

SECOND

Army Air Corps

340TH

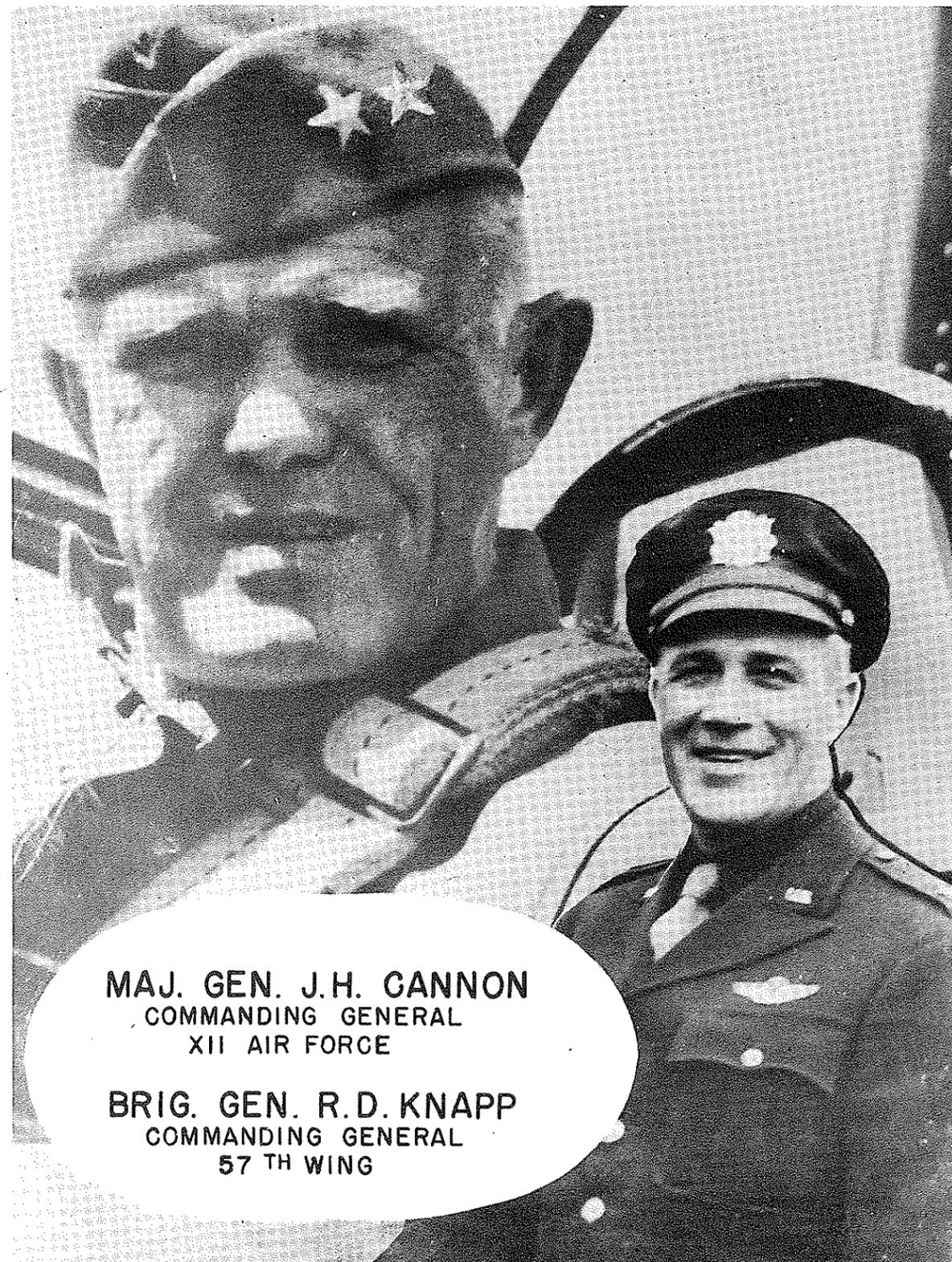
BOMB

GROUP

• XII •

AIR FORCE •

G. C. MOORE



MAJ. GEN. J. H. CANNON
 COMMANDING GENERAL
 XII AIR FORCE

BRIG. GEN. R. D. KNAPP
 COMMANDING GENERAL
 57 TH WING

COLUMBIA SOUTH CAROLINA

August 25, 1942 saw the birth of another infant, in Uncle Sam's prolific Air Force family. No announcements were sent to Goering but the chances are that if he did learn of it, his ponderous paunch merely rippled a bit--this puling infant not even meriting a good healthy belly-laugh of disdain.

As a matter of fact, no particular attention was paid to the event at Columbia, S.C., the birthplace. The birth certificate--CAAB G.O. No. 19--was filed, Col. Mills, appointed guardian and 340th was on its way.

At Columbia, the original cadre was quickly brought to practically T/O strength. Officers with shiney bars and popping chests nonchalantly showed the ropes to new arrivals--"newer" by a few hours. Enlisted Men popped in from all over but squadron first sergeants were not too busy to drop their sewing (they got a new stripe every other day) and help the new boys pick out the best tents and make sure they were supplied with all the home comforts. Things hummed from early morning to late at night--well, the Officers' Club was open until midnight.

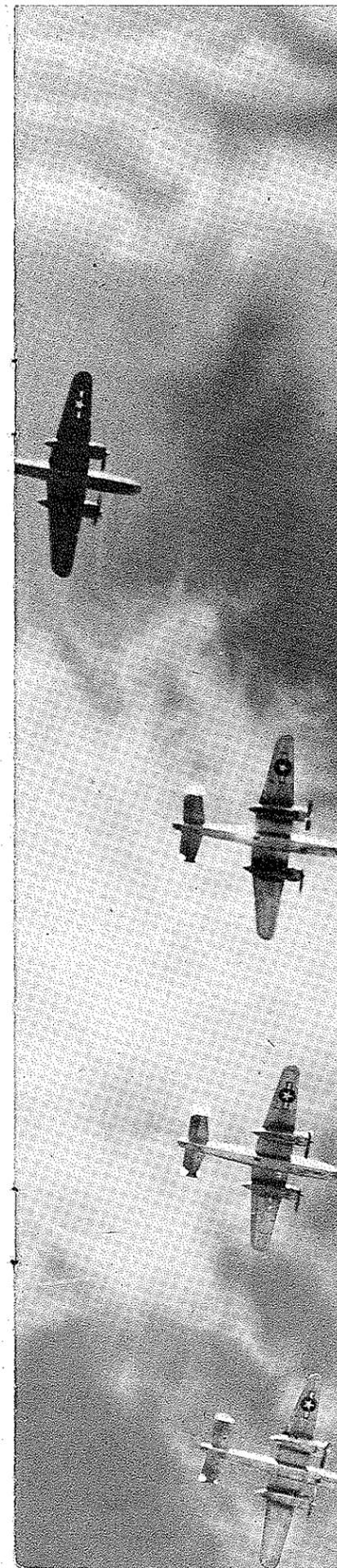
Squadron S-2's were busy planning mock missions in the best Harrisburg style and detail and squadron Operations were racing each other up and down the hilly graphs of the efficiency charts. September merged with October, October with November and before we realized it, our original unit Thanksgiving was behind us.

