

# 381st Bomb Group War Diary

1943: Precombat, Jun, Jul, ~~Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec~~

1944: ~~Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr~~, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec

1945: Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, June-Deactivation,

\* August 1943 through April 1944 records missing.

Precombat: January to June 1943

*The following pre-combat history of the 381st Bomb Group (H) was transcribed from microfilm by Gordon H. Wilkinson, 534 Bsq, and graciously offered for inclusion in The Flyer. His pains taking efforts are very much appreciated by the secretary, who has tried to transcribe some of the monthly Group Histories.*

## PRE-COMBAT HISTORY

of the  
381st BOMB GP (H)

by  
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Roll B0369: 1458-1484

1 January thru 22 June 1943



Assigned to command was Lt Col Joseph J Nazzaro, originally of Brooklyn, NY, but now living in Santa Monica, California. A former West Point football star, the 29 year old flier had been CO of the 81st Squadron, 39th Bomb Group and then commanding officer of the 302nd Bomb Group. He received his orders on December 17, 1942 in Tucson, Arizona assigning him to the newly activated Group as of January 1, 1943. The order was dated December 1.

He proved the ideal man for the job. Poised, cool and painstaking, with hazel brown eyes capable of looking right through a man, he was a stickler for discipline and "a hound for training". An airman of substance, he had definite ideas concerning training and was determined to carry them out. Uncannily conversant with even the most minute details of the Group's affairs, he "had his nose in everything". Very little escaped his notice.

It was characteristic of the man that while the Group was in the process of creation he personally interviewed every new arrival. His most important question was: "Are you prepared to go into combat with us?" If the answer was "no", or if the Colonel thought the affirmative answer was forced, the interviewee was eased out.

For the nucleus of his new outfit, Col Nazzaro picked his own men. The original assignees were all members of either 39th or of the 302nd,--men he knew he could depend on. For his S-2 he selected Capt Linn S Kidd, of Brazil, Indiana, a veteran of the first world war, a man as painstaking as the commanding officer, universally liked, and equipped with the temperament, experience and personal dignity to command respect. His S-4 was youthful, energetic and resourceful Capt John C Goodrum, of Vicksburg, Mississippi, who had been a cadet in the 39th. Capt David E Kunkel, Jr, of Muskegon, Mississippi, a West Pointer highly regarded as a flyer, was his choice for S-3.

The originally selected enlisted men were Master Sergeants Edgar Kurner, a line chief who was commissioned a First Lieutenant at Pyote; Richard W Lathan, of the operations office; and James R Cota, of Communications.

Two officers were assigned to the group by higher headquarters while it was still in its earliest formative stage. They were 2nd Lts William R Dendy, who received his orders in the middle of December, and George H Kessel, whose orders, dated December 22, 1942, listed him as athletics officer.

The first man at Pyote was Lt Dendy. He arrived there on December 30, found nobody around yet, and took off for several days, seizing the golden opportunity of spending some time at his home at Wink, Texas, only a few miles away.

Kessel came along through Salt Lake City where he picked up a cadre of enlisted men and brought them with him to Pyote early in January. While he was at Salt Lake City, he underwent, as did every other assignee, the standard "overseas fitness test", a medical examination given in less than a minute by a man with a stethoscope and another with a flock of tongue depressors. It was said of the examination that "you didn't have to be alive to pass it. You might have stopped breathing but as long as you were still warm you were OK."

At his home in Tucson, Lt Col Mitchell, CO of the 39th, gave a farewell party for Col Nazzaro to which officers of the 39th and 302nd were invited. Among the guests was Major Bill Martin, now also a Group CO in ETO.

Col Joe and Captains Kidd, Kunkel and Goodrum left for Pyote at noon on January 1 by train. Arriving at El Paso about 3 o'clock in the morning, they found all the hotels full and, apparently, no sleeping quarters available anywhere. Capt Goodrum, who had friends in El Paso, was the only one of the three in position to get some sleep.

Exercising his rank for the first time, however, Col Joe was able to secure a room at a hotel. Nobody slept, not even Capt Goodrum. The four officers played poker and discussed their yet unseen station all through the night. At 10 o'clock the next morning they entrained for Pyote. The train was crowded. The officers struck up acquaintances with several of the passengers and every mention of Pyote brought howls of laughter from the listeners. Opposite Capt Kunkel was a youthful, hard-faced Texan who virtually adopted the army men. He turned out to be Lew Jenkins, former lightweight title-holder, then on his way home to Sweetwater, Texas. The train-ride was pleasant, but the gales of laughter every mention of Pyote evoked were disturbing to the man headed for that little-known place.

About an hour before the train was due to reach Pyote, Col Joe hopped off at one of the stations on the way, phoned the base, and ordered that transportation meet the train.

At length the Rattler stopped at what was apparently nowhere. A few frame shacks, a desolate bareness everywhere, were all that met the eyes. Expectant but dubious, the four hauled their bags off the train and found their transportation,-a two and one half ton truck waiting for them.

The Pyote Air Base had been in existence four months. Although most of the buildings had already been erected, few had yet been fitted up for use. Mud and dirt were everywhere. After Tucson, it was a virtually "the wilderness".

Introduced to the permanent base officers, Col Joe discovered that Major Murphy, the quartermaster, had a staff car. A little fast talking and Col Joe was in possession of the vehicle. The four officers of the new Group went to Monahans for a steak dinner. They spent the night in permanent officers' quarters, the only BOQ with heat and light.

The next day Col Joe had his conference with Major Clarence Hewitt, the base commander. The group head was shown over the station and selected the buildings he would need for his outfit. Because he arrived before the expected 19th BG, due back from service in the South Pacific, and the also expected 96th BG, due from Pocatello, Idaho, the 381st commander got his pick of the available quarters.

The three Master Sergeants arrived while the conference was in progress. As soon as the building selections were made known, Kurner, Cota and Lathan busied themselves in an attempt to get the structures ready for use, while Capt Kidd and Kunkel went on a "swiping" expedition for blankets and comforters and Capt Goodrum saw about getting the heat and light turned on.

The base had natural gas for its heaters. In general the arrangement was ideal, for there were sufficient heaters to keep the place warm and the dirty work of carrying coal and cleaning stoves was avoided. The only difficulties were the fact that, no infrequently, heavy trucks passing over the gas lines, would cut the supply until repairs could be made.

The honor of turning on the first gas heater went to Cota. He and Kurner had tentatively finished cleaning the first enlisted men's barracks and Cota knelt down to apply a match to the burner. Evidently the pilot light cock had been left open, for there was an accumulation of gas. The resultant explosion blew the doors off the heater and knocked Cota back on his hind quarters. He was singed a bit, but not hurt. He maintained a healthy respect for the burners for the remainder of his stay in Pyote.

The heat had not yet reached the newly-selected 381st BOQ. The officers slept under five blankets and two comforters each. It was cold and raw, and anything but comfortable.

The next day the advance parties of three of the squadron arrived. Capt Landon C Hendricks, of Matwean, West Virginia, came to Pyote at the head of the 533rd Squadron. With him was 2nd Lt John J Tutsock, who, at the time was acting supply officer, but who, some weeks later, became the adjutant, succeeding 2nd Lt George H Keesel, who had replaced 2nd Lt Thomas Tompkins, the original acting adjutant. There was also 2nd Lt Ernest Murray, Engineering officer, and 2nd Lt Kreidler, acting operations officer. The latter was replaced, however, two weeks later by Capt John H Hamilton, Jr, 2nd Lt Robert E Thayer was communications officer and 2nd Lt Russell was armament officer.

The enlisted men came in with T/Sgt Joseph Howard, Marshall Peavy and Ray Rutherford as the ranking non-coms and S/Sgt Joseph Hildahl acting as first sergeant.

The model crew consisted of 2nd Lt James Deeds, pilot; 2nd Lt Karl Franek, co-pilot; 2nd Lt Joseph Rothenberg, navigator; 2nd Lt Leo K English, bombardier; and the following crew members: S/Sgt Louis Smulowitz, S/Sgt Irwin Bohlandeer, S/Sgt James J Lintgen, S/Sgt Elwood Harris, S/Sgt Joseph J Kristopovich, and S/Sgt Christian Langolf.

2nd Lt Ernest E Murray, 14-year army veteran and B-17 expert, recently commissioned from the ranks, was transferred in as engineering officer on January 12, 1943.

The main cadre arrived on Jan 19, with Lt Kessel at its head. Of this group 111 were assigned to the 533rd and Lt Kessel became squadron adjutant.

The 534th was under the command of Capt Donald A Appert. With him were 2nd Lts James E O'Brien, the squadron adjutant, Guy G Gilchrist, communications officer; Paul H Stull, engineering officer, and Gerald Platz, Armament officer.

The enlisted men were headed by 1st Sgt John F Hartley. M/Sgt Percy E Casey was line chief, and S/Sgt Chanucey J Smith was communications boss.

The model crew was composed of Jack B Painter, pilot; Robert L Withers, co-pilot; Charles W Nevius, bombardier; 1st Lt James A Delano, navigator, and the following gunners: S/Sgt John L Kratzer, and Sgts Richard V Aute, Otto O Borgia, Walter R Cecil and Joseph W Bushevicz.

The 535th's advance party was led by Capt William W Ingenhutt, of Minneapolis, Minn., as commanding officer. Other officers were 1st Lt Arthur F Briggs, Operations; 1st Lt Leonard L Spivey, Navigator; 2nd Lt John M Stracotenko, Bombardier; 1st Lt Clayton R Greenwood, Engineering; 2nd Lt Walter L Ritchey, Communications, and 2nd Lt Richard L Tansey, Adjutant.

First Sergeant duties were assumed by Alfred H Thompson, and chief of the engineering department's mechanics and specialists was M/Sgt Andrew J Banas. The enlisted portion of the cadre included M/Sgt Banas, T/Sgts Albert G Purchase (communications) and John Raimo (engineering), five staff sergeants, 12 sergeants, six corporals, 13 privates first class and 17 privates.

The "model crew", first combat team in the squadron, consisted of 2nd Lt Melvin Feign, pilot, 2nd Lt George B McIntosh, co-pilot; 2nd Lt Spivey, navigator; 2nd Lt Stracotenki, bombardier; S/Sgt Thomas R Moore, radio operator; Sgt Robert L Colborn, ball turret gunner; Sgt Charles G Dodge and Arthur L Everett, waist gunners, and Sgt Russell A Huebner, tail gunner.

The day after the advance parties and model crews arrived, just about everybody went off to El Paso for tactical studies at the Second Bomber Command School. Goodrum, Greenwood and Stull, the only officers left at Pyote, took charge of the weaning of the 381st.

While the combat school was in session, the boys left behind began the Herculean task of getting the group's part of the station in shape for use. The job looked impossible. The runways were overrun with jack rabbits and prairie dogs. Because Pyote was reported to be snake country, the men were not inclined to be eager about stepping into sagebrush on clean-up details.

There were no planes and no equipment. In a determined attempt to speed the arrival of line supplies, Capt Goodrum and Lt Greenwood flew to the San Antonio depot. When no help was forthcoming from that source Capt Goodrum hardly picked up the phone and put a call through to Brig. Gen. Walter Frank, head of Air Service Command at Patterson Field. The reply was dismaying. There would be no OEL equipment until the group moved into its third phase of training.

Returned to base, Goodrum and Greenwood, with Lt Stull, began the construction of wood maintenance stands and other necessities. The Station Air Corps Supply turned over what it could give, which was very little. Loans, sometimes without their knowledge, later were made by the 19th and the 96th.

Most of the building material and equipment were obtained through the simple process of stealing. During its stay in Pyote, the 381st earned an unequaled reputation for thievery. Despite the fact the legitimate supplies were long overdue and dismayingly scarce when they did arrive, it was the group's boast that it "never stood short".

The thievery was put on a virtually organized basis. The station theater was almost a month longer in building than the plan set forth, solely because the 381st raided it systematically day after day. Masonite and celotex disappeared from the pile in front of the structure with alarming regularity. And the station lumber stores took a severe beating. It was common practice for Lt Dendy and another officer to arrive at the store once a day. While Dendy engaged the man in charge in conversation in the front of the office, the other officer would drive his truck up to the rear, load it with lumber, and make himself scarce in jig time. The store keeper was unquestionably on to the game but was apparently willing to play ball as long as he was not an open party to the thefts.

Thus the work of getting ready went forward. There were minor annoyances in the interim. Men working on the water system once got two pipe lines twisted, with the result that the hot water was hooked up to the latrines outside enlisted men's barracks. Two unsuspecting GI's, using the latrines during that period, were blown off their seats by the gush of steam that smashed into the bowls when they were flushed.

The day before the combat school men were due back, the group was notified that four of the B-17's on the ramp had been allocated to it. One was assigned to each squadron and on January 10, 1943, when the school group returned to base, the rudiments of operations were ready.

On January 11 Major Conway S Hall, of North Little Rock, Arkansas, who had just returned from combat duty in North Africa, where he had flown four (4) missions, arrived in Pyote. With him was "Spot" a mongrel Dalmatian, who became the group's first pet and mascot.

Sandy-haired, 24-year-old Major Hall was a stock five-feet-five. An A-1 flyer with actual combat experience, he fitted into the picture perfectly as operations officer.

The ungainly Spot quickly acquired the reputation of being the "world's dumbest dog". Major Hall had picked him up in Tucson where he had found the animal limping along the roadside with a thorn in his paw. The removal of the thorn made Spot his friend for life. When the youthful major got into the plane for transportation to Pyote, Spot jumped in right after him. It was impossible to get the dog out and he was finally allowed to remain. At Pyote he became a big time operator with the local bitches, and probabilities are he left his progeny scattered over all of that section of Texas.

The 13th of January was the date of the arrival of the 532nd's cadre from Ephrata, Washington. Capt John G Weibel was CO. With him were Lt Warren Dewlin, who later became group communications officer; Lt Andrew J Choray, squadron operations officer, and Lt Archie R Davidson, engineering officer. There were 55 enlisted men, headed by 1st Sgt John M Gosma. There was no model crew.

Capt Weibel stayed only four days. Capt Robert F Post, Jamestown, New York, from the 302nd who arrived January 15th, became the commanding officer. With Capt Post were Captains George G Shackley and John H Hamilton.

The group made another ten-strike the next day with the arrival of Major Leland G Fiegel, who earned fame as pilot of the "Mission-to-Moscow" plane. He became air executive.

The outstanding record won in both training and subsequent combat by the 381st traces back to the set-up of the operational command functions. The combination of Col Joe, Major Fiegel and Major Hall was perfect for training. Col Joe was the tactician, the man with a background of experience in the training field. Major Fiegel added a wealth of flying knowledge and Major Hall produced the balancing quality supplied by his experience in combat. Among the three a schedule was developed which can only be described as "grueling". It produced results.

The assignments brought about changes within the organization. Capt Kunkel, who had originally been the operations head, became commanding officer of the 534th, Capt Appert becoming assistant operations officer.

There was virtually no flying in January. There were only four ships, to begin with. And the air echelon consisted of little more than the model crews.

The time was spent in laying the groundwork for the future. It was no easy task. Thievery reached hitherto undreamed of heights as the squadrons vied with one another in a race to "get fixed up". Officers and men worked long hours every day, with almost no comforts. The heating system frequently was cut off, the water was normally ice cold, and the sleeping quarters were crowded and filled with dust.

Dust permeated the daily life. Most days the personnel wore respirators out of doors. The winds were so strong and so constant that all of the building had to be cabled to the earth. One which was not so secured was blown to pieces in short order about a week after the group reached Pyote.

The officers club, the movie and the Post Exchange had not yet begun to function. A man worked all day and went home to freeze most of the night. The officers stuck pretty close to the base. The enlisted men formed the habit of meandering into Pyote in the evening. The attractions were few. But one could get a steak at the "Aztec" for from two and a half to four dollars, or at the "Sunbeam" for a dollar and a quarter to two dollars.

Pyote was once an oil "boom town", population 18,000. Some of the buildings of the thriving metropolis were still standing, half a mile from the railroad station. But there was nobody in them. The town that once had 150 oil supply companies within its limits was a ghost city when the 381st arrived. With the exception of the few business shacks opposite the railroad station, virtually nothing was in use. Its population was estimated at "about 75".

Nor was there anything doing in the place. Just once, during the 381st's occupancy was there any sign of life. Sometime in the middle of January there was a street fight in which two Mexican laborers were the principals. One ran a knife into the other's stomach and there was a burial several days later.

Typical of the conditions of the town was the Post Office. There was just one wall standing. All of the glass had been knocked out in the course of years and it had never been replaced. The mail boxes were rickety and few were whole. An elderly woman presided over the institution in a fashion less than haphazard.

The influx of base personnel drove her to distraction. Men who entered her place of business to send money orders home swore it took her three quarters of an hour to fill out each blank.

As things became more stable and passes came into existence, the men began to find their way into surrounding towns. Monahans was about 14 miles away, and there was some activity there. But most officers and the majority of enlisted men spent their 24 hour passes at Odessa, 60 miles down the line. There were roadhouses in Odessa and a plenitude of women. Cross country buses (two a day) made the Odessa run, in addition to the trains.

Meanwhile, activity began on the station. The officers' club and the Post Exchange, the theater and the gymnasium came into being. Officers assert both the lounge and the mess at the club were of a superior quality. Compared with its surroundings, the club was a thing of beauty. The bar functioned until midnight and fortunate officers kept safe their bottles with the bartenders.

Drinks were procured by giving the bartender the assigned bottle number. The man behind the counter would haul out the designated bottle, pour a drink, and add the side of seltzer, water, coca cola or what have you.

Alas and alack, it became common practice for officers who had run out of liquor to mention to the bartender the number of somebody else's bottle. Sometimes they might even take a blind stab at a number, and, occasionally, they hit bingo with the bartender reaching over a virtually full bottle of one or another of the best-liked brands. Everybody liked that stunt except those whose bottles were tapped.

The lounge was open all the time. There were myriad card games and many of them were high stakes. One-armed bandits (slot machines, to you) lined the walls. There was a dance every Saturday night and women were imported, mainly from Odessa, for the shindigs.

Many of the officers brought their wives to Texas and established them in nearby Monahans or Wink or even Pecos, Texas. The women spent most of their evenings at the officers' club. Col Joe was eventually forced to issue orders that the wives would only be allowed on base twice a week, because their constant presence interfered with the training schedule.

Another important part of the station's life was the trailer colony, located not far from the main gate. Many of the civilians working on the base were housed there, including a number of attractive women. It was not uncommon, after the men learned their way around, for them to spend a not inconsiderable portion of their time at the trailers. In fact, several evenings many of the group's jeeps could be found parked there, a situation which drew down on the users the wrath of the commanding officer. No disciplinary action was taken, however, much to the relief of a large portion of the personnel.

In the dust of Pyote the men took their exercise playing volley ball and baseball. Col Joe was a frequent participator, and showed real diamond "class" at the short stop position. Squadron competitions were set up and the bickering went on apace.

When the gymnasium began functioning, basketball was added to the conditioners, and, for while, it was impossible to get use of the floor, so popular was the game.

Tuesday was "gas mask day". All station personnel were under strict orders to carry the mask on that day of the week. At intervals somebody would initiate a gas mask drill. One such occurred as the 535th was lined up in class A uniform for a parade. The result was lamentable. From the mask carriers all sorts of odds and ends dropped to the ground. In several cases the wrappings had not yet been removed from the face pieces. Almost nobody got his mask on in anything like the required time and no small number of the men were still struggling to free their face pieces for donning when the order to remove the masks was given.

Lt William G Fullick, of Houston, Texas, who joined the group as group bombardier on January 30, 1943, was a gas mask conscientious objector.

There was a gas jeep on the base and on Tuesdays it would be loaded up with tear gas for nefarious purposes. Whenever it came upon a group of officers or men without their masks, it would pounce, flooding the spot with the lachrimator.

The most consistent victim was Fullick, who had asserted long and loudly he would never don the mask. The jeep caught him one day about a quarter of a mile from the mess hall toward which the bombardier was headed for his noon meal. Seeing his tormentor coming toward him, Fullick stood not on the order of his going but went at once. With the jeep in full cry on his tail, Houston's pride and joy sprinting for the safety of the mess. Eye witnesses assert he beat the jeep to the dining hall. He arrived white with dust and purple with rage.

There were other occasions, however, when he was neither as speedy nor so fortunate. It is reported he got most of his exercise racing the jeep over the alkali roads. It is a certainty that he managed to collect a prodigious amount of clothing dust.

All of the early days of preparation culminated in the group's first official training flight, a sea search mission with its base at Muroc, California. The 381st was one of three groups to participate.

In sharp contrast to the future, the group's contingent consisted of five aircraft, its entire line strength. Col Joe, Major Fiegel, Major Hall and the four squadron commanders with the model crews took part. Capt Kidd, as group intelligence officer, went with the advance party, led by Major Fiegel, to prepare for the group's first briefing and interrogation.

Taking off from Pyote, the formation headed for March Field, California, in accordance with the original flight plan. As the ships crossed the Sierras the weather thickened and Col Hall began to make an instrument let-down over the field. Circling during the let-down, Col Joe, Major Hall and Capt Post (who rode between the pilot and co-pilot seats), were not too happy because of the danger of running into a mountain in the soup. Fortunately, a change in orders was picked up just in time and Major Hall "poured on the coal" to take the formation to Muroc for the landing.

Bad as Pyote was, Muroc was worse. The place was cold and desolate and the only quarters that could be found for the crews were in a barn. Col Joe got a bed by an open window and, unaware that Col Hall's bunk contained two extra unused blankets, virtually froze to death before he donned his winter flying clothes for the remainder of the too-brief sleeping period. The gang went to bed at 2 AM and got up at 5 o'clock for briefing.

The flyers returned from the first search at noon and Capt Kidd conducted the Group's first interrogation in the mess hall. Everything was still new to everybody and a mass of unrelated and virtually useless information was forthcoming. The one untoward incident developed when a tail gunner in one of the Fortresses decided to test fire his guns on the search. A strong and bitter protest from the Navy resulted. It transpired that the bullets had just cleared a naval vessel which was also taking part in the maneuvers. The men on board the ship didn't like it.

The job finished, the five 381st aircraft returned to Pyote in a two-element formation. Col Joe led the first element, with Capt Hendricks and Ingenhutt flying his wing. Major Fiegel led the second, with Capt Appert as his wing man.

February 1, 1943 marked the arrival of the remainder of the original crews. Each squadron received five B-17's and phase training began in earnest.

Day after day the ships went up in the air where altitude, instruments and, particularly, formation flying were drilled into the pilots and crews.

The combination of Col Joe, Major Fiegel and Major Hall began to prove its worth. The group made a name for itself in training. The constant plugging at altitude and formation stood it in good stead when it finally got to combat.

Bombing and gunnery were not neglected. There were three bombing ranges set up in the wilds of Texas not far from Pyote and the boys at the bomb sights blasted them at every opportunity. There was a protest from the engineers who were setting up a shack on one of the ranges. It seems the bombardiers couldn't wait for the engineers to get out of the way before they began dropping explosives, and, at least once, the 65-pounders came dangerously close to the men on the ground.

There weren't too many bombs available for the 381st, not at the rate Col Joe was flying the boys, anyway. It began to be standard operating procedure to steal them from the other outfits on the base. The thing was done in a gentlemanly manner. Lt Dendy would wait until the 96th Bomb Group had its bombs all fused and lined up in the bomb trailer. Then he'd drive up with a jeep and hook the trailer up to take it over to the 381st area. It wasn't stealing technically. For he always promised faithfully to return an equal number "when we got our supplies". He never got them.

Ranges were set up around Pyote for the aerial gunners, also. But the boys got too much of their practice trying out their aims on the local cattle herds. They "got" a number of the beasts and there were a number of complaints from the owners.

Flying weather was excellent at Pyote and it was a rare day when the ships were grounded, There was one draw-back--the dust. The planes frequently encountered a sudden 40-mile gale which blew the sand up so high the air field was completely covered. On those occasions the ships had to go to El Paso to let down and land. It happened so frequently that Major Hall revolted and several times made landings at Pyote in swirls of sand against orders from the control tower. The sand clouds rose to 2,000 feet over the airport.

Along with the air training came the establishment of the ground schools. Most of the work in that field was done by the squadrons with group coordination. The airmen were taught aircraft recognition, briefing, and interrogation procedures, and the various allied subjects. Squadron officers handled most of the classes with group officers making the squadron rounds to teach their specialties.

Training conditions were primitive. The S-2 (intelligence) departments, under Capt Kidd, learned to improvise and its members became the best thieves on the base. Just about every detail in each of the intelligence officers on the base was manufactured by the department from stolen materials. The S-2 officers had to chip in to buy the tracing paper they used for overlays, so long were the supplies in coming.

They were weary months for everybody, but particularly for the air crews. Every spare moment they were not flying they put in ground school.

But the results were worth the effort. Toward the end of the training period, when most other groups were still new to both formation and altitude flights, the 381st outfit was able to put 36 planes in the air at a time, in excellent formation and at any flying height. These were things that proved invaluable in the early days of combat in the European Theater of Operation.



Yet, strangely enough, the training was not complete. That was no fault of the 381st organization heads. The difficulty lay in the fact that so much emphasis was, of necessity, placed upon South Pacific conditions. It was not until late in the stay at Pyote that Col Joe knew we were headed for England. When the group arrived in the ETO it was noticeable that training conditions underwent a complete change. Col Joe's insistence, in the States, on formation and altitude flying saved the outfit's bacon.

Through the month of February, crews and ground personnel continued to arrive. On February 9, 1943, Capt Leroy C Wilcox came from Tucson to take over the group adjutant's post. The staff was then complete, with Capt Wilcox, Capt Kidd, Major Hall and Capt Goodrum as S-1, S-2, S-3, and S-4, respectively.

The squadrons were now set up as follows:

Capt Robert F Post led the 532nd. His operations officer was 1st Lt Robert E Nelson. Capt Joe E Alexander, 2nd Lt Marvin D Lord, and 2nd Lt Jack H Owen were the flight commanders.

Capt Landon C Hendricks led the 533rd. Capt John H Hamilton was operations officer. The flight leaders were 1st Lts Robert L Withers, Martin Schrader, and John J Martin.

Capt David E Kunkel, Jr, headed the 534th. His operations officer was Capt George G Shackley. The flight leaders were 1st Lts Alan F Tucker, Weldon L Simpson and Reinhart M King.

Major William W Ingenhutt led the 535th. Capt Arthur F Briggs was his operations officer. The three flights were headed by 1st Lts Orlando H Koenig, Charles W Dowell and Marvin R Hecker.

1st Lt William G Fullick was group bombardier.

Capt Norman C MacKay was group navigator.

1st Lt Warren Dewlin was group communications officer.

1st Lt Gerald Platz was group armament officer.

The organization was completed March 5, 1943 with the arrival of Major William J Reed, of Fort Collins, Colorado, who had been base executive at Blythe, California. The tall, graying, 40 year-old officer became ground executive. A product of both the Adjutant General's School and the Command and Staff School, he had not only the background for the job, but possessed, also, the tact, the knowledge of human nature, and the ability to exercise authority judiciously which made him the perfect liaison between the commanding officer and the ground departments.

Throughout the month of February, the Group plugged away at its first phase training. Crew members learned the jobs they would be expected to perform in eventual combat. The B-17's flew hundreds of flights, most of them a plane at a time, or an element at a time. The gunners learned to know their guns. The pilots learned to fly the Fortresses in the style prescribed by Col Joe, and Major Fiegel and Hall. The pilots and bombardiers learned to work together as a team. Each group of ten men assigned to a Fortress learned, little by little, to work together as a crew.

Although the Group had now been in creation almost two months, its "first phase" was actually the month of February. The January days were reckoned as the organizational phase", and the 381st was the first group allowed four months for its combat training period..

On February 25th, with the accomplishment of a practice bombing mission at Wilcox Dry Lake, Arizona, the "first phase" was officially completed, authority for the advancement in second phase coming down from Second Air Force. Incidentally, Lt Fullick is reported to have set a new bombing-range record on the group training missions.

In second phase, the crews were taught the more difficult elements of combat flying. The flights were longer range. The emphasis was on formation, and on altitude flying.

Throughout this period, too, the crews learned to work by squadron. The flights featured squadron formation flying. The men flew day and night. The planes rarely remained on the ground long enough for servicing.

The ground crews performed miracles. How they did it with the dearth of supplies and the almost primitive equipment nobody will ever know. They improvised and stole. They worked day and night. And through it all they managed to keep their well-worn Fortresses operational 80 per cent of the time.

On March 12 Major General Davenport S Johnson, Commanding General of Second Air Force, made his first official visit to the station. A group review was held in his honor.

The next day the group accomplished successfully its first long range training mission. Sioux City was the terminus of the flight.

Capt Kidd received his promotion to Major on March 15, 1943. In the meantime the group's S-2 section had begun to take shape. Lts John H Esbebsshade, assistant S-2; Francis G Hawkins, photographic officer; and George W Porter, photo interpretation officer, made up the group intelligence staff. 1st Lt Leonard Dodge was the 532nd S-2 and his staff consisted of Lts Seymour Caplan and George T Kelly. 2nd Lt Henry W Bonneau headed the 533rd's intelligence office with Martin L Healy and Jack Taylor as his assistants. 2nd Lt William Daily was the 534th's S-2 and Lts Ross Hanks and William Albibress his assistants. Capt Joseph M Murray was S-2 of the 535th. His assistants were Lts William E Kornemann and Saul Bolton Schwartz.

March 27th Capt Ingenhutt became a major. It was the first promotion of a squadron commander. The others were not made until the outfit came overseas.

Major Ingenhutt, by the way, was the "terror" of the base. Short, stocky and a fighter, he earned the reputation of a "tough CO". Boys on the line began to recognize his mannerisms. It was rumored that when he came tearing down the road with his hat on the back of his head somebody was about to catch hell. In anger his language was that of the lumber camps where he spent several years rather than that of the University of Minnesota, of which he was a graduate.

The group got its first decoration in March. Major Fiegel received the DFC at ceremonies held on the line. The award was in recognition of his work as pilot of the "Moscow Mission" plane.

Throughout the stay at Pyote, the group stood attention at various parades to see members of the 19th receive decorations they had earned in the South Pacific. It was hot and nobody likes to stand parades but the ceremonies, viewed as foretastes of the future, were not condemned. The famous 19th was, at the time, deemed worthy of its honors by the men of the 381st. It is interesting to observe that in later days there was considerable complaint among the crewmen because of the belief that medals were so much easier to win in the Pacific than in the ETO.

The training schedule throughout the month of March was an intricate affair because the teachers had to deal with both first and second phase crews. The old crews took second phase work. But the newcomers, who kept streaming in through February and early March, had to be given the preliminary work the others had already taken.

The phase ended with the end of March. On the 31st of the month, Col Joe flew to Pueblo to pave the way for his outfit's transfer to that base for its final training. The day before, Major Fiegel and Major Reed had become Lieutenant Colonels.

The end of March and the beginning of April were hectic days at Pyote. The squadrons packed frenziedly for the movement to the next station. There were regulations relating to the size of the boxes and the way they were to be built and each

department tried to sneak into its allotment of box space as much of the stuff it had accumulated as it could fit in. There was much moaning and groaning because as many of the improvised implements and devices had to be left behind.

April 4, 1943 was moving day. Several of the air crews flew their ships to Pueblo, but most of the air echelon made the trip by train along with the ground men. The day (and it was a hot one) was spent loading the cars. Many of the officers in charge of the loading detail made innumerable trips from their squadron areas to the trains in jeeps throughout the day and when the time for departure came, left the vehicles sitting at the station.

The outfit left for Pueblo at 7 o'clock in the evening in two trains, under the command of Lt Col Reed. The first train, in which Col Reed rode, was in charge of 1st Lt Harry E Koch, the 532nd adjutant, and contained the headquarters squadron along with the 532bd and 533rd. The second train was under command of both 1st Lt James E O'Brien, and 1st Lt Richard L Tansey, adjutants of the 534th and 535th, respectively. The two trains traveled the 163 miles by different routes, the first going through El Paso, while the second made the trip by the east route. Two men were taken off the first train for illness. 1st Lt John E Radwick, a pilot, developed appendicitis and was dropped for treatment at Dalhart. Pfc Borland was taken off a little later in the journey.

The experiences aboard the train were similar for both parties. Most of the time was spent in reading and playing cards. The squadron mess outfits cooked and served the meals and did an excellent job in both cases.

The trains were enroute all of the next day and night. The second contingent arrived at Pueblo after midnight of the next day and spent the night on the train after a discussion between base officers and the train commanders with regard to what should be done. Some of the officers paid a surreptitious visit to town while the train was on the siding and came back about 4 AM somewhat the worse for wear. The rest slept.

The other contingent arrived at Pueblo at 7 AM. The men got their breakfast aboard the trains and then disembarked. On hand was the post band and a sheaf of base officers. With the band at the head of the column, the outfit marched into its new station, performing the rather unfamiliar martial steps with some difficulty and no little beefing.

Pueblo was quite a bit different from Pyote. The base was no longer new and most of the main roads were well paved. Officers quarters were almost luxurious, with indoor showers and latrines and even central heating. The enlisted men fared as well.

There was an excellent Post Exchange, with good snack bar and beer parlor. It was possible to get hamburgers, cokes and malted milks at the snack bar. The movie was also in good shape. Jinx Falkenburg, the movie actress, made a personal appearance while we were on the base and several members of the outfit were photographed with her.

Pueblo was a reasonably good town, and many of the outfit's wives followed their husbands to the new station. The station was only a few miles out of town. There were almost always taxis at the main gate for those who wanted to make the trip in a hurry. A full taxi brought a total fare of a dollar and a half. There was a regular bus service, in a Hugh trailer type vehicle, for 10 cents a ride.

The officers' club, although not as elaborate as the one at Pyote, was good. Wives congregated there on certain nights. There was the usual Saturday night dance. One armed bandits were again in existence. And liquor was available for those who brought their bottles and left them with the bartenders. There were girl waitresses and some were not bad looking.

The mess was pretty good, too. In contrast to Pyote, however, an officer bought a meal ticket for the month and was allowed only three meals a day. He could have them either in the main dining room or in the sandwich shop. At first both feeding places kept open most of the day and part of the night. Things changed toward the end of our stay, however, and late comers to meals had difficulty in getting anything to eat.

The mess had several interesting characters. There was the tall, curly-haired black waiter with a Stepin Fetchit voice who carried a coffee pot. His cry was "A little heat, sir?" And there was the buxom young waitress who played the mandolin and guitar and she had stage aspirations. She worked the evening shift and usually gave concerts in the kitchen while serving meals.

Officers could get steak dinners for a dollar in the bar. They were good, too.

The town offered a host of advantages. The girls were "eager", in the GI vernacular. And there were a number of movie houses.

There were several hotels, among them the Whitman and Congress, which were the best, and the Vail (down in the other end of town) where most of the "shacking up" was accomplished. All three had drinking rooms attached. One could dance at the Whitman and Congress and one could drink at all three hotels until midnight. One did.

Among the details the officers drew was that of town Officer of the Day. The unfortunate selected was fitted out with a loaded pistol and with his two brother unfortunates spent the night walking the Pueblo streets. Normally nothing happened. But there was one night a base MP S/Sgt Fritchie, was stabbed by a black-man in a drinking room at the Vulcan Club.

The training schedule at Pueblo was strenuous. The day after the ground echelon arrived, new Flying Fortresses were made available, 41 of them. Each squadron was assigned ten aircraft. The Forts were equipped with the new forward-pointing nose gun. Many of them had new type brakes and 58 inch wheels.

The rigid twelve mission training flight schedule was set up and adhered to for the third phase program. The flights were planned to simulate missions as they would take place over Germany. Dual maps were plotted in the intelligence offices, the courses showing the actual routes flown, and the routes that would have been flown had the mission taken place in combat. The briefings and interrogations were as complete as they would normally be in the ETO.

The emphasis was on formation, altitude and instrument flying. The grueling schedule taught the crews to work as a group in the air, and the training period welded the outfit into the best combination of formation fliers in the States.

With the ships flying day and night, the line crews worked constantly to keep the ships in condition. It was indicative of the high standard set by the group that not a single serious accident occurred throughout the training period.

It was now reasonably apparent, even to those not in the know, that we were headed for the European Theater, The simulated missions were plotted over Germany to begin with. Then the ground school work concentrated on Europe. For example, the recognition instructors dropped the Japanese planes entirely and limited themselves to the aircraft likely to be encountered over Germany.

Throughout the final days at Pyote and the days at Pueblo, the members of the 381st got their final leaves. Out of the goodness of its heart, Second Air Force granted each man six days of furlough or leave. Theoretically, those men who would be forced to travel more than 1,000 miles were told it might be possible to get extensions of a "a couple days" by wiring back to the station from home.

It was rough for the boys who had far to go. Those who went to New York or there-about, found it took two days to get there and at least two days to get back. A man was lucky if he managed to be home for two days.

Besides, the trains were hopelessly crowded, and normally they were hopelessly late. Many were the "chewing" and punishments handed out to those benighted souls who returned late from their final trips home.

Also Pueblo, three unassigned and unheralded members joined the outfit. All three were dogs--Meatball, Spaghetti and Nick. The first two were litter mates, while Nick was strictly a lone wolf until he became a one-man dog, the property of Sergeant Andrew J Duffy, of Philadelphia, a mechanic.

Meatball, low-slung, long-wheelbased lady, thrived under the care of a messhall kingpin, S/Sgt Mike Ratica, of Brownsville, PA. Spaghetti became attached to 1st Lt William G Fullick, of Houston, Texas, group bombardier.

Shortly before the outfit left for overseas, Spaghetti went AWOL. Meatball and Nick, however, went to war, the former traveling under special orders and with the sanction of squadron commander Capt Post, Nick making it, on the QT, aboard the "Queen Elizabeth."

In the middle of the third phase training, April 11, 1943, Col Joe led a "mission" to drop leaflets on Denver, Colorado in conjunction with the War Bond campaign then in progress.

On April 21 came the final training flight. It was a "monster" sea search mission with its base at Hammer Field, California. Major Kidd was then on his leave wherefore Capt Murray became the group S-2 for the operation.

The group was at full strength for the 5-day affair. In the course of the five days the entire outfit, with ground men and S-2 officers, made the trip to Fresno and back, and took part in three missions from there.

It was the most ambitious air-sea maneuver yet tried in the States. At one time there were more than 199 bombers in addition to escorting fighters, over San Francisco, a display which made the front pages in that City.

With Col Joe personally leading the group forces, the organization displayed the soundness of its training and the high caliber of its personnel. Throughout the 3 missions the 381st was the only group able to fly formation and to fly it in heavy weather. Throughout the three missions all of the 381st ships took part in each one with never an abortion.

There were a few mishaps. To give the crews necessary experience, each ship's personnel had to load its own bombs. The planes were loaded with a 500 pound bomb on one side and practice bombs on the other. The practice bombs were to be dropped on a sled target hauled by a naval vessel; the 500 pounders were not to be dropped. They were carried because of the possibility that enemy vessels might be in the vicinity of the sea search mission area.

Early in the bombing the sled target disappeared. The bombardiers in the rear echelons couldn't find it. When the ships returned from the mission it was found that one 500-pound was missing. Who dropped it was not discovered. But evidently he had socked the target on the nose with it.

Also, in the interrogation after one of the searches, several crews reported having seen a freighter enroute to San Francisco. The freighter arrived in San Francisco and complained that it had been fired upon by B-17's. The Fortresses gunners had been given permission to test fire their guns in clear waters and none would admit having come anywhere near the freighter. The Navy wasn't satisfied, however, and another interrogation of the crews known to have been near the freighter was made. Nobody knew much. And no disciplinary action was taken.

In the flights over San Francisco and Los Angeles the ground searchlight defenses were brought into action and the airmen got their first taste of flying bracketed in cones of light. It wasn't pleasant.

In between missions the airmen tasted some of the pleasures of Fresno. It was done on the quiet; theoretically nobody was allowed off base. But it was done well. Capt Shackley arrived for one of the missions with a bursting head. He was hopeful that he wouldn't be forced to fly. Capt Kunkel, his CO, didn't see it that way, however. Strangely enough, up in the air the head cleared, and Capt Shackley said later he enjoyed the flight.

In the last weeks at Pueblo somebody got the wind up about the lack of exercise for the ground men. A program of physical training was set up involving everybody and many ground personnel went to bed in the evening with muscles stiff and sore.

That wasn't the worst of it. The medical men were getting a bit worried about this time because so many of the men had not yet completed their courses of "shots".

Capt Milton Bland and Capt Louis Ralston, of the 535th and 533rd squadrons, respectively, formed the habit of standing at the head of the chow line. As soon as they spotted a man who was short in his shots, they pulled him out of line and sent him to the dispensary. He didn't eat until he got his stabbing.

Capt Wymer had another idea. He awakened his recalcitrant at midnight and shipped them down to the dispensary. They couldn't go to bed until they had received their doses.

Pueblo was the scene of the group's one serious accident. A ground crewman, standing in front of a ball turret while it was being serviced, was killed when a gun went off.

The last days in Pueblo were hectic ones again. Equipment was checked thoroughly and once again the packing began. The men whose wives were in town sneaked off post at every opportunity to take advantage of their last hours together in what was to prove a long time.

And on May 2, 1943 the movement overseas began.

Col Reed, Major Kidd, Major Ingenhutt and Lt Dewlin left Pueblo for Atlantic City to make up the first advance overseas party. The same day, Capt Goodrum and Lt Dendy left for the Port of Embarkation, New York, to process overseas with the advance ground echelon.

May 4, 1943 the first Fortress of the air echelon left Pueblo on its way over. Col Joe was pilot; Col Hall, co-pilot; Capt MacKay, navigator; Lt Fullick, bombardier; Lt Warren G Berning, weather officer; and M/Sgt Russell Faust, S/Sgt Halston B Randall, S/Sgt Phil Costanzo and Sgt Randall G Nichols were the others aboard. There was another crew member listed. He was "Spot", Col Hall's ungainly pet.

The plane was officially nameless. But on one side, where Col Joe sat, was the legend "PeeDee". On the other, near Col Hall's position, "PeeWee" was painted. The point of the second name was clear, Col Hall's lack of physical stature being obvious. The reason for "PeeDee" remained a military secret. The names were painted on at the order of Capt Post who got one of his men out to the plane secretly one night, shortly before the take-off, with a bucket of paint and a brush.

The two Colonels arrived at Salina, Kansas, the same day and were followed over the course of the next two days by the remainder of the crews in the group. At Salina modifications were made to the aircraft, principally the addition of an E5 valve to the bomb bay tanks.

Taking off from Pueblo, Lt Lord lost one of the wheels of his

landing gear. The Fortress zoomed up into the air while the rubber-tired wheel went rolling merrily down the end of the runway. The Air Forces were not minded to waste time. Lt Lord was directed to crash land the bomber, but neither at Pueblo nor at Salina. The order sent him to Oklahoma City for the landing, for the repair depot was there and it was simpler to bring the damaged aircraft directly to the place where it must be fixed. Capt Post followed Lt Lord to Oklahoma City and picked up the pilot and crew to bring them to Salina.

In the now-it-can-be-told department, reposes the tale of the runaway wheel. Strangely enough, although it was seen on its solitary trip down the runway, it disappeared from sight of man thereafter. More strange, still, is the fact that it eventually turned up in the ETO.

There was nothing supernatural about it, however, On-the-ball-mechanics from the 534th squadron chased the wheel down, quietly added it to their own equipment, and brought it over to England. Rumors are that base personnel at Pueblo hunted for it for days.

At Salina, where the crews remained an average of 14 days, the planes and men received their quotas of the very latest in flying equipment. Everything the Air Forces had, of the very latest in design and in development, was handed out to them. In the meantime, the airmen had a pretty good time. They were not too closely confined, and there were several reasonably good places to go.

May 12, 1943, the advance echelon, Col Reed, Major Kidd, Major Inghutt and Lt Dewlin, arrived at Prestwick, Scotland, having made the trip abroad in a C-54.

May 15, the air echelon started overseas with the departure from Salina of Col Joe's plane. The flight over was normally made in stages, depending on the weather. Most of the ships went first to Selfridge Field, Michigan; then to Bangor, Maine, and then to Gander, Newfoundland, whence the hop overseas began. Many of the pilots seized upon the weather as an excuse to set down near their respective homes. Higher-ups were not too strict.

In general the trip from Salina to Gander took two to three days. The average time for the crossing was 14 hours. The planes landed at Prestwick, Scotland, and proceeded then to Bovingdon.

All of the aircraft made the trip over safely. Three, however, were "sweated out". The last man in was Lt Disbrow of the 535th who was reported "in the drink" several times. It developed, however, that he had merely been delayed in take-off by weather and mechanical difficulties.

