



# 99th BOMB GROUP



# Three Hundred Mission Log

Vol. 1, No. 1

November, 1944

## 99th Hits Triple Century Mark

### Air Chiefs Praise Group Achievement

Prior to press time, the Group received messages of congratulation from the following Air Force leaders:

Major General Nathan F. Twining, Commanding General of the 15th AAF:

"To the 99th Bombardment Group at the time of their completion of 300 missions I extend my most sincere congratulations. Despite the diverse handicaps that confronted the 99th during the early days of the war, the shortage of planes, the lack of spare parts and the many other adverse conditions, the Group continued to strike the Hun. The 15th Air Force is proud of the magnificent record and accomplishments of the 99th."

Brigadier General Charles W. Lawrence, Commanding General of the 5th Bombardment Wing:

"It is indeed a pleasure to add my congratulations to the 99th Bombardment Group upon completion of 300 combat missions against the enemy, especially since I had the honor of commanding the Group during part of its combat service."

"The 99th Bomb Group has sustained an enviable reputation of dependability and achievement. The ground echelon having established a record in the care and maintenance of equipment second to none in the Air Force; the combat personnel a record of sustained operations of superior caliber throughout its entire service in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations."

"The Wing is proud of you. Continued success and happy landings!"

Brigadier General Charles S. Born, A-3, 15th Air Force:

"My most sincere congratulations to the 99th Bombardment Group on the completion of 300 missions."

"As one of the senior heavy bombardment groups in the Army Air Forces today, and as a very senior outfit in the European war, you are to be highly commended for the outstanding record of your group."

Brigadier General Fay R. Upthegrove, Commanding General, 304th Bombardment Wing:

"Sincere congratulations to the Ninety-Ninth on the successful completion of Three Hundred Missions in the Theater."

"Starting from scratch a little over two years ago, when the Group first began to form, you have indeed come a long way. As to your record, it speaks for itself, there is none finer anywhere."

"It will always be the highlight of my life that I was fortunate enough to be your first commander; to organize, train, move overseas, and lead the Group through its first hundred missions. Having flown most of my combat missions with the Group, it will ever hold first place in my affection. Bound up in this affection are the hardships, uncertainties, adventures, and associations we shared. I owe a great debt to the Group that I can never repay."

"The sturdy, faithful planes, the fighting spirit of the combat crews,

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COLONEL FORD J. LAUER, Commanding

### Colonel Lauer's Message

It is with great pride that I look upon the record of the completion of your 300th group sortie. I extend to you my heartiest congratulations on this occasion. You can well be proud of this achievement and your outstanding record as indicated by the group having twice been cited for exceptional services. The heavy destruction inflicted upon our enemy both in the air and on the ground, the destruction of 459 enemy aircraft in aerial combat and of 556 on the ground, with your own loss of only 61 aircraft sustained during a year and eight months of combat operations is truly a marvelous record. This achievement could not have

been possible without the closest cooperations of each and every member of the group. The maintenance personnel are especially commended for their constant devotion to duty, their ceaseless and untiring efforts in keeping a very high percentage of aircraft operational under adverse conditions, thereby contributing materially to the excellent results obtained. The 368th Service Squadron is to be commended for its able assistance toward these efforts.

I am happy to have played a small part in the operations of such a splendid organization. I give you my very best wishes for your continued success.

### Ninety-Ninth Awarded Two Citations

A Presidential Citation, highest honor which can be bestowed on a combat unit, has twice been awarded to the 99th Bombardment Group. In two impressive ceremonies, held on September 27, and November 7, 1944, Major General Nathan F. Twining, Commanding General of the 15th Air Force, attached the blue streamers to the Group Colors.

As the squadrons passed in review before General Twining, there was snap and precision to the marching, which showed how proud the men were. With the General on the reviewing stand, on both occasions, were Brigadier General Charles W. Lawrence, Wing Commanding General, and a former 99th Commanding Officer, Brig-

adier General Fay R. Upthegrove, first Commanding Officer of the 99th, now Commanding General of a B-24 Wing, Colonel Lauer and his staff, Major Yount, Aide to General Twining, and our Red Cross sweetheart, Mrs. Margaret "Bea" Risdale.

The 99th earned its first citation for the work done over Gerbini Airdrome in Sicily, on July 5, 1943. Quoting from the Citation, "...When it was necessary to neutralize Sicilian based fighters immediately prior to the invasion, the 99th Bombardment Group was called upon...to attack...and destroy enemy fighters and installations on the south half of the main airfield at Gerbini. As twenty-seven B-17s of the 99th Bombardment Group neared the target, they were at-

### Veteran Fort Group Logs 300 Missions

Catching the rays of the late afternoon sunlight, on November 20, 1944, 36 B-17s of the 99th Bomb Group peeled off and landed at their Italian base. The great, silver Flying Fortresses, led that day by Major Wayne J. Seward, Commanding Officer of the 416th Squadron, had just completed the 99th's three hundredth mission.

As Major Seward dropped through the nose hatch of his ship, after parking it in its revetment, he was warmly greeted by Colonel Ford J. Lauer, the Group Commander. Cameras clicked, and congratulations were extended to the men who had flown that day. In the background the ever-present ground crews were already servicing the bombers for the next day's operations. Before the flying personnel had finished gathering their gear, mechanics and armorers and communications men were making their careful checks of equipment, and the huge tank trucks were gassing up the almost empty tanks of the aircraft.

Target for the historic mission was the marshalling yards at Brno, Czechoslovakia, an important link in the German line of communications to the Russian front. Due to almost complete cloud coverage, the target was bombed by instruments, and returning crewmen were unable to give any indication as to results, although indications were good that our bombs hit in the target area.

All the aircraft, which had taken off that morning, returned safely. Moderate flak was encountered along the route, but not one of our ships suffered so much as a scratch. As they had for so many missions, the Luftwaffe fighters stayed away from our formation, either remaining on the ground, or being off somewhere else in the blue.

The three hundredth mission was completed just a few days short of 20 months after the first mission. On March 31, 1943 the original air echelon of the Group bombed Villacidro Airdrome, in what was then Nazi-held Sardinia, taking off from the first of our two African bases. Since that day our Forts have ranged the skies over the entire Mediterranean and central European area, dealing destruction to enemy installations in many countries. Bombs of every type have been dropped on airdromes, marshalling yards, factories, oil refineries, harbors, bridges, submarine pens and ordnance depots. Not content with devastating these strategic targets, our aircraft have given vital aid to the Ground Forces whenever called upon for tactical support. Every invasion, from Sicily to southern France, was precluded by the work of our Fortresses, and the hard-pressed Allied soldiers at Anzio, Cassino, and other points of fierce German defense were heartened and helped by the close support given them by our planes.

One of the first heavy bombardment groups in the Mediterranean Theater, the 99th has always been in the forefront of 15th Air Force activities. When the Wing of B-17s was chosen to fly the historic, first shuttle-bombing mission to Russia, the 99th was picked for the lead group, and it was a ship pl-

Adorned with painted bombs, swastikas, and patched flak holes, they stand proudly in their revetments, veterans of many combat missions, the B-17 F's now used as transport ships with the 99th. Stripped of their arms, but not of their dignity, these aircraft, original ships of the original crews made the Atlantic crossing in February, 1943.

Two of these majestic bearers of ill tidings to the Axis are still with us and performing perhaps a little less glorious task than their younger "sister soldiers of the skies," the G's, but still serving ever-loyally the Group which has cared for them.

The Warrior, or as the records carry her, A/C number 29474, is assigned to the 347th Squadron, and with Master Sergeant Walter K. Boothe, crew chief, nursing her through her ills, flew 96 combat missions. Out of 102 attempts, only six times did she turn back from the goal.

Aircraft number 49172, or Sweater Girl, a 416th ship, got her name from the voluptuous replica of femininity which adorns her frame. This lady of the airlines flew 111 missions in combat, a mark made possible by careful handling by the crews in the air and by the ground crew chiefed by Master Sergeant Chester A. Smiechowski.

Another one of these "Queens of the Air" is no longer with us, but one well worthy of mention. Number 29513, with 121 missions credited.

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tacked by an estimated one-hundred enemy aircraft...which made persistent, aggressive and determined attacks from all angles...in a furious attempt to break up the bomber formation. Returning the fire with devastating effect, the 99th Bombardment Group successfully penetrated the enemy defenses and dropped 3,240 fragmentation bombs, covering the assigned area so completely that twenty out of twenty-eight enemy fighters on the ground were destroyed and many installations...were severely damaged. During the battle with enemy fighters in the air, which continued before, during and after the bombing run, the Fortresses of the 99th Bombardment Group took

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## 99TH BOMB GROUP THREE HUNDRED MISSION LOG

Published on the occasion of the three-hundredth combat mission flown in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations by the air crews of the 99th Bombardment Group (H), Army Air Forces; Ford J. Lauer, Colonel, Air Corps, Commanding.

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### Lest We Forget

Chaplain Harold T. Whitlock

Two years ago we suffered our first fatality in this group. The shock of that crew's death was deeply felt. How fortunate we were that only one crew was lost in training. And our good fortune has continued throughout nineteen months of combat flying. Losses by death have been remarkably low.

It is right that we should pause in this, our proud celebration, to think for a moment and to say a prayer for those friends who have not come back and of those who have flown their final mission.

When they got up at "H" hour on that fatal day there was nothing that marked them apart from the others on the loading list. They were ordinary fellows like the rest of them, the kind of men we used to see at ball games and fairs, or in offices, shops, and churches. Men from all walks of life, of all classes of society, from every section of our land. Some were tousle-haired youngsters not yet matured by combat; others were seasoned veterans of many missions over unfriendly territory. Not one of them wanted to die—they had too much to live for, each had his particular hopes for the future. But they were men in a dangerous business, trained to do a needed and important job, and willing to risk themselves to accomplish their mission. They were expendable—they knew it—and some were spent.

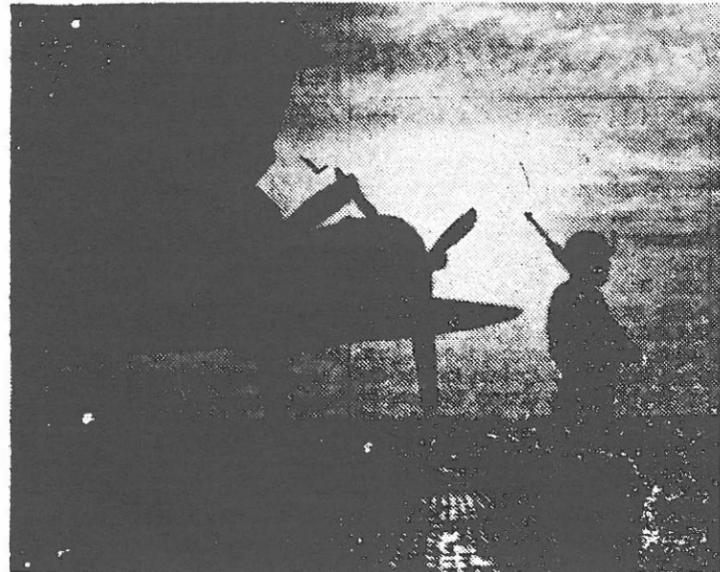
Someone will speak of them as having "lost their lives," but was it so? They were in a fight to protect and perpetuate things worth more than life, things without which life could not be worth living. "Tis man's perdition to be safe, when for the truth he ought to die." To that great cause they had given fully of their time, their thought, their skill, their energy. Can it then be said they did not give their lives as well?