Came November 30th with orders to move to Walterboro for third phase training. The first day of December dawned at 0400 for the 340th--cold and overcast. The barracks were all scrubbed, men and baggage loaded on trucks for an early start--and six hours later the convoy snaked its way down the white sand road between the scrub pines, headed for another part of South Carolina where late that afternoon we stretched our legs in Walterboro.

The ships and Flight Echelon did not arrive on schedule since the night we left, Columbia was visited by a violent hail storm which did more damage in ten minutes than our flying cowboys would have accomplished in as many weeks. The group lost in all, fourteen planes.

It was the first of three occasions on which the 340th has been practically stripped of ships through no fault of its own. In the later disasters, we had the coordinated help of the smooth-functioning units of the Twelfth Air Force to make quick replacements, but this time we were on our own. That "our own" was not too bad is evidenced by the fact that while first estimates of damage repair were up to a couple of months, actually the group was operating in a relatively few days, thanks to the unstinting labor of the loyal ground crews. Maybe we did--and still do--wage keen rivalry between individual squadrons (with everybody taking a sock at Group) but let anything or anybody tackle THE GROUP--watch out!

With the shortage of planes, Group



thought it advisable to intensify the school schedule and institute a bit of infantry drill to occupy our minds and muscles. The classes were held and usually the instructor at least was there. We hiked and marched sometimes almost as much as six miles in a day and all of five minutes with a gas mask on. Group also formed the habit of calling imaginary air raids, alerts and missions at most ungodly hours. The latter were the delight of our jeep jockeys—total blackout, the windshields opaque with frost but a good excuse for doing quite a bit better than the official "15 miles per hour on the post".



On January 30th, the Ground Echelon climbed into waiting trains headed for a very secret destination which everybody knew was Pittsburg, Cal.

Camp Stoneman was a beautifully laid out, equipped and operated post with everything from commissary stores to movie houses. Followed some days of stiff tests of physical fitness and endurance what with calisthenics in the cold, dark dawns, nurses, debar-kation nets, an obstacle course and a never-to-be-forgotten twelve-mile hike.

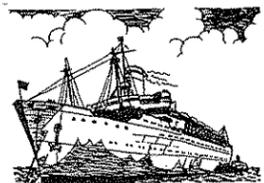
The enlisted men were warned to put everything they would need for several weeks into their "A" bags. Each man sorted out his half acre or so of belongings and found to his surprise that the Army hadn't made "A" bags anywhere near large enough but the "B" bags were far too large for

They loaded us down with equipment at Supply, pumped us full of bugs at Group Dispensary and the smart boys filled us up with rumors—positive information that we were going to China, India, England, Burma and Skowhegan—"that's confidential. Sure I got it from one who knows!" But the wise ones just nodded and waited until they got into town and got the real McCoy from their wives and girl friends.

Then one afternoon the Flight crews took off "into the bright blue yonder"—via truck. It was to be two full months—months full of strange sights, strange people, and strange smells—before the flight and ground echelons would again join up after circling the globe between them.

just a gas mask and helmet.

On St. Valentine's Day, every GI and his "A" bag and officer and his hand luggage marched aboard the GI ferry boat, sailed down the bay to Frisco there to board the U.S.S. West Point former luxury liner "America". Late in the evening, the last man staggered on board under a load of bags and blankets, rifle, overcoat, mask and helmet and finally the good ship West Point quieted down as tired men dropped off to sleep in various compartments and all stages of undress.



-4-

EN VOYAGE

For the next forty-two days the group enjoyed an all-expense-paid tour of the southern hemisphere—all alone on a vast expanse of empty sea where the nearest land was straight down and nobody in a hurry to get there. The nights were particularly beautiful and it seemed that we had more than our share of moon light under which the music of volunteer orchestras and singing groups took on a nostalgic sweetness.

We touched briefly at Wellington, New Zealand, then south around the island through the Tasman Sea across to Australia where we were given the hospitable townspeople. We headed out to sea once more, our next stop being Bombay, India where we smelled the smells and saw the sights.



On the third day we pulled out and started a dizzy zigzagging course across the Arabian Sea into the Gulf of Aden towards the Straits of Babel Mandab. The latest rumor that we were doomed to patrol the Red Sea was seemingly confirmed, they gave us pocket guides to Egypt and phonograph records of the Arabic language. The hospital bay filled up with the first victims of a run of GI's and much progress was made in learning the new language for among numerous