Col Joe arrived at Prestwick at 0900 on May 18, 1943.

May 20th he reached Bovingdon and, with the remainder of the Group, embarked upon a general orientation course on British flying procedures.

Meanwhile, back in the States, the ground echelon was moving. As a preliminary to the movement, Capt Wilcox was made a Major, and was placed in charge of the exodus. The movement orders emanating from Second Air Force Headquarters, were dated April 24, 1943. The special orders from the Pueblo Army Air Base were numbered "128" and were dated May 8, 1943.

Four trains, one for each squadron, left Pueblo on May 9th and 10th, headed for Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, the final staging area.

The men were in Class A's and packed full field equipment, helmets and rifles. The same deal was handed out to officers.

The train rides lasted from two to three days, depending on the routes followed. One of the trains went by way of Canada. Another went through Nebraska. Two made the trip direct, through Ohio and Pennsylvania.

May 12th the ground echelon reached Camp Kilmer.

Here the squadron and personnel equipment got its final check and received its final equipment for the journey overseas. The camp was immense. Aside from its size there was little to commend it. The food was about the worst the group had yet encountered. Many officers and men lived on egg sandwiches and hamburgers served at the various PX stores located all around the base.

Censorship began here. Strangely enough, although the movement had been secret and the men had been strictly enjoined to refrain from talking, not a few of the relatives turned up in the vicinity. S-2 officers became censors and other assistant censors were appointed from the respective squadrons.

Daily exercise was a feature of the stay at Kilmer. Morning set-up exercises were prescribed and, in addition, the men were taken on hikes, and were put through the various commando courses, with the officers.

All in all, it was not too bad, however. Passes were allowed every other day, and it was less than a couple of hours to New York City. For many of the men it was the first visit to the Nation's metropolis and long were the letters and tall the stories they wrote home.

Came a day when passes were suspended and when telephone or telegraph communications was banned. The group was alerted for its overseas hop.

The men packed two barracks bags. One went forward by truck. The other was carried. Officers sent their footlockers and other luggage ahead, retaining one bag.

May 26 the outfit moved. Everybody was in Class A's; everybody carried that one bag (packed full and heavy as hell); and everybody was loaded down with full field equipment, including arms.

It rained pitchforks. But it was a good show, nevertheless. A group of Senators, Congressmen and brass hats were at the railroad station to see the men off. Train after train was loaded full and dispatched.

The journey was a short one,--to the Bayonne ferry. In the heavy downpour, the officers and men struggled to load themselves and their heavy baggage aboard the ferry.

Waiting at the 44th Street Pier was the Queen Elizabeth. And aboard it baggage was loaded, through the course of that day, with others following aboard the next morning.

The major difficulty at the pier was that of getting "Nick" aboard the boat. Several times he tried to take the run up the gangplank, only to be shooed away by unsympathetic transportation officials. Finally he was carried aboard under an overcoat carried across a GI's arm, and, at his master's order, hid himself under a berth..

The mighty Elizabeth was well-packed.

Eighteen second lieutenants occupied a stateroom originally intended for one or two. The berths ran in three tiers to cover almost every available inch of space in each room. There was barely room for each man to get his luggage into the room with himself.

The enlisted men fared even worse. There were just twice as many men as there were berths and the men took turns sleeping on the various enclosed decks, occupying a state-room berth one night and a blanket on deck the next.

There was a PX aboard where cigarettes were sold for a nickel a pack. There was a lounge for the officers where card games were in progress almost every hour of the day.

There was no escort for the Elizabeth. Blackout regulations were strictly observed. It was, therefore, hot as hell in every enclosed space aboard, and cold as the very dickens out on deck.

Among the 16,000 aboard was a detachment of nurses, just about the only women on the boat. Outnumbered hundreds to one, the nurses had a wonderful time. The experience foreshadowed pictures eventually to appear at the ETO station. A woman, regardless of what she looked like, or what she did, was so much a novelty that she never lacked for squires.

Meals aboard the Elizabeth were served only twice a day, but they were adequate. And the food was excellent.

The trip was uneventful, although there were anxious moments. It was rumored one evening that the Hugh ship had been turning most of the day to get away from a submarine. The next day somebody started a story that the Germans claimed they had sunk the Elizabeth. The rumor-mongers said the claim had been made on a German broadcast.



The most wearying part of the trip were the boat drills, which took place every day, generally shortly after noon. The scenes of confusion as the thousands of men passed up and down the various stairways beggar description. To the inexperienced observer it seemed unlikely that anybody would be able to get off the Elizabeth if she were struck by a torpedo.

"Nick" was discovered one day by an officer who was inspecting the staterooms. There was an order that any pet discovered aboard ship was to be immediately thrown overboard. The 381st prepared to fight for its own. It developed, however, that the lieutenant colonel in charge of the watch was OK. He declared the animal officially "destroyed" and quietly enjoined "Nick's" keepers to make certain the dog was well hidden in the future.

Reasonably calm weather prevailed throughout the early days of the crossing. Men marveled at the fact that so few got seasick.

But, about two days before the vessel reached port, the picture changed violently. Angry seas tossed the mighty Elizabeth about as if she were a fishing smack. She rocked and rolled throughout the course of one complete night, sometimes seemingly standing on end. The hospital bay filled immediately. At least half the men wound up with seasickness.

The morning meal the next day saw only a few hardy souls on deck, and at least half a dozen of those present had to make hurried exits from the officers' mess during the course of the breakfast. Kippers on the table for the meal caused most of the havoc. Even those who stuck it out looked decidedly green before they left the tables.

Each man aboard received a present from the Red Cross. The gifts were little bags containing sewing kits, books, some candy, gum and other odds and ends.

The crossing took five days,--indicative of the speed of the Elizabeth and proof that the sea queen needed no escort to get safely across.

Early on the morning of June 1st we sighted the coast of Scotland. We sailed through the Firth of Clyde and on a bright, sunny afternoon, we dropped anchor in the harbor of Gourock. Clouds of gulls flew over the harbor and beautiful little Scotch villages hemmed the coastline.

All through the rest of the day tenders kept drawing up to the Elizabeth taking off the men. The 381st remained aboard. Officers scurried around below decks locating empty staterooms to make certain all members of the outfit would be able to get at least one good night's sleep before disembarking.

On deck the men kidded with the tender crews, dropped them cigarettes and chewing gum and threw food to the gulls. Nobody had been very much worried throughout the crossing but everybody was tickled pink to be near land.

Hours passed while hundreds of GI's lining the railings of the towering liner watched the first and luckiest of their fellows trickle across the gangway joining the "Elizabeth" and the pigmy ferry used to transport them to the shore. There was literally nothing to do other than watch the craft in the harbor, exchange comments on the new landscape and continue the favorite pastime of littering the decks of the innumerable boats clustered about the Elizabeth with everything--literally--from magazines to money

It was during this idle spell, when uppermost wish in every officer's and enlisted man's mind was the wish that he might get the hell ashore, that the rowdiest incident of the debarkation occurred.

Chivalry being not entirely dead, it came the turn of the aforementioned nurses to leave the transport ahead of at least 90 percent of the other troops. Their departure was accompanied by a festive touch, a last good-bye to those who had afforded some of the brighter moments of a dreary crossing.

As the blue-capped lieutenants took their place on the smaller vessel and turned looking upward, to wave their farewell to the tiers of brown-clad boys above them, the balloons descended, beautifully timed, from the hands of inspired geniuses, anonymous to this day.

Down they came floating on the gentle highland breezes--nearly a dozen hastily inflated, swiftly tied and officially approved "beetleskins."

It was not until late the next afternoon that the first contingent of the 381st was unloaded. In full pack and carrying the heavy bags, the men waited aboard the tender (which docked right at the railroad station, for hours until they were entrained). A group of Australian RAAF flying sergeants were on the tender, and money exchanges were made, men of the 381st getting their introduction of half-crowns, florins, shillings, and pence's.

A band at the railroad station played mainly martial music during the wait, as brass hats in staff cars floated up and down the railroad siding. Scottish women served tea. Some of the more enterprising officers, equipped with English money, got into the station canteen and came out with platters of sandwiches, most of them with cheese or sausage fillers.

At length, between 6:30 and 7 o'clock, the contingent was loaded aboard a train and started on its journey southward. It was our first glimpse of British railroad equipment and it was hours before the men finished marveling at the comparatively small size of the coaches and the goods wagons.

The train went through Glasgow and then across Scotland to Edinburgh, moving southward thereafter along the East coast. Nobody thought of doing anything but looking out the windows. Observations were interesting. The girls in Scotland, even through the countryside, were of a high average in pulchritude. Many a man determined then and there that if he ever got time off, he was coming to Scotland to have a look around.

On a trestle over Edinburgh the train stopped for a short while, giving fortunate men in some of the coaches a close-up of an Edinburgh street. As we watched, an English sailor and a buxom girl came along and stood on a street corner waiting for a bus. The boys were cheering and shouting out the windows of the train and the sailor kept looking up at us with a wide grin on his face.

His bus came along while we were still stymied. The sailor handed his girl friend up the steps, turned around toward the train, pointed at the girl, and gave us a long, slow-motion wink, grinned once more, stepped on the bus, and was gone.

As we rolled through the English countryside it grew darker and darker, although the twilight persisted until well after 10 o'clock. Towards midnight we began to pass through sleeping, black-out English towns, where not a person was stirring and not a light was showing. The entire country seemed evacuated.

We rode the rest of the night. Early the next morning after breakfast gleaned mainly from the C rations each man packed, the train began nearing our eventual destination. And at about 8 o'clock we pulled in at Great Yeldham station. Trucks were waiting. We detrained, were loaded into the trucks, and were brought to the mud hole that was to be our permanent station in England.

We were the first American outfit to occupy it. Previously it had been an RAF Sterling base and it was still under RAF management, with Squadron Leader Charles Dawson in charge.

June 6, 1943, Colonel Joe arrived at Ridgewell and he was followed by the rest of the air echelon, which had been receiving orientation training at Bovingdon.

Although the railroad station was Great Yeldham, the base was at Ridgewell, about a mile and a half up the road. It was in the County of Essex and lay very close to the Suffolk County Border. The nearest large city was Cambridge, a matter of 27 miles away.

Great Yeldham, with a population of about 600 was the nearest village. Trains for London (the trip varied from 2 and a half to 4 hours) left three times a day.

The early weeks were spent in cleaning up the base and preparing for operations. The outfit embarked on its first mission on June 22, 1943. Its target was Antwerp.

## **June 1943**

WAR DIARY  
381st Bomb G p (H)  
June, 1943

Roll BO369: Frames 1520 thru 1526

Submitted by:  
Saul B. Schwartz  
1st Lt., AC

[2] Ground forces, aboard the Queen Elizabeth, Arrived European Theater of Operations (Gourock, Scotland) 0800.

Arrived Station No. 167 (Ridgewell, Essex, England) 1400.

[20] Group Band was organized

[21] Preparations for the group's First Mission were made in accordance with Field Order No. 152B. With the 384th, the 381st was to run a diversion to the main effort. The bombs were loaded and the crews were briefed. The mission was called off, however, before the planes went up.

[22] Field Order 153B was received at the S-2 office at 0052 hours.

Field Order 153A (main effort) was received at 0545 hours.

The 381st Bomb Group earned its place in the strike force of the Eighth Bomber Command today, taking part, with the 384th Bomb Group, in a successful operation against Antwerp.

The operation was a diversion to the main effort, directed against Kiel.

Twenty-one Fortresses took off at 0700 hours, led by a few aircraft of the 91st Bomb Group. Lt. Col. Joseph J. Nazzaro, commanding officer, was in the lead ship. Brigadier General Frank O'Donnell, commander of the Eight Fighter Command, flew with Lt. Robert L. Withers as an observer.

Two Fortresses are missing and two crash landed in England. One, because of a mechanical failure, returned early. Seventeen of the planes are known to have bombed the target and it is believed the two missing aircraft also let their bombs go in the target area. Results of the bombing were reported as "good".

The missing aircraft were believed observed crashing, one on the continent the other in the channel. Observers said they saw six parachutes leave one of the Fortresses and two leave the other.

Of the two which landed away from base, Lt. Jobe's crew reported only minor injuries, while Lt. Schenk's crew reported six casualties. The injured were:

T/Sgt. John D. Sinclair, RO, of Lithonia, Ga.

S/Sgt. James F. Sloan, AG, of Vian, Oklahoma, and

S/Sgt. Charles W. Briton, AG, of Duquesne, Pa., who were seriously injured, and

2nd Lt. George C. Williams, Bombardier, of Warren, Ohio,

S/Sgt. George C. Bardsley, RO, of Methuen, Mass., and

S/Sgt. Mitchell J. LaBuda, AG, of Chicago, Ill., who sustained minor wounds. All were treated at the 12th Evacuation Hospital, Disp.

The 16 Fortresses which landed in formation here reported only one casualty:

S/Sgt. Arnold. B. Lorick, tail gunner, of Batesburg, S.C. who was killed at his gun station.

The missing are:

1st Lt. John J. Martin, Jr., pilot, Barwick, Pa.,

F/O Robert J. Marsh, C.P., of Fresno, Cal.,

2nd Lt. Harry J. Long, N., of Des Moines, Iowa,

2nd Lt. Wallace W. Hoag, B., of Minneapolis, Minn.,

S/Sgt. Leonard J. Formaro, AG, of Baltimore, Md.,

S/Sgt. Bill Geary, G., of West Mayfield, Pa.,

Sgt. Hugh F. Goswick, RO., of Spicer, Minn.,

Sgt. John B. Hutchinson, AG., of San Joco, Cal.,

Sgt. James S. Lantto, E., of Marquette, Mich.,

Sgt. Glenn W. Witts, AG., of Lancaster, N.Y.,

1st Lt. Earl Russell Harr, pilot, of Minneapolis, Minn.,

2nd Lt. Chester Lytle Hoover, B., of Graybull, Wyoming,

2nd Lt. George Paul Griffith, N., of Live Oak, Cal.,  
2nd Lt. William Robert Roberts, C.P., of Farwell, Tex.,  
T/Sgt. Robert E. Mandell, RO., of Toledo, Ohio,  
S/Sgt. Arthur Ariail Jones, AG., of Greenville, S.C.,  
S/Sgt. Everett Irving Hodadon, G., of Auburn, Me.  
S/Sgt. Charles P. Maury, AG., West Concord, Minn.,  
S/Sgt. Hubert Richard Clark, AE., of Cobden, Ill.,  
T/Sgt. Glenn H. Chapin, E., of Ansen, Tex.

The Fortresses met moderate flak and moderate fighter opposition. Claims totaled three enemy fighters shot down and two or three destroyed. The Fortresses flown by Lt. Schenk and Lt. Jobe had the roughest trip. Sinclair, RO in Schenk's ship, has been recommended for decoration. Wounded himself, he helped extricate the wounded tail gunner from the tail and returned subsequently to man the tail gun until the Fortress reached safety.

All returned pilots were loud in their praise of the P-47 fighter escort provided for the mission. Both the Schenk and Jobe crews attribute their safe return to the appearance on the scene at the critical moment of the Thunderbolts.

[23] Twenty three members of the 533rd Bomb Squadron and a civilian employed at this station lost their lives when bombs being loaded into plane No. 024 exploded shortly after 1100 hours. There were two explosions. The blasts completely destroyed 024 and severely damaged 992, which was in the next revetment. A Board of Inquiry was unable to determine the cause of the blast.

The dead are:

2nd Lt. Paul E. Tull, Hanover, Ind.  
T/Sgt. Charles H. Wilton, Richland, Wash.  
T/Sgt. Erwin Bohlander, Glenham, S.D.  
S/Sgt. Michael J. Egan, New York, N.Y.  
S/Sgt. Elwood P. Harris, Richmond, Va.  
S/Sgt. James J. Lintgen, St. Cloud, Minn.  
Sgt. Henry Bongiono, Charleroi, Pa  
Sgt. Dennis L. Collins, Churchville, Va.  
Sgt. Christian Langolf, Port Huron, Mich.  
Sgt. Joseph L. Nell, Atlanta, Ga.  
Sgt. Joseph J. Kristapovich, Worchester, Mass.

Sgt. Louis Smulowitz, Wilkes-Bare, Pa.  
Cpl. Roger H. Allen, New Haven, Conn.  
Cpl. Charles A. Feeley, Providence, R.I.  
Cpl. George Fiamma, Cor\_\_\_\_, N.Y.  
Cpl. Milton J. Forestal, St. Louis, Mo.  
Cpl. Melvin L. Jenkins, Tampa, Fla.  
Cpl. James H. King, Pilot, Va.  
Cpl. Elmer F. Madden, Pawtucket, R.I.  
Cpl. James A. Main, Burton, W. Va.  
Cpl. Guy McDuffee, Nashville, Tenn.  
Cpl. Joseph F. Sproha, Wharton, N.J.  
Pfc. Robert M. Ashcraft, Mannington, W.Va.  
John P. Humwick, Civilian

Injured were:

W/O Joseph L. Nutt, Orlando, Fla., who suffered from shock, and  
Pfc. Glenn W. Burkland, Hoquiam, Wash., who sustained a broken leg.

In accordance with Field Order No. 154B, 22 aircraft, with Lt. Col. Joseph J. Nazzero in the lead ship, took off at 1543 for St. Martin Bernay, France, to bomb headquarters building of the airport. The operation was a diversion (in conjunction with the 384th Group). The main effort was directed at Villacoublay airdrome and airplane assembly plant.

The Group formation was recalled after reaching the French Coast, at 1800 hours., returning to base at 1941. There were no encounters and no casualties.

[24] The Group got its first replacements.

A crew headed by 1st Lt. Charles P. (Tex) Atkinson arrived on the Station and was assigned to the 533rd Squadron.

Arnold B. Lorick, S/Sgt., who was killed at the tail guns of a B-17 in the Group's first operation, over Antwerp, was buried with military honors at Brookwood Cemetery.

[25] S/Sgt. Charles W. Brinton, armorer and waist gunner, of Duquesne, Pa., who was injured in the June 22 operation against Antwerp, died at 2100 hours at the 12th Evacuation Hospital, Disp. He had received a blood transfusion from Lt. George C. Williams, bombardier, who had received minor flak wounds in the same operation, prior to his death. Eight more blood donors, all enlisted men of the 533rd Bomb Squadron, were on hand at the hospital.

Lead by Lt. Cols. Joseph J. Nazzero and Leland G. Fiegel, 24 Flying Fortresses took off from here at 0545 to bomb the Flocner Aero Works at Hamburg, Germany in accordance with Field Order No. 155.

A 10/10 cloud cover in the target area made observation impossible. Fourteen of our aircraft are known to have dropped their bombs on an unseen target of opportunity believed to be within the target area. 2nd Lt. William G. Tsialas, of New York City, bombardier on one of the planes, said he recognized the water way formations about Hamburg through a rift in the clouds at the moment he let his bombs go.

Our formation encountered meager to moderate fighter opposition. Claims totalled six enemy aircraft destroyed, two probably destroyed and six damaged. Four of our Fortresses returned early, three landed away from base and one is missing.

Our casualties include:

S/Sgt. Invan J. Tieman, left waist gunner, of Winamac, Ind., who was killed

S/Sgt. John W. Podrosky, right waist gunner, of Monogahela, Pa. Was seriously wounded.

Both were members of Lt. Lishon's crew.

The crew of the missing aircraft, listed as "missing" included:

1st Lt. Robert K. Schrader, pilot, of Chicago, Ill.,

Capt. John H. Hamilton, Jr., C.P., of Morrison, Ill.,

2nd Lt. Edward J. Rogers, N, of Kansas City, Mo.,

2nd Lt. Edward G. Samara, B, of Retsof, N.Y.,

Sgt. William W. Yarnell, R.G., of Long Beach, Cal.,

T/Sgt. William K. Cutting, T.T.G., of Des Moines, Iowa,

Sgt. Cecil A. Pruett, B.T.G., of Whitehall, Ill.,

Sgt. Stephen Kurnafil, R.W.G., of Syracuse, N.Y.,

S/Sgt. Theodore W. Leidecker, L.W.G., of Kankakee, Ill., and

Sgt. Levis E. Frisbee, T.G., of Jow, N.C.

[26] With Lt. Col. Leland F. Fiegel in the lead ship, nineteen Flying Fortresses took off from this base at 1507 to join with other aircraft of the 101st Combat Wing in an attack upon the aircraft assembly plant at Villacoublay, France. The operation was a main effort.

An 8/10 to 9/10 cloud cover over the target, coupled with poor visibility and an undercast made bombing impossible, causing the group to abort. Seven of the planes, including the lead ship, returned early because of mechanical failure. With Col. Fiegel leaving the formation, leadership of the group fell upon 1st Lt. Osce V. Jones, of Albany, Ga., who headed the A flight, at the French coast. Our claims were one destroyed and one probably destroyed.

The Group met meager and inaccurate flak on its mission. All our planes returned safely to England, eleven landing here at 2044, while one landed at Bovingdon for gas, the only casualty was:

T/Sgt. Shirley E. Goucher, of Canton, Mass., who flew with Lt. Robert O. Fricks. His wounds were slight.

The 23 who died in the explosion on the 23rd were buried with military honors in the national plot at Brookwood Cemetery. Services were conducted by Chaplain James G. Brown. As the roll of the dead was called, a Sergeant saluted before each grave. Taps ended the ceremony.

[27] A memorial service for the 23 who lost their lives in the June 23rd explosion held at the station chapel at 0800 hours. About 400 attended, the personnel of the 533rd Bomb Squadron, of which the dead were members, filling most of the seats. The service which was non-denominational, was conducted by Chaplains William Miller, Martin J. Collet and James G. Brown. Candles were lighted on the altar which was draped with the American flag and a wreath was placed on the altar, also.

[28] Forming the spearhead of one wing of a large attacking force, 22 Flying Fortresses took off at 1410 hours under the leadership of Lt. Col. Joseph J. Nazzaro to bomb the locks at St. Nazaire. The operation was part of the major effort for the day.

Columns of smoke rising 10,000 feet over St. Nazaire were evidence of the success of the mission. Reports from the crews were to the effect that the target had been completely demolished.

All aircraft returned safely to England. Casualties were few. None of the injuries were serious. The injured were:

Capt. Landon C. Hendricks, of Orlando, Fla., squadron commander, who received a slight wound in his right side; T/Sgt. John P. Kapustka, of Middleton, Mich., top turret gunner, wounded in the knee by the same shell that hit Capt. Hendricks; and Sgt. Daniel A. Vina, of Tampa, Fla., tail gunner, with Lt. Tucker's crew, who received powder burns and shrapnel in his left heel and buttocks when a 20mm. shell exploded in his ammunition box.

Crews believed it was the Group's most successful operation to date. Claims totalled seven enemy fighters destroyed, four probably destroyed and three damaged.

[29] Sgt. Robert H. Anderson, of Thaxton, Va., a member of the 7th Station Compliment Squadron was accidentally shot in the left chest about 1630 hours and died in the Station hospital a few minutes later. The shot was fired by Sgt. Martin L. Miller, of Lafayette, Ind., a member of the same squadron, in quarters, during the course of a friendly discussion regarding whether or not Sgt. Miller's Thompson sub-machine gun was clean.



Forming the second and third squadrons of the lead element in a division mission, 14 of our aircraft took off under command of Capt. Arthur Briggs, assistant Group Operations officer, to bomb the Triqueville Airfield, Pont Audemer, France.

Although the target was reached at 1849, a 9-10-10 cloud cover prevented observation and no bombs were dropped.

The trip was a no-runs, no-hits, no-errors trip. No flak or enemy planes were encountered. There were no casualties.

Two of our aircraft returned early to base, one because a life raft broke loose, making holes in the stabilizer, the other because the turbo supercharger of its No. 4 engine went out.

## **July 1943**

381st Bomb Gp.

July 1943

War Diary

Roll B0369: Frames 1771-1778

[Day]

[2] A mission involving an operation against Le Mans, France, in which the group contingent was to be part of the forces for the main effort, was scrubbed.

[4] Twenty-four of our aircraft, under command of Lt. Col. Leland G. Fiegal, were part of the attacking force as the A.A.F. celebrated Independence Day with a bombing expedition against the Gnome-Rhone engine factory at Le Mans, France.

Excellent visibility over the area helped the Flying Fortresses find their target and clouds of smoke over Le Mans, that could be seen for 40 miles, attested the success of the mission.

Flying tight formation, our aircraft had little difficulty with enemy fighters. The gunners had a good day, and the claims totaled five destroyed, two probably destroyed, and four damaged.

One of our planes failed to return. The missing are:

1st Lt. Olef M. Ballinger, Pilot, of Newton Falls, O.,

2nd Lt. John M. Carah, C.P., of Chico, Cal.,

2nd Lt. Paul Hinckley McConnell, N., of Montgomery, Ala.,

2nd Lt. George C. Williams, B., of Warren, O.,

T/Sgt. John K. Lane, R. O. of Deland, Fla.,

T/Sgt. Byron J. Grenstal [Gromstal in Brown], T.T.G., of Van Nuys, Cal.,

S/Sgt. Albert G. Wackermann, B.T.G, of Silinas, Cal., [KIA in Brown]

S/Sgt. Harry W. Bauscher, Jr., R.W.G., of Cincinnati, O., [KIA in Brown]

S/Sgt. Francis E. Owens, L.W.G., of Pittsburg, Pa., and [KIA in Brown]

S/Sgt. William C. Howell, T.G., of Goldsboror, N.C.

(Sgt. Owens had previously been recommended for decoration for his act of dragging a wounded comrade from the zone of danger in the interval between the two bomb explosions in the June 23 accident at the base.)

There were no other casualties. All other aircraft returned safely to base.

[10] Led by Major William W. Ingenhutt, of Minneapolis, Minn., 22 aircraft took off to take part in a bombing operation against the air base at Villacoublay, France. The mission was part of a major effort for the day.

The combat leadership fell to Major Conway S. Hall, of Little Rock, Ark., when Major Ingenhutt was forced to return early because of engine trouble.

Six other of our planes also returned early.

Because the target was hidden by a 10/10 cloud cover, the Fortresses brought all their bombs back to base. The group encountered moderate to meager flak and enemy aircraft estimated at 40.

Flying tight formation our aircraft experience little difficulty with either flak or fighters. Our claims for the day totaled three destroyed, two probably destroyed, and one damaged.

There were no casualties. All our aircraft returned safely to base.

[13] Preparations were made for a bombing mission against the air base at Poix, France. The operation was scrubbed, however.

[14] The base was awakened early in the morning by the announcement of the first air raid alarm over the Tannoy. Some of the personnel equipped themselves with gas masks and helmets and repaired to the shelters. A larger number got out of bed but spent the time scanning the sky for things of interest. A few sluggards, probably lazier than brave, stayed under the covers.

There were two alarms, the first occurring shortly after midnight, and the second at a little after 0400 hours.

No bombs were dropped here.

The airdrome at Amiens-Glisy was the target for the day and 17 of the Group's Fortresses helped to bomb another German base out of existence.

The Group's contingent, which made up part of the secondary effort for the operation, was led by Capt. Robert E. Post, of Jamestown, N.Y. Visibility over the target was good and the crews reported that bombing results were "excellent". Clouds of smoke were observed billowing from the airdrome and from what appeared to be a fuel dump.

Interrogation reports appeared to reveal that the enemy was massing forces in an attempt to protect its bases. Flak was said to be the most intense yet encountered and there were apparently more fighters in the air the Group had ever met at one time before.

Claims for the operation totaled four destroyed and one probably destroyed.

Two of the Group's crews and planes were lost.

One disintegrated near Rattlesdon shortly after taking off. Six, including the pilot, lost their lives. Three were injured. One miraculously escaped unharmed.

The dead are:

1st Lt. Charles E. Hedin, pilot, Astoria, New York City, N.Y.,  
2nd Lt. William D. Burroughs, C.P., Syracuse, N.Y.  
S/Sgt. Stewart A. MacDonald, B.T.G., Kendal Green, Mass.,  
S/Sgt. Vivian M. Thomas, W.G., Akron, Ohio, and  
S/Sgt. Clifford J. Marhefke, W.G. Oshkosh, Wis.

The injured were:

2nd Lt. Frank E. Cappel, B., Cincinnati, Ohio,  
2nd Lt. Donald F. Hamm, N., Green River, Wyo., and  
T/Sgt. Robert S. Potts, R.G., St. Petersburg, Fla.

The sole member of the crew who escaped without injury was T/Sgt. Richard J. Hanna, T.T., Corona, Cal.

Missing in action, having failed to return from the target, are:

1st Lt. Robert J. Holdom [Holdem in Brown], pilot, Westchester, N.Y.,  
2nd Lt. Robert H. Gravelyn, C.P., Grand Rapids, Mich.,  
2nd Lt. William A. Bechter, N., Burlingame, Cal,  
2nd Lt. James A. Phillips, B., Jasper, Ala.,  
S/Sgt. William R. Coleman, T.T., Hutchinson, Kan.,  
S/Sgt. Willaim L. Craver, R.G., Warren, Ohio,  
S/Sgt. Raymond J. Fulliner [Pulliner in Brown], B.T.G., Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.,

S/Sgt. Kenneth L. Fossan, W.G., Willows, Cal,

S/Sgt. James B. Scollon, W.G., Barnsbard, Pa., NS [listed as T.G. in Brown]

Sgt. Morris E. Pryor, T.G, Flat River, Mo. [listed as S/Sgt and R.W.G in Brown]

The feature story of the mission was written by the crew of the "TS", piloted by 2nd Lt. Edwin R. Manchester who returned safely to England after a mid-air collision with an FW190 which was hit by the guns of 2nd Lt. Robert C. Black, bombardier. The German fighter, zooming out of control after it received Black's bullets, crashed into the No. 3 engine of the "TS", gashing the bomber's right wing, and then cartwheeled over the fuselage, pretzeling the right waist gun and cutting a third of the way through the vertical stabilizer. Knocked out of formation, the "TS" fought off a subsequent attack on the tail by six more FW's (knocking down one in the process) and, escorted by P-47's made its way to Manston, England, where Lt. Manchester "set her down" so neatly that no member of the crew sustained a scratch.

[15] The group began to operate under a new TO which increased the strength of the outfit materially. Specifically, squadrons were increased from 9 crews to 12 crews each.

Led by Lt. Col. Nazzaro, who with Capt. David E. Kunkel, Jr., flew in the lead ship, 30 of our Fortresses took off at 0715 hours to bomb the synthetic rubber plant at Hannover, Germany. Part of the group's forces flew with a [comp]osite formation which was led by Major William W. Ingenhutt.

The five planes in the composite formation returned early when the leader aborted and there was no clear idea who was to take over. The rest of the aircraft went on toward the target.

A 10/10 could cover made recognition of the aiming point impossible. The Group dropped its bombs on target of opportunity, later determined to be Geringhausen. Photos appeared to show that the village was virtually wiped out.

Although flak was not too intense, nor was it accurate, the formation had to fight its way through approximately 65 to 75 enemy fighters. From the defensive standpoint the mission brought excellent results. Our claims totaled 7 destroyed, 3 probably destroyed, and 2 damaged.

There were no losses for the Group. One of our Fortresses, piloted by Lt. Moore, made a landing at Mindenhall. There were no battle casualties, but Sgt. William H. Kithcart, of Paterson, N.M., top turret gunner, jammed his hand in his gun. He stayed at his post despite the injury until the Fortress was out of danger.

There were no other casualties.

[16] Another operation against Vitry-En-Artois airfield was scrubbed again.

[18] A mission directed against Kassel, Germany was scrubbed before briefing.

[23] The first Purple Heart won by personnel of the Group were presented by Col. William M. Gross, 101st Combat Wing commander, at ceremonies held at the Special Service hall. The entire combat personnel attended. Those who received the awards were:

Capt. Landon C. Hendricks

T/Sgt. John P. Kapustka

T/Sgt. Shirley E. Goucher

S/Sgt. Mitchell J. LaBuda

S/Sgt. George C. Bardaley.

Five others, entitled to the awards, were unable to be present. They were:

2nd Lt. George C. Williams

T/Sgt. John D. Sinclair

S/Sgt. John W. Podrowsky

S/Sgt. James F. Sloan

Sgt. Daniel A Vina

A total of 120 Air medals and two Oak Leaf Clusters were presented at the same time. The list was headed by Lt. Col. Joseph J. Nazzaro, Station commander.

[24] Led by Major Conway S. Hall, who flew with Capt. Landon C. Hendricks, in the lead ship, 21 of the Group's Fortresses participated in an operation against the aluminum plant at Heroya, Norway.

Facing moderate but accurate flak and no fighter attacks (although some fighters were seen), the Group's planes dropped their bombs third in the combat wing formation. Results were described as good.

The Group lost one Fortress, the "George Rebel", piloted by 1st Lt. Osce V. Jones, of Albany, Georgia. It was seen to be severely damaged by flak over the target. It dropped its bombs, but left the formation near the coast on the return trip and made a 180 degree turn, heading for Sweden. The No. 2 engine was feathered, the prop was bent, there was a hole in the port wing near the tanks, and the gas was leaking out. The No. 3 engine was smoking and losing oil.

Later reports, to the effect that a B-17 had landed in Sweden, and that the crew had been interned, lead to the believe [sic] that the personnel are safe.

The Crew included:

1st Lt. Osco V. Jones, Pilot, Albany, Ga.,

1st Lt. George B. MacIntosh, C.P., Dallas, Tex.,  
2nd Lt. Arthur L. Guertin, N., Detroit, Mich.,  
2nd Lt. Charles W. Nevius, B., Harrisburg, Pa.,  
S/Sgt. James E. Haynie, T.T.G., Stanswood, Mich.,  
  
S/Sgt. Joseph Nicatra, R.O., Lawrence, Mass.,  
  
S/Sgt. Charles W. Newcomb, B.T.G, Stanwood, Minn.,  
  
S/Sgt. Alfred I. Haugen, R.W.g., Shakopee, Minn.,  
  
S/Sgt. Shannon B. Early [Farly in Brown] , L.W.G., Franklin, Mass.,  
  
S/Sgt. Maurice M. Kelleher, T.G., Ithaca, N.Y.

Lt. MacIntosh was operations officer for the 535th. He flew in place of 1st Lt. Melvin R. Hecker, normally the plane's Co-pilot. Lt. Guertin, regular navigator in the "Chug-a-Lug Lulu", Lt. Disbrow's ship, flew in place of Lt. Leonard L. Spivey. The pilot and crew were among the most highly regard in the Group.

There were no casualties in the Group. We made no claims.

[25] With Hamburg as the target for the day, 24 Fortresses (three of them spares) left the base to form part of the attacking force. Capt. David E. Kunkel, Jr., of Muskegon, Mich., was Group commander, but the combat leadership fell to Capt. George Shackley, of Greenwood Lake, N.J., when the lead ship was forced by engine trouble to return early. The Group's contingent was high element in the second wing. Six of our planes returned early.

Although the Group Fortresses passed over Hamburg they dropped no bombs there. The Wing leaders deviated from flight plan, causing the Group pilots to anticipate a change in targets. Eventually forced to drop bombs on a target of opportunity, the bombardiers let fly at a marshalling yard near a city believed to be Heide. Strike photos showed direct hits on the marshalling yards and other important points.

Fighter opposition during the operation was neither intense nor determined. The crews reported approximately 20 to 30 Germans all told in the sky. But flak was described by the crews as "the most intense we have ever seen", and the worst of it was over Hamburg.

Three of our Fortresses were damaged by the anti-aircraft fire over Hamburg and were forced to leave the formation. They failed to return to the base.

Missing are:

Capt. Joe Alexander, pilot, of Berry, Ala.,  
  
2nd Lt. William C. Crowley, C.P., of Boston, Mass.  
2nd Lt. Jack H. Wemmer, navigator, of Toledo, O.,  
1st Lt. Harold Hellman, bombardier, of Chicago, Ill.,  
S/Sgt. George H. Orin, R.O., of East Liverpool, O.,

T/Sgt. James C. Nance, Jr., T.T.G., of Hazard, Ky.,  
S/Sgt. Peter D. Garvan, B.T.G., of Roslyn, N.Y.,  
Sgt. Walter F. Ferens, R.W.G., of Syracuse, N.Y.,  
Sgt. James Heist, L.W.G., of Quakertown, Pa.,  
Sgt. George R. Johnson, T.G. of [?]  
1st Lt. Jack H. Owen, Pilot of [?]  
2nd Lt. William E. Bohan, C.P., of Washesha, Wis.,  
2nd Lt. Liston A. Bascom [Bascon in Brown], N., of Arlington, Cal,  
2nd Lt. Frank A. Ronzio, B., of Cranston, R.I.,  
T/Sgt. Roy L. Slater, R.O., of Kelso, Wash.,  
S/Sgt. Kenneth K. Rector, T.T.G., of Mt. Vernon, Ill.,  
S/Sgt. Charles K. Winn, B.T.G., of Paris, Ark.,  
S/Sgt. Clarence C. Asher, L.W.G., of [?]  
T/Sgt. William T. Lindermeyer, L.W.G., of Casper, Wyo.  
S/Sgt. Robert L. Commins [Cummins in Brown], T.G., of Paducah, Ky.  
1st Lt. William R. Moore, pilot, of Longview, Tex.,  
2nd Lt. Dale G. Wendte, C.P., of Ponca, Neb.,  
2nd Lt. Philip P. Dreiseszun [Dreiseszum in Brown], N., of Kansas City, Mo.,  
2nd Lt. James H. Houck, B., of Winston-Salem, N.C.,  
T/Sgt. Edward W. Usher, R.O., of Chicago, Ill.,  
T/Sgt. John R. Ivey, T.T.G., of Columbus, Ga.,  
S/Sgt. Edgerton P. Zahm, B.T.G., of Aberline, O.,  
S/Sgt. Joseph G. Kralick [Kralien in Brown], B.T.G., of St. Clair, Pa.,  
S/Sgt William L Eortier [Fortier in Brown] R.W.G., of Missoula, Mont., and  
Sgt. John M. Watkins, T.G., of Utica, N.Y.

No indication of the fates of the three crews were obtained at the interrogation.

Our claims totaled two destroyed, three probably destroyed, and one damaged.

[26] Leading the entire Wing formation, 22 our aircraft went back to Hamburg with the Blohm and Voss seaplane bomber factor as the specific target. It was one of the Group's most successful operations.

Led by Lt. Col. Leland G. Fiegel, of Rochester, Minn., the big bombers flattened their target and [ ]aid waste the entire peninsula making up the southern reach of Hamburg. Encountering extremely intense flak over the target area the Group

forces kept excellent formation, nevertheless, and had no difficulty in locating the target despite the smoke screen. Enemy fighters kept away from the formation through most of the mission. There were few encounters.

Our claims totalled the Nazis destroyed. All of our ships returned to base safely. Six returned early.

There were three casualties:

1st Lt. Sidney Novell, N., of [?] flying his first mission in "Tinker Toy", was hit by a flak burst and killed.

1st Lt. Thomas J. Hester, bombardier, of Woodland, Ala., flying in the lead ship, froze his right hand when he took off his glove to manipulate the bomb sight. There was an opening in the nose through which the cold air poured in. Lt. Hester refused to protect his hand, however, realizing the bombing accuracy of the entire wing depended upon him. He led the Fortresses in an exhibition of precision bombing.

2nd Lt. Douglas C. Roraback, bombardier, of Sunol, Cal., was cut in the eyes and face when flak burst through the nose of the Fortress piloted by Lt. Weldon L. Simpson.

[27] All squadron commanders who had not yet been elevated to that rank were promoted to major. Those winning the gold leaves were Captains Rober E. Post, Landon C. Hendricks and David E. Kunkel, Jr., Major William W. Ingenhutt had received his majority prior to moving overseas.

[28] "The Poop from Group", official organ of the Station, a child of Special Service but a product of Public Relations, made its bow with a four-page mimeographed edition.

## **May 1944**

### 381st BOMBARDMENT GROUP

#### WAR DIARY

Roll B0370: Frames 38-55

May 1944

May Day dawned clear but cold and the Daily Bulletin's reminder that this was the last day for issue of coal was not conducive to comfort.

The Group flew its ninth consecutive mission in nine consecutive days. The marshalling yards at Troyes, France, Southwest of Paris, was the target. The Group's contingent was composed of 24 aircraft under the command of 1st Lt. Armour C. Bowen, who flew in the lead ship "Mispah", with 1st Lt. Dale McCrory as his pilot. There was no flak at the target and the Luftwaffe was absent. Without opposition, and fortified by what the crews described as a "super-excellent" escort, the bombers made their way to the objective despite the thick ground haze, executed a long bomb run, and dropped tons of explosives on the target. A few of the aircraft picked up flak holes at the French coast returning home.



It was another of a long string of consecutive non-abortive missions for the Group. And for 1st Lt. Alphonse Kosuch, Bombardier, and T/Sgt. Robert L. Piznick, radio operator, of 1st Lt. Roderick T. Cahill's "Any Base?" it was the ninth consecutive mission in as many consecutive days.

2nd Lt. Leonars B. Zapinski, who again piloted a Fortress home with an engine knocked out by flak, earned the nickname "Three Engine Zapinski" with the mission and named his airplane "So What".

For the first time in ten days the crews were given a day of rest on the Second, and most of the crews elected to spend the time in the sack. The long stretch of consecutive operational days had left them tired.

On May Third the Daily Bulletin announced that each member of the Station would be allowed only one Liberty Run trip a week to Cambridge and convey officers were ordered to check the personnel to enforce that policy. The six-hour Cambridge trip and the weekly 24-hour pass was to be the extent of each man's freedom from the base, henceforth. General Order 66, published May 3, awarded the Purple Heart to 2nd Lt. Joseph R. Scott for a wound received in action April 26.

The crews took off for a shot at Berlin on May 4, but the mission was scrubbed after the Fortresses were in the air and the bombs were brought back to base.

All Station personnel were warned, May 5, to refrain from giving information regarding casualties in personal mail.

Thirty-five Fortresses, making up two Groups, formed the 381st's contingent for the mission against German installations as LaGlacerie, France, May 6. 1st Lt. Ralph B. Freeze, flying in "Dee Marie", with 1st Lt. Ronald E. Dorrington as his pilot; and Capt. Seth A. Armstead, in "Stage Door Canteen", piloted by 1st Lt. George W. Wilson, were the respective air commanders.

Many of the aircraft came back full of holes as a result of the intense flak they encountered but there were no losses and only one casualty, caused a slight flak wound. Unable to find the target, because of the clouds, the Fortresses brought their bombs back to base.

Nineteen of our Fortresses led the Combat Wing over Berlin on May 7, with Lt. Col. Conway S. Hall, air executive, acting as wing commander, flying in the lead ship a pathfinder. The wing encountered intermittent flak all the way across Germany and plenty of anti-aircraft fire over Berlin, itself, but little of the stuff hit our formation.

"They were getting it up there, all right," said 2nd Lt. Harold C. Plog, a pilot, who was deputy commander, "but they appeared to be more interested in throwing it away than in hitting us. I guess there were so many Forts up there today they didn't know where to start shooting."

The Luftwaffe did not even make an appearance. The bombers made a long run and bombed on instruments.

2nd Lt. Michael W. Buchsbaum, bombardier of "Return Ticket", had a personal encounter with one of the few flak bursts to find the formation. A piece of shrapnel bounced off his helmet and shot through the roof of the nose compartment, leaving a hole large enough for Buchsbaum to put four fingers through.

A projected mission to Oldenburg on May 7 was scrubbed.

On May 8, the promotion of William G. Fullick, Group bombardier, to Major was announced. The promotion list included, also, Vernon W. Nicholson, 535th bombardier, who was elevated to captain, and Charles W. Nevius, bombardier, and Arthur L. Guertin, navigator, to first lieutenant.

Nevius and Guertin were among the few remaining original members of the Group. Both had been with Osce V. Jones when his "Georgia Rebel" had been forced to make a landing in Sweden after the attack upon Heroya, Norway. Interned in Sweden, they had been released through diplomatic means and came back on flying status with their outfit.

Air Medals were announced by General Order 3\_5, Tech/Sgts. Joseph Nicatra (also of Jones' crew), Malvin Samuels and Arthur H. Andrewjewski, and to S/Sgts, David G. Gilwin and Lewis J. McGuire.

The Flying Fortresses went back to Berlin on the Eighth, after a mission to Luxembourg had been scrubbed, with 1st Lt. George W. Reese, 2\_yr-old assistant operations officer of the 533rd, in command of the 18 aircraft which represented the 381st Group. Lt. Reese flew in a Fortress piloted by 1st Lt. Milton F. Tarr.

Again there was a 10/10 undercast. The big bombers plowed through a field of "old flak bursts" to reach the target, which was bombed on instruments.

