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**HEADQUARTERS
FOUR HUNDRED SIXTEENTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L)
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER**

SUBJECT: Historical Data

TO : Commanding General, Army Air Forces

1. The Four Hundred and Sixteenth (416th) Bombardment Group Light was activated on 5 February, 1943, without personnel, at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma. The authority for the organization of this Group was contained in General Orders #3, Headquarters Army Air base, Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma, dated 4 February, 1943. (see exhibit #1) The components making up the Group were the 668th, 669th, 670th and 671st Bombardment Squadrons Light.

The original transfer of fifty-one (51) Officers and two hundred and forty-one (241) Enlisted Men was made on 15 February, 1943. (see exhibit #2) The source of the cadre was the 46th Bombardment Group and units from Will Rogers Field; from Blythe, Calif.; from Barksdale Field, La.; and a number of men with considerable overseas experience from the Third Air Force Replacement Center, Plant Park, Florida. These key personnel were, in most cases, soldiers of valuable experience, and their contributions were especially large.

Until 15 February, all personnel were attached to their parent organization for duty, rations, and quarters. However, on that date, the 46th Bombardment Group Light moved to the North side of Will Rogers Field, leaving the South side to the 416th Bombardment Group Light (further references will call it the 416th Bomb Group(L)).

The Group originally operated as an Operational Training Unit under the III Air Support Command. Under the leadership of its young and energetic Commanding Officer, Lt. Colonel Richard D. Dick, the Group began to lay the foundation to cope with the administrative and operational problems it would soon face. The following Officers were assigned to the duties indicated:

Capt. Griffin R. Beatty.....	Group Operations Officer
Capt. Warren J. Conen.....	" Surgeon
Capt. William P. Thomas.....	" Intelligence "
Capt. James W. Townsend.....	" Adjutant
2d Lt. William L. Kinney.....	" Materiel

The four men who were selected to be Commanding Officers of the four Squadrons had been together ever since their graduation from Flying School. They had gained valuable experience while on Desert maneuvers in California. They were:

Capt. John G. Napier.....	C.O. 668th
Capt. Robert F. Price.....	C.O. 669th
Capt. Raymond T. Schlanser.....	C.O. 670th
Capt. David L. Willetts.....	C.O. 671st

(see exhibit #3)

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The Group fell back on the parent Group, the 46th, for assistance with its training. Pilots were attached to the 46th Bomb Group for transition flying during the first three months of our existence. On 11 May, the first eight(8) planes were assigned to the 416th Group. One B-25C and one A-20B was given to each of the 668th and 669th Squadrons. Two A-20B's were assigned to each of the 670th and 671st Squadrons. Classes in all the military occupational specialties were conducted by the 46th Bomb Gp. until 1 June 1943. The Pilots attended Ground School, for five hours a day, in the following subjects: code, link trainer, aircraft recognition, operation and maintenance of the A-20 and B-25, air navigation, radio, instrument procedure, etc. The Intelligence personnel attended classes for one hour a day. Training films were shown, such as DIVIDE AND CONQUER which all personnel saw on 21 and 24, May.

The training of the mind was important, but the training and conditioning of the body was just as important to produce the type of soldier that Col. Dick wanted. Therefore a physical training program was set up. Both Officers and Enlisted Men participated in the program of Calisthenics and games. All men took a physical fitness test during the third week in May. The Group participated in a march and bivouac on 21 May. Although the march was short, the experience of the bivouac was important. The men pitched shelter halves. They were instructed in how to camouflage and in camouflage discipline. After eating Supper, the Group returned to the Base.

Ceremonial Reviews were held on Saturday mornings which all available men paraded.

Morale during this period while at Will Rogers Field was high. Military courtesy and discipline was commendable. After an inspection tour and a formal review for Brg. General McDaniel, Col. Dick sent a letter of commendation to the members of the Group. (see Exhibit #4)

The Commanding Officers supervised their Squadrons closely. Those who were inexperienced profited greatly by this. Everyone looked eagerly to the future.