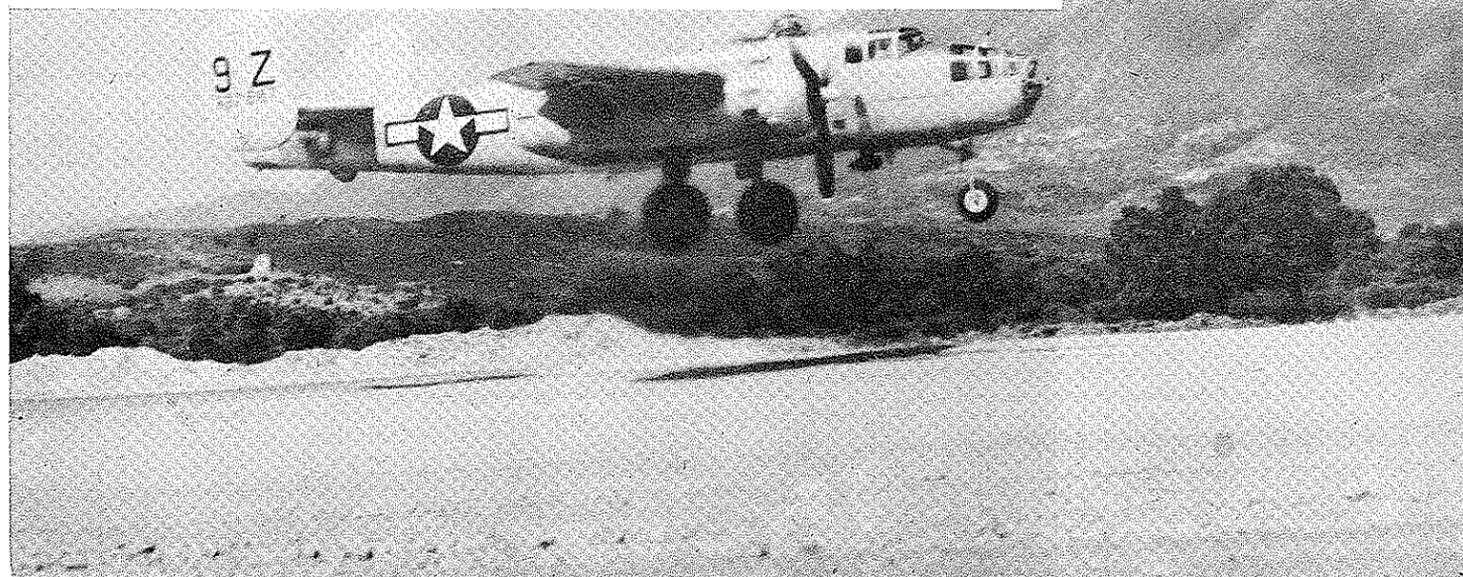
other things, the guide books said that "FAYN-ma-ra-HEED" meant "where is the toilet?"

MARCH 29th, SUEZ. End of the route, all out! We anchored in the stream at 1000 hours and went ashore in the rickety native boats about the size of harbor tugs, held together as far as we could see by bailing wire and grass rope. The engineers crowded on all steam the rusty boilers would carry and, amid the hoots and jeers of the winners, the boats raced for shore. Here we were herded onto the dinky, narrow-gauge train for a ride to the field—El Kabrit on Little Bitter Lake beside the Suez Canal.

Our new home was one vast expanse of sand which made the pitching of our tents no easy job but by supper time the camp was pretty well shaken down and we took our first look around. We saw our first evidence of war in the gaping roofs and shrapnel-perforated walls of the hangars and were suitably impressed when the Flight Echelon—old timers who had been there a week or so—casually mentioned that Jerry raids were a daily occurrence, further pointed out that the prisoner of war camps across the lake were brightly lit at night and served to guide the Stukas to our location.

We heard the saga of the Flight Echelon—how they travelled by train to Battle Creek in accommodations which were not what they were accustomed to expect as the "cream of the crop." How Capt Bailey practically tore to shreds an engineering major who had ideas about the kind of ships he was

-5-



going to turn over to the crews for the long ocean hop. Naturally, they snowed us under with their tales of difficult navigation, beautiful gals and wild parties and their final mad dash to Cairo with thirsty engines consuming gallons of oil.

Most of the boys made it but to the

EL KABRIT EGYPT

Kabrit was an immense camp with many buildings housing the post office, PX, the combat crews and of course Group. There was a movie theatre where "Mr. Shifty Shafto" sold Ballantyne's for 63 cents a can. The walls and roof were well ventilated with shrapnel holes and the place being equipped with wide rafters, did double duty as a bird sanctuary. These birds although without benefit of schooling in the theory of bombing, still did mighty well in practice.

There was sand, sand everywhere and not a tree in sight. But we had air conditioned latrines and washrooms with most invigorating cold water assisted by ice-cold breezes right off the lake.

We had our first mail call--one that made a lot of us fathers and the way some folks acted, You'd think it had never been done before. Those who didn't rate babies began to adopt Egyptian chow hounds.

A shave and a haircut cost all of 12 cents--two minutes for the haircut and fifteen seconds for the shave. It was asserted but never proved that we bought back the skin in the form of leather souvenirs.

On April 4th we had a rip-roaring

grief and sorrow of their comrades in some of the squadrons, there had been a few losses--boys who had left the States with high endeavor in their hearts and, while they had not seen actual combat, had in fact sacrificed their lives to the cause in which they believed. Can any of us do more?

sand storm, the wind a howling gale, visibility about twenty-five feet and powder-fine sand seeping into everything, no matter how tightly it was closed. Many tents pulled their stakes and ambled off across the desert followed by the belongings of their occupants, the latter bringing up a cursing rear.

Life at Kabrit was mostly routine relieved by swimming in the lake or baseball and trips to Ismalia, Cairo, Tel Aviv and Palestine. Then one morning Group told us there would be parties for all--A, B, C and D. The combat crews were "A" and flew off to Medenine. Some of the elite of the ground personnel were "B" and, in DC-3's waddled along above the desert in the prop wash of the A party.

Some men stayed behind to play baseball, swim and take three-day passes to Cairo to establish the custom--still followed--of throwing water on the heads of gheri drivers from the windows of the Grand Hotel. Others had their pictures taken on camels in front of the Pyramids.

By far the largest party however was that which threw its baggage into an assortment of war-weary Canadian and British trucks and pursued Rommel across the desert from Alemein to

-6-

Sfax while the Eighth Army got all the credit. Fifteen days and some 1900 miles after leaving Kabrit, the convoy unloaded at Sfax and the com-

bat crews more or less reluctantly, returned to them the privileges of guard duty and KP details and other odd jobs.

MEDENINE TUNISIA

Meanwhile the Flight Echelon and the DC-3 boys had covered the distance to Medenine in a few hours and were nicely settled in that dusty hole. They had pulled off several missions under the tutelage of the 12th Group and felt like veterans. At Medenine we dug the first of a long series of slit trenches and tent "cellars" but never afterwards, with the possible exception of Hergla, did we find harder ground. This being our first experience and knowing that this was a cleared (?) minefield, did not add any enthusiasm to our shovels.

