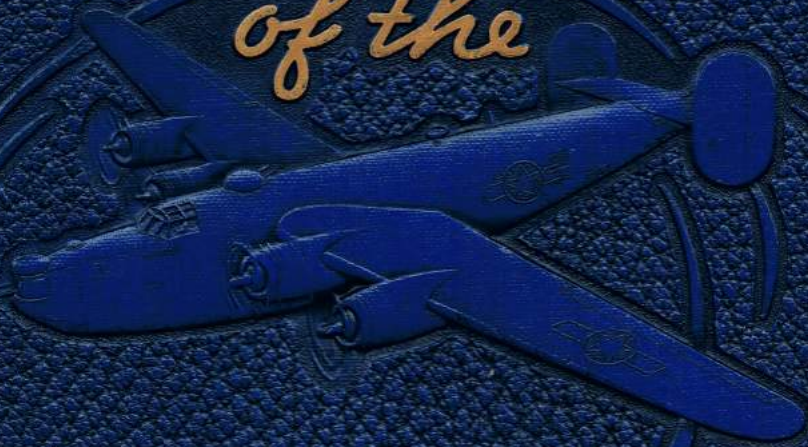


JOSEPH CHALKER

*The Flight
of the*



Liberators



McCOOK

MITCHELL FIELD

CHARLESTON

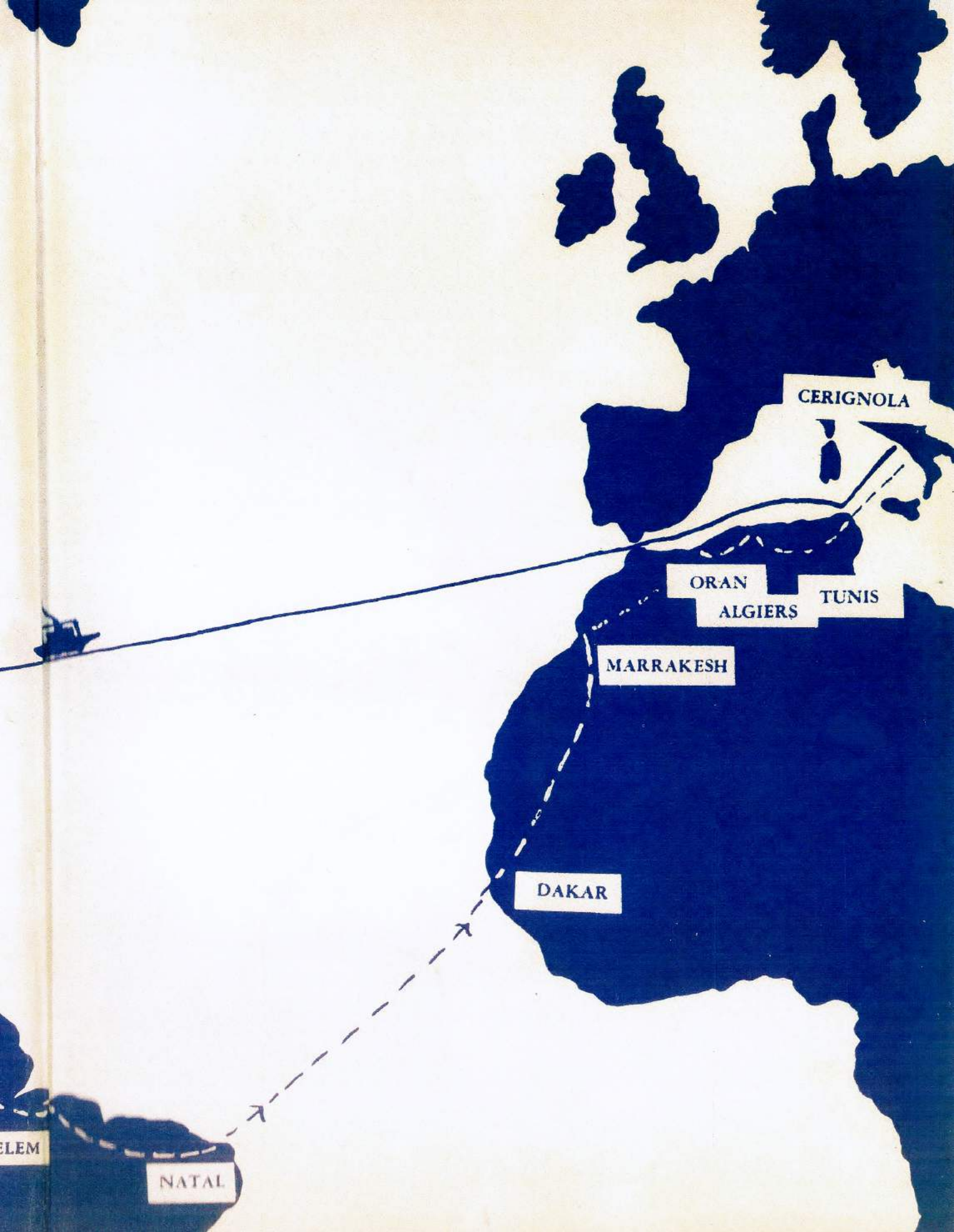
NEWPORT NEWS

TUCSON

MORRISON FIELD

TRINIDAD

BELEM



CERIGNOLA

ORAN

ALGIERS

TUNIS

MARRAKESH

DAKAR

NATAL

ELEM

The Flight of the Liberators

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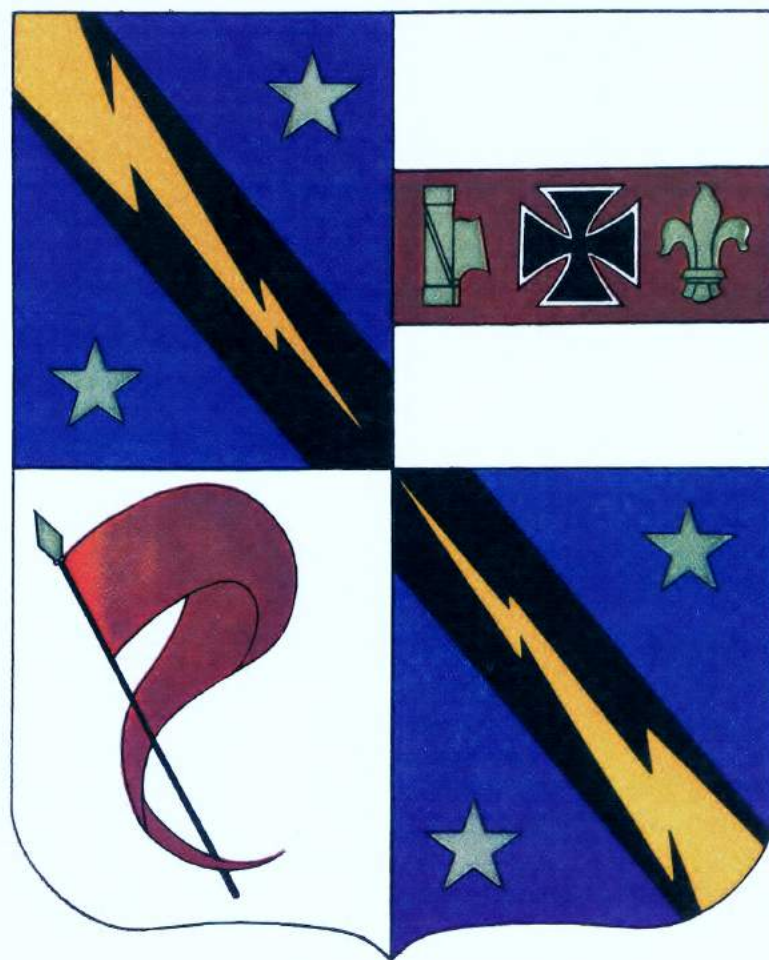
by

JOHN S. BARKER, JR.

Editor-in-Chief



THE FLIGHT OF THE LIBERATORS
ASSOCIATION



The Flight of the Liberators

The Story
of the Four Hundred and Fifty-fourth
Bombardment Group





The road to Bari passes a simple sign bearing the inscription: United States Military Cemetery. Here the peaceful Italian skies smile down upon the crosses of our airmen in their final resting place.

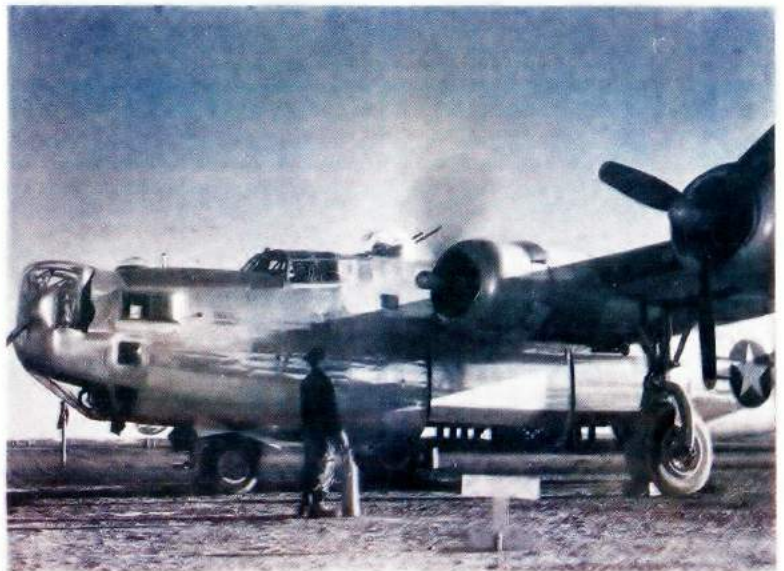
Dedicated . . .

. . . to those Valiant of the Four Hundred and Fifty-fourth Group who gave their lives so that we may live ours.

. . . and to the Mothers and Fathers of those Valiant, for to them the skies will never be as bright.



Pre-flight



This generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny.

F. D. ROOSEVELT

FOREWORD . . .

Aside from the annals of the War Department and the pages of this book, history will probably take no notice of the 454th Bombardment Group and the part it played in the Second World War. In recording the events of this great conflict, history will find no space for the individual soldier or the individual organization; large volumes will enclose the war's generalities, leaving no pages for the unit of command.

To the individual, however, the unit with which he spent his military career often holds as many, if not more, memorable occasions as the actual engagements of the war. The first raid on Tokyo, the fall of Italy, the invasion of Normandy, will long be remembered; but equally long remembered will be the laughs, the tears, the friendships, that have been found under the coat of olive drab.

That, then, is the purpose of this album: to preserve from time's mantle of dust those memories that members of the 454th will forever cherish. This album, in turn, will find it hard to include all the memories that grow out of two years association with new-found friends, new-discovered localities, and new-lived adventures. Still, it is hoped that among these pages will be found items to refresh the memories of the clerk at group headquarters, the armorer in the 737th squadron, the mechanic in the 739th, the cook in the 736th, the truck driver in the 738th, and the ordnance man, the pilot, bombardier, bombsight mechanic, tail turret gunner, the major and the flight officer, the first sergeant and the private.

The members of the 454th are proud of their group and the memories that they hold of it. They make no boast that the 454th was the best group in the Air Force, that it dropped the most bombs, flew the most missions, holds the most citations and decorations. Still, their group, as a typical heavy bombardment group of the 15th Army Air Force, is one in which they hold great pride.

And that is what they think of the 454th—"typical." This is the story of one group out of many. By changing a few names here and there, this could well be the story of any B-24 group that flew under the command of the 15th AAF. This is the story of over two thousand men who bore the banner inscribed with the emblem of the 454th Bombardment Group; it could well be the banner of the 455th, the 456th, the 459th, or any of the many individual groups that composed the strategic air force of the Mediterranean Theatre.

This is the tale of the typical group. Look not among these pages for celebrated heroes—they are all heroes. Look not among these pages for historic battles—they are all historic. Look not among these pages for sensational stories—they are all just memories.

And these memories belong to a member of the 454th. This is his story.



15th AAF Photo



MAJOR GENERAL NATHAN F. TWINING, Commanding General of the 15th Army Air Force, received his commission as Second Lieutenant, infantry, upon his graduation from the United States Military Academy in November, 1918. From there, a varied and active military career found him in the Hawaiian Islands and the Solomon Islands, among others, finally bringing him to the position of commanding general of the 15th AAF in January, 1944. Command Pilot Twining, then in his forty-seventh year, held the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Legion of Merit, and the Air Medal.

THE SECTIONS OF THIS BOOK . . .



Preflight

AN INTRODUCTION

Take-Off

A HISTORY IN REVIEW

Flight Formation

THE ORGANIZATION

On Target

AN ILLUSTRATION

Mission Accomplished

A SUMMARY





Take-Off



All are architects of fate working in these walls of time.

H. W. LONGFELLOW

BRIGADIER GENERAL FAY R. UPTHEGROVE, Commanding General of the 304th Bombardment Wing, started his military career in 1927 when he received his Bachelor of Science degree and commission as Second Lieutenant at the United States Military Academy at West Point. His colorful career found him in Hawaii, Africa, and Italy, at one time piloting a B-17 bomber on one of the first long-range missions from Africa to Germany. Command Pilot Upthegrove, holding the Distinguished Service Medal, Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Air Medal, assumed command of the 304th Wing on his thirty-ninth birthday in January, 1944.



15th AAF Photo



COLONEL HORACE D. AYNESWORTH, at the age of twenty-seven, was assigned to the 454th Bombardment Group, in July, 1943, as commanding officer. Leaving the University of Texas in 1936, the colonel entered the Army as a cadet to receive his pilot's wings one year later, in June, 1937. As provisional group commander, he led one group to Africa, returned to lead the 454th to Italy. Senior Pilot Aynesworth, a resident of Childress, Texas, holds the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, and Air Medal, representing his participation in repeated aerial assaults against the German strongholds of Europe.

WILLIAM R. LARGE, JR.
Lieut. Colonel, Air Corps,
Deputy Commander



JOHN A. WAY
Colonel, Air Corps,
Commanding
March 1945 to May 1945



EDWARD R. CASEY
Lieut. Colonel, Air Corps,
Commanding
May 1945 to June 1945



WILLIAM HUBBARD, III
Lieut. Colonel, Air Corps,
Commanding
June 1943 to —



AMOS G. ALLEN, JR.
Major, Air Corps,
Executive Officer



THE FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FOURTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) AAF

The 454th Bombardment Group found its birth in a mere piece of paper. In fact, its inception might be attributed to a number of pieces of paper—the Versailles Treaty of 1918; the formation of the Rome-Berlin Axis in October, 1936; the Axis Anti-Comintern Pact of November, 1936 and 1937; the German Four-Year Plan of 1936; the Munich Pact of 1938; the declaration of war by Britain and France in September, 1939; or the declaration of war by the United States, December 8, 1941. Any one of these, or all of these, might be held indirectly responsible for the birth of the 454th Bomb Group. In reality, however, it was a far more simple piece of paper that activated an organization that was to combine over 5 thousand men with over 200 million dollars worth of equipment in the battles of World War II. That paper bore the heading: *Second Air Force, 22 May 1943, General Order No. 47.*

On July first, 1943, the 454th drew its first breath. It was small, but that was to be expected of a new-born babe. Swiftly it was to grow into a strategic, powerful arm of the United States Air Forces. Like an eaglet, it tested its wings, found that it could fly. In a short time it was winging its way over the Atlantic Ocean, over the important German-held targets in Italy, Austria, Bulgaria, France, Yugoslavia, Poland, Germany. This was an eaglet that was to grow into a strategic air armada, to fly 243 missions, drop 13,000 tons of high explosives, destroy over 150 primary targets. This was the 454th Bombardment Group.

Activation

Lieutenant Colonel Horace D. Aynesworth arrived at the Davis-Monthan Field, Tucson, Arizona, to assume command of the newly-activated 454th Bombardment Group. This was on the first of July, 1943. There were but a few men in the original cadre that made up the nucleus for the 454th—there were only four bombers. Throughout the hot summer, the ground echelon, under the command of Major

Ryland J. Rothschild, trained at Tucson, while the air echelon, under Aynesworth, attended the School of Applied Tactics at Orlando, Florida.

While the ground personnel at Tucson, about thirty men in each squadron, drilled and attended lectures, the air echelon of the 454th did just about the same at Orlando. The School of Applied Tactics was, of course, more intense in its training. The model crews, as they were called, attended classes from eight in the morning until five each afternoon. They learned how to navigate over strange territory, how to ditch and escape from a crippled plane, how to recognize and fire at enemy fighters, and numerous other parts that make up a combat crew's training. After two weeks of lectures, exercises, and drills at Orlando, the air echelon was ordered to a field at Pinecastle, Florida, for tactical training. From this base, hewn from the Everglade swamp region, the group's four B-24 Liberator bombers made daily missions, "bombing" Miami, Charleston, Washington, and almost every city along the Atlantic Coast. Flying ten-hour, high-altitude missions, the crews would swing out over the ocean and turn to "attack" Baltimore or Savannah, the bombardier releasing empty bomb stations over the targets.

Life at Pinecastle was endurable, but little more. Pyramidal tents housed the men and their operational headquarters. To go from one tent to another meant wading through a sea of mud and a fog of mosquitoes—it is still a matter of debate as to which of the two evils was the worse. It was not the last, however, that the 454th was to see of mud and mosquitoes—we had yet to see Italy.

The first casualty of the 454th occurred at Pinecastle. While flying a ten-hour mission, every plane ran short of fuel, and one bomber, piloted by Captain Jay T. Winburn, was forced to make a crash landing in a lake near Orlando. Two of the crew were killed—the first, but not the last, members of the 454th to give their lives in the war of all wars.



AAF Photo Courtesy McCook Daily Gazette

On July 28th, the ground echelon entrained at Tucson to arrive at McCook, Nebraska, on the 31st. On the following day, Colonel Aynesworth led the air echelon from Pinecastle to McCook, and the group began its first phase training operations as a co-ordinated team. Throughout August and September, the dusty, wind-blown plains of Nebraska echoed to the roar of 2100 horsepower engines carrying the group's heavy bombers on practice missions.

McCook was a typical mid-western town with a population of a little better than 6,000. It welcomed its country's men-in-uniform and tried to make them comfortable—or as comfortable as McCook could without going too far out of its way. Armorers, after loading practice bombs or cleaning machine guns, would look to McCook for a cool, refreshing drink, perhaps even a bottle of scotch or bourbon; McCook had only rum and wines to offer. Mechanics, after wrestling for hours with greasy engines, would look to McCook for entertainment; McCook had only one theatre and a Y. M. C. A. building. Yet, in spite of its limited facilities, McCook, after it had thrown off its mantle of western reserve, was quite compatible to its soldier-sons.

Meanwhile, the base at McCook was rapidly filling with replacements to bring the group up to authorized strength. The four lone bombers that stood like ants on the large concrete ramp were not enough to keep the rapidly-growing squadrons busy. Therefore, idle hours were plenty, and the base PX was crowded from the

THE COMMANDING OFFICER of the 454th Bombardment Group arrived at McCook, Nebraska, to be greeted by members of the group's staff and Captain Leo L. Mellon (left), commander of the base. Lieut. Colonel Aynesworth (in sun glasses) had led the air echelon from their training at Orlando, Florida, to join the group at McCook and bring the 454th into operation as a complete group for the first time since its activation.

time it opened its doors until nine in the evening when it closed. Every evening empty beer bottles piled higher and higher on the PX tables as new members of the group gathered in friendly "bull-sessions" to tell how much better their last bases had been.

When orders came on September 28th that the 454th was to leave McCook, there were a few who had found friends in the small Nebraskan town and wished to stay. For the most part, however, the group's personnel awaited eagerly the hour of our leaving—and the hour came at six o'clock that evening in a torrential down-pour of autumn rain.

The troop movement, we were told, was to be conducted in all manners of a confidential, secret troop movement. We were not to tell the townspeople that we were going, or when, or where; we were not to write home that we were leaving. Most of us at that time were comparative rookies with six or eight months service and the hush-hush atmosphere that seemed to envelope the base filled us with a feeling of awe and suspense. Still, in keeping with the Army's manner of doing things, or at least the 454th's manner of doing things, we were not surprised at the send-off that we received. A larger share of the town's population had come down to the station to wave farewell to us, and more than one of McCook's daughters were kissing their soldier-friends goodbye. Some spy in our midst had evidently informed the citizens of McCook that it would no longer

THE LINK TRAINER at McCook was one of the many sections of the base that were busily readying the group for combat flying. Lieut. Colonel Aynesworth (standing at left) inspects the training procedure as Corporal Mumby (at desk) gives instructions to the pilot seated in the trainer. With Aynesworth are the commanding officers of the group's four squadrons.



AAF Photo Courtesy McCook Daily Gazette

have the 454th on its doorstep; but what made matters more confusing was the presence of the base's eighteen-piece band which had marched through town to serenade us with martial music. The rain was depressing and uncomfortable, but we still found laughter in the farewell that we received in spite of every effort to maintain secrecy.

* * *

The rattle of wheels and the chug of the steam engine drowned out the blaring rhythms of the band as the 454th Bombardment Group left the station at McCook. At first glance, the cars in which we rode promised little comfort; in time they provided less. A consensus of opinion seemed to be that the square-wheeled box cars were originally used to transport troops during the Civil War, and our hearts held great sympathy for our forefathers that they should have to fight with equipment such as this. We had heard somewhere during our basic training that a good soldier is one who can "bitch," so we "bitched." We complained about the stuffiness of the coaches, the lack of fresh air, the dirt that rose from the track bed to invade our coach through every available crack, the lack of comfort afforded by the hard seats, the lack of sleep—in short, we ripped the railroad concern up one side and down the other. This, of course, failed to improve conditions any, but we felt better.

For three days and four nights we watched a panorama of America pass the windows of our

thirty-mile-per-hour train. Our backs ached from lack of sleep, our stomachs ached from the lack of food, our eyes ached from the lack of diversion. We counted the letters in roadside posters, counted the girls in passing towns, counted the hours and the minutes. Time went slowly, and we spent it in shuffling cards or reading old magazines. Four nights later, when we reached Charleston, South Carolina, a tired, weary, and thankful group of men cast a last reproachful look at the coffin on wheels and looked forward to a good night's sleep.

Charleston

The train pulled in to a siding bearing no station, no platform, only the simple sign: Ten-Mile Station. This was the siding that ran through the center of the Charleston Army Air Base, and it was here, at ten-mile station, that we were to end four sleepless nights and three comfortless days of riding the iron horse.

Charleston Army Air Base was a welcome sight. To be truthful, it wasn't a sight at all, in the real sense of the word—it was nearly midnight and we could distinguish no landmark or building from the ink-black sky, but in our mind's eye we pictured cots with mattresses, mess kits with food, and rest, sleep, and relaxation. Therefore, Charleston was a welcome sight.

We jumped eagerly from the train and trudged wearily in one direction and then another, waiting for the word "Halt!" when we could heed

the beckoning calls of Morpheus. It came—the most welcome word ever issued from a first sergeant's lips. "Halt!" And then, strangely enough, we did not halt; we marched on until we found a barracks or a hut or any building with a six-foot by two-foot unoccupied space—and there we slept.

Morning came bright and clear and refreshing. It was a warm autumn morning, and the sun tugged at our eyelids, calling us to task. We stretched our limbs, ate our breakfast, gathered our belongings, picked our bunk, and then went out to inspect our new home. We satisfied our curiosity concerning the base, and then asked for passes so that we could satisfy our curiosity concerning Charleston. *

Charleston Army Air Base was divided, socially and geographically, into three parts—the squadron areas, where we lived; the line, where we worked; and the base area, where we played. Of the three, the last is indubitably the most attractive. We found the PX at Charleston to be well stocked with cigarettes, malted milks, and attractive maidens. The exchange was large, comfortable, and enticing, and as the month grew shorter we would pass the PX with an empty feeling in our stomachs and an empty feeling in our pockets. For the most part, however, the PX received a flourishing trade, and egg sandwiches disappeared as fast as the ten or twelve young waitresses could make them. Across from the PX there stood the base theatre which boasted the latest movie thrillers, the latest Walt Disney creation, and a long line of waiting soldiers. The furnishings inside the theatre were not luxurious—they were not even comfortable—but any complaint would bring the reply: "Ain't ya' heard there's a war on?" and the soldier resigned himself to the hard wooden benches and the amorous screen passes of Ann Sheridan. Behind the theatre there lay the service club, an excellent place for hiding when escaping details. There were comfortable chairs, books, magazines, radio, phonograph, and a weekly dance. There were congenial hostesses. There was southern hospitality.

But often we were forced to forsake the enticing comforts of the PX, the theatre, or the service club. Often we found that there was work to be done, and, although, it seemed almost sacrilegious to work on a base so comfort-

ably equipped for pleasure, many found that *affaires militaires* required their attention, the long hours of the day and night being filled with the rattle of machine guns, the roar of engines, and the clatter of typewriters. Rumor had it that we were supposed to be training for battle—and, under the conditions, it sounded quite plausible; so, we trained. We cleaned machine guns and we fired them. We loaded bombs and we dropped them. We repaired engines and we flew missions. We were to complete our final phases of combat training at Charleston, and the road from the squadron areas to the line was crawling with men going back and forth from the planes that dotted the wide field.

But all work and no play, etc., etc. The Civil War was the only war that Americans ever took really seriously; hence, as Americans, we made certain that we would find plenty of time to play. When time allowed, or in other words quite frequently, we would take a trip to Charleston. Since the base was ten miles distant from the city, this meant that we would either catch the bus or try to catch a ride on the highway. The bus, a typical G. I. contraption, was a long, low, stuffy, crowded, uncomfortable, slow, converted moving van. Therefore, we naturally chose the highway.

Muttering thanks to our congenial host, we would step from his car in the center of Charleston after a five minute ride along the smooth, four-lane highway. On our left stood Charleston's famed Citadel, and on our right stood Charleston's largest hotel, the Francis Marion. Few of us saw the inside of the Citadel, but the Francis Marion was a favorite place to dine. From there we would travel the alcoholic route to Gamlin's, Helene Curtiss', the Wagon Wheel, the Elite; or the dance route to the USO at George and Meeting, or the Windmill; or the pleasure route to the end of a long line before one of Charleston's theatres; or the shopping route along narrow, crowded King Street. Charleston, however, was an expensive town, and a soldier and his money were soon parted; thus leaving us to ride wearily back to the base with happiness in our hearts, food and drink in our stomachs, and nothing in our pockets.

Our search for diversion, however, did not distract us from the work on hand. We worked long hours of the day and night, maintaining a

perfect operational record during our brief stay in Charleston. The mechanics and armorers and ordnance men would walk the long road down across the railroad tracks to the bombers' revetments. The sun in day was warm and refreshing, and the stars at night were peaceful and dream-inspiring, and under these skies the engines of three score of heavy bombers roared and raced and lifted the "tin birds" skyward. Armorers and gunners, ordnance men and bombardiers, mechanics and pilots, all worked together in a team, and the long, weary hours of work were rewarded by the completed training of a co-ordinated, operational bombardment group that could send its bombers into any sky over any continent.

As a matter of record, as well as to prove to ourselves that our training had been complete, we underwent a brief period of operations under simulated field conditions. This was referred to as "bivouac," and saw each squadron spend six days in the wild countryside of South Carolina. The actual accomplishments of this enterprise are still a mystery to the larger part of the group's personnel, but it was a pleasant vacation from the strict regimentation of an established army base.

JSB

Bivouac

The pup-tents were too-short. They were too low. For many of us, it was hard to believe that the army had actually bought them to use as a shelter for a normal, grown soldier, but we were finding out the hard way that such was the original intention. Stretching our bodies out in one, we found that there was an immediate decision to make—whether to let our feet stick out one end, or our heads out the other.

The wooded area was studded with pieces of supposedly waterproofed material, held up by two tent poles, and staked down with wooden pegs. An attempt to stop water from flowing through in the advent of rain was noticeable in the shape of dirt trenches that ran around the sides of the pup-tents. Men were hunched over numerous camp fires in front of their tents as they warmed their C-rations in true boy-scout style. The smoke from the fires covered the region with a heavy blanket, causing our eyes to water and giving the place a definite odor of



burning wood. There was plenty of trading going on. Joe liked meat and beans, Elmer liked hash, Willie went for the chocolate bars, and Ed was a sucker for the hard candy. No one ate the C-ration biscuits.

This was simulated battle conditions for our outfit, preparing us for the rough life ahead during our tour of overseas duty. We were forty miles from the Charleston Air Base, near a place called Walterboro, South Carolina. Just about the time we became settled at the air base, orders came through that caused our group to hop into trucks and head for the wide open spaces. Bivouac is the word they used, although after we had spent five days away from civilization we had another word for it.

Dawn, one morning in late autumn, found us sleepily preparing to leave the air base, rolling out blankets into a roll, fastening our leggings, and hurriedly washing up. Although we had been told to carry our field bags with a blanket roll tied over the top, about half the men saved themselves all this trouble by throwing everything in a barracks bag. It wasn't the G. I. way to do it, but this method served the purpose as well as, if not better than, the field pack. Later on, we didn't have this choice; it was field pack with blanket roll—or else!

The convoy of trucks hadn't traveled very far before most of the drowsy passengers were right back where they had been several hours previously—asleep. Everyone had just about fallen into a deep slumber when the six-by-sixes lumbered up to their destination, a camp site just off the dirt road. The area was about the best place in the region for a bivouac. It had a colorful floor of autumn leaves and grass, shade trees scattered throughout the countryside, and the whole surroundings suggested peace and quiet—if they'd leave us alone.

Still half asleep, we jumped from the trucks with all our equipment, including our carbines, and started the search for a suitable spot to pitch a tent. This was a two man enterprise; because each G. I. carries only half of a pup-tent, he has to depend upon his buddy to furnish the other half. Most of the warriors of the 454th finally erected something which—loosely speaking—could be called a tent. The way some of the tents were put up, though, the inhabitants would have been much dryer, warmer, and happier if they

had just given it up as a bad job and simply rolled the shelter-half around them.

The first day we ate C-rations because the mess hall hadn't been set up yet, but the next couple of days we were fed warm field rations. The chow lines wound in and out around the trees as far as the eye could see, and the men sprawled upon the soft bed of pine needles to eat the meager rations. Because of the open air, we were always hungry, ready to pounce on anything that looked or smelled like food. More than one pup-tent had a suspicious bulge in its side, evidence of a cache of twenty or thirty cans of C-ration, enough food for a week.

One of the main purposes of our little excursion into the wilds of South Carolina was so that everyone could get a chance to qualify with his weapon out on the range, located about a mile from the bivouac area. We all had one of three types of firearms—a carbine for most of us, a Thompson sub-machine gun for a section head, and a "forty-five" automatic for an officer. The automatic and machine gun range was separate from the carbine range, and the combined clatter from both fields sounded like the sound track from "All Quiet on the Western Front." "Ready on the left," the range officer would yell. "Ready on the right! Ready on the firing line! Fire!" These words seemed to catch our fancy and, for a time after that, they echoed through the camp during all hours of the day and night. We fired a certain number of rounds standing, kneeling, and sitting from the one hundred yard line, and then repeated the firing from the two hundred yard markers. Most of us qualified as marksman, sharpshooter, or expert, according to how many shots we could get into the bull's eye. Not everyone proved his accuracy with the carbine just on the rifle range, however, and several of the neighboring farmer's chickens helped to supplement our meals of C-rations.

During our stay at bivouac, the communications truck maintained contact with Charleston, and our Liberator bombers, located at the nearby Walterboro Air Base, were kept in the air at various times of the day and night, as if we were in actual combat. There seemed to be a never-ending stream of jeeps and trucks carrying crews and mechanics out to the planes, most of the jeeps stopping at the Walterboro PX for candy, ice cream, and cigarettes. Our crews were

briefed on the location of certain vital targets in the areas, and they would take-off to bomb nearby bridges, warehouses, or shipyards, which, supposedly, were in enemy hands. One plane flew over the area to photograph the encampment, the photos showing that our camouflage had been highly successful, if not completely successful.

The days and nights of bivouac passed swiftly, days spent on the range during the hottest part of the afternoon, or in the sack while the morning was still fresh and cool, nights heavy with fog which passed away like shadows at sunset as we crowded around small fires, waiting for someone to find more wood to keep the flickering embers alive. These are the memories of bivouac. We found that it was actually possible to sleep in pup-tents, that our carbines were accurate and could be depended upon, and that it was possible to live on rations from a can. In short, we learned most of the little things we'd be required to know once overseas.

The last day crept upon us, and we prepared to leave the land of ants and chiggers, starry nights, and shaded days. Tents were taken down, blankets rolled up, and all loose belongings put away. Then we turned toward the trucks which were to take us back to civilization, to a shower and clean clothes and bright lights. First, however, came the inevitable order: "All right, men. Police the area!"

FLT

* * *

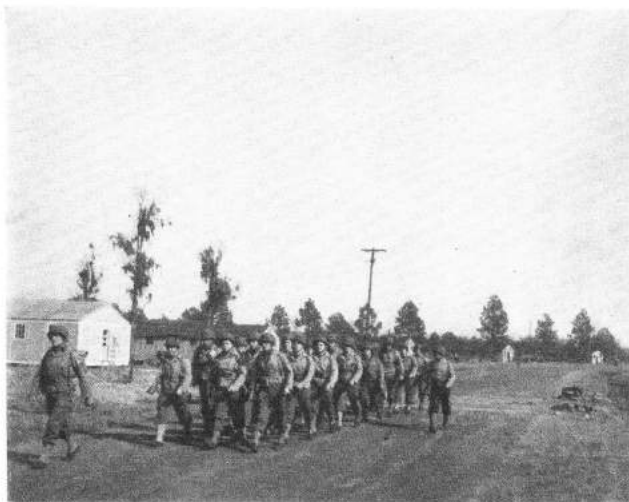
We returned to Charleston to find the base humming with activity. Wheels were turning,

gears were grinding, and everyone in general was running around like a chicken with his head cut off. Most of us had received furloughs while at Charleston, and the few who hadn't were disappointed to learn that all furloughs had been canceled. POM inspectors (preparation for overseas movement) were all over the base, prying into every nook and cranny, and asking innumerable questions. We began to wonder if we were perhaps going overseas. Soon it became definite, and we began wondering *where* we were going, instead of *if* we were going.

One month later we started moving. The group at that time had received fifty of its authorized sixty-four new B-24 H Liberators (this was the new bomber with the turret in the nose in place of the flexible, hand-held machine guns). With these, the air echelon started its flight to Mitchell Field, Long Island, for its processing before flying overseas. On December 8, 1943, the ground echelon boarded the train for Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, where it was to receive its processing. And that was the parting of the ways.

For over five months, we had trained together to perfect our organization and to make it a coordinated group of clerks, mechanics, truck drivers, pilots, and gunners. We had always had the two distinctions between the air crews and the ground crews, but we had worked together as one, each knowing that the other fellow had a job to do, each knowing that he was dependent upon the other. Now we were parting. The ground crews would go by boat, and the air

THE LAST MILE, *the mile from the squadron area to the railroad station, found the 454th Group saying farewell to Charleston and thus to the United States as we boarded the train that was to take us to Camp Patrick Henry, to Port of Embarkation, to War. With full field pack and arms, we passed in review before Colonel Aynesworth and turned toward the siding that held the waiting cars for our last major troop movement in the United States. We marched in silence, none of us thinking of the songs we used to sing while marching in basic training. We didn't feel like singing—someone murmured: Well, this is it!*





FOR AN HOUR we were to ride a train once more. This was the short trip from Camp Patrick Henry to the docks where three United States Army Transports, little Liberty ships, waited to carry the 454th overseas. We had known that eventually our outfit would be going overseas, and, now that we were going, an emotional strain and nervous tension could be read in each of our faces as we climbed into the crowded coaches. Through the dirty windows of the coaches we caught a few last glimpses of America—these scenes would have to serve our memories for nearly two years.

crews by plane, and both would meet again "Someplace over there" where they could show to all the world and, particularly, the enemy that they were a part of the best-fed, best-trained, best-equipped army in the world.

Patrick Henry

The train bearing the ground echelon pulled into the station at Camp Patrick Henry on the ninth of December, and was met by a bawling public address system which shouted orders like a 30-year first-sergeant. We carried our heavy duffel bags across the wide base to an empty barracks, fell flat on a bunk, and took a deep breath, the only deep breath which we were able to take during our five day stay at the camp.

Everything began happening at once — physical inspections, clothing issues, "shots," orientation, and, of course, details. One of the boys was singing a parody on a new song hit:

"My devotion . . .

. . . is to stay on this side of the ocean;

I don't like the sea, so if you're asking me,
Please let me stay in the States!"

He was quite surprised at the physical inspection, as was everyone else and especially those who hoped that some physical ailment would or would not eliminate them from overseas duty. We would bend over in front of one medical officer while another would look down our throats. If they didn't see each other, they would hand us a bible, and we were "in."

The camp was a warehouse of men going and coming from the theatre of War in the west. It held innumerable post exchanges, theatres, and service clubs, and a well-equipped telephone building which attracted hundreds of soldiers to a last-minute call home. Aside from the frequent details, our five-day stay at Camp Patrick Henry was a comfortable one, and then, on December fourteenth, we boarded the USAT *John Lawson*, *John Crapper*, or *Button Guinette*, the three liberty ships that were to carry the ground echelon of the 454th to Italy.

JSB

Sail Ho!

Three Liberty ships, United States Army Transports, steamed out of Hampton Roads, Virginia, on the fourteenth of December, 1943, through the strangeness and the chill of a winter evening during war. The fog clung to the thick, black water, and flotsam slid past the ships like grey ghosts.

We were human cargo aboard these three ships —we, the ground echelon of the 454th Bombardment Group. Many of us had not seen an ocean until we joined the Army, and the majority of us had never sailed the high seas in anything more realistic than a Herman Melville story. Yet there we were, weighing anchor, setting sail, and putting out to the open sea. We clung to the rail and watched the lights of the docks slip from view, heard the fog horn bellow its warning, and felt in the pit of our stomachs a

new and strange feeling, that of leaving home. It was all just as we had witnessed it on the screen a hundred times; life-preservers, helmets, carbines, heavy packs, darkness, fog, noises, men with feelings unnatural, a shipment overseas. None of us could realize the true significance, the actual meaning, the realistic being of the experience, for it was theatrically melodramatic.

By eleven that night, our three ships were away from the shoreline, slowly following one another like elephants at the circus. One of the four holds of each ship was for us, the other three for cargo. Five hundred men in one hold of a Liberty ship is comparable to fifteen people in a tudor sedan, which, it must be admitted, is not exactly comfortable. Our duffel bags were carried as cargo, but field pack, helmet, carbine, gas mask, and field bag were to be as much a part of us as our socks for the duration of the voyage. The four sides of number two hold, in which we bunked, were lined with tiers of canvas shelves, six to a tier from deck to deck; the clearance between bunks was all of eighteen inches, and the width of the aisles was two feet. Man, equipment, life-preserver, and blankets were tangled up on a spread of canvas two and a half feet wide and five and a half feet long, with eighteen inches in which to move around without digging a knee into the man above. The noise, heat, and confusion of a half a thousand men being assigned a patch of canvas in such confined quarters at least tended to momentarily alleviate that sudden pang of homesickness. Officers and non-coms were shouting and pointing and lifting and swearing, along with the buck privates. A knee flew out and caught someone on the chin, the butt of a carbine caught another in the groin, from a top bunk someone dropped a mess kit and it crashed against the steel deck below and everyone yelled, "rookie." The ladders at either side of the hold were crawling with us going up to and coming down from the deck above after having filled our lungs with fresh air and having looked to see if we could get one last glimpse of America. The hold teemed with activity and looked much as an army of ants would on moving day. The ventilation was poor, and the air was already heavy with the odor of sweat and equipment, sea smells and ship. Gradually an exhausted quiet fell over us, and a heart could almost be heard pounding.

Someone pulled off his leggings and web belt and tied them around the chain that held up his bunk; another pulled a Milky Way out of his pocket and the rustle of the wrapper could be heard plainly. The hold was lit by only a few sealed deck lights, and cigarettes could be seen glowing in the dark corners.

The center section of the hold was to be our mess hall, recreation center, and general breathing area. A dozen, high mess tables were made fast to the deck by rope guide lines; they were made of slick, polished pine, and looked new and clean standing there by themselves. One of the men, already out of his uniform and into fatigues, stood at one end of a table and shuffled a worn deck of cards; soon a group was about him and American coins and bills were placed upon the table and the game began, a game which was to continue for a long time. It was past midnight when the game broke up and the men that had been playing went to their bunks talking softly, voices rippling from bunk to bunk. "I wonder where the hell we're going." "India!" "Naw, I got it straight that the whole group is goin' to China." One of us, a nineteen-year-old, had nothing to say—he just lay there and stared at the thick, cold steel above him, probably wondering why Bell Telephone hadn't been able to make connections with his home when he had tried to call the week before to tell his Mom that he was shipping out and not to worry. The lights burned all night and kept many of us awake; so did the ump, ump, ump of the big engines behind us, and the rocking and pitching, and the strange noises, and the odd feeling in the pits of our stomachs. There were many things to keep us awake that night and perhaps the next.

* * *

We had known that eventually our outfit was going overseas; we had been preparing for it with combat training and orientation. That day in Charleston, the eighth of December, when we boarded a train with full field equipment, we knew we were going overseas. The train ride from Charleston to Camp Patrick Henry was like any troop movement in the United States, except for the unusual tension and emotional strain that was silently expressed by each of us. Many stared out the window, the poker games

were not as numerous as on other trips; the atmosphere was serious. Those of us that had not had a furlough or had not been home since we joined the army were tired and watery-eyed and hurt inside. It was easy to guess what we thought about.

Six o'clock the next morning we arrived at Patrick Henry—the staging area. The train pulled right into the camp and up to a long warehouse-looking building. The fog rolled and churned in the beams of the bright lights shining down from the eaves of the building. Inside the train we worked and struggled at our packs to get them in place. A voice crackled through a scratchy public address system: "Troop commanders report to staging area headquarters immediately. Officers in charge will fall troops out along platform in platoons of columns of four with full equipment. Rifles will be slung. Helmets worn. There will be no smoking and no talking. Carry on." The voice stopped; it had sounded hard and mean as it crashed through the grey dawn, and it meant business. The orders were rapidly carried out with precision, and we stood at parade rest beside our gear on the platform. The troop commander returned with the assigned billets, and our formation marched off the platform and down a gravel road. We glanced around as we juggled our packs and duffel bags; there was a big PX and theatre, the barracks looked OK, and the girls were walking at a business-like pace to their respective jobs.

Camp Patrick Henry was a war factory, an immense mill of fabrication and assembly. For five days we sweated out lines for vaccinations and shots, for shoes and underwear; we marched and drilled up and down the gravel roads; we GI-ed our barracks, and pulled everything out of our bags at least a dozen times for inspections. We hid unauthorized civilian shoes and silk socks during inspections, we dodged KP and drill, and we drank beer in the PX. We stood and watched prisoners-of-war for the first time while they worked on the roads in the camp. These prisoners were Italians, most of them captured during the newly-ended African campaign. They had probably killed American soldiers, they were the ones we were going to fight, and they were studied and watched and questioned by those of

us who could speak the Italian language. This brought us another step closer to the war.

The morning of the fourteenth took us out the same way that the ninth had brought us in, only this time the train consisted of day coaches and there were half as many cars. Four or five of us had to fit ourselves and our gear into one seat, a difficult but possible task. Some hung like sloths from the luggage racks, others were perched on the backs of seats, the aisles were packed, and even the wash room at the end of each car had its passengers. The sack lunches that we were given when we left camp were gone long before noon time. It consisted of two dry slices of bread converged on a splotch of jam, but it tasted good and every crumb was devoured with enthusiasm. We were too crowded and burdened to become nostalgic; it's strange, but even a soldier must be alone to dream and think and remember. When the train pulled into Newport News, Virginia, each man looked distorted and twisted from the long ride in the packed train. The train was driven out onto the pier and we detrained between it and the ship that was to carry us to the other side of the world. It wasn't much of a send-off; the Red Cross was represented by a few old ladies that walked stiffly through the platoons to pass out coffee and cookies. Everyone tried to get comfortable, without taking off packs, for the minutes before we embarked. One platoon peered through the big sliding doors of the pier and looked at the Liberty ship tied up to the dock. High on the side of the super-structure was the name: USAT John Lawson.

As the USAT John Lawson churned along in file with the USAT Button Gwinette and the USAT John Crapper, we, down deep in her belly, grew quiet, and each of us spent the rest of the night in thought. The first morning seemed to break loose with a sudden fury and movement; the sea pitched and the waves crashed against the sides of the small ship built in four and one-half days in a Virginia shipyard. The ship twisted and creaked; the chains holding the bunks to the deck squeaked, each link straining itself against the other. The three ships had run into a storm. Above deck the icy wind whistled through the rigging and super-structure, booms crashed together, snow and sleet raced the length of the deck, the seas were high and

angry. All that day the convoy in which we were going to travel was being formed, ships coming from the north and south and west, small ships, large ships, tankers, cargo ships, escort vessels, and all the while small, cunning sub-chasers churned up the sea in circles about us. By nightfall half of us were sick, terribly sick. It was too rough to go top'side, so we were sick right there in our bunks, vomiting in our helmets. The two hatches to the hold were sealed against the decks awash, and the stench in the hold soon sickened those who had so far weathered the storm. One debilitated soldier lay on his bunk fighting off nausea, while the man above him was violently sick. The choking noise he made and the sour odor that rose from the helmet soon conquered the man below and he rapidly lost hold of himself. He unbuckled his helmet from the head of his bunk, rolled over on his side so that this shoulder rubbed against the bunk of the sick man above, and dropped his face weakly into the helmet. The muscles of his stomach constricted, then completely relaxed, and he felt the hot, acetic fluid gush up into his throat. He coughed and strangled and practically turned himself inside out, then collapsed flat on his bunk, holding onto the helmet with one hand. His cheeks were hollow and a dirty green color shone through his grimy beard. He felt numb and tired, lacked the force of utterance, and that odd feeling was still in the pit of his stomach. He was not alone—the majority of us were deathly sick. Few of us had the strength to crawl out of our bunks for something to eat that day.

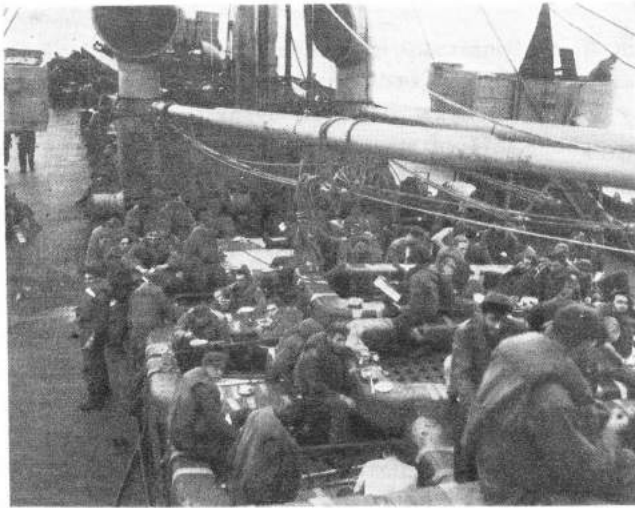
The next day, December 16th, the ocean was still wild and ruthless; during the night it had scattered the convoy and jumbled the well-planned formation, and it took the best part of the day to reassemble. That afternoon, the steward of the John Lawson, a short, fat, greasy man, opened a couple of cases of ship's crackers, and the few men that could maneuver brought armfuls back to those of us who were flat on our backs, and the salty, dry biscuits tended to hold our guts in place.

That evening one of the officers made an announcement. He stood on one of the high mess tables in the middle of the hold with two men holding his ankles to steady him. He spoke slowly: "May I have your attention a minute,

men. I know that most of you feel like Hell, but I have some information that I think you all want to hear. I opened our orders tonight, and I know our destination." Talk rippled through the bunks: "Well, here it is—India!" "India, that's a crock; I'll still bet it's China." The officer raised his hand for quiet. "Men, you will dock in Naples, Italy, in about twenty-five days. It isn't going to be an easy trip; the skipper told me that it will probably be rough most of the time. We know how you feel right now, but in a few days we'll all get our sea-legs, and, if the weather improves, we'll get up on deck for some exercise." At that, talk rippled again, and someone hissed. The major continued: "I know what you're thinking, but you don't want to be a bunch of weaklings when you get off the boat, for we are going to have a helluva lot of work to do. That's all, men." He stepped down and walked back to his quarters. There was no particular excitement when he was through. So it was Italy—so what! That was the attitude, but that night we slept more calmly.

It rained all the next morning, but by thirteen hundred the sun was drying the deck and hatch covers, and the sea had exhausted itself to a lazy roll. The hatches to the hold were broken open by the crew and the fresh, clean air, full of life and feeling, raced in and chased the stench out into the open. We lay there hardly realizing that we had passed through the storm and now could relax and release our firm hold on the bunk rail. An officer came into the middle of the hold and ordered the first two platoons of the 738th squadron up on deck—nobody was excused. We rolled disgustedly off the bunks and half-dragged ourselves up on deck, some of us helping the weaker ones—two days without eating had made some of us terribly helpless. As we stepped out onto the deck and breathed deeply, the color came back into our green-white cheeks, and the dry breeze soon evaporated the wet spots beneath our arms and left salty rings on the armpits of our shirts. We were given in-place calisthenics, not much, but enough to take the kinks out of our arms and legs. Both squadrons aboard the John Lawson were given the same routine, and after it was over many lay upon the hatches with shirts unbuttoned and blowing. We felt better.

That night at chow there was a long line to



THE C-RATION CHOW seemed to be a lot more edible when we were able to eat on deck. When the sea was calm, when the skies were clear, we would sit on the hatch covers on the little Liberty ships during meal time, the hunger in our stomachs being the only resistance to the temptation to throw the entire meal, mess-kit and all, over the side. The fresh air seemed to make us forget the taste and appearance of the powdered eggs and dehydrated potatoes, and the sheer will-to-live forced us to eat the meagre rations served aboard the Hungry John Lawson, Button Gwinnette, or John Crapper.

the mess section. The kitchen was located in the third hold, which was connected to the second by companionways at either end of the hold just beneath the staircase going above deck. The line formed at one companionway, worked around through the kitchen, and back into the hold through the other companionway. It was that night at chow that, because of the scanty meal, someone jokingly tagged our ship "the Hungry John"—we didn't realize then that the name would become so literal and pathetic with truth. It took, when all hands ate, about two or three hours for the line to pass through the kitchen, and often the same length of time to sweat out the wash line. Standing there holding onto a rope, swinging forward and then being yanked back, many of us became sick and could not wait for our food. Some men ate less than a dozen meals during the entire trip. Two meals a day was an established transport regulation, but two such small meals could not be considered adequate. When weather permitted the squadrons were assembled on deck and brought down to the mess section in platoon formation; no one excused. The water, after the second day out, was rationed to one canteen a day per man; it wasn't much, especially for those who were continually sick and whose throats burned and whose mouths always had a bad taste.

On the twentieth of December, the convoy, which now consisted of more than a hundred ships, ran headlong into another so'wester. It was an icy blast that continued for twenty-four

hours. Everyone was ordered below deck, and the hatches were locked. Nostrils dilated and pores opened as the heat became almost insufferable; those of us who weren't sick stood at the tables in the center of the hold and played black-jack or checkers, perspiration rolling from our half-naked bodies. Beads of sweat dripped from the steel plates above, and the air was thick and pungent, and seared our lungs.

The next day the ship pitched and rolled worse than at any time before; it was during the second meal that it seemed the roughest. We walked precariously, balancing a cup of hot coffee and a mess kit of creamed corned beef and boiled potatoes—the usual. One fellow slipped on a spot where someone else had spilled coffee, and down he went, cup and coffee flying in one direction and mess kit and food flying in another. He didn't regain his footing until he had slid the length of the hold, crashing into tables and knocking down other men. Standing at the tables, we held on with all our strength, and finally the weight snapped the guide lines on one table and it collapsed. Everything seemed to break loose then—other tables broke from their moorings, men fell and slid, and mess kits, coffee, and food went in all directions. It seemed hours before the mass ceased to revolve, and when it did it looked like the city dump.

Christmas Day was a gift of God—lovely, warm, and comforting. Services were held on deck, carols were sung beneath the Atlantic sun, and the strength of "Onward Christian Soldiers," seemed to push the little ships ahead faster. We

took a keener interest in our personal appearance that day. The mirror in the latrine had a crowd around it trying to shave with salt water. It wasn't very satisfactory, but we were looking ahead, rather than turning our thoughts behind us. That day flying fish broke the cobalt surf and skipped playfully alongside; a school of porpoise took the bone from the jaws of our ship and guided us onward. When the sun slipped behind the horizon that evening, it flushed the sky with a spectrum of colors few of us had experienced. And when darkness finally dropped a velvet cloak over the ocean, the phosphorus took over to light the way for us, each white cap glowing green and yellow and then fading away to make room for another. That night we slept in cosmos.

The naval gunnery crew, supplemented by some of our men, was ever on the alert for enemy aircraft, and the naval escort, omnipresent, ready to thwart a submarine attack. It was in the peaceful pink of evening that the air attacks were most likely to come. Many evenings on deck, when we were dreaming of what lay behind us and wondering what lay ahead of us, the siren sounded and we buckled our life preservers. The gunners, up on the turrets, adjusted their large turtle-like helmets and interphones, continued rotating and sweeping the skies with their clean, shiny guns. The attack by air never came, but one day in the late afternoon the family of sub-chasers dropped behind the convoy and began following one another, stern to bow, in a large circle. As the convoy drew further away from the sub-chasers, depth charges could be heard and their geysers seen billowing high into the air. The navy was at work.

New Year's Day in the middle of Atlantic—five years ago "it couldn't happen to us." Many of us wondered where we would be next New Year's; others thought only of this one; and others, the majority, thought of some New Year's past: Times Square, a little cafe off Jackson Street in New Orleans, dancing in the Mural Room of the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, the midnight show at the Orpheum in Chicago, driving along a skyline boulevard with the top down and the radio playing softly, horns, liquor, confetti, girls, and noises. We had been five hundred different places the year before, each

probably doing something different. Life had unexpected turns in its road.

On the second day of 1945 the convoy passed through the Straits of Gibraltar; it was early morning and the sun caromed off the rock as if it were a mountain of iodized salt, reflecting reds, violets, and opalescent blues. The surf breaking against its base gave it a delicate lace collar set off by a deep green frontispiece of ocean. We had entered the Mediterranean Sea. Magellan and Chris Columbus, and the Egyptians, and the Turks, and the Phoenicians had passed through these straits, gazed at the granite sentinel, and gone on to discover new worlds. The USAT John Lawson pointed her bow eastward and watched ships drop out of the convoy at Algiers and Oran. Transfixed, we leaned at her rail and stared at Africa, then turned about and stared at Spain, then turned back to survey the Black Continent again. Most of us had the feeling, many without being aware of it, that we were travelling along in the seven league boots of Richard Haliburton or on the carpet of Aladdin. These lands of desert and jungle, virginity and filth, danger and enchantment, slipped along before our eyes—it was incomprehensible to many. It seemed more like an ocean cruise aboard the Counte di Savoia—soft wisps of a salt breeze, the water so blue and calm that it made the ship seem stationary, mysterious foreign soils and people passing along as in a John Nesbitt parade.

The fifth of January found what was left of our convoy in another merciless gale that bounced the ships around as if they were toys in a child's bath. Tables, gear, men, and food crashed from one corner to another as they had before, possibly worse. For those of us who were safe and secure in our bunks, the activity in the hold took on the aspect of a Mack Sennet comedy. At twenty-two thirty the ships pulled into an ill-sheltered harbor, the bay of Bizerte, and dropped anchor to await further orders, while the USAT John Crapper went on to Taranto, Italy. The hills of sea rolled from the open Mediterranean, making the bay their vertex. Many ships drug anchor, and they all pitched and heaved, torturing their tired passengers. One ship in the convoy drug anchor during the night, to be torn apart on a reef just outside the breakwater; the men aboard that

ship were trapped like rats in a barrel, just as the men on any Liberty ship would be if it were attacked or run aground. For three days the ships rolled outside the nautical gates of Bizerte. On the fourth day, a French naval officer came aboard and piloted the John Lawson past the breakwater, through the submarine nets and harbor entrance, into an estuary, past the devastated city, and out onto the becalmed and tranquil Lake Bizerte. It was like awakening from a nightmare, weak and exhausted, and the lake mothered the ships and drew them to her bosom for protection. In utter ruin, complete and ruthless, the once beautiful city of Bizerte lay raped on the shores of the lake. We watched the people and the rubble as we passed by the city, and after our ship had dropped anchor the grim reality of the bombed and crushed city sunk deeply into us. Rusty superstructures of once proud ships protruded sickly above the water line where they had been sunk, their stacks revealing the tri-colors of many nations. In contrast to the destructional wake of battle were the hundreds of landing craft and vessels that lined the docks, waiting to be loaded and sent headlong into the fray. That night one of the men stood alone beneath the gun turret on the prow and silently watched a full moon blossom into maturity, engraving a mercury path across the sleeping waters of the lake. It reminded him of Georgian Bay on Lake Michigan.

Below deck one fellow lay on his bunk reading a much-worn Agatha Christie thriller. He closed the book and dropped it into his field pack, rolled over on his side, and withdrew a soiled handkerchief from his sweat-permeated fatigues to wipe his forehead. He replaced the handkerchief, rolled to the other side, and pulled his wallet from his pocket. He checked the calendar, courtesy of Pepsi-Cola; for twenty-four days we had been riding, starving, vomiting, dreaming, praying, laughing, crying, on this stinking ship. The voyage was taking longer than first anticipated. We were getting bunk sores, were weak and lifeless.

At eleven hundred on the ninth day of January, we were transferred to another Liberty ship, the USAT Zebulon Pike; landing barges maneuvered the switch. When the two squadrons were loaded aboard and half-way situated in the new quarters, another sluggish barge drew alongside.

We stood at the rails and looked down at the strange sight below; five hundred French Moroccan troops, known as *Goomes*, dressed in flowing burlap robes, were climbing aboard the Pike. These dark, Arab-looking natives were fearless mountain fighters. They cut off the ears of their enemy, for which they received a bonus, and a long, mean-looking knife hung at each man's side. They wore long dirty queues growing from the sides of their shaved heads, by which means they were supposedly lifted into heaven. The natives and their French officers were restricted to the section of the ship to the rear of the bridge, while our two squadrons were restricted to the forward end. Nevertheless, we, of two worlds, managed to exchange souvenirs. That evening the ships weighed anchor and churned out of the channel into the Mediterranean where we began the last leg of our journey.

There were no bunks on the Zebulon Pike, nothing but empty holds which could be entered only by a perpendicular ladder at one end. There was something, however, which definitely made up for the lack of sleeping quarters, and that was food. To anyone who had been eating regular meals the chow served aboard the Zebulon Pike that evening would not have seemed like much, but to us, half-starved soldiers of the Hungry John, it was a beautiful smorgasbord of chilled pheasant hearts, sturgeon eggs, french pastry, and sweet ambrosias. Actually it was canned vegetables and Vienna sausage, but almost as much as we could eat. Most of us were filled for the first time in many days; it didn't take a great deal of food to fill our shrunken stomachs. Most of us slept that night without that gnawing feeling in the pit of our stomachs.

We awoke the next morning as the rugged coast of Sicily was going by, and we breathed with less effort. The skipper of the ship set up a loud speaker on deck and monitored a short-wave station from New York which was broadcasting music of a popular band. We lay around deck and reverently listened, as if in church, to that which was coming from Home; we had already begun to use the phrase "back in the States . . ." The sun was hot and the air was clean and there were seven days' rations aboard that had to be consumed in the next two. It was great to be alive.

