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In April, the collapsing German dream of domination became a nightmare- a disordered calendar of retreats and losses and surrenders. The war was over in Europe. There had not yet been a formal capitulation -although rumors flew thick and fast during the closing week of the month- but for the 8th Air Force the war had ended. The simple fact was that there were no places left to bomb: targets had dwindled steadily throughout the month as Allied armies plunged deeper into the Reich, and the 92nd Bomb Group's 310th and last mission on April 25th was, significantly, into the heart of Czechoslovakia.

In world history, April was a peak month- it would require the perspective of time to sort and evaluate the sequence of events. With a shocking suddenness, in victory's month, the President of the United States died, on April 12th. The great cities of Europe fell -Vienna, Leipzig, Bremen, Stettin- and on

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April 26, the historic linkup of the American and Soviet forces took place at Torgau. North Italy was in revolt; on April 27, in Milan, the career of Benito Mussolini came to a sordid close. There were presumably authentic reports that Himmler had offered to surrender- Count Folke Bernadotte, a Swedish nobleman, was shuttling mysteriously from Stockholm to Denmark- and Hitler was reported dying. At month's end, Berlin, encircled and blazing, was close to total destruction.

The background was exciting. Members of the 92nd Group, like others in England, read the Stars and Stripes and the London newspapers, listened to the radio, and tried to understand just what was happening. The one fundamental fact seemed to be that the war was over, or just about over, and that the process, as always, involved considerable confusion.

In its last month of offensive operations, the Group's record was a good one, and an interesting one. 16 missions were flown during the month, after 21 had been briefed. 570 aircraft were dispatched, making April the second largest month of the year in that category. Abortives numbered 10 -an increase explainable by the fact that 6 were recorded on one mission- for a total of less than 2% of aircraft dispatched. 3 crews were listed as

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missing in action -2 of which collided in the target area on the mission of April 17- for a figure of slightly more than ½ of 1% of aircraft dispatched. The milestone mission, No. 300, came on April 7th.

After two days of inactivity because of weather, the operational month began on April 3, with 36 aircraft attacking the dock area at Kiel- a target requested by the Admiralty because the submarine situation had become more serious. The Group's aircraft were led by Lt Col James A. Smyrl, 327th Squadron CO, flying with 1st Lt Lloyd R. McGrew of the 327th Squadron. The squadrons attacked individually by PFF technique, with flak meagre and inaccurate. Results were not observed because of cloud conditions, but reconnaissance photos showed that almost every building of the naval arsenal and dockyard was damaged, and the engine shops roof-stripped.

Two missions were flown on April 4; one the Group's 4th "Disney" mission, the other an attack on airdromes in the Fassberg area. 12 aircraft participated in the former raid, a PFF attack on the submarine shelters at Hamburg, and the target was identified and believed hit. For his skill and airmanship on this mission, plus the determination exhibited by his crew, 2nd Lt William K. Davisson and crew of the 326th Squadron, leading

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the second section of 6 aircraft, were named "Crew of the Week." (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.)

Taking off in the dark with the heavy bomb load, Lt Davisson was called upon to exert all of his skill to avoid a crash when the power was lost on the #4 engine as the turbo cut out. Getting the ship under control the climb to assembly was accomplished and the buncher departed in formation. On the climb out however, it was apparent that he would not be able to retain the lead and keep the section in squadron formation. Turning the lead over to the deputy, Lt Davisson continued on course, cutting turns short and gaining all possible time, thus keeping in sight of the squadron although unable to reach its altitude. At the IP, he was slightly behind and about 3000 feet below the formation, but rather than abort, Lt Davisson drove on over the target, dropped his bombs and regained the formation and returned to base.

The other mission of April 4, to the Fassberg area, was not particularly successful. The Lead Squadron, failing to visually identify a target within the assigned area after 3 runs, returned to base in accordance with orders. The Low and High Squadrons selected airdromes in the area as targets of opportunity and bombed visually, with good results for the High Squadron, unobserved results for the Low.

