



451st PLANES WING OVER SOUTHERN GERMANY—Weird cloud formations and vapor trails are created as this squadron of planes of the 15th Air Force fly over their target at 25,000 feet. Some of the boys at Dow Field were in those planes, which created so much havoc with vital industries within the Reich. (U.S.A.A.F. photo.)

Battle Scarred Fighting 451st Observes Anniversary At Dow

The fighting 451st Bombardment Group, veterans of two years of aerial combat in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations, and pride of the 15th Air Force, is taking part in the celebration of the 38th Anniversary of the Army Air Forces at Dow Field today. Winners of three Presidential Citations, and so far as is known, the only heavy bomb group winning three Presidential Citations, the members of the 451st symbolize all that is best in the combat units of the AAF throughout the world.

Now stationed at Dow Field, the 451st has been assigned to the North Atlantic Division of the ATC, under the command of Brigadier General Lawrence G. Fritz. As fast as they can be screened, classified and processed, they will be assigned to the five major continental bases of the North Atlantic Division, at Presque Isle, Dow, Grenier Field, LaGuardia Field, and Washington National Airport. Some have already gone to take up their new duties with the Air Transport Command.

But even in their new stations, this writer sincerely believes that the boys of the 451st will not have changed—their old allegiance will stick. They will still be members of what they affectionately call "The Four Filthy First." And well they might.

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the group flying the South Atlantic route of the ATC, and winding up in Africa for further training. The ground echelons went over by boat, and landed in Naples, Italy. The two groups united in January, and were originally based at Gioia airodome, an Italian base with dirt runways.

STRIKE OPPOSITION

They flew their first combat mission on January 30th, against enemy radar installations in Albania. They flew nine missions without casualties, inflicting terrific damage against enemy factories, bridges and installations, but they struck real opposition on their tenth trip into Festung Europa.

Their target was the famous Regensburg aircraft factory in Germany, which was manufacturing one-third of the total production of Messerschmitt 109's, one of Germany's most effective fighter planes. In the raid, a joint opera-

tion frequently the weather was bad, rather than good. Nevertheless, 15 heavy raids were made against vital targets, including the bloody battlefield of Cassino.

BATTLE 300 NAZIS

On April 2nd, a tremendous raid was launched against enemy ball bearing plants at Steyr, Austria, where unexpectedly heavy enemy opposition developed, when 300 Nazi fighters were battled for better than two hours. Although two B-24's went down in the raid, 30 enemy fighters were known to have been shot down, and another 30 were listed as probables.

On April 5th, the 15th Air Force made the first of its many terrific raids against the Ploesti oil refineries, which at that time were producing nearly one half of the natural oil used by German tanks, automobiles, trucks, and planes. A crash on the take-off at Manduria resulted in 100 per cent casualties for one plane, and held things up for an hour, but the group formed on schedule. Again, they were heavily and bitterly attacked by enemy fighters, with five of the B-24's being shot down. The gunners had a field day, however, shooting down nearly 50 of the enemy craft.

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died, but as this occurred, anti-aircraft opposition at the major targets became increasingly great. "There were times when we could almost walk on the flak—it was that thick," said one pilot. Vienna was protected by more than 400 heavy flak guns, which took a heavy toll of the 451st bombers, with nine being shot down in one day over that city.

SUPPORT GROUND UNITS

With the beginning of the ground drive by the American Fifth and the British Eighth armies in northern Italy, the 451st began to fly close support missions in conjunction with the ground forces. During April of 1945, 22 missions were flown in 26 days, and bombing accuracy reached a new peak, with 67.7 per cent of all bombs landing within 1,000 feet of the exact pinpoint target.

On April 27th, the 451st made their last raid. On May 2nd, the war in Italy was over, and the men were notified that they were coming home.

Now, assigned to another branch of the Army Air Forces, they will assist in carrying out the logistics mission of the AAF—to get what it is needed where it is needed—when it is needed. The job of the Air Transport Command, transporting high priority men, materiel, mail and aircraft to and from the combat theaters of the world, is vital in modern warfare. The men of the fighting 451st are expected to play an important part in the job.

Their skilled technicians, mechanics, clerks, and flyers will soon fit into the groove of the ATC's smoothly running organization. Although the men of the 451st are sorry to see their organization breaking up, they are going where they will really be of tremendous service to the war effort.

The North Atlantic Division of the ATC is glad to welcome to its ranks, the fighting 451st Bomb Group—top ranking outfit of the 15th Air Force, and the entire ETO.

