

"On the occasion of the Second Anniversary of this Group I wish to express my personal appreciation to all personnel for the magnificent job you have done--often under the most difficult and disheartening conditions.

"We are now the oldest group in the ETO and are approaching our 100th Combat Mission. Our war record is one of the best in the entire Eight Air Force....this in spite of the fact that shortly after our arrival in England, the organization was practically dissolved and actually lost its identity.

"To those veterans who have been with us since Mac Dill Field, my thanks for refusing to quit--and to those who have joined us from time to time since then, my appreciation for the way you have carried on.

"Hope we can all celebrate the next one in the States."

The statement came on April 1 from Colonel William M. Reid, commanding officer of the 92nd Bombardment Group. What might have been added were these facts; that in those two years were only 15 operational months, in which period 95 missions had been flown, several thousands of tons of bombs dropped and 102 enemy aircraft destroyed.

The statement was heartening and timely, following a record-breaking month. But after the high promise of the last part of March, when 7 missions were flown in 10 days, April opened with a stretch of its traditional weather, and fog and gloom in equal proportions settled over the base.

Invasion was imminent, the Starg and Stripes bill, at expectation, echoed by the London newspapers. The aerial bombardment of the continent was "around the clock", the B.B.C. announced. But the 32nd Group was not participating; for five straight days the Group was stood down, and the next four days were even worse--the desolate and nerve-wrecking trinity of "alerted, briefed, scrubbed." Finally, on April 10, 20 aircraft successfully attacked the Evert airbase north of Brussels, and the operational month was under way.

Despite this long-delayed beginning, the month of April held up well, in statistical comparison. The Group flew 14 missions, only 2 less than the record set in March, and was alerted for 29 and briefed for 32, as compared to the previous months' figures of 22 and 20, respectively. 300 aircraft were dispatched, of which 270 successfully attacked targets. Two chastening figures: the loss of 3 aircraft in the Stettin raid of April 11 was the largest yet sustained by the Group; the total number of aircraft lost during the month was 16, which while no greater than in February and March, was in higher proportion to planes dispatched, or slightly more than 5%.

On the brighter side of the picture was the spectacularly low number of abortives (turnback after wing assembly); 2, or less than 1% of aircraft dispatched, by far the lowest percentage in recent operational history. The 320th Bombardment Squadron hung up a perfect maintenance record for the month with neither turnback nor abortion from any combat mission.

Exactly half of the month's sorties were into the German heart-- to Havel and Elbe and Brunswick, further east to Berlin and Brandenburg, north as far as Stettin, south to Chemnitz/Hofen.

Longest and most costly mission of the month was the April 11th raid on the industrial area of Stettin, when only 20 aircraft returned safely of the 20 dispatched. 6 aircraft of the 325th Squadron, flying as low squadron of the high group, were lost to savage and persistent fighter and flak attack. These ships were piloted by 1st Lts Charles D. Hickey and John A. Weaver Jr., and 2nd Lts Ernest L. Fortson, Charles E. Mikesell, Robert J. Rasmussen, Donald H. Shufeldt. This disaster was the greatest yet suffered by any one squadron in any one mission. (On March 23, 1944, the 325th Squadron had lost 4 aircraft over Berlin; the 327th Squadron lost 3 at Schweinfurt, Oct. 14, 1943; the 328th Squadron lost 3 at Gelsenkirchen, August 12, 1943.)

Other aircraft lost on the Stettin mission were piloted by 1st Lt. Richard W. Donaher of the 325th Squadron, and 2nd Lt. John E. Harris of the 327th Squadron. S/Sgt. John R. Kindred of the 327th Squadron, tail gunner on 1st Lt. Virgil W. Hill's aircraft, was killed by enemy fighter fire.

The entire mission was flown at an altitude of about 15,000 feet and required 11 hours to complete. Crew members described it as one of the "toughest" in memory. Enemy fighters outnumbered friendly ones, and the flak was accurate, varying from moderate to intense. Bombing results were good.

On April 20th, the Group dispatched its largest number of aircraft for the month- 36 - to attack construction sites at Lingen and Radenagues in the Pas de Calais area. The mission was truly memorable; the targets were of high priority and the bombing pattern concentrated; no planes were lost; it was the 92nd Group's 100th combat mission.

