

HIGH FLIGHT

By John Gillespie Magee, Jr.

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered
wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tum-
bling mirth
Of sun-split clouds -- and done a hundred
things
You have not dreamed of -- wheeled and
soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless hall of air.
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the windswept heights with
easy grace
Where never lark, or even eagle flew.
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of
God.

DEDICATION

To those who served actively with the 453rd
Bombardment Group (H)

To those who waited for those who served, and
particularly, a special dedication

To those who gave that last full measure of
devotion-- their lives

MEMORIAL DAY
MAY 1979

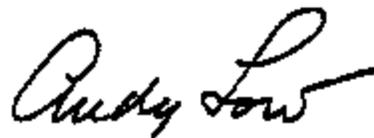
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The impetus for this re-telling of the story of the 453rd Bombardment Group (Heavy), in World War II, stems from the reunion of the 2nd Air Bombardment Division at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania in July of 1976. Certainly, Larry Thomas who commanded the 453rd for most of its history, and Don Olds, who has done most to keep us together in the later years, deserves most credit for this endeavor. By acclamation at the 1976 Reunion, I was elected editor, and herewith is my effort. It is a reproduction of the official history as stored in the archives. Little change has been made in the recorded script. Some difficulty was experienced in interpretation, and pictures reproduced poorly from the tapes.

It would not have been possible to produce this volume had it not been for the competent contribution of Mrs. Endicott, The Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

Also, the encouragement and technical assistance of Mr. Fernie G. Willis, of the Naval Air Rework Facility, Cherry Point, North Carolina contributed greatly to the recapture of this history. The able and conscientious administrative assistance of Mrs. Agnes Curran, and her daughter, Miss Celeste Curran, of Havelock, North Carolina resulted in the original draft of this document. Miss Debbie McVee competently accomplished editorial review and preparation for reproduction. Responsible for the printing and binding was Technical Sergeant Frank Scavotto, USAF.

The enthusiastic assistance of all these contributors is greatly appreciated, and hereby recorded.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Low". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Andy Low

Editor

MEMORIAL DAY
MAY 1999

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This revision of the 1979 version of "The Liberator Men of Old Buc" began as "busy work". Re-typing the original 153 pages was quite a challenge. As the work progressed, information from casualty reports, plus bits and pieces from my wartime diary and the diaries of Eino Alve, Howard Shaw, Jim Scanlon and G.W.Ford were inserted as an "enhancement". As another "enhancement", it seemed appropriate to include a "Memories Section". Members of the 453rd Bomb Group and members of other Groups wrote these excellent articles. A very sincere "Thank You" to all of you for your contribution. Also, I owe a special "Thank You" to Linda Wittig, daughter of Charles "Moose" Allen. Linda took all of my typed pages and inserted them into her computer, which helped prepare this very professional looking document. Finally, since the pictures from the original tapes reproduced very poorly, they were deleted.

This was to have been the extent of the effort. However, then someone said, "How about including the names of the Replacement Crews"? So, with the help of Don Olds, the 453rd historian, and contributions by many individual members of the 453rd, and by searching through back copies of the 453rd Newsletter and the 2nd Air Division Journals, many of these crews were located. Later, Julian Wilson, Chairman of the 453rd Bomb Group Association remarked that the Ground Crews were very rarely recognized for their contribution to the War effort. "Willie" had done an excellent job of locating many of these people and had their names in his computer. He supplied these names and an Administrative and Support Section was included. "Willie" thanks for the suggestion and for the effort it took to compile the list - Without these people it wouldn't have been possible for the Air Crews to go anywhere.

A final "enhancement" was the listing of all the planes that had been assigned to the 453rd. Tom Brittan had spent many years searching for this information and has graciously contributed the results of his efforts to this project. Thank You, Tom.

Regretfully, the names of a great many Administrative and Support people as well as many Replacement Crews are missing.


LLOYD W. PRANG

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

O	Original Crew
R	Replacement Crew
X	Command
XX	Staff
XXX	Support
P	Pilot
CP	Co-Pilot
N	Navigator
DRN	Dead Reckoning Navigator
GH-N	Navigator, Radar
MN	Mickey Navigator-Radar
MO	Mickey Operator-Radar
PFF	Pathfinder-Radar
PN	Pilotage Navigator
RN	Radar Navigator
B	Bombardier
H2XB	Bombardier-Radar
E	Flight Engineer
R	Radio Operator
NG	Nose Gunner
TTG	Top Turret Gunner
BTG	Ball Turret Gunner
RWG	Right Waist Gunner
LWG	Left Waist Gunner
G	Gunner
TG	Tail Gunner

INTRODUCTION

In his WARTIME DIARIES, the Reich Minister for Armaments and War Production, Albert Speer, second only to Adolph Hitler, Chancellor of the Third Reich, writes:

The real importance of the air war consisted in the fact that it opened a second front long before the invasion of Europe. That front was the skies over Germany. The fleets of bombers might appear at any time over any large German city or important factory. The unpredictability of the attacks made this front gigantic; every square meter of the territory we controlled was a kind of front line. Defense against air attacks required the production of thousands of antiaircraft guns. The stockpiling of tremendous quantities of ammunition all over the country, and holding in readiness hundreds of thousands of soldiers, who in addition had to stay in position by their guns, often totally inactive, for months at a time.

As far as I can judge from the accounts I have read, no one has yet seen that this was the greatest lost battle on the German side. The losses from the retreats in Russia or from the surrender of Stalingrad were considerably less. Moreover, the nearly 20,000 antiaircraft guns stationed in the Homeland could almost have doubled the antitank defenses on the Eastern Front. In the territory of the Reich those guns were virtually useless. Over the attacked cities they did little more than provide a kind of reassuring fireworks display for the population. By that time bombers were operating from such high altitudes that the shells of the 8.8-centimeter flak guns reached the planes at too slow a speed.

Playing a distinguished role in this "Second Front" effort against the Third Reich, and its Festung Europa, was the 453rd Bombardment Group (H).

This is that story.

HISTORY

453rd Bombardment Group (H)

Station 144, APO #634

ORGANIZATION

The 453rd Bombardment Group (H) was organized by the Second Bomber Command, Fort George Wright, Washington, pursuant to the order of the Second Air Force, Colorado Springs, Colorado, dated 22 June 1943. Special Orders No. 90, Headquarters Second Air Force, dated 22 June 1943 released Colonel Joseph A Miller, 0-18211, from assignment and duty, said Headquarters, and designated him as the Commanding Officer of the 453rd Bombardment Group (H), Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho. On 29 June 1943, Colonel Miller assumed command of said Group at Gowen Field, under the provisions of AR 600-20. The original activation order provided for or authorized the following details:

1. The 29th Bombardment Group (H), Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, was named as the parent Group of the new organization.
2. Under Special Order No. 180, Par. 36 dated 29 June 1943, Air Base Headquarters, Gowen Field, fifty five (55) Officers and two hundred thirty one (231) Enlisted men were assigned from the 29th Bombardment Group (H), to the new Organization as follows:
 - a. Headquarters Detachment - Eight (8) Officers, including, Lt. Col. Robert L Snider, Deputy Group Commander, and Lt. Col. Leslie D Stephenson, Group Executive Officer, and eleven (11) Enlisted men.

- b. 732nd Bomb Squadron (H) - Twelve (12) Officers including Major Curtis H Cofield, Squadron Commander, and Major Haydon A Trigg, Squadron Executive Officer, and fifty five (55) Enlisted men.
 - c. 733rd Bomb Squadron (H) - Twelve (12) Officers, including Major Robert C Sears, Squadron Commander, and Major Dana E Smith, Squadron Executive Officer, and fifty five (55) Enlisted men.
 - d. 734th Bomb Squadron (H) - Eleven (11) Officers, including Major Edward F Hubbard, Squadron Commander, and Major George L Brantingham, Squadron Executive Officer, and Fifty Five (55) Enlisted men.
 - e. 735th Bomb Squadron (H) - Twelve (12) Officers, including Major Robert F Harris, Squadron Commander, and Major Lee R Crawford, Squadron Executive Officer, and fifty five (55) Enlisted men.
3. A Command and Staff Cadre planned to consist of fifty two (52) Officers and eighty one (81) Enlisted men, to include four (4) model crews, was ordered to AAFSAT, Orlando, Florida, to begin a course of instruction on 9 July 1943. This Cadre came largely from the Officers and Enlisted men then in the Group at Gowen Field as shown by Par. 1 and 2 of Special Order No 182, Gowan Field. However, many others were ordered directly to Orlando from their previous stations.

Lt. Col. Robert L Snider, designated in said Paragraph of Orders No. 180 and 182, as Deputy Group Commander, was transferred upon his arrival in Orlando and he left the Group immediately for a new assignment.

Messages awaited the arrival of Captain Hamilton I Lee, of Texas and 1st Lt. George Lindholm, of California, advising each of the death of his father while these officers were enroute to Florida. In each instance, the great travel distance prevented the officers from attempting a trip to his home at the time.

HISTORY

453rd Bombardment Group (H)

Station 144, APO # 634

Early training in the States:

The 453rd Bombardment Group (H) was born in the hills of Idaho on 29 June 1943 at Gowen Field, Boise Idaho. Immediately upon their activation the flying echelon proceeded to the Army Air Force School of Applied Tactics at Orlando, Florida where they received training and instruction in heavy bombardment tactics, gunnery weapons etc.

On the 30th of July they were moved to the Army Air Base at Pocatello, Idaho where they were joined with their ground echelon. The first phase of training was accomplished there. This included local area flights, bombing and aerial gunnery practice.

On the 30th of September the 453rd moved to March Field, California to take up further study in Heavy Bombardment and accomplish their second and third phases of training. The training there was more extensive. It included cross country missions, navigation problems, gunnery, bombing and pilot training problems. At this time considerable time was spent in ground school instruction on problems pertaining to heavy bombardment. Training there was completed on the 28th of November and preparations were being made for the 453rd to move overseas and do their part in carrying the war to an earlier end.

AAFSAT

Cots and space were assigned at the school area to all personnel. Class instruction began at AAFSAT on 10 July and continued through 20 July. The daily period, except for Sunday, was from 0800 to 1650. In addition to attending classes on many subjects, advantage was taken of the opportunity to get acquainted and in a short time the "just a big family" idea developed. It was evident that the new Group consisted of determined, capable, and congenial men who would do a job well and get along agreeably. Warm friendships, general to the whole Group, soon developed and confidence grew.

PINECASTLE

Four B-24's were assigned, one for each squadron, and on Wednesday, 21 July, the entire cadre moved to Pinecastle Air Base, located approximately seven air miles directly south of the Orlando Air Base. This Base was an excellent airport that had the longest runway in Florida. However, general living conditions were rugged and uncomfortable. With only one exception, heavy rains visited the area every day, and the personnel waded through mud and water to meet their assignments. Mosquitoes were vicious; their long proboscides puncturing every exposed bodily surface and extracting blood, brought forth many expressions, including the on "The mosquito had decided air superiority on the base". Fortunately, there was no disease in the area and there were no ill effects.

The Pinecastle Air Base was permanently occupied by the 5th Squadron of the 9th Bombardment Group (H), and it furnished additional planes and crews for missions. Other squadrons were located at Orlando, Brooksville, and Montbrook, all part of AAFSAT. The 9th Bomb Group issued operational field orders from its Headquarters at Signal Hill, to direct the activities of the four

groups

then

attending

AAFSAT.

Those Groups were the 477th Bombardment Group (L) at Montbrook, the 453rd and 454th Bombardment Groups (H) at Pinecastle, and the 452nd Bombardment Group (H) at Brooksville. These field orders at times provided for joint operations by several of these groups. A total of seven missions were run by the 453rd. A brief account of the details of these missions follows:

23 July 1943

The 452nd, 453rd and 454th Bomb Groups (H) attacked the dock and warehouse areas at Wilmington. The 453rd dispatched five B-24's. Two of them returned to Base from a point about 60 miles west of Charleston because of bad weather. The other three reached the target simulated the prescribed attack and returned to the base area from which they were ordered. However, because of weather, they were ordered to proceed to Tampa where they landed and remained until the following day. Fighter interception by P-39's was experienced on this first mission. This mission was planned and briefed by the Group Staff, Commanded by Col. Miller.

24 July 1943

The 452nd, 453rd and 454th Bomb Groups (H) participated in a simulated attack on the "Schorndorf Synthetic Oil Works, on the northwest outskirts of Berlin". The actual target for the simulated attack was the oil refinery and tank farm at Baton Rouge. The 453rd dispatched three planes from this base, all of them made the simulated attack and they also bombed at the Cedar Keys Bombing Range. Shipping was sighted and a blimp was observed. This mission was planned and briefed by the 735th Bomb Squadron Staff, commanded by Major Harris.

25 July 1943

The 452nd, 453rd and 454th Bomb Groups (H), attacked the Wharves at New Orleans. Four planes were dispatched by the 453rd. Because of weather two of them returned to base from 29 degrees, 45' N. 84 degrees, 42' W. The remaining two reached and simulated an attack on the primary target. One plane had bomb-rack failure and bombed at the Cedar Keys Bombing Range. Eight heavy freighters at Panama City and three naval aircraft 25 miles southeast of Pensacola were observed. The Staff of the 734th Bomb Squadron, commanded by Major Hubbard, planned and briefed for this mission.

26 July 1943

No mission was ordered for today. After attending to individual Group or Squadron duties, The Cadre was permitted to use the day for personal affairs. The flying schedule had been heavy and the crews welcomed this opportunity for rest and recreation.

27 July 1943

The 453rd and 454th Bomb Groups (H) were ordered to attack the docks and repair ships at Charleston, South Carolina. The 453rd sent five B-24's on this mission; One missed the target, another failed because weather over the area caused it to return to base, and three made attacks at the South Cedar keys Range. One plane did not have a bombsight and only made a dry run. Fighter

interception by 12 P-47's was experienced. A convoy, much shipping activity and many aircraft were observed. This mission was planned and briefed by the Staff of the 732nd Squadron, commanded by Major Cofield.

28 July 1943

The 453rd and 454th Bomb Groups (H) were ordered to attack a convoy reported at a given point in the Atlantic Ocean with certain heading and speed, as a primary target, and the dam and power station at Augusta, Georgia as a secondary target. A slick was released to represent the convoy. The 453rd had five planes on this mission; one returned soon after take off because of engine trouble, one attacked the primary target and four attacked the secondary target. Fighter interception was experienced. Thunder storms necessitated calling the planes back to base before starting the planned searchlight runs. The Staff of the 733rd Bomb Squadron, commanded by Major Sears, planned and briefed this mission.

29 July 1943

The 453rd and 454th Bomb Groups (H), participated in a simulated attack on the Water Works on the Weser River in Bremen, Germany. The actual target was really in Columbia, South Carolina. The 453rd dispatched four B-24's on this mission, all of which attacked the primary target. However only three actually dropped bombs on the Ocala Bombing Range because one plane had no bombardier among the crewmembers. Much shipping and many aircraft were observed. This mission was planned and briefed by the Group Staff, commanded by Colonel Miller.

30 July 1943

The 453rd and 454th Bomb Groups (H) were ordered to carry on a simulated attack on Whale Rock Island, located within sight of Yucatan, then to bomb a slick to be dropped 30 miles to the southeast. Four planes took off for the 453rd

and all attacked the primary target and bombed the slick. On return to Florida, three aircraft made two runs each through the searchlight area. Observations included heavy shipping, aircraft, and smudge pots or smoldering fire. This final mission was planned and briefed by the Staff of the 735th Bomb Squadron, Commanded by Major Harris.

By this time it had been definitely determined that the Group would be stationed, at least temporarily, at Pocatello, Idaho. Earlier plans or rumors included Wendover, Utah; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Boise, Idaho. Orders were issued for travel from Orlando, Florida to Pocatello, Idaho, by troop train, by private conveyance and by military airplane, using the four B-24's assigned to the Group. Travel began on Saturday, 31 July, and was accomplished as specified in the Special Orders pertaining thereto. No unusual occurrence accompanied the prescribed TPA travel or the travel by military airplane. Possible exceptions were that automobiles were strained to make Pocatello by the following Friday, and a maintenance delay held the planes at Ft. Worth, Texas, from Sunday night until Tuesday morning. The travel by troop train was made more interesting by the fact that Captain John C. McFadden, in command, missed the train twice, first at Denver and next at Cheyenne, but he managed to make Pocatello with his troops. Someone suggested that he caught his train in one instance by going to the highway and thumbing a ride on a truck.

GOWEN FIELD

The Group Cadre at Gowen Field performed the usual garrison duties from the time the Group was organized until ordered to move. Lt. Colonel Stephenson reported that the fishing was poor. During the waiting period the usual rumors prevailed and a future home was reported as likely at the following bases via: Wendover, Utah; Bruning, Nebraska; Lincoln, Nebraska; Salt Lake City and Pocatello, Idaho. Finally the orders directed movement by troop train to

Pocatello. Wives drove automobiles because TPA was not authorized. Major Hayden A. Trigg, Executive Officer of the 732nd Squadron was train commander. 2nd Lt. James H. Van Swearingen, Property Officer, was still checking property when the troop train left, but he ordered a jeep and caught the train at the next station. Some confusion developed at this station when a dog selected the train commander as his victim. Headline: "Dog bites Major Trigg, train delayed, Jeep wins race".

POCATELLO

The base at Pocatello, Idaho was not prepared to take care of an additional Heavy Bombardment Group, but every-thing possible was done to assign comfortable living quarters and working facilities. The Group Headquarters was located in the old Officers' Club, adjoining the Officers' mess and across the lot from a new Officers' Club. Group Operations was moved to a separate building to afford needed room. Squadron Headquarters were set up in other buildings on the base, but Squadron Operations, Intelligence, Armament, Communications, Medical, and in one instance, Technical Supplies were assigned tents near the ramp for their respective duties. Organization details were quickly completed and arrangements were made to take care of new crews and other personnel to join the Group. Flying missions were run in every Squadron and training for future tasks was the constant call and endeavor. Several flights were made by Group and Squadron Officers to Wendover, Utah to visit O.T.U. Groups, then in second and third phase training, in order to get ideas as to best methods. Programs for crew and maintenance training, including ground school, were planned and prepared.

14 August 1943

The men will always remember the day of 14 August 1943 in these early days of the 453rd Bomb Group. On this day the Group experienced the loss of a B-24 and its entire crew. Early that afternoon a training and photographic mission was planned in the 735th Bomb Squadron and the following Officers and Enlisted men comprised the crew on ill-fated plane No. 41-29032:

- 1 -Marital Status
- 2 -G - Designates original Cadre at Gowen Field
-O - Designates original Cadre at AAF SAT
- 3 -Rank
- 4 -Name
- 5 -Position in Crew
- 6 -Organization
- 7 -Home address or that of nearest relative

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
M	O	2nd Lt.	MacGowan, David H.	Pilot	735th	121 Madison Ave. New York City, NY
M	O	2nd Lt.	Kerschner, Allen F.	Co-Pilot	735th	604 Shelby St. St. Paul, MN
M	O	2nd Lt.	Schroeer, Lyle P.	Navigator	735th	6223rd Ave. East Ashland, WI
M	O	2nd Lt.	Davis, Royce O.	P.I.	Group	1030 St. Paul St. Denver, 6, CO
S	O	T/Sgt.	Warner, Vernon L.	Mech.	735th	241 "A" Ave National City, CA
S	O	S/Sgt.	Hampton, Granville	Cr-Chf.	735th	3518 Howell St. Dallas, TX
S	O	S/Sgt.	Bradshaw, Jesse P.	Radio	735th	3612 South Adams St. Fort Worth, TX
M	G	S/Sgt.	Roberts, Herbert W.	Photo	732nd	445 Meadow St. Waterbury, CT
S	O	S/Sgt.	Parkey, William G.	Radio	732nd	Shopville, KY
M	O	S/Sgt.	Stock, Chester W.	Clerk	732nd	201 Cullen St. Whittier, CA
S	O	S/Sgt.	Baiocchi, Joseph	Mech.	732nd	835 La Salle St. Berwick, PA

At a point approximately thirteen miles south of Du Bois, Wyoming, this plane was Caught in a blind canyon and crashed into the mountainside. Complete destruction of the plane resulted and every member of the crew was killed instantaneously. A forest fire followed this accident, which led to the discovery of the burned wreckage and the bodies of the victims. Considerable difficulty accompanied the recovery of the bodies due to the inaccessibility of the terrain. Colonel Miller, Group Commanding Officer, and Major Lloyd, Group Medical Officer, immediately went to the scene of the accident to personally direct and assist in the rescue work. Everything possible was done to alleviate the grief of the relatives of these excellent men. Their lives were given to the service and their contributions will be forever remembered as one of real, substantial and lasting value. The following is quoted from a letter received from Mrs. Elizabeth C. MacGowan, mother of the Pilot:

"It is with poignant pleasure we read your letter in which you say so many of his friends and comrades were interested in him. Thank them for both of us and for him too. You can be sure if it is possible, that he and the other gallant lads, who have given their lives for the Army Air Force, will be flying down the skies ahead of your planes and into combat. They will be there for the skies are eternally theirs."

GROUND SCHOOL

Twelve (12) man crews, complete except that navigators were not available, were assigned to the Group under date of 24 August 1943, SO 256, Paragraph 1, Gowen Field. These crews were assigned to their respective squadrons on the 26th, and on 27th of August 1943, Ground School directed by Major Frank E. Sullivan, with St Lt. Lindholm, 0404327, as Schools Officer, went into effect.

Classes were conducted daily from 0700 to 1730 hours and covered the many subjects prescribed for first phase training, with the result that the requirements were reasonably taken care of in that respect for the crews available. Special classes were conducted for the Navigators who were later assigned. The school was conducted on a group basis except that, for the first few days at Pocatello, the squadrons for their own crews and other personnel conducted ground school.

DEPUTY COMMANDER

Major Sears, Robert C., 021906, Commanding Officer of the 733rd Squadron, was given additional duties as Deputy Group Commander on 16 August 1943. On the following 24th, Captain Kanaga, Robert H., 01699236, recently assigned to the Group, was designated as Commanding Officer of the 733rd Squadron and Major Sears was relieved from such duties, thereafter devoting his time as Deputy Group Commander.

POCATELLO AIR BASE

Major R.H. White, Base Commanding Officer, his Staff and Personnel continuously cooperated to make the 453rd Bomb Group appreciate the Pocatello Air Base. The result was that this Group would long remember very favorably the time spent and the training had at that friendly base.

PHOTO SECTION

2nd Lt. Jess L. Gerding, 0-862316, reported to the Group on 31 August and he immediately proceeded with the task of setting up the Photographic Section, securing the necessary personnel and equipment for instruction to the crews and

particularly the gunners, in preparation for camera bombing and camera gunnery. These programs continued to develop and improve through the succeeding phases of training, and a special school was set up about the middle of third phase training to insure that the gunners were fully instructed in their duties in handling the cameras assigned for their use on the respective missions. A great many pictures were taken in the flying vicinity of March Field, for use in preparation of photographic maps and target charts. The pictures taken were used as targets for camera bombing.

Developing processes were set up to record the results in camera gunnery. Many pictures were secured of targets which were not actually used in the training program, which will be available for other bombardment groups, or units to be trained at March Field. 1st Lt. James I. Shaw, O-724230, Group Bombardier, worked with Lt. Gerding in the selection of points for photography and he chose such targets as were used for camera bombing in the Group missions flown during the third phase. In addition to the foregoing, this section was responsible for the pictures secured for use with the Group and Squadron Histories.

GROUP MOVEMENT

It was assumed and assured that the Group would not remain at Pocatello for second and third phase training, and there was much speculation as to where the organization might be sent. Originally, it was thought that we would move to Sioux City, Iowa. Finally, it rested between Langley Field and March Field, First or fourth Air Forces, with the result that March Field, Riverside, California, was appointed the new home for the 453rd Bomb Group. Colonel Miller, Group Commanding Officer, accompanied by other Staff members, visited March Field and the Headquarters of the 4th Bomber Command and 4th Air Force at San Francisco, California, and gave to the members of this group the picture of what

might be expected at this new home. The advance party left by troop train on 22 September and proceeded to make what arrangements could be made for the arrival of the crews, planes and main train movements. The 30th Bomb Group (H) was still at March Field at the time the advance party arrived and it was several days before very much could be accomplished. However, when the next Group movement was made the various sections had set up their respective offices and the Group, as a whole was ready to function. The entire personnel traveled by troop train or as crew in B-24's, assigned to the Group.

NEW CREWS

Many new crews were assigned to the Group during the last days at Pocatello and the remainder arrived shortly after Headquarters were established at March Field. These crews were not evenly trained. Some had had very little training in the planes and this added to the task of creating a trained Group. The tactical training was planned and handled in the Squadron throughout the first and second phases.

SECOND PHASE

Ground School at March Field, for the second phase, was begun under Group control and supervision. 1st Lt. Benjamin F. Hale, 0-560519, was named Schools Officer. Classrooms were set up in the respective hangars occupied by the Squadrons. The several sections assigned instructors for the required courses, schedules were strictly maintained and this method continued until 24 October when the Squadrons basis was adopted. Thereafter, for the remainder of this phase of training, which ended on 4 November, ground school instruction was handled as a separate squadron function, each making its own schedule and furnishing its own instructors for the prescribed courses.

THIRD PHASE

Ground School continued for this entire period as a Squadron function. Third Phase Missions began on 5 November, beginning with Mission No. 4, prepared by Group in accordance with the directive of the 4th Air Force. The missions as first planned included fighter interception, actual bombing at Muroc Range, the camera bombing of two or three targets, actual gunnery on the gunnery range, camera gunnery for fleeting targets, and navigation.

It was found that all these activities could not be worked into a satisfactory six-hour mission. Therefore, beginning 7 November, the missions were planned and executed to eliminate actual gunnery. To accomplish this and still give complete training, only three squadrons in a planned rotation participated thereafter in the two daily Group missions, while the other squadron had squadron missions involving chiefly actual gunnery and bombing. In addition to this, each of the three squadrons participating in the two daily Group missions planned and executed another six-hour mission daily. One Group mission was briefed and led by squadron personnel, rotating the duties to give as many as possible experience in these functions.

Many interesting and instructive missions were used. Points of special interest for camera bombing included Lincoln Field, Consolidated Plant, Docks and other installations at San Diego; The Douglas Aircraft Plant, Airfield, Dummy and other installations at Los Angeles; Oil tanks, Round houses and bridges at Bakersfield; and the point on Catalina Island and Guadeloupe Island. Several camouflaged targets were used. Mission folders, target charts, target approach charts, photographic maps and actual photographs were prepared and used to aid in these missions. A Beloptican was used as an aid at briefings to show

charts, maps and pictures. Mission plans in detail and mission route overlays held for Airplane Commanders, Pilots, Navigators, Bombardiers and Radio Operators, and frequently special instruction were conducted for gunners after the main briefing. The main briefing was attended by all crewmembers that were to participate in the mission.

NEW DEPUTY GROUP COMMANDER

Major Robert C. Sears was assigned as Commanding Officer to the 735th Squadron and Major Robert F. Harris was relieved of such duties and named as the new Deputy Group Commander. This exchange of duties became effective on 13 October 1943. On the same day, Major Harris was named as Group Air Inspector.

P O M INSPECTION

The Group P O M Inspection was held on 13 and 15 November. On 16 November it was announced at Group Staff Meeting that it had been passed successfully passed. It was understood that rigid training would continue and the regular third-phase plans were carried out during the remainder of the time at March Field.

O.T.U.

Operational Training Supervisory Unit No. 1 was provided by the 4th Air Force as an aid to our training at March Field and consisted of Colonel Robert C. Cork and the Officers and Enlisted men of his command.

The contacts which these Officers and E/M had at March Field, with 4th Bomber Command and 4thTH Air Force, together with their zeal and effort to be helpful in the many problems involved in the training schedule at March Field, did much to help the 453rd Bomb Group (H). Some slight friction developed at first in some sections but they were quickly remedied. An understanding of the desire and effort of all involved making the 453rd an efficient and well-trained unit was all that was necessary for complete harmony. The consensus was that the O.T.U. idea is good and that it functioned well in this experiment. The personnel of the 453rd Group will long remember favorably O.T.U. No.1 and its personnel. Colonel Cork and his excellent staff have merited this expression of approval and confidence.

MARCH FIELD

Accommodations at March Field were very good. Each squadron had a separate hangar affording necessary office space for all functions. Orderly rooms, Supply rooms, Mess hall, and E/M barracks were assigned to each squadron near its hangar. All Officers were housed in a large BOQ formerly used by enlisted men, and an Officers mess was set up in the same building. Group Headquarters was on the line and conveniently located with the 735th Squadron, next to it, followed by the 734th, 733rd and 732nd Squadrons, in that order. Because Group Headquarters, originally used as Base Headquarters, was not wholly for use of the 453rd, the S-2 and S-4 offices were located in a one story building across the street and off the line. All accommodations were satisfactory and much better than usually expected.

March Field, an old base, offered many facilities for recreation and entertainment, in fact many more than the busy 453rd Bomb Group had time to use.

Colonel Charles R. Melin, his Base Headquarters and its Personnel offered excellent cooperation in all matters pertaining to Group training and comfort. This was much appreciated and will be long remembered.

OVERSEAS MOVEMENT

The Commanding Officer, Colonel Miller, conferred with Headquarters, 4th Air Force, San Francisco, regarding our overseas movement and thereafter on 25 October 1943, Major Robert F. Harris, Major H.B. White, Major Harvey L. Lloyd, and Lt. Walter R. Beckett, accompanied by S/ Sgt. Frank C. White, went to San Francisco to acquaint themselves with the general situation, traveling pursuant to Group Special Order No. 85, Par.1.

HISTORY

453rd Bombardment Group (H)

Station 144, APO #634

Transfer of Group to the ETO:

The 453rd Bombardment Group, Composed of the 732nd, 733rd, 734th and the 735th Bombardment Squadrons left March Field, California by rail on 2 December and arrived at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey for POE on the 7th of December, 1943. They were quickly put through the final processing and boarded their ship, the mighty Queen Elizabeth on the 13th of December. After an uneventful voyage they arrived in the British Isles on the 21st of December 1943. The remainder of the trip was made by train and the first section arrived at Station #144 on the morning of the 23rd of December, the second section arrived the next day. After a day or so of getting settled the 453rd was beginning to set up its new home for operations against the Axis.

While the ground echelon was moving overseas by boat, the air echelon traveled to Hamilton Field, California, was processed there and received their new airplanes. From Hamilton Field the air echelon moved brokenly across the Southern sector of the United States and flew to their new Station by the southern route. This was quite an event for everyone because they saw many things that were new to them and were very interesting. Terrible weather conditions caused some delay at different points along the route but the first contingent arrived at Station #144 soon after the first of the year and the last crews arrived by the first of February.

The crews began training immediately. They are now participating in full strength on operations against the Axis, as a new part of the American contribution to the Allied air effort.

DECEMBER 1943, JANUARY and FEBRUARY, 1944

On December 1 1943 the Air Transport Command flew Lt. Col. Leslie D. Stephenson, the Group Executive Officer; Major Frank C. Sullivan, the Group Operations Officer; Captain Victor F. Sieverding, the Group Intelligence Officer, and Captain John S. Braun, the Group Communications Officer from the States to Station #144 in England. They left early to make preparations for billeting the Group upon its arrival. Station #144 is located near Old Buckenham, which is about 80 miles from London, and 15 miles from the City of Norwich.

The 467th Sub-Depot, 1792nd Ordnance Company, 1231st Quartermaster Company Aviation Detachment (A), as well as a Royal Air Force Detachment were there to greet these officers on their arrival. Lt. Col. John H. Johnson, the highest-ranking officer present, acted as Base Commander until Major Robert Sears arrived. Maj. Sears acted as Base Commander until Col. Joseph A. Miller, the Group's actual Commander, arrived on January 23, 1944.

