The men in the Chemical Company had one advantage over the rest of the base. Their quarters were situated in the shadow of the mess hall. Aside from these glutinous implications, their heavy day-to-day work was not such as to arouse envy.

These were the men who took charge of the chemical bombs and fuses. When the ordnance men were called out to “bomb up” a mission, the chemical men teamed up with ordnance to load the trailers and aircraft.

All incendiary and smoke bombs were handled by the 869th, from the time the convoys pulled into the base until the load had been tucked safely into the belly of a Fortress.

It was hard work, but it was necessary work, and the blazing cities of Germany bore heated testimony to the efficiency of the wares of the Chemical Company.
INSPECTIONS

Capt. J. L. Moores
Air

Lt. Col. G. W. Dauncay
Administrative

Maj. G. F. Erb
Administrative

Lt. A. Pecyk
Air


Capt. P. H. Lipstate
Technical


S/Sgt. V. Collins
FINANCE SECTION

216th


Capt. G. K. Cohn
Station Finance Officer

POST EXCHANGE

Lt. Albert Paul
Sta. Post Exchange


Sgt. F. J. Hartnett
PX Manager

Sgt. Frank Maloziec
PX Manager
Figures show that the postal men filled out 60,000 money orders totalling close to $3,000,000. They sold more than $225,000 in stamps, and in the summer of '44, served 20,000 men, including other East Anglian bomb groups. At no time did the unit serve less than 12,000 men, although their T/O called for 7500 to 10,000 men.

BASE UTILITIES
1285th MILITARY POLICE CO.


COLOR GUARD
Men from the Fire Fighting Platoon were on call at all hours of the day or night. They moved swiftly and efficiently when a fire broke out. A crashed plane is always in imminent danger of explosion. Crash trucks were always present at take-off and return, and many lives were saved by the quick action of the men with the hoses.
Q. M. ACTIVITIES

R. T. O.  FUEL  FOOD  SALVAGE
Capt. R. Burns


Pfc. F. Alberti

S/Sgt. S. O'Brien


NO ONE is permitted in this room.

You are responsible for the cleanliness of this area. No smoking is allowed in this area.

Post Pull
This small detachment worked as a liaison unit, concentrating mainly on supply. All aviation fuels used on-base were issued through the liaison office. Average consumption of petrol per month was over 1,000,000 gallons. Between 8 and 14,000,000 litres of oxygen was inhaled monthly. Coal, coke, bedding, water, electricity and the destruction of rats were among the responsibilities of this detachment.
THE Third Reich, which Hitler had boasted would last a thousand years, was crumbling. It was February, 1945. Rosenberg's pagan Gods lay strewn in the rubble of the once arrogant strongholds of Fascism. The Horst Wessel had dropped from the Nazi Hit Parade and Goering was busy unpinning his medals. The blood-bath begun by a third-rate psychopathic painter was drawing to an end.

The Battle of the Bulge became but a bitter memory as the infantry crossed the Roer and the Moselle. The air forces continued to sweep the skies, as Luftwaffe opposition flickered close to extinction. As the 3rd, 1st, 9th, and 7th Armies slashed and took prisoner the soured cream of the Wehrmacht, the Red Army was driving hard toward the Elbe.

The Hundredth completed fifteen missions during February, then stepped it up to a climactic 22 in March. Americans poured over the bridge at Remagen, as other Americans dropped tons of explosives and incendiaries on Bohlen and Weimar...Chemnitz and Cottbus.

The weather was soupy on February 15, as a complete cloud cover sent the formation on to attack the secondary target. Maj. Neal Scott was Wing Air Commander in the attack on the important railroad center at Cottbus, a vital junction that handled a heavy flow of supplies for the Eastern Front. The target lay hidden 24,000 feet below. Lt. Storm C. Rhode picked up the target in his radar scope at forty miles, and all checks were good. Bombs were pitched through the clouds, and terrific explosions were felt as the target area was hit. The planes, even at high altitude, rocked from the concussion, and orange flames were seen through the undercast as the aircraft turned away.

A brief time out from the war was taken at the month's mid-way mark. A time out, that is, for the ground men. While a mission was out, a field inspection was held on the ground. Shoes had been highly polished, medals and ribbons placed with army regulation perfection on pressed olive-drabs, and the men, fatigued from their exertions in seeing the mission off, went through the formalities.

Maj. Gen. E. E. Partridge, 3rd Division C.O., and his Chief of Staff, Brig. Gen. Neil B. Harbold, arrived at 1035 hours and swept up through the sites. Later, the men were formed into platoons and marched out to the ramp, where the wind blew, the overcoat tails flapped and the inspection went off with accord. The men marched back, inspected and tired, changed into fatigues and returned to the ramp to sweat the ships in.

On February 23, the planes visited Treuchtlingen, and Don Ventriss, Group Bombardier, flew "A" Squadron and dropped his load squarely on the rail junction. A commendation from higher headquarters was forthcoming.

In any factual history, there lies the ever-present danger that cold tabulation of chronological events will divest the subject of human values. A certain number of planes rise, a certain number successfully bomb the target, a certain number are crippled, and the rest return to Thorpe Abbotts...That, in its essence, is the story of the Hundredth in aerial warfare.

Yet that is not the story of the men who set this destructive cycle into operation...the men who flew Bremen and Munster...of the Bloody Hundredth for which the Germans seemed to lie in wait...the Bloody Hundredth of Hamburg and Berlin and Regensburg.

Heroism and airmanship were routine...and the Purple Hearts were many...S. Rhode, wounded, over his mickey set...J. Olmstead, flying the tail as formation controller, wounded but fighting off attacking planes...The stories of pilots bringing back flying sieves were legion...Furrer led back by a friendly fighter...Wofford from Berlin on three engines...Lazzari with a hole in the waist large enough for a man to walk through...

On March 3, 1945, the Hundredth led the 3rd Division forces to Brunswick. Lt. Col. Wallace and Capt. G. Brown led, with Capt. F. Craft and Lt. L. Dawson flying deputy lead. Maj. J. Robinson and Lt. C. Blanding led "B" Group, while Capt. R. Hensey...
and Lt. D. Hutchinson led "C." The attack was directed against a large motor transport factory.

The bomber stream was preceded by a chaff force consisting of six aircraft, led by Lt. J. W. Thrasher. These aircraft carried, in addition to their loads of ten 260 pound fragmentation bombs, a load of metallized strips to be tossed from the plane, the purpose of which was to confound the German radar and flak operators, diverting their attention from the main attack.

Carrying the bomb load made a level bombing run necessary, and the flank came closer. Before bombs away, with no previous warning, a jet bounced out of the clouds, and as the bombs were dropped, made a pass firing heavy calibre shells. The shells ripped into one wing, setting it afire. Thrasher immediately rang the alarm bell and put the plane into a dive in an attempt to douse the flames. His calm voice sought out the men over the interphone. . . . "All right boys. . . . This is it . . . Bail out, boys . . ."

Navigator G. A. Rimmel helped bombardier H. F. Bott divest himself of his flak suit. Thrasher ordered co-pilot C. B. Bayha to leave the ship. The pilot alone remained at the controls, fighting the plane, trying desperately to keep it out of a spin so that his crew could get out.

Those few precious seconds saved the men. Then the flaming wing snapped away, with no previous warning, a jet bounced out of the clouds, and as the bombs were dropped, made a pass firing heavy calibre shells. The shells ripped into one wing, setting it afire. Thrasher immediately rang the alarm bell and put the plane into a dive in an attempt to douse the flames. His calm voice sought out the men over the interphone. . . . "All right boys. . . . This is it . . . Bail out, boys . . ."

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The Hundredth returned to the base after a good bombing job. The lost plane was the first in exactly one month. The Intelligence narrative stated: "Action of Chaff Force believed to have caused inaccuracy of flak in the target area."

On March 28, Gen. Eisenhower, at a press conference, blasted the theory of air "support." He insisted that it was one war, and that both air and ground branches were out to accomplish the same objective . . . to smash the ability of the enemy to make war. Neither branch supported the other. Both were an integral part of the whole. The reporters listened and were impressed.

Ten days prior to this conference and a week after the Remagen bridge had been found intact, the Hundredth struck again at the Reich capital. Maj. Harry P. Cruver led the formations on what was to be the final offensive aerial sweep by the Century group against Berlin. Sounding a final but deadly note of defiance, jet-propelled ME 262's of the Luftwaffe attacked near the Initial Point. The layers of cloud that obscured the aircraft from prying eyes had fallen away, and the battle was sharp as the bombers retained their tight formation and attacked the target.

The low squadron was hard hit. Four jets came in fast, registered strikes in the left wing of the lead ship, and destroyed the Number One engine. Air Commander Capt. R. L. Swain received a head wound. The fuel tanks flared up and men mushroomed from the escape hatches. Swain and pilot Lt. P. E. DeWeerdt were the last men to leave the plane. Engineer M. Kolling refused to bail out and Swain later reported "... it is believed that he was lost with the aircraft."

Lt. M. Jensen in Aircraft 293 slipped toward earth, fire streaming from smoky wounds. . . . Lt. E. Gwin went down. . . . Lt. R. C. King's aircraft had sustained two attacks. Sgts. R. Mitchell and J. Baker, ball and tail gunners, had been killed in the second enemy pass.

The jets came in for the third time, and the bomber spun violently as two more direct hits smashed under the flight deck and into the root of the right wing.

There was danger of explosion and King gave the bail-out order. The ship blew up as soon as the men left.

Four planes failed to return to Thorpe Abbotts. Berlin, even to the very end, had proved a tough target. The Nazi jets were fast and powerful. Only one had been destroyed during the battle, although two probables and seven damaged had been scored.

One year earlier, the jets might have prolonged the war and caused a tremendous casualty rise. Now, they were dispersed and their striking power was ephemeral.

Another battle took place during the month, a battle no less fierce and basic although the blood shed was nil. Sgt. Bill Mauldin tangled with Gen. George Patton over two guys named Willie and Joe. Those seeking to use army periodicals as sounding boards or their own brands of peculiar reaction, ran into concerted protest, and back-tracked as the Supreme Commander lay down the law with a few choice and democratic sentences.

As a result of this decision, the men of Aachen, of St. Lo, of the Roer and the Moselle and the Rhine were able to continue to laugh at the bewiskered tragi-comedy of Mauldin's art, and to hurl their bitches into the B-Bag.

It seemed healthy that in the climax struggle of the greatest war in history, men fought not only for
their lives, but also for a class-free heritage where thinking is not one of the privileges of rank.

The struggle in the air continued as the Hundredth, flying wing lead, battered the secondary target of Plauen on March 21, as bombardier Lt. J. J. Orendorff, despite a bombsight gyro that insisted on tumbling at crucial moments, managed to smash the works at the machine plant with results later judged to be excellent. On this mission which was led by Lt. Col. Lyster, German jets were again engaged near the target, and the plane piloted by Lt. B. Painter failed to return. One jet was destroyed.

Then, in rapid succession, the group struck at an airfield at Alhorn on the 22nd, marshalling yards at Unna on the 23rd, and flew two missions on the 24th of the month.

Capt. E. Ferbrache led the mission to the German airdrome, where all three lead bombardiers, Lts. D. Crichton, W. Wellings and A. Shiurba socked their targets for ratings of very good.

Col. Sutterlin led the outfit and the wing to Unna. For more than a month, incessant bombing had been shaping a major strategic policy . . . the isolation of the Ruhr from the remainder of the Reich.

By March 23, 1945, both of the principal waterways by which heavy traffic was moved out of the Ruhr had been sealed off. . . . One route to Southern Germany via the Ruhr, the Rhine and its tributaries had been cut by the advance of the ground troops, while the other route to Northern and Central Germany via the Dortmund-Ems and Mittelrand Canal systems had also been cut. Of the three main rail routes leading northeast out of the Ruhr, two had been severed by the destruction of rail viaducts and damage to bridges.

As a result of the difficulties which the Germans experienced in moving traffic over these lines, a great deal of freight had been backed up into the marshalling yards of the eastern Ruhr area. The target of Unna was one of these marshalling yards.

The weather was clear as the formations approached the target. The lead navigators, Lts. C. Roesel and R. Kirby, made good the I.P., and the four squadrons of the Hundredth peeled off and bore in.

Lt. C. Svendsen in the lead ship dropped his bombs on the yard, and Squadrons "B" and "C" followed suit. Results were very good.

Bombardier Shiurba of "D" was unable to define the target due to the intense smoke from the previous bombings, and decided to attack the last resort target . . . the marshalling yard at Marburg. The squadron, led by Capt. D. Liljenquist, used the rendezvous point of the primary target as the I.P. for the last report target. A good bomb run was made and the load was poured into the target area.

Flak, although meagre, had been accurate near the primary target, and Lt. A. Guardino's ship was struck. The right wing crumpled and the ship went into a spin, levelled off for a moment, then plunged and exploded on impact. There was no fire, no smoke, and no 'chutes were seen.

The morning of March 24 came in clear and beautiful. Spring had definitely arrived. The men stepped out of their huts to see the rare English sun. There was sunlight on Thorpe Abbotts and on the Rhine, where Americans and British swarmed over the river. Across the skies, Halifaxes and Lancasters pulled their cumbersome gliders to points beyond the Rhine, where they disgorged their bellyfuls of paratroopers.

The ships of the Hundredth were in the midst of the operations. Two missions were on tap that day. At 0600 hours, 38 aircraft of the group were dispatched to a Dutch airfield at Steenwijk. Maj. J. Gibbons was in charge of this operation, which had been designed to cooperate with ground moves so as to insure the enforced unemployment of all jet airfields, plus any alternate fields that the German fighters could possibly use. The A. M. raid was extremely successful, and bombs were spread over the MPI . . . the runways of the field . . .

At 1325 hours of the same day, Lt. Col. Wallace and Capt. J. DePlanque led the wing to the second airfield at Ziegenhain, and Capt. S. Passen and Lt. R. Kirby were the navigators. Bombardier Lts. C. Svendsen, A. Belimow, M. Snyder and A. Shiurba placed their bombs on the field covering the large hangar and the west end. Results were rated very good to excellent.

A total of 1,380 bombs (100 and 150 pounders) were released on jet fields in the twin raids, as the Hundredth evened up the score of long standing.

In other parts of the world, other scores were being evened. The U. S. 5th Army was on the move in Italy. . . . The men on Luzon were advancing. . . . B-29 Super-Fortresses were carrying the war to Japan proper. . . . The British hit back on the road to Mandalay. . . . Then, as the Hundredth ended the month with missions to Hanover, Hamburg and Zeitz . . . April 1945 took over . . .
The month was charged with drama. On the 12th of April, an overture of tragedy was sounded throughout the world, and free men bowed their heads in mourning at the loss of a great leader. The flag at Thorpe Abbotts dropped to half-mast, and the picture of the world bore a black frame.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, died of a cerebral hemorrhage. From the marble capitals of the globe to the stone church at Brockdish, his passing was mourned. It was mourned on the roads of Germany by the GI’s. . . . It was mourned in the halls of Congress. . . . It was mourned by the little men of the world.

