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To the meteorologists, the month of February was characterized by "broken strato-cumulus and towering cumulus clouds, with a showery type of precipitation," which translates roughly as meaning "better than usual" weather. Also better than usual were the activities of the 92nd Bombardment Group during the month, for, in total number of missions flown and total number of aircraft in operation, the 92nd reached new heights---as, indeed, did the 8th Air Force.

The Group participated in 12 missions, having briefed for 14 and been alerted for 17. A total of 308 aircraft were dispatched, of which 243 were over targets. Abortions totalled 21 or less than 7% of the number dispatched; 16 planes were lost---approximately 5% of the number dispatched.

Fortresses of the 92nd ranged as far north as Aalborg, in the nail of the Danish thumb; to Leipzig in the east, to Augsburg in the south. Operational statistics were impressive---38 planes were over the target at Wilhelmshaven, 31 at Leipzig, 26 at Frankfurt.

After two inactive days due to unfavorable weather, the month got off to a flying start on the 3rd, with the once-great submarine base at Wilhelmshaven the target. Due to 10/10 cloud, IFF technique was employed, with results not observable. All aircraft--the largest number yet put over a target--returned safely.

Frankfurt was the objective on February 6th, and a combination of circumstances made the day a most unfortunate one for the Group. The lead aircraft failed to take off due to mechanical difficulties. The deputy lead took over but was forced to abort shortly after entering the enemy coast. Some confusion resulted because the formation at the time was flying straight into the sun, and by the time the leader of the high squadron assumed group command, the group was 30 miles off course and separated from the Combat Wing. At this point they were attacked by 30 enemy fighters, and the group leader and wing aircraft shot down. The low squadron leader took over, and, realizing the impossibility of joining the Combat Wing formation decided to abandon the mission. Two aircraft of the

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326th Bombardment Squadron and one of the 327th Bombardment Squadron, piloted respectively by 1st Lt. Milton V. Shevchik, 1st Lt. Warren E. McMurray and 2nd Lt. Robert D. Lehner, failed to return.

Following eight bad weather days, 31 planes--the second largest number of the month--took off for Leipzig on the 20th. The raid marked the farthest eastward penetration for February, and followed a heavy RAF attack the previous night. Good bombing results were reported. One aircraft of the 326th Squadron, piloted by 2nd Lt. Harvey H. Jessen, did not return.

The 326th and 407th Squadrons suffered losses of 5 aircraft each, the 327th Squadron lost 4, and the 325th, 2. (See Appendix A.)

Awards for February included 17 DFCs, of which 14 were for completion of missions, 6 Purple Hearts and 206 Air Medals. Oak Leaf Clusters totalled 182; 1 to the DFC, awarded to S/Sgt. Joseph M. Walsh of the 326th, 180 to the Air Medal and 1 to the Silver Star. (See Appendix B.) The latter was awarded 1/Sgt.

Wen A. Hansen of the 326th for "gallantry in action while serving as a Radio Operator and Gunner on a bombing mission over Germany, October 4, 1943." Although seriously wounded and suffering severe pain, Sgt. Hansen remained at his gun and skillfully fought off repeated enemy attacks.

The 3 additional DFCs were awarded to 1st Lt. Jacob Pullilove, Jr., of the 325th Squadron, and Lt. Stanley F. Koropsak and 1st Lt. Bernard A. Makowski of the 326th Squadron. Lt. Pullilove's award was earned in a mission over Germany on December 13, 1943. Prior to reaching the objective, one engine of his aircraft became disabled. In spite of this he maintained his position in the formation and successfully bombed the target. Just after the bombing run, a second engine was knocked out and he was forced to abandon the formation. By employing violent evasive tactics, he eluded enemy fighters and reached the English coast, where a third engine burst into flames. Although forced to bring his crippled aircraft down with only one engine operating, Lt. Pullilove located an emergency airfield and landed safely without further damage to his aircraft.

