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DECLASSIFIED
DOD DIR 5200.10

HISTORICAL DATA

SQUADRON HISTORY
396TH FIGHTER SQUADRON
368TH FIGHTER GROUP

JANUARY 1945

SQUADRON HISTORIAN - 1ST LT. MURRAY B. THALER
RECORDER - CPL. THOMAS J. GRIFFIN

HISTORICAL DATA

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SQUADRON HISTORY JANUARY 1945 396TH FIGHTER SQUADRON

1. ORGANIZATION: Negative.

2. STRENGTH:

	OFFICERS	ENLISTED MEN
Beginning of the month	62	249
Net increase	3	2
Net decrease	3	3
Total at end of period	62	248
Total Officers and Enlisted Men		310

3. MOVEMENT: The advance party of the unit departed from A-68, Juvincourt, France on 1 Jan. 1945 and moved to Y-34, Metz, France arriving there the same day. All personnel present at Y-34 on 11 January 1945.

4. LOSSES IN ACTION: Negative.

5. AWARDS AND DECORATIONS:

In accordance with GO # 291, Hq. Ninth AF, dtd 14 Dec. 1944, the following named officers were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (Extract of GO atchd).

Capt. David C. Parrish

Capt. Charles J. Kennedy, Jr.

1st Lt. Paul J. Quilty

BATTLE HONOR

In accordance with GO # 14, Hq. Ninth AF, dtd 22 January 1945, the 368th Fighter Group was cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy. (Copy of GO atchd)

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WHICH ARE FOR USE

AFC 888, U. S. Army
14 October 1944

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SECTION I: MEMBERS OF THE SILVER STAR
SECTION II: MEMBERS OF THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS
SECTION III

* * * * *
1. By direction of the President, under the provisions of the Act of Congress approved 2 July 1926 (Stat. C. 40, 41, 1926), and in accordance with authority delegated by the War Department, the following-named officers are awarded the DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS:

* * * * *
DAVID C. FORTISH, O-675912, Captain, AG, 368th Fighter Group. For heroism while participating in aerial flight in the European Theater of Operations on 10 September 1944. Captain Fortish led his flight with outstanding aggressiveness and aerial proficiency in an attack against enemy tanks impeding the advance of our armored columns toward the Siegfried Line. Although the hostile tanks were cleverly concealed and well dispersed Captain Fortish bravely executed a solo attack and succeeded in personally destroying two of the tanks and forcing the balance to retreat. His courage and brilliant combat skill are in keeping with the highest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States. Entered military service from Kentucky.

* * * * *
CHARLES J. KENNEDY, JR., O-805635, First Lieutenant, AG, 368th Fighter Group. For heroic and outstanding achievement in the European Theater of Operations on 20 October 1944. While returning from an operational mission over Bergstein, Germany, a large force of enemy fighter bomber planes was encountered in close support of German infantry. Demonstrating keen professional skill Lt KENNEDY directed his men in repeated attacks on the enemy. By his own gallant determination he forced several hostile planes to break off pursuit of friendly pilots, and succeeded in destroying one of the enemy aircraft and damaging another. Lt KENNEDY'S fortitude and intrepidity as amply demonstrated in this engagement are exemplary of the highest traditions of the Army Air Forces. Entered military service from Texas.

* * * * *
JULIUS J. QUINCY, O-879842, First Lieutenant, AG, 368th Fighter Group. For heroic achievement while participating in aerial flight in the European Theater of Operation on 24 June 1944 when he piloted a P-47 type aircraft on an aerial reconnaissance mission in the vicinity of Bre, France, in support of Allied ground forces. En route to the home base the squadron was attacked by numerically superior enemy aircraft; Lt QUINCY displayed outstanding aggressiveness and aerial proficiency in driving off the enemy attacks and providing efficient cover for his element leader. By the audacity and forcefulness of his tactics Lt QUINCY destroyed one of the hostile planes; his brilliant aerial performance on this occasion is in keeping with the highest traditions of the Armed Forces of the United States. Entered military service from Massachusetts.

300 II, 10 201, 10 210th 10 2000, 14 December 1944, cont'

by command of Major General William H. H. H. H.

W. H. H. H.
Colonel, 330
Chief of Staff

OFFICE 1:

c/ J. J. J. J.
Colonel, 330
Adjutant General

10 2000 10 2000 10 2000

Henry J. H. H.
1st Lt., 10 2000,
1st Lt., 10 2000.

