

416th Bombardment Group (L)



668th Bombardment Squadron (L)

History

**15 February 1943 to 30
June 1945**



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HISTORY OF

668TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (L)
416TH Bombardment Group (L)

15 Feb 43 thru Dec 44

Period from 15th February 1943 to 30 June 1943

Will Rogers Field

The 668th Bombardment Squadron (L) was activated without personnel as a part of the 416th Bombardment Group (L), at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma by General Order No. 3, Headquarters Will Rogers Field, dated 4 February 1943. The unit was organized under T/O 1-137, dated 1 July 1942.

On 15th February 1943, the initial cadre from the parent Group, the 46th Bombardment Group (L), was transferred to form the nucleus of the fledgeling outfit. This transfer was accomplished by S. O. 46, Headquarters Army Air Base, Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma.

The 46th Bombardment Group (L), although it had never seen combat, had a wide variety of experience, including extensive tactical maneuvers in the desert at Blythe, California, from June to November 1942, where it operated as a close air support unit for General Patton's Second Armored

Division. Thus it was that many of the twelve officers and sixty-five enlisted men who comprised our initial cadre had probably the finest tactical training, short of actual combat, that could be found in the Air Forces at that date.

Captain John G. Napier, a young flyer with considerable experience in the A-20; both as a pilot and as an Engineering Officer, was appointed Squadron Commander.

First Lieutenant Chester C. Wysocki, Squadron Adjutant, was a veteran of seven years in the Army, including experience as a Regular Army supply Sergeant, and as a Quartermaster Supply Officer in the 46th Bombardment Group.

Second Lieutenant George W. Cowgill, next to Captain Napier the squadron's ranking pilot, was appointed Operations Officer.

The unit functioned at first under the tutelage and close supervision of the parent organization. Newly assigned pilots were attached to the 51st Bombardment Squadron for transitional flying.

The Squadron was scheduled, according to activation orders, to reach full T/O strength by 23d April, 1943. By the end of April we had twenty-six officers and two hundred and thirty-five enlisted men. Though this left the Squadron eleven officers and twenty-one enlisted men short of authorized strength, all key positions had been filled, and there were no major shortages of any great importance.

From the very outset of our training period, the emphasis was upon combat readiness and tactics. The 668th Bombardment Squadron, from the Commanding Officer down to the last private, was an offensive-minded outfit. This being so, it was a bitter disappointment to learn, as we did sometime in April, that we were destined to be an OTC Parent Group like the 46th Bombardment Group from which we had stemmed.

Nevertheless, the unit continued without altering its training progress, to ready itself for combat. Rigorous daily calisthenics were scheduled for all personnel. Newly assigned enlisted men were given an intensive review of basic training before they were put to work at the technical jobs for which they had been specially schooled. Air crew members, besides transition in the A-20, were given ground school classes in aircraft recognition, navigation, theory of bombing, and allied subjects. At weekly news talks given to the entire unit by our Intelligence officers, the latest tactics in aerial warfare were discussed at length. Later we were to learn that this extensive combat training would pay more than ample dividends.

We took time from our busy progress on 21st May to hold our first Squadron party in the Mess Hall at Will Rogers Field. Wives and girl friends were invited and the entire assembly gorged themselves on Beer and pretzels, popcorn, soft drinks, olives, potato salad and oysters.

On 3d June 1943 the Squadron, with the other components of the 416th, moved by air, motor vehicle and rail to a new permanent station at Lake Charles Army Air Field, Louisiana.

June - October, 1943

Period from 4th June 1943 to 31st October 1943

Lake Charles Army Air Field

On the fourth of June 1943 we moved into our new Squadron area. Though finished after war began, the base at Lake Charles was one of the finest small field in the Air Forces. Its sturdy, white-walled, two-storied barracks were erected by Corps of Engineers in the days before the rapidly expanding needs of the Air Corps dictated the construction, on newer fields, of the flimsy tarpaper cantonments we were to see at Laurel. Orderly Room, Q.M. Supply and Day Recs were housed in specially designed buildings. The large, well-equipped hangers included wide rooms which provided offices for Operations and the line maintenance sections. A wide concrete ramp on the landing field, besides providing a parking apron for aircraft, supplied an ideal setting for the formal reviews which were to become a weekly part of the Group's progress. Paved roads ran between broad green lawns. Later we planted in beds around the area, flowers which grew like weeds on the rich Louisiana loam.

In the oppressive heat of midsummer we continued without surcease our rigorous training progress. The Squadron, besides its authorized quota of A-20's, had two B-25's which proved a great aid in the transitional instruction of newly assigned pilots. As soon as they were checked out on the A-20, the flyers began to practice the more advanced tactics of close formation, low-level bombing, and night landings. Long cross-country missions and over-water flights on the Gulf of Mexico gave our bombardiers a wide experience in Dead Reckoning navigation.

The small town of Lake Charles was crowded with war workers from the new synthetic rubber plant, with riggers and drillers from the nearby oil fields, and on weekends with soldiers from the not-far-distant camps. Its shabby business section provided a few down-at-heel movie houses, their stuffy interiors redolent with the odor of roasted peanuts; and also a number of second-rate night clubs and cheap honky-tonks. The town on Saturday nights that summer had a devil-may-care, frontier air about it that was somehow exciting and diverting in spite of the crowds and the heat.

The Squadron grew by leaps and bounds. By the end of July we far exceeded our authorized strength, with a total of thirty-eight officers and three-hundred and ninety-one enlisted men. On 3d August we sent out a

cadre of twelve officers and thirteen enlisted men who were to form the nucleus of one Squadron in the 418th Bombardment Group (L). This outfit, under our guidance and with our assistance, commenced operations on the other side of the field and began enthusiastically to prepare for shipment overseas.

We began to send our staff officers and a few key enlisted men to a four-week course at the AAF School of Applied Tactics in Orlando, Florida, where they benefited from the technical instruction of men returned from the combat zones, who knew practice as well as theory.

Plans were afoot for at least two more Groups to be activated following the 418th. We continued to grow, and the overages created an administrative problem of nightmare proportions. Our personnel included a number of castoffs from tactical organizations whose priority far exceeded ours. Morale inevitably dropped.

Suddenly, overnight, the picture changed. The 418th was deactivated, and its personnel reassigned to the parent Group. Plans for new cadres were abandoned. Jubilant rumors which spread like wildfire through the unit were confirmed by Captain Napier at a meeting September 14th, when he told his staff officers, "This unit is to begin preparations for shipment overseas at the earliest possible date".

There was much to be done, and little time in which to do it. Innumerable shortages of equipment had to be filled. Though our emphasis had from the beginning been on tactical training, our new pilots and air crews were by no means ready for combat. As in all training groups where turnover of personnel is rapid, administrative records had been unable to keep pace with the multiple daily changes, and there was much work ahead on records before we could pass the rigid and exacting P.G.M. inspections.

On 27th September 1943, Captain Napier was transferred to Group Headquarters, where his engineering experience eminently qualified him for the position of Technical Inspector. Captain John M. Hill assumed command of the Squadron. Recently returned from a long tour in Australia and New Guinea, Captain Hill had flown both the A-24 and the A-20 as a flight commander in combat. He was thoroughly familiar with the A-20's tactical capabilities, and with the combat operations of a Light Bombardment Squadron in the field. The new Squadron Commander was an enthusiastic disciple of the South Pacific school of thought, which teaches that the closer to the ground you can fly, the safer you are, and the more effective will be your operations. He led the Squadron in practice missions on the deck, flying no more than a few feet above the flat prairies and swamplands of western Louisiana.

About the middle of October we transferred our overages, and the administrative burden was thus greatly lightened. Before the transfers were made, we had the unique opportunity of choosing by name the men and officers we wished to keep; and thus we were able to obtain, for the most part, personnel of exceptionally high calibre.

On the 18th of October the Squadron suffered its first casualties when 1st Lieutenant John W. White and his gunner, Corporal David S. Eckert were killed in an aircraft accident. Lieutenant White was coming in for a landing after nightfall and in a heavy mist. Apparently he misjudged his distance, for the plane crashed just short of the runway at Lake Charles. Lieutenant White, an excellent pilot, and a young officer who showed much promise, was Assistant Squadron Operations Officer. The loss of both him and Corporal Eckert was deeply felt throughout the unit.

This was by no means the Group's only casualties. A wave of aircraft accidents swept through the organization, bringing several fatalities in other Squadrons. On 22nd October the Group Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Dick was relieved, and Colonel Harold L. Mace, formerly Base Commander at Lake Charles, assumed command.

With the new Group Commander came many changes, but the one most vitally affecting the 668th was the assignment of a new Squadron Commanding Officer, Major Clarence S. Towles Jr., who assumed command on 28th October 1943. A graduate of Virginia Military Institute, Major Towles had been a Squadron Operations Officer with the 12th Bombardment Group (H), a B-25 outfit which operated in support of Montgomery's Eighth Army in the drive from El Alamein across North Africa. A veteran of over fifty missions, wounded in action and several times decorated for heroism and gallantry, he was yet no less eager to return overseas than was the Squadron anxious to prove itself in combat.

Events moved rapidly, On 29th October the Group Commander left for a tour of observation at our eventual overseas destination. On the last day of the month, and on the shortest of notice, we packed up to leave Lake Charles by motor convoy for the Staging Area at Laurel Army Air Field, Mississippi.

November - December, 1943

Period from 1st November 1943 to 31st December 1943

Laurel Army Air Field

Due partly to lack of adequate time for preparation, but largely to lack of experience, the move from Lake Charles to Laurel was poorly planned and poorly executed. The scheme of movement called for an air echelon to accompany the planes and a motor convoy to transport the majority of personnel and equipment. Heavier material which it was not feasible to carry by motor transport was to follow by rail. There were many minor complications of an administrative nature; those who owned motor cars were to go POC; personnel on leave or furlough had to be notified to proceed to the new station; many were on detached service at

several different posts; and a cleanup and loading detail had to stay at Lake Charles to complete the preparations for rail movement of material remaining behind. Yet there was no excuse for the fact that when the motor convoy loaded in the early morning hours of 1st November, approximately 35 men for whom no room could be found in the trucks had to be left at the Station until transportation could be provided. Fortunately, we were able to transport these men next day by running a shuttle service with the B-25. The loading detail found itself faced with tons of material left behind, far in excess of what he had figured as the total equipment for rail transport. Thus we learned a valuable lesson in mobility which we were soon to need. At Laurel we disposed of a great many items which, though useful in a garrison existence, were dead weight for a unit on the move. Also, we learned that by meticulous planning and careful loading, we could carry many things for which, in the haphazard manner that we had packed for the move to Laurel, we apparently had no room.

The motor convoy moved across Louisiana and Mississippi without mishap, and shortly before nightfall, rolled into the Base at Laurel. We set to work early next day in an endeavor to bring some semblance of order to the general chaos. After the clean, trim appearance of the Field at Lake Charles, the ugly barracks, muddy roads, and weed-grown lawns of Laurel were a definite let-down. The one advantage the Base seemed to offer over our former Station was the fact that we were permitted to operate a Squadron Mess (for our own personnel and those of Headquarters), in lieu of the Consolidated Mess run by the Group at Lake Charles.

On 6 November, four officers and eleven enlisted men of our Squadron departed Laurel for a two-week tour of duty with the Provisional Demonstration Wing of the First Tactical Air Division. The purpose of this tour was to give to ground troops a realistic conception of the mission and tactics of air support. Some of the camps visited were Fort Benning, Georgia, Fort Knox, Kentucky, Fort Riley, Kansas, and Camp Hood, Texas. At each of these posts ground troops training for combat watched P-39's and P-40's dive-bombing a target, followed by B-26's bombing at medium altitude, and to finish the show, our A-20's coming in on the deck to strafe and to scatter parafrags and incendiaries. Those of the 668th who participated in the Demonstration Tour were:

Captain John M. Hill	S/Sgt Earl R. Judd Jr.
2nd Lt Gustave Ebenstein	Sgt Richard T. Lorenz
2nd Lt Arvid R. Hand	S/Sgt Robert W. MacDonald
2nd Lt Richard F. Shaefer	Sgt Albert G. Morrissey
S/Sgt Robert L. Amick	T/Sgt Leo G. Robbins
S/Sgt Veto H. Ketchin	S/Sgt Bennett C. Sieg
S/Sgt John A. Fejes Jr.	Cpl Clarence H. Yost Jr.
S/Sgt John R. Herttua	

At the same time, the remainder of our combat personnel were participating in maneuvers with the 1st Tactical Air Division. From a small field at Pollock, Louisiana, simulated missions were flown in direct support of ground forces operating in this area.

On the morning of 8 November 1943, the Squadron moved out of the barracks to bivouac near our line area for a one-week field exercise. Pyramidal tents were erected for living quarters and an Orderly Room, a field kitchen was set up inside a double-wall-tent, and latrines and garbage pits dug. Though the weather was very cold, living conditions were not particularly rigorous. The men were permitted to go back to the cantonment area in the evenings for hot showers. The Post Exchange was still within easy walking distance.