After getting nicely settled, the next thing was of course to move on and in the early dark of April 16th, camp was struck. It was a bright and sunny day and fairly warm so that except for occasional thick dust, we enjoyed a Cook's Tour of the so-recently contested battle ground. The evidence was all around us in the form of wrecked equipment, gun positions, mine fields, etc. We hustled by the piles of mines beside the road but hoped the sappers had left none for our truck wheels to find as Limey road-hogs forced us over.

SFAX TUNISIA

Our new home was in the midst of an orchard of almond, peach, olive and apricot trees as well as some whose fruits we did not recognize. We found lima beans, giant peas, scallions and wheat all ripe and ready for picking.

The dirt-and-grass landing field was in pretty good shape although there were craters and unexploded bombs over the whole area. Wrecked Me 109's and Italian planes were plentiful--evidence of the effectiveness of raids by several of our boys not so many days before. Souvenir hunters had a field day.

While the group was credited with seven missions flown with the 12th Group at Medenine, it was at Sfax that we really began to function but briefing was still done by the 12th who were located a mile or so away and using the same field.

Easter Sunday was a black day for us. It dawned bright and fair with no hint of tragedy to come. Church was held in a field bright with poppies under the wings of the planes. Just after noon we were briefed for a run to Soliman South and the planes took off an hour later. As they were circ-

-7-



ling to join up, two ships of the th collided, plummeted to earth and burned, killing both crews—eleven men in all.

May 6th. Another bad day. On the early morning mission, Colonel Mills' ship received a direct hit over the enemy lines and there seemed to be no hope for any of the crew. Later, after Tunis fell, Capt Marcan, th C.O., was found convalescing in a former German hospital and evacuated to the States. Eventually word was received that Lt Zarega, Group Navigation Officer, was home. Capt Bachrach, flying co-pilot in a ship from the th, brought it in with bombs hung and no landing gear, the pilot having been fatally wounded. To wind up the day, one of the th planes came back with hydraulic system out and bombs hung. After circling over the field, the pilot headed out to sea and the crew bailed out. The ship made a wide turn and crashed a mile beyond the wreckage of the collision of a few days previous. Lt-Col Tokaz took over as the new Commanding Officer.

And so at Sfax the 340th had settled down to the business of war although we chafed at the policy which kept us tied to the apron strings of the 12th Group. We dug slit trenches in the orchards and wheat fields as the Germans had done before us. And just as they had done, we hit the trenches when night after night, raiders came over and the ack-ack started.

On May 9th, having driven the enemy into the Cap Bon peninsula, we left the mopping up to the infantry and turned our attention to Pantelleria, stepping stone to Italy. The reduction of this vaunted 'impregnable island fortress' was entirely a matter of pinpoint destruction—coastal defenses on the island perimeter while the airfield and harbor were practically ignored. One after another the coastal batteries were destroyed in a smothering crescendo of falling

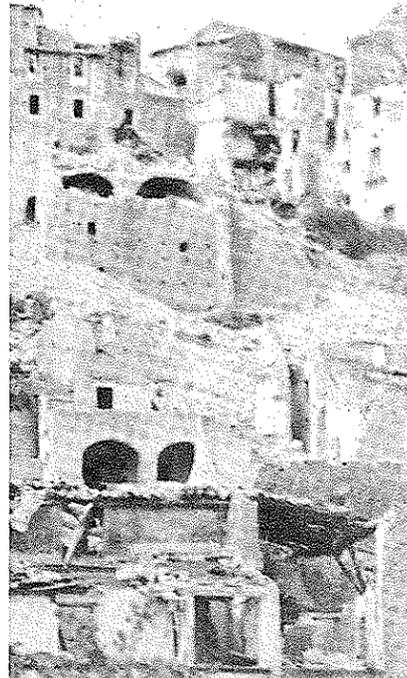
bombs. The result was the complete demoralization of practically all defenses. After this, the FIRST ALL OUT AERIAL OFFENSIVE, white crosses of surrender were displayed on the ground and our ground forces were able to occupy the island in a mere matter of minutes.

When we transferred the pressure to Pantelleria from Cap Bon, the German 90th Light took heart and continued to give trouble around Enfidaville. They were warned that unless they agreed to surrender, the "Golden 18's" (their name for our B-25's) would be over in twenty minutes. They didn't, we did—and the Battle of Africa was over. The newspapers didn't play it up exactly that way but you'll note that in six weeks after the 340th as a unit went into action, the Axis folded up in Tunisia. The blooming British think the bloody Eighth Army did it but we don't mind.

May 13th. Breakfast—grapefruit juice Cream of Wheat, hot cakes and sugar syrup, bacon, jam and plenty of coffee. F'eyven sake! Do we have to win a campaign to get something other than "Vienna sausage"?

The rest of the stay at Sfax was practically a social affair although everybody was at this time busily catering to that horror of war known as the GI's. Two necessary elements in this sport are speed and accuracy. Some made it, some didn't and some simply gave up trying and bought new underwear and pyjamas. The net result was a more frequent re-locationing of targets and a general loss on the average of twenty pounds weight.

The remnants of the group which had been left at Kabrit showed up at the end of May and as soon as they had their tents up, somebody discovered that the war wasn't over after all. The orderly rooms were rolled up, the latrines knocked down and it was moving day again.



HERGLA TUNISIA

Hergla was and probably still is a barren expanse of sand and thistles. It was close to the sea and in the background, we had the mountain range at the foot of which lies Enfidaville the last hold-out of the 90th Light which we like to think we had a hand in blasting out. There were nice cool breezes from the sea when they weren't nice hot breezes from the desert.

Life at Hergla wasn't too dull. In the mornings the gnats drove us crazy; during the day, flies, lizards, giant grasshoppers, tarantulas, scorpions and mice contested for every inch of space and at night, malaria-laden mosquitos gave close support to desert rats on patrol.



After supper one night, the group softened up Lampedusa and the next



Comiso had been a regular field for the Italians and was well-equipped

day, the navy swam in and took over. With some help from the RAF and the rest of the AAF, we had cleaned up Africa and Pantelleria right on the button and now Lampedusa. It was time for a breather. For the next three weeks, we worked hard at eating water-melons at a buck a throw, putting in sack time and listening to rumors of the great concentration of ships and men all up and down the coast.

