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NOV44

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SQ-BOMB-644-M1
Nov 1944-30 Nov

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UNIT HISTORY

644TH BOMBARDMENT SQDN (L)

APO 140

UNITED STATES ARMY

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COVERING THE PERIOD 1 NOV.'44 TO 30 NOV.'44

Sep 13

RESTRICTED

[redacted]

I-N-D-E-X

I. ORGANIZATION:

It has been very gratifying to watch the growth of comradeship under our new leaders Major Paulson and Captain Gertsenian. This is an achievement particularly with a combat outfit living under combat conditions for the tendency is to become interested in one's own affairs without thought of others.

To take a Squadron literally "into the woods" and set it up as a self sufficing combat team raises a great many problems. Each difficulty was overcome in order of necessity and to repeat the organization is functioning smoothly.

During the month a new type of work in regard to the war effort has been spoken of and our part in it seems to hinge a great deal on night fighters, although basically the Squadron, and the Group too, has been made up entirely of A-20 Havocs. The anticipated tactics will employ B-26 Marauders, and so we have had both crews and planes of B-26's assigned to the Squadron. This happy combination has brought new life to the Squadron and with it a whole host of new topics and theories to be discussed around the great fireplace in the Officers' Club.

PROMOTIONS:

The Squadron had but one Officer promoted during the Month. Lieutenant Joseph Harwell, our general adjutant, received his Captaincy. Captain Harwell has had an unusual amount of detailed work to do as a result of the recent move and, too, with the coming of the new members to the Squadron. He seems to be everywhere seeing that all goes well. Congratulations are in order and are well deserved.

II. STRENGTH:

The Squadron strength as of 1 November 1944, was 58 Officers (plus one attached) and 304 Enlisted Men. This number was increased to 71 Officers (plus one attached) and 320 Enlisted Men. The increase was due to the assignment of B-26 crews discussed under the preceding title of Organization.

Lt. David Lentz was transferred to the 391st Bomb Group on 6 November 1944.

Sgt Bennie Underwood was transferred to a General Hospital. A jeep overturned and broke his leg.

S/Sgt John Marchino returned from 1st Air Force Clearing station. He was hurt by an incendiary some months previous.

Cpl Theodore Shahoda returned to duty. He had been wounded by an accidental discharge of a gun in the camp area.

Lt. T. B. Kessler returned from 205 Hospital.

Lt. Robert J. Kelley is still in the hospital, recovering from an operation.

Lt. Howard Aines who was wounded by flak on a mission over Germany, is still in the hospital and the penetrating leg wound he received is healing rapidly. He is expected back next month.

II. STRENGTH, cont'd:

Sgt James Festu one of our cooks was transferred to the 106th General Hospital to be treated for a back injury.

Lt. Richard S. Vickery, Communications Officer, was sent back to the States for treatment of a stomach ailment.

S/Sgt Wiley Lowery was transferred to Laredo, Texas as a gunnery instructor.

Lt. Brown returned from the hospital and is raring to go again.

Lt. William Lamb finished his 65th mission during the month and by reason of such, is now on his way back to the States for a rest and reassignment.

All who were free went out to Lt. Lamb's plane and had a jeep all decorated in his honor. A large sign signifying his 65th mission was on the jeep. Lt. Lamb was surely surprised and then he was taken to the Officers' Club, the boys had a party in his honor. Lt. Lamb is the first of our Squadron's pilots to complete sixty-five missions. We are all happy to know that his well deserved visit to the States is a reality.

III. LOSSES:

We're rather proud to report no losses for the month of November. Our greatest hazard is flak and it is the continued effort of Captain Copeland, the Squadron Intelligence Officer and also the Group Flak Officer, to have our missions accomplished with a minimum of flak damage. Elaborate Maps are kept for the purpose of drawing the "best route" in to the target and the safest way home. Our Group has had a minimum of of flak compared to other Groups. A part of the credit should go to Captain Copeland for his earnest effort.

IV. AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:

This highly decorated Squadron had but three awards in November. Lt. Howard Aines received the Purple Heart award for an injury received while over Germany on a mission. Lt. Aines, one of our stalwart Bombardiers and Navigators has been hit numerous times by flying plexiglass and has never considered it important. His leg would is healing nicely and he will be back with the boys soon.

Lt. Noths was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for excellence in performance of duties under fire. While his plane was operating on one engine, he attacked his objective and returned to the base. Our Squadron sparkles with men holding this award and it is but another indication of the type of men we have in the "Best damn light bomb squadron in the world".

