

AS BRIEFED...

AN ADDENDUM

by W. Evan Owens

INTRODUCTION

Here, from the original author of AS BRIEFED, are several additional chapters about the men and events that made up the 384th. Readers will quickly recognize the style of Evan Owens.

We are indebted to him once again for having chronicled more of our history for us. As a 384th veteran, this was easy for him to do. As a writer, it doubtless became an even more pleasant task.

Evan Owens retired from the Air Force and returned to civilian life and his career as a writer, reporter, and columnist. Until his retirement in 1973, he worked for the Muncie Evening Press in Muncie, Indiana.



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544th



545th



546th



547th

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THE DUKE OF BUCCLEUCH

Almost overnight the men of the 384th learned to pronounce "Buccleuch," and a few of them even learned to spell it.

These were the Duke's woods we were living in, although he had so much land that he couldn't miss these few acres. They weren't so few, really. It was a mile from most of the four living areas to the mess hall and it was half a mile to the work area at its nearest point. And all in woods until one came up against the landing strip, which was like a gigantic slash of concrete with revetments here and there around it.

By the end of our first day there everyone had learned his way around, measuring everything in relation to the distance from the mess hall.

That was enough to know about the Duke of Buccleuch to satisfy most of us, but someone was always coming up with something we didn't know. The Duke traced his descent back to Richard le Scott who lived away back there in time, back in the thirteenth century somewhere. They didn't make their home anywhere near these woods, however, but had an estate in Selkirkshire.

Someone was created Lord Scott of Buccleuch in 1606 and won an earldom in 1619. The second earl's daughter, Anne, married the famous 1st Duke of Buccleuch.

There was always someone contributing something new to the story.

A few days after our arrival someone found three mice in the commanding officer's wastebasket which was so polished and clean the mice couldn't get out. They kept jumping against the sides, missing the top by three or four inches. The mystery of how they got there really wasn't much of a mystery. They had come down the drapes and dropped the last 12 or 13 inches. After that the wastebasket was always emptied at night, and cleaned and polished, and eventually there wasn't a mouse left in the building.

But we couldn't help learning, little by little, a few things more about Buccleuch's dukedom. One of his antecedents was made Lord of the Bedchamber by George III, but later became an associate of the Prince of Wales, having been removed from his office in the Royal Household.

That duke died unmarried, and the dukedom of Queensberry and some of his other titles did not pass on to Henry Scott, third duke of Buccleuch. His seat had been at Dumlanrig Castle, which was among the things that didn't pass on.

But while the 384th was in his woods, the Duke of Buccleuch was one of the largest and most powerful landowners in Britain.

He reportedly had acres and acres on his rent roll. In addition to his land holding he had wide control in armaments, motors, banking, insurance and railroad interests.

Somehow, in those first days at Grafton Underwood, it was hardly realized that in a very few days we would be flying over France, bombing marshalling yards and air fields, and submarine pens and factories.

There were even a few trips to London, where one could enjoy such pleasures as wandering about town then coming back to tell the rest of us about it.

One visitor, during his wanderings, was entranced by a sign he saw in a store window.

"Come in and Look Round," the sign said.

"I went in and tried," said our 384th sharpie. "But I didn't look any rounder when I came out than when I went in."

And so it went.

It seemed a long time since those days back home, before being sent to the 384th, practically all of us had participated in mock wars in the United States. It seemed they were always having mock wars in training.

One of the imaginary fighters described his experiences this way:

"The enemy took us by surprise and gained an initial advantage. I was told that parachutists dropped in on Rice Field, about 40 miles north, and others captured Needles, which is about 70 miles up-river.

"That put us in a precarious position, as they successfully occupied points within striking distance.

"Actually I was not certain where they were, but I had no doubt as to the seriousness of our position. But it was rumored that a blunder resulted in heavy loss to our forces, a squadron of our pursuits unintentially strafing our own troops.

"But morale was high. Give us the materials and we Blues would shove those dirty dog Reds back in to the Pacific Ocean," said one of those fresh from the War Games.

"To say the least, I was a very confused patriot. A few hours earlier our Blue Army had the enemy cornered in a sand flat along the river east of my air base. My squadron had sent a contingent to Needles. The contingent returned one night, intact. This put the enemy in a serious pocket.

"It was going to be a great victory.

"Then the commanders sent around several cans of red paint, and the blue on our planes was changed to red. We were being deliberately given over to the enemy. Our job now became to help the Reds fight out of the mess we Blues had gotten them in.

"Well, a flight from the Third Observation Squadron took off and lost four planes first thing. After they got into the air they learned there was a theoretical hole in the runway. I guess we had put it there ourselves when we were Blues.

"So we lost several planes and several good pilots, men who have learned so much out here on the desert that they could fly through a barn door if it was open.

"At noon the two armies met on foot in the mountains northwest of here, and got tired of using blank ammunition and started throwing rocks at each other.

"The Reds and the Blues seemed to be pretty mad at each other.

"As for me, I didn't know what to think.

"Yesterday I had thought of the Reds as barbaric hordes who were trying to tear down the civilization we Blues had built up. They wanted to put us Blues in a position of servitude from which it might take 1,000 years to recover.

"Now it was the other way around.

"And to make it worse, I wound up a captive. The Blues captured us at noon."

They sat around and talked.

Among the present duke's antecedents was Sir Walter Scott, a great writer who was born in Edinburgh in 1771. He practiced at the bar, but not extensively.

He was a man who believed in paying his debts. In 1813 he bought Abbotsford, where he established himself as a country gentleman. In 18 years he wrote 32 novels. At the ascension of George IV, Scott was knighted and created a baronet.

This member of the Clan Buccleuch got himself into a financial mess when two publishing houses in which he was interested failed with large liabilities. He refused to take advantage of the bankruptcy laws although knowing that he was legally entitled to their protection.

And what did this old-time Buccleuch do? Single-handedly he tried to pay off an indebtedness of nearly 120 thousand pounds, which is quite a few pounds, indeed.

For six years he worked at it, writing novels and receiving compensation at a great rate, and turning over the proceeds to his creditors.

In 1832 he died, leaving a part of the debt to be cleared off by royalties received after his death.

All this stuff about the Duke of Buccleuch upon whose land we were living came gradually to be known by the men of Grafton-Underwood.

But some people didn't much care. One who did was the sergeant who, during a discussion of the duke, asked what Sir Walter was best known for.

"I don't know," said the sergeant. "Probably *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*."

"Yeah," said the other. "And who was she?"

AGNES

It didn't take Grafton-Underwood long to discover Agnes.

Agnes was one of those people who thought beer was good for one, especially for women and especially for elderly women who had a lot of aches and pains. She fulfilled those requirements.

The 384th found her at the George, where she showed up every evening at the same time, sat at the same table, intending to drink exactly two bottles of Guinness.

Her actions led to the early belief that she wasn't exactly smart, even retarded, but this idea changed as we got to know her. One reason that they got this erroneous idea was that she was always alone, but would sit there talking to herself. And because she cackled when she laughed.

Three or four times each night someone would say, "Dance for us, Agnes," and Agnes would always oblige. She would get to her feet and do a few shuffling steps, parts of her anatomy bouncing to the rhythm, and then sit down, still laughing.

And there would always be one or two Americans who would take her a gin or something and she would decide that two bottles of Guinness were not enough.

That helped decide what to do for entertainment.

Once the Air Force Band played at Grafton-Underwood and another time Ethel Merman was at Grafton with her troop, but for the most part the G-I's found their own entertainment.

There was always the Foxy Theater, of course. The Foxy provided old movies for those who could sit on the hard benches long enough to see one through. The Foxy was really a decent little building for an Air Force place, but not for night after night.

So they would go out to hear Agnes a couple of times a week.

The liberty run town for the 384th was Northampton. The buses would load up at 6 o'clock or so and take off for Northampton, 23 miles, with the dimmest possible light for black-out driving.

But many men liked the village pubs, and would go cycling over as soon as they could get away, stay until "Towels Up" after a couple of beers, then pedal back. Girls? There were always girls there, waiting for the fellow they talked to last night, or last week.

And there was Agnes, 55 or 60 years old. Anyone who happened to be sitting at her table when she came, would get up and move away, saying "Hello, Agnes."

And Agnes would sit down, and in a few minutes she would be talking to herself, as though there was someone sitting with her.

Someone would say "Dance for us, Agnes," and she would laugh and get up from her seat, and go through that silly ritual again, and sit down and someone would take her a gin or a whiskey.

One of the advantages of going to the village pubs was that when one was ready to go home, he would get up and leave.

The trucks hauled men to Northampton, 23 miles away, but they left on the return trip at precisely 11 o'clock.

The trucks parked in the city square, and when leaving time came girls surrounded the buses singing such things as "Walter, Walter lead me to the Altar."

The largest town after Northampton was Kettering, seven miles from Grafton, with a population of about 35,000. After that, the villages. There must have been a dozen villages within a five mile radius of our base—Brigstock, Finedon, Geddington, all having pubs with interesting names, like "The Three Old Cocks."

Having danced for her beer, Agnes usually ignored her benefactors completely. She sat alone at her table, but once in a while she would hitch her chair a little closer to the one beside her, and would talk and gesture, as though there were someone with her.

By this time Agnes began to know her Americans, calling them by name and giggling.

But she had hardly had time to get acquainted with John Way, whose plane had gone down in the first June, the June of all those losses. Eventually we had a letter from Way's tail gunner.

"This was the June 25, 1943, mission to Hamburg," wrote Albert Westlake.

"I was originally assigned to Lieutenant Thomas Cuddeback's crew but that crew was grounded with aircraft maintenance and I volunteered to go with Way's crew as he was short a tail gunner.

"After taking off from Grafton-Underwood we proceeded to our rendezvous point over the English Channel. We encountered heavy fog and when we came out we were alone, though we could see several formations ahead and off to our left. Lieutenant Way tried without success to join one of those formations. Our efforts took us to the lead formation, off their right wing. By now, we were deep into Germany.

"As we approached the target we were attacked by all types of enemy fighters. Just before the target we were hit by flak and two of our engines caught fire. Moments after I heard 'bombs away' we were hit by fighters again. We were sitting ducks.

"As a Focke-Wulf 190 banked away from my position I noticed a parachute open below (later, in prison camp, I learned it was our navigator). But I couldn't watch him. I was busy again with fighters. At that time I was hit in the head and couldn't see out of my right eye. My guns were empty and we were really burning.

"Lieutenant Way finally gave the order to bail out. After I put on my chute, I released the tail hatch and looked forward, where the right waist gunner was sitting down and motioning with his head for me to come. The left waist gunner, Dodge, was still firing his gun, though he was badly wounded. I saw the right waist gunner's hands were only held onto his arm by tendons. I pulled the release for the waist door. Just as it came free a shell came through the door panel and exploded, wounding me again, jamming the escape hatch, and trapping three of us in the waist. The radio room was ablaze, blocking us from the bomb bay.

"For a few moments we just sat there, looking at each other. I had planned on bailing out with the right waist gunner. The ship went into a spin. I heard an explosion and blacked out. I came to just long enough to pull the D-Ring on my chute and was conscious once more before I hit in what I believe was the Ems River. I never saw the right waist gunner again, but Dodge was in the river about 10 feet away from me. A few moments later he drowned—he couldn't get his chute off.

"After the all-clear was sounded a launch with five old German soldiers on it came out and picked me up. They searched for other survivors, but there were none. I was transferred to a truck and taken to the German Marine Hospital in Emden.

"There I found out I had 48 pieces of shrapnel in me from my waist down, several in my right arm, and a cracked skull. My legs were gangrenous and a surgeon was going to amputate them—he had me on the operating table three times. Fortunately he spoke English and the gangrene was going away so I was able to argue my way out of it.

"In the middle of August I was transported to prison camp. On the 16th I arrived in Frankfurt for interrogation, where I met up with several old friends from the Group who were shot down over Schweinfurt. We were sent to Stalag 7A at Munich and from there to Stalag 17B in Krems, Austria."

And Agnes! Occasionally she would lean back and laugh that cackling laugh and slap her fat thigh. Then she would wag a remonstrating finger at her "companion" as though to tell him he was a gay young blade but he'd better be careful how he acted around her. Once in a while someone headed for the latrine would stop behind her and listen.

"What did you say, Agnes?" he would ask, kiddingly.

"Heh-heh-heh," she would say, "Heh-heh. I was only talking to myself." There were conjectures, but it was days before anyone found out who she was talking to. A Grafton man showed her a "Dear John" letter, and old Agnes was all sympathy.

"Forget her," said Agnes. "Get yourself another girl right away and forget her. You have to. If you don't, well——"

The old woman nodded toward her vacant chair.

"There's my man, sitting there. We come over here for a beer every day after he gets off work. Then we go home and I cook up something for him to eat. Oh, he'll talk your head off if you let him."

Agnes smiled without cackling.

