

Squadron History – 826th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy)

By

Sgt. O.M. Steward

The 826th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) was constituted and assigned to the 2nd Air Force as a unit of the 484th Bombardment Group (Heavy) in accordance to GO 135, HQ 2nd AF, and was activated by WD letter AG 322 (11 Sept 43) OB-L-AFRPG-M, with Kerns Field, Utah as the station of Activation. This station was amended on 24 September 1943 by WD Letter 322, and the Harvard AAB Nebraska was substituted as the field of activation.

Actually, the cadre of the squadron formed on 7 October 1943 at Mountain Home, Idaho with personnel mainly from the 5th Antisubmarine Command stationed at Westover Field, Mas. – including the squadron commander, Captain John B. Paine, of Texas, holder of the American Theatre ribbon, the Air Medal and two Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters, and Defense Service ribbon and rated as pilot.

While the actual formation of the unit was taking place at Mountain Home, a group of key personnel left for fundamental overseas training at the AAF Tactical Center at Orlando and Pinecastle, Florida, and arrived at Harvard, Nebraska on 10 November 1943 and were joined by 3 officers and 63 enlisted men arriving from Mountain Home on 17 November 1943.

While at Mountain Home, no major accomplishment was made. The base was situated ten miles from the town which was no more than a railroad stop. It was remembered from the amount of gambling that went on there; the whiskey that was rationed from the liquor store, and which when brought to a bar was resold with a mix for 35 cents a drink. At the base itself, the outstanding event was the chasing of the jackrabbits through the sagebrush.

While part of the cadre chased rabbits in Idaho, the men in Florida fared somewhat better. At Orlando, they stayed at the Air Force Tactical Center on the outskirts of town and had access to Jack Hollaway's night club; the entertainment at Phil Berger's; the Orange Trail Inn, and when tiring of steaks at the San Juan Hotel, they switched to seafoods at the Spanish Villa. Classes were of 50 minute duration with 10 minute breaks, and the ice cream man came around at 9 am and 2 pm. The women were lovely, sociable and friendly, and the weather was ideal with warm days and cool nights. The men who attended will long remember the lectures

received there, especially the lecture about battle conditions in which the men were informed as to what to expect. The sturdy and not-so-sturdy took turns in passing out while being informed on the proper method of driving a nail into the tongue to keep from suffocating; how to carry one's guts in one's arms; snakes, and the proper sprinkling of sulfa drugs on exposed brains. However, at Pinecastle, a taste of overseas conditions prevailed. There the men stayed in tents and the food was worse than overseas. Some men went up to complain about the food and were informed that it was in keeping with the training as to what to expect overseas.

Back at Harvard, the cadre began to expand into a full-sized squadron. By November 30th, the personnel strength had increased to 25 officers and 227 enlisted men, including the assignment, and joining of the squadron first sergeant, Francis J. Gillespie of Pennsylvania.

During the month of December 1943, the squadron began its second phase of training; shaping up and tempering into an overseas B-24 heavy bombardment unit. The personnel had increased to 78 officers and 377 enlisted men, with various groups of men on DS to specialist schools, and the squadron maintaining 13 B-24s for training, the first of which was long to be remembered and cursed – aircraft #41-28537 received from the Fairmont AAB on 15 November 1943.

With Captain John B. Paine at the head, the following key personnel formed the nucleus of the training of the squadron:

Executive Officer	Capt. Walter V. Hogan	Calif.
Operations Officer	1 st Lt. Abner O. McDaniels	Ohio
Intelligence Officer	Capt. Robert L. Cole	Ariz.
Sq. & Flt. Surgeon	Capt. Jack Shepard	La.
Squadron Adjutant	1 st Lt. Elmer C. Martinson	Mass.
Navigation Officer	2 nd Lt. James H. Albertassi	Mass.
Communication Officer	2 nd Lt. John W. McGregor	Pa.
Bombardier Officer	2 nd Lt. Charles R. O'Leary	Mass.
Armament Officer	2 nd Lt. Harry L. Collins, Jr.	Calif.
Ordnance Officer	1 st Lt. John L. Crandall	N.Y.
Engineering Officer	2 nd Lt. Norman F. Sieh	N.D.
Personal Equip. Officer	2 nd Lt. Louis Patlogan	Ill.
Supply Officer	2 nd Lt. Raymond Ewen	N.Y.
First Sergeant	1 st /Sgt. Francis J. Gillespie	Pa.
Line Chief	M/Sgt. William A. Pekkala	Mich.

Flight Chief	M/Sgt Carl Williams	Tenn.
Flight Chief	M/Sgt. Robert Miskimen	Mass.
Flight Chief	M/Sgt. Joe A. Ratigan	Ill.
Squadron Inspector	Sgt. Richard B. Ross	N.Y.
Communications Chief	M/Sgt. Raymond L. Snyder	Pa.
Armament Chief	S/Sgt. Louis Romanelli	Pa.
Operations Chief	Sgt. Andrew C. McKay	Pa.
Intelligence Chief	Sgt. Lee R. Lucas	Wis.
Supply Chief	Cpl. Harry Bradley	Brooklyn
Tech Supply Chief	Sgt. Richard P. Fulbright	N.C.
Transportation Chief	S/Sgt. Henry B. Kazmierski	Pa.
Chemical Warfare Chief	Pvt. Sandgo Robbins	N.C.
Ordnance Chief	T/Sgt. Raymond V. Snyder	Pa.