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS
NINTH AIR FORCE

APO 696, U S Army
22 January 1945

GENERAL ORDERS)

NUMBER 14)

E X T R A C T

BATTLE HONORS

1. Under the provisions of Section IV, Circular Number 333, WD, 1943, the following named units of the Ninth Air Force are cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy. The citation reads as follows:

* * * * *

"The 368th Fighter Group. For outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy on 3 September 1944 in the execution of an air-ground effort in conjunction with units of the ground forces in the vicinity of Mons. In the face of a withering barrage of antiaircraft and small arms fire, flights of the 368th Fighter Group bombed and strafed enemy targets. The group destroyed 262 motor transport and damaged 30 more. In addition, 230 horse-drawn vehicles were destroyed as well as an undetermined number of enemy personnel in the target areas. The group was further successful in seeking out, strafing and bombing targets of opportunity that impeded the advance of the ground forces. To accomplish their assigned task, eighty-three P-47 aircraft were dispatched on seven missions to strike a devastating blow in disrupting and battering the German defenses. The victorious exploits of the pilots of the 368th Fighter Group who struck a staggering blow to the enemy's supply of armored vehicles and motor transport, exemplify that leadership, teamwork and flying skill which is in keeping with the highest traditions of the service."

* * * * *

BY command of Major General VANDENBERG:

W W MILLARD
Colonel, GSC
C of S

OFFICIAL:

s/ C. M. Seebach

C M SEEBACH
Colonel, AGD
Adjutant General

A TRUE EXTRACT COPY:

Murray B. Thaler
MURRAY B. THALER,
1st Lieut., A.C.

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SQUADRON HISTORY

PERSONNEL CHANGES:

1. In accordance with par. 4, SO #1, Hq 368th Ftr. Gp, dtd 1 Jan. 1945, 6 of our Enlisted Men were promoted (Copy extract of SO atchd).
2. On 10 Jan. Pvt. Ronald E. Frazier was transferred to 460th Air Service Sqdn.
3. Lt. Phillip D. Boose was trnsfd to 10th Photo Gp Rcn on the 13th .
4. On the 14th we learned that 1st Lt. Grover Y. Greene's status changed from MIA to POW as of 27 July 1944.
5. 2nd Lts. Frank F. Citro and Robert S. Winchester were the 2 new pilots asgd to the sq. on 19 Jan.
6. 2nd Lts. Stephen L. Halpin and Charles E. LeGrand were trnsfd to the 397th Ftr. Sqdn on the 20th.
7. On 24 Jan, T/Sgt. Ernest E. Gibson was reasgd to the sqdn.
8. 2nd Lt. Robert D. Sheedy, a pilot, was asgd to the sqdn and Sgt. Karlton C. Brinson was trnsfd to the hosp. on 26th Jan.
9. Sgt. Richard C. Price was trnsfd to the hosp. and pfc Rudolph Gnatt was asgd to the sqdn on the 27 Jan.

RECOMMENDATION
FOR PROMOTION

COMMUNICATIONS SECTION
NO. 1

ERRATA

4. Under the provisions of AFM 11-2, 10 June 1952, and upon the recommendation of Major Hugh Egan, the following named AFM, 1st Lt. Egan, are promoted to grades as indicated:

AFM 11-2 (AFM)		
Cpl (21)	Clarence W. Rowley	14400000
Cpl (21)	Raymond Stovall	14400000
Cpl (21)	John W. Johnson	14400000
Cpl (21)	John C. Wood Sr.	14400000

AFM 11-2 (AFM)		
Lt (21)	Clarence H. H. H.	14400000
Lt (21)	Jack L. H. H.	14400000

In order of Lt Col. H. H. H.

/s/ H. H. H.
Major, Air Corps,
Adjutant.

OFFICIAL:
/s/ H. H. H.
/s/ H. H. H.
Major, Air Corps,
Adjutant.

" I HAVE INTEREST ONLY "
Murray B. H. H.
1st Lt., Air C.

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SQUADRON HISTORY

MISSIONS # 312, 313.....Armed Recce....."A" Party Leaves For Y-34, Metz.....

The New Year opened with a 0745 hours briefing for the squadron. An armed recce was to be performed in the Trier, Prum, Wittlich area. Capt. Baer was to lead the squadron. The AIO told us about the local activity by the Third Army with no spectacular gains. He also explained the corps areas of the army on the southern flank of the salient. After all the information was given, the pilots went over to the squadron area to await take-off. Meanwhile, "A" Party left for our new base at Y-34, Metz.

The squadron contacted the controller who asked them to investigate 2 Me-109's on the air strip south of Trier. They proceeded to the vicinity but saw no enemy aircraft. Flying over the Trier area, they spotted the marshalling yard just north of town and bombed it with very good results. 15-20 cars and one locomotive were destroyed, started a fire in the yards and got a roundhouse too. They then went on an uneventful recce along the course briefed before heading for home.