A Dornier assembly plant and repair works at Oberpfaffenhofen, 15 miles south of Munich, was the target for April 24. Excellent bombing results were obtained by 27 planes, but at the cost of 5 aircraft lost to severe enemy fighter attacks. These aircraft were piloted by 2nd Lts Richard F. Anthony and Bernard Rosenfeld of the 326th Bombardment Squadron, 1st Lt William W. Farramore and 2nd Lts Earl Howard, Jr. and James E. King, all of the 407th Squadron. Lt King's aircraft exploded over Baltenswil, Switzerland. Funeral services were held for Lt King and members of his crew in Berns on April 27, and the bodies were interred at Munsingen, where United States military authorities some time ago acquired a cemetery.

1st Lt Gordon E. Glubb of the 325th Squadron had the dubious distinction and near-tragic experience of being struck by the bomb salvo of a higher group. In violent evasive action to avoid the heavy flak at Oberpfaffenhofen, Lt Glubb's ship was struck by 2 500 GP bombs, one shearing away the horizontal stabilizer, and the other knocking out the #3 engine. The latter bomb landed on the

wing back of the dinghy, bouncing into the engine. By even more violent evasive action, Lt Clubb managed to dislodge the bomb, but not until after he and his crew had undergone a very tense sixty minutes. Upon landing away, at Bradwell Bay, the bomb fuze was discovered in the stricken engine.

On April 27, for the first time, the Group flew two missions, to Bois Coquerel in the morning and to Nancy/Essey in the afternoon. This, the first of the often-rumoured "double-headers," was not entirely successful, since the target was not identified in the morning mission and in consequence, no bombs were dropped. Results in the afternoon were better, and all aircraft returned safely from each mission.

Of the 16 aircraft lost during the month, the 325th Squadron had 6, the 326th 5, the 407th 4 and the 327th, 1. (See Appendix A.)

Awards for the month included 1 Silver Star, 27 DFCs and 28 Air Medals. Oak Leaf Clusters were presented to 2 holders of the DFC and to 182 holders of the Air Medal. (See Appendix B.)

T/Sgt James C. Underwood, Jr., a radio operator-gunner of the 325th Bombardment Squadron, was presented the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal and the Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal. This quadruple award, earned in the Southwest Pacific theater during 1942 and 1943, was given Sgt Underwood on April 8. Three days later, flying his 75th combat mission of the war and his 16th in the ETO, Sgt Underwood was

lost in the disaster that overwhelmed his squadron at Stettin. The aircraft in which he flew, piloted by 1st Lt John R. Weaver, Jr., was believed to have exploded about 12 miles north of Brunswick, an early victim of the savage fighter attack on the high group that day. Sgt Underwood, who entered service from Missouri, had joined the Group in December of 1913.

Officer promotions during the month were 1 to Major; 7 to Captain; 24 to 1st Lieutenant. (See Appendix C.)

31 Officers and 40 enlisted men completed tours of duty. (See Appendix D.) On April 19, Major Julian R. Thornton, Jr., Group Bombardier, and Major James K. McLoughlin, Asst. Group Operations, after having completed their initial operational tours, left on 30 day leave. Destination: USA. Upon their return, they will begin an additional tour.

Although the Group was alerted more days in April than in any previous month, the training programs were satisfactorily maintained, and in some categories, increased. The Link Trainers operated a total of 279 hours in April, as against 188 hours in March.

During the month, a sighting platform was installed in the Flexible Gunnery and Turret Training hangar which, together with other improvements, further developed the gunnery training program. Training was afforded for every gun position, and the turret trainer schedule practically doubled. On one non-operational day, 79 turret

gunners needed instruction, an increase of several hundred per cent over any previous similar period.

CWS activities for the month were chiefly confined to the procurement and issuance of Class II and Class IV supplies. All T/DA shortages were brought up to date. The Station Gas Defense Plan was rewritten and revised, outlining completely the procedure, personnel involved and action to be taken in the event of enemy gas attack. Chemical incendiaries loaded in April were considerably less than in March. In the second week of the month, the 32nd Station Complement began a 16 hour training course covering all the important phases of defense against chemical attack.

Work was begun in April on a pipe-laying project to divert part of the sewage from Communal Site B to the sewage plant located north of Communal Site A. The work was initiated and handled by the British Air Ministry under reverse lend-lease.

