

HISTORICAL RECORD

379TH FIGHTER SQUADRON - 362ND FIGHTER GROUP

1 MARCH 1943 to ~~31 JANUARY 1944~~ *May - 1945*

Squadron activated at Westover Field, Mass., 1 March 1943, per par 1, General Order #7, First Fighter Command, dated 19 February 1945. Table of organizing 1/27, dated July 1942. Cadre of Enlisted men furnished by 322nd Fighter Squadron, 326th Fighter Group, Westover Field, Mass.

Squadron attached to 322nd Fighter Squadron for quarters, rations administration and duty. 1st Lt. Raymond C. Schindler Jr., A/C 0432455, assigned as adjutant, assumed temporary duty as Commanding Officer. Eight (8) Enlisted men and Two (2) Officers assigned with cadre.

Squadron mechanics and Armorer's worked on line with 326th Fighter Group; Squadron started ground training by taking aircraft recognition at Group Headquarters. Also calisthenics and drill were given in the morning. Were very fortunate in being able to draw our athletic equipment and started forming our softball team. Much competition was furnished by the Officers team.

The excitement grew as each day passed for every one knew we were preparing for overseas. Equipment started pouring in and the carpenters were kept busy building the necessary boxes for packing. The mechanics started reading tech orders on the P-47 but some of the old Army men still hoped that the rumor of getting P-51's might come true. Everyone hated the hour when Sgt. Anderson (a/c recognition flash) and Fireball Higgins announced the recognition class. Of course, everyone went for they knew the importance of the class. Cpl. Lehner, our only S-2 man was always swarmed looking over the maps trying to figure out where our group would be sent. The Squadron was well represented in Group Headquarters for our Adjutant was also Acting Group C.O. in the absence of Lt. Col. Magoffin.

On April 1st the Squadron was relieved from 322nd Fighter Squadron for rations and administration. The 377th Fighter Squadron and Group Headquarters Detachment was attached for rations. Group Headquarters Detachment was also attached for quarters. Soon afterwards an overseas physical examination was given for we thought the boat trip was near but much to our disappointment we moved across the field to a new area near the Chicopee Gate the next day. On April 7th we lost the 377th for rations and in the same week we received Captain Lester M. Chancellor AC, O-427701, who assumed command of the squadron. On the 28th of the month Capt. Chancellor was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for valorous actions in the Alaskan Defense Command where he shot down an enemy dive bomber, 4 June 1942. Troops were reviewed by Major General Ralph Royce, Commanding General, First Air Force and Eastern Defense Command.

Sqdn History Contd

Our Squadrons new area was comprised of three two-story barracks, divided into work sections; Engineers, Armorers, Ordnance and Overhead barracks. The latter being occupied by the Orderly Room, Transportation Ops, S-2 and Supply. The upper section of the Overhead barrack was turned over to Group Headquarters Detachment. Other buildings that comprised our area were the Orderly Room, Supply and Ordnance, Day Room, Infirmary and Mess Hall. We were supplied with furniture by the base QM supply and magazines by the Special Service Officer. The Day Room became a place of relaxation and in the afternoon we used it suitable for a class room. Through the month our ground training program progressed and soon the men showed improvement on their knowledge of military hygiene, first aid, and organization of the Army Air Corps.

Our training program continued thru the month of June with the Squadron receiving the familiarization course on the pistol, calibre .45, at the Westover Field range. The 20th saw the Squadron packing and turning in equipment on the big moving day June 22nd. We departed Westover Field by motor convoy, arriving at the new station, Bradley Field, Conn, Lt. Rarey, Houghton and Palmer were assigned as Flight Leaders. On the 29th we received our pilots from Westover Field of whom many already had 20-30 hours in the P-47. Those coming to our Squadron were 2nd Lts, Abdallah, Ashford, Barnes, Booth, Brooks, Doty, Farrell, Foltz, Gee (the West Pointer), Geyer, Gill, Gordon, Jensen, Kitts, Larsen, Major, Lee, McCleary, McKee, Putnam, Shumway, Sutcliffe, Wilcke and Wood. The pilots started their OTU training with various classes in weather, S-2 subjects, drill, first aid, weapons, athletics, etc. The enlisted men finished up their ground training and started work on the line. M/Sgt Cuneo in Line Chief with T/Sgts Richardson, Taylor and Morgan for Flight Chiefs. In Armament T/Sgt Cipriano is department head, Ordnance is headed by Cpl. Maxwell, Communications by S/Sgt Roz um, Tech Supply by S/Sgt Sedlock, Transportation by Sgt Lewis, Mess Hall by S/Sgt Quinn, Operations by S/Sgt Groo, Personnel Office by S/Sgt Hearn, QM by S/Sgt Heuss, Intelligence by S/Sgt Anderson and T/Sgt Kollar was in charge of Engineering Maintenance. The latter being occupied by the Orderly Room, Transportation Ops, S-2 and Supply. The upper section of the Overhead barrack was turned over to Group Headquarters Detachment. Other buildings that comprised our area were the Orderly Room, Supply and Ordnance, Day Room, Infirmary and Mess Hall. We were supplied with furniture by the base QM supply and magazines by the Special Service Officer. The Day Room became a place of relaxation and in the afternoon we used it suitable for a class room. Through the month our ground training program progressed and soon the men showed improvement on their knowledge of military hygiene, first aid, and organization of the Army Air Corps.

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There was a hustle and hurry to get their department set up. Capt. Russell and Sgt. Johnson were out trying to get furniture for the mess room, finally receiving help from the Red Cross on the field through which they obtained enough for the three Squadrons and had the 379th Fixed up in a big way.

Our area assigned at Bradley Field consisted of three barracks of the two-story type, dayroom, mess hall, supply room and orderly room. Doc Finn's infirmary located in two rooms of one of the barracks and very convenient to grab the men for their shots, so he says. An Officers' Mess was established in the Enlisted Mens Mess Hall for the noon meals because of the distance that the pilots had to go from "Skunk Hollow" to other end of the field. S-2 and S-3 were assigned a building on the line near Armament, Tech Supply and Engineering which were established in or near the hangar.

As the summer came on it was not unusual to see a new convertible driven by one of our pilots cruising around the field or Capt. Chancellor's "Blue Rocket" setting on the hill with Lt. Percy's "Red Job" that had four flats and no brakes. In the afternoon at quitting time we could see Lt. Sol Risenburg trudging up the hill thumbing a ride home and of course he wasn't in the car pool of Major Laughlin, Capt. Chancellor and Lt. Finn and had no ration coupons for gas.

In July, our hot month, the officers and enlisted men took in many swimming parties at Babbs Lake. On the other nights the men, especially the pilots, could be found in Springfield, Mass. or Hartford, Conn. taking in a dance or drinking around, though we had shows on the post and a very good post exchange.

The ground training continued with the pilots with greater effort and the obstacle course was run at least three times a week by officers and enlisted men. On July the eight the Squadron departed from the area for an overnight bivouac on the outer edge of the field. On reaching our destination we put up our pup-tents and camouflaged the area. After supper the Captain gathered the men together and sang many different songs. In the morning we had a good breakfast cooked by Cpl. Murzyn, then packed our tents and filed back to the Squadron area.

In the next few days we began receiving our planes which were transferred from Grenier Field, N.H. This month started our Group on its flying OTT training and our Squadron with its eager, wild-eyed pilots broke their necks to get in their flying. On July 16th we lost 2nd Lt. George S. Palmer while on a routine flight near the field. His plane apparently went into a compassability dive and exploded upon hitting the ground. We all expressed our deepest sympathy by sending flowers to his wife and the enlisted men sent a 75 dollar war bond to his daughter.