The enlisted personnel enjoyed the recreational activities and entertainment prepared for them. Typical of the recreation available to them were these events taken from a copy of FUN DIAL* an announcement paper:

Recreation on the Base

Sunday---Radio Broadcast

All-Girl Bodeo

Mystery Show

Monday---Stag and Stunt

Tuesday---Dance

Wednesday---Dance

Thursday---Dance

Friday-----Grab Bag Nite

Saturday---Dance

These papers were designed by an Enlisted Man of the Group and posted weekly in the Squadron's barracks. Stories and pictures of personnel and activities were featured in two pages of FIELD NEWS,

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the Base weekly newspaper.

Typical of the competitive spirit that had already arisen between the Squadrons of the Group was the interest shown in the Field Day planned by Lt. John M. Flummerfelt, Group Athletic Officer. The four Squadrons sent its representatives into events of all kinds from a horseshoe tournament to a mile relay. No less interest was shown in the Officers Softball League that started on May 20.

Despite the apparently full schedule of activities, the social life of the Group was not neglected. Dances were held on Tuesday and Thursday nights at the Base Recreation Hall for the Enlisted Men. For the Officers a letter dated May 15, 1943, will describe one of their functions. (see exhibit #5)

For every man you know who has ever tried to defy the laws of gravity, you will find one who has faced death. There are some who lose out in the struggle. On April 15, 2nd Lt Eugene S. Hulette, while on temporary duty at Amarillo, Texas was killed on a routine training mission.

It was about the beginning of April when the Group began to function quite smoothly. On April 4, the Group was assigned to the 56th Bombardment Training Wing, General Order #8, III Air Support Command. Throughout that month and the next the Group progressed appreciably. On May 13, approval was received for Aircraft marking for the 671st Bomb Sq (Exhibit #6). Suddenly orders were given to prepare the packing of equipment for movement. On May 31, and advance echelon left Will Rogers Field by rail to report to the Commanding Officer at the Army Air Field, Lake Charles, La. (SO #151). 2nd Lt William L. Eubank was designated as train commander.

SO #152 published June 1, transferred the remainder of the Group to Lake Charles, La., thus beginning the second phase of the History of the Group.

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HEADQUARTERS
FOUR HUNDRED SIXTEENTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L)
Office of the Commanding Officer

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SUBJECT: Group History (Second and Third Phases)

TO : Commanding General, Army Air Forces

1. The second phase of the operations of the 416th Bomb Group took place in Lake Charles, Louisiana. The first two days of June were spent preparing for the movement from Will Rogers Field. On the evening of the third, the rail movement was begun. By the morning of the fifth, all personnel had arrived at the new Base. Lt Col Dick said of the movement, "I wish to compliment the officers and the men of the 416th who outdid themselves in our first change of station. Their initiative and aggressiveness were most efficient and gratifying. I have a great deal of confidence in our Group, and believe our efforts will aid materially in this war."

The City of Lake Charles, at first glance, was somewhat disappointing to those who had just left beautiful Oklahoma City. The hearts of all were somewhat gladdened, though, at the sight of the Army Air Base, the new home of the Group. The large well-kept lawn of the parade ground, the green grass throughout the Base, the flower gardens, the cream colored barracks, the general cleanliness of the field, and, above all, the cordiality of our new hosts impressed us greatly.

Also the new Base provided a tremendous increase in available equipment and facilities, installations, transportation, and in maintenance facilities for aircraft. A full hanger was immediately assigned the Group. A short time later a second hanger was turned over to us. The 608th and 670th Squadrons were assigned one hanger and the 669th and 671st Squadrons were assigned the other.

Operating as an Operational Training Unit, the added facilities enabled a more extensive program of training to be set up. At the same time there was an increase in equipment and a vast increase in personnel. As far as flying was concerned, the Group had only a small part of its allotted planes. Due to maintenance difficulties and this small number of planes, the flying time remained low, and all pilots were scheduled for extensive Link Trainer schooling. Improvements were continually being made by members of the Group which enabled it to train more rapidly and efficiently. A letter from Colonel Harold L. Mace, the commanding officer of the Air Base, to Lt Col Dick expressed

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his appreciation of the work of the Group. (Exhibit #7.)