By Christmas time, the men were becoming well acquainted with one another. The combat crews were flying, attending classes and lectures, and for the purpose of getting to know one another, they were sleeping and messing together in a separate section away from the ground crews. Harvard had been explored and passed up for Hastings, Nebraska, 18 miles away, where the Wintergarden, the Blackstone, the 40 & 8, the Hunt Club, and the Clark and Carter Hotels became familiar places. Whiskey was hard to get; and when obtainable, one had to purchase a bottle of rum to obtain the whiskey. On the base, Betty Lou and Mary Anne made the Air Corps supply section of the air depot the most popular place in the daytime. The civilian mess served a mammoth T-bone steak with French fries for one dollar; hot coffee and sugared doughnuts were served in the engineering office on the line every morning, and the service club put out a giant chocolate ice cream sundae for fifteen cents.

January revealed the squadron as a sturdy well-welded overseas tactical unit and the outstanding squadron in the group. The full strength of the squadron had been attained; and as of the end of the month and entering into its last phase of training, the 826th had 97 officers and 407 enlisted men. 2nd Lt. Fred A. Meier, Jr. of New York replaced 2nd Lt. Norman F. Sieh as Engineering Officer; Captain Claude A. Trotter, Jr. of Alabama took over as Squadron Operations Officer; and Captain Hogan in Ironizing the squadron had acquired the nickname of “Court-Martial” Hogan, and paradoxically had captured the admiration of the entire personnel for inaugurating and taking active part in the successful get-together squadron beer parties.

By the end of January 1944 all the men were back from various specialist schools and furloughs; the line was functioning efficiently on duty 24 hours a day; the winter was severe; the men were qualified in arms, gas, aerial combat and ground defense tactics, and were inoculated with all the shots required for overseas. They were physically qualified for overseas duty; misfits had been weeded out; the morale was high; and the men were malaria, typhus, dysentery, camouflage, sex, and censorship conscious through the medium of lectures and movies.

February ushered in the last phase of training. New flyaway planes replaced training ships and they filled the ramp, lined up wing to wing. Combat crews and ground crews functioned in a coordinated teamwork manner. All the elements – personnel and equipment, organization and training, supply, maintenance – were geared smoothly in an increased tempo of activity that reached its climax at the POM inspection which took place on 14 February 1944.

With the POM inspection over, and decreed fit and qualified for overseas duty, there came the hectic days of preparation of movement – crating, clothing issue, allotments, wills, powers of attorney, and farewells. The squadron administrative staff was awarded a plaque as the outstanding administrative section in the group; Captain Frank E. Oliver of Pennsylvania was assigned to the squadron as bombardier; the squadron was alerted on 20 February, and it threw its farewell dance and beer party on 28 February. Rumor prevailed that the group was going to India.

On the morning of 2 March 1944, 10 officers and 292 enlisted men, comprising the ground echelon under the command of Captain Walter V. Hogan, departed from Harvard as per Par. 14 SO #61 HQ. AAF Harvard, Neb. Dated 1 March 1944, leaving behind the air echelon under the command of the squadron commander, and who were to join up with the ground echelon overseas.

Traveling east, the ground echelon arrived at its POE, Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia in the dark of a rainy night on 4 March 1944. While the stay at Camp Patrick Henry was short, it will be remembered for its PX, the infantry and Air Force flare-ups, the KP detail with no rank excluded and where master sergeant and buck private ran the clipper or mopped the floor. There was Lt. McGregor's spill in the mud at the mock ship to remember, Sgt. Newton D. Baker's beery bayonet evasion, and Captain Hogan's remark of: "I don't want you to go looking for a fight, but I don't want you to walk away from one".

The infamous prewarned and precautioned clothing inspection took place on 11 March 1944 and the final (and rough) physical took place on the 12th. In the morning of 13 March, 9 officers and 296 enlisted men (2nd Lt. Bernard Stern was left behind) in full pack left Camp Patrick Henry, ferried across Hampton Roads and boarded the converted liberty ship, the “Lucretia Mott” at Newport News enroute to an unknown overseas station.

Edged in a huge convoy, the crossing of the Atlantic chronicled rough weather, sunny days, alert drills, days of seasickness, and one authentic enemy submarine alert. On 30 March 44 land was first sighted – the coast of Africa – and several hours later the Rock of Gibraltar appeared and increased in size until the “Lucretia Mott” knifed its way through the strait and into the blue water of the Mediterranean.

On 1 April during the night and early morn, the convoy was attacked by enemy aircraft; our baptismal of enemy fire and the Army jargon of “sweating it out” became factual. On the morning of 6 April 44, the convoy anchored outside the mined, netted and pea soup fogged harbor of Augusta, Sicily, and proceeded inside when the fog lifted. Augusta, Sicily with a canopy of Barrage Balloons, shored anti-aircraft gun placements, semi-tropical palm trees, darting British harbor craft, rowboat vendors of oranges, wine and cognac and the black market offer of four dollars for a carton of American cigarettes was our first studied overseas port. Captain Hogan led a swimming procession in the chilled water of the bay, and for an hour or two the water splashed with the voluntary divers and the thrown bodies of non-volunteers.

On 8 April 44, the “Lucretia Mott” anchored in the harbor of Brindisi, Italy where the squadron debarked onto land and proceeded to entrain in a long string of Italian box cars which soon acquired the name of “30 & 4”, for reason that thirty-four men were assigned to a car and thirty men suffered while four rested. With destination unknown, the train headed north. It was mid-day and the poverty of the people, the dirty streets and homes, and the battle marred scenes, and the ragged and dirty countless begging children presented a preview picture of Italy. At 0200 o’clock the train pulled into the yards of Bari, Italy on the Adriatic, which was undergoing an enemy bombing attack which, together with the frenzied explosive chatter of anti-aircraft guns awakened even those sleeping off the lethal vino on the bottom of the human pile.

