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June, 1944 was the 92nd Bombardment Group's most impressive operational month. The most sorties were made-- 668. The lowest loss of aircraft -2- was recorded. The abortive rate was only slightly more than 1%. But, dwarfing even these spectacular achievements, was the all-important fact of D-Day, June 6, focal point not alone of the month or of the year, but one of the significant dates of history.

The 92nd Group flew on 23 missions, more than ever before in one month, and its percentage of planes lost to planes dispatched was never as low, but- commendable and gratifying though these figures were- they seemed anti-climactic beside the one great fact that on June 6, after many months of planning and preparation, of training and of waiting, the Allied invasion of the European continent had at last begun. The campaign "Air Offensive- Europe" had become "Campaign- Western Europe"; to many members of the 92nd Group, approaching two years in the ETO, the war suddenly became measurable. Prime Minister Churchill, long ago, had characterized one phase of the war as "the end of the beginning." Perhaps now this phrase might be reversed.

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To the 92nd, D-Day did not come as a complete surprise. In the four days preceding, four missions had been flown to the coast of France-- to Dannes, Paleiseau, Le Touquet, Equihen-- in each case a tactical target. And on the night of June 5, combat personnel were restricted to the base-- an unusual situation. Something was up.

What was up was a total of 85 aircraft, flying 3 separate missions, dispatched by the 92nd Group on D-Day, beginning shortly before dawn when 40 planes took off to blast the gun emplacements at Longues and Arromanches on the Normandy coast. 3 miles below, the first waves of the invasion troops were pouring ashore from more than 4000 landing craft. Returning crew members described the Channel shipping with awe: "You could walk across it today!" was a favorite comment.

At 0719 hours, 12 aircraft took off on the day's second mission, with the target directly in support of the troops-- a road junction at Caen. 10/10 cloud cover forced a recall ten miles off the French coast. But at 1755 hours, 33 planes embarked on the day's third mission, and these blasted the railroad yards and factory areas of Thury-Harcourt and Flers. That the 92nd as well as the other heavy bombardment Groups had satisfactorily fulfilled their assigned role in the

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invasion was indicated by the following teletype from Lt. General James Doolittle:

"Today the greatest effective strength in the history of the Eighth Air Force was reached; an overall effectiveness of approximately 75% of all crews and airplanes assigned. Please extend my congratulations to all members your command for their untiring effort in achieving this impressive strength."

Tactical targets, in direct connection with ground operations, were in a majority for the balance of the month. The Group was alerted 31 times, briefed 28 times and flew 23 missions. (See Appendix A). All of these figures represented a 20% increase in activity over the month of May, hitherto the largest operational period. The tremendous total of 668 aircraft were dispatched- 50% more than in May, and as many as in the months of March and April combined. Remarkably enough, in view of the greater margin for error, only 8 aircraft were abortive and only 2 failed to return- for the phenomenally low percentage figures of 1 and 2/10ths and 3/10ths of 1%, respectively.

Strategic bombing was not wholly neglected- even in the all-important invasion month. The Group went to Hamburg twice, on the 18th and the 20th, sent 37 planes to Berlin on the 21st to participate in what was officially termed "the most devastating blow ever struck in daylight"

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against the heart of the Reich, bombed Bremen on June 24, and lashed at the Quakenbruck airfield at Leipzig on the 29th. On 5 different occasions, the Group dispatched more than 50 planes-- the record number of 57 taking off on June 11 to attack the Conches airfield in France.

Both of the aircraft lost during the month were from the 407th Bombardment Squadron (See Appendix B). Piloted by 2nd Lts Marvin R. Long and George H. Wareham, they were victims of accurate flak on the June 14 and 20 raids, over Bretigny, France and Hamburg, Germany, respectively. Nine parachutes were observed to come from Lt Long's plane.

The Luftwaffe was less in evidence than ever before during June, but there was plenty of flak. Over Hamburg on June 18, a direct burst struck the nose of the deputy lead aircraft, killing Lt Robert J. Crutcher of the 327th Bombardment Squadron, co-pilot, and severely injuring the pilot and other crew members. The ship was landed safely on the English coast, a tribute to the courage, stamina and flying skill of Lt Charles W. Hodges of the 326th Squadron, the pilot, whose foot had been blown off by the burst.

