



Bombs Away

43-16





These Are Americans .

... millions of mothers, dads, sisters and brothers—
fighting for America with all their strength.

They're making the weapons and tools we need on
every field of battle. Like a great heart pumping streams
of blood to maintain life, their tireless work goes on and
on and on, and from their hands come the planes, ships,
guns and tanks that smash harder each day at a weak-
ening enemy.

To the ingenuity and resourcefulness of American
engineers and scientists, and to the boundless deter-
mination of our millions of production workers, we—the
Bombardiers of Sixteen—humbly dedicate this page as
our gesture of thanks for their great work.

Victorville Army Air Field





Farewell . . .

from our Commandant

November 13, 1943

To the Class 43-16:

Silver wings and a commission in the Army Air Forces are your reward . . . reward for a job well done.

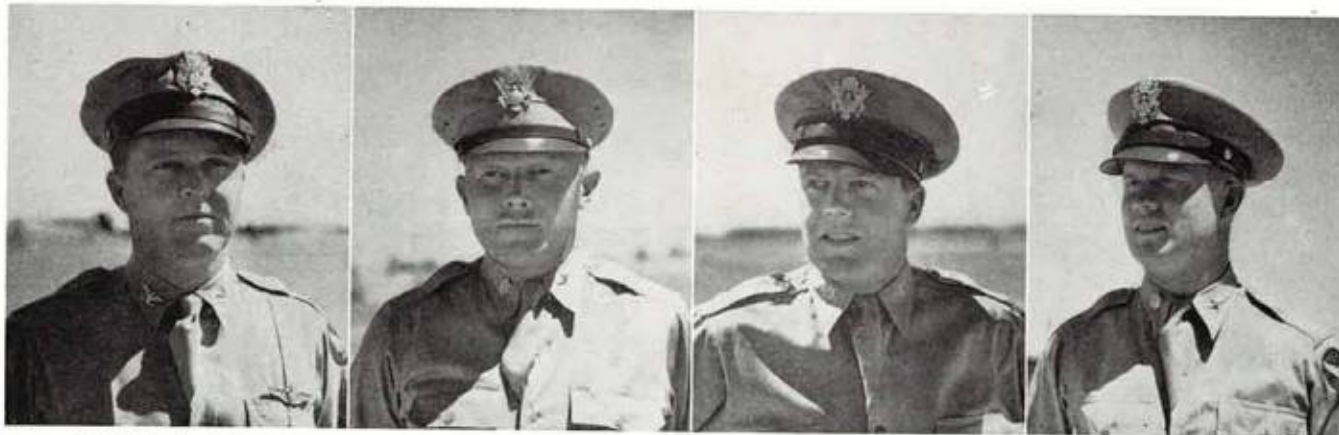
You are now an important cog in the bomber team. In your hands rests the final result of all bombing missions.

You have been hand-picked for your technical knowledge and skill. As a commissioned officer you have taken on an added responsibility and duty to your country. The results of your training will be felt over Tokyo, Berlin and a hundred other targets that will soon be yours.

Good luck and good hunting.

EARL C. ROBBINS,
Colonel, Air Corps,
Commandant.





COLONEL A. J. McVEA
Director of Training

LT. COL. ADOLPHUS L. RING
Post Executive Officer

MAJ. PAUL F. KIRKPATRICK
Post Adjutant

MAJ. CHARLES I. SAMPSON
Executive Officer, Technical



They Ran the Show ...

Behind all Post Regulations were a number of officers, whose duty was to administer activities at Victorville Army Air Field. Although we rarely, if ever, contacted these officers, we knew them through the department or activity they supervised. Occasionally we saw them, and they returned our proud salute . . . Always we had the feeling that this field was well governed, and its officer personnel seemed to be on its toes. Regulations were strict, but never unreasonable. The morale of cadets ran high, and our respect for administrative officers grew constantly. To the officers who shaped our program of training so well, we say Thanks! You did a splendid job of it.



MAJ. JOHN DE PAOLO
Post Operations Officer

CAPT. A. W. SHERMAN
Director of Ground School

MAJ. ROBERT H. MURRAY
Deputy Director of Training

They Played the Lead . . .

