up in a hurry and everyone hustled for chow.

After supper the boys stood inside the hangar gazing at the new and sudden activity.

"I don't know what the hell to make of this," commented Staff Sgt. Clarence "Stubby" Kuhl, 507th armorer, as a dozen "wheels" (flight chiefs), "gears" (crew chiefs), and "wipers" (mechanics) swarmed over "Elsie", Major Clay Tice Jr's. plane with brushes, spray guns, and cans of paint.

"Looks like a god-damned zebra to me," he added, as black-and-white stripes began to appear on the wings and fuselage, after much spraying by Corp. Jerome "Zombie" Catherwood, Squadron painter and daubing by Tech. Sgt. John W. Schaefer, assistant maintenance chief, and Staff Sgt. Charlie Snyder, "Elsie's" crew chief.

We who knew what to make of it thought: "Twenty-four hours! Monday's the Day!"

Sunday the 4th came and brought rain; and the crew chiefs swore at brand-new paint washing off in streaks. In the dry spells they went back to work with brush and spray. and 48 aircraft—enough for a full strength Group mission—were ready by Sunday night. About 9 p. m. pilots and intelligence officers from all squadrons were called to the Group briefing-room; and when we saw the covered maps on the wall and our "bigoted" officers, Lt. Col. James K. Johnson and Capt. Dudley W. Conner, standing at the head of the room with an armful of notes and official papers, we knew what was up. From them, and from Colonel McColpin, we received our introduction to Operation "Neptune" and to "J. A. P. E. O." (Joint Air Plan and Executive Order - the invasion "bible" for air operations).

With our burden of information we fretted through the entire next day, a day of postponement, sweating out the weather, finishing the paint jobs on the rest of the aircraft waiting for the word to go.

## Chapter Four

### INVASION

*The red-haired, red-mustached colonel shifted slowly back and forth, his hands in his pockets, a cigar-stub in his mouth. He took it out of his mouth to talk, as he thought between words it moved erratically up and down. When he looked up, his small blue eyes seemed to look directly into yours, calmly, impressively.*

*.... "The infantry will have trouble enough landing and getting inland," he said, "without being bothered by enemy aircraft. Sixteen pilots and planes, or 32, or 48, would be a cheap price to pay, to keep the beaches free . . . If your plane develops mechanical trouble, come home. If a fight develops you will stay there till the last enemy plane is driven away, even if you run out of gas and have to come down in the sea ... if you run out of ammunition, ram 'em . . ."*

Tuesday morning, June 6, at 0649 hours, led by Colonel McColpin himself, the Group took to the air to cover the most important military operation in all history.

June 6 and 7 the Group flew eight full-strength missions for 381 sorties, each squadron alternating on patrol in areas "East", "West" and "Easy", covering the ships in the Bay of the Seine from Le Havre on the east to Pointe de Barfleur on the west, and the battle areas inland from Bayeux to Caen. Middle cover at 8,000 feet was our assignment, while British Spitfires flew far above us and P-38 Lightnings flew low cover over the shipping, probably because their twin-booms made them more readily identifiable as friendly. The Group's 191 effective sorties flown on the 6th set a record for a single day's operations that was equaled only once, nine months later.

After a briefing that took place while troop carrier planes and R. A. F. heavies filled the still-dark skies with the growling of Wright and Rolls -Royce engines, the first bunch of pilots settled into their cockpits at 0630 in the morning. The last bunch climbed out well after midnight. They reported U. S. gliders parked nose to tail and wingtip, to wingtip in fields around Ste. Mere Eglise on the Cherbourg Peninsula, and white-colored parachutes scattered all over the countryside; they reported British Horsa gliders on both sides of the Orne River north of Caen, all looking rather beaten up, but like the American gliders jammed up like autos in a downtown Detroit parking lot. Major Clay Tice Jr. reported one lone Horsa out in a field all by itself, at least a mile from the others.

"That crew must really have a story to tell," he said, "if they are still around to tell it."

North of Caen they saw the British battleship "Nelson"—a big clumsy thing with its three huge turrets all forward—throwing black billowing broadsides into fields a mile north of Caen.

"Hell," they said, "You'd look out one side of the cockpit and see all this flame and smoke covering the battleship, and then you'd look quick out the other side of the cockpit and watch the flashing explosions on the ground where the shells hit."

They reported lines of ships moving landward, and a possible - warship sunk off the Isles de St. Marcouf; and objects like break-waters lining the beaches.

"They're moving in things that look like floating docks," they reported the 7<sup>th</sup>. And later— "they've got about eight large ships lined up end to end offshore apparently to be used as unloading platforms; they've got the cargo vessels anchored beyond this lineup, with small boats flashing back and forth, and more small boats shuttling between the stationary line and the shore."



"I know where we can get some steaks," reported Lieut. Art Washburn. "I just saw 'em - dozens of dead cows all over Normandy."

They reported Caen and Bayeux and Grandcamp ablaze, and red ball tracer on the ground, streaking inland from the coast. They watched curiously as a large ship, possibly a tanker, slid slowly along the canal into Caen from the north, paused while a large bridge swung aside like a gate, and eased on into the Caen harbor basin. And they noted flatlands flooded by the Germans around Picaudville at the base of the Cherbourg Peninsula.

General impression from the air was that the landing was a cinch; in fact according to Lieut. Russell "Freddie" Fredendall, "I watched one of these assault boats come in on one of the British beaches near Courseulles-sur-Mer, run ashore, and drop the nose. A whole bunch of infantry filed off, lined up on the beach as if they were calling the roll, and then marched away." In most cases the only movement seen on the ground was that of our troops pressing inland.

Someone using the call-sign "JIVO" called the Group and all three squadrons by their proper call signs and said, "Ten trains on Omaha Beach, go down and attack." Colonel McColpin called the Group's home station, "DRAINSINK", to find out who "JIVO" was, and the strange calls ceased. The Group later received a commendation from Major General Elwood R. Quesada, commanding IX Tactical Air Command, for not answering an enemy attempt to interfere with our operations.

But no enemy reaction; meager flak north of St. Lo once, on the second morning mission June 7, but otherwise "nil" for flak. Most repeated comment was, "Where the hell is the Luftwaffe?", and the daily teletypes from IX TAC reporting enemy sorties over the battle area caused great surprise and elicited remarks like "Well for Chrissake, we never get to see any!" The 508th alone glimpsed three Focke Wulf 190's attempting to dive-bomb landing craft at Cabourg, the third mission June 6th Jack Tueller and Bill Abraham dove after them, but lost the enemy in the clouds before interception could be made.

The night of June 7th, Lieut. Joseph H. Vivian of the 506th disappeared over the Channel. He was last seen at 2330 hours, on the last patrol of the day, at 3,000 feet and losing altitude, apparently experiencing difficulty keeping his ship in level flight. The homing station received a call from him 25 minutes later and gave him a steer. After that, contact was lost; a year later, with the unit in the throes of redeployment, no further information from any source had been received about him, and he remained on the rolls as "missing in action".

The Group was relieved from the beach-cover the 8th, and went dive-bombing, running eight separate squadron missions, for a total of 16 missions in three days.

The 506th bombed the St. Lo-Periers highway, and the Cherbourg-Brest Peninsula rail line on its first mission, the marshalling yard at St. Lo on its second, and the railroad and highway crossroads at Conde-sur-Noireau 25 miles south of Caen on one of the main highway arteries feeding enemy tank reinforcements to the front. The 507th hit Tour-en-Bessin, a village near Bayeux, cutting the principal lateral highway used by front-line enemy infantry opposing the American First and 29th Divisions on Omaha Beach, struck at the Bois de Molay, a small wood southwest of Bayeux, and took a final supper-hour crack at the St. Lo railroad yards. The 508th operated under the direction of fighter-controllers on board a ship off Omaha Beach in the morning, bombing a cluster of railroad cars in the yards at Montebourg, northwest of Utah Beach on the Cherbourg Peninsula, and nearby gun-positions, which were very hard to locate.

Bombing results were generally good. And while working with "BULLET", the ship-borne controller, the squadrons used special authentication procedure, challenging the controller with codes like "APPENDIX ABLE 75" and receiving proper answers like "TARE JIG LOVE" before making any attacks. On the Tour-en-Bessin strike, Major Clay Tice Jr. tried a stunt he'd been thinking about for weeks; after his dive and peel-up he circled over the target taking pictures out of the side of his cockpit with a gun-camera rigged up with a pistol-grip and trigger by Sgt. Milton Liberty, squadron photo technician. He ended up with 50 feet of good film, showing a string of dusty explosions down the center of town, marking the position of the arterial highway.

Following a system that was to last until the St. Lo breakthrough, the Group was released by higher headquarters on the 9th for "maintenance and training".

On the 10th, the Group sent out 48 planes to find artillery positions in the Bois de Molay, which were shelling the Isigny-Tour-en-Bessin-Bayeux highway, now in our hands, and holding up the advance of the First Division. With Major Leo C. Moon and the 508th leading, the Group liberally sprinkled the mile-square wood with 118 500-pound bombs.

"You couldn't see anything down there but trees," the boys said when they returned. "There were a few clearings, but you couldn't tell whether the bombs were doing any good or not."

'Apparently the bombing and concurrent strafing did do some good, for the following morning the assistant Ground Liaison Officer, Paratrooper Jack "Geronimo" Edak, came dashing down from Group Headquarters to the squadron briefing rooms to inform the pilots that the First Division had pushed off immediately after the bombing, and had moved four miles, right on through and beyond the woods. It was the first time our attacks had exerted so direct an effect on the ground battle.

The early afternoon mission against the bridges at Pontaubault was one of those things you read about in the papers. Pontaubault is a small village on the south bank of the Selune River, about four miles south of Avranches, at the upper end of an estuary that swells out into the Bay of Mont St. Michel. Three main highways from the west, south, and east, converged there and crossed the river on a single bridge. The Brest-Cherbourg railway paralleled the highway bridge on the west; east of the highway bridge, a second railroad bridge carried lines from Alencon and LeMans, east and south. Each squadron was assigned one-third of the triple bottleneck, the 507th designating one flight, led by Capt. Howard L. "Skin" Galbreath, to come in on the "deck" and sling their bombs into the highway bridge at zero altitude. While the rest of the formation circled into position for a divebombing run overhead, "Skin" sneaked down the valley of the Selune from the east; with his wingman, Frank Yeargin, he aimed at the north end of the bridge, released his bombs with the concrete roadbed dead ahead, pulled his nose up and over and broke away. Two bombs skipped off, two hit and exploded tearing chunks in the bridge surface. At the south end, Bob Green and Clarence "Yank" Wydner hit a supporting piling, which crumbled in a cloud of concrete-dust and flying chips of stone and steel.

"After we pulled up and over the bridge we zipped across a plowed field at about 50 feet," "Skin" said. "Some farmer was out in the middle of it with a rake or something, and hell, he never even looked up!"

Down came the dive-bombers, the 507th clustering its hits around the southern approaches of the highway bridge, in the village of Pontaubault itself; onto the eastern railroad bridge dropped the 506th hitting the northwest end with one bomb, bracketing the southeast end with four more, hitting the tracks at either end with six to eight more bombs. To the west the 508th scored near misses in the water along the northern span of their bridge, a cluster of hits on the northern embankment. Drexel Morgan hit the steel girders squarely, and Capt. "Robby" Robinson quieted a flak position on the southern bank with his bombs. Flying spray, dust and the dun-colored smoke of trinitrotoluene gradually cleared; the bridges, though damaged, still stood. Five-hundred pound bombs, even direct hits, are not enough against heavily-constructed bridges, the boys decided, and direct hits are hard to get.

*The Mark VIII Optical Gun-Sight has four main parts: light source; reticle -- a ring and bead stamped from metal or etched on the back of a mirror; lens, reflector plate a transparent mirror on which the reticle image is projected . . . The reflector plate is a piece of glass about four inches tall and two inches wide; in the center when the sight is on, you can see a circle of light about an inch and a quarter in diameter, and a pinpoint "bulls-eye" or bead of light, no bigger than one-sixteenth of an inch . . . You start down at 8,000 feet, and you point your plane in the general direction of the target. Then you start watching your sight, and at first the bridge is like a pencil-line, that doesn't fill more than half of the sight-ring. When it just about fills the ring and gets as thick as a chalk-line, you*

*pull the nose of your plane up, and as the target disappears, you release. Sometimes you're a little short, sometimes a little long. Sometimes the bombs straddle the bridge. If you're lucky, you may get a direct hit. . .*

Jerry Tullis called the last mission of the 10th a "field day". He strafed a cluster of barracks himself while his squadron, the 508<sup>th</sup>, cut rail lines near Chartres in 14 different places, set 15 tank-cars on fire and damaged 12 freight cars. Major Moon got a locomotive, and Capt. Ernest "Tibbo" Tibbets destroyed a switch-house.

Each squadron operated independently, the 506th hitting a highway bridge, a railway intersection, and a long stretch of track. Major Harold G. Shook destroyed a locomotive, and the rest of the squadron shot up 15 "goods wagons".

In the same area, near Auneau, northeast of Chartres, Capt. James A. "Hoss" Mullins leading the 507th in the 9:30 twilight, found something along the main line to Paris.

"The track was dark against a light roadbed," he said. "I saw the glow of engine boilers, then grayish-white smoke. There were two trains approaching each other from different directions, and Lad Lutman's flight dropped its bombs right on the track, stopping the two of them, side by side."

"My flight dropped six bombs either on the trains or right in between them," reported Freddie Fredendall. "Two box cars blew right up into the air onto the other train. As I peeled up I could see red tracers shooting past my left wing. That made me sore so I split-essed back down from 2,000 feet with Ed Grove, and the two of us each took a train and went right on down the line, all eight guns going. There was a hell of an explosion and we could see big fires when we left."

Blair the "Wreck" commented, "That place was just covered with tracer," then added, laughing, "These milk runs are getting boring!"

Four squadron missions were dispatched on armed reconnaissance the 11th, hitting bridges in the Normandy area. The 506th went back to Pontaubault and scored two more hits on the western rail-bridge. The 508th, off twice, found a concentration of tanks at St. Andre de Fontenay, four miles south of Caen, and dropped six bombs, when the tanks started releasing orange smoke signals. They broke off the attack, not knowing whether British patrols had pushed so far, but discovered on returning to base that the nearest friendly troops were seven miles away.

Luciano "Hiawatha" Herrera was hit in the oil-line by flak; escorted by Doc Williams, he headed for England but was forced to bail out over the channel about 10 miles south of the Isle of Wight. He successfully inflated his dinghy, broke out his sail, and was rescued by an R. A. F. "Walrus" seaplane. Eight hours later he was back with the squadron relating his experience.

Spotty weather hampered operations, but before it closed in completely, the 508th completed a second mission at noon, ranging from St. Gilles west of St. Lo, to Cherbourg, under a 3,000 foot overcast. Bill Kerr had his plane riddled by flak early, but he stuck with the formation and knocked out a gun-position. Jerry Tullis picked up a lot of holes from bomb-blast, but retained control of his aircraft and staggered home. Ed Pounds picked up a lot of damage, and over Valognes Ralph Smathers was hit and bailed out at 400 feet. Bill Abraham saw his parachute open, and it looked like he was safe.

We heard about it a month later. Smathers never rejoined the Group, but he successfully evaded capture, returned to England and paid the Group a one-night visit in Normandy before returning to the U. S. A.

". . . I was burned on the leg and neck, but I got out somehow," his story went. "I guess I was half-shocked or something, but it seemed to me I walked for quite awhile before I met anybody. I passed a German sentry at a crossroads without being challenged, and a

German cook pedaled by on a bicycle. We nodded at each other. I met several civilians who appeared frightened to see me and wouldn't have anything to do with me, but finally a couple of Frenchmen took me to a farmhouse, where an elderly lady and a young girl took me in ...

, , , Two Germans lived in the same house, but they never found me. Once one of them came to the door of my room, but the girl threw a quilt over my head. The women took care of my bums and fed me, and kept me for nine or ten days. Fighter-bombers dropped bombs awfully close once, and when the troops got closer, we were in the middle of an artillery duel. Bullets came whizzing around the house and I lay scared stiff on my belly on the floor, while the old lady kept puttering around the house doing her work. I felt pretty foolish ... Our tanks passed by, and the girl who could speak broken English, told some of the troops about me. They promised to come and get me; then the Germans counterattacked and reoccupied the area. During the night the French family bundled me up and we all slept out in a field far from the house, while a terrific fire-fight went on . . . We went back to the house in the morning . . . I saw helmets moving along a hedgerow; I was really sweating them out, till a couple of GI's appeared ... I was all right from then on. . . Once the family gave me two thousand-franc notes, brand-new; one of the men in the village, they said, had a store of money received from the British, for helping Allied airmen. I tried to give the old lady the money, but she absolutely refused . . . Said it was all taken care of . . ."

Armed reconnaissance assignments held out for the next three days, the three squadrons flying a total of nine reconnaissance missions and one uneventful four-ship escort. Forty-three planes covered the enemy communications zone west of the Vire River the 12th from St. Lo as far south as Avranches; the 13th and 14th the Group was sent further east, behind the center of the enemy front, as far south as Vire and Domfront. Transportation was the main target, with 24 strikes against rail-lines and rolling stock, 11 against tanks and motor vehicles, and five against bridges. Joe Wilson created a vacancy in some Nazi general's staff by catching a speeding limousine alone on a highway; Ollie Simpson shot up a large canvas-covered truck which blew up as if it were loaded with ammunition. Denver W. "Smitty" Smith punctured a large oil storage tank which disappeared under clouds of thick black smoke and flame.

"How the hell are those guys holding out?" Skin Galbreath wanted to know. "You have to look to hard to find any targets now, and I'm getting tired of plastering these railroads. Every railroad siding, every crossroad is just pockmarked. Their transportation is so crippled now they'll need crutches to move."

The 16th and 17th were spent on "submarine patrol"—uneventful shipping cover over the Channel. Back on dive-bombing the 16th, with two squadrons combining cover for B-26's with bombing; then something special.

There was a hurry-call to load up with frags (fragmentation bombs)—one of those S. A. P. (soon as possible) missions—and a vague word drifting out of Group Operations about French guerillas in open warfare with German infantry on the Brest Peninsula. All three squadrons got off. They arrived in the target area, about 20 miles northeast of Vannes, and carefully scouted all the roads leading to the triangle Serent-St. Guyomard-Malestroit, around a wooded ridge.

"All we saw there were two small fires burning in the woods," said Major Tice of the 507th, "so we went after the secondary targets we were briefed on. My squadron hit a chateau about three miles south of the ridge. We couldn't knock the thing down with frags, of course, but we dropped strings of clusters on it anyway. I never saw so many hits on a single target before in all my life; they just covered the place. There we went back and strafed the woods just south of the ridge, found some long crates that looked like they might be some dispersed enemy supplies and strafed them too. They burned."

Major Moon led the 508th against two radio stations west of the target area, one a tall silo-like structure, then hit an ammunition dump further west. Large explosions and heavy black smoke were still billowing up from the dump when the planes left. Major Shook and the 506th dropped their frags on a bivouac

of six tents and a dozen vehicles just north of the wooded ridge. Both the 6th and 8th beat up the railroad yard at Ploermel, 10 miles north of the target, starting a number of fires.

The following day, at a secret session in the Group Briefing Room, Capt. Michael R. D. Foot, a dark, slender, alert-eyed paratrooper of the British Royal Artillery, from Headquarters, Special Air Service Troops (Commandos), gave the "gen" to all the pilots who had flown the mission.

"Along about D-Day," he related, "we dropped some Fighting French parachutists on the Brest Peninsula, to organize the resistance groups there, and to push sabotage and guerilla warfare. They wore the regular British battle dress, but they were all former French Army officers and non-coms. They all knew what to do when they hit the ground; for most of them were heading straight to their homes. They had trained specially for their job during the winter, living out in the mountains in Scotland. Their leader was an amazing fellow, a former flyer in the French Air Force who lost an arm in Africa. He was a big man who used to stride up and down swinging the stump of his arm when he got excited.

"Anyway, apparently he had little difficulty recruiting personnel, for he suddenly found himself with a small army of 2,000 on his hands, with all the attached problems of supply and administration—an unenviable spot for a guerilla leader, for guerillas should never mass together. We gather that they had been shooting up a lot of stuff down there, for we had supplied them 450,000 rounds of ammunition by air, till finally yesterday the Germans sent a force down from their big camp near Rennes to investigate the disturbance.

"They caught our one-armed friend on a woody ridge—which is usually fatal for guerillas. We caught a brief radio transmission from him about noon yesterday saying he didn't think he could hold out and asking for help. Naturally he had to transmit on the run, so to speak, through irregular channels, so the location of his set couldn't be picked up and pin-pointed by German monitors.

"We started a call through Army channels for air support, but we didn't have much hope. In fact, it wasn't till we heard that your aircraft were on their way that we knew a Group had been allocated for the job, what with all the other demands for air on the main battlefield.

"Now the reason you didn't see anything when you got down there is that the battle was over. It was about six hours from the first call for help until you arrived, what with delays in transmission and stops in the various headquarters, and by some stroke of luck or providence or whatever you want to call it the French fought so hard for four hours that the Germans left. After your attack, we got another message from our friend saying 'THANKS VERY GRATEFUL AIR SUPPORT BUT LAND BATTLE COMPLETED'.

"We were interested, however, in the targets you actually hit. That silo that the 508th hit overlooked the very meadow where we had been dropping them supplies, which made things very ticklish. And the chateau that the 507th took care of was a local German headquarters; so all in all, we thought the material results were well worth while. But what is more important, you showed, all the French in the neighborhood that we have command of the air, that we can and will give strong fire-support to our friends on the ground. That kind of thing is just what was needed to give heart to the resistance movement; in Brittany the French will flock to help; the news will be all over France, and in time, word should even penetrate to Belgium and Holland.

"It shows that the Allies are definitely taking an interest in what goes on behind the lines, as well as the main battle. You are all to be highly commended for your part in the mission."

After Capt. Foot's visit, the Group received a formal commendation from General Lewis E. Brereton himself, Commanding General of the Ninth Air Force.

Weather stopped activity for two days, then three more days were spent on uneventful patrol over the beaches, marked only by our first eyewitness reports of conditions "at the Front". A special flight composed of Lieut. Col. Johnson and Major Hood of Headquarters, Capt. Freemantle of the 506th and Lieut. Blair of the

507th escorted General Ralph Royce of the Ninth Air Force Headquarters to Normandy in a C-47 transport, and landed near St. Laurent sur Mer on Omaha Beach. Blair's story:

"I spent a few hours roaming up and down the beach; foxholes all over the place, but not a casualty in sight. I passed a PW stockade, and saw a German in there that I swear didn't look over 14 years old. An MP was telling me that half of them were German, and the other half were Poles, French or Russians who had been told to either fight or be shot. They're either old men, or guys who were shot to pieces on the Russian front, or kids.

"The French don't seem to be too happy to see us—they look rather indifferent about the whole thing. They've got plenty to eat, but no clothes or shoes. They're all running around in wooden shoes.

"Anyway, I got my first good look at some Germans, and they sure don't look like supermen to me."

Flying with the 506th on the 22nd, Lieut. Charles E. Labno suddenly called that his engine was quitting and he was bailing out. But he never got out. His plane dove straight into the ground near Grandcamp on Omaha Beach; sad news announcing his death was swiftly forwarded to the Group by ground units in the vicinity.

June 24 was our biggest day since D plus One, eleven squadron missions and 168 sorties, reconnoitering the Brittany-Cherbourg corridor west of the Vire River and south to Avranches.

In an area 30 miles long and 20 miles wide, the Group dropped 388 general purpose bombs and 76 fragmentation clusters on 150 railroad cars, eight small bridges or overpasses, three artillery positions, and 20 scattered motor vehicles. Eight attacks were made against marshalling yards, Villedieu-les-Poeles catching it four times, three times from the 506th Squadron.

East of Granville two Messerschmitt-109's ran into a flight of the 506th on the sixth mission of the day. The Thunderbolts turned to follow the enemy, the 109's turned into the attack, and one of them passed over Marty Adams, leading the second element. Adams started a steep chandelle onto the German's tail; still on his back he saw the enemy aircraft half-roll, ready to dive for the deck, and opened fire immediately. He fell away in a steep dive after the 109, still firing, and after many hits, saw the pilot bail out. The other enemy fighter disappeared.

The encounter took place at three o'clock in the afternoon; little more than an hour earlier, Lieut. Ben Kitchens and Bert Espy of the 508th, flight leader and element leader respectively, had made two successful bombing and strafing passes on a string of vehicles near Periers. The flight was climbing to reform, at about 2,000 feet, when Espy's plane, apparently attempting a normal cross-over maneuver, chewed into the flight leader's tail. Both planes spun into the ground in a matter of seconds. Ray Gay and Chuck Viccellio, the wingmen, looked long and hard but saw no sign of parachutes. Major Moon, leading the squadron, refused to give up hope that Kitchens and Espy had escaped, until weeks later when the area was occupied by American troops, and their graves were identified. Even then, because of the incorrect spelling of his name on initial front-line reports, Lieut. Kitchens was still carried as "missing" on the Group rolls till March, 1945.

Only mission of the day taking off with a specific target was the seventh, led by Lieut. Col. Johnson against an ammunition warehouse at Auxais, six miles south of Carentan.

"Best bombing mission I've been on!" the colonel exclaimed. "The roof went up, the walls fell in, and clouds of yellow smoke all over the place."

The ninth mission of the day, flown by the 506th was mission number 100 for the Group; and Capt. Joe Nichols and his boys made it a good one, messing up the railroad yards at Vire and Villedieu-les-Poeles, cutting a rail junction at Avranches, and strafing a staff car.

The 507th Squadron arrived at the 25th of June with 57 missions and not a man lost. After the morning mission, the squadron intelligence officer started wading through the normal confusion of interrogation, extracting details from one pilot, then another; pinning down the facts that first; a huge supply depot south of Le Mans was left in flames; second: there was nothing moving on the roads between Le Mans and Tours; third: intense flak was received from the Forêt de Cinglais, south of Caen. He reached First Lieutenant Buford "Steve" Courtney, checking on the location of the flak.

"It was right here;" Steve pointed to the map. "I was following Freddie down when it came up around us and hit him."

"Hit him? How bad - is he all right?"

"He didn't come back."

*... For units new to combat, no losses are easy to take; but the first one is always particularly hard ... Till it comes, you think to yourself, good flying discipline keeps those Jerry lighters away; they'll never surprise us. Or, a steep angle of dive, a fast break away, smart evasive action, and the flak will never bother us. Days go by, flying hours pile up, and you begin to hope what maybe all of us will get through this thing, none of US will ever go down. Then comes the first one ... It's all very impersonal, the way they get it; you see the last agony of the plane, rather than the man. First a plume of blackish smoke; a graceful, swooning descent; then hard ground intervenes and symmetry of form and beauty of movement disappear in jarring impact, chaotic splatter of silver metal, and fierce red flame darkened with thick smoke ... You miss him first on the form-up, when you find only three planes in the flight; you miss him in the tent, in the sleeping-bag still rumpled where he crawled out of it this morning ... And a small chill shock of fear beneath the sadness reminds you in the darkness of your subconscious mind: it DOES happen! How will it be with me?*

Clonts, first, in the 506<sup>th</sup>, Smothers in the 508<sup>th</sup>; now Fredendall in the 507<sup>th</sup> the friendliest, happiest, most good-natured boy in the squadron. He was a good pilot, too; before his promotion during the month, he was leading flights as a second lieutenant, with first lieutenants flying his wing. ("Freddie's got a pretty good dive-bombing flight; we'll put him on that pinpoint," the Major would say). He had a young wife, whom we all had seen at Myrtle Beach; we all knew her name was Joan because he had it painted in big letters on the side of his ship. On the cowling he had a new insignia designed by her: the words "Freddy-Hopper", with a happy grasshopper firing a machine-gun. We thought of her and "Freddy-Hopper" when they picked up his effects to send home - his footlocker, his uniforms, his wallet (filed away when he picked up his escape-kit), all his little odds and ends.

We watched Art Washburn, Freddie's tentmate and best friend, to see how he was taking it. He disappeared from view after the mission; the next day he appeared looking all right; a few days later he mentioned something about Freddie and flying in casual conversation, and the strain disappeared.

Courtney described what had happened: "We were coming back from LeMans, when Freddie asked the Major if he could go down and get a truck he'd spotted in a town south of Caen. He got an okay, and dove down, with me on his wing. Then he lost the truck. 'I'm going to make another circle and come back over the town again.' He was down to 300 feet by this time, with me behind him at 1,000 feet, and all these tracers were up at us. The Major called him, 'come back up out of that flak!' but Freddie kept cruising in a gradual turn. I saw hits on his cockpit, and followed him down as his ship hit in a field and exploded."

Courtney made an unsuccessful search by jeep for news of Freddie after the Canadians captured the area south of Caen; not for eleven months did we hear anything about him. After V-E day, Capt. Miller on a visit

to the Graves Registration Section at Paris found records of his burial by the Germans at Caillouet, seven miles south of Caen.

The 506th ran a bombing and strafing mission against the silo-like radar tower near Plumelec, north of Vannes on the Brest Peninsula, previously hit on the 18th, and the 508th dispatched two armed "recces". The second was a genuine "sweat" mission; for after the planes took off the ceiling dropped almost to the ground and visibility fell off to onequarter of a mile. Joe Wilson flew underneath a string of telegraph wires on the way back, and the entire formation had to land in ones and twos at other airdromes in France and England. Bill Kerr and Denzil Lee stopped at the strip near Carentan while it was being shelled by German 88's a couple of miles away to the south. Weather or no weather, when the shelling ceased they crawled out of their foxholes and took off immediately for England.

Late in the afternoon Lieut. Clonts returned, and in an after-supper session restricted to pilots and intelligence officers, told as much as he could of his experience with the French underground, and his successful evasion. He then returned to European Headquarters for shipment home; for no "evader" who had contacted the French organizations was permitted to fly again against the German enemy, for security reasons.

The Group escorted C-47's to Normandy, took a third tour of beach patrol, or sat out the weather the next four days. The last day in June, each squadron ran a successful 12-strip reconnaissance across central Normandy to the Loire Valley, as usual hitting chiefly rail targets and some scattered road traffic. On the first, Bob "Senator" Johnson, now sprouting a handlebar moustache, got himself eight trucks with fragmentation bombs.

Coming back from the second mission of the day, Bob Green waited till the rest of the 507th was on the ground, then landed with a cluster of eighteen 20-pound frag bombs on one wing. When he hit the steel-plank runway, the cluster fell off and ten of the bombs exploded. The squadron medics, already on their way out in the ambulance saw Bob jump out of the plane, which began to burn; and as they ran to support him, he collapsed. Five minutes after the frags went off, he was in the Group Dispensary, receiving morphine and plasma. He was sent to the 95th General Hospital at Ringwood, and died there before dawn the next day. He was reported as a calm, smiling patient, who asked that letters be written to his mother, and to his girl friend, telling her he wished they had been married before he left the States.

Back on the landing strip after the accident, with eight live bombs still on the runway and no trained bomb-disposal men on the base, someone in a headquarters a safe distance away kept insisting that the runway be cleared. So Lieut. Warren L. Pell, Group Ordnance officer, with Lieut. Charles W. Young and Staff Sgt. Glenwood F. Moon of the 507th armament section crawled out on their stomachs, looked over the bombs, decided that three of them were "safe", then carefully picked up the five "live" ones and took them in a jeep half a mile over the bumpy perimeter track to a firing-in butt (an embankment where planes are., test-fired on the ground to check the alignment of the machine-guns). The bombs were detonated there later by bomb disposal specialists. The three men were later awarded the Soldiers Medal for their act.

On the third and last mission of the day, the 506th was having a great time, bombing and strafing a cluster of 100 freight cars east of Orleans, and ranging far to the east of the battle area. Swinging north near Evreux, the formation saw 12 to 14 Me-109's and Focke Wulf 190's 2,000 feet above them and slightly ahead. Turning directly toward the enemy, the squadron started to climb; the Jerries climbed too, then a pair suddenly broke down on the Thunderbolts, followed by the others. The enemy ran true to form, using their normal hit and run tactics; a quick burst and a long dive for the clouds, 7,000 feet below. Ray Elledge's third flight reacted most effectively, Ray chasing a 190 which escaped before he could get any hits, followed by another 190 which his wingman, Don Miller, shot off his tail. Don saw his own bullets score hits on the enemy, but lost him in the clouds.

Ted Welgoss, number four man in the third flight, found a Messerschmitt on his tail in the first seconds of the flight. His element leader, George McLaughlin, broke into the enemy head on, then dove as the German split-essed. Mac fired a long burst and saw pieces fly off the 109's wing, then the enemy plane



disappeared in the clouds. Major Harold G. Shook's number four man in the first flight wasn't doing so well, however. Elledge and Harold Freemantle both saw the P-47 shudder from cannon hits as a Messerschmitt caught it from below. The plane, flown by Lieut. Charles B. Hochadel, slid off into a glide and disappeared through a hole in the clouds, smoking as if the cockpit were on fire. Like Clonts, everyone thought he was a goner. Like Clonts, he walked back in on us a few weeks later.

For seven days in a row, no missions were flown—the longest break in the Group's year of combat operations. The entire organization was moving to France.

## Chapter Five

### NORMANDY

*Prepared long before D-Day itself, the schedule for movement of Ninth Air Force units to the Continent first reached the fighter groups in the form of a graph. There was a list of fighter groups and a column for the days--D plus 1, D plus 2, on and on. Shaded blocks showed which day your unit was supposed to move, and which numbered airfield site was to be yours. Some of the field assignments changed, because every field had to be scooped out of the ground, and the ground first had to be captured. There were some delays . . . The 366th was the first of the Ninth Air Force's fifteen fighter groups to land; somewhere halfway down the list came the 404th . .*

Orders arrived the evening of June 26 directing the Group's advance party (named the "air echelon", though it never flew) to proceed to a marshalling area near Southampton, for shipment to France. After getting rid of all excess baggage, waterproofing vehicles and equipment, de-waterproofing, then finally re-waterproofing again, the air echelon moved by truck the 27th to a staging area camp north of Southampton, between Eastleigh and Romsay. They lingered there two nights and a day; boarded ship June 29 at the docks of Southampton after being pelted by a two-minute hail-storm on the way down by truck, and got under way for France that night. The "vehicle party" with all the trucks and jeeps, and the "marching party" with personnel only were separated at the staging area, the former embarking on a Liberty Ship, and the latter on a California-built British Victory Ship, "Empire Crossbow". They didn't get together for the rest of the trip. The vehicle party had time to watch some of the heavy loading, and Sgt. Seely Hall Jr. and others saw a Sherman tank converted to 30 tons of fine rusting junk when a wild swinging crane dropped it over the boat-side into The Solent.

The marching party set out freshly supplied with K-rations, D-rations, one "Hot-Box" fuel tablet, a bottle of halazone tablets, matches, a razor blade, a can of "Insecticide Powder for Body-Crawling Insects", one box of "Motion Sickness Preventative" and two strong paper bags, just in case . . . The Channel didn't live up to its reputation for chopiness, however, and the bags turned out to be unnecessary.

We sighted France, Pointe de Barfleur, off our starboard bow about noon, and spent the afternoon passing the Cherbourg Peninsula, on our right in the distance, watching C-47's coming in for landings. Ships at anchor appeared ahead of us in ever-increasing numbers, and we finally moved in and stopped close to the beach off St. Laurent-sur-Mer, near two "Capetown" class British light cruisers. We could see the low flat gap in the land that marked the Vire Estuary on our right, then the tops of buildings at Grandcamp, and the low rolling hills that ended in bluffs at the beach. New brown bulldozed roads ran up the bluffs, and dead ahead of us on the rising ground above the beach we could see parked Thunderbolts and C-47's on Normandy's first American air strip, and more C-47's coming in to land from our left.

Ships lay about at anchor as far as we could see; wrecks stuck up out of the water closer inshore, and white, and sea-gray landing craft of all sizes completely covered the beach. Between us and the shore stood eight hulks of ships lined up, end to end, decks awash—and we remembered the aerial observation D-Day of the "breakwater of ships".

We piled into small assault boats that were hung on davits on our ship-side, and in them passed around the "breakwater". Seven of the eight ships appeared to be old cargo vessels; the eighth with the typical British bridge and ram-bow seemed to be a stripped down vintage 1910 British battleship or monitor. When we got inside the breakwater and looked back, we could see no open water; through one small gap an American cruiser of the "Northampton" or "Pensacola" class lay at anchor; elsewhere hulls, masts, stacks and cranes spread in a complete arc around us. Within the basin formed by the big ships, the little ones plowed back and forth.

Our assault boats put us off on a floating metal unloading platform, and we formed in a long single file for the hike up the 300-foot bluff. Halfway up the trail that wound past a long barreled German gun sticking out of a concrete emplacement in the hillside, we were all ready to fold up. The column managed to stagger on up to level ground, and halted to gain fresh wind. A line of MP's behind us strode right on by, contempt in every face, but we were too fagged to give a damn. Two C-47's then proceeded to land about five feet over our heads, so we got moving again. Past a small stockade with about 30 German prisoners; down a dusty little road between Norman stone farmhouses, little French kids hanging on the wall wearing GI garrison caps piped with infantry blue; across some pasture; and into an orchard marked "Transit Area 2", just west of St. Laurent-sur-Mer. There we spent the night of D-plus-24, gazing excitedly as a British bomber "stream" of hundreds of Lancasters and Halifaxes lumbered in toward Caen and back, eating our K-rations, jumping at the heavy noise of 90-millimeter ack-ack test-firing, sweating out our transportation. Those who had sweated during the afternoon in extra clothing were justified; the evening grew damp and chilly, as we left the inadequate shelter of apple trees to crawl in and under handy quartermaster trucks, out of a French drizzle.

The afternoon of the 1st, borrowed Quartermaster trucks moved the "marching party" to its new station, Strip A-5. The route ran along a new GI road into Formigny, on south through Trevieres to Cartigny L'Epinay, at which point the paddlefeet of the outfit came unawares, closer to the enemy than at anytime before or since - three miles west to the nearest panzer grenadiers at Airel. A short stop at an artillery command-post, sandbagged and buried within the walls of an old grist mill in a hillside; and briefed with new directions, on to A-5 . . . We gawked and gaped at the signs of land-war; the shelled ruins of Trevieres, its church, its shops, one street completely closed by rubble, a young woman in the midst of it all walking solemnly with a market basket.

We approached the field from the south, up an old stony dirt road, looked across a break in the hedgerow, and saw—a broad, brown scraped area lined with regular mounds of dirt; a bulldozer; a windsock.

With some local assistance we located the commander of the incumbent airdrome squadron, who found us an orchard to sleep in, and even provided the baggage-less officers with sleeping bags, and the "marching party" settled down to wait for the missing "vehicle party".

According to Staff Sgt. Harry C. Beckett, 507th Intelligence section chief, the adventures of the vehicle party ran something like this:

"We spent just one night in the marshalling area back at 'beastly Eastleigh' and that was in the rain. The "first driver" on each vehicle had to stay with his vehicle, while the assistants were assigned tents in the transient camp. Sgt. 'Rebel' Ethridge and I stayed with our vehicles, and to keep dry during the night, we tied our shelter-halves between the back of a quarter-ton trailer and the front of a jeep. We backed up the jeep to make the shelter taut, and slept on two litters from the ambulance. The next day, the 28th of June, we left the marshalling area a full day ahead of the marching party, and moved down into Southampton. We spent most of the day parked in a side street; moved around the corner and slept in an ambulance that night in another street. The next day we moved down to the docks and finally onto a Liberty Ship that evening. We spent two nights on that boat in Southampton harbor, and one anchored off the French coast. We finally unloaded and de-waterproofed in a transit area July 2nd. Ethridge and I had our shoes off for the first time in four days on the barge that unloaded us on the beach and dipped our feet in the channel on the way in.

"That night I slept in the front seat of my jeep under the steering wheel, while Ethridge slept in the back on top of six cots, a case of Ten-in-One rations, and three five-gallon cans of gas, oil and water. Plus personal equipment, of course, with a raincoat for warmth. We finally lit out for the field July 3rd and caught up with the marching party there in an orchard that afternoon."

Capt. Walter McCarthy, Group Adjutant, in charge of the vehicle party, started having difficulties on the docks in Southampton, when the loading officer on the Liberty Ship informed him that some of the vehicle party would have to wait for another boat. Investigation showed that Number Two hold, largest on the ship, was empty, because its main loading crane had become fouled. The ship's crew couldn't or wouldn't fix it, so Capt. Mac had to call out a GI detail from the vehicle party. After much labor with pulley and cables, the crane

was restored to serviceability, and the rest of the Group's equipment loaded on board. Off Omaha Beach one crane broke down almost immediately when unloading began. Seabees running "rhinos" (actually broad floating wharves) between ship and shore were ready to handle a load eight vehicles across and 16 deep on their huge craft, as fast as possible, but the ship's crew maintained a very casual level of effort, made no attempt to fix the broken crane, and even took time out in the middle of everything to have "afternoon coffee". As far as Mac was able to determine, the crews were getting extra pay for the time spent in the battle area, and saw no reason for shortening hours and reducing pay by working any faster.

Late in the afternoon July 4th, the first batch of our pilots began arriving, after being transported by C-47 to Strip 1 at St. Laurent-sur-Mer. The Thunderbolts were flown in the next day, with Floyd Blair exclaiming gleefully, "Do we get combat time for this?" Vehicles and marchers of the rear echelon left Winkton July 3rd, boarded a former Belgian steamer, the "Prinz Albert", which had landed Commandos at Dieppe; the ship's captain welcomed the Group aboard as the first American troops to travel on his vessel. They sailed early the next day, unloaded off Omaha Beach in the afternoon, and by early evening arrived at Site 5, bringing the Group back to full strength.

Already vocabularies were shifting from "jolly good" to "tres bien", and some of the boys discovered that "cidre", "Calvados", and "eau-de-vie" would be adequate substitutes for "mild" and "bitter". And at night heavy American artillery introduced us to battle sounds, with loud whamming bursts apparently in the next orchard, followed by a deep rattling echo across over our heads and off to the south beyond us, like the after-noise of the Burlington Zephyr disappearing down the tracks at top speed. As long as the express-train started loud and kept going away more and more faintly, we remained more or less at ease.

The field was a single 5,000 foot runway, cleared diagonally northeast to southwest across a couple of farms and orchards. About midway the runway had a sizeable dip, so that when you took off to the southwest you traveled downhill the last half of the way. Dispersal strips looped around among the trees on either side of the runway. We set up our tents in orchards around the perimeter taxi-strips, and got lumber from German barracks near St. Lo, we were only about 10 miles northeast of the city, and started to build fancy squadron briefing rooms, snack bars, and day-rooms. The 508th started it and from then on it was a case of keeping up with the Joneses. Colonel McColpin deliberately used the technique of taking one squadron commander over to see what another squadron was building; to Major Shook he hinted that the 507th had a mess-hall far superior to that of the 506th, to Major Tice he suggested that the 507th get on the ball and try, if possible, to equal the 508th.

When the mud after heavy summer rains began to harden under the wire-matting on the runway, first Norman operations began July 8th. When the sun really got working on the clay soil, the planes whipped up dense midday fogs of dust; every man after the leader took off completely blind as far as forward vision was concerned. You just gave it the gun, watched the edge of the matting out of the side of the cockpit to keep lined up on the runway, knew you were halfway and ready to start easing back on the stick when you hit the dip. You had to be careful taking off to the southwest; if you glided out too far you'd be over the German lines within range of small-arms fire.

The proximity to the forward troops boosted the Group's wheeled transportation; in dealings with the 29th Division, nearest front-line unit, pilots accumulated a large number of enemy motorcycles, some with sidecars. Bill Johns of the 508th was lucky and ran across a "volkswagen", the frail four-passenger German jeep. Various people in the Group suddenly became battle-conscious and went wandering off the field for a closer look at the enemy. Jim B. White crawled up to the railroad crossing at Airel and peeked at the smashed buildings across the Vire River 300 yards away that marked the enemy outposts; then six headquarters officers (Abe Lyman, Delmer Sanburg, Ted Crosthwait, Jack Weir, William Corley and Weather Station Sweeney) spent an unpleasant half hour in a ditch in the midst of an artillery barrage and on another excursion John O'Rourke picked up a small shell splinter in his back. The pastime declined in popularity.

Wilbur Vinson and Harvey Bates of the 506th couldn't stay back at the base the day they heard the 29th Division doughboys moved into St. Lo. What they didn't hear was that the Germans were still in the town

too. The two pilots had hardly penetrated the shell-torn, bomb-blasted streets when the Germans laid down a barrage. Vinson lost Bates in the confusion and took cover in a two-story building several hundred feet in front of a forward command post which the enemy seemed intent upon obliterating. For more than two hours he huddled in his refuge, digging deeper into the rubble as the shells came down and the upper floor of the building was blown in.

The bombardment let up; Vinson ran out, ready to hit the road back. He bumped into a couple of infantrymen with a prisoner in tow. They had some more important work to do up forward whence they had just come, and would he be so kind as to escort their captive the rest of the distance to the rear?

Anything to oblige the infantry, Vinson assured them. He'd be glad to help out, and as far as he was concerned they could have the forward positions all to themselves. So he and Bates turned in a prisoner of war, a Yugoslav, to the surprised officer in charge of the collecting station. Back to his 506th Squadron he brought back a slip of paper with the notation: "Received of Lieut. W. F. Vinson, one prisoner."

The new location was ideal for hurry-up missions; ten to fifteen minutes from the time the first plane left the ground, and you were over the target. And half of that time was spent circling around, forming up and setting course over the field. It seemed that you barely had time to switch hands from the lever that retracted the landing gear to the bomb-release.

*... Under conditions which require a special weight of attack to be delivered to the immediate front of the Ground Forces it will be necessary for air support missions to be ordered to a point near the front lines, and to be further directed to specific targets by the Air Support Party concerned ... The operation will be known as CABRANK ... It will be the rule that the target will normally be marked with colored smoke shells. Such shells will be fired upon the orders of the Air Support Party Officer to the artillery ... Orders to fire smoke shells will be timed so that the smoke will not have time to drift away from the area to be attacked. In case of a strong wind shells must be fired continuously until the attack is delivered ... (SECRET Memo, IX Tactical Air Command).*

"CABRANK" was a term borrowed from the British tactical air force. Borrowed, and then ignored; for though a whole series of "CABRANK" operations began for the 404th Fighter Group on July 8, the operations orders that reached us nightly by teletype never bothered to use the term. The language of the order ran something like this: "Mission XKQ-1. Three squadrons 404th Fighter Group will attack enemy strongpoints at T-351776, T348776 and T-346771. TOT 1000 hours. Targets will be marked with red smoke. Controller JENNY on C Channel."

Thirty-three planes spent half an hour working with JENNY the morning of the 8th, bombing invisible strongpoints southwest of Carentan, aiming at artillery puffs of pale violet smoke. The bombs were on the smoke, all right, but from the air no other results were distinguishable. The squadrons ran an individual mission in the afternoon, catching a string of trucks near Villedieu-les-Poeles, destroying a cluster of buildings six miles southwest of Carentan reported as a command post, and hunting for gun positions near Lessay.

The enemy still held a bulge in our lines, forming a triangle Lessay-Carentan- St. Lo. The tip of the bulge, near Carentan, threatened to cut the Normandy battle-front in two at the Vire Estuary; German artillery regularly interrupted traffic on the only through road connecting the Cherbourg Peninsula with the Allied armies east of the Vire River. American ground efforts to push the enemy back from Carentan and the coast were reflected daily by the targets assigned the Group through the following week. Only exception was the 11th, when the three squadrons operating independently, skip-bombed bridges and railroad embankments in southern Normandy as far as the Loire Valley, sharing in the Ninth Air Force effort to hinder shipment of reinforcements from Southern France to the invasion coast.

July 10, bad weather day, 24 of our planes went back to the vicinity of Raids, southwest of Carentan, bombing gun positions. On the 12, 14, and 15, we hit troops and artillery in the area Raids-Periers-St. Lo five times; two squadron-strength missions cracked down on artillery near Lessay on the enemy's left flank. By the 16<sup>th</sup>, First Army infantry had straightened out the salient along a line Lessay-Periers-St. Lo and were within a mile of each of the three key towns.

*... The controller will pass information to the flight leader to enable the mission to make a 90-degree left turn and dive from an altitude of 8,000 feet at a 45 degree angle onto the target from out of the sun. The altitude and angles of turn and dive can be adjusted to fit the requirements of any mission and the flight leader and controller will agree on the proper altitude and angles while the mission is enroute to the target.*

During one of the many breaks in operations caused by weather, Lieut. Col. Cowart of the 555th Signal Aircraft Warning Battalion introduced to pilots of the Group a radar set known as the SCR-584 (Signal Corps Radio). It had the ability to follow, continuously and automatically, the flight of an aircraft on which it had been directed or "locked"; used with a large-scale map on a table-type glass screen on which the position of the aircraft was shown by a spot of light, it could permit a controller to guide planes to a target under visibility conditions which would normally make bombing impossible.

Led by Capt. John Ashby Marshall of Group operations, a special six-ship flight July 16 performed the first radar-controlled "blind" dive-bombing mission in combat in the history of the Army Air Forces. Directed by Lieut. Col. Cowart himself in the ground control station assisted by the homing station crew of the 508th Squadron, the flight was "talked in" on the target, a bridge chosen for its inconspicuousness. The planes dove when told to into a mass of clouds, and broke out of the overcast with the target dead ahead, with nothing to do but line up sights and release the bombs.

Between regular operations, the experiments continued for the next two days. Lieut. Col. Johnson led a four-ship bombing flight the 17th, which had to make two passes before finding the target, another small bridge, and then was unable to line up on it in time to bomb. Recovering from the dive after releasing his bombs on an enemy half-track in the area, Col. Johnson ran smack into a swarm of 15 Focke-Wulf 190s. The disparity in numbers apparently never bothered him, for he sailed right into an attack with his flight, shot down one of the enemy, dispersed the rest of them in the clouds, and returned safely without loss or damage.

Major Shook led out seven aircraft the morning of the 18th without scoring any hits and Col. Johnson repeated on the final experimental run, attacking a fourth bridge. Results weren't too satisfactory, only four near misses being observed. Chief difficulties appeared to be these: the SCR-584 could compute an exact, accurate angle of dive, but the pilots had no way of being sure that their dive conformed with the computed angle; and in a low-ceiling area, there was insufficient time to line up sights on the target for pin-point bombing accuracy. However, according to Leroy Graham, one of the participants, "It sounds like a damn good deal to me, once they iron out all the kinks."

If nothing else, the experiments showed up both good points and limitations and inspired further research that resulted in later use of the set with a built-in Norden bombsight to control accurate level-bombing through clouds.

Six squadron missions rounded out operations the 17th, five of them strikes far to the south near Angers and LeMans against enemy —advanced landing grounds and a large fuel dump. Five airfields were hit, but if it hadn't been for Harvey Bates, no one would have seen an enemy aircraft all day. He was leading the last element of the 506th on the second mission, sweeping an apparently bare landing strip, when suddenly:

"I saw a shimmer of steel from what appeared to be a clump of brush and went after it. The reflection, I found, came from the surface of a single-engine plane, probably new. I strafed, and the rest did the same to make sure. It was destroyed. It was camouflaged by netting and by tree branches stuck in the net."

Returning from the third mission, Flight Officer Bill Donohoe of the 508th was forced to bail out of his plane when flak apparently broke his fuel line, and gasoline and fumes permeated his cockpit. The plane crashed about 2,000 yards inside the American lines in a small field surrounded by personnel foxholes and half tracks, burying itself nose first, up to the tail assembly. General Rose, commanding officer of the Second Armored Division, was having his hair trimmed in a building a few hundred yards away. He had a "close shave", but congratulated Donohoe on his escape.

Said Bill: "I was at about 8,000 feet when gasoline started leaking into the cockpit. I lost altitude to about 2,500 feet as I tried to get behind our lines. I turned the plane over on its back to bail out, but was so dazed and weak from the fumes I could only get my head and arm out of the cockpit. I reached back and kicked the stick forward and it pitched me out. I got quite a jerk when the chute opened, but otherwise wasn't hurt a bit. I had a few anxious moments as flak opened up on the plane and small arms fire came up at me from our lines, as they couldn't tell whether or not I was a Hun. I landed about 500 yards away from where the plane crashed.

"They took me in to see the general. It was funny seeing him sitting there getting a haircut. He said he was glad I got down all right, and arranged for transportation to get back to my base."

Capt. Jack L. Tueller, who used to hit hot licks on the trumpet for Alvino Rey's band, hit a couple of hot licks with 500-pounders on a late afternoon mission that took five German gun emplacements "out of this world". Still carrying bombs, he was escorting Lieut. Archibald Robinson, on his first mission, who had been shot up by flak on the way out. Robinson's cylinder and engine block were cracked and one aileron shot away, but he managed to return home for a safe landing.

"I was coaxing and guiding Robinson back," said Jack, "when this gun position, possibly the same one that hit him on the way out, opened fire again. There were five emplacements. I dive-bombed them and scored direct hits with the two 500-pounders. They'll have to replace the guns. I guess it was a foolish thing to do, but I was kind of mad."

Commented Major Moon: "I'm in favor of laying off fighter factories for awhile; if they've got to bomb factories, let 'em bomb the flak factories."

Major Shook finished the day by leading his squadron in at 9:45 in the evening on a road junction in the eastern outskirts of St. Lo hours before the 29th Division moved in.

Four dive-bombing missions the 18th in addition to the two experimental flights cost the Group two pilots, neither of whom were heard from till they were released from German prison camps nine months later. On the fourth mission, hunting for an observation post six miles east of Periers which the formation was unable to find in dense haze, Frank Gillespie's ship was hit. Flames started up just behind the cockpit, and west of Periers at about 500 feet altitude, Frank finally got out. Chuck Viccellio saw his chute open. November 15, higher headquarters notified the Group that he was a prisoner of war.

On the sixth and last mission of the day, which also was unable to bomb its target, seven miles northwest of St. Lo, Major Ray Elledge was hit by light flak which knocked out his engine. He went into a glide toward the gunners that had shot him down, strafing all the way, and bellied in. Slightly wounded, he was captured immediately by members of the Panzer Lehr Division, April 29, 1945, he and Gillespie were both "returned to military control."

A return to escort duty the 19th took all three squadrons out with separate formations of A-20's on an uneventful run into southwestern Normandy. A late attack by 12 planes of the 506th hit a supply dump two miles south of Periers. Each squadron got off once the following day, dive-bombing and skip-bombing rail lines and key bridges to the south, near Laval and Fougères. Fifteen miles northeast of Laval, on a main line that fed the eastern half of the Normandy front through Alençon, the 506th found just what the fighter-bombers were out there to stop—forty flat cars loaded with vehicular reinforcements for the panzer divisions south of Caen.

With bombs already dumped on a bridge, the squadron made seven strafing passes, starting fires up and down the line. Major Shook estimated 150 motor vehicles on the flat-cars.

Returning from the last mission of the day over water west of the Cherbourg Peninsula to avoid flak, the 507th Squadron turned back east toward the field over an inlet in the coastline which they thought was at Barneville, ten miles behind our lines. The squadron started to close up, flying through scattered showers, under a solid overcast. Losing altitude gradually to 1,500 feet, they were suddenly hit with a barrage of flak which damaged six out of 10 aircraft in the formation. Art Washburn said he was hit, and as his plane burst into flames and nosed down into a vertical dive, Tom Weller called to him, "Leap out!" The last thing the others saw as they took violent evasive action was his white parachute fully opened and settling gently.

Firmly convinced that friendly anti-aircraft had shot him down, the squadron sent out a party to pick him up near St. Sauveur le Vicomte, in the middle of the Cherbourg Peninsula. No sign of him, and no report from the ack-ack in the vicinity that any aircraft had been fired on. After much re-interrogation, it was determined that the squadron had come in over Periers, flak stronghold right on the front lines. November 18 Washburn was reported to be a prisoner of war, and May 1, 1945 he was safely back in American hands.

After a weather break, the Group three days later threw two 12-ship missions against bridges and rails between Coutances and Granville, and a third against an ammunition dump a mile from Periers. Enemy counter-fire, though severe, caused only slight battle-damage to three aircraft, but Ed Grove was lost in a tragic accident as the day started. Taking off on the first mission, he pulled into a tight turn to get into formation and mashed into the ground off the south end of the runway. He died on the way to the hospital.

For the past couple of days, commanding officers and intelligence officers had been hearing and reading about something called "Operation Cobra." Complete copies of the battle plan were in our hands; all that remained was to choose D-Day and H-Hour. Some 12 or 13 German divisions faced the American First Army west of the Vire; one American corps was to push through a corridor four miles wide just west of St. Lo, then fan out, spreading from the Vire to the Gulf of St. Malo near Coutances, in an effort to trap 10 divisions along the front Periers-Lessay. The outline of the ground attack communicated to us went no further than the seizing of positions along a line Brehal-Percy-Tessy sur Vire. Eighth Air Force heavies and Ninth Air Force mediums and fighter-bombers were to open the attack by saturating the four-mile corridor between Le Mesnil Vigot and Hebecrevon along the St. Lo-Periers road, to a depth of four miles as far south as Marigny. Bombing sectors were allotted, the medium bombers taking the southernmost strip of the corridor near Marigny, the heavies covering a broad center section, and the fighters working closest to our infantry in a strip that started at the St. Lo-Periers road, was 250 yards deep, and 7,000 yards wide including the entire jump-off front.

We knew what Allied divisions had already been committed on the battle-line; we and the Germans had about 25 divisions apiece on the entire Normandy front. What we did not know, and were not able to plot on our situation maps, were the Allied reserves, the new divisions recently landed. We had heard of a Third American Army and possibly another; we had listened at night in our tents to snorting tank engines and rattling tractor treads streaming down the road to the west of A-5 from Trevieres and Omaha Beach, passing under the railroad trestle and continuing straight south to St. Lo, or turning right to cross the Vire and assemble north of the break-through sector; once we had seen a huge convoy of tanks with the markings of the brand-new Fifth Armored Division. But our complete army strength we could only guess.

After a promising saturation-bombing and six-mile advance south of Caen the 18th the rain and mud that stopped the British Second Army and restored the tempo of fighting throughout Normandy to the same tedious plowing through hedgerows of the first five weeks of the invasion had been a big disappointment. We hoped mightily for decisive action in the operation now building west of St. Lo.

It looked like July 24-Monday-was the day. Pilots were briefed and in their planes waiting to take off shortly after noon, wondering about the nine-tenths overcast, and watching as heavy bombers, mostly invisible, droned by overhead. The sound of engines seemed to be moving above us from St. Lo back northeast toward England.



A sudden series of explosions, like heavy-sounding machine gun bursts, sent everyone scurrying for foxholes. Colonel McColpin hopped out of the "Short Squirt" and jumped into a foxhole to find Lt. Col. Johnson, deputy group commander, and Staff Sgt. John Sulzynski, "Short Squirts" crew chief, already there. Near the officers' mess and the Group Headquarters tents, through part of the 508th Squadron dispersal area, five distinct fires were burning fiercely; white phosphorous bombs slung on our planes for the mission were going off in some of the revetments, enveloping the area in stifling white smoke. Machinegun ammunition and fragmentation bombs on burning P-47's started popping, throwing bullets and jagged steel fragments in all directions.

Men appeared in helmets, gas masks, and carbines, all looking up expecting another attack. Wounded men began calling, moaning and screaming; ambulances from the Group and squadron dispensaries arrived, followed by crowds of shaken enlisted men, pilots, and ground officers, emerging cautiously from foxholes, slit-trenches and hedgerows. Count Colwell's plane was damaged; Bill Kerr was slightly wounded when a steel fragment hit him, while sitting in the cockpit. Jack Conner jumped out when his ship caught fire, saw flames covering Chuck Viccellio's plane, pinning Vic inside. With gasoline tanks flaring up suddenly, bombs bursting and machine guns still firing, Jack hauled Vic out of the cockpit and away to safety, then returned to help wounded armorers and mechanics. Al Yetter and Carmen Moreali picked up one seriously wounded man and carried him away from under the wing of his plane where he had fallen, just before the aircraft exploded. Staff Sgt. Edward Botte and Cpl. Robert Hopkins were killed instantly, and Chuck Viccellio and Pfc. Hickman died of injuries. Fourteen others were injured, three planes were totally destroyed and eight damaged.

Three "duds" were found-unexploded American 100-pound bombs. It was finally determined that an American bomber, probably one of two B-24's sighted by an antiaircraft gunner through a hole in the clouds over the field at that time, had accidentally released a string of 20 bombs. The Luftwaffe never did us as much harm.

We were distraught over our casualties, but could understand how an error even of ten miles, could have been made in such overcast weather conditions.

The fighter-bomber missions were scrubbed; the heavies were recalled after only one-fifth of the scheduled 1,500 had bombed. We wondered throughout the evening whether the entire show had been completely snafued for all time.

## Chapter Six

### BREAKTHROUGH

*... We could see them coming in from England, high and tiny, in vast boxes; little silver glints in the sun were the first indication of their arrival. Some of the planes dropped smoke markers on the targets and we could see them fall, and see the boxes swing on the bombing run. We couldn't tell when the bombs were falling, but we could see the black spots of heavy flak up around them. Toward the end, we didn't seem to see any more flak ... Our own planes were warming up, taking off, getting in formation, and heading out to the rendezvous point. Fighter group after fighter group, fifteen all told, came swinging back over us, south to St. Lo and east to the target, where they put their noses down and dove, flight behind flight, saturating the area along the highway nearest our troops. More silver planes, gleaming in the sun, lower than the heavies, 35 to 50 in each Group, 500 to 700 together, also visible going down at the target, till they disappeared out of sight ... Silver bodies from Long Island and Evansville, engines from Connecticut, propellers from New Jersey, guns from Michigan, bombs and ammunition from Massachusetts, Illinois, Minnesota, Colorado, and Utah, men and material from a continent 3,000 miles wide, plunging onto a patch of French terrain 7,000 yards by 250 yards ...*

It came off the 25th. Time up, 1020 hours; time over target, 1118 hours. Ours was the fourteenth out of fifteen fighter groups in the attack. Alternating with the others, the 404th hit the eastern half of the "fighter bomber" area, while to the south the four-engine boys finished saturating the land with hundred-pounders, and the mediums began their run. Five-hundred pounders for concussion; white phosphorus to burn, and to obscure the enemy's observation.

Duane Int-Hout reported: "There was a pall of smoke over the entire area. It was about eight-tenths smoke up to 2,000 feet, funneling out toward the north and beyond Carentan, where it stretched eight or ten miles wide, about 12 or 15 miles from the target. The area looked badly chewed up. There was intense light flak in spots, but apparently most of the anti-aircraft had been silenced, used up its ammunition, or burned out its barrels shooting at the heavies."

Paul Buckles, an element leader, pin-pointed where Colonel McColpin's bombs hit. "Just west of that snake-curve where the road winds down the hill from Hebecrevon, I saw the bomb explosions right on the road and in the field south of the road."

Some of us later rode through the area. Along the main road, one bomb hit after another had thrown up heaps of red clay and dust, and the entire road was the color of dried blood in the sun. just west of the S-curve in the road, in the ditch at the south side, was a large crater, with another beside it in the field. Buildings were caved in, side roads were blocked with rubble and dead cows. Along a hedgerow in one field, blast-ploughed like every other field in the area, ran a string of German foxholes. One-two-three-then a crater-then the line of diggings continued, two coal-scuttle helmets near them on the ground. Three vehicles lay smashed in another field, one an amphibious "volkswagen" or German jeep, with strings of machine-gun ammunition, German gas-mask containers, a flame-thrower tube, wooden handles for potato-masher grenades. On a bush down a clay road hung a brimless German field cap, powdery dusty, national emblem torn off the front. Behind a hedge, under an apple tree (leafless though it was midsummer), stood a scorched, rusty-looking self-propelled gun, a 75-millimeter set low on a Mark IV tank chassis.

Rumors drifted back to us during the day that our bombers had hit American troops on the front; some of our pilots reported seeing twin-engine bombers apparently on bombing runs, northeast of St. Lo behind our lines, and fires where no fires should have been, half a mile or more north of the Periers road, and smoke as far north as the Bois du Hommet, where we knew from Major Clay Tice, Jr., that the Third Armored

Division was assembled, waiting for the word to move. Major Tice had visited the Third the evening of the 24th, knowing that according to the second phase of "Operation Cobra" we would be providing cover for the armor moving along the Marigny-Coutances road. We fretted in fear that our own bombs had stalled the attack, and were not relieved when the expected calls for armored column cover failed to come during the afternoon. The battle-schedule called for the infantry to clear the path for the armor through to Marigny in three hours by 1400. Between 1900 and 1930 hours 35 planes of the 404th Group were plastering an enemy strongpoint in the village of La Chappelle en Juger, barely one-third of the way to Marigny. We thought the worst and gloomily wondered how many weeks or months it would take to organize for another grand offensive.

It still looked like discouragingly tough going in the morning. Between 0630 and 0640, 36 planes got off the ground in an effort to knock out resistance by enemy panzer troops in St. Gilles, a crossroad town between Marigny and St. Lo. Almost a solid cover of clouds hung over the battlefield at 1,000 feet; you have to release higher than that on a dive-bombing run to avoid your own bomb blast; one squadron brought its bombs back, while the other two found clearer skies miles south of the target and bombed two bridges. An hour later a four-ship flight tried to work with the armor, but had to return without attack. Between 0830 and 1100 hours five more missions took off, two in squadron strength still trying to hit St. Gilles, and three single flights to work directly with the Third Armored Division. Alternate targets far to the east and south had to be selected in every case; the overcast remained solid at 1,000 feet. IX TAC's controller, "Sweepstakes," recalled the last flight at 1100; it looked like the weather perversely was working for the Germans.

Two hours later we tried again; the clouds had lifted, and broken up, and from 1315 till 2230 hours, the Group put 50 aircraft up in 12 separate flights at approximately one hour intervals, working directly with "Poodle" and "Bronco" (Combat Commands A and B of the Third Armored Division). The first strikes were two miles south of Le Mesnil Vigot and five miles west of Marigny. on the western flank of the breakthrough corridor, against motor vehicles and artillery positions. Then suddenly, the targets shifted toward Coutances, west and south of Marigny, along the planned axis of the Third Armored drive. You could see the hook beginning to swing toward the Gulf of St. Malo.

Gun positions and an observation post three miles northeast of Coutances. The road and hedgerows near Cerisy La Salle. Motor vehicles, Krauts in buildings and hedgerows, four miles northeast and east of Coutances. Motor vehicles and artillery in the triangle Coutances-St. Sauveur Lendelin-Cerisy LaSalle. Woods southwest of Gavray. Hedgerows and vehicles along the Marigny-Coutances road. The enemy in the woods and buildings at Monthuchon, three miles north of Coutances; trucks and guns east of Coutances. More guns northwest of Coutances. Darkness and a rest-for the pilots. Mechanics got out flashlights and went to work; intelligence officers consolidated their reports and got on the phone the "hot" line to "Football" (IX TAC Headquarters).

Everybody swore when Joe Sherwood had to bring his flight back at 0800 the next morning with their bombs still on. Ten-tenths cloud at 900 feet. Effective operations were finally resumed at 1040 when Capt. James A. "Hoss" Mullins took four ships down on a woods along the Marigny-Coutances road with "Bronco's" blessing. The ceiling was a little higher, and there were just enough holes in the clouds to bomb through. Twenty-four missions during the day, and 103 sorties. Seventeen strikes within a ten mile radius of Coutances, four near Cerisy and Villedieu, two in the Avranches-Brehal area, and one deep between Mayenne and Laval, when the P-47 traffic over the battle area became too congested to let four more ships in. Road junctions, observation posts, woods, hedgerows, motor vehicles, and at last, enemy tanks out in the open where you could see them and get at them. George Hughes saw the first tank on the fourth mission of the day, out in a field; he bombed it and got near misses on it. Claude O'Brien scored the Group's first probable tank kills, however, when he led four ships in a strafing pass that left two enemy panzers smoking on a side road six miles east of Coutances.

It proved that you could knock out some enemy tanks with machine gun bullets if you hit them in the right place; other members of the Group later had varying success, some tanks burned, others just kept rolling right along while 50-calibers spattered off their sides. At the time, though, Obie had nothing left to use but his guns; a dozen Focke Wulfs had bounced him southeast of Coutances and his flight was forced to jettison their

bombs. It was the only encounter of the day, and went something like this: the flight was at 1500 feet after making a strafing pass with bombs on. O'Brien turned into a swarm of 190's and met them head on and fired short bursts at three of them. He caught the third one from the rear.

"I followed him at treetop level for about eight miles or more and then gave him a burst of two or three seconds, probably about 400 rounds. I didn't see any hits, but a few seconds later he seemed to try to gain altitude for an instant, then crashed into the ground, exploding all over the place."

Luciano Herrera, flying O'Brien's wing, got strikes on another Focke Wulf, then lost sight of it. Bill Johns, tall-end Charlie in the formation, saw another enemy plane crash in the vicinity, and the flight ended up with claims of one destroyed, one probably destroyed, and one damaged. None of our planes were touched.

Tom Weller, flight leader, and Ray Donnelly, wingman, collaborated nicely against trucks and personnel northeast of Coutances.

"We leaped onto six or eight trucks parked along the side of the road," Tom said, "and struffed 'em up at 500 feet. Somebody was shooting at us from the fields on the side of the road-maybe the guys who belonged to the trucks."

"If they got out into the fields or hedgerows I pity them," Ray added. "I couldn't line up on the road with Weller ahead of me, and that's where I strafed-all over the place."

Bob Duffy just disappeared into thin air on the same flight. After Weller spotted the trucks and was climbing to get enough altitude for a dive-bombing run, the second element of the flight caught some light flak. "Yank" Wydner, the element leader, broke into evasive action, then looked back for his wingman. He was gone. Nobody saw the plane go down, or a parachute open. Months later the 507th Squadron adjutant, Capt. Rolland G. McCartney, received a letter from Bob's aunt telling us that he was safe, a prisoner of war. He was recovered by American troops in Germany the next year, in April.

George Hughes got another crack at some tanks two miles northeast of Coutances. There were two, camouflaged, on the main road from Marigny. Direct hits flipped one off the road, and the second was later seen with its top hatch open, as if the crew had abandoned it. Hughes then flew back up the road to check in with the American armor,

"Hello, White Flight, is that you circling directly above us?" Bronco called.

At 2,000 feet, George looked down at the Shermans lined up on the road, some with iridescent cerise panels, and answered, "Roger."

"Will you sweep the area directly ahead of us?"

Silence while the flight strafed both sides of the road for a mile ahead of the armored column.

"Hello Bronco. Road clear to top of hill; two tanks in valley."

Another pause as the planes headed back toward the Shermans standing below, cerise markers flashing.

"Uh-oh-hold on, Bronco. There's one we missed. Tank on right side of road, next building up, 200 yards ahead of you."

Radio silence while the four aircraft ran a gunnery pattern on a camouflaged Mark III Panzer hiding behind a house on the roadside, its turret bearing a long-barreled 75 swung up the straight road toward our tanks.

The planes peeled up, and the last thing they saw, curiously, was a lone enemy ambulance, dashing madly down the long stretch of road from Coutances, and pulling up to the Mark III.

As a result of operations of the last three days, the group was commended by Major General Elwood R. Quesada of IX TAC, and Brigadier General Macauley of the 70th Fighter Wing.

The 28th the Group was relieved of armored column cover for the day, and ran three squadron missions in support of the 29th Division, covering the east flank of the breakthrough with a push down the east bank of the Vire River. Front line troops and artillery were successfully clobbered. Then a hurry call sent 35 aircraft off at 8 o'clock in the evening to catch a large troop-movement into the battle area-four long trains reported by reconnaissance moving northwest from Tours.

Splitting up to search the main rail lines north out of Tours, the squadrons found lucrative targets from Chateau-Renault, 17 miles northeast of Tours, to St. Calais. 37 miles north of Tours. At Chateau-Renault the 506th wiped out a rail shed full of cars, destroyed a locomotive and train of 50 cars, and set fire to three fuel-tank cars and a warehouse; at St. Amand de Vendome, a flight of the 507th led by Capt. Weller destroyed a 12-car train; the rest of the 507th led by Major Howard L. Galbreath cleaned up a 20-car train of boxcars and tank-cars at St. Calais; and at Vendome the 508th started large fires and explosions, claiming 50 to 60 railroad cars destroyed.

Back on armored column cover again the 29<sup>th</sup> and the day's work began with the most effective tank-strike in the Group's history. Captain Ernest Tibbets was leading four planes of the 508th Squadron when he found the tanks, 35 of them, broad and beetle-like, running away, scuttling along a secondary road to the southeast from Gavray toward Villedieu les Poeles. The flight was cruising along at 3,500 feet just above a low overcast, when light flak started coming up, and Tibbo spotted the column. Jerry Perlysky, number two man, said the first bombs exploded near the head of the column, knocking out the first and third tanks.

"I didn't bomb on the first pass as I spotted a gun, probably 37-millimeter, shooting at us from bushes about 15 yards off the road," he said. "I had direct hits on it when I bombed on the second pass. We made four passes after the bomb run and strafed the tanks good. They were left smoking and burning. The flak dropped off after each pass and at the finish there weren't more than one or two tanks firing."

Through all the smoke, fire, and dust, the flight estimated ten to 15 of the panzer kampfwagens were destroyed and 10 more damaged. Three of the four planes received flak-hits. Over the target area between 0630 and 0700 hours, the formation was followed within ten minutes by Capt. George McLaughlin and a flight of the 506th, which worked over another part of the same retreating force almost simultaneously, from 0635 to 0705. West of Gavray, five miles due south of Coutances, McLaughlin found highways and roads jammed with military and civilian personnel and equipment in, a general exodus from the Coutances area. Along a secondary road leading along the east bank of the Sienne River south to La Haye Du Puits, the flight level-bombed four tanks, without observing the results. The ceiling was too low for a dive-bombing run. They pushed on down the road strafing, then attacked horse-drawn vehicles and trucks on nearby side roads.

Said Mac: "I saw a large number of tanks moving along the roads with hatches open, but as soon as I'd tip a wing to take a look or make a pass they'd close up and dodge into the hedgerows. Once I saw a member of a tank crew with his head and shoulders and one arm outside the hatch. When he saw us he snapped the cover shut and the tank pulled over to the side of the road and stopped. In no instance did a tank return our fire. Everything was headed south.

"I saw guns being drawn on large double-carts by teams of six horses, and other two-wheeled carts that must have been carrying gasoline, because they exploded when we strafed them. What I didn't like was that about six out of eight times I'd hit the horses. I hate to shoot horses; I feel bad about that.

"There were planes all over the sky," he concluded. "To give you an idea, I was strafing a tank on a run from west to east, and crossed a plane strafing another tank from east to west. We both made 180 degree turns and came back, and he was strafing my tank, and I was strafing his."

The early morning weather jinx spoiled three out of the next four flights between 0700 and 0830 hours, though Jack Tueller found a hole in the clouds 15 miles east of the fleeing enemy columns and bombed the Forest de St. Sever, an enemy concentration and supply area. For two and a half hours through the middle of the morning we sat on the ground, then Joe Nichols went off with three mates from the 506th, found the thousand-foot ceiling had raised and broken from ten-tenths to six-tenths, went down and bombed. His flight destroyed a string of ten horse-drawn wagons and damaged a tank, moving South on the main road from Coutances to Granville, three miles north of Brehal, then caught two tanks on the Coutances-Gavray road three miles south of Coutances, and made them burn. One mission during the day was unable to attack when the terrific amount of radio traffic on the fighter-bomber control channels kept the leader from getting a clear message from the ground. But the rest operated effectively till after 10 o'clock in the evening, completing 140 sorties and 35 missions. Motor vehicles, buildings, tanks; horse-drawn carts, artillery, tanks; a road block, hedgerows, woods; tanks and more tanks. Coutances to Brehal, Coutances to Gavray; Percy, Villedieu, and the Forest de St. Sever. A possible American armored spearhead, tanks with red panels, was spotted four miles north of Villedieu; another report in mid-afternoon of red panels down the east bank of the Sienne to the bridge near Cerences, where the morning targets had been hit. La Haye Pesnel, 18 miles south of Coutances, began appearing in the interrogation reports, and the last three strikes of the day caught rear-guard elements of the Second and 17th S. S. Panzer Divisions north of the town. Total missions for the day, 35, a Group record.

We discovered that we had the Fourth and Sixth Armored Divisions to work with too, entering the action around Coutances and pushing south along the coast while the Second and Third worked farther inland. Nobody was stopping along the Brehal-Gavray-Percy. line.

The momentum of the drive was even faster the 30th. Intensive operations were held up by the weather till after 1400 hours in the afternoon. Capt. Harold Freemantle took off on a flight at 0627 but was recalled in half an hour by the IX TAC controller, with a solid ceiling at 1,000 feet. He repeated at 1125, slid under a 700-foot ceiling and level-bombed a couple of tanks east of Granville. A third flight off at 1140 could do nothing, and Lt. Richard "Red" Arnold provided the only accomplishment of the fourth mission, off at 1145, by descending to zero minus six feet altitude to strafe a small car hiding in a quarry. The clouds gradually spread during the afternoon, remaining low but offering enough holes for the planes to find targets. The area from Granville to Avranches, and La Haye Pesnel to Avranches now afforded the bulk of the targets, with seven strikes driving further south and east to St. Hilaire du Harcouet, as the enemy passed the Avranches bottle-neck and scattered in all directions. Tanks, half-tracks and trucks again took a pounding; but the most exciting thing for the Group was a series of aerial encounters which resulted in its best single-day record against the Luftwaffe: 10 enemy aircraft destroyed and three damaged, without loss.

It all started in the middle of the afternoon, when Tom Weller, leading a flight of the 507th on a strafing run northwest of Avranches, heard the ground controller report "bandits" south of St. Lo. He immediately headed northeast toward St. Lo, and ran into a formation of Messerschmitt-109's, which strangely started separating into flights of six as the Thunderbolts approached. Twelve got out of the area completely. Paul Buckles leading the second element chased away six more that were trying to get behind him, and Weller and his wingman, Ed Manchester, followed two more that dove for the deck. One of the Messerschmitts suddenly started to snap violently, out of control, and the pilot bailed out. Weller dove through the clouds and caught the second one attempting to pull up off the deck, hit him immediately with a short burst, saw the pilot jump out. His two planes represented the first encounter and the first air victories for his squadron, the 507th.

In the air at the same time, a flight of the 508th led by Capt. John W. Robinson ran into the edge of a dogfight between Focke Wulf 190's and P-51's. Robbie and Clarence Nelson both scored damaging hits on the same enemy aircraft for the only claim. Maxie Conn's flight from the 506th put on the peak performance of the day 20 miles east of Avranches, in the early evening.

Maxie and his wingman were at 4,500 feet, the number four man, "Bird-Dog" Hansen, was circling, and Earl Fisher, his element leader, was dive-bombing, when the high element spotted nine FW-190's and turned to meet them head on. The enemy scattered, four coming down on Fisher and Hansen. Conn turned inside one, got on his tail and felt the enemy plane explode as he closed and passed over it. He hit another 190 in the wing and tail section, then found himself under fire. Earl Fisher came up off his bombing run head-on toward a Focke Wulf, turned on his tail and saw the enemy hit the ground. Another made a pass at him but broke the wrong way; Earl hit him from dead astern and the pilot bailed out. Earl then climbed up to rejoin the formation and latched onto the 190 chasing Maxie Conn. The enemy broke away as Earl shot out of range.

"I got on his tail." Earl said, "squeezing off short bursts as he tried to outrun me. I closed to 250 yards and started to give him the works and found out I'd shot all my ammunition."

Hansen met two head-on in quick succession, and got one after a short turning action. Gene McClosky, number two man, fired in the first head-on pass without seeing any hits, then caught a Focke Wulf passing through his sights. He snapped in a tight turn and when he recovered, the fight was over. He saw one FW-190 dive into the ground, and counted four others on the ground burning. Five destroyed, one damaged, nobody lost.

In what was almost an exact duplication of Tom Weller's flight, George Hughes with four 507th ships climbed up to attack a formation of 18 Me-109's over Avranches shortly before 8 o'clock in the evening. Six of the enemy flew by out of sight, six more dove away, and the remaining six circled overhead, then disappeared into the overcast when the P-47's followed. Hughes then saw two more 109's travelling along below, apparently unaware of his presence, and dropped in behind them, he and his wingman, John Rogers, shooting down one apiece. John Ross, number three man, pulling up after following Rogers in his pursuing dive, caught a third 109 circling, turned inside him and got him.

At just about the same time, Ollie Simpson, leading a four-ship flight south of Avranches, ran across a stray Messerschmitt and ended the air claims for the day by scoring damaging hits before the enemy escaped into the clouds.

Major Shook had six planes up on the last mission, and about 2100 hours ran into nine yellow-nosed Me-109's. Nine yellow-nosed P-51's immediately jumped into the fight and made split-second recognition practically impossible, so the Thunderbolts pulled out.

The 31st ended a phase-not only a phase of the Normandy campaign, but a new phase in the use of planes in warfare. The group flew 21 missions, concluding its intensive week of breakthrough operations, and terminating the first mass-employment of bomb-carrying fighter aircraft in direct co-operation with advancing tanks.

The 404th's targets the final day of July clearly demonstrated the progress of "Operation Cobra"; all targets were well to the east and south of Avranches. Only scattered elements of seven German divisions remained in the American corridor which ran some 30 miles long from St. Lo to Avranches, and 20 miles wide from the Vire River west to the Gulf of St. Malo. The entire western third of the enemy front in Normandy was kicked wide open; only a stab across the base of the corridor toward Avranches could prevent the now active U. S. Third Army from fanning out in all directions, to the east, south and west with virtually no ground opposition.

Portent of things to come was the concentration of group targets around Villedieu and the Forest of St. Sever to the east and northeast of the corridor's base, where the enemy seemed to be walling up his exposed flank. Opening the day, the 506th and 507th ran two four-ship flights apiece against a reported ammunition dump in the forest, and scattered tanks and motor vehicles called in by the ground controller.

"Organ" called the 507th back to hit the forest again three flights later, and four more flights went after occasional tanks around Villedieu. Seven missions had little else to bomb but terrain features-railroad tracks, bridges or crossroads-a dozen miles or more south of the corridor. Two targets were near Tessy on the Vire River, where the second Panzer Division tried an unsuccessful diversionary push against the corridor wall.

Three flights looked over the main highway from Avranches west to the Brest peninsula, but found little worthwhile, and two flights of the 506th tackled scattered trucks and tanks near a town called Ducey, on a highway leading east about six miles below Avranches. The second flight to Ducey was a costly one. Capt. Tom Litchfield, the flight leader, was hit by flak and went down. He was not seen to bail out but unknown to us, he landed safely and was captured.

Soon after the element leader, Bob Huse, spotted what looked like a tank-duel at point-blank range. There was a large enemy, confronting a smoking U. S. Sherman, and holding a second American tank at bay. Bob went after the German, and heavy ground fire caught him down low. He never had a chance.

The last flight of the day was Ollie Simpson's four from the 506th. Ten miles east of Ducey, near St. Hilaire du Harcouet, they caught more fleeing enemy transport and shot up eight trucks and two heavy horse-drawn artillery pieces.

Operations figures show the group flew 43 missions the first three weeks of July, but in the final week-the week of the breakthrough at St. Lo-the total was 126 missions.

Total missions for the month were 169—an operational peak following 25 in May and 96 in June. And the heightened tempo in operations meant increased casualties, too.

The group lost 12 men, five of whom, however, turned up safely after the war as prisoners of the enemy. They were Elledge and Litchfield of the 506th. Washburn and Duffy of the 507th, and Gillespie of the 508th. But seven were lost forever-the worst casualty figure until the following March, when the group lost nine, eight of whom finally were listed as killed.

Meanwhile-the breakthrough was complete. Now for the exploitation.



## Chapter Seven

### PURSUIT

August was the month of the world's greatest pursuit, the month the enemy broke and fled.

For the 404th Group it started uneventfully enough, with a routine B-26 escort mission, and five dive-bombing assignments in squadron strength against three fuel dumps and a power plant far south of the battle area.

Meanwhile, Avranches was secured by mopping-up troops, and the Third Army fan spread in spectacular drives, which in one week reached the banks of the Loire, overran the Brest peninsula to the city of Brest itself, and isolated the island of St. Malo

No missions were flown because of weather August 2, and the following day only three squadron missions got off and only one bombed a target. The 508th harrowed the forest of St. Sever with a load, while the 506th saw nothing and received no requests, and the 507th returned home in disgust after being asked by "Murphy" of the Second Armored Division to make a "dry run" over a crossroads village through a hail of flak. Showers and lowering clouds over the battle-area made it hard to operate.

The rest of the week was relatively quiet, with the Third Army doing most of the moving, and the U. S. First and British Second and Canadian First Armies inching up and consolidating new positions.

The group's targets for three missions on the 4th of August were against unseen enemy troop positions in the wooded and hilly ground in the Vire-Mortain area, east of the Avranches corridor. "Murphy" called back after the third run and told Maj. Shook and the 506th the bombing and strafing were good. A fourth mission that day covered an A-20 bombing mission far to the south of the battle area without incident.

Three more uneventful escort runs followed the next day, and August 6 the group sent up only three missions in squadron strength. The targets again were in the hilly battle area east of the First Army line. Don Dickerson of the 506th was hit by flak and bailed out over enemy territory, but was rescued the next day by an American tank column.

The second mission up, the 508<sup>th</sup>, had a brush with enemy aircraft for the first time in a week. Three Me-109's and an FW-190 made a fast pass on the squadron and jumped immediately into the clouds after peppering Luciano Herrera, the squadron's narrow escape expert. Herrera landed safely, in spite of 20-millimeter cannon damage. His gunsight was knocked out, but the cockpit armor-plate of the big old heavy T-bolt saved the senior when a 20-mm shell lodged behind his neck. It only grazed him slightly.

Six squadron missions got off August 7th, three of them quiet escort affairs, and three dive-bombing and strafing near Domfront, where an armored "feeler" was pushing ahead on the First Army's right flank. The 8th was a four-mission day, but cloud cover kept the eight-ship flights away from the immediate front in the Vire-Mortain battle-area. The 507th did get in on a reported cluster of enemy tanks near Mortain, but bombed without being able to observe results.

Far to the southeast, near Le Mans, Major Shook led the 506th down on a dozen or more tanks and armored vehicles, claiming 13 destroyed. Capt. McLaughlin brought another 506th formation down later on a whole swarm of enemy vehicles deep in the enemy's rear south of the British-Canadian front, started huge fires and claimed at least serious damage on 40 vehicles,

McLaughlin located the profitable target in an apple orchard, which he scouted at zero altitude after a 10,000-foot dive.

"While the rest of the squadron circled above, I peeled off to have a look," he said.

"There was a stream of vehicles moving along a road near Flers, most of them westward toward the orchard, where new tracks were clearly visible. As I swept down at tree-top level, doing about 500 miles an hour, I saw that the orchard was full of men and vehicles.

"The men were just standing around under the trees, and some of them were washing at a trough out in the open. As I zoomed past I saw one of them, just starting to douse his face with water, jerk erect, shake his head, and dive into the hedgerow with the rest of them right behind."

The squadron then went down in pairs on the area, placing 16 500-pounders in the orchard, about the size of a small city block.

"We saw six large fires," Mac said.. "All the vehicles probably were destroyed, or at least badly damaged. If any of the personnel escaped they were lucky."

Meanwhile the 508th was running into heavy flak southeast of Domfront. "Count" Colwell's plane caught more than its share, burst into flames, and the "Count" bailed out. Capt. Tibbetts circled him as he parachuted down and got a wave as assurance that everything was well.

Colwell spent the next four days hiding out behind the enemy lines, without food or water, through one of the fiercest engagements of the Normandy campaign, and so close to enemy soldiers defending a besieged hill that he could have touched them without moving his body.

The "Count" successfully evaded capture and was back with the gang in a week, describing how he became perfect at judging the range of American artillery shells, which exploded as close as five yards from his hideout in an open wheat field. He said he squeezed the pulp of the little Normandy apples for an infrequent sip of juice, until his mouth became too sore to chew them.

From the afternoon of the 8th, when Colwell parachuted into a hillside orchard about three miles southeast of Mortain, until the evening of August 12th, when he contacted friendly troops, the hill was under constant attack by American infantry, artillery, tanks and dive bombers.

Colwell lay through this period poorly concealed in a shallow trench he dug with his fingers. "The Germans wore a path across the field not six feet from where I lay," he said. "And I'd lie there watching their eyes for signs of discovery as they'd walk by. Fortunately, they always were looking at the hedgerows around the field, and when they'd turn in my direction, they'd be looking past me."

"I must have been in the air with my opened 'chute about 30 seconds. I don't know why the Germans didn't see me. Or if they did,, why they didn't come looking for me."

He hid in a hedgerow for about 30 minutes, decided he wasn't being sought, went out and recovered his parachute, hiding it in the hedge. Hearing rifle fire about 200 yards to the southwest, Colwell started down a small lane to try to make his way through the lines and walked right up on the rear end of a German armored car.

"Luckily the Germans were in front of the car, and before they could see me I jumped into a hedgerow and went through into a wheatfield. There were so many Germans around I was afraid to move around much. I scraped a hole about six inches deep and when it was dark I slipped back and got my parachute to lie on."

The next day the "Count" made another attempt to get through.

"This time I almost bumped into a German walking down the lane. He had his shirt off, and was carrying a pot in one hand and a tin cup in the other. I jumped up on a wall that was covered with shrubbery and he walked by without seeing me. He seemed to be carrying food to a gun I'd heard firing a few yards away.

"I could hear a clatter like pots and pans up ahead and figured it was a German field kitchen. I went back to my wheat field."

That day the Americans tried to take the hill by frontal assault.

"There was a hell of a fight. Every kind of weapon was firing on all sides. The American shells came over in salvos. They must have been firing a dozen or more big guns at once. Sometimes it would be just one big roar. At other times I could distinguish the separate explosions. I got pretty good at that. The Americans must have fired at least 20 to 25 rounds for every one the Germans returned.

"I couldn't recognize any 88's nearby, but all kinds of smaller artillery and small arms and mortars. And it sounded like they had a lot of bazookas on the hill.

"I later found out we had 60 Sherman tanks in the attack, and lost 30.

"A flight of eight P-47's dive-bombed and strafed the field kitchen about 75 yards away, and shells exploded all over the field, throwing dirt over me where I was 'dug in'.

"I got pretty accurate at calling the shots on the big stuff. I'd hear the shells coming over and guess where they'd hit. A lot of them were mighty close."

The third day the Germans set up two machine guns in a corner of the wheat field.

"I was half-hoping they'd find me then," Colwell said. "I wanted a drink of water so badly, and it looked like the Germans were going to hold out indefinitely. But I still kept waiting and hoping for our forces to show up."

That night German planes dropped flares over the field.

"They must have been trying to photograph our positions, which I could tell from the firing were very near," the "Count" said.

"On the fourth day the Americans changed tactics and hit the German left flank. The enemy started moving out.

"Sometime that day I heard some movement along the hedgerow and something clinking on the ground, I thought. I figured the Germans meant to come back and were dropping ammunition belts along the hedgerow. When the sound stopped I crawled out. I was going to hide the ammunition, but I couldn't find anything. It must have been a gun or something brushing against the shrubbery."

The Germans on the hill were very quiet at all times, Colwell said.

"They didn't talk or laugh or make any sort of noise. The Americans were different. They would yell and cuss and shout and sing and make all sorts of racket.

"That evening I heard some talking, but it was too far away to tell whether it was German or American. Some of them came nearer and bunched together beyond the wall bordering my field,

"It could have been only an American G. I. who growled at another guy over there, 'You dirty son of a bitch!'

"I could have cried, that sounded so good.

"I was still apprehensive. The Germans had just been there, and I didn't want the G. I.s taking a pot shot at me. So I crawled up to the wall. When I was just across from them I jumped over the wall right among them so they wouldn't have time to shoot, and said, 'What the hell kept you so long?'

"They had heard about a pilot bailing out around there several days before, but they were very surprised. They thought I would have been captured or shot by now. They said, 'Where the hell did you come from?'

"I guess I was an incongruous sight on that hill, right in the middle of a battle, or the tail-end of it. I had pulled off my flying coveralls, and was wearing my officer's pinks, didn't have a cap and must have looked pretty haggard.

"I drank a canteen of water and got sick. One of the boys gave me a package of cigarettes. The first thing I saw when I jumped over the wall was the Red Cross emblem on a helmet. Those guys were all right. They were doing a wonderful job right up there at the front.

"A jeep came up pretty soon with food, and I rode back in it. We picked up a Colonel Byrnes-I think he was regimental commander and he had his first prisoner, a shell-shocked German.

"The colonel looked at me and said, 'What the hell kind of a uniform is that? You must be in the Air Corps. And you need a shave and a haircut, too.'

"But he said it so I knew he was just kidding, and he sent me back to Third Army headquarters in a jeep, along with the prisoner and an MP and a suspicious Frenchman they had picked up.

"Back at Third Army they showed me maps of where I'd been, and how the battle had gone. It had been a tough one and everybody felt that I'd been pretty lucky all the way.

"I've got to hand it to the infantry. They really go through hell. They really fight.

"That's about all there was to it, as far as I was concerned. It seemed a mighty long time, actually just 104 hours. It wasn't so bad while the fighting and shelling was going on. That kept you sort of interested. But I wouldn't care to go through it again."

On the ground the Normandy front was taking the shape of a three-sided box, with the British and Canadians forming the northern side, roughly on a line from Vire to just north of Falaise. The First Army held the west side of the box from Vire to Mortain, and had extended armor along the south side to the vicinity of Domfront.

In the Brest Peninsula, the Third Army left only mopping up forces and siege troops around the port of Brest, and reversed its field, sprinting eastward on the First Army's southern flank against light opposition, with teams of infantry and armored divisions. Intelligence reports, meanwhile, brought word of the movement of heavy panzer forces into the Vire-Mortain area.

As the British and Canadian armies squeezed down through difficult terrain on the north, the enemy launched his counter attack to the west through Mortain, four panzer divisions leading in an effort to reach Avranches and split the American armies. The situation was tight and the fighting hard. Mortain changed hands several times and at one point an entire U. S. battalion was surrounded in the hills near the key town.

Heavy air pressure was brought to bear by both the 404th and other groups of the Ninth Air Force, and rocket-firing Typhoons of the Second Tactical Air Force. A squadron of the 406th group, newly equipped with rocket launchers, was based temporarily with the 404th at A-5 and brought back high claims of tank "kills" daily. After our own experience with rocket-firing accuracy later in the year, we decided such claims were overoptimistic. But the combined weight of air-pounding and stiff ground resistance broke the back of the enemy's last desperate effort in Normandy.

August 9th the group was called on for eight two-flight missions. The targets all were troop and gun positions in the immediate rear of the battlefront. The enemy's camouflage discipline as usual was good and targets were hard to see, but the ships bombed on positions designated by "Cutbreak" and "Murphy", or pot-shot at the flashes of enemy guns and area-bombed wooded sections where new tracks and trails indicated enemy concentrations.

The seventh mission of the day, about 10 o'clock at night, was a rough one for Bob Johnson. His plane was hit by flak while bombing a string of enemy tanks east of Mortain. His oil line was broken, and the plane burst into flames at about 3,500 feet.

Major Leo Moon, the mission leader, said he ordered Johnson to bail out at about 2,500 feet,

"I circled above while he dropped to 2,000 and then 1,000 feet," Moon said. "He was still in almost level flight, and no sign of a parachute.

"The plane was at about 300 feet when it nosed over and dived toward the ground, and I saw the canopy fly off and the 'chute open. The 'chute almost collapsed, and swung Johnson in a wide arc as the plane crashed into a hill and exploded all over the place. I saw the flames leap out past the parachute. He swung back into a hedge-row and within seconds I saw a weapons carrier race up to him."

We discovered later that Johnson intentionally had refused to quit his plane until the last minute, to keep it from crashing into an American bivouac area occupied by an ordnance company. His plane finally hit only the width of a road from the area. Ordnance men rushed Johnson to an evacuation hospital, where he had 17 stitches put in a head cut-his only injury. Within a day the ordnance company commander forwarded a message of gratitude and appreciation for Johnson's action to the 508th Squadron.

August 10th was a six-mission day, most of them in squadron strength. The first two were troop positions within a few miles of Mortain, attacked by 12 ships each from the 508th and 506th. The target areas were marked with red smoke.

Major Shook brought the 506th back up from the dive-bombing run and rambled far to the south where he found a field with 15 Heinkel-111 bombers scattered about. "Pintail" squadron strafed and claimed at least three of the enemy craft destroyed and six damaged. Near Sourdeval, about the midpoint of the Vire-Mortain line, the Ninth infantry called the 507th for help and got it. Capt. Lutman led 12 ships down on a wooded area marked by red smoke and started fires and black oily smoke.

The fourth mission of the day, eight 508th ships led by Jack Tueller, went to aid "Cutbreak" of the Second Armored Division. who reported enemy tanks attacking near Couptrain, 20 miles southeast of Domfront and near the tip of the First Army pincer closing the south side of the Normandy box. Tueller's boys unloaded their bombs with great effect, estimating at least five enemy tanks destroyed and five damaged. The ground controller excitedly thanked "Granite" over and over again.

But that wasn't all for Tueller. Swinging to the south, he heard from the First Infantry division near Mayenne, about 20 miles due south of Domfront. He found a concentration of about 200 armored vehicles, but with no bombs and ammunition nearly exhausted, the best he could do was notify the Ninth TAC controller. "Sweepstakes" immediately scrambled other squadrons, including the 506th and 507th.

"Booty" had marking artillery fire laid on the target and 11 ships of the 506th and eight of the 507th saturated the area with 500-pounders. Large fires blazed up and ground control congratulated both Joe Nichols of the 506th and "Hoss" Mullins of the 507th for an excellent job.

The 11th was another six-mission day, with two of the formations working around Sourdeval, where the enemy pressure appeared finally to be slackening. Twelve ships of the 508th, led by Jack Tueller again, worked around Domfront on enemy gun positions; the 507th sent a squadron mission roving over the middle of the "box" -soon to be known for all time as the Falaise pocket-while two 506th formations probed near Alencon, some 30 miles southeast of Domfront ahead of the First Army's southern spearhead.

Tueller's formation knocked out a heavy gun position holding up American armor near Domfront. then acted as pivot on a lateral-pass play that sent additional squadrons :to assist two more hard-pressed U. S. tank units.

One of these recognized Tueller's voice from activities of the previous night, when he scouted an enemy armored concentration east of Mayenne and directed fighter squadrons to the attack. A heavy bomb and machine gun assault cleared the area for an American advance.

With the tank radio man directing the attack from his map, the conversation went like this:

Tank: "See the road leading out of Domfront to the west?"

Tueller: "Yeah."

Tank: "See the other road leading out to the north?"

Tueller: "Yeah."

Tank: "See the railroad to the south?"

Tueller: "Yeah."

Tank: "The target is north of the railroad, south of the fork. See it?"

Tueller: "Roger."

Twenty-two 500-pound bombs were dropped in the target area, where eight heavy German guns had been reported holding up the advance.

Tank: "What were the results? Did you hit it?"

Tueller: "Yeah, we shook 'em up a little."

Tank: "Thanks! You guys are doing a great job."

As the squadron formed for the flight home, another tank column called in, requesting "loan" of a flight with bombs.

"We've dropped ours," Tueller told him, "But we'll give your message to our controller."

The request was relayed, and the reply was, "Okay, tell him we'll send the first flight we get."

Again heading home, Tueller heard himself called for the third time, this time by the Second Armored Division column he'd supported the night before. "Cutbreak" recognized his voice.

"Hello there, White Leader" the tankman greeted him. "How are you doing?"

"Okay, I guess," was the reply.

"We had quite a show down here last night after you left."

"Yes, I heard."

"We've got something else for you. Can you take it?"

"We'll send someone else. We're low on gas and out of bombs."

"All right. It's a fuel dump. Tell 'em to contact us. We'll see you again."

"Roger. Just let us know when and where."

Ten missions got off the following day, four of them four-ship flight affairs, but the others in full squadron strength. Most of the work was within the pocket-tanks near Mortain and Sourdeval and Domfront; gun and troop positions in wooded areas, particularly in the Foret d'Andaine, a ten-mile strip of woods shaped like an arrowhead, just east of Domfront.

The group shifted the weight of its attack the 13th to the center of the "pocket" -to targets along a strip of the Vire-Argentan road, the main east-west escape artery for the Seventh German Army. Seven missions were air-borne, all 12 ships strong, and the targets principally were enemy vehicles, motor, horse-drawn and armored. Many were wide open on the roads going into Argentan from the west, Argentan standing at the eastern end of the pocket, about 45 miles behind the Vire-Mortain battle-line.

The 14th was the heaviest operational day of the month, 14 missions being dispatched, one and two flights at a time. Every target was in the Falaise Gap, chiefly in a ten-mile square area between the Foret d'Andaine and Argentan. The Third Armored by this time had slipped south around d'Andaine and was probing northeast, closing the southern arm of the pincers against increasing enemy tank opposition. And all day the group worked with "Bronco" and "Poodle".

Eight ships of the 508<sup>th</sup>, led by Major Leo Moon about midday, claimed the destruction of at least 15 tanks, three heavy anti-tank guns and five ammunition trucks. They reported the Germans in such headlong retreat their tanks were running with turrets reversed, firing on the move at American tanks a quarter of a mile behind.

"It was a picnic for us," said Moon. "It was the best day we've ever had. The Germans were being driven frantic. If they moved, we'd blast 'em. If they stopped, our tanks would get them."

First Lieut. Lloyd Geist reported the crew of one tank abandoned their armor and ran into nearby woods, waving a white flag. The tank was destroyed by strafing, the woods passed up.

Moon reported one jeep driver, either so disconcerted he lost his sense of direction, or anxious to surrender. The German left concealment under a tree and ran full speed down the road, tried to hide in the shadow of a hedge when the Thunderbolt started its dive, then ran madly to the south where U. S. tanks were advancing.

"I figured he wanted to surrender," Moon said, "so I fired a short burst in the road ahead of him. He stopped still. I hope he had a chance to give up. I felt sorry for him."

As the Thunderbolt went to the attack, Geist saw two German tanks racing toward Putanges. firing to the rear at two American tanks ahead of the U. S. column.

"They stopped as we came up, and we set them afire with our frag bombs."

The squadron then attacked tanks; and anti-tank guns just north of the town, one unconcealed gun being placed on a hill commanding a wide bend in the highway to Falaise. This gun and two others in the vicinity were destroyed,

"Tanks were running off the main road to cover on side roads in all directions," Moon said. "And we'd blast 'em with bombs or strafing attacks as fast as we could spot them,"

When the squadron circled back, the American armor pursuing the Germans was passing through Putanges. The head of the column had reached half a mile north of town, apparently blocked by two burning German tanks at that point, A P-38 squadron was on its way to relieve the 508th.

Moon said the low level attacks not only apparently knocked out any German attempt to slow the American armor, but completely disorganized them. Not a single burst of flak was reported.

"Our only damage was some bent leading edges where empty shell cases banged against the wings of the following planes. That was because we went in so close together with guns firing," Moon explained.

On a 507th mission, Capt. Tom Weller reported that a frag bomb attack stampeded horses pulling large carts in a cluster of disorganized traffic racing east on the Flers-Argentan highway.

Major Harold Shook, off with eight ships of the 506th about five P. M., reported that German armor and transport were moving in a haphazard fashion along secondary roads in an effort to escape the continuous attacks from the sky.

The target-names kept recurring like a litany. Argentan, Briouze, Carrouges, Putanges, La Ferte Mace and Ranex was a popular target late in the day and most of the 15th--and marked the group's last major action of the Normandy campaign.

Ranex was just a little cross-road town midway between Argentan and the Foret d'Andaine. Third Armored Division tanks were approaching it from the south and southeast and discovered a heavy concentration of enemy tanks in the woods on three sides of the town--the north, east and west.

The first mission, to "discover" Ranex was an eight-ship formation of the 506th. They were called there by an urgent radio request from "Poodle" for blood plasma. The ground control wanted the plasma dropped south of the cross-roads town, and the squadron relayed the information to "Sweepstakes". Two four-ship flights of the 506th followed and worked over the woods just east and northeast of Ranex hunting for the hidden tanks. They readily spotted American troops south of the town.

Sixteen ships of the 507th led by Major Tice arrived in the early evening and roamed over a wide-area west and north of Argentan, catching 30 or more scattered enemy vehicles. The woods near Ranex still were masking the enemy tanks, destined to be flushed from their cover the following day.

However one enemy subterfuge failed to save a panzer kampfwagen. One enemy tank commander scuttled under a railroad bridge near a town called Ecouche, about six or eight miles northeast of Ranex, but not before he was spotted by 507th flight leader Denver Smith. Smitty plunked his bombs down through the overpass and had the satisfaction of seeing the velvety black smoke of burning gasoline billowing up when he banked around for a look.,

The 508th put "three flights in the blue, which roamed over the Gap without touching Ranex, then the 506th got back in the picture again with two final four-ship flights. They worked closely with "Poodle", bombed a tank and motor vehicles among the trees three miles east of the town, and worked over an orchard marked with red smoke just half a mile from the village center.

That evening there was rejoicing and a big reunion over in "Granite" squadron. Three "MIA's" returned: Ralph Smathers, shot down June 10th on the Cherbourg Peninsula, Colwell, shot down August 8, and Bob "Senator" Johnson, downed just four days before. Smathers and Colwell escaped from enemy territory without being captured, while, Johnson was banged, up crash landing among our frontline troops. The "Senator" appeared with his head wrapped in a big turban of bandages.

There were ten missions the 15th, and nine of them worked with the armored column attacking Ranex. The 506th bombed the town itself and motor vehicles to the northeast; the 507th hit the town again and combed the roads and flanking woods to the northeast and northwest; more of the same for the 508th.

A 507th formation led by Capt. Ray Langford left 11 immense fires burning near the village square.



"The tanks were south of Ranes." he said, "and told us they were being held up by German stuff right in the town. They told us to bomb them out.

"We hit the town square and buildings around it with 15 500-pounders and seven 260-pound frag bombs. Eleven big fires were started and I saw several gushers of thick black smoke when we went back for a strafing pass.

"We reported our results, and the tanks said 'okay, we're moving in'."

Leo G. (Little Caesar) Moon followed with eight 508th ships, and after an hour of attacks was being relieved by Major Harold Shook and the 506th when he spotted a highly-profitable target--20 enemy tanks. He couldn't get the location across to Shook on the radio, so "Little Caesar" led Pintail Squadron to the target by marking the tanks in a strafing run.

Shook's bombers claimed destruction of 15 of the tanks.

By early afternoon the squadrons were beginning their second round of missions for the day, and the 507th finally found the enemy breaking cover and taking to the road northeast of the town.

Capt. Tom Weller's second flight got in for a good look at the enemy vehicles spotted them strung along the road partially concealed by the trees. Weller took some useful steps to stop the flak nuisance at its source on his bombing run. As he told it:

"I saw these tanks, and I saw some personnel running about like they were going to man their flak guns. So I said to my wingman, 'I'm going down. You stay up here, and if they start throwing flak at me, you leap on them with your frags.

"They must have heard me talking, because I went down and bombed the tanks and they didn't shoot a round at me."

Hearing of the concentration, Major Tice quickly rounded up another unscheduled mission and went back later in the afternoon with eight ships, with Weller leading his second element to locate the "happy hunting grounds." They found enemy tanks burned out along the road out of Ranes by the previous mission, and bombed in an arc from northeast to northwest above the town. They caught five more armored vehicles, two trucks, a motorcycle carrying five men, and a light flak gun, and shot up a scattering of infantry foxholes.

Major Tice saw a large brownish smoke ring rising from the ground to about 1000 feet, apparently puffed through the turret of a tank hit by Capt. James A. Mullins. Weller personally accounted for the five men on the motorcycle.

"I saw 'em northwest of Ranes running along the road. There were so many men on it I couldn't even see the motorcycle. I strafed 'em and got 'em all."

After the attack, Mullins, leading the second flight, received a weak call from "Poodle" urgently requesting blood plasma to be dropped at a point marked with panels south of Ranes. He relayed the message to "Sweepstakes", then, relayed the answer back to the boys on the ground: "It's on the way."

Soon afterward a P-47 from another group dropped the much-needed plasma.

On the 508th's second mission, Ira Fisher crash-landed but got out safely.

All three squadrons launched one more mission apiece in the early evening, all working west and north of Ranes on tanks, guns and motor vehicles.

By nightfall new and important news had reached the Group, the American Seventh Army and French allies were ashore on the Riviera coast, and the enemy's dispositions throughout France were in jeopardy.

Meanwhile, although we didn't know it at the time, the slaughter in the Falaise Gap had reached its peak. The heavy enemy commitment in the unsuccessful drive for Avranches had helped to hold some 20 of his divisions in a tightening pocket. His tide had run its course and turned to ebb, jamming up in the narrowing escape-gap to the east between Falaise and Argentan. The next few days were the windup; the enemy's strength was completely broken in Normandy by the armies of the air and armies of the ground. The enemy lost 100,000 men captured in the pocket, thousands more were killed or wounded, and the remnants of the Seventh Army thrown into disorder as they fled toward the Seine.

The Canadians seized Falaise; the British slid on by toward Argentan and a junction with the U. S. First Army by August 20th.

During this period new moves to bring about closer air-ground liaison were worked out by higher headquarters, and pilots from the various tactical fighter groups were assigned temporarily on a volunteer basis to ground combat units as air support officers. The first to go from the 404th was Capt. Art Justice, assistant group operations officer, who had 21/2 years of stateside training with two armored divisions before becoming an aviation cadet.

He was assigned early in August to one of the combat commands of the Second Armored Division, and rode with the tanks for two weeks.

"There was a lot of good-natured kidding about who was winning the war," Art related, "and they'd rag me about how easy the Air Corps had it. When our aircraft knocked out a particularly troublesome target, it was a great satisfaction to show 'em how the Air Corps was making things easier for them. Actually there was nothing like jealousy or anything like that. It was a team proposition. They were mighty glad to have us working over tanks and stuff they couldn't reach, or couldn't knock out with their guns. And every time it was possible, they'd rush recon units up to the target so we could tell the pilots the result of their bombing before they left the area. Lots of times the recon units would find stuff knocked out that we hadn't known was in there.

"Sometimes the target would be inaccessible to us until the next day, and the pilots couldn't be informed of the success of their mission against hidden targets. When I went back to my squadron and started bombing ahead of the ground forces again, that was good to know, when we hit wooded areas or other places where we couldn't see our targets. The chances are that we either knocked out something or forced the Germans to pull out of their positions, which often happened when I was with the tanks.

"I never was nervous about strafing by our aircraft when I was up front, but I sometimes was just a little apprehensive about bombing when the target was very close to our tanks. On the other hand, the ground forces seemed to be a little more jittery about being strafed, but not at all about the bombing, probably because they didn't realize how far it's possible for a bomb to miss its target when you're diving from 6,000 to 10,000 feet at 400 to 500 miles an hour.

"It bothered me a little more than the other fellows, and I was a little more nervous when I couldn't see the target over the brow of a hill or someplace like that, than when the target was in plain view, even if it were closer.

"Although they were more nervous about strafing, the fellows seemed to think strafing was a better morale-booster for us, because they could definitely identify the gunfire as aircraft, even from a distance, while the explosions of bombs could have been just more shell bursts, from either side.

"I've never been nervous about flying close to our ground units in air attacks, because we have close radio contact, and I figured if the target was too close, they wouldn't let us hit it. The ground controller would

tell us the distance from our troops and the direction of attack, and if our troops were quite near, he'd advise us to drop our bombs "long", if anything, rather than "short". We'd take a little extra precaution then, to line up correctly and drop beyond the danger-point, but with correct procedure we were not afraid of hitting our own men.

"Once when I was with the armor, our recce outfits spotted a dug-in German tank only 300 yards away, and called for an attack by aircraft.

"I told the planes how close our own troops were, but I was a little uneasy until after the bombing. The worst miss was 50 yards from the German tank. The others were right on it.

"Another time there were three or four German tanks hidden under trees on a hill across a river. From a hilltop I saw our planes bomb the area. They couldn't see what they were hitting-just a wooded hill. When we moved up, there was one tank completely knocked out, and the others had pulled out in a hurry:

"Several times we'd suspect the presence of enemy vehicles along a road or hedgerow in our path, and call for an attack right over our heads and down the road. We'd follow the attack, and find the enemy gone, leaving wrecked vehicles and equipment along both sides of the road.

"Only once were we attacked by friendly aircraft-and then toward dusk in conditions of poor visibility, by a formation with which we had no radio contact. The only injuries were suffered by a couple of German prisoners we had picked up. There didn't seem to be any particular resentment because of the attack; the outfit simply took a little extra care to put out identification panels from then on."

Justice returned to the group August 16th, the day of the 404th's final attacks in Normandy-three squadron missions against German motor transport east of Falaise. The 17th the group was idled by weather-and the 18th they turned their attention to barge traffic in the Seine, again with three missions in squadron strength.

On the ground free-swinging American armor raced ahead to the famous river between Paris and the sea, to start another tremendous pocket, chief escape from which was across the Seine at Rouen.

The 19th the group was grounded by weather-and the boys in the 506th and 507th snack bars relaxed to hear about the channel crossing of George Stovall and Lad Lutman. The pair had been on five-day "operational leave" in England, and found themselves stranded on the south coast.

Lad, a former Coast Guardsman, decided to try his "influence" with the Coast Guard. The two Thunderbolt pilots went down to the Coast Guard pier, and Lad engaged the blue-coated men in sea-talk-told them about his experiences from 1937 to 1940 when he served at the Coast Guard Academy at New London, Connecticut.

His acquaintance with several high-ranking Coast Guard officers got him as far as the executive officer of the USCG headquarters, and before the day was out, he and Stovall were on orders for France aboard a cutter.

"We had a fine crossing," said the Lad. "I stood a wheel watch and had a great time. An amphibious 'duck' brought us ashore on the beach and the Royal Navy furnished us transportation to the American sector, where we caught a ride to the base.

"It isn't a regular practice of the Coast Guard to carry passengers," he added. "It's like pulling teeth. But coming over in the crew was different. The only thing that happened was that Stovall got in a poker game and cleaned out the whole crew of 14."

The Luftwaffe, amazingly absent during the destruction of the German Seventh Army in the Falaise pocket, put in another fleeting appearance August 20th. It cost the enemy three Focke-Wulf 190's, but also cost the 507th Squadron one of its newest pilots, Second Lieut. Edward C. Manchester.

Manchester was lost on the third mission of the day, after two flights by the 508th in squadron strength. The "Granite" squadron formations bombed a reported German gun position along the line of advance of the Second Armored Division, and attacked barge traffic in the Seine to stop the ferrying of fleeing enemy troops. Also on the bomb-racks were some special bombs containing propaganda leaflets-"B. S." bombs.

Returning from the second 508th mission, Joe Landa's engine cut out near the field, and his glide brought him down just short of the runway. The plane was demolished in a spectacular crash, but Joe escaped with cuts, bruises and a severe shaking up.

The 507th followed on another "B. S." bombing assignment, dropping "surrender" pamphlets to a heavy German concentration near Argentan, far behind the American lines. Then the 12-ship formation, led by Major Howard Galbreath, answered an urgent call to help out an armored column held up by heavy anti-tank guns near Verneuil, and observed a tank battle raging in the area between Liseux and the Seine.

"Skin's" lead flight was low west of Rouen, pulling up out of a dive-bombing run, when the top-cover flight led by Steve Leonard, was bounced by six FW-190's. The enemy formation split up as the P-47's turned into them, and one came down on Leonard's tail, as Leonard's flight pursued two others.

Steve's wingman, First Lieut. John F. Phelps, pulled over on the tail of the German, and a hectic race began at about 8,000 feet.

"The FW was closing in fast on Leonard," Phelps said. I was as scared as if he had been shooting at me. I could see his 20-mm guns firing past Leonard, and the FW gaining all the time. I couldn't shoot at first because the FW was right on a line with Leonard, and I was afraid of hitting my own man. Then Leonard did a split-ess, and as he went down he left me free to shoot. I gave the FW a couple of bursts and saw the second one go right into the cockpit. I think I shot the pilot. The plane caught on fire and went down."

Another square-tipped wing flashed in front of Phelps's gunsight and he got off another burst with some apparent damage to the second enemy.

Meanwhile as the enemy craft dove through the formation, Leonard's second element picked up an FW and followed it down. Steve Courtney was the element leader and Lew Eldredge the wingman, but Eldredge's plane gradually slid ahead in the diving pursuit.

"I was firing at the FW all the time from 8,000 to 1500 feet," Eldredge said. "When I was pulling out, I caught a glimpse of another plane off my left wing. Not realizing it was Courtney, I got quite a scare and broke off my attack. The FW was still in a vertical dive below me, going at least 450 miles an hour."

Courtney thought it would have been impossible for the FW to have pulled out at that altitude and speed, so the squadron ended up claiming two of the enemy destroyed and one damaged.

Somewhere in the first moment of the attack, however, Manchester turned up missing. He was flying number four in the middle flight behind Lieut. Ray Donnelly, and according to Donnelly, when the flight turned and met the enemy in a head-on pass, Manchester fell slightly behind. A Fock-Wulf came directly at Donnelly and broke beneath him. When he looked around a few seconds later, Manchester was no longer with the formation.