No life laid down in a great cause is ever wasted. It lives on in the ideal they died to maintain. If their sacrifice means anything at all, it means that we, the living, must rededicate ourselves to the future for which they died. The man who can remember them, and then breathe easily and say, "Let's get back to our former ways; things can go on as before," is a traitor to his times and to them. Things must not go on as before. Their giving must not have been in vain. The world which we build will be their monument.

So let us pause and pray: "O God, to all who bravely laid down their lives grant perfect peace; shelter them forever under the cover of thy wings; and in thy loving wisdom and almighty power work through them and us the purposes of thy good and holy will that men may live in peace on earth and evermore. Amen."

### APOLOGIA

The editors apologize for having been forced to omit several items of general interest, and the mention of numerous personnel whose efforts have contributed much to the outstanding record of the Group. Space was at a premium, however, and we found it necessary to eliminate several columns of copy. We owe a particular apology to the men of the 368th Service Squadron for having devoted so little space to their achievements.



## Special Services Always On Ball

During 19 months overseas there has been much to be proud of and much to be laughed off and forgotten in the way of Special Service activities. To be forgotten are the days when at Navarin the Special Service Officer had to call the Photo Section to find out if the Group would have "Pierre of the Plains" that week—or no movie at all. A man's social life consisted of an occasional gin rummy game by candlelight and vino; sports activities usually got no further than competing with flies for the daily ration; and, in the way of education, a person was doing well if he had learned to say "combien" when the occasion presented itself.

By the time we got to Italy troubles had straightened out somewhat, as attested by the completion of the great serial "Arsenic and Old Lace." In the way of athletics, the only activity going on in the Wing area was basketball—and the 99th outshone all other groups by going through the season undefeated. They became Wing Champs after defeating the 82nd Fighter Group, and went on to cop the Area Crown by topping the 12th Air Force contender—the 21st Engineers. Co-managed by Capt. Scarborough, 347th, and Capt. Kirken-dall, 346th, the team did much to bring the name of the 99th before the Air Force sports eyes.

#### BASKETBALL CHAMPS

While the basketball team was warming up the Foggia Recreation Center by their frenzied activity another project was getting under way at the muddy base—this one in the entertainment field. It was a project which at that time placed our group high on the overseas entertainment roster—the 99th Orchestra. Though its size and quality has been reduced in the past few months, it was at one time a 14-piece outfit which had an enviable reputation throughout Italy. As attested by many written commendations from our own Ordnance Section up to Hq. NATOUSA, they have done a first rate job of providing entertainment to thousands of servicemen, and have brought much credit and a wide feeling of good will to our group. Their Special Musical Revue, "Caramelli Carnival," played successfully to over 15,000 troops in this area. Two of their musicians, Pfc. Adam Kunz and Pfc. Charles Forte, were featured soloists with the Kostelanetz Orchestra in its Foggia appearances.

#### LEGITIMATE THEATER

Throughout the summer the men of the 99th, though probably unaware of it, were seeing shows from a stage with the best outdoor facilities in Italy. Our group was the only one in this theater to receive an outdoor performance of "Over 21," the first legitimate Broadway play overseas. The cast and manager of the play were so enthusiastic about the absolute smoothness of the production that they made special recommendations to Theater Headquarters that our stage and amplification facilities be used as a model for standard overseas outdoor shows. To M/Sgt. George T. Love and Cpl. Joyce L. Dale goes the credit for this accomplishment of which our group may be justly proud.

Accredit it to the war weariness, the invigorating Italian climate, or just plain horse sense—the men of the 99th have recently become education happy. In the month of November alone the Special Service Office processed more Army Institute and University Correspondence applications than during the entire period of January through August this year. Poor classroom facilities, time, and weather are working against our plans for informal classes, but interest is unusually high and progress is being made. Several hundred texts in 25 different subjects, ranging from Grammar to Advanced Physics, are now being distributed to the eager students of "Sack-Time U."

Much to boast about, much to be laughed off, and nothing to be ashamed of.



"BEA"

## Coffee, Doughnuts, Smiles On Tap In 'Bea's' Corner

A combat mission may not be all beer and skittles, but the end of it finds coffee and doughnuts waiting for the returning fliers. After they have stowed their gear, piled on the trucks, and have been driven up to answer the probing questions of the eager interrogators, the tired crewmen break for "Bea's corner," where they get the best coffee in Italy, and a fistful of crisp, sugary sinkers.

"Bea," or Margaret Risdale as she is formally known but never called, is in charge of all Red Cross Clubmobile units servicing the Wing area, but her heart and her person are always with the 99th. Through the heat and the dust of Africa to the heat and the dust and the mud and the cold of Italy, she has sweated out ETA's, waiting for her boys to come back. Overseas as long as any of us, she looks as sweet and fresh as the day she left the States. Bea hails from Philadelphia, which is to the everlasting credit of that fair city, but to all of us she is the kind of American girl we left behind in the cities, towns and hamlets of home.

Anyone can hand out coffee and doughnuts, but the smile Bea hands them out with makes all the difference in the world. As each man passes her counter, and exchanges a few words with her, he feels she has been waiting just for him. It's hard enough for a girl to turn on a stock smile for several thousand men over a period of many months, but when she can make that smile warm and sincere, she's tops. That's Bea, the "Sweet-heart of the 99th."

On the few occasions when other girls have substituted for her, the men have never failed to ask, "Where's Bea." No slight is intended to the other girls—they're all wonderful—it's merely the most sincere tribute we can pay to our best friend. Thanks for everything Bea!

## Five Winners Of DSC Top List Of 99th Heroes

In a unit which has been in combat over a long period of time, many men will have performed acts of heroism, exhibited superb skill, and shown a devotion to duty, which has inspired those around them. The 99th has had more than its share of heroes, and the Group is proud of its long list of awards winners.

Heading the list are five men who exhibited extraordinary heroism while participating in aerial flight against the enemy. To these men has gone the second highest honor awarded by our country, the Distinguished Service Cross. One man gave his life in winning the medal, and the award was made posthumously. He was Lt. Thomas C. Hawke, a bombardier with the 347th Squadron.

On a mission to San Giovanni, Italy, in July, 1943, Lt. Hawke was setting his sight on the bomb run when a piece of flak hit him in the throat. Despite the intense pain, shock and loss of blood, Lt. Hawke stayed with his bombsight and successfully dropped his bombs on the target. He would not accept aid until his work had been accomplished. He died shortly after reaching a hospital.

Lt. John W. Wiley, 347th Squadron, was awarded the DSC for the courage he exhibited on a mission he flew as a co-pilot. Under attack by enemy fighters, his plane was badly hit by cannon fire, and Lt. Wiley was knocked out of his seat and one arm was severely wounded and rendered useless. Unable to help with the controls, Lt. Wiley still managed to be a useful

crew member. Dragging himself along the bottom of the cockpit, he kept feeding ammunition to the top turret gunner until the enemy planes had been driven off. Hospitalized for many months, Lt. Wiley returned to combat and finished his tour of duty.

In the historic attack against Gerbini Airdrome in Sicily, which earned for the Group a Presidential Citation, one man stood out above all the others. The hero of the day was Staff Sergeant Benjamin F. Warner, a waist gunner with the 348th Squadron. When the big, blonde sharpshooter had finished his day's work, seven Nazi fighter planes had been shot out of the skies by his cool trigger efforts.

Another gunner, Staff Sergeant Slavomir Nepil, of the 346th Squadron, was the next man to win the coveted award. In July, 1944 he flew on a mission to Ploesti, in his usual position, tail gunner. Nearing the target the ship was attacked by enemy fighters, after it had been forced to drop out of formation due to engine trouble. Sgt. Nepil's arm was shattered by an explosive shell, and succeeding shells, ripping into his compartment, threw him about violently. Despite this, and the intense pain he was suffering, Sgt. Nepil continued to operate his guns with one arm, until they were destroyed. Retiring from his position, he saw other members of his crew bailing out, and he was just able to leave the ship and pull the rip cord, before losing consciousness.

Most recent winner of the DSC was Capt. Warren C. Christianson,

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## Squadron Short Bursts

### 346TH STRAFINGS

By Sgt. Frank O'Donnell and Cpl. Joe Cozeran

Let's stroll down memory lane and look back on the light side of the days that went to make up the 300 missions just topped off by the group. How can we forget the excitement, the thrill, the sheer suspense of watching that Arabian "Tammerville Trolley," puffing, snorting, toiling along on its laborious way, heavily laden with Frenchmen, Moslems, Mohammedans, and Arabs, attired in the latest of mattress covers. Try and forget the time that the veiled Arab woman "sat" down beside Abe Kraftoff, and many times we would thirstily watch Art Levine and Chuck Miller, tramping across the field, bound for the French Canteen and a cup of beer.

Ah, Navarin! Quaint Navarin! OUR Navarin! It was our own little village, probably because no one else would take it. It was here that Ray Brogan made history when he said, "On the boat I was nervous and jerky, now I'm not nervous any more." It was here, too, that Joe Assoporti made a deal with an Arab farmer. Joe was to buy a donkey for 100 dollars, with the farmer's daughter thrown in. Poor Joe, all he wanted was the donkey, which was the prettier of the two. And Navarin is where Ross, Parkman, Anderson, Jones and Hardrock went into the engineering business, while the more mercenary members of the squadron entered the mattress cover industry.

And dust! Remember when the mess tent blew away, and we had to open C rations in our tents. Those were the days, days of long PX lines, with nothing at the other end but Raleigh cigarettes, sourballs, and Louis Probet. Profitable days too, when we could get three eggs for a cake of Lifebuoy soap, and for five francs one could get a rubdown, steam bath, shampoo and a dirty look from the Arab masseur. It was while we were at Navarin that Pancho Montenez made the rank of corporal, and set his own record by holding it for one consecutive week.

Remember the nose-lifting ride into Tunis? The cemetery where the Arabs half buried their dead? It was in good old Tunis that the price of mattress covers took a startling drop, making most of us go back to living on our salaries—a bitter blow. Also, just after reaching Tunis, Lt. Kusterer became a captain, and Pancho made Pfc. It was at Tunis that Byron Ordway gave General Jimmie Doolittle a ride to Group in the German truck, after which the General expressed the fervent wish to get back to his plane and safety.

