

416th Bombardment Group (L)

Group History

1945



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January, 1945

HEADQUARTERS
FOUR HUNDRED SIXTEENTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L)
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER

SUBJECT: Historical Data--January, 1945.

TO : Commanding General, Army Air Forces.

January 1945! What would it bring? The new year is never a time for reminiscing. Everyone thinks of the future. President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill agreed that 1945 would be the year of victory in the West. If it were true, what would the new year hold in store for the 416th? Would we become part of an Air Force of occupation needed to patrol Europe? Would we be transferred to the Pacific Theatre to help bring about the fall of Japan? Or, least probable, would we return to the States to become the nucleus of a training unit? The answers to all of these questions would be revealed sometime in 1945 probably.

There were realities, however, more important than conjectures to occupy our minds. The German breakthrough had been slowed up by the turn of the year. Their offensive capabilities were not to be regarded lightly, though. Furthermore, a new breakthrough in the southern sector of our lines had regained some of the territory and had tied up our troops there.

Poor weather restricted our operations. Experienced crews continued to be returned to the Zone of the Interior. They included: Captain LaVerne A. Marzolf, Captain William A. Peck, Captain Robert J. Morton, Captain Chester

R. Jackson, First Lieutenant William J. Greene (who will return to Ninth Air Force for re-assignment), Staff Sergeant Douglas Hantske, Staff Sergeant R.G. Holloway, Staff Sergeant Herbert A. Marion, Staff Sergeant Donald E. Stephens, Staff Sergeant Raymond J. Jones, Staff Sergeant James O. Young, Staff Sergeant George H. Pfenning, Staff Sergeant Claude J. Clark, Staff Sergeant Robert J. Mahoney, Staff Sergeant Philip E. Coulombe.

Poor weather again proved costly because it slowed down the training of new crews, especially of new flight and box leaders. Furthermore, a new policy had been established which gave all flight leaders with their bombardier-navigators, credit for 1 1/2 mission every time they led a flight or box. This policy became effective on January 30, 1945. Navigation above clouds was extremely difficult, and could be extremely costly in cases of attacks on targets close to our lines. The use of Gee equipment to aid navigation was stressed, but its use was still very limited because of failures in the equipment, and because of the obvious range limitations. Flawless navigation can only be achieved by constant training,----and constant training can only be carried out in good flying weather.

The only major change in Group personnel was the assigning of Major Collins H. Ferris as Group Air Inspector, relieving Lt Col Meng who was now to devote his full effort to his duties as Deputy Group Commander. The strength of the Group on the last day of January was:

668th Bomb Sq	57 Officers	299 Enlisted Men
669th " "	59 " "	300 " "
670th " "	60 " "	301 " "
671st " "	59 " "	297 " "
Hq, 416th	34 " "	58 " "
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Totals	269	1255

Word was received of the change of status of several of our crew members who had been listed as MIA or SWA (Seriously wounded in Action). They were:

Captain J.F. Meagher, from SWA to EUS (Evacuated to U.S.), First Lieutenant H.E. Hewes Jr., from SWA to EUS; Sgt C.L. Shaw, from SWA to EUS; Second Lieutenant Charles Church, from MIA to POW; S/Sgt H.J. Wilds, from MIA to POW; Sgt R.E. Wright, from MIA to POW; Sgt S.G. Novak, from MIA to POW; Second Lieutenant T.W. McManus Jr., from MIA to KIA; S/Sgt Roger W. Rice, from MIA to KIA; Sgt J.H. LaPointe, from MIA to KIA.

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSSES were awarded to Captain Hugh A. Monroe, First Lieutenants James Madenfort and Jack F. Smith, and a gunner, S/Sgt John E. Wilson. (Exhs #1-3, Jan, '45). Besides Air Medals, Oak Leaf Clusters and Purple Hearts to flying personnel, (Exhs #4-14, Jan, '45), ground personnel received awards. They were MOTOR VEHICLE DRIVER'S BADGES AND MOTOR VEHICLE MECHANIC'S BADGES to several men from the transportation sections. (Exhs #14A-Jan '45). Major General Hoyt S. Vandenberg presented DFC's to Captains

Monroe and Wheeler at another airfield.

Now for a summary of our operations for January. Little was to be expected in the way of operational flying at the beginning of the month because of poor weather conditions in the air and on the ground. However, in the latter part of the month, weather did improve. When the Russians began their massive offensive on Germany's Eastern Front in the middle of January, our increased activity helped to break down Germany's ability to defend herself on either front. By constantly striking at communications points, we slowed the transfer of personnel behind the lines and made it necessary for the enemy to have each hole plugged with permanent troops. With better communications, the Germans might have kept a mobile reserve to do this job of plugging the holes. If the enemy hoped to take any of his troops from the west and transfer them east, our bombing slowed this transfer.

The first mission in January, Mission No. 180, was an experimental mission flown in the afternoon of New Year's Day. This special mission was a combined bombing and strafing attack on concentrations at Mont Le Ban, Belgium, by one A-20 and five A-26s. The planes carried 260 lb fragmentation bombs with full loads of ammunition. The bombers were to make their bombing attack at 8,000 feet on the target, marked with smoke bombs dropped by P-47 Thunderbolts, and then dive down on the deck to strafe. On the first run over the target, the bombardier could not synchronize to bomb. Timing on the second run was poor and the smoke from the marker bombs disappeared before the target could be picked up. The Thunderbolts used up their bombs on the second run so that on the third run over the target, the bombers were unable again to attack. They returned to the base without any further attack. The target was protected by intense, accurate flak, heavy and light. One plane, piloted by Lt T.A. Murphy, with Staff Sergeant L.W. O'Connell as gunner, was lost. It was last seen leaving the formation in the vicinity of the target, going down in a glide. One chute was seen. Four planes received category "A" battle damage, and one, category "AC" damage. The flight was led by Captain F.J. Harrold with Lt W.E. Brewer as Bombardier-Navigator.

A small but important railroad bridge at Simmern, Germany, was attacked on the 2nd. It was on the direct route from the Frankfurt area to Trier. The weather was very cold with much snow and ice covering the field. On the take-off, two A-26s crashed. Both crashed after the planes had gotten into the air. The bombs from the first plane exploded immediately and the plane burned. Both the pilot, Lt H.B. Clark, and his gunner, Staff Sergeant J.W. Sabadosh, were killed. The crew of the other plane, Lt R.J. Lackner and Sgt A.J. Mussera, crawled from the wreckage to safety just before the bombs exploded and uninjured. A third plane refused to get more than a few feet off the ground and settled down at the end of the runway where the landing gear collapsed. Its crew, Lt Wm. H. Roberts, and Sergeant Raymond P. Windisch, were uninjured. The reasons for the crashes are unknown, although icing of the wings or carburetor might have caused them. Twenty-seven planes bombed the target with 45 tons of bombs, scoring excellent to superior results. The hits blanketed the bridge, railroad tracks, and the highway. (Exh #15-Jan

'45). Lt Col Willetts, Lt Royalty, B-N, and Captain Pair, Lt Corum, B-N, were the box leaders. It was reported that five to 12 ME 109s attempted a pass at the formation, but they were steered away by our fighter escort.

Evidently the bombs dropped on the 2nd had straddled the bridge, for on the 5th, 28 planes attacked it again. This time there was 10/10 cloud cover over the target. The P.P.F. plane got off course, so the first box, led by Major Price, Lt Hand, B-N, dropped on ETA from the I.P. on their second run. The second box, led by Capt McNulty, Lt Forma, B-N, stayed with the PFF plane and bombed on it. The results on the bombing were unobserved.

Again, on the 11th, the Simmern railroad bridge was to be attacked, using PPF technique. An equipment failure forced the PPF plane to seek a casual target to attack. "Gee" fixes taken by our planes located this casual target at Alzey, Germany--a marshalling yard. The bombs missed the yards but completely severed a highway. The PPF plane chose a casual target after two bombing runs on the primary target. The box leaders were Captain Hulse, Lt Conte, B-N, and Captain Stebbins, Lt Calloway, B-N.

The bad weather continued and after a day of rest, the crews took off on the 13th to attack a road bridge in the German town of Steinebruck. Only 19 planes made the attack, dropping on the PPF plane. The bombs missed the bridge but again severed a road. Weak, heavy flak was fired at the formation during the long bomb run taken by the PPF plane, and at the target, but only minor damage was inflicted. Major Price led the formation.

The following day, the 14th, weather cleared and a box of planes, led by Captain Hulse, bombed the defended village of Schleiden visually. Again, an unexplainable take-off crash cost the lives of two of our crew members, Lt G.C. Van Meter and Sgt C.M. Kikar. The plane crashed north of the field shortly after take-off and exploded. The bombing was excellent and might have been superior had not one flight been out of position when the bombs were released. The bombs hit roads and buildings in the center of the town and severed the rail line in four places. All north-south road traffic was blocked by the bombing. (Exh #16Jan '45.) Three planes landed at other fields and crashed when their landing gears collapsed. None of the crews were injured. The pilots were Lt L.E. Cannon and J.W. Blevins and Flight Officer H.J. Wilson. Weak, heavy flak was experienced on the turn off the target.

The Simmern railroad bridge was attacked again on the 15th. Sixteen of the 29 planes dropped their bombs using Gee equipment through clouds. Captain Pair, leading the second box, did not see the bombs of the first box, led by Lt Col Willetts, go away. Because his own equipment was not operating, he and his box returned their bombs. Results were unobserved because of 10/10 cloud cover at the target.

Taking off for the fourth straight day on the 16th, 32 planes attacked the Sinzig railroad bridge. Bombing was done by boxes led by Capt McNulty, Lt Forma, B-N, and Captain Monroe, Lt Kirk, B-N. The bombs covered the S.E.

approach to the bridge and cut the tracks, but the bridge remained standing. (Exh #17-Jan '45). Weak, heavy flak was encountered along the route and ten aircraft suffered category "A" battle damage, and two, category "AC" damage.

After four non-operational days, 35 aircraft attacked the railroad bridge at Euskirchen on the 21st. Bombing visually by flights, excellent to superior results were achieved. The bombs fell across the bridge, onto the railroad tracks, and into the marshalling yards to do extensive damage. (Exh #18-Jan '45). Moderate accurate flak hit the formation at the target and on the turn off. Twelve aircraft suffered category "A" damage, and one, category "AC." Major Dunn, Lt Brewer, B-N, and Captain Monroe, Lt Kirk, B-N, were the box leaders.

In the early morning of the 22nd, 33 planes again attacked the elusive Simmern railroad bridge, dropping 60 tons of bombs through the solid cloud cover. The first box dropped on the PPF plane and the second box bombed the target on ETA. Lt Col Willetts and Capt Pair teamed up again to lead the boxes.

Late that afternoon, six A-26 planes took off on a special strafing attack on road convoys, led by Capt McNulty, Lt Forma, B-N. No bombs were carried, but full loads of ammunition were ready for use. The bombers were late at their fighter rendezvous, but continued on over enemy territory until they were recalled by Parade without making an attack. Weather further hindered any attack even without fighter escort.

The 23rd was a day of history in our Group. Two flights of six aircraft took off on bombing and strafing attacks on motor transport near Arzfeld and troop concentrations at Blankenheim. The first flight was led by Capt P.G. Atkinson with Lt Ackerson, B-N. The second flight on the second installation was led by Capt Tutt, with Lt T.J. Beck, B-N. The weather was adverse and the planes had difficulty joining up. Flight Officer H.J. Wilson, in the second flight, was unable to join up and went in to attack alone behind the 410th Bomb Group. He said, "I missed the formation but rather than turn back I continued on course to the target. When I got to the target, there were A-20s strafing the road, so I circled about until they pulled away, then peeled off, dropped frags at 500 feet, and went down on the deck." Spotting four trucks on the highway, F/O Wilson roared down on them with guns blazing. "One truck veered off the road and piled into a ditch with black smoke pouring from it." Ground fire damaged the right wing and put a hole in the oil line of his left engine, but did not injure the crew.

Captain Atkinson picked up two planes of his flight and headed for the target at Arzfeld. Intense, accurate flak knocked out his left engine, hit his bombardier in one leg, and injured himself. Smoke entered the cockpit so that he had to jettison the hatch, but he continued on to bomb, in the vicinity of Dasburg. He peeled off and went down to strafe. After strafing with telling results, he attempted to get a homing. When he failed to contact any station and when Lt Ackerson was hit in the other leg, he began to look

for a field in which to make a forced landing. In the meantime, his gunner, Sergeant J.L. Collier, bailed out. Information is still sketchy as to the exact spot where he jumped so that he is still unaccounted for. Afraid that Lt Ackerson might bleed to death, Captain Atkinson brought the plane down on a gentle slope that he found. The momentum of the plane carried it over the crest into a gully on the other side. Lt Ackerson was thrown clear of the plane and into the snow. Fortunately, the plane did not burn because Captain Atkinson was unable to get out unassisted. Some Army personnel hurried to the scene and pulled him out of the wreckage. Lt Ackerson's legs were both almost shot off below the knees and his shoulder dislocated. His present condition is unknown. Captain Atkinson suffered a fractured ankle and hand, but is expected to return soon.

Captain L.C. Nielsen, in the second flight, was hit shortly after the flight broke up into two-ship elements to attack. A flak burst blew out the storm window, damaged the bullet-proof windshield, wounded the pilot severely about the face with plexiglass splinters, and knocked him unconscious. The plane careened out of control and fell to an altitude of 1,000 feet, where Captain Nielsen regained his senses and pulled the plane out of the dive. Although his gun sight was shot out, he continued on in, despite his painful injuries and pieces of glass in his eyes, through intermittent flak fields until he caught sight of a column of vehicles in the town of Berk, where he dropped his bombs. He landed his plane at A-68 without further injury to himself or his crew.

A fourth plane, piloted by Lt Theron S. Merritt, in the first flight, also attacked. Unable to stay with the planes of his flight in the bad weather, he dove down from 8,000 to about 1,000 feet to strafe vehicles that he found hidden in a town in the target area. Speeding by, he came over a second town where he noticed several vehicles and released his bombs. Guns hidden in the houses sprayed their steel at him and his gunner, Staff Sergeant R.J. Gatti, strafed gun emplacements with his lower turret. Lt Merritt's plane received only two holes due to the violent maneuvers that he executed. Unable to locate his flight, he turned around and headed for A-68 where he landed without further injury to the crew or the plane.

The landing gear of the plane flown by Lt J.C. Gary would not retract after the take-off. When he attempted to land the plane, the gear collapsed with a full load of bombs and ammunition in the plane. However, both he and his gunner, Staff Sergeant R.W. Chevront, escaped injury when the bombs did not explode.

The other seven planes that took off made no attack. All the aircraft received battle damage and Lt Beck was injured in the foot. The weather, which was exceedingly bad, prevented these planes from eighter joining up or spotting a target. The ceiling over our field varied from 200 feet to 1,000 feet and improved very little across the lines. All the men who went on these two attacks had volunteered for the job.

Because of the shortage of planes on the field, only 21 planes took off on the 24th to attack the Schleiden road junction. Only two flights were able to bomb when the bombsight telescope cable in the lead plane of the third flight was broken. The bombs blanketed the railroad lines and cut a major road. Possible hits were scored on a long road bridge. (Exh #19-Jan '45.) Major Price led the formation.

Flying our seventh mission in five days, a formation of 27 aircraft, led by Captains Hulse and Stebbins, attacked road junctions at Kall, Germany, southwest of Cologne. They scored excellent to superior results on this point. The bombs completely blanketed the road junction, damaged buildings, the road and rail line, and a railroad siding where 20 goods wagons were probably destroyed. (Exh #20-Jan '45.)

The planes were kept on the ground by bad weather until the 29th when they flew the last mission for the month, mission No. 195. The target, the Nonnweiler railroad bridge, was attacked using PPF technique. A 10-10 cloud cover prevented any observation of the damage caused by the 67 tons of bombs that were dropped. Major Dunn, Lt Brewer, B-N, and Capt Evens, Flight Officer T.M. McCartney, B-N, led the two boxes behind the PPF plane.

Sixteen missions, including 376 sorties, were flown in January, a month of extremely bad weather, and over 529 tons of bombs were dropped. Although many of our missions had employed the use of Pathfinder bombing, when our bombardiers were able to catch sight of the target through the overcast, their work scored the highest rating in the 9th Bombardment Division.

February, 1945

HEADQUARTERS
FOUR HUNDRED SIXTEENTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L)
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER

SUBJECT: Historical data. (February 1945)

TO : Commanding General, Army Air Forces.

As the war progress, it became apparent that a base nearer the Front would be advantageous from an operational point of view. Although the weather in January and February was bad, as the days grew longer, at a base nearer the Front it would be possible to squeeze in two or three missions a day.

Such a move had been contemplated for a couple of months. It became a

reality on the 5th of February when a reconnaissance echelon, made up of two officers and fifteen enlisted men from each unit, left for our new base, Station A-69 at Laon/Athies, about 3 miles east of the city of Laon. The field had formerly been occupied by the 323rd Bomb Group. It was built originally by the Germans.

The field was in very poor condition. Only one of the three runways was fit for operational use. One runway and 110 bomb craters in it which had never been repaired. The other runway had been partially repaired. These two runways were to be used as parking areas.

Of the five hangers still comparatively undamaged, four were assigned to the Squadron for use as mess halls. The fifth was to house the photo Laboratory and gunnery and bomb training equipment.

Taxi strips were full of holes and generally unserviceable. The Group had occupied the base for a matter of only a few days, however, before French laborers were hired to begin repairing the damaged roadways. Before the month had passed, work had progress beyond expectations. Captain Bailey, Station 5-4, had succeeded in securing the equipment and labor that was so gravely needed.

Getting back to the movement, on the 9th, the 668th and 670th Bomb Squadrons left Station A-55 by train and truck for Station A69. Exhibit #1-Feb '45) The 40/8 cars that had been part of every story of the first World War were used to carry our men and equipment. The trip was long and uncomfortable. The one redeeming feature was the comparatively mild weather. The snow had stopped falling and a few days of clear weather had dried the ground. The tents were taken down and set up again without too much difficulty. On the 14th, the 669th and 671st Bomb Squadrons departed for the new base. (Exhs #2 A-Feb 45) They were the last units to leave and cleared the field thoroughly. It was to be occupied by a troop carrier group. An inspection by the office of the Inspector General of the 9th Bombardment Division found the base in excellent condition when the 416th departed. (Exh #3-Feb '45) Our rating was later change to "Superior".