This time the Luftwaffe made at least a token attack, Lt. Merrill O. Burton, pilot of "Princess Pat", who had left our formation because he lost an engine, reported he saw Jerries attacking another Group to which he attached himself.

The Group's aircraft suffered little from flak and experienced no fighter attacks. There were no casualties.

Six Bronze Stars, newest decoration (virtually a junior Legion of Merit), were awarded to as many crew chiefs who had compiled records of 30 or more consecutive operations without abortives. The awards were made in General Order 347, dated May 9. The men honored were Master Sergeants John E. Fitzgerald, R.L.Helmert (recently transferred out), Robert E.Jurgensen, John F. Shanahan, Clarence T. Woelley and Harold L. Davis.

More and more preparations pointing toward the imminence of the Allied invasion of the German stronghold were being initiated by the base. The May Daily Bulletin for the Ninth authorized issue of two clips of ammunition for each carbine. The general opinion was that when the invasion began, the German retaliation would take the form of a counter-invasion, an attempt, possibly, by air-borne paratroops to cripple operational bases.

The Fortresses switched their attack from Berlin to France and 30 of our aircraft participated in the operation against the airfield at St. Dizier on May 9th.

The Group's contingent led the combat wing, with Col. Harry P. Leber, Jr., station commander, flying in the lead ship "Rotherhithe's Revenge", piloted by Capt. George K. Sanderman. Without enemy opposition of any kind, and fortified by a strong fighter escort, the bombers made a ten-minute run over the objective under perfect precision bombing conditions. Aided by the fact that they were to discern their objective from 30 miles away, the bombardiers did an excellent job. Returning crewmen told of the magnitude of the blows against the enemy airfields and rail centers and reported the entire Calais coast was "a mass of smoke". Col. Leber reported he saw three different enemy airfields well hit by the heavy bombers.

Physical fitness tests, for all Station personnel, were ordered on May 10. The men were required to run 300 yards, and to do as many chip-ups as they could. Scores varied.

Intensive training of the three new perimeter defense platoons, the mobile defense unit and the alert detachment and the military police was ordered. The training was aimed at preparing the men for possible invasion by enemy troops as a defense against the looming invasion of German-occupied Europe.

The mission to Rotenburg was scrubbed after the aircraft had taken off for the target. The planes brought their bombs back. They were over the North Sea when the recall went out.

General Order 353, dated May 11, awarded Air Medals to 2nd Lts. Maraus W. Todd, Jr., Charles R. Dayton, Victor R. Mc--sco, Donald I. Soles and Milan C. Snodgrass; F/Os James B. Chandler and Joseph W. Lawless; T/Sgt. Clarence A. Sprague; S/Sgt. Murl Simmons and Sgts Robert A Scharff, Richard W. Oberlin, and Max L. Rockey.

Another May 11 General Order, No. 356 awarded Air Medals to 2d Lts. Charles H. Eager, Edward B. Soltwedel and Forrest L. Campbell; S/Sgts. William L. Wheeler and Rodman W. Wallis and Sgts. Joseph S. Wilson, Fred D. Jenson, Walter A. Schillinger and Jerome D. Granlund. Nineteen Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal were also awarded by the order.

The marshalling yard at Luxemburg was the target of the Flying Fortresses.

A mission with Munich as the target, was scrubbed early May 11, and another operation, with Sarreguominos, France, as its objective was substituted. The Group put 31 Fortresses in the air, with Lt. Col. David B. Kunkle, Jr., Group operations officer, as commander of the Combat Wing. He flew in the Fort "Dee Marie", piloted by 1st Lt. Howard N. Kesley. The primary target was hidden under a thick haze, and the formations made two passes at it, unhampered by the light flak, without being able to see it. Col. Kunkle's ship lost its right inboard engine as the result of a flak hit and 1st Lt. Ralph C. Freese, piloted by 1st Lt. Ronald B. Darrington, deputy leader, took over the command. Seeking targets of opportunity, 12 of our aircraft bombed Thienville, in France, and the other 19 poured their explosives on Battenburg, in Luxemburg.

Between 50 and 60 enemy fighters made a head-on pass at the low elements of the formation on the way to the target. They were engaged, however, and driven off by P-51 Mustangs, part of the huge umbrella of American fighters which furnished escort for the bombers.

It was the first time in some time that the bomber gunners had been in battle range of the Jerries, although few of them broke away from the Mustangs to attempt attack. S/Sgt. Harold L. Jernigan, ball turret gunner of "Dreambaby", received credit for the only German listed as destroyed. It brought his total credits to three.

General Order 357, dated May 12, awarded Air Medals to T/Sgt. John S. O'Neal, S/Sgts. Patsy J. Savinetti, Hamilton B. Harper, Donald P. Shaub, Kenneth H. Cornell, Grover E. Padgett and Kenneth Starks; and Sgts. Albert E. McGlinsey, Berand J. Mitchell, Jacob R. Rush, Donald O. Davis, and Edward G. Craybill, Jr. in addition to 1 Oak Leaf Cluster.

Under command of Major Charles L. Halsey, 535th C.O., 19 Fortresses participated in an attack against the synthetic oil plant at Lutzkendorf, Germany, and columns of smoke, rising 15,000 feet in the air off the target, testified to the accuracy of the bombing. Although there was heavy ground haze, it did not obscure the target. The bombers picked up crops of flak holes but there were no casualties. The crews reported seeing a few enemy fighters but said the fighter escort kept them well away from the formation. All of our aircraft returned.

Distinguished Flying Crosses were awarded to 1st Lt. Raymond B. Conway and T/Sgt. Andrew Morris by General Order 363, dated May 13. The two completed their tour of duty. General Order 67, of the same date, awarded the Purple Heart to F/O Joseph F. Grace, who was wounded in action May 6.

Briefed for Posen, Poland, 32 aircraft took off early May 13 in two Groups, the first, flying with the 1st Combat Wing, under the command of 1st Lt. Ralph E. Freese, flying in "Dee Marie", with 1st Lt. Ronald B. Darrington as pilot; the second, flying with the composite Group, under command of Capt. Douglas L. Winter, flying in "Sleepy Time Gal", piloted by 1st Lt. Dale McCrory.

Clouds and thick haze obscured the primary and secondary targets. The 1st Combat Wing bombed Stalsgrund and the composite group dropped its explosives on Stettin. The formations encountered little flak and suffered no fighter attacks, although the composite Group reported that "about 70" enemy aircraft attacked the formation behind ours. Our gunners got shots at several Jerries which overran the formation they were attacking and claimed two shot down.

For the Group it was the tenth consecutive mission without a loss.

There was a lull in combat activity for the next six days. Three projected missions, the Orly Airfield May 15 and 16, and Rotenburg May 17, were scrubbed.

On the 14th, the Group held its first review and decorations parade in England. The entire personnel of the station except for skeleton crews paraded to the main runway on a cold, windy day, stood at attention while Col. Leber presented medals to a number of award winners (including Lt. Col. George G. Shackley and Major Charles L. Halsey) and presented, also, to members of a number of ground crews, silver bracelets given them by the Group in recognition of meritorious achievement in performance of duty. A review followed the ceremony, with the award winners receiving the salute together with Col. Leber and his staff.

An unusual problem was presented on May 15 with the receipt of a General Order announcing the award of a Bronze Star to M/Sgt. Elmer R. Beard, a crew chief. During the great inspection of April 18, Beard had been decorated with the Legion of Merit (for which he had been recommended by the Group awards committee) in an impromptu ceremony which took place in front of Beard's plane, "The Avengeress". Lt. Gen. John H. Lee had set up the decoration ceremony in the belief that he had that morning seen the order awarding the Legion of Merit to the Crew Chief.

The awards committee immediately convened to decide to request rescinding of the Bronze Star and award the higher decoration.

May 16, Col. Leber commended the entire personnel of the Station upon the fact that the Group had completed ten consecutive missions without an abortive.

On May 17, four more crew chiefs, M/Sgts. Harry Gerberding, William G. Hooper, Joseph J. Kohler and Robert N. Stafford received Bronze Star awards.

Meanwhile, May 15, General Order 371 awarded Air Medals to 2nd Lt. Allen Osterburg, Rensselaer J. Murray and James O. Parkman; S/Sgt. Elvin E. Young and Sgt. Thomas E. Snyder. Nineteen Clusters to the Air Medal were awarded in the same order.

May 16, General Order 374 awarded Air Medals to 2nd Lts. Holly W. Boots, Lester A. Gillette, James H. Long, Raymond C. Ollman, Charles R. Neumeister, Purvis W. Runyan, Richard L. Kellum, and Lee A. Nelson; and M/Sgt Charles P. Stermer.

May 16, also, General Order 373 awarded the DFC to William G. Fullick for extraordinary achievement as lead bombardier on six extremely successful missions.

Thirty five Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal were awarded by General Order 378, dated May 17.

Back to combat operations on the 19th, 39 aircraft participated in the mass attack on Berlin. Under command of Lt. Col. David S. Kunkel, Jr., the formation found broken clouds at the target and "flak all over the place". Grim highlights of the operation was the more than five minutes in which the formation received a constant battering from the anti-aircraft guns. But the formation never faltered and dropped its explosives with telling effect. Every ship returned to home base with battle scars. Two of our aircraft were missing. They were the first losses sustained by the Group during May.

Listed as missing in action as a result of the operation were:

1st Lt. Earl Sharp, pilot; 2nd Lt. Dorance Garner, co-pilot; 2nd Lt. Wayne T. Hardwick, navigator; 2nd Lt. Francis W. Britenbaker, bombardier; T/Sgt. William K. Suchy, radio operator; T/Sgt. Jarrett Schoepf, top turret; S/Sgt. Merrill L. Pennybacker, ball turret; S/Sgt. Gerald J. Rutigliano, waist; and S/Sgt. Follis D. Bratton, tail gunner, all of the 533d. The five enlisted men were subsequently listed as prisoners of war.

1st Lt. Harold C. Blog, pilot; 2nd Lt. Frederick L. Dill, co-pilot; F/O George W. Dennis, navigator; F/O Henry Miller, bombardier; T/Sgt. John W. Heidebrink, radio, T/Sgt. Jack L. Thompson, top turret; S/Sgt. Stanley Poloski, ball turret; S/Sgt. Samuel D. Humphrey, waist, and S/Sgt. Cornelius C. Anderson, tail. Dill, Heidebrink, Thompson, Poloski and Anderson were subsequently listed as prisoners of war.

General Order 397, dated May 20, awarded DFCs to 2nd Lt. William L. Mineo, 1st Lt. Edward L. Kerrigan, and T/Sgt Claude T. Caffey, all of whom completed their tour of duty.

Led by Lt. Col. George G. Shackley, 13 Fortresses took part in a mission against against Villacublay Airdrome, north of Paris, May 20. In the famous Fortress "Rotherhithe's Revenge", piloted by 1st Lt. George K. Sandman, Col. Shackley led his formation to the target and back almost without incident. It was CAVU at the objective, flak was meager, and there were no enemy fighters. The bombardiers hit the target hard.

A projected "doubleheader" mission with Ludwigshafen as its objective, was scrubbed later in the day.

Meanwhile, the preparations against a German counter-invasion or attacks against this airfield took another step forward. Night time guard was posted at Headquarters and a daily password system was inaugurated.

The Group received a commendation from Col. William M. Gross, Combat Wing Commander, upon performance in April. Mentioned specifically were the Group's bombing record, formation flying ability and low abortion rate.

Air Medals, awarded by General Order 401, dated May 21, went to 1st Lt. Thomas E. Barnicle, 2nd Lts. Samuel H. Whitehead, Warren R. Johnson, and Corbin J. Robertson; S/Sgts. Emmett W. Pope, Josiah T. Hank, and John T. Jenson and Sgts. Gentry T. \_\_\_\_\_ and Bill T. Hodge. The same order awarded 27 Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal.

The officer's tea hour was transferred to the officer's mess from the Aeroclub where it had flourished since it had been established some months ago.

The fortresses bombed Kiel May 22 with little opposition. Led by Maj. Arthur F. Briggs, 26 of our aircraft took part in the operation. The formation found patchy clouds along the course. There was moderate flak at the target. Some of the crews reported 15 to 20 enemy fighters "trying to come through the clouds", but said the P-38's got to them and drove them off. Bombing results were believed good. There were no losses.

Headed for Weipay, near Metz, 26 of our aircraft took part in the operation of May 23. Col. Henry P. Leber, Jr., who led our contingent, was Combat Wing Commander for the mission.

The formation encountered an almost solid undercast all the way, except for a few scattered holes. The primary was completely covered. Finding a hole over a target at Hamburg, the Fortresses made two runs and dropped their explosives with good effect. The big bombers encountered only a little flak. The crews reported 12 to 15 Me109's in the distance but experienced no attacks.

DFCs awarded by General Order 405, May 23, went to Lt. Col. Conway S. Hall, Group Air Executive, for achievement as Wing Commander in a number of missions, and to 2nd Lt. Nicholas M. Donnantuono, who was bombardier on the mission of April 30. Lt. Donnantuono became lead bombardier on that mission when the lead ship was forced to leave the formation, and he led the Fortresses to a good bombing job in spite of these difficulties.

The same day General Order 406, awarded the Silver Star, for gallantry, to 1st Lt. Daniel C. Henry, who flew his ship back from Berlin after a flak burst had almost blown the Fortress in two.

Order No. 405 of May 23, Air Medals to 2nd Lts. Joseph A. Albers, Jr., Earl L. Reno, Elevation E. Andrews, Howard W. Yates and Marvin L. Brown; S/Sgt. Hugo E. Pancheri; and Sgts. William F. \_\_\_\_\_ and Merrill W. Meyer. The same order awarded 22 clusters.

May 24 saw the Fortresses returning to Berlin to write a large page in Group history. We lost six aircraft on the mission, of the 39 the Group dispatched.

Lt. Col. John R. Fitzgerald led the Group contingent. The formations encountered dense clouds and persistent con trails, as well as thick haze, until they reached Berlin, where the weather cleared enough to give the crews a good look at

Friedrichstrasse, which was their objective. There was the usual intense flak over the Reich's capital, but the Fortresses ploughed through it. Although one of the squadrons bombed visually the formation employed instrument aids, and the results were reported as good.

About 60 to 75 Jerries slammed into the formation just after it turned off the target. The German's made only one pass, for the American fighter escort arrived on the scene a few seconds later, but several of our aircraft were hit. The Jerries came in wing-tip to wing-tip "shooting frantically" and the bomber gunners made their fire power felt. The Group turned in a large number of claims.

The six ship loss included the loss of two aircraft by collision.

Feature stories of the day were written by three aircraft.

One the famous "Stage Door Canteen", flown by 1st Lt. Arthur J. Bailey, sustained a loss of its hydraulic system, as well as other damage in the fighter attack. Knocked out of formation and returning home alone, it was further shot up by flak as it passed over Bremen.

The Fortress made a precarious landing using parachutes in place of the lost brakes and the entire crew climbed out unhurt.

The Fortress "Joanne", piloted by 1st Lt. John W. Williams flew through a "sheet of flames" caused by the collision and explosion of two aircraft directly in front of it. The fire almost burned off "Joanne.s" tail, and aileron and both rudders. Williams and his co-pilot 2nd Lt. Paul D. Lear, Jr., had to open their sliding cockpit windows to scrub enough soot from the windshield to permit them to see ahead, but they managed to bring the ship home with its crew unhurt. The tail gunner had bailed out over Germany, evidently unable to stand the heat of the flames.

1st Lt. Lawrence B. Wallerstein, flying his 29th mission and his first as a pilot, brought another Fortress, "Sweet Patootie", safe home under even more difficult handicaps. The fighter attack had knocked out the No. 2 engine and knocked the cowling from No. 1. The No. 4 was smoking. With one engine really pulling and with two others threatening to quit at any moment, Wallerstein made the trip home alone. The crew was unhurt

Listed as missing on the operation were:

2nd Lt. Carl H. Dasso, pilot; 2nd Lt. William L. Matson, co-pilot; 2nd Lt. Philip J. Barkett, navigator; 2nd Lt. Norman B. Isom, bombardier; S/Sgt. Anthony P. Madero, radio; S/Sgt Oscar S. Wright, top turret; Cpl. Paul A. Williams, ball turret; Sgts. Marshall E. Ross, waist, and Chester E. Herron, tail. Barkett, Williams, Ross and Herron were subsequently accounted for as prisoners of war.

2nd Lt. Walter K. Higgins, pilot; 2nd Lt. Herbert W. Burns, co-pilot; 2nd Lt. James A. Beck, navigator; 1st Lt. Robert W. Hughes, bombardier; T/Sgt. Eddie Delgado, radio; T/Sgt John S. Baird, top turret; Sgt. Robert H. Thompson, ball turret; S/Sgt. Franklin R. Collister, waist; and Cpl. Robert F. Smith, tail. Hughes, was subsequently reported a prisoner of war.

1st Lt. Clarence Wainwright, pilot; 2nd Lts. Howard W. Latton, co-pilot; Harry T. Dorn, navigator, and James R. Counts, bombardier; S/Sgt. Walter K. Haga, radio; S/Sgt Lowell D. Kennedy, top turret; Sgt. Charles Kruge, ball turret; Sgt. T. Stephens, waist; and Sgt. Floyd W. Malley, tail. All were unreported.

1st Lt. Clarence W. Ezzell, pilot; 2nd Lt. John L. Meyer, co-pilot; F/O Edward R. Adams, navigator; and 2nd Lt. William O. Wilson, bombardier; T/Sgt Louis K. Baker, radio; T/Sgt. Weslie K. Peck, top turret; S/Sgt. Harm R. Beninga, ball turret; S/Sgt Lloyd L. Harvey, waist; S/Sgt. Carl Schaaf, Tail. All were unreported.

1st Lt. Carl A. Gardon, pilot; 2nd Lts. Archie W. Sornberger, co-pilot; Edward B. Soltwedel, navigator and William C. Mosley, bombardier; S/Sgt. Donald P. Schaub, radio; S/Sgt. Kenneth H. Cornell, top turret; S/Sgt. Allen E. Shaw, ball turret; S/Sgts. Jacob R. Rush, waist, and John S. O'Neal, tail. Schaub, Cornell, Rush and O'Neal have been reported prisoners of war.

1st Lt. John A. Wardencki, pilot; 2nd Lts. Charles M. Dayton, co-pilot; William W. Morrison, navigator, and Willard I. Blackfield, bombardier; and S/Sgt. Robert E. Miller, radio; T/Sgt. Warren H. Backelin, top turret; S/Sgt. Charles Anderson, ball turret; S/Sgt. George S. Elliott, waist and S/Sgt. Harold R. Telzerow, tail. All are unreported.

S/Sgt. Jack E. Ross, tail gunner of Lt. William's ship was unreported.

DFCS, awarded General Order 409, dated May 24, went to 1st Lt. Connors C. Myers and James R. Turner; and S/Sgts. Glenn E. Davis, Frank M. Hancock, Lloyd O. Laughon, and John L. Ryan, all of whom completed their tours of duty.

Col. Leber commended the 532nd Squadron for its record of 27 consecutive no-loss missions on May 24.

May 25, twenty-six of our aircraft led by Col. Harry P. Leber, Jr., who acted as combat wing commander, hit the airfield at Nancy/Essey, France, with no opposition. Col. Leber flew in the lead ship piloted by Capt. George K. Sandman. There was no flak and no enemy fighters were seen. Bombing results were excellent.

Another mission alerted for the afternoon of May 25 and aimed at Munich was scrubbed.

A three day check by the Theater Censor's office revealed the 381st Group lowest in 1st Division in number of mail security violations. The report pointed out that officer violations exceeded those of enlisted men.

Daily Bulletin of May 27 announced that applications for ballots for the election in the United States were now being received.

General Order 412, dated May 25, awarded Air Medals to 2nd Lts. Archie W. Sorberger, Bernard Goodman, Woodrow W. Tyler, Lorance E. Hamilton, Roy K. Flint, Jr., Robert J. Kluthe, Wayne A. Schobert, Davis Schwartz, and Emerson E. Lewis; T/Sgts. William G. Seymour, John C. DuPre; S/Sgts. Russell H. Adams, James E. Dixon, Ronald F. Founds, Robert Q. Pope, and James W. Thompson; Sgts. Coral C. Highsmith, Julian D. Hill, Thomas G. Bowser, Jr., Chester W. Erringer, Jr., Morton L. Ex, David Jensen, James L. Judd and Samuel T. White, Jr. 3 Oak Leaf Clusters also were awarded.

DFCs were awarded by General Order 415, dated May 26, to 1st Lt. Lawrence B. Wallerstein and T/Sgt. Frederick W. Perkins, Jr., who completed their tours of duty.

General Order 416, dated May 27, awarded Air Medals to 2nd Lts. John W. Winter, Jack E. Sutherlin, Ray D. Sullivan, and Guy F. Ferranti; S/Sgts. Charles J. McMullen, Edward Y. Odian; Sgts. Walter J. Doremus, Sela P. Pantazelos, Richard Schneider, George W. Miller, JOHN E. Eckoff, Joseph A. Warner, George Samuelian, Henry W. Harris, and Harold T. Shenkel. The order also awarded 28 Clusters.

DFCs were awarded to T/Sgt. Robert H. Pinnick and Warren F. Fields, who completed their missions, by General Order 420, dated May 27.

The Fortresses attacked Ludwigshafen May 27, with 1st Lt. Howard N. Kesley in command of our contingent of 13 aircraft. Visibility was good, and our formations suffered little damage from the intense flak at the target. American fighters engaged the defending Luftwaffe planes and kept them away from the bombers. Crewmen reported "plenty of dogfights". One squadron of Jerries made a single pass at the formation ahead of ours. The bombers made a good run and hit the target.

One of our aircraft failed to return. Listed as missing are:

2nd Lt. Andrew H. Stuart, pilot; 2nd Lts. Glen S. Call, Co-pilot, Don H. Blyth, navigator, and Charles K. Eisen, bombardier; and S/Sgt. Aurelius W. Jones, radio, S/Sgt. Frederick W. Harrison, top turret; Sgt. Herman H. Kaplan, ball turret; S/Sgt. Harold B. Mickey, waist; and Sgt. Peter Selig, tail. All are unreported.

Purple Hearts were awarded to 2nd Lt. Emory H. Baird, wounded May 24, and T/Sgt. Floyd C. Hanson and Sgt. Nicholas M. Rotz, wounded May 19, by General Order 72, dated May 28.

Dessau was the briefed target of the Fortresses on May 28 and 29 of our aircraft participated. The commander was Maj. Charles L. Halsey. Clouds covered the primary and the bombers let fly at two targets, Politz and Frankfurt, instead.

The lead formation encountered meager flak, but the high group ploughed through an intense concentration of anti-aircraft fire to bomb Frankfurt. There were enemy fighters around but the attacks were on other Groups.

"Tomahawk Warrior", flown by 2nd Lt. Robert G. Beackley, ran into trouble. Lt. Beackley piloted his new Fortress with its brand new crew safely home although he was forced to come back alone from Germany at tree-top altitude. His No. 2 and No. 3 engines "went out", evidently because of mechanical failure.

The Fortresses made the long trip to Posen, Poland May 29, to bomb marshalling yards and other objectives. In command of the Group's contingent of 19 aircraft was 1st Lt. Dale McCrory, who reported "clear and beautiful weather". Flak was meager and there were no enemy fighter attacks on our formation, although the crews saw a flight of "about 12" Jerries making an attack on the formation ahead of ours over Denmark on the way home. They began a glancing blow at our formation but compact formation flying discouraged them and they broke off without coming in. Three ships landed away from base because of fuel shortage, but there were no losses.

General Order No. 426, dated May 29, awarded DFCs to 1st Lt. William R. Cronin, 2nd Lt. Julian G. O'Neal, T/Sgt. Glen M. Dick and James G. Farina; and S/Sgts. John T. Yergo, Robert L. Fain, Joseph A. Guttadauro and James O. Keesling, all of whom had completed their missions and were ready to be sent home for 30-day furloughs prior to beginning their second tour of duty.

The Junker plant at Dassau took a terrific pounding from the Flying Fortresses on May 30.

Col. William M. Gross, Combat Wing Commander, led the Air Division on the mission flying in a 381st ship piloted by Capt. George K. Sandman. Intense flak and between 40 and 50 enemy fighters defended the target.

Despite difficulties, and despite the fact that the lead aircraft sustained three direct hits which filled the nose and cockpit with smoke, Col. Gross led his formation unerringly over the objective and strike photos show bombs landing right on the aiming point.

Col. Gross paid tribute to the work of the lead team. Capt. Sandman, Capt. William H. Johnson, bombardier, and Capt. John W. Bruning, navigator, were decorated with the DFC by teletype within 24 hours after completion of the mission.

Three of our aircraft failed to return. Missing in action were:

2nd Lts. John J. Monahan, Pilot, Kenneth C. Cea, co-pilot, and Leland M. Haas, navigator; T/Sgt. William M. Hoyle, toggleleer; S/Sgts. John Valinski, radio, and Loebert G. Catter, top turret, and Sgts. Jerome D. Granlund, ball turret, Morris N. Emmanuelson, waist, and John B. Bryan, tail.

1st Lt. Merrill O. Burton, pilot; 2nd Lts. David L. Bredeson, co-pilot, and Alvin C. Berry, navigator; S/Sgt. Robert J. Hammond, bombardier; S/Sgt. James E. Marbry, radio; T/Sgt. John T. Eylens, top turret; S/Sgt. Ralph J. Powell, ball turret; Sgt Robert Hittel, waist, and Sgt. Victor C. Pillot, tail.

1st Lt. Leonard E. Zapinski, pilot; 2nd Lts. Othmer Widosh, co-pilot, David P. Fuller, navigator, and Howard Van Buskirk, bombardier; S/Sgt. George J. Pastre, radio; T/Sgt. William E. Webb, top turret; S/Sgt. James E. Wilson, ball turret; S/Sgt. Hamilton B. Harper, waist, and S/Sgt. Donald A. Harness. tail.

Missing also were 2nd Lt. Robert J. Kluthe, co-pilot, and S/Sgt. James E. Dixon, engineer and top turret gunner, of 1st Lt. Howard Yates' Fortress "Me and My Gal". The two bailed out seconds after a fighter attack had knocked the Fortress's No. 2 engine out and thrown the bomber out of formation. "Me and My Gal" engaged in a 20 minute hand-to-hand fight with 30 attacking Jerries, with Yates performing prodigies of evasive action believed impossible in a Fortress. The gunners knocked



out three of the attackers in the battle. The bomber lost its no. 1 engine and Yates made the return trip with two right-side engines alone turning.

Capt. William H. Johnson, who won a DFC cluster with the Mission on May 30, was awarded his DFC by General Order 430, May 30, for completion of his missions. On the same order the DFC was also awarded to 1st Lt. Richard J. Schmidt, S/Sgt. Wilton K. Hill and T/Sgt. Albert Atz.

Flying through heavy clouds, Flying Fortresses bombed the Florrennes airdrome in Belgium on May 31. The briefed target was Mulhouse, France, and 25 aircraft of the 381st took part in the mission, with Lt. Col. John E. Fitzgerald Jr. commanding. He flew in the ship "Silver Gate", with Capt. Douglas L. Winter as his pilot.

Clouds building up ahead of them made the penetration impossible, so the Fortresses sought and found a target of opportunity for bombing. The formation encountered no enemy aircraft and very meager flak.

DFCs were awarded to T/Sgt. Louis S. Kalmer and S/Sgt. Ralph J. Powell, who completed their missions, General Order No. 431, dated May 31.

Air Medals were awarded to the following officers and enlisted men by General Order No. 432, dated May 31: 2nd Lt. Francis J. Treanor, Lester E. Fine, and Charles W. Young; S/Sgt. Charles W. Gilberts, Albert W. Fahey, Jr., and Wayne M. Coffey; Sgts. James M. Moorhead, Willard C. Berney and Orby K. Putnam.

On May 28 Col. Leber left for the rest home. Lt. Col. Conway S. Hall took over command of the station pending the commanding officer's return.

May was an excellent operational month for the Group. We completed 19 missions, raising our total to 122. Bombing results were unusually good and the Group continued its march into first place in this theater of operations for bombs within 2,000 feet of the aiming point.

In almost every department, the Group towered above the First Division averages. We received credit for 8 enemy fighters destroyed, three more than any other organization in the division. We expended 13,000 of ammunition for each aircraft destroyed; the Division average was 33,707 for each aircraft.

Through the course of the month we lost 12 bombers, their crews, totaling 108 men, and three others who bailed out of stricken ships. With one gunner killed, our casualties totaled 112 men for the month. Nine were wounded.

Throughout the month we lost 22 combat crews, including those transferred out and those who completed their missions, and received 14 new crews. For the month we maintained an average of 84 percent for percentage of aircraft operational, a figure which compares very well with the Division average of 76 per cent. Only .4 per cent of the aircraft dispatched on missions returned early without receiving credit for a mission. The Division average was 4.8 per cent. Only two of our aircraft returned early throughout the month, whereas the next best figure in the Division was 1.25.

Throughout the month we averaged 25 aircraft for each mission; - the Division average was 19, and an average of better than 24 of our aircraft attacked the target each mission, while the Division averaged only 14.

## **June 1944**

381st Bomb Group (H)

War Diary

Roll BO370: Frames 56-78

June 2, 1944

Completing its first "double header" in nearly a year of combat operations, the 381st Bombardment Group followed its morning blow at the Pas de Calais area with an early evening attack on marshalling yards near Villacoublay, just south of Paris.

The target was one of several, both railroad installations and airdromes, which participating combat men observed hit in the Paris outskirts. In addition to indicating another step-up in the already mammoth pre-invasion air war, today's two missions meant for the 381st achievement of an even dozen as its total of consecutive operations without a single instance of early turn-back from a target because of mechanical or personnel failure.

Leading his contingent's 13 heavies this afternoon was Maj. Charles L. Halsey, of 827 E. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, Cal., flying his "Julie Linda" with Capt. Charles A. Enos, of 2301 Sacramento St., St. Joseph, Mo. Maj. Halsey called the mission "excellent", clear visibility for bombardiers over the target, full American fighter escort all the way and the only sign of enemy resistance was meager flak encountered in the target area.

"Everything went on schedule," Maj. Halsey said, "including a good, long bomb run".

Returning to the base in darkness, the Group held tight formation all the way to the field and were covered by their fighters, on the alert for possible Luftwaffe "intruders", nearly to their destination.

June 2, 1944

Without opposition, twenty three Flying Fortress of the 381st Bomb Group today contributed their share to the Eighth Air Force's attack on German military installations in the Pas de Calais area.

Bombing results are as yet undisclosed.

The 381st operated against the same objective in two separate contingents, led, respectively by pilots 1st Lt. Howard N. Kesley, of 1705 Mulberry St., Chattanooga, Tenn., and 1st Lt. Irving Moore, of 1641 N. Mariposa, Hollywood, Cal. Participating crewmen from both units told the same story: No flak, no enemy fighters and bombs away from close-flying formations.

All our aircraft returned safely.

June 3, 1944

For the second successive day Flying Fortresses dominated the Pas de Calais' invasion coast, striking at military targets left unprotected by the enemy with unspecified results.

Making its thirteenth consecutive combat operation without an abortive, the 381st Bomb Group followed up yesterday's two in one performance with a six-ship contribution to a composite bomber contingent. Leading was 1st Lt. Charles E. Ackerman, Jr., of 3375 Walnut St., Riverside, Cal., with 2nd Lt. Nicholas Fedak, of 427 First St., Conemaugh, Pa., as co-pilot.

The group with which the 381st ships flew encountered neither flak nor enemy fighters. Contrails were occasionally nearby, but did not prevent the bomb run's accomplishment as briefed. Returning crewmen said their formation was tight at 'bombs away'.

June 4, 1944

For the third consecutive day Flying Fortresses of the 381st Bomb Group added their strength to the mounting intensity of attack against Nazidom's "West Wall", dropping tons of explosives on the enemy's defense targets in the Pas de Calais area.

Group leader was Capt. Karl Franek, of 820 Ludlow Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio, a squadron operations officer. Crewmen with him agreed that today's operation - the fourth in three days and the 381st's fourteenth consecutive without an 'abortive' was as "nearly perfect as they come in this business".

It was their way of commenting on the complete lack of enemy flak and fighters to hamper the Fortresses. American fighter escort was "the best, as usual".

Over the broken clouds 12 of this group's ships made a long bomb run in tight formation to let the explosives go as briefed.

With the exception of meagre flak seen at a distance and one rocket reported by a crew as bursting far below our formation, Fortresses ruled the skies of Hitler's sunset "ring of steel".

5th June 1944

Thirty nine Fortresses of the 381st Bomb Group, led by Lt. Col. John E. Fitzgerald, Jr., 2808 Chatsworth Blvd., San Diego, Cal., a squadron commander, blasted a tactical target on the French coast today.

A 10/10 cloud cover hid the English Channel from the bombers as they flew toward the French coast, Col. Fitzgerald reported, but the clouds broke over the Continent and the target was observed "from 70 miles away."

An excellent bombing run was carried out, the Fortresses being unhampered by flak. Results are believed to be good. No enemy fighters were seen during the entire flight.

All bombers returned safely to the base. There were no casualties.

June 6th, 1944

Minutes before the Allied troops began the invasion of Continental Europe that marked the opening of D-Day, this morning, huge forces of American heavy bombers poured hundreds of tons of bombs on enemy installations all along the invasion coast.

The bombers were escorted by equally enormous formations of Allied fighters. There were more Allied aircraft taking part in the operation today than had ever been put in the air at one time before. Under command of Lt. Col. Conway S. Hall, of N. Little Rock, Ark., 36 Flying Fortresses of the 381st Group took part in the first bombing operation of the day, timed to precede, by a few minutes, the Allied landings.

The history making-events were completely hidden from the bombers by clouds. Over the tops of the 11,000 foot solid undercast, the Fortresses flew in good weather without a challenge by the enemy, either from the air or from the ground. Formation after formation made its way to one of the various objectives and dropped its bombs. None reported flak and none saw enemy fighters.

Occasionally, through the infrequent breaks in the undercast, members of the bomber crews managed to get a look at the water adjacent to the invasion coast, reporting they saw untold numbers of Allied ships on the way to the continent. For the most part, however, the airmen saw nothing but clouds, large numbers of Fortresses, and dozens of sky markers, curving in fantastic, futuristic shapes over the clouds. The bombing was performed by the use of instruments. Results were unobserved.

The air crews, who had been "sweating out" D-Day, were completely "browned off" by the fact that the clouds deprived them of their "box seats" for the invasion. From above the undercast, it seemed incredible that so much could be taking place below while over the clouds it was quiet and peaceful, except for the roar of the myriad Allied aircraft engines.

The targets attacked this morning constitute only the first of a series of objectives set by Eighth Air Force for the day in support of the ground troops. Bombers flying the second edition of the day's "shuttle bombing" plan, took off from here only a couple hours after the lead-off formations.

8th June 1944

Nine Flying Fortress crewmen returned to their home base today in borrowed RAF clothing after surviving a ditching just off the French coast last night in "invasion" waters bordering the beachheads of the Allied Expeditionary Forces.

Grinning and unharmed except for minor cuts and bruises suffered when their Fortress "Our Captain" plunged into the channel at dusk yesterday, the crew told a story giving high praise to the efficiency and skill of the Air-Sea Rescue Service.

"Our Captain" was struck by flak while raining its bombs on an airfield at Lorient, France. Fragments smashed into the No. 4 engine, causing both to start leaking oil and gasoline.

2nd Lt. John A. Martyniak, of 355 Washington St., Taunton, Mass., gave his faulty engines "full boost" to maintain his position in the formation, but the Fortress gradually slowed and began lagging behind. Finally the two engines lost almost all power and the No. 3 engine began malfunctioning.

Lt. Martyniak called by radio for fighter protection. Heading for the Channel, "Our Captain" lost altitude at the rate of 500 feet a minute, but the pilot believed a long glide to England might still be possible and ordered his crew to jettison all moveable equipment except the ball turret.

Navigator 2nd Lt. James G. Manion, 513 Dewey St., Rochester, N.Y. gave the ship's position to the radio operator, T/Sgt Paul E. Stewart, of 1743 N. Luna St., Chicago, Ill., and contact was made with Air-Sea Rescue. As the bomber dropped lower and lower toward the sea, the pilot called off altitude every 100 feet, keeping the Air-Sea Rescue well informed of his Fort's position.

Meanwhile, the rest of the crew except Lt. Martyniak and his co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Richard L. Kellum, of Williamsburg, Ohio, crowded into the radio room and braced themselves according to plan for the imminent ditching.

"Our Captain" struck tail first, then slid into the water on its belly, shaking up the men in the radio room and slightly injuring several of them. Water rushed into the radio room through the camera well so rapidly that it half filled the tiny compartment by the time the men had climbed through the hatch in the ceiling.

Though the huge bomber sank in little less than two minutes, the crew cleared their rubber dinghies from the ship and inflated them, but within a few minutes a pair of British Spitfires had sighted the stranded airmen.

They were now floating in water less than a score of miles from the Channel Islands, where, according to news reports of the day, Allied paratroopers were attacking German defenses.

"But we didn't see any invasion ships near us," said ball turret gunner S/Sgt. Lloyd S. Jackson of 667 N. Howard, St., Akron, Ohio. "We must have been south of their path."

The two Spits were joined by several more British fighters within 10 or 15 minutes, and the aircraft circled above the dinghies, protecting the Americans from possible strafing.

A Wellington bomber arrived at the scene an hour after the ditching. It circled for half an hour, calculating wind and drift, then dropped a motor launch by parachute from an altitude of about 300 feet.

"The launch floated down supported by the parachute," Lt. Martyniak said. "When it hit the water, there were sharp explosions and the chutes were blown clear of the boat. It was beautifully carried out."

"Our Captain" crew maneuvered their dinghies to the launch and climbed aboard. as a safety measure, they tied the dinghies to the rear of the emergency boat, but trying to start the motor of the launch was another problem.

One motor sputtered into action finally, but the propeller became fouled in the dinghy lines and the motor quit. The drenched crew worked strenuously until they managed to start the second motor. After proceeding for about a mile they met a high powered rescue ship and were taken aboard. The motor launch was secured to the larger ship's stern.

"And soon after we started on our way home," Sgt Jackson said, "The same thing happened to that ship's motor that happened to the one on the launch. Its propeller got tangled in a line, and the motor quit. They had another, though, and we came home on that one."

The men were given dry clothing, hot food and medical attention at an Air-Sea Rescue Station in southern England. After a night's sleep, they flew back to the home base aboard the Fortress "Yankee Rebel".

Others in the crew not already mentioned were 2nd Lt., Ray L. Stewart, of 1503 Mt. Vernon, Yakima, Wash., bombardier; S/Sgt Darrel E. Longley, of Newburg, Ore., top turret gunner and engineer; S/Sgt Albert W. Fahey, of 2118 Magnolia St., Sioux City, Ia. waist gunner; and S/Sgt Wayne M. Coffey, of Lenoir, N.C. tail gunner.

## **August 1944**

381st Bomb Group (H)  
War Diary

Roll BO370: Frames 95-109

### AUGUST 1944

August opened with an air attack against the Melun/Villeroche airfield, in France. The crews were briefed early but chill mist and drizzling rain held the take off up until 1100 hours. Major Arthur Briggs was in the lead ship of 37 aircraft which made up the 381st contingent for the operation. It was 8/10 to 9/10 cloud cover but the bombardier in the lead group picked up the airfield runways as his aiming point and the group bombed with good results. The low group, however, found the target completely covered and held its bombs, eventually bombing a target of opportunity, the Estampse/Mondesir airfield. The formations encountered moderate and accurate flak at the primary target but experienced no other difficulties. There were no enemy aircraft.

There was no mission on the second. An operation against the synthetic petrol works at Harnes, France, was scrubbed after briefing.

The day brought two bronze Star awards to the Group, published in GO 214, 1st BD, of that date. The recipients were both engineering officers; Capts. Ernest E. Murray, of the 533rd, and Clayton R. Greenwood, of the 535th. A bumper crop of Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal, 108 all told, also arrived published in GO 212 of that date.

A GI stage show, "Strictly High Class", winner of the 8AF competition, was presented at the theater in the evening.

Lt. Col. Conway S. Hall, Group air executive, was in the lead ship on August 3, when 37 of our aircraft participated in the attack against the marshalling yards at Mulhouse. One of our planes aborted, but the rest went on to the target where they

found an 8/10 undercast. However, there was a break in the clouds over the objective and the formation bombed visually. The clouds closed in again on the other end of the bombing run and results were unobserved. There were no enemy aircraft in the sky and there was no flak at the target. But, returning home, the formation caught unbriefed flak at Brussels, which although it was meager, proved very accurate. One of our aircraft was severely damaged. The pilot called the Wing leader and reported one engine out and the prop of another windmilling. He was last seen at 1710 hours and it was believed by the returning crews that the plane ditched. Nothing further was heard of the Fortress until the next day when the pilot's body was washed ashore at Orford\_\_\_\_\_ [possibly Orford Ness, Suffolk]. None of the others have been heard from.

The crew, all but the pilot listed as missing in action, included:

2nd Lt. John G. Wilcock, pilot

2nd Lt. Stanley E. Hutchinson, copilot

2nd Lt. Charles R. Marsh, navigator

2nd Lt. Robert I. Lucas, bombardier

Sgt. John A. Ramsey, Radio

Sgt. Alfred E. Prinz, Top turret

Sgt. Charles R. Evans, waist

Sgt. Robert F. Friel, ball turret

Sgt. Richard J. Fall, tail

The entire crew was flying its second mission.

The important experimental station at Peenemunde, was the target on August 4 and Col. Harry P. Leber, Jr., station commander, personally led the 37 aircraft assigned to the operation from this station. Capt Douglas L. Winter was his pilot.

Although the formations encountered moderate, accurate, tracking flak at the target they had no difficulty in completing the mission with excellent bombing results. The job was done visually in good weather, and the Luftwaffe was not on hand to offer opposition. There were no casualties as a result of enemy action, but the Group lost a man and a plane as a result of an accident.

The ship was piloted by 1st Lt. Hanley G. Cupernall and it carried Capt. Irving Moore, 532nd operations officer, who was deputy group leader for the mission, and Capt. Francis G. Hawkins, Group photo officer, who went along as observer and photographer. Shortly after take-off the Fortress caught fire. The men were forced to bail out and the aircraft crashed near Nuthampstead. The entire crew got out except the tail gunner, S/Sgt Harold F. Norris, who was burned to death. Several of the members of the crew received injuries in the jump, notably Lt. Cupernall, who suffered a fracture of the right leg, and 1st Lt. Charles W. Young, whose left ankle was fractured.

August 3, the station's most interesting courts martial took place. The defendant was one Cpl. Roger W. Martin, of the 533rd Bomb Squadron and the charges included some 32 specifications, ranging from desertion to masquerading as an officer. Martin had become almost a legend on the base. Several times he had escaped from confinement, twice from the Military Police at this station. He was illegally away from his base for two periods of three months each, and during these six months he was involved in almost incredible adventures.

Medical reports on Martin indicated that he suffered from pituitary gland deficiency, a fact which had developed in him a strong inferiority complex, as a result of which he was driven to extreme self-glorification. Thus, he was the guiding spirit of

numerous newspaper articles telling of his spurious deeds of deering-do, both in the South Pacific and this theater, of his string of medals (all non-existent), and of his heroic family. The tales were, of course, figments of his imagination.

During his absence from the station he was occasionally T/Sgt. Martin, 2nd Lt. Keith D. Moore. He managed to attach himself to an engineer outfit in Portsmouth, posing as an intelligence officer. He became friendly with the powers there, and actually carried out an investigation for the post, - a highly successful one, evidently, for he was commended for it. He left several forged checks in his wake, and he carried with him two complete sets of forged identification papers and passes of his dual personality.

He was finally captured when he over-extended himself. He told the Portsmouth authorities that he was about to proceed on orders to France and needed civilian clothing for the journey. Suspicious quartermaster personnel brought about his arrest.

The court martial resulted in an immediate dishonorable discharge and a further sentence of three years of penal servitude.

August 4 saw the beginning of the Eighth Air Force war bond drive. The station was divided into four teams, each led by a bombardment squadron and the race began. A picturesque portrayal of the contest was painted on the water tower of the shower room opposite the PX.

Thomas E. Barnicle, of the 535th was promoted to captain in orders published August 3.

Major Lynn S. Kidd, Group S2, who had been with the outfit since its activation in that capacity (he had been chosen for the job by Col. Nazzaro), was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious achievement in GO 219, 1DB, Aug.4.