The second mission for the day was briefed at 1100, with Capt. Henry leading. It was for the same type mission, and first operational one for Lt. Bergerand. The planes were airborne at 1405 and headed out to the area. The squadron found three different targets. One was a small marshalling yard near Gerolstein, some tanks in the same vicinity where they had found them yesterday, and railroad tracks near Trier. Lt. Olson reported an enemy radio station near Delfangen or Trierweiler. During the afternoon, we were notified not to send any more equipment to Y-34 for enemy planes had attacked and strafed airplanes already on the field. The advance party was going to remain there, but there was a temporary holdup until more definite information could be given. Lt. Ohlman returned from DS with the Third Armored Division.

MISSION #314.....Armed Recce

Major Crisp was to lead the squadron on the mission for the second of January. The same area was to be reconnoitered. Capt. Weintal told the assembled pilots about the results of the strafing at Y-34 and losses to friendly and enemy planes. The AIO told the latest news with but few changes. The Germans seemed to be on the defensive. Back at the squadron, the original takeoff was postponed for a little while. Lt. Kerchner was leading Red Flight as they taxied out after getting the call for takeoff. After remaining in the briefing area for a little more than an hour, the squadron spotted 4 trains near Nordel and bombed with excellent results. Major Crisp and his flight bombed a 20 car train with the cars exploding down the line. It might have been an ammunition train. Lt. Kerchner and his flight got six direct hits on another train, while Lt. Petrie's flight smacked two others. All this was depriving Jerry of much needed transportation and ammo.

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SQUADRON HISTORY

MISSION # 315.....Recce, Then To Land At Y-34.....

There were no operations on January 3rd. It rained practically all day. A couple of trucks with equipment left for Metz. Word came through that the planes would land at Metz from the next mission to be flown. A bombline change came in showing a possible pocket around the enemy in his salient and the wedge was shortened. The next day brought snow and rain. The planes weren't going to take off this day. Some pilots, men, and equipment left for Y-34 at noontime. The squadron mess was feeding all of the group which had remained.

At the morning briefing on the 5th, the squadron was told of the recce area which was south of where they had flown previously. Maj. Crisp led the squadron which took off at 1100 when the scud had cleared enough to allow take-off and work in the target area. This was Lt. Hunt's first operational mission. They didn't see very much in the briefed area. The squadron contacted Turpentine who wanted a couple of bridges looked at but the cloud coverage prevented observation. They proceeded to look the briefed area over and found 5 made-up trains, which were called in. They then bombed but with poor results because of a high northeast wind and also because P-51's bounced them. From this mission, the squadron landed at Y-34, our new operational base.

As soon as the planes had taken off on the above mission, more men and equipment left A-63 for Y-34. Capt. Kessler remained behind to take care of the details there, just as had been done on our previous moves. By evening, most of the squadron was set up at the new base.

.....Bad Weather Interferes With Operations.....

Bad weather set in on the 6th with no briefings held. All squadron departments were ready to operate with most of the equipment set up. The next day continued with a low overcast and no flying. The sections continued to straighten up as some equipment arrived with the trucks coming in from Juvincourt. Most of the cooks arrived in the evening. On January 8th, a briefing was held at 0915 for an armed recce in the Bitburg, Daun, Trier area with Capt. Henry to lead. An alternate target was the Lindorf M/T park. After Maj. East gave the necessary information about the mission, Maj. Davis told us about the First Army's drive southward to narrow the gap forced by the Germans, a brief sitrep along the fronts and the activity opposite the Seventh Army in the Strasbourg area. Capt. Henry gave the squadron the technical details of how the mission would be flown. "Spike" Quilt, gave us the combat ops flash of holding up the take-off because of the weather. Back at the squadron, we had been released until 1300 and then for the rest of the day. Snow came again and continued throughout most of the day. Towards evening, Capt. Kennedy taxied out to the runway to blow the snow off.

The 9th was another day of bad weather, with a stand-by in case a briefing was called in. A release came in at 1200, then for the rest of the day. It was a very uneventful day. The weather prevented any flying whatsoever.

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SQUADRON HISTORY

MISSION # 316.....Armed recce.....

The weather became better on the 10th. There was no activity in the morning. A briefing was called for 1300. It was the same area to be flown, Bitburg, Daun, Trier with the Wendorf W/E park as an alternate target. At group we were told that as a primary mission before going on the recce, the squadron was to contact AA Corps. The ALO remarked of the possibility of the enemy moving out of the pocket and reinforce down south in the Saarburg area where they might try to penetrate our lines. They had been building bridges south of Trier along the Saar River. Pailfull might have targets, but if not, they were to go on the briefed armed recce.

Back from group, the pilots were all set and went out to start the engines. Capt. Baer was to lead. Flying out on course, Pailfull told them that he had no targets. Lt. Cox's airplane was hit by flak and had to return home with Lt. Howie as escort after dropping their bombs on Bettingen. The rest of the squadron found a 8 x 88mm gun emplacement at the town of Jedoy with no hits. Later, they found about 10 trucks and destroyed 3 of them southeast of Wittlich.