August found us moving again. This time to Groton Army Air Field, near New London, Conn. This was only to be a temporary change of station. We moved by motor convoy and it only took us four hours which was a record time for us. The field was in operation order so we started flying the same day with the departments setting up to start off with a bang. The field, at first, was a disappointment for there was no elaborate post exchange, theatre or transportation.

We were very fortunate in being on the coast for this. It provided an opportunity to swim and lie on the beach. Some of the pilots hunted when they were not shooting skeet. Doc Finn seemed to be our best skeet shooter with a score of three out of twenty-five (ha ha). On August 5th 1st Sgt Carberry was assigned vice S/Sgt Hopp transferred. The day our pilots will never forget is the 15th. On that day we flew 187 hours to set a new record in the New York Fighter wing. Every pilot flew at least 6 1/2 hours with Lt. Hopp flying the most with 10 1/2 hours. This month the pilots worked on night missions, gunnery, formation, navigation and instrument missions.

On the 24th the Squadron held a party for the enlisted men for their good work in maintenance and keeping the planes going. On the beach at Croton Long Point the men all had beer, cold cuts and sandwiches they wanted. Cpl. Harbyn being an old circus barker from Barnum and Bailey's furnished the entertainment. What a laugh the fellows had.

On the 6th of September we received our "Warning Orders". The pilots finished 90% of their OTU training and started taking leaves. Nearly all the enlisted men had taken theirs and some have started on their second furlough. All of the Squadron fired the rifle for qualification with 89% qualifying. The familiarization class for the carbine was also held. The enlisted men attended a five hour course at Camouflage School conducted by the Camouflage Engineers.

Through the month our Squadron could be found in their spare time over on the beach or at the Crocker House in the cool bar sipping on a beer. Sometimes the pilots ate at the famous Dean's Steak House instead of the mess hall where squash and broccoli were served every other meal. No one will forget the day Major Casey made the donuts which were very good. These wonderful days at Croton will never be forgotten by anyone.

Near the middle of October we finished our flying OTU training and were inspected by the BOM inspectors. We thought the test would be rigged but it turned out that only a few of the pilots were quiz zed on their knowledge of flying and records, training charts, etc. were looked over. The Grounds Room had their records inspected and were found to be in good shape so the Inspectors moved onto the next squadron. In the next few days General Craigie inspected and found the Squadron ready for overseas duty. The General stated that our Group finished with the best maintenance and safety record of any group to go through the Fighter Command. Our Squadron finished with an accident record of one half of one percent for accidents.

Once again the Squadron started packing for on the 19th of October we moved to Mitchel Field N.Y. The tension grew for we knew that the Group would soon be on the boat going off to fight the wars. What a feeling this was to all the men. "Uncle Joe" our C.O. could be seen looking the mens' equipment to make sure that they had the necessary articles for overseas. When not busy in the Squadron he was attending meetings at higher headquarters. Our men took to Mitchel Field right away for it is the paradise field of the Air Corps. About fifty percent of the Squadron lived in and around New York City. In the evening we could see everyone taking off for the big city to see the lights and sights. During the day the pilots flew all over the coast trying to spot some night club they hadn't visited yet. We all knew we were living the life of "Riley" and took full advantage of it.

Our officers were quartered in a two story barrack on Mitchel Field and the enlisted men were in tents at Camp Mills. All the departments had their offices in Hangar #3. Near the end of the month the mechanics started getting the planes ready for transfer but were interrupted when an order came for the planes to escort a flight of B-24's to Smyrna, Tenn. While at Smyrna the weather closed in and the pilots took in the town having a wonderful time. On the fourth day the group started back and all planes made it OK. This trip was to be their last while in the States for the planes were transferred to the 320th, 370th and 412th fighter squadrons. While at this station we lost five of our pilots who were overages: Lts. Holstrom, Kushner, Ho pe, Best and Lane. With everything ready for overseas shipment we sat back and took things easy for the next few days.

On the 12th of November we were transferred from Mitchel Field to NYPOE, Camp Shanks, N.Y. per par 41, SO 315, HQ Army Air Base, Mitchel Field, N.Y. We traveled by motor convoy through New York City to the camp. On arriving we were assigned APO #9020 and shipping #8849-FWT. The next day we were given lectures on censorship and security by Lts. Kuhn and Russell. During the week we were at Camp Shanks the Squadron was allowed fifty per cent of the men to be on pass at night. Most of the men took in the brighter spots in New York City knowing it would be last chance for a fling. During the days the time was spent taking athletics, going to the post exchange for last minute purchases and "sweating out" where we would go. Lt. Zlotnick and his supply section were kept busy packing and turning in supplies. The Squadron took training in debarkation and going over the side of a ship. In the barracks at night the officers could be found in bull sessions and card games. Lt. Rarey caught up on the Squadron Journal of sketches that he keeps on the pilots. In the mornings the officers could be seen reading the different scribblings on the latrine walls, such as; "What a hole", "We leave tonight and have had no pass", and many others too numerous to mention. On the 19th the Squadron was alerted for overseas. On the 22nd we were transferred from Camp Shanks to the transport "Queen Elizabeth" (NY-594). We departed Shanks by train with many other outfits and arrived at the 42nd Street Station, Hoboken N.J. where we boarded a ferry boat at mid-night. Zig-zagging across the river we finally came to dock at Pier #38. After debarking we had to stand in line for some time but the Red Cross saved the day by giving us hot coffee and donuts and candy bars. Finally boarding the huge ship at 0300 the enlisted men were assigned a section of "C" deck and the officers assigned by rank. Of course, the 1st Lts. had the best and through the trip their state rooms seemed like officers lounges. That night everyone had to stay in their bunks as there were many more troops to be loaded. The next morning the PA system blared out the chow call giving the numbers of the cards that were to eat at certain times. After six days this got to be an old story. At ten the next morning the officers were given a lecture on the rules and regulations of the ship. The officers, in turn, passed them on to the enlisted men. On the ship we experienced many different and new customs. First of all we met the few English crew-men and their money. By this time we all knew where we were headed which made us quite happy -Jolly England-. Everyone took the ride fairly easy but few got sea sick. During the voyage the Red Cross came through again, this time with a bag of toilet articles, cigarettes, magazines, etc. which came in mighty handy during the trip and later. On the morning of the 30th we came up the Firth of Clyde and in the distance we could see the mountains of Scotland. In the harbor there were many ships ranging in size from fishing trawlers to mighty battleships of the English Fleet. We docked in the harbor and were met by large ferry boats which took us to the docks. The 379th was very fortunate in being one of the first outfits of the ship and were one of the first outfits to land on the soil of Scotland.

Here again, we were met by the Red Cross and welcomed by a Scottish band playing their favorite tunes. They must have been in a hurry to get us out of there for we were quickly ushered to a train and on our way to USAAF Station #159, Wormingsford, Essex, England. We had our first experience with Nissen Huts and British mud in site #3 which was assigned to us for a living area.

Our first experience with the RAF came when we started drawing supplies and setting up our departments. We were assigned our new APO number which was 638 and everyone immediately started writing home to let the folks know of our safe arrival, somewhere in England. In the next few days the Squadron looked the field over and also wandered into Colchester our nearest town. Not satisfied with this they started putting in for passes to London to see the city that was supposed to equal NYC.

We all had difficulty finding our way around in the black out, at first. Gradually we became accustomed to the mud, drizzle, and damp weather, although it seems some of us will never get used to the damp weather. Some of us caught colds but good old "Doc" Finn fixed things up with his new caught medicine. The pilots and enlisted men grew tired of sitting around with nothing to do and everyone hoped that we would soon get planes and go operational.

Christmas found us rejoicing with a good dinner in both the officers and enlisted men's mess. In the afternoon Major Laughlin gave the enlisted men a talk on what to expect in the near future. Afterwards the men had beer and coco cola that was bought by the officers of the Squadron.

