



483RD BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) ITALY 1944-45

INTRODUCTION

SINCE this book was compiled, the war in Europe rushed to a breath-taking finish. Victory in Europe marks an auspicious occasion for the dedication of this publication, and brings into sharp focus the important role played by the 483rd Bombardment Group (H) in the sustained strategic bombing campaign which, captured German generals freely admitted, was one of the principal factors contributing to their overwhelming defeat.

In reading this book, it should be kept in mind that the material covers a period roughly stretching from the organization's inception to the tail-end of its combat career in Italy. It will be noted that certain concessions to censorship rules have been made in order to assure the book's eligibility for mailing. Also, some repetition may be found, but it was felt that this would be permissible in order to assure each Squadron of a full, individual section. Many changes have occurred in the group setup since this material was compiled (and many are occurring even as this is written). Still, if this publication serves as a memento of the "old days" with the 483rd, it will have served its purpose.

May 9, 1945.

W. B. EPPERSON
BERNIE YUDAIN, Editors

483 BOMB GROUP HISTORY

WHEN the 483rd Bomb Group's air echelon arrived in Africa in April, 1944, en route to Italy, the new organization was welcomed to the Mediterranean Theatre by Germany's English-speaking slap-happy commentator "Axis Sally." This was the Nazis' idea of demoralizing new outfits, but like most of their psychological efforts, it proved a boomerang. The airmen recognized the "welcome" as an indication of impotence on the part of an enemy who admitted his awareness of certain movements, but found himself unable to do anything about them. At any rate, Miss Sally, who has travelled a long way—backwards toward her beloved Reich—since the 483rd entered the combat picture, has been given plenty of grounds to regret her cordial welcoming of the 483rd into the combat zone. But before reviewing the combat activities of this B-17 Flying Fortress Group during its first year of operations, it might be well to thumb back through the pages of history and trace the origin and growth of the organization, a process which should record for posterity the life story of at least one Heavy Bombardment Group of the U.S.A.A.F.

The 483rd Bombardment Group (H) was activated at Ephrata, Washington, on September 22, 1943. The new outfit comprised three new Squadrons—the 815th, 816th and 817th. The fourth squadron, the 818th, was composed of the old 21st Anti-Submarine Squadron which had transferred from Gulfport, Miss. The 21st, in turn, has grown from the nucleus of the 128th Observation Squadron, Georgia National Guard, but some of the Yankee members of the Group don't care to talk about that.

Colonel Paul L. Barton, a lean, keen West Pointer from Ludlow, Vt. who was then a Lt. Colonel, was appointed Group Commander. Other key wheels, both of whom still hold their original positions, were Lt. Colonel Cyril Carmichael of Pelham, N.Y., Group Executive Officer and Major Kenneth P. Bishop of Peterborough, N.H., Adjutant. Soon after



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FIELD PRESS CENSOR

The following Volume of the 483rd Group has been Censored By B.R. Napiorkowski 1st. Lt.

activation, Lt. Colonel Wallace L. Linn of Indianapolis, Ind. joined the organization as Operations Officer. The first Deputy Group Commander was Lt. Colonel Edward J. York, a native of New York State and later resident of San Antonio, Texas. Although at the time it was a fairly well-kept secret, word got around (as it will) that Col. York had been on the famous Doolittle raid on Tokio. His B-25, out of gasoline, had been forced to land in Russia, where Col. York and his crew were interned. After a year in the USSR, the doughty pilot and his crew "escaped", returned to the U. S., and Col. York



Wheels. Their grins weren't so broad on rough days

popped up in the 483rd. The exciting story of Col. York and his crew was finally made public more than a year after he joined the 483rd.

While the growing ground echelon worked on organization and training at the desolate sand-swept Ephrata base, the Air Echelon went to the Army Air Forces School of Applied Tactics at Orlando, Fla. and thence to Brooksville, Fla. for field training. The group was then transferred from the Second Air Force's jurisdiction, and on November 7, first units of the 483rd,

with only four B-17's to their name, arrived at MacDill Field, Fla. and the men sewed on the rather wierd patches of the Third Air Force.

A rigid program of basic training was instituted. New personnel—including high-ranking NCO's from other outfits and greenhorn newcomers from Tech schools—swelled the roster. Warning orders alerting the group for shipment arrived December 28, 1943, about the same time heavy bombardment units were moving from their African bases to Italy in order to increase their range. Training intensified, and inspections likewise. Headquarters was established as a separate detachment, with Major Bishop as C.O. In February, 1944, preparations for the overseas movement were begun. At this time, the 818th Squadron was redesignated as the 840th Squadron and thereby assumed title to the traditions of the old 840th Aero Squadron which was activated at Waco, Texas, on February 1, 1918.

On March 2, 1944, the air and ground echelons bade a fond farewell to MacDill. The airmen took off in their shiny new Fortresses for Hunter Field, Ga. and from there went to the jumping off point for their overseas hop. Despite violent storms encountered over the Atlantic, only one mishap occurred. One of the 17's was forced to ditch, but all members were rescued and the operation was hailed as a model example of ditching procedure to boot.

The ground echelon, commanded by Col. Carmichael, travelled by train to Camp Patrick Henry, Va., spent nine cold and rainy days there, and, on March 12, embarked aboard three Liberty ships. The sea voyage was rather uneventful, though tedious, except for a German air attack on the night of March 30, a day after the convoy had passed through the Straits of Gibraltar.

The ships carrying the 483rd personnel came through unscathed, and the groundmen finally landed at Brindisi, Italy some 28 days from the date of their departure from the States. At Brindisi, after a spirited march through the city, the men boarded diminutive cattle cars reminiscent of the 40 and 8's of the last war. Waiting in the yards, the men encountered their first "cigaretta Joe?" pleas, which were to ring in their ears, forever after. The urchins fared well at the hands of the expansive new-

Steerage passengers up for air. Similarity to sardines is actual



unior Wheels. Note the hair-do's