

Chapter 7 – Training Comes to an End – Now It’s the Real Thing [v3]

It is not clear when George heard about Gibby’s accident. The loss would have been reported when the surviving B-24’s returned to India on December 1, 1943 and a MACR (Missing Air Crew Report) was required to be submitted within 48 hours. Typically the War Department notified next of kin via telegram within a few weeks regarding MIA status so this news must have hit the family just before Christmas.

For the Hofmann’s and the Rauh’s the finality of it all would not be known for several months. Fortunately maneuvers and training sessions of December were intense enough to keep George focused on other things.

SECRET
596TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON
397th Bombardment Group (M) Hunter Field, Ga.

31 December 1943

SUBJECT: Summary of Squadron History for Month of December.

TO : Historical Officer, 397th Bombardment Group (M) Hunter Field, Ga.

December

During the month of December, the Squadron continued its regular tactical training program with many flights scheduled, the balance of the time being used by attending ground school courses particularly relative to B-26 operations and activities in combat zones.

From December 15th through 25th a series of missions organized by the Wing and coordinated with other Groups were flown, and our Squadron participated in all of these missions in addition to the regular scheduled flying.

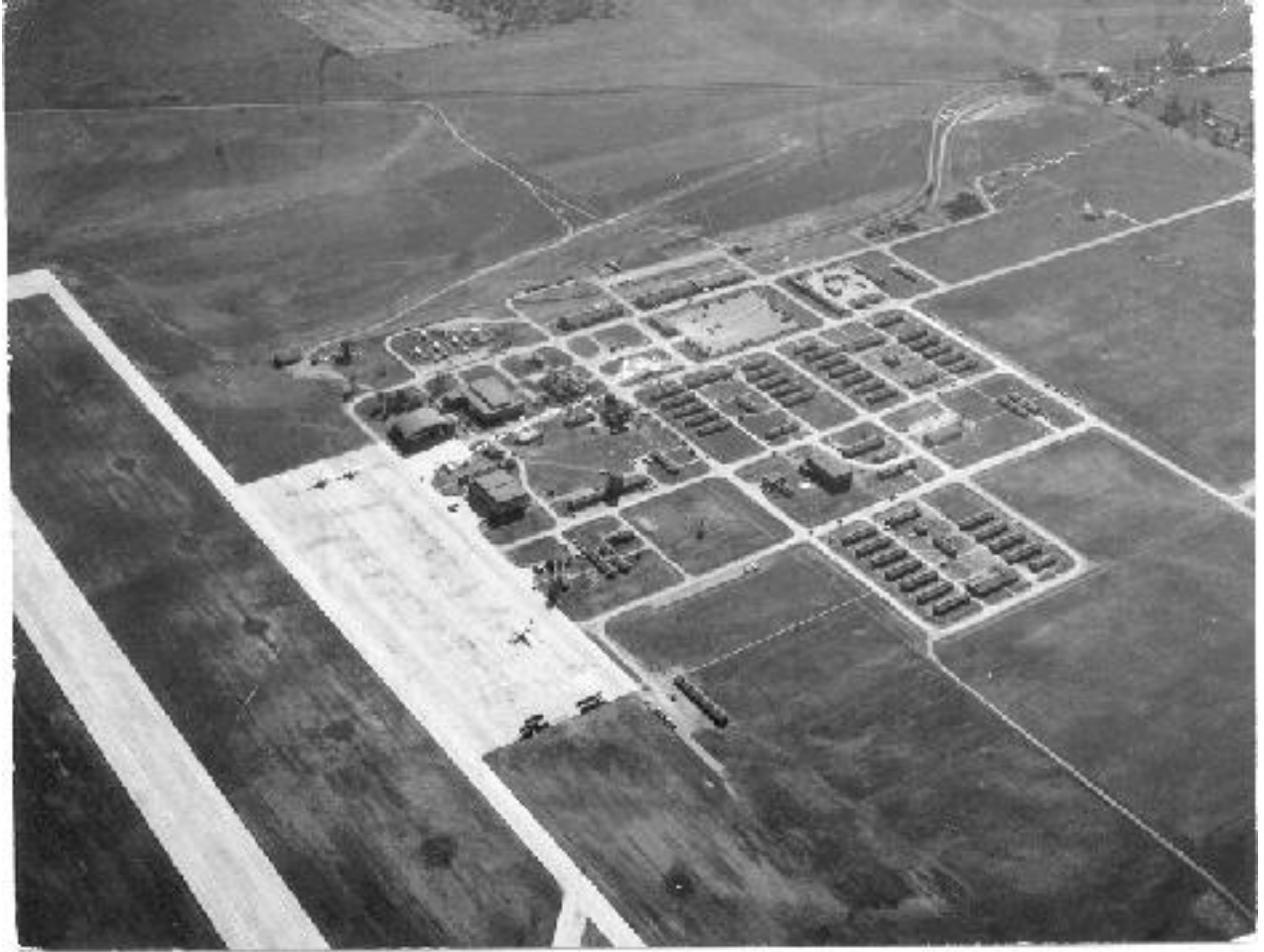
We received additional personnel during the month to bring the Squadron to full strength and the strength of the organization as of 31st December 1943 was 65 Officers and 331 enlisted men.

In this month 1st Lts. Wm. J. Rhodes and Robert R. Evans, flight commanders, were promoted to Captains, and 2nd Lt. Wm. V. Flowers was promoted to 1st Lt.

Since 26th December, we have been busy preparing to leave on two weeks’ maneuvers on the 1st January 1944 to Atterbury Army Air Field, Atterbury Indiana.

John R. Neale
1st Lt. Air Corps.
Asst. Intell. Officer

Atterbury Air Field - 1943,





The air base went through many name changes from its start as the Columbus Air Support Command Base to Atterbury Army Air Field in 1943, till base closing in 1946. The base reopened as Atterbury Air Force Base then renamed Bakalar Air Force Base October 1954. In 1972 the base was renamed Bakalar Municipal Airport and later known as Columbus Bakalar Airport. In 1981 Bakalar was dropped and became Columbus Municipal Airport.

The following notes of history can be found today at the Atterbury Bakalar Air Museum in Columbus, Indiana:

B-26 SPECIFICATIONS

Span: 71 ft. 0 in.

Length: 58 ft. 6 in.

Height: 20 ft. 3 in.

Weight: 37,000 lbs. loaded

Armament: Eleven .50-cal. machine guns; 4,000 lbs. of bombs

Engines: Two Pratt & Whitney R-2800's of 2,000 hp. ea.

Cost: \$227,000

PERFORMANCE

Maximum speed: 285 mph.

Cruising speed: 190 mph.

Range: 1,100 miles

Service Ceiling: 19,800 ft.

B-26 Bombers were at the Atterbury Army Air Field during 1943 and 1944. September of 1943 the first B-26's arrived at the field.