The "D.C. Bias " system, an emergency lighting arrangement providing the base with lights for the Technical Site and flying field in the event of a power breakdown, was installed during the month. Wiring was done by the Air Ministry. The system could be set into operation by switches controlled by both the Commanding Officer and the Station Engineer, but could not be turned off except by the latter.

An increase in the venereal disease rate was noted during the week of April 8-15, when 6 new cases were reported. The VD rate had

slightly increased in January and February over previous months and had dropped somewhat in March. Personnel were cautioned to improve the condition.

Beginning with the interrogation after the first operational mission on the 10th, the Medical Section authorized the issuance of "60 cc of Spiritus Frumenti" to combat personnel only. In less involved language, this meant a healthy shot of Scotch whisky. But the issuance was clinically severe, supervised by medical officers; each portion was signed for; and thirsty ground personnel were, as one S-2 officer put it, "mere ghosts at the feast."

On April 5, all passes and furloughs except for men on combat were cancelled until further notice, an order which caused considerable speculation. It was generally agreed to be because of Easter or because of the impending invasion, or both. Easter passed, the invasion still impended, and further notice came several days later, in the form of a new area pass system. Later in the month the old type pass was restored, but with a 24 hour limit instead of the 48 hours previously enjoyed.

The station baseball team was organized and began practice on April 11 for the season to start a month later. The 1949 team had been signally successful, winning 12 out of 14 games played and climaxing the campaign by defeating the 8th Air Force All-Stars at Alconbury in August. On April 17, the softball league got under way, with 12 teams composed of ground personnel, 5 of fliers.



The physical fitness program inaugurated in February produced in April a station champion in the person of 1st Lt James L. Weber, of the 407th Squadron, who posted a PFR of 72. Runner-up was Pvt Harold T. Saunders of the 325th Squadron, with a PFR of 61.

Socially, the month included an Officer's dance on the 29th, an EM dance on the 19th at the Red Cross AeroClub, and two squadron parties at the Special Services building, the 326th on April 1 and the 327th on April 26. The latter was notable in that squadron officers acted as bartenders.

A "barber-shop" quartette, sponsored by Special Services, was runner-up to the 379th Group in a singing competition held at Station 106 on April 26. The quartette was composed of S/Sgt Edmond F. Lynn of the 407th, Sgt Bernard L. Windsor of the 446th Sub Depot, Cpl Floyd E. MacMillan of the 326th and Cpl Edmond T. Bodine of Headquarters Squadron.

With the advent of spring, the atmosphere and activities of the Red Cross AeroClub were changed slightly. The ground surrounding the AeroClub was dug in the hope of encouraging grass; flowers made their appearance on tables; a plot in the back was plowed for a vegetable garden. More activities were planned for cut-off-doors to take full advantage of the long twilight, and supplies of soft balls, tennis equipment and other sports materiel were requisitioned.

The AeroClub-sponsored Station quiz Team continued its unbroken string of successes on April 18 by defeating a team representing the

500th Bombardment Group.

The Medical Section was called twice during the month to attend aeroplane crashes, the first on April 23 when a P-38 returning from an operational mission over the continent crashed at the end of the runway. The pilot was uninjured, although the plane was badly damaged. On April 28, another P-38 crashed between Fodington and Chelveston, near the Bedford-Rushden road. Medical personnel and ambulances were dispatched to the scene, but Chelveston personnel were already there and were assigned responsibility of caring for the crash. The plane had driven into the ground, and the pilot killed.

The PX was decorated in springtime colors during the first week of the month. Offered for the first time, and augmenting the cheerful atmosphere were Hershey chocolate bars, first standard American candy to be sold, several new magazines, and canned fruit juices. On April 21, a railing parallelling the counters was built and the "cashier" system installed. Several advantages were immediately apparent. On the first Monday following installation, 1020 men were served at an average time of 23 seconds per man. The new system also tended to save the customer money, since the average overage in the past had been about 20 pounds each month, due to customers in crowded sales lines leaving the counter before receiving change. Sales figures for the month were 2063 pounds, a drop in revenue from March, attributable to the shortages of non-rationed items, as well as the 33 1/3% decrease in the price of candy bars.

Record beer consumption for a single evening at the Unlisted Men's Bar was set near the middle of the month by GIs, thirsty and non-superstitious. Date: April 13. Consumption: 13 barrels.