The last mission of the day was a 16-ship effort by the 506th also scouting the Seine. George McLaughlin did some smart split-second thinking to bag the group's final kill of the day. "Pintail" was in the air about the time of the 507th's encounter, and heard the radio call of "bandits".

McLaughlin, leading the third flight, headed toward the vicinity of the fight over Rouen and spotted two planes ducking for cloud cover. He took his wingman down through the clouds, leaving his second element high to catch any attempt by the enemy to reverse himself and come back up again.

But below the cloud-cover at 4,000 feet, Mac saw the enemy, both heading for the deck. About 1,000 feet high, they leveled off, but the 506th Thunderbolts using full throttle and water injection, closed steadily. Suddenly the enemy pair broke off in opposite directions. McLaughlin chased one to the left, his wingman the other to the right.

Mac noticed that by firing short bursts at long range and to one side of the enemy, by now identified as an FW-190, the enemy would turn sharply in the opposite direction. Mac did this several times, gaining slightly each time by being able to anticipate the direction of the 190's next turn. Finally the Focke-Wulf banked sharply to the right at treetop level-too sharply. The German went into a high-speed stall, his wing tip hit the ground and the plane scattered in flames.

McLaughlin circled to take a picture of the burning wreckage, but two more FW190's jumped him from above. He turned into them, firing as he climbed, but discovered most of his ammunition was expended. He escaped into the clouds and returned to base, ducking in and out of the cloud-cover.

Weather closed in to help the fleeing enemy, and no missions were airborne for three days. The 24th the 506th and 508th both got 12 ships off, but heavy overcast made it difficult to find river targets.

August 25th the group got back into business with a vengeance, working chiefly with the 79th Infantry Division, forcing a crossing of the Seine northwest of Paris. Eight squadron missions hit troop and gun positions on both sides of the river, with the most profitable target sighted through the early evening haze by the 507th Squadron.

It was the road to Rouen-the main escape-route remaining for the enemy troops still south of the river. Rouen rests on the north bank of the river at the top of one of those giant snake-bends that make the famous river easily distinguishable. The land to the south, outlined by the winding river, points like a finger toward the city. And up the center of the finger runs a major highway. "Crocus" Squadron, led by Maj. Galbreath, found the highway jammed with vehicles, bumper to bumper. Bombing as well as they could in poor visibility, 12 ships laid five-hundred pounders along the roadside, and retired with a curtain of smoke rising from the packed enemy, motor transport.

That night the group heard the news that the Allied armies were in Paris -with the Second French Armored Division winning the honor of leading the way.

The 26th was an uneventful day-two squadron missions escorting B-26's, and two armed reconnes east and northeast of the French capital city.

But August 27th was something else again-a day in which the 506th fought one of the fiercest aerial engagements in the group's combat history, and Col. McColpin triumphed in one of the most unusual encounters of the war.

The enemy losses were heavy-11 destroyed and five probables-but the score couldn't take the sting away from our casualties. For the 506th lost four men out of 16, and only one of the four survived.

The big fight happened in mid-afternoon, after an unproductive search for dive-bombing targets by a 508th formation in the morning. Capt. George McLaughlin was Pintail squadron leader, and the formation in two sections was checking an airfield at Coulommiers, 20 miles east of Paris, when the enemy appeared.

Eight ships bombed up were at 7,000 feet, with two more flights covering at 12,000 feet. Down from the rear on the top section dropped approximately 20 Me-109's and FW190's. Apparently the attack was a surprise, although someone in the top section had called out "bogies" shortly before it began.

McLaughlin, on the deck inspecting vehicles on the roads near Coulommiers, heard the call of bogies, and started to climb, meanwhile glancing at his map to check his position. Max Conn was leading the second flight behind him, which included Tom Leaks, Marty Adams and Bob Daly. Harold Freemantle was leading the top-cover section, with Ollie Simpson heading Yellow flight.

Freemantle saw the enemy coming from about seven o'clock, broke left too sharply, and snap-rolled. When he came out of the maneuver the enemy formation had passed, and he dove after a straggling FW-190. The enemy led him in a long dive through the clouds and down to treetop level toward Paris. Pursuer and pursued streaked across the city's rooftops, with Freemantle just out of firing range, but closing. As he drew in close enough to open fire, the enemy broke right suddenly into a high-speed stall, snapped and spun into the ground.

Earl Fisher, flying number four in Freemantle's flight, heard his leader call for a climbing lufberry to the left. Two FW-190's appeared on Fisher's tail, and he turned into them, passing them head-on. He watched the enemy turn left, and he turned right to parallel them, following as the enemy leader snapped into a brief spin. As the enemy wingman disappeared, Fisher followed the leading 190 into a long dive through the clouds.

Fisher opened fire just below the clouds and noticed hits on the enemy's engine immediately. The 190 started to smoke as they leveled off at zero altitude, and Fisher kept firing until flames began streaming from the enemy's cowl. The German pilot bellied his plane into a field, jumped out and started to run, then fell flat as Fisher passed over him. Earl opened his canopy and waved, and the German waved back.

Simpson, leading the fourth flight, saw nothing of the enemy until tracers began streaking over his left wing. He broke right away from the line of fire, and the enemy, an FW-190, flew past him. Simpson continued in his turn and pulled into line on the tail of one of the enemy aircraft. He started shooting at close range, and at about 1,000 feet the FW-190, on fire and breaking up, went into a spin.

Ollie pulled up his nose, and spotted two more Focke Wulfs approaching at three o'clock. His element turned into the enemy, but lost them in clouds after Ollie had scored wing root hits on one plane. Below the clouds, he discovered an FW-190 pursuing a P-47 and closed in on the enemy, peppering his fuselage and wing-roots. The three planes went into a cloud in trail, and when Simpson broke out into the clear again, the other two were gone. He formed up with four other Pintail squadron members and returned to base.

Simpson's element leader, Carl Parsons, also discovered the fight was on when tracers flew past his plane. He broke right and started to climb when three FW-190's appeared ahead of him. Parsons picked up the last of the trio, and followed as the enemy broke for the deck. Carl fired all the way down and saw hits, but at 2,000 feet the enemy pulled out and Parsons himself was hit by fire from a 190 on his tail. He broke left and evaded the attack, but some 20-millimeter hits in the wings started his own machine guns firing out of control.

With his ammunition shot away, Carl hit the deck for A-5. With his air-speed indicator and hydraulic system out of order and no control over his flaps, he landed "hot". His brakes were useless so he tried to ground-loop by using left-rudder at the far end of the runway. The plane swung into a ditch and nosed over, but Carl escaped with a shaking up.

As the enemy barreled through the top cover, George McLaughlin heard the call of "Jerries", jettisoned his bombs and gave his plane full throttle. As he led his low section up, he saw about ten FW 190's firing as they dove. He broke right, and kept climbing, observing about ten more of the enemy diving in a second wave. As all the attackers passed on by, he rolled over and made a pass at two 190's turning with a P-47 from the top cover that had followed them down.

Mac closed in fast, centering his fire on the leading Focke Wulf, which pulled up after receiving several hits, then exploded in midair as Mac passed below. The rest of White flight followed the second Focke Wulf. Mac's wingman, Don Miller, lost the enemy in a cloud, but the second element stayed with the Focke Wulf down to deck-level, element leader Harvey Baker scoring several hits and claiming a "probable".

Miller, still "upstairs". got into a lufberry with another 190, and hit the enemy in the left wing as he tried to break away. The German dropped one wing and Don last saw him in that attitude, disappearing into a cloud.

Meanwhile McLaughlin was still in the midst of the fight. He rolled on another 190, which was 2,000 feet below and climbing. The enemy foolishly broke for the deck, and Mac, with the extra acceleration of altitude, gained quickly, firing several bursts from dead astern. He saw pieces fly from the enemy, then puffs of smoke and licks of flame. The German dove into the ground, and Mac pulled back up to about 5,000 feet.

An Me- 109 made a head-on pass at him from above, but there were no hits on either side. He kept climbing, and saw two P-47's chasing an FW-190 below him. An Me-109 popped out of the clouds and started a pass on the second P-47, so Mac went down again, firing a short burst although way out of range, which caused the enemy to break off his attack. Mac closed on the German in a long dive, and saw hits on the wings, fuselage and tail. The canopy popped off, and the pilot bailed out.

The fourth man in McLaughlin's flight, Rowland Dalberg, meanwhile was fighting a solo duel with two FW-190's. Dalberg was monitoring "C" channel on his radio while the rest of the squadron was on "A", so he heard none of the preliminary calls. He suddenly saw two 190's barreling in on the flight from eight o'clock, and turned into them, calling to McLaughlin without remembering in the excitement to switch channels.

The enemy pair split as Dalberg turned into them, so he followed the leader in a brief turning action. After two circles he managed to get a lead on the German, and fired a long burst. He saw the flash of strikes, and the enemy pilot bailed out, as the second FW-190 got into position on Dalberg's tail and started doing damage with his cannon-shells. One blew a hole in Dalberg's left wing.

Dalberg barrel-rolled to the deck, pulled up hard and wound up in a tight lufberry to the right. The maneuver was fatal for the enemy. As usual, the FW-190 failed to hold the turn with the P-47, and after several tight circles, Dalberg gained a firing position on the enemy's tail. The German tightened his turn too sharply, went into a high-speed stall and dug his wings into the ground. Dalberg straightened out and headed for home as the enemy exploded.

As the squadron's scattered elements straggled back to base, the ground crews totaled up the kills and were jubilant. But when the last plane was in, one entire flight was missing. Conn, Leake, Adams and Daly-what of them?

Days later, Adams was definitely reported killed, and Daly was discovered hospitalized. With his plane shot out from under him, he had bailed out, suffering a broken ankle. Nothing more was heard of Conn and Leake.

We can only guess at what happened to Red Flight during the engagement, but their position as the trailing flight in the low section of the squadron formation left them most vulnerable, and longest in the enemy's line of fire.

However the day's activities were not all completed. Colonel McColpin, rankling under orders from higher up which kept him on the ground most of the time, had taken off shortly after the 506th on one of those solo missions of his which were carefully camouflaged in the daily operations reports.

For safety, when alone, the experienced pilot stays close to the ground. The colonel did just that, flying at about 50 feet altitude to the vicinity of Coulommiers, where he heard the radio chatter about the 506th engagement. It was hazy on the deck, but about a mile away he spotted four single-engine aircraft approaching from his right beam.

They were FW-190's-and he turned right into their attack, The enemy divided into pairs, the second pair passing over him and attacking from the left, forcing him to reverse his initial turn. As he swung around, the first element lunged at him. They kept up the attacks from alternate sides for about five passes, firing on each pass. Sweating profusely, the colonel kept reducing speed and turning sharply, until the encounter developed into a five-ship lufberry, with McColpin in the unhappy number one spot.

But the enemy still hadn't learned that the Focke Wulf couldn't turn with the P-47. Keeping at deck level throughout, Colonel McColpin made use of the tree-tops for cover. After the second circle he passed between two rows of trees just skimming through. The first enemy didn't make it, and crashed.

McColpin tightened his turn even more, reducing speed to about 120 miles per hour-almost the stalling point. The enemy were having more and more difficulty keeping in the lufberry, and after about ten more circles the positions were reversed, with the colonel squeezing around onto the tail of the last German. Just as McColpin got his gunsight slightly ahead of the Focke Wulf, the second enemy in the lufberry did a half snap-roll, stalling out of the turn and crashing.

Immediately the German in the colonel's sights did the same thing, perhaps because of prop-wash or the explosion, snapping over on his back and into the ground.

Somewhere during the encounter the colonel lost track of the fourth enemy aircraft. After the two successive crashes, he discovered there were no more 190's in sight, so he put on full power and headed back to A-5. During the entire engagement he never fired a shot-one of the strangest air incidents of the war.

Three uneventful squadron missions in worsening weather concluded the day's operations, and the following day only two quiet medium escort missions in squadron strength were flown. Poor weather lingered, and the calls for fighter support grew less urgent as the enemy streamed back across northern France. The group sat idle for three days, while Patton's Third Army drove south of Paris, crossed the Seine near Melun, and sped through the Marne battlefields of the other World War. Through Reims they drove, through Metz and Nancy, and patrols even touched the Siegfried Line and returned with reports of only slight resistance.

The Battle of France was won. In a scant week, the swift rush of the First Army and the British Second to the northeast carried all the way to Brussels. Near Mons in Belgium the Allies sped by large numbers of German troops in a spectacular neck and neck race. The movement was so swift and so great that the 404th no longer could perform its tactical support function from Normandy.

Four days after the Third Army tanks and infantry had rolled over and beyond the area, advance parties from the 404th moved 240 miles by road to a new base of operations at Bretigny-sur-Orge, about 15 miles south of Paris, near Melun. The site was until recently a Luftwaffe installation, with hard-surfaced runways, which our high command designated as A-48. The first personnel hit A-48 the evening of August 28, and got their first look at what American air power had done to German air power on the ground.

For the last few days of August, while the move was being completed, the planes remained at A-5. The month of August had seen the group's targets move more than 200 miles away. It had become necessary to use belly tanks on every mission, and even so equipped, it was not possible to stay in the target areas for any profitable length of time. The 404th, which had been immediately behind the front lines, was now in the Communications Zone-and there was some tongue-in-cheek talk of "putting in for transfer to an active theater."



Cigarette rations no longer were issued free of charge to "CZ personnel". The food was dropping in quality-no more "combat rations". And the nurses who used to attend the Saturday night parties had moved up with their hospitals. Things were becoming tedious. So—

Goodbye to Chippelle and St. Martin de Blagny, to mud-and-matting taxi-strips, to white fiery Calvados (the "eau de vie" of the apple) and flaming watery cognac (the "eau de vie" of the grape), to flak fragments dropping in the orchards at night, to "Bed Check Charlie", to A-5, and liberated Normandy . . .

## Chapter Eight

### WAR OF MOVEMENT

More than any other, September was a month of moves for the 404th Fighter Group. The first three days of the month, the rear echelon was still moving up from Strip A-5 in Normandy to A-48 at Bretigny. The second week of the month, from the 11th to the 17th, the group was on the road again, this time from Bretigny to A-68 at Juvincourt, near Reims. During the last week of the month came another shift, this time northward from Juvincourt to A-92 at St. Trond, in Belgium.

Four different operational bases, 600 miles of ground covered, and we were just barely maintaining our position behind the hustling' infantry and tanks. At the end of the month we were still 37 miles away from the nearest German panzer grenadier in Aachen.

After the restricted horizons of Normandy, the broad plateau at Bretigny with its vast stretch of open sky, beautiful sunrises and sunsets, and clear, glistening Fall moon, was an impressive contrast. The field, laid out with two separate concrete runways, unconnected and at right angles to each other, had been well worked over by the Allied bomber commands. Covered revetments that had once housed Ju-88's had only the concrete pavement and low blast-walls remaining. Bomb-holes patched up by U. S. Engineers were visible all around the wide-circling taxi strips. A former enemy bomb-dump in a woods on the northeast side of the field, where the Group set up its operations and maintenance line was a burned-out, wild, littered area where bombs made of concrete, tiny incendiaries in large "breadbasket" containers, and conventional high explosive bombs lay strewn about. A tiny railroad track, which we later learned was a usual German airfield fixture, wandered through the woods, past revetted bomb and ammunition storage shelters.

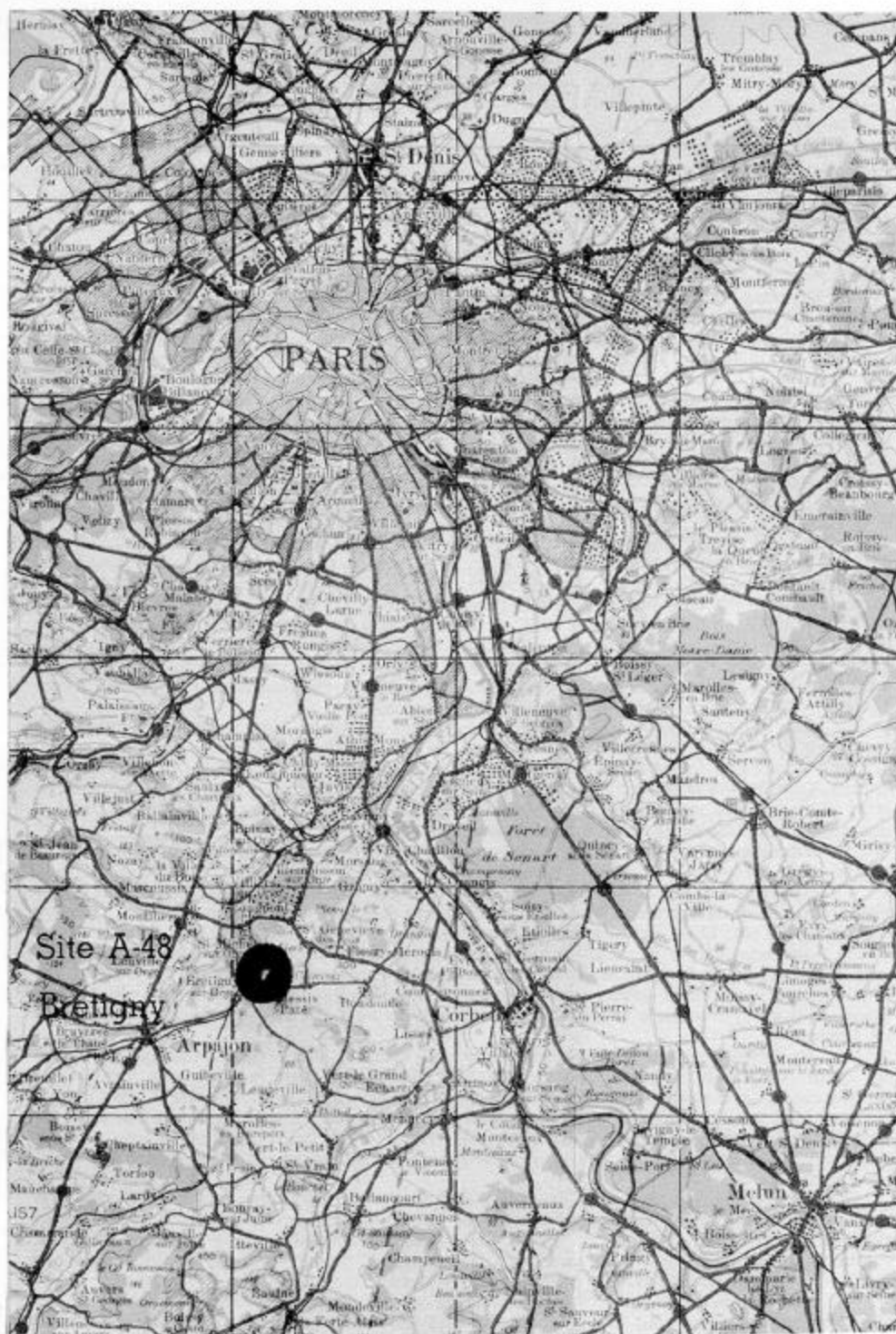
For the first time in the ETO the group shared a field with others. Our neighbors were the 365th (P-47) Fighter Group, which occupied the south and southwest sides of the field, where the only serviceable buildings still stood.

Fair examples of German skill at camouflage were two or three large hangars on the west side of the field, built in a small clump of trees, and so decorated with a mottled green arrangement of paint and nets that even as close as a quarter of a mile, their rounded roofs looked like small shrub-covered hills.. For all the cleverness of their construction, however, all had been partially collapsed by bomb-hits.

The enlisted men were widely dispersed off the field, and normally reached the line area by passing through a gate guarded by a U. S. MP, who stood in a wooden sentry box still bearing in faded black and gray paint the runic "SS" symbol of Hitler's Elite Guard. The officers were fully four miles away, completely off the field, in a large three story chateau. The rooms along the corridors of the building all displayed cards bearing the names and ranks of their former Luftwaffe occupants.

Facilities for operations were more primitive than ever, and before many refinements could be introduced, it was time to move again.

The small town of Bretigny 12 miles from the outskirts of Paris, had some large yards for the Paris suburban railway, which reminded many of the Long Island railroad out of New York. One curiosity of Ste. Genevieve des Bois, village on the northern edge of the Held, was a tiny Russian Orthodox church, painted in stark white and bright blue, with a typical Byzantine dome. After the completely rural environment of Normandy, the proximity of even small towns was a welcome change. But the great treat of course was Paris—and many members of the Group were able to visit the city less than a week after its liberation.



Scale 1 Inch to 3.945 Miles, or 1.014 Inches to 4 Miles.

Miles 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Kilometers 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 Centimetre to 2.5 Kilometres

Up from Bretigny through the Porte d'Orleans or the Porte de Choisy and onto the great boulevards of Paris. The bicycle traffic-jams, the friendly girls who patted you on the cheek in the evening and said, "N'avez vous pas une mademoiselle?", the people from urchins to matrons who offered you 100 francs for your American cigarettes, the kids around the Eiffel Tower who sidled up to you offering dark bottles hidden in paper bags and stole the K-rations out of your jeep when your back was turned—these were our common experiences.

Most of us, too, saw the Tour Eiffel, and the Arc de Triomphe, and Notre Dame. And drank champagne in the sidewalk cafes on the Boulevard Hausmann, looking curiously at the familiar red-and-white signs, "Buvez Coca-Cola", searched earnestly and in vain for the ancient castle-like jail, long since torn down, which gave the Place de la Bastille its name. Or bought postcards and perfume and women's clothing.

"But there is nothing," the salesladies would apologize. "The Germans did not shop and choose like you; they wanted this -and-this -and-this -and-this. And we did not want to sell to them at all, but they would take everything. Of course they could; they made all their own money."

We all saw the signs, the frantically happy banners and drapes, "Welcome to our Liberators", and gazed curiously at the few traces of battle, incongruous in this monument to civilization. In our minds we associated real down-to-earth infantry war with grass and mud, hedgerow and fields; but here in the heart of the city were trucks run slantwise into the curb, engines smashed and wheels removed; a concrete sentry shelter at a prominent corner, cracked and toppled over; a Mark V Panther tank in one of the great squares, immobile with a shattered track.

("When the Germans came here, we thought they had many vehicles," said the elderly man in the beret, who accepted your offer of champagne with such gracious hesitancy. "Then your army came, and it was as if they had had nothing,").

A few of us saw the golden Invalides, and the white Pantheon, the gardens of Luxembourg, the Latin Quarter, the Bois de Boulogne. And a very few wandered up to the height of Montmartre, stood in front of the beautiful Byzantine Basilica of the Sacred Heart, looked across the spreading city from the spot where Ste. Genevieve had watched the flaming city sacked by the Huns, 1,000 years and 100 wars ago.

Between social missions to this beautiful city, the Group managed to get in a few combat missions too. September 3rd. the first planes landed at A-48, but operations for the month actually began September 1st when Major Joe Sherwood led a 508th squadron mission against targets near the Forest of Compiègne, site of the famous railway car where the Germans signed the armistice ending World War I.

Jo-Jo, with only three of his 12 planes bombed up, answered a call for assistance by "Quickdive" of the 5th Armored Division, who asked for "two squadrons" on his target. "Quickdive" was anxious about enemy artillery in the eastern section of the forest, about six miles southeast of the city of Compiègne.

"The guns were hidden in the woods, and the tanks marked them with white smoke," Sherwood said. "We dropped right on the mark, and saw a solid sheet of flame and black smoke boiling up, from four direct hits and two near-misses.

"We pulled up and told 'em we had hit the guns. The tanks said: 'Good, have you got any more bombs?' We told 'em that was all we had, but we could strafe.

"They said, 'Call your ground control and tell them to send us another squadron in a hurry. Wait a minute.' I called Sweepstakes and asked for another squadron with bombs, and then the tanks called back, 'All right, you can strafe about 200 yards north of where you bombed.'

"We gave the area north of the guns a thorough strafing, going in line abreast to cover a wider area. Something blew up in the woods and started burning. When we pulled up I asked if there was anything else. The tank said, 'Yes, call your ground control and tell them to cancel that other squadron. You've got them on the run and we're taking over. Good show! "

As Sherwood's formation was leaving the area, Capt. Ed Pounds heard the tanks talking to a second squadron of Thunderbolts coming into the area:

" We don't need you now. Granite squadron did a wonderful job of it. They ran 'em out of the woods, and now we've got our artillery on 'em."

The 507th followed with an uneventful patrol to the Compiègne area without finding suitable targets, but the 506th caught some of the straggling enemy vehicular columns further north, across the Belgian border near Mons, accounting for some two dozen trucks and three armored vehicles. Ed Selkregg led the 508th on the final mission of the day, an NRO (No Results Observed) job on a wooded patch, also near Mons.

The spread between the targets attacked illustrated the fluidity of the front. From Compiègne, where the early missions traveled, to Mons, is a distance of about 100 miles, due northeast, along the enemy line of flight.

The following day was spent on the ground, and September 3rd the planes moved up to Bretigny. the first two missions starting from A-5 and landing at A-48.

Jo-Jo Sherwood led 12 508th ships on the first, working again with "Quickdive" of the 5th Armored-but so fast was the ground advance, that the target was near Cambrai in Flanders—50 miles or more beyond "Quickdive's" position of two days earlier, The squadron bombed a string of moundlike objects reported as camouflaged vehicles, and produced satisfactory explosions and: fires.

"Lad" Lutman took the 507th out on the second mission of the day, beating up a wooded area near Arras, northwest, of Cambrai.

The first mission to take off from A-48 was a 12-ship "Pintail" formation led by George McLaughlin, shifting abruptly from the German retreat toward Belgium to hit a column fleeing before the Third Army, south of Reims and some 65 miles due east of Bretigny.

Just as abruptly the Group assignments shifted back to the flight through Flanders, and the final six missions had a field day against enemy columns from Douai, north of Cambrai, to Brussels and Louvain, some 60 miles further northeast.

Jo-Jo Sherwood again, and the 508th, trounced a column of horse-drawn vehicles. Howard "Skin" Galbreath and the 507th wiped out ten motor vehicles. Major Harold Shook and the 506th, without bombs, strafed and destroyed 19 trucks, three tanks and a half-track, and spotted our troops deployed around Mons.

"Little Caesar" Moon led a bombless "Granite" squadron mission which found lush targets on the road-net between Brussels, Louvain and Namur on the Meuse, claiming destruction of some 60 horse-carts, wagons and other vehicles. "Speedy". Bealle led the 506th out to the same area and splattered some 20 trucks and seven horse-drawn vehicles. And Capt. James A. "Hoss" Mullins wound up activities for the day with the 507th, about seven o'clock in the evening, knocking off 15 trucks, and 40 horse-drawn vehicles with machine gun fire between Mons and Brussels.

Thus the day, destined to be the most active of the month for the Group, involved the completion of nine missions under severe operating handicaps in the midst of a move, with only an advance party of ground personnel at A-48, and the rest of the Group in transit from Normandy.

Already operating near the limit of safe operating range, the Group ran six missions September 4th, opening with three strafing assignments over the road-net leading eastward out of Brussels. Major Harold Shook, first off with the 506th, found some scattered tank and truck targets and claimed destruction of nine vehicles. Jo-Jo Sherwood and the 508th followed, but were sidetracked by a call from "Bronco" reporting enemy troops and transport in northern Flanders, near Arras, and found nothing to shoot up. Major Clay Tice and the 507th then probed deep to the east in the vicinity of Huy on the Meuse, and caught a lot of traffic in the Meuse valley. Squadron claims were a pair of tanks, five trucks, a horse-drawn field-gun and some 30 horse-drawn wagons destroyed or damaged.

Both "Pintail" and "Crocus" squadrons caught intense flak, which eventually cost the 507th a plane. Lieut. Lew Eldredge, clunking home with severe battle-damage, finally had to abandon his plane about 25 miles southwest of Charleroi near the Franco-Belgian border, in friendly territory. He bailed out safely, waved his hand to the squadron formation circling overhead, and returned unhurt to Bretigny the following day.

Early in the evening a second round of missions was airborne, this time loaded with 500-pounders. The 507th, behind Lieut. Col. James K. Johnson, deputy Group CO, blasted the railroad yard at Namur on the Meuse; the 506th following Ollie Simpson, hit a horse convoy hidden in woods west of Brussels; and the 508th, trailing Leo Moon, repeated on another enemy concentration in the same area.

The 5th, the weather was poor enough to keep the planes grounded all day, and the 6th produced four missions, one of which was abortive because of cloud-cover over the target area.

The 508th began the day with a 12-ship run supporting the Third Armored Division, With only two aircraft carrying bombs. The four 500's were expended successfully on a pair of railroad tank cars deep in eastern Belgium, across the Meuse beyond Liege, and strafing destroyed two isolated motor vehicles. Then, on the Group's deepest tactical penetration to date, mission leader Leo Moon spotted a long convoy of assorted vehicles on the main highway from Liege to Aachen, without the ammunition or the gas to attack them. He reported the target to the Ninth TAC controller, and late in the afternoon, another 508th formation worked over part of the convoy with good effect.

"Speedy" Bealle conducted the 506th on the second attack of the day, again with only two planes bombed up, and again far east of Liege. The destruction included a locomotive, nine motor vehicles and two tanks, all in the vicinity of Verviers, within 15 miles of the German border.

A 507th mission to dive-bomb an enemy artillery position in an old fortress at Dinant, on a cliff overlooking the Meuse valley, returned with its load when low clouds prevented an attack. Ashby Marshall led the 508th on the final mission of the day, bombing and strafing two trains, and shooting up about 15 vehicles along the Aachen highway, part of the convoy previously sighted by Major Moon.

September 6th, the first war correspondent to visit the Group arrived at Bretigny to spend the night. He was Fred MacKenzie of the Buffalo Evening News, and was particularly interested in Col. McColpin, the only home-town Buffalo fighter group commander in the ETO. The colonel, who normally turned a rather cold eye on publicity, warmed up to Fred and provided him with an excellent interview.

The Group was inactive the seventh, but jumped back into action with six missions the following day. The initial assignment was a complete shift in direction-to the south. The task-patrolling the great gap on the southern flank of the Third Army to prevent the escape of some 20,000 enemy troops left behind in southwest France. The first two missions, by the 508th and 506th, ran into an almost solid overcast and had to return without locating any targets, but the third mission, led by "Hoss" Mullins of the 507th, got into the Loire Valley to shoot up two trains, and more than 20 vehicles in the Bourges area, about 100, miles south of Paris.

TAC abruptly switched the Group north again, and Major Moon and the 508th became the first in the Group to attack targets in Germany. The 16-ship formation, with 12 planes carrying bombs, traveled in the late

afternoon to Aachen, and plastered the nearby marshalling yards, destroying or damaging some 40 freight cars and nine locomotives. The first close look at Germany was interesting, revealing plenty of rail-targets in the marshalling yards of the Rhineland, and factories puffing smoke and apparently in full operation at Eschweiler and Stolberg, east of Aachen.

"Little Caesar" with mock bravado scoffed at the quantity of heavy and light flak fired at the formation, commenting that those "silly so-and-so's should get some more training before they waste all their ammunition." But the enemy barrage was all too effective, knocking out of the sky a young newcomer, Second Lieut. William R. Hardin. No one saw him go down, but he failed to return from the mission and never was heard from again.

The rail targets in the Aachen area looked so good that the final two missions of the day both returned there. Harold Shook and the 506th knocked out at least two locomotives, strafed a string of 35 freight cars, and got eight bombs into a yard full of "goods wagons". The 12-ship formation then knocked the steam out of three more locomotives at Eupen in Belgium, ten miles south of Aachen.

Clay Tice and the 507th then concluded the Aachen rail-strike, starting large explosions and fires in a yard on the southeast side of the city with 18 500-pound bombs, about seven o'clock in the evening.

Each squadron managed one mission apiece the following day with good effect, again against rail targets in the area between Aachen and Cologne on the Rhine.

George McLaughlin led an 11-ship, 506th Squadron formation which claimed four locomotives and 16 railroad cars destroyed or damaged. The 507th followed, led by "Skin" Galbreath. Seeking to cut rails and embankments east and south of Cologne, the 12ship squadron ran into unexpected good luck. As George Hughes' flight went down on a highway junction, they caught a moving train in their gunsights.

"We were starting on our bomb run," Hughes said, "when I saw the train slowly moving up the track and crossing the highway. The locomotive was across and the cars were straddling the highway when we released our bombs at about 6,000 feet. My wingman's bombs were direct hits on the locomotive, and our other bombs exploded right in the junction, wrecking the cars and cutting the line."

Second Lieut. Jim Benton, the wingman, said: "I saw my bombs land right on top of the locomotive, and it just blew to pieces. It was considerate of them to cross the target and save us the trouble of strafing them."

The final mission of the day, late in the morning, bombed and destroyed two locomotives and more than 10 oil tank cars, at the junction town of Julich, west of Cologne. It was a 508th show, led by Capt. Ernest "Tibbo" Tibbets.

Luciano Herrera pulled a disappearing act with a German locomotive.

"I got a direct hit on a Y just south of the town where I saw a locomotive sitting," he said. "When I pulled away there was no locomotive left there."

Oil fires blazed up in several places along the tracks as the tankers ignited from direct hits and near misses.

Even the auxiliary gas tanks came into use. "I got a direct hit on a railroad track with my belly tank when I released it," Bill Johns observed. And Don Willoughby recorded this classic remark: "If that was 'midnight oil' in those tank cars, it'll be a dark night in Julich tonight."

But the attacks were only a warm-up for September 10th. one of the Group's most effective operational days. Its activities that day against enemy rail transportation to the rear of the Siegfried Line won the Group its

Presidential Unit Citation. The objective was clear enough-to cut off enemy rail supplies and reinforcements, and isolate the Westwall for easier reduction by our ground troops. The missions went like this:

The three squadrons got off together shortly before 8 A. M. with the 508th providing top cover. They worked from Aachen north and east over the Cologne plain, bombed up flights of the 506th and 507th each picking separate targets. Net claims from the six separate dive-bombing runs were three locomotives and 50 freight cars destroyed or damaged, hits along two other trains, and eight rail-cuts.

The entire group was up again shortly after noon, with the 506th flying top cover. Working further south over the Cologne plain in the vicinity of the Euskirchen rail center, the dive-bombing 507th and 508th accounted for nine locomotives and 145 railroad cars destroyed or damaged, and 12 rail cuts.

The third and final group mission of the day got off about 5 P. M. with top cover reduced to six aircraft because of the lack of German air opposition. The bombed-up flights spread their attack over a wider area, executing 13 separate strikes from the vicinity of Duren and the western reaches of Cologne as far south as Trier, 70 miles from Duren.

The targets also covered a wider variety, including two bridges, a round-house and an unlucky cluster of five horse-drawn vehicles, in addition to 13 locomotives and 116 railroad cars destroyed or damaged and five rail cuts.

So in the short space of 12 hours the Group prowled over a strip of enemy territory 100 miles broad, scored 25 rail-cuts in the important network of lines both feeding the enemy troops concentrated around Aachen and providing lateral communications along the whole Ardennes front, and destroyed or damaged 25 precious locomotives and 311 railroad cars. Only enemy retaliation was moderate flak damage to one of our T-bolts.

The 11th was a day of rest, and the 12th provided a series of uneventful escort and patrol flights until late in the day, when the 507th was called on for the first close support work in nearly a week.

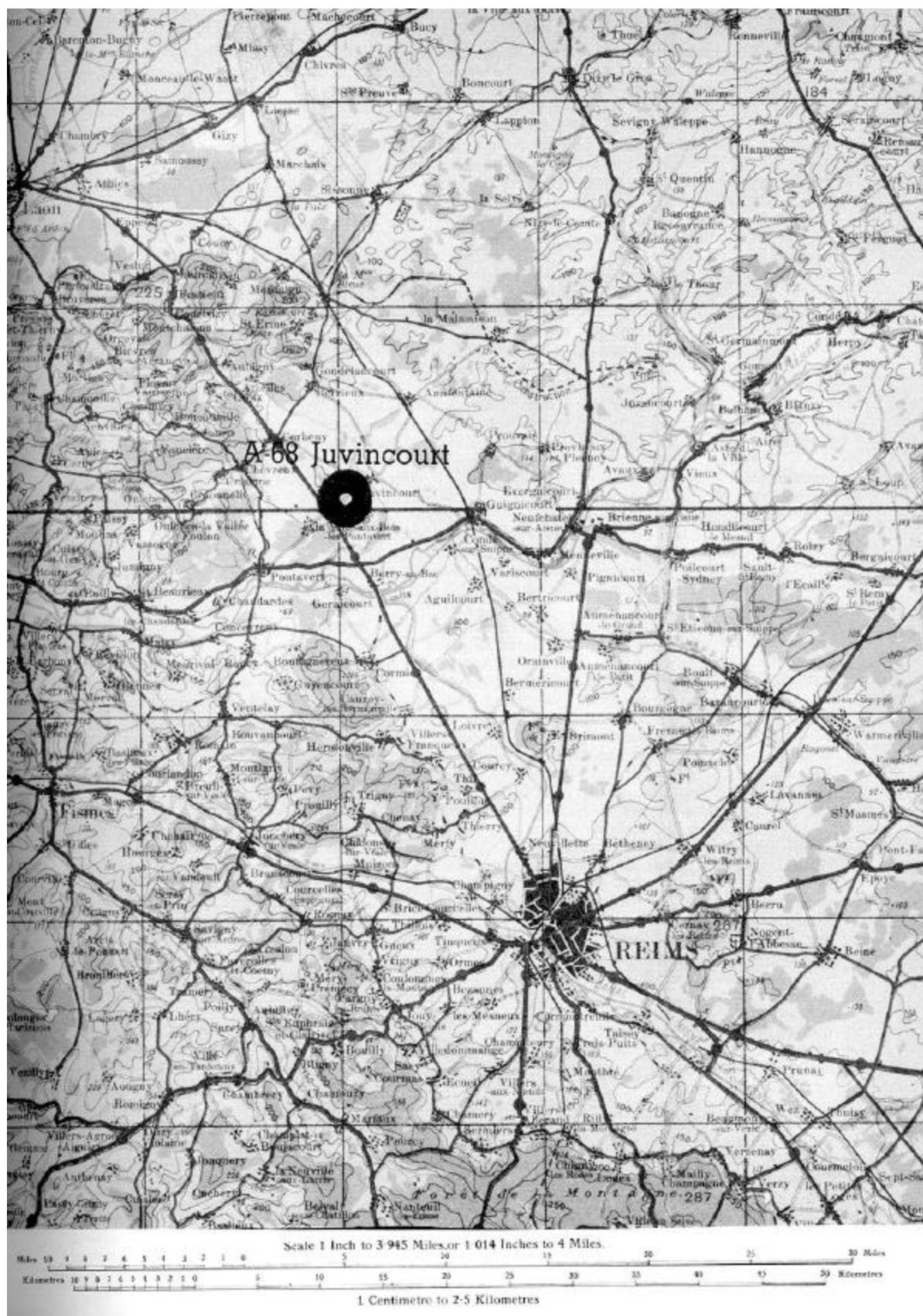
The call came from the First Infantry Division, near Aachen, and it signalled the end of the great sweep through France. Along the natural water barriers of the Moselle, the Meuse and the Albert Canal the enemy was regrouping and his resistance stiffening. After plunging across Belgium, through a town named St. Trond and on past Liege, the First Army ground to a stop on stubborn defenses outside Aachen. On other fronts the enemy left diehard garrisons in the ports of Brest, LaHavre, Boulogne, Calais and Dunkirk; the British and Canadians seized Antwerp with its port facilities intact, and Americans filtered through the Ardennes to the German border.

For the first time since the St. Lo breakthrough, a "front" was forming, south along the Meuse to Liege, with an armor-infantry finger poked at Aachen, then through the Ardennes forests and hills to Luxembourg city, which was in our hands.

From the American wedge approaching Aachen came the call for support answered by Maj. Clay Tice and the 507th. Twelve ships, with two bombed up, worked around Aachen and bombed and strafed scattered enemy road traffic, claiming hits on 12 vehicles.

Only other mission of note was a series of three four-ship patrols run by the 508th over the heart of Paris-over the Champs Elysees and Arc de Triomphe, to guard against surprises while Allied troops marched in massed formation in a Paris victory parade. Three other squadron-strength missions during the day provided escort for B-26's and A-20's, without incident.





Meanwhile, with the targets 200 miles from Bretigny advance echelons began the move from Bretigny to a new base 75 miles nearer to Germany-site A-68 at Juvincourt, near Reims. But as we moved we knew that A-68 would be as brief a stop as Bretigny, with the First Army still 125 miles ahead of us too far away for efficient close support.

As usual on the road, the jeeps and weapons carriers and bomb trucks became strung out en route, some of the more enterprising who had maps travelling by themselves. The main body took a detour through the suburbs of Paris because of the destroyed bridges across the Seine at Corbeil, the nearest crossing place. Others turned south to Melun, thence northeastward through the beautiful rolling valley of the Marne, crossing the river at historic Chateau Thierry with a stop at the Memorial to the Fourth U. S. Marines. Then on across the Aisne northwest of Reims, and into Juvincourt.

It looked like a farm village; big barns on the main street mingling with occasional small grey stone houses, a stone church, and a long yellow building, the "Mairie" or Town Hall Large but faded lettering over some of the buildings on the main street identified the butcher, the baker and the grocer- "Charcuterie", "Boulangerie", "Epicerie". The street itself was pitted and gravelly with the powdery stones and debris of nearby bomb-blasts. There were no craters in the street itself, but splintered roofs, scattered lumber and rocks that once were walls were visible to the right and left, down little side alleys and in the spaces between buildings.

The first 404th jeep found no traffic in the town. Windows were either boarded up or broken out. Four people sat by a dingy corner shack and looked at the jeep coldly, without expression-a woman in a colorless dress, two men in shabby trousers, jackets and caps, and a girl about 14. The Americans waited for the expected waves, then finally waved themselves. The girl raised one hand limply and dropped it. But for one more man, walking slowly down a side street, his back to the jeep, a box in his right hand, there, was no one else in sight.

Robert Villet gave some indication of the reasons behind the unenthusiastic reception. He was a short young Frenchman, about 25, wore dusty, worn clothes and a cap. He was a butcher in town, he said. They had an association of butchers, he said, from the surrounding towns, and they had one day a week allotted for visiting and serving each town. They could only get 80 grams of meat per week for one person (about 2 2/3 ounces), he said, but he hoped things would be improving a little now.

He related how the Germans had impressed him to work on fortifications around Soissons, how finally he had run away. He was picked up and beaten, and sent to prison in Laon for a month early in 1944. They were about to ship him into Germany for forced labor, but he escaped again, remaining hidden until the American Army came.

Many people were moved out of town to make room for Luftwaffe personnel, he said.

"But we were very afraid of the American planes," he added. "Particularly the ones with the two fuselages. They came over one day to hit the bridge three kilometers away at Berry-au-Bac, and the bombs hit all through town. Here I have had five relatives killed. Sometimes the warning would come when the planes already were overhead, and the Germans had all the shelters."

Finally as the G. I.s began to make friends by "infiltration" in the evening, people began drifting back into town, and sometimes you could see a smile. Then one Sunday, down the main street came the old village padre, with a crowd all dressed up in Sunday clothes. He took over his rectory and church which had been used exclusively during our stay by Father Van Garsse, Group Catholic Chaplain. On a small memorial to the dead of World War I appeared a new wreath and a string of tiny "Flags of the Allies". Never did these quiet people of the champagne country approach the enthusiastic joy of the Parisians over our presence, but at least by the time we moved on, fear and apathy were gone, and friendship was established.

The Group occupied the eastern side of the field, with little but ruins to operate from. Again we shared the field with the 365th Fighter Group, and again they copped the pick of the inhabitable buildings, a whole series of camouflaged barracks and hangars on the west side of the field. Our Group officers, however, located a few undamaged German barracks built right in the town of Juvincourt, and converted them into satisfactory shelter,

September 13, with the Group personnel split between Bretigny and Juvincourt, the 404th completed two missions in midmorning and early afternoon from A-48, in spite of miserable weather over the target area. The 506th pounded two gun positions, and the 507th, with little visible on the ground through the haze, dumped its load on a couple of trucks. Both squadrons were supporting the initial probes of the Third Armored Division into the Siegfried Line, hooking south and east around Aachen.

In spite of the weather, the air support had an appreciable effect, reflected directly in the ground situation. The First Army cracked the Siegfried Line south of Aachen in its first assault, and the Third Armored tanks pushed eastward to Stolberg, six miles beyond the suburbs of Aachen. Stolberg remained a tough nut, however, as its defenders resisted fiercely. Southeast of Liege, most of Belgium was cleared. The Albert Canal to the north was crossed, but the enemy managed to fall behind the Scheldt Canal, the next barrier, blowing all bridges.

Bad weather scrubbed all missions the 14th and gave the Group a chance to complete its move. The first missions from A-68 were run the 15th, with poor weather obscuring targets on the Cologne plain and forcing the Group to work further south. After two weather reconnaissance flights, the 506th dispatched 10 aircraft which were unable to locate targets requested by the 28th Infantry and Fifth Armored Divisions and finally bombed a train within a few miles of Trier.

The 507th with 11 planes wound up the day by picking out a railroad yard at Mayen, west of Koblenz, and plastering about 25 freight cars, after cloud cover blotted out a couple of excellent-sounding targets called in by the ground troops.

High points of a four-mission day September 16th were an encounter with enemy aircraft by seven ships of the 507th, and a highly successful strike against enemy tanks by the 508th.

About six o'clock in the evening, "Skin" Galbreath had the 507th formation out on an armed recce from Aachen to Koln. Duane Int-Hout's second flight acted as cover while Galbreath's flight bombed and strafed three buildings in the northern outskirts of Aachen, to which they had been directed by ground control, and three personnel-carriers heading northeast out of the city. The lead flight was reforming when the top cover ran onto a red-hot dog-fight between more than forty FW-190's and P-38's.

It all started with Sherman Crocker, who was flying the second element in Int-Hout's flight alone because his wingman aborted with mechanical trouble.

"We were flying top cover at 13,000 feet," Crocker told us after the engagement. "I spotted two FW-190's 500 feet overhead and we chased them up into the sun. I looked back to clear my tail and saw a 190 attacking a P-38. I called Int-Hout and peeled off after it. I saw my tracers passing all around the Focke-Wulf as it broke away. I chased it down firing at long range, and broke away in a climb to avoid collision with another ship firing below me. I climbed up to join my flight and attacked an element of two 190's. They tried to turn as I fired a deflection at the one on the left. The one on the right did a split-ess, and I followed my first target. I was firing at him as he leveled off, and there was an explosion, and the next thing I knew, I was flying right through his debris, with oil covering my windshield.

"I saw the pilot bail out and the plane crash. I climbed back up a few thousand feet and attacked another FW-190, 500 feet below me.

"I heard a big explosion and thought I'd been hit in the engine, but I checked my instruments and I was all right, and found out it was the FW blowing up right under me. I was separated from my flight and had only 15 rounds of ammunition left in one gun, so I had to pass up several more dogfights I saw around the sky and find my way back home."

This was Crocker's first encounter with enemy aircraft. Meanwhile, without his knowledge, another 190 made a pass at him from the rear and was shot down by Int-Hout, who also went on to make a double kill.

"We were climbing up toward some bandits in the sun," Int-Hout said. "At 18,000 feet Crocker called me and broke down and to the right on an FW-190 which was attacking a P-38. I turned right to cover him, and as I did so a second FW made a pass at him. I broke down and closed with the enemy as he rolled to make what seemed to be a second pass on Crocker. I fired a one-to-two-second "test" burst at about 70 degrees deflection.

"The tracer entered his cockpit. I followed the 190 down as it trailed white vapor, and saw it snap into a road. At about 3,000 feet I sighted a second one diving to the deck, turned into him and chased him for five to seven minutes, closing in on him as he dodged along the tree tops. Then I got an assist from a high tension wire that forced him to pull up, and as he dove down again I got him with a two-to-three-second burst from dead astern. He snapped down into a valley, and I saw an explosion and orange and black smoke about half way up the hill on the far side."

Major Galbreath's flight assembled in time to get in on the tail end of the fight, and Lieuts. Yeargin and Cox, his second element, scored damaging hits on two more FW190's.

Major Joe Sherwood and the 508th, up shortly after the 507th, received an urgent call for help from "Bronco" of the Third Armored. Swinging east of Aachen, they found an enemy tank formation attacking the point of our deepest penetration into Germany near Stolberg. Two aircraft carrying bombs carried out a dive-bombing attack while the other six ships in the formation strafed. After working back and forth over roads and fields and four tanks partially hidden in a gravel pit, the squadron left with claims of ten destroyed and ten damaged. The panzer attack fizzled and died.

The next day saw 51 aircraft dispatched on five missions, chiefly reconnoitering from Aachen east to the Rhine. Ashby Marshall led 12 ships of the 508th in support of the First and Ninth Infantry Divisions, bombing out a gun position and repeatedly strafing concealed enemy troop positions south of Eschweiler, in the vicinity of the previous day's tank attack. Ground controller "Booty" reported the evacuation of the area by the enemy after the strafing.

September 18th only two 404th planes were airborne on a weather recce. Bad weather cancelled all combat missions.

Meanwhile, in a tremendous operation supporting the British push north, code named "Market", the newly-formed Allied Airborne Army under General Lewis Brereton, moved up from command of the Ninth Air Force, dropped the 101st U. S. Airborne Division near Eindhoven, the 82nd near Nijmegen, and a British division near Arnheim on the Lower Rhine, far to the north of our nearest ground troops.

Objective was to clear the last water barriers before the plains of northwest Germany, on the flank of the Siegfried Line. During the days that followed, the enemy successfully regrouped against this new threat, surrounding the "Red Devils" at Arnheim, and slowing down the drive of British infantry, who were held at Nijmegen, ten miles from the encircled paratroopers.

After a week's bitter fighting, remnants of the First British Airborne Division had to fight their way back from Arnheim, past superior forces of enemy SS panzer troops and parachute infantry.

To the south on the American front, Aachen still held out, although U. S. patrols were in the city. First Army progress was slow to the north of Aachen, through Siegfried Line defenses. Elsewhere on our front

actions were local in character, and the lines were freezing with the coming of autumn. Meanwhile in central France, the Seventh Army from the Mediterranean theater joined with Patton's Third Army to form a continuous battle-line from Switzerland to the North Sea.

The 404th became involved in Operation "Market" September 19th, when 50 aircraft were dispatched to provide fighter and anti-flak support for the airborne landings in Holland. The planes were up at 1350 hours, led by Lieut. Col. James K. Johnson, but were recalled within half an hour by "Sweepstakes" because of poor weather, ten-tenths clouds up to 7,000 feet.

On the 20<sup>th</sup>, Lieut. Col. Leo C. Moon led 45 planes on a repeat mission supporting Operation "Market", 16 carrying bombs to drop on enemy flak and ground artillery positions harassing our troop-carriers and personnel. Cloud cover continued thick, ranging from two-tenths to ten-tenths over the landing areas, and the planes returned after an hour of uneventful patrolling. Only observation was an exploding plane, believed to be a C-47, near Nijmegen.

With weather still bad to the north on the 21st, TAC switched group operations far to the southeast over Luxembourg and the German Saar. Eight squadron missions were dispatched, ranging as far as Trier due east of our position at Juvin-court-in support of the Fifth Armored Division. They strafed enemy personnel, tanks and trucks, and dive-bombed concealed artillery positions marked by U. S. smoke shells, railroad tracks, and rolling stock. Twice the 507th went after a railroad tunnel where ground control reported a heavy railway gun was taking shelter between shots. The squadron closed one end of the tunnel on the first mission, and came back on the second with 16 ships, each carrying a full load of three bombs apiece, to close the other end, near Echternach.

Three armed reces were ordered September 22nd. one in group strength, one by the 506th alone, and the last the 507th and 508th combined. They worked up and down the Rhine from the Ruhr to Bonn, and to considerable depth across the river east of Koln. The strikes were very effective against rail targets, with claims of, three locomotives and 11 freight cars destroyed, and four locomotives and 65 "goods wagons" damaged. Three of our aircraft received minor flak hits.

Bad weather followed our strikes southward the next day, limiting the 404th effort to two missions, only one of which was able to get in for an attack. Col. Moon and 12 508th ships worked with "Burner" of the Fifth Armored near Echternach again, bombing and strafing concealed enemy transport and troop concentrations, a string of camouflaged vehicles and a trio of flak guns. They observed what apparently were enemy machines carrying our red panels just inside the German border north of Trier.

Following two days of inactivity, the group got two missions off the 26th, bombing rail junctions in the Roer Valley east of Aachen, and attacking barge traffic in the Rhine. That night orders arrived for our third move of the month, from Juvin-court to a former German night-fighter base at St. Trond in Belgium, newly designated as Site A-92.

Advance parties left immediately the next day, without causing any interruption in normal air operations. Three squadron missions were dispatched, but were prevented from executing their assigned reconnaissance over the Cologne plain by a heavy overcast. One formation returned with its bombs, while the other two dumped their loads without observable results on concealed enemy positions in woods between Stolberg and Eschweiler.

On the 28th occurred one of the most amazing personal exploits in Air Force history. The hero was a second lieutenant who had flown 39 missions- without shooting down an enemy aircraft-but who became an ace in twenty taut minutes of aerial combat late in the afternoon of this early Fall day. He was John W. Wainwright of the 508th.

Wainwright was flying Tail-end Charlie on the second and last mission of the day, a Group fighter sweep over Holland where enemy fighters and dive-bombers had been harassing our troops seeking to hold their perilous bridgehead across the Dutch Rhine.

The 508th was high squadron in the Group at 23,000 feet, when enemy aircraft bounced White Flight, two miles from Wainwright in the squadron's open battle formation. As Wainwright's Blue Flight swung to help, they spotted a lone plane off to their left. The flight leader immediately chased the new enemy aircraft, who turned out to be a decoy. As Blue Flight followed the stooge, Wainwright saw three Me-109's diving down out of the sun.

Without time to call his leader, the 20-year-old Texan turned toward the enemy trio alone, pulling up sharply and firing head on. One of the enemy began to smoke, and exploded off his left wing. So sharp was Wainwright's pull-up that his P-47 slowed down to stalling speed, and either the explosion or the enemy's prop-wash sent him into a 5,000 foot spin.

The tall youngster recovered at, 18,000 feet to find himself looking through his reflector-sight at another 109 in a flat spin, apparently the original decoy-plane. Wainwright fired; the enemy exploded.

Then Wainwright started looking for his flight leader, circling twice and calling over his radio without getting an answer. He looked around and saw two more Messerschmitts diving on his tail. He tried to outmaneuver them by making a tight turn and immediately went into another spin, as the enemy aircraft passed him on either side. He chopped his throttle for a spin-recovery, and found himself pointing in the general direction of the 109's. Although well within range, he reported that he was too nervous to hold his sights on the enemy, and simply sprayed bullets wildly after them.

It isn't clear whether they were trying to take evasive action from his fire, or simply went out of control in their power-dives, but the Messerschmitts ran together and exploded into a shower of debris. Still diving after them, Wainwright pulled out very fast at full throttle. His head grew numb and he blacked out. When he recovered consciousness he was flying at 6,000 feet.

He tried to call his flight leader again, without results, so he headed for the clouds immediately below and tried to pick up a safe course heading to return home. After several minutes of flying blind through the clouds, he discovered that the strain of the dive and blacking out had left him so that he couldn't read his instruments properly. He climbed back up out of the clouds for a look-see, and after essing to clear his tail, saw two more Messerschmitts coming after him and closing fast.

When they came within gun-range Wainwright made a sharp left turn and pointed his nose at the nearest cloud formation. Looking around he saw gun flashes and smoke spurts coming from both enemy planes. He racked the Thunderbolt in tighter, and took what he said he thought was going to be his last look. To his surprise, there was a collision. The smoke of an explosion was hanging in the air, and three wings were flipping end over end. He pointed his ship around to get gun-camera pictures of the wreckage, got his bearings and headed back to base.

There was plenty of excitement in 508th Intelligence when Wainwright came in and told his story. All the rest of the Group was back, and he had been almost given up for lost, after two and one-half hours in the air. He was credited with six enemy aircraft destroyed in a single engagement, while the rest of the Group, involved only briefly in the initial diving pass of the enemy, claimed another Me-109 destroyed (by Dick Arnold of the 507th) and an FW-190 and a 109 damaged (by Col. McColpin and John Ross of the 507<sup>th</sup>). The feat won for Wainwright the Distinguished Service Cross, the highest decoration awarded to any member of the Group. He won it on the personal recommendation of Hoyt S. Vandenberg, new commanding general of the Ninth, who called for the DSC as soon as word of Wainwright's achievement reached him.

The Group's final mission of the month on the 29th was anti-climax. Maj. Harold G. Shook led 35 planes to dive-bomb enemy concentrations in the woods between Stolberg and Eschweiler, marked with red

smoke by our artillery. The bombs were on the smoke; no other results could be observed. That ended operations from the Champagne country; the Group flew no missions the next two days, and completed its move to St. Trond, officially opening its new headquarters there the first of October.

## Chapter Nine

### THE WESTWALL

The road up from Juvincourt to our new station at St. Trond meandered across the rolling World War I battlefields of the Aisne valley to the Meuse gap at Mezieres, where the fall of France in World War II began. Then on northward following the Meuse through the humped-up, forested Ardennes country, beautifully wild and so much like the mountain-valleys of our own West Virginia. Just north of Givet, France was left behind for an area of gracious, park-like estates that seemed to be the summer-homes of Belgian royalty. Past bridges long since knocked down, concrete pilings now fringed with grass; past occasional concrete embrasures plastered into the sides of steep hills at bends in the road.

Through Dinant where the century-old white citadel, pocked with regular rows of cannon-ports, loomed over the small city from a tall cliff on the east bank of the river, shadowing the cathedral at its base. German guns in the old fort, you remembered, had been a 404th target September 5th but bad weather had prevented an attack.

Past the great bend of the Meuse at Namur, and on to St. Trond, which you discovered was a quiet town, with about 15,000 people, a three-spire skyline, a Carmelite monastery, a town-square, narrow side-alleys, and cobblestones.

Missed was the Reims champagne; but new treats were the ice cream-real and delicious-and beer more like the American type than anything encountered so far. The "Alken" and "Piedboeuf" brands, you discovered, had the most satisfactory beer-flavor; something called "Faro" turned out to be a peculiar, sickening sugary brew.

The base itself had belonged to the 12th Staffel of N. J. G. 1. (Night Fighter Wing One), a few of whose smashed Ju-88's and Me-110's still remained. Facilities were three crisscrossing concrete runways, only one of which was immediately usable; groups of at least three dozen large covered revetments, elaborately painted and rigged up to resemble barns and blocks of homes; one large brick-and-concrete hangar with a smashed roof; and a control tower on a three-story building, two-stories of which were dug down below the surface of the ground. The Group took the northeast side of the field, where some of the revetments remained in fairly good condition.

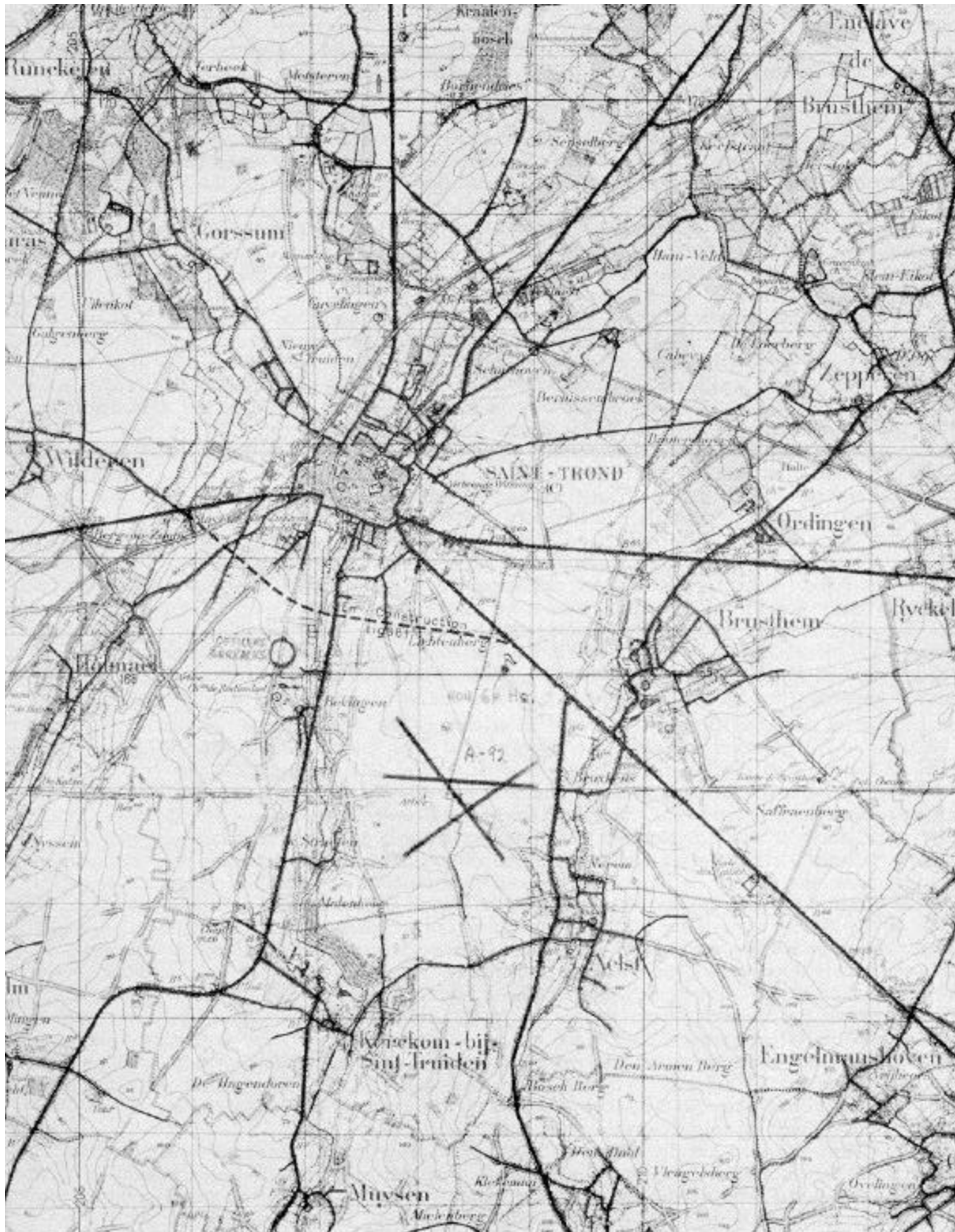
All the officers in the Group were quartered in a former Luftwaffe "community" of neat brick collegiate-looking "cottages" about a mile northwest of the field, near the tiny village of Bevingen. The buildings each had several rooms holding from two to six men, a tile bathroom, electric lights, walls a couple of feet thick, and heavy steel shutters for the windows. The officers' club and mess was in a former German mess, red brick like the rest of the community, and by far the best the Group had occupied since leaving the U. S. A. Belgian girls eventually were hired as waitresses, and the general opinion was that "we never had it so good!" A fine shower-building next to the mess-hall was made available four days a week to the enlisted men, and three days a week to the officers.

The enlisted men were quartered closer to the field, some in tents in orchards, "winter-proofed" with board sidings, and some in barracks and buildings on the edge of town.

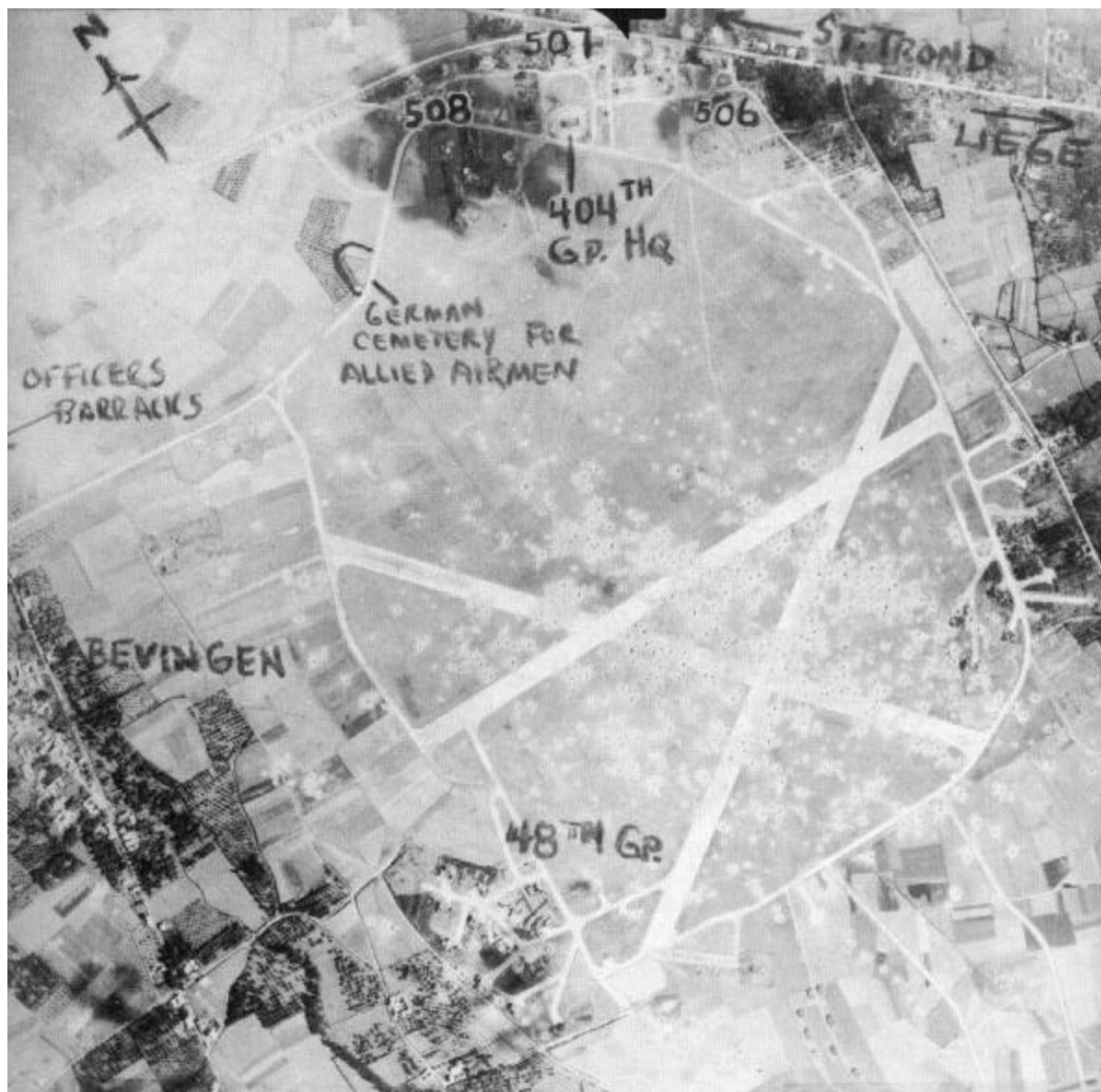
Leaving its former neighbors, the 365th Group, at Juvincourt, the Group was joined at A-92 by its old friends of the 48th Group, "mother" organization of the 404th at its activation in Meridian, Mississippi.

Among the chief beneficiaries of the new layout were "Doc Fang" (Capt. Ray Templin, Group dentist) and his patients. The Germans left behind a complete set of dental forceps, surgical tools, spatulas, drills, brushes and enough other oral gear to set up a well-equipped office.





A-92  
St. Trond



Here is A-92 as it looked before the 404th moved in. Those are Ninth Air Force B-26 craters on the field — which the Jerries used as a night-fighter base.

Marked in on the photo are the spots we took over — 506th, 507th and 508th line areas, "Function" headquarters, Bevingen, where the little Catholic church stood, the enemy cemetery for shot-down Allied fliers, and the road to the officers' area.

The north-south runway was the one we fixed up and used — the one that splits the field between the 404th and 48th Group areas.

This photo was taken by the 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Group, one month before we took over the field.

As the Group settled down for what was to be the longest rest in one place in its active history (a full six months), the first major changes in personnel began. During October the first group of 404th pilots to win "combat leave" were sent home to the U. S. A. for a well-earned rest. No special mission-count was used to determine a "tour of duty", but the senior pilots in each squadron were gradually rotated home. It turned out that the first groups rotated home averaged between 50 and 60 missions, with some exceptions; while those who received their orders later had completed 80, 90 and 100 missions.

There were important shifts in squadron commands, as the lucky pilots were returned to the "Z. I." Major Clay Tice of the 507th was relieved as squadron commander by "Skin" Galbreath, and "Hoss" Mullins became operations officer, Joe Sherwood was transferred from the 508th to the 506th to relieve Major Harold G. Shook; Lieut. Col. James K. Johnson left to assume command of the 48th Group, and Lieut. Col. Moon stepped up from the 508th to become deputy group commander. George McLaughlin then was shifted from the 506th to the 508th to replace Moon.

The 404th began operations from St. Trond October 2nd. with an uneventful fighter sweep some two hours long in the morning, deep over the plains of Westphalia, north of the Ruhr. Col. Johnson led the rail-cutting mission in Group strength in the afternoon over the lower Rhine valley, north of Cologne from the Dutch border to the river. The formation blasted the German rail-net in five places, and caught a couple of trains by strafing.

October 3rd two missions clobbered rail lines on the Cologne plains from Julich north to Munchen-Gladbach, accounting for four locomotives, six railroad flak cars and 42 "goods wagons" destroyed or damaged. The third mission of the day—the 508th led by Col. Moon—was diverted by the 29th Infantry Division ground control to attack an enemy strongpoint in the small town of Kruchen, west of Munchen-Gladbach. The squadron unloaded in a businesslike manner and posted the claim: "...one town destroyed."

The fourth mission brought its bombs back shortly before noon as the weather closed in, ending operations for the day.

After an early morning weather recce the next day, the Group dispatched 83 planes on seven separate missions, attacking individual strongholds called in by the armor and infantry along the arms of the front that swung crescent-shaped around Aachen from north to east.

On the sixth mission of the day, early in the afternoon, Maj. McLaughlin and 12 ships of the 506th were bounced by about 12 FW-190's while the lead flight still was carrying its bombs.

"Sweepstakes" warned of "bandits" while McLaughlin was down low spotting ground targets. He climbed back up to the formation and took up a northeast heading at the direction of the controller. "Sweepstakes" reported the enemy should be at nine o'clock from the squadron and somewhat higher. Almost simultaneously, McLaughlin saw them: "Bandits, nine o'clock high!" And the squadron swung left in a climbing turn to meet the enemy head-on. The enemy hit the "Blue" or top flight first as both formations split into a mass of twisting, turning, diving individual aircraft.

A P-47 chased by a FW-190 passed in front of Ivan Allen, McLaughlin's wingman. Allen broke right and took a snap-shot across the nose of the enemy, and followed him into a tight circle.. He discovered his gun-sight was out of order, so he tried to estimate the correct deflection and fired again. The tracers were behind the enemy; Allen pulled up enough to get hits on the FW-190's tail.

The German rolled and reversed his turn to the left. Allen followed, and still shooting by trial and error, pulled his tracer-stream up into the enemy's tail again. The German broke down and then pulled straight up. Allen seemed to gain on him in the climb, shot past him and corrected again, finally observing hits on the

fuselage. The FW-190 did a wing-over, leveled off as Allen kept shooting, and began to stream smoke. The cockpit canopy flew off and the pilot bailed out.

McLaughlin followed the encounter, covering Allen's tail, then saw a Focke-Wulf dropping out of a melee above him. Mac turned inside him as the German banked left and then twisted back to the right. McLaughlin began firing at long range, until the enemy suddenly pulled up into a steep climb, smoking badly, and the pilot parachuted out.

George Stovall, leading White Flight's second element, added a third victim to the squadron's score, but didn't know he'd done it until after the mission. He took a quick shot at a 190 crossing in front of him and followed it in a level turn, firing steadily, until he detected another plane tailing him. He broke off his attack, but discovered he was being followed by his own wingman. However the wingman, George Britton, saw the enemy fall smoking and burning.

Meanwhile Ted Welgoss, leading the second flight, chased three Focke-Wulfs as they dove through the squadron. Two escaped him into the clouds, but he followed the third in a shallow power dive with water injection, through a hole in the clouds down to about 6,000 feet. He opened fire, closing steadily, and the enemy burst into flames.

Behind Welgoss, his wingman, Kenneth Cobb, turned into another 190 and found himself on the enemy's tail when the German conveniently broke right. In a straight stern chase, also using water injection to overtake the enemy, Cobb fired steadily, finally observing strikes all over the fleeing Focke-Wulf, which then snapped down and began to spin violently out of control. Clint Winters, fourth man in Red Flight, also got a shot at an enemy and claimed one FW-190 damaged.

McLaughlin reformed the squadron after the brief fight and took count. Five of the enemy had gone down, but one of our men was missing-First Lieut. Rowland W. Dalberg. Others in the flight said they had seen a P-47 falling in flames at 8,000 feet. Nothing was heard of Dalberg for months, but we later learned he was a prisoner of war. He was finally returned safely to the States.

McLaughlin's victory was his fifth, bringing him up into the exclusive circle of 404th "aces" along with Col. McColpin and John Wainwright. The colonel had achieved that status by shooting down eight enemy planes as an Eagle Squadron Hurricane pilot with the R. A. F. in the early years of the war.

The Group got back to business October 6th after one day of idleness. Eighty-nine planes were dispatched on six missions supporting the Ninth Infantry Division. Principal targets were enemy front-line positions in the thick forests southeast of Stolberg, where the outer reaches of the Belgian Ardennes spread into Germany. Leaflet bombs were also assigned and were scattered to the winds over the Siegfried Line defense belt between Aachen and Julich.

On the lighter side, the boys in 507th Tech. Supply provided the diversion of the day. Staff Sgt. Ken Stewart, Sgt. Hiram Morris and Corp. Bill Penland were the chief actors in the story. Hiram was outside the supply tent, so Ken Stewart and Penland planned an ambush, crouching on either side of the entrance. Footsteps approached, and the tent flap was pushed aside.

"Leap on him!" cried Stewart in high glee. He tackled a pair of legs with canvas leggings on. But Hiram wasn't wearing leggings.

"You guys sure do play rough," said Capt. Rolland McCartney, squadron adjutant, looking down at the sprawling sergeant.

Commenting on the whole affair later, someone remarked, "But if Stewart had knocked him down and broken his leg or something, they'd never believe he hadn't done it on purpose!"

October 7th the Group got back to rail cutting again. Two missions were dispatched in Group strength which cut rails in more than 30 places in the Cologne plain railway net. The 506th and 508th participated in the final mission of the day in support of the Nineteenth Corps, banging away at enemy gun positions near Siersdorf, a tiny village west of Julich. The target was smoked by our artillery. Flak was intense and bothersome all day and six of our aircraft were damaged.

The following day 60 aircraft were airborne on close support missions, chiefly against enemy troops and gun positions in and around the village of Haaren, just north of Aachen. Some 24 tons of bombs were dropped in the village by the 404th and another six tons were laid on Vossenack, an enemy communications center deep in Hurtgen Forest, southeast of Aachen in the Ninth Infantry Division sector.

During the day the first pilot in the Group to fly 100 missions completed his "tour." He was Major Harold G. Shook, commanding officer of the 506th and it was typical of him that he took the unnecessary risk of flying on two of the day's three missions, although he already had received orders sending him home for a rest.

It was his one regret that he never had shot down an enemy plane, and he hated to stay on the ground while his boys were flying for fear they'd run into a good fight without him. In sheer flying proficiency he was regarded as the finest pilot in the Group, and if you listened to the men of the 506th talk, he was the "best-goddam-pilot-and-best-C. O. in the whole so-and-so Air Force." So far as his men were concerned, only bad luck kept him from being the "ace" of the Group.

In 100 missions he saw enemy aircraft only four or five times. Once he got on the tail of three different enemy aircraft in quick succession, but lost them when they split essed into a handy overcast.

He flew on every one of the 506th's first 50 missions, if not as squadron leader, then as wingman to "break in" some of his other pilots as mission leaders. Finally Col. McColpin told him to take it easy, so he only flew every other mission.

"I figured I had to lead these guys," he once remarked, "So I wanted to know what went on with each mission. I felt I had to know the territory they were flying over and the stuff they were running into as well as they did, so I didn't want to miss a thing."

When part of the squadron was bombed up and part top cover, Shook always handled the riskier dive-bombing assignment, until his last mission, when for the first time he flew with the top-cover flight. After he went home, other veteran pilots impressed newcomers with stories of his flying skill, and he became a kind of standard of excellence, to which others might strive but never equal. It is a tribute to his personality that he remained always a quiet-spoken, modest "pilot's pilot", who could make his airplane do things naturally and without showing off, that other pilots would have been foolhardy to attempt.

While the Group sat on the ground for the next two days, the First Army completely surrounded Aachen. October 11th the 404th began a five-day air assault on Aachen as part of a combined air-ground operation which culminated in the fall of the city October 21st.

The 507th, led by Major Galbreath, opened the day by dropping 13 leaflet bombs on the city, containing a surrender ultimatum. The 508th followed with another leaflet mission, this time over front-line troops in the German Ardennes, 25 miles southeast of Aachen, while the Allied High Command let the morning pass waiting for an answer to the ultimatum from the Aachen defenders.

Ninth TAC fighter-bombers remained Poised at their bases, bombing up, as it became apparent that Aachen would have to be taken by storm and promptly at noon,

as First Army infantry moved forward in house-to-house fighting, the 404th dispatched two dive-bombing squadrons to open the air assault. They were followed within 20 minutes by a third squadron-the 508th

Other groups hit Aachen later in the afternoon, while the entire 404th was diverted on a special mission supporting the Fourth Infantry Division, against enemy troops, near the village of Udenbreth, where the 508th had dropped- its leaflets on the morning's second mission.

Thirty-six aircraft got off the following morning, again pounding defense positions in and around Aachen. When the mission landed, operations were suspended briefly for a special event-mass presentation of decorations to members of the 404th and 48th Groups in a joint ceremony.

The guests of honor, who performed the medal-pinning, were Maj. Gen. Hoyt S. Vandenberg, Ninth Air Force commander (who three years after the war became Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force), and Brig. Gen. James W. Macauley, commanding the 70th Fighter Wing.

Honor guards of enlisted men from all three squadrons were drawn up on the hard-stand in front of the 506th hangar; Air Medal winners were lined up in platoons by squadrons and those who were to receive higher decorations formed a single line in front of the entire Group, while an informal crowd of G. I.'s and officers stood around, took pictures, and watched. General Macauley presented the Air Medals, and General Vandenberg pinned on the DFC's, Silver Stars, and Soldier's Medals.

The two generals talked chummily with the G.I.'s in the audience, both inconspicuously dressed, Vandenberg in a flying jacket and peaked flying cap, and Macauley in an unpretentious field jacket. They signed "short snorter" bills, both francs and dollars, and General Macauley remarked informally: "I wish there were medals to give to all of you; you guys are the real backbone of the Air Force. We couldn't do without you."

The "stars" were really falling on A-92, for coincidentally Lieut. Gen. Omar Bradley, 12th Army Group commander, appeared on the field with his personal C-47 transport. He waited over in the 508th line area and chatted with Col. McColpin and Lieut. Col. Johnson, until a sedan with a four-star license plate drove up. Out stepped General George C. Marshall, Army Chief of Staff. The two generals left immediately by air for Paris, escorted by a flight from the 507th Capt. Tom Weller, flight leader, consequently missed receiving his DFC personally from General Vandenberg, but got as much kick out of talking to General Bradley at Paris after completion of the flight.

*(In his biennial report to the Secretary of War June 30, 1945, "The Winning of the War in Europe and the Pacific", General Marshall had this to say about his visit:*

*"Early in October I made a hurried nine-day inspection trip to the Western Front, visiting American corps and divisions from the Vosges Mountains north to Holland. At that time many of the infantrymen had been in almost constant combat since D-day in June. After many computations and exchanges of radio messages with the War Department to determine the effect on our hard-pressed and delicately balanced shipping situation, it was decided to rush the movement from the United States of the infantry regiments of nine of the eleven remaining divisions ahead of the scheduled departure of the entire divisions. This was for the purpose of relieving those regiments which had been in combat for an excessively long period and to give immediate increased strength and striking power to our armies facing a most difficult winter campaign.")*

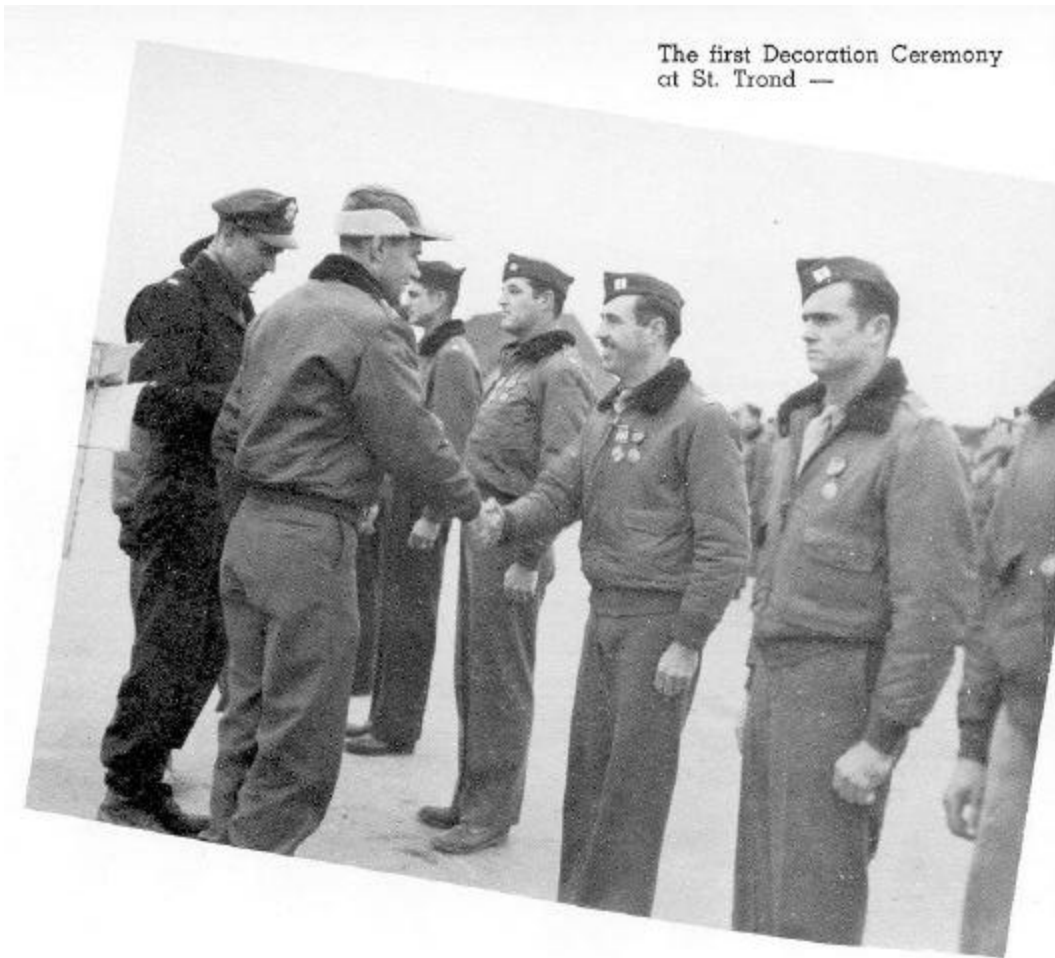
After the decoration ceremony, the pilots hurried back to their briefing rooms, traded medals for parachutes and were off on another Aachen trip, pounding gun positions and other strong points marked with red smoke by controllers "Seascout" (Ninth Infantry Division), "Cutbreak" (Second Armored) and "Booty" (First Infantry).

The first Decoration Ceremony  
at St. Trond —





The first Decoration Ceremony  
at St. Trond —





The first Decoration Ceremony  
at St. Trond —



The first Decoration Ceremony  
at St. Trond —



Wainwright chats with General  
MacAuley, 70th Wing Commander.  
(This is after Wainwright's  
six-plane kill) . . .



Describing the condition of Aachen in the throes of pulverization, Duane Int-Hout of the 507th had this to say:

"That place is really taking a beating. There's a pall of brown dust and smoke up to 6,000 feet over the city. You'd see a P-47 peel off and dive, and disappear into the smoke. Then there'd be a whurrnp on the ground. You'd see a building bust outward, and crumble up, and there'd be more brown dust and smoke. It's not as bad as St. Lo yet there are still a lot of buildings left-but it will be soon. There was a lot of bad weather in the area, and every Group that couldn't find its target on other missions simply would unload its bombs on Aachen and head home."

October 13th was the most active day of the month, with 134 aircraft dispatched on 11 missions in squadron strength, all working with "Booty" of the First Infantry Division against enemy traffic seeking to break out of the ring around Aachen to the northeast.

The first missions bombed concealed positions smoked by "Booty's" artillery, without observing results. The fifth mission, by the 507th crumbled a cluster of buildings on the southwest side of the city, also marked with red smoke. The 506th followed, saturating a wooded area, and the next four missions pounded buildings in the city and outskirts again.

The final mission of the day was a 507th show led by Lieut. Col. James K. Johnson. Eight bombed-up ships hit the red smoke and started two fires. On the pull-up Col. Johnson's aircraft started throwing oil; he left the formation with his wingman, and Lieut. Ray "Burrhead" Donnelly from Goose Creek, Texas, who had never led a mission before, took over the squadron. Donnelly got an emergency call from the ground, and proceeded to lead a hot strafing run on a smoke-marked wooded ridge just northwest of Aachen.

Clowning about the mission afterward, because it was Friday the 13th. Donnelly mixed little fact with lots of fancy in a mission report to end all mission reports:

"On our bombing run we dropped some leaflets. Our flight swung back and dove through the fluttering leaflets, so close you could read the Achtungs on them. There was no flak, so we went on down to street level. I used to be a newsboy back home, and saw to it that some of the leaflets ended up folded on doorsteps.

"As for the 13th I had 113 sortie credits, today was the 113th mission on my aircraft, and I fired 113 rounds out of each gun. At one time there were 13 aircraft in the formation, and the 13th aircraft had 13 as the last two figures in its serial number. I've been married for 13 months, and I bought 13 apples from little boys. Col. Johnson turned the squadron over to me today-the first time I've ever led it-and returned after 13 minutes, after we'd strafed a gun which I couldn't see because there was too much smoke and bullets. They fired 13 rounds of flak at us, we dove from 13,000 to 13 feet, and I ran off 13 feet of film on my gun camera. And I had 13 pieces of armament with me eight fifties, a forty-five, two bombs, a Very pistol, and: I used the relief tube right over Aachen. Of course you don't have to believe me if you don't want to."

Nevertheless 13 was a lucky number for Donnelly; his successful leadership in an emergency won him the D. F. C.

Early morning rain and overcast weather restricted operations to three missions the 14<sup>th</sup>. All were in squadron strength, again working with the First Division. However all three were exceptionally good strikes under adverse conditions.

Lieut. Col. Moon led the 508th on the opening show of the day at 1:30 P. M. looking for enemy tanks reported northeast of Aachen, near Eschweiler. Moon said he didn't see the tanks until they opened fire on the squadron; with gun flashes to mark the target, he led a bombing and a strafing run which silenced the enemy fire, but cost us one of our aircraft.

The downed pilot was Bill Donohoe, who already had been shot down once in Normandy. He was hit while working over a half-track with Doc Williams, and his plane began to burn. He managed to gain some altitude, got set for a crash-landing, and brought his ship in just behind the enemy lines north of Aachen. Immediately he ran to a nearby field and hid.

In a short time, seven SS troopers came to his wrecked plane and started hunting around for the pilot. However they apparently thought he had been killed in the crash, for they soon left. Donohoe hid for two nights around a German farmhouse until he was spied by the farmer. But his luck was still good. To his surprise, the German took him in and fed him, and on the next day an American infantry patrol came along and rescued him.

The third show of the day was a 506th attack led by Speedy Bealle which started large fires and explosions in a gun-position marked with red smoke near Haaren, just northeast of Aachen. But the second mission was the most unusual-a highly successful experiment in coordination with artillery and the technique of "peek-a-boo" bombing by the 507th

Capt. James A. Mullins was the mission leader. Bad weather was still hanging around at 1520 hours when he arrived over the target, a nest of Siegfried Line pillboxes on the east side of the Wurselen-Aachen highway, one mile northeast of Aachen. There were 12 ships in the formation, eight carrying bombs. The clouds were nine-tenths cumulus, with layers of stratus from 3,500 to 8,500 feet. The Wurselen highway was visible, but not the target.

Mullins set course heading southwest down the highway, letting down through the clouds.

"You have 30 seconds to start making the target," he called "Booty".

The cloud thinned out and vanished, and the squadron was into the clear, under the cloud-layer at 3,500 feet. doing 350 miles an hour.

"There's the smoke off my left wing," he called the squadron, as the first red puffs burst on the ground. Immediately he broke down and 90 degrees to the left, Capt. Weller and the second flight breaking somewhat less sharply. Bombs were released about 1,000 feet, but the planes pulled out so low that Mullins, and Lieut. Don Ferris, leading the second element of Red Flight, could see a scattered group of eight to ten rectangular positions, about 20 feet square and six feet high, green camouflage netting over the top and piles of brush around the sides, with one larger position in the center of the group which had tall antenna-like masts projecting through the net. Forty-five seconds after they broke into the clear, the planes were back into the overcast-without catching a single round of flak.

Two of the "brush piles" disappeared under direct bomb hits, while the second flight laid bombs into the antenna-position and on across the rest of the group.

Still working with "Booty", 72 aircraft were dispatched October 15th in six squadron missions. The 508th and 507th bombed enemy tank and troop concentrations between Aachen and Stolberg with good effect, but paid a hard price. Lieut. James E. Hall of the 507th apparently was hit by flak on his bombing run, and never pulled out of his dive.

The 506th led by Capt. Harry F. Baker, worked in the same area, dive-bombing and strafing enemy troops whom they could see on the ground scurrying for cover. The 508th returned to Aachen proper on the day's fourth mission, bombing smoked strongpoints in the city.

The final missions by the 6th and 7th went after tanks and gun emplacements in the vicinity of Stolberg, working through rain under a 5,000 foot ceiling. This ended 404th air operations in support of the siege of Aachen.

Reports for the five-day assault show that the Group dropped more than one-quarter of a million pounds of bombs and fired more than 80,000 rounds of 50-caliber ammunition in carrying out the Allied threat to liquidate the city.

The next two days were completely washed out, and only single squadron missions got off on the 18th and 19th because of persisting overcast and wet weather. By the 20th resistance in Aachen had collapsed and air support was diverted to the Siegfried Line defenses in the rugged German Ardennes area-the forests of Hurtgen, Rotgen, Monschau and others-and the Cologne plain.

Only one squadron mission-the first of the day-struck at Aachen October 20<sup>th</sup>. That was a 12-ship attack by Lt. Col. Moon and the 508th on a crossroads near Haaren, north of the city. Four other missions in squadron strength took off during the day, striking in sequence at Kohlscheid, a heavily defended village five miles north of Aachen; dropping leaflets over Monschau Forest, 20 miles to the southeast; beating up a railroad tunnel near Eschweiler, and a bridge and section of track just east of the town.

The surrender of Aachen was the only major ground success of the month. In eastern Holland the British Second Army made some progress, with flanking support from the Second Armored Division. The Germans appeared to have reorganized their forces with the Fifteenth Army opposing the Canadians in the Scheldt estuary; four corps on the front from Arnheim to Aachen; the Seventh Army, including the Fifth Panzer Army, from Aachen to Luxembourg; and further to the south the First and Nineteenth Armies.

During the final week of October, the First Army front was quiet but for two attacks in the Aachen area, both repulsed with assistance from the air. Units were regrouping, pulling out of the line for a rest, reorganizing for future offensive action. Most successful operation was the Canadian advance in Western Holland. Fighting was heavy but inconclusive on the U. S. Seventh Army front to the south.

On the 21st the Group enjoyed its last day of heavy direct-support activity for the month of October, dispatching 83 aircraft on seven missions in squadron strength. The 506th on the third mission dropped leaflets at the towns of Eschweiler, Duren and Euskirchen along a diagonal line running roughly from northwest to southeast across the Cologne plain.

All other missions were dive-bombing runs against enemy forward positions in Hurtgen Forest or further north in the vicinity of Eschweiler. Landing after the seventh and last mission of the day, Lieut. Don Orr of the 507th came in high and started to bank around for another approach, when his rudder locked. Stuck in a tight turn at 50 feet, he made a 270-degree swing, managed to level out, tore down a tent in the middle of the field, skidded in and nosed up. The plane was junk, but Orr escaped unhurt.

Sunday the 22nd was a non-operational day, but a new and unusual type of air activity held the attention of the entire Group. It started about noon when an odd and unfamiliar racket was heard for the first time, a sort of loud, grumbling washing machine noise, which sounded like a four-motored bomber with engine trouble. It was our first experience with the German jet-propelled "V-1" flying bomb. Late that night two more came over, thundering and vibrating as if they were going to take the tops off the buildings.

Monday the buzz-bombs started coming over on a commuter's schedule, every half-hour, so the Group organized buzz-bomb patrols, Col. McColpin and Capt. Lutman of the 507th among others, engaging in some unsuccessful pursuits. Along about noon the "flitibooms" stopped coming regularly, so the patrols were discontinued. Some of the bombs appeared over the field every day for several weeks, however, apparently following three main routes--one directly over the field, and the others about a mile away on either side of the field, heading generally northwest toward Brussels and Antwerp.

Meanwhile a realignment of ground forces which was to affect the immediate task of the Group was taking place. On October 3rd a new ground organization-the Ninth Army-had been brought up from the western coast of France and inserted in the line between the First and Third Armies. On October 23rd the Ninth Army was moved to the northern flank of the First Army above Aachen, and the newly formed Twenty-ninth Tactical

Air Command with four fighter groups was assigned to support it. A day earlier the 404th was detached from Ninth TAC and assigned to the new Twenty-ninth for a tour which was destined to last until the Battle of the Ardennes Bulge.

Bad weather over the new Ninth Army front continued for six days, grounding the 404th except for an uneventful fighter sweep October 24<sup>th</sup>. The only incident to mark the mission was the 508th's report of an unidentified aircraft seen travelling at unusually high speed near Cologne-probably the Group's first look at a German jet airplane.

Operations were resumed by the 404th October 28th--and the chief incident was the appearance of George McLaughlin, newly transferred from "Pintail" squadron, as commander of the 508<sup>th</sup>.

Mac of course by this time had accumulated more enemy aircraft claims on more missions than any one else while a member of the Group. Col. McColpin had a total of 11, but only three of those were knocked off during his tour with the 404th John Wainwright had six but all were kyoed on a single mission. Mac had drawn blood on four separate encounters on missions with the 506th squadron. So when he transferred to the 508th, he brought with him the reputation of being the Group's leading Messerschmitt magnet.

That reputation was justified on his first mission with his new command. Until McLaughlin took over, the 508th had been trailing the other two squadrons in the Group in total encounters and claims of enemy aircraft destroyed. On October 28th, "Granite" with McLaughlin hit the jackpot.

The encounter was a rarity for the 404th Group-it began with our planes having the advantage of altitude for a change. The 508th was at 16,000 feet, near Bonn on the Rhine, when Lloyd Geist, leading the last flight, called in three waves of enemy aircraft about 8,000 feet below. McLaughlin studied them for a moment until he identified them as new, long-nosed FW-190's. Then he rolled over and started down with White and Red Flights, ordering Blue and Yellow flights to provide top cover.

McLaughlin's flight closed fast on a cluster of six of the enemy, from out of the sun. Two crossed in front of Mac, and he opened fire on one, while his wingman, Lieut. Charles Cronk, fired at the second. Joe Wilson, leading the second element, went after a third enemy that started to circle behind White Flight.

Cronk got quick hits on his victim, and saw flames coming from the 190's fuselage. The canopy flew off as the pilot apparently tried to bail out, and the plane hit the ground and exploded.

Joe Wilson dove after his man in a long chase through the clouds. Two long bursts hit the 190 and started it burning. Light flak started coming up, so Joe pulled away, with the enemy down to 500 feet and plunging toward the ground.

Meanwhile Joe Landa leading the second flight, singled out another FW-190, but lost him in the clouds after getting some strikes.

Back upstairs at 14,000 feet, Geist circled with Yellow Flight, providing top cover. The sky seemed clear above so he bounced a lone FW-190 below him. The enemy saw him coming and headed for the deck. Geist kept firing at long range, closing slowly and hitting the German often. The pursued and pursuer passed over a large town and intense light flak came streaming up, so Geist fired one more burst and pulled away. His element leader, Ted Lundeen, saw the enemy plane splash into the Rhine.

The squadron then re-assembled—all but McLaughlin.

Mac flew right up the tail of his victim in a long chase, and saw him explode. He banked sharply away from the flying debris, and throttled back to keep from overrunning the rest of the German formation. Another FW-190 came across from his right, and Mac opened fire at about 200 yards range, hitting him in the cockpit and

along the fuselage. He watched the enemy slide off into a long flaming dive, then saw tracers passing his own left wing.

Mac broke sharp right. Two FW-190's were on his tail, so he ducked into a cloud, and started climbing to rejoin his squadron. At 6,000 feet he met two more 190's head on, and the three aircraft banked into a light Lufberry. The in-line engines in the long-nosed version of the 190 apparently gave them added zip, for they gained on the T-bolt in the turn, but couldn't get enough deflection to open fire. So in a good demonstration of tactical coordination, one of the Germans broke off, reversed his circle and came back on McLaughlin's tail, while the other German held Mac in the Lufberry. That was enough of that-so McLaughlin sweated through a fast aileron roll and got safely into a cloud 3,000 feet below.

He poked out of the cloud after changing direction, found himself clear, and started up for altitude again. He saw a formation far above him which he thought was friendly, until four planes rolled over and came down on him in a head on attack. He fired at them as they passed, and saw more FW-190's "all over the sky." Two more waves dived past him head-on, so he rolled over and headed straight down, doing fast aileron rolls.

Mac got into a cloud layer at 3,000 feet and started playing a dangerous game of hide-and-seek. Every time he popped his nose up above the clouds, waiting Focke-Wulfs took pot shots at him. When he tried to break out below the clouds at 1,200 feet, he ran into intense flak.

He finally took up a westward heading and flew from cloud to cloud, picking up attackers during each dash through open sky. But his luck held out; he finally left the enemy behind and returned safely to base.

The original intent of the mission was to provide target area cover for B-26's. The squadron never saw the B-26's, but certainly provided "cover" with a vengeance.

Only other missions of the day were a. two-ship weather recce, another escort assignment which was cancelled after our fighters were airborne, and a dive-bombing strike by the 507th against gun-positions near Geilenkirchen, a large town 20 miles north of Aachen.

The Group closed out the month's operations October 29th with a heavy 116-sortie day. Two missions in Group strength were dispatched on the 404th's deepest penetration into Germany to date-a series of strikes near Soest, an important rail junction 75 miles northeast of Cologne, feeding the Ruhr from the east. The final mission of the day, also in Group strength, attacked rails, bridges and rolling stock through intense ground fire just west of Cologne. Three of our aircraft were damaged during the day.

Two correspondents showed up at noon-George Rodger, English photographer for Life Magazine, and Allen Michie feature writer for the Reader's Digest. They were chiefly interested in the German graveyard for Allied airmen on the north side of the field, of which Rodger took numerous pictures, intended for Life's Armistice Day issue. One actually made the magazine. They also visited and took pictures of Lieut. Edwin B. Wright of the 506th and his plane, which had just come back from a mission with a flak hole smack in the middle of one of the propeller blades.

Social life at St. Trond began on Saturday evening, October 7th when the first of a regular series of Saturday night parties was held in the officers' mess, with a whole host of local girls and their families, a St. Trond "hot" band, and champagne as the attractions. The affair was a "natural" success and marked a resumption of the custom begun at A-5, but temporarily discontinued at A-48 and A-68 for lack of facilities.

A large movie house, the "Palais", was obtained for the use of the enlisted men every Friday evening, with Group Headquarters and each of the squadrons having a weekly dance in rotation. It is an understatement to say the dances were popular affairs with the Belgian girls; it was not uncommon to find the females outnumbering the males.

Only thing that was hard to get used to at the Palais was its outdoor co-ed latrine, with a row of little "closets" for ladies along one wall, and a completely exposed line of "gentlemen's fixtures" along the opposite wall. And the girls weren't at all bashful about giggling behind your back as they paraded on by to their "closets".

During the greater part of the month, the Group had two of its pilots on detached service with the Second Armored Division south of Geilenkirchen, finding out how the armor lived with its air support. They were Fred Varn of the 507th and James Dunn of the 508th who had volunteered for the duty back in Normandy. They left October 7th and returned the evening of the 23rd after spending 15 days with the "Hell-on-Wheels" division. As Varn related it:

"Dunn and I started out by reporting to Nineteenth Corps headquarters at Maastricht. We stayed there the first night, and the next day moved down to division headquarters way out in the woods in Holland.

"That's where Colonel Foucht's outfit was—he's the Air Corps liaison officer with the Second Armored Division. We had dinner with him—a damn good meal too—then Dunn went to Combat Command "A" and I went to C. C. "B" headquarters at Ubach, inside Germany. That was right on the front. They were in some sort of abandoned factory or coal-mine office. Then we went up to regimental headquarters in the city hall—a three-story building still in one piece on the eastern edge, the fighting edge of town.

"From there I went out to the battalion C. P.—just a farmhouse a little back of the lines, with the C. P. down in the basement. And from there I went in a jeep to the company C. P., up toward the front where the tanks were dug in. The C. P. itself was just a Sherman tank dug in, with a hole underneath for the message center. They used the tank-dozer for the digging—a bulldozer blade on a Sherman tank. Three scoops and they can bury a tank. The dug-out had the tank straddling one end, with a trench dug under the tank tracks for an entrance. The other end they covered with logs and dirt.

"From there we walked a couple of hundred yards out in front to the Air Corps tank, a regular medium Sherman with an Air Corps radio—the SCR-522, the same set we have in the P-47. The turret-basket—the steel framework that hangs down under the turret and swings with it—had been removed to make more room. We had a little map board about ten by twelve with a one-to-one hundred thousand map of our own area on it, like our briefing maps. The tank had a little "IX TAC" on the back, where the others had a "2" and diamonds.

"And that's where I lived for two weeks. There were six of us altogether: Lieut. Harold Bobroff, artillery officer, who had a radio of his own; four enlisted men, T/5 DuCharme, tank commander, Private Hall, driver, Private Green, assistant driver, and a private named Tony who was the loader. There was no rank in the tank.

"The tank itself was dug in down to the turret. Six of us slept curled up in the tank my first night out there. There wasn't any room, but we all got in. I sat up in the tank commander's chair in the right side of the turret, three slept on the floor below me, and there was one in each of the driver's seats.

"The next day we backed the tank out and dug us a slit trench under it. We had two little entrenching shovels, and all took turns, digging the trench chest-deep, wide enough for two of us to sleep side by side, and as long as the tank—about 11 feet. We rolled the tank back over it, and covered up the bogie wheels with dirt and branches so the mortar shells and shrapnel couldn't get at them. After that, three of us slept in the trench and did cooking there, and three slept in the tank—two on the floor and one on guard in the turret. We each took turns standing guard, in two hour shifts.

"There were lots of fireworks at night. I saw the big raid on Dusseldorf the 18<sup>th</sup>, it was another A-5 for fireworks. I saw the Germans bomb their own lines one night, too. They have some kind of bomb that bounces up and explodes in the air, throwing sprays of phosphorus around. They dropped a string of those on their own lines, which helped everybody's morale a lot.



"They were shelling when I got there, and shelling when I left. The boys in the tanks ignored it, but they stayed out of the way of it too. They took it as an everyday occurrence. I just got in the tank and tried not to worry about it. Mortar shells and 88's were landing all around us, and they got one half-track while I was there, but nobody was in it. Some of the infantry boys 100 yards ahead in the foxholes got hurt though.

"There was a tall wild cherry tree about 15 yards from our tank that the Germans had sawed half down because we had been sighting on it. After we chased them away from there it was their turn to use it as a range-marker. Finally after I was there for five days, a man from a light tank next to us got out and chopped away where the Germans had started it, and finally cut the thing down. Their fire was a lot less accurate afterward.

"Our position was on the top of a large gentle slope in the middle of a field, about a mile southwest of the village of Immendorf. We could look across rolling country to an enemy-held farmhouse and a wooded spot about half a mile away on our right front. Straight ahead they were dug in, in the fields. We couldn't see their foxholes but we knew they were there. We could see the main road between Immendorf and Puffendorf-a well-graded road with a line of trees along one edge. We could see its dark smooth surface, and every now and then a German truck scooting by. We were too far away to fire on it--a mile or a mile and a half. As a matter of fact, my tank didn't fire a shot the whole time I was there. A couple of tanks off to one side would fire every night just for the hell of it. The infantry did all the shooting for us. You'd hear patrols from the recon outfits sometimes at night; the thirties would go off, and then you'd hear those burp-guns-the German machine-pistols. You could tell the difference between theirs and ours. No matter who fired first, the others would always fire back; don't know whether they ever did any good or not.

"At night sometimes they'd have horse-drawn vehicles on the road, and one of the forward observation posts would call back and have artillery laid on it. They got some horses and wagons one night, according to reports from the outposts.

"I happened to be sitting in the turret one day looking through field glasses, and saw one German pop out on a bicycle. He had his helmet and rifle and all the trimmings. He wasn't out joy-riding, you could see that. But he seemed pretty casual, just pumping along at a normal cruising speed.

"Once a day an armored half-track would come out and bring us our rations K's and C's and Ten-in-Ones. We had a little gas heater in the tank for cooking.

"One day was just like the next. We ate, slept and sat there with the earphones on, waiting for something to come over; and we did get a few squadrons while I was there.

"Beforehand we had some targets that the artillery had given us over their radio, which they couldn't get at. So I'd call the planes. One day 'Chester Leader' came over and called 'Murphy'-that was me. Someone else had reported a bunch of 80 tanks three miles east of Geilenkirchen, so I asked 'Chester' to go down and take a look. All he saw were some pillboxes and gun-emplacements. So I gave him a pinpoint where the artillery said there were some gun-emplacements in the same area, and the artillery officer called on his radio and had red smoke thrown on the spot.

"I could see the planes circling--they were always Forty-Sevens--and peel off and come down. The leading edges of their wings were smoking, so I knew they were strafing. I couldn't see the hits, but after they finished their dive and peeled up, we could hear the sound of their machine-guns, and the bombs going off. It sounded pretty good.

"I called 'Chester' and asked what results he had observed, and he said he had seen three gun-emplacements, got one, and shook up another, I thanked him and he went home.

"Sometimes the artillery's forward O. P.'s could see the bombing, and we'd hear about the results over their radio later.

"One evening the Third Battalion was moving back and the First was moving up, and the Germans-they could hear the tank-engines every time they started up-began throwing in artillery and mortar fire. One mortar shell hit the front of our tank where the radio is, knocking out the Air Corps radio. It didn't do any other damage, just shook the tank up a bit, and didn't make much noise when it went off.

So we took the tank back to one of the maintenance battalions in Ubach, and had the radio fixed. It was a relief to get out and walk around a bit, which we weren't able to do up on the line. While we were there three of us took a jeep back to Heerlen in Holland, where there was a big coal-mine or factory with a lot of showers in the building, and got cleaned up. All the infantry and armored boys used to go back there when they could.

"After the maintenance run, we went to the edge of our old field, near a recon outfit, and stayed there the last two or three days I was up front. We drove the tank up to a big farm building, and parked next to the house on the south side, where we were partially sheltered from the enemy. The farmhouse was a big square stone job with a courtyard, like the ones in Normandy, and we slept in it for two nights. We weren't shelled, although one hellish corner had been knocked off the roof the night before.

"My last night we went up to one of the forward reconnaissance platoons in Bergendorf, and ate with the company commander, the platoon commander, my driver and two sergeants. It was a sharp meal-big plate of pork chops, French fries, and peas, and coffee that someone found in a house in the town. It was just like our own G. I. coffee.

"We were in the dining room of somebody's house in the middle of town, sitting at a big dining table with a table cloth, china, silver, and silver candlesticks. Sharp deal! The Germans were in the far end of town, dug in, so we had to be quiet moving around, and fairly quiet in the house or they'd throw in some mortar fire. The recon outfit had its armored cars backed into doorways, keeping watch.

"The pork chops were from German pigs, caught running around. You'd be surprised too, at the number of German chickens that got killed by 'shrapnel.'

"The next day, the 23rd, I got notice to return to regimental headquarters; I met Dunn up at Division, and Colonel Focht sent us back to Corps Headquarters.

"I had a pretty sharp time, but I'm glad I'm in the Air Corps.

"All the fellows I talked to were all for the Air Force-couldn't say enough for it. They just wished they could have air support all the time the way they did on the St. Lo drive. One sergeant in the recon outfit said if he ever got back and met some pilots he'd buy them all the liquor they could hold."

Dunn agreed with Varn that "it was plenty rough up there; we were shelled by day and bombed by night."

However he recalled with pleasure how American artillery tricked German batteries into shelling their own troops.

"The Germans sent up flares to mark their own front lines for a barrage," Dunn related. "But our artillery fooled 'em. Our guns shelled the German lines until the flares stopped going up. Then we shot up flares that burst behind the enemy lines. First thing you know the Germans had shortened their range and were shelling their own troops."

Not only German artillery but German rifles, in G. I. hands, took a toll of Nazi troops while Dunn was up front. He described how two American soldiers, armed with a captured German sniper's rifle and a pair of field glasses, climbed up on a nearby slag pile and took pot shots at the enemy.

"One of them would do the shooting, and the other would watch his hits," Dunn said. "You could tell when they got one of the Germans because the G.I.s would yell and slap each other on the back and almost fall off the slag pile.

"I saw them hit one German, and he really was surprised. He looked this way and that way, and then crumpled up and fell over. He never did know where the shot came from."

Among Dunn's souvenirs from the front are a pair of mahogany skis and ski-sticks, found in a captured command post.

"That German officer must have figured on some winter sport," he said, "but I think he'll stick to the running events this winter."

## Chapter Ten

### BAD-WEATHER DOLDRUMS

*As autumn brought bad weather to the armies in Western Europe, there were two things uppermost in the minds of the Allied commanders. The first was a question of positive action—the Siegfried Line must be breached in its entirety and all Germany west of the Rhine taken, to permit a winter buildup for a grand assault across the river into the heart of Germany with the coming of good weather in the Spring. Chief obstacle to the advance of the U. S. Ninth and First Armies was the swollen Roer River, which flowed roughly from south to north across the Cologne plain, passing about 15 miles northeast of Aachen at its nearest point. It had its origin in a large lake in the German Ardennes—in Gemund Forest, and flowed into the Meuse at Roermond in Holland. The river level was regulated by a series of dams just below the lake. The dams were in enemy hands, and the Germans could flood out an American assault at any time by blowing the dams. It became apparent to the American High Command that the Roer dams must be taken by the First U. S. Army, while the Ninth Army would bear the brunt of the push across the Roer flatlands.*

*The second matter of concern to Allied commanders, but not as pressing a matter as the question of the Roer dams, was the whereabouts of seven enemy panzer divisions which apparently had been pulled out of the battle for regrouping.*

*As November began, U. S. armor operating with the British Second Army, beat back a German diversionary attack near Venlo in Holland, while the First Army pushed out in a limited drive through hilly terrain through Hurtgen and Rotgen forests, seizing Schmidt and Vossenack on high ground near the Roer dams.*

Persistent rain and haze made November the worst flying month of the year so far, but the 404th Fighter Group nevertheless managed to operate on 20 of the month's 30 days. The Group was released for maintenance and training by XXIX TAC on the 3rd and was grounded by bad weather on nine days. With the front virtually static, targets were principally the rail lines that fed the enemy, and the Cologne plain villages that he had converted into a system of strong points. The Group ended up the month with buildings and railroad rolling stock as its chief victims, claiming 128 buildings, 14 locomotives and 247 railroad cars destroyed or damaged.

The most important change in the Group's operating personnel was the loss of our commanding officer, Col. Carroll W. McColpin, November 22<sup>nd</sup>. He shifted upstairs to XXIX TAC over his own vehement objections, where he became director of operations. Lieut. Col. Leo C. Moon became Group Commander, and Major Howard L. Galbreath of the 507th was designated deputy Group C. O. Major James A. Mullins replaced Galbreath as C. O. of the 507<sup>th</sup>.

Meanwhile more pilots of the, Group got welcome orders to go home on combat leave, including Freemantle, Bates, Allen and Porter of the 506<sup>th</sup>; Lutman, Weller, Courtney and Kovats of the 507th and McLaughlin, Selkregg, Geist and Williams of the 508<sup>th</sup>. The departure of McLaughlin left the 508th without a commander, so Major Robert J. Garrigan of the 506th was transferred to "Granite" squadron to fill the vacancy.

Late in the month, as Air Force headquarters appeared ready to equip all its tactical fighters to carry rockets, several enlisted Armament specialists in the Group received instruction in the handling of aircraft rocket projectiles.

Wednesday, November 1st, was thoroughly damp and dark. All to no purpose, the boys sweated out a rail-cutting mission which never came off.

A large explosion shook the late eaters at lunch in the officers' mess, and investigation revealed that the latest thing in German secret weapons, the V-2 rocket, had struck an isolated block of houses in the village

of Velm, about four miles southwest of the field. The explosion had left two curious craters, comparatively small, alongside a cobblestone road among a few houses on the outskirts of town. One crater was shaped like a dumbbell; half hidden in it was the body of the only fatality, a black-and-gray cat. The other crater, 50 yards from the first, was a shallow excavation with no visible debris around it, although the blast had scorched the earth for about 150 feet beyond it. For 600 to 800 yards along the projectile's line of flight, approaching the craters, were scattered pieces of metal, piping, little tanks like oxygen bottles, and a large metal chamber with as many holes as Swiss cheese.

Several families were moving their belongings from nearby houses, which had sections of collapsed roofing and smashed windows, but showed little signs of wall-damage. This was odd, since three houses were within 100 feet of the craters-in fact one crater was barely ten feet from the nearest house. Several people were reported hurt, but none killed. Conclusion was that the rocket had exploded in the air, or at least had partially disintegrated before impact.

At 1500 hours, a deputation of about 20 Belgians in B. N. B. (Brigade Nationale de Belgique) "White Army" armbands arrived with five clusters of flowers to place in the cemetery for allied airmen as an All Saints' Day remembrance. Protestant Chaplain Wyckoff and Catholic Chaplain Van Garsse each offered prayers at the ceremony. Chaplain Wyckoff discovered among the rows of crosses the names of several crew-members he had known while with the Eighth Air Force in England; they were part of a bomber force lost August 17, 1943, on a raid against Schweinfurt.

In the evening at the Officers' Club, Lieut. Floyd F. Blair of the 507th who used to play with a small dance-band back home in Georgia, conducted the first rehearsal of a new Group musical organization, the "Nix Compris" band. Blair handled the saxophone and clarinet, with Lieut. Don Miller of the 506th on the drums, Corporal "Count" Pacic of Group Headquarters at the piano, and Corporal Andy Kirk of Group Communications handling the trumpet and the vocal assignments.

During the night the British heavies and a couple of buzz-bombs passed overhead.

More bad weather the next day kept everything on the ground but the buzz-bombs. One dropped somewhere west of St. Trond.

The weather forecast for the night of November 2nd-3rd called for a big freeze to set in, so the crew chiefs were routed out of their tents to warm up the airplane engines shortly before midnight. At the same time, trucks and half-tracks full of infantry were rumbling and clattering by on the St. Trond-Liege highway. So some disturbed medics rushed a man in to Operations to find out if it was true that the "army was in retreat and we were fixing to fly the planes away from the field immediately."

Most of the night's entertainment centered around the cook's tent in the 507th Squadron area, inhabited by Mess Sergeant Joyce Cordell, Cooks Eugene Spangenberg and Joe Cocchi, and Cook's Helpers William T. Driver and Stanley Morris, Staff Sergeant Bill Dover, groping his way back to a poker game with Hubert Bonds of squadron operations, began calling "Bonds! Bonds!" through the blacked-out tent area.

"Bombs? Where?" cried the cooks, scrambling for their fox-holes.

A short time later, after a buzz-bomb droned by, Glenwood Moon came through the area, and tossed a handful of gravel on top of the cook's tent. There was a rustling and scuffling inside, and through the tent flaps jumped Joe Cocchi, struggling into his pants and shouting "Flak! Flak!"

November 3rd found the Group released from operational flying for maintenance and training, but the weather was too good to stay on the ground. So "Lad" Lutman among others, took off on a test hop in the early afternoon.

After a few loops and rolls, he came out of a dive and found himself in a dogfight with a buzz-bomb six miles west of the field.

"I saw the flame first," he said. "I was at 3,000 feet doing about 400 miles an hour when the bomb passed over me, heading in the opposite direction, toward Brussels. I chandelled up with power, and opened fire on the buzzer from below with about ten degrees deflection. I saw splinters fly off the wing and body, and pulled up in trail to about 300 yards from the bomb, firing. It started throwing black smoke, and the right wing dropped, so I shot some more from slightly above. It finally spun in and exploded in an open field. I felt the concussion at 4,000 feet."