From the October 8, 1943 Evening Republican Newspaper.: **B-26** falls and burns near Nortonsburg. All six crew members miraculously escaped death Thursday afternoon when their **B-26** bomber from **Atterbury Army Air field** made a crash landing four miles east of the field, plowed along the ground in flames for about 250 feet, spun around in a roadside ditch and was destroyed by fire.

Capt. Ward H. Porter, Intelligence officer with the bomber group at the local field said none of the men was seriously hurt and that the plane was on a routine mission.

B-26 Marauder Bombers Arrive at Local Field

Bombardment Group Units to Train Here Temporarily-Skies Are "Hot"

Units of a medium bombardment group have moved into **Atterbury Army Air field**, their **B-26 Marauder** bombers and air crews arriving at the field Thursday afternoon after a flight from their home base.

The units are expected to remain here temporarily while engaging in routine training, the base public relations officer stated.

The **B-26 Marauders** are the first combat planes to be based here in several weeks and are similar to the planes which arrived here with units of another medium bombardment group last September.

Bigger than Freeman Planes.

The **B-26** is a twin-engine, medium bomber now in action on almost all of the war fronts. These based at the local field are olive drab and also may be distinguished from the **AT-10** training

planes from **Freeman field**, Seymour, by their long glass-encased nose. The **B-26** is almost three times the size of the silver twin-engine training planes used by the **Freeman** cadets.

Commander of the group is **Col. Richard T. Coiner, Jr.** who is expected to be here only part of the time. Executive officer for units at the local field is **Maj. Franklyn E. Ebeling**. Other commanders are **Maj. Robert M. McLeod** and **Maj. Kenneth C. Dempster**.

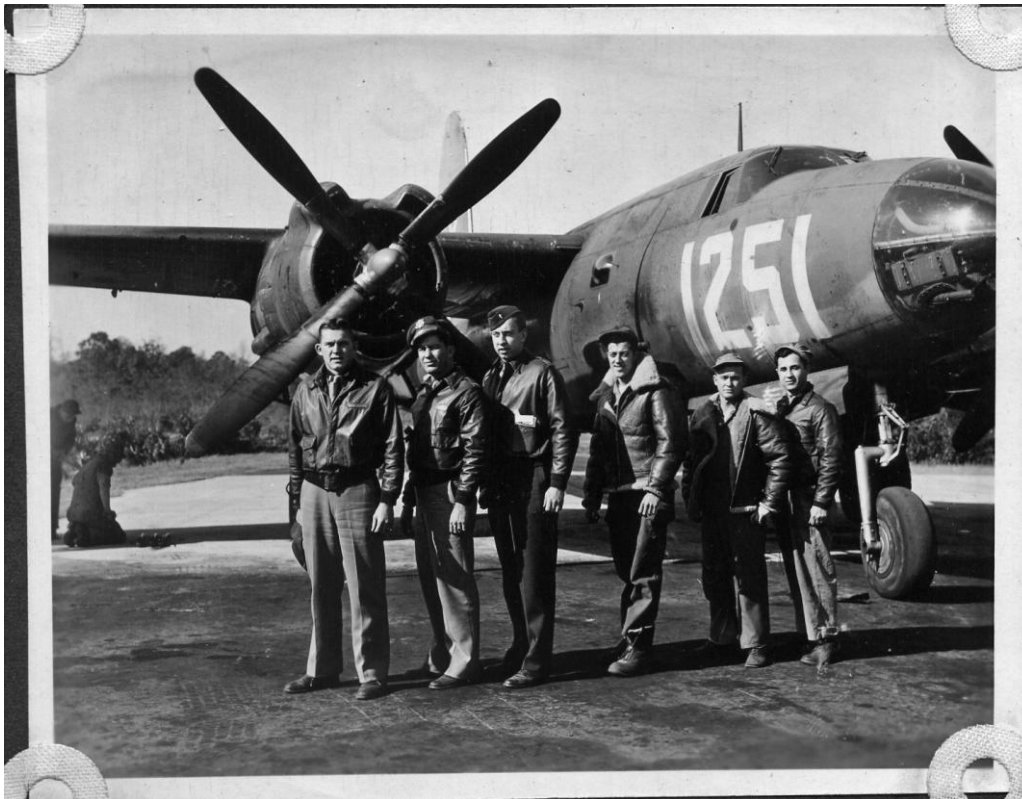
A constant stream of the **AT-10** training planes from **Freeman field** roared over the city as the cadets landed and took off again from the **Walesboro auxiliary flying field**.

Also in the air were the **B-26's** from **Atterbury Army Air field** as the boys put their larger mounts through night paces.

Former WWII **B-26** pilot, **George Parker**, Founder and Past President of the **B-26 Marauder Historical Society**, said the **397th Bombardment Group (Medium)** is the unit written about in the **Evening Republican Newspaper**, now **The Republic**. This unit was at the **Atterbury Army Air Field** during WWII.

According to **George Parker**, this was a training exercise for this Squadron - the **596th**. The aircraft for his mission was a **Martin B-26C**. His flight log had these entries:

- January 6, 1944-**Martin B-26C Sqdn (596th)** to **Atterbury** with regular Crew. This flight was from Hunter Field (Savannah, GA)-Atlanta-Nashville-Columbus, Ind. 4:10 hrs
- January 7, 1944-Crew #2 local flight **Martin B-26C** 2 hrs.
- January 8, 1944-**Atterbury** to Vichy, MO 2 hrs.
- January 9, 1944-Vichy-Columbia MO-**Atterbury** 2 hrs
- January 10, 1944-Mission #106, Crew #2 **Atterbury**-Nashville, Tenn.-**Atterbury** 3:35hrs
- January 11, 1944-**Atterbury Fld**-Woodbury, Tenn.-**Atterbury** 3:35 hrs
- January 12, 1944 **Lt. R. Jones** and crew #2 **Atterbury**-Tallahoma, Tenn.-**Atterbury** 4:10 hrs



The original crew in training – L to R: George Parker, Lloyd Shoemaker, George Hofmann, Danny Peebles, Unknown, Unknown

90+ missions into the war, George Parker (kneeling center) and the Missouri Mule II had seen several crew member changes as shown in the following photographs. (Note: each vertical bomb silhouette just below the pilots window represent a single mission).





January 4, 1943 – Atterbury Air Base

This is **B-26B-55 Missouri Mule II** crew: **George W. Parker**, pilot; **Floyd Hurstle Shoemaker**, co-pilot; **John B. Cartmill**, bombardier; **Danny Peebles**; **Robert N. Mink**, engineer; **Michael Joseph Garvie**, crew chief; **Don W. Billings**, radio; **John T. Brewer**, armorer; **Charles E. Franzwick**, assistant crew chief.

