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G-2-368-1-1
July 1944

HISTORICAL REPORT
1 July to 31 July

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Information contained herein, is written in compliance with Ninth Fighter Command Memorandum Number 20-4, date 22 December 1943. It is a resume of the activities of the 368th Fighter Group Headquarters, for the month of July, 1st to 31st 1944.

1. ORGANIZATION

No Change.

2. STRENGTH AS OF 31st JULY 1944

Figures shown below are total strength for Group Headquarters and assigned squadrons.

| <u>Assigned Personnel</u> | | <u>Authorized Personnel</u> | |
|---------------------------|------|-----------------------------|------|
| Officers----- | 193 | Officers----- | 181 |
| Enlisted Men----- | 873 | Enlisted Men----- | 826 |
| | 1066 | | 1007 |

3. DATE OF ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE FROM EACH STATION IN ETO:

Departed USAAF Station 404, Chibbolton, Hants, England 1st July for Advanced Landing Strip number A-3, 2 miles east of Cardonville, France, arriving on 3 July 1944. (

4. LOSSES IN ACTION:

Nil (for Group Headquarters)

5. AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:

Award of Distinguished Flying Cross:
Lt. Col. Frank S. Perego

Award of 2nd Silver Oak Leaf Cluster to Air Medal:
Lt. Col. Frank S. Perego

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RECORD OF EVENTS

PAGE ONE

1 July 1944

Alth the rest of the Group isn't over here as yet they are expected at any time. Here at the strip in France business goes on as usual. We are flying missions as fast as they can be thrown at us. They are mostly ground support work with a little armed recon work and intercept work thrown in for good measure. Today managed to pass off as an easy day tho', we were alerted for missions but due to the weather we could not perform any of them.

This evening a traveling USO show, "The Skyblazers" put on a performance at the Special Service tent for all personnel. Not expecting any entertainment of this form over here, we were a little surprised at the announcement. The show was well attended and well received by all personnel in the Group. From opinions expressed by the "first nighters" it is hoped that there will be more shows of this type along at some future date.

2 July 1944

The weather cleared up sufficiently to allow us to fly today. Our first job was a dive bombing mission to knock out a railroad bridge near Nantes. The 396th took this one. Major Sparks lead 12 P-47s off at 1421 on their way to see what they could do in the way of putting them out of commission. Results of the mission were excellent, hits were observed on the bridges, the tracks were out on all of them but no spans were down. The squadron did not run into trouble, but 15 minutes after take off, Lt. John L. Carters' prop went out and his engine failed. He called in a fix and said he was bailing out. No chute was seen, but his wingman saw the plane going down, obviously with no one at the controls. The squadron proceeded on the mission and returned home with out further trouble.

The 397th Squadron was alerted suddenly for a scramble intercept mission five different times over a peiod extending all afternoon. One Flight of 4 planes were the only ones to see any enemy aircraft. 40 plus Me-109's and Fw-190's were observed over Caen, but due to a greater superiority in enemy planes our pilots took evasive action and ducked for the clouds. Two of the boys took a couple of long range shots at the e/a before running and results were unobserved. The rest of the patrols were uneventful, no enemy aircraft were sighted or encountered any place they were directed to fly by the controller.

In a ceremony in the 395th area today, the DFC was presented to Lt. Col. Frank S. Perego, Deputy Commander, Major Henry Quimby, CO, 395th Sqdn., Major Paul Douglas, CO 396th Sqdn., Major J.D.W. Haesler, CO 397th Sqdn., and Capt Thomas Montag, Operations Officer, 395th Sqdn. in recognition of their services as squadron commanders and in their ability as leaders. All of these pilots have flown at least 30 missions before D-Day and are continually flying them every day. General E. R. Quesada, Commanding General, IX Tactical Air Command decorated the pilots. Among the visiting officers was Colonel Dyke Meyer, Former Commanding Officer of the 366th Fighter Group.

3 July 1944

For a while today it seemed as thoé there wouldn't be any flying. Starting early this morning it rained all day and kept operations at a standstill. Several

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3 July 1944 (continued)

briefings were held as standbys. It looked for a time as tho' we would get in a soft day, but it seems as tho' this weather is about as fickle as a woman. Around 1600 the ceiling lifted and then stopped and then the phone rang with the obvious results. There was enough time for each Squadron to fly one mission apiece, all dive bombing of concrete strong points behind enemy lines.

The 395th was the first one off, 12 of their planes zoomed down the runway and the last one leaving the ground at 1753. The boys proceeded to the target and dropped their bombs with fair results. While bombing was going on the controller called in and told the boys to investigate some reported enemy aircraft. The pilots took a looksee in the area, but no E/A were sighted. At this disappointment they turned around and came home landing at 1928.

The 397th took off next at 1801 to dive bomb the same type of target at a different point. Due to the nearness of the strip to the assigned areas it seldom takes more than 6 to 7 minutes to reach the target. They dropped their bombs with fair results on the target getting several good hits. On the way back the boys did a little strafing, destroying two fuel trucks and one unidentified object which gave forth a tremendous amount of white smoke. No enemy aircraft were sighted at any time. All planes were back home at 1959.

The 396th was the last squadron off, and again the weather broke up any thoughts of doing any bombing. They went to the assigned target and then after they got there it was totally obscured by 10/10s cloud cover. The word was given to come home and all bombs were jettisoned in a swamp west of the base. All back at 2150.

The rear echelon had been expected at any time having left England on the 2nd of July. About 1700 the trucks loaded down with the personnel rolled in the gate and on to the strip. They were guided to the 395th area and there they discharged their cargo of tired men, home at last after a long trip from England. There were exclamations of wonder and cries of welcome to the members of the advance echelon who had come out to see what it was all about. More than one person was glad to see them come, some for the pleasure of seeing old friends and others because there would be more men to take up the burden of work, what little there was left to do.

4 July 1944

As the men awoke on this morning and went off to their daily tasks, good natured banter was passed back and forth on the subject of this being Independence day. Altho' no one had any fire works we could hear the rumble of heavy artillery off in a distance, the sound of which filled our ears all day. We had to console ourselves with this and any bombing our boys would do, as our contribution to a noisy fourth. The day wasn't any different than the others that had passed since we landed. Missions came up and were flown or scrubbed as the weather permitted. For the men of "B" party it was a day of work, their holes had to be dug and fixed as living quarters. Pup tents were pitched over the holes and by night fall every one was dug in and sleeping at least a foot below the surface of the ground.

Meanwhile on the operational side, our boys flew 3 missions, one per squadron, with the 395th first off at 0745 to execute an armed recon and dive bombing mission on an gun emplacement back of enemy lines. Results of the bombing were excellent strikes were well concentrated. On the way back a convoy was spotted and strafed with undetermined results. No enemy aircraft were sighted and all planes were back on the strip at 0847.

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4 July 1944 (continued)

The next squadron to take off was the 396th, their job being the same type, armed recce and dive bombing of gun emplacements. The results of the job were very good, the target was thought to be probably destroyed, with 75 per cent hits obtained. A convoy of enemy vehicles was stopped on a road so the boys dropped down for a little shooting, coming away leaving four destroyed trucks and several more burning. All planes were back at the strip at 1300, having sighted no boogies and experiencing little flak.

The 397th ran into a little excitement on their mission. They went out to dive bomb road bridges and to execute an armed recce, but while bombing 18 PW 190s were seen below them and over the town of Coutances. Only 4 bombs were dropped on the bridge and the rest were jettisoned. The bridge was weakened but not badly hit. Results of the chase were 1-0-1, Capt. Eugene M. Potter getting his first destroyed and also a damaged. This was the only encounter although the rest of the planes had given chase. All planes were back home at 2058 after which it was decided to call it a day.