It was at this wonderful base in Tunis that we passed the century mark in missions. Keeping in step with our progress was Pancho, who once more rose to the dizzy heights of corporal. This time a definite change was noticed in Pancho, when he refused to talk to Pfc. Buck Hambrick. At the barbeque which was held to celebrate the completion of our first hundred missions, B. C. Ordway, once more met his old friend, General Doolittle. After the big get-together, at which Ordway was an honor guard, Byron was heard to say that he was highly browned off because the General didn't recognize him. The beef at this barbeque was definitely of the African variety, or maybe they should have killed the steer before they served it.

It would be difficult to describe our arrival in Italy, because one-third of the squadron came by boat, one-third flew, and the remaining third evidently hitch-hiked. This latter section was our famed advanced echelon. We were greatly impressed upon arriving in Italy. "Ah," we exclaimed, as we stepped down into knee deep mud, "No more dust!" For many days after our arrival we could hear the happy laughter and gay chatter of Libutti, Narciso, Panessitti, Lancellotti, Zito, Bellardini, Passero, Aquilino, Assoporti, Pallerano, and Pappy Rackstraw.

Remember the appearance of Rosy Ryan, decked out in all his finery, including the fruit salad? . . . The occasional visits of Higjaw, or should we say George Ardeleau, one of the only members of the original combat contingent remaining in the squadron. The night that the Red Cross gals came out to dance with the boys, and Mr. Graff, of the mess force, really let his hair down and cut a mean rug, to the utter amazement and amusement of the men, who thought that he had seen better days. Wasn't that the night that Col. Wiper dropped in and tried to cut Nick Bonfiglio, who was dancing with the cutest of the cuties? . . . When Ed Cummins and Charlie Payne entertained the boys and themselves on many occasions . . . When gin and juice had Captain Brock thinking that there was a tunnel under the English Channel, through which the Allied Armies would pass in order to invade the Continent? Some Stuff!

And so, as our 346th "Goebbels" would say, "that's all brother." In strolling down Memory Lane, as we have been doing, it has not been possible for us to recall to mind all the incidents in our overseas history. Nor has it been possible for set down, for posterity's sake, the names of even a fair share of the members of our organization. But, take heart, for we will mention all the names when we write our history for the commemoration of our six hundredth mission.

### 347TH FRAGMENTS

By S-Sgt. Arthur White

We will never forget the night in the Sirocco when Shorty Hoffman, less than five feet short, decided to whip Tiny Allen, who was over six feet and three inches tall, and weighed something over 250 pounds. Tiny just held Shorty off at arms length, but Shorty really was trying hard.

Operations sergeant, Air Raid Warden, can very well tell you. One black night, he took a crew out to one of the planes and started back to where he thought the Squadron was located. After over an hour of riding around in the jeep, he came to a dead end road at a cliff over in what proved to be the British area. He finally bumped into the Officer of the Day in another jeep who virtually took him in hand and took him back to his office.

Shortly after arriving in Italy, Pfc. Eugene Guglielmo set out to find his sister who lived somewhere in Southern Italy. After considerable research and no little difficulty, he succeeded in doing just that and brought her and the rest of the family back with him to Foggia. He then secured a job for his brother-in-law at the Squadron as foreman of the Italian laborers and he, the brother-in-law, is a very efficient worker. Gene is the well known magician in our Group who has—retained us as well as many other Groups with his magic and card tricks. He is an ardent poker player, but a consistent loser, and will not sit down to play cards unless he rolls his sleeves to his elbows even though the fellows all insist that they trust him. The most amusing thing that happens each month in these games is when Gene and Morris "Dum" Felscher get together, and the games nearly end up in his "Dum" is now an operations clerk and it would break his heart if he were to work on pay-night.

One of our favorite memories will always be the baseball game between our own "Whiffle-birds" who have never been known to win a ball game, and the WAC detachment in Foggia. This was played on our own diamond and two of our most comical characters were umpires. Paul Ward was one and Joe Germano was the other. In the middle of the game, off came their clothes . . . Ward, a fellow six foot three inches and more, weighing less than 150 pounds, was revealed in his

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NUMBER THREE HUNDRED: Colonel Ford J. Lauer congratulates Major Wayne J. Seward as Lt. Col. Bernice S. Barr looks on. In the background Maj. Philip M. Phillips interrogates Capt. George S. Eadie.

## Returned POWs Tell Tales Of Life As Axis Captives

When Romania capitulated to the United Nations, and left the Axis fold, last August, Allied fliers who had been detained as prisoners of war in that country were released and returned to their units. 44 men of the 99th, who had gone down over Romanian targets, were flown back to a 15th Air Force base within a few days of the armistice. These men, prisoners for periods ranging from a couple of weeks to almost a year, found they hadn't been forgotten by their old buddies, and there were many happy reunions.

The trite phrases men use to cover up their feelings were heard in every squadron. It was, "Hi, Joe," and "Gosh it's good to see you again boy," accompanied by firm handclaps and shattering slaps on the back. Nothing was too good for the returnees, and the few days they spent with the Group, before they shipped for home, were full of informal parties and amiable jousts with the vino.

Stories were told and retold—sagas of plunging planes, courage and skill, self-sacrifice, prison ordeals, lousy food, and all the little anecdotes which grew out of the men's adventures. Each "silk-cracker" added something to the general picture of life in prison camp. Naturally, a few of the men, being more observant than their fellows, came through with some facts about the female of the Romanian species.

In general, the men agreed they had received fairly decent treatment at the hands of their captors, and attributed their discomfort and lack of good food to the meager supplies at the disposal of the Romanian people. King Michael, described as "not a bad guy," visited the men and assured them he would have liked to do more for them,

but that the Dictator, Antonescu, couldn't see things his way.

Worse than anything were the bombings—first the Allied attacks, and just at the end a few Nazi dive bombing and strafing raids. The boys really sweated our planes out, particularly when the skies were overcast, and they knew the Mickey operators were on the job. The prison camp was situated uncomfortably close to some excellent targets, but luckily no one was hurt until the Germans dropped a few bombs in the camp area. The latter raid saw many of our boys performing acts of heroism, in removing wounded personnel to safety. For these acts, they were duly decorated upon their return to their units.

One of the funnier stories concerned a crew of another group, which had gone down on the shuttle mission to Russia. As they were brought into the prison camp by their captors, the old inmates gasped in amazement, not believing the evidence before their eyes. There, in front of them, stood the new prisoners, and each newcomer was carrying a B-4 bag. Not knowing whether this was now SOP for all combat personnel, the start of a new ATC route, or merely a trick on the part of their Romanian captors, the veterans set the grapevine humming with latrine rumors until they found out the truth.

When Bulgaria quit the war, several weeks later, a different story was told. The nine men who returned to the Group from prison camps in that country, had no amusing anecdotes to relate. Theirs was a straight description of hardship, brutality and suffering—a tale replete with the details of beatings and starvation. Men of the 99th are still POWs in Germany—let's hope they too can get home in the near future.



Brig. Gen. Fay R. Upthegrove, First Group Commander

## 99th Pilot Spends Week With 5th Army

As part of the general program, intended to create better understanding between all branches of the service, the 5th Army and the 15th Air Force, have been exchanging combat personnel for periods of a week at a time. The front-line fighting men and the high altitude warrior are thus permitted to see how the other half of the "Big Team" lives, works and faces the common enemy. The exchanges have been made for the past several months, and during that time the 99th has sent a few men to the front, and has been host to several veterans of the 5th Army.

Typical of the men that we have sent is Pilot, First Lieutenant Cecil M. Buffalo of the 416th, recently returned from a week of living in foxholes, enduring rain, mud and cold, and learning about the actual life of a combat man. He is a man capable of making a true and just comparison for he has already flown 47 bombing missions and is not "just another junior birdman."

Comparing both modes of warfare, Lt. Buffalo said, "As far as danger is concerned, I'd say it's about fifty-fifty, but life is much 'rougher' up front, I'll stick to the Air Force. When a flier is not on a combat mission, he lives a fairly comfortable existence back at his base. The ground fighter, on the other hand, lives for weeks under terribly hard and uncomfortable conditions—they get the best food when possible, but they also go for days on cold rations. I respect the ground man for his courage and high morale—I heard very little griping up front. Those boys also respect the Air Force, and strangely enough think we are doing more dangerous work.

"During the time that I was with the tank destroyer boys, we were stationed just behind the front-line infantry positions, and I got a chance to see some action. I fired about 40 rounds from the big gun, and they told me that I hit a German strongpoint. What confused me most, and scared me plenty, was the sound of the shells whistling overhead. It took me a few days before I could distinguish between the ones from our guns 'going out' and the German shells 'coming in.' The men I lived with could tell within a few yards where a shell would land. One night, while we were playing bridge, a shell hit close by, and one of the officers said, 'that hit the outhouse,' and sure enough, when I looked outside, there was a big hole where the little structure had been."

One of the infantry officers who was with us the latter part of November, was Captain Vernon G. Moore of the 185th Field Artillery Battalion with the 34th Division of the 5th Army. After his first mission with us to Vienna, he had this to say, "I enjoyed it very much and hope to fly again tomorrow. I wasn't scared of the flak so much until the crew began to talk over the interphones about the ship being hit and then I reached for my flak suit, but quick! The thing I was most afraid of was the 'prop-wash' and that was rough. I like the idea of exchanging men for short periods of duty for it gives each branch of the service a chance to see what the other is like."

### AIR CHIEFS

(Continued from page 1)

and the patience, loyalty, and unstinted toll of the ground personnel, are all a vital part of the magic which tells of great successes and spells such acute discomfort for the Axis.