Headquarters personnel, having set up an empty pyramidal which they designated "Command Post", promptly retreated back across the field, where they continued to work in the warmth of their offices. They came out to sleep in the tents at night, and joined us for meals.

The one mishap of the bivouac occurred when the Motor Fuel tent, catching fire from its sibley stove, burned down before the flames could be extinguished.

The evening of our last night on bivouac the Squadron gathered round a huge bonfire for a feast of singing and beer-drinking. Next morning (16 November), we struck camp and returned to barracks.

In the latter days at Lake Charles, we had been frequently visited upon by inspectors, but at Laurel they descended on us like the Plague. They came from every known higher headquarters, and from a few of whose existence we had not even been aware. Bearing brief-cases came they, with lengthy check-lists, copious memoranda, and always the disarming smile, the fraternal handshake, and the assertion that "we're only here to help you". Aided by platoons of enlisted assistants, with whirlwind speed they tramped through barracks and latrines, thumbed through service records, duty rosters, sick book and morning reports, scrutinized forms 20, sampled the food in the mess-hall, inspected the airplanes, studied the training chards (charts, we learned, were a passion with these men), asked innumerable questions, and in general left not a stone unturned or a dog-tag unchecked. On one memorable day which must have added at least ten years to the adjutant's age, teams were simultaneously present from three separate headquarters, criss-crossing each other's paths and issuing conflicting instructions.

At the very climax of the melee the Group, not to be outdone, entered the picture with a complex inspection setup of its own. Group inspectors inspected the Squadrons, Squadron inspectors inspected each other; and letters went back and forth and up and down, collecting countless endorsements and ending up nobody quite knew where.

At the urgent behest of an inspector from Wing, we set to work with razor blades, hacking from individual records carried on the person all mention of present and former organizations and stations. The result of this knifework on the Physical Fitness cards was ludicrous in the extreme; many men were left with little but a blank card with a large square center-hole.

Show-downs were held without number. After a time the men, upon the approach of an administrative officer, automatically dangled their dog tags outside their coveralls and wearily reached for their pay-books. And somehow, to the eternal frustration of the Executive and the Adjutant, deficiencies continued to appear. Sending out the countless minute discrepancies was as slow and tedious a job as clearing a minefield.

It was at this crucial time, when the nerves of all of us were strained very close to the breaking-point, that an argument which had long been brewing between the Squadron and the Group suddenly assumed rather grave proportions. Since activation, the headquarters personnel had been attached to the 668th for administration as well as for rations and quarters. This had been the arrangement in the 46th Group, and the idea was not unnaturally adopted from the parent organization without a great deal of thought. But since the Table of Organization allowed the headquarters enough clerical personnel to be administratively self-sufficient, and since, in the medium bombardment outfits from which some of us had come, headquarters handled their own payroll and personnel records, we found it difficult to see why we should be burdened with the task.

Most of the headquarters personnel, weary perhaps of the continued carping and whining of the Squadron, were as willing to take over the maintenance of their own records as we were anxious to be rid of the job. But whether he felt that a change at the very moment when we were rushing to meet a P.O.M. deadline might prove disastrous, or whether, having made a decision, he was determined to stick by it in spite of all, the Group Executive, in the face of urgent entreaties from both sides, remained adamant. The dispute was marked by a good deal of childishness and petty grievances from both parties. But the Squadron Orderly Room clerks, working late into each night on records one-sixth of which belonged to headquarters, and seeing the Group personnel signing out to go to town, felt there was some justice in their cause.

Only a few days before we left Laurel, the Group, learning that at the Port of Embarkation Headquarters would be considered a separate unit and that they must therefore adopt the policy in general use throughout the Air Forces, hastened to relieve their personnel from attachment for administration and to take over their own records. As far as the Squadron itself was concerned, that ended the matter, and the incident was a closed issue.

In spite of all these things, the Squadron somehow completed its preparations. When the real P.O.M. team arrived, we were ready for them. They were, as it turned out, not at all the Ogres which some inspectors of other headquarters had led us to envision, but an efficient, practical group of men, with a sense of proportion and a keen interest in the tactical as well as the administrative readiness of the unit. They employed the eminently sensible but apparently novel method of finding out what the outfits knew by asking questions at random of the personnel rather than by counting the inked squares on a training chart. We received

an excellent rating, and were pronounced ready to go.

But there was still much to be done. One major problem was the completion of crates for overseas shipment. Growing impatient with the leisurely work of the civilian personnel at Air Corps Supply, the Deputy Group Commander, with a Pattonesque determination to do things in a hurry, sent details of our own men to the well-equipped Carpenter shop. We organized a system, and soon had boxes rolling off a production line like B-24's from Willow Run. Even on Christmas Day we worked, for the deadline was frighteningly close, and it was still a nip-and-tuck business.

Another task which absorbed hundreds of man-hours, and the major portion of which was accomplished by the 668th, was the preparation of S.O.P.'s for a tactical Squadron and Group in combat. This included detailed procedures to be followed in such operations as movement by convoy and evacuation of an airdrome. Captain Robert C. Bailey, Squadron S-2, who had considerable overseas service with a combat group, supervised the preparation of the S.O.P.'s for the Squadron. Carefully and conscientiously written, they constituted a splendid guide which it was intended should be read by as large a number of personnel as possible, in order to furnish information on important phases of overseas operations with which few of us had had practical experience. Instead, the finished copies were absurdly overclassified as confidential documents and were locked up in safes where they were seen by practically no one. When we had been overseas a few months the Group issued orders that all copies of the S.O.P.'s be destroyed.

There yet remained the waterproofing, loading, and marking of the boxes-- a gargantuan task in itself. Lieutenant Hough and the men from Q.M. Supply worked around the clock to get the job completed. On the last day of the year, when the Squadron gathered in the Mess Hall for a sort of combination farewell beer-fest and New Year's Party, a small detail of men was still hard at work, nailing down the lids on the last of the crates.

January, 1944

Period from 1st January to 31st January 1944

On the first day of the new year the Squadron packed up, entrained, and departed Laurel Army Air Field 1630 for Port of Embarkation.

The troop train, better than most, was still very crowded and very slow. We bunked in Pullmans or tourist sleepers, two to a lower and one to an upper. The men lounged in the crowded, smoke-filled cars, playing poker or craps, reading comic books and back-date magazines (courtesy of Special Service), talking and dozing in the usual manner of soldiers in transit.

Feeding, because of the great length of the train and the narrow aisles of the compartment cars, presented a considerable administrative problem. The field ranges were set up in a freight car near the center of the train, and Staff Sergeant Brunetti and his crew, working under the supervision of Lt. Lancelotti, the Mess Officer, eventually hit upon a system whereby all personnel could be fed in a minimum of time. The use of paper plates and cups eliminated the necessity of cleaning mess gear.

There was little work to do aboard the train. Armed guards were posted between the cars as a security measure. The adjutant and supply officers did some last minute checking to assure themselves that records were ready for inspection by the port authorities. But for many it was the first real rest in months.

On the second day of travel, while rolling through Georgia, epidemic threatened the occupants of the crowded train when it was discovered that Private C. B. Weilbrenner had contracted mumps. The infected soldier was removed from the train at Atlanta. Occupants of the car in which he had been riding were quarantined and as much as possible, isolated from the other passengers. Other than this no mishaps occurred, and at 2340 on 3rd January we rolled into the floodlighted marshalling yard at Camp Shanks, New York Port of Embarkation.

We climbed out of the train under the weight of field paraphernalia and into a blinding snowstorm. Forming somewhat ragged files, we struggled up an endless and precipitous hill, into the darkness and the cold, and buffeted by the wintry winds. After marching across what most of us would have sworn was half the width of New York State, we arrived at our billeting area--a row of barren, fireless, cheerless tarpaper barracks. Dropping our gear, we hurried over to the Mess Hall where we were served a meal of warmed left-overs and hot coffee. Completely exhausted, we turned in.

The next two weeks were a curious and confused jumble of feverish activity and restless waiting. While the administrative staff wrestled frantically with such last-minute details as V-Mail Change of Address forms, certified rosters, and clothing shortages, the rest of us were tramping through inch-deep slush to attend personal affairs lectures and security talks, clamber down escape nets on the mock-up of a shipside, and test our new light weight service masks in the gas chamber. "Fall in in passenger list order" became a byword. It was said that when the Second Front was opened we would invade the continent in numerical sequence according to the chalked figures on our helmets.

There was, however, no lack of recreation at Shanks. There were large, well-stocked Post Exchanges and a number of movie theaters. Then, of course, there were the passes to New York City. The unit was restricted until processing was completed, but after that, 50% were permitted to go to town each night. Even the unlucky group who had been in Weilbrenner's car, and who were isolated in a separate barracks, had opportunity to visit the town when, on the fifth day of our stay at Shanks, the

quarantine was lifted.

As a matter of fact, when we were at last alerted for shipment on 15th January, most of the outfit had enjoyed about all of New York City that they could stand, both financially and physically. We loaded up in the early morning hours of 16th January and rode in trucks to a pier on the Hudson River where, after standing for about an hour in the bitter cold and the grey of dawn, we boarded a harbor boat which left Shanks at 0620. It was shortly after noon of the same day that we debarked from the river boat at a Brooklyn pier and filed, in passenger list order, up the gangplank of the S. S. Colombie.

The Colombie was a former ship of the French Line, converted to a U. S. Troop Transport. She was still commanded by a French captain of the Merchant Marine and staffed by a French crew. Sailors of the French Navy manned her antiaircraft guns. She carried in addition a small signal section from the U. S. Navy, and a staff of the Transportation Corps of the U. S. Army headed by Major Reynolds, the Transport Commander. Colonel Mace, the senior Army officer aboard, was appointed Commander of Troops.

The Colombie's hold was still empty of cargo, and we were the first troop unit aboard. We soon learned that we were to provide interior guard for the ship while she loaded at the dock. Captain Robert G. Bailey, Squadron S-2, was appointed ships' Provost Marshal, and began drafting a Guard Roster which would run continuously for the entire voyage.

On the evening of January 17, the other Squadrons of the Bomb Group, members of a P-38 Photo-Reconnaissance Squadron, and a large number of Air Corps casuale began to file aboard, to the accompaniment of recorded music from the ship's speaker system. In the early morning of January 18 we weighed anchor and were tugged through New York Harbor. The strength of the unit at date of departure was 260 enlisted men and 36 officers. At 1400, 18th January, we passed beyond the territorial waters of the United States, headed for open sea. We jammed the decks to see the land drop out of sight, and then to watch the convoy form. An ill-assorted company of seagoing craft which included ancient, ungainly tramp steamers; sturdy, paint-new liberty ships; broad-beamed, high-drafted baby carriers; sleek luxury lines; and a battleship of our own Navy steamed toward the rendezvous from various points of the compass, shepherded by the weaving, bobbing, swift-moving destroyers. The ships grouped themselves in lines about the battlewagon and forged ahead across the cold North Atlantic toward Europe.

"Rugged" was the word for living conditions aboard the Colombie. The compartments of the hold, with their narrow aisles, low roofs, and triple-decked bunks, accommodated not only the men, but their duffle bags, weapons and field gear as well. To enter one of the troop compartments was to encounter a bewildering tangle of legs and arms, carbines and gas masks, faces and blankets and feet. Folding army cots had to be set up in the already close-to-impassable corridors to accommodate men for whom no bunks could be found. To safeguard against spread of infection,

shelterhalves were draped as curtains between adjoining bunks, and this somehow added to the confusion of the picture.

Sanitation and cleanliness were the major problems in these cramped, ill-ventilated quarters, where common colds or more serious ailments could spread like wildfire overnight. Rigid inspections were made each morning by the Commander of Troops in person. Compartment officers were held responsible for the absolute cleanliness of their compartments at inspection time. Beds were made up, aisles cleared, and floors swept and mopped.

A.M.I.P. on board ship approached the proportions of a caste system. While the men waited in long chow lines and ate G.I. food, often ill-prepared, standing elbow-to-elbow at waist-high tables; officers feasted in a reasonable facsimile of pre-war French Line style. Seated in the main dining salon at tables set with snow-white naperery and fine silver, and served by French waiters, they gorged themselves at the two daily meals on all manner of dainties and delicacies.

In spite of the cramped quarters and uncomfortable living conditions, spirits ran high on shipboard. There was a good deal of horseplay and a great deal of gambling in the compartments. Group Special Service, under Sergeant Max's direction, got together two variety shows which were presented nightly in the Officer's Lounge. Movies were shown in the Dining Room each evening, for the benefit of those who could squeeze in to see them. A ship's Post Exchange helped fill in the long gaps between meals by dispensing candy and cigarettes. The men stood for hours on the decks to breathe the salt air and watch the convoy plowing through grey, choppy seas.

On the third day out we ran into heavy winds and a high sea, and most of the passengers grew rather queasy, while some became violently ill. For the most part, however, the weather was remarkably mild for midwinter on the gale-ridden North Atlantic, and by the time we had been about five days at sea, practically all personnel regained their health and appetites.