Officers of the 451st Bomb Group who have reported to date, (and there are still more to come), include the following: Colonel Leroy L. Stefanowicz of Wild Rose, North Dakota, Commanding Officer; Captain Daniel J. Coffey of Jamaica Plain, Mass., Special Service Officer; Major Clyde L. Wagner of New Rochelle, New York, Surgeon; Captain James H. Broderick of Albany, New York, Dental Officer; Captain Robert E. Davidson of Hidge-wood, New Jersey, Armament Officer; Captain Harry T. Fontaine of Brightwaters, Long Island, Information and Education and Public Relations Officer; Captain William Mattes of Bloomfield, N. J., Assistant Operations Officer; Captain Edward A. Zraick of Brooklyn, New York, Intelligence Officer; First Lieut. Lloyd H. Lipkey of Washington, D. C., Cryptographic Officer; Captain George C. Millinix, Baltimore, Maryland, Navigator; Captain William McNeil, of Steubenville, Ohio, Chaplain; Lieut. Col. Edward B. Rasmussen, Chicago, Illinois, Operations Officer; Captain Everett Williams, Poplar, Wisconsin, Weather Officer; Lieut. Col. Theodore H. Gorton, St. Joseph, Missouri, Deputy Group Commander; Captain Joe C. Pritchett, Fort Worth, Texas, Radar Officer; Capt. Charles E. Volz, Austin, Texas, Personnel Equipment Officer; First Lieut. William L. Evans, Calvert, Texas, Statistical Officer; First Lieut. Lawrence E. McBrearty, Waco, Texas, Medical Administrative Officer; First Lieut. Charles

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The Four Fifty First is reputed to be the most heavily decorated bomb group in the 15th Air Force—top outfit out of 21. It has won three Presidential Citations—more than any other bomb group in Europe. Its personnel has won one DSC, nine Legion of Merit Badges, 25 Silver Stars, 50 Soldier's Medals, one British Distinguished Flying Cross, hundreds of DFC's, thousands of Air Medals, several hundreds of Bronze Stars, and many other decorations.

The members of the outfit proudly wear 12 battle stars—representing twelve major campaigns in which they participated. They flew their planes against almost every country in Europe, including Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Albania, Greece, Yugoslavia, Poland and all the islands of the Mediterranean. They bombed oil wells, refineries, factories, railroads, bridges, roads, ships—in fact, any target they were assigned to attack, no matter how dangerous.

245 MISSIONS

Altogether, the 451st flew 245 combat missions, and dropped over 13,000 tons of bombs on the enemy. Over 8000 men were at one time or another members of the outfit, with the flyers rotating in and out. When their missions were done,

they were through, and were replaced by newcomers. The esprit de corps and the morale of the Group have always been exceptionally high.

On an average combat mission, the B-24's of the 451st would fly 38 planes, although they have flown as high as 54. Their last mission flown was on April 27th, just five days before hostilities ceased in the Italian section. This cessation of hostilities was due in no little part to what they had done.

The original commander of the 451st was Col. Robert E. L. Eaton. The group trained under him in the States, and flew under his command until September, 1944. His successor was Col. James Knapp, who remained with the group till December, 1944, when Col. LeRoy L. Stefanowicz assumed command. He is still in charge of the group, while it is being deactivated at Dow Field. Some of the men with the group at Dow, have been with the outfit ever since it was organized at Tucson, Arizona, in May, 1943.

The 451st boasts group commendations from Brig. Gen. Hugo P. Rush, Brig. Gen. William L. Lee, Lieut. Gen. Nathan F. Twining, and Lieut. Gen. Ira W. Eaker. Congratulatory messages complimenting the group on its bombing efficiency have come from General Marshal, Gen. H. H. Arnold, Gen. Touhey Spaatz, and Gen. Mark Clark.

The 451st started overseas in November, 1943, with the B-24's of

dirt runways.

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Their target was the famous Regensburg aircraft factory in Germany, which was manufacturing one-third of the total production of Messerschmitt 109's, one of Germany's most effective fighter planes. In the raid, a joint operation of the 8th and 15th Air Forces, the 451st was the first group to reach the target, after a terrible battle with enemy fighters. Although the 451st lost six planes in the struggle, they managed to knock down 25 of the enemy fighters. Despite the tremendous opposition from fighter planes and heavy flak, the target was hit squarely and the factory thoroughly gutted by explosion and fire. The plant never again resumed operation, the factory was a total wreck.

The 451st was awarded its first Presidential Citation for the Regensburg raid. There was plenty of trouble on the homeward trek, because a torrential rain had turned the mud runways into a swamp. Only a few of the planes were able to land and the others were scattered all over southern Italy. The group was split up, part of the outfit going to Manduria, and the rest to San Pancrazio. But despite this separation of the squadrons, all formations were made, and the bombing went on without delay.

