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DECLASSIFIED
DOD DIR 5200.9

395TH FIGHTER SQUADRON
368TH FIGHTER GROUP
APO 141
Strip Y-34..
Metz, France

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Historical Clerk:

Sgt Stephen S. Marks

Squadron Historian:

THEODORE F. SKALKO,
1st Lt., Air Corps.

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SQUADRON HISTORY Month of January..

I. Negative.

II. STRENGTH COMMISSIONED and ENLISTED.

1.	At beginning of Period:		
	OFFICERS -----	59	
	ENLISTED MEN -----	250	
2.	Net Increase:		
	OFFICERS -----	3	
	ENLISTED MEN -----	3	
3.	Net Decrease:		
	OFFICERS -----	4	
	ENLISTED MEN -----	4	
4.	At End of Period:		
	OFFICERS -----	58	
	ENLISTED MEN -----	249	

III The 1st of January 1945 found "A" Eschelon entrucked for Y-34 at Metz, accomplishing the move via QM and Squadron transportation. The 5th of January brought the consolidation of the Squadron as "B" Eschelon arrived on this date. This is a permanent change of station. The move was accomplished per VOCC, Commanding General, XIX Tactical Air Force.

IV. On 13 January 1945, F/O JOHN W RUSSELL was returning from an armed reconnaissance mission. His plane had been hit by flak and he ran low on gas before he could reach this field. When his engine quit, he was forced to make an emergency landing in the mountainous area surrounding this strip. He landed the airplane wheels up on an up-slope and after considerable devastation of trees and natural obstacles the plane came to a stop. He suffered numerous slight injuries to his leg, back and a general body bruising but was not hospitalized beyond an examination. He is back on flying status.

On 22 January 1945, 2nd Lt WALTER W SCOTT returned to the field from an armed reconnaissance mission with his airplane shot up by flak. In attempting to land he discovered only one wheel of his landing gear would come down. Forced to make an emergency landing, he pulled the one wheel up and executed an excellent crash landing. However, his airplane struck a B-24 which had crash landed earlier and as a result, LT SCOTT suffered severe injuries. He was removed to the hospital and the latest news we have is that he is to be returned to the Zone of Interior for further medical care.

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V. The following Officers were awarded Clusters to the Air Medal this month:

	<u>Cluster</u>	<u>Date</u>
CAPTAIN NORIEGA	2	1-8-45
CAPTAIN CALDWELL	17	1-8-45
1st LT IVEY	13	1-8-45
1st LT MATTHEWS	2	1-8-45
1st LT SNYDER	11	1-8-45
2nd LT BERGMAN	2	1-8-45
2nd LT FORTNEY	1	1-8-45
2nd LT HAYS	2	1-8-45
2nd LT RISMANN	5	1-8-45

The following Enlisted Man received the Bronze Star Medal which was awarded this month:

S/SGT CLIFFORD F DOLAN.

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1. The first day of the year began for our Squadron with another move. This time to Y-34 located at Metz. Bright and early "A" eschelon clambered into the trucks and began the long tiresome and slippery seven hour ride. We have no worries about any of our drivers having the usual hangover for its very questionable if most of them ever had all the water they could drink the night before much less liquor. All along the road were spectacles of vehicles of other organizations wrecked or tipped over as a result of too hasty application of brakes or no application at all. In its EM drivers, this organization has Pvt's Race, Stubinger, La Forge; three of the finest drivers in the Theatre. They know how to make time on the roads but what is more, they deliver the vehicles intact.

Driving through the city of Metz was like a ride through a cemetery. There weren't any people along the walks smiling or waving us on as in the past. As a matter of fact, the people who were on the streets were more hostile than they were friendly. C'est la guerre.

We arrived at Y-34 only to find that the German Air Force had just paid a strafing visit and left some 24 P-47's from the 365th Fighter Group strewn all over the field burning in sad disarray. While the trucks were parked preparing to unload, a lone P-47 buzzed the field, made a hot-rock landing pattern, stalled out and crashed on the field. Sure was a rough day for the 365th.

In the few hours left some of the trucks were unloaded and the EM were billeted for the night. This "A" eschelon isn't bad but it's plenty on the inconvenient side the first few nights for food, heat and light are pretty much a catch as catch can situation. The only cook to come along, Pvt Woods, put together a hasty salmon and coffee supper which alleviated the pangs of hunger. When a man is hungry, food is food no matter what form it comes in.

Back at A-68 the Squadron was flying two missions. LT EARLY took the Squadron out on one mission and merely accounted for 53 M/T's, 3 Personnel Carriers and two gun positions. That was a great piece of work. The second mission of the day, (Ironhorse) LT EARLY took the Squadron out again and banged away at railroad tracks. Jim's knee took quite a banging a while back and he has trouble walking but it sure doesn't interfere with his flying. A great lad this one.

2. Today the line was cleared, tents were set up, trucks unloaded and an amazing amount of work was accomplished. The living area is in the city of Metz but the quarters need a lot of work and a good beginning was made here. The mess hall was set up, cleaned up and ready to go. A coal pile was found and tons of coal was brought in to offset the heat problem.

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The usual scrounging took place and ski's by the hundred were found and picked up. Someone is kidding someone -- these boys think they will get to ski around here. Could be.

In the meantime, Pvt George O'Hara got to fiddling with an antique gun he picked up at Strip Three and shot himself in the hand. He's in the hospital. Sgt Welsh of the Armament Department fiddled around the cockpit of an Me 109 and after an explosion, discovered that this plane has a jettisonable canopy. I could have told him that earlier. All in a day's work.

At night the officer's and EM got to work on their own living quarters in an effort to round them into shape. Some progress was made along this line.

At A-68 the Squadron bombed a town - Scharfbillig. This was all told a near miss mission. Some 5 Jerry's watching the show got too interested and LT DEWAN clobbered them. I'll bet they are sorry now that they didn't take cover.

3. All is in order now and when rear echelon pulls in operations can begin without a hitch. A good job has been done and no one has any unusual complaints. First Sgt Calderaro has done an excellent job what with not only assigning and supervising details but chipping in and working himself, it at all necessary. One truck load of coal found him shoveling himself while the detail was at chow. This sort of cooperation makes anything possible.