5 July 1944

It was business as usual again today after a somewhat uneventful fourth. Several of the boys were heard to voice their dissatisfaction over not having any fire works to shoot off, but it was decided to let this pass and to keep an eye on them as pending section eight cases.

It wasn't an early start this morning. We had all been up several hours, even the pilots, when our first mission request came in. The 395th was detailed to go out and dive bomb a roadbridge and to execute an armed recce in the area south of St. Lo. The boys must have had plenty of sleep last night because their eye had improved enough to totally destroy the bridge by two direct hits. Since there wasn't a target to aim at any more, the boys dispersed the rest of their bombs in woods that gave evidence of having gun positions.

After the bombing they proceeded on to the recce mission over the assigned area. Only things observed were several trucks marked with Red Crosses. On return the boys reported that this area was very heavily defended by flak guns, worse than any they had experienced so far.

After the 395th mission we went on 1 hour alert. This is the way we stood until the middle of the afternoon when the 396th was detailed to go out and dive bomb a spiderweb of roads. Mission was uneventful, results of the bombing were excellent with 90% hits were smakk on the target. Planes returned immediately from the target landing back at the base at 1722. It is interesting to note that these missions last only an hour and a half on the average, this is a far cry from the missions used to fly from England which lasted as long as 3 hours of actual engine time.

All Squadrons managed to get in three missions even with threatening weather conditions. Another ~~point~~ point of interest is we fly missions with weather conditions that would have caused us to scrub a job back in England. Remarks have been passed that they have been saving all their bad weather for the invasion, and as it is usually said when you are new to a strange country "This is unusual weather for this time of the year".....!!!!!!!

The 397th last, but not least, took ~~on~~ ~~the~~ mission, to dive bomb a road bridge near enemy lines. They must have had a trying day sitting around waiting

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5 July 1944 (continued)

because results were very poor. No bombs fell on the bridge and it wasn't damaged to any effect. All bombs fell in the immediate area of the bridge. On the way home several tanks were strafed with undetermined results. All planes were home at 1847.

6 July 1944

A day of rest and relaxation for the pilots, but one of unreserved work for the men and officers of headquarters. A release until daybreak on the 7th had come in about 2000 last night giving us all day to work. Needless to say it was very welcome, every thing was in a chaos, maps and papers were all over the office. Due to the quickness in which a briefing would come up, information had to be gotten for dissemination almost at once. Briefing maps were put in order, photo maps were arranged so the right one could be found in a moments notice. Call boards were made for S-2 and S-3 sections to make notification of squadrons easier. At the close of the day we tip-toes out of the office, fearfully lest by creating a slight breeze we would destroy a good days work.

7 July 1944

Things started popping early this morning. After the nice rest we had been given yesterday we were expected to be on the ball. In the course of the day our boys flew six missions, two per squadron. The types of missions were dive bombing, strafing, and armed recce.

The 397th was first squadron off this morning on a dive bombing job, target: a concentration of enemy vehicles. The field order stated that they were to be bombed and then strafed. They had just finished bombing and the first flight was going down when the controller called in and warned the pilots that there were E/A in the vicinity. 12 plus E/A attacked suddenly as they were going down, then breaking off and heading back into the clouds. We came out on the debit side of the ledger losing two fine boys, F/O A. J. Cleever and Capt. E. M. Potter. F/O Cleever was attacked and destroyed by an E/A and Capt. Potter was last seen attacking a 190 head on. The Group will miss these two fine boys. Our claims are only one 190 damaged by Lt. John P. Feltz.

For their second mission they were given another dive bombing mission, this time on a gun emplacement. This time the job went off without event. The boys took plenty of time and planted their bombs right on the red smoke marker. Results were excellent, the smoke marker was blown out. Very little strafing was carried out, Major Hendricks destroyed one staff car and a truck after which they came home and landed at 1417.

The 396th was the second squadron up this morning, 12 of their P-47s took off on a dive bombing mission. They never had a chance to carry out their assigned task however, on the way to the target, they were jumped by 6 to 8 190s causing them to jettison their bombs over the combat area. Claims for the encounter are 1-0-2, Lt. H. Olson and Lt. Howie teaming up to down one 190, while Major Sparks got one damaged and Capt. Meyers and Lt. Benton damaged another. The E/A then broke off and our boys returned to the strip landing at 1044.

For their second mission they were given another dive bombing job on another target, this one to be a gun emplacement. This mission went off entirely without event. Results of the bombing were excellent, 90 per cent of the bombs landed in the smoke marked area.

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8 July 1944 (continued)

First target for the 395th was a strong point near the enemy lines. 11 p-47's took off at 0905 loaded with 2--500 lb. bombs, one under each wing. The mission was flown without event. Results were very good with marked areas completely blotted out after bombing. Several horse drawn wagons were seen in the town of St. Martin, but were not attacked. Strafing results were one truck destroyed.

Second mission for the 395th was one the boys all enjoy going on. They were given no specific task except to look for targets of opportunity. First target attacked was a marshalling yard at St. Martin, and the rest of the bombs were dropped on roads filled with traffic. Results of bombing is undetermined. Lt. Erwin M. Pascal was seen to bail out of his plane after he had called in his ship was on fire. Since no e/a were in the vicinity it is thought this was due to flak. Lt. Pascal will be missed as he was well-liked by his fellow men. This was the only event in an otherwise routine mission, the rest of the planes were back at 1725.

9 July 1944

Another full day for the officers and men of the Group. It turned out to be one of planes taking off and landing, briefings being held, missions taking form and being scrubbed. Due to bad weather conditions it isn't possible to fly as many missions that are scheduled. It is almost possible to say that the weather holds the fate of the pilots flying or not in the palm of its hand.

Results of the five separate missions today varied from good to excellent. Targets were the usual ground-support installations, gun emplacements, strong points, and tank and troop concentrations. The 397th and 395th got in two missions a-piece and the 396th followed with one. Strafing claims were few, convoys of military vehicles are not as frequent as they used to be. Claims for the day were: tanks, 1-0-3, M/T's 2-0-0. No enemy aircraft were encountered on any of the missions but there was plenty of molesting flak, mostly light AA fire.

The ultimate in publicity was attained by this Group when a story appeared in the July 9th edition of the Yank magazine depicting the part this outfit played in the battle for Cherbourg. Enclosed as a supporting document is the entire story. (Air Support for the 79th) Supporting Document Number one.

10 July 1944

Only one mission was flown today and this by the 395th. Bad weather kept the rest of the Group grounded all day, clearing up only once to allow the 395th to perform an armed recon in the immediate area south of St. Lo. The boys spotted a target and dive-bombed it with unobserved results, reason being there was so much light flak firing at them, all they wanted to do was get away from there. No enemy aircraft were seen and flak was light intense heavy. Upon return from this mission the boys waited around for a release or another mission, but nothing came up so the boys called it a day and headed for the sack or the movies. General "Comments" from the boys run like, "slow day" or "pretty soft".

Because of many requests, classes were started tonite for the serious study of the French language. The group has two interpreters attached to it and they are especially proficient in French and German. The beginners class is given

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10 July 1944 (continued)

by S/Sgts. Levesque and Gasrud. The advance class for those who have had a little French is taught by Capt. Donald M. Cleary, Group Chaplain.

An interesting sidelight on the "Sky Pilot" came out today when a clipping brought to light a fact that Chaplain Cleary had said the first Mass in a little village west of the strip. Being especially proficient in the French language he has no trouble in giving his sermon in both French and English, for the benefit of the G.I.s and the French civilians who attend the service.