T/Sgt Bruce D. Seeley received the Bronze star. As crew chief, he had his plane "ready on the line" under all conditions at all times and for fifty missions there was no mechanical failure of any kind.

IV. AWARDS AND DECORATIONS, cont'd:

The steadfast and diligent attitude exhibited by T/Sgt Seeley is not at all unusual in our Squadron. Five crew chiefs received this signal honor last month. All of which goes to show that our ground personnel as well as our flying personnel are definitely "on the ball".

It is very gratifying to our men to know that Major General Samuel Anderson takes a personal interest in what he calls "the men behind the planes" and awards to them a Bronze Star for performing their duties so well for such a sustained period.

V. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:

Its a genuine pleasure this month to give our genial Squadron Surgeon, Captain Edwin Turner a place in the limelight. (See Appendix 1)

Captain Turner was reared in Norfolk Virginia, and finished high school there. He finished college and attended the Medical school at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, completing his studies there in 1941. His home is in Atlanta Georgia now.

He was commissioned in July of 1941 and went on active duty in July 1942. After a year of Air schools and field work, he was assigned as a Flight Surgeon in the Air Corps and came to the 410th Bombardment Group in September 1943, where he was made Squadron Surgeon of the "Best damn light bomb squadron in the world".

His watchfulness over the "boys" has endeared him to all. He has taught us to get our injuries and ailments taken care of immediately. No one hesitates to go to his aid station to get fixed up. Surely a lot of us have a new approach toward medicine as a result of his efforts.

In addition to the normal duties of immunization and first aid, Captain Turner watches our food and water very carefully. Every drop of water is checked for residual Chlorine, before it is made available for use. The mess facilities are inspected three times a week as is the personnel also. Vitamin tablets are on every table to augment the diet. Of late, flying personnel have been given a series of sulphadiazine tablets to prevent colds.

Captain Turner has two ambulances operational at all times and is near the air strip when all missions take off or land.

Associated with the flying personnel as close as he is, enables him to observe combat "fatigue", among the members of the Squadron and it is his responsibility to recommend a period in a Rest Home to alleviate the condition.

Recently a call came in requesting "O" type blood. Over one-third of those having that type blood, came to Captain Turner as volunteer donors for the front line blood banks.

V. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH, cont'd:

In addition to constant lectures on first-aid, sanitation, personal hygiene, and care of the feet, the "Doc" has set up a Pro Station which is open, as is his aid station, twenty-four hours-a-day. Hot water, a distinct luxury, is provided at all times by means of an immersion heater in a large barrel. All men on pass are checked in and out and asked about exposure. This is Captain Turner's method of keeping his boys in good health. This is an indication of his whole hearted interest in his work and it reflects the admiration and respect, all of the "boys" have for him.

VI. MISSIONS:

Two members of our Squadron were injured in a crash-landing when their plane was disabled on a mission over Germany. The Pilot was Captain Robert F. Valtr, Bombardier-Navigator, Lt. Howard Aines, and crew members, Pvt Felix Wysowski and S/Sgt Evans. (See Appendix 2) The target was a railroad overpass in Germany. At the target area, Captain Valtr's ship was hit by Flak. His gas tanks were punctured and gas fumes were filling the gunners compartment. The radio was hit and the left tire punctured. Lt. Aines was wounded in the leg and bleeding.

Captain Valtr, could not operate the radio and he knew Lt. Aines was hurt so that he couldn't operate the bombsight, so with one engine damaged, he fell behind the formation and bombed the target visually with excellent effect. When in friendly territory, he bailed out his crew and made a crash-landing on a meadow which was cleared of cattle and observers by Pvt Wysowski.

The two wounded members, Lt. Aines and S/Sgt Evans were rushed to a hospital, while Captain Valtr and Pvt Wysowski stayed with the plane until the next morning.

For this sterling piece of work, the crew members have been recommended for the Distinguished Flying cross.

For the most part, our missions for the month were in close support of the ground forces. Upon two occassions the Commanding Generals of Divisions that had asked for aid sent messages of congratulations to the Group for excellence in bombing.

The number of missions were smaller than usual because of weather. Every attempt was made to overcome this obstacle. Several Missions were called back while enroute because conditions made it entirely impossible to achieve the desired result.

Concerning missions, it might be well to add that a new policy is now in force which allows gunners who have 50 or more missions to be eligible to return to the States. We have seven gunners eligible and needless to say, they are happy boys.

S/Sgt Fisher has already fulfilled the requirement under the new policy and is on his way back to the States.