The job of enforcing rules is usually harder than making them. And that job rested on the shoulders of Major Skaggs, Captain Garrett, Captain Miller, our tactical officer, and the sergeant major.

To play the leading role of shaping us into officers, Major Skaggs and Captain Garrett had to be themselves an example of what they expected of us . . . And we soon found that they set a fast pace and kept way in the lead.



CAPTAIN LOUIS H. GARRETT
Deputy Commandant of Cadets



MAJOR HAROLD M. SKAGGS, Jr.
Commandant of Cadets



T/SGT. NORMAN E. PAASCHE
Sergeant Major

Twelve to the Bars

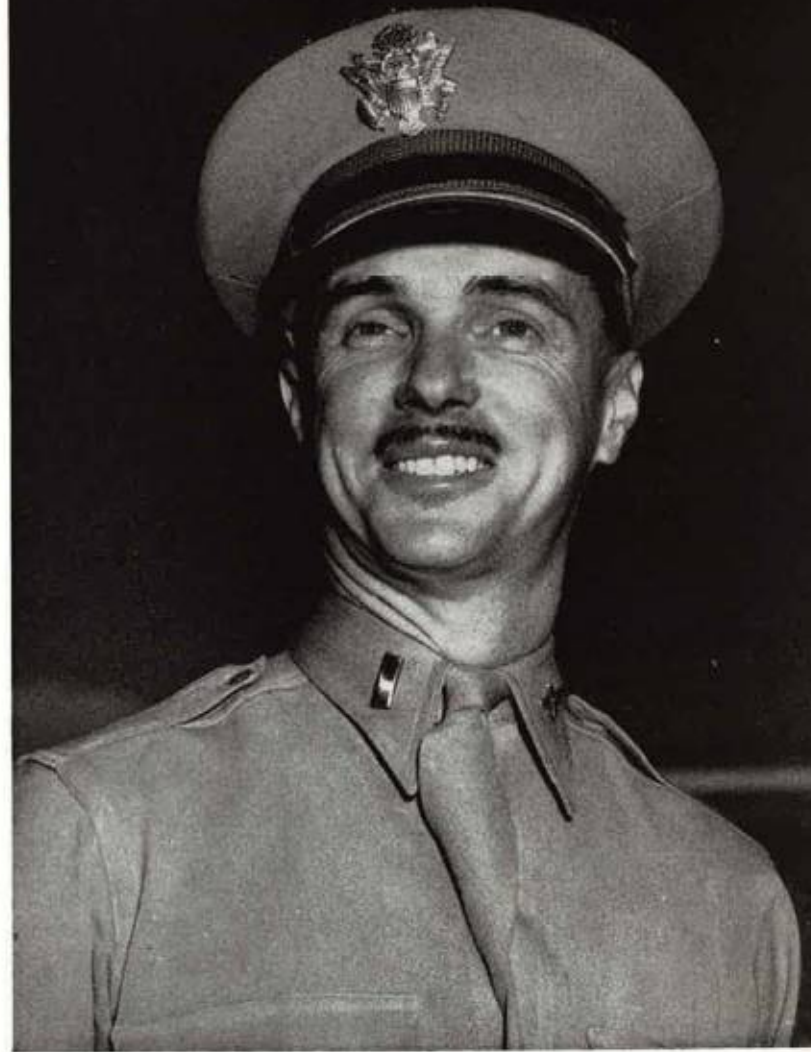
Twelve short weeks was all that Lt. Fred B. Blaney had to make officers of us. As Tactical Officer for Sixteen, he had the tedious, unglorified task of moulding us to fit the pattern, but quickly.

He was the weeping wall and guiding light of each of Sixteen's Bombar-diers. Yet his manner was calm and his hair unruffled. A resourceful officer and a gentleman, he insisted that twenty-six hours a day was too much for his boys. He then proved his point by miraculously getting a free hour here, an earlier pass there. A lecture occasionally became an hour of "sack time."

Lt. Blaney was known for his leniency tempered with firmness; his soft voice had a back-drop of steel. Necessary subjects were driven home by his deft hand.