11 July 1944

Four separate missions today! The 397th led with one dive bombing mission and one armed recon, while the 396th and 395th flew one armed recon each. The routine is different around here, everyone sits around waiting for the weather to break so they can fly. The boys are briefed on a mission early in the morning, then they wait around half a day before the ceiling breaks up enough so they can stand up without hitting their heads on the clouds.

Results of the bombing varied from good to excellent. Some of the targets hit were a concentration of tanks at a road junction, three small railroad M/Ys and troop convoys. There were no enemy aircraft sighted on any of the missions, but the 397th lost one fine pilot, Capt. Joseph Marini, who has been with the Group since activation. He was seen to bail out of his ship when it caught fire from Flak. Lt. Horlacker followed him down and saw him walk away in the company of two men. They could not be identified as friendly or enemy.

The 396th and 395th mission went off without event. No E/A were sighted and there was little flak fired at them. Both missions were routine, planes took off, performed the missions and came home again. Only strafing claim for the day was one truck destroyed by Major Sparks.

The first Red Cross club in France opened tonight for the members of the Group and Squadrons. Also this afternoon the first doughnuts made on French ground were made by Miss Florence Reed and her assistant Miss Helen O'Hara. Lt. Col. F. S. Perego and Capt. R. E. Leary, the first pilots to officially land in France were on hand to eat the first doughnuts. The club will be open for off duty hours, for the EM of the Group, it will be a place to relax, write letters, listen to the radio and to drink a cup of coffee before going to bed.

12 July 1944

After completing the mission yesterday a teletype came in releasing us for maintenance and training until daylight on the 13th, giving us a chance to relax and get things straightened out after the hectic days prior to this one. Targets were gone over, missions brought up to date. The stat section caught up on its "Oprep A" reports of preceding days. The communications section continued to change its wiring set up for the Group, installing new lights, telephones and power units. They set up a German power unit, one that had been taken after the fall of Cherbourg. The S-1 section continued to get in our hair by bringing all kinds of distractions up for us to do more paper work on. The S-2 section threatened to go crazy when upon arrival at the office found three bundles of maps to be sorted out, listed, and filed in the rack. A new briefing map was prepared by S/Sgt. Nazzaro, who is now cursing the lost feeling in his thumb caused by pressing tacks into tough plywood board. The

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12 July 1944 (continued)

Special Service section asking for suggestions on how to set up a new PX so that every man in the group will get the same amount of rations. They are sweating out the arrival of PFC Earl New who is off getting the new film for the night's movie. It will be possible to answer the million and one guys who come in and want to know the name of the picture. All in all it is a quiet and routine day for all concerned, things go on as usual, mission or no mission, released or not released.

Something new has been added--today a snack bar was set up in the Headquarters area near S-4 for the convenience of the Officers and Enlisted Men during working hours. Doughnuts and coffee are the main items, but specials are on the menu once in awhile too. Crackers with jam, canned peaches, and oranges are two of the main special items that have been on the menu since it opened. The bar is operated by donations of the men after they have come thru the pay line. The coffee dispenser is Cpl. Ed. Spahn, lately of the cooks kitchen and it is safe to say that he makes the best coffee in the ETO, any way the stuff tastes like coffee.

13 July 1944

Up early this morning for a briefing on a Group mission, the first in many a day. The targets were like those of days gone by before the invasion. We were to go out and bomb ~~the~~ and strafe railroads, RR bridges, rolling stock and embankments. The briefing was held at 0830 at which time we were given a 2 hour delay because of weather. This delay lengthened out until it lasted all morning and part of the afternoon up until 1448 when the 396th Squadron taxied out and took off in a cloud of dust. The next two squadrons took off at ten minute intervals, all to patrol the same railroad in Southern France on the Loire River. Not too much activity in railroad rolling stock was noted, but six locomotives were destroyed about 50 box cars were attacked with bombs and machine guns. Several of the cars were left burning and the tracks were thoroughly cut behind the cars. A bridge had been given as a primary target, but when it was reached it was found to have been bombed and destroyed. There were no enemy aircraft sighted on the mission and very little flak was seen. A lot of enemy activity was seen along roads and a few trucks were strafed and destroyed. The last plane was back at the strip and landed at 1730. The weather restricted any more activity for today. There was a solid overcast of 10/10s over the base and battle area.

Having expected Post Exchanges to be a thing of the past we were surprised one night while waiting in line at the mess hall to see signs about announcing that a PX would be in operation in the HQS. area, hours: 1800 to 2000, every evening. Material for the venture was brought over from England with the second echelon by the Special Service section with the help of the Executive Officer, Major L. Gorrel. Supplies may be limited but it thought that there would be enough to fill the needs for about two weeks at the most.

14 July 1944

We were to perform another Group mission this morning, all pilots were assembled in the briefing room to go over the target tours when Capt. M. D. Henry, Assistant Operations Officer, bounced into the briefing tent with an urgent request mission, target: to bomb artillery observation post in a church. The 395th was scheduled to take care of this little detail. The weather was by no means suitable for bombing, there was almost a 10/10s cloud coverage with a few occasional holes. The bombing was done thru these holes with fairly good results. Direct hits by 8 bombs

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14 July 1944 (continued)

were observed to drop on the courtyard inflicting damage on the church. 4 bombs were dropped on a crossroads with unobserved results. No enemy aircraft were encountered and there was a little flak thrown up. All planes were down at 1132.

The 397th and 396th were held on the ground because of the weather until about 1100 when it cleared sufficiently to allow them to take off on railroad patrol. The 397th attacked the northern marshalling yard at Chateaudun because it looked like a likely target. It was crowded with box cars and goods wagons. After bombing there were many cars on fire and some were seen to explode. One oil car was seen to be on fire, large clouds of heavy black smoke were seen to come up from the car.

Meanwhile the 396th started their patrol on the same railroad going from north to south. The cloud coverage was so bad that no good targets could be found. When finally one hole did open up in the clouds they bombed the tracks with fair results. A direct hit was noted on the "T" in the tracks east of Veneuil. After bombing the boys made a fighter sweep to the east and north and returned to base. NO E/A were encountered and flak was only experienced at one plane.

The 395th got in their second mission today, taking off at 1225 to patrol their section of the railroad. However due to the weather and solid overcast the briefed target could not be found. The boys flew on course looking for holes in the clouds and targets of possible interest. The entire bomb load was dropped on the track and it was cut in several places. About 59 goods wagons were seen in a small marshalling yard and these were strafed. About 20 of them were destroyed and left burning. No enemy A/C were encountered, the skies were clear of any type planes.

15 July 1944

We were given another Group mission for this morning. After yesterday's railroad patrolling it was a welcome respite to go out after targets of different nature. We were scheduled to dive bomb one of our old targets, a railroad bridge over the Seine River at Mantes Cassicourt. Briefing was held at 0730 after which we were held grounded the entire day until 1951 when the weather finally cleared enough to allow 36 of our P-47s to take off. The boys arrived over the target at 2100. Three bridges were picked as targets and the boys went after them. Results of the bombing was difficult to observe, because of heavy smoke over the area. Two of the bridges were destroyed and one severely damaged. All planes then returned to base, landing at 2210, just in time because fog was moving in so fast that in five minutes the entire field was reduced to zero visibility. No enemy A/C were sighted and flak fire experienced was vicious, three of our planes were damaged by AA fire.

16 July 1944

Briefing again this morning at 0800 for another Group mission, the target was the same as yesterday's, a railroad bridge near Mantes-Cassicourt. Altho' the briefing was held early in the morning the boys were held on the ground until late in the afternoon because of the bad weather. Our luck with the weather has been bad the last three days, it has been impossible to fly because of the solid overcast with few breaks. It is noticeable that the boys want to go out and go after Jerry positions and every once in awhile you catch them looking into the sky for signs of a breakup. Questions by the dozens are thrown at "Cloudy Joe" (Lt. Newton Steers) for information about the weather. With all the talking that is done about it it still stays around putting the "frickin'" missions that are planned.