A friend as well as a leader was gone. A friend who had against overwhelming opposition fought to give the little man his Wagner Act, his social security, the safety of his bank deposit.

In war as in peace, he had proven himself a leader of the people. With the change of conflict from national to international, he had spoken for all humanity regardless of arbitrary lines of sovereignty. The Four Freedoms, Yalta, the Atlantic Charter were left behind for the people as a heritage of his wisdom and foresight.

There were small men who carped at his greatness . . . but then, there were small men who had carped at the greatness of Lincoln and Jefferson and Jackson. As Roosevelt himself had said of Jackson on January 8, 1936. . . . “It seemed sometimes that all were against him. . . . all but the people of the United States. . . .”

The same was true of Roosevelt. . . . It seemed sometimes that all were against him. . . . all but the people of the United States.

He did not live to see and feel the fruition of his planning and aspirations, but he had led the world out of the shadow of the threat of Fascism, and had proven that democracy could act swiftly and efficiently in a framework of freedom. . . . He was not at his desk when the reports came through that the Russians had entered Berlin. . . . that the Americans had joined them on the banks of the Elbe. . . . He was gone, but the people would remember.

In April 1945, the 7th Army uncovered the hell-hole that was Dachau. Newsreel cameras recorded the horrors of the camp for the world to see. The Nazi record was etched into the fire-scarred bones of the former inhabitants, and it was now impossible for people to shrug and say with an air of disbelief. . . . "Propaganda." A load of human bones in an oven is more than "propaganda."

The air forces flew combat until the list of possible targets dwindled to zero. Then they flew again, but this time on errands of mercy.

The Hundredth completed fifteen combat missions in April, and a total of six aircraft failed to return. In an attack on the 3rd, the group lost Lt. W. Baldwin’s ship, which was last seen heading into the undercast after bombs away on the submarine pens at Kiel. Baldwin called on VHF saying he had fifteen minutes and eighty gallons of gas left for each engine.

On the 5th, marshalling yards at Nuremberg were destroyed, as bombardiers, Capt. J. J. Orendorff, Lts. A. Paterno and J. Tolliver socked their target. . . . Lt. R. Estes did not return. . . . Five more top bombing ratings were achieved at Eger, Czechoslovakia on the 8th, at Munich, at an airfield near Magdeburg, at an Ordnance depot in Landshut on the 11th, and bombs were dropped on German ground defenses in the French area of Royan on the 14th.

The Hundredth tangled with the Luftwaffe twice in April. On the 7th, an estimated 40 enemy aircraft jumped the group before target time. The action sprawled out over the sky as the escort fighters engaged the ME 109’s. At least ten jets passed high above, but did not join the fight. Numerous single attacks were pressed home against the planes of the Hundredth. The German pilots were fanatically aggressive, and bore in with suicidal determination.

. . . Lt. W. Howard’s ship went down. . . .

The Hundredth gunners traded volleys. . . . S/Sgt. W. Dudecz picked out an ME 109 coming in from five o’clock, tracked it and kept firing as the Kraut came in close to sixty feet. It suddenly seemed to vibrate violently, came sliding in and slashed the tail of the Fort. The fighter fell off toward seven o’clock and spun down as the injured Fort continued on to the target. . . . S/Sgt. J. R. Smith fired two long bursts and smoke streamed from an ME 109 as it broke away and went down. . . . Another ME 109 made a six o’clock attack on the plane piloted by Lt. A. Calder . . . one third of the bomber’s right wing was smashed off. The Fort spun and went down.


Three days later, the second and final encounter of the month took place . . . the final brush with the Luftwaffe in World War II. Two planes of the Hun-
dredth were destroyed ... those of Lts. D. Reeve and L. Bazin ... while gunners Chandler, Radice, Yarnat and Agan racked up four German jets ...

As the days passed through April, the group reached the 300 mission mark, and bitters plus good spirits flowed in the clubs.

On April 20, 1945, Maj. R. Stivers and Lt. C. Hellerich led 29 planes of the Hundredth to Oranienburg. This was a transportation target, and the endeavor had been planned in order to break up German defenses between the Elbe River and Berlin.

As the 500-pound General Purpose bombs dropped and blossomed on the marshalling yard, the detonations roared the final blast in the chain of Hundredth missions, a chain which had strengthened from a series of untried links at Walla Walla, Washington, into a forged weapon that hung heavy about the neck of Fascism.

The Hundredth had pierced enemy territory on 306 occasions, and had dropped 33,473,000 pounds of high explosive on strongholds in Nazi and Nazi-held territory. Incendiary powder and jelly totalled 2,634,000 pounds. ... Gunners of the Hundredth destroyed 261 enemy aircraft, and 101 were listed as Probably Destroyed ...

The bombs lay quietly in their revetments. Missions were scheduled on April 21 and 23, but were scrubbed. There was no place to go. The "rough ones" were over. The "milk runs" were over. The men leaned back and waited ...

In the final week of April, 1945, a convoy wound its way into Thorpe Abbotts, and the trucks were unloaded in the ordnance area. The load consisted of strange, cylindrically-shaped metal containers. In a few brief courses, the armorers and ordnance men were taught how to load the containers into the bomb bay.

On May 1, after bad weather had grounded the ships three times, the airmen were briefed. The containers were loaded with food and supplies, and the following instructions, set forth by USSTAF, were delivered:

"A. Crews will be briefed on the importance of this operation to the Dutch people, and will be instructed to make every effort to drop loads in the proper areas.

The civilian population of Occupied Holland, particularly in the cities, is suffering from lack of food as the result of their isolation and occupation by enemy troops, and deaths are occurring at the rate of several thousand per day. In order to alleviate famine conditions, this Air Force and the R. A. F. have been ordered to drop food supplies in the vicinity of the larger cities West and SW of the Zuider Zee. A truce with the German forces occupying this portion of Holland is being made in order that our Air Force may fly unmolested at required low altitudes through defended areas.

B. All crews will be cautioned against committing a hostile act of any kind while over Holland. Second runs are not authorized if aircraft are being fired upon from the ground.

All aircraft are cautioned to stay south of a line running east and west from Den Helder. The truce does not extend north of this line."

Col. Sutterlin, Lt. Wofford, Capts. Kodas, Hutchinson, Milling and Lt. Gilbert led 37 planes of the Hundredth, as bombardiers Paterno, Zemske and Calvert dropped the parachute containers on the large white crosses which were used to mark the target.

Some of the containers snarled due to the congested condition of the bomb bays. The men, who had been forewarned, shoved them free with large boards.

The Nazis did not interfere. It seemed that Eisenhower's message, sent to the German commander notifying him that any interference with the dropping operations would result in the guilty parties being treated as violators of the rules of warfare, had taken effect.

There were five additional "Chowhound" missions, and the ground men, after sweating out the war in the "paddlefoot" classification, were given the opportunity to fly along on these errands of mercy. The planes flew low over Holland, and the men could see the large letters spelling out "Thank you" on the ground as the life-giving loads of flour and bacon and cheese were released.

As a lease on life was being issued to the Dutch, life was being squeezed from the broken German armies. Peace rumors raced around the world. On May 2, the Germans in Italy surrendered. ... American commanders accepted the surrender of German armies in the field. ... In Czechoslovakia, the Red Army continued to battle against pockets of resistance. ... On May 7, 1946, the attention of the world turned to a schoolhouse in Rheims, France, where Gen. Gustav Jodl, German Chief of Staff, signed the two unconditional surrender documents. The German Fascist reign of tyranny was over at 0241 hours, British Double Summer Time. Three days later, the Western Allies met the defeated Germans in Berlin.
where Field Marshal Keitel, Admiral Friedeburg and Gen. Stumpf signed for the vanquished. General Zhukov and Air Marshal Tedder signed as representatives of the Allies, with Generals Spaatz and Tassigny as witnesses. The European war had been signed, sealed, and the world had been delivered.

With the advent of peace in Europe, the group embarked upon a period of speculation. It was announced in terms most certain that work still remained to be done, and routine still remained to be followed. Thoughts of home inevitably grew stronger, and the long-awaited army service rating point system sent the men into an arithmetical flurry.

Those with less than the magic 85 points were wont to spend their evenings at the Sad Sack, bemoaning their fate and imbibing that which made fate more bearable. The unfortunates minus the battle stars found it more difficult to reach the saturation point.

A battle star, in many instances, proved to be the equivalent of a return ticket home. Each star carried five points and the blessings of "them as had 'em." Only the men actually assigned to the Hundredth received these five point benefits.

By the time the final tallies were being made deep in the year, many men possessed no less than six of these bronze stars, or their utility value, thirty priceless points. The first had been issued under the general title, Offensive Europe, and included the period up to June 5, 1944. As the armies and airmen invaded the Continent, a Campaign Normandy star was issued, followed by the Campaign Northern France and Campaign Ardennes. The fifth and sixth stars were for Rhineland and Central Europe, adding up to a boat ride past the lady with the torch.

The big news broke on the final day of the month, immediately prior to Pay Call. The squadron Commanders, at meetings held in the squadron areas, informed their men that the group had been chosen as one of several to occupy Germany. Sharply divergent views were held. Sure, it was better than hitting the Pacific, wasn't it? Then again, it's not as good as going home. Home seemed further away than ever as the men sat on the grass and digested the news.

In the ensuing months, they lived under the occupation cloud. Then, on a night in August, Lt. Col. Wallace swept through the base and announced personally to the wildly cheering men that the group had suddenly been scheduled to go home.

Meanwhile, everyone sat and scanned the news sheets. There were curses as Himmler escaped the Allied hangman by committing suicide. The Churchill government, the war job completed, resigned, and new elections were set for July.

On the base, in a typical army move aimed at taking up the time slack, programs were inaugurated embracing the finer points of military existence. The men marched to and fro, going through the motions of close order drill. There were lectures on Japan and military courtesy, map reading and a brief course on military sanitation. There were also passes, furlough and inspections every Saturday morning. Guard duty was still pulled in occasional four-hour shifts.

Movement came with June, and the first major shipment of high-pointers took off in trucks and high spirits. Low-pointers soon were shipped in to replace them.

As the old man of Vichy was being tried for treason, the even tenor of life continued at Thorpe Abbotts. The 500 men who had enrolled in the base education system attended classes and turned to those men from the base who turned up as instructors. The queues sweated out the Base Cinema for such masterpieces as "Meet Miss Bobby Socks," while "I'm Beginning to See the Light" flowed symbolically from the wireless. Lauren Bacall was undraping her look for the edification of the London critics and the British jazz mag editors were complaining about the large numbers of Yanks who knew nothing about real American jazz. The sun grew a degree or so more virile as July pushed into the picture.

At the half-way mark in July, Britain tramped to the polls. The ancient Tory principles of privilege clashed against the nationalization plans of the Labour men, and the campaigns were marked by deep animosities and bitterness. It was two weeks before the slow returns began to sift in, and from the outset, Labour in the person of Clement Attlee took the lead over Winston Churchill and the Tories.

In August 1945, the atom bomb stunned the world, first with the elation of victory, then with a growing uneasiness that man had achieved the ultimate… the sharp and final method by which he could destroy himself. London's Hyde Park, ablaze with the summer sun and the high-pitched arguments of the rickety-platformed speakers, lashed out at the moral degradation and responsibility of releasing the weapon. Elation was mixed with horror, and horror with the faint ray of hope. To many people, the answer was simple. Either a strong United Nations
Organization arose out of the shimmering cloud over Japan, or the globe would struggle to its destruction.

More high-pointers prepared to leave for home. Before the Japanese officially threw in the ragged towel on August 15, 1945, rumors of V-J swept the European capitals as early as August 10, when snake dances slid through Oxford Circus and crowds jammed Piccadilly, blowing vigorously on horns and shaking rattles with long-postponed abandon.

The prematurity of the highjinks did not dampen the enthusiasm less than a week later, when the end of the war was announced officially. Thorpe Abbotts was being cleared of men scheduled for the sea voyage. Large groups left in August and September, making for severe shortages of manpower in the vital functions of the station. Gunners remaining on the base were pressed into service as telephone operators and clerks...

This was the twilight in the history of the Hundredth Bombardment Group. It had fought its way across the skies of Europe against the best that Fascism could offer. It was high on the lists of achievement, heroism and color. As far as the men were concerned, it was rumored that the boys in the Pacific had heard of only two outfits fighting the war in the ETO... the Eighth Air Force and the Bloody Hundredth....

The Hundredth had been the first outfit to hit England with Tokyo tanks, which later enabled the entire air force to strike longer and longer blows at the Axis. It had been the first outfit to carry twelve 500-pounders with the full gas load.... It was rumored that Capt. Bennie DeMarco was the first man in the ETO to see pink flak... but that remained unconfirmed.

The war work was over as the squadrons became receptacles for the varying point totals. Each squadron received men, held them until shipment, then let go. As the momentous year 1945 closed out, the squadrons headed for the boats. Capt. E. F. Beecher Jr., claimed to be the last Yank to leave Thorpe Abbotts, as he took off during the first of the new year.

It was 1946, and the Hundredth Bombardment Group had cleared out for home. It was a long time since the train had wheezed into Diss Station back in 1943.... A long time and a large turnover. Many had died since that day, so that many more could now go home in peace.

The trains still pull into Diss, some heading for Norwich, some heading for London. The pubs in the towns still sell their mild and bitters. The British still congregate and chat, sipping their Whitbread and Guinness.... Sometimes they talk about the war, sometimes about the peace.... Their towns seem quieter, and they mention this.... "Now when the Yanks were here...."

Perhaps the Red Cross Aero Club at Thorpe Abbotts has been torn down. Perhaps it has been repainted. Whatever its fate, the quotation on one wall had been alive, and would be remembered....

"... and we met a new land and sky pattern... grey sky... damp earth... and birds were different... and trees and stones... and insects were of another season.... the people spoke and thought another part of life... embracing customs foreign to our own... and yet a common cause expressed itself by theirs and ours who gave their lives...."
349th
COMMANDING OFFICERS

Maj. W. W. Veal
Lt. Col. S. L. Barr
Maj. S. H. Reeder
Maj. C. A. Martin
Maj. J. S. Robinson

STAFF
Maj. G. F. Erb
Capt. T. H. Wedin
Capt. W. G. Burke
Lt. D. P. Vernier

OFFICERS

Capt. T. H. Wedin, Maj. G. F. Erb

Rear, L. to R.: Maj. C. A. Martin, Maj. J. S. Robinson,
Maj. S. Reeder, Capt. T. Wedin, Maj. G. F. Erb


Rear L. to R.: Capt. J. Williams, Lt. D. Currie, Lt. B. Sparks
Capt. G. Erb, Front L. to R.