No Operations - Bad weather....

January 11th brought a 0900 hours briefing for the same recce area. The weather wasn't too good, which caused a stand-by on take-off. The ALO gave the latest about the ground situation with the news of the confirmation of Allied landings on Luzon in the Philippines. There was no flying throughout the day. Capt. Kessler arrived at the base making the whole unit present at Y-34. There was an overcast in the morning of the 12th. At about 1245, a briefing was called for 1330. The mission pilots were notified and rode up to group. The same area was to be flown as armed recce. The enemy was pulling out of the pocket as the First and Third Armies were trying to cut them off. There was still the possibility of their trying to get men and equipment south. Back at the squadron, the original take-off was postponed and a 15 minute alert was in force. The planes didn't take-off at all as the day ended.

MISSIONS # 317, 318, 319.....Armed Recce And Leaflets.....

An 0715 hours briefing was held on the 13th. The same recce area was scheduled for the squadron. Maj. Crisp was to lead on this mission. The pilots had gone out to their planes but came back to Operations because of the bad visibility. A later phone call over the hot line made it a 0900 hours take-off. The major's "mags" weren't functioning correctly and he couldn't take-off. Capt. Ryerson took over the lead of the squadron and set course for Bitburg. In the Mordel area, they found some vehicles, bombed and destroyed 2 of them. Lt. Kerchner, leading Red Flight took his 4 ships down to bomb a small marshalling yard nearby, with a direct hit in the center of one train. Flying to the other side of the Moselle River, north of Trier, they found some more vehicles and strafed them. It was on this mission that Lt. Boss' airplane was hit by flak on his dive bombing run, getting an oil leak and part of his cowling.

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SQUADRON HISTORY

MISSIONS # 317, 318, 319.....(Continued).....

He had to return with an open cockpit to see where he was flying. When he came into the S-2, S-3 site, Boss' figure had oil all over it. Doc treated his eyes to make sure there was nothing in them.

Capt. Baer led the 4 ship "newspaper" mission to the German salient area. Because of the weather, the planes had to be controlled to the 4 points. It was very uneventful.

The second recce mission for the day was briefed at 1000 hours. Capt. Henry was to lead. The boys were told of the good progress being made in the Ardennes sector and where possible German movement might be found. On the recce, 4 planes bombed Bitburg and others bombed the town of Gindorf. Near Gindorf, they found 10 trucks, destroyed 5 and damaged the other 5. Looking over the Gindorf I/T park, it appeared to be inactive. Lt. Olson's flight saw a suspicious looking P-47 and reported it.

MISSIONS # 320, 21, 22, 23.....Armed Recce and Alert Flights....

The same reconnaissance was to be flown on January 14th. The first mission was briefed at 0900 hours. The alternate target was the ammunition dump south of Prier. Maj. Crisp was to lead. The ALO gave his summary of the situation as he spoke of the First Army's push southward in the northwest corner of the pocket, squeezing the enemy. The planes were up by 1020 hours. They didn't see much, while searching the briefed area. Near Reinsfeld they spotted a supply dump and bombed it with only a couple of direct hits. Some barracks were found a few miles east of Reinsfeld and were strafed by Maj. Crisp and his flight before setting course for home.

The air alert flight was led by Capt. Kennedy in the morning. The controller tried to vector the 4 ships to bandits but none were seen. They also flew to the Bastogne area, where activity seemed to be nil. Flying back to the base, they flew uneventful short intercepts. This made Lt. Campbell operational.

The second recce mission was briefed and ready to take-off in the afternoon with Capt. Baer leading. Four ships were to carry leaflets to the pocket area. This mission would have been the first operational mission for Lt. Huff, but Lt. Olson's tachometer was out, preventing take-off as his wingman. The squadron was on course out to the first point when the controller called in bandits. All the pamphlets were dropped near the first "newspaper" point. Some jettisoned bombs unarmed while a couple of the boys tried to bomb a bridge over the Moselle, but no hits. The rest of the mission was flown uneventfully. The second air alert flight had taken off meanwhile and flew another uneventful alert with Lt. Petrie leading the 4 planes. Word came through officially that Lt. Grover Y. Greene was a POW as of the 27th July 1944.

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Squadron History

Issues, 324, 22, 23.....continued.....

the children.