Among the training courses was a course in Aircraft Recognition given to all personnel six days a week. News lectures were given by the S-2 section in the War Room on Saturday mornings. On the 30 June, the Group went on the six mile hike and bivouac. Particular stress was laid on camouflage and camouflage discipline. Reviews were held each Thursday afternoon. Physical training was supplemented by an enlisted mens' and an officers' softball league. A Group field day was held on the 28th, 29th, and 30th of June and was won by the 669th Bomb Squadron.

On June 25, an unfortunate accident robbed the Group of five men in one blow. Second lieutenants Paul F. Curdy, Howard J. Hilderbrandt, and Vincent J. Jasinski, S/Sgt Richard Wentling, Sgt Lawrence Zelley, and Pvt John Riley were all killed when a B-25 piloted by Lt Curdy collided with Lt Hilderbrandt's A-20 near DeRidder, Louisiana.

Approval was received on June 3 for the Aircraft Marking for the 668th Bomb Squadron. On the 29th, the 670th Bomb Squadron received approval for its aircraft marking. (See Letters-Exhibits 8 and 9.)

One of the busiest men in the Group was the Special Service Officer, 2nd Lt Raymond Hough. On his shoulders, as Special Service officer, fell the job of keeping the men contented. In compliance with his duties, a series of dances were arranged. Shell Beach Pier was the scene of a dance for the enlisted men on the 14th of June, and another was held in the Group Recreation Hall of the 17th of June. The heat of the climate, however, did not add to the enjoyment, so the next dances were held in the more cooler surroundings of the Hanger on the 22nd and 29th of June. They proved quite successful. Lt Hough's task was eased considerably when the 803rd WAC Post Headquarters Company arrived on the base the last week in June, and the WAC Recreation Hall became a popular spot. Transportation was always provided to bring young ladies from Lake Charles and surrounding towns to the dances.

The Officers also enjoyed the social life of Lake Charles. On the 12th of June, a party followed by a dance was held in the Cafeteria, and a dance honoring the officers of the 416th Group was held in the Majestic Hotel in Lake Charles on the 25th of June. These parties are often mentioned by those who attended and enjoyed them so much.

With all of these activities and the friendliness of

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the local townspeople, by the beginning of July, the 416th had begun to feel more at home at its new base. With adequate bus facilities and taxi service, everyone made use of the entertainment programs in town. The townspeople, too, enjoyed being hosts to the 416th Bomb Group. The Base Dance Orchestra played for local dances, and military personnel appeared at local clubs and churches. Families in town invited men to their homes to share their hospitality. In casual conversations, one got an idea of the friendly feeling that existed between the citizens of Lake Charles and the members of the 416th Bomb Group.

After June 1, there began an influx of surplus personnel and a more extensive training program was inaugurated. Newly assigned flying and ground personnel were directed to undergo two weeks of preliminary training in addition to their operational training. A limited number of qualified check pilots and supervised personnel worked unceasingly to fit the crews for combat, and to train pilots in safety measures in operation of new aircraft, in code procedure, in the mechanics of radio, and in the mechanical and operational characteristics of the A-20 and B-25.

The Group was better prepared to operate at the beginning of July than it had ever been during the course of its entire existence. More planes were assigned to the Group. Training continued, but it was hampered greatly by the continuous change of personnel. Those who had planned the training program had done a thorough job; however, one phase of our training had too long been neglected. The letter by Lt Col Dick to all personnel on "Our Rights and Privileges," dated 1 July 1943, explains it, (Exhibit 10.)

The second fatal accident to Group Personnel occurred on July 4. On that day, while on a routine training flight in the vicinity of Lake Charles, 2nd Lt Andrew P. Scully crashed and was killed. He was a member of the 670th Bomb Squadron.

One of the first major transfers in personnel occurred on the 11th of the month. Captain Raymond Schlanser was relieved of command of the 670th Bomb Squadron and transferred to the Army Air Base at Roswell, New Mexico. His successor was Captain Finlay Macgillivray, a well-liked and capable leader.