349th Bombardment Squadron


The donkey was brought back from North Africa.
350th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON

COMMANDING

Maj. G. W. Claven
Maj. A. M. Elton
Maj. R. Rosenthal
Maj. M. F. Youngs

Maj. R. Rosenthal
Maj. M. F. Youngs

OFFICERS

Capt. J. R. Swartout
Lt. Col. D. K. Lyster
Maj. M. J. Fitzgerald
Maj. C. E. Robbs

Maj. R. Rosenthal

STAFF OFFICERS

Capt. H. L. Varian Jr.
Capt. R. H. Tienken
Capt. F. S. Seibert
Capt. A. Paul

Capt. H. L. Varian Jr.
Capt. R. H. Tienken


Major "Buck" Cleven returns from prison camp.
350th AIRMEN

350th Bombardment Squadron

350th Bombardment Squadron

350th Bombardment Squadron


Front L to R: 2 Ground men, Capt. H. Bossett, Capt. S. Barr, T/Sgt. R. Cliff.


351st SQUADRON BOMBARDMENT

COMMANDING OFFICERS

Lt. Col. J. B. Kidd  
Lt. Col. O. Turner  
Lt. Col. C. B. Emberson  
Lt. Col. H. F. Cruver  
Maj. J. B. Milling

STAFF OFFICERS

Lt. Col. J. B. Kidd  
Lt. Col. O. Turner  
Lt. Col. C. B. Emberson  
Lt. Col. H. F. Cruver  
Maj. J. B. Milling

Lt. E. Walton  
Capt. C. J. Ribar  
Capt. R. H. Williams  
Capt. G. K. Jones

Capt. C. J. Ribar  
Capt. R. H. Williams  
Capt. G. K. Jones


1st/Sgt. F. T. Bauman  

1st/Sgt. K. R. Peterson  


351st Bombardment Squadron

351st Bombardment Squadron

351st Bombardment Squadron

418th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON

COMMANDING OFFICERS


1st/ Sgt. J. A. Biggs

1st/ Sgt. J. Brody

1st/ Sgt. D. Cox


418th Bombardment Squadron


### Operational Box Score

(Abbreviations: AF—Airfield, AC—Aircraft, T.O.—Target of Opportunity, S.T.—Secondary Target, L.R.—Last Resort Target, MY—Marshalling Yard, Noball—Mission to bomb rocket site, MT—Motor Transport, T.A.—Target Area. Note: When the Result column is blank, there is no available information due to adverse weather.)

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THE new men were grimy and tired as they marched into the West Compound. They looked every ache of the torturous three day train excursion from Wetzlar to Sagen. It had been a strictly day-coach journey, although at least one man had slept or attempted to sleep on the bag rack, a shelf approximately twelve inches wide. They were American fliers and they had been de-eagled.

As they shuffled in, the old veteran Prisoners of War, lined up along the barbed wire, kept yelling: "When's the war gonna be over?"

The new men screamed back: "It won't be long now!" and the old men came back with: "That's what they told us last year."

This was Stalag Luft III, a camp one mile's march away from Sagen, a town deep in Germany. Here, American airmen unfortunate enough to have been shot down but fortunate enough to have survived came to serve out their duration. Their war was over, and it became a question of accustoming themselves to the sheer boredom and ennui of prison camp life.

The new men were soon subjected to another search, and their personal belongings, fountain pens and cigarette lighters were taken into protective custody. In return, they were given a bath and issued half a Red Cross parcel.

They were a cross-section of the Air Forces. B-17 pilots traded wisecracks with P-51 pilots... 15th Air Force men lived with Eighth Air Force men. It was a big, unhappy family. The men traded advice, and the old men coached the newcomers in ways and means to lessen the dreariness of their existence. The PW novices soon found out that the food went further if it was pooled, and more palatable if one or two men did all the cooking. Pans and plates were fashioned from tin cans, and by pulverizing K-2 crackers, grating bread crusts and D-Ration chocolate bars, adding a bit of margarine, some powdered milk and a breath of treasured sugar, it was possible to turn out a passable substitute for a cake.

Before the men settled down to housekeeping, the American Commanding Officer in charge, the ranking prisoner, held a meeting...
two planes. Col. Alkire and his crew were forced to bail out, and the colonel landed in the center of the airport.

This seemed to be as good a time as any to give the target a firsthand examination following the bombing, so Alkire checked and made certain that it had been properly destroyed. Captured during this tour of inspection, the colonel made a forced journey from Verona to Frankfurt, Germany, where he was informed at the Interrogations Center that the schedule called for his assignment as Senior American Officer at some as yet undesignated camp. The place turned out to be a transport camp in Frankfurt, a place visited regularly by the Eighth Air Force and the R.A.F. In two months, the R.A.F. knocked it out, a complete job of demolition. Only one man was killed in this pin-point attack.

The colonel moved soon afterwards, and the trail led to Sagen and Stalag Luft III.

The orientation talk over, Col. Alkire stepped down. The camp Adjutant, Lt. Col. Aring, assigned the men to blocks (barracks) and rooms. They were now bona fide Kriegsgefangenen, which is Kraut for Prisoners of War. The contraction of this unwieldy word gave birth to its Americanized version, “Kriegie,” which came into general usage as a synonym for Prisoner of War.

There were double-decker bunks in the rooms, a table, a couple of stools, some lockers, a pewter pitcher, a tin pitcher and a small stove in a corner. The men went to supply and drew nine bed slats per sack, a bowl, cup, knife, fork, spoon and sleeping equipment.

It was June 1, 1944, and the weather was pleasant. Exhausted after the recent pilgrimage, Lt. A. Edwin Stern Jr. sank to his excelsior-filled mattress cover. The week had been a full one, and every moment still seemed vivid and tense. From the moment he had dropped from the tree and started to run from the guttural voices until he hit the sack at the Stalag Luft, the rapid-fire experiences had each left a sharp, clear imprint on his mind. He recalled bailing out after the Berlin job, floating down, being snared by the tree. Then the discovery by that bald-headed old Kraut, who yelled, bringing a one-armed Wehrmacht Pfc on the double. The soldier yanked out a P-38 with his good arm, and waved it around.

"Haben sie pistol?" the Pfc growled.

Stern shook his head, but was searched anyhow. The German uncovered some .45 rounds, and Stern was searched again. Two Luftwaffe officers came running up and took him in tow. They marched out of the woods and into a small town. Stern walked slowly, every step pulling at his chest. For the edification and general amusement of the villagers, who had turned out en masse to see what an American "killer" looked like, one of the boys in blue would boot Stern with every ten steps. The majority of the onlookers were quiet and curious. One woman jumped out of the crowd and spit in Stern's face, yelling, "Luftgangster. . . terrorflieger!" as well as other more colorful expletives. A few little Nazis in short-panted uniforms threw stones, but the guards, fearful of their aim, slapped the junior Nazis faces and marched Stern to Gestapo headquarters.

Three of his fellow crewmen were already there.

... . Dort Payne, Radio man Paltrineri and Waist Gunner Trout. They were all ordered to strip for a search, and were relieved of everything that was not sewn on tight. While they were dressing, a large car, pulled up outside the Gestapo station. The men piled into the rear seat, and as the car spun out of town, they saw a sign reading: LUDWIGSLUST 3 KM. That did not mean too much. Where the hell in Germany was Ludwigslust?

The car pulled into the airbase that Stern had spotted on his way down. At the base hospital, Paltrineri and Trout had their wounds attended to, and Payne, who had sprained an ankle, was patched up. They were then herded into the Commandant's office.

He was an ugly man of the type usually found playing ugly men in Grade "B" thrillers. He had no nose and cauliflower ears. One of the Germans present could speak English. He found the bomb pins in Stern's coveralls.

"What was your target?" he asked.

"Read your papers tomorrow."

"I am German!" he bellowed. His eyes grew wide and his chest swelled as he pounded on it.

This can't be real, Stern thought. It's too much like the movies. The German had placed the bomb pins on the Commandant's desk. Now, in a burst of rage he swept them onto the floor.

"Pick them up!" he commanded.

"Go to hell!" was the reply. The German slapped Stern across the face. Dort Payne saw Stern's fist clenched and held his arm, whispering, "Don't be a damn fool. All they want is an excuse to kill you."

Stern picked up the pins and Wolfgang smiled all over. As the guards marched the men to the cell block, his parting stroke was to hurl one of the electric gloves at Stern's face.

Payne and Stern were placed in the same cell. They were hungry, and pounded on the door, asking...
in fluent high-school German about eating time. The guard did not know.

The entire crew had been accounted for with the exception of Major Fitzgerald. They brought him in at 1600 hours. Everyone was rather surly, and the meal served at 1900 hours hardly improved the prevailing mood. It consisted of watered oatmeal soup and ersatz coffee. Payne could hardly stomach it, while Stern waded through two portions. The bread was as hard as wood. There was more than a suspicion that it was wood. This delightful repast was called breakfast.

After a rough night of near-sleep, the men were driven to Ludwigslust on May 25, 1944, climbed aboard a train and headed for the Dulagluft at Frankfurt...

The mattress cover itched and Stern shifted. It was only a week since the train had carried them through bombed-out Hanover and gutted Kassel. It had taken another week to set up this room at the Stalag, and at times, it resembled the Baldwin Locomotive works as men pounded on tin cans with hammers carved from tree stumps, others grated K-2 crackers on a salmon can punched full of holes, another stoked the fire and someone else smoked up the room with a firebrand in an effort to rid the place of a million green flies. Stern picked a green fly from his face and sighed...

There were two roll-calls per day... 0830 hours and 1730 hours. Supper usually followed the evening call. Breakfast, consisting of two onion-skin slices of bread and a cup of soluble coffee, was served after morning roll-call. The luncheon menu consisted of two slices of bread spread with enough liver paste to dampen the edge of a small knife. Three days a week, the men were graced with barley soup (with a subsequent elimination of the liver paste). Some men would strain ⅓ of the barley from the soup to be used in the improvisation of salmon croquettes or cake filler.

There were six prison camps punctuating the country around Sagen. The last camp had opened its barbed wire in March 1944, and Maj. Gale W. Cleven moved in as an aide to Col. Alkire. It had been a lengthy prison sentence for Buck Cleven.

It began on October 8, 1943, when three fighters attacked and left his ship a sagging wreck after the bombing of Bremen. Equipment was jettisoned in a futile attempt to stay in the air. The men bailed out, Cleven following from an altitude of approximately 2,000 feet. He landed northeast of Osnabruck, and was immediately surrounded by irate farmers and soldiers. Pilot DeMarco also landed nearby, and both men were taken to a Luftwaffe station, where the remainder of the crew gradually filtered in. From Osnabruck, the crew travelled by train to Frankfurt, arriving at 0100 hours on October 10.

The men slept in the station on flea-bitten burlap sacks filled with wood shavings. At 1700 hours, they were awakened for a train to Quackenbruck, on the outskirts of Frankfurt. From there, a street car brought them into Dulagluft at Überossel.

They were separated and placed in solitary. Cleven's room was small, poorly lighted and ventilated. Solitary confinement is not one of the recommended forms of amusement, and time moved with maddening hesitancy.

There was a surprise in store after a dinner of two egg-sized potatoes, a slice of bread and an evil glass of herb tea. Cleven received a visitor. Before the visitor entered, Cleven had neglected to eat the crude assortment of food offered him.

The man's eyes lit up with disbelief upon entering, as he saw such a large quantity of food lying undisturbed. He wore filthy civilian garb which paralleled his half-starved and gaunt appearance. His ensuing conversation was a hurried ramble, vague almost to the point of incoherency.

"Do you mind if I talk? At the last place, the Bastile prison in France... I could never carry on a conversation with anyone because of solitary confinement. Sometimes I hammered on the walls to the neighboring cell, but they kept shooting the occupants so that a continued conversation was impossible. Look at all the room we have here. May I eat some of this food? Thanks. This is nothing short of a banquet. Why, I can actually walk around in a large area. How dry it is in here. And so much sunlight."

After thirty minutes, Cleven, far from being dismayed, began to imagine that he was living off the fat of the land. Then a question lay heavy and unspoken on his mind... Does this man represent an average prisoner after months of confinement?

It was sometime later when Cleven found out the entire story. The man was an Engineer from a B-26 crew that had been shot down in France. The French hid him for awhile, but the Germans finally made the capture, and using the excuse that he was not a soldier, threw him into prison. He rotted for ninety days before the Germans admitted that he was an American and transferred him through Luftwaffe channels. This period in prison produced white splotches on his skin as well as the common symptoms of starvation. The
story was Cleven's initial introduction to the kindness of the German people.

He was interrogated on the morning of October 11. The German Hauptman (Captain) startled Cleven with his initial statement.

"We usually ask the questions," he said, "but for the sake of variety I'll answer yours."

Receiving no answer, the Nazi interrogator launched into an account of Cleven's life and of the command he had recently left.

"You commanded the 350th Squadron of the 100th Bomb Group. You were once stationed at Kelly Field, in Texas, and joined the 100th Bomb Group in 1942. You began your combat career in June 1943."...

The Hauptman seemed quite pleased with himself and continued in the same vein. Cleven remained silent. The greater part of the information was correct but seemed of minor value. After exhausting Cleven's career as the topic of conversation, the Nazi official switched to a topic closer to his own heart: his self. The remainder of the morning was spent in reminiscences of Philadelphia, where he had spent eighteen years.

"I intend to return there after the war," he concluded.

Cleven had his doubts about that, but did not contradict the head man of the moment. The Philadelphia story closed the "interrogation," which seemed to Cleven to have been the oddest in the history of warfare.

That evening, Cleven joined the other members of the crew; DeMarco, F/O J. Thayer, Lf. J. Downs, Lt. F. Harper, T/Sgt. T. Stringfellow, S/Sgt. J. Ferruggiaro, S/Sgt. W. Williams, T/Sgt. B. Barr, S/Sgt. W. Woodbury and Sgt. H. Calhoun. The men were moved to the center of Frankfurt. After nine days, they were transported to the railroad station and boarded freight cars. There were 43 men and 3 guards to a car, and the prisoners' shoes were removed to prevent escape. The train groaned through the Reich for three nights and two days, finally pulling into Sagen and the Stalag Luft on the morning of October 23, 1943. The men began their lengthy stay as guests of the hospitable Third Reich....

It was easy to tell the passage of weeks. Once per seven days, the Goons (as the Kriegies called the Germans) would pull a bed-slat inspection, checking each room to see that each bed still possessed the nine slats which were par for the course. The British had dug a fine tunnel using bed slats as eyebeams and lally columns in their camp, which was only a short distance away, and the Nazis were taking no chances. Bed-slates also provided an outlet and an opportunity for good, clean horseplay. Standard operational procedure was to slant the slats of an upper bunk so that a mere fraction of an inch on each board would be supporting the mattress. The weight of a man jumping into the sack was enough to send man, sack and slats crashing down into the lower bunk. It soon became foolhardy for any man to retire before carefully checking the status of his bed-slats.

At ten o'clock (2200 hours), the men were locked in their blocks. The lights went out two hours later, and huge dogs set loose in the compound. The darkness was total, and navigation to the latrine situated at the end of the hall was no small feat. German water was tough on the bladder, and there would be a never-ending trek to the end of the hall all during the night, with men grooping blindly for the door knob to their room, others stumbling into oddly dispersed pieces of furniture, and more cursing like Trojans on general principles.

