

321st Bomb Group

HEADLINES



15 March 1943 _____ 15 March 1944

Personal Note:

My Uncle Fred Ritger was a pilot for the 446th Bomb Squad of the 321st Bombardment Group in the 57th Wing of the 12th United States Army Air Force during World War II. In searching for information on my uncle's military service I found "Headlines" online at various web sites. It was scanned and saved in several formats, often from original documents which were in bad shape. In my search I never found "Headlines" in its entirety but I have collected all pages and have compiled them here. In an effort to make the document more readable and to get it indexed by major search engines I took the time to transcribe it and post it here. I have attempted to correct spelling and punctuation errors but I'm no expert so email me if you find an error. I've used common fonts as substitutes for the originals to make it display on most computers and I've tried to resize the pages to print on one page each without cutting off at the margins. Various printers, browsers and operating systems will wreak havoc with the formatting so I've provided a link below to a PDF version that you can download , view and print.

In gratitude for 1st Lt. Frederic C. Ritger and all who served in the 321st.

-Bob Ritger
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FORWARD

To tell the story of the part played by the 321st Bomb Group in the important battles of the Mediterranean is the aim of HEADLINES. Rather than give a lengthy narrative account of the unit's activities, the writers have prepared on-the-spot news items with appropriate date lines to cover the highlights. HEADLINES traces 321st activities throughout two years of combat, from March 15, 1943 when the group flew its first mission to March 15, 1945. It has been published by authority of the Commanding General, 57th Bomb Wing through facilities obtained by the U.S. Armed Forces newspaper, Stars and Stripes. The booklet is not an official document and its publication for distribution to personnel of the group has the approbation of Colonel Rex Smith, USAAF Public Relations Officer, Washington, D.C., who examined parts of the manuscript while touring this theater. The material in HEADLINES was gathered and prepared by Capt. M. T. Holloway and S/Sgt. John L. McNevin, Jr., of the 321st Public Relations Staff. Photos were provided by the Group Photo Section. We are indebted to Capt. John W. Dillin, 57th Bomb Wing Public Relations Officer, for his invaluable assistance in the enterprise. The manuscript was examined and passed by the Senior Air Censor, MAAF HQ., for publication and mailing.

321st ARRIVES IN AFRICA

MASS FLIGHT SPANS OCEAN

OUJDA, FRENCH MOROCCO, March 6, 1943 (Delayed). — The 321st medium bombardment group, a B-25 Billy Mitchell force composed of four squadrons, has arrived in North Africa. The ground and flight echelons rejoined here today for the first time since they separated at De Ridder, La., on January 21.

Taking off from Brooks Field, West Palm Beach, Fla., the 54-plane formation of B-25's led by Colonel Robert D. Knapp, group commander, began the first leg of the overseas hop on February 15.

For refueling and maintenance checks the formation made stops at Puerto Rico, British Guiana, Belem and Natal, Brazil, Ascension Islands, Monrovia, Liberia, Dakar, French West Africa and Marrakech before landing at Oujda on March 2.

At Staten Island, New York, the ground echelon boarded the USS Elizabeth C. Stanton the afternoon of February 7. The vessel shoved off the following morning at dawn in a 26-ship convoy including escort and docked at Oran at dawn February 21.

The men of the ground echelon bivouacked for 11 days in the vicinity of Oran and then made the trip to Oujda in French 40 an 8 rail cars, arriving at the local station today.

The mass flight crossing by the air echelon marked a pioneering achievement. This was the first time a group has succeeded in making the crossing in a single formation without the loss of a single bomber.

With the arrival of the 321st, the Allied Air Forces in this theater will have added to their striking power one of the best trained and best equipped groups in the USAAF. Activated at Columbia, S.C. August 1, 1942, the B-25 unit went through the first phase of OTU training there, then moved to Walterboro, S.C. for the second and final phase.

When this training which included skip bombing practice at Eglin Field, Fla., had been completed, the 321st was fully

Strategy



Col. Robert D. Knapp (right), C.O. of the 321st bomb group confers with Maj. General Doolittle (center), boss of the Northwest African Strategic Air Force and Lt. General Spaatz, commander of all American Air units in this theater.

prepared to enter combat; but instead of going overseas, the group was called upon to participate in maneuvers in Louisiana flying low altitude support missions for tactical ground force command problems. The unit received the benefit of this additional training before leaving the States for overseas service.

After taking part in maneuvers the group's planes were modified. The ineffective lower turrets were removed and guns installed at the waist and tail. Armor plating to protect each crew member was installed in all the bombers. The 321st thus brings into combat a new and more powerful B-25 which promises to provide some unpleasant surprises for the enemy when the group begins combat operations, it is reported.

Final arrangements are being made at present by the group commander and his staff or a base in the forward area from which the 321st bombers can range over enemy territory for the first time.

GROUP MAKES FIRST ATTACK

AIN M'LILA, ALGERIA, MARCH 15, 1943. — Roaring down a wet, soggy, grass runway, 15 B-25's led by Colonel Robert D. Knapp took off at 1330 hours this afternoon to attack an enemy landing ground at Mezzouna in Tunisia. This was the first combat mission to be carried out by 321st bombers and although heavy flak was encountered, all of the planes returned safely. P-38s escorted the formation.

The attack was directed against enemy aircraft dispersed about the landing strip and returning crewmen reported that several strings of fragmentation bombs found their mark. A number of fires were burning in the dispersal areas when the Mitchells turned for home.

For combat operations, the 321st has been assigned to the 47th Bomb Wing which is a part of Major General James Doolittle's Northwest African Strategic Air Force. Future targets are likely to be those of strategic importance.

Today's attack against the enemy's air power in the area is a part of the ever-increasing efforts by the Allies to maintain air superiority. The dangerous enemy thrust at Kasserine Pass a few weeks ago might have been successful had his air support been sufficient. By hammering his air bases ceaselessly, the Allies will be able to hold complete mastery of the air.

Now that the enemy is faced with increasing pressure in Tunisia from the South by the British Eighth Army and in the Gafsa region by American ground forces, his supplies and equipment will be expended more rapidly and his ability to hold Tunisia will depend more and more on the flow of replacements from Sicily and the mainland.

The Strategic Air Force is engaged in cutting off these supplies and destroying those on hand. Bombers of the 321st will play their part in carrying out this plan.

If the enemy's supply lines can be cut, nothing short of disaster awaits his forces in Tunisia.

BATTLE FOR TUNISIA ENDS

Tunis and Bizerte Captured; 321st B-25's in Sea Sweeps

Group Active Against Vital Targets

AIN M'LILA, ALGERIA, MAY 13, 1943. — The battle for Tunisia is over and the Axis powers have lost their last foothold in Africa. It was announced today that all organized resistance has ceased. Isolated groups of enemy troops are still being rounded up. Prisoners taken already number more than 150,000.

In contributing to the disaster which befell Von Arnheim's forces, the 321st Bomb Group flew 51 missions. Thirty of these attacks were directed against shipping in the Sicilian Straits, 15 against air bases, four against the vital communications center at Mateur, one against harbor installations and one against a railway junction.

The Group's attacks had two objectives. Of prime importance were the efforts against shipping and communications. By continually sweeping the enemy's sea lanes the 321st virtually sealed off the Axis Forces in Tunisia from their bases of supply in Italy and Sicily. Convoys sighted were attacked and special attention given to merchant vessels which carried supplies to the troops in Africa. At least ten of these large vessels were sunk and 18 others were so badly damaged it is probable that the cargoes were ruined before they reached their destinations.

Not only did these attacks on shipping prevent the Axis powers from bringing in sufficient supplies to keep their armies going but they were undoubtedly in a large measure responsible for his decision to make no attempt at evacuating.

Attacks by the 321st on enemy communications in Tunisia were in a sense for the same purpose as those against shipping. Limited stocks of supplies had already been accumulated and the bombing of communications was intended to prevent these supplies from reaching the armies in the field. On the one hand the flow of supplies to Tunisia was being checked; on

Turret Gunner First Killed

First 321st casualty in the war was a turret gunner. He was killed by a 20mm shell fired by an Me 109 during one of the early shipping sweeps. The B-25 in which he was flying was riddled with more than 500 holes when it crash landed at a friendly base.

the other the flow of supplies already in Tunisia to the troops who needed them was also being checked. First objective of 321st attacks was to weaken the enemy's forces by denying him the materials he needed with which to fight.

Almost a third of the Group's missions were directed against Axis air bases. The objective of these attacks was to destroy hostile bombers and fighters on the ground and thus help to maintain air superiority for the Allies. Many of these attacks were timed to reduce Axis air strength just prior to a major effort by our ground forces so that they would not be molested from the air when they began their push.

The initial period in combat for the 321st has been crowned with success. From novices, the men have developed into skilled veterans of combat and the efficiency of the B-25 unit had improved consistently with experience. Already the enemy has suffered severe losses at the hands of the 321st and more blows are in store for him.

For the part the Air Forces played in the Tunisian victory, General Spaatz received the following message from the Allied Forces Commander: "President Roosevelt has asked that I convey his thanks for the superb job you have done in the Tunisian Campaign. I am profoundly grateful to you and all portions of your command for having carried out their assigned tasks so magnificently as to earn this commendation from the President".

FIRST BIVOUAC WAS MUD HILL

About 14 miles out of Oran is a bivouac area where the ground echelon of the 321st spent its first few days overseas. The area covers the top of a hill and has been given a wide variety of names by hapless, new arrivals in Africa, one of the milder being "Mud Hill".

The men of the 321st reached this desolate, barren location in the dead of night on February 21, 1943, after marching four miles in the rain with full field equipment from the nearest railroad station. Fighting their way to the top of the muddy slope they attempted to pitch wet pyramids in the dark without tools with which to work. SNAFU is about the only expression to adequately describe the state of affairs.

There was little sleeping done that first night but the following day the sun was shining, the camp was put in order and the men began to buckle down to life overseas with A.E.F.

ARAB SCARE

The Arab scare had repercussion when a cook in the 321st woke up in the middle of the cold African night to find "two Arabs leaning over my bed with long knives". According to the frightened cook, the vandals eventually fled.

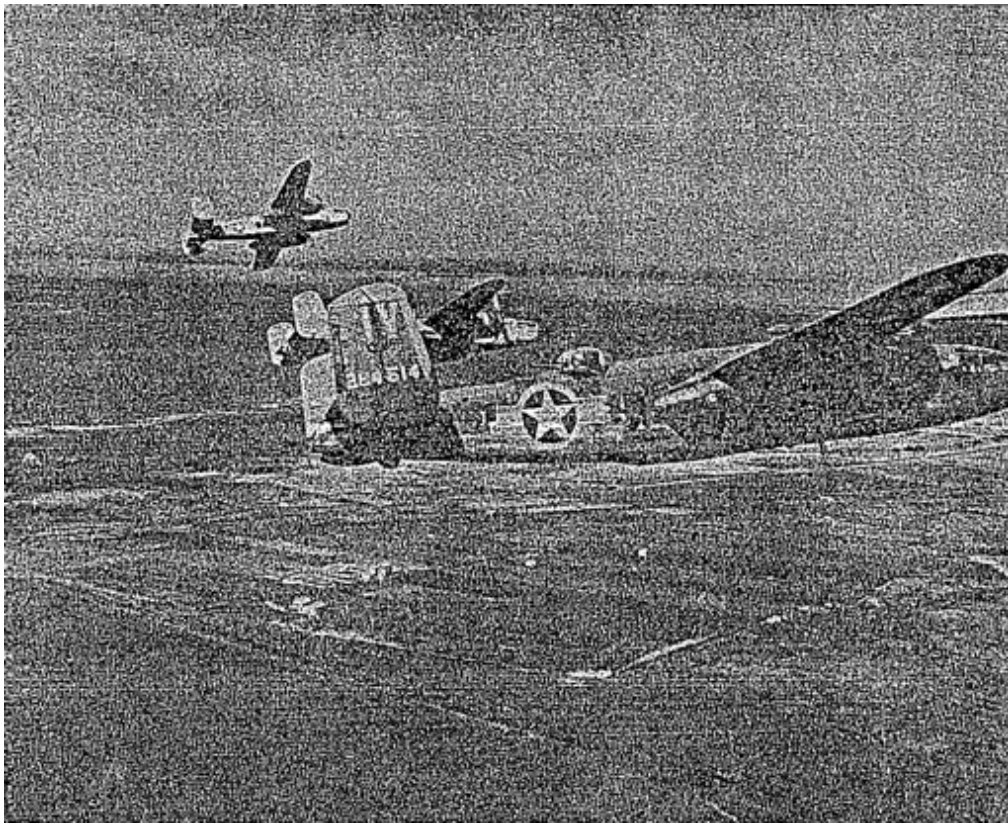
Tent members were disbelieving but each bed had an extra occupant the following night — a loaded firearm.

"EASTER PARADE"

About a week before Easter, 321st personnel held a song festival and a radio gunner was called upon to deliver a vocal. Because of the proximity of the holiday, he chose "Easter Parade" as his song.

Several weeks later the men gathered again to honor the memory of that radio gunner who was fatally wounded - on Easter Sunday.

321st WINS AIR BATTLE



321st BOMBERS! THEY HAVE AND ADDED PUNCH! The waist and tail guns as installed in all 321st bombers may be seen clearly in this shot. The lower turret has been removed from the modified B-25's.

B-25 Mitchells Shoot Down 17 Fighters Over Bo Rizzo

AIN M'LILA, ALGERIA, MAY 28, 1943. — German fighter pilots learned about the 321st Group's modified planes the hard way today.

With newly-installed waist and tail guns blazing away at the surprised Germans, Colonel Robert D. Knapp's B-25's knocked 17 enemy aircraft from the skies without loss to themselves following a heavy attack on the Bo Rizzo airdrome, Sicily.

A total of 29 B-25's bombed the important airdrome. Good coverage was achieved with hits seen on planes, in the revetments and in the various dispersal areas. The Mitchell escort dived down to strafe gun positions which were sending up a heavy anti-aircraft barrage and the big fight was on. A large force of fighters

swept in for the attack. Crews counted 30 to 50 including Messerschmitt 10s, Focke Wulf 190s and Macchi 202s. The 321st was outnumbered but the enemy pilots appeared inexperienced and, more important than that, they apparently were unaware of the new armament of the B-25's.

The modified Mitchells passed their first acid test with flying colors. In the ensuing attacks, 10 Me 109s were definitely destroyed along with a Macchi 202. Four Me 109s and 2 Focke Wulf 190s were probably destroyed while six other Messerschmitts limped away from the battle licking their wounds.

The majority of the Mitchell gunners made their kill with the "greatest of ease". Time and again, the enemy fighters came within easy range of the waist and tail guns

Parachuting Men Have Had It

The parachuting days of three combat gunners of the 321st Group are over now and as they languish in a German prisoner of war camp they have time to brood over the fates that placed them there.

The first time they were forced to hit the silk, they floated down almost directly on their home base. But it seems that you can't overdo a good thing and the second time they bailed out, well, they had it.