George W. Parker has been very helpful in furnishing information to the museum about the **B-26** aircraft and crews who were at **Atterbury Army Air Field**. According to his records, they flew **B-26C** models to **Atterbury** and picked up new **B-26B-55's** at **Hunter Field** which their group flew to England.

Pictured in the photographs below are three of the officers mentioned in the newspaper story. These three are deceased.

Photographs credit: **Marauder Historical Society**.



**Colonel Richard T. Coiner, 397th
Bombardment Group**



**Major K. C. Dempster, 397th
Bombardment Group**



**Major Robert McLeod, 397th
Bombardment Group**

Richard F. Weltzin, USAF (Ret.) former **397th Bombardment Group** member remembers being at **Atterbury Army Air Field** for a short time. *"The weather was bad. We were not used to flying in snow, light freezing rain, etc. I do remember going back to McDill. I was aircraft commander and flew in and out of light snow, low clouds and we had bad carburetor heaters so I lost an engine, got it going and lost the other and made an emergency landing half way home. Made it OK the next day."*

SOLDIER'S GAZETTE

Vol-1 Wednesday, January 12, 1944.

ATTERBURY ARMY AIR FIELD

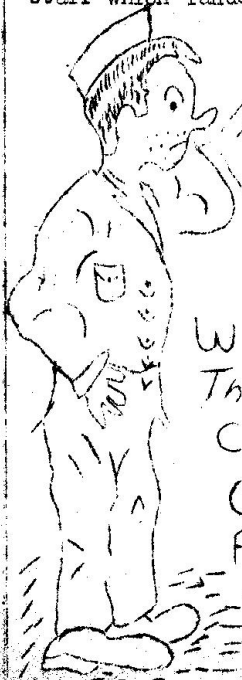
No. 1

WORLD NEWS IN REVIEW

AIR WAR - Once again Berlin reeled under new British and American attacks. In four nights the heavies loosed 6,000 tons of bombs on the already smoldering and staggering capitol. Weather and new fainting tactics kept allied losses low, made bombing more effective. Electricity has been cut off, communications hopelessly disrupted, food is very scarce. The forces continue their relentless drive for the total obliteration of this once proud capitol.

THE SEAS - Recent naval victories in the North Atlantic sent the 26,000 ton German battleship "Scharnhorst" and 5 destroyers to the bottom. The former was an all British show; no planes were involved. The destroyers, however, were trapped by British naval units and subjected to a terrific attack. They were finished off by American fliers. Importance: The convoy route to Marmunsk has been relieved of a tremendous threat; naval defenses have been weakened for the invasion; supply route to England is less costly. Merchant shipping losses continue to drop; more subs are being sunk. On the seas, as elsewhere, the Germans had another dreadful week.

THE GENERAL SPEAKS - General Eisenhower and Montgomery are back in England. So are most of the staff which landed the allies in North Africa, drove the Nazis from the desert, Sicily and Italy. Their purpose: To direct the cross-channel invasion from England. Before the press, Generals Ike and Monty were put on the spot; they had to defend the slowness of the Italian campaign. They admitted losses were heavy, progress slow, but defended its strategic value. Both were extremely hopeful, predicted victory in 1944. Meanwhile all England is seething with invasion rumors. Forty thousand new landing barges have been ordered. All may reasonably be sure that the zero hour for the big push is near at hand. General Arnold also spoke encouraging words last week. He traced the stupendous growth of the Army Air Forces from 17,000 officers and men in 1941 to 2,385,000 in 1944. About the War, he said, in brief: "Attack on Japan will not be seen, must be costly; next few months may see the Luftwaffe beaten to the ground; plane production rate continues to increase; Japs destroyed 324 planes at Pearl Harbor, left 178".



The
WINNERS OF
The CANTON OF
CIGARETTES

Cpl. M. MACARI
Pvt. H. J. SZPARK

SQUADRON

Some of the boys in the Base Detachment have been wondering when Cpl. "Diamond Jim" Barber is going to win a DOLLAR. His wife wants to know what the "boys" mean when they call him "FIVE CARD MONTY". What's the story Jimmie Boy?

Wonder when D.J. Bruno and that certain Columbus Belle are going to name the day.

Do you think Murano has reached that Section 16 he has been talking about?

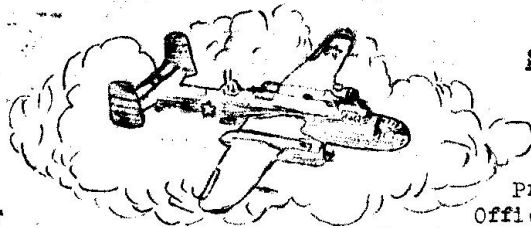
I wonder how Geo. Anderson & Robbins are making out with the Stock in the P.X.

What was the name of the Sailor who chased Albertine out of Chicago and made him come back to camp one day early from furlough????? Who is the lucky girl Cpl. Cecil Bolomey is getting ready to marry in February? Come on, Cecil, give us the low-down.....I understand Rushville beat us by 30 points. Does it mean that much difference when Lt. Del Vecchio doesn't play????????????? We hate to see McKearney go to Salt Lake City...Good luck Ole Kid! Remember there is a Mormon Law.....

Who will help the Mess Sgt. guard the Lemon Extract while Cpl. Barnett does K.P. since there is a shortage of liquor -- Isn't there Pat?

There is no truth to the rumor that Lt. "Gabby" Britton and Lt. "Weeping Warrior" Ain had to answer by endorsement for the "White Snow" snow storm.....So the Finance Department short-sheets these days - "HIM-ALL" and "TIE" are on the war-path.....

Will someone tell me how a High Ranking P.F.C. can live at the St. Denis Hotel when the cost is so high?



SQUIBBS

Pvt. Carpenter of the Chaplain's Office, and Pvt. Prentice of the Signal Office rate by taking two beautiful young ladies to chow last week. What have they got that we other fellows in Headquarters haven't got? Lucky Guys!

Who is the fellow in 304th who won't bear arms but goes home on furlough to shoot rabbits?

It is rumored McKearney is about to become a Mormon.

Cpl. Teselski seems to have turned over a new leaf. He was seen courting the same girl two nights in a row. (Sat. and Sunday night).