In May 1944, Maj. Sam Lawrence, one of the block commanding officers, had been a prisoner for a year and a half. He was a man of violent tempers, with a nature tending to the morose. A stickler for discipline, he was nonetheless known as a square shooter. Stern had been cooking nearly a week when, preparing supper, he found the spam full of wriggling white worms. Just at that time, Maj. Lawrence passed by the open door.

"Major Lawrence!" Stern called. "Will you step in here a moment please?"

He came in, and Stern pointed to the infested meat. "Major, the meat's full of worms."

"That's life," he muttered, and walked out of the room.

The spam was cut into small chunks, and as many worms extracted as possible. It was then boiled. That's life....

The Dulagluft at Frankfurt had been another stop along the route which finally led to Sagen and Stalag Luft III. It was May 1944. The train out of Kassel was crowded, and the German guards routed the civilian passengers to make room for the American prisoners. The bewildered and embittered ex-occupants sulked in the aisle.

The men had been given ten loaves of bread, some margarine and ersatz jam to stave off hunger during the trip. The bread was black, and a small loaf weighed perilously close to five pounds. The principal
ingredient seemed to be sawdust, and when done eating, it was almost possible to pluck the bread particles from between your teeth and use them as toothpicks. The jam was blood-red, and without too much imagination, you could picture its manufacture on the Russian front.

Hunger blunts ones tastes, and not many refused to eat. The bread succeeded in accomplishing three objectives. It slaked hunger, caused acute gas formations in the stomach and brought on tremendous thirst.

The train pulled into Frankfurt and the men were hustled off onto the platform. They remained there for two hours being counted, while bitter civilians made bloodthirsty remarks and drew their forefingers ominously across their throats. When the men climbed aboard another train to continue their tour through Frankfurt, they admired the farflung areas of devastation, and felt a personal pride in having had a hand in the levelling of the Reich stronghold.

There was a two mile march at the end of the journey, when the train stopped at Oberossel, a suburb of Frankfurt. The men hiked it to the dreaded Dulagluft, and found it to be a group of frame buildings. Men in British and Russian uniforms were working with picks and shovels, constructing air raid shelters. The prisoners were halted in front of the largest building of the group. A German in a Luftwaffe uniform called the roll in an Oxford accent and informed them that: "For you, the war is over."

In the basement of the building, the men were locked individually into concrete cells. It was colder than a Nazi's heart down there. Soon, other Americans were thrust into the cells. There was little conversation. Lunch was oatmeal soup, and they were in silence, wanting to speak, but none trusting the man beside them.

After a thorough search, cells were changed.

The cubicle called A-19 was just like every other cell in Dulagluft. Not even a peephole marred the solid door. The window was frosted glass and locked. Against the left wall stood a wooden bunk. Stern was tired and flopped down on the sawdust-filled gunny-sack.

Two hours later, the door was unlocked, and a German sergeant entered, carrying a printed form in his hand.

"Leutenant Stairn!" he barked, and Stern rose.

"That's a fine German name," he commented.

"Did your parents come from Bairleen?"

"No."

"Are you related to Max Stern of Hollywood?"

"Never heard of him."

"Do you remember a movie directed by Lewis Milestone? The opening scene shows the figure 10,000, then the camera backs up a little, and you can see that it's a large bag with 10,000 written on it."

The sergeant became extremely dramatic at this point. He spoke in a low, hoarse whisper, using his hands to describe the bag and the camera retreating from it.

"You don't know what's in this bag," he continued. "It could be gold, feathers or just a dead weight of 10,000 pounds." The sergeant was dramatising himself into a lather. "Then the camera moves back a little more, and you can see that the bag is resting on a gallows. Suddenly," he screamed, "the trap is sprung! . . ." He brought his hands together with a loud smack . . . "and the bag drops through the floor. . . . Do you remember it?"

"No, I don't recall that picture," Stern replied. "But did you see that other picture directed by Milestone, the one called 'All Quiet on the Western Front'?"

The sergeant grew furious. "Here! Fill this out!" he commanded, handing Stern the printed form and a pencil.

At the top of the form was space for a name, rank and serial number. Stern filled this in. The questionnaire then desired to know how and where the prisoner's plane was shot down. This had already been filled in with the word "Parchim." Then there were questions about the type of aircraft, squadron, group, group call signs, group C. O., target, type of bombs, etc. These were ignored.

The form was handed back, and the sergeant asked, "How were you shot down? Fighters or flak?"

"I don't know."

"What group were you in?"

"I don't know."

He was becoming angry. "You are pretty stupid to be a Leutenant."

"C'est la guerre."

"You will not be quite so funny if we send you to a concentration camp," he chuckled.

Inwardly, Stern was shaken. These bastards could very easily do anything, especially since his ancestors were of dubious Aryan stock.

"Under the Geneva Conventions, I'm to go to a Prisoner of War camp."

"The Conventions don't mean very much to us."

Stern's curiosity prodded him and he asked: "How come you speak such fluent English?"

"I was a waiter in Chicago. When the war's over, I shall return to the United States."
He opened the door, said, "Good afternoon, Lieutenant," stepped into the corridor and slammed the door behind him. The key twisted and Stern was alone again.

An hour later, the cell doors were unlocked and the men filed into the corridor. A line was formed leading up to a small table, where the prisoners were handed back an envelope containing the personal belongings which had been taken from them at Ludwigsburg. One dog-tag had been removed, presumably to be sent to the Red Cross in Geneva. They were then marched across the road to a barbed wire enclosure, which had been built around a pair of barracks. There were more men than beds, and some men doubled up.

After laying claim to a sack, the men paced the small enclosure. It was exhilarating to be out in the fresh air again. Everyone searched the ground for discarded cigarette butts. When two or three had been accumulated, they were rolled in a piece of tissue and smoked with much sighing and grinning.

That night, the bunks were found to be infested with lice. The men slept fitfully, scratched and tossed. In the morning after roll-call, they were given a piece of bread. Capt. J. Roberts and Capt. E. Brodsky, being the high ranking American officers present, were put in charge by the Germans. The men were scheduled to leave Dulagluft for a transient camp forty miles north, and unless they signed a parole promising not to attempt escape, their shoes and belts were to be confiscated. Roberts and Brodsky put the proposition before them, and they voted to sign.

After the march back to Oberossel, the prisoners were loaded on a special train that took five hours to reach Wetzlar. There was a four mile, uphill hike from the station to the camp, which was perched atop a small mountain overlooking the town. The scenery was magnificent but unappreciated. The air was hot and dry, and upon reaching the camp, everyone was drenched with perspiration.

There was another roll-call, another frisking, after which the men were issued a pair of shoes and a Red Cross cardboard grip. They were then taken to a tent area, where they hurriedly untied the web thong that secured the grip.

Inside, there was treasure finer by far than mere gold or jewels. There were five packs of cigarettes, five packs of Chiclets, a pipe, a package of tobacco, a razor, a toothbrush, shaving brush, toothpaste and shaving cream, a comb, two pairs of shorts and undershirts, two pairs of socks, a nightgown and a red wool sweater proudly bearing the label of the Red Cross from whence it came. It was a Kriegie's idea of heaven.

The mess hall was communal and under the direction of a British sergeant. Potato soup, a piece of bread, a chunk of cheese and a bit of corned beef tasted like dinner at the Waldorf. This banquet was fashioned from Red Cross food parcels, and there was even one cup of beer per man brought over from the German PX, which event provoked wild cheering.

The men retired to their tents at sundown. After roll-call and breakfast the next morning, they were taken to the showers. Most of them were possessed of itchy clothes by this time, and the hot water did more for morale than Betty Grable doing a take-off act on the wing of a B-17.

There were church services on Sunday, with the English mess sergeant doubling as the pastor. After a few biblical quotations, he delivered a sermon, the keynote of which was gratefulness for being alive, albeit prisoners. The men were in full accord with these sentiments, and sang loudly as a hymn closed the service.

That evening a group of Liberators dropped bombs on a factory one mile from the camp. . . .

The men left Wetzlar on May 29, 1944, headed for Sagen and Stalag Luft III. . . .

The story of escapes from the Stalag Luft is the story of many bitter disappointments. Continual efforts by organized crews in which everyone participated availed nothing. The one almost insurmountable obstacle was distance . . . the distance separating the prisoners from friendly forces. An American in disguise is easily spotted as such. Those who managed to leave the confines of the camp were picked up in short order due to this fact.

Englishmen were the most successful campbreakers, because their continental approach and mannerisms blended with the European mode of life. Despite the numerous failures, men continued their search for freedom and the road back. . . .

The entire camp went berserk on June 6. . . . Through a secret radio, the BBC (British Broadcasting Corp.) had announced the invasion of France. Morale shot up higher than the German defenses at Cherbourg. The end of the war was seen by October. On the 7th, the Volkischer Beobachter carried the headline: "Die Invasion hat Begonnen." The Nazis, however, were confident that they could push the Allies back into the sea.

A new cluster of Kriegies was welcomed into the West Compound on June 7. Among the guests were Lucius Lacy, Herb Greenberg and navigator Rossman.
Greenberg had slept across the aisle from Stern in the WAAF Site at the Hundredth.

"My God, Stern!" he greeted. "You're supposed to be dead!"

Stern straightened the matter out, and the men gabbled for hours.

Dort Payne's room in Block 169 was composed mainly of many who had left the bed and board of the Bloody Hundredth to wander far afield. Among the residents were Red Carillo, pilot D. Pearson and his bombardier, L. Smith, also W. Lund and J. Grassilli, the co-pilot and navigator. Malooly and his crew were also in the compound, and the new Kriegies informed him that he had made captain during his absence. After all the greetings and poop from group had been told and digested, the talk once more reverted to the twin and universal topics ... food and women.

The men whose tastes were more academic could regale themselves with the reference and lending libraries. The newer books, such as "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" were on lengthy waiting lists, but Roberts somehow managed to get them. He discovered a recipe for a concoction of bread mixed with hamburger in the "Tree," and the find was immediately employed with gratifying results.

Each day at approximately 1600 hours, a runner would bring the BBC news into the block, and the officers in charge would congregate in the wash room to listen. Guards were posted at each end of the barracks. After the news conference, the men were informed as to the progress of the invasion. Maps were drawn from history books found in the research library, and pins were moved up as the Allied armies advanced. Thus, the prisoners kept track of their liberators.

Each block had a baseball team, and the spirit of competition finally ended in the subsidization of ball players. Hal Van Every, former All-American football star, promoted deals whereby the better players moved into his block, which won the league play-off.

After the block play-offs, the bombardiers and pilots formed teams. Don Griffin got the boys together. Since the bombardiers were rated the weaker team, Stern was reluctant to wager his more tangible assets, such as cigarettes or D-Ration chocolate bars on the outcome of the game. However, he bet roommate Lucas a breakfast in bed on Sunday, the loser to lug the winner's coffee and toast to him, as he reclined in luxurious splendor amongst the wood shavings of his mattress.

The bombardiers won.

The D-Ration chocolate bars, the same bars men would discard as unedible back on the base, were a rare delicacy at Stalag Luft III. Although all Red Cross parcels in the room were turned over to the cook for the communal mess, the men insisted on retaining at least half a D bar. Cigarette rations were two and a half packs per week, and when such brands as Raleighs, Marvels, Twenty Grand and Roys crept into the parcels, cards were cut to see who would get them.

Food was set up as a medium of exchange, and the bank was called the Food-Acco. Each commodity was given a certain number of points. A can of milk brought 100 points, while spam and corned beef were rated at 85, and a small can of cheese brought 15 points.

The points fluctuated according to the scarcity of the article. At first, cigarettes were 12 points. As they became scarcer, they jumped as high as 36. It was a miniature stock market from which a shrewd manipulator could emerge with a small grocery store. As an economy, it was strictly unplanned, and fell prey to all the artificial scarcities and booms. D-Ration bars were 100 points until the hoarding began, at which time they spiralled to 200 points. The Acco then was suddenly flooded with D bars, and the price slipped back to 100.

The one advantage of being a cook in the communal mess was the not insignificant factor of being able to sample the wares during the preparatory stages. While slicing the cheese over the potatoes for an au gratin dish, the cook could deftly drop three slices on the spuds, and one down his gullet. Despite all the bitching, the men did not resent this, as the cooks were veritable "wheels" in the machinery of the camp.

Stern quit cooking in July. The job was taking up too much of his reading time, and a second cause was the fact that his roommates were making nasty and threatening remarks. He threw in the apron, abdicating by request, and Bill Fagen, together with Larry Seamon, took over the culinary department. The remainder of the men took turns on K. P., which was not too bad in view of the fact that the kitchen police received first priority on licking the pans. That is, if they beat the cooks to it.

It was inevitable that the musicians in the camp would eventually get together on Y. M. C. A. instruments. A twelve-piece band was formed, playing as their theme a jived-up version of "If I had the Wings of an Angel." They played under the title of the "Flying Syncopators," and "Mot" Williams, first trumpet man, could be heard blowing his brains out on "Rose Room" through Block 169 until lights out. On July 4, the band marched through the barracks at eight in
the morning, garbed in the traditional manner of the Spirit of '76.

German transition pilots in FW 190's would buzz the compound every day, almost carrying a few telephone lines off with them. Fagen would stand at the window aiming a machine gun visible to no one but himself, and make rattling noises. Then he would yell. . . "Blow up, you bastard!" while everyone screamed. Fagen finally claimed a damaged plane smoking.

Two camp papers, the "Stump" and the "Kriegie Klarion" were published. They appeared on Monday, and would remain pinned to the bulletin board in the newsroom all during the week. They contained news from the states gleaned from personal letters . . . cartoons . . . comic strips . . . sports of the compound . . . poetry . . . theatre news and the like. One comic strip was entitled "Nita Leigh," and the heat generated in the strip brought forth a protest from the Chaplain. The cartoonist subsequently toned down the bedroom scenes and cut down the number of whiskey bottles in each frame. The battles on the Continent raced and see-sawed through into 1945. In January, the Red Army cracked through Poland and into Germany. Sagen lay before the advancing Russians and the Germans began to get jittery. There was a huddle with the high-ranking American officers, who were ordered to toughen up the men by introducing hikes around the compound.

Col. Alkire issued an edict on January 23. All men were to hike the ¾ of a mile around the compound ten times a day for ten days. Speculation was aroused throughout the camp, and the possibilities of a forced foot-slogging east or west were discussed.

The hiking order was complied with, and there was no goofing off. The ground was covered with snow, and the tramping of 5,000 pairs of feet packed it down into smooth, slippery ice. There were sprained ankles, blisters, sore feet and strained muscles.

By January 26, tension was high. Loaded FW 190's groaned over the camp. The Germans were blowing up their airports near the camp. Each block was given orders to build four sleds and prepare packs made from pillow cases and overcoats.

The men were sitting around the room playing bridge on January 27, when someone rushed into Block 160 yelling: "Prepare to march!"

Everyone was stunned, and for a moment, the men were unable to move. Some developed bad cases of the "shakes." The time was 2030 hours. They began to rush around in dazed confusion, attempting to pack their meager belongings.

"I had been saving copies of the Volksicher Beobachter and the Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung to take home as souvenirs," Stern wrote later, "but they were too heavy to tote. Fagen and Seamon split up the remaining Red Cross rations as evenly as possible. I packed my share. We threw most of the coal we had left into the stove, and the room was warm for the first time since summer.