First Encounter Was on March

First encounter with fighters by 321st modified B-25's occurred on March 20, 1943, just five days after the group entered combat. The Mitchells were on a shipping sweep in the Sicilian Straits when about 30 fighters from bases in Tunis intercepted. Seven fighters were destroyed, four of which were bagged by modified gun positions. Tail gunners accounted for one ME-109 and one ME-210, left waist gunners accounted for one ME-109 and one ME-210. One B-25 was lost and one damaged so badly by the fighters it had to crash-land. Both of these bombers had been crippled by flak and were alone when attacked.

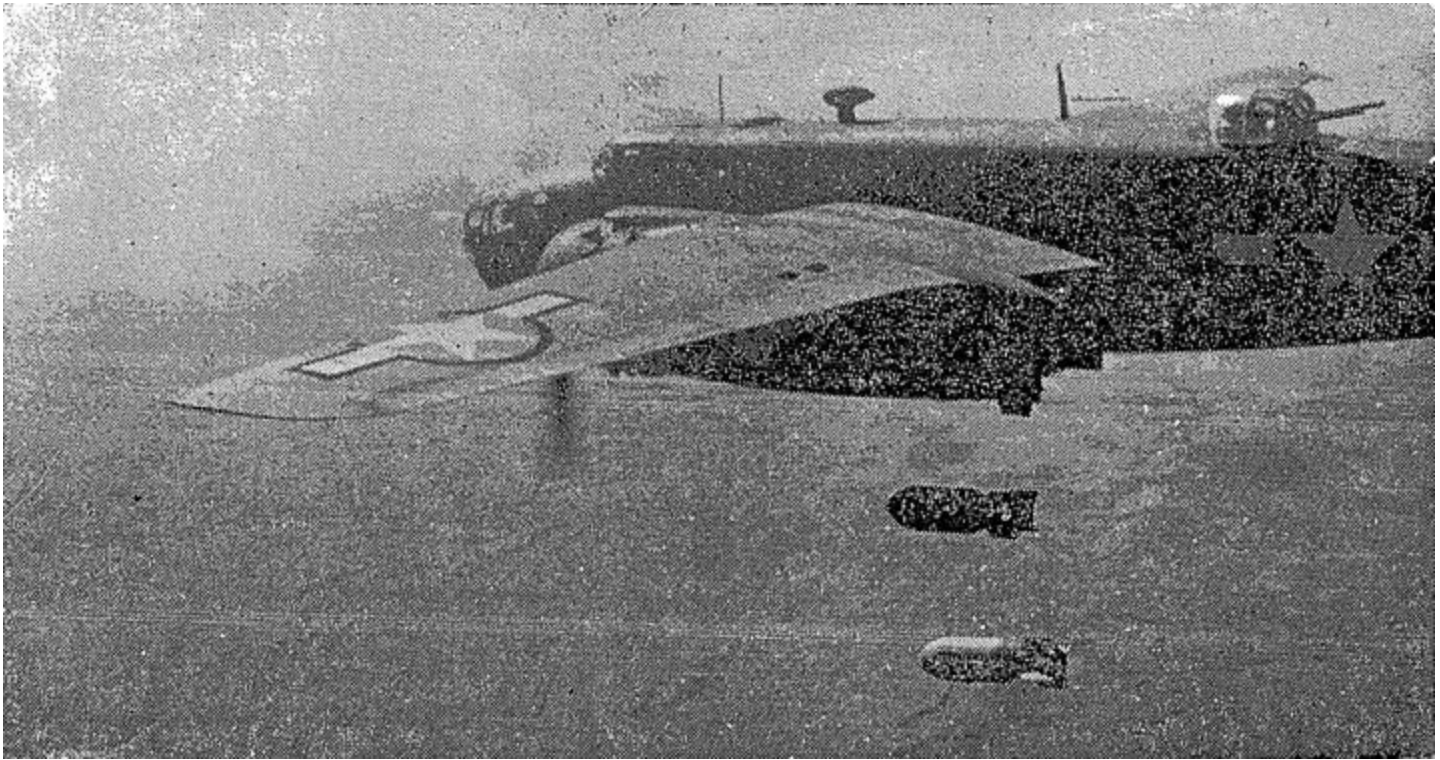
apparently unaware of their existence. These proved to be "duck gallery" shots.

The desperate but aggressive enemy pilots tried every trick in the books including their newest—air to air bombing. Some of the fighters went about 1000 to 3000 feet above the B-25's to drop bombs which usually burst below the formation.

The entire attack was carried out without the loss of a single aircraft and not one of the crewmen were injured.

The Bo Rizzo attack marks another raid carried out by the group against enemy installations on the island of Sicily which is receiving more and more attention daily. The 321st pounded similar targets in Africa with great success as it played a prominent role in the Tunisian campaign.

AAF WINS IN NEW TACTICS



BOMBS FALL ON PANTELLERIA. — Bombs like these from a 321st B-25 convinced the garrison on Pantelleria and Lampedusa that the best course was surrender. For the USAAF, it was a major victory.

Mediterranean Islands Fall Through Aerial Bombardment

SOUK EL ARBA, TUNISIA, JUNE 12, 1943. — Pantelleria and Lampedusa, small, heavily fortified islands lying just off the coast of Tunisia were still garrisoned by enemy troops after Tunisia fell. Both islands had harbors and Pantelleria had an airfield. With these islands in enemy hands, the Allies would be dangerously flanked in any future thrust towards Europe.

Yesterday, following the most intensive and concentrated aerial bombardment of the war our forces occupied Pantelleria. Today at noon, Lampedusa also was occupied. No large naval armada was used to gain these victories. The garrisons had surrendered before a single man of the occupying force was landed. Just how effective concentrated bombing of strong enemy fortifications could be had long been argued by military experts. The

aerial pounding of Pantelleria and Lampedusa which resulted in both surrendering without opposition to small occupying forces provided the answer.

During the past few days medium and heavy bombers including B-25's of the 321st were over the islands in wave after wave, bombing gun positions, defense installations and harbors.

Along with bombs the bombers dropped leaflets warning the island garrisons to surrender. The sign of surrender was to be a large white cross on the airdrome or in an open field. Until it appeared the bombers would hammer the islands relentlessly.

B-25 crewmen of the 321st reported seeing the cross on the airfield at Pantelleria yesterday. A small group of Allied vessels had been waiting for the sign and when it appeared they moved into the harbor unopposed. Today over Lampedusa crewmen witnessed a similar bloodless invasion.

The victory over heavily fortified ground positions by air bombardment alone is being hailed as one of the greatest achievements of the USAAF.

There are still some who underestimate the capabilities of bombardment from the air but the Pantelleria and Lampedusa victories have won for the Air Forces many converts to the principle of saturation bombing.

General H. H. Arnold, chief of the USAAF, sent the following message to General Spaatz following the fall of the two island strongholds: "Entire Air Force joins me in congratulations to Allied Air Force in North Africa upon highly successful completion of Pantelleria Air operations. Tremendous bombs dropped an negligible losses of planes speak well for planning, preparation and execution. Northwest African Air Forces have achieved a notable victory. This victory has been made possible only by the enthusiasm, skill, determination and bravery which all elements of the force have displayed. We have maintained and improved time standard which was so vital a factor in the fall of Tunisia".

321 BOMBS ITALY FIRST

500 Planes in Initial Attack on Rome

First Capital of Axis Is Hit

SOUK EL ARBA, TUNISIA, JULY 19, 1943. — An aerial armada of 500 aircraft struck suddenly and decisively at military targets in the Rome area today as B-25 bombers from the 321st Bombardment Group helped carry out the first air attack on the Italian capital.

With group commander Colonel Robert D. Knapp, Auburn, Ala., in the lead ship of a 72-plane formation — the largest ever sent up by the Mitchell group — the 321st went for the Ciampino airdrome, an important airdrome for fighters.

Penetrating an intense and accurate barrage of anti-aircraft fire, the bombers achieved excellent coverage. Bursts started at the railroad tracks on the southwest side and continued across facilitating buildings. Hits were scored on hangars, revetments and among parked planes. Numerous fires were reported in the target area.

Ten to twelve enemy fighters attacked the formation but were driven off by the bomber gunners. The epic attack cost the group one aircraft shot down over the target by flak while another plane landed at Bizerte after incurring some damage. This was a modest price to pay for such a successful and daring attack, it was stated.

Returning crews described their impressions of the big Italian capital and were quick to reassure that “no bombs fell in the area surrounding the Vatican”. However, at least one crew member reported a huge fire in the eastern part of Rome.

Axis radios, as expected, were quick to condemn the American air attacks, terming them “ruthless and barbarous assaults carried out on a sacred shrine”. The speakers could hardly suppress, however, their apparent concern over the effect of the attack upon the Axis bastion. Allied

Discomfort Synonymous with Souk El Arba

Flies, heat, dust and discomfort will always be synonymous with Souk El Arba to men of the 321st. From the desert to the South on July afternoons hot winds swept the area like the blast from a furnace making the simple process of living a great effort.

The 321st has had numerous bivouacs which wouldn't exactly attract tourists but it is conceded that of them all, Souk El Arba, takes the proverbial cake.

leaders answered Axis condemnations with the statement that attacks would be pressed against the enemy wherever he appeared. Mussolini had brought on this attack, the Allied reports continued, because of his insistence on building strategic military targets close to religious shrines.

The Rome attack added another outstanding achievement to the 321st Group's record which also includes outstanding missions during the Tunisian campaign and the first mission against the Italian mainland by medium bombers.

PROPAGANDA

That there are two sides to every story is a fact that can be affirmed by 321st crewmen who carried out the June 21st attack on Battipaglia in the first serial thrust at the Italian mainland.

After successfully completing their mission without loss—without encountering any opposition whatsoever, in fact—the crewmen heard the Italian radio broadcast the startling announcement that 26 B-25's were lost in the raid.

Mediums Begin New Efforts

SOUK EL ARBA, TUNISIA, JUNE 21, 1943 (Delayed). — For the first time in the war, the Italian mainland felt the might of United States medium bombers and the 321st Bombardment Group commanded by Colonel Robert D. Knapp spearheaded the attacks.

Taking off from their dusty African base, 36 bombers of the 321st took to the air with a strong escort to pierce the Italian defenses in their mission against the Battipaglia marshalling wards just south of Naples. The railroad yards here represented a vital nerve center for all rail lines going North to Naples and east to Foggia.

Apparently catching the enemy by surprise, the bombers made their runs without so much as a single burst of flak interfering. Excellent coverage was achieved with bombs falling on the choke points transformer station and repair sheds causing great damage. The transformer station was reported 75 percent destroyed.

No fighter opposition was experienced although reports stated that the fighter escort sighted and shot down one Junkers 290.

The highly successful attacks carried out with the surprisingly slight resistance demonstrated vividly to the enemy the imminence of regular attacks on Italian targets.

Jittery Italian broadcasting stations reported that “no fewer than 26 American aircraft were lost on this attack”.

Besides the military destruction wrought upon the target area many of the crewmen got their first glimpse of the famed volcano, Mount Vesuvius, and the quaint Isle of Capri. The attack added another success to the list of the 321st Group which is fresh from its important role in smashing enemy targets in the Tunisian campaign.

SICILIAN INVASION BEGINS

321st Bomb Group Assists Ground Troops in Landing

Powerful Allied Forces Battle Way Onto Southern Coast of Island

SOUK EL ARBA, TUNISIA, July 10, 1943. — Powerful Allied troops this morning began the invasion of "Festung Europa" by stabbing at the southern coast of Sicily aided by a tremendous naval bombardment from hundreds of vessels and preceded by a vicious serial bombardment including attacks by the 321st Bomb Group.

The B-25 group commanded by Colonel Robert D. Knapp wasted no time this morning as they ranged out against troop concentrations and barracks at the town of Palazzolo. The Mitchells achieved excellent coverage of the target area without meeting any enemy opposition.

Returning crews enthusiastically reported the huge armada of ships laying off the Sicilian coast while thousands of Allied troops were unloaded at the beaches of Europe's "soft underbelly". The crews and observers were amazed at the mass of ships—"too many to count" - which helped launch the long-awaited invasion of Europe.

As the Allied troops fought inland, the 321st joined other air units in smashing at enemy air power in the afternoon. The group's B-25's went out to attack the big Trapani-Milo airdrome in western Sicily.

Returning crews from this mission reported good coverage with hits on runway and hangars, one of which blew up. Two of the group's bombers were crippled by flak and made controlled landings on the sea off the African coast. A total of 19

ships were holed by the intense flak barrage.

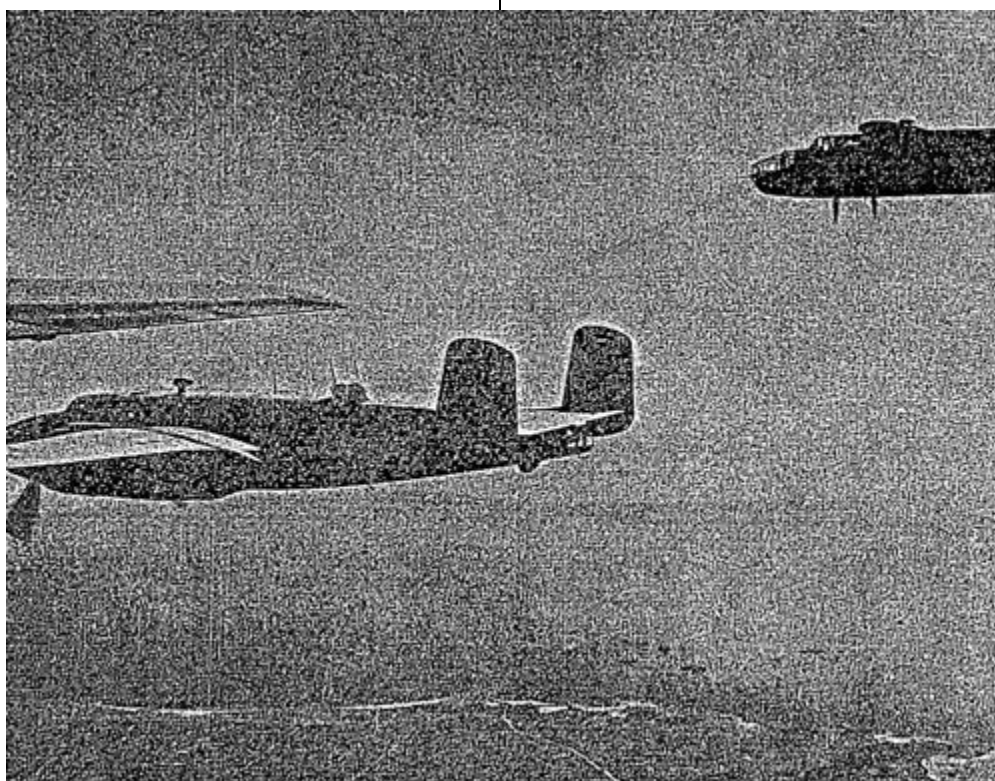
The Sicilian operation represents the third amphibious attack supported by the 321st Group which also helped neutralize the islands of Pantelleria and Lampedusa

"What's in a Name?"