The ground echelon arrived at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey on December 7, 1943, where they were processed for their journey to the British Isles. They arrived at Gourock on the Firth of Clyde near Glasgow, Scotland on the 21st of December

1943. The vanguard of the ground echelon arrived at their final destination, Station #144, the morning of December 23rd. The following day, the remainder of the ground echelon arrived.

(See "Journey to Old Buck" - Pg. M-2, in the "Memories" Section.)

During this time the air echelon was making final preparations at their P.O.E., Morrison Field, Florida for their departure overseas. The men were busy getting processed and the planes were being put in tip-top shape for the long journey overseas by the southern route. Crew # 43, piloted by Lt. Samuel Dean of the 734th Squadron, crashed on take-off as the Group was leaving.

There were no survivors among the crew or the passengers they had been carrying. After the crash, the passengers the other planes had been scheduled to carry were removed and diverted by the Air Transport Command through La Guardia Field, New York City as their P.O.E. to fly the northern route. All planes of the Group completed their journey to their overseas destination by the 5th of February 1944.

The arriving men of the 453rd Bombardment Group found their new base in turmoil. The prevailing weather conditions of rain, snow and cold winds made the base a quagmire. Minor cases of colds and flu took a big toll. Men were issued over-shoes to counteract the mud.

As each squadron came in, they set up their own operational offices on the line. All departments had their own separate installations except Intelligence and Communications that were consolidated at Group Headquarters.

During this time the field was supervised and guided by the Royal Air Force with squadron Leader L.E. Archer, Commanding. This detachment acted as a liaison unit to help set up Station # 144. On the 5th of February, this guidance ceased. The Union Jack was brought down and the Stars and Stripes were raised. The field was turned over in a colorful ceremony at which time Col. Miller accepted it on behalf of the United States Government from Squadron Leader L.E. Archer.

HISTORY

453rd Bombardment Group (H)

Station 144, APO #634

ROSTER OF STAFF HEADS AND KEY PERSONNEL

HEADQUARTERS

<u>RANK AND NAME</u>	<u>DATE JOINED GROUP</u>	<u>DUTY</u>
<u>COLONEL</u>		
Miller, Joseph A.	6/22/43	Commanding Officer
<u>LT. COLONEL</u>		
Stephenson, Leslie D.	6/29/43	Executive Officer
<u>MAJORS</u>		
Kemp, Edward K	8/28/43	Group S-4
Lloyd, Harvey L	6/29/43	Group Flight Surgeon
Sears, Robert C.	6/29/43	Group Deputy
Commander		
Sullivan, Frank C.	6/29/43	Group Opr. Officer
White, Harold B.	6/29/43	Group Adjutant
<u>CAPTAINS</u>		
Sieverding, Victor F	7/1/43	Group S-2 Officer
Smith, Clayton H.	8/18/43	Group Dental Officer

ROSTER OF STAFF HEADS AND KEY PERSONNEL (Continued)

<u>RANK AND NAME</u>	<u>DATE JOINED GROUP</u>	<u>DUTY</u>
<u>1st . LIEUTENANTS</u>		
Fairhurst, Kirk S	7/2/43	Group Eng. Officer
Hale, Benjamin F.	8/7/43	Special Serv. Officer
Kellow, Clifford C.	6/29/43	Group Comm. Officer
Lieb, Harry K.	6/26/43	Personnel Officer
Lindholm, George F.	6/29/43	Group Nav. Officer
Nixon, Forrest D., Jr.	6/29/43	Asst. Opr. Officer
O'Dell, Willard M.	8/25/43	Asst. Gp. S-2 Officer
Shaw, James I.	6/29/43	Group Bomb Officer

2ND LIEUTENANTS

Gerding, Jess L.	8/27/43	Group Photo Officer
Held Shirley L.	7/12/43	Group Weather Officer
Pringle, Reed A.	6/29/43	Group Stat. Officer

732nd BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H.)

MAJORS

Cofield, Curtis H.	6/29/43	Commanding Officer
Trigg, Hayden A.	6/29/43	Executive Officer

1st. LIEUTENANTS

Crowley, Joseph N., Jr.	6/30/43	Sq. S-2 Officer
Klockow, Willard E.	6/29/43	Medical Officer
Webster, Frank R., Jr.	6/29/43	Operations Officer

ROSTER OF STAFF HEADS AND KEY PERSONNEL (Continued)

RANK AND NAME DATE JOINED GROUP DUTY

733rd BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)

MAJOR

Smith, Dana E. 6/29/43 Executive Officer

CAPTAINS

Kanaga, Robert H. 8/22/43 Commanding Officer

McFadden, John C. 7/1/43 Sq. S-2 Officer

1st. LIEUTENANTS

Coggeshall, Robert D. 8/14/43 Operations Officer

Kammen, Leo 7/1/43 Medical Officer

734th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)

MAJORS

Hubbard, Edward F. 6/29/43 Commanding Officer

Brantingham, George L. 6/29/43 Executive Officer

1st. LIEUTENANTS

Currin, Richard L. 7/1/43 Medical Officer

Lawrence, Winston J. 6/29/43 Sq. Ops. Officer

Smith, Vernon L. 7/1/43 Sq. S-2 Officer

ROSTER OF STAFF HEADS AND KEY PERSONNEL (Continued)

<u>RANK AND NAME</u>	<u>DATE JOINED GROUP</u>	<u>DUTY</u>
<u>735th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)</u>		
<u>MAJORS</u>		
Harris, Robert F.	6/29/43	Commanding Officer
Crawford, Lee R.	6/29/43	Executive Officer
<u>CAPTAINS</u>		
Lee, Hamilton I.	6/30/43	Sq. S-2 Officer
Tucker, Albert M.	6/30/43	Medical Officer
<u>2nd LIEUTENANT</u>		
Clingan, Wilbur L.	8/20/43	Sq. Opr. Officer

THE
COMBAT
MISSIONS

The Combat Missions

February, 1944

MISSION # 1 - TOURS, FRANCE - 5 - FEB. - SAT.

The target was the airfield at Tours, France. It was a successful mission and all planes returned safely.

MISSION # 2 - SIRACOURT, FRANCE - 6 FEB. - SUN.

The target was a concrete construction installation, which were launching ramps for the V-2 rocket bombs being aimed at London.

Lt. Alfred Voskian of the 735th Squadron, flying "Little Agnes" crashed on take-off. Only Lt. Voskian, Pilot and S/Sgt. Archie Bloodworth, Engineer survived. The eight other crewmembers were killed. Lt. Voskian suffered a fractured spine and burns on both hands and ear. S/Sgt. Bloodworth suffered a broken leg and hip.

The following is what Lt. Voskian remembers before and after the crash -- after being a week later when he finally woke up. "We started our takeoff run, and got off the ground in normal fashion. However, after gaining an altitude of about 75-80 feet we stopped climbing and began to settle. I do not remember hitting the ground, but thought my wheels should have been halfway up when we did hit the ground. Major Sears, our squadron commander, confirmed that when he visited me in the hospital. We had 10 5001b bombs on board. He told me that after we hit the ground, we were sliding well, until we reached the end of the runway, where there was a ditch about 10 feet wide and six feet deep. At that point, the ship broke up, one bomb exploded and one bomb broke in half and the powder was burning. They salvaged the other eight bombs".

MISSION # 3 GILZE-RIJEN, HOLLAND - 10 FEB. - THURS.

The target was the Gilze-Rijen Airfield, southeast of Rotterdam, Holland.

All planes returned safely.

MISSION # 4 - HAMBURES, FRANCE - 11 FEB. - FRI.

The target was a construction installation at Hambures, France.

All 24 planes returned safely.

MISSION # 5 - SIRACOURT, FRANCE - 13 FEB. - SUN.

The target was the construction installation at Siracourt, France.

All 24 planes returned safely.

MISSION # 6 - SIRACOURT, FRANCE - 15 FEB. - TUES.

Once again the construction installation at Siracourt, France was the target. All 19 planes returned safely from a very successful mission.

MISSION # 7 - BRUNSWICK, GERMANY - 20 FEB. - SUN.

24 planes took off to bomb Brunswick, Germany. 23 planes returned safely; one plane did not return.

MISSION # 8 - ACHMER, GERMANY - 21 FEB. - MON.

The target was the airfield at Achmer, Germany. All planes returned safely.

MISSION # 9 - GOTHA, GERMANY - 22 FEB. - TUES.

The target was the aircraft assembly plant at Gotha, Germany. 27 of the 28 planes returned safely. Lt. Ingram of the 733rd Sq. and his entire crew were lost in aircraft # 42-64138. (Missing Aircrew Report #2495)

MISSION # 10 - GOTHA, GERMANY - 24 FEB. - THURS.

Once again the target was the ME 110 aircraft assembly plant. On this particular Gotha mission 16 aircraft came down in Switzerland, the highest figure for one operation. A total of 33 aircraft were destroyed. The 453rd was one of the few Bomb Groups in the whole Eighth Air Force who managed to avoid heavy losses on one single mission. Considering the duration and ferocity of the air battle this was an unbelievable feat. This time the mission was successful. The plant was destroyed. All 26 planes returned safely.

MISSION # 11 - FURTH, GERMANY - 25 FEB. - FRI.

The target was another aircraft factory near Nuremburg, Germany. 22 planes took off on this mission, however only 21 returned. Lt. Paul E. Kloeppel and almost all of his crew were lost. The only survivors were F/O Dixon P Griffith, co-pilot; T/Sgt James R Farris, engineer and T/Sgt. Robert Cunningham, radio operator. The aircraft factory was destroyed. This was the last raid of the month of February.

On the 14th of February, Colonel Joseph A Miller presented awards to three officers of the 734th Bombardment Squadron during the evening mess. 1st Lt. Van Dowda was presented with the Distinguished Flying Cross for his action in a previous engagement in the Aleutians. 2nd Lt. Clifford A Bertagnoli and 2nd Lt. Warren R Carter were presented with the Air Medal for meritorious achievement during the Groups first five missions.

The final week of February was known as the "Big Week" of the Eighth Air Force when over 3300 sorties were flown. It was a very costly week of operations but it did cause quite an appreciable amount of damage to the German fighter production, which was later estimated to have been reduced by almost 50%. The American airmen were engaged in waging a war of bloody attrition against the German fighters, not only by their continuous heavy bombardment of aircraft factories and airfields but also in the air where the gunners and fighter groups

were taking a very steady and costly toll of the Luftwaffe's fighter resources. The 453rd lost three planes and their crews during the first month of operations.

The Combat Missions

March, 1944

MISSION # 12 - ORANIENBURG, GERMANY - 3 MAR. - FRI.

20 planes were dispatched against Oranienburg and 20 planes returned. Bombing results were unknown due to a complete undercast.

MISSION # 13 - CAZAUX, FRANCE - 5 MAR. - SUN.

The Group sought Cazaux but due to an undercast and lack of PFF equipment, bombs were not dropped on this target. Instead, the airdrome of Bergerac nearby received the payload of the 23 planes that had been dispatched. All planes returned.

MISSION # 14 - BERLIN, GERMANY - 6 MAR. - MON.

March 6 was an historic day. Berlin felt the sting of the first daylight attack. Four of the 24 planes sent out by the group failed to return. Lt. Cripe and his crew of the 734th Squadron along with Lt. Tobin and his crew went down over enemy territory. Lts. Crockett of the 733rd and Meek of the 735th Squadron

ditched their planes in the Channel. Lt. Joseph G. Cyr was the lone survivor of Lt. Meek's crew. Lts. George P. Nacos and Orvis C. Martin, plus S/Sgts. William T. Talbott and Max A. Martin were picked up with Lt. Crockett. Lt. Richard C. Holman had two engines put out by flak over the heart of Berlin. Attempts to tag on to passing formations failed so Lt. Holman dropped to the cloud level, chased by six or seven FW-190's. With only top turret and waist guns in operation the crew accounted for two and possibly three of the enemy aircraft. Evading the attackers, the crew ran into flak over Amsterdam. Lt. Holman put the crippled Lib through violent evasive action, finally reaching the Channel. Desperately short of fuel, guns, ammunition boxes, flying equipment and all other equipment that could be detached were tossed overboard by the crew. Despite serious damage by flak and 20MM cannon shells the "two engine" bomber brought Lt. Holman and his crew home without so much as a scratch.

(See "The Rough Edges" - Pg. M-4, in the "Memories" Section)

MISSION # 15 - BERLIN, GERMANY - 8 MAR. - WED.

The Group dispatched 20 planes to Berlin for the second time in three days. The bombing results were excellent. The ball bearing factory at Erkner in southeastern Berlin was thought to be practically destroyed. The Group lost only one plane and crew, Lt. Ehrmann of the 732nd Squadron.

Lt. Ehrmann, flying B-24 No. 42-52175, "Portland Anne" was hit by flak over Berlin and had to bail out over Holland. The plane crashed near Balkbrug. One gunner broke his ankle but the rest of the crew was with the underground from one to six months. In the end, the Germans captured them all. The crewmembers were:

1/Lt.	Everett G. Ehrmann	(P)	Escaped,	POW-21 July 1944,
	France			

2/Lt.	William H. Hammond	(CP)	Escaped,	POW in Belgium.
2/Lt.	Marlowe B. Olson	(NAV)	Escaped,	POW in Antwerp.
2/Lt.	Walter H. Kendall	(BOM)	Escaped,	POW 22 Apr. 1944, France
S/Sgt.	Donald E. Anderson	(R)	Immediately,	POW- was wounded.
S/Sgt.	Odell Hooper	(TTG)	Escaped,	POW in Antwerp.
S/Sgt.	Morgan E. Hartman	(BTG)	Immediately,	POW in Ommen.
S/Sgt.	Paul H. Moseley	(RWG)	Escaped,	POW in Antwerp.
T/Sgt.	Bon E. Boswell	(LWG)	Escaped,	POW in Antwerp.
S/Sgt.	Michael Kopcza	(TG)	Escaped,	POW in Antwerp.

MISSION # 16 - BRANDENBURG, GERMANY - 9 MAR. - THURS.

The target was Brandenburg, 12 ships were dispatched. All returned - results were unobserved.

MISSION # 17 - (PONTHION DOMART), FRANCE - 13 MAR. - MON.

Twenty-five ships were dispatched today. No bombs were dropped due to the solid overcast and the absence of PFF equipment. All aircraft returned.

This Station suffered a slight attack by the Germans on March 14. Incendiaries were dropped but no casualties were reported and only a few brush fires resulted with no damage to installations or equipment.

MISSION #18 - BRUNSWICK, GERMANY - 15 Mar. - Wed.

22 ships were dispatched to Brunswick and all returned. Again, an undercast prevented visual bombing and the results were unobserved.

MISSION # 19 - FRIEDRICHSHAFEN, GERMANY - 16 MAR. - THURS.

21 ships were dispatched to the target. All returned safely but the results were unobserved.

MISSION # 20 FRIEDRICHAFEN, GERMANY - 18 MAR. - SAT.

This mission will be remembered for a long time. Friedrichshafen was situated on the banks of Lake Constance close to the border of Switzerland. This was a long and deep penetration raid. The 453rd was given the wing lead. The weather conditions over the target were expected to be nigh on to perfect for visual bombing. However, when the attacking force arrived they found that the Germans had set up a very effective smoke screen largely coming from barges anchored on the lake. To add to their discomfort the B-24 crews found themselves coming under very concentrated and accurate flak as well as encountering quite sustained fighter attacks.

Col. Joseph A. Miller, Group Commanding Officer, together with Capt. Joseph O'Reilly, the newly appointed Group Navigator, flew in the lead ship that was piloted by young, promising Capt. Stock of the 733rd Squadron. Bombing results were good but Col. Miller's ship failed to return. The ship was last seen heading for Switzerland, apparently in distress. On the return flight Lt. Stanley Kelly's badly damaged aircraft crash landed at Goudhurst. The Bombardier, Lt. Irving Dolin, the Ball Turret Gunner, S/Sgt. John A Spies and the Tail Gunner, S/Sgt. Thomas A Burns lost their lives in the crash.

Col. Miller had been with the Group since its inception on June 29, 1943. He had watched and aided its growth from a fledgling organization into a full-grown, hard hitting Bombardment Group. This was his fourth mission and his loss was an unexpected and hard blow. Capt. O'Reilly had, just 13 days previous, been promoted from 1st Lt. and that very day assumed the duties of Group navigator,

relieving Capt. Lindholm. The mission to Friedrichshafen was his fourth mission, and his first as Group Navigator. Those they left behind will long remember both men. Capt. Bolis assumed the duties of Group Navigator upon the loss of Capt. O'Reilly.

On March 19th, Lt. Col. Ramsay D. Potts assumed command of the Group. Col. Potts had been a member of Gen. Ted Timberlake's famous "Flying Circus", and brought with him the experience gained from 32 combat missions. He had led a bomber formation in the spectacular raid against Ploesti and had partaken in the bombing of Rome. Col. Potts is one of the most decorated officers in the ETO. He holds the DSC, the Silver Star with oak leaf clusters, the DFC and the Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters. Before coming to the 453rd he had held several high positions in both the 2nd Combat Wing and 2nd Bombardment Division.

MISSION # 21 - FRANKFURT, GERMANY - 20 MAR. - MON.

13 planes took off for Frankfort but were forced to return due to adverse weather conditions.

MISSION # 22 - BASDORF, GERMANY - 22 MAR. - WED.

19 planes were dispatched against the Basdorf airfield, near Berlin. An undercast prevented observations and Berlin as the secondary target was bombed. All planes returned.

MISSION # 23 - HANDORF, GERMANY - 23 MAR. - THURS.

The target was the airfield at Handorf, near Munster. 21 planes were dispatched and the marshalling yards at Munster were bombed as the secondary target due to adverse weather conditions over the Primary. Lt. Hamilton and his crew of the 733rd Squadron were lost on this mission. Lt. Hamilton, flying B-24 serial no. 42-52277, crashed near Bruinehaar, Holland, The crewmembers were:

1/Lt.	James W. Hamilton	(P)	KIA
F/0	George T. Kina	(CP)	POW, Ittbrbeck, Germany
2/Lt.	William F. Kern	(NAV)	POW, Oldendorf, Germany
2/Lt.	Henry C. Kier	(BOM)	POW, Oldendorf, Germany
T/Sgt.	John F. Smith	(R)	POW, Itterbeck, Germany
S/Sgt.	Jerome J. Norris	(TG)	POW, Itterbeck, Germany
S/Sgt.	John D. MacKenzie	(BTG)	KIA
S/Sgt.	Owen M. Haugen	(TTG)	POW, Itterbeck, Germany
S/Sgt.	Roland P. Kleppin	(RWG)	POW, Langeveen, Holland
T/Sgt.	Alfred Scott	(LWG)	POW, Itterbeck, Germany

Lt. Hamilton is buried in the USA and S/Sgt. MacKenzie rests at the US Cemetery of Margraten, Holland.

MISSION # 24 - NANCY, FRANCE - 24 MAR. - FRI.

15 planes took off for the Nancy airfield. However the weather interfered again and the Group bombed the airfield at St. Dizier instead. All planes returned.

MISSION # 25 - DOMART, FRANCE - 26 MAR. - SUN.

28 aircraft were dispatched against Noball target, Flaxicourt, near Domart in France. Clouds prevented accurate observations, but bombs were known to fall in the northern portion of the target. All ships returned safely.

It was also on March 26 that Capt. Coggeshall, who was Group Training Officer, became Commanding Officer of the 733rd Squadron, while Capt. Kanaga assumed the duties of Group Training Officer.

MISSION # 26 - PAU, FRANCE - 27 MAR. - MON.

23 planes departed for the important Luftwaffe training base near Pau, in southeastern France. Bombing results were good but the Group paid dearly with the loss of Major Cofield, Group Operations Officer since February 16, when he went down with Lt. Lien of the 735th and his crew.

On March 30th, Major James L. Stewart, The well-known screen actor, became Group Operations Officer filling the vacancy left by Major Cofield. Major Stewart had previously been Commanding Officer of a Squadron of the 445th Group.

The Combat Missions

April, 1944

MISSION # 27 - LUDWIGSHAFEN, GERMANY - 1 APR. - SAT.

23 planes departed for Ludwigshafen but adverse weather interfered and the marshalling yards at Pforzheim were bombed with the aid of PFF.

MISSION # 28 - BRUNSWICK, GERMANY - 8 APR. - SAT.

On April 8 the Group suffered its heaviest loss in a single raid to date. Of the 32 planes that were dispatched, 7 failed to return. Heavy flak and severe enemy fighter attacks took a heavy toll, but the bombing results were excellent. Lts. DeJarnette and Bingamen of the 732nd Squadron; Lts. Bergman and Brady of the 733rd Squadron; Lt. Swigert of the 734th Squadron and Lts. Dixon and Wells of the 735th Squadron were lost with their crews.

MISSION # 29 - TUTOW, GERMANY - 9 APR. - SUN.

27 ships departed for the airfield at Tutow. Due to adverse weather over England and the Channel, 11 planes returned early. 16 aircraft bombed the target successfully. On this mission Lts. Hamby and Neary and their crews were lost to the group. Among Lt. Neary's crew was Capt. Rollo, the Group Navigator. Capt. Rollo was flying on his fourth mission and had been Group Navigator since the loss of Capt. O'Reilly on March 18. Both crews were later reported safe in Sweden.

On April 10, Capt. Lindholm assumed the duties of Group Navigator and Capt. Ellis became Group Intelligence Officer relieving Major Victor Sieverding. Major Sieverding had been with the Group since its inception and his sudden transfer to 2nd Combat Wing Headquarters came as a surprise to everyone. Capt. Ellis,

an aggressive young man, had been Assistant Intelligence Officer at 2nd Combat Wing Headquarters.

MISSION # 30 - TOURS, FRANCE - 10 APR. - MON.

Mission # 30 returned the 453rd to the scene of its first bombing, Tours. The date was April 10 two months and five days after operations had begun. 26 aircraft led the Wing into central France, but finding the Primary target completely covered, they successfully bombed Orleans, Bricy and Romorantin Airfields. All planes returned safely, a good job well done.

MISSION # 31 - OSCHERSLEBEN, GERMANY - 11 APR. - TUES.

For the fourth consecutive day the Luftwaffe was to feel the punch of the USAAF. 24 ships set out for Oschersleben, scene of several fierce battles with the German Air Force. On this date, however, enemy fighter opposition was considerably lighter and bombing results were very good. No planes were lost, but Lt. Urpshot and S/Sgt. Nichols were wounded by flak.

It was also on this date that the ground echelon of the 733rd Squadron moved to their new home, North Pickenham, to become the 859th Squadron of the 492nd Bomb Group. The new 733rd was composed of members of the ground echelon chosen from each of the other three Squadrons, plus a number of basics that were brought into the Group.

MISSION # 32 - ZWICKAU, GERMANY - 12 APR. - WED

26 aircraft were dispatched to bomb Zwickau, Germany. Adverse weather, however, made formation flying impossible and the mission was abandoned while the planes were still over the Channel.

MISSION # 33 - OBERPFAFFENHAFEN, GERMANY - 13 APR. - THURS.

For the sixth consecutive day the 453rd took off for targets in Hitler's crumbling fortress. On this date, 18 aircraft took to the skyways for the DO-217 aircraft parts factory and repair depot at Oberpfaffenhafen, near Munich. Major Stewart led on his first mission with the 453rd since his arrival as Group Operations Officer. Bombing results were good. However, Lt. Dooley, flying on his second mission, was lost to the Group. He was last seen heading for Switzerland.

On April 14, the Aero Club opened with a grand celebration. Gen. Timberlake and Major Phipps of 2nd Combat Wing, Lt. Col. Potts, Lt. Col. Stephenson, Lt. Col. Johnson, Major Kemp, Major Stewart, Major Lloyd, Lt. Hale and Chaplain Lyles of this station were present. Miss Mapes and Miss Wilbur represented the Red Cross, the hostesses, Miss Wild of the Red Cross Headquarters and Mr. Falk, the Field Director.

MISSION # 34 - RATHENOW, GERMANY - 18. APR. - TUES.

After a lull of four days, 26 aircraft were off for the Heinkel parts plant at Rathenow, approximately 45 miles west of the heart of Big "B" itself. Despite excellent weather the Luftwaffe refused to accept the challenge. The flak was meager and the bombing was as briefed.

MISSION # 35 - PADERBORN, GERMANY - 19 APR. - WED.

The airfield and sub-depot at Paderborn was the target for the 26 Libs that were dispatched on April 19. The crews reported good results and for the second consecutive day, no planes were lost.

On April 19, Lib No. 452 of the 735th Squadron became the first ship to accomplish 25 missions without an abortion. Col. Potts and Major Sears congratulated T/Sgt. Randall and his efficient crew on their good work.

MISSION # 36 - WIZERNES, GERMANY - 20 APR. - THURS.

Again leading the Combat Wing, the 453rd put aloft 26 planes. The target was Wizernes, in the Pas-de-Calais area. The bomb load was the heaviest yet carried by the 453rd. Each plane was loaded with 8 x 1000-lb. G. P. The results were fair.

MISSION # 37 - HAMM, GERMANY - 22 APR. - SAT.

April 22 saw 26 planes depart for the marshalling yards at Hamm, Germany, rail center for the industrial Ruhr Valley. Bombing results were excellent. Due to a late takeoff, landings were made in total darkness and many aircraft had encounters with intruders. Lt. Munsey's ship was hit by a JU-88 off the English coast and crashed in flames just after making landfall. The bodies of Lt. Munsey and Lt. Crall were recovered from the plane. T/Sgts. John F. McKinney and William C. Grady were found dead, their bodies badly burned and mangled. T/Sgt. Grover C. Conway was last seen dropping into the water about 50 feet off shore. Lts. Leon Helfand, and Arthur Orlowski, S/Sgts. Ralph W. McClure and Kenneth G. Laux and Sgt. Norman M. Brown escaped with burns and other injuries. (For the complete story of the crew of "CEE GEE" II see "A Mission of Valor" in the book "In Search Of Peace" by Michael D. Benarcik.)

MISSION # 38 - GABLINGEN, GERMANY - 24 APR. - MON.

15 planes were dispatched against the air supply and repair depot of Gablingen, five miles north of Augsburg. Photographs confirmed the reports of the crews that all bombs fell squarely in the center of the target. No ships were lost.

MISSION # 39 - MANNHEIM, GERMANY - 25 APR. - TUES.

23 planes took off for the marshalling yards at Mannheim. Bombs were dropped on the secondary target with only fair results. Lt. Crockett was lost due to flak

and Lt. Scherzer was last seen heading toward Switzerland. Several days later, Lt. Scherzer and his crew were reported internees of Switzerland.

(See "Escort to Valor" - Pg. M-8, in the "Memories" Section)

MISSION # 40 - GUTERSLOH, GERMANY - 26 APR. - WED.

23 aircraft were dispatched for the airfield at Gutersloh. A solid undercast prevented visual bombing and the results were unobserved. No planes were lost.

MISSION # 41 - MARQUISE\HIDREQUENT, FRANCE - 27 APR. - THURS.

This was another history making day. For the first time the 8th Air Force accomplished two complete missions in one day. The first was against the Noball target of Marquise in northern France. The 453rd dispatched 18 aircraft against this target with good results.

MISSION # 42 - BLAINVILLE, FRANCE - 27 APR. - THURS.

Three hours after the first ships had landed, 24 planes took off for the railroad marshalling yards at Blainville, in eastern France. All aircraft returned and for the second time that day the bombing results were good.

MISSION # 43 - BERLIN, GERMANY - 29 APR. - SAT.

After a day of rest, the 453rd dispatched 12 planes for Berlin. The flak was terrific and returning crews reported savage encounters with the Luftwaffe, which was up in force in a vain attempt to protect the very heart of the Reich. Despite enemy action and undercast, results were thought to be good. Lt. Col. Sears, Commanding Officer of the 735th Squadron was Air Commander flying with the lead PFF ship when that ship was seen to be hit and fall out of

formation. Lt. Tye of the 734th and his crew were also lost. Lt. Davison ditched his ship and he and his crew, with the exception of tail gunner Harold G. Oakes were fished out of the Channel by the ever alert Air Sea Rescue Squads.

(See "Ditching in the North Sea" - Pg. M-10, in the "Memories" Section)

MISSION # 44 - SIRACOURT, FRANCE - 30 APR. - SUN.

On the last day in April 18 Libs set out for the Noball target of Siracourt. All bombs fell in the target area and no ships were lost.

(See the "Buzzin Twins" - Pg. M-12, in the "Memories" Section)

Capt. Andy S. Low who had served as Assistant Operations Officer under Major Cofield and Major Stewart, assumed command of the 735th Squadron upon the loss of Lt. Col. Sears and Capt. Bickerstaff, lead pilot of the 734th Squadron, became Assistant Operations Officer.

It is now almost three months since the 453rd Bomb Group first went operational. In that time many changes have occurred but none have been greater than the physical change on the station itself. Overshoe lane and Riverside Drive, once so deep in mud that even walking was difficult, have been paved with concrete. Three months ago where there was only mud, grass is now growing. Shrubs and trees have been planted all around the living area. All together the Station now has that lived in, well kept look. The post theatre, operated by the Special Service Office, now shows movies, new movies, on the average of five times a week. This has added immeasurably to the morale of the personnel here. The large, flat area directly in front of the Station Headquarters, has been converted to softball and football fields. Equipment for these sports has been issued and now the warm English sunshine finds many taking advantage of

the opportunity. The Aero Club, operated by the Red Cross, long awaited on this station, now operates at full blast. It fills the same niche in the lives of the enlisted men that the Officers Club fills in the lives of the officers. Here, various games are available, a snack bar has been installed and facilities have been built for the men to write letters. It is a good club and well organized. Already several dances have been held for the men, and young ladies from the surrounding towns have been in attendance.

The Officers Club has been greatly improved and several additions made. Here, too, dances are held for the young officers. These have been held on the average of two each month. They were greatly enjoyed and contributed much to the high morale of the station.

Promotions, always a great morale booster, have been coming in with regularity. The Combat officers, especially, are enjoying a great many promotions.

Food, long a point of argument here has improved at all messes. Fresh eggs and hot cakes, the supreme soldier breakfast, are found on the tables several times each week.

The bomb record of this Group compares favorably with the efforts of much older and more experienced outfits in this theater. Indeed, at one point during the last two-month period the 453rd led the entire 8th Air Force in bomb hits on or near the target.

Many good men have been lost by the Group in the two-month period just passed. Strange new feet are continually being placed on the bar rail at the Officers Club, the owners of which have joined the Group as replacements for the men who are gone. That several men have failed to meet the dangerous task

before them is to be expected in a business of this type, but for every man, who has failed, there are ten who have not and will not. Weak men in important positions, always evident and always dangerous in the services, have been cut to a minimum in this Group. The policy with the high command of the Group seems to be a definite weeding out process for the weak and the unfit. This in itself may well be the cause for the Group's success thus far, and its greater moments to come.

So, in the third month of its operational life, it might be recorded for history, that the 453rd Bombardment Group has suffered many losses, girded itself against the tragic repercussions caused therefrom, profited by its mistakes and even now is ready to carry out any mission to any point within its range.

The Combat Missions

May, 1944

The first of the new month was another red-letter day. For the second time in five days, The Eighth Air Force accomplished two complete missions in one 24-hour period. The 453rd dispatched 33 planes without a single loss.

MISSION # 45 - WATTEN, FRANCE - 1 MAY - MON.

21 ships were off on the first mission that was to Watten, a German rocket installation in the Pas-de-Calais area. The load was four 2,000-lb. bombs. Dense contrails and ground haze plus bombsight failure of the lead ship caused the bombs to be dropped to the left of the target.