His claim, one buzz-bomb destroyed, is unique in the Group's history.

The first missions of the month for the 404th were executed November 4th with each squadron getting off two formations. The 506th and 507th went cutting rails near Erkelenz, 25 miles northeast of Aachen, while the 508th attacked a bridge near Julich. Then the entire Group spent the afternoon on an uneventful fighter sweep in the Rhine Valley between Bonn and Koblenz-after which every one was free to prepare for the serious business of the day, the Saturday night party. For the first time, to eliminate the vast crowd of fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers who regularly attended and absorbed great amounts of champagne, guests were restricted to young ladies without chaperones, who had specific escorts. Nurses were imported from nearby field hospitals.

Late at night when the party was breaking up, the anti-aircraft west of the field finally shot down a flying bomb, which went off with a sky-lighting flash. Three enemy aircraft east of Maastricht were called in to Group Operations by "Gypsy" (telephone call-name for XXIX TAC) at 11 P.M., but after a few minutes of "sweating" were reported to have turned back just as Black Widow night fighters were being dispatched.

Pre-dawn weather was clear on Sunday, the 5th with a bright moon, but as daylight approached clouds swept in, and mist seeped up out of the ground. Morning takeoffs were scheduled for 0910, but it was 1100 when the nine-tenths overcast finally lifted to 5,000 feet and gave the boys flying room. Each squadron again launched two missions, the 508th cutting rails and attacking a bridge near Linnich, a Roer River village 15 miles northeast of Aachen. The 507th twice had to hit alternate targets because of cloud cover, once winding up in a hail of flak over heavily-defended Dusseldorf. Everyone reported the flak more intense than ever, and the 506th said its strike against a marshalling yard 10 miles southeast of Munchen-Gladbach was made through "ten-tenths flak".

Bad weather ruined the morning schedule, and still hung over the Army fronts by early afternoon, so TAC sent the Group deep into Germany on a strike against a rail road bridge at Arnsberg, at the eastern end of the Ruhr about 85 miles northeast of Cologne. Clouds hid the bridge, so the squadrons had to pick out secondary targets. The 508th picked itself out a train, Jack Conner getting bomb-hits on the locomotive, and Ashby Marshall plunking the center of the string of cars. Eleven ships of the 507th unloaded on a marshalling yard near Recklinghausen on the north side of the Ruhr. Squadron leader Jack Ray hit a large factory in the yards and left it burning, while the rest of the squadron blew holes all over the yards. Leroy Graham and Bob Allen spotted a 30-car train on the move five miles away, and worked it over with their 50-calibers, stopping the locomotive and splintering up eight of the cars.

A 45-mile gale was predicted for the night. Four night-fighters—two P-61's and two P-38's—proceeded to land on the field about 2300 hours, and the last one in was shot at from out of the darkness on the final approach. Conflicting reports from eye-witnesses said tracers were streaming up from the ground, as if from our local ack-ack, and popping out of the sky. No damage was done to the night-fighter, and the fire was undoubtedly done by an intruder who had escaped radar detection by flying close to the American formation.

The Group spent the first part of Election Day-Tuesday, November 7th-waiting on the weather, which was dark and overcast. A dive-bombing run and a bomber escort were scrubbed in turn, and the Group finally was assigned an afternoon fighter sweep, originally allotted to the 373rd Group on the Ops Order for the day.

There was a 30-mile-an-hour crosswind and 100-mile-an-hour winds aloft. Colonel McColpin objected to flying, but XXIX TAC Combat Ops insisted, so the Group took off on a sweep between Roermond and Bonn, over the Cologne plain.

The formation circled for altitude in a cloud-clear area around Eindhoven in Holland, then set course for Bonn. About 20 miles east of Bonn, Jo-Jo Sherwood of the 506th leading the Group, decided the formation was taking too much of a buffeting from the winds and turned back to base. He got a heading from "Roselee", XXIX TAC controller, and shortly afterward asked for a "fix".

"You're 40 miles from base," said the controller. That would have put the Group near Aachen, so Sherwood started to let down-and caught flak steadily for about five minutes. Actual position was just west of the Rhine, and still well inside enemy territory, about 80 miles from base. The entire mission was criticized as useless because of the bad weather, which strung the squadrons out and permitted enemy flak gunners to engage each squadron separately. "After all," the pilots grumbled, "the Luftwaffe had sense enough to stay on the ground in this weather." The "fix" incident weakened confidence in "Roselee", who seemed less experienced and less trustworthy than "Sweepstakes" of IX TAC, with whom the Group had worked flawlessly for five months.

A new batch of photo-maps arrived at Group Intelligence during the day and started up intensified rumors about a new "big push", for the maps covered the Roer River flats from Julich to Geilenkirchen, east of the Ninth Army front.

The next day the Group ran an uneventful sweep over the Ninth Army front in the morning. The weather was poor, with a solid low overcast at 5,000 feet, and high cirrus around 20,000, but not enough clouds at the right altitudes to encourage the Luftwaffe. Flying in and out of the clouds, Duane Int-Hout of the 507th had an-attack of vertigo and found himself continually impelled to roll over, so he dropped back to the number four position in his flight and flew Lew Eldredge's wing.

A Group escort mission in the afternoon was recalled after it got into the air, when "Roselee" reported the bombers couldn't make it.

Correspondent Gordon Gammack of the Tampa Tribune appeared from Ninth Army headquarters in the afternoon and interviewed Lieut. Ted Lundeen of the 508<sup>th</sup>, a native of Tampa.

No buzz-bombs appeared until about 5 o'clock in the evening, when a "formation" of two or three rumbled over.

November 9th the 506th and 507th worked over a bridge across the Roer at Linnich, funnel for two main highways. The 508th off last, ran into low ceilings, rain, sleet and snow, but managed to unload its bombs on a marshalling yard at Bergheim, half way between Julich and Cologne. But the mission cost the squadron one of its finest veteran pilots, Bob "The Senator" Johnson, the man with the handle-bar mustache, who already had escaped death narrowly when he rode his plane down in a belly-landing in Normandy. The sleet and rain moved west over St. Trond, eliminating all missions for the rest of the day. During the storm there was a buzz-bomb explosion nearby an unusual occurrence, since most of them seemed headed for Brussels and Antwerp so Seba Eldridge of the 507th cracked: "Uh-oh-looks like the rain put the doodle-bug's fire out!"

A lucky handful of pilots returning from Paris leave in the evening reported cold hotel rooms and high prices-two dollars for a "bread sandwich" in the bistros of Montmartre.

The boys were shagged out early the next morning for a briefing at 0715, but a downpour postponed flying until the afternoon, when three missions in squadron strength were airborne. The 506th destroyed two locomotives and strafed a couple of trains on the Cologne plain. Major Mullins led the 507th in an excellent dive-bombing attack northeast of Geilenkirchen which cut rails in two places, caught three trains, and a factory building, and for good measure squirted 50-caliber slugs into Munchen-Gladbach.

Meanwhile Capt. Tibbets led the 508th down through intense light flak on the marshalling yards at Julich knocking out a roundhouse, scattering "goods wagons", and starting several fires. Ira Fisher's plane was hit by flak, but stayed up just long enough to get him back over friendly territory near Sittard in Holland, where he bailed out. It was his second jump; he previously was forced to bail out near Argentan in Normandy.

News of a German threat to send over 1,000 buzz-bombs November 11th in "celebration" of Armistice Day drifted into the Group, and rumor built the figure up to 5,000 by the night of the 10th. Some impetus was lent to the rumor when buzz-bombs, after being absent all day of the 10th started coming over again by 9 P. M. in two's and threes.

However the next day the Group was too busy flying to worry about rumors. There were two six-ship leaflet missions over the front lines, an uneventful Group escort show with B-26's to the vicinity of Eschweiler, and a Group mission with two squadrons bombed up against an important communications center east of the Roer. The boys goggled when they saw the Ops order directive: "Attack AND DESTROY the town at Erkelenz."

Lieut. Francis "Red" Godfrey of the 507th thought the Group had fulfilled its instructions to the letter after the attack; said the dive-bombers really "clobbered the place." And the 506th which also bombed, corroborated his story. They reported the entire center of the town in flames.

Meanwhile Godfrey was so engrossed watching the destruction in the town that he lost track of his flight leader, "Yank" Wydner. He started to join two other P-47's until he saw them catching flak, then he made another circle over Erkelenz. Suddenly there appeared in the previously clear sky a belt of thousands of "spots" at 9,000 feet, northwest of the town. Godfrey said the belt looked to be about 100 feet deep and 400 feet wide, and the objects in it were of indeterminate shape and grayish and transparent.

He high-tailed for home with his important observation to report to Intelligence, but Major Mullins, the squadron leader, was so mad at him for losing the formation he scoffed at the story.

Some of the older pilots commented, "Spots, hell! That was flak, brother, a whole barrage of it!"

It was Saturday again-and another party, with the Nix Compris band, now five strong, appearing to perform for the first time. After the local "Belgique" musicians, they were a real treat.

Almost as an afterthought, the party-goers remembered about the rumored buzzbomb blitz. The actual Armistice Day flying bomb performance amounted to scattered flights during the day, and a few in groups after dark.

Sunday dawned rainy and cloudy, signaling the start of a stretch of bad weather that grounded the Group for four consecutive days, until the 16<sup>th</sup>. In spite of the rain, however, the Group started assigning four aircraft with pilots fully rigged and in the cockpit, to runway alert during the daylight hours.

There were cracks about "Pattern" bombing when the Ops Orders for Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday all called for the Group to do a "total destruction" job on the village of Pattern, which derived its importance from its position as a troop concentration point astride one of the approaches to the Roer at Julich. But mist and clouds wiped all the plans off the slate, although an early mission crew got as far as the briefing room on Wednesday.

Thursday, November 16 the Group was aroused at 0545 for "something big." Colonel McColpin announced at Group briefing that this was D-day for "Operation Q", the push across the Roer to Cologne and Dusseldorf.



Each squadron was to equip four ships with fragmentation bombs and eight with 500-pound G. P.'s. The 506th was to lead the way, and the Group was to be the first fighter group in on the show, opening the tactical air assault in front of the first wave of Ninth Army troops between 0800 and 0805 hours. Eleven front-line towns were to be hit inside of 45 minutes by the four fighter groups of XXIX TAC, the 404th taking a trio named Mariadorf, Hongen and Bettendorf, all just north of Eschweiler.

Colonel McColpin explained that the targets were to be marked with red smoke every 60 seconds for the five-minute period allotted for the Group's attack. The heavies were to bomb around Eschweiler between 1130 and 1245, when the infantry and tanks were to jump off. He said the ground forces already had waited a week for favorable flying weather, and now had reached the point when it was imperative to attack, with or without air support.

Pilots were in their planes ready to start engines when a call came to postpone takeoff for 30 minutes. Out to the planes again at 0745, and another postponement, this time "until further notice."

So fried eggs were served up in the snack bars, and everyone settled down to wait. The early morning low haze began to clear, although the clouds hung low and thick, and the Group finally was dispatched at 1030.

Over Aachen on the way out, the cloud cover was nine to ten-tenths. It was almost impossible to see enough of the ground to check landmarks. However Major Mullins of the 507th one of the Group's finest navigators, managed to get a quick peek through a hole in the clouds and reported, "We're directly over Wurselen, two minutes from Eschweiler."

"Roselee" called and told the Group to fly east and jettison its bombs, but Mullins insisted he knew where he was, and was going to find the target. He took the 507th down through a hole, called, "There's the smoke off my left wing!" and went in and hit Mariadorf. His was the only formation in the entire Command which was able to get in through the weather on the assigned target. XXIX TAC subsequently cited the Group for this mission.

As the Group returned to base, however, a hazard more dangerous than flak arose. The clouds had settled down to 800 feet over A-92, and landing aircraft were peeling off, disappearing into the "soup" and trusting to luck there wouldn't be another plane in the way when they broke out under the 800-foot layer. There were wild, crazy landing patterns, elements cutting in front of aircraft on the final approach, 48th Group planes mixed up with the 404th squadrons coming in scattered.

Lieut. George Wilton of the 507th discovered he was nowhere near the runway on his final approach and had to go around. But he never was able to sneak into the traffic pattern again, and finally had to land at another field.

Trying to land on instruments, Lieut. Willoughby of the 508th discovered his airspeed indicator was out. He reported his plight to Luciano Herrera, and the "Senor" did a remarkable job of flying in leading Willoughby down through the confusion of planes to a safe landing.

The heavies streamed overhead about noon to fulfill their part of "Operation Q", and the men on the ground thought an air-battle was in progress when sounds of chattering fifties drifted down. Experienced hands, however, surmised it was merely the gunners testing their weapons.

Frag bombs were loaded on the Thunderbolts for an afternoon run on Erkelenz, but the field remained "socked in." Even the buzz-bomb activity was at a minimum.

The Group suffered a freak loss during the day. Second Lieut. John C. McClure of the 506th on detached service away from the Group, was reported missing on a ferrying flight over France, and nothing more was heard of him.

Morning missions again were delayed the 17th but the first formation finally was airborne about 0900 hours, in weather that had been considered completely unfit for flying back in July. It was a successful strike by the 507th against troops and artillery in the town of Freialdenhoven, three miles west of Julich in front of the Second Armored Division, which shortly afterward was duplicated by the 508th

The 506th bombed an oil-dump and flew a six-ship "delivery" run with a load of the "Frontpost" newspaper, giving the German troops a true picture of the progress of the war.

The ceiling lowered again to 1,000 feet, and only one more mission got off a special request job by Major Mullins and the 507th against enemy tanks concentrating at Immendorf, a village two miles east of Geilenkirchen.

After some difficulty the squadron contacted "Abtide" of the Second Armored, and had smoke thrown on the target. The planes sneaked in under a 4,000-foot overcast, caught no flak until they tipped their noses down, and then got so much that Jack Ray, leading the last element, nearly had his tail shot off. The bomb-explosions paraded all through town. Several burning tanks littered the fields around town, and U. S. cerise panels glittered across fields to the west. Rain kept up intermittently on the way out and back.

Turkey and trimmings decorated all the mess-hall tables, for it was Thanksgiving, but the enlisted men of the 506th Squadron had the greatest treat. No K. P. and deluxe table service, with all the "dirty work" handled by squadron officers.

Idea for the G. I. holiday from menial kitchen tasks originated with John O'Rourke, squadron executive officer, who dished out the food in the mess-line, along with Adjutant Frank Tullos.

The volunteer K. P.'s and "pot-wrasslers" were pilots George Britton, Art Brock, Earl Fisher, Don Miller, Jim B. White, Jim Williams and Ed Wright.

Saturday the 18<sup>th</sup>, at last, was bright and beautifully clear. All three squadrons ran missions during the morning, the 507th hunting out an ammunition dump, the 506th raking Julich with bombs and bullets, and the 508th starting many fires and explosions in Aldenhoven, a village listed as an enemy troop billet and communications center on the main road to Julich from the southwest.

At noon "Roselee" scrambled the runway alert, which included four planes from the 507th and three from the 48th Group. When the call came in, Lieut. Abt of the 507th discovered his P-47 had mechanical trouble. At the same time a 48th Group pilot hopped out of his plane exclaiming, "Hell, I can't go up, the doc grounded me!"

There was a fast "deal", and Abt flew the mission in the 48th ship. The formation was vectored after fleeing "bandits" as far away as Recklinghausen in the heart of the Ruhr. There were no encounters, though the flight did chase two unidentified aircraft near Roermond, which just streaked away from the P-47's doing at least 350 miles per hour straight and level.

The afternoon show was a Group mission aimed deep, a repeat job on rail lines east of the Ruhr. The 506th flew top cover, while the 508th bombed the marshalling yard at Soest, accounting for at least 40 freight cars, and the 507th cut rails and worked over the marshalling yard, tunnel and factory at Arnsberg.

"Skin" Galbreath took one flight down on the west end of the tunnel, and got rail cuts on the east and west ends of a bridge there. Leroy Graham led another flight, personally scoring a direct hit on a bridge at the east end of the tunnel, while his element, led by Lieut. Paul Buckles, bombed the Arnsberg marshalling yard.

Buckles and his wingman, Bob Allen, then caught a long passenger train with steam up hiding against an embankment between Arnsberg and Meschede and worked it over. Graham and his wingman, Bill

Guyot, proceeded to Meschede and strafed a whole slew of cars and locomotives, On the pull-up, a twin-engine Me-410 popped out of the clouds ahead of them, and they gave chase. Graham got some long-range strikes, but the enemy had too much speed up and escaped.

Back at the base, the Saturday night party was fairly quiet. There were more nurses than ever, completely eclipsing the Belgian girls. The whole flavor of the evening was different—the dancing smoother and more "American", the "Belgian hop" completely absent.

Sunday the 19th turned out to be the most active day of the month for the Group—on the 404th's favorite assignment—armored column cover. Rumor had it that there had been some competition between Colonel Johnson, now commanding the 48th and Colonel McColpin to win the assignment; Colonel "Blackie" had grabbed the job for two days, and now it was Colonel "Pinky's" turn.

The Group flew 118 sorties in four-ship flights, and at the height of the day's operations had one flight over the target area every 20 minutes. The 508th was out 11 times, the 507th nine, and the 506th eight, working with the Second Armored Division. The fortified villages turned in to Siegfried Line strong points were the principal targets.

The 506th hit Gereonsweiler twice, between Geilenkirchen and Linnich The 508th worked over a whole roster of towns west of the Roer-Engelsdorf, tanks at Puffendorf, Bergeln, Freialdenhoven, tanks at Ederen, troops and a command post at Puffendorf again, Obermerz, Gusten and Aldenhoven. A runway alert led by Harold Buelow of the 508th was scrambled, but ended up patrolling uneventfully over Cologne and Bonn.

In spite of the activity, some of the mission leaders were critical of the calls for sup port. Duane Int-Hout of the 507th was particularly griped when "Cutbreak" sent his flight and another following against two tanks which the controller said he "thought" were in Freialdenhoven.

"The town was burning already," Int-Hout said, "and a whole squadron had bombed just ahead of us, and Cutbreak was giving the target to everybody in the area. Why waste two hours and 40 aircraft on two tanks that he wasn't even sure were there?"

General opinion was that the cover-missions weren't as markedly successful as the ones at St. Lo, because there was no sign of an armored "column" out on the roads as yet. The tanks still were strung out along the front, and hadn't moved enough to flush the enemy into the open.

Jack Ray, who led one of the afternoon missions over the battle area, commented:

"That country is beaten up worse than St. Lo now. There aren't even any walls standing in the towns. Erkelenz is flat; Julich is flat. There's fire and smoke all over the countryside."

John Phelps said, "You can't pinpoint the flak over there any more. You get it intermittently any place you fly."

And Int-Hout added, "I'm not going to fool around over there if they don't have any targets. I'll circle around behind the bomb -line where it's safe until they mark the target, then go in quick and hit it."

The spell of good weather ended late in the afternoon as the wind blew clouds in from the northeast. It was rainy, cold and drizzling all day the 20th with all scheduled missions scrubbed. Only the runway alert, led by Capt. Nelson of the 508th got off for a brief and uneventful trip out to the bomb line and back.

Only one mission got off the next day, a 507th show typical of the quickly-briefed, hurry up assignments of this period in our operations.

Scheduled was an attack at 0930 on the town of Langweiler, half a mile ahead of our forward troops. Low overcast and dampness held it up. In Squadron Intelligence Staff Sgt. Harry Beckett, Sgt. Joe Soling and Corporal Pete Laurencell prepared all the maps, plotted the course on the briefing map, set up aerial photos of the area, and sat down to wait.

At 1015 Ashby Marshall called all three squadrons from Group Operations to announce that the assigned missions for the day would be merely secondary targets; the primary mission would be to help "Decline" (XIX Corps) and the Second Armored Division, who were expecting a heavy German counter-attack momentarily. They were to be contacted on "D" Channel before doing any bombing.

Then he told the 507th to get off as soon as possible, giving him a call through "Roselee" if the weather over the target was favorable, so that the other two squadrons could be dispatched. Colonel Moon strolled over from Group to lead the squadron at 1025. He was briefed in 60 seconds on the new instructions covering radio channels, call signs and primary mission. The colonel gave the pilots a time-check, and instructions on take-off, assembly and route out, in about 90 seconds, and three minutes after he arrived, he was off again heading for his plane, and the mission was on its way.

Out over the bomb-line, "Abtide" had no targets. "Murphy One" (part of the Second Armored's Combat Command "B") contacted Don Ferris, Col. Moon's element leader, who was monitoring "C" Channel, and asked for an attack on Gereonsweiler, but clouds hid the town. "Brightside" (30th Infantry Division) on the southern end of the Ninth Army front, then very patiently tried directing the formation through the clouds to the day's original target at Langweiler.

On his first orbit, Moon was sure he had picked up the right place, but hesitated to bomb without the confirmation of red smoke. The clouds kept thickening in and around the town, obscuring it when the artillery was marking it, and the planes kept passing in and out of "Brightside's" view.

Running low on gas, Col. Moon finally took up an easterly heading, looking for a hole in the overcast. He found one-over the suburbs of Cologne, a fearful flak trap according to enemy situation maps in the briefing room. He made a 90-degree turn left onto the marshalling yard in the northwest side of the city; Ferris' second element split-essed on the target; "Yank" Wydner leading the low flight on the right, came in from 90 degrees; and Capt. Int-Hout, high on the left and slightly behind, broke right 40 degrees and attacked straight down along the east-west tracks.

There were rail-cuts in the yards, hits on a factory, a large, oily fire. Every place a bomb fell there was a building or a section of the yards to be hit. Don Ferris estimated that all the aircraft were down on the target inside of seven seconds. All the aircraft but his element broke away northward over the outskirts of Cologne; his split-ess left him heading southward, pulling up in a counter-clockwise orbit over the heart of the city. One complete 360-degree circle, and the squadron was reformed and heading home. And not a round of flak was fired! Even though Wydner's bombs hung up and he made a second pass over the marshalling yard to release them.

That ended all flying until the 25<sup>th</sup>. Meanwhile Lieut. Jack A. ("Eager Jack") Eggers, Lieut. John H. ("Able Jack") Zabel and Private Clarence Hord, among others found out why so few buzz-bombs were flying over the field lately. The trio was in Liege the 21st and reported V-1's dropping all over the place. The population seemed to be pretty jittery.

Home-going orders arrived the 22nd for another group of the veteran pilots, but a significant omission was the name of Ray "Burr-Head" Donnelly, who had been notified that he would be among the next to go. It developed that he was up for promotion to Captain, and for some reason couldn't be sent home until his promotion orders come through. So he sat and sweated, while the brand-new rank of "Captenant" was created for him.

During the day Colonel McColpin said his farewell to the Group, and in a formal message to all officers and men, he declared:

"During the past several months it has been my good fortune to work with a group of men in developing a fighter group that has attained an enviable record in all phases of operation. In order to attain this high degree of efficiency, each officer and enlisted man in the 404th Fighter Group and attached units has worked hard and loyally. I fully realize that at times there has been a clash of ideas, but the end result, which is so important, has been the development of a fighting team which has justly earned great praise from higher commanders everywhere."

"It has been my lot to be transferred to another headquarters, but I leave this Group with deep pride and satisfaction and with the knowledge that it has been my privilege to serve as commander of a group composed of the hardest working fellows I have ever known."

Vile weather continued the 23rd and 24th providing a dismal setting for the arrival of a truckload of new pilots about two A. M. the morning of the 24th.

Weather was still unfavorable the next day, Saturday the 25th, but each squadron got off one morning bombing mission, and combined in the afternoon for a peaceful fighter sweep in Group strength completely around the Ruhr and back across the Rhine near a place called Remagen.

During the day orders were published officially assigning Colonel Moon as Group Commander.

Two civilian correspondents, John Macklin of the Chicago Sun and Louis Azrael of the Baltimore News-Post, spent the night with the Group after a quick trip back from some of our newly captured ground in Germany.

In a bull-session in the 508th's pilot's barracks, they outlined the difficulties the infantry was bucking in its hard slugging match for the Roer. They told how the river flowed out of two dammed-up lakes in the forests on the First Army front. At present, they said, the river had a normal depth of about two feet and a width of a few hundred feet: but if the dams at its source were breached, the river would swell to a depth of 17 feet and a width of 1,000 yards. The Ninth Army's big worry, they pointed out, was that the Germans would destroy the dams after our troops had crossed the river, and thus separate American forward elements from reinforcements. And finally they told of the infantry's present plan to feint at Julich, then force a flanking crossing of the river about a mile north of the town.

Macklin then talked about the 404<sup>th</sup>—said he thought it was a good Group and should have an identifying name which could be used in newspaper stories. Censorship at this time prohibited any mention of units by numerical designation.

Airborne November 26th in spite of an almost solid overcast, the entire Group, led by Ashby Marshall, went down on a pre-briefed troop-concentration in the village of Kirchberg, one mile south of Julich, in support of the infantry "feint" mentioned by the two correspondents the night before. The formation found a clear spot in the otherwise completely overcast sky. The village was a tiny cluster of buildings strung out along a north-south road, and the first two squadrons down-507th and 506th-paraded their 500's right up the road. The whole place was burning when the 508th started down, and enemy tanks started to crawl out of the wreckage like beetles.

With "Tibbo" Tibbets leading, the 508th hopped on the tanks with enthusiasm, claiming eight destroyed and eight damaged with bombs and strafing.

"The tanks were spaced at intervals of 25 to 50 feet," Tibbets said. "Others were still in the outskirts of town, some against the walls of buildings. We blew up several buildings with our bombs. At least three 500-pounders were direct hits on tanks."

"We pulled up, formed again, and dived for a strafing attack. We strafed from 1,500 feet right down to within a few feet of the tanks. We made three passes at them.

"I knew our troops were not far away, so I instructed the pilots to pick out specific targets on each run, and to cease firing as soon as the target had been passed, to avoid ricochets into our own lines.

"After our third strafing run tanks were smoking and burning on the edge of the town and for a quarter of a mile up the road. As we started home the ground controller told us the attack had been successful, and thanked us for what he called a 'very good show'."

"That's one big reason tanks are my favorite target. You can actually see the results of your attacks, and know that you've given a helping hand to the fellows on the ground.

"Then you come back and look at the situation map, and you see the troop line move forward. It makes you feel good.

"I'm glad to see the German tanks back in the open," Tibbets added. "Give us a stretch of good weather and we'll give 'em the same treatment they got after the breakthrough at St. Lo."

During the afternoon each squadron dispatched two missions on a vain search for a missing A-20 with two colonels aboard, reported down somewhere west of Brussels, and the 507th and 508th launched one more dive-bombing mission apiece against rail targets behind the front.

Later sad news reached the Group of a jeep accident involving Capt. Wally Tribken, Assistant Group Operations Officer, and Staff Sergeant Luis Henderson, Group Drafts. man. A veteran of World War I, Henderson recovered, convalescing in the same hospital room in Toul that had been his 26 years before. But serious internal injuries proved fatal to Wally.

Lieut. Art Sternmermann of the 507th returned from two weeks with the Seventh Armored Division, and reported an interesting visit, although he found the division in a rear area, reforming around Maastricht after heavy duty with the British Army near Venlo.

"I spent most of my time talking to a Colonel Clark, boss of Combat Command B," Art said. "He explained to me the threat of the Roer dams, and outlined a plan for future operations in which the Seventh was to relieve the Second Armored after a bridgehead had been secured at Linnich, and was to push on for Dusseldorf.

"He and his men kept working on tactical experiments to keep the tanks, followed by armored infantry in half-tracks, moving as much and as fast as possible. Instead of pushing out cautiously and stopping to hunt out the defenses, the tanks would stay in motion to present less of a target.

"The Shermans, they had were carrying 75's, which Colonel Clark said weren't worth a damn for accuracy, and newer 76.2's, and when I left they were getting the M-36 tank destroyers, bigger all around and heavier than the Shermans, and carrying a 90 millimeter gun."

The Group was assigned to armored column cover the 27th but only four flights were able to get off before weather made tactical flying impossible. Jo-Jo Sherwood led a four-ship flight of the 506th against the village of Barmen, two miles northwest of Julich. A 508th formation led by Jerry Perlysky was unable to bomb because of bad weather, and on the way home flew into the flying bomb anti-aircraft defense area between St. Trond and Brussels, which our planes were forbidden to enter.

The gunners, instructed to fire at anything with wings, let the flight have it and all three ships landed with holes from our own anti-aircraft.

Two other 508th flights got off and managed to get near misses on a bridge near Linnich.

Just before noon a French correspondent representing the French radio arrived from XXIX TAC headquarters. He was Rene Balbaud, a short, black-haired intelligent looking man of 27. He spoke a little English and understood a little, provided you spoke slowly. He had been an infantry officer in 1940, and a prisoner of the Germans. He explained that French radio stations were starved for accurate stories about the American Air Force. He was anxious to know all about the Group's operations, including the types of missions and tactical principles, and to meet typical American fighter-bomber pilots.

Staff Sergeant Harry Webre of the 507th, a Louisiana "parley-voover" was corraled to handle the work of interpretation, and Monsieur Balbaud got "the works"—the different types of bombing, the formations flown, the coordinated dive-bombing attack and more. with diagrams to make everything picture-clear.

He talked with Lieut. Donnelly and Denver Smith of the 507th who described for him a "call" mission against a self-propelled gun on the outskirts of Aachen, and a dive-bombing run on Dusseldorf. He met Capt. Art Justice and Ollie Simpson of the 506th, who had been shot at by Me-262's, and Lieut., Lauter who had been on a good mission in the morning to Barmen. He saw Lieut. John Wainwright of the 508th and listened to the story of how six Me-109's were destroyed in a single engagement.

"Formidable, Mon Dieu, il est formidable!" exclaimed M. Balbaud.

He talked to Colonel Moon about the Group's progress and its work in general, and was highly pleased when he was taken down to look at the colonel's own airplane. He spent a good ten minutes standing on the wing and watching while Col. Moon worked the flaps, opened and shut the canopy, and pointed out the various instruments.

He had ridden in a P-61 on a two-hour night patrol over the Rhine, and he wanted to know which was better, the P-61 or the P-47. Col. Moon explained that they were designed for different jobs, and each was probably the best in its own field.

He ate lunch in the officer's mess, and soon showed he knew how to get more service out of the Belgian waitresses than we did. First he kept talking and taking notes until his food started to get cold. Finally he put his pencil down and set himself to the business of eating. He looked around, then called the waitress and asked for "du pain." With more alacrity than usual, the girl hustled out and brought back some bread.

P. R. O. Andy Wilson was pushing the gravy aside to make room for the peaches on his plate as usual, then M. Balbaud called the waitress again. She brought out clean plates and forks. He promptly sent her back for the proper utensils—spoons.

Later on in the afternoon he wanted to know if there was a bar in the house. Unfortunately an earlier check had revealed that the bartender was in town with the key to the drinks, so he went thirsty.

He wound up his visit after making arrangements for a recorded interview, for French radio use, completed later, with Lieut. Bill Warwick who spoke French sufficiently well to be understood by the French audience, and yet with an accent which would mark him obviously an American—which is what M. Balbaud desired.

Don Ferris took a riding from the boys in the evening about a nurse named Frances he had been taking to the weekly parties recently. The rumor had circulated that he was trying to find out the regulations about asking his C. O. for permission to get married. Floyd Blair led the whooping and hollering, Jack Ray called for a "bachelor party," and John Phelps volunteered to be best man. Phelps immediately nicknamed Ferris "Candy Legs"—apparently Texas-talk for "lover". Don laughed and cussed everyone out for making a fuss about a "pleasant friendship."

Meanwhile there were big goings-on over at Maastricht in Holland-headquarters of XXIX TAC. During the day, a Sunday, the Dutch were treated to their first exhibition of American football in a game between a XXIX TAC team and one representing the 404th Group.

The 404th team included men from all three squadrons, who had practiced together at odd moments between missions, under the coaching of Athletic Officer Dike Pisegna and Paratrooper Jack Edak, liaison officer from the ground forces.

XXIX TAC was heavily favored, having played and won a game already with the Ninth Air Force headquarters team by a 23-0 score. However with the help of husky Harley Rollinger, a new 507th pilot and former Iowa State College football star, the 404th played TAC to a standstill, only losing 3-0 late in the final period when TAC kicked a field goal.

Monday the 28th was a day of heavy activity in support of the Second Armored Division which won for the Group commendations from XXIX TAC and the division commander. A beautiful sunrise signaled good weather, and the Group dispatched 100 sorties on armored column cover, most of the time working over front line towns.

The 507th twice hit the village of Tetz, just east of the Roer between Linnich and Julich. The 506th sent three early missions which destroyed a castle at Barmen on the west side of the Roer, called in by "Cutbreak" of Combat Command "A" as a German strongpoint.

But the big job of the day was done on Flossdorf, a tiny village almost on the banks of the Roer, barely one mile southeast of Linnich and halfway between Linnich and Barmen. The 507th hit it on the squadron's first mission; the 508th subsequently bombed it three times and the 506th four times with flights led by George Stovall, Earl Fisher, Jo-Jo, Sherwood and Ashby Marshall. The target-enemy tanks in the town-was called in urgently by "Cutbreak". Stovall and Fisher each claimed a tank for their flight; Sherwood's flight claimed four, and Marshall bombed where "Cutbreak" laid red smoke without being able to observe his results.

Within two days came a letter from Major General E. N. Harmon, commanding the Second Armored, which highly praised the effectiveness of the attacks on Flossdorf, stating that eight tanks had been destroyed and the town severely damaged. General Harmon pointed out that the enemy tank concentration constituted a serious threat to the northern flank of Combat Command "A."

XXIX TAC also teletyped congratulations and a commendation.

Meanwhile in addition to the armored support operations, occasional flights still were going out to drop propaganda leaflets to the enemy front-line troops.

Leroy Graham led three ships of the 507th out on such a mission about two o'clock in the afternoon, pointing for a drop-zone northeast of Linnich. The three were separated by flak over Linnich, and started to reform just under an overcast at 5,000 feet. They saw about 15 or 20 aircraft milling about, four miles to the east. Lieut. Graham was in the middle, starting a left-hand turn to reform, Lieut. Cherne was high on his right, and Lieut. Bill Guyot was wide and low on his left, when two aircraft appeared, crossing behind the flight from below at "five o'clock". By the time Guyot saw the scoops under the wings and recognized them as Me-109's, they were zooming right up his tail, and the leader opened fire.

The burst hit Guyot's plane in the tail, fuselage and wings, and knocked out his trim tabs. He reversed his turn to the left-a cardinal error, as he said later-and got another burst from dead astern. Somehow he managed to escape by diving away.



He headed for home at 2,000 feet, afraid to lose speed by climbing, or to lose the chance of bailing out by diving for the deck. Flak hit him in the engine, which started throwing oil, and his compass started swinging about.

"If I'm heading into Germany now, I've HAD it," he thought.

Then he saw those welcome landmarks, the slag-piles along the Meuse Valley. He flew back from Maastricht with his canopy open because of the streaming oil, and when his engine finally quit two miles from the field, he aimed for a clearing, skidded to avoid some high-tension wires, stalled, and bounced in safely. Oil covered the fuselage and completely obscured the lettering and star-insignia.

"I was afraid all the time our gunners would shoot me down for a buzz-bomb," he said.

Meanwhile an Me-109 had slid up behind Graham. Cherne bounced the enemy, as Graham dove away. Cherne fired, saw tracers looping over the 109's wing, but saw no strikes. The Messerschmitt broke down and to the right, and Graham broke up and away. That was the last anyone saw of Graham-apparently safe and out of trouble, flying eastward toward the distant tangle of the dog-fighting planes. He was listed as "MIA".

Cherne looked in his rear-view mirror and saw the large reflection of another Me-109 with a big black-and-white spinner revolving almost down his back. He hauled up and away and into the overcast, and returned home alone.

The Group suffered another sad loss the very next day when Lieut. Wilford Knighton of the 506th was hit by flak on a dive-bombing run against a road-junction just east of Linnich, and was killed attempting to crash-land behind the American lines.

Quite a few buzz-bombs came over during the day, after a long letup.

First missions for the 29th were a series of escort flights, two by the 507th and one each by the 506th and 508th covering the bombing of B-26's and the new A-26's just behind the enemy lines. The 508th later got in two front-line dive-bombing missions, the 506th one, and the 507th a four-ship mission against a gun-position and observation post.

Jack Ray was the 507th mission leader, and when he was airborne, "Pink soap" Corps (XIII) told him to hit Linnich instead. Then "Tolly" (Combat Command "A" of the Seventh Armored Division) called urgently "I have a much more important target for you."

It was the town of Beeck, three miles north of newly-captured Geilenkirchen, and sticking like a thorn into the side of the American push toward Linnich.

Jack asked for smoke on the target, but "Tolly" said he couldn't provide any.

"Be careful where you bomb," the controller added. He explained that the enemy was dug into ruins in the center and north parts of the town, with our tanks on three sides.

"Can you see me circling the town?" Jack asked.

"No," said the controller, "but I guess you've got the right place."

Jack picked out the town, and peeled off at 8,000 feet in a steep dive, and discovered how close he actually was working to our troops. In the lower part of his gunsight he could see the cerise panels marking U. S. tanks in a horseshoe arc around the town on the east, south and west.

At 2,000 feet, more U. S. tanks appeared in his sight-ring. He pulled his nose up a little to clear them. At 1,000 feet, with the town rushing up at him, he let his bombs go.

As the flight pulled up they saw two explosions in the center of the town, then two more almost on top of them, then a concentrated pattern of four hits not more than 200 yards ahead of our tanks.

The ground controller got back on the air again.

"A beautiful job of bombing!" he yelled into the mike. Jack said he seemed too excited to talk, but finally thanked the formation for its help. Jack asked if they could do anything else.

The controller said the planes could strafe the town and look the area over, so the flight made another pass, spraying the town with 50-caliber bullets before returning to base.

Next day's situation maps showed Beeck within our lines.

The last day of November began with two morning missions pending, one an armed recce with a time-over-target of 0800 hours, and the other a "cooperation" mission with the Eighth Bomber Command to be airborne after 0900. The Eighth Bomber Command mission was given first priority.

The boys sat around all morning while the weather varied from fairly clear to cloudy, waiting for minds to be made up at higher headquarters. They finally took off on a Group show to support the heavy bombers at 1300 hours.

The mission looked like a "heller" on the Group briefing map, arrows and string running the course across the Rhine and 40 miles beyond Frankfurt to look at an airdrome near Fulda, 100 miles east of the Rhine, then back over the Frankfurt fighter fields, on up to Coblenz and Bonn, then home. The task was to provide secondary support to the bombers, guarding against following waves of enemy fighters in the event escorting Eighth Fighter Command P-51's were heavily engaged. Enemy fighters had been very active against our heavy bombers, and the situation promised danger.

The Group started seeing heavy bombers and U. S. fighters over the Rhine, south of Coblenz. For the next 100 miles until the Group turned back near Fulda, there was a steady stream of bombers in boxes, plowing in and plowing out, one after another. But after two big air battles with the Eighth during the past three days, the enemy fighter divisions appeared to be grounded for "maintenance and rest" for no enemy aircraft were sighted, and "Roselee" for the first time in a long time reported, "We have no bandits in the air."

The extreme length of the mission tied up the Group all afternoon and prevented further flights.

During the evening, Group noncoms of the first three grades opened an NCO Club in St. Trond with a big dance, with music by the "Nix Compris" band. Headed by Master Sergeant Sharkey of the 506th, the club obtained the use of a building in town equipped with card tables, dance floor, a radio and a bar.

One of the most unusual incidents in the Group's history involving the safe return of a badly-damaged aircraft occurred during November, on a 507th squadron mission against a tank dispersal area near Julich. The pilot involved was Lieut. Dave Schwartz, who joined the Group fresh from the states early in the month. As he described the dive-bombing attack:

"I was going down almost vertically, dividing my attention between the pip in my gunsight and my element leader, who was a little ahead of me and to one side. Almost at the instant I released my bombs I felt a big thump, and something threw me over on my left wing."

"The plane started vibrating, and I couldn't haul it straight back in a normal recovery. So I began to be a little skeptical about pulling out at all. I already was too low to bail out safely.

"I used a lot of muscle and prayer in an effort to pull up in a kind of sidewise crab. I finally got the nose of the plane over the horizon and headed for altitude.

"I could see red tracer balls all around me. Then I looked out at my left wing and saw that a top plate was missing. The ship was shaking the whole 30 minutes back.

"When we landed I looked at the hole and it was big enough for me to crawl through. It's a good thing I'd released my bombs. The enemy flak shell went through the top of the wing and blew out the bottom, inches from my bomb rack."

*On the ground, early in the month enemy resistance on the island of Walcheren collapsed, opening the way to Allied use of the Port of Antwerp, which immediately became a prime target of the V-weapons. The American First Army strengthened its positions in spite of heavy fighting with frequent counter-attacks by enemy armor, infantry and artillery in the Schmidt-Vossenack area around the Roer dams.*

*The First Army cleared Stolberg after weeks of fighting, as the Ninth Army jumped off on its November 16th drive for the Roer, gaining two miles the first day against slight resistance north of Aachen. On the opening assault the 30th Infantry Division captured Mariadorf. Resistance stiffened the second day of the attack and slowed the advance to a walk. Fighting became as bitter as in the pre-breakthrough days in Normandy, and gains dwindled to nothing, as the enemy's best troops and armor concentrated against the U. S. Ninth and First Armies, and the British Second Army.*

*G-2 meanwhile has determined that seven previously unaccounted-for German panzer divisions are somewhere along the First Army front between Aachen and Trier, but where and for what purpose is a matter of speculation.*

## Chapter Eleven

### LULL BEFORE THE...

*During the, first days of December the First U. S. Army was tied up in heavy fighting toward Duren and through Hurtgen Forest, while the Ninth pushed slowly up to the Roer south of Julich in an all-out yard-by-yard battle . . . Eight out of 12 enemy panzer divisions on the Western Front are in the reorganized German Seventh Army facing the U. S. First, according to Army G-2 maps ...*

The character of the ground fighting, as the year wore on into December, not only affected the targets offered to the tactical air support, but also injected some of its own dogged monotony into the tempo of the air operations.

The infantry moved carefully from strongpoint to strongpoint against determined opposition, valuing gains by the inch, in hard, unspectacular, bitter, dirty, stubborn fighting.

Day by day the 404th Group bombed the same towns, within the same few square miles along the Roer. Methodically the target was spotted on the briefing maps; in most instances the courses, location and recognizable features of the target were already completely familiar to the pilots. Following a set outline so that no information would be overlooked, the mission leader conducted the briefing. Out to the planes; take off and form up; the "commuter's route" to Aachen and then out across the Cologne plain; the second town along the road northeast out of Julich today-perhaps it was the first town yesterday, and tomorrow would be the third town out along the same road.

There was nothing spectacular about a straight drop on a stationary target-a group of buildings reduced to rubble, which looked like nothing at all worth hitting from the air. You hit it because you knew the enemy had holes and cellar-hideouts under the rubble that needed cleaning out, although the object you stared at through your gunsight was no more dramatic a target than a white bullseye chalked out on a practice field in Mississippi.

There was a routine about the pull-up, even a set of routine maneuvers designed to keep you clear of the flak. The flak wasn't spectacular either-just methodically deadly. No enemy running on the roads, no tanks discernible, no ammunition trains that blew sky-high in dramatic evidence of a good hit; just out, down, release, evade, reform, back to base, peel off, land.

Minute coordinates on the situation maps indicated the change day-by-day in the front-line troop-positions. The lines would seem static, until suddenly the pilots out dive-bombing just east of the Roer would recall that they hadn't had a mission on the west or American side of the river in nearly a week. And then they would recheck the situation maps and discover that the steady creep of the blue crayon line marking Allied forward positions had slid beyond their old targets-Barmen, Flossdorf, Kirchberg-and now hugged the banks of the Roer from Julich to Linnich.

During the first four days of December, for example, when weather held mission schedules down to one or two a day, dive-bombing targets were Baal, 4 miles north of Linnich; Elsdorf, 10 miles east of Julich; Pattern, two miles north of Julich; Boslar, three miles east of Linnich; Hambach, four miles southeast of Julich. And all were east of the Boer.

When weather over the battle area became too bad Saturday the 2nd, TAC "laid on" a deep armed recce to the vicinity of Frankfurt, 160 miles southeast of St. Trond, which ended up clobbering rail targets. "Mole" Wright of the 506th was hit by flak for the eighth time. The flight was the last mission for George Hughes of the 507<sup>th</sup>. During the evening he and John Volker, 507th Engineering Officer, were involved in an

accident between their jeep and a weapons carrier. Hughes suffered a broken leg and was hospitalized and lost to the Group.

However there was better news for Ray Donnelly; long-awaited orders promoting him to captain arrived December 3rd, clearing the way for his combat leave.

And as the 507th lost a veteran pilot, the 506th regained an old friend whom they never had expected to see again-Second Lieut. Robert L. Daly, He was the sole survivor of 506th's Red Flight, which was knocked out of the sky in the squadron's most bitter air fight near Coulommiers August 27th.

Recently released from the hospital, where he had been since he bailed out of his burning plane that day, Daly visited the Group and on December 3rd filed a claim for another enemy aircraft to add to the 506th's score of eight destroyed during the Coulommiers dogfight.

The claim was on behalf of Max Conn, his flight leader, who was lost together with Adams and Leake. Daly recalled that on the first pass of the enemy aircraft that bounced the squadron August 27th, Conn slid in behind an Me-109 that overshot him. Daly, on Conn's wing, saw strikes on the German's cockpit, and smoke beginning to pour from the plane.

Then Daly himself was hit in both wings and the canopy, felt a small explosion that filled his cockpit with smoke and flame, and bailed out. Going down in his 'chute he saw a bubble-canopy P-47 get its tail shot off and fall in a slow spin. He drifted into a cloud without being able to see whether the pilot of the spinning plane got out or not.

December 4th "Skin" Galbreath was out with the 507th on a dive-bombing run to Merzenich near Zulpich, ten miles southeast of Duren, when orders arrived promoting him to lieutenant colonel. Bronson Eaton, the squadron parachute expert located some silver leaves and sewed them on Galbreath's flying jacket while the new colonel was airborne. "Skin" never noticed the new addition until someone commented on them during the post-mission interrogation.

Mite-sized Donn Driscoll stalked in after the mission, grinning and rubbing his hands, and bragging: "I shot sixteen hundred and five rounds into a flak position. Sixteen hundred and five rounds! Sure it stopped shooting. But there were others in the neighborhood so I got the hell out of there.

An interesting aftermath of the mission was Don Ferris' account of how it feels to be charged with the responsibility of leading a flight for the first time in combat.

"I kept imagining all the things I was going to do wrong," Don recalled.

"I was the high flight, The first flight was at 8,000 feet, and Crocker's flight just a little below at 7,500. And there was Ferris way up at 12,000 feet watching them scissor through the flak.

"There was a high cloud bank, running east and west, which cast a shadow on the ground, and every time the low flights went into the shadow, I was afraid I was going to lose them. But I stuck like glue.

"On the dive-bombing run, we had to slide in under the cloud bank, and then pull up right into it. When I got back up, for a minute I was alone in the sky. I was twitching a little until the other planes finally appeared.

"On one of the scissors, Galbreath was turning in toward Crocker when a flight of P-47's from some other outfit came winging across in front of them. I thought, uh-oh, here's where Ferris gets all screwed up and gives some other Group top cover all over the sky."

He talked about the things that all pilots know and love about flying, how pretty it was, like flying over the ocean, to be above a solid cloud layer; how fine a large formation looked when the leader made a turn, and the squadrons crossed over and under, and flights within squadrons crossed, and elements swung over, and wingmen switched, and airplanes were all over the sky crisscrossing-then, out of it, and there suddenly was the formation all realigned, trim and disciplined.

"That was the most fun I've had flying," he added. "And it was the first time I've known everything that was going on during a mission."

Operations were livened up the fifth by a pair of dive-bombing attacks in Group strength northeast of the battle-area, a series of squadron shows using the new 500-pound incendiary bombs for the first time, and a thrilling 508th attack on a prize target-enemy aircraft on the ground.

A 507th formation led by Bill Lee picked up the good news over the radio that U. S. troops were in Julich. The squadron then proceeded to drop incendiaries all over Welldorf, the next village northeast of Julich on the way to the Rhine. Unusually large fires and columns of thick white smoke attested to the effectiveness of the new fire-bombs.

But the big moment of the day came on the early 508th mission, a strike against the enemy airdrome at Krefeld, ten miles northwest of Dusseldorf and five miles west of the Rhine.

The squadron leader, Wayne Anacker, had seven to ten-tenths cloud cover to contend with, but after circling observed the airdrome through a small hole in the clouds. On it were at least 12 twin-engine single-fin aircraft, probably Ju-88's.

Anacker started down immediately, fearful of losing sight of the field, and called the squadron to follow quickly. Picking up speed, he opened fire with his machine guns from 8,000 feet and continued on down to 4,000 feet, where he released his bombs. The squadron followed his lead, ran into intense light flak, and almost immediately pulled into the clouds.

Only Frank Webner, Anacker's wingman, got a good look at what happened to the target. He saw Anacker's bullets spattering all over three parked planes, and saw his own tracers hitting two others. He didn't stay down long enough to watch the bombs go off as German 20 and 37 mm stuff streamed up in his face, but the squadron on the basis of his observation put in a claim of five Ju-88's probably destroyed.

Only the runway alert, led by Earl Fisher of the 506th got off December 6th. and the weather was so bad they had to land at one of our new forward airfields near the German border, after a wild goose chase to the Rhine.

During the day we heard the story of a fine humanitarian action by Private First Class Saul Kagan, a special interpreter on German and Slavic languages on temporary assignment to the Group. Through him two Belgian Jewish refugees who had managed to reach the safety of the United States received their first news in three years of the fate of their two small children.

"If you ever get to Brussels, look up the relatives of Mr. and Mrs. Samuel S-, Kagan was told in a letter from a friend in the States.

"The couple had to flee Belgium in 1941 after the German occupation, leaving their children behind," the letter continued. "They lingered in France until the capitulation of Italy in the Fall of 1943, then crossed secretly into Northern Italy, finally reaching Rome, where they came under the protection of the American Army. They are now at the refugee camp at Fort Ontario, New York, and haven't heard a word about the children since 1941. The boy, Camille, would be nine now, and the girl, Lillian, six."

From A-92 Kagan finally managed a trip to Brussels, and located Mrs. A-, sister-in-law to the parents, and aunt to the children. She was a young, black-eyed, black-haired woman, but looked older than her 30-odd years. She received him in her three-room apartment on the middle floor of an old three-story house, wedged in a solid block of dwellings down a narrow Brussels side-alley, and apologized for keeping him in the kitchen to talk. It was the only warm room in the house-the coal shortage, she explained.

Furniture throughout the house was adequate, but aging; in the bedroom, however, only the bed-frames remained. She said the mattresses were in the cellar, where she and her husband and her own two children slept now because of the buzz-bombs.

For the first eight or nine months, Mrs. A- said, conditions did not change much under the German occupation. It was an old Nazi trick of appearing at first as a friendly and competent "new regime" rather than as a ruthless conqueror.

The mass roundups of the Jews began, and every Jew had to have a "J" punched in his passport, and had to wear a yellow cloth Star of David on his outer clothing with the word "Juif" written across in black. Gestapo patrols traveled the streets in vans, accosting all wearers of the Star, and challenging others who had what they thought was a Jewish "look". Some patrols moved house by house through the Jewish neighborhoods getting "recruits" for death-camps like Lublin.

Mr. and Mrs. S- made their escape, leaving the children with their sister-in-law, who with her own family was determined to stay. They felt the Nazis would leave the children alone, but they knew they themselves would not survive unless they fled, and would not be able to make good on their escape with the children along.

Mrs. A- sent her own boy and girl to a farm, to join the family of a friend with a non-Jewish name. The S- children she turned over to the local Roman Catholic parish priest, who sent them to a boarding school attached to a convent in Bruges, where the Sisters of the Sacred Heart fed them, clothed them, and at this time were still taking care of them.

"I visited them less than a month ago," Mrs. A- said. "They looked well. The Sisters told me they had difficulty obtaining clothing, so I have some shoes for them. Camille is in the third grade, and is first in his class. Lillian is in the first grade, And Christmas I will have them here with me in Brussels for a party."

She said she was convinced that Cardinal Van Raey, highest Catholic prelate in Belgium, had issued secret instructions to all Church organizations to take care of children whose parents were unable to provide homes because of political, religious or racial stresses.

(Father Van Garsse, Group Catholic chaplain and a native of Belgium, said this was an erroneous impression, but there might have been an understanding among local bishops about caring for the persecuted).

Mrs. A- explained that it was the common thing to turn to the local priest in any such emergency, and almost all the Jewish children who survived the German occupation did so because of the assistance rendered by their Catholic neighbors.

Mrs. A- seemed to become more excited and tense as she told Kagan of the years of occupation. Living in a predominantly Christian portion of the city, she and her husband hid in their little apartment for two years without stepping out into the street, depending on her neighbors, who could have betrayed her with a hint, to do her marketing and bring her food.

Once, she said, she was standing looking out her front window when she suddenly observed her neighbor across the narrow street violently motioning her away. Later she learned the Gestapo van had driven through her street, stopping passersby and inspecting the neighborhood.

As soon as the British Army swept through the Brussels area, Mrs. A - brought her own children back from their farm-refuge. Camille and Lillian stayed at the convent school where she felt they would be better cared for, because food and other supplies were so difficult to get.

The November butter ration hadn't been delivered at all, she said, and nearly everything had to be obtained through the black market.

"I have just placed an order with a black-market coal dealer for 1100 pounds," she told Kagan. "If I get it, I will have to pay 500 francs (eleven dollars); it used to cost 45 francs before the war, and even under the German black market the price varied between 200 and 400 francs."

She had thought her brother and sister-in-law were in Rome, because her only letter from them in three years had been written there. Her face lit up when she heard that they had reached America. In her mind the whole problem of the family and the children was solved. Kagan had to explain that the whole plan of emergency refugee shelters in the United States was just a temporary arrangement, and they might not be able to stay there.

"Well, even that is a great help," she said. "But I hope they can stay there, and have the children with them."

It was Kagan's pleasure to send the good news back to the unhappy pair at Fort Ontario that their children were well and safe, and waiting for them.

December 7th was just another bad day on the Western front—cold, cloudy and rainy. Only when the Armed Forces radio in the evening mentioned it, did we recall that it was the third anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

However December 8th was the feast of the Immaculate Conception, a Roman Catholic holy day, so Father Van Garsse celebrated solemn high mass at 1600 hours in Bevingen church in memory of those who died at Pearl Harbor and all the other battlefields of the war.

Barefooted, sandalled and tonsured Franciscan monks from a local monastery were in the choir, and Capt. John O'Rourke of the 506th sang two solos during the mass. Then at the conclusion, the organist played and O'Rourke sang the "Star-Spangled Banner" as impressively as we had ever heard it—with a strong, religious undercurrent, reverently as a hymn rather than a martial air.

Meanwhile in the skies the clouds thinned out, and the planes got into the air on three separate squadron missions and a combined Group show.

"Pintail" provided cover for the bombed-up 507th and 508th on the Group strike, a deep penetration to the northeastern extremity of the Ruhr in now-familiar territory, where the 507th took on a host of rail targets around Soest, while the 508th occupied itself primarily with a heavily defended airfield at Werl, near Hamm, about 15 miles from Soest.

"Crocus" Squadron was first in the Group formation, led by Colonel Moon. Lieut. Orr, tail-end Charley in the colonel's flight, saw a train near Werl and reported it. The colonel didn't see it, but gave Orr permission to attack.

Orr made a lone pass, missed the locomotive on the train, but smashed a nearby station. Then the squadron broke up into elements, hitting targets all over the place in a wild round of dive-bombing and repeated strafing passes. Ultimate claims were two locomotives, ten rail cuts and 54 railroad cars in and around Soest. And on the way home they strafed Hambach, four miles southeast of Julich, at the request of "Roselee".



Colonel Moon kept wondering why everyone was overrunning him on the way back, although he was pulling 38 to 40 inches of mercury. He wasn't aware that he was flying with his wheels down-inadvertently popped out of their wing-wells when he did a sharp Immelmann pulling up from one of his diving attacks. Lieut. John Boland said the pilots were all sweating Moon out, flying with throttles back to 29 inches, staggering through the air at a creeping 160 miles per hour, with flak coming up all over the place.

Meanwhile Major Tibbets, leading the 508th located the enemy airdrome at Werl through the clouds, and immediately dropped his wing and went down in a strafing attack. His wingman, Kemal Saied, spotted a Heinkel-111 bomber on the deck, just taking off, as they broke below the overcast at 8,000 feet. He heard Tibbets say he was going after it.

Saied continued his dive and opened fire at 6,000 feet. He saw several Me-110's on the field and concentrated on one. After observing strikes on the engines and wing roots, he switched to another one and got more strikes. He went down almost to the deck, and still carrying his bombs, broke up and away. Back at 10,000 feet, he couldn't locate the airfield again through the overcast, so unloaded on a railroad yard he spotted through a hole.

So fast was Tibbo's dive that Elton Long, leading the second flight, lost sight of him and the target he was attacking. However he recognized the major's voice saying, "I see an enemy aircraft and I'm going to attack," and later he said he heard Tibbets answer Roselee with "yeah, I got him," apparently referring to the enemy plane.

Clarence Wydner of the 507th got in on the airdrome as an observer. Passing overhead he observed the He-III flying at about 200 feet, and directly behind it a P-47, closing, presumably Major Tibbets. Then he saw the He-III streaming gasoline. It broke into three uncontrolled. snaprolls, hit the ground and exploded in flames. However, looking around, he saw another flash and explosion nearby, and was unable to locate the P-47.

Tibbets did not return from the mission, and one He-111 destroyed by him was added to the 508th record on the basis of what was heard and seen by Saied, Wydner and Long.

Claude O'Brien, leading Blue Flight, kept his eye on the airdrome after White Flight went down, and when he heard Saied calling in five plus parked enemy aircraft, he started down. His element leader was hit by flak before the dive and pulled out to head for home with his wingman, so O'Brien and number two man Andy Shaddix went down alone.

At 6,000 feet, below the cloud layer. they began strafing, passed the field, returned and released their bombs at 1,500 feet after getting dozens of strikes all over an Me-110. Their bombs straddled the twin-engine enemy, and they shared credit for its destruction. With flak coming up from the field's perimeter defenses like hail, they got back up into the clouds fast, without waiting for another look at the target.

Long, who was bringing his flight down through the overcast in hopes of locating the airdrome, broke out of the clouds at 8,000 feet and immediately spotted a railroad marshalling yard. Down went Red Flight, strafing as flak came up to meet them at 5,000 feet. Lieut. Richard X. Walker, a wingman on his sixth mission, kicked his rudder back and forth to spray his bullets over a wider area. At 1,500 feet the flight let go its 500's on a jam-packed lineup of at least 100 freight cars.

The bombs started. landing, exploding right and left among the cars, some of which went up in bright orange bursts of flame. As the planes pulled their noses up and could no longer strafe, the flak guns intensified their barrage, so "Granite Red" flight high-tailed back for the clouds.

Back at the base Colonel Moon called the pilots on the mission in for a critique because he felt the attacks had gotten out of control in a breach of sensible flying discipline. Already disturbed over the loss of

Major Tibbets, the mild-mannered colonel came as close as he ever did to swearing when he heard that some of the pilots had seen four or five more Heinkels stooging around at low altitude, in addition to the one bagged by Tibbets.

He lectured very heatedly that the other Heinkels should have been called in, not once, but several times—and attacked and destroyed.

"That, by gosh, is what we're out there for!"

For nearly a week after the Werl airdrome strike, weather and lack of promising tactical targets held down the number of missions.

There was the usual party Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup>, but no operations. A couple of "routine" dive-bombing and a quiet B-26 escort assignment the 10<sup>th</sup>. Leaflet missions on the 11<sup>th</sup>, bringing the American version of the war news to the German "dough" via the "Frontpost" newspaper.

*It was "quiet" on the ground too. The First and Ninth Armies prowled up and down the west bank of the Roer, stopped by high waters and flooded areas, and the Ninth worked at reducing pockets of resistance still holding out west of the river. The First and Fourth Infantry Divisions were relieved for the first time since they went ashore D-Day and a new division, the 106th, appeared on the situation maps, spread thinly along a broad front through the central Ardennes. The American problem was to keep up the attacks along the Roer as long as results were favorable, and at the same time husband strength for a heavy offensive when the dismal weather ended. Offense-minded General Eisenhower (according to General Marshall in his 1945 report to the Secretary of War) was compelled to hold some sectors of the front with comparatively weak forces in order to gather strength at his points of attack ... Meanwhile G-2 has discovered that the Seventh German Army now includes nine panzer divisions.*

For the 404th more waiting, card-playing, censoring mail, trips to Brussels. On December 12th only a runway alert, scrambled all to no purpose, and a spur-of-the-moment flight by the 507th in an effort to get at some tanks reported in Hambach, which ended up jettisoning its bombs through a solid overcast in the approximate vicinity of Duren, as directed by "Roselee".

Haze and overcast persisted throughout the 13th, and limited action the 14th to three squadron missions against rail targets between the Rhine and the enemy forward troops, and a leaflet-dropping mission by a formation of new pilots grouped into a "training squadron" under Ollie Simpson of the 506th and Floyd Blair of the 507th.

During the evening the squadrons ran an initial basketball practice session at a school gymnasium recently made available in St. Trond.

Friday the 15th operations began at noon with area cover for A-26's and B-26's bombing around Schleiden in the German Ardennes, south of the Roer dams. The mediums bombed through an almost solid overcast, and later in the day the 404th duplicated the technique, bombing from level flight in the vicinity of Euskirchen at the direction of "Roselee". in fulfillment of a radar-controlled method of fighter-bombing which had its origins in experiments in Normandy in which the Group played a leading part.

Saturday it continued damp and hazy, and only the 506th was airborne on an abortive search for enemy aircraft which was recalled before they passed the bomb-line beyond Aachen.

Colonel Moon decided it was a good time to start thinking about a Group nickname for publicity purposes, and offered a prize of 1,000 francs for the best suggestion by a member of the Group.

Frustrated by idleness, the pilots failed to become enthusiastic about the Saturday night party, and it was lightly attended partly because some of the hospitals supplying nurses by this time had started parties of their own.

But unknown to the party-goers who shot craps on Major Crow's felt-topped table, danced, or retired with a quart of champagne, another kind of a party was brewing in the mist-shrouded Ardennes, where grim and desperate panzer grenadiers were on the move along 40 miles of heretofore quiet front.

*In the days immediately preceding December 16th, slow advances in Monschau Forest and the plain east of Aachen created a front of several miles along the west bank of the Roer. Ninth Army activity dropped off to nothing, and the southernmost Eighth Corps of the First Army was idle until early the 16th when G-2 reported "sudden jabbing attacks of battalion strength" by the enemy. "Local successes" were followed December 17th by an "attack in strength using infantry, tanks, air . . . and parachutists ... on a broad front generally between Eupen and Trier . . ." Advances of six miles toward Malmedy were reported. Said the Ninth Air Force Intelligence Summary of December 18th, "This attack is considered to be an effort by the German Army High Command to bolster German morale just before Christmas".*

None of this information reached the 404th Group Saturday, and very little of it Sunday. It wasn't until Monday, December 18th, that we gained an inkling of what actually was going on in the hills 60 miles away . . .

## Chapter Twelve

### THE ARDENNES BULGE

Captain Peterson, his finger poised over a point on the map, looked up into a ring of unbelieving faces.

"I didn't believe it myself," he said, speaking as much to himself as to Captain Cohn the interrogating officer, and the group of wide-eyed 506th pilots who'd been waiting for return of the mission. "But that's where they are."

His finger pointed to Stavelot, 25 miles inside our bomb-line drawn in a heavy black line on the large wall map.

"The Germans are right there, with tanks and trucks and flak guns and everything else," he said. "We bombed and strafed a long column of them, and they definitely were German."

That was how the word that turned rumor into fact was brought to the 404th on Monday evening, December 18—the Germans were counter-attacking in force through Belgium, toward the Meuse river, toward Verviers, Liege, Namur, Dinant. And toward St. Trond.

It was clear that this was a major offensive, our front lines deeply penetrated. And for the first time since arrival on the continent, the 404th found itself directly in the path of a German ground attack. For it was apparent the Germans hoped to drive to the sea, with the great port of Antwerp (feeding three armies) as a prime objective. And a straight line drawn from Stavelot to Antwerp virtually bisected our runway at A-92.

Actually the 404th had entered into the Battle of the Bulge the day before, December 17. In a two-day series of air battles on December 17 and 18 the group bagged 21 German fighters destroyed and 13 damaged, almost 20 percent of the total Ninth Air Force claims during this surprising "comeback" of the German Air Force. Not until the evening of the 18th however, did we fully realize that the Luftwaffe had been out to "cover" the opening of the Rundstedt push.

The operations order for December 17 called for a group dive-bombing attack on Hangelar airfield 10 miles east of Bonn. Enemy paratroopers had been transported in Ju-52's on the previous night, and there were reports of raids over the First Army area by Ju-88's, Ju-87's and He-111's. We presumed, and probably were correct, that the enemy aircraft had landed at this field after their night attacks.

But we never got there. It wasn't necessary.

"We went out to hit the airport, but the airport was in the air," was the way Major John A. Marshall explained it when the shooting was over and the score totaled.

Marshall led the group formation. He had joined the 508th squadron the previous day, December 16, as operations officer, being replaced by Captain Arthur E. Justice, from the 506th as group tactical inspector and assistant group ops officer.

Marshall had the 508th out front. Captain William M. Lee led the 507th in the high "down sun" position, and Captain Harry F. Baker the 506th in the low position.

A filmy overcast at 9,000 feet often hid the squadrons from each other. Frequently the flights within the squadrons were out of visual contact. As a result, the squadrons were to fight three virtually independent actions when the big dogfight developed.

The 508th made first contact with the Luftwaffe near Euskirchen, turning to meet the attack of 50-plus Me-109's and FW-190's.

"They let down out of the clouds in two patches," said Lieutenant Harold J. Buelow.

Within seconds the sky was cluttered with turning, twisting, diving and shooting aircraft. Burning and falling planes and belly tanks added to the confusion; and in the middle of it all the enemy ground defenses-unmindful that many of the aircraft involved were German-opened up with a flak barrage.

"It looked just like one of those Navy recruiting posters," Marshall said afterward. Almost as Marshall ordered the 507th and 506th to "break right", he shot down the first of his two Me-109's for the morning.

Six Me-109's, flying head on, crossed underneath Captain Joseph Landa. He racked his plane around and fired 1,500 rounds from dead astern of the trailing plane, which started smoking and coming apart as it plunged to earth.

Lieutenant Robert O. Dodge, flying "tail-end Charley", destroyed one and damaged two before he got mixed up with a flight of three enemy aircraft. In the excitement he called over his radio, "I've got three cornered over here." But a moment later he was heard pleading, "Somebody help me. I've got three on my tail!" With holes in his wings, Dodge "hit the deck" and stayed there all the way from Bonn to A-92, successfully evading his pursuers.

Lieutenant William W. Donohoe inflicted damage on one Me-109, and then had his plane badly riddled by another whose marksmanship he underrated.

"I was sitting there unconcerned about this joker trying to get in a 90-degree deflection shot at me. I was laughing at him. And then his tracers started coming through my canopy. He shot out my guns and electrical system, caused one wheel to drop, knocked out the hydraulic system. A wheel caught on fire. I laughed too soon."

Donohoe got home uninjured, made a beautiful one-wheel landing and groundlooped near the end of the runway, skidding into a revetment from which another plane had just taxied.

Meanwhile, Lee heard Marshall's order for the 508th to jettison bombs and for the 507th to break right. On instruments in the overcast, he started his turn and after 180 degrees broke into the clear and saw the dogfight off to his left.

As he turned toward the battle four stray Me-109's flew toward the 507th. Lieutenant Robert W. Ellingson, flying No. 2 in the third flight, suddenly broke away from the formation in an upward chandelle. Immediately an Me-109 came in ahead of the flight and was destroyed by Lieutenant John C. Ross, the leader, after Lieutenant Arthur T. Stemmermann punched a few holes in it. As Ross pulled up from pursuit of the burning plane, he saw Ellingson dive past, pouring .50's into the doomed Me-109 he had detected above the formation at the beginning of the fight.

While Ross and Stemmermann were engaging the second enemy aircraft, Lee pulled in behind the third which was attacking Ross's flight from the rear. Two deflection shots into the cockpit finished that one. "Beautiful shooting" by Lee, according to Lieutenant Fred H. Varn, John P. Boland and Louis W. Wemmer, of the leading flight.

Stemmermann already was on the tail of a fourth Me-109 he spotted while following Ross, and he fired until a large puff of brownish smoke blew out of the aircraft and it fell out of control. It was four out of four in less time than it takes to tell about it.

The 506th didn't find the main fight but was by no means idle. Dropping their bombs at the first alarm, the Pintail boys tangled with nine Me-109's and in split seconds Baker knocked down one super-charged "cadet" who tried to turn with him and couldn't, and Captain Carl S. Parsons repeated. After Baker fought a draw with a second rival, neither getting in position for a telling shot, the Germans applied full throttle and went home. During the melee a 20-mm cannon shell damaged Lieutenant Joseph L. McDonnell's plane, but he made it back to A-92.

While the pilots on this mission, highly excited over their first aerial encounter in weeks, were being interrogated, all available aircraft were "scrambled" to seek out more victims. Only a 508th flight of six was successful in the hunt. and Lieutenant Elton B. Long damaged one out of two in a brief fight near Bonn.

We tried again in the afternoon to attack the Bonn airfield, again were intercepted, and again made the interception costly for the Germans.

Lieut. Col. Howard L. Galbreath led the 507th, planning a feint southeast of Laacher Lake, then an attack northward against the airfield.

Near Ahrweiler, however, he saw distant tracer flashes as if from a dogfight, and, moments later a single FW-190 came in high on the lead flight. "Skin" turned toward him, but Lieut. Rufus A. Cox, his element leader, slid inside him on the turn and with a series of deflection shots threw such a scare into the pilot that the German bailed out.

On the first turn Cox's wingman, Lieut. Roy H. Adams, saw another FW-190 coming up from below and shooed it off with some damaging hits. Then, although no one afterward remembered calling him, he thought he heard a sudden warning, "Break, Adams!" At the same instant he caught a flash of movement in his rearview mirror and banked steeply to the right as a Focke Wulf overshot him. Adams dropped in behind the FW and blew off part of its tail. The pilot literally "sprang out".

"He looked silly, sitting in the middle of space, looking at me with a surprised expression on his face as his chute opened."

Cox had scarcely turned from his first "kill" when another FW crossed about 800 yards in front of him in a 20-degree glide. Rufus the Red closed in and fired a snap shot as the FW turned sharply to the left, then headed eastward for the Rhine, down the Ahr river valley.

"We went below the level of the cliffs and wooded hills and as he started another turn I got in a long burst and saw strikes on the fuselage. I hauled up to 500 feet to keep from running into the high ground, but he didn't come up. I saw an explosion, black smoke and a bright fire on the hillside below me."

Lieut. Sherman N. Crocker, whose third flight lost the rest of the formation in the haze, went looking for a fight over the Rhine, and found an FW-190 evading several P-47's. Crocker rolled over, got strikes on the FW with short 10-degree deflection shots, then blew the plane up with a burst from dead astern, flying through the debris and oil of the wreckage. Lieut. Donald E. Orr damaged another stray.

Lieut. John F. Phelps couldn't find a target in the air so he led his second flight in a strafing attack which wrecked a 12-car train northwest of Bonn.

While all this was going on, Captain John E. Connor's formation from the 508th spotted a dogfight between FW-190's and P-38's near Bonn. Connor went to the rescue of a straggling P-47 which was being chased by two FW-190's, got in an accurate burst from behind and shot down one of them. "I had to do slow rolls to keep him in sight and keep from hitting the 47 ahead of him. The FW finally spun in."

The bag for the day was 15 enemy fighters destroyed and six damaged. We lost two, both from the 508th in the opening fight of the morning—Lieutenant Gerald H. Perlisky, who was last seen diving in pursuit of an enemy aircraft, and Lieut. Ira M. Fisher.

The 404th was second for the day in the Ninth Air Force, trailing the 366th group which claimed 16 enemy aircraft destroyed.

The Luftwaffe again on Monday, December 18, proved sensitive to fighter-bomber operations against troop movements between the Rhine and the front lines, where increased activity was being reported.

Major Joseph H. "Jo-Jo" Sherwood led twelve 506th planes on the first mission, an armed reconnaissance in the Euskirchen area. Bombing and strafing by flights, the squadron accounted for 14 military vehicles destroyed and a large fire started in the village of Weilerwist.

Captain George W. Stovall's blue flight was still on the deck working over a convoy when Roselee came on the air "screaming like mad" about "bandits" in the area.

"Come on up, George," Jo-Jo ordered, "Let's get together." Wherewith, George earned himself a place forever in the literary annals of the squadron. "All right, Major, I'm coming," the inimitable nasal drawl filtered up through the ragged overcast. "after just one more pass."

Stovall had throttle bent, water on and nearly two yards of mercury indicating in a steep climb to 6,000 feet when the Germans attacked from 12,000 feet. There were more than 50 of them, some with round-tipped wings, some square, and all with belly tanks, most of them retained throughout the battle.

The Jerries were aggressive and smart, keeping one section high for cover at all times, alternating with the two involved in the combat,

The first attack was directed down through Sherwood's high flight. The entire squadron reacted with a superior performance of teamwork with the chips down.

Jo-Jo drew first blood when an Me-109 of the first wave snapped and went into a spin. Several bursts at 50 yards range started the plane smoking as it started down, and Sherwood saw the pilot's 'chute open.

Sherwood's wingman Lieutenant McDonnell, mixed up in his second fight in two days, had shot up his ammunition on ground targets, and stayed out of the melee. Lieut. Charles W. Packer, separated from Stovall's, flight and looking for a friendly companion, swung in on Sherwood's wing and soon was in a Lufberry with an Me-109. With his gun sight out of commission, Packer aimed with his tracers and scored hits with two bursts, but broke off to evade another 109 on his tail.

Lieutenant George L. "Buddy" Britton and his wingman, Lieut. Harry H. Yocum, in white flight, went after an Me-109 that broke through the formation. Britton fired down to 75 yards range, when his ammo gave out, and the damaged 109 went into the overcast. Yocum shook off a Messerschmitt that came up behind him, then saw another in a left bank and scored hits just ahead of the cockpit. He started a fire in the nose and knocked off pieces of the plane, which tumbled off into a spin and disappeared. Climbing for altitude, Yocum scored with a long burst into another 109 climbing ahead of him. Then his ammunition gave out.

Stovall, meanwhile, reached the altitude of the milling aircraft and flew head-on within 20 yards of a flight of six before the plainly visible black crosses and black and white spinners identified them as enemy. Not a shot was fired. Six more came in shooting, but didn't stay to mix it, and Stovall bounced two others, firing at them point blank from 50 yards astern. One of them, losing airspeed in a climb, did a wingover and started down with Stovall in pursuit until the Me exploded. On the pullout he bounced a single 109 which was unaware of the attack until Stovall's guns tattooed the fuselage. The smoking 109 started a diving turn as Stovall ran out of ammunition and broke off.

Lieut. Donald E. Mercer, who had just destroyed another aircraft in an almost head-on attack, skidded onto the tail of Stovall's second victim and drove him into the ground where he exploded. They shared destruction of this plane.

Lieut. Leonard A. Aikins saw Mercer's first kill, then spotted an Me-109 spinning down, and scored hits on it. He climbed to the aid of a P-47 with an Me-109 on his tail, and drove the enemy aircraft away with damaging hits. Aikens turned into another 109 in a 50-degree dive and administered the coup de grace, running the Jerry into the ground.

Lieut. James D. Williams, Stovall's element leader, turned into two 109's coming in from behind and chased them off without observing strikes. Finding himself alone, he was climbing for altitude when he encountered two more 109's in the overcast, scored hits on the element leader, then lost them. After shaking off several attackers in the overcast, Williams fired a short burst at the leader of a two-plane element dropping down dead ahead of him, and went into a Lufberry with the wingman.

"I was getting strikes on him from dead astern when I ran out of ammunition. I needed only one guess as to what to do. I broke off and hit the clouds."

Claims of the 506th on this mission, six destroyed and seven damaged without a Pintail loss, were considered conservative, as Sherwood saw three explosions in the air besides the plane he destroyed; and Welgoss counted four distinct explosions on the ground. The 506th thus captured the honors for the two-day air battle with eight destroyed and seven damaged; the 507th had eight destroyed and two damaged; the 508th, five destroyed and four damaged.

A-92 had a visitor while the 506th was heading home. Just at noon a twin-jet Messerschmitt-262 crossed the field unexpectedly at 6,000 feet in an obvious reconnaissance. He must have seen plenty, for the two groups of P-47's, with all the transient heavy bombers, fighters, and transports on the field, presented attempting target. He crossed too quickly for an alarm. We were to remember this Peeping Tom a couple of weeks later.

Capt. John E. "Jack" Ray led the 507th in an attack on a truck convoy southwest of Euskirchen in mid-afternoon. The Squadron destroyed 10 trucks. Ray reported a curious thing -- the trucks, deep in enemy territory and headed west, had some kind of white identification marking, "almost like our own white star". (The plot was developing!)

Marshall led the 508th in an attack on railroad goods wagons and buildings in the Euskirchen area.

Peterson took the 506th out on a similar mission, against German movements in the same general area between their front lines and the Rhine.

Halfway to the target area he received a call from "Roselee," the ground controller. He was to disregard his designated mission, and attack a truck and vehicle concentration at point K-6801. Peterson hurriedly checked his map, called for a repeat of the message. K-6801 was 25 miles inside our bomb line, at Stavelot, Belgium. Wasn't there a mistake he argued?

Finally convinced that the radio order was authentic, Peterson started navigating. The weather was miserable on the ground and almost impossible for operational flying. The earth was covered with snow, the ceiling was at 1,000 feet, the clouds rested on the hilltops. His third flight became separated in the clouds and bombed woods north of Duren, a huge explosion indicating destruction of a fuel or ammunition dump.

White and Red flights looked for an opening. Peterson had Second Lieutenant Robert H. Walker on his wing, with Lieut. Frank J. Bates flying the wing of Lieut. Calvin S. Bosin, element leader. Lieut. Carl S.



Parsons led Red flight with Lieut. Charles E. Matheny as wingman; Lieut. Bronson F. Bayliss, element leader, Lieut. Arthur W. Brock, wingman.

At 1515 Peterson found a rift in the overcast. Five thousand feet below, strung out along a defile on the side of a steep hill, was a column of tanks, trucks, horse-drawn vehicles and mounted guns.

They were approaching Stavelot along an obscure road that bent around an irregular valley and was screened by the snow-laden trees and overhanging banks and rocks of the steep slopes. Occasionally the trail broke into the open to pass between little farmhouses surrounded by snow-banked fields.

The tanks didn't get to Stavelot.

Weeks later Peterson and Parsons (who were promoted, respectively, on December 22 to major and captain) revisited the scene-by jeep-and found the remnants of the column they had ripped apart by bombing and strafing. Battered flak guns were abandoned along the open section of road. Nearby were some German helmets, half-buried in the snow, a German novel lying nearby, pages rumpled and torn. Tanks were knocked out along the narrow ledge that passed for a road, burned out trucks scattered between.

The column was estimated at 40 vehicles. The squadron claimed 13 destroyed by bombing and strafing, no results observed on bomb hits along the half-hidden road. The flak guns must have been immediately knocked out of action. Not a shot was reported. Somebody bombed and destroyed a gun position. The right hook thrown by the Sixth Panzer Army at our Ardennes "solar plexus" had been partially blocked.

*There was a virtual blackout on news from the "Bulge". Press reports were at least 48 hours behind the events even official reports on the situation lagged from 24 to 36 hours. The Germans were reported exploiting their penetrations in the Monschau, Malmedy-Stavelot and St. Vith sectors, cutting off the 106th division, and surrounding the 101st airborne at Bastogne.*

At this crucial moment the fog come-thick sticky fog, which persisted for five days, grounding our Thunderbolts while the Germans were driving we knew not where.

The shocking news of the German offense intensified the excitement at 2:30 o'clock Tuesday morning, Dec. 19, when everyone was awakened by fire of the field's multiple 50-caliber guns. Personnel on the line who didn't "dive underground" saw the dim shape of a German night fighter, at extremely low altitude sweep across and disappear in the haze. It was determined that the Jerry had followed an American night fighter to the base and attempted to strafe him while he was in the pattern to make a landing.

Corporal James M. Davis and Private First Class Felix W. Reese were standing by in the 506th homing station when they heard a night fighter call for landing instructions. Reese scanned the sky and picked up the running lights, and a blur that might have been another ship behind. When he heard machine gun fire his suspicion was confirmed. Davis quickly called the pilot, still unaware of the danger in his intentness upon landing. "By God, you're right," the pilot answered and successfully evaded the German "sneak" raider.

The next two weeks, including the entire holiday season, found the Group on edge, harassed as never before. The stinking weather, the buzz bombs-by now flying over us in simultaneous flights of three, four and five-threat of enemy air attack, and the fluid condition of the battle across the Meuse from us, combined to create a constant state of apprehension, and rumors and alarms were increasing in volume and effect.

All personnel were briefed on the situation, and ground personnel received probably their very first lecture on "what to do if captured". Measures were taken to prepare for a hurried withdrawal if ordered, including the packing of minimum personal equipment and preparation for quick disposal of classified documents.

A surprise feature enlivened the officers' movie Friday night, Dec. 22. After the opening "short", Col. Moon announced that XXIX TAC anticipated a parachute attack on A-92 and A-89. The enemy was capable of dropping 1,500 paratroops on either field. All personnel must remain on the alert. After that announcement, Joan Davis in "Kansas City Kitty" was hardly amusing.

A rumor, starting on the line at about the same time with two inspecting medical officers from Command, that a parachute attack was expected in a matter of minutes, caused some uneasiness, but was stopped before it got into general circulation.

The next day Col. Moon repeated in substance what he had told the officers. "Personally, I'd like to see about a thousand Germans try to come down on our field," he said. "I'd like to shoot at them, and every one of us has a weapon to help protect our planes. I know we're Air Corps and specialists-not trained combat troops-but we'll make it interesting for them if they try it. I like this place and I don't think you want to let anybody run you out of it any more than I do. Of course some people are going to get killed. We must expect that."

The tension, but not the state of alertness, relaxed a bit after that. The presence of 700 infantry reinforcements in the chateau east of the field, and two or three days later the arrival of tank units of the British 29th Armored Brigade two miles down the road, was a help.

Individual opinions of the British were submerged in a unanimous feeling of relief that fateful week when armored columns diverted from the hard-pressed Holland sector came clanking down the Liege road to help stem the German tide. The 29th went into action alongside the U. S. Second Armored (rushed down from the Ninth Army front for the same purpose), and helped recapture Celles, directly east of Dinant on the Meuse.

With the Second Armored on this push was Sergeant Wilford F. Horn, radio mechanic of the 507th, who spent 17 days with the tanks as member of the air support party.

"When we reached Ciney, a pretty- good-sized Belgian town (almost due south of St. Trond), we found the people moving out," he said. "They were scared. They said the Germans sent a patrol through there just a few hours before, using American tanks and jeeps, but had withdrawn. They wanted to know, 'Will the Americans stay?' I heard they all moved back into town in a couple of days."

The haze persisted from the ground up to 3,000 feet. On Dec. 24 Col. Moon, disgusted with inactivity at this crucial stage, took off anyway to have a look. He landed with the report that once up through the stuff you could see down through it, and with careful flying, landing could be made safely. The Colonel then led a group mission which made rendezvous with B-26's which bombed bridges in the Trier area with the 404th as escort. The Jerries did not interfere with the attack on their "feeder lines" into the Bulge. A special seven-plane mission, with Marshall leading, went after bandits reported by ground control, but failed to find them and instead hit a railroad bridge and shot up 18 scattered motor vehicles in the Prum area behind the Bulge.

Christmas Eve, the Group's first overseas, was being observed very quietly. "Mrs. Parkington" was the feature picture at the officers' mess. It had wound pleasantly for more than an hour and a half when there was an interruption.

Lieut. Francis P. Dudzik, assistant Group Intelligence Officer, in a quiet but ominous voice, called, "Stop the projector, please; stop the projector." Then, as the lights went on, he made the awful announcement, "Parachutists have landed at the four corners of the field!"

There was a moment's stunned silence; then a one-minded stampede through the doors, down the concrete sidewalks to the barracks. Cartridges clicked home into .45's and carbines, out came Mausers, Lugers and even salvaged M-1 Garands from God knows where. There was an unspoken resolve to go down fighting.

Officers with defense assignments rushed down to the line, where guards were quickly doubled. All shadows were investigated with suspicion.

A few rounds of tommy-gun fire were heard in the 508th dispersal area where a shadow moved, and two guards blazed away at each other without damage.

About midnight Captain Wilson, having traced down the true story of the situation, visited all guard posts and found them smartly covered. The guards, on their own initiative, were disposed in such a way as to cover each other; and at no time in challenging did more than one reveal himself, while the other held his weapon at the ready. Wilson advised continued alertness, but relieved the tension with his explanation of the alert.

Ack-ack had reported parachutes dropping, not on four sides of the field, but four kilometers south of the field (pretty close, but what a relief!). The parachutists were believed to be RAF personnel abandoning a damaged aircraft (an explanation which later was confirmed).

The speed with which defense of the base was organized increased confidence that any attempted attack on our aircraft and installations would be costly for the Germans.

Normality quickly returned. Major Mullins called from the 507th officers' barracks: "Is it all right to start a poker game?" Yes, yes, yes!

Christmas Day dawned with high clear skies-but with an unusual, unexplainable ground haze, which seemed to exude from every little sugar beet and muddy furrow. It was exasperating to see the cloudless blue straight overhead, yet be unable to see across the field. Visibility of less than a mile grounded planes all day.

*"Our troops had withdrawn from the St. Vith area ... SS spearheads repeatedly attacking in the Marche-Hottent sector, still trying to break through to the north ... the 82nd Airborne was pulled back to a new defensive line in the Manhay area. . . the 101st Airborne was still holding out in isolated Bastogne . . . the southern German spearhead had pushed through all of northern Luxembourg above the Sure River. The northern attacking force was moving northwest toward Namur with its armored spearheads only 15 miles south of the city, near Dinant, within sight of the Meuse River where the British had dug in their tanks. (YANK, July 1, 1945, "Battle of the Bulge".)*

Ground haze up to 400 feet spoiled an otherwise weather-perfect day Tuesday, December 26, but Col. Moon, after a test hop, decided the planes could fly through the haze easily.

Captain Ollie O. Simpson's 15-plane 506th formation knocked out a gun position and six trucks and damaged an armored vehicle in the Dreiborn area east of Monschau, and Captain Ray's 507th squadron of 16 worked with the 78th Infantry Division west of Schmidt, dumping their bombs on a reported concentration of enemy tanks which were marked by 78th guns with red smoke shells.

The 506th lost First Lieutenant Robert G. Fenstermacher and First Lieutenant Clinton Winters when their planes were hit by flak.

Col. Moon led a composite formation, made up of 15 operational aircraft remaining in the three squadrons, which bombed in co-operation with the 78th Infantry close to the troop lines around Hollerath at the northern hinge of the Bulge. Talking constantly to "Foundation", the ground controller, in order to safeguard forward troops of the 78<sup>th</sup>, Moon led several strafing passes in the face of intense flak, destroying three tanks and five motor transport vehicles.

Lieutenant Eugene E. Armstrong, after his third strafing pass, was hit by flak. Fire in the rear of his fuselage cut his control cables and eight or ten miles east of Liege he went into a dive at about 7,000 feet. He bailed out at 5,000 and hit the tail as he jumped away, fracturing a leg and breaking an arm. Some Belgians reached him first, saw his "Gott Mit Uns" German souvenir belt-and were reluctant to help him, thinking him a Jerry pilot. An American doctor was handy, administered first aid, and had him transported to the 56th General Hospital near Liege. He was lost to the squadron, although he recovered.

Captain Duane Int-Hout, leading the second section of Moon's formation in an attack on motor vehicles near Gemund, reported three or four "cub" aircraft with U. S. markings, flying suspiciously deep in enemy territory, and catching no flak.

After his persistent attacks on panzer forces facing the 78th near Hollerath, Moon went after reported "bandits" in the Gemund area, but was recalled by ground control.

The Group worked over St. Vith on Dec. 27, and Col. Galbreath, who led a 506th mission, reported seeing American tanks moving into Ciney on the northwest side of the Bulge. Jack Connor, leading the 508th saw more than 20 vehicles scurry into woods near the base of the penetration area, and -attacked with frag and GP bombs which left little doubt of major damage. Flak damaged planes piloted by Joe Warren and Patrick Anderson, whom Connor guided back to the field for a safe landing.

Col. Moon was leading a second recce in the Bulge when he was diverted to provide top cover for RAF Lancasters bombing Munchen-Gladbach. No enemy fighters intercepted, although during the day three Me-262's were sighted by the Group.

Four civilians were reported killed and 17 injured when a buzz-bomb hit the railroad station at St. Trond. Some of the injured were treated in the Group dispensary.

Bad weather socked in again on the 28th and the main point of interest was presentation of decorations by General Nugent, XXIX TAC C. G., in the Bevingen theater.

The Group ended the calendar year with 44 sorties in bad weather, mostly blind bombing against targets near Euskirchen and Prum, the Bulge area being overcast.

There was a great deal of speculation as to whether the long-threatened German parachute attack would come New Year's Eve, when the Germans might suspect an advantage in the American tradition of speeding out the old year and welcoming the new in a jovial and reinforced spirit. Neither the celebration nor the night's sleep was interrupted, however, except for the late risers on New Year's morn.

## Chapter Thirteen

### HAPPY NEW YEAR

Capt. Wayne H. Anacker had the honor of leading the 508th Squadron on the Group's first mission in 1945, taking off at 0852 to smash the marshalling yard and a concentration of goods wagons at Junkerath.

Twenty-three minutes later Captain Crosthwait, Group Weather Officer, glanced out of the Ops penthouse on the roof of "Function" headquarters and remarked, "Look at the Typhies giving us a buzz job."

At the same moment Ollie Simpson, driving some pilots out to their planes for a 506th takeoff, called "here come some Spitfires—I hope."

Scarcely had either spoken when the single-engine aircraft, appearing just over the rise of ground south of the field, opened up with their ugly-sounding cannon and were identified as FW-190's and Me-109's—seven of them by most authoritative later accounts. Attacking individually after the opening pass, the German fighters ranged from the deck to not more than 500 or a thousand feet, most of them turning directly over the field for their return run—a fatal mistake.

Although the Germans struck without warning, the field's ack-ack defenses reacted instantly with a murderous and accurate counter-fire from their 40-millimeter weapons and multiple .50's. An Me-109 came in over the rooftops of the officers' area and attacked from the north. A Focke Wulf 190 came across the field shooting, zoomed, then peeled back down in a further attack from the north. Another Me-109 came across shooting, straight and level on the deck, from south to north; halfway across the field it was hit and burst into flames, zoomed upward in a complete ball of fire as the pilot bailed out to be captured off the edge of the field. One FW-190 ducked down behind the trees of the edge of the runway, went too low and bellied in. The pilot was made prisoner. An Me-109 scattered itself along the edge of the runway.

Staff Sergeant Harry C. Beckett of the 507th Intelligence section opened the back door of the Squadron Briefing Room, and stared directly into the black-and-white striped propeller hub of a plane barreling in from northeast.

"I knew what it was right away," said Harry, proud of his aircraft identification, so I closed the door."

Sergeant Edward F. Dziadzio, 506th photo section chief, stood beside the Operations building calmly snapping 35-mm pictures of the blazing battle. In the glass-enclosed Ops tower Lieut. Donald E. Willoughby called TAC. Someone answered "Air attack? Hold the line a minute." An FW made a screaming pass to within 20 feet of the penthouse. "To hell with YOU!" Willoughby yelled, and joined his shadow on the floor.

When the shooting was over the 506th counted one of its aircraft destroyed and four damaged; the 507th five damaged. The 508th area was untouched. German losses were at least five destroyed, possibly six. Only one of the attackers was known to have escaped. He was the squadron leader, and apparently the only experienced pilot in the bunch. Aircraft losses of the 48th across the field, were heavier, but no personnel were injured in either Group. The attack, despite the initial surprise and shock, could not be termed profitable or successful from the German viewpoint.

Only personnel casualties were suffered by the anti-aircraft defenders, who stood by their guns and won the thanks and admiration of the entire Group for their superior behavior under fire and excellent marksmanship.

Captured documents later indicated that the St. Trond field was to have been the principal target of the widespread New Year's Day raids, with around 200 aircraft allocated to A-92. It never was determined why

the plan was not carried out. It was apparent, from maps found on captured pilots at A-92, that the squadron which did hit the field was briefed to attack A-89. Whether its plans were changed at the last minute, or it strayed off course was not decided. Anyway, it's doubtful that any member of the 404th Group will participate in a more riotous New Year's Day celebration. Less than an hour and a half after the excitement was over, the Group was back in operation, with "Speedy" Bealle taking off with a 506th formation. In spite of the air raid, the Group ran 72 sorties for the day, banging away at road and rail movements at the base of the Bulge.

Leading the third flight of an afternoon mission led by Col. Moon, Lieut. Paul A. Hederstrom, ducked under a 4,000-foot overcast to destroy a concentration of 10 armored vehicles 25 miles due east of Malmedy. One man was lost during the day, Lieut. William A. Reitzel, who was hit by flak and bailed out in enemy territory on the initial 508th mission.

Before a light snow loused up operations on the afternoon of Jan. 2, the boys flew 55 more sorties against German equipment forming up behind the Ardennes salient, starting with Major Sherwood's early-bird 506th mission at 0815 first light.

A heavily-traveled road, conspicuously black against the snowy countryside, drew the interest of Capt. Theodore P. Welgoss on the afternoon 506th mission. He followed the tracks into the St. Vith area, found a convoy of 20 trucks and wrecked it with bombs and five strafing passes.

Lieutenant Robert E. Williams of the 508th crash-landed his aircraft on the field with bombs still on, leaped from the plane while it still was moving, just before it burst into flames and the bombs exploded and was uninjured.

Snow, rain and fog limited operations until Jan. 21, but every time the weather broke favorably the Group got in some hard blows against German armor and transport, either in the crumbling breakthrough area or directly behind it.

Col. Galbreath, leading the 508th found 10 camouflaged objects spaced 50 yards apart just south of St. Vith. They were believed to be dug-in tanks. A concentration of bombs resulted in a large explosion which darkened the ground and sent billowing black smoke clouds into the sky. Ray and Crocker on separate days worked over targets in the Schnee Eifel district, flanking a main communications route into the Bulge, and totaled 56 vehicles destroyed and more than 15 damaged on the two 507th missions. Major Mullins knocked out 34 vehicles in the Monschau Forest, and Col. Hood worked over a 20-car train west of Euskirchen, both 507th shows. Speedy Bealle's 506th mission on the 14th accounted for 24 vehicles destroyed and damaged. Carl Parsons and Paul Hederstrom were hit by flak and both bailed behind our lines. Parsons suffered a fractured ankle, but Hederstrom apparently struck his head against the stabilizer after leaving his plane and died in the 51st General Hospital the same day. Welgoss led another 506th formation which accounted for 21 vehicles, three half-tracks and half a dozen fortified buildings in the Bulge, and reconnaissance photos showed that Speedy Bealle "clobbered" the marshalling yards at Euskirchen despite heavy flak.

"Little Caesar" flew two of his super-lethal two-plane missions during this period, the first with Lieut. Paul M. Buckles as wingman on Jan. 5, and the second with Major Marshall as wingman on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

"We were pretty anxious to get at the enemy in the Ardennes beyond Houffalize," Moon said, "so I took off with Marshall to see if the weather over the area was clear enough for bombing and strafing. We each carried demolition bombs, a fragmentation bomb and four rockets, just in case.

"Southwest of St. Vith I dropped my wing bombs on two half tracks, bumper to bumper. I got one direct hit, and one miss off to one side. They were moving real slow on a curve. I came back to make a strafing pass later, and they just weren't there anymore. We dropped our belly frags on four or five large trucks on the other side of the same curve, and got one direct hit, but they wouldn't burn. I found a staff car, and strafed it. It wouldn't burn. Down the road near a town I found seven trucks and slung two of my rockets into them, and

they wouldn't burn. Then I tried to fire at a tank with my other two rockets, and they wouldn't go, so I strafed it three times.

"I went back to where I'd first bombed, and strafed a third half track. We strafed the trucks we'd hit with the frag bombs, because they weren't burning. Then I went up and buzzed around a bit, and saw another staff car, painted white, around a bend. I came across it and missed it the first time, so I came, back at it from an angle and splattered it. I finally went after a couple of trucks and hit the front one, when my guns quit firing . . . That's what satisfies me most—to shoot all my ammunition, drop all my bombs, fire all my rockets ---and kill lots of Germans."

January 16th, the 404th Group was transferred from XXIX TAC, with which it had operated since October 22, and was reassigned to IX TAC, its original overseas Command.

During the day a newcomer, Second Lieut. William P. Warwick of the 507th flew his first combat mission. The mission itself was not so important, "Just another routine show." But Warwick's account of how it seemed to him is interesting as a sample of how all new pilots feel and think when they are flying under fire for the first time.

"When we took off," he related, "I worried about all kinds of things. Were my instruments right? Were my wheels up or down? Would I run out of gasoline? I even wondered if I were flying in the right direction.

"I saw flak in the distance, hanging black puffs of it, and I knew we were approaching enemy territory. As soon as we crossed the invisible front line I quieted down; I was more curious than frightened about what would happen if I got a forty-millimeter slug in my plane. They were shooting, and we were weaving, and I was too busy just flying to worry.

"I heard the squadron leader talking on the radio, and saw the four planes in the first flight roll over into a dive. Then the second flight followed, and I armed my bombs and got ready. My flight leader started a turn, dropped his wing, and went into his dive. I rolled over with him. I kept watching him and watching my gunsight, released my bombs when I saw his fall away, and gave the ground a squirt with my machine-guns. I couldn't have recognized a tree from a rhinoceros on that first pass; all I remember seeing was a straight road and white snow. I know now that my flight leader had been aiming at a whole string of German trucks.

"Afterwards we strafed a large truck and three smaller vehicles right behind it. My tracers seemed to be hitting, for I saw some smoke or dust spurting up off the vehicles. We pulled up and circled again and made a third pass down to 300 feet at a vehicle and a house at a Y in the road. I suddenly saw red crosses on the truck and pulled my sight off it without firing. I don't remember whether we made a fourth pass or not.

"After each pass I'd figure, well, now we're going home, and down we'd go again. I heard the flak a couple of times—it was that close—and got bounced by it once, but didn't get hit. I remember feeling very contented on the way back. I was glad to get down on the ground, but I don't think I'll be too nervous going out again.

"I was surprised to discover how well you can see the things you're shooting at on the ground—sometimes.

"I know I have more respect than ever for my leader and the rest of the veterans in the squadron; now that I know what they go through every day."

One of the Group's leading "personalities", George Stovall, had quite a story of his own to tell the 18th Recently promoted to captain, he was down on the deck after completing a dive-bombing run with his flight, looking for vehicles to shoot up.

"I found a string of trucks and sprayed them good," George said. "Then I saw I must have overshot with some of my bursts, because a fire started in the woods on the other side of the trucks. I went back down to have a look at what I'd hit in there. I almost jumped out of the cockpit when I saw what it was.

"There were trucks and tanks and I don't know what all, parked in there bumper to bumper and side by side, all among the trees. It was a perfect setup. I made another pass and started another fire. Then I went up and got a couple of other flights from our squadron, and they went down and strafed the woods.

"There was so much stuff in there I wanted it done up good, so I went looking for some airplanes that still had their bombs. I pulled up to a flight of four P-47's, but they weren't from our Group..

"They had bombs slung under their wings, though, so I wiggled my wings and made all sorts of monkey motions to get them to follow me.

"It took them a little while to catch on. Then we flew near the woods, so I rolled over and went down shooting. They got the idea then and dropped their bombs on the woods and made three strafing passes and started a lot more fires. The place was burning good when I left.

"I got so interested I didn't catch up with the rest of my squadron until we were back at our home base.

"All the time, when I was circling up above, there was what looked like a big gray cloud down below me. When I lowered down it turned out to be not just a cloud. It was flak. Those Germans sure are persistent."

*The week of January 15 the Russians opened a full-scale winter offensive along a 400-mile front. By January 21st the Fifth and Sixth Panzer Armies were in full withdrawal from the Ardennes salient, with the obvious purpose of rushing reinforcements to the Eastern front, as well as breaking off what had now proved to be a costly losing battle in Belgium.*

On the 21st Capt. Sherman N. Crocker was leading the 507th homeward from a dive-bombing attack on a factory district north of Koblenz. From 10,000 feet, through a break in the clouds, Crocker saw a convoy estimated at 150 vehicles, apparently headed toward the northwest, about five miles west of Mayen. By the time the squadron was in position to attack, the main body of the convoy was dispersed. But Crocker's radio notification to ground control spotted the target for swarms of other aircraft. The 507th picked out a number of individual vehicles for strafing attacks, and destroyed eight.

The squadrons were going out at hourly intervals, and next on the scene was the 508th with Major Garrigan leading. The motor columns were back on the roads in the greatest mass movement seen by the squadron since the Falaise Gap. It was a setup for "Kelly's Bar Room". Bombs and 10 strafing passes accounted for 43 transports and a half track destroyed, 31 transports, two half tracks and four tanks damaged. Garrigan strafed a bus head-on, and it exploded as German soldiers bailed out, running for the fields.

By the time Jim B. White reached the area with the 506th the concentration had been trimmed to 75 vehicles, and the Pintailers claimed 38 of these destroyed and 10 damaged by bombing, in addition to an armored vehicle and gun position damaged.

With the Mayen convoy practically annihilated, the last two formations of the day cleaned up two vehicle concentrations north of the Schnee Eifel, at the base of the breakthrough area.

Major Mullins' 507th squadron hit nine places around Scheid, working through 9/10ths cloud at 1,000 feet to destroy 23 motor transports and damage 22, wrecking six fortified buildings and five guns. Mullins, probing the little valleys and dodging hills which suddenly loomed in the haze, was credited with a major share of the claims.



Capt. Anacker led the 508th a bit further north to knock out 24 freight cars, and destroy or damage 17 vehicles, an armored vehicle, two tanks and three guns in the Schleiden area.

This day, in which the 404th flew more than one-fifth the total fighter sorties of the entire Ninth Air Force and dropped more than one-fifth the bomb tonnage of all fighterbombers, had a historical significance, both for the Group and in respect to the general picture on the Western front.

In the first action of the morning Major Marshall's 508th formation had been directed by radio to attack a 25-car train northeast of Duren. But Joe Wilson's flight already had spotted it, and Marshall could immediately answer the ground controller, "It's destroyed". Bombs from four planes started fires along the cars. As the flight returned to strafe, the entire train erupted in an explosion which sent debris up to 6,000 feet and black smoke billowing to 12,000. Lieut. Robert E. Taliaferro's engine was hit by flying pieces and he crash landed without injury at Liege.

"We could actually see the concussion waves coming up at us in a big arc," Lieut. Patrick M. Anderson reported. The snow-covered ground was blackened for a quarter of a mile by the blast, which indicated one less trainload of ammunition for the front lines. Sherwood's 506th squadron destroyed twelve barracks buildings near Rheinbach southwest of Bonn.

The Group tally sheet showed 94 sorties for the day, with 45.2 tons of bombs dropped, 60,000 rounds of ammunition fired, 116 motor transports destroyed, 86 probable and damaged; 45 railroad cars destroyed and four damaged; in addition to scattered, armored vehicles, tanks, guns, and buildings.

The next day, Jan 22, and in the two days following, the 404th was joined in the all-out assault on the fleeing Sixth Panzer Army by all available aircraft of the Ninth Air Force.

*"During two days the Ninth Air Force flew 2,500 sorties, dropped 1,375 tons of bombs, destroyed 2,557 motor transport, 993 railroad cars, 40 tanks, 53 armored vehicles, 25 locomotives, 62 gun positions and probably destroyed or damaged at least as many more."*  
-(YANK Magazine, July 1, 1945.)

The 404th flew 1/12 of the sorties and destroyed 1/8th of the total motor transport and tanks on these two days, and felt a personal pride in the messages of commendation and congratulation which were addressed to Ninth Air Force units by General Spaatz and General Vandenberg and others.

The 506th led off the 102-plane operations of the 23rd finding a hole in the overcast above Stadt Meckenheim, southwest of Bonn, and plastering a 20-car train which had just pulled into the town. "The locomotive started steaming and smoking suspiciously soon," Major Peterson said, "so we went back and strafed it repeatedly to make sure they weren't faking." Lieut. Jarvis a little later went down to take a look at the yard and found nothing but wreckage.

The 507th off an hour later, found excellent pickings in and around Kommern, five miles southwest of Euskirchen, and added to its bag of tanks, trucks, railroad cars and buildings destroyed. Lieut. Arthur T. Stemmermann destroyed two tanks with his bombs.

"I couldn't see a thing at an altitude of 8 or 10,000 feet, he said, "but when I followed my flight leader down, plenty of stuff showed up all over the place. I was in my run, following his lead, when I suddenly saw two big Tiger tanks hiding in an alleyway between two low buildings. I changed my angle of dive and went after them with two 500's and a frag bomb. The buildings collapsed and the two tanks simply disappeared underneath the wreckage."

Lieut. Harley J. Rollinger came back with remnants of a bird, twigs, and stones, as well as flak holes, in his plane to show for an exceptionally low pass, on which he literally looked down the barrel of a heavy flak gun.

"I never would have pulled out of that one except for the recoil of my .50's as I poured tracers into that long shiny barrel," he said.

Captain Drexel D. Morgan went out with the 508th on his first rocket-carrying mission, and found plenty to shoot at in Blankenheim, straddling a main escape route from the pocket. He lined up on three trucks parked close together, and with one rocket destroyed all three and knocked a big hole in the road. (Undoubtedly the rocket firing ace of the Group, Morgan was selected in March to attend a special rocket school in the U. S. where he was at the end of the war.) Lieut. Franklyn C. Snyder, following his leader, saw a German soldier firing at the planes from a doorway.

"I strafed him, and then I saw a truckload of troops, and strafed them as they scattered. Then I came back around and saw a marshalling yard full of cars and- strafed them,"

After "almost running into a snow bank" Morgan notified "Sweepstakes" of a heavy concentration of vehicles around Blankenheim, rounded up his squadron and went home with a creditable score sheet.

Ed Justice took up the attack where Morgan left it, and with the 506th flushed an east-bound convoy which scattered as the Pintailers attacked. Ten were destroyed individually, as well as two horsedrawn carts ("Buddy" Britton's personal claim), and eight box cars.

The 507th rejoined the "vicious circle" with Duane Int-Hout leading the 404th Group's 1,000th squadron mission early in the afternoon, and Richard J. Gedeon, despite the 9/10ths overcast, peeked under the edge of a cloud and saw at least 40 trucks, bumper to bumper, trying to find a way out of the St. Vith area. The convoy was bombed through a small hole in the overcast. Lieut. Floyd Yudelton, in the last flight down, reported fires visible through the haze.

Fires still were burning in the area when Bob Garrigan took his turn at the target with the 508th. He continued southeast across the German border and destroyed or damaged 21 motor transport around Lichtenborn.

"Something had caused a traffic jam in town, and more trucks were trying to get in," said Lieut. James C. Dunn. "All our bomb hits were in the road among trucks and personnel. The only way they could get past that town was to go around it."

Joe Wilson knocked one vehicle completely over and tore the hood off another with his machine guns.

Col. Moon's composite squadron destroyed or damaged 38 vehicles around Prum. "Little Caesar" got a direct rocket hit into a truck filled with personnel.

"It looked like it had a serious accident," he said.

Jo-Jo Sherwood led the 506th against vehicles crawling around a hairpin turn on the south edge of Prum, destroyed five, damaged five, cut the road in five places, silenced flak guns in the adjacent woods and started a large fire which resulted in an explosion, probably ammunition.

There were two losses for the day. Lieut. Francis E. Abt of the 507th was hit by flak on the St. Vith mission, reported that he was about to bail out, and was given a "steer". When last seen he was headed west toward friendly territory. Lieut. Joseph L. McDonnell was hit by flak south of Euskirchen on Justice's 506th

mission and bailed out. His parachute was seen to open, but nothing was heard of him until after the end of the war when the squadron received a letter from him, revealing that he had been hurt and captured.

On April 10th Abt wrote from a hospital at Mourmelon in France, telling us that he was safe and on his way back home after a period of two months as a prisoner.

"The day I got hit," he wrote, "I jumped at about 500 feet. The ship was on fire and the rudder controls were out. I was burned on the legs and hands and had lacerations of the left eyelid. Everything is healed up except my right leg, which should be O. K. in a few weeks.

"The Goons got me right away, and after two days took me to a hospital at Euskirchen. From there I traveled four days and arrived at a British-staffed hospital deep in Germany near Meiningen, about 100 miles east of Frankfurt. I was with two paratroopers from the 101st Airborne, and we were really in sad shape when we got there.

"Our tanks came through April 2nd. The Goons started shelling the town, so the tanks evacuated us to Oberweid, where I stayed for three days. I got tired of hanging around so I caught a ride to Fulda on a half track and then made my way to the airstrip at Hanau. I was trying to get back to the squadron but they caught me there and slapped me in a hospital, and shipped me back to Mourmelon. I am on my way to the States, so they say. . .

" . . . I was dive-bombed and strafed by P-47's. and it ain't no fun!"

January 23 was another field day for the 404th and the Group ran its total of MT's destroyed to 1,000 plus. "App" Marshall, leading the 508th on the opening mission, reported that traffic was not quite so concentrated as on the previous days, but many good targets remained for those who searched.

"Travelling in groups of two to five and six, the Germans made it a game of hide-and-seek" Marshall said, "but it paid good dividends for us."

His 12 pilots reported destruction or damage to 25 motor transport, seven tanks, six buildings, and 15 goods wagons in the Sotenich area, four miles east of Schleiden.

Ted Welgoss then led the 506th on a mission east of St. Vith which was featured by one of the war's best jobs of air-to-air teamwork. The Pintailers, ran up a score of 31 vehicles destroyed and 10 damaged, in addition to other claims, with a P-51 Mustang, piloted by Lieut. Kenneth Ormandy of the 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Group, pointing out the targets. Afterward Ormandy photographed the results.

"A P-51 Mustang came out of nowhere and planked himself on my wing," Welgoss said. "He waved and rocked his wings, then pulled out in front of the squadron. He looked like he knew what he was doing, so I followed.

"The Mustang dropped off into a dive, and as he went down I finally saw where we were going. There was a road through a little valley below us; on one side of the road were woods, on the other a large field, with at least 50 to 75 vehicles lined up around the edges. We dive-bombed, then we strafed, and destroyed two dozen of them and must have damaged at least ten more.,

."After trying various radio channels, I finally hit the one the recce pilot-Mandate White-was on, and started talking to him. He said there were seven trucks near some factory buildings, so I sent down one of my men who still had his bombs on. The bombs hit the buildings and alongside the vehicles, and the tumbling walls took care of any trucks the bombs might have missed. The Mustang boy told me, 'Good job; get out of the way now, and I'll take some pictures of what you did.' We pulled up and he made about three passes over our targets.

"He asked if we had some more ammunition, and pointed out some trucks we had missed, so we strafed again.

"If you still have any ammunition, there are about 15 vehicles hidden under the trees in that little valley," he told me, 'but they're pretty hard to find.'

"I sent my third flight down, and they made a fast pass, shooting under the trees, and catching a lot of flak on the run. I thanked the P-51 man and he thanked me, and we went home. He was right about the trucks under the trees being hard to find; I found out when we landed that my third flight hadn't seen them at all. A few more guys like Mandate White and we'd never miss."

Major Mullins' 507th outfit found 125 to 200 vehicles in the Schleiden area, heading eastward along a network of roads, and made one of the highest single-mission scores against motorized transport, with 78 destroyed and damaged.

Don Ferris said, "Those along the roads were well dispersed, but those in the woods were bunched together. I guess they thought they were hidden, but they forgot there were no leaves on the trees. They were easily spotted against the snowy ground, and we really went to town."

Joe Landa's 508th mission in the same area featured "Jesse" James' direct hit on a half track loaded with about 25 soldiers.

Sherwood rushed back into the area with the 506th about noon, a time at which the Germans once had found their movements least disturbed by fighter-bombers. This time they should have known better. Jo-Jo and his men ran up the highest score of the month, 65 vehicles destroyed and 30 damaged, in addition to destruction of a tank, two large trucks with trailers, a large building and a fuel or ammunition dump.

Another complete round of 12-plane missions upped the score considerably before darkness closed down.

Lieut. Richard K. Walker attacked a van load of German soldiers, destroying the vehicle and killing the personnel, on a profitable 508th mission led by Col. Moon. Lieut. Denzil B. Lee was hit by flak and barely managed to get within two miles of home at A-92 where he bailed out safely from his burning aircraft.

Lee was pulling off his bomb run when flak riddled his wing, knocked his right aileron loose, set his plane afire and damaged his guns so that they continued to fire intermittently, out of control. Standing on right rudder, Lee started for home, getting steers from "Marmite". As he left the battle area, "Marmite's" signals became continually weaker, and finally faded out entirely. Back at A-92 Corporal Richard W. Reed was standing by in the 506th homing station. Sizing up the situation immediately, he went on the air without a call and gave Lee his headings until within sight of the field. The airplane went out of control, Lee jumped, was picked up by a passerby, and was the first member of the formation to show up at S-2 for the interrogation.

An early-morning snow, visibility down to 400 yards, prevented operations on January 24. But next day, Thursday, Jan. 25, marked a high point in the 404th's combat history. Because the dwindling Ardennes salient offered fewer large targets, the Group resorted to the shuttle bombing tactics which had proved so successful in the Normandy breakthrough, running four-plane flights at 15-minute intervals. Planes were loaded with two 500-pound general purpose bombs and a 260-pound frag each. The 508th also carried four rockets apiece.

Racking up the highest score in its history against motor transport—214 destroyed and 250 damaged—the 404th ran more than one-fifth the total fighter-bomber sorties for the Ninth Air Force that day, and knocked out half the total trucks, armored vehicles and tanks credited to the IX Tactical Air Command.

Aside from that, the Group ran several close-co-operation missions ahead of ground units, one of which directly enabled the 7th Armored Division to capture Medell, Belgium, on the 7th's drive from St. Vith to the northeast toward the Siegfried defenses.

Joe Landa of the 508th got the Group off to an early start with an 0851 takeoff, and personally destroyed eight vehicles 30 miles east of St. Vith. From then on, aircraft were on the ground only long enough to refuel, reload, and change pilots, all day long. Lieut. Luciano B. Herrera, with only Lieut. Donald A. Swan and Lieut. Archibald Robinson in his flight, accounted for 52 vehicles destroyed and damaged. Capt. William J. Abraham, leading a third 508th flight, squeezed off two rockets at a couple of trucks, destroying both, then let his other two go in salvo at a group of vehicles and destroyed six.

Jack Ray, on the first 507th mission said, "We'd sneak in over the edges of the clouds and catch a convoy before we were seen by soldiers standing in open trucks. They didn't start running until we started shooting. We must have got 30 or 40 of them."

Lieut. Floyd F. Blair led a profitable mission on which, he proudly said, "we never made two passes from the same direction and didn't catch a burst of flak."

His No. 4 man, Lieut. John P. Boland, said, "the Germans were driven frantic. Two jumped out of a truck and fell down as I saw my tracers hit all around them. Then they started to run, went about 10 feet, then turned and dashed right toward me and into my line of fire."

Col. Moon, leading a composite flight, scored a direct rocket hit on the front end of a truck as soldiers piled out.

"It looked like a movie shot, with pieces flying everywhere up into the air." He then strafed a series of trenches and dugouts, and saw small-arms fire come out of them.

Lieut. Wainwright, leading a 508th flight, also reported the Germans desperately defending their last remaining transportation out of the periled pocket.

"We were attacking a mass of vehicles just south of Prum, and the Germans were in nearby ditches and foxholes firing back at us with rifles. We made 10 or 12 passes on the personnel, in almost vertical dives to shoot down into the holes'."

A three-plane 506th flight, with George Stovall, Lieut. Kenneth K. Cobb and Lieut. Robert C. Grout, found the area east of St. Vith well beaten up in early afternoon.

"It looked like everything was knocked out," said Stovall, "more wrecked vehicles than I'd ever seen. Then I saw some of them move, and we went to work, setting them on fire with repeated passes."

Don Miller of Buffalo, N. Y., flying in the cool of the evening on this frigid January day, was hit in the canopy while attacking vehicles in the same area. He navigated back at 9,000 feet, in case his engine should quit, with freezing wind whipping through the open cockpit.

"Buffalo was never like this," he avowed, as he warmed his hands around a cup of Sgt. Stan Lipa's coffee in the Pintail snack bar.