The first of January found us getting our planes and all the departments went to work on the line. Thirteen P-47's in all came into the Squadron and what a scramble to try and get one to fly. No missions were flown by our group but a few of our pilots were with the 355th Fighter Group; Major J.L. Laughlin - 1 mission, Captain H.F. Houghton - 3 missions, and 1st Lt. C.F. Gee - 2 missions. They came back and passed their experience on to the other pilots.

On the 2nd the Officers had their first party in the ETO. S/Sgt N. Ganun and his orchestra furnished the music and the local Colchester girls were invited. The bar was crowded until the liquor ran out. Then the dancing started with a few of the couples really cutting rugs. Recreation was limited as the Red Cross had just started to operate. The Special Service Officer was providing magazines and Stars and Stripes newspapers. Transportation is provided every night to Colchester and everyone is taking advantage of it. Three shows a week are run in the ante room of the Sgt's mess. And so passes another month with all of us hoping that we will soon go operational.

So far the living conditions for our troops are very satisfactory, but the rumor of moving into tents is spreading. Heading, we thought would be a problem in the Nissen Huts, but by scraping and scratching, we managed to see the month through without freezing. Our meals have improved to the extent that everyone thinks this is the best theater of operations to be in.

Our recreation has been limited this month because of the wet weather. February 10th was the great day for the enlisted men, for their new Aero Club opened with its first function, a dance. The local Colchester girls were invited. Music was furnished by S/Sgt Nelson Ganun and his band composed of members of this Squadron. Refreshments were served and all had a very good evening. Day by day, supplies have come and the new club has improved to the extent that they can now serve snacks in the evenings. Also games writing tables, easy chairs and stationery have been added, so now it is a place for our men to relax after a long day's work on the flying line. Both the officers and enlisted men have three movies a week provided by the Special Service Officer.

History for MARCH 1944

This month the Squadron celebrated its first birthday being one year old. Everyone was released for the day and those who did not go to Colchester or London caught up on their "sack time." Beer was provided for the evening meal in the mess hall. 2nd Lt. Edward A. Abdallah was dropped from the rolls the 11th as missing in action. 2nd Lt. Frans A. Hirt, QMC, was assigned and joined as Personal Equipment Officer on the 4th of the month. 2nd Lt. Richard J. Rosenthal, A/C was transferred to the 45th Station Complement Squadron on the 4th. Capt. Thurman F. Morrison was transferred to the 377th Fighter Squadron but was transferred back to the 379th the same month. Pfc. Cornelius Heyman who we lost at Camp Shanks before leaving the states was transferred back to us on the 7th. 2nd Lt. Vernon P. Ligon Jr. was transferred to the 379th from the 377th Fighter Squadron on the 9th. 1st Lt. Walter J. Booth was transferred to the 377th on the 9th, and 2nd Lt. Donald M. Marsden was sent to Det "Q" of the 21st Weather Squadron on the same day. On the 13th Lt. Col. Laughlin received confirmation for the destruction of an enemy LOC over Meppel, Germany on the 13 of February per Report #10, HQ IX Fighter Command. Lt. Col. Laughlin went on D/S to Italy and Capt. Ray G. Fuchs, AC, assumed command. Our APO number was changed the 29th from #638 to #535 per USSTAF Regulation #80- 2.

This month found our pilots flying twenty two (22) missions of which two were dive bombing. The line crews put in long hours and really did a fine job with no griping. They could be found on the line at five in the morning and eight at night. The Red Cross brought hot coffee and donuts out to the men on the line on several occasions and the men really appreciated this. When the Red Cross did not come to the line the line came to the Operations Snack Bar and brought hot coffee out to all the dispersal areas.

History for MARCH 1944

Every Thursday evening there is a dance at the Field Aero Club for the Enlisted men and our Squadron is usually well represented. S/Sgt GaMan of the 379th furnished the music with his band on some of the evenings and other nights civilian bands come from the neighboring towns. There are always plenty of girls who come to the dances from Colchester. There are three shows a week for the enlisted men in the Sergeants' Anti-Room with an occasional stage show. Baseball diamonds are springing up all over the field and several of the departments have organized teams. Engineering and Communications seem to be the rivals at the time. On the 15th the officers had a "Wheel and Deal" party at the Officers' Mess. They had a real good dance and local girls were invited. Lt. Col. our West Pointer, went to Italy for three weeks to observe dive bombing tactics. Everyone is still "sweating out" the invasion and wondering where we will be this time next month.

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History for MARCH 1944

APRIL 1944

The month of April found the Squadron very busy on the flying line for we flew 25 missions. This was more than the previous record of 22 flown in the month of March. We found the Squadron beginning to play its part in the war with 12 Dive Bombing missions flown in the month. It is believed that our group was the first fighter group in the ETO to carry 1000 lb. bombs from England.

The first few days of April were exciting ones. Everyone began to hear rumors to the effect that we were moving to a new base. On the fifth, the Squadron received notice that we would move to Headcorn, Station 412, on the 15th of the month. Even though we stayed in operational status up to the last day, each department managed to get packed and all were ready when the big day came. Some remarked that this was the longest the Squadron had ever stayed in one place since its activation. An advance detail was sent to the new base to make arrangements for the Squadron to move in. Tents had to be erected for quarters; mess hall facilities made ready; department tents had to be set up, and other small details attended to. After all the tents were set up, they had to be moved and dispersed.

Before moving, the Officers had a dance at the Officers Club. The local Colchester girls were invited and everyone had all the liquor they wanted. This was obvious the next morning when Group Hqtrs. called to see who let the air out of Col. Magoffin's tires. No one knew, so all Officers were confined to the base for one week. The Enlisted Men had their weekly dance at the Aero Club with music furnished by S/Sgt Gannun and his All-American band. We all got to see two shows a week and the regular convoy run to Colchester provided transportation into town each night. In the evenings, the enlisted men could be found playing baseball or passing the football. On two different occasions, the Armament and Ordnance had a hot game of soccer with Ordnance Section winning.

On April 13, half the squadron moved by train to Headcorn and the other half moved on the 15th by convoy. The pilots flew to the new base and only a few were left behind as a cleanup detail. The night of the 15th was punctuated by the return of Lt. Col. Laughlin from Italy where he had been observing dive-bombing tactics and flying missions against the enemy. Everyone was glad to see him back and eager to hear stories of what he did and saw.

During the first few days at our new station, everyone was busy getting settled in their living quarters and departments. At first we had no beds for the enlisted men, but they came in several days later. The officers had electric lights and the men had candles. W/O Abrams soon hooked up a loud speaker and we all had music. Once or twice we got to hear a baseball game from the good old USA. At first we found this new outdoor life hard, but soon adjusted ourselves to washing and shaving in cold water in a helmet. Food tasted much better than back at Wormingford perhaps it was because we had our own Squadron mess and our own cooks preparing it. The Orderly Room had a Command Tent and a van. The Mess Hall had two large walls tents for cooking and a store room. A Mess Tent was set up for the officers and one for the Enlisted Men.

The pilots didn't seem to mind the change of runways and perimeter strips although the wire netting was rather tough on the belly tanks. Sometimes it was hard to take off with two thousand pound bombs or two wing tanks because of the short runways. Lt. Wood learned this on the 27th when he crashed at the end of the runway while lugging two, one thousand pound bombs. He walked away from the wreck with only a bruised neck. The plane was a total wreck, but all was well when the pilot came back safely. On the 29th of April, Capt. Morrison crashed on take off while carrying two wing tanks. He reached the end of the runway without leaving the ground and hit a gas dump causing the dump to explode. The plane slid on by spreading the gas in its wake. When the plane reached a standstill, the fire had followed and was beginning to burn the plane. Two enlisted men from an Anti-Aircraft unit dashed from their tent and while one threw dirt on the flames, the other used a pickaxe to break the canopy and pulled the pilot out to safety. Had it not been for these two men, the pilot would have been badly burned, but as it was, he escaped without a scratch. We were all thankful because the Squadron had previously lost Lt. Kitts on April 8th and Lt. Ligon on the 24th. Lt. Kitts was killed while on a strafing mission in the Rouen area. Lt. Larson saw him try to bail out of his shot-up ship, but as he stood up in the cockpit, the wind blew him out against the tail section and he went down without opening his chute. Lt. Ligon bailed out after his ship had been hit by flak while dive-bombing the M/Y at Malines. Capt. Flavin saw his chute open at 6000 feet about five miles south of Malines.

