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UNIT HISTORY

644th Bombardment Squadron (L)

APO 140

UNITED STATES ARMY

COVERING THE PERIOD 1 DEC.'44 TO 31 DEC.'44

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I. ORGANIZATION AND PROMOTIONS:

There have been two phases of organizational growth in our present Squadron set-up.

The first concerns ordinary living. Camp-life and its problems have largely been solved. This involved smoothing out little frictions caused by extra duties, longer hours and constantly being on the alert in a new environment. A routine has been established and everyone is doing his part for the common good. A familiar sight is Colonel Paulson, our Commanding Officer, chopping wood for an evening fire. Everyone chops wood in our Squadron and it is this spirit that carries over to other activities.

With relation to the actual Squadron organization and its purpose in the War effort, we have only to point to our results for the month. Our bombing record is probably the best so far and our Group should lead both the Light and Medium Bombers of our Division in accuracy of bombing. This was possible because of good teams and continuous training in their specific duties.

It is the Squadron's policy to train every man continuously so as to have the "Best damn Light Bomb Squadron in the World".

In refuting the often repeated ditty about "no promotions this side of the ocean", we promoted seventeen gunners who were Corporals, to the grade of Sergeant.

Lt. Robert Lamb who was described in our last month's History and who is now in the States, received his Captaincy en-route home. We were all pleased with this news. Captain Lamb was a flight leader and an able man, both in the air and on the ground.

II. STRENGTH:

As of 31 December 1944, there were 77 Officers assigned, (plus one attached) and 315 Enlisted Men.

Although the totals are similar to those of the first of the month, there have been several returned to the States and replacements have come in to the Squadron.

III. CHANGES IN STATION:

1st Lt. John Crone, Censor and Personal Equipment Officer, was transferred to the 386th Bombardment Group, as Engineering Officer. Lt. Crone was a research engineer in the Texaco laboratories for over five years before he was commissioned. We all

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III. CHANGES IN STATION, cont'd:

know how interested he was in engineering and hope this opportunity will fulfill his desires.

1st Lt. Edwin G. Mattson was placed on detached service to the 9th Bombardment Division, as Club Officer.

1st Lt. Howard Aines came back from the hospital, where he had been recuperating from flak wounds.

1st Lt. Robert Mayer was assigned as an Engineering Officer. He has been in other Units in this capacity in Belgium and Luxembourg.

Sgt Underwood who broke his leg in a jeep accident was transferred to the 203rd General Hospital.

S/Sgt Walsky who parachuted into a tree in the Eupen area, after bailing out of Lt. Winkler's aircraft was sent to the 2nd Evacuation Hospital on 3 December 1944, and returned to the Squadron on the 23rd of December 1944.

S/Sgt Evans who was wounded by flak was transferred to a convalescent Hospital in England. Seven of our gunners went home under the new rotation plan whereby gunners having 50 or more missions to their credit are made eligible to be returned to the States.

The happy boys are:

S/Sgt W. E. Albrecht,
S/Sgt R. Dejarnett,
S/Sgt J. Devecko,
S/Sgt J. Kishlo,
S/Sgt T. Oblak,
S/Sgt W. J. Vinerek,
S/Sgt W. Young.

S/Sgt Joseph A. Fisher was the first gunner of the original group to complete 65 missions.

No more desirable Christmas present could be given, than the one he received, namely, a trip ticket home. He left Christmas Day with all our best wishes. By this time the boys should all be enjoying the comforts of home. (See annex for photographs).

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IV. LOSSES:

On 12 December 1944, the Group had a mission to Wollseifen, a defended Village, which was holding up the Allied Ground Forces.

During the attack, Lt. John F. Lubben (Pilot), of Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin, Sgt Charles L. Spiegel, his gunner, left the formation and were seen to disappear in a cloud formation.

They were reported as missing and so far, no report has come through on them.

V. AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:

Several awards and Decorations normally due during the month of December were not formally awarded and so for purposes of this report, there were none. However there were several instances of action under combat conditions which merited awards which shall be forthcoming.

VI. 644TH SQUADRON IN THE WAR EFFORT:

The part our Squadron played in the War effort for the month of December borders on being spectacular.