The fourth day at sea we were treated to an impressive display of the tactical capabilities of a merchant convoy, when the guns of all ships were test fired. Crowding the Colombie's decks, we watched the black puffs of bursting ack-ack dot the blue heavens, saw the luminous tracers from our own fifty calibres soaring skyward, and heard the distant thunder of broadsides from the battlewagon's heavy guns.

In spite of these diversions, life on board grew more irksome with each day, and the entire unit rejoiced when, on 29th January, a thin blue line of land was sighted on the far horizon. We drew close to shore and anchored after nightfall, and so were forced to wait until the morrow for our first close glimpse of the strange continent. As a heavy morning mist began to rise, we found ourselves in an anchorage within the Clyde estuary. The roadstead was crowded with ships of every description. The

majestic Queen Elizabeth was unloading not far off, and across to our port was the Isle de France. There were in addition to many ships from our own convoy, a large British flat-top, and all sorts of lighters, tenders, patrol boats, tugs, dories, destroyers, converted pleasure yachts and barges. It was a busy and impressively warlike scene. On the not-far-distant shore could be seen the roofs and chimney stacks of the Scottish town of Gurock.

That afternoon (January 30) we again weighed anchor and proceeded very slowly up the River Clyde, past green hills, past ancient castles built upon crags, and further on, past the famous shipyards, their bays occupied for the most part by landing craft in various stages of completion. At 1730 we docked in the city of Glasgow.

Here, due to lack of train space, we were to stay on board for the remainder of the month. We stood on deck the next day, gazed at the red brick warehouse wall that was all we could see of the city, and longed for liberty. In the afternoon we were officially welcomed to the United Kingdom by a General of the British Army and a Wing Commander of the RAF, who came aboard to address the troops over the speaker system.

February, 1944

Period from 1st February to 29th February 1944

In the early hours of February 1st we clambered for the last time out of the triple-deck bunks and began a long tussle with duffle bags and blanket rolls in the cramped quarters of the Colombie's hold. Struggling beneath the weight of personal impedimenta, we debarked, still in passenger list order, at 0730, and (most of us for the first time) set foot on foreign soil. Fortunately, the Glasgow dock was conveniently placed near the railroad, and we had not far to bear our weary loads. Crowding into the undersized compartments of a Hitchcock train, we loosened our pack straps and settled back into the plush seats for the long journey ahead. Our ultimate destination was still secret, but most rumors placed us "somewhere near London". Those of us who had courageously consumed the K-ration breakfast issued on the boat were still picking fragments of fruit bar from our teeth as the train, with a feminine hoot, pulled away from the dock and headed south for England.

The trip was anything but dull; we crossed Scotland and then proceeded down the east coast for almost the length of England. The day was clear, and the view from the windows of the train afforded us a splendid panorama of the hedge-bordered English fields, incredibly green in midwinter, the tidy hay ricks, thatched-roof cottages, and spires of village churches half hidden among the hills. Now and then we glimpsed the Channel sparkling in the sun. There were apparently no beaches and the green

fields extended to the water's edge.

It seemed beyond belief that across that narrow strip of ocean, no more than a few minutes flying time distant, was the enemy; and more incredible still that in this idyllic, pastoral setting, a nation had been waging for four long years the greatest war in its history--a struggle for its very survival. Here and there, it is true, were occasional signs of military activity. We passed a few air fields, their runways skillfully blended into the countryside, and Spitfires or Mosquito bombers resting on widely dispersed hard stands. On a bluff overlooking the Channel, a company of British Tommies zeroed their rifles in on the targets of a small arms range. And atop the highest hills along all the coast, tall, tenuous radar masts stood out against the sky.

At Newcastle-on-Tyne we stopped for tea, sandwiches and meat pie; this proved the only halt of the entire trip. Nightfall found us still rolling southward, and it was not until well after midnight that we pulled into the station of Sible-Medingham in Essex County, and the order was given to detrain. We piled into waiting G.I. trucks, and a jolting ride of six miles or so proved the last hop of the long trek. We were at "overseas destination".

With no moon or stars to light our way, and with stringent blackout regulations, we were forced to wait until morning to satisfy our curiosity as to what the field looked like. We mulled around in the darkness, and aided by members of the advance party, found a place to sleep in one of the Nissen huts, dropped our packs, got some late chow at the Mess Hall, and turned in.

The entire outfit was up for early breakfast at Major Towles' order, and then abroad to explore and to get settled in our new home. Those of us who had half expected the rigors of field conditions in a combat Theater were somewhat amazed at the large Officer's Club and Mess, the Headquarters Office Building, the excellent runways, and the well equipped Technical Site. Pilots and air crews were especially pleased with the fine Crew Briefing Room and the Operations Office with its huge Mission Board and great wall maps. We were all well satisfied; difficulties with English stoves and English coal were yet to come.

The Squadron was soon hard at work preparing for combat operation at the earliest possible date. Hand luggage was hauled up from the Station. Barracks assignments were made so as to keep each section as much intact as possible, for administrative reasons. An Orderly Room was established in the small Picket Post, and later moved to the front end of a Nissen hut for want of more room. Officers' foot lockers and much of the TAT equipment had somehow gotten sidetracked, and trips were made to several scattered points of the UK to pick up baggage and OSL material. These, however, were minor difficulties. Our greatest worry was aircraft. Our planes, it seems, should have been on the field waiting for us. They had been shipped across weeks before we left. Where they were nobody knew. Frantic teletypes located A-20's at various distant depots and airfields.

Gradually they began to filter in, many of them ferried to the station by our own pilots. They were A-20G's and A-20J's, brand new models with which we were largely unfamiliar. Modifications had to be made, and our maintenance personnel pored over Tech Orders and labored far into each night in a race to get the ships ready.

So occupied were we with our various duties that we had little occasion to complain of the restriction which kept us on the Base. Geographical limits of the Station were in those days ill-defined, and some, walking a half-mile down the back road to Wethersfield, had their first experience with the weak and warmish mild-and-bitter of the English pubs. Before the end of the month the ban was lifted, and nightly liberty runs hauled eager soldiers to the local market town of Braintree, where there were cinemas, more pubs, women, and Red Cross Clubs for both officers and men. And before the month was up too, many of us had been to London for our first 48-hour pass; had visited the Tower, St. Paul's and the Abbey, and had groped our way around Piccadilly in the blackout.

On 12th February one of our planes took the air for the first time in the ETO, when the Squadron Commander, Major Towles, logged an hour of local flying in a new A-20G-25.

The evening of 13th February, the Luftwaffe came over London for the biggest air raid since the 1940 blitz. Standing outside our shelters, we watched the searchlights probing the night sky, the flak bursts lighting the horizon, and the great luminous parachute flares drifting slowly earthward.

On February 16th our Squadron Commander, Major Towles, was transferred to Group Headquarters as Assistant Operations Officer, and Major Robert F. Price assumed command. Major Price, who had been a pilot with the 46th Bombardment Group in the desert maneuvers of 1942, had wide experience in the A-20. He had been one of the original Squadron Commanders of the 416th, and held command of the 668th Bombardment Squadron from 15th February to 27th October, 1943.

A news release in the Stars and Stripes of 28th February carried the story, no longer classified, that the Ninth Air Force, under General Lewis H. Brereton, was in England, whence it had moved from the Middle East and North Africa.

On the 23rd of the month we received three new pilots; 1st Lt. Galen F. Bartmus, 1st Lt. Wayne A. Downing, and 1st Lt. Eldon B. Kreh. These men, all of whom had been in England some time, had flown A-20's with the RAF, and thus bolstered our meager store of combat experience in the unit.

On February 26th, a parade and review was conducted on the ramp beyond the hangar, with Squadron Leader Nernham, RAF Station Commander, as Reviewing Officer.

Meanwhile, our pilots were in the air every possible moment, getting

the feel of the new planes, and above all, practicing tight formations. Many of them, who had found their way with little difficulty over the table-land of Western Louisiana and the wastes of Mississippi, up for their first local hop in England, promptly got themselves hopelessly lost, and had to call "Darky" for a heading to the field. There were, it seemed, no power lines in England and no good rivers to follow. All the towns, all the roads, all the farms and all the air fields looked alike.

If we thought Ground School a feature of training confined to the Zone of the Interior, we were sadly mistaken. Our air crews took an intensive rensaw course in the identification of German and Allied aircraft which they were likely to encounter in the skies over Europe. The bombardiers, who had done their tactical training on the D-8 sight and for the most part at low level, now learned that they were to bomb from 12,000 feet with a pre-set Norden. Bomb-trainers helped them to get their hand in again on a sight they had studied exhaustively as Cadets. Pilots took link.

All intelligence personnel were placed on detached service for about ten days to attend a Ninth Air Force school in which the highly specialized functions of Air Intelligence in the European Theater were outlined and explained. They came back bursting with enthusiasm and the weight of State Secrets, and crammed with information on No-Balls, German fighter strength, air tactics, and the French Underground.

On the last day of the month Major Price and his bombardier-navigator, Lt. Arvid R. Hand, made their first practice bombing-run. Our ships had been modified and test-hopped. We were ready to go.

March, 1944

Period from 1st March to 31st March 1944

The dawn of 1st March found the Squadron with all aircraft operational and our crews eagerly awaiting the order from Command that would send them winging over enemy-held Europe for the first mission. The long weary months of training were at an end, and the accumulated, diverse skills of three-hundred officers and men were all to meet the acid test of one simple but inexorable question: Could we hit the target?

Though rumors were rampant, and though an 18-ship formation led by Lieutenant Colonel Walter W. Farmer, Group Operations Officer, took the air as if for combat bound, the flight proved a dry run, and the planes returned after a half-hour in the air. Our first scheduled mission came on the third of March. The objective was an airdrome at Poix, but the ships had hardly crossed the French coast when they were recalled by Bomber Command because of cloud cover over the target. Though our crews were

cheated of the opportunity to drop their bombs upon the enemy's installations, they had their first glimpse of Hitler's vaunted Atlantic Wall, and all received sortie credits. Officers and men who participated in this, the Squadron's first combat mission were as follows:

Major Robert F. Price
Captain William Battersby
1st Lt Arthur E. Osborne Jr.
2nd Lt Joseph F. Meagher
2nd Lt Raymond K. Cruze
2nd Lt Robert D. Leshar
2nd Lt Luther E. Hill
2nd Lt Gustave Ebenstein
2nd Lt Richard D. Poindexter
2nd Lt Richard T. McBrien (Bombardier-Navigator)
2nd Lt Arvid R. Hand (Bombardier-Navigator)

Gunners

S/Sgt Doyel H. Simpson	S/Sgt Ray Bankston
S/Sgt John R. Herttua	S/Sgt Joseph R. McCreery
S/Sgt Edward S. Dickinson	S/Sgt Elpidio A. Damico
S/Sgt William H. Coe	S/Sgt Earnest E. Kelly
S/Sgt Carl F. Love	S/Sgt Fred L. Adair
S/Sgt John A. Fejes Jr.	S/Sgt Earl R. Judd
S/Sgt Adolfo J. Antanaitis	S/Sgt Lawrence R. Hedrick
S/Sgt James S. Hume	S/Sgt Clarence R. Yost Jr.
S/Sgt Robert W. Burch	S/Sgt Daniel M. Brown
S/Sgt Lewis M. Daugherty	S/Sgt Charles L. Hibbs
S/Sgt Holley Perkins Jr.	S/Sgt S. P. Newell
T/Sgt Leo G. Robbins	S/Sgt Vern E. Molver

As the days went by, we came to realize the thousand minute details, any single one of which can spell failure for a mission. On March fifth the crews were about to climb into their ships when Command cancelled the mission because of weather. On the sixth we took off, but failed to make rendezvous with the fighter escort, and were forced to return with our bombs. On March seventh a Group formation led by our former commander, Major Towles, at last dropped its bombs on the Airdrome at Conches. No members of the Squadron were present on this flight.

On March 18th, when the Squadron Commander, Major Price, led a box which attacked a No-Ball target at Vacqueriette, rack malfunctions caused the bombs to drop prematurely. Over St. Omer the next day, our aircraft suffered their first serious battle damage when we met a barrage of intense and accurate German anti-aircraft. A No-Ball was attacked with fair results. Results of the seventh mission on 20th March were poor. On March 23rd, dispatched against Montdidier Airdrome, we failed to attack the target.

Rumor, quick to seize upon and exaggerate successes, was equally

prompt in raising to unwarranted proportions our failures. We were, it seemed, a "good Group on paper", and a "washout" in combat. Though there was plenty of fighting spirit left, it was nevertheless a fairly disheartened outfit which assembled in the hangar on the afternoon of 28th March to hear an address by the Group Commander. It should be set down to the everlasting credit of Colonel Mace that on this occasion, displaying rare insight and perhaps a skillful use of psychology, he in no way gave indication that he was at all discouraged with the results of the Group's first combat sorties. Instead, he praised the efforts of groundmen and Air crews alike, and mentioned several factors which had worked against us, and over which we had no control. Many of us returned to our jobs with a renewed faith and an increased vigor.

We very soon had more tangible reward for our efforts. The air crews, once over the "stage fright" of their first combat flights, proved the superiority of their training, and began to hit the target with a vengeance. Commendations started to roll in, from the newly activated A-20 Wing, from Command, and from Air Force. We held high our heads with pride, and strolled city streets with a suggestion of swagger. We were Air Corps. We belonged.