The audience of 321st G. I.s had just leaned back to relax between reels of the outdoor movie they were attending when a shot rang out and whined directly over their heads, too close for comfort.

The name of the movie they were attending was "Ball of Fire".

before Allied troops occupied those islands. The group played a prominent role in the Tunisian campaign helping to cut enemy supply lines on the sea and hammering incessantly at a wide variety of land targets.



INVASION OF SICILY. — A small part of the vast invasion armada which moved on Sicily today may be seen hugging the coast as 321st B-25's head inland to bomb troop concentrations. The Mitchell force carried out many softening-up attacks on the island prior to D-day and flew two missions as our ground troops were carrying out landing operations.

SICILY IN ALLIED HANDS

B-25-G's Enter Combat in Theatre

ISLAND FALLS IN FIVE WEEKS

SOLIMAN, TUNISIA, AUGUST 17, 1943. — The island of Sicily fell to the Allies today after a swift 5-week campaign in which the once proud Axis powerhouse was outgeneraled and outfought on the ground and practically outclassed in the air.

With the taking of Messina, Allied troops completed the first important campaign in the invasion of Europe in blitzkrieg fashion setting a pattern for future operations on the battlefields of the coming campaigns. And nowhere in the war has air superiority been so decisive a factor.

Starting many weeks before the first soldier set foot on the Gela beaches, Allied aircraft ranging from heavy bombers to fighter-bombers began the systematic pounding of enemy airfields, harbors, communications and strong points. Air support reached its peak on D-day and continued throughout the remaining days of the battle.

The important part played by the Air Forces in the Sicilian victory won a commendation from the army's number one man, General George C. Marshall. In a message to General Spaatz he said: "In supporting our troops in Sicily and in humbling hostile Italy, you and your American flyers and ground crews, have done a wonderful job. My personal thanks and congratulations".

The 321st Bomb group took an active part in the campaign. Flying B-25 bombers against a wide variety of targets, the 321st participated in 56 missions during the battle, sending out more than 2000 sorties. The group flew two missions on D-day.

Commanded by Colonel Robert D. Knapp, the veteran B-25 force helped blast the enemy from Tunisia, pulverize Pantelleria and Lampedusa from the air and then went to work on Sicily. This group was the first to give the Italian mainland a feel of growing Allied air power and also participated in the first bombing of Rome.

At present, the group is concentrating on targets in Italy.

Bob Hope Visitor

When Bob Hope and company visited the resort-like base occupied by the 321st on the sands of the Mediterranean beaches the popular comedian was not without hi usual wisecrack.

Striding into the area, he surveyed the sandy picturesque setting and remarked, "What is this, Santa Monica?"

ROMAN BATHS

ARE POPULAR

The American soldier's passion for cleanliness proved to be a boon to the Roman Bath business in North Africa. Each of the baths located near the 321st group's first two bases overseas consisted of a large stone floored room which was kept steaming hot. Two cement basins, one containing hot water and the other cold and numerous wooden pails were the only furnishings. Dried camel dung was used to heat the baths and its odor permeated the establishment. Cost of admission was 20 francs (40 cents) and at all hours of the day American servicemen with towels and soap paraded into the establishment.

AXIS FEELS NEW WALLOP

SOUK EL ARBA, TUNISIA, AUGUST 5, 1943 (Delayed). — the Axis felt the wallop of still another new Allied weapon today when a four-plane flight of B-25-G's hurled 36 75mm explosive shells at a railway switching station at Guspini, Sardinia.

Direct hits were scored on the target sending it up in flames. The B-25 in the Mediterranean Theater. The G's have been assigned to Colonel Robert D. Knapp's 321st Group and are operating as a separate squadron in the group.

Operations of the "Gun Squadron" will only supplement those of the 321st and the group is continuing uninterrupted medium-altitude bombing attacks against objectives in Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and Italy.

The B-25-G was developed after long experimentation. The 75mm cannon runs from the navigator's compartment out through the nose. There is no bombardier's "greenhouse" and the nose of the ship is metal-covered. A Cannoneer is required for loading the gun but it is aimed and fired by the pilot.

Just how effective the new planes will be in this theater is not known. Since they must fly at minimum altitude to fire the cannon with any degree of accuracy, anti-aircraft fire defending most of the vital targets in this theater might result in prohibitive losses.

While assigned to the 321st the B-25-G's will be used against shipping and enemy installations such as the one attacked today.

SALERNO LANDINGS MADE

Support Given By 321 B-25's

Strong United Nation Units Fight Way Onto Beaches

SOLIMAN TUNISIA, SEPTEMBER 9, 1943. — Strong United States, British and Canadian troops today made landings on the beaches near Salerno in an amphibious operation designed to outflank the German armies fighting in southern Italy.

The invasion was preceded by a spirited aerial bombardment of enemy communications in the area including attacks by the 321st Bombardment Group commanded by Colonel Robert D. Knapp.

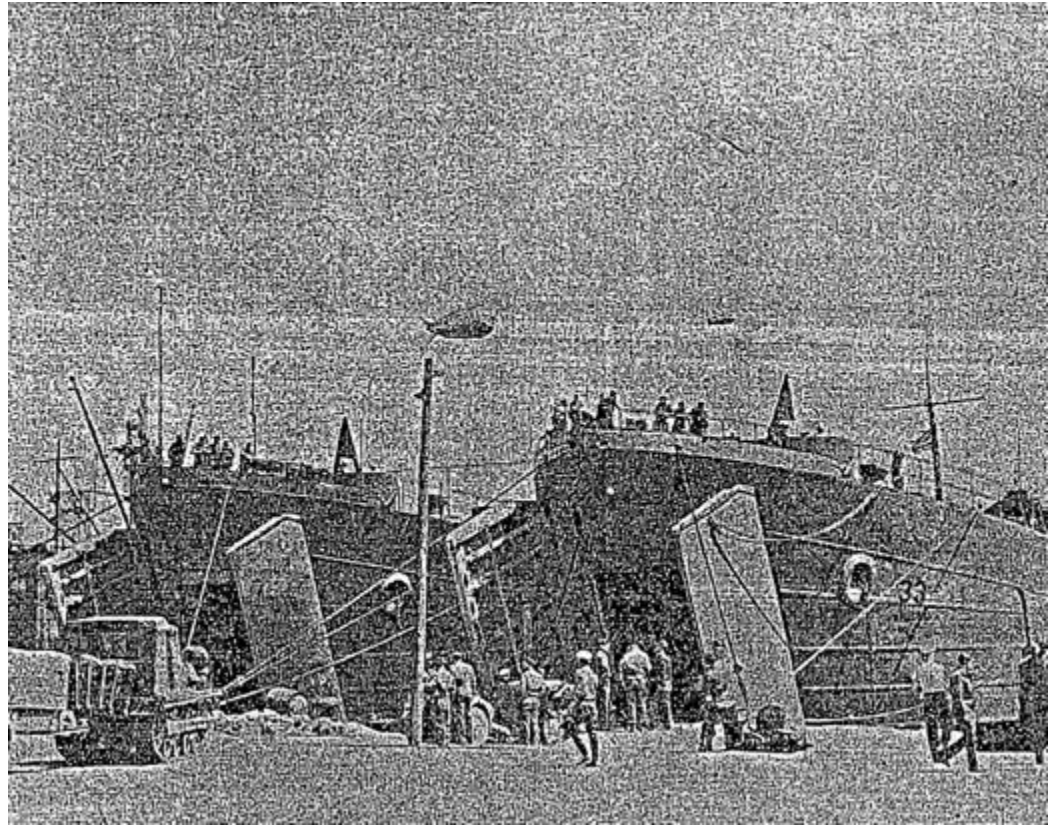
The landing at Salerno followed by one day the dramatic announcement Italy had surrendered to the Allies. The part which Italy might play in ground operations by the Allies on the mainland is not certain at this time. Naval units bombarded the invasion area at Salerno before the troops landed.

Following a plastering of several airfields north of Naples, the 321st Group concentrated on enemy strong points and communications in the Naples area in support of the Salerno landings. This represents the fourth amphibious operation supported the group commanded by Colonel Robert D. Knapp.

Yesterday, the 321st attacked a road junction north of Lauria, Italy, and reported heavy concentrations of bombs in the target area with two large explosions resulting. The group carried out this attack in the face of heavy and intense anti-aircraft fire.

While Allied troops were making their landings today, the 321st swept in ahead of them to smash railroad and highway communications near Potenza without escort. Excellent results were achieved with

LSTS Used in Invasion



LANDING CRAFT. — Out of the mouth of ships such as these, men, tanks, vehicles and supplies poured ashore at Salerno today. Stiff resistance is being encountered but everything is proceeding according to plan. The amphibious operation came just one day short of two months after the Sicilian invasion, one day following the announcement that Italy was out of the war.

many direct hits causing fires and explosions in the target area.

After a visit to the Fifth Army Headquarters, General Doolittle sent this message to the 321st and other groups which supported the ground forces: "General Clark has asked me to convey to the officers and men of the Northwest African Air Force the sincere thanks and appreciation of the Fifth Army for the magnificent air support which has been given them. It has greatly heartened the ground forces and has contributed much to the success of other operations. All were most enthusiastic in their acclaim of the close and continuous support which has been given them by the Air Force".

Assignment Officer Has Problems

The problems with which a personnel-assignment officer is faced are often great and he must try to fit many square plugs into round holes. But sometimes he comes across a natural such as the case of a 321st group officer who had the job of assigning an ex-weight-lifter. The job the man got — heaving bombs into the bomb bay as an armament worker. Said the man, "...great training for my profession".

PRESIDENTIAL CITATION WON

First Medium Attack on Balkans

321st CITED FOR EFFORTS

Group Knocks Out 186 Planes

B-25's POUND GERMAN BASE

Initial Raid From Italy is Made

GROTTAGLIA, ITALY, NOVEMBER 17, 1943. — Five weeks of concentrated attacks against targets in the Balkans ending today have resulted in a Presidential Citation for the veteran 321st Bomb Group.

The citation appears in War Department Orders and reads as follows: "The 321st Bombardment Group (M) is cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations on 8 October 1943.

"When the Allied invasion of the Italian mainland and simultaneous operations in the Aegean Sea dangerously exposed our extended supply lines to enemy air action from the Luftwaffe units stationed in the Balkans, the 321st Bombardment Group, then in Africa, was ordered to occupy bases in Southern Italy and immediately attack and neutralize the hostile Balkan airfields.

"On 8 October 1943, a formation of forty-eight B-25's, refueled by hand from five gallon cans and serviced with only such equipment as could be transported by air from Africa, flew from Grottaglia, Italy, in a raid on the heavily defended Eleusis Airdrome near Athens, Greece.

"As the formation approached the target, a swarm of hostile fighters attacked, drawing off the escort and permitting more than thirty enemy interceptors to engage the bombers unmolested.

"Distinguishing themselves in the ensuing battle by extraordinary heroism and unswerving determination in the face of desperate assaults by enemy fighters and anti-aircraft fire so intense that 26 B-25's were damaged and two were shot down into the sea, the bomber combat teams worked in perfect coordination to complete their mission.

"As the gunners kept up a withering fire

Distinguished Unit Rule Given

According to the circular governing unit citations, all officers and men assigned or attached to the unit on the date of the act for which it is cited are entitled to wear a distinguished unit badge as a permanent part of the uniform. All men subsequently assigned or attached may wear the badge only so long as they are associated with the unit. The distinguished unit badge is worn over the right pocket of the uniform and is the only decoration worn on the right side.

that destroyed eight enemy fighters and disabled four others, the pilots resolutely maintained a compact and level formation, enabling their bombardiers to cover the assigned areas with a devastating pattern of fragmentation bombs which destroyed many dispersed aircraft and started a number of fires.

"During the critical days which followed, despite almost insurmountable difficulties which kept comparable units inoperative during a part of this period, the 321st Group continued uninterrupted and extremely effective bombing operations against vital enemy objectives which were principally responsible for the reduction of the original Balkan strength of the German XIth Air Force from 300 aircraft to 114, and lending invaluable support to the morale of the Yugoslav Partisan resistance.

"The gallantry, esprit de corps and outstanding proficiency in combat displayed by the personnel of the 321st Bombardment Group have reflected the highest credit upon themselves and the Military Service of the United States".

A Citation in War Department Orders in the name of the President is the highest singular honor a combat unit can receive.

GROTTAGLIA, ITALY, OCTOBER 4, 1943 (Delayed). — Taking off in a steady rain from its new base, the 321st Bombardment Group, first bomber force to be based in Italy, attacked the Argos airdrome in Greece, today, thereby becoming the first medium bombardment group to bomb the Balkans.

The mission was accomplished just one day after the last squadron had joined the group at the new base. With maintenance facilities low and manpower at a minimum, skeleton crews of the advanced party worked feverishly to prepare the bombers for the mission. Each plane — and there were 47 on the mission — was fueled by hand from 5-gallon gasoline cans.

Argos airdrome is one of the main Grecian airfields harboring fighter planes which menace Allied shipping in the Mediterranean and which are proving dangerous to the success of the 8th Army's drive up the Adriatic. Despite the importance of the field and the fact that 30 to 40 fighter aircraft were observed at the base, the bombers encountered negligible flak and no enemy air opposition.

Returning crews reported many direct hits in the dispersal area and among administration buildings. A total of 13 fires were reported in the target area while one large explosion was observed on the east side of the field. All of the bombers returned safely.

Veterans of the Tunisian and Sicilian campaigns, the 321st had been smashing at enemy road and railroad communications in Italy before beginning attacks on the Balkans. The Group was the first to attack the Italian Mainland and has supported four amphibious operations in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations.

BULGARIA CAPITAL BOMBED

321st Bomb Group Attached to TBF

New 57 Wing Administrative

GROTTAGLIA, ITALY, NOVEMBER 18, 1943. — The Northwest African Strategic Air Force (NASAF) has been dissolved according to information received here today.

NASAF, commanded by Major General James H. Doolittle, was organized early in the North African Campaign to bring American and British units under a unified command. A similar organization, the North African Tactical Air Force, controlled all air units doing close support work.

When the 321st began combat operations in March, it was assigned to the 47th Bomb Wing which was a part of NASAF. As the Allied forces move into Europe the old organizations are giving way to new ones to meet current demands.

The American 15th Air Force is being organized and will consist of heavy bombardment and long range fighter units. Into this new organization will go the 47th Wing.

The 321st will be under the 57th Wing for administration, a newly formed unit in the 12th Air Force. For tactical operations the group is assigned to a British organization known as the Tactical Bomber Force (TBF.)

During eight months of combat as a part of the 47th Wing the 321st has established a proud record. Throughout the two campaigns which might well be termed the turning points in the European battle, the Tunisian and Sicilian, the 321st has fought gallantly with the 47th Wing.