On April 26th, Lt. Col. Laughlin who had been our Commanding Officer of the Squadron since its infancy was transferred to Group Hq. as Flying Executive officer. Capt. William J. Flavin, who had been with the Squadron as Flight Commander of "A" Flight became CO. As much as we hated to see Col. Laughlin leave us we were glad to hear that he would keep his Thunderbolt "Mr 5 by 5" in our Squadron and still fly with us.

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HISTORY FOR MAY 1944

This month found the Squadron still at Sta 412, Headcorn, England. On the 10th of the month, 19 a/c were despatched on D/B mission to Reims, Champagne airdrome. This mission was led by Capt. Flavin. The Squadron strafed the airdrome after it was bombed. Lt. Larsen damaged a JU 88 and Lt. Putnam damaged a DO 217. We suffered a great loss when our Operations Officer, Captain Houghton, was hit by flak while strafing and was seen to crash on the airdrome.

Men continued to receive passes to London and many brought back souvenirs from there. Most of the fellows went into Maddstone after flying hours. The town was about 12 miles from the field. A large number of men were seen at the famous Starhouse dancehall, where there was plenty of fine music and women. Drinks could be purchased at the bar or could be ordered at the table. Hence, we come to that old saying "Plenty of wine, women and song." What more could a man ask for? When the fellows didn't care to dance, they would be seen in the park on the outskirts of the town. There was a large canal running through there and the men would hire row-boats and explore the area surrounding the place.

During the month, an order was issued telling the men to move on the line near the aircraft. Everyone took down their tents in the former living area, and proceeded to move their personal belongings on the line. A great majority found belly tank boxes and made comfortable little shacks out of them. There were usually two to four men living in one of these shacks. The remaining few who did not have a shack, set up their pup tents and used it for sleeping quarters.

The S-2 and S-3 personnel had three shacks set up near the Operations and pilot's tents and had a sign in front reading "Number Ten Lullaby Lane." The credit for this idea goes to S/Sgt Richard D. Groo.

On the whole these shacks proved to be quite comfortable and served the purpose very well.

A group of English soldiers were stationed a few yards away and every so often they would come over and tell us of their experiences.

When the weather was warm you could see the men boiling their clothes outside their huts, as there was no base or squadron laundry facilities.

With the month drawing to a close, the personnel were still "sweating out" the invasion and knew it wasn't too far away. Pocks were started and men selected the day that they thought it would take place. Most of the boys selected anywhere from June 14 to the 1st of July. Perhaps a day in June will prove to be D-Day....who knows...time will tell.

JUNE 1944

With the invasion not yet started, the tense attitude of the Squadron mounted. The first three missions of the month were uneventful, but were eagerly flown by the pilots. The great day of June 5th arrived and what a long one it was for everyone. In the afternoon Col. Magoffin visited the Squadron and gave a pep talk and told that the invasion was not far off. Later in the evening, word came from Group Operations that there would be a briefing at seven o'clock for pilots and intelligence officers only. We had to make a wild dash into town to pick up three pilots who were on a day off. They barely made it and had to enter the back door of the briefing room because of the crowd. The three knew that something was up because of the guards posted all over the operations area. Upon entering, the pilots heard our Wing Commander Col. Saunders say "this is it." This could mean nothing else but the invasion was beginning, and wished us all the best of luck. Next, Col. Magoffin gave us a brief talk on what to expect. Major Goldfarb gave an outline on what had been happening in the last few months to enable the Allies to start the second front. The big story came when the ALO officers brought in their maps and started to explain what was to take place, where we would land and the number of troops employed in the landing. The most important event took place when our group was given its assignment. We found ourselves to be a Readiness Group and could be called upon for any kind of mission. The ALO's also told us we would have a maximum of four missions a day for four days and three missions a day for the next eleven days. This was just what the pilots were looking for.....MISSIONS, MISSIONS AND MORE MISSIONS.

Before finishing up at 11:30, the pilots were told of the alert system. The squadron was to be on the runway ready to take off, one squadron on fifteen minute alert, and the other squadron on one hour alert.

The next morning, June 6th, our Squadron was out bright and early, but no news had been broadcast. Not much information was available at the ALO's office, but everyone hung around there anyhow and had radios blasting trying to find out how it was going. All they could get was "Axis Sally", singing the invasion song over Calais. No word of a mission had been received when General Eisenhower announced the much awaited, for the invasion had started at six thirty this morning. About that time, the S-2 officers were going around to each flight and section to pass along the word on what was taking place.

No mission came in all that day, but we drew a hard assignment for that night we were to take off and escort C-47's pulling gliders to the beach-head. At first we thought the mission would be a hard one, but on the return the pilots said nothing much had happened.

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June Cont'd

In the next few days, we began piling up on missions, but without loss. One of our original pilots, Lt. "Ted" Jensen, was our first loss...he did not return from a dive-bombing mission to Argentan, France area. The last flight of the Squadron was bounced by twelve or more FW 190's. Lt. Putnam got in a few bursts and claimed one destroyed. Lts. Wilcke and Putnam both had holes in their ships. On June 17th on another dive bombing mission to the western part of Cherbourg Peninsula, Lts. Lee, Gordon, and Fredenberg failed to return to base. No one saw them after they were headed out after dropping their bombs. We were all hoping they were safe. (All three returned later after bailing out and walking back through the lines). Lt. Larsen, on another dive-bombing mission to Chinsey, France accounted for another Jerry. This time it was an ME 109 flying on the deck. Lt. Larsen made a pass without releasing his bombs. In addition to destroying two planes the Squadron accounted for many trucks, staff cars, locomotives and railroad cars, bridges railway tracks and troops. On one mission, Lt. McKee saw a truck from 2000 feet loaded with German soldiers. Making one pass he blew up the truck and not one soldier escaped. He estimated there was about 20 soldiers on the truck.

A lot of excitement developed when the Germans started their "robot planes" or "doodle-bugs" as the Yanks called them over England. Sometimes at night, it was like the 4th of July. When the flak started falling in the Squadron area, one could see our medics, including Capt. Finn our Medical Officer, heading for their fox-holes. At first all the bugs seemed to get away, but the planes are shooting many of them down now, and once in a while, an ack-ack gunner gets lucky and knocks one down.

Our enlisted men have been doing a good job keeping the planes in the air. Often we could see the Armament and Engineering Sections working at all hours of the night hanging bombs or repairing the planes for the next mission. During the first week of the month, Sgt. Grant Radaker saved the lives of many of the men when he pulled a fuse out of a bomb just as it was about to detonate. The fuse exploded and a piece hit him in the thigh. He is now on the way to recovery and we hope he will come back soon. For his deed he has been awarded the Soldiers Medal.

Another incident occurred during the month when Sgt. Clifford Douglas started to inflate a tail wheel tire on the ship he was crewing. A defective rim blew off, hitting his forehead and blowing off his left thumb at the joint. He also received many small cuts and bruises. Fourteen stitches were required to seal the cut on his forehead. After treatment in the Squadron Infirmary he was taken to the hospital and from there back to the States.