April, 1944

Period from 1 April to 30 April 1944

In the month of April it may be said that the real tactical history of the 668th Bombardment Squadron began. True it is that in March we had made six missions over enemy occupied territory. But we were, so to speak, only trying our wings. Those early flights were fraught with errors, both mechanical and personnel, and results were on the whole, poor. This is not to be wondered at, for with all our months of simulated missions, it was still only natural that we must become adjusted to the rigors of actual combat flying by a process of trial and error. That this all-important adjustment was made in so remarkably brief a period gives ample testimony to the adequacy and thoroughness of our tactical training.

Operational flying was hampered by the traditional wet and cloudy weather of an English April, particularly during the first half of the month. In spite of this, the Squadron took part in no less than twenty-two missions (including three radar deflection or window missions) over enemy occupied territory. Total sorties credited to the Squadron for the month were 189. Principal targets were No-Balls and Marshalling Yards, and the results, ranging from poor to very good, were on the whole, good. Major Robert F. Price, Squadron Commander, led two missions and was Box Leader on four others. Captain William Battersby, Squadron Operations Officer, was Box Leader on two missions.

The transition to full operational activity was felt by combat crewmen and ground personnel alike. Ordnance and communications men, mechanics and armorers soon learned that in a combat outfit, anything resembling the forty-hour week is the exception rather than the rule. A fourteen or sixteen-hour day became a quite frequent necessity; and between the work on the line and an occasional tour of duty on the cement detail, the men managed to keep fairly busy.

This latter task, the project of widening the cement roads and parking spaces on the Station, was one phase of the endless battle against English mud, which, softened by the drizzling rains of April, spread itself in a slimy film over roads and walkways, and clung with a gluey persistency to shoes, trouser-cuffs, and vehicles.

There was installed by order of Colonel Mace an extensive system of field fortifications -- a kind of Maginot Line of stakes bordering both sides of all roads, and plainly marking the legal boundaries between the opposite forces. Unfortunately, however, a 2 1/2 ton truck shows little more respect for a three-inch wooden stake than the Nazi Panzer Divisions showed for the concrete pillboxes which marked the eastern border of the nation that was France. Morning after morning, harassed Squadron Executives would awake to find great breaches in the lines, marked by stakes fallen splintered by the wayside. Then the maintenance and repair teams would go into action, cutting and pounding.

Let it not be said, however, that like France, we made the fatal military error of basing our entire strategy on a defensive campaign. Under the tactical leadership of the Group Executive, a vigorous offensive was waged. From his headquarters was issued an almost daily field order which sent his Mud Control Officers scurrying to the far-flung corners of the Station. Again and again the enemy was driven back within his boundaries by small but valiant details, armed only with shovels and brooms.

The irksome job seemed futile and even at times a trifle ludicrous. But those of us who had occasion to visit neighboring Stations, where we saw whole roads completely engulfed in layers of gummy mud; doormats caked with it; and even the floors inside buildings liberally coated with it, came to realize how useful and how necessary the work was.

Busy though the officers were, they found time on Friday evening, April 7, to attend a party at the Officer's Mess -- our first official social event since arrival overseas. All seem agreed that the party was a rare success. There was a good G.I. band, a fair number of ladies, and plenty of liquor for all. Sgt Max and his Repertory Players entertained with a first-rate floor show.

During this month the first awards were received by officers of the 668th Bombardment Squadron for performance in combat. In a presentation which took place in his office, Colonel Mace officially decorated Captain Richard B. Prentiss, Assistant Squadron Operations Officer, with the Air

Medal and Oak Leaf Cluster awarded by authority contained in General Order 29, Headquarters, Antilles Air Command, dated 13 July 1943. At a formal ceremony which took place the 12th of April, on the occasion when the field was officially transferred from RAF to AAF jurisdiction, Captain William Battersby, Squadron Operations Officer, was presented with the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, awarded by authority of General Order 82, Headquarters, War Department, dated 29 November, 1943. Both these Officers had earned their awards prior to joining the 668th, for anti-submarine patrol in the Caribbean Theater.

In General Order 75, Headquarters, Ninth Air Force, dated 27 March 1944, we received authority for an augmentation in strength involving an allotment of five extra combat crews, including one additional Flight Commander and one Bombardier-Navigator. A copy of this order is attached.

On 17 April, pursuant to Field Order Number 1, Headquarters, 416th Bombardment Group (L), a copy of which is attached hereto, the Squadron participated in a Group Mobility Exercise, designed to determine the preparedness of the Bomb Group for rapid convoy movement. An air echelon, plus the minimum personnel necessary to maintain operations, remained on the Station. The rest of the Squadron, split into an advance and a rear echelon, left the station by motor convoy, with a one-hour interval between echelons, and following the route shown on map attached, returned to the Station on the afternoon of the same day.

At a thundering critique conducted by Colonel Mace shortly after the return of the convoy, a fact of which all of us were aware was clearly announced -- the Exercise had not been an unqualified success. The Colonel, in his comments, laid particular emphasis on the almost utter lack of regard for dispersion of vehicles and defense against possible enemy air attack which had characterized the movement.

One result of this trial movement was a brief, intensive review course in map-reading, attended by administrative officers of the four squadrons. As a "final examination", officers were sent out in pairs by jeep, to follow a map-course previously laid out, over the circuitous byways of Essex County. Occasionally, some rather strange results were obtained.

There was no change in Unit Strength, which at the close of the month stood at 39 Officers and 264 enlisted men.

May, 1944

Period from 1 May 1944 to 31 May 1944

The month of May found the Squadron playing an active role in the ever-mounting crescendo of pre-invasion aerial offensive. Our aircraft

made during May a total of two hundred and sixty three sorties, an increase of thirty-nine per cent over April. Principal targets were the rail networks of Western Europe over which the Wehrmacht must endeavor to move men and supplies to cope with the forthcoming Allied offensive. Our A-20's wrought havoc upon these vital lines of communication by helping to destroy Marshaling Yards in Belgium and France. Also hard-hit were several important Nazi airdromes.

A letter of commendation addressed to all tactical units of IX Bomber Command by Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory (copy attached herewith), gave indication that the major campaign against "special targets" in Northern France had been successfully terminated. When the veil of censorship has at last been lifted, it should be a source of interest to future members of the Squadron that the 668th played a vital role in a series of tactical missions involving a dramatic race against time, and requiring the utmost accuracy and skill in precision bombing.

On 9 May, Captain William Battersby, Squadron Operations Officer, was killed when his plane unaccountably crashed one mile from the Station, while on a routine test flight. Also killed in this accident was Private-First-Class Charles W. Coleman, a parachute rigger and passenger in the aircraft. Captain Battersby, a veteran of the Carribean Theater, joined the Squadron in November, 1943. A few weeks before the outfit left for overseas, he became Operations Officer. His loss was deeply felt throughout the entire unit. Captain Battersby held the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters. He was posthumously promoted to Major on 20 May 1944.

A large delegation of men and officers attended the military services held for the internment of Captain Battersby and Private First Class Coleman at Cambridge.

Captain Hiram F. Conant, also a veteran of the Carribean Theater, became Squadron Operations Officer. Captain Richard B. Prentiss became a Flight Commander, while First Lieutenant Arthur E. Osborne was appointed Assistant Operations Officer.

During May the Squadron also suffered its first combat losses. On 20 May two combat crews were missing in action, including the following personnel:

1st Lt	Blair H. Bradford	(Pilot)
S Sgt	Clarence M. Gray	(Mechanic-Gunner)
S Sgt	Verne E. Molver	(Armorer-Gunner)
1st Lt	Michael E. Kleopfel	(Pilot)
S Sgt	Ray Bankston Jr.	(Mechanic-Gunner)
S Sgt	Leroy R. Shaw	(Armorer-Gunner)

On 27 May, 1st Lt Lucian J. Siracusa, Flight Leader, and his combat crew S Sgt Floyd E. Brown (Mechanic-Gunner) and S Sgt James N. Hume

(Armorer-Gunner) were reported Missing in Action. S Sgt Hume was a veteran of ninety-three combat missions, including 68 in the South Pacific.

On this same mission, 2nd Lt Tommie J. Sims, a newly assigned pilot flying his second combat mission, was seriously wounded and his aircraft severely damaged by enemy ground fire at the very outset of the bombing-run. Flying on one engine, the injured pilot heroically remained in formation for the duration of the run, and having released his bombs on the target, flew the ship back to England where he crash-landed. His crew, Sgt Harry W. Larsen (Mechanic-Gunner), and Sgt Julius C. Williamson Jr. (Armorer-Gunner), abandoned ship over enemy territory and are missing in action.

The following personnel received the Award of the Purple Heart:

S Sgt Atha A. Hill
S Sgt Edwin A. Anderson
S Sgt Arlington W. Newkirk
S Sgt Lewis M. Daugherty
S Sgt John R. Orr

Air Medals were awarded to the following personnel:

S Sgt Adolfos J. Antanaitis	S Sgt Lewis M. Daugherty
S Sgt Harold R. Hedrick	S Sgt Charles L. Hibbs
S Sgt Earnest E. Kelly	S Sgt Holley Perkins Jr.
S Sgt Fred L. Adair	S Sgt Floyd E. Brown
S Sgt William H. Coe	S Sgt Carl F. Love
S Sgt John R. Orr	S Sgt Clarence H. Yost Jr.
S Sgt Verne E. Molver	S Sgt James N. Hume
S Sgt Leo G. Robbins	S Sgt Edwin A. Anderson
S Sgt Ray Bankston Jr.	S Sgt Robert W. Burch
S Sgt Joe C. Burkhalter	S Sgt Elpidio A. Damico
S Sgt Edward S. Dickinson	S Sgt John A. Fejes Jr.
S Sgt Clarence M. Gray	S Sgt Earl R. Judd Jr.
S Sgt Robert W. MacDonald	S Sgt Joseph E. McCreery
S Sgt Arlington W. Newkirk	S Sgt Leroy R. Shaw
S Sgt Bennett C. Sieg	S Sgt Doyle H. Simpson
S Sgt Atha A. Hill	S Sgt S. P. Newell

The following were awarded Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal:

S Sgt S. P. Newell - 1st Cluster

Major William Battersby - 3rd Cluster (posthumously awarded)

Douglas (NMI) Havoc, an undersized, beer-drinking and ubiquitous part Irish terrier puppy dog, the proud possession of Lt Robert G. Meredith, became an unofficial Squadron Mascot, and a great favorite among all personnel.

June, 1944

Period from 1st June to 30 June 1944

The first of June found the Squadron, as the rest of the world, anxiously looking forward to the day of Invasion. But we did not await in idleness the opening of the Second Front. Our aircraft continued to pound the military installations of the Atlantic Wall, and the vital rail centers of Western Europe. On the 3rd of June we were restricted, and all passes and leaves cancelled. When we discovered in addition that our mail was not reaching its destination; and when on the 5th of June our planes were striped with white paint, obviously for purposes of identification, we knew that the Day could not be far off.

The night of June 3rd, the officers held their second party in the Club. Proceedings were slightly dampened by a twilight mission which kept many of the flyers away from the gathering until quite late in the evening. In spite of this however, the party was highly successful, and enjoyed by all who attended.

On the mission of 3rd June, referred to above, Second Lieutenant Anton P. Nikas, O 813 560, was reported Missing in Action, together with his gunners, Staff Sergeant Arlington W. Newkirk, 13157600, and Sergeant George W. Scott, 35548906. Lieutenant Nikas, a recently assigned pilot, had been awarded the Air Medal and was on his sixth combat mission. Sergeant Scott, also a newcomer, had flown 8 missions. Staff Sergeant "Scotty" Newkirk, who came over with the outfit from the States, was a veteran of 33 combat missions.

The pre-Invasion missions took quite a heavy toll in battle damage and casualties. On 4th June, the A-20J piloted by Captain Hiram F. Conant, Squadron Operations Officer, was hit by enemy ground fire while on a mission against the Coastal Battery of St. Pierre Dumont. The bombardier-navigator, Lieutenant Richard T. McBrien, was wounded in the legs by flak fragments. In spite of this, Captain Conant successfully attacked the target and brought the severely damaged craft back to England, where he landed at Rome Station. The gunners, Staff Sergeants Earnest E. Kelly and William H. Coe, extinguished two fires in the VHF equipment, thus saving the ship from crashing in flames.

The Sixth of June dawned bright and clear; CAVU over the Station. Early morning radio reports soon confirmed the rumors that this, at long last, was it. Soon after, dark scuds of cloud appeared in the blue sky, and by noon the weather had closed in. Low-hanging clouds blanketed Southern England, and the rains came in sudden, intermittent squalls. In spite of adverse weather, our ships took off for a mission against Argenton on the afternoon of D-Day. The crews saw the Channel filled with

ships "so thick you could almost walk across"; and the fields of Normandy strewn with gliders that had landed the first wave of airborne infantry behind the German lines.