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On the withdrawal, the Low Squadron passed over an uncharted flak area approximately 50 miles northeast of Osnabruck, and was caught in a barrage. The aircraft piloted by F/O Anthony L. Marozas of the 327th Squadron lost the #4 engine, and 2nd Lt Richard E. Leffel, the navigator, was wounded. The main gas tanks had received a direct hit, and the right wing was enveloped in flames. F/O Marozas ordered a bail-out after diving had failed to extinguish the fire. He then flew the aircraft slightly further, so there would be no danger to the parachuting crew members, and bailed out himself at 3000 feet. The entire crew were picked up by German patrols. While being transported to a prison camp in a hay wagon that night, a German tank rammed the cart, and in the confusion that ensued, F/O Marozas suffered a broken jaw and face lacerations; Lt Leffel was shot in the right leg. Freed by advance elements of the British Army the next day, the two were hospitalized; it was found necessary later to amputate Lt Leffel's injured leg.

Lt Col Albert L. Cox,Jr., 325th Squadron CO, flying with Capt Peter O. E. Bekker, led an attack the following day on the ordnance depot at Ingolstadt, a supply depot for Czech armaments. 36 aircraft were scheduled for the mission; only 30 actually bombed, visually and with excellent results. 6 aircraft were

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abortive, due to a combination of circumstances involving a weak buncher with no call sign, weather conditions, and personnel failure. One of the abortive aircraft, piloted by 2nd Lt Bernard F. Hurley of the 407th Squadron, was attacked by 2 ME-262's in the Ulm area, while Lt Hurley was trying to intercept the bomber column. The aircraft, although sustaining considerable damage, returned to base after jettisoning bombs in German territory.

All 4 of the large ordnance buildings at Ingolstadt were severely damaged, more than one-third of the huts in the northern area were destroyed, and 14 explosions took place in the probable ammunition stores.

Lt Col Ernest C. Hardin,Jr., 326th Squadron CO, flying with Capt Ralph E. Hoffman, led the 1st Air Division in a mission to Leipzig on April 6. Bombing was PFF, and the #2 H2X target, the Station House, was identified and believed hit. Reconnaissance later showed that the weight of the attack had fallen across the junction of the three main lines northeast of the station. All through lines were blocked at the time of photography; sidings and sheds in the freight yards and two locomotive depots were destroyed. All of the Group's aircraft returned safely.

The goal which all heavy bombardment groups strove to attain-

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300 missions- was reached by the 92nd Group on April 7, when Lt Col James A. Smyrl, flying with 1st Lt Lloyd R. McGrew, led the 40th Combat Wing in a visual attack on the Wesendorf Airdrome. (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.) Reconnaissance pictures showed that buildings in the area of the control building were set on fire and there was a heavy concentration of small craters over the center of the landing ground extending almost from the southern boundary into the hangar area on the northern side. The east-west runway was pitted with craters. First pilots, at the critique immediately after the mission, were jubilant at the results achieved. (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.)

On April 8th, 36 aircraft of the Group attacked the marshalling yards at Halberstadt by PFF technique with a visual assist. Strike photos showed bombs of the Lead and Low Squadrons to cover the center of the town and extend up to the assigned MPI; the High Squadron covering the MPI with a very concentrated pattern. An ammunition train in the holding siding apparently exploded during the attack, creating a special area of devastation.

Major Victor A. Cherbak, 325th Operations Officer, flying with 1st Lt Thomas A. White of the 325th Squadron, led a visual attack on the airfield at Oranienburg, April 10. Pilots reported the center of the airfield well saturated with hits. On April

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11, 34 aircraft of the Group attacked an explosives factory at Kraiburg, near Muhldorf. The attack was visual and the results spectacular. Casting long shadows over the countryside, a huge pall of smoke rose to 3000 feet as vast stores of nitro-glycerin and cordite exploded; aircraft at 25,000 feet were rocked by the force of the explosion. Five large explosions were observed in the storage areas; two stores buildings and a solvent recovery plant were still burning at the time of reconnaissance.

The success of the April 11 mission was clouded somewhat by an aircraft accident on take-off. The plane piloted by 1st Lt Reginald L. Hammond of the 325th Squadron blew a tire after the aircraft was about 1500 feet down the runway. Air speed was sufficient to make the plane airborne, and the landing gear was retracted in an effort to gain altitude. Prop wash was encountered, the aircraft lost altitude, crashed and burned. All crew members got out safely; 20 minutes later the plane exploded. (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.)

On April 13, Major Ygnacio J. Bideganeta, 327th Operations Officer, flying with Capt Lloyd R. McGrew, led 36 aircraft of the Group in a successful visual attack on the marshalling yards at Neumunster. The squadrons attacked individually; flak was meagre; results excellent. Reconnaissance revealed a pattern

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of destruction, with every track on the sorting sidings torn up for about 1000 yards, and the locomotive depot destroyed.