We owe much to Lt. Blaney for his effective teaching and example. But his greatest accomplishment was our realization of the honor and responsibility of being an officer.

CAPTAIN A. H. MILLER
Chief Tactical Officer



LT. FRED B. BLANEY

Capt. A. H. Miller was Chief Tactical Officer. Why he was became apparent when he gave us our first lecture. His enthusiasm and vigor gave a certain zest and clearer meaning to the many subjects he lay before us. We came to understand how men like this built armies.

His ram-rod back and dapper appearance became a familiar sight. Always on the alert, he corrected mistakes that might have grown. He was strict on enforcement of army regulations, and followed them to the letter in his own conduct.

Our admiration of Captain Miller goes very deep. We leave him with the feeling that if we're ever half the person and officer he is, we will have accomplished a worthy goal.

Sixteen Began the Grind . . .

"Airfield—7 miles."

A road sign pointed the way as our bus, crammed to the roof with men, rounded the curve into the home stretch. The bumpy, cactus-lined road led straight to the gates of Victorville—scourge of the West—the dreaded bombardier's death Valley.

Take me Back! I can't stand it. NO!

These were just a few of the comments as we pulled into the confines of VAAF. All the talk about "Hell-Hole of the Universe," took on sharp significance as we scanned the bleak desolate barracks set in this small clearing of desert. Here was home—12 long weeks of it.

Hot, dusty, tired and hungry, we piled from the three large busses into the sultry, blistering sun, cursing the day the Mojave Desert was discovered. Then began the mad scramble for equipment, barracks bags and most of all—A DRINK OF COLD WATER.

We got it . . . and more . . . a few moments later as we trudged wearily into the mess hall. Surprise! It was air-conditioned. Here was relaxation for the first time, with soothing music and best of all, "food fit for a king."

Things began to take shape! Like a chapter from "Lost Horizon," we were transported from a sweltering sand-baked desert, to the cool interiors of our new barracks.

Reluctantly the skeptics began to admit that "Victorville was all right—after all." Next on the roster . . . a cold shower . . . soft bunk . . . a good night's sleep . . . and the next morning we started the ball rolling.