"At 2230, we fell out and prepared to march. There was a red glow on the horizon to the southeast, and we could hear guns booming in the distance. We prayed that the Russians would get to Sagen before we marched out. It was hopeless. They were 32 miles away, and the Goons were fighting bitterly.

"Since the guards hadn't arrived, we fell back into the barracks, and I helped build sleds. Everyone was running wild, breaking into the Food Acco and taking all the food and cigarettes. They ransacked the cookhouse for meat and potatoes. At 2400 hours, we fell out again. A half hour later, we began to march past the gate, and were handed a Red Cross parcel each. My pack weighed about 40 pounds, so I carried the parcel in a sling.

"The snow was about two feet deep, and a driving rain and snowstorm made progress slow, cold, miserable and tedious. A half hour out from camp, the road was littered with blankets, musical instruments, parcels and cigarettes. The men could not carry them.

"We hooved it for 50 minutes, then took a break, men dropping into the snow along side the road. Every two hours, we would fall out for a 30 minute break, but it became so cold, that at the end of 15 minutes, the men would start yelling to march again. When I would start to feel exhausted, I would munch a cube of my prepared iron ration, and it would give me enough lift to keep dogging along.

"At 1115, we slogged into the town of Freiwaldau. We were taken to an Arbeitslager (Work camp) that was manned by Russian and Polish labor, mostly women. The wind was clawing right through our clothes, and the mercury sank to 22° below zero centigrade. Two men had frozen their feet, and were rushed inside. The rest fought their way into the larger building. I was lucky enough to be swept in with the tide. God! It was wonderful to be warm again . . . but my exultation was shortlived, as American brass chased us out.

"The women kept the stoves red-hot in the cook­house, heating water for us. I don't know what was in
the water, but it was absolutely nauseating. I forced myself to get something hot down, but it kept coming back up. We were finally informed that we could take turns sleeping in the chicken house adjoining the main building, but only for an hour. I was one of the first ones in. The floor was littered with straw that was infested with chicken lice and dung. Nothing bothered anybody. I curled up into my blanket and fell asleep. An hour later, we were aroused, and the second shift came in. I went back outside and ate some spam and crackers for supper.

"Everyone was lightening their packs. I threw away everything but food, eating utensils and blankets. The slave laborers had a field day gathering discarded cans of powdered milk, margarine and cartons of cigarettes. We had marched 29.6 kilometers that night."

"At 1730 hours we pulled up stakes again and headed for the town of Muskau. The wind was biting, but it had stopped snowing. We crawled along the road cursing and groaning. At 2330, some of the lads made an attempt to escape, and the Goons started shooting wildly. The entire marching column dived into a snowbank. The air was chill and quiet, and the sound of ricocheting bullets whining through the night was all you could hear. One bullet flicked up the snow about a foot in front of me, and I started to pray. I forgot all about the fact that I was freezing to death there in the snowbank. It was all over in ten minutes, and we resumed the march. That's when I found out that I was half-frozen.

"We pulled into the town of Priebus at 0100 hours on January 29. Men were dropping from exhaustion and exposure. Two guards and four Americans had already died. It seemed curiously ironic to see two Americans carrying one of the guards who could go no further. Men who could no longer walk were lifted aboard a horse-drawn German supply wagons. When there was no more room, they hung on to the tailboard, and were dragged half-conscious the remainder of the way to the next village.

"Lucas kept falling asleep while marching, and would only wake up when he smashed his nose into the pack of the man in front of him. Every muscle in my body was screaming for rest, and my lips and hands were swollen twice their normal size. I was afraid to look at my feet for fear that they would not be there. The men were becoming delirious, and the snow came driving down again."

"As I painfully trudged along step by step, my mind flashed back to my home in Washington. I remembered the difference in time, and realized that my father was just getting up from the dinner table. He was getting up now, and reaching for the newspaper. Then he settled himself in a big chair, and was lighting a cigar.

"I thought: 'Godammit, Dad... you're sitting in a warm house after a big dinner, while your son is freezing and starving on some God-forsaken German back road. It isn't fair!' I muttered audibly... 'It isn't fair!'"

"Five kilometers out of Priebus, Lucas, Sunderland, and one of our new roommates, Patillo, dropped out and were housed in a schoolhouse. I was completely delirious, as was Bill Fagen, who was marching alongside of me. We did not even recognize each other. When we stopped in a small village, Fagen turned to me and grabbed me by the shoulder."

"'Joe! You old son of a bitch!' he screamed. 'It's good to be back in Flint! Say! You stay here, and I'll go down the street and call up my wife, and have her meet us at the Chinaman's for supper!'

"'Sounds damn good to me, pal,' I replied. 'I'm hungry!'

"Fagen stepped out of the column to make the phone call, and was immediately thrust back in by a German guard. 'These cops around here won't let me by,' Fagen moaned. 'Must be a fire or something.' We started marching again.

"Eight kilometers out of Priebus, I could go no more. It was 0400 hours, and I was in a state of collapse. Herb Greenberg also dropped out. We tried to climb aboard a horse-drawn wagon that was headed for an inn one kilometer down the road. Herb got on the wagon, but there was no room left for me. I spent the night in a barn with 175 other men who could go no further. We fought each other for enough space to sleep. I finally wrangled a place, crawled into my blankets, and died. I had sludged 32 kilometers that night.

"The sun was shining and one of my neighbors informed me that it was 1000 hours when I came back to life. I felt as though a small steamroller had run across me during the night, and my mouth tasted like the inside of a motorman's glove. I gathered my few belongings, finding that a can of margarine and a tin of spam were missing. I cursed and ranted, but to no avail.

"The Goon guards had built a fire outside the barn to keep warm, and the Americans were using it to heat water and warm their food. Some of the local farmers were lugging hot water and cooked potatoes to us in exchange for cigarettes. I heated some corned willie, and spread it generously on two thick slices of the sawdust bread. I polished off this repast with a
boiled potato and a chunk of cheese. To wash all this down, I crossed the road to a farmhouse to drink from the pump.

"Several villagers were gathered around the water hole explaining how much they liked the Americans and how much they hated the Russians. Still trying the old game, I thought, and my mind reverted to May 1944, when they didn't seem to be bursting with love for the Yanks."

"The column fell in at 1200 hours, and we marched the remaining twelve kilometers to Muskau in fair weather. Several kilometers out of the town, it began to snow again. My right arch felt as if it had dropped through the bottom of my shoe, but I hobbled triumphantly into Muskau.

"For more than half an hour, we stood outside of a pottery factory, while the Goons tried to find a place to harbor us. When my feet became so cold that I forgot about my fallen arch, I knew that it was time to get the hell inside. I turned to two fellows shivering beside me.

"Look, men," I hoarsed, 'I'll pretend to pass out, and you two guys lug me into the factory. All three of us will get in.' They admitted that it sounded good, so I yelled and swooned.

"With their remaining bit of strength, they half-carried, half-dragged me brazenly past the guards into the factory. Our ruse had been successful. There were Americans inside, sprawled out on the concrete. Many were screaming in their sleep that they couldn't march another step.

"The pottery plant was manned mostly by Polish and French slave laborers. The wonderful part of our refuge was that the kilns kept the building warm. I found an unused spot, took off my shoes very carefully, lounged my body luxuriously across the concrete and dozen off. I couldn't have slept more comfortably in a feather bed.

"The next day, Lucas, Patillo and the rest of the lads who had been in the block straggled in about 1600. We took turns going down to the factory gate and bartering cigarettes and coffee for bread and potatoes. As I stood at the gate bargaining shrewdly with an old Frau, the guard was coughing up a lump and muttering: 'Alles ist kaput.' (All is finished.) I thought to myself: 'Brother, you ain't kidding.'"

"We left the pottery factory at Muskau on January 31 at 1315 hours, after an issue of a fifth of a loaf of bread per man, plus a dab of margarine. Rain plus zero temperatures had combined to give the road a glass-like surface. Even after two days of rest, my right arch was sending twinging pain straight up my leg. Along the route, I picked up a broken branch and used it for a cane. I was no longer walking, I was lurching my way over the ice.

"We straggled into the little village of Graustein at 2030, having inched our way 22 kilometers from Muskau. Since the column had been formed by block numbers, our entire block was quartered in a stable belonging to a wizened farmer named Willi Jung. We covered the horse leavings with straw and went to sleep.

"We woke at an early hour, as we were scheduled to march out at 0700 hours. However, we received word that we would not resume the trek until 1200 hours. Willi had a tool shed with a hot water cooker in it. We took it over, cooked potatoes and prepared hot coffee. The boys roamed around the yard swiping Willi's eggs. Grabowski, on a scrounging tour, picked up a glass egg that was lying in the hen house as an incentive to lazy hens. When he found that it was glass, we had to tie him down.

"Now Willi had a daughter who was betrothed to a handsome young Nazi mechanic in the Luftwaffe. As an engagement present, she had been storing away a precious bucket of walnuts, which she had cached in the barn. With no difficulty at all, some of the feretting Yanks found them, and having filled their pockets, tipped off the rest of us. We immediately depleted the poor gal's walnut present.

"When Willi's daughter found the walnuts gone, she ran into the house crying and yelling bitterly in German. Her mother, through an interpreter, told Maj. Lawrence what had happened, and the major, whose pockets were bulging, promised to restore the confiscated goods. He placed a bucket in the stable and we filled in one at a time. Those who had filched the filberts dropped them reluctantly back into the bucket. After we had completed the return, the major went into the stable and returned triumphantly to the Jung family with a full bucket. To placate the still bawling daughter, he gave her a bar of soap. She and her husband probably ate the bar on their honeymoon."

"At 1715 hours, we slushed our way out of Graustein, and arrived at our terminus, Spremberg, at 1930. We were housed in the garages of a Wehrmacht ordnance base. I went to sleep that night while the air raid sirens were wailing the approach of the R.A.F. We had walked 102 kilometers in five days. Don't let anyone tell you that the occupational hazards of a Prisoner of War aren't rough..."
and at once, rumors began to spin through the barracks. On April 4, 1945, the camp was evacuated, and the men moved under guard to Mooseberg, a town north of Munich. Col. William Aring and Maj. Buck Cleven were assigned duties by Col. Alkire, duties which were operative in the event that trouble began at any point. Maj. Egan was Provost Marshal of a trio of camps. Plans were laid for the possibility that the prisoners might take over control of the camp for their own protection. This was almost out of the question, as Allied troops were still too far away.

After an argument with their captors, it was agreed not to travel more than 20 kilometers per day or night. The Nazi colonel insisted on night marches, and it was rough. On the second night, the men watched a first-rate raid on Nurnburg, and all were happy not to have been there.

Rain made the pilgrimage miserable, and after five days and nights of stumbling, the column arrived at the town of Marching. Before crossing the Danube, the men were allowed to rest overnight. Egan noted that Cleven and Aring had cloak and dagger appearances, and was not too surprised when he was informed that Col. Alkire had given them permission to slip away.

As Cleven saw it, the Germans intended to fall back into the Redoubt area and keep up the fight to a finish. Consequently, the river would be a gate which closed behind them if they crossed it.

That night, as the German Hauptman was checking for irregularities, Egan was busy pumping water on a rusty old pump to cover the action. Cleven and Aring sped for the fence as the pump scraped and squealed. Egan stopped pumping a moment too soon, but the would-be escapees crashed through.

It was April 9, 1945 when Egan headed back from his pumping job while Cleven and Aring found themselves on the free side of the fence. They took off through the muddy fields, using hedges and bushes as cover. They pushed on through the night, and towards morning, came upon a small grove of willows, where they decided to spend the day. On this exact day, a local farmer decided that the hidden men needed plowing.

For hour after hour, the ground within fifteen feet of Cleven and Aring was being pulverized. They hugged the earth as the day slipped slowly toward evening. As the sun went down, they began cutting across fields once again. For food, they had a box of prunes, some iron rations made from barley, sugar and chocolate (four square inches for both men), a package of crackers and a package of British meat roll.

They could hear German equipment rolling through the countryside as they entered a large forest. Using the north star and a home-made compass, the men travelled on fire trails and logging paths. Towards morning, they again sought shelter, this time crawling under brush next to a spring. They spent another nerve-wracked day, as voices and the sounds of axes around them gave evidence that the local woodsmen were collecting firewood.

That night, the trail led to one of the main highways running north and south. Cleven and Aring decided to spend the day there, as reports over British Broadcasting before they had left the column were extremely rosy, an even the usually staid British announcers were going wild over the Allied advances. They hoped that Allied equipment would roll down the artery, but as the day waned, the Germans belied these reports and used the highway both ways.

Another two evenings, and the food situation was beginning to bind. The course was set to the northwest. The rain was steady and the night black. They walked into barbed wire . . . trees . . . ditches. It was difficult to see each other, and the compass was useless. They finally ended up in a road block. This consisted of a jumbled mess of felled trees, over which they climbed for what seemed hours. They decided to wait for daylight, and as light appeared, they saw that the road ahead was clear.

The day was spent on the side of a mountain. The refuge was inconvenient and the insistent rain weighted and soaked their clothes. At nightfall, the journey led across a range down into a narrow valley that ended with a town and a stream to cross. Waiting so as not to disturb the occupants, Cleven and Aring began to skirt the town. In scrambling across a sharp precipice, they suddenly lost their balance.

There was an uproar of hogs and chickens as the men slid down into a farmer’s yard. Overcome with disgust more than with fear, they decided to head down the main street and cross the bridge under the Nazis' noses. They casually walked past the pedestrians and cars. No one took notice of them, and they soon left the town behind.

Dawn of the next day found them overlooking a valley filled with clouds, and the day was spent on the side of another ridge. Approaching darkness found them sneaking past an inn over a local stream. Evading soldiers or civilians had become monotonous. They moved ahead, and nothing mattered but placing one foot in front of the other.

Sunlight located them in a young growth of trees, which proved to be the new home for a day. An-
other night of hiking brought them into another
grove of seedlings. About 0600 hours, the men heard a
continued growl of what they thought were G.M.C.
trucks rolling down a nearby highway. This noise
lasted for more than thirty minutes. Convinced that
there was not that much gasoline left in all of Ger-
many, they raced for the road, certain that the equip-
ment must be American. After running a quarter of a
mile with total disregard for being seen, they flopped
into a ditch as their hopes were dashed.

A German Division was being evacuated, and
units flashed by close to their poor hiding place. Luck
was with them, and they remained unperceived. Later,
several men in civilian garb approached. After a few
tense moments, they turned out to be French workers
en route to their homeland. They even supplied
Cleven and Aring with bread.

Food was by this time a major problem. They had
a few prunes each, and their condition was such that
they could not move quickly. Their recent run had
weakened them considerably. Any exertion in stand-
ing up quickly produced dizziness and partial black-
out.

The Frenchmen informed them of the reported
position of the Allied troops, and their hopes were
raised. Darkness brought much movement of enemy
troops. Cleven and Aring walked and listened
throughout the night. They caught up with the
sounds of gun-fire. 88’s, 105’s, machine gun and small
arms fire boomed and clattered around them. Shelling
was constant.