The two attacks on Hamburg, directed against the oil refineries, were successful enough to elicit commendations

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from Lt. General Carl G. Spaatz and Lt. General James Doolittle. The latter's message:

"Operations 20 June 1944 against difficult targets in Germany considered among most satisfactory ever conducted. You are congratulated for these successes."

50 planes-- the largest ever to attack a German target-- was the 92nd Group's contribution to the success of the June 20 attack on Hamburg.

Awards for the month included 1 Silver Star, 73 DFC's of which 68 were for the completion of missions, 3 Bronze Stars, 8 Purple Hearts and 173 Air Medals. Oak Leaf Clusters awarded were 4 to the DFC, 247 to the Air Medal. (See Appendix C).

Lt. Col. Andre Brousseau, Group Air Executive, was awarded the Silver Star for gallant action while commanding the division on the May 28 attack on Ruhland, Germany. On the first run over the target, cloud cover prevented all but the lead group from releasing bombs. Determined to destroy the objective, Col. Brousseau coolly maneuvered his lead Combat Wing over the target a second time and a third time. When it became evident that one group could not bomb, he reformed the Wing and, although deep in enemy territory, led the formation to a secondary target, where it bombed with excellent results.

Far behind the briefed schedule, and consequently

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without fighter protection, Col. Brousseau rallied his units into a tight defensive formation and led them back to England without the loss of a single aircraft. Said the citation: "The gallantry and tenacity of purpose displayed by him in accomplishing his mission under adverse conditions attest to his able leadership."

The 3 Bronze Stars were won by M/Sgts Herman J. Bir of the 327th Squadron, Elmer L. Krall and William F. Watson of the 326th Squadron, in each case the award being made in recognition of outstanding services as crew maintenance chief. The award to M/Sgt Watson was of particular interest since, as of June 30, the 3 B-17's assigned him had rolled up an aggregate total of 73 consecutive missions without mechanical failure. Of further interest was the fact that M/Sgt Watson had never attended an army technical school, his entire knowledge of maintenance coming from direct experience as crew member and crew chief.

Officer promotions during the month were: 1 to Major, 9 to Captain, 77 to 1st Lieutenant. (See Appendix D.) During the period, 29 officers and 42 EM completed tours of duty. (See Appendix E.)

Major Baine E. Stringham became CO of the 446th Sub-Depot on June 9, succeeding Lt. Col. Edward J. O'Donnell,

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transferred.

Due to the extensive operations of the month, training programs necessarily declined. (See Appendix F.) Personnel of the Bombsight Trainer took advantage of the lull in activity to repaint. The Turret Trainer continued as the outstanding feature of the Gunnery Training section. The blister hangar was completed, and offered training on two Upper Turrets, two Chin Turrets, a Ball Turret, a Tail Position Mock-Up, a Jam Handy Trainer as well as flexible gun mounts.

1st Lt Vernon E. Koch, acting Gunnery Officer since the departure of Capt. John C. Prosch, returned to the USA to attend Gunnery School. Capt. Prosch, who left in May was not expected to return until July and in the meantime, Lt Hal H. Collins, Jr. of the 327th Squadron, acted as Group Gunnery Officer.

The month was an active one for the Chemical Warfare section. Although CWS munitions were used sparingly in comparison with previous months, gas defense training measures and the reduction of gas defense plans into simpler shape occupied the bulk of the month. A booklet was prepared, complete with photographs, outlining the methods of decontaminating B-17 aircraft, and was sent to all squadron

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engineering officers. The purpose was to clarify, to some degree, the problems encountered if and when chemical warfare began.

In June also, several organizations were given a "dry run" through the Gas Cleansing Centers. Done to illustrate the actual procedure involved, it was believed to have given the men valuable training. Inspection of individual gas masks disclosed that a small percentage of personnel were still without some items of anti-gas equipment, as well as some not yet thoroughly acquainted with the new mask. Shortages in CWS equipment were more nearly filled with the acquisition of one more M3A1 400 gallon decontaminating apparatus. One more was still required to bring the base up to the required 5 vehicles, outlined in the T/BA.

The "Army Talks" program, group discussion of various topics designed to make the soldier more conscious of precise aims and achievements of the current struggle, was given impetus by a meeting of squadron adjutants on June 19. The program was initiated individually by squadrons.