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16 July 1944 (continued)

A break came along about 1800 giving our boys the chance they were looking for. At 1826 the first Squadron, 397th was taking off followed by the 396th and 395th each at a ten minute interval. Upon arrival over the target they had to look for targets of opportunity, because our nemesis the weather had again smarted things up. There was a solid cloud cover over the entire target area so the boys went out for targets of opportunity. Targets attacked were railroad bridges, military installations, marshalling yards and railroad tracks. Results of the bombing on these targets of opportunity were excellent in all cases, one bridge was destroyed by direct hits, cars in marshalling area were hit and left burning railroad tracks were cut thoroughly.

No enemy aircraft were encountered by any of the squadrons on their missions. There was plenty of anti-aircraft fire, five of our planes received battle damage. All planes and pilots returned safely, the last one landing at 2020, after which we were released until daybreak on the following day.

17 July 1944

The weather is still restricting operations this morning, because of having a nice day yesterday it is too hazy to see, visibility is about one mile. About noon things cleared up sufficiently to enable the Group to fly 3 missions per squadron, and one Group mission, making four missions in all. The first one up this morning was the 396th, taking off at 1231 to dive bomb troop concentrations, vehicles in woods, and to strafe traffic jam if any at a cross roads. Results of the bombing was good, hits were obtained in the target area and the bombs were well concentrated. Two trucks were strafed by Major Sparks flight leaving them on the road slightly damaged. No enemy aircraft were sighted and all the planes were back at the field at 1334.

The 395th was the next squadron off at 1244 to dive bomb gun positions and a gun park. The mission was absolutely uneventful, being flown as briefed. Results were excellent with all the bombs landing in the east and south east portion of the woods. All planes were back at 1348, having encountered no enemy aircraft. None of our planes were damaged by flak which was light and heavy intermixed.

The 397th's mission was a little more exciting. 12 of their planes took off at 1431 on an armed recon mission. Strafing was carried out on medium tanks, staff cars, jeeps, soldiers, and also bombing was carried out on these targets plus a bridge. Results of the strafing and bombing were several tanks knocked out, staff car and jeep destroyed, and 20 near misses on these targets. The bridge was damaged by near misses.

Lt. Rudolph Marko encountered and destroyed one 190 southwest of Lt. Io. It was the first ~~time~~ time that an enemy aircraft was seen carrying a belly tank. This brings the total of planes destroyed to 32 and 2 probables and 18 damaged. All planes were back and landed at 1556.

The last mission for the day was a Group mission involving planes from each of the squadrons going out to dive bomb strong points and road junctions. The mission was uneventful being flown as briefed. Results of the bombing was excellent, hits were obtained on all of the targets and there was a good concentration of bombs. Several of the targets that were marked by red smoke by the Ground Support Party were completely blotted out. No enemy aircraft were encountered it was a purely routine mission, a matter of flying ~~over~~ the job and returning to the base.

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18 July 1944

Today was a full day for the pilots and officers of the Group. There were seven operational missions flown today, six of them were out to dive bomb bridges over the Orne River and one was an escort job to a B-26 that was dropping leaflets. Results of the bombing were generally excellent. Two bridges were completely destroyed and 4 others were severely damaged. Several bombs were dropped on other targets such as cross roads and road junctions. Direct hits were obtained on these targets. The 396th lost a fine boy when Lt. John Spencer was shot down by flak over his target on the bomb run. The pilots did not know who it was that was shot down until upon their return when it was found that Lt. Spencer was NYR. He will be sorely missed by the officers and men of the squadron and a great deal of hope is held out for his return.

Quite a bit of excitement was seen to take place down by the S-4 sections tent this morning and upon investigation was found to be that the boys in the area were hot on the trail of some small animal, species unknown. After chasing the animal around the water trailer for about 15 minutes Sgt. Hutchins of the medical section pounced upon it as it came out from under a tent, by dropping his helmet on it. Leaving the helmet under the guard of the men that were watching the proceedings he set out in search of a receptacle to lodge the "critter" in. When he came back and the can he had procured was in place everyone stood around with bated breath waiting for him to take the helmet off. Slowly but surely he lifted it only to look under it and see that it was entirely empty. A shout of laughter was lifted into the air when Sgt. Hutchins lifted his face with a look of shock, surprise, and disappointment. It is feared that he will never live it down, because every where he goes he is known as "The Hunter" by those who witnessed the show.

19 July 1944

The only operations scheduled for today was an escort job to a C-78. They were to R/V ~~of the~~ over the field and after taking off and making the circle around the field they couldn't locate the C-78. The boys flew the briefed course until land-fall out where the cloud ceiling became too low to continue. At one place the clouds were down as far as 100 feet from the water. The boys then returned to the base at 1401. They encountered no enemy aircraft and no flak. All other operations were scrubbed for the day because of the bad weather. Visibility was almost nil, and there was a solid 10/10s cloud coverage.

20 to 23th July 1944

The weather finally broke today, the "Rains Came" and with a finality that looked as tho' they would be here for a long time. The perimeter strips and the taxi ways are a sea of mud and it is impossible to taxi a plane thru it. Jeeps and trucks passing along the side make deep ruts and get stuck firmly in the mud causing more chaos. The rain finally stopped on the 23th but the strip is still in too bad a shape to use. We have been reloaded for maintenance and training these three days, and in all the offices routine matter is being taken care of. The officers in S-2 and S-3 are working on something that is very secret and is expected to break in the next couple of days. While it is raining you can walk down the paths leading to the various foxholes and hear nice epithets being hurled into the air because of a slight matter of water running into the hole and making it a little wet. The day after the rain about 50% of the men have their things out of the hole and are making new arrangements for keeping it dry. Some dig their holes wider, others longer and all are out looking for stray pieces of canvas to cover up the entrances to the tents. Work was started on recreational facilities for the men of Group Headquarters. With the

PAGE TWELVE

20 to 23th July 1944 (continued)

assistance of the engineers that are maintaining the strip a ball diamond is being cut out of the turf in a field back of Headquarters. A softball team has been organized and the men are out working on the field to get it in shape for their first game Tuesday, 25 July 1944, with the Group Headquarters officers. Evening came around and with also the weather man who gave us a promise of no rain but still a few clouds for the next day so maybe tomorrow we will go back to being operational.

It was learned today that we will have another Squadron operating with our Group. Advance elements of the 406th Fighter Group, the 513th Squadron have come over here and will be operating off our strip until theirs is ready for them. The Group uses P-47s, but have a strange feature about it. They carry rockets besides the usual eight machine guns and are also equipped with bomb racks. This Group will only be with us for a few days but they will fly a few missions off this strip.

24 July 1944

This morning was heralded by most important and secret operations. In the S-2 section maps that had been specially prepared were brought out into the open and it was found that all the little lines on them are for. The briefing maps were fixed up specially with all kinds of meaningless symbols and lines. Two briefings were called one for 1045 and the other 1130. Colonel G. L. Meyers took the stand for the first one and gave out the story of what was cooking. The details to the big show about to begin were given and the part that Air power was to take in the mission. Out on the dispersal areas tractors are being hitched to the planes and they are all being towed to the end of the main runway, marshalling there until take off time. The strip is in too bad a shape for the planes to be able to taxi out of the runway.