For two straight days, April 14 and 15, aircraft of the Group participated in the blasting of coastal batteries and anti-aircraft defenses in the Royan area, 60 miles north of Bordeaux. The attacks, in tactical support of the French Army to eliminate a stubborn pocket of German resistance, were the first to be made on French territory in half a year. Flak was meager to non-existent on the two missions, and the bombing was visual, and successful enough to elicit the following commendation from General Jacob L. Devers:

> "General DeLarminat, commanding the Army Detachment of the Atlantic, wishes me to express his sincere gratitude for the co-operation you and the members of your command exhibited in the planning and execution of operation VENERABLE.
>
> "The weight and accuracy of the bombing effort on the heavily fortified areas of Royan and Pointe De Grave achieved excellent results and made it possible to open the Gironde Estuary with the minimum of casualties to our ground forces.
>
> "Your forces showed a high sense of combat efficiency and camaraderie in the accomplishment of a job well done."

Bombing was even better on the following day, April 16, with the target the marshalling yard at Plattling. Led by Major John R. McKee, Group Operations Officer, flying with Capt Alvin

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B. Skare,Jr., of the 407th Squadron, the area was fully cratered in a visual attack that called forth the following commendation from Col Anthony Q. Mustos, CO of the 40th Combat Wing:

> "Your excellent bombardment of the target at PLATTLING on the 16 April 1945, is deserving of the highest praise. The bomb patterns of each of your squadrons blanketed the heavy concentration of rolling stock and major rail installations in the area assigned to your Group. Photographs attest to this remarkable accuracy and compactness of bomb pattern.
>
> "This brilliantly executed attack made by aircraft of your command reflects the skill and determination of the crews in the performance of their duties. All concerned can feel justly proud of a job well done.
>
> "I wish to commend you on this outetanding piece of work, and I particularly want to congratulate the crew members who took part in this efficiently conducted attack."

To which Col James W. Wilson, Group CO, added the following indorsement:

> "Although I feel that we have done many other bombing jobs comparable to the one of PLATTLING, this is an achievement worthy of praise.
>
> "I wish to pass on my heartiest congratulations, not only to the air crews that flew the mission but to the ground men who, through their untiring efforts, made it possible to put smooth functioning equipment over the target in such a way as to cripple the enemy at a time when he desperately needs every installation of military importance."

For their part in leading this mission, Capt Skare and

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crew -three of whom, Capt Skare, Capt Pat Y. Spillman and 1st Lt James W Payne finished their tour- were named "Crew of the Week." (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.) After take-off, it was discovered that the airspeed indicator was not working properly, and was reading about 10 MPH high. Some difficulty was encountered at the assembly buncher because of clouds, and Capt Skare had to make tight turns off to one side of the buncher in order to stay in the clear. Despite mechanical difficulties, the target was bombed with superb accuracy: 80% of the strikes were within 500 feet, 95% within 1000 feet and all within 2000 feet.

Major Ygnacio J. Bideganeta, flying with Capt Lloyd R. McGrew, led the 40th Combat Wing on the mission of April 17. The target, the marshalling yards at Dresden, was attacked by H2X technique by individual squadrons, after a visual run had been set up at the IP. Neither enemy aircraft nor flak were encountered. Strike photos did not show results because of haze, cloud and the smoke of previous bombs, but returning crewmen claimed the target to be identified and saturated. The claims were supported by reconnaissance pictures, which revealed severe damage to sidings and facilities in the yards, and to many tracks in the rail center and Hauptbahnhof. Chaos was seen in the sorting sidings; tracks torn up and cars derailed.

The Dresden attack cost the Group two aircraft of the Lead

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Squadron, piloted by 1st Lts Arthur H. Huether and John W. Paul, Jr., both of the 327th Squadron, which collided in the target area. Because of low visibility, the Lead Squadron was flying a collision course with another Group, and the aircraft attempted to dodge with disastrous results. 3 parachutes were seen. Lt Huether, by grim coincidence, had narrowly escaped in a similar accident over Brussels the month before, when his aircraft collided with that of 2nd Lt Erwin F. Schmidt on March 3.

39 aircraft attacked the marshalling yards at Rosenheim on the next day. Bombing was visual and results excellent. Reconnaissance confirmed the claims of the bombardiers, showing the attack to be concentrated between the bridge at the northwest end of the yards and the Y-junction at the southeast end. Considerable damage was done to rolling stock.