There were no buildings for either living or operational purposes. The men lived in tents, resting on mud. The work on the planes had to be done outside, in good weather and bad—and more

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On April 9th, the group was reunited again at Castelluccio air base near the great Foggia airfield. At that time, it was anything but the powerful air base it is now. As the planes landed, they found nothing more than a runway—no buildings, no nothing. Since war could not wait for construction, and they were ordered to go into action immediately, they jumped right into their work. Although weather prevented their flying, they were ready to go into the combat the day after they arrived.

Main targets from the new operating base of the 451st were Ploesti (raided 20 times), Vienna (13 times), Linz, Munich, Friedrichshafen, Budapest, Bucharest, Belgrade, Steyr, and Bolzano—all powerfully defended cities, with hundreds of flak guns and swarms of protecting fighter aircraft.

PLOESTI OIL RAIDS

Toughest cities to attack were Vienna, Ploesti and Munich. Ploesti was particularly well defended, because oil was vital to the success of the Nazi war machine, and it was at Ploesti that the backbone of the Nazi oil system was broken. With 11 refineries in that city, it was a prime target—with top priority for the 15th Air Force. By the time the 451st finished with it, oil production and refining was down to practically nothing.

On August 22nd, the target was the Lobau oil refinery near Vienna at Markersdorf. Enemy fighters attacked in force, shooting down seven of the aircraft. The next day the 451st lost nine aircraft out of 24—the losses were terrific. But in spite of the heavy opposition and tremendous losses, the balance of the group fought its way through and hit the target with excellent bombardment results. The 451st received its third Presidential Citation for this raid.

Later, the 451st was called on to give support to the drives of the Third and Seventh armies in southern France. B-24's were used to fly supplies of gasoline, ammunition and bombs to Lyons, France. Seven supply missions were flown in heavily laden aircraft, despite severe cloud conditions which made flying over mountainous terrain difficult and dangerous.

That fall, synthetic oil plants in central Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary were hit almost daily in successful attempts to deprive the Nazis of fuel for their mechanized army and Luftwaffe. Communications targets and railroad yards were second in priority.

With the shortage of airplane gasoline, fighter opposition dwindle

Washington, D. C., Chief of Staff Officer; Captain George C. Millinix, Baltimore, Maryland, Navigator; Captain William McNeil, of Steubenville, Ohio, Chaplain; Lieut. Col. Edward B. Rasmussen, Chicago, Illinois, Operations Officer; Captain Everett Williams, Poplar, Wisconsin, Weather Officer; Lieut. Col. Theodore H. Gorton, St. Joseph, Missouri, Deputy Group Commander; Captain Joe C. Pritchett, Lott, Texas, Radar Officer; Capt. Charles E. Volz, Austin, Texas, Personal Equipment Officer; First Lieut. William L. Evans, Calvert, Texas, Statistical Officer; First Lieut. Lawrence E. McBrearty, Waco, Texas, Medical Administrative Officer; First Lieut. Charles A. Miller, Jr., San Antonio, Texas, Administrative Inspector;

First Lieut. Alton C. Murphy, Temple, Texas, Statistical Officer; Major William H. McGuire, Silver City, New Mexico, Gunnery Officer; Captain Richard E. Prouty, Metairie Falls, Washington, Air Inspector; WO Harold H. Burchell, Portland, Oregon, Technical Inspector; Captain Ralph M. McBeth, Miami, Florida, Communications Officer; First Lieut. John A. O. Winden, Alexander, North Dakota, Flight Control Officer; Captain William M. Dwyer, Wichita, Kansas, Photo Officer; Captain Robert L. White, McCool Junction, Nebraska, Bombardier; First Lieut. David D. Beitmen, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Photo Intelligence Officer; and Captain Henry D. Richardson, Adjutant.

Welders To Have Mass Discussion

BATH, July 31 (AP)—The Independent Brotherhood of Shipyard Workers will sponsor a mass discussion meeting tomorrow for Bath Iron Works welders and tackers, many of whom, the union leaders said today, believe an end should be made to an unauthorized work stoppage they began Thursday at the destroyer-building Bath yard.

"It was apparent that many were of the opinion that work should be resumed," brotherhood president, Ralph A. Mulligan said after a conference between union officials and representatives of the welders and tackers.

Mulligan said the employees had been assured that as soon as work resumed a meeting would be held with management which was expected then to reply to wage demands submitted by the welders. Arbitration would follow if management's answer proved unsatisfactory, Mulligan said the men were told.

About 700 employees in other departments at the shipyard remained off duty today because of a production situation created by absences in the welding department.

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