The first briefing was over and the pilots of the 397th were assembled in the briefing tent for the second one and it was almost over when Capt. Henry walked in and told us that the show was completely scrubbed. It was a little hard to believe that it wasn't going to take place because heavies had been flying over our heads for about three quarters of an hour. Considerable disappointment was expressed by the pilots who were counting on being in on the ~~big~~ goings on and now they are a little afraid that it won't come off now for some time.

About 15 minutes later Capt. Henry came in and told us that we would go back to the original schedule for today. An operations order had come in during the night and we were to revert back to this instead of flying in support of the big drive.

Starting at 1447 the 396th took off on their first mission. The Group flew six missions, two per squadron. The last plane landed at 2130. Targets were marshalling yards at Le Mans and Granville, road bridges and an ammunition dump at Livarot. Two escort missions to B-26s and A-20s were flown. Results of the dive bombing were generally very good. Large fires were started and much smoke was seen. There were several large explosions seen in the marshalling yards at Granville. The only enemy aircraft encountered were by the 396th Squadron when 7 190s and 109s made a short pass and then veered off. The boys chased them southward but never caught up to them. Some strafing was carried out and two M/Ts were destroyed. Flak encountered on the missions was generally vicious and several of our planes received battle damage. It was a tired bunch of pilots who hit the sack that night, all were getting ready for a big day tomorrow.

To night inaugurated the first ball game on the Group Headquarters diamond.

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PAGE THIRTEEN

24 July 1944 (continued)

The Enlisted Man took on the officers in a 9 inning tussel that turned into a rout. After the third inning when the EM got started and scored four runs to go into the lead. The officers got two in their half of the inning and again in the next inning. The EM had racked up a couple of hits to bring the score up to 8-4 and in the 7 and 8 they weally got going by racking up a couple of hits to bring the score to 11-4 and that is how the game ended. Batteries for the officers was Lt. Regan, pitching, Capt. Quinlan, backstop, For the EM M/Sgt. Conder behind the plate and the twirler was Sgt. Michalak.

25 July 1944

When arriving at the office this morning we were surprised to hear the big show planned for yesterday and then scrubbed was on again today. It had been thought that it wouldn't be able to work today because of the bombers going over yesterday and giving it all away, but there they ere again today. For a solid two hours heavy bombers, medium bombers, and fighter bombers passed over our heads toward the front and as far back as this strip the thud and shaking tremors of the bombs hitting the ground could be felt by the men who stood outside watching the planes flying overhead. Capt. R. E. Leary held a special briefing for those who hadn't heard the entire story. Our boys were being held on the ground for special request missions by the army. The first mission came off at 1226 when the 395th squadron took off to dive bomb a fuel dump. The bombing results for this first mission were very good, 22 bombs were laid down the length of the target area and two were near missed. Not much could be seen because of the smoke of exploding bombs and burning fuel. Pilots observations show that the roads leading south were choked with civilians trying to evacuate the area under attack.

A total of vie missions in all were flown by the Group. The 395th flew 2, the 397th flew 2, and the 396th flew one. The last mission was a combination of the 395th and 397th who went out to bomb a road junction with delayed fuses, from 1 hour to 12 hours delay. The type of bombs fusing was split up in the squadrons and some instant fuses were carried along with the delayed. ~~THE~~ Results of the bombing couldn't be ascertained because of the types of fuses used. Several of the road junctions that had been given as targets could not be located because of darkness and this resulted in bombing of ohters than the one briefed for.

Other targets for the day was an ammunition train and another fuel dump. The 397th and the 396th took over htese chores and had uneventful missions. No enemy air craft were encountered on ~~any~~ any of the missions flown today. The train was thought not to contain any ammunition and the fuel dump could nt be found at the place it was supposed to be. The boys bombed and strafed the areas and then returned to the base doing a little strafing on the way, damaging two halftrakks that were holding up civilians on a road junction. The last plane down for the night landed at 2230. Seven other planes landed on strip A-2 because of darkness.

Besides the missions flown by our Squadrons, two others were flown by the 513th Squadron of the 406th Group that had joined us for a few days to work with us. These planes are armed with rockets and their job was mostly strafing of tanks and armored vehicles. In their two missions they destroyed several tanks, M/Ts, armored cars, pill boxes, flak installations, and staff cars. Generally the strafing results on the targets attacked were very good. The encountered no enemy aircraft but several of their ships were damaged by flak and small arms fire due to the low level they carry out their attack. This ~~will~~ will be with us until the rest of their Group arrives and their strip ~~is~~ their use.

SECRET

PAGE FOURTEEN

26 July 1944

Today this Group flew missions in conjunction with the drive the Army started yesterday. Our job was to fly cover for the four columns of advancing armor. A total of 111 aircraft were dispatched from the Group, an average of 27 planes per squadron. These planes went out in 4 ship flights and were over the armored columns continually from 0853 to 2208. The initial job for the boys was to provide ~~XXXX~~ escort, and a close reconnaissance for the tanks that were advancing against German armor. We were assisted on these missions by aircraft of other Groups. All planes carried two 500 lb. G. P. bombs besides the usual eight machine guns. All types of targets were bombed, tanks, gun positions, strong points, artillery spotting positions in churches. Most of the targets bombed were targets of opportunity. Only a couple were called in by the Ground Support Party.

Two of our best pilots are MIA after the close of today's session. Capt. Deon D. Meyers, 396 Squadron, struck some wires with his plane while strafing. He was last seen to hit some trees, his left wing came off, the plane turned upside down and exploded. Capt. Robert S. Anderson, 397th Squadron, was investigating some tanks when hit by small arms fire, because no flak was seen. His plane billowed out white smoke and it dived straight into the ground and exploded. Lt. Col. Douglas CO, 396th Squadron, bailed out of his plane when he was hit by flak. He landed in friendly territory and returned to the strip late tonight. Col. Douglas was wounded slightly in his left hand.

The 513 Squadron of the 406th Group was also working with us on these missions. A total of 40 aircraft were dispatched from this squadron. Their planes are armed with high velocity rockets to be used extensively for strafing of tanks and other armored vehicles. One pilot is missing after the close of the day's operations. He was believed to be hit by flak and went down somewhere in the immediate battle area. No chute was seen. Total strafing claims for the 513th are 11-6-12 tanks, and 1-1-0 halftracks.

The S-2 section was increased in force this morning by the addition of a new officer, Lt. William Blagen, who had arrived to replace Lt. J. P. Hoffman who had transferred to Command. Lt. Blagen was appointed Assistant Group S-2 and Historical Officer.

A teletype from General McCauley, Commanding General, 70th Fighter Wing came in this evening commending the men of the Groups under his command for the part they played in today's operations. The attached document tells the story.

Copy of teletype, Y317-5D, Supporting Document #2.

27 July 1944

Today was a repeat performance of yesterday's activities. Our Group provided tank column cover for the 2 Armored Division by maintaining 4 ship flights over the area for a time length of 30 minutes. Planes were taking off and landing all day long. Our boys would stay over the tank columns until relieved and if they still had bombs targets of opportunity would be attacked. All kinds of targets were attacked but the bombs were dropped mostly on tank convoys, road junctions, and artillery observation ~~xxx~~ posts. In most cases the Air Support Party would be called for an OK before attacking any targets. About 30-35 190s and 109s were encountered on today's missions. Total claims on enemy aircraft are 2-0-3. Lt. Starn and Lt. Caldwell of the 395th getting one destroyed 109 and 190 apiece and Lt. Caldwell two damaged 109s. Lt. Brown claims the third 190. Two of our boys are still ~~missing~~ after today's activities. Lt. G.Y.