Thereafter ensued an interval. There did not seem to be any targets: the German corridor was shrinking rapidly; on the maps in S-2, the US bomb line and the Russian bomb line crossed at several points. In the week between April 18 and April 25, two missions were briefed and scrubbed. M/Sgt Royal P. Wendell of the S-2 section gained a reputation as a minor prophet when he firmly declared, early in the month, that the Group would fly 310 missions, no more, no less. He was exactly right: on

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April 25, the 92nd Group flew its 310th and last combat mission, leading the 8th Air Force in the final great offensive effort of the war, to bomb the vast Skoda armament plants at Pilsen, Czechoslovakia. Lt Col William H. Nelson, Group Air Executive, flew as Air Commander with 1st Lt Thomas A. White of the 325th Squadron. (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.) Major Vincent P. Purcell, Group Navigator, and Capt Albert H. Grinsted,Jr., bombardier, were also in the crew. (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.)

For the first time in the war- and, incidentally, the last time- the objective of the mission was revealed more than an hour before the formations arrived in the target area. A BBC overseas broadcast specifically announced the mission, warned slave workers to stop work and seek shelter.

The 92nd Group dispatched 40 aircraft, flying in 4 squadrons of 10 planes, a plan first tried in March. Flak was moderate to severe in the target area, and 25 aircraft received battle damage in varying categories. One aircraft was lost at the target; the plane piloted by 1st Lt Lewis B. Fisher of the 327th Squadron, struck by an accurate flak burst, was last seen over Pilsen going into the clouds in a spin with flames and black smoke trailing. No parachutes were observed.

Bombing was visual, but several runs were necessary because of cloud conditions in the target area. The entire region was

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blanketed with GP and incendiary bombs, and severe damage was inflicted. For skill and airmanship displayed on this final mission, 2nd Lt Emory J. Smith and crew of the 327th Squadron were named "Crew of the Week." (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.) On the third bomb run, Lt Smith's ship was hit by flak, damging the hydraulic system and rendering the brakes and flaps useless. The ailerons and rudder were also badly damaged. Despite these handicaps, Lt Smith made a safe return to base, landing well and executing a successful ground-loop at the end of the runway which saved the aircraft from extensive damage.

All 3 aircraft lost by the Group during the final month of offensive operations were from the 327th Squadron. (See APPENDIX B.)

Awards made during the month included 15 DFC's, 5 Bronze Stars and 2 Purple Hearts, 868 Air Medals. Oak Leaf Clusters presented were: 2 to the DFC, 414 to the Air Medal. The presentation of an Oak Leaf Cluster to the DFC to Capt J. Jack Crafton, and of DFC's to 1st Lt Paul E. Marlatt, T/Sgts Carl J. Avra and Nemcio G. Rodriquez, S/Sgts David P. Perreira and Benson B. Jones, members of Capt Crafton's crew, made them probably the most-decorated crew in 92nd Group history - or at least in recent months since the discontinuance of the "automatic" presentation of the DFC for the completion of tour.

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Capt Crafton's crew, of the 325th Squadron, finished their tour several months before.

At the conclusion of the final operational mission, the Pilot Status Board in Group Operations revealed that Lt Col Ernest C. Hardin, Jr., 326th Squadron CO and Capt Andrew S. Downs of the 327th Squadron had completed the most sorties-46. Col Hardin was, of course, one of the Group's veteran pilots, but Capt Downs had begun his first tour on October 7, 1944, completed two tours and was beginning his third. (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.)

During the month of April, 42 officers and 51 enlisted men completed tours of duty. (See APPENDIX C.) Officer promotions during the month were 2 to Lt Colonel, 2 to Major, 12 to Captain, 68 to 1st Lieutenant, 1 to CWO. Promoted to Lt Colonel were Major John R. McKee, Group Operations Officer and Major Lloyd D. Chapman, 407th Squadron CO. Attaining the majorities were Capt Vincent P. Purcell, Group Navigator, and Capt Victor A. Cherbak,Jr., 325th Squadron Operations Officer. (See APPENDIX D.) Warrant Officer (JG) Norton G. Stapleton of Headquarters Squadron became Chief Warrant Officer. On April 2, a roster of officers was issued. (See APPENDIX F.)