To Colonel Robert D. Knapp, group commander, Maj. General Doolittle sent this message today:

"The 321st Bombardment Group has been in the Command since March 15, 1943. During that period, the Group has flown 233 missions totaling 4,230 sorties and has successfully dropped 4,513 tons of bomb on a wide variety of land and naval targets. Twenty-six of the Group's aircraft

Pilot Officer Not Saluted

For three full days one of the pilot officers of the 321st didn't rate a salute from any of the enlisted personnel and not through any disrespect on the part of the yardbirds.

A fire in his tent destroyed the officer's belongings and in the emergency, he wore an enlisted man's shirt with technical sergeant stripes thereon.

MOVING FEAT UNBELIEVABLE

Someone who might have been visiting the 321st base while a particular engineering feat was being accomplished would probably rub his eyes in disbelief but it actually happened.

Line personnel aided operations men in moving a large Niessen hut from the line to the area — a distance of about a mile and a half over treacherous sand and bumps — intact.

were lost in combat as against 78 enemy planes destroyed, probably destroyed or damaged. During this period the Group has consistently maintained the lowest record for early returns of any unit in the command.

"This record is one of which every man in the organization can well be proud. It reflects great credit upon the Group Commander and upon the individual work of each officer and man. Furthermore, the record is all the more creditable in view of operating difficulties which frequently presented almost insuperable problems.

"With the transfer of the 321st from this Command, I desire to express to each officer and man my appreciation for the contribution he has made toward the splendid record achieved and to wish the Group continued success in its new assignment".

B-25's LAUNCH FIRST ATTACK

GROTTAGLIA, ITALY, NOVEMBER 15, 1943 (Delayed). — Led by the veteran 321st Bomb Group, four waves of B-25 Mitchell bombers carried out a 45 minute attack upon communications in Sofia, capital of Bulgaria, today to mark the first attack of the war on Bulgaria.

It has been disclosed that the attack was scheduled to be carried out several days ago but because of poor weather the bombers could not reach the target until the weather broke today.

The bombers encountered heavy anti-aircraft fire and had to drop through smoke clouds which had been put up in an attempt to obscure the objective, but the majority of bombs in the large pattern struck home. Heavy damage was done to the yards and many engines and cars left burning. Crews reported catching several engines as they were making a wild dash to get out of the yards at the height of the attack.

Sofia is one of the enemy's most vital communications centers. It is the hub of the huge rail network supplying German forces in the Balkans and in Romania.

The political aspects of this attack might be considered even more important than the effect of the damage. With the Russian armies moving ever nearer to Bulgaria's own borders, the attack was timely. It might cause the Bulgarians to ponder their present alignment in the conflict. Prospect of saturation bombing against their major cities might now seem a dreadful reality to the Axis satellite.

With this spectacular attack upon one of the world's capitals, the 321st ends its period of strategic bombing.

The B-25 was originally designed for bombing tactical targets but for the past eight months those of the 321st have struck strategic objectives with outstanding results.

Long range heavy bombers will continue strategic work in this theater and all B-25's will be assigned to the tactical work.

321 GROUP LOSES KNAPP

COL. OLMSTED IS SUCCESSOR

AMENDOLA, ITALY, DECEMBER 14, 1943. — With the reorganization of the Air Forces in this theater now in progress the 321st is losing its veteran commander, Colonel Robert D. Knapp.

Colonel Knapp was one of the most highly respected Group Commanders in the theater. It is only natural that he should be chosen for a more responsible position and it is anticipated that he will organize a new command.

Former Operations Officer and Deputy Commander of the 321st, Lt. Colonel Charles T. Olmsted is the new Group CO. He has been with the organization since it was activated in August, 1942.

Lt. Colonel Olmsted takes command of the Group at a time when many changes are taking place.

Under T. B. F. the unit's attacks have been switched from strategic to tactical objectives.

Also different administrative policies govern the Group. No longer will combat crewmen be rotated at the completion of 50 combat missions. According to the new policy men will fly until the Flight Surgeon deems it advisable to ground them from combat fatigue. No specific number of missions limits a man's tour of combat duty.

Most of the original crews completed 50 missions in September and October and have already departed for a tour of duty in the United States. Many of the first combat replacements who joined the Group in June are nearing the 50-mission mark. These men are the first to be effected by the new policy on rotation.

Indications are that the 321st in carrying out tactical missions, will use smaller formations but fly more missions. The Group has been operating under T. B. F. for about one month now and most attacks have been against railroad yards in enemy-occupied Italy.

The new Deputy Commander of the 321st, Colonel Knapp sent this letter for dissemination to all group personnel: "During the past 16 months that included three phases of training, army maneuvers and combat, I have enjoyed a degree of loyalty and support that has been most

New Commander



Lt. Colonel CHARLES T. OLMSTED

gratifying. In modifying all of our airplanes for combat, flying them to North Africa without loss, and modifying new airplanes in the field with extra armor plate; waist and tail guns, you have accomplished a marvelous job. The B-25 airplane as modified by this group undoubtedly saved many lives and resulted in the destruction of many enemy aircraft. All B-25 airplanes now being manufactured are patterned from modifications originating in this group...The combat record of the group is one of which I am, and you may be, very proud...and reflects great credit upon the individual work of each officer and enlisted man in this group... I am extremely proud of the 321st Group and will always feel in my heart that I am a part of it".

THE HARD WAY

When the 321st bombed the Cancellio railroad yards, Italy, one of the B-25's dropped its bombs "the hard way".

A burst of flak and slipstream from preceding aircraft turned the bomber into a perfect "slow roll" with a full bomb bay. The plane straightened out by itself, the bombardier dropped his bombs accurately and the crew headed home from a good day's work indeed.

UNIT PRAISED BY DOOLITTLE

SOLIMAN, TUNISIA, SEPTEMBER 2, 1943 (Delayed). — Penetrating the strong flak and fighter defenses near Naples, B-25 bombers of the 321st Bombardment Group today struck hard at a key communications center when they attacked the marshalling yards at Cancellio, achieving results hailed outstanding by precision bombing experts.

After studying photographs of the mission, statisticians came up with figures revealing that the Cancellio target area represented a rectangular pattern roughly 2100 feet long and 1000 feet wide. Into this area plunged nearly every high explosive bomb from the big formation of B-25's which emerged from the barrage of anti-aircraft fire unscathed, with at least one enemy fighter to its credit.

Following the destructive visit to one of Italy's most important marshalling yards, group officials disclosed that Major General James H. Doolittle, head of the Northwest African Strategic Air forces, had commended the group for its outstanding precision bombing.

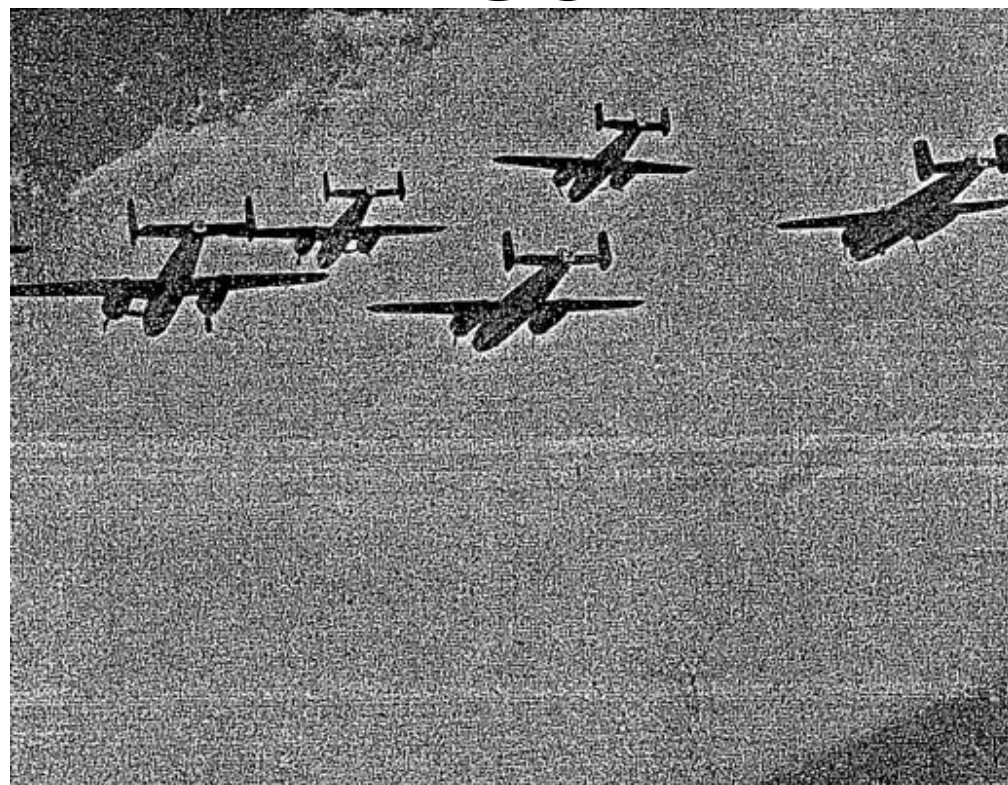
Just five days ago, the 321st had sent out a mission to bomb these yards but an almost complete cloud cover greatly handicapped accurate bombing and the mission did not achieve satisfactory results.

Today the group sent out a large force of B-25's heavily escorted by P-38's and there was no cloud cover to interfere. Heavy demolition bombs completely covered the marshalling yards with direct hits on both the north and south choke points. Bombs struck rolling stock, stations and sheds resulting in numerous fires and explosions. The stores depot and factory area also was heavily hit and huge clouds of black smoke hung over the target area after the bombers had left.

Enemy air opposition was vigorous with 60 to 70 fighters attempting to intercept. The B-25 escort engaged in a big dogfight with the enemy and at least 23 fighters were destroyed by the P-38's. A few enemy fighters evaded the escort and attacked the B-25's. They failed to account for a single bomber while one of the enemy planes was destroyed. Not a single B-25 was lost in the attack.

The Cancellio marshalling yards are a vital nerve center for traffic going to Naples and the North. It also controls the flow of supplies to Benevento to the East and the vital city and port of Salerno to the South.

LANDINGS MADE AT ANZIO



FOR THE 321ST IT WAS THE FIFTH. — Over Anzio at dawn on January 22, 321st B-25's flew inland 30 miles to hit a road junction and block traffic to the invasion beaches. The amphibious operation was the fifth which has been supported by the veteran B-25 unit.

Amphibious Thrust Designed To Break Italian Stalemate

VINCENZO, ITALY, JANUARY 22, 1944. — At dawn today powerful 5th Army units landed at Anzio and Nettuno just south of Rome in an operation designed to force an enemy withdrawal and break the stalemate at the Adolph Hitler line in Italy.

Systematic bombing attacks during the past few days on all lines of communications leading to the area south of Rome were carried out by medium bombers, including B-25's of the 321st, to pave the way for the landings. Preceding the landings, 321st Mitchells ranged over the beaches to attack and important road junction at Valmontone, about 30 miles inland. Flying through heavy anti-aircraft defenses the bombers blasted the junction with an accurate pattern of 500-pound bombs, blocking three vital highways at this point. Early reports from the beachhead

indicate that everything is going better than expected. The landing forces have met no opposition and the unloading of supplies and troops is progressing rapidly. The success of the 321st attack on Valmontone was undoubtedly in some measure responsible for the lack of opposition on the beaches.

The amphibious operation today was the fifth the 321st has supported. Before it, came Pantelleria, Lampedusa, Sicily and Salerno.

With the landing of Allied troops at Anzio and Nettuno, the Naples-Foggia phase of the Italian campaign officially ended.

B-25's of the 321st Bomb Group carried out 90 attacks during the campaign. Approximately 60 of these were in support operations in Italy. The others were directed against objectives in the Balkans.

When the Naples-Foggia phase of the campaign began, the 321st was assigned to the

Northwest African Strategic

Air Force. Flying from bases in Africa the unit began bombing enemy communications and airfields in Italy prior to the landings at Salerno.

After southern Italy was secure in Allied hands the group moved to an Italian base and switched its attacks to Balkan targets. These attacks continued for about six weeks. Then the 321st was assigned to the Tactical Bomber Force and its attacks were again directed at targets in support of the Allied ground forces in Italy.

Most of the missions flown by the group in the campaign were against enemy communications. Rail and road junctions, overpasses and marshalling yards were bombed repeatedly to disrupt the enemy's defensive operations.

This campaign is the third in which the 321st has participated since it began flying combat in March, 1943. The group took part in both the Tunisian and Sicilian campaigns.

Number One Man



THE BIG BOSS. — General H. H. Arnold, chief of the USAAF, visited the 321st December 9, 1943. He awarded some decorations, inspected the troops.

CASSINO IS PULVERIZED

ATTACK LED BY MITCHELLS

PAESTUM, ITALY, MARCH 15, 1944.

— For weeks Cassino has stood a towering obstacle in the path of Allied forces in Central Italy.

Bitter house-to-house fighting has been going on in the outer edges of the town but all attempts to take the entire city — and thus clear the way for a push to join the beachhead — have failed.

Last night all Allied troops were withdrawn from Cassino. At 0800 hours this morning a wave of B-25's dropped 500 pound demolition bombs on the city. Every

twenty minutes from then until noon another wave of bombers followed placing their loads in assigned portions of the town.

The all-out air assault was followed by a terrific artillery pounding. The greatest tonnage of bombs and heavy shells ever used on a single objective thundered down on Cassino.