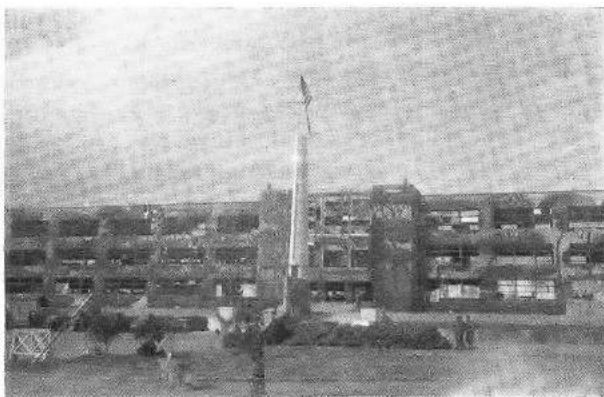
January 13, 1945, just thirty days after departing from Newport News, we tilted back our heads, lifted our unshaven faces, and squinted past the winter sun to Vesuvius, the Roman Olympus. Naples lay before us, glittering like a carved ivory necklace in the bright Italian sunlight. Vendors, carrying oranges and wine, paddled V-bottomed row boats to meet us. Harbor and naval craft raced madly about, in and out of the convoy, like busy water-bugs at meal time. We sat around the deck and drank the famed Italian vino and watched the black clouds of smoke pour from the crater atop majestic Vesuvius. That afternoon, much to our surprise, the anchor chains crunched and groaned and were drawn back into the nose of our ship, and we steamed out of the harbor. We passed the romantic isle of Capri, a rocky volcanic outcropping, and steamed northward up the coast about twenty-five miles to a small village, Pozzuli. LCI's drew alongside our ship that evening, and at twenty-thirty hours the first one of us set foot on an oil and tar-soaked beach. Our two squadrons were formed on a road above the beach, roll was taken, and then we were allowed to roam around until transportation arrived. The entire scene would have needed no retouching to be used for a Hollywood set; it had just rained, and the cobble-stoned streets glistened beneath a moon half obscured by silver-grey clouds; Italian children were running about, scantily clad, asking for cigarettes and candy; a bottle of red wine was passed around, compliments of the neighboring farmer and his wife. At four-thirty in the morning the trucks from the staging area arrived, and we, by then almost frozen, got up from the cold streets, slipped on

our packs, and climbed aboard. The heavy six-by-six trucks pulled out onto the paved road, one behind the other, and started weaving and dodging back and forth, trying to avoid the bomb craters and rubble. The monstrous artillery pieces firing at the front, not twenty miles distant, made dull, sad, abdominal noises. A flare burst above us and slowly floated to earth lighting up the entire countryside. It was all so real that we could no longer pretend—we were in a war up to our necks.

As the morning sky slowly turned from black to cool grey, the trucks turned in at the Peninsula Base Section Staging Area No. 1, formerly the Collegio di Ciano, a school built by the Bank of Naples for orphans. The buildings of the university had once been imposing and modern, but the white plaster and marble was now sloppily covered with camouflage paint, a vestige of the German occupation of the buildings as a headquarters; and the windows were all broken, and the plaster was falling, and the war had unmistakably been to Collegio di Ciano. Climbing off the trucks, we were marched past the huge administration building to our quarters which were large, empty, dark, cold classrooms. The enormous rooms, marble floored and pillared, were dead with silence, even after we entered them, and the wind raced through one side, swept across the floor, and out the other side. Exhausted, we unrolled our two blankets and curled up on the floor for a few, cold, uncomfortable hours.

For five days we slept on those floors, ate warmed C rations, and visited the bombed city of Bagnoli, which was just outside the gates of

THE COLLEGIO DI CIANO, built by the Bank of Naples as a gift to the city, was originally intended to be a school for underprivileged children. Upon completion of the building, however, the German army took it over as a training center. The camouflage job represented crudely painted trees and houses that blended into the surrounding countryside to present the appearance of a peaceful landscape.



the camp. When the location of our base had been established, we left Bagnoli, some by train that swept south, at the rate of five kilometers an hour, through Taranto, Brindisi, Bari, Barletta, and Margurieta di Savoia, where we left the Adriatic coastline and rode inland for twenty-five miles to Cerignola, and some by truck which took the long, cold route through Casserta, Benevento, and Foggia. Cerignola, the metropolis of thirty thousand, lice ridden, semi-Fascists, was to be our main tie with Italian civilization, for our base, San Giovanni, was located about six miles from the town. That afternoon we received our first mail call in over a month: Christmas Cards, New Year's greetings, long letters from Moms, letters filled with anticipation and worry and cardio-bravery.

The next day we moved to San Giovanni air base, which was to be our permanent field. It was a gently rolling plateau with double runways hewn through the farmland by the engineers. We settled down beneath the olive trees to prepare the base for our bombers and our flyers, to prepare for war.

RLL

By Air

On the twenty-sixth of January, 1944, our bombers circled the field, lowered their landing gear, and settled down on Italian soil. Their flight from America to Italy had been long, tiring, and interesting for the airmen. The routes taken by the group's Liberators during their flights varied slightly, but, for the most part, their stops were essentially the same. This is the flight, as told by T/Sgt. Eugene L. Bull, of Miss America, a plane which later became one of the group's distinguished bombers.

B-24, model H, number 312, left Charleston on the eleventh of December, 1943, and pointed its nose towards Mitchell Field, New York, where its crew was to receive processing before going overseas. Piloted by Captain McAllister of the 739th squadron, 312, as yet, had no name, and the crew was still arguing over a name for their baby. After seven days of processing at Mitchell Field and seven nights of gaiety at New York City, the crew climbed back aboard 312, and waved farewell to New York, and still had no name for their bomber. Many of the

other Liberators had received their christening at Mitchell Field. One in particular, named after a Broadway hit, had received a gala celebration when Moss Hart christened the plane *Winged Victory*, the name of his latest stage success.

On the 18th of December, 312 reached Morrison Field, Florida, where the crew underwent another physical inspection. Petty girls were being painted on the fuselages of other Liberators that dotted the field, as their crews named the bombers *The Pied Piper*, *Miss U*, *Nine Old Men*, *Rough Cob*, *Hairless Joe*. Still, when 312 left Florida on the twentieth, she had no name. McAllister headed the bomber towards the Isle of Trinidad, where they were to stay overnight, and the crew gathered by the waist windows, sweating out a last glimpse of the United States.

From Trinidad, 312 flew a perilous path over dense South American jungles to Belem, Brazil, for another overnight stay. When the crew climbed back aboard 312, they had full gas tanks, a South American banana monkey, and still no name. But unforeseen events cast their shadow when waist gunner John McGinley muttered: "God, I miss America already."

From Belem, 312 flew an eight-hour south-east course to Natal, Brazil, their fifth ATC stop during their route overseas. On the twenty-second of December, 312 and her crew arrived at Natal, but, because of the immense ATC traffic handled by the air base, it was not until New Year's Eve that they were able to leave. Christmas at Natal was quite unlike any Christmas that 312's crew had ever seen. There was a fine Christmas dinner, with turkey, ice cream, and Brazilian beer, but there was still something lacking. Nelson Eddy, returning from an overseas tour with the USO, led the singing of Christmas carols, but it was still not Christmas to the many crews whose many odd types of aircraft dotted the wide airfield. It was just another day, with a bit more fanfare than usual. The warm Brazilian sun enticed the crews to a few hours on the beach, and the cool, windy nights hurried the airmen to bed. But Christmas had been celebrated at Natal, and Natal therefore reminded them of Christmas, and Christmas reminded them of home. So it was that 312 climbed into the skies a few minutes before midnight on the thirty-first of December, her crew

trying to forget Christmas and trying to remember the war.

The coming of New Year's found 312 a few miles past the South American coast and heading towards the Black Continent. On her side was a freshly painted reproduction of a Varga girl, and above this was the lettering *Miss America 1944*. Under the brush of Lieutenant Bobinsky, the bombardier, a name and a symbol had been emblazoned on the fuselage of the fighting lady. She was christened on New Year's Eve, and reflected the thoughts of the crew members on that special evening: "God, I miss America already."

New Year's dinner was held at Dakar, South Africa, after a nine-hour flight across the waters of the south Atlantic. The dinner was very much similar to the Christmas dinner at Natal, but wine seemed to flow more freely in Dakar. Miss America was overseas now, and her crew had reason to celebrate, to drown their thoughts in Bacchian beverages. From Dakar, Miss America flew to the cold mountain base at Maraketch, Africa, and from there to Oudna, Tunisia, making an overnight stop at Bone, Tunisia, when bad weather forced her to seek refuge at the British base there.

Miss America arrived at Oudna on the fourth day of the New Year, and from then until the twenty-seventh her crew was primarily occupied in flying practice missions while waiting for the ground-crews to establish their base in Italy. The base at Oudna was a tent city, and an occasional pass to Tunis was a welcome relief from the monotony of the camp. For that matter, there wasn't much to do in Tunis, either, but it was interesting to study the trademarks of war in the bomb-torn village. Back at the base, when planes were grounded, the airmen of the 454th Bombardment Group amused themselves with reading, letter-writing, poker-playing, or drinking, but that, too, soon became tiring, and it was a welcome day, three weeks later, when the group's bombers rose into the skies and headed northward to Italy, the majority of the planes leaving Tunis on the twenty-sixth, Miss America leaving on the twenty-seventh.

Miss America circled the field while her crew gazed down upon two black landing strips, swarms of tents, and two or three buildings. Then pilot McAllister lowered the landing gear

FEBRUARY, 1944

and introduced Miss America to the runway on which she was to land after returning from 133 missions against strategic German-held targets in Europe. Miss America took the landing smoothly, and taxied to her revetment. This was her home; this was her base from which she and over three score of her sisters were to fly over 7,000 sorties to destroy the powers of totalitarianism and tyranny. The 454th Bombardment Group was intact, in operation, in combat.

* * *

The World

In February of 1944, the Allied Armies in Italy were still being held at Cassino in what was to become one of the toughest campaigns of World War II. At the same time, Allied troops captured Solomon and Caroline islands, while the Japs continued a drive through Burma to overrun British positions. During this month, Japan announced that her draft had been extended to include all men from the ages of twelve to sixty. And back in the States headlines were made by congressmen bickering over whether or not the soldier should vote in the coming elections, and by Charlie Chaplin who was charged by Joan Barry as being the father of her illegitimate child.

The Group

In February of 1944, the group flew over 100 sorties, representing five missions, against four targets in Italy and one target in Yugoslavia. The first target for the 454th was the airdrome at Orvieto, Italy. This, our first actual taste of combat flying, was heralded by the group's personnel who lined the taxi-strips to watch the return of the heavy Liberator bombers. There was no flak during this mission, and no enemy fighter opposition; in short, it was a milk-run, but it was our first combat mission, and hundreds cheered the return of the bombers that were now veterans of tactical bombardment. On the fourteenth of February, the target was the marshalling yard at Arezzo, Italy, followed by an attack on the railroad bridge at Cecina on



SAN GIOVANNI AIRFIELD, *as seen from the 737th Squadron, presents a panoramic picture of activity*

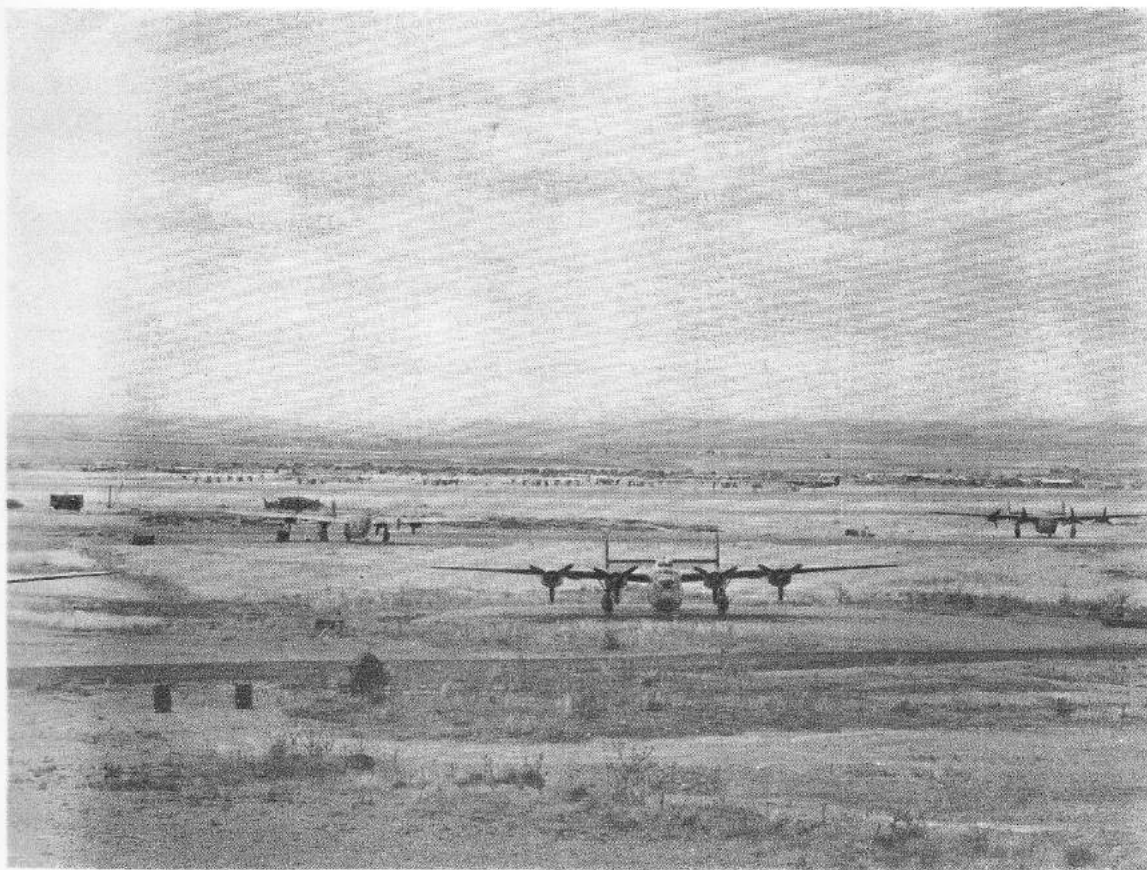
the sixteenth. Six days later our bombers took to the skies once more to bomb the harbor facilities at Sibenik, Yugoslavia, and, two days after that, on the twenty-fifth, we bombed the marshalling yards at Fiume, Italy. We had flown our first month of combat; this was the test of training. For the most part, the five missions during February were milk-runs, but one mission resulted in the loss of six of our bombers when enemy fighters attacked the formation over Fiume. Nine of the Nazi pilots were shot down by our alert gunners, but there was little elation over this victory. We had lost six bombers; we had lost sixty men; we had lost our carefree attitude. We settled down to fight a war that wasn't going to be all milk-runs.

Transition

APO 520—we had received our new number. Our long crossing was now but a memory—gone were the long nights of half-waiting, half-

sleeping on the magnificent, but uncomfortable, marble floors of Ciano College, gone was our long and desolate trip through narrow streets filled with debris, wizened peasants, half-naked children covered with dirt of undefinable color and insects of various phylums, gone were the reverberant echoes of trucks rumbling through innumerable "one-donkey" towns, gone were the shrieks of meshing gears of trucks winding and climbing range after range of mountains, gone was APO 9179. We had arrived at San Giovanni Field, Cerignola, Italy, on the once peaceful plains of Foggia, the country where there once ruled Julius Caesar who lived for the same purpose—to wage war and emerge victorious. Caesar came with his legions; we came with our Liberators. Now, with apologies to Caesar and his Gaelic Wars, all of Foggia is divided into three parts—the airfields, the airfields, and the airfields. Of these we were given one.

When we first came to San Giovanni Field, it



on a field preparing for battle and a picture of serenity on a field resting after a battle of the skies.

was a miserable and discouraging sight. It was a part of a nobleman's large farm, but, since the war, the fields had been given back to nature. The few olive trees were gnarled and twisted from neglect; our future roads were cow paths overgrown with weeds and thistles; our only buildings were a wine cellar and a stable. We were five miles from Cerignola, the nearest Italian town, and, outside of that, the entire countryside was a replica of our small niche. With the calm Adriatic to the east of us and snow-capped mountains to our west, we had arrived at the place designated to be our home for a rumorful length of time. As a home, there was little that could be said for it, but eighteen months stay there was to see many changes in the wild countryside where we first pitched our tents.

Our first concern, of course, was the housing problem. This was to grow from pup-tents to comparative mansions in the space of our stay

overseas. The evolution of the homes was slow, but steady. It started at San Giovanni the first evening that the ground members pitched pup-tents beneath the drab winter skies so as to save what few pyramidal tents we had for the men who were to fly each day in the heavy bombers that were on their way from Oudna. We had learned at bivouac just what sleeping in a pup-tent meant, but bivouac was under almost ideal conditions. There was none of the cold, biting winter air, none of the deep, mucilaginous mud, none of the incessant raging rains, that plagued San Giovanni in the early months of the 454th's occupation of the pasture land.

Some, to escape the elements that would not yield to the thin canvas of a shelter-half, dug fox-holes and covered them with pieces of canvas or pieces of wrecked airplanes. These small underground homes grew like tapeworms, and soon extended into spacious room with accommodations for four or more men. One such deluxe

fox-hole in the 739th squadron grew to fantastic proportions to include a kitchen with hot and cold running water, a living room with tables, chairs, and a bar, and a bedroom with four comfortable bunks for its occupants.

Slowly, sixteen-foot pyramidal tents began to dot the squadron areas as we left the cramped pup-tents and moved into the more comfortable six-man tents. But these tents brought additional problems. We had the homes; now we needed the furniture. And the weatherman was still to be reckoned with.

Our first step was a bed. The evolution of the bed in our encampment is a tribute to American ingenuity. It started with a mattress cover filled with straw. Caesar's legions in the same encampment would probably have marveled at the tents alone, but we came from a nation that was accustomed to clean sheets and inner-spring mattresses. We had Caesar's war thrust upon us, but we wouldn't accept his mode of living. From the mattresses, there arose the desire to sleep above the ground, and salvaged wood supplied bunks on which to lay the straw bundles. The next step in the evolution was to soften the wood, and, since this was impossible, we replaced the wooden bottoms of our beds with something softer—rope or metal bands woven in and out across the braces. Things were beginning to look better—and feel better. Finally we came to the mark of a rough camp in the States, but an excellent camp overseas; canvas cots were distributed to the men of the group. We tore up the wooden beds and built tables and chairs, and slept in comfort.

Our next consideration was the Italian weather. Despite the efforts of the Italian Chamber of Commerce, "Sunny Italy" can become surprisingly cold, as we discovered. We needed protection from the icy, winter winds, and, as our tents went up, so did our stoves. These stoves were unlike anything we had ever imagined before, and unlike anything we hope to see again. Some were simple, but for the most part they resembled something similar to a Rube Goldberg invention. The stove itself was either a five-gallon oil can, or half of a fifty-gallon drum. The stove pipes were iron water mains when available, or number-ten tin cans, courtesy of the mess hall, wired together to form an outlet for the heavy smoke. Fuel was a major prob-

lem; wood and coal were practically non-existent, so dieselite or gasoline was our only resort. This was piped in from a tank outside the tent by aluminum tubing salvaged from a wrecked plane. And thus was inaugurated the "Liberator drip system" stove, but not without research comparable to Curie's search for radium. The first stoves would spout, belch, clog, and make weird noises—sometimes even explode. Soon, however, these flashbacks to the Cocoanut Grove holocaust ceased, and Dante's *Inferno* became just literature once again. We were quite successful with the "drip system" stove, and, as the novices learned the procedure from the more veteran stove-builders, the loss of tentage decreased and fires ceased to raze the areas.

The progress that the base was making, its transition, could easily be seen from the air, and returning combat crews, after destroying buildings in German-held Europe, would marvel at the increase of buildings in American-held San Giovanni. No doubt the Jerry observation plane that paid occasional visits to our field saw the construction of our base, too, and Axis Sally, on her radio program, once surprised us by congratulating the 737th squadron on its new mess hall. The majority of the buildings at San Giovanni were constructed of the Italian tufa block, covered with a thin coat of plaster that required almost monthly recoating. This method of construction was not the best for a strong, weather-proof building, but it sufficed for the short time we were to stay at the base. Perhaps, some of the buildings, if cared for by the Italians, will last a decade, but hardly any longer.

The four squadrons were each busily engaged in their separate plans of building. The 736th squadron started its construction on the grassy slope of a hill. A Nisson hut was its first erection, and this was to serve as the squadron's orderly room during the eighteen months at San Giovanni. After this came a prefabricated operations building, a tufa-block mess hall, and, finally, an enlisted men's club. The 737th squadron started with nothing more than the 736th, but when we left Cerignola, the squadron had a tufa-block orderly room and EM club, mess hall, operations building, and ordnance-armament shack. The 738th squadron went through the same renaissance as did the 737th. Their first construction was the orderly room and operations building.

MARCH, 1944

The mess hall had second priority, and this was followed by a number of smaller buildings until finally, in February, 1945, the enlisted men's club was completed. The fourth squadron of the group, the 739th, was blessed from the start by two buildings which had been built by the Italians some years prior to our occupation. One of these was a long, low, narrow stable, which, with reconversion, was to house the commanding officer's quarters, the S-2 office, orderly room, the mess hall, barber shop, PX, ordnance office, and communications section. The second building, a former storage barn, was to become the squadron's operations headquarters. In addition to these, the squadron erected a tufa-block officer's mess and an enlisted men's club. Slowly, but surely, San Giovanni airfield was turning into a veritable village of buildings and structures.

Group headquarters was busily remodeling again and again that wine cellar that was to serve as the hub of the group's turning wheel. Under the tall slender trees that surrounded the building, numerous smaller buildings were being erected to serve as housing for special service, radar and communications, photo lab, supply, Red Cross donut shack, operations, and weather sections. Inside the large wine cellar, divisions and subdivisions were erected for S-1, S-2, and S-4, with separate offices for the commanding officer, air inspector, public relations office, courts and boards, and armament and ordnance. At the same time, group was building the officer's club in the area behind the 739th stable.

In the meantime the line was being studded with buildings and shacks for the various sections whose main line of occupation found them nursing the heavy bombers at all hours of the day and night. Armament shacks and ordnance huts and engineering buildings and tech supply houses were springing up in every squadron section with the rapidity of rabbits on the loose. Some crew chiefs were building separate huts beside each revetment in which to store the tools and spare parts for the individual airplanes. American ingenuity, and the desire for comfort, was rapidly turning the desolate field into a teeming city.

Even tents were undergoing various processes of remodeling and interior decorating. When the group flew frag missions, the ground and combat

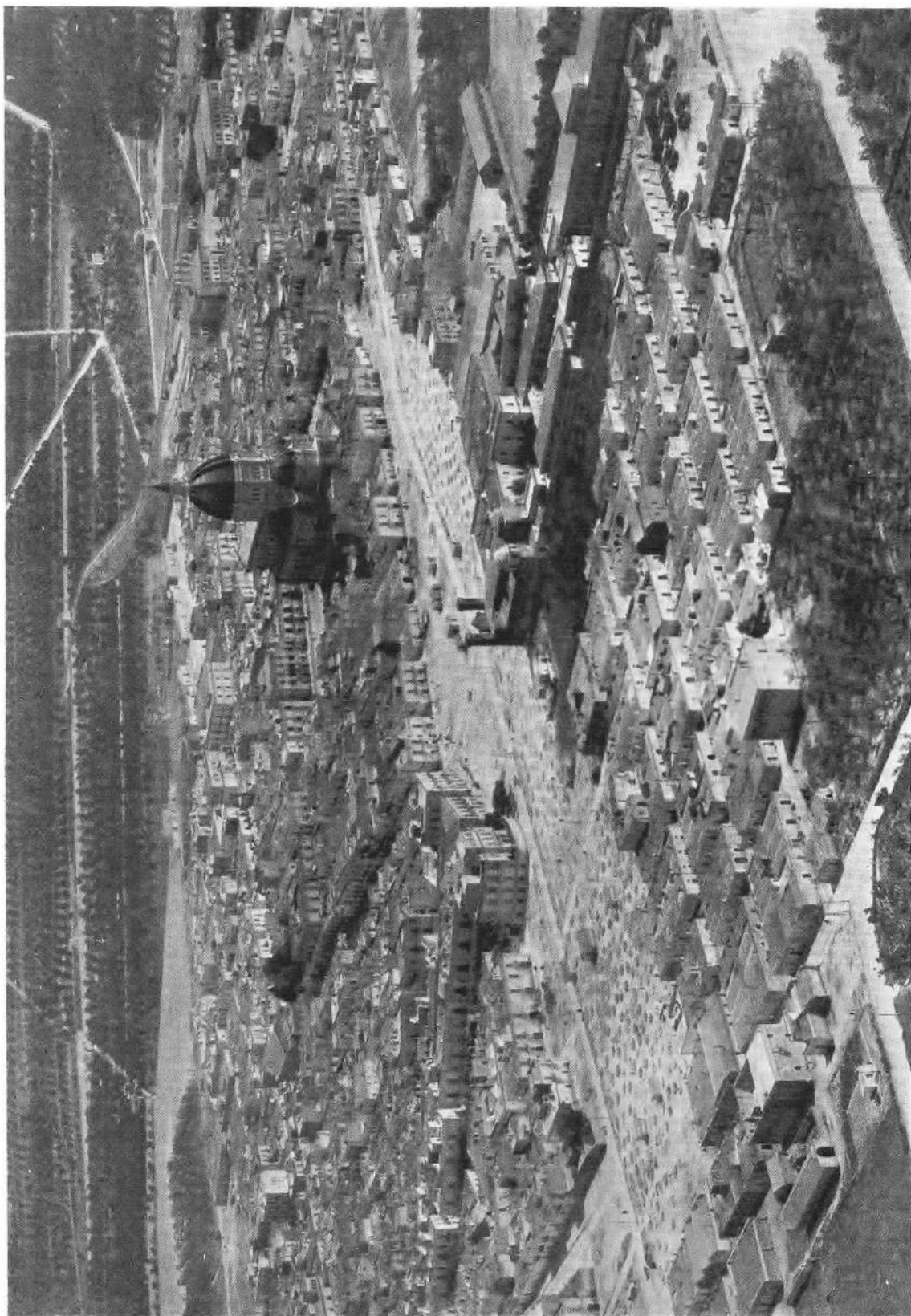
crews would clamor for the wooden boxes that housed the fragmentation clusters. These frag bomb boxes are one of the most useful articles to the air corps man overseas; they serve as foot lockers, tables, chairs, clothes cabinets, filing cases, and even in the construction of some of our ultra-modern latrines. These four-foot wooden boxes were used to build extensions on the tents, some tents almost doubling their floor space by the construction of wooden sides. The radar boys, who shipped into the group in spring of 1944, were regular "eager beavers" at building comfortable quarters, and their tents were remodeled with surprising speed, ingenuity, and practicality.

Throughout our stay in Italy, the group was constantly changing, remodeling, rebuilding. When we turned to leave the base, eighteen months later, the immense building plans suddenly dawned upon us as comparable to a federal project. Where there once had been nothing but two large runways and a few cowpaths, there was now long, wide roads, winding in and out among a city of buildings that were constructed to serve as comfortable housing quarters for the various functions of a bombardment group and its men. We had started with hundreds of pup-tents and candlelight; we ended our stay at San Giovanni with over thirty new buildings and electric power.

* * *

The World

March found Russia continuing her drive westward with only thirty-five miles between her and the Czech border. In Italy a crisis arose over the stalemate at Anzio and Cassino, but people were more interested in the eruption of Vesuvius. In the Pacific area, Bougainville was the scene of a terrific battle for control of the Solomon Islands, and bombers destroyed an entire Jap convoy in a four-day battle off New Guinea. In South America, Argentina once again irked the United States by banning the United Press from gathering or distributing news items in that pro-Fascist South American country, and back in the States headlines were made by



Cerignola, Italy, 1944

America's apology for the accidental bombing of Switzerland, by Boston's banning of *Strange Fruit*, and by the popularity of a zany ditty, *Mairzy Doats*.

The Group

March saw the 454th fly almost 300 sorties for a total of thirteen missions. February had taught us the grim realities of the aerial war against the German strongholds of Europe, so, instead of cheering the return of our bombers, we would sweat them out quietly, eagerly, hoping for their safety. The crew chiefs on the various Liberators began to take a more personal interest in their "babies," and eleven crew chiefs waited in vain by the empty revetments for bombers that did not return. The Luftwaffe had begun to take a little more interest in the 454th, and although they shot down eleven of our bombers during March, it cost them seventeen of their own planes. Our targets that month were primarily in Italy, supporting the ground troops in their drive northward. One target will always live in history as the *Battle of Cassino*, a little town north of Naples where the German army had succeeded in stopping the swift advance of the Fifth Army. During that day, the ninth of March, the American troops pulled back from Cassino while thousands of fighters, medium bombers, and heavy bombers, of the 12th and 15th Air Forces, blasted the small Italian village into oblivion. This great softening-up blow by the Air Force weakened the German hold on Cassino, but still it was not until two months later that the infantry was able to enter the ruined town. During March, we also flew our first mission over the industrial area of Vienna, Austria. There was little flak on this mission, but in time Vienna was to become one of our hottest targets. One of the missions during March resulted in the loss of *Winged Victory*, one of the group's most celebrated bombers. Our last target in March was the industrial center of Sofia, Bulgaria, which may be remembered as the starting point of the first World War. But March was the breaking point of the Italian winter, and the coming months were to see more and more planes of the 454th take to the skies and head towards targets in Italy, Rumania, France, Austria, Germany.

JSB

Cerignola

I discovered Cerignola on a twelve hour pass; I discovered Italy and the Italian people on that same pass. It was a discovery I had been anticipating, but one in which I was very disappointed, disillusioned. To explain, in word pictures, the Italian country and its people to one who has not been there would be very difficult; for the utter destitution and degeneracy has passed the state of human description. It is a country where a man's family are only a price to him, where women sell their souls to the conqueror, where children travel in gangs for self-protection, where Pride and Self-Respect are meaningless words of a pre-war day.

We hadn't been at San Giovanni Air Base very long when we were granted passes during off-duty hours—it was considered to be a change, a relaxation period, a chance to see the country. I took advantage of the first opportunity and checked out of the Orderly Room at ten-hundred hours for the city of Cerignola. I thumbed a ride along the dusty road on a water truck going into town for a refill. The five miles were hot and dusty, but the green fields, pocked with opium poppies, the silver-grey olive trees, and the peasant shambles that lay quietly along the side roads sparked the ride with interest and European atmosphere, country style. I hopped from the truck at the edge of town so that I might walk slowly to the center, and in that way miss nothing. I was hungry to know and understand these people of a foreign land, their habits, customs, and attitude toward the American soldier. The streets of the town were cobbled with chunks of yellow-brown stone; they were crowned high for drainage, and the sidewalks were narrow and high. The buildings that lined the streets were old and neglected, a balcony protruding like a belligerent chin from each shuttered window. Down the side street to my left a bent old man patiently turned a crudely hewn wheel, spinning dirty hemp into rope. A group of children played about him, throwing rocks and shouting at him, but he kept turning and looking down at his bare feet without noticing. I came to a turn in the main street and around it the town opened before me. The buildings on either side of the paved avenue housed shops of many descriptions; the theater

down three blocks and to the left of the piazza; the street vendors with their two-wheeled carts up the road to the right; the market area lined with blossoming trees; and, farther down, the cathedral. It was the cathedral which made it all seem so strange, this beautiful marble and granite structure, with its blue slate dome, rising magnificently out of the filth and corruption of the town.

I walked towards the large square in which this Roman Church rose, the closer to it I came the more dominating it became. I strode in the direction of the wide steps at its base, hesitating before an enormous granite fountain. The small amount of rain water that had collected in its basin was green with contamination, yet a half-dozen youngsters were playing in it. One of them yelled at me, "Hey Joe, cigarette?" I turned, he yelled again, something in Italian, but I walked towards the wide steps of the cathedral. A little girl, her black hair dull and matted, bent forward picking at a large, infested scab on her ankle; her thin cotton dress had been patched and mended, but was torn at the shoulders and waist. Her thin legs, swollen at the joints, were splotted blue and red; her feet, covered with filth, rested firmly against the cold marble steps. Stunned, I stood there and studied her. She looked up, the sores about her nostrils and mouth were running; she smiled painfully, "Caramella, Joe?" "I think maybe I can find something," I said and reached into my pocket to pull out a package of Lifesavers. With that gesture I was mobbed. Children were running from all directions, gathering about me with uplifted faces and hands, straining to get a little of what I had to offer. I handed the package to the small girl and opened the massive, oaken door to the cathedral. I was awed by its beautiful interior, the tall columns of polished green and brown marble, the mosaic floor, the ornate gold leaf altar at the end, and the delicate panes of alabaster which transformed the sunlight into warm, brown shafts of light that bathed the floor and opposite walls. I was particularly aware of the absence of pews and chairs, it seemed to accentuate the austerity and emptiness of the place. A small woman in black, head covered, was moving the length of the church on her knees, eyes directed on the shining cross at the altar, hands clasped in prayer. A few

civilians were kneeling at the prayer rail, and an Italian soldier, hands behind his back, stood before one of the small shrines studying a huge painting of the crucifixion of Peter. A Gregorian chant, originating from behind the altar, filled the huge cathedral with a cold morbidity. A young, well-dressed man offered to guide me through the cathedral for a nominal fee or a few cigarettes, I asked the way to the rotunda and gave him a cigarette. I climbed the steep circular staircase to the cupola and from there I could see all of Cerignola and the softly sloping hills of the countryside. From that height the town looked orderly and the tiled roofs and rustic chimneys looked delicate and picturesque. Army trucks and soldiers could be seen down the main street; water-carts, drawn by diminutive donkeys, nimbly picked their way through the narrow alleys; and the complete scene was a movie lot in Hollywood. A flock of white, powder pigeons settled on the Piazza below and walked stiltedly among the crowd, and brown swallows maneuvered graceful figure-eights and chandelles over the fountain. The buildings tapered off in size from the large ones in the center of town to the poor hovels on the outskirts, small roads and paths leading away from the town in spider-web pattern. I turned and walked back down the circular stairway and out onto the street. I had failed to grasp the significance of this fabulous and well-kept cathedral in the midst of such poverty and want.

I sauntered down a side street, children, begging for candy and cigarettes, following me as if I had been the Piper of Hamelin. One woman, kneeling in front of her door, pounded barley with a crude stick, another stepped out onto the sidewalk and heaved a bucket of garbage onto the street, another tossed a handful of dried corn to a few sick chickens in a coop. Dogs, chickens, pigs, and children ran in and out of the doorways that lined the street. Children were all about, some bloated, some thin, some dragging paralyzed limbs, all sickly and ragged and dirty. A young woman sat on a wicker chair by her door, an older one bent over her moving dry, withered hands through her hair clicking her nails on the typhus-carrying lice. A cart came down the alley and I stepped up on the sidewalk to let it pass; it was loaded with hand-made water barrels, and the driver stopped at each

house to fill the pottery jugs. A little boy hesitated in the shadow of the cart's big wheel and urinated against the spokes. I walked on to the next block and stepped into a building which had a sign on the door, "In Bounds—Approved For Allied Troops." I ordered a glass of cognac, smoked a cigarette, and watched the family move about, yelling at one another, waving arms, and spitting on the floor. I looked up on the wall at a small shrine, with a candle burning weakly at its base; I wondered what it meant to these baseless people. The father sat down at the table beside me, took a cigarette from the pack I had laid down, and asked in half-English-half-Italian whether I desired the company of his daughter for the price of two dollars. She was standing between parted curtains, her face was that of a fourteen year old girl, but her large breasts and swollen belly revealed her profession. I finished the cognac and left.

The stores? Well, Cerignola didn't really have any stores; it had shops. Not like the ones we have at home—they didn't have anything like that even before the war. The meat shop for instance was almost bare, nothing but tripe, hog meat, horse meat, including the muzzle and jaws, and chickens hung from hooks on the wall, and flies touched everything. There were many wine shops and cheap jewelry shops where a GI could get a Cameo for ten or fifteen dollars. There were a few clothing stores, but the prices were exorbitant, forty dollars for a poorly made pair of shoes.

The Red Cross Club was the only clean building in Cerignola. It was a large apartment house

which had been redecorated and outfitted with a Snack Bar for coffee and cookies, a reading and writing room, music room, game room, small theater, showers, and the Field Directors office for consultation periods. It was a Stateside contact, someplace to go when the town seemed dull.

About six that evening I left the Red Cross and forced my way out into the mass of humanity that was milling about. There were many more people on the street than earlier in the afternoon. Men, young and old, stood in large groups on every corner, their capes pulled high around their faces as protection against the chill that had dropped upon the town. They were probably deeply, seriously engrossed in discussions on the latest black market prices and the advantages of communism against fascism; yes, many were still loyal fascists, but the Soviet Socialist Republic was taking hold of these unstable, disorganized people. Talking with their hands and beautiful tongue they, no doubt, also spoke of the American. Their sun-hardened, wrinkled faces were stern, but their black eyes glistened; their worn capes told of better days and their empty stomachs made them a serious threat to the Allied Military Government.

In the middle of the block a thin little boy, dressed in shorts and wearing an Army cap, stopped me. "Hey Joe," he said, "Want to eat?" He hung onto my coatsleeve, "Vera guda spagett', eggs ana chips, plenta vino!" He put the emphasis on the vino. He led me up the next alley; it was getting dark and the building cast grotesque shadows against the street; I could

BACK AT THE BASE after a day in town, the flickering light of a kerosene lamp lights the page that starts with the simple phrase "Dear Mom"—a letter home to tell of the little town of Cerignola, to tell of the day's mission to Vienna, to say that everything is fine and her son is healthy, to ask for a package of cheese and crackers and cookies. "Cerignola is a strange town, Mom, nothing like America—"



hear the clicking echo of a cart in the next block, tiny hoofs hitting the cobbles. Finally, he turned into a dark doorway and up a narrow staircase to the third floor where he knocked; I knew this place wasn't "In Bounds." A young woman opened the door and led me into the kitchen where I sat down at a table covered with a torn oilcloth. I ordered "eggs and chips" and a glass of white wine. Her countenance was chalk white and expressionless as she broke some twigs into the hearth and lit them. She placed a greasy skillet on the grill and dropped a couple of eggs and a few pea-sized chips of potato into it. I didn't enjoy the meal—the bread was coarse and black, and the eggs and potatoes, fried in olive oil, had a queer taste. As I finished my glass of wine the young woman's brood trailed in, one behind another, four small girls and two boys, and she was heavy with her seventh child. At one time Il Duce had paid her a bonus for each child, and an extra amount if it were a boy. Now, though, she was having a difficult time feeding her children, for her husband was in a concentration camp where he had been for two years.

I walked the streets for an hour, the dark lanes and alleys completely void of any illumination. The streets were deserted, except for a few soldiers standing on the corners waiting for a ride back to camp. Great iron doors were pulled down over the shop fronts and the tables and chairs of the sidewalk cafe had been taken inside. Two cats slithered across the street in front of me and disappeared in the shadows. Adonkey's bray vibrated and echoed between the stone buildings and a child screamed behind closed shutters from a third floor apartment. The streets were becoming wet with dew, the air was cold and mysteriously damp, and the stars, against the blue sky, looked just the same as they did in San Antonio, London, Cape Horn, Stalingrad, and Nagasaki. An old man on crutches stopped, struck a match which made his dark face glow for a moment as he lit his pipe, and then clipped on up the street. This was Cerignola at night, and Cerignola at night was Italy at War.

I was ready to head back to camp; I was nauseated by the people in their seemingly contented poverty; I tasted their life and spat it out upon the cobbles. Cerignola, born of the Middle Ages, living in the stench of death and disease,

APRIL, 1944

existing, yet nonexistent, in a Twentieth Century War.

RLL

* * *

The World

In April Russia captured the Black Sea port of Odessa and stormed through the Crimea area. While congress was debating a possible "liquor holiday" the boys at Anzio were introduced to the *Anzio Express*, a powerful German gun that bombarded the beachhead twenty-four hours a day. The RAF was flying low-altitude missions to mine the Danube River and destroy river commerce that was supplying German troops, and Allied planes in the Pacific area were busy softening up New Guinea, New Britain, and other important Jap bases. Back in the States headlines were made by Henry Ford, when he announced that his Willow Run plant was turning out a Liberator bomber every hour, and by the New York Giants, when they defeated the Brooklyn Dodgers 26 to 8.

The Group

In April, the 454th Bombardment Group flew seventeen missions to drop over 1000 tons of bombs in 450 sorties. Flak was becoming heavier and heavier as the missions progressed, and on April twelfth the group ran into heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire over the Messerschmidt Aircraft Factory at Bad-Voslau, Austria. Ten minutes before the target was reached, the group's forty-two bombers were attacked by over seventy aggressive enemy fighters which strafed the Liberator formation with cannon and rocket fire but failed to stop their onward flight towards Bad-Voslau. Over the target, the flak guns took over where the fighters had left off, but they, too, failed to stop the group from scoring many direct hits on the vital enemy aircraft assembly plant. The final score read: two of our bombers destroyed and eighteen damaged, over thirty enemy aircraft and one complete aircraft factory destroyed or damaged. The bomb-strike photos showed extensive damage to

the factories at Bad-Voslau, one strike picture being indorsed by Major General Twining, commanding general of the 15th AAF, as a "superb job." For this mission the group received the Distinguished Unit Citation. (Actually, this was the group's second citation. The awards were made some time after the missions and the first award was received for the bombing of Linz, Austria, in July.) And the total score for the month read: seventeen targets destroyed or damaged, forty-one enemy fighters destroyed, and fifteen of our bombers lost. We were a little ahead of the game.

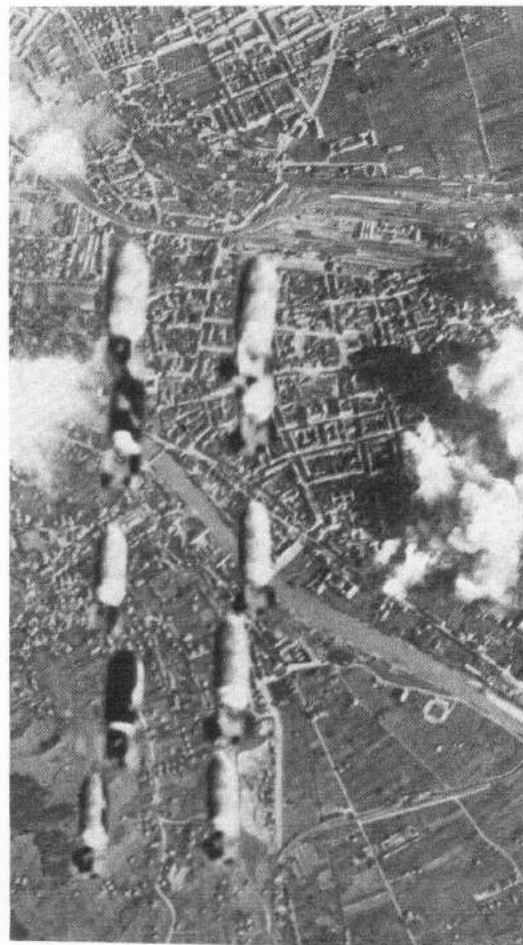
Lines

Wherever more than two soldiers are standing together, chances are that they are standing in a line. This seems to be the army's method of doing things. From the moment that a soldier is sworn into the army until the final moment when he gets his discharge, he does nothing but stand in line, one line after another—a line beneath the hot mid-day sun of summer, a line through the knee-deep snow of winter, a line in the pouring rain of spring. He gets his food, his clothes, his pay, his beer, his entertainment, his passes, and his flat-feet by standing in line after line after line. The 454th had its share of lines, just as any organization in this man's army has had.

First, you stand for half an hour in the hot summer Italian sun while you wait at the tail end of a line which you believe will eventually lead you to the mess hall. For obvious reasons, this is called the mess line. During this wait you read the Stars and Stripes, talk to your neighbor about the day's mission over Vienna, or watch the squadron's dogs chase each other all over Hell and back. There is no shade, no relief from the burning sun which soaks your clothes with perspiration—and the mess hall, when you finally get there, is even hotter. The aluminum mess kit rattling at your side is a damned nuisance, but it's a necessary one, and finally you reach the door and thrust out the mess kit to receive the noon meal. And what do you get? Spam, dehydrated potatoes, raisins, canned but-

ter, bread, and luke-warm tea. Oh well, you weren't hungry anyway.

On a rainy day in April, you find yourself standing in a comparatively short line that leads to a door labeled with the brief sign: Mail Clerk. For the lack of something better to do, you start to figure how long it has been since you last wrote to your dear wife, your loving mother, or your buddy in the Pacific. Quite shocked by your conclusions, you immediately switch your train of thought to the weather, and the rain which has turned the entire base into a sea of mud and is threatening to dissolve you into the same sea. By this time, however, you have reached the door of the little mail room and you thrust out an eager hand to receive any mail that may be addressed to you or any of your tentmates . . . Tim, Ripper, Bob, Shorty, Dinny, or Frank. The mail clerk hands you a



15th AAF Photo

A LINE that's worth waiting for, worth flying eight hours for, is this line of bombs as it heads for a direct hit upon the marshalling yards at Innsbruck, Austria.

bundle which you hastily scan for any letters or packages that may bear your address. So what do you get? Two bills, a church notice, and a draft board notification that you are now in 1-A.

But of course a soldier must have his cigarettes—hence, the PX line. The post exchange service overseas is a remarkable thing, and, aside from the ordinary sundries such as Raleigh cigarettes, Rheingold beer, and Ipana toothpaste, an occasional surprise is apt to appear in the form of a Ronson cigarette lighter. This windfall, however, is only for the friends of the PX man or the first two men in line—they being first only because they slept in front of the PX door all night. A two hour wait seems long enough to you, however, so you are content to walk away with just the usual bits of sundry articles after freezing every part of your anatomy in the cold winter winds that sweep across the Foggia plains. So you sweat it out, thinking how nice a cool beer will taste during the evening hours and trying not to think of how cool the wintry blasts of winds are during the daylight hours. Finally you reach the PX door, and what do you get? Three bottles of warm, flat beer, and six packs of stale, tasteless cigarettes.

And then, of course, there's always the line which the squadron refers to as "physical inspection." This entails another hour's wait in front of the dispensary, during which time you and your buddies rile each other with lewd cracks about the conduct or misconduct, as the case may be, of one soldier or another. Being a decent sort of a chap, you see no point to this waste of time, but "orders is orders," and there you are. Finally, as you reach the point of going AWOL, your turn arrives and you enter the dispensary, unbutton your fly and button it up again. And what do you get? Nothing, absolutely nothing!

But the end of the month rolls around and you find yourself in the only line that seems worth sweating out. This is the pay-line, and the two hour wait here seems to be most profitable. You are a private—excuse me, private first class—and are hence entitled to fifty-four simoleons plus twenty per cent for being in Italy (Hooray!). Of course you have plenty of time to figure up your liquid and frozen assets during the long wait—and since this is probably the end of January there are more frozen assets (accentuate

the first syllable, please). But your fifty-four plus makes a grand total of sixty-four dollars and eighty cents, which ain't hay. Of course there are a few deductions: six-fifty for insurance, twenty-two bucks allotment, a two dollar and forty-five cent statement of charges, a one buck mess fund, a one buck club fund, and the twenty-five smackers that you owe Joe from last month's crap games. So, after a few hour's wait, what do you get? Six dollars and eighty-five cents!

Yes, wherever GI's congregate, with men who know the army best, it's lines two to one. In McCook it was a line for a bottle of beer. In Charleston it was a line for a theatre ticket. In Italy it was a line for survival—one long, continuous, snaky, tormenting line. And what do you get? Sunburn, blisters, diarrhea, fallen arches, indigestion, and a bottle of beer. Oh well, the beer was good, wasn't it?

* * *

The World

May of 1944 found Russia's westward drive in a temporary lull after the capture of Sevastopol. In Italy the Fifth Army began a spring offensive with the final capture of Cassino after a five-month battle, and American bombers were shuttle-bombing between Italy and Russia. In the Pacific area, the Japanese were taking a terrific beating in India and New Guinea where British and American troops began new offensives. And back in the States headlines were made by the government's seizure of the Montgomery Ward plant, and by a horse named *Pensive* that came in first at the Kentucky Derby to win \$65,000.

The Group

In May of 1944, the group hit twenty targets in Italy, Austria, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and France. These included railroad bridges, marshalling yards, harbor facilities, airdromes, oil refineries, and troop concentrations. Two targets were abandoned because of heavy cloud formations over the areas, but for the other 550



German Supply Road—Cisterna, Italy

15th AAF Photo

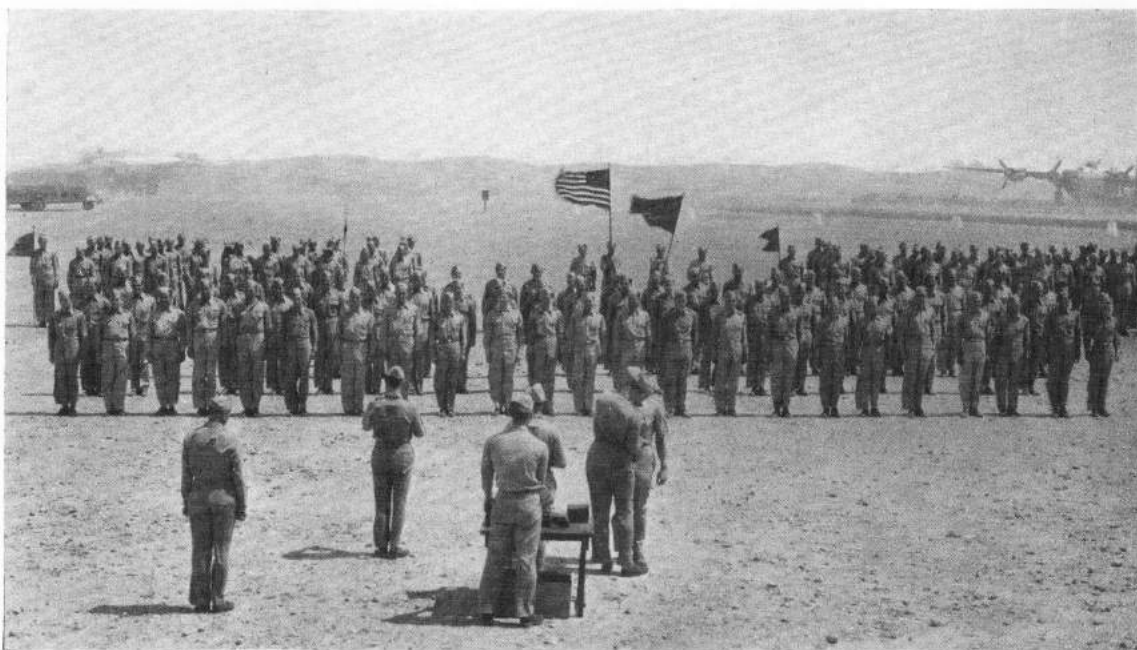
sorties, the group dropped over 1200 tons of bombs. Included in the May targets were three missions to the oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania. Ploesti, center of the Balkan oil refinery district, had seven main refineries in its network of oil production, as well as numerous smaller units of refining. In the months to come, the 454th was to hit Ploesti over seven times and come to know the target as "the hottest target on the face of the earth." The refineries' marshalling yards, the Redeventa, and the Unirea Sperantza oil refineries were the three main targets during the month, and over 60 tons of bombs were dropped by the group in combined raids with other groups of the 15th AAF. The results at Ploesti were most gratifying to the crew members, and the mission could be almost enjoyable if it weren't for the flak that the Nazi gunners seemed proficient in firing. Smoke and flames would shoot skyward with each bomb burst, the heavy black clouds rising from the burning oil often to a height of eight thousand feet. This way, the bombardiers could judge their work without waiting for the bomb-strike or reconnaissance photos. Still, few had time to watch the burning oil. The bursts of flak that

punctuated the sky seemed to hold a fascination for all the members of the combat crews, and sweating out the flak bursts over "the hottest target on the face of the earth" was more important to the tail gunner than were the pillars of smoke rising from the Rumanian town below. Gunners, pilots, navigators, all who flew the heavy B-24 Liberator bombers of the 454th Bombardment Group, will always remember Ploesti and the puffs of black smoke that spread throughout the sky like dirt over the face of an Italian laundry boy. The loss of ten of the group's bombers in contrast to the four enemy fighters destroyed is not surprising in view of the month's targets, such as Bucharest, Bologna, La Spezia, Graz, Wels, and, of course, Ploesti. For the next generation, wherever ex-servicemen congregate, there will always be one who can tell first-hand about the "hottest target on the face of the earth."

JSB

The Clerk

For some unknown reason many claim the title of Unsung Hero in connection with their military careers and achievements. Among those



THE DUST of Sunny Italy sweeps continually across the airfield during the summer months, but work and play go on as usual, even the weekly formations for presentation of awards, such as this formation when Major Allen received the Bronze Star.

will be the Clerks and for them the title will be most appropriate and justified, for they have, undaunted, waged a most tedious battle against reams of paper, regulations, minute details of correspondence, all of it being delicately wrapped in the accuracy of inaccurate red-tape. They are the ones that sit at a desk beneath a bright light and pound a typewriter, or check records, or compile reports or do one or more of the hundreds of jobs that come through their channel. It's a fact that the Army, even in combat, can not make a move, either to progress or retrogress, without an authorization to do so and the majority of those authorizations must be written. They must go through a channel that has a dozen stratas, each command taking the appropriate action and passing it on to the next, and when it reaches the top, and is either approved or disapproved, it must make the long journey back to its point of origination.

Every section of a Bomb Group or Squadron that functions as a separate department has its own clerical section. Armament and Ordnance have men at work logging and reporting ammunition expenditure for the purpose of requisitioning. They must post all regulations that govern their department and its work.

The Engineering Section has its staff of clerks whose responsibility is to maintain records on all aircraft maintenance, requisitioning material and equipment. They must maintain charts on the hundred-odd men in the section, know where each man works and his qualifications.

Upon the shoulders of the Operations Clerks, S-3, rests the serious problem of seeing that each combat man scheduled to fly is up and at briefing at the designated time. They are responsible for the flight reports, training charts, and the maintenance of the Form No. 5, the combat man's individual flight history.

The Supply Section is run by clerks, specially trained in that field, and it is their duty to equip and outfit each man in the organization with the proper paraphernalia. Each issue must be meticulously recorded in organizational and personal records, and there must be requisitions to balance the depletion of the supply. Often the procurement of certain vital articles is difficult and the men in supply must improvise until the equipment can be found.

The Intelligence Section, S-2, is a veritable gold mine of military information and statistics. In their office a man about to fly over Rumanian territory may obtain information regarding

JUNE, 1944

those people and what to do and expect if captured by them. They are on the job in the dark, early morning hours for briefing, and they are still at it and waiting in the afternoons when the crews return, ready to interrogate each one. Maps, and flimsies, and weather checks, and opposition reports, and a hundred things must pass through their hands before an aircraft is able to take-off on a bombing mission.

Many consider the hub of an organization its Orderly Room, for from that section come the regulations, bulletins, memorandums, and special orders that govern the day to day life of the average man in the outfit. There paper work abounds, there the buck-passing down through the commands comes to a stop, there action must be taken, there typewriters must hum twelve hours a day. Morning Reports, Sick Book, Statistical Reports, Service Records, Personal Files, Qualification Cards, and Pay Books are checked and rechecked, entered and re-entered, and counted, and computed. Each man is paid from this office, each man is promoted or demoted from this office, each man's work is calculated and evaluated from this office, each man that moves, must first move through the Orderly Room.

HAIL TO THE UNSUNG CLERK

A toast to the Underwood gunner,
Who fought with paper and pen;
Oh, hail to the typewriter runner,
A fighting man among men!

He fought an inglorious battle
Of white paper, red tape, and blue ink,
In an office where typewriters rattle
Till a man is unable to think.

He battled the A/R's and orders,
The letters, the memos, the forms,
To a point where sanity borders
The lull preceding the storms.

A job without glory or luster;
Just type a letter and file it;
The Purple Shaft, should, with cluster,
Be awarded the Remington pilot.

Approximately twenty-five men are responsible for the administrative and clerical work in the Squadron; theirs is not a dangerous responsi-

bility, but it is a most tedious and at times a most monotonous job. They must be accurate and punctual with their work for the successful functioning of the organization. Their job is not glamorous, not thrilling, not medal rewarding, but it is vitally essential, and without it no unit could function.

RLL

* * *

The World

The fall of Rome was a highlight of June, 1944, as the Fifth Army pursued the fleeing German troops northward. The biggest news in June, however, was the opening of the "second front" by the invasion of France. After the most intense bombardment in military history, assault forces landed along the French coast from Le Havre to St. Vaast-la-Hougue between 6:30 and 7:30 on the morning of the sixth. Thus began the final battle against the Nazi regime. In the meantime, the Pacific theatre held the limelight for the first B-29 Superfortress raid on Japan, and back in the States headlines were made by the induction of Mickey Rooney into the Army, and by congress which did away with the WPA and then went on a one month vacation.

The Group

During June, things were comparatively quiet during the sixteen missions flown by the air echelon of the group. Flak, however, was still present and, although not as thick, accurate. The group's loss of twelve bombers during the month of June was due mostly to the accurate fire of anti-aircraft guns over such targets as Munich, Vienna, and Moosbierbaum, and, although the group accounted for eight enemy fighters, the Nazi interceptor force was not at all effective in interrupting the purpose of our bombers. In continuing the strategical bombing to deprive Germany of the vital oil resources that were needed for the Nazi war machine, the 454th group, with other components of the 15th AAF, bombed the oil loading quay at Giurgiu, Rumania. The success of this mission may be



IN THE VALLEY across the road from Group Headquarters a former rubber plantation was converted to an officers' club, officers' quarters, and a group shower, a contrasting picture to the field of war that neighbored it.

seen in the fact that the 15th Air Force had no reason to bomb Giurgiu again. Another successful mission in May was the bombing of the Fiat works at Turin, Italy. In peace time the Fiat works had manufactured an Italian automobile similar in size to the old American Austin and similar in dependability to Jack Benny's Maxwell; in May of 1944, however, the Fiat Mirafieri and Lingotto works were quite busily turning out arms and ammunition for Hitler's tanks. On the twenty-second of June, the 454th put a stop to that, though! Four days later, the 454th raided another oil refinery, this one at Moosbierbaum, Austria. This was followed by an attack on the airdrome at Karlova, Bulgaria, resulting in the destruction of numerous Luftwaffe planes caught napping on the ground. By then it was quite obvious that the Luftwaffe would never recover from the blows dealt it by the Allied Air Forces operating from England and Italy. Since modern warfare depends so much upon supremacy in the

air, it was a foregone conclusion that Germany had lost the war, just as she had lost control of the air. Every new Luftwaffe plane destroyed brought victory just that much closer, and it was just a matter of time before Germany would realize her defeat and would surrender. Probably Germany did realize her defeat, but the matter of time before her surrender was something else again. It was not until almost a year later that Germany, fighting on her last square inch of soil, finally surrendered to the forces of the world pitted against her.

Entertainment

A wooden dummy sat upon the knee of a ventriloquist and warbled a parody on *My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean* . . .

My mother makes fine apple struddle,
My father makes synthetic gin,
My sister makes love for a living,
My God, how the money rolls in . . .

This was a USO show on the stage of the

temporary theatre erected by the special service division of the 454th. It was a good show, as were all the USO shows that tripped the boards at the base at San Giovanni or at the Teatro Mercantile in Cerignola. From all parts of the country, all parts of the world, artists of the stage, screen, and radio had traveled with the boys from home to entertain the servicemen over there. Vaudeville acts such as the ventriloquist and legitimate stage plays such as *Kiss and Tell* were brought to Italy where weary mechanics, clerks, and pilots could find lighter moments in a few hours of comedy that helped them to forget the war.

Catherine Cornell and Brian Aherne presented a performance of *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* for the GI's at the Foggia theatre. This was one of the more exceptional performances of art, most of the USO shows being comprised mostly of vaudeville acts and dance routines. Top honors for entertainment, most members of the 454th will agree, go to the show combining the talents of singer Frank Sinatra and comedian Phil Silvers. This was presented late in the spring of 1945, thousands of GI's sitting under the hot Italian sun on the sloping hill between group headquarters and the showers to hear Phil Silvers plagiarize Joe Miller and hear Frank Sinatra sing *I'll Walk Alone*. When Sinatra returned from his European tour, he did much to knock the type of entertainment that the USO sent overseas. We had no complaints, though, and we particularly liked the humorous, though ribald, repartee of Messrs. Silvers and Sinatra. Following the Frank Sinatra show came appealing Jinx Falkenberg, complete with shorts and tennis racket. She took a back seat to her partner, Archie of Duffy's Tavern, and the entire show took a back seat to the Silvers-Sinatra combine.

For the most part, however, the members of the 454th Bombardment Group have found many hours of enjoyment at performances of the United Service Organization. When memories of the life we spent overseas reappear in our moments of reminiscing, we will always recall the many hours of entertainment afforded us by the thoughtful members of one of the greatest morale-building organizations that this war or any war has ever seen.

There were other mediums of entertainment

to be found during our free hours in Italy. During our first weeks of occupation of San Giovanni field, the local Teatro Mercantile, under the auspices of the American Red Cross, presented three operas by members of the San Carlo Opera Company. These operas for servicemen attracted a variety of patrons, and during intermission one could hear comments on the richness of the soprano's voice, a dissertation on the women of Italy and their looseness, or a brief ejaculation on the number of passes that Joe made at last night's crap game—a far cry from what might be heard at the Metropolitan in New York. Still, those who attended these performances of *Madame Butterfly*, *Tosca*, and *Rigoletto* were men who would appreciate the classical work of one of the world's oldest and greatest opera companies, the San Carlo of Naples.