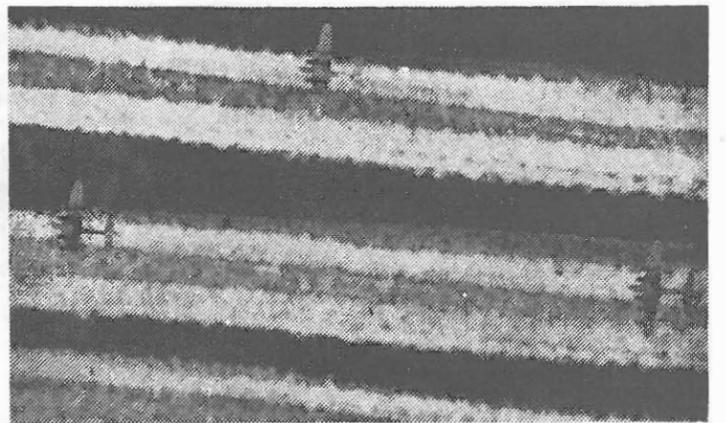
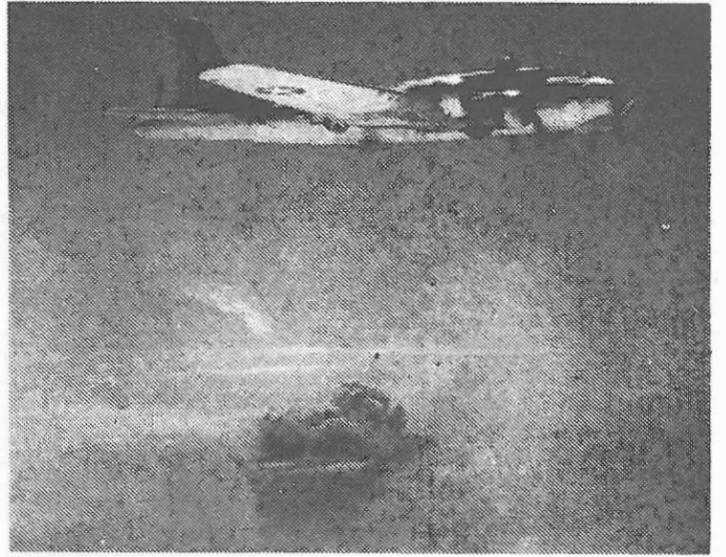
"All who have served the Ninety-Ninth can be forever proud of its accomplishments, knowing that it is one of the best Groups that ever dropped a bomb. Colonel Lauer, your present commander, and I have been friends for many years and I'm happy that the group has been able to enjoy his superior leadership and guidance these many months past.

"May I wish each one of you the best of luck and express the hope that this ordeal will soon be over."

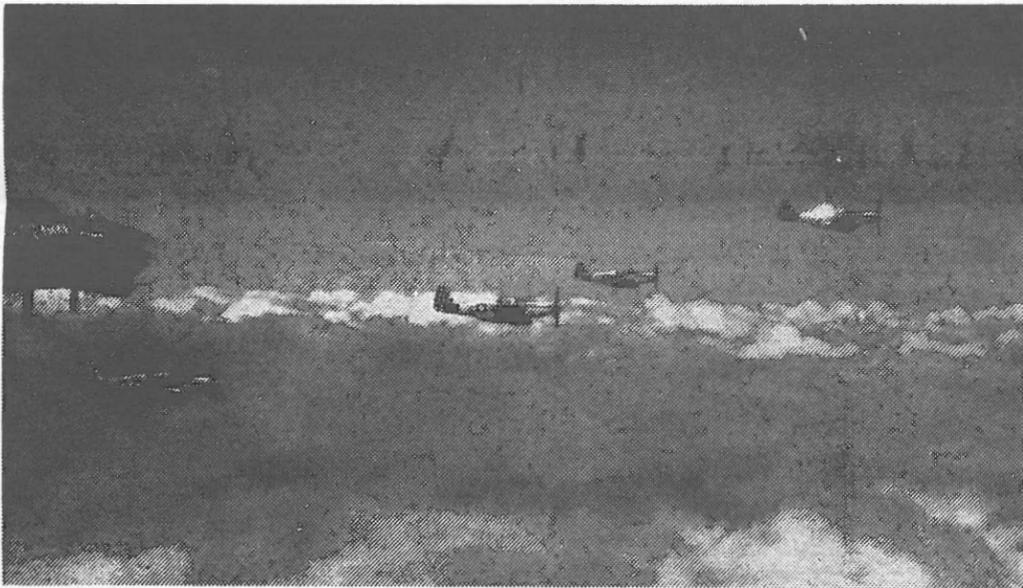


**CITATION PATTERN:** Under the bomb smoke is the remains of the Wiener Neustadt aircraft factory, until April 24, 1944, one of the most important Nazi single engine plants.

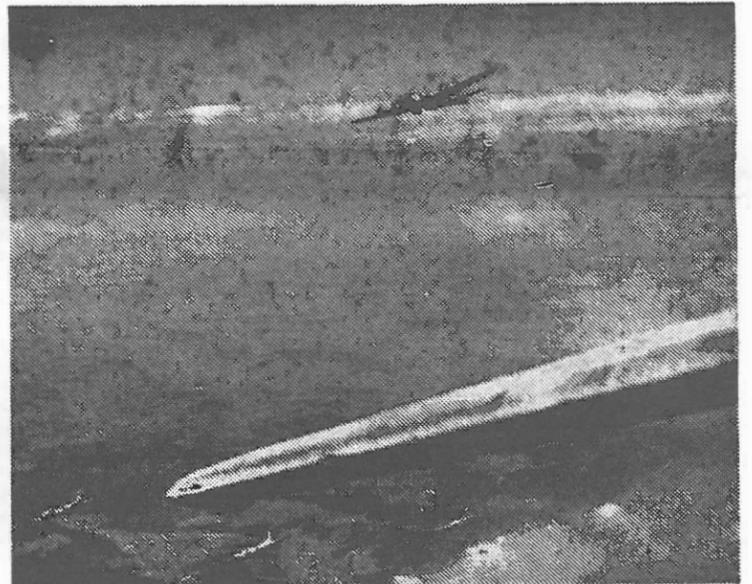
**THROUGH THE UNDERCAST:** Black smoke billowing up through the clouds at 20,000 feet, from a favorite target—Ploesti. Most of the Axis oil was consumed this way.



**TRAILS NORTH:** Planes of the 99th Bomb Group trace a delicate pattern in the wide blue yonder.



**SHUTTLE ESCORT:** P-51s of the famous "Checker-Tail" Group led their big brothers on the historic mission to Russia last June giving the bombers protection from the Nazis.



**FLAK ALLEY:** Heavy, intense and accurate . . . an old story to the crews who have flown mission after mission over Vienna.



**GENOA HARBOR (left),** receives the full weight of the 99th's bomb pattern. On this mission, flown to aid the invasion of Southern France, the Group was credited with destroying at least four submarines.



**FOR HEROISM:** Maj. Gen. Nathan F. Twining pinning the Distinguished Service Cross on Capt. Warren K. Christenson, who brought his Fortress home alone, after the rest of his crew had bailed out.



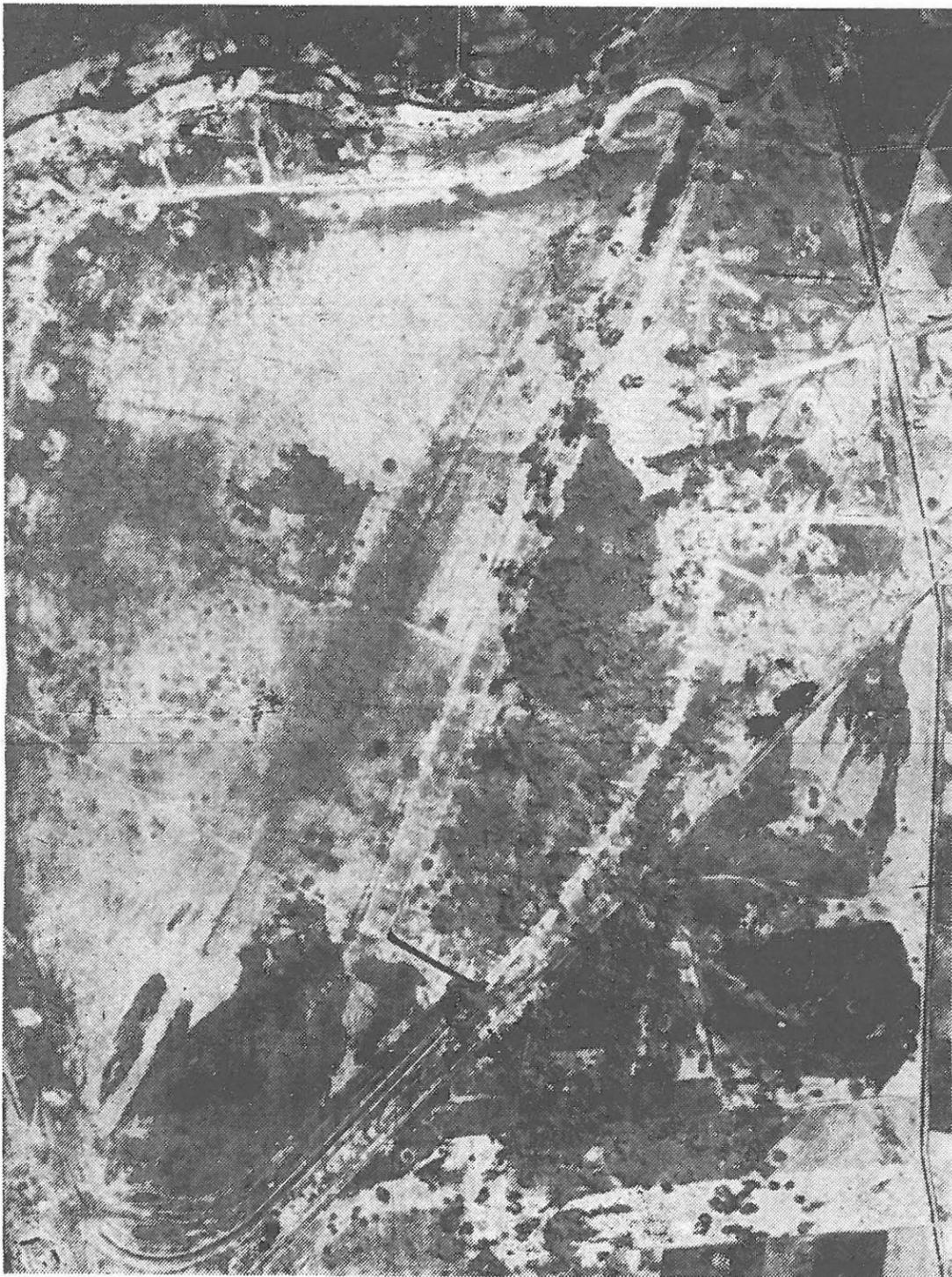
Bomb load for tomorrow's mission.