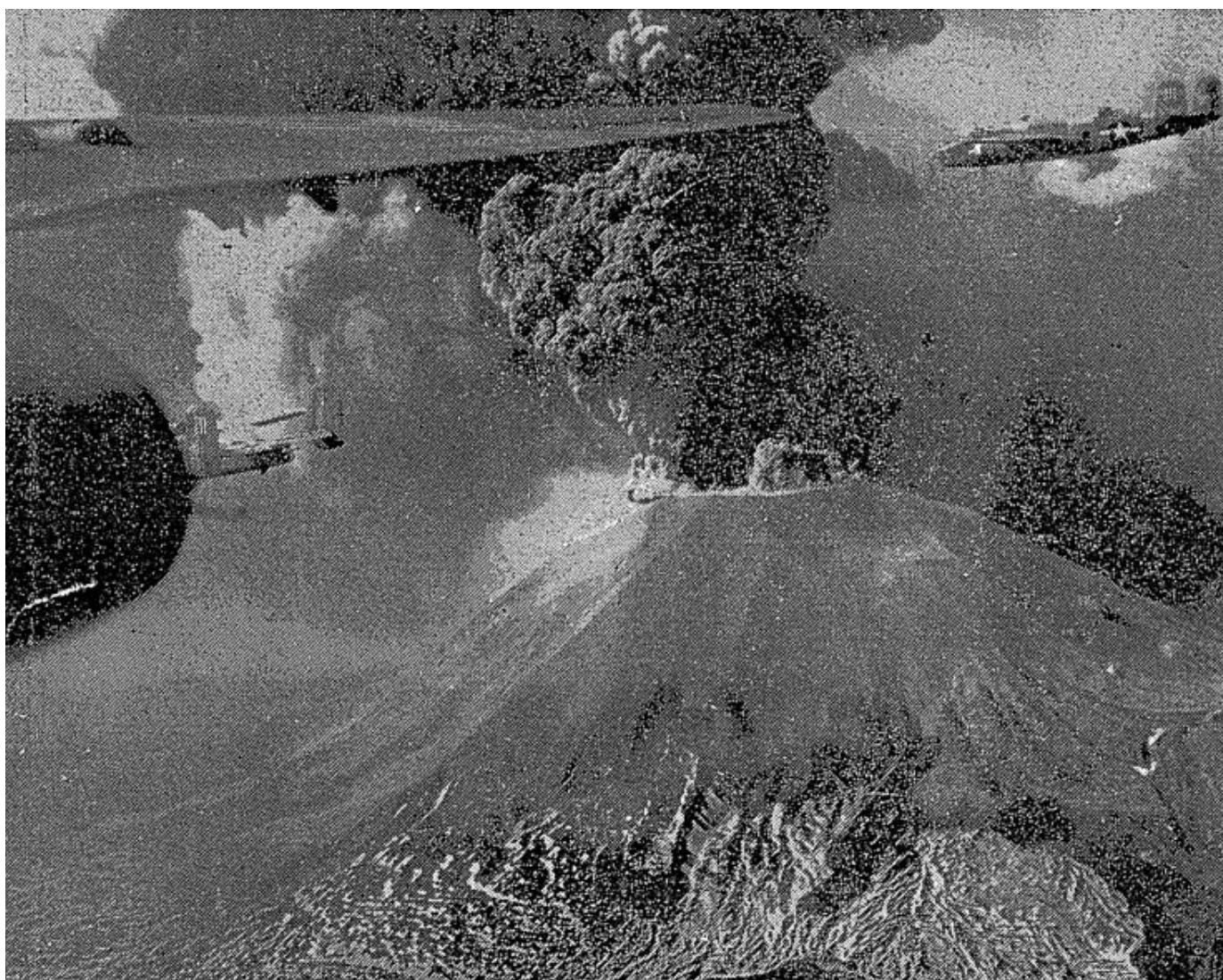
Watching the show from surrounding heights were the infantry troops who have been trying so long to take Cassino the hard way.

Two waves of 321st B-25's took part in the all-out air assault and crewmen reported excellent results on both missions with all bombs falling in the town.

The plan is simple. Cassino has been given a blasting which would drive out or kill any

enemy troops left in it. Immediately following the bombardment our own forces began to move into the battered town and reports from the front this evening indicate that they now occupy half of it. However, all of the streets are covered with rubble making the use of mechanized equipment very difficult.

The spectacular bombing of Cassino marks the first anniversary of the 321st in combat. In its first year overseas the group has participated in three campaigns, the Tunisian, Sicilian and Naples-Foggia phase of the Italian Campaign. It has supported five amphibious operations and flown 268 combat missions totaling more than 6,400 sorties.



VESUVIUS ERUPTS. — When Mt. Vesuvius erupted in March, 1944, hot volcanic cinders as big as watermelons showered down on the 340th Bomb Group's base near the foot of the mountain and the 321st was called upon to double its bombing effort. This 321st bombing formation was several miles away from the mountain but the air turbulence was so great it was almost impossible for the bombers to maintain formation.

SMITH NAMED COMMANDER

NEW TACTICS ARE STARTED

PAESTUM, ITALY, MARCH 19, 1944 (Delayed). — Four days have passed since Cassino was leveled and the enemy is still holding the town.

At Anzio the beachhead forces are pinned down and cannot move.

The stalemate in Italy continues and the Allied forces are but a few miles nearer Rome than they were six months ago. Obviously the situation calls for different strategy and today Allied leaders disclosed a new plan. They call it OPERATION STRANGLE.

As the name implies the operation is designed to strangle enemy troops south of Rome by cutting off all their lines of supply. Medium bombers and fighter-bombers will carry out the operation.

The primary job of the bombers will be to block highways and railroads by knocking out bridges. The primary job of the fighter-bombers will be to strafe and bomb all enemy transport on the highways and railroads.

All medium bomber groups in the First Tactical Air Force have been assigned a specific number of bridges to hit. Every key rail and road bridge will be bombed repeatedly and kept impassable.

Today the operation was launched.

B-25's of the 321st scored hits on a rail bridge at Avezzano, Italy, to accomplish the unit's first engagement in "OPERATION STRANGLE".

The group will play a major role in the operation and bridge busting will be its specialty.

Concentrated attacks against bridges will be something new for the 321st. During the on year it has been in combat the group has flown very few missions against this type of pin-point target.

In comparative size the average rail and road bridge is about the smallest target that is ever given bombers and perfection is required to bomb such an objective successfully.

Experience has shown that unless numerous direct hits are scored on a bridge

The New Boss



Colonel R. H. Smith, West Pointer and veteran of 38 combat missions in heavy bombers has replaced Colonel Charles T. Olmsted as 321st group commander. He has been overseas 19 months.

it will remain standing even though the pattern of bombs falls across it.

To make OPERATION STRANGLE succeed, every line of communications used by the enemy must be cut. The aim of the operation is to reduce the flow of supplies to a point insufficient to maintain the enemy's troops on the line south of Rome.

PITY POOR BIRDS

One night when a Bill Stern movie short appeared on the G. I. screen showing hunters shooting ducks a flak-wise 321st pilot was overheard to say: "I'll never shoot another bird as long as I live. I know now how the poor devils feel".

WEST POINTER ASSUMES JOB

PAESTUM, ITALY, MARCH 26, 1944. — Colonel R. H. Smith, 34 — year—old West Point Graduate, assumed command of the 321st today.

A veteran of 19 months overseas service with 39 combat missions to his credit in heavy bombers, Colonel Smith is reputed to be one of the ablest commanders in the theater.

The new 321st C. O. came overseas in September, 1942. He commanded a Bombardment Training Center, a Tactical Reconnaissance Group, was Deputy Commander of two different heavy Groups and was on the operations staff at 12th Air Force Headquarters before taking over the 321st.

While flying heavy bombers, Colonel Smith won two high decorations for distinguished service. He wears the Silver Star and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The Silver Star was awarded the Colonel for gallantry in action on March 1, 1943, while leading a formation of B-17's in an attack upon a vital Mediterranean harbor.

With the windshield of his bomber shattered by fire from enemy fighters and heavy anti-aircraft fire bursting in his path, Colonel Smith nevertheless led the formation in a precision bomb run which resulted in great damage to the harbor.

On May 24, 1943, Colonel Smith again distinguished himself while piloting a B-17 in an attack upon La Maddalena, Sardinia.

His bomber developed engine trouble on the way to the target, causing him to lose altitude and fall behind the formation. Despite the danger of attack by hostile fighters, Colonel Smith continued on alone and successfully bombed the target. For this action he received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Colonel Smith has also been awarded the Air Medal with seven clusters.

Former C. O. of the 321st, Colonel Charles T. Olmsted has been assigned to the operations section at 57th Wing Headquarters. Lt. Colonel Peter H. Remington who served with the 321st a short time as Deputy C. O. took command of the group for about ten days awaiting the arrival of Colonel Smith.

AIR ASSAULT SAVES ANZIO

321 GROUP IN TWO ATTACKS

PAESTUM, ITALY, FEBRUARY 19, 1944 (Delayed). — Our troops at Anzio are fighting the toughest battle of the war. With their backs to the sea and every foot of their beachhead in range of heavy German guns, there is no room to maneuver.

Early this morning the enemy began its first major counter attack designed to push the beachhead defenders into the sea. The main body of his forces was concentrated in the vicinity of Cisterna.

The drive started forward with terrific force and it appeared that nothing could top it.

Then to the rescue came wave after wave of bombers. They "fraggged" the counter-attack to a halt before it even succeeded in denting the American lines.

The 321st sent in two waves of the bombers which turned the tide. Flying through the heaviest barrage of flak since Athens, the B-25's poured string after string of deadly fragmentation bombs down on the enemy troops concentrated at Cisterna.

In a vain effort to turn the attack, a block of ME-109's pounced on one of the 321st formations as it crossed the beach. The B-25 gunners downed four of them and got two probables. Three bombers were lost to flak and fighters in these two attacks.

The beachhead was a little less than one month old when the enemy made his first big drive. It took him that long to bring sufficient supplies and troops to the area to mount an attack.

During that one month period T. B. F. bombers including 321st B025's attacked communications and materially slowed down all movement behind the enemy's lines. Had the Germans been able to move against the beachhead forces before their positions were secure, the counter-attack might well have succeeded.

It is probable that the enemy suffered heavy casualties in today's frag bomb attacks and that he lost a major portion of the equipment he had concentrated to carry out the drive.

57th Bombardment Wing Is Combat Operational Unit

Colonel R. D. Knapp Heads Outfit

PAESTUM, ITALY, MARCH 1, 1944. — The 57th Bomb Wing became a full-fledged, all B-25 combat organization today.

Two Groups, one of which is the veteran 321st operate with the Wing under the new set up. Later, all B-25 units in MTO will be assigned to it.

The 57th Wing was organized in November, 1943, when NASAF was dissolved but at that time was only an administrative unit. It played no part in the combat operations of its lower units. TBF controlled all operations until today when the Wing took over.

Colonel Robert D. Knapp is in command of the new combat Wing. He formerly commanded the 321st and it was he who brought the Group overseas. Operating directly under TAF (Major General John K. Cannon's First Tactical Air Force) the 57th Wing will select targets and plan operations to be carried out by the Groups in the Wing. Administration of the lower units will be handled by the Wing also.

To all combat Groups this change in organization is welcome. Not since the 321st was in the 47th Wing have both administration and operations been handled by the same Headquarters.

When the organization of the Wing is completed one other B-25 Group now stationed on Corsica will be assigned to it. This will be the first time that all B-25 units in this theater operated under the same command.

Indications at present are that under the new set up there will be no change in the

type of work B-25's have been doing.

TAF has ordered the 57th Wing to interdict enemy communications. The Groups making up the Wing have been engaged in this same type of bombing for the past few months under T. B. F.

B-25 DOES 500

Speed record for the B-25 is believed to have been set by a 321st pilot in January, 1944, but he doesn't advocate the method he had to use to reach the high mark. While on the bomb run a burst of flak under one wing flipped the B-25 over on its back. The ship, fully loaded, nosed straight down and had just about reached 500 m. p. h. before it could be pulled out of the dive. The plane and the crew came through without a scratch.

OH DEER OH DEER

While engaged in a deer hunt in the snow covered mountains of Italy around the Foggia area, a supply officer of the 321st took careful aim at what he believed to be a deer and fired.

He rushed up to "kill" and found (a) a wounded goat, (b) an irate farmer, and © a deer placidly taking the whole scene in from a spot in the bushes.

TEN FOR ONE

During 1943 B-25's of the 321st met a total of 421 enemy fighters in combat. Of these, 51 were destroyed, 12 probably destroyed and 28 damaged. Only five bombers were lost to the fighters. On the basis of the number of hostile aircraft known to be destroyed, the group knocked down 10 fighters for every bomber lost in aerial battle.

DRIVE ON ROME BEGINS

321 IS FLYING CLOSE ATTACK

CORSICA, MAY 12, 1944. — A tremendous aerial bombardment of the Cassino area spearheaded by the hard-working 321st Bombardment Group set the stage today for the long-awaited opening of the Allied drive on Rome.

Following the all-out air offensive, Allied infantry forces launched strong attacks against German troops which appeared to be falling back under the crushing weight of this new drive aimed at breaking the long

stalemate in this area.

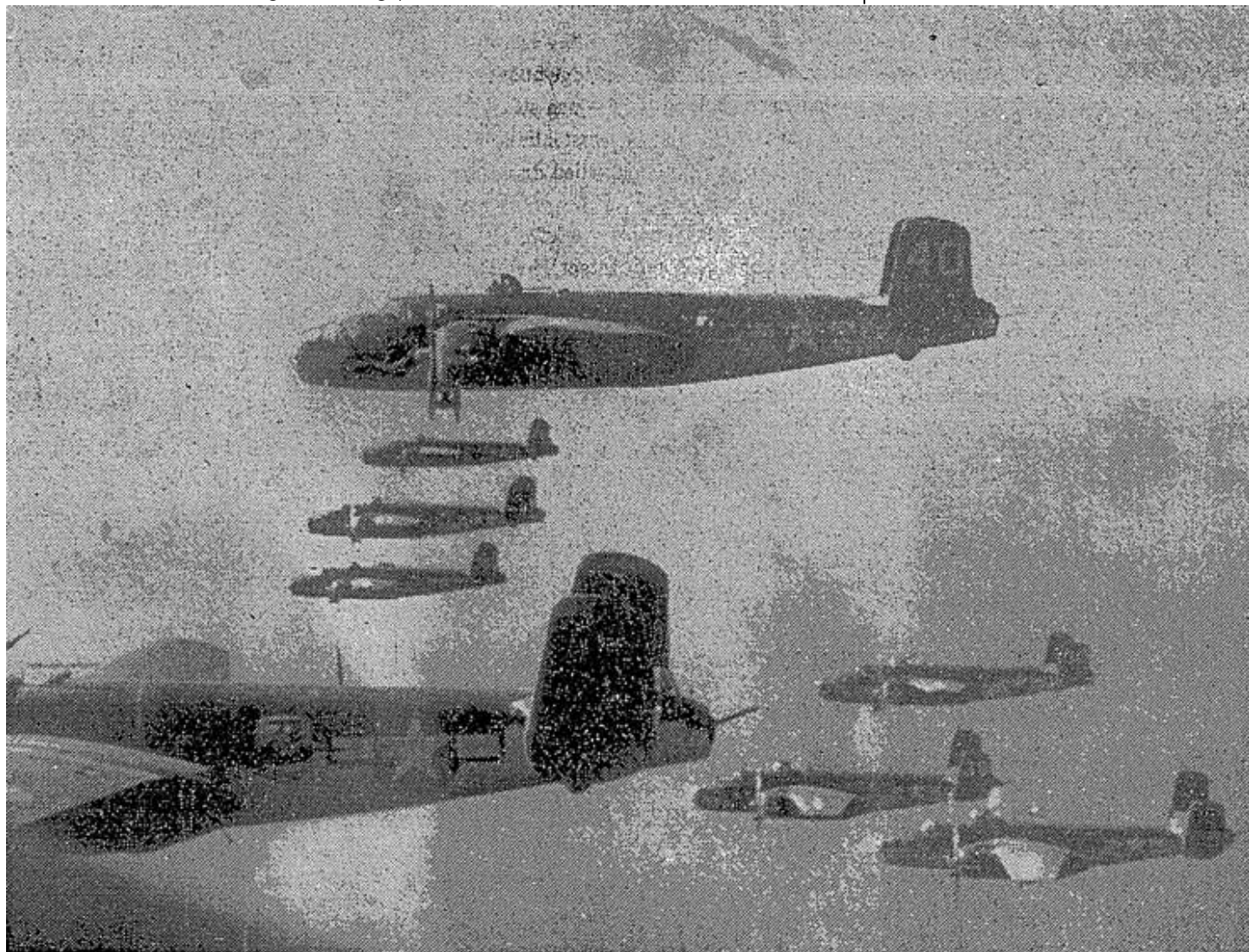
Despite poor weather conditions, bombers from the 321st had their busiest day since the group has started combat operations. Flying close support for the Allied troops, the B-25's hammered at communications and gun positions with three separate attacks on the important road junction at Vallecorsa and the German command post at Pico.