Back at A-68 bad weather kept the Squadron on the ground so idle hours were many.

4. We are now in the usual routine of what are known as Garrison duties. Most of the work is completed and a few touches here and there are all that are needed.

The Rear Eschelon is supposed to be ready to pull out of A-68 and we are awaiting them now. As was expected shortly after five and just when it was getting dark the trucks pulled in to be unloaded. A personal equipment tent was set up, lockers and chutes unloaded but some of the work had to be left until morning because it was dark and snowing and around here blackout is effective as of 1700 so no lights could be shown.

Fighting 395th is still grounded because of poor weather.

5. Things are starting to hum around here again and now we fight the war from Metz.

Early this morning, COLONEL PEREGO made an inspection of

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our tech site and he seemed to be well pleased. That takes care of that.

At about noon all the spare planes started to come and by tomorrow the Squadron will operate as a whole again.

At about 1400 the fighting twelve, led by MAJOR SPARKS landed on this field on their return from a mission. The objectives of today's mission were two A/D East of the Rhine River. Results of the bombing were fairly difficult to pin down but it's for sure that any bombs in that vicinity didn't do those A/D's any good.

Now the Squadron is reunited again except for a few of the personnel who remained behind to catch up on the odds and ends of the moving.

6. Where do these days go? Here it is the 6th of another month of another year and yet time has seemed to stand still.

A briefing was scheduled for 1000 hours but it was cancelled for the overcast over the field gave no signs of lifting. It didn't.

The afternoon was spent putting finishing touches on the work already done. Then an alert came through of a possible attack by the German Air Force and parachutists --- so the work turned to blasting foxholes. This is war...

An accumulation of mail came through and most of us walked away from mail-call with at least ten letters. Great day!!

7. There wasn't a great deal of activity this day because of an overcast which covered the strip and also the target area. The morning went by in dull fashion.

In the afternoon CAPTAIN PENDLETON released all the EM to return to their area to polish up their own quarters and personal belongings. Darn nice gesture.

What looked like a dull day turned into a tragic one in the tech site area. Since we are open to enemy attack here, foxholes have to be dug for protection. The ground is frozen hard so the Bomb Disposal Squad has been blasting holes around here. Today two of these men decided to use a German mine instead of G.I. explosives. After the smoke had cleared, the two bomb disposal men were dead, LT HUBERT had a chip of metal in his back, CPL FARLEY is in the hospital with very serious injuries, S/SGT DEMCHUK received painful if not serious injuries. Eight pounds of dynamite really played havoc hereabouts for a few minutes. MAJOR SPARKS, who was sitting the in "Ops" Tent, wound up in a

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very undignified position on the floor of the tent. Sgt Cook of Armament took a shaking up as did Sgt BERKSHIRE of the Engineering Department. Those who spoof at a Divine Providence can view LT COLBURN'S experience. He has been more or less supervising this detail and has been working about this hole all but for a few minutes. Ordinarily, he would have been near to the blast-scene if not right by it. He tired of waiting for the Bomb Disposal men and walked into a nearby tent. Now the Padre probably has another convert.

8. This morning started with a 0930 briefing. Group S-2 is set up in a building at this strip for the first time since our England days. After briefing by the S-2 and S-3 Officers, the weather Officer got up and predicted -- no flying. He was absolutely right for snow flarries started and continued all day and into the night.

In the afternoon some of the pilots tied on ski's and went out to get a little physical exercise. It is amazing how many indignified positions a human body can assume under circumstances. LT SMITH can be referred to on this subject.

Moustaches are coming into prominent view among the Officer personnel of this Squadron. Our Commanding Officer sports the snaziest one to date but ere long he'll be just one of the boys. There was a time when users of cigarette holders were frowned upon but since prominent members so indulge, one cannot say much on the subject any longer.

The evening brought a lot of mail but the lights went out in all but a few rooms so candlelight and flashlights brought the necessary illumination.

Hitler's gift with LT LUKER arrived late in the evening after a great deal of speculation as to whether or not it would navigate the hills of this area.

9. The persistence of the overcast which has stalemated us all week did not lift today making for another dull day. Not that the day was a calm and undisturbed one, for all of that. Group called a rush briefing and things started to boom. The pilots rushed from briefing to the personal equipment tent to the weapons carrier -- "Takeoff delayed." How do you like that? The resultant letdown came with the announcement that the mission was scrubbed. By this time it was too late to do anything but to return to the living area and to forget it all.

The one bright note of these dull days is that the Pilots Bar is operating smoothly and a lot of unnecessary hunger is alleviated. It's a good deal.

The Alert against enemy forces still continues and doubling of guards and other prevention measures are in force. The EM do not mind extra duties in the face of this possible

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threat and the spirit of cooperation is excellent.

Entertainment and recreation facilities are still limited but are slowly being rounded into shape. When lights are available a movie is shown and I'm told that the Officers' club is going along in smooth fashion.

10. A quiet day or so it appeared at its beginning. The morning was a dull one and no flying was anticipated. Right after lunch a quick briefing, a quick take-off and our pilots were off to war again. If the weather was good enough for a mission it was good enough for local flying so Operations decided to test-hop a few of the planes. Things started to happen. LT GARRY or "Ace" for short in taxiing down the runway could not get enough power up so he pulled up his wheels and crash-landed in a bomb crater. He emerged without a scratch fortunately but the plane will need a going over, Service team, speaking. Captaining Mazur, our "Ops" Officer took his own plane for a test-hop and after being airborne for an hour, developed engine trouble. He crash-landed near a town not very far from the strip and escaped with but minor bruises. At LT WAYLAND so aptly put it, CAPTAIN MAZUR has more lives than a cat, which is alright with us. From all circumstances, it does appear that he was extremely fortunate to have emerged at all for the plane is a total wreck. Shortly after these two incidents, our three errand pilots who were held up at Juvincourt by bad weather, landed here. Purple Flight greeted CAPTAIN MILLER with a flock of snowballs. LT DIMAN was greeted with a "Hi Skin" and LT WAYLAND exchanged a pen for the stick he let go off a few minutes before.

The mission turned out to be quite exciting for it returned with excellent results: 47 M/T's, 1 staff car and two buildings were added to the toll of enemy equipment this Squadron has destroyed. The Squadron was led by LT IVEY and in his own words, "It ain't hay."