MISSION # 46 - BRUSSELS, BELGIUM - 1 MAY - MON.

The day was saved with an excellent mission in the afternoon to the marshalling yards of Brussels, the Capital of Belgium. One twelve ship Squadron, carrying a total of 64,000 pounds of demolition bombs, dropped them smack on the target.

MISSION # 47 - SIRACOURT, FRANCE - 2 MAY - TUES.

Station planes, in two Squadrons, carrying eight 1,000-lb. demolition bombs each, returned to the Pas-de-Calais area. The target was the oft-bombed rocket installation of Siracourt, near St. Pol, France. As had occurred so often in the past, the target was completely covered by cloud. Bombing was done with the aid of a pathfinder ship and results were unobserved. Flak was meager and the Luftwaffe was made conspicuous by its absence.

MISSION # 48 - OSNABRUCK, GERMANY - 7 MAY - SUN.

After a rest of five days, the 453rd put aloft a total of 29 planes in three Squadrons. The industrial center of Osnabruck, as the target, received the hot sting of 1,454 x 100-lb. incendiary bombs dropped by the Group. Due to a complete undercast, the results were unobserved. Flak was meager to moderate and again the Luftwaffe was nowhere to be seen.

MISSION # 49 - BRUNSWICK, GERMANY - 8 MAY - MON.

On May 8th, one month to the day since the 453rd had attacked Brunswick with such great losses, the episode was repeated with still greater losses. Capt. Andy Low, Commanding Officer of the 735th Squadron, led the Group, which in turn led the entire Eighth Air Force into "Festung Europa". Capt. Low later received the DFC for his exemplary leadership in bringing the mission to a successful conclusion in the face of terrific odds.

Each plane carried twelve 500-lb. bombs, and dropped them through 10/10-cloud cover with the aid of pathfinder equipment. The Group encountered over 200 enemy fighters. These fighters accounted for six of the eight aircraft that we lost over enemy territory. From that time on the Hanover-Brunswick area came to be known to the Group as "fighter alley". Those lost with their crews were Lts. Witton and Keith of the 732nd Squadron; Lt. Parker of the 733rd Squadron; Lts. Hart, Banks and Stilbert of the 734th Squadron, and Lts. MacKay and Lovell of the 735th Squadron.

Of a total of 27 planes dispatched, only 17 returned safely to the home base. Lts. Jones and Ashbury crash landed at Watton after ordering the rest of the crew to bail out. Lt. Catlin experienced a similar landing at Hardwick, injuring S/Sgt. Bates, the ball turret gunner. It took two ships to satisfy Lt. Ward and his crew that were determined to get to Brunswick. When "Male Call", their regular plane

developed mechanical trouble one hour after take-off, Lt. Ward returned, requisitioned another ship, and took off in pursuit of the formation. By taking several short cuts and flying alone over enemy territory, Lt. Ward managed to catch the formation just prior to reaching the target.

At this point the bombers were subjected to vicious fighter attacks. A 20mm shell crashed through the cockpit, and passed through the radio compartment smashing the equipment as it exploded. The concussion knocked T/Sgt. Frank Diets off his feet. He quickly recovered his balance and in short order he pieced together his damaged equipment and returned it to working order. Other cannon shells found their marks in the left wing tip and left stabilizer in addition to numerous scars scattered all over the ship. The violence of the enemy attacks was almost unbelievable.

A check of enemy aircraft destroyed by Lt. Ward's crew disclosed the fact that tail gunner S/Sgt. Keith M. Dibble accounted for one FW-190 and one ME-109. He also shared credit with waist gunner T/Sgt. Walter W McLain for one plane probably destroyed. T/Sgt. McLain also shot down one ME-109 with no assistance. Ball turret gunner S/Sgt. Lafayette Evans destroyed one FW-190.

In total the enemy suffered a loss of twelve planes destroyed and three probably destroyed. This total does not take into account those that may have been shot down by our planes that did not return.

(See "Bringing Up the Rear" - Pg. M-15, and "The Story of a Combat Mission and a POW Experience" - Pg. M-16, in the "Memories" Section)

MISSION # 50 - FLORENNES, BELGIUM - 9 MAY - TUES.

The target was the night fighter base at Florennes, Belgium. Two Squadrons totaling 24 planes took to the air carrying a total of 986 100-lb. bombs. For the

second straight day enemy fighters rose to the attack and Lt. Perro, of the 735th Squadron and his crew was lost in the ensuing action. However, despite the enemy's interference, the results were good.

MISSION # 51 - BELFORT, FRANCE - 11 MAY - THURS.

The railroad marshalling yard at Belfort, France, so very near the Swiss frontier, was the target for the Group. Each plane carried five 1,000-lb. bombs. The two Squadrons found Belfort completely covered and went on to bomb the marshalling yards at Chaumont, about 100 miles distant, on the route home. Flak and fighter opposition were practically nil, a welcome change. Lts. Bertrand and Nortridge landed their planes in south England, short of fuel. Lt. Nowalis crash-landed his craft, but no one was injured. All other ships returned to the home base.

MISSION # 52 - ZEITZ, GERMANY - 12 MAY - FRI.

The next day saw an even dozen Libs from this Group attack the synthetic oil plant at Zeitz, deep in central Germany. The day was perfect and 133 x 250-lb. bombs rained down on the target. To quote S/Sgt. Eldon D. McGinnis, "the only thing I saw between us and the target was a lot of falling bombs". The results were excellent and all planes returned safely.

MISSION # 53 - TUTOW, GERMANY - 13 MAY - SAT,

The next day was another banner day as far as bombing results and lack of enemy opposition was concerned. Fifteen planes took off for the FW-190 assembly plant at Tutow, deep in northern Germany. All 728 x 100-lb. incendiaries fell in the prescribed target area and many parked planes were thought to have had their careers ended before they began. All Libs returned, a good job well done.

MISSION # 54 - SIRACOURT, FRANCE - 15 MAY - MON.

For the second time this month, the 453rd attacked Siracourt in the Pas-de-Calais area. Eleven ships carrying 1,000-lb. bombs each, bombed through an undercast of 6/10 to 8/10 with the aid of PFF equipment. Enough of the target was seen through a momentary break in the clouds to support the belief that the bombs fell in the target area. Flak was rather heavy but enemy fighters were nil and all ships returned home safe and sound.

MISSION # 55 - BRUNSWICK, GERMANY - 19 MAY - FRI.

May 19 scheduled a return engagement with enemy fighters over the heart of Brunswick. As before, 150 to 200 enemy craft attacked, but unlike that tragic May 8th day, Mustangs, Lightnings and Thunderbolts were on hand in sufficient numbers to oblige them. As a result of the excellent fighter cover. All 18 attacking Libs returned safely. Breaks in the clouds were few and far between necessitating the use of PFF as a bombing aid. The 453rd dropped a load of 216 x 500-lb. incendiary bombs that were thought to have fallen on the city's marshalling yards.

MISSION # 56 - REIMS, FRANCE - 20 MAY - SAT.

The 453rd led the 2nd Combat Wing in the attack against the marshalling yards of the cathedral city of Reims, about 70 miles northeast of Paris. Lt. Col. Potts led the mission that proved to be very successful. Flak and enemy fighters were practically nil and all ships returned safely, having delivered 114 x 1,000-lb. demolition bombs as ordered.

MISSION # 57 - SIRACOURT, FRANCE - 22 MAY - Mon.

For the third time in 22 days the 453rd attacked Siracourt. This time 22 ships carrying eight 1,000-lb. bombs each dropped through 8/10 to 10/10-cloud

coverage that prevented observation of results. Flak and enemy fighters were negligible and all our ships returned safely.

MISSION # 58 - ORLEANS, FRANCE - 23 MAY - TUES.

29 ships took off loaded with 348 x 500-lb. bombs for the airfield at Orleans, France. The Group flew in two Squadrons. The first experienced interference by another Group on the bomb run, causing them to release their bombs too late and fall past the target. The second Squadron, however, laid their eggs in the target area. It was a restful day as far as flak and enemy fighters were concerned and all ships returned safely.

MISSION # 59 - ORLY, FRANCE - 24 MAY - WED.

For the third consecutive day, the 453rd attacked a target in France. On this date, Orly Airdrome near Paris was the center of attention. 32 Libs carried a grand total of 96 tons of bombs to the very center of the target. Hangars and other installations were seen to crumble and some disappeared as if by magic. All the planes managed to weave their way through the moderate but accurate flak, and returned to find everyone at Old Buc sweating out their return.

MISSION # 60 - TROYES, FRANCE - 25 MAY - THURS.

24 Libs in two Squadrons of 12 each, led by Major James M. Stewart, pointed their blunt noses toward the marshalling yards at Troyes, France. Each plane carried ten 500-lb. bombs. The first Squadron flew past Troyes and bombed Terrenes due to the interference of weather. The second Squadron held their lethal cargo until Bretigny Airfield, the secondary target, appeared in the bombsights. Bombs rained on the center of the target as briefed. Despite moderate, accurate flak, all planes returned safely. However Lts. Wincey, Johnson and Elliott landed their craft at other bases.

MISSION # 61 - SAARBRUCKEN, GERMANY - 27 MAY - SAT.

Two days later, attention was drawn to the marshalling yards at Saarbrucken. 24 aircraft, in Squadrons of 12 each, laid their payload of 288 x 500-lb. bombs in the target area with good results. The effective chaff negated the moderate flak. For the seventh consecutive mission enemy fighters failed to challenge the formation. As a result, all planes rested in their respective berths that night.

On May 27 Lt. Col. Potts, the Group Commanding Officer donned the silver eagle of a full Colonel. Col. Potts had assumed command of the Group on March 19, upon the loss of Col. Miller.

MISSION # 62 - MERSEBURG, GERMANY - 28 MAY - SUN.

May 28 saw the return to Germany's synthetic oil plants. 25 planes, flying the familiar two Squadron formations, dropped their load of 50 tons of bombs on the plant at Merseburg, in the Berlin-Leipzig area. Flak was moderate and inaccurate. Though some members claimed no enemy interference, one ME-410 was claimed as destroyed when it came a bit too close. S/Sgt. G. McCarty, of the 734th Squadron, and a member of Lt. Witzel's crew, received the honor of being the first crewmember to complete his tour of duty. S/Sgt. McCarty had two enemy planes to his credit.

MISSION # 63 - POLITZ, GERMANY - 29 MAY - MON.

Once again, Germany's synthetic oil plants were given due respect. On this day 25 fully laden Libs dropped a cargo of 250 x 500-lb. bombs on the plant at Pölitz, approximately 100 miles north of Berlin. The 453rd led the 2nd Division to the target, being in turn led by Lt. Tolley, formerly of the Group, and now a PFF

pilot. Despite the flak, fighters, and a smoke screen, the mission was a success and the target was well covered. All aircraft returned.

Lt. Chandler of the 732nd Squadron and S/Sgt. McLain of the 734th were the second and third men to complete their tour of duty.

The 453rd celebrated Memorial Day by establishing two Group records. One, mission #19, of the month of May, was flown with 34 planes. Two, never before had so many missions been accomplished in one months time, nor had the Group ever placed so great a number of planes over the target on a single raid.

MISSION # 64 - OLDENBURG, GERMANY - 30 MAY - TUES.

The airfield at Oldenburg was the object of attention and received a grand total of over 95 tons of bombs. Bombing results were very good. The flak was intense and accurate, causing slight damage to six of the ships.

Lt. Earl became caught in the slipstream of the preceding plane and lost control of his already battered ship and crashed on the main runway. The crew escaped injury, but the "Golden Gabon" burned up.

Lt. Baer, forced to drop out of formation and reduce speed, flew the "Zeus" home at low altitude, leaving a trail of jettisoned equipment from the German border to the Channel. Upon arrival at the base he found the main runway blocked by the still burning "Golden Gabon". Lt. Baer then prepared to land on the short, alternate runway, in a strong crosswind. Those on the ground, who were nervously, anxiously waiting, saw the plane touch lightly on one wheel, slowly roll along and reduce speed until the left wing tip dragged. Then suddenly they saw # 1 prop dig into the ground off the runway and swing the ship around viciously. Amid a cloud of dust and dirt, the plane laid still. With just his right

landing wheel and receiving power from only two engines, Lt. Baer had made the most dramatic, skillful cross-wind landing that old Buc has ever witnessed, thus saving himself and his crew from injury. All were able to walk away from the ship unaided, including Sgt. Smertelny and Lt. Bales, who had stuck to his navigation table throughout the mission.

Five hours and 53 minutes from the moment he returned from Oldenburg, Lt. Baer was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. In an informal ceremony without precedent, Brigadier General Timberlake, Wing Commander accompanied by Col. Potts, Group Commander, and Major James Stewart, Group Operations Officer, made the presentation in the lounge of the Officer's Club.

MISSION # 65 - LUMES, FRANCE - 31 MAY - WED.

The last day of the month witnessed the take-off of 27 planes for Lumes, France. They carried a load of three tons of bombs each. However, the weather played havoc with the formations, and all planes returned without attacking the target.

That evening in the Officer's Combat Mess Hall, the table was set with a large cake and a grand dinner was served in honor of Lt. Ward and his crew. They were the first complete crew to finish their tour of duty.

The month of May was, by far, the busiest in the history of the 453rd Bombardment Group. All records were broken. A total of 20 missions were flown against all types of targets. Railways and airfields as well as aircraft plants in both France and Germany were attacked. The synthetic oil plants and refineries that Hitler had once believed to be safe from aerial blitz were not so distant after all. A total of 1,271 tons of bombs were dropped at the average rate of more than 141 tons per minute. Of a total of 431 attacking planes, 99 were lost

a loss of only 2%. The Group claimed 12 planes destroyed and three probably destroyed.

The 453rd knew how to fight and work hard, but it also knew how to play. Several inter-station softball and baseball games were played with Old Buc more than holding its own against the competition. Inter-squadron volley ball games were very frequent. There might have even been a table tennis tournament, if the ping pong balls lost in play could be replaced.

Bicycle rides through the surrounding countryside were becoming more frequent on days off as more of the men purchased velocipedes and the sun grew warmer.

Here at Old Buc, thousands of miles from the home of popular music, the "GI'Vers" furnish the officers and enlisted men with the type of hot swing and smooth rhythm that was so thoroughly enjoyed back in the States. The "GI'Vers" furnish sound testimony to the fact that American soldiers anywhere can adapt themselves to any environment and make themselves at home.

The band was actually started at Wendover Field, Utah. Their first problem was to secure musical instruments. Under the leadership of Lt. Col. Johnson, Commanding Officer of the 327th Service Group, and the cooperation of Special Services, officers and enlisted men contributed to the cause. With instruments under their arms, the newborn band came overseas.

Despite the fact that they were twice broken up after reaching England, the band never gave up. With their arrival at Old Buc and the opening of the Aero Club, they found a suitable place for rehearsal.

New members joined the original five until the present strength of nine men was reached. A few weeks of practice and the first Aero Club dance was given in early April. Since then the band has played for several dances both at the home base and at other stations. Through conscientious rehearsing and numerous performances, the "GI'Vers" have attained their goal of being one of the top bands in the ETO.

Members of the band are: Sgt., Albert Brondel, trumpet and leader of the band; T/Sgt. William Clearfield, trumpet; Sgt. Frank J. Plaskovich, alto sax; Pfc. Louis Arcoraci, alto sax; Cpl. Johnny Strianse, Tenor sax; Pvt. Ronald Whilden, drums; Sgt. Russell Stier, guitar; Pfc. Carl Angerman, bass; and Pfc. Jimmy M. Veltre, Piano.

If an officer or enlisted man, after a day's work, felt that the facilities on the base were not sufficient to satisfy his recreational desires, there were always the surrounding towns to fill the gap.

The Combat Missions

June, 1944

MISSION # 66 - ST. AUBIN, FRANCE - 2 JUNE - FRI.

For the first time in the history of the 453rd, the Group had as its target, not an airfield, marshalling yard, or manufacturing plant, but a gun position in the Pas-de-Calais area. The four-gun emplacement was situated near Berck-Sur-Mer and was the first tactical target the Group ever attacked. The fact that it represented a switch from strategic to tactical bombing caused much speculation in the Group. Many believed that this target meant D-Day was finally around the corner. The Group dropped 92 tons of high explosives from 23 planes on this particular target. However, due to unfavorable weather, results were unobserved.

June 3rd was a day of promotions. Among the fortunate were Major James M. Stewart, Group Operations Officer; Major Frank Sullivan; Commanding Officer of the 732nd Squadron; and Major Edward F. Hubbard, Commanding Officer of the 734th Squadron, who exchanged their gold leaves for the silver leaf of Lt. Col.

MISSION # 67 - BERCK, FRANCE - 3 JUNE - SAT.

The Group attacked its second tactical target. The 10 ships dispatched dropped 39 tons of bombs on another four-gun position again in the Berck-Sur-Mer district.

Two tactical targets in two days did much to increase the number of, and excite the morale of, the D-Day speculators. The change to tactical targets must certainly have a definite inference.

MISSION # 68 - ROMERANTIN, FRANCE - 4 JUNE - SUN.

The target was the airfield at Romorantin, approximately 100 miles south and slightly west of Paris. 26 ships dropped 78 tons of bombs, but not on the airfield. Bad weather prevented bombing of the Primary and an ordnance depot was pounded instead.

D-Day speculation had a relapse, but many still suffered from invasionitis. Capt. Andy Low, who led the day's mission, received news of his promotion upon leaving the briefing room, and that afternoon laid aside his "car tracks" for the gold leaf of a Major.

The fifth day of June was an off day, but proved to be the lull before the storm. Early in the afternoon, the Liberty Run was cancelled. Still later, all telephone calls were suspended. Earlier than ever before, the tannoy announced the "Standby, everyone alerted!" Invasionitis spread like a flood as the D-Dayers found willing ears.

(See "Prelude to D-Day" - Pg. M-20, in the "Memories" Section)

At 2000 hours came the exciting announcement, "All combat crews check with operations immediately.... Waves number 1, number 2, number 3,4,5, and 6 of "A" Flight, briefing at 2300." "Waves", "Flight", these were new terms in the flying vocabulary. "'B" flight, all waves, briefing at 0300; C Flight, all waves, briefing at 0400", the announcement continued. THIS WAS IT!

At 2315, the doors of the briefing room were locked and the roll was taken. Col. Potts began the secret briefing with a wire from General Doolittle himself. "We are summoned "to participate in a history-making invasion" ... Lt. Col. Stewart was busy checking the formation diagrams. Lt. Col. Harris rechecked his notes as did Capt. Crowley and Lt. Friedman of S-2. A message from General Hodges, Commanding Officer of the 2nd Bomb Division, was read next. The importance of bombing for the day was emphasized. "The enemy defenses must be destroyed... the success of all men of all nations participating will be profoundly affected by our efforts ... we must not fail them now."

"Zero-hour-- 0628 June 6, 1944; code word, Maisey-Doats; target, complete destruction of the enemy forces' installations on the shore line between Le Havre and Cherbourg and as far inland as the city of Caen. Secondary targets-- any railroad, enemy troop concentration, or road junction further inland. Precise timing is of utmost importance."

MISSION # 69 - ST. LAURENT, FRANCE - 6 JUNE - TUES.

The target was described by Capt. Crowley as a defended position 300 yards offshore, about 10 miles northwest of Bayeux and one mile north of St. Laurent. The complement was probably 40 men with machine guns, 2-inch or 3-inch mortars and anti-tank guns. The importance of knocking out this locality in support of the landing forces was stressed. Take-off was at 0327 as briefed. 36 ships in six waves of six carried fifty-two 100-lb. anti personnel bombs each.

At the interrogation, the crews plainly showed their disappointment. They were told they would see the Allied Navy standing offshore lobbing their shells onto their targets. They were told that they would see the invasion barges just waiting their turn to slither onto the beaches. The water would be filled with big ships, little boats, vessels of all varieties, leaving hardly any space for water. The

undercast was solid with breaks almost completely absent, hiding all from their view. However, they could sense the magnificence and magnitude of the spectacle below them. As a consolation perhaps, they did see the air filled with fighters of all kinds, medium and heavy bombers, and an endless chain of troop transports and gliders., all heading for the invasion coast. Everything that could fly or float was in the air or in the water in the greatest show on earth. Throughout the whole of June 6, despite the worsening weather, planes took off and landed, helping to make this day the greatest in the history not only of the Group, but of the Eighth Air Force as well. In all, four complete missions were flown by the 453rd.

MISSIONS # 70 - ST. LO; # 71 - CAEN; # 72 - COUTANCES - 6 JUNE - TUES.

A total of 70 planes were dispatched against targets in France. The 12 ships sent against St. Lo were forced by weather to return without dropping their bombs. The remaining 58 bombed on instruments with unobserved results.

The weather continued to be bad, but despite the undercasts, the Group attacked railroad bridges, and air fields in the beachhead area. For the following nine days bombs dropped continuously in an effort to disrupt the enemy's communications system and deny him the use of bases for his once vaunted Luftwaffe.

MISSION # 73 - ARGENTAN, FRANCE - 7 JUNE - WED.

Argentan, an important communications center, 40 miles south of Le Havre, was attacked by 23 Libs carrying 69 tons of high explosives. Again, results were unobserved.

MISSION # 74 - FLERS, FRANCE - 8 JUNE - THURS.

Avranches and Reden, near Flers were attacked on the 8th.

MISSIONS # 75 - BOULOGNE AND # 76 - DREUX, FRANCE - 10 JUNE - SAT.

Flying two missions on the 10th, The Evreux (near Boulogne) and Dreux airfields were the targets for the 34 ships dispatched that day.

MISSIONS # 77 - LE PORT BOULET AND # 78 - CORMEILLES, FRANCE - 11 JUNE - SUN,

The Railroad Bridge at Le Port Boulet, across the Loire River, about 50 miles southwest of Tours was the first target for the day. 24 ships prepared to unload 96 tons of destructive force were turned back by Jerry's ally since D-Day, the weather.

Out again in the afternoon 12 ships departed for the airfield at Cormeilles-En-Voxin. 36 tons of bombs were dropped too early when the lead ship suffered an accidental release. Only two ships held their bombs and attacked the airfield with only fair results.

MISSIONS # 79 - MONTFORT AND # 80 - CONCHES, FRANCE - 12 JUNE - MON.

On D-Day plus six the weather finally cleared. Two missions were flown. One against the railroad bridge at Montfort, The other against the airfield at Conches. The approaches to the bridge were heavily hit even though the bridge itself was not and the airfield was hit soundly. 34 planes carried a total of 124 tons of bombs.

MISSIONS # 81 - VICONTE AND MONTFORT, FRANCE - 13 JUNE - TUES.

For the fourth consecutive day, two missions were flown. The first was the Railroad Bridge at Le Viconte Sur Range, which was attacked by 22 ships carrying ten 500-lb. bombs each. The second was a return to Montfort. Due to

PFF failure at the last moment, results were poor. 10 ships carrying 30 tons made this trip.

MISSION # 83 - CHATEAUDUN, FRANCE - 14 JUNE - WED.

The 14th of June witnessed the attack on the night fighter base of Chateaudun. Carrying 49 tons of 100-lb. general purpose bombs, 19 planes peppered the north dispersal areas as briefed, while other Groups rendered the runways and taxi strips unserviceable. The Luftwaffe was denied another base of operations.

MISSION # 84 - LE PORT BOULET, FRANCE - 15 JUNE - THURS.

A return to the Railroad Bridge at Le Port Boulet proved to be very successful. Three squadrons, carrying a total of 108 tons of 500-lb. bombs, dropped them all on the 35-foot wide bridge. Later reconnaissance photos showed the bridge severely damaged, though not broken.

MISSION # 85 - HAMBURG, GERMANY - 18 JUNE - SUN.

The Group had a two-day rest period forced upon it by the weather. Then, on the 18th, the largest number of planes, yet dispatched, with the heaviest load yet carried, pointed their noses toward the Stade airfield, near Hamburg, Germany. 46 planes loaded with a total of 131 tons of bombs plastered the port area of the great industrial city of Hamburg when weather prevented bombing of the airfield.

Not only was this a great day in the history of the Group, it was also a great day for the Eighth Air Force as well. No fewer than 2,000 sorties were flown by the heavies that day.

London and the surrounding countryside was being bombed by Hitler's newest weapon, the flying bomb. The launching ramps were located in the Pas-de-

Calais area and it was these ramps that received the attention of the 453rd for the next few days.

MISSIONS # 86 AND # 87 - FIENVILLERS, FRANCE - 19 JUNE - MON.

The ramp at Fienvillers was attacked twice, but weather obscured the results.

MISSION # 88 POLITZ, GERMANY - 20 JUNE - TUES.

The big target for the day was the synthetic oil plant at Politz, deep in northern Germany. 24 Libs dropped their 60 tons of destruction on the targets as briefed and another oil plant would produce very little for Der Fuehrer. Smoke and flame belched forth in huge columns and covered the entire area.

MISSION # 89 - FIENVILLERS, FRANCE - 20 JUNE - TUES.

Once again this target was the object of attention by a single squadron of 11 ships. This time the weather was favorable and the results were excellent. A total of 33 planes carrying 87 tons of bombs attacked this very small target.

MISSION # 90 - ST. MARTIN L' MORTIER, FRANCE - 20 JUNE - TUES.

This flying bomb base was attacked by 12 planes carrying twelve 500-lb. bombs each. the results were unobserved.

The first crew since May 9th was lost to the Group when Lt. Kolb of the 735th was hit by flak and was last seen heading towards Sweden. Later, he was officially reported as safely setting down on Swedish soil.

MISSION # 91 - BERLIN, GERMANY - 21 JUNE - WED.

In the greatest daylight raid of the war on Berlin, the Group had as its target the diesel engine works at Nordban. This plant was believed to be manufacturing

the engines for the flying bombs. 71 tons of bombs were carried by the 34 planes attacking the plant and the great majority of them hit as briefed. Lt. Williams of the 734th Squadron went down to flak over "Big B", the second casualty of the month. The enemy fighter claims for the day were 12 destroyed , 2 probably destroyed and 2 damaged.

MISSION # 92 - JUVENCOURT, FRANCE - 23 JUNE -FRI.

After a day of rest, attention was drawn to Juven court airfield, northeast of Paris. Two Squadrons of 12 ships each attacked carrying a mixed cargo of 35 tons of general purpose and fragmentation bombs. The target was well covered, but Lt. Raiser of the 732nd Squadron fell victim to flak on the way home. His was the third crew lost on three consecutive days of operations.

MISSIONS # 93 - BRETIGNY AND # 94 - PONT-A-VENDIN, FRANCE - 24 JUNE - SAT.

The 24th was another two-mission day as the Group attacked an airfield and a power station. The first mission was directed against Bretigny airfield, but the 24 planes dispatched found their target cloud covered and went on to successfully bomb the airfield at Conches.

The second mission of the day was against the power station at Pont-A-Vendin, which was believed to be supplying power to several of the flying bomb stations. It was on this mission that Capt. Baatz, a lead crew of the 732nd Squadron and Major Kemp, the Group Adjutant, who was flying with him were lost to flak. Capt. Baatz was on his 26th mission and Major Kemp had been with the Group since its inception.

MISSIONS # 95 - BEUVRY AND # 96 - BUC, FRANCE - 25 JUNE - SUN.

The first target was the power station at Beuvry in the Pas-de-Calais area, believed like Pont- A-Vendin, to be supplying power to some of the flying bomb bases.

The airfield at Buc, near Paris was the object of attention on the afternoon mission. 12 planes carried 30 tons of 250-lb. bombs but weather interfered and most of the bombs fell into the surrounding fields.

About this time the Group became suddenly aware of the fact that it would be a year old on the 29th of June. The question on everyone's mind was - would the Group complete its 100th mission by that date? That would be record to be proud of. Only time and the weather could tell. Interest was at a high pitch. After all, only four missions to go and four days to do it in.

But the weather didn't hold out. Three times on the 26th and 27th, missions were prepared only to be scrubbed at various stages of the preparation.

MISSION # 97 - SAARBRUCKEN, GERMANY - 28 JUNE - WED.

The target was the railroad yards. The mission was PFF led and results of the bombing were unobserved.

MISSION # 98 - KOTHEN, GERMANY - 29 JUNE - THURS.

The Group celebrated its anniversary with its 98th mission. 48 Libs were assembled in the largest formation the Group ever attempted for a single mission. The target was the Kothen airfield. Weather, which had complicated operations for the best part of the month, again interfered. The four squadrons, carrying 121 tons of general purpose and incendiary bombs, found Kothen cloud covered and went on to bomb Gardelegan and Stendal air fields. Results on both

targets were good. The fact that this mission was flown by a record formation, was poor consolation for not attaining the 100 mission goal.

That evening the anniversary dance was held at the Aero Club. Col. Potts, Group Commanding Officer, cut the huge cake and the party was on. Girls from the neighboring villages and towns were present to lend a hand in the celebration. The "G.I.'Vers" played and the G.I.'s danced. The war was forgotten for a few hours.

June had been a month for breaking records. A total of 33 missions were flown in which 690 sorties were flown. Of this total, only four craft were lost for a remarkably low percentage of .005, a proud record in itself . A grand total of 1,953 tons of bombs were loosed on Hitler's fortress. The Group, hampered by unfavorable weather at almost every turn, had done its best in support of the ground forces. Railroad bridges, airfields, and flying bomb ramps had been attacked. In the course of the month, weather allowed only 17 visual bombings. On these missions, six airfields were hit hard; two industrial plants were hit with force enough to cut production considerably; and one flying bomb ramp was destroyed. Yes, June was a month for breaking records and records the Group could be proud of.

The Combat Missions

July, 1944

The adverse weather that had plagued aerial operations throughout June continued in July. Towering fronts and thunderheads permitted only 19 missions for the month, little more than half the record total for June. Of this total, a mere 7 targets were bombed visually, three formations were forced to return without attacking and 12 bombed with the aid of PFF equipment through solid undercasts.

To an already bomb-happy Germany, the realization was brought home that the Second Front and the Flying Bombs meant no respite for them.

MISSION # 99 - RENASCURE, FRANCE - 2 JULY - SUN.

Two Squadrons totaling 22 planes attacked the flying bomb installations in the Pas-de-Calais area. Sixty tons of 500-lb. bombs were dropped through the undercast with the aid of PFF equipment.

July 2nd will be remembered more for the changes in the Staff of the Group than for the bombing results. Lt. Col. Stewart was relieved from his duties as Operations Officer and transferred to Wing Headquarters. Major Low was relieved of his duties as Commanding Officer of the 735th Squadron and took up where Lt. Col. Stewart left off. Lt. Col. Hubbard became Commanding Officer of the 735th Squadron and Major Dowda, Ops Officer of the 734th, became that Squadrons CO. Capt. Bickerstaff was relieved of his assignment as Assistant Group Ops Officer to become Ops Officer of the 734th. Capt. Stokes, lead pilot of the 735th Squadron, became Assistant Group Operations Officer.

MISSION # 100 - L'ISLE ADAM, FRANCE - 5 JULY - WED.

The target was an ammunition dump, 20 miles north of Paris. Bombs were dropped through the undercast with unobserved results. The mission itself was uneventful.

Mission No. 2 for the month and No. 100 for the Group was flown exactly five months from the date the Group commenced operations, becoming the first Group to complete 100 missions in so short a period of time. In five months, the 453rd flew over 2,640,000 operational miles. The Division Citation stressed the fact that the Group had dropped over 4,000 tons of bombs on 42 targets in Germany and 58 targets in German-occupied countries. More than 30 enemy aircraft had met their "Waterloo" at the sights of the Group's gunners.

The 100 mission mark was celebrated by a grand dance at the Aero Club that evening. Refreshments were served and the girls from the surrounding hamlets and towns aided in the celebration. The huge cake didn't last long when the eager G.I.'s and their dancing partners took sizeable samples.