Five days at Christmas time, we had seven missions. The Commanding General of our Wing, General Backus sent the members of our Group a letter of commendation, stating that we had performed our missions with superior results. During the five days, we dropped one-tenth of the total amount of bombs dropped while we have been in Europe.

During the month, the men of the 644th Squadron participated in close support work aiding the ground forces in the "bulge" area.

In six instances, the results of our bombing allowed our troops to surge forward and move the bomb line closer to Berlin.

Our targets have included Marshalling yards, Defended Villages, Road Junctions and Communication Centers. The obliteration of these targets has considerably destroyed the supply and communication systems of the enemy.

Three of our pilots completed their sixty-fifth mission and by reason this makes them eligible to have leave in the States. Lt. Rath, Lt. Newark and Lt. Randall were the lucky boys. They are headed for Wisconsin, New Jersey and Kentucky respectively. (See Photo-Annex).

Lt. Winkler crash-landed his plane in the Eupen area after bailing out his gunners. He was unable to jettison his escape

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VI. 644TH SQUADRON IN THE WAR EFFORT, cont'd:

hatch and was forced to crash land his aircraft which had two failing motors. He was uninjured but had to chop his way out of the cockpit. He had some interesting tales to tell about front line ground troop procedures.

Christmas day 1944 will be one long remembered day for Lt. Carter and his two gunners Cpl Beck and Cpl Aiken.

They were en route to the Primary target when one motor cut out, forcing him out of the formation. The rest of the group had bombed and he couldn't pick up his aiming point because of the smoke. He then went back to the I.P. and took another run at 6000', still on single engine and scored an excellent. En route home, six ME 109's came in on the feathered engine side twice, but the turret gunner fired at them and the enemy disappeared. This fearless attitude in the line of duty will surely be rewarded.

VII. PERSONNEL PROBLEMS:

There have been no personnel problems in our Squadron. The Enlisted Men have worked hard and long and we know it, and we tell them we know it. We also show them just exactly where their job fits in the picture of knocking out the enemy.

In weekly talks, we show them what the Squadron has done, what the Group has accomplished and the end result on the bomb line. With every man realizing the part he fulfills in the picture, reprimands are few and courts-martial practically non-existent.

VIII. STATION LIFE:

Station Life seems to be on the improvement. More and more, activities are being brought to the base.

Movies are being shown in the Squadron areas as well as in the Movie tent. They aren't too good but now and then Class "A" pictures will creep in to the amusement of everyone.

Everything was done to make things as Christmasy as possible. Trees were set up in the Enlisted Mens' Club and the Officers' Club. Although the Post was restricted because of extrinsic military reasons the boys had a good time.

The Christmas dinner was out of this world. "Everything was provided and the turkey was delicious."

Midnight Mass on Christmas eve was held in a two century old French Chapel near by, while Protestant services were held during the day. Both services were well attended.

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VIII. STATION LIFE, cont'd:

We are now getting five packages of cigarettes per week. This has been a boon to the lovers of nicotine.

The Christmas mail also came through. Packages mailed at the proper time were received before Christmas. All sorts of goodies were added to the festive board because of the parcels from home.

We still are taking out-door showers, still have the out-door bathroom, still live in tents, still chop wood and still carry water. In regard to the weather it was eight degrees above zero. The French call it "froid", but to most of us, it was damn cold.

IX. SPECIAL INTEREST SUBJECTS:

One night, the base was strafed by an enemy fighter. The boys on the guns gave him the old rat-tat-tat, and he didn't come back anymore.

We have red alerts off and on all night.

We are sending flying officers and their crews up to the front for liaison work with the ground forces. The personal contact with the problems of the ground forces is broadening the aspect of flying personnel. Beneficial results are expected from these contacts.

Captain Monro and his two gunners, Sgt. Marolda and Sgt. Andrews, reported to the AIA P.M.C. Headquarters at Nancy on such a trip. After a brief Orientation lecture by the G-3, they were assigned to the XII Corps at Saaraki.

Fighter bomber activity in relation to close support work was studied on the spot.

Part of the time was spent inspecting the Maginot Line, and later in Germany, the front line.