Lieut. John J. Rogers, acting as flight leader for the first time, was headed for reported enemy vehicle movements when the 507th formation was diverted by ground controller to a "high priority target" for the 7th Armored Division. He was informed by the 7th Armored that an enemy strongpoint in Medell, two miles northeast of St. Vith was holding up the advance. We were attacking from north, west, and south, but 88's in the central and eastern parts of town were protected from ground fire.

"We'll fire a smoke shell into the target area every minute for eight minutes," Rogers was told. Rogers saw the first marking burst, and while a forward ground observer watched, the flight scored a concentration of hits around the smoke. Hardly had they pulled out of their dive when they were told,, "You're doing a wonderful job, keep it up!" They made a strafing pass so low they could see Germans sprawled on the ground near the gun positions.

"That's wonderful! Perfect!" came the radio call. "You've cleaned them up. Thanks!" The mike-man sounded like "he was doing handsprings." Moments later additional squadrons arrived to help, but were dismissed. "We don't need you now, thanks," they heard over the R/T. "That other bunch wiped 'em out."

A remarkable feature of these heavy-traffic air operations over a relatively small area of land was the excellence of ground-to-air control, particularly by the IX TAC radar station known as "Marmite". So appreciative was the 404th for the radar assistance which helped it to its high-scoring attacks that each of the three squadrons forwarded a letter of commendation to "Marmite" for its extraordinary efficiency.

"With at least five to seven flights over the target area constantly all day," wrote Major Mullins of the 507th "Marmite never confused this squadron with any other, always knew our position, always had a target, and gave safe courses home and fixes instantly to aircraft in trouble, without waiting for an SOS.

"So phenomenally accurate was Marmite at reporting unidentified aircraft that the squadron was able to concentrate exclusively on ground targets running up one of the biggest scores in its history with complete confidence that no enemy aircraft could execute a surprise attack."

Major Mullins said that in a poll to determine what non-flying help made the greatest contribution to a successful mission, his pilots unanimously answered "Marmite".

Jubilation over the day's sensational success was tempered by one sober note. On a low strafing run against enemy transport in the morning, Second Lieutenant Philip E. Harbert was seen by his 506th flight members to fly into a snow bank. His plane exploded.

From the time Sherman Crocker observed the first big concentration of enemy vehicles on Jan. 21 to sundown of Jan. 25, the 404th destroyed or damaged 1,247 tanks, half tracks and trucks. With other units of the Ninth Air Force we had virtually destroyed the transport of an entire Panzer army. Remnants were found and attacked for another week, but the main body had been shattered.

Major Sherwood took off with four 506th planes in a snowstorm on Jan. 26, but was recalled.

The 507th got three flights off on Jan. 27 with good results, and all three squadrons were airborne on Jan. 29, when Capt. Buckles of the 507th found the only large concentration since the "big day", a three-mile string of trucks and tanks on both sides of the road east of Prum. Buckles sprayed the entire length of the convoy, and the flight claimed 64 vehicles destroyed and damaged.

The last of January the 404th Group received its citation for the Sept. 10 strikes against rail communications between the Rhine and the "Westwall".

During the long winter spells of bad flying weather, no ground service performed by Group personnel was so frequently used and widely appreciated as the homing station, operated in shifts by specially trained squadron Communications personnel.

Because of the location of A-92, smack on the main route of the heavy bombers from Britain to Germany and back, literally hundreds of Eighth Air Force planes in trouble called "Mansion" for help and landed at our field.

In a space of two hours on a single day, for instance, Technical Sergeant Earl L. Shiery and Staff Sergeant Arnold Ervin of the 507th teamed up to "home" 65 aircraft, sending them from one to 12 steers apiece. They were fighters and bombers, leaving their target through solid overcast, singly, in pairs and in flights.

Traffic was so heavy two and three aircraft were on the air calling for help at once, and it took 25 minutes to get around to giving one pilot a second steer, after an initial compass heading had been transmitted to him. In spite of all difficulties, including two emergency landings, all aircraft were brought in safely.

During one 30-day period, Shiery and Ervin handled 348 transient aircraft-planes of other Air Force units-in addition to our own traffic.

Usually only one transmission is necessary. Once, however, "Mansion" gave 14 separate steers to a Britain-based fighter plane, guiding the pilot to safety from an original position east of the Ruhr, 150 miles away.

Pilots of our own Group placed complete confidence in the homing station. Major Mullins of the 507th returning low on gas and receiving what he felt was an erroneous course from XXIX TAC's "Roselee", promptly called "Mansion" and got a new "steer" from Sergeant Vernon Ellingson and Corporal James Conner of the 506th

With Ed Brajer and Charles Dunn of the 506th on duty at the radar wheel and mike, a call came from the pilot of B-17 "Doorstop D-37". Three engines were out, air speed indicator and altimeter out, wing on fire, all the crew bailed out except the pilot. The homing log entry ended the story of "Doorstop D-37" after six steers with the notation, "FIS" (field in sight).

There was only one exception to "Mansion's" service to all-and it was clearly expressed by the sign kept hanging in the 507th homing van:

"No German aircraft homed here!"

*The reduction of the Ardennes salient involved our First and Third Armies in heavy fighting under severe winter conditions, but progress was steady and by the end of January the bulge was eliminated at a cost which later proved fatal to the enemy. In the single day of 22 January, the air force destroyed or damaged more than 4,192 pieces of heavy equipment, including locomotives, rail cars, tanks, and motor and horse-drawn vehicles. The Germans gained an initial tactical success and imposed a delay of about six weeks on the main Allied offensive in the north, but failed to seize their primary objectives of Liege and Namur. They lost 220,000 men, including 110,000 prisoners and more than 1,400 tanks and assault guns. The operation was carried out by the Fifth and Sixth Panzer Armies, supported by the Seventh Army, thus stripping the Reich of all strategic reserves and seriously depleting the resources required to meet the powerful Soviet offensive in January.*

*"Possibly more serious," reported General Eisenhower, "was the widespread disillusionment ensuing from the failure to seize any really important objective and the realization that this offensive for which every effort had been brought to bear and on which such great hopes were pinned, had in no sense achieved anything decisive."*

*(From General Marshall's 1945 report to the Secretary of War)*



## Chapter Fourteen

### ON TO THE RHINE

*The reduction of the Colmar pocket in the south and the seizure of the Roer River dams to the north in the vicinity of Schmidt were both necessary preludes to clearing the enemy from the west bank of the Rhine and a full scale drive into the heart of Germany. The U. S. First Army now attacked toward Schmidt while the Third Army threw its weight against the Siegfried Line in the Prum-Trier area. By 10 February the First Army had obtained control of the Erft and Schammina dams, and the following day had cleared the entire west bank of the Roer. Although failing to prevent the flooding of the Roer Valley, this action forced the Germans to release the waters at a time when our operations would not be endangered, thus removing the most serious threat to General Eisenhower's plan for the invasion of northern Germany. (from General Marshall's 1945 report to the Secretary of War).*

February, the month of the "Great Rail Strike", opened with bad weather, and "pickle-barrel" missions (radar-controlled bombing through overcast) against marshalling yards and important railroad junctions west of the Rhine, principally Euskirchen, which was attacked a number of times.

Every report on the ground situation, every bomb line change, was watched with intense interest. Concentration upon rail communications, just as it had before the direct assault on Aachen, was the first step in a buildup for a major offensive. We "sweated out" the First Army kickoff, and meanwhile did the blocking that would lead to a "long gainer".

The 508th with Major Marshall leading, cut the important Ahr valley rail line at two bottlenecks, Dumpelfeld and Kreuzberg, on February 2nd. Marshall scored a direct rocket hit to destroy a tank southwest of Euskirchen, just to keep his hand in.

A more spectacular claim was made by Sherman Crocker's 507th formation which caught a supply train of 60 to 75 cars at Ahrweiler on the same line.

"The train stretched from one end of town to the other, and our bombs caused one big explosion and at least a dozen other explosions along the entire length of the cars." Flashes of intense ack-ack fire from the town looked to Lieut. William E. Guyot as if "somebody had lit up a huge bunch of firecrackers and thrown them in there." A flak fragment tore through the canopy of Lieut. James E. Benton's plane an inch ahead of his face. Captain James P. Proudfit, the squadron medical officer, washed Plexiglas dust from his eyes upon his return.

Fires still were burning in Euskirchen from the previous day's raids in which the 506th and 507th Squadrons participated.

All squadrons shared in successful operations in 9/10 to 10/10 overcast on Feb. when the Group claimed more than half the rail cuts made by IX TAC, half the road cuts and almost three-fourths of the railroad cars destroyed and damaged. The 8th was another big day, with the 404th bagging, one-fourth the total claims of 9th TAC against railroad cars and half the rail cuts.

On the opening mission Paul Buckles ignored a phony radio call for "all aircraft in the air return to base immediately".

A diversion from the attacks on rail lines was a close co-operation mission run by Bob Garrigan with the 9th Infantry Division near the Erft dam. The 9th's radio mike man reported "Good show" after the 508th dumped bombs and rockets into a reported concentration of 40 tanks in the town of Wolfgarten. The next day the 9th Division reached a point east of the Schwarnmina Dam in the drive to the Roer.

On a later 508th mission Bill Johns and Ed Sicard scored direct hits on an ammunition train, which "blew sky high", on the Duren-Dusseldorf railroad line. Jim B. White, 10 miles away with the 506th flight, saw the blast. Lieut. Lewis E. Eldredge's 507th flight destroyed or damaged nine tanks south of Euskirchen.

"All the towns in the Euskirchen area are full of people," said Major Kenneth S. Hodges, "all with guns." The flak was terrific.

George Stovall reported that "the artillery fire is so heavy in the Gemund Forest it looks like the woods are on fire." That was almost true. Infantrymen attacking the vital Schwarnmenauel Dam were supported by "one of the strongest artillery concentrations in First Army history", according to a later official announcement.

Weather forced the squadrons north of the area on Feb. 10, but they got in good blows in the Koln, Bruhl and Dusseldorf sectors. There were so many aircraft in the vicinity that Lieut. Harry H. Yocum commented, "There was a hell of a lot of light flak, but the Germans didn't have to aim it. Just throw it up there and it would come close to somebody."

Lieut. Harold W. McNabb, Jr., was "broken in" on Col. Moon's wing in a composite flight Feb. 11, when the Group concentrated on rail traffic between the front and the Rhine.

"The Colonel told me to come down and strafe a valley with him, but not as low as he was," McNabb said. "He meant not below 50 feet." The Colonel blew up three box cars "hiding under some bushes" near Adenau, southwest of Bonn.

"The explosion looked like a bonfire would if you hit it a lick with a fly swatter," Moon described it.

Sherman Crocker's leading flight strafed flak positions north of Ahrweiler on Feb. 13, while the rest of his 507th formation bombed the marshalling yard. Crocker had pulled up to 8,000 feet and was reforming his flight when his plane was bracketed with four heavy flak bursts. Part of his tail section was blown off, and the aircraft dived into the ground, where it exploded. No parachute was seen.

The 404th accounted for the bulk of IX TAC's record claims against rail facilities on Feb. 14, one of the Group's biggest days, with 13 locomotives destroyed or damaged, 454 railroad cars destroyed or damaged, and rails cut in 38 places in attacks on 11 marshalling yards west of the Rhine.

Jack Ray, flying his 98th and last mission with the 507th strafed a locomotive and three cars, was hit by flak and bellied in near Eschweiler, where news cameramen, who happened to be on the spot, got the pictorial story. Ray was unhurt, and returned that night, soiled but safe.

Meanwhile, the feature of the 506th's day—although excellent results were attained—was furnished by Edwin (The Mole) Wright. After strafing a trailer load of 20 to 30 Germans, The Mole had the distinction of being hit by flak for the ninth time, but brought his plane back as usual for repairs.

"There were 36 bursts of heavy flak. All of them missed me except one."

For the rest of the week, we shifted most of our attacks to rail movement east of the Rhine river.

On one show, Joe Wilson became separated from his 508th flight over the Rhine when he ducked through a hole in the clouds.

"I saw a couple of barges and strafed them, then I strafed a steamboat and broke up through the clouds. I went back and strafed another boat, and a gun started firing from a town on the riverside, so I strafed that, too."

"Skin" Galbreath, returning from a recce, said, "Towns are burning all along the Rhine river. It looks like somebody is trying to win the war this month."

On Feb. 21, the 508th squadron switched to direct co-operation with the 8th and 104th Infantry Divisions on three missions in attacks on enemy strongpoints at Stockheim, Ellen, Frauwallesheim, Golzheim and Oberzier, all near Duren. Marshall, Garrigan and Wainwright were the leaders, and were thanked for successful bomb, rocket and machine gun attacks. Both divisions hurdled the Roer river next day, sweeping past three fortified barriers.

Operation "Clarion" sent the Group out in full strength Feb. 22 to join in the greatest aerial blow of the war against German communications. With main lines already knocked out, the 6,000-plane attack on secondary facilities was designed to bring complete paralysis to enemy railroad communications on the eve of the main Roer crossing and drive to the Rhine.

The 404th was assigned the task of anti-flak support to medium bombers in an area of approximately 1,000 square miles, extending from near Frankfurt in the south to within 25 miles of Fritzlar in the north, and from Giessen in the west to Fulda in the east. Since flak opposition was very limited, the 404th was able to conduct its own. armed reconnaissance in the target area.

Col. Moon, who led 17 aircraft from the 506th carefully briefed the Group. Major Garrigan led 12 planes from the 508<sup>th</sup>. Col. Galbreath led 10 from the 507th and Major Marshall led a composite formation of 12 aircraft. "Many of these towns east of the Rhine," the Colonel pointed out, "have never been hit before. I want every pilot to pick out good targets and makes every bomb count. We want to show them what war is like."

*"Some trucks were parked alongside a number of those slit trenches the Germans dig beside the roads. I gave the trenches a squirt from my guns," Moon said. "We got nine locomotives and all of them blew up," said Marshall. "I dropped a bomb squarely on the railroad tracks and knocked a whole line of cars over on their backs," Major Hodges reported. "They looked like bundles of matches scattered around the yard," Seba Eldridge added. "Major Peterson clobbered a locomotive I was going after," said Lieut. Wright, "so I picked out a big factory building and shot through the windows. The whole thing, burst into flames."*

*"I was strafing at such low level I ran through my leader's bomb blasts," Lieut. Robert L. Allen moaned. "When I landed I found a hole in my tail, stones and mud in the underside of my wings." Harry H. Yocum saw a "box car go end over end, prettiest thing I've seen." He and Lieut. Robert C. Grout logged five hours flying time for the afternoon, on two missions. Col. Hood gave chase to an Me-262, but "just as I was ready to squeeze my trigger he ducked into the clouds and got away." Jim B. White, who, had a field' day against locomotives and freight cars said, "we made regular gunnery passes at the targets."*

*"I saw one locomotive completely blow up," Garrigan reported. Harry E. Anderson, who as a "spare" in Moon's formation, was pretty much on his, own, dropped a bomb beside a locomotive, went back for a look, and saw it lying on its side. "People came out on their porches and stared at me going by," Anderson said.*

"You see what I mean about all those little towns untouched by war?" Col. Moon said at the critique afterward. "It's good to give them a little taste of it so they won't want another one so quickly next time."

The 404th claimed 31 locomotives and 209 railroad cars damaged or destroyed, and 27 rail cuts.

The long-awaited drive to the Rhine opened the next day with seven divisions crossing the Roer river against moderate resistance. Artillery fire was lighter than expected. The aerial preparation had been timely and effective.

Eight-plane flights, taking off every hour from 0750 to: 1616, attacked targets east of Duren. The 506th in addition to "newspaper routes" morning and evening when the "German Stars & Stripes" was distributed in the battle area, had a special mission to bomb the marshalling yard at Liblar, 10 miles southwest of Cologne. Jim B. White's 12-plane force splattered the yard with napalm bombs.

Lieut. Woodrow W. Fields of the 506th was injured when a bomb fell from his aircraft while landing and exploded. His aircraft was destroyed.

Lieut. Donald A. Swan of the 508th was hit by flak while on a strafing run five miles east of Duren on the second mission of the morning. He bailed out deep behind the German lines and got through to rejoin his squadron next day.

"I was flying No. 4 and when the flight started to attack some artillery pieces east of Duren, I saw armored vehicles of some kind parked across the road along some woods and went after them with my rockets. My plane was hit by light flak from the gun positions and the controls shot away. I was at 1,000 feet.

"I managed to guide the plane over the woods, and at 600 feet, with the nose pointed down, I got the canopy open, grabbed the right side of the cockpit and unfastened my safety belt. I was doing better than 300, and I was flipped entirely clear of the plane. I pulled my ripcord and felt two sharp jerks, one right after the other. One was when my chute opened, and the other as it caught in the trees. I was hanging 10 feet in the air, but slipped free of the harness and dropped to the ground unhurt.

"I was less than a mile from the flak battery that knocked me down, and about 10 miles east of Duren, which still was behind the German lines. It was 9:30 o'clock in the morning, February 23. I knew the shape and size of the woods I was in from having studied my map, so I headed north. There was a village at the southwest edge of the woods, and I wanted to avoid all inhabited places.

"I had gone about a quarter of a mile when I heard soldiers approaching. The woods at this point were not a natural growth. The trees had been planted in even rows. But one tree was out of line and formed a little clump with two others. I hid in there.

"A patrol of about 20 Kraut soldiers, dressed in gray-green uniforms and wearing soft caps, came within 20 feet of me, spread out to search. But they didn't look in my hiding place. When they moved on I came out and looked for a better place. I found a pile of recently-cut spruce branches near a shallow depression in the ground. I got in there and pulled the branches over me. I'd hardly covered myself when six more Germans came up. One of them stopped not five feet from my head. I lay there looking at his heels, and said to myself, "Brother, you've had it". I wondered whether I'd be carried back or whether I'd be able to walk. After standing around for about five minutes the Nazis moved on.

"I didn't leave my hiding place until 7 o'clock that night. Then I headed west, guided by the sound and flashes of artillery fire. My compass had been broken when I fell into the trees.

"There was a lot of horse-drawn transport, all moving east. Once I saw a wagon approaching with two Kraut soldiers in it, and I dived into about eight inches of water in a roadside ditch. When the wagon got opposite me on the road I heard one of the Krauts say something in German that sounded to me like 'Whoa!'

"I was scared stiff. I knew they'd seen me. But instead of stopping, the horses started trotting, and soon disappeared.

"I was about four miles east of Duren about 11:30 that night, making my way into a valley. I almost stumbled into a trench with more than 100 Jerries in it. Just as I saw them a guard shouted to me to halt, and slammed his rifle breech. I shouted "Comrade", and waved my hand and kept on walking, expecting to get a bullet in the back at every step. But the sentry just said a few words in German in what seemed to be a pleasant tone of voice, and nothing happened.

"About two miles east of Duren I was skirting the southern edge of a small village when our artillery opened fire on the town. There was a large puddle of water ahead of me, and I was walking around it when a shell burst nearby and sprinkled the puddle with fragments. Several bursts were too close for comfort.

"On the outskirts of Duren I hid in a cemetery for half an hour, and then went through the town. It was about 2 o'clock in the morning. There were no signs of life. Except for a few bursts of gunfire in the distance, I heard nothing except the pounding of my heart.

"The town was beaten up. There were a few buildings standing, but all the roofs were gone. Everything was so quiet I avoided the streets and sidewalks, because my footsteps sounded too loud. I didn't want to disturb anybody.

"There is a marshalling yard through the middle of Duren, and an open space to the north of it. I walked through there, keeping in the shadows.

"When I got to the Roer river I was stopped. The river was about 100 yards wide at that spot. A road ran parallel to the river, and between the road and the river was a Kraut zigzag trench. I lay down on the edge of the road and watched for any sign of the Germans. I was wondering whether to take the chance of swimming across, when I heard hammering down the river.

"I was walking toward the sound when I was challenged out of the darkness. It was a sentry, and I could see he had a BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) pointed right at my stomach. Brother, for 30 seconds I talked faster than I ever have in my life. I told him I was a P-47 pilot who'd been shot down the day before. He thought it over for a moment.. 'Don't pull the trigger.' I said. 'Take me to your commanding officer.

"He thought that over for a minute, then came out of his hole with the BAR still leveled at me. He walked me down to where his platoon leader was, keeping that BAR on me all the time. He was a damn sight better sentry than that Kraut sentry was.

"The platoon leader of the 238th Combat Engineers, a Lieutenant McArthur, called for a boat and took me across the river as the Germans started shelling. And at half past three in the morning, hugging a stove in a combat engineer command post, I was munching on K-rations, a delicious meal after 17 hours of hide-and-seek. Later in the day, while our troops were crossing the river to capture Duren, they sent me back to A-92."

As Duren fell on Feb. 24, the Group ran 71 sorties eastward to the Rhine, concentrating on supply dumps and supply lines.

The Allied offensive was gaining momentum on February 25 when Major John A. Marshall and his wingman, Major Paul R. Crawley, a Pacific veteran but a newcomer to the 508th discovered and knocked out three Panther tanks headed toward the battle area, possibly intended for a counterattack.

The squadron formation already had destroyed or damaged eight buildings, four motor vehicles, a locomotive, five freight cars and five barges, in attacks ranging from the Rhine westward to Euskirchen.

"The tanks were standing on a road through a deep ravine southeast of Euskirchen," Marshall said. "As I made my first rocket attack from the direction of the town I saw a German dropping off the side of the nearest tank and running for the woods.

"Another German was just elbowing himself up through the turret. He never made it.

"We attacked back and forth down the ravine until our rockets were gone, then strafed with our guns. Rough winds whipping through the ravine caught me by surprise. My P-47 bucked like a wild horse. I had my hands full of airplane while I was trying to send my rockets home.

"On the fifth pass at the tanks, which were standing some distance apart, I could see that the turrets were completely shot off two of them, and the guns mangled. One rocket was long, and knocked the roof off a house which stood beyond the ravine."

The 28th Major Garrigan returning from a weather reconnaissance, saw a German medium tank firing from the bank of the Erft Canal at forward elements of the First Infantry Division. The First had reached Kelz and Gladbach, which just a month later was to be the location of an established, operational fighter-bomber base-Site Y-54.

"The tank was behind a large wrecked truck on the road, blocking any advance," Garrigan said. "They shot light flak at us as I made three passes to check identification. Then we scored five rocket hits, flying on the deck, to clean out both the truck and tank."

Lieut. William Westover, his wingman, scored a direct rocket hit on a nearby flak gun.

Bad weather, which had prevented operations on the 26th and 27th brought "pickle barrel" operations under control of "Disco One", a new Ninth TAC radar controller, on the last day of the month. Targets were not far beyond the front lines of the III Corps of Bonn.

In 19 days of flying during February the Group broke the record it had set during 21 days in July, for the number and tonnage of bombs dropped on the enemy. Three thousand, 178 bombs, 467 rockets, and 428,767 rounds of machine-gun ammunition helped prepare the way for the Roer crossings, and spearheaded the assault toward the Rhine. The tonnage of demolition bombs alone was 20 per cent greater than the Group dropped on the enemy in the month of the St. Lo Breakthrough. In addition our weapons included fragmentation clusters, and "napalm" bombs. The total was 707 tons.

*In executing General Eisenhower's plan, a coordinated drive by the First Canadian Army from the Nijmegen bridgehead along the watershed between the Meuse and the Rhine was necessary and an attack by the U. S. Ninth Army across the Roer toward Dusseldorf was to follow shortly afterward. On 8 February the First Canadian Army began its attack following a heavy air and artillery preparation. Initially, the Canadian advance was rapid, but flooded terrain delayed the start of the Ninth Army attack, permitting the enemy to concentrate against the Canadians.*

*In preparation for the Ninth Army offensive, the Tactical and Strategic Air Forces flew almost 10,000 sorties on 22 February, covering rail and transportation targets throughout the length and breadth of Germany. These blows from British, French and Italian bases were designed to paralyze the German rail system and isolate the Western Front. The next day the Ninth Army attack was launched and, although there was some delay in establishing bridgeheads over the flooded Roer the general progress was quite, rapid. By 1 March Roermond and Munchen-Gladbach were captured and the following day the armored columns reached the Rhine north and south of Dusseldorf. Meanwhile, in the Prum-Trier area, the Third Army drove across the Our and Sauer River, capturing Prum on 13 February. Successive bridgeheads were established across the Saar and the Kyll Rivers and on 2 March Trier fell to our troops. From the launching of the operations on 8 February to 1 March more than 66,000 German prisoners were captured by the Northern and Central Army Groups.*

*(From General Marshall's 1945 report to the Secretary of War).*

## Chapter Fifteen

### REMAGEN

March was to be one of our best months, with 25 flying days, 18 of them without a break, but weather the first of the month was so bad it took three days to find an important gasoline storage dump at Niehl, just north of Cologne. "Hoss" Mullins finally navigated to the target on March 3rd, and set it afire with four planes; another 507th flight guided by the flames 90 minutes later, helped the blaze along with another load of bombs.

The same day John Wainwright led a 508th mission which won for him the Silver Star and Purple Heart to add to his DSC and DFC. The 12-plane formation was attacking its third target, a marshalling yard just north of Cologne, when a flak shell from the intense barrage exploded just above Wainwright's cockpit, shattering his canopy, and riddling his seat and sides of the cockpit with fragments. He suffered only superficial wounds in the back, and returned safely.

That afternoon Lieut. Barton P. Christopher went to the aid of the 9th Armored Division on its drive toward Cologne. The targets were on the north side of Euskirchen. They were a German command post and a road block which consisted of small concrete buildings in which the enemy was strongly situated. After the bombing and strafing, the ground controller complimented them on a "damn good show ... You got direct hits on both targets." Christopher then strafed three machine-gun nests which were firing on him while he was at 2,000 feet over the target.

"It made me mad. The Germans jumped out of their sand-bagged positions and ran across a field toward a box car on a railroad track. I shot two of them down on the run, then strafed the box car." Christopher reported American troops and vehicles streaming along roads to the front, while Euskirchen was being shelled with white phosphorus.

Weather prevented operations by the 404th from the 4th through the 8th except for seven "pickle barrel" missions on March 5.

On March 5 the 9th Armored Division cleared Euskirchen, on the 6th it captured Rheinbach and Miel and on the 7th along with the 78th Infantry Division, moved rapidly to the east, reaching the outskirts of Remagen, while the 1st Infantry Division cleared Bruhl and the 9th Infantry Division moved within five miles of the Rhine.

At 1550 on March 7, Sgt. Mike Chinchar of the 27th Armored Infantry battalion led his platoon out on the Ludendorff railroad bridge at Remagen and ran for the far shore. By nightfall the bridgehead was secure. The planking with which the enemy had covered the rails for retreat of its armor and transport, became a thoroughfare for the first American soldiers pouring into Central Germany. It was one of the great "breaks" of the war, converted by American alertness into a masterpiece of exploitation that brought the end nearer by weeks.

Until Patton's Third Army had cleaned up several bags of prisoners west of the Rhine and was ready to cross and join the "big push", the orders to Hodges' First Army were to expand the bridgehead slightly and wait. While Hodges waited, the Germans threw everything they could muster against the Remagen salient.

The 404th was assigned the job of providing air cover for the bridgehead, and did a good job of it in spite of unfavorable weather, for the first few days knocking out railroad rolling stock bringing up reinforcements to the Germans massing around the perimeter of the bridgehead.

March 9 the Group struck heavily at three places along the main railroad line leading east from Cologne, and drew a commendation from ground control personnel for successful attacks through broken clouds and haze which limited low-altitude visibility to half a mile.



The 508th led by Capt. Drexel D. Morgan, attacked stationary trains headed eastward about 20 to 30 miles east of Bonn. With bombs and rockets the formation scored seven rail cuts and destroyed or damaged at least one locomotive and half a dozen freight cars.

While Morgan led a bombing attack on one yard near Wissen in which three trains were standing, and a rocket attack on another train near Rosbach, one flight led by Lieut. Edwin W. Pole bombed and strafed a concentration of motor vehicles near Altenkirchen, about 20 miles east of Bonn—apparently part of the transport of enemy troops massed against a thrust from Remagen toward the Ruhr.

"They tried to scare us off as we went in," Morgan said, "shooting up a lot of flak. But we sneaked in on them from the east and gave them hell. The haze was so bad under the clouds, which were at 8,000 feet, that we could barely make out the outlines of the trains. Our ground controller called us and told us it was great work and just what they needed done.

"I saw a couple of big tanks on the Hitler Highway (autobahn) east of Bonn, about three miles apart, but when I'd go after them I'd lose them in the low haze. I made three passes and lost them every time."

Meanwhile Major Kenneth L. Hodges, a transferee from the Alaskan theater, led ten ships of the 507th in an attack on the marshalling yard at Hennef near Siegburg, about seven miles east of Bonn and 15 miles north of the bridgehead, scoring direct bomb hits which destroyed or damaged 38 railroad cars.

"The first six bombs were direct hits among six strings of cars," Hodges said, "and after that a tower of smoke concealed the explosions of the rest of the bombs, but all ten planes dropped their loads in the target area."

Lieut. James E. Benton, who was the seventh pilot on the dive-bombing run, saw a box car doing flip-flops when I went down to drop my babies."

On the homeward flight, Hodges saw three vehicles on the Hitler Highway, pointing north but stationary.

"The nearest vehicle was a large van," he said. "In front of it was a smaller vehicle, and up the road was something that looked like a German-type jeep.

"On the outward flight we had seen a lot of flak coming up from this area, so I took only one flight down on the target. The full formation would have given the Germans a better target and would have increased the risk of some of us getting hurt unnecessarily.

"As we were getting squared away for our run, I gave the van a two-second squirt with my machine-guns, just to get lined up. I was startled to see the thing blow sky-high, exploding like a bomb.

"Wheels and stuff flew past me, and the explosion covered the area with so much smoke we couldn't even find the other two vehicles."

When he landed, Hodges found two flak holes in his airplane and a dozen more holes caused by flying debris..

"The van exploded with such suddenness and force," Hodges said, "that I'm sure it must have contained mines. I hope so."

Working far south of the Remagen bridgehead March 11th, Colonel Moon attacked through a flak barrage that rattled his plane "like hail on a tin roof" to damage two trains in the vicinity of Coblenz.

Out on what was supposed to be a "routine weather check", escorted only by Art Brock of the 506th, Moon left his wingman above as top cover as he spiraled down through the only hole he could find in the overcast, to observe ground activity.

"I first saw a train with a number of cars on it," Little Caesar related, "and fired my four rockets into it, damaging the locomotive and setting two tank cars on fire. Then I saw a plume of smoke some distance away and fired my guns at the base of it. As I got nearer I saw that the smoke was coming out of a short tunnel, and a train was protruding from the other end. As I swung around to make an attack on it, I saw a little red ball flash past my wing-and I wondered what it was. I soon found out.

"I saw some smoke coming up from the middle of the train, and thought that was a funny place for a train to be smoking. I suddenly realized it was gun-smoke from a flak car, banging away at me. I already had committed myself, however, and I banked around and sprayed the cars, and pulled up into the overcast. The flak sounded like hail on a tin roof as it hit my plane. My brake was shot out, and there was just a hole in my wing where my pitot tube had been."

With his airspeed indicator shot out, Moon climbed up through the overcast, a ticklish operation at best, rejoined Brock and returned safely to base.

Claims on armed recce on the 13th included three marshalling yards attacked, with seven locomotives, 133 freight cars, 20 buildings and 15 armored vehicles and transports destroyed or damaged, and rails cut in 14 places. Major Hodges led the most successful mission against the Wissen yard, 25 miles northeast of Remagen, but it was costly. Lieut. David Schwartz, flying No. 4 in the lead flight through a barrage of light flak, pulled off the target with his plane on fire in the rear, but apparently under control. Lieut. Varn, his element leader, advised him to bail out, but got no radio reply. Varn then saw Schwartz drop his bombs, which for some reason had not been released in the dive. "Hawk" headed westward at about 5,000 feet, and was lost in the haze until Varn saw the explosion of his aircraft in an open field.

March 14 dawned with cloudless skies and a bright sun. Morning missions took off on fighter patrols. Twelve aircraft from the 507th squadron, led by Major Hodges, were vectored to the camouflaged Lippe airfield, base for German dive-bombers harassing the bridgehead, 30 miles east of Remagen. A 15-minute bombing and strafing attack resulted in destruction of 21 aircraft, mostly Ju-87's (Stuka dive-bombers) and twin-engine Ju-88's, and damage to 21 more. The squadron suffered two losses when Lieut. Billy V. Brownlee and his wingman, Lieut. Ben M. Simon, mushed together while attacking from slightly different angles. Both planes exploded in mid-air 200 feet above the ground.

The first enemy aircraft attacked were 10 Ju-88's lined up nose to tail along a narrow road through woods bordering the field.

"They were hedged in by trees, and visible from only one direction," Hodges said. "I made three low passes before I saw them."

A P-51 notified the squadron that the field had been hit by another formation which silenced the flak. Lieut. "Double-O" Scroggin, however, saw a flak gun firing from a corner of the area, and kayoed it. After that the Thunderbolts attacked without opposition, except for some small arms fire from a pillbox on the northeast side of the field.

High scoring honors were shared by Lieut. John P. Boland, who destroyed four and shared six damaged with his wingman, Roy Adams, and Lieut. Lee A. Branch, who destroyed four twin-engine planes and damaged three FW-190's. John Phelps concentrated on refueling trucks around the field and William E. Guyot shot up barracks and operational buildings.

"The field won't be operational the rest of the day," Guyot assured Interrogating Officer Jack Zabel.

The airdrome attack opened a terrific day on which the Group flew through haze and broken clouds to render valuable assistance to First Army units in the bridgehead.

Ed Justice ranged up and down the Hitler Highway north of Remagen with a 506th formation, teaming up with a TAC recce P-51, and claimed 39 motor transports, four tanks and a horse-drawn vehicle, and caused the explosion of an unidentified target.

"I was on a strafing pass," said Capt. Russell A. Francis, "and momentarily 'blacked out'. When I recovered I saw a gusher of white smoke up to 200 feet as if a bomb had hit something. But no one dropped a bomb."

Lieut. Donald B. Clee, apparently hit by flak, was heard over the R/T reporting that he was going to bail out over friendly territory. He was not seen afterward.

"Monty" Hood took up a composite squadron and found a large concentration of transport on the Altenkirchen-Siegen highway.

"Supply trucks were parked bumper to bumper on the sides of the road," according to Lieut. Charles C. Dunn, "and the woods seemed to be the same way. It looked like the only stuff on the road was too big to get into the woods." Score: 65 motor transports and two armored vehicles destroyed or damaged, supplies set on fire and five road cuts.

Lieut. Howard W. Jarvis was hit by flak while attacking tanks and trucks with. "Clamwinkle" Williams' 506th formation late in the afternoon. His aircraft was destroyed, but Jarvis returned with only a small cut on his face and a black eye.

*The time had come to bail out, Lieut. Jarvis decided. He had been trying to nurse his flak-riddled Thunderbolt back from the Remagen bridgehead area on the east side of the Rhine, but his engine was burning, the hydraulic system was shot out and the plane was losing altitude fast, so he unhooked the harness holding him to the back of the seat, grabbed the lever to jettison the canopy, then changed his mind fast.*

*Below him he saw an assembly of tanks and troops waiting to cross bridge. He saw at once that the burning plane likely would fall among the troops, so he took the only choice. Aiming for the only flat ground in the area, he landed at 200 miles an hour, bounced off the tops of two hills, rattled around the cockpit and discovered to his amazement that he was still alive and with no bones broken. Jarvis hitch-hiked back to his base. (Morley Cassidy in the Philadelphia Evening Bulletin, March 19, 1945.)*

Successful as were the operations of the 14th they were a mere prelude to record-breaking achievements of March 15, when the 404th was twice "mentioned in dispatches".

*"404 Group, operating between the Remagen bridgehead and Hachenburg, claimed almost half the day's total against M/T and nearly all the A/V. A large percentage of 404's total were just across the Autobahn from the bridgehead within a 10-kilometer radius of F-8134 (crossroads at west side of Altenkirchen forest). "-(Summary of Operations, IX Tactical Air Command, 15 March 1945).*

*Air-Ground Co-operation. 404 Group flew two squadron missions in the bridgehead. On the first, direct hits were scored among buildings marked with smoke. On the second, artillery put smoke on an A/V concentration in the town of Schweifeld. One large explosion was observed and five A/V were damaged." -(Summary of Operations, IX Tactical Air Command, 15 March 1945).*

The buildings mentioned were attacked by a 506th formation with Harry Anderson as leader, and comprised the village of Strodt, described by Stars and Stripes on March 17, as "a key point in the German defense". The 9th Infantry Division, complimenting the 506th on a "good show", went on to capture Strodt and Schweifeld in immediate preparation for the First Army offensive from the Remagen bridgehead. Don Miller was leader of the formation bombing Schweifeld.

All three squadrons shared honors in the heavy claims of the day, which included 256 motor transports destroyed and damaged, 28 road cuts, 35 tanks and 12 armored vehicles. Flying 142 sorties, or more than 40 percent of the IX TAC total, the Group had its most active day since July 29, when it was spearheading Hodges' First Army in the breakthrough from St. Lo. Besides bombing, the Group fired 82,789 rounds of caliber ammunition, or more than 12 gross tons, and fired 125 rockets.

Major claims were entered after a 508th flight led by Joe Wilson was directed to a concentration of equipment in the Altenkirchen forest by two P-51's. Wilson personally made a bombing run, two rocket runs and six strafing passes against trucks, tanks, a flak gun and a column of marching troops before he was knocked out of action by a 40 mm flak burst in his left wing.

"The first hit blew off my pitot tube and flipped the airplane past the vertical," he said. "It was all I could do with both hands to straighten out at 100 feet, but while I was doing it the Germans hit me three more times, once directly underneath the cockpit. I was in a bad way, and they were still shooting at me. Then I looked up and saw those two P-51's who had shown us the target screaming down with guns firing to silence both positions that were shooting at me.

"I thought I was going to have to belly in, but Kemal Saied came in on my wing and led me to the field, signaling instrument readings to me. All mine were out. Once I tried to turn left and almost snapped into him out of control, but he peeled over me to the right side and stayed with me. I cut my switches and landed with a dead engine. Damage included loss of my pitot tube, dent in the prop, a rocker box knocked out, hole in the oil cooler, all the guns knocked out on the left side where the ammunition exploded and the hatch was knocked off, left aileron cut, trim knocked off, exhaust pipe cut, turbo pipe cut and numberless holes in my fuselage and wings caused by flak fragments."

Flight Officer Marshall Mushlin who had escorted Jarvis on his return from enemy territory the day before-abating flak with short bursts of MG fire-was himself hit through the prop on a strafing run on the 506th mission, but made another pass and was struck again. Although he "got a stiff leg from applying left rudder", Mushlin brought his Thunderbolt home with a severed trim tab cable, and his rudder control cable almost gone.

We ran only three squadron missions on the 16th, each against a different primary target of opportunity, but all tied together in a unique example of coordination.

The 506th, first off behind Major Harry Peterson, bombed and strafed two locomotives and trains south of Limburg. On the way back another train was found about 15 miles east of Remagen, and the locomotive ran up under a highway overpass for protection. "Buddy" Britton made strafing passes to keep the train immobile until the 507th arrived a few minutes later with bombs. Seba "Tiger" Eldridge led his flight on a bomb run which destroyed a train. The 507th then found six tanks in an open field near the Altenkirchen forest, and Floyd Blair's flight got one with near misses. Blair tipped the 508th off to the location of a concentration of 100 trucks and 45 tanks there, and John Wainwright led a successful attack on them.

The last mission had a tragic note in the loss of Lieut. William H. Johns, Jr., who was last seen strafing vehicles in the forest.

By March 19 the First Army bridgehead was 18 miles wide, north to south, and eight miles deep, with seven miles of the Ruhr-Frankfurt Autobahn in American hands. Collapse of the Remagen railway bridge at 1500 on March 17 came after it had served its purpose. Buildup for the coming offensive continued, across pontoon bridges already in service.

Previous records went by the boards as 7,000 Allied planes hammered Germany on the first day of an all-out air preparation for the last great offensive. The 404th broke all its previous records with 751 sorties in the next five days on armed reconnaissance and close direct cooperation with First Army divisions moving into positions to "leap off".

Six minutes after the last night fighter had landed from the previous night's operations, a 506th formation took off in the pre-dawn grayness for the first fighter-bomber blow of the day. By an ironic twist of fate it was Edwin "The Mole" Wright who was aroused from his well-beloved sack to lead the mission. One hundred and 80 sorties and 13 hours and 12 minutes later, Rufus "The Red" Cox taxied to his 507th revetment by aid of his crew chief's flashlight to close a day on which the Group hit the enemy with more than 100 tons of bombs, rockets and .50 caliber.

Wright's flight clobbered the yard and railroad station at Wirges just off the Hitler Highway east of Andernach.

"Let's hurry home boys," the "Mole" called, as the last bombs knocked an entire section out of a train. "We can still make breakfast."

Eight-plane formations were going out every 30 minutes after that. Hodges' 507th flight crumbled a power station 30 miles east of Bonn. Morgan's 508th hit the marshalling yards at Wissen Christopher's 506th went all the way to Wipperfurth, northeast of Cologne, to smash a moving 20-car train. Bill Lee's 507th cleaned up vehicles south of Altenkirchen, Lee's 100th mission and the second time he'd ever been hit by flak. The other time was his 98th two days before. Home safe.

Crawley's 508th hit goods wagons and vehicles northeast of Altenkirchen; Lieut. Robert C. Conway fired a rocket down the turret of a tank and it burned. Bealle's 506th and Rogers' 507th bombed marshalling yards east of the bridgehead. Bob Garrigan out with the 508th at 11 o'clock, reported "little stuff moving, everything looks clobbered, every road cut, every marshalling yard hit, wrecked vehicles scattered on roads, in fields and woods, towns looking like Duren all over again."

Joe Warren got a bomb hit 10 feet from a tank and knocked it off the road. Mediums started going over and catching flak, plenty of it. Tank and vehicle concentrations south and southeast of Altenkirchen were attacked by Hansen's 506th flight, Ross's 507th and Buelow's 508th

Peterson's 506th formation was led by a P-51 (Mandate Yellow) just after noon to a concentration of troops and 200 vehicles in the northern part of the Altenkirchen forest, and four huge fires were started. A flak burst hit Peterson's left bomb rack, knocked the 500-pound demolition bomb off, tore off all fairing and aileron controls. He brought his plane home. Elton B. Long took the 508th back to Wissen where a train of 40 flat cars loaded with vehicles was beaten up before they could be delivered to the northern sector of the bridgehead.

Harry Anderson's 506th formation attacked two trains, one of them half hidden in a tunnel 30 miles northeast of Remagen. Darkness was falling when Cox's flight bombed the important junction town of Emmerichenhain, 30 miles east of the bridgehead. As incendiaries burst among the buildings, according to Lee Branch, "the town was illuminated like a Christmas tree."

Operations of the next two days followed much the same pattern, with a hustle and bustle of briefing, interrogation, refueling, reloading and servicing. Pilots and ground personnel were busily occupied.

Don Willoughby strafed flak positions while Bob Carrigan put rockets into a depot at Klafeld, north of Siegen. Lieut. Robert E. Taliaferro released his bombs while diving through a cloud and when he broke through clouds of brownish smoke came up at him from an explosion that covered two acres of ground. Lieut. Albert J. Greffenius bombed a line of cars at Raubach, 15 miles east of Remagen, and a ball of fire cupped in a

cloud of smoke billowed to 700 feet. Harold McNabb was hit by flak and bellied his plane in at Euskirchen, with J. D. Williams zooming across to lead him in. McNabb was unhurt.

Major Paul R. Crawley found 30 vehicles bumper to bumper east of the bridgehead, and fired rockets into the middle of them. His wingman, Flight Officer James D. Moulton, followed him down and reported seeing two lines of vehicles, with about 12 in each line, and separated by a space about six vehicles wide. The 508th had as a special target an important railway bridge across the, Lahn river north of Marburg, and on the second try at it, Elton B. Long swooped down to have a look and found the south end resting in the water.

Early in the afternoon of March 21, Lieut. Luciano B. Herrera, leading eight aircraft from the 508th, discovered more than 50 tanks assembling just northeast of Bonn, across the Sieg River from the 78th Infantry Division which was advancing northward toward the Sieg

Herrera and Donohoe, who was leading his second flight, made repeated rocket and strafing passes on tanks, armored, vehicles and two marshalling yards next to the woods. They would make a pass in the face of the intense flak, then pull across the Rhine near Bonn to regain altitude for the next attack. Before ammunition ran low, 15 armored vehicles and other equipment had been knocked out, and Herrera then led Major Peterson with a 506th formation into the target to destroy or damage 18 tanks. Col. Galbreath brought a 507th flight to the area as the 506th finished, and claimed an additional six armored vehicles, probably tanks. Don Mercer of the 506th, flying over the town of Rott, due east of Bonn and in the path of the 78th advance, saw white flags lining the streets.

The next day, March 22, the Group shifted to close cooperation with the 1st and 9th Infantry Divisions, as General Hodges began to move out. One hundred and 48 sorties were flown, against enemy Command posts, tanks, vehicles and troop concentrations in the immediate battle area.

"Smoke from the Ruhr valley is drifting south of Cologne," Wright reported after a morning mission, and we knew things were brewing up in the British and Ninth Army sectors, as well as down south where the Third Army was to cross the Rhine that night.

*"This phase is known as the napalm era," wrote the 506th official unit historian, "and was responsible for the nervous twitch in the form of a convulsive push on the throttle when at the end of the runway and indicating about 110."*

Apparently as a result of the heavy expenditure of bombs in the Battle of the Bulge—at a rate that had not been anticipated by those who must plan the logistics of having a bomb ordered, manufactured, and shipped across the Atlantic so that it reaches the airplane just about the time it is needed—the 404th and other Groups of the Ninth Air Force found themselves running out of things to drop on the enemy.

By March 21 the situation was acute. There were less than 1,000 bombs of all types in the various squadron dispersal areas. In the Group bomb dump there were exactly one 500-pound semi-armor piercing bomb, six 90-pound frags and a 100-pound practice bomb. In an effort to put some kind of an effective load on the Thunderbolts, the new liquid petroleum composition (napalm) was resorted to, loaded into German auxiliary gas tanks.

A small incendiary was fastened to the napalm bomb as the igniter, and when the device struck the ground it created a fierce, destructive blaze. However the German belly tanks, being finless, tended to tumble in the air and could not be aimed with any accuracy; and they were extra heavy when fully loaded, and a more dangerous object than a bomb by far in the event of an accident on takeoff.

During the 21st a great variety of bomb -loads was achieved, including rockets, the most frequently used: 500-pound general purpose bombs, 500-pound semi-armor piercing, 500-pound incendiary, new 500-pound incendiary clusters ("Molotov breadbaskets"), 500-pound fragmentation clusters, 260-pound frags, 20-pound frags in small clusters, and 90-pound frags in clusters.

A chemical rather than an ordnance unit handled the incendiary and fire bombs, and had to manufacture the napalms by hand under field conditions. By the night of March 21st all the GP's (standard loading) were gone, semi-armor piercing were almost exhausted, and there was little promise of replacement in the morning. The following day three separate squadron missions were delayed an hour or more waiting for bombs. The extraordinary demand for fire-bombs overtaxed the capacity of the chemical units. Some 50-caliber ammunition was flown in on C-47's during the day, and 600 GP bombs were delivered to the whole TAC, of which the 404th Group received about 125, for emergency use only, in the event of a new German desperation move.

The bomb supply situation remained tight for days, and never did return to the abundance of pre-Bulge operations.

Meanwhile the Remagen bridgehead was swelling and ready to burst. That the ground forces were on the move was substantiated early in the afternoon of the 22nd by Fred Varn's report that the Altenkirchen forest, for days an exclusive, profitable target for fighter-bombers, now was under fire from our artillery.

The 506th had particularly good results against German strong points facing the First and Ninth Divisions. Wright led one formation in an attack on Hofen, seven miles east of Bonn. While the "Mole" knocked out three self-propelled guns south of town ("exploded like an ammunition dump"), Lieut. Calvin S. Bosin led the second flight in over the town at 50 feet to drop napalm. When they finished, the ground controller cried:

"Okay boys, good work. I think we can win the rest of this little war by ourselves now. Thanks."

Harry Anderson's bombing mission practically leveled the little town of Rahms, between Remagen and the autobahn. The ground controller said "good show; my air observer (a Cub circling overhead) says there's one building left in the west end of town."

Jorma Pelto, who had failed to drop one napalm bomb, said "I'll get it!" and swooped down practically to deck level-and made a direct hit, swathing the entire building in flames.

*In six weeks the combined efforts of the Allied armies had achieved a major objective. The German soil west of the Rhine had been cleared of all hostile forces, The river itself had been forced in two fortuitous crossings, and the freedom of action of the German defense on the east bank was seriously curtailed. General Eisenhower was now ready to launch his offensive beyond the Rhine ...*

*After a heavy aerial and artillery preparation, the Second British Army began an assault crossing of the Rhine during the evening of 23 March. Next morning, the U. S. 17th and Sixth British Airborne Divisions were dropped north and northeast of Wesel. British troops crossing the river soon established contact with the airborne forces. The U. S. Ninth Army crossed between Wesel Duisburg early on the 24th meeting light to moderate resistance. Within two days seven bridges had been built across the river and the British-American bridgehead stretched 25 miles along the Rhine to a maximum depth of six miles ...*

*During the critical week ending 22 March, United States aircraft alone made 14,430 heavy bomber attacks, 7,262 medium bomber attacks, and 29,981 fighter sorties against targets in Europe . . . .*

*(From General Marshall's 1945 report to the Secretary of War).*

March 23rd Captain Russell E. Oakes dropped a bomb directly in front of a train near Dusseldorf, and Major Crawley and Joe Warren mopped it up. Drexel Morgan led a recce east of Cologne and reported he "looked in the windows of every house in the area."

Lieut. R. A. Smith said there was so much flak, "it looked like a low overcast. I just shut my eyes, gritted my teeth, and busted through."

Captain Francis of the 506th was starting a strafing run when an 88-mm. shell hit .his left wing.

"I almost turned over and went in, but had enough altitude to recover. I kept hearing an awful noise as I wrestled with the plane, and thought it was coming apart, then discovered I still was firing my machine-guns."

The 507th bombed a marshalling yard at Gummersbach, east of Cologne. Flight Officer Matthew A. Fredrich had a bomb hang up, and went back to drop it, strafing as he dived. There was a terrific explosion. His leader, Lieut. James E. Benton, started to congratulate him on a direct hit, then saw that his bomb had hung up again. Fredrich's guns had set something off in the yard.

After providing cover for the spectacular sky train loaded with paratroopers that passed over A-92 en route to jump the Rhine at Wesel, north of the Ruhr, the 404th quickly returned to its mission of spearheading First Army attacks.

*By 25 March hard fighting in the Remagen area had extended the bridgehead to a depth of ten miles and a length of over 30. The German High Command, expecting an immediate drive on the Ruhr from this direction, had concentrated strong forces of Army Group "B" north of the Sieg River. To their great surprise, General Hodges broke out of the bridgehead to the southeast on 26 March, when his armor drove to Limburg, seized a bridge over the Lahn River, and raced along the superhighway toward Frankfurt. Other armored columns of the First Army, speeding eastward as fast as 40 miles a day, reached Marburg and Giessen by 28 March, and then swung northward through the hill country west of Kassel. Troops of the Third Army crossed the river at Mainz to reduce the German pocket bypassed between Mainz and Frankfurt while, to the east, other Third Army forces drove on toward Kassel and the line of the Fulda River. With solid contact between their advancing corps, the First and Third Armies were now executing a massive thrust to the northeast into the heart of Germany. The complete rout of the German military establishment was now under way ...*

*(From General Marshall's 1945 report to the Secretary of War).*

As a result of the opening up of ground operations, the 404th accepted two important assignments. Simultaneously we helped spearhead the drive into Central Germany, and engaged in weakening the resistance of the Ruhr defenders against First Army pressure on the lower side of the pocket. Several missions also were run in the Limburg area, 20 miles east of Coblenz, ahead of the Ninth Armored Division which subsequently captured the town.

These were extremely long-range operations from St. Trond, 250 miles round trip to Limburg, so it became necessary to break up the Group's most comfortable base establishment and push on into Germany. March 19th Lieut. Col. George Nichols and Major William Crow of Group Headquarters had inspected a new site on the Cologne plain about six miles southeast of Duren, known as Y-54. It was nothing but a flat stretch of turnip fields, but engineers were laying pierced steel planking and turning the farmland into an acceptable fighter strip.



The first Group working party of two officers and 16 enlisted men moved up to open Y-54 March 26, and the entire Group headed eastward the first week in April. The strip was just south of a shell-shocked smelly little village named Kelz. The ground was muddy, our living quarters tents again, and the entire layout was one we were glad to leave in a hurry. Inside of two weeks we were on the move again.

Our first look at Germany from the ground merely served to confirm the reports of the pilots from aerial observation: Aachen was badly hit, although not completely devastated; the Siegfried Line was not a clearly defined "line" as such, except for some rows of "dragon's teeth" concrete anti-tank obstacles near Aachen-rather it was one concealed bunker mounting a field-gun, flanked by two more, each flanked by two more, and on in considerable depth. Most of the "bunkers" or dug-in pillboxes, had been blasted by artillery, fighter-bombers, or combat engineer demolition teams; Duren was flat, completely reduced to rubble; the Germans were glum, stunned-looking people, now reaping some of the misery they had inflicted on others.

On March 24, 25, and 26, winding up 18 consecutive flying days, the Group concentrated on marshalling yards, motor transport and tanks east, northeast and southeast of Cologne.

On a 507th mission against a marshalling yard 20 miles east of Bonn on the main Cologne-Siegen line, Lieut. Francis W. Godfrey, who was leading the second flight, completed his bombing run and was pulling out to about 1,500 feet, when he suddenly snapped over to the right. His aircraft dived into the ground and exploded. No parachute was seen.

Jim B. White, out on his 97th mission, led a 506th formation which completely destroyed a locomotive and 25-car train just east of Wipperfurth, 20 miles southeast of Dusseldorf. White was on his second strafing pass when he was hit by flak. He bailed out over Wipperfurth and his fate was a subject of pessimistic doubt until he showed up weeks later to intercept a box of his personal possessions ready for shipment to the Effects Quartermaster.

A special target for March 26 was an aircraft reporting station eight miles northeast of Wipperfurth. A 506th formation led by Col. Moon scored direct hits on barracks, towers and operations building; the 507th led by Col. Mullins, damaged two pylon towers and scored hits on equipment in adjoining woods; the 508th, led by "App" Marshall, who scored a direct rocket hit, rounded out the attack and then destroyed and damaged 28 vehicles in the area before coming home.

On March 27th the Group shifted its punches to the eastern perimeter of the almost-encircled Ruhr. On a four-ship 506th mission, Lieut. Don Miller observed a convoy of 30 trucks and armored vehicles moving south through the town of Bremscheid. He immediately attacked.

One of his 500-pound demolition bombs scored a direct hit to halt and block the convoy.

"After that the vehicles were just sitting there, waiting to be knocked out," Miller said. "By the time the flight was through, at least ten were destroyed and eight damaged. A barrage of light flak came up from woods along the road south of the town, and the column probably was moving into its bivouac area when we found it."

The next day a letter of appreciation, to the Ninth Air Force commander from General Bradley, 12th Army Group commander, was circulated to all air units.

"I have noted the recent reports of the record number of sorties by ... the Tactical Air Commands of the Ninth Air Force," General Bradley's letter read, "and take this opportunity to forward my heartiest congratulations to you, your unit commanders and most particularly to your combat crews. On behalf of the fighting men on the ground I would like to convey to all your men fighting in the air our personal admiration for their large parts in our jointly sustained attack against the enemy ...

"I feel that ... the close cooperation existing between your Tactical Air Commands and our Armies has been a principal feature in driving the forces of our foe back and across the Rhine.

"Too much credit cannot be given to these men of the 12th Army Group-Ninth Air Force Tactical team who are relentlessly battering our foe on the ground and from the air. They beat him on the beaches, drove him from the occupied nations, crushed him in his own Rhineland and next will destroy him in the heart of his fatherland . . . "

Dirty weather set in, and on one of the last missions of the month, Lieut. "Mole" Wright leading eight ships of the 506th found himself over a cloud blanket practically solid from 6,000 feet down to 1,500 feet, and, then dropping unevenly down between the hills. The high ground in many places rose up to about a thousand feet and better. In this narrow corridor of fairly clear air there was a great deal of scud cloud to interfere with visibility.

"I thought I saw some aircraft on a field below us as we passed over a small hole in the overcast," Wright said. "I went down alone to look the place over, leaving the rest of the formation above the overcast, out of sight of any flak guns that might be in action. We were about ten miles northeast of Dusseldorf, and just south of the heart of the Ruhr.

"The hole closed over before I could get through, and by the time I broke out underneath, I was across a hill from the field and right over a marshalling yard. As I circled back to give it a look, two locomotives buckled together chugged slowly in front of a roundhouse. I dropped my two fragmentation bombs, and as they burst apart, the roundhouse and both locomotives were peppered with fragments and caught fire.

"It was raining, and I saw people near the roundhouse holding umbrellas over their heads, and so surprised they just stood there.

"I rejoined my flight, and when the airfield remained hidden by clouds, we flew southward about ten miles and found some motor transport parked off a north-south road. The clouds were more broken here and I could see people standing around in the fields, apparently tending their cattle or doing other work, and they didn't seem to take much notice of us.

"There was a flak gun placed in one field near a typical European farmhouse, with walled-in yard. I saw four or five people with farm tools in their hands, run across the yard—away from the gun. But we didn't bother that one.

"As the flight started its bomb run three flak positions opened fire from along the road. There seemed to be two guns in each position. So while the others dropped their bombs, I strafed the flak.

"All three positions quit firing, and I thought I had knocked them out. But when I flew past them they opened up again. I must have made them awfully nervous though. They were shooting one way and I was going another. Of course I wasn't fooling around down there. I was indicating better than 400 miles an hour at that time.

"We skimmed under the clouds and skimmed over and around the hills and strafed motor transport standing in the streets of a small town southeast of Dusseldorf, and started some fires.

"We couldn't see how much stuff we hit or knocked out. It wasn't worth risking a collision with a hillside to go back just for a look. You can't shoot down a hill with 50-caliber guns.

All squadrons on March 30 concentrated on marshalling yards in the Kassel area, which was being penetrated by the Ninth Armored Division, swinging northeast with accompanying infantry. The 404th attacked four trains of 20 to 40 cars each, constituting almost all the train attacks of the day by IX TAC.

*The magnitude of the offensive smothered resistance all along the Western Front. The shattered condition of the German transport system and the sustained speed of the Allied advance prevented the, enemy from coordinating a defensive line in any sector. He did offer bitter resistance at isolated points but these were bypassed by the armored columns, leaving pockets to be mopped up later. During the month of March nearly 350,000 prisoners were taken on the Western Front.*

*The entrance of the Fifteenth Army ... into the line of the 12th Army Group on 30 March gave more freedom of action to the First and Ninth Armies, enabling them to increase the weight of the offensive into Germany. Ninth Army tanks immediately broke out of the area north of the Ruhr and swept eastward in a powerful thrust toward Munster. On 1 April the enveloping columns of these armies made contact west of Paderborn, cutting off the Ruhr and a large area to the south, in the largest pocket of envelopment in the history of warfare.*

*Elements of 18 German divisions from the First Parachute, Fifth Panzer and Fifteenth Armies were encircled in. this skillful maneuver. Leaving strong forces to contain and reduce this giant encirclement, the First and Ninth Armies continued eastward toward the line of the Weser. Spearheading the Allied offensive, they headed for Leipzig and a prearranged junction with the Soviet forces. There was no loss of momentum, no respite for the enemy forces, and by the. end of the first week of April both armies had crossed the Weser in the area north of Kassel.*

*(From General Marshall's 1945 report to the Secretary of War).*

Armed reconnaissance in the Ruhr pocket comprised the Group's operations from March 31 through April 4.

Increased disorganization of the German defenses was apparent from the air. When Major Hodges led a 507th attack on scattered motor convoys northeast of Dusseldorf on March 31, napalm firebombs were dropped from a height of 20 feet.

"I saw 30 or 40 persons in civilian clothes (possibly DP's) flattened against the wall of a hillside cut," Hodges said, "and they were waving to us as we attacked." An overcast existed from 500 feet up to 6,000 feet, but the squadron made repeated passes on moving traffic in spite of the handicap. Donn H. Driscoll set a big anti-aircraft gun on fire, and the flames were used as a beacon for three passes against motor vehicles in the immediate vicinity.

"We'd find a hole in the overcast," Hodges said, "and glimpse some trucks through it. We'd have to keep the hole in sight and the trucks in sight for our dives, then we'd set something on fire to show where they were for another pass, and pull out through the overcast on instruments. There wasn't a bit of flak, until finally somebody set up a machinegun down there, but he didn't do us any harm."

Walter P. Gorham, the 507th's young Baptist minister, couldn't find the trucks so he "flew around at about 500 feet, and every once in a while would nose down and fire a burst through the overcast." He set five buildings on fire and damaged a powerhouse.

Results of the recces were good, although the weather continued so bad that on one mission Major Crawley reported simply that the 508th had "damaged Germany somewhere north of Siegen."

"Bird-Dog" Hansen's 506th formation flew airfield cover over Sites Y-71 and Y-84 deep in Germany on April 4, protecting our transport planes ferrying supplies to the fast moving ground troops. Coming home he followed the wrong squadron.

"After touring the various southern army fronts," wrote the 506th official historian, "he returned to the base after being airborne four hours and 30 minutes."

On April 5th the 404th shifted to close cooperation with the Seventh Armored Division and the III Corps, driving in on the Ruhr pocket from the east. During the next one-week period, which culminated in an armored drive deep into the collapsing defenses, the 404th toll in destroyed and damaged equipment and facilities included 20 tanks, 74 armored vehicles, 571 motor transports, 11 horse-drawn vehicles, 17 jeeps, staff cars and motorcycles, 157 fortified buildings, three flak positions and one oil dump.

By this time the move from St. Trond was nearly completed, and only a few cleanup details remained in Belgium. The move, however, was more than just a switch from comfort to hard living again for Don Ferris of the 507th. A romance had blossomed between him and the "nurse named Frances" he met at the Saturday night parties, culminating in their marriage in Liege-so the move temporarily "broke up" this brand-new family.

The nurse, First Lieut. Frances C. Austin, was an army hospital dietician. They actually were married twice, first in a civil ceremony at the Hotel de Ville or City Hall in Liege, read in French, where they were "processed" in a line with Belgian couples, six at a time. The second ceremony was a "church wedding" in the chapel of the 56th General Hospital in Liege. Granted a week's leave, the couple "hitched" a ride on an Eighth Air Force Flying Fortress, which had landed in Belgium to refuel after a bombing mission, and spent a brief honeymoon in England.

This was the first "combat marriage" in the Group; before Spring season had ended, however, Captain Ray Lucas of Group Transportation had followed Ferris' example, also taking as his life-partner a young nurse on the staff of the 56th General Hospital.

One sturdy old veteran dropped out of the picture when the Group move into Germany-T-bolt Y8-W, the 507th's "war bond" plane. According to squadron records, the plane had completed 200 missions without aborting because of mechanical failure. The Air Force considered this sufficient evidence of valiant service, and decided to bring the plane back to the States amid appropriate publicity.

"W" originally had been assigned to Lieut. Buford S. Courtney, who christened it "Sar Pete" after his wife. Mrs. Courtney's maiden name was Sarah Peterson, and "Sar Pete" was a short form used by Courtney's little nephew, whose mastery of the art of speech hadn't progressed beyond monosyllables.

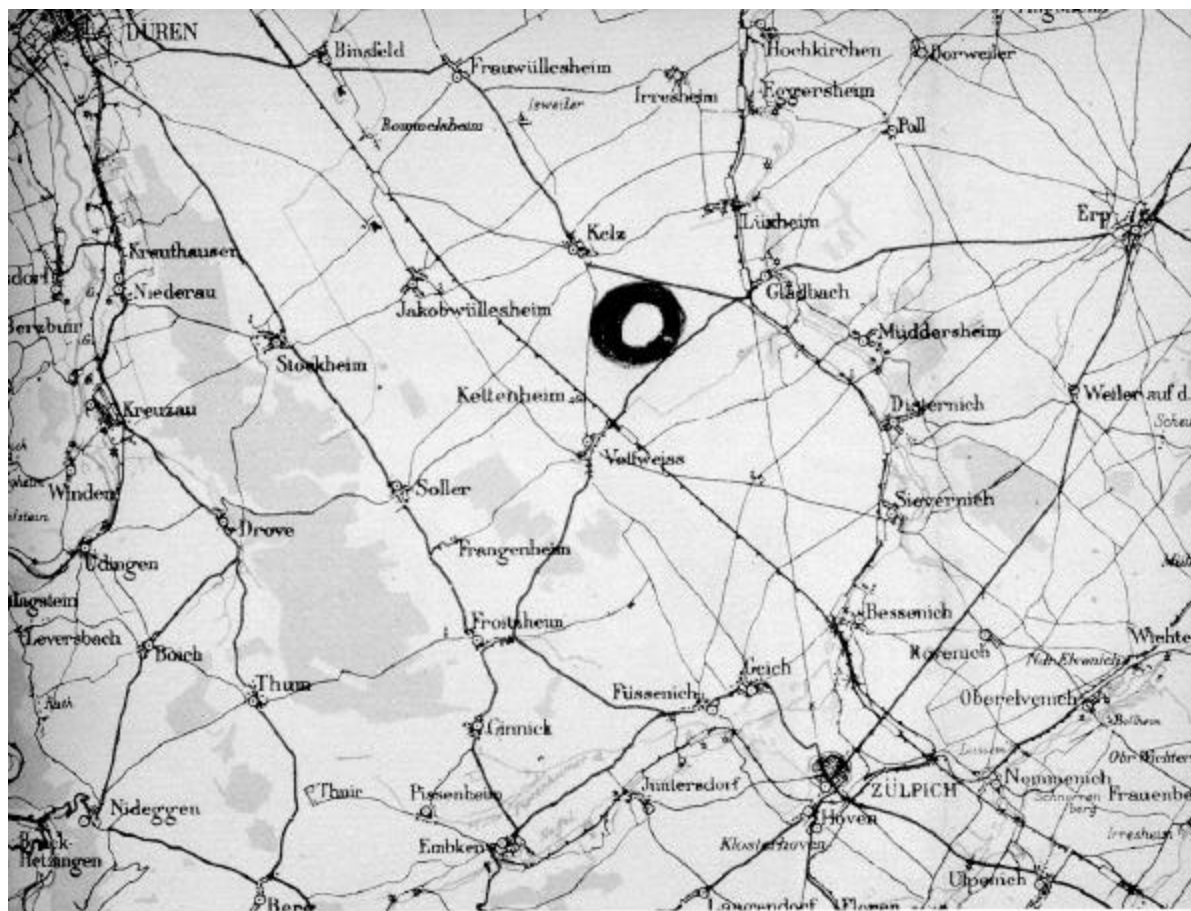
When Courtney was rotated home, the ship was assigned to Fred Varn. A native of Florida, he promptly plastered his own name on the side, a defiant "Fightin' Gator" in big red letters.

Then came a round-robin mix-up over publicity plans which had Jerome Catherwood, the "Mad Painter" of the 507th literally living up to his name.

When time came to retire old "W", a discussion with the Ninth Air Force Public Relations chief resulted in a decision to restore the name "Sar Pete". It was done. Meanwhile, however, photographers had taken still shots of the ship with the name "Fightin' Gator" on the side. When the pictures reached Ninth Air Force, there was another huddle. The decision: better change that name again-back to "Fightin' Gator" and let the War Department put "Sar Pete" back on it in the States, after a staged reunion between Courtney and Varn.

So "Fightin' Gator" was painted on again. Then the craft was dressed up with reproductions of the ribbons for the Purple Heart (for flak damage), Air Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross, a short movie film was made of it at A-92, and off it flew to England, en route home.

The climax came in a rumor that once in England, old "W" pronged itself in an accident and was junked along with the whole publicity project.



Y-54, Kelz

## Chapter Sixteen

### DEUTSCHLAND KAPUT

The planes of the 404th Fighter Group flew up to Y-54 at Kelz, Germany, late April 4th and began operating from the new strip the 5th. After a scant week of supporting First Army troops on the eastern flank of the Ruhr pocket, the aircraft of the Group followed advance ground echelons to a new base, Site Y-86, deep in the heart of Germany at Fritzlar, some 15 miles south of Kassel.

To make the trip, Group convoys had to swing southeast, curving well below the line of the Sieg River, due east of Cologne, held by the encircled Ruhr defenders. Fritzlar was a tiny, picturesque town on a small rise of ground overlooking the Eder River. It was some 85 miles east of Kelz by air, but more than twice that distance by the roads the Group's motor transport was forced to travel because of the tactical situation.

In direct flight, 404th planes had to pass over enemy forward positions between Kelz and Fritzlar, and this situation led to a tragic loss April 10th. With the Group still based at Kelz, Lieut. Col. Moon and his three squadron commanders-Lieut. Col. Garrigan of the 508th, Major Peterson of the 506th, and Major John A. Marshall, newly-designated C. O. of the 507th-flew east in a four-ship formation on a non-operational mission to inspect the facilities at Y-86.

On the return flight they observed some tempting targets in a valley between some low hills about 30 miles west of Fritzlar. Down they went to strafe-and caught a hail of flak that riddled Major Marshall's plane and sent the other three zooming back for altitude. Helplessly they watched as Marshall's craft slid toward the side of a hill bordering the valley. At the last second the white of a parachute trailed out behind the Thunderbolt-and plane and parachute hit almost simultaneously on the hillside a short distance apart.

Two days later with the area of the crash cleared by our troops and most of the 404th personnel moved to Y-86, a sad search-party led by Group Surgeon Jett O. Scott recovered Major Marshall's body where it had fallen-the still unopened parachute strung out on the ground behind him. They said it appeared he might have made a safe jump had he been over the valley, 1,000 feet lower than the hill where he struck.

The 507th was hard hit the 10th, losing both its new commander and Lieut. John Boland. Boland was seen making a series of strafing passes in a duel with a large enemy tank. His last pass was straight up a road toward the front of the tank, when the P-47 suddenly exploded at about 200 feet altitude, as if it had been struck by a lucky hit from the tank's big turret-gun.

The previous day the 506th lost Flight Officer Marshall Mushlin, who was killed in a non-combat crash.

Operations during the week of flying from Kelz were concentrated against the hilly country east of the Ruhr in the vicinity of Soest and Lippstadt, where the Ruhr pocket had been closed April 1st by the Second Armored Division of the Ninth Army, and the Third Armored of the First Army.

Captain McHale, a recent addition to the Group staff as liaison officer from the First Army, went touring among forward troops in that area, and brought back some front-line eyewitness reports that testified to the grim effectiveness of the 404th's attacks.

At headquarters of the 99th Infantry Division April 13, for example, Captain McHale learned that:

A village named Fretten had just been captured that morning, two days after an attack by four planes of Pintail Squadron. The flight had claimed only three vehicles destroyed, but the actual figure was closer to 15. There were still many dead enemy soldiers and civilians about. The town was 80 per cent demolished and over 100 people were killed by air attack alone.

An attack by Granite Flight the same day had smashed to pieces another village named Shonholthausen.

Pintail Red strafed the village of Lenhausen, and Crocus Blue bombed it, and all resistance ceased.

In a final comment, Captain McHale said:

"The Assistant Division G-3 reports that this Group has consistently given the best support of any Group. I queried him about a 20-minute delay on 9 April in which our planes had to wait for red smoke to be laid on the target. He said it was unfortunate that in that particular case his communications broke down, and that the usual wait for smoke was four to six minutes after requesting. He said that in the entire town of Brach, the target in question, only two buildings were left standing, and that it was burning fiercely when his troops moved in behind our air attack. In the town all resistance ceased and 130 prisoners of war were taken from the cellars in a state of terror."

On April 10th occurred the Group's first enemy aircraft claim in almost four months -since the great air battles of December 18th. Since the New Year's Day strafing attacks on Allied airfields, the Luftwaffe had virtually disappeared from the sky, except for sneak attacks in small formations on our advancing ground troops, and steadily decreasing opposition to heavy bomber attacks by the Eighth Air Force. Even the enemy's "pilot-less" air force-his V-1's and V-2's-no longer were in the air, once the allied forces had driven him from his Rhine valley launching areas, and all buzz-bomb and long-range rocket activity ceased after March 28th, ending at last the ordeal imposed on London, Antwerp and Brussels.

The 507th had a four-ship flight out April 10th working with the Ninth Armored Division near Weimar, 225 miles from Kelz. The second element of the formation was down strafing some vehicles, while Flight Leader John Phelps and his wingman, after bombing some fuel tanks on the Weimar-Leipzig rail-line, were circling at about 6,500 feet providing cover. The wingman, Lieut. Walter P. Gorham, called in an enemy plane diving down from three o'clock high out of the sun.

"The enemy fighter was coming down so fast," Gorham said, "that I called it out as a jet job. Phelps, however, Spotted it correctly as an Me-109 as we broke to the right."

"I turned sharply, crossed under my leader and got in position behind the enemy fighter, as he went past and below us.

"I remembered being taught back in the States to guard against firing short of an enemy plane, so I took a good lead and fired a short burst. The pilot must have applied his dive-brakes or something, because I was closing on him fast, and my tracers passed in front of him. I'm sure I didn't hit him. But things started happening.

"The canopy flew off the plane, and the pilot jumped out. I continued after the plane and got one long burst into it as it winged over to the right, just for my own satisfaction. It struck the ground and exploded.

"Then I went down and flicked on my camera switch and took pictures of the pilot. His parachute had opened and he was floating down at about 2,000 feet. I got a good look at him. He was a big fellow dressed in a dark flying suit belted across the waist. He threw his arms up across his face as I went in close to take his picture. He probably was afraid I intended to shoot him, but I didn't have any more use for him I didn't think much of his flying or fighting ability, and if that's the cream of the Luftwaffe well, I hope I can get some more that easy."

Gorham had an appropriate name for his aircraft, "Ruth-less Preacher." For he had been a Baptist minister before leaving college to get in the Air Force, and was married to a girl named Ruth. He celebrated his 24th birthday two days after his air victory.

*By mid-April our troops were along the Elbe near Wittenberg and Magdeburg and had established bridgeheads across the river. In rear of the armored columns, the cities of Hanover and Brunswick fell to Ninth Army infantry, Bypassing Leipzig and strong resistance in the Harz Forest, the First Army drove eastward to the Mulde Valley south of Dessau.*

*While these extensive operations continued, the battle progressed against the trapped Germans in the Ruhr. With the Fifteenth Army holding the west face of the pocket along the Rhine, and armor and infantry of the Ninth and First Armies driving in from the north, east and south, the formidable enemy forces were crushed in just 18 days. More than 300,000 prisoners were taken in this unique victory, won far behind our forward positions and squarely astride our lines of communication.*

*(From General Marshall's 1945 report to the Secretary of War).*

The 404th found Fritzlar an excellent base as far as ground facilities were concerned. It had been a permanent German Air Force installation, but the landing field itself was designed for 1939-type planes, and offered an unsatisfactory grass surface for our heavy fighter-bombers. Although it had been used by the Germans as a twin-engine bomber base, the Group found it necessary to have an emergency wire-matting runway laid down by our engineers from the northeast to the southwest corner, to provide a sufficiently long takeoff strip for the P-47's.

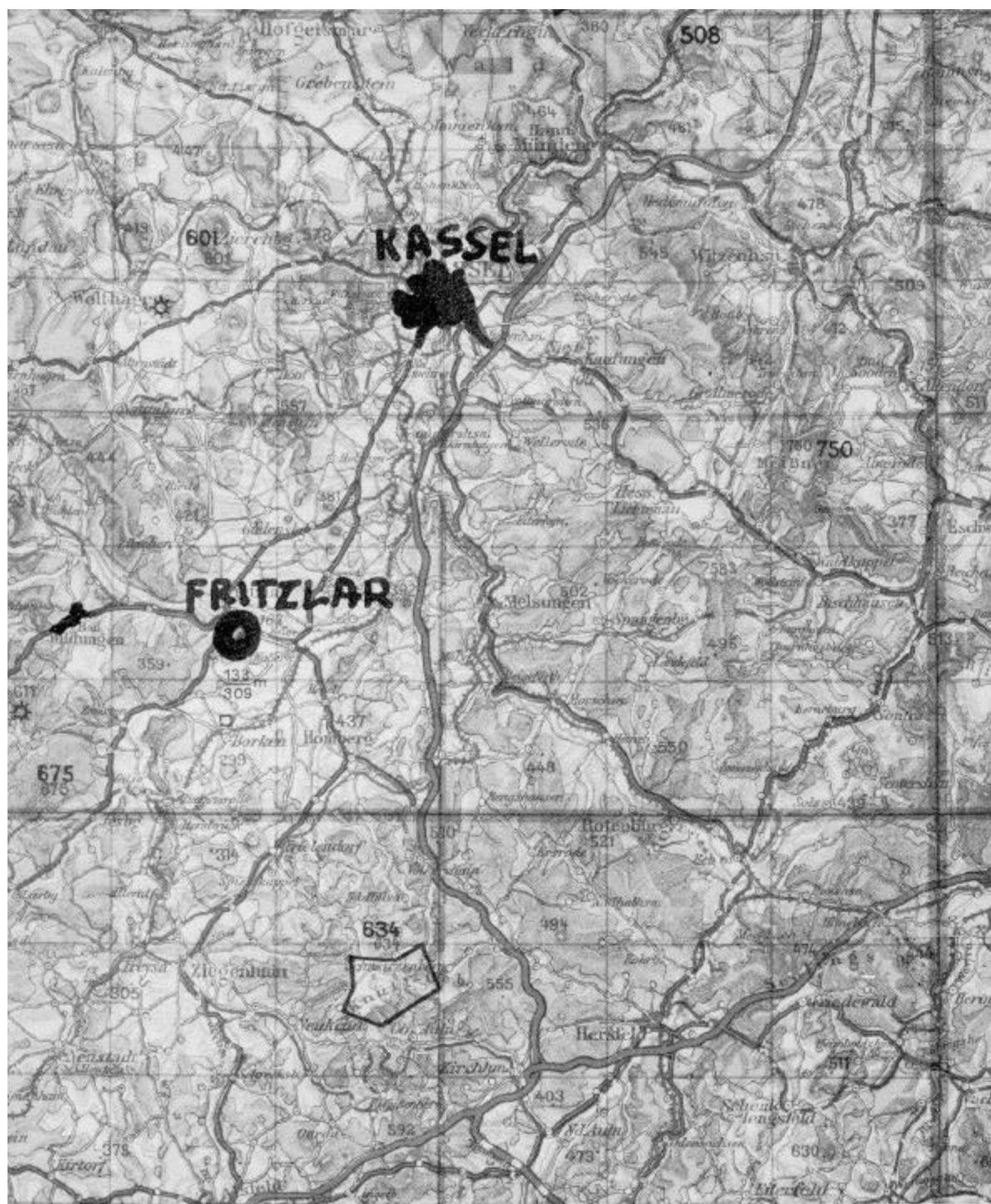
The hangars formed a crescent along the north side of the field, and all but two were in excellent condition. Some two dozen German aircraft were found scattered in the hangars, of various types, and all seemed to be ready to fly but for minor damage. Two hangars on the western end of the line had been collapsed, but the absence of shell or bomb holes led us to believe they had been demolished intentionally by the enemy, who had to flee before doing more damage. There were complete building facilities for all personnel beyond the hangars, not only for the 404th, but for the 365th Group which joined us again at Y-86.

Only signs of actual battle damage were in a row of three or four two-story homes on the northwest edge of the field, apparently the homes of the German base commandant and his staff. Two of the houses had smashed and burned roofs, and on the lawn in front of one were the deep marks of steel tank treads. From the position of the treads and a large burned-out patch of tall hedge in front of the houses, it was obvious that an enemy tank had waited here, screened behind the hedge and had fired at our approaching armor. Through the hole in the hedge, burned out by the muzzle blast of the enemy's gun, you could see, a mile or more in the distance, the road curving down a hill from the southwest, along which our columns had to, come in their drive through Fritzlar toward Kassel.

At Fritzlar the 404th took on its last major assignment of the war—armored column cover in the battle for Leipzig. The actual Leipzig phase of the campaign lasted one week from April 14th to 20<sup>th</sup> and in its way represented a perfect example of close tank support at its best for future tacticians to study. Employing the tactics of close coordination perfected at St. Lo, the 404th spattered 77 different ground targets in a wide arc 80 miles around Leipzig, from Dessau on the north to Dresden on the east. Without using a single bomb throughout the operation, the Group destroyed or damaged four tanks, 12 other armored vehicles, 13 gun positions, 98 motor vehicles, 20 horse-drawn vehicles, 21 locomotives, 122 railroad cars, 28 fortified buildings, seven barges in the Elbe River, 44 enemy aircraft on the ground, and a factory and oil storage dump.

In addition to this activity, the Group also managed to work in a few sorties against enemy resistance in the Harz Mountain pocket, northeast of Kassel, and several escort missions protecting Ninth Air Force medium bombers on strikes to the south, deep into Bavaria and Austria, where there was some evidence that the last-ditch Nazis might be gathering all available resources inside a "national redoubt" area in the Bavarian Alps.



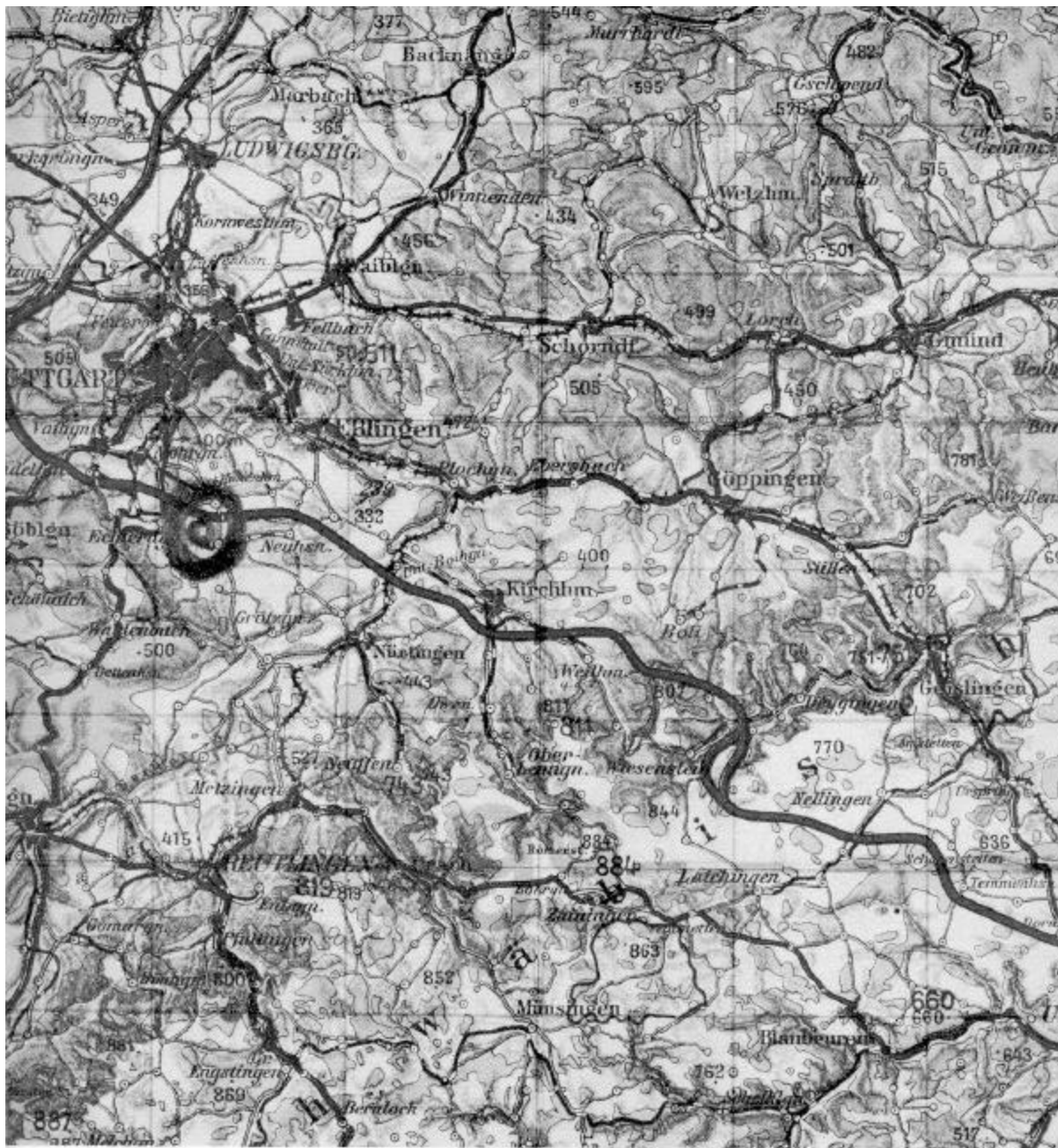


Maßstab 1:500 000



GOTHA: JUSTUS PERTHES

Einzigste Nachfräge 1743  
Stand der Bodenorganisation: 15.6.44



SITE  
R-50



GOtha: JUSTUS PERTHES

To round out the picture of the Leipzig campaign, the "task forces" involved were the Ninth Armored Division and the Second and 69th Infantry Divisions-a force of some 40,000 men, 350 tanks, 200 artillery pieces, 150 mortars, 1,000 machine-guns and 25,000 small arms. To this the 404th contributed 75 P-47's, 1,000 officers and men, and the striking power of approximately 600 machine guns (eight per plane) and 100 high velocity aircraft rockets (four per plane on the 25 aircraft of the 508th, our rocket-equipped squadron).

The Group opened the air phase of the Leipzig campaign moderately, the 508th shooting up an airfield eight miles east of Leipzig, then rocketing the town and railroad yard at Bad Lausich, 15 miles southeast of the city; the 506th strafing gun positions eight miles due south of the city and directly ahead of a U. S. armored column; the 507th strafing a 20-car train about 20 miles east of Leipzig, and a cluster of motor vehicles near the train.

The 508th claimed two enemy aircraft destroyed on the ground, two probably destroyed and four damaged; one locomotive and six flat cars destroyed, and two rail cuts. The 507th claimed one locomotive destroyed and 20 cars damaged, and one truck destroyed and three damaged.

The attacks increased the next day, with a series of heavy blows around Borna, 12 miles south of Leipzig, directly ahead of the Ninth Division. First it was the 506th strafing two villages northeast of Borna. The ground controller reported all snipers and other opposition ceased.

On the next strike, the controller asked Major Kenneth Hodges and the 507th to hit the village of Greifenhain, southeast of Borna and in the line of the tank advance. Primary objective of the 12-plane formation was to prevent German demolition of a small bridge which the armored column intended to cross.

The Thunderbolts strafed the bridge area steadily for about five minutes, started fires in the town destroying some 20 buildings, and damaged four trucks. While the pilots kept peeling up and barreling back down, the controller, three miles away, acted as a one-man cheering section with radio calls to "keep it up! keep it up!"

Destruction of the bridge was prevented, and success of the attack was confirmed in a subsequent message from the commanding general of the division, which reported that the strafing caused "occupants of the town to hang out white flags and run into the fields with their hands in the air."

"The Ninth moved on through the town with no opposition," the message concluded.

The same formation shot up two horse-drawn vehicles and three trucks about 12 miles further east.

Loaded with rockets, the 508th by special request blasted gun emplacements in Borna, starting fires, stopping all flak, and surprising a lone, hapless vehicle entering the town from the east.

The 506th, out again, strafed gun positions on the northern outskirts of Borna, and a small village three miles north of Borna called in by the armor as a defended obstacle.

Working well away from the armored column temporarily, the 507th roamed east and northeast of Leipzig, catching three locomotives, five railroad cars, five motor vehicles. and a horse-drawn vehicle in three separate attacks.

On the last mission of the day the 508th rocketed the village of Eula, three miles north of Borna, previously hit by Pintail Squadron, and saw American tanks squatting south of the village, waiting for the air attack.

The tempo of the attack increased the 16th, but shifted away from the tanks to the area northeast of Leipzig, as the armor began to roll without much opposition and pushed some 25 miles during the day to Riesa on the Elbe, 40 miles east of Leipzig.

The 507th struck a cluster of dual-purpose anti-aircraft-anti-tank guns northeast of Borna to the delight of the radio-man with the tanks. The 508th went 40 miles north of Leipzig, between Dessau and Wittenberg, to clobber a train, then returned to the Leipzig-Torgau rail-line about 15 miles northeast of Leipzig. to catch two more trains, claiming three locomotives and 30 cars destroyed or damaged.

The 506th got another call from the armor about guns in the same area struck by the 507th on the opening mission, and claimed four destroyed by strafing, then proceeded on a special search for a hidden enemy battery that continued to shell our tanks.

Prowling over a railroad line about 12 miles east of Leipzig, Major Peterson saw an indeterminate something on the tracks, with a long pencil-thin shadow pointing away to the south toward our troops. It was the jackpot—a string of four heavy railway guns, thoroughly camouflaged. Down went Pin-tail with its 50-calibers against eight-inch guns.

"After two strafing passes," said Flight Leader Barton Christopher, "I saw the Jerries running away from the guns. About that time we apparently hit the ammunition in five box cars and a motor truck nearby, and the explosions blew one gun sky-high. The other three weren't-likely to shoot again."

The 507th in four separate attacks hit two airfields and two railroad trains, roughly due east of Leipzig along the rail-line from Leipzig to. Riesa. The 508th in quick succession hit a train, three railroad yards, two aircraft in an open field and isolated barracks at points from 50 miles northeast to five miles north of Leipzig.

The 506th came back and banged a couple of horse-drawn vehicles near Brandis airfield, eight miles east of Leipzig, and a convoy of mixed motor and armored vehicles, ten miles further northeast. Working across the Elbe beyond Riesa, the 507th caught a sizeable road convoy heading east. The convoy had no place to flee except into the arms of the Russians at Gorlitz, some 75 miles away; but the presumption based on hindsight is that they were intended to strengthen the line against the Red Army, in the hope that more of Germany might fall to the Americans, whom they might assume were inclined to be more benevolent to their enemies than Soviet troops.

Back along the rail and highway link between Leipzig and Torgau on the Elbe, the 508th attacked a train and two clusters of vehicles in three separate strikes. They were followed immediately by the 506th which picked out two trains in the same vicinity, and also strafed scattered northbound traffic a few miles further south, claiming nine motor and ten horse-drawn vehicles.

On the train-attack, Lieut. Robert Klemola let his squadron mates handle one ten-car string while he concentrated on the other by himself—a locomotive and three flat-cars carrying tanks.

"I poured a stream of bullets into the first tank," Klemola said. "I could see the turret and a short gun-barrel pointing out of it. The tank blew up. It must have been loaded with gasoline or ammunition. The explosion caused the locomotive to blow up right ahead of it, and the other two tanks burst into flames. I've never seen anything go to pieces so suddenly."

April 17th was the day of peak effort for the 404th in the number of targets attacked, but the immediate effect on the battle for Leipzig became less as the armor, swinging through areas thoroughly scouted by the air the day before, closed off the last escape routes from the city to the northeast. The Group worked over the area northeast of the city, and delivered more than half of its attacks beyond the Elbe.

The 508th was off first, working around Torgau, north to Wittenberg and east across the Elbe, attacking six separate trains. Captain Harold I. Buelow, mission leader, said the "only sign of war along the Elbe is the complete lack of any sign of war. The Germans are afraid to move."

The 506th against barges in the Elbe, a stray truck and a locomotive pulling a train, the airfield at Kahla, 15 miles northeast of Riesa. The 507th against vehicles and railroad cars, a flak position, and a Messerschmitt-109 parked on a road ten miles southwest of Torgau. And the 508th again.

Trucks near Torgau, and a couple more 20 miles north of Leipzig. Eight large fires started in the village of Kleutsch, two miles from Dessau, across the Mulde ahead of the Third Armored Division, by the 506th Squadron. Three 507th strikes against already bombed airfields north and northeast of Leipzig at Delitzsch, Mensdorf and Mortitz, and a fourth run on flak positions near Delitzsch. The 508th against two long strings of railroad cars far to the northeast, across the Elbe near Wittenberg, and scattered vehicles on the roads in the same area. So thoroughly beaten up were the visible targets that the last mission of the day decided to see how things were in the Harz Mountains.

The climax passed as far as the air support was concerned. Leipzig was in a nutcracker, with the Ninth Armored on the east, closing steadily toward the Second Infantry west of the city, with the 69th Infantry to the south as a fulcrum. And the weather turned bad.

The 508th went down through haze to fire its rockets into four convoys far to the east near Dresden, then late in the day attacked a bridge across the Mulde seven miles below Dessau. All other activity during the day was a series of patrols protecting our C-47's ferrying supplies for the ground troops into airfields west of Leipzig.

It was nearly finished the 19th; the Ninth Armored had done its job on the city and faced west again, leaving the house-to-house clean-up to the Second and 69th Infantry. There were only two "Leipzig" missions for the 404<sup>th</sup>, one by the 507th which strafed a few railroad cars east of Torgau, and one by the 508th.

Major Paul R. Crawley was leading the Granite Squadron formation when he spotted a Focke-Wulf 190 flying south along the Elbe River near Riesa.

"I went in close enough to see the black crosses, and gave him a short squirt," Crawley said. "Then my wingman and I worked a scissors on him, making coordinated passes from behind and boxing him in. After he once tried to lead us off to the east where there still was an operational German airfield—and a probable flak trap for us—I got him smoking, and he nosed into an open field from about 200 feet. The pilot didn't get out."

It was Crawley's first enemy aircraft destroyed in a combat career that included duty in the Pacific theater beginning in June 1941, and attacks on the Gilbert and Marshall Islands.

"I was due," he said. "I've been looking for this for about three and one-half years."

The rest of the day was spent escorting A-26's far to the south, two encounters with enemy aircraft livening the operations.

Near Stuttgart twelve of the bombers became separated from the rest of the bomber-formation, and Bronson Bayliss and his flight from the 506th detached themselves to provide separate cover. Pintail flight was at 14,000 feet, 1,000 feet above the bombers, when bandits were called in over the radio. Then Bayliss saw them—three twin-jet Me-262's coming up from below.

He peeled down to the right and then rolled out to the left, pulling in behind one of the jets as they broke up through the bomber formation. He fired several bursts at long range and saw strikes at the wing-roots. His victim rolled over into a split-ess, smoking and in trouble, and Bayliss claimed one Me-262 damaged. The attack broke off and he returned to the bombers.

Ninety minutes later the 508th was at 18,000 feet covering the bombers over Ulm when two enemy aircraft appeared diving down from 22,000 feet. Lieut. John E. Hartshorn, flying the last position in the last flight, called them in and at the same instant saw tracers flying by his left wing.

"I turned my head," he said, " and saw four Me-109's at my altitude in trail, breaking off from a pass on me out of the sun. I called them in and Yellow Flight went into a Lufberry to the left. The four Me-109's broke contact and disappeared.

"We returned to cover the last box of bombers.

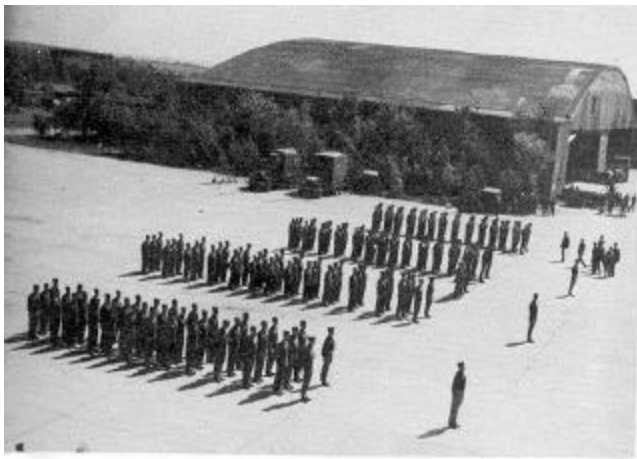
"Meanwhile the first two enemy planes remained directly above us, finally split-essing to attack. One got on the tail of our Number Two man and I lost track of the other. Our Yellow Two spun away from the attack, and the enemy aircraft pulled up to the right. I followed at a steep angle without seeing any definite hits. He rolled over into a spin, seemingly out of control. I stalled out, and followed him down, firing most of the way.

"Someone called in that there was a bandit on my tail, which turned out to be only Yellow Two. I pulled away at 8,000 feet, and as I did, saw the enemy aircraft crash."

Hartshorn's claim was the last German aircraft destroyed by the Group during the war in Europe.

April 20th the battle for Leipzig ended with the fall of the city, as the Group ran only two tactical missions. The first was a pre-planned strike by the 508th against five large oil tanks at Torgau. Leading the attack, John Wainwright scored direct rocket hits from 5,000 feet in an almost perpendicular dive, which blew up the center tank and set the others ablaze before the rest of the formation could fire. Five days later the Yanks and the Russians were shaking hands at Torgau in a history-making meeting.

Later in the day the 508th flew east to Dresden, catching a locomotive and 15 railroad cars, and a couple of stray motor vehicles. All other missions were uneventful escorts.



## FRITZLAR

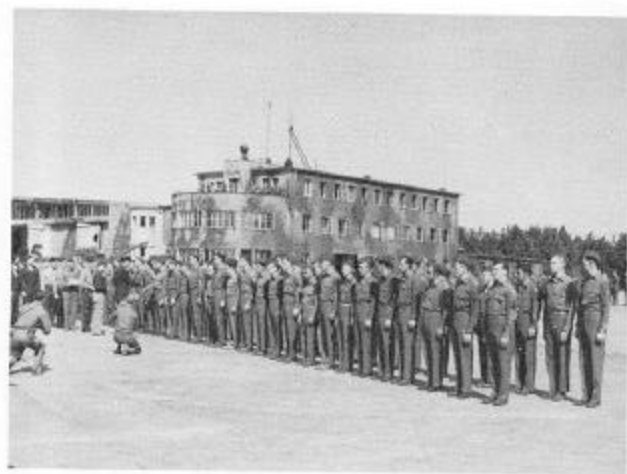
Decoration Ceremony at Fritzlar —  
General Stearley of Ninth TAC officiating . .

Atten—shun!

Trooping  
the Colors —



The Group Standard receives the  
Unit Citation Streamer . . .

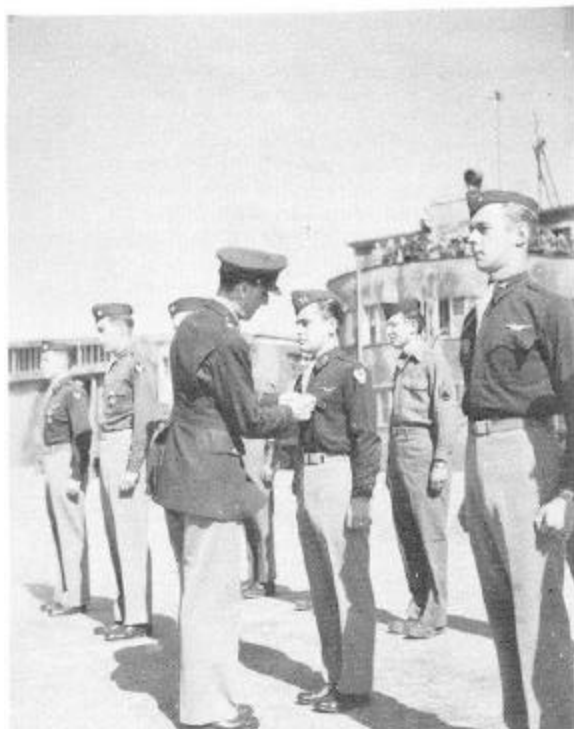
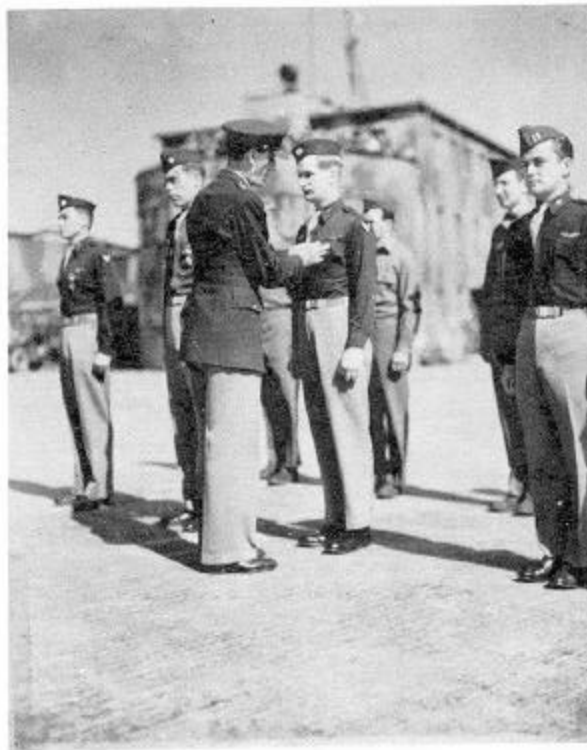


The EM's get their recognition too — Bronze  
Stars, Soldiers Medals, Purple Hearts . . .



FRITZLAR

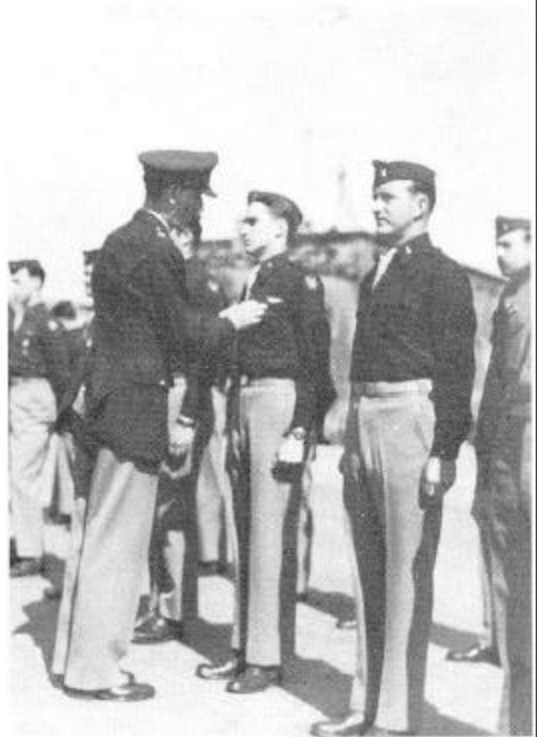
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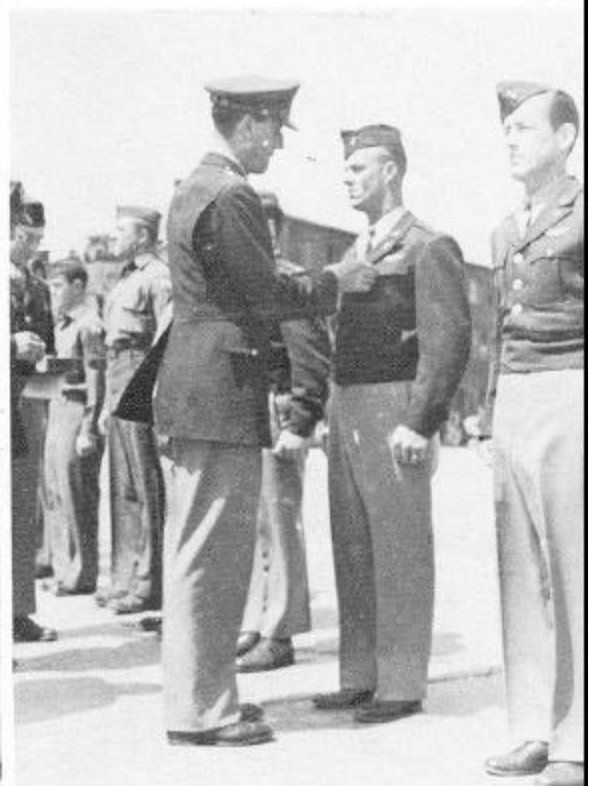
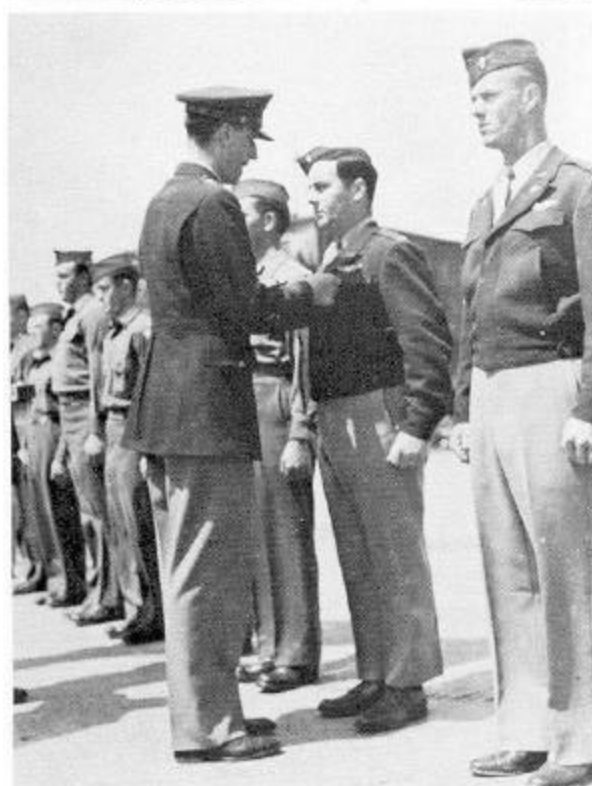
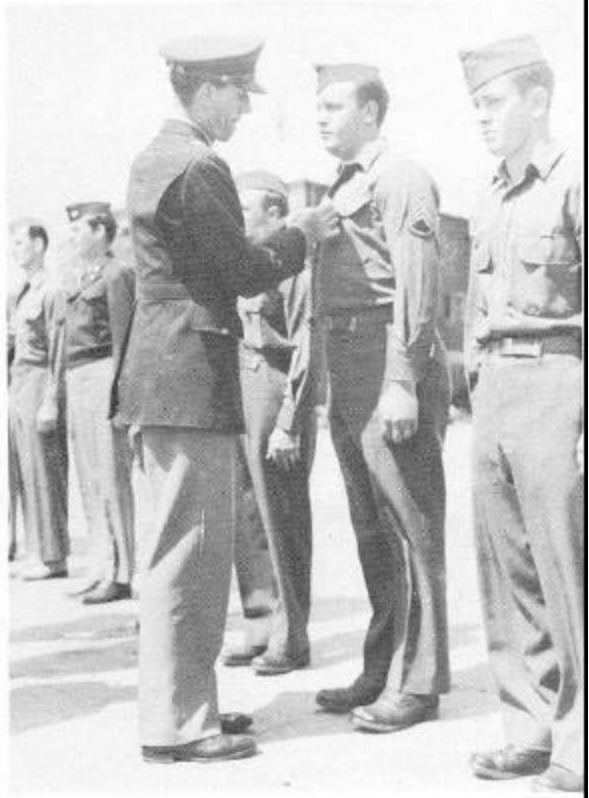


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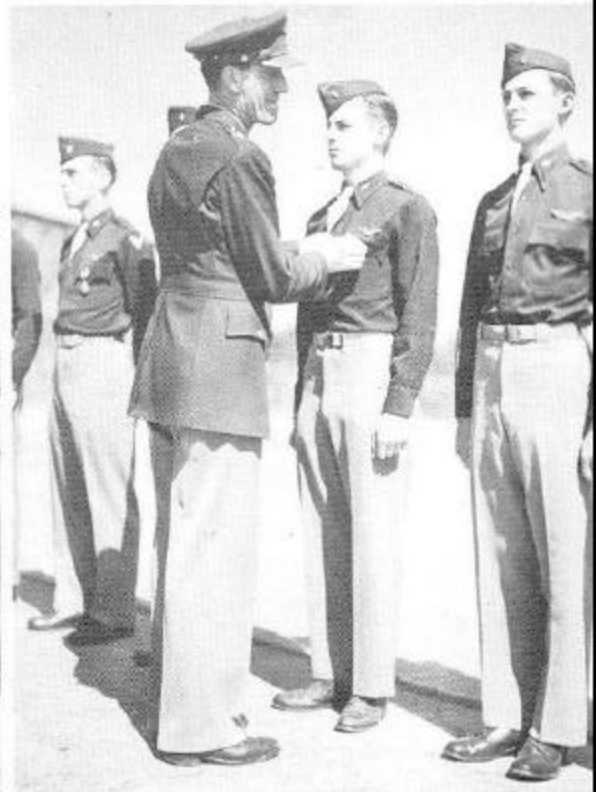


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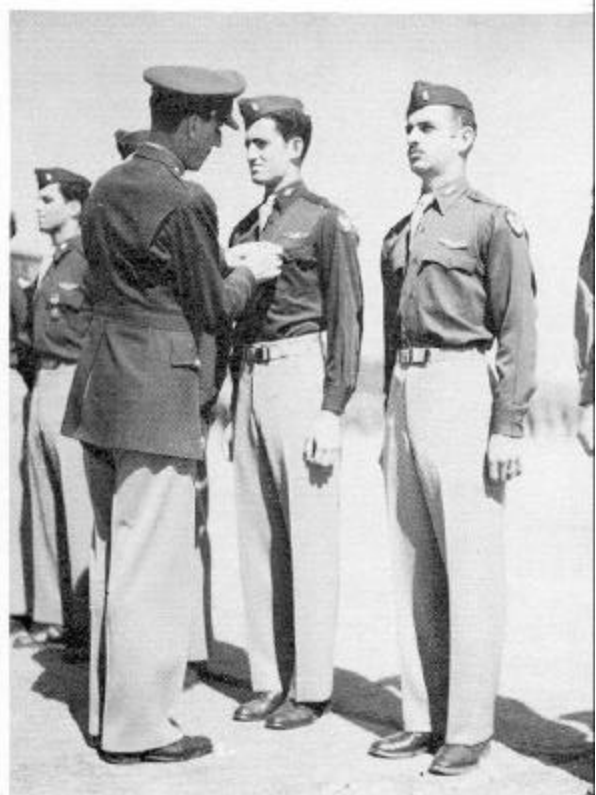
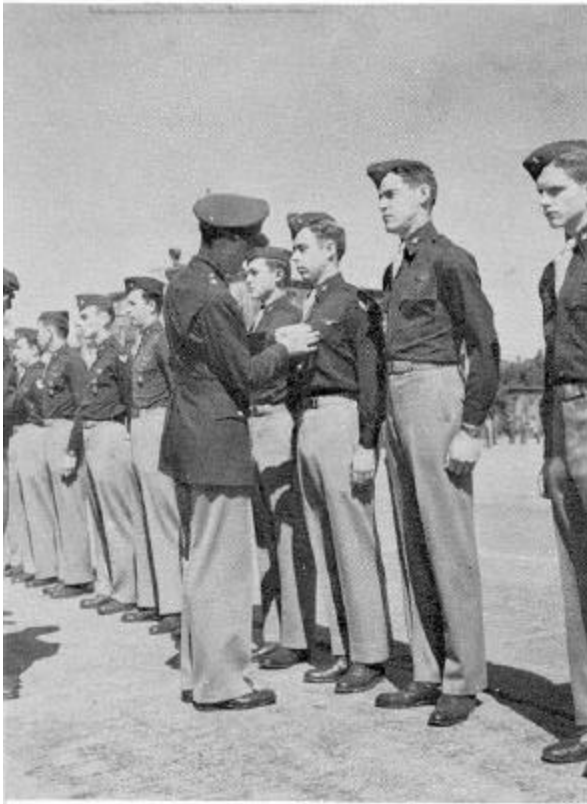
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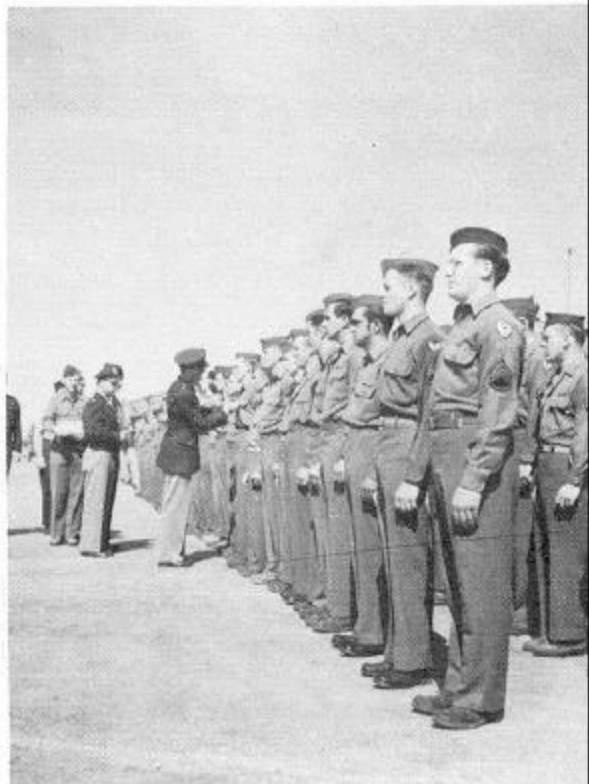
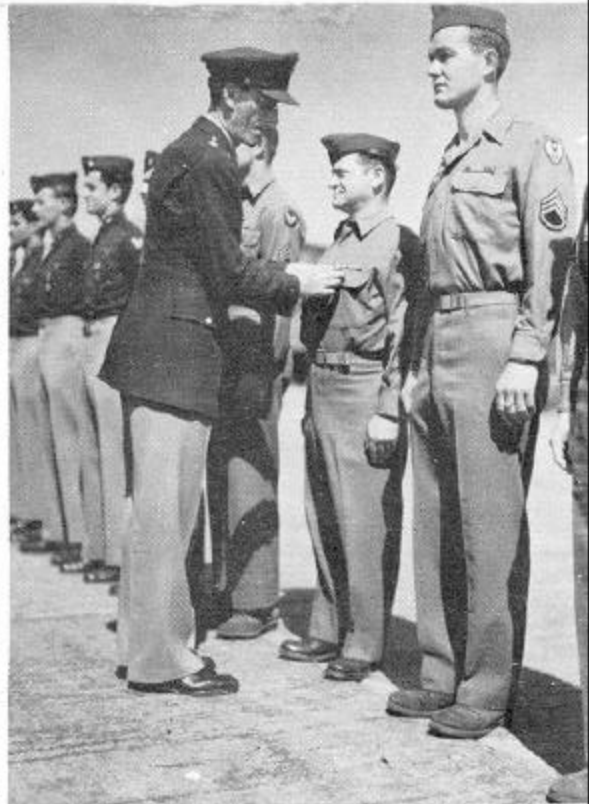
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## FRITZLAR (Decorations)



In Thanksgiving — Special V-E Religious Services . . .

*The long-awaited link-up between the Eastern and Western armies took place at Morgan, with the result that coordinated enemy action is no longer geographically possible. The field of battle is reduced to four areas of isolated resistance: Northern Germany, the Bavarian Alps and Czechoslovakia; Italy, and Yugoslavia . . . Patrols of the U. S. 69th Division contacted the Russian 58th and 15th Divisions, and patrols of the 104th Division contacted the Russian 118th Division on the Elbe River.*  
(From Ninth Air Force Intelligence Summary 130, April 30, 1945).

There were three other events worth recording the month of April: a final visit from General Quesada, IX TAC commanding general; the return of Jim B. White, prisoner of war since March 25th; and the departure of Lieut. Col. Leo C. Moon for the States after nearly 130 combat missions.

General Quesada came April 17th, accompanied by a Brigadier General and three civilian experts from the office of Scientific Research and Development. At a joint meeting of 365th and 404th Fighter Group pilots, he discussed the value of the micro-wave early warning radar, which had been used for control of fighter-bombers on blind-bombing "pickle-barrel" missions, and asked for criticisms and suggestions.

Everyone agreed that "Marmite", the radio "voice" of the MEW radar set, was an excellent, accurate controller, but suggested by way of constructive criticism that "Marmite" was too precise and tended to take some of the control of the mission away from the squadron leader.

Lieut. Col. John R. Murphy, deputy C. O. of the 365th and soon to be assigned to relieve Col. Moon as 404th Group commander, said "Marmite" tended to make pilots overdependent on radio advice and less good at navigation. Moon added that "Marmite" seemed to have less confidence in its readings than the mission leader.

General Quesada asked about the accuracy of "pickle-barrel" missions. One pilot from the 365th said he'd observed some of the results and figured it to be accurate within one-quarter of a mile.

All agreed that a new-sight for fighter-bombers would be an excellent device plus more ammunition, more fuel and more horsepower in the aircraft. Higher-velocity rockets were recommended.

Col. Moon mentioned that 50-caliber shells dropping from the wings hit the rocket fins and made them inaccurate. The technical representatives were very interested; they said they hadn't heard that before.

General Quesada asked how the pilots would feel about a tail-warning device for anything approaching to within 500 yards range of the fighter-plane, "if it weighs 50 pounds."

The gathering seemed to like the idea of a tail-warning arrangement, but not the addition of more weight to the plane. The talk drifted off into a discussion of the P-47N, a square wing-tipped job destined for Pacific delivery—when and if we got there.

"It's a good airplane," General Q. added. "I think you'll like it better than the one you have now."