On July 2nd, TBF let us in on the secret—we were to start in working again, with Sicily as the target. So on the third, we inaugurated the Sicilian Shuttle Service and on successive days, staged a Roman holiday over Comiso airdrome, making hideous skeletons of the buildings and plowing up the runways. Nobody told us that a month later, we'd have to clean up the mess or we might have been less enthusiastic.

While we rustled eggs and melons and cursed the blowing sand and lack of mail, the bomb line was creeping across Sicily and promising another Cap Bon at Messina. So to be nearer our targets as well as to the foods we heard was plentiful in Sicily, we packed up and moved again.

with permanent buildings. That is they had been designed as permanent



When our bombing was still the long dream of Mussolini. When we moved in they were mere shells of their former grandeur—a bit of destruction we'd had a hand in.

We found more than a score of Me 109's in perfect condition and plenty more Italian and German planes which had made their last landings.

The boys had a field day stripping souvenirs and collected so darn many parts they decided it would be easier to fly them than to cart them around. Soon we had several enemy planes reconditioned and flying with Allied insignia while eager men checked out on these famous ships.

After sweeping up the "Crowsfeet" we had dropped some time before, clearing a few mines and filling up holes, we settled down to enjoying Sicily. Our areas were plumb in the middle of tremendous grape orchards where Concord-type blue grapes and luscious big white Malagas were just getting to their best. There were almonds and peaches just ready for the picking but it was a continual race with the owner who also had the wish for the fruits of his labor.

Between missions to such familiar spots as Randazzo, Adrano and the unforgettable Messina (at the time, the "most heavily defended spot in the world") the flak-happy combat crews and the sand-happy ground personnel relaxed in the grape arbors while native labor dug in the tents, hacked out slit trenches. After the dust

and C-rations of Mergia, the free fruit and clear air of Sicily made Comiso seem like a GI paradise. And the good people of Sicily were fairly friendly in spite of our rather rough treatment of their town.

Came August 25th and Group staged a birthday party. There were the usual ho-hum speeches and the usual absence of timed brass hats. Music was furnished by a 10-piece native orchestra which was really good. A picnic supper was served and was followed by a magician, some talent from the squadrons and in the evening, a movie. The affair really went off in grand style and was all to the good from both entertainment and morale-building standpoints.



We knew what to expect when things came to such a pass that they were giving us free entertainment and eats—and sure enough next day came orders to move. The scouting party came back with harrowing details of dead bodies tied to booby traps, mines so thick only the skinniest sappers were sent in to locate them and similar comforting information. We knew we'd enjoy this new spot—Catania A/D.

CATANIA SICILY

At Catania we found everything SNAFU all over the place. Having found the British Eighth Army were camped field practically one continuous

-10-



crater and all the buildings mere shells from our bombings, they had decided nobody in his senses would try to use the place for an airfield. They just didn't know our experience and ability with pick and shovel.

After considerable urging, we nudged them over enough to give elbow room for our 00-odd personnel and our planes.

We were going to miss the orchards and vineyards but figured this loss was offset by a nearby sandy beach.

Jerry welcomed us with a raid just as we sat down to supper. Nobody spilled his coffee. But the guns on the line and all around the area in spots we didn't know about opened up and the group hit the ditch as one man. Supper was "meat and vegetable stew" again anyhow. Little damage was done although some of the folks up at Gp Hq were chased around a shelter by fragments.

SAN PANCRAZIO ITALY

Except for the fact that it was a bit blacker, we simply exchanged one mud for another by our move although some people contended that San Pan mud had better sliding qualities.

San Pan came to be famous for its fine plumbing, hot showers, inexhaustable lumber piles, yellow jaundice and MUD.

The really good point scored was the fact that for the first time we were out of tents and into buildings. It was true that some had no roofs, some no floors, others no walls but we patched and plugged. The weather was definitely on the coolish side and

We had frequent Jerry visits but on only one was there any real excitement—the afternoon the ack-ack got one Jerry, the Spitties another and one of our barrage balloons was sent down in flames, all in the space of a few minutes.

Through September and into October, the missions to Italy were mostly milk runs and we had standdowns for days on end. The frequent trips to nearby towns began to pall, heavy rain and frequent showers dampened our spirits. Everybody was bored and restless, the only bright spot being the receipt of orders for the first boys to go home.

Again came orders to move and the "A" party left taking most of the tents and equipment with them. For three days the rest of us huddled into the little shelter we could find because as soon as the tents were gone, the heavens opened up and unloosed a veritable flood.

cans of every kind were converted to use as stoves and stove-pipe and some weird designs there were.

We ganged up with the 321st Group for raids on Sofia and Kalamaki and struck a hot one on the second raid to the latter place. It claimed 3 Me-109's and the 4th another. One 4th ship did not come back. The mission had bucked strong head winds and everybody being low or out of gas and with some mechanical damage, the landing on the return developed into a rat race.

The first Christmas packages arrived and so did our orders to move again.

-11-

FOGGIA III ITALY

For a week, the 340th was scattered all over southern Italy. Rain and more rain grounded the air echelon and greased the roads. Trucks with flooded ignition systems stalled along the roads, others skidded into the ditches. Nobody wanted to feed us or bed us down. We were truly orphans of the storm.

With the first sunshine, a few hardy souls straggled into Foggia. Leaving the highway was like stepping off a dock at low tide. Mud came half way up the radiators of heavily loaded jeeps and acres of water were unexplored seas to which one hoped there was a bottom.

Some lucky ones found quarters in former farm buildings where the refuse was nearly as bad as the mud outside. For the next few days everybody was either digging out or digging in.

The front looked a long way off on the map but at night, the booming of guns on the Adriatic sector still sounded too close for comfort.

Our planes finally got in after some days and the boys went sight-seeing over Sibenik, Jugoslavia; Port Gruz,

Albania and Guilianova, Italy.

Christmas packages were piling in. Thanksgiving came and went. An epidemic of fires broke out as makeshift stoves belched flame in Foggia winds.