Neinburg, Germany, home of a large oil storage depot, was the target for August 5. Capt. George K. Sandman was the leader of the contingent of 39 A/C (37 plus one spare) dispatched from this station. [The addition was as on the original history!] Two of the Fortresses aborted. The rest went on to find good weather at the target and made a long visual run to produce excellent bombing results. There was virtually no flak at the target although the crews reported they saw eight rockets. Meager to moderate flak was fired at the formation at the coast in. No enemy aircraft were seen. We lost one ship and its crew. Listed as missing in action were:

1st Lt. Salvatore J. Melomo, pilot and deputy leader

1st Lt. Edwin W. Palmer, pilot

2nd Lt. Charles J. Freeman, navigator

2nd Lt. William Bernstein, bombardier

T/Sgt. Leland W. Vaughan, radio

T/Sgt. Willard G. Gilbertson, top turret

S/Sgt. James M. Moorhead, ball turret

S/Sgt. Julian D. Hill, waist

S/Sgt. Louis F. Beneke, tail and

1st Lt. David W. Lane, special purpose navigator

Evidently disabled by flak, the Fortress was last seen near Cuxhaven with its No. 3 engine feathered. No smoke or flame was observed. Bernstein, Moorhead, Beneke and Lane were subsequently reported prisoners of war. The rest of the crew have not been heard of.

There was another casualty. 1st Lt. Caleb G. Baxter suffered a compound fracture of the leg when he was hit by flak shrapnel.

Captain Karl Franek, 533rd operations officer, was awarded the DFC by GO 220, 1BD, Aug. 5. He had completed his tour of duty. Thirty-six Air Medal Clusters came to the Group by GO 223 of the same date.

Meanwhile, GO 216, of Aug. 3 had brought a cluster to the DFC to Major William G. Fullick, Group bombardier, for his accurate and skillful bombing on the mission of July 21. The superior results obtained, stated the station, were in a large measure attributable to the outstanding proficiency of Major Fullick. The same order brought clusters to the Air Medal for 1st Lt. Howard R. Yates, pilot, 1st Lt. Francis B. Broderick, special equipment navigator; and T/Sgt. Clarence N. Rolla, top turret gunner and engineer. Yates and Broderick won the awards for their excellent work on the lead team in the mission of July 21.

Rolla was awarded his cluster for his courage, coolness and devotion to duty on the same mission.. Flak had severed the hydraulic line in his aircraft and the fluid, spurting all over the pilot, ignited. Rolla saw the pilot jump out of his seat, his clothing in flames, and immediately threw him to the catwalk floor where he fell upon the pilot, extinguishing the flames with his body.

DFC's were awarded, by GO 218, Aug. 4, to 1st Lt. Joseph A. Albers, Jr., and T/Sgt John D. Jannsen, and S/Sgts. Merrill W. Meyer, Charles W. Newcomb and Edward Y. Odian all of whom had completed duty tours.

August 6 was an unusual day in base history. The London production of "While the Sun Shines", regarded as the most successful play of the year in England, did a show at the base. A stage was specially constructed in Hanger No.2 for the occasion, and several thousand men were in the audience. The experiment was not too much of a success because the hanger presented acoustical problems. But the case, working up hill all the way, put on a magnificent performance, despite the difficulties and the audience enjoyed the show immensely.

The show, originally slated for early afternoon, had to be postponed until early evening because of the mission.

The target for the operation was the aircraft factory at Brandenburg. We put up 37 aircraft plus a spare for the job and Major Arthur F. Briggs was the contingent's commander. There was one abortive. The rest of the formation found a 4/10 cloud layer over the target, but visibility was unlimited. The flak was moderate and the Fortresses made a good bombing run to score excellent results. The Luftwaffe was up and, although the bomber crews reported no attacks on our formations, they did see large dogfights between the defenders and our escort all around the target area.

We lost one Fortress and its crew. Those reported missing were:

1st Lt. Allen W. Webb, pilot

2nd Lt. John W. Hayes, co-pilot

2nd Lt. Earle S. Grossnickle, navigator

2nd Lt. George Gomez, bombardier

S/Sgt. Ralph K. Murkin

T/Sgt. Landon S. Grisham

S/Sgt. William C. Burt

S/Sgt. Adolph M. Gonzales

S/Sgt. Jack S. Patrick



Lt Hayes and tail gunner, Sgt. Patrick are the only members of the crew still unreported. The others have all been listed as prisoners of war.

The aircraft, apparently hit by flak, was last reported near Salzwedel. Its pilot reported he had lost one engine and was having trouble with another. He requested fighter support.

Results of the 1st BD swimming meet, held at Bedford August 5, showed this station finishing third. The relay team, composed of Lt. MacGregor, T/Sgt. Cenker, Cpl. Tank and Pvt. Horton won the event.

George R. DeDantis, 532nd executive officer, and Nelson F. Nunamaker, fairly recently appointed CO of the ordnance outfit, were promoted to captain. The promotions were announced in the Aug.7 Daily Bulletin.

DFC's were awarded, by GO 224, Aug. 7, to 1st Lt. Albert J. Harding, Jr., 2nd Lt. Emerson E. Lewis, T/Sgt. Lannace J. Boudreaux, T/Sgt. Paul K. Harris, T/Sgt. Hugo E. Pancher, and S/Sgts. Shannon B. Early, Bill T. Fudge, John M. Howry and Justin L. Turner.

There was a mission August 7 and the Group, supplying crews for two different Wings, had two targets, both fuel depots: St. Florentin and Bourron Marlotte. There were 37 aircraft including one spare, assigned, the major share flying in the 1st "A" Wing, with Capt. Ralph Freese as commander; the remainder flying with the "C" Wing with 1st Lt. William Herrington as leader. Both outfits found good weather and bombed visually, with excellent results. There was no flak at the targets, but both Wings caught anti-aircraft fire at the French coast (meager) and further flak at Lisieux. The latter was described as moderate and accurate. There were no enemy aircraft in the sky.

We were assigned to ground support on August 8 and 37 of our aircraft were assigned to hammer enemy troops concentrations at Cauvicourt, France. Lt Col. Charles L. Halsey was the wing leader for the operation. One of our ships returned early, but the rest went on to battle their way to the target through an intense and accurate field of flak. It was clear over the objective and the Fortresses accomplished their bombing visually with good results. One enemy aircraft, "a twin engine job" was seen at the target but attempted no attacks. The flak riddled most of our aircraft, 30 of the contingent returning with battle damage, five of them with major damage. Capt. Barnicle, flying deputy lead, had a couple of engines knocked out by the flak but managed to make a good emergency crash landing in the British lines near Baveaux. He and the rest of his crew returned to base the next day.

Eight members of the Group, having completed their duty tours, were awarded their final DFC's in GO 226, 1BD, August 8. The recipients were 1st Lts. Albert A. Saleeby and Samuel H. Whitehead; F/O James W. Gonzales; T/Sgt. Ernest B. Gatten, Jr., and S/Sgts. Johnnie S. Nosal, Sheldon L. Oberstein, Paul N. Pearlin and Walter L. Van Horn.

There was no rest for the crews yet, August 9 we put up 24 aircraft for an attack against the Bayerische Motorwerks at Allach, near Munich. Lt. Col. David E. Kunkel, Jr., was the Wing leader and Captain Douglas L. Winter was his pilot. Weather made it impossible to reach the assigned target. The formation took a new heading and went to Saarbrücken where they found moderate to intense tracking flak defending the target. The bombing was done visually with Pff assist, and the strike photos showed excellent results with hits upon the vital marshalling yards. There was other flak, notably at Mastricht, but it was meager. The Luftwaffe failed to show. We had one casualty, S/Sgt Donald G. Valente, who received a relatively mild wound in the left forearm. All our aircraft returned. There was one abortive.

Twelve more DFC's were awarded to Group members by GO 229, 1BD, August 9. The recipients were 1st Lts. Elyn E. Andrews, Guy F. Ferranti, William W. Harris, James H. Long, Donald K. Stewart, Jack B. Sutherlin and Thomas M. Weaver, T/Sgts. John C. DuPre and Davis H. Sones and S/Sgt Joseph A. Warner. The same order brought a cluster to the DFC to 1st Lt. Robert G. Beakley. All had completed their duty tours.

There was a stand down, finally on the Tenth, a welcome stand down for both air and ground crews, for most of the Fortresses were pretty badly shot up, and the ground boys were working night and day to keep them flying.

There was no cessation of DFC recipients, however, GO 232, 1 BD, Aug. 10 brought Distinguished Flying awards to 1st Lt. Russell B. Rodrick and T/Sgts. Ernest A. Conatser, Franklin M. Glover and James E Haynie; S/Sgt. Harry Applebaum, all of whom had completed tours of duty.

Flying operations began again on the Eleventh and 36 of our aircraft were dispatched to attack a tactical target at Brest. Capt. Edward H. MacNeil was the commander. Fifteen minutes before they hit the French Coast, on the way in, and while still climbing for altitude, the formation had to level off for a while to avoid collision with a formation of RAF Halifaxes. The climb was resumed after the Halifaxes got out of the way and the Fortresses went on to find a cloudless sky at the target. There was no flak and there was no enemy aircraft. The Forts made a long visual run and dropped their explosives with telling effect. Strike photos show hits directly on the MPI.

Seventeen Oak Clusters to the Air Medal came to the Group by way of GO 234, 1BD, August 11, and the same day saw DFC's awarded to nine members of the Group via GO 235. The DFC winners were 1st Lt. Michael Lombardi, Donald I. Soale, and Ray D. Sullivan; T/Sgts. Leroy W. Aden, Leonard M. Hanson, Carl S. Lambert, John J. Lukasik and Leabert B. Sterling; S/Sgt. Doanld G. Valente. An Oak Leaf Cluster to the DFC was awarded to 1st Lt. George W. Conley. All had completed duty tours.

The twelfth was a day of rest and flying personnel were left free to attend both an exhibition tennis match, with Capt. Frank Shields and Sgt. Charlie Hare, both famous Davis Cuppers; and performances of the GI show "Petticoats" at the theater.

The same day brought a cluster to the DFC to Major Arthur F. Briggs, who had completed his tour of combat duty and was ready for shipment home. A similar award , for the same reason, went to Major William G. Fullick, Group Bombardier, who was also due to leave back in the States. The awards came out in GO 237, 1BD, August 12.

A Bronze Star Medal also came to the Group August 12, via GO 239; The recipient was Capt. Julius Eichenbaum, chief ordinance officer of the station.

August 13 was a red letter day. For the Daily Bulletin published the order permitting resumption of the 48 hour pass for ground personnel.

There was a mission August 13, also. The target was a tactical one at Rouen and 37 of our aircraft participated in the operation under the leadership of Capt. George K. Sandman. Meager to moderate and accurate flak was encountered all the way from the IP [Initial Point] to the target. The weather was good and the Fortresses made a long run, in spite of the flak, dropping their bombs with good results. There were no enemy aircraft. The flak, however, cost us two casualties.

2nd Lt. William G. Haines was killed by a piece of shrapnel that virtually amputated his right leg and penetrated, also, his left thigh.

S/Sgt. Thomas R. Ressler received a mild penetrating wound in his back.

Seventeen Air Medals and 32 clusters were awarded to the Group by GO 238, 1BD, August 12. 34 more clusters were added in GO 243, August 13.

And DFC's awarded by GO 241, August 13, went to 1st Lt. Robert P. Burrell, Wayne E. Herman, and Harold W. Walkup; T/Sgts. Russell H. Adams and James W. Thompson; and S/Sgt. Samuel T. White, Jr.

August 14's target was the Metz/ Frescaty airfield. We put up 37 aircraft with Lt. Col. Charles L. Halsey in the lead ship. There was one abortive. There was a 2 to 4/10 cloud over the target and it was hazy, but visibility was good. There was no flak and the Luftwaffe was absent. The Fortresses performed an excellent bombing job and all our aircraft returned safely.

Thirteen Air Medals and 25 Clusters were awarded to Group members in GO 249, 1BD, August 15.

The same day, Col. Leber issued orders restricting all combat officers to the base until noon Sunday, August 20. The order was the result of a high jinx in site 2. Somebody fired some pistols and some flares in the heat of the excitement. In issuing the order, Col. Leber promised another five day restriction for each repetition of the offense.

The Ostheim airfield, near Cologne, was the target August 15 and Lt. Col. Conway S. Hall was the wing leader. We put up 37 aircraft.

Except for patchy clouds the weather was good and it was clear in the target area. There were no enemy aircraft but the flak was moderate to intense and accurate of us. Col. Hall said the formation ahead of ours had gone in above their briefed altitude and their chaff was drawing heavy anti-aircraft fire directly upon us. The last five minutes of the bombing run was negotiated in a climb in order to avoid the intense flak then pointing at our formations. Despite the difficulties, however, the bombing was excellent. Strike photos showed hits upon the MPI and a good concentration of bombs in the target area.

The aircraft factory at Halle was the target for the Sixteenth. The 37 aircraft assigned from here were under the command of Lt. Col. John E. Fitzgerald, Jr., who was the Wing Leader. There was one abortive. The formations encountered good weather and it was CAVU [Clear And Visibility Unlimited] over the target except for some haze and smoke. There was moderate, accurate tracking flak defending the objective and the Luftwaffe was also on hand. The enemy aircraft, however, concentrated their attack on the Wing behind ours, coming in almost simultaneously with the arrival of the flak. The formation made a long, visual run and really hit the target. Results were recorded as "excellent" for the lead and low groups but only fair for the high group which suffered an instrument failure in the lead ship. All our aircraft returned safely. There was one casualty: Sgt. John B. Keffer, who suffered a penetrating wound in the hip. His injuries were described as mild at the station hospital.

Five DFC's were awarded to members of the Group by GO 250, 1BD, August 16. The recipients, all of whom had completed duty tours, were 1st Lts. Doswell A. Jamison and William F. Skoglund; T/Sgt. Louis Muro, Jr., and S/Sgts. James C. Burrows and Francis Lobasso.

There was a cessation of hostilities for the group for the next seven days. No missions were projected, even until the 23rd, and on that day an operation destined to attack the engine factories at Russelsheim, was scrubbed at briefing.

The awards kept coming in, however. Five more DFC's were received here with GO 234, 1BD, August 17. Those honored were 1st Lt. Harry D. Brown and Edward W. Switzer; and S/Sgts. Arthur T. O'Malley, Harvey H. Reeves and Rex L. Scott. All had finished their combat tours.

Three more DFC's were included in GO 256, August 18. These men had also finished their duty tours. Those honored were 1st Lt. Robert E. Teien, T/Sgt. Clarence A. Sprague and S/Sgt. Harold I. Schenkel.

Purple Hearts were awarded to 1st Lts. Donald K. Stewart, Robert G. Peackley, and James H. Long. T/Sgt. Franklin M. Glover and S/Sgt. John H. Keffer via GO 263, 1BD, August 20.

And there were a flock of Air Medals and Clusters in GO 261, August 20, 36 Air Medals were awarded. There were 15 Clusters for us in GO 267, August 21.

There were 32 more Air Medals in GO 272, August 23.

August 21 the Bulletin announced the promotion of Richard W. Edwards, flying control chief, to Major, and Ross G. Hanks, 534th S2, to Captain.

The evening of the 21st was a rough one for the enlisted men, because a shortage of beer necessitated closing the beer hall for the evening.

The war again began for the 381st on the 24th. The target was Weimar, where the objective were land armaments used for the manufacture and storage of V2 weapons. With Capt. George K. Sandman in the lead ship, 37 of our aircraft took off for the

operation. There was one abortive and one of our planes attacked a target of opportunity, believed to be the Stade airdrome. The rest went on to Weimar where the weather was good. The only clouds in the sky were above our formation and there was no haze. There was moderate flak from Maunburg to Weimar, but there was no flak on the target itself. The crews saw one enemy fighter, an Me 163, who "dove" on our low group but fired no shots. The formations made a beautiful bombing run and reported excellent results. All our aircraft returned safely, but we suffered two casualties: Sgt. Don W. Horem, wounded in the hand received a fracture of the hand, and T/Sgt. David Caldwell suffered a moderate wound to the left forearm. Both injuries were due to flak.

The Neubrandenburg airfield was the target August 25 and 37 of our aircraft were assigned to the mission with Capt. Douglas L. Winter in the lead ship. Winter had just taken over the leadership of the 534th Squadron after Major Briggs (and Major Bullick) had left for the States on leave. It was a cloudy morning but the clouds disappeared when the formations reached the German coast at Kiel. It was clear over the target although some of the crews reported seeing "several red and purple bursts". There were no enemy aircraft. The Fortresses made an unmolested run and the bombing was excellent for the low group and good for the lead and high groups. On the way home the formations caught flak at Peenemunde, but it was meager and inaccurate. All our aircraft returned safely.

1st Lt. Charles H. Eager, 534th bombardier, was awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster to his DFC by GO 280, August 25. He had completed his missions and was ready to leave for home.

Major Briggs, who had just left from the States, was made a lieutenant colonel and Captain Sandman, who had taken over command of the 533rd, was made major in orders announced in the Daily Bulletin August 31.

The teams lead respectively, by 533rd and 535th squadrons were first to fulfill their quotas in the 8th AF war bond drive on this station. QUOTAS were 22,000 dollars for each team.

DFC's were awarded to 1st Lt. Lester E. Fine, GO 258, August 19, and to 1st Lt. Robert G. Hecker, GO 271, August 22. Both had completed tours of duty.

Gelsenkirchen, well remembered frequent Group objective, was the target August 26, and 37 aircraft were assigned to the operation here with Lt. Col. Charles L. Halsey in the lead. The Fortresses took off in a heavy ground fog and had some difficulty in assembling, but the weather cleared to some extent when the formations reached enemy territory. It was hazy at the 29,000 foot altitude at which the Fortresses went over the target and non-persistent contrails bothered them a little, too. An intense flak barrage, much of it inaccurate for us, was the enemy's defense at the target. There were no enemy aircraft up. Smoke and haze obscured the target, but the bombardiers synchronized on fires left burning by the wings that hit the objective ahead of us and the bombing was performed in good shape. 1st Lt. Charles W. Nevius, lead bombardier, had to contend, also, with the fact that his plane was hit twice by flak bursts while it was on the bombing run. Because of the smoke and haze, results of the bombing went unobserved. All our aircraft returned safely to base.

The aircraft factory at Schonefeld was the briefed target for August 27. Our contingent of 37 aircraft, led by Lt. Col. John E. Fitzgerald, Jr., found it impossible to get through to Schonefeld because of weather conditions. Col. Fitzgerald took his formations instead to a target of opportunity, Emden. There was a 6/10 undercast with ground haze up until the Fortresses reached Emden, but over the city there was an opening in the clouds. Moderate but extremely accurate flak greeted the American bombers as they embarked upon their run, but the Forts made a good, long straight and level nevertheless and bombed visually, with PPF assistance. Results were excellent. Hits were observed on the vital dock areas and on the

marshalling yards. There were no enemy fighters up, but the flak took a rather heavy toll. Many of our aircraft suffered battle damage and our casualties totaled six wounded and one killed.

Among the wounded was 2nd Lt. Raymond L. LaPierre, who received penetrating wounds of the neck, shoulder, leg and arm. His elder brother, 1st Lt. Roger LaPierre, also flew the mission, as pilot of the deputy lead ship. It was a rough trip for the brothers, for the elder had learned, via radio, that his kid brother had been hit while the formation was still over enemy territory.

Others wounded were T/Sgt. John Dufek, who received moderate severe buttocks wounds; Sgt. William E. Combs, 2nd Lt. Robert Armstrong, S/Sgt. Harold G. Pendleton, and S/Sgt. Keith F. Jensen, all of whom were slightly injured.

Sgt. Richard Ramsdell was killed in action. He had been hit in the back by a piece of shrapnel which tore right through his body, coming out at the chest.

In the meantime, back at the Station, various events were taking place. Cpl. John C. Wolfe defeated Sgt. James Garvey for the station tennis championship. And the 448th Sub Depot softball team won the station title in its event from the "Not-In-Stocks".

Twelve DFC's came to the Group through GO 283, 1BD, August 28. The recipients, all of whom had completed their tours, were 1st Lts. Paul H. Anderson, James V. Farley, James R. Kline, Harry A. Smith, Leonard L. Loper and Eugene J. Roberts; T/Sgts. Lileon F. Card, Jr., and Johnny L. Daniel; S/Sgts. Leo F. Foley, Kenneth Hale, Millard F. Seaman and Samuel T. Weatherly.

A Bronze Star medal was awarded to Capt. Francis G. Hawkins, photo officer, in GO 284, August 29. It made Capt. Hawkins one of the most decorated of the ground officers, for he had already won the Air Medal for participation in six missions.

The final mission of the month was the Kiel operation of August 30. It was mission 181 for the Group and the sixteenth mission of the month. We put up 37 aircraft under command of Lt. Col. Conway S. Hall. The formations encountered bad weather all the way with 10/10 undercast and swelling cumulus clouds towering up to 20,000 ft. There was moderate, inaccurate flak at the target. The Luftwaffe was not present. The bombing run was made by PFF methods and the results were unobserved. All our ships returned safely. There was one casualty: 1st Lt. John W. Cassen, who suffered moderately severe wounds of the right forehead and nose.

Thirty two Air Medals and eleven Clusters were awarded to Group members in GO 289, 1BD, August 31.

And on the same date, through GO 294, the Purple Heart was awarded to T/Sgt. John A. Dufek, who had been wounded only a few days before, on the mission of August 27.

Other events during the course of the month included the visit to the Station of a group of American rubber tycoons. The guests included Paul W. Litchfield, chairman of the board of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company; John L. Colyer, president of B. F. Goodrich; Harry E. Smith, general manager of Manhattan Rubber Manufacturing Division; W. A. Hazlett, head of the British Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Co.; and Edward M. Eickmann, of Goodyear Aircraft Corp.

The month ended with the entire base looking forward to the celebration of the Aeroclub's anniversary on September 2.

## **September 1944**

381st Bomb Group (H)

Roll BO370: Frames 110-126

War Diary

September 1944

September began with a mission destined for the chemical works at Ludwigshafen, an objective which was to be the Division's favorite for the early days of the month. The Fortresses took off and got well into France before bad weather put a stop to the operation. Recall was ordered when the formations reached a point southwest of Paris and all the aircraft returned with their bombs.

Furloughs, recently re-authorized for Eighth Air Force took effect for the first batch of fortunate Group member September First and large contingent left base from each of the organizations. Those whose furloughs began then, however, were not altogether fortunate. For September 2 was a red letter day in the history of the station.

It was the anniversary of the opening of the Red Cross Club, and the celebration reached heights of entertainment. Despite the pouring rain, the celebration opened in the early afternoon with a USO show in Hanger 1. Bing Crosby, great American radio and screen star, was the leading member of the cast which also included comedian Joe DeRita, and songstress Darlene Garner and Jean Darrell. Some 600 wounded from neighboring hospitals were guests of the Group for the occasion. They were literally hanging from the rafters (not the wounded) when Crosby opened the show. It was the most successful of entertainment ever offered on the base.

The show was followed by a tea at the Aero Club and then by a dance for enlisted men in the hanger at Great Yeldam. With the Group members who purchased War Bonds voting, Pvt. Cynthia Burville, blonde and beautiful 19 year old ATS girl, stationed at Colchester, was chosen beauty queen by popular applause at the dance. She was presented with a bouquet of roses and her picture was taken, against the background of the crowd, with Col. Leber congratulating her.

The next day, with the Lord Lieutenant (pronounced "leftenant") and the High Sheriff of Essex County in attendance, Pvt. Burville christened a Fortress. The name, "Smashing Time", was selected in a GI contest to choose a title emblematic of Anglo-American relations. The winner, author of the name was S/Sgt. George A. Ranger, of the 533rd Squadron.

It is interesting to note the 533rd, with Lt. Gail Brewer, one time insurance salesman, as its sparkplug, finished first in the War Bond contest. With its associate organizations, it purchased \$32,875 worth of bonds, more than \$10,000 above its quota. All organizations went over the top.

Sept 3rd was also the date of the first completed mission of the month. The target was Ludwigshafen, and 37 of our aircraft participated with Capt. Douglas L. Winter in command. The formations hit a 6/10 to 9/10 undercast en-route, and ran into a 10/10 coverage at the target. There was moderate but inaccurate flak at Karlsruhe and moderate but accurate flak at the objective. There were no enemy aircraft. The formation made a PFF run and dropped their bombs in good shape. Results, of course, were unobserved.

We lost one aircraft. Listed as missing in action were:

2nd Lt. Omar P. Fulton, pilot,

2nd Lt. Robert B. Harrington, co-pilot,

2nd Lt. Robert X. Conley, navigator

2nd Lt. Richard G. Greer, bombardier, and the following gunners:

Sgt. Roger A. Martin

Sgt. Theodore L. Jefferson

Sgt. James C. Grubbs

Sgt. Carl J. Von Goeben, Jr.

Sgt. Franklin S. Berry

The aircraft was last heard of at 1255 hours chugging along behind the formation. The pilot called to say he had one engine out and another acting up, and that he would be forced to make a crash landing.

Subsequently, information was received that the men had landed near Rheims. Somehow, they were brought out by the 15th AF and all but Conley were said to be accounted for. Details were not available.

One man was wounded on the operation. He was Sgt. Jackie J. Nichols, a waist gunner, who suffered a relatively mild flak wound in the right leg. The abrasion was treated at the station hospital and he was out of action only a day.

There was no mission then until the eighth, although two attempts were made to get going on the sixth. Operations briefed for Berlin and for Bremen were scrubbed before take off in each case.

In the mean time, on September 4, in the effort to cut down the size of the now unwieldy squadrons to about 22 crews, each of the organizations shipped large groups of men to the 12th RCD.

Several groups of awards were received in General Orders from 1BD, in the early days of the month. Fifteen Air Medals and 12 clusters were included in GO 295, 1 Sept.; 32 more clusters were authorized in GO 297, 2 Sept.; and GO 301 of the same date authorized 73 more clusters.

DFC's were awarded in GO 299, 2 Sept., to 1st Lts. Warren R. Johnson and Haven J. Williams; 2nd Lts. Raymond P. Kotkiewicz and Arthur S. Palmer, Jr.; Technical Sergeants Jerry C. Delligatti and Varnie R. Dyson; S/Sgts. Levett L. Bennett, William F. Gaddy and Edward G. Graybill, Jr. All had completed their tours of operation.

DFC's were awarded, in GO 302, 3 Sept., to 1st Lts. William L. Bonar and Bayard A. Nelson; T/Sgts. August J. Cheminara and Louis W. Goc; and S/Sgts. John H. Combes, Joseph A. DeMaria and Stanley J. Lewandowsky. They, too, had completed their combat missions. Capt. Howard N. Kesley, 534th Operations Officer, who had risen in the Group from the rank of F/O, was awarded the DFC in GO 308, 5 Sept., for his leadership in the August 15 mission. His aircraft was severely damaged by flak on the target, and actually lying over on its side over the target with its No. 3 engine afire. Kesley skillfully righted his ship, led the formation unerringly to the target, performed a good bombing job, and then led his outfit home without losses. 1st Lt. Purvis W. Runyan, 534th Bombardier, also was awarded the DFC in the same order. Runyan was bombardier in Kesley's ship. With only a minute to make his adjustments after Kesley righted the airplane, Runyan performed his task skillfully and coolly and led the formation to good bombing results.

Lt. Col. Conway s. Hall was awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster to his DFC in the same order. Col. Hall was Division commander for the August 15 mission, riding in the aircraft piloted by Kesley. He assisted the pilot in gaining control of the aircraft after the flak burst disabled it. He rallied the formation after the bombing and led the entire outfit safe home without losses.

DFC's authorized in GO 310, 6 Sept., went to Capt. Thomas E. Barnicle, 535th lead pilot; 1st Lts. Alford J. Goodfellow, Normand E. Klare, James G. Manion and Joseph H. Myers, Jr.; T/Sgts. Joe F. Hendrickson, Heinz W. Huthmann, Joseph LaMantia, and J. W. Swafford; S/Sgts. Robert F. Irwin, Donald B. Olauson, John S. Patoki, Edward L. Vacek, and Robert H. Witt. All had completed duty tours.

The same day, in GO 311, 17 Air Medals and 37 clusters were distributed to Group members.

A courts martial sitting on Pvt. Marcos Ortiz, of the 7th Station Complement, Sept. 6, found Ortiz guilty of attacking Pfc. Paul J. Simmons with a knife and sentenced him to be dishonorably discharged and to be confined at hard labor for two years. GO 312, 1BD, 7 Sept., awarded 18 Air Medals and 10 clusters to Group members. GO 313, of the same date brought a Purple Heart to 1st Lt. John W. Carson, who was wounded on the August 30 mission.

Capt. Ralph E. Freese, 534th pilot who acted as Group operations assistant in charge of training, received his DFC in GO 315, 8 Sept. He had finished his tour and was ready for shipment back to the States.

Ludwigshafen was the Fortress target again on Sept. 8 and 37 of our aircraft were assigned to the operation under command of Lt. Col. Charles L. Halsey. The formations encountered a solid undercast over the target and bombed PFF. Results were unobserved. There was a moderate to intense tracking flak at Ludwigshafen but most of it was below the formation. No enemy aircraft were visible. There was one casualty, 2nd Lt. Harold D. Wilker, a navigator, who received a piece of shrapnel in his skull. The wound was mild, necessitating grounding for only two days. S/Sgt. Herman H. Parrish, 534th radio operator, listed as injured in action, dislocated his left knee when he fell over an obstacle in the ship.

We were headed for Ludwigshafen again the next day after a mission to Gaggenau had been canceled with a force of 49 aircraft commanded by Lt. Col. John E. Fitzgerald, Jr., who flew with 1st Lt. Harris Sluyter as his pilot. A 3/10 to 4/10 undercast, which started building up when the formation left this station, cleared when the Fortresses reached Belgium, but the weather socked in again and scouts reported that it was 10/10 over the target.

Ludwigshafen was therefore passed up, and the formation went, instead, across the river to Mannheim, which was the PFF target for the day. It looked for a while, as if the bombing would be visual, but the clouds stacked up, after a visual run had been begun and the instrument men took over to complete the job. Results were unobserved.

Four ME 163's were reported in the vicinity of the target but they made no attempt to attack. The flak, however, was fairly accurate, although it was rated as only "moderate", and 16 of our ships sustained battle damage. There were no losses, although Lt. Gardner had to crash land his Fort at Manston, in England, on the way home. There were two casualties: Sgt. Robert J. Sharp, 533rd toggler, suffered a compound, comminuted fracture of the left leg; and Sgt. Gale H. Kay, 534th tail gunner, received a mild penetrating wound of the left shoulder.

In the mean time, several promotions were announced. Joseph M. Murray, former Group S2 executive officer, who had taken over the leading spot in the group intelligence office when Major Kidd left for the States, was promoted to major. George T. Kelley, 532nd S2, was promoted to captain, and became executive officer at Group S2. And Corbin J. Robertson, of the 535th was promoted to captain.

Final figures in the War Bond drive showed the team led by the 535th Squadron as high with a total of \$39,550. Tied up with the 535th were the 1142nd MP Company and the Headquarters Squadron of the Bomb Group. The actual single high scorer, however, was the 533rd Squadron, which turned in a total of \$32,875 dollars by itself. The 535th total was an even \$31,000. The entire Group subscribed 155.3 percent of its quota, which was \$88,000.

Sept. 9 brought more Air Medals/Clusters. Two were awarded in GO 316 and 15 more were included in GO 318.

The diesel lorry works at Gaggenau, reported to be turning out V-I and V-II weapons, was the briefed target for Sept. 10. Only 24 of our aircraft were assigned and Col. Leber was in personal command. The formation found the weather good over the target and made a visual bombing run with excellent results. There were no enemy aircraft in the sky. The Fortresses encountered meager inaccurate spotty bursts of flak at Metz and at the IP, and ran into moderate, accurate flak at the target. We lost one ship. Missing in action were:

2nd Lt. Ernest Germano, pilot

2nd Lt. James M. Gre, co-pilot

2nd Lt. Richard A. Tierney, navigator

2nd Lt. Edward J. Spaniel, Jr., bombardier



S/Sgt. John C. Diedrich

S/Sgt. William D. Shelley, Jr.

Sgt. Alexander Donaldson

Sgt. Harry Siders

Sgt. Cloyde I. Goody

The aircraft was last seen in the vicinity of Baden Baden with two engines smoking. It peeled off under control, and apparently headed for France. Five 'chutes were observed coming out of it. A subsequent letter from Spaniel's mother informed the Group that he was a prisoner of war. The others have not yet been heard of.

Dennis E. Murphy, 534<sup>th</sup> pilot, was promoted to captain. The announcement was made in the Sept. 9 Bulletin.

September 11 the Fortresses had the synthetic oil refineries at Mersburg as their target and 37 of our aircraft were assigned from here under command of Capt. Douglas L. Winter. The weather was not too good There were 2/10 to 3/10 swelling cumulus clouds most of the way, building to 7/10 to 8/10 over the target. Passing near Koblenz the crew men saw a barrage of flak, although it was not aimed at them. The flak appeared to cover a large fleet of barges in Rhine near that city. At the target flak was moderate and fairly accurate. The bombing was visual with a \_\_\_ and bomb bursts were observed in the target area. There were \_\_\_, although Lt. Thornton was forced to land his bomber in \_\_\_. There was one casualty: S/Sgt. Robert F. Irwin, who suffered a fracture of the big tow of his right foot as a result of a flak burst.

DFC's were awarded in GO 320, 1BD, 11 Sept., to 1st Lts. Richard Wendt, Warren Miller, John D. Cochran and James H. Mattison; \_\_\_ David Caldwell and Melvin Samuels. An Oak Leaf Cluster to the \_\_\_ to Capt. Phillip W. Gatznig, 535<sup>th</sup> operations officer. All had completed their combat tours and were preparing for shipment home. Capt. <problem with the transcription or original>

page "9" follows

target of opportunity, dropping its bombs in populated area. The high group hit the last resort target, Plauen, aiming for factories there, and saw its explosives land in the southeast corner of the town. The formations encountered moderate, accurate tracking flak at the target. En-route to the objective, six ME 109's made a run on the formation at Pritzwek, but fired no shots, Crew men said the Schmitts were being chased by P-51's. A little later the crews saw a formation of 15 to 30 single engine enemy fighters queuing up to make an attack on the Wing behind ours.

One of our aircraft, piloted by Lt. McMullen, made a safe crash landing in France. The rest returned to base carrying five casualties:

Sgt. Lydell A. Hayes, was killed in action. A ball turret gunner, he died of anoxia. Wounded were Sgt. Myres J. Baker, a waist gunner, who suffered severe frost bite of the right hand and had to have the member amputated; Sgt. Joseph J. Charkowski, who suffered a severe frost bite of the face and cheek as well as anoxia; S/Sgt. Alvan A. Bacon, who received a piece of flak in the back which penetrated to the pelvis; and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Muray Hill, a co-pilot, who was wounded in the left shoulder.

There was no missions, then, until the Seventeenth, although attempts to set up operations against Genshagen and Eindhoven were scrubbed on the Fourteenth and the Sixteenth, respectively.

In the mean time the awards were pilling up. Thirty-four Air Medal Clusters were awarded in GO 324, 1BD, 12 September.

DFC's were authorized, in GO 326, 13 Sept., to 1st Lt. James E. Nadeaux, Paul O. Schiemeyer, Frank L. Scurlock and Charles P. Stormer (who had been an enlisted navigator when he first came to the group); and T/Sgts. Erling A. Anderson, Willard C. Bessey and John O. Sheppherd. All had completed duty tours and were ready for shipment home.

Ten more DFC's, also to men who had completed tours, were awarded in GO 328, 13 Sept., to 1st Lts. Edwin E. Baran, John M. McCollum, George H. DeVoe, Nicholas Fedak, Robert O. Long and Bruce L. Rivett; T/Sgts. Robert C. Huttlinger and Richard H. Miner; S/Sgts. Sigurd H. Esselstrom, and Arch J. McCabe.

The same order authorized a DFC Cluster for Major George K. Sandman, who was also now ready to take his leave back home.

Col. Harry P. Leber, Jr., Group Commander, was awarded an Air Medal Cluster in GO 327, 13 September, along with Brig. Gen. William M. Gross, Combat Wing Commander. Twenty-eight Air Medals were awarded to group members in the same order. And 51 Air Medal Clusters were awarded in GO 331, 15 Sept. Among the recipients was Capt. Winter.

Sept. 16 the news came that Airborne forces had begun the invasion of Holland. A 534<sup>th</sup> Fortress, "Passaic Warrior", piloted by a 532<sup>nd</sup> crew headed by Lt. Frank L. Scurlock, was assigned to fly Gen. Brereton to view the invasion from the air. In the ship, also was Courtney, of Colliers, who subsequently turned out a magazine story on the operation.

The next day we played our own part in the invasion. The Fortresses were sent to knock out troop and gun installations impeding the ground forces advance in the Eindhoven area. We sent 42 aircraft with Capt. Edward H. MacNeill in command and 1st Lt. Harris Sluyter as his pilot. It was overcast at 18,000 feet and somewhat hazy below, but there was no flak (except for a few bursts in the distance) and there were no enemy aircraft up. The lead group and the high squadron of the high group, made two bombing runs on the target. The rest caught their targets the first time over. Results were reported as good to excellent.

A DFC was awarded to 1st Lt. William F. Greene, 533<sup>rd</sup> bombardier, in GO 334, 1BD, 16 Sept. He had completed his tour of duty. The same day nine Air Medals and 13 Clusters (including one for Lt. Col. Fitzgerald) were authorized to Group members in GO 333, and seven more Clusters were awarded in GO 336.

A Cluster to his DFC was awarded to T/Sgt. Franklin M. Glover, top turret gunner and engineer, for heroism as published in GO 332, 15 Sept. On the August 8 mission, flak disabled the No. 3 engine and punctured the No. 3 gas tank of the aircraft in which Sgt Glover was flying. Another burst short circuited the electrical bomb bay system, causing some bombs to drop and some to become fouled in the bay. A fire started alongside the bomb bay and Sgt Glover immediately began to fight it with an extinguisher. A flak fragment tore the extinguisher out of his hand. He tried to find another but there were none. He notified the pilot as soon as the fire got out of control (he was still trying to fight it with an extinguisher with a hole in it) and the entire crew bailed out behind Allied lines.

Purple Heart decorations were authorized (in GO 337, 1BD, 17 Sept.) For 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Maury Hill, S/Sgt. Robert F. Irwin and S/Sgt. Alvin A. Bacon. Irwin was wounded on the Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> mission, the other two on the operation of Sept. 12.

An Oak Leaf Cluster to the DFC was awarded to Lt. Col. Charles L. Halsey, 535<sup>th</sup> Squadron Commander, in GO 338, 17 Sept. Col Halsey had finished his tour and was ready for shipment home.

Lt. Col. George G. Shackley, 533<sup>rd</sup> CO, and Major James A. DeLano, Group navigator, who left for leave in the States last June, returned to the Group Sept. 18, both resuming their former positions.

There was a stand down on Sept 18.

The target for Sept. 19 was Hamm. The marshalling yards in that city were the objectives. Under the command of Lt. Col. David E. Kunkel, Jr. Group Operations Officer, 37 of our aircraft were assigned to the operation. It was 10/10 to about 5 degrees East that day. The weather cleared, then, as far as the IP, where swelling high clouds built up to 10/10 at the target. The formation started a visual run, but when the weather socked in the instrument boys took over and the bombing was by PFF. Results, of course, were unobserved. The flak was of the moderate, tracking variety and very accurate. Ten of our aircraft sustained battle damage, five of them listing their damage as "major". No enemy aircraft were encountered, and there were no casualties.

A Purple Heart was awarded in GO 67 USAFE, 18 Sept., to F/O Frank A. J. Champ, who was wounded in the mission 15 June, in which his aircraft was shot down. He was an evader.

Fifty-four Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal were awarded Group members in GO 340, 1BD, 18 Sept.; and ten more were authorized in GO 342, of the same date.

James B. Linsky, 535<sup>th</sup> Armament officer, was promoted to Captain, according to announcements in the Daily Bulletin of Sept. 20.

DFC's, upon completion of tour, were awarded in GO 345, 1BD, 20 Sept. to 1st Lts. Harry R. Carroll and Harris Sluyter; T/Sgts. Jack F. Crumley and Johnny T. Davis; and S/Sgts. Delton W. Carpenter, Henry W. Harris, Ralph L. Hooper, Kenneth R. Howard and Fred W. Johnston.

Six Air Medals and ten Clusters were authorized in GO 346, 1BD, 21 Sept. to Group members.

A mission intended for Kassel was scrubbed Sept. 20 after briefing.

Sept 21, 37 of our aircraft were assigned to the operation against Mainz, with Capt. Douglas L. Winter in command. There was a heavy fog layer up to 2,000 feet when the ships took off and there was a 4/10 cloud undercast below at the beginning of enemy territory. It was about 8/10 at the IP and the lead ship started a PFF run. About ten miles from the target the weather broke a little to about 3/10 to 5/10 and the bombardier was able to see the objective. A smooth change was made to let the bombardier take over and the Group bombed visually. Results were unobserved because the clouds socked in again after the Group passed the MPI. Strangely enough, the high group started a visual run and wound up bombing PFF and some of the men were able to see something of the results. They reported the bombing was "good". The low group bombed off of the lead group's smoke markers. There was meager to moderate flak at the target, generally inaccurate. One ship failed to come back with the formation. It was discovered later that Lt. Bailey had landed in Brussels, forced down because one of his engines was out and another was afire. All of the crew were safe and subsequently returned to duty.

Col. Leber was in the lead ship for the next day's mission, flying with 1st Lt. Howard R. Yates as his pilot. The target was Kassel, the marshalling yards there constituting the main objective. We put up 37 aircraft and found the weather 10/10 all the way. The formations got meager and inaccurate flak from the Rhine and Moselle region both going in and coming out. At the target the flak was also meager and inaccurate, although the rear of the formation experienced a little rough treatment from the ground batteries.

There were no enemy aircraft in the sky. The bombing was done by PFF methods and the results were unobserved. We had one casualty: Sgt. Henry J. Ianni, 534<sup>th</sup> top turret gunner and engineer, who was severely wounded in the left shoulder by flak.

Col. Leber ordered a two-hour-a-week course in military courtesy for all personnel of the Group on Sept. 22.

There was a stand down until the 25<sup>th</sup>, because of weather.

In the mean time, Harris Sluyter, 532<sup>nd</sup> lead pilot, was promoted to Captain. The announcement was made in the Sept. 23 Bulletin.

In GO 350, 1BD, 22 Sept., 29 Clusters to the Air Medal were authorized for Group members; GO 353, 23 Sept. brought five Air Medals and a Cluster. GO 356, 24 Sept. authorized 34 more Clusters.

DFC's were awarded in GO 358, 1BD, 24 Sept. to Capt.s Irving Moore and Dennis E. Murphy; 1st Lts. Oscar E. Myerscough, Nelson F. Rekos, Alexander Stepanich, David J. Gardner, Larance B. Hamilton, Edward V. Huber, John Krc, Jack A. MacGregor and John A. Martyniak; and T/Sgt. James C. Vaughn, all of whom had completed operational tours.

DFC's were also awarded GO 351, 1Bd, Sept. 22 to Capt. George W. Reese; 1st Lts. Hanley G. Cupernall, Chester E. Hudson, Charles W. Nevius, Emil A. Pane, Albert I. Singer, George B. Ward; T/Sgts. Ronald P. Founds, Alfred I. Haugen,

John E. Hubbard, Mack B. Melchor, William G. Seymour; and S/Sgts. Earl W. Berneking, Lloyd L. Daffern, Daniel F. Flicek, Albert F. Lang, and Yonan D. Yonan. All had completed their tours of duty.

Most noteworthy of those listed are Lt. Nevius and Sgt. Haugen, both of whom were original members of the Group, prior to ETO. Flying with 1st Lt. Osce V. Jones (later Major Jones), they made a crash landing in Sweden and were interned there throughout the winter of 1943-44.

Although many members of the crew had performed deeds worthy of publication, a secret edict, promulgated by higher headquarters, kept the names of all members of this crew from publication.

The 24th was the occasion of a visit by four American naval officers who were to study tactics in use here to prepare for operations in the South Pacific.

The stand down was lifted on the 25th and the target for the day was Frankfort. The marshalling yards were the objective. With Lt. Col. John E. Fitzgerald in the lead ship, 37 of our aircraft took off for the operation. Two returned early. The weather was 10/10 all the way, the clouds socking in to above 20,000 feet. There was meager flak, of the barrage type, at the target and it was reported as inaccurate, mainly low. There were no enemy aircraft. The formation used PFF methods for the bombing and the results were unobserved. We lost one aircraft and its crew. Those reported missing in action were: 1st Lt. Oscar W. Gills, pilot; 2nd Lt. Charles R. Prenatt,

co-pilot; 2nd Lt. Donald E. Adams, navigator; 2nd Lt. William P. Hudisill, bombardier; and the following gunners: S/Sgt. Minor P. Stone, S/Sgt. Paul E. Parke, Sgt. Shelby W. Cook, Sgt. Leo V. Krainz and Sgt. Harold A. Mourning.