"See what I mean?" she said. "My man sitting there—well, he ran off. How long ago? 1916, it was."

She sat there a while longer responding to one more "Dance for us Agnes," then went out the door. As she was passing the last table some of the airmen heard her say: "You boys be careful, up there."

SHUTTLE BOMBING

The night the church bells rang at Geddington was the most embarrassing we had during our stay at Grafton-Underwood.

This was several weeks before Captain Moon of S-2 left for Russia. For a long time the Eighth Air Force had hoped to put two or three airfields in Russia, partly so they could hit Germany from two sides, but mostly because we'd get more of our shot-up planes back.

The way it was, our planes had to fly all the way back to the middle of England to reach safety. Why not fly over the target and continue straight on to Russia, only a short hop away?

Apparently Russia and our other allies thought it a good idea. Men were taken from various Fortress bases, made into a cadre to go over there and get things moving.

That was weeks ago, maybe months, with no word of Captain Moon, and no word about shuttle bombing, either. So we imagined he was busy setting up an S-2 section in Russia, and going into town once in a while to have a vodka or two and ogle the girls.

But at Grafton-Underwood a person didn't have to leave the base for something to do. He might take a fling at learning to speak Japanese.

We had a Japanese-American on the base, George Uyemura~~and~~, and he got tired of reading stories about English-speaking Japanese who tried to trick the Americans in that theater by giving fake advice on the radio.

"If a Jap with a Brooklyn accent can fool an American Pilot once in a while," thought George, "An American with a Yokohama accent could have those Zeros running around in crazy circles."

So this little Jap of ours went to his Special Services officer, Lieutenant John W. McKinnon, and suggested organizing a Japanese language class on the base.

The class met twice a week. Said Staff Sergeant Uyemura~~and~~, a supply clerk: "It may be tough for the boys to learn Japanese, but it'll come in handy one of these days and I hope that day isn't far off."

There weren't many Eskimos serving in the Eighth Air Force, but the 384th had one—PFC William F. Oten. Oten was a native of St. Michael, Alaska, which is about 100 miles up the coast from the mouth of the Yukon River.

We had another from Alaska, Lieutenant Elmer L. Smith of Aleknagik, but he wasn't an Eskimo. And still no word about shuttle bombing.

The ships were crossing the Channel almost every day now, and some of them didn't fly back, and occasionally a relative would make his way across the Atlantic and up to our base to make personal inquiries.

One day we had a call from Wing that we were to have a visitor, a Mr. Downe, and we were to meet his train in Kettering at 11:43 am. He was on "intelligence" business and wanted to see Colonel Lacey, the commanding officer.

Someone in Intelligence got the job of taking care of him.

Mr. Downe turned out to be a gray-haired, pink-faced, checker-suited American who had spent the previous 30 years in Europe, most of it in Paris, but for the last 11 years in his central office in London.

Two or three months each year he would spend in "The States." In fact, he had just returned from New York by plane the previous Saturday, five days ago.

He and his escort got back from Kettering just in time for lunch, and the two or three fellows at his table pumped Mr. Downe on the latest news from America.

Had he been to the West Coast?

How was everything in the Bronx?

Would the Cardinals take the Yankees in the World Series?

Mr. Downe was the center of attention. But the main thing facing his escort was to be sure Mr. Downe didn't miss the 3:20 back to London.

It seems that while he was in America members of the family received word that his nephew, Charles Downe, was "missing in action." The younger Downe had been a navigator in Major Gilmore's

squadron. As a member of Aufmuth's crew that had set out September 6 on a mission to Stuttgart. The plane was one of five that failed to return.

This Mr. Downe was Charley Downe's uncle.

"It was a little useless for you to come up here," his escort said. "You would have been able to get just as much information in London."

"Well, I'm not expecting much. I just want the truth if I can get it."

"We don't know the truth. All we know is that five planes didn't come back. Pulcifer was one of them, and Pulcifer has made it out of France, so maybe the rest of them will, too."

"Can you try to find out something?"

By this time the snack bar would be open, and there would be powdered egg sandwiches and coffee, but he kept standing there. Captain Algar and his navigator, Captain Celentano, who had been in the same formation, were called in to see if they could tell anything about Aufmuth. Aufmuth's plane was last seen flying west or southwest or losing altitude or whatever it might be.

"I don't remember anything that would help," Algar said. "There were five planes left the formation that day. Sometimes you don't miss a plane or something. Sometimes another plane will come in and take his place without our knowing it."

Celentano didn't have anything to offer, either.

It was time for our visitor to go, but he kept on hanging around. Finally he turned his back to warm up by the little charcoal stove. You have to treat a fellow right, and besides, he was on the Board of Governors of the American Club in London, and they were supposed to serve the best and practically the only drinks in town. He probably had plenty of rocks. Why didn't he sit there with them in London, instead of running up here?

"Well, I guess all I can do is wait," he said. "By the way, if you ever get to London be sure to look me up."

Sure, we'd look him up, but only because the American Club has the best drinks in town. We lost 50 guys like his nephew in a lot of missions, a couple of hundred since that crew went down. And we were still flying. New crews coming in all the time. New faces looking out of a Flying Fortress Window. Faces without names. Faces with just identifying letters such as D-o-w-n-e.

"Yeah, we'll look you up. Well, we'd better move if you're going to catch the 3:20."

He turned around.

There were tears in the man's eyes.

Charlie Downe wasn't just a face in a Flying Fortress window.

"You must have one of those English colds," said his escort. "They don't have weather here. They just have climate."

This might have been an embarrassing moment, but so was the ringing of the Geddington church bell. It was late at night when it began. We could hear the bell at Grafton-Underwood, two or three miles from Geddington. It created quite a sensation, for it was the first time the bell had rung for two or three years, maybe more. And it wasn't supposed to ring when it did.

This bell was on the church at Geddington, a town that has a Queen Eleanor's Cross. The Cross was there to remind people the Queen had spent a night there during a trip from London to Scotland or vice-versa. Originally there were a dozen of them, but only two or three survived.

So it was quite an honor to a village to have a Queen Eleanor's Cross.

Anyway the bell rang. People poured in from everywhere, armed with pitchforks. Most of them were farmers from the area. The people milled around a while, then went home and back to bed.

The bell tolled and tolled and tolled, contrary to what the English thought it should be doing. After all that bell wasn't supposed to ring as long as the war lasted, except in emergency.

What made the bell ring?

Two Americans, of course, who had parked their bicycles in the church yard and went in to find

out what would happen.

A delegation of English men came to Grafton to protest the affair, but they took it well, smiling a little.

We had been overseas a long time before we had eggs for breakfast.

Well, we had eggs, but only enough for those early-morning breakfasts for crews going out that day. Those scheduled to fly could tell how far they were flying because of the number of eggs they had. A one-egg breakfast meant they were hopping across to France somewhere. A six-egg breakfast meant Berlin!

But eventually things got straightened up so there were eggs for everyone.

Some idea of how the men felt about eggs, or the lack of them, was demonstrated in a movie at the Foxie Theater one night. Hedy Lamar and Robert Young were the leading actors.

The scene: The breakfast room.

The Main Character, as the GI's saw it, a soft-boiled egg being consumed by Robert Young.

When that egg appeared on the scene it aroused more cheers and handclapping than all the rest of the cast together. It was a thundering ovation.

The great pre-invasion blitz against targets on the continent continued unabated and medium bombers, fighter-bombers and just plain fighters maintained the flow of Allied aircraft across the Channel.

Today the men were witnesses to a cross-channel duel between Allied and German long range guns. Flying high over the French coastal areas, they watched the tiny black bursts of English shells exploding among German installations. Return fire from German guns sent shells screaming in answer, the first shells splashing in the water.

"First we saw 15 or 18 bursts on the ground below us," said Staff Sergeant Delbert R. Reedy, ball turret gunner. "One fell short and sent up a column of water in the channel, but the others went into the area. They were really lobbing them over. It seemed pretty accurate fire from the English. The shells were going into some buildings."

The marshalling yards that were the objective of the B-17's were well hit.

On Monday, May 15, 1944, we had our 100th bombing mission celebration. The day was raw and cold. The celebration was inaugurated with a morning mission to Mimoyecques in the Pas de Calais area of France. An attempt at using a new bombing technique failed because of faulty mechanism and two bomb runs proved fruitless. The formation returned with its bomb load.

Then there was an outdoor noon meal of hot dogs, potato salad, rolls, baked beans, ice cream and lemonade.

Music by a more than 100 piece Air Force band, softball game, bicycle race, all taking place in the afternoon, and dances in the evenings.

That day we learned what happened to James Brown's ship which failed to return from the Sottevast mission of May 8. The ship had exploded at 1,000 feet, after eight men had hit the silk.

Then frigid water began taking its toll. Only Kuba and Yeager, who didn't have their Mae Wests and had to swim, survived the cold water.

THE OLDEST PUB

A fellow encounters many difficulties in searching for the oldest pub in England. In the first place, there are a lot of claimants. Second, few documents survive to substantiate the claims. Third, and most important, when the investigator wakes up in the morning his chief interest is in a cold towel.

But in spite of the hardships many Grafton-Underwood people sought to add to human knowledge on the subject.

Among them was Sergeant George, who worked out on the line somewhere and was obsessed with the idea. He spent his furloughs looking. He usually took along a friend, who eventually became to him what Boswell was to Johnson. And it was this Boswell who, at the request of Intelligence, filed the following report in an envelope marked "Search for the Oldest Pub":

I can't tell you where the oldest bar is. After some inquiry, we found the trail leading to Finedon, a village bathed in antiquity, where there was supposed to be a pub founded in 1042 and occasionally slept in by royalty during its early years.

I knew a school teacher there and, determined to keep my investigations on a high level, I communicated with him and arranged for a few introductions.

That's how I happened to be sitting the other night in the Bell Tavern, surrounded by old clocks, old furniture, and a good supply of mild and bitters. There were four fellows in the room and I was introduced all around.

There was George, a London school teacher who had evacuated with the earliest Blitz to teach in the Midlands. Next was Bill, his brother, who was visiting in the village. Then there was Harry, a green grocer.

They didn't bother to introduce another customer, a British soldier hunched in the corner who opened one eye after a while, looked at me perplexedly, started to rise, shouted "Femadora," then subsided again.

My reticent English friends laughed self-consciously, one of them smiling an apology.

"Quiffed," he explained.

I nodded and to make things easier turned the conversation into other channels. I asked about the grandfather's clock, which was covered with all kinds of gadgets, so that if it was working you could have told not only what hour it was but also what day, what month, the condition of the moon and probably even such other matters as the progress of the Spanish Armada and the itinerary of the Crusades.

Then Bill ordered another round of beers.

"I guess this is a pretty old place," I ventured, finally.

The school teacher looked proudly at the others.

"I told the sergeant this is 'reputedly' the oldest licensed house in England," he explained. "He seems to be interested in old things."

He said it as though trying to explain that I wasn't really a drinking type, and wouldn't think of entering a public house except on a matter of research. But even so he ordered another round and I had to drink fast to catch up.

"The only old part of this building is the hallway," said one of the others, a little contemptuously.

"The rest of it is quite modern, probably sixteenth or seventeenth century."

About that time there was a commotion over in the corner and the soldier was on his feet. He stood there shakily a moment.

"Femadora," he said, raising one arm and waving it in the air. He repeated it a couple of times, then sank back again for another rest.

"If you want to see a really old pub you ought to go down to Surrey," said the fellow called Bill, ignoring the interruption. "There's one there that goes back to the seventh century."

"Reputedly," put in the school teacher.

Bill raised his glass, said "Cheers," and I looked down to discover I had a fresh beer in front of me.

After a few more drinks Bill and the others were saying "Mud in your eye," or "Down the hatch" and I was popping up with "Cheers."

Once when I disagreed with one of them on something I said "You've got the wrong end of the stick, Old Boy." After that I found myself using the expression quite often.

"No matter what anyone said I told him he had the wrong end of the stick, old boy, and with what I thought was a beautiful English accent."

"If you're really anxious to find the oldest pub in England you should go to Nottingham, old boy," said George. His cheeks and nose were a bright red and his eyes were gleaming in the subdued light. "There's a place there called The Road to Jerusalem that goes farther back than anyone should give a bloody damn."

"Why'd they call it The Road to Jerusalem?" I asked.

"I was there in the time of— Say, Molly, how about some more bitters, old girl."

Having ordered the drinks, George apparently forgot where he left off and started talking about a fellow he used to know in school. I asked again about The Road to Jerusalem.

"It's a pretty nice place," said George. "Built in the time of the Crusades. They have a lot of relics there." He paused a moment. "I remember once this fell—, What were we talking about?"

About that time someone in the other room called "Towel's up" which means that's all the beer in England. In the United States it means he has just hung up a towel.

Bill sighed and picked up his glass. "Down the hatch," he said.