The same type of issue was led by Capt. Henry in the afternoon. They were going to try to get rid of the towns as early as possible to be ready in case enemy aircraft were in the vicinity. After the 3-2, weather, and the A-10 were through, Capt. Henry briefed the boys on the details as they completed the DMB briefing. The boys got the latest info from the morning mission just before taking off. After becoming airborne, the controller called in about 40 enemy A-10 west of Hagen. The squadron flew to the vicinity of the grid coordinates given but didn't find anything. They then went south where one flight bombed the railroad at Wengern, destroying at least 8 box cars. They damaged 20 more by strafing the 40 to 50 cars in the area. Pappy Kennedy went down and destroyed a truck and trailer. They continued south toward Simeon where Olie's flight bombed a couple of vehicles in the same woods where the squadron had bombed this morning. A couple of the other planes bombed the barracks nearby, too, and flattened 2 more buildings. They also strafed the box cars in the small marshalling in Simeon.

The alert flight was only two airplanes - Lts. Ellis and Newhart. It was another very uneventful alert.

Bad weather sets in again....Capts. Baer, Ostuw and Ryerson Leave..
Capt. Meredith A. Henry Our New Operation Officer.....

There would have been a 0900 briefing on the 17th, but because of bad weather setting in, it was called off. A release came in until 1300 and for the rest of the day later. The finishing touches were put on in the pilot's room and it was almost ready for use down at the line.

No operations were scheduled for the next day. The mission would have been close support with a recce area. At 1400 a meeting was held in the group briefing room for all squadron CO's, operation officers, flight leaders, and S-2's. Maj. Davis gave the situation on the ground and the reason for the meeting. He had been up to AIA PAC and told us of the drive which was going on. Our group had been assigned to support the 4th Infantry Division of the VII Corps. The drive was to wipe out the enemy salient and to restore the former line. He gave the whole picture, order of battle, objectives and the boundaries. The battlefield was going to be isolated. The drive was already on, having jumped off in the early hours of the morning. The major continued with the other divisions taking part. Lt. Col. Perego then spoke to the assembly about the meeting he had at XIX PAC with all the group commanders, and General Vandenberg's comment regarding the very good work done by the Ninth at the time of the German breakthrough and the continued good efforts made by all. The rest of the day was uneventful. Capt. Henry became our new operations officer. The orders had come in for Capts. Baer, Ostuw and Ryerson, who were to leave early the next morning. Late in the afternoon, the squadron was assigned 2 new pilots, 2nd Lts. Frank S. Citro and Robert S. Winchester.

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SQUADRON HISTORY

MISSION # 531...no Targets From 4th Inf. Div. So Proceed On Armed
recce....awaris by General Weyland.....

Non-operational weather arrived in the morning of the 14th. Capts. Baer, Ostow and Myerson were wished a very nice leave before they set out for Paris on their first leg for home. Gen. Weyland arrived to decorate the group pilots and enlisted men. At 1015, the recipients were all lined up in 4 ranks at the Officer's Club. Our pilots who received their DFD's were Capts. Kennedy, Lts. Lewis, Hamilton, Berchner, Loeb, Petrie and Guilt. The men who were awarded the bronze star medals were S/Sgt. Markness, Morris, Potter and Watrin. Lts. Johnson and Loeb were awarded the Purple Heart.

A briefing was called in for 1215. It was a group briefing but the missions were to be individual squadrons. They were to contact Organ and get possible targets. Other divisions might request support also. The recce area included Neuenburg, St. Vith, Adenau, and Echternach. The ALO gave the situation as he had done at yesterday's meeting. Maj. Crisp led the squadrons as they set course for the mission. Arriving in the vicinity of the 4th Inf. Div, the controller was contacted, but he had no targets so, they continued on the briefed armed recce. The weather was pretty much overcast in the area with occasional breaks. They saw a very long train at Lauterechen and immediately went down to dig bomb it. The boys got 4 direct hits and many near misses. Explosions and 2 fires were seen in the town nearby. When the pilots returned, they remarked that it was the longest train they had ever seen.

Some more snow.....no Operations.....

January 20th was a very uneventful day. It snowed for the most part of the day. Lts. LeGrand and Halpin were transferred to the 387th Fighter Squadron. In the afternoon, 2 of the Ripsaw Controllers lectured to the pilots on what they could and couldn't do, with the sets they were using, to aid the missions. A briefing was held at 0830 on the 21st for support of the 4th Inf. Div. and a new recce area between Vianden, Wittlich, and Erier. The 4th had advanced some since its last location. The Germans seemed to be concentrating forces in the Vianden area. There were no other major changes along the Western Front. The ALO told us of the continued progress the Russians were making west of Warsaw and in their southern sector. There was some doubt about the weather because of the snow coming in and the snow in the target area. Back in the squadron, the take off was delayed and the snow came again. This continued with a release coming in for the day.

MISSIONS # 532, 53, 54...A Field Day...Thunder Boms Destroy 124 and
Damage 87 enemy Vehicles.....