"I'm going home in a few days," the general announced. "I want you to know how I appreciate all your work. I want you to know my successor as Ninth TAC Commander, Brigadier General Ralph Stearley." And he introduced General Stearley.

Within the next few days Col. Murphy moved his baggage into 404th quarters, and prepared to assume command. He held a staff meeting, and outlined his plans to have every mission briefed at Group headquarters, rather than in the squadron briefing rooms, which the Group had been accustomed to doing since its first combat days in England. The prospect of a change created a strong undercurrent of varying opinions

among the Group and Squadron staff officers, until Col. Moon stepped in with a little talk which turned out to be his farewell speech to the Group.

"Colonel Murphy's proposal is a good thing," he said. "It's important to change, to gain new experience, to find better ways of doing things. A thorough centralized briefing is better than ground-school; and the idea of having pilots on regular duty as operations officers in turn sounds like excellent training in leadership.

"I can't get all the pilots together very well," Moon added, "although I did want to speak to the squadron commanders and ground officers. I've had a wonderful time with you all; I think the Group has run smoothly and well; and I know you will continue to cooperate with Col. Murphy."

Within a few days "Little Caesar" was on his way back to the States, with a head start of about three months on the rest of us.

Colonel Murphy, a handsome West Pointer, instituted regular staff meetings at which he engendered a feeling of cooperation and good-will by seeking opinions and advice, and making clear-cut decisions, the soundness of which was made apparent to all. The 404th was "his Group" thereafter.

Jim B. White, the tall amiable Texan, made a most welcome reappearance at Fritzlar, just in time to intercept a box-full of his "effects" consigned to his next -of-kin. He had quite a story:

"I was leading an eight-ship flight from Belgium on March 25th on my 96 1/2 mission-I never got to make it 97. We got an early start that morning and went out on an armed recce looking for rail traffic northeast of Cologne. We found a train of about 40 cars with trees and branches stuck all over them, in a little village in a valley, with two big hills on either side of it.

"We got two fires started with napalms, and I took the first flight back down on a strafing pass. I could see the flak guns blazing away on either side of the train, and as I pulled up I was hit under the belly and in the left wing root. I was down about 50 feet when I caught it-explosive stuff, got a piece in the heel of my shoe. I managed to climb to 2,000 feet, when the cockpit became filled with smoke.

"There was an explosion next to the fuselage on the left side, and I heard a 'pop' inside the cockpit. Big flames shot up. When it popped, I started getting out, and just as I did I heard Bugs Aikens call, 'Get the hell out of that son of a bitch, Jim B.!' "

"The explosion lifted the left wing. I started to slide the canopy back electrically, then remembered to jettison it. I was afraid the flames would come in the cockpit so I stuck my head out the right side and rolled on out. I was curious to see if the chute would open. It did, in a hurry. I looked up and it blossomed full out.

"I bailed out at 7,000 feet and it took me several minutes to get down. I was coming down toward the top of a hill, so I pulled the shroud-lines a little and slipped away into an open field. When I was about 50 feet high, I noticed a soldier with a burp-gun at the edge of the woods. I forgot about landing, watching him.

"He said 'Halt; hold up your hands; have you got a pistol?' in a way that made me feel those were the only English phrases he knew. He searched me for a pistol, but I wasn't carrying any. He was a private first class in the regular army. He made me pick up my parachute and led me toward a lieutenant and some more soldiers. One of the others took the chute, and they marched me away with my hands clasped behind my head.

"At a little building they took my leather flying jacket which was left for the P. F. C. who captured me. Then I was sent with two guards into Wupperfurth (about 20 miles northeast of Cologne). One-quarter of a mile away a squadron of P-47's came in and dive-bombed a railroad yard. The guards and I hit the dirt.



"When we walked into town some of the civilians were around, crying and moaning. One woman who could speak a little English cried at me, 'See, you kill the women and children and destroy our churches!' I just kept looking straight ahead. About 40 people gathered around, and, I didn't know what was going to happen next, but the guards were pretty good. They got me out of there in a hurry.

"I remember I was carrying my fountain pen, a pocket flashlight, escape kit, pocket comb, dirty handkerchief, and that was about all.

"The guards pushed on through and marched me out of town again, walking on each side of me. We walked southeastward, turned east, and covered about ten or 12 miles. I kept getting turned over from one pair of guards to another, from town to town. About sundown they left me with a soldier who took me back in a staff-car over all the ground I'd covered during the day, looking for a place to lock me up. I ended up in a ten-by-ten room with eight G. I.'s, in the corner of a tool shed in the edge of a little town near a marmalade factory.

"That night the soldier in charge of the room-a clerk or something-gave me what he said was part of his own rations-black bread and margarine, some potatoes and macaroni and junk mixed up all together in the bottom of a can, and a cup of dirty coffee. I slept on a straw mattress on the dirt floor that night. The G. I.'s were infantrymen captured two or three days before. One could speak German.

"We stayed there until late the next afternoon, when two guards led me away with three of the G. I.'s. They'd stop any kind of a vehicle that came along, to get transportation. We got a ride in a trailer with a bunch of civilians, soldiers and PW's for about six miles. About nine P.M. we caught another ride on a truck full of milk cans.

"All along you'd see trucks tied together, one towing three or four others. Some looked shot up.

"I ended up in a barracks with some more G. I.'s that night. There were about 28 of us, and about the same number of French prisoners. We could hear artillery in the distance.

"The next morning they threw all the guards' possessions on a little cart, and rations on another cart-a sack of barley, some bread, and a sack of macaroni. Then they made the G. I.'s push the carts, and off we moved again. The artillery was getting pretty close.

"There were six guards along, two on me and four for the rest of the column. I walked on ahead and pretty soon a third guard rode up on a bicycle, leaving only three to guard the other 40 or 50 prisoners.

"We were supposed to go to Olpe (to the southeast, about 40 miles east of Cologne), so they said. When we were eight miles from it, the mediums came over and bombed the town. We saw them turn away, and saw smoke coming up from the ground. A runner went out, and reported back that the place we were heading for had been bombed out. So they found us other quarters in a 30-by-40 room in an old building used to house laborers. All of us including the guards slept there, while rain poured down outside.

"The Germans moved six tank destroyers by us that night, up the road into a woods on a hill. They set up two 88's on the opposite hill the next morning, and moved the tank destroyers out. We stayed there two nights and a day, with hardly enough room to lie down. Finally a captain appeared to take charge of us.

"The second day at the building in Olpe we saw the Frenchmen with some Red Cross food packages-vienna sausage and that sort of thing. We left there pretty early in the morning and moved into some barracks eight miles above Olpe, formerly used by Russian laborers. Twenty G. I.'s were there already, so they moved in our party of 28 Americans and sent the Frenchmen on to another spot. The barracks had a stove in it, and we kept the fire going. We stayed there two or three days.

"They served us a bowl of sage tea for breakfast to go with our bread ration, one loaf for four days' eating. I ate mine in two and one-half days and did without for the next day and a half. Dinner consisted of barley mush.

"With the German captain's permission we obtained some whitewash and plastered POW in white all over the building, and constructed the same letters in rocks outside.

"Prisoners kept accumulating there continually-so many I couldn't keep track of them. After a couple of days the artillery seemed to be right down the road where we'd come from. Two shells landed about 100 yards from us one night. We felt pretty confident we'd be overtaken by our own troops there.

"One of the boys had a harmonica and we played and sang until about 1230 that night. An English-speaking guard came in at 0215 and had us get ready to move out in 15 minutes. The Germans gave us Red Cross parcels there, which were split among 170 men. We played poker for Chiclets one day, and I ended up with 85 boxes. They also issued us one blanket to every two men.

"Starting at 0230, we walked all day. Once P-47's, flew over us while we were strung out along the road, and I thought we were going to get strafed, but luckily they passed us up.

"After dark we ended up in a camp with French, Russians, Italians, Poles and some Russian girls. Thirteen officers among us received a special privilege, a room by ourselves. An English-speaking guard said he knew where there were some Red Cross parcels at Gummersbach (about 12 miles west of Olpe), so I went with him. We hiked along and finally stopped to wait in a half-basement in a little building near a crossroads. American artillery started hitting behind us and moved gradually closer until the last shell hit about 100 feet from us, and stopped.

"I tried to stall the guard off, to get him to wait for the Red Cross and pick up some cigarettes in a nearby warehouse. I propositioned him to stay around and wait for the Yanks, but he was insulted. He was a good soldier.

"I carried two boxes back 12 miles."

"Two days later U. S. troops overran us at a camp known as Stalag VI-G. We were in a valley between two good-sized hills, with a little factory farther up the hill. About noon we heard some hollering and saw a French flag flying over the factory.

"I told the PW's beforehand to stay inside, the building to avoid confusion. Everyone was whooping and hollering, and our 15 or 20 guards stayed huddled together in one corner. Finally we saw G. I.'s with rifles coming down the road, and burst into cheers.

"We stayed there that day. An American major came by and told us he'd try to get us some rations. We continued to eat German food out of a storeroom in camp for two days, until we finally got a whole mess of eggs and chickens.

"About 120 of us were loaded into trucks and moved back near the Rhine. By this time I had come down with something and had a high fever. We were moved to, an airfield near the Rhine where C-47's were unloading supplies. The outfit there had to cut orders on us before we could leave on the planes, but we sneaked on about five or six of the transports and ended up at Paris. I was supposed to go to Le Havre the next day for shipment back to the States, but they took a good look at me and put me in a general hospital for nearly two weeks, said I had a slight case of pneumonia.

"Then I went to Camp Lucky Strike near St. Valery on the Channel Coast, where, I was supposed to get processed and shipped home. I went through the processing and reached an understanding with one of the boys up there to keep off the shipping orders so I could come back to the Group and visit you characters again.

"I hitch-hiked back in a six-by-six truck; it only took me three days to cover the 400 miles to Fritzlar. I left at 1500 hours on a Wednesday, got a ride on a truck into Paris, rode from Paris to Mourmelon, and checked the airfields there to find out the location of the 404th. The planes there all were carrying gasoline up to Patton, so I hitched another truck ride to Charleville where an Air Depot outfit gave me a wrong location for the Group. I hitched another ride to St. Trond, where they put me up for the night.

"From there I caught a ride in a big cab-over-engine truck to Aachen, then rode in a weapons-carrier up near Cologne. It was raining like hell there, and the driver gave me his raincoat. I already had talked somebody else out of a blanket. I got another ride immediately with an Eighth Air Force maintenance crew and wandered all over the place, finally crossing the Rhine. By nightfall I caught a ride into Frankfurt and located the 404th at an airfield there-but it was the 404th Squadron of the 371st Fighter Group.

"I spent the night with the 371st and started out again with another incorrect location for our Group. I finally arrived at XIX TAC headquarters ten miles north of Frankfurt and ate lunch there Saturday noon. There they told me the 404th was at Y-86. I couldn't get through by telephone or radio, so an MP took men out to the autobahn to try my thumb again. At last I hopped a weapons carrier which dropped me off at the main gate at Fritzlar Saturday afternoon.

"While I was a prisoner I was interrogated about four or five times. In Wupperfurth a Luftwaffe captain asked me some questions, but dismissed me after two or three minutes. The only thing I told him was that I was an airman, since they had seen me floating down.

"I was carrying an English computer in my pocket, and, for awhile they were debating whether I was British or American. I didn't even tell them I was from Texas.

"The third interrogator asked me if I still had my watch. He seemed surprised that it hadn't been taken from me, and said as long as I still had it. he guessed I could keep it. He told me first to lay all my personal possessions on the table, then asked about the watch. He got mad because I hadn't put down the watch among the other things, so I started to open my shirt. I said, if you want all my personal belongings, I guess you want my clothes too. But he said 'no, no, no.'

"At Stalag VI-G, I was the senior American officer in camp, with 180 French, 170 Americans and 65 Russian soldiers, some of whom had been prisoners for five years, in addition to Russian, Polish, Belgian and Italian slave-laborers.

"I found clerks and typewriters to list the names of the prisoners and their outfits, and after we were freed by our troops, we had plenty to drink, sending out occasional details to pick up cognac, schnapps, or whatever they could get. I had no trouble handling the men; all were willing to help, although I did have to rack off a detail or two to keep the place clean."

Altogether Jim B. spent 20 days as a prisoner in the Ruhr pocket.

May 1st the Group celebrated the end of a full combat year. Some of the figures for that year are worth mentioning: 30,346 combat hours flown by 404th pilots, nearly four mil. lion rounds of 50-caliber ammunition fired, enough gasoline used to fill 300 railroad tank cars, more than two thousand rockets fired, and the following bomb -totals dropped: 16,381 general purpose 500-pounders, 411 500-lb. semi-armor piercing, 65 250-lb. G. P., 2,680 260-lb. fragmentation, 1,500 frag clusters of varying sizes, 146 incendiary clusters, 772 incendiary bombs, 753 napalm tanks, 54 white phosphorus, and 318 leaflet bombs, for a total bomb tonnage of 5,150.

Claims were 78 enemy aircraft destroyed and 36 damaged in the air, 35 destroyed and 69 damaged on the ground; 150 locomotives destroyed and 124 damaged; 2,580 railroad cars destroyed and 3,298 damaged; 683 tanks and armored cars destroyed and 563 damaged; 2,485 motor vehicles destroyed and 2,212 damaged.

With the departure of Lieut. Col. Moon, whose total of nearly 130 missions was the greatest flown by any individual as a member of the 404th, only five of the Group's original pilots who began operations in England May 1, 1944, remained: Lieut. Col. Howard L. Galbreath, Lieut. Col. Charles M. Hood, Major Robert F. Bealle, Major Arthur E. Justice, and Captain William M. Lee.

Operationally, there was little left for the 404th to do, with the few remaining combat areas 150 miles or more away from Fritzlar. The last missions of the war were flown May 4th, deep armed reconnaissance sweeps across the plains of Bohemia almost to the Czechoslovak capital city of Prague, 250 miles southeast of Y-86.

*On 5 May, the German commander surrendered all forces in northwest Germany, Holland and Denmark.*

*Along the Danube, the Third Army continued the advance into Austria and entered Linz on 5 May ... At noon on 6 May, Army Group "G", comprising all German forces in Austria, surrendered unconditionally to our Sixth Army Group, just 11 months after the landing in Normandy.*

*The powerful Wehrmacht had disintegrated under the combined Allied blows, and the swift advance into the mountains of Austria and Bohemia had prevented the establishment of an inner fortress. Surrounded on all fronts by chaos and overwhelming defeat, the emissaries of the German government surrendered to the Allies at Rheims on 7 May 1945, all land, sea and air forces of the Reich.*

*(From General Marshall's 1945 report to, the Secretary of War).*

News of the German surrender reached Group Headquarters the afternoon of the 7th, and all carbines and other weapons except those used on guard duty were rounded up quickly before the news could leak out to the squadrons, to prevent any unnecessary accidents during the 404th's victory celebration. Then the men of the Group joined the rest of the world in rejoicing, and signal flares lighted the sky over Y-86 during the evening. The next day-officially designated as V-E Day-a special religious service of thanksgiving and remembrance of those who had died to win the peace was held. Major Speedy Bealle and Sgt. VerCande of the 506th traveled to the Twelfth Army Group Press camp at Bad Wildungen six miles away, to participate in a V-E Day radio program broadcast in the States over the Columbia Broadcasting System.

May 3rd there was some non-operational excitement around the base; a 365th pilot saw a small liaison-type plane with German markings landing in a field ten miles south of Y-86. MP's from the base were dispatched after a radio call from the pilot, who continued to circle the area until they arrived.

The military police found a party of stray U. S. infantrymen who happened to be passing by when the plane landed. The doughs had one German prisoner, and another onlooker, a young Russian DP, indicated that there was another German hiding in the woods nearby. The MP's immediately rounded him up and began to search the plane, which was loaded with small grenades, fuses, raw explosives, plastic land mines and other material for sabotage.

One of the Germans was a dark-haired, hollow-cheeked arrogant-looking person about 24 years old, who had been shot in the foot by one of the infantrymen. The German never made a sound, and the MP's never noticed anything was wrong with him until they had him in the jeep en route back to Y-86 and saw blood running from his foot. The other prisoner was a round-faced, curly-haired frightened youngster of about 20. The two were hustled back to the Fritzlar guardhouse, and then transported to an Army interrogation cage.

The younger of the two, the curly-haired blond, said the pair were deserters, and the only way to get hold of an aircraft to desert in was to volunteer for "this", this type of mission, sabotage. He said he had an uncle in Dorheim, a little town about one-quarter of a mile away from where they landed, and wanted the MP's to stop there. The MP's didn't stop.

The older prisoner, while explaining that some primer coils among the plane's cargo were "safe", attempted to pull a metal plunger at the end of one coil. Not knowing whether he was demonstrating or attempting suicide, the MP's stopped him. Both Germans thought they were going to be shot, and seemed to become greatly relieved along the way as they gathered that they were being taken to a PW camp.

Both were low-ranking Luftwaffe noncoms.

Another event of recreational interest to the Group took place the same day, the opening of "Schloss McCarthy", a rest camp for officers and enlisted men named after the Group Adjutant, Major Walter McCarthy. The site was a collection of buildings on the Edersee—a beautiful lake eight or ten miles west of Fritzlar, which in peacetime had been a summer camp belonging to a German University. It provided hunting, fishing, boating, swimming, and plain relaxing in an eye-soothing setting.

Postwar activities centered around the routine of housekeeping, athletics, frequent leaves and passes, trips to the German horror camps at Nordhausen and Buchenwald, and considerable thinking over the question of whether our next destination would be the States or the Pacific Theater. Missions were scheduled to search the areas where some of our "missing in action" pilots had been lost, in an effort to determine their fate. Ground teams were organized to visit enemy air force installations and assist in the demilitarization of Germany.

One of the most interesting short-leave trips of this period was an aerial "pilgrimage" to Lourdes, the city of miracles in the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains in southernmost France. Eight officers of the Group made the round trip of 1400 miles from May 10th to 14th

According to Major McCarthy, Group Adjutant, who organized the trip, Americans were still a rarity in Lourdes, which was then being used as a French Army hospital rest center. Through the courtesy of the local French commandant, the party was quartered in one of the many modern hotels near the famous Lourdes Grotto of Ste. Bernadette.

The officers visited the spectacular two-level Cathedral of Our Lady of Lourdes, the grotto and the ancestral home of Ste. Bernadette, and made sightseeing trips by cable railway to nearby mountain peaks, beyond which towered the majestic white-topped Pyrenees. Most popular souvenir was the famous water of Lourdes, of which Major McCarthy brought back 14 quart-bottles for friends.

"Everyone treated us like kings," Mac said. "One of the best parts of the trip was our stop at the French air field at Pau, 25 miles from Lourdes. Pau was as near as we could land our plane, and we would have been stuck but for Major Henry LaPlace, the base commandant. He offered us the use of his private bus, which we filled with gasoline from our plane. The field had been devastated by Mediterranean-based B-17's (it had been used by German long-range reconnaissance planes patrolling both Atlantic and Mediterranean sea lanes) and ours was the first plane to land there since the Germans left in 1944. Major LaPlace proudly showed us a monument commemorating the first aeronautical school in Europe established at Pau by Wilbur Wright."

Confronted with restrictions on travel near the then forbidden Spanish frontier zone, the party obtained a visa from French military authorities at Toulouse to complete the trip. Those who made the "pilgrimage" were Major McCarthy, Major John B. O'Rourke, Captains Harold J. Buelow, Russell E. Oakes, Andrew F. Wilson and John H. Zabel, and First Lieut. Richard P. Lee and Donald A. Swan. Oakes, who flew the party down in the Group's C-64 administrative plane, brought along his mascot puppy, "Turbo".

A very special trip was one by Sgt. Johnny Tsoros, of the 506th, which took him all the way to Greece by air to visit close relatives in that war-weary land.

We had occasional visits from Very High Brass (General Eisenhower and all the Army Group and Army commanders) who landed at the field en route to Twelfth Army Group headquarters at nearby Bad Wildungen. And on May 17 we got a peep at some of our Eastern Allies.

That was the day a U. S. C-47 on a special mission into Russian-occupied territory, returned loaded with Field Marshal Ivan S. Koniev, commanding the First Ukrainian Army which was lined up nose-to-nose facing the U. S. First across the Elbe, and members of his staff. The field marshal was due at a noon conference with General Bradley.

Tipped off in advance that some form of aerial demonstration would be appropriate to greet the high-ranking visitor, both the 404th and 365th Groups had full Group formations in the air. As Koniev stepped out of his plane, with huge white marshal's stars on giant gold shoulder boards, the Groups passed in review overhead, and then the 404th returned to 50-feet in a 48-plane buzz-job that never was seen before, and may never be seen again. With Lieut. Col. Garrigan leading the formation, the aircraft swooped low in two lines, each line six flights wide. Garrigan held them on the deck far across the sunken bowl in which the field lay, until it appeared that the whole formation would smear itself on the hills to the southwest. One pilot indeed felt the situation was getting a little ticklish and broke up and to one side to clear himself, but the planes thundered on up, laboring slightly, and passed above the hills.

Garrigan met the marshal on his return from Bad Wildungen, and received the Russian's admiring appreciation for a daring and impressive salute.

Before the month was out another Group member received felicitations from a top member of a foreign government. He was Lieut. Rufus A. Cox of the 507th. On leave in London, he was resting in an American Red Cross club when the Queen entered, accompanied by Princess Elizabeth.

A crowd immediately gathered around the royal visitors. Cox, although interested, found a seat clear of the throng and remained in the background. In a few moments Queen Elizabeth made her way to where Cox was sitting, and surprised him by asking his name.

Cox, from Comanche, Texas, said he refrained from the temptation to include the history of Texas in his answer, but he did explain he was a westerner and a Texan, who maintained an attitude of tolerance toward the lesser states of the Union.

After quite a long conversation, during which they pleasantly discussed their respective countries and world events, the Queen moved on, and Cox decided with a pleased grin: "Why, she could almost pass for a Texan."

The officers' mess at Stuttgart was staffed by Hungarian Jewish girls obtained from a large Displaced Persons center in Fritzlar. Group Protestant Chaplain Edward B. Wycoff became interested in their religious welfare, and with the aid of a Roman Catholic interpreter, conducted for them the first Jewish service they had been permitted to attend in four years.

Most of the young women were in tears as Chaplain Wycoff distributed mezuzahs, Jewish religious amulets, which had been unavailable to them during their years of enslavement under the Nazis. His interpreter was Hungarian-speaking Gabriel Lazar, a Catholic, 508th Squadron supply officer.

The DP settlement in Fritzlar included many mixed nationalities, and to show their appreciation to their American liberators, they prepared an elaborate musical show in many acts and scenes, organized by the Italian contingent but including songs and dances of some of the other nationalities represented. They put it on in the large "caserne" where they were quartered, before a packed house of 404th members, the night of Wednesday, June 13th.

It was very well done. They had their own orchestra, and printed programs for the "Fritzlar Follies of Forty Five; a Revue in Two Parts", with such touches of humor on the title-page as "choreography by Busby Berkeley, gowns by Orry-Kelly, make-up by Max Factor." The acts included a "comic dance by Luba ( a Ukrainian or Polish blonde) and Angelo"; "Songs from Rigoletto by Primo Ricciarelli"; and "Russian Dances and Songs by Hilda (a Russian blonde)."

One scene, completely misinterpreted by the otherwise appreciative audience, was supposed to be a very sad song by one of the Italian male performers. But as he sang in Italian to a young lady member of the cast, his expression and manners gave the impression that he was burlesquing. The audience kept laughing until the singer stopped, cold and went sulking off the stage. Apologetically, an Italian-speaking G. I. came out and explained that it was genuinely a serious number, and would the audience please not laugh. The singer reappeared, finished his song amid an atmosphere of friendly embarrassment, and received rousing applause.

But the act that brought down the house was the appearance of a wild-haired young woman, believed to be some kind of a Central European gypsy, who did a hip-swinging dance and then started to take off her clothes. With each removal the audience howled and clapped and she really warmed up to her task. Down to thin panties and grinning broadly, she seemed ready to keep it up all night until the red-faced stage managers rang down the curtain and almost bodily led her into the wings.

Life was so relatively pleasant and our accommodations so good at Fritzlar in these early days of peace that we knew it couldn't last long. And we were right. IX TAC headquarters, far to the east at Weimar, was directed to evacuate its position as the U. S. Armies prepared to withdraw to turn over part of conquered Germany to the Russians on the basis of top-level decisions. TAC decided ours was the finest base available to them, so we received our walking papers. June 20th, advance parties left for Site R-50, far to the south near Stuttgart, and the rest of the Group moved down there by June 23rd.

Another Group-occupied the only buildings at R-50--a former German civil airport known as Stuttgart-Echterdingen--so the 404th found itself on the grass on the south side of the field, setting up tents again. We obtained displaced persons to help in our housekeeping problems, flew training missions until we were directed to turn in our airplanes, and studied recognition of Japanese aircraft.

We discovered to our sorrow that the end of the war had not meant the end of losses for the Group. During this period we lost five pilots and an enlisted man in accidents. They were Lieut. Lee A. Branch of the 507th and Lieut. Robert Klemola of the 506th at Fritzlar; Lieuts. W. E. Field and H. A. Field of the 507th, and Private First Class Youngblood of the 508th in a jeep accident at Echterdingen; and John Wainwright.

Yes, Wainwright, the Group's most decorated pilot with the D.S.C., the Silver Star, the D.F.C., the Purple Heart, and the Air Medal with 15 Oak Leaf Clusters, the young Texan who had destroyed six enemy aircraft in a fabulous air encounter, who had survived flak hits July 12, 1944, that tore huge holes in his wings, put 40 holes in his fuselage, and went through his canopy an inch behind his head.

Wainwright was killed July 7 when his plane stalled out and crashed on what should have been a routine takeoff. The Group attended funeral services for him the next day in a little Lutheran church at Bernhausen, a village on the southern edge of the airfield. Chaplain Edward Wykcoff conducted the services, and a quartet from the 508th sang the hymns for the dead.

While we sweated out July, we learned that the Group was destined for the Pacific theater by way of the States, with the exception of personnel who had low point scores in the tabulations announced by the Army to determine when you might be eligible for discharge. Low-point men were transferred out to Groups intended for shipment direct to the Pacific, and were replaced by high-point men from other units.

Late in July we received orders moving us to the Assembly Area Command at Reims, to prepare for embarkation to the U. S. A. We were billeted at Camp New York, a large tent-area in the dusty plains near Suippes, some 25 miles east of Reims. We were there when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima August 6th, and the second on Nagasaki August 9th. Before we left for Antwerp, our port of embarkation, the Japanese sued for peace, and we knew with great happiness that there no longer was any need for us in the Pacific. There we also learned we had been awarded the Belgian Fourragere in a mass citation to units of XXIX TAC for "meritorious service in Belgium" from October 1, 1944, to Jan. 15, 1945.

We spent about two weeks at Camp Tophat, across the Scheldt River west of Antwerp, and embarked on the cargo ship "Montclair Victory" Thursday morning, August 30th.

Original orders were to sail for Boston, with arrival scheduled September 7th, but well past mid-ocean on September 5th, orders were received by wireless changing our destination to Hampton Roads, probably because of congestion at the Port of Boston.

There were groans all over the ship Thursday from its 1958 passengers, when the engines were stopped completely for two and one-half hours to repair a leaky condenser. But on Saturday the 8th, a solid gray line of land appeared to the west, and the "Montclair Victory" slipped quietly by Cape Henry, the southern arm of the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, past Norfolk and Fortress Monroe, and into its dock at Newport News, Va.

At Camp Patrick Henry a few miles from Newport News, we were greeted the way we felt overseas veterans should be greeted, with a brass band, a quick and clear explanation of all that would be done to speed us to our homes, a steak dinner with unlimited quantities of fresh milk, and ready access to dozens of telephones for those important first calls home.

Then came the breakup of the Group; we were railroaded away to leave-centers nearest our destinations, and to our surprise a good percentage of us were immediately discharged on the basis of our point-scores, after a period of processing. We had expected to reassemble after leaves of 30 days at Drew Field, Tampa, Fla., where the Group's records and equipment had been consigned, but only a handful of officers and men remained in service to complete the details of deactivation. The 404th Fighter Group became only a number in the Army's historical files on November 9, 1945, at Drew Field.



## CASUALTIES SUFFERED BY THE 404TH FIGHTER GROUP 1944-45

DATE	NAME	SQUADRON	TYPE CASUALTY
13 April '44	Frost	506	AD (Accidental Death)
8 May '44	Clonts	506	MIA (Missing in Action); Evaded capture
9 May 44	Joyce	506	KIA (Killed in Action)
7 June '44	Vivian	506	MIA
11 June '44	Smathers	508	MIA, Evaded capture
22 June '44	Labno	506	KIA
24 June '44	Espy	508	KIA
24 June '44	Kitchens	508	KIA
25 June '44	Fredendall	507	KIA
30 June '44	Hochadel	506	MIA, Evaded capture
1 July '44	Green	507	DOW (Died of Wounds)
18 July '44	Elledge	506	MIA, PW (Prisoner of War)
18 July '44	Gillespie	508	MIA, PW
20 July '44	Washburn	507	MIA, PW
23 July '44	Grove	507	AD
24 July '44	Viccellio	508	DOW
24 July '44	Sgt. Botte	508	KIA
24 July '44	Cpl. Hopkins	508	KIA
24 July '44	Pfc. Hickman	508	DOW
26 July '44	Vinson	506	MIA
27 July '44	Duffy	507	MIA, PW
31 July '44	Huse	506	KIA
31 July '44	Litchfield	506	MIA, PW
6 August '44	Dickerson	506	MIA, Evaded capture
8 August '44	Colwell	508	MIA, Evaded capture
20 August '44	Manchester	507	MIA
27 August '44	Adams	506	KIA
27 August '44	Conn	506	MIA
27 August '44	Daly	506	MIA, Evaded capture
27 August '44	Leake	506	KIA
8 September '44	Hardin	508	MIA
4 October '44	Dalberg	506	MIA, PW
14 October '44	Donohoe	508	MIA, Evaded capture
15 October '44	Hall	507	KIA
24 October '44	Pvt. Winrick		AD
9 November '44	Johnson	508	MIA
18 November '44	McClure	506	MIA
22 November '44	Tribken	Hq.	AD
28 November '44	Graham	507	MIA
29 November '44	Knighton	506	KIA
8 December '44	Tibbets	508	MIA
17 December '44	Ira Fisher	508	MIA
17 December '44	Perlysky	508	MIA
18 December '44	Mills	506	AD
26 December '44	Fenstermacher	506	KIA
26 December '44	Winters	506	KIA

DATE	NAME	SQUADRON	TYPE CASUALTY
1 January '45	Rietzel	508	MIA
14 January '45	Hederstrom	606	KIA
22 January '45	Abt	507	MIA, PW
22 January '45	McDonnell	506	MIA, PW
25 January '45	Harbert	506	MIA
13 February '45	Crocker	507	MIA
23 February '45	Swan	508	MIA, Evaded capture
13 March '45	Schwartz	507	MIA
14 March '45	Brownlee	507	MIA
14 March '45	Clee	506	MIA
14 March '45	Simon	507	MIA
16 March '45	Johns	508	KIA
20 March '45	Rives	507	KIA
21 March '45	Sullivan	506	KIA
25 March '45	Godfrey	507	MIA
25 March '45	White	506	MIA, PW
9 April '45	Mushlin	506	AD
10 April '45	Marshall	507	KIA
10 April '45	Boland	507	KIA
17 April '45	Francis	506	MIA, DOW
1 May '45	Branch	507	AD
8 June '45	Klemola	506	AD
2 July '45	Field, W. E.	507	AD
2 July '45	Pfc. Youngblood	508	AD
3 July '45	Field, H. A.	507	AD
7 July '45	Wainwright	508	AD

# THE SUMMING UP

## CRITIQUE

*For those of you who remember the relief it was to get your butt safe back down on the ground, relax, and rehash the mission, here is something that will bring back memories:*

*A completely recorded conversation involving most of the pilots on a mission over the Bulge in January, 1945.*

### The Pilots:

WHITE FLIGHT    1. Major James A. Mullins  
                         2. Second Lieut. Harley J. Rollinger  
                         3. First Lieut. Richard J. Gedeon  
                         4. Second Lieut. William P. Warwick

RED FLIGHT        1. Capt. Duane D. Int-Hout  
                         2. First Lieut. Lee A. Branch  
                         3. First Lieut. Francis E. Abt  
                         4. Second Lieut. Ralph M. Richard

BLUE FLIGHT      1. Capt. Clarence S. Wydner  
                         2. Second Lieut. Francis W. Godfrey  
                         3. First Lieut. Fred H. Varn  
                         4. Second Lieut. Louis Wemmer

YELLOW FLIGHT   1. First Lieut. Rufus A. Cox, Jr.  
                         2. Second Lieut. Donald Orr  
                         3. First Lieut. Billy V. Brownlee  
                         4. Second Lieut. Lee Tucker

### The Mission Report:

Target: Armed reconnaissance, area of St. Vith.

Aircraft dispatched: 16 P-47's.

Our aircraft damaged: 8 (by flak).

Bomb load: Demolition and fragmentation bombs.

Enemy reaction: Flak heavy and light, intense and accurate.

Weather: Ceiling and visibility unlimited.

Results: 19 motor vehicles destroyed (Branch 5, Abt 3, Richard 3, Brownlee, Cox, Gedeon, Godfrey, Mullins, Varn, Warwick, Wydner, 1 each).

15 motor vehicles damaged (Brownlee, Cox, Orr, Tucker, Wemmer, 2 each; Gedeon, Mullins, Rollinger, Varn, Wydner, 1 each).

1 fortified building destroyed (Branch).

1 rail cut (Int-Hout).

7 road cuts (Cox, Gedeon, Godfrey, Varn, Warwick, Wemmer, Wydner, 1 each).

## The Mission:

MULLINS-On the way out I called the ground controller and he said to go five miles south of St. Vith. We came in about three or four miles north of the city and saw some P-47's dive bombing, and started getting heavy flak, when I saw a bunch of stuff on the ground. There was a convoy of 15 or 20 vehicles coming out of a small town, just off the side of the road. We went down, and I missed with my bombs, and Rollinger hit in the town, but my second element, Gedeon and Warwick, got good hits long the road. You could see the tops of the vehicles, but couldn't quite make out what they were. I'm satisfied there was a tank or two in the lineup, though.

ABT-The ground controller told us there were 100 vehicles near St. Vith. When we got in there, I saw the other P-47's bombing too, and we started catching flak. Cox broke off to investigate two bogies and Major Mullins orbited to pick him up. We kept getting heavy flak, so Major Mullins moved further in, and started orbiting again, looking for stuff. He called and said he saw some vehicles and told the rest of us to stay up till we could see where he was bombing. He rolled down to the left on a road. My flight leader had trouble with his plane and went home, so I took over and dove on the road from the other side. I watched where the Major's bullets were flashing and saw the vehicles, about 20 of them, under the trees along the highway. I could see some flak firing from way out in the fields; the flak tracer was coming in at the Major's flight from below and behind me. Then I saw some bombs hitting, two a little long, and two more right on the road. We strafed all the way down. I'd pick out one vehicle and concentrate on it, then pull my sights over to another. If you try to kick back and forth to spray 'em, it just spreads your bullets all over the country side.

WARWICK--I was on Major Mullins' wing. The controller wasn't too specific about where to find a target, so he just looked till he found some vehicles pretty close to the front. I saw the line of them pretty well spread out among the trees along a road. But our bombs were fairly well spread along the road also, and should have gotten several vehicles. There were quite a few fires when we left. Rollinger hit along the road up near a town; that's when he got hit himself.

ROLLINGER-I went down on the town and felt a thump in my motor when I pulled out. The engine missed a couple of times, and I knew I was hit. I didn't see my bombs explode, but I was so low I couldn't have missed. In fact I was worrying about getting caught in my own bomb -blast.

GODFREY-That flak was just all over today as bad as Hambach Forest. Certainly it was worse than the last time we were out. They must have moved in all the guns in Germany -it seemed like there was one every foot. We had so many airplanes in there too, that it made it tougher. I was following Yank Wydner in a left-hand turn with the rest of the flight when another flight from some other Group met us almost head on, also in a left-hand bank. I thought we'd had it. We whooshed past each other, belly to belly.

WARWICK-I don't know enough about it yet to say whether the flak was extra heavy or not. There was a lot of it and I got bounced a couple of times, and thought it was pretty close.

MULLINS-It was the most flak I've seen in some time.

RICHARD-That flak was really rough. We flew over it and under it, and all around it; there were black spots everywhere you looked. I got hit a couple of small holes. Abt got a big hit in the tail; I could see it from where I was flying.

ABT-It was back up over the road when I got clobbered. I heard a bang and got bounced in the air and my controls went haywire. I called Major Mullins and said I was hit and right away the ground controller called in and gave me a heading to the nearest friendly territory. He was right on the ball! All the way home, the stick kept trying to kick back, so I just squeezed my knees together behind it and held it forward with my hands.

ROLLINGER-The flak made the mission pretty snafu as far as I was concerned. I started out on Major Mullins' wing, flew Brownlee's wing for awhile, and ended up all by myself. After I got hit on the bomb-run, I flubbed around till oil covered my windshield, so I came home alone.

MULLINS-I didn't know what had happened to Rollinger. After I missed him I saw eight or ten vehicles that looked like tanks with snow piled up on each side, and the three of us strafed and started a good fire. I spent the rest of the time circling above the area trying to pick out my own squadron. There were at least 50 or 60 aircraft all in a 15-mile square there, so I finally gave up and came on home. I circled over the field till the rest of them all landed. I couldn't seem to get a straight call through on the radio, it was so jammed up.

GODFREY-I had radio trouble too. I saw six tanks down there, dark as coal. I reported them to Yank, and kept watching them, and everyone of them pulled in under trees and stood still in the shadows. But we never could get together for an attack; there were planes all over the sky, and I finally lost the spot where they were hiding. The ground controller said they were enemy, but every time he tried to give us a message someone else would cut in. I knew they were tanks even though I was at 9000 feet, because of the tracks-wheeled vehicles don't make right-angle turns.

WYDNER-I couldn't see the tanks at all that Godfrey called in. I searched the woods, and there wasn't much flak there, so figuring they had the flak where they had the most stuff to protect, I went looking for the flak. I spotted a lot of activity just about the time my wingman called in beaucoup vehicles. I would have been highly pleased if they had been German, but I thought I'd better take a look because we were close to the front lines. I flew down the road about a quarter of a mile and saw about ten or twelve vehicles with our panels on. So I just kept making a rectangular patrol over the base of the "bulge."

MULLINS-Yank's was the last flight to bomb. When we first hit all the flak he got separated a little from us, and went further in looking for targets. I don't know what anyone hit but myself; after my second pass I didn't see anyone I could recognize except my own flight.

WYDNER-I could see targets down there but they looked like they'd been worked over before, There was no sense going after something that was already shot up, so that's why I kept looking.

GODFREY-We were in a gentle climbing turn looking around, when two red flashes popped in front of my left wing, and two more alongside me, right between me and Yank, and at just the right altitude. We kept turning and looking, and bam! Four more alongside of us. I still didn't get too upset, figuring, what the hell, in this turn we'll soon be out of it. Then came another batch that bounced me and flipped my plane half over. "Yank!" I called him. "There's too much flak around here!"

WYDNER-The flak was hellish, all right. I decided I should pay more attention to my flak evasion then. I was flying at 7500 feet and right below was a layer of solid white-looked like every square inch was covered with light flak.

COX-Aw, the flak wasn't bad today.

ABT-Well, hell, you were up at 12,000 feet, above the rest of the formation.

COX-No, I wasn't. It's not close till you hear it.

ABT-When the tracers come by, it's close. Eight ships got hit-I guess that was close enough.

COX-They put up bursts all around to scare us away, I guess. It did look pretty solid down there with all those white puffs-light stuff. I didn't know what to do, watching Yank down there circling, catching flak every time he made 360 degrees. I expected his flight to be more shot up than it was. He made another one of his special bombing runs, too-dove right through the flak, released, and then just made a gradual recovery. When I bomb I

pull back with both hands and pull streamers all the way. When I was flying a wing, I used to beat my leader up sometimes.

ABT-I jump all over the cockpit on my pullouts.

COX-Did you get scared today, Rollie?

ROLLINGER-At times.

COX-When Rollie landed and Major Mullins asked him where he had disappeared to, he just said, "I don't know nothing from nothing!" You were on Brownlee's wing for awhile, weren't you?

ROLLINGER-Yes, and believe me, that was a workout.

ABT-Brownlee really takes evasive action.

ROLLINGER-Hell, I thought he was out of control a couple of times.

BROWNLIE - Evasive action? You're damn right, buddy. They blanketed my tail there once. I got browned off though-after we dropped our bombs we just kept circling there, letting them shoot at us.

COX-What did you want us to do? We had to cover the Yank, and. I thought he was go to drop his bombs any minute.

WYDNER-I saw lots of stuff down there, one or two vehicles here and there, but I was waiting for a really worthwhile bombing target. I picked out some blocks of heavy equipment with snow on them, and just started down, when out of the corner of my eye I saw some large vehicles like tanks with round tops about a mile up the road, so I turned on them. I couldn't tell for sure what they were because of the snow. I didn't strafe the vehicles at all, because I was concentrating on the bomb run; you can't do both at the same time and do either one right. We didn't get too much flak there till we pulled away, then all hell broke loose. They weren't pleased to see us by any means. I pulled up in a fairly gentle turn because I figured I was high enough so it couldn't be too accurate. I tell you, though, the flak was so thick I was scared of being hit by light stuff shot at somebody else.

GODFREY-All I know is, the Yank and I started down on one target, then he saw another and headed for it, cutting me off so I couldn't strafe. I didn't know what he was aiming at till we were right down on it.

WYDNER-I guess I did mess you up on the dive-bombing run. I came in corkscrewing in the first place, then saw this other target and broke left after it. You would have had to be a genius to know where I was going. I think we got three out of five vehicles there anyway. I don't know where my second element bombed.

ABT-How much stuff did your flight claim, Cox?

COX-Hell, we didn't claim anything.

ABT-What were you bombing, an open field?

COX-Might as well have been-didn't hit what we were aiming at.

ABT-To think you have the nerve to say the flak wasn't so much today!

RICHARD-Hell, he was off chasing P-51's all the time.

WARWICK-I see two bogies," he says, and everybody's calling him, "They're P-51's! They're P-51's!"

COX-Well, they were black things; our P-51's are all silver, aren't they?

WARWICK-Could have been British.

COX-We finally bombed a curve in the road.

RICHARD-Anything on it?

COX-There were four vehicles down there, and some more that were burning between some buildings, and that's all I could see without any flak around them. Our demolition bombs hit reasonably close, but our frags should have damaged them anyway. We went further behind the lines to find them, and missed some of the flak. I was the top flight and circled giving everybody else top cover While they were milling around below me.

WYDNER-I saw one guy get it in a P-47 in the distance., There were two of them flying. along, then there were four big black puffs. One of them started streaming black smoke and dove right on into the ground.

GODFREY-I didn't see any planes go in; I saw one guy that I thought was going in, though. He was headed straight down, and I half lost him against the ground; then I saw him pulling thick plummy streamers, and saw his bombs explode below him. Real good hits, too.

ABT-The flak's always heaviest right on the front lines.

GODFREY-You just can't work that close to the, lines when they don't give you a specific pinpoint target. If you could fly right in and out it'd be all right, but when you have to hang around and hunt for targets, you just get clobbered.

ABT-I wish I could get on some of those patrols right over the field. Anything that gives you combat time where you don't get shot at is for me. If combat time means anything toward getting home.

COX-The doc won't help you much toward getting home.

ABT-Hell, he'd let a blind man fly.

RICHARD-It's a good thing you don't see all the flak-you'd go crazy.

COX-By the time you guys are ready to go home they'll really have some flak.

RICHARD-They'll have them all bashed back into a little pocket in the middle of Germany, and there'll be nothing but flak guns. We'll see how this aircraft does at altitude then.

# THE NEW YEAR'S DAY RAID

*(Extract from report of Prisoner of War who participated in New Year's Day raid  
on the St. Trond Airfield in Belgium, Jan. 1, 1945)*

Some three or four days before Christmas, the Kommandeure of I, II and III Gruppen of Jagdgeschwader 2 were summoned to a meeting held at the Geschwader headquarters at Nidda. At this meeting they were notified by the Kommodore, Oberstleutnant Buhlingen, that it was planned to carry out a low-level attack on St. Trond airfield with the object of delivering a damaging blow to the Allied Air Force.

The Kommodore stressed the importance of the mission, and the senior officers present were urged to take great care to give the pilots of their units detailed and careful briefing.

Aerial photographs of St. Trond airfield, some of which were taken about the middle of December, were available, and the accompanying interpretation report indicated that about 130 P-47 Thunderbolts, about six four-engine aircraft and a few C-47 Dakotas were on the airfield. Other photographic cover showed the airfield anti-aircraft defenses.

Oberstleutnant Buhlingen indicated that other Geschwader would attack other Allied airfields simultaneously, but did not specify the units or airfields involved.

The light anti-aircraft fire in the front line area was looked upon as a serious menace, since the aircraft would be flying at a low altitude over a fairly broad front, but it was anticipated that the AA on St. Trond airfield would be taken by surprise.

On the day following the Kommodore's outline of the preflight plan, pilots of II/J.G.2 were given advance briefing by the P/W in the course of which he divulged the target and emphasized the importance of the operation. The method of attack was demonstrated with the help of a sand-table model of St. Trond airfield. On the evening of December 31st, the final briefing took place, when pilots were given maps on which the course was marked and were told that 0920 hours had been fixed as the time over target.

A day or so after Christmas, two Ju-88's, each with a crew of four, arrived at Nidda from a training unit in southern Germany to act as pilot aircraft. On the morning of the attack the Kommodore with his Geschwaderstab section of four took off from Nidda, shortly in advance of the time of start fixed for II/J.G.2, for the purpose of assembling with and leading either Gruppe I or Gruppe III of J.G.2.

At 0830 hours the 20 aircraft of II/J.G.2 assembled over Nidda. Both the Ju-88's, which were already airborne, set off ahead of the formation. After about four minutes of flying time one of the Ju-88's broke away, the pilot having satisfied himself that the other Ju-88 was flying satisfactorily and able to lead the formation. P/W stated that both the Ju-88's were briefed to return to their own base.

When flying in the vicinity of Verviers, P/W's aircraft was hit in the radiator by AA fire and he was then forced to make a belly landing, which he accomplished successfully.

In P/W's opinion the actual date of the raid was not fixed in order to take advantage of the after-effect of New Year's Eve conviviality and merely happened to coincide.

He considered that a mistake was made in fixing 0920 hours as the time of attack, maintaining that had the attack been delivered earlier, Allied AA would have had difficulty in distinguishing friend from foe and there would have been less chance of Allied aircraft being airborne.

When informed of the results of the raid on St. Trond airfield, P/W declared that he considered it a distinct failure, as the G. A. F. could ill afford to lose so many pilots in return for the destruction of aircraft only.



# THE LUFTWAFFE -- THE FAILURE OF A MISSION

*(From Ninth Air Force Intelligence Summary 132, May 14, 1945)*

A thorough postmortem of the late, departed GAF is not entirely possible as yet. However, some of its obvious short-comings can be noted.

Perhaps the seed of German failure in the air lay in its basic conception of air-power. Strategic bombing was never given adequate consideration. Tactically, the requirements of the battlefield and cooperation with ground forces were never developed with sufficient imagination or understanding. Perhaps the early victories against weak and unprepared enemies stultified further progressive thinking. Perhaps the requirements of defense against crushing Allied strategic bombing attacks and support of a defending army took precedence over any sound offensive development. Whatever the reason, expansion, development and progress never kept pace with the fresh tactical, technical, and numerical Allied superiority.

The Luftwaffe's career from mid 1944 to the end was one of two-fold attrition—fuel and pilot personnel. The destruction of German fuel supply was reflected first in the curtailment of training and transfer of personnel to other branches of service. Inevitably, this affected the quality of the tactics and the maintenance of an adequate supply of trained and seasoned pilots. This lack became particularly acute in the absence of experienced formation leaders. Soon curtailment of operations became necessary. The scale of effort was conditioned more by the supply of fuel than by the elements of the currently prevailing tactical situation.

Another shortcoming was the inability to fight a two-front air war. The Luftwaffe led a gypsy existence, constantly shuttling its striking force from West to East and back, never being able to settle down for any length of time to deal adequately with either front.

Quantitatively, the Germans were able to maintain a good semblance of production for replacement to the end. Only in April 1945, did the order of battle fall below 4,000 operational aircraft. Qualitatively, however, development of new types was tardy. The jet program contained some germs of success, but it was too little and much too late. When the end came, the jets were still in the phase of building to operational strength, and development of suitable tactics and procedures had never become a decisive factor.

The testimony of such high ranking prisoners as Von Rundstedt, Dittmar, Kesselring and others, was belated confirmation of what was already known—Allied air power immobilized the enemy and was the conclusive factor in the defeat of Germany. Against these inescapable facts the pompous braggadocio of Goering is shown up as vain, meaningless, and even pathetically ridiculous,

## AS LONG AS THERE ARE WARS...

*(Editor's Note: It is not known to me whether the War Department has related the following story to the next of kin of the pilot concerned. Rather than reveal what perhaps is better not to know, I have omitted the pilot's name and anything else that might identify him closely. But I feel that the story itself should be told, as a bitter reminder of the things that happen when war darkens man's mind against his brother. As long as there are wars, such incidents as this will occur.)*

The story reached the Group first through a telephone call from TAC headquarters. The body of an American pilot had been found, and there was reason to believe he was from the 404th Group, but more information was needed to confirm the identification.

The body had been found by American troops advancing through Germany, near a little village. The plane had made a crash landing, but was relatively intact. The pilot's body was half-buried nearby, clad only in underwear-with 28 burp-gun bullet wounds.

A captain from the Inspector General's Department investigating war atrocities followed up the phone-call from TAC by visiting the Group, talking to the dead pilot's closest friends, his crew chief, his commanding officer, and his intelligence officer. The I. G. officer showed them a dog-tag with the last name barely legible; the number copied off the side of the aircraft, and the personal insignia it bore. He checked Engineering records to determine who was flying the plane the day it crashed. It all added up. There was no doubt of the identification, even though the victim's buddies had difficulty recognizing a picture of his body.

With identification established, the I. G. officer disclosed what had happened. According to an American soldier-prisoner who was held in the village near the plane crash, a pilot was marched into town that day, escorted by an armed civilian. The next thing the eyewitness saw was the same pilot being marched out of town again accompanied by two men in what appeared to be uniforms of the Gestapo.

Soon afterward the Gestapo men returned alone, carrying an American flying jacket and perhaps other clothing, and handling a wristwatch.

Later the PW eye-witness was ordered out as part of a digging detail. They marched out near the bellied-in P-47 and saw the pilot's body lying there, in undershirt and shorts. They dug a shallow grave on orders from the Germans. The Gestapo men said he was killed trying to escape.

The town eventually was overrun by American troops, and the PW eyewitness told his story. The I. G. officer exhumed body, and noted that all the bullets had entered the victim's body from the front.

The group understood that the First Army was holding two men as suspects in this wanton shooting of an unarmed captive. It is hoped that they received their full measure of justice in the war crimes trials conducted by the American Army of Occupation.

## 404TH FIGHTER GROUP COMMENDATIONS, 1944-45

JUNE 6, 1944, FROM LT. GEN. LEWIS E. BRERETON, COMMANDING GENERAL, NINTH AIR FORCE: "I feel it a distinct personal privilege to be your Commander and to congratulate each officer and man of the Air Force on magnificent individual and collective reports in preparation for this battle, Normandy Invasion. Your past operations have been marked by relentless destruction of enemy installations and equipment, bringing once again brilliant achievements to this Command."

JUNE 12, 1944, FROM ADMIRAL H. R. STARK: "The Air Cover has been so perfect in daylight that all we do is wonder which type is now going overhead-Spit? P-47? etc. A great tribute .....

JUNE 15, 1944, FROM LT. GENERAL SPAATZ, COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL AIR FORCES: "Operations in France and Italy have reached a stage where it is possible very definitely to see the air contribution, and I wish to commend the personnel of all US Air Forces under my command for a superior performance which was responsible for a large portion of the Allied successes on the Continent.

". . . The fighter operations have been carried out with efficiency and determination that is particularly commendable. In addition to the above accomplishments and at least equal to them in importance is the superior work of our ground crews and other personnel whose unspectacular work behind the scenes makes possible all combat operations. Their work, having little personal compensation such- as comes from direct participation in combat action, is all the more commendable for that reason, and I want them to know that the importance is recognized. . . ."

JUNE 18, 1944, FROM GENERAL BRERETON: "It has come to my attention that the armed reconnaissance conducted by the 404th Fighter Group in the vicinity of Vannes on 18 June was highly successful. During a period of approximately 30 minutes in the target area the Group carried out attacks which result & I'm great damage to the enemy. In addition, the report of this mission contained information of observations made enroute which we're of considerable intelligence value. The value of the aggressive manner with which these attacks were carried out may be more thoroughly appreciated when it is known that the request for assistance came from an organized resistance force of Free French patriots. Such prompt and effective assistance to a group of isolated patriots will have a wide-spread effect on the morale of similar groups throughout occupied countries."

JUNE 20, 1944, FROM LT. GENERAL OMAR BRADLEY, COMMANDING THE FIRST US ARMY: "Will you please express to the officers and men of your command my appreciation for the fine work they have been doing and of the close cooperation they have given the ground troops. Their ability to disrupt the enemy's communications, supply, and movement of troops has been a vital factor in our rapid progress in expanding our beachhead.

"I realize that their work may not catch the headlines any more than does the work of some of our foot soldiers but I am sure that I express the feelings of every ground force commander from squad leaders to myself as Army Commander when I extend my congratulations on their very fine work."

JUNE 20, 1944, FROM MAJOR GENERAL ELWOOD R. QUESADA, IX TAG COMMANDER: "The Fighter-Bomber boys are doing more to make this campaign a success than anyone ever anticipated. The versatility of our efforts is a tremendous contribution. The manner in which each boy has performed his mission and the manner in which he has exercised individual initiative is a source of great pride."

REAR ADMIRAL D. P. MOON, US NAVY: "Never before has an Amphibious Force in a contested area enjoyed such immunity from aerial opposition. For that immunity, we are deeply grateful to the Ninth Air Force and its associated commands. Well can we realize the difficult situation which confronted you for months prior to the actual touchdown, when you were engaged simultaneously in active and effective operations and in

conducting the planning and training phases which contributed so materially to the successful culmination of Operation Neptune."

JULY 20, 1944, FROM THE COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE XIX CORPS: "It is desired to thank the 9th Tactical Air Command for the superior support they gave this Corps on the 16th and 17th of July in their fight for St. Lo

"The Air Force participation in breaking up a German counter-attack late on the afternoon of 17 July contributed materially to the success of the operation and to the saving of American lives.

"Air strikes arrived on time and on the target. This close support by the air forces of ground troops exemplifies the team work so essential to success and is most appreciated by the front line fighting troops to whom it was a life and death matter.

"Presence of any of our aircraft over the front line troops has had an immeasurable effect upon their morale. When our aircraft are over the front lines the use of close-in artillery and mortars by the enemy stops."

AUGUST 15TH, FROM GENERAL EISENHOWER: "You have created in France a fleeting but definite opportunity for a major allied victory."

AUGUST 16, FROM GENERAL SPAATZ: "Since the end of July bombers and fighters under your command have ranged incessantly Over enemy territory, inflicting unprecedented damage on the enemy's power and ability to fight."

SEPT. 13, 1944, FROM AIR MARSHAL LEIGHMALLORY: "... These operations, attacks on flying-bomb sites, not only imposed on the enemy a prolonged and unwelcome delay in the launching of this campaign but effectively limited the scale of effort which he has been able to achieve."

SEPT. 26, 1944, FROM MAJOR GENERAL EDWARD H. BROOKS, COMMANDING THE V CORPS: "During the past week the troops of this Corps have had some particularly fine close support by fighter-bombers flown by those enthusiastic young Americans of the IX TAC.

"This support has been of the greatest assistance in repelling vicious German counterattacks and has also accounted for an appreciable number of enemy personnel and vehicles, including tanks and artillery."

FROM THE COMMANDER OF THE TROOP CARRIER FORCES AT THE JUMP INTO HOLLAND: "Troop Carrier Forces returning from Operation Market report outstanding assistance and support by members of your Command. They watched with admiration your fighter pilots take out gun positions that would have destroyed Troop Carrier aircraft and result in a loss of Airborne Forces. Please convey to your units our appreciation for a splendid job well done. From this combined effort a new field of employment of airborne forces will surely be effective. A vital and potentially vulnerable Air Operation has been carried out with great success. That success is due to a very large degree to the magnificent air support given by your units. I am very proud of the high degree of tactical and technical skill shown by your units."

OCTOBER 14TH FROM GENERAL QUESADA: "Yesterday, Friday the 13th, was most gratifying. Your high number of successes with one abortive is a good demonstration on leadership. It was a damn good day."

AND ANOTHER FROM GENERAL Q. OCTOBER 16, 1944: "It is my pleasure to congratulate you the 48th and 404th Fighter Groups on your outstanding operations in support of the VIIth Corps on the afternoon of 15 October, 1944. The ground commanders report that a heavy counter-attack was repulsed as a direct result of your fine work. Your aggressive spirit under such adverse weather conditions, reflects credit upon you and this Command."

NOV. 16, 1944, FROM LT. GENERAL W. H. SIMPSON, COMMANDING THE NINTH ARMY: "I wish to commend the officers and men of IXth TAC for the excellent close support afforded the 9th US Army on 16 November, the initial day of the current operations."

AND FROM XXIX TAC: "The mission your Group flew today was of a very superior manner under very bad weather conditions. I wish to commend you and the Group for such fine work."

NOV. 29, 1944, FROM MAJOR GENERAL E. N. HARMON, COMMANDING THE 2ND ARMORED DIVISION: "On the afternoon of 28 November, 1944, fighter-bomber aircraft of the 404th Fighter Group, XXIX TAC, while engaged in flying column cover for Combat Command "A" of this division were directed by the ground controller to attack enemy tanks assembled in and around Flossdorf, Germany. These tanks constituted a threat to the northern flank of Combat Command "A." Despite extremely heavy concentrations of enemy flak, flights of aircraft repeatedly bombed and strafed that target area destroying a total of 8 tanks and severely damaging the town.

"It is desired that personnel engaged in this operation be commended. The courage and flying ability displayed were in the highest tradition of the military service and the assistance rendered the ground forces constitutes a splendid example of cooperation between forces of the service."

DECEMBER 24, 1944, FROM GENERAL NUGENT, COMMANDING XXIX TAC: "Congratulations on the splendid work you have been accomplishing on the German Air Force and German ground penetration. I feel it is your Christmas present to General Vandenberg and to me. Thanks for both of us. It is also your Christmas present for those for whom we are all fighting-the folks back home. Best wishes for your continued brilliant success and good luck."

Everyone remembers the Battle of Bastogne and the magnificent stand of the 101st Airborne Division under Brigadier General A. C. McAuliffe who made his classic American reply to German demands for surrender-"Nuts." The 36th, 35th, 354th, 362nd, 366th, 367th, 370th, 405th, 406th, and 404th Fighter Groups participated in that battle and here is what General McAuliffe had to say in a letter to General Vandenberg on 25 Jan. 1945:

"I wish to express to you and the personnel of your command who supported us at Bastogne, the admiration of the 101st Airborne Division for the tremendous support we received from the fighter-bombers of the 9th Air Force. Despite intense flak, these fighter pilots repeatedly attacked and disrupted German formations preparing to act against the town. Attacks were made on targets within 400 yards of our infantry lines. They were a tremendous boost to our morale and were a vital contribution to the successful defense of Bastogne."

MARCH 27, 1945, FROM LT. GENERAL OMAR BRADLEY COMMANDING 12TH ARMY GROUP: Too much credit cannot be given to these men of the 12th Army Group-Ninth Air Force tactical team who are relentlessly battering our foe on the ground and from the air. They beat him on the beachhead, drove him from the occupied nations, crushed him in his own Rhineland, and next will destroy him in the heart of his Fatherland.

"I also feel that the close cooperation existing between your Tactical Air Commands and my Armies has been a principal feature in driving the forces of our foe back and across the Rhine."

The airborne operation across the Rhine in March called for an umbrella of fighters over the thousands of troop-carrier ships and gliders. General Williams wired General Vandenberg:

"The superior air coverage afforded by the 9 AF permitted Troop Carrier to operate free from enemy action. The airborne operation was highly successful due to your splendid cooperation. Thanks to all participating personnel."

FROM THE COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE ARMY AIR FORCES. H. H. ARNOLD, MAY 2, 1945: "My personal observations together with those of my staff during our European tour inspire this message of congratulations to you and all the men under your command (9 AF) for superior achievements in the destructive employment of air power. Having seen some of the results with my own eyes, I am profoundly impressed by your accomplishments and proud of the magnificent contributions you and your men have made and are making to the glorious history of the Army Air Forces."

GENERAL STEARLEY OF IX TAC FORWARDED THE MESSAGE TO THE 404TH FIGHTER GROUP WITH THIS COMMENT: "The achievements which have merited this message are the direct results of the courage and unstinting devotion to duty of you and the men under your command."

# AIR COMBAT CLAIMS OF THE 404TH FIGHTER GROUP, 1944-45

DATE	SQUADRON	PILOT	DESTROYED	PROBABLY DESTROYED	DAMAGED
8 May 44	506	Dunsmore	1 Me-109		
19 May 44	508	Kitchens	1 Me-109		
24 June 44	506	Adams	1 Me-109		
30 June 44	506	Miller			1 FW-190
30 June 44	506	McLaughlin			1 Me-109
17 July 44	Hq.	Johnson	1 FW-190		
27 July 44	508	Herrera	1 FW-190		
27 July 44	508	O'Brien	1 FW-190		
27 July 44	508	Johns			1 FW-190
29 July 44	508	Moon			1 Me-109
29 July 44	508	Wainwright			2 FW-190
30 July 44	506	Conn	1 FW-190		1 FW-190
30 July 44	506	Fisher	2 FW-190		
30 July 44	506	Hansen	1 FW-190		
30 July 44	506	Simpson			1 Me-109
30 July 44	506	McCloskey	1 FW-190		
30 July 44	508	Nelson & Robinson			1 FW-190
30 July 44	507	Weller	2 Me-109		
30 July 44	507	Rogers	1 Me-109		
30 July 44	507	Ross	1 Me-109		
30 July 44	507	Hughes	1 Me-109		
20 Aug. 44	507	Donnelly			1 FW-190
20 Aug. 44	507	Phelps	1 Me-109		
20 Aug. 44	507	L. E. Eldredge	1 Me-109		
20 Aug. 44	506	McLaughlin	1 Me-109		
27 Aug. 44	Hq.	McColpin	3 FW-190		
27 Aug. 44	506	Fisher	1 FW-190		
27 Aug. 44	506	Parsons		1 FW-190	
27 Aug. 44	506	Baker		1 FW-190	
27 Aug. 44	506	McLaughlin	(2 FW-190 1 Me-109)		
27 Aug. 44	506	Miller		1 FW-190	
27 Aug. 44	506	Simpson	1 FW-190	2 FW-190	
27 Aug. 44	506	Dalberg	2 FW-190		
27 Aug. 44	506	Freemantle	1 FW-190		
27 Aug. 44	506	Conn (posthumous claim)	1 Me-109		
16 Sept 44	507	Yeargin			1 FW-190
16 Sept 44	507	Cox			1 FW-190
16 Sept 44	507	Crocker	2 FW-190		1 FW-190
16 Sept 44	507	Int-Hout	2 FW-190		
28 Sept. 44	508	Wainwright	6 Me-109		
28 Sept. 44	Hq.	McColpin			1 FW-190
28 Sept. 44	507	Ross			1 FW-190
28 Sept. 44	507	Arnold	1 FW-190		
4 Oct. 44	506	Winters			1 FW-190
4 Oct. 44	506	Cobb	1 FW-190		

DATE	SQUADRON	PILOT	DESTROYED	PROBABLY DESTROYED	DAMAGED
4 Oct. 44	506	Welgoss	1 FW-190		
4 Oct. 44	506	Stovall	1 FW-190		
4 Oct. 44	506	Allen	1 FW-190		
4 Oct. 44	506	McLaughlin	1 FW-190		
28 Oct. 44	508	Landa			1 FW-190
28 Oct. 44	508	Geist	1 FW-190		
28 Oct. 44	508	Wilson	1 FW-190		
28 Oct. 44	508	Cronk	1 FW-190		
28 Oct. 44	508	McLaughlin	2 FW-190		
3 Nov. 44	507	Lutman	1 V-1 bomb		
18 Nov. 44	507	Graham			1 Me-410
8 Dec. 44	508	Tibbets (posthumous claim)	1 He-III		
17 Dec. 44	507	Orr			1 FW-190
17 Dec. 44	507	Ellingson	1 Me-109		
17 Dec. 44	507	Adams	1 FW-190		1 FW-190
17 Dec. 44	507	Stemmermann	1 Me-109		
17 Dec. 44	507	Ross	1 Me-109		
17 Dec. 44	507	Crocker	1 FW-190		
17 Dec. 44	507	Cox	2 FW-190		
17 Dec. 44	507	Lee	1 ME-109		
17 Dec. 44	508	Donohoe			1 Me-109
17 Dec. 44	508	Long			1 Me-109
17 Dec. 44	508	Dodge	1 Me-109		2 Me-109
17 Dec. 44	508	Landa	1 Me-109		
17 Dec. 44	508	Connor	1 FW-190		
17 Dec. 44	508	Marshall	2 Me-109		
17 Dec. 44	506	Parsons	1 Me-109		
17 Dec. 44	506	Baker	1 Me-109		
18 Dec. 44	506	Williams			2 Me-109
18 Dec. 44	506	Packer			1 Me-109
18 Dec. 44	506	Britton			1 Me-109
18 Dec. 44	506	Mercer	1 Me-109		
18 Dec. 44	506	Mercer & Stovall	1 Me-109		
18 Dec. 44	506	Yocum	1 Me-109		1 Me-109
18 Dec. 44	506	Aikins	1 Me-109		2 Me-109
18 Dec. 44	506	Stovall	1 Me-109		
18 Dec. 44	506	Sherwood	1 Me-109		
10 April 45	507	Gorham	1 Me-109		
10 April 45	508	Hartshorn	1 Me-109		
19 April 45	508	Crawley	1 FW-190		
19 April 45	506	Bayliss			1 Me-262
Total					
FW-190			42	5	16
Me-109			34	0	14
He-111			1	0	0
Me-410			0	0	1
Me 262			0	0	1
Aircraft			77	5	32
V- 1 bomb			1	0	0

# *Group Headquarters*

THE CO's



McCOLPIN



MOON



MURPHY



## THE DEPUTY C. O.'s



JOHNSON



GALBREATH



HOOD

# GROUP HEADQUARTERS

## COMMAND SECTION

The Command Section of Group Headquarters served as a kind of super Orderly Room, an administrative center which translated into action the pronouncements of higher headquarters and the policies of the Group Commander. A compact, smooth-working section of office-workers with regulations, duplications, files and strict attention to detail their daily chore, it helped bring to the 404th continually high efficiency ratings.

Members included three commanding officers during the combat year: Colonel Carroll W. McColpin, and Lieutenant Colonels Leo C. Moon and John R. Murphy. Lieutenant Colonel George O. Nichols served as Ground Executive Officer; he was relieved by Major Walter McCarthy, then Group Adjutant, who in turn was replaced as adjutant by Major John E. McManus, formerly of the 508th Squadron. Assistant Adjutant was First Lieutenant James P. Cuninghame. Master Sergeant Alphonse V. Mandry, sergeant major, headed the enlisted staff, followed by Master Sergeant Jake V. Stewart, administrative inspector, Staff Sergeant Malcolm S. Lucy, Sergeants Albert J. Carter and Edward M. Ziemba, and Corporals Cletus A. Stoeppel and Albert K. Hanson.

The section, like the rest of the group, became accustomed to working in and out of tents and patched-up buildings alike while "operational."

Al Mandry is from Utica, N. Y., and was one of the best sergeant majors in the Ninth Air Force. He served as an able assistant to Major McCarthy and Major McManus, handled all Group Headquarters correspondence, and supervised the work of the other personnel in the section. There never was any doubting Al's knowledge of all the memorandums, regulations, letters and other data that reached the Group; the mere mention of a subject and he could produce all the information available.

Jake Stewart, administrative inspector, also acted as assistant sergeant major. He made the required monthly inspections of administrative work in the three squadrons, and earned a reputation as a strict and fiery character. He knew his business and made certain that squadron personnel were familiar with the latest directives on maintenance of administrative records. He is from 'way out in El Centro, California, and is mighty proud of his Imperial Valley. A poker player deluxe, "Stew" supplemented his card wizardry with readings in old English poetry. A combination difficult to fathom!

The "pride of Meridian, Mississippi," (he says) is Staff Sergeant Malcolm "Stencil" Lucy. The duplicator expert, "Stencil" prepared all the Group's Special Orders, covering transfers, promotions, duty assignments, and awards. As additional duties, he made out all rosters of officers and enlisted men, and maintained a file on all personnel who were ever members of the Group.

Sergeant Al "Jawja" Carter served as distribution chief, then transferred to the Special Service section as mail clerk. Corporal Al Hanson, Fairdale, North Dakota, did a bang-up relief job in his place as distribution chief, forwarding all correspondence, regulations and other information to the proper destinations within the Group.

Sergeant Eddie Ziemba, the St. Louis "bombshell," is the only member of the section who joined the Group after leaving the States. He was assigned in England, and served as the classification expert, entering everything on the Form 20's and Service Records of the Headquarters personnel from typhus shots to battle stars. Eddie took over the job recording individual "points for discharge" when the "point system" came into effect. His records were the first to be inspected when visitors from higher headquarters dropped in and were always up to snuff.

Corporal Cletus "Cincinnati" Stoeppel was the file boss in charge of memorandums, Army Regulations, and circulars. He posted all changes daily and worried each bit of incoming correspondence into its proper bracket under the Dewey Decimal System.

Lieutenant Colonel George O. Nichols, Clinton, Indiana, an authoritative executive, achieved some extracurricular attention when he became one of the organizers of a postwar veterans' society known as the "United Veterans." Major Walter "Redhead" McCarthy, Springfield, Massachusetts, one of the busiest men in the Group, came up the hard way from buck private, at Miami Beach, to the highest position a ground officer can hold in a fighter group. Major John "Mac". McManus, an able adjutant from Alameda, California, was noted for his occasional nocturnal renditions of an unmelodious song, "Hey Mabel!" Lieut. Jim "Junior" Cunninghame, soft-spoken native of Alabama who served as assistant adjutant and assistant statistical officer, was one of those rare persons who never had a word of unkind criticism for anybody.

## COMBAT OPERATIONS

The Combat Operations Section was organized at., Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, with Major Charles M. "Monty" Hood as Operations Officer; First Lieut. John Ashby "App" Marshall, Tactical Inspector; First Lieut. Ted L. "Crosswind" Crosthwait, Weather Officer; Staff Sergeant Homer L. Hensley and Sergeant Kenneth M. Schwenk, Operations Clerks. Promotions during the combat year advanced Monty Hood to Lieutenant Colonel, Marshall to major, Crosthwait to captain, Hensley to technical sergeant and Schwenk to staff sergeant.

At Winkton, England, the "Ops" office was set up in a Brockhouse trailer, a four-wheeled office van of English design, whose very limited space made close coordination of all movement a necessity. App Marshall's favorite remark about the situation was, "Section A, inhale; Section B, exhale!"

Soon after combat flying began it was discovered that a 20-hour operational day was rather long, even if "the duty" were split two ways. Lieut. John M. Porter of the 506th was the first of the squadron pilots brought up to Group to relieve the situation. After a short tour, Lieut. Porter was relieved by Capt. Charles W. "Wally" Tribken, a former member of the RAF and an experienced combat pilot. The English influence was strong in Capt. Tribken, and the Ops staff was soon initiated into "Wally's Afternoon Tea Club." Not to be outdone, the sergeants inaugurated a "Pre-dawn Tea Hour" for that early morning pickup.

A typical day in England went something like this:

The daily Operations Order arrives about three hours before dawn, calling for a dawn takeoff. The order is carefully studied, targets are assigned to the squadrons, courses plotted, takeoff, rendezvous, and briefing times figured, and other Group sections alerted to insure that maps, photos, ammunition, bombs, fuel and weather information will be ready. Briefing time rolls around, Ops, Intelligence, Communications, Weather, and the Ground Liaison Officer pass out essential information to the mission leader and his pilots, and everyone settles down to "sweat out" takeoff time.

Sergeants Hensley and Schwenk take over the fancy Ops switchboard (a Rube Goldberg device) to answer the countless questions that always come up just before takeoff. Monty Hood or App Marshall rechecks the mission plans and watches for last-minute changes in the Ops Order. Ted Crosthwait hurries to the weather van for last-minute information on target weather.

As soon as the last plane is airborne, the Operations Section at Command Headquarters is notified over a direct phone line. Then the staff can relax for a few minutes before beginning plans for the next mission and the making up of routine records and reports.

The Operations Section stuck to its trailer in the orchard in Normandy, at Bretigny, and Juvincourt. Comic relief during the tragic bombing of A-5 by U. S. heavies was the sight of the rather bulky Monty Hood and Sgt. Ken Schwenk trying to evacuate the trailer by the same narrow door at the same instant.

At St. Trond, the trailer was abandoned and Combat Operations was established in the glass-enclosed "pent house" on top of the Group Headquarters building. The trailer was not deserted for long; Homer Hensley and Ken Schwenk soon established deluxe living quarters in the former office.

To the dismay of the Group, Capt. Tribken was killed in a jeep accident shortly after reaching St. Trond. Capt. Arthur E. Justice came up from the 506th to replace him.

Changes in December included: promotion of Ashby Marshall to major and his transfer to the 508th squadron in exchange for First Lieut. Donald E. Willoughby; promotion of Monty Hood to lieutenant colonel, "Crosswind" to captain, and Ken Schwenk to staff sergeant.

New Year's morning, 1945, at St. Trond will always be remembered as the day when "Crosswind's Tiffies" buzzed the field. Willoughby, Crosthwait and Schwenk were up in the "pent house" tower together with Major Bob Manss of S-2 and Pfc. Swenson of the G. L. O.- (Ground Liaison) section. Seven aircraft appeared approaching the field from the south, right on the deck. They carried belly tanks and as they spread out in line abreast, Crosswind observed:

"Looks like a flight of Tiffies (Typhoons) giving us a buzz job."

About this time the planes opened fire, and everyone hit the freshly oiled floor. Don Willoughby grabbed the "hot" Ops phone to notify Command of the attack as the planes, slim-nosed Messerschmitts and stubby Focke Wulfs, peeled back down for a second pass.

"You're under attack? Hold the phone a minute," said a voice from Command.

"The hell with you," said Don, scrambling with the rest for the stairs as bullets whizzed by the "penthouse."

Buzz-bombs, the Battle of the Bulge, a false-alarm paratroop attack, and heavy traffic from Eighth Air Force transients and cripples made the rest of the stay at St. Trond interesting.

"Just like LaGuardia Field, only more so," Homer Hensley used to say, as colonels and generals seeking rides to England ascended to the penthouse like swarms of bees.

March 19, the Group broke its own record for sorties flown on a single day, set June 7, 1944, when 192 effective sorties were completed. In March also, much to the gratification of the Weather Section, it was discovered that during the previous four months, only 11 planes out of 4268 sorties flown "aborted" because of weather. The score was a record for the entire XXIX Tactical Air Command.

Easter Sunday found the section on the move again, to Kelz, Germany, where the trailer was reinstated as the center of operations in a German beet field. Capt. Justice moved over to the 507th Squadron, and First Lieut. Donald E. Miller came up from the 506th. The stay at Kelz was short, and soon Combat Ops was set up in a deluxe office with a broad curving expanse of windows overlooking the airfield at Fritzlar.

There Lieut. Col. Hood became deputy group commander, and Major Paul R. Crawley of the 508th took over as operations officer. Major Crawley went "all out" on flying regulations and standing operating procedures, so much so that he became known around the office as "S.O.P. Crawley." Lieut. Col. Murphy, new group commander, revised the scheme of briefings throughout the Group, putting all briefings in Group instead of at the squadron level. In turn, each squadron sent a pilot to Group Operations to serve as Duty Officer, including First Lieut. Don Miller of the 506th, First Lieut. John J. Rogers, 507th, and Capt. Harold J. Buelow, 508th. Capt. William M. Lee of the 507th served a brief tour as Tactical Inspector, and Willoughby was promoted to Captain as the war ended. After the group moved to Echterdingen Air Field, near Stuttgart, Capt. Harry H. Moreland, a Twelfth Air Force veteran, was assigned to the section.

# INTELLIGENCE

Known to many as the "Snoop and Poop" office, the Intelligence section had two main functions, apparently diametrically opposed-to tell all, and to see that nobody else told anything. Charged with knowing as much about the enemy as possible, the boys in "S-2" had to give the pilots all the available "poop" (red-hot last-minute information) about the next target, extract from them every vital observation made during the last mission and pass the details up to higher headquarters. Charged with "security" and "counter-intelligence," the S-2's had to organize mail censorship, lectures on escape and evasion, and harangues on "safeguarding military information," so that no information about the Group's activities would reach the enemy. The members of the section briefed, interrogated, prepared and issued maps, made plans for the defense of each base occupied by the Group, studied, held classes, censored, supervised public relations, wrote the unit history.

Changes among the officer personnel in the section were frequent during the combat year, Major Robert W. Manss being the only officer constantly on the job. When the Group began operations in England, Capt. Dudley W. Conner was in charge, assisted by the then Captain Manss and Lt. William P. Corley. First Lt. Francis Dudzik replaced Lt. Corley, then Bob Manss became section boss when Capt. Conner returned to the States for a discharge in September 1944. Warrant Officer Jon R. Grimes joined the section to fill the vacancy, then moved to the 508th Squadron. Lt. Dudzik was transferred to the 36th Fighter Group, and the section ended the war with Capt. Kenneth J. Hollenstein of the 508th and Capt. Andrew F. Wilson of the 507th as Bob "The Leaf" Manss's assistants.

More stable was the enlisted staff, with Staff Sgt. Harold I. Hamm, Corp. Ralph E. Gallo, Corp. Fred Graff, Corp. Wilbert M. Knapp and the two draftsmen, Staff Sgt. Luis M. Henderson Jr., and Corp. Joseph E. Moroney, as mainstays. Other members were Technical Sgt. Eddie P. Watson, chief NCO until he left for home and a discharge from the base at St. Trond, Pfc. Joseph H. Saling who became draftsman for the 507th Squadron, and Pvt. Saul Kagan, who was transferred to higher headquarters while at St. Trond because of his ability as an interpreter.

Shortly before D-Day, Bob Manss together with Major Bob Rosa, then Ground Liaison Officer, left the Group temporarily on a special assignment for higher headquarters. Landing on Omaha Beach on D-plus-two, they served the first American airstrips in Normandy as a briefing and interrogating team, handling pilots from various groups in the Ninth Air Force before any unit advance parties could be landed.

On a representative day in the career of the Group S-2 section, "The Leaf" was night Duty Intelligence Officer and Willie Knapp was in charge of quarters. The message center clerk brought the teletyped operations order in at 0230. Manss and Knapp checked the target file, kept by Fred Graff, and found a photo of the POL (petroleum, oil and lubricants) dump which was the specific target called for in the ops order. On the Group Briefing map, a large 12-foot-square rig in nine sections hung on the wall, they plotted the courses and the target-location. Bob Manss notified the squadrons of the mission and tentative briefing and takeoff time. They checked the flak map, a special side-wall map carrying all known or suspected enemy flak concentrations, maintained by Ralph Gallo, and examined the airfield status chart and official list of German airfields, to determine the possible strength of air opposition in the target area.

The G. L. O.'s (ground liaison officers), Captains John Grindell and Jack Edak, arrived with their assistants, Pfc.'s Harry Compton and Roland Swenson, to determine the latest bomb -lines and troop-dispositions before the briefing.

At 0630, briefing time, Major Manss took his place among the other briefing officers and gave the pilots all pertinent S-2 information on the nature of the target, location, and enemy capabilities. At 0730 he and Corp. Knapp were relieved by Capt. Ken Hollenstein, Sgt. Hamm, Sgt. Henderson and Corporals Gallo, Graff and Moroney.

While the mission was airborne, Hamm and Gallo registered and filed the incoming secret and confidential documents. Graff looked over his target file, checked the map supply and made up a requisition to cover the shortages. Henderson and Moroney filled in the grid lines on a map begun the previous day, and started on some charts for Group Operations.

When the mission landed, Ken Hollenstein was ready to interrogate in the Group Briefing Room. Harold Hamm assisted in making out the "opflash" (mission report) which was phoned to TAC (Tactical Air Command) Headquarters by Ralph Gallo.

After listening to the interrogation, Captain Andy Wilson and Sgt. Al Gelders, Public Relations staff, talked with the pilots and phoned the news story of the mission to the TAC P.R.O. (Public Relations Office). They then had some pictures taken of one of the planes which returned with exceptionally heavy flak damage.

During the afternoon, bad weather grounded the Group, and a class in Aircraft Recognition was held in the briefing room by Capt. Hollenstein, with "Cecil B. De" Graff, film expert extraordinary, operating the epidiascope and Renshaw projector. At noon Bob Manss and Willie Knapp returned to work; "The Leaf" visited the squadron S-2's, while Wilbert brought the target indices up to date. By supper time the section was ready to leave, with the exception of Corp. Gallo and Capt. Hollenstein, who were CQ (in charge of quarters), and D.I.O. (Duty Intelligence Officer), respectively, for the night.

Closely allied with Group Intelligence were two other sections; Ground Liaison, staffed with Army personnel, and Public Relations. Authorized two, the Group was assigned a total of eight different Ground Liaison Officers from England to Germany. Major Robert Rosa, later G-2 for an Army Corps, was the first. Capt. Jack Edak, former paratrooper, wounded with the 82nd Airborne Division in Italy, and Capt. John Grindell, stayed the longest. The enlisted staff was more permanent, with Pfc. Harry Compton, followed by Pfc. Roland Swenson, on the job from Winkton to Fritzlar.

Public Relations was first handled in England by Capt. Andrew F. Wilson, then S-2 of the 507th Squadron. Sgt. Albert L. Gelders joined the Group just before the move to Normandy, and took over the bulk of the story writing. The two moved out of the squadron and up to Group Headquarters while at St. Trond, Al "Scoop" Gelders winning the reputation of being one of the busiest men in the Group, rushing from one squadron briefing room to another for eye-witness accounts of each mission. He had noon and evening "dead lines" for phoning mission stories up to the Command P.R.O., often was still on the phone when everyone but the guards had left the line for the night. Besides his daily coverage of operations, he put out great masses of stories on individuals in the Group, for home-town newspapers. Al and Andy Wilson both worked on picture-making, lining up timely photogenic subjects with squadron photo men to take the pictures, assisted Ninth Air Force movie men in the taking of a documentary film about "Fightin' Gator", the Group's 200-mission plane, took parties of pilots to nearby press-camps to meet correspondents, and escorted around the Group such visitors as:

Fred McKenzie, Buffalo Evening News  
Louis Azrael, Baltimore News-Post  
John Mecklin, Chicago Sun  
Jacques Garnier, Agence France Presse  
Rex Stout, War Writers' Board  
George Lyons, Office of War Information  
Jack Parker, NBC Blue Network  
Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Muller, Readers' Digest  
Allan Michie, Readers' Digest  
George Rodger, Life Magazine  
John McDermott, United Press  
T. McFee Kerr, Reuters  
Edward Connolly, Exchange Telegraph Agency  
Larry LeSeuer, CBS

Bob Wear, Fort Worth Star-Telegram  
Amon Carter, Publisher, Fort Worth Star-Telegram  
John W. Vandercook, radio commentator  
George Fyfe, London Daily Telegraph  
Rene Balbaud, French Radio  
Tom Yarborough, Associated Press  
Gordon Gammack, Tampa Tribune  
Virginia Irwin, St. Louis Post-Dispatch

The "Snoop, Poop and Scoop" boys will always remember: The excursion by Willie Knapp and Bob Manss to the little railway station at Lison in Normandy, when a Focke Wulf made a strafing pass and they both ended up under a railroad 'car-and seven Frenchmen . . . The stirring "pep-talks" by that Mississippi lawyer, Dudley Conner, in full-flowering Southern eloquence, and his edicts on office procedure—"Let the Journal show!" . . . The Brockhouse trailer, and the S-2 "circus tent," both on Lend-Lease from the British, and how "The Leaf" tore his hair when the trailer went over on its side in a ditch halfway between St. Trond and Kelz ... Gallo trying to dig a hole with his stomach-muscles in front of the supply -tent when bombs fell on A-5 ... The great Group Name contest, when Group personnel submitted over 1,000 names to "Little Caesar"-Col. Moon-and he found none acceptable as a nickname for the Group; he gave Virginia Irwin some of the suggestions and she used "Tin Hornets" in a story on the Group in her St. Louis Post-Dispatch column . . . The wild alarm Christmas Eve in the officers' mess by Lt. Dudzik, with the best of intentions -"Parachutists have landed on four corners of the field!" . . . The typewriter-expedition to Weimar run by Fred Graff, "Isaiah" Hamm and Andy Wilson, believed to be the only time American Army personnel salvaged German equipment, when they traded a bashed Olympia typewriter at the factory for six new ones when none were forthcoming through Quartermaster channels . . . Publishing the "Montclair Victory News," ship's daily "penny liar and gossip sheet, on the boat coming home, with the help of Bob Major and Bruce Holst of the 506th ... The section's one and only target snafu, in the early days in England , when the coordinates of two targets were accidentally combined and the 506th went searching in vain for a buzz-bomb launching site . . . "Hello, Football, this is Function Two" . . . "Sorry, sir, the Football line is out." . . . "But goddamit, this is a mission report!"

## MATERIEL

The Materiel or S-4 section consisted of Major William B. Crow, Capt. Jack Weir, Capt. Raymond Lucas, transportation officer, and Tech. Sgt. Thomas J. Harris, chief clerk. Tech. Sgt. Joseph Q. Whipple was added to handle air corps supply and engineer corps equipment, and when a group supply section was formed, Staff Sgt. Robert Mettler moved up from the 508th to take charge.

Major Crow and Tom Harris had the job of locating all types of depots on each move so that there would be no break in the continued stream of supplies into the organization. They also coordinated the work of the three squadron supply sections.

One of the big jobs which continually confronted the section was the provision of such things as transportation, shipping space and boxes on each move. It was necessary for "T.J." to find out the space required by each section, and make the necessary truck or train allocations. Tents had to be properly stored and. patched under S-4's supervision. Bob Mettler probably will never forget the time during the Ardennes Bulge battle when all the tents had to be taken from the second story in the Motor Pool building at St. Trond , packed onto a truck and sent to a rear area, then refolded and restored a month later when the German threat ended.

A new job, that of handling Post Exchange rations fell upon the supply section when the Group hit the continent. Bob Mettler was one happy boy when at St. Trond the Group established a PX store with its own personnel to handle the weekly rations and keep the ration-coupons and money straight.

## STATISTICS

When the Group arrived in England, a Statistical section was formed, and staffed by personnel from other sections in the Group. Capt. Delmer Sanburg, assistant adjutant, became Statistical Officer, with Tech. Sgt. Donald Schmidt of Operations as his chief N.C.O., assisted by Sgt. Larry Holst, Sgt. Bob Cechetini of the Command section, Corp. Allen Yetter of Weather, and Pfc. Sol Malin of Operations.

"Schmitch" consolidated the airplane status reports from the squadrons and sent them to higher headquarters. It was not uncommon to see Don burning the midnight oil while checking for discrepancies before phoning the report to TAC.

In addition he answered correspondence, helped out other members of the section, and arranged all award recommendations and medals for presentation.

"Chech's" chief job was making out all payrolls and officers' pay vouchers for Group Headquarters; he was the boy to see around the tenth of the month if you wanted to get paid the thirtieth. He also made up the daily consolidated morning report for the Group. For his excellent work Bob received the Bronze Star Medal.

Al Yetter made up the charts and diagrams for the section, kept a file on medals awarded within the Group, and even went in for some light carpentry, making files, desks, and other items for the office. For carrying an injured crew chief away from a burning plane loaded with bombs during the bombing of A-5, Al received the Soldiers Medal.

Larry Holst made out the operations reports on all combat missions; he really had his hands full when the Group was flying a dozen or more missions a day. For the consistent high quality of his "opreps," the section received a commendation and Larry the Bronze Star Medal. In addition to his regular work, "Hoist" helped Don Schmidt in making out the airplane status and allied reports.

Sol Malin kept the file on combat flying time for all pilots in the Group, and checked the pilots' individual flying time records. He also submitted all the form recommendations for Air Medals.

Delmer Sanburg, besides administering the affairs of the section, had the imagination-taxing task of composing the bulk of all recommendations for awards that went out of the Group. Assisted in composition by the squadron S-2's in the latter half of the combat year, he remained the chief consulting authority on proper form and suitability of awards. His collection of fine pipes and tobaccos was an object of much admiration among the heavy smokers of the Group.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The Headquarters Communications Section was chiefly responsible for the maintenance of communications throughout the Group, and between the Group and other headquarters. Besides Group personnel, it was necessary to select telephone, teletype, radio, and code enlisted men from the three squadrons, in order to maintain a 24-hour schedule, seven days a week. The cooperation and all-around good work of the squadron men contributed greatly to the section's successful operation.

Chief of section was Major Wayman L. Toll, a first lieutenant when he came overseas, assisted by First Lts. Charles S. Higgins and Kenneth M. MacDowell, radar expert.

Corp. Robert "The Voice" O'Rourke served principally as Communications clerk, but the versatile Irishman could and did double up in many jobs, including code and telephone. After duty hours, he crooned smoothly with the "Nix Compris," the Group's dance orchestra.



Headquarters men who formed the communications section overseas were led by Tech. Sgt. George "Sledge" Rader, who was responsible for all the work done or not done by his boys. Staff Sgt. Mervin "Little Arnie" Thresher was the secretive individual who ran the code room, complete at most of our bases with a small sliding panel in the door like a Blind Pig to see that only authorized people gained admittance. He was the constant victim of corny cracks like "Joe sent me!" as he opened the panel to examine each visitor.

Staff Sgt. George "Eager Beaver" Miller was Message Center chief. There were times when machines and lines broke down, but George was handy with tools, and could even wield a pretty mean broom. To people on the outside looking in, it seemed that George was forever cleaning and sweeping the place out.

The genial electrician with a drawl, Staff Sgt. John "The Cat" Duncan was responsible for the abundance of electrical power that made the teletypes and radios run. In addition to the GI electrical equipment, "Dunk" became well acquainted with many foreign electrical systems. Many a time the local "juice" failed and "The Cat" was summoned to get the auxiliary power generators working. John had the sympathy of his sleeping buddies when this happened in the middle of the night.

Oklahoma's contribution to the section was Sgt. Frank "Buck" Potter, one of Little Arnie's trusted code room men. Like the rest of the boys behind the sliding panel, "Buck" was so tight-lipped he wouldn't discuss the war until he could quote the "Stars and Stripes."

Sgt. Connie Dorman was Message Center clerk, which is more involved than it sounds. If everything went by the field manual his job would be a snap, but at times for Connie SNAFU and S.O.P. seemed synonymous.

It happens to all units and sections and it happened to us-the section had its Brooklyn representative, Corp. Peter "Cosmo" Volpi, message center clerk and teletype operator. In addition to his duties Pete did more than his share in spreading goodwill for his beloved borough.

Sgt. Kenneth "Lenny" Escher was one of our radio operators, and during the course of the war helped out in many capacities, including running the telephone switchboard. Sgt. Frederick "The Warden" Lee, alias "Sammy Downtown" was another who served as message center clerk. Fred, along with Sgt. Jack "Lush" Stroker of the 508th, the Grand Grey-haired Man of the Code Room, was responsible for most of the nicknames throughout the section. The two, faithful followers of Damon Runyon, latched on to many of his works in the Special Service library, and spread Runyon's colorful names among their buddies.

Corp. Walter J. "The Count" Pacic, better known for his after-hours playing on the ivories, showed as much skill with a telegraph key as he did with boogie-woogie, which is saying plenty. Corp. David O. "Pop" Roach was another of the boys who helped to maintain the message center. One of the older members of the section, he was quick to be tagged "Pop." He added much color and humor to the gang while serving as a message clerk.

Pfc. Richard X. "Skokie" Sullivan was another Irishman who lent his talents to the message center as a teletype operator, and later became a member of Little Annie's code room Inner Sanctum.

Corp. Joseph J. Mlcoch joined the section late in the combat year, from the 506th, and went to work in the code room. Another devotee of Damon Runyon, he fell right in with the rest of the bunch.

Headquarters lineman extraordinary was Pfc. James B. Robarge, who, equipped with climbing belt and spurs, saw the section through many of its trying days.

Major Toll, boss of the section until he departed for an advanced communications school in the States, achieved fame at St. Trond as a public utilities magnate, managing great gangs of civilian laborers on electrical and plumbing projects about the base. A crew under his supervision unearthed a large telephone cable under the former German communications strong-room at St. Trond, which, so the story goes, ran from Brussels to

Aachen and points east. Wayman claimed there was no truth to the rumor that he plugged in a field phone and buzzed Hitler in Berlin.

Lt. Chuck Higgins, tallest man in the section, proved to be an invaluable assistant to "For Whom the Bells Toll," and an equally effective drummer with the "Nix Compris" band. Lt. Kenneth MacDowell, a "ham" radio operator in civilian life and best-informed technician in the Group, made radar his specialty and supervised operation of the three squadron homing stations. He was always in demand for advice and trouble-shooting work on everything from radar antenna to Dike Pisegna's movie projector.

## ENGINEERING

A good share of the credit for the Group's excellent maintenance record, one of the best in the Ninth Air Force, is due the engineering staff, headed by Capt. Robert DeGregorio, formerly engineering officer of the 507th Squadron, and his technical inspection force. Constantly watching technical orders and maintenance standards throughout the Group, the inspectors, including Chief Warrant Officer Frank Plebanek, Master Sgt. Clarence H. Bernshausen, Master Sgt. John W. Watson, and Tech. Sergts. James B. Cupples and Charles Schatz, assisted the squadron engineering sections in overcoming their problems of maintenance and supply. Greg, dubbed "Murphy" because "DeGregorio" was too long a handle, received the Bronze Star Medal for his capable performance. The short, elderly Schatz, a lawyer from Brooklyn, was often consulted by members of the Group with legal problems, and conducted a law course in the Group's Information and Education school at St. Trond and Fritzlar.

## ARMAMENT AND ORDNANCE

Group Headquarters came overseas with an Armament section consisting of Capt. Harold R. Lyman and Master Sgt. John W. Watson. In England, an Ordnance section was added by bringing First Lt. Warren L. Pell and Sgt. Erwin W. Bortner up from the 506th Squadron, and the staff was rounded out by the addition of Tech. Sgt. James B. Cupples in Normandy as ordnance armorer. The establishment of an Air Technical Inspector's office drew away both Watson and Cupples early in the combat year. While overseas Warren Pell advanced to captain, and Erwin Bortner climbed two grades to technical sergeant.

.Bortner acted as clerk, keeping files on armament, ordnance, photography and chemical warfare, recording expenditure of bombs and ammunition, and serving as ammunition inspector. Greatest period of stress for the section was late in March, 1945, when the Group hardly knew where its next bomb was coming from. No missions were cancelled, though some were delayed, and some queer loading had to be employed. March 21st, one of the lowest days, the Group bomb dump at St. Trond had the following:

- 100 boxes of 50-caliber ammunition
- One 500-pound semi-armor-piercing bomb
- Six 90-pound fragmentation bombs
- One 100-pound practice bomb
- 300 practice rockets

The rocket-firing 508th had just a "fair stock" of five-inch aircraft rockets; there were no 260-pound frags or 500-pound GPS (General Purpose bombs), the favorite loads. Fifty-caliber ammunition was coming in on a hand-to-mouth basis; the 1922<sup>nd</sup> and 1591<sup>st</sup> Ordnance Companies, local suppliers, were digging up their normally unused odds and ends, including clusters of 90 and 20-pound frag bombs, 500-pound frag clusters, and 500-pound semi-armor-piercing bombs. The Group had to turn to the 810th Chemical Company to supplement its supply with such things as 500-pound incendiary bombs and incendiary clusters, and "home-made" Napalm bombs-German belly' tanks filled with the secret petroleum mixture and fitted with a small thermite or magnesium incendiary as igniter. Possible explanation of the shortage was the unexpectedly large

bomb-consumption during the Ardennes Bulge battle, which reduced stocks throughout the theater faster than ships had been scheduled to bring more in. The nature of the fleeing enemy targets made it possible to run more missions exclusively on strafing, and the shortage eased off. C-47's were used to fly in emergency loads of ammunition.

Warren Pell received the Soldiers Medal for heroism at Winkton, June 30, 1944, when Bob Green of the 507th landed with a load of fragmentation bombs, part of which exploded. Warren, with Lt. Charlie Young and Staff Sgt. Glenwood Moon, removed the remaining live bombs from the runway so that other returning planes could land.

## TRANSPORTATION

The Group Motor Pool and Transportation section was formed by combining the three squadron transportation crews in Winkton under Capt. Raymond M. Lucas.

Number One concern in England was preparation of all vehicles for the landing on Omaha Beach, and all personnel throughout the Group scheduled to do any driving received waterproofing instructions from Capt. Lucas, Staff Sgts. Clyde "Scrappy" Campbell, Richmond S. Lewis and Irving "G. I." Smith, and Corporal Henry "Sunny" Becker. Then with the pressure on, the boys waterproofed all day and night in the rain for the final move to France. Three vehicles were dunked in the Channel going ashore, but all the rest never got more than the tire-treads wet.

All the boys learned to be pretty fast on foot in Normandy, scrambling for foxholes. During the bombing of A-5, the section lost Corp. Joseph L. Hickman, a driver . . . En route from Normandy to Bretigny, Scrappy Campbell and Roy Mann ended up in Paris -claimed they took the wrong road. It made a good story, anyway, The last truck had no sooner arrived at Bretigny when the section had to start hauling men and material to Juvincourt; the vehicles were hardly serviced and put back in shape when orders came to move again, to St. Trond ... There were no other moves for six months, but still the drivers put in long hours behind the wheel, and stayed busy repairing tires-a critical item-when they weren't driving.

Runs to Aachen for coal and lumber were frequent; on one trip Kehoe Kelly, Pascal Baube, Mac McShane and Jessie Bell were strafed, but escaped without injury. "Gogo" Gomillion wasn't so lucky on a run back from Liege, when a V-1 "buzz-bomb" blew him off the road. The bomb hit a brick house, and the bricks smashed up the truck and injured Gornillion. He received the Purple Heart. Liege was never a popular trip during the buzzbomb raids, but nevertheless, under persuasion, many runs were made to transport nurses for the officers' Saturday night benders. During the Ardennes breakthrough, the drivers and trucks saw plenty of excitement helping to evacuate Ninth TAC Headquarters.

The mechanics, Sgts. Clarence "Flash" Bowren, Frank "Pop" Moleski, Raymond "Redtop" Benoit, Charlie Thomas, and Irving "G. I." Smith, worked hard and long hours to keep the vehicles running. Replacement parts were hard to get at ordnance, depots, and Corp. "Big John" Trowchwitz spent most of his time tracing down depots and ordnance collecting points that might have some needed part. All the vehicles came in for hard usage on the roads around St. Trond, which were pretty badly torn up by the armor and other heavy ground force equipment, particularly during the "Bulge."

At Fritzlar the section concentrated every effort on completing a 6,000-mile check on each vehicle. At one time 54 vehicles were dead-lined for parts. Before the checkup could be completed, the Group moved south to Stuttgart. By some miracle a skeleton crew left behind at Y-86 repaired 19 vehicles and caught up to the Group three days later.

During a year of combat, the Motor Pool through enemy action had one man killed, Corp Joseph L. Hickman, and two injured, Corporals John W. Lynch and William H. Gomillion.

Corporals Joseph Papez, William Fitzgerald, Alvin "Pop" Enger, and John Lynch were the clerks for the motor pool, each taking a turn as dispatcher. Drivers for "Uncle Luke and his Forty Thieves" included Corporals Terry "Pop" Windle, John Trowchwitz, Jessie Bell, Leroy Mann, Pascal Baube, William Gomillion, John "Barney" Burnett, and Gilbert "Diz" Dyszelski; Pfc. William "Timber" Dooley, Ernest "Wrangler" Lee, Carl "Hopalong" Poplin, Lawrence "Kehoe" Kelly, Dom "Pinky" Perillo, Jackson Mullins, James "Pretty Boy" Hawkins, James "Doc" Williams; and Privates William Hampton and William McShane. Mechanics were: Sgts. Clarence Bowren, Frank Moleski, Irving Smith, Raymond Benoit, Charles Thomas, Lawrence "Herk" Pratt; Corporals Lewis "Ginny" Navairo, Walter Keefner, and Henry Becker. Section chiefs were Staff Sgts. Clyde "Scrappy" Campbell, Cleo "Rummy" Raney, and Richmond M. Lowis.

## MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

The Group Medical Department faithfully fulfilled its responsibility for "Care of the Sick and Wounded." Its principal function was care of minor cases, but emergency care and shock treatment were skillfully administered to major injuries before evacuation. Operation of the Group Aid Station, previously handled by an independent Medical Corps Unit, was first established at St. Trond during the early part of December, 1944, and continued throughout the European campaign.

With the exception of the officers -they are placed in a category all their own -the 404th Group Medical Department was given more than its share of characters when the Army made distribution to the various organizations.

Prime ruler and chief dispenser of our happy little group was Major Jett O. Scott, Hot Springs, Ark., fondly known to all as "The Old Man." The Major joined the outfit in February, 1944, as Group Surgeon and served in that capacity until deactivation. He is long to be remembered for his outstanding surgery, which we're sure made better men out of some of us.

Capt. Raymond P. "Cavity" Templin, entering the Army from Jacksonville, Ill., came to us in March, 1943, and served as Group Dental Surgeon. "Doc Fang" is known throughout the Group for his famous last words: "Sorry, soldier, it's just got to come out."

The Group medical administrative post was held down by First Lt. Michael M. Cook, who could change the whole course of events at the dispensary by merely looking up a memorandum or a circular letter. He hails from Downieville, Calif.

Without fanfare but with all due respect, we now come to the Medical Department enlisted personnel, without whom the Aid Station could not have operated. The list is headed by Tech. Sgt. Melvin L. Clemons, Stillwater, Okla. "The Boss" had an uncanny knack for rooting "goof-offs" from their hiding places. Surgical assistance was performed by a staff which included Sgt. Herschel "De Lank" Blank, Russellville, Mo., skipper of the autoclave; Pfc. Walter "Dead Pan" Martin, Lynchburg, Va., who was to be found in any emergency in the nearest sack; and Pfc. Melvin "Flash" Busler, Watertown, N. Y., who ran second best to "Dead Pan" for the nearest sack.

The first aid and medical work was supervised by Sgt. Olen "Fat Lip" McGann, Colorado Springs, Colo., who just couldn't duck those swinging doors, assisted by Pfc. Jack "Snake" Verner, Ft. Worth, Texas, wearing the purple faded trunks. The tender care and expert service given the patients of the Aid Station was rendered by Corp. Franklin "Deacon" Riffell, Clayton, Ohio, and Pfc. William "Dunker" Kunze, Franklin, Mo. Through their hands have passed more pills and pots than payrolls. Sgt. Franklin "Blood Count" Nicholas, Downing, Calif., was in charge of the laboratory. His decision determined in many cases whether a patient stopped or started sweating. A good man to have as a friend was Corp Joseph "Chipper" Blecha, Glenville, Minn., dental technician, who could or could not put in a good word for a fella with his boss ("Sorry, Soldier," etc.).

The administrative and office work was handed down to Sgt. James "Wrong Way" Corrigan, Brooklyn, N. Y., who has been called all kinds of names by higher headquarters for his reports with those "little mistakes." The mess and kitchen of the Aid Station functioned under supervision of Corp. William "Toad" Robinson, Akron, Ohio, and Pfc. Robert "Belly Robber" Rothwell, Joliet, Ill., who, through some miraculous recipe were very adept at changing chicken legs to wings and unmentionable parts. They also were called all kinds of names, but not by higher headquarters. Whenever the Aid Station had emergency calls or patients to be evacuated, Corp. Ted "Shifty" Wojtowicz, McKeesport, Pa., and Pfc. Leonard "P. X" Duffy, Parnell, Iowa, were\* in charge of the transportation. Both men, it has been rumored, won their licenses in crap games—or so most of their passengers insist.

Pfc. Solomon "Pancho" Flores, Oklahoma City, Okla., and Pfc. John "Slick" Ryan, Providence, R. I., were the fortunates who sweated out ambulance duty on the flying line for the Group. Both men have been known to snore like P-47's after spending a hard day on the line watching the planes take off and land. All art work and sign-painting was duly performed by Pfc. John "Brush" Beley, Rochester, N. Y., who was quite able with the brush, and quite, quite able at brushing away the chow. The upkeep and general repairs around the dispensary were accomplished by Sgt. Charles "Hot Shot" Barr, Owensboro, Ky. "Hot Shot" Charlie caused more groans from the medics for the "splinterless" holes he put in packing boxes, than C. Q. duty with penicillin shots.

## SPECIAL SERVICES

The Special Services section arrived overseas with Capt. Marvin S. Buckberry in charge, assisted by First Lt. Dominic R. Pisegna, Sgt. Salvatore D'Aura, and Pfc. Carmen Moreali. The section's responsibilities covered everything from entertainment and athletics to mail collection and distribution. Later in the year, at St. Trond, an Information and Education department was added under First Lt. Robert F. Martin, a "refugee" from IX TAC. Capt. Buckberry moved up to IX TAC, leaving "Dike" Pisegna in charge; "Dike" in due time was promoted to captain. Staff Sgt. James L. "Curly" Evans joined the section in England, and First Lt. Frank B. Tullos served some time with Special Services before becoming adjutant of the 506th Squadron. Carmen Moreali left the section while at St. Trond to join IX TAC headquarters, and Sgt. Albert J. Carter moved in as chief mail clerk.

Special Services started operating immediately on board the "Sterling Castle," Europe-bound, when Buckberry and Pisegna kept the boys supplied with pocket-sized books, and Sal D'Aura organized and directed a Group Glee Club, which gave excellent performances during the crossing after six hasty rehearsals. Sparked by Sal, an excellent singer and musician and formerly a music teacher in Brooklyn, the Glee Club gave many concerts in England to other American units, and even performed at Ascot, near London, for Lieutenant General Lewis E. Brereton, then commanding the Ninth Air Force.

The section ran regular movies for all group personnel, sweating out an occasionally balky projector and an uncertain power supply, enduring all kinds of hoots and howls from an unmerciful audience when mechanical difficulties delayed or cancelled a performance. The staff was responsible for the staging of all U. S. O. "live" shows that reached the Group, among which were such notables as Spike Jones and his band, Dinah Shore, and Private Mickey Rooney. At St. Trond, Special Services supervised weekly dances in the downtown Palace Theater, and helped to organize and present G.I. shows made up of men in the Group and other neighboring units.

Whenever the opportunity presented itself, Dike, former West Virginia U. athlete, with his athletic assistant, Curly Evans, ran organized sports—boxing, softball, football, and even basketball when a gymnasium became available at St. Trond. The Group baseball team won second place in the IX TAC tournament in England, and the football team dropped a close defensive game to XXIX TAC in the "Dutch Bowl" in Maastricht, Holland. At Fritzlar the "Brass Hats," the 506th Squadron officers' team, won the Group championship and a trip to England in a wild softball league race.

The Information and Education department, efficiently run by Bob Martin, fostered a fine educational program, starting at St. Trond and concluding at Stuttgart, which included the "Function School," a series of classes taught by members of the Group, covering seven different U. S. Armed Forces Institute courses. Subjects covered were picked by polling interested Group personnel, and 115 students were enrolled, of which 87 completed their courses. The ubiquitous Sal D'Aura, Tunisian-born and an excellent linguist, taught French, and music appreciation; Master Sgt. Al Mandry covered bookkeeping; Lt. Al Hendricks, 506th, taught English; Major Bob Manss and Tech. Sgt. Charles Schatz, both lawyers, taught law; Tech. Sgt. Kelley Westbrook, radio for beginners; and Master Sgt. Don Ikier, arithmetic. The Group was the only Ninth Air Force unit to push its USAFI school program through to completion for high school or college credit.

The first course-Music Appreciation-began at St. Trond in March, 1945; the others were started at Fritzlar, May 27th. All were completed by July 14th at Stuttgart, and the last examination was given July 19th. Handicaps to a larger number of classes were the training program then underway to keep the boys in shape for the Japanese-presumably our next targets-the disarmament program which scattered men far and wide over Germany, the shortage of textbooks, and the need to avoid courses which couldn't be completed before our final movement westward.

Other outstanding sidelines were the "Nix Compris," and the organ-music and choir-singing provided for both Protestant and Catholic church-services by Sal D'Aura. The "Nix Compris," a really good five-piece dance band sponsored by Special Services, which arranged for the instruments, had Andy Kirk as trumpet-player and vocalist, "Count" Pacic at the piano, Don Miller, Chuck Higgins or George Cuonzo at various times on the drums, Floyd Blair and Milton Liberty alternating on the saxophone, and Noel Arrighi on the bass viol.

## CHAPLAINS

By a good fortune rare among units of its size, the Group through most of its combat year had both a Protestant and Catholic chaplain regularly assigned. When the Group was organized at Key Field, the chaplain was Father Ralph E. Thompson, Catholic; he was followed by Lts. Solomon Bass and John R. Himes, both Protestant. The latter went overseas with the organization, but was relieved in England June 23, 1944, by Capt. Edward B. Wyckoff, Protestant. Chaplain Wyckoff was soon joined by Capt. William F. E. VanGarsse, Catholic, and the two served together through Normandy, France, and Belgium, to Germany, where Father, VanGarsse switched to an Army of Occupation unit.

Their assistants were Corp. Clifford Ellis, Protestant, and Corp. Lawrence M. Clark, Catholic. Sgt. Anton Gabel, 507th orderly room clerk, who served as part-time aide to Father VanGarsse, left the Group at St. Trond to become Catholic chaplain's assistant at IX TAC Headquarters.

Reminiscing about his arrival in the Group, Chaplain Wyckoff said:

"I remember the first Sunday service I had with the 404th. They showed me a single wall tent and told me that was my chapel. 'You mean my office, don't you?' I asked. 'No, that's the whole works, chapel and everything.' And then-my first congregation consisted of six persons. I was so discouraged I wanted to transfer out immediately."

"When the adjutant was trying to find quarters for me at Winkton, he took me to the officers' area and disappeared into one of the tents. There was a quiet discussion, then I heard a loud voice say 'Hell, no! Don't put that S. O. B. in here!' What a welcome!"

Chapel services were held in every conceivable place-openfields, Nazi beer halls, bombed-out theaters, tents, mess halls. Chaplain Wyckoff finally got himself a real church when the Group hit R-50-a little green-roofed Lutheran church in the village of Bernhausen on the edge of the airfield. But his real pride and joy was the little wooden chapel he designed and had built by Belgian carpenters at St. Trond. It was probably the

only building built expressly for use as a chapel by American troops in Belgium. It was there he held his Easter services, just before the move into Germany.

Chaplain Wyckoff also assisted surrounding units who had no regular chaplain and held as many as six services on a Sunday. From an original gathering of six, his normal Group congregation of a Sunday grew to about 150.

"Attendance is a funny thing," he commented. "Naturally when everyone was flying, attendance was low. During the Ardennes Bulge battle when the weather was so bad, it seemed to clear up just before services every Sunday, and off the planes and my congregation would go. But weather itself didn't affect the attendance as much as it used to back in my pastorate in the States. 'When morale was good also, attendance was good; when morale was poor, everyone seemed down in the mouth. at everything, including going to church. When we were strafed, attendance jumped the following Sunday. And for some reason the Sunday after payday usually brought a good crowd."

A former pastor of the Manchester Baptist Church, Los Angeles, Calif., Chaplain Wyckoff entered the Army Air Forces in September, 1942. He trained at the Chaplains' School at Harvard, and served with the Eighth Air Force from June, 1943, to the following year.

Chaplain VanGarsse, known popularly as "Father Van," joined the Group in Normandy, July 26, 1944, and said his first masses in an orchard. A native of Belgium who came to America to take up an assistant pastorate in California in 1934, he joined the Army in April, 1943. He was the first man in the Group to enter Belgium, dashing from Juvincourt up to his old home at Appels, a village 25 miles west of Brussels September 17, just a few days after the Germans had pulled out.

"I was the first American the people had seen," he said. "And they crowded around so I could hardly get home."

Father Van found his father and brother and other relatives well and safe, but learned to his sorrow that his mother had died during an Allied bombing raid. His last visit home had been in 1939, the year he became an American citizen, when he caught the last boat back before the war.

His knowledge of French, Flemish, and German was particularly valuable during the Group's long stay at St. Trond. There he enjoyed his best accommodations, using the Catholic church at Bevingen on the west side of the airdrome for Sunday mass, and a room elaborately painted by Belgian workers in the 506th line area as a chapel for daily afternoon mass.

Responsible for the religious welfare of all denominations, Chaplain Wyckoff was able to arrange for transportation and other accommodations for Jewish members of the Group during the observance of special holidays such as The Passover and Yom Kippur.

Able assistance at all services was rendered by Sgt. Salvatore D'Aura, singer and organist. Major John B. O'Rourke, executive officer of the 506th, an excellent professional singer, sang at Catholic services on special occasions.

## ROSTER OF HEADQUARTERS PERSONNEL

NAME	RANK	STREET ADDRESS	CITY, STATE
Alek, George D.	Pfc.	2614 120th St.	Toledo, Ohio
Barr, Charles H.	Sgt.	Route 2	Utico, Ky.
Beley, John T.	Pfc.	45 Klueh St.	Rochester, N. Y.
Bernshausen, Clarence H.	M/Sgt.		Needville, Texas
Blank, Herschel L.	Sgt.	RFD 3	Russellville, Mo.
Blecha, Joseph F.	Cpl.	Route 3	Glenville, Minn.
Bortner, Erwin W.	T/Sgt.	136 E. Wilson	Batavia, Ill.
Brown, Ralph B.	M/Sgt.		Bronston, Ky.
Buelow, Harold J.	Capt.	2104 Bennett St.	Dubuque, Iowa
Busler, Melvin J.	Pfc.	124 Mechanic St.	Watertown, N. Y.
Carter, Albert J.	Sgt.	RFD 2	Hazelhurst, Ga.
Cechetini, Robert C.	Sgt.	211 0 G Street	Sacramento, Calif.
Clark, Lawrence M.	Cpl.	Northcliffe Apts.	Seattle, Washington
Clemons, Melvin L.	T/Sgt.	112 N. Main St.	Stillwater, Okla.
Compton, Harry S.	Pfc.	81 Williams St.	Portland, Maine
Cook, Michael, M.	1st Lt.	222 S. 5th St.	Hannibal, Missouri
Corrigan, James J.	Sgt.	3216 Cortelyou Rd.	Brooklyn, N. Y.
Crawley, Paul R.	Maj.	354 S. Lucerne Blvd.	Los Angeles, Calif.
Croft, Joseph W.	Capt.	P. O. Box 206	Groesbeck, Tex.
Crosthwait, Ted L.	Capt.	P. O. Box 16	Morehead, Ky.
Crow, William B.	Maj.	320 N. Leroux	Flagstaff, Ariz.
Cunninghame, James G., Jr.	1st Lt.		Grove Hill, Alabama
Cupples, James B.	T/Sgt.	Box 124	Clarks, Louisiana
D'Aura, Salvatore	Sgt.	193 Clinton St.	Brooklyn, N. Y.
De Gregorio, Robert	Capt.	25 Potomac St.	West Roxbury, Mass.
Duffy, Leonard	Pfc.	521 6th Ave., SE	Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Duncan, John C.	S/Sgt.	1811 Montclair Ave.	Norfolk, Va.
Ellis, Clifford L.	Cpl.	520 West Perkins St.	Hartford City, Ind.
Escher, Kenneth T.	Sgt.	1637 Locust Ave.	Long Beach, Calif.
Evans, James L.	S/Sgt.	1229 Nineteenth St.	Huntsville, Texas
Flores, Solomon A.	Pfc.	Gen. Del.	Oklahoma City, Okla.
Galbreath, Howard L.	Lt. Col.	1277 Central Ave.	Chino, Calif.
Galli, Armand J.	Pvt.	RFD I	Ottawa, Illinois
Gallo, Ralph E.	Cpl.	69 Franklin St.	Bristol, Rhode Island
Gelders, Albert L.	Sgt.	511 W. Central Ave.	Fitzgerald, Georgia
Graff, Fred	Cpl.	7731 Yates Ave.	Chicago, Illinois
Hamm, Harold I.	S/Sgt.	65 Kenduskeag Ave.	Bangor, Maine
Hanson, Albert K.	Cpl.		Fairdale, North Dakota
Harris, Thomas J.	T/Sgt.	1305 Sunset Drive	El Reno, Oklahoma
Hawkins, James B.	Pfc.		Tribbey, Ky.
Henderson, Luis M., Jr.	S/Sgt.	214 W. 72nd St.	New York, N. Y.
Hensley, Homer L.	T/Sgt.	2309 Montgomery Ave.	Ashland, Ky.
Higgins, Charles S.	1st Lt.	318 S. 18th St.	Quincy, Ill.
Hollenstein, Kenneth J.	Capt.	12055 E. 28th St.	Brooklyn, N. Y.
Holst, Laurence R.	Sgt.	3415 Holyoke Drive	Los Angeles, Calif.
Hood, Charles M.	Lt. Col.		Osceola, Iowa
Hudek, Paul J.	Sgt.		Pocahontas, Iowa
Johnson, James K.	Lt. Col.		Phoenix, Ariz.
Justice, Arthur E. Jr.	Maj.	817 Academy St.	Watertown, N. Y.
Kagan, Saul	Pvt.	2165 Bolton St.	The Bronx, N. Y.