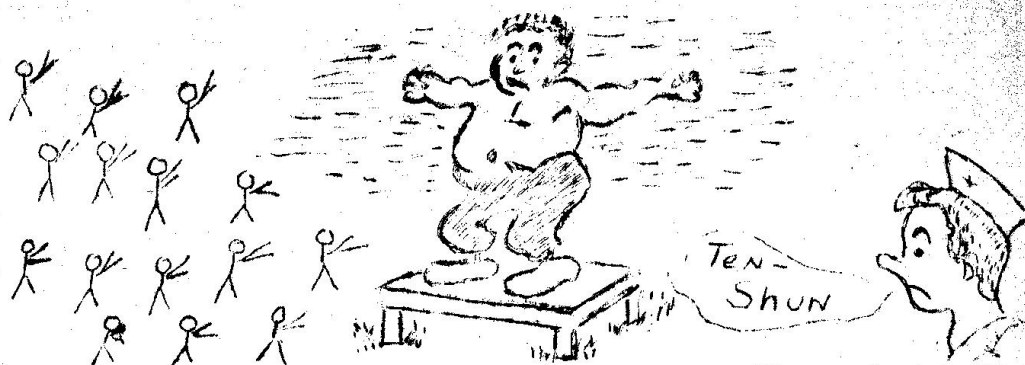
Why does Pvt. Stevens strut like a peacock when leaving the infirmary on or about the 15th and 30th of each month?

Don't be surprised if Character BRUNO springs forth with fast cadence in Jitter-bug in the daily classes at Calisthenics.

The reason that Lt. Fradin has been looking so glum lately, is that he earns a living by "Looking down in the mouth".

The Operations Officer is really on the ball - even when he leaves the Field - he operates.

It is rumored that Pvt. Perkins put in for Officers Candidate School again....



Tired of losing close ones, our boys did it up good Thursday night at Rushville. With six players able to make the trip because of transportation shortage, they faced the "hottest" team they have encountered all season. Playing on a "band-box" floor the boys were lost as Rushville ran rough shod in the last five minutes for a 71-38 decision. Hitting the ceiling with several of their shots the "Flyers" were helpless as the boys from Rushville hit them from all angles. This was the second time the two teams have faced each other, the Air Base gaining a 46-44 decision here in the first encounter.

On Thursday night, January 13th, a double-header is on the menu. Camp Atterbury is coming here for a tussle with our Base team at 8:00 o'clock. In a preliminary attraction a squad from the bomb group will be host to the Cummins Engine in what should be a very interesting game. The Atterbury team is paced by Jerry Steiner, a former college star who was rated one of the outstanding college players in the country. A very good game should result and the evening should produce some good basketball. On Tuesday, January 18th, the Franklin team is scheduled to show here. Opponents of the Air Base team have had nothing but praise for the showing of Clyde Young, our 6 ft, 3 inch center. Clyde's work under either basket makes him continually one of the most valuable men on the floor. On the defense, he is the best around, and in addition is our second highest point man.

Clyde hails from Ohio, performing for 3 years with Marietta College, where in his senior year, he captained the cage squad.

The new Volley ball league got under way Wednesday night with the 1035th team, captained by Creepy Lebensorger, winning from the 396th Bombers in two very closely contested games. The Base Squadron gained a forfeit when the 597th failed to appear. On Friday night the Base took a walloping from the 596th in two straight. The Headquarters - 1035th games was postponed.

GYMNASIUM SCHEDULE

Wed. Jan. 12

Gym will close at 7:00 P.M.
8:00 PM - Dance for Enlisted Men.

Thurs. Jan. 13

7:00 PM Basketball
Bombers vs Cummins Engine
8:00 PM Basketball
Base Team vs Freeman Field

Fri. Jan. 14

6:30 PM Volleyball
596th vs Bomb Hdqs.
7:15 PM Volleyball
Base Hdqs. vs 597th Bomb
8:00 PM Volleyball
Bomb League Basketball

Sat. Jan. 15

Open periods.

Sun. Jan. 16

Open periods.

Mon. Jan. 17

6:30 PM Volleyball
Bomb Hq vs 1035th
7:15 - Base Hq vs Base Sqdn.
8:00 - Bomb League Basketball

Tue. Jan 18

Open periods.

THEATER

Wed - THE GANG'S ALL HERE
Alice Faye-James Ellison
Thu - THE GHOST SHIP
Richard Dix-Edith Barrett
Sat - SWING REVER
Kay Kyser-Marilyn Maxwell
Sun - SONG OF RUSSIA
Rob't. Taylor-Susan Peters
Tue - NO TIME FOR LOVE
Claudette Colbert-F. McMurray
Wed - DESTINATION TOKYO
Gary Grant-J. Garfield-A. Hale

WIZ

1. In the old days, what did people call the telephone operator?
2. Mr. Flanagan married a mannequin. The mannequin's name was Hannigan. When Flanagan married the mannequin named Hannigan, he bought her a ramin. Now what did Mr. Flanagan buy for his little mannequin-Hannigan-lambikin?
3. Chances are that the Mayor of Washington, D.C. will never be invited to the White House for lunch. Why not?
4. If an enlisted man in our Navy was walking down the street in Naples and met General Montgomery of the British Army, would he be expected to salute him?
5. What is a heptastich?
6. Calamity Jane was a pistol-packing mama of the 1870's, but what was her occupation?
7. Whose picture appears on every cigarette package?

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

What is the Chaplain? His duties and this and that casting about for ways and means of serving and being helpful to you men. Come to the office and make suggestions as to ways we can help. Unload your difficulties here, too.

It has been suggested, a good suggestion, that we have a Bible study. The Chaplain announces that he will meet any and all men who wish to join in an informal forum discussion and study. Let us say 1900 on Tuesday beginning 17 January 1944.

The 1230 hour is being tried out for the Protestant Worship. We were pleased with the attendance last Sunday. We question whether that hour is better than the other, by the response. If you like this later hour come out next Sunday and let us know by your presence.

RELIGIOUS SERVICE

Protestant - Sunday 1230
Catholic - Sunday 1030

ANSWERS TO WIZ

1. Central..
2. A small baking dish.
3. Washington, D.C. has no mayor.
4. Yes. Not required, but expected.
5. A poem of seven lines or verses.
6. She was a "girl scout" - fighting Indians with General Custer. She saved the life of a Capt. Egan in the Battle in Powder River Country. She also carried mail for the privately operated Pony Express.
7. De Witt Clinton's.

DANCE TONIGHT AT REC HALL
COME ONE - COME ALL - FOR AN EVENING OF FUN



3 9 7 7 H B O M B U R S T S



596TH BOMB SQUADRON

597TH BOMB SQUADRON

The Fighting 596th Ground Forces arrived at Atterbury Army Air Base 3rd January 1944 at 0330 and were greeted by slush and a sleet storm..... long before Zero Hour our forces were firmly entrenched in the P.X.

They came, they saw, and they were impressed with the Air Base at Columbus. Many of the men including our Sgt. "Red" Horgan have decided to become thirty year men providing they can do it all at this field.....

The only casualty suffered in the movement was having "Field Marshall" Boucher lose his voice which was very much appreciated by the enlisted personnel.

What Captain with the initials J.N. is slowly but surely becoming a walking and talking add for Fuller Brush Products? And speaking of brushes, have you seen the First Sgt's Crop?