Briefing was held at 0830 on the 22nd. The same recce area was planned and air cooperation with the 4th Infantry Division. Capt. Henry was to lead the squadron's first mission for the day. The original take off was postponed and the 12 bombed up planes were airborne at 1108. While the boys were out in the target area,

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SQUADRON HISTORY

1155100 7 662, 66, 64.....continued....

Pappy came down from a test hop and told us that the squadron had found and was working over a "helluva lot of Jerry vehicles." Lt. Joderlund had to return a little earlier because of the battle damage to his plane due to flak. When the rest of the boys landed and came into the operations building, we learned of the great concentration of German mixed vehicles trying to get out of the remnants of the Ardennes salient north of Vianden on both sides of the Our river. Capt. Henry remarked that it was the best mission he had ever been on. There were M/Ts all over the place - in the valleys, along cliff roads, and on top of the mountains in the area. Lt. "Sammy" Merchner came in shouting he hadn't seen so many vehicles bumper to bumper since the Malaise days of the drive up towards Mons. The concentration he saw easily approached the 1000 mark. Mediums were in the vicinity at the same time. Some went after and knocked out a road bridge over the Our river east of Solcoorn, which stymied traffic across it, helping the fighter bombers take care of the enemy's transportation. It was a very fruitful mission. Capt. Henry's flight accounted for 10 M/Ts by bombing the Dasburg roads. A P-51 recon pulled up to Lt. Loeb's flight, rocked his wings and then led them to a concentration of motor transports by diving down on the target. They dive bombed immediately and destroyed 15 more M/Ts. Lt. Merchner and his flight destroyed 15 more by bombing, and one tank, too. There were all sorts of vehicles, armored cars, tanks and M/Ts towing guns. Although the light flak was intense, the boys strafed and added 30 more destroyed vehicles to the total and damaging 60 others. The tally - 70 destroyed, 60 damaged.

The 4th Infantry wasn't on the air but VII Corps told the squadron to contact the 388th which was also in the target area. The P-51 was doing a fine job, too. Lt. Dixon's plane was hit and he had to belly it in southeast of Luxembourg. Dixon was alright and was back with the squadron in the evening, having been flown to the base by a cub from A-97 near Luxembourg.

The alert flight was flown by Lts. Olson and Huff. It was very uneventful. The second armed recon and air-ground cooperation mission was briefed at 1115, Maj. Crisp to lead. The roads which the Germans might be using as withdrawal routes were pointed out on the map. The ALO told of the pressure being exerted on Vol. Kunitz's forces from the north and south of the pocket. There were no major changes along the line.

By 1455, the squadron was over enemy territory. They contacted the controller who told them to go to the vicinity of Wisenach where they could look for the enemy vehicles. Flying to the called in area they spotted M/Ts. Maj. Crisp's flight dive bombed a concentration of 35 vehicles including fuel trucks, with excellent results. This was south of where the boys had worked in the morning. A total of 30 were destroyed, 20 of which burned and were exploding, and the 5 others were damaged. Lt. Grace had taken over the flight when Lt. Fullis returned to base early. His flight found 10 others M/Ts on the east side of the Our river. Bombing with excellent results, they destroyed them. 14 more vehicles were strafed and destroyed and 12 more damaged, making the total for the mission 54 M/Ts destroyed 17 damaged.

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SQUADRON HISTORY

MISSIONS # 332, 33, 34.....Continued.....

It was a very eventful day for the Thunder Bom Squadron. The grand total for the day was 124 A/Ps destroyed, 77 damaged. The Jerries were caught and hammered away at.

MISSION # 335.....more German Vehicles Destroyed, 32 - 14...

The squadron was first to be briefed at 0700 on January 23rd. Capt. Henry was leading the squadron on the same type of mission. The AIO gave his sitrep of the previous day's advances by the 4th and 5th Infantry Divisions. He didn't have too much news about the sector where the boys had found the juicy targets. When they arrived in the target area, organ controller asked them to recce the Vianden area. They complied and Capt. Henry reported the inactivity around there. They were looking over a good bridge south of the town when a P-51 called in over the A/P telling the squadron about a concentration of vehicles. They flew to the vicinity of the grid coordinate, where the P-51 went down and straffed to show the squadron the exact location of the vehicles which were east of Eisenbach, on the other side of the river. There were about 50 A/Ps of which they destroyed 16 and damaged 4 by bombing and then destroyed 16 more by straffing, plus 10 more damaged. This credited the squadron with 32 A/Ps destroyed and 14 damaged for the day's work. They also spotted some moving vehicles going east. Capt. Henry spotted a bridge just north of the one which was bombed out yesterday and it appeared to be in use. He called this in to the AII Corpss controller. The flak seemed to be concentrated in a belt between Basburg and Eisenbach, and four of the squadron's airplanes had to go to the service team for repairs from the battle damage incurred.