At 0800 o'clock on Easter Sunday, 9 April 44, the squadron transferred from train to waiting trucks on the outside of Cerignola and were moved up to the Torretta Airfield – as desolate a place as could be imagined. There, in a light falling rain, the sheep were chased off the field and tents were pitched. It was “C” rations for Easter, and a wet Italian sheep dung smelling ground for a bed that night.

With the camp site established, the weeds chopped and the snakes St. Patrick's, the organization began to function. On 14 April the first of the squadron planes and men arrived and the 826th Bombardment Squadron set up for conflict with the enemy. The total strength of the squadron was 95 officers and 403 enlisted men at the time, including both ground and air echelons.

The air echelon started leaving Harvard on 13 March 44 and were all out by the 19th. The 18 flyaway B-24Hs of the squadron flew from Harvard to Lincoln, Nebraska and from there to Morrison Field, Florida where the ships were prepared, and the crews briefed for the transoceanic hop. On 24 March 44 at 0200 and at two-minute intervals, the planes took off from Morrison Field and some landed at Waller Field, Trinidad, and the others at Borinquen Field, Porto Rico and joined up the following day at Belem, Brazil. From Belem, the planes flew to Forte Liza, and Natal, Brazil, the jumping off place, and took off across the blacked-out waters of the Atlantic and landed at Dakar, West Africa. From Dakar, the planes flew to Marrakech, French Morocco and from there to Djedeida, Tunisia, where in the face of the necessary secrecy the group and the squadrons were welcomed over the radio by Ack Ack Sally from Berlin, even mentioning the group commander by name. At Djedeida, the squadron lost two planes by transfer to the 461st Bomb Group; and both crews headed by Lt. Morgan and Lt. Ray were transferred out of the squadron. The other sixteen ships and crews joined with the ground echelon at the newly established camp at Torretta Field Italy, officially designated as APO 520 US Army.

In the week following the 20th of April, the line was set up with engineering, armament, ordnance, communications, and bombsight, and the planes were given a thorough inspection and prepared for their first combat mission.

On 29 April 1944, the 826th Bombardment Squadron (H), a component of the 484th Bombardment Group (H) of the 49th Wing of the Fifteenth Air Force flew its maiden combat mission, the primary target being the marshalling yards at Drnis, Yugoslavia, and the honor of being first for the squadron fell to:

Pilot	Plane #	Plane Name	Nose #	Crew Chief
Capt. Paine	42-52689	SA Wrong Gal	53	S/Sgt Price
Capt. McClung	42-52675	Miss Fire	58	Sgt McNiel
Capt. Trotter	42-52684	Umbriago	54	S/Sgt McIntyre
1 st Lt. Fairchild	42-52671	Dream Girl	51	S/Sgt Tessalone
1 st Lt. W. Dowd	42-94741	Vivacious Lady	62	T/Sgt Walker
1 st Lt. Creasman	42-52697	Salvo Sally	63	T/Sgt Tullius
2 nd Lt. Remington	42-52632	Flaming Mamie	55	S/Sgt Yates
2 nd Lt. Lovett	42-94739	Sleepy Time Gal	60	T/Sgt Herrmann
2 nd Lt. O'Shea	42-52705	Toggle Annie	52	S/Sgt Collins
2 nd Lt. Nash	42-94747	Novetta Maria	57	Sgt Tullier

At ETR time the entire squadron sweated out the return of the group, and all ten of the squadron ships back in good shape.

In May 44, nineteen sorties were made, starting with the harbor installations of Parma, Italy on 2 May and finishing with an attack on the Ploesti Rumania oil and refinery installations on 31 May. In the interim, such other names as Bucharest, Rumania; Bologna, Caesena, and Padau, Italy; Wels, Austria; Lyon, Salon, and Carmoules, France; and Wiener Neustadt, Austria had become laurels in the history of the 826th's combat accomplishments, with the Messerschmidt factories and airdrome at Weiner Neustadt; then factories, troops, and marshalling yards at Bucharest; and the oil installations of Ploesti: outstanding for their flak and fighter concentration. Every ship in the squadron proudly wore numerous battle patches and C.G. Jones' "Vicious Virgin" came in with her top blown out by flak big enough for a man to crawl through, and Yates's "Flaming Mamie" flaunted a flak hit that tore the entire side of the bomb bay out.

May also brought three Outstanding changes. Captain Paine, the squadron commander, and Captain Hogan, the squadron executive officer were promoted to Major, and on 26 May, the squadron was redesignated from "heavy" to "pathfinder" in accordance with GO 528 HQ 15th AF dated 18 May 1944.

By the end of May, the 826th was the only squadron in the group to have weathered the rough missions of the month without loss of a plane or man. Crew chiefs' McIntyre of "Umbriago" (42-52684), Price of "SA Wrong Gal" (42-52689), Hessler of "Dry Run" (41-28803), Yates of "Flaming Mamie" (42-52632), and C.G. Jones of "Vicious Virgin" (42-74946) and their crews were vying with one another in establishing a record of consecutive missions for their planes. The fierce

rivalry of the ground crews in working against time and practically unsurmountable odds and lack of equipment in preparing their ships for the next day's mission evidenced the eagerness and the high morale of the maintenance men and specialists. The ground crews were keeping the ships in the air with adaptations of the proverbial bailing wire and masking tape, and the combat crews were taking them up in full confidence and enthusiasm.