On the evening of the 6th of June the Squadron received its most hazardous assignment. The Marshaling Yard at Serqueux was in use by three Panzer Divisions who were being hastily transported to the front in an effort to stem the rising tide of Allied Invasion. It was vitally necessary that the Yard be destroyed, and A-20's of our Group were given the job. With a 10/10 cloud cover over the target and most of Normandy, low-altitude flying was a necessity. Bombing from three-thousand feet, the formation successfully attacked the target. Severe and accurate German anti-aircraft was encountered during virtually the entire sortie over enemy-held territory. Our aircraft suffered 100% battle damage. Unable to reach Home Station, Second Lieutenant Charles C. Mish crash-landed his battered aircraft on the Southern English coast. Faced with a similar situation, Captain Richard B. Prentiss was forced to land at an RAF field on a runway where Mosquito bombers were taking off on a mission.

We soon came to recognize the grey skies and cold drizzling rains of D-Day as normal summer weather in Britain. Gone were the halcyon days of April and of May, when almost every bright new dawn meant another mission, and many days brought two. In the crucial period during which our ground forces struggled to consolidate the beach-head against strong counter-thrusts of German armor, we often flew, as on June the sixth, in spite of the clouds and the rain. On these occasions, when a heavy overcast obscured the target, we were led by pilots of the First Pathfinder Squadron, whose aircraft were specially equipped with secret apparatus making possible an accurate release of bombs upon an aiming point invisible to the naked eye.

More often than not, however, when over the Station or over the target, skies were darkened and targets obscured, the order to Stand Down, relayed from Command, kept crews and planes on the ground. So it was that in June we made only two-hundred and thirty-seven sorties, as against two-sixty-three in May.

On Tuesday evening, 13 June, the Squadron threw a beer-party. Barrels of mild and bitter were set up on lumber piles in the Compound behind the Area. Men and officers of the Squadron, wandering over with mess cups in hand, helped themselves to the beer, and also to sandwiches and meat pies dispensed by Staff Sergeant Brunetti and the crew from the Mess Hall. Highlighting the evening was a softball game between officers and enlisted men. Captain Wysocki, Squadron Executive Officer, pitched for the G.I.'s, which probably accounts in part for the large number of four-base hits scored by officers. Numerous disputes arose on close decisions, and since no umpire could be found who met with the approval of both sides, the final score remains in doubt.

Not many days after Invasion, buzz-bombs made their appearance over Southern England, and the targets in the Pas de Calais region were no

longer a military secret. It should here be mentioned that this Squadron played a vital role in the destruction of launching platforms for the new and deadly military weapon which, were it not for our air force, might well have destroyed London.

Though the Station siren sounded at infrequent intervals, and though once or twice the doodle-bugs were seen overhead, none landed close enough to the field to give us much cause for alarm. Some of the combat crews on pass in London, however, had close-calls almost as nerve-wracking as a near burst of flak over the target.

In the month of June we lost by transfer three officers who were part of our original outfit before coming overseas. First Lieutenant William J. Lytle, bombardier-navigator, went to the 669th Bombardment Squadron. First Lieutenant Richard F. Shaefer, West Point graduate and Flight Commander, became Assistant Group Operations Officer. First Lieutenant Richard D. Poindexter, pilot, was transferred to A-3 section of 97th Combat Wing.

On 27 June Captain Gerald M. McNulty, a veteran of many combat missions and more than 1500 flying hours, and a former pilot with the RCAF, joined the Squadron. With him came his bombardier-navigator, Second Lieutenant Francis H. Bursiel.

On 29 June, Flight Officer Bruce E. Baxter, T-2090 and his gunners, Sergeant Reed L. Ernstrom, 19 171 760, and Sergeant Harold A. Potter, 16 119 390, were reported Missing in Action after a mission against St. Hilaire - Vitre Railroad. All recent arrivals in the combat zone, Flight Officer Baxter was on his first mission, while both gunners were flying their second.

On 30 June, First Lieutenant Scott B. Ritchie Jr., 0 26 239, Staff Sergeant Edwin A. Anderson, 31 324 736, and Staff Sergeant Harold W. Smith, 33 568 884, were killed when their ship unaccountably crashed shortly after take-off on a training smoke-mission. Lieutenant Ritchie was a graduate of the West Point class of 1943, and had been with the Squadron since September of that year. He was an excellent and courageous flyer who on more than one occasion distinguished himself by successfully landing badly damaged aircraft. Lieutenant Ritchie had flown 36 combat missions. Staff Sergeant Anderson, who came overseas with the unit, was a veteran of 42 missions. Staff Sergeant Smith had flown 20 combat sorties.

July, 1944

Period from 1st July to 31st July 1944

Weather impeded July operations, but in spite of this, AUS pilot sorties were flown in close support of our ground troops advancing through

France.

The Fourth of July was celebrated in fine style. Lt. Eldon B. Kreh furnished a one-man fireworks display with the aid of a very pistol and some star shells from the aircraft. For the men there was a dance at the Station Aero Club.

Also on the 4th, Staff Sergeant Holley J. Perkins was relieved from assignment to the Squadron and departed for the Zone of the Interior. First combat crewman of the 668th to complete an operational tour, Perkins was a veteran of action both in the E.T.O. and in the South Pacific.

On 17 July, Staff Sergeant William H. Coe, an airplane mechanic-gunner, died of injuries received 8 July 1944 in an automobile accident at Braintree, Essex. One of the Squadron's original combat gunners, Coe had flown forty-seven missions. On 14 August he was awarded posthumously the Soldier's Medal for heroism.

On the morning of 18th July the Group flew its hundredth combat mission. A formal review was conducted on the Station for Major General Lewis H. Brereton, Commander of the Ninth Air Force, who awarded to 1st Lt. Charles C. Mish of the 668th, the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The afternoon of the 18th, on the Group's 101st sortie, a mission against Gles sur Risle, we lost one of our original pilots. First Lieutenant Raymond Kyle Cruze, his aircraft severely flak-damaged, was forced on the return journey to ditch in the channel. Though he was seen to leave the sinking plane, Lt. Cruze's body was never found. He had been reported Missing in Action, and presumably drowned. The body of Sgt. Frank E. Cherry, armorer-gunner of the crew was recovered from the channel, but efforts to resuscitate him were in vain. He was officially reported Killed in Action. Sgt. Samuel H. Giesy Jr., the mechanic-gunner, was rescued from the channel, though seriously wounded and suffering from exposure. Lt. Cruze was a veteran of forty-three sorties over enemy territory.

On the last day of the month, Staff Sergeant Adolfos J. Antanaitis, armorer-gunner, suffered a broken leg when his pilot, Lieutenant Leshner, successfully crash-landed his aircraft in Southern England. after he had lost an engine en route to the target.

August, 1944

Period from 1st August 1944 to 31st August 1944

Operational activity during August increased slightly over the preceding month. A total of 212 sorties were accomplished.

On 3 August, Lieutenant Colonel Theodore R. Aylesworth assumed command of the Group, vice Colonel Harold L. Mace, transferred.

Second Lieutenant Tommie J. Sims was awarded on 5 August the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in action against the enemy 27 May 1944, at which time he was a member of the Squadron.

On 6 August the 416th was chosen by General Anderson to attack one of the most difficult and important targets ever assigned to the IX Bomber Command. A rail bridge at Oissel was the only remaining route open to the German Army endeavoring to cross the river in order to stop the Allied advance toward Paris. Heavily defended by all the anti-aircraft the Nazis had been able to muster, the Germans had successfully defeated former attempts by B-25's to destroy the vital line. Information received through intelligence indicated that at least four Panzer Divisions were making hasty preparations to cross the bridge before another aerial attack could be made. The mission was led by First Lieutenant Arthur E. Osborne Jr., Assistant Squadron Operations Officer, whose bombardier was 1st Lt. Warren Forma. Over the target, intense accurate and uninterrupted German ground fire was encountered for a period of four minutes. Lt. Osborne's ship suffered a direct hit which severely damaged one engine, but in spite of this, he held his place at the head of the formation for the duration of the bombing-run. All but one flight dropped their bombs, and as the strike photographs clearly show, the bombing was as nearly perfect as anything which has been seen in the Theater. Direct hits were made on both spans, and the bridge utterly destroyed. Second Lieutenant Arthur J. Welsh and his crew, consisting of Sergeant Stanley G. Novak and Sergeant Raymond E. Wright, all newcomers to the Squadron, were lost over the target and reported missing in action. Lt. Col. Walter W. Farmer, Group Deputy Commander, was also lost on this encounter. Lt. Osborne and his crew were forced to land on a Normandy flight strip, and remained overnight on the beach head. They returned bearing trophies of war, including an oversized swastika banner.

Captain Hiram F. Conant, Flight Commander and veteran pilot of the Squadron, was transferred to the 670th Bombardment Squadron on 7 August, where he became Squadron Operations Officer.

On August 30, 1st Lt. Luther E. Hill, one of our original operational pilots, who had flown fifty-three missions, was granted a rest from operational bombardment, and transferred to a liaison Squadron on the Far Shore.

News of some of our combat crewmen reported Missing In Action began to filter in. On August 22, Sgt. Harold A. Potter, missing in action with F/O Baxter on 28 June 1944, returned to the organization for a brief period of temporary duty, prior to his return to Zone of Interior. Potter had parachuted to safety, been captured and imprisoned, escaped, and hid out in a French home until the village in which he was concealed was liberated by the Allies.

Toward the end of the month, Staff Sergeant Arlington W. Newkirk, missing in action 3 June 1944, swaggered back with tales even more fantastic. "Scotty", fighting with the ???, assisted in the capture of several gun emplacements and was credited with the killing of several German soldiers.

September, 1944

Period from 1 September 1944 to 30 September 1944

To The Far Shore--Advance Echelon

The month was only a few days old when official word came through that we were to begin preparations for movement to France. By 0530 the morning of 15 September, all of the Advanced party was ready and waiting to leave. However, it was not until 0705 that we finally loaded into the waiting trucks and departed from the field. We arrived at Sible Hedingham railroad station at 0725 and boarded the train immediately. At 0740, the train pulled out of the station and headed for Southern England. Our strength at departure was 5 officers and 98 enlisted men.

After an uneventful trip through Southern England, including London and vicinity, we finally arrived at East Leigh at 1420 that afternoon. We detrained immediately and were moved by truck to a transit area, designated simply as "C-18", between East Leigh and the Southampton docks. Here we were billeted in six-man tents from 15 September to 17 September. While at "C-18" we came in contact (most of us for the first time) with "C" rations, and during our 2-day stay in this area, our breakfast, lunch and dinner consisted solely of this type of ration. Also while here we gained an additional enlisted man from our motor convoy, making our strength 5 officers and 99 enlisted men.

At 1300 September 17th, we departed from C-18 by foot and marched to the Southampton docks, where, after an hour's wait, we boarded a somewhat ancient, but sturdily-built channel ship christened "Lady of Mann". The last man of the 668th boarded ship at 1500. The "Lady of Mann" sailed out of the docks at 1800 and anchored in the harbor for the night.

During the period we were anchored in the Southampton harbor, all aboard were entertained by various members of the ship's passengers, including several members of a colored Field Hospital unit, a nurse of the same unit, whom the G.I.'s promptly dubbed "Dinah Shore", and a few boys of our own group. A new type of ration, the "S" ration, which none of us had seen before, was issued to us, and proved to be more than satisfactory. The 668th was quite fortunate in securing very comfortable quarters for both officers and enlisted men, with good bunks and excellent air conditioning. Needless to say, morale was extremely high, and

throughout the entire trip not a man was seasick.

At 0230, 18 September, while all were sleeping, the "Lady of Mann" pulled anchor and quietly slipped out of the harbor at Southampton, bound for the French Coast.

At 1250, we dropped anchor about two miles from where the initial invasion beachhead was established, between Casen and the Port of Cherbourg, and at 1315 we debarked from the "Lady of Mann" on to an LST and headed for the Utah Beachhead, which was about a mile from where our ship had dropped anchor. At 1420 we debarked on French soil.

Our strength at landing was 5 officers and 99 enlisted men. We assembled and marched to a 9th Air Force Transit Area, a distance of six miles from the point at which we landed. Everyone was completely exhausted as it had been a long time since we had done any marching with packs, and, after our pup tents were pitched and made as comfortable as possible, the echelon, to a man, turned in for the night.

The following morning, September 19th, we pulled down our tents, rolled our packs and made ready for what we thought was to be a 2 mile march to a nearby airstrip, from where we would be flown to our ultimate destination. Instead, we waited around until early afternoon for a truck convoy to drive us out. At 1600 we departed in trucks and drove 22 miles to the 20th Replacement Control Depot (aviation) at Catz, France. En route we passed through the towns of Carentan and Isigny and had an opportunity to observe the devastating effects of war in France's towns and villages. In Carentan, scarcely a wall was still standing, although repairs and rebuilding were going on.

We arrived at the 20th RCD at 1700 and immediately pitched our tents. While here we enjoyed prepared food, which was a welcome relief after 5 days of "C", "S" and "K" rations.