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HISTORY

JULY 1944

On the first of the month, the Group was alerted to move. There was nothing for the Squadron to do but prepare. First of all, every department drew fibre boxes and started marking symbols on the front. Beside packing and getting ready to move we continued to stay on ops, and what a job this was. Finally the word came on July 2nd for the Air Echelon to move. There was much excitement caused by the idea of going to France. Some wondered if the snipers had been cleaned out and if the troops were being bombed or strafed. Many rumors were floating around to this effect.

The air echelon vehicles left our field (412) about 5 o'clock in the morning and drove all day to Southampton, the Marshalling area. The air echelon marching party arriving at night in Southampton, where they were met by special M.P.'s who directed them to Camp C-7. There the men drew their equipment such as P.X. rations, lost field equipment and attended a briefing on what to expect in France. Exactly 24 hours later they boarded a boat and left jolly Old England, much to the men's disappointment. The men were kept in a transit area in France for three days. Finally they were awakened the third morning and everyone got into the trucks. "Gee", one whispered "I wonder where to now." Two hours later he found out as the trucks pulled into what was supposed to be strip A-12.

The first day over men found an ammunition dump with enormous amount of lumber in it. With two trucks they hauled it back to the Squadron area and started building small huts. First they dug their fox holes and then build their huts over them. After everything was finished, the men threw the excess dirt against the sides of the huts. Some obtained sand bags and after filling them with dirt, they piled them up against the huts.

Soon after finishing their huts, the men were wandering around talking to the engineers that were building the air strip. It wasn't long before rumors were floating around everywhere. It seems as though all one had to do was stick his hand into thin air and he had a hot rumor. The ones that were the hottest were about the snipers being around the field and also about being bombed and strafed. They traveled so fast that within two days the rumors were back to the men in the ground echelon in 412.

Some wondered what they had dug their fox holes for but it wasn't long before they found out. On the fourth or fifth not after arriving, the field was shelled. What a scare this was! The men didn't move to their fox holes at first but after hearing the whistle and then the boom, they were like gophers. Some said their hole wasn't deep enough but there was nothing to do but stay in there till after the shelling. It was coming from a high hill about three miles away we thought. Some weren't sure though, for the strip was surrounded on three sides by the Germans.

The next day everyone could be found digging. I heard one sergeant say that he would be digging from now on to get away from that awful whistle and the bang. Some of the men were even dragging huge logs to put over the tops of their fox hole.

As the days went by, the strip began to look like an airfield. The different departments were waiting for the planes to come over. New roads were being made to the chow house and sleeping area. The chow wasn't too good but it served the purpose. The Squadron was lucky on the water problem for we had a well next to the mess hall. The "Doc" tested it and gave his OK to use it. Preparations continued on the air strip and finally the engineers finished the runways and perimeters.

July cont'd

Meanwhile back at Station 412 in England, the Ground Echelon continued to keep the Group on Ops. Our first mission of the month resulted in the loss of 1st Lt. Kenneth McCleary in the Rouen area. It was believed that he was attacked by Me 109s. We all have hopes of his returning. On the 7th we lost Lt. Barnes in the Derval area. It was believed he was killed.

On the 8th, while on an Armed Recce East of Paris, the Squadron was told over the R/T that bandits were following them. Around the Bruges area the Squadron attacked 25 plus ME 109's. Lt. Nagelstadt, Wilcke and Sullivan claimed one damaged apiece, while Lt. Wilcke claimed two damaged beside the destroyed. On this mission Lt. I.L. Taylor did not return.

The ground echelon continued to work, worry and also hear rumors that were floating back from France. Up to the time we received orders to move, the Squadron conducted 15 Armed Recce missions in France on M/Ys, railroad tracks, gun positions and targets of opportunity. Finally on July 15th we received notice that we would move out on the 17th. Early in the morning of that day, the moving party headed by Major French, started off and ended up in Easterleigh near Southampton. They were met by M.P.'s and directed to Camp C-4. The ground echelon headed by Lt. Russell and 133 enlisted men left Headcorn at 6:30 arriving at Easterleigh 10:30. We were met by M.P.'s and directed to trucks. After much confusion we loaded and started off. The convoy leader got lost so we wandered around over the country till 2:45 in the morning, finally reaching camp and after much griping we found the locations of our tents and hit the sack. Everyone was up by eight the next morning for there was a lot to be done. Getting rations, lost field equipment and briefing. After this was all done and dinner through, the men found the showers. What a relief this was to get a hot shower in a real honest to-goodness shower house.

At first we had hopes of moving out in twenty-four hours and had heard rumors to the effect that no outfit had been in the marshalling area over 48 hours. Evidently higher headquarters had forgotten us for nothing happened in the 48 hours. Our men had heard so many rumors that they were beginning to spread them. After 132 hours spent in the area and everyone had more than rested up, we were moved out and down to the harbor in Southampton. Then after several hours of waiting, we boarded the boat Neuralia, which had been a troop carrying ship before the first war. Pushing off from there, at four we docked off the Isle of Wight still two the next morning. Leaving there we arrived on the Omaha Beach-head about two. We unloaded on an L.S.T. by Jacob's ladders and what an experience this was! One man, Cpl. Golob lost his helmet. After getting half way down, he looked on down to see if the boat was still there. Off came his helmet. After reaching the bottom he was wondering how he could retrieve it. Getting ashore was not hard but the long high hill that we had to climb on the landing strip was terrible. Not only did we have to contend with stops and starts about every 15 seconds, but near the top it started raining and made the walk slippery. Finally after walking for a mile and a half we came to site E-4. Here we camped for the night.

Getting up early the next morning we all had K rations for breakfast. After packing and policing the area, we waited for the trucks to come. At two they arrived and we loaded onto them.

On reaching A-12, we were met by the Squadron and many wild stories of what had been going on. Some of the rumors we had heard previously seemed to be true. Everyone was taken to the squadron area, and Capt. Hanna proceeded to tell the men what to expect and what to do for the next few hours. Of course....everyone started digging.

July cont'd

The planes had already arrived and had flown several missions. The pilots seemed more eager than ever, being so close to the enemy. The equipment was being brought over by C-47's and some had already arrived.

The first night the ground echelon was at A-12, we received a bombing. Everyone took to their fox holes and nothing seemed to happen, except that the runway was hit.

On the 27th we received another shelling at four in the afternoon. T/Sgt Hartman was killed even though he was in a shallow fox hole. One of the planes received a direct hit. That night we received another shelling at 2200. Also about one o'clock that night we received a bombing with frags. Through out the rest of the month it was a usual occurrence for us to be bombed or shelled. Though it came quite often we lost no one else, although several EM were wounded.

This month we received 2nd Lts. J.D. Thwing, J.C. Taylor, P.M. Ploche re, R.L. Spillee, R.W. Percy, and F/O M.K. Swafford.

AUGUST 1944

The month of August found the Squadron working harder than ever. Besides keeping the ships in condition for 44 missions, the men were still "sweating out" the shellings and air raids. However, for the short stay we had at A-12 and thanks to the British offensive South and East of our field, all came through without injury.

We were soon to live up to all we were told about moving. On the 8th we got a teletype stating that we were moving on the 10, 11th, and 12th. On the 9th, Lt. Putnam and a detail of enlisted men left by truck for A-27, Rennes Municipal Airfield. This was also in a different section of the land of "Sunny France", the Brittany Peninsula. It was here that all the men found the cognac, wine and champagne that they heard so much about and never seen. Also the rare delicacy in food, which taste we had almost forgotten called steak, was found in abundance. Even though Rennes stayed "Off Limits" during the month, everyone found many cafes near the field and in the small villages. However, it was a good thing that eggs were plentiful because the meals fell off. Plenty of fresh vegetables were to be found and they were used as the backbone to every meal. These gardens had been planted by the "Jerries" in their four year stay. With "Tex" Murzyn taking over the Mess Hall, the appearance and taste of the meals seemed to take a turn for the better. He became the number one scavenger of food in the Squadron.