The aircraft was last seen with two engines smoking, below the formation and dropping back to the left. The left wing appeared to be afire but the ship was still under control. Five 'chutes were reported seen. All members of the crew were subsequently reported prisoners of war.

T/Sgt. Fred E. Stanford and S/Sgt. Robert L. Hansen were awarded DFC's in GO 365, 1BD, 26 Sept. Both had completed tours of duty.

An Oak Leaf Cluster to the DFC was awarded to Lt. Col. David E. Kunkle, Jr. Group operations officer, in GO 363 1BD, 26 Sept. The award was made for exceptionally good leadership in the mission of August 9.

1st Lt. Robert H. Angevine, mickey navigation, was awarded the DFC in the same order for his work on the same mission.

GO 361, 1BD, 26 September, authorized 39 Air Medals and 27 Oak Leaf Clusters for the Group.

The marshalling yards at Osnabruck proved to be the target Sept. 26 and again we put up 37 aircraft, this time under command of Lt. Col. George G. Shackley. There was a 5/10 to 7/10 undercast, with tops at about 15,000 feet, all the way and it was reported 6/10 at the target. The formation made a visual bombing run, with PFF assist, and the wet strike prints showed good coverage on the lead group's MPI. The other two MPI's were obscured by smoke. The Fortresses encountered meager to moderate, inaccurate flak at the target as they went over, and the crews reported variously that four to thirteen rockets were seen to explode near the formation that preceded us. After we left the target the flak increased in intensity. There were no enemy aircraft. All of our aircraft returned safely. There were no casualties.

Cologne was the target for Sept. 27. Under command of Capt. Douglas L. Winter, 37 of our aircraft participated in the operation. It was 8/10 to 10/10 over the target and light, persistent con trails made the task more difficult. There was little opposition, however. No enemy aircraft appeared, and the flak was meager and inaccurate both at the IP and in the target area. The bombing, performed by PFF methods, produced unobserved results. There were no losses for the day. Two of our aircraft aborted. One, piloted by 1st Lt. Nelson C. Schein, landed in Brussels to permit immediate hospitalization of a gunner,

Sgt. John B. Keffer, who suffered from anoxia. Keffer was under treatment at a British 8th Army hospital for several days before he was returned to base. He was taken off flying status.\*

[\*Note added - Earle L. Bassett writes the following to correct the record here:

*I was the radio operator on that flight with 1st Lt. Nelson C. Schein. What happened was that our belly gunner William Dangerfield passed out in the ball turret from lack of oxygen. The waist gunner (Keffer) and I cranked him out but we could not get him revived with oxygen so the Lt. broke formation and we landed in Brussels. Dangerfield did not return to our base with us (about 4 hours after we landed in Brussels) and I don't remember if Keffer did or not but Keffer definitely was taken off flying status..." ]*

The target for the 28th was Magdeburg and Capt. James L. Tyson, 535th Operations officer, was the commander of the 37 aircraft assigned to the operation from here. There was one abortive in our Group. The rest went on to find the weather 9/10 to 10/10 over the target. There was moderate flak at the IP and it was accurate. At the target, the flak was moderate and although it was at our altitude it was not on our formation. There were no enemy aircraft. The formations bombed PFF and results were unobserved.

The Magdeburg operation, the Group's 195th mission, was the last for the month. The only other events worth recording were the awards.

Twenty-six Air Medals came to us by way of GO 366, 1BD, 27 Sept. DFC's were awarded in GO 368, 28 Sept., to 1st Lt. Benjamin W. Ploch and S/Sgts. Charles S. Bullions, Jr., Gerald M. Hickman, George H. Robben, Jr. and Nicholas M. Rotz. All had completed their duty tours.

There were 22 Air Medals and 19 Clusters for us in GO 372, 29 Sept. Capt. Howard R. Yates, 535th lead pilot, was awarded a Cluster to his DFC in GO 373, 1BD, 29 Sept. The same order authorized DFC's for 1st Lts. Leonard A. Frank, Arnold G. Gittleman, Edward T. Landman; T/Sgts. Darrell E. Longley, and George D. VanBuskirk; S/Sgts. Henry R. Augustine, Wayne M. Coffey, Daniel D. Hernandez, Alexander McCool, Jr. Nicholas VanWieren and Marvin J. Walters.

Twenty-six Air Medals were awarded to 381st combat men in GO 366, 1BD, 27 Sept., and 8 Air Medals and 23 Clusters came to us in GO 374, 30 September.

## **October 1944**

381st Bomb Group (H)

Roll BO370: Frames 127-141

WAR DIARY

OCTOBER 1944

The main topic on the station in the early days of October was the projected 200 mission party, scheduled to take place later in the month. First plans contemplated a dance at the officer's club, three or four enlisted mens' dances, free liquor and a two day stand down.

Higher headquarters were asked for a rake off of 2,000 pounds from PX earnings to take care of the cost. Capt. Samuel H. Dixon, new special services officer, was put in charge of the enlisted mens' end of the occasion and elaborate plans were a-borning.

Buzz-bomb activity began to get closer to the station with the opening of October. In the evening of October first, two of the doodle-bugs passed low over headquarters with RAF fighters on their tails. Lt. Leon Wagner, in the control tower, excitedly furnished a blow-by-blow description of the encounter over the Tannoy as the fighters shot down one of the P-planes. The other crashed near Birdbrook, only a few miles away with enough force to rock the station.

There was no mission on the first.

On the Second we put up 37 aircraft to participate in the attack on Kassel. Capt. Edward H. MacNeill was the commander and his formation encountered a 7/10 swelling cumulus undercast on the continent, building up a complete 10/10 coverage in the target area. Flak was moderate and fairly accurate at the objective. There were no enemy fighters. The formation bombed PFF methods, aiming for the briefed PFF target, the Henschel and Sohn factories, and results were, of course, unobserved. En route home, the formation was taken through the Ruhr, for some unknown reason, and there ran into intense flak. There were no losses, although 13 of our aircraft suffered battle damage, two of them of the "major" variety.

There was one snafu at takeoff. Two planes collided at taxi-time one's prop chewing up the other's tail.

The awards procession began with the first day of the month. GO 382, 1BD, 1 Oct., authorized ten Air Medals for the Group.

DFC's were awarded, in GO 381, of the same date, to S/Sgts. Paul C. Smith and Seely H. Wilson, both of whom had completed tours of duty.

Thirty more Air Medals came along in GO 384, Oct 2.

And, on the same date, a Cluster to the DFC was authorized for Lt. Col. John E. Fitzgerald, Jr., 532<sup>nd</sup> C.O., in GO 385. The award was made for Col. Fitzgerald's outstanding leadership in the August 27 mission, when huge cloud banks made an attack against the primary target impossible. Col. Fitzgerald selected a vital target of opportunity, courageously made a good run on it despite heavy flak, and secured excellent results.

1st Lt. Harvey G. Tidwell, 532<sup>nd</sup> bombardier and one of the first of the Group's returnees from leave in the States after completion of one tour of duty, received a Cluster to the DFC in the same order for the same mission for his superior work as bombardier on that occasion.

GO 384, Oct 2, brought nine Air Medal Clusters to the Group. And GO 387, 3 October, brought 20 more. Another 22 were added in GO 394, 4 Oct. and ten Air Medals were authorized in GO 397, Oct 5.

A mission intended for Cologne was scrubbed Oct. 4, but it was on, again, on the fifth. We put up 35 aircraft for the operation with Lt. Col. George G. Shackley in the lead ship, and our specific target was the station and goods yard in Cologne. It was 6/10 to 8/10 to the English coast that day, and although the weather broke to some extent over the Channel, it socked in to a complete 10/10 over the target. Visibility was poor. The bombing was done by PFF methods and results went unobserved. The high group reported meager and inaccurate flak at Cologne but the other two groups found the anti-aircraft fire moderate to intense and accurate. There were no enemy aircraft and there were no battle casualties. Two men were injured, however, as a result of the mission. S/Sgt. Walter J. Doremus, radio operator, and Sgt. Arthur P. Hafner, waist gunner, suffered an ankle sprain and concussions of the left leg, respectively, when the 533<sup>rd</sup> ship in which they were serving crashed on take-off. Nobody else was hurt.

A flock of Air Medals came through October 6, 34 of them, to be exact. They were authorized in GO 399, 1BD.

Politz was the briefed target October 6 and Col. Leber, in person led the 37 aircraft assigned to the mission from here. Capt. Howard N. Kesley was his pilot. The formation took off in clear cool weather, but the clouds began building up when the Fortresses reached the continent. Col. Leber was unable to contact weather scouts because so many others were on the channel, but he heard a report indicating the primary and secondary were closed in. He therefore led his Wing to Stralsund, the last resort target, and made his run on the power plant there. The bombing was performed visually (the weather was reported as 5/10 to 7/10), and the results were reported as "good". There was no opposition at all at the target, but the formation did run into some moderate and very accurate flak originating from flak boats in Eckerndorfer Bay. There were no enemy aircraft. All our aircraft returned to base. There were no casualties.

Miss Ann Overton, from North Carolina, recently arrived from the States, became a member of the Red Cross Staff. Miss Mim Smith, scheduled to take off for home any moment, had resigned from the directorship, and Miss Celia Weinschenk, Miss Smith's assistant, became the new Aero Club director.

Brux, in Czechoslovakia, was the briefed target for Oct 7, but the 37 A/C assigned from here for the operation never got there, nor did the rest of the Division. Lt. Col. David E. Kunkel, Jr., commander for the operation, received a report from weather scouts that the target was open "with heavy haze". At the IP, however, it was discovered the target would be 10/10 and Col. Kunkel ordered a turn back to the secondary which had been observed as open. There was heavy haze, however, and the bombardier was unable to pick up the Zwickau objective, so the formation went over it again. The low group bombed this time, but the lead and high went on to Schneeberg and bombed a target of opportunity, the marshalling yards, there. The incendiary bombs were held and dropped on the Nordhausen airfield on the way home. The bombing was all done visually and strike photos show a good pattern on the secondary MPI [Mean Point of Impact] for the low group. The high group's bombs evidently landed in an open field, but the lead group hit the marshalling yards and the western end of Schneeberg. Flak was non-existent in the area bombed, but the formations picked up moderate and accurate flak at Osnabruk and meager flak at several other points along the route.

One of our aircraft got tangled up with a couple of Goering's new-fangled jet-propelled jobs.

1st Lt. John J. O'Conner unable to keep up with the formation, was ordered to jettison his bombs and meet the outfit again on the way home. The formation's change of course prevented meeting, but O'Conner did meet two Jetties [German jet fighters] and his gunners fought them to a standstill until some P-51's came along and chased them off. The Jerry fighters, ME163's were the first attackers the group had met in some time. The battle lasted five minutes and although the Jetties had scored a couple of hits, the Fortress, "Los Angeles City Limits", returned safely to base. It was the aircraft's 61st consecutive non-abortive mission.

There was one man MIA as a result of the mission. Sgt. Marion O. Heilman, O'Conner's gunner bailed out of his aircraft at 52-28 North 08-35 East, and has not been heard of.

Three men were wounded. 2nd Lt. Richard A. Mitchell, co-pilot was hit in the right arm; S/Sgt. Harlie H. Moore, waist gunner, suffered an abrasion of the left leg; and 2nd Lt. Stanley A. Milowski, navigator, received an abrasion above the eye. All are from the 535th Squadron.

The same day, Col. Kunkel's Cluster to the DFC, for completion of tour, was authorized in GO 403, 1BD, 7 Oct.

In the same order, DFC's were awarded to 1st Lt. Norwood C. Durbin, Harold Wood, Billy W. Santos, Kenneth O. Lingenfelter, and Fred R. Jarvill and to S/Sgts. Moe Kluger, Robert Q. Pope and Charles A. Polito. All had completed their combat missions in this theater.

A mission to Bruz was scrubbed on the Eighth which was a big enough day anyway.

Morton D. Joyce, station administrative inspector, and Edgar C. Kurner, Group S4 and engineering officer, were promoted to Major; Earl M. Crawford, 532nd communications officer (who had just improvised a system of emergency lighting for the runways), Elbert E. Husted, 532nd armament officer, and George H. Robinson, 533rd combat officer, were promoted to Captain. The advancements were proclaimed in the October 8 bulletin.

Tommy Trinder, hailed as England's No. 1 comedian, with Monsewer Eddie Gray, Adelaide Hall, and other London variety stars, led by Producer Jack Hylton, did a stage show in Hanger No. 2 in the afternoon. Among the guests were some 600 wounded American and British soldiers, invited from neighboring hospitals.

The word came that the buzz bomb we heard the night before, which really rocked the camp when it hit (obviously somewhere near), smashed down in Little Yeldham, only a mile and a half from the base. The explosion broke a lot of glass in the village and left one woman suffering from shock, but as far as could be learned, caused no fatalities and did little other damage.

October 9 was another big day - technically, at any rate. For the Group flew its 200th Mission on that day. Moreover, the target was Schweinfurt, the place where the outfit suffered its first big loss (11 aircraft and 10 crews in August 1943).

Actually, there was nothing to the mission. Our 37 aircraft, under command of Capt. Edward H. MacNeill, hit 10/10 weather all the way and did their bombing PFF method. Even the flak was hardly up to Schweinfurt standard. It was described as "meager and very inaccurate" when the formation went over the target. Rear elements reported that it increased to "intense" after bombs away, but we weren't there to catch it then. There were no enemy aircraft up. Our crews reported that our escort was outstanding. The Fortress men said they saw a number of planes from other formations, straggling for one reason or another, each with an umbrella of at least six fighters guarding it. All our aircraft returned safely to base.

It developed the 200 mission party was off. Higher Headquarters actuated by reported excesses and unfortunate occurrences at other stations, had put a stop to all-say-out celebrations. The thing simmered down, finally, to an enlisted men's dance October 21 and an officer's party the next day. We still hoped, however, to draw the 2,000 pounds we asked for from the PX funds.

Col. Leber proclaimed October 9 and 10 Federal Ballot Voting Days. Throughout the period specified and throughout the rest of the time the polls were kept open, only six men utilized in the presidential election. This did not mean, however, that there was no interest in the presidential election. As a matter of fact, postal representatives on the base indicated that the absentee ballot mail was very heavy. Probabilities were that a large percentage of the men voted.

GO 408, 1BD, 9 Oct., authorized 19 Air Medals for Group members. And GO 410, 10 Oct brought 14 more.

DFC's were awarded in GO 412, 1BD, 11 Oct. to 1st Lt. John P. Weidenbach and Eugene P. Weisser;

T/Sgts. Henry Meier and Joe F. Stobaugh; and S/ Sgt. Rafael D. Esqueda. All had completed their duty tours.

More DFC's came through in GO 415, 12 Oct. for 1st Lts. Alger H. Clark and Harley L. Reed; 2nd Lt. John Rama; and S/Sgts Armando M. Castro and George W. Miller. They, too, had "finished up".

A Purple Heart was awarded to 2nd Lt. Richard A. Mitchell in GO 423, 1BD, 13 Oct. for the wound he received on the Oct. 7 mission.

And, the same day, the Group got seven Air Medals in GO 418 and two more in GO 421.

Col. Halsey started on his way home Oct. 11 and Major Isaac C. Taylor, rather recently transferred into the Group, took over command of the 535th Squadron.



Roger LaPierre, 533rd lead pilot, and Dean T. Larson, 534th Mickey navigator, were promoted to captain by announcement in Bulletin of Oct. 13.

A mission to Bremen on the tenth, one to Cologne on the twelfth, and another to Cologne on the thirteenth, were scrubbed because of inclement weather.

Despite the steady downpour of the twelfth, Maury Maverick, chunky one-time Congressman and Mayor of San Antonio, and presently head of the Smaller War Plant Corporation, who paid a visit to the base that day in his capacity as a member of the War Production Board, got out on the line and christened a new 535th Fortress. It was named "The Alamo". Maverick addressed a crowd of interested G.I.'s and a sprinkling of officers at the Aero Club in the evening, driving home the idea that the government would provide funds for opening a small business for returning service men after the war.

Friday the thirteenth M/Sgt. Clarence Bankston, crew chief of "Stage Door Canteen", with his crew, and member of the combat crew led by 1st Lt. Fred Davison (currently flying the famous bomber) were guests at Stage Door Canteen, in London. Col. Leber also made the trip, with Col. William J. Reed, ground Executive, Major Karl B. Greenlee, adjutant, and other ground officers. The visitors were treated to dinner in the canteen and to a stage show headed by Doris Hare and Gerald Frankau, well known British stage stars. The bomber had 76 consecutive non-abortive missions. In addition, it was the first ship in ETO to use parachutes for brakes after its hydraulic system had been shot out on a mission. It had been christened in April by Mary Churchill, daughter of the British Prime Minister.

We finally got to fly again on the fourteenth and Cologne was the target. Lt. Col. George G. Shackley, with LaPierre as his pilot, was commander of the Wing in which our 37 aircraft flew. It was 8/10 to 10/10 all the way and the undercast combined with a middle cloud at the targets to make visual bombing impossible. We bombed by squadron, using PFF methods, and results were unobserved. There was moderate to intense tracking and barrage flak at the target and there was more flak (accurate, though meager) at Rhine on the way home. We had no losses although one of our aircraft landed away from base.

There were three wounded, and all of them were concerned on one of the best combat stories the Group had turned up since D-Day.

#### Pella Tulip

They were flying in a Fortress called "Pella Tulip" two minutes before bombs away, the Tulip was hit by a flak burst which virtually shattered the nose and cockpit and knocked the bomber out of formation. 1st Lt. Charles W. Reseigh, the pilot, hit in both arms and in the face by flak bursts and suffering from a broken leg also caused by a flak wound, was too seriously hurt to pull the bomber out of its dive. 1st Lt. David R. Rautio, the copilot had also been knocked out by the blast. He regained consciousness, pulled the ship out of its dive when it was low enough to avoid anoxia difficulties (for oxygen system had been knocked out) and salvaged the bomb load. For the next four hours Rautio fought with the stubborn Fortress, despite the streaming cold of the open cockpit and despite his wound, nursed it back to England with both its right-side engines out. Rautio sustained injuries of the forehead and of the right arm. T/Sgt. John M. Nushy, the engineer and top turret gunner, put out a fire in the cockpit, helped remove the pilot to the radio room where the bombardier administered first aid, and then Nushy climbed into the pilot's seat where he acted as copilot for Rautio intermittently massaging Rautio's face and neck to minimize danger to the 21-year-old Rautio from frostbite. Nushy suffered mainly from conjunctivitis, caused by the flying plexiglass when the nose was shattered. F/O Maryan J. Winicki, the navigator was credited with excellent work throughout the grueling trip. He and Nushy narrowly escaped serious injury when Winicki stooped down for a flak helmet, at Rautio's order, and Nushy bent down at the same moment to check a flaw in his oxygen equipment. A flak burst slammed right past the spot their heads had been.

#### Pella Tulip Damage

It was to Cologne again on the fifteenth and this time Capt. Douglas L. Winter headed our formation of 37 aircraft. There was no change in the weather: it was 10/10 all the way. The bombing was done by squadrons using PFF methods. No enemy aircraft were in the sky and the flak was variously described for the lead group it was "meager to moderate and fairly accurate", for the low and high it was "moderate to intense and accurate". All our aircraft returned, but 17 of them brought battle damage back, nine of them of the "major" category.

One man was wounded: S/Sgt. Alex J. Pine, 532nd waist gunner, who was hit in the right thigh. Another suffered from moderately severe anoxia, Sgt. George H. Johnson, 534th tail gunner.

A new liberty run went into effect beginning Oct 16, and its destination was Chelmsford, now available to us because so many of the 9th AF groups previously stationed in its vicinity were now in France. It had several advantages, not the least of which was the fact that men taking the run could make the 659 train to London and be in the big city before 8 o'clock.

There was no mission on the sixteenth.

We went back to Cologne again on the seventeenth with Major Isaac N. Taylor, new 535th C.O., heading the contingent of 37 aircraft we put up for the mission. The weather was still unfavorable, building up to 10/10 over the target. The bombing was done by PFF methods, although, for a while, because there appeared to be a break in the clouds, visual bombing seemed possible. The flak was moderate and inaccurate. For a change the Fortress men saw three ME410's. The Jerries were coming in. There were no attacks, however. All but one of our aircraft returned safely to base. Lt. Rice landed in Brussels, five of his men bailing out, first.

Of these, the waist gunner Sgt. Marion H. Tschirhart, suffered a sprained ankle and was treated at a British hospital.

A mission to Kassel, on the eighteenth was scrubbed.

Awards kept coming in.

DFC's authorized in GO 424, 1BD, 14 Oct., were awarded to 1st Lts. Roger G. LaPierre, Wallace K. Bjorness, Willis J. Black, Edward B. Grazul, Donald D. Paynter, Joseph J. Pearce and David R. Rautio; T/Sgts. Ralph M. Miker and Orby K. Putman and S/Sgt. Frank V. Wassell.

More DFC's, GO 431, 17 Oct, went to 1st Lts. Robert W. Devenish, Hugh A. Evans, Ernest F. Guy, Jr. William F. Letson and Lloyd E. Sunderland; 2nd Lt. George I. Van Leeuwen; T/Sgts. Karl C. Beard, Eugene G. Gay, Charles W. Gilberts and Howard W. Seeds, Jr.; and S/Sgts. Edwin A. Anderson, Harry Brown and Thomas H. Cavanaugh. All had completed their duty tours.

We received 11 Air Medals and 19 Clusters in GO 432, 17 Oct.

DFC's for extraordinary achievement went to Capt. Irving Moore and 1st Lt. Bruce L. Rivett in GO 437, 18 Oct. Capt. Moore was decorated for his excellent work in holding the plane while his crew and observer bailed out after the ship caught fire on takeoff in the August 4 mission. Rivett was awarded the medal for bringing his Fortress home on one engine, plus, on the August 8 mission.

Purple Hearts for Rautio and Resigh came along in GO 442, 19 October. The same day brought us four Air Medals, GO 441; and DFC's, GO 440, for 1st Lt. William E. Bigham, Jr.; T/Sgts. Maurice J. Kelly, Wilbur R. Lund and William S. Rump; and S/Sgts. Charles T. Chochren, Walter J. Dormeus and Bert M. McCraw, who had finished up.

T/Sgt. Edward M. Wood, of the 534th, and S/Sgt William J. Grospitch, of the 535th won the Division horse-shoe pitching championship, October 17.

We went to Mannheim on the nineteenth, with Capt. MacNeill leading our 37 aircraft contingent. It was an uneventful mission. The weather was still bad; 9/10 at the target, and completely closed in on the trip home. The bombing was done by PFF methods and went unobserved. Flak was meager to moderate and inaccurate. There were no enemy aircraft and there were no losses. S/sgt. Daniel D. Hernandez, 534st waist gunner, suffered from anoxia and mild frost bite on the wrist. There were no other incidents.

There was nothing doing from the combat point of view until the twenty-fifth. A mission intended for Ludwigshafen was scrubbed on the 24th.

The enlisted men's and officers' 200th mission dances went off as scheduled, on the 21st and 22nd.

DFC's were awarded, GO 446, 1BD, 21 Oct. to T/Sgts. Gordon A. Fortney, Herbert A. Goldberg, Charles F. Hodges and Robert R. Moore; S/Sgts Arnold A. Gangloff and Arthur E. Nolte. More were authorized, GO 449, to 1st Lts. John E. Johns, James R Lang, Robert E. Relke, James C. Schomburg, Carl Stein and Dale P. Winsor; T/Sgts. Fred D. Bare and Donald L. Couldtrip and S/gts Richard L. Snyder and Charles Valine. A Cluster to the DFC went to Capt. Dean P. Larson in the latter order. All had completed tours of duty.

Five Air Medals came to us in GO 450, 22 October.

GO 456, 25 Oct., brought DFC's for 1st Lts. Harold E. Asay and Robert A. Douglass who had completed their tour.

Word came to us, Oct. 25, that Major Gen. Williams had left for the States and that Brig. Gen. H. M. Turner had taken over the command of the First Division.

Hamburg was the target Oct. 25 and the Blohm and Voss aircraft factory the specific objective. Lt. Col. Shackley led the outfit to which we contributed 37 aircraft and crews. The weather was still 10/10 over the target and the bombing was done by PFF. The flak was moderate to intense, but it was inaccurate for us. There were no enemy fighter attacks although crewmen reported they saw two unidentified single engine planes go down in flames some distance behind the formation that followed ours. There were no losses.

We started out for Munster the next day, with Capt. Douglas L. Winter in the lead ship of our 37 aircraft formation. We got to Munster, all right, and found 10/10 again. We didn't bomb, however, because of an instrument failure, carrying our bombs, instead, to Bielefeld, where it was also 10/10. The instrument worked there, and we dropped our bombs using PFF methods of course. There were no observations of bombing results. Flak was moderate and inaccurate at Munster, and meager and inaccurate at the target of opportunity. There were no enemy aircraft. There were no losses.

There was a Mannheim mission scheduled for the 27th, but the operation was scrubbed after briefing.

Ten/Tenths

We went back to Munster on the 29th with Major Taylor in the lead ship. For a change, our 37 aircraft formation found the weather better than briefed. In fact, it was almost good enough for a visual bombing run, patchy clouds giving rise to a description of 3/10 to 10/10 coverage. The bombing was done on PFF, however, and, because the lead squadrons instrument ship was "out", the low squadron's lead ship took over for the bombing, which was performed in good shape. Crews reported that they saw our bombs hit the city. There were no enemy aircraft up, but the flak was tough. It was described as moderate, but very accurate at the target. There was other flak, meager and inaccurate, at Zwolle on the way home. One of our aircraft crash landed in Brussels. Twenty-two other Fortresses suffered battle damage. We had three wounded: Sgt. John J. Sladek, 535th ball turret gunner, in the left ribs; S/Sgt. Walter L. Doremus in the right elbow; and Sgt. Ward A. Freeman, in the face, neck and arms. Besides, Sgt. John F. Watson, 534th ball turret gunner, suffered anoxia.

The final mission of the month, Oct. 30, had Gelsenkirchen as its target and our 37 aircraft were under command of Capt. MacNeill. The weather was 10/10, again, keeping the record intact for the month. Moreover, dense, persistent contrails bothered the fliers. The formation bombed the marshalling yards at Hamm, the secondary target using PFF methods. There was meager and inaccurate flak seen at the target, but none of it was near us. We saw no enemy fighters. Here was no battle damage, for a change. Yet, strangely enough we lost two men. The two, both members of Lt. Berkley's crew bailed out over the English Channel on the way to the target when the No. 1 engine caught fire and the bomber went out of control. Lt. Berkley eventually righted his ship and brought it back. Missing are: 1st Lt. Harry L. Delaplane, Jr., bombardier, and S/Sgt. Frank K. Gunderson, tail gunner.

There was another casualty as a result of the mission, but it was only a record. The Fortress "Stage Door Canteen", on its 80th consecutive non-abortive mission, was charged by Engineering with an abort. Lt. Clark, the pilot, nursed the ship home with one engine out and the propeller wind milling. On landing a blade of the propeller crashed into the radio hatch. Nobody was injured, however, except M/Sgt. Clarence B. Blankston who picked up the abort.

DFC's were awarded, GO 467, 1BD, 28 Oct., to 1st Lts. Stan L. Smolen and William M. Stewart, T/Sgt Herbert A. Dubberstein, and S/Sgts. Kenneth R. Clark and Harold G. Witmer, who had completed their duty tours.

Fourteen Clusters to the Air Medal came to us via GO 459, 25 Oct. GO 472, 29 Oct., DFC's went to 1st Lts. Clarence E. Johnson, William R. Jones and Floyd W. Kirby, T/Sgt Meyer W. Johnson and Joseph E. Malsberger, S/Sgts. Wayne C. Leeth, Theodore E. Matthews, Oliver F. Orris, Louis F. Starr and Charles C. Tsouros, who had completed their tours of duty.

2nd Lt. William H. Boyce, who lost two engines over the target on Oct. 5, and subsequently feathered a third over the Channel to bring his bomber safely to base on one power plant, received a DFC in GO 476, Oct. 30.

Fifteen Air Medal Clusters were included in GO 477, 30 Oct., and 35 more were published in GO 481, 31 Oct.

DFC's were awarded, GO 475, 30 Oct., to 1st Lt. Arthur W. Bailey, Caleb G. Baxter, T/Sgts. Eldon E. Bauman, William P. Chin, Marvin W. Ford, Joseph A. Held and Robert A. Suplick, and S/Sgts. Vere D. Clair, Jr. and John A. Gulp. All had completed combat duty tours.

The only incident of October 31 concerned a DFC which was not awarded. S/Sgt. Harold W. Hofer, 535th gunner, who completed his tour the day before, was the first man in the group to "finish up" without receiving the DFC. He was the first affected by the new order which requires that the award be given henceforth, only for achievement upon recommendation of the Group commanding officer.

END OF OCTOBER 1944 HISTORY

November 1944

WAR DIARY

381ST BOMB GROUP

NOVEMBER (1944)

Microfilm Roll: B0370, Frames 0142 – 0152 (duplicate frames 1013 – 1023 are much easier to read)

Transcribed by Scott Burris

November began with a weather stand down, and a touch of irony.

Harry L. Delaplaine, Jr., 533rd bombardier, who was reported missing in action after he and a gunner bailed out of their airplane over the Channel yesterday, was announced as promoted to first lieutenant in the Nov. 1 Bulletin.

Three Air Medals and 19 Clusters were authorized for Group members in GO 483, 1BD, Nov 1. Twenty more Air Medals were added in GO 486, 2 Nov.

Nov. 2 also brought a crop of Purple Hearts. GO 487, of that date, announced the awards of the wound decorations to S/Sgt. John S. Sladek, S/Sgt Walter L. Doremus and Sgt. Ward A. Breeman, all injured on the Oct. 28 mission.

DFC's came along also on the Second (GO 485). The recipients were T/Sgts Lloyd I. Burns, Jeremias J. Lubeley, George W. Redbird, David F. Smith, and Ralph ? Ellis, Jr, and S/Sgts Francis G. McGivern, Raymond E. Mitchell, Francis J. Riley, Richard W. Stone and Arthur E. Veach. All had completed their duty tours.

In the same order, DFC's were also authorized for the following officers; 1st Lts Irving M. Bant, George A. Ford, Robert A. ? einrich, Douglas E. Holt, James B. Richmond and Paul R. Smith. They, too, had "finished up".

1st Lt. Frank T. Palenik, 535th bombardier recently returned from leave in the States, received a DFC Cluster for his exceptional work in the lead ship on the mission of Sept. 28, in which he made a split-second change from PFF to visual bombing with excellent results.

Twenty-five Air Medals Clusters came our way in GO 488, 4 Nov.; and nineteen more were added in GO 491, 4 Nov.

An attempt was made to set up a mission to Hamburg Nov. 3, but it was scrubbed.

We finally got flying the next day. It was mission No. 209 for the Group, and the target was Hamburg. Col. Leber, with Capt. Watson as his pilot, was in personal command of our contingent of 37 aircraft. It was 10/10 over the target and the bombing was done by instruments. The flak was moderate and inaccurate, mainly of the barrage type. There were no enemy aircraft. All our aircraft returned safely to base.

Frankfurt was the target for Nov. 5 and our 37-aircraft contingent was led by Capt. Douglas L. Winter. It was 10/10 again over the target, although there was a break to about 8/10 at the end of the bombing run. The bombing was accomplished by PFF methods and results were unobserved. The meager to moderate flak at Frankfurt was fairly accurate. We had four battle damaged ships when the mission was over, and one man wounded: S/Sgt Max A Blair, 532nd tail gunner, who received a mild flak injury to the left thigh.

Nov. 5 was the beginning of a new plan for officers mess dances. The dance that night was for officers of field grade and captains, only, and each of the women guests was expecially [sic] invited. The crowd was small and the party much more sedate than previous brawls. Opinions were mixed.

DFC's were awarded (GO 496, 5 Nov) to 2nd Lt. Harry V. Boyd, T/Sgts Tomas E. Comish, Jr., Robert L. Megee, John M. Nushy, and Ernest J. Trautman; and S/Sgts. Leslie ? Alexander, Donald C. Herman, William H. Cline, Robert F. McPheeters, Loren W. Murphy and Herbert C. Penner. All had completed their duty tours.

We went back to Hamburg Nov 6 with Capt. Frank L. Tyson, 535th operations officers, as commander of the 37 aircraft formation. The 8/10 to 9/10 cumulus, plus middle cloud, plus smoke screen at the target made it necessary to call again up on the PFF technique. There were strike photos, however, and they showed hits on the North side of the river at Hamburg, a little northeast of the MPI. There were no enemy aircraft. We lost two Fortresses on the mission to the moderate to intense and extremely accurate flak defending the city. Missing in action are:

2nd Lt. Julius Levitoff, pilot.  
2nd Lt. John F. Champion, Jr., copilot  
2nd Lt. Joseph W. Byrnes, navigator  
S/Sgt. Joseph C. Ward, togeleer  
S/Sgt. Gil H. Menedez  
S/Sgt. Alfred J. Kreutz  
S/Sgt. Carl E. Gates  
S/Sgt. Anthoy Skrinski, Jr.  
S/Sgt. Bruce M. Hillard

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2nd Lt. Dudley K. Brummett, pilot  
2nd Lt. Boyd C. Fox, Jr., copilot  
2nd Lt. Alfred Fox, navigator  
2nd Lt. William G. Barker, bombardier  
Sgt. Leonard A. Carmichael  
Sgt. Charles D. Dugger  
Sgt. John Watson  
Sgt. Thomas J. Lyons  
Sgt. Frank N. Horach, Jr.

Levitoff's Fortress "For me and My Gal", was last seen at 10.54 in the target area its no. 3 engine propeller gone after a direct flak hit. The Fortress dropped back and nosed down. Two to five objects were seen coming out of the plane. They disappeared into the clouds. Probabilities are these might have been bailers out performing delayed jumps.

Brummett was last heard of at Noon. Oil was streaming from his no. 1 engine and his left wing tip was smoking. Over the VHF the pilot reported he was turning back toward the continent because of a hole in his gas tank. They were last seen under control heading back toward Germany.

Fourteen Air Medals were awarded to Group members in GO 499, 6 Nov. Eleven more came along in GO 502, 7 Nov. and 38 Air Medal Clusters for us were published in GO 505 of Nov. 8.

There were no more missions until Nov. 9. The target that day were gun emplacements and pill boxes at Ouvr de Chesny, in North France. Our 37 aircraft were commanded by Lt. Col. Fitzgerald. We had one abortive and the spare also returned early. The rest of the formation went on to the target where they found a 10/10 undercast, decreasing to about 6/10 at the end of the bombing run. The Pathfinder ship led as far as the IP where the G/H Fortress took over and led the way to the bombing. The results were unobserved. Anti-aircraft fire was meager and inaccurate, but it increased in intensity after the Group got to the target. There were no enemy aircraft. The Group sustained no losses.

That evening a USO cast, featuring Peggy Wood, Clare Luce (not the Congresswoman) and Rollo Peters, all ranking New York stage stars, put on the Noel Coward "Bliithe Spirit" in the station theatre. The show stayed here three days, giving extra performances, including to which sounded from the neighboring hospitals were invited.

Ten DFC's were awarded in GO 510 to Group members who had completed their tours. The recipients were 1st Lts William J Bendall, Gayle C. Bromander, Maury Hill, Robert D. Lane and Franklin L. Ross; T/Sgts Warren Conklin, Troy L. Phelly, Anthony B. Tabor, John P. Tewalt and Devereaux F. Thomas, and S/Sgt Wilmer L. Myers.

The Group received 33 more Air Medals in GO 512, 9 Nov., and 38 Air Medal Clusters in GO 514, 10 Nov.

Capt. William C. Herrinton, who had long served as the operations officer in the 532nd squadron, received his "finishing up" DFC in GO 513, 10 Nov., together with 1st Lts John H Burget, Howard N. Carter, Fred V. Masterson, Jr., Harry W. Moulton, Robert Osborn, and Floyd H. Netts; T/Sgts Alphonse A. Annunzisto, Dana V. Clark, Jr., Sidney Feldman, Myron E. Gates, Leonard Kaplan, Clarence N. Rolla, Herman V. Weise, and S/Sgts. Max Bair and Robert H. Harper.

We went to Cologne on the Tenth and Col. Leber, with Captain. Watson as his pilot, was again in the lead ship of the 37 aircraft formation. It was 10/10 to 8/10 at the target and bombing was done by G/H equipment with a Pathfinder assist. Flak was moderate and fairly accurate. We lost no aircraft but an unfortunate accident cost us one man:

1st Lt. LeRoy Drummond, 535th bombardier,

Who was killed, when just of the bombing run, the Fortress flying above Drummond's ship with three bombs fouled in the bay, suddenly got rid of its load. Two of the bombs ripped off the nose of Drummond's Fortress and fell clear. The third crashed into the nose compartment and hit Lt. Drummond on the head, killing him instantly. The bomb remained jammed in the floor of the nose for about 45 minutes before it could be dislodged and dropped out of the forward hatch. The rest of the crew, unharmed, were hospitalized upon return to base. They were shocked by the accident to Drummond.

There was another stand down until Nov. 16. In the meantime, on Nov. 12, the junior officers, lieutenants, flight officers and warrant officers had their installment of the monthly party.

Charles E. Ackerman, Jr., and Troy H. Jones, Jr. both 534th pilots were promoted to captain by proclamation in the Bulletin Nov. 14.

Ten Air Medal Clusters came to the Group via GO 517, 12 Nov. Fifteen Air Medals were awarded to Group members in GO 519, 13 Nov., and 43 more were published in GO 524, 14 Nov.

The newly organized station glee club, under Lt. Leon Wagner, had its first meeting the evening Nov. 14.

Leonard Lisnow, one of the Station dentists, attached to the 7th Station Complement, was promoted to captain as announced in the Nov. 15 Bulletin.

The Nov. 18 mission had enemy lines at Eschweiler, six miles northwest of Aachen, as its objective. Our 36 aircraft were under the command of Capt. Douglas L. Winter. Although it was 10/10 when the formation reached the continental coast, the weather cleared over the target and the bombardier was able to take over from the Mickey for a visual run six miles from the release line. The bombs hit the MPI and formed a tight pattern to the east. The opposition was nil. There was meager and inaccurate flak but it didn't even start coming up until the lead group had finished its run. There was no air opposition.

M/Sgt. Alfred G. Allen, chief clerk in sub-depot supply, was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service in GO 530, 16 Nov.

1st Lt. Purvis W. Runyan, 533rd bombardier, was promoted to captain and received his "final" DFC Cluster at practically the same time. The Cluster came through in GO 526, Nov. 16. In the same order a DFC was awarded to 1st Lt. Jack A. Keating, another bombardier, who had also completed his tour.

Runyan's promotion order was published in the Nov. 17 Bulletin. Other promotions announced at the same time included those of Douglas L. Winter to major, and Robert A. Douglas and John A. Fanton to captain.

Lt. Col. Shackley was awarded another Cluster to his DFC in GO 534, 17 Nov., for his leadership on the mission of October 5.

Thirteen Air Medal Clusters came to the Group in GO 537, 18 Nov., and two Air Medals and 28 more Clusters for us were included in GO 540, 19 Nov.

1st Lt. John J. O'Conner, who brought his Fortress safely home last October 7, after he had lost one engine on the way to the target, and another in a five minute dual with a couple of jet propelled Jerries, and awarded the DFC in GO 548, 21 Nov.

We got to fly again Nov. 21 and our target was the synthetic oil refinery at Mersebourg. Major Taylor led our contingent of 37 aircraft. It was 10/10 at the target again, and the bombing was performed by the use of PFF methods. We hit the primary, but results were unobserved. The 144 incendiaries carried by the Group were retained until the formation reached Friedberg where they were dropped visually with results which were described as excellent. There was no flak at Friedberg, but there was plenty of it at the primary. It was intense and accurate and it gave rise to a crop of wounds and forced one of our aircraft to crash land in Brussels.

2nd Lt. William G. Pettit, 533rd co-pilot, who was in the aircraft that landed away from base, suffered a sprained left ankle when he parachuted from Fortress. His 'chute had been damaged by flak and refused to open, he had to rip it apart in the air and just opened in time to prevent more serious injury when he hit the ground.

The others wounded were S/Sgt. Earl E. Emell, 535th togeleer, who received mild face abrasions; 2nd Lt. George Kaluger, 534th bombardier, who suffered conjunctivitis; T/Sgt Clifford T. Owens, 533rd radio operator, who was severely wounded in the left leg; 2nd Lt. Charles G. Banotai, 534th navigator, who suffered from conjunctivitis.

GO 530, 22 Nov. announced the award of a DFC Cluster to Capt. Dale McCrory, now a fighter pilot, once a lead pilot in this Group.

DFCs were awarded (GO 551, 22nd Nov) to 1st Lt. Edwin W. O'Neill, T/Sgts Bruce O. Bentley, Charles R. Bowman, Philip W. Nichols; and S/Sgt Frank W. Brown, Jr., all of whom had completed their operational tours.

We received seven Air Medal Clusters in GO 555, 23 Nov.

T/Sgt. Robert L. Todd, operations clerk and T/Sgt. Elson D. Nash, chief of the intelligence NCO's until he left for the States several months ago, were awarded Bronze stars for meritorious achievement in GO 560, 25 Nov.

There were eight Air Medals and 32 Clusters awarded to Group members in GO 558, 24 Nov.

The Bulletin announced, Nov. 22, that sales of clothing at the PX's had been stopped except for combat personnel. And collections of overshoes were being made on the base, evidently because they were needed immediately in the ground combat theatres.

Nov. 23 was Thanksgiving and it was observed here with turkey and all the other trimmings, including a football game. The game, advertised as the "Powdered Egg Bowl Classic" was between the 1775 enlisted men and the Officer's Club teams. The enlisted men won in the final quarter, pushing over a touchdown and rushing over the extra point to trim the officers 7-6. Capt. Julius Eichenbaum, officers' captain, was the muddiest man in ETO when the game was over.

Thanksgiving also saw the announcement of the promotions to captain of Edwin A. Bryce, Jr., James F. Grey, Gottfried H. Klinksiek, Gene J. Demagalski, Everett L. Scarborough, and Lloyd E. Sunderland, all combat men.

We went back to Kerseburg Nov. 25 with Capt. MacNeill leading our contingent of 37 aircraft. It was an almost uneventful mission. The 10/10 cloud cover at the target necessitated Pff bombing and results were unobserved. There was intense, accurate, tracking flak. One of our aircraft landed away from base but the rest all returned safely and there were no casualties.

Two Air Medals for us were included in GO 564, 22 Nov., and GO 565, 22 Nov. brought us five more Air Medals and 11 Clusters. GO 562, NOV 30, gave us 3? More clusters.

There was another mission Nov 26, and the target was the railway viaduct at Altenbaken, a vital point in the railway line from the Ruhr to Kassel. Col. Leber was in personal command, against, and we put up the customary 37 aircraft. The weather was pretty good when we reached the Zuyder Zee, but it built-up, over the continent, to 10/10 at the target. The bombing was performed by use of the High Squadron's G/H equipment, the mickey in the lead ship have "gone out". The lead group made a 360 degree turn on the higher squadron's smoke markers. Results were unobserved. There was no flak at the



target and the only opposition encountered was some meager and inaccurate AA fire at Zwolle on the way in. There was no air opposition, either except for one Jerry fighter. We lost a ship and crew nevertheless.

The missing are:

2nd Lt. Kyle S. Smith, pilot,

2nd Lt. Donald F. McGurk, copilot,

F/O Melvin A. LaLuzerne, navigator,

S/Sgt. Byron F. ?ear, togeleer, and the following gunners:

Sgt. Lester F. Colson,

Sgt. Gustave E. Contreras,

Sgt. Thomas Arnold, and

Sgt. Francis R. Delange,

The Fortress was last seen at 52-38 North 06-77 East. It was under attack by a single enemy aircraft and crews from the other Fortresses reported they saw the Jerry go down and crash into the earth. The Fortress, its pilot reported via VHF, had three engines out and had two of its bombs fouled in the bomb bay. The stricken bomber asked for fighter support. It was not seen thereafter.

We learned on the 25<sup>th</sup> that the day before S/Sgt. Alfred G. ("Red") Hersey, one time 535<sup>th</sup> armament man, now a combat gunner, had fallen off a horse on his first day at the rest home and had broken his collar bone.