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PAGE FIFTEEN

27 July 1944 (continued)

Greene of the 396th Squadron was seen to bomb a tank, pull up to 3000 feet and then bail out. He was then seen to walk away from his chute. Lt. R. G. Bork was seen to bomb a column of tanks, pull up to 1000 feet and bail out. He was last seen to walk unharmed into a hedge. Capt. J. J. McLackhan was seen to bail out after his plane was hit by flak. He returned to the Squadron late this evening uninjured.

Total strafing claims for the day are: Tanks, 18-8-36, armored cars, 26-2-1, M/Ts 51-2-35. The past two days have been unparalleled in the history of our Group. We were told that our duty over here would be to fly close support to the Army and we have found this to be true to the Nth degree, much more than we thought possible. Regardless of weather our boys fly two and three missions per day in direct support. All targets bombed are first picked by the Ground support party who relay this information to us via radio and then our boys bomb on their say so. An armed recon is kept up at all times to aid the Army. The pilots strafe anything that may be an enemy asset. To date we have destroyed well over 2000 M/Ts and over 50 tanks and other armored vehicles. In the air we are the highest scoring P-47s Group in the ETO with a record of 30 destroyed, 3 probables, and 18 damaged.

28 July 1944

Early briefing again this morning at 0500, but our luck with the weather was losing its grip again. We were held on the ground all morning until noon when an ops order came in giving us the job of escorting and maintaining top cover for B-26s and A-20s. All three Squadrons were given this job, taking off at intervals of 45 minutes. They R/E with the bombers, escorted them to the target, maintained cover during bombing, escorted them back and left them returning to the strip and landing. No enemy aircraft or flak of any kind was encountered. Remarks from several of the boys call attention that it was just another milk run to them.

There were no more missions scheduled for today. Some of the boys hit the sack, others relaxed by going to the movies and others just sat around and did a little "hangar flying". A release for maintenance of the runway and landing strip perimeter came in about 1830 giving us two days to get things in shape. We would have no missions until the 31st.

29 - 30 July 1944

Early last evening Capt. Leary called over the speaker from the Ops truck with the news that we would be released for maintenance of airplanes and more especially the strip and taxi ways. Because of the bad rain about a week ago the perimeter had been in bad shape and almost impossible to taxi planes back and forth from the dispersal areas to the main runway. On these two days the Engineers were out all day rolling up the wire, grading, filling holes and generally repairing the ravages of rain. In the "Ops" sections it was mainly a couple of days of relaxation for the officers and men. Only routine work was carried out. New briefing maps were prepared as the ground forces moved forward. On Sunday night a softball game was played between the officers and EM. It was played primarily to give the officers who were unable to play at other times when we are on operations. It was enjoyable time, the EM won again by a score of 11 to 5. Generally the men relaxed and rested up for a hectic couple of days because tomorrow we go back on SOFS."

31 July 1944

This morning when arriving at the office we found that we were placed on a one hour

SECRET

PAGE SIXTEEN

31 July 1944 (continued)

alert, and this is the way we stayed until 1400. Being today is payday the men are all walking around figuring how much money they will have to spend, if they could, after they had paid off debts and other things. After passing thru the pay line there are expressions of wonder on some of the mens faces because of questions being asked by Capt. Pendleton. The next thing you hear is "Where is so and so, he owes me some dough!"

On the operational side we flew three missions today, one per squadron. The 395th was first off and the other two squadrons came off at ten minute intervals. Their targets were fuel dumps near Rennes. Bombing results on the target were generally good, but they couldn't be sure of any observation because of heavy smoke. Nothing eventful occurred. There were no E/A encountered and flak was light and meager. Comments from the boys run like "Easy life," and "Just another milk run".

The end of July finds the Group firmly established on Advanced Landing Ground, site A-3, on the continent of Europe, and now flying the type of missions they had trained so long and hard for. As the month ends the situation looks pretty good with Allies driving ahead on every front. Every morning eager eyes turn to the maps in the ALO tent to see what progress has been made. Every one is looking forward to the coming months; its trials and errors, and with a fervant hope this war will be over soon!!!!

A M E N**SECRET**

CONTINUATION OF REAR ESCALON MOVEMENT FROM STATION 404, C. BOLTON, HANTS, ENGLAND.

1 July 1944

At 0230 this morning word came that the time had arrived. The second echelon was to move out bag and baggage for the long awaited trip to France. Word was relayed to the troops and they made a quick job eating breakfast, rolling their packs and preparing to leave. By 0730 we were in formation and on our way to the railroad station at Fullerton, a hike of about 3 miles. Despite the cumbersome heavy packs the jog was completed in jig time and everyone got to the station in good condition. We were loaded in the cars and packs were taken off and everything made ready for the ride. After the ride which lasted about 2½ hours we arrived at the city of Dorchester where we were loaded into trucks and taken to the marshalling yards. The men were bedded down in tents, ten men to a tent, and then off to a good supper. After supper some of them went to the show and others cleaned up in preparation for the trip across. Most of the men hit the sack to get a good nights sleep. The first part of our trip was accomplished and over with.

2 July 1944

After a restless night we were up early to greet a rainy morning. No definite word had come through as yet as to whether we would be leaving today or staying for a longer period. After lunch our rations were issued, one carton of cigarettes, candy, and K rations. About 1430 the word came, be packed and ready to go by 1715. Everything went off without a hitch, we were loaded into trucks and taken to the town of Weymouth where we were to embark for France. After the usual waiting in line for doughnuts which were being given to us by the ARC and life jackets, we were finally loaded on a ferry ship that took us out to our transport ship. On the ship we settled down to a sleepless nite and a rough trip which turned out to be better than expected.

3 July 1944

We arrived off the coast of France at 0900 this morning after a fairly rough trip. We waited on the boat until about 1300 hours until we were notified to file out into the landing barges. Needless to say, we were very much impressed by all the shipping in the harbor and the apparent results of D-Day blasting. Forming our group on top of a big hill, our CO, Capt. E. R. Pendleton, led us off the the transient area where we relieved ourselves of the packs and prepared to spend the night. Lady Luck was with us tho', Capt. Pendleton had managed to hitch a ride from a C-47 that was going to our strip and he procured transportation for us. After a short ride of about ½ hour we arrived at the strip and unloaded, took a roll call and found not one person missing after the trip, were taken to the assigned areas for the headquarters men told to set up our pup tents and to start digging our foxholes in the morning. After the tents had been put up and necessary things finished the men settled down to serious thought and the job ahead, what the future will bring only time will tell.

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The American 79th Division had fought its way to the base of a hill heavily fortified by the Germans, and had flowed around it toward the outskirts of Cherbourg. Jerry still used the position to pepper our rear, however, and that's where the fighter-bombers of the 9th AAF came into the picture, thereby setting up one of the better examples of ground-air coordination in this war.

By Sgt. BILL DAVIDSON
YANK Staff Correspondent

ON THE ROAD TO CHERBOURG (DELAYED)—*La Mere a Canards* is a gently sloping hill that dominates one of the secondary highways leading into the great French port of Cherbourg. The summit of the hill is 160 feet above sea level, and as you stand on its bald top, you can look to the north and see the rooftops of Cherbourg, obscured by overcast and the smoke of battle, four miles away.

Between the hill and the city are rolling French farms cut up into the usual little squares by the omnipresent hedgerows and drainage ditches. There is an occasional patch of woods and a gray stone farmhouse, and just in front of the city, another row of picturesque low hills. Before the war *La Mere a Canards* was a popular Sunday picnic ground for the people of Cherbourg. There was a charming clump of woods on the southwest slope of the hill, and on the edge of the woods a quaint little police station, where a few beneficent old *agents de police* held forth.