The advantage to the new base was immediately apparent. In the first place, it was only about 100 miles from the Front. In the second place, the field had frequently been used as a diversionary field because the weather usually permitted flying. With this good weather plus the nearness to the Front lines, our planes would be able to fly more missions than at any time previous. [Rest of line missing] [missing] As far as living conditions were [concerned and office space on the new Base, it offered many opportunities. We continued to live] in tents, except the headquarters personnel who occupied a small group of barracks buildings still useable. The Group which had occupied the Base before us left quite a bit of usable lumber and a few shacks. This lumber and the shacks were used for offices in the Squadrons. Group and Station headquarters took over a wooden framed building hidden in the woods at the eastern end of field. The building had not been repaired and

was in rather poor condition. French labor was used to make repairs on it and on other buildings in the area, making them useable once more. Someone spoke the truth when he said that we should be called, not the 416th Bomb Group, but the 416th Engineering Group. It seemed that whenever we occupied a Base, into our hands fell the task of almost completely rebuilding it.

Work progressed rapidly on both the repairs of the field and the setting up of the units. Although most of us had dreaded the thought of moving, the comparatively good weather had made the move much simpler. The living sites and office sites were much better than they had been at Station A-55. And the operational advantages far overshadowed those at the former base. All in all, our future on the new Base looked much brighter.

The extended restriction made the work of the Special Service section more important than ever. Almost as soon as the Group occupied the new base, Special Services was showing movies. A German theatre that had been partially destroyed was repaired sufficiently so that in the last week of February the "Miles Bell Show" performed for us. The show was exceptionally good. The club occupied two buildings in the headquarters area. "Babs" and "Jean" of the Red Cross were serving doughnuts and coffee from their truck to the men around the base as they were at work.

The movement was the big event of the month for the Group. As far as personnel in the Group were concerned, there were some changes. Lieutenant Colonel W.J. Meng, who through his pleasantness, cooperation, and excellent work in the air and on the ground had become almost a legend in the Group, was transferred on the 27th to the 9th Bombardment Division where he was appointed Air Inspector. His departure was sincerely regretted, but the opportunity that it afforded him was well deserved. Major Ferris was relieved as Group Inspector and assumed the duties of Commanding Officer of the 670th Bomb Squadron. Major Dunn was transferred from command of the 670th Squadron to the 671st Squadron. Lieutenant Colonel Willetts left the 671st Squadron to become Group Operations Officer. Within a few days, Lieutenant Colonel Radetsky was appointed Deputy Group Commander and Air Inspector. (Ex #4-Feb, '45.) One of the older members of the Group as far as length of time in the Group was transferred to the Zone of the Interior for physical reasons. He was Captain William H. Maier, Group Ordnance Officer. First Lieutenant Earl J. Norris replaced him. Captain Maier left on the 7th. Capt R.V. Wheeler was transferred from the 671st Bomb Squadron into Group Operations on the 20th. Major R.A. Clark, who had been on temporary duty at Bombardment Division from Group Operations was transferred to Bombardment Division on the 22nd to become A-3 Controller in charge of night diversions.

Several crew members returned to the Zone of the Interior during February after having completed their tours of duty. They were: Capt D.H. Hulse, Captain E.E. DeMun, Captain R.E. Greenley, Staff Sergeants H.J. Sylva, L.C. Burger, J.W. Galender, and D.S. Blackford. Two pilots, graduates of West Point, were taken to the U.S. for 30 days after which they will rejoin the Group. They were Captain D.F. Shea and First Lieutenant M.A. Zubon.

There were several changes in the status of men who had been missing in action or seriously wounded....Staff Sergeant H.J. Wilds from MIA to POW; Staff Sergeant R.E. Wright from MIA to POW; Sergeant S.G. Novak, from MIA to POW; Staff Sergeant R.W. Rice, from MIA to KIA; Staff Sergeant C.W. Middleton, from MIA to POW; Staff Sergeant R.J. Colosimo, from MIA to POW; Sergeant G.W. Scott, from MIA to POW; Captain J.F.Meagher, from SWA to EUS; Staff Sergeant A.D. Garrett, from LWS to RTD. First Lieutenant Jack F. Smith was presented the DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS by General Vandenberg at another Base. The usual Air Medals and Oak Leaf Clusters were awarded to combat crews. Lieutenant Poundstone received the Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster to the Purple Heart--the only Purple Heart of the month. Sergeant Walter T. Bladykas, a crew chief, was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. (Ex #5-7, Feb, 45.)

The war almost stood at a stalemate when February rolled around. The Ardennes Bulge was a thing of the past. Our troops seemed to be making no effort toward any offensive. Instead, their gains were very small, mostly in the central part of the Front. We watched with great interest the rapid advances of the Russian Armies as they drove to within 35 miles of Berlin in the Frankfort[?]n-Oder area. One thing seemed certain from the reports of our men [who] had visited our own ground forces at the front. There was a [large] massing of troops and equipment all along the front. The all- [out] offensive might start soon. Weather seemed to have delayed the [war] so far.

Here is a resume of our operations for the month of February.

The first mission of the month, mission No. 196, was an attack on the defended village of Schleiden on the 1st. The one box, led by Lt Col Willetts, Lt Royalty, B-N, attacked the target using PPF technique. Results were unobserved due to cloud cover. There was no flak.

The mission on the 2nd was the opposite of the "milk run" on the 1st. The target, the Euskirchen supply center, was attacked visually. The range of results ran from good to excellent with hits scored on buildings which blocked the roads, and on the roads themselves. (Ex #8-Feb '45.) It had been used as an active supply and housing center for troops enroute to the front. Ground defenses started firing at the formation from the moment it crossed the bomblines until it came out of enemy territory. It varied from moderate to intense, but all of it was accurate. Twenty-two of the aircraft suffered battle damage; nineteen, category "A," and three, category "AC." Lieutenant D.E. Smith was flying a window plane. On the return trip he heard an explosion in the rear compartment of the plane. He called his gunners, but neither of them answered. He landed the plane safely at A-78. In the gunners compartment, he found Sergeant R. DeStafono dead. His body was badly broken. Only one small hole was visible in the plane, but the bulkhead had been sprung by the force of the unexplainable explosion. The other gunner, Staff Sergeant D.R. Abriola, was seen to bail out after the explosion near Bolbark, in enemy territory, and is listed as MIA. The [two] boxes, led by Major Price, Lt Hand, B-n and Captain McNulty, Lt Forma, B-n, scored good results.

On the 3rd, the Group attacked a type of target once considered suitable for the load carried by "heavies," the storage and repair depots at Berg Gladbach. It was one of the most active depots used by the Germans, and was considered very well defended. The target was just a few miles east of Cologne. Weather was very bad so that it was necessary to bomb on a PPF plane. Results were unobserved. Moderate, accurate heavy flak was thrown up in the target area and four aircraft suffered battle damage. Only one box of planes took off; it was led by Capt Stebbins, Lt Calloway, B-N. One flight got separated from the formation in the bad weather, but went in to attack the same target with the 409th Bomb Group.

Again on the sixth, we attacked the same target on PPF because of the cloud cover. Although there were no observations of the results, photo reconnaissance found a factory and three large buildings damaged. A double track railroad between the target and Rosrath had been cut by three direct hits and through traffic was impossible. A road had also been cut. There was weak, inaccurate flak at the target and en route. Major Dunn, Lt Brewer, B-n, and Captain Evans, Lt McCartney, B-N, were the box leaders.

The big day arrived on the 8th. After an aerial barrage similar to that of St Lo, the Canadian First Army was to step off in an offensive that was soon to reach the Rhine northwest of Dusseldorf. Weather again was very bad, but our planes went in to do an excellent job. A letter of commendation was received on the bombing. (Ex #9-Feb, 45.) The mission marked the first time that we had bombed equipped solely with A-26s. The new A-26C with a glass nose led the flights and boxes. The planes carried 250-lb. fragmentation bombs, dropping 99 1/2 tons on the target. This was the greatest tonnage ever dropped by the Group. The mission also marked the 200th flown by the Group. The 200 mission had been flown in the span of a few days more than 11 months. Col Willetts, with Lt Royalty and Lt Muir as B and N, had the pleasure of leading the formation on its 200th mission. (Exh #10-Feb, 45.) Captain Pair, Lt Corum, B-N, led the second box. While returning to the base, Lt C.H. Steed called the control tower saying that he had only a few minutes fuel left. It was the last word heard from him. His plane was found later in a field near Villers St George, where it had crashed. Lt Steed was killed. His gunner, Sgt C.E. Tranchina, was seriously injured in the crash and died the next day [NOTE: Sgt Tranchina did not die, but was Evacuated to the U.S.]. Their bodies were interred at the American Military Cemetery, Solers Seine et Marne, France. The mission was successful and marked the beginning of a series of attacks all along the front.

On the following day, the 9th, while the 668th and 670th Bomb Squadrons were packing their equipment preparatory to moving, two boxes of aircraft took off to attack the Kempen communications center. The PPF plane did not drop and in the bad weather, the formation split up. Only one aircraft attacked the primary target with Gee equipment. Three aircraft attacked the town of Lichpenare on Gee equipment. Nineteen aircraft dropped on ETA, in the vicinity of Scherfede. The formation encountered moderate accurate flak from Cologne and intense accurate flak from Dusseldorf and Dortmund. Six aircraft

received category "A" damage. One plane, with Capt H.M. Borman as pilot and Sgt R.J. Perujo as gunner, was forced down by battle damage, which caused loss of gas at A-54. The nose wheel broke landing when the plane hit some buckled steel planking on the runway. The plane piloted by L.E. Cannon, with S/Sgt J.W. Robinson as gunner, also crash-landed. They were forced down in a field just inside the bomb line. None of the crews were injured. Capt Stebbins, Lt Calloway, B-N, and Capt Evans, Lt McCartney, B-N, were the box leaders.

The following day, the 10th, military installations east of Munstereifel were attacked through clouds on PPF. A break in the clouds allowed the crews to see the results, which were excellent. Major Price, Lt Forma and F/O Harvest as B and N, and Capt Hulse, with Lts Conte and Kupits as B and N, were the box leaders.

The following mission, on the 13th, was carried out by PPF in an attack on the motor transport center at Iserlohn. Unable to find the fighter escort, the formation attacked a secondary target on PPF, the town of Wittlich. An almost solid cloud cover prevented any observation of the ensuing results. Major Dunn, with Lt Brewer, B-N, led the one box that made up the formation.

Two missions took off to attack targets in Germany on the 14th. In the morning, the armored motor vehicle repair depot at Mechernich was attacked. The first box, led by Col Willetts, with Lts Royalty and Basnett as B and N, dropped on their PPF plane. The leader of the second box, Capt Pair, with Lts Corum and Pair as B and N, was unable to release his bombs. He peeled away from the formation after he had attempted a second run on Gee equipment unsuccessfully. The deputy leader took over and led the box east toward the Rhine, where he made a sweeping turn and headed back to our lines. The second box encountered moderate to intense accurate flak from the moment it left the target area until it reached friendly territory. Ten aircraft suffered battle damage. The eleventh aircraft, believed hit by flak, was last seen going down in flames in the vicinity of Heinersheim. One chute emerged. The crew of three included Lts J.J. Chalmers and L.W. Eckard, and S/Sgt K. Fortner. Photos showed a large freight station severely damaged and two smaller buildings damaged. At least 15 goods wagons were badly damaged or burned out, and three rail lines in the sidings were knocked out. At least two hits were scored on the roof on well camouflaged concrete buildings which were partly underground.

That afternoon, an ammunition dump in the woods near Rheinbach was attacked with excellent to superior results. Bright flashes in the target area indicate that some ammunition was hit. When it was decided to bomb by boxes, one flight did not receive the message. Because of the haze, it attacked the town of Ludendorf as a casual target. Moderate accurate flak was fired at the formation on the target and on the turn-off, but all planes returned safely. Major Price, Lts Forma and Babbage as B and N, and Capt Evans, Lt McCartney and F/O Harvest as B and N, led the two boxes.

The ordnance depot at Unna was the target on the 16th. Moderate to intense accurate flak followed the planes on their bomb run, over the target, and on the turn-off. The most intense flak seemed to be coming from Dortmund and Hamm. The PPF plane was hit by flak and dropped on the town of Kamen, two miles NW of the primary target, with excellent results. One flight, realizing that the PPF plane was dropping early, tried to pick up the target alone. A thick haze prevented their recognizing it. They bombed the town of Kal Kaiserau with excellent results. Going in on the bomb run, the plane flown by F/O H.D. Wilson, with Sgt E.F. Berkes gunner, was seen to nose up and then start downward, still under control. It went into the clouds at 6,000 feet and has not been heard from since. At about the same time, Lt J.F. Allens plane received a hit in his engine. The engine went dead. He continued with the formation on single engine but was forced to salvo his bombs before the target and started back alone. He flew north to clear the Rhine Valley and called for a heading home. A voice over the radio told him that he was in friendly territory. Just then, about 20 bursts of flak came up off his tail. He headed west until he found what looked to be a friendly airfield and started to circle it. Not until he heard what sounded like a German accent did he realize how close he was to more danger. Finally, a British fighter field contacted him and led him in. He landed safely. There, he was told that he had been flying through some of the "hottest" flak areas in that section. He also learned that the Germans had been trying, unsuccessfully, for some time to cut in on radio communications. Capt Stebbins, Lt Calloway B-N, and Capt Sommers, Lt Kupits, B-N, led the two boxes.

Again on the 19th, the attack on the Wiesbaden ordnance depot had to be made on PPF. There were no observations of the results. Flak at the target was weak and inaccurate and there was no battle damage. Major Dunn, Lt Brewer, B-N, and Col Napier, Lt Moore, B-N, were the box leaders.

Two missions were flown on the 21st. In the morning, road bridges at Geldern were the targets, with only two flights taking off. The first flight, led by Capt Stebbins, F/O Blount B-N, made two runs on the target and was unable to synchronize. On the third run, he used fixed angle bomb and hit southwest of the aiming point. The second flight, led by Lt Singletary, Lt Rosenquist, B-N, was unable to synchronize on two runs over the target and chose as a casual target the town of Nieukerk. A cloud cover over the target caused added difficulty.

That afternoon, the Lage railroad bridge was attacked. Clouds, haze, and smoke from previous bombings obscured the aiming points. Estimating the probable location of the target, 22 aircraft bombed. Photos later showed a concentration of craters east of the bridge. Some craters were seen in the embankment at this point and the track was probably cut. Two planes suffered battle damage. A third plane, piloted by Lt R.E. Johnson, returned on a single engine when flak had knocked it out over the target. He came in to land but found that he was not going to make the field. He began to pull up and go around. Turning into his dead engine, the plane refused to climb. It crashed into the woods in the 670th Squadron area and piled through part of a

living site. The men in the area, hearing the plane's approach, ran for safety. Three did not get clear of the plane. Lt Cook was killed instantly in his tent. Lts T.S. Merritt and Sheley were struck by the parts of the plane. Lt Merritt suffered a fracture of the leg. Lt Sheley was more fortunate, breaking a small bone in his foot, from which he recovered in a short time. The fuselage bent double at about the middle of the bomb-bay. Lt Johnson's body was flung out of the cockpit into one of the wheel housings. It required 45 minutes for medical officers to free him from the wreckage. He suffered a broken collar bone and minor facial injuries. He has been evacuated to a hospital in another zone of operations. His gunner, Sgt Brandt, crawled from the wreckage uninjured except for shock. He was treated immediately with no further ill effects from the accident. Col Willetts, Lt Royalty and Lt Basnett as B and N, led the first box; the second, was led by Capt Pair, Lts Muir and Corum as B and N.

For weeks, Intelligence and Operations knew of plans for a series of attacks up and down the Western Front, aimed at disrupting the German communications network in one great blow. It was to be a maximum effort on the part of the Ninth Air Force, the Eighth Air Force, and the Royal Air Force. For the Ninth, it would be one of its most spectacular, but dangerous attacks. The 22nd, Washington's birthday, was the day for its execution. Three flights were to attack bridges at Miltenberg; two flights, railroad sidings and bridges at Hochost; one flight, the bridge at Munster; and the seventh flight, the Simmern marshalling yard. The bombing attacks on the first two targets and the last were to be made at about 10,000 feet. Peeling off by elements of two planes, the planes were to dive to the deck and strafe targets only of military importance. We had flown four experimental missions, bombing and strafing before. This, however, was the first time that we had made such an attack on a Group scale. The Munster bridge was attacked in the usual manner, bombing from a medium altitude. All of the bombing attacks were successful, except the attack on Munster. Haze prevented clear recognition of the target so a section of railroad track and a bridge about 43 miles south of the primary target, near Mechesheim, was attacked with excellent results. (Exhs 11 and 12, Feb '45.) There were smiles on the faces of those who had strafed. Most of the planes carried wing guns which gave them 14 forward firing machine guns in addition to the four guns in the two turrets. The speed of the planes was the keynote of their success. The speed over the targets ranged from 400 to 500 miles per hour. A total of 63,605 rounds of ammunition were expended in addition to 55 tons of bombs that were dropped. The strafing claims included; 1 tank train destroyed and left burning, one horsedrawn vehicle destroyed, four heavy M/T destroyed, one railroad station damaged, six locomotives damaged, 15 buildings damaged, one light M/T damaged, five barges damaged, 15 goods wagons damaged plus several at Simmern, 15 buildings (barracks) damaged, oil tanks at Simmern damaged.

Box I, attacking Miltenberg, was led by Major Price, Lt Forma and F/O Harvest as B and N. Two flights of Box II, attacking Hochst, were led by Capt Evans, Lt McCartney and F/O Blount as B and N. Flight C of Box II, attacking

Munster, was led by Lt Grunig, Lt Morris, B-N. The attack on Simmern, counted as a separate mission, was led by Lt Rooney, Lt Kirk, B-N. Photos showed approximately 11 craters visible in the railroad crossing, cutting at least seven damaged lines and destroying or damaging six wagons.

The formation encountered some weak but accurate flak coming out over the bomb line. There was light flak fired at the strafing planes. Three planes received minor battle damage and returned safely.

Settling back to the usual type of attack, two boxes of planes scored excellent results by PPF on the Golzheim communications center on the Cologne Plain. Hits were scored on the main highway, on roads and buildings in the town. Only five bursts of flak, inaccurate, was fired at the formation in the target area. Col Napier, Lts Moore and McQuade as B and N, and Capt Stebbins, Lts Calloway and Connor as B and N, led the two boxes.

Another communications center on the Cologne Plain at Viersen was attacked on the 24th. Equipment in the PPF plane failed so the planes attacking with their own Gee equipment. On the last minute of the bomb run, the planes encountered moderate, accurate flak. Ten aircraft suffered battle damage. Results were unobserved through the clouds. Major Dunn, Lts Brewer and Maltby as B and N, and Lt Rooney, Lts Kirk and Koch as B and N, led the two boxes.