When the Teatro Mercantile was not presenting operas or stage shows, GI's would fill its hard wooden seats to watch the latest cinema antics of Bing Crosby, Betty Hutton, Abbott and Costello, or Bette Davis. Directed by the Red Cross and the Army Special Services, most of the more recent movie productions were shown on the screen of the Italian theatre with, of course, a five minute wait every half hour while the operator changed reels. These movies, however, were an escape from the country that we were in, an escape from the life that we were living. Once again we could see America, an automobile, a nightclub, a well-dressed woman. Our over-taxed memories could relax, and we would be walking once more on the sidewalks of Broadway, Main Street, Water Street, Fifth Avenue, or Sunset Boulevard. It is little wonder that the "Red Cross Music Hall" always boasted a record capacity audience.

The group, itself, after a few weeks of our stay at San Giovanni, started its own Roxy theatre under the direction of special service officer Archie Kodros. It started with one projector and a crude screen in the basement of the headquarter's wine cellar. It soon became apparent that the small basement could not hold all the members of the group that wanted to see *Going My Way* or some other photoplay of the year. Hence, the 454th's Roxy was moved to a large tent near the radar section.

JULY, 1944

From outward appearance, the new tent that housed the 454th's theatre resembled a three-ring circus tent. It was cold in winter and hot in summer, and we would sit, sweating or shivering, on the little tin stools that originally served as casings for bomb fins. During one of the usual summer storms, however, the Roxy's tent was carried thirty feet down the road by the strong summer wind, and for the rest of the season we enjoyed the coolness of an open-air theatre.

The coming of Fall, however, required the construction of another tent to shield us from the autumn rains and the winter winds. The fate of the earlier tent advocated the construction of a sturdier shelter, and November of 1944 saw the beginning of an iron framework to support the canvas shelter. A new screen was built from a few mattress covers and mounted on a platform that could be used as a stage for USO shows that might honor the 454th Roxy with an appearance. The projection room was constructed of tufa-block to serve as a warm and comfortable office for Ed Koby as he maintained the group's theatre. Near the back of the theatre, a special box was built for the commanding officer and his guests, and this was furnished with more comfortable lawn chairs. But the other members of the 454th continued to sit on the hard, cold, uncomfortable steel stools. But at least we had a theatre again, so we couldn't complain.

Through hook or crook, Captain Kodros and Sergeant Koby managed to procure a second projection machine. Since the group was only authorized to have one, it is a matter of conjecture where the second machine came from, and Captain Kodros, not wishing to disclose any professional secrets, refused to name the origin of the second projector. We asked no questions, though, being thankful for the two projectors that did away with the wait between reels as the operator changed the sections of movie.

Existence at San Giovanni airfield might have been a tough life, but it could have been worse. Through the Army's Special Services, the American Red Cross, and the United Service Organizations, we found many laughs, much enjoyment, and many hours of relaxation. To these organizations we doff our greasy fatigue hats, our Hotshot Charlie flight caps, our neatly pressed suntan hats, and mutter a meaningful "Thanks."

The World

In July, England was sweating out her second month of buzz-bombing, hoping that the British and American troops which were driving toward St. Lo could put a stop to the new German weapon by capturing the buzz-bomb's launching points. As Americans entered Pisa and engineer battalions frowned at the famed leaning tower, Russia rejected Rumanian peace proposals, and it was obvious that the war was not going according to Hitler's plans. In the Pacific, the beachheads at Guam were advancing against stiff opposition while we invaded another important base, Tinian in the Marianas. And back in the States, the Democratic convention drafted Roosevelt as presidential nominee for a fourth term.

The Group

During July, 1944, the group flew eighteen more missions, bringing the total to eighty-nine missions in six months of operations. Continuing their drive to deprive Germany of fuel, the 15th Air Force bombed three more oil refineries at Ploesti, the Titan oil refinery at Bucharest, the oil storage facilities at Trieste and Bucharest, and the synthetic oil plant at Brux, Czechoslovakia. The memorable mission of the month, however, was the attack on the Herman Goering tank works at Linz, Austria. This was on July twenty-fifth. Thirty-three of our bombers were in the air that day, heading northward across Yugoslavia, when they were attacked by fifty persistent enemy fighters using rockets, twenty-millimeter cannons, and machine guns, in an attempt to break up our formation of bombers. The Nazi pilots, however, must have been out on a party the evening before, and their feeble attacks accomplished little except to tighten the formations which downed nine enemy fighters and probably five more. The flak guns that surrounded the target were a little more *on the ball* than the remnants of the Luftwaffe, and succeeded in damaging eleven Liberators and killing two of our boys. But even they

A BLUE RIBBON, signifying the award of the Distinguished Unit Citation, was pinned on the banner of the 454th Bombardment Group by Major General Nathan F. Twining, commanding general of the 15th Army Air Force. It represents recognition for the 454th's mission to the Hermann Goering Steel Works at Linz, Austria, on the twenty-fifth of July, when the group, despite intense anti-aircraft fire and over fifty enemy fighters, somehow managed to drop 165,000 pounds of high explosives right in the middle of the vital tank factory.



could have done better, because the group still stuck to its course and blasted Hell out of the tank works, despite both flak and fighters. Just about then, the Luftwaffe must have given up the opposition as a bad job, and, except for three fighters in the following month, the 454th had little trouble after that from Nazi pilots. The raid on the Herman Goering tank works, however, was quite successful, in spite of the determined, if inaccurate, attempts by the enemy to stop the formation. It was for this mission that the group received its first Distinguished Unit Citation, and we all started wearing little blue ribbons over our right breast pockets. The box score for the month: over 500 sorties flown, over 1200 tons of bombs dropped, fifteen bombers lost, eighteen fighters downed, and eighteen targets left crumbling or burning. All in all, it was a *bono* month.

Citation

The little blue badge which members of the 454th wore over their right pocket stood for two awards of the Distinguished Unit Citation. The first one was awarded for the mission to Linz, Austria, which the group flew in late July, 1944. The second one came for the mission to Bad Voslau, Austria, which the group flew three months before the first one, April, 1944. The orders for these read as follows:

"Headquarters, Fifteenth Air Force, 24 September, 1944, General Order Number 3604, Section I—Citation of Unit. Under the pro-

visions of Circular 333, War Department, 1943, and Circular 89, North African Theatre of Operations, 10 July 1944, the following units are cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy.

"454th BOMBARDMENT GROUP. Notified to prepare maximum number of aircraft for a mission against the Hermann Goering Steel Works in Linz, Austria, the ground crews worked enthusiastically and determinedly to have their aircraft in perfect mechanical condition to insure the success of the mission. On 25 July 1944, thirty-three (33) B-24 type aircraft, heavily loaded with maximum tonnage, took off, and, assuming lead of the wing formation, set course for the objective. As was anticipated, their formation was intercepted by approximately fifty (50) aggressive and persistent enemy fighters, and, in the ensuing violent aerial battle, the enemy used rocket guns, 20 millimeter cannon, and machine guns in a desperate attempt to disrupt this vital operation. Despite very intense, accurate and heavy anti-aircraft fire and fierce enemy interception over the objective, the gallant crews battled their way through to score many direct hits in the immediate target area, causing destruction and severe damage to the enemy plant and installations. Throughout the heavy opposition by the enemy, two (2) crew members were killed, thirteen (13) injured by fighter and flak fire, and eleven (11) aircraft damaged. Through their ability to maintain a tight formation to procure maximum fire power

available, together with accurate gunnery of the gallant crews, they accounted for nine (9) enemy aircraft destroyed, two (2) probably destroyed, and three (3) damaged. The material damage inflicted in the target area contributed greatly to the damage and destruction of the Hermann Goering Steel Works, seriously curtailing the production of tanks and armament. By the determination, airmanship, and exceptional courage of the combat crews, together with the superior professional skill and intense devotion to duty of the ground personnel, the 454th Bombardment Group has reflected great credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States of America."

Sounds good, doesn't it? Well, it was good. Perhaps the flowery phrasing and flag-waving of the citation wording makes it sound a bit exaggerated, but the group still did all that the general order claims. The photographs of the

bomb-strikes at Linz were endorsed by Major General Twining as 'a superb job.' "

The second citation follows the same pattern.

"... On April 12, 1944, the 454th Bombardment Group was notified to prepare for an attack with a maximum effort of 42 aircraft on the high priority Messerschmidt Aircraft Factory at Bad Voslau, Austria. Despite the handicaps of lack of tools and equipment, the ground crews worked enthusiastically and put in commission the required number of aircraft. At 0840 the group took off to attack this strategic target, a highly important part of the enemy's aircraft assembly complex. The group was leading the wing on this vital mission. Ten minutes before the target was reached, seventy to eighty enemy fighters, both twin and single engine aircraft, began aggressive attacks upon the formation which lasted for forty minutes. They came in four and six abreast, raking the formation with



"a superb job"
N. F. Twining
Major General
U.S.A.

rockets and twenty millimeter cannon. Nevertheless, by grim determination, the group fought its way through to the target. At the target intense, accurate, and heavy anti-aircraft fire was encountered. Cloud cover and bombsight malfunction in the lead aircraft further hampered the operation. Nevertheless, the group successfully dropped its bombs and inflicted grave damage on all the vital installations. The savage enemy opposition caused two of the group's aircraft to be destroyed. In addition, eleven aircraft were severely damaged, and seventeen others received less severe damages. Three men were gravely wounded and one man slightly wounded. However, the group exacted retribution from the enemy. The accurate fire from the gunners accounted for eighteen enemy aircraft destroyed, five probably destroyed, and eight damaged. An additional five aircraft were destroyed on the ground. The group was able to fight its way through the enemy fighters and return to base with the loss of only two aircraft. By the conspicuous courage, determination, etc., etc. . . ."

Only the army could write something like that! We didn't win the war singlehanded, but, from the way that sounds, we could have. But then, as anyone in Public Relations Office can tell you, even a citation for the Good Conduct Medal sounds like the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The World

In August the invasion of southern France marked an historic point in World War II as the battle against Germany brought the war closer to German soil. American troops of the western beachhead had made appreciable gains to enter Brittany after the capture of St. Lo despite the terrific artillery bombardment. The Russian advances had slowed to a standstill while the Red Armies gathered reinforcements and supplies for the final drive westward. In Italy the British Eighth Army was mopping up Florence before continuing northward, and in the Pacific the island of Guam was cleared of Japs and converted into a naval and air base. It was about this time that Japanese scientists announced that they had stepped up the alcoholic content of apple cider to permit its use as an airplane fuel.

AUGUST, 1944

The Group

In August, the group flew nineteen missions, dropping bombs all over Europe, and particularly France. We were wondering why we were paying so much attention to a couple of seemingly insignificant bridges in southern France and a gun emplacement near Toulon. Then, on the fifteenth of August, the group's deputy commander, Lt. Col. James A. Gunn, III, announced at briefing that the target for the day was Beach No. 264B. In the early morning darkness, our bombers raced westward toward the beach of southern France. As dawn broke, the crew members looked down to see hundreds of small naval craft churning the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, while large naval gunboats shelled the shores. Bombs had to be dropped by 06:29 at the latest, and the first wave of bombers flew over the beach to spread the shores with 500-pound demolition and general purpose bombs. The second wave of Liberators, however, was over the beach at exactly 06:29, but, for fear of hitting any troops that might be landing on the shore, they held the bombs in the bomb-bay to salvo them out at sea. And that was it. The 454th was supporting the invasion of southern France, two months after the initial landings had been made at Normandy on the western shores. Back at the base, ground men eagerly awaited the return of our bombers and their crews, eagerly listened to the descriptions of the invasion. The 454th was exceptionally proud of itself that day; it had accomplished something that could be read about the next day in any newspaper in any town in the United States. The 454th was "in" on the invasion. Maybe we were actually helping to win the war, after all. It was different from the bombing of the Zahnradfabrik works at Friedrichshafen, Germany. This was something that the whole world would know about, not just 15th AAF headquarters and the War Department. But we had other work to do, and the group hit oil refineries at Ploesti and Campina, Rumania, Blechhammer, Germany, and Kolin, Czechoslovakia. The synthetic oil plant at Blechhammer



S/Sgt. Joseph Jamro, one "who came back from the hottest target on the face of the earth."

was hit three times that month by the 454th, and was to be hit again and again until the Russian armies walked into the eastern German town in January, 1945. We ended up the month with a total of over 450 sorties, with eighteen losses, due largely to the flak guns at Blechhammer. We had downed three enemy aircraft, the last to come into range of the ten fifty calibers that dot each Liberator bomber. Our 1100 tons of bombs had been dropped with sixty-five per cent accuracy, which wasn't bad. And another month beneath the Italian sun was ended.

One Came Back

Black puffs of flak edged closer to the Liberator bomber, trying to knock the plane out of the sky before it could lead the deadly formation onto the bomb run over the oil refinery at Ploesti, Rumania, one of the hottest targets in air force history. Oil, a high priority target for the 15th Air Force, was the objective of the Liberators as they swung around into a heavy concentration of flak. Hitler's Wehrmacht needed every drop of oil and gasoline that it could find, and each and every supply of the precious liquid was protected by an extensive system of flak batteries.

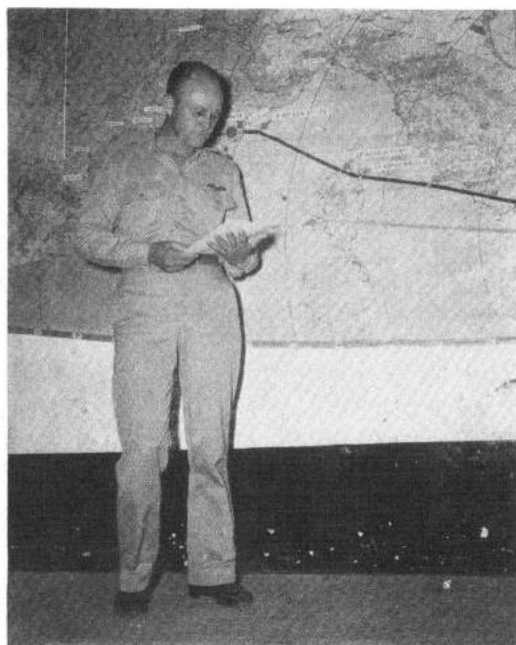
Riding in the tail turret of the radar ship, Staff Sergeant Joseph Jamro watched the flak as it burst under his plane, coming closer every minute. It was his fourth time over Ploesti, and the going was rough as the entire formation of

bombers went through evasive action in an attempt to escape the probing fingers of flak. Suddenly, the B-24 rocked violently from a hit, and Lieutenant Colonel James Gunn, III, the pilot, had to feather number one engine which was on fire. The Jerries had the Liberator boxed in now, hitting it every few seconds.

In a few minutes there were large holes throughout the ship, the hydraulic system was out, flooding Jamro's turret with fluid, number four engine had to be feathered because it was on fire, number three engine had a runaway-propeller, and the oxygen system was hit. Jamro tried, but couldn't contact anyone over the plane's interphone, and then he found out that the warning bell wasn't working either. The bomb sight wasn't functioning, so the bomber had slipped out of the lead position to make way for someone else. Jamro decided that it was time to find out what was going on in the rest of the ship and left his turret. The other members of the crew were getting ready to abandon the bomber, and he didn't think that it would be such a bad idea. Jamro was the second man to jump through the camera hatch.

It was the afternoon of August 17th, 1944, that Jamro floated slowly down towards the much-bombed Ploesti area. His chute had opened without any trouble, but all his thoughts now were of what would happen when he hit the earth—and enemy soil. He was wearing his heavy flying suit and boots, first aid outfit, and his helmet. The bombers of his group had drop-

WORLD BATTLEFRONTS



Lt. Col. James A. Gunn, III
Deputy Commander
454th Bombardment Group (H)

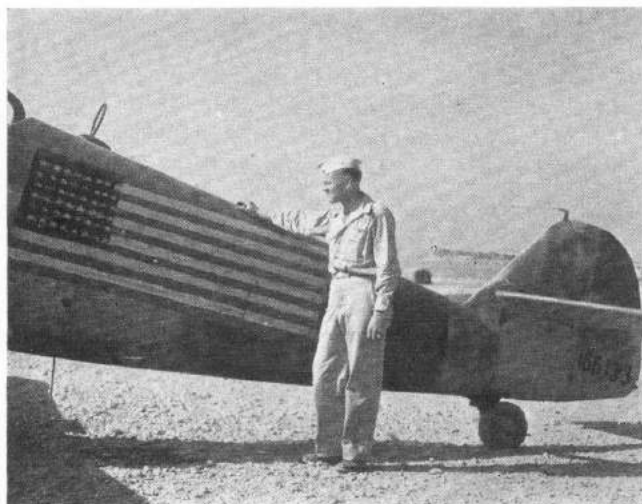


Photo by S. Weiss

MEN AT WAR

"Look at Those G.I. Shoes!"

Wagging its wings, a German Messerschmitt 109 skimmed in low and fast to the huge air base of the Fifteenth Air Force Headquarters in Italy. U.S. gunners held their fire. Reason: a U. S. flag was painted crudely on the fuselage, white stars daubed on the wings. The plane landed, braked to a stop. Tall, handsome Captain Carl Cantacuzino of the Rumanian Air Force climbed out. To the crowd of airmen who ran up, he said: "I have somebody here you'll be glad to see."

He unfastened the fuselage plate of the radio compartment. Someone in the plane stuck his feet out. A man in the crowd yelled: "Look at those G.I. shoes!"

The passenger was Lieut. Colonel James A. Gunn III of Kelseyville, Calif., who had been shot down over the oil fields of Ploesti—"the hottest target on the face of the earth"—two weeks before. He was one of more than 3,000 U.S. airmen downed in Rumania in 13 months of raids. Two-thirds had been killed. But 1,101, plus 25 Britons, were still alive in prison camps around Bucharest. They were well treated but they chafed.

When they heard young King Mihai announce on the radio that Rumania had switched to the Allied side in the war, they persuaded the prison commander to turn them loose—with their side arms. But it was not enough to be free: they wanted to be back in Allied territory.

Colonel Gunn interviewed the Rumanian air minister, who introduced him to Cantacuzino, Rumania's leading ace, with a score of 64 downed Allied planes. Cantacuzino agreed to fly Gunn to Italy.

Colonel Gunn told his story to General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson and his U.S. air commander, Lieut. General Ira Eaker. They made a quick decision. Within twelve hours 38 Flying Fortresses were speeding toward Bucharest; more soon followed. At Bucharest's airport the bombers took aboard the 1,100-odd men and brought them back to Italy. Fifty were wounded, 17 on crutches and ten on stretchers. All were happy. So were their families in the U.S., who were promptly notified.

Reprinted by permission of Time Magazine



ON THE ALERT for any bombers that may come back crippled by flak, the group's ambulances wait by the tower on the runways for the return of every plane from every mission.

ped their bombs by this time and were swinging off the bomb run. Mother Earth was coming closer now every minute; small houses and roads were becoming larger and larger, and Jamro knew that it wouldn't be long before he would hit.

"I landed all right," recalls Jamro, "right in the middle of a German patrol. I hit my head pretty hard, but my flak helmet saved me from serious injury. I guess that I hit about three miles outside of Ploesti. The patrol took me to a German camp where they took away all of my clothes, jewelry, and money, and interrogated me for the first of many times."

He was then removed to another camp and interrogated by an English-speaking German. Here he met part of his crew, but no one knew what had happened to the rest of them. The German interrogator made little headway and they were finally taken to a Rumanian garrison. That night the airmen were removed from the garrison because of an English bombing. Using every type of transportation in their headlong dash away from destruction, the citizens left town when bombers were sighted or heard overhead. To Jamro and his comrades it seemed

strange to be on the receiving end of an attack by Allied planes. They stood by and watched the tremendous columns of fire and smoke that the English left in their wake and after it was over the flyers were taken back to their prison.

The food was poor at Ploesti. Jamro had to get along the best he could on sour bread and water. The next day, August 18th, the 15th AAF and Jamro's own outfit, the 454th, bombed Ploesti. It was even more terrifying than the English bombing of the night before. Wave after wave of Fortresses and Liberators passed over the city releasing tons of high explosives on the oil refineries and railroad yards. The Americans had to leave Ploesti again for their own safety. The Rumanians, although they had been through many bombings, never seemed to get over their fear of the raids; Jamro and his friends could see why. August 19th, the Americans bombed Ploesti again, and the prisoners went through the same routine that they had the day before. They felt like hunted animals just waiting for the next air raid, wondering if they would make it to safety in time. Being prisoners didn't help their peace of mind either.

The twentieth was moving day again. Jamro was just becoming used to his surroundings, trying to accustom himself to his new life, when he was removed from Ploesti and taken to a P. O. W. camp in Bucharest. He was interrogated again and then shown to his new spacious living quarters—a four foot sleeping space on the floor. Conditions here were a little better, though, and he had a choice of *ersatz* coffee or water which, in the long run, amounted to either clear water or colored water. The Rumanian guards gave Jamro and his buddies fair treatment when they arrived at camp, but, as the days passed, the attitude of the guards changed to downright friendliness. The Russians were coming.

Jamro noticed that all the prisoners with him were under the same tension that he was feeling. How long would it be before the Russians reached the city? Would the Rumanians leave them here when the armies of Stalin arrived, or would they be removed to a rear area—maybe even Germany? The Americans received their answer two days later, on the evening of August 23rd, when they were told that they would be liberated soon. The Russians were coming closer.

For the tail gunner who was shot from the

skies on his fourth Ploesti raid, the next day was a day to remember. He was allowed to leave the camp and roam the streets of Bucharest—at his own risk. The Germans were pulling out of the city, but not without a fight and a lot of spite-bombing, even though there were no Allied troops in the city as yet. Stuka dive bombers whined overhead all day long, indiscriminately bombing everything in their path. The hospital was hit three days in a row along with most of the public buildings located in the heart of the city. The Rumanians, former friends of the Germans, were getting a taste of the other side of the Nazi character—and they weren't enjoying it.

August 25th, the next day, Bucharest was bombed again. Jamro went to the local *Adapost*, the safest bomb shelter in town, but he didn't take advantage of the protection for long. During the raid, he assisted in evacuating the wounded under heavy bombing. The casualty list was high that day, and, to top it off, there were supplies to be taken to safety also. For his courage and disregard for personal safety in carrying the wounded out of danger, Jamro was awarded one of the nation's highest combat decorations—the Silver Star.

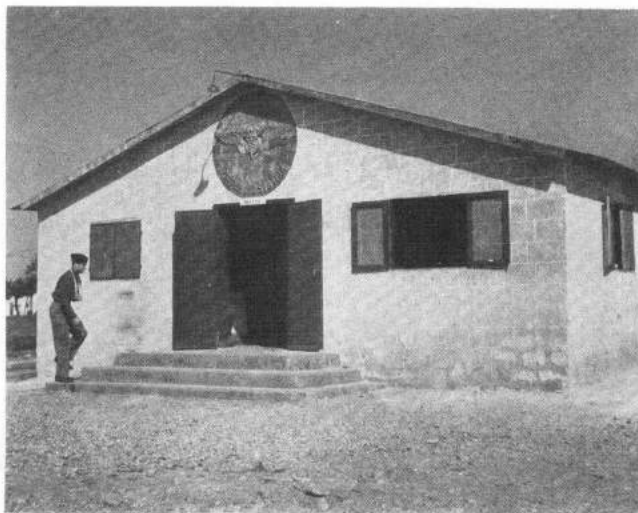
In the meantime, Colonel Gunn, Jamro's pilot, was on parole from the prison camp, trying to slash through the red tape of the Rumanian government so that he could arrange for the evacuation of all the downed Allied airmen as soon as possible. He finally talked them out of an ME-109, complete with pilot, in which he

flew to Italy and completed the plans for the evacuation.

The stepped-up pace of the bombing of Bucharest, by Americans and Germans both, had the population in a panic. Wild-eyed men and women wandered around aimlessly, too terrified to think about where they were going. The Americans weren't above being affected by the continuous pounding either. Most of them were praying earnestly, asking only to be delivered from the Hell that rained from the skies. The bombing continued for two more days. The all-clear would sound, the people would leave the bomb shelters, and the next minute German planes appeared out of nowhere to strafe the streets crowded with civilians. It was understandable why the people cheered so much when American bombers raided the air field of the Nazi marauders.

On the thirty-first of August, just two weeks after Jamro bailed out of his crippled Liberator, over thirty B-17's of the 15th Army Air Force circled the field and landed to take on the first of the evacuees. The populace was overwhelmed by the Yanks, showering them with flowers and kisses. Many of them took a little time out to be serious, though, explaining that they wanted American influence again as in pre-war times. Jamro didn't make the plane that day, but the first of September he left Rumania for Bari, Italy. He cleaned up, was issued new clothes, and in a matter of days was headed for the United States—and the home he thought he might never see again.

SICK CALL is at eight o'clock in the morning. We don't care if you did break your arm at four o'clock in the afternoon; sick call isn't until tomorrow morning. That's a standard army gag, but with the medics of the 454th it just didn't hold true. The 454th group had a good bunch of men in its medical section, and, aside from the hypodermic needles that the medics occasionally wielded, the treatment that we received was excellent, and appreciated by those suffering from sore throat, diarrhea, or athlete's foot.



SEPTEMBER, 1944

Many 15th AAF airmen went down over "the hottest target on the face of the earth." Few came back. Joseph Jamro was one of few.

FLT

* * *

The World

Headlines of September highlighted such news items: Americans in Belgium, Army announces demobilization plan, Americans breach Siegfried line, Peleliu in the Pacific invaded, Airborne troops hit Netherlands. In a peaceful citadel in Canada, the historic Quebec Conference found leading powers of the world gathered to discuss latest developments and plans for war and peace, while Russia's armies surrounded Warsaw and began a new offensive that was to drive Germany back to her own soil. The Russian armistice with Rumania blasted another headline across newspapers of the world, as Russian troops marched into Ploesti and Bucharest.

The Group

September brought cooling winds to the hot, dusty plains of Foggia where our planes landed after seventeen more missions against despotism and dictatorship. Among our usual targets throughout Europe were the airdromes in Athens, Greece, as our bombers helped support the British invasion of Greece and quell the Greek rebellion. Twice during September we dropped 500-pound general purpose bombs on the fighter planes that dotted the Tatoi Airdrome at Athens. Too, we bombed the railroad bridges at Latisana, Venzone, and San Dona di Piave, Italy, to support the Fifth and Eighth armies, and Szajol and Belgrade, Yugoslavia, to support the Russian and Yugoslavian armies. The mission to the Venzone railroad viaduct and the San Dona di Piave railroad bridge was a double mission flown on the twenty-third of September, one force hitting the first target while a second force blasted the second target. Strangely enough, the majority of our targets during the month of September were railroad facilities, the exceptions being the harbor facili-

ties at Trieste, the synthetic oil plant at Odertal, and the airdromes at Munich and Athens. Of the 450 sorties during the month, only four bombers were lost to flak, the 454th's best record. Enemy fighters had disappeared from the skies, and, aside from an occasional observation plane which kept a safe distance from the formation, our bombers encountered no further elements of the Luftwaffe during the ensuing months of operation.

JSB

Highlights

News releases from the Public Relations Office often contained items of humor and interest. These are a few of the "highlights" prepared by Frank Teske, public relations writer for the 737th squadron.

* * *

S/Sgt. Harold L. Wilke, 26, of Bridgeport, Conn., an aerial cameraman, was policing the area one day when he came across an old, beaten-up calendar. Acting on a hunch, he tore off everything past July 4th—setting that as the date he would be finished with his missions. That was in February of 1945—and he hadn't flown a mission!

By the middle of April he had completed 35 missions—32 of them in a row during a gruelling six weeks period—setting a record in the 15th AAF for the number of consecutive missions flown by a Liberator crewman.

* * *

Everyone at this base agreed on one thing—it would never run. Furthermore, anyone who bet that it would was very foolish and good pickings for some easy money, but 2nd Lts. William H. Sherman, Rogersville, Mo., and Rollie M. Schuder, Langley Field, Va., had other ideas about their captured, broken-down German jeep.

"We didn't have much to work with," said Lt. Sherman, "but with Schuder's mechanical ability and my moral support something was bound to happen. After all, Italy's a big place if you have to walk whenever you want to go somewhere. We decided to ride." Gathering various parts from more places than can be mentioned, the two American pilots soon had the German *Volkswagen* in running condition and, incidentally, about 150 dollars changed hands in the form of lost wagers.

* * *

Out of the war have come many tragedies . . . but this Liberator base has suffered one of the worst. Every day the war was brought home to the ground crews here in the form of battle-scarred B-24's and victorious combat crews returning from missions, but Fate reared its head in a strange way recently.

A reluctant G.I., T/Sgt. Ernest Stormo, was just doing his part . . . he had just filled a latrine ditch with gasoline, intending to set it on fire. He lit a match and threw it into the hole, and then it happened . . . the entire wooden construction over the ditch blew forty feet into the air and showered the surrounding area with pieces of lumber. Surprised G.I.'s hit for the fox-holes with amazing speed, and then cautiously peeked out a little later to see what the Jerries had been after.

All they saw was Stormo looking at the scarred, broken remains of the deluxe latrine cover with an unbelieving expression on his face. He later officially stated: "How was I to know that it was high-test gasoline? I hope that this incident will not keep me from getting my Good Conduct medal."

* * *

The persistent efforts to purchase a motorcycle of Lt. Alphonse Riccardi wound up in an unforeseen development the other day—he became the Godfather of a little Italian *bambino*. He became good friends with the proprietor of a local shop selling motorcycles and when a new

baby appeared, Lt. Riccardi was asked to be the Godfather.

* * *

Although his bullet-riddled tail turret suffered the direct hits of two German 20 millimeter cannon shells, S/Sgt. Thomas Whelan, 28, a gunner on the B-24, "Sassy Lassy," still believes in the luck of the Irish because he came through the fight without a scratch.

* * *

"You might say that I practically ran all the way home from the last mission," said S/Sgt. Edmund Trzcinski, New York, "because my heating suit went out and I really had to do some moving to keep warm until we landed."

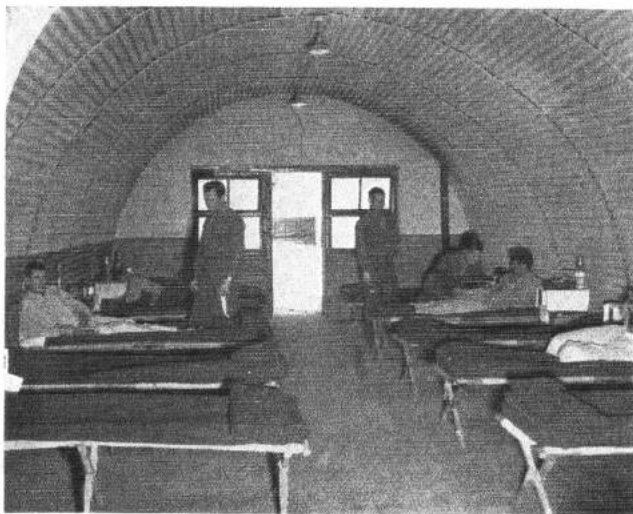
* * *

History repeated itself recently when S/Sgt. Lloyd L. Wallisch went back to the World War I style of bombing—throwing his bombs out the window. He carried the bombs to the waist of his Liberator after they had fallen from their racks on takeoff, and then threw them out over the target.

* * *

The navigator told them that the target was free of flak that day. So T/Sgt. Albert L. Gilman and S/Sgt. William Mathers didn't bother to put on their heavy suits and helmets as the B-24 headed into the bomb run. Then the shells started breaking all around them. However, they think maybe their timing was right, because one of the first bursts lifted them off their feet. When they moved the flak suits on which they had

THE HOSPITAL WARD *at the base dispensary is a nice place to spend a quiet evening if you tire of sleeping in a tent. All you have to do is scratch your leg or break a toenail and you have first call on a comfortable cot in a heated Nission but. Of course, you won't get your work done, but who wants to work? Still, it can be seen from the number of empty cots in this room that the 454th did not have as many goldbricks as it could have had.*



been sitting, they saw a large hole in the fuselage.

* * *

For awhile it looked as though the men in the 738th would have to drink their ice cream, but then the 60 gallons of delicious liquid took an airplane ride. As a result the ice cream for that evening could be eaten with a spoon, thanks to S/Sgt. Roy Brockway, the mess sergeant, and the weather at 20,000 feet.

* * *

A piece of Nazi flak turned traitor by revealing its own gun battery. While on a mission to bomb the railroad bridge at Brod, Yugoslavia, a Liberator had completed the bomb run in the face of heavy flak. Suddenly a piece of flak tore through the fuselage and ripped through a target chart. Looking down, the bombardier tried to locate the battery. Then he tried to find the exact spot on the target chart, and found the battery's pinpoint cut out on the map by the flying shell fragment.

* * *

S/Sgt. Roy Phillips, a Liberator gunner with the 454th, has an enviable record of "firsts" to his credit. Arriving with the first AAF in England, his outfit was the first American fighter group to operate against the Germans. They were also the first to make flights out of Algeria, the Island of Malta, Sicily, Italy, and the Anzio beachhead.

* * *

This is the story about a fruit cake that was struck dead-center by a piece of flak and still remained untouched. S/Sgt. Walter C. Campbell took the package along on the ride to bomb the Nazi aircraft factory at Regensburg, Germany. After the bomb run, Sgt. Campbell picked up the package and noticed a gaping hole in the center of it. The flak had gone through the package and the two-inch hole in the middle of the fruit cake, but hadn't touched the cake. Undaunted, Sgt. Campbell and his crew enjoyed the cake, but saved the hole as a souvenir.

* * *

At 12:17 noon, T/Sgt. Robert Carpenter, an engineer-gunner, was on a bomb run over the German oil refineries at Oswiecim, Poland. At the same moment, back in the States, his daughter was born. Sgt. Carpenter has good reason to remember that mission.

* * *

German flak batteries recently "got the bird" enroute to the Moosbierbaum oil refineries, but it cost Lt. Roy R. Cook, a co-pilot, seven dollars and thirty cents. The bird, in this case, was the American eagle on Lieutenant Cook's dress hat. Fortunately, the hat had been sitting on the radio operator's table instead of on his head.

* * *

Children in the primary grades at the Temple, N. H., school participated indirectly in the 15th AAF bombing of the Neuburg airdrome, German jet-propelled aircraft base north of Munich. Over the target ten five-hundred-pound bombs, autographed for them, tumbled out of the bomb bay of a Liberator. The bombs were autographed for them by 1st Lt. James E. Robinson, bomb sight officer for the 737th, whose sister-in-law teaches at Temple.

* * *

When M/Sgt. Vernon E. Bullard painted the 50th bomb on the side of "Dinah Mite," the B-24 of which he was crew chief, he told his inquiring pilot that she would definitely fly 100 missions and promised to go along on the 100th. He recently stepped from the Liberator after flying, as per his promise, with "Dinah Mite" over Brux, Austria. He holds the Bronze Star for expert maintenance of his ship through a year of combat flying.

* * *

To the impressive and ever-growing list of fantastic tales spun by airmen, add the story of the 738th bomber which was saved from a crackup by the explosion of its own bombs. Enroute to a target in Austria, a mechanical failing of the engines caused the plane to loose power, falling swiftly from 6,000 to 800 feet. The pilot, Lt. William Harrigill, Jr., gave the "prepare to crash" order. The bombs, as is customary under such circumstances, were salvoed. There was a tremendous explosion. The concussion lifted the B-24 into the air, jarred the engines, and, in the moment of grace given by the added altitude, the plane regained engine power and carried its ten-man crew home safely.

* * *

A fine sense of values, some quick thinking on the part of a GI in the face of danger, and a pair of officer's pants saved two cases of Christmas cheer for a party in the 737th last Christmas.

Sgt. Ervin G. Ficken, in charge of quarters,

making his rounds in the early hours of the morning waking up members of his squadron, noticed that one of the officer's tents in the area was on fire. Making his way to the tent as fast as possible, he found that the officer, Major Henry N. Moore, was already awake. The tent was in flames as Sergeant Ficken rushed in to save whatever he could. He immediately spied two cardboard cases of precious American whiskey which were to be used at an enlisted men's Christmas party. They were beginning to burn.

Ignoring everything else, he carried the cases outside and then beat out the flames with the only pair of officer's pants that hadn't burned in the fire.

There isn't an enlisted man in the 737th who doesn't believe that Sergeant Ficken deserves the Silver Star for gallantry in action.

FLT

* * *

The World

In October of 1944 the Russian Red Army reached East Prussia in the north and forced the surrender of Bulgaria in the south. General "I will return" MacArthur invaded the Philippines to begin another terrific campaign in the Pacific theatre. Meanwhile, Allied troops in Europe had driven across the German border to capture Aachen, first major German city to feel the democratic government of AMG. Back in the States the nation mourned the death of Wendell "One World" Wilkie, and Philip Wylie's *Night*

ITALIAN MUD was the most common element of our adverse weather. From early fall until late spring, San Giovanni field was a sea of sticky consistency making life miserable and flying impractical. It was impossible to walk through the knee-deep mires and difficult to drive through them. Wherever a truck or jeep would pass, a cloud of mud would fly from the spinning wheels soon covering everything and everyone with a two-inch coat of mud. This condition was particularly nice for the armorers and ordnance men who often had to roll 500-pound bombs through the deep mires to the bomb-bays. Good old sunny Italy!

OCTOBER, 1944

unto Night was rated as the most outstanding book of October.

The Group

During fifteen missions in October, we had to abandon one target because of heavy overcast over the target, but we made up for it by flying a double mission on October fourth, the *red force* bombing a railroad bridge at Mezzocorona while the *blue force* hit the railroad bridge at Casara, Italy. We returned to Munich, Germany, to bomb the west marshalling yards, Vienna, Austria, to bomb the oil depot and motor works, Bologna, Italy, to bomb the stores depot, Odertal, Germany, to bomb the oil plant, and Trieste, Italy, to bomb the marshalling yards. One of the hot targets for the month was Steyr, Austria, where we blasted the Aero Engine Works that bore the tongue-twisting name of Walzlagerwerke, and two of the five planes lost during October can be attributed to the flak guns at Steyr. Another tongue-twisting target was the Oesterreichische motor works at Vienna. This, too, was a hot target, but, although the flak was thick enough to walk on, the anti-aircraft fire for once was not too accurate, and the group scored many direct hits on the motor works. Our third tongue-twister for the month was Szekesfehervar, Hungary, where we destroy-



ed another marshalling yard in our strategical bombings to cripple the German army by cutting its supply routes. The 454th ended the month with a new low of less than 300 sorties, dropping 650 tons of bombs with only fifty-eight per cent accuracy. Our accomplishments for the month, however, were enough to destroy two railroad bridges, and damage six marshalling yards, two oil depots, and two war factories.

Capri

We were weary of war. We needed relaxation more than anything else. In Italy, we were continually searching for that place which would be just a little different—just a little more removed from the grim realities of war. We saw the Colosseum in Rome; we rode the gondolas through the streets of Venice; we hiked up and down *Via Roma* in Naples; but we were not satisfied. The aftermath of war was still too close. All this time, though, there was one place that was totally ignoring the troubles of the rest of the world—the Isle of Capri in the Bay of Naples. That's where we were heading for now.

Our ancient little Italian ferry puffed her way towards Capri as we strained at the rail, trying to distinguish features about this ready-made paradise. The sprawling seaport of Naples, half enveloped in a cloud of haze, lay behind us along with smoking Mount Vesuvius further down the coast. The silhouette on the horizon was rapidly changing to a series of cliffs and tree-covered slopes with a tiny town nestled among the hills. A long row of stone buildings at water level indicated the harbor that our ferry was heading for.

As we approached the harbor, we gazed with hungry eyes at the white-washed villas surrounded by green foliage on all sides. Nothing in Italy could surpass this sight. A few minutes later we could make out the figures of people scurrying around on the dock and then we heard a wheezy band playing a crude version of the *Isle of Capri*. Italians lined the dock waiting for us to leave the ferry so that they could carry our bags for us. Many of them were very insistent, but most of us still felt strong enough to carry our own luggage. By the time we left Capri, though, we were in such a lazy mood

that they did a good business. Capri has that effect on a GI.

Once off the ferry, we could see that there had to be some way to reach the town located high above us. Our answer to the question was parked at the end of the dock—a common, ordinary jeep. We took a count and there seemed to be more of us than the jeep could hold, but somehow we all managed to pile into the vehicle. Our driver, a former infantryman with the Purple Heart, jammed down the accelerator and away we went.

The jeep coughed and groaned as it wound up the steep, narrow road. Italians, clothed in clean, faded garments, smiled and waved a greeting to us as our over-loaded jeep continued on up the grade. The eight-foot-high limestone walls on either side of the passageway formed a canyon which served to amplify the noise of the sputtering jeep.

Except for the racket our jeep was making, the island was noticeably quiet. Winding up the continuously curving road for a few minutes, we entered a peaceful little town square—the heart of the Isle of Capri.

About the size of a small parking lot, the square was crowded with people who pressed around the jeep as it stopped. A flight of ten wide steps on one side of the square led to part of the town which was on a higher level. Almost a third of the space in the square was taken up by a cozy sidewalk cafe filled with men and women sipping lemonade as they watched us climb out of the jeep.

Bright, crudely painted signs, in Italian and English, hung from a row of shops specializing in selling souvenirs to visitors. The store fronts were very narrow, consisting of a door and small shop window. Peeking from their shops and spying us, the proprietors were pleased. Business would be good.

A tiny stone church, supporting a steeple and the big town clock, was on the fourth side of the town square. Looking huge in comparison to the rest of the church, the clock was five minutes slow—and had been for years. No one bothered to change it because they knew it was slow and took that into consideration.

As we jumped out of the jeep onto the cobblestones, our surroundings reminded us of the picturesque Italian town which used to look so

inviting on the steamship advertisements. In war, as she had in peace, Capri ignored the turbulent, outside world.

The atmosphere was heavy with a carnival spirit. Soldiers strolled by wearing enormous straw hats bearing the word "Capri" in green letters, T-shirts exposing sun-burned necks and backs, and wooden slippers that clapped along on the cobble-stoned street. They were all wearing the tinkling little lucky bell of Capri. The merchants on the island were doing a good business.

After hoisting our luggage from the jeep, the six of us struggled up the flight of steps leading to our villa. An old, bronze-faced Italian was conducting his open-air vegetable market at the top of the steps, and he chanted a little louder as he noticed us climbing towards him.

"You like eat, Joe?" he asked, knowing that we were too busy carrying our bags to stop and see what he had to offer. A minute later, he slowly lowered himself to the street and went to sleep against a worn wall of chipped brick. There wouldn't be any more Americans passing by for awhile.

Passing several brick houses, we entered a dark tunnel cut out of the buildings. The passageway was damp, with beads of moisture covering the walls, but the dampness wasn't what we noticed most. We were surprised to find doors leading to small rooms on either side of the tunnel and women and children living in the rooms. The inhabitants didn't seem to mind

the uncomfortable air because they had been living there all of their lives.

Emerging from the musty tunnel, we found ourselves in front of a large two-story villa bearing the sign *Villa Maria*. One fellow banged the metal knocker on the massive door and a jolly, heavy-set woman answered, politely inviting us to enter our home on the Isle of Capri.

We followed the woman up some stairs and then she showed us our rooms. Every one of the rooms seemed strange because it was so clean and neat looking. There was a beautiful bird's-eye-view of Capri from every window and the beds were equipped with clean sheets, mattresses and springs. It was too much to take all at once. We couldn't believe that this was to be our living quarters for the next week. One GI, tired from the gruelling truck ride to Naples, stretched out on his sack and went to sleep immediately. The wonders of Capri could wait.

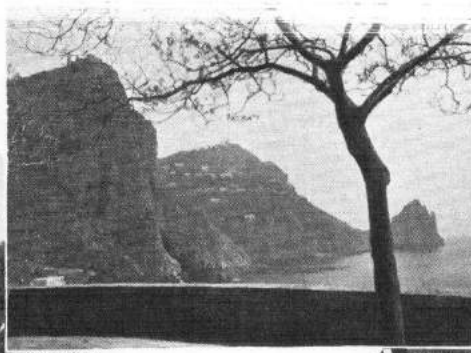
In a few minutes we were settled and ready to start out on a tour to familiarize ourselves with this beautiful green island. A dark heavy-set sergeant from Texas, suggested that we visit the Blue Grotto, a cave located at water level, famous for its beautiful reflections of color. Everyone agreed that it would be an excellent idea.

Retracing our steps, through the tunnel and down into the town square, we decided to take the alternate method of reaching water level, the cable-car or *finiculare*. These wooden cars descend the steep side of the cliff at a forty-five



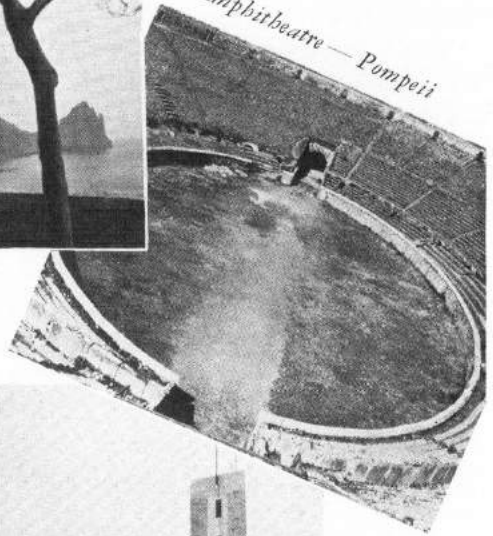
HIT THE ROAD. *With a day or two of freedom, members of the group would set out along the Appian Way for Napoli, Roma, or another story-book city of the old world. Ever filled with wanderlust, we saw as much of historic Italy as travel accommodations would permit. Some of our more popular stops were captured by Joseph Paparatto's camera for Pages 60 and 61.*

British Ack-ack—Bari

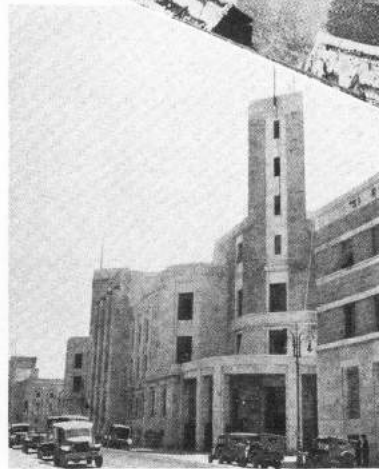


Isle of Capri

Amphitheatre—Pompeii



Rest Camp—Venice



15th AF Headquarters—Bari



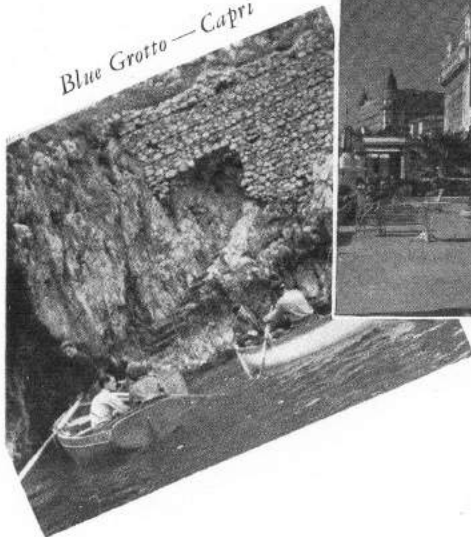
Rest Camp—Bari

Victor Emmanuel Monument—Rome

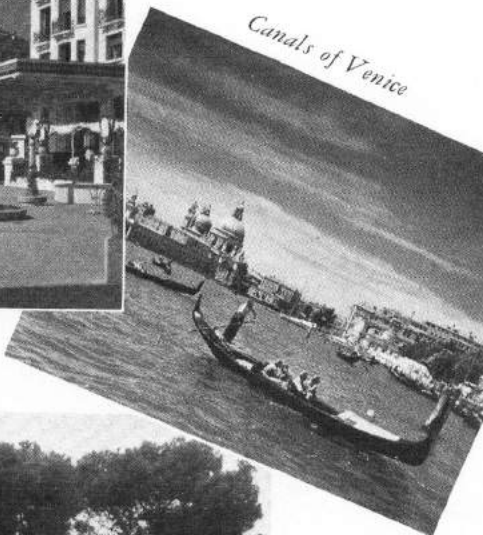


Cassino

Blue Grotto — Capri



*Rest Camp
Cannes, France*



Canals of Venice

Colosseum — Rome

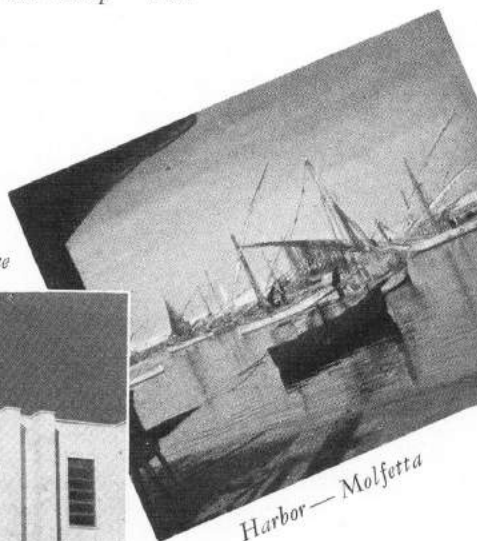


Rest Camp — Bari

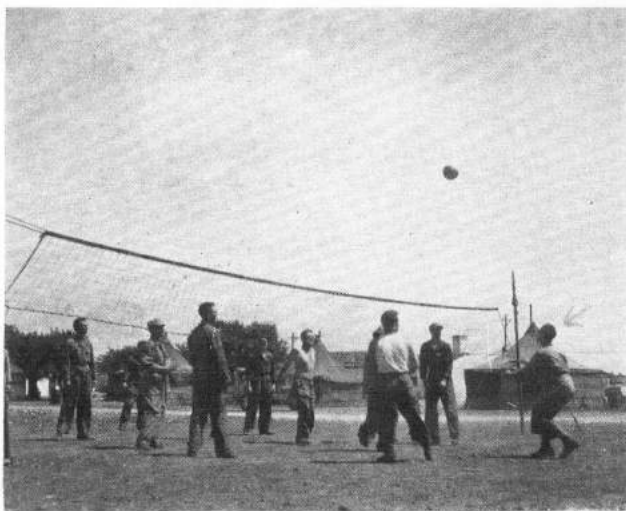


St. Peter's — Rome

Rest Camp — Rome



Harbor — Molfetta



RECREATION at San Giovanni airfield centered around the games of volleyball and baseball, with an occasional game of football or soccer being played around the group area. Volleyball was the chief pastime of combat crews between missions when the officers of a crew would challenge the enlisted men. This game, however, was interesting only to the players, and spectators would cross the field to watch a fast game of softball or baseball.

degree angle, and everyone hopes that the cable holds because it is a long drop to the sea. The operators of the cable-cars jam as many people as they can into the five small compartments before they begin the long journey down to the water front. The view from the car window is magnificent because it gives a view of Capri almost equal to one that would be received from the air.

A seafaring Italian with a sun-tanned skin and greying hair was waiting at the *finiculare* exit, on the lookout for prospective customers. We were helpless to resist his elaborate sales talk and soon found ourselves in his sailboat on our way to the Blue Grotto. The talkative sailor kept us interested relating his experience in New York City during the last war while he was serving in the Italian navy.

As the boat bobbed up and down in the blue Mediterranean, we saw the steep sides of the island towering far above with tiny villas and castles perched on the dizzy heights. About a third of the way around the island, the sailboat arrived at a spot just off shore where a bunch of rowboats, each manned by one Italian, crowded around an opening in the rocky side of the cliff. This was the Blue Grotto.

A vast cave in the side of the rock, it is reached through an opening so small that only a rowboat can enter. This is where the Italians come into the picture. For a fee they will take two passengers through the opening to view the cave. Naturally, for Americans the fee will be

higher because we spend our money more readily than other people. The water inside the cave is so luminous that the rowboat seems to be floating on a pool of blue-tinged silver. The sergeant from Texas put his hand in the water, and it appeared that his hand was made of silver. Several men took off their clothes and swam in the refreshing pool, their silver bodies shining in the water.

A few minutes later, we passed through the small opening again and were confronted with several rowboats filled with souvenirs of Capri—made in Naples. An attractive young girl in one boat was selling shell necklaces, imploring us to buy one and send it home. Although they had bought similar necklaces in many parts of Italy, several soldiers purchased them.

Returning to the harbor of Capri was not as easy as it had been to come the other way. Our hardy ship captain really had to work for his money because he was forced to row us all the way back against the wind. He was nearly twice as old as any one of us and we felt a little guilty as we watched the sweat roll down his weather-beaten face. Finally, one GI broke down under the strain and offered to row for awhile, but the Italian wouldn't hear of such a thing. Nobody asked him a second time.

Leaving our boat, we returned to the level of the city again by way of the *finiculare*. We knew that there was plenty to see in the town and started out by just roaming aimlessly down the narrow streets, taking in the sights as we

strolled along. Every other shop was selling souvenirs. Slim-waisted girls with muscular legs, developed from climbing the streets of Capri, were the drawing cards for these shops. Unlike the Italian girls on the mainland, they were as friendly as most American women. More than one soldier spent most of his week's leave in one of the shops playing checkers or cards all day long in the hope that he would be lucky enough to get a date for that evening. When he took inventory at the end of the week, he was probably surprised to find that he hadn't seen even half of the attractions of Capri.

The Army Air Force maintains a number of hotels for men on rest leave to Capri. These modern buildings once housed wealthy international visitors, but now they are at the service of any GI. Included in the list of hotels available are the *Morgano*, the *Pagano*, the *Isle of Palms*, and the *Windsor*. When all of the hotels are filled up, small villas, similar to the one we were staying in, take care of the overflow.

There are several native guides with their mules in front of the *Morgano* every day. For a fee, one of them will take up you the steep, mountain paths that lead to the castle of Tiberius. We decided to take the trip one day when we couldn't think of anything else to do. All the way up the Italians gave us a running commentary about the many virtues of Capri. We didn't have to be reminded about the beauties of Capri because they were evident all around us. The sun-drenched vineyards and ma-

jestic valleys far below, the deep blue waters of the Mediterranean lashing at the rocky coast, and the picturesque mountain paths were some of the sights that we would remember for a long time.

At the end of our climb we came upon the ruined castle of old Tiberius, master of the Roman world in his time. All that remained were the shattered brick and marble rooms and several giant cisterns used to collect fresh water two thousand years ago—in the same method it is still collected today. Capri has no fresh water. It must be collected in cisterns or brought to the island from Naples in a water boat. After our excursion was over, we returned to our villa and went to a dance later that evening.

Some of the things that we missed on the island were the monastery of San Michele, the late Count Ciano's villa, the old English fort of Castigliano, and Anacapri, the second town on the Isle of Capri. There just wasn't time enough to see everything.

Many of us went to Capri for a rest. Of course, the perfect place to meditate was Luigi's American Bar, a quiet, refined joint where anything could happen—and usually did. The chief attractions of Luigi's were all the beer we could drink, plenty of cokes, and a very questionable orchestra, but at least they tried. For the GI's who hadn't tasted enough Italian *vino* on the mainland, there was a large variety of wines. There were always a couple of M. P.'s slinking outside Luigi's, but they were regular fellows,

THE BASEBALL tournaments in the group usually found the 739th squadron and the 736th squadron fighting for top honors, the 736th squadron usually winning. All four squadrons of the group had some top-notch ball players, although pitchers seemed to wear out easily. Bill Wilson, catcher for the 739th team, was one of the group's best players, his throw to second base being an infallible bullet from home plate to the mitt in the second baseman's hand.



NOVEMBER, 1944

stationed there to carry the more unfortunate G. I.'s home at night and put them to bed.

The week of swimming, dancing, sight-seeing, picture-taking, drinking, and boating came to an abrupt end one evening with a notice posted on all hotel bulletin boards:

"All members of the 454th Liberator Bombardment Group will report back to their unit immediately."

We were shipping, going home, back to the good old United States—the Isle of Capri extraordinary.

The next morning, as our little Italian ferry pulled out of the Capri harbor, we reluctantly watched the beautiful island fade away in the distance. Suddenly, the ferry veered off to one side and the excited Italian captain pointed to a spot in the blue water. An enormous mine was floating by, not twenty feet away. It could have blown the tiny ferry sky high.

We were back in the outside world once again.

FLT

* * *

The World

November found U-boat activity at a new low, and it was admitted by the German high command that submarine warfare had not been as successful as planned. It was announced that six Allied Armies were engaged on the western

front as the drive on Germany met stiffer opposition when the Nazis directed their V-2 buzz-bombs against troops in France and Belgium. The Russians continued their advance against Budapest, and joined forces to race through Hungary. And back in the States a mud-slinging campaign ended with Roosevelt's re-election as Boston banned Kathleen Winsor's *Forever Amber*.

The Group

For our nineteen missions in November, 1944, the group picked on some hot targets: Graz, Austria; Linz, Austria; Vienna, Austria; Munich, Germany; Innsbruck, Austria. These targets included troop concentrations, oil refineries, marshalling yards, aircraft factories, ordnance depots, and airdromes. Vienna in particular seemed to become hotter with every mission. Flak guns, moved from the path of the onrushing Red army, had been clustered around the vital city in Austria, and when the group bombed the Lobau oil refinery at Vienna on the nineteenth of November, there seemed to be twice as much flak as there was on the fifth of the month when we bombed the Floridsdorf oil refineries. Similarly, with each succeeding mission, the flak batteries became more and more determined, more and more effective. Had the war lasted another month or two, Vienna might have surpassed even Ploesti as the "hottest target on the face of the earth." On two of the missions during November, the group forsook its usual load of 500-pound general purpose bombs to carry 120-pound clusters of fragmentation bombs



15th AAF Photo

A LIGHTNING P-38 serves as escort for the heavy bombers of the group on their way over the Alps to Odertal. When enemy interceptors have attacked the B-24 bombers, gunners aboard the heavy planes have often become a bit confused in the ensuing dogfights between P-38's and FW 190's, P-47's and ME 109's. Miraculously, however, no gunner of the 454th has been credited with downing any friendly fighters, although it is a safe bet that many escorting pilots often wished the bombers were not equipped with machine guns.

against the troop concentrations at Mitrovica and Visegrad, Yugoslavia. Each plane carried a total of 120 of these frag bombs which were made of small iron rings cast to split into fragments and shower any neighboring troops with fast-flying bits of shrapnel. Carrying frag bombs seemed to bring the combat men in more direct contact with the enemy, for every bomb dropped meant a few less German soldiers running around wild. But whatever the target and whatever the bomb load, the task was essentially the same—the tactical and strategical air support in destruction of Germany's resources and supply routes.

EM Clubs

Now, mind you, I am not by any means what you might refer to as an alcoholic. I will admit that at times I do like a wee nip, especially a cocktail before dinner. But that should not lead you to the conclusion that I drink for the enjoyment of getting drunk. No, this is all under the heading of "scientific experimentation," and that is the only reason that you find me sitting in the 736th's Esquire Inn tonight.

You see, it all started earlier this evening when I was passing the Officer's Club in the 739th Squadron area, and through the windows of the club I was able to see a picture of revelry and enjoyment such as I have never seen before. Being an enlisted man I, of course, could not enter the club to investigate the cause of this merriment, so I have taken upon myself the task of preparing a report to the members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union on the scandalous habit of the American soldier to look

for a bottle of wine in his first free moment. So far I have discovered little, but I have hopes of completing my research before the night ends.

Now, take, for instance, this comfortable little club in the 736th Squadron. Here we have various members of the 454th group engaged in entertaining pastimes, none of which will endanger the health of the individual soldier or the progress of the war in general. Because there happens to be a bar in this room is no reason why a member of the WCTU should frown upon this establishment as a place to spend a quiet evening. This Esquire Inn is a rather new building, you know. It was built by the 736th squadron in late 1944, and I can see that the squadron has the interests of its personnel at heart when it goes to such trouble to provide a comfortable recreation room for its hard working members. Now, look at the fellow spending a quiet evening with his friends drinking coke at the end of the bar. He probably . . . What? There's rum in the coke? Tsk, tsk. Don't mind if I do. A rum-and-coke if you please, bartender.

Let's stop for a moment at the 737th's club. Here, please notice the panelled ceiling and the inlaid bar. Also note that Club 37 is situated right next to the orderly room; in this way the squadron's officers may keep a close watch on the activity within the club to thus assure the WCTU that the situation is well in hand. Now look at those murals. Don't you think that they are works of art? What? A bit risqué, you say? Oh, come now, my good fellow, surely you realize the importance of maintaining the morale of a soldier so far away from home. There are times when one should have his thoughts diverted from the Hellishness of war, and what better way is there than various art displays?

* * *

Gentlemen, A Toast—

When I return from Italy with mud upon my feet,
With mud upon my pants and shirt, mud in every pleat,
With mud beneath my fingernails, mud all through my hair,
I'll step into the nearest bar and climb upon a chair;
Then I'll announce to all the world: I've mud inside me, too,
And since I have to wash it out, the drinks are all on you;
But let me warn you 'fore you start, I'll shoot the first damn guy
Who raises up his glass and toasts, "Well, here's mud in your eye."

Can my thoughts be diverted? Why, certainly they can! A gin-and-juice, thank you.