Col. Leber led the formation again on Nov. 29 and the target was the oil refinery at Misburg. A 10/10 undercast prevailed at the target again, and Pff bombing was performed. There was meager and inaccurate flak at the target and it was mainly behind us. We did hit some moderate flak at Oanabruck and some more of the meager variety at Zwolle and Amsterdam, but the opposition was not too tough. There were no enemy aircraft and there were no losses.

The last mission of the month was reserved for the last day. The target was the synthetic oil plant at Zietz and our 37 aircraft were led by Major Taylor who flew with Capt. Jemagalski as his pilot. Before they reached the target the lead ship was forced to abort because of mechanical failure and Capt. Menton and Lt. Berkeley, of the 533<sup>rd</sup>, took over leadership. The formations enjoyed bad weather, as usual, with snow in some areas, and dense persistent contrails at 26,000 feet. There was a 9/10 middle cloud at the target with some cumulus underneath that, but there was a hole over the objective and the bombing was performed visually. There was intense, accurate tracking flak defending the place but the Luftwaffe was not present. There were no casualties and no losses, although Sgt. Allen Taylor, 532<sup>nd</sup> ball turret gunner, suffered frost bite in the toes and was grounded for five days as a result.

2nd. Lt. Charles F. Ho?k and T/Sgt Clifford T. Owens, were awarded Purple Hearts (GO 567, 30 Nov) for wounds received on the Nov. 21 Mission.

And Harold W. Hofer, 535<sup>th</sup> Staff Sergeant, who had completed his combat tour without DFC, and had already left for home, was finally awarded the DFC in GO 568, 30 Nov.

There were two other unusual events during the month.

Nov. 10, Cpl. John J. Corley of the 533<sup>rd</sup> squadron, was killed when he was hit by a truck on the perimeter in the darkness of the 6 o'clock in the morning [as written]. It was the first traffic casualty suffered by this Group in its 18 months of operations.

And, Sunday Nov. 19, six crew chiefs were presented with the Legion of Merit medals awarded to them for the excellence of their maintenance work. Those who received the awards were: S/gts Bob H. Bryan, Martin Dejong, Clarence C. Loch, George C. Minger, Robert J. Roberson, and Joseph J. Gentile.

It is interesting to note also, that the continued stay of the Group in one place is beginning to bear fruit in the way of marriages and contemplated marriages.

It is worth remembering too, that speculation was rife concerning the date of the end of the war in this theatre and the chances of the Group members for getting home. Optimism is running pretty high.

END.

## **December 1944**

United States Strategic Air Forces  
European Theatre of Operations  
Eighth U.S. Army Air Force  
1st Air Division  
381st Bombardment Group  
381st Bomb Group History - December 1944

Microfilm Roll B0370, Frames 0153 – 0164

Transcribed by Scott Burris

The last month of the year began with a stand down, but December 1st was an eventful day, nevertheless. The Congressional War Investigation Committee headed by Rep. Merritt (Dem.) of New York, and Rep. J. Parnell Thomas (Rep.) of New Jersey, were on the base early in the morning. They were only here for a little over an hour and Claire Booth Luce, widely publicized Connecticut Congresswoman, was center of attraction. The main topic of conversation, when Congressmen and GI's foregathered, was the cigarette shortage and the consequent "hardships" experienced here were pointedly brought to the Legislators' attention.

The group took off, about 9 a.m., in two C-47's, for France

There was another stand down December 2 and the only event of importance was the arrival of five new combat crews.

Perhaps the cigarette attack on the Congressmen had some effect, for announcement was made on Dec. 3 that the sale of fags would be reinstated at the PX beginning the next day. Dec. 4 customers reaped their harvest. Combat crews and ground crew personnel were allowed seven packages a man. The rest of us received five packs each.

An attempt was made to get a mission off on the third, but the operation, destined for Debra, Germany, was scrubbed in the morning.

The first combat operation of the month didn't take place until the Fourth. Lt. Col. John E. Firtzgerald, Jr., led our contingent of 37 aircraft in an attack on the railway storage sidings at Soest, Germany. It was 10/10 all the way. There was no enemy opposition, neither flak nor fighters. The bombing was done by instruments and results were, of course, unobserved. There was one ship missing when the formation returned; pilot, 2nd Lt. J.H. Nolan, of the 533rd. Reports that he had landed in France were confirmed late that night when Nolan was heard from.

It was clear as a bell on the morning of Dec. 5th, but there was no mission. Instead a practice gunnery operation was scheduled. There was another practice formation-flying mission on the Sixth.

A mission destined for Munster was scrubbed on the Seventh.

1st Sgt. Charles D. Butts, of the 535th, and Miss Joyce E. Brisket, of Kineton, Warwickshire, were married at the Registrar's office, Halstead, at noon Dec. 8.

With Col. Leber in the lead ship, 37 of our aircraft participated in the Dec. 9 attack on the railway marshalling yards at Stuttgart. The weather was bad from the German border on in, although the clouds began to break in the target area. The bombing run was begun on instruments, but the breaking clouds permitted a last-minute visual bombing. Results were unobserved, although on ball turret gunner reported a "good-looking pattern in the marshalling yards". There were no Luftwaffe representatives in the skies but there was stiff ground opposition in the target area. The flak was described as moderate and accurate. One of our aircraft failed to return. Nine of our ships came back with major battle damage. One of the returning aircraft, its hydraulic system shot out, landed with a parachute out as a brake. There were two wounded aboard:

T/Sgt. Rafae C. Larsen, 532nd radio operator, was hit by flak fragments in the back and right shoulder and died at Braintree Hospital two days later; and

T/Sgt. Jacob P. Kaluza, top turret gunner, who received penetrating wounds in the loin and lacerations of the left arm.

The missing ship was reported down at 1715 near Nancy. There were five casualties:

S/Sgt. Harold E. Hallstrom, radio operator, suffered an amputation of one leg and fracture of the other in addition to other wounds,

S/Sgt. John J. Sladek, ball turret, was hit in the head and suffered concussions and lacerations of the scalp;

Sgt. William W. Robey, toggleleer, suffered a fracture of the right elbow joint and lacerations of the thigh,

2nd Lt. John H. Murphy, co-pilot, was hit in the right side, right arm and left thigh; and

2nd Lt. John C. Simpson Jr., navigator, suffered a fracture of the ankle bones in the right foot.

Clark and his crew were in "Boulder Buff".

The mission was Number 221 for the Group.

The target for Dec. 10 was Mainz but the mission was scrubbed at 1700 hours, red-red flares from the control tower disseminating that information.

That left the day free for the wedding of Major Raymond D. Jolicoeur Sub-Depot commander, and Miss Joan Preece, acrobatic dancer in Tommy Trinder's show, "Happy and Glorious", playing at the Palladium. The marriage was the culmination of a romance begun last March. It took place in the Catholic chapel in Halstead and was followed by the reception at the Officer's Mess, of which Major Jolicoeur is president. It was a windy, rainy day and the cold was biting.

The first ten days of the month were optimistic ones for the station personnel. Our ground troops in the continent were making steady progress and speculation regarding the date of Germany's fold-up was rife.

There were two major promotions. Martin L. Healy, formerly of the S2 section, but now executive officer of the 533rd, and Dona J. LaCouture, Jr., 533rd pilot, were elevated to captain.

New Regulations concerning DFC awards for completions of tours thinned down the stack of awards in General Orders. Air Medals and other decorations were still coming along, however.

The Bronze Star Medal was awarded (GO 571, 1BD, 1 December) to Sgt. Nathan H. Ainis, hard-working clerk in the Group Bombardier's office.

An Air Medal and 32 Clusters came to the Group in GO 579, Dec. 3, and there were three more Air Medals in GO 589, 6 Dec., for us.

1st Lt. David R. Rautio, 532nd pilot, was awarded an Oak Leaf Cluster to the DFC (GO 592, 6 December) for his flying job on the Oct. 14 mission when, as co-pilot, he took over his severely damaged ship after the pilot had been wounded and brought it back. The four-hour return trip was made with one engine giving only partial power and the propeller for another engine windmilling. Most of his controls were shot out besides.

There were 23 Air Medals for us in GO 595, 7 December.

2nd Lt. William G. Pettit, wounded on the Nov. 21 mission, received a Purple Heart in GO 608, 10 December.

We gained two Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal in GO 609, 10 December.

Meanwhile the basketball season got under way with the Yeldham hangar court as the official playing center. Every organization was represented in the station tournament and many organizational units all had teams entered in the competition.

Other activities were going on, too. A shooting team was in the process of formation and the glee club was polishing up its pipes for the Christmas carols season. Preparations were in progress for the Christmas and New Year's celebrations and all over the base Christmas trees and elaborate holiday displays were being created. The place was alight at night as result.

The 448th Sub-Depot had a super-duper Santa Clause-and-reindeer display with floodlights playing on it.

There was a mission on December 11 and the target was the Ludwigshafen-Mannheim railway bridge. Capt. Cronin was in the lead ship when our 36 aircraft took off for the operation. We were participating in thaws was to the largest-yet Eighth Air Force smash at Germany, with 1000 four-engine bombers in the sky. Capt. Cronin was forced to abort after take-off and Lt. Thorndike took over for the operation. It was cold and damp at take off, but the weather was not too bad up until half an hour from the target area, where it socked in. The bombing was done by use of Gee-H equipment through a 10/10 undercast and results were unobserved. There was no air opposition. The meager, but accurate, flak, cost us one ship, Lt. Belskis, which sustained a direct flak hit over the target. Missing in action are:

1st Lt. Leo Belskis, pilot,

2nd Lt. Glenn C. Vaughan, co-pilot;

1st Lt. James V. Collett, navigator;

2nd Lt. Ross W. Perrin, bombardier; and the following gunners:

T/Sgt. Elvis ? McCoy,

T/Sgt. Walter R. Newman,

S/Sgt. Lynn J. Laurett, Jr.,

S/Sgt. Durward V. Suggs, and

S/Sgt. Robert P. Rogers

The aircraft, hit in the target area, was seen to slip off to the left and roll over on its back. The No. 2 engine dropped off it and the left wing was afire. The aircraft went into a spin, apparently out of control. Six 'chutes were reported but they disappeared in the clouds and there was no report with regard to whether or not they opened.

There was a casualty on the mission, too, S/Sgt. Jack W. Norman, 533rd toggeleer, suffered a mild abrasion of the right eye as the result of a flak hit.

Merseburg was bombed by our aircraft December 12 when Capt. Tyson, flying in the lead ship, found the weather too tough for an attack on the primary at Ludwigshafen. We put up 37 Fortresses for the operation, but two collided as the formation

neared the continent. Lt. Orcutt's ship shearing the rudder from the one piloted by Lt. Ruf. Both aircraft landed in Brussels. Two others, of our contingent, aborted. The weather was clear over the continent until the formations approached the primary when it socked in to 10/10. Merseburg was also covered, but Capt. Tyson reported a good Pff bombing run on the synthetic oil plants in that city. Flak was moderate, but inaccurate, bursting both above and below our formation. There was little battle damage and there were no casualties. No enemy fighters were encountered. The ceiling was down to 1,000 feet when the ships returned to base at 1645 but the landings were executed in good shape.

The Thirteenth was misty and cold and the heaviest fog of the season rolled in about noon. Liberty runs were cancelled as a result. There was no mission.

The stations first (and, thus far, only) V2 casualty came to light on the Thirteenth. He was Sgt. John. H. Orall, of the 533rd who was on a train, at Chesterfield, coming back from Cambridge when the rocket hit. Orall got a piece of steel in the left knee, suffering internal bleeding and had to be hospitalized for a week.

Robert H. Angevine, 535th mickey navigator, was promoted to captain on the Thirteenth.

We were stood down December 14.

Weather was the principal enemy defense on the Fifteenth when 37 of our aircraft participated in the attack against the marshalling yards at Kassel. Lt. Col. Fitzgerald was in the lead ship. The weather was bad all the way and the briefed target (also at Kassel) was so completely covered that the formation was forced to make its run on the secondary. Results were unobserved. Flak was meager and inaccurate and there were no enemy fighters in the sky.

Difficulties in the finding the manpower adequately to service the Forts assigned to the group under the present pass and furlough schedule gave rise to an order by Col. Leber limiting furloughs to one every six months for all ground personnel. It was argued that ground crew men were unable to take furloughs oftener than that and it was therefore unfair to grant other personnel a time-off advantage.

Continued bad weather gave us stand downs through the Sixteenth and Seventeenth.

Col. Leber was in the lead ship for the Group's 225th mission, Dec. 18. The marshalling yards at Cologne was the target for the day and despite the fact that stinking weather gave rise to five abortive for the day, our formation was the only one in the combat wing to bomb the objective. To do it we had to climb to 31,000 feet, so thick was the weather. We bombed from that altitude using Pff technique and results were, of course, unobserved. There was virtually no enemy opposition. The crews saw no enemy fighters and reported only about four bursts of flak. There were no casualties and no losses, but probabilities were that the excessively high climb would necessitate a crop of engine changes throughout the squadrons.

A mission briefed for Schwerte, Germany, was scrubbed on the Nineteenth. In the early hours of the morning, specifically at 0130 hours, Lt. Ashley Hamory, former pilot, now a ground officer, and a group of enlisted men, who had missed the liberty run back home because the train from London was very late in the heavy fog, gave invaluable assistance when a V2 hit the Hoffman factory in Chelmsford. The men gave first aid and assisted the British Red Cross by seeking out the injured.

The pea-souper held through the next day and a mission intended for Cologne was scrubbed after the crews had breakfasted prior to briefing.

Five DFC's, unusual in these days on no-automatic final awards, came to the Group in GO 611, 11 December. The recipients, all of whom had completed their tours of duty, included: 1st Lt. Charles W. Reseigh, 532nd pilot who was wounded in the ship Rautio brought back last October; 1st Lt. Arthur J. Sherman, and 1st Lt. Charles ?. Young, T/Sgt. John E. Mackay and T/Sgt Walter F. Triplett.

One Air Medal and 34 Clusters came to use in GO 612 December 11.

And in GO 614, 12 December, there was an Oak Leaf Cluster to the DFC for Lt. Col. Lewis P. Ensign, not from this station, but popularly believed to be the next commanding officer when Col. Leber will have completed his tour of duty.

We received two Clusters to the Air Medal in GO 615, 12 December.

We reaped a harvest of five Oak Leaf Clusters to the DFC in GO 617, 12 December. All were for lead team members on the mission of Nov. 16 when the mickey ship failed and the lead ship had to resume the top position for the bombing run. The run, begun on instruments, wound up as a visual run and the results were reported as excellent. The decorees were Major Douglas L. Winter, command for the operation, Capt. Charles W. Borner, his pilot; Capt. Purvis W. Runyan, lead bombardier; 1st Lt. George W. Douglad, mickey navigator; and 1st Lt. Walter A. Carl, Jr., navigator.

Three more Air Medal Clusters were handed down to us in GO 618, 13 December. And 33 Air Medals were awarded to the Group in GO 623, 14 December.

T/Sgt. John J. Smith, 532nd radio operator, received a DFC in GL 62?, 14 December. He had completed his tour of combat duty.

We received 35 Air Medal Clusters in GO 626, 15 December.

Bronze Star Medals were awarded to the following enlisted men in GO 628, 16 December; ?/Sgt. Joseph Kafka, M/Sgt. Floyd Carrick; T/Sgt. William E. Pinter; T/Sgt. Robert L. Rowan; and S/Sgt. C.B. DeBose.

There were three Air Medals and four Clusters for us in GO, 629 December 16, and 23 more Clusters in GO 633, 17 December.

Sgt. John H. Orall, wounded Dec. 13 by a V2, received a Purple Heart in GO 643, 21 December.

We got two Air Medals and 29 Clusters in GO 639, 19 December, and 19 more Air Medal Clusters in GO 641, 20 December. And General Order No. 6, This Headquarters, issued 180 Good Conduct Medals to personnel of this station, at the same time revoking two medals issued on October 1.

It is interesting to note that the excessive optimism prevailing in the early days of the month took a sudden but complete volte face. German counter-attacks were responsible for the reversal.

There were no missions on December 21, nor was there an operation scheduled for the 22nd. The annual Christmas party for children of the surrounding towns was held at the Aeroclub on the 22nd and about 350 youngsters appeared for the shindig. Events included movies, ice cream cones, oranges and gift packages. It took two Santa Clauses to last out the energies of the children.

There was a stand down against December 23. There were two explosions, either buzz-bombs or V2's, in the early morning and the tower reported a buzz-bomb going over at 0800 with a fighter in hot pursuit.

We finally got a decent day on the 24th. We put up 51 ships to lead the entire First Division in an attack upon enemy communication lines in the area between the American First and Third Armies. Our targets were both air strips, one near Ettinghausen, the other at Kirch Gons. It was Eighth Air Forces largest effort. There were 2,000 heavy bombers and 900 fighters in the air.

Col. Leber, with Capt. Bordner as his pilot, was in personal command of the operation. Weather was CAVU and we got some of the best strike photos we've seen. There was moderate flak half an hour before the objective, but there was none at the target and there was no major opposition.

It was virtually a perfect day for us. The "A" Combat Wing which Col. Leber headed place all but one of its bombs on the landing strip at Ettinghausen. We had no losses and no casualties, and all our aircraft returned to base. There had been one abortive.

Although good weather held for us until after our ships were in, the fog socked in at other fields in England, and, as a result, we found ourselves with 74 visiting aircraft and their crews. Ground crews, ordnance men, mess hall workers, transportation personnel—just about everybody—did an exceptional job while the visitors were landing and while they remained on station.

A BBC sound truck, originally sent to Bassingbourne to get a “hot” newscast of the mission, was re-routed to this station when the 91st was unable to get home. Arriving at the station shortly after 6 o’clock, the BBC got recordings of statements regarding the mission from Col. Leber and Major Fullick (who was lead bombardier), were fed and were dispatched back to London by 8:30. The recordings went on the air several times during the next several days.

Christmas Eve was a rough night. Our crews pre-flighted and loaded the visiting aircraft as well as our own for a proposed mission to Schwerte, Germany, while frost gave the ground and all external surfaces a heavy coat of something that looked like snow. It presented the appearance of a White Christmas, and dressed the trees and bushes up to make the station look like a Winter Wonderland. Natives said it was the heaviest frost in 50 years.

The mission was scrubbed before take-off and the Station settled down to celebrate the day. The Officers Mess provided free beer for the enlisted men at the Theater, the PX and the Waaf Site. First two graders were invited to use the facilities of the Officers Mess and bring their dates there. A lethal rum punch was served them. The Aeroclub provided coffee, refreshment, and music. There was a community sing in the evening, followed by a reading of Dickens’ “Christmas Carol”, by Major Wilcox. The messes, all of them, featured turkey and trimmings in profusion.

The 26th, Boxing Day, was clear and bright, but there was no mission scheduled. Visiting ships got away, much to everybody’s relief, and the day featured a reception to the local British gentry. The visitors, approximately 150 of them, were collected in our transportation, brought to the Officers Mess, where they were given rum punch made with fresh oranges and lemons, and then taken out the line in relays, where they were allowed to visit with “Stage Door Canteen” and “Rotherhithe’s Revenge”. Among the guests were Sir Ronald and Lady Storrs, Mr. and Mrs. S. A. Courtauld, and other notables. The fog rolled in again that night and with it came a freezing cold. Water in the latrines and toilets froze and conditions on the base were hardly of the best. The fog cleared later in the day but there was no operation.

We got off the ground again on the 28th with Lt. Col. Arthur F. Briggs, operations officers, leading a formation of 37 of our aircraft in an attack on the Ludendorff Bridge over the Rhine at Ramagen, Germany. It was perfect for flying at our altitude, but there was a low 10/10 undercast which made visibility nil. There was no flak and the Luftwaffe was absent again. Bombing was done by Gee-H equipment and results were unobserved. There was one abortive. All our aircraft returned safely and there were no casualties.

A mission intended for Ruhland, Germany, was scrubbed on the 29th.

Lt. Col. George G. Shackley led the Group on the 30th when we put up 37 ships for an attack on Mainz. It was another “milk run”. The weather was bad most of the way and a solid 10/10 over the target. Bombing was done by instruments and results were unobserved.

We were up against on the 31st, the ninth consecutive day over Germany for the Eight Air Force heavies. Our target was Prum and the Fortresses got there and back without opposition, neither flak nor fighters. Although the weather was clear over the Channel, it began to cloud up over the Continent and it was 10/10 on the target. We put up 37 aircraft for the operation, the Group’s 229th. There was one abortive. We suffered neither losses nor casualties.

It was evening of Festivities that brought in the New Year. Both enlisted men and officers had dances, and the officers had hired the Eric Winstone “Swingtet” for the party. A wild time was reported at both dances.

The day was marred by an accident, however. Capt. T.H. Jones, a lead pilot, was “checking out” 2nd Lt. E.F. Weynard in the morning. Coming in for the landing the pilot dropped it in and the No. 1 prop flew through the cockpit, injuring both Weynard and Jones. Weynard suffered a virtual amputation of the left leg and a compound fracture of the other. Jones suffered a badly mangled left hand.

Weynard's leg was amputated in the ambulance in front of the hospital, Capt. Louis Ralsten performing the operation. The young man's eventual recovery is attributed to the excellent work performed by Cpl. Jeronime Casaz, of Stamford, Tex., a surgical technician, who gave first aid at the scene and who rendered valuable assistance to Capt. Ralston in the ambulance.

There were several promotions in the last ten days of the month. Robert E. Thayer, Group communications officer, was elevated to Major on the 21st. Walter A. Carl, Jr., and Robert H. Kaurin, 534th combat men, were promoted to captain on the 26th.

And there were a number of decorations.

Two Air Medals were handed down to use in GO 644, 21 December, and there were four more in GO 651, 24 December, and 21 more, together with nine Clusters, in GO 655, 26 December.

DFC's were awarded (GO 656, 27 December) to Capt. John A. Fenten, 533rd pilot; T/Sgt. Donald E. Kirkpatrick, 533rd radio operator, and S/Sgts. Paul F. Keller, Jr., and Robert F. Staubitz, ball turret and waist gunner, respectively. All had completed their combat tours.

Seven Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal were awarded to Group members in GO 665, 29 December.

DFC's were authorized for Capt. Gene Demagalski, 535th lead pilot; Capt. James F. Grey, 535th navigator, and 1st Lt. Ralph W. Spatz, another 535th pilot. They had completed combat tours.

Eleven Air Medal Clusters, including one for Major Fullick, were authorized in GO 670, 30 December; and GO 673, 31 December, brought us 24 Air Medals and 21 Clusters.

The final General Order of the month, No. 672, 31 December, brought notice of an award of a Cluster to the DFC for Capt. Dale McCrory, originally one of our pilots, now flying P-51's over here.

END MONTH OF DECEMBER, 1944

## **January 1945**

ETOUSA  
USSTAF  
EIGHTH ARMY AIR FORCES  
FIRST AIR DIVISION  
(FIRST BOMBER COMBAT WING)  
381ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP

AAF STATION 167  
RIDGEWELL, ESSEX  
ENGLAND  
APO 557 – c/o Postmaster, N.Y.C.

JANUARY



Transcribed by Scott Burris

Microfilm Roll: B0370, Frames 0165 - 0177

With perhaps an omen for the early victorious conclusion of the ETO war, the New Year dawned cold and clear. There was a mission on, and the briefed visual target was the aircraft plant at Magdeburg. The PFF target was Kassel.

The 37 aircraft making up our contingent took off in brilliant moonlight at 0730 hours with Major Issac n. Taylor in the lead ship. Flying weather was not too bad and reports from weather scouts said the target would be open. The formation made a visual run on Magdeburg and found it covered. There were so many formations over the city at the same time that coming off the run the high and low squadrons got separated from the lead. Under Capt. Ned W. Renick's leadership, the high and low, using PFF methods went on to bomb Kassel, which was covered by a 10/10 undercast. Major Taylor's squadron found itself unable to look at Kassel because the equipment in the lead ship had "gone out". They went on, therefore, to Coblenz, which they bombed visually. Results were unobserved. One of the aircraft in the lead squadron, having lost two engines, left the formation and bombed a target of opportunity, believed to be Itzehoe.

Our formation experienced no air opposition but the ground defenses were tough. Flak was intense and accurate at Kassel and moderate but accurate at Coblenz. In addition, there was moderate accurate flak on the route in at both Brunsbuttelkoog and at Donetz. Major Taylor's right wing got shot up a bit at the first-named place. Fourteen of our aircraft sustained battle damage of the 35 that returned to base. Nine of it was of the "major" category.

We lost two aircraft on the operation but both of the crews were safe. At first we feared we had lost one crew, returning airmen having reported that they saw a B-17 knocked down by an FW 190 attack. It developed later, however, that the crew of the ship piloted by 1st Lt. Vincent J. Peters bailed out safely, and that 1st Lt. William H. Clark crash-landed his bomber in France. There was one casualty among their crews. Sgt. Chris Gianacopulos, Peter's radio operator, fractured his right leg in the bailout landing. He was subsequently transferred to a patients' detachment.

There were two other casualties on the mission. 1st Lt. Peter Kowalski, 533rd bombardier, received a penetrating wound of the right leg. And 2nd Lt. John E. Rice, 534th pilot, suffered a penetrating wound of the right shoulder.

It is interesting to note that Lt. Peters bailed his crew out at Metz, or rather between Metz, and the front lines. Tail Gunner Sgt. Charles F. Knaus landed near an American engineers outfit. Some of the GI feared he was a Jerry paratrooper and shot at him as he was coming down. Fortunately, the missed.

Gerolstein, Germany, was the target for the Group's 231st mission January 2. We put up 37 aircraft under command of Lt. Col. John E. Fitzgerald, Jr., who was flying his "finishing up" mission. The weather was good. There was low ground haze on the way in and heavy snow on the ground made identification of the target somewhat difficult. It was CAVU at the objective and the bombing was performed visually with good results. There was little opposition. The Luftwaffe was not present and there was only meager flak at the target. The Group had two abortive, but had no losses and suffered no casualties.

We went back to Cologne Wednesday, January 3, hitting the PFF secondary, the marshalling yards, when 10/10 undercast made a run on the visual primary, a bridge, impossible. There was moderate but inaccurate flak and there were no German fighters. Capt. Ewing S. Watson was in command of the 3 aircraft which made up our contingent, but engine failure forced him to abort after take-off. There was one other abortive. The remaining 35 Fortresses went on to the target with Capt Ackerman of the 534th Squadron taking over the lead. He reported hundreds of American heavies battering Cologne from the skies. The weather closed in solidly in the afternoon and the formation returned to base in the rain. There were no losses and no casualties.

Although it was clear and cold on January 4, there was no operation scheduled.

There was a mission on the Fifth and the railhead at Heimbach was the briefed target. We put up 37 aircraft with Capt. William M. Cronin, assistant Group operations officer, in command. There were three abortive. The rest of the formation went on to the target, finding VACU weather on the continent to within four miles of M.P.I. There low cumulus clouds formed 10/10 undercast and forced the formation to bomb by instruments. No observations were possible. Enemy opposition was completely lacking. There was no Luftwaffe and there was no flak.

The OWI was hand with a sound truck when the formation came back and recordings, for propaganda purposes, were made on the mission. Major Blount was pressed into service to do a record on the work done by Cpl. Cazas in saving the life of Lt. Weynand, who suffered a virtual traumatic amputation of the left leg in the accident of Dec. 31.

We were out again on January 6 and our target was Cologne again. Col. Leber was in personal command of our contingent of 37 aircraft and the entire formation went to the target to find the weather completely closed in. There was moderate flak at Cologne but our formation, fortunately, appeared to find a free path right through the center of it. The bombing was done by Gee-H methods and results were unobserved. There were no enemy aircraft. All of our Fortresses returned safely to base and there were no casualties. It was the Group's 234th mission. For Col. Leber it was his next-to-last combat flight.

That evening a V2 explosion rocked the station shortly before 2200 hours. Reports were the burst was near Halstead. No damage was done on the station but it was too close for comfort. The explosion was almost immediately followed by taps, indicating a stand down for the next day.

There was no operation on the Seventh. The weather couldn't seem to make its mind up, winding up in the evening with snow.

We led the entire division the next day to attack an overhead bridge Aalsey, Germany. We put up the usual 37 aircraft with Major George K. Sandman in the lead ship. The snow followed by the frost has put a slippery pat of ice over the roads and runways and utilities boys had been out most of the night salting and sanding the surfaces to make it possible for the trucks to haul bombs to the planes, and for the Fortresses to get off the runways. The formation had round a high 10/10 undercast all the way, but that was their only difficulty. There were no enemy fighters and there was no flak. All of our aircraft got out safely although two of them landed away from base.

There was a stand down on the Ninth. Roads were covered with ice and snow a result of the fall throughout the night.

It was bitterly cold the next day and the ice was still all over the place. Snow began to fall again about 0845, but the mission was on, just the same. Lt. Col. George G. Shackley leading our contingent of 37 aircraft in an attack on the airdrome at Ostheim, near Cologne.

The formation took off in a snowstorm and ran into patchy clouds over the continent. Engine failure caused Col. Shackley to leave the formation and make an emergency landing at Ghent. The high squadron, led by Capt. Mack Stallings and 1st Lt. Fred Davison, took over the lead and the original lead squadron became the high squadron. The formation went on to the target where the clouds were broken. At first it appeared a visual run would be possible, but toward the end of the run the lead ship found a great patch of clouds sitting on the target itself. The run was therefore completed by means of the Gee-H equipment and the bombing was performed in good shape. After the run the high squadron (originally the lead) was separated from the first of the formation and bombed using its own Gee-H ship, piloted by Lt. Roush. Results were unobserved. The only enemy opposition experienced was at the target where the flak was moderate and accurate. Roush was shot up leaving the target and was forced to make a landing on the continent. Oddly enough he came down in the same already chosen for a landing by Col. Shackley. He had one serious casualty aboard.

S/Sgt. Arthur P. Hafner, Roush's tail gunner, was hit by flak in the right leg just below the knee and suffered a traumatic amputation of the leg. He was rushed to the 77th British General Hospital, near Ghent, for treatment.

There were no aircraft in the skies, at least as far as we were concerned. Returning to base about 1530 hours, the formation landed in a swirling snowstorm. There was one other casualty. S/Sgt. Jackie J. Nichols, 533rd waist gunner, received a moderate perforating wound of the right leg.

Neither Shackley nor Roush had been heard from until late that night after the mission had returned and fears for their safety were current on the base. It is interesting to note that at the time Shackley was still missing, Ted Malone's story of Shackley and his ship, "Rotherhithe's Revenge" was being broadcast in the states.

Meanwhile other events were taking place on the Station. Robert L. Dewhurts, 532nd bombardier, was promoted to captain New Year's Eve, his promotion being officially announced in the New Year's Day Bulletin. Roy W. Lundgren and George J. Stone, 533rd squadron bombardier and navigator, respectively, were promoted to captain Jan 4.

The evening of Jan 3, the station basketball team beat the Station 165 representatives 45 to 37, with PFC. Bernie Davis, who registered 14 points, the scoring star for Ridgewell.

Official notification of the redesignation of the 1st Bomb Division to 1st Air Division was announced Jan 6.

Jan 9 the quartermaster moved from Communal Site 2 to WAAF Site 1. The quartermaster site became the home of the NCO club, finally organized after sixteen months of trying.

Fifteen Air Medals were handed down to Group members via GO 2, 1BD, 1 Jan.

The DFC was awarded (GO 6, 2 Jan) to Capt. Robert H. Kaurin, Capt. Dona J. LaCouture, 1st Lt. Raymond J. Wieloszynski, and S/Sgt. John H. Sather, all of whom had completed combat duty tours.

Five Air Medals, in GO 7, 2 January, and eleven more in GO 8, 3 Jan were awarded to Group members.

DFC's were awarded to 1st Lts. Francis J. Mousseau and Joseph F. Slavik, both pilots, in GO 9, 4 Jan., upon completion of their tours of duty. In the citations, attention is called to the mission of 11 December when Lt. Mousseau adroitly took over the leadership of the formation after the leader was forced abort and commanded the formation through an excellent bombing run despite the adverse weather conditions. Several missions were cited in Lt. Slavik's case.

42 more Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air medal were authorized for Group members in GO 11, 5 Jan. Two more were awarded GO 16, Jan 6. There were 18 more Clusters in GO 16, 6 Jan. Thirteen Air Medals and 43 Clusters came down to us in GO 19, 7 Jan. And there were 20 more Clusters in GO 20, Jan 8. We found 11 Air Medals listed for us in GO 25, 9 January and on Jan 10, in GO 28, we gathered 15 more Air Medals and a single Cluster.

We were non-operational Jan 11. There were two rather unusual visitors, Sir Oliver Sammonds, British M.P. and head of one of England's largest aircraft components factory and his 16-year-old son. The stayed overnight, Sir Oliver spending a lot of the time with material and engineering officers, discussing, primarily, the Anglo-American conference with regard to post-war aircraft lines.

Friday, January 12, was also non-operational. Rain early in the morning made the ground slushy underfoot and the cold turned the slush to ice, making the going treacherous.

We finally got flying again on the Thirteenth. The target was a bridge at Germensheim (sp?). Our 37 aircraft were commanded by Major Winter who flew with Capt. Bordner as his pilot and Major Fullick as his lead bombardier. The weather, which was bad at take off, cleared to about 4/10 over the continent but there was a large 10/10 cloud patch right over our target. We bombed using Gee-H equipment and rear element gunners said they saw some of our explosives get the bridge. The lead team reported other formations bombing bridges up and down the Rhine, apparently in the clear, and apparently with good results. Flak was meager but accurate and there were no enemy aircraft. Icy mist, haze and heavy clouds made the landing back at base hazardous, but everybody got in all right with the exception of two Fortresses, both which landed away from base. There were no casualties.

The autobahn bridge, at Cologne, was our target Sunday January 14, Major Isaac N. Taylor led our contingent of 37 aircraft on the mission and the formation, finding the weather VACU did an excellent bombing job. Strike photos show a smoke pattern covering the center of the bridge. There were no enemy aircraft but the flak, which was meager and inaccurate over the enemy lines going in, thickened to moderate and accurate at the target. The flak cost us a ship, "Columbus Miss", piloted by Lt. Roebuak. The crew bailed out near the battle line and two of the crew members, evidently landing with the German installations, are still MIA.

They are S/Sgt. Richard L. Shott, BTG, of Columbus, Ohio, and Sgt. Fred Lainer, TG, of Worcester, Mass. The two bailed out at approximately 50, 14N – 05, 46E after the plane had received a direct hit in the No. 3 engine. The remaining members of the crew subsequently returned to base. They reported one 'chute falling into enemy held territory.

A mission was scrubbed on Monday the day was devoted to the christening of the "Fort Lansing Emancipator", a new Flying Fortress, in the 533rd Squadron. Jack Parker, radio commentator for the Lansing, Mich., radio station, appeared on the base with a BBC sound truck to do the recording and emcee the program. Mary Brian, well known film star in ETO with USO State Shows, was drafted into service at the last moment to wield the coca cola bottle. An all-Lansing crew, with Capt. Renick as pilot, Lt. Nolan, co-pilot, Lt. Taber as navigator, and F/O Boomershine as bombardier, was on hand, the enlisted men having been flown in from other stations, some of them Second and Third Division bases to complete the line up.

Earlier in the day, Sir Ronald and Lady Storre were at the officer's mess for luncheon. They were unable to stay for the christening because Sir Ronald was slated to leave for London the first stage of a return to the near East.

A two plan mission, with Lutskendorf as the aiming point for the "A" versions and Berlin as the objective for the "B" alternative, was scrubbed early on the morning of the Sixteenth. And all-day fog clamped a pall on the station. The liberty runs were cancelled. As an aftermath of the Lansing deal, Capt. Renick, Lt. Taber, and F/O Boomershine went to London to do another broadcast for Jack Parker.

Mission No. 239 went off on Wednesday, the Seventeenth. The marshalling yards at Paderborn, near Kassel, was the target and 37 of our aircraft were assigned to the operation with Lt. Col. Hall in the lead ship. The weather was bad most of the way and, although it broke for a while over Holland, it closed in solid at the target, where the bombing was done through a 10/10 undercast by PFF methods. There was no enemy opposition at all, the crews reporting no flak and no German fighters. Results, of course, were unobserved. There were no losses.

Mannheim was the target for the Eighteenth, but the operation was scrubbed. Mr. Hadow, on leave from the British legation, in Washington, visited the base and appeared to be particularly concerned about the question of the Anglo-American relations.

There was a stand down on January 19, a bitterly-cold, cloudy, windy day.

With Ludwighafen as the target, 37 of our aircraft were dispatched January 20 with Capt. Ewing S. Watson in the lead ship. As a flying operation it was completely uneventful. There was a solid 10/10 undercast all the way to and from the target and although moderate flak was seen in the target area, none of it was directed at us. There were no enemy fighters. The bombing, a combination of PFF and Gee-H technique, was performed in good shape and the entire formation returned to base.

There was one unusual sidelight. As Lt. Malleus was taxiing into position for the take off, Sgt. Homer L. Williams, his waist gunner, suddenly went berserk, burst out of the ship and bolted. He was replaced at once by T/Sgt. William E. Abbott, and the ship, after going to the foot of the taxi line, took off on the mission and completed it satisfactorily. Williams, a veteran of one combat operation, was consigned to the guardhouse.

In the meantime, several events were recorded on the station.

Melvin C. McBurney and Russel J. Hadley were both promoted to captain Jan 14.

McLendon M. Stallings and Frank T. Palenik, 535th pilot and bombardier, respectively, were promoted to Captain January 17.

The evening of January 17 was a big one for the station basketball team. The Five outclassed the highly-publicized "Traveling Circus", 93rd Bomb Group and Second Division champs, 30 to 26. The 93rd had won ten straight games prior to the defeat. Schmidt with eight points, and Condit and Davis with seven each, were the scoring stars for our side. The results gave the base a feeling of extreme optimism with regard to the basketball team.

January 20, and military personnel on the station began taking sulfadiazine pills daily [editor's note: Sulfadiazine is used to treat bacterial infections]. An order published in the Daily Bulletin required the taking of the daily dose.

We received 10 Air Medal Clusters in GO 33, 1BD, 11 Jan. There were 50 more in GO 31, of the same date; and 55 more in GO 41, 13 Jan.

2nd Lt. Albert D. Miller, Jr., received the Purple Heart in GO 44, 15 Jan., for wounds received on the mission the day before.

We picked up 11 Air Medals and 66 Clusters in GO 46, 15 Jan., and 17 more Air Medals and another seven Clusters in GO 47, 16 Jan. There was a bumper crop of Clusters for us in GO 51, 17 January, a grand total of 83; and we found another Air Medal and 11 Clusters in GO 52, 18 January.

M/Sgt. James K. Hatton, Jr., of the Seventh Station Complement, of Station technical inspector's office and M/Sgt. Harry F. Emans, of the Sub-Depot, were awarded Bronze Star Medals in GO 53, 18 January.

2nd Lt. George Kaluger and S/Sgt. Athur P. Hafner were awarded Purple Heart decorations in GO 58, 20th Jan. Kaluger was wounded Oct. 18, Hafner Jan 10.

DFC's were awarded to 1st Lt. Irving Taxel, navigator, and 2nd Lt. Willis K. Griggs, bombardier, both of whom had completed duty tours. Lt. Taxel's citation mentioned specifically the missions of 3 and 12 Sept. Lt. Griggs, the citation recounted, in addition to performing capably on all his missions, twice courageously cleared the bomb bays by hand, after explosives had been fouled.

There were 17 Air Medals and 11 Clusters for us in GO 58, 20 Jan.

Sunday, Jan 21, was a big day on the Station. Col. Leber, who led the mission, completed his tour of combat duty with the operation.

The target was Aschaffenburg, the M.P.I. consisting of the tank assembly plant near the town. Col. Leber flew with Major Winter as his pilot, leading our contingent of 38 aircraft. There was one abortive and the spare returned early; the remaining 36 aircraft encountered 9/10 cloud undercast all the way with occasional brief breaks. It was 10/10 over the target and the bombing was accomplished by Gee-H methods. There was no enemy opposition at all, not even flak.

Returning to base in haze and high wind, the formation suffered a tragic accident. Two aircraft collided in the traffic pattern and every member of the two crews was killed. Exact details of the accident will never be known. There were those, however, who said they saw a P-47 out in the traffic pattern and cause one of the Fortresses to wing up sharply.

One of the Fortresses was seen to cut the tail from the other. None of the crew members had a chance except for Sgt M. Swartz, tail gunner who was alive when he was picked up. He died very shortly thereafter, however, in the hospital.

Those killed in the accident, all of the 532nd Squadron were:

2nd Lt. J. E. Smith, pilot;  
F/O W. A. Dernberger, co-pilot;  
2nd Lt. C. F. Soper, navigator;  
Sgt. B. L. McCudden, togeleer;  
S/Sgt. P. J. Durban, radio operator;  
Sgt. V. L. Gray, engineer;  
Sgt. D. T. Wilson, ball turret;  
Sgt. R. E. Campbell, waist;  
Sgt. W. A. Streich, tail;

F/O N. F. Tauro, pilot;  
F/O V. J. Crofts, co-pilot;  
F/O S. L. Sobole, navigator;  
S/Sgt. E. L. Jones, togeleer;  
S/Sgt. M. A. Shapiro, radio operator;  
S/Sgt. G. S. Panaccione, engineer;  
Sgt. A. Taylor, ball turret;  
Sgt. J. P. York, waist;  
Sgt. M. S. Swartz, tail;

There was another crew MIA, but it was subsequently returned to base, having been forced to make a landing in France.

Immediately after the mission, Col Leber was presented with the Silver Star, awarded for leadership. Brig. Gen.



William N. Gross, 1st Bomb Wing CO, made the presentation. Lt. Col. Louis Ensign, rumored to be the next CO for this Station read the citation.

There was a stand down on the Twenty-Second and it continued through the Twenty-Sixth. Most of the time there was either snow or heavy frost. It was constantly cold and there were heavy clouds. So bad was the weather that the liberty run was cancelled two of the days.

We tried to get operational again on the Twenty-Seventh. A mission, with Bremen as its objective, was set up, but a scrub was ordered early.

Finally, on January 28, we flew our 242nd mission. The target was the Hohensollern bridge at Cologne, but we didn't bomb it, at least not on force. Our contingent, 38 aircraft, was led by Major Taylor. We found at 4/10 to 6/10 clouds all the way and that, with ground haze, made an instrument run necessary. The formation made a Gee-H run on Cologne, but both the Gee-H and PFF equipment in the lead ship went out so the commander decided to abandon the run and head for a target of opportunity. The navigator saw the objective after the run had been abandoned, but they were too far off course, then, to do anything about it. The lead squadron changed planes with the high, because the high lead ship's instruments were in working order, and they went on to a target of opportunity, first believed to be Bielefeld, but later found to be Guttersloh. Where they made a visual run on the marshalling yards and reported excellent results. Five of our aircraft had previously bombed at Cologne dropping on a smoke marker of a group that preceded us over the target. There was little opposition. The crews reported moderate and accurate flak at the target and some meager and inaccurate flak on the way home. Capt. William F. Carpenter was in the high squadron lead ship.

There was another mission on the Twenty-Ninth, Mission No. 243, despite the snow and freezing weather. The target was Niederlahnstein, just south of Coblenz, and Major Sandman was in charge of our contingent of 37 aircraft. The weather was good until the formation reached the bomb line, and there it closed in to a 10/10 undercast. The bombing was done by means of the Gee-H equipment and the aiming point was the marshalling yards. The meager flak was inaccurate and there were no enemy aircraft to molest the bombers. All our aircraft returned safely to base.

That was the operational end of the month. There was a stand down the next day, a day which saw the heaviest snowfall of the year. Although a mission was set up for the Thirty-First, with Berlin and Misburg as alternate targets, the mission was scrubbed.

On the Station in the last ten days of the month, things were happening.

January 22, Fred Davison, 535th pilot; Walter L. Ritchey, 535th communications officer and one of the senior first lieutenants in the outfit; Edward Godlewski, 534th communications officer; and George Steidl, Jr. 534th engineering officer, were all

promoted to captain. And, the same night, the Station basketball team soundly trounced Station 103, 61 to 41, with Butler, who registered 26 points, taking his place as our high scorer.

Two combat men, Edward N. Miller, of the 532nd, and Donovan L. Chamberlin, of the 535th were promoted to captain on the Twenty-Sixth. And Charles W. Bordner, 534th lead pilot, got his promotion to major on the Thirtieth.