These two attacks were the beginning of a series of attacks made on targets on the Cologne Plain prior to and during the drive of the American First and Ninth Armies to the Rhine.

Another of these attacks was made on the 25th on the Kerpen road junction. Thirty six planes made the attack, dropping on the lead plane of the first box with excellent results. Bombs covered the aiming points, destroying buildings and cutting or blocking several roads. At least two direct hits were scored on railroad tracks. Moderate accurate flak was fired at the formation from about one minute before the bombs went away until the formation came out over the bomb line on the way back. Six aircraft suffered category "A" battle damage; two, category "AC" and one aircraft was hit by flak over the target. The left engine was knocked completely out of the nacelle and the plane turned over on its back. It went out of control and into a spin. No chutes were seen. The crew, Lt J.J. Farley and Sgt E.R. Hardesty, are listed as MIA. Col Willetts, Lts Royalty and Basnett as B and N, and Capt Pair, Lts Corum and Muir as B and N, led the two boxes.

That afternoon, a second mission took off, this time to attack the Norvenich communications center. It was a PPF attack through a solid cloud cover. There was no flak. Major Price, Lts Forma and McCartney as B and N, and Captain Andersen, Lts Babbage and Shaft as B and N, were the box leaders.

The following day, the 26th, flying our ninth mission in six days, thirty-eight aircraft took off to attack road junctions in Sindorf. The PPF

plane was unable to release its bombs. The box leader contacted "Roselee," as his Gee equipment was not operating. "Roselee" vectored the planes of the first box in on the town of Munstereifel and gave them the signal when to attack. Entirely by coincidence, the second box also chose the town of Munstereifel as a secondary and attacked on Gee. One aircraft was forced to drop from formation by engine trouble. It joined the 410th Bomb Group and dropped on its target, a communications center at Wickrath. There was no flak. The two boxes were led by Col Napier, Lts Moore and McQuade as B and N, and Capt Stebbins, Lts Calloway and Johnson as B and N.

The last mission of the month, no. 127, was flown on the 28th. The target to be attacked was the still very important ordnance depot at Unna. A 10/10ths cloud cover hung over Germany. A last minute equipment failure in the PPF plane of the first box prevented it from bombing. It was too late for the box leader to make a Gee run. As a result, he led his box on to attack the marshalling yards at Seigen on his own Gee equipment. The PPF equipment worked fine in the second PPF plane so that the second box was able to attack the primary target. Twenty-eight and one-half tons of incendiary bombs were dropped on each of the targets. The box leaders were Major Dunn, Lts Brewer and Maltby as B and N, and Lt Rooney, Lts Kirk and Koch as B and N.

Despite the inclement February weather, our Group had flown 22 missions. This was only a few missions less than we had flown during some of our best operational months. On these missions, 707 individual sorties were flown and 1032 1/2 tons of bombs were dropped on enemy installations. A month-end summary published by the Public Relations Office ties our operations with the general plan of battle for the whole of the 9th Bombardment Division. (EXH #13-Feb, 45.)

March, 1945

HEADQUARTERS
FOUR HUNDRED SIXTEENTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L)
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER

SUBJECT: Historical Data. (March, 1945)

TO : Commanding General, Army Air Forces.

The strength of the Group at the end of February was 253 officers and 1221 enlisted men. At the end of March, our strength was:

668th Bomb Sq	52 Officers	268 Enlisted Men
669th Bomb Sq	59 Officers	291 Enlisted Men
670th Bomb Sq	63 Officers	294 Enlisted Men
671st Bomb Sq	65 Officers	284 Enlisted Men
HQ, 416th	33 Officers	55 Enlisted Men
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TOTAL	272	1210

Among changes in personnel during the month, Major Price, who completed his tour of duty, left for the States. Major McNulty became Commanding Officer of the 668th Bomb Squadron. Major Price had been one of the original members of the Group. On the Original orders of the Group, he was placed in command of the 668th Bomb Sq, but he was immediately reassigned to the 669th Bomb Sq. He served as its commander until October 1943. Early in 1944, he was made Commanding Officer of the 668th Bomb Sq again. He was the first of our Commanding Officers to complete his tour of duty and return to the States. He with his Bombardier-Navigator, Lt Hand, had been one of our most successful bombing teams. Just a few days before his departure, Colonel Aylesworth presented him with the Distinguished Flying Cross at a staff meeting.

Many more of our crew members left for the Zone of the Interior during the month of March, including Major R.F. Price, Captains R.L. Behlmer, C.C. Mish, and E.B. Kreh; First Lieutenants W.F. Tripp Jr., R. Conte, J.F. Smith, J.C. Sewell, and E.J. Renth, Staff Sergeants P.G. Euga, E.L. Schafer, A. Teran, D.H. DeBower, R.G. Schrom, and R.F. Stobert, and Technical Sergeant J.F. Goggin. Staff Sergeants K.G. Lagerman, M.E. Diaz, and R.W. Cheuveront returned to the States to attend the A.A.F. Flexible Gunnery School. Captain F.J. Harrold was to return for 30 days after completing his temporary duty with the ground forces.

Changes in the status of several crew members formerly listed as MIA were received: Staff Sergeant L. Ashton from MIA to POW; 2nd Lt J.B. Saidla from MIA to POW; Staff Sergeant J.S. Wing from MIA to POW; Sergeants A.F. Cavanaugh from MIA to POW; J.M. Harris from MIA to POW; Sergeant A.O. Wylie from MIA to KIA; Captain R.B. Prentiss from MIA to KIA; 1st Lt F.H. Bursiel from MIA to KIA; Staff Sergeant D.M. Brown from MIA to KIA.

First Lieutenant Norman V. Shainberg, a POW, was returned to duty in the States under military control, having lost a leg while in the hands of the Germans. Captain P.G. Atkinson was returned to duty from SWA.

"Ted's Terrors," the cream of the 416th basketball players, were our representatives at a tournament held at the headquarters of the 9th Bombardment Division. They came through their first game against the Bombay Headquarters quintet with flying colors, 48-34. In the finals, however, they lost their drive and were defeated, 40-26, by the team from the 397th Bomb Group. "Ted's Terrors" were: Major C.C. Wysocki, T/Sgt E.J. Russo, Sgt C.L. Heisel, S/Sgt Charles R. Nordstrom, Pfc Charles R. Bohles, T/Sgt E.T. Hunter, S/Sgt Jack L. Campbell, Sgt Charles D. Donovan, Sgt P.D. Cookingham, Sgt

Harold Stevens, and Cpl J.A. Mapes.

A G.I. talent show, "Off Limits", furnished some pleasant entertainment at the Station Theatre on the 20th to supplement the usual movies held throughout the Base. A dance was held for the Enlisted Men on the 21st at the 668th Mess Hall. Young ladies from nearby towns were invited. The favorable comment was a mark of its success. A French civilian variety show from Paris entertained on the 25th.

There had been a noticeable lack of hospitality among the people of Laon. Whether or not it was due to the severe damage done to the city by Allied bombing, a coldness did exist. Both as a friendly gesture at this Easter Season and also in an attempt to help win the favor of the local people, on the 24th, candy which had been donated by the soldiers of our base and doughnuts given by the Red Cross were distributed to over 850 French youngsters who were celebrating their first liberated Easter. Because the children would have a vacation from school during Easter Week, Saturday, the 24th, was the day chosen for the affair. The children, whose ages ranged from four to seven years, gathered at the Laon Schools and the Hotel de La Ville to receive the "goodies" from a committee consisting of Lieutenant Colonel Townsend, Major Thomas, Lieutenant Suttner, Staff Sergeant Max, and Corporal Yost. The mayor of Laon and school teachers were there to enjoy the occasion with the children. Exh 1-6, Mar '45. The affair was very much of a success and helped promote much friendlier relations with the townspeople than had ever existed before. A letters of thanks from the Academic Inspector of Aisne is symbolic of the thanks and gratitude of the townspeople. Exh #17-Mar (45.)

The party was instrumental in starting a French Welcome Committee. Our soldiers were invited into French homes to enjoy their hospitality and friendship. Many took advantage of this opportunity to dine with them and at the same time to come to know the French people better.

The Aero Club opened on the 25th.

Easter week was a busy week for Chaplain, P.C. Penticoff. He conducted Protestant services throughout Holy Week with communion services on Easter Sunday. The Catholic Chaplain of the Fourth Service Group conducted services for those of the Catholic faith. Exh #18. Many, both Protestant and Catholic attended Easter Services in the famous old cathedral at Rheims.

The awards and decorations section was kept busy writing up the work that our men were doing. The nation's second highest military decoration, the Distinguished Service Cross, was awarded to First Lieutenant John W. Kehoe and Major Leland C. Nielsen. Exh #9-10. Lt Kehoe, now MIA, was given the award for "extraordinary heroism in action against the enemy while serving as pilot of an A-26 type aircraft on a mission to Munstereifel, Germany 25 December 1944." Major Nielsen received the award for "extraordinary heroism in action against the enemy while serving as pilot of an A-26 type aircraft in a bombing and strafing mission near Blankenheim, Germany, 23 January

1945." These two men were the second and third in the history of our Group to receive this high award. The only other man to hold it was Lt Tommie J. Sims.

Several Distinguished Flying Crosses were also awarded. Among the recipients were Staff Sergeant Irving Binney, Captain Hilary P. Cole, Lt William J. Greene, Captain E.B. Kreh, Captain P.F.E. MacManus Jr., Captain LaVern A. Marzolf, and Lt R.H. Smith, and a bronze oak leaf cluster to the D.F.C. to Staff Sergeant R.K. Riley. All of these men have returned to the Zone of the Interior. Exj #11. As has been mentioned before, the D.F.C. was awarded to Major R.F. Price before his return to the States. At a ceremony at the 409th Bomb Group station, Lt Col Willetts, and Major Dunn and McNulty were awarded the D.F.C. Major General Samuel E. Anderson pinned the decorations on our officers. Exh #12-13.

Captain William P. Kinney, Group S-4, and one of the original members of the Group, whose work has been an "outstanding factor in the success of our operations," was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. Others who received the same award were T/Sgt. M.E. Bjertness, a crew chief; S/Sgt E.M. Max, of Special Service; Sgt Carl Valentine, a crew chief. All received the award for "meritorious achievement in direct support of military operations." Exh #14-15.

Purple Hearts were awarded to Lieutenants Wesley D. Chitty Jr. and L.W. Edstrom, and Pfc. Edwin L. Gur. Exh #16-17. The usual Air Medals and Oak Leaf Clusters were awarded to our crewmen. Exh #17.

There was a tremendous influx of new combat personnel into the Group during the month of March. Some of the personnel had just arrived overseas from the States. Others had been with a combat group in the E.T.O. prior to joining us. The 386th, formerly equipped with B-26s, had been converted to an A-26 Group. This meant they were overstrengthened in combat personnel. This overstrength was mostly in Bombardiers and Navigators. They were reassigned to the 416th and to other A-26 Groups. A now pre-operational ground training program was set-up so that these new crews could, in the shortest possible time, be cleared for flying and relieve the burden which had been placed on the old crews. Exh #18.

The operational effort of our Group and other bomb groups over Europe at the end of February and the first of March was a certain indication of great events on the ground. Our troops had pushed forward to the West Bank of the Rhine in all sectors. There the advance halted momentarily. Finally on the 8th of March, the news flashed across the world that a bridge had been taken intact, spanning the Rhine at Ramagen, by the American First Army. Troops poured across the Rhine at Ramagen; by the time the Germans were able to shell the bridge in the river, enough auxiliary bridges had been built to make the bridgehead secure. A congratulatory message was received from Secretary of the Navy Forrestal and Speaker Rayburn of the House of Representatives for the part all of us played in this achievement. Exh #19.

The real offensive east of the Rhine began on the 24th when Airborne troops crossed the river north of the Ruhr in an area which had been saturated by our bombing. At the same time, our Third Army pushed off near Frankfurt. Once the crossing had been made, our troops and armor began to run rampant over enemy territory, taking thousands of prisoners, either too weary to continue fighting or too well beaten to fight back. The Ruhr Valley was the one stumbling block in our advances. If supplies and reinforcements could be kept from the Ruhr, soon our troops would be able to strangle it with attacks from all sides; the Ninth Air Force was assigned the task of isolating the Ruhr. In a series of well-concentrated and effective blows, against marshalling yards, bridges, and communications and supply centers, the troops in the Ruhr were soon isolated. Our own troops encircled the area from the east to make the isolation complete. From that moment on, it was just a matter of time before the famous Ruhr garrison fell. A letter of commendation was received from General Eisenhower on the great job done by the Ninth Air Force. Exh #20.

February and early March missions might be called the "PPF" campaign. For a large part of these two months, our missions were Pathfinder missions flown often in extremely hazardous weather. None the less, the successes achieved are gratifying to each who had a part in them. Letters of commendation from General Anderson, General Backus and from General Vandenburg, commanding the Ninth Air Force, reveal the value of our attacks. Exh #21-23.

One other commendation was received from General Williams, commanding the IX Troop Carrier Command, passed on by General Anderson. It concerned the splendid cooperation given which made the airborne operation of the 24th highly successful. Exh #24.

Here is a summary of our operations for March 1945.

When mission no. 218, the first mission of March, took off in the early afternoon of the first, it was to begin the most active month of our operations and also some of the greatest advance of our Armies on the ground. That first March mission was to attack the Giessen ordnance depot on PPF. No fighters showed up to escort our formation. When the equipment in the PPF plane failed, it attacked the town of Brumm, just over the bomblines. The two boxes of our planes, led by Major Dunn, Lts Brewer and Basnett, B-N, and Lt Buskirk, Lts Hanna and Muir, B&N, dropped on the PPF plane. There was no flak.

Again on the 2nd, PPF was employed to attack warehouses at Iserlohn through 10/10 cloud cover. There was no flak. The two boxes were lead by Capt Evans, Lt McCartney and F/O Blount, B&N, and Captain Andersen, Lts Babbage and Shaft, B&N. The mission marked the finish of our first year of operations.

The Giessen ordnance depot was attacked on the 3rd through a solid cloud cover. For the third day running, enemy flak guns were silent. Lt Col Napier,

Lts Moore and McQuade, B&N, and Captain Miller, Lts Connor and Johnson, B&N, were the box leaders.

On the 4th, marshalling yards at Huls were attacked on PPF. There were openings in the clouds, which permitted observations. Crews reported hits in the north choke point and in the middle of the yards. Through these same holes, enemy gunners were able to spot the formation. Weak and inaccurate flak was encountered at the target and on the turn off, but there was no battle damage. Weather became worse as the planes returned. Coming down through the overcast, Lt Hackley's plane went momentarily out of control. His gunner, Sargeant Koons, bailed out although he had not been told to do so. The gunner landed safely near Charleroi. Lt Hackley brought the plane under control and landed it safely at our base. Only one box, led by Capt Stebbins, Lts Calloway and McQuade, B&N, made the attack.

The fifth was the first two-mission day in March. In the morning, marshalling yards at Marburg were attacked by 37 aircraft, dropping over 55 tons of 500-pound demolition bombs on PPF. There was no flak, and no observations of the results. Major Dunn, Lts Brewer and Basnett, B&N, led the first box; Lt Buskirk, Lts Hanna and Muir, B&N, led the second.

That afternoon, the Bingen yards were attacked behind two PPF planes. There was weak, inaccurate flak at the target. Capt Stebbins, Lts Calloway and McQuade, B&N, and Captain Andersen, Lt Babbage and F/O Harvest, B&N, were the box leaders. Reconnaissance over the target five days later found very heavy damage to the yards.

Flying their seventh mission in six days, two boxes, led by Lt Col Napier, Lts Moore and McQuade, B&N, and Capt Miller, Lts Connor and Johnson, B&N, bombed the Opladen marshalling yards on PPF. Crews reported that the bombs cut completely across the northern end of the yards. There was no flak. The planes made their attack without fighter escort.

After a day of rest, the motor transport depot at Wulfrath was attacked on the 8th, using PPF through a solid cloud cover. There was no flak. An assortment of 500 pound incendiary bombs and 250 and 500 pound demolition bombs were carried. The box leaders were Capt Stebbins, Lts Calloway and McQuade, B&N, and Lt Rooney, Lts Kirk and McNutt, B&N.

Two missions were flown on the 9th. The Butzbach marshalling yards were to be attacked. The first box attacked on PPF. The equipment in the second PPF plane failed so the leader of the second box took over the lead and bombed the Werterburg communications center with good results. An ME 163 jet plane and an ME 210 fighter were reported, but neither made an attack. Again, there was no flak. Major Dunn, Lts Brewer and Beck, B&N, and Lt Brown, Lts Kerns and Muir, B&N, led the two boxes.

The second mission of the day was another PPF attack on the Wulfen ammunition filling plant. There were clouds over the target, but these were

some observations of the results: many fires were seen in the target area; many buildings burst into flames as though set afire by gasoline. Three patterns circled the aiming point. Exh #25. Weak, inaccurate flak at the target caused minor battle damage. Although FW 190s were reported along the route, they never came in close enough to be identified. Capt Evans, Lts McCartney and Babbage, B&N, and Capt Stanley, F/O Blount and Lt Shaft, B&N, led the two boxes. General Backus flew as an observer with Captain Evans.

The Dillenberg marshalling yards were attacked on the 10th, using PPF through solid clouds. Gee fixes indicated excellent results. There was no flak. The two boxes were led by Lt Col Napier, Lts Moore and McQuade, B&N, and Capt Miller, Lts Connor and Enman, B&N.

Again, on the morning of the 11th, a solid cloud cover over the Lippe airstrip made it necessary to attack with PPF equipment. There was no flak as 268x500 pound demolition bombs were dropped. Capt Stebbins, Lts Calloway and McQuade, B&N, and Capt Rooney, Lts Kerns and Muir, B&N, were box leaders.

The Wulfen ammunition filling plant that had been attacked on the 9th was attacked again in the afternoon of the 11th. PPF was used. As on the 9th, weak, inaccurate flak was encountered at the target. Major Dunn, Lts Brewer and Beck, B&N, and Lt Brown, Lts Kerns and Muir, B&N, were the two box leaders.

On the morning of the 12th, 304x500 demolition bombs were dropped. The mission was carried out on PPF, on the Lorch marshalling yards. There were no observations. The box leaders were Capt Evans, Lts McCartney and Babbage, B&N, and Capt Stanley, F/O Blount and Lt Shaft, B&N.