After fighting it out for two days with the other two squadrons, the 669th and 670th came to grips on the 21st of July in a Group Field Day. The 669th Bomb Squadron came out victorious and appeared to be well on the way to permanent possession of the Championship trophy with two victories.

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The physical training program continued throughout the month although it became less rigid because of the extreme heat. The twilight softball leagues continued to draw more players and spectators. One of the gruelling trials that the men went through was a 12 mile march and bivouac held on the 27th of July. The next morning the attendance at Sick Call increased and the Medics were busy treating blisters and sore feet.

Approval was received on the 28th for the aircraft marking for the 669th Bomb Squadron. (See attached letter-exhibit 11.) This was the last one to be received so now all squadrons were able to display their insignias.

The heat of the summer months brought about changes in the recreational and social activities. It was found that it was quite impractical to use the hot and stuffy Recreation Hall very extensively. Dances, therefore, were held in the hangers of the 6th, 13th, and 20th. The last dance included a floor show as part of the entertainment schedule. In addition to the weekly dances at the Officers' Club, the Group held a party at the Lake Charles Country Club on July 1 to start the month.

A check on the strength of the squadrons on the first of August reveals the following figures:

Squadron	Officers	Enlisted Men
668th Bomb (L)	38	393
669th Bomb (L)	38	393
670th Bomb (L)	37	383
671st Bomb (L)	38	397
Hq, 416th	33	79

On the first day of August, orders were received activating the 418th Bombardment Group (L) and its four squadrons. (See G.O. #6.) The personnel were assigned on the 12th from the 416th, now a parent unit, to the new 418th by Special Order #97, Headquarters, 416th Bombardment Group (L), Lake Charles, Louisiana, Army Air Field. The cadre left for AAFSAT, Orlando, Florida, on August 3. On the 11th, another major change occurred, when the 416th Group was transferred out of the III ASC and assigned to the III Bomber Command. (See Letter-Exhibit 12.)

Colonel Richard E. Lee, commanding officer of the 56th Bombardment Training Wing, Will Rogers Field, reviewed the troops of the 416th in a parade held in his honor on the 12th. (See cut, Exhibit 12-A). He and his staff had just completed a two day inspection of the Group and the squadrons.

Another march and bivouac took place on the 27th. This time the march covered a total of six miles. It was carried

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out in good order with only a minimum of casualties, in contrast to the previous bivouac.

Recreational activities continued with many added attractions. A Group Field Day was conducted on the 23rd, 24th, and 25th. The 670th Bomb Squadron emerged the victor over the 668th by a lop-sided score. Softball leagues for the officers and enlisted men continued with the competition very keen. Three Hanger Dances were held for the Enlisted Men, two Bingo Parties with valuable prizes to the winners, and a new feature, weekly dance instruction classes with comely young ladies from Lake Charles to teach those who had not mastered the fine points of that art called "Jitterbugging." The Officers' Club continued to be the scene for weekly dances for the Officers. Colonel and Mrs. Mace were guests of honor at a country club party in Lake Charles on the 26th.

The month of September surpassed all past months in activity and excitement. It began with a change in command of the base. Colonel Mace, who had been commanding officer, was transferred to the 56th Bomb Training Wing at Will Rogers Field. He was replaced by Colonel Wendell B. McCoy.

About 1030 on the morning of September 4, on a local training mission, two planes collided in mid-air when they flew into a cloud. The pilots were 2nd Lt Walter J. Burke and 2nd Lt Robert W. Morton, with the 671st Bomb Squadron. They were the sole occupants of the A-20's.