Let's take the jeep down to the 738th club now. We might as well see all the "hot spots in town," so to speak. This club, you know, is the newest one in San Giovanni. The 738th squadron was the first to open an enlisted men's club on our new field, but it was only a temporary affair in an old storage tent. Now they have this attractive night club right in the heart of the squadron area, less than a five minute walk from your tent. That table at the end? Oh, that is a little game of some sort—I believe they call it a "Crap game." Gambling? Why, no, of course not. True, it might cost you a little to play, but it costs money to watch a baseball game, or a football game, doesn't it? But look over at this end of the room. Quite a modern library, isn't it? That fellow there is probably reading some of the works of Shakespeare. It's what? *The Case of the Lucky Legs*? Well, you know, a little light reading relaxes the mind at times. But let's step up here and see how this bar is constructed. What was that? Oh, yes, a cognac-and-water, if I may.

Let's see what the 739th is like? (Hic!) I think you'd better drive. I'm gettin' tired.

Now, this is a nice place, isn't it? It once was down where trashportation wash, but now they've built wish nicer building. See? Solid marble bar, and even a brash rail. Have a drink? Aw, c'mon. Two whiskeys with juish. Hmm, my head feels a 'ittle fissy, and I'm beginning

to get my murds wixed. I must be awfully tired. But, let's have another drink. Oh, see the pretty fireplace. Le's start a fire, huh? Ya' know, bub, thosh parachutes look nice up on the ceiling. I wonder if they'll burn. (Hic!) Hey, you guys can't t'row me out! I'm a chitisen! I deman' my rights!

Oh, well, I wash goin' home anyway. Now lesh see. I've gotta do somethin' I think. What wash it? The what? WCTU? Wash that? Oh, I remember. I gotta write a reupry on actvedis of teh enlswed mn8s c1\$8 an th affluence of incahal, h04ght U? Helb, lit id go dil mornigd.

* * *

The World

The last month of 1944 found the war one year older, and showing her age by a complete change of battle-fronts. Both the Japs and the Germans had lost all the major battles of the year, and December found them in a position to lose more. Russia, after capturing the ancient Hungarian fortress city of Pecs on the Danube, was only thirty miles from the Austrian border. In Italy Allied troops were checked in their northward drive after the fall of Ravenna, and on the western front the armies had established a Roer River front. In the Pacific theatre, Mindoro was invaded to bring the war that much closer to Tokyo. Back in the States, congress created the new five-star general rank, and movie critics voted Bing Crosby's *Going My Way* as top photoplay of the year.

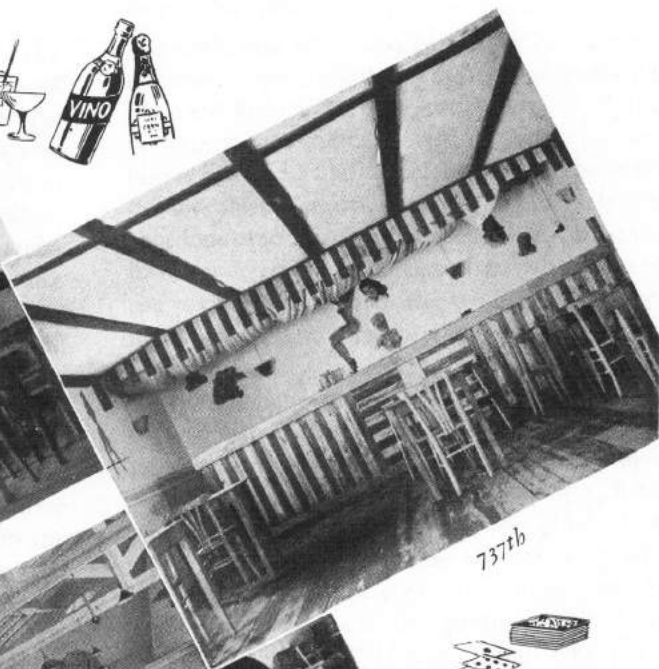


THE GROUP OFFICERS' CLUB was one of the first buildings to be erected at San Giovanni. This was followed by the enlisted men's clubs until every man in the group had some place to spend a pleasant evening. Members of the WCTU may be interested in learning that the group's clubs handled over \$25,000 worth of Italian vino and liquor.

Where the Elite Meet...



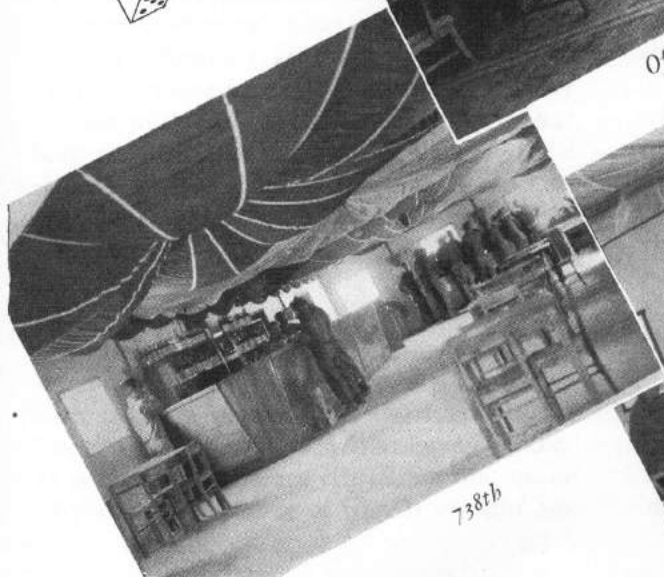
736th



737th



Officers' Club



738th



739th

DECEMBER, 1944

The Group

The last month of 1944 saw the start of the Italian winter that was to be one of the most severe winters in Italy. Despite the adverse weather conditions, though, the group was able to fly almost 300 sorties, representing sixteen missions. These included four marshalling yards, five oil plants and refineries, and three industrial areas. Also, in December, the group was once again over Vienna to blast the southeast goods yard which was the storehouse for much of the Wehrmacht's arms and ammunition. The synthetic oil plants at Blechhammer and Odertal, as well as the refineries at Brux and Pardubice, Czechoslovakia, and Oswiecim, Poland, received another pasting from the 454th. On these missions, Blechhammer and Odertal put up the stiffest resistance, but it was the last time that we had to bomb these plants. The other oil refineries, although not exactly milk-runs, were comparatively safe. As the Russian armies pushed in from the east, and the American and British armies drove in from the west and south, the 454th was loosing more and more targets, and those that were left were becoming hotter and hotter as flak guns from all of Europe were concentrated around the few main targets that were left in Germany. Still, despite the intense flak, the group lost only five of its heavy bombers during the month of December. The adverse weather conditions, however, hampered the accuracy of bombing, and our percentage dropped from eighty-five per cent in November to forty per cent in December. The European winter had been exceptionally harsh during late 1944 and early 1945, and dense cloud formations often caused visual bombing to falter and err.

Noel

Christmas came to San Giovanni airfield. It brought with it all the cheer and good fellowship and love of God that Christmas usually brings to God-fearing and God-loving peoples. It brought a temporary relief from the routine of war and the horror of war. It brought nos-

talgic glimpses of the life we had known and loved and left. It brought with it a lesson that we had known, a lesson that we had been inclined to forget in twelve months of hardship. This is Christmas in Italy, December, 1944, and this is the lesson:

A little pine tree stood beside the base chapel. It proudly bore the colored lights that Christmas trees are known to wear until Twelfth Night. Perhaps it was not cognizant of the part it was playing in the Yuletide celebration of the 454th Bombardment Group, but somehow we felt that this lone tree knew its purpose that Christmas Eve, for every branch seemed to whisper over the rustling winds with the words: "Gaze upon me, warrior; know me better. Know me by the blue light that shines among my arms, for it is the blue of the heavens; it is the blue of His eyes. Know me by the red, for it is the stripe of your banner and it is the blood that fell upon the cross. Know me by the yellow light, for it is the ray of the sunshine and the glow of the moon; it is the golden light of hope and faith. And know me by the white star that surmounts my branches for it is the guiding light of the Star of Bethlehem." It was a small tree, but it was a proud tree, and it taught us that there were lights burning on the trees in a million homes where faith still conquered doubt and fear and depression.

For two weeks the mail clerk had been handing us packages and letters, all of which had been sealed and mailed with the hope that our Christmas might be a merry one. Such little things, these fruit cakes, sewing kits, and woolen socks. Such little thoughts, these cards and letters. And yet, so big. These packages and cards and letters had come from relatives and friends—and even forgotten friends—and they reminded us that there were others who thought about us, worried about us, prayed for us. They taught us that Christmas is larger than the thoughts of idle men, that it is larger than the boundaries of any nation; that Christmas, like the far-reaching light of the evening star, is in the hearts of all free men wherever they may be.

We gathered in the various clubs throughout the area that evening to toast the joyous holiday, to laugh again when we thought we had forgotten how to laugh, to gather in song and merriment, to wish each other a merry Christ-

mas. But why was this evening so different from other nights? It could have been because we were all thinking of the same things—of home, and the family clustered around the fireplace, of Christmas past when we were in a thousand different places, but all in the same country of freedom-loving, peace-loving men. Yes, it taught us that even in war we cannot forget our love of fellowman, for in that love is love of God.

From the chapel came the voice of Ronald Colman. He was playing the part of Old Scrooge on a recording of Charles Dicken's *Christmas Carol*, and his voice carried on the wings of the wind to echo in our hearts: "May we keep Christmas always. May its fires burn forever in our hearts. And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless us, every one!" This was followed by

voices raised in the singing of *Silent Night, Holy Night*. Old Scrooge taught us once again that charity and forbearance were the teachings of Jesus Christ.

And that evening some of us went into Cerignola, to the small, but magnificent, cathedral, to partake of Catholic Communion. At the midnight mass some of us knelt among the poor Italian farmers and their families to pray. Yes, to pray for those that were fighting on God's day, fighting to preserve God's day. Yes, a poor Italian farmer thanking God for what little he had, and praying for those who had less on this Christmas day.

That was Christmas Eve. We awoke the next morning in the same beds, the same tents, the same country, but it was a different morning.

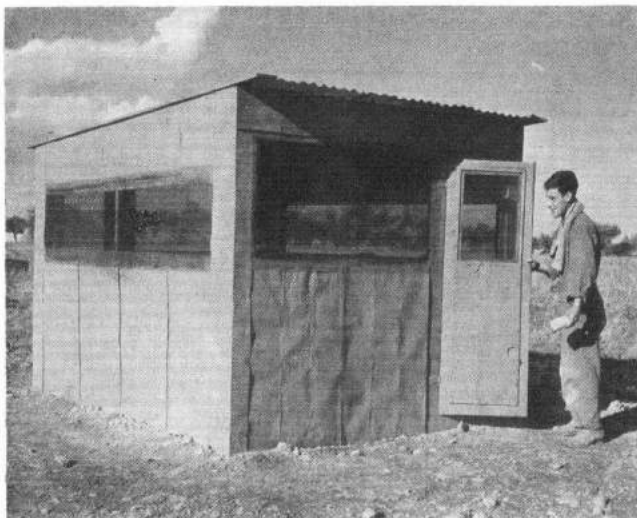
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A Soldier's Prayer on Christmas Eve, 1944

Out of the grey skies rent by the sword of Mars,
Out of the grey skies lost to the light of stars;
Out of the grey skies into the hearts of men,
Will shine that Star of Bethlehem again.

Out of the dark night stilled by the touch of death,
Out of the dark night hushed by the devil's breath,
Out of the dark night, shining from afar
Will be the guiding light of Evening's Star.

Into the stilled hearts drowned by the tide of war,
Into the stilled hearts there will come once more,
The hope and faith that fill the hearts of men
—The Prince of Peace will rule the earth again.



THE PLANS for this ultra-modern latrine will be sent free of charge to any former member of the 454th who now owns a farm. This latrine, M-1, modified, is of simple construction, requiring only the materials from twenty-six frag bomb boxes. Containing seating-space for a bridge foursome and two kibitzers, this modern building is offered to posterity by the 454th Bombardment Group with the simple remark: No post-war home should be without one.

It was Christmas morning and the brisk morning air seemed to reflect the lightness of our hearts. The sun broke through the winter clouds to reflect the warmth of our hearts. The hymns from the group's chapel reflected the song in our hearts. This was Christmas morning as it came to San Giovanni airfield, bringing with it the lesson so worded in "God rest you merry gentlemen; let nothing you dismay. Remember Christ, our Savior, was born on Christmas day."

* * *

The World

The first month of 1945 found the battlefronts of the world changing rapidly as Russia, Great Britain, and the United States continued their drives against Germany and Japan. In January Russia repulsed a counterattack at Budapest, and announced that they were only 63 miles from Berlin with the fall of Poland's capital, Warsaw. In the western area, German counterattacks were gaining ground in the Strasbourg region, but the Third Army continued to push through the snow-clad Siegfried Line to enter Luxembourg, and in Italy the Allied Armies wiped out a German bridgehead on the Senio River. The spotlight in the Pacific theatre focused on MacArthur's Sixth Army units which were only 34 miles from Manila, on the Marianas from which Superforts again raided Tokyo to shoot down 75 Japanese fighters, and in China where Jap

thrusts threatened U. S. air bases there. Back in the States people were raising Hell over the fact that three servicemen were bounced from a cross-country flight to make room for Col. Roosevelt's A-priority dog.

The Group

The 454th Bombardment Group got off to a poor start at the beginning of the new year. In January, 1945, the winter set in worse than any winter Italy had experienced in a number of years. This forced our bombers to hug the ground, and only an occasional break in the heavy cloud formations that covered the Foggia regions permitted the group to resume its operational status. During January, only seven missions could be flown, and at one time weather grounded the planes for a total of ten days. The missions that were flown, however, showed surprising results and raised our bombing percentage. Vienna felt the blows of the 454th as we dropped hundreds of tons of bombs on the east station in a successful attempt to cut the supply route through Austria. We paid another visit to the marshalling yards at Graz, and the oil refinery at Moosbierbaum, Austria. The bomb-strike photos presented gratifying results for all of these missions, and, had it not been for the weather, the group would probably have cut another week or two off the length of the war with its January bombardment. Weather conditions, as well as flak, accounted for ten of the

JANUARY, 1945

group's bombers lost that month. This was quite a high average for only 100 sorties during the month, but war can't stop to argue with the weatherman.

Lira

Oh, the pay that they give you
They say is mighty fine;
They give you fifty dollars
And take back forty-nine.
Oh, I don't want no more of army life,
Gee, Mom, I wanna go home. . . .

We sang that in basic training even before we received our first pay from the army. We sang it while training in an army technical school, and while training at McCook and Charleston. When we arrived in Italy we found that the words and music were still the same, even though we could now add twenty per cent to the fifty dollars, twenty per cent "overseas" pay. But, nevertheless, the army still managed to get most of it back.

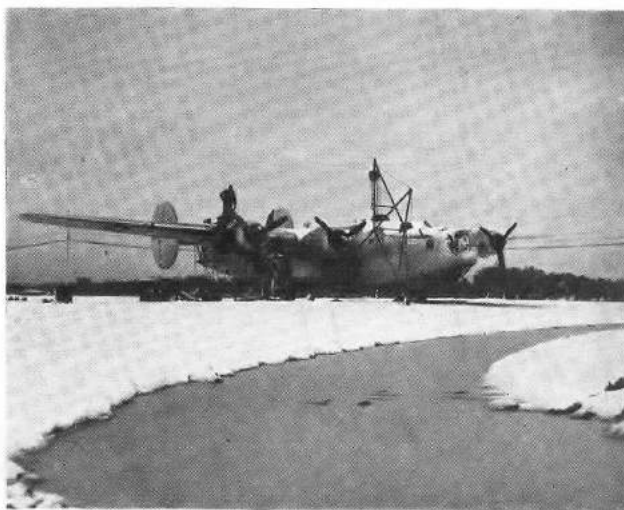
We were paid in Italy with little pieces of paper, the paper being not much better than that used in the average daily newspaper, and not worth much more. The pieces of paper bore markings to evaluate them. One such bill would

be worth fifty cents while another bill, being exactly like the first except for an extra digit, would be worth five dollars. All this was no doubt the simplest method of making Allied Military Currency, but the Italians found that the bills were easily counterfeited.

The feel of a good ol' American greenback was almost forgotten in our long months of association with the Italian *lira*. A few fellows in the group still had a couple of one dollar bills which they would occasionally crinkle in our ears to remind us that good currency was still in existence in some parts of the world. For the most part, however, we were content to cope with the paper Italian bills, looking at each *cento lire* bill as so many drinks or haircuts, and not seeing it as the equivalent of an American dollar. The American dollar stood for a comfortable theatre, a new suit of clothes, gasoline in the car, a steak dinner. We were unable to buy any of these with the Italian bills, chiefly because Italy didn't have such things, and therefore we could not attach the same value to the *lira* as we could to the penny.

Long before the war the *lira* had been accepted by world finance as being worth a fraction over twenty-four cents in our exchange. At that rate of exchange the Italian note would be acceptable in any country of the world, but as the war began the value of the *lira* dropped steadily until, at the time of the Allied invasion of Italy, it was worth but one-half of a cent on the black-market exchange in Switzerland. The Allies, as

THE WEATHER of Italy was a strange phenomena, being generally made up of four elements—too cold, too hot, too wet, too dry. During the winter rains of 1944-1945, a three-inch blanket of snow fell upon the muddy grounds, and the base looked almost like a picture on a Christmas card. After everyone had worked hard clearing paths through the snow and sweeping the snow from the planes and equipment, the snow melted, leaving the field even muddier than before. It was nice to look at for two hours, though.





THE CHAPEL BELL stands watch over the tent area of the 739th Bombardment Squadron where sleeping combat men rest after the day's mission to Vienna. Since one tent is rather much like any other tent, there is little difference between one squadron area and another, and if it weren't for the chapel bell this photograph might be labeled as the view from the door of any tent in any squadron.

an illustration of good faith, issued their occupational currency at the value of one cent per *lira*. This, of course, helped to stabilize the financial construction of the teetering Italian government, but, actually, the buying power of the *lira* was not worth even one-half cent.

The financial construction of any country is based, primarily, on such things as the natural resources of the country, the manufacturing output of the country, the buying-power of its citizens, and its world-trade. These things, however, did not exist in occupied Italy. What few natural resources that Italy had were in northern Italy, at that time occupied by German armies. For a number of years the factories had been manufacturing nothing but the weapons of war, and, naturally, the Allied bombing of Italy and the occupation put a stop to this manufacturing. This left nothing for the Italian to buy and no place for the Italian to work. Thus, without income, the Italian had no buying power. The Italian *lira* was not worth a tinker's dam.

Thus, the money was worth little to us. Store shelves were bare; there was nothing to buy. For what else could we spend our monthly fifty? Entertainment, thanks to A. R. C., U. S. O., and Army Special Services, was no expense. Our clothing and meals were, of course, furnished by Uncle S. Our PX rations of toiletries and minor luxuries were at reduced prices requiring an expenditure of less than one dollar a week. A haircut and shave, our only really necessary expense, amounted to something like twelve

cents, an AMG established price. So, what could we do with our *multi mille lire*?

For one thing, we would spend it at the bars in the various EM clubs throughout the group area. Still, a stomach could stand just so much of the Italian poison, and at thirty cents a drink we could no spend much. Some of us spent money, while others made it, in the nightly "crap" and poker games. Even those who disapproved of gambling often found themselves spending an enjoyable evening, finding a thrill in the turn of a card or the roll of dice. There was nothing to do with our money and nothing to do with our evenings. Was it wrong to spend these useless bits of paper in an attempt to forget for one evening our loneliness, our discomfort, our war?

But we did find a use for our money. We bought War Bonds. Even before the war the Italian *lira* had not been so powerful, had not had such value. For *settecento e cinquanta lire* we could buy a GI war bond—a ten dollar bond that meant a sooner end to Nazi Germany, a swifter return to the Zone of Interior, a better post-war life for us, for America, and for the world. The Italian *lira* was working for us then.

Yes, they paid us fifty dollars and, through one method or another, they took back forty-nine—but now they were only borrowing it. Someday we'll be able to point to our new cars and our new homes, and say, "We bought those in Italy ten years ago with some little pieces of paper that weren't worth a tinker's dam."

FEBRUARY, 1945

The World

February of 1945 found the Russian Armies driving into the Baltic region as the First Army entered Cologne and the Seventh Army repulsed German drives and drove them back into the Saar basin. In the Pacific theatre, B-29's continued to bomb Japan, destroying 332 planes in two days of fighting. The memorable invasion of Iwo Jima in the volcanic groups also began in February. Back in the States people were humming *Accentuate the Positive* from a recent Bing Crosby production and reading Ben Cerf's humorous *Try and Stop Me*.

The Group

In February of 1945, the weather broke to enable us to set an all time high of twenty-three missions for the month. After a month of sweating it out on the ground, the air crews were eager to finish their missions, and the group flew sixteen steady missions in thirteen days, flying double task forces over Germany, Austria, and Yugoslavia. The weather during February, however, was still unpredictable, and five targets had to be abandoned when heavy clouds settled over the areas forcing our bombers to turn from

the targets and carry their heavy bomb-loads back to the base at Cerignola. For the most part, though, the group did remarkably well, losing only five planes in its 450 sorties, dropping 850 tons of bombs with over sixty per cent accuracy. In February, the group returned to Vienna four times to bomb oil refineries, the communications area, and the central railroad yards and shops. And again the group went to Triesti to bomb the shipyards and harbor where the Italian liner *Rex* lay burning from a previous 15th AAF mission. Moosbierbaum, too, had a return engagement from the 454th group, and three times in February heavy demolition bombs rained upon the oil refineries. In brief, the group fairly well plastered Germany, Austria, and Italy with its heavy bomb loads throughout the second month of the new year.

Spring is Sprung

Spring comes to Sunny Italy, to San Giovanni Field, to the 454th group area. Good ol' Spring, arrayed in all its glory of green grass and leafy trees and blossoming weeds. Good ol' Sunny Italy, where there's mud and rain and wind and snow and dust and every element of weather save common sunshine. Ah, hail to the vernal equinox with its yearly renaissance of Mother Nature in all her splendor.

We had suffered the long, cold nights of an Italian winter. We had seen a snowfall in a land not accustomed to the presence of snow. We

THE ORDNANCE SECTION has the job of supplying food for the hungry bomb-bays of the Liberator bombers. Once the bombs are at the plane's revetment, it's up to the armorers to load them into the bomb-bay, but the ordnance man has to bring the bombs from the bomb dump and fuse the bombs after they are loaded. Playing with truck-load after truck-load of 500-pound bundles of TNT, the ordnance man treats the high explosives like a toy, even though he respects their potential power.





MANY OF OUR BOMBERS, *crippled by enemy flak, have been forced to use this ingenious method of breaking the plane's speed on landing when brakes have been damaged. Two parachutes, tied to the waist mounts, are released as the bomber lands.*

had seen the snow melt after three hours on the ground to add more mud to the ever-growing mire that we so proudly called "our airbase." In heavy overshoes we had wallowed through ankle-deep pools of mud to roll a bomb to the bomb-bays or to carry a report to group headquarters. For eight months we had driven jeeps and trucks and bomb-trailers through vast seas of pultaceous pulp of paludal precipitate.

Ah, but Spring is here. Should this not end the muddy curse of winter? Hell, no! Spring seems to bring nothing but its usual showers to the plains of Foggia, and, instead of improving, conditions for the most part are decidedly worse. We stand with our heads in turtle-like helmets, with our bodies in tent-like raincoats, and with our feet in paste-like mud, and raise our faces to thee, oh Spring, in hopes of deliverance. And how do you answer our prayers? A face-full of rain we get, yet! Nothing but a macerating monsoon of moistening madefaction to add to the pultaceous pulp of paludal precipitate!

But let us look to the donut and not the hole. Spring must have something in its favor. Does

it not precede the summer? And what does summer bring? Why, summer brings the warm, hot, blistering Italian midday and the biting, dust-filled winds. Especially the dust-filled winds. Yes, we find that the grass is not always greener on the other side; it is not always greener in summer than in winter, so to speak. The mud has disappeared and in its place we have dust. Dust that fills the hair and eyes and ears, and whips through the tents with the effect of a sand-blasting machine. Sunny Italy, once Muddy Italy, is now Dusty Italy! A sporiferous sirocco of sabulous sandstorms to replace the macerating monsoons of moistening madefaction and the pultaceous pulp of paludal precipitate.

Come, though, let us not bother our minds with such sad and discomforting thoughts. Let us rejoice, for this is Spring, and life is once more gay and fresh and joyous. Let us vote for the Queen of the May. Let us warble a Mendelssohn melody. Let us dance hand in hand with the gremlins on the wing of a Liberator. Or have we been overseas too long?

Ah, good ol' Sunny Italy! Ah, good ol' Spring!

MARCH, 1945

The World

March headlines highlighted new landings in the Philippines, the Russian capture of Danzig, and the Third Army's crossing of the Rhine into Frankfurt. In Italy Allied Armies began new drives toward Bologna as the RAF dropped the world's "most powerful" bomb—eleven tons—on Germany. Back in the States "oscar" were awarded to Bing "Going My Way" Crosby and Ingrid "Gaslight" Bergman in Hollywood. *Don't Fence Me In* was number one on the Hit Parade.

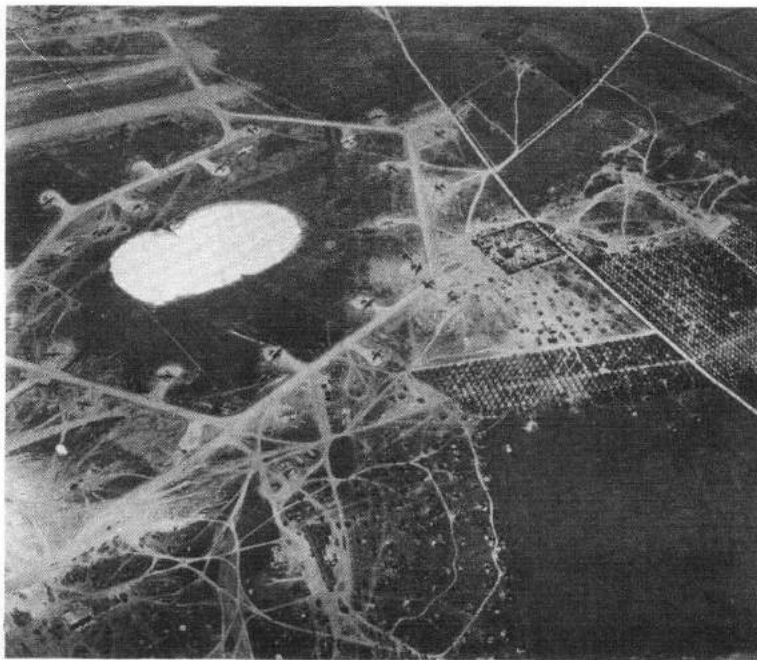
The Group

March found the 454th flying another twenty-one missions, including four double missions and one quadruple mission. The weather had cleared completely, and therefore no targets had to be abandoned; twenty-three different targets felt the blows from the 454th, some of them being subjected to two or three raids during the month. Linz, Vienna, Graz, Moosbierbaum, Klagenfurt,

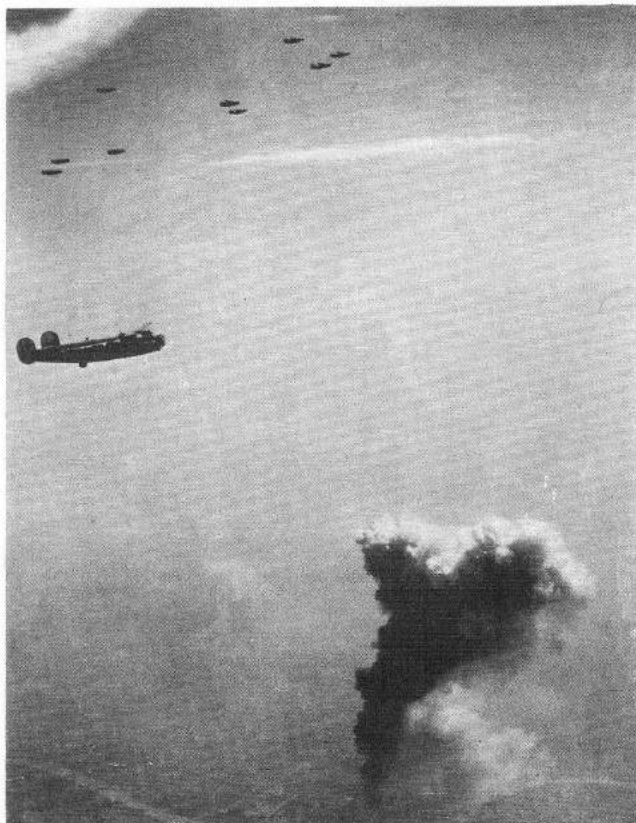
and Klapfenburg, Austria, all watched the Liberator bombers of our group unload the bombs upon them, resulting in the destruction of three oil refineries, four marshalling yards, a tank works, a steel works, and a locomotive works. The tank works at St. Valentin, Austria, also received a crushing blow from the 454th when, with the 15th AAF, we swept across the huge factories to lay a nest of eggs in the center of the famous Krupp factory. One mission during the month was in direct support of the onrushing Red armies in eastern Austria when the group bombed the sidings at Szombathely, Hungary. On the thirtieth of March, the group dispatched four forces to hit four separate targets simultaneously. On the first, ninth, twenty-second, and thirty-first of March, the group flew double missions to Austria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Germany, and Italy for a total of 650 sorties, the group's highest record. A new record was also hit on tonnage with over 1400 tons of high explosives raining down upon Germany's strongholds with an accuracy of eighty-four per cent.

Rumor Hath It

During the months of April, May, June, and July, rumors in the group area were thicker than the mud, and anyone that paid any atten-



*Aerial view of
San Giovanni Airfield*



A direct hit Ploesti

tion to these rumors would be kept busier than an air raid warden in Berlin. The following is the story of Pfc. Wilfred M. (for Montgomery) Widebottom, a poor, unfortunate victim of idle rumor, but this could have happened to any one of us. Our scene opens with Pfc. Widebottom rushing back to his tent to pack his barracks bag. He had just heard:

"Well, I was sitting at the switchboard today and I heard General Upthegrove say to Colonel Aynesworth that the 454th was supposed to be off the field by the twelfth of April. He said that we've flown our last mission and all we're waiting for is written orders from Air Force."

That evening at chow, Pfc. Widebottom overheard a conversation between two master sergeants, and afterwards he rushed back to unpack his duffel bag and settle down for a long stay in Italy. He overheard something along these lines:

"Yes, it's a toss-up between us and the Fifth Wing to stay in Italy as occupational air force. They've been debating whether to use the 304th

Wing or the Fifth Wing, and the only difference is whether to use the B-17 or the B-24."

And so it went. Pfc. Widebottom spent nine-tenths of his time packing and unpacking his bag, or writing letters home to say that he'd be home soon or to disregard his previous letter that said he would be home soon. He was not what you might call a gullible soul; he was just overly conscientious. He wanted to be sure that when the group was ready to move, he'd be ready to move, too, and in this way present no delaying element to the progress of the 454th.

But the rumors persisted:

"All men with under eighty-five points will be shipped out to the army of occupation."

"They're going to disband the group here in Italy. We'll sit for weeks in a repple depple."

"All men with over eighty-five points will be shipped to the 455th group which is going to be an air force replacement depot."

"I just got back from Naples where I met a sailor on one of the ships and he said that all their boat is waiting for is three of the groups from 15th Air Force."

"By-the-Book said today that we were to be the last group to leave Italy. The ones going to the Pacific are leaving first."

"We're supposed to be out of here by the twenty-first."

"No, it's the eighteenth . . ."

"No, we're staying . . ."

"No, we're leaving . . ."

Pfc. Wilfred M. (for Montgomery) Widebottom was slowly going crazy. He had beaten a regular path from the mess hall to his tent during his numerous trips to pack and unpack his duffel bag. He was nervous and excited—in short, a mental and physical wreck. Poor Wilfred!

Finally, Pfc. Widebottom decided to take stock of himself. Looking himself straight in the eye (a difficult task, indeed) he spoke to himself with such words as follows: "Widebottom, old boy, you are surely driving yourself into an early grave, and possibly into a section eight. Now, let us get a firm grip on ourselves. Really, this is all very silly." Hence, Pfc. Wilfred M. (for Montgomery) Widebottom decided that he

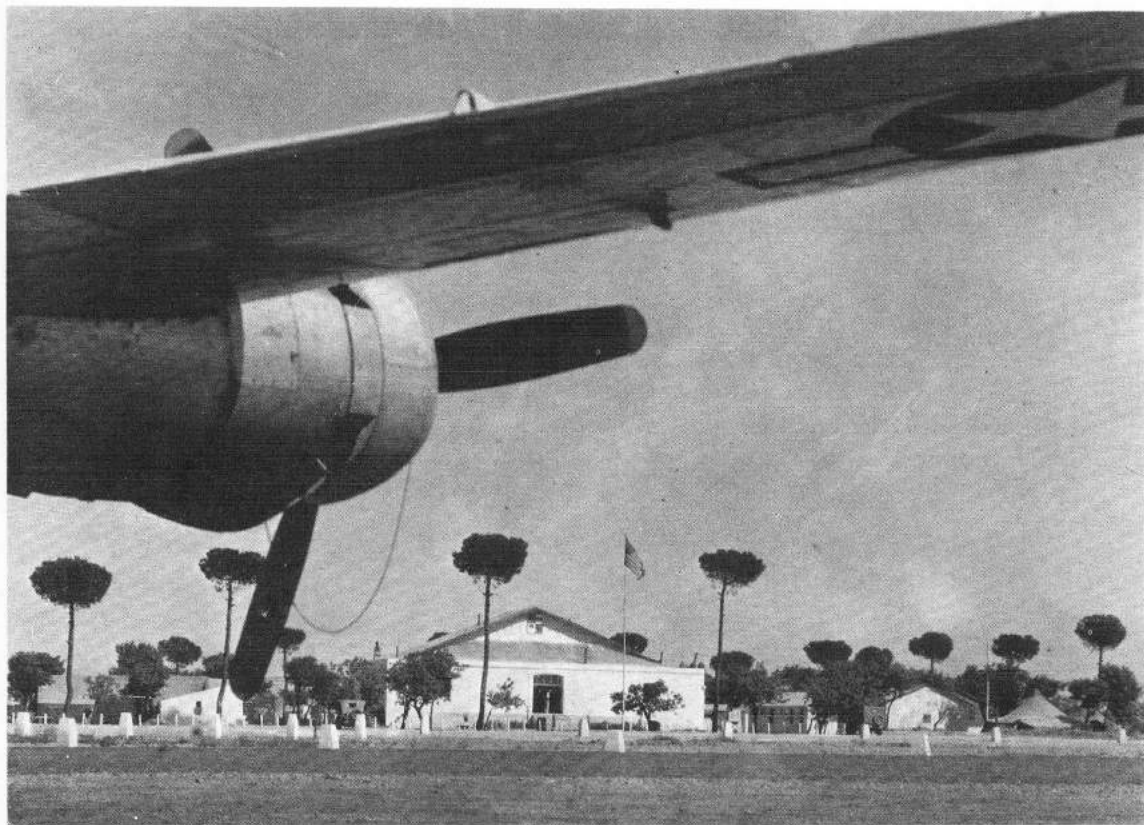
would pay no further attention to any and all rumors. In the future all rumors would go in one ear and out the other (which was quite possible in this case since they would meet no resistance between Wilfred's ears).

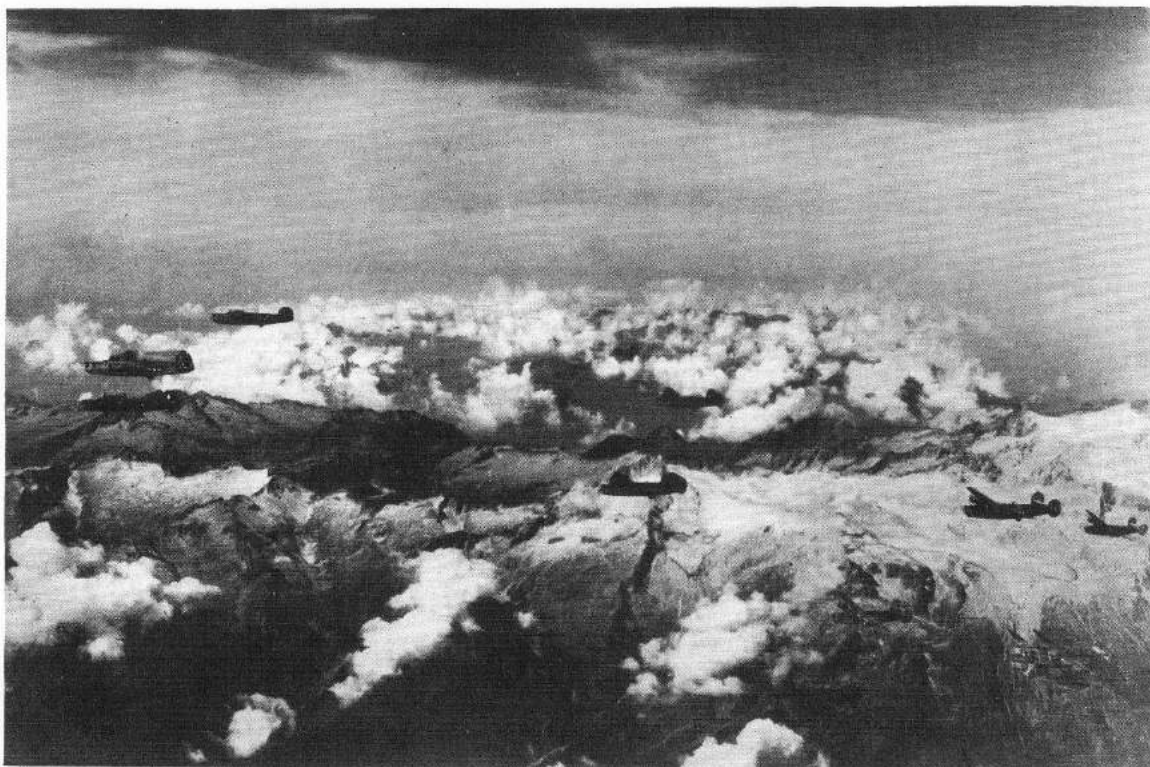
Time goes on. The rumors continued to flavor each meal at the mess hall and each drink at the EM club. Until finally the morning of July eighth arrived to find the group in the state of excitement and general commotion. Pfc. Widebottom was lying on his cot in a little stone hut beside the dispensary when a jeep drove up to the door and dispersed a variety of passengers. First, there was the squadron supply sergeant who wanted to know why Pfc. Widebottom did not turn in his cot prior to shipment. Then there was the first sergeant who wanted to know why Pfc. Widebottom was not at last night's formation to find out which truck he was to ride. There was the squadron adjutant who wanted to know why Pfc. Widebottom did not pick up his dog tags and pay book in the orderly room. There was the squadron executive officer who wanted to know why Pfc. Widebottom was

not out on the truck ready for movement. Then there was the squadron commander and the group commander who wanted to know why everyone else was talking to Pfc. Widebottom. Finally, there was the group chaplain who came along just for the ride since it was his jeep that everyone else was riding.

Pfc. Wilfred M. Widebottom listened carefully to each of his visitors, then carefully lit a cigarette and turned to regard the intruders. "Look," he said, "I resolved long ago to disregard any and all rumors even though they are quoted by the commanding officer. I regard this all as another attempt to bolster my fluctuating morale, and until you can show me in black and white that the 454th Bombardment Group is leaving Italy I shall continue to pay no attention whatsoever to hearsay."

With that statement, Pfc. Widebottom rolled over and went quickly back to sleep. We feel, now, that he has had no further inconvenience from old man Rumor. In fact, the last we heard from him, he was still lying on his cot at San Giovanni field in Sunny Italy.





OVER THE ALPS of Switzerland, the clouds often kept better formation than the heavy bombers of the 454th returning from a particularly rough mission to Vienna or other flak-ridden targets in central Europe.

The World

April brought world startling news with the death of our commander-in-chief, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who died April twelfth at the age of 63. This, however, did not stop, or even slow, the war effort, and Russia announced that Berlin was completely encircled. About this time the horrors of German concentration camps were brought to the public attention as Allied troops captured Bremen and drove toward Munich. Another big headline of the month was the linking of Russian and American troops at the Elbe River, the fall of Venice and Milan, and the capture and execution of Mussolini and his mistress. But death struck two sad blows during April and the invasion of Okinawa brought the headline: Death Comes to G I's Pal, Ernie Pyle.

The Group

April, 1945, was the last operational month of the 454th Bombardment Group. By that time, rumors were floating thick and fast in regards

APRIL, 1945

to the possible surrender of the German military regime. Each day that the group took to the skies, everyone expected it to be our last mission over Europe. Finally we came to our last mission, although no one realized at the time that our bombers had carried their last load of destruction and death. The twenty-seven missions flown in April brought our final total to 243 missions (exclusive of doubles), 7071 sorties, in fifteen months of operations. We had dropped a total of 13,389.19 tons of bombs, destroying or damaging over 150 different German strong-points throughout southern Europe. We had lost 134 of our own bombers, and had destroyed on the ground or in the air a total of 334 enemy planes. On the twenty-fifth of April, 1945, the group bombed the marshalling yards at Linz, Austria, and the bombers returned safely to the base at San Giovanni where they settled down with the ease and grace of the planes that

first landed on the same strip fifteen months before. The Liberator bombers of the 454th had flown to San Giovanni Field to accomplish a certain task in conjunction with the 15th Army Air Force's program of tactical and strategical bombardment of vital Nazi strongholds in southern and eastern Europe. Now they had finished the job, and were taking the rest that they had earned. The group had maintained a total of 173 heavy bombers, only sixty-two of which were left on the wide airfield to carry the group's airmen back to the United States. And the 454th Bombardment Group took a deep breath and settled down to sweat out the last mission, the mission to America.

Finito

May, however, brought much rejoicing where April had brought tears. First came the surrender of German troops in Italy; then, the fall of Berlin; finally, the surrender of Germany. After almost six years of war, Germany had been driven back from her vast conquests to her last square mile of soil, and she was beaten to her knees. V-E Day was declared May eighth at 11:01 P. M., central European time. But we had another war to fight, so we looked to the Orient where things seemed to be progressing rapidly with advances in the Philippines, Burma, and Okinawa, and with the invasion of Borneo. For some, the war was over; for others it had just begun.

83-84-85 Bingo!

With the end of the war in Italy, the end of the war in Europe, our attention was immediately attracted by the war in the Pacific area where battles still raged on land and sea and air. Of course the uppermost thought in our mind was our possibilities of being transferred to the Asiatic command. Realizing that we might be sent there, we immediately began looking for ways to keep from going. The easiest method of escaping further overseas duty, and by far the best way, would be to make ourselves eligible for discharge, so we thus borrowed paper and pencil and spent many hours figuring how we stood with the point system for discharge.

Most of us had entered the army in late '42 or early '43; hence, as of May twelfth, we had

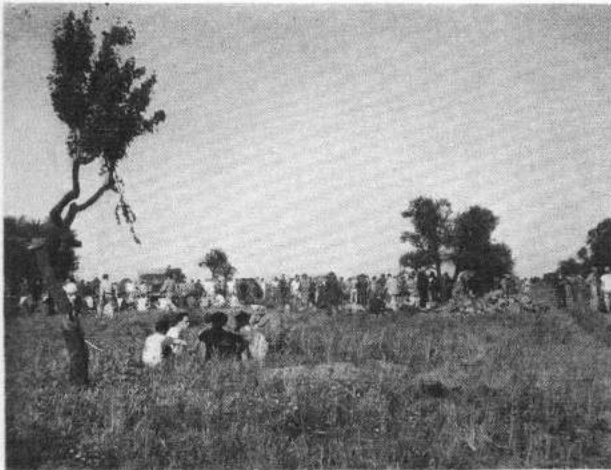
approximately thirty points for service time. The group had been overseas seventeen months at that time, so that gave us another seventeen points. Now for awards and decorations. We couldn't count our Good Conduct Medal or our Distinguished Unit Citations, but we did have eight battle stars which, at five points per, brought us another forty points. This totaled something like:

Service time in the army	30
Service time overseas	17
8 Battle Stars at 5 pts	40
	—
Total	87

Whooppee! Eighty-seven points! Discharge score at that time was eighty-five points, and it was soon discovered that over eighty per cent of the group was eligible for release from the service. Of course, some of us had extra points, more than we needed, such as the Bronze Star or Soldier's Medal which meant five more points or a child dependent which meant twelve more points. Let's have another beer!



This is what we were paid with, little pieces of paper worth anywhere from one cent to ten dollars, each lire being worth a penny. (The sixteen dollars and fifteen cents shown here are through the courtesy of Cpl. Vernon Smith since the photographer and the editor were both broke that day.)



On V-E Day, we sat beneath the Italian sun . . .

V-E Day

MAY 8, 1945

On V-E Day, the 454th Bombardment Group celebrated the completion of the mission to Italy, drank 12,000 bottles of beer, ate 1200 pounds of barbecued meat, slept that night with a lighter heart and a firmer dream.



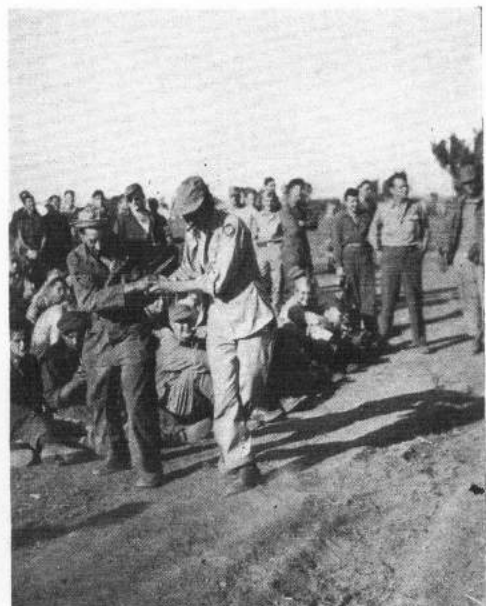
. . . ate cold cuts and barbecues . . .



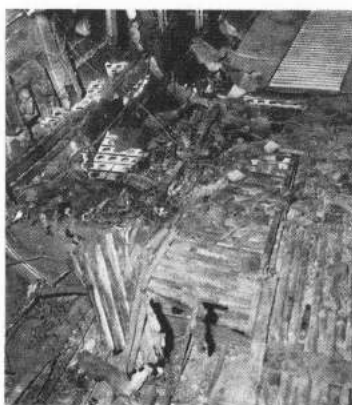
. . . drank beer by the case . . .



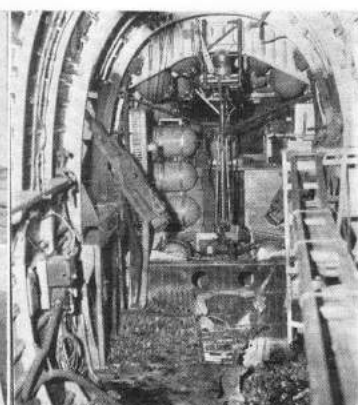
. . . listened to the GI band . . .



. . . and danced.



FLAK *A harmless-looking puff of black smoke rocked the heavy bomber and fought with the pilot for control of the*



plane. Slip Stream had received an almost direct hit from the flak batteries in Europe and had been forced down at San Severo, Italy.

On the other hand, there were a few of us who had perhaps only twenty-six or twenty-seven months service time. This totaled only eighty-four points, and those who had more than enough, even though they offered, could not give extra points to those who fell short of the eighty-five mark. So we had another beer, and, while some laughed over it, we cried in it.

There was a faint ray of hope, however, for those with only eighty-three points. Even the best latrines held talk of the army lowering the critical score within the next month or two, and this gave us something to think about, something to hope for, something to pray for.

Where now?

But that counting-the-chickens deal always held true for the army, and conversation soon took the turn towards the occupational air force. "Well, now I heard. . . ." "Yes, but this is a fact. . . ." And so it went until it suddenly became a fact and a few members of the 454th Bombardment Group packed their duffel bags and said farewell to the group that had fostered them through seventeen months of war. So close to going home, so close to being discharged, these men were picked to join the Fifth Wing for possibly another twelve-month stay in "sunny" Italy. After the first list came a second list, and a third, as truck-loads of men headed for the Foggia region which harbored the Fifth

Wing. Those of us with under eighty-five points sweated and sweated.

Then the men with over eighty-five points had their morale jarred a little when it was announced that men eligible for discharge would be transferred to the 455th Bombardment Group where they would wait until all the men for re-deployment could be shipped out of Italy. They, too, so close to going home, were faced with another possible five-month stay in dear old Italy. The morale of the 454th Group had never been very high, but in those two black months that preceded our shipment to the Zone of Interior morale was lower than it had been in the blackest day of the war. The peace was beginning to look tougher than the war.

Throughout these two months, May and June, work went on as usual, not as difficult for some, perhaps, but harder for many, especially the clerks at group headquarters. Instead of flying combat, we flew practice missions, and the engineering sections of the four squadrons had their hands full with the care of the heavy bombers. Towards the end of June, however, combat men left the briefing room and walked to their bombers for the last time at San Giovanni. The roar of engines in the warm spring mornings caused ground men to look upward as formations of Liberators buzzed low over group headquarters and, dipping their wings in a last respectful salute, headed towards Africa on a

route that would eventually lead them back to America. One day we looked to find that the 454th had no more bombers dotting the taxi-strips of San Giovanni airfield. The group felt like an orphan.

Hup! Two! Three! Fo!

In the meanwhile, working on the principle that idle hands breed mischief, the group's gears inaugurated a system of drilling, marching, parades, and physical training. Shades of basic training, didn't we deserve a rest? We had been so absorbed in winning a war during the past year and a half that we had forgotten all the methods of goldbricking, and we found ourselves swiftly reverting to our old basic training goofing-off. It kept us on our toes, though.

For the most part our last few weeks of stay in Italy were quite comfortable. The rumors that persisted in haunting every latrine and mess hall were, of course, troublesome at times; but physically we enjoyed a life of luxury. When we could get away with it, we slept till noon. During the afternoon we had nothing to do but sleep some more, or read books, or run into town for a cup of coffee at the Red Cross Club. In the evening we would gather at the various squadron clubs and drink rum or cognac, or shoot "crap" until we went broke, or play cards, or, of course, just sit around in a good old army bull-session. There were baseballs and footballs, and basketballs floating around the squad-

ron areas during the day, and most of us developed a healthy suntan or an uncomfortable sunburn. Since there was no work to engage our evening hours, the 454th's Roxy became more and more popular as we found more and more spare time on our hands.

Are We or Aren't We?

But though our hands were idle, our minds were not. We spent the greater part of each day sifting, sorting, and filing rumors, balancing the favorable with the unfavorable and trying to figure out which might originate from a reliable source and which might be figments of the active imaginations of such fellows like the one shown sitting at the typewriter on Page 157.

"Hey, Bob, tell Zak what you heard at S-1 today. You know, about our shipping out on the twenty-second."

"Say, ya' know what I heard today? Well, I wuz down at wing today and the PFC in operations told me that the 454th was the next to move; all we're waitin' for is a boat."

And so it went, with at least eight new rumors each day. Every officer from the second lieutenant to the colonel was quoted time and again, the officers with the most optimistic outlook being quoted more often than the others.

Yes, We Are!

Finally it came—the 454th was ordered to prepare for shipment to the Zone of Interior, to

THIS PHOTOGRAPH was the result of a publicity stunt started by Russ MacQuiddy of the Public Relations Office when he started to write stories to accompany cheese-cake photos of members of the group contributing to the Infantile Paralysis Fund's March of Dimes. Since the pictures were posed, there actually was no money collected, but someone started asking: what's happening to the lire that the photos show the men donating. Hence, we had to take up a collection, and Colonel Aynesworth turned \$433.41 over to General Upthegrove for forwarding to New York.





THE TEATRO MERCANTILE was formerly Cerignola's opera house, but with Allied occupation of Italy it became the Red Cross Music Hall and boasted the performances of many USO troops, an occasional Italian opera, and daily matinee and evening showings of the latest photoplays. Looking out upon a park of imported palm trees, the theatre was a picturesque sight in the city of rubble and ruin. Furnished with wooden seats and two high-altitude balconies, it was none-the-less one of the most comfortable and attractive theatres in southern Italy.

the United States. It came as a relief from the mental tension that we had been under for two months. Finally we knew what the score was. No more rumors from the latrine, this was the "poop from group!"

Tents and temporary buildings came down with the speed of lightning as the 454th prepared to move. Soon there was nothing left standing except the permanent, so-to-speak, tufa-block buildings that we had constructed. The base began to look much as it had when we first moved in that January morning of 1944. How bare the fields looked; how lonely the olive trees appeared. We had been used to seeing tents thickly strewn throughout the area occupied by the 454th group. There was little left.

And so it came on the morning of July eighth that the 454th Bombardment Group said farewell to Cerignola, to San Giovanni airfield, to the Fifteenth Air Force. In the crisp, cool morning we boarded trucks for the ride back across the mountains to Staging Area No. 1 at Bagnoli, north of Naples. As the trucks turned onto the road leading away from the base, we took one last glance at the farmland that had been our home for eighteen months. What a strange feeling! We were happy; our joy was beyond expression; but the lines around our mouths were not lines of laughter and the wrinkles by our eyes were not wrinkles of smiles. It was a relief to be on our way, for we could never for a minute keep the war from our minds as long as we lived at Cerignola where everything we saw

and did reminded us of almost two years of hard work and hard living and hard fighting.

Bagnoli Again

At Bagnoli we settled down for another wait, but it was a pleasant wait. We knew what we were waiting for, what lay ahead of us, and we could endure any discomfort for a chance to ride the waves to America. Of course, the beds in "the college" were not as comfortable as those we had known at San Giovanni, but even the hard wooden bunks were softer than the marble floors that we slept on when we first met Bagnoli. The weather, too, was more pleasant, since our first stay at the Collegio di Ciano had been in the biting winter of January in Italy and we were now able to sit on the college roof and take sun-baths. The mess arrangement at Bagnoli had undergone a few changes, too, since our first arrival, and we ate better food in better mess halls under better conditions.

During the day we would gather at the Red Cross building (formerly the college library) and play cards, or ping-pong, or pool. Occasionally, we could "take off" and we'd head for Naples, keeping an eye on the harbor for a likely troop transport. Finally it came, the S.S. Argentina, and our days and nights of waiting were over.

Adios

She stood next to the foot of the gangplank. The twenty-year-old girl with the jet black hair

and creamy skin was always in the way, no matter where she moved in an effort to escape the stream of soldiers flowing by her as they moved up the gangplank, into the transport. She was crying.

Dressed in a dark green, snug-fitting dress, the attractive Italian girl appeared to be from one of the high class families in Naples. As she stood there, she twisted her white handkerchief into a rope, and tears glistened in her eyes. A small, brown suitcase rested on the dock next to her feet; she looked at the suitcase and then up to the top of the gangplank and cried harder. Three of the GI's supervising the loading of the ship walked over to where she was crying and asked her what was wrong. She told them that her fiance was leaving on the transport and had promised to take her with him, but now they wouldn't allow her to go up the gangplank and her sweetheart wasn't around to help her out.

One of the men volunteered to find her boy friend and bring him back to her. They felt sorry for her because she did not have a chance of going with the ship, and it sounded like her man was just leaving her on until the very end.

A few minutes later, a tall, blond flying officer descended the gangplank, and the girl threw herself into his arms. She clung to him desperately, but he did not seem moved by her actions. The officer noticed that everyone was looking at him; he took her by the hand and led the weeping girl away from the ship to a secluded spot where no one could see them.

A young Air Corps major came down the gangplank right behind the flying officer. He stopped to talk to the three soldiers who had questioned the Italian girl.

"She's in a bad way," he said, shaking his head. "That poor kid risked everything just because she loved that fellow, and now that he's going back to America where there are plenty of women, he is forgetting her completely. You know that an Italian girl is disgraced in the eyes of her neighbors once she goes out with an American, and more than one girl has had her hair cut off for being seen on the street with a GI. They wouldn't dare touch her while her boy friend was still here, but now that he's leaving, she's in for a bad time."

While the major was talking, the blond pilot returned to the foot of the gangplank with the girl. She had stopped crying, but she still clutched his arm tightly. He kissed her once more and then climbed the gangplank into the hold of the transport. The girl was crying again before the officer had disappeared from view.

A convoy of trucks unloaded another group of soldiers carrying heavy packs on their backs. The men formed into platoons and moved past the weeping Italian girl and up the gangplank. For a few moments she was lost in the bustling activity once again. Wringing her handkerchief, the girl talked to everyone who would listen to her story, and several minutes later she had another soldier chasing into the liner after her sweetheart. The flying officer refused to leave the ship again.

THE SPECIAL SERVICE division of the 454th Group managed somehow to procure two projection machines for the 454th's Roxy. These machines, under the care of Edward Koby, did away with the fifteen minute wait everytime the operator had to change reels. This made such photoplays as *Lady in the Dark*, *Going My Way*, and *My Friend Flicka*, a bit more entertaining. It also meant that we wouldn't have to sit quite so long on the hard steel stools in the biting winter air.





A DONUT, a cup of coffee, and a smile from an attractive Red Cross girl greeted the returning combat men after their flights to German-held Europe. This photograph was obviously staged since "chair borne" Frank Teske seems to be on the receiving end of a smile from Ila Mae Mattson, from Montana. Insert shows Harriet "Red" Vaden, the southern belle who was our first RC representative and donut donator.

A group of Italian dock workers loading heavy equipment into the hold of the ship had been watching the Italian girl for a long time. During a lull in the loading, several of them approached her and started to jabber in Italian, waving their arms in the air as they talked. She moved away from them, but they followed her. Finally, she appealed to one of the soldiers for help, and the GI chased the Italians away. The girl stayed close to the soldier after that.

The last squadron of men arrived at the dock and moved into position to board the ship. A short, fat transportation officer stood next to the gangplank calling out each soldier's name as he passed. The last man entered the ship, and the GI's supervising the loading gave their records a last minute check. The dock workers carried the last piece of cargo aboard, and the transport was ready to shove off as soon as the gangplank was lowered.

The well-dressed girl watched the soldiers make final preparations to leave. She saw that there were no more men waiting to board the ship and that the loading of cargo had been completed, but she told the soldier standing beside her that she couldn't believe her sweetheart was leaving her forever. The GI tried to comfort her.

Amid cheers from the passengers on the ship, a portable crane backed into position and hooked the gangplank, lifting it away from the transport. It would be a matter of minutes before the ship would slowly pull away from the dock

and head for the United States. Several men waved down to the Italian girl standing far below the level of the deck, and she waved back with one hand as she wiped her eyes with the other. It wouldn't be long now.

Since the loading was finished, the soldiers working on the dock got into their trucks and jeeps and drove off. The girl was left alone with the Italian dock workers. She did her best to ignore them, but several of them started to ask questions. They jeered at her. Several minutes later, she was completely surrounded.

Men on the ship shouted to the Italians to get away from the girl, but the workers weren't afraid now because they saw there was no one around to help her. The biggest Italian in the group shoved his way to her side and took her arm. The girl resisted and struggled to free herself, but the husky man was too strong for her. She was helpless.

The girl wasn't crying any more; she was too frightened to cry. There wasn't an American on the dock near enough to help her. The dock workers wanted her to come with them, but she struggled to remain next to the transport until it left.

Three blasts from the ship's horn pierced the late afternoon quiet, and engines rumbled as the liner pulled away from the dock. The girl was hysterical. She wrested free from her captor and ran to the edge of the dock, waving as she ran. One of the Italians grabbed her just in time to stop her from jumping into the water. After

that one of them picked up her suitcase and the others rushed her away from the dock.

Every few steps she twisted around and waved at the departing transport. Then the group disappeared around the corner of a warehouse.

Two of the three soldiers who had been the first to talk to her stood silently at the rail. One of them rubbed his eyes and said, "Got something in my eye. Must be all the dust in the air."

The other GI's eyes were moist, too.

"Yes," he replied, "there's a lot of dust in the air."

SPECIAL BY FRANK TESKE

Bon Voyage

After ten days at Bagnoli, the first three squadrons of the group left to board the waiting troop transport, and the following morning the 739th Squadron grabbed a donut from the hand of Miss Ila Mae Mattson and climbed the gangplank for the last voyage. Then we turned to look back at Italy, a last, long, thankful look at the land that had been our "home" since January, 1944. That night the Argentina left the dock and headed westward, past the Isle of Capri, towards the Rock of Gibraltar.

The S.S. Argentina was a seaworthy ship. How much stronger, how much larger, how much more comfortable than the three little Liberty ships we had ridden before! The Argentina was crowded, but not too uncomfortably so. We could endure any discomfort for ten days.