The rains had ceased, and the summer sun beamed its welcome warmth down on the earth. The enlisted men's club came into existence with a \$760 dollar contribution, and a tufa block mess hall was under construction, and the medics were engaged in a major latrine project. Rest camps came into being. The beautiful song-honored Isle of Capri in the Mediterranean, and San Spirito on the green, emerald waters of the Adriatic gave change of scenery and relaxation to the men. On 28 May, Major Hogan, Lt. Ewen, Sgt OM Steward and Cpl. Tracy Drove down to Naples and rented the beautiful Villa Lamberto high upon the mountain side overlooking the Bay of Naples and onto the picturesque Mt. Vesuvius, for use of the squadron personnel coming to Naples for a three-day rest pass.

June, the pearl month of the year and summer's rare, gifted days came in warm with blue sapphire skies, tinged with red – for the fortunes of war blooded the squadron for the first time. Sixteen sorties were made and new names like Var and Avignon, France; Vienna and Innsbruck, Austria; Munich and Blechhammer, Germany; Giurgiu, Rumania; Bussoleno, Marrodi, Porto Marghera, and Palo, Italy became familiar target objectives.

On 7 June 44, over Var, France, T/Sgt Thomas E. Key, aerial engineer on Lt. Nichol's crew in "Puss & Boots" (41-28835) was killed by flak, and T/Sgt Alvin F. Petrillo, radio operator in the same plane, became a hospital casualty from a flak wound. They were the squadron's first battle casualties.

On 11 June over Giurgiu, Rumania our ships were attacked by German ME-109s and in the melee the squadron shot down five enemy fighters (confirmed) but lost "Dream Girl" (42-52671) and "Umbriago" (42-53684). It was the squadron's first aircraft loss in action in 29 combat sorties. "Umbriago" was on its 23rd sortie and was credited with 33 missions, and "Dream Girl" was on its 21st sortie and 29th mission.

“Dream Girl”’s crew was 2nd Lt. C.S. Odle, Pilot; 2nd Lt. D. Douthwright, Co-pilot; 2nd Lt. F.A. Fayard, Navigator; 2nd Lt. A.R. Matney, Bombardier; T/Sgt. W.R. Owen, Jr., Engineer; T/Sgt. C.D. Angelo, Radio Operator; and S/Sgts. Murtre, Burnett, Whitaker, and Bowersmith, Gunners. “Umbriago”’s crew was 1st Lt. L.Z. Rose, Pilot; 2nd Lt. W. Hardin, Co-pilot; 2nd Lt. L. Falvo, Navigator; F/O D. Coleck, Bombardier; T/Sgt. B.G. Olds, Engineer; S/Sgts. J. Hartgrove, Humphrey, Kesey, Kennedy, and Laucella, Radio Operator and Gunners. Of Odle’s crew, later news disclosed that Whitaker and Bowersmith were killed, and the rest bailed out and were captured but were released from a prison camp when Russia overran Rumania. Of Rose’s crew, Coleck, Humphrey, and Laucella died; Olds, Hartgrove, Kesey and Kennedy were missing in action, and Hardin and Falvo bailed out and were captured and held prisoners of war until brought out of Rumania when that country surrendered.

On 13 June, over Innsbruck, Austria the formation was again attacked by enemy fighters and the 826th were credited with shooting down four ME-109s, but “Vivacious Lady” (42-94741) with 1st Lt. R.L. Remington and practically a new crew other than T/Sgt. F. “Pop” Howland went down. Remington was captured and imprisoned; Howland and Lt. Hassen, Navigator and Lt. Chapman, Bombardier, evaded capture after bailing out and with the help of Partisans came back after 37 days of underground traveling through enemy country. The rest of the crew were reported missing in action and dropped from the rolls.

On June 9th, returning from Munich with an engine out, “Darling Darlene” (42-52633) with Captain Lollar’s crew landed at the Isle of Vis, Yugoslavia, but the crew and the ship returned several days later. On 12 June, “SA Wrong Girl” (42-52689) after establishing a record of 26 consecutive sorties for 37 missions (the highest in the group) made a crash landing and was destroyed by fire.

July, the fields were waist high in rustling ripening wheat; the construction of the mess hall at the northeast site of the camp was almost completed, and the medics had sided in north and south ends of the camp with spaced two-seater latrines made from steel gas drums and sided with canvas and frag box tin. Mosquitos made their appearance and so did atabrine and repellent. Lizards scurried in the grass, and moles pushed up knobs of new-turned earth inside the tents and out. Dogs enlivened the tent area, and showers were discovered at the 496th Service Squadron and a flowing river nearby became the “ole swimming hole”.

21 combat sorties were flown during the month and the Herman Goering Tank Works at Linz, Austria; the Manfred Weiss Armament and Aircraft Factories at Budapest, Hungary; the submarine pens at Toulon, France; the Messerschmidt factories at Friedrichafen and Weiner Neustadt, Germany; and other places like Tarascon, Beziers, Aviano, and Nimes, France resounded and rocked with the bombs of the 826th.

Two “mickey” ships were assigned to the squadron, and they went to crew chiefs Cushard and Price. “Miss Fire” went down at Corsica on 12 July on its 30th sortie, but returned in August. On 10 July, Lt. Fairchild’s crew and Lt. Nash’s crew were sent back to the States on DS after having completed 35 missions. Lt. Fairchild’s crew consisted of himself, Lts. Kelly, Sureck, and Cronin, and Sgts. Ross, Blood, Schley, Cox, Mason, and Holbrook, while Nash’s crew included Lts. Fenick and Rubenstein and F/O Maniak together with Sgts. Hecht, Doerfler, Lope, Fitch, Kowalski, and Purdue. The enlisted men of the two crews were in a train wreck in Indiana on their way to a distribution base after their furloughs, and Schley, Hecht, Doerfler, and Fitch were killed in the wreck.