On the morning of the 20th September we again rolled our packs and made ready for another trip to a nearby airstrip. However after several "dry runs" we were informed that we would again stay overnight in an area approximately 100 feet from our old one. This caused many caustic comments and quite a few of us were of the opinion that we would spend the duration making "dry runs". However, on the afternoon of 21 Sept. we finally did load into the trucks and were taken to a C-47 airstrip about 7 miles from the camp, from whence we were flown to our final destination. At 1700, 21st September, we climbed out of the C-47 in a heavy downpour of rain at A-55, a large, bomb-shattered airfield, located about 5 kilometers outside Melun, approximately 40 kilometers southeast of Paris. Our strength at arrival was 5 officers and 99 enlisted men.

The month of September began with a series of concentrated attacks upon Brest, heavily garrisoned Nazi stronghold at the tip of the Brittany peninsula. Heavy overcast spelled failure for several missions, but we finally succeeded in hitting the target in a number of close

support attacks which aided materially in the eventual capture of this vital port.

On 12 September the Squadron participated in the first A-20 mission ever to bomb Germany. The target was a marshalling yard at Wendel, ten miles northeast of Saarbrucken, and results were reported good.

The same day, Lt. Loring G. Peede became the first pilot of the Group to complete 65 sorties, and was recommended for return to Zone of the Interior.

On 17 September, the Advance Echelon of 5 officers and 98 enlisted men departed the station for movement to the Far Shore. The Air Echelon left a few days later, and the rear echelon loaded into C-46's on 25 September for a quick hop across the Channel.

Our new home presented a considerable contrast to the trim, compact, English airdrome whence we had come. At one time a large, well-equipped Nazi field, it had been bombed on numerous occasions by Allied aircraft, and any damage we had failed to do was systematically completed by the Germans prior to evacuation. Not a single building remained intact, and most were damaged beyond repair. The runways, taxi-strips, and hard-stands, hastily patched-up by an Aviation Engineering outfit just prior to our arrival were still in need of considerable repair and maintenance.

Units were widely dispersed, and for the first time in our history we found ourselves detached from the Group Headquarters. The area assigned to the 668th centered around a ruined cluster of farm buildings and a walled garden, several acres in extent, in which was still growing the vegetables planted by the enemy and carefully nurtured through the long summer months, that we might have fresh tomatoes, onions, and lettuce for our table.

The Squadron set to work with a will, clearing the rubble from a central court which later became a sort of Forum Romanum for the unit. Squad tents were set up for mess hall and living quarters, latrines and fox-holes were dug, the line sections located and organized, and all the myriad tasks of setting up camp accomplished as rapidly as possible. It was our first real experience at operation in the field, and we learned much.

The officers set up their mess-hall in what had been a stone-pillared stable, and Lt. Meredith built an ornate bar at one end of the room which met with the hearty approval of all. The project was an ill-fated one. We soon learned that Headquarters would not permit the operation of a bar in the Squadron area; and we had not been many weeks on the station when the imminent danger that the damaged and sagging stone roof might collapse forced the abandonment of the Mess Hall.

On 30 September the Group received a shipment of fifteen A-26's, the sleek, silver ships which we were to give their first full scale combat

test.

October, 1944

Period from 1st October 1944 to 31 October 1944

On the first day of October, ground and air crews began indoctrination and training in the A-26 Invader. A Mobile Training Unit gave technical instruction, while several newly assigned A-26 pilots began checking our men out on the airplane. Airmen and maintenance crews both waxed enthusiastic over the new ship. Pilots were especially pleased with its single-engine performance. The only complaint registered was the fact that for close formation flying, the A-26 was inferior to the Havoc, since the engine nacelles of the Invader were so located as to cut down the pilot's visibility. All agreed, however, that the advantages of the new airplane far outweighed this one disadvantage.

Overcast skies and almost daily rainfall greatly impeded operations throughout the month. During October a total of only 8 missions were flown, as against 15 in September. On many days, weather not only prevented operational flying, but also hampered transitional training on the A-26.

In spite of the almost constant rain, and the mud which made a gummy morass of the area, work continued in the living sites and technical shops. Ingenious field expedients of one kind or another were set up, and good use was made of partially destroyed German property. Iron stripping which had been used for temporary hard stands by the Nazis was found to make excellent catwalks over the deeper mud-holes. A shower was eventually completed which resembled a Rube Goldberg nightmare, but which proved quite effective. The organizational Tanney equipment saw its first service, and the imperious voice of Captain McNulty, borne across the ether into every corner of every tent in the area, saved the C.Q. many a weary mile of walking. By a tie-in with the Operations radio, the Tanney was also used for an occasional broadcast of music or of such special features as the World Series.

The remainder of the rubble was cleared from the buildings, and all scrap lumber in the area salvaged, cut, and stored in compounds for use during the winter weather soon to come.

On 7 October the following air crew members, having completed 65 missions, were relieved from assignment to the tactical unit and returned to "Zone of the Interior", that absurdly inadequate military synonym for home:

1st Lt. Loring G. Peede

T/Sgt. Leo G. Robbins
S/Sgt. Charles L. Hibbs
S/Sgt. John A. Fejes
S/Sgt. Earl R. Judd Jr.
S/Sgt. John R. Orr
S/Sgt. Edward S. Dickenson
S/Sgt. Harold R. Hedrick
S/Sgt. Carl F. Love
S/Sgt. Fred L. Adair

On 27 October, they were joined by five more of our original crew-men. The lucky quintet on this occasion consisted of:

1st Lt. Robert D. Leshner
S/Sgt. Joe C. Burkhalter
S/Sgt. Elpidio A. Damico
S/Sgt. Lewis M. Daugherty
S/Sgt. Bennett C. Sieg

November, 1944

Period from 1st November to 30 November 1944

As day followed dreary day of cold, rainy, muddy weather, we began to wonder why they had bothered to bring us across the channel. During the entire month the Group flew but three missions.

Intensive training continued on the A-26. Crews newly assigned from the States had been trained on the A-20, and the burden of transitional instruction in the Invader fell upon the tactical unit.

On 11 November, 2nd Lt. William G. Kelley, 2nd Lt. Richard C. Miles, Cpl. Terrance F. Morrissey and Cpl. Samuel A. Pepe were killed when the aircraft piloted by Lt. Miles unaccountably crashed near Fontainebleau while on a routine training flight. All four men were newly assigned; and had not yet seen combat.

On 17 November, the Squadron participated in the first combat mission flown by the A-26. Due to a shortage of glass-nosed Invaders, A-20 Havocs were used in the Number One position for all flights.

The early combat missions uncovered several "bugs" in the Invader, and the technical sections, together with the Douglas Field Representatives, wrestled with the accomplishment of minor mechanical improvements. For air and ground men alike it was pioneer work, and though fraught with difficulties and hazards, it had its compensations in the sense of real achievement that was felt by the entire Group.

On 27 November, Lt. Gustave Ebenstein and Captain Galen Bartmus both veteran Flight Commanders completed sixty-five, and received their orders for shipment home.

Also on 27 November, Maj. General Anderson, Commanding General 9th Bombardment Division, visiting the Station on a tour of inspection, awarded Distinguished Flying Crosses to Captain Arthur E. Osborne, Captain Joseph F. Meagher, 1st Lt. Warren Forma and 1st Lt. Arvid R. Hand of the 668th. 1st Lt. Luther E. Hill and Major Hiram F. Conant, former members of the Squadron, were similarly honored.

Thanksgiving Day brought rain as usual, and a fine turkey dinner, G.I. style. The first of the Christmas packages began to arrive and mail delivery improved somewhat, to the great relief of all concerned.

December, 1944

Period from 1st December to 31st December 1944

December brought a slight improvement in the weather, and 15 missions were flown.

On 2d December, while returning from a combat mission, Captain Joseph F. Meagher, Flight Commander, was struck in the foot by a flak fragment and severely wounded. The same burst disabled the aircraft. Captain Meagher, without informing his crew that he was injured, lest he give them cause for alarm, left the formation and by a superb feat of airmanship, successfully crash-landed the battle damaged ship without injury to the crew. A veteran of sixty-three missions, Captain Meagher was transferred to a General Hospital and evacuated to England, whence he will be sent home. The heroic act on his last combat mission, together with the professional skill displayed throughout his tour, mark Captain Meagher as one of the distinguished combat pilots of the Squadron.

The German winter offensive, which began on 16 December, caused considerable excitement on the Station. The possibility of paratroop attack, coupled with raids in the vicinity by a rejuvenated Luftwaffe, made mandatory the enforcement of stringent security measures. Personnel were required to carry gas masks, weapons, and web belts at all times. Airplane and area guards were tripled, and all enlisted men except cooks were placed on the Guard Roster.

Lt. Thomas L. VanOver, former pilot who had been grounded for medical reasons for two years, and had been ground operations officer for the Squadron, regained his wings and was transferred to the 344th Bomb Group for transitional instruction in the B-26.

On 4 December, Lt. Wayne E. Downing, who had completed an operational tour of 65 missions, volunteered for a second tour in the A-26, and was transferred to the 670th Bomb Sq. (L).

On 8 December, Staff Sergeant Francis L. Flacks, veteran armorer-gunner who prior to assignment to the Squadron, had acted as serial gunner in the B-17 used by General Eisenhower, completed his tour and was returned home.

On 12 December, the following gunners, having also completed their combat tours, were transferred to the States: Staff Sergeants Joseph E. McCreery, Robert W. Burch, Clarence H. Yost Jr, Robert W. McDonald, Atha A. Hill, Kenneth E. Hornbeck, Donald E. Raines, Everett Shelton, and Earnest E. Kelly.

Staff Sergeant Earnest E. Kelly, after having flown more than fifty combat missions, acted for a period of more than three months as First Sergeant of the Squadron, performing the duties of that position in a superior manner.

Christmas 1944 proved, ironically enough, the most disastrous day in the Squadron's history. Through cloudless skies, our aircraft participated in two highly successful missions against supply points behind the Ardennes salient. Intense accurate hostile ground fire was encountered on both sorties. The following personnel failed to return and are missing in action Capt. Richard V. Miracle, Capt. Richard B. Prentiss, 1st Lt. Jack J. Burg, 1st Lt. Francis H. Bursiel, 1st Lt. Robert R. Svenson, S/Sgt. Daniel M. Brown, S/Sgt. Arthur F. Galloway, S/Sgt. Phillip G. Fild, S/Sgt. John R. Simmonds and Sgt. Alvin C. Wylie.

Captains Miracle and Prentiss were original combat pilots of the Squadron. Captain Miracle, West Point graduate of the class of '42, was an able and respected officer on the threshold of a promising military career. Captain Prentiss, veteran of many hours of antisubmarine patrol in the Caribbean, and was a Flight Commander whose professional skill and wide experience will be sorely missed. Lieutenants Burg and Bursiel had both outstanding records as bombardiers, and they, as well as Lt. Svenson, were nearing the completion of their operational tours. S/Sgt. Fild was on the last mission of his combat tour.

Capt. Arthur E. Osborne, 1st Lt. Robert G. Meredith and Staff Sergeants Roy F. Chustz and Daniel R. Schenck were transferred home after completion of operational tours. Captain Osborne, Assistant Operations Officer, had a distinguished record as a leader of boxes and formations on many hazardous and highly successful missions.

On 26 December we received a forcible reminder that, though far from the front, we were still in a combat zone. A lone German aircraft believed to be a JU-88, strafed the field. No damage was done.

On the eve of the new year, enemy bombs were dropped near the Station

when an attack was made upon the neighboring town of Coubert. The year ended literally with a bang, and the explosions had a sobering effect on the New Year celebrants.

January, 1945

668th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (L)
416th Bombardment Group (L)

Unit History
for

January 1945 through February 1945

Period from, 1st January, to 31st, January 1945

Changes in Organization: Negative.

Strength: As of 31 January 1945, total strength was 53 commissioned Officers, 4 Flight Officers, and 299 enlisted men.

Unit Movements: Negative.

Losses in Action: 2d Lt. Ralph J. Lackner, O 760 878, slightly injured in action 2 Jan 45 (fractured ankle, sustained in crash landing after power failure at inception of combat mission.)

Narrative of Operations and Incidents:

If we thought the weather had done its worst, we had much to learn in the first month of the new year. The heaviest snowfall that France had seen in many winters blanketed the plain below Paris, and covering the airdrome, added to the operational hazards of overcast skies and subfreezing temperatures.

Long before the snow had ceased falling, the back breaking task of cleaning runways, taxi-strips and hard stands was begun. Mud-control details were replaced by snow removal squads assigned to definite areas. In this work we were hampered by lack of adequate equipment, though some ingeniously contrived makeshift snowplows were assembled from field expedients. French civilian laborers hired under reverse lend-lease were of great assistance. The employment of rock salt as a melting agent proved effective, though an objection to its use was later discovered when it was found that the sodium chloride acted as a corrosive on the magnesium alloy of the A-26 nose-wheel assembly.