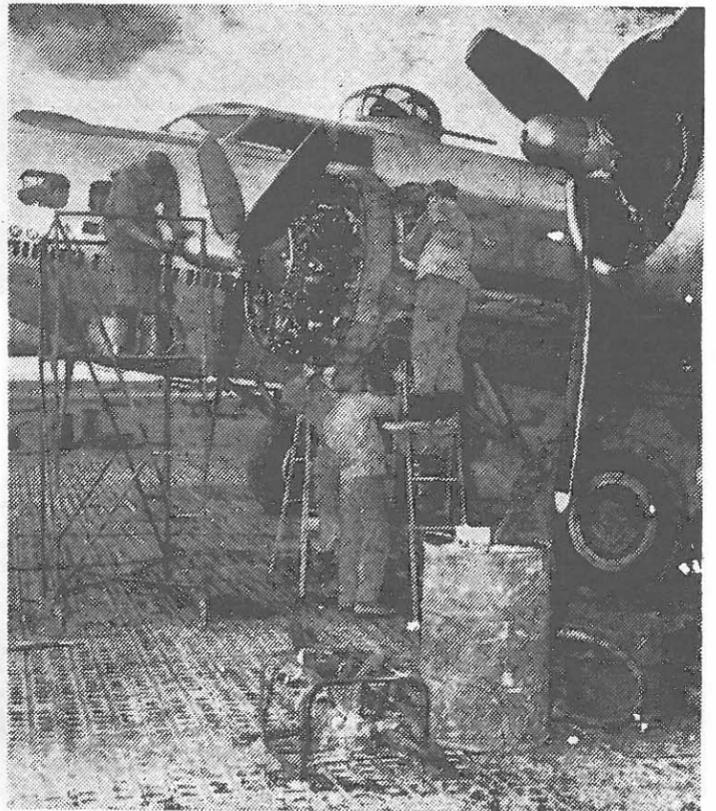
The Motor Pool lives up to its name.



Italian barbers draw first blood on our arrival.



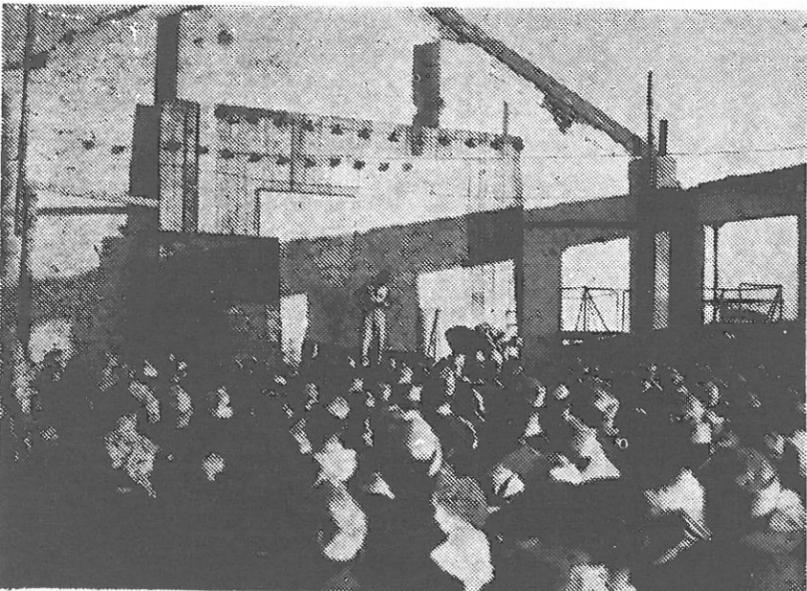
FRAGS ON FRITZ: The south half of Gerbini airdrome is covered by the 99th's frag pattern, dropped despite determined fighter attack. For this the first of two Presidential citations.



ENGINE CHANGE: One of the many ground crews doing part of the every day work which goes on down at "the line."



BATTLE CASUALTY: (Above) men of the 368th Service Squadron prepare to install a new tail cone on a Fortress which took a chewing, but came back.



RUSSIAN BRIEFING: Crews receive instructions for the mission flown from our Russian base, in a bomb-gutted building.

ALLIES: A 99th guest and a Russian host greet each other over some gifts for Adolf.



# History . . . . . Still In The Making

## Life With The 99th At Home And Abroad

On the first day of June, 1942, at Orlando, Florida, part of the equipment was located for a group which still had no personnel. The orders for the activation of the 99th Bombardment Group (H) were cut and later the equipment was transferred to MacDill Field, Fla., to Barksdale, La., and to Pendleton, Ore.

It was on the 25th of September 1942 that orders were cut at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, activating the personnel from the 29th Bombardment Group of the 2nd Air Force to form about a 20 percent strength of the new group from the 6th, 43rd, 52nd and 411th Squadrons. These squadrons formed the nucleus of the 346th, 347th, 348th and 416th Squadrons in that order.

Colonel Fay E. Uptegrove was designated as the Group Commander, and Lt. Col. Leroy A. Rainey, as Deputy Group Commander.

Departing from Gowen Field on the 26th of September for Walla Walla, Washington, the advance detail and part of the equipment arrived and the real work of the Group began with the arrival of the rest of the cadre by the end of the month. Additional ground personnel arrived from the Salt Lake City Army Air Base Replacement Center in Utah.

In the month of October, the Group received 12 flight leaders and their crews. Flying one plane per squadron, with the Squadron Commander and a model crew flying each, the minimum number



Brig. Gen. Charles W. Lawrence

was increased during the month to 10 aircraft for the Group.

On November 10th four Operations Officers were assigned to the Group from Gowen Field.

So, because of the poor weather, the Group moved from Walla Walla, to Sioux City, Iowa, to complete its second phase of training at the base where it was already scheduled to take third phase training. The movement took place in the middle of November. Adding more aircraft and crews, as well as acquiring about 75 percent of the ground crew's total strength, the Group, by the 18th of the month, really became a working organization.

The Group lost its first crew and aircraft during an accident in training on November 30th when No. 286 crashed three miles from the field.

All the equipment was packed and ready to go between December 31, and January 4, and the ground echelon entrained midst a driving snowstorm of blizzard proportions for satellite fields at Mitchell and Watertown in S. D. The 348th, 416th, and Hq. Squadrons went to the former, and the 346th and 347th headed further north to the latter base.

Meanwhile the air crews went to Salina, Kansas, arriving on the 5th of January, 1943, for the final stage of air training. From the 7th to the 13th, the combat crews were on leave while the ground crews "tup, two, three, four" and got in some sack time at the satellite bases with "no planes, no work, no nothing."

The flight echelon flew to Des Moines, La., after returning from the leave. Despite some little engine trouble and what-not coming

overseas, the trip via Morrison Field, Fla., Borinquen, Puerto Rico, Atkinson Field, Georgetown, Brit. Guiana, Belem, Brazil, (where a couple of 348th ships collided and were held up for repairs) to Yumdum Field, Bathurst, Gambia, and finally across the Atlantic Ocean to Marrakech, Morocco. Three of the Squadrons proceeded to Oran and the 347th followed later.

At the La Senia AAB, Algeria, the crews got final briefing and



Lt. Col. Wayne Thurman

with the various lectures felt themselves ready for combat by March and two squadrons each proceeded to the 301st and 97th bases. After the work was completed on the Group's own field at Navarin, (not far from Constantine) the crews and aircraft moved in.

Meanwhile, the ground crews still in South Dakota until the latter part of February, sweated out the rumored furloughs and after much ado received a six day "furlough" without travelling time to be taken either at the time of changing stations from South Dakota, to Tinker Field AAB, Oklahoma City, Okla., or from the latter base upon arrival.

In March the Group's ground men were considered "processed" and proceeded to Camp Kilmer, New Brunswick, New Jersey, arriving March 19, 1943.

Measles seemed to be the order of the days at Kilmer and some of the barracks were continually quarantined with that disease. Hikes, drill, lectures, guard duty, obstacle courses, calisthenics, and games, K. P. etc. etc., were supplemented by passes to New York City and nearby cities and towns. Finally all was in readiness and after many restricted periods, the ground men packed up and entrained for Weehawken, N. J. on the morning of the 28th of April, 1943. Detraining there, the Group was ferried to Staten Island where the men and equipment were bundled and crammed aboard the U. S. S. Edmund B. Alexander, staying overnight in the docks and pulling out early in the morning, the 29th of April, 1943, (about 19½ months ago) and the ground echelon began to draw its overseas pay.

Limping across the Atlantic Ocean with faulty engines, the Alexander and its very precious cargo dropped far behind the rest of the convoy and were escorted by two Navy destroyers which provided ample protection from the lurking U. boats. A safe landing was made at Oran, Algeria, at 1930 hours May 12, 1943, and the men were moved to a bivouac area at LaSenia.

At the La Senia base, ground men were visited by members of the air echelon and learned about the operations out of Navarin. On May 24th the two echelons joined forces again after a long separation. The reunion was made possible only after a never-to-be-forgotten 40 and 8 ride in the super modern, deluxe, stream-lined luxury jobs that the French run on their North African tracks.

The ground crews also learned about the first 21 missions from members of the air echelon and a small part of the dope is this . . . The first mission of the 99th was flown to Villacidro, A/D, in Sardinia, on March 31, 1943, with Colonel Uptegrove leading and the largest number of B-17's to be used in the war to that date, 94, was employed with the 99th and two other groups sallying forth. The men had loaded the bombs, kept up the ships, flew 'em and started all over again in the cycle

until the rumored coming of the ground men became a reality. Great celebrations took place as friends got together again and the 99th was once more intact so the war wouldn't, it couldn't, last long.—The 25th mission was flown on the last day of May when our Group bombed the Foggia A/D in Italy for the longest mission to date, and the bombs destroyed many enemy aircraft grounded on the field.

Missions, vino excursions, and the war, all continued during the month of June. Reports of an expected Arab uprising had all the men carrying arms at all times for a few days, but it proved to be a dry run and was soon forgotten.

On our 36th mission to Messina, Sicily, on June 25th, the roughest opposition in flak and fighters to that date was encountered, and though the target was well covered, the enemy had taken its toll of 99th men with two killed and eight wounded.

The next day was a rough one also, although it was a non-operational day, as an explosion of 500 pound bombs which occurred as they were being unloaded from trucks, caused the death of 16 men and critical injuries to four more. The men were all from the Ordnance company and the Service Squadron men who were driving the trucks.

Colonel Rainey left the Group on the 29th of June and Colonel Richard Smith took over the post of Deputy Group Commander. Another old timer in the Group, Major Frank Dunnington, S-2 officer, was also transferred out on this date.

Dust storms and heavy concentration of dust particles on every object in the area proved to be one of the greatest nuisances of the period. Fireworks on the Fourth of July were limited to another explosion at the Ordnance dump and a large fire in the wheat fields nearby. Luckily, this time there were no casualties although a great deal of hard work was necessary to quench the fire.

More fireworks and great disaster occurred on the 5th of July as the 99th attacked airfields at Gerbini, Sicily. Led by Col. Uptegrove, this mission number 41, was successful in the amount of damage done to the enemy target but it also was heavy in casualty losses to our own Group as one complete element was shot down. Later on several of the men on the crews returned and reported on the whereabouts of others hitherto unreported. Staff Sergeant Benjamin F. Warmer, III, was credited with shooting down seven enemy air-



Col. T. E. Meyer

craft from his waist gun position in a 348th ship. The Group later received a Presidential Citation for this mission.