But the non-operational event of the month was a stag party, held at the officer's mess on the evening of Thursday, Jan. 25. There was a dinner, given to Col. Leber, with Gen. Gross and all officers of the field grades as guest. After the dinner there was a show, featuring a strip tease dancer, who just about the homeliest, the least graceful, and the most evil-smelling woman in England. It was a hilarious occasion, however, with Capt. Schwartz as impromptu master of ceremonies.

There was a private party in Col. Leber's quarters later that evening, after the women had left the station.

From the party came the news that Col. Hall had be designated by Gen. Gross to succeed Col. Leber, a move hailed with delight all over the base. The change was made possible by the loss at Nuthampstead of Col. Hudson, the CO. Col Ensign was sent to Nuthampstead to take over there.

The only other events worth recording were awards.

A DFC for S/Sgt Paul W. Hege, toggelier, was issued in GO 59, 1BD, 21 Jan. The citation mentioned, specifically, two occasions in which he administered prompt and effective fist aid on missions. He had completed his combat tour.

We picked up 49 Air Medal Clusters in GO 63, 21 Jan; six Air Medals in GO 65, 22 Jan; three more Air Medals and 32 more Clusters in GO 67, 23 Jan; and an Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal for Col. Leber in GO 72, 24 January.

A DFC was awarded to S/Sgt Rufus R. Frazier, waist gunner, in GO 73, 25 Jan. Sgt. Frazier, who had "finished up" was cited for a number of missions, but notably for the operation of August 14 when he saved the ball turret gunner from anoxia.

There were ten Air Medal Clusters for us in GO 75, 25 Jan; 11 more in GO 83, 29 Jan. twelve Air Medals in Go 83, 30 Jan; and 72 more Clusters in GO 90, 31 Jan.

Largest award of the month was published in GO 9, ETO Hq, 30 Jan. Major Edgar C. Kurner, group engineering officer, was given the Legion of Merit for his work in the period from 22 June, 1943 to 8 June 1944.

END

## **February 1945**

United States Strategic Air Forces in European Theater

Eighth Air Force

First Air Division

First Combat Wing

381st Bombardment Group (H)

February 1945

Microfilm Roll B0370: Frames 0178 – 0189

Transcribed by Scott Burris

We started February with a mission to Mannheim, Mission No. 224 for the Group. The marshalling yards were our objective and 37 of our aircraft were dispatched under command of Major Winter. We led the entire Eighth Air Force over the target.

The weather was bad all the way and the outfit had to climb over a high cloud front to assemble. It was 10/10 at the target and a new bombing technique, the twin-beacon "Micro H", was used for the first time with results subsequently reported as successful. Aside from the weather, the Group had little difficulty. Flak was meager and inaccurate, and there were no enemy fighters. Battle damage was slight.

There was one abortive, Lt. Kuhn, in a 535th aircraft, suffered engine difficulty over the Channel, jettisoned his bomb load, and came on home, with only one engine left, and forced to land down wind, Kuhn's plane crashed into and knocked down two ground crew huts. Nobody was injured but the plane was badly torn up.

The Daily Bulletin published the news that, effective February 19, only official (TPM forms 3) passes would be acceptable in London.

S/Sgt. John C. Marinace, waist gunner, was awarded the DFC (GO 92, 1BD, 1 Feb.) "for outstanding ability and exceptional ingenuity". Mentioned in the citation was a mission (5 Oct. 1944) on which Marinace brought a wounded tail gunner out to the waist for first aid while his ship was afire, and then crawled back to man the tail gun after the fire had been extinguished.

A two-plan mission, with Berlin as the "A" objective, and Dresden as the target in Plan "B", was scrubbed because of weather 2 February.

*Unable to transcribe frames B0370-0179 to 0181 from the digital scan. Transcription follows from the original microfilm and trusty Dukane 27A25 microreader.*

Major William G. Fullick, Group Bombardier ???? since the activating of the 381st, was transferred to Nuthampstead to become the Group bombardier there.

Twelve Air Medal Clusters were awarded to Group members in GO 95, 2 Feb.

1st Sgt. Charles D Butts, of the 535th, was awarded the Bronze Star Medal in GO 94, 1 Feb.

February 3 was a big day in the history of Eighth Air Force. Berlin was the target and 1,000 bombers were sent to hit military targets within its limits. Capt Edward M. MacNeill, flying his last mission (his seventh over Berlin) was in command of our contingent of 36 aircraft and the Templehof railway district was our specific target. Capt. Klinksiek was the lead pilot.

Flak was moderate but accurate. MacNeill said there was much less flak than there used to be "in the old days". Flying weather was good, and, although the formation found a solid undercast from the European coast almost to Berlin, the clouds broke at the target and it was wide open over Berlin. Ours was the twelfth Group to bomb and strike photos show our explosives landing to the right and on the assigned MPI.

The formation returned 40 mins early with two ships missing. Listed as MIA are the following:

2nd Lt. John B Anderson, pilot; 2nd Lt. Leonard A. Wall, co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Paul C.G. Cayoni (Cayori in roster, Gayard in Medical and 532nd Osborne transcribed diary), F/O Carl H. Forbes, Jr.; and Sgts. George R. Nessley (Nessly in roster), Carle E. Kempainen (Kempainen in roster), Curtis P. Wallace, Michal J. Medzic, and Robert N. McGreavy.

2nd Lt. Paul O. Pucylowski, pilot; F/O Harry M. Yarnes, 2nd Lt. John E. Kelleher, S/Sgt. A. H. Zichterman, T/Sgt. Joseph J. Noxon, T/Sgt. Clarence E. Way, Sgt. Stuart R. Mitchell, S/Sgt. Karl R. Green, and Sgt Robert M. Landes.

Anderson's aircraft was last seen at approximately 52-44N-13-28E with its No. 2 engine afire. The plane swerved off the target and left the formation where it was seen under control long enough for the entire crew to bail out. Nine 'chutes were seen, one evidently in a delayed jump. The aircraft made a climbing turn after everybody was out and then exploded.

Pucylowski's fate is a mystery. Nobody noticed anything wrong with his aircraft. It was last seen at 52-??N—13-23E when it left the formation made a sharp turn and slid underneath, disappearing from sight. No 'chutes were seen.

There was one casualty. It was S/Sgt. Jeremiah B. Hogan, 534th waist gunner, who suffered a slight flak wound in the forehead.

The mission got a heavy play in the press. Strike photos taken by our Group, showing a Fortress with contrail silhouetted on the target on which excellent hits were obtained, appeared on page 1 of at least three London papers. Capt. MacNeill's quote led the Eighth Air Force story.

There was a stand down February 4. It was a cold, rainy day, with low hanging clouds and a marrow-chilling wind. The only events of importance were decoration. Group members were awarded 17 Air Medals (in GO 103, 4 Feb.) and 49 Air Medal Clusters in GO 104, of that date. DFC's were awarded Capt. Fred Davison, one-time pilot of Stage Door Canteen, and 1st Lt. Melvin R. McIntyre, bombardier. Both had completed tours of duty.

There were several promotions announced Feb. 4, notable among them the elevation to captain of Ralph J. Gaw, 534th pilot.

A mission intended for Munich was scrubbed Feb. 5 after briefing. Although the day turned out beautiful, it started as a stinker, heavy rain and overcast sky. Throughout the night the full thuds of explosions were heard and rumors were they were V2's going off in the distance.

William J. Muckerman, sub-depot adjutant, was promoted to captain February 5.

Lt. Col. Conway S. Hall, 26-year-old command pilot, former Group operations officer and, more recently, Group air executive, took over command of the 381st officially February 6. There was a mission on that day too. Our 37 aircraft were under command of Capt. Ewing S. Watson and the briefed target was Lut??edorf.

The lead squadron's lead ship had trouble with its VHF which was alternately going out and coming back. As a result, the formation was somewhat scraggly. Patchy clouds made it possible for the navigators to proceed by pilotage until the target area was reached. Here it turned 10/10, and the lead VHF came on just in time for Capt. Watson to hear the Division commander say he would attack a target of opportunity. Our formation followed the bomber stream to a wide open area

where the bombardier picked a town with a railroad running through it and bomb visually. The target was identified as Ohdoruf. Crew men said the bombs landed along the railroad in the built-up area.

There was virtually no opposition. The formation caught meager flak at the enemy coast going in and no flak at the target. There were no enemy fighters. Two of our aircraft failed to bomb with the formation and dropped their explosives on Steinbeck.

A Purple Heart was awarded to S/Sgt. Allen M. Jones, 534th ball turret gunner, for wounds received on the mission of 8 May, 1944. The award was made in GO 108, 5 Feb.

Two Air Medals and 48 Clusters were awarded to the Group in GO 109, 6 February.

The mission intended for a target at Osterfeld, Germany, February 7, was recalled after the aircraft had taken off.

The day gave rise, however, to an unprecedented one-man attack on Germany. Lt. Taylor, of the 532nd, was unable to stay with the formation because he lost the boost on his No. 3 engine. He cut north in an attempt to intercept the formation before it went out over the coast. His radio operator failed to hear the recall order and Taylor, unable to see a formation, and unwilling to come back as an abortive, calmly proceeded on to Germany alone. He ran into a 10/10 cloud, figured that was why he missed the outfit, made a Gee-H run on Essen, and let fly at that target. He hit accurate flak and came back with major battle damage, but he made it all right. Credit for the mission was duly handed out and Taylor and Blakeney, the navigator, were awarded back pats, after the head office brass had worried, for a time, about the problem of whether or not Taylor should be court martialed.

Austin W. Simmons and Charles O. Todd, Jr., 535th pilots, were promoted to captain. The announcement was made in the February 7 Daily Bulletin.

Eight Air Medal Clusters came down to the Group in GO 113, 7 Feb.

There was another scrub Feb 8, and this time the intended target was Wesel.

On the ninth, in response to an Army request, 37 of our aircraft went out for an attack on the motor road viaduct at Arnsberg, Germany. Capt. Cronin, assistant Group operations officer, led the contingent, which flew all the way to the target over broken cloud only to find the objective completely covered. In addition, the cloud layer ran much higher than briefed, completely enveloping our aircraft at bombs-away, which was handled on PBO-GH technique. There was neither flak nor fighter at the targets and all our Forts and crews returned without casualty or incident.

Five new crews arrived on the base early this same evening. Pilots and the squadrons to which assigned are: Lts. Smith and Perry, 535, and Lts. Hall, Hull, and Adelmeyer, 534.

Missions intended for targets at Kassel and Munster were scrubbed on the tenth and eleventh, respectively. On the latter night, highlighted by a dance at which Lt. Cols. Hall and Reed were present as guests of honor, the Station's new non-commissioned officers' club, located in the old quartermaster building adjoining combat mess, was officially opened. Membership is limited to top three-graders.

Col. Leber was unable to attend, being required at the officers' club, where he and Brig. Gen. Gross, First Combat Wing commander, presented DFCs and Bronze Star medals to combat and ground personnel.

Monday, Feb. 12, was cold and drizzly and we had a stand down. Four new combat crews arrived on the 1930 train at Great Yeldham. Lts. Huff and Scherman and their crews were assigned to the 532nd, while Lts. Peyton and Roettger went to the 533rd.

Having completed his tour of combat duty, Col. Leber, with Lt. Col. Fitzgerald, 532nd C.O., left the group for new assignments on Tuesday, February 13. Lt. Col. Conway S. Hall, who joined the Group at activation in January 1943, and who has served as its air executive and deputy commander ever since, as been assigned to command. He is one of our veteran combat pilots, and led the epic Schweinfurt attack of August 17, 1943.

Flying as "B" group in the Combat Wing, which led the entire First Air Division, we turned what might have been a miserable and costly failure into one of our outstanding combat performances Feb. 13.

Dresden was briefed as the target center, but the field order carried a strict injunction that nothing whatsoever would interrupt the bomber stream, heading for a target very close the advancing Russians in southern Germany. Consequently, when the Group ahead of us led off course because of a foul cloud and contrail conditions over the central Reich, Capt. Tyson, 535th operations officer up as Group leader for our 37 bomber contingent, realized the time schedule had already been upset. He therefore had no other choice but to seek a target of opportunity.

While we peeled off in search of such an objective, after sustaining considerable damage from AA defenses, the Group ahead went plowing on through the cumulo-bango weather and flak prevailing over Munster. Capt. Pelenik, Group lead bombardier for the day, began looking for a hot target through weather that constantly varied between VACU and fubar. Although he was unaware of the full importance of what he finally selected at the time, he lined up on a vast industrial

pile which later proved to be the long-sought-after Sudetenländische Treibstoffwerke, an A-plus priority synthetic oil plant two miles northwest of Brux, Czechoslovakia.

There, as strike photos later proved, lead and high squadrons did an excellent visual job, with heavy and tight bomb concentrations placed in and near the plant buildings.

The 12-plant low squadron, failing to recognize Palenik's bomb run, made up for the oversight a few minutes later when they hammered home their explosives on the Skoda arms plant at Pilsen.

It was a rough day, with the formations encountering moderate to intense flak, first at Munster, next at Brux and finally at Pilsen. On the way out, the crews observed our excellent escort in large dogfights with the Luftwaffe although none of our formations were attacked.

Eighteen of our aircraft landed away from base, thirteen of them on the Continent, most of them for lack of fuel or because of engine failures. Two crews bailed out of their aircraft over Belgium and, of these, two were injured – 2nd Lt. E. B. Wulf and S/Sgt. C.J. Kubiak, pilot and tail gunner respectively, who were hospitalized in Belgium. Four drifted into enemy lines and presumably were made prisoners.

Missing in action are: Sgts. D. McCartney, radio; W. Tresti, ball turret; P.D. Boland, waist; and M.P. Bioavert, tail, all of the 534th.

It was rough back at the base after the remnants of the formation came in, too. The rest of the day was spent in trying to determine what it was the Fortresses hit. Grave fears were expressed that the formation was over Chemnitz at the bombs away and that the explosives had fallen on the Russians. When the target had been identified, however, there was great rejoicing. For it developed that the bombs had fallen on an objective which the Eighth had been seeking for months.

The most unusual experience of the mission belonged to 2nd Lt. Hugh D. Robinson, Jr., Wulf's co-pilot. Having bailed out of his Fortress, Robinson was picked up just inside the Allied lines by American soldiers. Examined by a doctor, he was ordered to the hospital at Leige for X-rays. He went off in an L5, was clouded in while in the air, flew around until the fuel gave out, and then bailed for the second time. That wasn't all. He was in a B-24, for a ride back to England, when the Liberator's landing gear collapsed while it was taxiing for take-off.

We went back to Dresden February 15, with Capt. MacNeill in the lead ship of our 24-aircraft formation. Although the formation was briefed for clear weather over Dresden, MacNeill was informed by the weather scout that it would be 10/10. There was no flak at the target but the formation encountered anti-aircraft fire both at Brux and at the bomb line. It was



meager and inaccurate although it covered a wide area. The formation bombed Dresden, using PFF method. Two of our aircraft hit other targets, one dropping near the Wesen-Ems canal, the other hitting Lingen, Capt. Carpenter, low squadron leader, was forced to abort and jettisoned his bombs in the Channel. There were no losses or casualties.

With Major Bordner in the lead ship, a 37-aircraft formation from here participated in the attack on transportation targets at Nurnberg the following day. Although there was good weather at the Belgian coast, clouds began building up to 27,000 feet in Germany, and it was 10/10 over the target. The formation made a mickey run and the bombing results were unobserved. Flak at the target was meager and inaccurate, generally bursting behind the formation. On the bomb run, two bombs from Lt. Lundquist's aircraft dropped through the wing of Lt. Davis's Fort, but there were no casualties. Lt. Stevens, who lost two engines on the way in, pulled out of formation, bombed Staden all alone, and returned early.

Three Air Medals and 45 Clusters were handed down to the Group in GO 116, 9 February; and there were five more Clusters for us in GO 140, 15 Feb. Capt McLandon M. Stallings, 535th pilot and 1st Lt. Henry S. Tabor, 535th navigator, were awarded DFC's in GO 142, 16 Feb. Both had completed duty tours.

There were nine Air Medals and 40 Clusters in GO 145, 16 Feb.; nine more Air Medals and 18 Clusters in GO 147, 17 Feb.; three Air Medals in GO 149, 19 Feb.; and 27 Clusters to the Air Medal in GO 152, 20 Feb.

The Purple Heart was awarded to T/Sgt. John N. Nassar who had been wounded Feb. 14, in GO 143, 16 Feb.

February 17 the 535th Squadron basketball team captured the station championship, defeating the 534th ordnance five by the score of 41 to 38.

Nurnberg was our objective again Wednesday, Feb. 21, and the No. 1 visual target was the armament factory. Our aircraft were under command of Major Taylor. The formation found broken clouds all the way in, building up to 10/10 at the target. The bombing was done by PFF methods and results were unobserved. Flak was meager and inaccurate at the target.

We were briefed to attack the marshalling yards at Gardelegen Feb. 22, hitting the objective from 12,000 feet. We formed part of a great effort of 3,000 bombers intent upon knocking out as many enemy communications centers as possible. The RAF and the Russians were in the show. Crews were briefed to attack any railheads as targets of opportunity.

Our 37 aircraft were commanded by Capt. Tyson. The formation missed the primary because it was forced out of position in the traffic pattern by another Group. Tyson went on to Kobbeltz for a good visual coming of the overcast at the marshalling yards. The high squadron bombed at Klotze, also attacking a marshalling yard with good results.

Gen. Gross was present at the interrogation and, after the critique by the lead crews, he presented the Legion of Merit to Major Kurner, the Bronze Star to Major Greenlee and the Purple Heart to Sgt. Nassar.

With Major Sandman in the lead ship, 37 of our aircraft took part, February 23, in the continued assault on German communications. We were briefed for HOF. A complete 10/10 undercast prevailed all the way in and the formation searched Germany for a suitable target. Major Sandman finally located Meiningen, where the lead and high squadrons bombed the marshalling yard. The low went on to Adelsberg, having been unable to line up on Meiningen, and hit the rail center there with fair results. Although the bombing was carried out from 13,000 feet, there was no opposition with the exception of about 12 bursts of flak going in and a like amount coming out. The search for a target caused many of the aircraft to run out of fuel and 11 landed away from base. All were subsequently reported all right.

While the mission was going on, 44 enlisted men, the second contingent from this station, left for the infantry.

Hamburg was our objective Feb. 24 and 36 of our aircraft participated, with Capt. MacNeill commanding. The mission was uneventful. The 5/10 undercast encountered at the coast began building up as the formation went along and there was doubt until the last minute as to the type of bombing to be attempted. The formation finally used PFF methods and results were unobserved. Lt. O'Neill, with one engine out and two others malfunctioning, bombed a target of opportunity and returned early.

Preflighting an aircraft for the mission, Sgt. Thomas S. Downey, an assistant crew chief, was hit and killed instantly by a revolving propeller when a fire broke out in an engine. Downey was trying to put an extinguisher on the flame.

Sunday, February 25, we went in to Munich with Capt. Cronin in command of our 37 aircraft. It was an exceptionally satisfactory. The ground was visible all the way to the target. Although there were smokepots hiding the target, wind blew the smoke away and gave us a clear look at the objective. We bombed visually, and, although we hit to 398th MPI instead of ours, our bombs "walked right across the marshalling yards". Flak was moderate and accurate but it didn't start coming up until after the bombing run. There were no losses and no casualties.

Meanwhile, back at the station, Anna Neagle with Herbert Wilcox, Phyllis Calvert and Jean Nent, three of Britain's best known film stars, helped "Stage Door Canteen" celebrate its 105th mission. There was a birthday cake with 105 candles, which Anna Neagle cut and the others served, with coffee. A picture of Miss Neagle holding out a slab of cake to M/Sgt. Clarence B. Bankston, crew chief, on a knife, appeared in most of the English papers, particularly those controlled by Lord Kemsley. Clarence Winchester, Group Captain Mahaddie and Harold Thackrau, of Stage Door Canteen in London, and Peter Murray Hill, actor and husband of Miss Calvert, were present as were, also, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Plummer, Gen. Gross was also in the party.

Major Winter led a formation of 37 of our aircraft to Berlin on Monday, and the trip turned out to be a milk run. It was a solid 10/10 at the target and the bombing was PFF. The only opposition was meager and inaccurate flak, although some Jerries were reported in the target area. The radio reported, later in the day, that more than 3,000 tons of bombs fell on Berlin in the operation.

Tuesday was another PFF day as Major Bordner led 37 aircraft to attack Leipzig. It was 10/10 at the target. Although there was a heavy flak barrage at the target just before we got there, for us the anti-aircraft fire was reported as meager and inaccurate. There were no incidents. Results were unobserved.

We had a stand down Wednesday, Feb. 28, the first after a string of nine consecutive operation days.

We were awarded 31 Air Medals and 36 Clusters in GO 156, 22 Feb.

Purple Heart decorations were awarded to 2nd Lt. Eugene E. Pauley and Sgt. Edgar J. Browns, both wounded on the mission of Feb. 16. The awards were published in GO 161, 23 Feb.

There were seven Air Medal Clusters for us in GO 158, 23 Feb.; nine more in GO 163, 24 Feb.; eighteen Air Medals in GO 167, 25 Feb.; and 40 Air Medals and 89 Clusters in GO 170, 26 Feb. The final award publication of the month for us was GO 173, 27 Feb.; and that brought us 86 more Air Medals.

END

## **March 1945**

381st Bomb Group (H)

War Diary

Roll BO370: Frames 190-205

March 1945

March 1 was an operational day. It was Mission 260 for us and the target was Stuttgart. We put up 37 aircraft, with Capt. Ewing S. Watson in the command spot.

The formation encountered 6/10 cloud cover most of the way, but on the target the clouds thickened to 10/10. The only enemy opposition experienced was meager flak, which was shot up at the Fortresses as they crossed the battle line. There was no flak in the target area and there were no enemy aircraft in sight.

The formation made a mickey run. The clouds broke over the objective, and the bombardier was enabled to make visual corrections. Turning off the target the formation struck a clear spot and were able to see the results of the bombing under the

shelf of clouds. Reports were that bombs were seen bursting across the marshalling yards although the main pattern was slightly off.

The entire formation returned safely to base, with the exception of Sgt. D. R. Hawkins, engineer in Lt. Price's airplane, who bailed out over friendly territory after a fire broke out in one of the Fortress's engines. The fire blew itself out and the aircraft returned to base without difficulty.

Chemnitz was the target for March 2 and we sent out the customary 37 aircraft contingent with Capt. Tyson in the lead ship. It was an uneventful mission. Although the weather was approximately 2/10 to 4/10 most of the way in, over the target it was a solid 10/10 and the bombing was executed by instruments, results remaining unobserved, despite the fact that the crew reported scattered breaks in the target area. There was no enemy opposition of any kind and there were no unusual experiences for any of the aircraft, except for one and that one did not go to Chemnitz.

Lt. Charles "Hotrock" Carpenter, posted as deputy leader for the mission, developed engine trouble immediately after he took off and was forced to bring his Fortress back. Col. Shackley, in the tower, gave the youngster explicit landing instructions. Carpenter came in with full fuel and bomb load and made a beautiful set-down, Col. Shackley hearing him breathe into the microphone "Good landing, huh?".

Hastily transferring to another Fortress, Carpenter took off again and Shackley heard him say "Good take-off, too", as he began to pull up his wheels. About 20 minutes behind the formation, Carpenter set out to catch up. He searched the skies for the Fortresses. Far ahead he saw a "big blob of ships" and gleefully "poured on the coal" to catch up to them. Getting within seeing distance, he discovered it was a force of Lancasters.

It was too late to do anything about it now, so he tacked on to the "Lancs" and went along to their target, which turned out to be Cologne. Carpenter had a bomb sight, of course, so he took his turn on the run and performed an excellent bombing job, "to show those guys what daylight bombing was really like.

The Lancasters didn't discover him until after the formation had turned for home. Then there was a lot of high jinks in the air. The Lancs frolicked with the Fort, turning turrets, shooting flares and exchanging signals. Eventually Carpenter picked up two of the British bombers as wing men and flew formation with them across the channel.

It was fun. The strangest part of the story was revealed after "Hotrock" landed back at the base. The name of his plane, it developed, was "RAFAFF", derived from the combination of the initials of the British and American Air Forces.

March 3 was a clear, cold, windy day, and, although the radio later carried the report that 1,200 American heavies attacked Germany, we were not in operation. Instead the Group flew a practice mission in the afternoon.

In the evening the NCO club had its official grand opening, with a dance for members only.

At 0100 hours March 4 (Sunday) the Tannoy sounded a red alert. Enemy aircraft were reported overhead and strict blackout was enforced. We heard later that the Jerries pulled a strafing attack on a second division field near Sudbury, using 20mm shells.

We flew mission No. 262 March 4, with a tank factory in the Southeastern corner of Ulm as our objective. Major Taylor was in command of our 37 aircraft formation. It was 10/10 from France through the target and back, and flying was exceptionally tough because of the worst contrails we had encountered in a long time. The bombing was done by Gee-H methods and results were unobserved. There was no enemy opposition of any kind. It was 37 up, 37 over and 37 back.

Ruhland was the briefed target for March 5 and our 37 aircraft were under command of Lt. Col. Shackley. Finding the primary completely covered, the formation went on to the secondary, Chemnitz, and executed the bombing there through a 10/10

undercast. Enemy opposition was confined to flak and was encountered only at Brux, where a heavy barrage was thrown up at the Fortresses. There was no flak at the target.

Two of our aircraft, those piloted by Lt. Price and Lt. Smith, made safe forced landings in France. The rest returned to base without incident. There were no casualties and no losses.

There was a stand down on Tuesday, March 6, and Wednesday, March 7.

Wednesday a party of officers, headed by Col. Hall, went to Parliament, in accordance with arrangements made for us by Lord Kemsley. They met General Gross and Lt. Col. Smith, of combat wing, who were also included in the invitation. Gen. Gross, who arrived in London before the party from here reached there, made connections with the MP, who took him in to the debate. They were shown through Parliament (the rest of the party) but proved to numerous a group for Mr. Lionel Berry, Lord Kemsley's son, to handle and were unable to get into the chamber for the debate.

The Ridgewell party was subsequently entertained at luncheon at the Savoy by Clarence Winchester, acting for Lord Kemsley. Group Captain G. L. "Hamish" Mahaddie, of Warboys, was also a guest.

We flew Thursday, March 8, and our target was the synthetic oil plant at Huls, Germany. Our contingent of 37 aircraft was commanded by Capt. Edwin Bryce. One of our aircraft returned early because of mechanical failure. The others went on to the target, despite bad weather, bombing by PPF methods through 10/10 undercast. Results were unobserved. The only enemy opposition was meager and inaccurate flak at the target. No enemy aircraft were encountered.

Kassel's marshalling yards, depot and repair shops, made up the target for March 9, and Lt. Col. Conway S. Hall, Group Commander, was in the lead ship of our contingent of 37 aircraft. The weather was good enough for visual bombing at Kassel, although a cloud shelf made it impossible to determine results. Wet photo prints showed good bombing. There was no enemy air opposition, but meager and inaccurate flak was encountered in the target area. We lost one aircraft. Missing in action are:

2nd Lt. P. J. Scherrman, pilot; 2nd Lt. E. B. Nelson, co-pilot; F/O N. J. Drohan, navigator; 2nd Lt. M. M. Miska, bombardier; and Sgts. G. M. Casparovich, W. R. McLain, G. W. Monzigo, H. B. Houghton, and H. D. Fitzgerald.

The aircraft was hit by flak over the target between the No. 3 engine and the bomb bay. The whole right side was afire as it began to glide down to about 15,000 feet, where it was seen to explode. Two 'chutes were reported.

Capt. Marvin W. Fairbanks, of the 532nd, returned from the mission to discover he had been appointed Group navigator.

We went to Sinsen, near Recklinghausen, March 10, where a railway center for supplies to the Western Front was our target. Our contingent of 37 aircraft was commanded by Capt. Carpenter, 533rd Operations Officer. It was 10/10 all the way and the bombing was done by Gee-H methods. Meager and inaccurate anti-aircraft fire was the only opposition encountered. There were no casualties and no losses.

The administration of sulfadiazine pills to all personnel was suspended March 10 on order from higher headquarters.

The first ten days of the month brought a steady, although somewhat depleted, stream of general orders awarding decorations to members of the Group.

We received 31 Air Medals in GO 179, 1AD, 1 March, and eight Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal in GO 186, 2 March. There was a bumper crop of 61 more Clusters in GO 188, 3 March.

DFCs, for "extraordinary achievement while serving as tail gunners" on bombing missions over Germany, were awarded (GO 192, 4 March) to S/Sgts. Andrew G. Walker, Jr. and Omer L. Godfrey. Both had completed duty tours.

We were awarded 11 more Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal in GO 196, 5 March, to follow the 52 we received in GO 193, dated the day before. There were 39 Air Medals included for us in GO 198, 6 March, and 27 Clusters. We won 47 more Clusters in GO 201, 7 March, and 36 Air Medals in GO 202, 8 March, which also brought us 27 more Clusters. There were 7 Clusters for us in GO 208, 9 March. And GO 210, 10 March, brought us seven Air Medals and nine more Clusters.

We went back to Bremen Sunday, March 11, with the submarine pens as our first objective and the marshalling yards as our No. 2 objective. Major Charles W. Bordner was commander of our fleet of 37 aircraft, flying over 10/10 clouds all the way to and from the target, we found moderate to intense flak at Bremen, although it was inaccurate for us. Because Major Bordner's mickey was "out", the lead squadron fell back and bombed off the high squadron, which took the lead run for us. Results were unobserved. Bordner reassumed the lead after the bombing had been performed and brought his formation safely back to base without losses or casualties. It is worth recording that despite the heavy flak, none of the aircraft showed major battle damage.

Congratulations from General Arnold on the operations of the past five weeks were handed down to us through 1st AD on Monday, March 12.

The railroad center at Dillenburg, in the Ruhr, was our target March 12 and our 37 aircraft were commanded by Capt. Tyson. It was another 10/10 day. The lead, high and low squadrons accomplished individual bombings, using Gee-H methods. There was no flak, and the Luftwaffe was still out of sight. There were no losses or casualties.

There was a stand down March 13, although the day, which began with light frost and clear skies, showed bright sun and steadily rising temperatures through the afternoon. There was one unusual incident. Lt. Charles H. "Hotrock" Carpenter, who earned fame through bombing Cologne with the RAF in a Fortress named RAFAAF, was called to London for his second radio broadcast within the week.

We flew again on the Fourteenth, and our target was the single track railroad bridge at Vlotho, in the Ruhr. Capt. MacNeill was the commander of our force of 37 aircraft, 36 of which attacked the target. The abortive was the famous "Stage Door Canteen".

The formation found good flying weather although ground haze made downward visibility only fair. Flak was very meager and inaccurate. The formation made a good visual run and results appeared to be good for at least the lead squadron. There were no casualties and no losses from the mission.

But later that evening a Fortress flying on a practice mission crashed near Yeldham and two members of the crew were severely injured. 2nd Lt. Andrew Dudek, navigator, suffered fractures of one hand and both legs, and F/O Raymond M. Oxley suffered a fracture of the ankle.

Oranienburg, whose marshalling yards had been the center of considerable enemy movement towards the Eastern Front, was our target March 15 for Group Mission No. 270. We were tail end Charlie (last over target) for the entire Eighth Air Force, and Capt. Carpenter was commander of our 37 aircraft contingent. Flying weather was good but the target was somewhat obscured by ground haze and the dense smoke of previous bombings. There was considerable enemy opposition. Even the Luftwaffe was up and, although our formation was not attacked, crew members did report dog-fights in the target area between the Jerries and our escorting fighters. There was meager, inaccurate flak on the route in, and when the Forts reached Oranienburg they found moderate and fairly accurate anti-aircraft fire awaiting them. The bombing was visual and, although the dense ground smoke made spot assessment impossible, the crews were certain they had done a good bombing job.

On our way home, the Fortresses got more flak at Wittenberg, and, although it was meager, it was "right in there". One of our aircraft, with Lt. Charles "Hotrock" Carpenter at the controls, sustained a direct hit in the waist, which killed the gunner, S/Sgt.

N. J. Ahl. Carpenter struggled gamely with his badly battered aircraft and flew it, somehow, back to England, where he made an emergency landing, under the worst possible conditions, at Woodbridge. T/Sgt. J. R. Thrash, engineer of Carpenter's crew, was slightly wounded in the flak burst. Sgt. R. L. Hinders, tail gunner, was slightly injured when the plane broke in two in crash landing.

There was one other casualty on the mission: 1st Lt. R. Muffley, who suffered wounds in the nose and eyes as a result of flak over Wittenberg.

A mission intended for Bohlen was scrubbed after briefing March 16. A change of PX hours was announced that day. Effective March 19, the new hours will be Monday through Friday, 0900 to 1230 hours; and 1330 to 1730 hours; Saturday 0900 to 1230 hours.

Bohlen's synthetic oil plant was our target again on March 17, and Major Bordner was in the lead ship of our 37 aircraft contingent. The 10/10 cloud undercast which prevailed in the target area was complicated by dense, persistent contrails. Further difficulty was caused by the fact that both the lead and high squadrons' instrument aircraft were not functioning properly. The formation found moderate but inaccurate flak over the battle line going in and similar anti-aircraft fire at the target. Because of the instrument snafu only the low squadron bombed Bohlen. The other 25 aircraft went on to Jena, where they made their run and dropped their explosives. Both bombings were by PFF through 10/10 clouds and results were not observed. There were no losses and no casualties.

Berlin (Schloashauss railroad station) was our target for Sunday, March 18, and our 37 aircraft were under the command of Major Joseph Krieger, Jr. Flying weather was good until the formation approached Berlin. There a 4/10 undercast, with dense persistent contrails and ground haze, made observation difficult. Flak varied from moderate to intense and was reported as accurate. Enemy fighters were reported in the vicinity, but our crews didn't see them and suffered no attacks.

Starting the bomb run, Maj. Keieger found a squadron from another group out-of-position directly under our formation and he was forced to deviate from course to avoid hitting it. The run and bombing were accomplished, nevertheless, but only the lead and low squadrons dropped. The high squadron's lead ship, hit by flak, had lost its AFCE, and was being crowded by another out-of-position squadron from another group. The high followed the rest of the formation through the target, then went on to pick another target of opportunity, a plant at Zehdenick, just north of Berlin, where it dropped its bombs.

Although 20 of our aircraft suffered battle damage, three of them damage of the "major" type, all of our formation returned safely to base. There was one casualty: Sgt. Laddie Fields, who suffered a flak wound above his right ankle.

Plauen was our objective Monday, March 19, and our No. 1 target was a new wrinkle for us, the flak batteries guarding the town. We were slated to be first in. Our 37 aircraft, under command of Capt. Watson, found beautiful weather until they entered Germany. There the clouds thickened all the way up to our altitude and we were joined by dense persistent contrails and thick haze. There was meager flak for us at the battle lines, although the Groups behind us were really shot at from the ground. Although we saw no enemy aircraft, our crews reported they heard stragglers calling off attacks by "jerries".

The complete undercast forced us to forego the first two targets and attack H2X objectives for the day. We used PFF methods and results, of course, were unobserved.

We suffered neither losses or casualties.

There was a stand down on March 20.

Crew members received 36 Air Medals and 31 Clusters in GO 214, 11 March; 45 Clusters in GO 216, 12 Mar.

The DFC for extraordinary achievement as a bombardier was awarded to Capt. Melvin C. McBurney in GO 219, 13 Mar. McBurney had completed his tour of combat duty.

Eight Air Medals and 23 Clusters came down to us in GO 221, 13 Mar; and there were 12 more Air Medals and 40 Clusters for us in GO 222, 14 March. GO 224, 15 March, gave us 27 more Clusters. And there were 15 Air Medals and 23 Clusters in GO 228, 16 March.

1st Lt. Henry B. Matty, Jr., was awarded the DFC in GO 230, 17 March, for "extraordinary achievement while serving as a bombardier". There were 14 Air Medals and 34 Clusters for us in GO 236, 17 March; we received three more Clusters in GO 234, 18 March; and GO 236, 18 March, brought 20 Air Medals and 76 more Clusters.

The airfield at Rheine/Salzbe was our target for March 21 and we put up 37 aircraft under command of Capt. Bryce. The weather was clear although there was considerable ground haze. Flak was meager at the target (which was the only place at which it was encountered) and it did not start coming until after the lead and low squadrons had dropped their bombs. The high squadron reported the anti-aircraft fire was meager, accurate and continuous following. The formation began a Gee-K bomb run, winding up with a visual bombing when Lt. Tidwell, lead bombardier, was able to pick up the target in plenty of time to get himself lined up. Strike photos showed hits right on the aiming point with an excellent pattern in the target area. There were no casualties or losses.

Hut installations at Feldhausen made up our target on March 22 for the Group's 275th mission. Our 37 aircraft, under command of Capt. Gotthardt, found good weather to the target, but ground haze and smoke screen and the smoke of previous bombings made the objective difficult to pick up. There was moderate and accurate flak defending the place. The formation made a Gee-H approach and shifted to a visual run when the target came in sight. Results were reported as excellent. We lost the lead ship which was hit immediately after bombs away and started going down in flames. Neighboring aircraft reported there was a hole right through the cockpit. Two to three 'chutes were observed clearing the ship. Capt. Gotthardt, who had only recently been promoted (last Sunday) was highly regarded in the Group, as were other members of the crew. Capt. Ackerman took over the lead for the return to base.

Missing in action were:

Capt. Robert B. Gotthardt, flying as Group leader; 2nd Lt. Robert D. Fawcett, pilot; Capt. George J. Stone, navigator, and second tour man; 1st Lt. Peter Kowalski, bombardier, twice decorated with the Purple Heart; 2nd Lt. Elbert W. Hiller; 2nd Lt. Walter F. Scott; 2nd Lt. Charles G. Bonotai and T/Sgt. Lawrence A. Russolino, S/Sgt. Joseph H. Biglin and Sgt. Stanley H. Bishop.

Friday, March 23, we put up 37 aircraft for an attack on the marshalling yard at Cosefeld. Capt. Cronin was in the lead ship. Except for a little ground haze, the weather was beautiful on the target, there wasn't a cloud in the skies. With no enemy opposition of any kind to bother them, the Fortresses made an excellent bombing run and strike photos picture an exceptionally good bombing, despite the fact that the lead ship's bombs fell just a little short. The crews reported two twin engine fighters bellow them but experienced no attacks. The mission marked the finish of his second tour of combat for Capt. Klinksick, first man in the organization to perform that stunt.

Herbert Lazar, 535th radar officer, was promoted to Captain. A similar advancement was announced for Charles F. Houk, 534th pilot.

Saturday, March 24, our contingent of 37 aircraft, commanded by Capt. Tyson took part in the ground breaking for the airborne invasion scheduled for the day by attacking the landing ground at Furstenau/Vechtel. Weather and visibility were perfect and the bombing was performed visually with excellent results. The bomb concentration was "dead on the target". There was flak defending the target and the crews described it as "meager but very accurate". We lost one crew, suffered several other casualties, and returned to base with a crop of battle damage.

Missing in action were:



2nd Lt. Robert E. Jankowiak, pilot; 2nd Lt. Philip R. Roche, 2nd Lt. William D. Garrett, 2nd Lt. Herbert H. Levenson; and S/Sgts. James E. McGrath, Oscar J. Moberg, John W. Hensley, Paul L. Berger, and Stanley E. Beschta.

2nd Lt. Charles E. Greenlee, bombardier was wounded by flak which hit him in the forehead.

We flew a second mission the same day and this time the target was the night fighter base at Twente, in Holland. We provided only 12 aircraft for the operation and Major Taylor was the commander. There was ground haze but the formation was led into the target by an instrument ship which pointed the way to the objective accurately. Capt. Palenik, lead bombardier, was able to pick up the target and the results were excellent. The formation, which took off at 1415, returned to the base at 1730, for what was probably the shortest flying time ever experienced by the Group on a mission. There was no enemy opposition and there were no losses or casualties.

Meanwhile, airborne troops were landing in the area near Rees and were beginning the push which was to mark the final surge of the war in Europe.

Wayne E. Herman, 535th bombardier, was promoted to captain. (WRONG HE WAS A PILOT!)

The planes took off at 0600 Sunday, March 25, for an attack on Seitz, but were recalled at 0700 because of weather conditions. It was a dull day and a light rain fell throughout the evening.

Coming in for a landing about 2200 hours after a practice flight, a 533rd aircraft caught fire. The crew got out in time, but they were unable to save the ship, which burned brightly for more than an hour. 50 caliber bullets were popping all over the place. There were no injuries.

We flew again Monday, March 26, and, for the Group's 279th mission, the target was Seitz. Our 37 aircraft were commanded by Major Sandman. The weather was filthy all the way in and out and Seitz had cloud banks all over it. The formation made two 360's in an attempt to get a look at the objective, a synthetic oil plant, and the low squadron did bomb, although because of an accident in the nose of the lead ship, the bombs landed away from the target. On the second run over Seitz flak got the lead aircraft's bombsight. The formation proceeded to the secondary at Plauen and, with the high squadron leading, executed their bombing there. Strike photos showed fair results, the main pattern falling long, although some bombs landed on the factory. The moderate to intense flak cost us one casualty.

2nd Lt. Arthur J. Smith, 532nd bombardier, was severely wounded by a piece of shrapnel which went through his hand, but he dropped his bombs with the leader before he collapsed.

Six of our aircraft landed away from base, most of them because of a shortage of fuel.

March 27, turned up an overcast, drizzly morning and the mission scheduled for the day was scrubbed.

James V. Farley, new Group bombardier, was promoted to Captain.

We hit Berlin Wednesday, March 28, with Capt. MacNeill in command of our 37 aircraft contingent. For Berlin it was a strange mission. Not only did the crews see no enemy fighters, but flak was meager and inaccurate. It was 10/10 on the target and the bombing was accomplished by instruments. Results were unobserved.

There was a stand down March 29.

March 30, with Col. Hall in personal command, the Group's contingent of 37 aircraft participated in the attack on the submarine pens at Bremen. There were clouds from the Zuider Zee in to the target and there was a 6/10 cloud cover over Bremen. The formation made its approach down a cloud-free alley and Capt. Farley, lead bombardier, had no difficulty lining up on his target. Results were reported as excellent, with a light pattern of bombs right on the building comprising our MPI. The formation encountered opposition in the Bremen area only, but the flak there was reported as moderate to intense. Col.

Hall reported he saw one "jerrie" making passes at a straggling B-17. As the German came in for his second pass, four P-51's showed up and one of them knocked the jerrie down.

We lost one aircraft and its crew. Missing in action were:

1st Lt. Robert A. Bennett, pilot; 2nd Lt. A. D. Nelson, Jr.; F/O P. D. Cawley, S/Sgt. E. H. Holt, T/Sgt. R. H. Mumper, S/Sgt. C. D. Majors, T/Sgt. C. M. Slemszenski, S/Sgt C. J. Hockley, Sgt. G. Stubblefield and S/Sgt. C. F. Knaus.

Sgt. J. D. Newell, Jr., 535th ball turret gunner, was slightly wounded in the left leg.

We finished the month with another mission (No. 282 for the Group) on March 31. Our 36 aircraft were led by Major Taylor and the No. 1 target was Merseburg. Although the weather at our altitude was good, there was a complete 10/10 undercast below. The formation went, therefore, to the H2X target, listed as No. 3, the marshalling yards at Halle, and performed an instrument bombing job there. The only opposition was meager and inaccurate flak. There were no casualties and no losses.

The last third of the month brought another influx of awards.

There were three Air Medal Clusters in GO 238, 20 March; 25 more Clusters in GO 241, 21 March; and 12 Air Medals and 18 Clusters in GO 245, 22 March.

1st Lt. Robert J. Roush, a pilot, was awarded the DFC (GO 243, 22 March) for his flying job on the mission of Jan. 10, 1945. Roush took over the lead when the leader was forced to leave the formation and Roush's aircraft was severely crippled by anti-aircraft fire over the target. He eventually brought the aircraft back for a landing at a friendly base on the continent.

2nd Lt. John E. Rice, Jr., 534th pilot, was awarded a DFC (GO244, 22 March) for his outstanding flying ability and exemplary initiative on the mission of Jan 1, 1945, when he brought his aircraft back after it had been crippled by flak and Rice, himself, had been wounded in the shoulder.

We received 44 Clusters to the Air Medal in GO 246, 23 March; and 17 Air Medals and three Clusters in GO 252, 25 March.

F/O Robert E. Farmer, 534th, received the Purple Heart (GO 253, 26 March) for wounds he received on the mission of March 22.

There were nine Air Medals for us in GO 258 27 March; five more Air Medals and 90 Clusters in GO 261, 28th March; 33 Clusters in GO 265 29 March; 30 more Clusters in GO 268, 30 March and a final 28 Clusters in GO 269, 31 March.