This was the first mission flown from this strip since the Squadron landed here so that is quite an event in itself.

CAPTAIN PENDLETON is still going around saying something big is going to happen soon and it isn't what everyone thinks it is. Turn to the latter part of this month's history to find out what it is. Personally, I'm as curious as all.

11. Our living over here seems to consist entirely of overcasts and more overcasts. Then to further complicate any possibility of flying, we get snow flurries. And that ain't all.

After the usual mail censorship detail in the morning, there's nothing else of any interest to do. The pilots bar is crowded all morning which leaves the boys little appetite for a

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noonday meal. And so it goes.

We welcomed back an old-timer in LT RIFE who returned from England. An reoccurring injury forced a hospitalization and treatment and LT RIFE is now back to old PURPLE HEART Blue Flight.

The afternoon while dull, brought forth news that DFC awards to LT LE LOUP and LT KIEINKLAUS have been confined. Every man in original Red Flight is now so bedecked. Keep them happy.

The QM shower in town was tried today and all told it's a pretty rough deal but a bath is a bath. No telling what extremes these Americans will go to to keep clean. Nicht wahr?

The mail is coming in from time to time which has a heartening effect upon all of us. Don't expect to hear anymore of Blessed Events in the States from any of our men. "e were there, we tried, some got it, some didn't -- and so it goes.

12. Dull day. Any further comment would be a waste of paper and words. Still what is a waste of paper. The EM of this Squadron who were injured in our recent blast received the Purple Heart at the 34th Evacuation Hospital. Sgt Richards, S/Sgt Demchuk and Cpl Farley were so honored.
13. The weather broke the one time and this Squadron went to war again today. An 0800 briefing brought LT JENSEN forth as the leader of the flight into enemy territory. An armed recce brought a target at Siegborg in the form of a M/Y's which received a free gift of 23 bombs. No charge connected with this free demolition service. Strafing attacks after the bombing netted 28 M/T's destroyed, 1 A/C destroyed and 5 other M/T's damaged.

A second mission was led by CAPTAIN MILLER which R/V'd with a B-17 at 15,000 feet over Verdun and fast piled up flying time. One of these mysterious missions. This mission aroused a great deal of curiosity but when no answer was forthcoming, the curiosity died down.

The third mission of the day was led by LT EARLY into the same armed recce area we've been scheduled for right along. A total of 17 M/T's, four horse-drawn gun carriages, and some enemy personnel destroyed was racked up on this mission. Our "Scoreboard" is increasing in numbers -- but definately.

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Kill them all. F/O Russell mysteriously disappeared after being separated from the Squadron on this mission and as yet no word has been received from him. He was last contacted by radio somewhere north of the field here asking for a "homing" which he received and he went on to say he was low on gas. He should turn up pretty soon unless something radically wrong took place so we are sweating him out.

It was drink out last night since a bunch of promotions came out. Here we note MAJOR SPARKS' delicate touch. Now we call them CAPTAIN JENSEN, CAPTAIN CALDWELL, 1st LT SNYDER, 1st LT WAYLAND, 1st LT GIANNETTI, 1st LT CRUICKSHANK. The latter officer was bowled over for he has undergone the Darwinian Test of survival -- 24½ months a second LT. This is war.

14. F/O RUSSELL turned up this morning when several medics brought him in. It seems he crashed up-slope on a mountain, tore up everything in sight including the airplane and walked away from the crash. He suffered injuries to his back and a leg but nothing serious. This started the day off right for things started to happen

The first mission of the day didn't produce any results for the Squadron jettisoned it's bombs to aid the 397th engaged in an extremely uneven dogfight. It was a useless attempt because by the time our boys got there, the show was over.

The afternoon brought all the excitement and gave forth one of the best examples of leadership this Group has seen in some time. Returning home from the Frankfurt area with CAPTAIN MILLER leading the nine ship Squadron, things started to happen. The Squadron first out-bluffed a formation of 12 Me 109's only to run into 60 plus assorted enemy aircraft. While CAPTAIN MILLER was feinting (fainting), LT GARRY took his three ship flight down and bounced a formation of 20 Me 109's. He did it again. He shot at and destroyed an Me 109, LT RIEMANN shot another Me 109 off LT GARRY'S tail while LT MARSCH (a freshie) shot an Me 109 off LT RIEMANN'S tail. What a day!!! What a day!!! Low on gas, outnumbered and all else, our boys not only gave the enemy two shellackings in one day but came home intact. How do you like that???

LT WAYLAND is conducting a little race with LT GARRY in destroying enemy aircraft and now he hates to sit on the ground while LT GARRY is out knocking them down.

15. We are flying right along now since the weather has lifted if only for a time. The first mission led by LT IVEY accounted for a bridge and a supply dump. This Squadron has talent to spare when we can send out a First Lt as a Squadron Leader and two CAPTAINS as flight leaders. In the meantime, the alert flight piles up combat hours chasing bogies in the area around the field which inevitably turn out to be P-47's or some other

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friendly craft.

LT GARRY led the second mission of the day but this flight found targets a little harder to find.

16. The new regime of CAPTAIN MAZUR, CAPTAIN JENSEN and LT WAYLARD are in the saddle and all is well.

LT IVEY took the Squadron off on the first mission today and found targets somewhat scarce. Undisturbed by this fact, the Squadron pounded a W/Y again and gave it a nice going over. Where the h--- Jerry gets all his W/Y and W/T's is a mystery to me. Our Squadron alone has clobbered enough of these targets to discourage a Republican much less a dictator. Captain NORIEGA is leading Red Flight these days after coming up through the ranks and is doing a swell job.

The Alert flight were airborne to pile up some "safe" combat time. Here's a chance for me to earn my Air Medal but I can't get any close cooperation. Hard luck old man!!!

The second mission led by CAPTAIN CALDWELL (I remember him as a 2nd LT) ran into their usual run of things. They jettisoned their bombs and belly-tanks to go to the aid of Tropic Squadron who were in a dogfight. When they got there, the fight was over. And so it goes.

LT SNYDER has acquired Lizzy, the former Medics pup and where he is she is. Ken really has a way with dogs but no luck yet finding Jerry planes.