I said "Cheers," and we all finished our beers.

The commotion of leaving disturbed the fellow in the corner.

"Femadora," he announced.

He was still muttering that word as we went out the door. George flashed on his torch (English for flashlight) and kept it pointed on the steps as we stumbled out.

"Down two steps," he said. "Watch it."

Finally he had us all safely out on the street.

"Say, what does this 'femadora' mean, anyway," I asked.

Bill had already turned away, as our paths separated there. But he turned back long enough to explain.

"Frig 'Em All, Dead Or Alive," he said.

Then the school teacher took my arm and we tried to follow the dim line of the roofs as we felt our way home.

That's all I can remember about my trip to what is "reputedly" the oldest licensed house in England.

THE WILD BLUE YONDER

One of the most serious mistakes the French underground made after 384th flyers began parachuting about the countryside was their choice of a hiding place for Dave Wilmot and Tom Hunt.

These two gentlemen aviators were among the earliest of 384th losses, having been shot down in flames only days after our arrival at Grafton-Underwood.

The French underground picked them up and found places to store them, splitting them up into pairs.

Thus it was that on France's Bastille Day—July 14—Wilmot and Hunt and Ulmer and Aguiar found themselves in the custody of M. Ragaine, operator of a small hotel in the town of Bazu la Foret, near Rouen.

M. Ragaine hustled Ulmer and Aguiar up the stairs into the attic and then unfortunately decided to hide Wilmot and Hunt in the wine cellar.

The error didn't become obvious for two or three hours. Then the patrons in the Ragaine bar began to hear music, vocal music, emanating from the basement:

"Off we go, into the wild blue yonder, climbing high, into the sun . . ."

At the time, we didn't know back at Grafton-Underwood what happened to the men we lost that day. But eventually Tom Hunt made it out as did Bill Aguiar, the ball turret gunner.

This was so early in the coming of the 384th that the ship didn't yet have a name, only a number, 031.

The crew was made up of Lieutenant Howard C. Burgoon, pilot; Lieutenant Kress, co-pilot; Lieutenant David B. Wilmot, navigator; Tom J.E. Hunt, bombardier; Staff Sergeant McFarland, radio operator; Sergeant Aguiar, ball turret gunner; Technical Sergeant Peckham, top turret gunner; Staff Sergeant Roland H. Jenkins, waist gunner; Staff Sergeant Costello, waist gunner; and Staff Sergeant Ulmer, tail gunner.

Tom Hunt was cared for by the French underground for three months, then escaped from occupied territory over the Pyrenees Mountains into Spain, then North Africa, and then back to England. The rest of his crew, except for Bill Aguiar, were captured, as were M. Ragaine, Mrs. Ragaine, and M. Glatigny.

The 384th crew had flown off into the wild blue yonder, 17 gleaming B-17's, and they had limped back, only 10 of them. We had been in England less than a month, most of which had been devoted to training.

The date: June 26, 1943.

The objective: Villacoublay an air field in the suburbs of Paris.

Several parachutes had been seen, but the counting wasn't very dependable.

"My pilot, Burgoon, and co-pilot, Kress, were captured by the Germans shortly after reaching the ground," Hunt was to say when he returned to England.

The rest of the crew were captured, including Hunt's singing partner.

Tom Hunt said after his return that they were fed well, especially while in the care of M. Ragaine and M. Glatigny.

"I had the feeling," said Hunt, "that some of the French families were doing without in order to give us food, which was hard for the French to come by at that time."

While Hunt and Wilmot were celebrating Bastille Day in a wine cellar, the 384th was returning to Villacoublay for the third time in as many weeks. Enemy fighters were making a pass at them again, although it was flak that proved troublesome this time. One of our planes was knocked down.

Meanwhile, the yonder was blue for this crew of ours that was trying to get back.

"I got myself hidden shortly after I hit the ground," said Hunt, when he got back to England. "We had bailed out so high that my crew was scattered over quite a few miles, near the town of Gisors."

"M. Ferdinand Ragaine was a member of the underground unit in that area and he and M. Albert Glatigny were responsible for helping most of my crew and we were hidden in several locations around the town of Doudville until they were able to determine that they could not get us across the channel. German fortifications were too well established."

"However, they did take Bill Aguiar, ball turret gunner, and myself to a coastal town in an attempt to get across the Channel."

"The underground made the decision that our best bet would be to attempt to cross the Pyrenees

mountains into Spain. Bill and I were the only two of the crew to make it through Paris."

But all of the crew, although some of them never saw each other again, knew that the blue was quite yonder up there.

"We were handled by various French people via the underground system and I have nothing but the highest praise for them as they had everything to lose and nothing to gain by secretly aiding American crewmen. At the time the war was not going well for the Allies."

"Bill and I had a close call while leaving Paris, as we became separated near the Arc de Triomphe on Champs Elysees due to a large crowd of people near the subway leaving for Southern France."

"We were both able to get back to the apartment where we were being hidden by a French woman doctor. But there were some anxious moments passing German check points in the subway and on the train."

The French underground led a precarious life, as Allied airmen were creeping and hiding all over France, and the Germans were inventing new ways to catch up with them.

"The ones in our area had been hit pretty hard," Hunt said.

It was getting more and more difficult for the underground to tell an American airman from a German posing as an American airman. The disguised Germans would try to get help from the underground. And when a Frenchman tried to help him the German would gather information, then later when their notebooks were filled, they would backtrack and pick up quite a few members of the underground.

This made it difficult for the underground to re-establish contacts and most risky for them to help.

But help came, and sometimes from unexpected sources. On the train from Paris to the south Hunt violated one of the suggestions given in briefings on how to escape and evade. He had been given a magazine, a French magazine, which he was to read in his train compartment, or to pretend to read. He was to appear to be engrossed in it, so no one in the compartment would try to engage him in conversation.

Recalled Hunt:

"After a couple of hours of holding the magazine I relaxed my guard and put the magazine in my lap. I had no sooner let the magazine fall into my lap when a German officer sitting next to me turned and asked me a question. I had no idea what he was asking. When I didn't respond he asked me again and of course my heart by this time was in my throat. I couldn't answer, even if I knew the question."

"All I could do was shrug my shoulders. He stared at me for what seemed like hours. Then he got up and left the compartment."

"All along there had been a young woman following Tom and Bill Aguiar, sometimes 20 feet behind, sometimes 40. She had been assigned that job by the underground apparently."

"At this episode in the train she appeared to be upset. But shortly the train stopped at a small station, and she quickly got us out of there."

During their exodus Bill Aguiar and Tom Hunt received help from one person who could speak only one word of English. He was the Basque guide who took them over the Pyrenees Mountains. The party also included a Royal Air Force pilot and someone from the Royal Canadian Air Force, as well as Hunt and Aguiar.

"We had some close calls," recalled Hunt "going over the mountains to San Sebastian, Spain. We tagged along behind and every once in a while he would turn around and say, 'Quickly. Quickly.'"

His party would speed up for a while then begin lagging again.

"It was uncanny how he knew exactly where and when to travel the different trails in the mountains," said Tom Hunt. "Of course having lived there for many years he probably knew the area like the back of his hand.

"He would walk slowly awhile and then speed up, saying 'quickly, quickly.' We managed to get through the German patrols that were in the mountains.

"He used that word frequently in our movements through the mountains, as we did, indeed, have to move quickly on several occasions when he was aware we were in danger. The word, 'quickly,' was the only English word he knew."

This crew had gone down in flames over Villacoublay. It was almost a year later that Tom Hunt's brother, a P-47 pilot stationed in England, went down in France in the same area, and there, again, the French underground became involved.

Wrote this underground fighter to the mother of James T. Hunt:

"Madame, Since a long time, you must have been informed of the glorious death of M. William Hunt (your son, probably). So, it is not the sad news I want to write to you about but having witnessed the combat in which he met his death. I thought you would want a few details which you cannot know about his heroic end.

"It was on the 10th of June about 2:30 in the afternoon; we were busy, my children and I, digging a trench to take shelter in when needed, when over our heads seven American planes met 21 German planes coming in the opposite direction. While it was a three to one fight the Americans engaged immediately in combat.

"It lasted about half an hour. Personally we saw six planes fall; three American planes and three German planes. We went immediately to the nearest. He was a German, safe and sound who had parachuted down. We were disappointed. Unfortunately we did not find the second flier in the same shape. In the sky his plane acted as if out of control or without a pilot, as if the pilot was either killed or very wounded.

"We had guessed right, for near the plane we found the dead pilot, neither burned nor disfigured. He was, alas, one of our own. We learned by his identification tag that he was M. William Hunt. His wounds made us sure that he had been killed in the combat; moreover he had not dropped his bombs before crashing—these exploded only when the plane crashed. So the pilot must have already been dead.

"I can say for a certainty that M. Hunt did not meet, as we have seen it happen so often, a frightful death in a plane crashing fire. He must have died instantly.

"We wanted to take his personal belongings to send them to you as soon as it would have been possible to do so, unfortunately the Boches reached the plane before we did and took everything.

"I was able to find only his identification tag, his short jacket with a fur collar and a sort of little red flag. This little flag covered his body while it remained near the plane.

"With the inhabitants of the village we put him in a coffin and buried him the next day in the cemetery which surrounds our little church. Pious hands put flowers on his grave and since that day we have not forgotten to put flowers there wishing to prove our gratitude to this young man who came so voluntarily, I believe, and from so far away, to die in our beautiful French sky to defend the cause of liberty against the German tyranny.

"Friends of his, from the same squadron fell also in that combat of June 10th. Major Donald McLeod and Lieutenant Robert McIntosh—they were more fortunate than their friends and they came out safe and sound.

"We had them in the region until the arrival of the Canadians on August 18th. They were guests at my house for 10 days and they took advantage of it to go piously to kneel and pray on the grave of their comrade.

"They will be able to confirm to you all that I have just said to you.

"Madame, if one of my children had gone to sacrifice his life in your country and if you had been a witness, I would have liked so much to know how he had died. I do not doubt but that you feel the same way and it is why I write you.

"If one day, when this terrible war is over, you want M. Hunt to be brought back to America to sleep there his last sleep, I am at your entire disposal, and I will also send you the small objects I was able to save.

"I beg your pardon Madame to have reopened the wound in your heart and I beg of you to believe in my respectful sentiments."

And so it was that only a few weeks after Tom's escape, his brother fell in the same area of France.

Ragaine, a farmer, joined the underground after the Nazis occupied France. He still carries a tattooed

serial number on his arm from his years in a Nazi concentration camp, for they finally caught up with him. Two months after aiding Hunt, he was captured by the Gestapo. His wife, too, was imprisoned.

"She was well aware of the consequences of helping us, but never seemed afraid of what she was doing," said Tom Hunt.

"What she must have thought of Dave and me, singing in the basement while he was serving a holiday crowd upstairs. Some of those people were Germans, too. After closing the bar he hustled us into the attic and put us with Ulmer and Aguiar. We found out later he had been warned previously by some townspeople that he had hidden us too long and they were afraid the Germans would find out and take some action against the village.

"However, he had not been able to find out how to move us through the underground and refused to just turn us loose on our own.

"He was a wonderful person, totally without fear of the Germans. And the way they fed us . . . I remember well that when she found out I liked egg custard. After that she made it as often as she could."

Tom Hunt was silent a moment, remembering that Bastille Day, so intent in his thoughts that one might expect him to break out singing, reenacting the scene.

Now there's nothing funny about this, but he might sing the other version of the Air Force Song:

"Here we go, into the wild, blooey, crash! Bam!"

THE BUZZ BOMBS

June 6. Invasion! June 12. The first salvo of buzz bombs!

For a long time the Eighth Air Force was aware of something new going on on the other side of the Channel. That was the reason for the trips to Peenemunde and the allied bombing of strange concrete ramps being built along the coasts of France and Belgium.

So they gave them the code name "Grapefruit" and went after them. This early interest may have prevented a lot of trouble, which otherwise might possibly have delayed the invasion.

The Grapefruit missions kept the Germans off balance and they were unable to meet the time-table that had been planned to start months earlier.

Actually the Americans had been experimenting with a secret weapon, too. In the Station Log for Sunday, May 26, 1944, appears the following:

"This was an epochal day for the 384th Bomb Group. The Group was one of three groups chosen to participate in the unveiling of an American secret weapon—a glider bomb released from a four engined bomber. Six or more months ago this weapon was delivered to the bases for practice purposes. It was tried on test runs with what was described as questionable success.

"Today, favored by ideal weather conditions, the already heavily battered city of Cologne served as the guinea pig.

"The bombs are released 20 miles from the target at the end of a 2,000 foot dive, fall about 1,000 feet by themselves, then straighten out into a gradual descending flight toward the target. There is no remote control. They are on their own from the moment they are dropped. Twenty Flying Fortresses took off from this field and joined 40 planes from other groups.