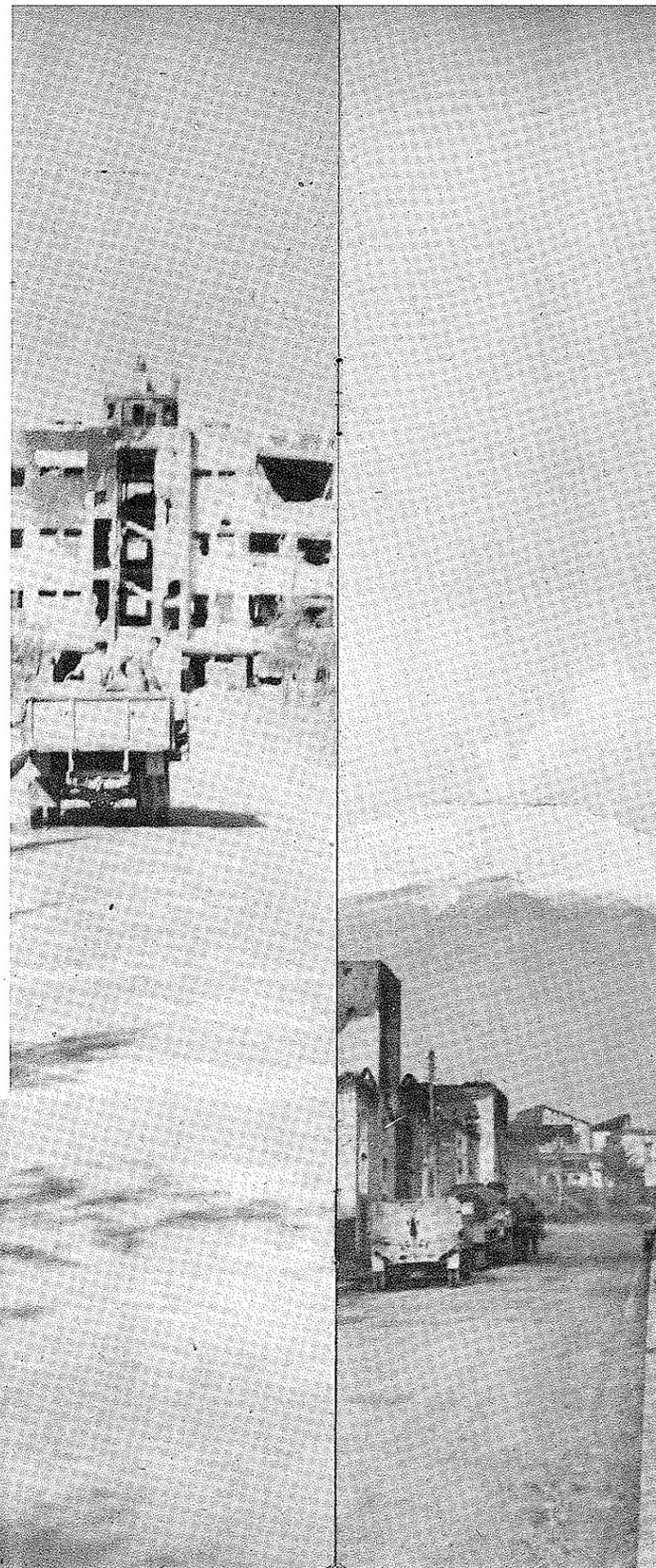
New Years Eve--yup, you guessed it, it rained. At midnight every gun and rifle let loose in honor of 1944 but plenty of folks didn't hear them. We syphoned them out of the trenches next morning. And what a morning! Few gasoline stoves were safe in the gale which swept in off the sea. Our tents were down or on the way as the swearing occupants wallowed in the mud fighting playful canvas. Mess tents threatened to take off momentarily and might as well have since the water and mud inside wouldn't have been much deeper. But 1630 found the chow lines a quarter of a mile long as usual and ankle-deep in mud.

A few days later good weather set in, the absorbent ground quickly dried out, the various clubs were doing a thriving business and we were more or less comfortably settled for the winter. S-o-o, we got orders to move. Next stop, Pompeii L/G.

POMPEII ITALY

Pompeii L/G was a brand new field cut into the grape orchards and the vegetable farms of Terzigno at the base of Vesuvius and completely sur-

-12-



rounded by hills. The group advance party had commandeered one whole street of the town, turned out the occupants after having them clean up the places for us. The buildings were of volcanic stone and concrete with walls nearly three feet thick. In most cases the quarters of one former family was one large room perhaps twenty feet square with domed ceiling fifteen to eighteen feet high. Most of them had probably been built by their occupants and had the usual individualistic designs of elaborate decorations in colorful motifs. Some had large fireplaces.

Wherever you lived, you had but to step outside your door to view old Vesuvius, the world's most publicized volcano. There was always a halo of smoke over it and at night, the bubbling lava sent orange spurts skyward to illuminate the overhanging clouds and smoke. But we felt safer from Vesuvius than from the threat of German bombs which several times fell in Naples twenty miles away.

Then the Fifth Army opened up the Anzio beachhead and the wet, cold days at Foggia seemed idyllic by comparison. None of the combat crews will ever forget the "heavy, intense and accurate" flak over the "wooded area" or practically any part of the sector a plane ventured to visit.

At this period of operations, the Gp as a whole lost better than a dozen planes on the beachhead operations.

After much hesitation because of political and religious complications, Monte Cassino Abbey was then given us for a target because the Germans were entrenched there and "it was causing the loss of too many American lives". We went at it with the heavies and 26's. The boys on the ground at the front were most enthusiastic and word was later passed to us that the B-25's had stolen the show. But according to our ideas, as

usual in the publicity, the heavies got all the credit.

Rainy weather continued to force standdowns during much of February and in early March but on the 10th, we got a mission to Littoria M/Y. It was one of those days. The formation ran into flak. Two ships of the 1st collided but got back to the field. One of the 1st in the following box dove to duck the collision in a hurry, pulled up, two of the bombs pulled loose and went through the bomb bay doors.

The Colonel, riding co-pilot with the 1st, went down. That was a real loss because in his short time with us, Colonel Chapman had earned everyone's respect and liking and had raised the morale of the outfit to its then highest peak.

On the 15th of March the Allies must have gotten mad at the Germans who, in spite of bombs and shellfire were still holding out in Cassino and making it tough for our slogging infantry. We were told to level the damned place and four other medium and eleven of the heavy groups were sent along to help us.

That must have made the Germans mad in turn because that night some 35 of their bombers scooted low over our heads to bomb Naples.

Under cover of the excitement, our new C.O., Colonel Chapman slipped in without fuss or fanfare.