NAME	RANK	STREET ADDRESS	CITY, STATE
Knapp, Wilbert M.	Cpl.	7631/2 W. Fourth St.	Williamsport, Penn.
Kunze, William E.	Pfc.		Franklin, Missouri
Lee, Frederick C.	Sgt.	3025 Yorkshire Rd.	Cleveland Hts., Ohio
Lucas Raymond M.	Capt.	3429 Livingston Ave.	Lorain, Ohio
Lucy, Malcolm S.	S/Sgt.	3701 7th St.	Meridian, Miss.
Lyman, Harold R.	Capt.	P. O. Box 14	Olathe, Kansas
Lynch, John W.	Cpl.	533 17th St.	Brooklyn, N. Y.
MacDowell, Kenneth M.	1st Lt.	278 Waltham St.	West Newton, Mass.
Malin, Solomon	Pfc.	29431/2 Vineyard St.	Los Angeles, Calif.
Mandry, Alphonse V.	M/Sgt.	1211 Catherine St.	Utica, N. Y.
Mann, Leroy E.	Cpl.	1151 Garden Ave.	Hamilton, Ohio
Manss, Robert W.	Maj.	228 Niagara St.	Dayton 5, Ohio
Martin, Robert F.	1st Lt.	63 Vinson St.	Dorchester, Mass.
Martin, Walter S.	Pfc.	1014 16th St.	Lynchburcr, Va.
McCarthy, Walter	Maj.	100 Webber St.,	Springfield 8, Mass.
McColpin, Carroll W.	Col.	2124 Niagara St.	Buffalo, N. Y.
McGann, Olen J.	Sgt.	303 W. Kiowa St.	Colorado Springs Colo.
McManus, John E.	Maj.	1329 Fountain St.	Alemeda, Calif.
Mettler, Robert J.	S/Sgt.	289 Chestnut St.	Chillicothe, Ohio
Meno, Roy E.	Pfc.	1461 S. 91st St.	West Allis, Wisconsin
Miller, George C.	S/Sgt.	2161 Lee St., S.W.	Grand Rapids, Mich.
Mlcoch, Joseph J.	Cpl.	330 E. 91st St.	New York, N. Y.
Moon, Leo C.	Lt. Col.		Kamiah, Idaho
Moleski, Frank J.	Sgt.	East Park St.	Centralia, Penn.
Moreali, Carmen	Pfc.	678 N. 18th St.	San Jose, Calif.
Moreland, Harry H.	Capt.	I I 11 Goot St.	Mobile, Alabama
Moroney, Joseph E.	Cpl.	563 Twelfth Ave.	New Brighton, Penn.
Murphy, John R.	Lt. Col.	510 No. Main St.	McAllen, Texas
Nicholas, Franklin K.		Route 1, Box 87	Lake Port, Calif.
Nichols, George O.	Lt. Col.	447 Blackman St.	Clinton, Indiana
O'Rourke, Robert T.	Cpl.	4518 Alfred Drive	Dayton, Ohio
Pacic, Walter J.	Cpl.	623 Ioorra Ave.	Youngstown, Ohio
Pell, Warren L.	Capt.	254 Johnson St,	Buffalo, N. Y.
Perrin, Cloyd C.	Sgt.		Lake Ozark, Missouri
Pietraszak, Stanley F.	Sgt.	406 Pulaski St.	Toledo, Ohio
Pisegna, Dike R.	Capt.	46 Manvelli St.	Morgantown, W. Va.
Plebanek, Frank A.	CWO	406 Ist. St., W., Elyton Village	Birmingham, Ala.
Plesky, William J.	Pfc.	.305 Bank St.	Waterbury, Conn.
Potter, Frank L.	Sgt.	1521 N. Hudson St.	Altus, Okla.
Rader, George W.	T/Sgt.	1353 E. Mound St.	Circleville, Ohio
Riffell, Franklin K	Cpl.		Clayton, Ohio
Roach, David L.	Cpl.	906 Jackson St.	S. Covington, Virginia
Robarge, James J.	Pfc.	1816 Pool St.	Toledo, Ohio
Robinson, William W.	Cpl.	Box 73	Stow, Ohio
Rothwell, Robert L.	Pfc.	1002 Summit St.	Joliet, Illinois
Ryan, John S.	Pvt.	38 Reynolds Ave.	Providence, R. I.
Sabia, Lawrence	Pfc.	2039 Delaware St.	Dunmore, Penn.
Sanburg, Delmer E.	Capt.	Route I	Austin, Colorado
Schatz, Charles	T/Sgt.	256 Keap St.	Brooklyn, N. Y.
Schmidt, Don F.	T/Sgt.	Route 3	Rickwood, Ohio
Schwenk, Kenneth M.	S/Sgt.	433 East Tioga St.	Allentown, Penn.

NAME	RANK	STREET ADDRESS	CITY, STATE
Scott, Jett O.	Maj.	505 Med. Arts Bldg,	Hot Springs, Ark.
Stephens, Henry J.	Sgt.	Gen. Del.	Luverne, Alabama
Stewart, Jake V.	M/Sgt.	1215 S. 4th St.	El Centro, Calif.
Stoeppel, Cletus A.	Cpl.	7868 Perry St.	Mt. Healthy, Cincinnati, Ohio
Sullivan, Richard X.	Pfc.	4911 Louise St.	Skokie, Illinois
Swan, Donald A.	1st Lt.	328 Hanover St.	Oakland, Calif.
Swenson, Roland E.	Pfc.	3407 SE 53rd St.	Portland, Oregon
Templin, Raymond P.	Capt.	1235 Parnassus Pl.	Jacksonville, Illinois
Thresher, Mervin C.	S/Sgt.	22 Depot St.	Buckland, Conn.
Toll, Wayman L.	Maj.	Cooley Farm	Warrensville, Ohio
W. (KLD)*	Capt.	2758 Bedford Ave.	Tribken, Charles Brooklyn, N. Y.
Van Garsse, William F.	Capt.	1528 4th Ave.	San Diego, Calif.
Verner, Jack H.	Pfc.	809 E. Harvey St.	Ft. Worth, Texas
Volpi, Peter J.	Cpl.	202 Ninth St.	Brooklyn, N. Y.
Watson, Eddie P.	T/Sgt.	25 S. Broadway	Oklahoma City, Okla.
Watson, John W.	M/Sgt.	735 East 139th St.	Hawthorne, Calif.
Whipple, Joseph Q.	T/Sgt.	703 19th St. NE	Canton, Ohio
Wier, Jack A.	Capt.	471 S. Grant St.	Denver, Colorado
Williams, James C.	Pfc.	225 W. Main St.	Weatherly, Penn.
Willoughby, Donald E.	Capt.	2631 E. California Ave.	Bakersfield, Calif.
Wilson, Andrew F.	Capt.	15788 Monte Vista	Detroit, Michigan
Wojtowicz, Ted J.	Cpl.	RFD 2	Elizabeth, Penn.
Workman, Franz S.	1st Lt.		
Wyckoff, Edward B.	Capt.	215 W. 85th St.	Los Angeles, Calif.
Yetter, Allen M.	Cpl.		Pittsville, Wisconsin
Ziemba, Edward M.	Sgt.	1814 California Ave.	St. Louis, Mo.

(Killed in Line of Duty)

# 506<sup>th</sup> FIGHTER SQUADRON

## ORDERLY ROOM

In the years to come, when you have nothing better to do than just be a civilian, and you find it difficult to remember what it was like being a 'dog-face, you may find yourself trying to reminisce about your pleasant years in the 506th. Naturally your thoughts are going to wander to that sacred shrine, the Orderly Room, and to the personnel who slaved within its holy boundaries. So to give your reminiscence a gentle push in the posterior and start you down the road of memory here are some brief profiles of said personnel who gave so unselfishly of their typewriters and fountain pens:

"Breathes there a man with soul so dead, he ne'er to himself has said (or to Sgt. Hollinger), 'Is my allotment O. K.?' " And Gene has answered satisfactorily almost every man who has ever been in the 506th. He is best remembered for his quiet sincerity and his untiring work with service records and payrolls.. His abstinence from night life was complete. At least, most of the EM of the Squadron thought it was complete, but there are a few who know of a night in Reims with Captain Wade and other Squadron members. If you desire further information along that line just shake the closet a little harder and a skeleton is almost sure to begin to rattle. Others know of a party in Santa Monica with none other than Carole Landis and Linda Darnell, and it is extremely doubtful that those two ladies needed any information about service records.

Any Duty Sergeant who weathers an overseas period without a knife in his back must be good, or cozy; so as Duty Sergeants go, O'Connor was okay. How many times have you checked the guard roster or duty roster, holding your breath and praying a little, with Cpl. Edward O'Connor lurking surreptitiously in the background and enjoying himself with all the satisfaction of a medic about to give a shot when he reaches your name on the roster?

Crossing the Atlantic on the Sterling Castle, many members of the Squadron wondered why they so often heard the plaintive wail of the ship's loudspeaker "Calling Cpl. Childers" or "Cpl. Childers report to the ship's orderly room immejutely." Many stories circulated about his delinquency from the ship's orderly room. Some were to the effect that he was seasick. Others were to the effect that he was getting sack time (or deck time). To a certain extent both stories were correct, but most of the time he was looking for submarines. In case that doesn't strike a familiar note in your memory, Childers diapered your Form 20's.

The most sought after man in the Squadron was Pfc. Kaufman, the illustrious mailman-and I do mean sought-after! Did you ever find him? As a result of this ectoplasmic quality Kaufman had many nick-names conferred upon him by loving squadron members who had received no mail and who had been unable to buy any stamps for weeks on end. These endearing terms, however, are censurable and must be omitted.

The reputation of the Orderly Room had to be maintained on all fronts, even the Front of Chance, and in this particular line was well represented by Sgt. Forster. Frank was our Columbus, or Steve Brody, or whoever happened to be tops in the art of taking the boys at blackjack. (And Frank never shot craps on a blanket).

Last but not least, we come to the leadership of the Squadron-that venerable position known in classification manuals as "Administrative Specialist," or First Sergeant, or to the masses, "First Nubbin." Sgt. McLelland manipulated the course of the Squadron until almost the last minute, when Sgt. Geeminee Porras took over. Mac had the good fortune to have well over 100 points and bade us adieu before we left for the Assembly Area. Porras had the bad fortune to have 60 points and he had to give up many of his night sessions at the table upon his ascension to the throne.

Boss of the squadron ground echelon was Major John B. O'Rourke, executive officer, who advanced from first lieutenant during the Group's combat year. 'Remember - "They call him Honest John, Square Deal O'Rourke!" The squadron's secret weapon was our V2FW, the "Commander," that Army old-timer -Capt. Jesse Wade,

adjutant and proprietor of "Wade On Inn." The Commander left us at St. Trond and his job was filled by Capt. Frank B. Tullos.

## OPERATIONS

The Operations Section is the nerve center of a Combat Squadron. Here the field orders are correlated with the Squadron's ability to carry them out. First of all Operations is kept constantly informed as to the status of all airplanes-whether they are "in" or "out," and when things are going fast and furious, if and when ships that are "out" will be ready to go so they may be scheduled for later missions. Things are apt to be hectic around Operations. When everything seems to be proceeding according to plan, changes and corrections to the Field Orders may at the last minute change or cancel missions, move the take-off time, change the bomb loading\* or fusing, add more planes, take off or put on belly tanks. Our wires sizzled and our feet got hot warning armament, ordnance, engineering, intelligence, and sack-bound pilots of the new "poop." And when the immediate attention of the staff was released from the missions, there were the never-ending flight records to maintain.

Operations operated from a trailer at Winkton, A-5, A-48, A-68 and Y-54-and there was always that problem of getting back the wheel loaned to the 508th on the last move. 'By the time St. Trond was reached the need for direct telephone lines to Engineering, Armament and the Briefing Room was recognized. Thereafter Operations had its own ten-drop switchboard that had also direct lines to Group Ops, the CO's office, and a line to Function Switchboard. With the rest of the Squadron, Operations got swank at Fritzlar and had a glass-enclosed office. That's where the desks got all the heel marks on top.

Some of the best officers in the Squadron officiated in Operations: Major Elledge, Major McLaughlin, Major Bealle, Maj. Garrigan, Maj. Peterson and Capt. Bosin. Staff Sgt. Peers M. Patterson was Section Chief assisted by Sgt. Conner, Cpl. O'Brien and for a time Sgt. Harris. Pat was made for the work-tall enough so it wasn't too noticeable when he wore his legs off to the knees running ground. The biggest night life overseas for both Conner and Patterson was not in Brussels or Paris, as you might expect, but rather at A-92 during the Battle of the Bulge. At that time they were living in the "Ops" Van on the field and consequently were aroused by each and every air alert. When the alerts were numerous and close together, they spent an entire night jumping out of bed and tearing to meet the Fire Fighter boys at their air raid shelter.

All had quieted down one evening and the boys had hit the "sack," when a Kraut dove in and strafed the runway. Just about that time business really picked up and our own ack-ack let go. The van's occupants changed location in a hurry as an overeager gunner sent several bursts across close to the ground. The boys went down the coal chute of the snack bar building and Pat dug himself a neat hole in a convenient ash-pile. You know it is really amazing how fast some of us can move when the occasion arises.

Perhaps Johnny O'Brien's greatest trials and tribulations during our tour overseas were at St. Trond, when he was nursing the miniature motor pool belonging to Operations. What with, having to contend with jeeps that wandered and jeeps that completed their trips in the ditches of Belgium, it was truly a headache for Johnny to keep track of them and their trip tickets. But, from what we heard, he was more than repaid for his efforts by some of his jeep XC's to Brussels and Paris.

## INTELLIGENCE

Clifton Fadiman and his "Information Please" experts hardly hold a candle to Intelligence for the diversity and number of questions answered daily. For briefings, the location and description of targets, bomb-line, strength and disposition of enemy, flak disposition, changing enemy tactics and capabilities had to be known. Information-hungry men required the "straight poop" on the progress of the war. The Army had a pretty hard time keeping up with the gains as indicated in the *Stars and Stripes* and everyday some innocent would peer at one of the situation maps and exclaim, "But I read in *Stars and Stripes* that we took that a week ago!"

Pilots were briefed before each mission and interrogated upon their return. The pilots would be quiet and tense before the mission, but after their return with the ordeal over, relief spouted out in excited and happy yelling-"there I was on my back . . . the first thing I saw were the tracers," "I was really pulling streamers," "there were black puffs as low as 2,000 feet," "did you see those fish bowls?" Then things would settle down and a straight story emerge. Ops Flashes would be sent in, encounter reports written, claims made, and in the meantime another mission briefed and the pilots sent on the way out to their planes.

Sgt. Holst kept the bomb-lines up on the briefing maps and those carried in the cockpit and had a hard time when they conveyed sensational news. When an important new posting arrived, Capt. Cohn would grab a red pencil and run for the briefing room.

Monthly unit histories had to be prepared, and these, delayed to the last possible minute, caused a lot of intensive writing and typing. Ground school generally fell into S-2's lap and the Intelligence officers had a particularly hard job getting censors together to do the mail on Sunday mornings.

Records of all types were compiled by Corporal McGinness. Missions, hours, sortie credits, claims, were all available in the S-2 office. Mac's work was not altogether with statistics. Back at Winkton he was sent to Group for about two weeks to help the Poops fold maps which were sent flat from higher headquarters. At the end of the ordeal Mac exclaimed to Bruce Holst that if he ever saw another map again he'd go berserk. Well the play-boy corporal saw a helluva lot more maps before Jerry yelled quits and he's still not a candidate for section eight. What's he planning to do when he becomes a civilian? Why, he's going to settle down in a little shop and cater to vacationers set to travel the world ... You guessed it, he'll sell them maps!

Various types of charts, record boards posters, all from Sergeant Anderson's pen and brush, were supplied by Intelligence. "Andy", who, incidentally, goes under several aliases, most popular of which is "The Great Procrastinator," has many assets which have added prestige to the section. The Man of Tomorrow's chief job at A-92 was drawing and painting husky and lusty pieces of womanhood on the cowlings of the Thunderbolts. This was all very well, but the jobs were being produced in the section's very small office and what with brushes, paints and two or three cowlings scattered throughout the "shop," there was little room for anyone else to work. As the "shapes" took shape the eyes of Capt. Cohn, Lt. Johnson, Lt. Lee, Holst and McGinness were forced away from the necessary details of briefing preparations or writing ops flashes. Because the sights were always pleasing was perhaps the only reason why our Poor Man's Varga was allowed to stay, although the distraction did cause many extra hours "down at the office." But the section didn't mind-would you?

"Sunny Cal," our jeep, named after Bruce Holst's beloved state, served faithfully until Fritzlar where we had to turn it in to Group. She had a remarkably fine record: stolen only once, disappeared over night once, had a slight accident during a blackout in Liege once, and threw the Group Adjutant and a couple of other people off the hood once.

Arriving overseas with Captain Joseph Cohn as S-2 Officer and Lt. Melvin H. Johnson as assistant, the section did not change until midwinter when Lt. Johnson was forced to the hospital with illness. Lt. Richard P. Lee took over the assistant's post and kept it until the war ended. He then was transferred to an Occupational unit.

## ENGINEERING

Back in the States, Engineering had a lot of practice maintaining A-35's, A-24's and P-39's. So naturally on arriving overseas the boys got P-47's to nurse. Without varying their facial expressions, the A. M.'s (aviation mechanics) picked up their tools and became P-47 experts. For about a week there were a few of the then new D-22's to work on, but with the flip of an unlucky coin, Major Shook and the 506th acquired all the old clunkers in the Group and transferred our new ships to the other squadrons. Taking that in stride too, Engineering had them operational by the time the Group was put on a combat status.

It was up with the light about 0330 a. m., and to bed after midnight. After a while, many of the A. M.'s caught their few hours of sleep in belly-tank boxes on the line. There were trying times painting the battle-stripes on, the ships in the rain, and using heaters to dry them 'quickly. The paint had a water base, and had to be constantly retouched as the planes stood out in the rain all day before D-Day. Then with the air echelon already on its way across the Channel, the remaining men had to install dust-filters on the ships each requiring 90 man-hours of work-while packing and preparing to move.

The Jekyll and Hyde character of the strip at A-5 had the boys out washing clay off the ships with the decontamination unit when it rained, and cleaning clouds of dust out of the oil filters when the sun was out. The status-board hopped up and down. One day four ships were lost in flight, and five more went to the Service Team with battle damage two for wing changes, two from a collision, and one that came to rest on its back with Carl Parsons, fortunately unhurt, inside. At A-5 was started the crusade by Group's beloved "Greg" for "charts." When Capt. Petoskey and Master Sgt. Shockey got done with their Tech Order Compliance Chart it covered several acres of plywood and was a puzzle of red and green symbols. When the inspectors came around they groped for an appropriate remark about it and finally settled rather vaguely for "It sure is pretty."

Of course, there was one ship that required very little work. Lt. Col. Johnson's "Nellie B" never did get its first 50-hour inspection until late at A-5. The Colonel was one of the few members of the Group pre-briefed on the invasion secrets; he was classed "bigoted" and forbidden to fly till after D-Day.

Everybody wished they were in Tech. Sgt. Johnny Knight's flight at A-48. There all the little French mademoiselles used to congregate, and when Capt. Petoskey chased them away, following the order that all civilians be kept off the field, one is reported to have said: "American soldiers are nice; officers are like Boche's.

At A-68, oil-leaks and champagne were the most common items. After the hectic night at A-92 when the ships landed in the dark and foul weather, engine and wing changes became a common squadron activity-seven engine changes the first ten days at St. Trond. Having acquired a partially bombed out hangar, the boys started to cover the several square miles of holes with canvas. Lend-Lease and the Belgiques finally finished the job. The place wasn't warm in winter, but at least the covering kept the light out. It soon became Maxey's motorcycle shop.

When the Jerries started to get rough, the dispersion racket bloomed. Move 'em this way and that. Tanner spent all one Saturday morning moving airplanes. Then the line was all chewed up by bulldozers throwing up dirt blast-walls. When winter struck, the boys found relief in the many huts inhabited by mechanics in the daytime, and-off the record-by guards at night.

It was at Y-54 that Sgt. Burkett, in his selfless devotion to 506th Engineering, racked off Major (Group Adjutant) McCarthy's C-47 to load engineering equipment for the move to Fritzlar. With the fine hangars at Fritzlar and the war on the wane, top priority job suddenly became sweeping the hangars, but that stopped when we moved to Stuttgart, lost the hangars, lost the planes, and some of us in idleness lost our shirts.

Good-natured Shorty Purnell made up for his deficiency in size by telling tall stories in the bull sessions with the "bigger" boys . . . He was given permission to speak by the signal of rapping on the table three times-a practice based on the old saying that "children should be seen and not heard." "Cowboy," as he was also known, because of the wishbone structure of his legs, was very busy toward the end of the war crewing a training ship at A-92. It was there he met his ideal girl, a midget, during one of the Palace Theater dances. Evidently she was not hep to the jive and could not cut a rug, for the romance soon withered and died.

One of the most interesting structures erected on the line at A-92 was Bob Rakow's "plexiglass palace." The novel arrangement of plexiglass bubble-windows gave the guards who slept there an unimpeded view of the approaching O. D.'s lights. Rakow had great difficulty getting materials for his FHA project and spared no expense-of time searching piles of wreckage for parts. After the damage caused by the German strafers New Year's Day, he repaired the house with tin, having decided that practical materials were better than those more ornamental.

There have' been- many remarks made about the shape of Willie Cullen's head. It is certain that after one incident the head of this black-haired Irishman from Massachusetts was altered in appearance. Noticing just before takeoff that his plane's oil cooler doors were closed, Willie asked the pilot to open them, roaring into the pilot's ear over the noise of the engine. The pilot accidentally hit the canopy switch, closing it electrically and jamming Willie's head in the opening. Then in the excitement the pilot moved the throttle forward and left Willie waving in the propwash like a pennant at Fenway Park.

Danny O'Connell was never one to be intimidated by rank. Patsy Angelo recalls one meeting between Danny and General Bradley of the Twelfth Army Group. After saluting, Danny opened the conversation by remarking, "They ain't doin' much flyin' now, are they?"

Their talk dealt for the most part with flying and weather conditions. To every remark of the General, Danny replied, "Eh?"

Patsy acted then as interpreter, relaying the General's comments. Whenever Danny tells the story, he concludes by saying, "At the end he gave me a half-assed salute so I gave him one in return."

The incidents of Tony Souza's wanderings from the hospital in Liege in search of his outfit "somewhere in Germany" read like a saga. He left the hospital not knowing where the Group had been sent after leaving St. Trond. He heard by rumor that the 404th was stationed at Kelz, and set out for there. Rides were scarce. He had no helmet or gun. He got a lift to Bonn finally, with some officers in a jeep. There an Air Liaison Officer after questioning him told him the 404th was in Fritzlar, and arranged to have his own chauffeur take Tony to a trucking outfit which made runs to Fritzlar. Tony missed, that ride, so set out on his own again. After hiking and being soaked to the skin three times he was taken over by a tank destroyer outfit, where he received K-rations, his first food in a long time, and a German automobile. After forging a trip-ticket, finding that he was going the wrong way on the right highway, and coasting down hills to conserve gas, he finally made it.

We often thought it must be very pleasant to belong to a Dutch family, for Al Lever received more letters and packages than anyone else in the squadron. We didn't know, however, whether a large rear and big feet were typically Dutch. It was rumored that Al took off his shoes so he could climb into the cockpit each morning to preflight his plane. He dug his foxhole at A-5 large enough to accommodate his posterior, but found he had to leave his feet dangling out.

Willie Lee once was called upon to perform some fine acrobatics. It had long been expected that someone riding wings would be thrown off if a pilot ever had to apply the brakes suddenly. Willie's pilot taxiing out for a mission suddenly threw on the brakes. Obeying Newton's laws of motion, Willie immediately flew off head first, somehow grabbed the pitot tube, executed a complete flip, and eased himself to the ground.

At Fritzlar a well-remembered sight was Gertie the goose following Al Rolfe about. Al found her down on the line one morning and it was a case of love at first sight. They were never separated until the move to Stuttgart. Gertie ate clover and bits from the mess hall, and seemed to thrive upon such food. In a few short weeks she grew as a good goose should grow, gained fine white feathers, but never reached the egg-producing stage. Visions of goose-egg omelets therefore never matured.

All that Aaron Hess can recall about the New Year's strafing is that he managed somehow to pour himself into the ruts by the dual wheels of the gas truck, the only depression he could find, so that all of him was below the surface of the ground.

Herky Burkett was always a rather interesting character, with his caustic wit, his debonaire man-of-the-world manner, his latent air of something of the rogue, his blue Virginia blood, and his affectation of a goatee. It is not so astonishing then to recall the time he arose hastily in the dark at A-5 during an air alert and in the rush for his foxhole cut his foot on a K-ration tin, cursed loudly, and returned to his sack. As he climbed into bed again he flung this curse in fine Virginia accents: "Let the s. o. b.'s bomb de joint—I don't give a DAMN!"

Ever since we hit the E. T. O. "Flash" Rogers kept predicting the end of the war. Usually the end was always a few weeks away and when the predicted date came, Flash calmly moved into the future again and said knowingly, "You just wait and see." He was not content with confining his prognostications to the end of the war, but predicted the results of ball games, times of movements to new fields, and so on. To his credit, Flash sometimes backed his prophecies with hard cash. On New Year's Day after hearing the results of the Rose Bowl game, it is believed he learned his lesson.

There was a crisis in the Porter household when "B. C." received word from his wife that she had bought a dress for \$22.50. His cry of dismay, which carried into the Belgian night, is well remembered by the residents of St. Trond, and marriages, deaths and births are often dated as having occurred so many years after that occasion. When B. C. finally chilled to a cool rage he sent this ultimatum to his wife showing her who was wearing the pants, even if they were G. I.: "Yo u shall wear that dress for five years, my dear."

#### SUNSHINE PLANTATION, SOUTH CAROLINA

Dear Johnny Knight,

I have been wondering if you would consider selling the old south 40 at our former field at A-48. I realize that you have extensive holdings there, but thought perhaps in the interest of our friendship, which ordinarily should not enter into business transactions, you might sell the south 40 to me, once you know what I have in mind. A landscape artist under my guidance has drawn up plans for a picnic park as it would appear on said plot of land. This when completed I shall turn over to the French government as an expression of our appreciation for the kindness of the French to us. Will you please give this serious thought?

Sincerely,

W. E. "Papa" Kennedy

Perhaps it was because Gordon Ulrickson had gotten up so late, or perhaps it was because of the unusually conscientious nature of his mission, that he suffered an almost complete loss of memory. Ulrickson had gotten up from bed late one night and had gone down, to the field at A-92 to check batteries on charge, for fear they might become over charged. When challenged by the M. P. at the gate, he could not give the password. In answer to the M. P.'s question, he could only recall that the name of his commanding officer (Lt. Col. "Jojo" Sherwood) was "Tojo". That certainly did not help matters. It was only after Major O'Rourke had been aroused and called to identify him that Ulrickson was permitted to enter the field.

Ken Paquette of the loud laugh was always something of a practical joker. It was always strange that whenever a trick was played he was nowhere to be found, but he was always the first to know of the results suffered by the victim. He was a good instrument man when he could be found. He had the happy faculty of being present when instruments were o. k. after a mission, but if one plane returned with one instrument out, "Packy" was most certain to be across the street from the hangar, trying to find out what went on under the "Bieres Van Tilt" sign.

Ken Burke is the one member of this squadron who can qualify most for the title "Superman". At Winkton, he was riding the wing of Major Elledge's plane, which was late for a takeoff. The Major was quickly given the green light, and forgetting Burke upon the wing, started the swift run down the runway. The plane was one-third of the way towards takeoff when Burke attracted the Major's attention by frantically kicking at the aileron. It is rather amusing to picture, while lingering over a rye-hi, what would have happened if they had gotten airborne, with the wheels up and locked.

Quiet, blue-eyed Don Heaton is quite a man with the women. At A-5 he used his knowledge of cow milking to gain an introduction to a French milkmaid. His first ship, "Dodie", bore the picture of a "Piccadilly commando". At one stage show he disrupted the whole number by flirting with a girl in the chorus, because the girl and her



companions broke out laughing. At A-92 he lost his ship "Nita" when a bomb exploded under the left wing while landing.

Ken Stern brought into the squadron a bit of old Sweden-quite a chunk of it, in fact. "The Monster" toiled endlessly making repairs in sheet metal to battle-damage, and sang his Swedish songs with a "rah-tee-do-tee-ah" softly to himself. Kenny had evidently read too many funny books, for he was always wanting to play with the rivet gun-perhaps a Buck Rogers complex-but his Engineering Officer said NO. His letters from Minnesota, addressed in green ink, were roundly dis cussed in the squadron. He did a wonderful imitation of a Swedish horse, and had the very fine attribute of being continually good natured.

Everett "Speedball" Henning had the honor of being recognized as crew chief of the cleanest airplane in the squadron. In England, and at A-5, where "Dreamboat" used to park on the corner in A-Flight, his good work never showed up because his ship was an O. D. job. However with "Wizie", a silver ship, his care gained recognition. The first "Wizie" had a very short life, tangling tails and props with another ship one memorable Sunday afternoon at A-5.

Ben Harrelson's first ship in England is remembered for the little black and white dog painted on the cowling. Lt. Hochadel, Ben's regular pilot, was forced to bail out of the plane shortly before the main body of the squadron moved across the Channel. Ben's later ships bore the name "Jean Ridley".

George "Arm and Hammer" Bolles had plenty to keep him busy during his career as crew chief, for his planes suffered more damage than anyone else's. His first old clunker, "Tic", had a cannon-shell explode in the map case beside Lt. Harvey Bates. "Tic II" bellied in with Lt. Fenstermacher sweating it out. After repairs, "Tic II" finally met her fate that memorable Sunday in Normandy, overturning at the end of the runway because her brakes had been shot away. "Tic III", because of a change of pilots, became "Supermole". "Supermole" was shot down, but Lt. Grout bailed out safely and returned to tell the tale. Next an unnamed O. D. clunker was hit in the wing and the wing had to be changed, at A-92. A new silver "Supermole" also had a wing change, and was transferred to the service squadron later when a great section near the supercharger was blown away. The third and last "Supermole" suffered a wing change, but was still around at the end of the war. It was in the first "Tic" that Lt. Dunsmore shot down his Jerry -first kill in the Group.

Early one morning in Normandy, while streams of tracers and flak bursts were showing in the sky, Clyde E. Davis was preflighting. He had one eye on the instruments and the other eye on the alert watching the sky. Someone caught his attention by moving the aileron. When Clyde got both eyes focussed together, he found he had taxied across the taxi-strip. He had forgotten to put on the brakes.

Harris G. Roberts as crew chief had the outstanding record of 232 missions on his planes without an abort. "Bunny Too" is the best remembered of his ships.

"Wild Bill" Cody got his name long ago. Before any newcomers met him, the greenhorns were warned that "Bill" was a big strapping six-footer and as rough as they make 'em. By contrast, his buddy Phil Nolan was a small meek individual. The team of Cody and Nolan was touching. "Bill" acted as godfather to Phil, supplying him with cigarettes and matches. When "Bill" was finally slated to leave the outfit because of points, Phil stayed beside him till the last moment of parting, although he should have been at the swimming pool in Bernhausen saving the drowning. "Bill" led all the chowhounds in the battle for first place in line, was an excellent crew chief, and a "bon soldat".

Dave Hickman's ship in England bore the painting of a Texas cowgirl toting two pistols, and clad in the scantiest of scanties. It is well, then, that this crew chief could boast: "I may not be good lookin', but thank God I'm pure!" In Normandy Dave sampled some Calvados, slept for two days, awoke at eight one evening and went down to the line to preflight. Communications men who were working (?) sent him back to bed.

John Schuler solved the tool-box shortage problem. Whenever he had an engine change he left his toolbox: out on the line and used his assistant's. Cozy, n'est-ce pas?

George "Frenchy" Arsenault could speak French well, which enabled him to find his way around easily after we hit France, and helped him to obtain food and drink. His planes chalked up a higher total of missions, 251, than anyone else's in the squadron.

Austin M. "Attu" Avery crewed several ships, the best remembered of which were "The Carolinian ... .. Shoo Shoo Baby," and "Sheila." Avery had a romantic streak in him which often brought out bursts of song. Selections from light operettas made up most of his repertoire, and "One Alone," we believe, was his favorite; at least we heard it most often. In Sint Truiden "Attu" became interested in "Johnnie," an attractive cafe habitant (she worked there). He was interested merely to promote international good will. He has never lived down the fact that "Johnnie" was arrested one day and spirited away for Lord knows what kind of subversive activity. It is rumored (oh tragic ending) that she was shot.

Pete "Am I Hot" Orlick was the first to make Public Relations. In England he posed for a photograph to be used with a story about the squadron's activities. Pete and glass belly-tank tubes never got along very well, or at least his tubes and the runway there at Winkton never hit it off right ... After we received the sleeping bags in Sint Truiden Pete had one hell of a time with them. He awoke one morning to find his head down in the bottom of the sack and his feet sticking out of the opening. Perhaps the night before had something to do with it.

Ollie "Red" Marshall took a short hop home from one of the squadron dances in St. Trond and because of solid overcast bellied in on the tram tracks before his home base. It would be more accurate to say that he crash-landed, for Red forgot to raise his struts and damaged both of them. Capt. Barton "Give Me More Water" Christopher often complained that it took a long time to raise the gear on his plane "Maggie Zass," so a familiar sight at A-92 was "Red" standing out by the runway clocking the time it took other planes to raise their gear in comparison with his own.

During our operations in England and France, Doug Coppinger, alias "Pretty Boy," alias "Cover Boy," advertised Major McLaughlin's ship "Southern Comfort." The first one to bear the name, an O.D. job, had a fine painting of a whisky bottle on its side, but when the Major received a new D-22, a flashy Levine signboard took, to the air ... Coppinger took a beating but he always remained loyal to his state of Texas ... Ever since he joined the Army he suffered with the dilemma of two girls to choose between. Only the future will tell. ... Sol "Sockie" Richardson crewed "Buckeye Girl" all the way to A-92, where she became "The Impatient Virgin." "Sockie" left the pitot tube cover on during one mission and the pilot tried to shoot, it off in flight with his .45. He only succeeded in filling the tube full of holes.

Lawrence Ver Cande, always quiet, cheerful and hard working, crewed the C.O.'s planes-first Major Shook's "Rae," then Col. Sherwood's "Betty Bag." "Verk" cannot be remembered without recalling his bicycle. He fixed it up at A-5 and rode it at all our fields in Europe until it was swiped at St. Trond. "Verk's" ancestors came from Belgium, and there he gained the title of "Black-Headed Belgique."

Larry Knight's first ship was "Poopsie," a grand name if we ever heard one. When one of the flight chiefs had a day off Larry took over. He was so conscientious, especially when we were going through the ordeal of "hang tanks, drop tanks, put 'em on again" that he was called "Nervous Knight." In civilian life Larry had flown Cubs, so until the Cub we had in England met its end, Larry was as happy as a pig in mud.

Bob Major was assistant to Bolles and carried a full supply of hammers and chisels about to satisfy his chief's demands. He will probably be remembered for trying to crawl into the loudspeaker whenever there was any "long-haired" music on the radio. He was called by a variety of names, including "Eiffel, Limey Lover," "Belgique," and "Buchenwald."

Dan McAdams must have kissed a chip of the Blarney Stone for he could tell a mean story, and with a point. Just before sailing, the -shrill of McLelland's whistle confining us to Camp Shanks drowned out the soft peal of wedding bells, and Mac was left patiently waiting until he could set foot on American soil again ... In Belgium Mac met with a freak accident; he was hit in the hip with a cobble thrown up by a passing truck and he was lost to us in a maze of hospital. transfers for some time. It was good to see his smiling countenance again in Fritzlar. Mac was happiest when working on "Dream Boat," the plane with the charging goat, in the days when Lt. Allen was flying it.

Harry C. "Bedbug" Harris was hard to beat for practical jokes, prodding you when you least expected it, and getting stinko on one drink-o. But when he was, assistant crew chief on "Bunny Too" with Lt. Anderson flying, a combination resulted that couldn't be topped. The sound of "Bedbug's" melodious voice chewing "Andy" out for getting his ship shot up on a mission is a familiar memory. Harry evidently had great confidence in his mechanical ability and "Andy's" flying ability, for they both went up in a P-47 and Harris was put through the paces.

Johnny Lee was assistant crew chief on "Mommie," and together with Arsenault chalked up a record number of missions for the squadron on the ships they crewed. Johnny used. to appear at the tables where those midnight card games often continued till the first faint flush of dawn.

Howard "Squirrel" Luxhoj, assistant inspector and crew chief, once chopped wood while slightly exhilarated after one of those big parties.

It was some time before the members of the squadron became used to the British system of exchange. When Wallace George was on his first pass to London he was buying souvenirs, and one item was priced for him at ten shillings. Evidently "Puffy" thought the winsome young thing behind the counter was taking advantage of his ignorance of British coin, for he said to her, "I won't give you more than a pound for it." Answered the salesgirl, "I'll take it!"

Hoyt Elliott was always soft-spoken, with a Georgia peach-fuzz sort of accent, and behaved himself constantly. A thought, of him brings to mind his mischievous smile, like that of a little boy who has been into the jam-pot. Hoyt worked with Sammy Miller on "Flak Valley Express."

Harold Terrebonne was another French-speaking soldier who got along well in France and Belgium. Terry worked with Porter on "Pretty Baby," Capt. Stovall's ship. Incidentally three of the squadron's pilots were expectant fathers in England, and their planes, including "Pretty Baby" carried the picture of a baby carried by a stork and ringing a doorbell. After Terry left St. Trond, carrier-pigeons, C-47's and men going back to Belgium on pass carried an uninterrupted stream of letters to that beloved city.

Sigrid "Moe" Melhus worked with Coppinger on "Southern Comfort." His greatest accomplishment was the knack of being able to sleep wherever and whenever he wanted to -which was all the time.

Richard W. "Stinky" Davis has often been cited as our candidate for a Section Eight. He is in his third, if not his fourth, childhood. Any simple thing gave him great amusement. One morning while Kennedy was preflighting, "Stinky" climbed up on an ammunition box and blew into the pitot tube. When Kennedy saw the airspeed indicator start to twirl, he didn't know whether to bail out or belly in.

Behrman "Butch" Boettcher, also known as "Pinky," was the one Wheel in Engineering who made all the Little Wheels go round. Behind all the line activities was his quiet supervision. He is remembered for his lumbering walk and contagious laugh. "Butch" said that he had an understanding wife; she understood too damn much. Though carrying the burdens of maintenance, "Butch" knew how to throw them aside and have a good time. Ask him to recite his visits to London, Paris, Reims and Bruxelles, s'il vous plait. Remember the time he and "Yank" Tanner went under the table at the Non-Coms' Club in St. Trond?

Lloyd "Lord and Master" Shockey was the inspector who gave each crew chief the list of write ups on the planes after those 50-hour and 100-hour inspections. "Myrt," as he was also called, was a hard taskmaster when under pressure, but ordinarily took a fatherly attitude toward his boys and smiled with an understanding and benevolent air upon their antics. His spare time was spent pouring over his charts of Tech-Orders-complied with. These made beautiful designs in red, green, blue, and varicolored shadings, which seemed to fascinate him.

Remember how forlorn and unhappy "Yank" Tanner was when Maxey went to the hospital at St. Trond, and how his face lit up when Maxey returned?

Tom "Alphabet" Przybytek, the flight chief with the Pepsodent smile, has never been judged quite sane. His singing, as he called it, ranged from "Three Little Fishies" to grand opera. He was easy on the boys in his flight, who never objected, and always gave them a helping hand. He is the only man in the Allied Forces who liked C-rations, and would eat anything that wouldn't fight back. "Prizy" was one of our most illustrious chow hounds, always eating from someone else's mess kit. He often barked in his sleep.

Wade "Hamfat" Hanna carried more weight than anyone else in the squadron. A flight chief, he always saw that his men did not lack for shelter and recreation, in England setting up a tent with telephone, table, and cards. Wade was always approachable, and new mechanics seeking information were sure of receiving consideration and attention. It is a good thing that nature provides a person of strength and bulk with a saving amount of good nature. He carried his sense of considerate conduct into his party life.

Harold "The Wheel" Barlett will never be forgotten by the boys in his flight. He would be amazed if told that he resembled a character from Dickens, or Shakespeare. With ruddy complexion, a large paunch, and a gift of gab, he breezed his way through the squadron. He was most content with a good brew in one hand and another on the way.

From Eldridge Maxey, Ray Comer, and Augie Sudekum came some of the most ingenious contraptions and useful creations in the Group. The hydraulic test stand was never given a chance to prove itself, but the snowplow was put to good use, cleaning the hangar space, taxi strip, and parking areas. Perhaps it is just as well that whatever they had in mind to create with that buzz-bomb jet unit never saw the light of day.

Lou "Silent Yokum" Bauman worked steadily in maintenance and quietly assisted all whose planes arrived in the hanger for battle-repairs or inspections. Lou rationed out his words, a few at a time. Cody used to plague him, but "Silent" could take care of "Wild Bill" with one hand.

Walter Lopes was another of the most dependable men in maintenance. He took part in all- the engine changes and wing changes, and from experience soon learned how to make them in the most efficient manner. He was extremely loyal to his home state of California and spoke fondly of several girls there.

For some time Laverne Mitchell hid his light under a bushel-not that his hard work in maintenance went unnoticed. But he permitted this light to show only in the wee hours down in the tool room of the hangar at Fritzlar. There night after night, following a long day's work, "Mitch" labored on the model of a log-turner, into which he was incorporating some of his own improvements. In Idaho he has a lumber mill of his own. All the parts for this intricate machine he formed by hand, or on a lathe from light metals. To the uninitiated it is very complex, but "Mitch" had it almost to the point of operation, when the movements towards home temporarily ended his experiment.

Alex Torma very nearly became an interpreter for the Army back in the States, for he could speak fluent Hungarian. He even left the squadron for an interview and examination. Rumors flew that he had been sent to Washington, D. C., as a first lieutenant. Later, however, he returned, went overseas with us, and worked hard in maintenance. No, he wasn't made a first lieutenant.

Ralph Semrau and "Alma Queen"-how he used to argue that she could outstrip every plane in the squadron! Sometimes he got quite excited, as if he really believed his own argument. "Sam" of the big posterior nevertheless could get around when he wanted to. He took part in sports from time to time, but had a great love for his sack. More often than not, during ball games, his cot hung in bumpy depressions from his weight.

Dick "Farmer" Albright was evidently paid on the sly by the Rochester Chamber of Commerce, for "Rochester, the City Beautiful" became a byword among those who knew him well. With a corncob pipe, a rolling gait, and his ability to call out a square dance or two, he earned the nickname "Farmer." Later it appeared that he was quite a hand at cards. If he were in the chips, he would sit at the big tables until the small hours, but if his streak of luck were bad, he'd sit at a little side table and play solitaire. Albright had a soft job assisting Rakow on the Group Commander's ships, but later on was given a plane of his own.

L. E. Strunk joined the squadron at Fritzlar, and became the driver of our "Local Limited" taking men and equipment from the hangar to the ships on the line. He was a spellbinder with stories about his pre-404th experiences.

Albert J. Carlin came to the squadron at Fritzlar also, and joined the bunch in the parachute department.

Chuck Walters, utilities man, was called upon at all times to perform a variety of tasks. He was largely responsible for the actual building of that finest of day-rooms, "Wade On Inn" at ABC. It took some time for the men to believe that such a place could be built; Chuck made it come true.

Elmer "Lone Wolf" Carwein was always thought to be an innocent and sober lad. He gained the name "Lone Wolf" almost at the end of our combat career in St. Trond. He worked quietly assisting Ver Cande on Major Shook's ship "Rae," talked about the tall corn of Indiana and his neighbor, Wendell Willkie, and deceived everyone. Then came that day in St. Trond when the truth did out; and putting two and two, together to get five, we knew that Carwein was a wolf in corn husks.

Thomas J. Mahoney worked with Dale Fisher on "Hairless Joe," their first and last love. Transferred out at A-5, old "Hairless Joe" was returned to us at our last combat station, Y-86, greatly aged and altered and unfit to take part in the fight any more. "T. J." was a good mechanic; he had quite a struggle with the French language, the sum total of his learning being "comme-ci, comme-ca."

Felix Puroll, one of the prop specialists, started to have his hands full early. While he was still overseas, his little girl began asking her mother to ask Daddy to buy a new car, etc., etc.

Herb Hoefs, prop specialist, though always busy with propeller changes and inspections, was not content to leave his work at the end of the day. At night and during spare time, he made models of props and airplanes, and picture frames from the aluminum of scrapped U. S. and German props. "Hoefski" hails from Wyoming and is very content with his state, sage-brush and all.

Charles Hamilton became a father in England, and he sweated for many days before he finally heard the good news. When he was not looking for the mailman he was working on props. After he left England, he carried with him a good imitation of the English accent, which he continued to use.

Just how Ezra Stowe, instrument man, managed to leave the line so often at A-92 and be dressed and on his way into St. Trond before 1630 p. m. no one will ever know!

"Hoiman the Goiman" Bressler, another instrument man, went pub-dubbing one night in England, and on his return was unable to find the entrance to his tent. After scratching about outside for some time, he finally got in under the side, and under somebody else's cot.

Tom "Ginsboig" Orsono, gas-truck driver, never liked to wait too long if you were checking your tanks for gas. For one thing they should have been checked before he drove up, and there were other planes to be refueled,

and time was short between missions, etc., etc. Once a crew chief kept Tom cooling his heels while he made some entries on his forms. Tom proceeded on to the next plane, and when the bypassed crew-chief called after him, Tom answered with all the indignation at his command: "You ignorant s. o. b., do you or don't you want gas?"

Thomas O. "Tech Order" Marsh had plenty of battle damage to keep him busy in the squadron. But he was busier still after he ate Danny O'Connell's Ex-Lax bar, thinking it was candy. He was absent from duty for several days..

Frank "Dodo" Doherty, sheet metal man, drove just about everybody to the verge of insanity with his singing. Not content with his natural voice, he warbled in falsetto. He had a limited but usable French vocabulary.

Tom "Jonesie" Ciurkowski got into hot water at A-5 by shooting a pigeon. This was when it was against the rules to fire your gun at anything but a German. Colonel McColpin had it in mind to court-martial the slim, boyish-faced sheet metal man, but Major Shook got him off with a week's K. P. One of the most difficult jobs Jonesie ever had to perform was the repair of the tail section skin and ribs on Pete Orlick's ship.

"Kats" Katsacoulas used to drive his crew chief, Everett Henning, to distraction with his enthusiasm, exuberance, and ability to tell tall tales. "Kats" worked hard and was continually cleaning, shining and polishing the ship. Several of the other boys were getting peeved because it was putting their wipe-jobs to shame. But it was finally discovered that "Kats" was using steel wool, which isn't good for "alclad" and peace reigned again. "Kats" wants to fly a Cub after the war.

Freddie Crane was one of the finest characters in the squadron, hard working, good natured, always helpful. He was an electrician and was a familiar sight on the line walking from plane to plane with his battery -testing kit, or his meter for checking the voltage regulator. Freddie has been accused by his contemporaries of being the champion sleeper in the squadron when off duty, but this no doubt was because of the long hours he put in.

Ray Lindsey was another electrician and seemed always to be working on mags. He was quite an artist and juggler with a baseball. When the disarmament gang was on D. S. in Bayreuth, Germany, Ray spent several hours amusing the German children with his tricks.

Between missions in England, the gas truck drivers had to work fast to refuel all the planes, and had to make quick decisions. One day after the squadron had landed, the refueling men were given ten minutes to have the planes filled up for the next mission. The 507th and 508th went ahead and attempted to fill their tanks. "Dave" then suggested that the 506th trucks help the 507th refueling, and the Service team help the 508th. Thanks to his suggestion two squadrons were off on time for the mission rather. than none at all.

Ralph P. "RPM" Spinney worked hard and long hours with the rest of the refueling section. Rarely was his calm nature disturbed when working against time. Once he lost control when one of the majors was pushing him and kept stammering "Yes sir, yes sir, yes sir, yes sir, yes sir, yes sir!" The Major turned away abashed; those were more "yes sirs" than he had received in several months.

Joe 'No Hair' Maher, a D. P. from Jamaica, Long Island, often lived up to his own witty sayings. He was as "sharp as a harp," "mellow as a cello," and sometimes "drunk as a skunk." Once at midnight in the dead of winter, he was apprehended on his way to the Great Square in St. Trond to look for a flashlight, clad only in his shorts. At A-48 near Paris, three gas trucks set out to get gas, Joe driving Number Three. He ran into a foxhole at the edge of the field and slept in the truck cab the rest of the night. The other two returning found, him there at 0400 the next morning.

It is said by those who knew him that whenever "Brudge" Grinnen rode his bicycle out to visit the pubs at Winkton, he always had to call for a homing to get back to his base.

Richard M. "Miles" Shank is believed to be the only man in the ETO who had an accidental fire in his foxhole. A faulty home-made stove started it, and he lost clothes, gun and everything.

Getting Sammy Levine to paint a name on your ship called for high diplomacy, because of his artistic temperament. Sam would spend three-quarters of an hour telling you why he couldn't do the job, when the job itself took half an hour. Once he put himself to it, though, his work was neat and flashy.

Elbert "Ripcord" Bunch was just about the fastest thing in the squadron. He kept the parachutes in order and all the parachute records straight. At St. Trond "Rip" could smell a buzz-bomb a mile off and made the distance from the second floor to the cellar in nothing flat. One night he came home late carrying a slight load. As he came in the back door someone on the field fired a shot or two. Bunch made the cellar in one step and began calling plaintively to "Pop" Winter: "Ju-88's, Pop! Ju-88's!"

George Taylor, Engineering Clerk, kept up the status board and answered questions like "Any word of a mission, George?" or "Are we released, George?" etc., etc. He continually had trouble with gremlins, plaguey little fellows who used to appear on the status board during the -night with messages. One used to say only, "Here I am again, George!" George sometimes took a pass just to get away from the little imps.

D. J. "Fat Boy" Perry clerked in the Engineering Office. VE-Day didn't mean as much to him as the day he received news of the birth of his child.

Lawrence W. "Pop" Winter had a favorite expression: "They never put nothin' over on ol' Lawrence!" At A-92 as winter set in, "Pop" turned out some of the best looking "winterized" jeeps you could ask for. He enjoyed Paris and thought it the most beautiful city in Europe. He had a time keeping his ward, "Packy" Paquette from getting too involved with "Furrin wimmen."

"Tapper" Michelone was "Pop" Winter's assistant as squadron carpenter. "Tapper" busied himself with the day room at A-5, built eight-holers, helped "Pop" with the jeeps, and worked continually on lesser jobs.

A. Heine came to us after having seen service in the Aleutians. He had more hydraulic troubles than any other crew chief, and he and his assistant, Willie Cullen, regularly ended up drenched with hydraulic fluid from head to foot. At A-92, Heine was active on the day-room, committee, saw -to it that the boys had a variety of liquor and served as a good bartender. "Blackie Baby" was his baby also till his point score sent him home from Fritzlar.

Dale Fisher was another veteran of the Aleutians. Quiet and conscientious, Dale loved his first ship, "Hairless Joe," and was almost heartbroken when it was transferred out of the Group. A common expression of his was, "You ain't just a kidding." He enjoyed passes to Europe's famous cities, but it is believed his heart was always home. When he had "Black Panther," it was one of the best-dressed planes in the squadron.

Sammy Miller crewed "Flak Valley Express." Sammy was really sweating after one mission from England, when his ship, flown by Lt. Stovall, didn't return. It turned out later that Stovall had lost the formation, run out of gas, and landed safely in a friendly wheat-field.

Patsy Angelo nearly joined the fire-fighters in England, and when he got to France he could have used a little of their assistance. His laugh was "out of this world." He was assistant crew chief on "Nita."

Tobias Miele worked quietly in the tool-room, furnishing tools and parts as needed. Sudekum scared him with a story he told at St. Trond. Toby was transferred later to the infantry.

## COMMUNICATIONS

It says some place that man's ability to communicate his ideas is the greatest single factor in his outstripping the other species. However that may be, it is certainly true that in the control of vast armed forces there is no more important element than communications. Aerial warfare deals in quickly-hurdled distances and split second cooperation, and to meet its needs the AAF has adopted, adapted, and developed every known method of communication. Maintaining these communications with laboratory accuracy under field conditions and urgencies was this Section's job.

To the pilot in combat, his command set radio is a brother. It helps him find the target through ground, and radar observers, and guards him against surprise attacks through warnings from his fellows and radar searchers. In bad weather or unfamiliar terrain it is the string that pulls him home. His radar set will identify him as friendly to his own forces and in emergency landings locate him to Air Sea Rescue.

The squadron section worked very closely with Group Communications in the ETO campaign and furnished teletype, telephone, code and radio men as needed under varying conditions. The squadron homing station was in operation continually from Normandy through the last days at Fritzlar, Germany. While most of the work was in support of the 404th, scores of limping 8th Air Force aircraft were assisted during October, November and December, 1944. In the first six months on the continent alone over 700 aircraft were homed. Activity ranged in intensity from the long, slow days of routine maintenance and standing by on a socked-in field to days when over 40 aircraft were homed. The accuracy of the steers given and general savvy of the operators built up the confidence of pilots to the point where they took maximum advantage of the help the homing station offered.

Establishing prompt telephone communication and keeping the lines open was no mean job for the telephone men. The bulldozers and vehicles at A-5, for instance, kept them busier than one-armed paper hangers, repairing broken lines. When it came to electric lighting, Communications always looked after the boys who were scared-of the dark. The squadron Public Address system was in constant operation; providing the line with quick, vital in-formation on missions as well as music and news. Such a message as "Coffee and doughnuts in front of the hangar through the courtesy of the Red Cross" was especially welcome. Everybody in the squadron who had a radio at one time or another, and that was nearly everybody, had it fixed in squadron communications,

Master Sergeant Remer C. "Turkey" Brewer as Communications chief, kept a little black note-book crammed full of vital information. He never got caught short on supplies or who was next on detail. His chief concern was how to send home all the money that he won at cards.. Tech Sgt. Felix Goffredo was known as "Pop" to everybody in the section, for he not only kept things straight on the line but looked after his boys in personal matters. Staff Sgt. Joe Blackman, or "Steinmetz," was credited with the ability to make a radio out of a piece of wire and an old "Hemo" can. He would have made a million if he'd collected for all the sets he repaired. He liked to sell so much that he forgot the profit motive. As a sideline he was flight chief in D Flight.

Staff Sgt. George Lee, the sage of the section, picked up the nickname "Nails" from a General of the same name in "A Guy Named Joe." He looked after B-Flight with the same concern he would his insurance and real estate deals. Sgt. Chester Boyd was C-Flight commander and the man with the wit. Boyd was as sharp with the pasteboards as he was with his humor. The literary set dubbed him "Magpie."

There wasn't an American head of waves in all of Belgium that was so adapted to a Belgique haircut as that of Sgt. Garland Whitlow. "Pete" was a great talker in his sleep. Once in Normandy he wished he hadn't been so fast in hitting the foxhole, when the late comers piled on top and almost broke his back. Sgt. Earl Kirk kept both "Herno" and A-Flight. He is reputed to have passed more steam in the Army than he has jeep-time, but that's a purely academic argument.

Cpl. Shorty Rondeau and his knowledge of French as she is spoken was top interpreter and negotiator for the squadron. Otherwise he enjoyed stretching out luxuriously to his full 5' 1" length on the grass in A-Flight. Cpl. Speakman was the leading figure in the Section's "back to the sack" movement. Known as "Limey," the British had no stouter friend.



Tech. Sgt. NMI Zore, or the poor girl's Fred Astaire, was as successful with the mad-moysels as he was with temperamental engines. Him and Oil Koik.

"Spots " Johnson or "Build a better mousetrap" Johnson as he was known in those days, gave to the world the Johnson Electrical Mousetrap, developed after considerable experimentation with the Johnson Guillotine Mouse trap. He has been mentioned for membership in the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Belgique Robbins proved that old saying, "Still water runs deep." It is not known how deep he was in at St. Trond. Tech. Sgt. Edgar Heindel, chief of the Radar section and leading exponent of the "laugh so it kills you" department was known as "Handle". He never was cold and his back ought to be a wonderful place someday for someone's feet.

Staff Sgt. Calvin Savary, or "Scabby," had a favorite pastime-chow. Radio, radar, electric light engineering, bus dispatching, and supply were only a few of the things he worked at. Sgt. Zilka and his giggle were present when he was dubbed Willy from Piccadilly.

Sgt. Wosnichak, "Wash," or the great Dissenter was the "Russian" interpreter. He was adjudged top imitator of Tojo and President Roosevelt on the PA. Sgt. Figaro Feeg found plenty of the classical music he liked on the European stations. Did he and Wash ever settle an argument? Tech. Sgt. "Little Wheel" Brajer piloted the 506th homing station. The rough, tough example of an army sergeant amused himself with mathematics.

"Swede" Ellingson was always around for an argument and otherwise tried to beat himself playing solitaire. Staff Sgt. "Hick" Wagner enjoyed driving and fishing more than anything. Sgt. C. J. Dunn was the big chess and card man at the homing station. He taught everybody chess so he could beat them at his own game.

Sgt. Mack McFadden could fix a PE-99 in his sleep. He made them talk through the commendations on all, the inspections. What was that tune Mack used to whistle? ... Cpl. "Legs" Conner 'had the best library in the outfit. Six feet, four inches of slowness, the Texan constantly draped himself over a book ... Slim Davis was the Homing Pigeons' pitcher. Southern Drawl ...

Reese did the impossible and learned French with one of those "Casey" methods. His Van Dyke beard and cross-word puzzles were a part of the homing station . . . Rocky Reed was in C-Flight until St. Trond where he became a CNS operator. His stories are hardly less wild than his driving.

Elges was one of the homing gang until St. Trond where a mishap with a German star flare put him out of operation ... Pfc. Slipknot Ceppaglia was clean-up man on the moves. Remember the clipping he had pasted in front of him at the switchboard at A-5? "The telephone man is the most important man in the Army!"

Cpl. Jim Hoban, head of the telephone men, was as persistent in his sleep as he was in getting the lines in and working ... Lou Buttler was the checker shark. He was spryer at shinnying up a pole at over 40 years of age than most of the young bucks.

Jasper "Jabo" Pace rounded out the telephone quartet. He didn't take any back-talk from telephone subscribers. We always wondered when he would tell some Major, "You got rocks in your head!" Sam "Army and Navy Store" Goldman reputedly would buy anything. In Brussels one time he and Clark were dickering with a Limey sailor for a "P-38" when of a sudden Goldman was struck with a grave doubt as to the value of the buy. "Say, Clark," he exclaimed, "where will we get the gas for it?"

Sgt. C. J. Smith, Corporals Ralph Martin and Joe Mendel were the "Little Three" in the teletype department. C. J. Smith of the Barrymore profile knocked himself out on his gun butt one night when he plummeted to the floor after mistaking a street-car for a buzz-bomb. Silent Joe Mendel's favorite pastime was "looking for a candle," and "60 cycles" Martin wrote more words than anybody in the Group.

Joe Mlcoch, pronounced "McClutch," looked after the paper work (?) of the section until Group decided it needed him. Then Vic Max took over and found he had time for the section, I and E, and big deals to boot. Irwin "Hubert" Clark worked on Group switchboard until Fritzlar and did a good job. Wonder if General Ike and General Vandenberg got their Christmas cards?

Remember: C. J. Smith night-fighting it back to the squadron area after being caught by a cloud-burst while sleeping in a haystack at Winkton? The antics of that perpetual-motion man, "Sixty. Cycles" Martin? The time Calvados ran away with Speakman, Frank and Reed? The "prize-winning" mademoiselles rumored to be so intimate with members of the section—"Gaby," "Paula," "Janie," "Gravel Gertie," "Mimi," and "Margie?" Ceppaglia and Johnson's Ten Per Cent Club at Stuttgart? How much Wosnichak enjoyed the boat and plane rides on the moves? What a WHOOPING good time he had! How we fooled the other sections, tricking their boys into electric shocks? That's where they really called us "Radio Queers." The movement to A-48 when over-enthusiastic Frenchmen tossed everything at the GI's and Zilka got conked on the dome with an over-ripe cucumber from a balcony window? The Pie Lady? Three a. m. at A-5 when a tree-limb crackled like a machine-gun then collapsed, bringing the tent down on Mendel and Butler in their sacks? Goldman and Zilka, censor's delights?

It was at Myrtle Beach, and all the P-39's but one had landed as, fog closed in over the field. The pilot still airborne had never used the homing station before and was rather skeptical, but after about ten minutes he gave the "homers" a call. Jim Davis was at the wheel at the time and gave about five steers, but each time the pilot made his approach, he reported he could see nothing but water. Eddie "Little Wheel" Brajer took over and was soon worn out like Davis when the same report kept coming in. On the 19th steer, the pilot called again, "All I can see is wa-land!"

Before he had rolled the length of the runway, he ran out of gas. The pilot immediately headed for the homing station and offered the boys everything from Scotch and cigars to blood plasma. Ellington speaking for the group, declined.

It was chow time and everyone had left the station except C. J. Dunn and Felix Reese. The day was a sunny, peaceful one, typical of pre-war Normandy. A soft caressing breeze stirred the leaves of the apple trees, carrying the sweet intoxicating smell of ripening fruit. The incessant hum of the much-hated yellowjacket harmonized with the other sounds of nature. Reese and Dunn were contented in such a serene setting, to say the least.

"Ain't nature grand?" asked Reese.

"Isn't," corrected Dunn, who doesn't like the misuse of the King's English, even in fun.

The lazy countryside was aroused by the chatter of automatic cannon fire. Reese jumped as if he had hot rivets in his pants, forgot his helmet and dove headlong into a ditch full of water. Dunn, always the man of the moment, opened up with his carbine at a Focke Wulf 190 coming in over the trees; in a few minutes the Luftwaffe was minus one aircraft. It is not known whether Sgt. Dunn brought the plane down or whether the credit belonged to the ack-ack.

Out of the ditch crawled Reese, covered with mud, his composure not a little shaken. Sarcastically he exclaimed, "Ain't nature grand!"

"Isn't," corrected Dunn.

#### DOTS AND DASHES

I've seen them come and I've seen them go,  
Boys of the Communications section, and so  
I'm not insulting one little bit,  
I'm just describing as I see fit.  
Laff it all off and have lots of fun,  
Smile and be happy and take this as a pun.  
First there's our section head, Brewer by name,  
He led this fine section to 506th fame.  
Next is Joe Blackman, a radio bug who  
Could fix any radio without much ado.  
Felix Goffredo was leader on the line,  
With all of the fellows he got along fine.  
Look at George Lee, a conscientious guy,  
On moves he was happy when he could fly.  
Old Irwin Clark knew how to raise heck;  
He's the small fellow called "Cooshay avec."  
Whitlow's a guy who all contests would win;  
In Europe he was known as a second Errol Flynn.  
Characters we had, and there were no few;  
Wosnichak and Mendel, to only mention two.  
Music was Feeg's and Zilka's delight;  
In radar work they cared for B and C flight.  
The linemen: Jim Hoban, Ceppag, Buttler, too,  
All were nice fellows and good workers, true.  
Mlcoch, our clerk, did all that he could,  
They took him to Group because he was good.  
Victor Max took his place, a pretty good kid;  
He did all right in what little he did.  
Martin and Smith were really the guys,  
They left us in Germany, both teletype wise.  
Zore knew his line and had quite a face,  
He palled around with that guy named Pace.  
Radios in A flight were always on the beam,  
Rondeau and Kirk made up that team.  
Heindel and Savary were both fine and dandy;  
At radar and radio both were quite handy.  
Out there at the station small Brajer was boss,  
The Bronze Star Medal at him they did toss.  
Ellingson, Wagner, Reese and Dunn,  
Worked together at homing, and had lots of fun.

The others were Davis, Conner and McFadden,  
They, too, at homing worked just like Aladdin.  
Johnson and Robbins were the kids on code,  
High in our esteem both of them rode.  
Boyd was our comic, our pride and our joy,  
Doing his stuff he was such a good boy.  
Goldman and Speakman were two of a kind,  
Two greater friends we never could find.  
Lt. Hendricks gained confidence and our affection,  
We all worked together to make up the section.  
We did a good job if I say so myself;  
Later on in years take this book off the shelf,  
Read it! Look at it! Think of the past.  
With this sort of outfit-how could the war last?

## ARMAMENT, ORDNANCE, PHOTO, CHEMICAL WARFARE SECTION HISTORIES

Before leaving Myrtle Beach, the Armament and Ordnance Sections of two officers and 65 enlisted men gained valuable experience in the handling of practice bombs, inert drill bombs, and a selection of various drill fuses. All the men had a basic understanding of the types of bombs and fuses that would be handled once we entered combat.

The equipment used for delivering and loading bombs included four Bomb Trucks, eight Bomb Trailers, and several Bomb Lift Trucks for raising bombs up to the wing racks of P-47 aircraft. Shortly after our arrival in England, the Ordnance Section designed a metal bomb cradle that proved to be a labor-saving device, and was successfully used up to our last days of operations in Germany. A belt repositioning machine, supplied by the RAF, greatly expedited the preparation of ammunition for the aircraft machine guns by properly aligning and positioning the cartridges, thereby reducing armament malfunctions.

Our first bombing mission required the loading of 500-lb. bombs on 18 aircraft, which proved to be the section's baptism in that spectacular ETO stage play, "Put 'Em On-Take 'Em Off." As time went by, a greater variety of bombs was handled by the sections, including GP's, 260-lb. frags, fragmentation clusters, Napalm bombs, aerial rockets, propaganda leaflets, and caliber .50 combat ammunition. The Armament Section's work covered the loading of bombs, maintenance of the aircraft machine gun and all armament equipment on the planes. During the time planes were on the ground, harmonization of the aircraft machine guns and cameras was a regular function of this section. An abandoned German hydraulic jack, which was found at site A-68, greatly expedited the harmonization of aircraft machine guns, and was extensively used by this section up to the close of operations. The primary function of Ordnance was that of ammunition supply, to insure that bombs and ammunition were ready at the planes in time for Armament personnel to load, and to assist Armament personnel with the loading of bombs. Necessary data for loading of planes, such as numbers and types of bombs to be loaded and their fuses, was furnished by Squadron Operations.

This squadron's ammunition expenditure for all operations in the ETO is tabulated below, and includes all rounds of combat ammunition expended by pilots of this organization:

### BOMBS

- 5,437 ea. 500-lb. General Purpose Bombs
- 150 ea. 500-lb. Semi-Armor Piercing Bombs
- 739 ea. 260-lb. Fragmentation Bombs
- 46 ea. 500-lb. Incendiary Clusters (110 bombs per cluster)
- 84 ea. 500-lb. Fragmentation Clusters (20 bombs per cluster)
- 10 ea. 540-lb. Fragmentation Clusters (six bombs per cluster)
- 295 ea. Napalm Incendiary Bombs
- 243 ea. 500-lb. Incendiary Bombs
- 60 ea. Aerial Rockets
- 148 ea. Propaganda Leaflet Bombs
- 32 ea. 250-lb. Bombs, General Purpose
- 32 ea. 100-lb. White Phosphorous Bombs
- 264 ea. 100-lb. Fragmentation Clusters (six bombs per cluster)
- 1,143,018 rnds. .50 Cal. Machine Gun Ammunition

Included in the Armament Section were the small Photo and Chemical Warfare sections under the Armament Officer. The Photo Section handled the loading and editing of combat film. Gun Sight Aiming Point cameras, harmonized with the airplane's machine guns, enabled each pilot to have a record of his own combat claims, for each magazine was changed whenever ammunition was expended in air firing. During inclement weather, the

pilots' own combat film was shown to them, by use of the 16-mm. projector and screen. Public relations pictures and a considerable amount of amateur development added to the activity of the photo section.

Activities of the Chemical Warfare section were largely devoted to training gas chamber exercises, gas mask drills, and lectures on chemical agents. Much to everyone's satisfaction, tactical employment of gas by this section was not required during the war. During non-training periods in Chemical Warfare, valuable assistance was rendered by the men of this section to the Ordnance and Photo sections.. Officers and enlisted men of the Armament, Ordnance, Photo, and Chemical Sections are listed below:

#### ARMAMENT SECTION

First Lieut. George Fedorko, Armament Officer  
(hospitalized at A-48)  
First Lieut. Lewis D. Baylor, Armament Officer  
Master Sgt. Marvin B. Layton  
Tech. Sgt. Donald W. Corcoran  
Tech. Sgt. Gene H. Davis  
Tech. Sgt. Donald W. Ikier  
Staff Sgt. Harry B. Ayers  
Staff Sgt. Russell M. Gannon  
Staff Sgt. Anthony T. Mastre  
Staff Sgt. Dewey F. Sharp  
Staff Sgt. Cecil L. Shepard  
Sgt. William W. Boyes  
Sgt. Lester F. Collins  
Sgt. William A. Hastings, Jr.  
Sgt. Glenn A. Keese  
Sgt. James A. Lightbody  
Sgt. Norman U. Mounts  
Sgt. Roy N. Peris  
Sgt. Domenic J. Setaro  
Sgt. George E. Simpson  
Sgt. Laurence F. Young  
Sgt. Joseph A. Zavrl  
Sgt. Albert L. Hayes  
Sgt. Roy F. Perryman  
Cpl. Harold S. Arnold, Jr.  
Cpl. Howard L. Beach  
Cpl. Guy L. Bogart  
Cpl. John M. Brooks  
Cpl. John R. Cates, Jr.  
Cpl. Byron G. Delano  
Cpl. John L. Delaney  
Cpl. Henry W. Fornal  
Cpl. Avelino C. Gonzalez  
Cpl. Fred Harmelin  
Cpl. Paul R. Hansel  
Cpl. Edward J. Haseman, Jr  
Cpl. Donald A. McLean  
Cpl. Frank C. Pelkey  
Cpl. Oren L. Ralston, Jr  
Cpl. Paul B. Reed  
Cpl. Harry R. Rigas  
Cpl. Stanley Soldovnick

Cpl. Elmer J. Weber  
Cpl. Cornelius W. Westra  
Cpl. Benjamin H. Diggs  
Cpl. George C. France  
Pfc. Charles R. Eck

#### ORDNANCE SECTION

First Lieut. Gordon O. Finstad, Ordnance Officer  
Tech. Sgt. Alex A. Hegyi  
Staff Sgt. Garland O. Barnett  
Sgt. Harry C. Beegle  
Sgt. Gabriel L. Contreras  
Sgt. Jacob M. Fielden  
Sgt. Quentin Scroggins.  
Sgt. Sydney I. Van Denk  
Cpl. Kurt A. Burg  
Cpl. Louis J. Boucher.  
Cpl. Frederick L. Greenkorn  
Pfc. Christ J. Dulaveris  
Pfc. Michael J. Misanko  
Pfc. Thomas J. Oldham  
Cpl. Rudolph Smith

#### PHOTO SECTION

Staff Sgt. Edward F. Dziadzio  
Sgt. Walter O. Hillgren  
Cpl. Donovan C. Cammack

#### CHEMICAL WARFARE SECTION

Sgt. Edwin J. Hurley  
Cpl. Robert J. Hofbauer

## ARMAMENT PERSONALITIES

In preference to Army chow, Gene Davis ate fire, glass, swords, blades and old nicknacks . . . "Old Shambling, Ambling Roy Acuff 2nd"—even a war failed to ruffle or hurry Washington's "pride and joy," Norman Mounts ... Hank Fornall, the Polish Ambassador from Pennsy, always maintained an ample larder at A-92-steaks, chops, coffee, French fries, cognac, bread and butter; he was always good for a snack ... Up first in the morning, first at chow, first at work and first weather prophet of the outfit-always sure to predict rain during a rain storm: Alvino Gonzalez . . .

Bill "Old Bongo" Hastings was noted for his Gargantua interpretations, envy of every monk at the zoo . . . "Gassy" Cannon's claim to fame in the 506th: "First armorer to go home . . ." Dry humorist from a dry state, Frank "Kansas" Pelkey's favorite subjects were dogs and women; dogs he understood, but women frightened him ... Paul, "Old Smiley," Reed smiled and laughed his way through the whole campaign; claimed there was nothing to smile about New Year's Day, however.

Orin Ralston-news interpreter, war analyst, reporter at large; always ready with the true picture of the world situation, including a few rumors and a bit of propaganda. Skeptical of the real importance of line attendance

after the New Year's Day strafing ... Glen Keesee still maintains the trip to Tienen in Belgium was worth that \$15 fine. . .

Al Hayes claims there is nothing like a little nap every day. His ambition was to win enough at poker to buy a suit of "fine clothes" for civilian life ... Dewey Sharp says, "Next to cutting hair, I like to clean guns best." . . . V-E Day not only marked the end of hostilities in Europe; it was the day Jim Lightbody finished memorizing his 18th book on "Bullets and Ballistics" . . . George Simpson always managed, between cases of the GI's, to put in an appearance at the line ... No one ever really knew if "Boogie" Bogart did or didn't in Europe ... On reaching France Harold Arnold finally uttered his first words; thrilled by this new proficiency, "Gabby" is still dispensing Georgia humor. . .

A true "Marconian" disciple, "Bub" Brooks claims if it's got electricity in it, he can fix it. Supply claims he used more candles for light at A-92 than any one in the outfit . . . Johnny Cates achieved fame at Stuttgart as undisputed master of the horseshoes.

Tony Mastre's heroic flight to safety at A-48 inspired countless others to follow Harmelin second, Weber third. All three lost the Soldiers Medal and five points during this trying action . . . "By George, now," Maine has the biggest spuds in the country, says Byron Delano ... John "Old GI" Delaney was the Army Bible and authority on what to wear, and where, when, how and why to wear it . . . His claim to army fame: "The GI isn't dressed GI in the Army!". Dom Setaro proved at A-48, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that man is faster than a jeep.

Freddy Harmelin, in spite of squibs, squelches and razzberries, sang "Long Ago and Far Away" all over the continent of Europe . . . After experiences in Normandy, Bill Boyes advocated fox-hole drainage systems. He claims the present type, although preventing "Purple Hearts," are wet and damp, muddy, dirty, and full of bugs . . . Stan "I'll kill ya in two seconds, see" Soldovnick visions the perfect post-war radio with thousands of dials for tuning and turning . . .

"Bet a Million" Peris' GI equipment consisted of cards and dice with a "boiling machine" to send home his fortunes . . . The Jerries on New Year's Day demolished Joe Zavrl's pride and joy-his shack, where fortunes in francs were won and lost at the flip of a card by GIs in hip boots (yes, the sessions got that deep) . . . "Crash" Collins made the famous New Year's quip. "Aw don't run, they're 'Limey' planes."

Remember old "Whisper Voice" Westra, holding conversation with some friend across the field? ... Old Ox McLean, scrambling to safety on hands and knees was probably mistaken by strafing Germans as some form of a pill box, New Year's Day . . . Norm Rose-a species whose habitat is dark alleys. Lurking shadows and dark doorways were no mysteries to "Old Snoop" who could ferret out the "hiddenest cafe" or "femme divine" in some of the most fog-shrouded cities of Europe ... Robert Schwab nearly caused an "International Incident" when he forced the Belgians to return his beloved "C" flight shack at A-92 . . . Wilburn Fitzgerald's contribution to armament safety lay in his timely "Buzz Bomb" warnings during our stay at buzz bomb alley at A-92. His startling shouts and stair-rattling descents gave ample warning to all concerned. "Fritz's" admirers claimed he could hear a buzz bomb before it was launched.

Through the din and roar of battle, K. P. persecution and detail duties, Elmer I. Weber tenaciously and with determination plugged one song, "I'll Be Seeing You," throughout the length and breadth of the land ... Paul Hansel, Rose's understudy in "Quail Sleuthing" even surpassed the old master. Armed with Cho-co-lat, gum and cigarettes, "Peanuts" covered all the highways and byways in an intense program of legal fraternization ... Harry "Radar" Rigas was noted for his uncanny ability always to find the right direction, He constantly amazed his buddies. His forte was imitations, and at the drop of a hat he went into his song and dance. The "Mickey Rooney" of our outfit, he commanded a large audience ... Charley Horn is best remembered for his steady and sincere manner. Some little armorers built their homes of straw, and some of sticks, but Charley had a prized steel pill box at A-92-much the envy of everyone during raids and buzz bomb runs...

Leaving St. Trond wasn't such sweet sorrow for Cecil "Shep" Shepard where a deep and warm friendship had blossomed for him. The clump-clump of "Ole Martin's" Number 35 wooden shoes always preceded his head in the doorway, and his daily query of "Shep here?" always brought some loud and gusty greetings. Oh yes, Martin always brought an apple too ... Harry Ayers: "I don't know what in hell that's for. It could be done a lot different than that." ... The boys all claimed it kept any number of plasma-donors busy to keep Don Corcoran on his feet and going, but "Cork" maintains there is nothing like a "wiry" frame for endurance. His survival of the "Affair de Paree" well proved his point ... Larry Young left his heart at Myrtle Beach, S. C. So what if he did put the guns on the bomb racks, the bombs in the gun bays and the ammo in the cockpit? He claims he had a pilot who knew what to do, thus equipped.

While Freddy Harmelin sang all the way, "Amour" Perryman did his adagio dance at the least provocation. At the last count he was a couple of splits and a back bend ahead of irate fathers from the shores of England to the "steeple of Stuttgart." ... If anything peeved Donald W. Ikier it was deep snow. Armed with snow shovel and broom he chased flakes and flurries all over the field at St. Trond. To see him rescue a snow-bound plane was indeed a treat. Aye, the man was a veritable snow plow ... Marvin Layton coined a phrase that defies spelling and meaning. His "Kum Cheer" isn't what it looks and doesn't seem to mean what it means. Somehow bombing schedule lists always appeared at these mystifying words ... Staunch soldier of maintenance was Charley Eck, who, armed with sledge and hammer, stood between the graveyard of a plane or its return to duty. It was no uncommon sight to see Eck wading knee-deep in controls and cables, wheels and wires, nuts and bolts with sledge a-swinging and hammer pounding to create order out of chaos. The "wheels" may get the glory for charts completed and forms filled out, but Eck's day will come. We understand his "Order of the Shiny Screwdriver" may even now be on the way from Washington.

#### SNAPSHOTS:

Though the Photo Section existed only in the minds of those who dwell upon T. O.'s and such trivial items until we brushed, off Oregon's dust at Myrtle Beach, Gus Heilbronner's assignment made most of us aware of said section, in no minor fashion at that time. Above and beyond Gus's GI talents was his ability to place himself as a welcome partner at the bar, in a blackjack deal or just for an informative moment or two in a typical bull session. We soon learned that Photo was an important part of our organization.

Out of the myriad of personalities who posed themselves before the First Sergeant's desk, reporting as Photographic Lab Technicians, only one, our own Ed Dziadzio, remained and subsequently became an integral part of the organization. Ed's civilian occupation didn't remain a secret any length of time but instead of proving of value to him, it left him constantly with a drawing pencil in his hand, First Lieutenant on his tail and a hopeless look on his countenance. His aptitude at creating just what Mac wanted on a piece of paper, placed him as the Squadron's Number One though somewhat unwilling artist.

There came a period of experimentation into the inner mysteries of the complicated gun-cameras and magazines. Lieut. George Fedorko, the Photo Officer, having a cool and calculating nature, involved himself quite deeply. At this point, he brought Walt Hillgren, heretofore one of his ever-loyal armorers, into the picture. Walt, possessed of an objective and scientific outlook toward all that this world sets forth, found himself shortly up to his knees in the problems already causing gray hairs for those involved. To the relief of all, most of the puzzles soon became quite-if not crystal-clear. At the end of those trying times, Hillgren had become a full-fledged member of that illustrious little group, the Photo Joes. As a matter of incidental information it might be said that one of those lesser evils that seemed to hold half the Army in its grip, rising as late as possible, was also one of Walt's better known traits. As he says, "An eight o'clock breakfast is better than none." Looking back, both Walt and Ed seem to enjoy recalling with a bit of nostalgia, those darkroom and foxhole nights in Normandy.

Never will it be denied that Army photo work deterred Gus, Walt, and Ed from outside activities along those lines. Where they went, there was always certain to be an all-seeing lens covering the situation. The three of them documented the 506th's accomplishments from the Normandy landing to Central Europe.



The latter part of October, 1944, saw a minor change occur in the section's makeup -the addition of the Squadron's chemical warfare, N.C.O., Ed Hurley. Over a period of months his chief accomplishment seemed to be a progressive adaptability at trimming prints, correct to the millimeter. It didn't really affect his mind but his fellow soldiers began to have doubts when he carried a pair of scissors with him at all times, working at night, screaming "Let me cut! Come on, please, let me cut!"

The photo section acquired its last member in a thoroughly undramatic manner. One sunny afternoon during our stay at St. Trond, a beaming smile permeated the here-to-fore drab confines of the photo lab. Without any evident reluctance, "I'm working here, now," was voiced by a character who got by with the name, Donovan Cammack. Immediately following this soul-crushing, yet stirring announcement, aforementioned Don Cammack disappeared. Upon his return, some few days later, and ever since, all remained in a state of wonder as to what he meant when he said "work" when he came upon the scene.

### THE FLAMING NIGHT-POTS

The Ordnance Section was composed of 15 hard-working and intelligent characters under the leadership of Alex Hegyi and his assistant Garland Barnett, better known as Barney.

The forgotten ordnance men arrived in England resolved to give their all for the glory of the 506th and help defeat the enemy. They buckled down to the great task of filling practice bombs with sand. This humiliation, however, did not last long and soon they had the thrill of loading the real stuff.

About this time two new men entered this department, Corporals Kurt Burg and Frederick Greenkorn. They filled the gap made by two men who made good and were transferred to a higher echelon. The new men were a great help to the old-timers in the outfit such as Barney, Hegyi, Rudy Smith, Jacob "Soil" Fielden, Sydney "Van Up" Van Denk, Harry "Stumpy" Beegle, Thomas "Cab Happy" Oldham and Gabriel "Hoss Curly" Contreras. Those not so old included Christ Dulaveris, Michael "Suds" Misanko and Louis "Butch" Boucher.

This team spent many weary hours trying to satisfy the whims of Alex Hegyi and alternately loaded and dropped bombs and gas tanks on the planes. It would start early in the morning with the announcement of a mission over the P. A. system and all those who couldn't hide very well from Hegyi were rolled out from under their blankets into the cold air, and reported to the line. Each 500-pound bomb was hoisted individually by a manually-operated winch mounted on the truck, and placed on a stand which held the bomb at the proper wing angle. The bomb was wheeled under the shackle by which it was hung. This was repeated till all the planes were loaded, fused and ready for the mission. Then a grinning operations clerk drove a jeep up and down the line saying, "Take them off and hang gas tanks." The S-3 man was very happy as he said this. He enjoyed it so much it was repeated three or four times till the ordnance and armament men were pulling out the last of their hairs. The Ordnance men, especially Rudy, Suds Butch and Christy who usually found themselves working the winch, had the greatest affection for the men who planned the missions.

We have forgotten the name of the ingenious ordnance man who discovered that the gadget behind the Bomb Service Truck was, to lift bombs from the ground and into the trailers. He did us a great service for we were getting muscle-bound lifting them by hand. By D-Day the education was complete and our planes flew constantly in support of the landings in France. "Van Up" in charge of ammunition was kept very busy while the bomb loaders were not too happy either.

It wasn't all work and no play, however, for when weather grounded the planes and all the work was caught up, you would find Curly Contreras, "Suds" Misanko and "Soil" enjoying their leisure hours at the pubs of Boscombe, with a glass of bitters. Curly had a way with the ladies and a few were quite sorry to see him leave.

On the continent it was up to Butch, who could speak French, to teach us the necessary phrases to get along. It was, however, difficult to get him to relinquish this information and we had to be content with "Bon Jour." Language was no serious obstacle to the cider and champagne-thirsty ordnance men, who never stood short on

that account. The self-fashioned colloquialisms and pantomime which came into existence when we tried to speak to the natives will always be remembered.

Quentin Scroggins, who came to us from another squadron, injured his nose in a collision with an orderly room member on his way to a fox hole. Though bombs exploded frequently from various causes, Quentin was the only ordnance casualty, and proudly carried his nose in splints for a couple of days.

The grand awakening came and Ordnance let Armament do some of the work. This fair sharing of the work was greatly appreciated by the Ordnance men who during continuous flying had more work according to S.O.P. than could be handled by the small section.

At A-48 we became familiar with German Ordnance work. Jerry ammunition and bombs were more complicated than ours and had greater variety. Their presence was dangerous and our section cooperated with the bomb-disposal specialists in the removing of the sensitive, tricky bombs from our immediate area and line.

The boys had a lot of fun with their introduction to Calvados. Oldham enjoyed it the most with Barney sharing the honors. Soil, Quentin and Rudy were quite content with cognac. Suds drank anything he could find. Suds, Christy and Curly put in a lot of cycling time, wandering around the French countryside and through small villages. The fellows all smile when reflecting on their lighter moments in Belgium. There were several girls with saddened hearts when we left and we sincerely hope they have since been in a happy again. Even "True To The Girl Back Home" Greenkorn had a fling but the girl back home won out and Fritz remained true.

Fritz was also the outstanding athlete in the section which boasted five positions on the squadron baseball team. He was flashy at third base and was also classy in basketball.

The other versatile players included "Soil" Fielder who boasted the best throwing arm in the section and won a \$40 bet from an unfortunate challenger heaving for distance. He liked left field. He could easily be spotted at a distance by the baseball cap he always wore.

Curly Contreras split his interests between boxing and baseball. He had a berth at first base. He cut hair on the side and applied himself to the job with the serious expression of a surgeon on a delicate job. Suds also enjoyed cutting hair and between the two we were kept presentable. Suds was not as dependable, though his work was as good. No matter what kind of a cut you asked for, you ended up with what he wanted to give you, from a trim to a crew cut.

Beegle, also true to a lovely miss back home, was a good all-around player. Nicknamed "Stompy," he was a good looking Dutchman and one of the best fellows you could meet.

Burg was a little bundle of energy and smiles. What he lacked in bulk he made up in spirit. He was very generous and if you twisted his arm he'd let you have a cigarette. He jumped around at short stop and talked up a good game.

Robert Hofbauer came unofficially to our section when he didn't have enough work in CWS to keep him busy. He liked to catch and caught for the team. We gained a man whose assistance was invaluable. He still denies having put the tear gas capsule in the stove, clearing the barracks out in short order, while at a stateside base.

Because of the limited amount of space, we have to allow Barnett only a few lines, though a book would be more appropriate for this colorful character. With a few shots of Scotch and a pipeful of tobacco he will relate any one of his numerous experiences. Those who have heard his tales are truly fortunate.

Butch Boucher from Taunton, Mass., had his happiest moments when devoting time and affection to an uncooperative and inconsiderate motorcycle. Through his persistent tinkering he was able to make it go one-fourth of the time. He enjoyed maintenance more than ordnance and spent quite a few hours welding and taking things apart.

Oldham had an unexpected ride when the trailer on which he was riding broke loose from its prime mover. He rode it like a cowboy until he could reach the brake. He took great delight in driving through mud whenever he could find a reason. The section, anxious to please, put Oldham in charge of the vehicles.

One bright, sunny day came the great occasion. Fifteen men whose only claim to fame was being in Ordnance walked solemnly to the appointed place before the camera. It has been rumored that never before had these men been showered and shaved and in OD's at the same time. The other departments watched the phenomenon with great disbelief and one bystander was heard to remark, "Now I've seen everything." The story is sheer libel that the photographer took one look and went into tantrums. The shutter clicked without a mishap and the boys returned to their interrupted activities after ceremoniously greeting their Ordnance Officer, Lieut. Gordon Finstad. Gordon had the choicest refuge of all during the New Year's Day strafe job; he was out in the middle of the field, prone between two 500-pound bombs.

## SQUADRON SUPPLY

Take 1,001 items, including "paper, toilet, M-1", mix them with liberal parts of sweat, hard work, expletives, clairvoyance, requisitions, records, and SNAFU, and you have Squadron Supply.

During preparations for moves we of Supply had the greatest reason to tear our hair. London in fog is no more obscure than the early directives with "general instructions" on movement procedure.

Each man had to be fully equipped with the correct items. What and how much to pack had to be determined. Clothing, equipment and supplies from axes and insect powder to typewriters and six-by-six trucks, each had to be handled in its own specified way. Worrying about deadlines, accuracy, and varying interpretations of the same instructions made for jumpy nerves.

What a mix-up can occur when instructions for marking boxes include the specification "Unit Destination," which is then corrected a few days later to read "Unit Designation"! Or when all overcoats are to be turned in to Supply for unit packing one day, then orders are countermanded and all overcoats must be reissued and carried individually.

Plenty of experience was picked up by Squadron Supply in the States, and preparation for overseas movement was accomplished without any broken bones. England was a cinch. In Normandy came the first experience at dickering in a foreign language for laundry and other services, and begging, borrowing, and "requisitioning" materials for dayrooms and messhalls. Constant movement on the continent made it necessary continually to re-requisition lost clothing and equipment, salvage worn-out and damaged items, repair shoes. Cleaning, preserving and, stationery supplies, rations and ammunition had to be kept up to the required levels, Post Exchange and combat rations dispensed, and tents and cots kept in repair.

Vive la Supply!

Firm but amiable might well describe Hugh Spangle, boss of Supply. When in need of anything GI, a pair of socks, or an extra blanket, the safest bet for all of us was to see Hughie. His firmness appeared when one of us was obviously trying to "make" Supply for something extra, or when it was carelessness on our part that brought us in search of a replacement-article. But the age-old complaint, "hole in the seat of the pants" never failed to bring out the best in Hughie, and the expeditious issue of a new pair of trousers.

Shortly after the squadron was formed, a number of the officers and leading noncoms went to the AAF School of Applied Tactics at Orlando, Fla. Supply was left shorthanded, and drafted some armorers to help out. "See Steve" became a much-used phrase, so much so that Armorer Gideon L. Stevenson was permanently converted to a dependable supply man. Steve's loud and raspy voice may have incited fear in some and fooled others, but

his bark was worse than his bite. Most of us knew we could count on Steve for more than sympathy when in need.

In contrast with Steve's grand manner was the quiet expressiveness of "Val" Valenzano, a man of efficient ways and calm, yet caustic, wit. "Val" never seemed to be in a hurry, but always got results. His services were requested, and rendered, on every kind of a job from clerical work to loading a freight car.

"Cozy Leo" was one of the tags pinned on Jim Shea. Known as a hard bargainer, whether the "bargain" involved the sale of a gold-brick or the issue of a pair of 9-D's, Jim was at his best dabbling in higher finance. A Boston accent, Fall River cockiness, and New York shrewdness, all went to make up "Cozy Leo."

## TECHNICAL SUPPLY

When Tech. Supply identified its packing boxes with its initials it also decorated them with what many consider its slogan-an old Army expression, "T. S." At least Lieut. Bennie D. Mirkin, Tech Supply Officer, established a record with the number of times he used the expression. Another one we all recall is, "I talked to Monet yesterday, and it's no soap." Tech. Supply handled Army Air Forces and Signal Corps equipment-in short, everything used on the line plus personal-issue ordnance equipment such as carbines and trench knives.

Staff Sgt. Tom Bulger came to the squadron back at Myrtle Beach in time to get Tech. Supply straightened out for overseas. movement. In England and until Lieut. Mirkin joined the squadron as Assistant Engineering Officer and Tech. Supply Officer he was the big wheel in the section. TS was very closely allied to the Engineering Section being primarily, during operations, stock-chaser for parts needed in maintenance of the airplanes. When an airplane needed an engine or a rivet, Tech. Supply had to hunt it up.

Anybody who worked with tools in the Army knows how difficult it was to hang on to them. And Tech. Supply knew how, difficult it was to replace lost tools. Inventory, survey and requisition formed the never-ending circle. Each mechanic on the line had a kit, engineering, communications, armament-and engineering had its tool room and the other sections their kits. And all these sections had their light and heavy equipment-all secured and issued by Tech. Supply. The pilots and ground crews drew their flying and mechanics' clothing from T. S.

With all the ships flying constantly despite moves, every man in Tech. Supply had to "put out" to keep airplane parts and ground equipment flowing at the rate necessary to keep the ships in the air.

## ANECDOTES

REMEMBER . . . ?

The train loading alongside the beer. PX at Key Field and the quantity of "military" brew consumed by the time the train pulled out . . . That 33-hour ride in day coaches with the mercury near the 100-degree mark . . . The mosquitoes and gnats of Congaree ... The Congaree Widow ... The motor pool employees of Myrtle Beach . . . The last lap of the ride from Congaree to Burns, Oregon, 180 miles on a rickety old track where the speed limit was 25 miles an hour and the train actually averaged 16 MPH swaying and bumping all the way ... Held up by a flock of sheep on the road to Burns ...

If you remember all these you are an old-timer and the following words and pictures should bring back vivid memories, printable and otherwise.

We'll always remember the warm evenings at Key Field which were spent around the tables beside The Coffee Shop while empty beer bottles accumulated and Joe Lannon, Squirrel Luxhoj, Ken Burke, Yank Tanner (a Rebel

if you ever saw one) and several others would harmonize with "Maybe," to name but one selection from their repertoire.

Harry C. (Bedbug, Horizontal) Harris had two of the most unforgettable nicknames ever given a squadron member. In case the origin has been forgotten, the name Bedbug. was given to Harry during the days when he was one of the permanent members of a fumigating squad at Key Field. "Horizontal" was added when he and his crony had been out on a binge and Harry (until then a most innocent child) was borne back to the barracks as stiff as a poker.

Who'll ever forget our "first First Broom" -Pop Kline. A vet of World War I, Pop could use the King's English in no uncertain terms, and his vocabulary was out of this world, especially when a lowly recruit had stepped out of bounds. Behind that gruff exterior, however, was a good heart. When you came to know Pop you found that he had been born, and not, as you had previously believed, issued. We'll always remember him sitting at his desk in the orderly room at about mid-night, chain-smoking and frantically seeking his reading glasses which he had set down someplace (invariably they'd be high on his forehead). Between misplacing his glasses and his false teeth, Pop had quite a time.

It was at Congaree where tall, lean, music-loving Bob Major made his bid for fame. Bob was crewing an A-24 at the time and his pilot was on a flight and overdue. Finally, word came through that his pilot was okay, but please to send one each A-24 hand-crank. Bob went to his hard-stand and there, in the grass, lay the crank, just where he had thrown it after winding up the plane before take-off. The crank was flown to the aroused pilot and later "Trilby" faced him rather sheepishly. It didn't take long for the story to get around and the long Rhode Islander has never lived it down.

Remember the days in Congaree when Wheel Barlett haunted the PX and grabbed off most of the beer while the juke-box was slinging out with "Lay That Pistol Down"? And the boys were carrying a few flour sacks in the back seats of A-24's to drop on troops in the maneuver problems with Fort Jackson soldiers?

Hunting was one of the major pastimes in Oregon. Freddie Hobrecht bagged at least one antelope and probably an additional dozen were slain by other Nimrods of the unit. The high spot of the hunting fell to a cook, Jack Gardenhire, who bagged a 300 pound bear with one shot from his carbine. Rabbits and coyotes were hunted with rocks, clubs, carbines and .45's. A favorite method of hunting the big jacks was to form a large circle and gradually close in until someone clobbered the rabbit with a rock.

Remember . . . the married men and the ambitious swains moaning when we had night ground school at Myrtle Beach . . . At the same time Wheel Barlett had an out-of-town guest ... Trying to get Joe Nichols off his back to look at recognition shots ... Harry Freemantle slipping a Russian PE-2 into the Renshaw class . . . Mel Johnson at the group party at the Ocean Forest, and Joe Nichols losing his wallet and wrecking his car the same night . . . McCarty's dry run to the train a few days before taking off for Camp Shanks . . . The long face of freshly-wed Butch Boettcher when he returned to Myrtle Beach and heard the glad tidings . . . The dinner party at the Lafayette and George Fedorko stepping off the bus, falling and breaking a quart of whiskey. George just sat in the middle of the street with a dull look while the whiskey ran out of the paper sack . . . The weather in which Shook brought the squadron back to Myrtle Beach so that they could be in time for that same party. . .

The guy in Myrtle Beach who came to Hugh Spangle and in all sincerity asked for a "foxhole liner."

Shack Pappys at Myrtle Beach: Speedball Henning, Loyd Shockey, Harris Roberts, Butch Boettcher, Sammy! Stearns, Ben Harrelson, Sack Forster, Jim Moore, Sunshine Kennedy, Burnett Porter, Bill Hastings, Frank Nicholas, John Knight, Ed O'Conner, Cecil Shepard and Ken Rhodes . . . The beastly 24-hour train ride to Camp Shanks . . . Did you ever ride a troop train where adequate drinking water was provided? Harry Freemantle drank a can of condensed, irritated milk from evidently discontented cows and got sick as a dog . . . The 25 cent poker games which ran 22 out of the 24 hours . . . That match from the train to the barracks at Shanks ... The cadence of the colored troops prancing down the hill as we dragged our way up . . . The bitter cold and snow during which we had a life boat drill ... The snowball fight between the officers and the enlisted men . . King of the hill-or Bunker Hill to you guys from Wisconsin ... The physical inspection which consisted of running around a

big room stark naked. If you got all the way around you were okay for combat. Actually they made you strip so they could inspect your teeth . . .

The 12-hour passes into New York which some boys turned into 24 hours by getting hold of their passes 12 hours early ... The man in Armament, standing next to the censor, who stopped the bus to mail a letter in a civilian mailbox . . . Chalking the numbers on our helmets and climbing those long stairs at the pier, loaded down with all our baggage ... Joe Nichols and Jack Engman trying to get the soldier from another outfit to come down off the mast. The man bucking for a section eight responded to Jack's orders by climbing higher. Finally they coaxed him down and put him in the brig ... Harry Freemantle's lush job of gunnery officer ... The poker games of Crazy Eight, baseball, softball, sweat, acey-ducey, spit, Dr. Pepper, four forty-four, fiery cross, etc. The bitching by the second lieutenants, 304 of whom were in Compartment E-4... The "splendid" food, with Seth Parker the only one aboard who probably enjoyed a meal on the "Starving Castle" . . . The rumors about the Wacs on board the transport following us in the convoy-which started the boys taking turns using the one pair of binoculars available . . . John B. O'Rourke, the famous Irish tenor, giving his first public concert on the high seas ... The destroyer picking up the three men in a dinghy about 24 hours from Liverpool . . The British bands greeting us at the dock and our first glimpse of the British Bobby Marching through the streets of Liverpool and craning our necks for bomb damage The Red Cross, at the train station, with coffee, donuts, cigarettes, gum and life-savers . . . Our first ride in British trains . . . That first meal at Winkton after 14 days on board the Starving Castle. GI beef stew-it tasted like a five-buck steak at the Ritz . . The first showers at Winkton which looked like a Buck Rogers weapon . . . The arguments over the comparative merit of a P-47 and a P-51 . . . The highlight of ground school-the geography class with its R.A.F. instructor-what a joker . . . The first mission with Bob Huse's prop going out shortly after take-off. Ollie Simpson stayed on his wing but they were so far back that they were continually being called in as bogies.

It was in England when we started to have hotcakes every other day and the practice didn't cease until we hit the boat for the Z. I.

Although Jerry came over quite often during the nights in England, very few of the men hit their fox holes. Those that did were T. O. Marsh, Elbert Bunch and Scratch a Maxcy. But they had the last laugh for when we got to Normandy everyone went digging and those boys really knew the score.

One nice day when the squadron was released for maintenance and training, and nearly everyone took off on a cross-country. Shortly after supper Group Ops called and stated that we were alerted to fly to an Eighth Air Force base at 2200 hours. We had ten ships on cross-countries and had to get them back some way. We started Flying Control and Combat Ops to work. By 2100 we had about half of our planes back. Thirty minutes later they scrubbed the mission.

Piccadilly Circus got a workout whenever we were allowed passes to London, but circumstances and experiences enjoyed there cannot be related in this history. There were other interests in the city, however; historical monuments were visited and then there were always the shows. Sack Forster and Neemee Holst invariably became inebriated on gin and/or scotch and then sobered up at a Phyllis Dixie stage show. The afternoon preceding a day off the men were usually able to knock off in time to catch the 5 o'clock train for London. Many a tale was told the next day of Piccadilly commandos, bottle clubs, sightseeing, etc.

One morning in England Captain Wade strolled into the kitchen and tasted one of Bly's dainty hot-cakes.

"What in hell did ya use for flour-Plaster of Paris?" cried the aged captain.

"Sir," replied Bly indignantly, "I've been cooking hot-cakes in this Army for seven years, and I know how to cook 'em!"

"Well, I've been eating 'em for 29 years in the Army and I haven't tasted anything like this!" was the come-back. It wasn't long, though, before the Adjutant and the mess sergeant were bosom buddies.

One night in England the officers were having a party in the tent area. Shook got everyone out of the sack and into Harvey Bates' tent and there was Ollie Simpson hanging on the tent pole, drunk for the first and last time in the ETO. Clad only in shorts and boots, as was Shook, Ollie had a big cigar in his mouth and a wild look in his eye. Someone questioned Shook's condition so he proceeded to do 75 push-ups. The boys continued to drink and a couple of them engaged in a dog-fight with Harry Baker doing slow rolls off the sack. Pretty soon the Tent Improvement Committee of Shook and Simpson started to function. Between them they threw the stoves out of every tent in the area. Along about 0130 hours a guard came in with the alarm that a paratrooper had landed on the field. O'Rourke, Fedorko, Westerinen, Hendricks and Cohn grabbed carbines, .45's and flashlights and started searching. Their greatest worry was being mistaken for the Jerry by other members of the searching party. Each also had in his mind a picture of a body with a thin strand of wire around its neck. Some hours later it developed that what the guard had thought to be a parachute was a drifting barrage balloon.

It has been suggested that some of the talent in this squadron should not be passed unnoticed. One example in particular which has been cited is the rendition by Jack K. Harris and Richard Anderson of "Live and Let Live." Given just before hitting the sack every night in England it is like nothing heard before (and you'll never want to hear it again) and should be recorded so that posterity will not be deprived of such a gem

Incidentally, Jack had his own ideas on when and how the Group would return to the States, which he expressed like this:

New York, N. Y., May 19, 1951 (AP) The 404th Fighter Group, under the command of Lt. Gen. Leo C. Moon, of Kamiah, Idaho, landed early today at the U. S. Army Port of Debarkation at New York. This Group has been in action in the European Theater of Operation and this shipment is the last of overseas troops to be returned to this country, all others having been returned previously.

After seven years of brilliant combat flying and occupational patrol work, the tired but deliriously happy men of the Group are almost all in agreement with Gen. Moon who says, "No compris Anglais, avez vous le Cognac?" It must be explained that these men have been in France, Belgium and Germany for such a long period of time that they have forgotten the English language completely, and have acquired several European customs, some of which are not mentionable here. It is believed that after a short time under the care of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc., a nation-wide alcoholic institution, that these splendid soldiers will be freed of the fiendish desire for Cognac, Calvados, Schnapps and other European drinks which have become a substitute for water to them.

It is expected that after re-naturalization these men will again be model citizens. Let us hope so. Arrangements have been made with several leading universities to instruct the men in the English language and in American customs, which will, no doubt, seem strange to them. After thorough indoctrination in the American way of life, they are to be separated from the service but will be kept under strict surveillance to determine whether further instruction is necessary. It is needless to try to express our pleasure at having these very desirable characters again in our midst. If at any time during the next five years, you discover any of your anti-freeze, rubbing alcohol, or any other liquid with an alcoholic content, has been taken without your knowledge, contact the War Department at once!

Bicycles had been issued originally but the enthusiasm for them waned and Harry Baker and Seth Parker bought motorcycles. Making passes at each other, they were constantly trying to out-turn each other. No serious accidents occurred but at one time or another almost everyone took a spill from one of the bikes. Harry, later known as Pierre, used his bike to good advantage, often going out to get fresh strawberries for us.

Best story to come out of the channel-crossing: Tom Bulger and Gideon Stevenson, coming off the landing barge in their jeep, with the tide rising, drove into a deep hole which forced them to tread water until a "Duck" came by and picked them up. Alphabet Pryzbytek did a follow-up and that gentleman took advantage of the situation and had a good time swimming and floating in the Channel. It was indeed a wet entrance into France for the threesome.

France-the land of wine, women and song, of gaiety and laughter, and flowers. That ain't the way we saw it when we arrived. Mud and dust, flies and bees, tents and foxholes, work and sweat, and "Bed-Check Charlie."

We were in the swing of things right off the bat in Normandy with a water trailer of cider and jerricans of Calvados!

Remember: When the air echelon had to sleep in an apple orchard the first night in Normandy with no protection against the long rainstorm ... The foxhole living quarters at A-5, complete with pin-ups, shelves, clothes racks, and just about all the comforts of home ... The Standard Operating Procedure for Sammy Stearns when "Charlie" came over every night-how he'd dive into Gene Davis' foxhole dwelling, often upsetting Gene and his cot ... The Calvados-how it knocked out Kenny Paquette and Dave Hickman and just about everybody else in the squadron ... Our artillery, in back of us, shooting over our heads at the enemy a short three miles away ... The trips to the front lines ... Riley and his motorcycle ... Dave Harmon and his electric clippers, made by himself, and run off an airplane battery ...

Not too many foxholes were dug the first few days at A-5 because the weather was bad and no Jerries flew over. But as the weather improved and Bed Check Charlie made his nightly appearance the holes got deeper and deeper. Each day the men would go down another foot or so. It was rather funny at first. You'd hear ack-ack off in the distance and try to bury a little deeper in the sack. As the planes approached everyone would feel for his boots and helmet. Finally when the planes were overhead you'd bounce out of the sack and into a foxhole. As you left your tent a white streak could be seen, Georgie Stovall in his shorts racing for Marty Adams' foxhole. In the snack bar the two poker games would be going full blast. The big gamesters always grabbed their stacks but in the little game there was no stopping to pick up chips, just sail out and hit the long trench. Remember the day the bombs started falling at A-5 and Johnny O'Brien was crawling for the ditch and George Stovall ran across the full length of Johnny's body without knowing it?

With the passing of time many structures are destroyed which were once familiar, and they exist thereafter, as they originally stood, only in one's mind. Such a place is the day room, "Wade-On Inn," which once stood in the Normandy orchard, hidden from Jerry eyes by camouflage and the sheltering branches of apple trees.

When Capt. Wade first proposed such a project no one believed that it could be created or that it was worth the time and effort. However, as the building began to take shape and the contest was run to find an appropriate name for the day room, interest and enthusiasm mounted. The carpenters and those assigned for working details, and the others who contributed their various talents worked late into the long summer evenings, and a bit of America away from America emerged.

Amateur carpenters designed easy chairs, sofas, writing desks, an octagonal poker table which was never to know a night's rest, a coffee table, and cushions for all chairs, of burlap filled with straw and covered with 0. D. blankets. The artists of the squadron arranged pinups about the walls. The Intelligence section maintained maps on which we could see the tiny area, held by the Allies at that time in Normandy, expand down towards Brittany and across Northern France.

Movies were held here in the afternoon and on certain evenings, meetings and the reading of those inevitable Articles of War. The most popular movie at that time in Normandy, if you will remember, was "Shine On Harvest Moon," with Ann Sheridan (just about the only film available).

Here, in this pleasant lounge, the men of the squadron gathered to relax of an evening, to read from the wealth of books in the Armed Forces Editions, to write in a pleasant atmosphere, to play cards, or just to sit and smoke and shoot the old baloney.

The crowning factor which gave members of the squadron a sense of ease and relaxation was the presence of a radio and a phonograph. The Special Services records included many of the popular swing and boogie favorites



from home and they were played over and over so that hearing them now, again, one is sometimes reminded of that pleasant place. The recording of Spike Jones' "As Time Goes By" never failed to bring riotous laughter.

The passing overhead of "Bed Check Charlie" was the only incident which ever caused the enjoyment and relaxation to cease momentarily, while lights were extinguished and the furniture was cursed in the scramble for foxholes.

The lumber and furniture of the day room was carried to A-48 with the intention of erecting it again, but the scramble across Northern France caused us to leave it behind. But closing your eyes you can see it standing yet, while mottled sunlight and shadow play upon its latticed sides and the rhythm of Tommy Dorsey's "Boogie-Woogie" comes from its cool interior.

Bob Hofbauer's perseverance at all tasks is known but there's no instance so obvious as his determination to make the De-Con his ever-loving baby. Once behind the wheel the change in character was amazing-his countenance, grim and unsmiling, his eyes staring always forward, he was off to see that no shower at A-5 lacked that vital content -water.

Happenings in the Blackout: Sgt. McLelland driving across a bridge that wasn't there and Commander Wade driving into the shell crater. And -the innumerable jeeps which would wind up in our area lot on Sunday mornings, from the Group C. O.'s to the Bomb Disposal jeep.

Remember: Shook, "Geronimo" Edak, Dickerson and Cohn being sniped at on the Coutances road and Geronimo floorboarding the throttle and not easing up till they got to St. Lo ... Bob Huse and Vinson being pinned in a building in St. Lo for a couple of hours by 88's and then coming back with a receipt for a PW they had turned in ... Dave Harmon standing nonchalantly on a land-mine near St. Lo and Sack Forster pushing him off in a manner far from gentle ... Riley and his captured motorcycle putt-putting at some dark hour, which was cause for much abuse thrown at Riley and the bike ... Snipers opening up on McLelland and company near St. Lo and an infantry boy coming to their rescue ... Speedy Bealle's memorable statement, made early in August, that he wanted to get Buddies Britton and Brock five missions apiece before the end of the war ... The nights when T. O. Marsh plunged through the tent flaps on his way to the foxhole ... Driving to Bois de Molay and trying to Parley-Vous with the lady to do our laundry ... The little 10-year-old French girl, Odette, who used to hang around the snack bar ... The famous \$18.75 War Bond raise in the big poker game and the classic, "What is your next highest card" ... That scenic Mont St. Michel ... The piggyback rides, one in particular with Shook and Charlie Reed, Tech Rep. of Republic, barrel-rolling around a formation ... When Alphabet Pryz ran over Tom Orsono with the gas truck ...

We were all gleeful and full of anticipation when we heard that we were to move to Bretigny-only 15 miles from Paris!

On the convoy trip to Bretigny Commander Wade stopped the convoy to speak to Col. Nichols and an M.P. gave Joe Cohn the choice of moving the convoy or going to a summary-court. He moved the convoy, and did Wade burn!

That trip to Bretigny will be remembered easily by the squadron. With the gals getting better looking as we neared Paris and the crowds lining the highways and streets with flowers, fruit, and vegetables, it was a great wonder that the convoy arrived at A-48 without a missing person.

The flurry of egg and tomato hunting when we arrived at Bretigny (acheter oeufs) was tremendous. We Were pretty successful at first - getting hams, eggs, tomatoes, grapes, pears, etc.

Then there was the time in Paris when Old Man Stevenson lost his false teeth.

The squadron averaged about two trips to Paris per man and saw it pretty thoroughly. With no M.P.s and no joints in the Off Limits category it suited the squadron perfectly. To sit at one of the swankiest side-walk cafes sipping delicately of champagne and eating K-rations and at the same time to watch the gals ten abreast ride by on their bicycles with a display of anatomy that only men overseas can appreciate was the acme in wholesome diversion. There was the customary sightseeing—Louvre, Notre Dame, perfume buying, etc., but these were secondary.

Talk has gone the rounds that Willie Boyes and Sully Soldovnick were planning to open a Sphinx Club after they got into civilian life.

Remember the dinner at Kugler's in Paris? Shook, Freemantle, McLaughlin, Petoskey, Simpson, Bates, Nichols, Jones, Fenstermacher, Cohn, Reed and a couple of others met there and Fenst did most of the ordering. It was a lot of fun.

It was a beautiful ride through Chateau-Thierry and the Marne Valley in early September when we were driving to our new field at Juvincourt.

The boys soon learned that even the lousy carbohydrate flak-candy could be traded for eggs.

At A-68 a standard meal for the first week was K-rations and champagne with the latter selling from 60 to 120 francs. We certainly ate well, with 10-in-1's for the evening snack.

Remember the night Fisher and Fenstermacher put Major Garrigan's sack out of the window and the good Major spent quite some time throwing a hammer around? Some of the boys tried to carry Harry Peterson's sack (with Pete in it) out of the door but when they couldn't get the sack through the door they were forced to call it an abort.

Sam Stearns, Tom Bulger, Louis Boucher and Cleo Raney became acquainted with a family nearby who had close relatives who were big wheels at the champagne warehouse in Reims -needless to continue.

Anyone who saw Shook give "Rae" a workout over A-68 will probably agree it was one of the best ever seen in a Peter-47. Two loops and an Immelman off the deck and then a split-ess from less than 2500 feet ... Then there was the day that the squadron enlisted personnel were being briefed by Joe Cohn. Harry Anderson did a perfect buzz job coming down on the formation out of the sun; he was really wound up when he came across. Even the pilots in the snack bar hit the floor with a thud.

And so we said a fond farewell to La Belle France, as they say in the movies, and set out for Belgium. In one little advance party were Jim B. White, Earl Fisher, Ed Petoskey, Buddies Brock and Britton, Bart Christopher, Clint Winters, and Joe Cohn. Brock and Britton made their first bid for fame when they ate more French fries in Mons than the other six combined. The party received a welcome near the Belgian border like a liberating army.

The first thing the boys did when they hit St. Trond was to eat three ice cream sundaes. The next thing was to eat a steak, French fries and sliced tomatoes.

Early in November the squadron threw a real party at the Palace Theater. Beer, champagne, cognac, women-it was really fine. Most of us were taking a shot of cognac and chasing it with champagne or vice versa. There were plenty young Belgique gals and true to a quaint Belgian custom, a large number had their mothers with them.

While in St. Trond the Communications section took quite a liking to near-by Brussels. Earl Kirk, Remer Brewer, Felix Goffredo, Jasper Pace, Rocky Reed, Murray Goldman, Thomas Speakman, Calvin Savary, and John Zore came to know the city like their own home towns.

There were two squadron parties in the officers' Pintail Club with Major Pete singing the Chandler Song and Mel Johnson grabbing the mike and refusing to give it up. The Pintail Club looked like a Varga exhibit.

Does anyone know why Solomon Richardson was always late to the Non-Com Club dances in St. Trond? It certainly took him long enough to get ready for one.

In remembrance of Belgium we leave this last will and testament: To Wilbur McGinness we bestow all the French-English, English-French dictionaries in popular use today so that he may have an opportunity to continue and enhance his study of the Belgian people, their language and their way of life. To Winton C. Merrill we gracefully give Baby. John H. Schuler: We give to you, and gladly, that great state of Texas, which was the subject for so many comparisons with little Belgium. To John W. Knight, in appreciation of your diplomatic skill in obtaining for the squadron so many donuts and so much hot coffee, we humbly give an honorary membership in that great institution-The American Red Cross. The last drop from the last bottle of St. Trond cognac we give to Thomas J. Mahoney. To our "conscientious" mail-man, Bob Kaufman, we give all Belgian work horses, in remembrance of the one you rode through the main streets of the city one afternoon in a highly delighted mood. To Peers M. Patterson we allow one each, M-1, extra long, sack and sleeping bag.

The friendship of Joe Maher and Walt Barker did not suffer any when they found that "Rhubarb Rosie" had "courted" both of them in civilian life. The common sight of Joe and Walt with Moe Melhus produced a little Jamaica away from Jamaica.

Notes in Liege. Wandering through toy land in a department store near Christmas time. Going to the hospitals for the "benefit" of Group and winding up at a 70th Fighter Wing party. Identifying oneself as an American to road-guards by giving the following information: Place of birth, capital of home state, river flowing through capital, Army serial number, etc. Jonesie and Joe Cohn being picked up by the MP's and beating the rap with the alibi that they were there to buy colored pencils. Sweating out buzz bombs and jumping when one exploded, while the nurses nonchalantly sat quiet. The boys waiting in the rain 90 minutes for a tram to take them back to St. Trond and then getting lost and having to get the MP's to take them home at about 0200 hours. Watching the boys and girls swim in an indoor pool while you sat and drank beer.