Our Adjutant, Lt. Morton, returned from leave on the 4th, several inches larger around the waist. Was it due to liquid refreshments Lt.?

Believe-it-or-not (Apologies to Ripley) but many of the men in the 597th have seen their first snow here.....

A certain Surgeon of the 596th who was so happy to be in God's Country saw a pool covered with ice and while trying to slide across it made a point landing. Since that time it has been known to members of the 596th as Kennard Pool.

Your man Friday understands that many of the Officers and EM of the 597th are impersonating newly launched ships being christened by the racoon "Micky" who mayany day now turn into the main course of a six course dinner.....

The Air Echelon of the 596th are now trying to requisition new zippers for their B-4 and parachute bags after packing and unpacking twice daily for four days at Hunter Field while waiting for the Ground Echelon to sweep and salt the runways in Indiana.....

Congrats to Capt. Pemberton-yep, he just made it. You can't keep a good man down. Our congratulations too go to 1st Lt. Kowalsky who has just traded gold for silver. (Bars!).....

During his stay at Hunter Field - what well known S/Sgt. of the Air Echelon thought himself a second Joe Louis and tackled not one, but three M.P.'s.....
P.S. - Ask him who won?

We hear that T/Sgt. Bill Moore really did his best at the dental survey. Oh Yah! says 1st Sgt. Anderson.....

According to the latest rumors and common gossip Cpl. W.T. Clarke of the Arm. Dept. is still holding down 1st place as the #1 Morale Builder of the 596th..... Incidentally, wonder if the P.X. could be the reason for the hot wires between here and Salisbury for more cash!!!!

Have you noticed J.J. Donahue's new figure? He sure is putting on weight since his recent marriage. Mrs. Donahue must be a wonderful cook. Our congrats to you.

Whenever the T/Sgt. from Eng. and the S/Sgt. Gunner get together on who owns what cigar and why????

The new P.T. program is fool proof... saw Lt. Gathof, our Adjutant, hard at it. What chance do the rest of us have?.....

Speaking of P.T., we see Major Dempster is really getting in fine shape since he has taken up the manly art of self-defence. It seems our pet racoon "Micky" can't resist daily bouts with him, especially when he has on his Wolverine lined parka.. Must have been love at first sight...

596th (Cont'd)

Welcome back to the chow line you orderly room pencil pushers. There is no service club here so hope you like our G. I. Chow.....Also noticed is the remarkable increase in the appetite of S/Sgt. Migura due to better meals or the absence of female K.P.'s whose adoring glances kept him so flustered that he usually came out hungrier than he entered...

* * *

Since Friday morning after reading Special Order No. 2, Capt. Acton has been walking around all smiles.....We understand that two of our Lts. have been on detail in town checking up on telephone numbers....business and otherwise.....Sgt. Johnson and Cpl. Thorpe left yesterday to see the sights (Feminine) in Indianapolis.....Lt. Birnbaum and Rosenthal are doing well for themselves teaching the other officers new games. (Which they invent).....Seems as though Maj. McCleod really showed the boys something about shooting when he went out on a gunnery mission and strutted his stuff from a turret.

* * * * *

SPECIAL SERVICES.....The 397th Bomb Group Basketball Team played and won their first game of the season last Thursday night when they defeated the Strong Diesel - Cummins Five of Columbus by the score of 35-31. The game ended in a tie at the end of regulation time but Becker of the 596th Sqdn. put the game on ice in the overtime by garnering 5 points. The following participated for the 397th: Capt. Hughes, Lts. Parker, Mallum, Colahan, Swatzrock, Fleisher, Bels, and Sgts. Becker, Fink, and Willmore.

Tuesday, 11 January, the 397th Officers will tangle with the 397th EM..... The winner to play the Cummins-Diesel Team on Thursday 13 January 1944.

LEAGUE STANDINGS

EM BASKETBALL LEAGUE

| | W | L | PCT |
|--------------------|---|---|-------|
| 597th Arm..... | 1 | 1 | .500 |
| 597th Eng..... | 2 | 0 | 1.000 |
| 597th Ord. Rm.... | 1 | 0 | 1.000 |
| 596th Comm..... | 1 | 0 | 1.000 |
| 596th Arm..... | 1 | 1 | .500 |
| 596th Eng..... | 0 | 1 | .000 |
| 596th Ord. Rm. . . | 0 | 1 | .000 |
| 597th Comm..... | 0 | 2 | .000 |

* * * * *

OFFICERS VOLLEYBALL LEAGUE

| | W | L | PCT |
|------------------|---|---|-------|
| Gp. Hq..... | 1 | 0 | 1.000 |
| 597th B. Sq..... | 1 | 0 | 1.000 |
| 596th B. Sq..... | 0 | 2 | .000 |
| Base Hq..... | 1 | 1 | .500 |

The 596th Squadron and part of the Headquarters Detachment arrived here Monday morning at 3:30 and left the train in a cold drizzling rain, marching to their barracks which had the lights on and the fires going nicely, Thanks to the Base personnel. The 597th Squadron arrived here Wednesday morning under the same conditions.

* * * * *

GUARD'S PREDICTIONS

Everyone in the Guard Squadron will get a rating or a hash mark - can't lose on this bet.

The job of K.P. will receive a new classification number - everyone can't be pilots and bombardiers.

A copy of Hoyles Rules on gambling will be issued to every new man entering the Squadron.

There will be at least three shotgun marriages and an equal number of trips to Reno.

That most of the men will be able to wear Theater of Operations' Ribbons before the end of the year.

The first month of the year will produce more Latrinograms than the other eleven put together.

That more men will go to Church realizing that if you expect help from up above, you must be "Up Above" others yourself.

That the "Smoke" conditions on the post will take at least one year off everyone's life if it don't take you away altogether.

That civilians will replace enlisted men on many jobs, soldiers are now doing - or can they?

ANSWERS

1. Veronica Lake.
2. Chiang Kai-Shek.

FLASH!!!

Now that the Air Corp. has taken over the Sub-Depot, the question is, Will the sub-Depot actually be taking over the field when a certain "General" pulls O.D.?

The mystery of the Officer's Club is why HE-ALL loves the joker, when it is obvious that this love is not returned, in fact, friend joker seems to shun HIM-ALL.

PROVERBS

Be brave, my son, and let who will be clever.

A little pot is soon hot.

A drowning man will clutch at a straw.

A bold attack is half the battle.

An ounce of discretion is worth a pound of wit.

QUIZ

1. Here is a description of a movie actress. Can you name her?

With flowing locks
Her gaze she blocks,
And cuts in half
The sight she hath.

2. Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin & Chiang Kai-Shek are now known as "The Big Four" - Churchill is the oldest - which is the youngest?

The following publication was issued in late 1943 at the conclusion of the 397th Bombardment Group's stateside training. It is forwarded with a personal message to the airmen from Colonel Richard T. Coiner.