It seemed so much different to everyone after the move. Although the field had been badly damaged by Allied bombers, the Engineers had one runway repaired and ready for use upon our arrival. The big difference was the immensity of the field; larger than Mithel Field in the States. The officers took over the Officers club left by the "Jerries" in their hurried retreat, complete with bar. It wasn't long before they were drinking all the champagne, wine and anything else that suited their fancy. They also took over a large barracks with a bit of Germanic atmosphere about it, for it was used by the Luftwaffe pilots and officers. With a bit of cleaning it was really very presentable, and a treat since it was the first time they had slept in anything other than a tent since April. To everyone's sorrow, the showers had been demolished by the "Jerries" before they left. The first day everyone found a perfect substitute in the form of six swimming holes - formerly rock quarries. With the weather being the hottest the Squadron had experienced since they left the States, a large representation could be found at each pool every evening and when the missions were out. This was also the first swimming we had done since leaving the shores of good old USA.

After three days of setting up departments in old houses and buildings on the field, word was received that Lt. Col. Laughlin was to be our new Group Commander as Col. Magoffin was listed as MIA since August 10th, while the Air Echelon was moving. It was a break for all as Col. Laughlin was our former C.O. and very well liked by all. It made everyone happy that an outsider wasn't moved in. However, it did prevent him from going to the States on a 30 day leave. Our Squadron was very fortunate in having four of our pilots go home, namely, Capt. Geyer, Peterson, Major Flavin and Lt. Doty. They were to leave on August 13th for England and from there to go where everyone has hopes of going....HOME.

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Sqdn History August Cont'd

Major Flavin, however, remained to help Col. Laughlin with his work, which was really appreciated by all especially the new C.O. After collecting many phone numbers and addresses and packing, the three pilots left with happy expressions on their faces and disappointment of other pilots faces as word came through that there would be no more 30 day leaves. With the remaining "Old Pilots" pushing the 200 hour mark or better, it was a bitter blow. Never-the-less all took it well as the "Fortunes of War."

Probably one of the biggest morale builder features was the fact that we were once again drinking beer. It was German beer purchased at the brewery in Remes, but it was more like beer we could remember and not the "mild and bitters" to which we were accustomed to drinking in England. With the fellows "chipping in" we were getting beer everyday for about a week until the Army took over the brewery.

And even though the opportunity presented itself so lusciously for us to leave the field so much, we were quite careful about it for there were still snipers in the woods near the base. Helmets, guns, etc. were always in order.

All in all, with the bombs empty bottles etc. left by Jerry, all anyone could say was, "Jerry sure had a fat life here for four years."

About this time Private Lang decided to see what the outlying district looked like, so with an empty carbine and a stomach full of liquor he left on the 15th of August and hasn't returned yet. Now everyone is wondering whether a sniper got him or not. The general opinion is 50-50 either way.

Wherever there is fun and laughter, there are also heartaches, for while at A-12, we lost several pilots who were unable to enjoy the remaining luxuries of "Herman the German". The pilots were Lts. Farrell, Wellek, Wilcke, and Wood. With Lt. Farrell and Wilcke getting out O.K. (Lt. Farrell a P/W and Lt. Wilcke being returned to the hospital) Lt. Wellek was never heard from again and Lt. Wood was killed about one mile from the base while attempting to land in very thick weather on his return from a "support" mission. To him, all we can say is, "A grand guy missed by all."

Without a doubt the highlighting occasion of the month was the speech to the pilots by Air Chief Marshall Trafford Leigh Mallory, the Deputy Commander of SHAFF, on August 27th, congratulating them on the work they had done to date as fighter and fighter-bomber pilots. Another highlighting occasion was the awarding of the Distinguished Flying Cross to four of our pilots and pilots of the other two Squadrons and groups nearby. Those from our Squadron presented with the medal by Major General Vandenberg, with Brigadier General Weyland as a member of the decorating party, were Major Flavin, Captain Morrison, Captain Ashford and Lt. Putnam. After numerous pictures being taken of the Generals and Generals and pilots, everyone again returned to their normal duties. Also presented at another time were Purple Hearts to four of the enlisted men wounded at A-12 by shell fire, luckily all not badly. Everyone says the Purple Heart is a medal they will freely do without.

During the latter part of the month, many new additions in pilots were assigned to the Squadron. These are: Captains Junkin and Mitchell, Lts. Kusi, Fegan, Chermak, Lieberman, McMahon, Peyton, also assigned was Lt. Belden, a new engineering officer. We did lose, Lt. Russell, who became the Squadron S-2 of the 377th Squadron on the 29th of the Month.

Three more of the pilots were promoted during the month, namely Figgis Savage, and Sullivan all to First Lieutenant.

Sqdn History August Contd

August was a month of wonderful experiences and a month that the Squadron enjoyed as they encountered the enemy many times with seven enemy aircraft destroyed by Capt. Peterson, and Ashford and Lt. McKee, Geyer, Wood, Hamby, Taylor and Major. Lt. Savage scored a probable. Also during the month the Squadron accounted for the following: 77 trucks destroyed, 3 half-tracks destroyed, 10 tanks destroyed and 4 damaged, 18 gun emplacements destroyed and 4 damaged, 3 railway engines destroyed, 75 box cars destroyed, 7 barges destroyed and 4 damaged, 6 barges damaged, 1 (10,000) ton transport destroyed, 2 (500 ton) transports destroyed.

The morale of the Squadron remained high. The men lived in tents as there was no need for fox holes at A-27, so no jumpy nerves. Liquor flowed freely and good swimming and plenty of beautiful girls were around throughout the day. The road cutting across the field was constantly filled with people on Sundays. During the week, one could see people throughout the day traveling on their bicycles. With the people being more friendly than in Normandy, a person saw some of the movie scenes such as throwing flowers as the soldiers passed down the road come true. So with Brittany living up to its publicity of being famous for some of the "most beautiful" girls in the world and with seeing them on Sunday and once in awhile during the week, everyone was quite happy and sing out "Ooh-la-la." That and the loud speakers in the flights and living area; a soft-ball league; and other recreational facilities made all very much satisfied as could be expected under the circumstances. The 379th was very proud in completing so many missions and really doing their part in bringing this to an end as soon as possible in order that each member might soon see and be able to say one word that is constantly in each mans heart, mind and lips...HOME!!!

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Sqdn History August Contd

HISTORICAL SUMMARY FOR MONTH OF SEPTEMBER 1944

It seems as though each month that the history is to be written, the first thing mentioned is moving, and this month is no exception. The latter part of the month found us on our way to A-79 (Reims, France).

Up till then the Squadron kept operating at Brest trying to reduce the city to a rubble and kill Germans so that all our efforts might be swung to the East chasing the Hun. The weather treated us very nice for every one kept in getting their swimming and companionship with the lovely mademoiselles of Rennes and surrounding countryside.

Our move this time was a long one and the only reason anyone cared to make it was due to the Champagne that flows so freely around Reims. The greatest share of the move was made by C-47's and the Group's AT-26.

However, the air echelon had their usual amount of fun and heart aches for Major Morrison was C.O. of it. It was during this month that he made Major, Lt. Shumway Captain, and Lt. Hirt 1st Lt.

We also received a new C.O., Major Berry Chandler. Major Flavin went to Group as Group Operations Officer. Other changes in personnel were Lt. Meryweather coming from Group as Adjutant, Capt. Hanna becoming Squadron Executive Officer and Major French going to Group as Group Executive officer. Lt. Hirt took the job as assistant S-2.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 1944

During the month of October the 379th Fighter Squadron continued to support the 3rd Army and destroying enemy means of transporting war materials to their front lines and destroying enemy aircraft.