A number of duty reassignments occurred during the month, largely because of the organization of the 409th Air Service

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Group on April 15. The 409th was composed of 3 Squadrons: Headquarters and Base Service Squadron, 835th Engineering Squadron and 659th Air Materiel Squadron. These new units absorbed the 446th Sub-Depot, the 1755th Ordnance Co., the 32nd Station Complement, the 1205th QM, the 1140th MP Co., the 2042nd FFP, the 245th Medical Disp.(Avn) and the 205th Finance Disb Section. Major Baine E. Stringham became CO of the 409th; 835th CO was Major Leroy E. Fake and 659th CO, Major Paul Leonberger. Additional personnel were drawn from the 92nd Group; Capt Edward C. Weizer, S-1 Officer became the 409th Group Adjutant, 1st Lt William M. Sage became 409th Group S-1 Officer.

As was inevitable with disbanding and activation on short notice, some administrative confusion was noticeable, but the officers of the new squadrons, in general, had sufficient experience to handle their new assignments adequately. Because most of the changes were paper, the bulk of the work fell upon the shoulders of the new orderly rooms. Payrolls were made under the old organizations and paid in the old unit sites, inasmuch as physical transfer of living quarters had not yet been made.

92nd Group S-2 officers figured in the transfer picture during the month. Major Robert E. Tauscher, Group S-2 Officer, left to attend school in the US, and his place was filled by Capt

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James V. Moriarity, 326th Squadron S-2. (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.) Capt Perry H. Burnham, Ass't S-2 Officer, returned after a period of illness. 1st Lt Henry S. Gary, former 325th Squadron S-2, was transferred to the 1140th MP Co., and became Police and Prisons Officer. 1st Lt John A. Noel, 407th Squadron Adjutant, was appointed Ass't Group Adjutant on April 25th during the temporary hospitalization of Major William V. Croak. 1st Lt James L. MacFarlane became Group S-1 Officer. Capt Charles B. Prisk became 92nd Group Chaplain; Capt Method C. Billy, 409th Group Chaplain. 2nd Lt George D. Jenkins, MAC, was relieved from assignment to Headquarters Squadron and transferred to the 351st Bomb Group. Major Joseph R. Henry, Group Surgeon, spent a week at HQ, US Third Army to observe the evacuation of patients.

The concluding days of the air war over Europe showed its effect in the reduction of chemical ammunition expenditure. During April, 338 500 lb M17 incendiary clusters were dropped on targets, and a total of 118 Smoke Trail Bombs used. Activity in the 861 Chemical Co., aside from offensive operations, consisted chiefly of preparation for possible movement. Fuzes and bombs were packed for shipment, and equipment checked.

No particular changes were recorded in the training program; at month's end, the statistical analysis board in Group Operations showed the 325th Squadron the leader in rated operational effic-

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iency, with the 327th Squadron runner-up. In rated air training efficiency, the 327th Squadron was first, and in ground training efficiency, the 326th Squadron led. (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.)

At about 0545 hours on April 8th, a fire broke out in the Station Sick Quarters. The blaze apparently began in a field sterilizer, with two alcohol burners, which was being used for the sterilization of syringes used in penicillin injections. Although one Medical Department EM was in an adjoining room, and three others were just across the hallway, they were unable to get the fire out; it spread rapidly in the treatment room, the pharmacy, both offices and the waiting room, with some damage being done to both dental clinics, the drug storage room and two hallways. A Class 1[illegible] fire truck responded to the alarm, and upon arrival at the scene, called immediately for assistance. A pump and hose lines were rushed to the site, and the fire brought under control about 12 minutes after the arrival of the added equipment. Most of the medical and dental records were saved. The destruction of equipment was not great- loss of the building being the main item.

Lt Col Schuller, MC, 1st Air Division Surgeon and Major Coppage of the Chief Engineer's Office, 1st Air Division, inspected the damage the following day. It was decided that the Air Ministry

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would undertake repairs to the building.

The success of the March appeal for blood donors called forth the following commendation from Col James W. Wilson, Group CO, on April 8:

> "The response to the call for blood for battle casualties in France and Germany was indeed remarkable on this station. The total pints given by us this past week was 803.
>
> "I feel that this represents a great deal of effort on the part of the unit commanders and a strong sense of humanity among those who gave their blood.
>
> "It is yet too early to tell how we will stand in the Division on a competitive basis, but this effort compares very favorably with previous Blood Donor Drives.
>
> "I wish to extend my hearty congratulations to every man responsible and I am in hopes that the next call for donors will receive an equally enthusiastic response."