This flying every day is good for everyone for inactivity breeds discontent. As it is working all day makes it a pleasure to hit the sack at night.

17. Briefing at 0830 - released until 1000 -- released until 1300 - released until daybreak. In sum and substance, this was "Our Day."

All in all a dull day for we thrive on flying. When the airplanes are grounded the necessary maintenance is caught up and we begin to sweat out a mission.

The EM now have days off and all of them walk into Metz to look the town over. A lot of them walk right back but the diehards stay to look for some excitement. "It ain't to be had."

The G.I's hit the field with a vengeance and kept most of us pretty busy until the cause was discovered. Ironical to find that our Squadron Doc was a victim too. Hard luck old man.

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18. The usual overcast was over the field so flying was out of the question. The day just dragged with nothing unusual occurring. MAJCR SPARKS and what some other American boys are sweating out, are orders to return to the Zone of Interior. Lucky devils.

Two new pilots have been added to the roster - fresh from the States -- 2nd Lt Anderson and 2nd Lt Caughtry. Come in where it's warm men, glad to have you.

19. The day's activities opened with a briefing although flying conditions did not appear ideal. Still the weatherman said the mission would go and after a few delays, it went. LT IVEY took the Squadron out and located a two mile long train and clobbered it beautifully with bombs and strafing attacks. Since there wasn't any flak in the vicinity, it was a veritable picnic. LT HOADE'S bombs dropped into the town of Wolfenstein and he's right proud of the buildings he blew up. If we ever move that way to have to live in those buildings, we'll know who to work over.

Only one mission but a good day all in all.

20. An 0745 briefing for a mission in support of the Fourth Infantry Division was briefed this morning but no soap. The field socked in and at 1300, we drew a release until daybreak. Snowflurries all afternoon ended any speculation as to the possibilities of any kind of flying.

LT HORD and LT KOENING were transferred VOGO to the 397th Fighter Squadron. They had just begun combat flying with our Squadron and we hate to see them go but this is war.

CAPTAIN CLARK and LT LUKER are at the Group Dispensary with slight ailments and they could use a third for a pinochle game.

21. Briefing at 0745 for a armed recy. Period. That's all. The weather socked in and that's all there was to flying. Snow flurries throughout the day further served as a reminder that this is winter.

A release until daylight came through shortly after noon so many of the pilots went out skiing. More would have liked to go sheing but this is no place for the latter sport.

LT LUKER returned from the Group Dispensary raring to play more pinochle. CAPTAIN CLARK is still there -- our prayers to the contrary.

What will tomorrow bring???

22. The Russian drive is apt to begin a German Offensive on this

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front and from all indications we may yet meet the Russians this side of the Rhine River. Once on Strip Three, we thought we'd meet the Russians at St Lo but they stopped to drink vodka and we forged again. Since we don't have much to drink around here, its the Russian's turn again.

This morning brought two missions. One an Alert Flight went up and logged some "soft" combat time. Another, an armed recy into the Vienden area really produced results. Led by LT EARLY, the Squadron found a German convoy bumper to bumper and really had a picnic for at least half an hour. Today's results are the highest set by the Squadron since I can't remember when. Nice work boys. At this rate it's sure to be Golden Gate by '48. Who's kidding?

The afternoon saw us putting up another Alert Flight with uneventful results. Then the Dusters went to work in the same area as they had in the morning. Led by CAPTAIN CALDWELL, the Squadron first clobbered and clobbered the enemy convoys found on the roads. A very conservative estimate had this Squadron destroying over 200 enemy M/T's, cars, guns, personnel and anything else which drew a breath in this area. What a day, what a day! As Confucius would say, "A house without a toilet is uncanny."

23. The last two days has seen our Squadron break every record for destroyed enemy M/T's which has ever been set by us. The totals are staggering and unbelievable but knowing our pilots, they probably are too conservative in their reports. This crowd of ours claims nothing it actually doesn't destroy and oftentimes, go overboard on this theory. It's a good way to be.

Nothing doing during the morning except for a briefing and a late morning takeoff. The boys returned in the early afternoon with average results compared with the last several days but still good. This boy LT EARLY has done a wonderful job of leading the Squadron since he first started doing it and when it's all said and done, he can be chalked up as one of the main reasons behind the success of this Squadron. LT GARRY got his plane in the way of some light flak on this mission and got slightly clobbered. Here's another factor important in our Squadron's success.

The weather closed in rapidly cancelling all hopes of further flying. We drew a release until daybreak short -

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ly after the first snow-flurries. This gives the ground crew a chance to catch up on necessary maintenance and we hope to get out again tomorrow to clobber some more.

24. The rumor factory is back to work again and is turning out some dandles I must admit. None of these rumors concern the possibility of the war coming to an end so there's nothing to worry about really.

Ah Yes, briefing in the morning for the same mission which our Squadron has been flying for some time. The morning remained overcast but in the afternoon the heavens opened up enough to embrace our mission. Led by CAPTAIN JENSEN the boys sallied forth with bouquets for the Superman. A convoy was located and bombed and strafed but because it was nestled in a wooded area, our pilots returned with varied NRO results. Still four direct hits in that area isn't going to help anyone I'm sure.

LT ANDERSON and LT COUGHTREY were airborne on a training flight for orientation program of what goes on here in this combat flying business. Ho hum!!! Soon maybe not tomorrow, they'll be out there earning their flying pay. It's over here that one discovers why pilots draw flying pay -- it ain't enough so help me.

25. It was a cold day today -- one of the coldest anyone of us have known for some time. Briefing in the early morning took place with the fond hope that the weather would open up long enough to get one mission airborne. It was not to be for the overcast prevailed all day long.

We added another replacement pilot to our roster in the person of 2nd LT H.F. ONUSSEIT. Come in boy; it's cold outside. Ah, these youths walk into the glamour of war and all its horrors. Little do they know. That's all.