However, it was one month that we did not have to do any moving, which to everyone was a great relief. We were really situated in the heart of the champagne country, where it was literally so plentiful that one could take a bath in it. No one was caught short by not having enough to drink. There were several small villages by the field that harbored many grape pickers. So the men of the Squadron had many dates with the mademoiselles. Although one serious thing resulted from the above. Most of the men would not believe what they read about V.D. The V.D. rate showed a sharp incline during the month.

The men were kept busy for we had "beau coup" rain and mud. When they weren't busy working on the line, it was building walks in the living area. After that with cold weather setting in, we were very fortunate in finding some barracks that the Germans had occupied only about five miles from the strip. So then details of men started the task of tearing them down, transporting them and rebuilding them. The one large improvement being a large barracks converted into a mess hall. Every section and department also found pre-fabricated buildings of all types and moved them and set them up for the Orderly Q.M. Supply, Engineering and Tech Supply together, Armament etc. With wood available and plenty of Jerry stoves it did much to raise the morale of the enlisted men. Another thing that most of the men found was inner spring mattresses to use thanks to the leaving of them behind by the jerries.

The movies were plentiful. With the officers living in the Chateau, they had them on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights. The EM's on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturdays. However the smallness of the tent and number of men, it was mandatory that they be there at least one hour before starting time to get in. Two shows helped to relieve the congestion somewhat.

Convoys were started to Reims every nite. Many men took advantage of this to go to the clubs and visit the Wacs.

Another thing was that many of the men went to the famous Reims Cathedral on Sundays to mass.

During the month, we had one mission that made us quite world famous. The Dieuze Dam must be blown in such a way so as not to have all the water gush forth at once. It normally was a job for heavy bombers due to the structure of the dam. However, Higher Headquarters was afraid that they would not get the pin point accuracy that was required. Mediums were also considered but decided against. Was then that the General called upon this Group to do the job. So with Colonel Laughlin leading our Squadron, the mission took off with 1000 lbs. bomb under each wing. On the rain soaked tar paper, not one failed to take off. That alone was really an accomplishment. Then after reports were in from the interrogation, we found that the dam had been bombed as wished. For this the Squadrons and Group received many commendations including Lt. General Patton and Brigadier General Weyland. It saved a division of ours and prevented the Hun from flooding territory valuable to us.

Although everyone had much mud to contend with, spirits remained high for pilots could go to Paris on leave and everyone had champagne "galore". Not the beautiful girls as at Rennes, but many women and sights to see from the last war. So everyone continued to do their utmost towards winning the war.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY FOR NOVEMBER 1944

This month found the Squadron once again on the move trying to keep up with General Patton. With the most suffering being done by the officers, for it meant going back to living in tents after the Chateau life. Also the enlisted men having to leave the mess hall after using it for about two weeks.

The air echelon was busy packing on the 7th and 8th, leaving the 9th for Strip A-82 at Etain, France. No one was too eager to move for it had been raining for several days and meant driving about 75 miles in the rain. And upon arrival it meant a lot of hard work of putting up tents and buildings, and doing such in mud about knee deep. It meant hauling the mess hall from the other field and lumber and flooring from wherever one could find it.

With the aid of the Engineers on the field we managed to locate a German dump of building material about 30 miles away. So flooring was hauled for all tents, and also siding. Rock was hauled to build walks, and fuel for the stoves was also hauled. This came from front line positions and several times from places under shell fire.

The pilots and S-2 & S-3 personnel build a pilots room and parachute room. The departments set up their line buildings, and after a couple of weeks the place began to look like something even if the mud was still as deep as always, and still having much rain.

The communications men put lights in the tents and that did much to help relieve the poor spirits of all.

On the 19th, the planes and Ground Echelon came. They were really a down-hearted bunch when they saw all of the mud. However, they soon became accustomed to it and were wallowing as well as the rest.

On the 23rd, the cooks set out a delicious turkey dinner and that really did more to raise the morale than anything.

In the air, we still continued to destroy much of the enemy on every mission.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY FOR MONTH OF DECEMBER 1944

With the holiday of Thanksgiving already passed, everyone started seriously thinking of the forthcoming Holidays. However, it wasn't with very much zest that we looked ahead, as it would mean the second Xmas overseas and away from our loved ones. Although the first arrival of packages did much to relieve some of the tension, and again in some cases increase it. Mostly though, it made up for the mud that everyone was still walking, working and living in, for no matter where you went it was at least four to six inches deep. The men did build walks around their area and between the tents. One walk was not finished for about a week so an unnoticed inspection to us was conducted by Major Berry Chandler, our Squadron C.O. and it did not meet with his approval. One night after supper, with the aid of flashlights, all the Enlisted Men turned out to finish the walk. With an axe detail to cut the logs to hold the gravel in place, and a bucket brigade to transport the gravel, the walk was finished in a few hours to the tune of much "bitching" and laughter.

The big thing was the lowness of the morale, due to the mud. The completion of the Mess Hall did much to relieve the situation. The Mess Hall was transported from our last field and showed signs of tearing apart and rebuilding. This was completed under the direction of Lt. Taylor, for taking a trip without anyone's knowledge. The carpenters were put under the direction of Lts. Sovern and Rescher to build an Officers Club and Mess Hall combined as an addition to the regular Mess Hall. It included a bar, home made fireplace out of armour plating from German planes lying around the field, and rocket tubes as stovepipe. With the addition of hand made tables and chairs from a French lumber mill, both mess halls were put in shape. Then a detail got some overstuffed furniture and the Officers Club was completed.

At this time Major Chandler inaugurated Sunday night meetings of the enlisted men. These were held in the Mess Hall and consisted of listening to all "bitches" of the men, and then proceeded to tell and show them, with the aid of a map, the past weeks happenings and doings of the Squadron in aerial warfare. The first one proved to be very interesting. The mail situation, in the form of censorship was straightened out, and the appointment of Captains Finn and Kuhn to be the I.G.'s of the Squadron. Also the Squadron Commanders policies were fully outlined and understood by all concerned, and everyone left feeling much better.

It could be readily seen as the month passed by that the War Department's pledge of trying to have all the Xmas parcels delivered by Xmas was really being done. The parcels really started to pour in, but the lettermail dropped to almost nil. About once a week a small bunch of "V-Mail" would come in. After the receipt of packages for a couple of weeks and no letters, everyone then started to wish for letters and no parcels. This went to prove the old saying that "you can't satisfy all at once."

During the month it was decided to have a Christmas party, to be strictly G.I. The officers were invited to put on a skit, but the invitation was met with no response. They each contributed to buying five barrels of beer offered at the party. The show, under the direction of Lt. Grim and his assistant, Mr. Abrams, proved to be well worth each man's effort expended as it was filled with laughter.

Sqdn History December cont'd

Much credit must also go to Sgt. Winter, Cpl. Higgins and Cpl. Horowitz for the writing and getting the men together. Also T/Sgt GaNun and his orchestra who furnished the accompaniment and a few numbers of his own. Playing to a full house on Dec 23rd, with the "S.R.O." sign hanging hours before the curtain time it was widely acclaimed by all critics and people attending. With the theme of the show centering around amusing incidents happening in various departments, and the ribbing of officers, everyone left remarking of the quality of the cast and performance.

On Christmas day, everyone found time to attend church. The Catholics were unable to hold a mid-night mass, but had a High Mass at 0830 and two others on both days. The Protestants also had two services on both days.