In common with the rest of the world- with the exception of what was left of the Nazi radio -members of the 92nd Group were inexpressibly saddened at the news that the President of the United States had died. The flash interupted late radio programs in the evening of April 12; many Group members, working or sleeping, did not hear of the tragic happening until morning. The shock was instantaneous and profound: to many a youthful GI, the words "President" and "Roosevelt" seemed indissoluble; older men, recalling the stormy weather of the 30's -the bank holiday, the first 100 days of the New Deal, the WPA, the Social Security Act, and innumerable other controversial

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legislation- found it hard to visualize a world in which Mr. Roosevelt would no longer play a dominant role.

The flag was half-masted for a 30-day period; plans for the 300th Mission Party, scheduled for April 15, were immediately cancelled; a memorial service was held on the base. Sobered by the great loss, 92nd Group members carried on with their usual tasks-- there was still a war to be won.

The 327th Squadron- last to erect a signboard and site fencing- produced the most elaborate sign of any squadron. (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.) The site was attractively enclosed with white posts and wire -perhaps reflecting the New England taste of Lt Col James A. Smyrl, Squadron CO- and for general appearance closely rivalled the 407th Squadron site. The addition of large windows and a new blue-and-white decorative scheme greatly improved the appearance of the 327th Barber Shop, presided over by PFC James R. Dogali.

Two United States legislators, Congressmen Gene Worley of Texas and Francis Walters of Pennsylvania, visited the station on April 24 and 25. The Congressmen- friends of 1st Lt John A. Marple, 326th Squadron S-2 Officer- had returned to England after visiting the Nazi concentration camps. As the guests of Col Wilson, they attended the briefing for the April 25th mission, went aloft to observe the aircraft forming, later toured the base. Col Wilson brought them to the EM General Mess for the

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noonday meal, where they listened appreciatively to the 92nd Skyliners. A scheduled flight over the Ruhr valley, with Col Wilson at the controls, was cancelled because of weather conditions.

Red Cross Aeroclub activities for the month began with the gala re-opening on Sunday, April 8th, after being closed for redecoration for more than two weeks. Surveying the redecorations, GI's agreed that the time was worth it: the snack bar emerged in a combination of primrose yellow, leaf brown and red; the lounge and library were "blush-tone" and blue. Col Wilson and members of his staff were honored guests at the re-opening, the 92nd Skyliners played, refreshments were "on the house." (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.) On the following day, the first dance of the month was held, to be followed by another on April 21. In April, the Aeroclub presented its customary quota of bingo, cake raffles and, as an added and thoroughly appreciated attraction, the 92nd Skyliners offered a weekly "jam session"- an hour to an hour and a half of swing music for the addicts. On April 26, Miss Pauline Kelly, the "Blonde Bombshell" played popular piano music in the Aeroclub lounge.

At 1330 hours, on the Hinwick-Harrold road, a jeep driven by Pfc Lonnie C. Bates, of the 409th Air Service Group, ran into a ditch, April 26th. Pfc Bates received serious head injuries

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and his passenger, T/Sgt Harry J. Richard of the 407th Squadron, mess sergeant at the Consolidated Mess, was slightly injured. (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.)

The Suggestion Box continued to attract GI attention, and worthy suggestions continued to be adopted. (See APPENDIX E.) The Information-Education program made preliminary gestures toward getting underway: a preview of two motion pictures explaining the program was attended by making officers and instructors toward the end of the month; GI's filled out forms indicating what subjects they preferred.

The PX took in the largest receipts for any month of the year when their register, at month's end, totalled 3394 pounds. The Coca-Cola machine accounted for 287 pounds of this total, and Photo-developing, 40 pounds. A discussion of PX profits and their availability for station benefit resulted in a statement being issued on April 10. (See APPENDIX G.) The statement summarized sales and profits over the period from September, 1943 to December 31, 1944, and explained the War Department policies in connection with appropriations of the profits.

Softball continued to be played every night that weather permitted; more and more tennis players appeared on the Arena court each evening. Special Service activity focussed on two projects: the re-opening of the redecorated Post Theatre on

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April 27th, and the 300th Mission Party on April 29th.