For several days, Vesuvius had been acting up a bit more than usual and in the early hours of March 22, woke us with its rumbling and roaring. It was snowing cinders about as large as BB shot with a sprinkling of tennis balls which by mid-morning were helped out by others sometimes as big as melons. Many of these latter, while ice-crusted outside, showed on the inside a white-hot core when the force of their fall broke them open.

-13-

It was impossible to move the planes and early in the afternoon, when the roofs of buildings were going down under the weight of the stuff, preparations for evacuating were hurried and most of the personnel got out from under. The rest left later.

Axis Sal and her boy-friends gleefully announced to the world that the 340th was finito. And so it must have seemed but she didn't know the 12th AF. In three days we were back in action fighting that much harder as "The Best Damn Group There Is".

PAESTUM ITALY

With our move to Paestum, it seems we changed weather as well as location. Instead of continual rain and cold, we now had balmy, Spring days, plenty of sunshine. Baseball sprouted teams, sacks were dragged outdoors and sunbathers conditioned their hides.

Based on previous experience in getting ordinary supplies, we figured on several weeks' vacation before our lost planes could be replaced. But in three days, we were operating again on full scale and very shortly we had more and better planes than ever before and, in addition, new crews were drifting in.

Under Colonel Chapman's guidance, we switched from the British Mark IX to the American Norden bomb sight, the crews put in long hours of practice flights, formations tightened up and our already excellent record for bombing accuracy began to climb to still higher levels.

From close support work we switched to transportation and communications targets and went in for a weary round of tunnel, railroad and highway blasting. The crews felt like commuters on the same old routes to the same old targets which we socked as fast as Jerry could repair them—or even when he didn't. Interrogat-

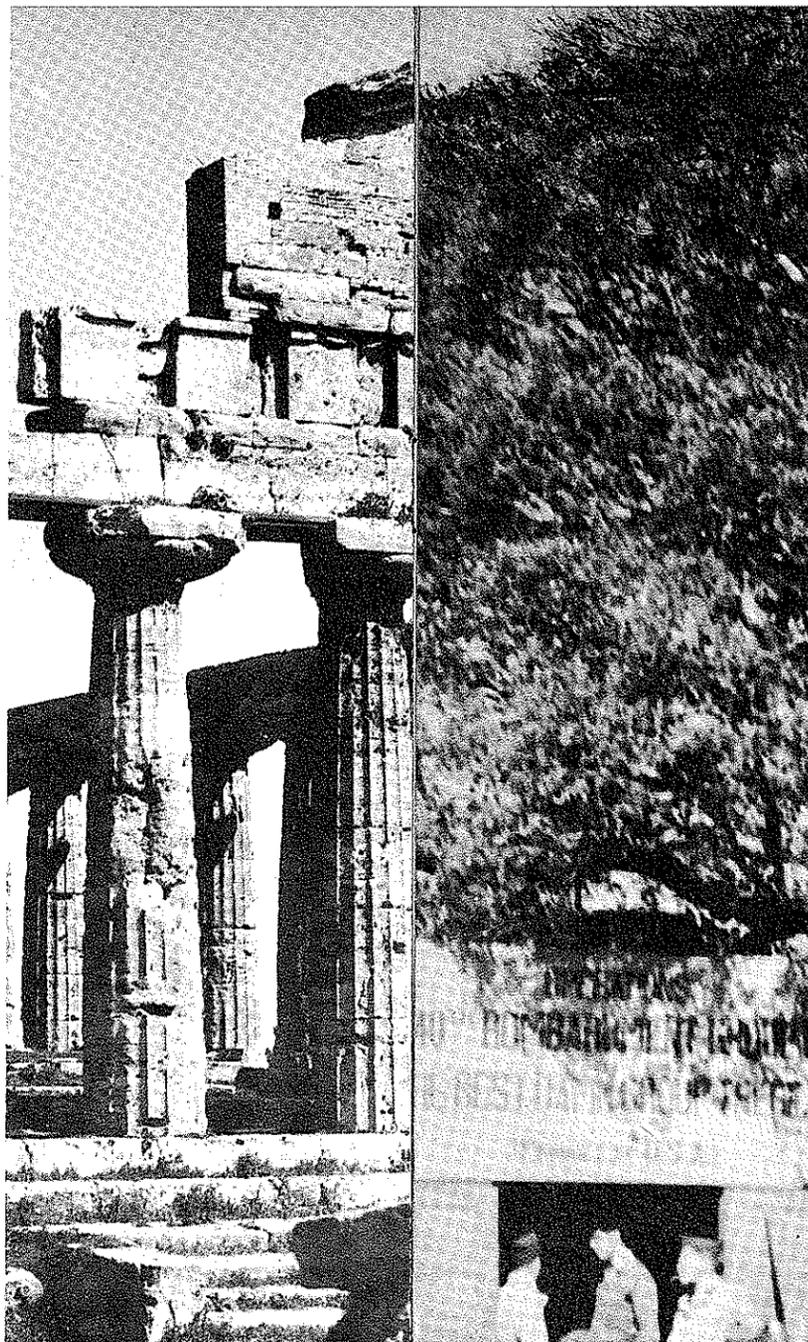
ions brought out such gossip as what day Mrs Pomigliano hung her wash out and the state of Mr Ficcole's vegetable patch.

An impressive presentation ceremony was held in the ruins of the ancient Greek coliseum where similar ceremonies were probably staged for the helmeted warriors of the fourth century before Christ.

We finally had found "Sunny It". The sunshine was good for frazzled, war-weary nerves, eggs were plentiful, the food was looking up and we seemed to have the best compact location we'd ever had.

Group was probably literally correct when on the 14th, they told us we'd stay put indefinitely but on the 15th, it became definite and on the 16th, after a 0430 breakfast, everybody except a few of the ground personnel and the combat crews left for

for



For fourteen months we had looked for it and here it was—the next best place to home. Everything you find in the travel books from warm, ocean bathing on a clean, sandy beach to mountain scenery, hunting and fishing. When the Colonel comes back with some farmer's fattened sow he's still been "hunting" wild boar.

The low-level volunteers who started their legalized buzzing at Paestum, have innoculated the whole group. Now when a beautifully perfect echelon or even the whole damn formation comes over low enough to blow the sugar off the American Red Cross donuts, we know without listening to the radio that they're saying, "Mission completed, bridge finito!"