The Group Agricultural Officer, Lt Stanley Loupus of the 32nd Station Complement, at month's end had slightly over 9 acres under cultivation, of which 7 acres were potatoes. Lt. Loupus, appointed in February, had in co-operation with the Air Ministry and with the assistance of



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the Bedford War Agricultural Committee, planted the majority of the acreage in May. One-fifth of an acre was experimentally and optimistically devoted to sweet corn, to the dubious interest of neighboring farmers. Almost 2 acres were allotted to garden vegetables. Land Army girls were supplied by the Bedford organization to assist with the planting of the potatoes.

The activities of the Red Cross Aeroclub were somewhat curtailed by the combination of extensive operations plus good weather. One dance was held during the month, on June 13, and as usual, was well-attended. An Officer's dance drew a good crowd on June 3.

2 USO shows played the station: "Laughtime" with Bob Evans as M.C. on June 11, and Rudy Starita's show on June 25. Because of inclement weather, both were held indoors. The Arena, however, saw constant use daily by tennis, handball and basketball players. The Station baseball team broke even for the month, defeating Chelveston 6-3 on the 11th, and bowing to Grafton Underwood on the 20th, 3-2. The 446th Sub Depot softball team supplanted the 326th Squadron team as leaders in the Station league.

Two officers of the Group, Capt. Albert O. Smith and Lt Andrew J. Rosenberger of the 327th Squadron journeyed to London during the month to participate in foreign language propaganda broadcasts over ABSIE. Talks were of ten

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minute duration, Capt. Smith's in French, Lt Rosenberger's in German.

On June 9, Chaplain Bertram Klausner of the Eighth Air Force conducted a service for Jewish personnel of the area, devoting a major portion of the services to the dedication of a 7 branch candelabra, hand made by the 1755th Ordnance Armament shop. The candelabra, which remains in the Chaplain's possession, was built of dural and brass, with candle cups made of .50 shells. Credit for the gift went to Lt George H. Orloff and Sgt Carl Petree of the 1755th, as well as to Chaplain Ware.

40 crippled children from nearby Hinwick Home were treated to an afternoon's observation of operational activity on June 4th. The children were taken to the airfield, shown a B-17, obligingly being pre-flighted, inspected the hard stands, and, in general, had the time of their young lives. Instigator of this enterprise was Sgt Nathan L. Karp of the 407th Squadron, aided and abetted by Special Services Officer Lt Walter Fieg. The day closed with ice cream and cakes at Hinwick Home.

Reported as prisoners of war during the month were Lts Carl Palumbo and Robert J. Marcus of the 326th Squadron, two of the three officers who inexplicably bailed out over

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Ostend May 8. Underlined anew was the sinister part of the story: three men bailed out, two chutes were missing.

Successfully escaping from enemy territory almost six months to the day after being shot down, Sgt Anthony L. Mills and Sgt Harold P. Maher of the 327th Squadron arrived in England June 30. Flying as left-waist and tail gunner respectively in an aircraft piloted by 2nd Lt Michael J. Stroff Jr., their ship was attacked by enemy fighters on the Dec. 31 mission to Cognac/Chateaubernard, France. The attack came just after the target, and with 3 engines shot out, Lt Stroff managed to crash-land in the Province of Vendee. Crew members were unhurt and separated immediately into groups of two. 3 were captured, according to Sgts. Mills and Maher.

For the first 3 days, subsistence was confined to one candy bar each, and their first meal was the traditional bread, cheese and wine of the country-- according to both, the most attractive food within memory. For 11 days, they were "on their own," and miraculously enough managed to avoid capture even though they were still in flying clothes. On the eleventh day, they managed to make contact with the underground, and the arduous and complicated process of getting into Spain began.

Closest call, according to Sgt. Maher, came one night

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when an automobile in which he was being transported to a mountain refuge was ordered to halt by two members of the Gestapo. The driver refused to stop and the Gestapo opened fire. The shots were wild and the car was soon out of range.

PX sales for the month totalled 3,019 pounds, a slight increase over May. Installation of a soda-fountain, scheduled to open in July, was begun and thirsty, anticipatory looks were in evidence. The Group was in the midst of its largest and most successful operational month, the invasion was on, the war never looked better- but when the fountain would open was a major matter, too. Thirsty GIs consumed a steady 30 barrels of beer each week of the month at the Enlisted Men's Bar.

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