Somewhere around the 7th of the month, the 416th Bomb Group was changed from an Operational Training Unit to a Tactical Unit. The month began with 180 officers and 1693 enlisted men. With the de-activation of the 418th Bomb Group, more personnel were thrown onto already overburdened facilities. All of the available space in the barracks was utilized. At the end of the month, the figures on our strength were:

668th Bomb Sq.	39 Officers	452 E.M.
669th Bomb Sq.	38 Officers	469 E.M.
670th Bomb Sq.	38 Officers	462 E.M.
671st Bomb Sq.	36 Officers	472 E.M.
Hq., 416th	29 Officers	93 E.M.
	180	1948

Instructions were received, however, on the 24th, which referred to a re-organization of the Group, effective on the 1st of October, 1943, in accordance with T/O 1-132, 29 May, 1943. (See G.O. 46, Exhibit 13.)

The first inspection by the III Bomber Command was held on the 3rd and 4th of September. On the 9th and 10th, a 56th Wing Inspection team inspected the Group Headquarters and the squadrons. The results of both inspections were only satisfactory; however, under the circumstances of changing personnel, satisfactory was an accomplishment.

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Training continued throughout the month. A Bombardier-Navigator School was established, as was an Intelligence School, and an Armament and Ordnance School. The Operations Officers concentrated on Low Altitude Missions. Targets were chosen within an hour's flying time of the Base, so as to allow interception problems to be encountered. The low swamplands along the Gulf Coast furnished fine target localities.

One event that few shall forget was the Hurricane scare. Warnings were posted along the coast from Galveston, Texas, to Lake Charles. All planes that could be flown were taken to Will Rogers Field and Muskogee. This took place on the 18th. In the meantime, the men were restricted and alert teams were on duty continually. Anxiety and anticipation of disaster soon disappeared, and word was received that the Hurricane had fizzled out before it had reached us. The planes returned after five days away from the Base.

Planes of the Group staged an aerial review for a Labor Day Program at Lafayette, Louisiana (See letter, exhibit #14). A mass formation also flew over the local base during each of the Thursday afternoon reviews. The troops on the 23rd were inspected by Major General Allen W. Gullion Sr., and Brigadier General Derrere, commanding general of the VIII Army Service Forces Command. General Gullion is the father of 1st Lt Allen W. Gullion Jr., a pilot of the 669th Bomb Squadron.

Another Group Field Day was held on the 27th. The 668th Bomb Squadron led the 669th when the points were totaled. The softball game was high-lighted by an argument between the 669th hurler, Sgt James Chestnut, and the umpire, Chaplain Penticoff, (See cut, exhibit #15.) The softball leagues were coming to the end of their schedules. The officers never did determine a champion. The 670th Bomb Squadron had the best record in the Enlisted Mens' League and won the championship. But football was in the air, and a base team was organized. Some of the non-flying personnel of the group played with the team. Still popular, the hanger dances were held on the 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th. The last one also included a pie-eating contest. Dances were held at the Officers' Club each week-end. An NCO club was also begun (see letter, exhibit #16.)

The transfer of personnel to T/O strength which was referred to in Exhibit #13 gave warning of a drastic change of personnel during October. The big transfer took place on the 13th and 14th, when a troop train took them to Florence, South Carolina. Lt Earth was Train Commander. Captain Murphy was train physician, and Lt Heafy, train mess officer.

At the beginning of the month, the Group was composed

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of 179 officers and 1953 enlisted men. On the 31st, these figures showed the following:

668th Bomb Sq.	38 Officers	264 E.M.
669th Bomb Sq.	39 Officers	251 E.M.
670th Bomb Sq.	41 Officers	251 E.M.
671st Bomb Sq.	43 Officers	255 E.M.
Hq., 416th	27 Officers	58 E.M.
	188	1079

October was an unlucky month for the Group. An unfortunate series of accidents shocked everyone. On October 1, 2nd Lt Walter C. Morris, with his gunners, Sgt Everette L. Bass and Sgt Hughes M. Braud, crashed and sank into the Gulf while on a minimum altitude missions. Their bodies were never recovered. On the 10th, while flying as escort for a convoy moving to the Bivouac area at the Gillis Airfield, 2nd Lt Robert F. Kempernolte and his Bombardier-Navigator, 2nd Lt John W. Wisdom, collided with a plane flying in the attacking formation. Occupants of the second plane were 2nd Lt Fred E. Holzscheiter, pilot; 2nd Lt Frederick H. McVay, Bombardier-Navigator; S/Sgt Clyde E. Graham, gunner. All occupants of both planes were killed. About 2000 on the night of the 18th, while night flying in weather that had moved in quite rapidly, 1st Lt John H. White, and his gunner, Cpl David S. Eckert, were killed when their plane crashed. Second Lieutenant Herman C. Jones, Bombardier-Navigator, was killed while flying with 1st Lt Robert J. Duthu; they overshot the field in bad weather. Lt Duthu was severely injured, but recovered.