S/Sgt. Coopridier, the mess sergeant was reduced to Pvt and transferred to the 825th. Lt. Porter was checked out as a first pilot and the flying combination of Ireland and Porter broke up as a team. Capt. Trotter, the Squadron Operations Officer made Major; 1st Lt. Clare T. Ireland, Jr. made Captain and so did 1st Lt. E.C. Martinson. 2nd Lt. L. Patlogan took off his gold bar and pinned up a silver bar in its place. Robert Keating and Thomas “Red” Meere were transferred to the 461st Bomb Group; 30 men were going to Naples very fifth day to stay at the Villa and Major Hogan had a budding turkey and chicken ranch adjacent to the orderly room.

The summer August sun goldened the bodies, and the wind flurried the grey dust from the parched earth. Miniature whirlwinds swept dust cones high into the air and myriads of bugs helped in the cussing of Italy and Mussolini.

Captain’s McClung and Lollar received their gold leaves, and the squadron sent Miskimen, Jaraslaw, Donnell, Keith, Berger, Coleman, Cole, Ramseyer, Casteel, Flavin, R. Howard, Saucier, and Mulder back to the States for B-29 training. The squadron flew twenty combat missions during the month, hitting the gun positions at Genoa, Italy and Toulon, France; the Chemical works at Ober Raderach, Germany; airdromes at Alibunar and Szolnok, Hungary and Markersdorf, Austria;

marshalling yards at Ferrara, Italy; oil at Lobau, Austria and Ploesti; and other targets at Avignon and Miramas, France, and Borovnica, Italy.

On 22 August 1944, over Szolnok, Hungary, Lt. Abbot and his crew went down in "Salvo Sally" (42-52697). It was the plane's 48th sortie and 65th mission. "What's Cookin" (44-41143) was assigned to the squadron and it went to crew chief Yates to replace "Flaming Mamie", while 42-51882 received on the 30th went to Tessalona to replace the ill-fated 42-78364 which was wrecked and transferred to the 496th Service Squadron with only 4 sorties to its credit.

On 15 August 1944, the 826th participated in the history making southern France D-Day invasion, earning not only another bronze battle star, but also was included in the commendation received from the commanding general of the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe.

The enlisted men's bar room and day room were completed by the end of August and was formally opened on 2 September with a strip tease number as the entertainment of the evening. It was noted that beside other things, the personnel of the squadron had acquired "wolf" tendencies. September brought in new replacement crews and sent home with missions completed such old timers as Capt. C. Ireland, Lts. Dion, Enright, Goble, Huntoon, R.E. Myers, and Myron Portor; likewise, Sgts. Daugherty, Barber, Bouchee, Koch, Johnson, Mathesius, Cornett, Kirby, Biernat, Kinder, Stromback, and Skolny. 2nd Lts. MacCrum and Linkous were promoted to the rank of 1st Lts, and Lt. Floyd R. Creasman was transferred to the 11th Air Depot. Captain R.L. Cole, the squadron S-2 Officer moved over to group as Group Adjutant, and 1st Lt. John F. Holstius of San Francisco came over from the 825th as the new S-2 Officer. Lt. Holstius entered the Army in July 1942 and graduated from OTS Administration at Miami Beach as 2nd Lt. He attended the S-2 school at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and was a classmate of 1st Lt. Norman Edwards, congenial Asst. S-2 Officer.

A unit commendation (GO #9 dated 10 Sep 44) was received from the Commanding General for outstanding service in the attack on the Lobau underground oil storage in Vienna.

Ferry slips at Smedervo, Yugoslavia; R/R bridge at Mitrovica, Yugoslavia, and troops at Ferroda, Italy came in the attacks by the 826th during the month. From 10 September to 2 October, the planes of the squadron, stripped of its turrets and

turret guns and loaded with supplies, flew without escort to Dijon-Lyon, France with high octane gas, ammunition, bombs, oil, grease, and other supplies to feed the hungry tactical Air Force of the 7th Army who were way ahead of their normal supply lines in the early days of the southern France invasion. On 20 September the squadron sent 8 planes with crews and ground men under the command of Major Hogan to France, and Lyon, Avignon, and Istres, France because familiar places and hotbeds of interest that restored the vim and enthusiasm which the unchanging decadency of Italy had dulled.

October brought the planes and the men back from France and immediate reconversion to combat operations. Caesara, Bologna, and Milan, Italy caught hell and so did Vienna, Munich and Linz, Austria, as well as Komarom and Ersekiyvar, Hungary. Over the latter, 1st Lt. Robson in “Dry Run” (41-28803) went down with Captain F. Oliver, Lts. Voss and Walrond, and Sgts. Dodge, Farnieri, Dunmire, Wakolee, Reimer, Parsons, and Sykes. The plane was on its 60th sortie and 78th mission. All eleven men bailed out and after 45 days of traveling through enemy territory with the help of Partisans, returned to the base.