At daybreak they crossed the East-West super
highway running from the southern end of Nurn-
burg. They spent the day in a thicket, discussing the
latest events. There was a possibility that walking in
the daytime was now safer. First of all, the roads
might be mined. Secondly, they might be shot in the
darkness by their own troops.

Shortly before noon, a Piper Cub flew over, and
they decided that if it was safe enough for a Cub to
be out, they could walk in the daylight. They started
out, and after several hours met some German civilians
who informed them that Allied troops were in a local
village. This proved to be the only contact made by
Cleven and Aring with any Germans.

They headed for the village, and encountered the
45th Division. Their nine nights across Germany had
paid off in freedom. They were treated royally, ate
ravenously, and rested awhile. Contact was established
with the proper authorities for transport out of Ger-
many.

"Consequently, after due processes," Cleven con-
cluded, "I wound up back at Thorpe Abbotts with
the Hundredth Bomb Group, where everyone was a
sight beautiful to see. . . ."

After Egan had completed his Operation Pump-
ing, he headed back to his quarters, wishing like hell
that Cleven and Aring would make good their get-
away. Egan and Cleven had been together many
months out of their total service. They had served to-
gether at Randolph, Kelly, Hendricks, Fort Myers,
Tampa, Boise, Walla Walla, Wendover, Sioux City,

Both had agreed that Egan following Cleven
down into Germany was going a little too far, al-
though Cleven’s first words to Egan upon the meet-
ing in prison camp had been . . . “You’re late. What
detained you?”

Egan thought back to December 26, 1943, when
Kriegies from the Center Camp came over for a visit
to see the boys in the South Camp. They had jammed
into Egan’s quarters. There were Ollie Chiesl and
Pinky Helstrom . . . Dick Carey and C. Cruikshank
. . . F. D. Murphy . . . R. C. Pearson . . . E. Moffly and
Hollenbeck and others piled into the six by nine
room. It was a Bloody Hundredth reunion, and it
made old home week look like a funeral. . . .

Here it was April 9, 1945, almost fifteen months
later. Cleven was off across muddy fields, and the
camp was parked by the side of the brown Danube,
waiting for fate and the Goons to get the men across.

The crossing never took place. There was a
change of plans, and more marching to a place called
Mulhausen . . . Then on to Holzhausen . . . to
Obermunchen and Willersdorf. Many men slipped
away during the night. Then the gate of another
prison camp clanged behind the weary column. There
was more rain, more wind, and a large, virile collection
of fleas and lice.

Egan conscientiously continued to scribble notes
in Cleven’s book, which Buck had left with him . . .

April 29, 1945

“We have more or less taken over the camp. Germans are about but things are going our way. Last
night, Col. Good and the C. O. of the German SS met
and planned to make this camp neutral ground. Col.
Good took a Red Cross truck and went through the
lines to Allied Headquarters, where he met a West
Point classmate. The American Command said . . .
HELL NO, we’ll fight for it! The Kriegies are in the
middle again. Right now a fair-sized war is going on all
around us. Light arms, tanks, heavy guns, mortars,
etc. So far, three people have been wounded. Maj.
Lawrence had a spent bullet fall in his lap. 1230 April 29.... The fighting has moved away (I hope) through the trees, and you can see 'Old Glory.'.... The town has been taken. My first glimpse of the red, white and blue in 19 months.

"People are shaking hands and tears big as you know what are rolling down cheeks. I must be a misanthrope... the stuff has had no great cheering.... I'll knock off. An American tank is entering camp. I may be a free man. Flags of all nations are going up; France, England, Russia, India, Serbia, South Africa. People without flags are dashing around getting their national colors to make flags. Tanks are visible through the trees in the distance. Small arms fire cannot be heard at this time.... Heavy guns and mortars still shake the buildings. The number of wounded is now eight.

"A Piper Cub just flew over camp. The war for us must be over. We are free. 1405 April 29.... Gen. Smith of the 3rd Army just entered camp in a jeep, followed by an armored vehicle. Further identification was impossible because it was covered with Kriegies. 1900 April 29.... We are free! The infantry has not arrived but the tank boys assure us 'Allus is Goot.' Heavy guns continue to shake the buildings. Highlight of the day was a Cpl. Mahoney, a tank man, whose son, a lieutenant, was a prisoner in the camp. ... Reliable rumor has it that we go to Le Havre from here. The British believe Churchill will fly them out. The party left the barracks."

April 30, 1945

"Soldiers all over the place. Goons putting up resistance about 1 ½ miles from here. Alkire's regiment, of which I am Exec, goes into action. We take over a warehouse to billet our troops, who are Commando work parties. We are going to France by air in seven to ten days. Heard that Col. Aring is back in the States... no word of Cleven. If he's home I'll be late for the wedding. We picked up three barrels and small amount of 'spirits,' also fresh eggs."

May 3, 1945

"Delousing, evacuation and the old man has just been ordered to Paris, which leaves me in command of the regiment, which is getting bigger every hour. Possibility of 1100 more men arriving today. What a rat race. Regimental C. O. 3rd Army takes over the Stalag at midnight. 1500 instead of 3000 were evacuated this date and no evacuation tomorrow."

May 6, 1945

"Spirits very low... no evacuations today. Looks like we'll be here forever. 2000 hours... best news yet. 19,500 to be flown out tomorrow, using four fields. Generals and Congressional party inspected camp today. As they entered the first half of the building, some Joe Kriegie in a top bunk in a dark corner raised up and shouted, 'Jesus Christ, what's wrong... the Goons moved us in thirty minutes.' When one of the generals said, 'Conditions here are deplorable... deplorable!' another voice floated down from a top bunk.... 'Big words! Big words!' The party left the barracks."

May 10, 1945

"Spent last night in a bombed-out barracks on a good airfield at Strubbing. Chaos still reigns supreme. We are going to fly to Le Havre today. We actually fly to Rheims... then by train to Camp Lucky Strike. Chow line half mile long. ... Remember, if the chow line is a half mile long, then the line to wash your mess kit is a half mile long. I think the Pacific war will be over before I get out of this place."

May 22, 1945

"We left Camp Lucky Strike for another camp at Le Havre. Chow lines again. Came aboard U. S. S. Monticello today. Our port in USA rumored to be Boston.

"There were 45,000 men at Mooseburg when we were liberated. Took twelve days to cross to USA. Landed at New York. Came home Friday, June 8, 1945. Went to Hobbs, New Mexico, June 28th to be best man at Cleven's wedding...."
The Rosenthal Legend

The sweat had turned Maj. Robert Rosenthal soaking wet around the shoulders the way it always was with him. His busted up, burning plane was eighteen miles past Berlin. His crew, those that were alive, had already escaped.

It was February 3, 1945, and Rosie was on his fifty-second mission. The plane was dropping and he took a chance on falling behind the Russian lines. He bailed out...

Rosie came down hard, breaking the right arm which had been fractured once before. Strange soldiers with bayonets ran up to him yelling and he took a chance and yelled "Americanski" and the bayonets pulled back.

He had come through once more, and headed via a Moscow hospital back to England. The Rosenthal Legend was kept intact.

It was real legend, made up of the following ingredients: that he could have stopped flying and that he couldn't get killed.

When Lt. Robert Rosenthal came overseas in the summer of 1943, he was a shy, strapping, frizzle-headed guy; he looked like a big-boned, shambling country ballplayer. Rosenthal was a Brooklyn boy who had played college ball and earned a law degree just in time to go into the Air Corps. He never got over being a shy, quiet man who could get easily embarrassed if you asked him how he kept going, why didn't he go home after a tour of operations, etc.

The legend around Rosenthal didn't grow up all at once. I think I was in on the beginning of it, and it was on a night in October 1943 when Maj. John Egan, sitting in the 418th Squadron Orderly Room, and setting up his flight order for the next morning, said, "I think this boy Rosenthal is quite a flyer."

The next day, Egan went down on the Munster raid and Rosenthal kept on going and he did become quite a flyer just like the major said he would.

He couldn't get killed... His first flight over Bremen saw the Hundredth take a bad smashing up; his second, all the way to Marienburg, was one of the longest B-17 flights in the ETO until that time, and his third was Munster. One, two three... one day after the next, and his ball turret gunner, S/Sgt. Ray Robinson, said of those three flights... "The first night after Bremen we were too tired to sleep, the second night after Marienburg we were too scared, and the third night after Munster we were just through... finished."

In the late afternoon, as Rosenthal's ship came in over the airfield at Thorpe Abbotts, it was all alone in the sky on that October day in 1943. The careful landing procedure for formations was unnecessary. There was only one plane coming in... actually half a plane, for two engines were out. Twelve planes had failed to return.

Bill DeBlasio, the tail gunner, wrote in his diary... "By the grace of God we were the only ship to come back. Our pilot brought us home safely."

The interrogation that afternoon was very exclusive, like a consultation with a private physician. The story of Munster was in terms of the evidence of one tired, battered crew. With the formation smashed to pieces before the target was reached, Rosenthal dropped his bombs on Munster and kept on going... The legend was under way.

The tour that began with Bremen ended with Berlin and by that time it became something special. "Rosie's Riveters" came home to a crazy holiday greeting from Berlin, March 1944. The sky was filled with flares. Radiò operator Bocuzzi rode down to the interrogation on the back of an MP's motorcycle. Ground Crew Chief J. E. Woodard was crying... The legend was really under way. Rosenthal was Capt. Rosenthal now.

He wouldn't stop flying... I saw him in London after the first tour and he asked me, did I
I said “Sure, why don’t you go? Go home to the ice cream, the girls, the ball games, and all in one piece. You deserve a break.”

I don’t know why he asked me, because he wasn’t going to go. He looked like a big, stubborn farmer who knew exactly what he was doing. . . . The legend had a root somewhere. He said, “But do the Russians go home after they do a tour?”

“Sure,” I said. “Everybody goes home for a rest after a tour.”

I didn’t know what the Russians did, but it didn’t make any difference, anyway. He was on his second tour a week later. He was flying again, and in the same way; with his shirt dripping wet with perspiration around the shoulders all the time he was in the cockpit and with no particularly exciting information for the interrogators after he came back. (“If you come back,” he told the interrogators, “it’s a milk run.”)

Now it must be said just once that Robert Rosenthal is Jewish. Some people liked to think that he was taking revenge on Germans; that he had a mother or sister or somebody who had been killed by the Germans. Legends take on things that aren’t there. Rosie flew against the Germans because they were Nazis and they were killing a lot of people, Jewish as well as non-Jewish. His family was safe at home in Brooklyn, and he didn’t like to talk about why he was fighting.

He couldn’t get killed. . . . It was luck, nine-tenths of it, and Rosenthal will tell you that. Sure he could fly but so could a lot of other good men who went down . . . and Rosie will tell you that too.

When he came home alone from Munster, it spelled nearly the end of the original Hundredth Bomb Group which had assembled at Boise, Idaho, in 1942. He came into the war when the going was hotter than it was ever to be again in the European Air War. We had no fighters in the sky then. The Jerry planes simply lay around the target area. What fighter cover American planes had, turned back at the German coast, leaving the big babies to take it by themselves.

Now that the war is over, it might as well be said that a single bomber is just a big tin can and it never was a match for skillful fighter formations. We were dropping over enemy targets like leaves in autumn. Rosenthal survived the early fighterless days and went into the second phase, when we had fighter cover. . . .

He couldn’t get killed . . . His plane got hit hard over France during that second tour and she rolled brakeless into a tree and Rosie fractured his skull. The dogfaces were fighting the war in France then and he was safe behind our lines. He ended up in a hospital and still wouldn’t go home. Capt. Bowman, the group S-2 officer by that time said complainingly, “The only way to get that guy home is to put travel orders under his pillow in the hospital some dark night.”

He was hit over Germany again in May 1944, and with two engines out, both on one side, and alone in the sky, he tried the long trip home. A P-47 called over to him, “Big friend, what can I do for you?”

“P-47 from big friend . . . stay with us,” said Rosie. He didn’t bail out over the Channel, the gas was running out, and at last, as his third engine sputtered out, he rolled on an airfield just off the surf of the North Sea . . . and England. Still OK and still flying.

And then in February 1945, Major Rosenthal went down again and this time it looked like it, though hope remained after “observers saw engine Number Three explode . . . and six men bail out. . . .”

Rosie got himself a silver leaf on his return to Thorpe Abbotts. The war ended in the summer of ’45 or he would have gone on to the Pacific. He was a stubborn guy. He had 52 missions under his belt and plenty of fruit salad on his chest, right up through the Distinguished Service Cross. He had been flying from the fall of 1943 to February 1945.

He came home at last to Brooklyn, took off the brass and the decorations and the legend and slipped quietly back into civilian life. So quietly that no one has got hold of him since then. Maybe though, he might be found in the music store on West 44th Street in Manhattan where he used to go before the war in order to listen to the newest hot jazz records.

The one thing I would like to ask him is this: When he was with the Russians, did he ever find out if the Russian flyers went home for a rest after a tour?

Saul Levitt
BASE SERVICE COMMAND
83rd SERVICE GROUP

Lt. Col. S. K. Eck
Commanding Officer

Lt. J. D. Clinkman
Adjutant

M/Sgt. E. F. Smith
Sergeant Major

Lt. Col. H. Dungan
Commanding Officer

M/Sgt. E. F. Smith
Sergeant Major
The strategy of air power was the strategy of pounding the enemy until his will and means of waging war had been destroyed. There was a complexity of design in modern warfare. No single arm of warfare could lay claim to being the decisive factor in victory. Land, sea and air were all integral parts of the whole of triumph, molded by many hands in many lands.

It was made possible by the best of men in the finest of machines... by former shoe salesmen, farm laborers, business executives, bank clerks... by men of diverse talents whose very ideals were often at cross-purposes. The men fought in the infantry... in tanks... in planes... in ships. Other men, in even larger numbers, never came near to the sounds of warfare, but performed their tasks in the comparative safety of hangar, machine shop and office well behind the danger zones. Despite the prosaic quality of the work, much of the war depended on these men.

In the air forces, the problems of supply and maintenance were many and varied. Forty planes in the air meant fifteen tons of equipment necessary to maintain and overhaul the engines. Forty planes in the air meant more than 700 tons of parts and machines held in readiness for general repairs. Forty planes in the air meant a constant strain on supply and maintenance organizations, and a constant headache to the men who kept the stuff flowing and in operation.

The men in the service outfits at Thorpe Abbotts acted as the secondary army. They backed up the boys who performed the more dangerous, spectacular work. They were the men who fed and clothed the base, the men who dished out the butts and candy rations, the men who listened to the gripes if an issued piece of equipment failed to fully satisfy.

These men, working at Station 139, Thorpe Abbotts, a B-17 base in East Anglia, had traveled far to perform these vital chores. The journey began in the long summer of 1942, as men shipped into Lubbock, Texas.

They came from recruiting stations and army technical schools. The majority had been in the army less than six months. It was June, 1942. The entire country was still girding, preparing to step into high. Three months before, Gen. Marshall had said: “The time has come when we must proceed with the business of carrying the war to the enemy.”