397th BOMB. GROUP

Forty-five years from now, the gray-haired wonder-veteran of World War II and veteran of the 397th Bombardment Group (Medium)- will sit back in the comfort of his fireside chair and tell his grandchildren the story of the 397th and his personal exploits in the war that will then be difficult chapters in a child's history book.

He will probably do this after an inquiring youngster has asked about the picture of the B-26 in his history book and the picture has brought a gleam of memory in the old man's eyes.

And though he won't remember everything, he will remember some of the things in the story that begins with a day in April, 1943.

The day was April 20, 1943 and the place was MacDill Field, Florida -- the date and place of activation of the 397th Bombardment Group. Coming together were a few men and a name, the skeleton of a new unit of medium bombers employing the B-26 Martin Marauder. Captain Bertram E. Solomon was Group Commander.

A month later, the date was May 12, the first cadre of enlisted men came to the 397th from the 21st Bomb Group at MacDill. Three days later the few planes and men of the Group were at Orlando, Florida at the Army Air Forces School of Applied Tactics, learning the techniques of battle and tasting simulated warfare. In a month they were back at MacDill.

More men appeared and more planes and the 397th was more than a name. Summer found the Group established in its own hangars at MacDill and the four Squadrons -- 596th, 597th, 598th, and 599th -- developing into a battle of the air ----- as the summer progressed each man was rehearsing for his role in the future.

A succession of commanders had come to the Group. Captain Solomon had been replaced by Major Ross Freeman. Major Frank L. Wood was the next commander, then Major Rollin M. Winingham. Lt. Colonel John F. Batterer was next in line. And in October there came the present commander, Colonel Richard T. Coiner, Jr.

The Group moved to Avon Park, Florida and the Avon Park Bombing Range on October 14th. Another month of training passed and the Group went to a new station, Hunter Field, Georgia. The date of that change was November 1.

More missions, more extensive training and the child of April was becoming a man. There were maneuvers at Dale Mowbray Field in Florida and Atterbury Field at Columbus, Indiana, and the Squadrons of the 397th figured in these. And now the story comes back to Hunter Field.

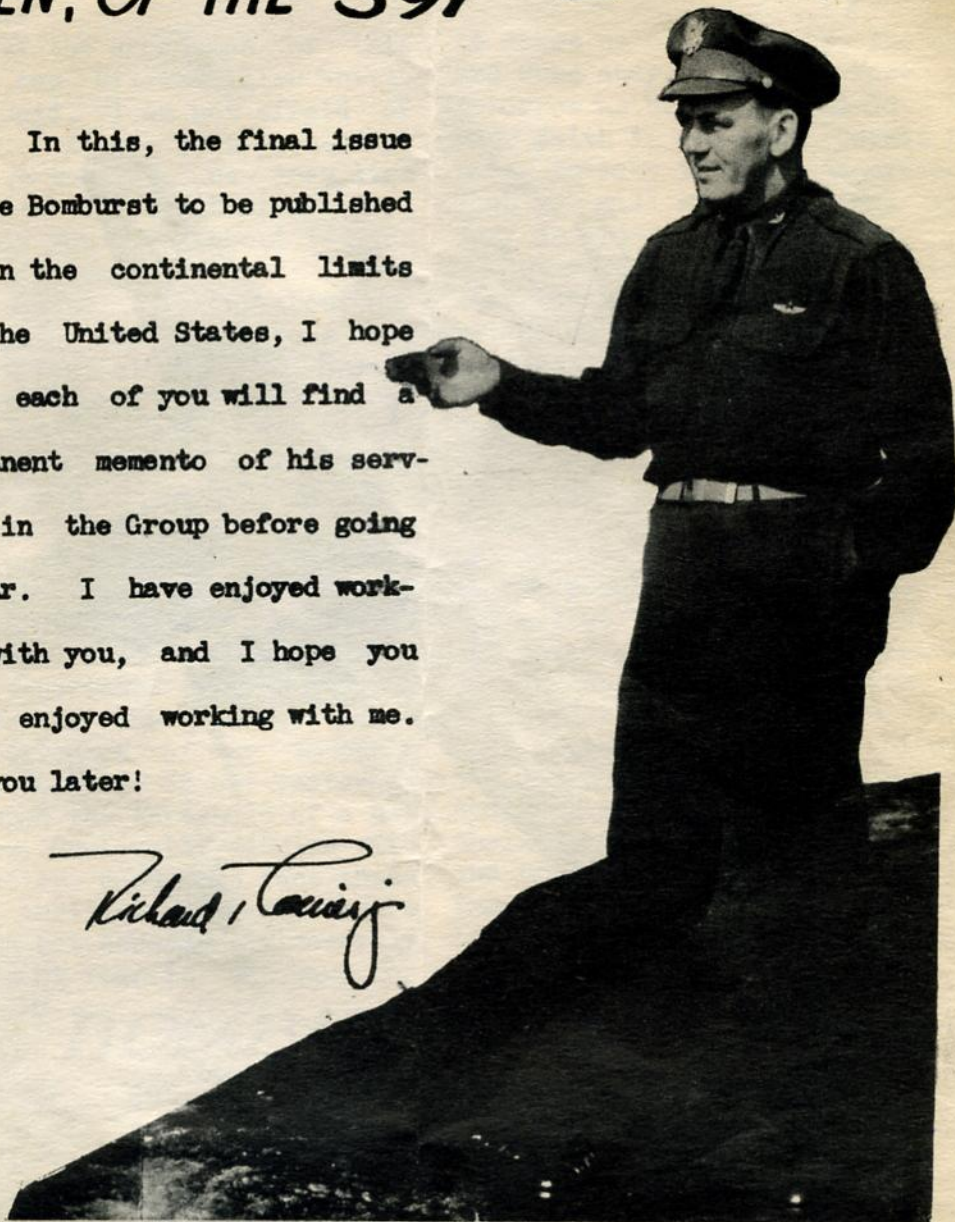
This was just the beginning of the story that the grandfathers of the 397th would have to tell. It was just a portion. There will be more later.

by Cpl Bud Johnson

MEN, OF THE 397th —

In this, the final issue of the Bomburst to be published within the continental limits of the United States, I hope that each of you will find a permanent memento of his service in the Group before going to war. I have enjoyed working with you, and I hope you have enjoyed working with me. See you later!

Richard L. Lewis





a B-26 formation roared over the English Channel at 12,000 feet toward the railroad marshalling yards at Abbeville, France.

Above the formation hovered a watchful ME-109, ready to nail

New U. S. Marauder Medium Bombers Show German Air Strength

A U. S. MEDIUM BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON IN BRITAIN, Oct. 6.—The chief of the new American force in Britain said today after heavy pounding these craft in France and the low country, giving Germany's major strength much of the strength of the German air force and deeper inland.