German equipment and supplies were being rushed to the area of our Ramagen bridgehead through the Mummelbach yards. As a result, on the afternoon of the 12th, one Group attacked the yards on PPF. Although weak, inaccurate flak was experienced at the bomb line in, there was no battle damage. Lt Col Napier, Lts Moore and Calloway, B&N, led the first box; Capt Miller, Lts Connor and Johnson, B&N, the second.

The 13th saw two more missions. The first attack was made against the jet-fighter airfield at Rheine on PPF. Although fighters were based on the field, none rose up to challenge the formation as the planes turned off the target. Moderate, accurate flak filled the sky and five planes received battle damage. A sixth plane, piloted by Lt C.S. Jordan, was also hit. When his wheels would not come down for a landing, he was forced to take a crash landing at Station A-70. The landing was a magnificent job. The fuselage was skinned and the props were bent. That was the extent of the damage. The plane was turned over to the depot for repairs. Riding with him were his gunner, S/Sgt H.F. Jensen and an observer from the 11th Armored Division, S/Sgt E.E. Bolton. None of the crew was injured. Later, photo reconnaissance showed the airfield covered with craters, and runways destroyed. Capt Stebbins, Lts Calloway and Powell, B&N, and Major Ferris, Lts Royalty and Koch, B&N, were

the box leaders.

That afternoon, the Husten marshalling yards were attacked. The PPF plane was unable to keep with the formation so the box leaders attempted visual runs. Haze obscured the target, but after two runs, they dropped by boxes on a combination of Gee equipment and ETA. The results were estimated as fair. Moderate, accurate flak was experienced at the bomb line, but there was no battle damage. The two box leaders were Major Dunn, Lts Brewer and Corum, B&N, and Lt Brown, Lts Kerns and Muir, B&N.

Continuing this aerial offensive to isolate the Ruhr Valley, a railroad bridge at Nieder-Marsburg was the target on the 14th. Heavy haze in the target area and similarity of terrain made the bridge difficult to identify. One flight blanketed the approach to the bridge (Exh #26) while others fell across roads and buildings south of the bridge. One flight misidentified the target and bombed another railroad bridge, 3 1/2 miles southwest of the target. Their bombs blanketed one of the approaches to the bridge. Capt Evans, Lts McCartney and Shaft, B&N, led the first box; Lt Rooney, Lts Kirk and McNutt, B&N, the second.

Incendiary bombs were dropped on the Pirmassens road junction (exh #27) on the 15th. For the first time in over a month, the weather was ideal. Taking advantage of the weather, our bombardiers did an excellent job. The town was almost completely covered with smoke and flames after the attack. Just before our main formation reached the target, six planes, carrying 260 pound fragmentation bombs attacked flak positions at the target area. Their job was well done because only a few bursts of inaccurate flak were seen. The mission, led by Lt Col Napier, Lt Moore and Johnson, B&N, and Capt Miller, Lts Connor and Enman, B&N, was the 20th in eight days.

A day of rest followed this mission, but on the next day, the 17th, the attack was continued with even more vigor. Two more missions were flown. The first target was a road junction at Altenkirchen. An almost solid cloud cover hung over the target and there was no flak. PPF equipment failed so Gee equipment was used. Results were unobserved. Lt Rooney, Lts Kirk and Moore, B&N, and Major Ferris, Lts Royalty and Koch, B&N, led our boxes.

The target in the afternoon was the Bard Homburg marshalling yards. Bad weather caused the formations to be late going into the target. The PPF planes were told to hold their bombs. The formation scattered in the clouds. The first flight used Gee to attack the briefing secondary target, Weilburg. The other two flights of the first box used Gee to attack Montabaur. Most of the second box attacked Weilburg on Gee equipment. Four aircraft, separated from the rest of the formation, dropped their bombs on German territory. There was no flak. Major Dunn, Lts Brewer and Muir, B&N, and Lt C.J. Brown, Lts Kerns, B&N, led the two boxes.

Throughout the pages of our History, two words have stood out, "Bloody Sunday." The 18th was one of our bloodiest Sundays. Two PPF planes led our

two boxes in to attack on the Worms communications center. Up to the Rhine, a solid cloud cover hung over the ground. It cleared at the Rhine. The PPF planes began their long bomb run. At the same time, intense, accurate flak was shot up. The leader of the first box called the PPF plane, saying that he was going to attempt a visual run, but asked him to stay in the lead in case a visual run was not possible. The first box dropped visually, as did the PPF plane. The leader of the second box decided on a visual attack from visual I.P. They turned left before the target and went to the visual I.P. west of the target. Peeling off, they bombed visually by flights.

The intense accurate flak at the PPF I.P. continued to the target, except for a momentary break. When the second box turned off for its visual I.P., they passed out of the flak area. But going into the target, they experienced moderate flak up to the target.

Four planes were presumed to be lost to flak when they failed to return to base. The planes went down in the vicinity of the PPF IP, northeast of the town of Bingen. Two planes went down in the vicinity of the target. Twenty-three other planes suffered battle damage; 17, category "A", and six, category "AC." Only one returning crew member was injured, Lt W.D. Chitty Jr. He counted over 80 holes in his plane, 20 in one engine and yet the engine ran. Flak cracked both his windshields and glass grazed his wrist. An 88 mm shell crashed through the cockpit of Lt Carver's plane and exploded over his head. He was uninjured.

No chutes were seen to emerge from any of the planes that were lost. The crews are all listed as MIA.

#261 received direct hits in the left engine between the PPF I.P. and the target. It was last seen disintegrating and in flames, going down at a undetermined point. Lt J.P. Kenny and S/Sgt J.J. Sittarich were the crew.

#213 was seen by two crews to leave the formation in the target area with a fire in the cockpit after a direct hit in the left engine on the bomb run. Its crew was Lt C.J. Vars and S/Sgt J.J. Griffith.

#521 received a direct hit on the turn off the target. Both engines were smoking and it was losing altitude but apparently under control. It might have been the plane seen to hit the ground near Johannisberg. After flames broke out in the right engine nacelle, the right wing broke off about 3,000 feet above the ground. The crew included Lt R.H. Cornell, Lt R.E. Enman, and S/Sgt A. Carter.

#237 received a direct hit in the right wing and was seen to hit the ground in flames near Bingen. The crew was Lt W.B. Jokinen and Sgt E.J. Creeden.

The bombs of the first box fell in two patterns in the town, causing extensive damage to buildings, roads, and railroad tracks. Box two scored

hits in the marshalling yards and a highway overpass. All in all, many tracks were cut, ten cars destroyed, four warehouses damaged, 85 buildings damaged, roads and streets cut, and the overpass probably destroyed. Exh #28.

The box leaders were Capt Evans, Lts McCartney and Freed, B&N, and Capt Andersen, Lts Babbage and Roman, B&N.

Appalled yes, but none the less determined, two boxes led by PPF planes took off that afternoon to attack the Krentzel marshalling yards. The second box attacked the target on PPF without incident. The PPF plane of the first box pulled away on the bomb run without attacking. Gee equipment and Channel "B" in the lead plane of the first box was not operating, so he told the leader of the second flight to take over, Lt C.J. Brown. Lt Brown's Gee equipment was jammed too. He called "Bullseye" and asked to be vectored to the target. After flying headings for an hour, Lt Brown's Gee equipment began to work and he went in to bomb the target on Gee. This box encountered weak, inaccurate flak at the bomb line out. Cloud cover, ranging from 9 to 10/10, extended over enemy territory. The boxes were led by Lt Col Napier, Lts Miller and Mulgrew, B&N, and Captain Miller, Lts Connor and Wrubbelle, B&N.

The 19th was an extremely active day for the Group. One box of 24 planes attacked the Lage railroad bridge with excellent results. Exh #29. Moderate, accurate flak at the bomb line in and out caused battle damage to nine planes. Major Ferris, Lts Royalty and Moore, B&N, led the box.

At the same time, 18 more planes attacked the Nassau road junctions. Again the results were excellent, with hits on the railroad, buildings, and roads. Exh #30. Lt. Rooney, Lt Kirk and F/O T.L. Goss, B&N, led the box.

A third box of 18 aircraft attacked the Schweim marshalling yards with a box of the 409th Bomb Group. Again attacking visibly by flights, the formation scored excellent results with all bombers scoring hits in the yards. Major Dunn, Lts Brewer and Muir, B&N, led the box.

Slowing down somewhat to catch our breath on the 20th, only one mission was flown. The target was the Geisecke marshalling yards. The PPF plane, which was leading the formation, developed engine trouble at the I.P. and had to leave the formation. A large cloud hung over the target and after three runs without success, the leader of the first box led the formation to the briefed secondary target, the town of Westerberg...a total of 76 tons of bombs were dropped on the already badly hit town. The first box wiped out the center of the town. Exh #31. Noticing activity in the yards nearby, the bombardier in the second box changed his aiming point at the last minute. It threw off his accuracy and his bombs landed in the woods, but some cut minor roads. The two boxes were led by Major Shaefer and Lts Hand and Roman, B&N, and Capt Evans, Lts McCartney and Freed, B&N. Although the formation passed over several heavily defended Ruhr towns, only on the third run over the primary target was weak, inaccurate flak encountered.

The Coesfeld road junction in Holland was attacked by 37 aircraft dropping 500 pound incendiaries on the morning of the 21st. Fires from the bombing swept from one end of the town to the other. Smoke from previous bombings interfered with the sighting. None the less, the results were excellent. The course took the planes over most of Holland and yet flak was never more than meager. The boxes were led by Capt Miller, Lts Connor and McCartney, B&N, Lt Col Napier, with Lt Moore[?], B-N.

[The remainder of page 20 and the first line of page 21 are missing.]

A maximum effort of 31 planes attacked road junctions at Vreden and flak positions that afternoon. Due to the similarity of targets and terrain, two flights attacked the town of Stadtlohn with excellent results. The rest of the formation scored excellent to superior results on the primary target, dropping 1,000-pounders. Exh #32. Results on the three flak positions were unobserved because of the type of bomb used. Weak to moderated flak was encountered from the bomb line to the target. Major Ferris, Lts. Royalty and McNutt, B&N, and Captain Rooney, recently promoted, Lt. Kirk, B-N, were the box leaders.

Coming back over friendly territory about 25 miles northeast of St. Trond, Captain Andersen, leading the second flight of the first box, was attempting to regain his position in the first box. He slid his plane over the plane flown by Captain Rooney and chewed off its tail. The two planes collided in mid-air and fell to the ground and burned. Lt Kirk, B-N in Capt Rooney's plane, bailed out safely with only minor injuries. All the others were killed in the crash, which happened without warning. Captain Rooney was completing his 65th mission when the accident occurred. The reason for the crash is unknown. Flying with Captain Andersen were Lt W. Babbage, Lt. L.J. Roman, and S/Sgt S.L. Heitell. Captain Rooney had Capt C.C. Slaughter of the Infantry and Sgt. R.J. Kamischke flying with him. Lt W.E. Downing's gunner, Sgt. A.D. Sgroi, flying in #4 position behind Capt Rooney, realized that a collision was imminent. He opened the bomb bay doors, preparing to bail out. The drag on the plane was sufficient to slow it down and keep it out of the way of the colliding planes. Had it not been for his action, his plane might well have been struck by Captain Andersen's plane. Sgt Sgroi was slightly injured in the eye during the collision.

The sudden concentration on the area on the east bank of the Rhine above the Ruhr was an indication of a possible jump across the Rhine in that area. Two more missions on the 22nd hit the town of Borken in this area. In the morning, dropping 100-pound bombs, 34 aircraft scored excellent to superior results. Exh #33. Two flights misidentified the target and bombed the towns of Sudlohn and Stadtlohn with good results. Three planes scored excellent results with 260-pound fragmentation bombs on flak positions. Flak was moderate and accurate and six planes suffered battle damage. Lt Fero's plane was unable to make it back to the base because of battle damage and crash-

landed near Station Y-55. Although the plane was washed out, neither he nor his gunner, Staff Sergeant A.A. Rojas, were injured. The box leaders were Major Dunn, Lt. Brewer and F/O A.J. Lehneis, B&N, and Lt. C.J. Brown, Lt. Kerns, B-N.

Going back after the same town in the afternoon, smoke from the morning's bombing almost completely obscured the target. Unable to see the target on the first run, the formation dropped on Gee equipment on the second run. There was no flak. One gunner reported a single engine fighter plane approaching the formation from below at seven o'clock. Making a pass from one o'clock and firing tracers, it closed in to 800 yards. The gunner did not return his fire and made no claims. The P-47 escort steered the fighter away. Major Shaefer, Lts. Hand and Reeves, B&N, and Captain Stanley, F/O Blount and Lt. M.P. Schlefer, B&N, were the box leaders. Brigadier General Backus, commanding the 97th Combat Wing, rode as an observer with Major Shaefer.

The Dinslaken factory area was attacked by a maximum effort on the morning of the 23rd. Excellent results were scored, destroying a large portion of the factory area and nearby roads and buildings. Exh #34. The one general observation concerned the amount of smoke in the target area and along the west bank of the Rhine. The bombing of the Allied Air Forces in the past few days had turned the German towns and villages into huge bonfires. On our side of the river, however, with a move anticipated, mile after mile of the riverbank was concealed behind a continuous smoke screen. As yet, on crossing of the river was reported.

There was weak but very accurate flak in the target area and five planes suffered category "A" battle damage. Lt Ford's plane was hit by flak on the first run over the target. He broke away from the formation and headed for friendly territory, still carrying his 1,000-pound bombs on single engine, escorted by P-47's. At about 4,000 feet, his other engine stopped. With his bomb bays full of bombs and without any power, he glided his plane to the ground for a crash landing. He was only slightly injured in the landing. His gunner, Staff Sergeant Freeland W. Tharp, bailed out without an order from the pilot over enemy territory and is now MIA. The box leaders were Capt. Miller, Lts. Connor and Johnson, B&N, and Lt. Col. Napier, Lt. Moore and F/O Wrubelle, B&N.

Our 250th mission, the 33rd of the month and our 50th in 43 days, took off in the afternoon of the 23rd. This time the town of Dinslaken was attacked. Smoke from our morning's bombing still hung over the target. Three boxes of eight flights dropped 64 tons of a new type of incendiary bomb which was supposed to be inextinguishable. The fires swept through the town. Counter-battery fire was very effective because weak, inaccurate flak was encountered. The three boxes were led by Major Ferris, Lts. Royalty and McNutt, B&N, Lt. Brewster, with Lt. Dennis and F/O F.J. Conley, B&N, and Capt. Tutt, with Lt. L.A. Orr, B-N.

On the 24th, in a dawn attack in cooperation with a long awaited push by

our ground forces, two boxes of aircraft, led by Major Dunn, with Lt. Brewer and F/O A.J. Lehneis, B&N, and Lt. Brown, Lt. Kerns, B-N, made an attack on flak positions at Ihling Kamps, east of Bocholt, dropping 733x260-pound fragmentation bombs on the lead plane of the first box, which attacked visually. The lead bombardier misidentified the target and bombed on the edge of the town of Rhede, one mile east of the target. Hits were scored on the railroad, roads, and buildings. Two planes led by Lt. C. Jordan, Lt. Mulgrew, B-N, were assigned to attack another flak position with the 409th Bomb Group, scoring excellent results.

As our planes returned to the field, overhead, C-47 Dakotas and gliders were heading eastward to participate in the mass offensive, after rallying over Laon. Our crews reported even more C-47's and gliders in the target area as they made their attack. At that time, there was report of any landing of our troops on the east bank of the Rhine. Within two hours, the world heard the news that the Rhine had been crossed both in the north by our airborne troops and in the south by General Patton's Third Army.

The second mission of the day took off while our troops were pushing across the Rhine to attack a railroad bridge north of the town of Colbe. The bombs of at least one flight were centered on the bridge. Exh #35. The others fell close by. The east side of the bridge was severely damaged and the bridge was now unserviceable. Some of the bombs landed in the woods and caused violent explosions; the railroad tracks and roads were cut. Only one box, led by Major Shaefer, Lts. Hand and Reeves, B&N, made the attack.

For the fifth day running, on the 25th, two missions were flown. The morning mission was a full scale attack on the road junctions at Altenkirchen. Buildings in the northwestern and central part of the town were destroyed. Buildings were left burning in five separate places. Road traffic was blocked by debris and craters. Crossing the bomb line, some weak inaccurate flak was fired at the formation. As it approached the target on the bomb run, it experienced moderate accurate flak. Twenty-two planes suffered battle damage; seven of them were category "AC". Lt. Barausky's plane was hit in the right engine on the bomb run and it was knocked out. He feathered his prop, continued on to the target, and dropped his bombs. He got a heading back to Y-57 and prepared to crash land. His B-N, Lt Sheehan, came back in the cockpit to brace himself. The right strut had been shot up and the right tire shot out. He chose the dirt portion of the field for his landing. He feathered his left engine (his right was already feathered). Both the gunner and the bombardier jettisoned their hatches, so that they could get out of the plane quickly. The left engine was torn off as the plane sank into the grass. The gunner, Sergeant Hall, was slightly injured. Captain Miller, Lts. Connor and Johnson, B&N, and Captain Stebbins, Lt. Calloway, B-N, were the box leaders.

That afternoon, one of our most successful missions was flown. Two boxes of 37 aircraft attacked the very important and heavily trafficked marshalling yard at Fulda, a key point for the transfer of supplies and equipment to

German troops facing General Patton's bridgehead. Two Superiors and four Excellents were scored. Exh #36. Violent explosions indicated that the yards contained ammunition or fuel. One hundred and twenty-five freight cars were destroyed or damaged; 47 hits were scored on the tracks; eight hits on the railroad overpass probably destroying it; there were ten hits on railroad workshops, 23 on other buildings, and 15 on roads, cutting them. Major Ferris, Lts. Royalty and McNutt, B&N, and Lt. Brewster, with Lt. Dennis and F/O Conley, B&N, led this successful mission.

The Gemunden marshalling yards were successfully attacked on the following day, the 26th. The target was a great distance from our base, but, because of the rapid advances made by General Patton's troops, it was just a few miles ahead of the bomb line in his sector. The yards were the junction point of four separate rail lines. Two superiors and three excellents were scored. The choke points, tracks, cars, and surrounding workshops were destroyed or severely damaged. Lt. Brown, Lts. Kerns and Brewer, B&N, and Lt. Buskirk, with Lt. Hanna, B-N, led the two boxes.