And while we're on the subject, let's give the Red Cross a great big hand. We got our first regular installation at Pompeii and it has been a permanent institution ever since.

With bombs away, it's "So long, flak; hello doughnuts and coffee". And were they lifesavers after those long, paralyzingly cold rides of last Spring! And the generous portions of smiles, conversation and wise-cracks served along with the coffee and sinkers, by three dainty bits (American) of femininity pep up morale no end.

If we seem to be more or less content with our lot at present, don't get the idea that all has been balm of Gilead here. Jerry welcomed us after our first few days with an all-

OF COURSE, GENERAL, IF YOU INSIST, WE WILL GO HOME!

out raid that set even the combat crews to emulating the mole. Picks and shovels were at a premium and many were the designs of shelters.

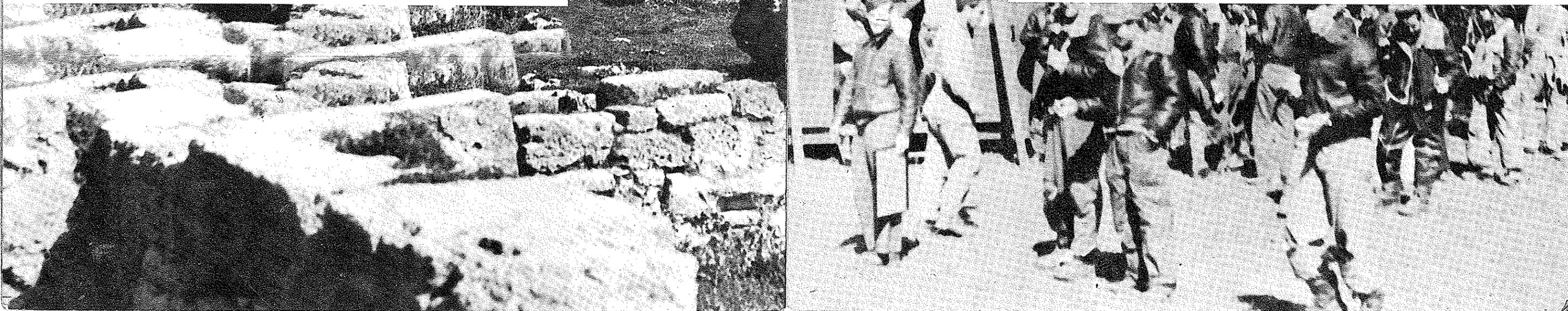
Once again we were practically wiped out of ships and other equipment as well as heavily hit on tentage. There were personnel losses, too.

But by energetic patching and scraping, by mid-afternoon we had a mission in the air and the grim desire for revenge simply gave added accuracy to the bombardiers' aim.

Again the 12th AF came through fast and handsomely and before the Jerry Todt battalions could patch a bridge, we were back over the bomb line in full formation.

By July, we had hit an all-time high with a record for hits that will require some doing for any group to better. But we're out to do it ourselves in this very month of August.

Sure we've "bitched"—at locations, at food, at many things. That's what makes us the fightingest group. We watch the men on the line baby their ships like blooded horseflesh—it's the itching urge for perfection—no matter whether it's rolling seven straight passes or knocking out a pinpoint bridge—that will help us continue to be top contributors to the war effort. Neither Jerry raids nor old Vesuvius herself kept us out longer than it took to get our wind. So where do we go from here?



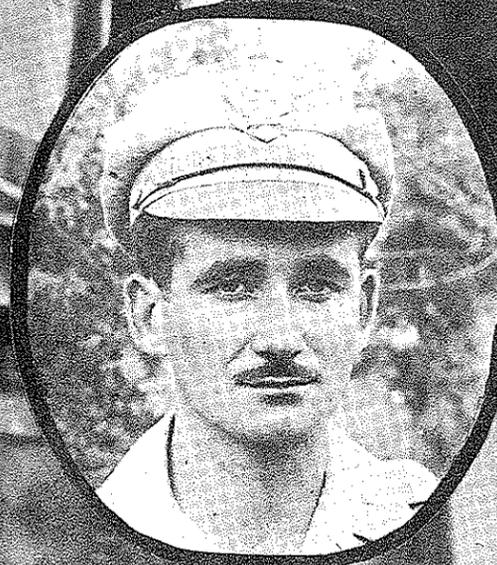
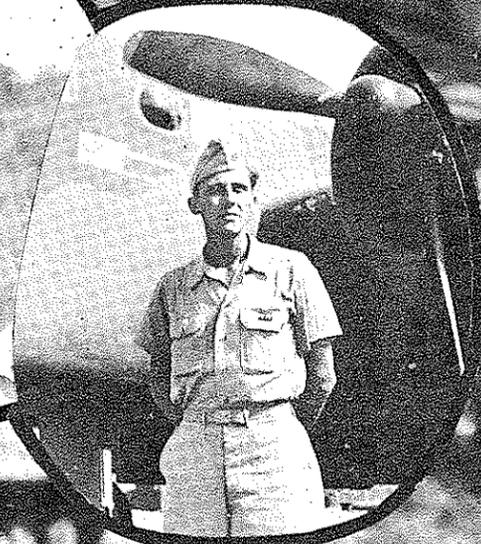


Colonel W. F. Chapman,
Commanding.

Lt. Col. M. A. Bailey
Deputy Commander.



SQUADRON COMMANDERS
Top
Major R. M. Hackney
Major F. Parsons
Bottom
Capt. H. B. Howard (Acting)
Major R. C. Cassada
Major Leonard Kaufman





Second Birthday Celebration
25 August, 1944

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

1430 Formation for Presentation of Awards
Major General J. H. Cannon
Brig-General R. D. Knapp,

1600 Baseball Game
48 th Enlisted Men vs 48 th

1900 USO Gala Show

2000 Dance at the Officers' Club

2000 Informal Party at EM Club



DRAWINGS AND LETTERING BY

S/Sgt Caracciolo.....Gp Hq
S/Sgt Stevenson.... th Sq
Lieut Nravinec..... th Sq
S/Sgt Willock..... th Sq
S/Sgt Horry..... th Sq
Sgt Moore..... th Sq

PHOTOGRAPHIC ENLARGEMENTS BY

Corp Schneider..... th Sq

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