26. The continual snow flurries have hindered flying of any kind. In the midst of a snow flurry at it's worst, a briefing was held for an armed reccey. Everyone attended for who are we to doubt the weatherman. This, despite a release until 1100 and briefing was called at 1030 hours. What's funnier yet, at 1400 hours the weather broke and our Squadron was airborne on it's mission. CAPTAIN "Swede" JENSEN led the Squadron but in real tough weather only to receive a recall midway through the mission. Rather than to return to base with the bombs, various targets were located and clobbered. A M/Y's, a bridge, and a train of Goods-Wagons were added to the toll of victims. Our boys will fly when birds must walk which is enough to say in anyone's favor.

27. This morning's activities opened with a release until 1100

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hours. Then a release until 1300 -- then another release until daybreak. As the Germans would say it, "So ist das Leben." When there isn't any flying -- conditions are pretty dormant around here for we thrive on flying. There's always work to be done so that's no real problem but the flying is what adds to the spice of work.

Passes to Paris have been inaugurated but since only one Officer and one enlisted man can go at one time, the odds on all getting to go are pretty slim. Some of the men insist on sweating out the war and they have a pretty good point there.

Pretty dull day all in all.

28. The Sabbath is upon us -- Tis a day of rest. The snow flurries brought a release until 1100. Those who desired to attend church services did--those who didn't -- didn't.

The afternoon brought a release until daybreak so forestalling any operation flying most of the crew-chiefs are busy seeing that the Red Nose and red stripe get painted on their ships. There are always little touches like this which need to be done.

On the whole, a pretty dull day anyway one looks at it. Let us hope that this next week brings forth some activity.

29. This was some morning all told. Of the twelve planes scheduled for the mission three wouldn't start at all. The brakes froze up on the forth and LT SMITH flying the fifth one had to return to the field because of an oil leak. LT BUCHMAN was running around crying "I've had it" but the engineering Officers of the 396th and 397th had all they could do together to equal our number of ships airborne. It wasn't much of a mission after all except that the M/Y at Kaiserlautern got clobbered again.

The afternoon brought another mission and our "Old Man" CAPTAIN MAZUR led the Group into an armed recy mission. He did a fine job of it for our Squadron alone accounted for over 28 M/T's destroyed with the added handicap of poor weather and a lot of flak. "That's my old Man."

30. Briefing at 0700 which is early for an armed recy this morning. Our pilots returned from briefing, got ready to go, started out for their planes only to be called back and put on an hour alert. The, due to snow flurries, we were released until noon. Then at noon, we were released until daybreak. How much can be done with weather like this - tell me????

CAPTAIN "Pappy" CLARK is back in the saddle after a two

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week sojourn at the hospital. These diehards!!

Pretty dull day but more to come.

31. This was a great day. We started with a release until 1100 hours. Then we drew a release until daybreak putting to an end to all further speculation as to flying.

The one incident of any interest was the fact that we were paid. That is something whether there is a place to spend it or not.

The rain brought with it oodles and puddles of water and a small boat would come in real handy around here. Maybe Spring is around the corner, who knows?

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ACTIVITIES AND MISACTIVITIES OF THE ENLISTED MEN

Cpl HAROLD D. FARLEY was seriously injured in an very unfortunate accident, when a German mine exploded which was used to blast a foxhole in the tech-site area. His injuries resulted in the loss of his right eye, a purple heart, and is on his way back to the states. We will miss "Cud", his spirit, and his gestures -- We want you to take care -- we know you will come out on top for your made out of the right stuff.

SGT PAUL S. KRAMER of St Paul, Minn. is the creator of the attractive paintings that can be seen on all the cowlings around here. Keep on painting those "pinups" very pleasing to the eye, if you know what I mean.....

SGT ROBERT HOFFMAN lost his barracks bag on this last move. Much to T/SGT GRIMSLEY'S regret -- a new set of clothing has to be issued -- without a statement of charges. What he doesn't know is that a lot of valuable personal belongings were lost too which can never be replaced.

CPL EUGENE PRALLE, CPL LOUIS M MIRDELBERGER, and PVT HOWARD GUTMAN signed the 104th the same day for leaving the base without permission one afternoon.

SGT JOHN C WELCH of Chicago received word that his brother, formerly reported MIA, has been killed in the Pacific area. His brother was in the Navy. Chin up feller.....

SGT ROBERT G. NOWLAND returned from the hospital where he was being treated for stomach trouble. He's well on the way to recovery after 18 days of the pill-rolling treatment.

CPL GEORGE SLAYTON signed the 104th for being in Reims when he wasn't supposed to be. A little too much champagne was the cause of it.

CPL J.T. KINKAID and S/SGT BURCHARD GORDON also signed the 104th for not saluting MAJOR RICE in the vicinity of the Messhall.

CPL GEORGE A GAUL returned from DS from the rocket range where he was for over two months.

CPL EUGENE PRALLE is trying to repair a German radio. He's having a lot of trouble finding the missing parts.

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WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST, JUNIOR, SEES:

BOMBERS PREPARE TO GO ON MISSION

DESCRIBES RETURN OF BURNING PLANE AT ADVANCED BASE IN BELGIUM.

AT AN ADVANCED 9TH U.S. AIR FORCE FIGHTER BOMBER FIELD, SOMEWHERE IN BELGIUM, NOV 25 -- THE NEXT DAY AFTER MY ARRIVAL, THE SKY WAS CRYSTAL CLEAR, WITH THE SUN ACTUALLY TRANSMITTING SOME WARMTH TO THE RAINSOAKED EARTH. THERE HAD NOT BEEN A DAY LIKE IT FOR MONTHS AROUND HERE AND, TO USE AVIATION TERMS, IT WAS "CELLING AND VISIBILITY UNLIMITED." AS A SEQUENCE, EVERYTHING IN THE AMERICAN AIR FORCE WAS UP.

OFFENSIVE ALL ALONG LINE:

THE OFFENSIVE ALL ALONG THE WEST WAS UNDER WAY AND AN ATMOSPHERE OF EAGERNESS ON THE AIR BASES TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE GOOD WEATHER WAS IN EVIDENCE ON EVERY HAND. IN THIS ACTIVITY WAS UNDOUBTEDLY DUPLICATED AT EVERY OTHER FIGHTER AND BOMBER FIELD.