The fine weather began to cloud up and on the 27th, no mission took off. However, on the 28th, one mission was run even though the weather was extremely bad. Thirty-eight planes attempted to bomb the oil storage depot at Ebrach. Trying to get through the overcast, the formation split up. Two PPF planes were leading the two boxes. Twenty-nine planes dropped on the PPF plane. Gee fixes indicated poor results with the bombs hitting far east of the target. Four planes attacked a railroad and autobahn crossing on Gee equipment when they became separated from the formation. Two planes bombed near Wurzburg. One plane dropped near Waalchern; one, over enemy territory, but the location was not determined. One plane, with a crew of F/O H.G. Gunkel and Sergeant L.J. Grzona, disappeared from the formation and is unaccounted for. The crew is listed as MIA. It was last seen going through the overcast at the start of the bomb run. Major Shaefer, Lts. Hand and Reeves, B&N, and Capt. Evans, with Lts. McCartney and Myrold, B&N, led the two boxes.

There was no mission on the 29th. On the 30th, an ordnance depot and barracks area at Hann Munden were attacked. A 7/10ths to 8/10ths cloud cover made it necessary to bomb on two PPF planes. There were no observations of the results. Three aircraft suffered battle damage. The box leaders were Major Ferris and Lt. Brewster.

The Wurzburg storage depot was the target in the morning of the 31st. Patchy weather made target identification difficult. The leader of the first box decided to bomb on its PPF plane. The leader of the second box made a visual attack. Bombing by boxes, the results as seen through the clouds appeared to be excellent. Violent explosions and clouds of smoke that billowed high into the sky followed the attack in which 222 x 500-pound incendiary bombs were dropped. There was moderate, accurate flak during the last few seconds of the bomb run. Although four aircraft received battle damage, all planes returned safely. Capt Miller, Lt. Connor and F/O Wrubelle,

B&N, led the first box; Lt. Col Napier, Lt. Moore, B-N, led the second box.

Mission # 259, the forty-second mission of the month, took off in the afternoon. It was an uneventful PPF attack on the Marienburg storage area, just south of Wurzburg. A few crews reported hits in the target area. The first box leader was Lt. Brown, Lts. Kerns and Brewer, B&N; Lt. Buskirk, Lt. Hanna, B-N, led the second box. It was the last mission of the month of March.

In our first full year of operations, ending 2 March 1945, our Group flew 219 missions, including 7,486 individual sorties, dropping 6394 1/2 tons of bombs. However, during the month of March 1945, our Group flew 1615 sorties on 42 missions and dropped a total of 2565 3/4 tons of bombs, a bit more than 40% of the total tonnage dropped during the first year of operations, although we had flown only one-fifth as many missions. During that first year of operations 72 aircraft were lost, either over enemy or friendly territory, due to enemy action, or .96% of the total number of sorties flown.

April, 1945

HEADQUARTERS
FOUR HUNDRED SIXTEENTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L)
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER

SUBJECT: Historical Data. (April, 1945)

TO : Commanding General, Army Air Forces.

Easter Day, April, 1945, Exh #1, with its religious services and significance, ushered in one of the strangest months in the history of World War II. No longer did we think that the bombs we dropped were as a pebble on a beach, lost among the others. Instead, as the month slipped by, each ton of bombs dropped seemed to show a definite reaction and bring about a new change in the bomb line. The Germans were on the run and we now knew that it was only a matter of time before an unconditional surrender would be made.

The question in the minds of most of us, now, seemed not to be "When will V-E Day come?" but "What will be the terms of surrender so that we will not have to fight again in another decade or two?" The Yalta conference, held some months ago, had decided on some of the terms to be demanded. The San Francisco conference, to begin on April 25, attended to delegates from the Allied Nations, was to decide on the terms of final settlement. Our champion

at these conferences was our President, Franklin D. Roosevelt. His astuteness, understanding of the problems, and diplomacy had won him the confidence of the whole world. Then a pall fell on us. The news reached us on the morning of the 13th that President Roosevelt had died at his summer home at Hot Springs, Georgia, on the 12th. The average American soldier knew that with his passing, had gone one of our greatest assurance of a just and lasting peace. A period of 30 days of mourning was proclaimed by the new President, Harry S. Truman. A memorial service was held on the 670th Bomb Squadron's athletic field on the 15th. Chaplains Penticoff and Doyle conducted the service, attended by all available personnel from all units on the base. Exhs #2-5. The events of the following few days were watched closely to see what changes in policy would be made by the new President. Mr. Truman issued a statement that he would continue to carry out the policies of the late President and would make no immediate changes in the cabinet.

April might easily be called "Inspection Month." On the 3rd and 4th, the Office of the Inspector General of the 9th Bombardment Division made a complete administrative inspection of the Group and Station. The Group and Station received a Superior rating. This was the second consecutive Superior rating given to the Group in an administrative inspection by that office.

On the 9th, Colonel Strammey, a reclassification specialist from ETOUSA, arrived to spend a few days on the Base. He flew on a couple of missions so that he might understand the conditions under which our combat crewmen worked and lived and thereby make any needed recommendations for improvements.

A Bombardment Division Personnel survey, audit, and inspection team arrived on the 28th to make a ten day inspection of personnel records, checking them for accuracy and agreement. The team, composed of an officer and three enlisted men, was under the supervision of Captain James M. Lynch Jr.

Throughout the month, there were changes in personnel and assignment. Major Wm. P. Thomas, Intelligence officer for the Group since its activation in February, 1943, was transferred to the headquarters of the European Civil Affairs Division on 6 April. He was succeeded by Capt M.B. Sheridan, who had been I.O. of the 670th Bomb Sq since the Group's inception. Capt H.W. Anderson and Lt L.H. Perkins were appointed Top Secret control officer and assistant control officer. When Lt Col Napier returned to the U.S. after completing his tour of duty, Major Shaefer became commanding officer of the 669th Bomb Squadron. Capt R.V. Wheeler was appointed assistant Group Operations officer on the 22nd. The strength of the Group on the last day of April was:

Hq, 416th	33 Officers	56 Enlisted Men
668th Bomb Sq (L)	48 "	275 " "
669th Bomb Sq (L)	56 "	272 " "
670th Bomb Sq (L)	61 "	269 " "
671st Bomb Sq (L)	54 "	269 " "

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TOTAL	252	1141

Among those who had completed their tours of duty and had returned to the Zone of the Interior were Lt Col J.G. Napier, First Lieutenants F.W. Henderson, A.E. Herman, W.A. Merchant, F.H. Miller, T.J. Murray, A.H. Maltby, E.R. Hayter, R.J. Basnett, R.J. McQuade, J.K. Colquitt, H.J. Montrose, J.J. Lackovich, D.L. Withington III; Staff Sergeants E.P. Brzesinski, R.J. Brown, R.W. Carstens, H.E. Fessler, C. Fetko Jr., C.F. Floyd, H.J. Nowoskielski, H.J. Roberts, J.W. Robinson, R.P. Sharp Jr., S. Kochan Jr., J.A. Hummer, D.E. Burns, M. Bookach, F.P. Basford, H.R. Davis, T. Connery Jr., A.H. Vinson Jr., L.E. McElhattan, C.F. Huss, M. Hall, A.A. Cianciosi, and H.G. Wiggins.

There were several changes in the status of men listed as MIA: Lt R.K. Cruze from MIA to KIA; S/Sgt A.L. Nielsen from MIA to KIA; S/Sgt P.G. Fild, from MIA to KIA; Lt R.R. Svenson, from MIA to KIA; Sgt E.J. Creeden, from MIA to POW; Lt C.J. Vars, from MIA to KIA; Capt R.V. Miracle, from MIA to KIA; S/Sgt F.M. Tharp, from MIA to KIA; Sgt R.L. Ernstrom, from MIA to KIA.

Lt W.R. Jokinen, who had been listed as MIA, was captured by the enemy. While being marched off in a POW column, he escaped in the darkness and found his way back to our lines and eventually back to our Group. His gunner, Sgt Creeden, was at the head of the PW column and could not be informed of the scheme to be carried out by his pilot and was marched off to a PW camp. Sgt C.E. Tranchina, who had been seriously wounded in a crashlanding in January, in which his pilot, Lt Steed, was killed, was evacuated to the States.

With the coming of warmer April weather, more time was devoted to the improvements of runways No 1 and 3, used as parking areas, were partially repaired so that they could also be used as taxi strips. Runway #2, used for operations, was continually in need of repair. Exh #6. Loose stones in the touchdown areas had caused minor damage to our aircraft and had been especially hard on tires.

To partly remedy the situation, "tarmac" was used to cover the touchdown section at each end of the runway. Landscaping became a favorite pastime around the base. Shrubs found in some of the bombed-out living sites on the base were transplanted to our living sites. Headquarters building was also beautified. The flagpole was moved. French workmen laid a cement base around it. They planted a row of flowers on each side of the walk leading from the road to the building. The ground around it was leveled and grass seed planted. The green foliage of the trees and bushes added to the new-found beauty of the base. Exh #7.

The job of providing sufficient entertainment and recreation for the men was cared for very capably by the Aero Club and Special Services. The Aero Club celebrated its first anniversary with a dance on the 9th. Music, dancing, and refreshments were all on the program. Exhs #8,9,10. This was the first of a series of Monday night dances for the enlisted men held at the

club. On the other nights, the club was always open for doughnuts, ping-pong, bridge, chess, and reading. Special Services brought several USO shows to the base. Of course, there were the usual nightly movies in either the unit mess halls or the Station Theatre. A softball league was formed made up of teams representing all units of the base. The muchpublicized "Champagne Valley League" opened on the 23rd. Exhs #12-13. The baseball league was made up of seven teams from Station A68, A69, and A70. In their first game, our nine defeated the 4th Service Group team A representatives, 16 to 6. By the end of the month, we were leading the league with two victories and no defeats. In the opening game, Colonel Aylesworth was there to toss the first ball. On the 18th, the IX AFSC Band played at the Unit A mess hall. To provide further recreational activities, volley ball courts and horseshoe pits, as well as softball diamonds, were constructed in the squadron areas. A swimming pool, located near the motor pool, was completed near the end of the month and was ready for use. A heating unit was attached so that the temperature of the water could be regulated. A field day, scheduled for the 29th, was cancelled due to the cold, rainy weather.

On the 6th, an old familiar face returned to pay a short visit. It was Brigadier General Harold L. Mace, who had been commanding officer of the Group when it arrived overseas. His familiar "Hi Boy," greeted everyone at Colonel Aylesworth's staff meeting. General Mace now commands the 98th Combat Bomb Wing.

During the month, a SOLDIERS' MEDAL was awarded to S/Sgt C.V. Hinker for having promptly and courageously defusing a 1,000 pound bomb when it had fallen on the bomb-bay doors, forcing them partly open. Wind, blowing on the arming vane, had started to arm the bomb. His courage saved himself, his pilot, and the plane from possible destruction. Exh #14.

Corporal W.E. Lane, an Intelligence clerk, was awarded the Bronze Star Medal. Exh #15. His ability and trustworthiness in handling secret target material had made him an important part in the conduct of our military operations. Several crew chiefs and flight chiefs were also awarded the Bronze Star Medal for their work in keeping the planes in exceptionally fine operational conditions under very difficult handicaps. Among them were Master Sergeant R.M. Slifko, T/Sgts C.S. Curtis, C.J. Deutscher, and O.T. Hagerman and Staff Sergeant J.K. Ekler. Exh #16 and 17. Colonel Aylesworth pinned the Bronze Star Medal, which had been awarded a month previously, on S/Sgt Edwin A. Max.

Purple Hearts were awarded to Lt R.K. Johnson, F/O Robert W. Harvest, Sergeant H.E. Brandt, and Sgt W.C. Buckley. Exh #14, 15, 17. In addition, the usual Air Medals and Oak Leaf Clusters were awarded. Exhs #18,19,20.

Also, during the month, orders were received giving the Group battle credit for participation in the campaign of Northern France. Exh 21. And the Battle of Germany. Exh #22. For those of us who had been in the Group prior to D-Day, we were now allowed to wear four bronze service stars on our

theatre ribbon for the "Air Offensive, Europe," "the Normandy Campaign," "the Northern France campaign," "and the Germany campaign." The Northern France Campaign, dated from 25 July 1944 to 14 September 1944. The German Campaign began on 15 Sept 1944.

The award of the Motor Vehicle Driver's Badge was made to Pfcs J.W. Lyde, S.J. Bellagamba, and G.F. Lee.

Although they were dated in January 1945, the orders were not received until April for the award by the French government of the Croix de Guerre to seven members of the Group. Exhs #23,24,25. They were Colonel T.R Aylesworth, Lt Cols L.F. Dunn, J.G. Napier, and D.L. Willetts, Major R.F. Price, Capt R.S. Rudisill, and Capt A.R. Hand. The awards were made, signed by General de Gualle, for exceptional deeds of war during the course of operations which liberated France.

Three letters of commendation were received by the Group during the month of April. On the 3rd, a TWX, signed by General Eisenhower, commended us and all others who had a part in bringing about the complete encirclement of the Ruhr Valley. Exh #26. Letters of commendation from Lt Gen Bradley and Major General Vandenberg commended us as part of the 9th Bombardment Division for the great part our attacks played in reducing the fighting efficiency of the German Army. Exh #27. The third commendation, signed by Maj Gen Anderson, congratulated the Group on the splendid job and the flying and bombing done during an attack on the Hof railroad bridge on the afternoon of 12 April. Exh #28.

Staff Sergeant Harold G. Wiggins, a gunner in the 670th Bomb Sq, devised a gadget to enable the gunner to release any hung-up bombs. The main escape hatch for a gunner was the open bomb bay. A switch in the gunner's compartment opened the bomb bay doors and salvoed the bombs. A "hung up" bomb, however, might block the passageway and prevent him from abandoning the plane. Sergeant Wiggins' invention was a rod, about three feet long with an angle-shaped end. By means of this rod, he was able to release the bomb from its shackles. The device was adopted by our Group and submitted to Bomber Division for possible adoption by other A-26 Groups.

Impulse, or radio-release bombing had been experimented with by our communications section for almost a year. Although it had been proven very successful in experimental flights because of lack of equipment, it had been tried on a small scale on very few missions. By April of this year, however, sufficient sets were available for at least four flights of a formation. Throughout the month of April, it was used intermittently and with success each time. The moment the bombardier in the lead plane released his bombs, a radio-signal was transmitted to the other planes of that flight which would automatically release their bombs at the same precise instant. The wingman had nothing to do with releasing the bombs other than to open the bomb-bay doors and turn on the bombing switches. The use of impulse bombing meant the elimination of pilot lag and thereby made the pattern more compact.

The final stages of the battle of Germany were already underway when April Fools' Day came around. The need for aerial cooperation diminished no less now that our troops were racing deep into Central Germany. When it became apparent that the enemy might try to "hole up" in the Bavarian Alps, is what soon became known as the "National Redoubt," only air power could prevent the troops in the north from escaping to the south. For this reason, on several missions our planes flew almost to their extreme range to knock out marshalling yards and bridges. Returning from many of these missions, the crews were able to see some of the destruction caused by their bombs and see why Germany was now fighting for the defense of Berlin.

Mission #260, the first mission in April, was flown on the third. It was an attack in which 76 tons of bombs were dropped on the marshalling yards at Hemeln, using PPF technique. The formation climbed to 16,000 feet trying to reach the I.P. due to the clouds. Climbing 500 feet higher, the bombs were released at 16,500 feet. A few crews reported that through a small break in the clouds they saw the bombs bursting in the yards and in the town. The formation encountered weak but accurate flak between the I.P. and the target. A few bursts also came up at the R.P. where Lt James P. Phillips' plane was hit. He feathered his engine and returned to base on single engine. He was able to get the engine operating over our base and landed on both engines although he was able to get very little power from his damaged engine. The formation split up after leaving the target in bad weather. Major Sommers headed back alone and traveled directly across the Ruhr pocket which our troops had created. At low altitude, his gunner, Staff Sergeant Kalen Heath, fired at a few flak guns as he sped by but he could make no claims. The box leaders were Lt Col Willetts, with Lts Powell and Reeves B&N, and Capt Evans, with Lts McCartney and Myrrold, B&N.

Again on the 4th, clouds in the target area necessitated the use of PPF equipment in attacking the Crailsheim barracks area. The formation of 39 aircraft dropped a total of 58 tons of incendiary bombs on the target. Although the results were not observed, photo reconnaissance later found the barracks almost entirely gutted. Capt Miller, Lts Connor and Moore, B&N, led the first box; Lt Blomgren, Lts Johnson and Morley, B&N, led the second box.

Principally because of the extreme distance of any suitable targets, the third mission of the month was not flown until the 8th, when 42 planes attacked the Munchen-Bersndorf railroad sidings and oil storage tanks. Crews reported violent explosions in the storage area and many hits on the railroad siding. Photo interpretation found three tanks destroyed, one large storage type building one-half destroyed, and two other storage buildings damaged. Craters blocked the roads in at least four places. There was no flak, but one plane suffered battle damage when a bomb dropped from another flight exploded prematurely under this plane. Due to the similarity of terrain and smoke, one flight misidentified the target and dropped 4 1/2 miles southwest of the target. The three boxes were led by Major Ferris with Lts Royalty and McNutt, B&N, Lt Brewster, Lt Dennis and F/O Conley, B&N, and Capt Tutt, Lt Orr B&N.

In the afternoon of the eight, the Sonderhausen road junctions on the point of the Third Army's thrust toward Leipzig were attacked. Despite heavy smoke and haze, four flights scored excellent results. A fifth flight lost the formation and later tagged onto what was thought to be our formation. It bombed with the first flight of the formation on the secondary target, Bad Frankenhausen, with unobserved results. It was not until the formation turned off the target that they could see the tail markings of the 396th Bomb Group. Unable to pick up the primary target, one other flight chose the town of Nordhausen as a casual target. It was later learned that Nordhausen had contained a large "death" camp, where the Germans had perpetrated some of their greatest crimes against the civilized world. Because of the poor visibility, bombing altitudes ranging from 4,500 feet to 9,000 feet were reported. The box leaders were Lt Brown, Lts Kerns and F.O Lehneis, B&N, and Lt Buskirk, with Lt Hanna B&N.

The 9th was another two mission day. In an early morning mission, 44 aircraft took off to attack an ordnance depot at Anberg-Kummersbruck, dropping 500 pound incendiary bombs. Bombing visually by flight under ideal weather conditions, the target was destroyed. Because of the importance of the depot, four Groups had been chosen to attack it. By the time our Group approached it, all of our aiming points were obscured by smoke. Picking new aiming points in the parts which appeared to be yet untouched, our bombardiers wrought further destruction and also cut railroad tracks alongside the target. Exh #29. For the first time in weeks, considerable traffic was noted in railroad yards. Several truck convoys were also reported. There was no flak. The three boxes were led by Major McNulty (Lts Powell and Myrrold, B&N), Capt Evans (Lt McCartney, B&N), and Capt Dufault (F/O Cardinale, B-N.)