The re-opening of the Post Theatre provided an interesting study in contrast. Only a short year before, the seats had been board, the temperature but slightly, if any, warmer than the outdoors, the walls a drab, unrelieved grey, the stage a makeshift. In those surroundings, 92nd Group GI's had seen, or partially seen, movies. The 16 millimetre film flickered like a 1910 newsreel and, inevitably, broke a half-dozen times in the course of an evening.

The announcement, in the Daily Bulletin, had stated that the new photographic equipment- 35 millimetre- would produce "the perfect photographic clarity and sound reproduction matched only by the de-luxe cinema houses." GI's, accustomed to over-statement,were skeptical before the reopening, enthusiastically agreed when they saw the film. They also agreed with Col Wilson, who delivered a short address on the occasion, that it was unfortunate the new equipment was not available earlier. The theatre was pleasantly decorated in carmine, mauve and silver, and the curtains were of silver rayon. Frosted lights were set in the side walls. The decorative scheme was selected and accomplished under the direction of S/Sgt Sebastian T. Puglisi, Teletype section head. A new policy, which involved daily matinees, two-day runs of films, and printed monthly programs was begun.

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The long-awaited, once-postponed 300th Mission Party also lived up to, or surpassed, expectations. The day began with the assembly of squadrons in their respective sites, and a march to Hangar #1, where the principal addresses were delivered by Col James W. Wilson, who introduced the guest of honor, Brig General Bartlett Beaman, Chief of Staff of the 1st Air Division; (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT) the four Squadron COs, Major Mellor W. Stevenson, Group Ground Executive, Major James J. Boutty, Group Engineering Officer, M/Sgts John Kowalczik of the 327th Squadron and Hugh W. "Bull" Durham of the 325th Squadron, and others. The "Divisionnaires" of the 1st Air Division furnished the music, and ebullient GI's inflated and floated scores of the GI version of toy balloons.

During and immediately after the morning program, a squadron of P-51's from Honington, invited by Lt Col John R. McKee, Group Operations Officer, put on a dazzling aerial display. In between staring at the sky and ducking to earth, GI's managed to see an elaborate "buzz job." (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.)

Beer flowed freely, on the ball diamond and in the enlisted men's lounge during the afternoon. Several soft ball games, plus the "Divisionnaires" entertained an overflow crowd at the ball diamond. (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.) A professional troupe from London put on a stage show in the Hangar in the early evening

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and later at the Officer's Mess. (See PHOTO SUPPLEMENT.) The 92nd Skyliners played for the stage show and the dance that followed in the Hangar, and the dance orchestra from Chelveston played for the Officer's Dance. Champagne enlivened the proceedings. The day was a long one and a full one- certainly the most memorable social event in 92nd Group history.

In many respects, the month of April was a curious one, full of strange quirks and small oddities. It began on Easter Sunday, a day devoted to the Prince of Peace, and it closed with peace in Europe practically at hand. The weather was capricious- warm at the month's beginning, chilly at its close. For some reason, the Consolidated Mess served fried eggs five mornings in a row- something unheard of to men who well recalled the days of two or three eggs per year. On April 23, England abandoned the blackout; not so, army posts.

At the end of April, 92nd Group morale was at a record high. The reasons were no doubt varied and cumulative -"morale" is a word susceptible to infinite explanation- but the simple answer seemed to be that the war was just about over, and the 92nd Group was on the winning side.

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CREW OF THE WEEK
(25 Apr)

Left to right, front: S/Sgt H. G. Brown, Jr, S/Sgt H. L. Wallman, S/Sgt A.B. Cahoon, S/Sgt G.V. Woodward, S/Sgt L. E. Beary.

Back : F/O H.G. Chrun, Lt G.W. Hawkins, S/Sgt C.E. Beutler, Lt Emory J. Smith.

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CREW OF THE WEEK
(4 April)

Top Row, left to right: 2nd Lt T. J. Robbins, 2nd Lt W. H. Kelly, 2nd Lt W. A. Davisson, 1st Lt S. C. Harward.

Bottom : Sgt A. P. Alves, Sgt S. F. Lopez, Sgt W. P. Little, 2nd Lt W.H. Hayes not available.

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CREW OF THE WEEK
(16 Apr)

Left to right, top: 1st Lt J. W. Payne, Capt Alvin B. Skare, Jr., 2nd Lt R. C. Sackett, 1st Lt J. D. Wetnight.
Bottom: T/Sgt W.P. Short, 2nd Lt A. M. Spencer, Capt. Pat Y. Spillman, T/Sgt R. Benton.

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