"OH FRANKIE" was heard just once from some wise guy as Frank Sinatra sang "Candy." Hundreds of us from the 454th and the 455th sat on the hillside across from the group showers as Frank Sinatra, Phil Silvers, and a couple of lovely lasses entertained us with bits of song and dance. The Italian sun was unusually hot that day, but we didn't mind it; we were too absorbed in the entertainment on the stage before us. It was unanimously agreed that the Silvers-Sinatra combine was the best USO show that we had seen in our eighteen-month stay at Cerignola.

Originally, the Argentina was a member of the Dollar Lines that plied the Argentina and her sister ships through the waters to South America and back. Built to accomodate 600 passengers, she had been taken over by the government to carry American troops around the world. Now she was bringing them back, and her normal troop load of three thousand men had been increased to an experimental capacity of six thousand. This meant crowded mess halls and quarters, men sleeping on decks, innumerable fire drills and abandon-ship orders. But there was not one of us who would rather wait for a less crowded boat, who would prefer the John Lawson or the Button Gwinnett. We were thankful for the ice cream and fresh milk, but we would have lived on bread and water in an old Spanish galley just for the chance to return to America.

As Italy faded from sight we turned our eyes forward, and not once during the rest of the trip did we look backward. Neither our eyes nor our thoughts turned back to Italy and its filth, degradation, poverty, and war. After passing the Rock, we had eyes for only America and everyone was making bets on what time we would see the coastline of the grandest country in the world.

Our first stateside contact was the radio broadcast picked up from New York by the ship's radio station. It was the voice of Lowell Thomas: "The fog that day made visibility zero, and the army bomber from Sioux Falls had passed over LaGuardia Field on its way to Newark. Sud-





BEFORE LEAVING Italy, every member of the group received a Certificate of Merit or a Certificate of Valor representing his part on the ground or in the air in the battles of the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations.

denly the pilot pulled back on the stick, but it was too late. With a thunderous crash the Mitchell bomber crashed into the Empire State building." This was our first sound of America.

Welcome Home

Everyone pressed against the rail. It was six o'clock in the morning, and many of the bleary-eyed soldiers had been up all night watching for the first lights from New York to appear. This was it; we were coming home.

A thick grey fog clung to the water covering us with a light coat of moisture. Men in the rear of the ship couldn't see as far as the bow, but we were optimistically trying to catch our first glimpse of the New York skyline. We were not due in New York harbor for another two hours.

The four decks of the former luxury liner were so packed with men that it was impossible for anyone to retrace his steps once he had wedged himself close to the rail. Many men had slept next to a choice spot along the rail all night in the cold dampness just to make sure they would have a ringside seat for the show they had been waiting almost two years

to see. Tight knots of soldiers were speculating on what would happen to them when they reached the United States.

"The rails of this ship will not stand the pressure you are exerting on them," blared the ship's public address system. "Move back from the rail. We don't want anyone falling into the ocean now that our voyage is nearly completed."

The passengers attempted to move back, but the pressure from behind was too strong. Certain areas of the liner were supposed to be kept clear at all times; these areas were now filled with men who were constantly trying to find a higher vantage point. Some of the more courageous soldiers were even moving slowly towards the ship's bridge, a spot that they wouldn't have dared go near on any other day. They were coming closer.

Looking more like a mirage than anything else, a thin strip of land came into view to the left of the ship. The fog was lifting slightly, and the land appeared ghostly in the distance. Many men thought it was a ship passing by, but the land became more distinct as time passed.

Eyes nearly popping out of our heads, we stared at the land, vainly trying to distinguish

a smokestack or building. It was too good to be true; in a few hours we would be on the shores of the United States.

Our thoughts were disturbed by a shout from one soldier who had spied a small launch bobbing toward us from out of the wall of fog. It was the Coast Guard launch which met every ship entering the harbor. After exchanging signals with the transport, the proud little craft spun around and headed back into the soupy mist.

"Well, there they go," remarked one of the sailors sarcastically. "We'll read in the papers tonight about the Coast Guard bringing in another ship."

The returning soldiers waited tensely for the ship's next move. Clean-shaven and as neat as we could be in uniforms that had been worn for ten days straight, we pushed and shoved each other unconsciously. Bright signal flags in all colors were flying from every mast on the liner, but the heavy fog dampened any high spirits. We were all hoping that the warm sun would pierce the fog and outline the New York skyscrapers.

Suddenly, the ship listed as everyone surged to the right side of the liner. Men were climbing all over each other to see the faintly outlined skyline barely visible through the mist. One

man, wrapped around a mast, let out a shrill yell and before long we were all shouting wildly. Half of the GI's couldn't even see the skyscrapers, but they cheered as loudly as everyone else. At least somebody had seen something.

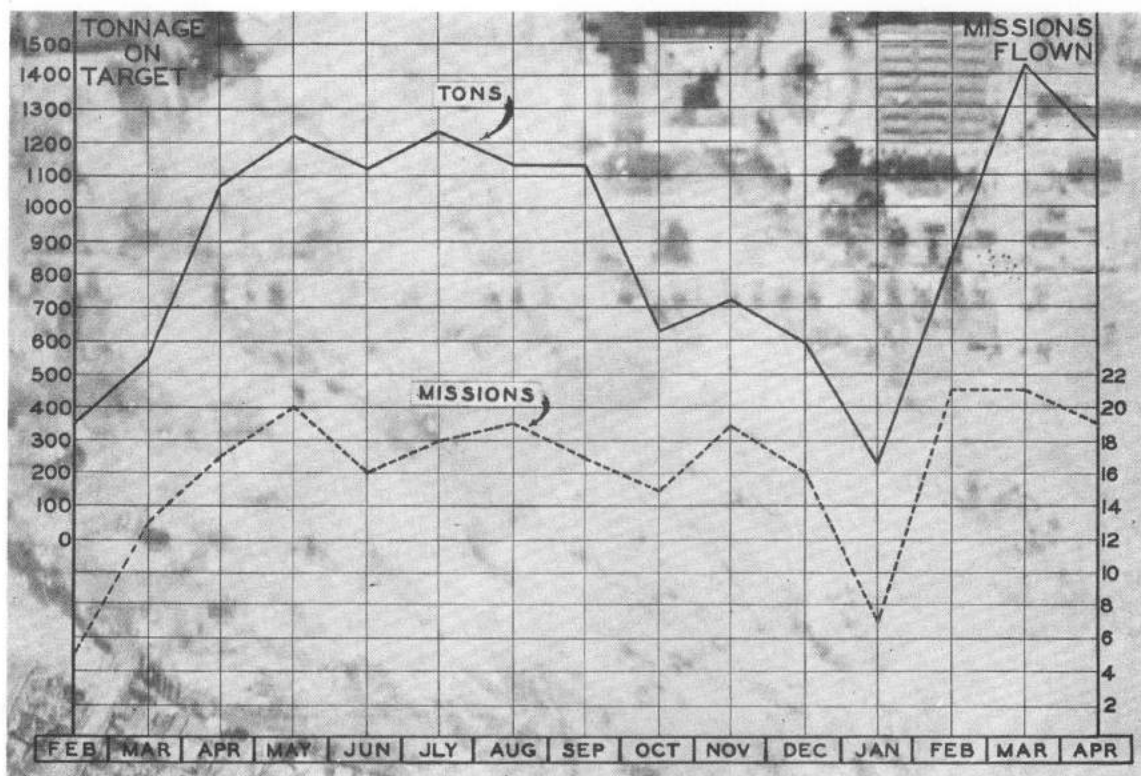
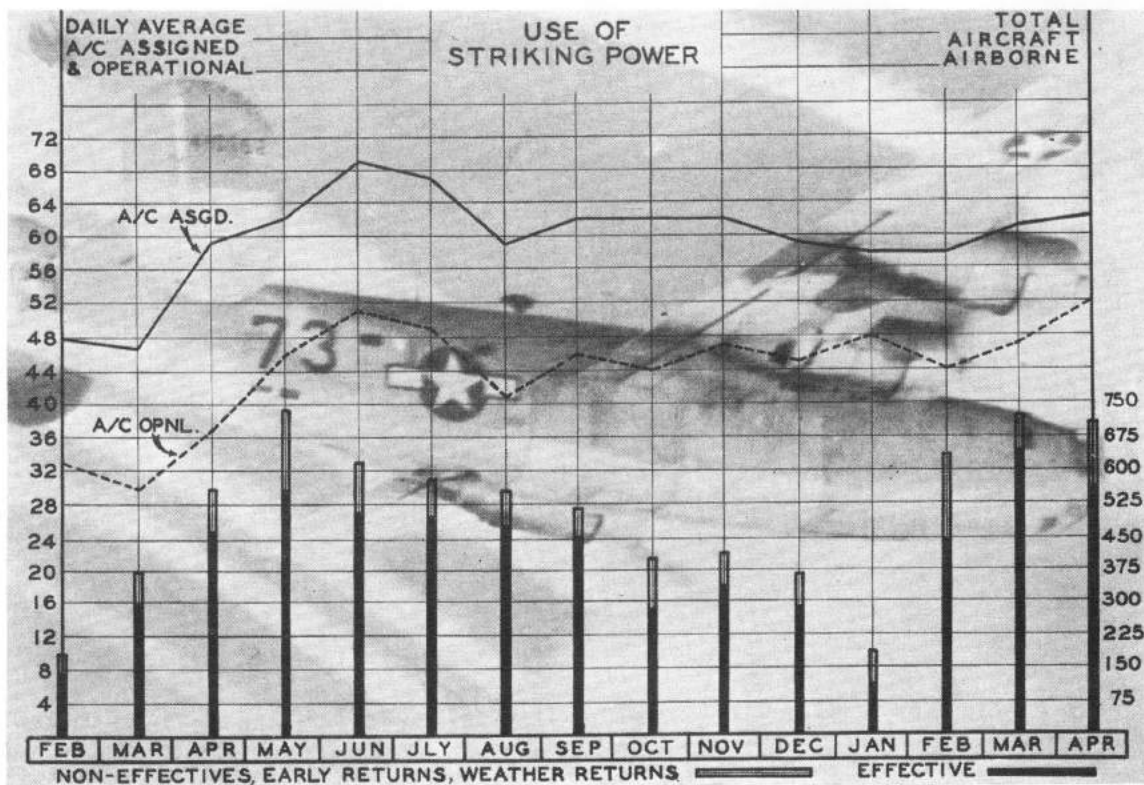
The captain of the ship, a husky Swede in a trim uniform, smiled down at the soldiers on the deck below as he watched them stare at New York. He knew that the ship would list to the other side in a few minutes when he passed the Statue of Liberty, and he mentioned the fact to a soldier standing next to him. The GI did not even hear the captain because he was too busy taking in his first glimpse of America.

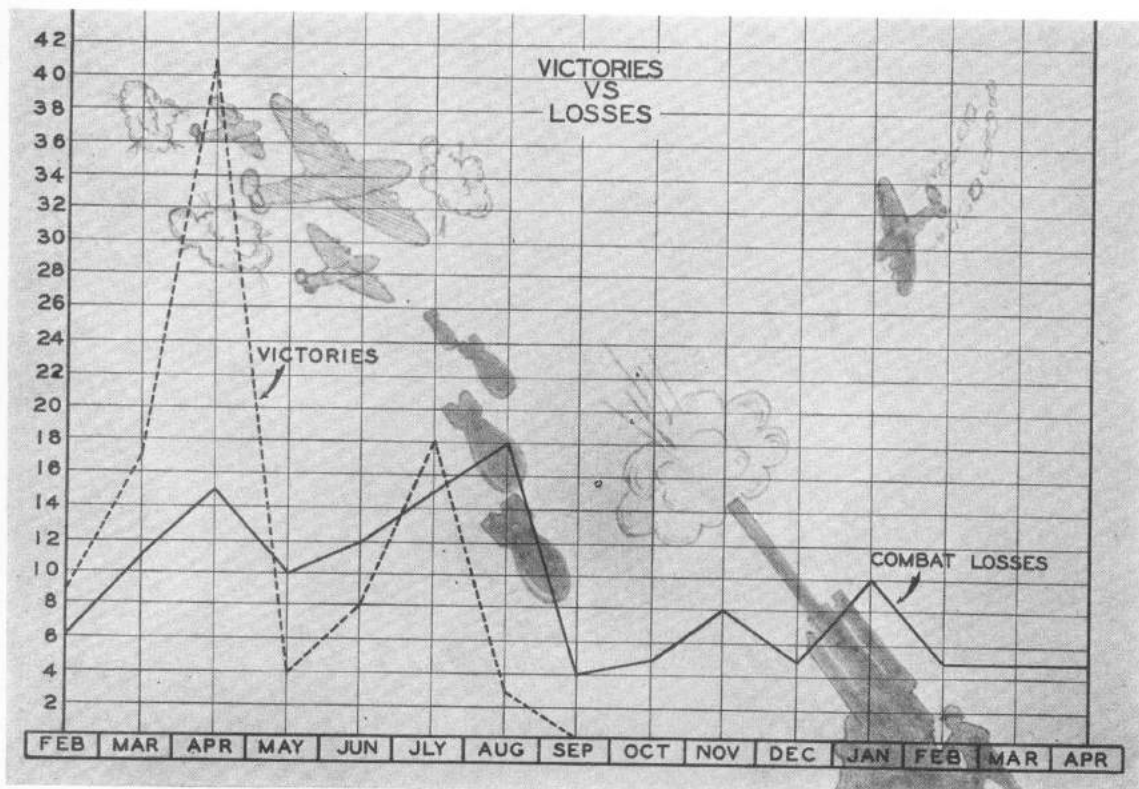
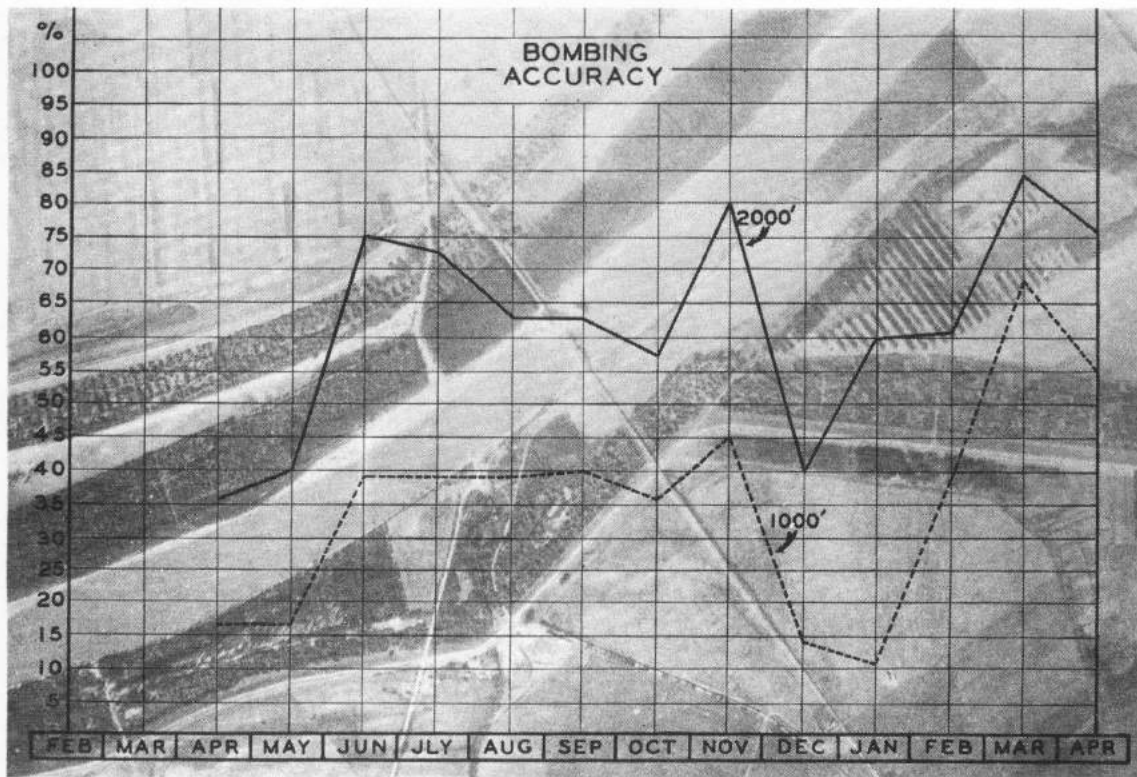
Many men were shaking hands and congratulating each other. The back-slappers were in rare form along with several people who had been jumping into the air repeatedly. The pessimists in every outfit were beginning to admit that the transport might be heading for America after all.

The majestic Statue of Liberty, torch and all, appeared on the left side of the liner, and the ship listed heavily to that side from the added weight of the men. Although it was much too dark for ordinary picture-taking, a lot of officers and enlisted men clicked their camera shutters without giving the weak light a second thought. This was no time to think.

* * *

The graphs on the following pages illustrate the operational highlights of the 454th Bombardment Group during its fifteen months of strategic, technical, and tactical bombing of vital German resources and supplies. On the first graph a comparison may be made between the number of planes assigned to the group, the number of planes operational in the group, and the number of planes flown by the group. For example: in the month of June the group had 69 bombers, 51 of which were in combat-flying condition, and with these 51 bombers the group flew 625 sorties, although only 500 of the 625 planes actually dropped their bombs on the targets. The second graph shows the tonnage of bombs in comparison with the number of missions. As seen in the first graph, the group flew 500 sorties, or, as shown in the second graph, a total of 16 missions during the month of June, 1944. On these missions, over 1100 tons of bombs were dropped on the targets, the third graph showing 39 per cent of these bombs falling within a 1000-foot radius of the center of the target, and 75 per cent (including the 39 per cent) falling within a radius of 2000 feet. On the fourth graph it is seen that during the same month the group lost 12 of its bombers, due to encounters with enemy fighters and flak. At the same time, however, the group's aerial gunners accounted for eight German planes. Also noticeable on the last graph is the decline and fall of Nazi air power, German fighters virtually disappearing from the skies in September of 1944. It is interesting to note that the group's losses also declined with the decrease in the activity of the Luftwaffe, our losses after September being due largely to enemy anti-aircraft fire.





Graphs by H. P. Smith



The Cathedral of Cerignola was an impressive sight in the small, dirty Italian town. Rich and splendid with its polished marble and alabaster, the cathedral attracted many members of the group to Easter and Christmas services.

Here and there, trying not to be noticed, soldiers were crying quietly. They had waited a long time for this and couldn't help being overcome with joy. Many more rubbed their eyes frequently as they read the huge "Welcome Home" signs at the New York docks; this was the welcome that had seemed so far away only a few weeks ago.

One after the other, every ship in the harbor tooted three times as a welcome to the transport, and the liner's piercing horn answered each greeting. The smallest tugs seemed to have the loudest whistles, the whole tug vibrating with every toot. The noise and confusion only increased the excitement of the passengers.

The fog was steadily lifting. Shiny automobiles darted across the bridges and behind the docks in a steady stream. We were impressed by the sight of more cars than we had seen at one time for years. American prosperity was evident wherever we looked; the competitive America of screaming billboards and persuasive radio commercials stretched before us.

A tug, brightly painted in red, white and

blue, left the dock and headed for the transport. As it chugged closer we could see that there was a brass band aboard along with about twenty attractive young American girls waving white handkerchiefs. "Welcome Home" was painted on the side of the tug in large red letters stretched its entire length.

When they were a little closer the band started to play a hot swing version of a popular song while several of the girls jitterbugged with each other. The large transport threatened to tip over as all the men rushed to one side. Disregarding the physical danger involved, soldiers were hanging from the masts and any other place they could reach.

In the midst of a bunch of soldiers at the rail, a short sergeant from the Bronx struggled to get in front of the other men. He tapped every man on the shoulder who was between him and the rail, spoke a few words to each one, and was allowed to move closer to the rail. Finally, he reached the rail and waved wildly, yelling at the top of his voice. A well-dressed woman of middle age stood on the bridge of the tug, her eyes searching the maze of faces which lined the rail of the transport. All at once she threw one hand up to her mouth while she waved happily with her other hand. She had spotted her son—the sergeant from the Bronx.

The soldiers clustered around the sergeant waved to her as enthusiastically as he did. Most of them were crying with joy. To us she represented every mother in America.

It was good to be home.

SPECIAL BY FRANK TESKE

This Is It, Men!

Home at last! After nearly two years of Italian life, we were once again back in the land of neon lights, paved streets, shining automobiles, chocolate malts, lovely blondes, school children, buses, department stores, and modern cocktail lounges. Home again! To be greeted at the dock by the American Red Cross with fresh milk and donuts. Fresh milk! Such a little thing to Americans who have it every day and begin to take it, more or less, for granted. Such a big thing to America-hungry GI's. A little glass of milk, and the sight of it made us realize that

those long, cold nights of loneliness and the long, cold days of hardship were over. There were smiles on our faces and tears in our eyes.

Then, everything began to happen at once. Faster than it takes to tell, we were on the ferry, on the train, bound for Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. The next morning we were again on trains, this time bound for various camps throughout the country, camps that were close to our homes, camps from which we would receive the thirty-day furlough authorized returning soldiers. The clickety-clack of the train wheels seemed to echo in our ears, and our hearts, with the lines:

America, stretch out your arms when I begin to roam,
Guide me safely on my way, and guide me safely home.
America, home of the brave, America, the free,
America, land blessed by God. America for me!

And we were home. Home for thirty days. Thirty eventful days in which we saw through the daily newspapers the changing of a world.

The first steps of reconversion. The atom goes to work. The atomic bombings of Japan. The capitulation of Japan. The lowering of the point score for discharge. What more could happen in thirty days? We celebrated our home-coming—and we celebrated lots more.

We returned to our various separation centers from which we had received our furloughs and were greeted with the wonderful news that the 454th group existed no longer except on paper. Most of us were discharged there at the twenty-two camps throughout the country. It was a matter of a few days. For the few that remained because of the lack of points there was a long trip to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. It was less than a month later, however, that even these were discharged, and the 454th Bombardment Group was just a memory. No longer were we corporals or sergeants, lieutenants or majors; we were Misters, and how wonderful the word sounded.

And there is no better climax to the story of a great organization. There is no end, for the 454th lives on in our memories. There is no finish, for the 454th lives on in our hearts. There remains only a farewell! So long, and GOOD LUCK TO YOU, MISTER!

So Long and Good Luck to You, Mister!

THE CHAPEL of the 454th Bombardment Group was built under the direction of Thomas Hepner, group chaplain. Occupying a central location in the group area, the chapel attracted many crowds to its small but ornate altar for regular Sunday services or a Wednesday night concert hour. The chapel was complete with organ, the organ having been brought across the Atlantic by Chaplain Hepner who seemed to guard it more dearly than life itself.



The Members of The Flight of the Liberators Association

Samuel Abramson
Irving Abravaya
Michael Acanfora
Billye Adams
Nipp Adams
Ross Adams
Isidore Adler
Joseph Agolia
Philip Ahlin, Jr.
Henry Ahrens
Clarence Albedyll
Benedict Alibrand
Amos G. Allen, Jr.
Ralph Allen
Horace Almy
Arthur Althoff
Claude Altig
I. M. Amaro
Frank Ambrosoli
Melvin Ames
Nick Amori
Andrew Amuny
Meron Ananian
Albert Anderson
Byrne Anderson
Chester Anderson
James Anderson
James Anderson
Norbert Anderson
Richard Anderson
Ronald Anderson
Victor Angel
Joseph Angelo
George Anger
Joseph Anthony, Jr.
Noel Anthony
Glenn Antrim
John Arana
Alfred Arch
Lucio Archuleta
Joseph Arndt, Jr.
Colin Arnold
Nicholas Aromando
Antonio Arsuaga
Richard Ashby
Vern Ashcraft
Charles Astryke
J. B. Atkins
R. C. Austin
Philip Avello
Don W. Avey
Max Bacha
Frank Badac
Frank Badami
Michael Badzik
Joe Bagley
Floyd Bailey
Fred Bailey
Archie Baird
Gilbert Baird
Clarence Baisley
Doyle Baker
Gene Baker
James Baker
Joe Baker
Marion Baker, Sr.
Phillip Baker
Wilton Baker
Charles R. Bakke
Marvin Balding

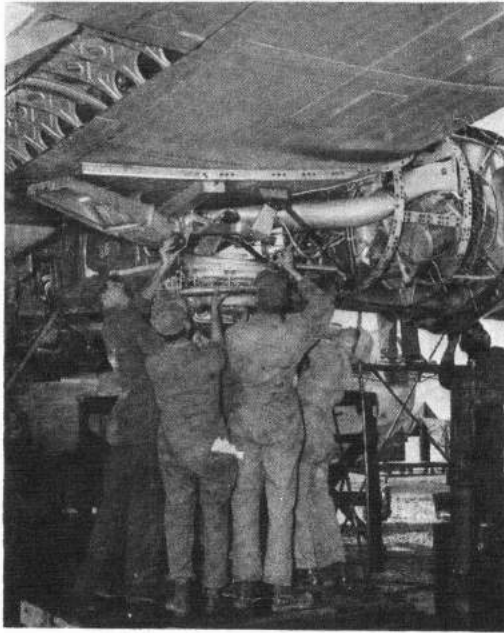
George Baldr
Roy Baldwin
James Ballard
John Balmer
Reginald Barnard
Andrew Barnes
Lloyd Barnes
John Barrett
Ned Barrett
Samuel Barr
William Barry
Iranus Barthe
Frank Bartolotta
Doyt Bartz
John Baskin
O. J. Bass, Jr.
Thomas Bates
Eugene Bauchmann
Harold Bauer
James Baxley
Howard Baxter
George Beck
William Beczkalo
Thomas Beebe
E. Beeman
Thomas Beggs
Lawrence Begin
Frank Beletz
Paul Belfiglio
Earnest Belisle
Bernard Belleville
Robert Bell
William Bell
William Belmonte
Hugo Beltari
Ernest Bender
Earl Bengtson
Raymond Benjamin
Elza Bennett
William Bennett
Clifford Benson, Jr.
Donald Benson
Francis Benson
Neil Bentz
George Benzie
Edward Bercegeay
Ferdinand Berg
Charles D. Berman
Alfred Bernard
Edward Berry
John Berry
Willie Berry
Grover Berryman
John Bertok
Frederick W. Betz
John Betzenhauser
Joseph Betzing
Howard Bickford
Donald Bieber
Joseph Bigleben, Jr.
Wayne Bigrigg
Stanley Billick
Charles P. Bilyeu
Frederick Bimel
Morley Bingham
Wally Birge
Wallace Bischoff
Arthur Biscornet
Eric E. Bishop
Joseph Biskupski

James Black
E. K. Blackwell
Jesse Blair
Roy Blakemore
Willard Blanchard, Jr.
Elmer Blatter
Harold Bliven
Gerard Bloomer
William Bloss
Charles Bobinsky
Leo D. Bode
Robert Boehm
Monroe Bogoff
Richard Bolarski
George Booth
Asher Borkan
Ralph Borter
Cyril Bosak
Gerald Bossman
Walter Bothe
George Botske
Roger Boucher
Jack Bowman
Richard Bowman
Frank Boyington
Oscar Boysel
Stewart Brady
Earl Brand
Earl Brandt
Warren Brandt
William Brand
Ralph Branstetter
Gordon Brazelton
George Breisch
Anthony Brennan
H. P. Brenneke
H. L. Bricker
John Bricker
Hubert Bridges
Thomas Bridwell
Bryce Brift
Edward C. Brim
Jean R. Brinton
John W. Brinson
John Britain
Adolphus Brittingham
Roy Brockway
Don Bronaugh
Alexander Bronson
Harold Brooks
James Brooks
Robert Brooks
James Brothers
George Brownlee, Jr.
James Brown
O. A. Brown
Robert Brown
Thomas Brown
William Brown
Fred Brugger
Dexter Buchanan
Warner Bucklew
S. A. Budzitowski
Roland Buechs
Jack Buehner
Lloyd Buff
William Buford
William Buk
Vernon Bullard
Eugene Bull

Leslie Bunch
 Ralph Buoscio
 Harold Burchett
 Kemp S. Burge
 Arthur Burgeson
 Leon Burke
 Walter Burkett
 Verlin Burnett
 John P. Burn
 Verl Burton
 John Busche
 Harold Buttle
 Willard Butts
 Paul Byre
 Arthur Byron
 John Caden
 James Caldwell
 James Calhoun
 William Call
 Charles Calvi
 Victor Calvo
 Kenneth Camden
 David Campbell
 Theodore Campbell, Jr.
 Buford Cannon
 Harold C. Cannon
 William Cannon
 Ferdinand Caravone
 Kenneth Carbiener
 Melvin Carey
 Howard Carlson
 Robert Carlson
 Richard Carlton
 Robert Carney
 James Carr
 John Carr
 Harold Carroll
 Robert Carr
 J. A. Carlson, Jr.
 James Carstens
 Isaac Carter
 Orval Carter
 Kenneth Casacant
 Gordon Case
 Edward Casey
 Robert Casey
 Joseph Caspano
 J. C. Cassell, Jr.
 Rudolpho Casillas
 Thomas Cavanaugh
 Tony Celhar
 Thomas Cely
 Nicholas Cercone
 Joseph Chalker
 Russell Chamberlain
 George Chaplin
 John Chapman
 Dick Chase
 Robert Chase
 Sheldon Chathams
 Charles Check
 Daniel Chelette, Jr.
 Daniel Cherellia
 Joseph Chmelo
 Harry Choisser
 Franklin Christensen
 George Christensen
 James Christopher
 Dewey Church
 James Church
 Robert Cileo
 Frederick Cimaen
 Joseph Clague
 Wylie Clatworthy
 Wesley Claus
 Russell Clements
 Adelbert Clenin

Vernon Cline
 Robert Cohen
 Murray Cohen
 Dan Colatorti
 James Coleman
 David Coles
 Grover Collins
 Lewis Collins
 Maurice Collins
 Nelson Collins
 Robert Collins
 John Coll
 Carl Colombo
 Ralph Coloney
 Joseph Colson, Jr.
 Gilliam Compton
 Corbett Connell
 James Connely
 Robert Consaul
 James Cook
 George Cooper
 Harold Cooper
 Ray Cooper
 Glenn Cooter
 Federico Coriddi
 Joe Costantino
 Peter Costa
 Horace Cotter
 John Coughlin
 Richard Couling
 Bernard Coventry
 Floyd Coverston
 Daniel Covert
 Charles Cox, III
 Robert Cox
 William Crafton
 Maxwell Cramer
 Milford Crapser
 Hugh Crawford
 John E. Crawford
 Orrville Crawford
 John M. Crist
 James Crossen
 Joseph Crowley
 John Cruik
 John Crump
 Junior Cudd
 Ben Culbertson
 Thomas Culkin
 Edward Cullinan
 Robert Cullison
 Thomas Culpepper
 Gerald Curley
 Raymond Currie
 Malcolm Curry
 Howard Curtis
 Charles Cushing
 Roy A. Dahl
 Ernest Dahlen
 Leon Dailey
 Howard Daniels
 George Dansby
 Francis J. Daugherty
 Ben Davis
 Earl Davis
 Edward Davis
 Franklin Davis
 Milton Davis
 Thomas H. Davis
 Ray Davis
 Vernon Davis
 William Davis
 Charles Dean
 William Deery
 Evan DeFabio
 Nicholas DeFelice
 William Dellett

Anthony DeLuke
 Ralph Dench
 Kenneth Dengel
 Thomas DeSavia
 Floyd Desch
 Roland Deschenes
 James DeShields, Jr.
 Charles Detore
 Herbert DeVine
 John Devine
 Arlo Diamond
 William Dibble
 Herbert Didion
 Alphonso Digennaro
 Earle Dill
 Robert Dinges
 Frank Dierenzo
 Cecil Disterhoft
 Hector Ditomasso
 Cecil Dodds
 Ernest Dodson
 Frank Doerr
 William Donovan
 Alfred Doherty
 Dale Donnelly
 William Dougherty
 William Douthart
 Augustive Dragon
 Stanley Drasba
 Virgil Driver
 David Dubin
 Raymond Duchnowski
 Robert Duckworth
 John Duda
 Carey Dudley
 C. T. Dugan
 Wilfred Duggan
 Brice Duke
 Fayerd Duke
 L. W. Duncan
 Robert Dunlap
 Travis Duran
 Alex Durant
 John Duren
 Robert Durette
 Edward Duschak
 E. E. Duvall
 Harold Dyer
 Warren Eakins
 Marion Eastwood
 Lyle Eby
 Don Eckwall
 Louis Edwards
 Norman Edwards
 Thomas Edwards
 Alfred Egan
 Wymond Ehrenkrook
 Donald Einhorn
 Herbert Eldridge
 Isadore Elman
 Allen Elms
 James Elms
 Max Elting
 Frederick Emmelmann
 Archer Engle
 Lawrence English
 Lloyd English
 Ervin Epling
 Evert Epps
 Clayton Erb
 Harold Erickson
 Irving Erlichman
 Norton Eubanks
 Charles Evans
 Edward Evans
 Francis Evans
 Leonard Evans



Supercharger-change—and new power is brought into the old engine for its high-altitude climb over Germany.

Harry Faber
Ralph Farrar
Richard Farrell
Adolph Fasana
R. P. Fedderson
Lawrence Fee
Joseph Fekete
Larry Feler
Paul Ferencik
George Fenner
Dennis Ferguson
Harmon Ferguson
W. E. Fheriault
Ervin Ficken
Elmer Fields
Robert Fields
Eugene Figas
Glenwood Fillbrook
Moe Finkelstein
James Finney
Theodore Fisher
Kermit Fish
David Fishman
Merle Fister
Billy Fitzgerald
Brian Fitzgerald
Willard Flaugh
Cecil Flury
Edwin Fonner
George Foote
Royce Foreman
Maurice Fortune
John Foster
Charles Fox
Lyman Francis
Howard Frank, Jr.
Charles Franklin, Jr.
Robert Fraser
Ross Fraser
Donald Frederick

Earl Frederick
Howard Freeman
Harry Freeman
William Freeman, Jr.
Russell Frick
Edward Frickey
Harry Fritchman, III
R. L. Frizell, Jr.
Howard Froman
Edward Frost
James S. Fry
Milton Fryer
Francis Fulginiti
Paul Fuller
William Fuller
Robert Funke
Francis Furlong
George Furman
Norman Furrer
Shelton Futrell
Stanley Gaborek
LaVerne Gaker
Al Galindo
Desmond Gallagher
John Gallagher
Albert Gallant
Clifton Gallent
Edward Gallegos, Jr.
John Gambill
J. P. Gamlin
Joe Ganci
Henry Gappa
John Garee
Joe Garofoli
Arthur Garofalo
Joe Garrett
Lawrence Garton
Howard Gandee
Hymen Gassner
James Gatewood

Frank Gavigan
Stanley Gawelko
Gabriel Gelber
Leonard Gendron
Roy Geneslaw
Joe George, Jr.
John George
William George
Thomas Gerzel
Sheldon Gettel
William Gibbons
Robert Gibson
Charles Gildersleeve
William Giles
Vincent Gill
Walter Gillespie
Samuel Gillingham
Arthur Gilman
Rollin Gittings, Jr.
Frank Gitto
Leo Giuffre
Francis Gizzi
James Glonek
Francis Goggin
James Gohn
Norman Goldberg
Howard Goldsmith
Jerry Goldstein
Morton Goldwasser
Edward Gondek
Carl Gonstad
Alvie Gooch
Robert Goodman
Robert Goodrich
James Goodwin
Don Gordon
Meredith Gothard
Richard Gottfried
Ralph Gove
Allan B. Gower
Frederick Grabeman
William Grady
Arthur Graham
Robert Graham
Karl Gramling
O. Grammarco
Richard Grange
William Granger
Frederick Grant
Kenneth Grasse
Gerald D. Gravit
Herbert W. Gray
Russell Gray
Richard Grecco
Sidney Green
Woodrow Green
Harry Greenfield
Franklin Greenspan
Atlee Greenwood
Alvin Gregorio
Francis Gregory
Peter Gregos
William Grenier
Robert Griewahn
Forrest Griggs
Amedeo Grillo
Corwin Grimes
John Griscavage
William Groce
John Groeger
James Grogan
George Gross
Arthur Gschwind
Frank Gucciardo
James Guckian
Lawrence Guiliano
Kenneth Guinn

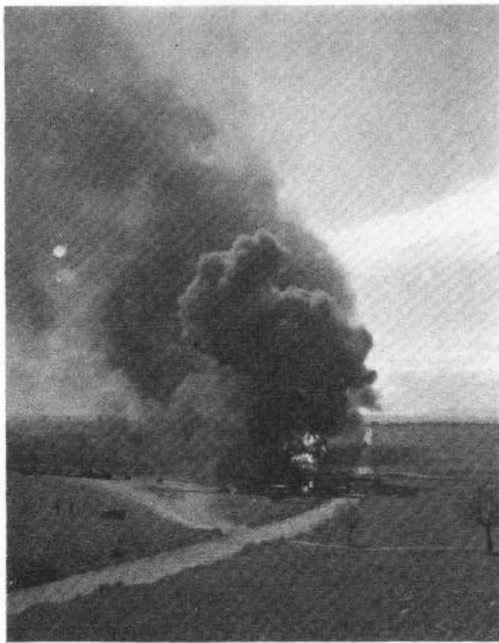
John Gulick
John Gullman
Walter Gunning
Herman Guse
Sylvan Guskind
Ben Guthrie
Arthur Gutowski
Thomas Guzzo
George Gwynn
Lawrence Habbley
Nade Habshey
Thavin Hackler
Thomas Hackney
Charles Hagan
Carl Hagelthorn
Dan Haggerty
Reynold Hake
Howard Haley
John Hall
Kenneth Hall
Lee Hall, Jr.
Roland Hall
William Hallman
Russell Hall
George Hamburger
Kryn Hamelin
Charles Hamilton
Foster Hamilton, III
Harry Hamilton
Roy Hamilton, Jr.
Harris Hammontree
E. J. Hamner
Robert Hamm
Darius Hammond
Wilbur Hammond
Clifton Hancock
James Hang, Jr.
H. J. Hannibal
Alfred Hansen
Clifford Hanson
Hartney Haraldson
Gerald Harbitter
James Harbs
Melvin Hardin
Norman Harlow
Noal Harper
W. T. Harrigill
Benjamin Harris
Edgar Harris
Raymond Harris
Lon Harrison
John Harrison
Nathan Harrison
Felix Harrod
Jack Harsh
Douglas Hart
Edward Hart
Francis Hart
Clarence Hartman
E. T. Haswell, Jr.
Arthur Hatfield, Jr.
Henry Haugan, Jr.
Edward Haupt
William Havlin
Francis Hawkins
Frank Hayduk
James Hayes
Walter Hayes
Farrest Hay
Donald Hazzard
Clyde Hedge
George Heffner
Henry Heffner
Dwight D. Hefner
Derril Hefty
Edward Hegel
Arthur Heinold

William Helton, Jr.
Dennis Hemmer
Clinton Henderson
Roy Henderson
Wyatt Hendrick
Arvin Hendrix
Sylvan Hendrix
Herbert Henning
Oscar Henry
William Henry
Thomas Hepner
Theodore Herring
Roger Hertz
Richard Hibbert
William Higgins
Dale High
Robert Hill
Walter Hilmes
Frank Hilton
Joseph Hinnerman
Samuel Hines
Claude Hinman
Joseph Hirsch
Charles Hirson
Willis Hodgeman
Edward Hodges
Jerome Hoffman
Matt Hoffman
Frank Hofstatter
Arthur Hogan
R. S. Hague
A. F. Hoisington
Joseph Holaska
John Holcombe
Richard Holcomb
James Holliday
John Hollifield

Pearl R. Hollis
Leonard Holman
William Holman
Lee Holmes
Leo Holscher
Arnold Holt
Kenneth Holzberg
Bing Hom
George Homolka
Eugene Honeycutt
George Hood
Melvin Hoover
Robert Hopkins
William Horats
Clark Houser
William Houston, Jr.
Rex Hout
Arthur Howard
James Howard
Paul Howard
Richard Howell
Ralph Howland, Jr.
Theodore Hubbard
Harold Huber
Henry Huber
Vincent Hudson
Arthur Huey
James Huff
Ellis Hughes
William Hughes
Roger Huibregtse
G. C. Hull
Sherman Hunt, Jr.
Stanford Hunt
Jes Hussey
Lalo Ibarra
Venancio Ibarra



Engine-change—and 1200 new horses replace a tired engine on the wing of a heavy Liberator bomber which will be ready for the next day's flight to Munich.



One of the group's first accidents was this Liberator bomber that overran the landing strip, plunged over the hill to hit a parked gasoline truck, exploded in a volcanic blast of fire and smoke.

Charles Ice
 Fred Immer
 George Inch
 Edward Ingram
 Adam Irvine
 Howard Isaacs
 Nels Isaacson
 Joseph Isky
 David Ives
 Zygmunt Jablonski
 Bowles Jackson
 Erling Jackson
 James Jackson
 Billy Jacobs
 Charles Jacobs
 Fred Jacobs
 Richard Jager
 Robert James
 Steven James
 James Jamison
 Leonard Janis
 Stanley Jastrzemaki
 Harold Jenke
 Hassel Jenkins
 Frank Jenne, Jr.
 Allen Jensen
 Albert Johnson
 Arthur Johnson
 Daniel Johnson
 Bert A. Johnson
 Ernest Johnson, Jr.
 Glen Johnson
 James Johnson
 Leslie Johnson
 Milton Johnson
 Paul Johnson
 Quincy Johnson
 Ross Johnson

Wayne Johnston, Jr.
 William Johnston
 Charles Jones
 Edward Jones
 Elton Jones
 Jerry Jones
 Robert Jones
 Russell Jones
 Thomas Jones, Jr.
 Walter Jones, Jr.
 Willard Jones
 Donald Jordan
 Frank Jordan
 Lawrence Jordan, Jr.
 Perry Jordan
 Frank Jorfi
 Lynn Jose
 Edgar Joyner
 George Juettin
 George Kachelries
 Edward Kaczmarek
 Charles Kadar
 Walter Kahar
 John Kaib
 Bernard Kain
 Lawrence Kakatsch
 Vincent Kaletok
 Samuel Kaner
 Edward Kapuzza
 Donald Karchner
 Joseph Karcz
 Kenneth Kardon
 Charles Kariainen
 Homer Kast
 Ernest Katri
 Horace Katz
 Peter Kaufenberg
 Charles Kauffman

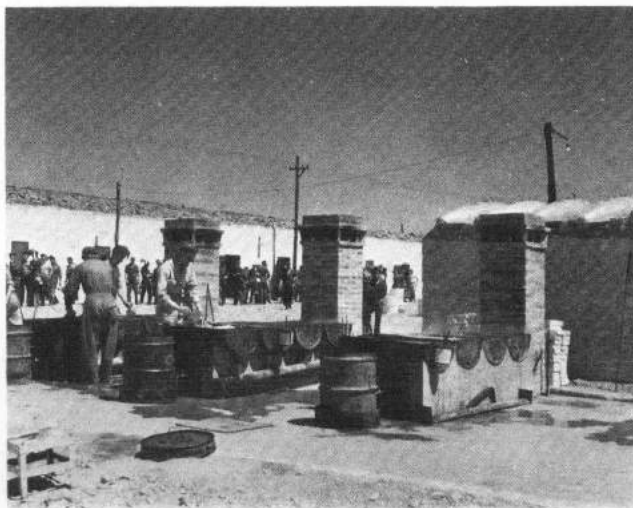
William Kavasch
 William Kaynor
 Henry Keahey
 William Kearney
 Ural Keaton
 John Keenan
 Bruce Keisling
 Earl Kelchner
 Ward Kellogg
 John Kelly
 Joseph Kelly
 Robert Kelley
 Henry Kelsay
 Edward Kelter
 George Kemp
 Howard Kempiners
 William Kendrick
 John Keneally
 Merrill Kerlin
 Morton Kern
 Roger Kernozicky
 Eugene Keutzer
 Robert Kidder
 Jesse Kimbrough
 Ralph Kinckner, Jr.
 Charles King
 Curtis King
 Herman King
 Jesse King
 Roy King
 Dennis Kiriazis
 John Kirchner
 Virgil Kirkpatrick
 Joseph Kirrans
 Lloyd Kirsch
 James Kirtland
 Louis Kisylia
 Harry Klaiss, Jr.
 Arnold Kleinberg
 Harold Kline
 William Kline
 Sargent Knee
 Harold Knight
 Robert Knirsch
 Robert Knoepke
 Lynn Knouse
 Archie Kodros
 Earl Koehler
 William Koenke
 Dale Koepfel
 Mitchel Kolaczewski
 John Kolesko
 Bill Kollar
 Melvin Konkle
 Orville Koonce
 Walter Kososki
 Eugene Korpi
 Philip Kotenski
 August Kovich, Jr.
 Edmund Kozlara
 John Kravchuk
 William Krause
 Thomas Krebs
 Milton Krueger
 Joseph Krutka
 Leo R. Kubeska
 Eli Kublin
 Joseph Kuchta
 Florian Kulaga
 Max Kuniansky
 William Kunze
 John Kunzman
 George Kursor
 George Kushka
 Howard Kutsch
 Theodore Kuzmiak
 Kaarl Kymalainen

Horace Kyzer
Harold LeCore
Charles LaDow
Emiel Laethem
Resley LaGrange
Frank LaManthia
Charles Lamb
Edward Lamb
Peter Lamb
Donald Landrum
Wilburn Lane
William Lane, Jr.
Henry Lange
Robert Langer
Everett Lankford
Elmer Lantz
Donald LaPasta
William Large, Jr.
Thomas LaRose
Donald Laske
Benny Laskowski
John Last
Philip Latona
Mirel Lavezzi
William Laws
Irving Lazarowitz
Albert Lea
Maurice Lebel
Edmond Ldblanco
J. W. Ledbetter
Paul Lee
Sherwood Lee
Willard Lee
William Lee, Jr.
Henry Leino
Edwin Leishman
Gordon Lemp
T. H. Leitch
Edward Lemanzik
Charles Lemley
Lyle Leonard
Wally Lepinski
Saul Levine
Clarence Lewis
Jack Lewis
William Leyendecker
Ferdinand Leyh
Theodore Libbey
Anthony Licata
Henry Liegler

John Linsky
Charles Little
Gilbert Lloyd
Kenneth Lloyd
George Locklin
Harry Loeb
John Lofy
Anthony Lombardi
Loren Loomis
Henry Lopez
Horatio Lopez
Nick Lopez
Kenneth Loserth
Christopher Loveley
Wayne Lowry
Vitore Lucero
Walter Lucy, Jr.
John Lukakis
John Lukas
Charles Lumbard
Vito Lupo
Albert Luttrell
Jacob Lyda
Ed Lynch
Howard Lynch
Bert Lyon
Earnest Lyons
Francis MacDaniel
Louis McAdoo
Andrew McAffrey
Coyal McBride
George McCabe
Stanley McChristian
Harvey McClanahan
James A. McConnell
James McCorkle
Charles McCready
William McCrorey
Scotty McCullough
William McCully
Richard McDaniel
Crit McDonald
James McDonald, Jr.
George McFadden
John McGah
Francis McGarrity
John McGarry
Charles McGee
Victor McGinty
Robert McGowan

Bernard McGrath
Thomas McHutchison
Robert McInroy
Allen McIntosh
Archie McIsaac
Leonard McKelvey
Frank McKimney
Francis McKibitt
Francis McKowen
Thomas McLaffen, II
Herman McLaurin
David McNair
Leo McNamee
D. M. McNeely
William McNerney
John McPherson
Regis McQuillan
Charles McQuoun
Carl McWilliams
Cyril Mabesoone
Michael Macaluso
William Madaris
Vincent Maggiano
Paul Maher
John Maloney
Perey Maneval
Thomas Manning
Paul Manno
Delmar Manthei
Neal Manthei
Ernest Manzo
John Marek, Jr.
Daniel Maritz
Joseph Marrone
Allen Marshall
Clemence Martin
Jim Martin
Robert Martin
W. C. Martin
Vincent Martino
Donald Martinson
Johnnie Massey
John Masters
William Mata
John Matheson
John Mattson
Raymond Matzen
Arthur Maurer
Raymond Maurice
Vincent Mauser

NEAR THE END of our stay in Italy many surprising reforms and constructions began to dot the squadron areas. For example: this glorified wash line for mess kits by the 739th mess hall had for fourteen months been only old oil drums filled with boiling water. Just before we left Italy, however, a series of hearths complete with chimneys and running water for the wash basins were installed to facilitate more sanitary methods of cleaning the enlisted man's mess kit. The 454th often waited until the eleventh hour before doing anything.



John Maxey
 Elzir May
 Glen Mayer
 Joseph Mazur
 Felice Mazza
 Edward F. Meagher
 Donald Mealy
 George Mechem
 H. R. Meckstroth
 Harry Mee
 Gabriel Meltzer
 John Mendenhall
 Ralph Mercer
 Glenn T. Meredith
 John Meredith, Jr.
 Harry Mernagh
 Stephen Merrifield
 Frank Messana
 Robert Meyer
 Mick Mickler
 John Mihalyo
 Sherman Miles
 Alvin Miller
 Billie Miller
 Fred L. Miller
 Floyd Miller
 George Miller
 Harold Miller
 Herbert Miller
 Jacob Miller
 John Miller
 Robert Miller
 Richard Miller
 Edward Milliren
 Philip Millis
 E. E. Milnar
 John Minckler
 Albert Minger
 Joseph Minotty
 Miriam Mirrick
 Darrell Mitchell
 Bernard Mizera
 George L. Mock
 Herndon Moffatt
 Manual Moga
 Robert Monahan
 John Monsees
 Clarence Moore
 Howard Moore
 James Moore, Jr.
 Orval Moore
 William Moore
 Edward Moran
 Vincent Moran
 Pete Moroso
 Jimmy Morris
 Andrew Morrison
 Arthur Morrissey
 R. F. Moser
 Louis Moskowitz
 Robert Moser
 James Moulaison
 Stanley Moutvic
 John Mroczka
 Clifton Muckenfess
 Donald Mueller
 Lee Mueller
 Thomas Muirhead
 Irven Mulroy
 William Mullen
 Glenn Munn
 Merlin Munson
 Wendel Murdock
 Russell Murico
 Elvin Murie
 Michael Murray
 Francis Myers

Jack Myers
 Alfred Namnoun
 Anthony Napoli
 Garfield Narum
 Gene R. Nash
 Martin Navarro
 Joe Negahnquet
 Arthur Nelson
 George Nessif
 Irvin Nevins
 Christopher Newberger
 Donald Newell
 Harry Newfield
 Ernest Newman
 William Newton
 Bernard Nichols, Jr.
 John Nichols
 Paul Nichols
 George Nicklas, Jr.
 Eldon Nielson
 Byron Nieman
 Joyce Nilsson
 Donald Nitz
 E. J. Nobles, Jr.
 Dallas Noe, Jr.
 John Nolan
 Ronald K. Nolan
 William Noonan
 John Norman
 Paul Norris
 William Norris
 John Norton
 Eugene Nusbaum
 Milo Oakland, Jr.
 Mike Obucina
 Grant Oefstedahl
 Robert O'Hagen
 Ogden Oldfield
 Ferris Oldroyd
 Thomas O'Leary
 Henry Oliver
 John Oliver
 Elmer Olson
 Kenneth Olson
 Joseph O'Malley
 Eugene O'Neil, Jr.
 Raymond Ordway
 Frank Orr
 Paul Osborn
 Robert Otten
 William Overstreet
 Jack Owen
 Perry Owen
 James Owens
 William Owens
 Ferdinand Oxmann
 Thomas Pack
 Lester Paden
 George Pageler
 James Palmer
 Steve Palumbo
 Vincent Palumbo
 Louis Papasavas
 George Pappas
 Lionel J. Parent
 William L. Paris
 Albert Park
 James Parker
 Norman Parks
 Jack Parrish
 Miland Patchin
 Edward Pate
 Myhre Paulson
 Edward Pavicic
 John Pawlowski
 Paul Pearson
 Robert Pease

Alfred Peccia
 Robert Padrazzi
 William Peed
 Joseph Peigneux
 Ralph Pellegrini
 John Pemstein
 Hector Pena
 Manuel Perez, Jr.
 Raymond Perman
 Charles Perry
 Donald Perry
 Lester Perschau
 Ellsworth Pershing
 Adrian Peterson
 Arnold Peterson
 John J. Petit
 Steve Petrakis
 Harold Petree
 Frank Petrucci
 Neil Pezzola
 Carey Phebus
 John Philbeck
 Ashby Phillips
 David Phillips
 Isaac Phillips, Jr.
 James Phillips
 Robert Phillips
 Wilson Phillips
 Sigmunt Piekarski
 Hamilton Pierce
 Lucien Pignon
 Charles Piona
 Alfred Pittman
 E. M. Place
 Gerald Platt
 William Plesnak
 Elmer Plunkett
 Heath Pollard
 Stanley Pomanek
 George Poris
 Glenn Porter
 Gordon Potter
 Pete Powanda
 Joe Powers
 Robert Poxon
 Robert Praster
 Charles Pratt
 W. E. Pratt
 Oran Prejean
 John Pressley
 Murice Preston
 Joseph Pribula
 Charles Price
 Evan Price
 Jacob Price
 Paul Price
 J. S. Primrose
 Hershell Prince
 Ira Pringle
 Roger Prior
 Robert Prosser
 Charles Proudfoot
 Joseph Pufka
 Francis Pugh
 Patrick Pulvere
 David Purdy
 Robert Purkiss
 Adam Push
 Anthony Puzas
 Frederick Pyecroft
 Fred Quenzer
 G. F. Quigley
 Thomas Quigley
 Robert Quillam
 Martin Quinn
 Billie Rackley
 Edward Radke

Constatine Ragne
 James Ragsdale
 Herbery Raley, Jr.
 Herman Rall
 Alfonso Ramirez
 Raymond Ramquist
 Ralph Ramseler
 Lawrence Randall
 Joseph Ranson
 Arthur Ransoni
 Fred Raymond
 Clyde Reams
 Elwin Redding
 James Redwing
 William Reed
 Francis Reedus
 Norman Reeh
 Thomas Reese
 John Rehak
 Robert Rehn
 George Reichenbach, Jr.
 John Reicher
 Harry Reichgeld
 Charles Reilly
 Oden Rein
 Harold Reinhardt
 Peter Reis
 Robert Remick
 Charles Reynolds
 P. G. Reynolds
 Harry Rhode
 Clarence Rhodes
 Walter Rice
 Howard Richardson
 John Richiusa
 Michael Ricigliano
 Lewis Ridley
 Preston Riley
 Frank Riggs
 Robert Riley
 Thomas Riley
 Henry Rinna
 Lee Riordan
 Robert Rippy
 Shires Risser
 LeRoy Rizor
 Claude Roberts
 John Roberts
 William Robin
 James Robinson
 Lincoln Robinson
 Thomas Robinson
 Otis Robirds
 William Robishaw
 Daniel Robison
 Clayton Robson
 Harry M. Rodd
 Albert Roes
 Hershel Rogers
 Ralph Roehlig
 Lennox Romita
 Dan Roney
 James Rookstool
 Charles Rose
 Robert Rose
 Alan Rossbach
 Edwin Rossillon
 John Rosso
 Frank Rostagno
 Walter Rostkowski
 Henry Roszewski
 Ryland Rothschild
 William Rowan
 Robert Roy
 Emilio Rubrigi
 William Rude
 Alfred Rudman

Lou Ruchser
 Robert Rudd
 T. H. Ruger, Jr.
 Robert Ruiz
 George Rupp
 Lyle Rush
 Charles Russomanno
 David Ryan
 William Rychel
 Michell Sabal
 William Sage
 David Sahlein
 Arnold Salazar
 Robert Sales
 Warren Salisbury
 Louis Saluatorell
 William Sanderson
 John Sandison
 Robert Sargent
 Morris Saroff
 Emilio Santipadri
 Warine Satterfield
 Vinal Savage
 David Sayers
 Anthony Scalse
 John Searce
 Russell Schacke
 Ernest Schaefer
 Lyle Schaffner
 Floyd Scheel
 Jerome Scherzer
 Winloe Schibler
 Wellington Schipman
 Bert Schlageck
 Robert Schlemmer
 Carl Schlingman, Jr.
 James Schmid
 Richard Schmid
 Walter Schmitz
 Max Schmukler
 Carl Schneckenburger
 Lester Schneider
 Jack Schreiber
 Layton Schrock
 Rollie Schuder
 John Schueller
 Darwin Schultz
 Willard Schuyler
 Jack Schwartz
 Deat Scott
 James Scrivani
 Alva Shroyer
 Glenn Seager
 Jack Seay
 Louis Segreti
 Robert Seidner
 Andrew Sekel
 Joseph Selders
 Lloyd Selheim
 Thomas Sellitto
 Walter Seremet
 Walter Serin
 Henry Seron
 Harold Seton
 Melvin Shafer
 Earl Shanks
 Ralph Sharp
 Steve Shay
 Edward Shean
 Ralph Sheedy
 Herbert Shelton
 William Sherman
 Henderson Sherrill
 Arthur Shimp
 Edward Shively
 Malcolm Shoemaker
 Marvin Short

William Short, Jr.
 Eugene Shrewsberry
 Donald Shroyer
 Philip Shultz
 Harold Siegel
 Frank Siegfried
 George Siemer
 Frederick Sieperman
 Henry Sigel
 Lyle Sigg
 Clayton Sikes
 H. B. Silliman
 John Simenson
 Edlone Simmons
 John Simondejka
 Eugene Simonini
 Edward Simpson
 Jerry Sims
 H. M. Sinclair
 Glyndon Singleton
 Fenton Sink, Jr.
 Arthur Sisler
 George Skarita
 Robert Skelton
 Edward Skibicki
 John Skinner
 Thomas Skoram
 Bernard Slavin
 James Sloan, Jr.
 Roy Smiley
 Earl Smith
 Dennis Smith
 Ellery Smith
 Floyd Smith
 James Smith, Jr.
 John Smith
 Lawrence Smith
 Merrill Smith
 Paul Smith
 Robert Smith
 Vernon Smith
 Joe Smolec
 Charles Snodgrass
 Dale Snyder
 Francis Snyder
 Homer Snyder, Jr.
 John Snyder
 Edwin Sokal
 Joel Somers
 Raymond Sordello
 Robert Soricone
 Herbert Sorkin
 Richard Sorrell
 William Spainhour
 William Spangenberg
 Craig Spaulding
 James Spears
 Elmer Speer, Jr.
 Herbert Spielman
 Fred Spiller
 Eddie Spinski
 Danny Spoo
 Jack Spreadbury
 Vincent Staffeiri
 S. E. Stambach
 George Stamm
 James Stanton
 Ray Starkey
 Laurence Starrh
 Robert St. Clair
 Robert Steele
 Thomas Steen
 Billy Steffy
 Joseph Steiger
 Harold Stein
 Kenneth Stelter
 Edwin Stern

Frank Stewart
 Arthur Stewart
 Edward Stewart
 George Stewart
 Jack Stewart
 John Stewart
 Charles Stinson
 Norman Stoker
 Johnson Story
 Ken Strauss
 Paul Strayer
 Shirley Strother
 Brendan Sullivan
 John Sullivan
 Robert Sullivan
 William Sullivan
 Clifford Susinski
 Alfred Sutley
 Elwood Swails
 Arthur Sweeny, Jr.
 Melvin Sweet
 John Swisher
 Warren Swope
 Dillard Sword
 Frank Sylvester
 Richard Szczechowski
 Raymond Szmiegiel
 John Szuta
 Herbert Talbott
 Melvin Tamblyn
 Robert Tandberg
 Delma Tanner
 John Tasker
 Frederick Taylor
 Malcolm Taylor
 Wilbur Taylor
 Howard Teifke
 Leo Tenore
 Edward Tesche
 Joseph Thacker
 Glen Thomas, Jr.
 John Thomas
 Melvin Thomas
 Rober Thomas
 A. Z. Thompson
 Daniel Thompson
 Donald Thompson
 Rupert Thompson
 R. R. Thompson
 Charles Thorngate
 Ted Thorson
 Lee Thrasher
 Alvin Thrun
 J. C. Tidwell
 Charles Tietjen
 Raymond Tinker
 James Tisdale, Jr.
 Patrick Tolson
 Ronald Tornell
 John Tovcimak
 George Townsend
 Stephen Trattman
 John Trapani
 Lyman Trescott
 Richard Troyer
 John Trujillo
 Kenneth Trumps
 James Tucker
 John Tulba
 Gilbert Tunnell
 Curtis Turner
 Levi Turner
 Martin Turner
 Frank Tvas
 Arthur Utterback
 Joseph Valensky
 John Valentine, Jr.