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Lt. Koropsak, a bombardier, was decorated for extraordinary achievement during a mission over Germany on November 26, 1943. Though under constant attack during the bombing run, he released his bombs accurately on the target and, on leaving the target area, manned the nose guns, destroying one enemy plane and warding off numerous fierce attacks. During these attacks the pilot, Lt. Makowski and co-pilot were both wounded. When the attacks ceased, Lt. Koropsak moved the wounded co-pilot, administered first-aid and returned to the cockpit to assume the co-pilot's duties. Due to the pilot's wounded condition, Lt. Koropsak flew the plane back to England, and gave invaluable assistance to the pilot in making a safe landing.

Lt. Makowski's decoration was a tribute to his courage and flying skill on the same mission over Germany, November 26, 1943. Fierce fighter attacks wounded Lt. Makowski, wounded and incapacitated his co-pilot, damaged the control column and wrecked the instrument panel. In spite of his wounds and these handicaps, Lt. Makowski kept his crippled plane in formation and, with the help of Lt. Koropsak accomplished a perfect landing at the home base.

Officer promotions during the month included 2 to Major, 7 to Captain and 29 to 1st Lt. (See Appendix C). 7 officers and 5 enlisted men completed their tour of duty during the month. (See Appendix D).

A realignment of the M.P. complement was begun early in the month with the arrival of Detachment A, 1140th Military Police Co.(Avn) consisting of 1 officer and 23 enlisted men. On February 3 Detachment A, 1142 Military Police Co (Avn) was transferred to the Group and the detachments consolidated with a total strength of 2 officers and 56 men. 1st Lt. Frank A. Guiner was appointed Provost Marshall.

Because of the ever-present possibility of sabotage, a perimeter guard to tighten the security of the airrome was instituted on February 16. Eleven additional guard posts were created, each charged with the specific protection of a group of aircraft. Sentries and Corporals of the Guard were furnished by the Squadron personnel.

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The "Arena", long a pet project of the Special Service Officer, 1st Lt. Walter E. Fieg, was completed on February 17th, although formal opening was postponed until better weather. Designed for tennis, handball, basketball, boxing and summer dancing, the "Arena" covers an area 70 x 110 feet with concrete to the depth of 6 inches. According to Lt. Fieg, there is no similar construction on any other base. Its cost was somewhat over 400 pounds, of which 140 pounds was subscribed by officers and men. The deficit is expected to be made up in the future by further subscription, plus the profits from the Enlisted Men's Bar, scheduled to open in March.

The 92nd Group's flexible skeet range was completed in February, and an average of 300 gunners per week trained. The range--an elaboration of the "Jeep skeet" (firing at clay pigeons from a jeep)--was incorporated in the Gunnery Training program after it had been seen in operation at Cheddington.

The principles involved incorporate the use of a weapons carrier with a flat platform and railing. The shotgun is mounted on a regular waist gun mount, with an Edgewater adaptor, ring and bead sight, in order to simulate actual battle conditions. The course consists of four trap houses of various heights and angles of deflection so that the "bird" may be thrown in such a manner as to provide tracking practice for the flexible gunners as well as give them rapid coordination. The positioning of the houses enables a greater variety of shots. In addition to the normal value of skeet to the gunner, the moving base adds the problem of forward motion to be compensated for, and thus affords extra training.

Social activities during the month include an E.M. Baby Picture Contest, on February 3, won by Pfc Francis B. Roan, and an Officers Dance on February 5th, which drew an attendance of approximately 400.

The Red Cross Aero Club, after an initial two weeks of operation in January, swung into full activity during the month. The February 2nd "Ground Hog Day Variety Show" was well attended and received. On February 14th, the "Valentine's Day Dance" drew a crowd of several hundred. Ping Pong, bridge games, song-fests and quiz shows were featured during the month.

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The quiz contests--originating as inter-squadron affairs--proved particularly successful. After a series of contests had determined the 327th Squadron team as winners, a team representing the station and including two members of the 327th was organized. The station team then successively defeated two teams from other AAF stations as well as a team of officers from this Group. These contests, particularly the latter, attracted a great deal of interest.

Early in February, the Post Exchange girls suddenly emerged in military-type maroon dresses, gold-buttoned. It may be coincidental, but sales figures for the PX in February were 3342 Pounds, as against 2788 Pounds in January.

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