One month later, Marshal Stalin called for a Second Front... But Corregidor fell in May... and on June 21, the Desert Fox, Rommel, swept into Tobruk... The news was bad and the Allies were being pushed back across the headlines of the world... In June 1942, Maj. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower set up his headquarters in the ETO. The German armies were on the march in Russia... Against this backdrop of defeat, the aspirations and movements of a small group of men in the Texas Panhandle dwarfs into less than insignificance. Yet, one group of men, multiplied a thousandfold by more and still more groups, finally brought the enemy to their knees.

Lubbock summers are hot. They are also dry and dusty, except when the infrequent rains turn
the company streets into quagmires of white, limey mud that clings with the lifelike persistence of leeches.

The original cadre from Brooks Field, San Antonio, Texas, hit Lubbock as the 83rd Air Base Group, Sp AC. The Recruit Department expanded and two outfits were formed. The 83rd was one of these outfits. Heading the new group was a wiry, dynamic major named Samuel K. Eck, whose motto, "No can do...can do" became the catch phrase of the outfit.

Training a green outfit is identical throughout the branches of the army. It takes equal parts of patience and sweat, to which occasional dashes of disappointment must be added. It takes times and it takes intensive training.

The Lubbock Army Flying School boasted of good runways. Twin engine, advanced trainers circled overhead as a new class of cadets flew in. The planes were crewed by personnel of the school squadrons. The men of the 83rd were meanwhile schooled at the Sub-Depot under civilian instructors, being led into the intricacies of engineering and supply work. The men who in future months would roll parachutes, push link trainer buttons and click combat shutters now answered roll call and went to school and did the air corps hop in calisthenics. The rat-tat of small arms fire heralded their qualifying rounds with the Springfield and Tommy gun.

In July, the 83rd was absorbed into the Air Service Command, and became the 83rd Service Group, consisting of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and the 98th Service Squadron. Also assigned to the group was the 2005th Quartermaster Truck Co. The men worked, squinted into the hot sun and shook their heads over the newspapers, which told of further German advances. There was second front talk in the high places, some of which was primarily double talk. The war was supposed to be over by Christmas, but there was an air of insecurity shifting uneasily above the Allied world. The word "Stalingrad" broke into the news as the Nazis advanced on the city...

Despite the constant pressure of training, there were opportunities to span the twelve miles from the base into town. The 33,000 inhabitants of Lubbock lived along spacious streets in neat rows of houses. There was oil in the vicinity and cotton was a major crop. Plains rolled off to the horizon and ranches spotted the Panhandle landscape. Along the main road leading back to the base, the Texas Tech campus waved green lawns at the men. The lawns, or it may have been the decorative femmes adorning them, proved a constant source of inspiration to the men of the 83rd.

Considerably less inspiration was the dry bent of the town, which drove them to drinking the somewhat less than potent punch dispensed at the local liquid centers. Occasional dances graced the floors around town, on which occasions the men of the group, addicted to service always, inevitably spiked the punch with strong liquids of doubtful origin.

The Hilton Hotel was one of the centers of attraction, while the Cotton Club on the outskirts of town attracted the local trade by lining up name bands. Further up the line, 125 miles further, Amarillo beckoned, and many men headed there to spend their longer week-end passes.

The Lubbock stay stretched into its fifth month, as the Texas sun beat down, warming September and October with rays of slightly diminished intensity. Even as the winds churned up the dry earth of Texas, people in another part of the one world made their way through the rubble and snow of Stalingrad, their minds of single purpose intent on keeping 1,000,000 foemen out of the city. The Solomons and Guadalcanal pushed into the headlines, and men
studied the bitter lessons of Dieppe. As October closed, and the 400 men of the 83rd Service Group climbed aboard a troop train, invasion plans were being discussed, and the news from North Africa was soon to be screamed across the world.

Many of the men were of local Lubbock stock, and leaving the base was tantamount to leaving home. The troop train tooted mournfully and headed northwest.

The first phase of training fell behind. The men still had much to learn, but they were well on the road to becoming the smoothly functioning outfit that opened combat shop in England half a year later.

The train crept into Oregon territory, and it was late evening, November 1, 1942, when Pendleton was reached.

Rain was beating the earth into pulp as the men detrained into the wetness. They huddled as orders were shouted into the night. There were vehicles to unload from flat cars. The base was three miles from the station, and these vehicles were to cover those three miles. It was a muddy trip. The road ribboned through the rain in ascending curves, and it was still raining when the men of the group dragged barracks bags from the trucks.

There was more confusion as they sought their own bags, a difficult job at any time, now made almost impossible by mud, rain and darkness. Some semblance of quiet eventually came from the chaos, as men stopped off at any barracks along the route that boasted of an empty sack.

When daylight finally arrived, they were roused and pulled themselves and their possessions together. They looked around. The base seemed to be situated on a high plateau overlooking the town of Pendleton. Later, they heard that planes did not take off from the runway . . . they merely fell off and were in flight.

The men plunged into the second phase of training with zeal. The work was intensive, and for the first time, they actually put their working hours to use laboring over B-17 Flying Fortresses. There were planes reserved strictly for training purposes, and there were planes that flew in for minor servicing.

When the 83rd arrived at Pendleton, they found the remaining component parts of the group waiting to be gathered into the fold. The 379th Service Squadron ... the 1100th Ordnance Supply Co. and the 1970th Quartermaster Truck Co. were already there. Soon, the 1775th and 1776th Ordnance Medium Maintenance Companies came down from Walla Walla, Washington, and the 92nd Signal Co. was assigned to the group.

Maj. C. Adams commanded the 379th Service Sq., Lt. R. Major was in charge of the 1100th Ordnance Supply Co. and Capt. B. Rambo commanded the 1970th QM Truck Co.

Life was far from placid when these various and hitherto independent units came together. It took time before their loss of sovereignty could be replaced by the striving toward a common goal.

It was at Pendleton that three prominent and popular officers joined the group. Capts. Patrick C. Bouchard, Walter A. Hazelton and Eugene Rovegno all reported together. Their military bearing and brisk salutes belied the fact that it had been more than twenty years since they had stuffed moth balls into the pockets of their uniforms. The Adjutant, Lt. John D. Clinkman, showed them into Lt. Col. Eck's office, where after the usual military amenities, they were greeted with a typical Eckian statement of intentions.

"Gentlemen," the colonel said, "I think you'll find that I'm a pretty square shooter, but it's only fair to warn you that I may ride you rather hard sometimes." The words were hardly out when Rovegno, putting on his best southern drawl, replied, "Colonel, suh, you'd better put on your spurs, because you're going to find the ridin' pretty tough this time!"

There were other officer arrivals at Pendleton. The little ex-marine, Lt. Albert Alex, arrived to head the Hq. and Hq. Squadron. Lt. Henry L. Hollingsworth was to become group pianist in addition to his Chemical Warfare duties. The Medical Department was augmented by the arrival of Lt. Taylor Hunt, the Group Surgeon, Lt. Albert P. Gaude, Group Dentist, and Lts. Thaddeus Poremski, Andrew Van DePol and Capt. C. H. Stark.

As the men worked in the shops and became more proficient in the varied intricacies of their trades, the army also found time to inflict calisthenics and drill upon them. These activities were occasionally rained out, as mist and fog rolled in, painting a prophetic picture of the climate that the men were to endure in the long months to come.

Every morning, the roar of the convoy would fill the dull dawn, and the mobile shops would take off for the training area. The various sections began to function with a degree of efficiency. The men in the instrument shop bent over their benches, probing into the workings of the flux-gate compass, perfecting their speed and technique in the repair of the numerous and complex pieces that go to make up the eyes and ears of a bomber, on which navigational instruments alone played a vital role in 90% of all
There was activity in the electrical, welding and machine shops, and the smell of sawdust permeated the wood mill. Parachutes and props were worked on, while the paint and dope shop caught up with the daub jobs.

The arrival of Christmas was greeted by the usual gargantuan meal, as well as an exodus toward Portland, which bore no dry stigma, and where times traditionally known as "high, old" were consummated. Pendleton itself was a small town with a USO and a large shirt manufacturer. It was also the home of the largest annual rodeo in the country, but this main event had been cancelled for the duration.

The year 1943 opened on a welcome note as lengthy columns of battered Germans finally reached the center of Stalingrad ... as prisoners. Von Paulus surrendered his armies before the city and the bitter siege had been lifted. . . .

To the majority of men in the service group, weaned for the greater part on training ships, the sight of P-38's darting through practice maneuvers was breathtaking, and necks were in a state of crane during the first few weeks at the base.

The entire stay at Pendleton lasted just over two months, and on January 7, 1943, the entire group once more boarded troop trains and headed for Pueblo Army Air Base.

Also arriving at Pueblo with the outfit was the 188th Quartermaster Co., which had joined the group one station earlier. Lt. Emmett G. Scharling was in command of the 74 men. The outfit had been activated at Baer Field, Fort Wayne, Indiana, in April 1942, and subsequently moved to MacDill Field, Tampa, Florida, in June.

Despite the Chamber of Commerce, rain came down in large buckets during the three week stay. The men existed under leaky tents in an area called "Boom Town," and the Service Club was the only bright spot on the agenda. When the movement came, it was to Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho.

At Gowen, the trail of the QM Co. almost crossed with that of the newly forming Hundredth Bomb Group, but the QM unit shipped out in September, while the Hundredth was activated at Gowen Field a month later. It was ten months before both outfits were finally to meet at Thorpe Abbotts, Norfolk, England.

From Boise, the trail led to Oregon, where the QM Co. was assigned to the 83rd Service Group, then on to Colorado.

The men worked hard at Pueblo to complete the group training. The mobile units were quick and always ready to move. The men worked under actual field conditions, and when a plane was occasionally forced down in the desert, units took off immediately. The plane was serviced under difficult conditions, and those which crashed beyond repair were dismantled and stripped.

Administrative efficiency kept pace with the technical progress, and each squadron ran smoothly geared to the group machinery. Capt. W. Hazelton was in command of the 98th Service Sq., with Lt. James B. Gallagher as Adjutant and Lt. E. F. Beecher, Jr., as Supply Officer. Tony L. Patterson was the well-liked 1st Sergeant, and Lt. Raymond Mead was the Engineering Officer.

On March 21, more than fifty QM men left Pueblo by motor convoy. They arrived in the vicinity of Fowler, Colorado less than two hours later, and immediately set about creating a bivouac area. Latrine-digging was not overlooked, nor was
the placing of guards around the camp for the night. However, the Officer of the Guard spent a comparatively quiet night, and the men were detented early the following morning for a day crammed with mock skirmishes, camouflage discipline, first aid, field sanitation, as well as defense against ground and air attack.

At dinnertime, Col. Eck came over in a Piper Cub to demonstrate a strafing. The men quickly took to the ditches, losing half their meal in the action.

The unit left the bivouac that same night via blacked-out convoy, and arrived back at Pueblo without mishap.

The five months spent at Pueblo were highlighted by the idyllic weather. Pueblo, a town of more than 50,000 inhabitants, was known as a good “soldier’s town.” There were things to do, and the men went bowling and swimming . . . rode horses and roller skates. There was dancing at the Hotel Whitman or the Arcadia, and enough bars to successfully quench any and all thirsts. The Y.M.C.A. had a good basketball court and swimming pool.

Life was made even more pleasant for the many men whose families had travelled to Pueblo. It was here also that Lt. Robert Major, a 220-pounder who had played football at Minnesota when Bronco Nagurski was ploughing up the opposition, developed a deep aversion for small bathtubs. He discovered that the fit was too tight, and for awhile thought it would be necessary to call on the group’s C-2 wrecker for extraction purposes.

A note of tragedy was struck at Pueblo, when a plane crash cost the group their surgeon, Lt. Taylor Hunt, as well as several other officers and enlisted men. Lt. Hunt had set up the group dispensary, organized and trained the group medics, and his loss was severely felt.

Maj. Gen. Walter H. Frank’s unannounced visit to the 83rd Service Group Headquarters caused a few moments of anxiety. The visit was due mainly to the fact that the general had been forced to remain overnight at Pueblo against his wishes, and consequently felt that he was obliged to inspect. He was in a rare mood indeed for such an inspection.

The first officer to meet the general’s wrath was Maj. Rambo, QMC, the acting Group Executive. The general wanted to know by what authority a QM officer was doing as executive officer of an Air Corps group. Explanations were made but failed to satisfy. The fact that the major had taught school in civilian life did not help matters.

Capt. T. J. Anderson was then interviewed by the general, who rather pointedly asked him what his qualifications were for his assignment. The captain replied that he had been a squadron adjutant, a squadron commander, etc., but the general interrupted him and said, “I mean civilian qualifications.”

Capt. Anderson went on to say that he had been on the faculty at the Universities of California and Southern California, to which the general retorted succinctly, “Another damned school teacher!”

Personnel shortages were filled at Pueblo, and shortly before the group received its port call, Lt. Col. Harold E. Dungan succeeded Lt. Col. Eck as Group Commander. The latter relinquished command of the outfit he had organized and trained, and the men were sorry to see their old C.O. leave. Their complete cooperation was given his successor as the group buckled down for the final polishing. There were continuous shots and sore arms as the overseas preparations swung out.

Lt. Col. Dungan, Majors Bouchard, Rambo and Lt. Robert Belcher made up the advance party to the Port of Embarkation and overseas. The remainder of the group, with Capt. Anderson as acting C.O., and minus the two QM Truck companies, started on the road to Camp Shanks, New York, on May 15, 1943.

As the train laboriously wound its way through Missouri and Indiana, heading toward New York, history was being written across the world. In North Africa, the Allies had captured Tunis and Bizerte, and the Axis was evacuating all of Tunisia. Prisoners numbered over the 100,000 mark.

At Camp Shanks, Mark D. Sanborn was assigned as Group Red Cross Director. The men of the service group made the most of their New York stay, hitting most of the high spots and a few of the low ones.

The QM men were not so fortunate. They were alerted soon after hitting Shanks, and never got off the base until they boarded a train on May 22 for the P.O.E.

The Shanks interlude was filled with inspections, lectures on insurance, bonds and allotments. There were clothing showdowns, always a source of irritation to the men who must lay out every item of government-issued equipment that they possess for quick perusal by the clothing checkers. There was also the final physical inspection to be reckoned with.

The inspection took place in a large building, and the men queued up in lengthy, single lines. As they later described it, it seemed as though two doctors double-timed through the ranks. Everyone came through in perfect shape.
On the last day of May, the group, after a march with duffle bags and packs, boarded the stuffy train for the brief journey to the pier. It was noon as the 83rd Service Group shuffled aboard the ferry, which nudged its way toward a giant gray liner. As the ferry swung alongside, the words Queen Mary could be deciphered beneath the slate layers of paint. The men were not unhappy.

On June 1, 1943, the huge liner pushed out to sea, carrying 23,000 troops, the largest load it had ever borne. The crossing was quick and crowded, as expected, and on June 6, the Queen reached Scotland and tied up at the Firth of Clyde.