On the night of July 9th a special invasion mission was pulled to Sicily and the invasion was made early in the morning with one more step taken toward the end of the war. Missions to Sicilian targets came thick and fast about this time and on the 14th of July the Group flew its 50th mission to Messina, in Sicily.

The first Allied attack on Rome, on July 19—mission No. 54 was flown with the 99th dropping 108 tons of 500 pounders on the marshalling yards and railroad buildings in the area. Great care was taken by the crews which had been

briefed not to drop any stray bombs in the area of Vatican City and other non-military targets and the mission was highly successful. Two movie photographers and three internationally known newsmen made the flight with the 99th. The newsmen were Raymond Clapper of the Scripps-Howard papers, later killed in a crash over the Marshall Islands in February 1944, Richard Tregaskis in the International News Service, and Herbert Matthews of the New York Times.

Foggia marshalling yards were the targets for our 56th mission on July 22, and the Group encountered severe opposition and lost a crew and a plane as well as receiving damage to several other aircraft.

Another move was in the wind in the last week of July 1943, and as we prepared to move to Tunisia, reports came through that Mussolini had resigned as leader of the Italians and we had high hopes of a quick victory.

By August 6th our new quarters were well under way and the field



Lt. Col. James A. Barnett

at Oudna, near Mohammedia, a few miles from Tunis was ours.

From Oudna, our first mission was to Messina, Sicily, and was number 64, and we hit the target well. We brought back three wounded men, though, so we didn't escape unscathed.

The big event of August 14th was the Bob Hope show at the 301st B. Gp. field across the way and many of our venturesome souls went over the hills to see his troupe (of course Frances Langford might have drawn a few of the wolves—could be.)

The 99th's first mission to France took place on the 17th of August when the LeTube A/D at Marseilles, was smashed and many enemy aircraft were caught on the ground with their "flaps down." Other damage was done that day to hangars, and ack-ack batteries.

Axis mentors decided to give us a taste of bitter medicine and almost got close enough to us to give us a scare as their aircraft attacked Bizerte, lighting up the skies and the ground crews were made to realize a little that there actually was a war going on.

Foggia again was a target for the 99th on the 25th of August on No. 66 as we destroyed 41 enemy aircraft on the ground and 28 others were hit by the Fortresses. We lost one crew of the 416th however, and one man in the 348th was killed and three others wounded, all because of flak from enemy guns.

Lt. Gen. Spaatz, and Maj. Gen. Doolittle were present at the 99th field to present the Distinguished Service Cross to Staff Sergeant Benjamin Warmer for his record in bagging seven enemy aircraft on the July 5th mission.

The 348th lost a crew and ship over Bologna, on September 2nd. The seventh of the month will be remembered by the same squadron for it lost a bombardier on that attack.

The same day, the Commanding Officer of the Squadron, Major Warren Whitmore, and his crew, were on their 50th mission as was the veteran aircraft No. 494. While over the target, Major Whitmore's ship was hit badly and he couldn't land it at the base, so as the ground crews sweated out the slowly dropping crew members "chuting" to earth one by one, the Major kept circling the field in 494 and then bailed out himself with the ship crashing a few miles away. All 11 men on the crew were

OK with minor injuries received on landing.

The day of the 72nd mission (to the Frascati A/D near Rome) proved to be an historical one in the course of the war, for Italy was at the same time invaded and the country capitulated on paper.

Mission number 88 was the 99th's first mission to Germany and a ME factory near Augsburg was to have been the recipient of the bombs but an undercast caused the Group to turn back. Lt. Franck, a 416th Bombardier, was credited with 4 enemy aircraft, and Staff Sergeant Warmer got credit for the 10th of his career. We lost two crews and A/C and others were wounded and damaged.

Greece was first hit by our bombers on the 9th of October as Salonika and Larissa had targets for our bomb loads.

There was little operational activity from the 11th to the 23rd of the month when ground members took transports for bases in Italy and Sicily and the remaining ones began to wonder what was in the wind. The crews with two days rations and supplies followed the ground men. The mission to Wiener Neustadt was a washout and the planes and men returned on the 25th. The men told marvelous tales of the improved conditions in Italy compared with our dust hole in Africa.

Mission number 100 proved to be an operational flop as far as bombing goes due to a complete overcast over Turin, but credit was given for the mission and the century mark was reached on the 30th of October 1943.

General Spaatz and Doolittle were present for our celebration of the 100th mission and though rain hampered the festivities it didn't stop the barbecue and beer party.

Another overnight deal was on for the 2nd of November and with Sicily as the refueling spot, and Wiener Neustadt again as the target, the detail was SNAPUED.

On the 11th the Group reached the latter target and did a good job on the aircraft factory there.



Col. Peiham D. Glasford  
Deputy Commander

Enroute we destroyed eight enemy fighters and lost none.

We had a man wounded and one killed from the 346th Squadron on the 18th of November, and on the 18th, Staff Sergeant Streetman, an aerial photographer of the 348th (originally of the 416th), saved a ship and crew by freeing a lodged frag bomb that would most certainly have destroyed both ship and crew. With about 30 seconds to go before explosion time, he pried the bomb loose with a machine gun barrel and sent it earthward.

On the 19th the B-25's of the 310th Bomb Group left our field and some Wellingtons or "Wimpys" of the RAF dropped in on us.

On the 25th of November came Thanksgiving Day, and proved also to be the biggest and best eating day we had had overseas.

We also said goodbye to Col. Uptegrove as he left our Group for the USA on DS and Lt. Col. Thurman took over the reins as acting Commanding Officer.

Plans were made during the last week for a move to Italy. Payday brought gold seal greenbacks as the medium of exchange and the francs of North Africa were converted to a reasonably accurate facsimile of our US cash.

The first contingent of men left for Bizerte on the third of December.

Mission No. 112 to Grizmano was (Continued on page 7)

# From Walla Walla To Umbriago With Travel Time A Salute To Three Builders Of The 99th

(Continued from Page 6)  
 News and both ships and crews stayed overnight at our new base in Italy. It was the site of many wrecked enemy aircraft, and at the time, the base was occupied by South African units.

The big guns could be heard when the rest of the 99th arrived at the new base, for the front lines weren't so many miles away, and the nights were at first a little ominous. Trips to the Marshalling yards and vicinity were taken and it afforded the crews an opportunity to see at close range what damage they had wrought upon at least one of their erstwhile targets. Air raid dry runs became frequent and as the field really began to take shape and tents were erected, and offices set up, the 99th again prepared to operate from a permanent base. The first mission pulled from the new A/D was made on December 14, to Athens, Greece.

On December 19th Colonel Charles W. Lawrence succeeded Col. Upthegrove as our Commanding Officer with Lt. Col. Thurman as his Deputy.

The same day the crews had a rough mission to Augsburg, Germany, which cost the lives of two men, wounds to four, and 30 were listed as MIA, as well as the loss of two of our aircraft. Jerry paid in the loss of at least eight fighters.

On Christmas Day of 1943, the Christmas parcels to the Axis from the 99th Bomb Group were to have been a nice load of bombs delivered via air, but since the weather prevented the crews from seeing the targets, the presents were returned to the base for future delivery. A super-duper Christmas dinner was cooked for all hands and a large shipment of mail and packages came in to boost the morale of the men no end. Another happy occurrence on Christmas Day was the return of one of the crews that was lost on the 19th.

All sweated out the explosions on the 29th as a landing Wimpy crashed into a parked one and fires and explosions followed thick and fast.

Another turkey dinner with fix-ins topped off the first day of the new year and everyone wondered just what 1944 would offer.

January found many improvements in living quarters, if not in weather, although a fine month was made operationally with 24 missions completed.

On the 19th and 20th of the month the Group participated in a softening up attack on Airdromes in and around Rome and our targets for the day were respectively, Ciampiano and Contocelle.

These attacks were not without reason however and on the 22nd of January the Allies landed south of Rome and the invasion was number one topic for discussion.

On the 26th of January Lt. Col. Thurman again took over command of the Group when Col. Lawrence became commander of the 5th Wing.

January 27th proved a bad day for the 99th as a Wellington crashed in the Squadron area hurting several men and killing the first sergeant of that unit, Sgt. Peter Hurey, (later the enlisted men's mess hall was named Hurey Hall in his honor and memory). For their work in the dangerous surroundings during the accident, eight men received soldier's medals.

February ushered in a new month and a new contingent of WAC's to town. Few of the men were in a position to make any time with them however as the lads stationed in town took over pretty quickly. Not much doing operationally but there were some good movies during the month to brighten up the recreational side of the picture.

On February 15th Col. Ford J. Lauer assumed command of the Group, relieving Lt. Col. Thurman.

February 25th provided us with a fine target for the day, Regensburg, Germany, number 156, and the target was destroyed with the loss of four aircraft. We had destroyed 21, probably destroyed two, and damaged one of the enemy aircraft in the severe running battle with 150 Nazi planes that occurred that day.

March found a lot of work being

done on the A/C as the insignia of the yellow diamond which had earned us the title of "Diamond-backs" was outlawed and we had this replaced by a "Y" insignia.

Our own 99th Bomb Group stage performances and it also played at other units in the vicinity.

On the 15th Cassino was attacked, a stronghold for the Germans, and our mission number 161 was highly successful.

We were not too happy at the exchange deal that sent our nice new Gs to the 2nd Bomb Group in exchange for some pretty well beat up Fs and rumors flew thick and fast as to the whys and the wherefores of the exchange.

Members of the 483rd Bomb in the 416th Squadron area hurting Group arrived with new aircraft (Gs) and were attached to us for a time awaiting the arrival of their ground crews. Later on we got their Gs and they got the Fs that we had. Our first mission in the silver jobs was to Steyr, Austria.

Easter Sunday church services found nearly everyone in attendance at one time or another during the day. A nice, lazy non-op day was observed on this Sunday holiday.

On the 16th of April, Lt. Col. Headrick, our Deputy Commander, was lost in a raid over Belgrade, Yugoslavia, as the Group met intense flak.

Cokes put in an appearance on the 17th and the one per man was very welcome after nearly a year sans coke.

On April 23rd our Group, led by Colonel Lauer, went to an aircraft factory at Wiener Neustadt, Austria, and tossed lethal "monkey wrenches" into the works, hampering production of Herr Hitler's Luftwaffe replacements. Encountering no little opposition from Nazi ack-ack and fighters, the Group received another Presidential Citation later on for this mission.

During April we also got another order on insignia and a "Y" on a diamond background became our designation and mark of recognition.

The Group almost completely destroyed the Varese A/C factory on the 30th of April on mission No. 164 and we suffered the loss of two A/C and crews and had six wounded men on the aircraft that returned.

May 12th provided a day for another two missions, as one was pulled in the morning to the Tarchinina A/D north of Rome, and in the afternoon, the target most vital at the time was the headquarters of the German High Command in the same area, and the surroundings received a heavy pounding from our missiles.