William Vanderbosch
 William Vanembrugh
 Henry Van Ooyen
 Raphael Van Steenhuyse
 Ted Varlas
 James Vaughn
 Richard Vaughan
 Fred Venegoni
 Ferdinand Vercelletto
 James Vincent
 Dale Vining
 William Vivian
 Charles Vogel
 Louis Wagner
 John Walczak
 Eugene Walence
 Gene Walker
 Ralph Walker
 Alfred Wallence
 William Walling
 Lloyd Wallisch
 Alex Wallulis
 Martin Walsh
 George Waltman
 Glen Walp
 Harry Walsh
 Israel Walters
 James Walters
 Joseph Walton
 W. H. Walton
 A. M. Warner
 Bruce Washburn
 Warren Watkins
 Calvin Watson
 Nellis Webber
 Walter Weber
 Bennett Webster
 John Webster
 Donald Wedge
 Samuel Weiss
 Arnold Weinthal
 Kenneth Weir
 William Weitz
 Horace Wellington
 Walter Wells
 Maurice Wert
 Joseph Wertheimer
 William Wertz
 Forrest Wesen
 Raymond Wessel
 Hugh West, Jr.
 Joseph West
 Medard Westrup
 Joseph White
 Carlton Whittemore
 John Wieden
 Sylvester Wieler
 Cecil Wilcox
 Richard Wilde
 Harold Wiley
 Frank Wilkens
 Arthur Williams
 ✓ Robert Williams
 Hugh Willis
 Paul Will
 James Wilson
 Leontis Wilson
 Russell Wilson
 William Wilson
 Calvin Wilt
 A. M. Winkler
 John Winder
 Marrion Wire
 Halbert Wishart
 Boleslaus Witkowski
 Clarence Wittman
 George Wixsom

Kirby Weest
 Frank Wojcik
 Richard Wolff
 John Wolodka
 Albin Wolosayk
 Robert Woodall
 Eugene Woodard
 Oscar Woodard
 Jack Woods
 Leo Woodward
 Robert Wooley
 William Wooten
 James Worley
 Frederick Wren
 Donald Wright
 Northam Wright
 Paul Wright
 Robert Wyant
 Marion Wyland
 M. O. Yarber
 James Yatsko
 Ralph Yeomans
 Ray Yoke
 Vincent Yonusaitis
 Maurice Young
 Clifford Zacholl
 Aram Zakarian
 Claudio Zamara
 Stephen Zavosky
 Mitchell Zerron
 Joseph Zgoda
 Joseph Zika
 Horace Zimmerman
 Kenneth Zimmerman
 Henry Ziolkowski
 Philip Zisk
 Amador Zitani
 Dale Zopfi
 Theodore Zukowski
 Walter Zwirko
 James Burgess
 William Calhoun
 Charles Carnathan
 John Carpenter, Jr.
 Collin Chong
 Cornelius Conklin
 Howard Crissman
 Robert Darcy
 Eugene Gatz
 James C. Gaunt
 George Juth
 Frederick Kelleher
 Dennis Kingen
 James MacLean, Jr.
 Lowell R. Miles
 James Milne
 Robert Morrow
 Frank Paterka
 Gerald Robbins
 Andrew Solock
 William Anderson
 George Ashline
 John Bianchin
 Russell Erwin
 Martin Farrell
 James Garrett
 Robert Gumm
 Ferris Joyner
 John McCorkle
 Harold Meyer
 Carnot Nisely
 Emil Petr
 Oscar Thielen
 Allen Unger
 Horace D. Aynesworth
 Herman Kohn
 Joseph Paparatto

Frank Piazza
 Homer P. Smith
 Darwin Swanson
 Frank Teske
 Franklin Tomlinson
 Fay R. Upthegrove
 Mark Wagoner
 Robert White
 Mike Zapolsky
 John S. Barker, Jr.
 Robert A. Whitehead
 Robert L. Lamborn, Jr.
 R. F. Baker
 Michael Barone
 Louis Brada
 Harold Breazeale
 LeRoy Fuller
 Lyle Hayes
 Charles Horton
 Herman Ingram
 Therman Ingram
 Donald Jandernoa
 Russell Kilpatrick
 Melvin Lieberman
 Albert Merz
 Shukree Moses
 Frank Niebojewski
 Royne Roman
 John Shields
 Paul Vegna
 Anthony Zoccoli
 Herbert Brenneke
 Wallace King
 Elmon B. Harris
 William G. Means
 Fred Affleck
 Archie Anderson
 Fred Armstrong
 Harry Baseleon
 Carl Bauman
 Temple Bentley, Jr.
 William Bibow
 Richard Bickers
 Lionel Billman
 R. G. Blackburn
 Al Block
 Orrin Brooks
 Edward Bryan
 Leslie Buck
 Real Caron
 Donald Chesney
 James Clausen
 Marion Collier
 George Connors
 Edward Crevonis
 Charles Crookshanks
 Wilbur Dalrymple
 Raymond Darrow
 John DeLaMare
 Albert Diniak
 Robert Dennis, Jr.
 Albert DiNapoli
 John DiPrima
 Albert Disoteco
 John Dornhof
 Louis Dougherty

Herbert Durrenre
 Joseph Farr
 Frank Ferraioli
 Leo Fever
 Robert Finch
 Ralph Finkbinder
 John Fiocca
 Elmer Flecksig
 Manley Fliger
 George Frank
 Howard Freeman
 Walter Freeman
 Raymond Frost
 William Fullerton
 George Gardmann
 H. J. Geiger
 Edwin Georgi
 Sylvester Giaccone
 John Gibbons
 Jack Gouchenour
 Clyde Graham
 Ian Grant
 Boren Green
 Rodney Griffin
 Jerome Gross
 Norman Hall
 T. J. Hall
 Bethel Harris
 Edgar Haynie
 Elmer Hazelton
 Warren Hearne
 Raymond Hennessey
 Leon Hickman
 Irvin Hilgeman
 Warren Hill
 Howard Horton
 Henry Hoose
 Roland Houle
 Lewis Hunt
 William Hutchinson
 Bron Jagielski
 Joseph Jamro
 Alexander Jembrysek
 Howard Jensen
 Garland Johnson
 Saul Kahn
 Edward Kellerman
 Robert Kemple
 Richard Kenyon
 Stanley Knuteson
 Edward Koby
 Donald Kresge
 Marvin Krueger
 William LaBoskey
 Jack Lawson
 Donald Leedy
 Darel Lewis
 Thaddeus Losiewicz
 Thomas Martin
 Robert Marker
 Wilbur Mashburn
 Joe McAllister
 Thomas McCarthy
 Paul McConnell, Jr.
 William McCormick

Peter McDonough
 John McGinley
 Robert McPherson
 Otto Mitchell
 Hal Morris
 Kelvin Moran
 Claude Morton
 Wasyl Mostecky
 Virgil Mudd
 Leo Nelson
 Stanley Newborn
 Alfred Neugebauer
 Eugene Newman
 Joseph Nix
 Harris Hygard
 Ell Peebles
 Arthur Penuel, Jr.
 Edward Perkins, Jr.
 M. J. Persinko
 Paul Platko, Jr.
 Samuel Radoycis
 Norman Raio
 William Reichand
 Donald Rimbe
 James Robinette
 Dale Rowen
 Chales Ruiz
 Marvin Saltsman
 Richard Sampson
 Louis Sheriff
 Ralph Sherwood
 Alvin Sholl
 Morris Simonton
 Oramel Skinner, Jr.
 Ashleigh Smith
 David Smith
 George Smith
 Warren Smith
 Dexter Tait
 Marvin Talasnik
 Charles Taylor
 Gerald Tegner
 F. G. Tervooren
 Corbin Thomas
 David Thorn
 Howard Topper
 Harry Torosian
 Nelson Trout
 Bart Tudor
 John Tyson
 Rogelio Vargas
 Phillip Van Strander
 Murray Verlin
 F. K. Vosper
 Albert Walker
 Morton Wasserman
 Joseph Weisbrot
 Matt Wheeler, Jr.
 Richard Wickert
 Parker Wiley
 James Wilson
 Arthur Wombaugh
 Joseph Wright
 Raymond Wright

PRIZE



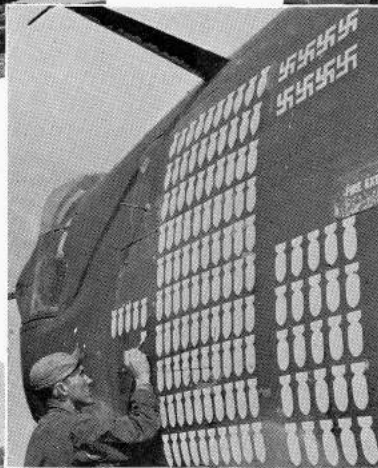
WINNERS



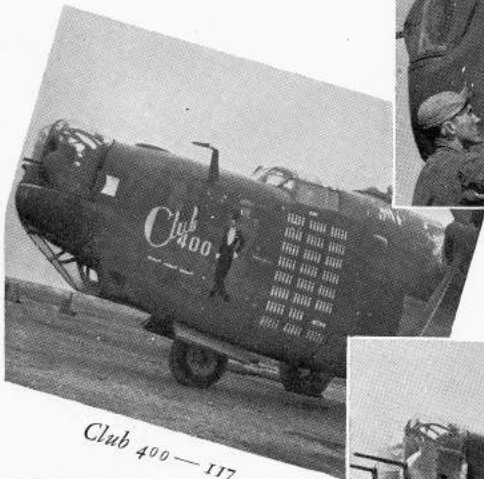
Dragon Lady — 116



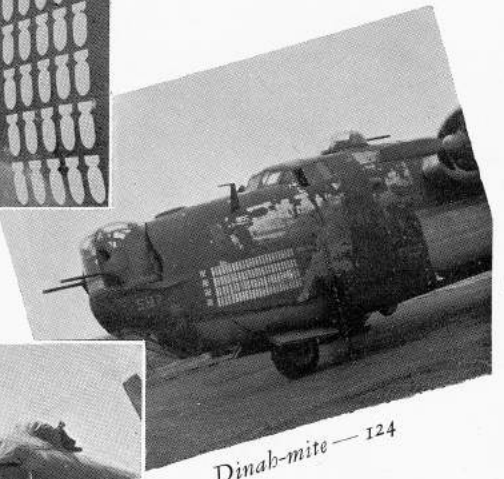
Easy Take-off — 101



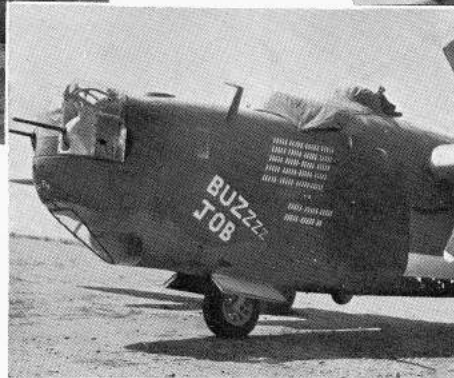
*Miss America
133*



Club 400 — 117



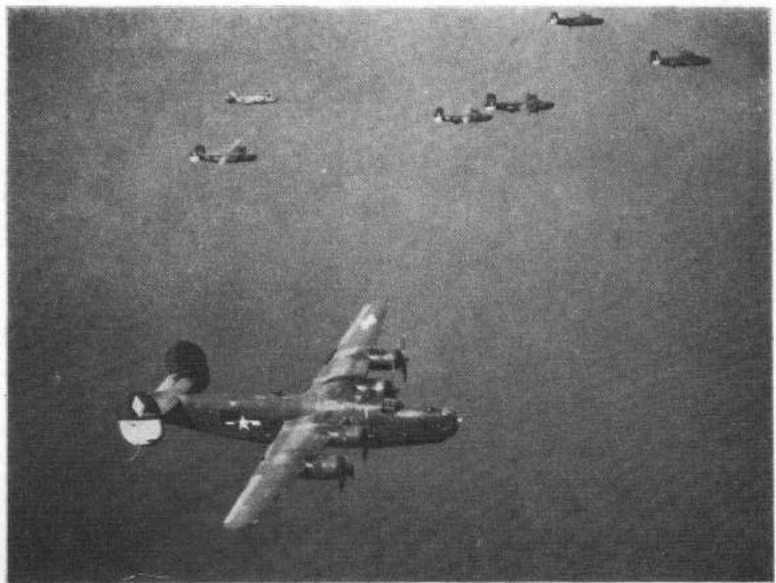
Dinah-mite — 124



Buzz-Job — 126



Flight Formation



Your strength is in your union.

H. W. LONGFELLOW



454TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP HEADQUARTERS

In the old stone farmhouse, remodeled into comfortable offices, the headquarters detachment of the 454th Bombardment Group looked out upon San Giovanni airfield and governed the operations of each squadron on the field. As a vital link in the chain of command, Group Headquarters disseminated the information arriving from Wing and Air Force and acted as coordinator for the four squadrons of the group.

The original command of the group's detachment at headquarters fell under Colonel Aynesworth as group commander, Major Ryland Rothschild as group executive officer, and Major Charles Cox, III, as group adjutant. Major Rothschild, later lieutenant colonel, left the group in 1944 and was replaced by Major Amos G. Allen, Jr., who was originally the executive

officer of the 739th Squadron. Major Cox returned to the Zone of the Interior, too, and his place was taken by Major Joseph Minotty. Late in our stay at San Giovanni, Colonel Aynesworth was advanced to Wing Headquarters and was replaced by Colonel John A. Way, Colonel Edward Casey, and Major William Hubbard, III, in turn.

But the changes of command did not effect the efficient operation of the clerical staff at headquarters. In late 1944 the S-1 sections of the four squadrons, complete with service records and qualification cards, moved from the orderly rooms into the main office of the large Italian wine cellar where the goings and comings of each man in the group were tabulated by a large staff of clerks under the direction of Lieutenant Robert Fraser, assistant adjutant. Also in this

maze of offices, the 454th's model of the Pentagon, would be found the heads of the Armament, Ordnance, Engineering, Operations, Intelligence, Public Relations, Air Inspector, Supply, and Communications Sections of the group, all madly rushing about their business, pausing only in an attempt to "wolf" the Red Cross girl at the donut stand each afternoon.

The arrival of Colonel Way as commander of the group led to the establishment of basic training procedure and the construction of "Way Field." Our morale at that time was at ebb tide, and the inauguration of a daily program of calisthenics and drilling brought our morale almost to the point of rebellion. But with work to be done it was soon discovered that the idea of drilling, like many other ideas born in the dormant minds of the 454th's personnel, was impractical, and "Way Field" soon became nothing but another dust bowl for the playful winds of the spring season. The Saturday morning reviews for the presentation of awards found use for "Way Field," however, and Captain

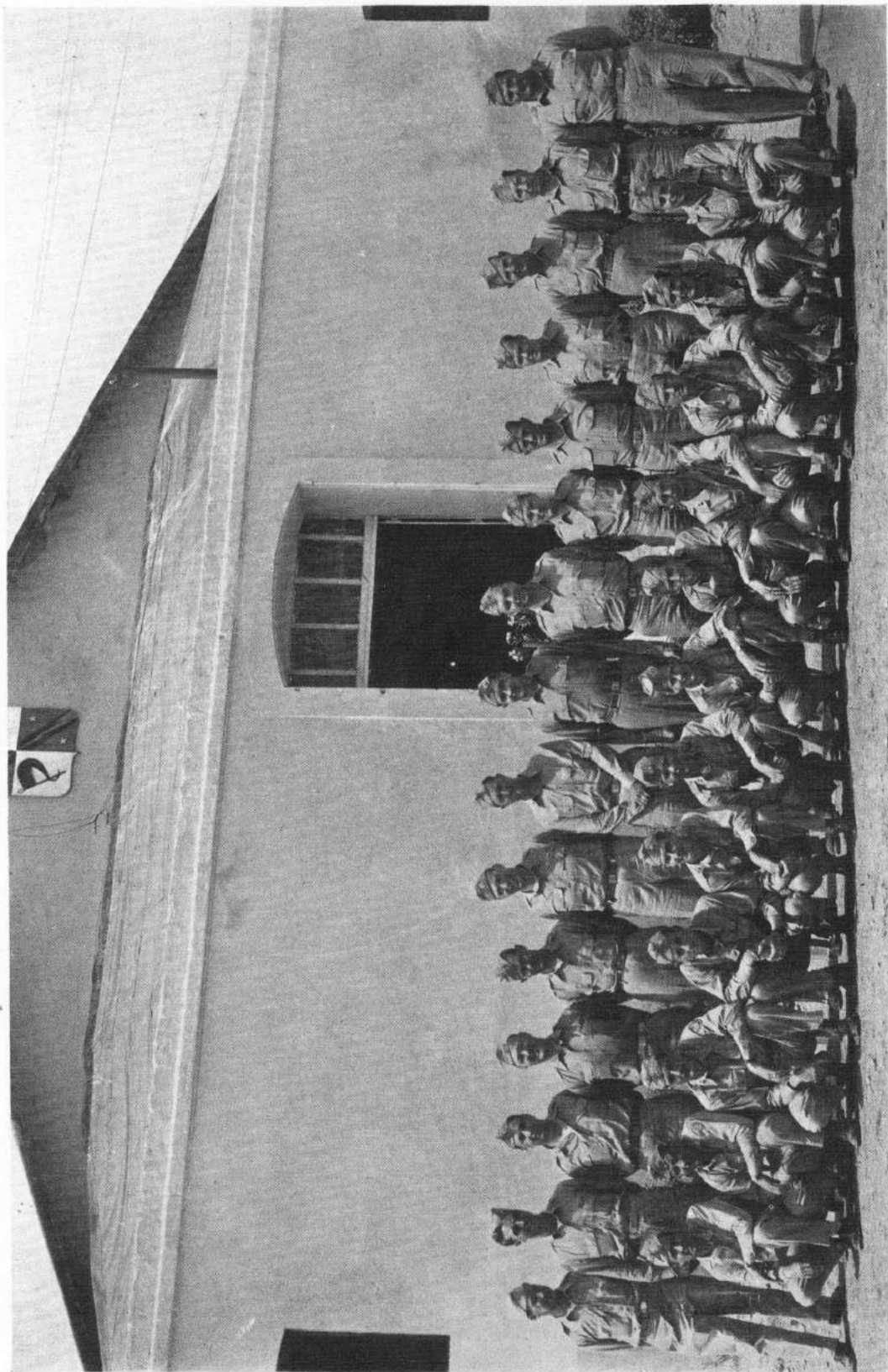
Gelber arranged for the award of innumerable air medals, distinguished flying crosses, bronze stars, and silver stars upon the dust-filled, wind-driven, rain-soaked drilling field.

But despite an occasional set-back, the group headquarters detachment operated faithfully and efficiently throughout the time of our activity. The group photo lab worked long hours to produce the results of the bomb-strikes over various targets. The intelligence and operations sections worked hand in hand to formulate plans for each day's briefing and interrogation. Communications maintained an uninterrupted lifeline between the group and higher headquarters. And the statistical section tabulated the information on every man in the group from a change of home address to an award of the Good Conduct Medal.

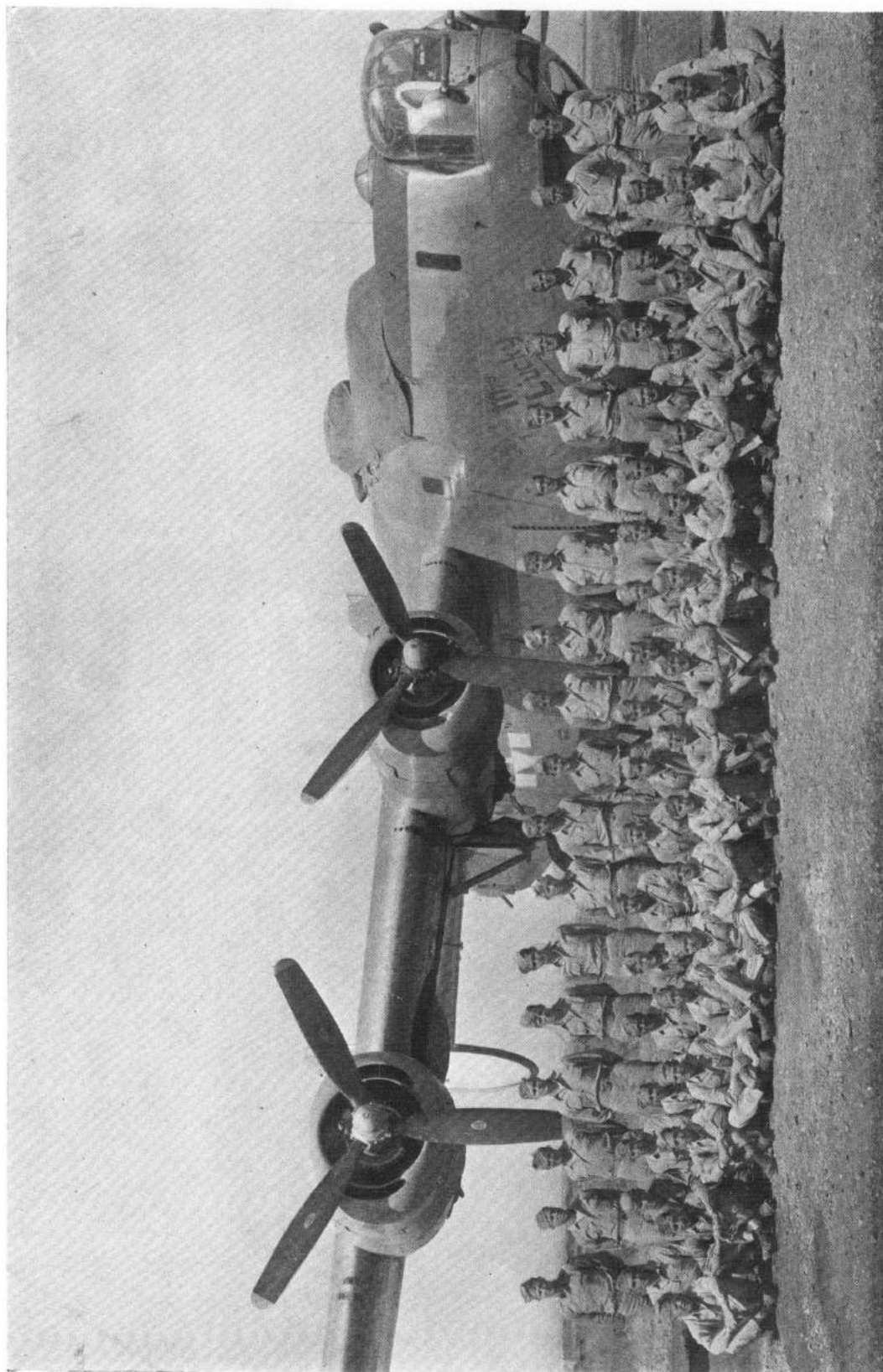
As the group left San Giovanni Field, the personnel of the headquarters detachment looked back at the old wine cellar and echoed the words of Lionel Parent, group sergeant-major: "It was a tough fight, Maw, but we won."



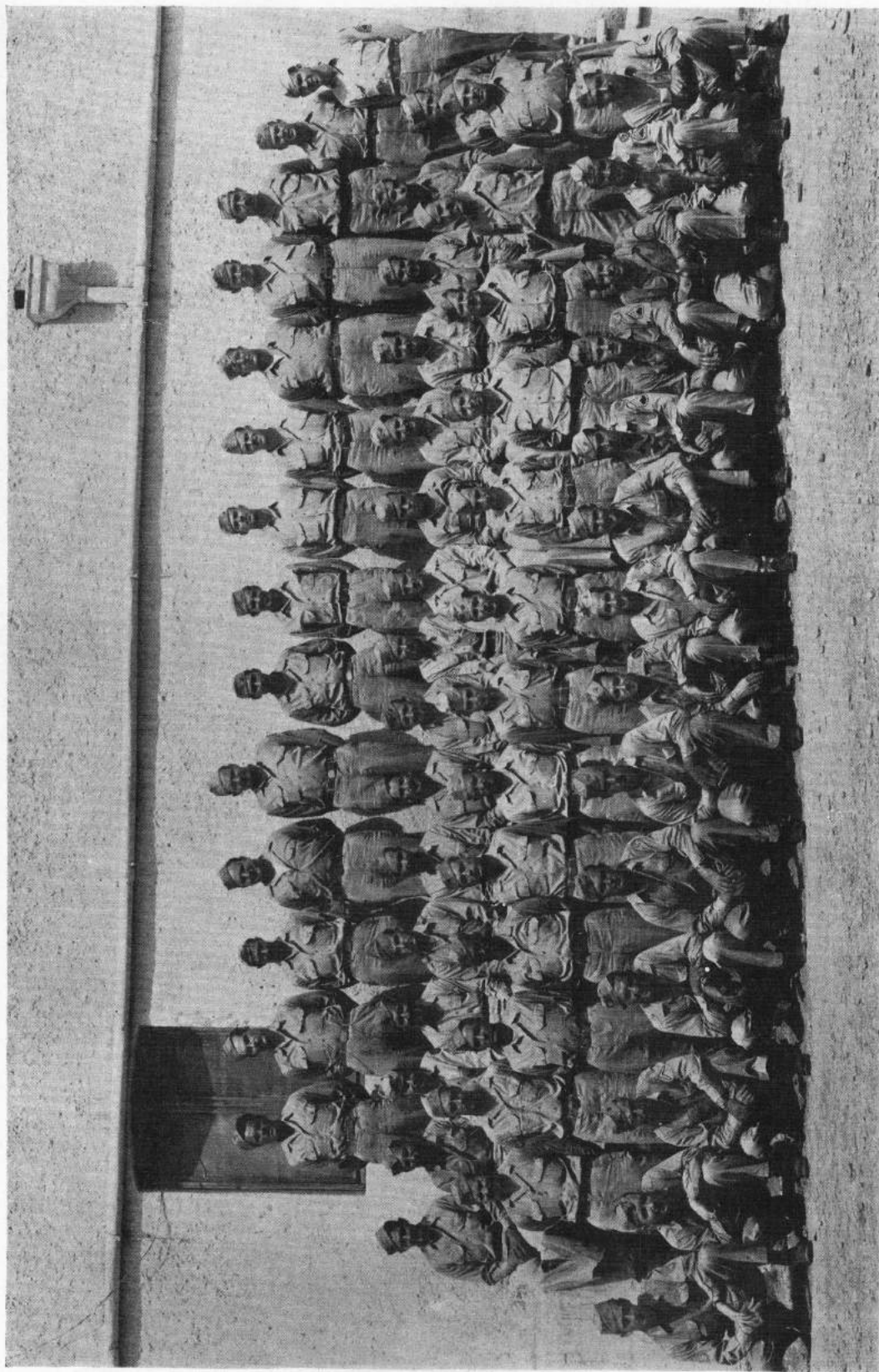
GROUP PHOTO LAB. *First row:* Harry Newfield, Samuel Weiss, John Pemstein, George Siemer, Mark Wagoner, Frank Piazza. *Second row:* Joseph Valensky, Arthur Johnson, John Gallagher (section NCO), Donald Graves (section officer), Richard Carlton, Constantine Ragne, Joe Paparatto.



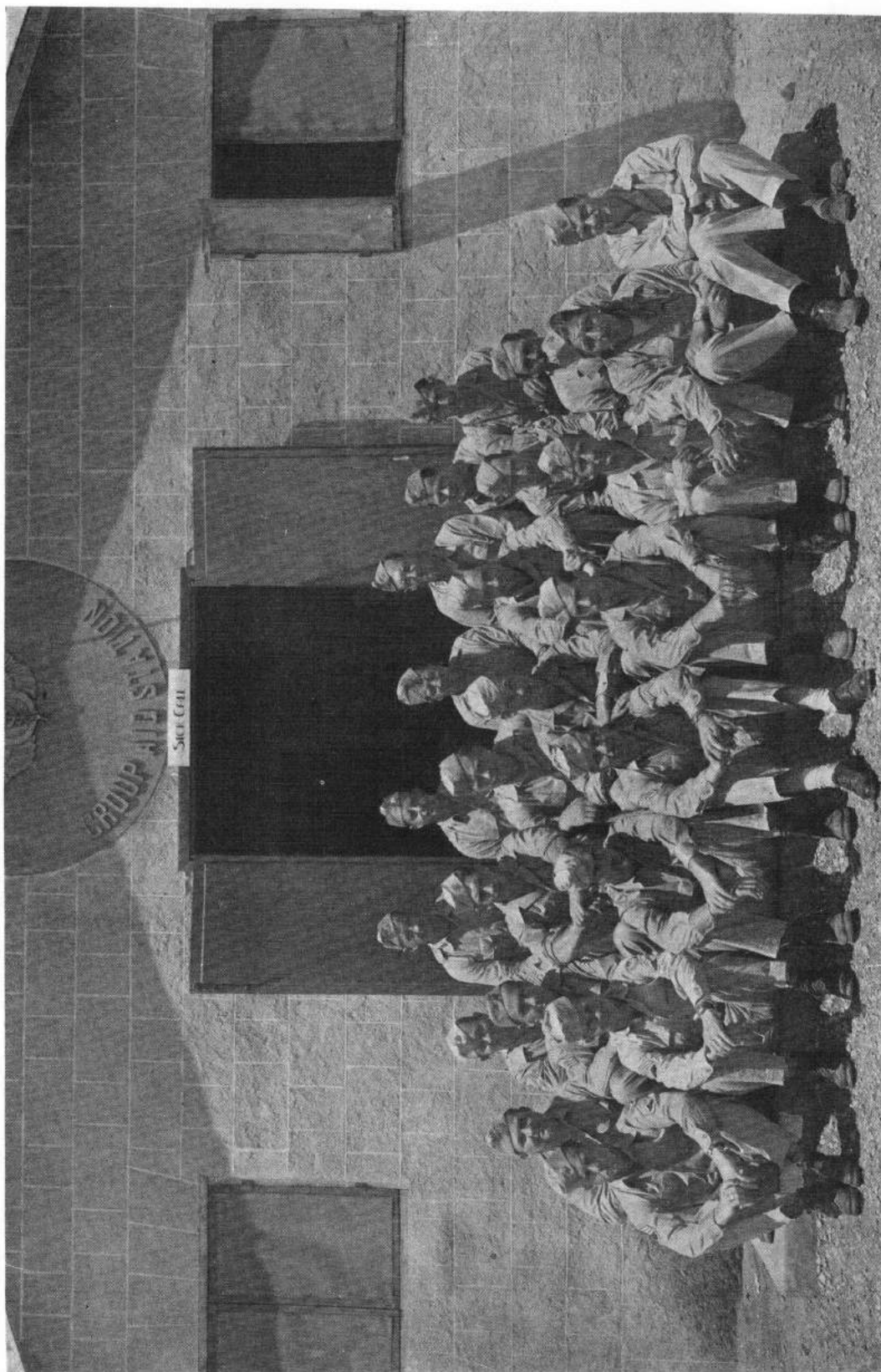
GROUP OFFICERS. *First row:* Joseph West, Isidore Adler, John Crawford, Ligon Smith, Joseph Minorty, H. P. Smith, Robert Fraser, Donald Graves, Ralph Bransterter, Wymond Ehrenkrook, Floyd Desch, Orrin Prejean. *Second row:* Harold Glick, John Tripiani, Gabriel Gelber, Amos G. Allen, Jr. (executive officer), William Hubbard, Howard Isaacs, John McGrail, Edward R. Casey (commanding officer), William Kavasch, Thomas Hepner (chaplain), Ralph Dench, Wyatt Hedricks, Gordon Potter, Archie Kodros.



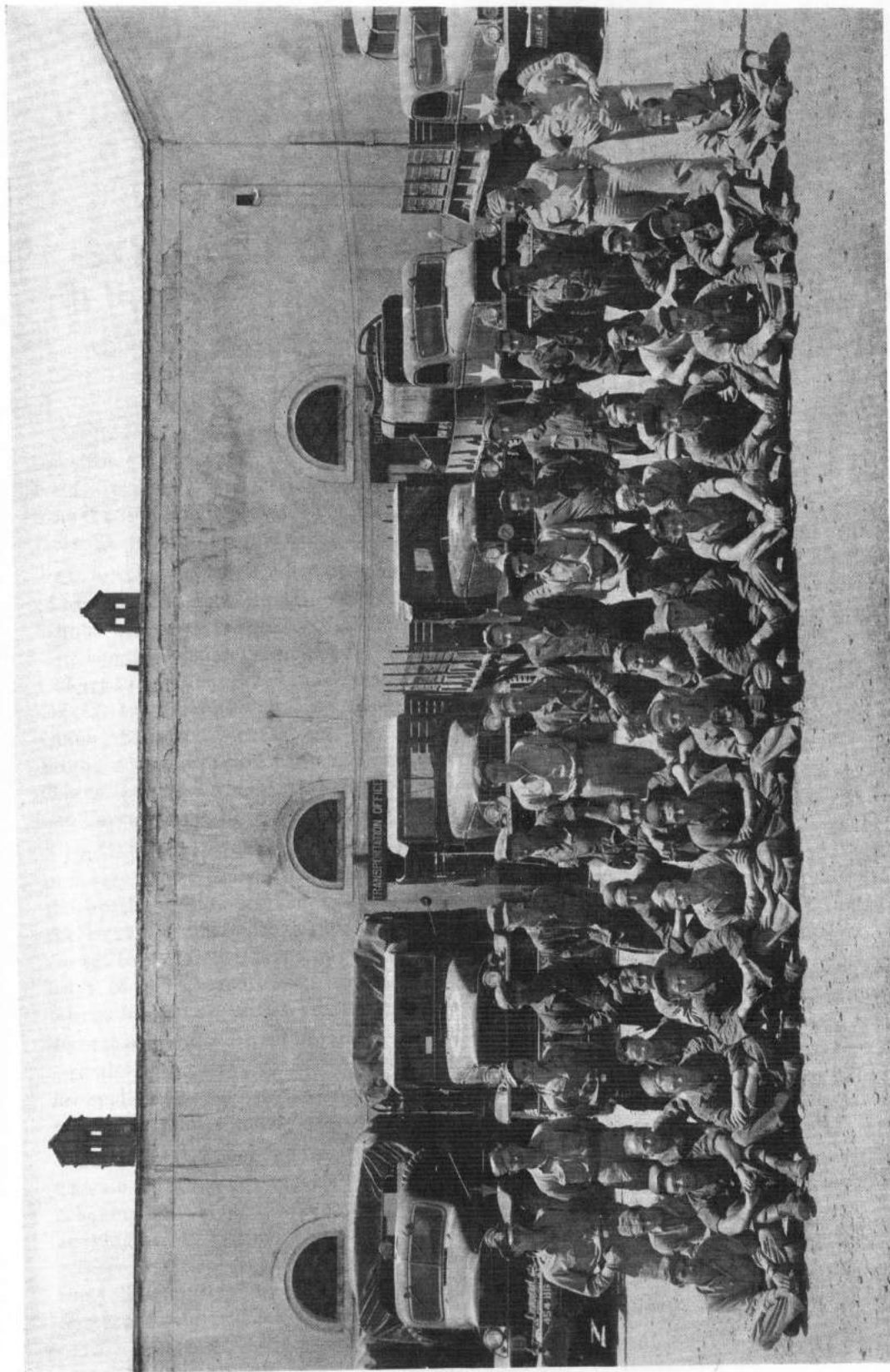
GROUP RADAR. *First row:* James Cook, John Kaine, Jerome Frost, Earl Pye, Robert Jones, Horace Almy, Ralph Howland, Anthony Suk, Harry Faber, Shelton Futrell, Charles Kauffman, Stephen Karp, Delmar Manthei, Alfonso Galindo, Mervin Warren, Joe Hagan, Billy Fitzgerald. *Second row:* Manuel Miller, Robert Mulloy, Eugene Simonini, Shires Risser, Glen Mayer, John Shields, Samuel Dunton, Robert Finch, Ted Varlas, Lyman Trescott, Royne Roman, William McNerney, Charles Dean, Leland Sackett, William Stewart, William Morrison, Lloyd Maeby, Guy Jamison, Walter Gillespie. *Third row:* William Holman, Andrew Schor, William Gibbons, Bert Lyon, Arthur Graham, William Fuller, Edward Skibinski, Dale Donnelly, Gerald Curley, William Barry, Henry Albers, Ernest Dahlen, Henry Smith, Harry Mernagh, William Call, Henry Keahey, James Deshields, Willard Flaugh.



GROUP ENLISTED MEN. *First row:* Kelvin Moran, Vernon Cline, Harmon Ferguson, Charles Detore, Coyle McBride, Edward Koby, Pete Frazier, Noel Anthony, Ralph Sheedy, Edward Brim, John Crist, Joe Ranson, Howard Lewis, Alinur Garcia. *Second row:* Norman Parks, Robert Boehm, James Elms, Joe Berzing, Charles Hagan, Clarence Zachary, Franklin Davis, William Taylor, Walter Rice, Howard Daniels, Hollis Knott, Raymond Currie, Christopher Kammer. *Third row:* Ralph Sherrord, Arnold Kleinberg, Andrew Anderson, Lionel Parent, Richard Gottfried, Glenwood Fillbrook, James Johnson, Vern Lewis, Byrne Anderson, Theodore Zukowski, William McCrorey, Alfred Arch, Jean Brinton, Frank Gritto, Charles Check, Betram Stoner. *Fourth row:* Manuel Arvizu, Vernon Smith, Donald Lang, Walter Serin, Roy Dahl, Dexter Buchanan, Frederick Emmelmann, Charles Astryke, David McNair, J. A. Carson, Albert Roes, George Stanley, William Vanembrugh, Thomas Manning.



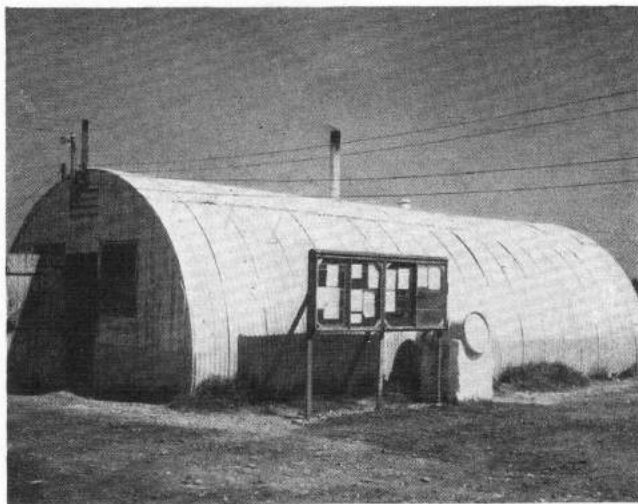
GROUP MEDICAL SECTION. *First row:* Louis Edwards, James Jackson, LeRoy Fuller, Lyle Rush, George Sands, Frank Stewart, Forrest Griggs, Elton Jones. *Second row:* Everett Epps, Paul Lee, Joseph White, William McCrorey, George Brownlee, Robert Duckworth, Walter Rice, Claris Campbell. *Third row:* Walter Wells, James Dougherty, Orrin Prejean, James Potter, John Minckler, Cecil Disterhoft, Adam Push.



GROUP TRANSPORTATION. *First row:* D. G. Landrum, T. Sausedo, A. D. Durant, T. L. Pack, G. H. Mund, W. S. Wooten, F. J. Mazza, E. J. Kapuza, R. J. Stiefvater, W. R. Sharp, A. E. Barnes, C. H. Pratt, T. H. Warner. *Second row:* W. E. Norris, F. E. Turner, J. E. Karry, J. R. Connolly, E. E. Murie, V. Savage, C. L. Hamilton, C. L. Spencer, L. R. Ibarra, H. M. Gandee, C. Q. Reynolds, H. Barraza, G. L. Platt. *Third row:* W. T. Hudson, W. G. Chandler, C. W. Cline, P. R. Flores, M. P. Quinn, D. E. Maritz, A. Moret, E. J. Harris, G. G. Filbrook, N. R. Bruno, W. M. Douthart, W. F. Haberman, R. G. Sherrod, F. C. Carlisle, S. E. Lee, R. W. Schlemmer.

736

BOMB SQUADRON



On June 2, 1943, the 736th Bombardment Squadron (H) was activated at Davis-Monthan Field, Tucson, Arizona. The cadre was taken from the 39th Bombardment Group (H). Captain James D. Jamison became Commanding Officer.

On July 3, 1943, the tactical personnel departed for Orlando, Florida, to attend the Air Forces School of Applied Tactics. Captain Jamison, Commanding Officer; Lt. Grady, Operations Officer; Lt. Stamm, S-2; Lt. Mealy, Armament Officer; Lt. Paulson, Squadron Navigator; Lt. Quinn, Squadron Bombardier; Lt. Kilimnik, Flight Commander; Lt. Wren, Engineering Officer; Lt. Barauch, Communications Officer, and Captain Prejean, Medical Officer.

Until July 21, 1943, this group, with the necessary complement of enlisted men, enjoyed the hotels in Orlando, and attended classes of the Heavy Bombardment Course. On the 21st, we set forth for Pinecastle one of the satellite fields of the Orlando base, to carry out the lessons learned at AAFSAT. Our departure was accompanied by a torrent of rain, and, upon our arrival at Pinecastle, we found ourselves living in mud-surrounded tents, battling over-sized mosquitoes and a number of other hardships.

On July 31, 1943, under the command of Captain DuBrow, Group S-2 Officer, the ground echelon departed for the cornfields of Nebraska, arriving at McCook on August 3rd. The flying echelon left August first and reached McCook the following day, having spent the night in Shreveport, Louisiana. The remainder of the

squadron, consisting of Lt. Sink, Adjutant, and Lt. Scheiner, Supply Officer, with 76 enlisted men, had arrived in McCook on July 26th.

The Squadron continued to grow during its stay at McCook. On August 20th, Lt. Phebus arrived to become Ordnance and Transportation Officer. Lt. Stern put in his appearance and became Assistant S-2 Officer. Lt. Trapani, who had been with the Group at Orlando where he was in an accident which hospitalized him, became a member of the 736th Squadron as Tech Supply Officer. On September seventh, Lt. Beck became Assistant Operations Officer. Captain Ehrenkrook, fresh from Biggs Field, appeared September twelfth and became Executive Officer. Training continued throughout the period with one battle-scarred ship, good old 072, which will doubtless go down in history and eventually find its way into the Smithsonian Institute as the airplane which won the war.

Keeping 072 in the air, occupied the time of Lt. Wren and his Engineering staff while S-2 and Operations beavered-away planning missions, most of which had to be scrubbed. Operations worked out devious schedules keeping one crew aloft and other crew members busy with link trainer and bomb trainer. By this time the air echelon had been increased by the arrival of Lts. Mattox, Clay, Whitney, Ward and Switzer, complete with crews.

Then came that fatal day. September 31st, aided by a torrential rain, the ground echelon of the 736th Squadron moved by truck to the

railroad station of McCook where to the strains of martial music furnished by the base band and with the assistance of the entire female population of McCook, the "Secret" troop movement got underway. We boarded a collection of coaches, which in the words of the Burlington Railroad, were in operation. It was rumored that President Grant's initials could be discerned upon the door in one of the coaches. Thus, began our journey to Charleston, South Carolina.

Captain Ehrenkrook acted as Assistant Train Commander, while Lt. Stamm performed his duties as Train Quartermaster in an exemplary manner. Under his direction, the mess staff turned out excellent chow which did much to keep up spirits which might well have lagged for 72 sleepless but drowsy hours through Kansas City, St. Louis, Memphis, Birmingham, and various other southern hamlets. The high point of the trip was the maneuver at Birmingham when we were marched through the main streets of the town to the YMCA for a shower only to discover that the YMCA would have none of us.

At 0030 hours, October 4th, the train reached Ten Mile Station at Charleston and we staggered off and made for the mess hall. On October 6th, the squadron received the remainder of its complement, with the arrival from Tucson and Clovis of Lts. Forney, Goodwin, Wilson, Hogan, Rabun, Felbab, Noonan, Ellis, Larsen, Nagy, Kutsch, and Peters, and their crews. Training began in earnest with Second Phase Missions, briefed and interrogated by Lts. Stamm and Stern, planned by Lts. Grady and Paulson.

Living conditions were interesting. The staff officers were living all over the halls, crew officers were under each others beds, and the GI's were double, if not triple, bunked. At any rate, despite the normal amount of grumbling, we managed to have a good time, but not at the expense of training. The Squadron had the best record for keeping its operational ships in the air, and this record was marred by none but minor accidents.

On November 8th, the Squadron set forth to Walterboro and bivouac. This phase of our training is one that will never be forgotten. It may be termed as our first taste of combat. Not only was the weather altogether different from what was expected, but the mosquitos were

ferocious. It was not sad news to the personnel when we learned that the remaining two days would not be necessary and the men would return to Charleston. Thanks to Captain Mealy and his armament boys who were great at procuring local poultry, the menu of "C" and "K" rations was favorably substituted by fresh fowl.

On November 15th, the Squadron was visited by the P.O.M. inspectors and was found to be ready for overseas duty. Shortly thereafter, preparations were made to leave. All departments scurried about preparing our equipment for shipping, and, when the word came, everything was in readiness.

A fast, and uncomfortable ride to the Port of Embarkation was a thrilling experience—we were fully aware of the earnestness of our mission. Once again, Captain Ehrenkrook was the duly elected troop commander. It was all too hurriedly done. With hustle and bustle, the men found themselves aboard the ferry "Mohawk" headed for a troop ship. The Liberty Ship "S.S. Button Gwinnett" was not a large ship, it must be admitted. It was, however, seaworthy and ready to make its second voyage. The ship was ably manned by veteran seamen and merchantmen under the command of Captain Braithwaite.

On December 13, 1944, we were all bunked comfortably five and six high in the hold that was to be our home for the ensuing month. Everything went smoothly with most men witnessing a miniature "Monte Carlo." It was the first night out at sea on December 14th when we began to regret our sins and prepare our souls for the death that was sure to come within the next five minutes. Sea Sick! Sea Sick! Never again, we moaned. There were grunts and curses with each roll of the ship. Everyone was evidently in high spirits though, since there could be heard the usual supreme and unsurpassed GI complaints expressed in the manner that only a soldier knows.

Lt. Stern and his staff: James E. Sloan, Robert C. Bell, Joseph A. Persichini and William Durr, published the daily poop sheet the "Button Gazette." The slander, together with the "Adventures of Fearless Freddie," kept the men impatiently waiting for the next day's edition.

December 24th, Christmas Eve, 1100 miles eastward of Bermuda, the men at last became serious and sang Christmas Carols. Aside from

the usual routine, Christmas was brightened by the voice of President Roosevelt coming over the radio. December 26th—1200 miles from Gibraltar and a new regime began on the good ship "Burton Gwinnett." Open air eating became the rule. Rain mingled with soup and coveralls alike. Pieces of ham, followed by large splashes of hot coffee, flew in all directions with every sway and roll. Men stooped over to cut delicate slices of meat, then straightened up to allow the succulent morsels to slide into their stomachs.

January first—100 miles from Gibraltar. The New Year was ushered in on the Burton Gwinnett with great enthusiasm, amid shouting and banging in the hold. Such old favorites as "Auld Lang Syne" and "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here" were led by Lt. Trapani. Tex Moffatt and Mathew Miscjka, with violin and guitar, put out with the well-known aria "Bell-bottom Trousers" and the "Okey-Dokey Song."

The sights of Gibraltar and, later, Bizerte harbor were pleasant ones. After leaving Bizerte harbor on the sixth, it was days before we had the thrill of seeing Sorrento, Capri, and then Naples Harbor.

On the 13th January, 1944, the Squadron found itself moored at the staging area in Baginoli only to depart shortly afterward and set up operations at Torretta Air Field. Four days later, the shift from Torretta Field to Cerignola's San Giovanni Air Field reminded all of Army methods and movements.

After the air echelon arrived from Oudna, activities began with the bombing of the Orvieto Air Field, Italy, on February 8, 1944. All sections remained intact with section heads as follows: S-1, George Murdock; S-2, Hartney Heraldson; S-3, Therman Ingram; S-4, B. W. Jackson; Engineering, Laurence Berg; Ordnance, Bert Johnson; Armament, Theodore Hubbard; Tech Supply, Harry Loeb; Photo, John Gallagher; Medics, J. W. Jackson; Communications, Willard Beal. The total strength of the squadron at this time was 394 Enlisted Men and 90 Officers.

April 29, 1944, the old mess hall tent was no longer upright. We filed into the new tufa-block mess hall complete with tables and chairs. With such a magnificent building, even the C-Ration seemed to taste much better.

Oh Happy May 22nd—Two fragmentation

missions were flown and frag box lumber became available to the squadron personnel. Great building activity was evidenced throughout the area, with tents being extended, boarded in, floored, and tables and chests being made.

The new enlisted men's club "Esquire Inn" was officially opened on February 1, 1945. The committee included Lawrence Neima, Therman Ingram, Walter Jancek, and Robert C. Bell. The committee had been busy supervising the construction of the new club while other valiant volunteers were on the alert, and secured from the Red Cross a supply of comfortable chairs and other furniture. With Emilio Santipadri as artist, many beautiful and enticing pictures, quite unlike "Pink Elephants," were painted on the white walls. William Wertz and Estes Laseman added color to the club room with the hanging of several unsalvageable parachutes.

At the close of the campaign, many of the original personnel were still with the unit. There had been a few changes. Major Eaton, replaced Major Skinner who had replaced Major Jamison as CO. Captain Perry was the last of twelve operations officers that superseded Major Grady. Lt. Nickas replaced Lt. Durnford as supply officer while Rolland Warkle replaced B. W. Jackson as supply section head. Richard Bowman replaced Bert Johnson as ordnance section head. First Sergeant George Murdock had been replaced by Robert Frazer, George Stanley and, later, Gene Nash.

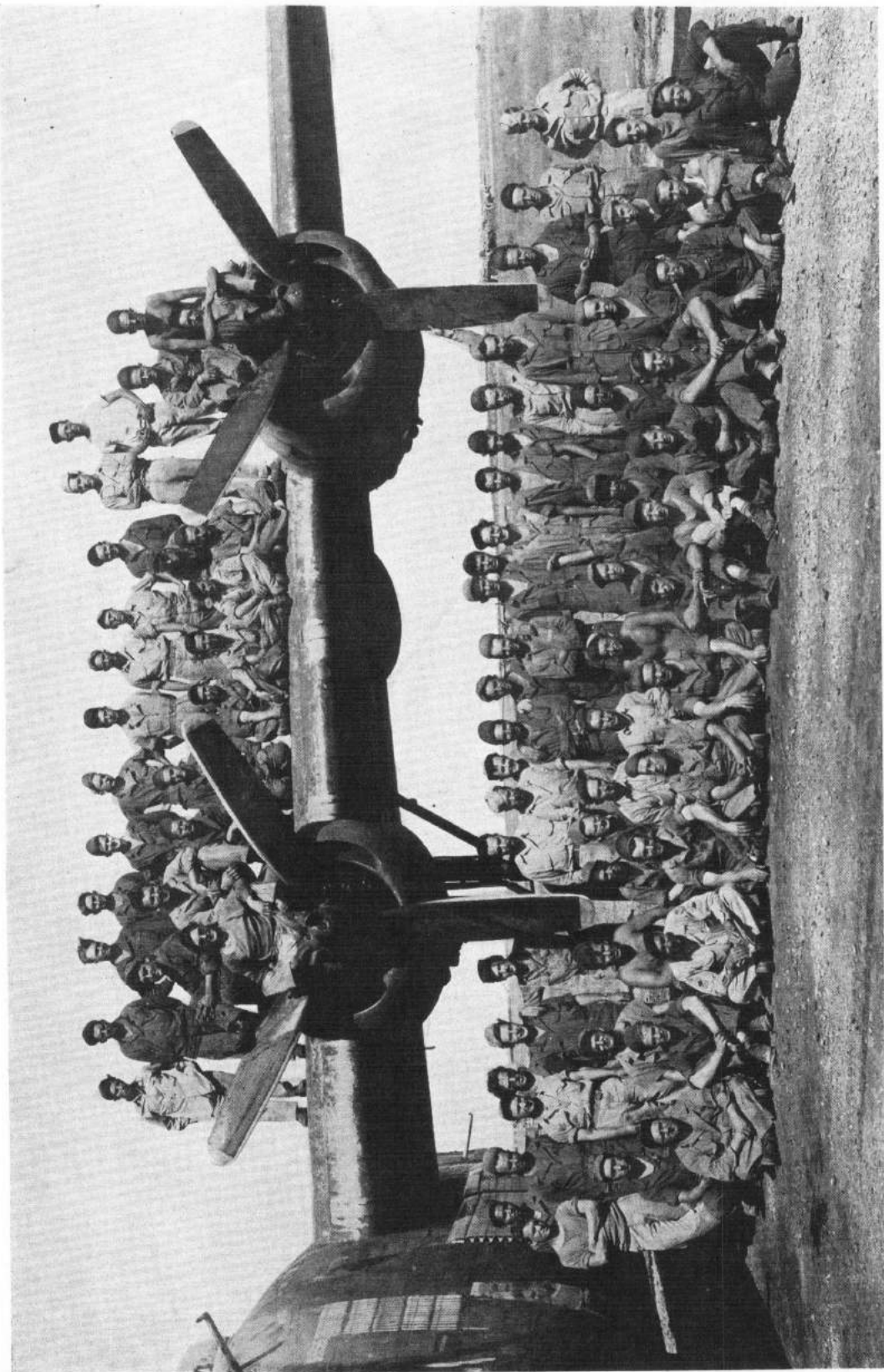
Among other unforgettable things, the 736th Squadron Baseball Team will live with us always. With Adolphus Brittingham as manager and Joseph Zgoda as Field Captain, the team was tops in the league, winning 21 games while losing only 6.

As we left Italy, there were many who felt they wanted to return some day. They found it to be a strange country full of strange people with old customs and modes of life. Aside from the usual dislikes, there are many who found in Italy a queer fascination. It was not the Cognac, Rhum or the Vino but something beyond that, something that one cannot explain. This had been our home for the past eighteen months. Here we had lived and fought in the Battle of Germany; we could not leave without one backward glance at the land once controlled by the Legions of Caesar and the Sections of the 736th.

JP



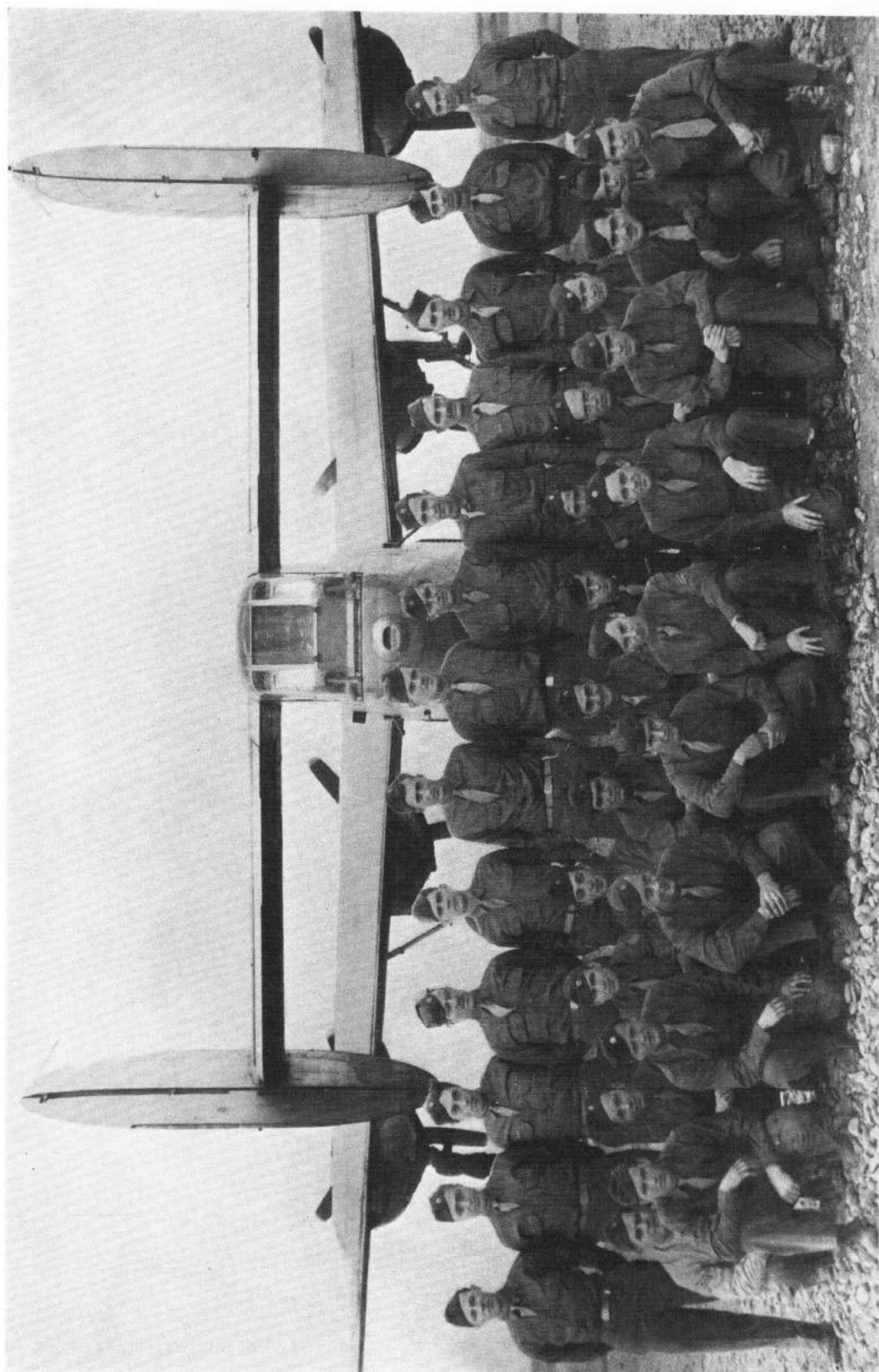
736th S-1, S-2, S-3, S-4. *First row:* Gene Nash (first sergeant), Floyd Crader, John Pawlowski, Robert James, Mathias Kopf, Robert Woods, Walter Janiak, Peter Costa. *Second row:* Glen Pearson, Clayton Sikes, Horace Wright, James Sanders, Talbert Stewart, Wannie Satterfield, Harold Crunk, Charles Hayes, Coy Sonnier. *Third row:* Leonard Helle, Joseph Sleszynski, Roland Warkle, Robert Mock, Dennis Loftin, Arthur Nikas, Fenton Sink, Samuel Zeff.



736th ENGINEERING. *First row:* R. Hertz, E. J. Erickson, H. L. Rorer (section NCO), R. V. Gittings, S. S. Guskind, L. A. Whitley, A. J. Gullace, W. G. Koeneke, A. Bernard, L. R. Brink, R. L. Tandberg, V. R. Ashcraft, A. R. Sisler. *Second row:* P. H. Byrnes, E. C. Bender, H. R. Carroll, C. H. Wilt, M. S. Cohen, M. W. Elting, D. M. McNeely, H. E. Didion, M. E. Short, H. Willis, A. Althoff, V. L. Davis, R. R. Starkey, G. Furman. *Third row:* E. J. Wildeman, R. C. Casillas, P. Powanda, F. A. Badac, Z. Gawronski, C. E. Eckleberger, J. W. Steiger, M. A. Badzik, R. D. Heisler, W. A. Phalan, F. J. Bartolotta, I. Lazarowitz, E. C. Santipadri, J. I. Harbs, J. Coulson, H. E. Bauer, W. B. Bloss, T. C. Rogers, W. A. Rychel, W. L. Brown, C. E. Cushing, F. J. Beletz, F. E. Wren (section officer). *On wing, sitting:* W. J. Shipman, J. M. Cruik, J. M. Chemelo, R. F. Guthrie, B. A. Watkins, G. K. Dansby, B. G. Belleville, H. E. Beltrari, K. L. Zimmermann, C. Piona, L. Schneider, J. E. Barruss, T. E. Cavanaugh. *On wing, standing:* J. L. Carstens, S. Barr, W. E. Theriault, C. E. Anderson, H. J. Kempiners, J. B. Moore, A. W. Howard, W. O. Lyendecker, R. R. Thompson, J. H. Grimes, L. M. English, C. G. Martin.



736th COMMUNICATIONS. *First row:* James Woods, Vincent Kalerek, James Anderson, Lawrence Kakatsch, Augustave Dragon, George Gallman, Robert Robinson, John Reed. *Second row:* Edgar Haswell, William Buford, Hershell Prince, Jacob Lyda, Willard Beal (section NCO), Floyd Desch (section officer), Joseph Zgoda, Frederick Quenzer, Robert Quillam, Felix Lamb.