Three Squadrons participated in a Bivouac at the Gillis Airfield on the 6th, 9th, and 10th. The Squadrons would receive the Field Order on the evening of the bivouac. Early the next morning, it would leave the Base by truck convoy, and would cover the 75 miles to the bivouac area. The area was large so that each Squadron was given complete freedom to choose its site. Camouflage against air attacks was stressed because missions were planned at the home base and sent out to simulate a bombing and strafing attack against the encamped troops. The bivouac by the 669th Bomb Squadron was marred by the untimely accident mentioned earlier. It was most successful otherwise, and the Squadron was able to spend the day in the Bivouac area without being spotted despite a continuous seven-hour search by a B-25 Mitchell, which observed the area.

During the month, many things happened. One third of the Group attended a Mobile Camouflage School conducted by the Third Air Force. The 56th Wing made an inspection from the 5th to the 8th. They observed the procedure followed by the Squadrons in the preparation and execution of missions. The Group concentrated on Low and Medium (8,000 feet) altitude missions.

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Dances were held for the Enlisted Men at the Recreation Hall twice a week. A dance and reception for Colonel and Mrs. McCoy was held at the Officers' Club on the 22nd. The base football team played a game on the 24th. It was followed by a Tea Dance and Buffet Supper at the officers' club and a Hallowe'en Dance was held for the Enlisted Men at the Recreation Hall and one for the Officers at the Club.

The big news of the month came on the 22nd. On that date, Colonel Mace joined the Group and took over as Commanding Officer. Colonel Dick was relieved (see Farewell Letter, Exhibit #17.) *Also Exh. 17-A* The new commanding officer, already well-known to many as CO of the Lake Charles Army Air Base until September 1, 1943, brought with him several men to occupy key positions in the Group.

A few of the changes follow:

- 27th--Major T.R. Aylesworth to Group Headquarters.
- 28th--Major Walter W. Farmer to C.O. of the 669th.
- 28th--Major Clarence S. Towles Jr. to CO of the 668th.
- 29th--Major Clarence A. Martin Jr. to CO of the 671st.

All of these officers came from the 46th Bomb Group (L), Tampa, Florida. Colonel Dick was transferred to the 46th Bomb group on the 25th. Colonel Mace spoke to all officers of the Group at the War Room on the 24th, stating his policies and plans. He announced that he would be leaving shortly on a secret mission. Lt Col T.R. Ford, promoted from Major on the 23rd, would assume command while Colonel Mace was gone. Colonel Mace left the Group on this mission on the 29th.

Word was received at 0900 on the 30th that the Group was to be transferred to the Army Air Base at Laurel, Mississippi. Packing would have to be hurried so that the motor convoy would be ready to leave the base at 0400 on November 1. All sections worked with rapidity and efficiency to do the job. An advanced echelon flew to the new Base on the 31st to prepare it for the arrival of the 46th. This advance echelon was under the command of Lt McCullah.

The vehicles in the 99 truck convoy were lined up on the eve of the departure from Lake Charles in the order in which they were to move off. At 0400 sharp in the morning of November 1, the first vehicle left the base. The morning was cold and foggy. The fog lifted towards noon, but the weather remained cold. With a minimum of accidents, the convoy arrived at the Laurel Army Air Base at 1915 after traveling 345 miles.