Bub Brooks' name for any of his acquaintances never changed. We were all "Bub" to him; but there's only one real "Bub."

After New Year's Day no one doubted the right of Walt Hillgren and Ed Dziadzio to the title, "Combat Photographers." No foxholes for them-their rugged little cameras served as their only weapons recording Jerry's unwelcome intrusion upon A-92 that fair morning.

Candidates for a study in thoughtfulness would be Ike Ikier, Frank Pelkey, Ruby Haseman and Hose-nose Setaro during one of their pinochle games.

Remember how we laughed when they appointed a snow control officer and the natives said it didn't snow much? Klemola, one of the Flying Finns, sculptured a perfect, high-breasted, snow woman, so fine in fact that some of the men got frostbitten fingers going to and from the barracks.

Thoughts of St. Trond: The two girls, Denise and Alice, and the little boy, Johnny, who picked up our laundry ... Sweating out a B-25 loaded with bombs with only the left landing gear in good condition. Three of the crew bailed out over the field and then the pilot set the crippled ship down for a perfect landing ... Trying to housebreak Frenchie and Pete, the two Cockers. Bird Dog Hansen describing a mission with his hands and his "Twang, Phfft," etc.

Evidence that members of the squadron have come from many walks of life was shown in February when the boys put on a show in the Palace Theater at St. Trond. With Harry Rigas as the capable Master of Ceremonies, "Poolay Manoor" played before a packed house. Ranging from skits and songs to Gene Davis' climactic fire

and magic act the show brought lots of fun for the participants and the audience. Those who participated were Harry Rigas, Freddie Harmelin, Phil Nolan, Gene Davis, Bill Hastings and the Nix Compris orchestra.

It is believed that the enlisted man in the squadron with the finest collection of photographs is "Glamo ur-Boy" Coppinger. Who has not seen "Coppinger and the Buzzbomb . . . Coppinger and the Eiffel Tower," "Coppinger and his Foxhole," "Coppinger and his airplane," ad infinitum?

Do you remember-The sweet voice across the highway from the hangar calling for her "Babee-e . . .How long George Taylor was sweating out the Good Conduct Medal . . . Flight A's four-bell fire-alarm when Ben Harrelson's invention failed in their shack . . .Dale Fisher keeping the squadron's typewriters in shape . . . Bob Rakow's snap crewing... Charlie Horn's underground home at A-92 . . . Those damn buzz-bombs ...

At this time the American ideal of equal opportunity for all regardless of race, origin and religion is pointed to with special pride. It is interesting to note that many men in this unit have parents who were born in the following countries: Italy, Poland, Greece, Russia, Germany, Austria, Mexico, Ireland, Canada, Hungary, Sweden, Holland, Norway, England, Portugal, Rourmania, the Azores Islands, Denmark, Jugoslavia, Switzerland, Belgium, Nova Scotia, Czechoslovakia and Spain.

Each New Year's Day will bring to mind the one of 1945 when the Luftwaffe strafed our airfield at St. Trond. Some of the men had a time finding protection. Willie Cullen dived through the hangar window and found sanctuary in a coal pile, Coppinger crawled into an abandoned half-track trench and was okay on the first pass but was out in the open on the second, Childers was blown to the floor from the concussion of a 20-mm shell hitting the hangar door, Heine got mad and fired his Tommy -gun at the passing planes, Al Lever was pinned down under his airplane's wing, which was carrying a 500-pound bomb, and Bunch found safety in the farthest corner of the cellar in the Operations Building . . .

Remember the last day at A -92?. Bird-Dog Hansen was leading an' airfield cover flight over Y71 and Y84. The weather was stinking but aside from that it was an uneventful mission until Bird-Dog took the wrong autobahn coming home. After touring the various southern army fronts he returned to the base, being airborne four hours and 30 minutes.

Speedy Bealle turned highway engineer one day at Kelz, Germany, when he supervised the laying of a road and parking area behind the snack bar.

In the lonely cabbage fields at Kelz stands the Nissen-hut-shaped Officers' mess, a monument to our short stay there and to our indefatigable labor.

Communications quickly had lights in the tents at Y-54 but the slightest blinking would cause the cry of "Hendricks! Hendricks!"

Whenever we were to move and live under field conditions Pop Winter turned out those eight-holers of his own inimitable design. Their appearance was always a positive indication of a move.

At Fritzlar the boys became really "hot rocks" when they got their Jerry flying boots. Ding-Dong Wilterding pulled one of the best when he described somebody as so hot he pulled streamers" standing still.

Nostalgia filled the boys when they rode to the top of the monument north of Kassel. Those beautiful woods-everyone's thoughts turned to picnics and best gals.

VE Night! It took a while for the men to realize that it was all over-that sweating buzz-bombs and "Charlie" had ended. But when full comprehension dawned on the boys they cut loose in gay fashion. Sunshine Kennedy and Verc Ver Cande wound up the activities by drinking and singing with the officers in the BOQ. How they got

there no one knew-maybe it was their keen sense of an alcoholic odor. A carnival air was lent by illumination from red, green, white, and yellow flares.

While we're on the subject here's a wine and liquor list of the squadron during its tour of the ETO:

Mild and Bitters-too mild and too bitter.  
Half and Half-if you half to you half to.  
Brown Ale-brown.  
Scotch and Gin (in London)-not much and too much.  
Cidre-the yellow jackets liked it.  
Calvados-a cheap mickey.  
Champagne-and K-rations.  
Cognac-paint remover.  
Schiedam-looked like gin, tasted like hell.  
Anisette-for the elite.  
Cherry Brandy-before dinner.  
Belgian brown beer-in lieu of water.  
Buzz Bomb Juice-you've had it.  
Gold-Orange-reverse lend-lease.  
Rhine Wine-VE-Day liquid.

Remember the open house at Fritzlar in the suite of Cal Bosin, Ken Cobb, Joe Cohn, Al Hendricks and Doc Thomas? The password: Bring your own food and drink . . . The songfest which lasted till 0300 hours and the condition of the room ... The Mole making like Frank Sinatra, Bugs Aikins' rendition of "Dan McGrew", Pete and the Chandler Song, Packer tending bar and filling the Gordon's Gin bottle with Bommerlunder . . . Someone throwing Hendricks' sack out of the window. "Garcon, a bottle of Dry Rhine Wine."

Remember: Houston and his candid camera shots . . . Buddy Britton and "more" copies . . . Ding-Dong trading one camera for another . . . That five-day leave in England after the "Brass Hats" had won the softball title . . . The "Nut House" in London with its 11 refined" atmosphere. The cigarette girl who smoked cigars, holding Pelto's hand . . . Willie's firm belief that Bommerlunder on the run is best . . . "Cosmo" Hendricks on a trip from the U. S. Embassy to the "Nut House" in one evening ... Jerry O'Hara's stomach on the ride back to Fritzlar . . .

The third stool in the 506th latrine was always a fertile place for rumors. However, there they came forth in a crude state. Those GI's who were most adept at embroidering these stories so that they were repeatable were Charlie Smith., T. O. Marsh, Shorty Rondeau, Ralph Spinney, Peers "Slick" Patterson, and Hut-Sut Ralston.

Probably the biggest things to come out of our squadron (or the war) were the remarkable ears of Cauble. It was not so much the size that amazed us, but more the fact that they were the first pair of educated ears we'd ever seen. Not only could he turn them inside out, but on him it looked good. Beside this, few of us will ever forget the morning when he was a little reluctant about crawling out of the sack. The O.D. had to call his name three times rapidly, and nine tom turkeys rushed over to investigate.

At the squadron party in the hangar at Bernhausen, a man, if he drank, was known by the color of his drinks. The base for all these concoctions was an innocent appearing punch of lemonade (GI, with all those essential vitamins) and hidden therein and lying in wait was a potent quantity of Buzz-Bomb juice. The weakest of the men colored their base punch with red wine and took as much delight in the color resulting as they did in the drink. Those of tougher fiber used Creme de Menthe which accordingly gave a variety of greens. The he-men added another shot of Buzz-Bomb juice (unsuspecting victims that they were) and were seen at various times during the evening in chairs or across tables stiffened in their last conscious attitudes.

Our candidates for the three bravest men in the squadron are Ed Hurley, Dean Johnson and Al Ceppaglia. At Stuttgart they gave their best on the operating table and with heads held high, walked back to duty. Their courage and perseverance on this occasion reflect great credit on themselves and the Army Air Forces.

Shorty Purnell finally got to crew a plane his size when he received the L-4 at Stuttgart.

Among the favorite and most commonly heard expressions used at some time or another, these will probably remain longest in our memory:

Released til dawn!  
Bob, is there any mail?  
Take off bombs, hang belly tanks, take off belly tanks, hang bombs,  
Mission scrubbed.  
Any gum, Chum?"  
Buzz bomb on track one!  
Yuh nervous in the service?  
One hour alert.  
Stand by.  
Don't be bitter.  
When we get those ten points I'll have  
Cigarette pour Papa?  
She looked clean to me, Doc.  
Police up everything that doesn't grow.  
Disciplinary action will be taken.  
Blow it!  
Corporal Childers, report to the ship's orderly room.  
On to the Pacific.  
Voulez vous coucher avec moi?  
One drip and you're dropped.  
You've had it!  
A-35s-BEAUTIES IN FLIGHT.  
Blackout is now in effect-guard this ship, guard this ship.  
Don't fraternize.  
What was this before they killed it? (Often heard at chow).  
Nix Compris.  
Have you heard the latest?  
You-sim-pulee cawn't miss it.

A remark overheard at Stuttgart seems to typify our Lieut. Jeffries, the Mississippi boy from the feudin' country. Said Jeff after seeing quite a deal of the Third Reichland, "Man, I've been to two county fairs and a goat ropin', but I ain't never seen nothin' like this."

It happened in the fifth inning in a league ball-game against the 507th officers in Stuttgart. The picture: We were in the field with Willie Cullen on first, Kurt Burg on second, Fred Greenkorn on third and John Delaney at short. Vic Henry was chucking and Stach Lipa was behind the plate. The 507th had men on first and second with no outs. The infield was playing in close to cut off the runners. Henry pitched and the batter hit a ground ball to Greenkorn who fielded it cleanly, stepped on third base and then threw to Burg at second in plenty of time to force the runner headed for the keystone sack. Burg wheeled and heaved a fast one to Cullen on first and the ball beat the runner by half a step. A triple play! Fast stepping men, fast stepping.

#### FAMOUS SAYINGS:

Pryz-Got a cigarette.  
Melhus-I don't do dat.

Kaufman-Any bomb line changes?  
Maxcy-Bear X!  
Barlett-Never again.  
Albright-Rochester, the city beautiful.  
Lipa-Nice Day.

If the Jerries ever do find enough material to wage another war it certainly will not be Lieut. Urban's fault. His proficiency in the dubious art of scrounging, or as they say in the vernacular, "collecting captured equipment," was unsurpassed. This, coupled with his smiling willingness to lend a hand at any time leads us to believe that at some future date this enterprising young man will be the prosperous proprietor of a nice shop-the entrance of which will be adorned with three shiny round balls.

Some members of the squadron and what they'll be best remembered for:

Hose Nose Setaro-for his feat of being able to smoke a stogie under the showers.  
Hoyt Elliott-for always being at home while abroad.  
Charlie Hamilton-for his imitation of the Limies.  
Norman Mounts-for his sad and lonely songs.  
Norman Rose-for sleeping in cockpits.  
Walt Wosnichak-for his pessimism.  
Stinky Davis -for being the most likely candidate for a Section Eight.  
Irwin Clark-for his resemblance to Hubert.  
Johnny O'Brien-for singing Irish songs while happy.  
Frank Pelkey-for making true the saying that baseball umpires are born blind.  
Herbert Hoefs-for making model airplanes and propellers.  
Edwin Brajer-for his Quartermaster gait.  
Francis Doherty-for thinking he could sing.  
Moses Porras-for having beginner's luck in poker at St. Trond.

Did anyone ever find Keating the night he was supposed to play the piano at the Officer's Club at St. Trond?

Remember: Jerry O'Hara and Bob Schafer on the ambulance run to Liege ... Gehling sleeping in ground school but in a ball game the most aggressive man on the field ... Hendricks rubbing elbows with the ex-Wehrmacht at Eder See . . .

Dear Diary;  
1944

December 1,

Today I had another experience I don't want duplicated. The First Sergeant elected Shorty Rondeau and me, among others, to replenish our diminishing stock of coal. Our convoy of trucks, started out for Aachen, through Holland. Just ahead were the "dragon's teeth" of the Siegfried Line.

I was dozing in the back of the truck with my carbine between my knees, when suddenly the sound of machine-guns brought me fully awake. I heard the cry "Jerry plane!" and the truck stopped so abruptly we almost straddled the one ahead of us. We were passing through an ammunition-dump, and a Focke Wulf 190 was trying to blow it up. We all leaped from the trucks and started running for cover. The plane made one pass at us, fortunately without success. The ack-ack was beginning to look alive, and filled the air with shell-bursts.

All this time-a matter of seconds-I was running away from the road and up a slight incline. I was wearing galoshes and it was rough going in all the mud. I heard the sound of an engine, looked back, and saw the Jerry was returning for another try. I dropped flat on my face and tried to burrow to China. I raised my head a trifle, just in time to see a bomb falling. My face

went back into the mud, and then and there I gave out with a silent prayer. The bomb, a fragmentation type, landed about seventy yards away. Close-but no cigar!

Again I looked up, and saw the Jerry was coming right for us to give us a strafe job. The plane was so low I could easily see its markings. The pilot fired a few short bursts and passed to my right, no more than twenty feet above the ground. Some Joe nearby got up on one knee and emptied a full clip at the plane. So help me, I can't see how he wasn't riddled by cannon-slugs, but he wasn't touched.

The Jerry didn't come back, and I believe he was hit by ack-ack on his second try. Again we heard the sound of engines, many engines, and it was a thrill to see P-47's overhead, though just a bit too late to intercept the Focke Wulf. I resumed my seat in the truck, and the reaction set in. I started to shake as if I had the gripe, but it soon passed. The officer in charge of the convoy decided that was enough excitement for the day, so we came back, minus the coal-and minus casualties.

Victor Max

### SNACK BAR SAGA

The 506th Fighter Squadron always believed in making the best of existing conditions. Not content with such bare necessities as a pilots' room, a briefing room and map, and a pot of coffee, the organization went all out at every new base. We all came to realize that "the line" is the heart of the unit. A comfortable place to live is essential, but the time spent sweating out missions need not be passed in an uncomfortable tent called in field manuals a "pilots' ready room."

Starting on an advanced fighter base in England with a couple of glider crates and a piece of corrugated iron as a snack bar, this outfit advanced to near perfection in Belgium.

The Snack Bar at A-5 was one of the show places of Ninth TAC until the St. Lo breakthrough. As we conceived it, a snack bar is a combination ready-room, short-order bar, meeting place, briefing room, recreation room, and lounge. At A-5 we felt we had everything; we slept in our tents but lived in the snack bar.

From the first briefing in the morning till the last chips were cashed at night the snack bar was crowded. Here mail was censored, S-2 "poop" read, and everything from paddle-props to sex-life in a fox-hole discussed. During the evenings letter-writing and card-playing prevailed.

Marty Adams was the architect and construction engineer, Earl Fisher and Wilbur Vinson the interior decorators and furniture experts. Jim B. White was foreman in charge of the carpenters and unskilled labor, and we had plenty of the latter. Everyone pitched in to make a beautiful building. Scrounging rose to new heights and in short order we had beaucoup raw materials.

The overall dimensions of the building were approximately 20 by 60 feet. At one end was the kitchen and bar; at the other end was the briefing room. The sides of the building were made from bunks found in Jerry's warehouse near Lison. All of the material was scorched with a blow-torch to give a finished appearance. The ceiling was made from brown-and-green camouflage netting. The floor was grass with wire runway matting. The green grass and restful colors of the ceiling possibly had a cooling effect, because even on the warmest days the snack bar was delightfully pleasant. The building's roof and sides were covered with tarpaulins.

Sofas were made from the slatted frames of two Jerry bunks and as cushions we used GI mattress covers filled with straw and covered with blankets. Chairs and tables were built to match. Vinson's finest product was the chair he turned out for Major Shook, "The Hub."

Marty fashioned a bar of tile. Since it cost little more to go first class he even included a fireplace for grilling steaks. Fedorko built a lamp with a 37-mm. shell for the body surrounded by six 50-caliber bullets. Petoskey



strung the lights and Hendricks hooked up a speaker from his homing station so everyone could listen to the R/T chatter on missions. Also he installed a regular broadcast-band radio so we could hear all the popular programs, including Axis Sally, Calais One and "Hello Pierre, Hello Nanette." It was over this radio that we heard Rommel tell us he'd drive us back into the sea in six weeks.

For decorations we had pin-up girls, Jerry rifles, burp-guns, belts of captured machine gun ammunition, a French fireman's helmet, and Jerry tin hats.

The briefing room, separated by a fiber-board partition, filled the north end of the building. Here everyone hurried to each call of "Bomb-line change" to see the latest movement of our troops. In August when the German lines were rapidly folding, bull sessions would last far into the night with each man a military analyst predicting where the bomblines would be on the morrow.

Johnny Tsoros was the man behind the bar. No matter how early the first mission was briefed, he was on hand with hot coffee. He delighted in fixing something "special" for the men. He kept everything spotless in his kitchen, and was a wonderful asset to the first "Pintail Club."

But St. Trond was the payoff.

Deciding that we would probably be there for the winter, Major Joseph H. Sherwood, then C.O., said he would like to see as comfortable a setup as possible, compatible with efficiency in getting missions off. Taking over the former motor transport repair building on the bombed-out field, the outfit went to work. First a small briefing room was set up for use while the main briefing room and snack bar were being built, painted and furnished.

The accompanying pictures could have been taken in any officers' club in the States. We doubt if any squadron organization in the States had anything to compare with it. Sofas, easy chairs, writing tables, poker tables, radio, rugs on the floor, and even marble statuettes for adornment.

In an adjoining room was the bar and kitchen, with coffee the strongest drink dispensed, accompanied on occasion by toast, cheese, combat-ration eggs and oranges. An electric refrigerator and electric cooking range were other features. The bar itself was natural oak, and shone like a bar in any Gay Nineties' saloon.

The high spot of the suite was the briefing room, about 25 feet long and 15 feet wide. The unbroken walls were covered with maps and performance charts. Our main briefing map was on the front wall, an Army/Air map, scale 1:250,000, and covered ten square feet. The area shown ran from Antwerp on the west to sixty miles east of Berlin, and from thirty miles north of Hamburg almost to the Swiss border. It carried the bomblines, restricted flying zones, all known active enemy airfields, and other pieces of information.

On one side wall was the map used for close support work, ten by fifteen feet. Its large 1:100,000 scale facilitated the location of pinpoint targets. Friendly and enemy ground dispositions were plotted from daily Army situation reports. The boys liked to watch the bomb-line move; because of the scale a three-mile ground advance moved the line a good two inches on the map.

On the opposite wall was another map of equal dimensions, but on a 1:500,000 scale. It took in most of England, Brest, Italy 100 miles south of Florence, Poland and Denmark, and carried all three European fronts. Here we showed routes and distances to all nearby American and British fields. Under winter weather conditions, those headings and distances were well worth knowing.

On the rear wall a small map of the China-Burma-India Theater created some interest, but the boys were all content merely to study the CBI situation from a map. A portable 1:500,000 flak map completed the display, although 1:25,000 sheets were available in the files for pinpointing targets between the German border and the Rhine.

Photo-maps—uncontrolled mosaics—of the Siegfried Line as well as nearby towns and defenses were usually covering unused portions of the maps. They were used for routine study by the pilots as well as for briefing and positive identification during interrogation.

The mission schedule with the pilot's name and ship number was the first interest when the pilots came to the line in the morning. This board also listed the runway alert pilots, who usually read their names with moans and groans. Next was the mission record board, showing pilots by flights, with their combat flying time, missions, and sortie credits. The statistics aroused the normal amount of bitching about eager beavers trying to crowd in a bunch of missions.

There was also an aircraft status board, maintained by Engineering and Operations. Listed were all ships with their pilots and crew chiefs, and the up to the minute operational status of the planes, including armament, communications, and engineering.

A map of the local dispersal area, showing the positions of the planes in their parking spaces, was particularly helpful. Each pilot could spot the location of his own aircraft and every other ship on the mission; confusion in taxiing out for the start of a mission was thus kept to a minimum.

A briefing blackboard was filled in for each mission, showing Start Engine Time, Takeoff Time, Route Out, Courses, Distances and Estimated Times of Arrival, Direction of Takeoff, Position of Sun, Authentication and Letters of the Day, and Radio/Telephone procedure. Also posted was a briefing check list so that the squadron leader would cover all important points in his briefing.

Also in the room was a combat claims board, showing all air and ground claims since the squadron went operational. Total squadron missions and sorties were posted daily. Recognition posters of tanks and planes, with jet-jobs receiving the greatest attention, were located in various parts of the room.

One late addition to the snack bar was a poster showing "Famous Last Words," with appropriate cartoons by Sgt. Anderson. Not all the "last words" were uttered in aerial combat, but all were famous with the squadron.

During the Ardennes counter-offensive, the weather was the poorest we had encountered. Snow, sleet, and freezing ground-fogs permitted flying only rarely, and therefore the snack bar became increasingly important to morale. The day usually opened with "mail call" for censoring, not receiving mail. By 1030 the day had bogged down to letter writing, poker, gin-rummy, reading. If a mission got off, the remaining boys listened to a play-by-play account over the R/T. When they heard Stovall and his "just one more pass," they started sweating out the flak.

## THE PINTAIL SONG

(to the tune of the "Whiffenpoof Song")

From the hotels down at Brussels  
To Liege where Nurses dwell,  
To the dear old Function bar we love so well;  
See the 5-0-6th assemble with their glasses raised on high,  
And the magic of their singing casts its smell.  
Yes, the magic of their singing of the songs we love so well,  
The Chisholm Trail, the Sparrow and the rest.  
We will serenade old Jimmie while life and voice shall last,  
Then we'll pass and be forgotten with the rest.

For we're poor little lambs who have lost our way,  
Baa Baa Baa We're little black sheep who have gone astray,  
Baa Baa Baa Peterson's Pilots off on a spree,  
Damned from here till eternity.  
God have mercy on such as we.  
Baa      Baa      Baa.



## 506 PILOTS

### CERTIFICATE OF MERIT



1ST LT. MARTIN E. ADAMS



1ST LT. LEONARD A. AIKINS



1ST LT. IVAN V. ALLEN



CAPT. HARRY E. ANDERSON



1ST LT. DREW W. BACON



CAPT. HARRY F. BAKER



1ST LT. FRANK J. BATES



CAPT. HARVEY P. BATES



1ST LT. BRONSON F. BAYLISS



1ST LT. GEORGE L. BRITTON, JR.

MAJ. ROBERT F. BEALLE



CAPT. CALVIN S. BOSIN



1ST LT. ARTHUR W. BROCK, JR.



1ST LT. MARK W. CAUBLE



2ND LT. DONALD B. CLEE



1ST LT. CHARLES R. CLONTS, JR.



1ST LT. KENNETH K. COBB



1ST LT. ROBERT L. DALY



1ST LT. MAX  
W. CONN

1ST LT. DONALD M. DICKERSON





1ST LT. CHESTER L. DUNSMORE



1ST LT. HUBERT P. EDWARDS



MAJ. RAYMOND P. ELLEDGE, JR.



CAPT. JACK W. ENGMAN



1ST LT. ROBERT G. FENSTERMACHER



CAPT. EARL FISHER, JR.





CAPT. RUSSELL A. FRANCIS

CAPT. CHARLES R. HANSEN



1ST LT. WALTER J. GABRIEL

2ND LT. PHILIP E. HARBERT



1ST LT. ROBERT C. GROUT

1ST LT. GEORGE H. GEHLING



2ND LT. ROBERT K. HENDRICKS



1ST LT. PAUL A.  
HEDERSTROM, JR.



1ST LT. CHARLES  
B. HOCHADEL, JR.



2ND LT. ARTHUR O.  
HOUSTON



2ND LT. ROBERT H.  
HUDDLESTON



1ST LT. ROBERT W.  
HUSE



CAPT. JAMES H. JONES



1ST LT. JOSEPH C. JOYCE

MAJ. ARTHUR E. JUSTICE





2ND LT. JOHN A. KEATING



1ST LT. ROBERT B. KLEMOLA



2ND LT. CHARLES E. LABNO



1ST LT. EDWIN M. LAUTER



1ST LT. THOMAS C. LEAKE



CAPT. THOMAS B. LITCHFIELD, JR.



1ST LT. CHARLES E. MATHENY, JR.



1ST LT. EUGENE J. McCLOSKEY



1ST LT. JOSEPH H. McDADE



2ND LT. JOHN C. McCLURE



1ST LT. JOSEPH L. McDONNELL



1ST LT. ROBERT C. MELTVELDT



MAJ. GEORGE W. McLAUGHLIN



1ST LT. DONALD N. MERCER



CAPT. DONALD E. MILLER



F/O MARION W. MORAN



CAPT. MILNOR B. MORRISON



F/O MARSHALL MUSHLIN



CAPT. JOSEPH NICHOLS



F/O MARK E. O'CONNOR



1ST LT. JEROME F. O'HARA



1ST LT. CHARLES W. PACKER



CAPT. SETH T. PARKER



CAPT. CARL S. PARSONS



1ST LT. JORMA A. PELTO



MAJ. HARRY G. PETERSON



1ST. LT. JOHN M. PORTER



2ND LT. ROBERT W. SCHAFER



MAJ. HAROLD G. SHOOK



1ST LT. IRWIN SIMPSON



LT. COL. JOSEPH H. SHERWOOD





CAPT. OLLIE O. SIMPSON



1ST LT. VINCENT A. SMITH



2ND LT. THOMAS W. SUTTON

2ND LT. ROBERT S. URBAN



CAPT.  
GEORGE W.  
STOVALL



1ST LT. WILBUR F. VINSON







1ST LT. ROBERT H. WALKER



CAPT. THEODORE P. WELGOSS



1ST LT. LEO WESTERINEN



CAPT. JIM B. WHITE



CAPT. JAMES D. WILLIAMS



1ST LT. CLINTON C. WINTERS



2ND LT. ANGIER G. WOODS



CAPT. EDWIN B. WRIGHT

1ST LT. HARRY H. YOCUM



## AWARDS TO PILOTS

RANK	NAME	NO. OF MISSIONS	AWARDS
Lt. Col. Joseph H. Sherwood		95	Silver Star, DFC, Air Medal and 16 Oak Leaf Clusters. Croix de Guerre.
Lt. Col. Robert W. Clingerman		6	Air Medal.
Major Robert F. Bealle		109	DFC with Cluster, Air Medal and 16 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Major Raymond P. Elledge		43	Air Medal and 7 Clusters.
Major Arthur E. Justice		95	DFC, Air Medal and 14 Clusters.
Major George W. McLaughlin		106	Silver Star, DFC, Air Medal and 19 Clusters, Croix de Guerre.
Major Harry G. Peterson		76	DFC, Purple Heart, Air Medal and 11 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Major Harold G. Shook		105	DFC, Air Medal and 17 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. Harry E. Anderson		100	DFC, Air Medal and 15 Clusters.
Capt. Harry F. Baker		79	DFC, Air Medal and 13 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. Harvey P. Bates		73	DFC, Purple Heart, Air Medal and 12 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. Earl Fisher			DFC, Air Medal and 16 Oak Leaf Clusters
Capt. Russell A. Francis		45	Air Medal and 7 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. Harry F. Freemantle		81	DFC, Air Medal and 13 Oak Leaf Clusters, Croix de Guerre.
Capt. Charles R. Hansen		92	DFC, Air Medal and 14 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. James H. Jones		91	DFC, Air Medal and 14 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. Thomas R. Litchfield		77	Air Medal -and 6 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. Joe Nichols		58	Air Medal and 7 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. William M. Lee		102	DFC, Air Medal and 16 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. Seth T. Parker		53	Air Medal and 7 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. Carl S. Parsons		83	DFC, Air Medal and 14 Oak Leaf Clusters, Purple Heart.
Capt. Ollie O. Simpson		95	DFC, Air Medal and 16 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. George W. Stovall		89	Silver Star, DFC, Air Medal and 16 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. Theodore P. Welgoss		89	DFC, Air Medal and 14 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. Calvin S. Bosin		88	DFC, Air Medal and 13 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. Barton P. Christopher		83	DFC, Air Medal and 12 BOLC.
Capt. Donald M. Miller		92	DFC, Air Medal and 14 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. James D. Williams		88	DFC, Air Medal and 12 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Capt. Edwin B. Wright		88	DFC, Air Medal and 13 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Martin E. Adams		42	Air Medal and 6 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Ivan V. Allen		67	DFC, Air Medal and 11 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Leonard B. Aikins		70	DFC, Air Medal and 9 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Drew W. Bacon		29	Air Medal and 2 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. John L. Barth		38	Air Medal and 6 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Bronson F. Bayliss		89	DFC, Air Medal and 14 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Arthur W. Brock		86	DFC, Air Medal and 12 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. George L. Britton		88	DFC, Air Medal and 11 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Frank J. Bates		46	Air Medal and 6 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Donald B. Clee		10	Air Medal.

Lt. Kenneth K. Cobb	79	DFC, Air Medal and 10 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Max W. Conn	45	Air Medal and 8 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Roland P. Dalberg	48	Air Medal and 7 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Robert L. Daly	8	Air Medal
Lt. Donald M. Dickerson	28	Air Medal and 4 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Chester L. Dunsmore	4	None
Lt. Hubert P. Edwards	73	DFC, Air Medal and 11 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Robert G. Fenstermacher	54	Air Medal and 9 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Woodrow W. Fields	2	None.
Lt. Walter J. Gabriel	41	Air Medal and 3 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. George H. Gehling	43	Air Medal and 3 Oak Leaf Clusters.
Lt. Philip E. Harbert	6	Air Medal
Lt. Paul A. Hederstrom	53	DFC, Air Medal and 9 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Robert K. Hendricks	1	None
Lt. Arthur O. Houston	1	None
Lt. Robert H. Huddleston	36	Air Medal and 2 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Charles B. Hochadel	22	Air Medal and 3 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Robert W. Huse	40	Air Medal and 5 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Howard J. Jarvis	57	Purple Heart, Air Medal and 6 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Alfred Jeffrys	1	None
Lt. Joseph C. Joyce	2	None
Lt. John A. Keating	25	Air Medal and 2 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Robert B. Klemola	50	DFC, Air Medal and 4 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Wilford Knighton	33	Air Medal and 5 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Charles Labno	9	Air Medal
Lt. Edwin M. Lauter	71	DFC, Air Medal and 9 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Thomas C. Leake	42	Air Medal and 6 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Charles E. Matheny	79	DFC, Air Medal and 10 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Eugene J. McCloskey	32	Air Medal and 5 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. John M. McClure	4	None
Lt. Joseph McDade	46	Air Medal and 4 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Joseph L. McDonnell	31	Air Medal and 3 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Harold W. McNabb	50	DFC, Air Medal and 4 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Robert M. Meltvedt	58	DFC, Air Medal and 7 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Donald M. Mercer	72	DFC, Air Medal and 9 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Jerome F. O'Hara	26	Air Medal and 2 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Charles W. Packer	76	DFC, Air Medal and 9 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Jorma A. Pelto	50	DFC, Air Medal and 4 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. John M. Porter	46	Air Medal and 7 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Robert Schafer	35	Air Medal and 3 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Irwin Simpson	36	Air Medal and 3 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Vincent A. Smith	37	Air Medal and 3 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. John C. Sullivan	10	Air Medal
Lt. Thomas W. Sutton	36	Air Medal and 3 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Robert S. Urban	28	Air Medal and 2 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Wilbur F. Vinson	29	Air Medal and 4 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Joseph H. Vivian	4	None
Lt. Robert Walker	51	DFC, Air Medal and 5 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Leo Westerinen	47	DFC, Air Medal and 7 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Angier G. Woods	41	Air Medal and 3 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Harry B. Yocum	71	DFC, Air Medal and 9 Oak Leaf Clusters
Flight Officer Marion W. Moran	37	Air Medal and 3 Oak Leaf Clusters
Flight Officer Marshall Mushlin	27	Air Medal and 2 Oak Leaf Clusters

Flight Officer Mark B. O'Connor	40	Air Medal and 4 Oak Leaf Clusters
Lt. Clinton Winters	40	Air Medal and 6 Oak Leaf Clusters

Staff Sgt. George O. Arsenault	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Austin M. Avery	Bronze Star Medal
Tech. Sgt. Harold J. Barlett	Soldier's Medal, Bronze Star
Staff Sgt. George W. Bolles	Bronze Star Medal
Sgt. Chester R. Boyd	Bronze Star Medal
Master Sgt. Behrman L. Boettcher	Bronze Star Medal
Tech. Sgt. Edwin J. Brajer	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Joseph E. Cody	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Douglas L. Coppinger	Bronze Star Medal
Tech. Sgt. Frederick W. Crane	Purple Heart
Staff Sgt. Clyde E. Davis	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Dale G. Fisher	Bronze Star Medal
Cpl. William H. Gomillion	Purple Heart
Tech. Sgt. Wade E. Hanna	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Benjamin M. Harrelson	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Donald B. Heaton	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. August W. Heine	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Everett S. Henning	Bronze Star Medal
Pfc. Victor E. Henry	Purple Heart
Staff Sgt. David H. Hickman	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Winfred E. Kennedy	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Tarry L. Knight	Bronze Star Medal
Tech. Sgt. John W. Knight	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Mack Large	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Thomas O. Marsh	Purple Heart
Staff Sgt. Oliver L. Marshall	Bronze Star Medal
Master Sgt. Eldridge C. Maxcy	Bronze Star Medal
Sgt. William J. McFadden	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Samuel F. Miller	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Peter Orlich	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Peers M. Patterson	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Burnett C. Porter	Bronze Star Medal
Tech. Sgt. Thomas Przybytek	Soldier's Medal, Bronze Star
Staff Sgt. Solomon L. Richardson	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. Harris G. Roberts	Bronze Star Medal
Staff Sgt. John H. Schuler	Bronze Star Medal
Pfc. Leonard E. Strunk	Purple Heart with Cluster
Pfc. Henry B. Szewczyk	Purple Heart
Staff Sgt. Lawrence F. Ver Conde	Bronze Star Medal

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# 507<sup>th</sup> FIGHTER SQUADRON

## ORDERLY ROOM

After several weeks of hectic processing at Myrtle Beach, S. C. the Headquarters Section had completed the necessary details in preparation for the journey to the ETO. When the Squadron departed from the U. S. on the 23rd of March 1944, the section was under the leadership of Captain Charles F. Mauger, Jr., Executive Officer, and Captain Rolland G. McCartney, Adjutant.

First Sergeant Frank Csonka, better known throughout the Squadron as the "First Broom", headed his Orderly Room "queers" (and no dirty cracks) into the war against the Nazis. Staff Sgt. Abraham Plotkin, the Squadron's only representative from Arizona, maintained the personnel records and that popular army form all so eagerly waited to sign, the payroll. Sergeant Jack Segal, a New Jersey delegate, was assigned as Classification Specialist and statistical Clerk. Chicago's pride and joy and good will ambassador, Sergeant Anton Gabel, was designated to handle the Morning Report and the Duty Roster. It was through the Duty Roster that he made all his friends. Sergeant Lloyd McKinney, from Texas, continued his duties as correspondence typist and file clerk in spite of streamlined war weapons like buzz-bombs. Pfc. Oswaldo Molinar, another Texas representative, was with the Orderly Room staff as distribution clerk until Belgium when he was assigned to the Communications Section as a switchboard operator. And last but not least, the spreader of good tidings, the guy that toted all our packages with war souvenirs, and most logical contestant for the title of "The Voice", our mail orderly from "North Boigen", N. J., Pfc. Bob Stoeve.

Having conditioned itself in England, from early April until July 1944 to the mobile field conditions under which it would have to work on the Continent, the Headquarters Section embarked with the Squadron for the cross-channel voyage to Normandy. Although the "Fighting 507th" hit the beaches without a mishap, Jack Segal was a near casualty after his trek up the famous hill at Omaha Beach under full pack and carrying such extras as Service Records and Form 20's. However, the section managed to remain intact throughout the six weeks' bivouac in the Normandy apple orchard despite the nightly air-alerts, and the daily "Battle of the Bees".

As the course of the war moved along, all took advantage of the opportunities for seeing France, including Paris and Reims. It was during the short stay at Reims that Captain Mauger was promoted to Major. Then came the hectic winter months in Belgium. Besides sweating out the buzz-bombs, Segal and McKinney were sweating double on what would come first, their orders for transfer to the Infantry or their 31st birthday, which would no longer make them eligible. V-E Day won out. While in Belgium, the section lost the congenial, well-liked Anton Gabel, who was transferred to Command Headquarters as assistant to the Command's Catholic Chaplin, a position for which probably no other enlisted man was as well qualified. The remainder of the original staff was still in Headquarters Section as it moved onto the holy soil of Deutschland, and across the Rhine to victory.

Subsequent to V-E Day the Orderly Staff received its latest addition, Pfc. Paul Drucker of Brooklyn. Captain Rolland "The Whip" McCartney, who had been with the Headquarters Section since the Squadron was activated in 1943, was transferred to the 508th Squadron as Executive Officer. First Lt. William H. MacMelville, former Squadron Supply Officer, was selected to assume the duties of Squadron Adjutant.

The members of the section may well be proud of the part they have played in helping to establish the organization's excellent record in combat and its contribution to victory in Europe. Remember, you guys who got out early with enough points for discharge, that it was the guys in Headquarters Section who ascertained the scores for you. And the ironical thing about the matter was that none in the section, with the exception of the "First Broom" were able to compute enough points of their own to attain the critical score.

## OPERATIONS

After arriving at Myrtle Beach, S. C., from maneuvers at Pollock, La., the Operations section was well trained and ready-for a winter's hibernation. Myrtle Beach suited Staff Sgt. Hubert B. Bonds and Sgt. Horace D. "Rebel" Ethridge very well; their homes were in North Carolina and Georgia respectively. The other two enlisted members, "dam yankees" Alex Martin of Massachusetts and John "Yonko" Martinick of New York didn't like the Beach so well.

After being there for a short while we began to think we definitely would not have a winter of ease. Our "hot-rock" A-24 pilots were pulled out and sent to Fighter RTU's, including Operations Officer Jim B. White. Replacing them were trained pilots from the RTU's, including some with combat experience. Capt. Howard L. Galbreath became Operations Officer, with First Lts. John E. Ray and William M. Lee as assistants.

Fortunately the enlisted men had recent furloughs, because all furloughs were suddenly cancelled and an intensive training program with P-39 aircraft was begun.

After much hard work, we departed for the POE and foreign shores, arriving in England in time to participate in the pre-invasion round-the-clock assaults on Festung Europa. Although the working day was long, we managed to have time for off-the-base activities and were soon taking to mild and bitter tea and crumpets in regular Limey fashion. All of us enjoyed the English mannerisms and speech, and spent as much time in Bournemouth as possible.

-On the move to Normandy, Rebel Ethridge with the advance echelon, preceded the rest of us by several days, and with Intelligence section personnel, cleaned and decontaminated a two-room combination farmhouse and barn for use as briefing room and office. We were glad when the pilots "policed up" a German barracks, section by section, and built a combination snack bar, briefing room and office on a grand scale. It was the best set up we'd had so far.

At night, "Bed Check" or "P. C. Charlie", the Jerry recce-plane, regularly passed over the field. And every night our ack-ack boys threw up a hellish amount of flak. Yonko and Pete Laurencell of S-2, on duty together one night, took shelter by the edge of a hedgerow. While in the prone position they heard sounds like objects falling through the trees and pelting the ground around them.

Said Pete, "What's that, John?"

"Apples," John promptly replied. The pelting noises continued, and they could hear the objects bouncing off the wings of the planes, fifty yards away from the trees. Hugging Mother Earth a little closer, John thought a minute then said in a matter-of-fact tone:

"Say Pete. Them ain't apples."

When things quieted down, they found jagged anti-aircraft shell fragments scattered about on the ground.

During the St. Lo breakthrough, S-3 began to have trouble coordinating the work of the line sections in a manner that would meet our rapid schedules. Greatest difficulty was the shortage of planes, because of battle-damage and general wear and tear. Operational planes stayed out longer than had been planned on armored column cover, and were on the schedule to take off again before they landed. In spite of, everything the squadron got off 13 missions on July 26, for a Group record.

Soon it became apparent to all that to stay in the war we would have to move nearer the front. In late August we jumped to A-48 just a week or so after the liberation of Paris. Suffice it to say that we had several passes to the city and enjoyed the scenery and the liberation celebrations immensely!

After a stop near Reims, we moved on to A-92 near St. Trond, a former enemy air base with two usable concrete runways. After some weeks in a small H-shaped shack formerly used by Belgique "broom-men" who made brooms for sweeping the taxi strips out of bundles of sticks, Operations together with Intelligence



moved into a fine building, again constructed from parts of a German barracks under the foremanship of Capt. Sherman N. Crocker, a good all-around utility man.

The enlisted men were quartered about half a mile from the line in tents. Everyone got busy and collected enough lumber to "winterize" the tents with floors and walls, as the nights were already becoming colder.

The squadron sent its first pilots home on rotation from A-92: Major Tice, Steve Leonard, and Duane K. Ash. "Skin" Galbreath, now a major, became commanding officer; Capt. James "Hoss" Mullins moved up from A-Flight as Operations Officer, retaining Jack Ray as assistant. Bill Lee then took over A-Flight.

By this time the gang had become pretty well acquainted around St. Trond and Brussels, only 40 miles away. Winter weather and short daylight hours gave everyone plenty of time for social activities. Life was a bed of roses until mid-December when the Krauts penetrated our lines in what later became known as the "Battle of the Bulge".

The buzz-bombs which had started to cross the field, often with an occasional landing and explosion, became numerous. Some would cut out just before reaching the field and we could hear them glide over very low. The silence that follows the cutting out of a buzz-bomb is indescribable. The only noise was the sound of bare feet slapping the floor as G. I.'s leaped out of the sack and scooted for foxholes, sans clothing and shoes. Next was heard the sigh of relief as the potent "flickety-boom" (phonetic interpretation of the Flemish word) swished by to land a mile or more away.

To add to our nervous apprehension another rumor made its appearance. As is always the case, it came from an "unusually reliable source". A large number of German paratroopers were being held in readiness, and soon as weather permitted, were to be used to destroy our fighter-bombers along the front before they could interfere with the enemy in the Bulge. All guards were doubled and everyone was on the alert at all times. Then came the famous Christmas Eve alarm. This is our version.

About 2230 hours, December 24, the message came over the phone, "Parachutists have landed on four corners of the field." All personnel were rounded up and told to fall out ready for battle. Quite a few were in bed and didn't take time to dress properly for the cold weather. Many had been imbibing freely of drinks that had been carefully hoarded for the Christmas season, and were in the day-room singing. Everyone fell out in a high state of excitement, some nervously cocking their weapons. A few carbines were discharged in the area, but no one was shot, fortunately. Submachine guns could be heard sporadically chattering all over the field.

The men were placed in squads and dispersed around out corner of the base behind trees and embankments, and in ditches. Patrols were sent out to scout the immediate vicinity. Bonds and Ethridge were in an "ambush squad" and lay freezing in the snow. Martin was a member of a patrol and sweated out a fusillade of bullets from some eager ambush-men who might mistake him for a parachutist. Martinick was the C. Q. in Operations, and reportedly spent the hour sweating profusely in a cold bomb shelter. After an hour the straight story came out: the crew of a crippled RAF bomber had bailed out, four kilometers from the field.

New Year's Day we were all up early, finished with breakfast and on the line by daylight, eager to get those Thunderbolts "in the blue". Our takeoff was being delayed because there wasn't enough 'blue'. The clouds were breaking but were still low.

We heard a formation of planes cross the field, and in a moment come screaming back in a "buzz job", a "buzz job" with bullets. It was a mixed flight of Me-109's and FW190's. After some scrambling and leaping about, all personnel found safety in bomb shelters and foxholes, and under cletracs. Apparently the targets were our planes only, because no personnel were injured or fired on. After making several passes, in which a number of the enemy were downed by antiaircraft fire, they left the vicinity. Bonds and Harry Beckett of S-2 returned to their offices. After answering several phone-calls and assuring the Orderly Room that no one was injured, they heard an aircraft approaching the field in a power dive. Looking out the rear door they spotted the plane, easily identified as a P-51, and they continued to stand there and watch. Suddenly, and with a hellish roar, another

plane vaulted across some roof tops, just 50 yards away and directly in front of the P-51. It had a big black-and-white spinner and was literally "looking down their throats". About that time they saw its black crosses on the wings, and bolted for the bomb-shelter. This may have been the plane that bellied itself in near the other side of the field and became the Group's Number One war souvenir, recovered, repaired, and repainted with white stars and a gaudy red finish.

During this time Major Galbreath became a lieutenant colonel and Deputy Group Commander. after two remarkably swift promotions. "The Hoss" Mullins, now Major, took over the squadron, and Jack Ray became Operations Officer with Bill Lee as assistant. Promoted to major also, Jack made a forced wheels-up landing just inside our lines in March on his 98th mission. That seemed close enough, so he made the next rotation list home. He was replaced by Major Kenneth S. Hodges, a recent addition to the squadron after an Alaskan tour.

In early April we moved into the Vaterland, then across the Rhine to Y-86 southwest of Kassel.

Our C. O., now Lieutenant Colonel Mullins, returned to the States, Capt. Lee went to Group Headquarters, and Major Arthur E. Justice came down from Group to be Operations officer. Major Hodges became commanding officer. Major Justice went home in a short while, and Capt. Richard I. Gedeon became Operations officer, with Capt. John I. Rogers Jr. as assistant.

## INTELLIGENCE

The Intelligence section of two officers and three enlisted men started with Capt. Andrew F. Wilson, who was appointed Squadron S-2 in February, 1943, shortly after activation. The section grew to a maximum strength of three officers and five enlisted men, most of whom were lost in turnover and T. O. changes. Of the staff that served overseas, Corp. Peter E. Laurencell was added at Key Field. Staff Sgt. Harry C. Beckett, from the disbanded 623rd Squadron, became NCO in charge at Congaree; First Lt. John H. Zabel Jr. joined as Assistant S-2 at Myrtle Beach, and Sgt. Joseph H. Saling, draftsman, was transferred from Group Headquarters at Winkton.

The work of the section required patience, a sense of humor, diplomacy, thoroughness, accuracy, and attention to detail. Every man was well suited to his job, and each made an important contribution to the section's performance. "Air Force" Wilson was calm, "Able Jack" Zabel was ebullient; Harry was thorough and accurate, Pete patient, Joe ingenious. And all had a saving sense of humor, which made them as contented a crew as you could find.

There was very little routine about Combat Intelligence. Jack Eggers used to say about interrogation of the pilots, "Why any dope can get up and ask those questions-even I could!" But there was more to it than that. You had to get all available information ready before the mission, prepare cockpit maps and time-schedules, and "clue" the mission-leader before briefing, then take your part in the actual briefing. At interrogation you had to cover a uniform number of points about the mission. But the details of every mission varied; some were told simply and clearly, others came out bit by bit in a jumble with ours the responsibility to weigh the credibility of each pilot's story and write a report as succinct and close to the truth as possible.

It was the duty of the intelligence officers to do the actual briefing and interrogating, but such was the caliber of the men in the section that any one of the members could and did brief and interrogate competently in emergencies, Pete in particular had a streak at St. Trond when he interrogated more missions than any two-striper in the Ninth Air Force.

Harry organized a fast map and travel service that set some sort of a record at St. Trond. We had been waiting all afternoon for a preplanned mission to get off. All of a sudden Lt. Col. Hood called down from Group with a new target and instructions to gather the pilots immediately. Harry and the boys went to work. Three minutes later when Col. Hood walked in the briefing room, Capt. Wilson had the target "poop" to give him; the Colonel

briefed quickly, and when he dashed out the door eight minutes after his original call, Harry's crew had a fresh set of maps, all properly marked, ready for him and the flight leaders.

While at St. Trond, Capt. Wilson was moved to Group Intelligence, where he could have a freer hand running the Group's public relations together with Sgt. Al Gelders. Jack Zabel became S-2, and later captain, running the section with his irrepressible good nature, to the satisfaction and amusement of all.

Joe Saling's fine charts and art work were features of every briefing room; a "hobby man", Joe led, in the production of fancy belts woven from colored wire found in the hulks of bashed enemy aircraft, and set up a little business in tooled leather goods, the raw material also procured from abandoned enemy equipment. Pete, ever a steady bulwark in the section, typed and typed and typed-among other things, those rambling squadron histories, always two weeks to two months late, through A. F.'s dilatoriness, and always pushed out under pressure.

The section's sidelines-always popularity-boosters-included classes in Aircraft Recognition and Escape and Evasion for the pilots, and blasts to the enlisted men on censorship and Safeguarding Military Information. Troubles of all sorts we listened to, sympathized in most cases, and did what we could ("Leap off, brother; don't tell your troubles to me, I got enough of my own!"). Rumors were the bane of our existence; it paid, we found, to tell the straight story before the rumors started, but they homed in on every wind and had to be denied or clarified with facts. "Station Cinq-Cent-Sept", a nightly "radio broadcast" over the Public Address system, was one of our stunts in Normandy, to keep everyone informed and amused along about the sack-time hour. Unfortunately the P. A. system went kaput and was held up for repairs in England so long that the broadcasts were never resumed.

We operated out of a Brockhouse trailer-van and a glider-crate in England, the van and an old barn and a transplanted German barracks in Normandy, just the van supplemented with an outdoor briefing map under a tree at Bretigny, the van and a pair of blastwalls erected by the Germans at Juvincourt, an H-shaped shack and a rebuilt barracks at St. Trond, another rebuilt barracks at Kelz, and a superfine hangar-office in Fritzlar. The barn in Normandy was more colorful than it was practical. A small two-room clay building, it was full of filth when we arrived. We cleaned out hay, bottles, cobwebs, wooden shoes and old rabbit skins, and with the help of the decontamination truck and the Chemical Warfare boys, washed and lime-coated the interior. The barracks the pilots brought back piece by piece from the vicinity of St. Lo was a big improvement. After we had been in the barn a week or so, two decrepit-looking peasant women appeared, and as far as we could understand their French, claimed that disreputable-looking place had been their home.

We liked our work; next to flying we thought it the best job in the Air Corps. There was only one drawback. We were in close contact with the pilots continually, knew them well, made most of them our friends and then had to lose some of them. Hell, you know how it is . . .

## ENGINEERING

At Winkton our line was located around the east end of the field, along the taxi-strip which circled the runways. The runway itself was a heavy wire-matting laid directly on the ground: the perimeter track looked like chicken-wire interwoven with laths and tree limbs to hold it in place during rainy spells or in the wake of propeller wash. Our maintenance hangar was a large "blister", an arched corrugated iron structure, all roof, with open ends. We spent our first Sunday, Easter, hanging canvas over the ends.

The boss and his foreman-in-chief were Capt. Robert "Murphy" DeGregorio (then first lieutenant) and Master Sgt. George W. "King" May.

What a disappointment when we received our first consignment of aircraft P-47D-5's, 6's and 10's, the oldest model Thunderbolts to be had. They were combat-weary and had seen plenty of action with other British-based Groups. Our Service Team began to issue equipment, and Sgt. "Errol" Flynn was the first to receive a gas truck.

It looked like a 1918 model, and the rest of the gasoline boys started sweating it out. Finally Corp. "Mammy" Duke got his -a jackpot-a new model with a closed-in cab and all the latest conveniences. Trucks came in for Sgt. "Flat-top" Sharon, Corp. "G. I Jackson and "Pop" Hargis, and we were fully operational, servicing before takeoffs, after missions, and wasting a lot of paper belly tanks during that "put 'ern on, take 'ern off" period.

Shortly before May 1, 1944, we received an allotment of brand-new P-47D-22's; our specialists and flight personnel gave the new silver ships a thorough 100-hour inspection. Our squadron was the first in the Group to have all its planes inspected and operational by May when we flew our first combat missions.

June 3 we started painting white and black markings on the fuselage and wings of the aircraft, everyone in engineering and the flights taking part in the distribution of paints and handling of brushes. But the paints were water-colors; and it rained. Over and over again from morning till night the paint was applied. It almost ruined our sense of humor, but all ships were ready with proper markings for D-Day.

Flak-holes started giving the sheet-metal boys a workout. Staff Sgt. William F. "Rover" Bader and his crew, "Hot Potatoes" Brandon, "Hobbsy Dobbys" Hobbs, and "Shorty" Bruskin went into action patching holes, changing ailerons, stabilizers, and rudders. They saved the section many man-hours and missions by fixing parts that could only be replaced from depots after considerable delay.

About June 28, the "air echelon" pulled out for France. As the convoy was leaving the field, the rest of us left behind received a teletype requiring the installation of air filter screens on all aircraft for use on the dusty strips of the "Far Shore". Master Sgt. Leo H. "T. O. Leo" Hirt, and Tech Sgts. E. L. "Hedy" Head and "Little Chief" Schaefer worked with the crews instructing and installing the screens. The weather was raw and bitter; when it wasn't raining it was cold and miserable, but the work went on day and night, the A. M.'s working under tarps with flashlights, sometimes sitting or lying in pools of water.

A month after D-Day we completed our move to France, and found ourselves again in the rain. The new strip was carved from orchards and farmland, on about a five per cent grade, with a decided dip in the middle. To the southwest, off one end of the runway, lay St. Lo, many times our target. When the Breakthrough began, we could see the planes take off, circle for altitude, go into their dives and drop their bombs, and come back to the field. Then servicing with fuel and ammunition and another takeoff. Missions were running 20 minutes per flight, and we were all on the ball. Hit them again and again, the section felt; the more they get from us the less the ground forces will have to suffer.

The friendly flak at night caused more trouble for the sheet-metal men; the fragments fell all over, and some naturally pierced the skin of the planes parked in their revetments.

On the move to A-48, scrounging parties began on a large scale. Tech. Sgt. "Sparkie" Barnett scoured the countryside and Nazi warehouses for radio and electrical parts. A car or two drifted in, and once a German troop-carrying bus was picked up and put into use.

Staff Sgt. "Eager" Bevers and "Brrrrrrctck" Burack went all out, under persuasion, to wire snack bars, living areas, line sections and offices for lights.

At A-68 near Reims, Master Sgt. "Big Chief" Howell, the hot cletrac jockey, drank more champagne than he did water. He ran the specialists and supervised packing and unpacking on the moves. Sgt. Jose Guerra was lord of the tool- room, and received many compliments from rank on his proficiency.

The propeller specialists were kept busy at St. Trond, especially when the boss, Tech. Sgt. Clayton "One Corpuscle" Meech became languid in his methods and relapsed into hibernation for the winter, but Staff Sgt. Johnny Jay Gardner handled the epidemic of engine and prop changes in stride, while Staff Sgt. Anthony "Duke" Consalmagno danced his way from ship to ship and sang encores.

Bad weather and heavy usage had us working from early morning till late at night during the winter in Belgium. There was preflighting, and changing of instruments and dead batteries, inflation of tires, cleaning frost and snow from the planes, clearing revetments, runways and taxi strips. From England onward the watchword was "Improvise!", and improvise we did.

Here the Red Cross came into our lives with hot coffee and doughnuts on the line. It certainly was good.

If it did nothing else, the winter weather made a worrywart out of Staff Sgt. "Vitamin Flintheart" Hutchinson in the instrument section. One of his jobs was to replenish the oxygen supply in the planes before and after each mission. On cold mornings the oxygen reading would fall off, and he'd fill the bottles up to the correct reading. During the morning as the planes became heated after preflighting and the action of the sun on the metal, the oxygen would soar beyond the level of capacity.

Staff Sgt. Eugene "Old Sarge" Setzer, another instrument man, had an unchangeable idea that all instruments should be blacked out to cause the pilots less trouble ... Our man-handler, Sgt. Garnett Fitzgerald, was in hot water most of the time and made the line chief's hair turn grayer day by day.

The most worked men of the section were Sgt. Earl "Curly" Smith and Corp. Henry Herode, the carpenters, who had to build boxes, mess halls, hangars, racks, showers, offices, and sometimes dayrooms and the like, to make life more livable in the E. T. O. Smitty always slept with his hat on-wonder why... Pfc. Korl, a newcomer from the infantry, joined Smitty's crew, and at Fritzlar, where boxes were going home by the thousands, the three men detailed themselves to answer the box demand, in all sizes and shapes. Good work, boys.

Corp. Jerome "The Mad Painter" Catherwood is one of the most adept men we have seen at adorning the sides of an airplane with pinups and the like according to the taste of each individual pilot. He must have been good, if other units called upon him to do some murals for them. The only thing that bothered him was to have to do something over. "Fightin' Gator"-or is it "Sar Pete"?- anyway Y8-W, the War Bond Diane, put the greatest strain on his artistic patience. "Sar Pete", as named by Lt. Courtney, was approaching its 200th mission without an abort. Lt. Varn was assigned the plane when Lt. Courtney went home and changed the name to "Fightin Gator". Ninth Air Force still photographers took some pictures of the "Gator" for publicity purposes, then the Group Commander decided that "Sar Pete" was a more unusual name and had it restored. More photographers came down, this time to take movies; the earlier still pictures showed the name "Fightin Gator," so after long consultation "Sar Pete" was painted off and "Fightin' Gator" painted back on for posterity. Who moaned? Catherwood. Who groaned? Catherwood. Who painted? One guess. Capt. Wilson had to bear "the painful news of each change to the artist; anyone who says he isn't a diplomat for swinging that deal just doesn't know "The Mad Painter".

In the welding department Corp. Winfred "Snuffy" Smith was the strong man; he welded everything from airplane parts to showers, steam-tables and snack-bar furnishings.

Two clerical NCO's ran the Engineering office, annoying the boys in the flights with boring details like switching from belly tanks to bombs in ten minutes, taking shots, getting paid, getting a shortarm, dental appointments, pass list, furloughs, leaves, details, K. P., special guard duty, laundry day, salvage day, processing of all sorts, clothing checks, chow time. They gave advice free over the telephone, took in a lot of bull, and incidentally kept mission records and files on promotions and the status of engines and aircraft, salvaged Forms I and IA, wrote reports and handled correspondence. They were promoters of good will, window-gazers who sweated out the planes as long as the crew chiefs did: Staff Sgt. Rochow "Groucho" Scarpine, who really never knew what it was all about at any time, and Corp. Thomas "Kid" Reynolds, who wanted to be a gunner.

A-Flight consisted of six planes with permanently assigned pilots and crews. Tech. Sgt. Arthur C. "Jug" Poole was flight chief, and most of us had trained with him in the States. Staff Sgt. John Sulzynski and Staff Sgt. "Horizontal" Lute crewed the Group C. O.'s plane, Y8-A, the "Short Squirt", which finally bore eleven swastikas,

eight earned when Col. McColpin was in the R. A. F., and three added with us. During the early days "Sully" changed so many carburetors that today he may be considered an authority on the subject. Y8-C was crewed by Earl J. "The Character" Thomas, and George A. "Muscles" Donaldson. That was really a tough ship. It was the first to undergo major maintenance, when it became involved in an accidental collision on the ground just before takeoff. Time after time it came back from missions with flak damage big enough to require a change of wing or empennage. In spite of the beating it took, old "Ginna J." was one of the two ships in the squadron that lasted through the entire campaign.

Staff Sgt. Cade E. "Katy" Willis, with Sgt. "Slick" Harris and Sgt. John "Hap" Houser, crewed lucky "H", which never needed any major maintenance outside of a couple of engine changes, Willis kept "Angie" in the air for approximately 240 missions, and it was still in commission when hostilities ceased.

By contrast Staff Sgt. Ignatius "Ignition" Coppola, working with Harris and Houser, crewed 13 different planes. Some were lost to enemy action, some were claimed by high-ranking officers, and a few were lost in accidents. For a long time Coppola wasn't troubled with an engine change. That luck broke with a vengeance when he was assigned to "L" which needed six engine changes in quick succession, four of them handled by Coppola. Next time try knocking on wood, Sarge.

Staff Sgt. Deon J. Gillen, the "Desert Fox" from Oasis, Utah, and Hans L. "Hansel" Hole, later known as the "Beau Brummel of Brussels", kept V, "Peggy", in flying condition for many months until a later-model plane was assigned to their care. Staff Sgt. Tony Hollendorfer and Sgt. Lloyd "Red" Smith could probably qualify as oil-leak detectives; we know they should be successful in civilian life as oil-well drillers. This much we know: by diligence and patience they mastered those leaky engines and kept their planes ready for combat.

At A-5, when we were accidentally bombed by our own air force, "Sully's" pilot, Col. McColpin, was about to leave on a mission. Nearby watching the projected departure stood Lt. Col. Johnson, deputy Group commander. As the bombs began to fall, everyone headed for the only shelter in sight, a shallow ditch. In they went Corp. Leroy Sherman, Sgt. Sulzynski, Lt. Col. Johnson, and Col. McColpin, all according to rank. Of course, the fact that the colonel was strapped in the cockpit may have had something to do with his being last.

That was the time John Duke, A-Flight's refueling man, broke his own record for hitting the dirt. With the power of 100-octane fuel, he dove through a hole in a hedge and into the ditch beyond. It took the able assistance of several of his comrades to pull him back through the same hole.

At A-92, A-Flight built a shanty that just couldn't be beat. Large and roomy, warmed by a good stove, illuminated by many windows and decorated with beaucoup pinups, it was our pride and joy as well as a haven of rest from the snowy winter weather.

Staff Sgt. "Sammy" Samu and Sgt. John Wells, who crewed D, the famous "Snortin Bull", for Lt. Col. Mullins, wired the shanty for sound, using a discarded headset to pick up music and news which came over the field phone line. The sounds were amplified with megaphones made of scrap metal. One defect in the building was noted a little too late. The door seemed too small during the buzz-bomb rushes, and was damaged a number of times during the crush. It was also damaged when we locked Sammy outside and he opened it up with an axe!

At St. Trond "Jug" Poole became ill and was sent to the hospital at Liege. He was evacuated from there during the Battle of the Bulge, and after being in several other hospital's was sent to an infantry replacement center where he really sweated it out. After returning to the flight, Jug was so thankful for his escape that he tried to do all the work on all six planes. He soon calmed down.

And then came New Year's day of '45 and those famous last words, "Look at those Spits coming in for a buzz job!" After the strafing was over, A-Flight had five of its six planes out of commission because of enemy action. But all our planes were back in action the next day except R, which Sully was crewing at the time. It was really peppered, and out for several days. Speaking of action, you should have seen A-Flight vacate that shanty. "Slick" Harris and "Hap" Houser were found hiding under a bulldozer half an hour later.

At Kelz, Gillen's plane was shot down by a direct hit from an 88 on a Nazi tank while working over the Ruhr pocket.

During our overseas service Staff Sgts. Ignatius Coppola, D. J. Gillen, Anthony Hollendorfer, Ernest Samu, Earl J. Thomas and Cade E. Willis received Bronze Star Medals for meritorious service. The whole flight was proud to share in the Presidential Unit Citation.

B-Flight took shape gradually under that ever-smiling Tech. Sgt. Jimmy Howell. Lots of things had to be learned, and fast, since most of the men had no previous experience on P-47 type aircraft. Everyone was eager as hell, as is usually the case with something new, and it wasn't long before the boys could overcome minor difficulties without calling in the "brains" or "wheels."

One of the first insignias in B-Flight was an arrangement of yellow, blue and red on Staff Sgt. "Dazzlin" Dittmer's plane. The originator, Lt. Reiff, hailed from Michigan, and the painting was supposed to represent his home state. At any rate it never failed to draw comment or a five-minute glance from Col. McColpin himself, which was quite a compliment to that expert paint-mixer, Jerome Catherwood, "The Mad Painter".

Everything went along pretty well until one of those major problems turned up-a wing change on the ship crewed by Staff Sgt. Charley Irvine and "Butterball" Fetkin. It was the first in the outfit, and proved that the boys could tackle anything, for the ship was on the job again in record time. It showed that the men of B-Flight didn't go in for "Hangar Queens": and "Hangar Queens" just weren't in style in the AAF.

Jimmy Howell got himself promoted to Maintenance Chief, and we were joined by that tow-headed guy from Ohio, "Arky" Vaughan, who remained as our flight chief till the war was *fini*.

The dust-filter job, required before we left for France, had the short-handed ground echelon working in the rain 16 to 18 hours a day under wing-covers draped over the planes. The job was accomplished without any major difficulties, but the filters represented our toughest task, so far as maintenance went, our whole time overseas.

Records of which we are mighty proud:

Staff. Sgt. John Knight's plane, 'the "Eager Beaver", before it was lost, led the IX TAC in total bombs dropped, ammunition fired, and total missions without an engine change. Johnny received the Bronze Star Medal for his outstanding performance as crew chief.

Y8-X, crewed by Staff. Sgt. Roye Lewis and Staff Sgt. Volney Harrison returned safely from a mission, minus one cylinder and a magneto, shot out by flak.

Here were the teams:

Flight Chief-Tech. Sgt. Raymond M. "Arky" Vaughan  
Staff Sgt. Charles R. "Mimi" Irvine  
Sgt. Stanley J. "Butterball" Fetkin  
Staff Sgt. William E. "Stinky" Roach  
Staff Sgt. Nunzio A. "Junk Man" Primarolo  
Staff Sgt. Fernwell "Glenwood" Summitt  
Sgt. Leverett C. "Gigolo" Nelson  
Staff Sgt. Carl J. "Dazzlin" Dittmer  
Staff Sgt. John A. "Ripper" Hall  
Staff Sgt. Roye E. "Red Cross Commando" Lewis  
Staff Sgt. Volney V. "P-Vine" Harrison  
Staff Sgt. John H. "Eager Beaver" Knight  
Staff Sgt. Thomas A. "Tommy" Moore

## C-FLIGHT

The outstanding performance of C-Flight under adverse conditions was the result of the able and untiring efforts of Tech. Sgt. Cornie "Mick" Gallagher of Philadelphia, Pa. He took great delight in rounding up the boys at four a. in. for early missions - which finally got off about four p. in. We place the blame entirely on the English weather. Mick and his boys were first in the chow hall, first to preflight, first to "bitch", but last to leave the flight line. The late hours at night were not wasted, for we always knew our ships were ready for early takeoff in the morning.

Staff Sgt. Charlie "Water on the Knee" Snyder crewed the Squadron Commander's ship from England to Belgium, with the assistance of Staff Sgt. Julius Hicks. His most embarrassing moment was the day Major Tice went for a hop and landed almost immediately with a gas-leak; the water-cap was missing. The crew had a total of 161 missions on Y8-E, "Elsie".

Staff Sgt. Harry "Ten Per Cent" Webre, who preferred to work and did on his day off, and his prize assistant Sgt. "Oil Screen" Ross, who pulled the screen after a taxi-mission, crewed the only ship in the Group that got a buzz-bomb.

Staff Sgt. Bob "Brussels" Holway and his assistant Robert "RPM" Meader crewed Capt. Weller's "Striped Ass Ape", which knocked down the squadron's first two Jerries. Unfortunately "RPM" Meader had the bad luck to get sick and was returned to the good old States.

Staff Sgt. Leon "Kansas Sunflower" Shalz and his capable assistant Jimmie "Cafe Royal" Givens from the hills of Tennessee, grease-monkeyed the "Rocky Rose". Once they gave their plane a complete overhaul to determine why the water system wouldn't function properly. As usual after three days' labor the plugs were found to be the cause of the trouble. Their plane also had two Jerries, and approximately 140 missions.

Staff Sgt. John "Coal Miner" Novak and Sgt. Robert "Sarah" Burrows crewed "Miriam". Their plane was the first in the Group to hit 100 combat missions' on July 18, 1944. While preflighting one morning, they thought they had struck oil; they discovered a defective oil gasket on the oil-screen cover was allowing oil to seep over the entire fuselage. The crew had 300 missions and one Jerry.

Staff Sgt. Ralph W. "Junior" Moore and his crack assistant, John "Pee Pee" Welcomer crewed the "Ramblin Wreck", about the only aircraft in the squadron with an appropriate name, mechanically speaking. Capt. Blair thought he was flying a jet-plane when he pulled 75 Hg. several times on takeoff. Later it was discovered that one balance line was disconnected. Staff Sgt. Welcomer forfeited a day off the following week.

Crewing our flying hotel, the UC-78, were Staff Sgt. Robert "Boll" McPherrin and Corp. "Pass Happy" Centrone, a former tin-binder. The crew led a fairly easy life as the "hotel" was usually gone for several days at a time, to Paris and elsewhere, doing a good job bringing up the officers' morale during its rum-running days.

D-Flight was activated at Winkton, with Tech. Sgt. Pearl "Pop" Henderson as flight chief. The following crew chiefs and assistants were assigned: Staff Sgt. Ray McVicker and Sgt. Denver "Tabor Labors" Tabor, Staff Sgt. Harry A. Benson and Sgt. Sidney M. Elbert, Staff Sgt. William T. West and Sgt. Fred S. Furness, Staff Sgt. Samuel "Fuzzy" Futch and Corp. Leroy Chybowski, Staff Sgt. Arthur Crettol and Sgt. Albert "Cactus" Pearson, Staff Sgt. Bill Dover and Sgt. Sam "Seaweed" Ilavsky.

It was the misfortune of the flight to lose the squadron's first pilot and plane in combat, followed a few days later by the loss of Mac's "Bobby Snooks" in a tail-chewing ground accident. Was Mac surprised when 20 minutes later he had a replacement!



Elbert and Benson had "Test Hop Zuzu"; although it was appropriately named "Sad Sack", the ship was one of the few that finished the war with the squadron. At least its fuselage did; at various times new wings, new engines and new empennage were added.

In Normandy Willie West's plane came back shot up beyond repair and was turned into the Service Team. At Paris D-Flight was noted for its crop of motorcycle mechanics. At Juvincourt, Capt. Crocker, flying Y8-V crewed by West and Furness, got himself the D. F. C. for two Jerries on one mission.

In Belgium the "Fightin Gator", Republic War Bond Plane No. 28, originally named "Sar Pete", was in the news and the flight went Hollywood. The "Gator" completed 200 missions without an abort under the expert crewmanship of "Fuzzy" Futch and "Tachometer" Takavitz. The Ninth Air Force, in recognition of the feat, filmed the 200th mission, with Lt. Col. Moon flying a photographer in TAC's AT-6 to get shots of the formation in the air. After the 200th bomb was painted on the fuselage by Col. Moon himself for the benefit of the cameras, and "The Mad Painter" added the DFC, Air Medal, and Purple Heart, the plane was flown to England on the first leg of the trip to the States for a War Bond tour. Rumor had it that the ship was bashed in England, but nobody ever really knew what became of it. The "Sar Pete" was for Lt. Courtney's wife; it was all a young relative could make out of her full name, Sarah Peterson. The "Fightin Gator" was for Lt. Varn's home state of Florida.

Sgt. Dover left the flight for Officer Candidate School, and "Cactus" Pearson took over "The Cold Dope". Dover, along with Benson, Futch, McVicker and West, received the Bronze Star Medal for their work.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The last months of 1943 and the early months of 1944 saw much activity in the 507th Communications section. Shortages in Personnel were filled at this time and a rather extensive training program was followed,

Lt. Jack Eggers and Master Sgt. Paul Phyllaier were Communications Officer and Section head, respectively. Lt. Kenneth McDowell was newly assigned as assistant Communications officer.

The radar section consisted of Tech. Sgt. Thomas M. Waterstraub, Staff Sgt. Wilfred E. Horn and Sgt.'s Philip Towsley and Robert W. Zarn. All of these men had been with the outfit since a few weeks after the activation of the unit. Sgt. Seely V. Hall brought the section to full strength when he was assigned to the outfit from tech school at Boca Raton, Florida,

The radio mechanics' section was also nearly complete. It had five men: Tech. Sgt. Robert E. Mills, Staff Sgt. Jack Weiss, Sgt. William F. Smith and Corps. Tony Nardella and Walter Swenton were all old. men with the outfit. This section was tilled when Pfc. Harry Neilson arrived from the 48th Fighter Group and Pfc.'s Glenn Oakes and Lewis Wardwell came in from tech schools.

Tech. Sgt. Robert A. Koettters and Staff Sgt. John H. Hocker were radio operators. Sgt. Kenneth O. Williams had been an orderly room clerk for some time and a radio operator in civilian life. He became an overage in the orderly room and was put into communications. Sgt. Edmund Barbour and Cpl. Ralph J. Bolt shipped in from operators' school, at Scott Field, thus completing this section.

The CNS (Control Net System) section was completed with all new men at this time. Prior to this period, Earl I. Shiery, Weiss, Towsley and Corp. William A. Branney were operating the C. N. S. equipment. The section was then filled by Staff Sgts. Arnold G. Ervin and Theodore Folia, Sgt.'s Gordon J. Burke and Julian B. Espinosa, and Cpl.'s Edwin Brooker, Frederick Sera. Thomas V. Wallis and Robert Bernhardt. All of these men came directly from school at Tomah, Wis.

Also with the outfit at this time were Sgt. Donald S. Long, Pfc. Frank, A. Anderson, and Pvt. Peter P. Collura, teletype men. Cpl. Robert Davidson was lineman and Branney and Pfc. Jerry J. Bartello were switchboard operators. Clerks for the section were Sgt. Michael D. Matthews and Cpl. Victor W. Max.

This was the section as it stood at the time of our departure from the States; however, many of the men were of lower rank, achieving their ratings overseas.

The last months at Myrtle Beach were busy ones for the section. All preflighting was done in the mornings and nearly all maintenance was carried out at night, the section being divided into a day and night crew.

The Squadron had mostly P-39's, which were equipped with a radio set new to us-the SCR 522. Many hours were spent learning to tune this set and mobile units taught the personnel more about its operation and maintenance. The section was given the job of operating runway control and did so most successfully. The truck used for this purpose was soon dubbed "The Canary" inasmuch as the entire vehicle was painted a vivid yellow.

Radar was installed in all the planes at this time. It was thought at first a man would be needed to guard each plane, which would mean a terrific amount of guard duty. It was decided, however, that one man per ramp would be sufficient. The equipment was rather difficult to install in P-39's and more than one radar man threw every word in the book at radar, the plane and everything in general.

The radar used had a simple but important function-identifying our own planes from those of the enemy. The radar mechanics only tuned and did simple checks on these sets. All major repairs were done by signal outfits. This was also the procedure for radio mechanics.

The radio operators set up their station and were soon smoothly operating with the other squadrons. They also attended code classes to improve their speed and accuracy.

The work of the operator is monotonous. The sole purpose of this section is to keep up contact with other outfits when both telephone and teletype fail. At Myrtle Beach the squadrons communicated with each other for practice. Group communicated with all outside organizations.

Long, Collura and Anderson were soon going on teletype. This is a most important means of contact as nearly all operations and orders to the Group came by this means.

A new switchboard arrived and was put into operation immediately, each member of the section having a turn at it.

Horn took over all maintenance of power units and kept them all in tip-top condition up to the time we left for the E. T. O.

The new CNS men soon had their trucks in operation, taking over from the radio mechanics. The CNS equipment consisted of three trucks, one transmitter, one receiver and another receiver with a rotating directional antenna-the homing van.

The entire section had been "sweating out" Phyllis's fatherhood before he left the states. He left for home in January and the section soon learned of his daughter, little Virginia. We all chipped in and bought the baby a war bond, clothes and a comforter.

During the last days at Myrtle Beach a few P-47's were flown in. The radio proved to be in a rather difficult spot to reach but as later models arrived from time to time this situation improved.

The communications section was one of the first sections to board the "Sterling Castle" at New York-boarding a day before the main body of the squadron. During the crossing Max felt none too good, Hall wrote a 13-page

letter and Waterstraub and Mills, Sergeants of the Guard, stumbled about the ship in the utter darkness of the Mid-Atlantic. Food conditions had even Phylliaer contemplating volunteering for K. P.

The section was quickly set up in a tent at Winkton, England, and soon had the area wired for lights. Lt. MacDowell and all the radio operators were assigned to Group for duty. All teletype men were also called to Group and their work now was most important. Branney and Bartello did shifts in the Group switchboard, at times conveying air raid alerts to the various squadrons. Another telephone operator, Pfc. Frank R. Pitra, came from the 368th Fighter Group to join the section. Collura attended code school and became a group code man.

When the planes started flying combat missions, detonator plugs were installed in all radar and the sets were tuned. CNS began work in earnest. Their main job now was to home in planes which had lost their bearings during missions over the continent. By this means, the planes came home by the straightest route, saving much gasoline and time, and perhaps lives and aircraft. Many a pilot has reason to thank the "homing pigeons". This type work continued through our stay at St. Trond.

The rest of the section moved smoothly. Crystal changes, an all-night job, were completed efficiently. All tuning of transmitters had to be done after sundown as did all preflighting. Again two crews were formed. It was at this field that the men had an epidemic of "tool dropping". Quite often you might see a radio "queer" sprawled beneath a P-47, the belly cowling removed, probing for a lost screwdriver or pliers. At one time both Phylliaer and Towsley wriggled into the tail of a plane in search of some tool.

The men also had their share of nights a la foxhole and a la London!

After crossing the Channel and landing in Normandy Matthews left to take charge of the Group message center and Corp. Carmen Marcantonio from Tech Supply took his place. A new teletype operator, Donald S. Tait, joined us here from the Eighth Air Force.

Here, as in Winkton, the section set up in tents. We encountered difficulty, however for we would no sooner have a tent erected than it would be racked off by some rank for some other purpose.

There was construction work going on when we reached the field and it caused Davidson no end of trouble. His lines were constantly chopped to bits by the numerous cletracs in operation at the base. This was soon eliminated to a degree when the lines were either run through buried cables or strung on poles.

Here, too, communications aided in wiring the area and the Public Address system was installed. Some work was done at night but because of German recce planes and our flak, all personnel tried to finish all work before flashlights were needed.

At the time of the St. Lo breakthrough bombing of our field, Sgt. Williams was on duty at the Group radio station alone. He and Major Toll alternately occupied a position beneath the radio van.

It was here that Phylliaer turned barber and more than one man emerged from beneath his shears looking like a clipped sheep.

All were experiencing a little of this war for the first time and nerves were a bit frayed. One night Nardella was on area-guard. Phylliaer was C. Q. and Waterstraub Sergeant of the Guard. In the wee hours of the morning Nardella heard a noise in the bushes behind him. "Who's there?" No answer but more noise. "Who's there?" Again more noise. Like Superman's first cousin, Nardella turned and made a record ten-yard dash past the Orderly Room into the orchard. This action brought out both Phylliaer, his tommy-gun on full automatic, and Waterstraub with his carbine, both ready to mow down a squad of SS Troopers. Waterstraub walked toward the bushes and gave the challenge. In answer came the long-drawn out bray of a French donkey.

Quite a few communications men were employed in the shuttle run to Bretigny. Once there, the section moved into its first building overseas, a full-sized wooden shack. Telephone lines were strung and routine maintenance followed. Nearly all the section's personnel were able to visit Paris.

We returned to tents at Juvincourt. As at A-5, two tents were used so that the noise and confusion of the men in the shop would not bother the telephone operator. Again, there was little but routine line duty.

At St. Trond, Belgium, the section again had a building, did more work and lost and gained personnel. The section set up in a small brick office, all that remained of the large hangar. A tent was pitched for storage. Wires were strung a considerable distance to both line and living areas but headquarters and the flights were not too far. The section aided in wiring the enlisted men's area for lights and putting high voltage lines into the line area. The P. A. system was installed. Various modifications and crystal changes were accomplished and an SCR-522 was installed in the UC-78.

The winter months caused a little trouble for the section. One night a high wind blew off the roof of the shack but caused no real damage although some equipment got dirty and wet. Snow didn't aid in line repairs and neither did a group of tanks that moved into the road by our living area.

At this time the CNS section started homing both Ninth Air Force planes and heavies and fighters of the Eighth Air Force.

The CNS men gave 2000 homings in one month's time and set a record of 65 homings in 2 hours. For this achievement Sgt. Shiery was awarded the Bronze Star Medal.

During the New Year's Day strafing Towsley blandly stayed at the switchboard while other section members dove helter-skelter for the nearest shelter. It is undecided as to whether he was doing his job to a "T" or whether he was just too scared to move.

At the time of the Von Rundstedt offensive and the Battle of the Bulge, Horn was on detached service with the 2nd Armored Division-maintaining SCR 522's in the tanks for ground-control communication with our planes.

Horn's story, as told to Sgt. Al Gelders for a public relations release, is as follows:

"I've just returned from temporary duty with the Second Armored Division, which helped stop the German drive into Belgium. I'm glad I went for two reasons.

"I saw with my own eyes how our ground forces can take it, and how they can fight back. I got a new slant on the war, seeing men fight and die out there, watching German artillery shells exploding all around us, and seeing how our boys kept going through rain and snow and cold, officers and men fighting together and living together in the field.

"The other reason is I heard from the men themselves how highly they regarded our fighter-bombers working with them. They think a lot of our P-47's. They said it's rough when they're not flying. It's plenty rough down there anyway.

"The weather was bad almost the entire time I was with the tanks. There were only about four or five flying days, even for the Cub observation planes. The fighter-bombers were a big help on the few days they could operate.

"I joined the combat command I was to work with at a little town in Germany. I was to maintain the special radio equipment used to direct planes attacking with the tanks. Early the next morning we moved out. The Germans had broken through and we were going to plug the hole.

"When we reached Ciney, a pretty-good-sized Belgian town, we found the people moving out. They were scared. They said the Germans sent a patrol through there just a few hours before, using American tanks and jeeps, but had withdrawn.

"Will the Americans stay?" they wanted to know.

"I heard they all moved back into town in a couple of days.

"One of the days when Ninth Air Force fighter-bombers were flying, the position of six German tanks was learned. The planes knocked them all out. Another day I had a ringside seat on a hilltop while the fighter-bombers were hitting a town the Germans were in.

"I didn't see much of the German Air Force. They strafed us one day, but didn't do any damage. The same night they were overhead, but ran into our Black Widows. A German Ju-88 was shot down in plain view. I saw him spiraling down to the ground in flames.

"German planes didn't give us much trouble, but their artillery did. They knew where all the roads were and they kept knocking holes in them. But the last three days I was there every move we made was an advance.

"It's rough as hell with the tanks, but I want to go back. I hope next time the flying weather will be good, and our fighter-bombers will be up there with us. Then the tanks will really go to town."

The members of the section sweated out the buzz-bombs, the Christmas Eve scare and the events of New Year's Day, none the worse for wear except for a few gray hairs here and there.

We lost quite a few men at A-92. Lt. Eggers left to become adjutant of the 508th, and was replaced by Lt. Louis D. Sedrish from an A-20 outfit. Oakes, Neilson and Ward well were carried as overages, and were shipped to the First pathfinder Group. Towsley left for the infantry, but later returned to the Air Corps. Max was transferred to the 506th, Pfc. Oswaldo Molinar came in from the Orderly Room to become a telephone operator, and Collura rejoined the squadron from Group.

Little was done at our first field in Germany. The switchboard was set up and lines strung. The shop was set up in a French tent laid with a wooden floor. Line maintenance was mainly preflighting and returning of sets.

Fritzlar saw the section in the best quarters it ever had on the continent. The first days again saw the installation of switchboard and lines although these were soon dispensed with, Group using the German system installed at the field, using only one central switchboard. All the switchboard operators helped in this operation.

The section repaired all the broken windows in its rooms, found ideal work benches and cabinets and was soon smoothly settled.

The officers obtained a number of German radios and the section put many of them into operation so that both officers and enlisted men might have the use of them. A Signal Corps receiver was also installed in the day room from which speakers were run to various rooms.

When the planes were moved across the field the section could not remain in the hangar building entirely. A number of tools, spare sets and dynamotors were taken to the C flight shack. All tuning was still conducted in the hangar shop, however. This set up worked most satisfactorily.

Following VE Day line work fell off and all boxes and chests were painted and equipment packed in preparation for movement.

When the point system was disclosed Phyllaier was the only man with enough points for discharge, having 92. At this time, also, the army asked for volunteers for the Army of Occupation. Both Nardella and Swenton volunteered and were sent to the 36th Fighter Group. They were replaced by Staff Sgt. Ruel R. Skinner and Corp. Walter J. Brudek, both high-point men.

At Bernhausen the section was again set up in a French tent. Lines were strung and the switchboard put into operation once more.

Before long about half the personnel were released from the line and those remaining carried on what little maintenance there was. The CNS men set up their equipment but soon tore it down.

By the middle of July 1945 the tent had been torn down, Group handled all telephone lines, the planes were gone, the majority of the equipment was disposed of, and the CNS had been driven to a place near Reims and turned in. The section had concluded its ETO operations.

Just at this time, however, both teletype and telephone at Group failed and the radio operators borrowed equipment from the 324th Fighter Group across the field in order to keep up contact with higher headquarters.

Nine men made up the Control Net System crew. Our network was originally defensive in purpose, part of a system to protect important objectives from enemy aircraft. Radar continuously tracks the path of the intruders, giving readings on their location, altitude and approximate number, while the extensive CNS network tracks our own interceptors and in conjunction with, the radar guides our planes to a point of interception.

We were all thoroughly indoctrinated in the defensive use of our system, but when we struggled through our last tech school, we were sent to Myrtle Beach to join an offensive fighter-bomber group.

When we arrived, we were surprised to find the CNS unit all but non-existent. We quickly devoted ourselves to the homing station, consisting of three radio vans. one held two transmitters, the second, two receivers, and the third, two receivers and a directional antenna. Upon the calibrated base of the revolving antenna the operator reads and then forwards by radio the correct "steer" for the pilot to take toward his home base.

Our station at Myrtle Beach was set up by a Signal Corps team under Lt. Jack Hanley in November, 1943. A fractured pole caused a delay, but soon the station was operational and the Signals boys were teaching Group and Squadron radio men the fundamentals on our set, the first assigned to the Group. Tech. Sgt. Shiery, later our boss, was one of the Signal Corps instructors. He left with the term to set up more homing equipment at other U. S. bases, then returned to us and transferred to the Air Corps.

The order in which we joined the 507th was as follows - Folia, Ervin, Espinosa, Wallis, Bernhardt, Burke, Shiery, Sera, and Brooker. All three squadrons took turns operating our station at Myrtle Beach; the most important work our crew did was to give a fighter plane an emergency fix. (A "fix" is a position-check; the operator reads the calibrations on the base of the antenna opposite the scale used for homings, and tells the pilot what his bearing is from the station). The pilot reported that a B-24 had blown up in midair out over the Atlantic, and needed an exact fix so the Air-Sea Rescue could be directed to the right location.

In Winkton we operated much as we had done in the states, homing our non-operational aircraft for a couple of weeks, then settling down to bring back flight and squadron formations in earnest. Around D-Day our planes seemed to be in the air more than they were on the ground. The landing-pattern was impressive to watch, after dark when we'd brought the Group back from the French coast. We'll never forget sweating out the pilot who was trying to get in with his canopy completely covered with oil. It was nearly midnight, and Lt. Col. Hood from Group Operations was on the mike, giving landing instructions. The landing was safe and successful-to the relief of all of us who were monitoring the two-way conversation.

Some of our biggest thrills came during the close work with the armor in the St. Lo Breakthrough, when we listened to spotters reporting tanks, troops and gun positions, heard the formation leader's command to dive, and his terse recital to the ground-controller of the observed results.

At St. Trond our work was increased, to include night fighters and planes of the Eighth Air Force as well as our Ninth Air Force ships. Ervin and Shiery were on duty the day we homed a record of 65 callers in two-hours-which is really pouring on the coal. Throughout November, 1944, we had scores nearly that high every day. Some planes came in battered wrecks, one or two motors out, short of gas, wounded personnel aboard. One B-17 came in after a midair collision with another Fort, carrying the body of a crewman from the other plane in its bombardier's compartment. Probably our most spectacular homing involved a P-51 pilot who made his first "Mayday" call from deep in Germany, east of the Rhine. "Mayday" is the emergency signal adapted from R. A. F. usage, derived from the French "m'aidez"-"help me". The P-51 was on fire, the canopy was jammed shut, the wheels and flaps wouldn't work, and the pilot couldn't bail out. The TAC controller had him first and tried to get him down on a new field near Aachen; it was still under construction, so we picked him up. After a few minutes the plane came in sight, the fire out by this time. It had a hole in the rudder large enough for your foot. The pilot made a safe belly landing, but had to wait for the crash-crew to pry open the canopy before he could get out.

The night-fighters always kept up an interesting cross-conversation. Because there were so few of them up at one time, they took more liberties with "radio chatter" than our pilots could, and wisecracked back and forth with the ground controllers. It wasn't so funny one night when some P-38's were in the landing pattern and an intruder fired a few bursts. No damage, but many a startled jump by all the hands.

Kelz, Fritzlar and Stuttgart wound up our homing career uneventfully.

## ARMAMENT AND ORDNANCE

The P-39 Bell Aircobra was the plane at Myrtle Beach, so we thought who didn't have to fly it. Sleek, beautiful, big cannon in the nose, a fine air chariot. Then the awakening in England; we prepared for one ship, and fought with another, the P-47 Thunderbolt.

Various games inspired by the sporting crowd appeared on board ship on the way across. Carl "Steak" Stakel won upwards of \$400. Too bad he couldn't buy food on the "Starvation Castle". Wally Reinhardt pulled K. P. willingly and seemed to get fatter while the rest of us counted newly-visible ribs.

We settled down to hard work in England, trying to find enough sun there to get a tan. Before actual operations started, three of us achieved prominence by helping extricate a pilot from his plane, smashed and burning after a landing accident. For their courageous action Lt. Vince Kerrigan, Frank "Limey" Brunner and Tom "Big Chin" Lattimer were awarded the Soldiers Medal.

Oh my aching back-around-the-clock work. Two shifts were instituted, loading bombs by hand, a circumstance later changed, much to our relief. By this time Little Howard Miller had his trusty box camera out going strong. Where are those wonder shots you took?

Three men we knew of won't forget how it is to work all night in a cramped cockpit—Lt. Charley Young, Lauri Lehtinen and Jack Ramey. Installation of manual releases was the reason behind it all, as an important mission was on tap requiring simultaneous release of all bombs—which couldn't be done at that time with our electrical releases.

Out-guess the guesser—what bomb load this time? Constantly changing targets required various combinations of bombs. Sometimes when Command got real contrary, five changes per mission resulted. The Church of England would have been shocked indeed at some of the adjectives splitting the local atmosphere.

We learned quite a bit about English customs and currency, but we still don't know what "HCS" meant on the honey-bucket wagon that always managed to pass during chow-time.

Romeo "Polinsky" Achtabowski was dubbed the "walking tool box"; he managed to have the right tools always in his pocket. Bill "Grogan" Coogan went to Scotland and came back raving about his good time, while Otis "Slip-joint" Pearson had a "cat-ate-the-canary" smile after Blackpool. Cliff Cabage made the team as an A-1 Fire Fighter. "Junior" Goodwin and "Personality Smile" Polk joined us and remained inseparable buddies.

"Frenchy" Dupuis and George "Soft-Spoken" Kilargis took good care of social life in Bournemouth, using the Red Cross as their base of operations. Coming across the Channel, Glenwood F. Moon tried to prove that jeeps can swim; then he sweated three months before his baggage finally caught up with him . . . Ed Crittenden proved he was no mountain climber on that bluff overlooking Omaha Beach; he stopped with the rest of the mob on the hilltop, but a C-47 breezing in for a landing soon changed his mind. Hey Ed! How does it feel to be chased by a Big Bird?

In Normandy the nightmare of-manual bomb-loading was ended when Lt. Young had a winch installed on the weapons carriers, courtesy of the Tank Ordnance outfit. A-5 represented bees and cider and our first chance to use Blue Book French. It wasn't long before some of, our master linguists mastered enough triple-talk to have washing done.

Weather was fair and warmer with occasional flak. Billy Maxam stood guard one night when a dud 90-mm buried itself a scant 20 feet away. Helmets came into their own, which brings to mind a story about "Twinkle Toes" Reinhardt. By some devious means, he had acquired a pudding. Having no other receptacle, he put it in his helmet. That night during the air raid alert, he forgot the pudding. For further details, consult "Puddinhead" Reinhardt.

Joe Scott and Charles "Throcky" Seyfarth, during the unfortunate bombing of A-5 by our heavies, sought shelter in a ditch and accidentally tipped a garbage-can in with them, making it easier to slide. Chuck Cassata and Brunner were caught out on the runway riding bicycles. The final count: two men, two bicycles, and four different directions.

Anthony J. Augustin and Ed Crittenden, the Chemical Warfare boys, proved themselves friends of the Common Soldier with their portable showers—the decon-unit—and doubled as fire-chasers and plane-washers. John "Gabby" Hayes' pilot downed our first two Jerries on one mission. Listening to Hayes tell it, the war was over . . . Trouble was encountered keeping stray cows off the taxi-strip. Del Boccio and Cassata came to the rescue by riding herd on their bicycles. And "Don't Fence Me In" was still just a dream in some composer's frontal lobes!

Franklin "Sack" Johnson turned up broke a few days before payday, but the obliging medics gave him a free hair cut. A plane wing proved itself harder than his head. Does it hurt, Sack? . . . "Jake" Schrader was undisputed tobacco-chewing champ, if and when a chaw was available. Does he miss the cuspidor around the cracker barrel back home?

At Bretigny, we found a miniature German trolley system. We tried to fix it to service the planes by track, but operations forced us to leave before much track was laid. However tracks to Paris were made day and night . . . In the heart of the Champagne country, we all thought it a special delight to eat K-rations and drink champagne from canteen-cups. Stem-glasses are a low device of civilization. There were potato patches on the airfield, and plenty of greasy hands to give French fries a special taste.

Belgium: Clarence C. Hord joined our organization and became an armorer; three cheers to you. "Gabby" Hayes became an institution behind the day room bar, mixing wild tales, Benedictines, and brandies. Brussels became the favorite haunt on days off; there it was that Ralph Gray lost his watch. What time is it, Ralph? ... That



Christmas we well remembered because of the paratrooper alert. Richard Cather will recall it well, for he was runway guard. Remember Brunner preflighting his Thompson?

New Year's started with a bang, when the Jerries came down strafing. Milt "Big Boy" Hamman stayed above ground, firing his carbine at the swift-moving targets ... During the long cold winter nights, Leroy Sherman loved his elongated siestas after supper so much that his tent-mates had to wake him up regularly to go to bed. He was awakened one night and told to get up for breakfast. Without asking any questions, he had a good start to the mess-hall before snickers gave the joke away.

Davenport and Stakel vied for the title of Hearts King in the stove-pipe league. Stakel also livened up the evenings with trumpet tunes ... Del. Boccio conceived a bomblift with Jerry tail-wheels; it seemed fairly practicable, and he promised to mechanize the next one, with telescopic sights and push-button controls - - . "Okie" Kliegl and Don Person contributed to the squadron party by putting on acts and skits Y8-W, the War Bond plane, crewed by Ramey and Everly, went home on exhibition. "Lew" Grau became famous for his friendly approach to business matters as assistant armament inspector- Thanks for the helping hand, Lew.

A faulty incendiary fuse for a napalm bomb exploded while being handled by Joe Scott. Casualties were Joe, so seriously burned he was lost to the squadron, Ray Miller and Avrom Samoville, hospitalized, and Ramey, slightly injured. To Joe, one of the swellest guys in the squadron, we wish the best of everything.

Lt. Young instituted a get-together to ease over all the section's problems. Results were great ... Don Fine kept murdering the hillbilly classics. You name it, I'll sing it, he claimed ... Ollie Gregory enlivened many a party with his agile dancing, which we Young men envied. You're only as old as you feel ... Ask "Gravel Voice" Daws, our Armament chief, how many hairs he lost on that jeep ride on the icy pavement with the boss, Lt. Young, at the wheel ...

Al "The Body" LeTourneau became flight chief of the "Clunkers", the Group training squadron instituted at St. Trond, teaching rookie pilots the rudiments of cockpit armament.

Germany: With the coming of D. P.'s to take over the, detail work, John Davis became the handy man, with his knowledge of German and Polish ... "Stubby" Kuhl disappeared just as Mickey Rooney came to camp. Any significance? ... Ed Molenkamp worked long hours to fix his outboard motor, visualizing a life of ease at the Eder-See Rest Camp, then being run by Lt. Young. When he did get there, he spent three days rowing. How did it get broken, Lieutenant?

"Tiny Foot" Russell won the biggest pair of boots in a raffle at the squadron party. Some days you just can't make a pfennig Jack Jensen, after long months as an armorer, joined the motor pool as parts man. "Candlestick" Ford, after passing a G. I. automotive course, indulged in his hobby. Harold Reis won his feud with Moon by default when the latter joined the occupational forces ...

Final counts showed Don Person's plane out in front with 240 missions, and Block's with 236. Total bombs dropped, 8,093; total ammo expended, 1,477,629 rounds.

John Jenkins took over Moon's position as armament inspector, but not his glasses ... Lehtinen won a carbine-shooting match ... So wound up Armament's overseas career, Photo men, by T. O. attached to the Armament section, didn't appear in the Group till January, 1944. Assigned to the 507th were Corp. Milton Liberty and Pfc. George Plavetich. With what little equipment there was, cameras were boresighted within a week and the P-39's went up on test photo missions.

In Winkton, the initial lack of tents had us working in the open. Many squadron members were taking pictures with their own cameras, and were anxious for processing. With the help of a changing bag, a table, old cans, and some chemicals, we got their work out for them. Additional useful equipment reached us in England, which was all to the good.

When we hit Normandy, the refrigerator was unpacked and turned over to the Snack Bar, and the packing cases it came in were converted into a dark-room. All gun-camera film was sent to Ninth TAC for processing. The men in the section boresighted the cameras, made replacements, put in and changed film after missions, Reports were made with each magazine sent to Ninth TAC. Processing continued on the side-personal snapshots, and PRO work for Capt. Wilson.

Back at Winkton Liberty was sent out to get some crash-pictures of Lt. Green's ship, burning after some frag bombs fell off while landing. He was none too eager, especially with the memory in his mind of the time he was taking close-ups of a blazing P-51 in Florida and 50-caliber slugs started popping in his direction. So he picked a spot behind a steam-roller, and by bobbing. back and forth, finally got the necessary shots.

During the first two weeks in Normandy, we developed 200 rolls of personal film. While there Liberty and Plavetich both were promoted to sergeant.

Major Tice had a gun camera mounted on a handle installed in his cockpit. He would go out on a mission, drop his bombs, then circle and take pictures while the rest of the squadron went down. He returned with some fine shots. After one mission, he told his crew chief, Charlie Snyder, that he had some really spectacular pictures. He picked up the camera to remove the film and it was empty. The Major, instead of chewing out the section, kidded us about it. That slip-up never happened again.

The stops at Bretigny and Juvincourt were too short to do much setting up. At A-92 in Belgium, we picked out a shack, remnant of a bombed-out German building, which turned out to be our best lab to date. New equipment permitted the work to be turned out more quickly, and the pilots took some of the burden off us by doing their own processing up in their barracks. But PRO was working in full force, and with the help of some straight talking by Lt. Col. Moon at a supply depot, had a C-3 camera issued to the section. Capt. Wilson arranged the desired shots, and we took 'em.

Once the captain wanted a shot of a crew chief warming up his plane in the wee hours before daybreak, about 0530. Liberty said fine, if Capt. Wilson would agree to be there to supervise and stage the shot. The picture as finally taken showed a crew chief meeting his pilot after the last mission after sunset!

Here Corp. Bill Alsbrooks joined us, from a Photo Recon outfit. We took the usual ribbing about not having enough work for two, much less three; but between trips to Brussels and Liege, gun camera work, and those everlasting PRO shots of social functions, parties, briefings, crackups, the brass in Group, etc. etc. we managed to keep busy.

At Fritzlar something new in the extracurricular line turned up, A lot of the boys in the squadron wanted cameras, and the infantry had them-all kinds of good German models. Licitly or illicitly, Liberty and Plavetich managed to scrounge up and pass out 50 cameras—Leicas, Rolleis, Retinas, Exactas—sometimes, but rarely, at bargain prices. We became "experts"; anyone with a camera to buy or sell consulted us.

When the war ended in Europe, we had little to do but sweat out the next move. The combat film was edited and passed out to the pilots, and the C-3 camera was kept till the last possible moment for publicity and historical shots.

An elite but sometimes "forgotten" crew were the Ordnance boys, the only gang besides the medics who didn't wear Air Corps insignia. The chief was that Belmont, Mass., ward boss and gay Lothario, Lt. Vince Kerrigan ("They're all good kids!") ably assisted by Tech Sgt. Joseph P. Lannon. Stalwarts of the section included Staff Sgt. Alvin Jones, a demon driver in a weapons carrier, and Sgt. John J. Schneider, primate of the paperwork. Then there were Sherman Dixon, who knew as much about clippers and comb as he did about fuses and TNT, and Henry DeBoer, ace softball pitcher, whose Dutch family background made him a valuable asset in Flemish Belgium, and ever cheerful Bill Boturla.

Most versatile was Sgt. Paul H. Bernat, who could make almost anything out of wood and metal, and cut hair like a master barber besides. "Barney" turned out folding desks, fancy slit-trench toilet seats, a clever little hook-gadget to simplify fusing of bombs, and "tailored" bomb -cradles. His bomb -bumper, a brace attached to the back of the bomb -service truck to prevent hung bombs from swinging, was an important safety and efficiency device that won for him commendation from Ninth TAC and a mention in the Ordnance Sergeant magazine recommending widespread adoption of the rig. The bomb -bumper was his chief claim to fame till that night in Fritzlar when the M. P.'s caught him slightly off-limits.

"Me Polski, me Polski," he protested in his best Polish, and the hoodwinked gendarmes let him rejoin his D. P. friends.

## SQUADRON SUPPLY

"And that's all you have to do!" These simple words from the POM team uttered to a group of pale-faced supply men at Myrtle Beach during the last days of February,

1944 did more than anything else to make all supply men borderline cases for Section Eights. Such momentous declarations as "Lafayette, we are here" and "Give me liberty or give me death" faded into insignificance.

The next few weeks were busy ones, an understatement of course. Preparation for Overseas Movement became as much a part of every man as his serial number and his dog tags. Before it was over, Doc. Proudfit wouldn't have been the least bit surprised to find all five squadron supply men lying at his door for sick call; diagnosis, "war weary".

A word about the personnel who bore the brunt of the avalanche. Staff Sgt. Alphonse A. "Barce" Barcellone, from America's 49th State—Brooklyn, of course—was the sparkplug of the outfit, the man who knew all the answers and didn't begrudge help to those who needed it. James W. Sweeney of New York City doubled in brass for Barce whenever the occasion required. Sgt. Robert S. Husted gave strong support in the backfield, with the aid of Corp. Joseph J. Coletta, of Lawrence, Mass. The presiding officer, Lt. William H. MacMelville, wasn't bashful about claiming Boston, Mass., as his favorite hunk of the U. S. A., and with the support of the aforementioned characters made the 507th Supply section tops in "friendly service with a smile". "The customer is nearly always right" was more than a worn out motto, it was a code of ethics.

In spite of all kinds of doleful predictions the squadron arrived at Camp Shanks completely equipped and with individual wardrobes that had us all feeling like followers of Lucius Beebe. A week at Shanks convinced us that our Myrtle Beach preparations hadn't permanently maimed us; otherwise, how could we have had strength enough to take off on our 12-hour passes to the Big City? Lt. MacMelville had himself a soft detail. while at Shanks—that trip to Brooklyn with the rest of the Group S-4s to check on equipment lists turned out to be a picnic, or so we were told. Incidentally, we received invaluable assistance while at Camp Shanks from Lt. Kenneth L. Dodd whose primary duty was Personal Equipment Officer, but who was appointed Assistant Supply Officer just when we needed help most. Barce and Jim Sweeney have promised never to tell what happened to all those shoes Lt. Dodd requisitioned for the squadron, but we hear they had a hot time there for awhile.

The day came—maybe we should underline that and say "THE day came". We gathered up our 413 pounds of personal baggage apiece and hauled ourselves up the gangplank; no bands, no pretty girls, no ticker tape, just us. From the 23rd of March until the 4th of April we saw lots of water, heard lots of rumors (all straight stuff) and sweated out the sub which we were all positive was just waiting for a lucky crack at us. However, no sub, no strafing attacks, no nothin'; a disappointing trip, with nothing to tell our grandchildren.

Our meadow in Winkton, known officially as AAF Station 414, had all the conveniences of the forest primeval, including tents, and after a delay of several minutes, dozens of newly-dug foxholes. Why, we were in a war

zone! Of course, we practically never saw a German plane, or anything else German for that matter, but those nightly raids all around us, with the sky lit up by the flash of pounding bombs and crisscrossed with an ever changing pattern of tracer fire from the ack-ack guns while slender pencils of light wandered hungrily in every direction, made it easy to believe a foxhole was one of our most important pieces of equipment. Yes, we definitely knew there was a war on.

Our new Squadron Supply Section was neat, but not gaudy. A far cry from the wonderful concrete floored buildings of our training days, our two tents were more than adequate to care for the needs of the squadron. As we recall it now, our worst problem was the terrific blast of wind and dirt that always hurricaned in through every crack in the tent whenever the plane parked nearby got its prop whirling, which was often. Sweeney and Coletta spent as much time collecting the files from every corner of the tent as they did handling the regular supply business. In Winkton came our first definite realization of just how rationing operated; coal was rationed, wood was practically non-existent, soap was cut to a minimum and we were even rationed on the number of pieces of clothing that could be sent to the laundry. Some of our happiest moments were spent in trying to solve the weekly riddle of what had happened to all those extra pieces of laundry that went out and never bothered to come back. Incidentally, it was at Winkton that we first learned what the Inspectors in the States meant when they told us paperwork was practically eliminated when we arrived overseas; they meant that the supply of paper was practically eliminated but that the number of reports, requisitions and channels was increased at least 500%. Some cards, those inspectors.

D-Day found us operating smoothly and with a regular routine, aside from such minor crises as getting in new pilots and not having enough tents to house them, and trying to convince our unconvinced GI's that the army knew what it was doing when it filled our requisitions for size 36 battle jackets with mostly size 40s. Toward the middle of June we were alerted for movement to "the far shore" and then began a repeat on our Myrtle Beach days with the slight difference that we now had 100% of our equipment instead of just Minimum Essential Equipment. Joe Coletta and Bob Husted did a magnificent job of supervising the marking and packing of our equipment, while Barce and Jim Sweeney officiated like the experts they were over all the paperwork and other headaches that were a part of the movement. Wonder if anyone will ever forget those hours of waterproofing all the vehicles, only to have last minute instructions to de-waterproof them? We imagine the air still has a bluish tint to it, reminder of the language that covered the area when we received orders at the last possible minute to re-waterproof all the vehicles again. That waterproofing material was one of the strangest items we were ever called upon to requisition; up to then we'd chased after everything from scotch tape to 2 1/2-ton trucks, but to try and make us believe we were to secure material that would transform those trucks into amphibious models—that was expecting us to believe too much. Only catch to it was, it worked.

Near the end of June we finally went out of business in England. Our section was broken down into two echelons for the movement, with Barce going ahead with the first lot of our personnel to set up operations in Normandy. Lt. MacMelville took off at the same time with most of the squadron's vehicles under his wing. All the vehicles were loaded with either men or equipment and the procession to the assembly area at Southampton looked like some creation of Barnum and Bailey's. Last minute shortages of equipment were picked up at Southampton, the waterproofing on the vehicles was given the final once over and off they went to the docks. Here once again the army's policy of "hurry up and wait" was put into effect and two days and nights were spent in the rain until our Liberty ship was ready for us to load. Most of the loading was done at night, interrupted only by an occasional air raid alert or the exploding of a buzz bomb around the docks. Loading completed, the trip across the longest 90 miles of water in the world was uneventful and on the 30th of June the vehicle party landed in Normandy. We were all given our first glimpse of combat activity when a vessel a few hundred yards from us hit a mine off the Normandy beach and within 30 minutes was completely out of sight beneath the water.

The personnel party, of which Barce was a part had crossed the Channel in another ship and had preceded us to our new strip by two days. Here Barce took over as Acting First Sergeant until several days later when First Sgt. Csonka arrived. Sweeney and Joe Coletta were among the last to arrive, having stayed in England to make certain that every piece of our equipment managed to make the trip. Bob Husted came over with the second vehicle party and had the misfortune to be in one of the jeeps which wasn't quite amphibious enough. It just

plain sank as it rolled off the landing barge and all the men in it and two or three other jeeps had a swimming party which they hadn't counted on. We know they hadn't planned on it because they happened to be carrying their baggage and their guns at the time-not exactly swimming attire. Those items were our first battle casualties so far as equipment is concerned. For awhile it looked as if we'd have to add at least three jeeps to the casualty list, as the tide was coming in at the time and it was an impossibility to recover the vehicles right away. In fact, it wasn't until the next morning that the tide receded far enough to see the jeeps, almost entirely covered with sand. They were hauled out and towed to our new base, but it took all the ingenuity of our Transportation men to get them in serviceable condition after their dunking in salt water and sand.

Once again our section started to function in the apple orchard that served as a squadron living area in Normandy. Site A-5, as it was known in them days, also lacked many of the conveniences that we'd been so used to at home, but by this time we considered ourselves seasoned in the ways of combat operations so all pitched in with zeal. Judging from the waistline that Jim Sweeney started to develop, many of the men thought it was his idea to have the supply tent set up right next to the squadron mess tent. The farmer who owned the orchard we set up in had a nice stock of apple cider, so he immediately was put on Barce's list of people worth knowing. How that Brooklynite could get along with anybody and everybody and still not give the Supply Room away is something the rest of the section could never figure out.

Our Normandy retreat served us well. Here our biggest problem aside from the important question of how far from the tent our foxhole should be located (Joe Coletta had this down to a science; before the first wheeze of the alarm had sounded he was in the hole, even if his attire sometimes consisted only of a helmet) was the mixture of glue and cement the French called mud. Our supplies always came through, which to us was a miracle, of planning on the part of the various supply services, and in addition to the regular clothing and equipment we even had our own PX in the supply tent. Never a dull moment from dawn to dusk. While at A-5 most of the supply men managed to get in a few sightseeing trips. Because he was also the Squadron Transportation Officer and Tech Supply Officer, there were many occasions when Lt. MacMelville had to be away for a day on business and Jim Sweeney or Bob Husted nearly always managed to catch the gravy train and make the trip as driver, as neither Barce nor Joe ever drove the jeep at all. In those days the names of such towns as Cherbourg, Caen, St. Lo, Carentan and Avranches were of intense interest and most of us got in on the ground floor to do our sightseeing and picture-taking.

The end of August found us again splitting into two echelons to move to the vicinity of Paris -such anticipation you wouldn't believe. Once again Barce went ahead as our supply representative and acting First Sergeant for the squadron and James William Sweeney accompanied him. Joe staved behind to clear up the last minute work in Normandy and at this time Bob Husted had been transferred to the Parachute Section to work with Lt. Dodd and Bronson Eaton. Lt. MacMelville took off with a large convoy of vehicles and personnel. Incidentally, if you've ever wondered what it feels like to arrive at a strange field about umpteen square miles in area at 1:30 AM, with nobody awake who knew where our area was and not a trace of moonlight to help keep the vehicles out of bomb craters, just ask him.

Our stay in the Paris area at Site A-48 near Bretigny was of short duration. No insurmountable problems developed so far as our supply setup was concerned and our two tents again stood the test. Our only casualty was "Missie", the supply jeep named by Lt. MacMelville for his wife. It seems that Jim Sweeney had the misfortune to be riding along the perimeter of the field late at night when there was slightly over ten-tenths fog in the area and he found out what happens when an irresistible force meets an immovable object-in the form of a steamroller. The irresistible force stopped, coming off second best in the encounter. Yep, our Motor Pool section had lots of work in those days. Naturally, Paris was a major attraction while we were located so close to it and some tall stories floated around the squadron area after the first men had paid their respects to the City of Light. Further investigation by the rest of the personnel proved that the stories weren't so tall after all.

Before the last of our equipment had arrived at Site A-48 from Normandy we again received movement -orders, this time taking us all the way to the Reims area at Site A-68 in the town of Juvincourt. This time Sgt. Sweeney acted as point for the move, making the first trip with our equipment while Joe Coletta squeezed into one of the

middle convoy trips. Barce and Lt. MacMelville stayed till the last piece of equipment was loaded and then rode up in truck convoy.

Once again our trusty tents did their job while in the Reims area; everything from C-Rations to PX supplies were handled in the regular routine that had now become second nature to all the supply men. It was a matter of days until we received orders once again, this time taking us out of France and way up into Belgium to St. Trond-Site A-92. Sweeney did the honors once more and went as Supply advance party while Joe Coletta followed shortly after by C-47 aircraft. In our various moves we had made use of every kind of transportation to get our equipment where it was needed, when it was needed-trucks, jeeps, boats, trains and air transport. Each move required more transportation than the previous one as the souvenir hunters added to their personal baggage at every stop. Once more the tail-end Charlies, Barce and Lt. MacMelville, came up just after the first of October via vehicle convoy. Looking back, it hardly seems possible that we had made three (count 'em) moves within the space of about a month. Our equipment had stood up well, our losses had been slight and everyone was still able to manage a smile.

St. Trond proved to be our rest and recuperation center for nearly six months and it was a relief not to be wondering from day to day when our orders would drop in on us. Our supply setup was all in one large tent, a French Hospital tent which was one of many we had acquired from the trainload of German equipment at Reims. The fact that we had several such tents, along with the fact that our officers were quartered in buildings and many of the line sections had buildings for setting up in, proved to be of invaluable help in getting through the winter. Our equipment was able to be cared for that much better and the extra tents meant less crowding in the enlisted men's living area. Toward the end of our stay we built an addition to the orderly room building and made that our headquarters for the balance of our operations during the winter months. That was the first time since we'd left the States that we operated from anything but a tent and it seemed like having a slice of civilization all to ourselves.

As is the way with all good things, our sojourn in Belgium ended and the beginning of April found us hauling stakes for an overgrown beet field called Site Y-54 near Duren, Germany. Back to tents for a couple of weeks and off we went again deeper into der Reich. This time it was a real move, crossing the Rhine and making good use of the less beat-up sections of the Autobahn. As always, air transport played a big part in carrying our carcasses and equipment to the new base and everybody arrived at Site Y-86 near Fritzlar in good shape.

If the Nasties could have seen the look of pleasure on the faces of the supply men when we surveyed our new setup they'd have felt well repaid for all the work they put into building that wonderful air base. A super colossal supply section right in the hangar; concrete floors, two offices—one with a sink and running water—steam heat, and a store room big enough to hold the World Series. At last we'd come into our own.

Just after V-E Day came the call. for Occupational Air Force volunteers, and not being a man to turn down a golden opportunity, Joe Coletta took his barracks bag in hand, pinned his ribbons on his blouse, and took off to help rule the Germans.

The custodians of the paper-clips and the "music rolls" (four sheets per man per day) eventually took time out to think back over the months of work and fun (and abuse) they'd, had in helping to make the victory possible. The little bit extra we'd put plus the efforts of the rest of the Group, surely must have shortened the war by at least a year (honest, we've always been modest about things like this).

The rest of the story isn't important; we won the war in Europe so naturally expected to hie ourselves CBI-ward. No one will ever know how disappointed we all were to find the Big Brass Bonnets wanted to send us home. Notwithstanding, we all had learned to be good soldiers—it says here in fine print—so we bowed to the inevitable. Did we get home? Were the wives and kiddies happy to see us? Were we happy to see the wives and kiddies? Gentle reader, please don't wake us up.

## TECH SUPPLY

The overseas history of the Technical Supply section really started about February 27, 1944, at Myrtle Beach. Individual tool kits were drawn and prepared for overseas shipment in compliance with Third Air Force directives, of which there were many. Tools had to be cleaned with a solvent, then dipped in a compound to prevent rust during the voyage. The "brass hats" weren't satisfied with this so they said to wrap each individual tool with waterproof papers; then as an added precaution the outside of the tool box covers were sealed with masking tape.

This section had little or nothing to do at Camp Shanks, N. Y., so the personnel, consisting of Lt. William "Mac" MacMelville, supply officer, Tech. Sgt. Clarence E. "Slick" Hall, Sgt. Kenneth H. Stewart, Sgt. Hiram C. "Moe" Morris, Corp. 'Carmen "Mark" Marcantonio, and Corp. William G. "Snazz" Penland, gave the squadron supply section a helping hand with clothing-issue.

On the ride across the pond we had nothing to do except to log plenty of sack (bunk fatigue) time, which everyone certainly appreciated.

We officially became operational in England when the "TAT" equipment arrived from Liverpool. That TAT simply means "To Accompany Troops". We were assigned to a blister-affair which was to us the first hangar in many months. Tech Supply fenced off a section about 20 by 15 feet and opened for business. The first aircraft we had the privilege of checking were "WW"-"war weary". What a disappointment to the whole organization!

The very first part we needed was a water booster pump. We had to report "Not in Stock", so the plane was immediately declared "AOG"-"airplane on ground for parts"-by the engineering officer.

A few days later we received some literature commonly known as technical orders on our new aircraft, which in many ways increased our efficiency.