Operation of the Pratt and Whitney engines (with which we were relatively unfamiliar) in temperatures far below freezing provided further difficulties. The Group suffered a sudden epidemic of crash-landings occasioned by power failures on take off. Two such accidents occurred to pilots of the Squadron at the outset of the combat mission flown 2 January 1945. Second Lieutenant William H. Roberts, when his craft had become airborne, could not gain sufficient power to remain aloft, and was forced to crash-land just off the end of the runway, with a full load of 1,000 pound bombs. The aircraft caught fire upon landing. Experiencing difficulty in getting out of the ship, the pilot was assisted by Sergeant Raymond P. Windisch, the gunner. The two men then fled from the burning plane, and had no sooner attained the shelter of a small wood some yards away when the flames reached the bomb bay and detonated the bombs, scattering fragments of the aircraft over a space of several acres. No injuries were sustained. Second Lieutenant Ralph J. Lackner suffered an almost identical accident, though in this case the plane did not burn or explode, but the pilot sustained a fractured ankle.

On 13 January Second Lieutenant William H. Roberts again crash-landed for the same cause, and under almost identical circumstances. This time his aircraft did not catch fire, and neither he nor Sergeant Windisch were injured.

The reason for these crashes was largely undetermined, though frost on wings and frozen carburetors were believed to be important factors.

Under the Air Crew Liaison Program sponsored by USSTAF and Theater Headquarters, selected combat crews of the Squadron were sent to the front for seven days temporary duty attached to tactical ground units on the line. The purpose of these missions was to promote closer liaison and mutual understanding between medium bombardment crews and the ground forces whose tactical operations they were directly supporting. During their stay, our pilots, bombardiers and gunners were given every opportunity to learn the problems that confronted the Allied units arrayed before the Westwall, and were even permitted, on several occasions, to accompany patrols on forays into enemy-held territory. A complement to this program was the reception by our unit of commissioned and non commissioned ground force men who, during their short stay with the Squadron, gave lectures on ground operations, attended briefings and interrogations, and were permitted to fly combat missions as observers.

The program was a conspicuous success. All participants spoke with enthusiasm of the lessons they had learned, and suggestions arising out of the discussions between airmen and their allies on the ground were in more than one instance resolved into positive action by directives of higher headquarters. Some even hailed the plan as a hopeful indication of departure from the Ivory Tower attitude of those who, directing the war from afar, pay sometimes too little heed to ideas engendered in the minds of those men responsible for the performance of the operational leg work.

First Lieutenants Charles J. Anderson and Hugh M. Evans, new Flight

Commanders both of whom had done outstanding work on their early missions, were promoted to rank of Captain 8 January 1945.

In spite of the weather hazards already mentioned, the Group flew fifteen missions in January, a considerable improvement over the previous two months. As an example of the difficulties encountered in destroying specific pinpointed targets, particularly under such weather conditions as to render visual bombing infeasible, the Simmern railroad bridge is a case in point. On 2 January we attacked this target with two pilots of the Squadron leading flights. The team of Lt. Hugh M. Evans and F/O Thomas M. McCartney (Bombardier-Navigator), scored a Superior, while Lt. Carl S. Stanley and his Bombardier-Navigator, F/O Judson H. Blount Jr., rated an excellent. Nonetheless, later reconnaissance photographs showed that although damage to tracks at both ends had rendered the route temporarily useless, the bridge still stood. On 5 January we attacked the same target, this time from above a cloud cover and with PFF ships in the lead. Results were undetermined. On 11 January, the same bridge was the primary target of another PFF sortie. Due to navigational difficulties, the formation bypassed the primary and bombed its secondary objective. On 15 January, the only Group of the 9th-Bomb Division to take the air for combat, we aimed our bombs once more at the Simmern bridge, this time dropping on GEE from above a heavy overcast and for undetermined results.

On 23 January, six crews from the Group led by Captain Gerald M. McNulty, Squadron Operations Officer, and including Lt. Otto F. Jacobsen, also of the 668th, were briefed and dispatched for a low-level strafing mission. The target assigned was a column of enemy motor vehicles fleeing from the last faint bulge of the Ardennes salient and moving west from Dasburg. The plan called for Thunderbolts to guide us to the position and lead us in the assault at low-level. When our formation was unable to make rendezvous with the P-47 escort, the ships were recalled. Nevertheless, it was an historic occasion, since it represents the first attempt in this Theatre to use the new A-26 in the type of work for which it is tactically designed: bombing and strafing at treetop level.

Other outstanding missions during the month include the attack on Benzig rail bridge 16 January, on which Captain McNulty and Lt. Forma scored an Excellent and Captain Evans and F/O McCartney a Superior; the sortie against Euskirchen bridge 21 January for which Captain Stanley and F/O Blount were given a Superior; and the assault upon the Communications Center of Schleiden, 24 January, which marked the 19th consecutive Excellent for Lt. Arvid R. Hand, veteran Bombardier whose pilot is Major Robert F. Price, Squadron Commander.

February, 1945

Period from 1st February to 28th February 1945

Changes in Organization: Negative.

Strength: As of 28 February 1945, total strength was 55 Commissioned Officers, and 293 Enlisted Men.

Changes of Station: From Station A-55, Seine-et-Marne, (near Melun), France to Station A-69, Oisne, (near Laon), France. Headquarters opened at A-69, 0001, 13 February 1945. See Narrative for dates of departure and arrival by echelons.

Losses in Action: First Lieutenant John J. Chalmers, 0 533 025 (Pilot), 2d Lieutenant Lawrence A. Eckard, 02 063 021, (Bomb-Nav.) and Staff Sergeant Kim Fortner, 15 088 677. Missing in Action 14 February 1945 after combat mission against Machernich, Germany.

Narrative of Operations and Incidents:

The weather showed considerable improvement in February. With the early return of spring, 21 missions were flown by the Group in support of the ground forces now rapidly closing up to the Rhine.

On 9 February, First Lieutenant Gilbert VandenBrink became Squadron Ordnance Officer, replacing Lieutenant Earl J. Norris, who went to Headquarters as Group Ordnance Officer.

The major part of our efforts during the month were directed toward the task of moving from Station A-55 to our new field at Station A-69, near the town of Laon, in Departement Oisne, France. As in the move across the channel from England, personnel and equipment were transferred without any interference with combat operations--an assignment which called for careful planning and smooth coordination. Profitting from our experience on the former move, it was decided to send two entire Squadrons forward at a time rather than endeavor to split each unit into advance and rear echelons. Accordingly, Squadrons A and C departed Melun by train 1600 hours, 9 February 1945 and arrived at Laon about 1300, 10 February. Organizational vehicles were dispatched in convoy about 0100 hours, 10 February and arrived at Station A-69 about 0930 hours of the same date.

The air echelon flew the Squadron's aircraft over to the new Station on the morning of 12 February.

The majority of personnel travelled by rail, and thus experienced the discomforts of the legendary "40 & 8" which played so vital a role in allied transport during World War 1.

The advantages of the new field more than compensated for the hardships of a mid-winter move. The Squadron found itself with a huge wooden hangar left intact by the Boche. This was soon converted into a combination kitchen, mess-hall, officer's mess and theater. Squad tents were pitched in two long rows facing each other on each side of a Company

Street. Squadron Operations set up shop in a small wooden shack, while the rest of the line sections moved into tents.

Rising abruptly out of the encircling plain and towering like a silent sentinel over the field stood the ancient citadel of Laon. The venerable walled city atop the bluff had been since the Dark Ages a fortress all but impregnable, while its University was one of the great European centers of learning. Here the young Abelard had studied, and here, at a much later date was born and raised Pere Marquette, the Jesuit whose missionary zeal was to carry him across uncharted wilderness to the headwaters of the Mississippi and beyond.

"La Ville Basse" the modern part of town at the base of the cliff, was unfortunately located close to one of the largest Marshalling Yards in northern France, and allied aircraft in destroying the rail installations, had laid waste a large part of the city.

The people of Laon were not exactly friendly toward our troops. Several unfortunate incidents involving paratroops stationed in the town had considerably dimmed the enthusiasm of the French population with regard to their Yankee liberators.

On 9 February, 1st Lt. Carl S. Stanley, Flight Commander, was promoted to Captain. The same date, the following pilots were promoted to First Lieutenant: William W. Annin, Ronda C. Buchanan, James H. Carver, and Lumir J. Prucha.

On 15 February, Captain Gerald M. McNulty, Squadron Operations Officer, received a promotion to grade of Major.

In the outstanding missions of the month, personnel and aircraft of the 668th played an important role. On 2 February the team of Major Price and Lt., Hand led one box, while Captain McNulty and Lt., Forma led another in an attack on the Communications center of Euskirchen. Both boxes scored "Excellent."

On 8 February, a sortie against the defended area at Nuttenden marked the 200th mission for the Group in less than a year of operations.

On the morning of 14 February, heavy enemy ground fire was encountered over Machernich. Lieutenant John J. Chalmers and his crew were reported Missing in Action (see Item 4 above).

The afternoon of the same day, the new team of Major Price and Lt., Forma scored a "Superior" in an attack on Rheinbach Ammunitions Depot. Lt., Hand, Major Price's regular bombardier, was grounded due to a non-battle casualty (broken ankle).

On 22 February, the Squadron participated in the first really successful low-level strafing mission by our aircraft. One flight led by

Major Price and Lieutenant Forma attacked bridges at Miltenburg; another led by Captain Evans and Lieutenant McCartney flew against the sidings and bridges at Hochost. This mission was flown as part of a coordinated attack upon Nazi rail and road centers designed to paralyze all German transport in the Rhine valley. The ships released their bombs from medium altitude, and then went down on the deck to strafe any target of military value in the vicinity. When the scores were added up, the Group had the following claims to its credit: one tank train destroyed and left burning; one horsedrawn vehicle destroyed; one R.R. station damaged; fifteen buildings damaged; five locomotives, five barges and fifteen goods wagons damaged.

March, 1945

HISTORY

of

668TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (L)
416th Bombardment Group (L)

for March 1945.

Period from 1 March to 31 March 1945

Changes in Organization: Negative.

Strength: As of 31 March 1945, total strength was 52 Commissioned officers, and 286 Enlisted Men.

Changes of Station: No change of Station.

Losses in Action: See Narrative.

Narrative of Operations and Incidents:

During March, with the long awaited arrival of Spring flying weather, the Group hit its stride in A-26 operations. A total of 41 missions were flown, exceeding by 10 missions the previous record of 31 flown in May, 1944 with A-20's at the height of the pre-Invasion aerial offensive.

Once again ground maintenance crews worked almost around the clock. The intensified training program, coupled with heightened combat activity, considerably reduced the sack time of pilots, bombardiers, and gunners. For whatever leisure time was available, there was a wide choice of

activities in the Station. A soft ball league was organized and twilight baseball became an almost nightly event. Movies were presented three times a week in the hangar. The Information-Education program offered evening classes for those who desired to brush up on their high school or college work, or to get a start on vocational training.

The Squadron granted its first leave and furloughs since our arrival overseas, and a small quota of fortunate individuals were sent to the United Kingdom for seven days exclusive of travel time. Meanwhile, our combat men were going to the new rest-centers on the Riviera.

On 20 March 1945 Major Robert F. Price, Squadron Commander since 16 February 1944, having completed a combat tour of 65 missions, was transferred to Group Headquarters to await orders sending him home. Before his departure from the Group, Major Price was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Major Gerald M. McNulty, who since 23 July 1944, had served as Operations Officer, assumed command. Major McNulty has wide experience in tactical operations of the European Theater. Prior to his receipt of a commission as First Lieutenant in the United States Air Corps 30 June 1943, he completed one and one-half combat tours in fighters and bombers as a pilot of the RCAF, attached to the RAF.

Captain Carl S. Stanley succeeded Major McNulty as Squadron Operations Officer.

Captain Charles C. Mish, Flight Commander and Staff Sergeant Philben C. Euga and Ernest L. Schafer were sent back to the States on 25 March at the completion of their operational tours.

On 28 March Captain Eldon B. Kreh, Assistant Operations Officer, having also completed a combat tour, was transferred to Zone of Interior.

Though the war went strongly against the German, his ground defenses were by no means thereby diminished, and he continued fiercely to defend himself, as the unit's combat losses in the month of March clearly attest.

On 18 March two of our aircraft were shot down over the Reich. First Lieutenant James P. Kenny, Staff Sergeant John J. Sittarich, Second Lieutenant Clifford J. Vars, and Sergeant John J. Griffith Jr. were reported Missing in Action.

A tragic accident on 21 March deprived the Squadron of one of its outstanding combat crews. Captain Charles J. Anderson, leading a flight on the return lap of a combat sortie, had dropped behind his position in the first box, and was endeavoring to bring his flight into its proper place. Flying directly into the sun, which may have blinded his vision, and passing beneath an element of the second box, Captain Anderson pulled up, and in so doing his aircraft collided with the lead ship of the second box flight, piloted by Captain Rooney. Both ships crashed. Captain Anderson, 2nd Lt Westmoreland Babbage, his bombardier, 2nd Lt Leo J. Roman, and Staff Sergeant Stanley L. Heitell were instantly killed.

On 28 March, Flight Officer Harry G. Gunkel and his gunner Sgt LeRoy J. Grzona became lost from the formation while returning from a combat mission through heavy clouds, and were not again seen. Both men were reported Mission in Action.

Second Lieutenant's George Parkhurst and Roger A. Russell were promoted to First Lieutenant on 23 March 1945.