MISSION # 101 - BELLOY-SUR-SOME, FRANCE - 6 JULY - THURS.

34 aircraft attacked two more flying bomb installations in the Pas-de-Calais area with generally poor results. One squadron was forced off its bomb run when another Group interfered. The two other squadrons picked up the target a trifle late and bombs fell long of the installations.

MISSION # - 102 - HALLE, GERMANY - 7 JULY - FRI.

Leading the division, the 453rd attacked the aircraft plant at Halle, 20 miles northwest of Leipzig. 38 aircraft rained 82 tons of high explosives on the target with very good results. Enemy air opposition was nil, but intense, accurate flak accounted for the loss of Lt. Kuzelka of the 735th Squadron. Capt. Beckett, also

of the 735th Squadron, flying as deputy lead in a PFF ship was also lost when his ship collided with one from another Group.

(See "Forget the Enemy - Beware of the Friendlies" - Pg. M-22, in the "Memories Section)

Also on the 7th, the 453rd received its third Commanding Officer. Col. Potts who had been in command since March 19, and had done so much to improve its bombing qualities, was transferred to 2nd Wing Headquarters. Col. Thomas, who had much experience as Assistant Ops. Officer of the Eastern Wing of the ATC, and had more recently been connected with the 2nd Combat Wing, became the new Commanding Officer of the Group. He had 12 combat missions to his credit.

MISSION # 103 - JUSSY, FRANCE - 8 JULY - SAT.

Three squadrons were forced to return from Jussy, 70 miles northeast of Paris without dropping bombs on the Railroad Bridge there. For the next nine days, the 453rd had more trouble with the weatherman than with the Luftwaffe.

MISSION # 104 - MUNICH, GERMANY - 11 JULY - TUES.

The Group attacked the Reims airfield near Munich with the aid of PFF equipment. Capt. Boreske, Ops. Officer of the 733rd Squadron was reported MIA when the PFF ship in which he was flying was lost.

MISSION # 105 - MUNICH, GERMANY - 12 JULY - WED.

The Air Park at Reims was attacked again on the 12th with the aid of PFF equipment. Lt. Banais was hit by flak and was last seen headed toward Switzerland.

(See "Ach Munich!" - Pg. M-23, in the "Memories" Section)

MISSION # 106 - SAARBRUCKEN, GERMANY - 13 JULY - THURS.

The target was the railway marshalling yards. These yards had become tremendous cogs in the German railway system due to the disorganized conditions of the roads in France. Thus, their destruction was necessitated.

MISSION # 107 - SAARBRUCKEN, GERMANY - 16 JULY - SUN.

The railway marshalling yards were attacked again using PFF equipment. During these last four raids, One hundred and sixty-three sorties were flown and 426 tons of bombs blasted the targets.

On July 13, Headquarters USSAFE issued General Orders No. 43. It contained a paragraph telling of the heroism of Lt. James S. Munsey. On April 22, Lt. Munsey, crossing the English coast, returning from Hamm, Germany, sacrificed his life for the safety of his crew. "When the intercom was shot out, Lt. Munsey was unable to determine whether all his crew had jumped, and with complete disregard for his personal safety, remained at his post until he no longer had sufficient altitude to jump." For his selfless devotion to his comrades, Lt. Munsey was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, posthumously. It was men such as he, who placed devotion to duty and comrades above all else, that were responsible for the enviable record not only of the 453rd but also of the entire 8th Air Force.

MISSION # 108 - BELFORT, FRANCE - 17 JULY - MON.

The weather finally cleared, permitting visual missions for a few days anyway. Three Squadrons carrying 102 tons of bombs dropped them on the marshalling yards. This was an important rail-link between the production centers of Germany and the front lines of France. The crews found their MPI's cloud-

covered and bombed other choke points in the area. Results were good and Germany had to rebuild and repair anew.

MISSION # 109 - CAEN, FRANCE - 18 JULY - TUES.

For the first time the 453rd went in for area bombing, in direct support of the ground forces. Bombing directly forward of the troops, this Group rained 102 tons of frags on the Jerries and their installations. Results were very good. 46 aircraft were over the target, the greatest number yet.

Mission # 110 - LAIPHEIM, GERMANY - 19 JULY - WED.

Taking advantage of the continuing favorable weather, 36 "banana boats", a name the Fort crews gave to the Libs, attacked the airfields of Leipheim and Laipheim in southwestern Germany. Two Squadrons poured 62 tons of incendiaries on Laupheim while 29 tons of frags splattered on the target at Leipheim. Results at both fields were excellent.

MISSION # 111 - GOTHA, GERMANY - 20 JULY THURS.

The Germans were attempting to rebuild the aircraft factory that had been bombed so successfully on February 24. A little dissuasion was necessary. Thus, on July 20, the Group put aloft 49 Libs laden with 134 tons of bombs to put the great plant out of commission for good. Capt. Bell, leading the high right squadron of the 389th Group, left them when they failed to pick up the target at the I.P. and went on to plant his squadron's load directly on the target. The remaining three squadrons repeated his performance, making the bombing for the day one of the best the Group had ever done. All ships returned safely, although many were holed badly by flak.

MISSION # 112 - MUNICH, GERMANY - 21 JULY - FRI

Leading the Division with Lt. Col. Harris as Air Commander, the Group set out for Munich/Reims with 32 planes carrying 81 tons of high explosives for Hitler's Reich. Running up against a towering cold front, Lt. Col. Harris ordered the formation to turn about and the railway yards at Saarbrucken were bombed via PFF. Lts. Cowgill and Gengler of the 734th squadron collided in mid-air shortly after the turnabout. The rest of the planes reached home safely.

MISSION # 113 - ST. LO, FRANCE - 24 JULY - MON.

After three days of waiting for favorable weather, area bombing was called for at St. Lo. This, like the bombing near Caen, was in direct support of the ground forces. 130 tons of 100-lb. frags were loaded aboard 31 aircraft. Arriving over the target area, they found it cloud covered and the bombs were brought home.

MISSION # 114 - ST. LO, FRANCE - 25 JULY - FRI.

The next day, the same force tried again and on this date the Germans felt the weight of the frags dropped on them. All four squadrons laid their eggs in excellent patterns on their appointed areas. So successful was the bombing, and so badly were the Germans mauled that the Americans were able to break the stalemate. The next two weeks witnessed the capture of the Brest Peninsula and the lightning advance on Paris. The 453rd was proud to have been responsible in part for the breakthrough.

MISSION # 115 - PARIS, FRANCE - 28 JULY - FRI.

40 planes took off for fuel storage dumps and the docks in the Paris area. Carrying 120 tons of 250-lb. bombs, the formation was forced to return without attacking because of inclement weather over the target area.

MISSION # 116 - BREMEN, GERMANY - 29 JULY - SAT.

One of the most successful, if not the most successful, PFF mission ever flown was flown on this day. 44 aircraft from this Group dropped 132 tons of

destructive force via the lead PFF ship. Photo reconnaissance later showed several hits on the Primary; concentrations in a U-boat shipbuilding works; considerable damage to yard facilities; two or three ships, standing in the harbor, sunk; heavy destruction was caused in the warehouse districts; and railroad facilities north of the target also heavily hit. It was indeed a good job well done.

MISSION # - 117 - LUDWIGSHAFEN, GERMANY - 31 JULY - MON.

For the fifth consecutive mission, the 453rd put four squadrons of planes aloft. The target this day was the chemical plant at Ludwigshafen. Weather again necessitated the use of PFF equipment. Major Low, the Group Operations Officer was lost when his PFF ship went down to flak. Major Low had assumed the duties of Group Ops. Officer on July 2. He was the third Command Pilot lost to the Group in this one month. Capt. Beckett was lost on July 7th and Capt. Boreske on July 11th.

(See "Chivalry in Adversity" - Pg. M-25, in the "Memories" Section)

(See "Ludwigshaven" - Pg. M-27, in the "Memories" Section)

Despite ole man weather, the Group established a new record in July for aircraft dispatched and tonnage carried. Flying three and four squadrons of planes on 17 of the 19 missions, the Group amassed a total of 746 sorties, losing 4 aircraft. A grand total of 2,022 tons of destructive force aided the ground troops in their struggle to liberate France.

In the three month period ending July 31, the Group amassed a total of 1,867 sorties. Against this total 17 aircraft were lost for a percentage of .009. In this same period, 72 missions were flown against Hitler's production centers and airfields as well as his communication lines. Fortress Europa shook from the

impact of 5,246 tons of bombs from this Group alone. In the greatest air offensive the world had ever seen, the 453rd played a role of which it was justly proud.

Station 144 was justly proud of its Aero Club as well. In the little more than three months of its existence, it had grown to fill a spot in the hearts of the enlisted men that had been sorely emptied when they left home. Under the able leadership of Miss Helen Wilbur, the directress, a schedule had been devised that made available to the men a varied program of entertainment and a chance to relax. There were Sunday forums which featured speakers such as Mr. Price, Balkan correspondent of the London Times who gave a memorable resume of the history of the Balkan countries and their activities in the last war and in this one. Lord Ironsides addressed a sizable gathering on two occasions, speaking once on India and the second time, on the British state of affairs before the U.S. entered the war. There were also other speakers.

The Aero Club also sponsored the interstation Ping Pong tournament. Old Buc's champions, Pvt. Richard Carlson and Cpl. Diecken of the 80th Station Complement, were largely responsible for defeating Hardwick, Hethel, Doeopham Green, Shipdham and Tibenham. In the 2nd Division tournament, it was Pvt. Carlson who brought the victor's flag to Old Buc.

There were dances held three times a month. Bands from Watton, Morley Hall, and Hethel, as well as the 453rd's own "G.I.'Vers" supplied the dance tunes. Girls from Old Buckenham, New Buckenham, Attleboro and even Wymondham and Norwich were provided with round-trip transportation. Refreshments, including ice cream on occasions, were served to the G.I.'s and their partners.

The ARC Aero Club also sponsored State Night Parties. Illinois, Indiana, California, Pennsylvania, and North and South Carolina have already had theirs. Others are on the waiting list.

Red Cross entertainers were received with a hearty welcome and deep appreciation on July 5 and 22. July 20 featured a picnic at Roxham, where swimming, boating, tennis, volley ball and other means of relaxation were available.

To round out the extensive program there was the Glee Club which met every Thursday, the Sunday evening Classical music sessions and the Bridge Club. All this besides the library with it's many volumes of good literature, it's writing room, game room, music room and last but by no means least, the Snack Bar.

Another organ of Old Buc that was doing its part was the Special Services Section. Through their sponsorship, a "stitched sphere" flung past him with a quick underhand motion fooled many a man into striking out. Lt. Hale, in charge of Special Services, was responsible for the interstation softball and baseball schedules between the Enlisted Men and Officers of this station and those of the nearby bases. Old Buc did more than hold its own in these games. The Officers softball team never lost a game in the 14 they played and the Enlisted Men finished better than .500. With Special Services' guidance, intersquadron games are played and everyone who so desired was given the opportunity to participate.

Besides Softball, Lt. Hale was responsible for the three USO shows a month that entertained The Enlisted Men and Officers of this base. Movies were shown three times daily at the Post Theatre by the Special Services Operator. They

weren't the latest directly out of Hollywood, but that didn't matter too much. They served their purpose of relaxing and entertaining the personnel.

Off the base, the boys frequented the English pubs in Old Buckenham, Attleboro, Wymondham and Norwich. The Castle and Bell Hotels and the HayMarket were favorite eating places in Norwich for the Officers and Enlisted Men on pass. The Hippodrome and Theatre Royal in Norwich attracted and entertained many a Yank.

In Attleboro, the Anglo-American Club served sandwiches, coffee or tea and pastry to some hungry G.I. with an evening off. Dances were held here and at Old Buckenham as well.

In Wymondham, the boys had the Anglo-American Club there and in Norwich, the ARC Club had its headquarters in the Bishop's Palace. Dormitories were provided for those remaining in town overnight as well as food for the hungry.

Some of the personnel made acquaintances with the neighboring townsfolk and many a dinner was served to a Yank by some English folk whose sons and daughters were far from home.

Attending the numerous dances and other affairs made available to them, it was only inevitable that the American boy meet that certain English girl. In the eight months that the Group has lived in the ETO more than a dozen Enlisted Men and Officers have ended their bachelor days or are scheduled to do so in the very near future.

Capt. Wilson, Executive Officer of the 733rd, who came to the ETO some two years ago and married an English girl shortly thereafter, became the father of a

little girl last February. Lt. Zellers, Sgt. Molnair, and M/Sgt. Boucher, all of the 734th met and, married a girl since coming over here. S/Sgt. Wilson and Pvt. Weidemann of the 733rd; Lt. Cannavaro, the assistant photo officer and Capt. Hardwick, Group Photo Interpreter, both of Headquarters were engaged to be married in the very near future. There were others also.

The Combat Missions

August, 1944

August witnessed the establishment of still more bombing records. Although fewer planes were dispatched, they carried a record tonnage of bombs. 683 planes took off, loaded with 2,708 tons of high explosives. Including July 31, the 453rd flew eleven missions in ten successive days of operations; another record. A total of 28 missions were flown for the month. Bombs from the bellies of Ole Buc's Libs rained on targets of all descriptions with varied results. Airfields, railroad bridges, aircraft plants, flying-bomb sites, oil refineries, and oil-storage depots were hit. Some of the targets were new others had appeared in the Group's bomb sights on previous occasions. Some of the missions were flown without a hitch others were hampered by weather and/or mechanical failure at the crucial moment.

MISSION # 118 - MONTEREAU, FRANCE - 1 AUG.- TUES.

This was another mission, which was hampered by the weather. 36 aircraft turned their attention to the railroad bridge northeast of Paris. Of the 144 tons carried, 96 tons fell on a target of opportunity; the rail bridge at Montereau. The Primary target had been cloud-covered. Two squadrons, consisting of 24 planes bombed Montereau, the third arrived in time to find it cloud covered and decided to bring their bomb loads home.

MISSION # 119 - NEUVEY, FRANCE - 2 AUG. - Wed.

The Railroad Bridge at Neuvey-sur-Loire, a 50-foot span, southeast of Orleans was the target for the six Libs that day. The minute target plus a stubborn cloud formation forced the bombs to fall slightly north. The Low Left Squadron did the best. It was thought that a few of their bombs may have found the span.

On August 3rd, Lt. Col. Edward F. Hubbard, CO of the 735th Squadron assumed the duties of Group Operations Officer, filling the vacancy left since July 31 when Major Low was lost to the Group in the operations against Ludwigshafen.

MISSION # 120 - PARIS, FRANCE - 3 AUG. - THURS.

The target was an oil supply depot in the Paris area. Again, weather interfered and forced a search for a target of opportunity. The air field at Conches, which had been bombed so often in the past, received the full load from the attacking planes. Results were excellent and Conches was definitely hard hit.

MISSION # 121 - SCHWERIN, GERMANY - 4 AUG. - FRI.

Two-a-day was the order for August 4. The first target was the airpark and FW-190 assembly plant at Schwerin. 89 tons of destruction cascaded in an excellent pattern on the plant with good results.

(See "Dateline - 4 Aug. 1944" - Pg. M-28, in the "Memories" Section)

MISSION # 122 - MONT LOUIS FERME, FRANCE - 4 AUG. - FRI.

The second mission for the day was accompanied by undercasts and results were unobserved. The target was a flying bomb site which the Group had sought on several previous occasions. The single squadron of eleven ships dropped 33 tons of bombs through the clouds with the aid of instruments.

MISSION # 123 - BRUNSWICK, GERMANY - 5 AUG. - SAT.

36 planes carried 102 tons of bombs to the airplane and engine-manufacturing center. When the Libs turned away from the city, large fires were left burning fiercely. Unlike the early missions to Brunswick, the Luftwaffe failed to challenge the formations. Throughout, the flak was intense, but all craft returned safely.

MISSION # 124 - HAMBURG, GERMANY - 6 AUG. - SUN.

The Germans needed oil, among other things, to stem the oncoming tide of Allied Forces. At Hamburg, there was a crude oil refinery before the 453rd aided in the halt of its production. On August 6 thirty-four craft rained 102 tons of destructive force on the plant. The 453rd led the Wing and the Division on that occasion. When the formations left Hamburg behind, huge masses of flame and billows of black, heavy smoke towered thousands of feet into the air. The German High Command sprouted a few more gray hairs.

The second change of the month in the staff of the 453rd occurred on August 7. Capt. Willis was recalled to 2nd Combat Wing Headquarters as Wing A-2 and Capt. McFadden, 733rd Squadron Intelligence Officer, became Group S-2 in his stead. Both men had proved themselves capable and beyond a doubt would fulfill the obligations of their new positions with the utmost efficiency. Capt. Willis had come to the Group as S-2 on April 10 replacing Major Sieverding who had been called to Wing.

MISSION # 125 - FREVENT, FRANCE - 7 AUG. - MON.

Ole man weather again proved to be Hitler's ally as the Group strove to pulverize the rail junction at Frevent. Of the 36 planes dispatched, only one squadron of 12 succeeded in picking up the target in time enough to drop. The results were fair and the remaining two squadrons returned with their loads.

MISSION # 126 - BOIS ST PIERRE AND AVESNES, FRANCE - 8 AUG. - TUES.

Two flying-bomb sites in the Pas-de-Calais area were successfully bombed today. The lead squadron bombed Bois St. Pierre and the high right struck at Avesnes. Both squadrons bombed through holes in the scattered clouds.

August 9 saw another change in the staff. This time Capt. Stoermer of the 735th Squadron relieved Capt. Lindholm as Group Navigator when Capt. Lindholm decided to fly with the big ones.

MISSION # 127 - STRASBOURG, FRANCE - 9 AUG. - WED.

36 planes, loaded with 90 tons of bombs destined for the fuel storage dumps, were recalled because of unfavorable weather.

MISSION # 128 - STRASBOURG, FRANCE - 11 AUG. FRI.

Two days later, the story was different. Two squadrons consisting of 23 planes rained their 63 tons of lethal cargo on the precious fuel dump. Results were excellent and Hitler's dwindling oil reserves dwindled a bit more. Lt. Freed of the 734th was forced to ditch on the way home and only three members of his crew were fished out of the icy drink. Those listed as MIA were 2nd Lt's Freed, Norton, and Schmidt, S/Sgt. Blackwell and Sgts. Byers, Labin, and Reintgen. Those saved were 2nd Lt. Stevenson, S/Sgt. Soine and Sgt. Kreiss.

The American Army had broken out of St. Lo and had raced through the Brest Peninsula, bypassing the points of stubborn resistance. One of these points was the harbor of St. Malo. From the small I'le de Cezembre, situated about three miles outside the harbor, the Germans incessantly poured 105 & 155mm shells into the troops advancing on the port. It became necessary to bomb the island into submission.

MISSION # 129 - I'LE DE CEZEMBRE, FRANCE - 13 AUG. - SUN.

36 planes loaded to capacity with 144 tons of 2,000-lb. bombs struck with full fury. Ile de Cezembre was approximately 2,000 feet by 1,000 feet and pictures show that every foot of the tiny isle was well covered.

Two days later, St. Malo capitulated. Ile de Cezembre was one of the finest examples of direct air support by heavies to date and needless to say, the 453rd felt a certain pride in the aid they had rendered. Major Coggeshall was Command Pilot of the Group and 63% of the bombs fell within 500 ft. and 82% fell within 10,000 ft. of the target.

MISSION # 130 - ANIZY LE CHATEAU, FRANCE - 14 AUG. - MON.

Another Rail Bridge became the object of attention. 144 tons of bombs cascaded from 36 Libs as indices met. Though the concentrations were good, they were a bit to the side and the approaches suffered the heaviest damage. There was a slight possibility that the bridge itself may have felt the impact of a few bombs. All planes returned safely but Lt. Whitehead, flying "HOO JIVE", had trouble with a runaway prop right from takeoff. At one point it was feathered completely and had to be restarted.

MISSION # 131 - ZWISCHENAHN, GERMANY - 15 AUG. - TUES.

The target was the airfield, situated 9 miles northwest of Oldenburg. The installations were well hit by the 30 attacking bombers, with their payload of 90 tons. The three attacking squadrons averaged 78 percent within 1,000 ft. of their aiming point.

MISSION # 132 - DESSAU, FRANCE - 16 AUG - WED

Dessau was a very good example of how malfunctions at the crucial moment can wreak havoc with the best-laid plans. The aircraft factory was attacked by 48 Libs carrying 120 tons of bombs. The deputy-lead of the low-left squadron suffered a direct hit by flak that caused an accidental release far short of the target. The rest of the squadron dropped on his release and 30 tons were wasted. The high-right squadron had a bombsight failure at the last moment and another 30 tons of bombs fell short of the target. There was no photo coverage for the remaining two squadrons, but it is hoped they fared better. The flak was very intense and Lt. Stanchfield of the 733rd Squadron was lost on the way home.

P	Stanchfield, Milton, A.	KIA
CP	Mishaga, Frank	KIA
N/B	Skakley, Earl E.	POW
RO	Marshall, James H.	POW

TT	Baba, Frank J.	POW
NG	Youree, Howard	POW
RW	Trapani, Eugene	KIA
LW	Fuller, Harrell W.	KIA
TG	Hall, Herbert L.	POW

MISSION # 133 - METZ GERMANY - 18 AUG - FRI.

The Germans based on the airfield at Metz must have been astonished at the sight of the tight-packed formations approaching them. The lead squadron tallied 70 percent of their bombs within 500 ft. of the MPI, 92 percent within 1,000 ft. The high-right squadron was even better, 88 percent within 500 ft. and 100 percent within 1,000 ft. The two squadrons, averaged 88 percent within 500 ft. and 96 percent within 1,000 ft. of the aiming point. The 72 tons had fallen where they would do the most good.

August 18 is a day which will be remembered by Major Shaw. On that day he gave up his "cartracks" for the gold leaf of a Major. In a quiet, informal ceremony, Major Shaw had the leaves pinned on by Lt. Col. Hubbard, Group Operations Officer.

MISSION # 134 - BRUNSWICK, GERMANY - 24AUG. - THURS.

Hitler's Fortress had a respite for five days, but on the sixth, Brunswick had it again. 453rd planes took off with 90 tons of bombs for the same target the Group had attacked earlier in the month. The results from two squadrons were excellent. The third squadron missed, but Brunswick was afire again.

MISSION # 135 - WISMAR, GERMANY - 25 AUG - FRI.

36 planes laden with 90 tons of bombs struck at the FW-190 plant. This was another excellent mission. The Group averaged 55 percent within 500 ft. and 96

percent within 1,000 ft. of the aiming point. The Luftwaffe would have to dip elsewhere for it's FW-190's. Lt. Huntoon was forced to drop out of the formation when "Hoo-Jive", one of the leading ships of the Group, with 60 missions to her credit, developed engine trouble. Despite her affliction, "Hoo-Jive" carried Lt. Huntoon and his crew safely to Sweden. Lt. Huntoon was the third loss for the month.

(See "Flak Alley Terror" - Pg. M-29, in the "Memories" Section)

MISSION # 135 - LA LOUVIERE, FRANCE - 25 AUG. - FRI.

In the afternoon of the 25th something new was added. Eleven Libs took off for La Louviere, bent on destroying the coke ovens there. Carrying 30 tons of bombs, the ships were to bomb in elements of five and six. This hadn't been done since D-Day. However, weather spoiled the fun and only one element bombed with undetermined results.

MISSION # 137 - EMMERICH, GERMANY - 26 AUG. - SAT.

The 24 aircraft that were dispatched found their target cloud covered. Determined not to bring back their cargo, the crews found and bombed the airfield at Eindhoven, Holland. 72 tons of bombs fell where they did the most good.

MISSION # 138 - BASDORF, GERMANY - 27 AUG. - SUN.

The airfield at Basdorf, near Berlin was the target. Thirty Libs carried 75 tons of bombs, but Hitler's best ally, the weather intervened and forced the recall of the mission. Basdorf would have to wait.

MISSION # 139 - FLERS, FRANCE - 30 AUG. - WED.

Two flying bomb sites were chosen as targets for the last mission of the month. Two squadrons were put aloft. 66 tons of bombs were dropped through the undercast with undetermined results.

Beyond a doubt, August had witnessed some of the most spectacular bombing exhibitions in the Group's history. Such names as Strasbourg, Bois St. Pierre, Ile de Cezembre, Zwischenahn, Metz and Wismar will be recalled by those who were on these missions, with a certain thrill and pride that goes hand in hand with a job well done.

August will also go down in annals as the month that clinched the Western Front for the Allies. Paris was Liberated! The invasion of the Riviera was accomplished and followed through with unbelievable success. The Allied Armies had made spectacular advances and dealt death blows to the German Seventh and Ninth Armies. From all fighting corners of the globe, the news grew from good to better.

These newscasts were bound to have an effect on the morale of the personnel of the Group. They did! From all the corners of the station, predictions as to when Hitler would fall, ran rampant. With these predictions came the inevitable rumors. Imaginations were strained. Some reported packing cases being lettered in Supply. Operations were to cease immediately, but they never did. Most everyone's eyes faced west. Bets were laid as to which direction the Group would travel next. Stories were circulated of huge banners hung from the great cities of the U.S., From the Statue of Liberty with the words, "Welcome Home Eighth Air Force." Our imaginations were really strained, but almost everyone hoped for that furlough home before the inevitable journey to the land of the Geisha Girls.

The Combat Missions

September, 1944

August had witnessed the spectacular strides of the Allied Armies. The Americans had charged out of St. Lo into Brittany, across France, through Paris, to the very frontiers of the Reich itself. The British and Canadians had wrenched free of Caen and had raced up the flying-bomb coast of Pas-de-Calais, into Belgium.

In September, the boys ran into stiffer opposition. The early part of the month had witnessed the liberation of Belgium and the advance into Holland. The going in the latter part of the month was much slower, hard fought, and hard-gained. Of course, this was due not only to the fact that the Germans had withdrawn into the Reich and were now fighting desperately for their Fatherland, but due also to the fact that the Allied supply lines that had been so strained were now in the process of rebuilding and stocks were being replenished for the big push

The spectacular gains of August had produced a state of super optimism. Many actually and seriously believed they would be home by Christmas of 1944. The hard, slow advancing that characterized most of the September fighting served to bring home the realization that Germany was far from being licked. The ranks of those who claimed it would take another winter began to swell. Many still believed in an early collapse of the Wehrmacht, but as the opposition increased, their numbers decreased.

The wave of optimism began to ebb and was replaced by a sound, realistic analysis of the situation. The length of the war with Germany depended upon how long Hitler's ruthless SS and Gestapo could control the Wehrmacht and

populace. No one could definitely answer that question. It was best to prepare oneself physically and mentally for another winter. The personnel began to do just that.

The men, who remembered the past winter, remembered it as one of inconveniences. Inconveniences that were undoubtedly magnified by the fact that the young Group had just left March Field in the good ole USA. At March Field, the personnel had enjoyed barracks that were more than adequately heated. The showers and latrines were a part of the barracks. The roads and sidewalks were all paved. The "line" where they trained themselves to maintain and fly the big Libs was a mere hundred yards from the barracks. The mess hall was even closer. There were two theaters on the base showing the latest pictures. The personnel could enjoy the pleasures of the gymnasium, bowling alley and swimming pool. The PX served real milk shakes with plenty of ice cream, fresh ham, fresh scrambled eggs with real bacon. Off the base there was Riverside, a lively little town. Then there was Los Angeles and "Sunset and Vine".

The ground echelon arrived at Old Buc amidst pouring rain and penetrating cold. The narrow, poorly paved road ways were mostly mud. The men were tired and demoralized from their long journey overseas and by rail. Many of the barracks weren't even completed. Roofs were needed in some, electricity in others, and stoves in the majority. To give further emphasis on the demoralized atmosphere, it was two days before Christmas.

It rained throughout most of the first few months. One trudged through ankle-deep to knee-deep mud a good part of the time. If the soldier wasn't fortunate enough to own a bike, he walked over a mile to the line, a good 1/2 mile to the mess hall and too often had to take cold showers. The food, to begin with was poor. and one didn't satisfy his appetite with explanations which were true

enough. Nothing could compare with the PX at March Field. Attleborough was nothing compared to Riverside, Pomona or San Bernardino. You couldn't begin to compare London with Los Angeles or any other city for that matter- not to an American soldier. These cities spelled home.

Late spring and early summer saw quite a few changes on the base. The men had become thoroughly accustomed to the "inconveniences". The food had improved a hundred-fold. Even ice cream was served occasionally. Sunday chicken dinner was now a habit. The roads had dried enough to permit paving. That promised to do away with mud completely. The Aero Club opened in April, in July the Non-Com Club began to function. The Post Theater had finally found a permanent home and few could now complain about the acoustics. Besides, the majority had by now formed bonds of friendship with the civilian population. Some had found homes with wide open doors in London, Cambridge, Ely, Bedford, Attleborough, Norwich, Wymondham, and Old Buckenham. On furlough the men had visited London, Manchester, Leeds, York, March and had even gone to Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness and other beauty spots to help further Scottish-American relations. No matter how tough this winter might prove to be, the men now had at their disposal means of recreation. The center of home life on the base for the Officers was the Officer's Club, for the enlisted men, the Aero Club and the Non Com Club.

The Officer's Club boasted a good bar, well-stocked with Scotch, Rye, and beer. There was the lounge, where one could write letters, play cards or read the books which were available from the library. There was also the Games Room where ping pong and pool tables offered many an enjoyable hour. Dances were held at regular intervals.

The activities of the Aero Club reached a new high during the month of September. The Art Exhibit was held during this month. There were more than sixty entries. Water colors, pencil sketches pen and inks and even oils were well represented. Lt. Mangal took first prize for the best all around exhibit. S/Sgt. Clark won the Blue Ribbon for an oil painting of Capt. Bieck, Sgt. Schwartz won for his excellent pencil sketches of Norwich and Lt. Friedgut won for his realistic portrayals of life on the base. The number and quality of the entries was truly remarkable considering that they were made in the spare time of the entrants. It must have taken weeks to assemble Their collections. Old Buc's Ping-Pong team continued its winning streak and defended its Second Division title by defeating all comers. In a great Invitational Tournament held on Sept. 3rd, Wendling, Hethel, Deophom Green, Hardwick, Seething and Bun all bowed to the prowess of the Old Buc five. On the 22nd, Hahnington suffered a rout at the hands of the home team. On the 28TH, Horeham, champions of the 3rd Division, came to Old Buc cocky and confident with their winning streak of 32 straight. They had recently defeated the Hans Crescent Club, champions of the London area.

The Old Buc five trounced the 3rd Division champs soundly with a score of 5 to 2.

During the month, two dances were given at the Aero Club. The base band, the "G.I.'Vers", played while the G.I.'s danced. Their partners included Wrens from Great Yarmouth as well as girls from nearby Attleborough, Wymondham, Norwich and Old Buckenham. Everyone agreed that the dances were improving. The Non-Com Club gave its first dance for Club members the first week in Sept. It was a success and there was the promise that more would come.

Miss Katherine Dionne, the new Club Directress, and her able assistant Mercedes Garriga, started the fad of free waffles once weekly. Needless to say, the men ate it up. In three weeks, they consumed 1,700 waffles.

A juvenile show given by a troupe from Norwich was featured on the 24th. If they were lacking in talent, they more than made up for it in spirit and comedy in their method of presentation.

The Bingo Club was started on the 20th and was the feature every Wednesday night. Prizes consisting of cigarettes, pipes, tobacco, candy bars, etc. were given to the lucky winners. Tuesday night was the night S-2 took over. Featured one week was a group of officers from Watton who told of their experiences and explained methods they used in their job of photo and weather reconnaissance. On another occasion, Lt. Reed, having just returned from home, gave an interesting verbal sketch of life in the United States. His caricatures of the folks back home and comic descriptions of their "struggle to live" brought many a burst of laughter from his audience.