Most of Major Lollar’s crew went home after completing their fifty missions. There was Major Lollar, 1st Lt. Petrie, T/Sgt. Sweitzer, and S/Sgt. Shorty Czaplicka. 1st Lt. Shobe, Captain Dowd’s Co-pilot also went home and so did Smiley and the Stedman twins. “Novetta Maria” (42-94747) after flying 50 sorties and 64 missions without an abortion was retired as war weary and was converted into a cargo plane. Major Claude A. Trotter was transferred to the 824th as Operations Officer, and Captain McDaniels took over as Squadron Operations Officer in Major Trotter’s place. The “Spokes” was in the process of construction – the first and forerunner of the winterized tufa block living quarters in the tent area – and the autumn was hardly noticeable except in the evening when the sun went down, and the cool wind swept over the mountains. The skies at night were illuminated with crystal clear brilliant stars which together with a silvery moon, bathed the inked darkness on the night with dreamy illumination.

November brought in the rains and the mud – ankle high thick gooey Italian mud that just wouldn’t scrape off. The weather was wet and damp and chilling, with overcast skies that kept flying down to a minimum. Only 12 combat missions were flown during the month and Klagenfurt, Austria; Augsburg, Germany, and Villafranca, Italy became new names on the target roster of the squadron. On 1 November, “Vicious Virgin” (42-94746) with 2nd Lt. Kimkins and his crew went

down and were reported missing in action. "Cover Girl" (42-51684), McIntyre's second plane after flying 41 sorties and having 55 missions to its credit made a crash landing and was transferred to the 496th Service Squadron. Crew Chief Matthews' ship 42-52490, node No. 59, was retired as war weary after 57 sorties and with a credit of 75 missions and was transferred to the Air Service Command.

1st Lts. Jepson and Holstius made Captain; T/Sgt Willie R. Ashurst, Jr., the last of the old timers, completed his missions and went home. So did T/Sgt. Wesley R. Zink. 2nd Lt. Stanley H. Mauldin, the squadron's all American/Texas football star made 1st Lt., and Sgt. F.W. Mossbarger went home on an emergency rotation.

On 6 November 1944, the squadron participated with the group in a review by Major General Twining, commanding general of the Fifteenth Air Force who on behalf of the War Dept., presented the group with a battle honor and Presidential Citation for Meritorious Achievement in combat duty, and the following G.O. from the WD milestone the achievement record of the squadron:

GENERAL ORDERS:
NO. 1 :

WAR DEPARTMENT
WASHINGTON 25, D.C. 4 JANUARY 1945

V11-- BATTLE HONORS

3. AS AUTHORIZED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 9396 (SEC.1, BULL. 22, WD, 1943) SUPERSEDING EXECUTIVE ORDER 9075 (SEC.111, BULL.11, WD, 1942), CITATION OF THE FOLLOWING UNIT IN GENERAL ORDERS, NO.4116, HEADQUARTERS FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE, 23 OCTOBER 1944, AS APPROVED BY THE COMMANDING GENERAL, MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS, IS CONFIRMED UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 1V, CIRCULAR NO. 333, WAR DEPARTMENT, 1943, IN THE NAME OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AS PUBLIC EVIDENCE OF DESERVED HONOR AND DISTINCTION. THE CITATION READS AS FOLLOWS:

THE 484TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP IS CITED FOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE OF DUTY IN ARMED CONFLICT WITH THE ENEMY. ON 21 AUGUST 1944, THE GROUP WAS ASSIGNED THE TASK OF ATTACKING AND DESTROYING THE LOBAU UNDERGROUND OIL STORAGE IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA. AS THE MAIN GASOLINE STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION CENTER IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE, A SUCCESSFUL ATTACK ON THESE INSTALLATIONS WOULD RESULT IN THE IMMOBILIZATION OF A DECISIVE PART OF THE ENEMY'S AIR FORCE AND MOBILE EQUIPMENT AT A MOST CRITICAL PERIOD IN THE WAR IN THE EAST. THOUGH UNDER SEVERE PRESSURE AFTER A WEEK OF SUSTAINED OPERATIONS, THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT PRIOR TO THE ATTACK, THE GROUND CREWS WORKED UNTIRINGLY AND ENTHUSIASTICALLY TO HAVE THEIR AIRCRAFT AT THE PEAK OF MECHANICAL PERFECTION TO INSURE THE SUCCESS OF THE MISSION. ON 22 AUGUST 1944, THIRTY-NINE B-24 TYPE AIRCRAFT TOOK OFF WITH MAXIMUM TONNAGE AND SET COURSE FOR THEIR DESTINATION. DESPITE THE EXTREMELY ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS WHICH SEPARATED THE GROUP FROM ITS DESPERATELY NEEDED FIGHTER ESCORT, THEY PROCEEDED DIRECT TO THE OBJECTIVE, IN FULL REALIZATION THAT THEIR UNPROTECTED FORMATION MIGHT BE EASY PREY FOR THE ANTICIPATED HEAVY ENEMY INTERCEPTION. DEEP IN ENEMY TERRITORY THE GROUP WAS ATTACKED BY APPROXIMATELY 50 HIGHLY AGGRESSIVE ENEMY FIGHTERS, WITH INTERCEPTION WELL COORDINATED ALONG THE ENTIRE ROUTE TO THE TARGET. THE PLANNED EIGHTH AIR FORCE DIVERSIONARY EFFORT HAS BEEN CANCELED BECAUSE OF ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS AND THE ENEMY WAS ABLE TO COMMIT ALL RESERVES SAFELY. CONTINUALLY THROWING FRESH AIRCRAFT INTO THE ASSAULT, THE ENEMY IN A VIOLENT AND BITTER AERIAL BATTLE USED ROCKET GUNS, CANNON, AND MACHINE GUNS IN A DESPERATE EFFORT TO BREAK UP THE TIGHT FORMATION AND PREVENT A SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THIS VITALLY IMPORTANT MISSION. CONSISTENT WITH THEIR REMARKABLE PAST RECORD THIS GROUP, WITH BLAZING DEFENSIVE FIRE AND SUPERIOR FORMATION FLYING, CONTINUALLY KEPT THE ENEMY AT BAY AND DESTROYED OR DAMAGED 13 ENEMY FIGHTERS FOR THE LOSS OF ONLY 1 BOMBER. AT THE TARGET A HEAVY CONCENTRATION OF INTENSE AND ACCURATE ANTIAIRCRAFT FIRE WAS ENCOUNTERED WHICH DESTROYED TWO MORE OF THEIR BOMBERS. DESPITE THIS HEAVY ENEMY FIRE AND OVERWHELMING NUMBER OF ENEMY FIGHTERS WHICH CONTINUED TO HARASS THEIR CRIPPLED FORMATION, THE GALLANT CREWS BROUGHT THEIR AIRCRAFT THROUGH FOR A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL BOMBING RUN, CONCENTRATING THEIR BOMBS ON THE TARGET TO INFLICT GRAVE DAMAGE TO VITAL INSTALLATIONS AND SUPPLIES. THE COMPLETENESS OF THE DESTRUCTION INFLICTED ON THE ENEMY BY THE 484TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP IMMOBILIZED COUNTLESS ENEMY AIRCRAFT AND HALTED