April, 1945

HISTORY OF THE 668TH BOMB SQ (L) for April 1945

Period from 1 April to 30 April 1945

Changes in Organization: Negative.

Strength: As of 30 April 1945, total strength was 48 Commissioned Officers, and 276 Enlisted Men.

Changes of Station: No change of Station.

Losses in Action: See Narrative.

Narrative of Operations and Incidents:

During all of April, the Allied Armies moved rapidly across Germany in pursuit of the beaten and routed Wehrmacht. Resistance was sporadic and ineffective. But if the task of the ground forces proved far lighter than in the assaults of last winter against heavily defended positions, the first and final stages of the European war posed for medium bombardment groups at least one problem that we had not previously encountered. The bomb-line, travelling eastward across the Reich with our onward marching armies, moved in some sectors far beyond the effective range of A-26's based at Laon. Fortunately with the general weakening of resistance in Germany, antiaircraft defense of military targets became meager and ineffective; and it was therefore possible to fly at lessened speeds and lower altitudes without unduly exposing to risk our planes and combat crews. Accordingly, the combat range of the aircraft was augmented by flying with a throttle setting which employed a more economical fuel-air ratio. Five-hour missions into the heart of Austria or Czechoslovakia became almost routine occurrences. The longest combat mission flown by the Group was very slightly less than 1,000 miles round trip.

The disintegration of effective German resistance is evidenced by the

fact that in twenty-four missions flown during April, the Squadron suffered no combat losses whatever. Our only casualties, ironically enough, occurred as the result of one of the last sorties flown by the expiring Luftwaffe on 17 April, against the spearhead element of a 3rd Army column advancing on Billingslebe. First Lieutenant James H. Carver (pilot), Pfc Forest C. Brown (armorers), S/Sgt Nathan M. Graham Jr. (aerial gunner), and S/Sgt Carl Valentine (crew chief), on detached service with a Third Army combat team, were accompanying the convoy in a jeep. German fighters, coming in on the deck, strafed the column and dropped fragmentation bombs. Lt Carver and Pfc Brown received slight scalp wounds. S/Sgt Graham suffered a punctured ear drum and lacerations of the right hand. S/Sgt Valentine sustained serious shrapnel wounds of the right leg and was transferred to a General Hospital. The other three injured men were returned to the unit.

On 23 April 1st Lt Arvid R. Hand, veteran Squadron Bombardier-Navigator whose combat record places him among the best bombardiers in the Division, was promoted to rank of Captain.

First Lieutenants James K. Colquitt and James H. Montrose were transferred to the Zone of Interior on 25 April, upon completion of their combat tours.

Our pilot-bombardier teams continued to hit the assigned targets, inflicting damage upon the enemy's remaining communications centers and storage dumps, which materially hastened the final victory. On 11 April, Major McNulty and Lt Powell scored a "superior" in an attack on Bernburg Marshalling Yard. The following day, Lt Paul E. Parker and Lt Robert E. Shaft led a flight against a rail bridge at Hof, also with "superior" results. On 20 April the bombing of the flight led by Lt William Laseter and Lt Mark P. Schlefer on Deggendorf Oil Storage Depot rated a "superior". On 21 April the team of Captain Evans and Lt McCartney continued its excellent combat record with a "superior" for the bombing of Attnung-Puchheim Marshalling Yard.

May, 1945

HISTORY

of

668th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (L)

for

May 1945

Period from 1 May to 30 May 1945

Changes in Organization: Negative.

Strength: As of 30 May 1945, Total strength was 57 Commissioned Officers and 285 Enlisted Men.

Changes of Station: A-69 (near Laon, France) to A-59 (Cormeilles en-Vixen, France)

Losses in Action: None

Narrative of Operations and Incidents:

The fifth month of 1945 finds all of us "sweating" out the end of the war, but as usual each morning we attended a briefing, and to begin the month right, on May 1st instead of the usual "scrub", exceptionally favorable operational weather and conditions presented itself. Our target was located in AUSTRIA, STOD AMMO PLANT, one of the still remaining sources of ammunition for the German Army in that sector. Squadron "A" dispatched 9 ships to make up a total of 37 ships dispatched from Group. Due to adverse factors, Group did not attack the target.

On May 2nd we were again briefed, but this time our target was "scrubbed", but on May 3rd we were alerted by Field Order Number 277-880 for the last mission that we would fly in the European Theatre of Operations and once again our target was the STOD AMMO PLANT in AUSTRIA. Squadron "A" dispatched 7 ships to make up a Group Total of 34 ships. This time conditions were more favorable, and the target was attacked by using "equipment" bombing technique with undetermined results. Our last mission in the ETO was the way our crews liked them, a "milk run" with no one suffering battle damages or any "near" misses. So ends our operational status after 14 months of combat against the enemy, attacking all types of military targets, and from altitudes far above that of medium altitude to straffing missions on the deck. Mission number 285 closed our files under Operational Missions.

After enjoying the "non-ops?" status for several days, and then a complete celebration of VE day, the calm was soon shattered by rumors that we would soon be leaving A-69 for another operational field, when or where the rumors differed, but it was soon established that we would definitely leave, and our destination would be A-59 which was located quite near Paris, which naturally made the personnel quite happy, and perhaps a little impatient to be on our way to our new home.

On the 19th of May the advanced echelon, under the command of Captain JACOBSEN, with eight enlisted men, departed to set up a Squadron Site at A-59. The remainder of the Squadron left the 25th for A-59.

Arriving at our new destination we found that we had a much better field and living conditions were more pleasant than at A-69. All personnel cooperated one hundred percent in setting up our new Site, for all were eager to be one of the first to get a "Paris Pass", for Paris seemed quite near, especially when looking across the field and seeing the Eifel Tower against the sky line.

The end of the month finds every one well settled and a very extensive training program fully under way. This program includes ground schools, and an average of four hours flying by all combat crew personnel, with stress upon all types of low level tactics.

These last few days of the month finds additional personnel being transferred into the Squadron from units that are being deactivated in this Theatre that are of no more use to Bomb Division and Air Force. These transfers are causing quite a boost in the morale of the men in the Squadron, for all the new-comers have been informed that this Group would be one of the first in the 9th Bomb Division to be returned to the States.

June, 1945

HISTORY

of

668TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (L)

for
June 1945

1 June thru 30 June 1945

Changes in Organization: Negative

Strength: As of 30 June 1945, total strength was 49 Commissioned Officers and 303 Enlisted Men (26 EM attached)

Changes of Station: None

Losses in Action: None

Narrative of Operations and Incidents:

The month of JUNE finds our Squadron in full swing with a very extensive training program well under way. In fact some of the personnel

are working hard long hours, the same as they did before "VE" Day, but they realize that it is necessary, and that they must continue as they have in the past so that their standard high efficiency will still be maintained, something that has always been a requisite of Squadron "A".

Landscaping the Squadron flight line was one of the early projects of the month, this project being the establishing of small rail road tracks as walks thru the flight line area. These rail road tracks were formerly used by the Germans as means of transportation of equipment to and from their supply Depot across the field. This minor beautification project was approved by all members that had to work on the line, for during wet weather our flight line can be a very slippery and muddy installation.

The smooth trend of activity was suddenly interrupted by orders that caused every individual in the Squadron to realize that war has some good points, especially for an Operational Unit. According to the new "poop" from Group, all personnel would stand reveille, first call being at the bright and early unheard hour of 05:55 hours, an hour that most members had tried to forget since VE Day. Most individuals had gotten in the habit of sleeping until seven AM each morning, and often times later. The spectacle that presented itself on the morning of first roll call and reveille was far from that of a spirited Combat Squadron, for in that formation stood a group of very sleepy and unhappy soldiers.

When it rains it pours, for a few days after the reveille formations were put into effect, the Squadron soon heard the ill rumor that our Group had been mentioned for further foreign service in the CBI. It was but a few days before the rumor was officially announced that we had been the Group named from our Wing to further continue our scope of action against the enemy, this time leaving the Old Western Front of World War II, for a new battle field in the Far East. Old members in the Group and Squadron were disappointed in the sudden change, for most members had about half convinced themselves that they would go home, and to make the bitter pill taste worse, it was learned that a junior rival Group that did not have the operational experience or time in the ETO, would be one of the first leaving for the States. Members of Squadron "A" have one answer for such a trend of events - "C'est la guerre"

At the peak of the sad news, some of the members of the Squadron began to feel that maybe good comes with the bad, for it was announced that the "point" system that we had been hearing so much about was being put into effect by the AAF, and that all high point men with 117 points and above would be eligible for the list and probably an early return to the States. The first official list came out with three men from this Squadron practically on top. These men were told that they would be sent directly to an assembly area and from there to the States and back to civilian life. The next list of high point men included men with 108 points and above, this time Squadron "A" had quite a large quota, one officer and ten enlisted men. Captain THOMAS C. BAILEY, Squadron S-2 Officer was the lucky individual, not only in Squadron but in the entire Group, for Captain Bailey has been the only Ground Officer returned to the states for

discharge. In the shake-up, our 1st Sergeant Thomas H. Hodge was included in the high point list. Sergeant Thomas H. Hodge has been "top-kicking" Squadron "A" for approximately six months. Duties of first sergeant were assumed by Sgt. Adkission, former Squadron Sergeant Major.

Our Executive Officer, Major CHESTER C. WYSOCKI, who has been with Squadron "A" for a period of over two years, told members of Squadron "A" good-bye, for on the 8th of June he was notified that he was being transferred to Squadron "C" as their Executive Officer. Major JACKSON L. MARKS formerly of Squadron "B" was assigned as Executive Officer of this Squadron in place of Major Wysocki. Captain HORACE W. BREECE, Squadron Adjutant received orders to resume the duties of Adjutant in Squadron "C", being replaced by Captain LOWELL E. GEFFINGER, former Adjutant of Squadron "C". Captain Geffinger not only had the huge task of Adjutant, but that of Acting Squadron Executive Officer, for Major Marks' duties with Group Headquarters were such that he could not act in the capacity of Squadron Executive Officer. Another old member of Squadron "A", First Lieutenant WILFRED L. LUCKASEN, Squadron Supply Officer was transferred to the Sq. "B" staff, and was replaced by Squadron "B" supply officer, First Lieut. CLAYTON R. FOSTER.

Making the change in personnel almost complete, Major GERALD M. McNULTY, Squadron Commander, received his orders on the 8th returning him to the States. Major McNulty has been the Squadron's CO for approximately four months, and prior to that time was Squadron Operations Officer. Major McNulty had quite a long combat record, having served several years in the RAF and after being assigned to the USAAF, flew 65 missions in A-20's and A-26's. Squadron "A" was informed on the 8th that our new Commanding Officer would be Major JOSEPH W. BIRD, who had been a Group Staff Officer for several months. It was indeed pleasing for Squadron "A" to learn of this new assignment, for Major Bird had already established a reputation of not only being a very efficient and capable officer, but one of the most popular officers in Group, well liked and respected by both officers and enlisted men.

Combat personnel in the Squadron began "Sweating" out their orders, and on the 11th of June orders were received that the following named officers, Captains EVANS & HAND, and Lieutenants HALE, HARRIS, PARKER, McCarthey and McCready, would report to the Replacement Depot near Paris for immediate return to the States. Several of the above named officers had 65 operational missions to their credit and all members had been ace pilot-bombardier-navigator combat teams that had scored many hits on targets and "EXCELLENTS" for the Group.

After all the drastic changes and the "re-shuffle" in personnel, salve was administered to our wounds by Group announcing that a pass policy was being adopted by Group and would be complied with by all units. All men that had not had leaves during the current year would be eligible for seven days either in England or in Southern France. Passes were set up so that each member of the Squadron would have on twenty four hour pass a week and 48 hour passes were put into effect so that members of the unit

would have an opportunity to relax for two days in Paris at the expense of the Red Cross. These 48 hour passes were for Ground Crews as well as Combat Crews. Liberty runs were leaving daily from the Squadron for Paris, and returning at 2330 each night to pick up the personnel who were waiting at "Porte de la Chapalle" the end of the Metro run in St. Denis. In addition to the liberty runs going into Paris, four trucks were dispatched each evening at six thirt for Pontoise for members wishing to visit our local cafes and "other attractions". Added attractions in Pontoise was an enlisted man's club and bar in town, plus numerous invitation from the local citizens for dances and dinner dates.

On the 29th of June Major JACKSON L. MARKS, was transferred to the 99th Combat Wing. Major Marks, even tho Squadron Executive Officer, had never been actively engaged as such, for his primary duties were that of Group Staff Officer.

On the 30th of June orders were received that 1st Lieutenant ANTONIO? J. LANCELOTTI, another old member of Squadron "A" and also the best Mess Officer that we have ever had in this organization, was to be transferred with 15 enlisted men to the 344th Bombardment Group.

So ends the month of June with personnel still actively engaged in a huge training program and doing the work that is so necessary in keeping us operationally fit and "alert" for pending assignments, regardless as to where or when.

(Declassified IAW EO 12958 and 13526)
Documents available from the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) at Maxwell
Air Force Base, AL.