Ella Logan, ably assisted by Edie Dalaney and Frank Petrillo, sang, danced and, played for the personnel in the USO show sponsored by Special Services.

September had witnessed the climax of the Eighth Air Force's Bond Drive and the ETO Blood Bank Drive. The Group's quota in the Bond Drive was \$87,000. They went over the top with more than \$103,000 dollars. In the Blood Bank, more than 325 pints were collected from those with type "O" blood.

Operations for the month hit a new low as weather prevented the Group from attempting any more than 13 missions. Only four of these were visual. The remainder of the targets were bombed with the aid of instruments. On the 13 operational missions, 434 aircraft were dispatched, loaded with 1,115 tons of bombs. The figures for September were low, to be sure, but the average number of planes attacking and the tons of bombs dropped was still high. Nine of the

thirteen targets were railroad marshalling yards feeding the Wehrmacht on the Siegfried Line.

MISSION # 140 - KARLSRUHE, GERMANY - 5 SEPT. - TUES.

The target was the important marshalling yards. 24 aircraft brought up the rear Wing to drop 50 tons of bombs. The damage done was shown very well by the photos which were taken later.

MISSION # 141 - KARLSRUHE, GERMANY - 8 SEPT. FRI.

Once again the target was the marshalling yards. This time the crews reported 10/10ths clouds over the target and results were unobserved. Lts. Parks and Whitehead sustained flak damage that caused them to land in France, all safely. Lt. Beecher ditched in the Channel. Lts. Beecher, Brown and Forbes and T/Sgt. Poland were picked up by Air Sea Rescue. T/Sgt. Holden, S/Sgts. Kasitz, Hooper, Hovenesian were all reported killed in action.

MISSION # 142 - MAINZ, GERMANY - 9 SEPT. - SAT.

The railway marshalling yards were the target. Again weather, hindered operations and results were unobserved. 40 Libs discharged 92 tons somewhere over the target.

MISSION # 143 - ULM, GERMANY - 10 SEPT. - SUN.

39 Libs flew to Ulm, the site of an ordnance depot. 94 tons of bombs were dropped through a solid undercast. Once again, results were unobserved.

MISSION # 144 - MISBURG, GERMANY - 11 SEPT. - MON.

The oil refinery was the target. It was capable of producing 200,000 tons annually, therefore, it must be denied to the Wehrmacht. Accordingly, 33 planes attacked, dropping 85 tons of destruction with good results. Despite unfavorable weather conditions the Group was able to lay their eggs in the proper basket. Lt. Handwright was hit by flak over the target and forced to crash land in France. None of the crew was injured. Capt. Whitehouse got a direct hit in the nose turret. The shell went through without exploding and took out the gunners control column. The gunner received only minor injuries but the residue of the turret fell into the # 2 propeller thus knocking out that engine and forcing Whitehouse to return to Old Buck on three engines. Two lead aircraft were knocked out by flak on that bomb run. Capt. Don Gillies was forced to make an emergency landing at the Manston air field emergency strip. He bailed out most of his crew before landing without hydraulic pressure and with one engine and some controls shot out.

In his notes regarding this mission, Lt. G.W. Ford wrote: "On the bomb-run all hell broke loose! Flak was thick and close. We could see, hear, smell, and feel the explosions. 88mm shell fragments hit two of our crew, though they weren't badly wounded. Flak knocked holes in all parts of our B-24. Our # 3 engine had the worst damage and we had to shut it down. At about the same time, three ME-109s attacked the Group from the rear, but missed us. Shortly after that, when we were heading out toward Holland, # 2 engine's prop started "running away" and before long the engine quit entirely. Having lost a lot of power, airspeed, and altitude we decided not to try to cross over the North sea, but to turn southward and find an airfield not occupied by German forces. Flying over Belgium, we hoped to spot a place where conditions were suitable for us to land, but we didn't. We were unable to hold our altitude and as we were now just a few hundred feet above the ground, we prepared for a crash landing. Then # 1

engine's oil pressure began dropping, and we started to pick out a pasture to go in wheels up. While looking, we sighted a small airfield. On the field were two P-38s and one B-17. That didn't make it an American base and we could only hope that it wasn't in German hands. We took the risk and staggered down onto the runway. U.S. Army Engineers and the French underground guerrillas controlled the place. This airfield was across the border in France, and it had been held by the Germans just two days before. The plane was so badly damaged we had to leave it there. We got back to the 453rd base the next day by hitching rides on C-47s, happy to be "home" and to be taken off the "Missing in Action" list."

MISSION # 145 - WEISENHORN, GERMANY - 13 SEPT. - WED

This was the last mission in September that the Group experienced favorable weather over the target. A fuel storage dump of 10,400 ton capacity was the target. Shortly after the Group passed over the Rhine River, somewhere between Karlsruhe and Mannheim/Ludwigshaven, they encountered an unknown flak battery. The first burst took out two B-24s and crippled the Squadron lead. Lt. Mills of the 733rd Squadron and his entire crew were lost. Capt. Alve noted in his diary "A B-24 flying above and to our right received a direct hit. Fragments from the same shell struck our plane, causing a flat tire. Our friend Lt. Mills was flying the ship that received the direct hit. I could see the cockpit burning, I saw him struggling in the flames. Then his plane veered over us, nearly crashing into us. We saw one chute open, but officially everyone was listed as missing in action. Depression settled in thick and heavy that night when we saw the empty bunks." (Editorial note: The Navigator, Cornelius W. Ford, the Top Turret Gunner, Alvin J Demroe and the Left Waist Gunner, William D Dennis were the only survivors.) Capt. Parten crash-landed at Prouvy Demain, France in a vain attempt to save his gunners life. S/Sgt. W.E. Carman, however, had died of his

flak wounds. Bomb strike photos showed that a large amount of damage was done to the dump.

From the 14th to the 21st, the 453rd was prevented from attacking Hitler's Reich by his most faithful ally, ole man weather. It was the longest period of inactivity since the Group became operational. In the middle of Sept. the Group went into the trucking business. On the 16th they picked up gasoline in 5 gallon cans. Over 200 jerry cans were loaded in the bomb bays, waist section, putt-putt well and the nose sections. On the 17th the gasoline was delivered to General Patton's Army who had advanced beyond their supply lines. Only a minimum crew was required for this operation; two pilots, an engineer and a navigator. They landed at Clastres, France at an airfield which had very recently been liberated from the German Forces. There were several wrecked German fighter aircraft and a few dead Germans on the field and the area was heavily mined. The Group had continual top cover supplied by P-38s and P-47s. On the 18th and 19th blankets and similar items were brought in, on the 20th the load was flour and rations. It was something new and proved quite popular, especially with those who got a ride to France if only to unload the ship and hop right back. 52 ships participated in this operation.

The 21st witnessed a change in the command of the 733rd squadron. Major Coggeshall was relieved and Major Heaton took over the reins.

From the 21st to the 30th, the Group performed seven missions, all with the aid of PFF equipment.

MISSION # 146 - KOBLENZ, GERMANY - 21 SEPT. - THURS.

The marshalling yards were the target. 66 Libs dropped 164 tons through the solid undercast with, of course, unobserved results.

MISSION # 147 - KASSEL, GERMANY - 22 SEPT. - FRI.

The marshalling yards felt the impact of 240 tons from 84 Libs.

MISSION # 148 - KOBLENZ, GERMANY - 25 SEPT. - MON.

Once again the marshalling yards were the target.

MISSION # 149 - HAMM, GERMANY - 26 SEPT. - TUES.

The oft-bombed marshalling yards were the target 73 craft carried 201 tons and dropped through the solid undercast.

MISSION # 150 - KASSEL, GERMANY - 27 SEPT. - WED.

This was a very bad day for 2nd Air Division B-24s. The target was the marshalling yards. Lts. Putman and Ross were forced to land in France. All returned safely. Lt. Tardiff was forced down behind enemy lines but he and six other members of his crew managed to evade the Germans and return to the base. The other three were reported missing in action.

The 445th Group made a serious navigation error and got out of the Bomber Stream where they were attacked by a mix of about 100 ME-109s and FW-190s. An urgent call for help went out to the P-51 & P-38 fighter escort however they arrived too late to fully engage and drive off the Germans. The Germans attacked in 3 or 4 waves of 15 each resulting in 25 B-24s shot down over/near Kassel. Two others crashed in France, one in Belgium, and two in England. Only 4 planes returned to their home base at Tibenham. Later it was learned that 29 German planes had been shot down.

MISSION # 151 - KASSEL, GERMANY - 28 SEPT. - THURS.

The marshalling yards were the target again today.

MISSION # 152 - HAMM, GERMANY - 30 SEPT. - SAT.

The marshalling yards at Hamm were attacked once again.

This was the extent of the operations in September. In approximately 8 months of operations, the Group has lost 40 crews over Germany. Three have crash-landed, four have ditched. 40 men are interned in Sweden and 13 in Switzerland, seven having escaped and returned to the home base. Of the 7 crews that crash-landed or ditched, 42 have survived. Some have been grounded, others have gone on flying. 17 men have evaded the Germans after bailing out over enemy territory. 35 have been reported KIA, 136 POW, and 266 MIA. Such is the cost of war.

On 16 Sept., Capt. Lester Hardwick, Group Photo Interpreter and Gwendolen D. Craven-Smith were married at the Norwich Cathedral. Major John Braun, Group Communications Officer was the best man and Capt. Charles Titkemeyer, Navigator, served as usher.

The Combat Missions

October, 1944

October arrived, and with October came the dreaded winter flying conditions. Flying conditions that were dreaded not because they couldn't be surmounted, but because they contained additional discomfort and flying hazards. The 453rd flew 18 missions during the month and of the 18, a mere four resulted in visual bombing. "Mickey" operators and bombardiers cooperated throughout the month, attacking marshalling yards, airfields, synthetic-oil plants and storage tanks as well as ordnance depots and factories. The priority target proved to be the all important marshalling yards close to the fighting fronts, duck soup for the "Mickey" operators.

MISSION # 153 - HAMM, GERMANY - 2 OCT. - MON.

The target was one of the largest railroad centers in Germany. Early in the morning, 21 Libs pointed their noses towards that all important communications center. 63 tons of bombs cascaded into the clouds. "Mickey" operators enthusiastically claimed that Hamm lay beneath that snow-white, fleecy, solid undercast.

Lt. Emerson of the 734th had just recently married an English belle. He had completed one tour of operations but while waiting for papers permitting him to take his wife home with him, was flying a few more to keep his wings in trim. Lt. Emerson, flying his 39th mission, failed to return. Trailing the Group over the target at the moment of bombs away, his ship burst into a sheet of flames and broke in two. Returning crews reported seeing a few chutes before the plane-halves disappeared into the clouds. It is hoped there were more than just a few chutes.

MISSION # 154 - LACHEN/SPEYERSBURG, GERMANY - 3 OCT. - TUES.

Germany's frontline airfields were of major importance now that she had lost all those fine fields in France, Belgium and Holland. The Luftwaffe now had to rely on several grass-surfaced landing areas for repairing and storing her craft. Because of their tactical value, these fields became priority targets. Accordingly, 29 Libs Launched 68 tons of destruction on Lachen/Speyersburg with very good results.

MISSION # 155 - RHEINE, GERMANY - 5 OCT. - THURS.

It was the marshalling yards again as 31 Libs took off for Rheine. This particular rail junction was only two miles from Holland, 60 miles from the front lines. Its importance, therefore, was obvious. 91 tons were dropped visually with very good results. Many a German will long remember the clouds of smoke that rose from the yards on this day.

MISSION # 156 - GLINDE, GERMANY - 6 OCT. - FRI.

Ten miles east of Hamburg, at Glinde, there was an ordnance depot for the assembling and manufacturing of all types of ordnance and equipment. That was before the 453rd teamed with Wingmate, the 445th, to destroy the plant completely. The Group dropped 86 tons from 31 Libs where they did the most good. Scratch off one ordnance depot. Ninety percent of the bombs dropped fell within the 1,000 feet circle. A good days work excellently done.

MISSION # 157 - KASSEL, GERMANY - 7 OCT. - SAT.

This was another day for the "Mickey" operators. As part of a force of 1,500 Libs and Forts from England alone, the Group put aloft four squadrons, 40 ships. Because of patchy clouds and some mix-up in calling the signals, bombing was on instruments, with poor results.

MISSION # 158 - KOBLENZ, GERMANY - 9 OCT. - MON.

One day of rest, then off again. The target was the marshalling yards. Though the bombing was via PFF, breaks in the clouds permitted some observations which substantiated "Mickey's" claims of excellent results. The 31 Libs had dropped 86 tons as briefed.

MISSION # 159 - OSNABRUCK GERMANY - 12 OCT. - THURS.

The target was the marshalling yards. Again exercising his powers the "Mickey" operator led the formation over the target. 32 Libs saw through momentary holes in the clouds and adjudged the results as very good. 89 tons of bombs were dropped that day.

MISSION # 160 - KAISERLAUTERN, GERMANY - 14 OCT. - SAT.

It was a two a day on October 14 and both were marshalling yards. The first force numbered 10 Libs - Adverse weather caused two craft to lose the formation and return to the base. Lt. Beecher failed to bomb because of mechanical malfunctions and thus only 7 ships attacked. Pathfinder methods were used again as 13 tons of bombs fell through the clouds.

MISSION # 161 - COLOGNE, GERMANY - 14 OCT. - SAT.

The second mission for the day was directed against the great rail center of Cologne. 26 Libs carrying 65 tons of high explosives experimented with a new formation. They flew in two six-ship and two seven-ship sections, abreast. Here again, bombs were dropped through the clouds with the aid of the "Mickey" man. Results were believed to be good.

MISSION # 162 - REINHOLZ, GERMANY - 15 OCT. - SUN.

Again flying the new formation, 26 ships attacked the synthetic oil plant at Reinholz on the Rhine River. The plant was small, but it was producing oil for Hitler's Wehrmacht, and this could not be tolerated. Results were only fair as the 71 tons of eggs dropped only nicked their target but pounded the Power station next door.

The 17th of October proved a memorable day for the 733rd Squadron. On that date their remarkable record of eighty-two missions without a single loss was published in "Target Victory", the Second Bombardment Division's Official publication. The 733rd Squadron had received a Division Citation for their achievement on September 19. On the 17th of October, Capt. Samuel R. Haggard, engineering officer of the 733rd, line chief M/Sgt. Harold E. Hall, and crew chiefs M/Sgt. Vern G. Gill, and M/Sgt. Joseph Karpinski whose planes set records of from 44 to 59 consecutive missions without an abortion were all awarded the Bronze Star for their meritorious achievement. Major Robert D. Coggeshall, under whose able leadership the 733rd established the Eighth Air Force record, was awarded the DFC.

MISSION # 163 - COLOGNE, GERMANY - 17 OCT. - TUES.

The target was the marshalling yards at Cologne for the second time this month. Weather conditions called for Pathfinder bombing methods as 107 tons fell from the bomb-bays of the Group's 38 Libs.

At bombs away, Lt. Lofton's ship sustained flak hits that severed No. 1 and No. 2 fuel cells, damaged the left landing gear and knocked out the nose turret. With precious gasoline streaming into the waist and bomb bay, T/Sgt. Williard Edwards Jr., crew engineer, sprang into action. Realizing the danger of an explosion, T/Sgt. Edwards opened the nose wheel doors, and all hatches to

allow the fumes to escape. Then without oxygen at 21,000 feet, with the temperature at -40 degrees, T/Sgt. Edwards raced about ripping up upholstery and cotton belting. Lying in a precarious position on the slippery catwalk, he proceeded to stuff the material into the leaks and halted the flow of fuel sufficiently to allow the battered bomber to stay with the formation. When two engines quit, Lt. Lofton coaxed the crippled ship onward until at 1,500 feet they crossed the battle line. Fired upon by all sorts of small arms, the ship still limped forward. A third engine faltered and Lt. Lofton gave the word to bail out. All escaped via the silk and the ship went on to crash a short distance away. By his heroic efforts, T/Sgt. Edwards had saved the crew from possible death and certainly from capture by the enemy. All returned safely to the base. T/Sgt. Edwards had been recommended for the Silver Star.

(See "Bail Out" - Pg. M-31, in the "Memories" Section)

MISSION # 164 - LEVERKUBEN, GERMANY - 18 OCT. WED.

The I. G. Farben Chemical Works at Leverkusen, near Cologne, became the target today. Again weather prevented observation of results as 10 Libs dropped 30 tons through the undercast.

After the mission Lt. Scanlon wrote this in his diary, "The weather during this entire mission was real bad. We formed up over England at 24,000 feet, in and out of clouds and contrails. En route to the target, the flak was the most accurate I had seen coming up thru 10/10 undercast. Our radio operator was hit, our plane got over 40 holes, the elevator trim and radios were shot out, so was # 3 prop governor, and # 4 prop got a big dent in it. Slowed down when leaving the target area, we headed toward England alone, entering clouds at 23,000 feet and breaking out at 5,000 feet near our base. Responding to the red flares that we fired, medics met us when we landed and took care of our wounded radioman".

MISSION # 165 - MAINZ, GERMANY - 19 OCT. - THURS.

32 Libs took off for the marshalling yards at Mainz. The formation encountered clouds that rose to 28,000 feet. Even this did not deter them, for they bombed via PFF. 79 tons of bombs were released on the target. Lt. Carter of the 733rd was lost as the result of a direct hit by flak.

October 21st witnessed a change in Squadron Ops. Officers. Major Walsh; Operations Officer of the 734th became Operations Officer of the 732nd. Major Boice, Operations Officer of the 732nd, moved to the Operations office of the 733rd. Major O'Dwyer moved his desk from the Ops. office of the 733rd to the Ops. office of the 734th.

MISSION # 166 - GELSENKIRCHEN, GERMANY - 22 OCT. - SUN.

The target was the synthetic oil plant at Gelsenkirchen in the Ruhr. 11 Libs dropped 33 tons of destructive force through the clouds with the aid of PFF equipment.

MISSION # 167 - HAMM, GERMANY - 25 OCT. - WED.

There are no comments regarding this mission.

MISSION # 168 - NEUMUNSTER, GERMANY - 25 OCT. - WED.

The target was the grass-surfaced airfield at Neumunster. Again, the boys never saw the ground, but dropped their 31 tons from the 11 craft via PFF.

MISSION # 169 - MINDEN, GERMANY - 26 OCT. - THURS.

The Mittelland canal is one of Germany's most important east-west waterways. At Minden, the canal rises to 20 feet above the terrain and crosses the Weser River via a bridge. It was here that the "Mickey" boys hit the jackpot. The entire mission was PFF. From 32 ships, 58 tons of 2,000-lb. bombs cascaded through a cloudbank that looked like any other cloudbank. The "Mickey" operators,

however, insisted that the target lay beneath that particular bit of cloud and no other. They were right!

MISSION # 170 - CUXHAVEN, GERMANY - 30 OCT. - MON.

The last mission of the month was to have been performed against the synthetic oil plant, and storage depots at Hamburg. Weather proved an insurmountable obstacle as only 13 of the dispatched 30 craft dropped their payloads. And even then they dropped on a target of opportunity, the oil depot at Cuxhaven. The other 17 craft returned to the base with their bombs.

On October 31, Lt. Col. Sullivan was relieved of his duties as C.O. of the 732nd Squadron in favor of Major Walsh and Capt. Seaver became Operations Officer, filling Major Walsh's shoes.

In the eighteen missions performed for the month, the Group had flown 469 sorties and carried 1,202 tons of bombs to the heart of Hitler's Reich.

It is true that the success of any mission depends upon the cooperation of everyone on the base from the KP to the combat crew. But perhaps the person most directly responsible is the crew chief and the mechanics charged with keeping the planes in the air. In this respect, the 453rd's Engineering Department is tops.

Under the leadership of Capt. E. F. Rhode, from Minneapolis, Minnesota, Group Engineering Officer, The department has seen the Group through 4,224 sorties with but 157 abortions. With Lt. James R. Long of the 732nd, of Malden Massachusetts, Capt. Samuel R. Haggard, of the 733rd, from Helena Arkansas, Capt. John F. Johnson of the 734th, from Purcell, Missouri and Lt. Harry F.

Godges of the 735th, from Garrettsville, Ohio, heading their Squadron-Engineering departments, the Group has established many an enviable record.

M/Sgt. Karpinski was crew chief of the Liberator "Archibald", which completed 59 missions without an abortion or engine change before crash-landing in Belgium.

Crew chief M/Sgt. Charles E. Stephens of Cartersville, Georgia, has seen his charge "Butch" through 62 missions without an abortion.

As in other months, all was not work, there was still some time for relaxation. Of the three dances during the month, the best was the Halloween party, complete with jack-o-lanterns and pumpkin pie. Red and purple cellophane over the lights gave a spooky look, while big cardboard witches and black cats dangled from the ceiling. A rather effective ghost in the entrance, made with flour sacks and a sheet was spoiled when someone stole the sheet! A lot of hay around the floor completed the picture, and all the neighboring children came to peek. Apparently Halloween is purely an American institution. S-2's War Review is still the most popular weekly event, averaging about 125 people each Tuesday. The Bingo parties are gaining in popularity and the free waffles are still consumed in numbers hovering around 700 each Saturday night.

The base band had four Jam Sessions during the month on off nights in the Aero Club. With an alternate boogie woogie piano player, Katie Dionne, the club directress had a hard time closing even at midnight. The audience just refused to leave.

The awards for the Art Exhibit were made on October 3. The pictures were all mounted and displayed on large frames in the card room of the Aero Club for

two weeks before moving to the Officer's Club for exhibition there. The ribbon winners and those who presented the ribbons were S/Sgt. Al Clark, whose oil paintings won him first prize. Lt. Mangel, who excelled in pencil sketches of Norwich, and Katie Dionne, Aero Club Directress who was assisted by Lt. "Archie" Henderson in giving away the prizes.

The Combat Missions

November, 1944

November witnessed Old Man Winter slowly gain control of flying weather and cover the airways with cloud. Only 14 missions were flown during the month and of these, only one resulted in a visual sighting and bombing. As Allied troops moved ever forward, it became possible to press into use the GH technique of bombing, generally conceded to be more accurate than the H2X method.

Early in the month the entire Western Front burst into action. German transportation lines and centers close to and supporting the front acquired a higher priority. Still high on the priority list, however, were the oil plants and storage depots, still producing for Der Fuehrer. Of the 14 missions flown, six were directed against oil and five against rail targets. Also attacked were the Mittelland Canal, an airfield and a gun emplacement in the Metz Area.

MISSION # 171 - GELSENKIRCHEN, GERMANY - 1 NOV. - WED.

20 Libs, flying in two squadrons, attacked the oil plant at Gelsenkirchen in the Ruhr. 60 tons of bombs disappeared into the undercast. Bombing was done with the aid of GH equipment.

MISSION # 172 - CASTROP-RAUXAL, GERMANY - 2 NOV. - THURS.

The target was another oil refinery at Castrop-Rauxal situated in the Ruhr Valley. 29 ships were dispatched but one had to abort due to mechanical failures. The remaining 28 dropped 78 tons of high explosives via GH. Results were unobserved.

"El Flako" was on her 78th mission on November 2nd. In 77 previous excursions, she had never aborted and had always returned her crew safe and sound. Lt. Isaksen, of the 735th Squadron, was on his first mission; "El Flako" received a direct hit from flak and broke in half. A gallant ship and a gallant crew became the victim of a cruel trick of fate.

MISSION # 173 - GELSENKIRCHEN, GERMANY - 4 NOV. - SAT.

Weather forced a day of rest, but on the 4th it was Gelsenkirchen again. As before two squadrons of 10 ships each accomplished the mission without loss. On this occasion, 54 tons of eggs plummeted into the solid undercast. GH equipment was used once more and once more results were unobserved.

MISSION # 174 - KARLSRUHE, GERMANY - 5 NOV. - SUN.

The target was the marshalling yards. 31 Libs were dispatched loaded with 82 tons of bombs. Pathfinder methods of bombing were used with unobserved results.

Upon returning to England, the formation found the base beginning to close in. Eight ships were forced to land away from the base. Lt. Barre crash-landed his ship at Bungay when the weather interfered with his vision and he found himself landing half-way down the runway. Lt. Barre was unable to take off again and couldn't stop the ponderous ship in time and ran off the runway.

To Capt. Hoffman, November 5 will be a day to remember for a long time. He became Operations Officer for the 732nd Squadron with Capt. Seaver as his assistant.

MISSION # 175 - MINDEN, GERMANY - 6 NOV. - MON.

The Mittelland Canal at Minden was the target. The canal had been broken on October. 26 and now the object was to further complicate handling of the barges, loaded with supplies for the Wehrmacht. 30 aircraft carrying an 80 ton load dropped it through the undercast via PFF, unobserved. Later PRU's proved that the feat of October 26 was not luck. The canal suffered new breaks.

MISSION # 176 - RHEINE, GERMANY - 8 NOV. - WED.

29 ships flew against Rheine. Due to hazardous weather, only one squadron of the three attacked dropping 25 tons through the solid undercast.

MISSION # 177 - METZ, GERMANY - 9 NOV. - THURS.

This was a big day. On two previous occasions the Group had been scheduled to attack Fort L'Aisne in the Metz area in direct support of General Patton's Third Army. Now, finally, weather had cleared sufficiently to permit the operation. 30 aircraft, flying in three squadrons, dropped 81 tons on the 'Fort'. Results were not as good as was hoped they would be, but direct hits were observed on the gun positions.

Lt. McGilvary will remember this mission for a long time and derive pleasure out of telling and retelling it to his grand-children until they tire of it. Racing down the runway, Lt. McGilvary in "Shoo Shoo Baby" was horrified when the throttles suddenly popped back just as he was ready to lift the ship. Recovering in a flash, he pushed them forward again but the air speed had dropped considerably. With nine other hearts wishing it forward and upward, Lt. McGilvary succeeded in lifting the plane at the very end of the runway. Rising, but not quickly enough, the ship clipped the tops of the trees at the edge of the field. Checking on the damage and satisfied with the behavior of "Shoo Shoo Baby", they went on to bomb with the formation. That evening at the hard stand, the crew went

over the ship and discovered that "Shoo Shoo Baby" had sustained damage to her left flap and stabilizer.

The Group's first loss to anoxia occurred during this mission. The victim was S/Sgt. Frank A. Mayer. Tail gunner on Lt. Doyle's crew. Five minutes after S/Sgt. Mayer had answered to a query regarding fighters, he was dead. Lt. Doyle dove out of the formation while his crew made every effort to revive the stricken gunner. Even artificial respiration failed. Upon landing in Allied controlled territory, S/Sgt. Mayer was officially pronounced dead. It is believed that he permitted his oxygen mask to freeze, for the oxygen system checked out perfectly.

MISSION # 178 - HANAU/LANGENDIEBACH - 10 NOV. - FRI.

The mission was directed against an airfield just one hundred miles from the battle lines. It was being used by the Luftwaffe for ground support of their troops against the Allied forces. The airfield was near Frankfurt. 20 Libs carried 36 tons of bombs and dropped them via PFF through a solid undercast.

MISSION # 179 - BOTTRUP, GERMANY - 11 NOV. - SAT.

Oil was the target for the fourth time this month. The oil plant at Bottrop, six miles north of Essen, received the brunt of the attack. 18 Libs, carrying 51 tons of bombs, let loose via GH with unobserved results.

Lt. Friedhaber, of the 734th squadron, was seen to be hit by flak and disappear into the undercast. His was the second loss of the month. What proved to be the longest stand down period in the operational history of the Group lasted for the next ten days.

MISSION # 180 - HAMBURG, GERMANY - 21 NOV. - TUES.

On the eleventh day 31 Libs took to the air. Their target again was the oil plants located in Hamburg. 85 tons of bombs cascaded through patchy clouds via PFF . A few strike photos showed enough of the ground to support the belief that the bombs fell on the Hamburg dock area, just south of the assigned target. Lt. Whitehead, of the 734th Squadron, lost an engine over the target and swung away from the formation. He was later officially reported to have landed safely in Sweden. He and his entire crew were safe and sound.

Mission # 181 – BINGEN, GERMANY – 25 NOV. – SAT.

Mission No. 181 was directed against Bingen. Situated on the Rhine River, half-way between Frankfurt and Koblenz, this town harbored a small but important railroad marshalling yard. 32 Libs delivered 89 tons of high explosives to the town, dropping them thru the undercast via instruments. Later in the day, B-17's returning from Merseburg, reported huge columns of black smoke rising to over 20,000 feet, testifying to the accuracy of the bombing.

MISSION # 182 – BIELEFELD, GERMANY – 26 NOV. – SUN.

41 aircraft flew on to bomb a railway viaduct just outside Bielefeld. Using a visual correction through a cloud break on a PFF run, 101 tons fell on the target with fair results.

For the third time in the month, tragedy stalked the 734th Squadron. Capt. Conard, leading mission 182, crashed a few miles from the base. Apparently unable to get his plane to climb, Capt. Conard jettisoned his bomb load. Never over a few hundred feet above ground, the ship lost altitude steadily and headed for two homes about forty or fifty feet apart. Unable to climb over them or fly between them, Capt. Conard's action is believed by Major McFadden and Col. Thomas, who investigated the crash, to have been deliberate in order to avoid striking the homes and injuring or killing the occupants. His courageous action

cost him his life along with the lives of his crew, but the occupants of the homes were in no way harmed, This, despite the fact that an engine damaged a corner of one of the homes as it was dislodged from the plane. Capt. Conard has been recommended for the DSC, posthumously.

MISSION # 183 - ALTENBAKEN, GERMANY - 29 NOV. - WED.

The target for the day was another railroad viaduct. It was an eventful mission with 85 tons falling from 31 bomb bays via GH technique. Results once more were unobserved.

MISSION # 184 - HAMBURG, GERMANY - 30 NOV. - THURS.

The target was the railway marshalling yards. Again, results were unobserved as the 20 Libs dropped their 50-ton payload via GH.

In the fourteen missions performed in November, the Group had amassed a total of 375 sorties. The planes dropped 957 tons of bombs. The Group lost four crews during the month's activities.

With only fourteen days taken up with missions, the personnel of the base had plenty of time for recreation and it was offered in abundance to the Officers at the Officers' Club and to the enlisted men at the Aero Club and Non-Com Club.

The dance at the Officers' Club proved to be a great success and everyone had a grand time. Ice cream, cake, and pie were present in quantity and of course there was Scotch, Rye and Beer.

The Aero Club held three dances, but by far the most successful was the cabaret dance. It was quite an unusual affair. The snack bar was transformed into a night club with the only lights, coming from candles on the tables. Twenty- five

Officers in mess jackets served as waiters, serving the "customers" chocolate and caramel sundaes topped with cherries and whipped cream. The corner drug store back home had come had come to Ole Buck. The floor show lasted an hour, the talent coming from Ole Buck and adjoining bases.

The Ping-Pong team added to its laurels. Seeking new competition, they went to London to play the ETO cupholders, the Mens Crescent Club and the Mostyn Club. The Ole Buck Five won both matches, but fortunately for the Mens Crescent Club the cup was not put up. Besides defeating these top teams, they won the finals of the 2nd Division tournament doubles played on the base November 28. In six other matches held, they walked away the victors.

Still high on the preferred list was S-2's weekly war review. Interest was heightened when convalescent boys, wounded in France, presented their graphic sketch of the war as seen by the doughfoot. For an hour afterwards, questions were still being flung at the men of the Fighting Infantry.

The popularity of the Classical Musicals continued to grow as did the Bingo and card parties. The Free Waffle night served hundreds of the men as they ate to the hot tempos of the Band jam sessions.

The Group was rapidly approaching the first anniversary of their arrival at Old Buckenham. There was no doubt that the 453rd would be infinitely better prepared physically and mentally to face their second winter than they were the first. Roads that used to be more than knee deep with dirty, gooey, mucky mud were now paved.