DIVISIONAL MOTOR COLUMNS DESTINED FOR THE SUPPORT OF GROUND TROOPS ON ALL FRONTS. LEAVING THE OBJECTIVE, THEY COURAGEOUSLY BATTLED ~~BY~~ THEIR WAY THROUGH THE CONTINUED ENEMY OPPOSITION UNTIL FRIENDLY FIGHTERS WERE MET AND THE RETURN FLIGHT TO BASE WAS MADE WITHOUT FURTHER LOSS OR DAMAGE. BY THE CONSPICUOUS COURAGE, AIRMANSHIP, AND DETERMINATION OF THE COMBAT CREWS, TOGETHER WITH THE SUPERIOR TECHNICAL SKILL AND DEVOTION TO DUTY OF THE GROUND PERSONNEL, THE 481ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP HAS UPHELD THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF THE MILITARY SERVICE AND THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES."

T/Sgt. J.E. Douglas was wounded in action, and on 20 November 1944, Lt. Simkins and his entire crew that had been missing in action returned none the worse. Thanksgiving dinner was turkey, and on 21 November, the squadron was redesignated from "Pathfinder" back to "Heavy".

December brought no relief from the rains and the mud. The area and the fields were quagmires. The nights were cold and homemade stoves burned wood, and oil and gas to warm the tents. The squadron flew 13 sorties during the month and added such names as Maribor, Austria; Brux, Czechoslovakia; Odertal and Passau, Germany; and Venzone, Italy as targets. On 6 December 2nd Lt. Simkins for the second time and his crew went down and were dropped from the rolls as missing in action. Lt. Simkins was flying "The Flying Dutchman" (42-52775) and it was on its 51st sortie and 64th mission when it went down.

On 21 December 1st Lts. Norman F. Edwards, Asst. S-2 Officer, and Fred A. Meier, Jr., Engineering Officer, were promoted to captaincy. Christmas Day was just another combat mission day, and the turkey Christmas dinner was marred by the scattered and late return of the crews who had to land at various fields because of the weathered condition of the field at the base. It was rainy, cold, muddy, and the skies completely overcast.

On 30 December, Captain F.E. Oliver was transferred to the 824th Bomb Sq. where he took over as Executive Officer.

A white heavy snowfall fell as 1944 departed into the limbo of time and 1945 was born. The enlisted men's club threw a champaign party and starting at midnight the snow filled air resounded with mellowly voices singing "Auld Lang Syne" which mingled with the gunfire and flare bursts.

The mud froze and the dampness disappeared with the coming of the cold weather. The weather was inclement throughout the month and only six combat sorties were flown, with one over that great flak alley, Vienna, 2 over Moosbierbaum, Austria;

Trento, Italy; and Zagreb and Brod, Yugoslavia. 1st Lts. Linkous and Larson were promoted to the rank of captain; 2nd Lts. Harper was transferred to the 825th, and Captain Warne, 1st Lts. Robson and Dooley, and T/Sgt F. Dodge completed their missions and went home. The squadron commander flew to Cairo in 57 as a Major and came back to find himself: Lt. Colonel John B. Paine, age 24, holder of the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with six clusters. On 20 January, Captain Abner O. McDaniels received his gold leaf, and the camp manifested his popularity and promotion far into the night.

Russia was hammering away at the eastern front and on the western front the German December offensive had been blunted and turned back. Flying weather made its appearance and the aerial pace was stepped up to a record-breaking peak. 18 consecutive combat missions were flown during the month that taxed the utmost of everyone engaged in the activities of the squadron. Hitting troops, harbor installations, marshalling yards, oil, railroad bridges, airdromes in Austria, Italy, Czechoslovakia, and German, the unrelenting shower of bombs dropped over primary targets in a record-breaking bomb tonnage. During the month, S/Sgt. Newton D. Baker went home on an emergency furlough and permanent transfer to the States. S/Sgt. Keith H. Dye of Hollywood, California and Pvt. Rudolph F. Krivohlavy of Iowa but citizens of Canada and Czechoslovakia went down to Naples where they took their oath of citizenship and became naturalized citizens of the United States.

