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UNIT HISTORY

646TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (L)

APO 140

UNITED STATES ARMY

COVERING THE PERIOD 1 Feb. '45 to 28 Feb. '45.

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I. ORGANIZATION:

There were few changes in key personnel during the period. Capt. Gerold E. Bickley was appointed Assistant Communications Officer (Add Dy)¹. 1st Lt. Donald A. Fentgelly was appointed Assistant Armament Officer (Add Dy)¹, in place of 1st Lt. Clarence Schurman. Capt. Bickley gave way to 1st Lt. Clyde Z. McSwain as leader of flight "D"² while 1st Lt. Phillip L. Day replaced Capt. J. Duane Wetne as leader of Flight "A"².

II. STRENGTH:

The strength of the unit consisted of 54 officers and 298 enlisted men on 28 February 1945. 1st Lt. Roland G. McDonald was evacuated to the States after being seriously wounded in action. Flight Officer Walter L. Arager, who had joined the outfit in France, was also sent home, as a result of injuries sustained in a crash landing when returning from a training flight. Capt. Joseph A. Nicholson and S/Sgt Marcel S. Bibeau completed their 50th missions and returned home under the Air Forces rotation plan. One pilot, one bombardier-navigator and two gunners joined the group on 1 February³ and were assigned this unit.⁴

III. CHANGE OF STATION:

The unit moved to the airfield at Juvin-court, AAF Station A-68, located about fifteen miles north of Rheims, during the period. The movement was completed in three echelons, Advanced, Air and Rear. Each echelon effected its move in one day and the squadron was soon comfortably situated in German-built barracks in the town of Juvin-court. After the cold tents of Coulommiers, the new "luxurious quarters" were not hard to take.

IV. PART IN WAR EFFORT:

Bad weather confined most of the month's operations to PFF missions. Outstanding, however, were the few others flown during breaks in the overcast. A real milestone was February 3rd, when seven crews from the squadron took part in the group's first night mission. The target was a motor vehicle repair depot at Mechernich. Bombing by the light of flares and marker bombs, the planes came in over the target at 15 second intervals and at varying altitudes. A-20's, B-26's and the new A-26 Invaders were all used in this latest phase of the tactical air war. A second night

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mission, in which nine crews from the squadron participated, was flown against the communication center of Slatzheim on February 22nd. Ten planes from the 640th, led by the pilot-bombardier team of Maj. Gus Weiser and 1st Lt. Elliot L. Landon, took part in an attack against the group's first strategic target. The objective was a factory at Solingen making jet units for the enemies new planes and buzz bombs. Strike photos disclosed excellent results with severe damage inflicted upon the buildings and other installations. Probably the highlight of the month's operations and, from a bombing accuracy standpoint, of the squadron's history, was the mission "Clarion" flown on February 22nd. A part of a vast aerial blow, aimed at knocking out simultaneously all of the enemies key rail facilities, supplying his front lines, the group had six different targets to be attacked by eight flights. The flights furnished by the squadron had as their target the marshalling yard at Lauterecken. That lead by Weiser and Landon had excellent results while the other, led by Capt. Donald D. Anderson and 1st Lt. Robert L. Reiman, went them one better and chalked up a Superior. In all, during the month, the squadron participated in 21 missions against road junctions, defended villages and railway yards, in addition to those mentioned above. An average of approximately ten crews was furnished for each mission and the total sorties flown by the unit during the period was 212.

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1. Sq. Order # 7, 646th Bomb Sq (L).
 2. Sq. Order # 8, 646th Bomb Sq (L).
 3. Par 13, S.O. # 27, Hq 134th Repl Bn (AAF).
 4. Par 1, S.O. # 9, Hq 410th Bomb Gp (L).