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UNIT HISTORY

646TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (L)

APO 140

UNITED STATES ARMY

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

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INDEX

- I. ORGANIZATION.....Page 1,
- II. STRENGTH.....Page 1,
- III. LOSSES IN ACTION.....Page 1 & 2,
- IV. PART IN THE WAR EFFORT...Page 2.

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I. ORGANIZATION:

On 1 December 1944, Captain J. Duane Wethe was appointed Squadron Tech Inspector and Tactical Inspector (Additional Duty)<sup>1</sup>, and 1st Lt. Robert M. Race was appointed Squadron Administrative Inspector<sup>1</sup>. On 2 December 1944, Captain Gerald F. Dale was appointed Flight Test and Engineering Officer<sup>2</sup>, 1st Lt. George W. Lane Jr. was appointed Assistant Flight Test and Engineering Officer<sup>2</sup>; 1st Lt. Henry A. Fly was appointed Squadron Information and Education Officer (Add Dy)<sup>2</sup>. On 7 December 1944, 1st Lt. Roy A. Wiedman was appointed Flight Test and Engineering Officer, vice Captain Gerald F. Dale, KIA; 1st Lt. Roy A. Wiedman was appointed Assistant Operations Officer (Add Dy)<sup>3</sup>; 1st Lt. Melvin W. Peterson was appointed Unit Fire Marshall (Add Dy)<sup>3</sup>; 1st Lt. Raymond R. Craddock was appointed Mud Control Officer (Add Dy)<sup>3</sup>.

II. STRENGTH:

The strength of the Unit consisted of 62 Officers and 299 Enlisted Men on 31 December 1944. On 16 December 1944, five Bombardier-Navigators joined the Group<sup>4</sup>, and were assigned this Squadron<sup>5</sup>. On the same day, one Intelligence Officer, 1st Lt. Frederick M. Dick, joined the Group<sup>6</sup>, and was assigned this Unit<sup>7</sup>. 2nd Lt. Loren C. Covington, Pilot, transferred to 127th Replacement Bn, AAF, on 17 December 1944.<sup>8</sup> The Squadron had its first combat crew member to complete 65 missions. 1st Lt. Alden C. Clark, S/Sgt Theodore Pelletier and S/Sgt Byron R. Sample were transferred to 127th Replacement Bn, AAF Station 591, on 19 December 1944<sup>9</sup> to await shipment home. Other aerial Gunners to be sent home during the period under the Air Forces Rotation Plan were; S/Sgts Donald W. Noren, Carl V. Pitts, Harry Appel, James E. Jackson, Shelah E. Campbell, Vere H. Miller, Giulio Ortolan, Hugh G. Whitehurst, Jr., Leroy C. Eglington, Marcel S. Bibeau and Gene H. Frederick. All were transferred to 127th Replacement Bn, AAF Station 591 on 28 December 1944<sup>10</sup>.

III. LOSSES IN ACTION:

Three pilots and two gunners were lost in action during the period.

On the first day of the month, while participating in a mission against Saarlautern, in Germany, the plane piloted by 1st Lt. Ward L. Neff had an engine failure shortly after take-off and crashed near the field with full bomb load. Lt. Neff was killed when his parachute failed to function properly, a split across the middle of the fabric indicating the bomb concussion as the probable cause. His gunners, S/Sgt Myron Hayes and S/Sgt James E. Doherty parachuted to safety.

Captain Gerald F. Dale was killed in action on 5 December 1944 on a mission against Kall. Flak damage over the target knocked out one of his planes' engines and he was forced to leave the formation, after getting a fix on a friendly field. Unable to maintain altitude, Captain Dale ordered his gunners out and then attempted to bring



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III. LOSSES IN ACTION, cont'd:

the plane in, the altitude by that time being insufficient for him to jump. He was killed in the resulting crash.

On 25 December 1944, 1st Lt. Clarence Schurman, S/Sgt John S. Gaul and S/Sgt Milton W. Palmer were lost over enemy territory. On a mission against a railhead at Ahutte, their planes' left wing was torn off by flak while over the target and spun in. Two chutes were seen to open. All three crew members are missing in action.

IV. PART IN WAR EFFORT:

The first part of the month saw the Squadron participating in missions against enemy strongpoints and communication centers in close support of Allied Ground Forces striking at Western Germany. With the launching of Von Rundstedts counter-offensive on 19 December, and the tactical Air Forces called upon to help stop the German drive, the Squadron took to the air in its greatest effort since D-Day. Blessed by a stretch of cold, clear weather and with its pilot-bombardier teams operating at peak proficiency, the planes of the 646th blasted at targets in and around the enemy's formed "bulge" with infallible accuracy. For bombing effectiveness this period was the high point in the Unit's history. The Squadron is justly proud that, with the chips down, she came through, and shared in halting what may have been the final enemy threat to Allied Victory.

1. Sq. Order #40, 646th Bomb Sq (L),
2. Sq. Order #41, 646th Bomb Sq (L),
3. Sq. Order #42, 646th Bomb Sq (L),
4. Par. #16, S.O. #78, Hq, IXth Bomb Div. (M),
5. Par. # 2, S.O. #157, Hq 410th Bomb Gp (L),
6. Par. #10, S.O. #78, Hq IXth Bomb Div. (M),
7. Par #8, S.O. #157, Hq 410th Bomb Gp (L),
8. Par #12, S.O. #347, Hq, 9th Air Force,
9. Par #1, S.O. #79, Hq, IXth Bomb Div. (M),
10. Par #1, S.O. #88, Hq, IXth Bomb Div. (M).