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The following day was devoted to locating the Sections of the squadrons. A ground detachment under Captain Randall of the 671st left for detached service at the airfield at Pollock, Louisiana, and from the 2nd until the 15th, combat crews and necessary ground personnel participated in the maneuvers there. The maneuvers were conducted in conjunction with the armored forces from Camp Polk, La. Our planes were to work with the Blue Forces. Low and medium altitude missions were flown, day and night formations used, and air-ground recognition practiced. The personnel were changed frequently so that the ground crews as well as the combat crews had an opportunity to engage in the maneuvers.

On the 6th, eighteen A-20 planes left the Laurel Air Base to participate in a two-week demonstration tour. They visited five Army camps: Ft Benning, Ft Knox, Ft Sill, Ft Riley, and Camp Hood. The A-20's concentrated on low altitude attacks by the hour while Marauders carried out medium altitude attacks for the benefit on the thousands of ground personnel that gathered at each camp to watch the demonstrations.

At 1310Z on November 9, the entire Group left the cantonment area and traveled across the field to the Bivouac area. There the Squadrons set up their living quarters.... pyramidal tents and lived under field conditions for one full week. The weather was ideal for the bivouac, clear and cool (see Field Order.) Encl. #18.

At the end of seven days, the Group broke camp and returned to the area of cantonment. The bivouac area, however, was found to be ideal for the location of the technical sites. As a result, the technical sites remained there and operations continued to be conducted from them until our departure from Laurel.

The Pollack maneuvers, the demonstration tour, and the seven day bivouac were wonderful training grounds for a Group aiming for combat. Other training was planned. Bad night flying conditions at Laurel necessitated the transfer of some crews to Barksdale Field to complete their night flying requirements. Pachuta and Hancock Bombing Ranges were secured to be used for smoke laying missions, chemical missions, and bombing missions. Two night convoy driving tests were made. Some combat crewmen attended the Oxygen Indoctrination Course at Barksdale Field. The Base set up a Drivers' School to enable men to obtain driver's licenses. A series of chemical warfare and first aid classes were held at the Base Theatre for all personnel. Communication within the Group was by means of field telephones. Special days were set aside on which days all calls had to be challenged and authenticated, using a pre-arranged code.

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There were a few changes in personnel during the month. Major Julius B. Wummers, a veteran of many missions against the Japs, was transferred to the 46th Bomb Group (L), Morris Field, Charlotte, N.C., on the 4th. The following day, Captain William J. Meng was made commanding officer of the 670th, relieving Captain MacGillivray. Major Farmer became Group Operations Officer, with Major Clarence A. Martin replacing him as commanding officer of the 669. Major Martin was relieved of his duties as Commanding Officer of the 671st Bomb Squadron. On the 29th, Captain Ostreicher, Captain MacGillivray, and Major Martin, disqualified on his overseas examination, were transferred to the 46th Bomb Group at Morris Field, North Carolina. A change in the T/O necessitated the transfer out of the Group of one Intelligence officer from each squadron.

The inspections were the most important events of the month. Several were held. General Parker of the III Bomber Command visited the base on the 12th, while the Group was on bivouac. An inspection from the III Bomber Command held forth from the 22nd until the 25th. The discrepancies noted were too numerous to mention here. Colonel Mace, who had just returned from his secret mission of the 23rd, was dissatisfied with the results. He voiced his displeasure to all personnel in a talk at the base theatre on the 25th. The Group was restricted and given 72 hours to correct all the discrepancies. With the pressure on, everyone pitched in to do an almost impossible job. Orderly rooms were open almost 24 hours a day working on records. None of the other sections got any rest either for the next three days. But the job was completed at the end of the 72 hour deadline. It was not only finished, but it was done well. When the 56th Wing Inspection team finished its two-day inspection on December 1, they were able to tell Colonel Mace that he had a "damned good outfit."

Strength at the end of November was as follows:

668th Bomb Sq	40 Officers	272 E.M.
669th Bomb Sq	40 Officers	271 E.M.
670th Bomb Sq	37 Officers	277 E.M.
671st Bomb Sq	41 Officers	269 E.M.
Hq, 416th	30 Officers	62 E.M.
	<u>188</u>	<u>1151</u>

In the hustle of the inspections, the Group passed Thanksgiving day by almost unnoticed. However, the usual Thanksgiving Turkey was served in all the mess halls, and was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Some of those who were more fortunate were able to take their wives to the Base for dinner.