"The bombers advanced to within 20 miles of Cologne, which was in plain view due to the unlimited visibility. The release dive began from 21,000 feet. At 19,300 feet the planes abruptly pulled up, and down went the glider bombs, plummeting another 1,000 feet and then levelling off in a 200-mile-an-hour flight.

"Approximately 60 seconds later, the strikes were observed on both sides of the Rhine River. Of the 40 glider bombs released by our formation, 33 landed in the target area.

"Approximately an hour after the Cologne group had taken off, another formation of 20 craft left the field bound for Dessau, southwest of Berlin, to attack the Junkers aero-engine works, but dropped on a target of opportunity 10 miles east of the city."

That measuring of the results of the American glider bomb may have been somewhat biased.

But that was six months ago. Now the Germans were initiating their secret weapons that they had been working on so long, the V-1s and V-2s. It was a little late. The English and the Americans were already across the continent on foot. As they raced they discovered that most of the cement ramps had already been put out of commission by those "Grapefruit" missions that for weeks had the big bombers hopping over the Channel every week or so.

The first salvo of buzz bombs, as the V-1's were called, was not a great success, either.

Only 10 bombs were fired in that first salvo, only four of the 10 reached England, and only one of them reached the target, London.

But the buzz bombs kept coming, and then the V-2's, the rockets, which were more formidable because they gave no warning. A V-1 could be heard, and the people quickly learned to drop to the ground when they heard the putt-putt of those pulse engines.

On the other hand, the V-2 made a silent approach. It was all through with its work before the noise came.

The bedroom curtains would jerk in, pause a second, then blow out. Then all over town people would put fingers to their ears and close their eyes for what was to come next:

V-r-o-o-o-m!

The sound of the concussion was terrific. When one went outside the next day to examine the damage, he wasn't likely to find any. The rocket may have dug in three miles away, or 10, or even twelve.

The V-1 was a pilotless aircraft with a wing span of about 17 feet and length of about 25. According

to intelligence it weighed slightly more than two tons, half of which was in the form of high explosives.

By the time the ramps had been overrun by the ground forces someone who was keeping track said that 10,000 bombs had been fired at England, almost exclusively at London.

Of those 10,000, more than 3,000 had been shot down before they could get through. And there were about 2,400 craters left in England.

And still there was no word from Captain Moon.

By this time the veteran Flying Fortress on the base was Old Reliable, which oddly enough was known as "Problem Child" before moving into combat. Technical Sergeant Felix R. Bowsley said he went on his 25th mission in her, and it made him feel like a newcomer just to be flying in her.

The sturdy, battle-scarred, dependable old Fortress was making her 57th trip when Bowsley was getting over that big hump, the 25th.

On the Anklam job he and his crew beat off enemy fighter attacks for two and a half hours; over Bremen they waded through an almost solid curtain of flak; coming back from Emden they landed with only one engine functioning.

The crew had nursed their ship back on just a few cups full of gas. Two engines died when they reached England, and a third stopped just as the wheels touched the home runway.

Sergeant Bowsley says the biggest surprise he ever had came during a mission last fall.

"A couple of twin engined jobs lined up on our tail, about 1,200 yards back," he says. "The first thing we knew there was a flame from under their wings and then a ball of fire shot out. It exploded just short of us."

All the way back the crew was trying to figure that one out. What Bowsley was seeing was the first of the German rocket guns, later to become a familiar sight.

Through it all the men of Grafton-Underwood went through their regular work, keeping the planes going.

The impact of those disastrous Schweinfurt missions was never quite forgotten. One day we had a message from one of our lost crew. He had gone down on the first Schweinfurt mission of August 17, 1943, and by a coincidence the message was dated October 14, 1943, the anniversary of that loss. It was addressed to "My Commanding Officer."

"Dear Sir: This is the first chance I've had to write since being shot down. Haven't seen any of the crew as yet. Have been in three different hospitals. Expect to go to prison camp soon. Pilot killed in action, for whom I request the D.F.C. Am uncertain about the bombardier, engineer and radio operator. Regards to all there.

"Good show! Good show! Wayne—" He seemed to stop there for a moment, than added: "Give to the Red Cross."

At that time we still had our own Red Cross representative on the base, 48-year-old William H. Bockmiller. Bock was always doing something for Grafton-Underwood.

By a strange twirk of Fate (all fates have twirks—) or perhaps it was by discreetly tugging on right sleeves—by one of Fate's strange twirks, old Bock finally received word that he was going back to the same outfit with which he went overseas a quarter of a century ago.

For a year now he has served as Red Cross field director for our heavy bombardment group, but always in the back of his mind was the hope that some day he could rejoin the infantry with which he spent a couple of years in France during World War I.

Then, the other day, it happened.

The order came through assigning Bock to the Baltimore regiment of the old Blue and Gray Division.

"Well," said Bockmiller, as he waved goodbye at the air field, "I left my watch in France back in 1918, and if I'm lucky enough to get in on this invasion I may find it before you guys get there."

The invasion was still ahead of us then, but most people had an idea Old Bock would be in the first

wave when it finally came.

But Robert O. Johnson wouldn't be in it.

One day Bob's father walked into the office, and it was easy to see the resemblance. There was a picture somewhere around the place, a father-son picture when Mr. Johnson visited the place some months ago.

And it was easy to know why he had come this time. There was an aerial photograph, and everyone was aware of it and for a while there was usually someone standing between Mr. Johnson and the picture, hiding it.

The picture was taken on the Berlin mission of March 9. It showed a ship without a tail, heading downward at a 40-degree angle.

Mr. Johnson, who is a Lockheed man stationed in Belfast and who entered England on a special pass, didn't mince his words. He had come to find out about Robert. There was no evading the issue, so Sergeant Henry Davis pointed to the picture of the crippled plane.

"I'm glad you showed me that," said Mr. Johnson. "That hole, it must have made it easier to get out."

"But the plane broke into three parts."

"That must have made it even easier."

"Look, Mr. Johnson, naturally we don't know what happened on the under side of the clouds, but the plane, what was left of it, was heading almost straight down. The force of the dive would have made it difficult for anyone to reach an escape hatch. You see—"

Sergeant Davis just shrugged his shoulders.

"Well," Mr. Johnson was persistent. "You don't know Robert. There's no stopping that boy. He's all right. I know it!"

Mr. Johnson himself finally turned the conversation away from that falling plane in the picture.

He said he hoped to go soon to China. There wasn't any use going home. There is another son at home just turning 18.

"I wouldn't want him anywhere but in the Army," said Mr. Johnson "For that matter—" he hesitated a moment, then began blurting out the words, "Robert's all right. Even if he isn't all right, I'm proud of him."

For the first time Mr. Johnson was admitting the possibility that his son had died. But he was smiling while he was admitting it.

He had seen the picture, he knew as much as we did. He even knew that it was a bomb from a high group that had blown the ship in two at the waist. There was no withholding anything from Mr. Johnson.

He walked to the door buttoning up his coat, and he opened the door, and he went out. But on the way he said: "Anyway, it took a Yank to bring him down."

One day a group from the Two-City Film Company showed up at Grafton-Underwood, and for a while we all felt like movie stars. After all, they were shooting at almost everyone who came along. They were doing a movie about an American flyer and an English girl and the difficulty of courting under war conditions.

They were on the base for a couple of weeks, doing background, so that we didn't get to see the ravishing leading lady.

An executive in this crew was a gentleman named Small whom everybody called Smitty. The day they showed up they were checked out thoroughly, although they had orders from top headquarters and we had known for a couple of days they were coming.

They had to be checked out again, of course, and someone from Intelligence was about to go through the ritual when the director of the movie company took the security officer to one side and said the guy listed as "Small" was generally known back at the office as "Mr. Smith."

The name "Small" embarrassed him. Couldn't we just call him Smith, but leave it on the official papers as "Small?"

So throughout his stay at Grafton-Underwood this gentleman was called "Smitty" because we wanted him to do a good job on the picture as we were in it. What embarrassed Smitty was that he was only about

four feet 11 inches tall.

The invasion hadn't come yet, but the fighters were now accompanying us in great strength when the bombers went out on missions. Those wonderful fighter escort planes enabled the Flying Fortresses to get there and back, often without a mark to show for it.

But they had a bad influence on our bomber pilots. Every once in a while a Thunderbolt or a P-51 would buzz our base, cut a few didoes, do a half-roll, then buzz the base again.

So when First Lieutenant James G. Biller II saw a Thunderbolt field below—this was back in April of 1944—he decided to give the fighter boys some of their own medicine.

He leaned on the stick, gave it the throttle, and sent his big Flying Fortress thundering across the field at a scant 15 feet above the field.

But the smile of satisfaction died on his face when the control operator got him by radio.

"That's all right, friend," came the exasperating voice over the radio, "but when are you coming down off oxygen?"

THE BULGE

Whatever the Allies had planned for December 16, 1944, it must have been big, involving practically everything we could put into the air co-ordinated with something massive on the ground.

The order for the mission had been coming over the machines for hours.

Not only that, but higher headquarters had authorized the dispatch of newspaper correspondents to the groups making up the Eighth Air Force. These correspondents arrived only a few hours earlier, and they didn't know what they were there for. They only knew there was something mysterious going on. The correspondent sent to Grafton-Underwood was Bill Frye of the Associated Press.

"All I know is they were assigning guys all over everywhere," Frye said.

Then the mission was suddenly called off and people began walking around saying "What's going on here, anyway?"

What was going on was that Germany had something big going, too, and it was already under way.

Fog kept the German aerial arm on the ground, but allied air attacks also were in trouble with fog, so they cancelled each other out.

Bill Frye stayed around, waiting for orders that would take him back to London.

This turned out to be the beginning of the great German offensive that became known as The Bulge.

One of the major surprises of the entire campaign came the day Moon came back. People entering the Officers' Club would take a few steps, then stop suddenly, just standing there a minute.

Then they would rush forward with outstretched hand.

"Moonbeam," they would say. "Why Moonbeam, you old stiff. How you been?"

And Major Moon would stand there, grinning, saying hello to everybody.

So Moonbeam was back, but only for a few hours, for he had a new assignment down in the London area somewhere.

He didn't have much to say about shuttle bombing, except that there wouldn't be any. The Russians didn't like the idea of American soldiers going into their towns.

"It was almost like a prison," said Major Moon. "We were confined to our airfield and besides, with the war going the way it was, it didn't seem necessary any longer."

On the day before Christmas the fog finally lifted, and now the Luftwaffe began feeling the weight of Allied air strength again. On Christmas Day American ground troops went on the offensive again.

They started to squeeze the Germans out of the The Bulge.

That night Bill Frye, still hanging around visited the village pubs, singing Christmas carols, and wound up telegraphing the following story:

"Press Associated London Frey—BOMBER BASE DATE 25/12

CHRISTMAS WAS TURKEY AND SOME DRINK AND SCRUBBED MISSION THIS FROST-JEWELED BASE ENGLISH MIDLANDS IT MERRIER BECAUSE 384TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP SHARED YESTERDAY HUGE ASSAULT BEHIND GERMAN LINES WITHOUT LOSS. SOME FLYING FORTRESSES LANDED ELSEWHERE WHEN FOG CLOSED IN BUT CREWS SAFE EVEN IF AWAY FROM HOME. "

"MORNING CREWS ALERTED EARLY WITH PROSPECTS LANDING FAR AWAY AND MISSING CHRISTMAS TURKEY ENTIRELY BUT FOG WHICH KEPT GROUP GROUNDED MOST LAST WEEK AND HAD AIRMEN BITING NAILS AS READ OF GERMAN ATTACK WHICH HELPLESS AID INFANTRY CLOSED IN AGAIN PREVENTED TAKE-OFF. "

"SCRUBBING MISSION PRODUCED HOLIDAY INSTEAD OF WORKDAY BUT NO PARTIES DANCES OR EVEN MANY TRIPS NEARBY TOWNS ONLY SKELETON STAFFS WORKED—EXCEPT COOKS. "

"PILOTS BOMBARDIERS NAVIGATORS HUNG AROUND BAR OFFICERS CLUB PLAYED POKER CHESS READ MAGAZINES TALKED OVER YESTERDAY MISSION. SOME WENT MOVIES BICYCLED INTO TOWN CAUGHT UP CORRESPONDENCE. "

"CAMP LOUDSPEAKERS ANNOUNCED AFTER MISSION SCRUBBED THAT BE HOLIDAY FOR ALL."