It was the beginning of the history overseas, and none stepping aboard the train to Boxted, a base near Colchester, could foresee the movements, shifts, the dull and exciting events of the next three years.

The men were now ready to put their training to the test. Within 48 hours, they were setting their barracks bags down at Thorpe Abbotts. The 379th Service Squadron was ordered to another base and parted from the group. Any visions of the remaining elements operating as a unit were rudely shattered as the outfit split into two segments, half of the men remaining at Thorpe Abbotts to service the Hundredth Bomb Group, while the second half was shipped to the 385th Bomb Group at Great Ashfield.

These disruptions of organizations and personnel called for much revision of planning and additional on-the-job training. Lt. Col. Dingan kept his headquarters at Thorpe Abbotts, with a detachment going to Great Ashfield. The 98th Service Squadron and the 1776th Ordnance Co. remained at Thorpe Abbotts. Part of the Hq. and Hq. Squadron also remained. The old 1100th Ord. Co. had been incorporated with the Medium Maintenance Co.

Personnel and property were divided, and the ensuing red tape unwound and tripped up the unwary. Slowly, order began to assert itself, and the base prepared for war.

As these preparations continued, the interest of the world was suddenly focused on the first clear test of aerial power against a well-fortified citadel. On June 12, the Mediterranean island of Pantelleria surrendered unconditionally under the terms laid down by Lt. Gen. Spaatz. It was the first time in the history of warfare that a fortress was subjugated by air power, with some support by sea power, without action by ground forces.

The men read the news and were heartened. The star of air power was in ascent, and they had hitched their battle wagons to this star. Things were looking up.
COMMANDING OFFICERS

Maj. W. A. Hazelton, Jr.  
Lt. Col. P. Bouchard

STAFF OFFICERS

Capt. J. B. Gallagher  
Maj. R. J. Mead  
Capt. E. F. Beecher, Jr.  
Capt. E. F. Kibble  
W/O J. Felt

Adjutant  
Engineering  
Supply  
Supply  
Engineering

T. L. Patterson, Jr.  
G. F. Hardage, Jr.  
M/Sgt. J. A. Ciocciola

First Sergeant  
First Sergeant  
Shop Supt.
The 456th Sub-Depot was born on December 1, 1943, voraciously absorbing its parent body, the 83rd Service Group. In the months prior to the birth of the new organization, there had been feverish activity as Thorpe Abbotts emerged as a base for combat activity.

The first official mission took off on June 25, 1943, and the months of training and traveling had reached fruition. From that day until the final combat operation on April 20, 1945, the history of the service organizations was an integral part of the entire effort of the base.

It was for the most part a humdrum, routine existence for the service men, an existence interspersed with occasional flashes of high drama. The various departments of the group meshed into smooth operation. Service group personnel were appointed into key base positions. Capt. Rovegno assumed the duties of Base Engineering Officer. Bouchard became the S-4 man, while Col. Dungan was Ground executive.

The "big-gas birds" took off on their sorties through July and August of 1943, and many returned nursing severe wounds. Work piled up in the hangars, in the shops, on the desks. Heavy opposition in the air meant heavy work orders, but the organization clicked and transformed limping aircraft into slick flying machines once more.

Supply was a constant source of irritation, and stock shelves were on numerous occasions bare of important items, necessitating those small triumphs of ingenuity that aided greatly in keeping aircraft operational.

East Anglia grew misty and cold with the advent of winter. Problems were increased. The biggest engineering headaches were caused by the older ships not equipped with electronic superchargers. Due to the cold and low pressure at high altitudes, erratic regulation resulted in lack of power and some abortions.

High altitude missions also spotlighted the need for more and better heated clothing. There was a shortage of electrically heated gloves which became so acute that after each combat mission the crews turned their gloves over to those flying the next mission. The answer to this shortage problem was to modify the connections of the suit to fit British-type gloves. In general, the heated suits lasted for approximately ten missions before blowing out. All clothing with the exception of the boots were rethreaded by the men in the equipment office.

It was not all work for the service men. They took their passes and headed off-base, dispersing over the crowded isle and its crowded pubs....
It was London and Norwich... Ipswich and the many towns within cycling distance. The Magpie Inn at Harleston was a favored dart center, and many cycles headed for Dickleburgh and Diss...

On November 29, 1943, VIII Bomber Command Headquarters issued a general order which greatly affected the administrative life and times of the service outfits at Thorpe Abbotts.

Service groups had originally been designed to operate in the field, servicing several separate tactical units. However, on permanent installations, its subservience to the bomb group made its top-heavy echelon of command unwieldy and wasteful of personnel. For this reason, the Bomber Division commanding officers were instructed to form Sub-Depots within their commands in accordance with manning tables of the Air Forces Build-Up Plan, dated May 28, 1943.

The Sub-Depot was an echelon of the Eighth Air Force Service Command. The commander reported directly to the station commander, who controlled the depot. All reports followed the chain of command through the station commander to the Air Depot Commander at the 1st Strategic Air Depot, Honington.

So there was a mess of paper work, culminating in the shedding of one name and form for another. Everything was neatly tabulated in the records, and air force law in the body of Eight Air Force Memo 65-6, which defined the purpose of the Sub-Depot with relation to maintenance, repair and redistribution, was closely followed.

The 456th Sub-Depot was divided into two sections: Engineering and Supply. Two officers and 38 enlisted men dealt in supply. Three officers and 167 enlisted men engineered.

Maj. Patrick C. Bouchard left his S-4 duties to assume command of the depot, with Lt. Edward F. Beecher in charge of supply and Capt. R. Mead at the engineering wheel.

Within a month, the Sub-Depot was operating at full strength. Perhaps a good criteria by which an organization of this type may be judged is through uneventful routine. A problem appears... it is solved. There is steady, clock-like efficiency, and the clerks chart the completed work orders on their green-lined graphs...

Winter made way for Spring, and the fields of East Anglia came to life. March of 1944 saw Anzio and Cassino break into the news, and the Hundredth Bomb Group attacked Berlin for the first time. Casualties in men and planes were heavy, and the battle-damaged aircraft piled up the work.
There was plenty of work after the missions. The sheet metal shop, 80% of whose business was taken up with flak damage, began to slap patches on holes. In the large hangar, engines were built-up and ripped wings set in working order.

A system of careful priorities was in operation, and inspectors co-ordinated and allocated the priorities. M/Sgt. Nolan’s trailer Instrument Shop performed delicate tasks, and the men there were not averse to tinkering with a watch after the more pressing business had been completed.

Although the great mass of work on the ground possessed a certain monotony, there were nevertheless flashes of excitement. May 9, 1944 provided one of these moments, as the ambulance and bomb service truck raced to meet a plane coming back from a bombing raid on an airfield in France.

Lt. B. L. Williams brought it in, and the aircraft rolled to the end of the runway, where the squeal of brakes brought it to a lurching halt. The truck and ambulance pulled up and men leaped off. They knew what they would find.

While over the target, a plane in a higher echelon had taken violent evasive action while releasing its bombs. A 100-pound general purpose bomb crashed into the tail of the lower plane aft of the rudder, seriously wounding the gunner, and had imbedded itself nose down. The bomb was still alive, both nose and tail fuzes armed. It was wedged against the gunner’s side.

Capt. Major, Station Ordnance Officer, was top man present. The crowd soon dispersed when word got around that there was a live bomb in the tail of the ship. The day was not too warm, but the men involved perspired profusely. Photographer Sgt. Earl F. McCollister got in close to snap pictures as T/Sgt. Charles H. James, an ordnance man, and Pvt. Willis K. Copeland, used a length of wire threaded through the bomb lug to remove the pressure from the nose fuze. James, working slowly, carefully worked loose the armed tail fuze, which he handed to the captain.

The medical men had first learned of the emergency while in the interrogations room. T/Sgt. John S. Erp, Capt. Emery C. Kinder and Capt. Wendell C. Stover immediately headed for the perimeter. Erp requested permission to go in and look the situation over.

The heavy breathing of the wounded man cut the stillness. Saving him seemed a long, a very long chance, but the men worked as quickly as they could. Erp wormed forward and attempted to pull the gunner free, but could not. Something had caught. Capt. Kinder, a slim man, crawled in and cut the thong from one of the gunner’s boots which had caught on the fuselage.
They proceeded to extricate the fatally wounded gunner, and the ambulance raced for the hospital. Despite the speed with which the entire incident had been handled, the gunner, S/Sgt. R. Cohen, had been injured beyond aid, and later succumbed.

The strain was still there, because the armed bomb was still jammed into the tail. Capt. Major called the Bomb Reconnaissance Officer, who posted MP’s and called the R.A.F. Bomb Disposal squad, who in due time removed the nose fuze and the bomb.

There was a general let-out of breath. The job was over and the men dispersed to talk it over later at their various clubs. It was something to remember. . . .

The even tenor of life was jarred to its roots the following month. The service men were given a boost and a spur to increased effort as the Allies finally launched the invasion of the Continent. This was what the men had been waiting for. This was what would get them home quicker, and the entire base vibrated with hopes of a speedy victory.

As the months passed, and the Allies struck deeper into France, the realization that victory by Christmas was an impossibility dampened spirits somewhat. Another dampener proved to be the battle stars awarded to the bomb group. These awards naturally led to some resentment, as those non-combat men fortunate enough to be assigned to the bomb group received the priceless points while the service men working in parallel fields were ignored. “T.S.” was the phrase used unsympathetically by the bomb group boys.

It had been a full year, a year of work and hope. There had been disappointments as well, but as the January snows blanketed the base, the men realized that the Fascists were doomed, and that the old, cracked record of “Home by Christmas” might very well turn into reality this year.

It was cold in London, and an occasional rocket still crashed without warning into the already wounded city. The service men still caught the early train for the big town, which as usual, was crowded with soldiers of every land and denomination.

The hotels and rooming houses were full, and you were lucky to find a Russell Square room for a night. By inserting a shilling into the slot, the gas heater in the room might get the temperature up to zero. . . . It was “rough in the ETO” . . .

Deep on the Continent, the Allied armies continued their advance, and Cologne fell on one side of the front as the Red Army reached the Baltic and the Austrian border on the other.

At Thorpe Abbotts Headquarters, the paper war flared out with a new wave of fury. A large-scale organizational reshuffle was in the making, and the midnight bulbs could be seen from the road as men worked over lengthy stencils. . . .

It was April, 1945, and the 456th Sub-Depot, with the war in its twilight days, was being dissolved. . . .
Air Service Group

GROUP COMMANDERS

Lt. Col. Eugene Rovegno
Lt. Col. H. F. Cruver
Maj. G. F. Erb
Maj. Fred Bock

SERGEANT MAJORS

M/Sgt. Alex Alchin
M/Sgt. Thomas Rogers
Sgt. Willard Gresens

Headquarters & Headquarters Squadron

SQUADRON COMMANDERS

Maj. R. J. Mead
Maj. G. F. Erb
Capt. J. B. Gallagher

First Sgt. O. S. Davis

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ON APRIL 15, 1945, the news was officially out, and the 412th Air Service Group was activated. The 476th Sub-Depot and many of the independent units on the base were deactivated and absorbed in this major service shift. With the completion of the war in sight, the move tended to unify the base into more compact groupings, with a resultant saving of administrative work and personnel.

Three squadrons were created. They were the 412th Headquarters and Base Squadron, the 838th Air Engineering Squadron, and the 662nd Air Materiel Squadron.

The great majority of former Sub-Depot men were transferred into the engineering squadron. The 1285th Military Police Co. (Avn) brought their discipline into the materiel squadron. The 1141st Quartermaster Co. was disbanded after three years. The 1776th Ordnance (S. and M.) Co. and the 2110th Fire Fighting Platoon joined the newly activated service group.

Lt. Col. Eugene Rovegno, who had joined the old 83rd back in Pendleton, became the commanding officer of the service group, with Maj. George F. Erb his Adjutant. Maj. Raymond J. Mead took over the Group Executive duties, and M/Sgt. Alexander Alchin, from the old disbanded 28th Station Complement, became the Group Sergeant Major.

The administrative changes did not affect the technical work in the shops and hangars. The group had been activated with masterly timing. Five days after activation, the base put forth its final combat effort, a mission to Oranienburg on April 20, 1945.

There was still a great deal of work. Although flak damage was now a thing of the past, there were still practice flights and Chowhound missions to be flown, there were still engines to be changed and aircraft supply to be drawn.

The official end of the war in Europe came in May, and the enormity of the surrender news was focused down into the incongruous realization that it would not be necessary to put the blackout blinds into their accustomed niches again. The radio blared the welcome news every few minutes, and it seemed strange to hear weather reports for the first time in years.

Victory celebrations began early. Flares were arcing all over the perimeter, and the bolts of red, green and yellow lit the skies . . .

The war in the ETO was over, and the men were thankful. Services were held on the base and all over the world . . . . The people of Lubbock, Texas and Walla Walla, Washington . . . . the people of Moscow and Stalingrad . . . . the people of London and Brockdish . . . . the people of Paris and Arles . . . . people on farms and in cities felt a great weight lifted from their minds and hearts. The threat of Fascism had been smashed, and boys would soon begin the long, watered path back to their own lands.

They had completed their job, and although one foe still remained, the hour-glass of arrogance, of decadence and of darkness was running low . . .

Men headed for the Sad Sack Shack to down a victory brew . . .
Lt. B. J. Deitchman
Personnel

Capt. G. K. Cohn
Finance

Capt. T. A. Poremski
Medical

Capt. C. J. Hinkley
Catholic Chaplain

Lt. J. C. Merrill
Utilities

Lt. R. Sangro
Fire Marshal

Lt. P. G. Brady
Transportation

UTILITIES

COOK


Cpl. L. Workman

FINANCE


MEDICS

ADMINISTRATION


FIRE DEPT.


TRANSPORTATION


FLYING CONTROL

AUTO MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR


AIR MECHANICS


SHEET METAL


MACHINE SHOP


ADMINISTRATION


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662nd Air Materiel Squadron

Maj. E. G. Scharding
Commanding Officer

Lt. R. P. Joyce
Adjutant

Capt. E. F. Beecher, Jr.

Capt. E. F. Kibble
Adjutant

Capt. W. L. Crane

Thomas P. Philbin
First Sergeant

L. to R.: Sgt. J. E. Cheek, Cpl. J. P. Harnden,
T/Sgt. V. F. Sheedy.
Service Activities
STATION

ACTIVITIES
SPECIAL SERVICES

Capt. P. W. Laney
Lt. C. V. Ashworth
Lt. R. O. Neighbors


Lt. Ashworth and Movie Projectionists.
Guests of the Station

Mr. Jack Warner (Warner Bros. Studios) and party stop off for a visit.

Jack Warner receiving an explanation from Col. Sutterlin and Major Varian.

Gen. O. A. Anderson

Brig. Gen. N. B. Harbold

Maj. Glenn Miller

BillyConn
Heavyweight Contender

Lt. Col. John Bennett and guest from British Navy.

Lt. Gen. J. C. H. Lee
Supply Chief

Adolph Menjou
Movie Star

Lt. Gen. James Doolittle
Field Events