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There was a feeling of uncertainty prevalent when the month of December rolled around. Uncertainty as to the adequacy of our training; uncertainty as to what could be taken along or needed when and if we ever did get notice of overseas duty.

Personnel within the Group were quite stable during the month of December. The Squadrons were given an opportunity to replace untrained personnel. Major Murdock W. Campbell, transferred from Headquarters, Morris Field, became Commanding Officer of the 669th Bomb Squadron, filling the vacancy that had been temporarily filled by Captain Robert F. Price after the transfer of Major Clarence A. Martin Jr. Mr. Sigvard L. Rugland was attached to the Group as Red Cross Field Director.

The final stage of training had to be complete, omitting nothing that could be of possible value overseas. For the first three weeks of the month, the Gunnery range was secured at Biloxi, Mississippi, and all crews had to fire on the range before their training could be completed. The 1,000 mile overwater trip was cancelled after the first two missions had been flown. Planes of the squadrons participated in Group missions throughout the month. From 12 to 18 planes were employed in attacks on simulated targets at the Hancock Range. Practice bombs were carried on these attacks. All combat crews were required to attend an Escape lecture by Lt Woods of the M.I.D., Washington, D.C.

A final III Bomber command inspection was made on the 13th and 14th. It served to keep us on our toes for the most important inspection in our history by the POM team. Actually, for a Group that had been through a series of intensive inspections, the anticipation of the POM inspection was a great deal worse than the actual inspection itself. But there was much joy in the hearts of everyone when the last Inspection team left the Base. The Group was given an excellent rating.

While at Laurel, there was little time for anything but work. Recreational facilities on the base and in Laurel itself were somewhat limited. As a result, the Enlisted Men spent much of their spare time at the Laurel USO. The officers looked forward to the Saturday night dances at the officers' club. A group party, followed by others, was held for the officers on the nights of 27 November and 22 December at the Laurel Country Club. Both of them came at times when relaxation was greatly needed. Lt Charles Stewart, Engineering Officer for the 669th, added to the enjoyment by singing at each of the parties. The music was furnished by an orchestra composed of men from the base complement.

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On the 24th, Colonel Mace spoke to the Group and told them that they had been pronounced ready for combat duty. In the course of his speech, he informed the men of what they could expect, what they should do in the way of preparation for movement, and to thank them for the spirit and co-operation that had been extended his command.

Christmas Day was a holiday and everyone used it to relax from the cares of a war-torn world. They filled up on Turkey that was served on all mess hall tables. The officers were invited to attend a buffet supper and dance at the Laurel country club to end the day.

The remainder of the month was spent in preparation for overseas movement. Equipment was packed and crated. Supplies were turned in. Records were turned over to the Base. On the 28th, all officers and enlisted men were restricted to the base. We could not receive visitors, nor could we make phone calls to points off the base for anything but official business.

On the 29th, Colonel Ford, Major Farmer, Major Thomas, and Lt Cooney left for the New York Aerial Port, New York, N.Y., as the Air Echelon.

New Year's Eve was spent on the base with a maximum of merriment. A show featuring personnel from the Group began the evening's festivities. Each squadron then turned its mess hall into a bar and served beer until all of it had been consumed. The beer was secured through contributions made at the monthly pay line.

Throughout the month, an attempt was made to give every officer and enlisted man who had not had a furlough since July 1, a furlough of at least a few days. Physical exams continued to be given to qualify men for overseas duty; clothing inspections seemed to be conducted continually to insure proper marking of clothing. Major Aylesworth became Lieutenant Colonel Aylesworth on the 4th. The West Pointers were all made first lieutenants on 1 December, which at the time caused some muttering to be heard from some who seemed just as deserving.

As had been the case several times before, the first day of the month brought with it some major change or activity. This time we were to spend our last day of 1943 at Laurel and the first day of January, 1944, en route to Camp Shanks, New York.

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