"AT RED CROSS AERO CLUB FOOD COFFEE CHOCOLATE READY FOR GEEYES AT OPENHOUSE AND LOUDSPEAKERS SENT OUT RECORDING DICKENS CHRISTMAS CAROL AS HOSTESSES MISSES JEAN A SMITH AND LORNA SARFF TRIED MAKE IT SEEM AS HOMELIKE AS POSSIBLE. "

"SOUND TRUCK PARKED BY POST THEATER SENT CAROLS AND CHRISTMAS HYMNS FLEETING THROUGH MISTS OVER ENTIRE SPRAWLING BASE. "

"DAY PASSED SLOWLY QUIETLY. CHRISTMAS PACKAGES OPENED LONG AGO BY MEN WHO DON'T SAVE ANYTHING OF KIND BEYOND DAYS MISSION. HEAVY FROST CAME CLOSE MAKING IT REAL WHITE CHRISTMAS BUT MEN EMERGING FROM CHURCH SERVICES WITH QUOTE LORD NOW LETTEST THOU THY SERVANT DEPART IN PEACE UNQUOTE STILL RINGING IN EAR. WALKED INTO THICK WHITE MIST AND SWORE AT WEATHER WHICH KEPT THEM FROM FIGHTING WAR.

FRYE. "

But the big silver planes were back at it the next day, with the help of "Snuffy," of course.

A heavy bombardment trip to Berlin wouldn't seem the same without "Snuffy" tagging along. Snuffy, as she was named by her first crew, is a veteran, a real veteran with a record of nine months of combat operations over the most important objectives on the European aerial front.

Eight times out of her total of 106 missions she has released her bombs over Berlin—more than any others at Grafton. Listed among her assignments were such well-known targets as Cologne, Merseberg, Wilhelmshaven, Oberpfaffenhoven (which Major Nelson never did learn to pronounce) Kiel, Brunswick and Mannheim.

In the course of her career she has accounted for two Nazi fighters and has had but two of her crew members wounded. Only once has she returned because of mechanical failure and that was on her forty-third mission.

Considered a lucky craft by the two crews who completed tours on her, she has had a few narrow escapes. On one occasion, the ground crew discovered a hole burned through one of the gas tanks after she had returned from a raid in the flak filled skies over Germany. They are wondering to this day how she ever made it without blowing up.

Much of the credit for "Snuffy's" record is given her ground crew who have seen her through from the date of her arrival in March of 1944. In spite of their confidence in her, they spent many hours of anxious waiting during the attacks which followed D-Day. However she completed 18 trips over the Continent in June with no more damage than a few "harmless" flak holes here and there.

By this time the 384th had had more than 240 attacks against the enemy.

There were many patched and repatched planes going out from Grafton-Underwood, but there were many gleaming new ones, too. And although things were getting easier the Germans reminded us by action not to get too cocky. They were still throwing up flak and fighters.

Robert L. Wilson and his crew arrived at Grafton-Underwood February 2, 1945, flew their first mission February 19, went on to complete 26 missions, the last to Pilsen, Czechoslovakia.

On March 30, assigned a shining new plane, they helped the 384th celebrate its 300th mission by flying to Bremen to bomb the submarine yards.

This plane of theirs had never been flown in combat, a luxury compared to some they had flown.

"The crew chief had told us to be careful of his new plane and we told him we would bring it back to him," one of the crew said, when they returned.

On the way to Bremen, Lieutenant Bob Wilson asked George Schumpp if they should tack onto the low lead or high squadron. They decided the high squadron. When they got back they had 100 holes in their shiny new plane, but they didn't get shot down. Sergeant George Smith had a shell go directly

through his radio compartment. Schumpp took a souvenir of flak which cut the chin turret cable, hit the roof of the plane, and dropped on his desk.

Some of the squadron were injured on that mission, some died, and some of our planes were shot down.

The crew chief cried when he again saw his brand new B-17, now decorated with all those holes.

He would have cried just as hard if he had been Lester Hall on that Sottevest mission a year ago.

"I rode tail gunner in Captain Jacob's ship," Hall was to write later. "I'll never forget those moments when we were hit. I was blown out of the ship. Lieutenant Baker, flying on our left wing, later told me in prison that we blew up in formation. I never knew until then what had happened. One second I was in the tail putting on my chute and then I came to in the air."

"I met John Custin, the navigator, in prison. When in October, 1946, I was in Spokane at the Air Force convalescent hospital, I met one of the gunners, Sergeant Hogarth. He had escaped and hid until the allies picked him up."

"While I was falling to earth I saw Lieutenant J. E. Foster's ship minus the tail hit the ground. It hit right next to a farm house. It didn't burn or explode."

"I had flown to Berlin the day before with him as co-pilot. When Lieutenant Allison's co-pilot was killed flying with my original crew on the Sottevest of April 25 they all got it; I became Allison's co-pilot. They certainly were all swell fellows."

After Delbert McNasty disappeared there weren't many dogs on the field for a while. Salvo, of mixed breed, had a litter of puppies on the softest chair in the officers' club, and no births anywhere have been better attended.

When people discovered what was going on they crowded around to help. Salvo was offered a drink of water every two or three minutes, and there was always someone patting her head. And she was offered the best tidbits that could be found in the kitchen.

It took two hours to deliver the pups, seven of them, all looking as nondescript as their mother.

The next day a combat man who has been over Germany too many times to mention, and who knows what flak and cannon can do, had just been informed of Salvo's litter.

"Wouldn't you know it," he said. "The only excitement around here in months and I had to miss it."

The most aristocratic dog on the base was a Scottish terrier, belonging to John McKinnon, who chose to name him "Bufort". Bufort was a pure bred. McKinnon had bought him at a fashionable dog show.

Bufort was not as well known as the others because he was confined to the Nissen hut where his owner lived.

Bufort was shipped down to the Midlands from the bonny bonny braes.

He was a real highlander, although some of the other fellows didn't exactly like the tilt of his kilt. That was because they hadn't succeeded in correcting some of his basic habits. They built a little box for him to use as a latrine, but he wouldn't use it unless he was absolutely sure someone was watching. If you looked him squarely in the eye he'd saunter over to his box, adjust himself, then cock his head proudly, as though to say: "Look at Bufort on the pot."

A WOODEN SHOE

From the beginning we had reason to believe we had a lot of friends down there. There was that "Hello Yanks" of long ago. There were waves and V-signs for airmen who were going home at low altitude.

And there was Nowosad and the wooden shoe.

All over France the people waved as the B-17's went over.

Several weeks ago Lieutenant Charles Decker had an experience while hedgehopping his crippled Fortress over buildings and trees and high tension wires, while his gunners shot it out at close range with German ground defenses.

Back at Grafton-Underwood Decker and his crew, after that one-hour dash across Northern France, told how they shot up machine-gun emplacements and scattered German troops as they fought their way along.

"At the sight of our Flying Fortress skimming the ground at from 20 to 40 feet the Germans dispersed in all directions," said Decker. "But the French people stopped and stared, and many of them waved as the plane roared by."

Things like that were happening all the time. We knew, too, that thousands of Frenchmen were helping our downed pilots and crew men escape via the underground.

And there was Nowosad and the wooden shoe.

A few days later another B-17 flying a low-level way back to Grafton-Underwood, caused some inconvenience for a farmer working a field down below.

It was along a gravel road near Issoudun, France.

This was the same Issoudun from which The Lafayette Escadrille flew during World War I, and which put out a periodic newspaper called "The Plane News". This paper printed strange experiences of "aeroplanes" that undertook long-distance hauls to points 25, 30, even 50 miles behind the German lines. In the village streets the Frenchmen rubbed elbows with the mechanics and "aviators" of that day.

One of those aviators was Carl Spaatz, now a Lieutenant General commanding strategic bombing in another war. Every airman was fighting his own little individual war in those earlier days, although surviving copies of The Plane News provided a record of the first faint beginnings of formation flying. One pilot, recounting his war experiences in the issue of January 11, 1919, tells of carrying four 20-pound bombs over the German lines!

Another tells of shooting down a Jerry, then landing to inspect the wreckage!

Frenchmen in the Issoudun neighborhood heard of many such incidents a quarter of a century ago. It may have been our old peasant with the runaway horse who put the chalk marks on Bruce Wainman's plane. Wainman, who had gained quite a reputation as a singer in civilian life, crashed in that vicinity back in 1918.

"When the French peasants rushed to his aid," says a yellowed copy of The Plane News, "they found him lying unconscious but singing in excellent French a selection from a noted opera."

Or maybe he was singing that aviator song of World War I:

"Beside the Belgian water-tank the young observer lay.

And as I listened carefully I did hear him say:

Take the connecting rod out of my kidney,

Take the skutcheon pin out of my brain,

Take the motor block off of my liver,

And assemble the motor again."

And now here was that big, silver Flying Fortress flying over the same Issoudun and being stared at by a farmer whose horse had been scared off and was running across the field.

Over the roar of the engines, the crew didn't know whether the horse whinnied. But he reared in his traces, then lunged forward just as the peasant leaped to the roadside.

Sitting there in the ditch, the peasant watched the silver bird skim past, so close he must have been able to make out the faces in the hatches. The horse set out at a gallop across the field. But the peasant

waited before setting out after his runaway horse.

"The old man waved and gave us the V-sign," said one member of the crew. "I could almost read something in his eyes."

And there was Nowosad and the wooden shoe.

Finally we got a letter from Moonbeam, dated August 1, but it was difficult to tell where he was, except he wasn't in Russia drinking vodka. His return address was given as Headquarters, Eastern Command, ASC USSTAF.

"Just a line to let you know I am still on the way," wrote Major Moon. "Managing to get a brief breathing spell in this hot melting pot of Egypt. Leaving most any time now."

So apparently he was in Egypt but was he on his way into Russia or on the way out?

"Manage to get most anything you'd want, even Bourbon over the bar, banana splits, no rationing to speak of, so damn many things to buy.

"I am trying to enjoy it all, but lots I cannot see because of time. Along the way managed to parley a bit with the people of Algiers, Morocco, even took in the Pyramids.

"Don't know what the set-up will be like, yet.

"The weather here and all along is quite a contrast to England. I'm gradually breaking out in a sun tan."

There wasn't anything about shuttle bombing.

By this time Allied armies were racing across France. It was only a few days after they had pushed into Belgium when this wooden shoe thing came up.

Our planes had been over Germany that day, but on the return trip one of them landed in distress on a field not far from Brussels. It was something that couldn't have happened a few short months ago. After communicating with the downed crew the maintenance people back at Grafton decided to send a relief crew to make the repairs right there on the spot.

So in a little while here came Captain Fred Nowosad and his commander, Colonel Smith and two mechanics, Master Sergeant Bernie T. McAnally and Master Sergeant Arthur Guilmet.

They found the ship had been hit a number of times on its bomb run. The oxygen system and control cables had been damaged, and two flak bursts had put out one engine.

By morning they had the airplane ready to fly again, and both ships were ready to go back across the Channel. But first Nowosad had a goodbye to say.

A small boy had spent hours watching Nowosad and the others making the repairs.

"We had come down on a field pocked by bomb craters and littered with the wrecks of German aircraft," Nowosad said. "We'd no sooner touched the ground than this kid came running up, all smiles.

"If I ever had any doubts about what kind of a welcome we would get they were gone as soon as I saw those Belgian faces. Their happiness is something I'll remember all my life.

"You know, those Belgians, they say the word 'Boche' with a hiss."

When it came time to part the kid was smiling with tears in his eyes.

During those hours in Belgium the boy had touched Nowosad's captain bars once in a while, so now Nowosad took off one of his bars and gave it to the boy. "Just a memento," he explained.

"That kid's pockets were empty, probably had been all his life," recalled Nowosad, later. "So what did he do? He pulled off one of his wooden shoes and gave it to me."

A ONE-MAN MISSION

Major Booska, a squadron commander, was a veteran of 45 bombing operations over enemy territory. Not long ago he had received the Croix de Guerre from the French government.

His co-pilot that day was Jay F. Walker. Also on board were a navigator, a bombardier, a radio operator, an engineer, and a bell turret gunner, as well as representatives of the photo section and intelligence.

Even that day, it seemed strange that Booska had a bombardier, for the plane carried no bombs.

The mission of that one-plane "formation" was to assess the damage inflicted by our planes a few days earlier.

It was a little difficult to remember, now, that things hadn't always been that way, the days when flying alone was inviting the Germans to chalk up another victory, the days when our planes were coming back riddled and hurt.

Only a month ago the 384th Group completed its 300th mission. That was the day the formation came back from an attack on the submarine yards at Bremen. Captain Joseph S. Laboda, a squadron operations officer, was on his 45th mission. He led the 384th formation.

Pilots had been coming back for weeks to report no flak and usually no fighters.

One day a flying officer walked into the photograph section and asked to see the bomb pictures of the day's mission.

Captain John E. Kreidler produced the pictures of the bomb strike and of Erfurt, a city of about 140,000 in central Germany. One squadron of the 384th had attacked military objectives in the city. The officer bent low over one of the pictures and ran his finger down one of the streets. The finger stopped.

"That's where my grandmother lives," he said. "I visited Erfurt twice when I was a boy. I remember how we would leave the railway station, walk down the main street, then down an alley and across a yard, and there was her house. According to these pictures her house was not hit."