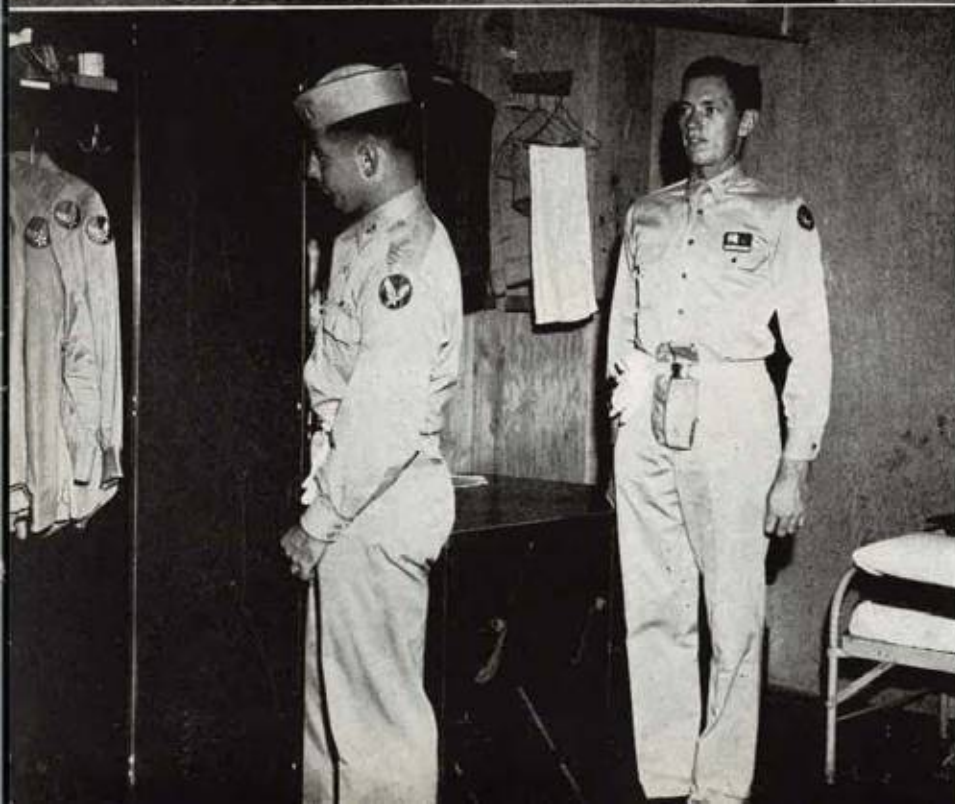
Officers

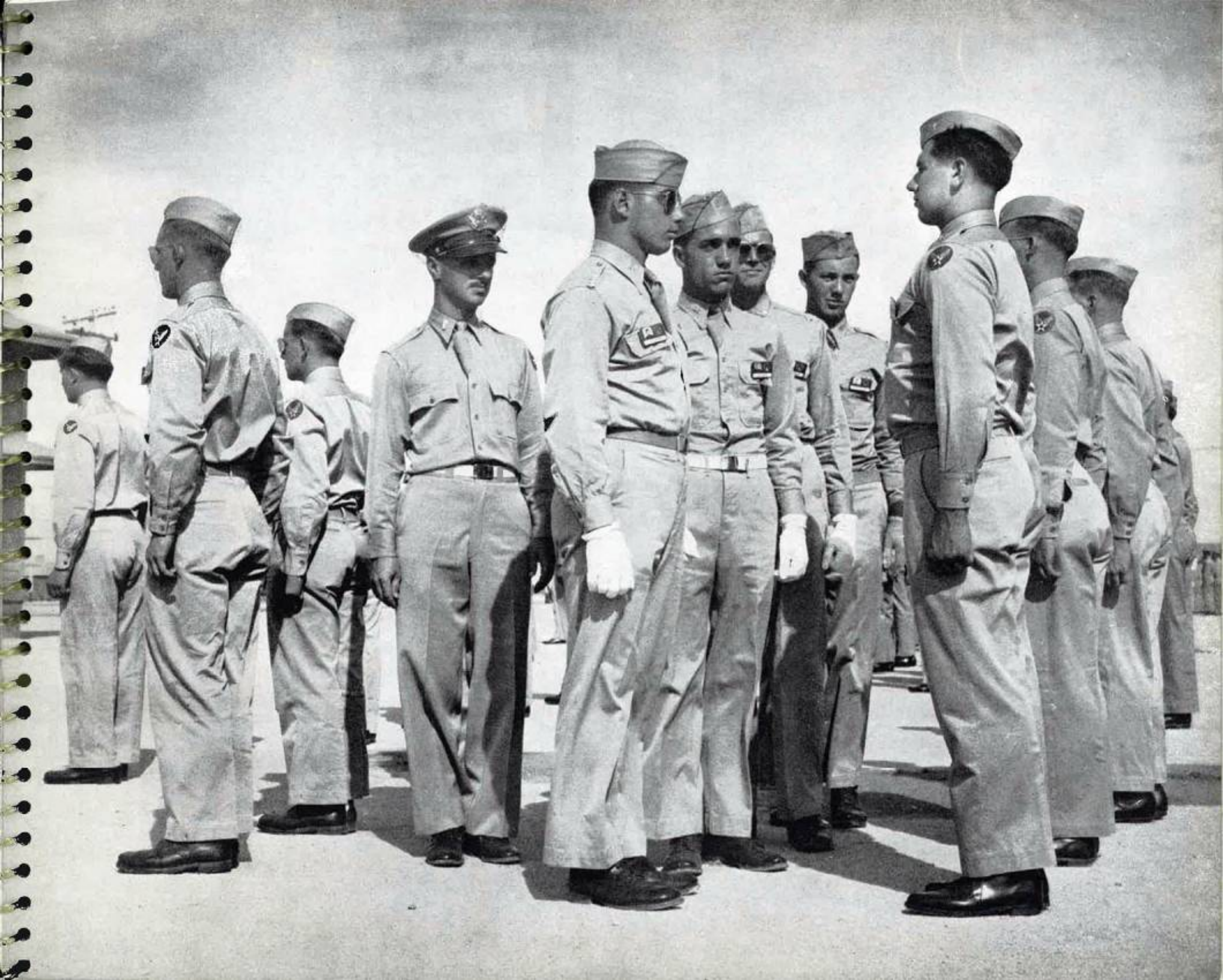
... in the Raw

At break of dawn on Saturday morning, we were yanked from our sacks and the day began. Wildly we blitzed our brass that should have been polished the night before. We shaved a little closer, too. And put a blinding polish on our G.I. shoes, for this was the day that counted.

On the parade ground, we strutted our stuff and cursed the guy who missed a step. In the barracks, we cleaned out the corners cached with a week of dirt; made up our beds with an eight-inch white collar.

Not that we were overly eager to look so sharp . . . but we were eager for Open Post, our reward for being on-the-ball.





First Came Theory . . .

They told us how important our theory was, computers were the thing, and analysis and causes of errors absolutely necessary. Yes, this they said and more. And we listened alertly, groggily and finally half asleep. We sweated and strained; our brains raced madly or didn't move at all. But we learned, one way or the other, we learned.

Our instructors pleaded and stormed. They stomped around the platform or stood still in agonized silence. They demonstrated how this gear pushed against that one, and to our amazement, we hit a shack and not a hat full of nickels.

Finally the light of understanding penetrated our grasping minds. Fumbling thoughts became clear, and the fog of bewilderment lifted. This was ground school, where the mold for a bombardier was first cast.

For a job well done, we give thanks to Lts. Friday, Kridner, Kloch and others on the Ground School staff. They not only accomplished the seemingly impossible, but they proved that slave-drivers can be regular fellows. They sweated out every test with us, watched over us like mothers, and treated us like brothers. When an understanding of the bombsight finally dawned on us, they were as happy as we were.

LT. JAMES C. FRIDAY



LT. EDWARD A. KLOCH



LT. JOHN D. KRIDNER







Our New Love, Bombing