But *La Mere a Canards* isn't so beautiful any more. A bitter air-land battle was fought here two days ago, and now the hill is scarred by the tracks of many vehicles, and blackened by the blasts of combined weapons. The clump of woods and the quaint police station are destroyed. The only inhabitants of *La Mere a Canards* now are the dead. The slopes are dotted with the carcasses of cattle that stepped on mines or got in the line of fire. The cattle lie there on their backs, bloated beyond recognition, with their legs jutting stiffly into the air.

The Germans had heavily fortified *La Mere a Canards*. It was a typical minor hedgehog position, with three solid concrete gun positions set into the top of the hill. The Germans cut down the trees to give the .88-mm. guns an unobstructed field of fire in all directions. Then they surrounded the concrete positions with Spandaus and flak. The hill covered one of the three main approaches to Cherbourg.

The American 79th Division fought its way up to the base of *La Mere a Canards*, and then flowed around it to the outskirts of Cherbourg, four miles away. The hill was thus an isolated island of resistance behind our lines. A U. S. combat team was left behind to reduce it. The island of resistance proved tremendously troublesome, however. It was like a big super-sniper left in the rear to harass us. The Spandaus commanded the valley leading down



The smoke of battle rolls across Cherbourg peninsula as American ground forces, aided by aerial artillery, close in for the final assault to seize the vital port for the Allies.

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Our own 105 howitzers of the combat team opened up on *La Mere a Canards*, but the shells only bounced off the concrete walls of the emplacements. Elements of the infantry battalion attacked. The doughboys worked their way up the hill, past the dead cows, and went to work on the first concrete emplacements with rifles, BARs, flame throwers and demolition charges. The emplacement was knocked out. But the men had taken a lot of punishment from the cross-firing Spandaus, and they went down the hill again, carrying their wounded, and leaving their dead behind.

The battalion commander looked at his watch. It was 1500 hours. He reached for a field telephone to call Division headquarters.

AT 1700 hours, the phone rang in the operations tent of a Thunderbolt fighter-bomber group settled down in the dust at an air strip a few miles behind the lines. The group had just returned from

AIR SUPPORT

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its third mission of the day. The ships were already gassed up and checked, and Combat Operations had been informed that the group was ready to go again.

When the phone rang, Capt. Meredith Henry, of Philadelphia, answered it. The call was from Combat Ops. Henry took the message down almost automatically. He had just finished writing his report on the last mission, and he was tired. The voice on the other end of the line droned: "Grid location so-and-so. Time over target, 2100 hours. Two squadrons to attack strong point with 1,000-pound bombs—check—1,000-pound bombs. The target will be marked with smoke, fired from artillery on the ground. The leader is to call in by radio to ground. Our troops will be withdrawn 1,000 yards. That is all."

As Henry looked at the message, Col. Gilbert L. Meyers, of Milford, Iowa, the 27-year-old commander of the group, walked in. He looked puzzled. "Did you just get a mission from Combat Ops?" he said.

Henry handed over the order. The Colonel studied it. "Well, I just got a phone call from Command," he said. "This mission is hot. General Bradley requested it himself. It's a strong point that's raking our guys from the rear, and the General says we must use 1,000-pounders, otherwise we don't even nick the concrete."

He called in Lt. George Coburn, of Milburn, N. J., the armament officer. "Can we take off from this strip with 1,000-pounders?" the Colonel asked.

Coburn shook his head. "The strip is too new," he said. "The mesh will billow up in front of the planes on the take-off and catch the bombs from underneath."

"How about one bomb?" said the Colonel.

"Maybe," said Coburn.

The Colonel's armorer, Sgt. Earl Adamson, of Montevideo, Minnesota, watched the Colonel and Coburn approaching. He was sitting under the wing of the Colonel's P-47 munching a D-ration and writing a letter home. He stood up, scribbling a few last words as he rose.

"We're going to load one 1,000-pound bomb under the right wing," said Coburn.

Adamson laughed. He thought Coburn was kidding. Coburn wasn't kidding, however, and a short time later, the bomb had been jacked up and clamped under the wing.

Then, mouth open, Adamson stepped back to watch.

Col. Meyers got into the Thunderbolt, wobbled crazily down the runway and took off. The ship swung from side to side as if the Colonel were fighting the stick. Then the Thunderbolt headed out in the direction of the enemy lines, and Adamson and Coburn could hear the explosion from where the

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Colonel jettisoned the bomb in Jerry territory. In a few minutes, the Thunderbolt came flying back and landed. The Colonel stepped out. "No good," he said. He walked over to the line chief, M/Sgt. Joe Walker, who used to be a student at Appalachian State Teachers College, in Boone, North Carolina. "If we cut the fins of the bombs down a bit," the Colonel said, "do you think we'll have enough clearance to carry these 1,000-pounders under the belly, Joe?" Walker measured the distance. "Yes, sir," he said. "About 2½ inches off each fin ought to do it. But won't that affect the accuracy of the bomb?"

"Not from the height at which we're going to do this little job," said the Colonel.

The pilots sat around under a tree outside the squadron operations tent. They watched the group

"Ordinarily," he continued, "it would be a job for our heavy artillery to reduce the four-foot-thick concrete fortifications of this point. The ground commander in the field requested either artillery or air support, and it went all the way up to Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley, before it was decided to use dive bombers. That's us. If they used artillery, there would be danger of the shells going over the hill and hitting our own troops on the other side. Remember, we have the enemy surrounded here. He is behind our lines."

REINTHAL showed the pilots how to locate the target by following a road all the way up the peninsula. He told them how they were to take radioed directions from the ground and how the target would be marked for them in smoke. Then,

The Thunderbolts turned back to *La Mere a Canards*.

They recognized it almost immediately. From all around the target flares went up, identifying friendly troops. Col. Perego called the ground on the assigned radio channel. The Ground answered. "We will drop smoke on the target," it said. The pilots wheeled and watched for the smoke, which soon appeared right on the bald dome of *La Mere a Canards*.

Lt. Nolan was flying the Colonel's left wing. They put their noses down together and headed into the target from 2,000 to 800 feet. As they dived, the flak came up to meet them. Nolan took evasive action, and before he knew it, he had gone past *La Mere a Canards*. By the time he was in position for another run, he had to queue up and wait his turn. Everything was all mixed up there below the overcast. The Thunderbolts were milling around waiting for a crack at the target. And a squadron of Col. George Bickell's Mustangs, who were supposed to be flying top cover for the Thunderbolts, were down there, too, grabbing a look at the excitement.

Finally, Nolan's chance came again, and he made his run. He went down to 800, and dropped the heavy bomb. The whole target—200 yards square—was covered with thick, black smoke. Nolan watched his bomb strike through the smoke. A tremendous red explosion licked up at him. Nolan pulled up and four or five bursts of heavy 88-mm. flak followed him. The Germans had elevated the 88s for air defense now. They'd never get them zeroed on the roads again. That took time and observers, neither of which the Nazis had any more.

Lt. Hayes was one of the last to bomb. There still was a lot of light flak when he went in. He saw it coming up at him, but it was too late to avoid the stuff, so he scooted down low in his cockpit and flew through it. He got through all right and dropped his thousand-pounder. He couldn't see a thing except the smoke now. He knew the concrete was being hit, however, because every once in a while there would be a puff of white smoke among all the black. Also, in the debris through which his plane was flying, he could make out chunks of masonry and bits of what seemed to be gun metal. None of the 88s were firing now, and even the light flak was dying away.

The Thunderbolts flew up through the overcast, reassembled into battle formation, and headed for home.

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FOR THE 79TH

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Suddenly, Capt. Thomas Montag came out of the Operations tent. The pilots clustered around him. Montag posted the mission in chalk on a blackboard leaning against the outside of the tent.