THE SKY WAS LITERALLY ROARING WITH PLANES WHOLE DAY THRU. ADD TO THIS FIGHTERBOMBER ACTIVITY SUPPORTING EACH ARMY, MEDIUM BOMBERS AND HEAVIEST OF THE BRITISH, AND YOU MAY GET A ROUGH IDEA OF THE TERRIFIC AERIAL BEATING THE GERMANS TOOK ALL ALONG THE FRONT FROM HOLLAND TO SWITZERLAND.

THIS WAS ONE DAY I WANTED TO BE UP IN THE AIR. BOTH THUNDERBOLT "PIGGY-BACK" PLANES WERE BEING USED OPERATIONALLY DURING THE MORNING, BUT LT COL PAUL DOUGLAS ASSURED ME I WOULD GET ON A MISSION THAT AFTERNOON. AS IT WAS, THE MORNING NEVER HAD A DULL MOMENT.

MY ROOMMATE, LT HENRY L OLSON, ASSIGNED TO THE FIRST MISSION, WAS AWAKENED AT 5 O'CLOCK, HAVING ATTENDED BRIEFINGS AND SEEN MANY SQUADRONS TAKE-OFF, I TRIED TO ROLL OVER AND GET A LITTLE MORE "SACK-TIME" AS THE BOYS CALL SLEEPING (DERIVED FROM THE BAGS WE SLEEP IN).

MY ATTEMPTED SLUMBERS WERE SOON DISTURBED BY THE ROAR OF PLANES JUST OUTSIDE AS THE MECHANICS MADE PRE-FLIGHT WARM-UPS ALL OVER THE FIELD.

FINALLY, PAUL DOUGLAS BOUNCED INTO THE ROOM FULLY AND SHARPLY DRESSED AS EVER SHOUTING "FIRE!!!" AT THE TOP OF HIS VOICE.

I WASHED AND DRESSED AND WE WENT DOWN TO THE SQUADRON SNACK BAR FOR BREAKFAST OF PANCAKES, EGGS AND COFFEE.

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RIGHT AFTER THAT WE WENT OVER TO LT COL JOHN D.W. HAESLER'S TRAILER WITH BUILT-IN STOVE -- THE NERVE CENTER OF GROUP OPERATIONS. ACTUALLY, THE CONTROL TOWER IS THE FIRST NERVE CENTER IN ANY FIELD, BUT IT IS CONCERNED ONLY WITH THE TAKE-OFF AND THE LANDING OF PLANES. THE OPERATIONS TRAILER, IN ADDITION TO CLEARING ALL THIS INFORMATION HAS COMING THROUGH IT ALL ORDERS FROM THE HIGHER COMMAND PLANNING IN ADVANCE FUTURE MISSIONS, THE IMMEDIATE STATUS OF ALL PLANES, INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL SQUADRONS, FLYING AND WEATHER CONDITIONS AND A MULTITUDE OF COMPLEX DETAILS.

WE HAD NO MORE THAN GOTTEN INSIDE WHEN JOHNNY WAS NOTIFIED FROM THE CONTROL TOWER THAT ONE OF OUR BOYS WAS RETURNING FROM A MISSION WITH A FIRE IN THE RIGHT WING WHICH HAD BURNED OUT HIS HYDRAULIC SYSTEM AND WAS STILL BURNING IN A TIRE. I FOLLOWED ON HIS HEELS TO A JEEP AND WE RACED ACROSS THE MUDDY FIELD TO THE TOWER.

THERE BY RADIO, JOHNNY SPOKE TO THE PILOT, ASCERTAINING FROM HIM THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE FIRE AND THEN ORDERED THE PILOT TO BRING THE SHIP IN ON ITS BELLY. JUST OUTSIDE, AN EMERGENCY FIRE TRUCK STOOD BY AND I SAW THE SHIP WITH ITS RIGHT WING FLAMING APPROACHING THE END OF THE RUNWAY, ITS WHEELS TUCKED UP IN PREPARATION FOR A CRASH-LANDING, I JUMPED ON THE BACK OF THE TRUCK.

THE PILOT BROUGHT THE PLANE DOWN, LEVELING OFF ABOUT FIVE FEET ABOVE THE GROUND AND FINALLY TOUCHING THE RUNWAY AMID A SHOWER OF SPARKS IN THE SMOOTHEST LANDING I HAVE EVER SEEN. HE MUST HAVE BEEN GOING 120 MILES AN HOUR BECAUSE HE SKIDDED AT LEAST 500 YARDS, FINALLY COMING TO A HALT AT THE EDGE OF THE RUNWAY A COUPLE OF HUNDRED YARDS AHEAD OF OUR RACING FIRE TRUCK.

I COULD SEE HIS PROPELLER FINALLY CEASE WHIRLING AS THE TIPS OF THE BLADES, EACH BENT BACK BY STRIKING GROUND, CAME TO A STANDSTILL. PILOT LT EDWARD DAME, OF KITTANNING, PA., PILED OUT OF THE COCKPIT AND GOT OUT OF THERE IN A HURRY AS WE CAME ALONGSIDE. THE BOYS HAD THEIR FIRE EXTINGUISHING HOSES AND SHOES SPLITTING OF THEIR SPOOLS ALMOST BEFORE WE CAME TO A HALT. TWO OTHER FIRE TRUCKS AS WELL AS A COUPLE OF AMBULANCES PULLED UP IN A MATTER OF SECONDS AND SOON THE FIRE AREA WAS SMOTHERED BY A FOAMY WHITE CARBON DIOXIDE THE ARMY USES FOR EXTINGUISHING FIRES IN PLANES. EVERYTHING ABOUT THE PLANE IS VERY INFLAMMABLE SUCH AS GASOLINE, OIL, RUBBER, AMMUNITION, EVEN ALUMINUM, AND WATER IS PRACTICALLY USELESS. AFTER SEEING THAT THE PLANE WAS NOT GOING TO EXPLODE, THE PILOT WENT BACK TO THE COCKPIT, AND TOOK OUT ANY PORTABLE PIECES OF EQUIPMENT HE HAD. THE FIRE FIGHTERS WERE HAVING A FIELD DAY WITH THEIR APPARATUS, SPLASHING ABOUT IN THE FOAM AND SPRAY OF THREE FIRE HOSES. HALF A DOZEN OF THE SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE FIELD WERE ON THE SPOT WITHIN A MINUTE OR TWO. I SAID THAT THE PLANE STOPPED AT THE EDGE OF THE RUNWAY. IT WAS AN EXAMPLE OF THE COOLNESS WITH WHICH LT DAME HANDLED THE SITUA-