The officer, who had not been on the day's mission, said he also has an uncle in Erfurt. He and his crew had drawn a stand-down.

"My grandmother's getting along in years now. She's 88," he said as he turned to leave. "Maybe you'd better not tell anyone about this, with the war and all. They might not understand."

Major Booska's plane was flying over Erfurt today. And beyond it.

The date was April 25, 1945.

Booska and his crew were flying to a small town the full length of Germany away. It was south of Berlin and a few miles farther east. Almost on the border.

The mission demonstrated how fast the Russians and Americans were closing in. When the mission left Grafton-Underwood the status of a small airport there was supposedly the same as yesterday, still in German hands. Now it had been cleared of booby traps and someone down there was inviting the Booskaviches to come in. The man on the ground knew the code word for the day, so apparently the little air field down there now belonged to the Americans, and had already been cleared for landing.

Booska and his lone aircraft spent half an hour over the village. One of the main recognition points was a tall brick chimney in the center of the village. Booska flew the plane around and around the chimney, so close it seemed the left wing must be attached to it, while Kreidler was taking picture after picture of the damage.

And Booska was continually getting an invitation to land from the lone man at the airstrip, who had to be an American because he was giving the code word.

But the flight plan didn't call for a landing, and Booska didn't land.

Down below the populous crowded into what appeared to be a court yard in the middle of the village, they stood there and stared. Where was the Luftwaffe? Why didn't they come? Why didn't they come and drive these intruders off?

They were civilians, but the men all looked alike, all wearing suits made from the same pattern. Dark blue suits all cut alike, made of the same kind of material. Civilian uniforms.

An unarmed plane they were gawking at.

That bomb sight over there meant nothing any more. Technical Sergeant William E. Walsh had devised a system to train bombardiers. This was nearly two years ago, but no need of it now. Walsh's contribution was to help bombardiers in training. It was not much more than a bomb sight and a projector, which reflected a moving magnified area of enemy terrain.

In a few days those roads would be clogged with prisoners of war making their way west across Germany, but we didn't know about that, now. What had their lives been like in prison camps? In a matter of days now, we would get a comprehensive description of what it was like.

When Koenig showed up at Grafton-Underwood he had to tell the story over and over again. He finally sat down at a typewriter and wrote as follows:

"Highlights from the P.O.W. Camp"

by Robt. M. Koenig

From a strictly personal point of view.

"We guys flying combat back in 1943 were pretty uninformed as to the prospects of becoming prisoners of war. We sort of figured that either you got back to the base or else—

"Percentages at that time were pretty much stacked up against us, so one day our turn came along and we began the 'life of leisure' deep in the heart of the Reich.

"The 'goon' Chamber of Commerce was waiting to greet us upon arrival and took us on a short whirlwind tour of Central Germany before delivering us to our final destination. You know—all that business of a pat on the back and a few well chosen words—'for you the war is over'.

"The 'goon' interrogation was short and incomplete for all purposes. We told them nothing, so they told us everything—when we were born and where we went to school—what time we lost our baby teeth—when we went through flying school, when we joined the group, when we came overseas, where we landed—they told us things about our own group that we ourselves didn't know.

"Then we were taken to Stalag Luft 3 near Sagan, Germany, where we were to live for the next year and a half. Here we immediately got into the swing of things.

"The 'swing of things' meant meeting all the guys from the old group (most of them were present), flying all of our missions over again, exchanging all the poop from group, and finding out 'the score' on this business of being a kriegsgefangenen (kriege).

"The routine for the next year and a half varied little from day to day. Ten of us lived in a room 16' by 20'. We slept in double tier bunks. We did all of our own cooking with a larder furnished largely by the Red Cross. Two men would go on cooking for a week at a time and the other eight would eat and bitch about it. Actually the food we ate was damn good—there just wasn't quite enough of it. Our cooking utensils were fashioned out of tin cans—all of them. One hundred and forty men did all of their cooking on two small stoves (resulting in a continual flop).

"For recreation, we built a theatre and organized a theatre guild of writers, actors and prop men; we formed a sixteen piece dance band (instruments furnished by the YMCA; we organized Kriege Kollege with academic courses in all subjects (books furnished by the YMCA and the International Students Union of Geneva). This also included a pretty well stocked fiction library. We received phonographs and records from the YMCA; we played bridge, bridge, bridge, and poker; and we organized a comprehensive sports program (YMCA equipment). With all of these advantages at our disposal, about half of the men in camp still stayed in their sacks from morning till night till morning. You just can't satisfy some guys.

"Our guards were segregated into two classes—the 'goons' and the 'ferrets'. The ferrets were the guys that were always snooping around trying to find the tunnels we were building, or the radios we were listening to to get the news from England, or the wire cutters that continually cropped up all over the place.

They were pretty efficient at finding things, but we were even more efficient at hiding them.

"The 'goons' were the guys that weren't ferrets, including all ranks from General on down to soldatten. They spread themselves around camp and tried to discourage the inhabitants from straying away. Their arguments in urging us to remain were (1) We had more food and cigarettes inside our camp than the civilians had outside. (2) Once we did get out, there was no place to go (the night clubs were all closed down). (3) The German women really weren't too good looking. (4) The civilians were at times downright unfriendly. (5) The SS might get hold of us when the Luftwaffe wasn't looking, and above all (6) Germany had reached the end of her rope and the war just couldn't last much longer. They were telling us that as early as the summer of '43—and they actually believed it. So most of us stayed around (Even though they didn't furnish us an officer's club).

"Now and then we would get the urge to drink. In this matter there was little to choose from. Our kriegie brew consisted of a sort of raisin brandy (brewing time—two weeks). Since the making of the brew took a terrific slice out of our sugar ration, we had to content ourselves with having it only on special occasions, like Christmas and the Fourth of July.

"The first Christmas was the biggest and best of these events because the place wasn't quite as crowded as it later became. Everybody got quite stinko. The six full colonels in camp got tossed into the fire pool amid the floating chunks of ice. Captain Jackson (an old Eagle Squadron boy) captured a horse from an unsuspecting 'goon' and galloped all around the camp. One kriegie climbed unsteadily over the twelve foot barbed wire fence in full view of a guard (the guard merely turned him around when he had finally gotten over, and I'll be damned if he didn't climb right back over. Then he passed out.)

"Of course most of us got sick (the stuff was pretty raw) but we had a hell of a good time.

"The second project was a little more successful than the first however. Several men were actually observed ice skating from time to time. Roughly we figured that approximately 1500 men had worked on the average of 100 hours each on the Rink Project. Oh well—anything to pass the time."

"JANUARY-----1945 A.D.

"THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING! THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING!"

"How far are they from us—200 miles—20 miles—20 feet—OH MY GOD! We're going to be free men! The goons will never move us—they can't move us—they haven't got enough men.

"SO WE WERE EVACUATED

"With a few hours warning—with the sound of Russian guns quite audible in the East—we packed up our tooth brushes and as much food as we could carry on our backs, and marched out of Stalag Luft 3 at 0100 hours, January 29, 1945 into the face of a driving blizzard.

"Brigadier General Vanaman said, 'If my men can walk—I can walk.' And so he walked—as did a score of Colonels—and numerous Lieutenant Colonels—quite a number of majors—a slew of captains—an s.p. full of 1st looies—and a host of 2nd looies. We walked and walked and walked—for about a hundred miles through the Rhineland in mid-winter—with the Red Army on our tails all the way. At Spremberg, we were put on boxcars (packed in box cars I should say) and taken to Stalag 7A, a camp near Munich. This camp was set up to hold about 20,000 and by the time we were liberated, it was holding 110,000. Never had so many men lived for so long in such a small space. It was a nightmare worthy of forgetting as soon as possible. We were there four months to the day and it seemed more like four years. God knows how we managed to get food, but we seemed to—thanks to the Red Cross trucks driving between our camp and the Swiss border.

"Each day we watched the American movements on our hastily drawn maps—getting closer and closer. It was the continued good news that kept us going throughout those four months. Considering the

conditions of the camp, the morale managed to remain remarkably high.

"Three days before the Americans arrived, the 'Goons' packed up and left the camp. We had to station our own guard around the fence to keep the terrified civilians out—they wanted protection from the Russians—and thus we waited.

"The front moved past us on Sunday morning April 29, with the 14th Armored Division moving rapidly through our sector. The skirmish lasted about two hours and we hailed the American flag that was hoisted over the neighboring village of Moosburg. A few minutes later, the Sherman tanks came rolling into our camp. The reception they received has been doubtless unequalled. You couldn't see the tanks for the swarms of kriegies that were climbing all over them. God but we were happy!

"Almost a month has passed since then. Now I am sitting at a typewriter in the headquarters building of my old bombardment group in England. When I landed here the other day, it seemed as though I was finally completing that mission I had started on August 17, 1943. It was a grand feeling to be back. My big ambition now, however, is to see that little wife of mine as soon as possible, and if I know her, she will be waiting pretty close to that Statue of Liberty when I return."

But the roads weren't clogged today. People crowded into the courtyard below, all looking up at that plane lumbering around and around the chimney. They were civilians, but the men all looked alike, all wearing suits made from the same pattern. Dark blue shirts all cut alike, all made of the same material. Civilian uniforms. All gawking at an unarmed bomber going around and around and around.

That bomb sight over there meant nothing any more. Technical Sergeant William E. Walsh had devised a system to train bombardiers. This was nearly two years ago, but no need of it now. Walsh's contribution was to help bombardiers in training. It was not much more than a regular bomb sight and a projector, which reflected a moving, magnified area of enemy terrain. This did not satisfy Walsh. He began his improvements in the unit by first adding the rudder circuit of the automatic pilot, thus giving the bombardier pilotage control such as they have on an actual bomb run.

Then came the major innovations. From the bone yard, a collection of wrecked aircraft in one corner of the field, he salvaged the plexi-glass enclosed nose section and its panel of control switches, the bomb racks from the bomb bay, and the complete bomb release mechanism.

These he incorporated with the original training—well, it hardly seems worth describing now.

Booska flew back the width of Germany just over the tops of the trees, and there are a lot of trees in the Black Forest. Over Erfurt and Coblenz, mile after mile, never a piece of flak. Never a rocket.

Back at Grafton-Underwood he learned how close they had been to the Russians and the Americans, who had linked up only 25 miles away.

The end was near.

DEATH OF THE LUFTWAFFE

The curtain is going down. One can sense it in the way the B-17's come back from a mission. They come back in tight formation, roaring over the field, everyone with a thumb stuck into the air.

It can be felt in the laughter everywhere, in the cocky salutes, the stepped up pace of men who know exactly where they are going and how to get there.

In a matter of days prisoners of war would be swarming out of the concentration camps, storming across Germany and France to Camp Lucky Strike, and Major Dolan will be there as the official greeter of 384th men who have been gone for weeks, months, maybe years.

This report was found in Intelligence files later, when it was all over:

"Camp Lucky was about 40 miles up the coast from LeHavre. There were 40,000 men there when I (Dolan) left. Most of our men were at Mooseburg, Barth, Sagan."

The camp was either dusty or muddy, depending on the weather. There was some grumbling, but these men did not object to sweating out the mess line, which they had to do, sometimes for as long as an hour and a half.

Most of them had been flown out of Germany to LeHavre, then taken by truck to Camp Lucky.

This camp had been used originally as a staging area for infantry going up.

Upon arrival a man was given a shower. His clothing was sterilized. And he was deloused, whether he had a louse or not.

He was then assigned to a tent area and started in the process of being issued new clothing, rations. Records were made. There was a partial pay, then he was given a shipping tag and moved to the shipping area at LeHavre by truck, loaded on boats to be returned to the United States. For most of them the move took only a few hours, but the skinny ones were put in quarantine, to be fattened up a little before sailing and this might require 10 days. The quarantine mess hall fed seven times a day, on a bland diet. But the men responded by putting on weight in a hurry.

Major Dolan could hardly stick his head out of his tent-flap without seeing someone he hadn't seen for a while, and all wanted to know how the Group had fared, and asked about people.

On one occasion Pop Dolan asked the questions himself.

He had been there for several weeks when he saw a familiar face on the road.

"Hello, hello, hello," Dolan greeted him. "How's everything at Grafton-Underwood?"

He was talking with one of the last pilots we lost. It was on our last mission, April 25, an attack on the Skoda plant at Pilsen in Czechoslovakia. Two of our planes had gone down, the ones piloted by Lieutenants Andrew Lovett and Philip Leavitt (Lovett and Leavitt, no pun), and the crews of these planes had seen Grafton-Underwood more recently than Pop Dolan.

Several 384th men had dinner in a small hotel near the camp. It was called the Villa Rosa. Among them were McMillin, Foister, Edwards and Bryant. It was about eight miles from camp. They had canned turkey. A Frenchman cooked it and would not charge anything.

They sat around and talked about things that had happened to them. Edwards, for instance, knew he was the father of a child but didn't know whether it was a boy or a girl.