Two boxes took off in the afternoon on another longrange attack on the Saalfeld marshalling yards. The enormous yards were to be attacked by two other Groups of our wing. The yards were again covered with smoke by the time our attack began. Five of the six flights scored excellent to superior results, however, eliminating any possibility of the yards being used in the near future. The bombs blanketed wagons, trucks, and servicing facilities. The engine roundhouse was more than 1/3 destroyed and six engines probably destroyed. Craters were visible in the central section of the sidings where at least 48 engines were derailed and damaged. Besides, 65 goods wagons were destroyed, 35 factory buildings damaged or destroyed, at least 50 hits on the tracks, and 28 on the roads. Exh #30. The other flight, trying to synchronize into the drifting smoke, hit off the edge of the yards. The box leaders were Capt Miller (Lt Connor and F/O Wrubelle, B&N) and Lt Blomgren with Lt Johnson B-N. Lt D.L. Price returned early from the mission. When his gunners'turret would not operate, he called the box leader, but he was unsuccessful. He wobbled his wings and then hit an air pocket. The heavy jolt broke the bomb shackles. His gunner, Sgt J.F. Reicher, reported that the bombs were rolling around in the bomb bay. Although supposedly safe, the arming vane of one of the bombs had begun to revolve. He dropped three bombs in an open field near

our base; two of them exploded. The fourth did not fall out. Sgt Reicher crawled in the bomb bay and kicked it out. It was this bomb that had the spinning arming vane. Lt Price then returned safely to base.

Not even a week ago would we have dreamed of attacking a target in Czechoslovakia because of the great distances involved. Yet the progress of the war had been so rapid that an attack on a giant viaduct at Eger was necessary to stop German troops in the north from escaping to the Redoubt area of the south. The mission, flown by 25 planes, was an extremely long one--over 800--miles--and yet, as Major Ferris put it, "It was a perfect mission. The weather was ideal; navigation was excellent and bombing was superior." Crews reported that the bombs severed the viaduct. Exh #31. Some bombs also extended across a dam and nearby factory area. Reconnaissance showed the viaduct cut in two places, the dam severely damaged, and two large factory-type buildings destroyed by the 1,000 pounders that were dropped. Our Group had the honor of being the first bomber unit of the Ninth Air Force to attack a target in Czechoslovakia. Among those who flew on this mission were Brig Gen Backus, Col Britt (Division Flak Officer) and Col Strammey, a reclassification specialist from ETOUSA who was visiting the base for a few days. Flying as B&N with Major Ferris were Lts Kirk and McNutt. There was no flak anywhere along the route.

While the first mission of the day was returning from its target in Czechoslovakia, 22 more planes took off to attack buildings which housed oil pumps for an underground storage at Stassfurt/ Leopoldsdorf. Crews reported large sheets of flame and smoke that climbed 6-7,000 feet into the sky. Many of the buildings were destroyed or damaged. Exh #32. Forty-four tons of bombs were dropped on the target. Three airfields were observed to have planes dispersed on them, but there was no fighter reaction. Lt Brown, with Lts Kerns and Orr, B&N, led the formation.

A full-scale effort in the morning of the 11th put 47 planes into the air to attack the Bernburg marshalling yard. A total of 282 x500 pound demolition bombs were dropped on the target with results ranging from good to excellent. Exh #33. Bombs blanketed the southern choke point of the yards, many goods wagons, and buildings adjacent to the yards. Other bombs covered railroad sidings and storage sheds. Many large fires were started, possibly burning oil or ammunition. No complete photo interpretation was possible because 1/2 of the yards were still obscured by smoke. The three boxes were led by Major McNulty, Capt Evans, and Lt Lackovich.

That afternoon, our planes made a deep penetration into Germany to attack the Zwickau marshalling yards. The yards were completely destroyed by the 37 attacking planes. Exh #34. Between 80 and 100 freight cars were destroyed or damaged, 40 to 50 direct hits cut the tracks, and three buildings were destroyed or severely damaged. Capt Miller, with Lts Connor and Vollmayer, B&N, and Lt Blomgren, Lt Johnson, B-N led the two boxes.

Going into territory never before attacked by our Group, 42 planes took

off in the morning of the 12th to attack the Kempten ordnance depot near the Swiss border. Previous to this time, tactical targets in that area had been attacked almost solely by the First TAF. Weather over the base was cloudy. It became worse over enemy territory. The formation flew through almost an hour of rain. The target was to be attacked visually only because of the proximity of a POW camp. The cloud base was at about 5500 feet, making an attack impossible. To drop any lower would have forced the formation to fly over mountain ranges, which rose up that high. The planes returned with their 500-pound incendiary bombs.

One bomb inside Major Ferris' plane broke open inside the bomb bay. He opened his doors over the practice bombing range and got rid of the dangerous load.

Enroute to the target, six bursts of inaccurate flak were seen crossing the bomb line.

Through small breaks in the clouds, crews were able to see German airfields. Several of them appeared to be in excellent condition, but deserted. The box leaders were Major Ferris, Lt Brewster, and Capt Pair.

Although the weather did not improve, 27 aircraft took off that afternoon to attack the Hof railroad bridge farther north from the morning's target. Weather forced the formation down to 5200 feet to make their attack. The bomb patterns completely surrounded the bridge. Exh #35. There were four direct hits on the railroad tracks, eight on the roads, and 20 buildings destroyed or damaged in addition to the destruction of the bridge. A commendation was received from Gen Anderson on the fine job done in getting to the target and bombing it in bad weather. Exh #28. The planes returned to the base in the middle of a driving rain storm. Only one plane was diverted to another field. There was no flak. Lt Brown, with Lts Kerns and Hanna, B&N, led the single box which made the attack. This was the eighth mission flown in four days and all but one had been extremely successful.

With the bomb line moving ahead by leaps and bounds, and no targets available in the central part of our lines, our planes took off about noon of the 15th after a couple of days of rest to attack the Ulm marshalling yard, southeast of Stuttgart. An almost solid cloud cover necessitated the use of PPF equipment. Results were unobserved. Photo reconnaissance on the following day found 12 hits in the area just south of the main sorting sidings, causing minor damage to tracks and rolling stock. Through traffic was still possible, however. Weak, inaccurate flak was experienced coming out over the bomb line near Freiburg. The formation was to be led by Capt Evans, but when he was forced to abort, Capt Stanley (F/O Blount, and Lt Myrrold B&N) took over from the lead plane in the second box. Lt Heinke (Lt Rosenquist, B-N) took over the lead in the second box.

Two missions were flown on the 16th. In the morning, 31 out of 38 planes dropped 186x500 lb incendiary clusters on the built-up area of the town of

Zerbst, seven miles ahead of the Second Armored Division and 83rd Infantry Division. One flight was unable to bomb because the briefed TOT time limit ran out before a second run could be made. A collision course with other flights prevented bombing on the first run.

Although smoke from a previous attack hung over the target, excellent results were scored on the marshalling yards and in the town itself. In the yards, 100-150 wagons were destroyed, eight sheds, three warehouses, and 25-30 other buildings were set afire. Smoke made it impossible to estimate the damage done to the town although flames were seen shooting up through the smoke. Major Shaefer (Lts Hand and Connor, B&N) and Major Sommers (Lts Kupits and Vollmayer, B&N), led the two boxes. There was weak but accurate flak on the bomb run and two aircraft suffered battle damage.

The target in the afternoon was the Wittenburg marshalling yards. Only one flight, led by Lt Parker, Lt Shaft, B-N, was able to make an attack because of dense smoke and clouds. This flight flew a slightly different course, which enabled the bombardier to see the target. Crew members reported excellent results. Moderate to intense, accurate flak was encountered at the target and on the turn off, but only two planes received battle damage. The two box leaders were Capt Evans (Lts McCartney and Myrrold, B&N) and Lt Brewster (Lt Dennis and F/O Conley, B&N).

The 17th was another two mission day. The heavily-defended city of Magdeburg was the target. Excellent results were scored on the town and its marshalling yard. Exh #36. One flight misidentified the target and caused extensive damage to buildings and roads 2 1/2 miles southwest of the original aiming point. The three box leaders were Major Dunn (Lts Brewer and Kerns, B&N), Lt Buskirk (Lt Hanna and F/O Przywitowski, B&N), and Lt Parker, Lt Shaft, B-N.

The target in the afternoon was the very important Tubingen ordnance depot. Five flights scored good to excellent results on the target with many hits on the ordnance buildings, and other buildings and roads in the target area. Exh #37. Because of a bomb release malfunction, the other flights did not bomb although it made four runs on the target. The first box was led by Capt Evans (Lts McCartney and Myrrold, B&N) and Capt Stanley, F/O Blount, B-N.

After a morning mission was recalled before it could cross into enemy territory, 38 planes took off in the afternoon of the 19th to attack the Neu-Ulm marshalling yards, the second largest between Munich and Nuremburg. All 38 planes dropped their load of 4x100 lb bombs squarely on the target. Out of six flights, four superiors and two excellents were scored. Between 150-160 cars were destroyed, 40 bursts on the tracks cut them, several roads were cut, and 22 buildings were destroyed or damaged. Exh #38.

Enemy fighters were reported over the radio to be in the target area. One single engine fighter closed in on the formation while it was circling the

R.P. Staff Sergeant Felix Di Orio fired two short bursts, but made no claims. The approaching plane broke away at about 800 yards and disappeared. Sgt DiOrio was the only man in the formation to spot the fighter and was unable to identify it as to type.

The box leaders were Capt Miller (Lts Connor and Vollmayer, B&N), and Major Sommers (Lts Kupits and F/O Cardinale, B&N).

Two equally successful attacks on the 20th went a long way toward striking the knockout punch to Hitler's armored and air might. In the morning, the Deggendorf ordnance depot was left buried under smoke and flames. Four flights used impulse bombing very successfully. The depot was severely damaged; 30-35 hits on storage buildings, 15-20 hits on railroad tracks, 10-15 hits on smaller buildings, and 5-10 hits on roads. Exh #39. Damage cause by two flights could not be assessed because of the smoke and flames.

When the bombs in one plane would not release over the target, his flight leader led him to the town of Viechtach, which he bombed with excellent results. Moderate, accurate flak was fired at the flight from this town, but there was no battle damage. The rest of the formation did not experience any flak.

The two boxes of 44 planes were led by Major Ferris (Lts Kirk and McNutt, B&N) and Lt Brewster (Lt Dennis and F/O Conley, B&N).

In the afternoon of the 20th, the German Air Force fuel storage depot at Annaburg was attacked. Dropping 100 pound demolition bombs, the attack, which started many fires, was highly successful. Many roads were cut, 12 buildings destroyed, and 500 hits were scored in the fuel storage area. Exh #40. There was no flak.

Lt Hale landed his plane with a flat tire. The propeller was bent as the plane swerved of the runway over rough ground. There was no further injury to the plane or crew.

Three boxes made the attack. They were led by Major Dunn (Lts Brewer and Hanna, B&N) and Lt Brown (Lt Kerns, B-N), and Lt Prucha (Lt Reeves, B-N).

Again on the 21st, our Group, for the second time in a month, was the first Ninth Air Force bomber group to strike a new country, Austria. The target was the Attang-Puecheim marshalling yards, about 25 miles southeast of Linz, Austria, on the direct route to the National Redoubt area in western Austria. The trip, our longest to date, totaled 970 miles. Bad weather forced the formation down to 8,200 feet to bomb. High mountains in the area made this a dangerous altitude, but there were no accidents. The target was completely destroyed by the attack. Exh #41. The formation scored four superiors and three excellents. An estimated 300-350 freight cars were destroyed along with one roundhouse and 25 buildings. All tracks were severed

as were several roads. The bomb patterns were exceptionally compact; four flights used impulse bombing.

Returning, some flights almost on the deck, the formation flew directly over an airfield at Erding. Crews reported that they could see Jerries scurrying for shelter as the formation approached, expecting to be bombed. When no bombs were dropped, they came out of hiding and fired weak, light flak at the last flight of the formation. Lt Hackley's plane suffered battle damage, but in return, his gunner, S/Sgt O.T. Hawk, fired at the Germans with his turret guns. He inflicted some light damage before his guns jammed.

There were many observations. On the airfield at Erding, as many as 50 planes were reported, including ME 109s, HE 111s, JU 88s, JU 52s, and ME 163s. None of the planes challenged our formation, however. Special convoys were sighted, including one large armored convoy--this convoy was reported immediately to fighter-ground control. Several trains were also reported.

Weather at the Base was getting steadily worse, so that 40 planes were diverted to A-64 for the night. Two others were diverted to Y-64.

The leaders of the three boxes were Capt Evans (Lts McCartney and Myrrold, B&N), Capt Stanley (F/O Blount, B-N) and Lt D.O. Turner (Lts McGivern and Morley, B&N).

Bad weather began to roll in which kept the planes on the ground until the 24th, when the target was a jet fighter field at Landau, near Straubing. Our two boxes were led by two Shoran-equipped aircraft. An equipment failure prevented the Shoran planes from making an attack even after two runs. Our own Gee equipment was inoperative so that the attack was abandoned. A 9/10 cloud cover prevented any visual bombing. This was the first time Shoran, a new method of blind bombing, was employed by the Group. Shoran equipment installed in A-26 Invaders was to replace the older Pathfinder equipment installed in B-26 Marauders.

Major Shaefer (Lts Hand and Connor, B&N) and Lt Blomgren (Lt Johnson, B-N), led the two boxes.

On the 25th, 38 aircraft attacked the Freilassing ordnance depot. One flight of six planes attacked two flak positions near the target in elements of three about 2 1/2 minutes before the main attack. They dropped 132x100 lb fragmentation bombs with excellent results. The formation encountered no flak.

Buildings and installations in the depot area were severely damaged; roads and railroad tracks were cut. Many fires were also kindled. Exh #42. The two boxes were led by Major Ferris (Lts Kirk and McNutt, B&N), and Lt Hall (Lts Goss and F/O Conley, B&N). The two elements attacking the flak positions were led by Lt Van Noorden (F/O Brandt, B-N) and Capt Dufault (F/O Cardinale, B-N).

As April drew toward a close, we had seen the bomb lines of our Armies and the Russian Armies pushing closer and closer together. Around the 20th, a security silence veiled the advance of the Reds. The Germans carried reports of Red troops on the outskirts of Berlin and other by-passing it to the south. Finally, a short but exciting TWX was posted on the situation map that the Red Army had linked up with the forces of the American First Army at Torgau, northeast of Leipzig. Germany was cut in half! Exh #43.

That afternoon, the 26th, 44 aircraft filled a landing ground at Platting, in the lower part of what remained of Germany, with bombs and bomb craters. A total of 968x100-lb pounds bombs fell on the landing ground; 66x100-lb fragmentation bombs kept flak gun positions silent while the main attack went on. There was no flak.

The pictures available at briefing were very out-dated and inadequate. When the bombardiers tried to find their aiming points, they discovered that the field had since been reconstructed. Choosing secondary aiming points, in every case but one, they scored two superiors and four excellents. The other bombardier, Lt P.G. McGivern, flying with Lt D.O. Turner, was able to identify his aiming point and scored excellent. Many hits were scored on revetments and airstrips. Exh #44.

This mission, #283, the last mission in April, was led by Lt Brown (Lts Brewer and Kerns, B&N) and Lt Buskirk (Lt Hanna and F/O Semtanka, B&N).

May, 1945

HEADQUARTERS
FOUR HUNDRED SIXTEENTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L)
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER

SUBJECT: Historical Data. (May, 1945)

TO : Commanding General, Army Air Forces.

How much longer would the war in Europe go on? When May Day arrived, we all knew that the end was near. Just how near was a question that only time would tell.

On the first day of the month, two boxes of aircraft took off to attack the Stod ammunition dump. Bad weather during the last few days of April made flying impossible. During the time, however, our ground forces had continued their drive forward and had joined with the Russians to cut Germany in half.

Our forces had pushed into Munich and into the Bavarian Redoubt. When our planes reached enemy territory, bad weather built up. It was impossible to get in to the target. The formation crossed the bomb-line for about two minutes before it was forced to abandon the attack. There was no flak or enemy opposition. The box leaders were Capt Evans (Lts McCartney and Myrold, B&N) and Captain Stanley, F/O Blount, B/N.

Two days later, on the 3rd, our planes went back to Czechoslovakia to attack the Stod ammunition dump again. Two boxes of aircraft made the attack behind two planes employing Shoran equipment. The results were unobserved through a 10/10-cloud cover. The boxes were led by Major Shaefer (Capt Hand and Lt Dant, B&N) and Captain Blomgren, Lt Johnson, B-N. This mission, No. 285, was the last mission flown by the Group before the final capitulation of the enemy on V-E Day, 8 May '45.

The break-up of Germany came fast. On the first of May, it was reported that Hitler had died. The report and no official confirmation, however. On the second, at 1200 GMT, German troops in Italy and western Austria surrendered unconditionally to Field Marshall Sir Harold Alexander. Russia also announced the fall of Berlin to Red Army troops.

Three days later, effective 0800 hours on the 5th, all German forces in Holland, Denmark, NW Germany, Helogoland, the Frisian Islands surrendered to Field Marshall Sir Bernard L. Montgomery. Also a premature announcement that the remainder of German troops had surrendered brought a joyous celebration on the Base. War news the next morning saddened the hearts of many for the report had been false.

Finally, the real news broke. At 0241 hours on the morning of the seventh, German officers signed the unconditional surrender presented by the Western Allies and Soviet Russia about 35 miles from our base at Reims. The official announcement of the surrender was made simultaneously in Washington, London, and Moscow, at 1500 hours on the 8th, which was officially designed as V-E Day. All hostilities were to cease as of 0001 hours on the 9th. Exh #1.

Messages of Congratulations poured into the Message Center. Their themes were fundamentally the same, thanking all of us who had brought about the victory. Exhs #2-10.

On V-E Day, Colonel Aylesworth addressed a gathering of all personnel at a hardstand in the 671st area. He emphasized the wonderful record made by the Group and also the task still to be performed. He also expanded on the "point system" which had been set up to govern the discharge of men not vitally needed for the continuance of the war in the Pacific. Exh #11-12.

Shortly after V-E Day, the Group instituted a policy which was the very wish of many of men on the ground, who, day after day saw the planes take off and hours later heard the stories from the returning crewmen of the complete

destruction of Germany. A sightseeing tour was planned and each day, for as long as it was practicable, the planes were loaded with ground personnel who got their first look at beaten Germany. They looked at the ruins of Cologne, the Ruhr, the Remagan bridgehead, the Rhine Valley from almost tree-top level. The camera man shot four of these men throughout various stages of their journey and what he photographed is among the exhibits. Exhs #13-21.