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TION, AS IT KEPT THE RUNWAY CLEAR, ENABLING THE REST OF THE PLANES TO USE IT ON THAT CLEAR FLYING DAY. EVEN AS WE STOOD THERE TWO THUNDERBOLTS CAME ROARING DOWN THE STRIP. A GUST OF WIND CAUGHT THE ONE NEAREST US, SLIPPING IT OVER SO THAT ITS WING BARELY MISSED HITTING THE DAMAGED PLANE'S WING BY JUST ABOUT SIX INCHES. THAT WAS THE FIRST EPISODE OF A BUSY DAY. WE WENT BACK TO THE OPERATIONS TRAILER AND LISTENED TO JOHNNY HAESLER DIRECT THE MOVEMENTS OF VARIOUS FLIGHTS.

AT A BOMBER FIELD THERE IS GENERALLY ONE TAKE-OFF AND LANDING PER DAY, EMPLOYING ALL SERVICEABLE PLANES. SOMETIMES MEDIUM OR LIGHT BOMBERS WILL HAVE TWO OF THESE MASS TAKE-OFFS. D-DAY WAS AN EXCEPTION AS MANY MEDIUM GROUPS FLEW THREE TIMES. FIGHTER FIELDS, HOWEVER, PARTICULARLY FIGHTER BOMBER FIELDS FLY IN UNITS OF THREE OR FOUR FLIGHTS PER SQUADRON AND THREE SQUADRONS ON THE FIELD. FIGHTING AND DIVE-BOMBING AS THEY DO IN DIRECT SUPPORT AND IMMEDIATELY IN FRONT OF GROUP TROOPS, THEIR TARGETS ARE OFTEN SMALL INSTALLATIONS SUCH AS TANKS OR GUN EMPLACEMENTS. THEREFORE THEY OFTEN FLY ONLY FOUR OR EIGHT PLANES TO A MISSION. THUS INSTEAD OF ONE BIG TAKE-OFF AND A LANDING BY THE GROUP AS A WHOLE, THE FIELD IS ALIVE ALL DAY WITH SMALL NUMBERS OF PLANES TAKING OFF AND LANDING. ADD TO THIS PRACTICE FLIGHTS BY NEW BOYS AND TEST FLIGHTS OF NEWLY OVERHAULED MOTORS AND YOU HAVE A DARNED BUSY RUNWAY.

CROSSING THE PERIMETER OF THE TRACK OR RUNWAY NECESSITATES HAVING A COMBINED AIR AND GROUND TRAFFIC MP AT EACH INTERSECTION. AS PLANES ALWAYS HAVE THE RIGHT OF WAY, YOU OFTEN HAVE TO WAIT FIVE OR TEN MINUTES GOING TO YOUR BARRACKS OR MESS IN A JEEP.

THIS MAY GIVE YOU SOME IDEA OF TRAFFIC AROUND A STATION ON A BUSY DAY. AFTER THE EPISODE OF THE BELLY LANDING, I WENT OVER AND LISTENED TO A COUPLE OF BRIEFINGS OF OUT-BOUND MISSIONS AND INTERROGATION OF RETURNING FLYERS. BETWEEN THESE WE WERE STANDING OUTSIDE SOAKING UP A LITTLE SUNSHINE, WHEN THREE DOUGLAS TRANSPORT PLANES, EACH TOWING GLIDERS, APPROACHED AT ABOUT A THOUSAND FEET. THEY WERE FLYING INTO A BREEZE OF ABOUT 40 MILES AN HOUR AND APPEARED BARELY MOVING THROUGH THE SKY ABOVE US. EVEN AS WE WATCHED THEM APPROACHING, ONE OF THE TOW LINES BROKE AND WE SPENT THE NEXT FEW MINUTES SEATING OUT THE GLIDER, AS IT SEEMED FOR A LITTLE WHILE AS THOUGH HE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO STRETCH OUT HIS GLIDE SUFFICIENTLY TO MAKE THE FIELD. HE DID, THOUGH, AS HIS TOW PLANE CIRCLED THE FIELD TO LOOK OVER LIKE A MOTHER BIRD WATCHING OVER ITS YOUNG. TWO OTHER SETS OF PLANES ALSO MADE A WIDE TURN AND ONE OF THEIR GLIDERS CUT LOOSE AND LANDED ON THE FIELD. THE THIRD TOOK UP ITS COURSE AGAIN BUT IN A LITTLE WHILE ALL THREE TOW PLANES LANDED ON THE FIELD. IT SEEMS THAT THE LAST ONE HAD TRIED TO GO ON BUT THE WIND AT THAT ALTITUDE APPARENTLY ALSO CUT ITS LOW LINES.

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THE MORNING'S UNSCHEDULED EVENTS ON THE GROUND REMINDED ME OF A CRACK MADE BY A TELEPHONE OPERATOR IN THE PICTURE "GRAND HOTEL."

AFTER ABOUT A DOZEN UNTOWARD INCIDENTS, OCCURING ONE AFTER ANOTHER, THE GIRL LOOKS UP AT SOMEONE STANDING BY THE SWITCHBOARD AND SAYS FACETIOUSLY, "YOU SEE NOTHING EVER HAPPENS AT THE GRAND HOTEL."

TO COMPLETE THE MORNING, WHILE SITTING IN THE OPERATIONS TRAILER ABOUT 11:30 A.M., HAESLER, WHO HAD BEEN TALKING TO THE FLYING CONTROL TOWER TURNED AND SAID LACONICALLY:

"HANK MAZUR AND HIS GANG HAVE BEEN IN A FIGHT. THEY OUGHT TO BE BACK IN A COUPLE OF MINUTES."

SO TECHNICAL SERGEANT DON FACKA OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND I WENT OVER TO THE PILOTS' ROOM TO WAIT THEIR RETURN. I DID NOT REALIZE IT, BUT SO FEW LUFTWAFFE CAME UP NOWADAYS, THAT A GOOD DOGFIGHT, WHICH ALL BOYS HOPE THEY'LL GET MIXED UP IN, IS AN EXCEPTIONAL OCCURRENCE. WITH THE DIVEBOMBING AND STRAFING THEY DO, THEIR GREATEST DANGER IS FROM FLAK.

FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN WE BUSTED IN, I ASKED LIEUT. KESTING IF CAPTAIN MAZUR WAS IN YET. "NO HE'S NOT. WHAT'S UP?" HE ASKED. I TOLD HIM THEY HAD BEEN BOUNCED BY SOME JERRIES AND GOTTEN INTO A FIGHT. HE SNATCHED OFF HIS LITTLE OVERSEAS CAP AND BANGING IT TO THE FLOOR SAID.

"NOTHING LIKE THAT EVER HAPPENS TO ME. THAT MAZUR DRAWS JERRIES LIKE FLIES. I'VE HAD 71 MISSIONS WITH THIS GANG, AND I HAVE NEVER YET SEEN A JERRY PLANE."

THEY CAME IN THE DOOR JUST THEN, CAPTAIN MAZUR, ONCE CAPTAIN OF THE 1942 WEST POINT FOOTBALL TEAM AND A BUNCH OF HIS "PANZER DUSTERS," INCLUDING 1ST LT. ROBERT E. CALDWELL OF ROSEVILLE, CALIFORNIA, 1ST LT. JOSEPH L WILLIAMS OF KENTUCKY; 2ND LT. WILLIAM C. DIMAN OF RHODE ISLAND, AND 2ND LT. BRYCE A. RALSTON OF NORTH DAKOTA. ONE OF THEIR BOYS HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN WHEN THEY HAD BEEN JUMPED BY 15 OR 20 FW 190'S JUST AFTER BOMBING AT LOW ALTITUDE, BUT BETWEEN THEM THEY HAD GOTTEN FIVE AND DAMAGED THREE MORE. THE POOR INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, LT TED SKALKO, WAS TRYING TO GET A COHERENT STORY OUT OF THEM, BUT THEY WERE SO FULL OF THEIR OWN AND THEIR BUDDIES EXPLOITS THAT THEY ALL TALKED AT THE SAME TIME.

RALSTON'S PLANE HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT SHOT UP. HIS RADIO HAD GONE OUT, AND FLYING FOUR ABREAST, QUITE WIDE APART, AS IS THEIR CUSTOM, HE HAD NOT HEARD THE BOYS WARN HIM OF THE ATTACK. THE FIRST THING HE KNEW HE WAS BEING SHOT AT BY A JERRY ON HIS TAIL. HE GOT A FEW BULLETS THROUGH HIS SHIP WHICH ALMOST RENDERED IT UNCONTROLLABLE, AND HE SAID HE WAS THINKING OF JUMPING, BUT BEING AN OLDTIMER, HE DOVE FOR THE GROUND, "HIT THE DECK" AS THEY SAY, AND STARTED FOR HOME.

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SAY, AND STARTED FOR HOME. MAZUR WAS GRIPING LIKE THE DEVIL BECAUSE HE HAD GOTTEN TWO JERRIES IN HIS SIGHTS AND MISSED THEM BOTH -- THE FIRST TIME HE EVER MISSED COMPLETELY IN A FIGHT. ODDLY ENOUGH, THROUGHOUT THE FIGHT GERMAN FLAK BLAZED AWAY WHETHER THEY WERE BEING CHASED OR WERE CHASING THE HUN.

ONE OF THE JERRY PILOTS BAILED OUT ON THE WAY DOWN, AND THEY WERE KIDDING ONE KID THAT HIS VICTORY SHOULDN'T BE COUNTED, AS THE PILOT GOT AWAY. IT MAY SOUND A LITTLE COLDBLOODED, BUT ACTUALLY THERE IS NO FEELING OTHER THAN THAT OF YOUTHFUL EXCITEMENT AND ENTHUSIASM. BY THE TIME THEY FINISHED THEIR INTERROGATION AND CRITIQUE, IT WAS TIME FOR LUNCH. THE PILOTS OF ALL THREE SQUADRONS EAT TOGETHER AND THESE BOYS, BEING THE ENVY OF ALL THE OTHERS, WERE HARDLY ABLE TO GET ANY FOOD INTO THEM FOR ANSWERING THEIR QUESTIONS AND RETELLING THEIR EXPERIENCES.

WILLIAMS HAD GOTTEN TWO, AND CALDWELL, DIMAN AND RALSTON ONE EACH. RALSTON GOT HIS AFTER HE PEACEFULLY HEADED FOR HOME WITH HIS SHOT-UP PLANE. SUDDENLY A P-47 SHOT BY HIM WITH A FOCKE WULF 190 ON ITS TAIL. HE SWERVED HIS SHIP A LITTLE AND SHOT DOWN THE 190.

JUST ABOUT THAT TIME A SQUADRON OF OUR P-38 LIGHTNINGS DIVED IN AND THE JERRIES TOOK OFF. MAZUR WAS BURNED UP BECAUSE HE MISSED A COUPLE, BUT NOT NEARLY AS MUCH AS I WHO HAD MISSED THE WHOLE SHOW. MY ONLY CONCOLATION WAS THAT I WAS GOING UP RIGHT AFTER LUNCH.

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THE DAILY TRIBUNE OF TIPTON, INDIANA ran a headliner which read like this;

FIRST LIEUTENANT JOSEPH L WILLIAMS whose wife, Mrs Della Mae Williams, lives at 918 North Main street, recently destroyed two enemy fighter planes when his squadron fought the Luftwaffe over Germany according to word received from the war department.

Lieutenant WILLIAMS, who is with a Ninth Air Force fighter bomber group in Belgium, was flying in aerial support of the U. S. First Army with the Thunderbolt squadron known as the "PANZER DUSTERS." The Thunderbolts dive bombed enemy ground positions in a forest and strafed a small German town near Duren. A few minutes later 15 to 20 Focke Wulf 190's attacked the P-47's.

In the dogfight that ensued the Thunderbolts destroyed five of the enemy fighter planes and damaged another. They lost one of their own. Lieutenant WILLIAMS destroyed two of the FW 190's.

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Good work, Joe, and we're all glad to see another of our guys make a big splash as he passes the first two rungs of the "Ace" ladder. Only three more to go!

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