A second briefing was held, but this mission's take-off was prevented due to the weather. Snow came and with it a release for the rest of the day.

MISSION # 336....More Vehicles Pounded.....

The Vianden-Wittlich-Trier recce area and joint air-ground effort with the 4th Infantry was again scheduled on the 24th. The mission pilots were at the group briefing at 0915. Maj. East's opening remarks were that the Russians were reported 15 miles from Breslau. He gave them the pertinent facts, Lt. Ramsey gave his weather synopsis, then the AIO gave the situation along the Western Front. The first and Third Armies continued to shorten their lines. Our troops were cleaning up St. Vith and he continued with a brief summary of where our lines had been prior to the enemy breakthrough, as compared to the restoration which had been accomplished. The weather was very bad in the morning but better conditions came in the afternoon. Maj. ^{Criss} was to lead the squadron.

After waiting around at operations for a take-off to be called in, it came in for 1430. The pilots went out to their ships and got set for the mission. When they arrived in the controller's area,

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SQUADRON HISTORY

MISSIONS # 336.....Continued.....

Organ told the squadron that a recce plane had a priority target for them. After getting the coordinates and flying to the area, the squadron found a concentration of close to 75 vehicles at a different point about a mile northeast of Brandscheid. Dive bombing, they accounted for 20 more M/Ts destroyed. A fuel dump nearby must have been hit for a large fire with black smoke and orange flames billowed up. Flying south towards the recce area, a large van was raked with the .50s. Lt. Strickland had to return early, but landed at A-69, Laon, one of our former bases in France. When the boys came down from the mission, they went to the critique and then to supper.

A 0730 briefing was held January 25th for continued joint air-ground operations with the infantry. There was a bad haze with very little visibility. Snow came with no take off scheduled. During the day, the combat film of Dec. 23rd's air battles were shown down at the S-2, S-3 building. Capt. Henry got some of the men over from the line to see it, too. The film was shown in the afternoon again with Lt. Col. Perego and Lt. "Spike" quilty coming over to see the excellent shots of the Jerry planes going down, and being chased by our boys. There was no flying at all as the day ended. Lts. Newhart and Glazier flew back to our base from Paris where they had attended "Toss Bombing" lectures.

MISSION # 337....A Bridge Is Knocked Out....Notification of Unit Citation.....

It snowed all morning on the 26th. All the squadrons were briefed at 1030 for tactical air effort in cooperation with the 4th Infantry Division. The weather man predicted clearing skies in the afternoon with good enough weather in the target area to run a mission. There was no definite take off for the separate squadrons because of the need for clearing the runway and sweating out the time for the better weather. The ALO mentioned the continued Russian advances with their troops reported about 124 miles from Berlin. He gave the latest of the situation along our own front before the pilots left for the mess hall.

After chow, the mission pilots awaited a call for the take off time. It came in for a 1430 take off, Lt. Tullis leading the squadron. He had gathered his pilots together in front of one of the S-2 maps just to review the mission before going out to the planes. When they arrived over the briefed area, the low overcast prevented working with any of the controllers. The squadron then proceeded eastward and bombed a bridge over the Moselle about 8 miles southeast of Wittlich. When they returned to the base, they didn't think the bridge was knocked out, but when one of the other squadrons returned they reported that they were in the same vicinity when our squadron had bombed and that our pilots had put the bridge into the water.

While the mission was still up, Group S-2 called on the hot line to notify us that we had been awarded a Battle Honor for a Unit Citation for the excellent work done by the Group on the mission executed 3 September 1944, when the Germans were caught trying to pull out from the vicinity of Mons, destroying 492 enemy M/Ts and horse

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SQUADRON HISTORY

MISSION # 337.....Continued.....

drawn vehicles, and damaging 30 more vehicles. This was a great blow to the enemy which the day's missions accomplished.

In the afternoon, a new pilot arrived to join the squadron - 2nd Lt. Robert D. Sheedy.

MISSIONS # 338, 339.....Armed Recce.....

Snow was the major factor during the 27th. There were no operations and the release came in the afternoon. In the morning, the first ground officers and enlisted men were given passes for 40 hours to Paris. Each squadron was authorized 1 officer and 1 enlisted man to make the trip. The bad weather continued on the 28th with no operations.

Briefing was at 0700 on the 29th. The opening remarks dealt with the congratulatory TWX message from General H.H. Arnold for the achievements by the units of the Ninth Air Force on the 22nd and 23rd, when the retreating enemy motor columns were blasted (Copy of TWX attached). The mission, a Group formation, was to recce the general area east of the Rhine between Gissen, Friedberg and Hofheim. Due to freezing and taxiing difficulties, Maj. Crisp and Lt. Breuer were the only two to take off. Maj. was leading the mission. When the group was airborne, they were called and told to go on a short mission. The weather was poor in the briefed area. Ripsaw #5 told the formation where they were and then took them to Kaiserslautern where they bombed the marshalling yard. The squadron's 2 airplanes got 4 direct hits on the tracks as they dive bombed.