Last winter the men had absolutely no means of entertainment on the base. The Base Theater had been established, but the sound was terrible and very often the

projector would break down in the most interesting scenes. Besides, the pictures were all old and the men had seen them in the States. There was also the blackout to contend with. It took quite a while to acclimate themselves to it and to the cold, wet weather. Many of the men suffered attacks of Sinus soon after our arrival. By far the worst offender, however, was Mr. Mud. No matter how often the sun shone, he seemed to be forever present. There was always enough rain so that he could play havoc with the unpaved roads. The heavy vehicular traffic was his tool.

The outward appearance of the base has changed considerably during the past year. Narrow roads have been widened and repaved thus practically eliminating the mud problem. The home sites have been vastly improved. During the summer months, flower beds and shrubbery beautified some, while volley ball and softball courts were set up in others. The massive, ugly Nissen huts have, acquired more of a homey atmosphere with the addition of grass, trees, shrubs and small white picket fences. Indoors, radios have brought in the outside world while pin-ups have added color to the blank walls. The fuel situation is being handled much more efficiently this winter than last. There is warmth in the evenings at least when the day's work is done. In sharp contrast to last winter, there is always something doing on the base.

At the Aero Club one can indulge in a game of Ping-Pong, billiards or cards. The Snack Bar offers sandwiches, tea, coffee and "cokes". In addition, the daily menu contains such features as cheese rarebit, grilled cheese sandwiches, hamburgers, and apple tarts, etc. The huge fire places in the library and game room are excellent spots for letter writing or reading. The music room satisfies those hearts which crave some jive, and the "Longhairs" hold their recorded Musicals on Monday evenings. Other evenings at the Aero Club are taken up with the S-2 War Review, Ping-Pong tournaments, Bingo parties and card parties. Unlike last

year, a man can look forward to filling his idle hours this winter on the base if he so desires. If not, there is always a train or bus to take him anywhere he pleases.

The Combat Missions

December, 1944

December, and almost a new low in missions flown. Only during the month in which the 453rd began operations, the month of February, were there fewer missions accomplished. Then, the Group chalked up its first eleven, this month an even dozen were added. Hitler could thank the ETO weather for that. Nevertheless, it was during December that the 453rd established a Division if not an 8th Air Force record by bunching sixty-two Libs over the target on Christmas Eve. It was a fitting Yuletide gift to Hitler's forces.

In all, 380 sorties were flown against rail junctions, marshalling yards and rail bridges rendering vital support to the Wehrmacht.

Von Rundstedt began his surprise counterattack on December 16. The greater majority of these sorties were flown after that date, and the greater part of the 1,046 tons dropped, were aimed at the communication centers supporting his Ardennes salient. No aircraft were lost to enemy action. However, the Group lost most of the members of two crews, one on takeoff, the other on a practice mission.

MISSION # 185 - NEBRA, GERMANY - 4 DEC. - MON.

The target was the marshalling yards at Nebra, 35 miles southeast of Kassel. 31 planes participated, dropping a total of 88 tons of bombs through the clouds via GH.

Lt. Schuberman refused to allow engine trouble to rob him of a mission. Forced to feather his No. 3 engine soon after takeoff, he returned with his load of bombs, hopped into a spare and took off again. After a merry chase, he caught up with

the formation, bombed with the Group and returned. Strong headwinds caused Lt. Hepper to land in Belgium. Running short of fuel, he landed on a field near Brussels where weather prevented his takeoff for a few days. Thus it was that Lt. Hepper and his crew were "forced" to spend a few days in Brussels.

He had to wait a long time, but his patience was finally rewarded. After being a Captain for months, Capt. McFadden, Group S-2 Officer, received his oak leaves. He was notified on December 4 that his Majority would be retroactive to December 1.

MISSION # 186 - MINDEN, GERMANY - 6 DEC. - WED.

An attempt was made to make certain that the Mittelland Canal at Minden remained useless to the Nazis. Twice before this same Canal was attacked and on both occasions it was successfully breached. This time, however, results were not good due to malfunctions in the PFF equipment. The 114 bombs were released from the bellies of 42 Libs and it is hoped that they caused damage to something other than cornfields.

S/Sgt. Salvador Valasquez, who completed his combat tour and is now working with the Bomb-Trainer, did his part to better Anglo-American relations by marrying the girl on December 6. Two days later, Capt. Haggard bettered Scottish-American relations by marrying Miss Mary MacGregor of Edinburgh. Uncle Sam's family was growing.

MISSION # 187 - BINGEN, GERMANY - 10 DEC. - SUN.

A four-day respite was forced upon the Group by inclement weather, but on December 10, the 453rd took to the skyways again. 20 Libs, GH led, performed the mission against the marshalling yards at Bingen, near Mainz. Though the results were unobserved, the equipment was working perfectly and it is felt that

the 50 ton payload found their mark. Lt. Witri of the 734th Squadron developed engine trouble over the French coast and fell out of formation. Dropping back slowly and working feverishly he succeeded in bringing the engine back to life. Lt. Witri then attached himself to the 458th Group and bombed with them. At the rally point he succeeded in catching a formation of the 453rd and returned home with them.

MISSION # 188 - HANAU, GERMANY - 11 DEC. - MON.

46 Libs their bellies laden with 120 tons of explosives, dropped on the PFF ship's lead. The crews watched the bombs disappear through the undercast. It is hoped they fell on the marshalling yards at Hanau, the target for which they were intended.

MISSION # 189 - HANAU, GERMANY - 12 DEC. - TUES.

Because results could not be ascertained, Hanau's marshalling yards became the target again. Three Squadrons consisting of 30 Libs attacked visually with a payload of 72 tons of destruction. The lead squadron found their mark while the low- left hit a bit to the left of the target. The leader of the other squadron developed automatic-pilot trouble too late to turn the lead over to his deputy. Thus the squadron scored a gross error.

Lt. Lloyd W. Prang, co-pilot and S/Sgt. Howard Shaw, tail gunner on Lt. Victor A. Mortensons' crew recalled that "moderate but very accurate flak was encountered over the target. Total time of the mission was 6hrs. and 55min. After the bombs were away, light but accurate flak from the German,88's closed in. Our ship was hit between #1 and #2 engines. There were holes in the left wing; two in the waist and one piece of flak was stuck in the left rudder. Luckily, there were no casualties. The Group immediately behind us received direct hits on two ships and two more went down in long flaming glides. 40 men were gone in about 20 seconds". Flak can be extremely deadly when visual

conditions exist. There followed a week of the worst weather this Group has ever experienced, fog, sleet, ice and rain all played their part in keeping the 453rd grounded.

It was during this spell of weather that Von Rundstadt attacked. He chose a "lightly held" section of the American First Army and accomplished a sizeable advance in the first few days. It was this act that brought the entire Eighth Air Force into play as a tactical weapon against his vital rail and road junctions.

MISSION # 190 - BITBURG, GERMANY - 19 DEC. - TUES.

The first in a rapid series of attacks came on December 19. The target was the marshalling yards at Bitburg, near Trier. 24 Libs participated, dropping their 65 ton payload via the GH lead ship with unobserved results.

The weather had steadily worsened and Old Buc was entirely closed by fog as the planes returned across the channel. The ships were then diverted to Dunkeswell, a Naval Air Station in Southern England. The fog persisted for four days, and for four days the Navy played host to the air crews. They lived the life of Reilly, filling themselves with oodles of ice cream of all flavors and good, cold American beer. These four days proved to be a real vacation with pay. However, all good things must come to an end and so the air crews returned home on December 23rd. Returning to the base at the same time were the 10 Libs that had partaken in the day's mission.

MISSION # 191 - JUNKERATH, GERMANY - 23 DEC. - SAT.

The target was the small rail and road junction of Junkerath, just east of the Luxemburg border. The general situation at the time was very fluid and the orders were to bomb via GH for fear of hitting friendly troops. Though

conditions were excellent for a visual sighting, bombing was as ordered, with rather poor results.

December 23rd witnessed quite a few changes in the duties of the Group's staff personnel. Lt. Col. Harris who had been with the Group since its inception left for France. Lt. Col. Hubbard inherited the duties of Air Executive, while Lt. Col. Dowda; formerly Commanding Officer of the 734th Squadron became the Group's Operations Officer. Major Clingan, Ops. Officer of the 735th, stepped up to become the new Commanding Officer of the 734th Squadron. Capt. Bailey then became Operations Officer of the 735th Squadron.

MISSION # 192 - MAYEN, GERMANY - 24 DEC. - SUN.

December 24TH, Christmas Eve, the Eighth Air Force presented Hitler with a very special Christmas gift. More than 2,000 four engine bombers took part in a massive display of air might. This was the greatest effort ever attempted and was completed with excellent results.

The 453rd was honored by the presence of two distinguished visitors. Commissioner Paul V. McNutt and Brig. General Griswold, Chief of Staff of the Second Bombardment Division, watched as members of sixty-four crews filed into the briefing room. They listened intently as a picture of the days operation was drawn by Capt. Hoffman of Operations and Lt. Meen of Intelligence. Capt. Strahan, the weather Officer, gave one of those rare briefings in which he could predict no clouds whatsoever along the route. From the Central Tower, the Group's guests watched the first of more than three-score planes take to the air with the aid of their landing lights and the light of the moon. It was an all out effort and the 453rd could be proud of its contribution. Six and a half squadrons directed their attack against the small road and rail junction of Mayen, 15 miles out of Hausen and Berresheim, 40 miles west of Koblenz. The half squadron

joined with a half squadron of the 389th to attack Bitburg. These small communication centers were the crux of Von Rundstadt's offensive, for his supplies were being taken right up to the front lines by rail. In perfect flying weather, a record load of destructive force was loosed on the Group's targets with excellent results. 166 tons of bombs, by far the greatest load yet carried by the 453rd, dropped from the bellies of the 62 attacking Libs.

Of the 64 craft dispatched, only two aborted due to mechanical failure. Lt. Harteman of the 732nd and Lt. Wm. A. Fisher of the 734th were the fellows who missed the show. Lt. Glass used the long runway at Woodbridge when his hydraulic system was shot up. Two crews spent Christmas on the Continent Lt. Rollins landed at Leon/Athies and Lt. Scanlon at Cambrai/Niorginne. France. Both Crews managed to escape injury.

Lt. Scanlon recalled that poor old "Sky Chief" (his B-24) took a pounding. "We got hit by flak several times as we neared our target, but we maintained formation, dropping bombs on time and on target. Our plane was severely crippled, with # 1 engine shot out, # 2 engine's turbo was hit # 3 engine was leaking oil badly and # 4 was feathered. Miraculously, most of the other aircraft systems were still working and none of the crew had been wounded, but we were losing altitude rapidly as we headed for a safe haven in France. Fortunately we found a British airfield staffed with Mosquito bombers, flown by Polish crews. Their mission was to bomb Berlin nightly with 4,000 lb.bombs. Using emergency crash landing procedures, we landed. We counted over 50 fist sized holes in the right wing alone and the entire ship was pretty well riddled with holes. We had to leave "Sky Chief" there and spent the next three days trying to get back to Old Buck. We never saw our B-24 again".

Alerted for a Christmas-day mission, many of the air crews used discretion in their Christmas celebrating when partaking of the spirit. It wasn't until after

briefing that the 453rd was scrubbed from the mission. That was all that was needed. It hadn't snowed, but it was a white Christmas nevertheless. The ersatz snow had been several days in forming. it consisted of several layers of frost and was thick enough to cover roads and pavements as well as fields. The setting was perfect. With the aid of the Officers' Club and the Non-Com Club, memories of past Christmases were momentarily forgotten and home-sickness was drowned in mild and bitters and lager. Where it came from, no one seemed to know, but liquor and wine seemed to be in abundance. Some were even lucky enough to have champagne direct from France. After all the celebrating, the Group needed a rest and took advantage of the stand down the 26th had to offer.

The 453rd lost its second PFF crew in as, many months on December 27. Lt. Brown of the 732nd Squadron was the first to test the salt-strewn, slippery runway. He was to lead the low-left squadron. The plane refused to rise more than a few feet off the ground. Lt. Brown was heard to say to the radio tower "I cannot keep her up. We have had it". His Liberator slanted down, until it disappeared over the hedgerows. Then there was a thundering crash, and a column of black oily smoke appeared. The tail, with the tail gunner, S/Sgt. Earle W. Richmond, inside had broken off aflame. Waist gunners Sgt.-Marvin G. Mackey and S/Sgt. Tommie F. Dickson leaped through their waist windows. Without losing any time they dragged S/Sgt. Richmond from his seat and beat out the flames licking at his clothes. They sustained many contusions and abrasions but incredibly they were alive. Ammunition, set off by the flames, began to pop in all directions and the three survivors made for a ditch just as the bombs blew up. They survived that too.

The crash and fire trucks and ambulances were warned to stay away as the bombs were due to go off at any moment. With a deafening roar and a rumbling like thunder, two of the 250 pounders exploded. Two more explosions followed

in rapid succession as the remaining two bombs went off. The 453rd was scrubbed from the mission. S/Sgt. Mackey and Dickson have been recommended for the Soldier's Medal.

MISSION # 193 - NEUNKIRCHEN & HAMBURG, GERMANY - 28 DEC. - THURS.

Undaunted by the tragedy, but still sweating out risky take-offs, three squadrons were assigned targets. Two were to attack Neunkirchen and one was to fly with a Wingmate against Hamburg. The two squadrons with Neunkirchen as their target were led by a GH ship. Their bombs fell eight and a half miles short of their goal, falling on the small rail junction of Bierboch with fair results. The third squadron attacked Hamburg via GH with unobserved results. In all, 29 ships participated in the attacks, unleashing 82 tons of bombs.

Lt. Mitchell of the 733rd Squadron and a skeleton crew, flying on a practice mission, became the unfortunate victim of the second tragedy to strike the 453rd in as many days. F/0 Patcheider was the lone survivor when the plane, with three engines gone, crashed into a river bank near Coptherne, Shrewesbury. Lts. Mitchell and Peterson died after undergoing emergency operations in the hospital at Coptherne. Lt. Gilbert, T/Sgt. Richards and S/Sgt. Batchelder were all killed instantly.

In eleven months, the Group lost the better part of two crews on training missions.

MISSION # 194 - REMAGEN, GERMANY - 29 DEC. - FRI.

The Group had as its target the Rail Bridge across the Rhine River at Neuwied, about ten miles northwest of Koblenz. 29 ships attacked via GH. It was Snafu. All three squadrons dropped at once, as a unit on the GH lead despite the fact

that perfect visual conditions prevailed. 79 tons of bombs plowed up the fields, 6,500 feet from the target.

Lt. McGilvary went to a good deal of trouble to get in on this mission. He and his crew became the second crew to man two ships on one mission. When the No. 3 turbo ran away, he returned, and without a moment's hesitation switched to a spare and set out in search of the formation. Sighting the formation at Brussels, he joined and stuck with them over the target and back home.

Lt. Benarcik, who had so ably assisted Capt. Stokes in his job as Training Officer, inherited the position when Capt. Stokes received the long awaited orders to go home.

MISSION # 195 - EUSKIRCHEN, GERMANY - 30 DEC. - SAT.

The target was the Railway Bridge at Euskirchen, just east of the Ardennes Satient. 29 Libs attacked via GH with results unobserved. The crews watched a total of 79 tons of bombs disappear into the solid undercast.

MISSION # 196 - KOBLENZ, GERMANY - 31 DEC. - SUN.

The specific target for the 29 attacking planes was a railroad bridge spanning the Mozelle River just north of the city. Again, bombing was via GH and results unobserved as 108 tons plummeted into the undercast.

Lt. Sauret had quite an experience to relate when he finally returned from the continent via C-47. Abandoning the formation after he had lost No. 3 and No. 4 engines, he was set upon by enemy fighters. Firing distress flares, he succeeded in attracting the attention of passing P-38's. They promptly drove the "bandits" from his tail and escorted him to nearby Florennes where he landed the ship

without further damage to the crew or the ship. The ship required engine changes and had to be abandoned.

Thus ended the Old Year. Despite the advertised shortage of liquor and wine, the 453rd acquired almost enough (there never would be enough) to ring in the new year in true American style. The Officers' Club and Non-Com Club practically depleted their stocks as many welcomed in their second New Year in the ETO.

December found the Group's Inter-squadron basketball schedule in full swing. All the squadrons and service companies had their teams and games were scheduled in the gym nearly every night. So far the 733rd Squadron was in first place, closely followed by the 735th. As teams played together more and more, the games became more hotly contested and it was anyone's guess as to who would be in first place at the end of the season.

Uncle Sam acquired three daughters by marriage during the month. In addition to Capt. Haggard and S/Sgt. Velasquez, M/Sgt. Kincheloe of the 733rd Engineering Section, signed away his freedom at the altar when he said "I do".

The Aero Club held two dances during December. One was on December 17, the other a gala New Years celebration, held on the 31st.

The Army's educational program was put into operation with the commencement of French, Bookkeeping and accounting classes, and Small Business classes, each held two nights weekly at the Aero Club. In addition, S-1 held typing and Army Correspondence classes for those interested. Other subjects were on the planning board and would be offered to the personnel as soon as arrangements could be made.

As usual, Old Buc's Ping-Pong team continued to be tops. Seven matches were held early in the month and the team walked away from them all as victors. There would have been more games played except that Pvt. Carlson and Cpl. Neilan, two of the regular five, injured themselves playing basketball.

As the month drew to a close, one's thoughts turned naturally to Christmas and the memories that were brought to mind. The packages kept pouring in to be sure, but at the expense of the regular mail. It seemed as if all the folks at home were remembering those overseas. Truck-load after truck-load passed the Group's Main Gates until some of the recipients actually wished they would stop. The feeling was no doubt brought about by the fact that first class mail had practically ceased flowing. The true value of a word from home was thus emphasized. More precious even than parcels was the common ordinary letter from home.

Christmas Eve finally arrived, dressed in white. Even as the 453rd was going all out against Hitler's Fortress through the medium of the air, those who had remained at home were going out in a different manner. The 453rd played host to more than 1,250 British children ranging in age from four to fourteen. They were gathered from the neighboring villages and towns. Many were orphans or evacuees from the London Blitz.

The party had been in the making since the first of November. Some of the personnel conceived the idea of making toys for the children of Paris, so many of whom had never experienced the spirit and thrills of a child's Christmas. The idea spread like wildfire to and among the neighboring children who began to donate their own toys or make new ones. Rag dolls, wooden toys and myriad of Christmas cards were enthusiastically donated by these youngsters for their small French Allies.

Wheels began to grind. The American Red Cross chose more than 300 French children to receive the gifts on Christmas Day at the ARC Club at Rainbow Corner in Paris. The Group received permission to fly the gifts to Paris. An all-French speaking crew was chosen to ferry them over.

The crew consisted of: Major Thomas J. O'Dwyer, Operations Officer of the 734th, 1st Lt. Robert W. Van Harlingen, Co- Pilot, 1st. Lt. Marcus P. Moldower, 734th Squadron Navigator, 1st. Lt. Francis E. Thomas Jr. , Public Relations Officer, T/Sgt. Robert W. Nicholson, Gunner, T/Sgt. Reuben Brockway, Radio Operator, and S/Sgt. Edgar Dominique, Engineer. Also along were Mr. Arnold J. Palk, A.R.C. Field Director, Mr. Eliot Elisofen, War Correspondent of Life and Time Magazines, and Mr. Ted Milone of the Blue Network, and Sgt. Ivan L. Cobb, Public Relations Photographer. T/Sgt. Reuben Brockway was chosen to portray the part of Santa Claus, uniform and all, but minus the paunch. A nameless Lib, veteran of 74 missions without an abortion, was chosen to act as Santa's reindeer and sleigh. Personnel on the base contributed their PX rations to fill the stockings of the little guests. The Aero Club was all bedecked, even to a Christmas tree. Decorations consisted of silver cones and bells made of chaff. Colored chains were made of red and silver stripes of paper. Lights were added. Everything was set.

The British children began to arrive in G.I. trucks and were placed in three groups according to age. Those from four to seven gathered at the Aero Club where they were entertained. Here, too, they received their stockings filled with candy and toys from Santa himself and were served ice cream and coke to their heart's content. Those aged seven to eleven were taken out to the perimeter and shown through the planes.

Then came the big show. The procession walked to the hardstand where a huge platform had been erected alongside one of the ships. It was this ship that was to carry the gifts of these youngsters to their little French friends. With Sgt. Al Klauber of the 734th Squadron acting as "emcee", and Santa receiving the gifts, Judith McDavid, an eleven year old orphan of the blitz, christened the ship "Liberty Run".

Fully loaded, the ship attempted to take off but slipped off the runway as the engines were revved up. Fortunately the ship was not damaged, but take-off was postponed till morning.

Meanwhile, those aged eleven to fourteen had been taken to the base theater, where they were entertained by Cpl. Sissenstein, of Special Services who was quite an amateur magician. He kept them laughing and held their interest with his feats of magic and sleight of hand. They were joined later by those who had witnessed the christening of the plane, and the entire group were shown animated cartoons and a comic feature. Then they returned to the Aero Club where they too received gifts and filled themselves with candy, ice cream, and cakes. After the last child had been fed, they were returned to their homes. It is safe to say that many will long remember the Yankee hospitality shown them on this Christmas Eve by the personnel of the 453rd Bomb Group.

As night fell, the Aero Club was thrown open to all regardless of rank. Officers and G.I.'s celebrated Christmas Eve in true American style. At the base chapel, Chaplain Healy led the Midnight Mass as many observed Christmas Eve in the ETO as they had observed it at home. Still others celebrated by drowning their sorrows, if they had any, in mild and bitters plus a surprising amount of wine, scotch and rye.

After a final check-up, "Liberty Run" was ready. At 10:15 the engines were revved up and the ship raced down the runway and into the air. Two hours and fifteen minutes later, at 12:30, the plane touched down. The precious boxes were eagerly unloaded and disbursed by the Red Cross Hostesses and Field Attendant. At Rainbow Corner in Paris the gifts were handed to the children by Santa.

Without a doubt, "Liberty Run's" mission was a grand success. The French children who received the gifts experienced something new even as those who had given them and ferried them across the channel.

Back at Old Buck, the Group was stood down. Needless to say, the Officers' Club and Non-Com Club did a bang up business as practically everyone took advantage of the situation. The traditional turkey was served for Christmas dinner with all the trimmings. Many of the personnel invited their lady friends to a real Yankee dinner. This consisted of tomato juice, fresh fruit, turkey, giblet dressing, vegetables, hot parker house rolls and butter. However, all good things usually come to an end and so did Christmas. Fortunately, for many who had taken their celebrating a bit too seriously, December 26 found the Group stood down.

New Year's Eve found the Group doing business with Hitler, the only kind of business he knew. Nevertheless once the day's business was over, the personnel turned to ringing out the old and bringing in the new in true American style. With a dance at the Aero Club, open house at the Non-Com Club and plenty to cheer with at the Officers' Club new Snack Bar and Bar, the men soon got into the proper spirits. As many rang in their second New Year in the ETO, there was a fervent toast that there would be no more.

The Combat Missions

January, 1945

Nineteen-hundred and forty-four went out with a downfall of snow. All during the early hours of the New Year, snow removal crews labored frantically to clear the runways, for the Group was already alerted. Von Rundstedt was to be given no rest so long as the weather permitted formation flying over the lines. Despite almost impossible take-off conditions, this Group and every Group would do their part in disrupting his communications lines.

The 453rd performed fourteen missions during the month. A total of sixteen targets were attacked, thirteen of which were railway bridges and marshalling yards. The synthetic oil plant at Dortmund, and the oil depot at Ehmen, near Brunswick were also attacked. A total of 338 sorties were flown with 319 actually attacking the targets. 774 tons of bombs dropped from the bellies of the attacking Libs.

MISSION # 197 - REMAGEN, GERMANY - 1 JAN. - MON.

The first mission of the New Year had a tragic beginning. Lt. Judd of the 735th Squadron, leading the Group, crashed while attempting to take-off. The plane slipped off the runway, slithered across the frozen field unable to rise or stop and crashed into two parked planes. The planes sustained only minor damages, but nine of the eleven man crew lost their lives. Lone survivors were 2nd Lt. Frank Pitkovitch, pilotage navigator, and Sgt. Walter H. Beck, right waist gunner. Those who lost their lives were 1st Lts. A. C.Judd, the pilot; B.B.Basick, navigator; F.E. Sallee, bombardier; 2nd Lts. J.W. Ellingson, co-pilot; J.E. Gilligan, mickey operator; T/Sgts. O.A.Coburn, radio operator; S.J. Bolger, nose gunner; Sgts. C.L.Hendrix, left waist gunner, and E.P. Bull, Tail Gunner.

Undaunted by the tragedy, the ships continued to take-off from the treacherous runway. Six craft succeeded in taking to the air but the eighth, piloted by Lt. V. E. Smith of the 733rd Squadron, slid off the runway, He brought his ship to a stop on the rough, frozen field. The ship was badly damaged, but Lt. Smith and his crew escaped injury.

Watching from the control tower, Col. Thomas, Group Commanding Officer, prevented further loss of lives and equipment by ordering a halt to the proceedings.

The six ships that had taken off were joined by Maj. Webster in the GH ship and proceeded to lead the Wing as the Field Order directed. As ordered, they broke away from the formation at the designated point and proceeded to their own target, the railway bridge at Remagen, just north of Koblenz. 17 tons of bombs fell through the undercast via GH. (See "The Remagen Bridge Mission Story"-Pg. M50+, in the "Memories" Section.)

News traveled fast for Sgt. Davis B. Bennett, of Gulfport, Miss., but you can bet it didn't come via the mail. Appearing in the Stars and Stripes of January 2, 1945, in the column "Life in These United States", was an item by the Army News Service describing the marriage of his sister to S/Sgt. Carl Kitchen Jr. It was the first Sgt. Bennett knew of the wedding. Said the Sgt., "Thanks to the News Service, I'll be able to wish them luck long before the announcement arrives in the mail".

MISSION # 198 - KOBLENZ, GERMANY - 2 JAN. - TUES.

The Group dispatched 32 ships for the Railway Bridge in the northern section of Koblenz. It was across such bridges as this that supplies for Von Rundstadt's offensive were passing. Their tactical military value was obvious.

The Libs found their target blanketed with clouds and were obliged to use instruments, with unobserved results. Von Rundstedt had chosen his time to attack devilishly well. Weather, which had allowed him to strike with such surprise was now keeping the heavies from fulfilling their full purpose.

The 3rd of January rounded out one full week of continuous attack against the German communication lines. Takeoffs and landings during that week were accomplished under conditions, which heretofore had been considered impossible. Snow fell intermittently day and night. Despite the efforts of the snow-removal crews, the runways remained slippery and treacherous, pockmarked by the action of the salt and sand strewn upon them in the effort to keep them open for business. Despite these hazardous take-offs and landings, sometimes during one of the intermittent snows, and more often than not, with visibility approaching zero, the attacks continued and would continue so long as weather permitted formation flying over the continent.

MISSION # 199 - HAMBURG, GERMANY - 3 JAN. - WED.

The target was another of the communications centers serving the Ardennes Salient, the marshalling yards at Hamburg. 30 ships, flying the familiar ten-ship formation, carried 71 tons of bombs to their target. Once again it was necessary to bomb with the aid of instruments without observing the results. It could only be hoped that the bombs found their mark. It was on the return from Hamburg that Lt. Roth ran into trouble. His No. 1 and No. 2 engines were lost as he crossed the battle lines and he and his crew were forced to bail out. The plane crashed a few miles southwest of Saarbrucken, quite close to the front lines. Lt. B.H. Wiseman, navigator was caught in a tree where an American infantryman "captured" him. He had to do some fast talking to prevent the soldier from shooting him as a German parachutist. Sgt. Bernie Mullen, top turret gunner, was captured by the French police, and he too had to do some arguing to

convince the authorities he was not an enemy saboteur. Sgt. D. M. Heath, Sgt. T. B. Montgomery, S/Sgt. T.J. Duba and S/Sgt. C.L. McNeil, also came down in the vicinity and these five sergeants got together soon after proving their identity to the French authorities.

Lt. Roth landed near Teting, just south of St. Avold. At first, he believed that he was inside the German lines. He finally wandered into Teting where he found the village people rather suspicious. Shelter was finally found in a villager's home and there the kindly Saar folk entertained Lt. Roth by showing him pictures of their son and their daughter's sweetheart in German uniform. Word was sent to French authorities the next day, and Lt. Roth was taken to St. Avold where he found Lt. Briggs, his co-pilot, also in the hands of the French police. Lt. Roy S. Bocunse, bombardier, received a severe head injury on his descent. Meanwhile a B-24 which had crashed quite close to the scene of the bail-out was found with three bodies, and the conclusion was reached that Roth, Briggs and Wickham, who were unaccounted for at the time, had crashed with the plane.

Lts. Roth and Briggs finally caught up with the six who had gone ahead, in Paris, and there ensued a joyful reunion after they convinced their comrades that they were not ghosts. Sgt. Wickham was discovered by a local family who took care of his injured leg and kept him safe until a group of American soldiers arrived. He was evacuated through a series of hospitals in France and eventually returned to Old Buc, where he flew 7 more missions with the Roth crew.

This was the second narrow escape for Lt. Roth in three days. On December 31, mechanical difficulties forced him to land near Brussels where he remained for the night. Before he could take off the next day, the field was attacked by the Luftwaffe and his ship was put out of commission. Lt. Roth and his crew stood by and watched his ship being strafed and bombed. He and his crew returned to the base via C-47 on January 2, just in time to be alerted for this mission.

January 5th, 1945, the Group established a record of which it could be rightly proud. On that date, the Group accomplished its 200th mission, exactly eleven months from the date it performed its first. By so doing, the 453rd became the first Lib Group to fly 200 missions in so short a time. Although the other two Groups in the Wing completed their 200 missions before the 453rd did, the 453rd consistently bettered their records. In this period, 5,060 sorties were flown with more than 50,700 individual sorties recorded by crew members. In the attacks against Germany's communications, synthetic oil plants, and oil storage depots, aircraft plants, and launching sites, etc., this Group loosed 12,191 tons of bombs. 121 of the targets were located in Germany, 74 in France, 3 in Belgium and 2 in Holland. In the first five months of operations, the Group destroyed 41 enemy planes, probably destroyed 6 more and damaged 18. In the last six months of operations the 453rd was never attacked by enemy fighters. Casualties in the Group were the lowest in the division, with a total of 373. 193 were recorded as MIA, 138 were killed, and 40 wounded. 7,009 awards were received by the crew members. Approximately 970 crew members completed their tours of operation, and most of them returned to the good ole U.S.A. "Figures don't lie", and these were figures of which the Group was extremely proud.

MISSION # 200 - SOBERNHEIM & NEUSTADT, GERMANY - 5 JAN. - FRI,

Two squadrons were dispatched on this memorable day to two top-rate targets. One squadron directed its attack on the marshalling yards at Neustadt, southeast of Koblenz; the other carried its bombs to the marshalling yards at Sobernheim, just east of Koblenz. In all 57 tons of bombs were dropped on the targets. Due to camera malfunctions, no photo coverage was available of the bombing at Neustadt. The squadron attacking Sobernheim ran into tricky cloud formations, which prevented them from obtaining a good run on the target. Consequently, the bombs fell one and a half miles from the aiming point.

On the return trip, Lt. Snell of the 732nd squadron was forced to drop out of the formation and landed his ship at Clastres, France. Lt. Bussell of the 733rd Squadron and Lt. Witri of the 734th Squadron developed engine trouble and were forced to land on the continent, Lt. Bussell landing at Leon/Athies, and Lt. Witri at Florennes.