Despite the progress of the war, plans had been made to move the Group to a more Advanced base, Station Y-80, near Weisbaden, Germany. With a movement of troops to Germany soon to take place, emphasis was placed on a program of training in exterior and interior guard duty. Guard mounts and at least one 24-hour tour of guard duty were to be included as part of the training. On the 5th, a reconnaissance echelon moved onto the new base. An advanced echelon made up of the 669th and 671st Bomb Squadrons was packed and ready to depart by train and truck on the morning of the 7th. At suppertime on the 6th, however, an announcement told of the cancellation of the move.

Station A-69 was to be used as an ordnance redeployment depot. Tents were pitched in unoccupied parts of the field. It was necessary that the Group be moved to another base if it was to continue with its training.

The training program was intensified on the 16th, with each pilot to complete 20 hours of instrument flying and five hours of night flying. Dinghy drills in the swimming pool were part of the ground training.

While the program was in "full swing", orders were received to move the Group to Station A-59 at Cormeilles-en-Vexin about four miles northwest of Pontoise. On the 19th, an advanced party arrived at the new field. A day later, the 669th and 671st Bomb Squadrons which made up the advance echelon moved by truck convoy to Station A-59. The air echelon arrived on the 24th; the rear echelon, of the 668th and 670th Bomb Squadrons, arrived by motor convoy on the 25th. The move was made with the assistance of two Quartermaster trucking companies. Exh #22.

An inspection of the former base at Laon by the Inspector General of the 9th Air Division found the Station was left in superior condition. Exh #23.

Colonel Aylesworth assumed command of Station A-59 on the 25th. Exh #24. The new base was in far better condition for flying. Exh #25. The NW-SE runway was in excellent condition. The NW-SE runway was being repaired and would soon be available. Although hardstands were crowded, there was sufficient parking space available. The hangers were either partially destroyed or completely destroyed so that they were of little value. Part of this destruction resulted from attacks made by our Group in May 1944 when the field was still in the hands of the enemy.

Group headquarters occupied a chateau in the town of Cormeilles-en-Vexin. Exh #26. Most of the larger Group offices were housed in the chateau. Others were located throughout the town of Cormeilles.

Living conditions for headquarters personnel were a great improvement. Some lived in the chateau; other moved into buildings in the town. The squadrons were less fortunate than heretofore. Because it was thought that our stay on the Continent might be not long, it was felt that transporting tent floors would not be worth the effort. Three of the four squadrons found their living sites in the middle of hay fields. The usual rain, which always seems to plague our moves, turned these areas into mud holes. It was not unusual to see shoes caked with mud ankle high.

Changes in personnel, now that the war in Europe was concluded, were frequent. The "point system" as it became known to all GI's, was published. An adjusted service rating card was filled out for each man in the Group. Exh #27. A critical score of 85 points, the number necessary to become eligible for discharge, was the goal of most GIs. Four types of credit were considered: service credit, overseas credit, combat credit, and parenthood credit. One point was awarded for each month in the service; one point for each month overseas; 5 points for each combat award such as battle participation credits, Air Medals, and other decorations; and 12 points for each child under 18 years of age.

The first of the lucky "85-ers" left near the end of the month. Along with them were a few who, over 40 years of age, were offered discharges. They included: Master Sergeants Norman L. Stone and Russel W. Waddell; Technical Sergeants Albert L. Brewer, Richard C. Fisher, Kenneth J. Polson, Robert E. Behny, Samuel Hamman, Staff Sergeants Herman Franzel, Joseph D. Muldoon, Samuel Snider, Sergeants John T. Carroll, James M. Chestnut, Lara T. Backe, Richard F. Smyth, Clifford W. Eickhoff, Will C. Reed, Richard T. Lorenz, Carl S. Champlin, Corporal Roland O. Pierce and John H. Johnson.

Two men who had completed their tours of duty were also returned to the Zone of the Interior. They were Major Hiram F. Conant and First Lieutenant Wayne E. Downing, who had flown 84 missions.

The 9th Bombardment Division, which had formerly been known as the 9th Bomber Command, was again renamed, this time the 9th Air Division. Exh #28. A farewell message was received on the 18th from Major General Samuel E. Anderson who had commanded it. Exh #29. He was succeeded by Brigadier General Richard C. Sanders, who had been chief of staff. Also Lieutenant General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, who had commanded the Ninth Air Force, returned to the United States. His successor was Major General Otto P. Weyland. Exh #30.

In our own Group, Major Joseph W. Bird was assigned to the Group as assistant Group operations officer. He had just arrived overseas on his first assignment from a third Air Force training base. Lt Michael Zubon, who had returned after a leave in the States, was placed on temporary duty with the Headquarters of the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe. Working with the Director of Intelligence, he dealt with the securing and study of the latest types of German equipment and German documents, which might be useful in our war against Japan.

The 7th War Loan campaign, extending from 1 May to 7 July 1945, was pursued with interest by the members of the Group who gave not only of their lives, but of their wealth to promote the cause for which we fought.

Social Service continued its activities. Shortly before we left Station A-69, a USO Camp Show, "Comment Tally Ho" was presented for the entertainment of the troops. On the new base, movies were held nightly in one of the theatres. A large tent in the 669th area and a hanger in the 671st area were used as theatres.

The Aero Club on the base was ideally located in the town of Cormeilles. A dance was held there for the enlisted men on the 27th. The floor space was rather limited so that when the French Welcome Committee opened a club in Pontoise, the dance was transferred to that club to be held every Saturday night. The reading room, part of the Information and Education program, occupied a part in the daily life of many. Its adequate supply of good books offered a source of quiet relaxation. Because of the Unsettled condition of our future, the complete educational program was delayed for the time being.

The Champaign Valley League, which had been progressing very well, was unofficially concluded on the 13th of May. Ex #31. Because of the distance between the fields since our move, it became impossible to continue the League with four victories and only one loss. Captain Zesiger was appointed the new athletic director and instituted a program of physical training for ground and combat personnel.

Awards and decorations meant something more to each of us now that they counted as points toward a possible discharge. According to War Department GO #33, dated 1 May '45, the Battle of Germany was redesignated as the Battle of the Ardennes, the Battle of the Rhineland, and the Battle of Central Germany. Exh #32. As yet, nothing official had been received authorizing us to wear the battle stars for these three new campaigns.

The highest award for the month was the Distinguished Service Cross, which went to Captain Paul G. Atkinson Jr. for extraordinary heroism during a low-level attack on 23 January 1945. Exh 33. His bombardier-navigator, 1/Lt Dale G. Ackerson, was awarded the Silver Star. Exh #34. The Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded posthumously to 1/Lt F.H. Bursiel who was killed on Christmas Day. Exh #34. Others who received DFCs were Capt Carl S. Stanley, 1/Lts Julian F. Allen, John A. Buskirk (Exh #35), Lovick E. Cannon, Wesley D. Chitty Jr., Capt R.B. Hall, 1/Lts Russel Ford (Exh #36), James Colquitt, Millard W. DuBose, Earl R. Hayter, Floyd Henderson, Arthur D. Herman, Joseph Lackovich, R.J. McQuade, James H. Montrose, Donald L. Moore, Jackson C. Sewell, Jack L. Burg (MIA), Ralph Conte, Wayne E. Downing, Ernest L. Johnson, L.R. McBride, Robert G. Meredith, Michael Zubon, Capts E.E. DeMun, Joseph Kupits, R.V. Miracle (MIA), G.F. Bartmus, Wm. A. Peck, David A. Hulse, Majors H.L. Sommers, G.M. McNulty, R.F. Price, Lts Cols J.G. Napier, L.F. Dunn, David A. Willetts, Staff Sergeants Douglas Hantske, Earnest E. Kelly, and R.W. McDonald. Exhs #34 and 37. A Soldiers' Medal was awarded to S/Sgt Daniel

Chest. Exhs #38-39. Bronze Star Medals were awarded to several, including M/Sgts Robert L. Amick, Robert E. Atchison, James T. Howard, Norman L. Stone, Thruman B. Strickland, Clarence R. Young, T/Sgts Clifford D. Body, Herman E. Keebaugh, Edward J. Russo, S/Sgts Michael Clark, Roy E. Gettle, Robert R. Hanson, Elmo W. Cline, William R Springer, Drexal R. Wells, Lawrence R. White, Lt Col J.W. Townsend, M/Sgt Dennie B. Brosset, T/Sgt A.L. Brewer, T/Sgt John S. Craig, and Sgt Vito G. Zukauskas. Exhs 38-40. Many Air Medals and Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medals were also awarded. Exhs #41-44. Among those who received the Air Medal was Major Murdock W. Campbell who had been a German Prisoner of War since D-Day and had just been liberated. Exhs #45-50.

At a ceremony held at the 410th Bombardment Group, Colonel Theodore R. Aylesworth, Lts Cols David A. Willetts, L.F. Dunn, and Captain Arvid R. Hand received the French Croix de Guerre from General Backus. Exhs #35, 51 and 52.

With the war concluded a program of training was set up. Many personnel were sent to schools to obtain knowledge which would be extremely useful in the Pacific. Most of the schools were held in England. The schools included American Aviation Ammunition, Driver's Maintenance, Fuel Service Maintenance, General Hydraulics, Electric Maintenance, RAF Intelligence, A/C Recognition, POW and Escape and Evasion, Cryptographic Devices, and P & W Wasp R-2800 engine school of Technical Training.

Strafing and skip bombing ranges were secured. Contemplating much low-level work in the Pacific, this type of range was exceptionally valuable. For strafing, two nose guns and two wing guns were fired. The training program set up for combat personnel included Exhs #53-54.

A schedule of calls for the day was began on the 30th. Exh #55. Plans were also made for the first of a series of Saturday morning reviews to begin on the second of June. Also to begin on that day was the first of a usual Saturday morning personal inspection of barracks and uniforms.

Far from the battle zone, but just as important to us as the winning of the war was the conference held at San Francisco. It had begun in April and would probably continue throughout most of June. That conference at which all of the Allied Nations were represented was planning the world of the future--a World in which wars would be something found only in history books. The magazine, "Army Talks," contained a discussion of five points of US Foreign Policy which were to guide our representatives at the Conference. Exh #56. A later copy of the magazine discussed the conference. Exh #57. The two brought out some of the issues that would in the future perhaps keep us from another war. The distribution of these two magazines was well received and began many discussions among the members of the Group.

As our Armies over ran Germany, they continued to come across German Prisoner of War camps. Many of these camps contained former members of our Group who had been captured. These official changes in status were received by the Personnel Section: Major Murdock W. Campbell, from POW to RMC; 1/Lt

John J. Chalmers, from POW to RMC; Capt R.H. Cornell, from POW to RMC; Second Lts Charles Church, Albert Jedinak, Ronald A. Wipperman, all from POW to RMC; Staff Sergeant Daniel R. Abriola, from MIA to RMC; S/Sgts Clarence M. Gray and Harold F. Hatch, from POW to RMC; Sergeants Harry W. Larsen and Stanley G. Novak and 2/Lt Anton P. Nikas, from POW to RMC; Staff Sergeant J.L. Collier, from MIA to RMC, S/Sgts L.B. Curtis, Wm. E. Fields, Jas. N. Hume, and Jas. B. Thompson, from POW to RMC. Sergeants A.F. Cavanaugh, J.M. Harris, G.W. Scott, R.E. Wright, and 1/Lt A.W. Gullion, from POW to RMC; Staff Sergeant Joseph L. Kasper, from POW to RMN (Hospitalized for non-battle injuries); 1/Lt Wm. R. Jokinen, from MIA to RMC; 2/Lt C.J. Vars, from MIA to RMB (hospitalized for battle wounds); S/Sgt H.E. Shatzer, from POW to RMC; 1/Lt D.G. Ackerson, from SWA to EUS; S/Sgt Kim Fortner, from MIA to RMC.

Getting back to our operations, which ceased in this theatre on V-E Day, although our last mission was flown on 3 May, two missions were flown in the month of May with 67.5 tons of bombs being dropped and 71 sorties being flown. Looking back over our total operations in the European Theatre, our Group flew 285 missions in exactly 14 months. During that time we had dropped 10,959.95 tons of bombs while flying 10,026 sorties. An operational record compiled by the Intelligence Department from their records provides an overall picture of the nature of our operations in the European Theatre. Exh #58.

Unit Strength for May:

Hq	33 Officers	61 E.M.
668th Bomb Sq (L)	57 Officers	285 E.M.
669th Bomb Sq (L)	56 Officers	279 E.M.
670th Bomb Sq (L)	58 Officers	276 E.M.
671st Bomb Sq (L)	54 Officers	274 E.M.

June, 1945

HEADQUARTERS
FOUR HUNDRED SIXTEENTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L)
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER

SUBJECT: Historical Data, June 1945.

TO : Commanding General, Army Air Forces.

With the War in Europe finished, there were no combat missions flown

during the month of June. This did not mean that flying ceased. On the contrary, flying continued on at an almost accelerated pace in preparation for a possible movement directly to the Pacific.

When June rolled around, plans seemed to call for redeployment of the Group to the Pacific through the States. These plans were soon changed, however, and it was announced that the Group was scheduled for transfer directly to the Pacific Theatre.

Morale naturally dropped when this news was received. Many members of the Group had been overseas for almost a year and one half. Setting foot on United States soil was something that they had looked forward to for quite some while. Nevertheless a comprehensive training program was instituted for both ground and flying personnel. (Exh #1-Jun '45) This program completely occupied the minds and the time of the men. (Exh #2-Jun '45) Along with this there was a great deal of work to be done on the planes, such as engine changes and general repair work on planes which had already seen a good bit of combat.

In connection with our own training, schools, both in England and France, were attended by men from our Group. These schools included:

RAF Institute of Pathology and Tropical Medicine.

G E power turret and central fire control school.

VHF equipment school.

Automatic flight control equipment course.

School in technical training.

School in welding, oxygen-acetyline.

VT fuze school.

Aviation ammunition course.

POW and E & E school.

RAF Intelligence school.

Instructor-training staff school.

Some personnel attended a Loran Navigational Radar Maintenance school. Loran was new navigational equipment never before used by the Group. It was similar to Gee equipment, but more advanced, more elaborate, and with greater range. Loran sets were obtained and instruction of crews continued here at the base as part of the ground school program. As soon as sets were installed in the planes, crews used Loran for navigational missions.

There was a tremendous turnover in personnel during the month. On the 8th, all of the Squadron Executive officers, Adjutants, and Supply officers were shuffled around among the Squadrons within the Group. On the 29th, the first enlisted men with 75 points or more on their Adjusted Service Rating cards were transferred to the 344th, 387th, 394th, and 397th Bombardment Groups. We in turn received men from those Groups and also from the 391st Bomb Group. The transfer sent many men with Master, Technical, and Staff Sergeant's ratings to other units and opened up opportunities within the

Group for many promotions. Most of the men who replaced those who had been transferred out were of the last three grades.

Captain Kinney and Major Marks were transferred to the 99th Combat Bomb Wing. Captain McDonald was transferred to the 97th Wing. Major Chester Wysocki was transferred to the 322nd Bomb Group and was later placed on DS from that Group with the office of the Air Inspector of the Ninth Air Force.

First Lieutenant Fred Rabson joined the organization from the 410th Bomb Group and became Group Radar officer, replacing Lt. Charles F. Gunderson, transferred. As a result of other changes, Major McCullah became Group Materiel officer; Captain Weisman, Group Statistical officer and Administrative Inspector; and Captain Hogue, Group Armament officer.

Many combat crews returned to the Zone of the Interior during the month. Exh #3-Jun '45. Most of the men in the Group with a critical score of more than 85 points also returned to the States, (Exh #4-Jun '45), some scheduled for immediate discharge. (Exh #5Jun '45). This robbed the Group in most cases of key personnel. When new men replaced them, the job of training these men fell on our shoulders if our sections were to operate efficiently.

As had happened the month previous, many of the men who had been listed as MIA or POW were liberated by the Allied Armies. The changes in their status are included in Exhibit #6-Jun '45.

A technical inspection of the Group was made by the 9th Air Division technical inspectors from the 14th to the 16th of June. Among the sections inspected were Operations, Flying Control, Engineering, Technical Inspector's office, Group S-4 office, Armament, Photo Laboratory, Motor Pool, Communications, and all General Purpose vehicles. As yet a rating based on the results of the inspection has not been received.

On those same three days, a four-month's general inspection of the Group and the Station was made by the Inspector General of the 9th Air Division. The overall rating of the Group and Station was superior. The Conclusions and Recommendations made in their report are found in Exhibit #7-Jun '45.

The first of our regular Saturday morning reviews was held on the 2nd. At these reviews Air Medals and Bronze Star Medals were awarded. Exhs #8-16--Jun '45. The reviews were preceded by inspections of the personnel and quarters.

DISTINGUISHED-FLYING CROSSES were awarded to twenty-four of our crew members. They were: Colonel Theodore R. Aylesworth, Major Richard F. Shaefer, Captain John E. Blomgren, Captains Hugh M. Evans, Robert O. Gruetzemacher, Richard J. Tutt, First Lieutenants Peter P. Barausky, Robert J. Basnett, John T. Beck, William H. Ames, Donald A. Fero, John C. Gary, Robert C. Hanna, Thomas J. Murray, Wayne Musgrove, Richard E. Greenley, Thomas C. McCready, James H. Miller, Robert B. Singletary, Alfred Remiszewski, William F. Tripp, Elizabeth O. Turner, Alonzo P. Winn, and David L. Withington. Exhs

#17-19--Jun '45. Sergeant Chester A. Morris, III, was awarded the SOLDIER'S MEDAL. Exh #20-Jun '45. BRONZE STAR MEDALS were awarded to Colonel Aylesworth, Captain Edmond V. Bond, Master Sergeants Russell W. Waddell, Paul F. Brooks, Noel E. Clark, Roy A. Anderson, Technical Sergeant Thomas E. Melte, Staff Sergeant Dean F. Colden, and Sergeant Milburn Chaplin. Exhs #20-23--Jun '45. Three crews who had been injured by enemy fire while touring the Front in Germany received the PURPLE HEART, First Lieutenant James A. Carver, Staff Sergeant Nathan M. Graham, and Private first class Forest C. Brown. Exh #24-Jun '45. Many others received Air Medals and Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal. Exh #25-27--Jun '45. Corporal George J. Knudsen and Private First Class Seamon J. Smith received the MOTOR VEHICLE DRIVER'S BADGE. Exh #28-Jun '45.