VII. STATION LIFE:

The Enlisted Men's Club that we spoke of constructing last month, is a reality. A portable former German barracks building was obtained from an airfield near [illegible]. The boys dismantled it and brought it to our site and erected it. It's a good sound structure and enables the men to meet, play cards and lounge at their leisure. There is a bar and beer is served daily from 1700 to 2000. Since we all live in tents, a wooden building is a sort of luxury.

S/Sgt [illegible], our Squadron Supply Sergeant, is the President of the Enlisted Mens' Club. He is supported by a fine group of Club Officers and all is running smoothly. A gala party is planned for Christmas and from the looks of things, it's to be something for the books.

It was the first wartime election for most of the men. We had regular booths set up in the mess hall and Captain [illegible], our Adjutant, ran the election, like a veteran.

Thanksgiving Day will be one, long remembered. Lt. [illegible], our Mess Officer, [illegible] all the trimmings, except cranberry sauce; [illegible] we don't expect too much but the Thanksgiving dinner was the best one this Squadron has [illegible].

The [illegible] two weeks [illegible] two packs. [illegible] to sell [illegible]. [illegible] clearing [illegible]. [illegible] off to let the men [illegible]. [illegible] Christmas [illegible]. [illegible], C[illegible] "[illegible] C[illegible]".

[illegible] Christmas Cards [illegible], [illegible]. A [illegible]. [illegible], [illegible] of Christmas Cards [illegible].

[illegible] still exist in the French barbers who come twice a week to the Squadron area. Our laundry, cleaning and shoe repair facilities compare with average work done in the States.

We're still taking water out of the muddy river, filtering, purifying and constantly checking it. It still [illegible], [illegible].

O[illegible]. A [illegible]. [illegible], [illegible], [illegible].

[illegible] "[illegible]" [illegible]. [illegible], [illegible], [illegible].

VII. STATION LIFE, cont'd:

The Liberty run consisting of a two-and-one-half ton truck goes nightly to the nearby village of Coulommiers. Leaves the field at six-thirty and gets back at eleven.

In regard to the training program, we have our Bombardiers in the trainer, constantly. The Gunners have a special school. The Pilots are being acquainted with ground duties, and all are taking Recognition Classes. The medics are giving courses in First-Aid, and they have paid off dividends already. In short, everybody is learning and doing so that we shall always be the "Best damn Light Bomb Squadron in the World".

DON L. SULLIVAN,
1st Lt., AC.,
Historian.

Top

Capt. Robert Valtr
Pilot

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Bottom

Lt. Howard Aines
Bombardier-Navigator

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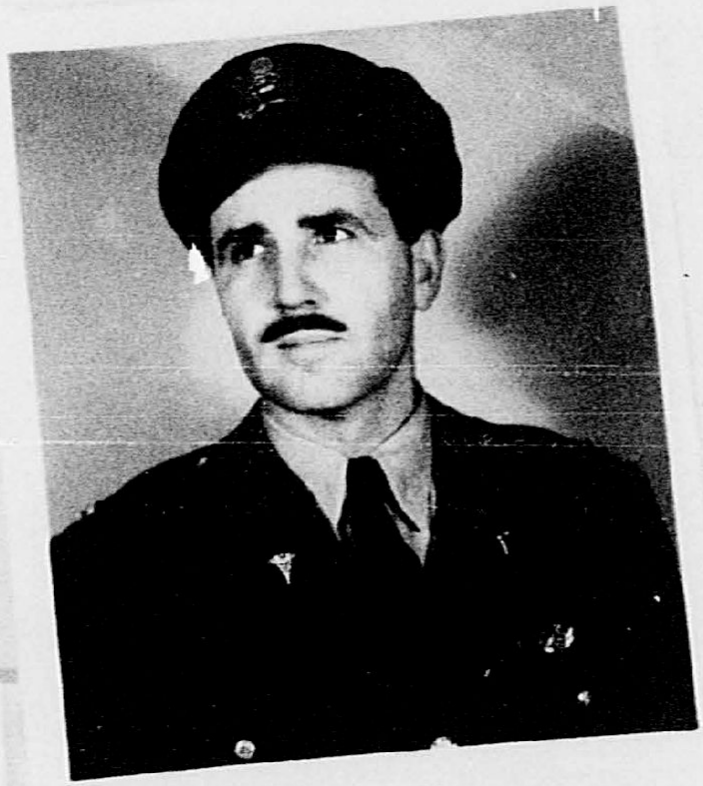
APPENDEX 2



Top
Capt. Edwin Turner
Squadron Surgeon

Bottom
Lt. William Lamb
Gun mission

APPENDEX 2