The road junction at Vallecorsa controls one of the main routes to the vital "highway six", an important objective of this drive. The cutting of this road would deny the Germans defending Cassino their main supply route to the north.

Mitchell bombers took off early this morning to hit this road junction but cloud coverage prevented accurate bombing

although the edges of the target were hit. The second attack of the day on this target was led by the Group Commander but once again weather intervened. The third attack was the most successful with a good concentration going through the town although once again cloud cover made observations and accurate bombing very difficult.

The attacks on the Pico command post went much better. The first mission cost Colonel Smith's group one plane with 23 planes damaged by a withering flak barrage that, together with poor weather, prevented completion of the raid. However, the second attack on this target resulted in a good concentration of bombs covering the target area despite another heavy barrage of anti-aircraft fire.



TARGET BOUND. — On another bridge-busting mission over Italy, these 321st B-25's maintain tight formation. This kind of formation flying has helped to put the veteran Mitchell force at the top in precision bombing.

ITALIAN CAPITAL CAPTURED

ETERNAL CITY HAILS AMERICAN INFANTRY B-25'S HIT IN NORTH

Romans Greet U. S. Ground Men

CORSICA, JUNE 4, 1944 — Rome, the Eternal City, today became the first great European capital to fall into Allied hands.

Amidst the hysteric cheers of thousands of happy Romans, American troops entered the Italian capital riding the crest of the big, offensive that started less than one month ago.

The American forces were aided by the 321st Bombardment Group which has been hammering at German supply lines in close support of the big drive. Ranging along the lines of retreat to the north of Rome, the B-25 group struck twice at enemy communication lines, once at Viterbo and once at the Tarquinia road bridges.

The Viterbo highway center, 90 miles north of Rome, received a good concentration of bombs from the Mitchells. Bombs started in the factory to the southeast and swept through the junction. The bombers encountered little flak but had some difficulty sighting their target because of a persistent haze.

The Tarquinia road bridges were both covered with an excellent concentration of bombs with the southwest bridge definitely

destroyed. The bombers in this flight did not encounter any aerial opposition. These attacks aimed at smashing enemy lines of retreat have added a further strain on the Germans fleeing the onrushing Allied troops.

The 321st group has joined other aerial units in a systematic smashing of enemy lines of communication called "Operation Strangle". These "bridge-busting" attacks have choked the German supply lines and have contributed substantially to the success of the current Allied drive up the Italian boot.

Rome — the big prize of this latest drive — was taken intact, having fortunately escaped the extreme ravages of war. The Eternal City represents a great psychological victory for the Americans and from the manner in which the Romans showered flowers, kisses, wine and other forms of hospitality on the conquering Americans, it appeared that Rome undoubtedly appreciated the change in hands.

In supporting this victorious drive, the 321st paced the 12th Air Force in bombing accuracy. Brig. Gen. Robert D. Knapp, Wing Commander sent the following message to the group two weeks after the big push began: "Congratulations on the excellent bombing the 321st Bomb Group has been doing the past few weeks. The superb bombing of the Todi road bridge on May 25 where your strike photographs show 100 per cent accuracy was the best I have

May Marked Heaviest Group Losses

Heaviest losses in aircraft suffered by the 321st in any one month occurred in May, 1944, during the big push on Rome. Fourteen bombers were lost from all causes although most of the crews escaped.

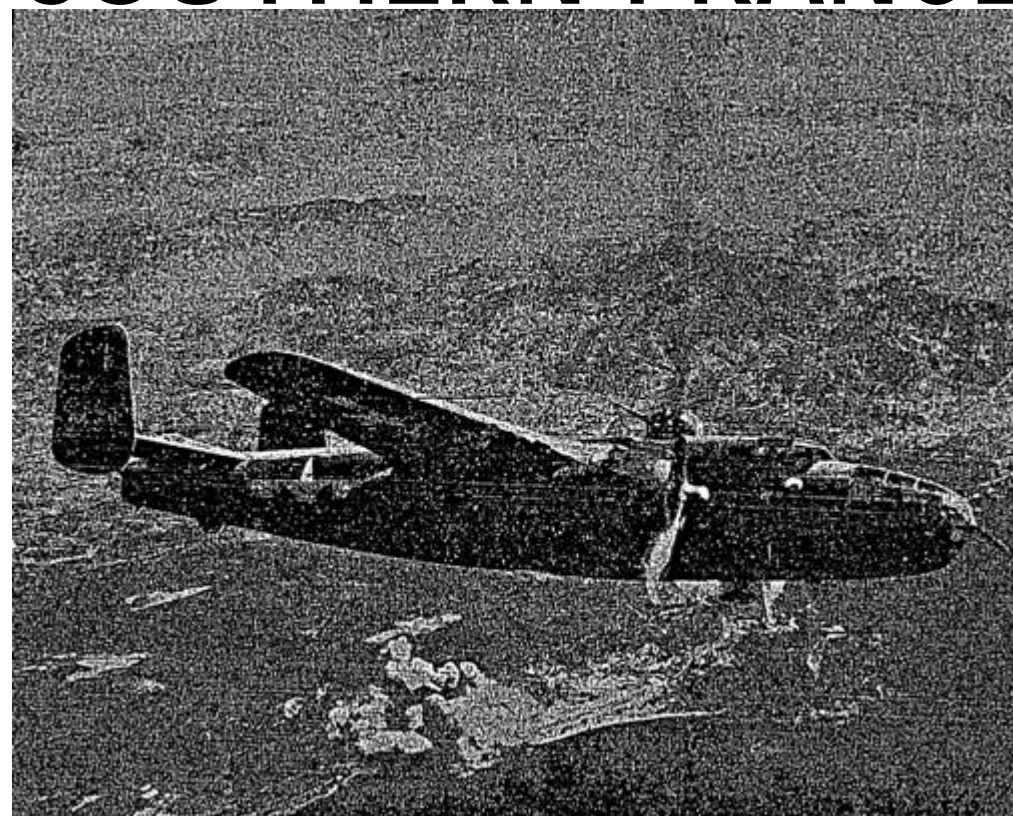
Both Sides Given Hero Awards

In May, 1944 over Elba German anti-aircraft gunners hit a 321st bomber, setting it on fire. The pilot stuck with the burning ship until all the crew bailed out and then hit the silk himself. When Elba fell recently a captured German document showed that the AA gun commander had been awarded the Iron Cross for shooting the B-25 down. The 321st pilot was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism.

seen...".

Maj. General John K. Cannon, 12 Air Force commander, received the following cable from General C. Marshall upon the fall of Rome: "Congratulations on a great victory". Undoubtedly more than to any other single force, the collapse of enemy resistance south of Rome may be attributed to the combat units of the 12 Air Force.

SOUTHERN FRANCE INVADED



PRE-INVASION BOMBARDMENT. — Thirty minutes before the troops landed in southern France 321st B-25's bombed the beaches. Clouds of smoke and dust may be seen rising from the target as this Mitchell bomber heads for home. The bombs used on the beaches exploded many mines easing the job of the ground forces when they went ashore. Bombing gun positions and communications, 12 Air Force B-25's paved the way for the invasion 11 days prior to D-day.

321st Begins Attacks 11 Days Prior to Push

CORSICA, AUGUST 15, 1944. — In the haze of the dawn's early light, United States, British and French Amphibious forces today made landings on the southern coast of France.

The landings, which were made in the area between Marseilles and Nice, followed a heavy air and naval bombardment of the invasion beaches in which the 321st Bombardment Group played a leading role. The veteran B-25 group braved poor weather conditions to give the invasion beaches a pre-dawn pounding before the Allied troops went ashore.

For the past 11 days, the 321st has

conducted a softening-up campaign aimed at key gun positions on the coast of southern France. Later in the day the B-25 unit flew its second group of missions attacking the road bridge at Monte Faucon near Avignon with great success. For the 321st, it was the sixth amphibious operation it has supported in the Mediterranean.

Early reports on the invasion indicated that the initial landings were made with great success and that they had moved inland with slight opposition from the Germans. More than 800 ships, including many French vessels, were used in the big operation.

This new front in France is apparently aimed at splitting the Germans in this country. It has the subsequent objective of

DSC Is Presented to Bombardier

Only bombardier in the 12th Air Force ever to receive the Distinguished Service Cross was a 321st officer. While leading a formation of B-25's on the run he was critically wounded by shell fragments and thrown from his position. Returning to the sight he dropped his bombs and with the other planes dropping upon his sighting, 100 per cent accuracy was scored on the target. The DSC is ranked only by the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award.

Enemy Fighters Fail to Appear

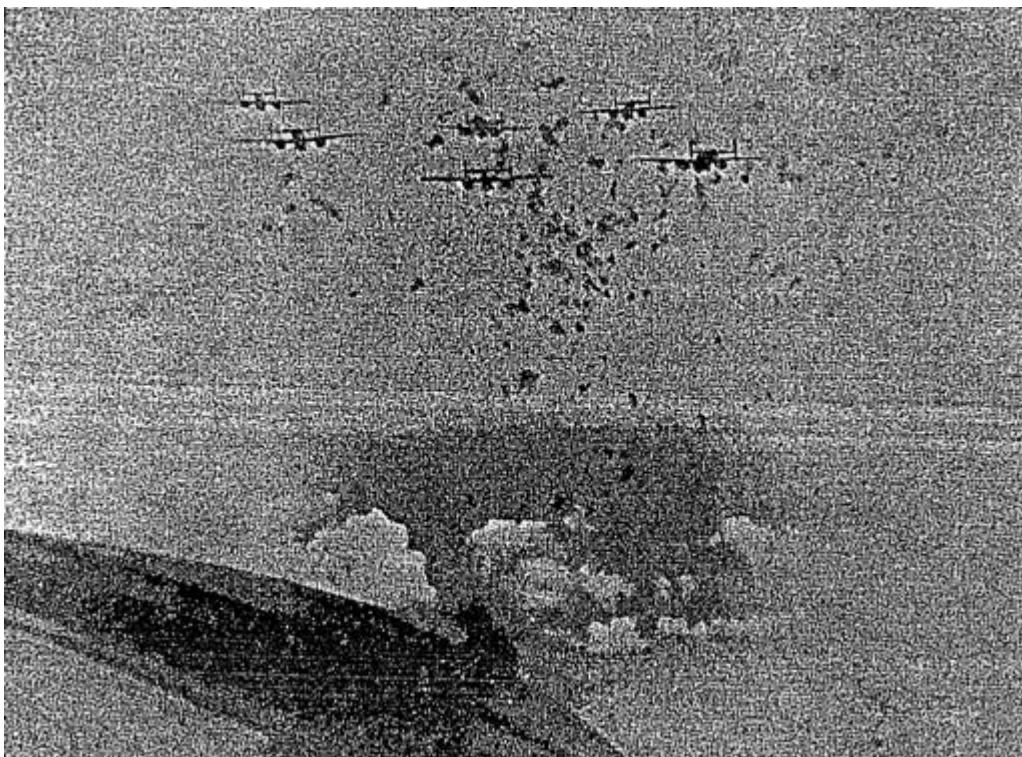
During June, July and August, 1944, when the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces were sending thousands of planes over southern France in preparation for and in support of the invasion, not a single hostile fighter challenged 321st B-25's glaring evidence of the weakening power of the once-mighty Luftwaffe.

Wild Boar Hunt Popular Sport

Wild boar hunting, once popular as a sport of kings, provided an exciting pastime for many American forces on the island of Corsica. Native guides were always glad to point out the more likely haunts of the boar and help the novices at the sport bag a few. In addition to boar, there were ducks, quail, wild pigeons and an abundance of other game making the island somewhat of a hunters paradise.

joining hands with the troops in northern France. Meanwhile the hard-pressed Germans in France must divide and deploy their thinning forces to meet this new threat which may have caught them mapping.

321st BLASTS WARSHIPS



FLAK OVER TOULON. — No less than 82 heavy anti-aircraft guns protected the harbor at Toulon and it seemed that all of them opened up on 321st B-25's when the group attacked shipping there on August 18, 1944. Target of the attack was the battleship "Strasbourg", cruiser in the "La Galissonniere" class and a submarine. The heavy barrage of flak damaged 27 bombers but all returned from the mission safely.

Battleship, Cruiser, Submarine Fall Victims to B-25 Attack

Formation Flies Through Terrific Anti-Aircraft Fire at Toulon

CORSICA, AUGUST 18, 1944. — The boys in the 321st Bombardment Group are calling them the B-25 "Super Bombers" following the Mitchell bombers' destructive attack on shipping at Toulon harbor in southern France today when they battered a battleship, cruiser and submarine in one of the most successful attacks ever made by B-25's in the Mediterranean theater.

This new nickname, although not quite

accurate, is not given without good reason. The harbor at Toulon, is ringed with a heavy net of anti-aircraft guns and for that reason was always designated as a "heavy bomber" target. To send medium bombers over that target was generally considered out of question.

But then the reconnaissance plane came back with pictures of Toulon harbor, revealing a juicy set-up. There was the 702-foot battleship "Strasbourg" of the

Endless Formations Pass Over Field

Those who happened to be up and around during the pre-dawn hours of August 15 — D-day in southern France — were treated to an impressive and unusual aerial show.

For several hours, a stream of Allied aircraft paraded overhead in the darkness marked only by the constant roar of thousands of engines and the unbroken queue of navigation lights on the ships.

Dunkerque class. Alongside her was a cruiser of the La Galissonniere class. In the near vicinity were also a destroyer and a submarine.

The situation seemed ideal for the heavy bombers to attack on a precision high-altitude mission where they wouldn't be so vulnerable to the intense flak. Nevertheless, the B-25 group, command by Colonel Richard H. Smith, Belle Meade Park, Nashville, Tenn., was given the assignment.

When the B-25's approached their target at regular medium bomber altitude, they immediately spotted the battleship, cruiser and submarine. The destroyer was not present having skipped out after the reconnaissance pictures had been made.

The German anti-aircraft gunners greeted the brazen Mitchells with a heavy barrage-type flak pattern through which the bombers had to fly to reach their target. The deadly part of the flak is that it doesn't recognize rank. The Colonel himself plus 14 others received wounds, none of which were serious. And, although they were badly shot up, not a single bomber was lost.

The outstanding results of the attack represented one of the heaviest blows ever struck at German Mediterranean shipping. The submarine was sunk, the cruiser was keeled over on its side and the battleship gutted by fires and completely disabled.

Heaping great praise on the veteran B-25 group, T. A. F. headquarters called the attack "one of the most destructive ever carried out by a group of medium bombers".