THE pilots rushed away to see their crew chiefs and check their planes and equipment. Briefing was in 45 minutes.

Capt. David Reintal, of Cleveland, Ohio, the Assistant S-2 officer, prepared the briefing. First, he checked the grid coordinates and located the target on a big map. The target was *La Mere a Canards*. Then he took out a big book of aerial photographs of the Cherbourg area and found a picture of *La Mere a Canards*. After that, he sat down to prepare his briefing speech to the pilots.

The briefing was an interesting one. "Gentlemen," Capt. Reintal said. "We have a tough job ahead of us today." He showed the pilots the map and photograph of *La Mere a Canards* with a Velopticon, which projected the pictures on a screen.

with a final word of caution about our own troops just a thousand yards away all around the hill, the briefing was over.

The mission took off at 2027 hours. It was led by Lt. Col. Frank Perego, the Deputy Group Commander, who four years ago was a sales representative in Kansas City. The 24 Thunderbolts, kicking up huge clouds of dust, roared down the metal strip runway one at a time, and climbed into the air. They quickly picked up speed and elevation, and formed themselves into the spread-out, line-abreast battle formation they have adopted since they arrived in France. The sun was shining. But a haze was beginning to rise from the green fields and torn-up roads. A mile from the field, the haze became an overcast.

The Thunderbolts headed into the overcast and went up to 6,000 feet. A few minutes later, they burst out of the overcast again, down to 2,000. They were over the target, and the Battle of Cherbourg was spread out below them.

Our own lines were clearly visible—intricate trench systems jammed with soldiers, who seemed to be just waiting. The roads back from the front were clogged with vehicles, long convoys going in both directions. A big artillery duel was in progress, and the pilots could see the gun flashes of our Long Toms and 105s, and then the puff of smoke and dust as the big shells landed in the Cherbourg dock area. There was lots of light flak coming up at them from Cherbourg. The city was enveloped in smoke. An occasional tall building protruded from the smoke. Huge fires raged at scattered intervals.



Colonel jettisoned the bomb in Paris territory. In a few minutes, the Thunderbolt came flying back and landed. The Colonel stepped out. "No good," he said. He walked over to the line chief, M/Sgt. Joe Walker, who used to be a student at Appalachian State Teachers College, in Boone, North Carolina. "If we cut the fins of the bombs down a bit," the Colonel said, "do you think we'll have enough clearance to carry these 1,000-pounders under the belly, Joe?" Walker measured the distance. "Yes, sir," he said. "About 24 inches off each fin ought to do it. But won't that affect the accuracy of the bomb?"

"Not from the height at which we're going to do this little job," said the Colonel.

The pilots sat around under a tree outside the squadron operations tent. They watched the group

"Obviously," he continued, "it would be a job for our heavy artillery to reduce the four-foot thick concrete fortifications of this point. The ground commander in the field requested either artillery or air support, and it went all the way up to Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley, before it was decided to use dive bombers. That's us. If they used artillery, there would be danger of the shells going over the hill and hitting our own troops on the other side. Remember, we have the enemy surrounded here. He is behind our lines."

REINTHAL showed the pilots how to locate the target by following a road all the way up the peninsula. He told them how they were to take radioed directions from the ground and how the target would be marked for them in smoke. Then,

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The Thunderbolts turned back to *La Mere a Canards*.

They recognized it almost immediately. From all around the target flares went up, identifying friendly troops. Col. Perego called the ground on the assigned radio channel. The ground answered. "We will drop smoke on the target," it said. The pilots wheeled and watched for the smoke, which soon appeared right on the bald dome of *La Mere a Canards*.

Lt. Nolan was flying the Colonel's left wing. They put their noses down together and headed into the target from 2,000 to 800 feet. As they dived, the flak came up to meet them. Nolan took evasive action, and before he knew it, he had gone past *La Mere a Canards*. By the time he was in position for another run, he had to queue up and wait his turn. Everything was all mixed up there below the overcast. The Thunderbolts were milling around waiting for a crack at the target. And a squadron of Col. George Bickell's Mustangs, who were supposed to be flying top cover for the Thunderbolts, were down there, too, grabbing a look at the excitement.

Finally, Nolan's chance came again, and he made his run. He went down to 800, and dropped the heavy bomb. The whole target—200 yards square—was covered with thick, black smoke. Nolan watched his bomb strike through the smoke. A tremendous red explosion licked up at him. Nolan pulled up and four or five bursts of heavy 88-mm. flak followed him. The Germans had elevated the 88s for air defense now. They'd never get them zeroed on the roads again. That took time and observers, neither of which the Nazis had any more.

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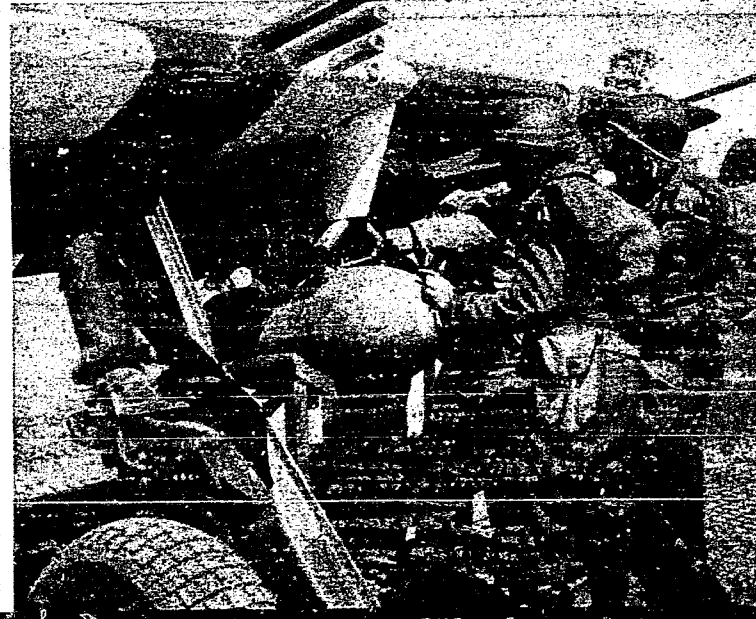
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Resting at an advanced American landing strip in France, Thunderbolt pilots snatch a hasty chow before renewing their assaults against the German lines.



Something new is being added to this P-47 in France with the mechanics ready to grab their carbines in case of a German assault.

COPY OF TWX Y317-5D 70th Fighter Wing; COMMENDATION

EVERY MAN IN YOUR ORGANIZATION IS TO BE COMMEDED FOR THE PART HE PLAYED INTODAYS OPERATIONS. DUE TO SUPERIOR LEADERSHIP, AND AGGRESSIVENESS ON THE PART OF EVERY PILOT. THE PART OF AIR SUPPORT DEVELOPED INTO A BATTLE BETWEEN OUR FIGHTER GROUPTS AND THE ENEMY. THE SMOOTHNESS OF THE DEMONSTRATED TEAMWORK REFLECTS GREAT CREDIT ON THE PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRAINING UNITS TO THIS HIGH STATE OF EFFICIENCY. IT WAS NOTED THAT THE PILOTS FOLLOWED EXPLICITLY THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THEIR BRIEFINGS AND MADE EVERY EFFORT TO POSITIVELY IDENTIFY TARGETS BEFORE ATTACKING, EVEN AT RISK OF PERSONAL SAFETY. THE R/T WAS OUTSTANDING FOR ITS BRIEFNESS, CLARITY, AND ACCURACY. YOUR WORK THIS DAY HAS BEEN A GREAT CONTRIBUTION TO THE FINAL VICTORY.

-----M C C A U L E Y-----

SECRET