AMERICANS TAKE OVER FRENCH SKY

More Than 200 Planes Strike at Tergnier

BOMBERS RETURN

For Marauders Strike Pas de Calais Area

BY W. W. HERCHER
LONDON, Feb. 9 (AP).—The steady barrage along the French coast "lifted suddenly and 100 miles inland with States medium

Many Definitely Tracking Under Air Raids, Sweden

Some questioned whether B-26s could operate successfully over Western Europe but this experimental raid dispelled all doubt.

which disastrous casualties were suffered. The reasons for the failure

Thus it was more than just on this formation their bomb bay We were ba later—and we Spits had taken ME-109s that h and

Glenn L. Martin Co. announce that B-26 contracts were being increased, instead. Among Army airmen major credit for the Marauder's comeback goes to slim, youthful (38) Brigadier General Samuel E. Anderson, commander of the Marauder squadrons in Britain.* Within six months Anderson and his staff reshaped the Ma

Respectable Floozie

Allied bombers were back again, plowing and harrowing the "secret-weapon," "rocket-gun," "special-military" coast of France. The most successful aircraft on the job was a plane that had just lived down an unjust but bad reputation: the U.S. Martin Marauder.

Marauder pilots swept in day after day, returned with astonishingly low losses. The operation was all so brisk, business-like and efficient that it was hard to remember that the sleek, cigar-bodied B-26 had come close to being washed up as an unruly failure, not many months ago.

Good piloting and crack operations have changed all that. In the European Theater, the B-26's operations have been almost monotonously successful.

Its rate of loss on missions runs around 0.3%, lowest in the theater. Early this month it set a record of 1,500 sorties by individual planes, without a loss. The Air Forces top command, which had expected to taper off production, this week let the

TIME, JANUARY 31, 1944

One of the proudest boasts cocky Maraudermen now toss around is this: "She's a man's airplane—separates the men from the boys." In England recently some U.S. pilots, inordinately proud of their hot sweet-

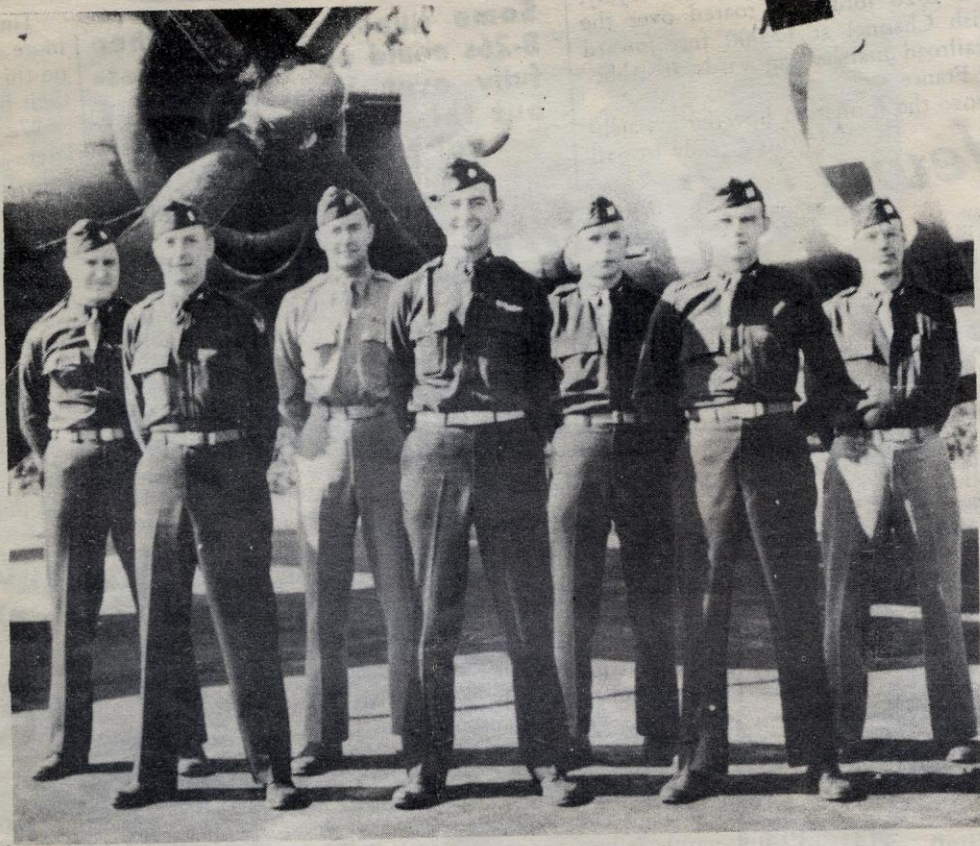
Bombardment Is One of Most Intense of War

Great Air Umbrella Helps Troops Repulse Beachhead Attack

By EDWARD KE... Headquarter

The Conversion. Sam Anderson decided first that too much had led the Air Forces to experiment with fighter-plane speed carrying capacity. Anderson previous notions, treated the medium bomber for medium got it moved from the Bom to Air Support Command. He installed a rigid daily

Mighty Air Arm



596th

Front row, left to right: Lt. Sam H. Morton, Adjutant; Major Robert M. McLeod, Commanding; Capt. Forest W. Acton, Executive. Second row: Lt. Byron R. Eells, Supply; Capt. Richard F. Weltzin, Operations; Capt. John H. Kennard, Surgeon; Capt. Robert H. Erskine, Intelligence.