BATTLE ENDS IN FRANCE

ALL COASTAL AREA TAKEN

CORSICA, SEPTEMBER 14, 1944. — The campaign of southern France officially ended today as American 7th Arm Forces completed the occupation of all coastal regions and continued their swift advance up the Rhone valley.

One of the shortest battles yet fought in the Mediterranean area, the campaign was completed 30 days after Allied forces landed on the Riviera coast.

In no other battle in this theater have the allies had such tremendous superiority in the

air. Exerting maximum effort, TAF bombers including B-25's of the 321st group flew a record number of sorties throughout the campaign. Sixty-eight missions were chalked up by the 321st during the 30-day period.

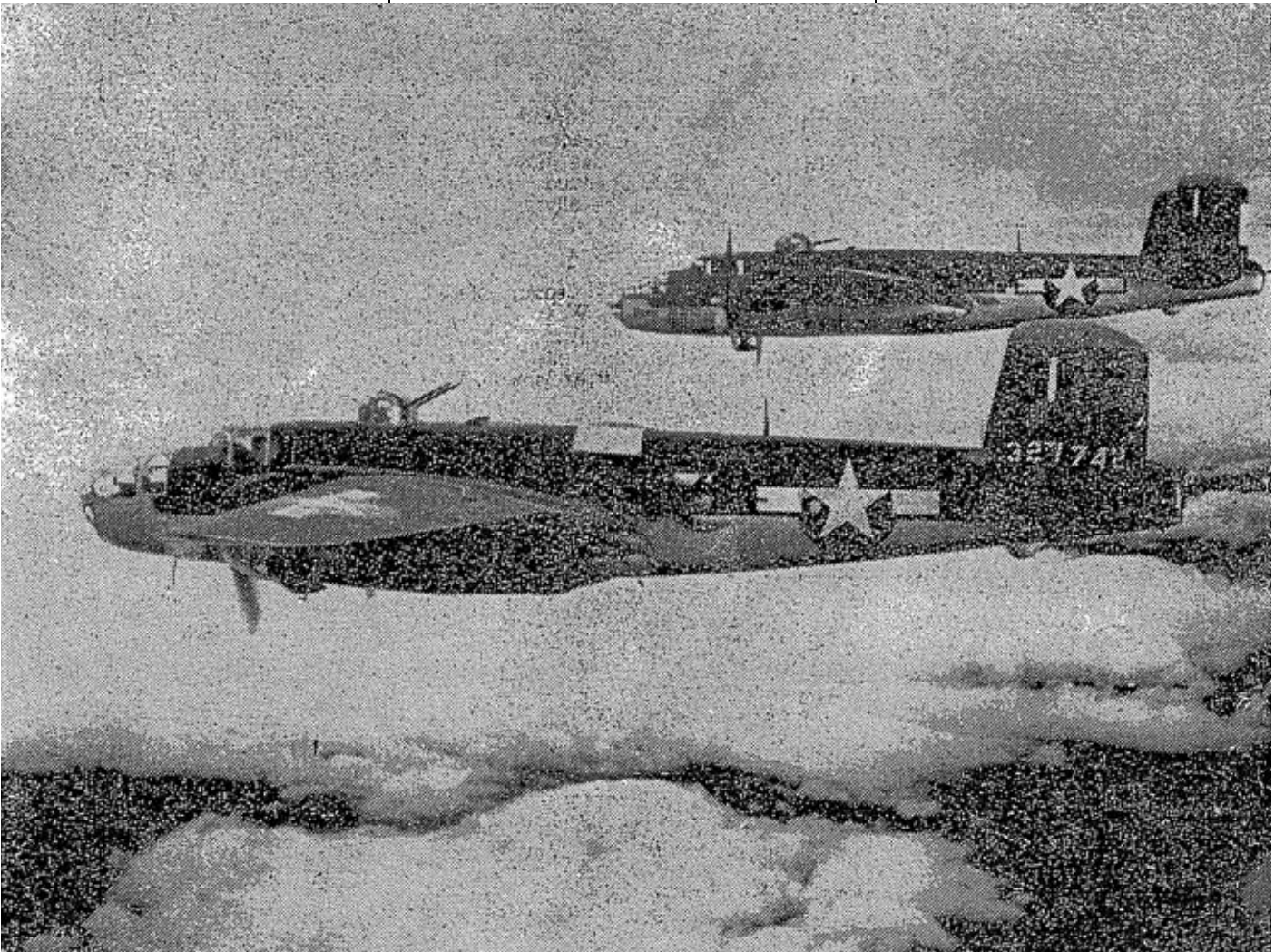
Most of the group's attacks were aimed at disruption enemy communications. Repeatedly attacking key rail and road bridges, the B25 unit helped to block off all attempts by the enemy to organize his forces for effective attacks against the invading Allied troops.

The French campaign is the fifth in which the veteran 321st group has taken part. The B-25 force participated in the Tunisian, Sicilian, Naples-Foggia phase and Rome-Arno phase of the Italian campaign. The closing date of the latter has not yet been announced.

Before the official closing date of the

French campaign, the 321st already was beginning to swing back to attacks on communications in Italy. Now going into its sixth month of operations principally against bridges, the veteran B-25 unit has developed into the most accurate bombing aggregation in the theater.

The outstanding bombing accuracy of the group was commended by Brig. General Robert D. Knapp, Wing Commander, on September 6, when he sent the following message to the 321st: "Congratulations on your excellent bombing for the last tow days Photo reconnaissance reports Pavia rail bridge destroyed, Pavia West road bridge destroyed and Pavia East road bridge badly damaged and blocked. Also Poleselo and Legnago rail bridges were cut at their approaches".



12 TH AIR FORCE WORKHORSES. — Throughout the battle for southern France, B-25 Billy Mitchell mediums helped to keep communications behind the enemy lines so snarled that virtually no organized resistance was met by the onrushing Allied forces. Favored with excellent flying weather, the veteran 321st Group flew 68 missions during the 30-day campaign.

PRECISION BOMBING PRAISED

Bombers of 321st Group Better 90 Percent

ESTABLISHES NEW RECORD

MAAF HEADQUARTERS, NOVEMBER 27, 1944 — When they ask you to do the impossible in this Army, that's commonplace; but when someone actually does the impossible, brother, that's news.

As early as six or seven months ago, men who knew their bombing best would have sworn up and down that a record of 90 percent bombing accuracy was practically out of the question. Today those same men are tipping their overseas caps to the 321st Bomb Group of the 12th Air Force for accomplishing the impossible.

In September and October of this year this B-25 Mitchell Group placed an average of better than 90 percent of all bombs dropped in the target area.

The outstanding group in the theater during February, March and April was bombing in the 60's and this accuracy was considered so remarkable that the group received a Presidential Citation for its performance.

In May, the B-25's of the 321st began to encroach upon that record and set the pace for bombing accuracy in the theater. Following is the group's month by month record of precision bombing with a vengeance: May—63 percent; June—74 percent; July—78 percent; August—82 percent; September—90.4 percent; October—93.5 percent.

Bombing accuracy, in case you doggies are wondering, is figured on the basis of an imaginary circle which covers an area 600 feet in radius from the center of the objective. When bombers of a large formation all place their loads within this area, the score is 100 percent and complete destruction of the target is almost certain.

The record of the 321st is all the more remarkable when it is realized that some of the bridges they've attacked are only about 20 feet wide and 100 or 200 feet long. The wing span of a B-25 is 67.7 feet.

The 321st came to North Africa in a 54-plan mass flight in February in 1943. It participated in the Tunisian, Sicilian, Italian and French Campaigns and flew many missions over the Balkans in support of Marshal Tito's partisans. It was the first group in the theater to use B-25's mounting 75mm cannon; first to attack the Italian mainland; first to operate from a base in Italy.

Commanding Officer of the 321st is Col. Richard H. Smith of Nashville, Tennessee. He is 34 years old and a native of El Paso, Texas. A graduate of West Point, Colonel Smith has flown more than 65 missions in medium and heavy bombers. He sports the Silver Star, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Purple Heart and the Air Medal with seven oak leaf clusters.

Group bombardier is Captain Melvin A. Anderson of Seattle, Wash. Formerly a reporter for the Seattle Times, the Captain has flown 53 combat missions since June. He holds the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with clusters. He briefs the bombardiers before each mission and is responsible for their training schedule.

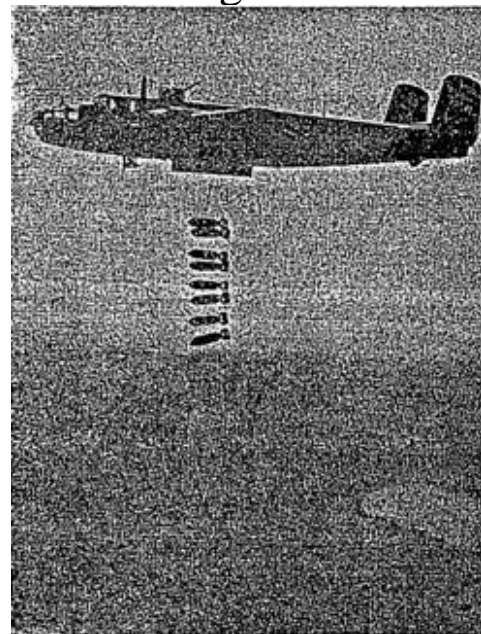
Andy, as he is known to guys around the group, was brought to Rome to tell war correspondents how his medium bomb group happened to be the most accurate for its type of bombing in the USAAF.

Speaking with some difficulty



Bull's - Eye

The Big Moment



BOMBS AWAY. — The crucial moment of every bombing mission is pictured here. If the bombs are released a fraction of a second early or late the mission may

because of the large cigar he habitually wears in the starboard corner of his mouth, Andy pinned the credit for his group's remarkable achievement on his skipper Colonel Smith.

"I know it sounds like rah-rah stuff", Andy told the correspondents, "but it's the old story—teamwork. And then, there's that thing called morale, which is a word I hate to use..."

Captain Anderson told how the colorful training program worked out by Colonel Smith was largely responsible for the group's record breaking achievements.

"Between missions", Andy revealed, "our crews put in quite a few hours over the practice range, dropping bombs which contain sand and just enough explosive to cause a cloud of smoke.

"The Colonel is a great one for competition, and the betting that goes on is terrific. No, it isn't organized betting; nobody makes book or anything like that. Just informal betting; 100 or 200 dollars at a crack, with crews competing against crews and squadrons against squadrons. The payoff is on the accuracy percentages, which are posted from day to day".

"BOMBING LIKE FOOTBALL"

"Practice Makes Perfect"

Says C. O. of 321 Group

ROME, NOVEMBER 28, 1944 — A group of eager young men whose leader has convinced them that bombing "is just like football — you have to practice all week to play on Saturday" — chalked up an unprecedented record of 93.5 percent accuracy in placing their missiles on German targets in October. Now it is shooting to better that mark.

The sharpshooters comprise the veteran 321st Bomb Group of the U.S. 12th Air Force, flying B-25 Mitchell medium bombers, and they're commanded by 34-year old Col. Richard H. Smith of Bellemeade Park, Nashville, Tennessee.

Smith's fliers believe that 93.5 percent figure probably established them as the most accurate precision bombing group in the world. So far their claim is unchallenged.

The report said: "A90 percent bombing accuracy record is something which was hardly thought possible six or seven months ago. The outstanding group in the theater during February, March and April was bombing in the 60's. This accuracy was then considered so remarkable that the group received a presidential citation for it.

It remained for Cap. Melvin A. Anderson of (2120 North 44th St.) Seattle, Wash., a former reporter for the Seattle Times and now group bombardier to tell the group's success secret:

"We've just got to hand it to the Old Man" he said, "Colonel Smith get the guys all steamed up. Our main job for months has been on German bridges and the Germans are not dumb. They know that when we miss a bridge the first time, we probably will keep coming back until we bust it.

"That's been the Colonel's best training plea. The guys have convinced themselves through him that they must practice so they won't have to keep going back to the same target".

Bombing accuracy is calculated on the basis of an imaginary circle with a 600 foot radius. Its center is the heart of the objective. An Air Force announcement explains: "When bombers of a large

formation all place their loads within this area the score is 100%".

Although Anderson placed unceasing practice firs among the factors contributing to the 321st record, he cited others:

"You know it sounds like college 'rah-rah' but competition really works with these kids. The colonel builds up that idea too. It gets so hot they begin betting on their targets. Then they can't afford to miss.

"Another thing, our bombardiers navigate all the way out to the target. That gives us a double check. Our group has never yet had a

formation bomb the wrong target".

"There's another thing. There are ten clubs on our field. Every one of them has a bar. That helps a helluva lot. If you think the other guy is a bum, you can get a drink and tell him so to his face. They get their grudges off their chests and don't worry about them.

"Again there's Colonel Smith. We used to be able to come back and tell a commanding officer a lot of malarkey about why we missed or could not finish a bomb run, but you simply can't kid Colonel Smith, he knows all about it.

Like most of the group's top officers, Smith is a combat veteran with 67 missions to his credit.

His deputy group command, Lt. Col. Charles F. Cassidy of (1249 Fillmore St.) Denver, Colorado, has 57 missions.

On the Nose



CONCENTRATED PRECISION BOMBING. — While a tight concentration of bombs explodes squarely on the bridge below, three planes of the second flight move over the target to drop their missiles. Bombing such as this enabled the 321st to pace the Wing in accuracy for seven consecutive months in 1944.

ACCURACY RECORD IS SET

B-25 BOMBERS OF 321st TOPS

At A 12th AAF B-25 BASE, DECEMBER 1, 1944 — How do they do it?

Colonel R. H. "Red" Smith's 321st bomb group has the top ranking Air Force men in the theater asking that question, and there's a reason.

The group's B-25 Mitchells made history in September when their bombing accuracy for that month soared up to 90 per cent. Nobody thought the performance could be repeated. Then along came October and again the unit's bombing accuracy scaled the ninety mark. November—ditto.