For us it had been an exciting and elating month. Victory talk became more and more outspoken and frequent bets were made on the date that hostilities would cease.

Volunteers were being sought for agencies involved with end-of-the-war activities, and directives from higher headquarters, which obviously dealt with winding up affairs, were coming in frequently.

But it had been a heavy operational month. The Group executed 23 combat missions.

## **April 1945**

SHAEF

ETOUSA

USSTAF

8TH AIR FORCE

FIRST AIR DIVISION

(FIRST COMBAT BOMBARDMENT WING)

381ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)

WAR DIARY – APRIL 1945

Microfilm Roll: B0370, Frames 1836 – 1842

Transcribed by Scott Burris

We started April with a stand down. Easter Sunday was a heavy, dark gray day with rain squalls throughout the morning.

All over the base talk of the final victory accelerated. Officers and men were becoming interested in possibilities of transfer to units of the Allied Military Government. And there was speculation regarding whether or not the next detail draw for the Infantry would be required to go. An order was published directing all squadrons to pick up all firearms belonging to personnel of the base.

There was a briefing on the Second, and the intended target was an installation in Denmark. Bad weather forced a recall, however, while our formation was over the North Sea.

The crews were brief twice on Tuesday, April 3. The first operation was Kaltenkirchen, Germany, as its objective. The second was intended for Deldering, Denmark. Neither mission took off, however. Both were scrubbed.

We finally got operation on April 4. Our target was Hoya, Germany, and the objective was a landing strip. It was Mission No. 283 for the Group. Our 37 aircraft were commanded by Lt. Col. Shackley. The attack on Hoya was made after 10/10 clouds prevented the formation from hitting the airfield at Reinsehlen. Accurate and meager-to-moderate flak was encountered immediately after bombs-away, and some of the aircraft took a pasting. The bombing, performed visually despite an 8/10 undercast, was well done, the explosives falling on the runways in good patter.

There were two casualties:

F/O R. A Thomas, 532<sup>nd</sup> co-pilot, was severely wounded at the target and died in the airplane on the way home. T/Sgt. Jack C. Poole, a 533<sup>rd</sup> gunner, was slightly wounded.

The I&E (Information and Education) program, hitherto rather lightly considered, took on a new lease on life. Meeting and preparations speeded up. The base was being searched for men who had teaching experience.

Meanwhile, the betting concentrated on whether or not we would complete 300 missions.

We were up again Thursday, April 5, and our target was an ordnance depot at Grafenwohr. Maj. Bordner, in command of our 37 aircraft contingent, described the operation as a milk run. The target was 8/10 covered and the run was made by instruments with the low squadron, led by Capt. Scarborough, taking over for the bombing because the lead's equipment had gone out an hour before the target area was reached. Results were unobserved. There was no flak and the Luftwaffe was still absent. There were no losses or casualties.

Raymond D. Jolicoeur, sub-depot commander, was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel April 6 and "bought the bar" at the officers' club that evening.

There was no operation April 6, the only event of importance was a request from higher headquarters for pictures of M/Sgt. John E. Fitzgerald, 535<sup>th</sup> crew chief, credited with 155 consecutive non-abortive missions. The request confirms claims made here that Fitzgerald is the ranking crew chief in the Theater.

Mission No. 385 was accomplished April 7 and the target was the jet-propelled fighter base at Kohlenbissen. Capt. Cronin, former Group Operations Officer, who took over command of the 535<sup>th</sup> Squadron when Maj. Taylor was moved to assistant group operations officers, led our formation of 37 aircraft. Flying weather was good all the way, but the ground was obscured by a 9/10 undercast at the target. The lead bombardier managed to pick up the objective despite the clouds and the ground haze, and the bombing was preformed visually with good results – the part of the lead squadron, at any rate. Only two flak guns fired at our formation throughout the trek, and, although enemy planes were reported in the vicinity, none were seen. There were no casualties.

The mission marked the 100th operation of the Fortress "Passaic Warrior", christened last July by Congressman Gordon C?nfield.

The transfer of Capt. Cronin brought a shuffling all around. Col. Hall and Col. Shackley still occupy the commander and deputy spots, respectively. Maj. Sandman is now Group operations officer. Capt. MacNeill is 532nd commander (although not on paper); Capt Watson heads the 533rd; and Capt. Cronin the 535th. Maj. Winter is still CO of the 534th.

There was a mission Sunday and the target was the marshalling yard at S?endahl. Maj. Krieger led our force of 37 aircraft. The bombing was accomplished visually through an 8/10 undercast with only fair results. The formation was tracked for 90 seconds by meager but accurate flak on the bombing run. The anti-aircraft fire cost us a ship and its crew. Missing in action are:

2nd Lt. HE. Adelmeyer, pilot; 2nd Lt. J. N. Frampton, F/O N. E. Melvin, S/Sgt E. J. Dybicz, T/Sgt J.H. Hayden, T/Sgt. R. L. Daily, Sgt. R. E. Cobb, and Sgt. E. P. Houser.

The aircraft was seen going down over the target with two engines afire. Three 'chutes were reported.

There was another casualty: Sgt. J. V. McCarthy, engineer on Larson's crew, received a severe flak wound to the right thigh.

Oberpfaffenhofen's airfield was the target Monday, April 9, and our contingent of 37 aircraft was commanded by 1st Lt. Seeley. We had a good day. Flying weather was perfect and it was CAVU at the target. The bombardiers picked up the objective from miles away and our bombs smashed the east-west runway. There was meager and inaccurate flak at Munich and there was no other opposition. There were no losses and no casualties.

Back at the station, baseball practice was called for the Station team.

Oranieburg, the ordnance depot, just north of Berlin, was our target on Tuesday, April 10, and our 37 aircraft formation was led by Capt. MacNeill. Maj. Harry T Hance (sp?), Division assistant adjutant general, flew with the formation. It was his first and only mission.

The Luftwaffe was up for once. Our crews reported 40 to 50 Jerries in the target area, some of them "jetties". Nevertheless, we were not attacked. Escorting Mustangs, engaged in dogfights with the enemy aircraft, kept them away from the Fortresses, although a couple of straggling bombs from other formations were reported under attack a couple of times. The closest we came to an attack was just off the bomb run when an Me262 came barreling through the formation. He didn't fire but our gunners blazed away at him and reported later he was too fast to hit.

The bombing, accomplished under CAV conditions, was excellent. All three squadrons dropped their eggs on the target. There were no losses or casualties.

Gordon M. Johnson, of the 533rd, was promoted to captain April 9.

We received 34 Air Medals in GO 27?, 1 April; 50 more in GO 277, 2 April; 41 in GO 280, 3 April; 60 in GO 283, 4 April; 23 in GO 289, 6 April; 1 Air Medal in GO 295, 9 April; 47 Clusters in GO 286, 9 April, and nine more Clusters in GO 298, 10 April.

There were three DFC's for us in GO 294, 9 April. The recipients were Capt. Charles O. Todd, Jr. 1st Lt. Thomas P. Stypula and 1st Lt. Jack R. Thornton. All had completed tours of combat duty.

The oil storage depot at Freiham, southwest of Munich, was the target Wednesday, April 11. It was Mission No. 389 for us and the commander of our contingent of 37 aircraft was Capt. Johnson, promoted three days before. Bad weather encountered over France cleared to beautiful weather over Germany. Our target, clearly visible from miles away, was still smoking from previous bombings and our explosives fell in the thick of the smoke. The Luftwaffe, which had taken a pounding the day before, was not in evidence and the excellent Mustang escort had no interference to run. Flak at the target was meager to moderate and accurate. The lead squadron, cutting off the target correctly, escaped the roughest part of the flak, but the low caught it. A near burst in the tail of the "Dee Marie" severely wounded Sgt. R. E. Forsyth, tail gunner, and his escape from death was regarded as miraculous. He suffered hand, arm and leg wound[s].

On the return journey, two 535th squadron aircraft collided over Wilhemshaven. The Fort flying Lt. Greenspan and Capt. Garret knocked the entire right horizontal stabilizer from the Fort piloted by Lt. Brashear. Brashear brought his ship out of a flat spin 10,000 feet below the level at which the impact occurred, and nursed it safely home. There were no injuries. A mission with Beureuth as its intended objective was scrubbed April 12.

News of President Roosevelt's death knocked the Group flat. Social functions were suspended.

Friday the Thirteenth was a mission day for us and the target was the marshalling yard at Neumunster. Weather was good and Capt. Eager, lead bombardier, was able to identify his target from 20 miles away. Strike photos show a pattern of bombs right on the MPI. There was flak at the target but it burst behind us (we were informed the 398th lost its lead plane.) For us there were no losses or casualties.

We had a stand down Saturday, April 14.

"Any Minute Now" the London papers announced Sunday, April 15, as our formation of 37 aircraft, led by Maj. Sandman, took off for Soulac-sur-Mer, near Bordeaux, in France, to attack one of the last remaining pockets of German resistance there. The target was a group of gun emplacements and we led the Wing. Weather was perfect and so was the bombing, performed from 15,000 feet. Pictures show only one bomb landing outside the pattern. The job was carried out just ahead of a bombardment of the seaport by the French fleet.

At the control tower, at 1630 hours, a memorial service was held for Pres. Roosevelt.

We went to Begensburg the next day, completing Mission No. 292, with Capt. Tyson in command of our 37 aircraft. Our target was a railroad bridge and although the weather was good, the bombs fell short. The formation turned off just short of the tracking flak after the bomb run. There were no enemy aircraft in sight.

About noon today, a P-51 Mustang, believed to be carrying 1st Lt. Joe D. Nelson, former 533rd Squadron pilot, buzzed the tower and crashed into a field off the Little Yeldham road. The pilot was killed and his body so badly burned as to preclude immediate identification.

A new set-up came into effect on the Station, April 16 with the activation of the 432nd Air Service Group. Col. Reed was named commanding officer of the new organization which is composed of the 858th Air Engineering Squadron and the 682nd Air Material Squadron, as well as the 432nd Headquarters and Base Service Squadron.

The new organization took over all of the old ground units except the 881st Chemical Company detachment. Lt. Col. Jolicoueur became executive officer and headquarters CO. Major Olas D. Miller was named CO of the 682nd, and Capt. Mitchell M. Hall, Jr., was made CO of the 858th. Maj. Greenlee became ground executive of the Bomb Group in place of Col. Reed.

With Maj. Bordner in the lead ship, 37 of our aircraft attacked engine sheds at the Dresden marshalling yards for Mission No. 293 Tuesday, April 17. We led the entire Eighth Air Force for the mission. High clouds made flying difficult but visibility downward was all right at the target and the bombing was done visually. Results were not too good. The pattern looked a little short of the objective. Flak was meager and tracking but only the high squadron caught it and there were no casualties, nor was there much damage. Enemy aircraft were reported in the target area, and they were said to have attacked the groups immediately behind us, but we experienced no difficulties.

There was a stand down Wednesday, April 18.

The briefed target for Thursday, April 19 (our Mission No. 294) was the marshalling yard at Elsterwerda, near Leipzig. Our 37 aircraft were commanded by Capt. Seeley, who was promoted the day before. The weather was good, less than 2/10 on the target. But a stiff cross wind of more than the 30 degree drift the bombardiers can kill, hampered the bombing. The high and low squadrons bombed at Elsterwerda with poor results. Seeley took the lead group over the target three times without

success because the bombardier just couldn't get synchronized. The latter finally lined up on Falkenburg, the last time over, and bombed the marshalling yard there. Seeley caused some consternation back at base by erroneously sending in a 104 strike message. It should read 4-1.

Mission No. 296 on Friday, April 20, had as its target the marshalling yard at Brandenburg. Because of the fiasco of the day before, every ranking flying man on the base, with the exception of Lt. Col. Shackley and Capt. Cronin, was ordered out on the mission, which was led by Capt. Ewing S. Watson. Even Col. Hall flew, although he went in the unarmed Little Rockette as an observer.

Flak was meager but accurate, one burst touching off the flares in Capt. Watson's aircraft. The weather was good and so was the bombing. There were no losses and no casualties.

Back at the base, Capt. Gerald Platz, group armament officer, was transferred to higher headquarters. Capt. Elbert Husted, III, was appointed in his place.

Promotions during the second ten days of April included the elevation of Thomas S. Garreth, III, 535th pilot, to captain.

Similar elevations were granted to Harvey G. Tidwell, second tour bombardier, and Lloyd Smith, of the 535th.

We picked up 29 Air Medals in GO 302, 11 April; 28 more in GO 306, 12 April; 61 more Clusters in GO 308, 13 April; five more in GO 317, 15 April; 65 Clusters in GO 324, 16 April; nine Air Medals in GO 322, 15 April; six Clusters in GO 325, 17 April; 40 Clusters in GO 328, 18 April; and two Air Medals in GO 326, 18 April.

Capt. Mitchell M. Hall, Jr. sub-depot engineering officer and now 858th Air Engineering squadron CO, was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for meritorious service in connection with military operations against the enemy in GO 309, 17 April. With Lt. Col. Shackley in the lead ship, 37 of our aircraft participated in the attack on the marshalling yards at Munich on Saturday, April 21. It was Mission No. 296. As a mission was completely uneventful. All over Germany the weather was bad, a 10/10 undercast prevailing. There was no flak and there were, of course, no fighters. The bombing was done by instruments and the results were unobserved.

With an eye on the 300th mission, Col. Hall. Called combat wing and asked that this Group be given an "A head" the fourth operation hence. He was assured every effort would be made to do so.

Sunday, April 22, the Station was favored with a treat. Alfred Lunt and Lynne Feltanne, two of the world's greatest stage stars, brought to the Station theater their London comedy hit, "Love in Idleness" with the entire London cast. The show was done without scenery or costumes, and with only the props that could be scrounged on the base. It held its audience spellbound. The men said it was the best show ever given on the base. ???????, general manager for H.M. Tennant, London producers, who was responsible for sending the show here, was with the party.

Just before Lunts returned to London, they helped pay honor to the bomber "Passaic Warrior" which had completed its 100th mission. Mary Alice Collins, former stage star and current BBC announcer, did a radio script on the occasion. There was no mission on April 23, but the Group sustained one of its greatest losses nevertheless.

Carrying holidaymakers bound for three-day passes in Ireland, a Fortress piloted by Capt Charles Ackerman, 534th operations officer, crashed on the Isle of Man, hitting just below the peak of a 2,000 foot hill. Everybody aboard was killed. Scarcely a man on the station was not affected by the tragedy, for every man on the station had a friend aboard. There was also a number of men on the Station who had fought hard to get aboard the trip, and these men were very hard it. The list of dead follows:

532nd Squadron --- M/Sgt. Edward Z. Gelman, T/Sgt. William E. Geist, S/Sgt. Wayne K. Manes, Cpl. Merle L. Ramsowr.

533rd Squadron --- T/Sgt. Joseph W. Sullivan, T/Sgt. Joseph L. Grey, Cpl. Edward G. Bailey.

534th Squadron --- Capt. Charles E. Ackerman, Jr., F/O Edwin A. Hutcheson, Jr. 1st Lt. Martin Matyas, 1st Lt. John P. Fedak, T/Sgt. Wesley M. Hagen, and T/Sgt. David H. Lindon.

535th Squadron --- Cpl. Herbert C. Gupton, Jr., Pfc. Angelo Quagliariello, S/Sgt. Alfred M. Mata, and Sgt. Jose M. Martinez.  
HQ 381st --- 1st Lt. Wayne W. Hart.

534th Squadron – Sgt. Michael J. Kakos, Jr. Sgt. Irvin R. Hargraves, Cpl. Earl S. Ammerman, and Cpl. Leslie H. Maxwell.  
432nd HQ --- Pvt. Andrew R. Barbour and S/Sgt. Ralph L. Gibbs.

848th Mat Sq --- 1st Lt. Lawrence E. McGhehey, Sgt. William c. Ullmann and T/4 Andy Piter, Jr.

682nd Mat Sq --- 1st Lt. James M Hinkle (station quartermaster) and Cpl. Harry Super.

881st Chem Co --- T/5 Walter A. McCullough and Cpl. Thomas P. Flaherty.

Tuesday, April 24, Col Hall, Capt. Shackley and a group from the Station flew to the Isle of Man to pick up the bodies and view the scene of the wreck. It was a day of mourning on the station.

Wednesday, April 25, the Group flew a mission to Bilsen, with Maj. Bordner in the lead ship. Mission No. 297, it turned out to be the Group's final combat operation. As a bombing expedition it was a washout, for all but two of aircraft brought their explosives back to base. Although the flying weather was good, it was 10/10 over the target and the leaders refused to take a chance for fear that the bombs might fall on friends.

The trip was no picnic. Maj. Bordner was quoted as saying "I'll brain the next guy who tells me the war is over". The flak was intense and accurate, and, although our aircraft escaped the worst of it, returning crews reported they saw several B-17s from other Groups going down over the target.

We had only one casualty, S/Sgt. B. C. Brock, Lt. Marshall's waist gunner, was wounded, moderately severely.

Back at the base the papers carried the news of the opening of the 'Frisco conference. And speculation was rife regarding the possibility that the Americans and English linked up with the Russians in Germany.

Believers in the theory of symmetry drew quite a bit of support from the fact that Pilsen was our last mission. For, the day after our operations began, June 22, 1943, there was accident on the line which cost us 23 dead. The accident on the Isle of Man, which cost us 31, occurred just before our final mission.

The "Tomahawk Warrior," well-known 535th Fortress, caught fire coming in for a landing on Thursday, April 26. Lt. Albert J. Cotea and his skeleton crew got safely out of the aircraft at the end of the runway near the 534th site. The bomb load went off after the fire burned for a while and blew a hole 40 ft by 30 feet by 18 inches in the concrete. Utilities men worked all night patching it up. We were still thinking there would be more missions.

The men who died in the Isle of Man accident were buried April 27 at the Cambridge cemetery,. It was the largest funeral seen here. Seventeen truckloads of men from the Station attended.

The surrender of Gen. Dietmar, Germany Army and General Staff news commentator, was announced the same day.

Newspapers of April 28 announced the link-up with the Russians as occurring at the Elbe River, near Torgau, April 25. And thoughts of going home began to be aired at the base.

The death of Mussolini at the hands of an Italian mob was announced in the April 30th papers.

Other events of the month included the promotion of Kenneth L. Hillier, weather officer, to Captain on April 30th; the promotion to Major of Ewing S. Watson, 533rd commander; the promotion to Captain of Charles E. Eager, bombardier; and the announcement of a clothing check for all personnel, which gave further points to the thoughts of going home.

We were awarded four Air Medals in GO 341, 23 April.

Capt. Robert J. Gotthardt, pilot, reported shot down and MIA in march, was posthumously awarded the DFC in GO 351, 25 April.

There were 51 Air Medal Clusters for us in GO 356, 26 April, with the name of Conway S. Hall, Station commander, leading the list.

DFCs were awarded (GO 355, 26 Apr) to 1st Lt. Peter Kowalski, 533rd, and to 1st Lt. Pearlman R. Perry.

THE END

## **May 1945**

381st Bomb Group (H)

War Diary

Roll BO370: Frames 206-212

May 1945

United States Strategic Air Forces in European Theater - Eighth Air Force First Air Division - First Combat Wing - 381st Bombardment Group (H)

MAY (1945)

Papers of May 1 printed the German announcement of Hitler's death and the assumption of leadership by Admiral Doenitz. There was no activity on the base with the exception of hot rumors and preparations for ---E program. Bets were that we would still be here in September.

A photo mission to Oschersleben, planned for Wednesday May 2, was scrubbed. It took place the following day, however, with Maj. Sardent, pilot and Capt. Fairbanks, navigator, who had both been on the original Oschersleben mission, Jan. 11, 1944, in the aircraft and with Capt. Hawkins and S/Sgt Kleinmeier, of the photo department, with Capt. Schwartz, public relations officer, flying along. Story and pictures were scheduled to appear in the next issue of the First Division magazine.

May 7 a teletype announced the German surrender at 0200 hours in the morning. Without further ado, the Station prepared to celebrate. A ceremony was held at the control tower at 0600 hours, in the misty morn, with Col. Hall giving a brief summary of the Group's activities in the course of which he announced that we had lost 165 aircraft and approximately 1290 men. We had accounted for 223 enemy aircraft destroyed, 40 probably destroyed, and 167 damaged. We had dropped more than 22,000 tons of bombs.

Our biggest day for fighters was Oschersleben, Jan 11, 1944, when we knocked down 28 Jerries. Our biggest single loss was the first Schweinfurt, August 17, 1943, when 11 of our aircraft and ten of our crews failed to return from the mission.

Immediately after the ceremony, the Station was thrown open for celebration. More than \_00 pounds worth of beer was provided for the enlisted men, and the officer's and NCO clubs threw their bars wide open. There were fireworks on the line after the ceremony but they were not too easily visible because of the mist. All base vehicles were impounded to lessen the possibility of accidents. All personnel were restricted to base.

Pictures of the celebration were in London late in the afternoon.

The day wound up with 20 officers and enlisted men spending the night in the Station Klink.

We were among the few (with the City of New York) who celebrated on the Seventh. The official VE-Day celebration was scheduled for the Eighth. Other stations called in frequently through the course of the day to ask what the hell all the



excitement was about. The surrounding towns were completely dislocated. The school children just failed to go to classes. A teacher called the station to ask if the holiday were official and if she could take off too.

There was an apparent return to normalcy on May 8, although very little work was done. There were ugly rumors. One story said that a plan of drill and inspection, two hours every day, was in process of formation and events substantiated it. The plan was discontinued however, before it went into effect.

Our aircraft began to fly "rubbernecking tours" over France and Germany. The first trip was for holders of the Bronze Star, mainly crew chiefs.

Col. Hall, Major Sandman, Maj. Thayer and Capt. Rudell were drawn for 20th Air Force and it was rumored they would leave the Group Approximately June First for their new assignments. Col. Shackley's name was subsequently added to the list. Thursday, May 10, we put up 30 odd aircraft for a trip to bring out of Germany repatriated American prisoners of war. Col. Hall took off at 0500 hours to be the first on the ground at Lubeck, where we were to pick up our men, to set up a ground control unit to bring the aircraft in. Maj. Sandman, flying photo and public relations men from Division in addition to Capt Swartz, followed him in.

We picked up a part of a load at Lubeck and dispatched 12 of our aircraft to Rhein to pick up others. All told we brought back more than 800 men, dropping them near Paris, France/ At Rhein Col. Hall, reluctant to leave any POWs behind, crammed the last two Forts full to make certain he would get everybody off.

Wednesday May 16 a teletype announcement told us we were one of the Groups to be sent back to the States and a fever of preparation and packing set in.

The first flight to the Zone of the Interior was scheduled for Saturday, May 19, but it was scrubbed.

The first batch left for home, 20 aircraft, each carrying 20 men, including the crew (one of whom was the crew chief), Monday May 21. The itinerary was Valley, Wales; Iceland, Newfoundland, Bradley Field, Conn.

-30-

Excerpt from Daily Bulletin No. 126, 6 May 45

OFFICER' PROMOTIONS: Following officers' promotions in AUS is announced"

2nd Lt to 1ST LT

RICHARD W. BOWLER, 535th B Sq TURNER G. BRASJEAR, JR 535th B Sq DOUGLAS

A. BRIDGES, 535th B Sq WILLIAM G. BUSH, 535th B Sq

ROY E. COOK, 535th B Sq RAYMOND D. DAHLGREN, 535th B Sq

JOHN W. FIBLIT, 532nd B Sq PAUL V. FRASER, 532nd B Sq

ROBERT B. HARRIS, 532nd B Sq ARTHUR HOLMBERG, 535th B Sq

JOSEPH A. HUMMEL, 535th B Sq HARLAN F. KRIETE, 535TH B Sq

HERBERT H. MCLAUGHLIN, 535th B Sq RUSSELL T. RIPPE, 535TH B Sq

LAWRENCE A. SMITH, 535th B Sq CHARLES B. WILLIAMS, 535th B Sq

CHARLES F. WRIGHT, 535th B Sq ELMER B. WULF, 535th B Sq

Excerpt from Daily Bulletin No. 127, 7 May 45

1. Detail for today:

Station OD: 2d Lt Robert G. Pope, Hq 381st Bomb Gp (H)

Hq Duty O : Capt George W. Porter, 533rd Bomb Sq (H)

Convoy O : Liberty Run Cancelled

Convoy O : Liberty Run Cancelled

Sq Site 2 : 532nd Bomb Sq (H).

2. V-E\_DAY\_PLANS:

(1) All Department Heads will free as many men as possible in order that they may participate in the activities for the day.

(2) The Officers' Mess Bar, NCO Club Bar, Station Beer Parlor, and Aero- Club will be open from 100 hours to midnight today, no special activities are planned.

(3) No regular meals will be served at noon or in the evening, but snacks will be available from 1100 hours to 2400 hours today.

(4) All personnel will be restricted to the limits of the station, except for those who must leave on official business, until 0700 hours, 8 May 45. From 0700, 8 May 45, until 0700 hours, 9 May 45, all personnel will be limited to a travel radius of 20 miles, except for official business. Authorization for official trips may be secured from Station Headquarters.

(5) The Station Theater will have shows at 1000, 1200, 1400, 1600, 1800, 2000, and 2200 hours today.

All personnel must remember that we are in a foreign country and therefore must conduct ourselves in an exemplary and agreeable manner when dealing with all civilians. We will not be able to do all the things which British Civilians are entitled to do and higher headquarters will not tolerate any violation of regulations at this time. Severe disciplinary action will follow for any offenders from this command

FROM DAILY BULLETIN NO. 128, 8 MAY 1945

2. Discharge: Enlisted personnel 42 years of age or over may now apply for discharge. Inquire at Orderly Rooms for particulars.

\* \* \* \* \*

5. Restriction:

(1) Except in case of Official Business, the following rules will apply for today and tomorrow, 8 May and Wednesday, 9 May 45.

(a) At the Unit Commanders desire, short passes not to exceed six hours may be issued to the small communities nearby within a ten mile radius. (This does not include over-nite passes).

(b) No travel warrants will be issued.

(c) There will be no Liberty-Run.

(d) Special cases may be taken up with the Unit Commanders concerned.

(2) It is the desire of the Commanding General of this Division that the contact with civilians for the next two days be held to a minimum and that the conduct of the Officers and Enlisted Men of the Eighth Air Force be absolutely above reproach. It is expected that the members of this command will cooperate to the fullest.

## **June 1945 to Deactivation**

### HISTORY OF 381st BOMB GROUP

1 June 1945 to Inactivation

#### CONCLUSION

TWO years of life in rural England ended as suddenly as they had begun. Ridgewell celebrated VE Day as a beer holiday 6 May 1945, as has been noted elsewhere, and it was less than a week from that time that Group Commander Conway S. Hall, with Lt Col George G. Shackley and all squadron heads, was summoned to a special meeting at Brampton, First Air Division's HQ.

When they returned to base, the outfit as one took to pen, pencil, typewriter, to inform their wives, families and friends Stateside that the long-awaited end finally materialized; 1,875 troops of the 381st were coming home.

It came as a refreshing stimulus after many days of waiting since the last of 297 missions, late in April, and despite its anti-climactic position relative to the cessation of hostilities.

The word which Col Hall and his officers brought back with them from Brampton did not become official until the next day, 13 May, when the group received its orders. It was not until then that maintenance crews began flooring their Fortress bomb bays to receive baggage; that material men and squadron supply sergeants began checking equipment lists and readying crates and shipping tickets, and that the whole field began discussing possible dates and manner of shipment.

Early there was the rumor that every available plane, excepting those needed to transfer to outfits going to occupational assignments, would be flown over the ATC's northern route. These reports proved well founded, although at first squadron commanders understood the word "passengers" to denote volunteers from the ground echelon who might be afforded space on home-run aircraft with their regular combat crews.

By mid-day, however, the final arrangement called for the outright assignment of ten passengers for each plane, with a total of 72 Fortresses and their crews scheduled to make the hop. Those aircraft included several transferred in to us from other First Division group for the purpose of ferrying to the ATC terminus and Bradley Field, Windsor Locks, Connecticut.

#### BOMBERS LEAVE RIDGEWELL

On 20 May, within a week of the alert order's reception, 11 bombers of the 532nd and 533rd took off for home, authorized by the group's air-and-sea movement orders contained in Letter AG 370.50 OpGC, HQ, ETOUSA, APO 887, 13 May 1945, Subject Movement Orders Shipment 10043; later amended to 19 May 1945.

Dispatching problems at various divisional stations, deriving largely from unfavorable weather conditions over the northern air route and resulting in a great stack-up of aircraft at Valley, North Wales, and at Meeks Field, Iceland, causing a delay between the dispatch of the first 11 planes and that of the 61 that followed them 7 June. The first crews and their passengers, a total of 220 men, had little time to cut the luggage weight to the allowable 55 pounds (plus or minus additional pounds per

man for the special flying gear of airmen) and had no time at all to say good-bye to the people of Ridgewell and Great Yeldham before they were homeward bound.

From 20 May to late on the morning of 7 June, 1,215 men did virtually nothing but sleep and eat. Each day promised departure, and each day, for more than two long anxious weeks, brought its disappointment. The base movie was jammed from opening time at 14.00 hrs each day, straight through to the 23.00 hrs let-out from the final evening performance.

The ARC Aeroclub, already stripped down to a games room and the barest sort of snack bar, finally discontinued operation of the latter nearly a week before the larger contingent was airborne. There was literally nothing with which to occupy the time of most of the men, and waiting, in the face of a sudden homecoming so long anticipated, was keenly irksome.

Prior to the departure of the second flight, a holding party consisting of five officers and some 60 enlisted men from the Bomb and Service Groups, was chosen to oversee base maintenance until its final disposition had been decided upon. In this party was 1st Lt George E. Kessel, 535th Equipment Officer, one of the many officers and men of the group who had married English girls during their two years abroad.

#### MAJOR WILCOX HEADS SEABORNE UNIT

When the 61 planes of the second unit left the field on the sunny afternoon of 7 June with Col Hall at their head, there remained, exclusive of the intended holding force, 695 officers and men under the command of Major Leroy C. Wilcox, newly appointed ground executive officer. This remainder completed the packing and shipment to Scotland for hold loading of the group's TAT equipment earmarked for use in the States.

The materiel included, among other things, those capacious helmets which had done duty not as armor but wash basins in latrines and barracks. Also packed were all carbines and gas-masks, neither of which articles had seen more than practice service in two years.

Refueling units, mobile oilers, cletracs and other heavy line machinery was shipped to a nearby depot, there to be re-issued to occupational units needing such replacement equipment. All records of confidential or lower classification and all office supplies and equipment, library material, excess clothing, and field issue, kitchen and mess hall items, and the one thousand and one items required to make a bomb group's housekeeping possible at home or abroad, came to the States TAT.

Already the air travellers of both bomber contingents were nearly two weeks into their 30 days of "Rest and Recuperation". Which the exception of two aircraft which developed engine trouble but came through after a day or two's delay, every pilot made the long, over-water haul via Wales, Iceland and Labrador, in under 24 flying hours.

The 381st had the good fortune to accomplish the entire air phase of the movement without a casualty, although one bomber made an emergency landing in Greenland, where an engine was temporarily doctored to permit its pilot to return to Iceland. There, after miraculously coming through a crash-landing in one piece when the undercarriage collapsed during the landing, the crew idled for three days while Meeks Field hangar crews returned the bomber to A-1 flying shape again.

#### AIR CONTINGENT'S JOURNEY

For the great majority who flew home, though, the trip was a thorough going success, despite the crowding attendant upon cramming 20 men, their gear, and considerable special equipment, into each narrow bomber. And every officer and man had only the highest praise for the efficiency and consideration with which they were handled by the military and civilian personnel of ATC. This great organization scheduled and routed every bomber over the course which included landings at Valley, North Wales; Meeks Field, Iceland; Goose Bay, Labrador; and Grenier and Bradley Fields, USA.

Emphasis at every station was placed upon messing and billeting the transients. Red tape simply did not exist, and only pilots, navigators and radio operators were subject to the most elementary briefings on the course and procedures ahead, immediately following landing at each base.

At Valley, a sandspit exposed to the salt breezes of Caernarvon Bay, the commanding officer insisted upon Class A uniform for all transients leaving the flight line. Inasmuch as one could hardly eat, sleep or attend the normal natural functions in a bomber crammed with 20 other similarly motivated, it was necessary for all but a few far-sighted characters to rip duffel and B-\$ bags out of the bomb bays, extract wrinkled blouses and trousers, and go parading into mess halls, movies and barracks looking anything but the smart soldiery undoubtedly envisioned by the commander who issued, and personally assisted in enforcing, the order.

Crews stayed overnight at Valley, then took off for Labrador early the next morning. Meeks Field proved to be an unreleivedly flat wasteland composed mainly of ancient volcanic stones and Nissen huts banked high with earth and rocks against what the permanent party claimed were winters so severe, planes and personnel were absolutely immobilized for weeks at a time when fog, snow and ice gripped the base.

But there was hot water in the wash houses, and there were sheets on the beds. After more than five hours of flying the travellers badly needed both.

In addition the ARC girls offered free coffee and doughnuts in a hut which also provided reading, writing and lounging facilities. Trucks met every incoming plane and fast-working refueling and maintenance crews checked straight down the line until all aircraft were pronounced ready for take-off.

Station time at Meeks Field came late the same night, with pilots taking their craft on ACFE towards Labrador, 10 hours away across the North Atlantic. The sun merely dipped below the horizon for a few hours during that leg of the journey, and both "Kiwis" and combat men marvelled at the rugged grandeur of the Greenland peaks, ice-clad and forbidding their broad bases lost in the impenetrable gloom, as the southern tip of the great island swept slowly beneath them.

At Goose bay, wryly dubbed by its personnel as "Heaven in the North", and which proved a clean, rather wonderful collection of army installations in a setting of sandy soil, slim straight pines and a glory of cloudless blue sky and golden sunshine, long low airport limousines met each bomber as it rolled into its allotted parking place. Briefing was prompt and the food at Goose excelled. Mess halls were operated 24 hours a day to accommodate transients. Bedding and bunks were ready for bodies badly prezeled by ten hour attempts at couching on luggage and gear heaped in bomb bays and radio rooms.

#### STATESIDE

Bradley Field, Connecticut, should have been the next stop en route, but overcrowding there led to ATC dispatchers to assign most 381st aircraft to an overnight stay at Grenier Field, New Hampshire, some five hours flying south across New Brunswick, the Gaspé Peninsula and Maine.

Grenier offered the returnees their first chance to make that all-important phone call, and the Bell system's newly opened base telephone exchange was a seething, sweating pass of eager soldiers and beautifully patient and co-operative switchboard girls until far into the morning following the afternoon of arrival.

There was also fresh milk in abundance, and at the administrative building, where Red Cross and other volunteer ladies poured it, gallons were consumed by grown men who, quite apart from having seen nothing of the cow's nectar for months or even years, boasted stomachs thoroughly conditioned to the consumption of English ale and what the Army unblushingly called coffee. That milk, plus the sight of women smartly clad and made further attractive by fresh coiffures and sufficient make-up, told returnees at Grenier that they were very close to home.

## AIR TRAVELERS PROCESSED

But where the military was concerned, the travelers might still have been in another world. The good, abundant, common-sense ATC management continued through Bradley Field, reached after a 90 minute flight from Grenier on the fifth day of flying. Here crews found the most amazing swift and efficient processing system.

First half-a-million dollars worth of bomber and equipment was disposed of via a simple exchange of signatures between the pilot and a coveralled, grease stained non-com. Then great roofed vans carried men and baggage to the initial processing shed.

Beginning with the attractive WAC sergeant, one of many enlisted women sprinkled through all departments with effective psychological "savoir", officers and men passed down clearly defined lanes and were checked for equipment. Everything one considered surplus could be surrendered there. Then customs officials took signatures, leaving examinations at the simple interrogation level, and the possible possession of unauthorized items to the conscience of the soldier.

Quarters came next, and in each living area were tailor shops and well stocked PXs. Next day matters of physical check-ups, personnel records, and pay were equally swiftly and sensibly taken care of, and on their third day at Bradley, the 381st entrained for Camp Myles Standish, Massachusetts, there to be divided into regional groups for shipment to the nearest separation centers, coast to coast.

It was from the latter, generally in a matter of two days, that all were released for 30 days of "R&R" the first meaningful leaves of any significance since going overseas.

Thus was the air phase of the group's shipment handled for the average man. It was in every way a success. No man who came home via ATC's northern route could speak anything but praise for those who planned and executed the enterprise from start to finish.

## RIDGEWELL TO GOUROCK

Homecoming for Major Wilcox's contingent proved to be the true completion of the overseas duty cycle begun two years before. Booked for passage on the Cunarder HMS Queen Elizabeth, which brought them to the British Isles late in May 1943, they rolled down to the railway station at Great Yeldham in trucks, starting on the morning of 20 June. The last of three trainloads were on their way north by two minutes past midnight on the morning of 21 June.

Most of the population of Ridgewell, Great and Little Yeldham and the surrounding villages lined the highways and jammed the platforms and tracks. They had come, and stayed until the last train's departure, to say their good-byes to men who had arrived as strangers and were leaving as friends. And in many cases husbands and sweethearts, after two years of close and amicable association.

The ARC clubmobile from Braintree, 16 miles west of the base, was on hand with its girls passing out the inevitable coffee and doughnuts.

In first class carriages, three soldiers to a compartment designed for six civilian passengers, the troops moved north west to Cambridge, then north through the Midlands, to Glasgow and finally Gourock, the tiny village on the Firth of Clyde where the outfit had originally landed.

Train and delay in transit lasted overnight, and on 22 June the outfit boarded the Queen Elizabeth, from whose decks they spent two days watching thousands more loaded from ferry-sized lighters which plied the harbor past allied warcraft, fishing trawlers and squat, dirty colliers, from the docks to the mammoth liner.

On 24 June the ship slipped down the Clyde past villages and dwellings where men and women, waving sheets, flags and anything else sufficiently large and bright, added their send-off to this first great homecoming boatload of the Eighth Air Force men and women who had been America's spearhead into the Reich.

#### LIFE AFLOAT

Early in the afternoon of 29 June, four days later, the grayclad behemoth warped into Pier 91, North River, New York City. The voyage's length was necessitated by hard weather towards the end of the journey, to avoid the worst of which the Elizabeth's skipper took his ship many miles off course. The result was equivalent, in time consumed, to that spent zig-zagging alone two years before, when possible lurking submarines afforded the handicap.

Living and messing conditions aboard were far superior to those of the first crossing. Men were numbered and fed at specific times, announced over the ship's public address system. There was little line-sweating for chow.

Further, returning veterans said the food was excellent. They particularly cited the white bread served at every meal, the first most of them had eaten in two years. Chicken, steak and fresh fruit and milk added a solid solid to the full menu.

As for sleeping accommodation, the return trip saw none of the eastbound alternation that meant one night on a hard, chilly deck and the next in one of the many canvas-bottomed bunks crammed into cabins originally designed for two or three occupants. True, the men were sardined below decks, but each had his bunk to himself all the way. Yet many hit the deck and the railings on the last day, when the blow was heaviest and three-dimensional mal-de-mer in assorted intensities overtook the less able sailors.

#### NEW YORK !

PIER 90 brought the men home next to old 91, from which they had sailed. But whereas the department for combat had been shrouded in silence and semi-secrecy, the homecoming was brightened by the mid-afternoon sunlight and enlivened by the screams of harbor craft and the musical welcome of good army bands in the harbor and the dock.

As with the men who came into Grenier Field, it was a beverage that made the biggest hit with the seaborne returnees when they hit the dock. There were the ARC volunteers, with their doughnuts. But there, too, instead of coffee, was milk, and soldiers drank their way through gallons of it.

From the pier Major Wilcox led his way by train to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, where within 48 hours, they were broken up into regional groups for shipment to separate centers, a set up parallel to that encountered by the air travellers who broke up at Myles Standish. Yet there was an exception, one which still rankles in the mind of every man who came home by bomber.

Taking the processing encountered at Fort Dix as possibly the most graphic example, there every by-sea returnees with 85 or more points was asked, point plank, whether he wanted further services or discharge. Only certainly rare instances of supercritical MOS held a man back from this hand-out. Consequently many of those who headed home from Fix did so to stay, while the rest took their 30 days of temporary freedom before returning for assignment to Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

#### SIOUX FALLS - BOOM TOWN

Air returnees began arriving at Sioux Falls AAF about 20 July, from which date the stream steadily increased in volume through the ensuing six weeks. Officers and men traveled to Sioux Falls for full screening and processing, based primarily upon their military occupational specialties and the number of points they held under the Adjusted Service Rating system. In answer to the question of further overseas service, which had been plaguing everyone's mind while at home, there was offered an unqualified choice for all who had completed at least one six-month tour of duty overseas, or who had accomplished 18 combat missions or 150 combat hours as an air crewman.

Sioux Falls air base, politically hand-raised child of Chan Gurney, South Dakota's member of the Senate Military Affairs Committee, was well up to its neck coping with thousands of incoming returnees at the time of the 381st's arrival. Thus by 8 August there were an estimated 20,000 transients needing processing, bed and board during their stay. This varied from a week or two in the case of ground echelon personnel, to as much as six weeks for many gunners. And incoming shipments of 2,300 troops from 8th and 15th Air Force bombardment groups and their service outfits was not uncommon. Late in July and early August out-shipments regularly fell below the daily count of those received.

Such a vast overpopulation was borne in addition to the base's approximately 3,000 permanent part enlisted men and women. Absolutely essential to the expedition of the mass processing program, these numbers were being steadily augmented by hand-picked specialists, mainly clerks, from the ranks of the transients.

#### FINIS FOR THE GROUP

It was at Sioux Falls that the 381st learned of its impending de-activation. This was to have taken place in July, but orders had not been received by mid-August.

Disposition of 381st personnel followed the ordinary pattern prescribed by the 2nd Air Force HQ, which was mainly concerned with the training of B-29 Superfortress groups and replacement crews for the Far East conflict. The great majority of transients were, in the order of their arrival at Sioux Falls, shipped out to various CCTS, OTU and gunnery school posts of the 2nd Air Force. Those not to be trained for further overseas duty, or slated for permanent party posts in the States, expected to resume temporary jobs while awaiting separation on the basis of local quotas. But until each individual's arrival at such a station, he was carried as a member of the 381st on detached service to 2nd Air Force.

All TAT equipment ended its overseas and cross-country shipment in a huge pile at one end of the base's old "Stone Hangar", where at due time it was turned over to the 2nd Air Force by Captain Bill Tutsock, 381st assistant materiel officer.

Lt Col Hall and squadron commanders, Major Edward H. McNeill, 532nd; Major Ewing S. Watson, 533rd; Major Douglas L. Winter, 534th; Captain William Cronin, 535th, were last recorded as being held at Sioux Falls pending assignment in the 2nd Air Force. As second-tour combat pilots, the four squadron leaders faced excellent prospects for honorable discharges.

In fact, with the announcement of two Air Force "Atomic Bomb" attacks on a pair of Japan's key industrial cities -Hiroshima and Nagasaki - and the entrance of the USSR into the war against Japan on 7 August 1945, it became increasingly indicative that the men of the 381st might well end their military careers of World War II awaiting discharge at Army Air Forces bases coast to coast.

Having entered the war the officers and men of the 381st, more than justified their trust among the senior members of the 8th Air Force's First Division, understood the plan and its goal. For they loaded the bombs, changed the engines, briefed the crews and equipped the planes, hauled the payload and breached the opposition, time and time again, until "bombs away" meant the climax of a factory-smooth operation so routine and unglamorous that all knew VE Day's realization could be but a matter of hard work, time and casualties expended on a dirty but necessary job. And that, under the decorations and citations, the foolishness and fun, the frustration and bitterness, the camaraderie and the novelty of life in a strange but essentially understandable corner of the world, was quite what the war proved to be for the 381st Bombardment Group.

#### HEADQUARTERS

##### SIOUX FALLS ARMY AIR FIELD

Sioux Falls, South Dakota



CERTIFICATE

*I hereby certify that, to the best of my information and belief, file copies of the complete historical records of the 381st Bombardment Group (H), covering the period from activation, 1 January 1943, through 15 May 1945, and exclusive of the final installment as prepared per instructions contained in Letter 314.7, HQ, SFAAF, Sioux Falls, S.D., 14 July 1945, Subject: Histories of Units inactivated or disbanded at Sioux Falls Army Air Field, have been forwarded to Headquarters, Eighth Air Force, through HQ, First Air Division, APO 577, U.S. Army.*

*I further certify that completion in narrative form of the unit's history, covering the period from 15 May 1945 through inactivation, was accomplished this date at Sioux Falls Army Air Field.*

*CHARLES R. McCARTHY,  
Captain, AC,  
Adjutant.*