Toward the latter part of the month there spread many rumors about another "something big cook-

ing." The rumors became fact as on the morning of June 2nd a mission got under way and the crews with new uniforms, complete with all insignia and stripes, identification, etc., bombed the Debreczen M/Y in Hungary, and continued on to a base at Poltava, Russia. While the men rested, worked, and spread international good will among the Russians, those left behind, sweated them out, got sack time, swimming, etc., and waited for their return. They pulled a mission from Russia and returned to the Stalin base. Coming back to our base on the 11th, the crews told tales of Russian hospitality, of wine, women and song, entertainment, sightseeing trips, and, in case we forgot to mention it, they told about the women of Russia.

July was another theatrically big month as Irving Berlin and his "This Is The Army", show played in the Foggia area for a few days. It was also a good month operationally as we flew 21 missions.

On the 14th of July, Colonel T. J. Meyer assumed command of the Group relieving Col. Lauer who went home on DS. Colonel Meyer became ill and after his transfer to the hospital, Lt. Col. James A. Barnett became the Commanding Officer, taking over on the 1st of August.

On August 12, 13, and 14, the Group bombed gun installations on the northern Mediterranean Coast and it began to look as though something big was in the offing . . . and it was. On the night of August 14th a pre-midnight briefing revealed the invasion of southern France early the next morning. For the first time in history our heavy bombers took off in darkness and arrived at the beachhead just before the first waves of invasion troops swarmed ashore.

August gave us a total of 22 missions and several men returned to the base after enforced vacations in POW camps in Rumania. They were released when that country capitulated to the Allies.

Hitler's navy received a bad blow on the 4th of September as we bombed Genoa Harbor and sub pens and destroyed at least four of the subs therein.

Major General Nathan Twining, Commanding General of the 15th AAF, was on the field on the 27th of September to present the Group with the streamer of the Presidential Citation for its work on the Gerbini Airdrome on July 5, 1943. He commended not only the men who flew the mission but also those on the ground whose work made it possible.

On September 22, Colonel Lauer returned from the States and once again assumed command of the Group relieving Lt. Col. Barnett.

Also in the month of September our Executive Officer, Lt. Col. Wm. Hampton, a member of the Group since "way back when" departed for the USA, as did Lt. Col. Lawrence Semans, our Operations Officer. Their places were filled by Major John A. Sarosy, former Group Adjutant, and Lt. Col. Bernice S. Barr. Capt. N. M. Scarborough came up from the 347th Squadron to become the adjutant.

October found the 99th with a total of 16 missions flown with a couple of days being, "double days", with "Red" and "Blue" forces going for different targets. The seventh provided targets in Vienna, Austria, and Nove Zamky, Hungary, respectively. On the 13th, Blechhammer South O/R, Germany, and the Florisdorf O/R at Vienna were attacked, in the drive to cut off Hitler's oil production and keep his machines inactive.

On the 12th of October, anniversary of the day when Italy's Chris Columbus is reputed to have discovered America, the Group flew mission No. 275 and in direct support of the ground troops, dropped a part of the heaviest bomb tonnage ever to be released in a tactical operation.

A day and night combination of a double mission day also took place when on the 28th of October, the Klagenfurt, Austria, aircraft show "Caramelli Caravan" presented on the 14th of March drew a large crowd at each of its per-

factory, and the marshalling yards at Munich, were hit.

In November we were again visited by Major General Twining who presented the second streamer to the unit's colors as recognition by the President of work done on April 23, 1944, at Wiener Neustadt, Austria. He also presented Captain Warren Christianson, of the 347th, with a DSC at the ceremonies.

Our Group's 300th Mission occurred on the 20th of the month of November, as targets at Brno, Czechoslovakia were hit. Thus we start upon another leg of a journey toward the end of the war and start another page in the Group History.

## Group's Activity Is Shown By Statistics

Captain Philip Sweeney of the Group S-3 section, Statistical Officer, has unearthed some figures and facts for our amazement and edification.

In the 300 missions we have had 8,746 aircraft take off on missions and of these 8,111 have gone over the target, leaving the remarkably low number of early returns at 635. Thus each mission we have averaged sending out 29 aircraft and averaging only two early returns, with 27 dropping their bombs on enemy objectives.

These 8,111 aircraft over the target have dropped 18,938.14 tons of bombs on enemy targets, or an average of 63.29 tons per mission. The B-17's most popular bombs were the 500 pounders as 51,915 RDX and General purpose bombs of that weight were carried, weighing 1,270.74 tons. Also the 1,000 pounders numbering 4,748 and tipping the scales at 2,374 tons were unpleasant gifts to the enemy. Five thousand seventy-seven 100 pound Gp's weighing 253.85 tons were dropped; Six thousand, seven hundred and sixty-eight bombs of the 250 pound class for a total of 846 tons; 5,572, 300 pounders totaling 835.8 tons; 292 bombs weighing a ton each, busted blocks in many a district in Nazi-held territory. More or less as an experiment, 28—1,600 pound anti-personnel bombs were dropped—weight, 22.4 tons. Conflagrations were started by our 552 bombs of the 100 pound incendiary variety, weighing 27.6 tons, and by our 348, 500 pound fire makers at 87 tons.

Gunners have fired 2,269,343 rounds of ammunition in combat at 1,954 enemy aircraft and have destroyed 459 of them, probably destroyed 96 more and damaged 59 of the 1,954. Thus 614, or 31.4 percent of all these aircraft encountered were at least hit. All of these were met prior to mission number 210. The aircraft also destroyed 556 enemy aircraft on the ground and only ten of those since mission number 200.

So far the enemy hasn't done too well against us (knock on wood if you wish) as in 300 missions they have damaged 1,372 of our A/C by flak, and enemy aircraft succeeded in hitting 162 of ours. Enemy action has accounted for the loss of 60 of our aircraft and nine others have been destroyed by other causes, mostly of an operational nature, since coming overseas.

Personnel who have flown with us, and some who are still flying with us under the colors of the 99th total 3,359 men. Nearly one-half of this number, 1,460 have completed 50 missions, and 1,030 are still flying with us.

Major Frederick Koehne, Group Flight Surgeon has also furnished us with a few pertinent facts and figures as to personnel in combat.

Of the total of 81,110 man sorties, only 892 have men with misfortunes including 88 men killed in action, 251 wounded in action, 216 missing in action, 97 in Prisoner of War camps, and 3 interned in Switzerland. 147 more fortunate men have returned to the base after being either MIA or POWs. In addition to the above, there have been 90

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In addition to the various Commanding Officers, who have been responsible for the success of the 99th, three other officers, who are no longer with us, have had major roles in the growth and development of the Group since its activation. They are Lt. Col. William H. Hampton, Lt. Col. Lawrence S. Semans, and Lt. Col. Vernon E. Fairbanks.

Col. Hampton, as Group Executive Officer, was the administrative bulwark of the Group, working tirelessly to see the unit functioned without friction and red tape. He relieved the Group Commanders of all the little problems which crop up from day to day, and he deserves credit for the smooth way in which the Group functioned on the ground. Col. Hampton left the Group in September, on orders taking him back to the States, where an important assignment awaited him.



Lt. Col. William H. Hampton

Col. Semans began his long tour of duty with the Group as Commanding Officer of the 347th Squadron, taking that unit through phase training, and leading it overseas. Shortly after landing in Africa he was transferred to Group, and given the highly important position of Group Operations Officer. Under his able supervision, schedules, training programs, combat tactics, and SOP's were established, which did much to make the Group a tight and effective combat unit. Col. Semans put great stress on safe and intelligent flying, cutting down on Snafus and helping to make the 99th's record lowest on losses, both combat and non-combat. He, too, left us in September, for a well deserved furlough in the States.



Lt. Col. Lawrence S. Semans

Col. Fairbanks, (Doug to one and all), came overseas as acting Group S-2, but the acting part was soon dropped, and he became head man in the Intelligence Section. A veteran newspaper man, he could divorce fiction from fact, and when he briefed the combat crews, in the "hour before the dawn," they knew they could stake their lives on his information. Col. Fairbanks' light could not long be hidden under the Group's bushel, and, back in April, he was called to Wing to head its A-2 section.



Lt. Col. Vernon E. Fairbanks

## 368th Service Squadron Has Excellent Record

Overseas since January 1943, the 368th Service Squadron has performed the many duties and details necessary to "keep 'em flying" for the 99th Bombardment Group.

Through African dust and Italian mud the 368th has worked long and hard to service the Forts, and it has always been ready to do more than is required of a Service Squadron.

Space prevents enumerating the jobs the men in the Welding Shop, the Electric, Radio, and Battery Shop, the Sheet Metal Department, the Parachute Department, the Dope, Fabric, and Paint Shop, the Carpenter Shop, and the Airplane and Engine Mechanics have done for the 99th, but the men have served the 99th in a manner deserving of recognition and praise.

A record of which the 99th and 368th may both be proud is that it has only been necessary for the 99th to salvage six aircraft, a record no other B-17 Group can claim . . . proof of the work and maintenance of both organizations.

Improvising when necessary, substituting, requisitioning, and constructing parts and materials, to keep itself a smooth running organization, the 368th Service Squadron has proven itself tops to the men who fly the planes, and to the men of the 99th's ground echelon.

## Squadron Short Bursts

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long-handled underwear and a fatigue hat, and Germano, tall and stocky, sported a very loud pair of pajamas. At the same time, the pitcher for the Whiffles, working very hard to win the ball game, decided that he too, had too much adornment, so this Pvt. Isaac "Kansas" Havens, pulled off his coveralls to display another set of pajamas to match those of Germano. It seems that the Whiffle-birds were defeated despite the antics, perhaps because of them, and the WAC's were triumphant.

### REMINISCING WITH THE 348TH

By S-Sgt. Joseph "Bama" Marshall

It's been a long twenty-six months for the boys who were around to form the Three Hundred and Forty-Eight Bombardment Squadron, a part of the Ninety-Ninth Bombardment Group, veterans of many a combat battle. Statistics show that these veterans of the first cadre, have been side-kicks to many a Yank who has come and gone through the Squadron. Some are back home... some are seeing action on other war fronts.

Our first leader perhaps stands foremost upon the minds of the original gang... Lt. Col. Warren B. Whitmore... one of the best of flyers... could darn near make a Fort flap its wings. Col. Whitmore led us through the States...

Maj. Elliott was our second C. O., followed by Maj. Davis, Capt. Branson, Maj. Murphee, Maj. Christensen, and currently, Maj. Knepper. Every one of them equally capable of handling the job (and fellows... I'm not using this as a cue, for I am as high as I can go... darn it... missing a helluva good chance here!!!) Of course, a C. O. can not spend all his time seeing that things are being looked after on the ground. Remember Mitchell, South Dakota???