The T.O. strength of the squadron showed an overage in Tech Supply, so the section lost a good typist and the boys a good friend when Mark was transferred to squadron communications. He was always the "sharpie" of the bunch. After his shift, he always managed to drop in for a little chat and use of the typewriter-we never could tell which was his main objective.

After a couple of weeks at Winkton we received some armored force combat suits and some British flying clothing. The pilots were in love with the British equipment, which later proved very helpful in the case of Capt. Ray Langford. His R. A. F. gauntlets saved him from possibly fatal burns when he survived a crash on takeoff that wiped out his plane. Team "B" of our Service Group was in the same shape we were-no parts at all. They eventually scrounged around the boneyard and secured enough parts to keep operations up to a high standard. Our largest headache was jettisonable gasoline tanks for our fighters. These tanks, made of paper with fittings for the wing-tanks, were manufactured in Great Britain.

June 3 we were ordered to get large quantities of black and white paint. As far as we could tell from the free-floating rumors, that meant invasion. We got ready for France, and sent "Slick" Hall in the air echelon with just enough supplies and equipment to operate for a period of ten days. We picked a nice shady clump of trees for our place of business in Normandy, and with the help of a camouflage net, concealed from the enemy a nice juicy target. "Slick" may have lost a few strands of that non-recoverable item, hair, the first few days at A-5, listening to Jerry planes overhead and our own artillery shaking the earth.

As a whole we loved to get in the sack-time, but it soon became a lost love. Between German planes, ack-ack, lots of work, and guard duty, the only thing to be said about our sack time is that we "had it".

On the move to Bretigny, Hall, Stewart and Penland took off in a jeep and trailer, and by great good fortune made it to the new strip. When "Snazz" Penland alighted from the jeep at A-48, his first words to "Chicken" Stewart were: "Chicken, the next time I'll drive, and you pray!"

After a slight pause during which he took a chew on, his slug of tobacco, "Snazz" continued, "Let me at 'em, I'm ready to leap!" And he wasn't referring to the Germans, not with freshly-liberated Paris just a few miles away.

Here the boys managed to mix a little social life with business. We all- had experiences in Gay Paree that won't easily be forgotten. Paris turned out to be a hellish place where a G. I. could really enjoy himself no matter what his taste. There was talk that Penland let his hair down about this time and nobody has been able to recognize him since.

After just two weeks at A-48, Hall and Penland took off in a jeep with a trailer load of Tech Supply equipment to A-68, leaving Stewart and "Moe" Morris behind to take care of the packing of the remaining equipment. Even though there was a lot of work to do, "Chicken" always managed to start shaving and cleaning up about 4:30 p. m., getting ready to take off for Paree on his bicycle. Coming back late one night, he was challenged by members of the F. F. I. Not knowing he was being halted, he kept on going till they fired a shot across his bow. And then he had to do his own laundry.

Tired and dirty, the advance party members hit A-68 September 11, and decided to set up the Tech Supply tent immediately. The best place they could pick was a spot near a lot of bomb craters. There was just room enough for the tent; the pegs ran down the sides of the craters which made things rather uneven. When the tent was up it had more curves and twists than the pedestrians on Pigalle. After getting all the equipment unloaded and strategically placed, "Slick" decided to scrounge around for a stove, since it was getting cold in this neck of the woods. In a German barracks he found a good one, and a few other odds and ends of furnishings. He ended up with as much stuff in the Tech Supply tent as he did in the squadron area; which place he lived in it was hard to tell. No one knows how he ever kept up with his stuff, even his mess kit. Probably it was the good food we had.

In about two days Morris and Stewart arrived by C-47 with the rest of our equipment. They were supposed to be in the "ground" echelon so they flew, and Hall and Penland in the "air" echelon came by jeep.

We got our first real break at St. Trond, since we were the first American outfit to settle in the vicinity. First Army ran the town and kept it "off limits" the first month we were there, but the Belgians were very hospitable and we started infiltrating into the taverns and cafes near the field.

Forty-eight hour passes were given to Brussels, with transportation provided, and the boys found hitch-hiking to Liege satisfactory. We also had the advantages of a closed shower-room with hot water, if you went early enough. Yes, and Brussels was better than Paris.

Here we moved from a tent to a shack constructed for us by Belgians and our own squadron carpenters. We were beginning to look like something. We received the sharp-looking new B-13 jackets for the pilots, new green fur-lined jobs to replace the old leather jackets. Our first batch included only 19 jackets, which posed quite a problem in diplomacy, for we had almost 50 pilots at the time.

Personal equipment, which we were handling, was turned over on paper to Lt. Dodd, but we still did the work when he became involved in a series of coal runs to Aachen and other points for the Group.

We got some heckling from Engineering, but Capt. Volker and the crew chiefs were cooperative and helpful. St. Trond finally was placed "on limits" and we could go in freely and make new friends. Except for a session of rain and cold and that unforgettable New Year's day, we were quite content to spend the duration here. However those damned flickety-booms were perturbing, especially when they came over every 15 minutes.

Lt. James S. O'Connor joined the department to learn Tech Supply. He was assistant Engineering officer, and the T.O. did call for a Tech Supply officer. He knew he had plenty to learn, and tried merely to listen. At times it was difficult and he didn't. But we all know Irishmen are stubborn: ask Stewart.



The people in Sint Truiden really accepted us with open arms, and many of us felt love's flame starting to burn. Somehow the 404th will always remember A-92. We thought we'd be there till the war was over, but December 18 and bad weather changed our minds. The Krauts had begun their counter attack, and we were told we might have to move out too sweet. We were instructed to carry arms and helmets at all times. Then a British tank unit moved in near the field. Parachutists were expected to drop on the field any night. It was St. Lo all over again, but now we were softer and cockier. It gave some of us quite a shock. Hell -we thought Jerry was ready to throw in the towel and here he was damn close to the field. Well, the weather broke, and the planes got off, and that was that.

On to Y-54, where we set up two tents and had a tool-room, run by Sgt. Guerra of Engineering. He was one of the most courteous and efficient men in the squadron. He was pretty low when we left St. Trond, because he left his heart there.

Fritzlar was a good competition for St. Trond, but alas, no cooshay avec legally. Fraternizing was not permitted. Yet some of the lanes outside the field looked like 42d and Broadway with G. I.'s and girls all about-all Displaced Persons, of course. Here the boys built up a nice office inside a huge hangar. But it was too good to last; we had to go south to another Deutsch flugplatz near Stuttgart. We set up in a small wooden hangar and began to finish our inventories in preparation for our move home.

Supply is a strange and fascinating game. It can get you down if you don't keep your head up. Some shady transactions went on at times, beyond our control, involving Air Corps, Ordnance and Quartermaster property. Jackets and forty-fives kept disappearing in exchange for Lugers and cameras. The trades left our books in a hell of a mess but we did our best to protect everybody and render justice and punishment to those who had it coming. We were fortunate to have a first-rate staff-Guerra, a gem in the tool-room, Morris who did most of the tracing while Stewart handled the paper-work, and Penland, who always cooperated with a cigar in his mouth, tagging many items that should have been handled by other departments.

## MEDICS

The squadron's health and sanitation was entrusted to the competent hands of Capt. James P. Proudfit, assisted at various times by Sgt. Barr, Woodrow Custer, Sgt. Davis, Joe Roberts, Robinson, and the one and only Rothwell. Barr showed great coolness in his efforts to save the injured and dying during the bombing of A-5. From "Old Doc Sack" right down, the boys were always ready for every ailment with a pill, a crooked needle and a shortarm.

Remember: the time Rothwell came back from an evening in Paris clad only in his shorts, and smelling-but not of Paris perfume ... The time Davis got Smitty to help him crack the German safe in our office at Fritzlar; the haul was a fine P-38, thought Davis, until somebody put him wise that it was only a flare-gun. . Custer's perpetual worried look—perhaps some personal business in Liege troubled him ... The time during an air-raid alert when Barr jumped into some brambles with Roberts right on top, and Roberts took his own sweet time making sure that all was clear before he got up. . Roberts and his softball pitching, which no one would be convinced was legal . . . The time Robinson tried to "put Rothwell to sleep" . . . The time Roberts, with Bernat and Boturla of Ordnance, ran afoul of some unfriendly fists in a deserted house in Belgium, after a slight altercation in a pub...

## MESS

Many were the men who helped to prepare and serve the food that kept us all generally overweight overseas. Attacks of acid indigestion there were, it is true, after unfortunate bouts with K-rations, red weenies and C-ration stew, but when the boys had good makings, they cooked 'em right, under the watchful eye of Mess Sgt. Joyce L. Cordell, the Carolina preacher. Included in the roster of cooks and helpers were such culinary wizards as Joe Cocchi, Miner Uselton, Harold Ketchum, Peter Mickle, Joe Schmidt, and "Frenchy" Martin. And

the pilots will always remember Gene Spangenberg, the silent man behind the Snack Bar counter, who rustled up those fried eggs and those delicious homemade doughnuts, superior to the Red Cross by far.

## 507th PILOTS

1st LT. RICHARD H. ARNOLD



1st LT. DUANE K. ASH



CAPT. FLOYD F. BLAIR



CAPT. PAUL M. BUCKLES



1st Lt.  
Buford S. Courtney



Capt.  
Rufus A. Cox Jr.



Capt.  
Sherman N. Crocker



Capt.  
Raymond T. Donnelly



2nd Lt.  
Robert L. Duffy, Jr.



Capt.  
Donald D. Dove



Capt.  
Lewis E. Eldredge



Capt.  
Donald M. Ferris



1st Lt.  
Russell S. Fredendall



Lt Col.  
Howard L. Galbreath



1st Lt.  
Leroy Graham



1st Lt.  
Robert W. Green



2nd Lt.  
Edgar E. Grove



1st Lt.  
James E. Hall



Capt.  
George C. Hughes



Capt.  
Duane Int-Hout



Capt.  
Ernest J. P. Kovats



Capt.  
Ray C. Langford



Capt.  
William M. Lee



Capt.  
Stephen V. Leonard



Capt.  
Charles C. Lutman



Lt Col.  
James A. Mullins



Maj.  
John E. Ray



1st Lt.  
Robert A. Reiff



Capt.  
John J. Rogers, Jr.



Capt.  
John C. Ross



Capt.  
Denver W. Smith



Maj.  
Clay Tice, Jr.



1st Lt.  
Arthur W. Washburn



Capt.  
Thomas L. Weller



Capt.  
Clarence S. Wydner



Capt.  
Benjamin F. Yeargin, Jr.

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## AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

### 507th Fighter Squadron

NAME	RANK	AWARD OR DECORATION
Abt, Francis E.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 12 OLC's.
Adams, Roy H.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 6 OLC's.
Allen, Robert L.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 11 OLC's.
Armstrong, Eugene E.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 7 OLC's.
Arnold, Richard H.	1st Lt.	DFC, Air Medal 11 OLC's.
Ash, Duane K.	1st Lt.	DFC, Air Medal 8 OLC's.
Benson, Harry A.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
Benton, James E.	1st Lt.	DFC, Air Medal 12 OLC's.
Bernat, Paul H.	Sgt.	Soldier's Medal, Bronze Star.
Blackwelder, John S. Jr.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 8 OLC's.
Blair, Floyd F.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 15 OLC's.
Boland, John P.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 5 OLC's.
Branch, Lee A.	1st Lt.	DFC, Air Medal & 12 OLC's.
Brownlee, Billy V.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 9 OLC's.
Brunner, Francis X.	Cpl.	Soldier's Medal.
Buckles, Paul M.	Capt.	Silver Star, DFC, Air Medal & 16 OLC's.
Cherne, William L.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 5 OLC's.
Coppola, Ignatius J.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
Courtney, Buford S.	1st Lt.	DFC, Air Medal & 11 OLC's.
Cox, Rufus A.	Capt.	Silver Star, Air Medal & 16 OLC's.
Crocker, Sherman N.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 15 OLC's.
Dittmar, Carl J.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
Donnelly, Raymond T.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 11 OLC's.
Dove, Donald D.	Capt.	DFC Air Medal & 15 OLC's.
Dover, William H.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
Driscoll, -Donn H.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 6 OLC's.
Duffy, Robert L. Jr.	2nd Lt.	Air Medal & 5 OLC's.
Eldredge, Lewis E.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 13 OLC's.
Eldridge, Seba	1st Lt.	DFC, Air Medal & 10 OLC's.
Ellingson, Robert L.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 11 OLC's.
Ferris, Donald M.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 15 OLC's.
Fredendall, Russell S.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 3 OLC's.
Fredrich, Matthew A.	F/O	Air Medal & 2 OLC's.
Futch, Samuel L. Jr.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
Galbreath, Howard L.	Lt. Col.	DFC with OLC, Air Medal 16 OLC's.
Gedeon, Richard J.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 7 OLC's.
Gillen, Deon J.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
Godfrey, Francis W.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 6 OLC's.
Gorham, Walter P.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 5 OLC's.
Graham, Leroy	1st Lt.	Silver Star, Air Medal & 12 OLC's.
Green, Robert W.	2nd Lt.	DFC, Air Medal & 3 OLC's.
Greffenius, Albert J.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 4 OLC's.
Grove, Edgar A.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 2 OLC's.
Guyot, William E.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 10 OLC's.
Hall, James E.	1st Lt.	DFC, Air Medal & 8 OLC's.
Hill, Harold E.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 3 OLC's.
Hill, Rex E.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 3 OLC's.

NAME	RANK	AWARD OR DECORATION
Hodges, Kenneth S.	Major.	DFC, Air Medal & 5 OLC's.
Hollendorfer, Anthony Jr.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
Holway, Robert N.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
Hughes, George C.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 15 OLC's.
Int-Hout, Duane D.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 15 OLC's.
Irvine, Charles R.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
Justice, Arthur E. Jr.	Major	DFC, Air Medal & 14 OLC's.
Kerrigan, Vincent R.	1st Lt.	Soldier's Medal.
Knight, John H. Jr.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
Koerner, Charles R.	1st Lt.	DFC, Air Medal & 11 OLC's.
Kovats, Ernest J. P.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 13 OLC's.
Langford, Ray C.	Capt.	Air Medal & 2 OLC's.
Lattimer, Thomas E.	Cpl.	Soldier's Medal.
Lee, William M.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 17 OLC's.
Lutman, Charles C.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 11 OLC's.
Mauger, Charles F. Jr.	Major	Bronze Star.
May, George W.	M/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
McVicker, Raymond K.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
Moon, Glenwood F.	T/Sgt.	Air Medal & 2 OLC's.
Roach, William E.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
Rogers, John J. Jr.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 16 OLC's.
Rollinger, Harley J.	1st Lt.	Purple Heart, Air Medal & 8 OLC's.
Ross, John C.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 18 OLC's.
Sala, Peter J.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 2 OLC's.
Sarnu, Ernest	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star.
Sasseville, Norman H.	1st Lt.	DFC, Air Medal & 4 OLC's.
Schwartz, David	2nd Lt.	Air Medal & 3 OLC's.
Scroggin, Orville O. 111	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 4 OLC's.
Shaw, John J.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 2 OLC's.
Shiery, Earl L.	T/Sgt.	Bronze Star
Simon, Ben M.	2nd Lt.	Air Medal & 1 OLC
Smith, Denver W.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 13 OLC's
Snyder, Charles W.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star
Sternmermann, Arthur T.	1st Lt.	DFC, Air Medal & 15 OLC's
Stephens, Glen H.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 2 OLC's
Summitt, Fernwell G.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star
Thomas, Earl J.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star
Tice, Clay, Jr.	Major	DFC, Air Medal & 12 OLC's
Tucker, Lee E.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 5 OLC's
Varn, Fred H., Jr.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 14 OLC's
Warwick, William P.	1st Lt.	Air Medal 3 OLC's
Washburn, Arthur W.	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 4 OLC's
Webre, Harry A.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star
Weller, Thomas L.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 14 OLC's
Wemmer, Louis W.	1st Lt.	DFC, Air Medal & 6 OLC's
West, William J.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star
Willis, Cade E.	S/Sgt.	Bronze Star
Wilton, George H.	1st Lt.	DFC, Air Medal & 7 OLC's
Wydner, Clarence S.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 15 OLC's
Yeargin, Benjamin F., Jr.	Capt.	DFC, Air Medal & 15 OLC's
Young, Charles W.	1st Lt.	Soldier's Medal
Yudelson, Floyd	1st Lt.	Air Medal & 5 OLC's



# 508<sup>th</sup> FIGHTER SQUADRON

## ORDERLY ROOM

The Orderly Room, center of all administrative functions in the squadron, still goes on whether flying does or not. The end-of-the-war staff included:

First Sgt. Dale Sarsgard, who directed the work, and as "topkick" was the man to see for almost everything.

Staff Sgt. Ronald C. Jacobs, personnel clerk from Thermopolis, Wyo., the "figurehead" of the Orderly Room. It was up to him to see that the payroll got out and the men got paid. "Jake" took care of all financial matters and the Service records.

Staff Sgt. Walter E. Miller, new man on the staff, who joined us at Fritzlar. He nursed the sick book and acted as assistant duty sergeant.

Sgt. Thomas M. "Herr Von" Fretz, classification clerk. Formerly a "wheel" up in Group, "Von" joined us at Winkton, to care for rosters and Form 20's.

Sgt. James K. Smith, duty sergeant, who made up the teams for all the details. J. K. joined the outfit at Myrtle Beach, and since blazed a prominent trail in the activities of the squadron.

Sgt. Carmine J. Baratta, an old-timer with the squadron, and high-point man of the staff. He was file clerk and handled officer's pay vouchers.

Corp. Justin F. McCarty Jr., a personnel man at heart, but a dabbler in all kinds of jobs. His main forte was care and feeding of the Service Records.

Pfc Norbert W. "Nubs" Monson, who did the office-typing. There was really no cause for alarm, those of you who Caught him "crewing" his machine; he claimed Army training in mechanics, and just wanted to keep in shape.

The outfit changed a lot in the States; the oldsters still like to tell of the days from Key to Congaree to Oregon ... It seems if you weren't in Oregon you just haven't lived. At Myrtle Beach, the squadron was reorganized for combat with Major Leo C. Moon as C. O., Capt. John E. McManus as executive officer and First Lt. Clarence F. Woodall, adjutant. All three officers moved one grade higher overseas.

First sergeants at Myrtle Beach came and went faster than we could keep track of them. There the present staff was formed, and stayed- together throughout the European campaign.

In England we had two pyramidal tents for the Orderly Room, and stuck to our pencils through all the pressure on preparation for invasion. Our first days in France we had more than our share to do. We pulled C., Q. at night, and it was up to us to get the mechanics out to the airplane in the morning. At Bretigny, we set up in tents again, where we lost First Sgt. Robert J. Lowenwirth, who had been with us since Winkton. Sgt. Sarsgard took over the reins at Juvincourt.

We had our best office at St. Trond, and there isn't one of us who will forget the pleasant days spent in Belgium. There we changed adjutants, Capt. Woodall leaving and First Lt. Jack A. Eggers from the 507th Squadron taking over. Major McLaughlin and Maj. Robert J. Garrigan, later lieutenant colonel, in turn came in from the 506th as commanding officers.

Besides the fine quarters, there were many other things we remembered about St. Trond, not least among which were the "buzz bombs". We were very lucky they kept going. Our section looked like a law-office in the States, with all the desks. Despite all the luxury, our first sergeant had trouble sleeping nights, because you guys made too much noise coming in at night. Many a time Dale got up to tell the merry-makers it wasn't nice to make so much racket.

We passed from this bliss to the little town of Kelz, Germany., We didn't stay long, but while there the Orderly Room carried on in a large hospital tent. Next move was to Fritzlar, into a fine suite of three rooms. We had a shower and bath right off the office, and the first sergeant and his boys-Jake, Baratta, Fretz-had a room off the bathroom. It was our first office in the Army that had wallpaper and pictures, and flowers all over the place. There your points were figured. The boys really made us happy with their frequent calls; when we'd ask a lingering soul if we could help, the standard answer was, "Just looking."

Stuttgart was our last stop in Germany. We set up a fine establishment, known to all the faithful as "Little SHAEF Headquarters", using the hospital tent with screens to keep the bugs out. We lined up ten desks in a row, and when our efficient Communications section put in lights for us, the work went on till all hours. Personnel were coming and going all the time, and it was a job to keep track of everybody, but again the staff held out. There we lost Major McManus; and though he had stepped on some of the boys there wasn't a man among us who didn't say "Mac" was a good man and wished him well in his new job as Group Adjutant. Capt. Rolland G. McCartney from the 507th became executive officer, together with the newly-promoted Capt. Eggers "packing" the administrative staff with "Crocus" squadron graduates.

## OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE

Our first base in England, a cow pasture, gave us plenty of room to set up Operations and Intelligence Sections. Major Moon selected a site and after experimenting for several days with pyramidal tents, wall tents and tarps, we ended up with a sturdy contraption well braced with wood siding against the wind and the prop wash of our own planes. In a few days a Limey trailer arrived which was taken over by S-2 and used as an office, while S-3 set up in a command tent.

Setting up our briefing map was a problem because of the scarcity of material and the amount of space needed for the map to cover our operational area; however most obstacles were overcome and in a short time we had everything set to become operational.

At this time S-2 had no bomb line to worry about, but drawing courses for the pilots was difficult because of the distances involved and the number of maps carried by the pilots. The routes were constantly changed to add to our displeasure. Operations had troubles too. Missions were changed from fighter sweeps to dive bombing and back to sweeps again and so we were continually put on the spot between the Armorers and Crew Chiefs. Wing tanks had to be changed for bombs and vice versa and of course everything had to be done in a rush. Naturally S-2 and S-3 were always blamed for these changes and the confusion that followed. It was during this period that we were flying from dawn until late in the evening. Many times the S-2 and S-3 clerks slept on a convenient spot to catch a few hours sleep rather than hike down to the squadron area for a short rest. "D" day was soon to come and we were ordered to dig foxholes just in case "Jerry" decided to pay us a visit. Operations kept busy seeing that the maximum number of planes were "in" while S-2 was busy preparing maps. The big day arrived and then we prepared for the time when we too would hit the channel. The sections were split up so that we could operate from two bases. Toward the end of June the advance echelon pulled out for Normandy. Communications left on the base were very limited and there was a lack of transportation which made operations difficult. Capt. Marshall of Group Operations was making the rounds of the squadrons in a gas truck, giving last minute instructions and details of a pending mission.

In Normandy the Engineers had constructed a strip in an apple orchard. Once again it was necessary to use tents for Operations and Intelligence. After several sites had been selected, we finally set up alongside a

hedgerow at one end of the runway. S-2 used the trailer and S-3 a pyramidal tent. It was necessary to cut through a hedgerow and build a small bridge to connect S-3 with S-2 and the briefing room. The briefing room, snack bar and lounge which the pilots constructed was the most elaborate on the continent at this time.

Here the situation changed somewhat. External fuel tanks were no longer necessary but Operations had numerous changes in A/C status which were due mainly to increased flak damage. S-2 was kept busy posting bomb lines on the two briefing maps along with the numerous maps the pilots carried. On several occasions the Front advanced so rapidly the briefing map had to be replaced every day. It was work from early morning until late at night for all concerned. The four-plane missions kept both sections busy with Operations scheduling the planes and S-2 passing out maps to the pilots, picking them up on their return and keeping the bomb line current. Our Armies were going ahead rapidly and we were due for a move, this time to the vicinity of Paris.

The new field was just out of Bretigny and again our facilities were built from scratch. The S-2 trailer was delayed in arriving because of a burned-out oil wheel bearing, but the section picked up a Jerry model which was used as an office and S-3 took over the Limey trailer when it arrived. The briefing room was not such an elaborate affair, though it was larger than the one we had in Normandy. The front was broadening out which necessitated larger briefing maps. After a short stay at Bretigny we were on the move again.

To our surprise the advance echelon at Juvincourt had set up in a slightly damaged building on the line, thus giving "the tent makers" a rest. Ops again used their trailer and S-2 tracked down another Jerry trailer complete with stove, which turned out to be a very convenient home in the winter months to come. Our stay in the "Champagne country" was limited to a few weeks and with regrets we headed north into Belgium.

The advance echelon had left, some by plane, others by truck convoy, when it was decided to try and make the trip to St. Trond with the Jerry trailer we had acquired. A weapons carrier was hitched onto it and away we went, the remnants of S-2 and S-3. Enroute the civilians, recently liberated, ran for cover as the camouflaged creaking and swaying trailer rolled down the road. We camped out on the road the first night and continued on to our new base the following day. Several bets were made that the outfit would never make it and what a surprise when the odd caravan arrived. The advance party had set up the pyramidal tents and the briefing room was under construction. The pilots had dismantled a Jerry barracks and were rebuilding it on the chosen spot. Several additions were built on and the completed structure was a cozy home during the winter months. Having picked up sufficient plywood, we were able to cover the front and side walls of the briefing room with a 1/250,000 and a 1/100,000 briefing map. We also had a sizeable 1/500,000 map for navigational purposes. S-2 and S-3 trailers were placed along side the briefing room. The sections were kept busy making flight-maps covering our area and again flak was giving Operations a headache with their A/C status. Ops constructed a "super status board" which was appropriately hung in the briefing room. S-2 kept photo maps of the operational area posted here too. Changing T. A. C.s and operating in this area necessitated making more flight maps so there was never a dull moment, with constantly changing bomb lines to plot. A convenient fox-hole had been dug under the S-2 trailer and several others were dug in the immediate vicinity. On several occasions these were used and appreciated. As the front moved further, Operations was again confronted with longer flights. requiring belly tanks, and in time we knew another move was in order.

This time the move was into Germany and we settled down at a strip in a beet field near the town of Kelz. The pilots had set up a hospital tent, and a portable map constructed at St. Trond was put into operation. A frame structure was built and covered with tarps to form the snack bar and briefing room. Operations worked out of their trailer while S-2 did likewise. The mud was one handicap we had to contend with at this temporary strip. We had been at Kelz only a short time when we headed east again. The advance party learned that at Fritzlar there was plenty of office equipment and spacious offices available for S-2 and S-3. This was welcome news to the sections, after having struggled with makeshift housing since becoming operational. S-2 abandoned the faithful trailer and the sections moved on to their new base.

At Fritzlar we had two large rooms, one for the S-2 and S-3 offices and the other for the briefing room. We located some Jerry carpeting and plenty of desks. When the office was completed it looked more like a Wall Street broker's office with its individual desks, telephones and carpeted floor. S-2 decided to construct a new

map and when finished it covered the front wall of the briefing room. Carpet was laid and benches were brought in to make the room complete. Because of the condition of the runway very few bombs were used, rockets being carried on the majority of the missions. Operations was again busy calling A/C "out" for damage to wings and flaps caused by rockets jarring off on the rough landing strip. S-2 was kept busy with the constantly changing area over which our aircraft. could operate, keeping the bomb line current and marking out restricted areas.

It was evident that V-E day was not too far distant as our operational area became smaller and smaller and on the 4th day of May 1945, Operations scheduled its final combat mission in the ETO.

Through our tour of combat operations -both S-2 and S-3 sections worked in close cooperation which, materially benefited the sections during their hectic periods.

Section heads were Staff Sgt. Robert E. "Rocker" Shaw of Meadville, Pa., Operations, and Staff Sgt. Charles I. "Pop" Mlynek of Santa Barbara, Cal., Intelligence. Staff Sgt. Joseph F. "Judge" Sheridan and Sgt. Paul W. "Sonny" Himan completed the S-3 staff; Sgt. Robert "Petite" Barnes, draftsman, and Corp. John M. "Peke" Picco, were the other S-2's.

The "Judge" is from Newark, New Jersey, and generally held court daily in the Operations section, handing down decisions based, as he put it, on facts, never rumors. He was seldom scooped. To uphold one of his decisions he would even do battle. Remember the mighty struggle that ensued between the Judge and Pop Mlynek on V-E night? The winner? Let's call it a draw.

"Sonny" Himan hails from Chicago, but insisted his home would be in Fond du Lac, Wis., after his discharge. Originally a professed 30-year man, he ended up ready for civilian life because, he says, "They made me bitter!" Besides his work as clerk, he held the position of first pilot and crew chief on the section's weapons carrier. We believe his happiest moments were spent behind the wheel on trips.

"Petite" Barnes, draftsman and artiste, was always in the "paint"; we have followed his guiding signs and posters through France, Belgium and Germany. He hails from San Anselmo, Calif.

"Peke's" favorite pastime was map-making; however, the newspaper magnate from Springfield, Ill. says, "I never want to see another map after this war is over!"

Operations for a typical day were carried out in the following manner:

The Intelligence section kept a C. Q. on duty in the S-2 trailer during the night, and a pilot was assigned as Night Duty Officer. The C. Q. picked up the Operations Order at Group Headquarters along with the regular distribution, which included bomb -line changes, colors of the day, and authentication codes. The Duty Intelligence Officer at Group S-2 usually gave the time of briefing for the first mission, time of take-off, and the approximate time the squadron duty officer should awaken the pilots. Armament and Engineering were advised of the type of mission, so the aircraft could be prepared accordingly. The C. Q. then plotted changes in the bomb-line on the briefing map, and drew up the flight maps. Course cards were prepared for the pilots, listing courses to be flown, colors of the day, and air-to-ground authentication codes.

In the meantime the duty officer aroused the pilots scheduled for the first mission; Operations scheduled the aircraft on the mission and advised Armament of the proper assortment of bombs for "bombing up". If the mission were escort or top cover, wing and belly tanks had to be installed by the crew chiefs.

When the pilots arrived and were assembled in the briefing room, maps and data cards were passed out. The mission leader briefed his pilots on the target, direction of attack, course out and home, colors of the day, authentication, and all other pertinent information; the weather conditions expected en route and at the target area were also discussed. The pilots were told too of the type of bombs and fuses each plane was carrying. If the mission were escort or top cover, the leader gave the formation to be flown in relation to the escorted ships. Watches were synchronized and the start engine and takeoff times were given. The pilots viewed available

photos of the target area to familiarize themselves with the appearance of the target and any nearby check-points. Then they packed up their escape-kits and food-kits and departed for their respective planes.

Upon their return from the mission the pilots were interrogated by the S-2 officer to ascertain the damage inflicted upon the target, what was hit, time of attack, location of the target. All incidents and any unusual activity were reported. The pilots put in their individual claims of targets destroyed or damaged. From the preceding information, the S-2 officer made up the "Opflash" report which was sent to Group S-2. If there were any special observations made during the mission, they were immediately telephoned to Group S-2 as a "hot" flash report.

The mission leader generally held a critique on the complete mission, from taxiing out until the landing of the last plane, telling of any faults he had observed in take-off, join-up, flight formation to the target, action over the target, flight formation on the return, peel-off, and landings.

After the planes had landed they were checked over by the crew chiefs, armorers and radiomen, and all battle-damage and mechanical troubles were reported. Operations was then notified of any change in the aircraft status so that the schedule for the next mission could be set up.

On numerous occasions the S-2 officers, including Capt. Miller, Lt. Hollenstein. and later w/o Grimes, held orientation lectures for the enlisted men of the squadron, keeping them posted on the situation. The briefing maps were made available to them so that they could follow our armies in their progress against the enemy.

## ENGINEERING

A fighting airplane has several functions to perform: it must deliver the pilot to the target area where his highly specialized training can be brought to bear; it must afford maximum performance under battle stresses; and finally, must return the pilot safely. Every time an airplane takes to the air it bears an unwritten guarantee that it is ready to fulfill these functions. But long hours of maintenance on the ground are required to attain this standard of performance in the air.

This is the work of Master Sgt. Stellman and his Engineering Section.

The job begins long before sunrise. Stars can still be seen gleaming through the dewy canopy before the crew chief finishes preflight. Minor adjustments must be made, belly tanks hung, filled and connected. Everything must be ready when the pilot climbs into the cockpit.

When the plane returns, it is first checked for battle damage, and the pilot writes up any defects noted in the air. The crew chief and his assistant must either clear up these defects or ground the plane before the next mission. Here they can ask the advice of the Flight Chief who keeps a close check on the planes in his flight and is the first court of appeal on anything concerning them. He decides whether the defect is only minor and can be corrected readily on the line or whether it is major and requires extensive maintenance work. Electrical and instrument work can usually be done on the line by the proper specialist. Plug, engine, wing, and propeller changes or the repairing of extensive battle damage require the facilities of the hangar and the help of the maintenance crew. Tech Supply is indispensable here for its stocks; it must be able to supply any item that goes into the makeup of an airplane, no matter how minute. The line chief makes all final decisions, the Inspector gives the O. K. on the completed job and the airplane is ready to fly again.

But whatever the job, it is the combined effort of the various departments within the section: Maintenance, Flight, Tech Supply, Specialists, Refueling, which produces the final result. The job must be done efficiently and the airplane returned to flying status in a minimum of time with the same, although unwritten, unqualified guarantee. The 508th Engineering Section has done this; its maintenance record has been and remains one of the highest.

# The Engineering Machine

## The Big Wheels:

ENGINEERING OFFICER

CAPT. KEITH H. MELTON

LINE CHIEF: M/Sgt. V. H. Stellman-Fullerton, Nebraska farm boy who reached the top of the enlisted men's ladder. Line Chief and main drive wheel of Engineering Section. Answers to name of "Chief" upon occasion. Holds Bronze Star Medal.

MAINTENANCE CHIEF: M/Sgt. W. L. Russell-Lanky lad from Milan, Texas, who wields the long black whip over the maintenance gang, to whom he is known as "Funk". It is rumored that he once changed an engine single-handed with nothing but a screw driver and a pair of water pumps ... It was a rare black day for the 508th; somehow maintenance was lagging. Operations was clamoring for planes and more planes. "Funk" strode anxiously back and forth urging his crew to still further effort. The men worked mightily; finally, seeing their accomplishments, "Funk" dashed into the Engineering Shack exclaiming, "Stellman, I got another'n in!"

INSPECTOR: M/Sgt. L. R. Overton-Our walking technical reference library from Des Moines, Iowa. He is the inspector and reads T. O.s for enjoyment like other people read Dick Tracy. Being an inspector, he is naturally short sighted; he might not notice a missing wing, but don't dare leave a hose clamp loose or mighty will be his wrath and lengthy his write-up.

## The Wheels:

"A" FLIGHT CHIEF: T/Sgt., R. L. Filorito-Guiding light of "A" Flight and manager of the Blue Devils. Get him to tell you of those furlough experiences

"B" FLIGHT CHIEF: T/Sgt. S. J. Pollick-Hot comer artist on the several local nines. One of our commuter soldiers back at Myrtle Beach, with a bus deadline to make morning and evening.

"C" FLIGHT CHIEF: T/Sgt. G. E. Ecelbarger-Underground farmer from Springdale, Pa. "Bubble Nose" says and we quote, "I did not need knee pads to get back from St. Trond."

"D" FLIGHT CHIEF: T/Sgt. D. C. Kauffman-From the "Show Me" State down around Garden City. Flight Chief, and sometimes tractor specialist.

"E" FLIGHT CHIEF: S/Sgt. V. H. Wade-The "Senator" is another of our professional men along with the "Gov", the "Judge" and the "Doc". When the "Senator" props his feet upon the stove, and leans back against the cracker barrel, "step down, brother", because there's going to be a filibuster and the "Senator" knows no rivals.

ASST. MAINT. CHIEF: T/Sgt. E. C. Howard-There must be a special patron Saint watching over and guiding our Texans, for "Lo! Unto us he came a Pfc. Behold him now in stripes that are five. Whither now?"

ASST. MAINT. CHIEF: T/Sgt. G. W. Moldan-"Tiny" was the direct cause of one case of flat feet in the post office keeping the mails hot writing to a certain party "State Side".

## The Little Wheels:

HEAD OF THE ELECTRICAL DEPT.: T/Sgt. L. P. Schreck, sometimes known as "The Eye", not always so successful in his social life. At the last Group party, he got hold of a pretty little D.. P. who had just learned to say, "OK". But D. P. also had Mamma along who took one look at the "Eye" and thought the old fashioned "Nein" more appropriate.

HEAD OF THE PROPELLOR DEPT.: T/Sgt. G. R. Sauer, "Muscles" has recently emerged from the lower depths into the wheel class, with two rockers. Can we touch you, "Muscles"?

HEAD OF THE INSTRUMENT DEPT.: S/Sgt. K. G. Neid, "Noodles" is the main spring in the Instrument Section ... Doesn't object to removing and replacing an instrument occasionally if not too busy repairing watches.

HEAD OF THE SHEET METAL DEPT.: S/Sgt. L. O. Miller, L. O. will answer to the name "Porky" but you had better have your track shoes on when you address him by this handle. A Ripley, Tennesseer, to whom Jerry gunners gave plenty of headaches with flak holes. Now that the shooting has stopped though, he never had it so good.

HEAD OF TECH SUPPLY: S/Sgt. M. B. Scibior, Sphinx-like supply sergeant; explains his success is due to sticking closely to this formula, "Never issue anything, never take anything in, and you keep your records straight".

HEAD OF REFUELING: Sgt. J. E. Bridges, Dispenser of Shell Products; hails from Pine Hill, Ala.

HEAD OF THE PARACHUTE DEPT.: Sgt. A. Englander, "Engie" runs the Group tailor shop, cleaning, pressing, and repairing. Incidentally, he takes care of parachutes. We are informed that he has never had a chute returned because it failed to open. Ten times they were used and ten times they worked. The pilots are reported definitely in favor of his average. "Be brave, Engie".

## The Gears: (Crewchiefs)

S/SGT E. A. BROOKS-Crewed for the Brass and consequently was always in the know. Cleanest plane in the Squadron was Brook's. Why not? It never flew! The men who should know inform us that it was only a mock-up. Bronze Star.

S/SGT J. A. CARDELE-Modestly claims to be Boston's gift to the E. T. O., which only goes to show to what heights municipal wrath can rise. Bronze Star.

S/SGT T. J. DREYER-Strictly a big time operator, "Zipp" has more schemes under his hat at any one time than he can handle. But the "poker face" he wears would seem to imply that he was considering cleaning the oil screen. We are on to you, Zipp.

S/SGT J. E. FERENC-Noted for his dry humor once went to Brussels with enough Francs for a five day furlough and had it extended to 13 days. "Fate tricked me into eight thirsty days of sightseeing", is the way Joe explains it. Bronze Star.

S/SGT R. H. FEWELL-Noted for his slightly uncontrollable voice that could sound chow call to porkers in the next County. Our selection for a career in politics. Bronze Star.

S/SGT J. E. GILLESPIE-The only rival Vic has in the rumor field. "Jim" has several undivulged sources of information and can give you a hot rumor any time of the day or night. Has been known to be right-but not often. Bronze Star.

CPL W. P. GLEASON-"Wild Bill" two-shots-and-he-is-out Gleason. After a couple of beers, Bill gets a yearning for distant places. Remember Colorado Springs? A late comer to the exalted crew chief status, Bill has never received the recognition or stripes he deserves.

S/SGT J. A. Z. GOULET-"Frenchie" came out of the woods of Canada to give us a hand at the battle of St. Trond. Here he distinguished himself. How about it, Frenchie?

S/SGT L. E. GOWEN-Can say that his plane had completed 242 combat missions by V-E Day. Can also say that he has added 20 pounds to his belly tank since induction day. Obviously the man never had it so good. Bronze Star.

S/SGT T. J. HARRISON-A paddlefoot from Louisiana, "Tommy" is a truck driver turned airplane doctor and a damn good one. Bronze Star.

S/SGT J. L. HELM-Rugged little citizen from Arcada, Calif. Holds the Bronze Refueling Medal with the Horse-Hair Cluster. Bronze Star.

S/SGT J. G. HENRY-"The Beak", not at all sensitive concerning his prominent proboscis, Joe gets understandably browned off when his own bicuspid turns and snap at him, Plans to combine business with pleasure afterwards and open a bar back in Trenton. Bronze Star.

S/SGT R. L. HOLTZCLAW- "Holtz'n Hammer," dynamic little personality who is now back on Civvy Street, via the Purple Heart route. Wounded at St. Lo, he is back in Texas now. "Good Luck, Roy," from the 508th Air Force. Purple Heart.

S/SGT M. M. HOUSTON-Counting his points anxiously against the day he can return to Sweetwater, Okla., and buy that ranch. Bronze Star.

S//SGT L. R. KING-"Les", round man from R. I. Small man from a small state but built like a weight lifter. His loyalties are divided between airplanes and farming, but he is equally good at both.

S/SGT C. M. KUEHN-Crew Chief and cowboy, you know his nickname has to be "Buck". He likes planes but wants to go back to poking cattle in New Mexico. Bronze Star.

S/SGT R. W. LARGE-Known variously as the "Old Gov", "Camden Kid" etc. A professional Irishman from Camden, N. J. Very democratic-treats his pilot like an equal. The "Gov," is a late arrival in the rocker class after having received a six month set-back for an impersonation of the Brussels Maneken way back in Redmond, Ore. Bronze Star.

S/SGT H. R. MARSHALL-Never much of an eater, Harry nevertheless made it a matter of principle to beat "Chow Hound Fewell" to the mess hall. And few were the days when it wasn't Marshall, "Win, Place, or Show." Bronze Star.

S/SGT R. H. MARTIN-Farm boy from Atlanta, Georgia. Quiet type, but don't rile him up with any crazy notions like the North won the War (Civil War of course!). Purple Heart.

S/SGT E. L. MARXER-Bama Boy who traded the Marine Corps for the 508th Air Force and has never regretted the change. Bronze Star.

S/SGT J. V. McARDLE-Chicago Crew Chief, card player par excellence. Bronze Star.

S/SGT K. A. MYERS-"Punjab" Witty sayings and sharp repartee; he is equally as handy with a screw driver.



S/SGT F. W. NAGY-"Button Maker", ex-flying gadget turned grease monkey. Crewed for "Buzz Boy Donohoe". Keeps counting his points but can never quite get the necessary 85.

S/SGT L. E. OLIVER-A Southerner from Herick, S. D., at least that's what he tells the girls. Old "Couchez" Oliver is quite the ladies' man. If you don't believe us, just ask him.

S/SGT J. L. ROGERS-"Ta-Ta" to all; no section or squadron meeting is complete without a few words from Rogers just to confuse the issue. Bronze Star.

S/SGT C. H. ROHRS-"Spot" left Napoleon, Ohio, to join us. He was a member of the Bar there the best Bar in town. When you were out of "Spots", you were out of town. Bronze Star.

SGT J. B. SEELY-From Randolph, New York. We don't know how we would have passed the long winter evenings back at St. Trond if it hadn't been for the "Randolph Register".

S/SGT T. J. SHOOK-Hails from Cincinnati, Ohio, where he lived on a strict Heinie diet of pickled pigs' feet, kraut, and beer. We'll take vanilla. Bronze Star.

S/SGT H. J. SLUTSKY-Ambitious, fast-climbing mech. "Doc" plans a pre-med course after. Habits are hard to break though. "Doc", we can just hear after your first operation, "Forceps! Scalpel! Water-pump!" Bronze Star.

S/SGT R. J. SMELKOSKI-"Smokey". tell us about the time in St. Trond you went to take a shower and found yourself in an insane asylum. How did you ever get back out? Bronze Star.

S/SGT A. P. TORBERGSON-This mighty right-hander can throw a baseball further than most men can hit one. He can throw the bull also, it has been noted, and can bandy a phrase with the best. Comes from some place called Somers, Montana. Ever hear of it? Bronze Star.

SGT J. E. WELDON-It says in our file that Jerry was a bank teller in Hartwell, Ga. before coming into the army. If he's like the rest of us he has been doing more listening than telling since June, '42. Considered by some, Weldon for one, a close runner-up to "Couchez" Oliver.

S/Sgt. V. H. WESTON-One of the few crew chiefs who went into V-E day with the plane he started crewing in England. An enviable record; good work, "Wes". Bronze Star.

## The Cogs:

S/Sgt. W. R. ATKINS-A native of the State which modestly claims to be an Empire, Texas. Bill lives in a world of electrons where you always got to accentuate the positive.

CPL J. H. BAILEY-"Long John", New Haven' representative, athlete, and assistant crew chief.

CPL J. F. BERTERELLO-"Bert". assistant clerk in Engineering pounds a mean typewriter. A sharp soldier when it comes to the clothes. Calls "The Wheel" Friend-an honor in itself.

SGT M. J. BISCH-LeSauer, Minnesota. One of the lucky "catalog Corporals" who came out of AM school that way. "Mat" is one of the famous triumvirate of Bisch, Peterson, and Crow; photographers, big operators, and auctioneers.

SGT W. G. CARTER-Prop specialist from Memphis. A good man but he left us for the Infantry at A-92.

SGT D. CROW-A good man in a dark room. Pictures? Of course! Oxygen? At times!

SGT J. C. DOYLE-Solid citizen of Scolley Square, Jake left a position commanding a large salary but requiring little work, to join us. In the Army, he was a prop specialist, a job also requiring little work; we won't mention the salary. His only complaint was that he could not take care of prop troubles in jet jobs. A fortunate 42, he is out now, and back at business on the Square. Good luck, Jake.

S/SGT J. C. DYET-"Bing" is from Helper, Utah, but don't hold that against him. What has Frank Sinatra got that Dyet hasn't, not counting the Voice and a few red corpuscles more or less?

CPL A. N. EBLE-Seen frequently in the Sheet Metal Dept., it is supposed that he works there, though there is little evidence to support this statement. Known as "Two Guns" or "Pistol Packing Eble".

SGT J. R. FINNEY-Baby of the outfit back in Mississippi, now one of the best mechanics in the Squadron.

SGT E. B. FLAHERTY-"Half Track" got that way running around in a fog of hose clamps, gaskets, oil seals and engine parts. Most frequent remark, "Not in stock, we'll order it." Runs a jitney service between Air Corps Supply and Tech Supply.

SGT J. GARIGLIETTI-One time supply man, he climbed the ladder of success verily to the upper-most rung, crew chief of a Maytag Bomber!

SGT R. D. GILKEY-"Gil" is a sack time artist in his own right. He wasn't quite awake that day he started for Brussels . . . He wound up in Liege! "Include me out!" is his only comment when there is a detail to be pulled.

S/SGT J. S. GRAY-"Fleet Foot" picked up his handle back at St Lo at a time when any of us could have qualified for it. A master storyteller, he always got carried away. He has traded the Sergeant prefix for that of Mister and is now busy snowing them under on Civvy Street concerning his Army experiences.

S/SGT T. J. GRIMES-He will go down in our memory as "The Merchant of Stuttgart". Fire Sale prices on all Souvenirs!

SGT J. E. JOHNS-A fox hole wouldn't be complete without Jimmie. Back at St Lo he was working on a scheme to take one to bed with him but couldn't figure out how to dig it up. Sweated out the daily sugar report from Syracuse.

S/SGT W. H. KAVAN-"Arkie" is a Long Island farmer with a southern accent. At A-5 an ardent advocate of deeper and deeper foxholes, "Iron Hat" wore his helmet even in the shower.

SGT F. M. KILLAR-Not as ferocious as his name would imply, "the Killer" is our welding expert. He's had it so easy of late that he has acquired a belly tank.

SGT H. J. KLEE-Newcomer, prop specialist, and sometimes interpreter from Richmond Hill, N. Y.

SGT S. LENCH-Don't disturb! He's working on his suntan these' days and dreaming of seeing "Dem Bums" hop it up before too long.

S/SGT C. F. LOVE-He's wasting away here in the ETO; longs for the day he can return to Altoona, Pa. and sink his teeth into a big fat juicy banana split. Stop it Charlie! You'll have us drooling.

S/SGT V. M. MARASCIO-Pinch-hitting now as an airplane mechanic, "Vic" dispenses slick trims and semi-official rumors. With the mass production methods learned in the Army, Vic plans to give to Red Bank, N. J. the latest in a 15 chair Tonsorial Emporium. When the stories get tall in the new layout, Vic, you can always tell the boys about the time you drew a blank at the Red Cross in Bournemouth ... Remember?

SGT W. H. MASSING-Another "Pa." boy, our first "ear-mover downer." Bill had a line of gab to go with his work. We lost him at St. Trond due to illness and last reports have him back in the good old U. S. of A.

SGT J. E. MARTIN-Halls from Roanoke, Va. John sweated out Sheppard Field but got his reward in an army-sponsored trip to Santa Monica. Airplane mechanic, he is equally as handy around trucks and is giving the motor pool a hand at present.

PFC B. J. MESSEY-Jack of all trades; refueling, engineering liquid refreshment dispenser, and no slouch at cards. Ben's "got it made" now; declared class "D", all he has to sweat out is a boat ride back to Civvy Street.

S/SGT W. H. MILLS-"Sack Time" Mills, member in long standing on our skeleton crew says, "My rapid advancement in the army was due to a clean life and plenty of rest."

SGT H. G. MOON-That last training film set some of the boys wondering just what is the real cause of those whispers and grunts, Moon. Let's see your throat.

S/SGT J. MORINO-Jake isn't as tight as Schreck says he is; he doesn't ask a receipt every time he lends out a nickel, a pint of blood will do as security. "The Profile" left many broken hearts behind when he had to leave St. Trond. Don't cry, Georgetown, it won't take him long to take Berlin.

CPL JAMES V. MULLEN-Our spies inform us "Cletrac" Mullen after a little accident a couple of months ago insists on checking out a parachute and safety belt from "Engie" before embarking on a jeep ride.

SGT F. A. NEALON-"Bud" is the efficiency expert of the Sheet Metal Dept. He can easily put on a two inch patch with the aid of a cletrac and a 6 x 6 truck load of equipment.

SGT D. W. NELMES-"Yap Yap" you know why. Quite a handy lad with tools, fighting at present for the sacred honor of Wayland, NY. Nelmes can take a vehicle (abandoned of course) that is in pretty bad shape; overhaul it, and it will run like an abandoned vehicle in terrible shape. At this point it becomes the property of the impoverished Engineering Section.

SGT A. B. PETERSON-"Pete's" from Compton, California where the sun's always shining (it says here). Second member of the Crow, Peterson, Bisch firm.

CPL L. W. PHELPS-One of the less serious characters in the section. "Louie" is the chubby chap with the red face and gold spectacles who kills you and himself laughing at jokes-Louie's jokes.

S/SGT W. R. PLUGGE-"Plug" makes with the typewriter and like all good clerks can turn a simple statement into a ten-page directive; complete with paragraphs, sections, and subheads. Bound in beaucoup Fed tape.

SGT R. V. RATCLIFFE-"There is a tavern in the town." There are several in fact but the only one for, us is the Ranger Inn, Chicago, Reid Ratcliffe, prop. Reid says, "Drop in anytime for a beer, only ten cents," or, "credit makes enemies, let's remain friends."

CPL B. REYNOLDS--Farmer, from Cherryville, La., Squadron Carpenter.

CPL H. O. ROEBUCK-"High point Harry" Roebuck has the edge on most of us. He has a gorgeous wife and a beautiful 12-point child waiting for him back in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

SGT E. M. SCHULTZ-Springfield, Illinois A. M. who has returned to his first love, carpentering. He's now helping Smitty out in his box factory.

SGT W. D. SMITH-Hails from Gloucester, Ohio. He swings a wicked hammer and is a veritable one-man box factory. This is just a thought Smitty; but if you decide to give up farming we understand the pre-fabricated out-house field is wide open.

CPL C. A. SPEES-"Under the spreading chestnut tree the village Smithy stands". We don't know about the chestnut tree but the village is Homer, Michigan and the standing Smithy is our own Spees. Sit down Spees and take a load off your feet,

SGT A. J. STUNTEBECK-Saskatchewan, Canada, boy down here with a broken back helping the U. S. win a war. He's on the outside looking in now, the lucky man.

SGT D. TATE-Squadron athlete from Marshall, Minn. Noted for the famous No. 63 play last fall (a play we unfortunately neglected to have in our book).

SGT H. W. TATE-100-Octane dispenser from Huntsville, Ala.

SGT D. W. TOM-First learned of being chosen by his doublecrossing neighbors and received the President's greetings at New Concord, Ohio. Conscientious mechanic and apt pupil of Marascio with the bowl and scissors. Right now Tom has been corralled into the Group barber shop for the benefit of brass priority.

CPL A. R. TURNER-Hardworking (if we may use the word work in this connection) refueler from Lancaster, Ohio.

S/SGT M. VANDERWAL-"The Belgique" . . . A master of the language, "Van" blossomed into a social "smooth operator" back at A-92.

S/SGT P. C. VEDVIK-Better known as "Sledge Wedge," or just "Sledge." Sledge is a farm lad from De Forest, Wisconsin who gave up things rustic to become a spark plug specialist; he climbs right into the engine after them we understand. The best break he ever had was the broken arm at St. Trond which sent him back to Bournemouth, his old stomping ground; Criterion, Dutchess, Wow! Say Sledge, what does this new nick-name you've acquired mean? "Radar!" We don't get it.

CPL. G. W. WING--From Somerville, Mass., Wingo knows all there is to know about trucks.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The 508th Communications section, headed by First Lt. James D. Clark, started out the war with Germany at Winkton, England. Within a few weeks after our arrival, our section was fully operative, maintaining ground and air-borne communications for our planes. After moving to A-5 in Normandy, various men from the section, including the entire CNS crew headed by Staff Sgt. Westbrook, left to go on detached service, operating fighter Control Net Systems throughout the battle of France and Belgium.

At our first former German field, A-48, we had plenty to do putting into use serviceable Jerry communications lines. At A-68, near Reims, Staff Sgt. Wright was sent on another detached service assignment, to maintain frequency modulated radio circuits from advanced headquarters sites to forward Air Force units. The constant moves kept our days full, not only maintaining communications at the field we were leaving, but setting them up at the new field as well,

At St. Trond we had a fine semi-permanent set up, involving a complete communications system which included telephone lines to higher headquarters, inter-Group and inter-squadron lines, and power lines to all parts of the field; plus ground radio communications, teletype networks, frequency modulated circuits, a public address

system for squadron announcements, and an air-raid warning system. This took a great deal of time to rig, install, and keep in service, but it was here we operated on our largest scale, with great success.

Our operators and teletype men worked in close conjunction with Group Headquarters. Our linemen worked constantly, repairing telephone and power lines, and our flight-line crews were kept busy maintaining the air-borne equipment in tip-top shape.

It was here our section had its own living quarters, built out of a semi-destroyed German barracks. We divided it into various rooms, including a day-room, for ourselves. Here we spent many a night pulling jokes, discussing thousands of subjects, having plenty of heated arguments, and best of all on cold winter nights, indulging in a midnight snack or two.

About this time Sgt. Owicki and Corp. Stroup set about developing and printing pictures. From then on we all became ardent shutter-clickers, and our section always had the biggest and most complete collection of war pictures on the market.

Our first field in Germany was Y-54, where we didn't do much but work. We just got finished installing all our equipment when we had to tear it down again, pack up and race after the advancing ground forces into central Germany.

Y-86 was intact, with the exception of a few hangars. All the buildings were of modern design and construction. Our living quarters and working conditions were the best we ever had. We had a fine hangar workshop, and had a fine chance here to do a lot of experimenting with German radio equipment.

On to R-50, where we cleaned all our equipment, that had served us so well during the war, and packed it for shipment to the various depots.

## The Communications Machine

### Big Wheels:

First Lt. James D. Clark, section officer.

Master Sgt. Charles A. Chapin, section chief. "Chap"-said with a long a-is the wheel of our section, and brought us through with flying colors. Keeping up with some of the "characters" has been a nerve-wracking job for our master sergeant.

Tech. Sgt. David C. Babcock, inspector. "Bab" is one of the old codgers of the section. He rose to fame, fortune and five stripes while in the prone position of attention in the shade with his shoes off. A participant in all games of skill, and a man equipped with a vocabulary that would put Webster to shame.

Tech. Sgt. George V. Cuonzo, chief radio operator. George is short on height but long on stripes-three up and two down. That second rocker entitled him to the station of "wheel", and the rhythmic racket he makes with the drums proclaims him the drummer of the "Nix Compris" band.

Tech Sgt. John R. Smith, line chief. "John R." is a very likable character. He joined the outfit in Myrtle Beach, S. C., and after many months of hard work was transferred to the Occupational Air Force. His tales, tall and untrue, brought sunshine when the clouds were dark.

### Little Wheels:

Staff Sgt. John C. Birchler, B-Flight chief. "Birch" is an old-timer in the Army. having served in the Aleutians before riding all the way with us. Another high-pointer, he expected soon to be a civilian. "Birch" is the champion beer-drinker of the section, and if there is any brew in the neighborhood, he will find it.

Staff Sgt. Kelley C. Westbrook, CNS chief. "K. C.", an instructor in Control Net System work, knows all about it. He has two main attributes: the ability to do his job well, and the ability to attract the opposite sex. He was the unsung Don Juan of the 508th.

Staff Sgt. John N. Wright, assistant line chief. Better known as "Uncle John" because of his service and lectures on every known subject. Generally found puttering around the shop with all sorts of gadgets, or on his way to Signal Supply for parts or replacements.

Sgt. John C. Owicki, A-Flight chief. "Wick" is a camera fiend, MI-AI, and whether you were a general or a private, chances are he has your picture. All day long the cry went up, "Where's Owicki?" And if you could find him you were a valuable man. The nickname "Speed" could easily be pinned on him, - for he has been seen streaking for his foxhole while still in the sack.

Sgt. Thomas M. Talley, C-Flight chief. "Mother" Talley got his name from his habit of giving "motherly" advice to all the younger members of the outfit. He also had a reputation as a Fire Chief, but he never put out a fire. His one drawback was his "belly tank", which it is hoped he will someday jettison.

Sgt. Willis J. Wantz, C-Flight chief. "Willy" is one of our oldest members. He was a confirmed kibitzer in any card game, and could be found regularly whispering valuable information to some younger member of the section regarding plans for the latest and best practical joke.

## The Gears:

Sgt. Rex C. Riordan, wire chief. Rex was our ace telephone lineman. It is rumored that he climbed everything in the ETO except the ladder of success. As far as Rex is concerned, Georgia never did surrender at the end of the -Civil War. There were no lines out when Rex was on the job.

Sgt. lack E. Stroker, message center chief. Very little is known about the "Leech". He is remembered throughout the Group for his very dramatic entrance into a garbage pit at St. Lo. He lost his watch in the process in the garbage.

## The Cogs:

Sgt. Elmer Angell. To a rookie, Elmer must have looked like a 30-year man with all his stripes and medals. It was expected that he would soon demand longer sleeves on his blouse, because space was running out. Elmer left us to join a flying crew somewhere in the ETO.

Sgt. John W. Atchley. When not busy making radios, "Satchel" could be found making another batch of corn squeezings. His ability as a master radio mechanic made him a very popular guy with the rest of the boys. His main job was that of radio operator. "Satchel's" greatest ambition was to get home to his gal "Lulu Belle" and his old coon-dog "Razz".

Sgt. Noel A. Arrighi. "Christmas" was the outfit's representative from the land of liquid sunshine. A musician of the old school, he did a swell job entertaining the Group as a member of the "Nix Compris" swing band. The first sergeant may have noted that he was the latest riser in the squadron and his first meal of the day was usually dinner.

Sgt. James Cunningham. Jim was the section clerk. A very handsome fellow though not a lover. Many a girl fell for this Romeo, but his heart belonged to a certain miss back in dear old Miss. Thanks to Jim the section was always informed about the latest news-events.

Sgt. John G. Davis. The "Old Man", while in the Army, spent most of his time in a horizontal position in the sack or running over to see the Doc about the latest development on his old-age discharge. He was really a spry old boy though, for when work-detail came around or Jerry was overhead the "Old Man" could be seen streaking for refuge like a comet.

Sgt. Constantine Dorman. "Connie" was one of those very quiet men. He came overseas with Group, and was fortunate enough to be assigned to the 508th at St. Trond. He was an expert teletype man and an eager baseball player. In fact he was so eager he broke his collar-bone fielding a hot one.

Sgt. Daniel S. Greenbaum. "Shrewd" had the wonderful knack of handling a bridge deck like an expert. He was considered so slippery that we believed half the time even he didn't know what he was doing. He was also known as the walking dispensary, and might be seen at any time working on an ingrown hair or getting a paint-job.

Sgt. Walter R. Weed. The "Mouth", sometimes known as "Weedbaum" because of his close association with his boy Greenbaum. As a radio man he became an expert ping pong player. The "Lip's" sweet and unassuming disposition was pleasing to all, never sarcastic, always Mother's Little Helper. We hope you will be a good boy in the future, Baby Dumpling.

Sgt. Edward J. Yeckel. Ed could be called the 'fastest-talking man in the service. He could spit out words, when wound up, like he was powered with 100-octane. He took part in everything from card-playing and ping pong to spending lots of time in the Red Cross club eating doughnuts and drinking coffee-usually during working hours.

Corp. Louis A. Cerrone. This gentleman's name must have been "Sack". Lou held office-hours day and night from under a pile of blankets. A free-movie fan and a lover of "Pocket Books", Lou has yet to do his first day's work.

Corp. Vern J. Halvorson. Hal is a big lovable guy who was always getting picked on by someone just a little bigger than he was. Truly a mother's ideal son, he didn't smoke, drink, gamble, or have any bad habits. He was the golden-haired boy of the 508th.

Corp. George H. Hamilton. Ham is a true 30-year man. The deals he wasn't in on just weren't worth a look. He could get along on anything, anywhere, and it was once rumored that he was seriously considering settling in Paris, even though England was still calling. Corp. Andrew M. Kirk. "Hot Lips" was our trumpet-playing singer with the "Nix Compris". The lad could "send" you with his horn, and had a voice better than Sinatra's. We understand Andy wanted to wear a bow-tie, but Group proved uncooperative.

Corp. Frank Maldonado. Mal is the Latin member of the section. His pleasant manner and flashing smile made him well liked. His knowledge of Spanish helped him pick up these various languages with ease. He was an expert with the dice and always wanted a couple of marks till payday.

Corp. Monroe Reiser. "Moe" greeted you with "How about a little pinochle to pass the time", and ended up with your shirt and trousers. He also handled the dice with dexterity and finesse. As a teletype operator, he has really come a long way in the Army with his card-playing.

Corp. Dwight C. "Termite" Renshaw. Known as "Renny", the smallest man in the section. He was always a terrific headache to our supply sergeant, because the Army never figured on a little guy. Although small in size, "Renny" could always be heard bemoaning the fact that "Chap" or the duty sergeant had found something for him to do.

Corp. Francis S. Stinson. "Stins" is an old seacoast salt who ended up in the Air Corps. Why, even he doesn't know. The mail man was good to him, and he could be found nightly in the dayroom answering a huge stack of mail. Though he is a Jerseyman, it was rumored that his heart belonged to Florida where he took his basic training.

Corp. C. Freeman Stroup. "Strouman Freep" is one of the boys whose photo work will keep the outfit long after the war is over. He was our hot weather boy, and it took the Army to show him there were temperatures lower than 50. A Bronze Star for efficiency should be presented to the mail clerk for getting "Struance's" souvenirs back to Tampa.

Corp. Walter J. Votruba. "Pappy" will always be remembered by the outfit, though he left us at St. Trond. To "Pappy," everything was chicken, and even in the pay-line there was something to moan about. To drive the jeep was his big thrill, and truly he must have been the Army's worst driver. The gang loved to call him "Limey" much to his dislike, and his "Barston" accent provided us with many laughs.

Corp. Theron W. Watters. Warren was the proprietor of the PX, and was always well stocked with the weekly line of cigs, candy and beer. We don't believe there was a card game this handsome character didn't know about. He was a true lover of the opposite sex.

Corp. Douglas L. White. Doug was a charter member of the Tall Story Club. To hear him tell it, he has been around the world, gone to college, and been to every bar worth visiting. Always a willing worker and ready to try anything once. Hollywood missed a good bet here.

Pfc Philip Leviton. Lev put on so much weight that he was accused of having found a home in the Army. He denied all such allegations, of course, but we are sure he was a friend of the mess sergeant.

Pvt. Lloyd M. Justice. Hails from Maryland, where he was a core-maker. We suppose a core-maker is one who makes the thing you discover when you get to the core of the matter. However we haven't given the thing too much thought. Maybe you had better tell us, Jus.

Pvt. John Michalchuk. Mike is an Occupational Air Force man, and he should do well with all the contacts he has over there. A master with the cards was John, and as his luck went, so he went. Prince to pauper to prince. An expert guardhouse lawyer, Mike gave us many laughs with his technical arguments.

## CNS SAGA

Early in July, 1944, the big wheels of Ninth Tactical Air Command decided upon an idea for directing our fighter aircraft by means of radar and V H F to targets of special importance. This idea was to become one of the major control factors in the operation of fighter aircraft on the continent.

Accordingly nine men from 508 Fighter Squadron were ordered to temporary duty with 12 more from the 555 Signal Aircraft Warning Battalion, then situated near Strip A-5. At this time, 14 July, the enemy front could be distinguished a few scant thousand yards away. This then was to be the pattern: The radar team with added communications would contact aircraft in the air and direct them to such targets as assumed importance in the very fluid ground situation.

The radar team had behind it a bit of excitement. It had landed on D-Day on Omaha beach suffering losses in men and equipment. It had operated for 9th TAC in spotting enemy aircraft throughout the early stalemated days of the beachhead. None the less exciting was the role of the nine men from the 508th. All were experienced Control Net System Men, skilled in the maintenance and operation of Very High Frequency equipment. They had operated an emergency homing station at Warmwell, England, throughout the air offensive of Europe and through the D-Day intensive operations. All this was a part of the Air Sea Rescue Service which sent aid to



pilots who were forced to land in the sea around England, at the direction of Fixing Stations which plotted on several widely separated stations the exact spot where the call for help was sounded.

At one time the men were startled to hear the voice of one of the pilots from their own squadron, Lt. "Amigo" Herrera, calling for help just as he crashed into the English Channel. They sent the word in to the Chief Controller, requesting that they be informed when the lieutenant was rescued. The boat could not find him, but a plane flown by another member of the same unit found him in his dinghy with sail up and directed a flying boat to him, circling until it arrived.

Blind dive-bombing missions, the first in combat by the USAAF, were flown under the control of this new team by flights of the 404th Fighter Group and the results were gratifying. Targets were near enough to the friendly troops for them to see the results without being exposed to danger. Missions were flown on the 15, 16, 17, and 18 July but no more until the period during the time of Falaise-Argentan Gap when thousands of tanks and armored vehicles were wiped out by thousands of aircraft daily directed by the radar-communications team to the area.

It was essential that this team and the later ones which followed it be as close to the enemy lines as the battle situation would permit in order to direct aircraft so that they would not be attacking our own troops. In fact many missions were cancelled while the planes were in the air because of the fast moving ground situation.

Once during the fast move across France, the team was ordered to a place atop a hill near the town of Pre-en-Pail, where the tank columns had passed around the hill. The men were turned back by the French in the town saying "Boche", and pointing in the direction of the hill. The men retired to the town's largest cafe and the twenty of them sat talking with the townspeople, and drinking beer until the arrival of the slightly disgruntled infantry.

It was a great adventure for all the men who made the experiment. The officer in charge of the radar team and the others were some of the finest men we have ever known, willing to do the same job under the same conditions as we were working. Often they took over for us, giving us much needed rest during the long days when the sun was still high at 2030 hours. And those men of the radar team from the "Triple Nickel", they were tops for working buddies.

Returning from the unit, then stationed at a point just south of Aachen, on November 1, 1944, and called now "Marmite One", were G. H. Hamilton, K. C. Westbrook, Sgts. Weed and Greenbaum, and Cpls Halvorson, White, Cerrone, Maldonado, and Watters.

## ARMAMENT AND ORDNANCE

The Engineering section sends the airplane into the air, but it is the work of Armament and Ordnance that makes the trip produce results. The guns bombs and rockets put the sting in the dreaded "Jabo" and give the Allied airman his most deadly and accurate weapon. The airplane in itself is just a showpiece in war, until it becomes a platform for firing guns and releasing bombs.

Ordnance handles, stores and delivers to the airplane as needed, the bombs, ammunition and rockets. It is hard, grueling work, particularly on eight-mission days. For this reason, the 508th has found the careful division of functions within its Ordnance-Armament team most effective. Staff Sgt. Price and his boys deliver the goods to the airplane, where their work ceases and Armament takes over.

Installing, harmonizing and loading the guns, loading and fusing the bombs, connecting and installing the rockets—all this is the work of Master Sgt. Bentz's section.

There are moments in the air when the pilot's life depends as much upon the efficient operation of his guns as upon his engine. The guns in an airplane require constant attention to keep them dependable. A lot of credit for Armament's fine job on our aircraft machine guns is due to Flight Sergeants DeMaison, DiSciaccia, Finger, and Loughran, with help and instruction from the flight chiefs, Arndt and Tendick. The all-important inspector's job was handled by Tech. Sgt. Prindaville. The maintenance and installation-work on the Planes was done by those two "fixers" and "trouble-Shooters", Sgts. Richard Salerno and Jack Taylor. The credit for the paper work goes to Corp. Volpicelli who did the work of two men clerking for both Armament and Ordnance.

The Photo Section, attached to Armament has done a fine job. Although a small section and cramped for space and facilities, Staff Sgt. Anderson and his two capable assistants, Sgt. Rinaldi and Corp. Haney, have not only taken care of the airplane cameras but have had many outside jobs of photography and developing thrust upon them. To them goes the credit for the pictures in the 508th section of this book

Sgt. K. K. Bailey ran the squadron's smallest section, Chemical Warfare, with Sgt. Uckmann as assistant. Fortunately we were never gassed, and their knowledge was never needed.

## The Armament Machine

### The Wheels:

First Lt. William H. Lewis, Armament officer, whose skillful experiments with the installation of a British gun-sight on a U. S. mounting contributed so much to the accuracy of our rocket-firing sorties..

Master Sgt. Charles N. Bentz, section chief and Bronze Star winner. "Red", or the "Brussels Casanova" comes from the one and only Texas. His greatest pastime, singing; his next, a deck of cards. He made sure his boys got in on the best of everything.

Tech. Sgt. Henry V. Prindaville, inspector. "Hank", the "Briar Patch Detective", won his fame scenting buzz-bombs. He comes from New Jersey, where it is rumored he was a Flatfoot. After this is over he would like to join the Police force, but as an armorer, not a Flatfoot. Hank likes his job. Purple Heart.

Tech. Sgt. Raymond W. Tendick, chief of A and B flights. He hails from the "Show Me" state, down around St. Louis. You can't trip Ray on his guns, fuses, and bombs, fortunately too, we'd say. But lately he turned his talents into other directions, such as dispensing beer for the entire Group. Good work, Ray!

Tech. Sgt. Frederick M. Arndt, chief of C and D flights. "Brute" or "Wisconsin Flash". His knee-pads were his best friends. He was "loved" by his armorers for his inspections. Especially for the way he found discrepancies which weren't noticeable. While in Belgium he was one of the wheels of the Non-Com's club and helped out by tending bar now and then. He did a nice job, particularly at serving himself.

### Small Wheels:

Staff. Sgt. Charles V. DiSciaccia, A-Flight. You'll go a long way to meet another Charles DiSciaccia. Whenever you dream about those ETO days, don't forget old "Liebowitz" with that cigar in his mouth, telling the guys what kind of bombs to load for the next mission. When you spend that weekend in Connecticut, remember to visit Thompsonville, and you'll find "Lieb" watering the lawn at 17 Windsor St.

Staff. Sgt. Francis J. Loughren, B-Flight. "Kraut" was liked by every one who knew him, because he never changed. Frank, we think, will have a hard time forgetting some things encountered at St. Trond. He always had one or more "friends" waiting for him at the Non-Com's club dances there.

Staff. Sgt. Glen E. DeMaison, C-Flight. Whenever you're around Cleveland, be sure to stop at 2190 Olive Ave. and spend a few minutes with Glen. Without a doubt he'll have a few of his "Rube Goldberg" inventions to show you, and you'll leave wondering where he gets all those ideas, and how they work.

Staff. Sgt. Carl P. Finger, D-Flight. "Cottonseed", the boy from North Carolina with his inseparable pipe. His most famous expression, "Give me a match." Carl will have a hard time forgetting the two "Burlap" sisters of St. Trond, Belgium.

Staff. Sgt. John S. Freeman, maintenance chief. "Bones" was also known as "Buchenwald" because the mess hall was starving him. We don't know yet why he stayed so small. His favorite pastime was eating a double steak supper, "Hoosier style".

## The Gears:

Sgt. Jack M. Taylor, maintenance sergeant, A and B flights. "Sack Time" calls Scranton, Pa., his home, but anywhere his sack is home to him. After three years in the army someone should tell him what working on the line means. Looks like Mrs. Taylor will have to support the family because Jack likes the sack better than work.

Sgt. Richard J. Salerno, maintenance sergeant, C and D flights. "Moose", the gentleman from the West known throughout the squadron for his gift of gab. His hobby was anything and everything. A great Lover of Good Music, mostly his own. Salerno can't sing, but he's a keen judge of fine horses and cute blondes-take it from the "Moose".

## The Cogs:

Sgt. Edward Adamczak. "Dodo", the fellow from Manistee, Mich. who was forever gazing at the fair damsels with the Major. The latter was "Dodo's" best friend.

Sgt. Marvin Bell. "Bunkie Boy's" most famous expression, "Is the Doc in?" was used quite often. The boys who lived with him always appreciated the chocolate Easter eggs and candy bars, of which he received many.

Sgt. Walter H. Cyphers. "Mike's" home is in Columbus, O. He was a chronic moaner about old age and his love for the Army. He likes his bowling quite a bit, but not as much as he does his moaning. For awhile he was "banker" of the squadron. He played third base on the softball team.

Sgt. Raymond Goodwin. "Rudy" come-, from Baltimore, Md. His favorite occupation is being a hammer mechanic. "Rudy" plans to open a fish-market in civilian life.

Sgt. Eugene C. Hills. We all liked the sweet music "Curly" could get out of a guitar even if it did keep us awake late at night. Purple Heart.

Sgt. John W. Lilliendahl. Everybody called him "Lil". A Brooklynite, he left us in Germany to join the Occupational Air Force.

Sgt. Dewey E. Marwitz. The "Weasel" from Markesan, Wis. A teller of corny jokes and an authority on Oregon moss agates; claims he is as much Irish as Notre Dame's football team.

Sgt. Samuel C. Miller. Known as "Food", only modesty kept him from eating out of a messkit made with sideboards especially for him by the boys. He's the boy who made all Group Headquarters hit the floor at Myrtle Beach when a 50-caliber "ran away". Sammie hails from Lewiston, Pa.

Sgt. Michael Purcell. Commonly known as "Pop, the old codger", from Pennsylvania. A 30-year man, not a draftee. A good Joe? Roger! Specialized in Small (not Short)

Arms. Sgt. Joseph E. Puskarich. "Lucky", from Washington, Pa., left us to join the OAF. We are wondering if the boys he took up with there donated to his poker bank account.

Sgt. Stanley H. Ring. Home town, Alstead, N. H. Stanley entered the 508th in February, 1943, as an armorer and has worked at it ever since. He is a great fisherman and swimmer, and thought the Rest Camp at Fritzlar was a great place.

Sgt. Lynn H. Smith. "Smitty's" occupation with the 404th was in Armament, but we think he would make a good preacher, which is his main ambition. He would also like to be a coal miner.

Corp. Reno Benedetti. From San Francisco. Joined the 404th in May, 1943. Commonly known as "Benny Spaghetti", but will never say no to salami and beer.

Corp. William L. Bradaric. From San Diego, Cal. Joined the 404th November 15, 1944. Armorer-maintenance. "The Diego Halfback" left for the Infantry in April, 1945.

Corp. John W. Cottier. "Moan Job" is from Chicago and came into the Army in December of '42. John says the greatest day of his life was the day he joined the 404th Group. He is a great inventor, and the squadron even used some of his ideas.

Corp. Frank J. Cyrus. Hometown is Chicago, Ill. He joined the 404th in May 1943. Frank crewed 7J-E for Maj. Tibbets and Lt. James. His hobby is art-sketching; he also plays a saxophone.

Corp. Joseph E. DeFlorio. Comes from Rochester, N. Y., and is best known for his cigar and his red mustache.

Corp. Ernest Dietrick. We've always wondered where "Zeke" Dietrick acquired that subtle sense of humor; but it's always there and most of the time if you are the object you wish he'd find someone else to bug. "Zeke" says he'd like to see a few of his buddies in Ontario, Ore., when they get out that way.

Corp. Harold Dornbaum. As Ernie Pyle wrote (?), the armorer is all brawn and little—but right there we stop, because our male specimen, "Doorbell" Dornbaum, has a highly developed cranium to boot. We suggest that all of "Dorbie's" buddies drop in at 48-34 207th St., Bayside, L. I., where he promises you a grand time discussing Einstein's Theory of Relativity.

Corp. James D. Engel. Jimmy the "Fat Boy" came from the 310 Bomb. Group to the 404th in June, 1943. His home in Laverne, Minn. He's quite an athlete when it comes to the sack. Purple Heart.

Corp. Laurence E. Erickson. "Swede" comes from Chicago, Ill., and served as armorer on 7J-G and I. Larry is a great baseball and boxing fan. He'll remember St. Trond; he had a great time there.

Corp. Floyd Evans. The armorer who later took over the job of bartender at St. Trond, and later the back-breaking job of mail clerk after it had already worn out one man. He handled money orders for such famous persons as "Mike" Cyphers and Nick Lamicelli.

Corp. Arthur B. Ferris. The "Moose", a great lover of horses and motor-cycles, comes from Detroit, Mich. He is a past master at fixing motorcycles.

Corp. James C. Fronek. Get "Birdie" to tell you about the time he went up 15,000 feet without using oxygen. We don't claim that he tells tall tales but we would like proof for some of them.

Corp. Glen K. Griffith. His greatest ambition was to beat Harry Marshall to chow. After sweating 14 days for a pass to London, he had a perfect time, stretching a five-day pass to 12 days. He is an ardent pinochle player and likes to trace down "vicious rumors".

Corp. Harry F. Hillard. Home town, Sacramento, Calif. Joined the 404th in England. "Volto's" hobbies: collecting, analyzing, enlarging, and reporting on all rumors. A G. I. roving reporter.

Corp. Samuel E. Hokett. "Red" hails from Detroit, and joined the 404th in February, 1944. He enjoys riding a motorcycle more than eating, A great guy.

Corp. Charles J. Lawless. "Gestapo", Lt. Donohoe's armorer, the man with the all-consuming thirst.

Corp. Vernon P. Price. Known to all as "Pappy" from Miller, Mo., he could hardly wait to get back to "Blossom," his pet heifer.

Corp. Alexander R. Ross. From Jersey City, N. J. (pronounced "Joisey"). He had the unique ability to turn any G. I. meal into a sandwich. "Coffee an' All" votes the straight Hague ticket in God's Own City. Best tent-area coffee brewer in the squadron.

Corp. William H. Said. Armorer for Capt. Connor. An enthusiastic armorer, who collected guns, sack-time, and weight.

Corp. James V. Salvato. Ardent fan of Noel Coward and staunch supporter of his hometown, Brooklyn. Believes non-fraternization means No Frauleins. Most natural position is prone.

Corp. Albert Tomicich. From Haywood, Calif. to the 404th Group in January, '44. "Tommie" rode a bicycle so he could get in five more minutes of sack time.

Corp. Benjamin V. Volpicelli. Ben "I'm Essential" Volpicelli is best known for his familiar refrain, "Now listen here, young man."

Pfc. Robert Ashworth. An armorer tool-clerk who joined the 404th in July, 1944. Enjoyed the squadron dances at St. Trond; left for the Infantry in April, 1945.

Pfc. Benjamin H. Morrison. Armorer from Sedalia, Mo. joined the 404th in May, '44. "Meatball" specialized in dry cleaning with 100-octane gasoline.

Pfc. William F. Rae. Habitue of the Red Cross clubs where he held forth on any subject under the stimulus of coffee and doughnuts.

Pvt. Francis C. Currie. Maintenance armorer from Sardis, Miss. who specialized in midnight snacks-coffee and egg sandwiches if obtainable. Favorite pastime, before he left for the Infantry in March, '45, was sacking.

Pvt. Alexander Krasowsky. Comes from the sovereign commonwealth of Massachusetts. Krasowsky was the first man in the 404th to meet the Russians.

## Photo Section:

Staff Sgt. Hugh M. Anderson, section head. "Andy's" hometown is Atlanta, Ga. He started with the .404th at Key Field in the orderly room, passed through squadron supply and engineering before settling in Photo. Fittingly enough, his hobby was photography.

Sgt. Michael J. Rinaldi. Plenty of Civvy Street experience in the photo line Racked off, "Mike" ended up coaxing Class D thrillers out of a broken down projector, doing a better job than the pictures were worth.

Corp. Edward T. Haney. Columbus, Ohio's gift to the 404th. As an engrossing sideline, printed and developed pictures for the rest of the boys.

## Chemical Warfare:

Sgt. Kenneth K. Bailey, section chief. "K. K." was pilot and crew chief on the decon. truck, which he fondly referred to as the "Joy Wagon".

Sgt. Karl L. Uckmann. An old Dodger fan, called "Kraut" because he spoke German so fluently that Group made him an interpreter. "Kraut" spent quite a bit of time in the Caribbean, so had enough points to get out early and start looking for the tree that grows in Brooklyn.

## ORDNANCE

### Big Wheel:

Staff Sgt. Raeford C. Price, section chief. The North Carolina cadre man saw action in his neighbor-state fighting the Battle of Congaree against gnats and mosquitoes. Casanova of Meridian, Conway, Paris, and Hannut. His absence in Germany because of the loss of a finger was felt by everybody.

### Little Wheel:

Sgt. Edward J. Bialach. Better known as Ed, the Man-about-Brussels, or in Germany, the Man-about-D. P.'s. His popularity increased considerably when his Polish vocabulary became known.

Corp. Elbert Brown. The old gentleman, commonly known as "Plaz", was the outfit's best bartender, because he never drank. He always drew a crowd when he sat down to tickle the ivories. Our favorite pianist and mechanical genius and everybody's friend.

### The Boys:

Staff. Sgt. Ray E. Pepper. "Pep" is from Pemberton, O. Once Ordnance chief, he was transferred to Armament where his skill on 50-caliber machine guns was hard to match.

Staff Sgt. Robert G. Wulff. Former infantry supply sergeant who proved to be an asset to the section the short time he was with us. He could hold down a desk job and operate efficiently in the field as well.

Sgt. George A. Jackson. A Utah man who stayed in Ordnance till he became a decon. driver. "Jack" was a good athlete; played on the Group football team, and was a star softball pitcher.

Sgt. Philip T. Parker. Native of Wiscasset, Me., often referred to as "Porcupine". Left our band to pursue, we hope, a more advantageous career. We'll always remember the night when "Paratrooper Parker" sweated under the withering fire of 508th defenders, then went through the same thing again a week later by courtesy of the Luftwaffe.

Albert H. Strong. "Lucky", a Wisconsin lad, was very active in all sports. Not only could he play a good game of baseball, but he could match the best in ping pong.

Corp. Frank E. Caskey. A native of Belleville, N. J., Frank came in the Army fresh from school. He spent a little time at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, which made him the good ordnance man that he is. He ran a close second to P. T. Parker in every way—even the O. C. S. part.

Corp. Lloyd E. Ellsworth. Gift of the State of Illinois to Ordnance. You name it, he'll lift it. Boss-man of Old 426, ably assisted by Parma's hero, "Elmer" Kuratko.

Corp. Edgar A. Funderburg. The South Carolina jitterbug. Old "Chubby Cheeks" was constantly reminded of his home town, Aiken, by the old Army expression, "Oh my achin' back!"

Corp. Frank E. Kuratko. Holds the Purple Heart for wounds received in Normandy. Frankie, lost the friendship of E. W. Green Jr. one night, while leading a race to a foxhole on the other side of a barbed wire fence at St. Trond. Green's clothes caught in the barbed wire because Frank stepped on it while Green was crawling through.

Corp. Joachim Ordoyne, "Pop" , the fireman from Ponchatoula, La. He deserted us for the comforts of the Officers' Snack Bar. "Pop" spoke French fluently, so he really got along well with his relations in Paris.

Pfc. Edward W. Green Jr. Better known as "Beer". When the going was rough his famous battle cry was, "Let's go Lehigh!" Under ranked throughout the war, his value was finally realized and he made private first class by direct act of Congress.

Pfc. Robert Torpy, Machinist from Madison, Wis. Had bad luck with his Army career, an ordnance man who had to work his way through parachute and transportation before he made our team. Achieved a name for himself in the squadron as a topnotch wristwatch man; he sure could make swell crystals.

Pfc. Robert B. Youngblood. The greatest tragedy in the Ordnance family, the death of Bruce Youngblood, occurred after hostilities had ceased. Bruce's excellent character and knack of making friends made him well known throughout the Group. The strong relationships formed working and living together caused his loss to be felt by the section like the loss of a brother.

## SQUADRON SUPPLY

Staff Sgt. Hugh J. King of Bristol, Tenn. was our Supply Sergeant. Besides seeing that you guys were dressed "to kill" in the best drab the Army has, he also managed to collect for himself beaucoup points.

Corp. Julius H. "Jerry" Kreutzer was the Big Wheel of Supply and a good right hand man to his boss. It is not to be doubted' that he is headed for Big Business back in Richmond Hill, N. Y.

Pfc. William B. Green was a new addition from the ground forces. Noted for his stories of "Up Front", he rounded out a happy family.

Pfc. Horace L. Lovejoy, a new addition to Supply, proved a valuable man. The AGF's loss was the 508th's gain. The handsome lad from Maine did a good job with the 32's.

Pvt. Bernard G. "Bunny" Swist is "Mr. Supply" himself. That brace he supported on the middle finger of his right hand was the result of catching three softball games with a broken finger. Such courage was never before seen in the ETO. We hope it didn't hurt his dice game.

Big boss of the section was First Lt. John S. Heher, irreverently christened "Pubic" by Doc Baker. Long John served Supply well, and did an excellent job in the Group Motor Pool.

## MEDICS

The Medics arrived with the Squadron at Winkton under Capt. Archie J. Baker, Squadron Surgeon. The "gang" included Staff Sgt. Raymond W. Smith, Medical NCO; Sgt. James J. Corrigan, surgical technician; Corp. Ted J. Wojtowicz, medical technician; Corp. Hubert R. Isaacson, surgical technician; Pfc. Melvin J. Busler, surgical technician; and the three ambulance drivers, Pfc. Earl Bray, Pfc. William E. Kunze, and Pvt. Leonard Duffy.

The first Medical Aid Station consisted of a tent and a few bottles of pills, so "Pill Rollers" was a natural for the section. In Normandy, July 24, 1944, the medics went underground. It was their first brush with bombardment. There were a great many casualties from the bombs, which fell chiefly in the 508th line area.

We pursued the front lines across France, stopping to treat a new type of casualty after a short pause near Paris. At Juvincourt the dispensary was set up in a building for the first time overseas. Back to a tent at St. Trond, but only for a short time till we found enough lumber to build ourselves a winter home, which kept out everything but the weather. Here we were introduced to the buzz-bombs. The bombs caused no casualties, but the noise from the things did.

Bray was C. Q. at the Dispensary one night when a buzz-bomb cut out overhead. He left his bed and was really going places when he hit a stack of supply boxes. The tangle made more noise than the bomb; it floated on by, but Bray was a casualty nevertheless.

During the paratrooper alert Christmas Eve, the medics were supposed to set up an emergency first aid station in a bomb shelter. Smith and Bray were the only two men on hand at the time, and happened to run into Lt. Lewis, Armament officer, who had them out on a guard-post in nothing flat.

The Boche came over shooting New Year's Day, where the only casualties, happily, were the foxhole variety. At St. Trond Capt. Baker left for home on emergency leave, to be replaced by Capt. Norman E. Goulder.

Fritzlar provided us with our best setup overseas-a partitioned-off corner of a large hangar. We swapped medical officers again, Capt. Goulder departing in favor of Capt. William H. Kaufman.

## MESS

There was never any need for a chow whistle in the 508th; those chow hounds just seemed to know by instinct when the food was ready. That might be construed as a tribute to the skill of the cooks, or it might be that the boys were always hungry. But we always knew that no matter what the conditions, "Mac" McKinney would manage somehow to get his boys cracking and get out the hot chow. And out it came.

There were times when we wished we had plates and cups instead of mess-kits, but after a day on K. P., we were glad that each man had to wash his own. The first place we found at any new site was the row of G. I. cans with steam up, waiting for the mess-line to go through.

There were rough days for the cooks when all we could get were substitutes: rice for potatoes, C-rations for beef, marmalade for butter-will you ever like marmalade again! Even then it was a matter of driving for miles over dusty roads to get the stuff. Menus changed by the day, but we always knew that if it could be made edible, ours were the cooks to do it.

Those midnight snacks that we got without "Mac" finding out were really not much to write home about, but the fun of eating them and the fact that they were illegitimate made them tasty. With a bottle or two of Normandy cider, or Reims champagne, and Nescafe and synthetic lemon, a few "liberated" potatoes and a bartered egg, we managed royally.



## The Staff:

Staff Sgt. Otis C. McKinney, mess sergeant. Boss of the belly-robbers, "Mac" claims to know more different ways of preparing powdered eggs than Oscar of the Waldorf.

Sgt. Earl C. Buck. Buck had beaucoup points, picked up in Europe and Alaska, but from the amount of meat we were getting, we thought he was turning in his red ration points for them.

Sgt. Joseph M. Dugan. Kitchen character noted for his battle cry "Take it off, it's holding up the line!" At certain periods he is more perturbed than usual and drives the K. P.'s to the verge of murder, then he softens and offers some tidbits from his larder as a peace-token. His last words before leaving the States, "Men, I'll see that you never get hungry overseas." "Get" implies a change of status; we never "got" hungry, we stayed that way ... We'll always remember Dugan's ability to turn everything that came his way into stew.

Sgt. Mike T. Fravert. As far as the kitchen was concerned, "Spider" was the brains behind the pantry door. Just the man for the job. None could accuse him of eating too much. Life began at 40 for "Spider" all right; he and Uncle Sam negotiated a separation on that basis in Germany.

Sgt. Roy L. Morgan. When Morgan whipped up a batch of his light fluffy biscuits it took ten men and a cletrac to get them out of the oven. We are kidding of course; he's a good cook, or the officers wouldn't have racked him off for their mess.

Sergt Ervie N. Saunders. "Red" gave up the textile mills for frying pans. A hard worker, he was the only cook who cooked as though he meant it.

Sgt. Robert E. Sensabaugh. High point cookie from Newark, O.

Corp. Edward F. Crow. Another cook who turned his culinary skill over to the Officers' Mess. What about the boys you left behind in "Buchenwald", Crow?

Corp. Chester V. Grysburg. His pancakes couldn't be eaten; couldn't be eaten for that matter, but he was a good kid. He made P. F. C. so many times he'd have to wear a double length sleeve to get on all those single stripes. Sometimes it got just too hard to bear, hanging over a hot stove, working your fingers to the bone for 250 unappreciative chow hounds.

Corp. Nicole Lamicella. Nick had his eye on that "work one day and off two" proposition when he chose the kitchen as a career. Except for burning the chocolate pudding occasionally, he would make some little lady a nice wife.

Corp. Bronislaw J. Wojno. Junior member of the firm of Dugan and Wojno. What Dugan turned into stew Wojno doled out grudgingly. Between them they killed the last red corpuscle in the 508th.

Pfc. Noncie J. Incardona. Cook's helper from Chicago, who presided over the bread-pan (*bread-pan* we said!) and dice table.

Pfc. Walter A. Long. Former locomotive mechanic from Utica, N. Y. Perfectly fair about passing out the meat in the consolidated mess; the 508th boys got nothing but fat either.

Pvt. Ronald B. Lambdon. The "General" has a plush Southern accent you can cut with a knife. Never known to be angry, he had a smile for everyone, despite the fact that no one understood him. He is the E. M.'s walking proof that the Army doesn't always come out on top; he ate red tape for breakfast and we loved him for it ... Go to it, "General"!

## ANECDOTA

### THE "TERRIBLE PARACHUTE ATTACK", 508th VERSION:

The Christmas packages had been coming in for over two weeks, every mail-call adding another 30 or 40 to the total. Every one in the 508th had been neglecting Dugan's stew to stuff themselves with candy, fruit cake and cookies in the evening. Several had even come, by bottles labeled "cough medicine", but containing pure golden bourbon. By Christmas Eve most of the packages were in, most of them in Joe Henry's room, although the stream didn't peter out until weeks later. "Gov" Large and several others, notably Harry Roebuck and "Sack" Mills, did quite a bit of visiting during those gala days. They went from Ference and Cardeli's room at one end of the barracks to the other end where Moon, Scibior, Flaherty, Mullen and King, supply men all, holed up for the protection which numbers gave them. About halfway down the hall they were fairly exuding goodwill, smiles, and fruit cake.

About 9 p. m. the barracks quieted down. The squadron rounders were at their celebrations in the St. Trond taverns and the stay-at-homes had fallen asleep under the weight of the fruitcake they had eaten, which was considerable.

Suddenly there were a series of whistle-blasts, and "The Wheel" McCarty was in full control of some situation—we couldn't make out what. Finally it seeped through our sleep-benumbed senses that he was yelling, "Everybody outside with guns and helmets; Ground Alert! Ground Alert!"

That meant only one thing to us. We had already been warned that the Germans might use paratroopers during the "Bulge", and this was it! Teeth chattered and knees shook. Vic the barber grabbed Johns, his roommate, and said, "Don't get scared, it's O. K." Johns, who wasn't awake enough to be scared yet, was twice as calm as his would-be protector. Bill Gleason and Jim Seely were pale but calm and proceeded to arm themselves for bear. Gleason carried about 15 clips of ammunition, and a hunting knife; and Seely sensibly took time enough to put on his fur-lined boots.

It was very cold outside; the moon was bright and there was little wind. The men were scared but quiet; all cursed the bright moonlight. We didn't know whether it was the real "McCoy" or not, but we kept to the shadows as much as possible. No one wanted to be too cautious in case the whole thing was a mistake. We didn't want to be laughed at later, still we wanted to be around later. All doubts about the alert were dispelled when a short burst of rifle fire sounded in the distance. Nobody seemed to be in charge, so the men huddled together in the shadows of the red brick barracks. It was too dark to identify anyone, but scared speculations as to the outcome were exchanged briefly. Rumor took root and grew upon mere guess: paratroopers had landed only a mile away and were proceeding toward the field; they would have to pass our barracks to get there.

Master Sgt. Overton took temporary control at this point and told everyone to spread out. He sent half out into the alleyway between two brick buildings. The remaining half got scared at being left alone, and soon the whole bunch was together again in the alley. "The Wheel" McCarty had returned valiantly to his sacred post as Charge of Quarters and stayed hard by the telephone. He even remembered to phone the officers' quarters and soon had Major "Mac" on the scene together with Lt. Heher. Major "Mac" was calm and asked for details, listened carefully, and began a plan for defense. He sent Sgt. Stellman and 20 men to the line. At this point "The Wheel" interrupted to find out who was going to guard the Orderly Room. Sgt. Freeman was given five men to protect the rear and the north end of the barracks, Sgt. Overton and seven others, the south end. The Major got more and more excited as the precious minutes flew by and rushed here and there getting his men in position and giving them last-minute instructions.

Lt. Heher went into the alleyway and made his presence known with: "Men, I am Lt. John S. Heher and I am in charge of this group. We will proceed north across this field to the other highway."

Each man was issued a hand grenade of which he knew absolutely nothing. Then sliding on bellies and making short rushes, the whole party advanced across the field floodlighted by the moon. "Long John" Bailey said they must have gone about half a mile; he kept seeing enemy troopers everywhere since he had neglected to bring along his bifocals. He wanted to throw a grenade a couple of times, he said, "but fortunately didn't know exactly how to go about it."

Meanwhile back at the barracks, other officers had arrived to add to the confusion. One of them had racked off Sgt. Freeman to lead another "Rescue party" to the line where reinforcements were badly needed. Major "Mac" wasn't informed of this, and when he went to check on Sgt. Freeman's barracks-guard couldn't find him. He began to shout "Sgt. Freeman, Sgt. Freeman!" at the top of his lungs. This strangely enough calmed the men's nerves. They evidently figured that any paratroopers in the vicinity would certainly get Major "Mac" before they got anybody else, and felt a little more at ease.

The first rescue party bound for the line to save the planes at all costs, deployed and ran across the muddy field. "The Wheel" shouted to them to stop, Gleason said, and they did, but when ordered back they refused to retreat and continued their valiant charge. The Ack-Ack boys on the raised highway showed great intelligence by not firing at the wildly charging melee. The line made the highway without any casualties, although several men fired their guns by mistake in the excitement. Over the hill they swept and down into the field, and quickly into foxholes. Then began the waiting and the sweating.

The cooks and bottle-washers under the capable command of Staff Sgt. Otis McKinney were given the difficult section of highway above the mess-hall to defend. They acquitted themselves admirably. One party surrounded a Jerry trooper in the middle of the field and were just about to finish him off when it turned out to be Parker. Just after the alert was sounded, "Doc" Baker stumbled into the Medics' shack armed with an antiquated shotgun and two shells, ready for action. Out in D-Flight Abe Englander and Fewell shared adjoining foxholes. "Engie" buried himself with a camouflage job on his helmet, while Fewell challenged shadows.

The men of the 508th continued to fire harmlessly at one another, while trucks and tanks moved forward to the attack up the highway in front of the barracks. The barracks-guard lay low and strained their eyes watching the frozen moonlit fields. Finally when the terrific suspense of waiting for the fight became unbearable, the tones of "Mother" Talley's well-modulated voice came in over the P. A. system soothingly intoning, "All Clear, All Clear." Never were more beautiful words uttered.

With tension off, egos began to swell and to assume more normal proportions. Everyone had to talk at once, to tell where he was and what he saw, and how scared "so and-so" looked while he himself was so calm. Carbines were willingly laid back in their corners to gather dust, and pockets emptied of ammunition. What had looked like a "till death or dawn" affair was over in two hours. Bunk "critiques" took another hour, but by the time the third shift of guard went on at 12 o'clock all was quiet again. Peace reigned supreme. The 508th Air Force had met the enemy and as usual had brought distinction upon itself.

Next day it was learned that the "attack" was only the crew of a Lancaster Bomber bailing out after being crippled on a raid over Germany. Well, we were ready anyhow. It's a good thing the Germans didn't attack. (A good thing for whom?)

This one could only have happened in Paris. One of our drivers had parked his truck at the Grand Hotel, feeling he would have little trouble finding such an imposing place again, and set out on a little unofficial sightseeing. One drink led to another, and on the way back our hero became lost in the maze of buildings. To add to the confusion, it turned out there were several Grand Hotels. Finally he gave up trying it alone, and stopped a pretty young thing in wedge-heels and a funny-looking hat. "Grand Hotel?... he begged with appropriate gestures at the horizon. "Grand Hotel-oui" she consented quickly, and latching herself to his arm, waited for our confused hero to take her away.

Why did certain armorers always have burlap bags in their tents at A-92?

People have a lot in common even if they don't speak the same language. It is amazing how many little transactions can be made with such simple phrases as "couchey", "nix compris", "beaucoup chocolate" and the like.

Wonder what caused the sudden great demand for cigarettes at R-50?

One of the boys came back from Reims with this story: "I met a beautiful girl but she said she only went out with friends. I saw her with about five different guys during the evening. She must be friends with the whole U. S. Army!"

Brussels is pretty large, and those medieval streets wound so that we quickly became lost. We picked out a nearby citizen and questioned him concerning the whereabouts of the "Maneken". A large helpful crowd had gathered by this time, including both sexes. Finally our character saw the light and exclaimed loudly for all the world to hear: "Ah, Maneken Pis!" Then amid much laughter from the crowd he pointed out the direction, and we slunk hastily away.

We thought the water pretty cold at Stuttgart when we preflighted the pool, but some of our hardier comrades even went in for night swimming. At least we assume they did, for some of them went out on a "swimming" pass and didn't get back till three o'clock the next morning.

It happened in Brussels. One of our crew chiefs who considered himself something of a linguist decided to show off his high school French. Spying a slick looking mademoiselle, he bade his comrades stick close by and watch his technique while he asked the way to the Ardennes Red Cross Club.

"Mademoiselle," he began. But while he fumbled with his vocabulary the mademoiselle came out in brutal English: "Soldier, it will cost you 750 francs and you can't afford it." And she walked on.

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Ramblings: Myrtle Beach-only one more inoculation . . . Where are! your dogtags? ... Don't talk, the enemy is listening . . . Torture by lectures ... Made out all your allotments? . . . Life insurance . . . Camp Shanks . . . They'll yank you off at the gangplank ... They can't do this to, me ... Abandon ship drill . . . Struggling up the gangplank. The "Starving Castle" . . . England-you've "had it"! ... Winkton ... You men are privileged to take part in the greatest show on earth . . . English weather . . . Mud ... Bournemouth . . . "First door on the left, you can't miss it" . . . Piccadilly . . . Hold that truck ... Censorship ... ATS gals . . . Put on bombs-take 'ern off; hang belly tanks-take 'em. off ... Honey buckets . . . D-day broadcasts . . . If you can't shoot 'em down, ram 'em . . . Bournemouth's Branksome Towers . . . Norfolk Hotel . . . "Bless 'Em. All"... Normandy ... Where's the bomblane? Takeoff, bomb, land, refuel, takeoff, bomb, land, refuel, takeoff, bomb ... The Periers flak-trap . . . "I got three tanks that time!" . . . "Hell, that's only one less than me!" . . . Calvados cider ... Air alerts ... They can't hit you ... Foxholes ... Danger ... Where is my steel helmet? ... Dig your own foxhole, you lazy so-and-so ... Jerry motorcycles ... Bill Johns and his "volkswagen" . . . Our arsenal of German weapons ... Spike Jones and the Nillson Sisters... . The Snack Bar ... I'm wounded, I think ... St. Lo ... Bretigny . . . Paris . . . Voulez-vous? Mademoiselles ... Comme see, comme sa-a-a ... Wrecked Jerry airplanes ... Souvenirs ... The F. F. I. and their cars in Paris ... Eiffel Tower ... Chanel Number Five . . . Oh well the war is about over . . . Dinah Shore ... Juvincourt ... Champagne ... Holland invasion ... The trestle bridge to mess . . . Beaucoup hangovers ... St. Trond ... Nix compris, nix compris ... Good barracks ... Goldie . . . "I'll kill you, you \* \* \* \* \* 1" Snow, ice-skating . . . Winter operations. Corso's Cuties or debutantes . . . "Cognac-goot-prima?" . . . Cafe Metropole. The Parisien, Café Royal ... Palace Theater ... Red Cross Club ... Doughnuts on the line ... The Bulge ... How far away are they? ... I can leave at a moment's notice ... This will be a bomber base; we are going to

GERMANY ... Kelz ... Wind and mud ... Scarred countryside ... Aachen, Duren, the autobahn. . . Fritzlar ...  
Jerry planes intact ... Want some belly-tank leather? ... Non-fraternization . . . "Kommen zie hier" . . . Dee Pee's  
... Requisitions ... Burgomeisters . . . V-E Day ... And victims ... We're going home—no, to the C.B.I. ... The  
EderSee .. Squadron stag party . . . The D. P. floor-show; the strip-tease expert . . . Kelly's Barroom ... U. S.O.  
shows . . . Beer and buzz bomb juice ... Stuttgart ... Tent life, sun tans . . . Softball league ... Bernhausen , . .  
Confined to post ... Myrtle Beach in reverse ... Dogtags ... Lectures . . . Dreams of thirty-day leaves ... WE'RE  
GOING HOME!

# NUGENT'S *Neutralizers*



A NINTH AIR FORCE BASE, Bernhausen, Germany, July 9, 1945

Memorial services were held in the little Lutheran church of Bernhausen Sunday, July 8, for Captain John W. Wainwright, 21, Marshall, Tex., P-47 Thunderbolt fighter bomber pilot who set a Ninth Air Force record last September 28 by destroying six German fighter planes in the air on one mission. Wainwright, a veteran of the 404th "Tin Hornets" fighter group, was killed July 7 when his air craft crashed on a routine training flight, two months after his last combat mission.

He was one of the most-decorated pilots in the group, with the Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart, and Air Medal with 15 oak leaf clusters, won in 12 months of combat flying.

The DSC was awarded for his six-plane "kill" of September 28, when he was flying the "Tail End Charley" position on a squadron mission near Arnheim, Holland. He became separated from his squadron when he turned off to intercept three enemy aircraft attempting to attack the formation from the rear. Out of contact with his squadron because of a faulty radio, Wainwright battled a series of attacking fighters, shot down four and caused two to collide, and navigated back to his home base.

He won the DFC for successful dive-bombing of German positions in the Hambach forest and strafing attacks which silenced flak guns trained on the rest of his squadron December 1.

The Silver Star and Purple Heart awards were based upon a series of actions March 3, when as squadron leader he successfully attacked factory installations and a marshalling yard in the Ruhr valley. He was wounded by a flak. burst which shattered his canopy and riddled his cockpit with fragments.

In one of the last major operations of the war, Wainwright led a rocket attack on an important oil storage dump at Torgau, Germany (a few days later the meeting place of U. S. and Russian forces), and set the installation afire before following planes of his squadron could attack. They saved their weapons for another vital target.

Wainwright, the son of Mr. and Mrs. John H. Wainwright, Route 2, Marshall, Tex., entered service October 28, 1942, was commissioned November 3, 1943, and came overseas as a second lieutenant in April 1944. He participated in all major operations of the. Battles of Normandy, Northern France, and of Germany, winning steady promotion and assignment as a flight leader.

He participated in September 10 operations against German rail communications between Aachen and the Rhine which won a presidential citation for the "Tin Hornets" group, and led formations of squadron strength in the group's close co-operation missions leading to encirclement and capture of Leipzig.

Two brothers are in -service, Lieutenant Alfred A. Wainwright and Sergeant Walter D. Wainwright.

Memorial services for the Texas Pilot were conducted by Captain E. B. Wyckoff, 215 W. 85th street, Los Angeles, Calif., Protestant chaplain. A quartet from Wainwright's squadron took part in the services.

(From 404th Group Public Relations Files) .



CAPT. WILLIAM J. ABRAHAM



CAPT. WAYNE H. ANACKER



1st LT. PATRICK M. ANDERSON



CAPT. HAROLD J. BUELOW



2nd LT. CHARLES W. CALDWELL



1st LT. ROBERT J. COLWELL





CAPT. JOHN E. CONNOR



1st LT. ROBERT C. CONWAY



MAJ. PAUL R. CRAWLEY



1st LT. CHARLES H. CRONK



1st LT. ROBERT O. DODGE



1st LT. WILLIAM W. DONOHOE JR.



1st LT. JAMES C. DUNN



1st LT. EUGENE M. FABER



1st LT. IRA FISHER JR.



LT. COL. ROBERT J. GARRIGAN



1st LT. RAYMOND F. GAY



1st LT. LLOYD J. GEIST



1st LT. FRANCIS T. GILLESPIE



1st LT. JOHN S. HARRINGTON



1st LT. LUCIANO B. HERRERA



1st LT. FREDERICK W. HILL



1st LT. PAUL A. HONER



1st LT. KENNETH O. HUNTER



MAJ. GEORGE W. McLAUGHLIN



LT. COL. LEO C. MOON



CAPT. DREXEL D. MORGAN



F/O JAMES D. MOULTON



CAPT. CLARENCE E. NELSON



CAPT. HARRY J. NYSTROM



CAPT. RUSSELL E. OAKES



CAPT. CLAUDE R. O'BRIEN



1st LT. ANTONIO S. PAPPAS



1st LT. GERALD H. PERLYSKY



CAPT. EDWIN T. POLE



CAPT. EDWIN H. POUNDS



1st LT. ARCHIBALD ROBINSON



CAPT. JOHN W. ROBINSON



1st LT. KEMAL SAIED



1st LT. ROBERT W. SCHWEGMAN



1st LT. EDWARD M. SELKREGG JR.



1st LT. ANDREW P. SHADDIX





CAPT. JACK SHELTON



1st LT. ROLAND C. SHERIDAN



LT. COL. JOSEPH H. SHERWOOD JR.



1st LT. EDWARD A. SICARD



1st LT. NORMAN P. SKILLINGS



1st LT. CHARLES M. SLONEKER



1st LT. RALPH L. SMATHERS



1st LT. EDWARD J. SMITH JR.



1st LT. RAY A. SMITH



1st LT. FRANKLIN C. SNYDER



1st LT. SIDNEY V. SUHLER



1st LT. WALDO H. SULLINS





1st LT. DONALD A. SWAN



1st LT. ROBERT E. TALIAFERRO



MAJ. ERNEST D. TIBBETTS



CAPT. JACK L. TUELLER



1st LT. JERRY B. TULLIS



1st LT. CHARLES H. VICCELLIO



CAPT. JOHN W. WAINWRIGHT



1st LT. RICHARD K. WALKER



1st LT. JOE H. WARREN



1st LT. FRANK E. WEBNER



1st LT. WILLIAM R. WESTOVER



1st LT. ROBERT E. WILLIAMS



CAPT. WALTER J. WILLIAMS



CAPT. DONALD E. WILLOUGHBY



CAPT. JOSEPH E. WILSON



CAPT. GILES C. WRIGHT

## 508th FIGHTER SQUADRON AWARDS

### D. F. C.

Lt. Col. Leo C. Moon (cluster)  
 Lt. Col. Joseph H. Sherwood Jr.  
 Maj. Ernest D. Tibbets  
 Capt. John W. Robinson  
 Capt. Wayne H. Anacker  
 Capt. Robert Johnson  
 Capt. Harry J. Nystrom  
 Capt. Walter J. Williams  
 1st Lt. Joe H. Warren  
 Capt. Jack L. Tueller  
 1st Lt. Edward M. Selkregg, Jr.  
 Capt. William M. Kerr  
 1st Lt. Lloyd J. Geist  
 Capt. Clarence E. Nelson  
 Capt. Drexel D. Morgan (cluster)  
 Capt. Claude R. O'Brien  
 Capt. Edwin H. Pounds  
 Capt. Giles C. Wright  
 Capt. Joseph E. Wilson (cluster)  
 1st Lt. William W. Donohoe, Jr. (cluster)  
 1st Lt. Luciano B. Herrera  
 1st Lt. Archibald Robinson  
 Capt. John W. Wainwright  
 Capt. Edwin W. Pole (cluster)  
 1st Lt. Edward M. James  
 Capt. Joseph Landa, Jr.  
 Capt. Elton B. Long  
 1st Lt. Kemal Saied  
 Lt. Col. Robert J. Carrigan  
 Maj. George W. McLaughlin  
 Maj. John A. Marshall  
 Capt. John E. Connor  
 1st Lt. Patrick M. Anderson  
 Capt. Harold J. Buelow  
 1st Lt. Charles M. Cronk  
 Maj. Paul R. Crawley  
 1st Lt. Robert C. Conway  
 1st Lt. Robert O. Dodge  
 1st Lt. James C. Dunn  
 1st Lt. Ira M. Fisher, Jr.  
 1st Lt. Raymond F. Gay  
 1st Lt. Paul A. Honer  
 1st Lt. William H. Johns, Jr.  
 Capt. Theodore A. Lundeen  
 1st Lt. Denzil B. Lee (cluster)  
 1st Lt. Gerald B. Perlisky  
 1st Lt. Andrew P. Shaddix  
 1st Lt. Edward A. Sicard  
 1st Lt. Franklyn C. Snyder

1st Lt. Donald A. Swan  
 1st Lt. Richard K. Walker  
 Capt. Donald E. Willoughby  
 1st Lt. Frank E. Webner  
 Capt. William J. Abraham

### SILVER STAR

Lt. Colonel Joseph H. Sherwood, Jr.  
 Maj. Ernest D. Tibbets  
 1st Lt. Luciano B. Herrera  
 Capt. John W. Wainwright  
 Lt. Col. Robert J. Garrigan  
 Maj. George W. McLaughlin  
 Maj. John A. Marshall

### AIR MEDAL

Lt. Col. Leo C. Moon (19)  
 Lt. Col. Joseph H. Sherwood, Jr. (16)  
 Maj. Ernest D. Tibbets (16)  
 Capt. John W. Robinson (7)  
 Capt. Wayne H. Anacker (14)  
 Capt. Robert K. Johnson (9)  
 Capt. Harry J. Nystrom (7)  
 Capt. Walter J. Williams (11)  
 Capt. William J. Abraham (13)  
 1st Lt. Benjamin F. Kitchens (2)  
 1st Lt. Bert Espy (2)  
 1st Lt. Joe H. Warren (10)  
 Capt. Jack L. Tueller (7)  
 1st Lt. Francis T. Gillespie (3)  
 1st Lt. Edward M. Selkregg Jr (9)  
 1st Lt. Charles H. Viccellio (4)  
 Capt. William M. Kerr (4)  
 Capt. Robert J. Colwell (5)  
 1st Lt. Lloyd J. Geist ( 12 )  
 Capt. Clarence E. Nelson (15)  
 Capt. Drexel D. Morgan (15)  
 Capt. Claude R. O'Brien (14)  
 Maj. Edwin H. Pounds (9)  
 Capt. Jack Shelton, Jr. (1)  
 1st Lt. Ralph L. Smathers (2)  
 Capt. Jerry B. Tullis (7)  
 Capt. Giles C. Wright (11)  
 Capt. Joseph E. Wilson (15)  
 1st Lt. William M. Donohoe, Jr. (14)  
 1st Lt. Luciano B. Herrera (15)  
 2nd Lt. Charles Caldwell (4) -  
 1st Lt. Archibald Robinson (12)  
 Capt. John W. Wainwright (14)  
 Capt. Edwin W. Pole (13)

1st Lt. Edward M. James (13)

**AIRMEDAL**

Capt. Joseph Landa, Jr. (17)

Capt. Elton B. Long (16)

1st Lt. Kemal Saied (7)

Lt. Col. Robert J. Garrigan (8)

Maj. George W. McLaughlin (19)

Maj. John A. Marshall (16)

Capt. John E. Connor (14)

1st Lt. Patrick M. Anderson (8)

Capt. Harold J. Buelow (14)

1st Lt. Charles M. Cronk (11)

Maj. Paul R. Crawley (5)

1st Lt. Robert C. Conway (7)

1st Lt. Robert O. Dodge ( 14)

1st Lt. James C. Dunn (10)

1st Lt. Ira M. Fisher, Jr. (8)

1st Lt. Raymond F. Gay (15)

1st Lt. Paul A. Honer (7)

1st Lt. William H. Johns, Jr. (11)

1st Lt. Charles R. Koerner (11)

Capt. Theodore A. Lundeen (14)

1st Lt. Denzil B. Lee ( 14)

1st Lt. Gerald B. Perlysky ( 11)

1st Lt. Andrew P. Shaddix (10)

1st Lt. Edward A. Sicard (7)

1st Lt. Franklyn C. Snyder (7)

1st Lt. Donald A. Swan (5)

1st Lt. Richard K. Walker (5)

Capt. Donald E. Willoughby (12)

1st Lt. Frank E. Webner (7)

1st Lt. William A. Reitzel (2)

## 508th FIGHTER SQUADRON ROSTER

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Anderson, Hugh M.	S/Sgt.	..... 468 Park Ave. SE, Atlanta, Ga.
Anderson, Patrick M	1/Lt.	4208 McCorckle Ave., S. Charleston, W. Va.
Angell, Elmer E., Jr.	Sgt.	43 Byfield St., Bristol, R. I.
Arndt, Frederick M.	T/Sgt.	623 Birch St., Baraboo, Wis.
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Arrighi, Noel A.	S/Sgt.	PO Box 2, Concord, Calif.
Ashworth, Robert M., Jr.	Pfc.	13 Cumberland St., Roanoke, Va.
Atchley, John C.	Sgt.	RFD 4, Sevierville, Tenn.
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Babcock, David C. Jr.	T/Sgt.	352 Laurel St., Hartford, Conn.
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Bailey, Kenneth K.	Sgt.	RFD 2, Coldwater, Miss.
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Benedetti, Reno J.	Cpl.	PO Box 111, Rockaway Beach, Calif.
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Carter, William G.	Sgt.	2109 Washington Ave., Memphis, Tenn.
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Connor, John E.	Capt.	1019 E. Meadow Pl., Milwaukee, Wis.

NAME	RANK	ADDRESS
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Cottier, John W.	Cpl.	7204 St. Lawrence Ave., Chicago, Ill.
Craine, Richard H.	Pfc.	90 Bryant Ave., White Plains, N. Y.
Crawley, Paul R.	Maj.	354 S. Lucerne Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif.
Cromwell, Clinton E.	T/Sgt.	San Fernando, Calif.
Cronk, Charles H.	1/Lt.	122 Sinclair St., Bellevue, O.
Crow, Delma	Sgt.	201 Ninth St., Bakersfield, Calif.
Crow, Edward F.	Cpl.	RFD 2, Marshall, N. C.
Cunningham, James D.	Sgt.	Hamilton, Miss.
Cuonzo, George V.	T/Sgt.	2412 Lorillard Pl., Bronx, N. Y.
Currie, Francis C.	Pvt.	Sardis, Miss.
Cyphers, Walter H.	Sgt.	533 Ryan Ave., Columbus, O.
Cyrus, Frank J.	Cpl.	4324 S. Hermitage Ave., Chicago, Ill.
Davis, John G.	T/Sgt.	908 N. Treton St., Ruston, La.
DeFlorio, Joseph E.	Cpl.	15 Harris St., Rochester, N. Y.
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