On 16 February, aircraft 56 (42-78224) with Lt. Mason and a new crew went down MIA. On the next day, 17 February 1945, the squadron was hit hard when Captain Larson, flying in the “mickey” ship 501 (44-48828) collided in midair on the way to the target over Yugoslavia with the lead “mickey ship 502 (44-49721) which was on its first combat mission, with Major McDaniels at the controls. Both ships went down. Major McDaniels was seriously injured and died on the 18th of injuries received in the crash landing. He was 23 years of age, one of the most popular men in the squadron, married, holder of the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with five clusters, the American and Mediterranean Theatre ribbons and Battle Stars, Squadron Operations Officer, and his home was Cleveland Heights, Ohio.

Larson’s crew consisted of himself, his co-pilot, Lt. Cummins, Lt. Rabinowitz, Nav.; Lt. Duke, Bombardier; Lt. Mulcahy, Radar, and T/Sgts. Morris and Unterberger, Engineer and Radio Operator, and S/Sgts. Coke, Scheina, Mathison, and Unger, gunners. Captain Larson’s ship went into a spin and never came out.

Lt. Duke was the only one to bail out. The crew of 502 consisted of Major McDaniels, Pilot; Lt. Dippel, Co-pilot, Lts. Danowski and Schwartz, Navigators, Lt. Weser, Radar, Lt. Dowdey, Bombardier, and Sgts. Kolbe, Redifer, Clark, Hiser, and Mordica, Engineer, Radio Operator and gunners. Lts. Schwartz, Weser and Dowdey, and Sgts. Redifer and Mordica came out of the crash with slight injuries while the rest were killed or died of injuries received.

On 20 February 2nd Lt. O.M. Colvin and his crew went down MIA over southern Austria in airplane 42-51882 on its 36th sortie and 42nd mission. 1st Lt. John M. MacCrum, Jr., made captain, and in the evening memorial service was held at the newly erected miles memorial chapel for Major McDaniels and the men who died with him on the 17th. A quartette sang "Lord Guard and Guide the Men Who Fly" and Sgt. Theodore A. Daum sang "One Sweet Solemn Thought".

On 21 February Major Walter V. Hogan was transferred to group where he took over as Group Executive Officer, and Captain James L. Bennett, Adjutant of the 826th was assigned as the squadron's new Executive Officer. Captain Bennett was commissioned in 1942 and came up from the ranks by way of S-2 Officer. His home is Handley, Texas, he's single and 32 years of age.

Lt. Colonel Paine completed his missions and was relieved of his primary duty of commanding officer and was replaced by Major Claude A. Trotter who came back to the squadron, where he received a great ovation at the enlisted men's club that evening in expressing their gladness in having him back and as the new commanding officer, and the men gave Lt. Col. Paine and Major Hogan a champaign salute of "He's a Jolly Good Fellow" and farewell.

The new squadron commander, Major Claude A. Trotter, Jr. came over with the original air echelon from Harvard. He comes from Petrey, Alabama and was 25 years of age in February. He entered the Army as an aviation cadet in February 1941 with a military background of Marion Military Academy and North Texas Aggies. He attributes his love of flying to his father, who is a captain in the Air Corps stationed at Tyndall Field, Panama City, Florida. He was air cadet captain in primary, basic and advance training, taking them at Love Field, Dallas, Texas, Curtis Field, Brady, Texas and Kelly Field, San Antonio, Texas where he graduated and received his commission on the 26th of September 1941. Married a southern girl but is not a rebel. Prior to joining up with the 5th Anti-Sub at Westover, Major Trotter, a Lt. then, worked on experimental flying with Major

General Doolittle at Norfolk, Virginia in February 1942 when Lt. Col. Doolittle was working out his Tokyo raid with B-25s off the aircraft carrier Hornet in the waters of Norfolk. Major Trotter holds the American Defense ribbon, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with four clusters besides the Mediterranean Theatre ribbon and Battle Stars.

There was no easing up on the targets of Europe as March came in. The western and eastern fronts were in the process of their spring objectives and the Air Forces were up in maximum effort in tactical and strategic support. On 4 March, Lt. Crockett and his crew in 61 (42-51697) went down in action over Muhldorff, Germany and were dropped from the rolls as missing in action.

On 9 March, Captain William H. Dowd, who had taken over as squadron Operations Officer and the only remaining flying officer other than Major Trotter that had come over with the original air echelon from Harvard, holder of the American and Mediterranean Theatre ribbons, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with four clusters, member of the old 5th Anti-Sub, a native of Stoneham, Mass., Boston College, and graduate aviation cadet at Turner Field, Georgia and commissioned in April 1942, was promoted to the field grade of major.

Warm weather brought in a general spring housecleaning and the camp area began to look spic and span. The tree trunks were limed white and so were the tufa block houses and buildings, giving the area a new and clean-looking appearance. General McNarney, the theater commander paid a visit to the group. M/Sgt. William A. Pekkala, the squadron Line Chief, was transferred to the group air inspector's office and M/Sgt. Carl Williams became the squadron Line Chief.

13 March 1945 marked the official one year overseas anniversary of the squadron. Its achievement was marked indelibly in the records of the war department and in the progress of the war in Europe. On 13 March it had participated in 156 sorties over the roughest targets in Europe; it had 30 confirmed ME-109s and ME-210s to its credit and had achieved the distinction of being recognized by the Berlin radio as "The Red Tailed Devils". It had participated in flights made in unbelievable adverse weather and flying conditions; it had given its men and planes and effort to the highest degree of merit and skill for the purpose for which it was activated, and as the anniversary month ran out and the end of the war in Europe came in view, the powerful roar of the squadron planes taking off vibrated the pride of the

squadron in its officers and enlisted men and the part they had played in upholding the banner and cause for which they had so nobly given.

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