McNulty thought the only funny thing during his stay in prison was when he was lying in bed and overheard through the thin wall an interrogation of Foister:

"What do you do in civilian life?" the German asked. Foister an ex-schoolteacher, said: "Gamble."

"You couldn't make a living out of that."

"No? Get a deck of cards and some fresh money and I'll show you."

Pop Dolan greeted them all. Said one: "The Red Cross and YMCA were our main support. They supplied us with musical instruments, and we had pretty good bands. We needed a trombonist, but the Luftwaffe never sent us one. We even petitioned for one. But we had a pretty good band."

How did a Kriegie feel when the doors burst open and an allied tank rumbled in?

"Our prison was a mad house. The tank disappeared under a human blanket. Everyone was laughing and cheering and maybe crying a little. It was a wonderful day."

"It was a long mission," said another. "We took off at 9:04 a.m. August 17, 1943. Landed May 19, 1945."

How many of them there were. And how many successfully evaded.

Staff Sergeant Kenneth N. Hougard, missing in action May 8, 1944, came back July 7th, 1944. He hid in barns in the area in which he came down. He could hear the American guns and on the 4th of July American artillery men searched the barn of the house in which he was hiding. He finally made his presence known to the American troops and was taken to the forward command post and there was presented to General Eisenhower who promised him that he would let his commanding officer know he was safe.

Sergeant Hougard was one of the first Americans to go through the lines after our troops had landed on French soil. On July 5 the British Broadcasting Company relayed a message from its studio on the Continent that Hougard was the first American to go through the lines and had been hidden by the underground since May 7th.

First Lieutenant Everett L. Charles, missing in action October 14, 1943. He stayed with the underground for months and then headed toward Spain. He got as far as the French side of the Pyrenees where he was picked up. He was then taken to Fresnes on May 25, 1944 and stayed until July 10, 1944. At various times he was interrogated by the Gestapo and they tried to get him to reveal the names of the people who had helped him, but he refused.

On July 10, 1944, Lieutenant Charles with six other prisoners were taken by train enroute to Dulag Luft. Although handcuffed, he managed to slip the cuffs and jumped out the window of the moving train.

He then hid in a barn and again headed for Spain. He walked for six days and finally was picked up by the resistance forces and from then on he helped them in gathering supplies dropped by parachute from the Allies. He worked with the resistance. He left them August 3, 1944. He then headed toward Normandy. He walked six more days and again encountered a resistance group in the northern section of France.

He reached the American headquarters on August 20 and arrived back in the United Kingdom August 24, 1944.

One of our evaders came back by way of Italy. He was Staff Sergeant Louis L. Ratkiewicz, missing in action since October, 1943. They found three panes of his parachute cut by flak. The chute opened and the panes were torn out. But he landed safely in France where he was picked up by the French and taken to a farm house where he met Technical Sergeant James R. Murray, Technical Sergeant James W. McKeon, and later Technical Sergeant Emmett A. Hood, Staff Sergeant Francis R. Sylvia and Staff Sergeant William E. Martin, all enlisted men from the same crew. They crossed the French-Swiss frontier on various dates so as not to be picked up by the Germans. They spent a very nice winter in Switzerland enjoying the winter sports. On August 19, 1944 Ratkiewicz made his third attempt to get out of Switzerland and was successful in getting into Italy. He joined the partisans in Italy and at one stage of his evasion captured three Germans and turned them over to the partisans. He finally reached France on September 25, 1944.

Staff Sergeant George J. Kemp, missing in action September 6, 1943, evaded capture after having bailed out over Germany. He hid in woods for two days, living on the escape equipment he had carried with him. Sergeant Kemp walked for approximately three hours a night and traveled for nine nights before reaching French soil. Once in France he was given clothing and help and taken to the Swiss Frontier in October, 1943.

Allied bombs helped one 384th man to escape. Staff Sergeant Bernard F. Zyglowicz, went down March 4, 1944. Back in the United Kingdom September 7, 1944. He was picked up by the Germans and placed in a Citadel as a PW on April 2, 1944, with thirteen other Allied airmen. The Germans shifted them from one cell to another and they had to leave their shoes and trousers in the hall, to keep them from breaking out, as the Germans found them to be escape conscious and well trained.

On a day in April, 1944, shortly before midnight, bombs started raining in the area and some fell on the Citadel damaging the six-foot thick wall and enabling Sergeant Zyglowicz to get out. He had to climb over a wall and swim a canal, and in so doing lost his shoes and socks.

While climbing over a second wall he was machine gunned and hit in the left hand, but managed to get over the wall. He ran barefoot for approximately a mile and a half where he met a Frenchman who helped him. He stayed with them until September 7, 1944, when he reached the United Kingdom.

Staff Sergeant John C. Larson, missing in action October 11, 1944. Returned to United Kingdom March 9, 1945. Landed in Germany after having been blown clear of his aircraft. Had been wounded in his left arm and in the left shoulder. Was immediately picked up by a German MP and taken to Holy Trinity Hospital in Weiseling, Germany. He was given first aid and put into a private room. He had received burns around his eyes and left wrist. He was visited daily by the German MP who had picked him up. He received excellent treatment by the Nuns who were in charge of the hospital. On March 8, 1945, an American officer removed him to the American Army headquarters and returned to the United Kingdom March 9, 1945. The German MP who had picked him up never visited him after December 1. It is believed he was sent to the Russian Front and no other German military personnel called on him from then on.

The German MP would try to move Sergeant Larson but the mother superior in charge of the hospital would say he was in no condition to be removed unless the German had an ambulance. This was backed up by the foreign doctor who dressed his wounds. By making these statements they kept Larson from becoming a prisoner of war. Larson received the same consideration shown the German patients at the hospital. At Christmas he received the same food gifts distributed by the Nuns to the other patients. On March 8 a German woman informed the Americans who had liberated her about the American airman in the hospital in which she had been a patient.

Staff Sergeant Albert J. Wickline, MIA October 14, 1943, evaded from France, returned to United Kingdom December 27, 1944.

Staff Sergeant Roland H. Jenkins, MIA June 26, 1943, helped by French and returned to United Kingdom July 4, 1944.

And so it went. The 384th set records in the number of evaders who returned.

First evaders in the group were Staff Sergeant Lester Brown and Staff Sergeant John F. Houghton.

Fiftieth evader was Technical Sergeant Kenneth P. Christian.

One hundredth evader, Staff Sergeant Clarence M. Wieseckel.

Somewhere along here we began hearing the name Istres. This was supposed to be the place we would go from here. Actually, when the time came we had a letter from Sergeant Henry L. Davis, who helped with the advance party. Wrote Davis:

"Hard at work in the middle of the afternoon on a scorching Istres day. Thought you might be learning some of the features to expect in your new home. What's been done is a change from Grafton's 'luxurious' accommodations for Istres' suffocating climate.

"Hordes of vicious mosquitos, and clouds of brown dust thrown in. At the moment I am seated in front of my office, attired in shorts, shoes, and stockings. This is my third day here.

"As I write, I am simultaneously directing eleven German PW's who are making a pathway from the tent to the road and lining it with stones, that are a bumper crop here.

"The PW's outnumber us five to one, but they are a meek and humble lot.

"They're always looking for cigarette butts, and it's a regulation here that we tear up our butts.

"My duties consist of assigning men to various details. For office equipment I have a table, two pencils, one manila folder, with metal clasp attached. I am also the squadron Postmaster General."

But that was later. Now, back at Grafton, we were still congratulating Paul J. Brumley, who finished his 35th combat mission during the so-called "Christmas holidays."

Brumley was one of the few members of the group who had served in another theater before coming to Grafton-Underwood. Three years ago he was chased out of the Philippines by the Japanese and not long

after that he was chased out of Java. He was an old Army man, having been in the service since 1936. His outfit, the famous 19th Bomb Group, lost all its planes except nine without even getting off the ground when Pearl Harbor came.

"Just after Pearl Harbor we were trying to keep a jump ahead of the Japs and save our skins," Brumley told his new buddies at Grafton-Underwood. "They shoved us back to the goal line, but now the Axis is discovering how we can carry the ball."

He was on the last plane to get out. They flew to Australia, then moved over to Java.

"We didn't do too well there, either, but I did notice that Lady Luck was on my side. One day my crew took off on a mission and left me behind. They never returned."

"We didn't have a ship left that could fly, so we built one out of parts from five different Fortresses."

This was when Brumley earned the title "Last Man Out of Java."

The pilot of the plane was Cherry Mason, a soldier of fortune, who had been a pilot with the Dutch Air Lines in the East Indies, but who had never before handled a Flying Fortress.

A ground mechanic filled in as co-pilot. Passengers were a three-month old baby, a boy and a girl, each about 13, four women, and three Dutch officers.

That left one vacant spot, the engineer's post, and Brumley matched coins with five other men—and won.

The Japanese were only seven miles away when the patch-work bomber lumbered off the battered field. Brumley and his mates flew out at 4 p.m. The Japs captured the base at 10 p.m.

There was no navigator, in fact, no navigation instruments. All the crew had to work with was a compass and an ordinary map of the world. Only three of their four engines worked as they set out on the long overwater haul to Australia.

"We missed the airfield we were trying for by 150 miles," Brumley recalled. "But we were happy enough just to find Australia."

After a couple of months of ground duty in Australia, Brumley returned to combat and flew operations over New Guinea and Rabaul. He had about 30 missions when he was sent back to the United States.

For a while the Air Force used him as an instructor. One day a crew bound for overseas lost their engineer. Brumley applied for the vacancy and got it.

He arrived in England in October, flew four operations, then went to the hospital for another kind of an operation—cartilage trouble in one knee. After a few months with a weather unit he joined the now-veteran 384th.

The day after flying his thirty-fifth he stayed on the ground and watched his old ship take off for Germany. The ship was hit by flak and caught fire. In the excitement four men bailed out over enemy territory. The rest remained on board and brought the plane back to base. Among those who didn't was Brumley's replacement.

One of his missions he doesn't like to remember was just across the Channel to Bordeaux.

"Sixteen Jerries jumped us," he says. "We got badly shot up, exhausted our ammunition, and had one engine on fire. We made it back okay, though, and the crew got credit for five German planes."

And now we could almost see around the last corner. It was near the end. You could tell by counting the bullet holes.

The Germans could still put up a few planes, but it took fuel to do it, and their fuel supplies were dwindling.

They put 800 fighter bombers into an attack on New Year's Day, a few months ago. That cost the Allies about 144 aircraft destroyed and 62 damaged beyond repair.

But it cost the Germans even more. The Luftwaffe lost about 200 aircraft and about as many pilots.

The losses of the British and Americans were serious, but in a matter of a day or two our beds were all occupied and the revetments around the field were filled with gleaming planes again.

The sky belonged to us.

It belonged especially to Technical Sergeant Paul J. Brumley.

On March 1, 1945, American heavy bombers took off for Berlin once more, and they put 1,250 planes into the formation.

Again on the 19th of March the Americans put 1,250 over there. Overmatched as they were, the Germans sent 37 planes to intercept!

Thirty-seven planes!

On September 1, 1939, almost six years earlier, the Luftwaffe had 3,650 combat planes, and now they still had about 3,500 but that was too puny a force to accomplish anything, especially without fuel.

On the 6th of May Admiral Karl Donitz, who had taken over from Hitler to negotiate the surrender, ordered the remainder of his forces to put down their arms.

On that same day the Germans lined up their airplanes in parade order and the Allies began dismantling them. The planes were headed for the scrap heap.

Those that escaped being dismantled in other places, sat in their disposals, their fuel tanks empty.

So it was with the installations. A few that might be useful for the victors were saved. The others were destroyed.

And so the Luftwaffe died.

Yet at Grafton-Underwood there was no shouting. Those were the planes and men who had been knocking us out of the sky a few short months ago and getting knocked out of the sky themselves.

The B-17's had been through a tough fight, and they knew it, and so had the Spitfires and others.

You hear? The war's over!

Many of the men took it silently. When the word reached one G-I he remained quiet for a full half minute, shaking his head.

"Wouldn't you know it," he said, "And I had a furlough coming up next week."

CASABLANCA

Few at Grafton-Underwood knew that France had a desert until they were dumped in the middle of it. An advance party had gone down there ahead to set up tents and mess halls and to drive wooden stakes into the sand with white ribbons on them to show truck drivers how to get in and out of it.

And to set up housekeeping for the rest of us.

So it was that late in June, only a few weeks after the German defeat, the whole outfit took a last look at the Duke of Buccleuch's woods and piled into the planes for the hop across the channel to this desert.

During the trip there were conjectures as to where we would wind up. Most agreed this was a brief stopping point before going to the Pacific to take on the Japanese air force.

"Where else could we go?" someone asked.

"Why not back to the United States?"

"What would we do in the United States?"

"Oh, I can think of a lot of things."