On the Western Front, the 1st and 3rd U.S. Armies, together with their British Allies, had succeeded in slowing, if not halting, Von Rundstedts' offensive. One of his aims had undoubtedly been to reach the Meuse River. This he failed to achieve, though he came within four miles of this objective. In the east, the Red Army had not yet begun its March to Berlin, but all eyes were turned in that direction. How much the heavies had contributed towards the slowing or halting of Von Rundstedt was hard to say, but the attacks against his communication centers continued. With the Continent held in the firm grip of ole man winter, these attacks were not as frequent as was desired.

MISSION # 201 - ZWIEBRUCKEN, GERMANY - 7 JAN. - SUN.

The Group attacked the marshalling yards at Zweibrucken, just ten miles north of the front lines, and fifteen miles east of Saarbrucken.

MISSION # 202 - STEINBRUCK, GERMANY - 10 JAN. - WED.

The Group's target was a rail and road junction at Steinbruck, barely five miles southeast of St. Vith and eight miles south of the front lines.

MISSION # 203 - RUDESHEIM, GERMANY - 13 JAN. - SAT.

The Group attacked a large railroad bridge at Rudesheim, near Bingen on the Rhine River.

All targets of the previous three days were attacked through heavy undercast, necessitating the use of instruments. Pictures taken of the bombing of the bridge

at Rudesheim failed to show the bursts, but proved that the bombs had fallen in the target area. In all, 158 tons of bombs were dropped on the targets by the 61 planes that participated in these missions.

MISSION # 204 - EHMEN, GERMANY - 14 JAN. - SUN.

This proved to be a field day not only for the 453rd, but also for the entire 2nd Division. The Group's target was the large underground oil storage depot at Ehmen, northeast of Brunswick. For the first time since December 4, 1944, the weather permitted visual bombing. Pictures showed the target area well covered, and the black smoke which rose was evidence of burning oil, oil that would never be used by the Wehrmacht.

Lt. Lloyd W. Prang recalled that: "At the target there were only railroad tracks leading into the woods. There were no other clues that a storage dump was there. However after the bombs hit it we could see smoke and flames that rose to 10,000 feet. Also, as we approached the target, our Hi-Right Squadron drifted over our Squadron and dropped their bombs right through our formation. One string of bombs missed our left wing by about ten feet!"

MISSION # 205 - REUTLINGEN, GERMANY - 15 JAN. - MON.

The weather was good over the Group's target for the second consecutive day. However, the lead squadron bombed the marshalling yards at Urich as a last resort. The remaining two squadrons bombed the marshalling yards at Reutlingen, the primary target. The three squadrons averaged 95% within 1,000 feet of the aiming point.

MISSION # 206 - MAGDEBURG, GERMANY - 16 JAN. - TUES.

The Group dispatched three squadrons consisting of 33 Libs. The target was the Krupp Tank Mfg. plant at Magdeburg. Due to cloud interference the results were poor. Bursts were observed from one and one-half to three miles from the aiming point.

MISSION # 207 - HEILBRUNN, GERMANY - 21 JAN. - SUN.

Only one mission was accomplished during the next thirteen days. The target was the marshalling yards at Heilbrunn, approximately thirty miles north of Stuttgart. Three squadrons took to the air, carrying 59 tons of bombs. The formation experienced extreme temperatures over the continent, which actually froze the fuel transfer pumps on many of the planes, causing a number of them to land on the continent. Lt. Bussell of the 733rd squadron and his entire crew bailed out over France, when they failed in their attempts to transfer fuel. Capt. Bishop, of the 732nd squadron, flying on his last mission, landed at Juvencourt, refueled, and returned to base. Lt. Krause, of the 735th squadron, was forced to land at Villaroche near Melun, France, while Lt. Senter set down at LeBourget Field just outside Paris.

The 453rd acquired a new Commanding Officer on the 24th of January, the fourth since the Group's activation. On that date Lt. Col. Hubbard took formal command of the Station. He had been with the Group since the Group's inception on June 29th, 1943, coming into the fledgling organization as the Commanding Officer of the 734th Squadron. He served with that organization and as Commanding Officer of the 735th Squadron until becoming Operations Officer of the Group on August 3, 1944, when Major "Andy", Low went down over Germany on July 31. On the 23rd of December he took up the duties of Air Executive which was vacated by Lt. Col. Harris who was transferred out of the Group. When Col. Thomas left to return to the States, Lt. Col. Hubbard took over. Lt. Col. Hubbard has been on twenty missions and has received the Air

Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters and the Distinguished Flying Cross with one Oak Leaf Cluster.

Lt. Col. Dowda assumed the duties of Air Executive vacated by Lt. Col. Hubbard, when he became Commanding Officer. Lt. Col. Dowda was another man who rose from the ranks, coming into the Group as a first pilot of the 734th Squadron, a 1st Lt. He rose from 1st. pilot to Operations Officer of the Squadron, to Commanding Officer of the Squadron, and finally became Group Operations Officer on the same date that Lt. Col. Hubbard became Air Executive Officer. Lt. Col. Dowda has flown twenty-five missions with the Group and holds the Distinguished Flying Cross and Oak Leaf Cluster, as well as the Air Medal and three Oak Leaf Clusters.

The staff of the 453rd was altered further on January 26, when Major Clingan became Group Operations Officer, vacating his position as C.O. of the 734th squadron. Major O'Dwyer, Operations Officer of the 734th, was transferred out of the Group and Capt. Dailey, was then transferred from the 735th to the 734th where he assumed the duties of that squadron's Operations Officer. This left the 735th Squadron without an Ops. Officer and initiated the transfer of Capt. Trevor from the 733rd to the 735th to fill the vacancy.

MISSION # 208 - DORTMUND, GERMANY - 28 JAN. - SUN.

After one full week of stand-downs, the Group was finally alerted. The target was the synthetic oil refinery at Dortmund. The skies over Germany were clouded once again and the results of the bombing were unobserved. A total of 47 tons were dropped from the bellies of the 19 attacking Libs.

MISSION # 209 - HAMM, GERMANY - 29 JAN. - MON.

The target was the marshalling yards at Hamm. The ground was hidden by a solid undercast necessitating the use of instruments. Once again, flying the usual three- squadron formation, the Group dropped 79 tons of bombs through the clouds via PFF.

On the return trip, the oil pressure on No. 1 engine of Lt. Mortenson's plane dropped, forcing him to shut it down about 40 miles from the English coast. Since it was not possible to feather the prop, it began "windmilling". Soon the vibrations began to shake the entire plane and the engine started to smoke. While over the Channel he declared an emergency. Within minutes an Air-Sea Rescue boat appeared. Also, a P-47 took a position off his left wing and a Spitfire off the right wing. Upon landfall he headed for Tibenham airfield because it provided a straight in approach to the runway. Due to the runaway prop both pilots had to apply extreme right rudder pressure to keep the ship on a straight heading. With the left wing held high, they landed on the right wheel; the nose wheel collapsed when it hit and the plane skidded off the runway. Luckily, no one was injured in the landing. Since they were only six miles away, a truck took them back to Old Buck.

The 734th Squadron was still without a Commanding Officer, consequently, on the 29th, Lt. Col. Davidson, a newcomer to the Group, was chosen to fill the vacancy. For two days now, Capt. Dailey was both Ops. Officer and acting Commanding Officer. Capt. Shea was transferred from the 732nd to the 735th to assist Capt. Trevor in his duties as Operations Officer.

On the Western Front, the Allies had not only succeeded in halting Von Rundstedt's offensive, but had succeeded in pushing him back beyond his starting point. There were definite signs of an impending offensive against the

Siegfried Line and the Ruhr Valley. All along the entire front, the Allies were feverishly preparing for the final push to Berlin.

On the Russian Front, Warsaw, Crakow, and Koda had fallen in one of the swiftest advances in military annals. Poznan was bypassed, Russian spearheads were threatening to cut off East Prussia. Breslau was almost under Red artillery fire. The Russian Armies under Cherniakovsky and Rokossovsky in the north, Zuhkov in the center, and Koniev in the south, had in two magnificent weeks, marched across the Polish plains, captured the better part of upper Silesia and at the close of the month were but 92 miles from Berlin.

MISSION # 210 - BERLIN, GERMANY - 31 JAN. - WED.

On the last day of the month, the Group was alerted again. Base weather conditions were still bad. The runways, in spite of all the efforts of the ground crews, were practically ice. Visibility was down to a mere 500 yards. As had been the case so often in the past, the Group was given two plans to work on. Plan "A" was Berlin. With the Russians constituting a real threat to Berlin and with that city teeming with refugees from the east, a strong blow at the very heart of the Reich would indeed have a demoralizing effect on the entire population of Germany. Plan "B" had as its target, the Herman Goering Steel Works at Hallendorf, ten miles southwest of Brunswick. Plan "A" was scrubbed just prior to take-off and the Group prepared to attack the Steel Works. The first 19 of the 33 planes negotiated the icy runway without mishap, but Lt. Litman, the twentieth to try the treacherous take-off, ran off the runway, blocking it, thus putting a definite halt to the proceedings.

The 19 Libs had flown two and a half hours over Germany, and had gotten as far as the Dummer Lake region in northeast Germany, when they were recalled. Base weather conditions had prevented the fighter escort from taking off. The weather also prevented the Group from returning to Old Buck. They were diverted to a Spitfire base at Newcastle, near Scotland. Although the 19 crews only stayed overnight, they consumed two days worth of rations.

Thus ended the month. Weather conditions had given Berlin a respite, but there would be other days. Winter, with its flying hazards, kept the number of missions down to a minimum during January, but it didn't prevent the celebrating of the New Year. Once it was the cause of canceling a dance to be held at the Aero Club, but it didn't interfere with the 200 mission dance and party held there on January 21. Cold fronts and icy runways could call a halt to operations, but it was no deterrent to life at Old Buck.

January 1, 1945 could very easily be the last New Year's day spent in the ETO. As such, this New Year's day would be recalled by many in the years to come as one of reckless, good natured, wholesome fun. January 1, 1945 was celebrated in true American style. It started early in the evening of Dec. 31 1944, and some of the boys were still feeling the effects forty-eight hours later. The NCO Club and the Officers' Club were well stocked for the occasion and it was a good thing they were.

The NCO Club held its monthly dance on January 7, and the Officers' Club had theirs on January 13. Needless to say, both were a grand success and left the dancers in high spirits and the memory, if any memory at all, of a good time.

On January 21, the 200 Mission party and dance was held at the Aero Club. G. I.'s from Old Buck and the surrounding bases displayed their talents in a thirty-

minute floor-show, which was truly excellent. The W.A.C.'s, W.A.A.F.'s, W.R.E.N.'s and A.T.S. girls from nearby bases were treated to a sample of Yankee hospitality and fun. Snetterton Heath's band, the "Tin Hatters", supplied the dance rhythms.

The S-2 reviews of the news continued to hold the interest of the attendants. During the month, the guest speakers on the program included British Lt. Col. Roe who was home on leave from the Burma front and who gave the boys a good account of the fighting and living in that war theater. On another occasion, Harry Leavitt, who had spent quite a few years in Russia, gave a vivid account of that country's contributions to the Allied war effort. Perhaps the best measure of the audience's interest was the fact that the questions were still coming one and a half hours after Mr. Leavitt had finished his prepared talk.

The cold ping - pong room and the shortage of ping - pong balls served to reduce the interest in the game for the present, but you could rest assured that with the coming of warmer weather, the game would again soar to the heights of its former popularity.

The classes in bookkeeping and accounting, small business, and typing held their regular pupils and progress was being made. A new class, of a slightly different nature, was begun during the month. This was the dancing class. G.I.'s, eager to learn swing and sway, attended these classes weekly under the tutelage of Sgt. William Karras of the 733rd Squadron. Thursdays were Bingo nights, whereas Saturday nights featured the ever popular free waffles.

The basketball squads got into full swing during the month with the 734th Squadron coming up from behind to tie the 733rd Squadron for first place in the first half of the season. There were many close games, but the only overtime

game was played between the 734th Squadron and the 733rd Squadron. The score stood at 33 all at the time of the whistle, but the 734th finally sank the all-important basket.

Seventy-one enlisted men below the rank of Sgt. were transferred to the Infantry on January 26. Everyone began wondering whether this would become a regular monthly occurrence. The fact that the personnel of the Service Squadrons had to undergo a physical examination didn't help matters; it only served to strengthen the argument of those who held that it would be a monthly affair.

The month of January saw five more Yanks take the fatal plunge. Pfc. Richard R. Cardin proved that fate plays some funny pranks. He had to come over to England to find Miss Molly McCabe and marry her. Miss McCabe is a Canadian WAAF. T/5 Max Klein, of the 874th Chemical Co, married Miss Dianna Antin of London, while Cpl. James L. Chaudein, of the 734th Squadron married an ATS girl. Sgt. Joseph Hannon and T/Sgt. Thomas L. Smith, both of the 476th Sub Depot, attempted to prove that Yanks and Limeys can live together. Uncle Sam had better get his unmarried nephews home in a hurry or the poor girls at home will have to look elsewhere for husbands.

Someone once said there were no atheists in wartime. Here at Old Buck, that statement is substantiated and there is more evidence of the fact that in War as in Peace a man has faith, and in War, perhaps even more than in Peace, he is conscious of that faith. Despite the hardships of war, he will find time to keep his faith, whether he be in a foxhole or on an Air Base.

Here at Old Buck the Group's Protestant Chaplain, Capt. Lester R. Liles, found Protestant Chaplain, Capt. Wesley R. Cain, of the 80th Station Complement Squadron already on the base. Thus there were two Protestant Chaplains but no

Chapel. Chaplain Cain was later transferred out of the Group and Chaplain Liles was left to carry on.

The first services were held in the Mess Hall until Col. Miller, the Group's Commanding Officer at that time, granted permission to share what was then known as classroom 5. This huge Nisson hut proved much more satisfactory and in May, 1944 was designated as the Base Chapel, to be used only for religious and educational purposes. A call for volunteers to beautify the Chapel was answered enthusiastically and the men worked together in their spare time tearing apart bomb boxes for lumber with which they erected the pulpit and altar rails.

The altar was made from salvaged material. Sub Depot made the candelabras. The statuettes and vestments were purchased by individual contributions. T/Sgt. Madden, Sgts. Beggs, Kosnowski, and Diener and Cpl. Fagan, all of the 467th Sub Depot made the confessional, the oratory, and kneeling benches and pedestals. 2nd Lt. Russell A Anderson, co-pilot on Lt. Brown's crew, made the velvet canopy for the oratory. He was killed later when Lt. Brown crashed on takeoff. Among many others who gave of their services were Sgt. Bronder of the 80th Station Complement Squadron and Sgt. Lambert of the 733rd Squadron.

Catholic services were held by visiting Chaplains until July, 1944 because the Group had not been able to have a Catholic Chaplain assigned to it. Chaplain Fabian Harshaw, of the 44th Bomb Group, held evening Mass until February, 1944, and was followed by Chaplain Quinlan, of the 445th Bomb Group, who held Mass each Sunday morning and the first Friday morning of each month until the arrival of Chaplain John M. Healy on July 18, 1944. Chaplain Healy then took over the Catholic services entirely upon his assignment to the Group.

Chaplain Healy celebrated the first Sunday Mass on July 23rd, and set the Mass schedule as daily at 1630 hours and Sundays at 0900 and 1630 hours. The matter of securing an office and an efficient clerk was accomplished in short order. The small concrete building, formerly housing the Special Service section, was vacated and turned over to Chaplain Healy. Pvt. Donald J. Harrington of the 734th Squadron, became his clerk.

The first Protestant service to be held, soon after the Group's arrival overseas, had a total of 16 present at the morning service and 11 at the afternoon service. Of course this was prior to the arrival of all crews. Today there are two Protestant services conducted each Sunday, one at 1030 and another at 1900.

A worship service is performed at 1900 each Thursday in which a visiting Chaplain or local Minister is invited in to give the sermon. This policy is followed in order to give each man the opportunity of hearing a chaplain of his own denomination occasionally. The attendance increased to an average of 175 at the morning services and 100 at the evening services.

Upon the arrival of the 453rd on this base, the Jewish Chaplain of the Eighth Air Force acted as a circuit-riding chaplain in that he traveled almost constantly from one Bomb Group to another conducting services for the Jewish personnel. The Jewish Chaplain at that time was Major Bernard S. Clausen. His policy was to appear once in each Division once each month and have the various Groups send the men to one central point for the services. This policy was followed until mid-summer, 1944, at which time a Jewish Chaplain was assigned to the 2nd Air Division. He visited each Group once each month, conducted and held personal consultations with the men desiring to do so.

It has always been the policy on this base to conduct services each Friday evening at 1900 hours for the Jewish men. In the absence of the Jewish Chaplain, the Protestant Chaplain, Capt. Liles, usually attends the services and gives a brief sermon. Cpl. Bernard Levine, of the Fire Fighting Platoon, has taken the responsibility of the Jewish services and has done an exemplary job of creating and maintaining the interest of the men in the services. At present, the Jewish Chaplain for the 2nd Air Division is Capt. Albert S. Goldstein.

Both the Catholic and Protestant Chaplains attend the briefing services and conduct separate religious services for their men prior to the taking off of the combat crews on a mission.

These services are very well attended and have proved a big success, even though at times they were held in very awkward places. Usually, however, a room is secured in the Briefing building. The average attendance for the Catholic pre-briefing services is about forty. There has been as high as sixty-five. For the month of January, there were 699 at pre-briefings and 152 communions were given at the Sunday services.

Protestant communion services are held twice each month, following the morning and evening services on the last Sunday of each month. The Protestant Chaplain has averaged preaching, or delivering various types of addresses in the local community and nearby cities and villages, once each week since the Group moves into this theater. There is a constant demand upon all Chaplains from the civilian churches and organizations to appear before their audiences, and the policy is complied with as much as opportunity permits. However, many engagements have to be turned down from time to time due to the time required in the service of the Group personnel. To those most concerned, the greatest service performed by both Chaplains is their consultation sessions. Beyond a

doubt, both Chaplain Healy and Chaplain Liles have taken many a worry off the minds of their charges.

5 February 1944 to 5 January 1945

During this eleven-month period, Combat Crews flew over 31,000 operational hours.

For this same period, the 453rd Bombardment Group flew a total of 5,060 Combat Crew Sorties. Over 50,700 individual Combat Crew Member Sorties were flown. This Group flew more Combat Crew Sorties for their 200-mission period than did the other two Groups in the 2nd Combat wing. Although the other two Groups completed their 200th Mission before we did, our total Operational time for completion of 200 Missions was considerably less.

453rd Bomb Group flew 5,060 Combat Crew Sorties

445th " " " 4,879 " " "

389th " " " 4,453 " " "

The 453rd Bomb Group dispatched 5,420 Bombardment Aircraft, of which 4,372 or 81% attacked. This is a high rate of Airborne Aircraft Attacking. The 19% failing to attack were due to following reasons.

Weather resulted in -----11%
Mechanical & Equip. resulted in ----- 5%
Personnel, Enemy Action, Formation, & Other -- 3%

The targets attacked during the eleven - month period were marshalling yards, Oil Refineries, Synthetic Oil Plants, Oil Storage Depots, Airdromes, A/C Repair Shops & Air Parks, A/C Assembly Plants, Coastal Defense Guns, Launching Sites, Inland Waterways & Port Areas, Chemical Works, RR and Highway Bridges, Ordnance Depots, and Missions in direct support of Ground Forces Operations. The location of the targets were as follows:

Germany -----	121
France -----	74
Belgium -----	3
Holland -----	2

Of the 200 Missions, 94 or 47%, were attacked by visual sighting.

Visual -----	94	-----	47%
H2X -----	49	-----	25%
Gee H -----	43	-----	21%
No Bombings -----	14	-----	7%

The 453rd Bomb Group dropped 12,191.1 tons of bombs against enemy targets.

453rd Bomb Group -----	12,191.1 Tons
445th Bomb Group -----	11,582.4 Tons
389th Bomb Group -----	9,950.7 Tons

The loss ratio for crews and aircraft has been lower than that of either of the other Groups in the 2nd Combat Wing.

The 453rd Bomb Group percent of operational aircraft MIA to Sorties was 1.1%.

453rd BG for 200 Missions ---	54	-----	1.1%
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445th BG for 200 Missions -----94 ----- 1.9%

389th BG for 200 Missions----- 91 ----- 2.0%

The 453rd Bomb Group percent of Operational Aircraft losses to Sorties was 1.6%.

The casualties for the 453rd Bomb Group were less than those of the other Groups in the 2nd Combat Wing of the 2nd Air Division.

453rd
KIA ----- 138
WIA ----- 42
MIA ----- 193

The eleven - month MIA total was 490 less 297 (see below), leaving 193 missing as of 5 January 1945.

Total reported MIA for 200 Missions -----	490	
MIA to KIA -----	58	
MIA to INT (52 returned to U.K.) -----	71	
MIA to POW -----	153	
MIA to returned -----	15	297
MIA (unaccounted for)		193

On June 6th, 1944, the 453rd Bomb Group flew on four Missions, 68 Combat Crew Sorties were flown. June was the top month for the highest number of Missions flown with a total of 33 Missions during the month.

The 453rd Bomb Group has consistently been able to put up more than its share of Aircraft on Operational Missions. December 24, 1944 was a big day for the

Group when 64 aircraft were airborne on one Mission to Germany with 62 crews receiving Sortie credit.

In spite of the number of aircraft put up or the aircraft battle damage, the Group always maintained a high percentage, of Aircraft in commission. For the eleven - month period the average percent of on-hand aircraft fully operational was 86 percent.

The gunners destroyed 41 enemy aircraft. The following claims were recorded during the first five months, and no claims were turned in for the last six months.

Aircraft Destroyed	-----	41
Probable Destroyed	-----	6
Damaged	-----	13
No Claim	-----	38

The following number of Combat Crew Pilots completed their tour of duty. In most cases this indicates that 97 Crews have completed their tour, or when multiplied by 10, is equivalent to 970 Crew - Members relieved from Combat duty, of which most have been returned to the U.S.A.

732nd Bomb Squadron	-----	29
733rd Bomb Squadron	-----	26
734th Bomb Squadron	-----	22
735th Bomb Squadron	-----	<u>20</u>
		97

The following Awards and Decorations were won by members of the 453rd

Distinguished Service Cross	-----	1
Silver Star	-----	4
Distinguished Flying Cross	-----	957

OLC to DFC -----	52
Bronze Star -----	41
Soldiers Medal -----	1
Purple Heart -----	60
Air Medal -----	2,233
OLC to AM -----	4,460

During September 1944 the 453rd Bomb Group dispatched a total of 54 Aircraft on three Missions devoted to carrying cargo to liberated areas in France and supplies to Advance Ground Forces. Sortie Credit was not recorded for these Missions.

The Combat Missions

February, 1945

February, on the Western Front, witnessed the closing of the Ardennes bulge and late in the month, the beginning of the drive to the Rhine. The long awaited offensive made such spectacular gains and gained such momentum, that it carried across this great natural bulwark in the very early part of March.

For the 453rd, February came in like the proverbial lamb and went out like a lion. Sixteen missions were performed in the shortest month of the year. Of these sixteen, twelve were recorded in the last fifteen days. Only once in the past six months had the Group accomplished more missions and dropped more bombs. The number of sorties flown was the greatest since August, 1944. Oil plants and depots and communications centers remained the priority targets as the Allies began their final drive. Against these targets, the 453rd recorded 499 sorties and released 1,158 tons of bombs.

Five of the sixteen missions directed their attack against the synthetic oil plant at Rothensee, just four miles north of Magdeburg. This plant was one of four still

producing oil in quantity for the Armies of Hitler. The first of these missions, and the first mission for the month, was recorded on Feb. 3rd.

MISSION # 211 - MAGDEBURG, GERMANY - 3 FEB. - SAT.

The synthetic oil plant at Rothensee was completely hidden by clouds, so the bombers flew on to drop their lethal cargo on the marshalling yards in Magdeburg instead.

February 5th was just another date on the calendar, but to the 453rd, it marked the completion of one full year of operations against the enemy. The Group commenced operations in time to participate in the attacks against the Luftwaffe which broke the back of the once-vaunted German Air Force and established once and for all Allied air supremacy over Hitler's Fortress Europa. In the battle from the Normandy Beachheads to the Rhine River, the 453rd established one enviable record after another. In its first year of operations, the Group participated in 211 missions. More than once, and for sustained periods of time, the 453rd led the entire 2nd Air Division in bombing accuracy.

To celebrate its first anniversary of operations, a grand party was held at the Aero Club in which more than thirty officers donned white coats to serve the hundreds of G.I.'s and their dates. The Club was packed for an evening of dancing and merriment to the music of the "Flying Yanks", one of the ranking bands in the U.K. The honor of cutting the massive anniversary cake went to Lt. Col. Van D. Dowda, newly appointed Air Executive Officer of the Group. Feature of the program was a special floor-show presented by selected members of the Second Air Division's Special Service talent show, "It's all yours Buddy".

MISSION # 212 - MAGDEBURG, GERMANY - 6 FEB. - TUES.

The target was once more the synthetic oil plant at Rothensee. Once again, clouds obscured the target and the bombers flew on to smash the railway marshalling yards in Magdeburg.

The mission was a milk run, but the Group lost a crew at the assembly point. Lt. Flatt of the 734th Squadron and his entire crew were killed when his plane was caught in a prop wash and spun to earth. The plane crashed a few miles from the Base.

MISSION # 213 - MAGDEBURG - GERMANY - 9 FEB. - FRI.

The day's target once more was the oil plant at Rothensee, and once more clouds over the Primary objectives forced the bombers to smash at the marshalling yards in Magdeburg.

The mission of February 9th ended as tragically as that of February 6th had begun. Lt. Rollins and Lt. Glass, both of the 734th Squadron, were involved in an accident, which resulted in the death of Lt. Rollins and his entire eleven man crew. Lt. Rollins' ship crashed a mere hundred yards from the runway in full view of all those who came to "sweat- them in" each day.

(See "An Easy Mission?" - Pg. M-34, in the "Memories" Section)

Lt. Jochens, of the 732nd Squadron, on his 5th mission, with 3 props feathered was forced to ditch his plane when the last engine quit at an altitude of only 700 feet. He ditched his plane in rough water in the North Sea, off Great Yarmouth. Three of his nine man crew lost their lives. Those killed were 2nd Lts. H.H. Warnke , and R.M. Murczyk, and Sgt. E.V. Barnhill. The survivors were 2nd Lt. E. R. Jochens, and Sgts. H.A. Henry, E.M. Steven D Delewry, R.Yudelson, and E.T. Schuler.

Fourteen men had lost their lives on a mission, which had encountered little flak and no enemy fighters.

MISSION # 214 - DULMEN, GERMANY - 11 FEB. - SUN.

Still striking at Hitler's fast dwindling oil resources, the Group attacked the oil depot at Dulmen, just seventeen miles southwest of Munster.

MISSION # 215 - MAGDEBURG, GERMANY - 14 FEB - WED.

It was Magdeburg again. Against Magdeburg and Dulmen, the Group had unleashed 452 tons of bombs from the bellies of 199 planes.

MISSION # 216 - MAGDEBURG, GERMANY - 15 FEB. - THURS.

The target was overcast again, making it necessary to bomb via PFF. It was not possible to determine the results.

It was from February 21 to 26, 1944 that the Eighth Air Force struck at the Luftwaffe with such fury and effectiveness that the Luftwaffe was dethroned as king of the air of Europe. Also, February 16 to 28, 1945 may be regarded in the future as that period in which the Reich's rail system received such devastating blows that it was unable to supply the Wehrmacht on the Western Front, thus contributing to the spectacular gains made by the Allied Armies through the Siegfried defenses to and across the Rhine itself. In that thirty day period, the 453rd accomplished ten missions against communication centers in the Western Section of the besieged Reich.

MISSION # 217 - BURGSTEINFURT, GERMANY - 16 FEB. - FRI.

The Group set forth for the marshalling yards at Rheine in Northwest Germany. Due to mechanical difficulties in the lead ship, the 31 planes dropped on the

smoke markers of another Group which was making an attack on Burgsteinfurt as a last-resort target 88 tons of bombs fell on that date.

Tragedy struck again on the 17th. The mission that day was headed once more for Magdeburg, but was recalled before reaching the enemy coast. Lt. Duncan, of the 733rd Squadron, was forced to ditch on returning and only four of his ten-man crew were recovered. The survivors were 2nd Lts. C. M. Frank, H. E. Prout, and H. Stein and T/Sgt. H.J. Fink. Those who lost their lives were 1st Lt. L.M. Duncan, T/Sgt. R.A. Beltz, S/Sgts. L. Patsey, J.N. Redman, and the identical twins Edward J. Hensley, and Edwin J. Hensley.

(See "The Last Flight of old "Blood & Guts" - Pg. M-35, in the "Memories" Section)

MISSION # 218 - JUNGENTHAL, GERMANY - 19 FEB. - MON.

The Group attacked the Jung tank assembly and repair depot at Jungenthal near Siegen. 21 planes participated, dropping 58 tons of bombs through the clouds, another instrument bombing. One Squadron of eleven planes ran into interference by another Group on the bomb-run and were thus prevented from dropping their cargo.

MISSION # 219 - NUREMBURG, GERMANY - 21 FEB. - WED.

The 21st began a successive string of missions that carried well into March. It was another of the Plan "A" and Plan "B" affairs with Plan "A" Berlin and Plan "B" Nuremburg. Plan "A" was cancelled prior to takeoff, to the disappointment of many. Nuremburg thus became the Group's objective. 39 Libs smashed at the marshalling yards of that great German City.

MISSION # 220 - HALBERSTADT & VIENENBURG, GERMANY - 22 FEB. - THURS.

Probably the most spectacular raid since the low - level attack on Ploesti took place on February 22nd. From the Danish Peninsula South to Nuremburg, the entire Eighth Air Force, joined with the RAF, the Fifteenth Air Force, and the Tactical Air Forces in France, Belgium, and Holland to tear at the rail and road junctions in that area. Specific flak-free targets were assigned and bombed from altitudes ranging from fifteen hundred to twelve thousand feet. For once the weather was with the Allies and the mission was a tremendous success.

The 453rd's specific targets were the marshalling yards at Halberstadt & Vienenburg. The photos, for the first time in many a day, showed ground instead of clouds. They also showed just how effective the bombing was. Due to the difficulties of target identification, Oker, instead of Vienenburg was attacked, but the results were good there too. Four Squadrons consisting of 38 Libs participated in the all out mission. It was quite a Novelty to be able to doff the oxygen mask over the target. Many of the gunners had the time of their lives straffing the marshalling yards and other objectives as the formations came over their targets.

MISSION # 221 - PADERBORN, GERMANY - 23 FEB. - FRI.

The Group was briefed for a low level (6,000') attack on the marshalling yards at Fulda. However, the weather was extremely bad so, using instruments, a bridge at Paderborn was bombed instead.

That day it was necessary to use flight instruments to take-off from Old Buck. The clouds extended up to 12,000 feet. After that there various layers of clouds and con-trails all the way up to 27,000 feet. Vertigo posed a real problem for the pilots, the bomb-run lasted 35 minutes, the longest ever, and most of it was done while flying in the clouds.

Upon returning to the base, the Group found it to be 100% overcast. It was necessary to let down one plane at a time from 13,000 feet to about 300 feet before exiting the mixture of cloud and rain. The Gee Box, which helped to locate the base, proved to be a very welcome piece of equipment that day.

MISSION # 222 - LENTE, GERMANY - 24 FEB. - SAT.

The railway marshalling yards were the target.

MISSION # 223 - GIEBELSTADT, GERMANY - 25 FEB. - SUN.

The Airfield at Giebelstadt was the target. Giebelstadt was becoming increasingly important as a base for jet planes. Here, on this field, they were serviced, repaired and maintained. It was necessary to remove the target, and removed it was.