597th

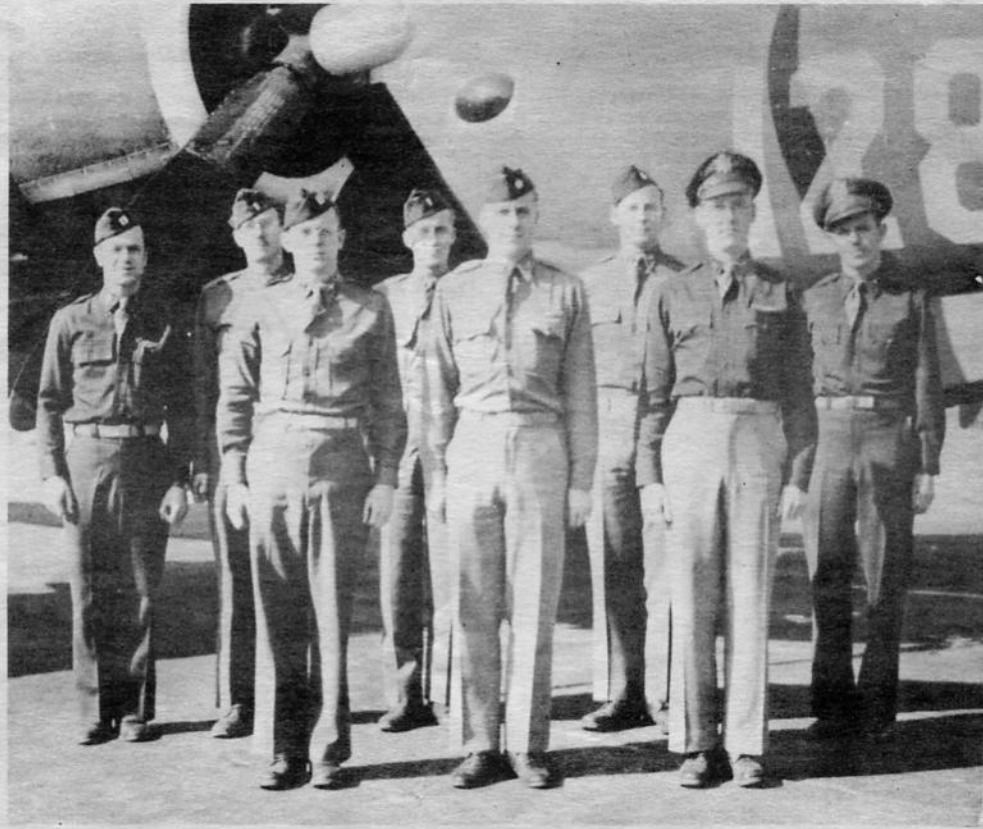
Front row, left to right: Capt. Paul W. Vereen, Executive; Lt. Col. Frank L. Wood, Commanding; Capt. Raymond Berger, Operations; Second row: Capt. Solomon Sherry, Surgeon; Capt. Lloyd W. Gilmore, Intelligence; Lt. John S. Gathof, Adjutant; Lt. Nathan Kowalsky, Engineering.



Front row: Capt. G. D. Hughes, Ass't. Operations; Lt. J. F. Haupt, Jr, Ordnance; Lt. C. H. Schultz, Weather; Lt. H. C. Beck, Jr, Photo Interpreter; Capt. E. W. Ulick, Navigation; Capt. E. G. Morrow, Engineering; Capt. C. S. Funderburk, Supply; Chaplain C. R. Comfort, Jr; Lt. R. J. Wood, Orientation; Capt. F. E. Seale, Jr, Armament; Capt. J. M. Lynch, Statistical; Lt. D. Weinberg, Jr, Ass't. Statistical.

Group Staff

Second row: Capt. J. A. D'Andrea, Special Service; Capt. W. Raikind, Communications; Maj. R. L. McCollum, Surgeon; Maj. K. C. Dempster, Operations; Lt. Col. R. M. Wingham, Deputy Commander; Col. Richard T. Coiner, Commanding; Maj. F. E. Ebeling, Executive; Maj. K. R. Majors, Adjutant; Maj. T. E. McLeod, Intelligence; Lt. J. M. Snow, Photography. Not present: Maj. W. D. Snyder, Jr, Bombardier; Capt. M. R. Geegoline, Dental; Lt. A. L. Mahlum, Ass't. Special Service; Lt. T. S. Timberlake, Ass't Intelligence; Mr. M. P. Meriwether, Ass't Engineering.



598th

Front row, left to right: Capt. Frederick R. Black, Executive; Major Franklin S. Allen, Jr., Commanding; Capt. Fred F. Bronson, Operations. Second row: Capt. Eugene J. Boyd, Flight Surgeon; Lt. Charles H. Cooke, Intelligence; Lt. Dwight Lowe, Engineering; Lt. Albert Carr, Supply; Lt. James P. Foulk, Adjutant.



599th

Front row; left to right: Lt. Robert C. Hubbard, Supply; Capt. Maurice Hamilton, Operations; Capt. Gordon C. Hamilton, Intelligence; Capt. Glenn L. Judson, Surgeon. Second row: Major Lloyd A. Kuhns, Executive; Major Eugene H. Berkenkamp, Commanding; Lt. Jack A. Littlejohn, Adjutant.



Wheels

Front row: 1st Sgt. A. L. Migura, 596th; 1st Sgt. A. Anderson, 597th; Sgt. I. W. Harrington, 598th; 1st Sgt. A. A. Vitch, 599th. Second row: S/Sgt. J. F. Horgan, 597th; S/Sgt. J. Eisen, 596th; Sgt. Major J. C. Hardy, Group Hq; T/Sgt. J. R. Calabria, Group Hq; S/Sgt. S. P. Hesselbart, 599th. 1st Sgt. R. J. Curran, 598th, absent at taking of picture.

"Our Day" Chaplain Comfort

One of the great men of this country was William Allen White. He once said, "I am not afraid of tomorrow. I have seen yesterday, and I love today." We love life and we have our enthusiasms too. What would you think about if you had sixty seconds to live? Most of us would be thinking about our yesterdays. Rushing across the screen of the mind would be the yesterdays of which we were proud and pleased. We would have visions of home, loved ones, and friends. Many memories of joyous places and people would flash on one after the other. There also would be a gulp of shame for the sins and failures of yesterday. They would be crowded, concentrated seconds indeed.

Now experience is a great teacher but we are more excited about the experiences of our tomorrow than about those of our yesterday. We are upon the threshold of a new adventure. Curiosity mingles with anticipation. How do we face these unknown thrills? To say we are afraid is not necessarily cowardly. The sense of fear is necessary for

it makes us use due care. The coward runs away. But we face our tomorrow as brave men should. Put your faith in God and permit His power to make tomorrow magnificent. Then you will win a personal victory and we will win the war.

But consider that we, each one, love today. Life is precious to us. We do not absent-mindedly nor carelessly put life in unnecessary danger. Uncle Sam has gone all out to protect our lives with safety devices. We want to live now in the todays. Yet we have taken a section of the months and years out of our normal career to give to our country. We are also giving all we have to the future of our loved ones and of ourselves. No man can isolate today from tomorrow for what we achieve today will influence tomorrow. Life is wrapped up in a bundle. "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it." Yesterday, today, and tomorrow: each has its special importance -- but this is our day. Let every 397th man do his part.

"BOMBURST STAFF"

Editor -- Cpl. R. G. Nemoff Artist -- Sgt. V. Sindoni
Capt. J. A. D'Andrea, Officer in Charge
-- Associates --
M/Sgt. J. C. Hardy, S/Sgt. C. McFarland, Cpl. C. Johnson
---- Photography ----
Lt. J. M. Snow Sgt. A. P. Cullen

Autographs

VICTORIES



Midway

Coral Sea

Guadalcanal

Buna

Bismarck Sea

Munda

Attu

Kiska

Tunisia

Salamaua

Lae

Sicily

Salerno

Gilberts

Marshalls,



Heavy action was underway in the European, Pacific and China/India/Burma theatres. These trainees were now ready to roll.