

HEADQUARTERS  
451ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)  
APO 520 US Army

NARRATIVE HISTORY

1 Dec. to 31 Dec. 1944

December undoubtedly was the most notable month for our Group in quite some time. Notable for the many changes in the squadrons and in Headquarters and also for the series of holiday parties. Probably our most important change occurred the last week of the year when Lt. Col. Stefanowicz assumed command of the Group.

Lt. Col. Hoppick, former commander of the 727th Squadron, moved to the "castle" and was appointed Deputy Group Commander. Col. Knapp, our former commander, departed for a "job" at MAAF.

Eighteen missions were flown during the month; results running from excellent to snafu. On the larger percentage of the missions assessment was impossible due to cloud coverage over the target area. On December 3rd we sent 3 planes to Innsbruck M/Y, results were only fair. A three day layoff did not improve our results for on the 6th, 30 planes were no more effective against Maribor M/Y. On the 7th our "trails received their just reward for results were rated good. A brief respite the next day against Graz limited our results to fair but on the 9th we again were on the beam in plastering Millach M/Y, Austria. Mission #164 we had 34 aircraft and the results were rather startling: 34 early returns. On the 11th we again flubbed against Vienna but of the 15th Linz was the recipient of a plastering from 26 aircraft of our Group with good results despite 10/10 coverage. It would appear that we were resting on our laurels on the 16th for our results were miserable, through 10/10 again.

The week ending December 23 saw our best bombing for the month. Four missions were flown; the net result being good on three and fair on the 4th. On the 17th we had good results but we lost 2 planes. On the 18<sup>th</sup> Blachhammer took the beating through 10/10, a condition which was somewhat an obstacle for the results were listed fair at Blechhammer; however this weather condition was no hindrance on the 20th at Linz for we achieved excellent results.

On the 25th we had our best day of the month, excellent at Wels M/Y, Austria. 40% of the bombs dropped within 1,000 feet of the briefed aiming point, a beautiful Christmas present for the enemy. On the 26th under CAVU conditions we achieved good results at Osweicim

Oil Refinery, Poland. On the 27th and 28th under good weather conditions only fair results were achieved against Venzone RR viaduct, Italy. However we had the satisfaction of smashing one span of the bridge on the 2nd day. On the 29th fair results were gained at Udine factory area, Italy despite CAVU conditions. Summarizing we might say the month was average for results. We had our share of poor missions, but they were overshadowed by the long list of good missions.

Personnel changes were many and included the following: On the 2nd Major Moran joined the 51 Club and he departed for the States on the 15th. On the 4th Capt. Peck, Ass't S-2, was placed on DS to the United States, the result being a linguist in French. On the 5th Major McManus was placed on orders to the 49th Wing A-2 section. We all are looking for big things for "Mac". Major Hodges, formerly Ass't A-2 at Wing, took over as Group S-2. Lt. Robertson of the 724th Squadron was placed on DS to replace Capt. Peck. On the 15th Capt. Sanford took over at the 724th as Squadron Commander and Capt. Rollins became Operations Officer.

The "Party Season" began on the 14th when the 727th Officers held open house. There is no doubt about the success of the evening for it is still under discussion amongst those who attended. On the 18th the Group Headquarters Staff entertained at a dinner and dance. Guests included General Lee of the 49th Wing and members of his staff. Christmas Eve was observed in traditional style. Midnight Mass was held by Chaplain Coughlin and Chaplain McNeil observed Christmas Day with services at 1000.

New Year's Eve was the occasion for informal parties within the squadrons and reports circulating attest to the fact that all members of the Group did their best to make it a memorable one.

December 26th was a bad day for the 724th Squadron for on that date the entire operations staff was last seen heading for Russian territory. Included were Capt. Sanford, the C.O., Capt. Manoogian, S-2, Lt. Gibbons, Squadron Navigator, Lt. Emmerling, Squadron Bombardier, and Lt. Frazier, PFF Navigator. Capt. Rollins, Operations Officer took over the Squadron and he in turn was assisted by Lt. Custer who was appointed Operations Officer.

Changes in the "Castle" area include the construction of a new club building for the enlisted men. The old club was converted into a theatre, a project in sore demand. The new club was dedicated during Christmas week with appropriate ceremonies.

/s/ LAWRENCE E. ROBERTSON

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Ass't. S-2