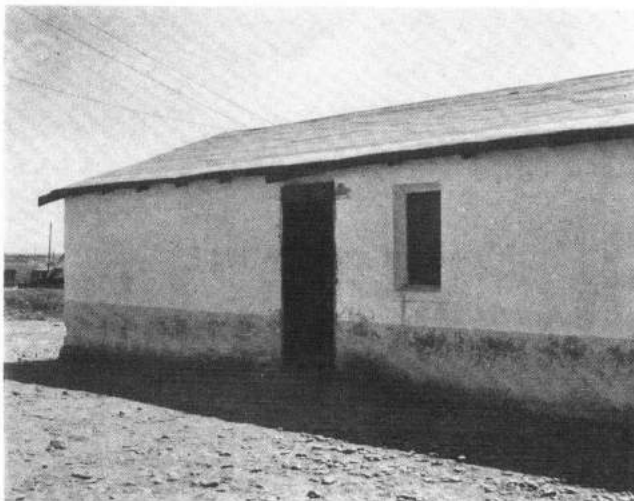
736th ARMAMENT. *First row:* Merlin Payne, Sparks Francini, Joseph Whittling, Robert Smith, Robert Cohen, Charles King, Eugene Tiernan, Michael Acanfora, Henderson Sherrill. *Second row:* Joseph Wasilk, Evan Price, James Smith, Peter Peperissa, Daniel Rodriguez, Thomas O'Neil, Donald Mealy (section officer), Theodore Hubbard (section NCO), James Guckian, Alfred Sutley, Orval Ellingson. *Third row:* Eugene Figas, Harold Erickson, Amador Zitani, Jesse Hussey, James Bordeaux, Andrew Sekel, George Quigley, Clifford Susinski, Frank Sexton, Harry Hamilton, Carlton Whittemore, Thomas Connell, George Locklin.



736th ORDNANCE. *First row:* Gene Ojewicz, Clayton Sikes, Wendell Murdock, Mirel Lavezzi, Eather Bennett, Francis Quinn, John Carr. *Second row:* Roger Kernozicky, Thomas Krebs, Ralph Gove, Neil Pezzolla, Morton Rosenfield (section officer), Richard Bowman, La Verne Gake, Floyd Stewart, Leslie Gammon, John Mroczka. *Third row:* Leandro Pellarin, Robert Matice, Mike Obucina, Donald Karchner, Kenneth Widner, Howard Baxter, Alex Samargin, Glydon Singleton, Thomas O'Leary, William Myers.

737

BOMB SQUADRON



The 737th Bombardment Squadron of the 454th Liberator Bombardment Group was formed at Tucson, Arizona, under the command of Captain Herschel Carithers, on July 1, 1943.

Two days later, the model crew and the section heads of the squadron left for Orlando, Florida, for advance training. At the time, Captain James Huff was operations officer, Captain James Ford was the squadron bombardier, and Captain James Brothers was the squadron navigator. The ground officers were Major Joseph Minotty, Captains Arthur McClure, Glen Porter, Edward Stein, Frederick Vickers, and Lieutenant Frederick Brent.

At the end of the month, the entire outfit moved to a spanking new air base which hadn't quite been completed on the outskirts of a little town in Nebraska. The town was McCook and the time was August first. The permanent party of the base had warned every last gal in McCook that we were headed overseas—a rough bunch—but the damsels didn't seem to frighten easily, judging from the welcome they gave us.

Gradually the 737th got under way, slowly at first, gaining speed as each man became accustomed to the job. Most of us were right out of tech schools and we needed plenty of experience. We got as much as we could from tinkering with old 247, the first B-24 that the squadron had.

For many of us, this life in a regular squadron was a lot different from our past experience in the reception center, basic training base, school, or the overseas pool. We'll never forget the first

day in the squadron. No whistles or bugles to wake us up at 5:30 in the morning. We began to take notice of the guy working next to us, figuring that we'd probably be together for quite a while. Most important of all, though . . . we had a job to do. Not just digging holes or drilling, but a regular job which was part of the over-all squadron set-up.

Some of the more unfortunate among us had made the acquaintance—strictly from the business (KP) angle—of our first sergeant, Thomas McLaffon. He was destined to play an even more sinister role—as far as details went—when the squadron moved on to Charleston.

Just about the time that we felt we knew what the score was, they told us to get set to move. It was to be strictly a secret troop movement . . . at least that's what the girls in the U. S. O. in McCook said. Remember? The whole town was at the railroad station to see us off that rainy night of September 28th. The band insured us that the whole deal was hush-hush, but they could have played a little softer just the same.

And the train! For three days and four nights we enjoyed the luxurious comfort of those hard wooden benches. The square wheels that each box-car possessed didn't help either. At intervals during the trip they took us off the train for a few minutes calisthenics—a weak excuse to find out just how many of us could still walk. The guys who flew down were really lucky!

It was dark, on October first, when we finally arrived at the Charleston Army Air Base. Loaded

down with equipment, we stumbled out of the cars and blindly followed the leader. This game brought us to a row of empty barracks and, at the command, we all rushed into the nearest shack, threw off our packs, and hit the sack in record time.

The next morning we waded through a pile of bags, trying to find the right one; then we took a look at the new base. There was a big PX, complete with a couple of good-looking girls, a barber shop, chapel, and movie house. The service club came into its own right here as a place to go when there wasn't any other place to hide. Besides that, it was located right across the road from the mess hall—an excellent location.

This camp also brought a new innovation—the mess pass. It was supposed to keep other squadrons from eating our wonderful (?) food, but the M.P.'s at the main gate seemed to think that it was a pass to Charleston. We let them think so.

It didn't take long to find out that Charleston was a rather crowded place. Only the strong and courageous ventured to King Street during any of the rush hours. One of the only havens was the U. S. O. at George and Meeting. The other "havens" were Gamlin's and the Windmill. There were plenty of dances if we knew where to look—one practically every night in the week. If we didn't feel like going all the way to town, well, there was always the Port U. S. O. right across the highway from the air base. Plenty of fellows got lost in North Charleston, too, because of the way the streets were laid out—especially if they had been drinking.

In between the reviews on the drill field and the barracks inspections, the squadron got in a lot of practice missions. Major Jack Graham was the operations officer in charge of the training of the new crews that were coming in all this time. We lost our first place on one of these missions. Flight Officer Juett's plane blew up over the bombing range, killing two. The whole squadron was a little more sober after this. Later, we lost another ship on a 1,000 mile over-water flight to Kindley Field, Bermuda.

Details came fast and thick in Charleston. We pulled K.P. for a week at a time, and there were plenty of other little jobs to do. None of us will ever forget the sight of the first sergeant

popping into the front door of the barracks unexpectedly, yelling: "Bolt that back door! Don't anybody leave the barracks until I get my detail." Men were seen diving under the barracks in more than one instance.

Then there was bivouac. In order to keep us reminded that we were headed overseas, we were piled into trucks, driven to a desolate spot near Walterboro, South Carolina, and dumped. After living in comparative comfort at the air base, this life in pup-tents was a definite change. There just wasn't enough room in one of those things, and it seemed that either our head or feet had to be out under the stars.

Major Milton Heath, our executive officer then, made history when he ordered everyone, including the officers, to sweat out the chow lines. For a couple of days we ate C and K-rations, supplemented by candy and anything else we could get to eat at the Walterboro Air Base. We all lived through it, though, and there was a real celebration when we arrived back at our air base.

We had a change in our staff officers about this time. Major Heath shipped out, Major Minotty was made the executive officer, and Captain Robert Sullivan was made the adjutant.

Then the inspectors came around to see if we were ready to go overseas, and they declared us in—definitely. After that it was just a matter of time, we were told. Everyone got busy packing boxes and loading them on freight cars. On December 8, 1943, we left Charleston for Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, a camp none of us knew even existed.

The next day, around noon-time, we pulled into Patrick Henry, got off the train with full field packs on our backs, and marched to our new home. We had a hard time comprehending the vastness of the place. All branches of the service were represented at the PX and service clubs. We knew that we wouldn't be staying there very long.

All the ground men of the 737th were in barracks according to which of the five platoons they were in. Harry Wilson was in charge of the first platoon, Ernest Stormo, the second, Robert Cullison, the third, Richard Zylman, the fourth, and Joe Clague, the fifth and last platoon.

Many things happened during our stay at Patrick Henry, but one instance will stand out

vividly in our memories for all time. It was, of course, our final overseas physical. We had to strip completely and then, wearing only an overcoat, march over to the dispensary for inspection. We walked up to the medical officer, turned our backs to him, and threw our coat-tails up into the air. He said, "Okay," and that was it. The guys who had been bragging that they would never be able to pass the final physical were left speechless by this procedure.

On Friday, December 13th, we left for the boat. They fell us out in front of the barracks with our duffel bags and field packs, and then politely told us that the trucks which were going to take our bags were two blocks away. They couldn't drive up to us. We had to drag ourselves to the trucks. It was a rough war from then on.

We climbed onto an old dilapidated train, and had just about eased our packs off our backs when the thing stopped and we were told that this was it. For most of us, this was the shortest train ride in our army experience—and the last one in the United States for some time.

There was a brass band waiting for us at the covered pier where we got off the train. They struck out with the Air Corps song as we formed our platoons and struggled along under the ever-increasing weight of those duffel bags. They were getting to be more of a problem after every step.

We rounded the corner of the warehouse-like structure and there it was—the boat—gangplank and all. The band was playing "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" as we moved up the inclined gangplank, and more than one of us swallowed twice.

Never before had we been so crowded. There was just room enough to sit down on the deck back-to-back. Most of us were thinking about the same thing. We'd never make it across in this old tub. The first big wave would finish us. No one had the presence of mind to speak up to the multitude and assure us that it was only the ferry to another dock across the bay.

The army was going all-out for brass bands that day. There was another one on the dock at the end of our ferry ride. They were playing, strangely enough, "I Love to Ride a Ferry," which was as far from the truth as it could be.

We moved off the ferry, struggled through another dock house, and suddenly came out next

to a 10,000 ton Liberty Ship, the *Button Gwinnette*. Nobody had to tell us that this was the real thing. As we started up the gangplank, our names were checked off a list, and the twenty per cent overseas pay officially began.

None of us remember too much about that first week at sea—except for the fact that the ship never was in an upright position for more than a few moments at a time. We were either walking up-hill or down the other side continuously. We couldn't go anywhere without our life-preservers, but we got used to them after we found that they made swell seats. We could be comfortable no matter where we had to sit down.

Rumors about where we were headed were circulating all the time. No one even thought of mentioning our final destination—Naples. We all thought that the Germans were too close for us to risk a landing there. As a matter of fact, we did see the flashes of the front line guns when we arrived there, but that's getting ahead of the story. As our convoy sailed past the Bahama Islands, a PBY patrol plane buzzed our ship, coming so close that we could easily see the pilot giving a V-for-Victory sign with his two fingers. It was a break in the monotony.

The captain of the *Button Gwinnette* couldn't figure us out. The last bunch of men he had taken across had been quiet, they had prayed a lot, and seemed frightened about the whole thing. He said that we were just the opposite, always noisy and without a care in the world. We just didn't know any better.

The convoy finally made it across the Atlantic, sailed through the Straights of Gibraltar, and on into the Mediterranean Sea. When we reached Bizerte, we dropped anchor and all of us thought that it would be just a matter of time before we disembarked. We stayed there three days and nothing happened.

Then we pulled out of the harbor and headed for Naples, Italy, the largest port in Allied hands. At this time we had a close shave. During afternoon chow on the day we left Bizerte our ship narrowly missed a floating mine which had broken loose from an American mine-field. Our lookout spotted it just in time, the *Button Gwinnette* veered sharply to port, and the mine floated by about ten feet off our starboard beam. If it hadn't been sighted in time, the squadron

history could very well have ended here. We were to find out later the damage that exploding gasoline made.

We arrived in Naples harbor and stayed there three days before we could get in to the docks. The ground men of the 737th Bomb Squadron hit Italian soil on January 13, 1944, just 31 days after leaving the United States. We were all very glad to get off the ship and were ready for anything. They took us to an Italian college on the outskirts of Naples where we slept on cold, hard marble floors until January 16th. We shared the grounds with a bunch of Arabs who were headed for the front lines. At night we could see the flashes and hear the rumble of the front-line artillery.

The ride from Naples over the mountains to Cerignola was a nightmare. Just as it was getting dark, we left in open trucks. Many of the drivers had never driven a truck before, and none of us ever figured out how we made it without an accident. To add to the danger, it rained while we were high in the mountains, making the slippery roads still more treacherous. The truck convoy pulled into the narrow streets of Cerignola about five the next morning and stopped in front of the Music Hall. Most of us were numbed from the extreme cold ride, and we had a hard time trying to walk around after climbing off the truck. We were hungry enough to eat anything in sight.

On the dreary afternoon of the 17th we pulled into our first camp site, located several miles outside of town. We formed our platoons again and received orders to pitch our tents. The cold grey afternoon had almost passed. We went to work, but were stopped in the middle of the tent-pitching to form platoons again so that we could be assigned tents according to the roster. It was a slow tedious process, and by the time we all were given tents, afternoon had turned into pitch black night. Many of us crawled into any tent we could find.

The next day we took inventory of our surroundings and found that we were located next to a field of British Wellington bombers, better known as "Wimpys." We spent most of our time here answering formations every other hour and drilling. One of the things we remembered from this place was the racket every morning as the tail gunners on the "Wimpys" let go with

tracers, trying to shoot down some of the ducks that flew over regularly. Very few ducks were hit.

January 22nd, the 737th moved to a new location. Trucks rushed us to San Giovanni Field as if there was gold to be found in them tar hills. We all wanted to get there first so that we could have first pick of the tents which were already set up for us. We were told to fix our pyramidal tents up as best we could and most of us made many improvements in a short time. After we were settled, they pulled the old army game on our once happy outfit. We had to move into pup-tents to make room for the combat crews which were due to arrive the 26th. During eighteen months overseas, this phase of our life was the roughest. It rained almost continuously, creating a variety of mud that we came to hate with all our hearts. The pup-tents weren't any larger than they had been on bivouac in South Carolina and the ground was a lot wetter.

We ate out in the rain unless we were lucky enough to find shelter somewhere. By some miracle, very few of us got sick or had any trouble. There was plenty of guard duty at this time, too. Things got better, though. We finally got tents, lights, cots, and a mess hall, all this happening over a period of months. Later, the "Club 37" was built, and the place began to look presentable. Gradually we built the area into a miniature city.

There were some changes in our staff. David Sayers was now the first sergeant. Captain Donald Martinson took Captain Sullivan's place, and Major Henry Moore was our new executive officer. During our eighteen months overseas, we had six different commanding officers. After Captain Carithers left the 737th, Lt. Col. James Mears took over. Later on, there was Major Jack Graham, Captain Billy Jacobs, Major Ralph Dench, and our present boss, Major William Fitzpatrick.

No matter how much time passes, though, we'll all smile or chuckle a little as we recall those famous words of one of the better known southern ball players of the 37th—Major Moore.

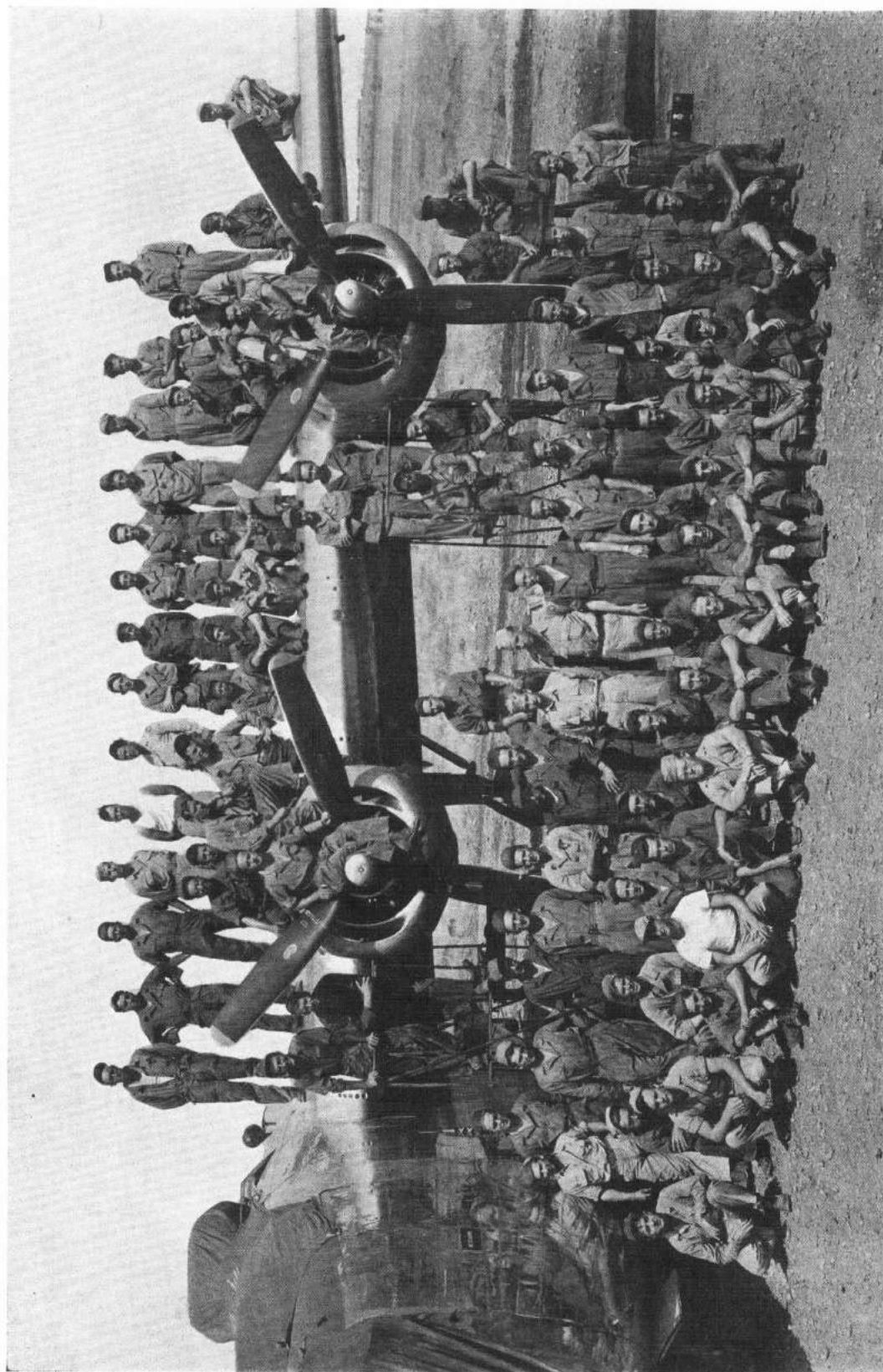
"Y'all play ball with me, and I'll play ball with y'all."

The only trouble was that he was always at bat.

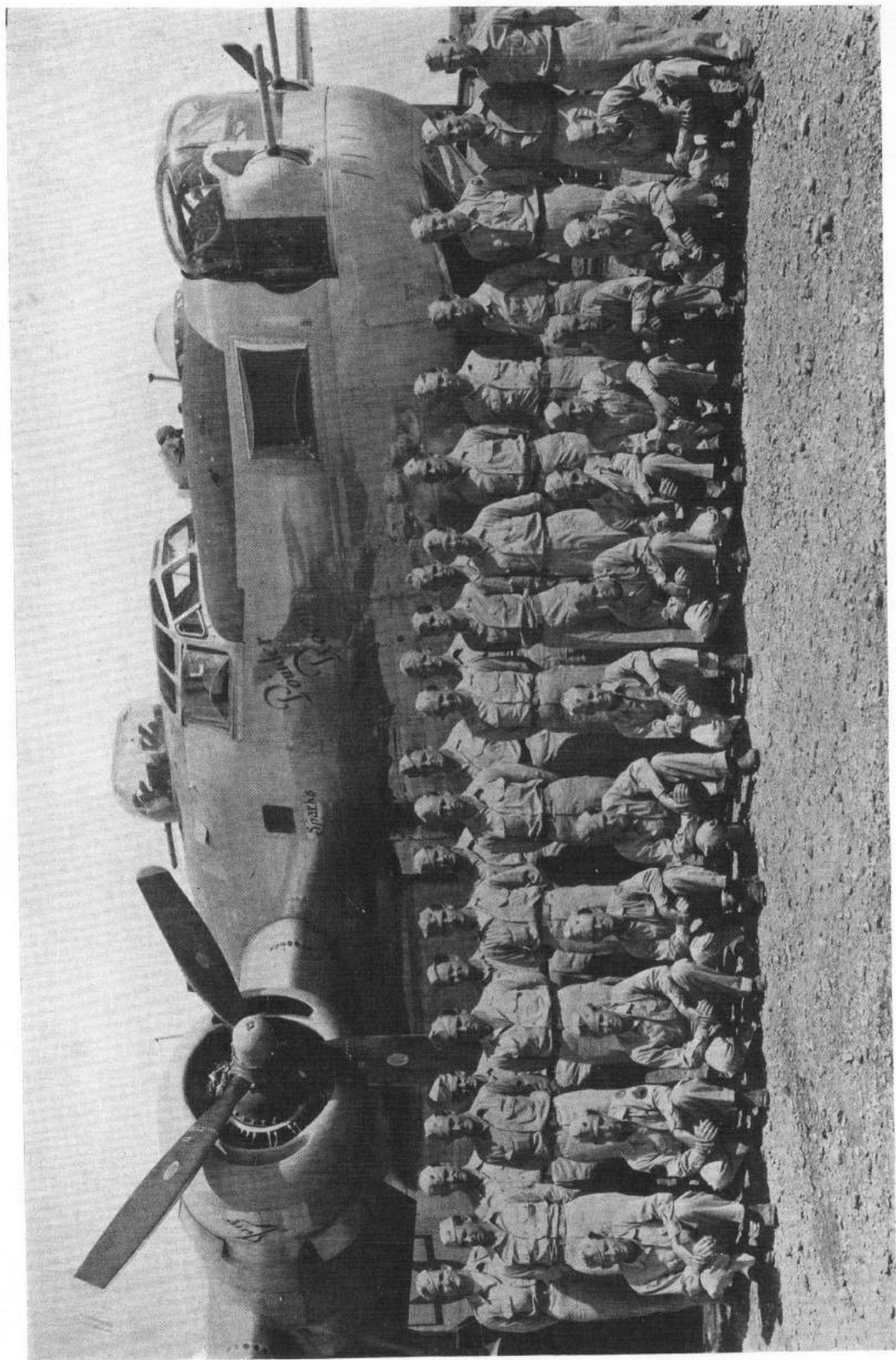
FLT



737th S-1, S-2, S-3, S-4. *First row:* Joseph Agoglia, Ervin Nason, Harry Loeb, Harry Pritchard, Robert Steele, Joseph Clague. *Second row:* Lawrence Brown, Ross Adams, Russell Wilson, Kenneth Carbiener, James Gohn, James Ballard, William Vivian, Raymond Sordello. *Third row:* John Caden, David Sayers, Henry Moore, William Fitzpatrick, Donald Martinson, James Robinson, Lawrence Giuliano, James Goodwin.



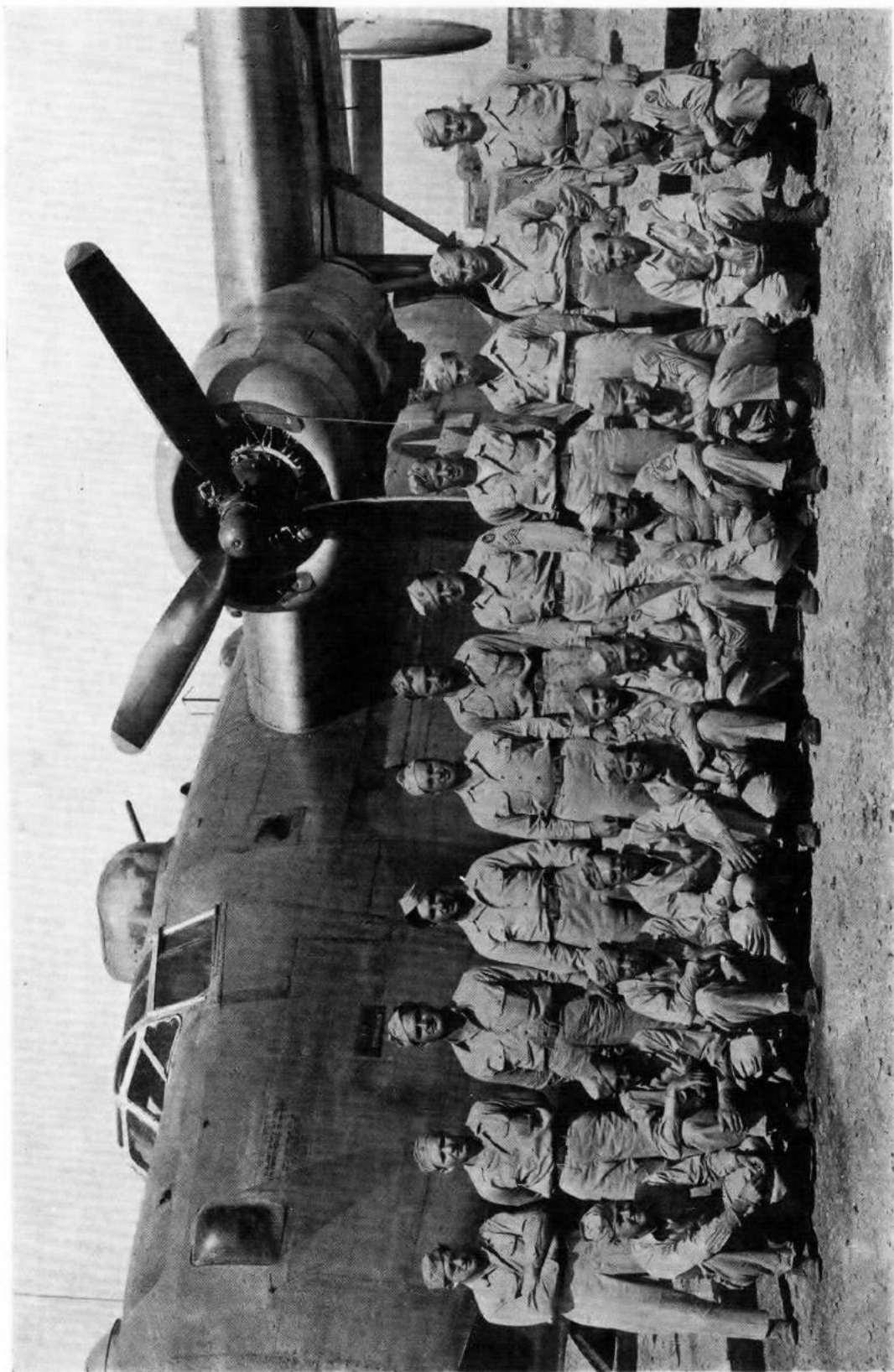
737th ENGINEERING. *First row:* Arthur Finley, Harry Freeman, Fritz Bartram, Constantino DiCecco, Ernest Stormo, Anthony Deluke, Roger Thomas, Clifton Hancock, Carl Gonstad, John McGah, Roy Smiley, Robert Rudd, Harold Corcoran, Leonard McKelvey, Raymond Perman, James Johnson, Anthony Lombardi, Clois Engard, Kenneth Camden, James Morrow, John Baskin, Lyman Francis, George Botsko, Henry Cappa. *Second row:* Marriion Wire, Robert Kehm, Ray Yohe, Charles Sondgrass, John Szuta, Leopold Tenore, William Noonan, Harold Seton, Glenn Porter (section officer), Laurence Starrh, James Crossen, John Gambill, Elmer Blatter, Elmer Milnar, Thomas McLaffon, Douglas Hassell, William Sullivan. *On crew stand:* James Hayes, Wilton Baker, Robert Riley, Henry Hart, Henry Heffner, Isaac Carter, Robert Roy, John Franks, John Tasker. *On wing, sitting:* Howard Freedman, John Norton, Joel Somers, John Hollifield, Nicholas Cercone, Marshall Yarber, Joe Garrett, Joe George, Elwood Bender, Thomas Hackney, Fred Brugger, Joseph Garofoli (section NCO), Howard Froman, Jack Woods, Thomas Riley. *On wing, standing:* Lawrence Smith, David Campbell, Herman Guse, Charles Kaufman, Robert Gibson, Roland Hall, James Vaughn, Oden Rein, Ervin Ficken, Leo Giuffre, John Foster, Kryn Hamelink, Donald Einhorn, Joseph Ganci.



737th ARMAMENT. *First row:* John Harrison, Ralph Pellegrini, Arthur Stewart, Howard Haley, Elmer Plunkett, Everette Lankford, Frank Reedus, Harry Choiser, Frank Drenzo, William Robshaw, Francis Pugh, Joe Powers. *Second row:* Arthur McClure (section officer), George Booth, Donald Benton (section NCO), Nellis Webber, Doayne Robbins, Melvin Ames, William Short, Andrew Amuney, Melvin Konkle, Glenn Walp, George Bretsch, George Nessit, Francis McKowen, Edmund Bacuhmann, Jack Stewart, Anthony Brennan, Gerard Bloomer, William Spainhour, Oscar Boyssel, David Purdy, Harvey McClanahan, Johnnie Massey.



737th COMMUNICATION. *First row:* James Stevenson (section NCO), John MacLeod, Paul Smith, Lee Mueller, Vincent Lawrie, Bernard Healy, Morton Goldwasser, Warren Tinola, Phillip La tona, Herbert Spielman. *Second row:* Henry Haugan, Resley LaGrange, Glenford Franke, James Owens, Darius Hammond, John Roberts, Louis Feller, John Kolesko, Lawrence English, Emil Cameron.



737th ORDNANCE. *First row:* James McCorkle, Theodore Meyer, Richard Holcomb, Richard Thaler, Emilio Rubrigi, Samuel Titane, Harold Switzer, Peter Reis, Walter Weber, Orlando Giammarco, Robert Cullison. *Second row:* Richard Vaughan, Charles Vogel, Louis Pagnoni, Vito Lupo, Edward Ingham, Henry Venter, John Tovcimak, John Neumeller, Perry Jordan, John Simodejka, Richard McDaniel (section NCO).



738

BOMB

SQUADRON

Since the squadrons function collectively as a group, there is little difference between the history of one squadron and the history of another. Their targets are the same, the table of organization is the same, and their routine is the same. Thus, the 738th Bombardment Squadron followed the same pattern as the 736th and 737th, followed the group from Tucson to McCook to Charleston to Italy. Under the command of Major Corwin E. Grimes, of Olean, New York, the 738th played an integral part in the establishment of the group in the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations.

Back at McCook, as with the other squadrons, men were joining the organization every day, coming from army technical schools where they had learned the principles of turret mechanisms, propellers, instruments, electricity, cooking, weapons, ammunition, and a hundred other specialties that make up a well-trained bombardment squadron. We had a good team then, green from the lack of experience, perhaps, but on its way to bigger things, for we were beginning to learn that the army operated as a co-ordinated team with each man having a certain part to perform. It was tough sledding at first, but there were a few laughs along the way—like the time we were on parade at McCook and were supposed to pass in review before the commanding officer. A young lieutenant commanding the platoon, however, had his wires crossed, and gave the wrong column movement only to find us marching off the field and away from the surprised colonel.

When the group left the Second Air Force with its "secret" troop movement and joined the First Air Force at Charleston, South Carolina, the squadron moved into little plywood huts, similar in size and shape to the pyramidal tents that we would come to know so well in Italy. These little prefabricated buildings were quite a bit more pleasant than tents, and even more comfortable than the regular army barracks. In a regular barracks a tired soldier would have to suffer the snoring of perhaps forty buddies, but these new huts held only six. The canvas cots were not as comfortable as regular GI bunks, but they were still nice to come home to after working on the line or playing on the town. At Charleston the squadron gave a party and dance before starting final preparations for the trip across. The fact that there were few dancing partners soon turned the dance into a beer party—our last fling before heading for Sunny Italy.

The next stop with the group was Camp Patrick Henry where we were processed for overseas movement. This included physical inspection, clothing check, a few "shots," and a ticket for an ocean cruise. For some of us it was a one-way ticket.

Then we climbed the gangplank of the USAT John Lawson and settled down aboard the ship with the 739th squadron. The trip over contained all the humor, pathos, and drama of a modern novel; but, surprisingly enough, we lived through it all, and it wasn't long before we were flying missions against Nazi-land.

The 738th and the 739th were the first two

units of the group to reach the new base at Cerignola. There was some debate over who would get first selection of location for the squadron, but it was settled by the toss of a coin between the squadrons' executive officers. The 739th won, picked the long stable, left us with the olive grove. In this olive grove we spent eighteen months, and managed to build around it a maze of buildings to house the numerous departments of the squadron. The tents which found shelter beneath the lean branches of the Italian over-grown shrubbery soon began to branch out into more complex forms of housing with wooden floors, wooden walls, wooden roofs. Soon our olive grove was one of the most ideal camp sites on the base—muddy, perhaps, in winter, but cool during the hot summer days and nights.

Major Corwin Grimes was our commanding officer during most of this transition. When he finished his missions, he was replaced by Major Ligon Smith, another square-shooting soldier and a darn good pilot. Our executive officer was Major William Hudson and, under him, our adjutant, Captain James Williams. On the line we took orders from Captain John Skinner, engineering officer, and Sergeant Nutting, line chief. The sergeant later received a commission and was transferred from the organization as a second lieutenant, leaving Sergeant Gooch in charge.

There is an old saying about first sergeants,

but it doesn't apply to Leo MacNamee who was the only first sergeant to remain with the group from its start to its finish. He put us on a lot of details, but he helped us out of a lot of tight spots, too. Mac was, in army vernacular, *one good joe!*

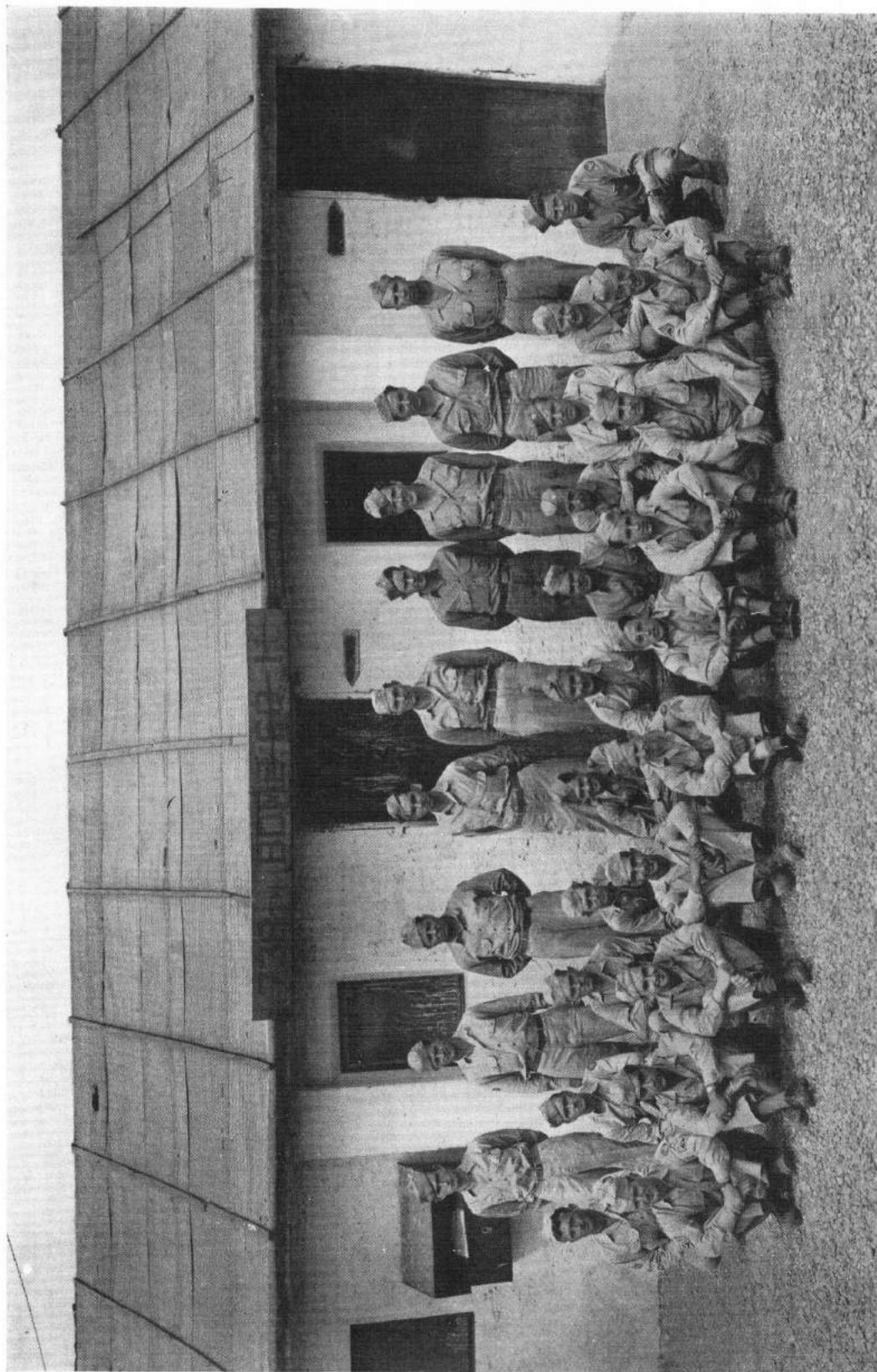
But there were a lot of *good joes* in the 738th, and there was a nickname for every character and personality in the squadron. There was Moe, Rabbit, One-spoon, Gook, Sun-hatched, Mouscy, Moose, Boots, Chubby, Dusty, Hippo, Arab, Big Ike, and Pop, and hundreds more. These were the names that floated through the smoke-filled air at the club. It took us a long time to build the squadron's enlisted men's club, but it was worth waiting for—and the *vino* tended to brighten our spirits. The "crap games" went hot and heavy every pay-day night in the "little bar around the corner" and *multo lire* changed hands time and again as acey-ducey or six-and-a-post-hole bounced back from the cushioned sideboard.

We lived hard, we played hard, we worked hard, we fought hard, as members of the 738th squadron, and more than once our squadron came through with a top record. We're proud of that record, and in years to come we'll remember the olive grove, and the enlisted men's club, and the nicknames, and the missions over Vienna, for these were all a part of our squadron—and we'll always remember our squadron.

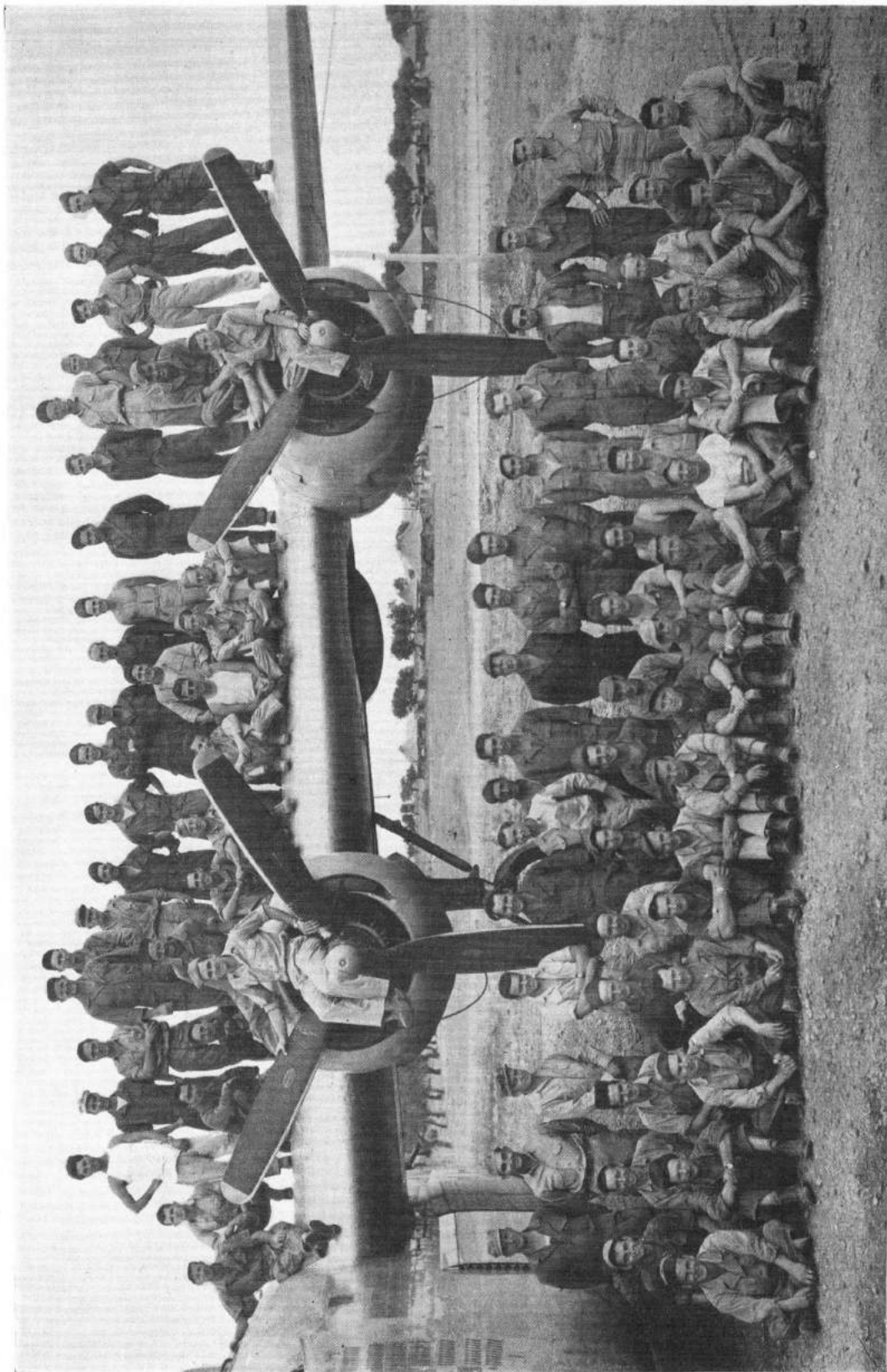
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THE OLIVE GROVE of the 738th Bombardment Squadron was cool in summer and warm in winter, or at least cooler and warmer, respectively, than the open fields of the other squadrons. The road through the center of the olive grove conveniently led to town, and when "Way Field" threatened us with an hour of drilling and marching, we would leave the olive grove and San Giovanni and Way Field far behind us.

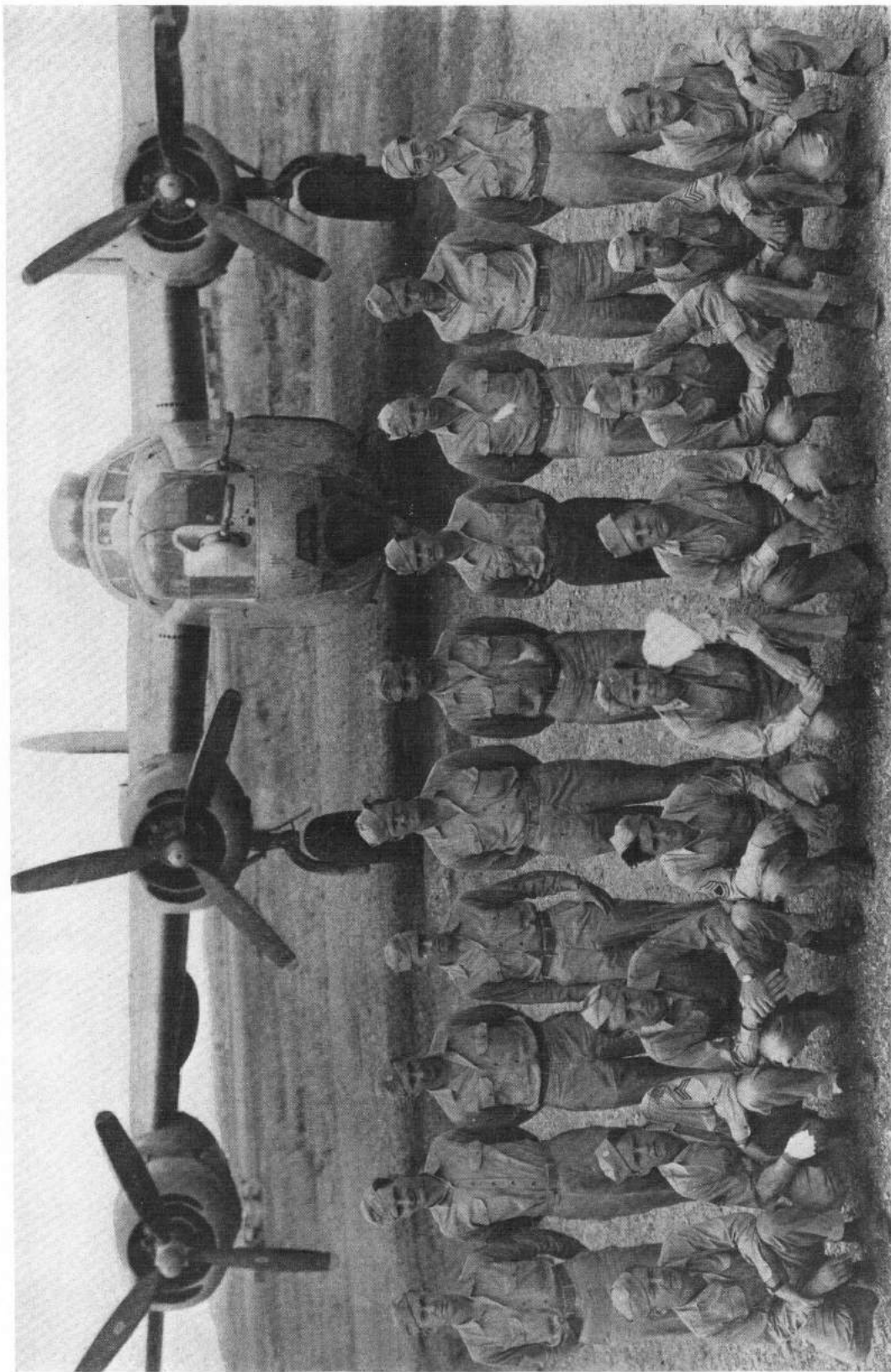




738th S-1, S-2, S-3, S-4. *First row:* Leo McNamee (first sergeant), Joe Haddad, Henry Siger, Melvin Sucharipa, Norman Parks, Robert Consul, Joe Holaska, James Hopkins, John Gullman. *Second row:* Ernest Elsner, Cecil Wilcox, Bill Meehan, Garnet Alley, Alvin Miller, Robert Knowles, George Cooper, Arthur Nelson, Cornalius Dugan, John Simenson, John Kirchner. *Third row:* Francis Hawkins, Paul Price, Horatio Lopez, Lloyd Meece, Otis Ayres, William Grimes, Charles Neidt, Raymond Morgalis, Ben Green.



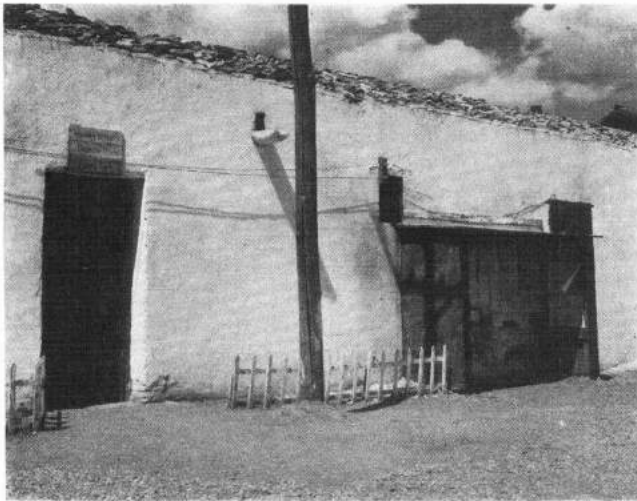
738th ENGINEERING. *First row:* Morton Kern, William Kendrick, August Kovich, Earl Kelchner, Thomas Chelette, Edward Kelter, Stanley Jastrzemski, Joseph Biskupski, Fred Raymond, Walter Kirk, Lawrence Garton, John Kunzman, Max Herrington, Woodrow Green. *Second row:* William Hilton, Vincent Yontus, William Cannon, Charles Jacobs, Lynn Jose, Peter Kaufenberg, George Benzie, Gaetano Corricelli, Richard Miller, Dewey Church, Louis Wagner, Joe Constantino, Roy Baldwin, Ferris Oldroyd, William Mata. *Third row:* Shelton Furrell, Frank Plax, Henry Ahrens, Leo Holscher, Theodor Kuzmiak, James Tyler, Daniel Thompson, Walter Campbell, Harold Bliven, Noel Harper, Harry Greenfield, Thomas Guzzo, Philip Stelmasiak, Fred Hartman, Olives Masys, Alvie Gooch (section NCO). *On wing, sitting:* James Phillips, Milton Krueger, Jesse Kimbrough, Orval Moore, Ned Barrett, John Duck, Max Cohen, Saul Levine, James Fry, Floyd Smith, Robert Collins, John Chapman, Mathias Hoffman, Lewis Ridley, Archer Engel. *On wing, standing:* Florian Kulaga, Darrell Mirchell, Cyril Mabeosone, Raymond Duchnowski, Harry Walker, Raymond McLaughlin, Grant Oefstehahl, John Keenan, William Johnston, Daniel Covert, Clarence Moore, George Hamburger, Henry Seron, Zigmunt Jablonski, William Krause, Henry Keahy, Victoriano Lucero, Albin Woloszik, Meredith Gothard.



738th COMMUNICATIONS. *First row:* Raymond Brack, Francis Koepfel, Miles Hunt, Frederico Coriddi, Joe Negahnuquet (section officer), Joseph Nix, John Oeterson, William Ward, Carrol Hughes. *Second row:* Arlo Diamond, John Brunow, Alex Wallulis, James Larson, Clarence Albedyll, John Reicher, Lee Sarver (section NCO), Winlow Schibler, Royce Foreman, Bernard Slavin.



738th ARMAMENT. *First row:* Mitchell Sabal, Emory Ford, Arthur Gschwind, Roy Rasmussen, John Anderman, Eugene Shrewsberry, Manuel Moga, Earl Shanks, Morley Bingham, James Scrivani, Charles Russomanno, O. B. Fox. *Second row:* Kenneth Stelter (section NCO), Harold Goudreau, James Hang, Warren Hill, Lester Crim, Derril Hefly, Marion Wyland, Norman Kennedy, John Wieden, Hector Dittomasso, Billy Smiley, Ben Davis. *Third row:* Eugene Williams, Frederick Sieperman, Joseph Burghardt, Calvin Stricherz, Arthur Heinold, Vaughn Marker (section officer), Ross Fraser, Marlin Drake, George Kemp, John Betzenhauser, Leonard Gendron.



739

BOMB SQUADRON

With the group and its three other squadrons, the 739th Bombardment Squadron (H) was activated at Tucson, Arizona, in July of 1943, under the command of Major Franklin Tomlinson, of South Orange, New Jersey. With a few changes of command, the squadron remained about the same throughout its training at Tucson, Orlando, McCook, and Charleston, and throughout its combat time in Italy.

Amos G. Allen, Jr., the squadron executive officer, headed the staff of ground personnel with Harold Crunk as first-sergeant. When Major Allen was transferred to group headquarters, Thomas Browne, and, later, Wymond Ehrenkrook became the squadron's executive officer. Harold Crunk was replaced by Sergeants Gene Nash and Vernon Frederic as first-sergeant, and with the transfer of Captain Martinson, squadron adjutant, Stanley Shea held down the desk in the orderly room. Lieutenant Luber, former bombsight maintenance officer, took charge of the squadron's armament section when Captain Moran was transferred to 15th Air Force headquarters as Provost Marshall. Captain Burn and Lieutenant Cohien retained their positions as communications officers, and Thomas Cely remained as squadron supply officer. The enlisted personnel of the squadron remained rather much the same throughout our stay in Italy. Sergeant Lopez became section head of ordnance, and Sergeant Haupt, section head of engineering. Bernard Mizera retained control of the armament section and Gilbert Tunnel re-

mained as head of communications. And those were the boys from whom we took orders.

The mysterious disappearance of Major Tomlinson over Switzerland led to the instatement of Major Darwin Swanson as commanding officer of the squadron, and, upon completion of his tour of duty, he was replaced by Major Milton Fryer, one of the best pilots and commanders the squadron ever knew.

But as we watched our leaders come and go, we found that the changes of command in no way influenced the efficient operation of the five-hundred-odd men who maintained and flew the heavy Liberator bombers assigned to the 739th. A testimony to our perfect record is old 312, Miss America, who came through all our months of combat with a total of 133 sorties, representing half again as many missions to some of the hottest targets in Air Force history.

In the spring of 1944, the 739th had the distinction of becoming the group's "Mickey" squadron. In this capacity we maintained nothing but radar planes to lead the missions for the entire wing. This, of course, meant harder work for some of the members of the squadron, especially the radar section, but for the most part a "mickey" squadron has an easy life in combat. Since radar planes carry only half the bomb-load of regular bombers, the work for armament and ordnance became much easier. And the entire squadron noticed the difference in the length of chow lines and PX lines as the combat crews left the squadron; a radar squadron keeps only

the "mickey" navigators. This "vacation" lasted but a short time, though, and the radar planes were once again distributed among the four squadrons of the group. Then the 739th went back to work.

But it was not all work. We found many hours for play at the 739th Enlisted Men's Club "where the elite meet." A nightly crap game, organized by "Jersey Joe," provided us with innumerable hours of excitement when we found something to do with the *lire* that we collected from the government each month. Poker games, ranging in stakes from five and ten cents to five and ten dollars, were another favorite drawing card at the club. But most of the time, we would just gather around the bar in good old Army bull-sessions while Matthews, the Italian bartender, passed out various concoctions of Italian "poison." Our favorite squadron joke was "Misfoot," a humorous character of Maltese descent. We still smile at the thought of his run-in with the MP's in town when he was arrested as an Italian impersonating an American soldier. But then, everyone took his share of "ribbing" at the club, from Whitey, the squadron sage, to Cognac Joe, the squadron elbow-bender.

But all that is past history. The 739th Squadron no longer exists as a complete organization as we knew it. Still, the 739th does exist, if only in our memories. And there it can never die, for many of the friends that we made in the squadron are lasting friendships, many of the things we learned are lasting knowledge, many of our memories are lasting memories. Throughout the coming years somewhere, sometime, something will remind us of . . .

The long, cold nights of guard duty on the line when we would try in vain to catch a few minutes sleep in the cockpit of one of the heavy bombers.

The ancient Italian stable that housed the majority of the squadron's offices as well as the mess hall and a barber shop. Can we forget the mess hall with its long tables and sagging benches, its noon meals of C-rations or spam, its midnight snacks and our attempts to "borrow" a loaf of bread for toasting?

The pup-tents in which we slept during our first month in Italy. And the deluxe fox hole that four of the armament boys under the direction of Claude Morton built at the squadron's cross-roads. The pyramidal tents that grew like Rube Goldberg inventions and the radar boys that were regular "eager beavers" at tent construction.

The explosion of the bombers on the line one night that sent us leaping from our warm beds and into muddy fox-holes.

The first EM club in the old transportation building and the new one that was built near the dispensary. And its nightly bridge games, and poker games, and the weekly Italian orchestra with its sickening arrangement of *Don't Fence Me In*.

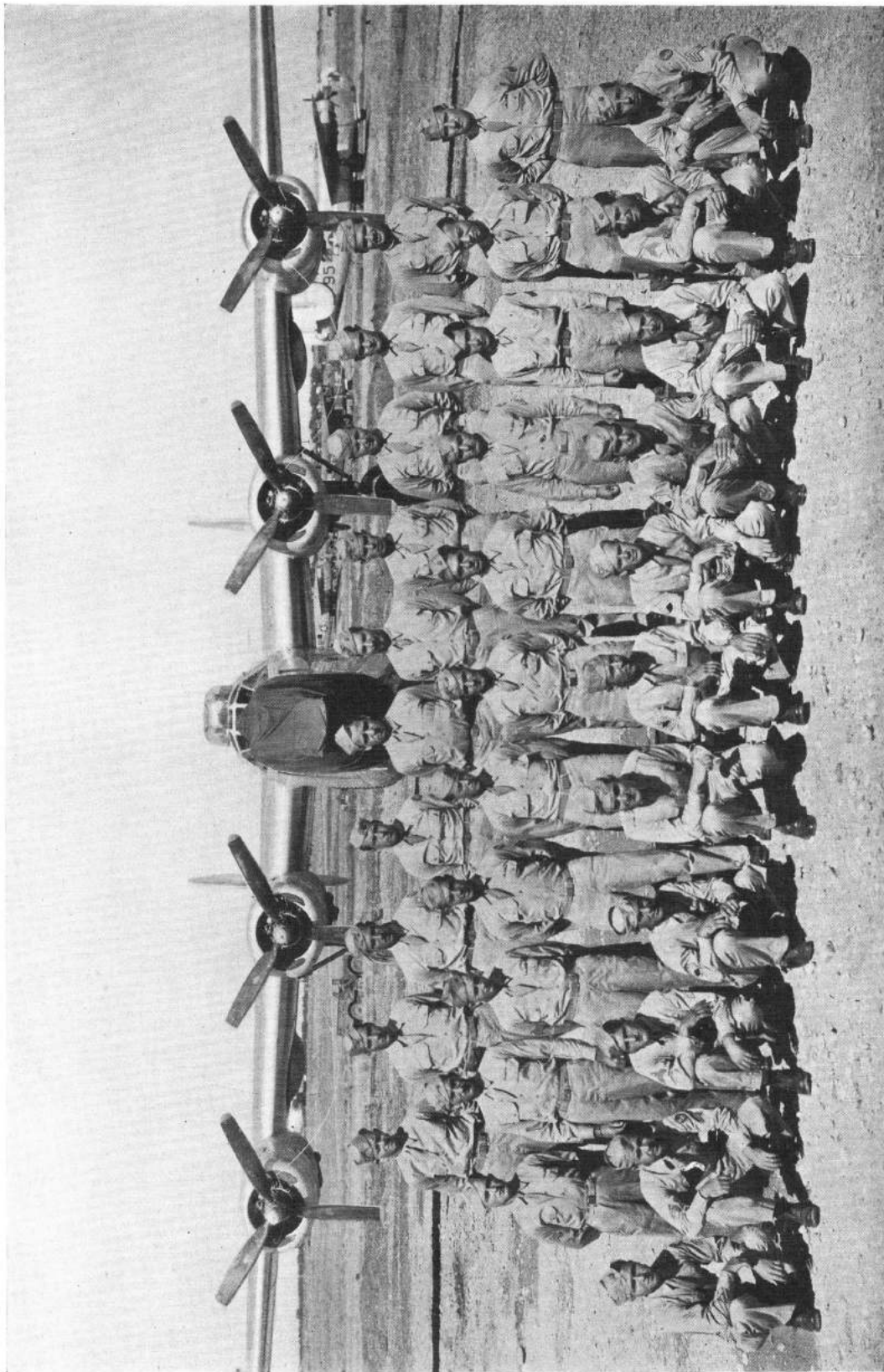
The Hungry John Lawson that plied the mid-winter waters of the Atlantic to bring us to "Sunny Italy."

That New Year's day turkey dinner that spread an epidemic of the GI's throughout the squadron to make one long, continuous line from the many tents to the few latrines in the squadron area.

The six-man huts at Charleston and the beer-parties at McCook.

And thousands of other little memories that crop up in our minds now and then. Especially the nicknames and the friends that we lived and worked and fought with for two years . . . By-the-book Allen, School-boy Martinson, Zak, Joe the Polak, Paul Will, Rabbit, the Greek, Hoppy, Handle-bar Winkler, Jim the postman, WAC Mary, Pappy and the camera, the George Frank-Al Diniak Team, Ray "geezcr" Wright, and so on throughout the squadron.

Yes, the 739th is gone. And we're glad that it has, for the squadron stands for the many months we spent in Italy and all its filth and poverty and disease. But there is still a warm spot in our hearts, and there always will be, for the squadron that fostered us through the Second World War. Gentlemen, put on your best suit of "civies" and raise a glass of good-old American beer to the best outfit that ever led a mission over Germany!