Lieutenant Whitten, the new Information and Education officer, set up his office in the Aero Club building. His library increased in popularity. Although the complete educational program had never been started because of the unsettled status of the Group, some group and self-study classes were conducted during the month. The courses include Psychology, Algebra, English, and Business Law, Principles, and Management. The reference library was of considerable assistance in this work. Educational tours were arranged to enable the men to visit Paris, Fontainebleau, and Versailles on conducted tours. Also in connection with the I & E program, all personnel were required to attend the showing of an Army informational movie, "On to Tokyo."

The Aero Club added a couple of new features to its regular coffee and doughnut service. The Hobby Shop gave the men an opportunity to relax and at the same time learn something of metal-craft and block printing. With censorship rules relaxed, many found time and opportunity to record some of their experiences on photographic film. The Aero Club dark room, although always badly in need of supplies, provided a place for the men to develop their own film.

The theatre tent and hangar were settings for Special Service movies held six nights a week. An increasing supply of athletic equipment was made available to the men. A court was repaired for use by the tennis enthusiasts. Although golf clubs were available, the lack of golf balls limited their use. Of course, softball, volleyball, basketball, football, and horseshoe pitching were as popular as ever as after-dinner sports.

"Joe Bananas" dance orchestra recruited some new members and blossomed forth at our first Saturday morning review as a military band. This did not take the place of their original reason for being, however. They played at the Enlisted Men's dance and the Officer's dance which were held weekly at the Hotel de Ville in Pontoise.

The 199th Medical Dispensary which had been attached to the Group since shortly after our arrival in England was transferred to the 9th Air Division. A Group Dispensary was set up in the town of Cormeilles-en-Vexin with the sick quarters occupying the second floor of the building used by the Group

Aid Station.

The strength of the Group on the last day of June was:

Hq, 416th	32 officers	46 enlisted men
668 Bomb Sq	49 "	303 " "
669th " "	52 "	296 " "
670 " "	56 "	299 " "
671 " "	50 "	301 " "
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TOTAL	239 "	1245 " "

July, 1945

HEADQUARTERS FOUR HUNDRED SIXTEENTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L) OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER

SUBJECT: Historical Data, July 1945 Installment.

TO : Commanding General, Army Air Forces.

Throughout the month of July the effort of the entire Group was devoted to getting prepared to add our might to the already powerful air force units attacking the Japanese Empire in the Pacific. Our preparations included the completion of our flying training to meet ATC requirements. Engines with 480 hours or more were changed. All "line" sections worked feverishly to make these and other needed changes on the planes. Armament had to apply corrosion preventive to all the guns on the planes and tape them for protection against the weather. Communications had to change the frequency of the radios to the international frequency. Extra transmitters were also installed in each of the planes.

During all of this time ground school was being conducted. Flying personnel were instructed in the use of Loran equipment, dinghy drill, escape and evasion in the Pacific Theatre, and aircraft recognition. All personnel attended classes in orientation on the Japanese War, Oriental culture, and Far Eastern terrain and climate. Training films augmented other lectures on the care and use of small arms, first and second echelon automotive maintenance, and tropical diseases.

On the 12th, our warning orders were received. Three days later, the first coverage in planes and crews departed from Station A-59 for the Air

Assembly Area at Station A-74 at Cambrai, France. The remainder of the planes and crews left during the next five days. The crews were to ferry the planes over the southern route to the States. There they would pick up new planes and rejoin the Group at a Base somewhere in the Pacific Theatre. The A-26 B's carried a three-man crew---a pilot, a gunner, and a crew chief. The A-26 C's carried a bombardier-navigator in addition to the other three men. Many of these crews had high critical scores, and it was doubtful whether many of them would ever rejoin the Group. When Colonel Aylesworth left with the Air Echelon, Lt. Col. Townsend assumed command of the Group Echelon as of 22 July 1945.

While in Cambrai, about four days before the scheduled departure of the Air Echelon, a hail storm caused considerable damage to our planes. This, together with the shortage of belly tanks, needed for the long over-water trip across the Southern Atlantic, slowed the departure from Cambrai. Although there was some trouble with the planes mechanically, there was only one fatality. 1st Lt. Robert J. Hanna, who had done as outstanding job as a bombardier navigator, was scheduled to return to the States with a plane flown by a crew from the 391st Bomb Group (M). After having taken off from Marseille, the plane plunged in the Mediterranean. The crew was lost.

A pre-POM audit team inspected the records of every man in the Group from the 13th to the 15th. Also on the 15th personnel were restricted to the base pending a movement of the Group to an Assembly Area. Cholera shots were given to everyone who had not received one in the six months previous.

The USSTAF POM team arrived on the 16th. At the conclusion of their inspection, the Group was pronounced ready to continue its operations in the Pacific Theatre.

A routine inspection by the Ninth Air Force POM team was the last before the Group was ready to move. As soon as the inspection was completed, the work of loading the baggage train began.

The baggage train, the headquarters motor convoy, and the troops--loaded into 40 and 8 cars--left Pontoise on the 26th for Camp Chicago in the Assembly Area Command pending direct shipment to the Southern Pacific. These convoys arrived early on the 27th. Early that same morning, the remainder of the motor convoy left Station A-59 and arrived at Camp Chicago before noon.

Camp Chicago was located between Rheims and Laon, not too far from our old Base, Station A-69 at Laon Athies. Although all of our troops lived in tents, cement floors made them fairly comfortable. The unit orderly rooms and supply rooms were set up in Nissen huts for the first time since we had left England. Large Nissen huts were used for the individual squadron mess halls. Post Exchanges, movies and USO Camp Shows were attractions of which we all took advantage. The huge Red Cross and well-stocked library were often filled with 416th men.

There was little work to be done the first couple of days, and the men enjoyed the leisure moments either resting or getting acquainted with the base. Suddenly we received a call to process all of our records and equipment. Knowing that the sooner we completed this processing, the sooner passes, furloughs, and leaves would be obtainable, everyone worked hard at it. The processing was completed within two days--in sufficient time to beat the deadline set for this work. The date set for the completion of our equipment processing, records processing, and waterproofing was 2 August. Our personnel readiness date was 1 September. We were further informed that the Ground Echelon of the Group would leave Camp Chicago and the Assembly Area Command prior to 5 September 1945 for the Pacific Theater.

Getting back to some of the events of July which did not pertain directly to the movement to Camp Chicago, on the 11th censorship was resumed.

Every type of aircraft used by the USAAF in the war against Germany was placed on exhibit under the Eiffel Tower in Paris. "Tom Swift's Flying Machine" from the 669th Bomb Sq. (L) received much attention from those who attended the Paris exhibit for the A-26 Invader was still the newest and most secret plane of the war.

Two Brigadier Generals, Sanders and Backus, visited the base at Station A-59 on the 14th. General Sanders pinned the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Bronze Star Medal on Col. Aylesworth in a ceremony held in Col. Aylesworth's office.

One of the highest awards won by anyone in the Group, and the only one of its kind ever received by a member of the 416th, was pinned on Corp. Lester H. McPeak of the 670th Bomb Sq (L). He received the Legion of Merit. As an armament mechanic he had devised many adjustments and modifications for both the A-20 Havocs and the A-26 Invaders. These were accepted on several occasions by the Army Air Forces and were incorporated in further modifications of these planes. Col. Aylesworth made the presentation at a ceremony held on the lawn in front of the headquarters building on the 24th.

There were no operational missions during the month. We received credit for participation in the Battle of the Rhineland and the Campaign of Central Germany during the month.

The glad news was received on the 25th that we had hoped for and worked for a year and a half. At that time we were informed that the Distinguished Unit Badge or the Presidential Citation had been awarded to the Group for our work from 6 to 9 August 1944 during the battle of the Falaise Gap.

Among the changes in personnel during the month, we lost one of the original members of the Group. Major Conen had been Group Surgeon since the activation of the 416th. His place in the Group was taken by Major Bernard Lowenstein.

After our departure from Station A-59, an inspection team from the Ninth Air Division found the vacated base in excellent condition. When we reached Camp Chicago we were officially transferred out of the Ninth Air Force into the Assembly Area Command. The Commanding Officers of the four Squadrons left with the Air Echelon. Those who were appointed Commanding Officers of the Ground Echelons were:

668th Bomb Sq (L)	Capt. Geffinger
669th " "	Capt. Haubrich
670th " "	Capt. Breece
671st " "	Maj. Morris

The strength of the Group on the last day of July read:

668th Bomb Sq (L)	15 Officers	237 Enlisted Men
669th " "	14 " "	243 " "
670th " "	15 " "	242 " "
671st " "	15 " "	243 " "
Hq, 416th	21 " "	61 " "
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Total	80 " "	1026 " "

August, 1945

HEADQUARTERS
FOUR HUNDRED SIXTEENTH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (L)
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER

SUBJECT: Historical Data, August 1945 Installment.

TO : Commanding General, Army Air Forces.

Knowing that the Group was scheduled to go directly to the Pacific Theater, the interest of everyone turned to the war in that Theatre. Between the Army Air Forces and the Navy Air Forces, all of the main Japanese home islands were being subjected to daily bombings. The Japanese Navy was almost completely destroyed. Lack of aerial opposition was the direct result of many fighter strikes against Japanese airfields. The only serious Japanese opposition in the air was the Kamikaze or suicide planes, which attacked our naval units. All in all, by the first of August, it became apparent to the rest of the world that Japan was already a defeated nation.

Then on the 5th, the greatest blows fell. Russia declared war on Japan

and its armies began an unrelenting drive through Manchuria. But a few hours before evening, American scientists reached in the "Flash Gordon Era" and unleashed the most destructive weapon ever before used by man. One bomb, the atomic bomb, almost completely destroyed the city of Hiroshima and its populace of hundreds of thousands.

Still the Japanese did not utter a word of surrender.

Again a single B-29 Superfortress flew over Japan. Again it dropped a single atomic bomb. This time the important city of Nagasaki was almost completely disintegrated.

The world looked on aghast realizing that here was a weapon that, if used by an unscrupulous enemy, could wipe out mankind. Even the Japs who had hoped to rule the world if they had to fight one hundred years could not stand the thought of further attacks such as these. However, we must remember that Japan had been beaten to its knees even before the atomic bomb was used.

At 1300 (French summer time) on the 10th, radios blurted out the news that Japan had sued for peace. Her terms were that she would accept the terms of the Potsdam Conference if the Emperor would be retained as the head of the Japanese government. On the 11th, the Allies radioed Japan that they would accept the Japanese surrender with the Emperor as head of the government, but under strict military control. The world awaited Japan's reply.

At 2400 hours G.M.T. on the 14th, the great news was broadcasted. Japan agreed to accept our terms.

This surrender placed a different light on military movement to the Pacific Theater. Direct redeployment from the E.T.O. to the Pacific ceased. Our orders were changed near the end of August to read redeployment to the Pacific via the States.

Our readiness date remained 5 September, and so little remained for the Group to do until a call was received from the Port Commander. All equipment that could be turned in was turned in and accounted for. Shortages were filled. Other equipment was processed and made combat serviceable.

For the majority of personnel there was little to do. Leaves and furloughs to England, the Riviera, Switzerland, Italy and other parts of France were given to as many men as possible. One, two, and three-day passes were issued. In the meantime the men spent their leisure moments at movies, USO shows, the Aero Club, the library, or at the PX eating ice cream or drinking beer. Softball diamonds were always in use during good weather. After VJ Day, censorship regulations were relaxed and once again the men were able to seal their own envelopes.

A further screening of personnel during the month transferred 91 men out of the Group who had critical scores of 59 or less. This took place after the

Group was notified that it was not going directly to the Pacific Theater.

At the end of the month, special purpose vehicles and Group headquarters T/E equipment was sent to the Port Commander at Marseille. This was our first step toward boarding the boat for home.

Strength of the Group at the end of August was:

668th Bomb Sq (L)	15 officers	239 enlisted men		
669th " "	15 "	242 "	"	"
670th " "	15 "	241 "	"	"
671st " "	15 "	242 "	"	"
Hq, 416th	21 "	64 "	"	"

	81 "	1028 "	"	"

There were no campaigns during the month for which we received battle credit. The Group participated in no operational missions during the month.

September, 1945

September Installment--Group History

Although hostilities with the Axis powers had ceased completely during the month of August with the fall of Japan, September was a month of continuous preparation for the coming overseas movement of the 416th Bombardment Group (L). Quasi-official word had been received from United States Forces, European Theater Headquarters that some direct shipments to the Far eastern and Southwest Pacific Theaters would be cancelled but it was not until 6 September 1945 that official orders were received rerouting the Group from its destination in a former combat theater to the United States for the purpose of being demobilized.

With the change in orders came continued preparation in the form of a changeover in personnel, the processing and turning in of equipment necessary for forces remaining in the theater, and the movement to the United States which for most members of the Group meant separation from the armed forces and return to civilian life. Until point scores were lowered again, there would be some who would return to the United States in reception station groups for furloughs, leaves, and further duty and volunteer officers who would do likewise. But these were few in comparison to the many who were to accept discharge and release from active duty.

The unit on 1 September was still at Camp Chicago near Laon, France, and under the jurisdiction of the Assembly Area Command, Headquarters Rheims, France. Immediately after the receipt of movement orders on 6 September, United States Air Forces in Europe Headquarters issued orders that all personnel who did not have the required number of points (59 points) for return to the United States would be transferred from the unit and replaced by other personnel. The changeover was effected during the period 9-11 September when some 92 enlisted personnel were transferred to occupation forces and high point personnel from other occupation forces arrived as replacements.

In view of the fact that the unit was shortly to be demobilized all equipment other than that prescribed as minimum essential equipment for housekeeping purposes was turned in to supply functions at Camp Chicago.

On 13 September orders were received from Assembly Area Command Headquarters in Rheims, France, to move the unit from its present location to the Calas Staging Area near Marseille, France, for redeployment to the United States. The movement commenced on the 15th of the month when the Headquarters, 668th, 669th, and 670th Bomb Squadrons of the Group moved on one train (Main 5315-17) at 1214 hours from St. Erme railhead near the camp. The Group considered itself fortunate in having received chair cars for the movement instead of 40 and 8's usually used for troop transport in France, which were reminiscent of World War I and occasionally appeared, from look of deterioration, to have served in both wars.

The 671st Bomb Squadron departed from Camp Chicago with other units on a later train at 1720 hours.

Although there were no sleeping or eating facilities aboard the train, the trip was made somewhat comfortable in that frequent stops were made for hot meals enroute. Enlisted men and officers alike attempted to make themselves comfortable by sleeping on chairs, floors and by slinging hammocks.

It was 0530 hours on the morning of 17 September when the organization arrived at the railhead, Johnson Spur, near the Calas Staging Area, debarking from the train approximately one hour later to ride in semi-trailers on winding and narrow roads, which led up to the plateau where the camp was situated.

No time was wasted in the immediate commencement of processing for the continuance of the movement to the United States and the unit was informed on the same morning that it was to be ready to move by water on the 23rd of September. On that date, the 668th, 669th, and 670th Squadrons were warned to move on the 27th and their ship was designated to be the SS Marine Panther, an Army transport. The actual movement was delayed and they sailed on the 30th of September. Next to be warned and alerted was the 671st Bomb Squadron, which sailed on 1 October on the SS Torens. The destinations of the Marine

Panther and SS Torrens were New York and Boston, respectively.

Headquarters of the Bomb Group received its warning orders on 29 September to sail on 2 October on the Colorado Springs, a Victory Ship.

Among the original members of the group who left in September was Captain Maurice B. Sheridan, Group Intelligence Officer, who received orders to proceed to his home in Colorado because of an emergency. Another member was T/Sgt Matthew G. Blair who returned home for the same reason.

The strength of Group Headquarters on 30 September was 31 officers and 73 enlisted men.

October, 1945

October Installment--Group History

When the month of October 1945 rolled around, it was to bring to a last phase the activities of the 416th Bomb Group (L) which had commenced in February of 1943. For the unit, which had gone through multiple transitional phases in the United States before going into combat in the European theater where it had performed brilliantly, was to be demobilized in accordance with current War Department policies upon the termination of hostilities with the Axis powers.

Although anticipation of personnel was heightened by the fact that the unit was to return to the United States, the month commenced with a disappointment. According to original schedule, Headquarters of the Bomb Group was to sail on the second of October on the S.S. Colorado Springs Victory. However, after the departure of the 668, 669, 670, and 671 Bomb Squadrons, word was received that the S. S. Colorado Springs Victory had been delayed from sailing from its port in the United States and would not arrive in Marseilles, France until 12 October. After a few days, the consist of the S. S. Colorado Springs Victory was changed to the S. S. Blue Island Victory which was already in the port of Marseilles. Upon inquiry, it was determined that the latter would not be ready to sail until approximately 10 October since repairs had to be made to the boilers of the ship.

Meanwhile, personnel of the group headquarters, while waiting, contented themselves with the various special services and other activities which the Calas Staging Area had to offer. These came in the form of movies, USO shows, and athletic facilities, much the same as at Camp Chicago.

The long awaited order to proceed with embarkation came on the evening of

9 October. After an early reveille, on 10 October, the unit departed the Calas Staging Area at 0900 for the port of Marseilles, France where the S.S. Blue Island Victory was berthed at Pier D, Berth 28. Due to last minute repairs, actual departure of the ship did not occur until 0700 on the morning of 11 October. For the first time since the unit was overseas, it served without a chaplain when on the afternoon of 10 October Chaplain (Captain) Lloyd E. Mottley was transferred because he lacked the required number of points (75) for return to the United States.

Aboard ship, the journey was pleasant during the period in the Mediterranean Sea, but the second day in the Atlantic Ocean brought stormy weather and a spell of seasickness to some unfortunate members of the group. The trip was accentuated by other periods of rolling seas, but most personnel had by that time found their sea legs.

Twenty-two months of overseas service in England and France was terminated for the group when it arrived at Boston Port of Embarkation, Mass, on 22 October 1945. Upon debarkation which took place 23 October 1945, the group moved by rail to Camp Myles Standish where the final stage in demobilization was to take place, the transfer of personnel to reception and separation centers, the turning in of all equipment, and shipping records to prescribed storage depots.

Orders for demobilization were received from Headquarters Camp Myles Standish on 23 October 1945 to be effective 0001 hours 25 October 1945. On 24 October 1945 all processing was completed, bringing to a finale the activities of the unit, which had accomplished its mission of aiding in the bringing of the Nazis to their feet in surrender.

(Declassified IAW EO 12958)

**Documents available from the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) at Maxwell
Air Force Base, AL.**