This is all toward a concerted effort to make the 644th Bombardment Squadron, "The Best damn Light Bomb Squadron in the World!"

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S/SGT. WM. ALBRECHT

BOTTOM
S/SGT. W.J. VILBERG

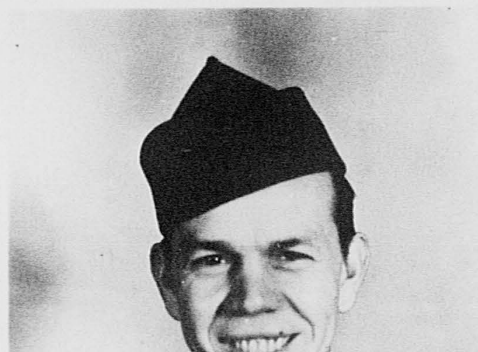
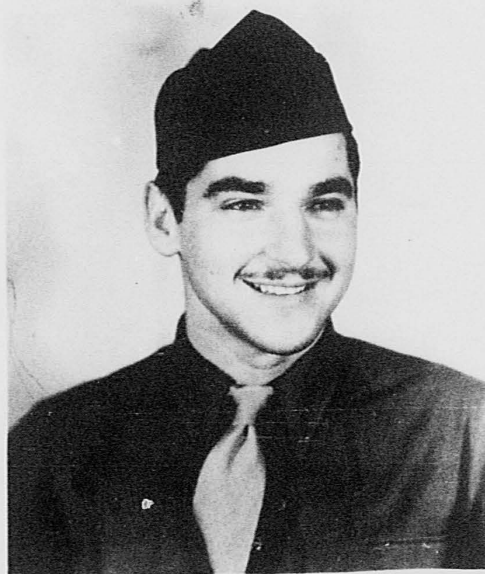
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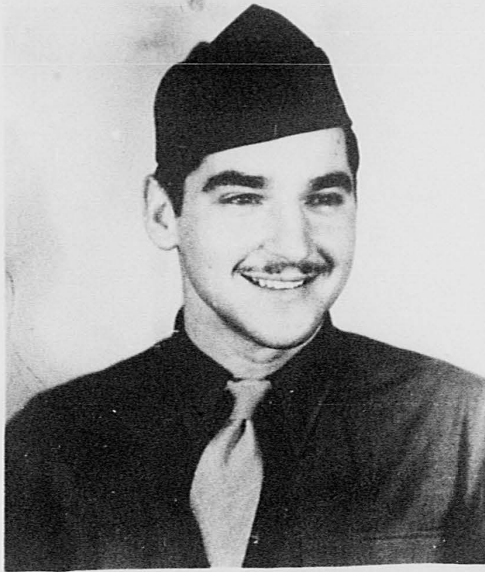
C/SGT. THOMAS OBLAK

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C/SGT. PAUL H. DE JARNETTE

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C /SGT. JOHN HIGLEY

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C/SGT. Wm. A. YOUNG

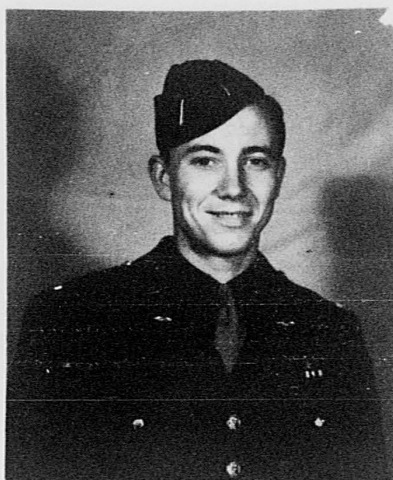
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LT. RANDALL

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"MERRY CHRISTMAS"

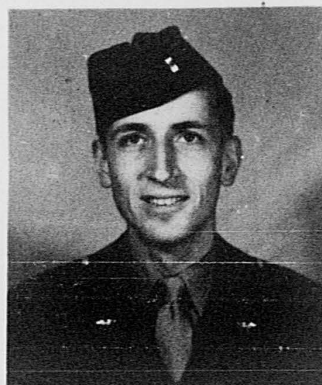
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LT. WINKLER

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LT. CARTER and CREW

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LT. RATHB

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LT. NEWBARK

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