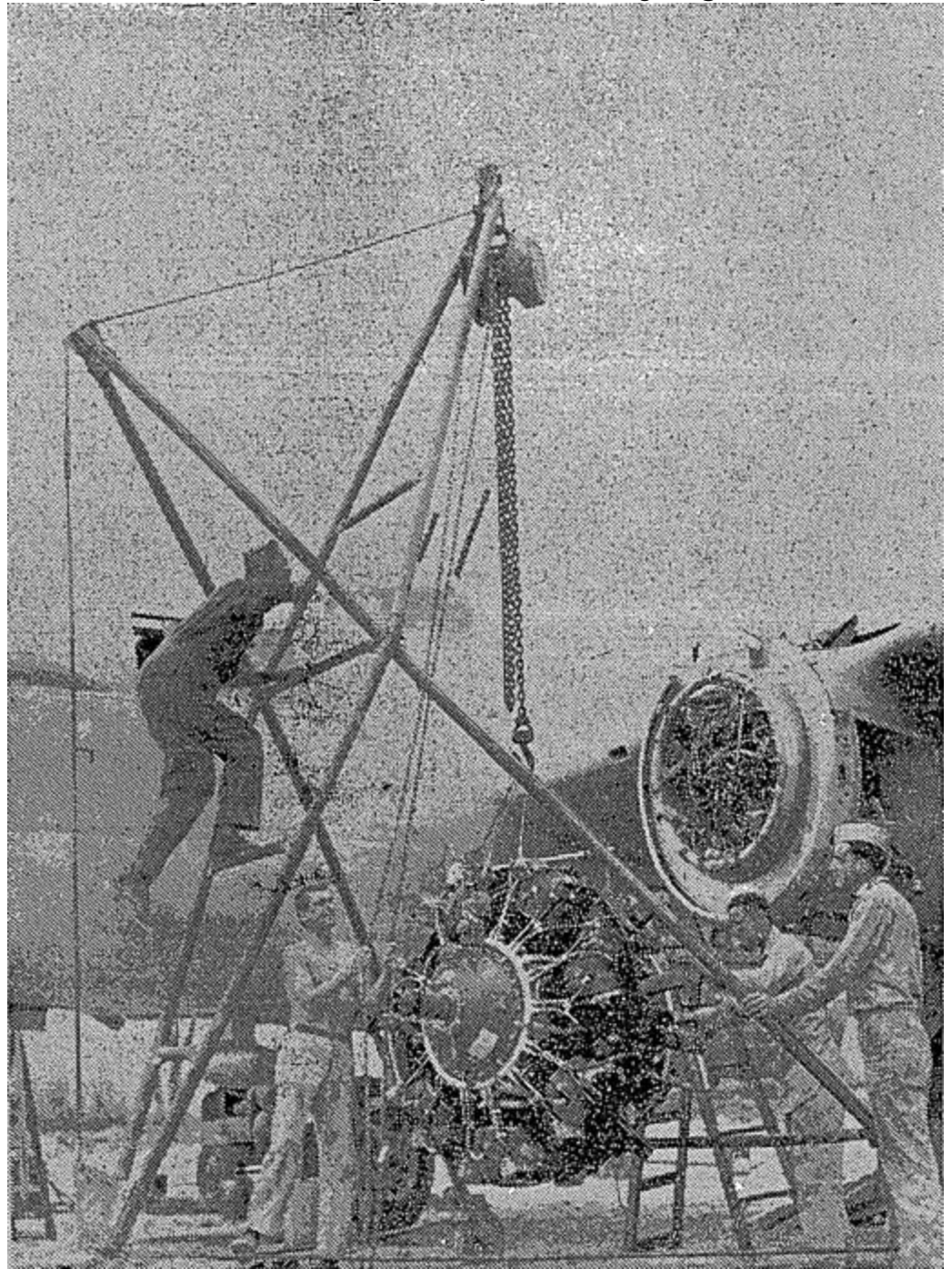
It was only a matter of six or seven months ago that such precision bombing against pin-point targets was considered out of the realm of possibility. An average in the sixties for a one month period was enough to evoke a happy grin from the men who knew their bombing best. These theories have been forever scrapped with the 321st setting the pace. The group has placed nine bombs in the target area out of every ten dropped during the past three months of sustained combat operations. Ninety-six attacks were carried out during the period, most of them against rail and road bridges in the Po Valley.

Bombing accuracy is figured on the basis of an imaginary circle which covers an area 600 feet in radius from the center of the objective.

Credit for the remarkable accuracy record of his group is given by Colonel Smith to his staff and the intensive training carried out in the group between missions. The colonel, a West Point graduate and native of El Paso, Texas, has flown more than 65 combat missions in heavy and medium bombers. He adheres strictly to his rule that only the men who have proven themselves to be outstanding in combat will be selected for the operational staff. The same rule applies in the selection of flight leaders and lead bombardiers. All members of the operational staff have flown from 50 to "they've been on plenty of missions themselves and are qualified to plan and brief a mission in the best possible manner so that men going out can hit the target".

Colonel Smith frequently leads the B-

They Keep 'Em Flying



ENGINE CHANGE. — The men of the 321st who keep 'em flying a new engine into place. With only portable field equipment for their use, the maintenance men have performed miracles in keeping their B-25's in the air.

25's in their attacks. He has distinguished himself in combat and wears the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart and Air Medal with seven clusters.

The 321st, Formerly commanded by Brig.

General Robert D. Knapp, Auburn, Ala., came overseas to North Africa in a 54-plane mass flight in February, 1943. It has participated in every major campaign in the Mediterranean area since.

LT. COL. CASSIDY NEW C.O.

ASSUMES TOP UNIT POSITION OF 321 GROUP

Lt. Co. Earl Young Is Assistant C.O.

CORSICA, JANUARY 28, 1945 — Lt. Col. Charles F. Cassidy, Jr., deputy commander of the 321st for the past ten months assumed full command of the group today.

Colonel R. H. Smith who has been C. O. of the B-25 unit since March, 1944 will return to the United States according to reports received here.

At a staff meeting held by the new group commander when he assumed command, Colonel Cassidy announced that there would be no immediate change in policies, administrative or otherwise under his command. The group will carry on as previously.

Colonel Cassidy commanded a fighter squadron in this theater and was deputy C. O. of a fighter group before transferring to bombers. The ten months he has served with the 321st as deputy C. O. has seen the group make vast strides in perfecting precision bombing.

Some of the most outstanding pinpoint bombing of the war has been accomplished by B-25's of the 321st. As a member of the staff Colonel Cassidy contributed materially to this record and he is well qualified to fill the position as the group's leader.

A veteran pilot, Colonel Cassidy has taken part in numerous combat missions with the 321st and won a cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross for his part in the Toulon attack on August 18, 1944, when the group sank three warships.

The new deputy commander of the group is Lt. Col. Earl B. Young. Colonel Young was formerly assigned to the 12th Fighter Command and the transport service in this theater.

Stars and Leaves



THE COMMANDERS. — (L. to R.) Lt. Col. Charles F. Cassidy, Jr., 321st C. O., Brig. Gen. Robert D. Knapp, 57th Wing C. O., Lt. Col. Paul T. Cooper, 446th Squadron C. O., Maj. Thomas C. Bounds, former 445th Squadron C. O., Maj. General John K. Cannon, 12th Air Force Commander, Maj. Marshall C. Strenger, 447th Squadron C. O., Maj. Harold S. Farwell, 448th Squadron C. O.

General Arnold Sends Greetings To Cannon and 12th Air Force

General H. H. Arnold, USAAF commander, sent the following message on New Year's Day to Major Gen. John K. Cannon, commanding 12th AAF, which reads in part:

"The continual pounding by the 12th Air Force of railways, bridges, and roads has made movement of any sort extremely difficult for the Germans the rapid movement and freedom of maneuver virtually impossible. Your bombing of troop concentrations and supplies has played a vital role in our operations. You also have accomplished the highly important mission of denying the enemy the air within range of your planes".

12, 361 Decorations Given 321st

A total of 12, 361 decorations have been presented to 321st personnel during two years of combat. The awards were as follows: One Distinguished Service Cross, 17 Legion of Merits, 31 Silver Stars, 438 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 31 Soldiers Medals, 81 Bronze Star Medals, 2,144 Air Medals, 9,241 clusters to the Air Medal, 339 Purple Hearts, 38 clusters to the Purple Heart.

BRENNER BATTLE RAGES

ITALIAN RAIL LINE IN PASS GETS BLASTING

Big Aerial Campaign in Fourth Month

WITH THE 321ST BOMB GROUP IN THE MEDITERRANEAN THEATER, FEBRUARY 27, 1945. — As the Battle of Brenner Pass, campaign to cut the juggler and deal a decisive death blow to Kesselring's forces in northern Italy, nears the close of its fourth month, the veteran 321st Bomb Group today chalked up its 39th attack on this Nazi main line of communication with the Po Valley.

The 147-mile, double-track, formerly electrically-operated Brenner Pass rail system has been bombed by more than 1,000 Mitchell bombers since the first assault on November 6, 1944, almost half of which were sent out by the 321st group. More than 5,000 tons of high explosive have been dropped on carefully selected weak points along the line by B-25's alone.

Every day that weather has permitted, 321st bombers under the command of Lt. Col. Charles F. Cassidy, Jr., have struck hard at from one to three targets on the main line or its feeders. A list of the vital targets hit since the Mitchell Workhorses were given the assignment includes rail bridges, rail fills, temporary German-built diversion bridges, transformer stations and power plants that formerly hid the line, stations yards and even a cliff that can cause a landslide over the tracks.

Most bombed spots on the line are targets at Rovereto, San Michele, Lavis, San Imbrogio, Calliano and Ala. Lately the Mitchells of the 321st have been striking targets as near as nine miles to the Austrian border.

The resulting cut of critical war materials from home has been felt keenly on the Nazi southern front. The Germans have received the worst end of the deal in the destroy-and-repair contest that has been the Battle of Brenner Pass. Most Brenner Line targets are in a steep gorge with high mountains on

San Michele Hit



B-25'S VERSUS BRENNER. — A cloud of smoke marks the pin-point of the bridge at San Michele on the Brenner Pass route, one of the chief targets being bombed repeatedly by B-25's in the Battle of Brenner Pass.

either side and the attacks must be made around noon or the deep shadows will conceal the target effectively. The enemy knows this, and usually is waiting with smoke pots, flak and, when he can spare them, fighters. Clouds, haze, turbulent air — all uncontrollable factors — have sided with the Germans in this grim Battle of Brenner Pass.

German ingenuity, with unlimited help of Italian forced labor, has resorted to the building of multiple passages to be used with or in place of particularly vulnerable bridges. If the main passage is bombed, they use the diversion and have time to repair the main bridge. Italian workmen are kept working on repairs in shifts, night and day, stopping only during bombing attacks.

Whether the bombings will write the final chapter to the long, bitter struggle in Italy...as has been reported recently by a Zurich dispatch remains to be seen. But in the meantime...the Battle of Brenner Pass continues with unabated fury.

Kesselring Reported Set to Withdraw From Italy

LONDON, FEB. 17 (UP). — A Zurich dispatch to the London Daily Mail reported today that Marshall Albert Kesselring will shortly withdraw the German Army from Italy as a result of Allied bombings of the Brenner Pass and the Russian advance towards Vienna.

Kesselring, the dispatch said, was expected to move his men into the mountains of southern Germany around Salzburg and Berchtesgaden.

321 IN COMBAT TWO YEARS

MITCHELLS OF VETERAN UNIT TOP MTO WITH 15,800 SORTIES

WITH THE 321ST BOMB GROUP, MARCH 15, 1945. — Climaxing two full years of combat operations with an average of better than one mission a day to its credit totaling more than 15,800 set a record for all medium and heavy groups in the Mediterranean theater — the veteran 321st Bomb Group took a day's leave from the 12th Air Force battle of Brenner pass to bomb a rail bridge at Canale Di Isonza on the vital Trevisio route and to celebrate the second anniversary of its first mission. The group was scheduled to carry out its first assault upon Austria but could not complete the mission because of complete cloud cover.

General John K. Cannon, 12 Air force Commander and one of the USAAF's leading tacticians, visited the veteran B-25 Billy Mitchell unit commanded by Lt. Col. Charles F. Cassidy, Jr., to pay tribute to the group on reaching the two-year milestone in its long dramatic combat history. While officers and men more than a thousand strong stood in formation on the parade ground, General Cannon, accompanied by Brig. General Robert D.

Knapp, 57th Wing Commander and former C. O. of the 321st and other high officials, awarded 56 decorations to individuals of the group. There followed an inspection of the troops after which the officers and men passed in review.

The 12th Air Force chief is reported to have been much impressed with the combat record of the 321st. In measurable destruction no less than 92 surface vessels have been sunk or damaged by the group in 24 months, including one battleship, one cruiser and eight destroyers. The battleship and cruiser plus a submarine were sunk in a

single attack upon Toulon harbor on August 18, 1944, an altogether unprecedented feat for medium bombers which has been cited in 12th Air Force orders. The orders have been submitted to the War Department and if approved will constitute an official presidential citation, the second for the 321st.

The record of hostile fighters destroyed in aerial battle is equally impressive. While in recent months the Luftwaffe has all but disappeared from the skies in this theater, in the early days when fighters appeared frequently to challenge the group's B-25's they always got the worst of it. Gunners of the 321st destroyed or damaged 112 in the air

20,000-Ton Mark is Reached on Last Day

On the last day of its two years in combat the 321st Bomb Group dropped its 20,000th ton of bombs. Every type of bomb ranging from 20-pound fragmentation missiles to half-ton bridge-busters helped make up this total. To carry these bombs over enemy objectives the group sent out 15,822 Mitchell bombers.

contributed to Allied victories.

Airdromes, shipping and communications have made up the bulk of 321st targets during two years of combat but they were by no

means the only objectives attacked.

Troup concentrations only a few hundred yards from out own lines have been bombed numerous times by the group as well as fuel, ammunition and supply dumps, factories, harbor installations and a variety of other targets.

In still another respect the veteran 321st has outclassed all comparable units in this theater. On every one of the 731 days it

has been in combat, the group has stood prepared to strike. Only the weather has kept unit's

CANNON LAUDS 321 RECORD

The 321st Bomb Group today completes two full years of successful operations in the Mediterranean theater. During this period over 800 missions of 15,800 sorties have been flown. You have been contributing in a very important way to the allied victories in the Mediterranean. You of the 321st have achieved many "firsts" in tactical bombardment as a result of constant effort to improve technique and to increase the efficiency of your strikes against the enemy. This alertness to the necessity for improving and developing bombardment tactics has shown its value in your sustained bombing efficiency throughout campaigns in Tunisia, the Mediterranean Islands, Italy, the Balkans and southern France. Your extremely high degree of bombing accuracy, now continuous for over seven months, is a source of great pride and satisfaction to me. I offer you my hearty congratulations and sincere wishes for your continued success.

JOHN K. CANNON Major General U. S. A.

for the loss of only eight bombers to hostile fighters.

But the combat record of the 321st cannot be measured in numbers of planes or ships destroyed. By far the greater part of the unit's effort has been directed against enemy communication in Italy, France — or wherever the most harm could come from disrupting them. It is not possible to enumerate the number of cuts and blocks created on vital enemy supply routes and even if it were — the figures would not measure the strangling effect of these attacks on the enemy nor tell the story of how vastly they

B-25's on the ground and on many occasions the group has succeeded in carrying out attacks in weather which was far from satisfactory for flying. Not once during the full years of battle has the 321st been "pulled out of the line".

In all Mediterranean campaigns since Tunisia the group has played a vital role.

Now in the midst of the 12th Air Force Battle of Brenner Pass, the 321st continues to lead the pack, both in missions flown over that vital route and tin targets destroyed. For the past six weeks the line has been kept impassable with up to 25 cuts along its 147-mile length.

Those who Have Served

with the

321st Bomb Group

15 March 1943 - 15 March 1945

In inscribing such a magnificent record of achievement throughout two years of combat, inevitably there were those of the 321st who gave their all.

Their names will be but mere words upon the written page — but in our minds — their smiles — their tears — their greetings — will continue to glow — and they shall not be forgotten.