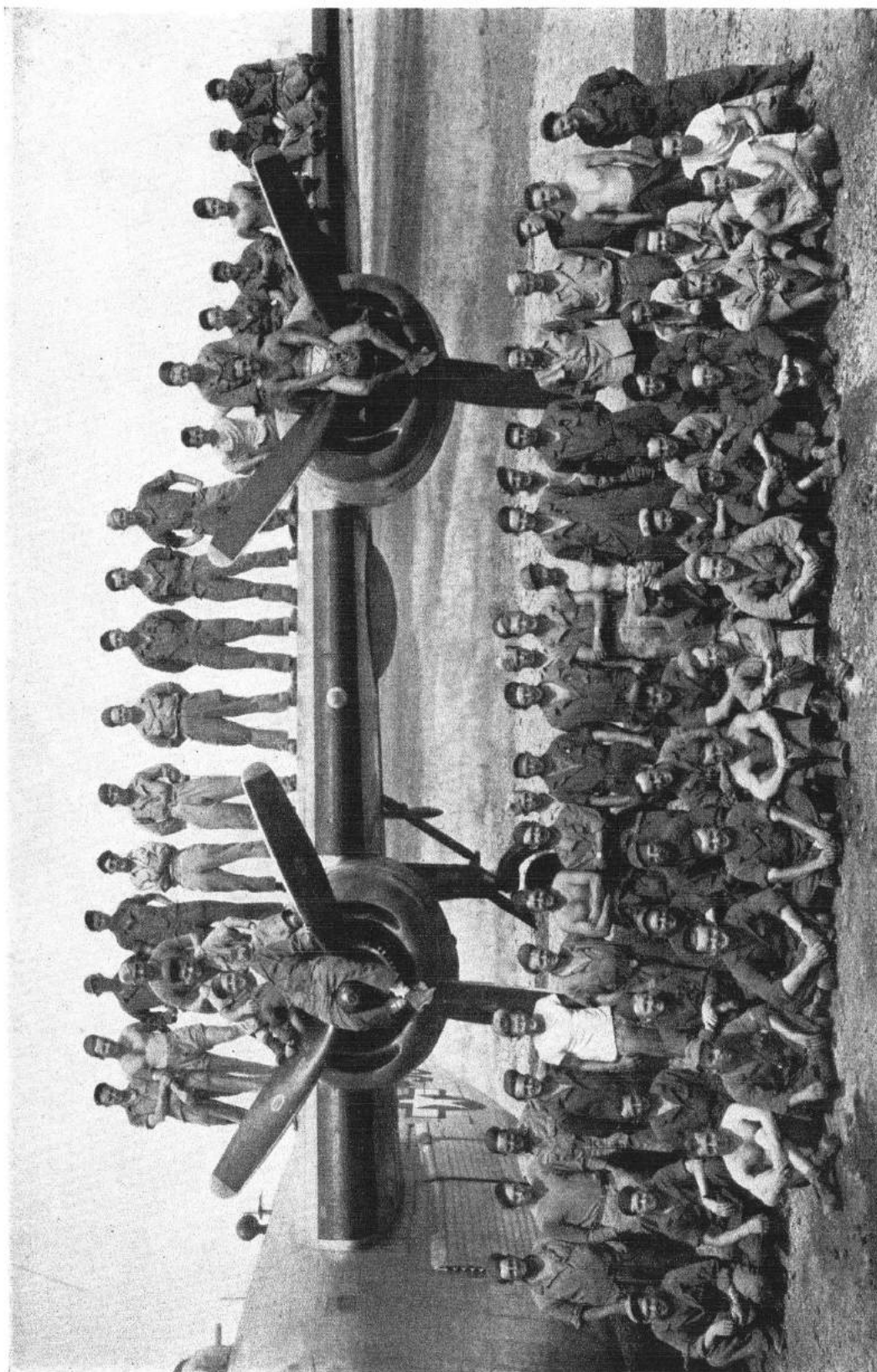
739th ORDNANCE. *First row:* Clarence Wittman, Ellis Hughes, John Smith, Henry Lopez, Edward Hart (section officer), Corbin Thomasy (section NCO), Ell Peebles, William Deery, Frank Girro, Max Schmukler, Dan Rooney. *Second row:* Dennis Kiriazis, Harry Rhode, Louis McAdoo, Clark Houser, James Gatewood, Joe Smolec, Nick DeFelice, Benny Laskowski, Philip Avello, Harold Miller, Howard Goldsmith. *Third row:* Thomas Ruger, Jack Schreiber, James Palmer, Glen Thomas, Cosmo Grassi, Atlee Greenwood, Leslie Bunch, Harry Janis, Don Landrum, Curtis King.



739th S-1, S-2, S-3, S-4. *First row:* Peter Gregos, John Sandison, Bing Hom, Clifford Cox, Arthur Slater, Alexander Jembrysek, Lloyd Barnes, Murray Verlin. *Second row:* Harris Ham-
montree, Mike Zapolski, Joseph Shaefer, Celestino Lugo, Edward Davis, Vernon Frederic (first sergeant), John Duda, Jerry Jones. *Third row:* James Walters, Ward Cross, Leo Nelson,
Thomas Cely, John Burn, Milton Fryer (commanding officer), Richard Stern, Howard Stoner, Marvin Balding, Arthur Wombough.



739th ARMAMENT. *First row:* William Hutchinson, Charles Bakke, Phillip Van Strander, Berthel Harris, William McCormick, Bron Jagielski, James Clausen, Homer Kast, Ed Kellerman, Craig Spaulding. *Second row:* Al Block, Claude Morton, Ed Sokal, Clarence Morris, Albert Diniak, George Frank, Harold Luber, Samuel Abramson (section officer), Bernard Mizera (section NCO), Ralph Oldenham, Morris Simonton, William Bibow, Ed Bryan, Donald Chesney. *Third row:* Robert Blackburn, Stanley Newborn, Robert Macomber, Nelson Trout, Thomas McCarthy, John Bricker, Max Bacha, Leo Phelps, Bart Tudor, Thomas Funderburk, Robert Carr, Robert Smith, Frank Kuperus, George Stewart.



739th ENGINEERING. *First row:* Arthur Biscorner, Alvin Gregorio, George Bloch, John Crapser, Paul Wilkenson, Edward Haupt (section NCO), William Grenier, Warner Bucklew, Ervin Epling, Alexander Winkler, Edward Gondek. *Second row:* Elwood Swails, Bernard Nichols, Stanley Mourvic, Henry Benson, Alfred Wilson, George Dill, William Sexton, Oscar Bass, Fred Venegoni, Wilson Phillips, Earl Smith, Joe Randall, Bert Schlageck, Harold Huber, William Delleit. *Third row:* William Jordan, Otto Mitchell, Ernest Schaeffer, John Eby, Edson Price, John Tegner, Arthur Logan, Blas Arroyo, Ralph Farrar, Ralph Branstetter, George Pageler, George Reichenbach, James Rookstool, James Vincent, Joseph Bigleben, Theodore Libby, Robert Sargent, Jacob Miller, Harold Petree, John Wishart, Ernest Lyons, S. Sambach. *On engine nacelle (left):* Louis Sheriff, Russell Murico, Peter Lamb. *On engine nacelle (right):* Fredinand Caravone, Frederick Tervooren. *On wing:* Harry Klaiss, Bert Goldberg, William Davis, Doyle Baker, Leroy Kaake, Andrew McAffrey, Harold Knight, Fred Jacobs, Edward Spinski, Edward Duschak, John Sullivan, Herman McLaurin, Henry Roszczewski, George Meltzer, Raymond Szmigiel, Fred Spiller.



On Target



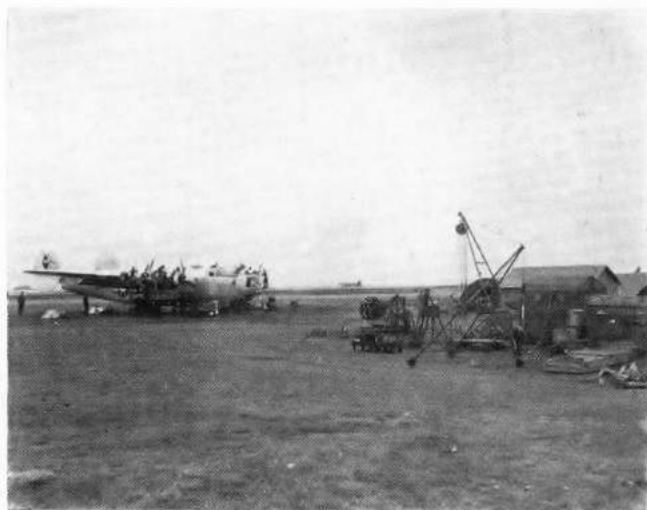
Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow . . . to the last interval of recorded time.

W. SHAKESPEARE

BOMBS AWAY

Through its use in newspapers, magazines, books, radio scripts, and motion picture plays, the term "Bombs Away" has become a familiar phrase to most of America. Few, however, realize the full significance of the phrase, the hours of research, study, and plain hard work that make the phrase possible. Here, aptly portrayed in photographs by Joseph Paparatto, is the scene behind the bombardier's dramatic words. Here are the many hours of work of unsung mechanics, weathermen, armorers, ordnance men, communications men, clerks, truck drivers, and the many others that work together as a team, as a squadron, to make possible the simple phrase "bombs away"—meaning another target hit and demolished by over sixty tons of bombs.

This is the story of one mission out of many. It may have been the bombing of the railroad yards at Verona, Wels, Rosenheim; it may have been the bombing of the oil refineries at Ploesti, Vienna, Odertal, or the factories at Linz, Tourin, Kapenberg. It may have been a mission in support of the Fifth Army at Cassino, Florence, Bologna, or in support of the Russian Army at Szombathely, Budapest, or Bucharest. Whatever the targets, the preparations were essentially the same, and the results were essentially the same—"Bombs Away!"



The wheels of the mighty machine that can put hundreds of Liberator Bombers into the air for eight hours start turning and groaning, rapidly gaining momentum, many hours before the lead ship leaves the runway and retracts spinning landing-gears up into its fat muscular wings. . . .

Of the million kinks and crevices, large and small, that stand belligerently on the road to Victory, many can be found at any Air Base where planes must be sent into the air to wage war against an enemy. . . .

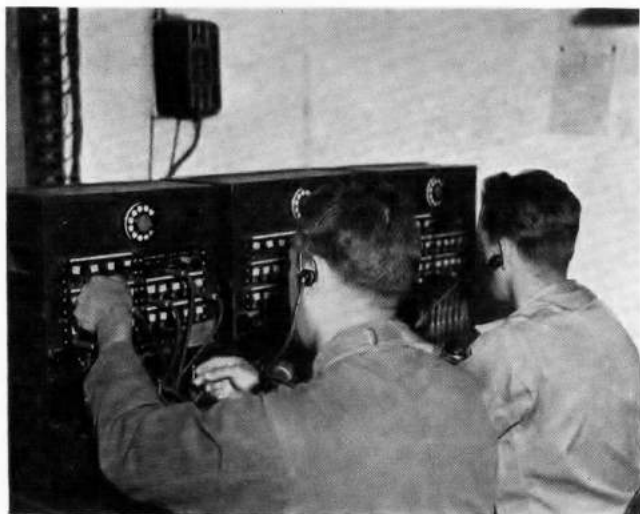
2. In the grey-drab afternoon the mechanics, electricians, armorers, ordnance men, and specialists of a hundred types swarm over, around, under, and in the planes that will fly the following day. Loading, reloading, adjusting, checking, and rechecking they rush from fuse box to wing tank, number one engine to tail turret, bomb-bay to landing-gear, rudder control cables to instrument panel, hydraulic line to escape hatch, and back again—"Re-check!" Theirs is a great responsibility since the slightest error may jeopardize the life of the bomber and its crew.



3. At the Motor Pool, the other side of the area, mechanics and drivers are working feverishly to put their wide variety of vehicles into tip-top shape. Their trucks and trailers must be ready to haul equipment that night, and crews the next morning. Their huge gasoline trucks must be ready to load at a moments notice, and there are jeeps and command cars and trucks of all types to be worked over, tires to be changed and repaired, joints and frames to be lubricated, points to be adjusted, and a hundred and one arduous tasks to be performed in as many a variation of weather.

4. As an engine is being checked and a tire is being repaired, deep in the recesses of an old building a battery of clerks and specialists work over brightly lit desks sorting colored maps and a multitude of intelligence reports that will guide the pilot of each ship over "target" and assist each bombardier in dropping his bombs where they will do the most damage. The intelligence officers and clerks work day and night to prepare their briefing reports for the gunners, navigators, pilots, and bombardiers that will fly the following day.





5. "Bzzzzzzzzzz. Hello, Nome Operator, connect me with 25." "Nome 71, please." "Operator, try Nome 39 again, it is very important." All through the day and night there is a continuous stream of phone calls rushing to all sections of the four squadrons and Group Headquarters. Tiny red lights glow on and off as conversations between the Adjutant's Office and Air Force Headquarters, the 737th Orderly Room and their Armament Section, the Control Tower and Group Operations begin and end. This is the endless life-line between bombs and typewriters.

6. The operations clerk posts the flight schedule: "Captain Unger flies lead." "Bishop will be ball-gunner on Green's crew." "I hope it's gonna be a milk-run, that last one was a bitch." As the crew members gather around the flight board, the next day's mission is planned. The operations officer and the clerks of S-3 sort the navigator's and pilot's flimsies, make out the flight formation chart, and compile the wake-up list for the next morning. They receive the bomb-load and fusing time from the operations office at Group Headquarters and forward the information to . . .



7. . . . the ordnance section. The bomb-trucks and trailers worm down the dusty road to the bomb-dump and fill their requisition of the specified load: "500 pound RDX; Frags; Clusters; 1000 pound General Purpose." Hoists and winches begin to creak and the bombs are loaded aboard the trailers and hauled back to the base. The deadly TNT in steel is rolled out onto the revetment ready to be hoisted up into the yawning bomb-bays by the waiting armorers who will dose the hungry bomber with medicine prescribed for tomorrow's target.

8. One of the most dangerous jobs a ground crewman can perform is that of fusing the bombs that will splatter down upon the factories of the Reich. If the rods holding a bomb in place should snap and if that bomb should be defective the explosion could be heard and the smoke could be seen for fifteen miles. The chances are one in ten thousand, but some soldier will load that *One*. However, the ordnance men play with the fuses as a child plays with a toy—they know their job and how to do it.



9. Tired and grease-smudged mechanics make last minute adjustments, cinch-up hydraulic lines as hot sweat runs down between shoulder blades, take up slack in the rudder control cables as rain drips off the ends of noses and mud clings to rubber overshoes, and all the while thinking not of the part they are playing towards victory, but of a mug of hot coffee or a canteen cup of cold, artificial lemonade. This is the man that "Keeps 'Em Flying" and his is the responsibility of 4,800 mechanical horses that won't take "whoa" for an answer.

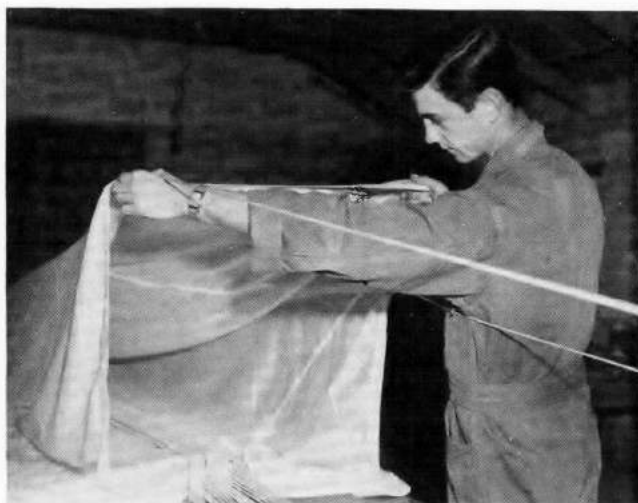
10. The snake-like gas hoses flush the last gallon of 100 octane into the wing tanks of Miss America as she majestically rests with her ninety-ninth mission under her battle-studded belt. The gigantic refueling unit trucks stand-by ready to drive to the next plane. One misplaced match or a carelessly tossed cigarette could do a great deal of sabotage here. Miss America used 23,000 gallons of high octane gasoline on her last mission—7,000 "A" coupons, 5,750 American blue seal dollars. And while those thousands of gallons of liquid are pouring out of the end of canvas-rubber hoses . . .





11. . . . a few drops of rain water in the bottom of a Pyrex tube help piece together the intricate pattern of weather prediction. "The weather over target will be three-tenths undercast." "Tomorrow, CAVU (ceiling and visibility unlimited)." The complicated and code-like synoptic maps must be prepared, there must be wind-aloft charts for the navigators, altimeter-correction diagrams for the pilots, atmospheric cross-sections, and mission forecast maps, all of strategic importance to the mass functioning of a bombing mission. The weather observers, like any other section in the complex works of a bombardment group, play a vital role in the success of the mission.

12. The sound of a clanging bell can be heard throughout the ship and over the interphone, "Pilot to crew—pilot to crew—prepare to bail!" Flak or fighters may cripple a ship to the point where only 650 square feet of manufacture-perfect, pack-perfect Nylon can save the lives of the crew. The private or corporal or sergeant that packs these parachutes may be responsible for the lives of many men. His skill must never fall below that of perfection, his eyes must be on the alert for flaws and imperfections in the snow-white silk that may the next day be silhouetted against a blue Austrian sky.



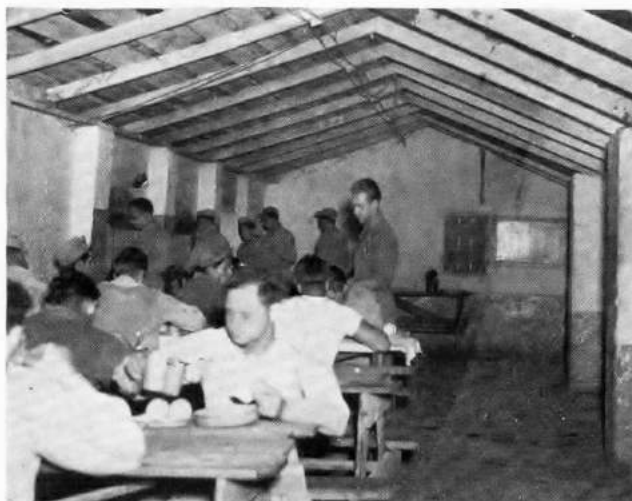
13. An ambi-dextrous Power Turret and Gunsight Specialist runs his acutely sensitive fingers over the charging cable of the twin fifties in the Sperry Ball Turret. "Jake, hand me that small crescent!" "Somebody up there in the ship, how 'bout crankin' this thing around a coupla' notches?" The ball turret is too small for the average gunner to wear his chute and if that escape hatch should fly off he would plummet 20,000 feet to the earth below. And the turret mechanic must be sure that every detail of a turret is operationally perfect and safe.

14. "Checking—checking, one, two, three, four. O. K., Mac, this line is clear—over. Roger." The last inter-phone station has been checked by the Radio Mechanics. The buck sergeant slips the headphones from his ringing ears and unsnaps the sweaty throat mike. "Mac, did ya' check-out the command set? O. K. Throw the switches and let's go to chow." When the last man of the communications section leaves the line the group of big Liberator Bombers has been made ready; they stand at a position of attention, awaiting further orders.



15. As the men who will fly these planes in the morning roll and toss tensely in their bunks, guards stand watch at each revetment, ready to challenge all who pass. A jeep draws up to the plane: "Halt! Who is there?" is the challenge. "Officer of the Day," comes back. With his forty-five ready the guard asks the pass word. At times this routine seemed unnecessary, but many lives and millions of dollars of equipment could be lost if one guard failed to be constantly on the alert. The moon sets, the east becomes faintly pink, the guards change, and . . .

16. . . . the operations clerks pass from tent to tent awaking the combat crews, the time: 0415 hours. Out of their warm sacks they roll and into their expensive and cumbersome flying equipment; long underwear, flying suit, heated suit, fleece-lined trousers and jacket, and that inevitable streamer of white silk wrapped about the neck and tucked into the V of the jacket. With helmet and goggles in one hand and messkit in the other they duck out of the pyramidal tents and head, from all directions, to the mess hall. Breakfast is powdered eggs, bacon, oatmeal—it doesn't taste like home cooking, but it supplies the needed energy for the bomber's fighting men.





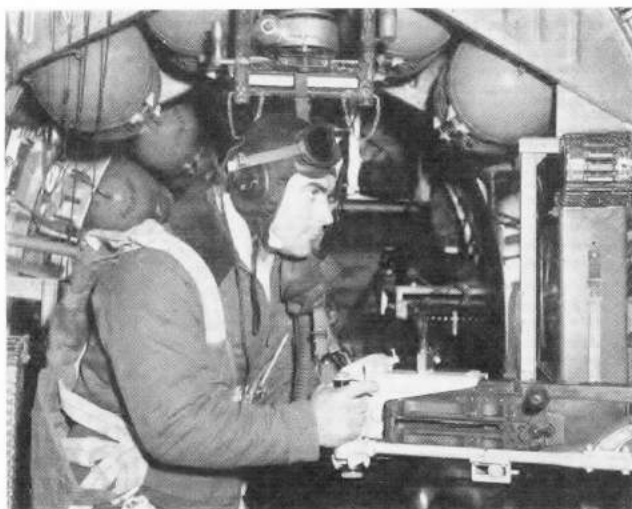
18. Out of the Briefing Rooms, a wine cellar a few years before, and into the ripe morning air come the men with a mission. Some are laughing and kidding one another, others are dead serious and it shows, while others walk out of the big building as if they were heading for the office back in Chicago or Detroit or San Francisco. The navigators, carrying heavy briefcases filled with computing equipment and charts and flimsies, are odd-looking business men. The men load back onto the trucks and are driven down to the flight line for take-off.



17. Into trucks the crews pile and off to Group Headquarters for Briefing at 0500 hours. Pilots in one room, navigators, bombardiers in another, and gunners in another; courses are plotted, take-off time, time at I. P., time at target, ground and air opposition, weather conditions, every believable and unbelievable, conceivable and unconceivable item is taken into consideration and made a mental note of by the men who will fly. "Ready for a Hack!" "0542 and 55, 56, 57, 58, 59,—Hack!" The bombardiers and navigators synchronize their watches to the second.

19. A-3 bags with chutes, clothes, and oxygen masks, and even K rations are loaded aboard the plane. Each man makes a last minute check of his station; the gunners check their turrets, guns, ammunition belts and oxygen lines; the navigator rolls out colored maps and charts on his desk; up on the flight deck the pilot and co-pilot loosen up the cold controls by manipulating them. The pilot slides back the plexiglass window of his compartment and shouts at two of the crew standing beside the ship, "Let's go!" A last puff on a cigarette, grind it into the ground, up into the bowels of the huge plane, and each man to his station.

20. The pilot kicks over the four 1,200 horsepower engines. As each one catches, sputters, then churns the air madly, the ship wrenches and shakes. The big bomber rears itself on its haunches and settles back on its shock absorbers, tense and anxious. The multi-dialed instrument panel hums and dances as the pilots check a multitude of items. The signal comes from the flight tower to take-off, the engines are accelerated, the whole ship throbs. Down the hard-packed runway and into the crisp morning air—"Engineer to pilot—landing-gear up and locked."



21. Out over the turquoise Adriatic the gunners test-fire their heavy machine guns. The nose-gunner gazes down at a fleet of Italian fishing smacks heading out to open sea, so peaceful and unconcerned about the bombers overhead that are going into battle. The lead pilot radio-contacts his formation and gives them the directional heading. The gunners check their ammunition chutes, the charging cables, and fifty caliber machine guns so as to be prepared for any and all Messerschmidts or Folke-Wolfes that may jump from behind a cloud.

22. The navigator climbs up to the navigation dome in the nose compartment and with his precision sextant "shoots the sun." The intricate and highly developed instruments at the disposal of the crew members are the finest—each crew member being trained in the operation of the equipment surrounding his job. The skill with which each man performs his duty is what places the bombs directly on target and gets him and his ship back safely. It is not like driving a Buick across Wisconsin with a Texaco road map. It is strange country and there are no route markers.





23. One of the most hazardous and uncomfortable positions on the ship is the lower ball turret. When Sperry constructed this tiny sphere of steel and plexiglass they must have seriously counted on each crew having one small man. The gunner, curled in a small ball, has hydraulic control over his position and, as he dangles 20,000 feet over the earth, he can revolve and turn to track-down enemy fighters with his twin fifties, but if the hydraulic system should fail he is trapped and is an easy, defenseless target.

24. And as the big plane speeds on toward the target, down in the cramped radio compartment the radio operator is maintaining constant contact with the other bombers in the formation. In thirty-below-zero weather droplets of nervous perspiration gather on his forehead and nose, while each man at his station is anxiously awaiting that first taste of enemy opposition, simultaneously carrying out his part of the job that their team has to do. The radio operator must also man the waist gun, or operate the "panther" unit to detect enemy radar positions.



25. The bombardier, seated before a battery of switches, dials, calibrations, and lights, makes the settings on the intervalometer. Each bomb that they are carrying will drop at his command, each will leave the bomb-bay at a given signal, each will burst against the target below, spaced and timed as he directs—upon him can depend the success or failure of the missions for his bomber. In the lead ship the bombardier must check his sight and auto-pilot control—usually the other bombardiers drop their bombs on his signal. Below, the shore fades away and the spectacular formation of . . .



15th AAF Photo

26. . . . B-24 Liberator bombers charges out from behind a guard of clouds, down the bomb-run, towards the target. The enemy anti-aircraft batteries on the ground have picked up the formation and are firing round after round trying to get the correct range, trying to blast the formation of tight-flying bombers from the air. The fatal flak fragments fly in all directions and leave a tell-tale puff of innocent-looking black smoke where they burst. The bombers tighten up the formation against possible enemy fighters. The flak now becomes . . .

27. . . . a wall of black, grey, oddly-shaped clouds ahead, above, behind, below. And over the inter-phone: "The bastards have got our range now." The fragments rattle against the metal fuselage, peppering the waist position, as the crew members nervously sweat-out each burst, watching them explode on all sides, waiting for the one they won't see explode, the one that will tear the bomber to pieces. Out over the right wing another burst, Buh-loom, and beyond the number three engine the metal yawns back in shredded layers, but the stubborn ship drives on.

28. "Fighters at nine o'clock. . . ." And a burst of machine gun fire races out from the left waist gun. The gunner rides his "fifty" around his half of the clock tracking the ME-109 that made the pass at his position. Looking like a man from Mars, the gunner feels like part of the bomber, drawing his life blood from a maze of cables, wires, and tubes that enable him to keep alive and alert at 20,000 feet altitude, thirty degrees below zero, Centigrade. His steel helmet and flak suit, sun goggles and oxygen mask, heated suit and parachute harness, his fleece-lined boots and gloves feel heavier at high altitude.





15th AAF Photo

29. While the gunners, weighted with over sixty pounds of equipment, battle the attacking fighters, the bombardier is talking the pilot down the bomb run. Dials and gauges are watched carefully as the formation drones down upon the strategic target. Seconds seem to crawl by as the bombardier calls . . . "Bomb doors open" . . . "On target" . . . "Bombs Away!" "Let's get the Hell out of here and head for home, boys." The tail gunner leans forward to watch the bombs glide earthward. And as the 5,000 pounds of TNT carry out their assignment on the ground below . . .

30. . . . the men and their bombers head for home, dodging flak alleys and keeping constantly on the alert for enemy fighters that may be hovering above waiting for some crippled plane to fall behind the formation. The tenseness and cold sweat disappear as the delicately blue Adriatic Sea shows through a break in the soft clouds. The tail-gunner throws the switch on the interphone and sings "Flying Home;" the radio operator tunes in the American Expeditionary Station at Foggia. Each man thinks to himself: "Only ten more to go," or "That makes twenty-three and I'm still kicking." That's the way they figure it.



15th AAF Photo



31. The hard, black, landing strip looks good to the tired and hungry men as they circle their home base for a south approach to the field. The pilot mops the sweat from his brow as the gasoline gauge registers empty—another thirty miles and they would have had to crash-land. The waist gunner leans out the window and gives the pilot a check: "Landing gear down and locked." The huge wheels gently touch the inter-woven steel landing mats and the ship heaves and lunges down the runway on its mighty shock absorbers.

32. A bomber runs out of gas as it circles the field; the engines sputter and choke a few times, then go dead. The pilot and co-pilot fight at the controls to maintain partial control of the heavy plane, to keep it level when they hit; but the plane is dropping too fast, and with a deafening roar it crashes. Men and equipment are thrown with terrific power against the walls and sides of the ship. The nose and flight deck crumble, and the thin metal ripples all the way back to the tail. Crash trucks and ambulances race down the dirt road to the wrecked bomber resting on the runway.



33. As precious gasoline drains from the tanks of the planes still in the air, men feverishly operate trucks and tractors to pull the battered plane off to the side. In minutes the runway is ready again, and the mission-weary bombers follow one another down the metal strip and along the taxi-ways to their individual revetments. The bombers are home again. The wounded flyers of the battered Liberator have already been evacuated to the station hospital in town where they will be given the best medical attention possible in a theatre of war.

34. The four-engined bomber lumbers up to its revetment, the crew chief signalling and directing it into its resting place. Oil-spattered, flak-shattered, the exhausted Liberator turns around and faces west as the late-afternoon sun burns the grey, hard-packed Italian earth. The mighty engines drone and give the ship a few last shakes and shudders and then stop, squeaking and cracking as they cool. And as the props stop spinning, mechanics start work again to prepare the bomber for the next day's flight.





35. Grimy faces, lined and bewildered, revealing the marks of oxygen masks, emerge from the bomb-bay. The men shed their heavy flying suits and lay back in the shade of the wing to take a few quick drags on a cigarette. A six-by-six pulls up in front of the hardstand, and the men load clothes, parachutes, briefcases, and themselves upon it, and it charges off in the direction of group headquarters. Glancing back at the resting bomber, someone murmurs, "Well, that's another one under our belts," and that was that.

36. Before going down into the cellar for interrogation, they stow a mug of hot coffee and a few doughnuts into their empty stomachs. A smile for each of them from the Red Cross girl helps in some intangible way to relieve the emotional tension acquired during eight hours in the air. Pilots and radiomen, navigators and gunners, bombardiers and engineers, all have something to say to one another about their ship or their attackers or their bomb drop. Here, many stories of bravery, human interest, and terror have been woven and cast upon the lives of these men.



37. Deep in the recesses of the old farm building the intelligence officers are gathering about them the fighters that have returned. "What was the opposition?" "Well, 109's hit us just before target time. . . ." "And there was flak heavier than . . ." "Hell, yes, I'd say we knocked it out; the target was boiling with smoke and flames . . ." After interrogation the crews crawl back into the waiting trucks and head back to the respective squadrons for chow, mail, a movie, a few drinks, a game of cards, and the "sack"—another day has come to an end for them, but . . .

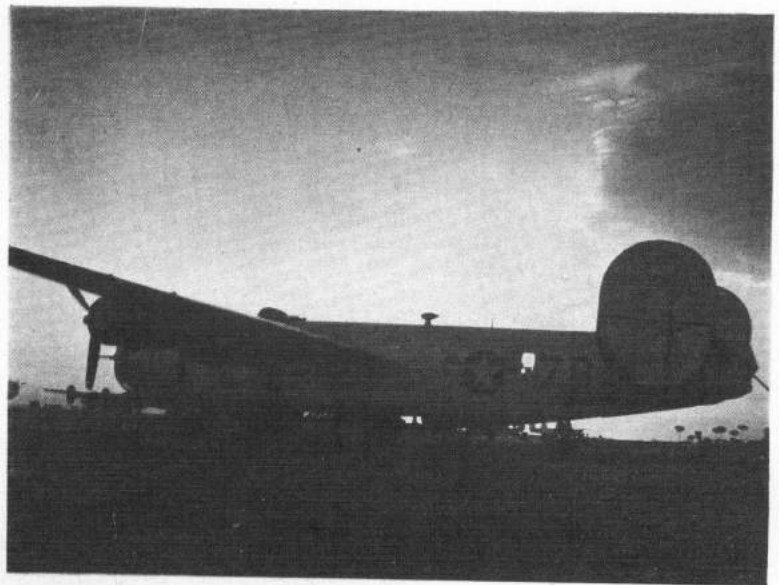


38. . . . the intelligence clerks and officers remain at their desks, as they analyze and interpret the photographs taken on the mission, as they prepare for tomorrow's mission. The success of the day's story now unfolds before their eyes and magnifying glasses. They know now whether the dust and grime and sweat and tired muscles and blood-shot eyes and strained bladders and pain and blood and death had been counter-balanced by the destruction wrought against the enemy, my enemy, your enemy, the enemy of life and love and freedom.





*Mission
Accomplished*



Something attempted, something done, has earned a night's repose.

H. W. LONGFELLOW



John S. Barker, Jr.

A Letter from the Editor . . .

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 454TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP:

Well, you fought a war, and you won a war. Whether you served as pilot or cook, gunner or mechanic, you played an important part in the winning of the battles of World War II. In fact, with a bit of thought and association of ideas, you may be able to lead to the premise that, if it hadn't been for you, we would never have won the war at all. You may, thus, feel proud of yourself, proud that you did the best you could, proud that you worked and fought as hard as you could, asking no quarter and giving none. You may feel proud that you are a citizen of the greatest country in the world and a member, or a former member, of the greatest army in the world. But don't feel too proud!

Whenever you sit back to stretch your arms and swell your chest with pride, you usually close your eyes at the same time. That was what happened back about 1941. Remember? Oh, we were a proud nation! We were self-sufficient and secure within our natural boundaries. What cared we if the children in the neighboring yard played with matches; fire couldn't spread to our house! Why? Because we didn't believe in fire.

Yes, we were a proud nation, too proud. As a result, we stretched our arms and swelled our chests and closed our eyes—and bought a war. Yes, we bought the war. We ordered it and had it delivered to our doorstep, Pearl Harbor, even before we were ready to pay the price for it. So, we had to pay for

it the hard way. But no matter how we paid for it, we bought it. We bought every sinking by a submarine, every bombing by an airplane, every death by a machine gun. And by *we*, I mean you and I and the fellow next door.

We bought the war by our vote. Did we vote? If we didn't, we bought the war because we didn't care enough about our country to vote for its survival. If we did vote, we bought the war because we didn't care enough about our country to investigate the candidates for whom we voted, to investigate the foreign policies of those we put into office. We were looking for leaders who would "keep this country out of war." It was thus that we bought the war. We ordered it because we ignored and, by ignoring, sanctioned, such things as the Ku-Klux Klan, the German American Bund, the Panay incident, the rape of Nanking, the murder of Ethiopia, the break-up of the League of Nations, The Third Comintern, the America First Committee, and many others. But above all, it was our pride that bought this war. *We were too proud to fight!*

As a result, we did fight. We soon realized that just because we didn't believe in fire it wouldn't spread, and, as sparks began to shower upon us from the neighboring yard, we put in a hurried call to the fire department, a call that was almost too late.

We're proud of the 454th Bombardment Group, and justly so. We're proud of our country's armed forces and our allies, and justly so. We're proud of our democratic government, and justly so. But surer than Heaven and Hell we're going to have another fight on our hands if we don't govern our pride.

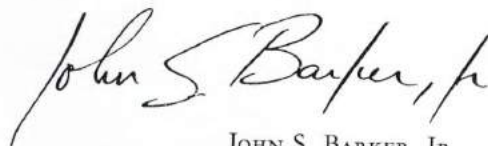
The world is made up solely of men such as you and I, be they poor man, common man, or rich man. The common man of America is, basically, no better than the common man of Europe. If we can feel proud of our country, then he has every right to feel proud of his country. Our pride in our country has set America up as the leading power of the world, but, in accepting the pride in this prestige, we must also accept the responsibility, and, thus, we must assure the world of pride in itself.

The 454th Bombardment Group, as we know it, is no longer a complete organization. It has been disbanded, but it must still go on fighting. You and I, as members of the 454th must go on fighting, and, until every common man in this man's world can look with pride to himself, to his home, to his country, and to his world, our fight will not have ended.

Our weapons are no longer bombs and bullets; we fight now with new weapons and we fight new enemies. Our weapons are diplomacy, ballots, common sense, and forbearance. Our enemies are intolerance, greed, and tyranny. The battles that we fought as members of the 454th laid the cornerstone for a new building to take the place of the one that was razed by the fire that spread through Europe and Asia. We cannot relax now to let others complete the structure; we must be sure that the new building is stronger, sturdier, and, above all, fireproof.

How do we go about this? First of all, we must vote for men to fill the offices of our government with the forethought and intelligence that these offices require. Then, we must maintain our strength as one of the world's leading powers to protect not ourselves but the world. We must show other powers what they should do, not tell them what they can't do. We must be ever on the alert to catch anyone that may stumble and fall upon the path to world peace. In short, we must maintain a government that will not allow the neighbor's children to play with matches, we must maintain a watch that will see any neighboring children playing with matches, and we must maintain a fire department that will stop any neighboring children from playing with matches.

Not until then, and only then, will we be able to take pride in the victory which we have won, the nation which we have built, and the world in which we live.



JOHN S. BARKER, JR.
Editor-in-Chief

Left to right:

Robert L. Lamborn,
Staff Editor

Frank L. Teske,
Associate Editor

Robert A. Whitehead

Dennis Ferguson



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The Flight of the Liberators was born in the over-active imaginations of its editor, Cpl. Barker, and its "main gear," Pfc. Whitehead. Under the sanction of Colonel Aynesworth and 15th Army Air Force, *The Flight* grew in leaps and bounds, thus requiring the unselfish efforts of more than its two originators. The actual completion of this volume is due to the co-operation of nearly every member of the 454th Bombardment Group, and, especially, to a few members. And it is to these few that we, the 454th Bombardment Group, doff our caps.

First of all, there was Major Amos G. Allen, Jr., group executive officer, and Captain H. P. Smith, group public relations officer, who took upon themselves the task of governing the progress of *The Flight* with an eye to exactness and detail. Captain Smith, who drew the graphs shown on Pages 88

and 89, helped plan the lay-outs for many of the photographic sequences shown within these covers. He also designed the group insignia for the title page.

Frank Teske, whose stories on Capri, the 737th Squadron, the liberation of Ploesti, and the public relations highlights may be seen on various pages of this book, worked with almost surprising diligence to insure the success of *The Flight*. Bob Lamborn, a "natural" for ideas, wrote the sketches on Cerignola, the crossing, and the clerks, and with the editor was co-author of the story for the Bombs Away series. Bob Whitehead, who wrote the larger part of the story of Transition, organized the subscription staff of Herman Kohn, George Frank, and Al Diniak, and managed to collect

Captain H. P. Smith



S/Sgt. Joseph Paparatto

quite a few hundred thousand *lire* to pay for the engravings used in this volume.

But beyond a doubt, the largest share of the credit, if there is any, goes to the man who spent many hours of the day trudging through Italian mud with camera in hand and many hours of the night in the blackness of the photographic laboratory to produce the pictures seen on these pages. Joseph Paparatto, better known as "Pappy," was a natural with a Speed Graphic or a portrait camera. With but few exceptions, the pictures used in this book are the work of Pappy's camera, and each give testimony to his exactness for composition, lighting, developing, and printing.

And to the entire staff of *The Flight of the Liberators*, the members of the 454th Bombardment Group say: "Thanks for the memories."



On the morning of July eighth, the 454th Bombardment Group boarded trucks, took one last look at San Giovanni Field and Cerignola, and started back along the mountainous route to Naples. . . .



. . . where we ended up right where we had started eighteen months before. . . .

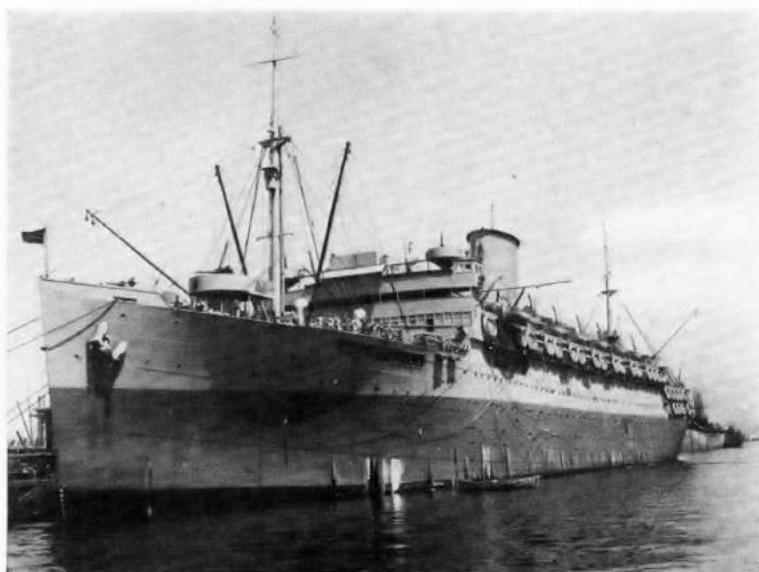




*. . . at Bagnoli, the Collegio di Ciano, where
we stayed for ten days. . . .*

*. . . and then left to meet the S.S. Argentina
at the docks in Naples. . . .*





. . . a proud and sea-worthy ship, the S.S. Argentina. . . .



. . . so we boarded the ship for our last voyage.





. . . and left the harbor of Naples on the evening of the eighteenth.

Aboard the ship we settled down to sleep in crowded holds. . . .





. . . or sleep and play on crowded decks. . . .

. . . and eat ice cream and drink fresh milk in crowded mess halls. . . .





... and play cards. . . .

... or listen to the ship's radio programs. . . .





. . . or watch boxing matches. . .



. . . while up on the bridge the skipper of the ship piloted us. . .





*. . . into New York Harbor where we were met
by a "Welcome Home" launch. . . .*



*. . . and where, after nearly two years, we set
foot once more on the land of the free. . . .*



The 454th was home again.



TARGETS DESTROYED BY THE 454TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP

The following is a list of targets destroyed by the 454th Bombardment Group during its 243 missions over Europe. Some of the targets had to be abandoned because of adverse weather conditions in the target area. On these missions, bombs were dropped on "targets of opportunity," miscellaneous installations that the crew might pass on the return trip from the weather-obscured target.

<i>Number</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Target Attacked</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Orvieto, Italy	Orvieto Airdrome	8 Feb 1944
2	Arezzo, Italy	Marshalling Yards	14 Feb 1944
3	Cecina, Italy	Railroad Bridge	16 Feb 1944
4	Sibenik, Yugoslavia	Harbor Facilities	22 Feb 1944
5	Fiume, Italy	Marshalling Yards	25 Feb 1944
6	Cisterna, Italy	Cisterna-Velletri Road	2 Mar 1944
7	Canino, Italy	Landing Ground	3 Mar 1944
8	Orvieto, Italy	Airdrome	7 Mar 1944
9	Cassino, Italy	Town	15 Mar 1944
10	Vienna, Austria	Industrial Center	17 Mar 1944
11	Maniago, Italy	Landing Ground	18 Mar 1944
12	Klagenfurt, Austria	Airdrome	19 Mar 1944
13	Bologna, Italy	Marshalling Yards	22 Mar 1944
14	Ancona, Italy	Marshalling Yards	24 Mar 1944
15	Targets Abandoned		26 Mar 1944
16	Verona, Italy	Porta Vescovo Marshalling Yard	28 Mar 1944
17	Milan, Italy	Lambrate-Serriate Marshalling Yard	29 Mar 1944
18	Sofia, Bulgaria	Industrial Center	30 Mar 1944
19	Steyr, Austria	Daimler-Puch Aircraft Factory	2 Apr 1944
20	Budapest, Hungary	Main Marshalling Yards	3 Apr 1944
21	Bucharest, Rumania	Marshalling Yard	4 Apr 1944
22	Bologna, Italy	Marshalling Yard	7 Apr 1944
23	Bad Voslau, Austria	Assembly Plant and Airdrome	12 Apr 1944
24	Budapest, Hungary	Tokol Airdrome and Dispersed Planes	13 Apr 1944
25	Bucharest, Rumania	Marshalling Yard	15 Apr 1944
26	Turnul Severin, Rumania	Marshalling Yard	16 Apr 1944
27	Sofia, Bulgaria	Marshalling Yard	17 Apr 1944
28	Monfalcone, Italy	Dockyards	20 Apr 1944
29	Bucharest, Rumania	Southeast Marshalling Yards	21 Apr 1944
30	Bad Voslau, Austria	Airdrome and Aircraft Factory	23 Apr 1944
31	Bucharest Rumania	Main Marshalling Yards	24 Apr 1944
32	Turin, Italy	Fiat Aeritalia Aircraft Factory	25 Apr 1944
33	Porto San Stefano, Italy	Loading and Unloading Facilities	28 Apr 1944
34	Toulon, France	Munitions Factory	29 Apr 1944
35	Milan, Italy	Lambrate Marshalling Yard	30 Apr 1944
36	Faenza, Italy	Railroad Bridge	2 May 1944
37	Ploesti, Rumania	Marshalling Yard	5 May 1944
38	Campina, Rumania	Railroad Sidings	6 May 1944
39	Bucharest, Rumania	Marshalling Yards	7 May 1944
40	La Spezia, Italy	Harbor Facilities	12 May 1944
41	Bologna, Italy	San Rufillo Rail Installations	13 May 1944
42	Piacenza, Italy	Airdrome	14 May 1944
43	Ploesti, Rumania	Redeventa Oil Refinery	18 May 1944
44	La Spezia, Italy	Harbor Facilities	19 May 1944
45	La Spezia, Italy	Harbor Facilities	22 May 1944
46	Targets Abandoned		23 May 1944
47	Graz, Austria	Thalerhof Airdrome	24 May 1944
48	Piacenza, Italy	Airdrome	25 May 1944

<i>Number</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Target Attacked</i>	<i>Date</i>
49	Chambery, France	Marshalling Yards	26 May 1944
50	Montpellier, France	Frejorgues Airdrome	27 May 1944
51	Targets Abandoned		28 May 1944
52	Bos Novi, Yugoslavia	Troop Concentrations	29 May 1944
53	Knin, Yugoslavia	Troop Concentrations	29 May 1944
54	Wels, Austria	Airdrome	30 May 1944
55	Ploesti, Rumania	Uniera Sperantza Oil Refinery	31 May 1944
56	Szeged, Hungary	Marshalling Yards	2 Jun 1944
57	Omis, Yugoslavia	Town	3 Jun 1944
58	Genoa, Italy	West Marshalling Yard	4 Jun 1944
59	Brasov, Rumania	Marshalling Yard	6 Jun 1944
60	Voltri, Italy	Shipyards	7 Jun 1944
61	Munich, Germany	Ordnance Depot	9 Jun 1944
62	Ferrara, Italy	Airdrome	10 Jun 1944
63	Giurgiu, Rumania	Oil Loading Quay	11 Jun 1944
64	Munich, Germany	Bayerische Motor Works	13 Jun 1944
65	Vienna, Austria	Nova Schwechat Oil Refinery	16 Jun 1944
66	Turin, Italy	Fiat Mirafiori and Lingotto Works	22 Jun 1944
67	Craiova, Rumania	Railroad Depot	24 Jun 1944
68	Avignon, France	Marshalling Yard	25 Jun 1944
69	Moosbierbaum, Austria	Oil Refinery	26 Jun 1944
70	Karlovo, Bulgaria	Airdrome	28 Jun 1944
71	Targets Abandoned		30 Jun 1944
72	Budapest, Hungary	Manfred Weiss Marshalling Yard	2 Jul 1944
73	Bucharest, Rumania	Titan Oil Refinery	3 Jul 1944
74	Trieste, Italy	Oil Refinery	6 Jul 1944
75	Dubnica, Czechoslovakia	Armament Works	7 Jul 1944
76	Vienna, Austria	Munchendorf Airdrome	8 Jul 1944
77	Miramas, France	Marshalling Yard	12 Jul 1944
78	Trieste, Italy	Oil Storage Facilities	13 Jul 1944
79	Ploesti, Rumania	Dacia Romana Oil Refinery	15 Jul 1944
80	Vienna, Austria	Munchendorf Airdrome	16 Jul 1944
81	Avignon, France	Marshalling Yard	17 Jul 1944
82	Friedrichshafen, Germany	Maybach Aircraft Engine Factory	20 Jul 1944
83	Brux, Czechoslovakia	Synthetic Oil Plant	21 Jul 1944
84	Ploesti, Rumania	Romana Americana Oil Refinery	22 Jul 1944
85	Les Chanoines, France	Airdrome	24 Jul 1944
86	Linz, Austria	Hermann Goering Tank Works	25 Jul 1944
87	Budapest, Hungary	Manfred Weiss Armament Works	27 Jul 1944
88	Ploesti, Rumania	Standard Oil Refinery	28 Jul 1944
89	Bucharest, Rumania	Mogosaia Oil Storage	31 Jul 1944
90	Friedrichshafen, Germany	Zahnradfabrik Works	3 Aug 1944
91	St. Rambert, France	Railroad Bridge	6 Aug 1944
92	Blechhammer, Germany	South Synthetic Oil Plant	7 Aug 1944
93	Campina, Rumania	Steuea Romana Oil Refinery	10 Aug 1944
94	Toulon, France	Gun Positions	12 Aug 1944
95	Pont St. Esprit, France	Railroad Bridge	13 Aug 1944
96	Savona, Italy	Gun Positions	14 Aug 1944
97	Southern France	Beach No. 264B (Invasion)	15 Aug 1944
98	Ploesti, Rumania	Astra Romana Oil Refinery	17 Aug 1944
99	Campina, Rumania	Steuea Romana Oil Refinery	18 Aug 1944
100	Hadju Boszormeny, Hungary	Airdrome	21 Aug 1944
101	Blechhammer, Germany	South Synthetic Oil Refinery	22 Aug 1944
102	Ferrara, Italy	Railroad Bridge	23 Aug 1944
103	Kolin, Czechoslovakia	Oil Refinery	24 Aug 1944
104	Brno, Czechoslovakia	Kurim Aircraft Factory	25 Aug 1944
105	Bucharest, Rumania	German Army Barracks	26 Aug 1944
106	Blechhammer, Germany	South Synthetic Oil Refinery	27 Aug 1944
107	Ora, Italy	Railroad Bridge	28 Aug 1944
108	Szolnok, Hungary	Marshalling Yards	29 Aug 1944

<i>Number</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Target Attacked</i>	<i>Date</i>
109	Debraczen, Hungary	Marshalling Yards	1 Sep 1944
110	Nis, Yugoslavia	South Marshalling Yard	2 Sep 1944
111	Szajol, Hungary	Railroad Bridge	3 Sep 1944
112	Latisana, Italy	Railroad Bridge	4 Sep 1944
113	Novi Sad, Yugoslavia	Marshalling Yard	6 Sep 1944
114	Belgrade, Yugoslavia	Sava Railroad Bridge	8 Sep 1944
115	Trieste, Italy	Harbor Facilities	10 Sep 1944
116	Lechfeld, Germany	Airdrome	12 Sep 1944
117	Odertal, Germany	Synthetic Oil Plant	13 Sep 1944
118	Athens, Greece	Tatoi Airdrome	15 Sep 1944
119	Budapest, Hungary	Kobanya Marshalling Yard	17 Sep 1944
120	Budapest, Hungary	North Railroad Bridge	18 Sep 1944
121	Gyor, Hungary	Marshalling Yard	20 Sep 1944
122	Kiskore, Hungary	Railroad Bridge	21 Sep 1944
123	Munich, Germany	Riem Airdrome	22 Sep 1944
124	Venzon, Italy	Railroad Viaduct	23 Sep 1944
	San Dona Di Piave, Italy	Railroad Bridge	23 Sep 1944
125	Athens, Greece	Tatoi Airdrome	24 Sep 1944
126	Munich, Germany	West Marshalling Yard	4 Oct 1944
127	Mezzocorona, Italy	Railroad Bridge	4 Oct 1944
	Casara, Italy	Railroad Bridge	4 Oct 1944
128	Gyor, Hungary	Airdrome Installations	7 Oct 1944
129	Vienna, Austria	Winterhafen Oil Depot	7 Oct 1944
130	Casara, Italy	Railroad Bridge	10 Oct 1944
131	Vienna, Austria	Osterreichische Motor Works	11 Oct 1944
132	Bologna, Italy	Stores Depot	12 Oct 1944
133	Szekesfehervar, Hungary	Marshalling Yard	13 Oct 1944
134	Hranice, Czechoslovakia	Marshalling Yard	13 Oct 1944
135	Odertal, Germany	Synthetic Oil Plant	14 Oct 1944
136	Steyr, Austria	Walzlagerwerke Aero Engine Works	16 Oct 1944
137	Innsbruck, Austria	West Marshalling Yard	20 Oct 1944
138	Gyor, Hungary	Main Marshalling Yard	21 Oct 1944
139	Targets Abandoned		23 Oct 1944
140	Trieste, Italy	Opicina Marshalling Yard	23 Oct 1944
141	Graz, Austria	Wetzeldorf Ordnance Depot	1 Nov 1944
142	Klagenfurt, Austria	Aircraft Factory	3 Nov 1944
143	Linz, Austria	Main Marshalling Yards	4 Nov 1944
144	Vienna, Austria	Floridsdorf Oil Refinery	5 Nov 1944
145	Mitrovica, Yugoslavia	Troop Concentrations	5 Nov 1944
146	Vienna, Austria	South Ordnance Depot	6 Nov 1944
147	Novi Pazar, Yugoslavia	Troop Concentrations	7 Nov 1944
148	Villach, Austria	Marshalling Yard	11 Nov 1944
149	Linz, Austria	Benzol Oil Refinery	14 Nov 1944
150	Visegrad, Yugoslavia	Troop Concentrations	16 Nov 1944
151	Munich, Germany	West Marshalling Yards	16 Nov 1944
152	Graz, Austria	Main Marshalling Yards	17 Nov 1944
153	Gyor, Hungary	Marshalling Yards	17 Nov 1944
154	Vicenza, Italy	Airdrome	18 Nov 1944
155	Verona, Italy	Locomotive Repair Depot	19 Nov 1944
156	Vienna, Austria	Lobau Oil Refinery	19 Nov 1944
157	Lundenburg, Czechoslovakia	Marshalling Yards	20 Nov 1944
158	Villach, Austria	Marshalling Yards	22 Nov 1944
159	Munich, Germany	Marshalling Yards	25 Nov 1944
	Innsbruck, Austria	Marshalling Yards	25 Nov 1944
160	Linz, Austria	Industrial Area	3 Dec 1944
161	Targets Abandoned		6 Dec 1944
162	Klagenfurt, Austria	Industrial Area	7 Dec 1944
163	Volkermarkt, Austria	Town	8 Dec 1944
164	Linz, Austria	Industrial Area	9 Dec 1944
165	Vienna, Austria	Southeast Goods Yard	11 Dec 1944

<i>Number</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Target Attacked</i>	<i>Date</i>
166	Blechhammer, Germany	South Synthetic Oil Plant	12 Dec 1944
167	Linz, Austria	Freight Yards	15 Dec 1944
168	Brux, Czechoslovakia	Synthetic Oil Plant	16 Dec 1944
169	Odertal, Germany	Synthetic Oil Plant	17 Dec 1944
	Gross Strehlitz, Germany	Marshalling Yards	17 Dec 1944
170	Oswiecim, Poland	Synthetic Oil Plant	18 Dec 1944
171	Villach, Austria	Marshalling Yards	20 Dec 1944
172	Wels, Austria	Main Marshalling Yard	25 Dec 1944
173	Bruck, Austria	Marshalling Yards	27 Dec 1944
174	Pardubice, Czechoslovakia	Oil Refinery	28 Dec 1944
✓ 175	Landshut, Germany	Marshalling Yards	29 Dec 1944
176	Verona, Italy	Porta Nuova Marshalling Yard	4 Jan 1945
177	Graz, Austria	Marshalling Yards	8 Jan 1945
178	Vienna, Austria	East Station	15 Jan 1945
✓ 179	Brod, Yugoslavia	Road Bridge	19 Jan 1945
180	Linz, Austria	South Marshalling Yard	20 Jan 1945
✓ 181	Moosbierbaum, Austria	Oil Refinery	31 Jan 1945
182	Gleisdorf, Austria	Marshalling Yard	31 Jan 1945
183	Targets Abandoned		1 Feb 1945
184	Regensburg, Germany	Rhenani and Danubia Oil Storage	5 Feb 1945
185	Moosbierbaum, Austria	Oil Refinery	7 Feb 1945
186	Moosbierbaum, Austria	Oil Refinery	7 Feb 1945
✓ 187	Vienna, Austria	Southeast Communications Area	8 Feb 1945
188	Moosbierbaum, Austria	Oil Refinery	9 Feb 1945
189	Targets Abandoned		13 Feb 1945
190	Maribor, Yugoslavia	South Marshalling Yard	13 Feb 1945
✓ 191	Klagenfurt, Austria	Marshalling Yard	14 Feb 1945
192	Vienna, Austria	Floridsdorf Oil Refinery	14 Feb 1945
193	Vienna, Austria	Floridsdorf Oil Refinery	15 Feb 1945
✓ 194	Regensburg, Germany	Obertraubling Airdrome	16 Feb 1945
194A	Targets Abandoned		17 Feb 1945
✓ 194B	Targets Abandoned		18 Feb 1945
195	Pola, Italy	Shipyards	19 Feb 1945
196	Trieste, Italy	Shipyards	20 Feb 1945
✓ 197	Vienna, Austria	Central Yards and Shops	21 Feb 1945
198	Plattling, Germany	Marshalling Yards	22 Feb 1945
✓ 199	Klagenfurt, Austria	Marshalling Yards	22 Feb 1945
199	Udine, Italy	Marshalling Yards	23 Feb 1945
200	Targets Abandoned		24 Feb 1945
✓ 201	Linz, Austria	North Main Marshalling Yard	25 Feb 1945
202	Augsburg, Germany	Marshalling Yard	27 Feb 1945
✓ 203	Albes, Italy	Isarco River Railroad Bridge	28 Feb 1945
204	Moosbierbaum, Austria	Oil Refinery	1 Mar 1945
✓ 205	Jesenice, Yugoslavia	Marshalling Yard	1 Mar 1945
205	Linz, Austria	North and South Main Marshalling Yards	2 Mar 1945
✓ 206	Wiener Neustadt, Germany	Sorting Sidings	4 Mar 1945
207	Kapfenburg, Germany	Steel Works	8 Mar 1945
208	Graz, Austria	Station Marshalling Yards	9 Mar 1945
	Klagenfurt, Austria	Marshalling Yards	9 Mar 1945
✓ 209	Verona, Italy	Parona Railroad Bridge	10 Mar 1945
210	Vienna, Austria	Floridsdorf Oil Refinery	12 Mar 1945
211	Regensburg, Germany	Main Marshalling Yards	13 Mar 1945
✓ 212	Wiener Neustadt, Germany	Railroad Yards	14 Mar 1945
✓ 213	Moosbierbaum, Austria	Oil Refinery	15 Mar 1945
214	Amstetten, Austria	Marshalling Yards	16 Mar 1945
✓ 215	Muhldorf, Germany	Marshalling Yards	19 Mar 1945
✓ 216	Wels, Austria	Main Marshalling Yards	20 Mar 1945
217	Neuburg, Germany	Airdrome	21 Mar 1945
✓ 218	Kralupy, Czechoslovakia	Oil Refinery	22 Mar 1945
	Wels, Austria	Main Marshalling Yards	22 Mar 1945

<i>Number</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Target Attacked</i>	<i>Date</i>
219	St. Valentin, Austria	Tank Works	23 Mar 1945
✓ 220	Munich, Germany	Riem Airdrome	24 Mar 1945
221	Prague, Czechoslovakia	Liben Tank Works	25 Mar 1945
222	Szombathely, Hungary	North Sidings	26 Mar 1945
223	Vienna, Austria	North Station and Goods Depot	30 Mar 1945
	Graz, Austria	Marshalling Yards	30 Mar 1945
	Klagenfurt, Austria	Marshalling Yards	30 Mar 1945
	Klapfenburg, Austria	Tank Works	30 Mar 1945
224	Linz, Austria	Freight Yards and Locomotive Depot	31 Mar 1945
	Treviso, Italy	Marshalling Yards	31 Mar 1945
✓ 225	Krieglach, Austria	Railroad Bridge	1 Apr 1945
226	Krems, Austria	Marshalling Yards	2 Apr 1945
227	Alessandria, Italy	Marshalling Yards	5 Apr 1945
228	Verona, Italy	Ordnance Depot	6 Apr 1945
	Verona, Italy	Flak Installation	6 Apr 1945
	Brescia, Italy	Marshalling Yards	6 Apr 1945
229	Targets Abandoned		7 Apr 1945
230	Campo di Trens, Italy	Railroad Bridge	8 Apr 1945
	Avisto, Italy	Railroad Viaduct	8 Apr 1945
✓ 231	Lugo, Italy	Area "Apple"	9 Apr 1945
✓ 232	Lugo, Italy	Area "Charley"	10 Apr 1945
233	Goito, Italy	Fuel Depot	11 Apr 1945
234	Nervesa, Italy	Railroad Bridge	12 Apr 1945
✓ 235	Ghedì, Italy	Ammunition Factory and Stores	15 Apr 1945
	Bologna, Italy	Area MA 9	15 Apr 1945
236	Targets Abandoned		16 Apr 1945
✓ 237	Bologna, Italy	Area MA 9	17 Apr 1945
	Bologna, Italy	Area MA 18	17 Apr 1945
✓ 238	Bologna, Italy	Area MA 9	18 Apr 1945
239	S'Stino di Livenza, Italy	Installation	19 Apr 1945
	Linz, Austria	Marshalling Yards	19 Apr 1945
	Klagenfurt, Austria	Marshalling Yards	19 Apr 1945
240	Ponte Gardena, Italy	Railroad Bridge	20 Apr 1945
	Avisio, Italy	Railroad Viaduct	20 Apr 1945
✓ 241	Padua, Italy	Road Bridge No. 1 and No. 3	23 Apr 1945
✓ 242	Bassano, Italy	Road Bridge	24 Apr 1945
243	Linz, Austria	South Main Marshalling Yards	25 Apr 1945



15th AAF Photo