Before Christmas, the "Hun" surprised everyone with his so-called and hoped for last "all out attempt". There was never a doubt in the minds of those over here of the Yanks stopping it. All everyone wished for was clear flying weather. On Saturday, Dec. 23rd it arrived and the pilots eagerly took off to add their "all out effort" in stopping his advance and turn it into the disastrous last attempt gamble of the German High Command. With everyone constantly asking the A.L.O.'s for any information, the pilots upon return from the missions, everyone managed to keep well informed of the progress being made. It also brought the Hun forth with his remaining Luftwaffe. On Dec. 26th, our Squadron had its best day with nine (9) aircraft (FW 190's) destroyed and two (2) damaged with the loss of one of our aircraft as the pilot returned safely after belly-landing in friendly territory. It was also high-lighted by the fact that eight (8) of our P-47's against 25-40 of their 190's. Lt. Fegan got one of his when he jettisoned his bombs "armed" and caught it in the blast. The day before, Capt. Peterson, our new C.O. got himself an ME 109 without firing a shot. After he got his tail the E/A belly-landed and the remains then strafed on the ground.

Major Chandler, our C.O., was moved to Group as Flying Executive after the loss of Lt. Col. Harbison and was Acting Group Commander until the return of Col. Laughlin from the States. Capt. Doty became Operations Officer after the loss of Capt. Mitchell on a Close Support Mission over Germany. Major Chandler was lost on Dec. 26th while leading our Squadron.

The Squadron really took a very active part in the air war to help stem the advance of the German counter offensive. Although the "Hun" proved to have brought along with him his best AA, for they really "clobbered" our airplanes. There was one day we couldn't fly as most of our planes were out for battle damage.

However, we more than took our share of damage inflicted upon the enemy. During the month Generals Saunders and Weyland decorated the pilots and enlisted men in the Group. Capt. Peterson received the Silver Star, Capt. Peterson and Doty received clusters to the D.F.C., Lts. Taylor, Hamby Brokaw, and Sullivan received the D.F.C. itself. M/Sgt Cipriano, M/Sgt Rozum, T/Sgt GaNun, T/Sgt Harrington, T/Sgt Morger, S/Sgt Osborne and S/Sgt Groo received the Bronze Star Medal.

Capt. Sullivan was probably the happiest man during the month, for one afternoon he completed his 100th mission, and the next day received his orders for a leave and promotion to Captain.

The month ended with everyone looking forward to victory in 1945.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY 1944

During the month the Squadron suffered its most severe losses. A Squadron Commander, Capt. C.A. Peterson, and four other pilots were lost on one mission. Even with such great losses the Squadron continued to operate and take more than its share of the destruction of the enemy.

With the Historic battle of the bulge going on, our pilots and planes continued to fly all day and practically every day and many times in weather that normally would permit no flying. Also during the month we engaged the Luftwaffe in the air for the biggest day the Squadron had ever enjoyed. When eight of our a/c bounced 40 plus 109's and came home with eight enemy a/c destroyed for the loss of one plane and no pilots. Lt. Sloan bailed in on our front lines and returned about 3 days later but did cause some anxious moments during that time as no one actually knew what had happened to him.

The weather continued to be cold and snowy. Much ice and wind throughout the month. However with our coal details making numerous trips we had plenty of coal and coke to burn. Also had electricity 24 hours a day as we have a high power tension line running thru our area. The French gave us a transformer and we hooked onto it.

Much time was spent in the tent and sack by everyone. On Saturday and Sunday nights we continued to have combat film and movies for the Squadron in the Mess Hall. On Sunday nite before the movie we would have a Squadron meeting where the C.O. would go over the weeks operations for the enlisted men. In addition to this one evening a Lt. from an armoured division talked to all about Bastogne and the bulge and how they operate which proved to be very interesting.

The operations clerks and S-2 clerks with the aid of the carpenter built an office building onto the pilots rooms and the departments moved from the vans where they were operating.

One van was given to Communications for their switch board and message center and the other to Transportation for an office. The building was a great improvement for room and warmth. A partition was put up for the C.O.'s office.

During the month Lt. Richardson bailed out and was picked up by an infantry patrol. It left him with a lame leg and a hemorrhage of an eye. At the end of the month he and Lt. Sloan went to the states R & R, they both were promoted to captains before they left.

FEBRUARY 1945

The month of February found our Squadron at the same station A-82. The weather was continually getting colder and windy all the time but the personnel didn't seem to mind at all for every tent had a pot-belly stove with "beau-coup" coal and coke to burn. With boards along the sides of the tent to winterize it, living conditions were all the more comfortable.

Men continued to receive two day passes to visit various parts of France, except the towns that were "off limits." Most of the men applied for passes back to Reims as many were friendly with French mademoiselles back there. Pilots continued to receive flak leaves to Paris and also the Riviera. days of the

During the first few months the outfit was rather low on operational aircraft, so four planes flew with 377th and four with 378th until there were enough to have a mission from our own squadron. On the 6th of the month we had 16a/c which flew a/r in Trier area. The damage they inflicted upon the enemy compensated for the unoperational days.

The GLO's usually held a situation briefing for all pilots every so often to keep them up-to-date on the war. On the 7th, Capt. Corbin and Duby gave the latest information concerning the front line status, bomb ~~lines~~ lines on all fronts, places where allied patrols are located, German strongpoints and many other items of military value.

The 7th of February 1945, marked the completion of one year operational activity. Lt. Col. Bradley, who was acting Group C.O. in place of Col. Laughlin, sent a commendation to all personnel congratulating them on their tenacity, team-work, and willingness to do a job, and do it well. The commendation showed the Groups totals for the years operational time, sorties flown, bomb tonnage on target area, and totals of all enemy a/c vehicles, locomotives, AA guns etc. damaged and destroyed for the year.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY FOR MARCH 1945

March was our second month of relatively warm weather after the severe cold of January. Our mud had mostly dried up and the S quadron area was a much more pleasant place in which to walk. The hard stand that had been constructed in six inches of mud and water in November was now in excellent shape with a covering of gravel. The famous pile of coke that we had built up all through the winter was still being used but was almost depleted when we moved to Germany early in April.

Numerous pilots went to the Riviera during March and Pronounced the climate and recreation there quite superior to that which we were accustomed to in Etain.

Lieutenants Mossman and Coleman joined the Squadron during the month while Lt. Zlotnick -- one of the members of long standing -- was transferred to Paris.

The Military School at Romilly, France, was attended by Capt. Meryweather for the two weeks course. The purpose of the school was to train an officer in the Group to handle military government affairs in Germany.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY FOR MARCH 1945
Cpl. Merrill left for temporary duty in Cannes, France, the envy of all the men who had heard about that land of sunshine and beautiful French girls from the pilots who had visited there.

We were happy to see Capt. Sullivan again, who returned from the States after his thirty day leave. The hard stand that had been constructed in six inches of mud and water in November was now in excellent shape with a covering of gravel. The famous pile of coke that we had built up all through the winter was still being used but was almost depleted when we moved to Germany early in April.

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HISTORICAL SUMMARY FOR APRIL 1945

The month of April will long be remembered by the members of the Squadron for the first of our numerous moves in Germany. Early in the month we learned that we were to move to a base near Frankfurt. On the 8th of the month the Air Echelon departed and that afternoon they set up on a famous dirigible air-drome south of Frankfurt. With the aid of D.P.'s, a mess hall, orderly room supply building, and medical aid station building were constructed--all before the main body of the squadron arrived about a week later. Fortunately, we had perfect weather during this move and the subsequent feverish building activity. While at Frankfurt several officers and men did an excellent job of hoisting a large water tank to a high dirt elevation and laying pipe to the squadron area so that running water was available for washing purposes near the living tents of the enlisted men.

Our second move commenced the last day of April when the air echelon went to the base they were to occupy for only three days, near Furth.

Four new pilots joined in April: Lieutenants Jones, Tuck, Price, and Weedn. Captain Sullivan, after being shot down and falling into enemy hands, was reported to be in an American hospital and soon would rejoin us. Capt. Hanna, a ground officer of long service in the squadron, was promoted to Major. Lt. Williams rejoined the squadron with an amazing tale of eluding the enemy for several days after being shotdown.