The run-way showed up and we landed and we found ourselves walking in sand and breathing sand and eating sand in a desert we'd never even heard of before.

The search for places to go began almost immediately, but there weren't many places. Istres wasn't far, once you got out of the desert, but it was too small to accommodate many at a time, and there just wasn't any other place.

Each man was issued a pamphlet telling him to behave in France, as we had earlier received pamphlets telling us how to behave in England (if you find warm beer doesn't suit you, don't shove it back across the counter and tell them to put it back in the horse).

Our French pamphlets reminded us that food was scarce there and had been for several years. If a French family invites you to dinner, get something at the mess hall and take it to them.

Such things happened, too. Two 384th men were invited into the home of a large family. They bore as a gift a large can of fruit salad. What did they have to eat that night? Fruit salad pie!

"It was good, too," one of them said. "Those French. Have you ever tasted fruit salad pie?"

Riding a bicycle in sand was probably tried, but if anyone did he probably dragged back on his hands and knees. One doesn't pedal far on sand.

It was about two or three miles to the gate, across the sand, then on down a tree-lined street to Istres.

Istres turned out to be a pleasant little village with a couple of saloons that had run out of Cognac long before we got there.

"Those dirty boches," someone said. For we had been told that the Germans had been here before we. It was from this desert that Germany sent out the planes to destroy the Italian fleet, when Italy surrendered.

The ships were plucked off one by one as they steamed toward Malta to surrender.

Randy Jacobs squatting in the hatch of his plane, after shooting sparks the length of the runway trying to stop his disabled plane, a cigar clenched in his teeth, back after that first Schweinfurt. The short cuts through the woods to the mess hall. Istres is a small town, too small to serve as a Liberty run, available on foot or by catching a ride on a water truck.

Sand.

So for the most part the fellows sat on their cots and talked. The talk was about little things that had happened at Grafton-Underwood, remembering the pheasants they sometimes scared up, flying straight up, with a whirl for a tiny piece of sky 30 or 40 feet up.

Bicycle accidents.

There had been so many bicycles at Grafton that we had to set up a bicycle repair shop.

And they talked about the mosquitos here in the desert. What mosquitos were doing in the middle of the desert no one found out, but here they came, in battle formation. Nets had to be issued to everyone for sleeping.

Then they put us back to work again. Mechanics swarmed over the planes, tightening bolts and

screws that had already been tightened two or three times since the European War was ended.

Then they started a shuttle service, flying to Casablanca, loading the planes with people; then flying back. Day after day, plane-load after plane-load, these people were brought back, Frenchmen who had been marooned on the wrong side of the Mediterranean since the war began.

Every day two planes, three, maybe five or six flew across the water to Casablanca, herding their human cargo into Fortresses for the trip back, carrying lost people to their homeland.

In order to give airmen enough to do, baseball teams were organized, and the most interested spectator we had was Adolph, a prisoner of war who worked on the garbage details.

Oddly enough, although trying to think of ways to keep the Americans busy, they assigned most of the work to these prisoners of war, with their blue outfits and a big letter "P" painted on their backs.

Adolph was out there watching baseball as much as his work would allow. He carried a pencil and a pad of paper to the games. He made a chart of the field of play, marked the bases on it, and made notes on what the game was all about.

Adolph worked hard on the clean-up detail. He got to the place where he actually thought he was a member of the 384th Bomb Group. When the time came to leave, months later, Adolph was a dejected man.

He stood on the fringes, crying, while these new friends he had adopted filed into planes to leave.

The planes were beginning to move down the runway when he thought of putting up an arm and waving a feeble wave.

Prisoners of war even did the cooking, and nobody knew what the old cooks did when the new cooks took over.

It must have been in late August when the 384th celebrated Air Force Day by inviting all Istres to come out for a tour of the base.

The planes were lined up and cleaned up and the message was carried to places not too far away, and Sergeant Davis, Henry Davis, went to the mayor's office in Istres and borrowed a French flag. Then army trucks toured the countryside, loading up French men, women and children, driving them through the sand to the place we call—well, we didn't exactly call it home.

There were enough people to mill about, and the mayor smiled at everyone, and looked up at the French flag waving up there, and seemed to take pride in the fact that he was the one who loaned it to us.

He had to brush the sand out of his hair once in a while, but he kept smiling through it all.

One of the things for griping about was why we were stuck out in the middle of the desert, while a small British organization was stationed in a mansion-type house under the trees of Istres.

"Why couldn't they have put us near the edge of the desert?" someone would say.

"Yeah. Instead they put us in the middle. They must have had a yardstick to have found the exact center."

"Look at those Limees. Living in town."

Then, one Wednesday toward dusk, three English lorries were seen struggling across the sand, following the marked route to our base.

They sounded their horns as they spewed sand toward us. Then they stopped and the drivers jumped out and began going from tent to tent, inviting everyone to a party in town.

The Americans were taken by surprise, but they started piling into the lorries and the lorries took them to that mansion in town, and the place was filled with barrels of whiskey, and there were signs on the walls and tables full of food.

The biggest sign in the place said:

"FOURTH OF JULY."

It was the first any of the Americans had remembered what day it was, but those Britishers remembered.

It was late when they took us across the sand to our tents again. Once in a while after that you would hear someone remarking on what a nice bunch of Englishmen they were, helping Americans celebrate Great Britain's loss of the American colonies.

While we were sitting around on our cots the statisticians were busy doing what statisticians have to do to make the records straight. From higher headquarters came the information that the last bombs dropped on a German target were released at 11:16 a.m. April 25 by the 384th Bomb Group.

This seemed quite fitting to us, as the first bombs were dropped from Grafton-Underwood, too. It wasn't the 384th. It was the 97th Bomb group.

On August 17, 1942, 12 Fortresses, predecessors of the thousand-bomber fleets, took off from Grafton-Underwood. Their objective was the railway yard at Rouen, France.

The tiny formation returned intact. The 97th Group pulled a few more missions, then was called upon for the North African campaign.

Three years ago!

And now the last bombs had been flown from the same field, from Grafton-Underwood.

Colonel Theodore R. Thatcher, then a lieutenant, flew in one of those 12 planes. He helped both to raise and lower the curtain.

And now here we were, sitting on our bunks. General Arnold must have sensed the restlessness, for he sent a memorandum "to all officers and men of the AAF in the ETO."

"I want you to understand clearly," the General said, "that I am so anxious to see you all go home again as you are to get there. However, we must not lose sight of the fact that there is another job for us to do—in the Pacific. Some of you, but not all, will be needed for its accomplishment."

After sitting around talking for a couple of months a guy runs out of things to talk about. There's a limit to how long you can talk about any one thing, even about the "Damn Yankee," which was one of our most successful planes in combat.

Since the preceding April, "Damn Yankee" had been one of the regulars on the Eighth Air Force's team of target smashers.

Then came the day she went out to bomb a Luftwaffe fighter field in Germany, and 10 minutes away from target Lady Luck deserted her.

On 96 previous assignments she had reached her objective and delivered the goods.

As "Damn Yankee" kept adding to her increasingly perfect record of always attaining the target she became an institution among the men of the 384th. She had absorbed severe punishment from enemy weapons, but she always healed quickly under the physician-like care of her mechanics, and always she went back for more.

The 384th had its heart set on a mark of 100 perfect missions for the dependable old plane, a feat rarely achieved by a four-engine bomber, but what would have been No. 97 turned out to be the battle-scarred craft's stumbling block.

One of the plane's engines had been giving trouble during most of the flight, and finally, when a cylinder head blew off, almost within sight of the target, the pilot had little choice but to head back for England. Crew mates say there was bitter disappointment written across his face as he peeled out of formation.

Back at the base, after his plane had returned, Staff Sergeant Charles F. Hruby, who has headed the "Damn Yankee's" ground maintenance crew since the bomber reported for duty on the European aerial front, philosophically summed up the situation:

"Luck plays a 90 percent role. What happened today has happened several times before, only then it occurred on the trip home, after the target had been bombed. It's a good ship and she has a lot of missions left in her."

Overlooked amid the disappointment over the failure of the "Damn Yankee" to attain the hundred mark was the fact that the plane had a pretty impressive record with 96 perfect missions. No other ship on the base comes close to that figure, and the 384th had been hitting at the Germans 20 months and has carried out more than 250 operational missions. Few bombers anywhere could boast such a record.

"Damn Yankee's" combat career over Europe has seen her take part in most of the great Eighth Air

Force efforts conducted during the last nine months. Berlin has felt the weight of her bombs on three occasions, while some of the other objectives have such familiar names as Metz, Saarbrücken, Stettin, Merseburg, Mannheim, Halberstadt, Hamburg, Bremen, Munich, Ludwigshafen, Hamm, Frankfurt—the list goes on and on.

“Damn Yankee’s” busiest month was June, when the Allies invaded the continent. The plane flew a grueling schedule of 18 bombing assignments, including a double-header one day.

In her travels over Europe “Damn Yankee’s” propellers have pulled her a prodigious total of nearly 150,000 aerial miles, while her bomb bay has dropped a resounding total of 576,000 pounds of explosives on the enemy.

Wrote higher headquarters:

“ ‘Damn Yankee’ operates from a base that is considered hallowed ground by the Eighth Air Force. On the basis of her past performances, it wouldn’t be at all surprising to find the ‘Damn Yankee’ taking off on the clincher, the final heavy bomber job over Germany.”

FROM: AIR FORCE COMBAT UNITS-GROUPS

HISTORY

384TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP

Constituted as 384th Bombardment Group (Heavy) on 25 November 1942. Activated on 1 Dec 1942. Trained for combat with B-17's. Moved to England, May-June 1943, and assigned to Eighth AF. Functioned primarily as a strategic bombardment organization, concentrating its attacks on airfields and industries in France and Germany. Targets included airdromes at Orleans, Bricey, and Nancy; motor works at Cologne; a coking plant at Gelsenkirchen; an aircraft component parts factory at Halberstadt; steel works at Magdeburg; and ball-bearing plants at Schweinfurt. Made a damaging raid on aircraft factories in central Germany on 11 Jan 1944 and received a DUC for the action. Took part in the campaign of heavy bombers against the German aircraft industry during Big Week, 20-25 Feb 1944. Received another DUC for the mission of 24 Apr 1944 when the group, although crippled by heavy losses of men and planes, led the 41st Wing through almost overwhelming opposition to attack an aircraft factory and airfield at Oberpfaffenhofen. The group also bombed ports, communications centers, oil facilities, and cities, attacking such targets as oil storage plants in Leipzig and Berlin, ports at Hamburg and Emden, and marshalling yards at Duren and Mannheim. At times it flew interdiction and support missions. Attacked installations along the coast of Normandy prior to and during the invasion in Jun 1944 and then bombed airfields and communications beyond the beachhead. Supported ground troops during the breakthrough at St Lo, 24-25 Jul, by bombing enemy strong points just beyond Allied lines. Hit tank and gun concentrations north of Eindhoven to assist the airborne assault on Holland in Sep. Struck enemy communications and fortifications during the Battle of the Bulge, Dec 1944-Jan 1945. Aided the Allied assault across the Rhine in Mar 1945 by attacking marshalling yards, railroad junctions, and bridges to cut off enemy supplies. Remained in the theater after the war as part of United States Air Forces in Europe. Carried American soldiers to Casablanca for return to the US, returned Greek soldiers to their homeland, and moved Allied troops to Germany. Inactivated in France on 28 Feb 1946.

Redesignated 384th Bombardment Group (Very Heavy). Allotted to the reserve. Activated on 16 Jul 1947. Inactivated on 27 Jun 1949.

SQUADRONS. 338th: 1947-1949. 339th: 1947-1949. 544th: 1942-1946; 1947-1949. 545th: 1942-1946; 1947-1949. 546th: 1942-1946. 547th: 1942-1946.

STATIONS. Gowen Field, Idaho, 1 Dec 1942; Wendover Field, Utah, 2 Jan 1943; Sioux City AAB, Iowa, c. 3 Apr-9 May 1943; Grafton Underwood, England, Jun 1943; Istres, France, c. Jun 1945-28 Feb 1946. Nashville Mun Aprt, Tenn, 16 Jul 1947-27 Jun 1949.

COMMANDERS. Col Budd J Peaslee, 2 Jan 1943; Col Lucius K Lacey, c. 6 Sep 1943; Col Dale O Smith, 23 Nov 1943; Lt Col Theodore E Milton, 24 Oct 1944; Lt Col Robert W Fish, 17 Jun 1945; Lt Col Lloyd D Chapman, 18 Oct 1945-Feb 1946.

CAMPAIGNS. Air Offensive, Europe; Normandy; Northern France; Rhineland; Ardennes-Alsace; Central Europe.

DECORATIONS. Distinguished Unit Citations: Germany, 11 Jan 1944; Germany, 24 Apr 1944.

MOTTO: Keep the Show on the Road.