MISSION # 224 - BERLIN, GERMANY - 26 FEB. - MON.

With the Russians only thirty-two miles away, the Reich capital took on added military importance. The marshalling yards located in Berlin were indeed lucrative targets. 29 ships participated in the mission this day. Although the bombers were forced to drop their loads through a thick undercast, the results as shown by the plots from the Second Air Division showed the 453rd's bombing as one of the more accurate of the day.

MISSION # 225 - HALLE, GERMANY - 27 FEB. - TUES.

The target was the marshalling yards at Halle. At 8 hours and 20 minutes it was a very long mission. The 453rd luck was with them on this day. They were scheduled to fly as the third Group in the Wing, however, the 445th arrived late at the IP, so the 453rd changed places with them on the bomb-run, and went in second. Not a single burst of flak was fired at the Group. However, the sky

turned black with anti-aircraft fire after the Group passed and the 445th lost two planes that day.

MISSION # 226 - ARNSBURG, GERMANY - 28 FEB. - WED.

For the past eight days the assault against Hitler's rail system continued. On the eighth day the railway viaduct at Arnsberg was bombed with relentless fury.

The consecutive string of missions meant very few days off for the combat crews and for the ground personnel, it spelled long hours on the "line" servicing the planes and keeping them fit. The strain of "I'm flying again tomorrow" or "we'll get that engine changed this afternoon and slow time it tonight so she can fly tomorrow" was borne by the entire personnel of the base. Small wonder then that the men chose to fill the idle hours left to them with activities designed to relieve the nervous tension and let off the "stress".

Many found the answer in a good book. Some looked to the base theatre for a few hours of relaxation. Others preferred competitive sports. No matter what the officer or G.I. chose as a means of recreation on the base, he had the U.S. Army Special Services Division to thank for his library, that comedy or drama or the sporting equipment he used in his games. Of course there was the Officers' Club where an officer could relax or the Aero Club and Non-Com Club for the enlisted men, but here too, the long fingers of Special Services were noted.

When the men came overseas, they brought with them the desire to continue with the sports they had enjoyed in high school or college. Special Services came prepared to satisfy their desires. With the lengthening days of spring and summer, more and more of the personnel found time to regain their batting eye and skill afield. Within the squadrons, the departments formed teams and followed definite schedules. There was intra-station competition between the squadrons and the various service groups. The best of the individual players

were chosen to represent the group in inter-station competition. Under Capt. Hale, Special Services equipped the teams, arranged the inter-station and intra-station schedules, and provided transportation to and from the various sports, but volley ball, badminton and tennis had their devoted followers as well.

Each squadron and service group found space and measured out their baseball and softball diamonds. Some erected volleyball courts. The more important intra-station games were played in front of Headquarters. The home games of the teams were also played there. In the inter-station league, Old Buck's teams did right well for themselves. The Officer's baseball team went so far as to play in the Second Air Division finals.

The Combat Missions

March, 1945

The month of March proved to be one of the greatest in the history of the war, second only to June 1944, the month of the invasion. On the ground, Allied forces crumbled the Siegfried defenses and stopped only when they reached the Rhine itself, but not for long. Before the month was half over the doughboys crossed Germany's "River of Destiny". They chose to cross by the Ludendorf bridge near Remagen. Ironically, this very bridge had been the target for the 453rd on two occasions just a few short months ago. Now, instead of being denied to the Germans as a road of retreat, it was open as an American highway to be used in pursuit of the enemy. So swift was the advance of the Allies all along the line, that before April appeared on the scene, The Rhine had been crossed in many places, considerable gains had been made all along the front and the war was open to the very heart of the Reich itself.

For its contribution to the successful conclusion of the war, the 453rd flew on 25 missions, the greatest monthly total since that memorable June, in 1944. Considerably better than half of these resulted in visual missions with excellent results. Ten of Germany's critical communications centers felt the blast of the 453rd's bombs. The railway yards at Munster were visited three times. To further decrease Germany's power to produce oil and set aflame her reserves, the Group plastered five of the Reich's largest refineries and storage depots. To assure the freedom of the skies, five jet-propelled aircraft fields and factories were attacked. In all, the Group amassed a total of 984 sorties and dropped 1,141 tons of bombs for Hitler and 68 tons of supplies in support of the Allies.

Carrying the string of missions begun on February 21 into March, the Group performed three missions in the first three days of the month to establish a record of 11 missions in 11 consecutive days.

MISSION # 227 - INGOLSTADT, GERMANY - 1 MAR. - THURS.

The marshalling yards at Ingolstadt, thirty miles north of Munich, were attacked through a solid undercast. The 31 Libs dropped their 70 tons of bombs with the aid of instruments.

MISSION # 228 - MAGDEBURG, GERMANY - 2 MAR. - FRI.

Magdeburg, which had received so much attention in February, was attacked again today. The mission found the target hidden by clouds once more.

MISSION # 229 - MAGDEBURG, GERMANY - 3 MAR. - SAT.

At the briefing a groan of dismay sounded throughout the room as the crews saw the line extending to Magdeburg again. The reason was because the target was heavily defended and it was also a very long mission of over seven hours.

On the way to the target, the navigation was off a bit and the Group passed over the Frisian Islands and Helgoland. This brought them into range of a two gun anti-aircraft battery which proved to be very accurate. Although no planes were lost, many had holes in them.

At the target there was no cloud cover and it was possible to bomb visually. The flak was moderate to intense and very accurate. The large red centers of the exploding shells were very visible. The Group flew through the mass of bursting shells and the crews could smell the exploding powder through their oxygen masks.

The 453rd was one of the last Groups over the target. They found the smoke and flames, which rose to over 10,000 feet, was too thick to identify the aiming point so the 33 planes dropped their 77 tons of high explosives directly into the holocaust.

As the Group turned to go home it was evident that the oil refinery was finished. The place was in ruins. It was extremely doubtful that another mission would ever be scheduled to go to Magdeburg.

Layers of clouds extending up to 25,000 feet and more were responsible for the unusual "mission" of March 4th. When weather prevented the assembling of the formation over England, the planes went to France. There also they found the clouds insurmountable and abandoned the mission. Lt. Rupley of the 733rd Squadron was unable to find the formation. Unaware of the abandonment, he went on, tagged onto a passing Fortress formation and bombed with them.

MISSION # 230 - GIEBELSTADT, GERMANY - 5 MAR. - MON.

The airfield at Geibelstadt was the target for today.

MISSION # 231 - HARBURG, GERMANY - 6 MAR. - TUES.

The oil refinery at Harburg, just south of Hamburg felt the sting of 28 tons of incendiaries and general-purpose bombs dropped from the 10 attacking Libs. The 453rd also sent six Libs to act as the screening force.

MISSION # 232 - SOEST, GERMANY - 7 MAR. - WED.

The marshalling yards at Soest were the target on the 7th.

MISSION # 233 - SIEGEN, GERMANY - 8 MAR. - THURS.

The marshalling yards were the target and due to the complete cloud cover, the results were unobserved.

MISSION # 234 - MUNSTER, GERMANY - 9 MAR. - FRI.

Patchy clouds prevented the visual bombing of the rail yards. However the damage inflicted was great even though the aiming points were not hit. At the target the flak was moderate and accurate. One of the ships of the 389th Group received a direct hit and went down in flames; no chutes were reported seen.

MISSION # 235 - PADERBORN, GERMANY - 10 MAR. - SAT.

82 tons of bombs were dropped on the marshalling yards.

MISSION # 236 - KEIL, GERMANY - 11 MAR. - SUN.

Because of the increasing scourge of Germany's undersea prowlers, the Eighth Air Force concentrated its attention on the pens at Bremen, Kiel and Wilhelmshaven. The 453rd's target for the 11th was the submarine yards at Kiel. Here again, clouds hid the target and it was necessary to attack with the aid of instruments. The flak was light and inaccurate.

MISSION # 237 - WETZLAR, GERMANY - 12 MAR. - MON.

32 Libs dropped 79 tons of bombs on the rail yards of Wetzlar, just twenty-five miles north of Frankfurt.

The last half of March may well go down in history as the most spectacular of the war in Europe. On the ground the Allied forces finally found the weather they were waiting for. With amazing rapidity, they formed along the Rhine and awaited the word to go. In the air, the sky voided itself of clouds and the result was the greatest number of visual missions the Group had ever experienced.

MISSION # 238 - GERDELEGEN, GERMANY - 15 MAR. - THURS.

The German General Staff were found to be in Zosgen, just south of Berlin. On the 15th of March the Eighth Air Force chose to pay them a little visit. The 453rd led the entire Air Force over the target. Unable to pick up the aiming point due to the ground haze, they went on to bomb the marshalling yards at Gerdelegen on the return trip as a last resort target. 31 Libs plastered the target with 71 tons of bombs. Results were excellent and another rail center required the attention of Hitler's repair gangs.

(See "Our Last Mission" - Pg. M-36, in the "Memories" Section)

MISSION # 239 - MUNSTER, GERMANY - 17 MAR. - SAT.

Munster was attacked for the second time in the month. With the Allies now pressing as hard from the West as the Russians were from the East, this communications center took on added importance. However, for the second time in the month clouds covered the target and the bombs were dropped with the aid of instruments and with unobserved results.

MISSION # 240 - BERLIN, GERMANY - 18 MAR. - MON.

In the northwestern portion of Berlin, in the sector known as the Tegel District, tanks, small arms, anti-aircraft ammunitions and other armament as well as parts for Army transports were pouring from factories which had not been attacked since early 1944. It was a lucrative target indeed. Trailing the formation, the Group was flying thru dense contrails from the Groups ahead and above a solid blanket of cloud. It looked very much like another instrument bombing with results unobserved. Suddenly, as the Group ahead dropped their bombs and turned away, the clouds disappeared, the formation broke out of the contrails and there before the 453rd lay its target. Lt. Smith, of the 735th Squadron, lead bombardier, found his aiming point covered by the smoke of the proceeding attacks and hurriedly trained his sights on another portion of the factory. The results were excellent. 48 tons of bombs tumbled from the bomb-bays of the 21

attacking aircraft and hit where they did the most harm. One hundred percent within one thousand feet of the aiming point was the score for the day.

MISSION # 241 - NEUBERG & BAUMENHEIM, GERMANY - 19 MAR. - MON.

The 453rd attacked two jet aircraft fields, northeast of Augsburg. With two squadrons smashing at Neuberg and one at Baumenheim, the Group scored again. In all, 33 Libs dropped 81 tons on the targets.

MISSION # 242 - HEMMINGSTEDT, GERMANY - 20 MAR. - TUES.

Today's mission called for an early afternoon takeoff and late evening return. The target was another of Hitler's oil refining plants, this one at Hemmingstedt, on the Danish Peninsula. Despite the ground haze, the bombers dropped their load where it did the plant the most harm and the Allies the most good.

MISSION # 243 - ACHMER, GERMANY - 21 MAR. - WED.

Two missions were called for today. The first took 43 Libs, carrying 94 tons of fragmentation and general purpose bombs to the jet aircraft base at Achmer. The weather again was perfect. Three squadrons, carrying the frags, had as their objective the destruction of any planes hidden in the dispersal areas. All the frags hit where briefed. The target for the one squadron carrying the general purpose bombs, was the runway. The bombs missed their mark but hit squarely on the barracks and built up areas of the field. Thus, though they missed their aiming point, they did considerable damage.

MISSION # 244 - ESSEN, GERMANY - 21 MAR. - WED.

The second mission of the day was another airfield at Essen. Only four aircraft participated in this mission. They carried 13 tons of bombs. Appraisal of the damage inflicted was made difficult due to the fact that the four Libs were part of a composite squadron and that the pictures were of poor quality due to the

failing light of the late afternoon. However, so far as could be determined, the bombs did fall where they were supposed to.

MISSION # 245 - GIEBELSTADT, GERMANY - 22 MAR. - THURS.

The target was another airfield. Once again the weather was favorable and the 33 bombers found no difficulty in finding and blasting their target. All 78 tons of bombs fell within two thousand feet of their aiming point and cut the runways that crisscrossed the field

Editorial Comment:

The Leavenworth crew in A/C 949, took flak over the target, lost # 4 engine and feathered it. Number 2 Turbo waste gate went full closed and the engine was cut back to half power to avoid overheating. Because of the late hour and potential Luftwaffe intruders over Old Buck, they landed at a 9th Air Force P-47 Base at St. Trond, Belgium. They assessed the damage, declined a C-47 ride back and put the crew to work replacing # 4 throttle control cable. Meanwhile the base technician repaired the # 2 super charger electronic control. They flew 949 back to Old Buck on March 23rd.

MISSION # 246 - MUNSTER GERMANY - 23 MAR. - FRI.

Once again the target was the marshalling yards.

MISSION # 247 - WESEL, GERMANY - 24 MAR. SAT.

The mission this day was to drop supplies to the troops who had crossed the Rhine River at Wesel, in northwest Germany. The altitude was to be 300 feet. After the drop it was necessary to make a tight turn, which resulted in being over the enemy lines for about 15 minutes. At this point the small arms ground fire was intense and resulted in the greatest loss of aircraft to the Eighth Air Force on

a low - level mission since the Ploesti Raid. Reports range that from 14 to 20 planes were lost. However, while the other Groups lost from 1 to 3 planes each, the 453rd was spared, all crews returned safely.

MISSION # 248 - STORMEDE, GERMANY - 24 MAR. - SAT.

The second mission of the day, in the afternoon, was to eliminate a landing strip at Stormede.

MISSION # 249 - EHMEN, GERMANY - 25 MAR. - SUN.

The oil storage depot at Ehmén had been hit very hard on 14 January. However, enough time had elapsed to make it a necessary target once again.

MISSION # 250 - WILHELMSHAVEN, GERMANY - 30 MAR. - FRI.

The Red Army had taken Gydnia and Danzig, important Nazi Baltic Naval Bases, and for a long time the hideout for several of Hitler's largest ocean raiders. With these bases gone, they sought refuge in Kiel, Bremen and Wilhelmshaven. The Subs also were becoming more and more of a threat to the Allied sea lanes, operating from these bases.

Accordingly, on March 30, the 453rd was dispatched along with several other Groups to raise havoc with the sub pens and docks of Wilhelmshaven while other forces of the Eighth Air Force visited Kiel and Bremen. Three squadrons took to the air with 77 tons of bombs and let them fall through patchy skies onto the target. Two squadrons, unable to find their primary aiming point, bombed their secondary with the aid of instruments with last minute visual corrections. One squadron attacked the primary. All bombs missed their marks, but the damage was still extensive.

MISSION # 251 - BRUNSWICK, GERMANY - 31 MAR. - SAT.

The last mission of the month took the Group to the marshalling yards of Brunswick. After a fortnight of visual bombing made possible by ideal weather, the skies became cloud-covered and necessitated the use of instruments. 31 planes were dispatched but only 29 returned to base.

At the Dutch coast, on the way to the target, the #1 engine of Lt. Hopper's plane caught fire. Lt. Hopper left the formation and the crew started to bail out. Three chutes were observed over the channel, the other eight over the enemy coast. The ship kept burning, the wing crumpled, and the ship crashed, blew up and burned.

At the target, Lt. Bussell of the 733rd Squadron was hit by jet aircraft and reported two engines out. Trailing the formation, he dropped out at the Dummer Lake area and attempted to land in Allied Controlled Territory. He was never heard from again. Lt. Bussell was the first crew the Group had lost to enemy fighters in approximately ten months.

It was altogether fitting that March should go down in the Group's annals as one of its greatest months for it proved to be the last full month of operations in the ETO.

With the coming of warmer weather and longer days, athletic equipment began to come into permanent use. Pitching arms were unlimbered and batting eyes were sharpened.

At the Aero Club, the Second Division Band played at one of its dances while the "G.I.'Vers" supplied the dance tunes for another. Perhaps the highlight of all recreational activities, however, was the boxing show that took place in one of the hangars. Some personnel from the 453rd participated and there were some

professional British boxers also. The referee was Lt. Love of the 735th Squadron, himself a former Golden Glove champion. The highlight of the show, however, was the wrestling match between two professional wrestlers. The hangar was filled to capacity and all thoroughly enjoyed the show.

The Combat Missions

April, 1945

The month of April was a momentous one for the 453rd Bomb Group, for it witnessed the final operational mission in the ETO. On April 12th, the Group received its permanent stand-down. In the twelve days of operations, the Group performed eight missions. 433 tons of bombs fell on all corners of the Reich from the bellies of 161 attacking Libs.

The month began with the skyways closed. In all his efforts, and with all the forces at his disposal Hitler had never once succeeded in forcing the retreat of the bomber formations. Yet his ally, weather, had been continuously guilty of that very act. The first days of the new month uncovered nothing new. Twice, on April 2nd and 3rd, the Group attempted to reach, and put out of commission, the airfield at Anlberg in northern Denmark. Instructed to bomb by visual means only, the formations were forced to turn back on April 2nd after reaching the Danish coast. On April 3rd the planes stood by till late in the afternoon before finally receiving the word that the mission had been scrubbed.

MISSION # 252 - WESENDORF, GERMANY - 4 APR. - WED.

Finally on April 4th, the skies became more passive and the 453rd performed its first mission of the month. The target for the day was the airfield at Wesendorf, twenty miles north of Brunswick. A blanket of cloud covered the target and hid it from view, thus necessitating bombing via instruments. For the first time since June 21st, 1944, the Group was attacked by enemy fighters. On several previous occasions the returning crews had reported sighting enemy fighters off in the distance and sometimes witnessed their attacks against other Groups, but not since that day in June had enemy fighters actually attacked a 453rd formation.

At that, the brunt of the attack was borne by the proceeding Groups and the 453rd escaped with a few holes in the planes but none in the men.

(See "Our Longest Day" - Pg. M-41, in the "Memories" Section)

MISSION # 253 - EGER, CZECHOSLOVAKIA - 5 APR. - THURS.

Only one plane performed the mission today. That plane was piloted by Lt. Templeton of the 732nd Squadron. The target was the rail center of Eger in Western Czechoslovakia. Unable to assemble the formation over England because of layers of clouds, each plane proceeded to France alone to form over the Continent. There, too, they found the clouds too high to cope with. Accordingly, the recall was sounded and the planes returned home. Lt. Templeton, who never received the recall signal, tagged onto a passing Fortress Group and bombed the Ordnance Depot near Grafenwehr, Germany.

MISSION # 254 - HALLE, GERMANY - 6 APR. - FRI.

The target was the marshalling yards at Halle, deep in Central Germany. The bombers found their target hidden and bombed with the aid of instruments. In all, 59 tons of bombs fell through the undercast from the bomb-bays of the 27 attacking bombers.

MISSION # 255 - DUNEBERG, GERMANY - 7 APR. - SAT.

The skies finally cleared on April 7th. Dispatching 33 planes, the Group attacked the explosives factory at Duneberg, near Hamburg. Shortly after crossing the Dutch-German Border, a formation of FW-190's and ME-262's attacked from all angles. The action consumed only a few minutes but was fast and furious while it lasted. When it was all over and the count was taken, only one ship received minor damage and two others were damaged more seriously. None was lost and the Group was officially credited with one enemy plane destroyed, five probably destroyed and one damaged. Lt., "Snuffy" Smith's plane got hit the worst. His

ship was a mass of 20 and 40 MM holes, however, no one was injured At the target, the weather was almost perfect, the clouds that were present never interfered with the bombing and the results were excellent. Crews reported terrific explosions that rocked their formations at 20,000 feet, almost four miles high.

MISSION # 256 - FURTH, GERMANY - 8 APR, - SUN.

At Furth, five miles west of Nuremburg, there was an airfield and aircraft components factory. This plant was turning out parts for and assemblies of jet plane units. The Group attacked this target with 30 Libs dropping 48 tons of bombs. The Nazis countered with moderately intense and fairly accurate flak in an attempt to drive the bombers off, but they had never succeeded before and they didn't succeed now. Results were excellent despite the barrage and the factory was well hit. All the barrage accomplished was to punch a few holes in some of the ships. The crews were not so much as scratched.

MISSION # 257 - MEMMINGEN, GERMANY - 9 APR. - MON.

At Memmingen in Southern Germany, the Germans had constructed an airfield suitable for jet-propelled aircraft. Performing the sixth consecutive mission, the Group dispatched 31 aircraft against this target. With ole man weather on the right side, the bombs found their mark. One squadron suffered an early release but the other two plastered the target. 72 tons of bombs were dropped by visual means and the runways were rendered unserviceable.

MISSION # 258 - RECHLIN & WITTENBERGE - 10 APR. - TUES.

The target was another airfield situated fifty miles north of Berlin. It was the Luftwaffe's experimental base of Rechlin, given over to the development of jet-propelled aircraft. Three squadrons carried out the attack but only two of them dropped their bombs on the primary target.

The other squadron went on to bomb the railway marshalling yards at Wittenberge on the route home. All went well until the planes neared their target. The 453rd luck ran out about ten miles from Wittenberge, when the formation ran into moderate but extremely accurate flak. Lt. Powell's ship received a direct hit, broke at the windows and went down in flames. The Bombardier, Ed Jacyna; Tail Gunner, Charles Giano, and Right Waist Gunner, Peter Fleming were the only survivors. Bourbon leader had two engines shot out. The deputy lead had his hydraulic system shot out and both of them had wounded aboard. A total of nineteen ships received damage in varying degrees from these guns.

(See "Last Mission -- Lasting Memories" - Pg. M-43, in the "Memories" Section)

MISSION # 259 - AMBERG, GERMANY - 11 APR. - WED

On the 11th of April, the 453rd wrote finis to its operations in the ETO. Performing its 259th mission, the Group scored again. The target for this day was the rail junction at Amberg, twenty-five miles west of the Czech Border. The target was small, but it was a choke point in the Nazi communications system feeding the armies facing the Russians. There was no opposition of any nature and the 11 attacking Libs dropped their 26 ton load as briefed.

Verbal orders to prepare to move were received on the 12th. With 259 missions to the Group's credit, the 453rd wrote finis to its ETO career. The Group was stood down permanently.

In fourteen months of operations, the Group amassed a total of 6,664 sorties and had dropped 15,805 tons of bombs on all corners of the Reich against all types of targets. Airfields, marshalling yards, synthetic oil plants, armament factories, dock areas, and rocket sites were impartially dealt with.

Of the original force of sixty-one ships, only one remained. That one was "Male Call", a veteran of ninety-five missions. The plane was crewed by S/Sgt. John Johnson of the 734th Squadron.

In all, the 453rd had ten veteran B-24's with 100 missions or more.

120 missions - "My Babs" of the 733rd Squadron.

Crew Chief - T/Sgt. James T. Culvahouse

From Durant, Oklahoma.

117 missions - "Wandering Wanda" of the 735th Squadron.

Crew Chief - M/Sgt. William J. Lodelie,

From Freeland, Pennsylvania.

116 missions - "Hattie Belle" of the 735th Squadron.

Crew Chief - M/Sgt. Joseph M. Miele,

From Rahway, New Jersey.

113 missions - "Arrowhead" of the 732nd Squadron.

Crew Chief - S/Sgt. Andrew J. Cumming,

From Rialto, California.

111 missions - "Foil Proof" of the 735th Squadron.

Crew Chief - M/Sgt. Freeman L. Perrault,

From Elmhurst, Illinois.

107 missions - "Ohio Silver" of the 732nd Squadron.

Crew Chief - M/Sgt. Milton R. Frank,

From Emery, South Dakota.

103 Missions - "Century Queen" of the 735th Squadron.

Crew Chief - M/Sgt. James E. Mock,

From Chicago, Illinois

101 missions - "Crows Nest" of the 734th Squadron.

Crew Chief - T/Sgt. Clinton G. Colvin

100 missions - "Becky" of the 732nd Squadron.

Crew Chief - M/Sgt. Albert V. Cowell,

From Jacksonville, Florida.

100 missions - "Liberty Run" of the 735th Squadron.

Crew Chief - M/Sgt. Arthur Pensack,

From Dickson, Pennsylvania.

The 453rd began its operations in time to assist in the knockout of the Luftwaffe. Prior to, and after D-day, the Group played its part in paving the way for the exclusion of the Wehrmacht from France. When the Allies crossed the Rhine, the 453rd was there to drop supplies to the paratroops who had floated down on the East Side of Germany's "River of Destiny". When the on -rush of Allied Forces followed, the 453rd helped by attacking airfields, marshalling yards, and ordnance depots.

Now, the powers that be decreed that the 453rd's job in the ETO was completed. Where the Group would go no one knew, or if he did know he was not saying, but all indications pointed to a thirty-day furlough in the States and then on to the Pacific.

The Group set aside the week of April 8th to 15th for "Salute the Ground Man Week". Featured on this program was a grand parade that started along Miller Road. The men marched in formation to Station Headquarters where various members of the ground crews received their bronze stars amid a full-scale review for their outstanding achievements in the pursuit of their duties. The parade then marched back the way it had come. Competitive sports were held throughout the week. Free beer was served at the NCO Club and Officer's Club every day. The week was to be finished off with dances to be held at the Aero Club and the Officer's Club. The program was interrupted on the 12th by the news of the impending movement.

Then like a bolt of lightning out of the serene, calm blue, came the tragic news of the death of President Roosevelt. All dances and parties were immediately cancelled and the flag was flown at half-mast for the remainder of the Group's stay in the ETO. Morale, which had skyrocketed with the possibility of a thirty-day furlough home, fell to a new low with the passing of the Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army and Navy. When the shock of his death had somewhat worn off, there remained a determination to fulfill the task that still lay ahead and to bring to a successful conclusion that for which he had tirelessly fought.

TO THE UNITED STATES

AND

DEACTIVATION

13 April to 15 September 1945

With the cessation of operations on the 13th of April 1945, the Group was afforded a unique opportunity to catch up on maintenance and repair work. Even minor "tinkering" jobs which had previously been impossible to accomplish because of the heavy volume of battle damage, and major repair work now received the attention of industrious crew chiefs and mechanics on the line. The period of non-activity lasted almost a week until on the 19th of April orders came from Headquarters, ETO, alerting the organization for departure from the Theatre.

The next two weeks were spent in making shipping crates and packing up all the Group property for movement over "a long sea voyage". Everything from typewriters to engine mounts was packed, weighed, measured and stenciled with the magic symbol "10062- A, B, C, D, E" which would insure its delivery by the POE authorities to our, as yet unknown, next station in the United States.

All departments were buzzing with activity during those two weeks. Orders to return to the States was incentive enough to make zealots out of even those who had been close to being "Goldbricks" only a short time ago. All equipment had to be repaired, or if not repairable, replaced by the depot so that when it reached us

at our new destination it would be all ready to begin operations in a combat again. We were to be one of the "Re-deployed Units" destined for duty in the Pacific Theatre after all personnel had been given thirty-day Rehabilitation and Recuperation leaves and furloughs in the USA.

Any shortages in organizational property were requisitioned; airplane engines, instruments, props, elevator surfaces, etc. were overhauled. Radio sets were checked, so that the aircraft could be transferred to other Groups in the ETO for use in waging war against the Hun.

All enlisted personnel were given show down inspections, and clothing was issued to replace worn-out or lost items. Everyone in the Group underwent a "records processing" where all service records, form #20s, Officers' 66-2s, soldier's individual pay records and shot records were checked and corrected. Physical examinations were given to determine whether all personnel were qualified for further overseas duty, and those disqualified were transferred to the other organizations, that were to remain in the European Theatre. Since we were to be returned to the United States as the first leg of our new journey, those eliminated for physical reasons were the subject of many jests in the vein of "being unfit for duty in the United States". Advising them to take out first papers for British Citizenship, as they no longer met the physical requirements for entrance back into the United States.

By the 5th of May, all Group aircraft had been accepted by Tech Inspectors of the Groups which were to receive them, and all organizational property was packed and crated ready for shipment. Everyone was impatient for orders to come through so that we could get started back "Stateside". As all duties had been concluded there were daily tournaments of volley ball, baseball and "touch" football between teams within the Group.

VE Day as well as our movement orders came on the 9th of May. Victory in Europe was really good news for us as it meant that we saw the successful conclusion of the job at which all our efforts had been directed for the past two years. We could now be departing the theatre with no regrets about leaving in the middle of a fight.

We took our last look at Old Buckenham at about 1000 hours and boarded the troop train which was to take us to the POE at Southampton, England. As we sped through Ely, Cambridge, London, and other English cities that we had visited on passes and leaves during the past eighteen months, the people waved and shouted "God Speed" to us. We really felt as if we were leaving "Our ETO Home".

The 453rd Bomb Group, along with the other organizations, embarked on the Naval Transport, USS Hermitage, on 9 May 1945, and we got under way back to the USA on 13 May. The next ten days aboard ship were spent doing the routine work of ship housekeeping, deck patrols, kitchen police, and mop and broom details. By the time our personnel had grown accustomed to hearing the ship's tannoy system herald a broadcast by the preliminary "Now Hear This", instead of the more familiar "Attention to Broadcast", which we had used on the Air Base PA system, we were pulling into Boston Harbor.

We docked at about 1400 hours on the 23rd of May while being serenaded by two bands and "flashed at" by dozens of photographers. This was it, the moment we had been dreaming of since leaving these same shores back in December 1943. We were back from the War!! Enthusiasm was in no way dampened by the knowledge that within a few short weeks we would be departing once again to another, and more final, phase of the war.

By 2000 hours we had disembarked and were speeding on a troop train toward Camp Myles Standish while being served-doughnuts and fresh milk by the American Red Cross. For many, this was the first fresh milk in over eighteen months. Everyone agreed that these United States was a fine place to be.

The next day the whole organization had been segregated by reception station groups, and were entrained to their new stations where they were to receive thirty-day Rehabilitation and Recuperation leaves, and rejoin the Group at the Army Air Base at Fort Dix, New Jersey, some thirty days in the future.

Upon reporting back to the Air Base it was learned that our organization was to be disbanded and all personnel were to be placed in the Air Transport Command. Someone then remarked, "Take down your service star, Mother, your son is in the ATC". Goodbye to the TAC outfits. Goodbye to "Sweating Out" the return of those "flying boxcars" which had carried our crews over enemy territory on two hundred and fifty-nine combat missions since the 6th of February 1944. Goodbye to friends and acquaintances with whom we had shared those suspenseful, sometimes hilarious, often times tragic, experiences that can only be known in a combat outfit in a theatre of war.

Personnel were shipping out each day to stations all over the United States; Reno, St. Joseph, Dallas-- "Good luck, Sarge, see you again some day"-- Homestead, Greenwood, Memphis -- "I'll mail that ten to you as soon as I reach my new station, Joe"-- Long Beach, Palm Springs, Detroit -- "Be sure and write"-- Nashville, Wilmington, Great Falls-- "The best damned outfit in the Army Air Force is splitting up" -- letters coming back from all the pals who had already arrived at their new stations-- "This is sure a fine place, Mac, hope you get sent out here"

The 453rd Bombardment Group (H) and the Squadrons assigned thereto were officially inactivated on 15 September 1945 in accordance with Field Manual 80-20-2 (Inactivation Manual), pursuant to the authority contained in TWX, Ferrying Division, Air Transport Command. 0929K, dated 5 September 1945, Air Transport Command Letter 20-2B, dated 29 August 1945, and the VOCO, Army Air Base, Ferrying Division, Air Transport Command, Fort Dix, New Jersey.

The 453rd Bomb Group (H) activated on 29 June 1943, completed its assigned mission, and officially de-activated 15 September 1945. Another organization - another chapter in the annals of the United States at War.

(Also see "U.K. Memories" - Pg. M-44; "Was it Really Fifty Years Ago?" - Pg. M-47;

"Bunchered Buddies of Old Buck" - Pg. M-48; "Memories" - Pg. M-49, and "The Congressional Record" - Pg. M-50 in the "Memories" Section)