The second mission for the day was similar to the morning's. Capt. Henry led the squadron on this one. The group was to fly the recce area as planned. The weather was still poor when they arrived over the area. The squadron bombed a concentration of 15 vehicles in a forest about 15 miles east of St. Vith with very good results, destroying 6 and damaging 8.

The same type of mission was scheduled for the 30th, which brought a 0730 briefing. Capt. Reinthal pointed out the different German airfields enroute over the area. Weather was doubtful and the ALO gave the latest sitrep on our fronts. He told us that the Russians were reported about 80 miles from Berlin at one point. Maj. Crisp, who was going to lead the group, briefed the assembled squadrons and each returned to their respective sites to await an 0845 take off. In the squadron, the pilots had gone out to the airplanes already when a call came in over the squawk box to recall the pilots since take off was held up and we were put on a 1 hour alert. Snow came and later in the day a release came through.

An overcast was present all day on the last day of the month. The temperature rose as the rain fell, turning the snow to slush. No briefing was called since the weather was expected to be bad all day. The squadron commanders, operations officers, and flight leaders went to a meeting at Group Headquarters where flying control and group policy was discussed. The rest of the day was rather uneventful as the month came to a close.

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SQUADRON HISTORY

C O P Y

FROM HQ. XIX TAC (ADV) 281700A
TO CG 100TH FIGHTER WING
CG XIX TAC REAR
CO'S ALL GROUPS
CO 19TH TACTICAL CONTROL GROUP

SECRET SEND IN CLEAR
BT REDLINE REDLINE

OPW71

THE FOLLOWING IS PARAPHRASE OF A MESSAGE FROM GENERAL ARNOLD TO CG NINTH AIR FORCE TO CG XIX TAC : IT IS INDICATED FROM PRELIMINARY REPORTS OF OPERATIONS FOR PERIOD 22/24 JAN INCLUSIVE THAT YOUR AGGRESSIVE CREWS ESTABLISHED A NEW ALL TIME TOTALLY HIGH IN NUMBER OF GERMAN TRANSPORT DESTROYED. THE PREVIOUS RECORD SET AT FALAISE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN ALMOST DOUBLED. THIS LOOKS LIKE EXCELLENT SOLUTION TO GERMAN TRANSPORT FUEL PROBLEM. HIGHLY COMMENDABLE ARE THE SPEED WITH WHICH YOUR COMMAND REACTED TO OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED AND THE THOROUGHNESS OF ATTACKS . THE SPIRIT DEMONSTRATED, NOT ONLY FOR THIS SHOW BUT FOR THE CONSISTENT DETERMINATION OF YOUR UNITS TO DO MORE THAN THEIR SHARE, HAS PROVED AN INSPIRATION TO EVERYONE. PLEASE ACCEPT MY CONGRATULATIONS FOR YOURSELF AND ALL PERSONNEL INVOLVED.

THE CG ARMY AIR FORCES IN WASHINGTON HAS SEEN FIT TO REMARK THE OUTSTANDING WORK OF UNITS OF THE XIX TAC AND I TAKE GREAT SATISFACTION IN TRANSMITTING HIS MESSAGE AND CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU ALL.

----WEYLAND----

C O P Y

A TRUE COPY:

SECRET

Murray B. Thaler
MURRAY B. THALER, 1st Lt, AC.

2136

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SQUADRON HISTORY

January 1945 brought with it the first anniversary of the unit's arrival in the European Theater of Operations. The German's attempt to stab into our lines in the now famous "Ardennes Salient" was a failure as he started to pull out. Our pilots did a marvelous job of catching the enemy transportation all over the roads leading out of the salient on the 22nd and 23rd of January, bombing and strafing these mixed vehicles. The original lines of our ground forces were straightened as the enemy was cleared out. Word came through that the Group received the Unit Citation for the battle honors won near Mons on 3 September 1944 as they hit German road transportation in front of our advancing columns in Belgium. The pride in the organization was easily felt when we were notified of this achievement. Of those who participated in that day's operations, men like Capts. Joe McLachlan and Dave Parrish, have returned home, Capt. Alfred "George" Benton was transferred, Lt. Khauss is MIA, Lt. Stevens was transferred, as was Maj. Andrews who led the first mission for that day. And as the Battle for Germany continues, the Thunder Bum Squadron will demonstrate its important role in the joint air-ground action against the enemy.

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