Thus we come to write about the unsung heroes of which there are many in the squadron, the enlisted personnel of the squadron. Their work overseas, could hardly be surpassed. They have worked under deplorable conditions... in rain... mud... dust storms...

### FLAK FROM THE 416TH

By Sgt. Arthur Bassin

Long ago and far away! We wonder if the "Angel" (Dinan to you) has caught up with Swingen. If you recall, he was looking all over our beloved S. S. ALEXANDER. Say, how's about another battle star for that boat ride over? Ouch! My back! Sleeping in that stone quarry, and that horse collar around our necks—blanket roll to "you all." Combat is, or shall we say "was," rough! Pup tents comma C rations... Can you imagine our "Hygiene Boy," Paul E. Cole, with scads and scads of music roll spread underneath his blankets... but if you remember, we were warned about bringing beaucoups of latrino paper in our "B" bag if we wanted to be happy overseas.

Ah... that wonderful train ride on the 40 and 8... seeing Africa the hard way... Jimmie Kish and Company running from one "coach" to the other... Everyone, including yours truly, had the Gee-eyes... "Doc" Beal (we all thought you tops, Major!) slipping the "oil" to the higher echelon... Our two-bit lawyer, Warner, stiff as a board from imbibing too much Vino Rouge... Andy losing his "knap-sack." Things to see... every time our Toonerville Trolley stopped, half the troops would run out in search of some giggle water.

ITALY SURRENDERS!... Rumors!... One couldn't hit the outhouse without hearing the favorite comment, quote when are we going HOME? unquote... Remember, we were having one of our formations in front of the Orderly Room and Major Weeden let us have the facts... Sure, we all thought it was just a matter of "sweating out" the boat... don't rub it in, we all make mistakes... Now it can be told... Pearce, Hamann and Braswell had their "B" bags all packed! So, we leave the beautiful city of Navarin (Is he kidding?) and with it so many of us left charge accounts with our favorite laundry man... That wasn't really necessary. Heil, I mean, leaving your serial number and blood type to that Jamouk, just because you owed him fifty Francs for that last bundle of wet wash! Our three night prowlers, Immekus, McGinty and Darrow, told us personally that Setif was Shangra-La to them. They called it Cognac, but me-thinks it la Femme Jolie!

MEMOIRS OF TUNIS: The time our Squadron Pin-up, Tommy O'Shea and his aide-de-camp, Bilinsky, had just one too many in town... Tommy said the foxhole wasn't too bad, but he didn't go much for the PX operator smuggling up "that" close (Bahlnsk,—Pahleese!)... How come those two Broadway Ballads, Bassin and Dinan fell into the hospital together? Who caught what from whom?... And so, as Fitzpatrick and his Travelogue would say, "Farewell to Africa! You gave us plenty of kicks and thrills, but c'est la guerre... We must tarry one, we jokers have to get this thing over with as quickly as possible. Africa calling Italy... Africa calling Italy... Over... Over to you!"

Spoke to Bobbie Obarr and he reminded me that we got here just about this time last semester. As if anyone has to remind us about sweatn' that line out, that open air serving line... Herculean Dutch Reynolds handing out itty bitty olives, Brabham, Gerrol, Higdon, and "Shoot two bucks" Louis Benos, aside to Sarniak: "Is it true what George Moore told me, that your full name is Joe 'No Seconds' Sarniak?"... All the departments then chipped in and four-one-six showed this wing-croo up here what that phrase means, "Keep 'em Flying!"... And never

Overture: and so, another Xmas rolls around, but the melody lingers on. Up we soared, higher and higher, tallying up the missions—ten, 20, 30, here we sit on top—300 missions! What now, little man? CBI???... Buon fortuna!

## English Lads Load Nickels For Missions

You've seen 'em dashing from one aircraft to another on the line, or on the way to and from the line, and probably wondered if they were trying to find the Wellingtons across the strip.

We mean, of course, the British lads who have charge of the distribution of the leaflets that we drop upon the enemy, supplementing the bombs we carry.

That is the purpose of their wild dashing, to see that the proper "nickels" are put in the ships for the mission. Known as leaflets, nickels, propaganda sheets, and by various other names, they are the products of the Psychological Warfare Branch of the RAF which works hand in hand with our Air Force in breaking the morale of the Axis soldiers.

Using truth as a weapon more powerful than lies, some of these "nickels" are accurate news reports which in themselves, written in the language of the country upon which they are dropped, are so different from the reports of Goebbels and his crews that they are bound to cause questioning and unrest among the soldiers on the other side of the fence where the grass isn't so green.

Whether it be "Tommy" or "Bill" or "Scotty" or someone else designated by his unit, the British lad who dashes about has a definite, important purpose in our activities, in doing his part to finish the war and go back to the "Isles" as we want to go back to the USA.

## DSC Winners Top 99th Hero List

(Continued from page 1)

a lieutenant with the 347th Squadron when he performed the act for which he was later decorated. In August of this year Capt. Christianson was piloting an element lead ship on a mission to Vienna. On the bomb run his ship was hit by flak, but he managed to keep his element in formation, and a successful pattern of bombs was dropped. Over the target, Captain Christianson's plane was hit again by flak, and an entire engine was torn from its mounting. The B-17 was thrown into a spin, but Capt. Christianson, disregarding his own personal safety, remained at the controls, allowing all the other members of the crew to abandon the ship. After dropping many thousand feet, he finally succeeded in pulling the ship out of the spin at a very low altitude. Without the aid of navigational charts, or crew members, Capt. Christianson flew the plane all the way back to the base, where he made a safe landing despite one useless tire, loss of an engine, and damaged controls.

In addition to the five men named above, many others have merited awards, and to date, members of the Group have earned 8 Legion of Merit Medals, 29 Silver Stars, 209 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 45 Soldiers Medals, 26 Bronze Stars, 245 Purple Hearts, over 2,500 Air Medals, and innumerable clusters to the latter.

## ORIGINAL FORTS

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ited to her, bears the name "El Diablo." At present flying General Upthegrove hither and yon, at a B-24 Wing in this theater, "El Diablo" earned the respect of our former commanding officer who requested her transfer to him. Gen. Upthegrove well knows what "The Devil" can do, he should for he ferried her across the Atlantic himself nearly two years ago.

They have served us well in combat, are serving us as transports, and may they continue to serve as they have done, veterans among veterans.



Lt. Col. Bernice S. Barr  
Operations Officer



Maj. John A. Sarosy  
Executive Officer

## Ninety-Ninth Awarded Two Presidential Citations

(Continued from page 1)

a terrific toll of the enemy planes. Official approved claims consisted of thirty-eight fighters destroyed, eleven probably destroyed, and one damaged, against the loss of three bombers. The destruction of seventy enemy fighters by this group in a single mission was a serious blow to the enemy defenses of Sicily, and played a major part in setting the stage for the invasion five days later. By the courage, heroism and determination of the air crews, together with the professional skill and devotion to duty of the ground personnel, the officers and men of the 99th Bombardment Group have reflected great credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

Citation number two was given for the superb job done on April 22,

1944, when the group attacked the aircraft factory at Wiener Neustadt, Austria. In the lead of the Wing formation our ships flew through highly aggressive enemy fighter attacks, during which Luftwaffe pilots tried desperately to break up the bomber formation, with rocket, cannon and machine gun fire, and heavy, intense, accurate flak, which riddled thirty-one of the thirty-six bombers. Despite this, our aircraft dropped their bombs in a well concentrated pattern, scoring many direct hits, destroying many buildings, and crippling the single engine fighter production of the enemy at a most critical period. During the action five enemy fighters were destroyed and three damaged on the ground.

It is fitting that the two men who have had the longest tours of duty in command of the 99th, and have been most responsible for its success, should have led the Group on these notable missions. Brigadier General (then Colonel) Upthegrove flew the lead on the Gerbini mission while Colonel Lauer led the Group on the mission to Wiener Neustadt.

## STATISTICS

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operational battle casualties. The latter figure includes men killed or wounded in operational flight, but not in contact with the enemy.

The group has flown 144,070 miles in reaching enemy targets, and our 8,111 aircraft over the targets have totaled 3,893,280 airplane miles, averaging 480 miles from the home base to the target for each mission. The average time for each mission was six hours and 29 minutes. The total time for the 300 missions is 1,946 hours and 25 minutes with the individual plane adding up to some 52,847 hours. With ten men on each aircraft, this accounts for 528,470 man hours. Thus if one man could have flown every position on every ship on every mission, he would have flown continuously for six whole years. What no rest camp? No furlough?

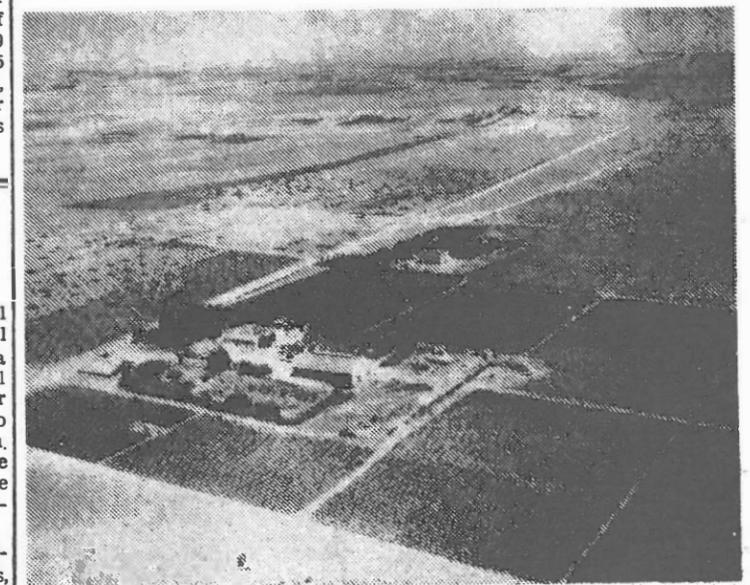
Thirty-six men have led our group over targets during our 300 missions. Colonel (now Brigadier General) Upthegrove led the group the most times with 47 sorties, and Colonel Lauer, the second busiest leader with 27 sorties.

## Veteran Fort Group Logs 300 Missions

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loted by our present Group Commander, Colonel Lauer, which set the pace. Ploesti and Vienna, the two places which have felt the greatest weight of 15th Air Force bombs, know well the power of the 99th.

Elsewhere in this paper, statistics tell the whole story of our activity, and the records are many and imposing. Behind all these figures lies a human story—a story of men. Courage, devotion to duty, the will to win and hard work are those hard to measure qualities which have made the 99th a great organization. Three hundred missions was not the goal, nor will four hundred be—the goal is defeat of the enemy, and a return to a better world.



AFRICAN BASE: An aerial view of our Tunisian quarters taken on a clear day, when the dust was all on the ground.