Awake, or half awake, or not awake at all—it didn't make a devil of a lot of difference. We stood reveille at 4 AM and bombed at 5. That was way back when our vague impressions of bombing and our not too certain knowledge of the sight itself were enough to keep us groggy and uncertain 28 hours a day.

There we were, staring at the board . . . draggin' around after forms, hittin' the line of some seventy-odd, for chutes, 'ox' masks, stop-watch, clip-board flashlight, peanuts, popcorn, chewing gum, candy; get chur lucky number . . .

Then the stroll, hand in hand with a ton of the aforementioned, out to our gleaming ships. Looked like we were all set, and we were until about the middle of night phase when the Armament men took a powder. And all they left us were the bombs. Pretty little 100 lb. bundles of blue. All we had to do was load them. Meanwhile somebody had to pre-flight the sight, the question was WHO, and the bohunk with the two-headed coin usually won. Salute your pilot, check the form 1 and we were ready to take-off.





Food...Fit for the Kings!

The royal kitchens of the cadet mess, packed high with savory delicacies, provided us with many a pleasant moment in our round-the-clock schedules.

We extend full culinary credits to Lt. Bert Galindo and his staff of kitchen commandos who had the knack of mixing together a few good left-overs, adding a dash of this and that. The result—a tempting dish truly fit for the kings.

From early morning to late at night . . . after tedious missions . . . our thoughts turned to the bill of fare at the cadets mess. We dined in style on sizzling steaks and delicious ham—choice chops and roasted chicken to say nothing of the lowly fish all bedecked with tartar sauce and salad.

Our well-rounded meals ended as perfectly as they began with tempting pastries—just the kind mother used to make. They won our hearts from the start with tasty, crisp cookies, fresh doughnuts, cakes and juicy pies, to say nothing of the kettles of hot chocolate at night—to calm our nerves and lull us into deep slumber.

We of 43-16 give thanks to Lt. Galindo and his staff who struggled through a maze of ration books and food budgets to keep us well-stocked with the almighty calory.

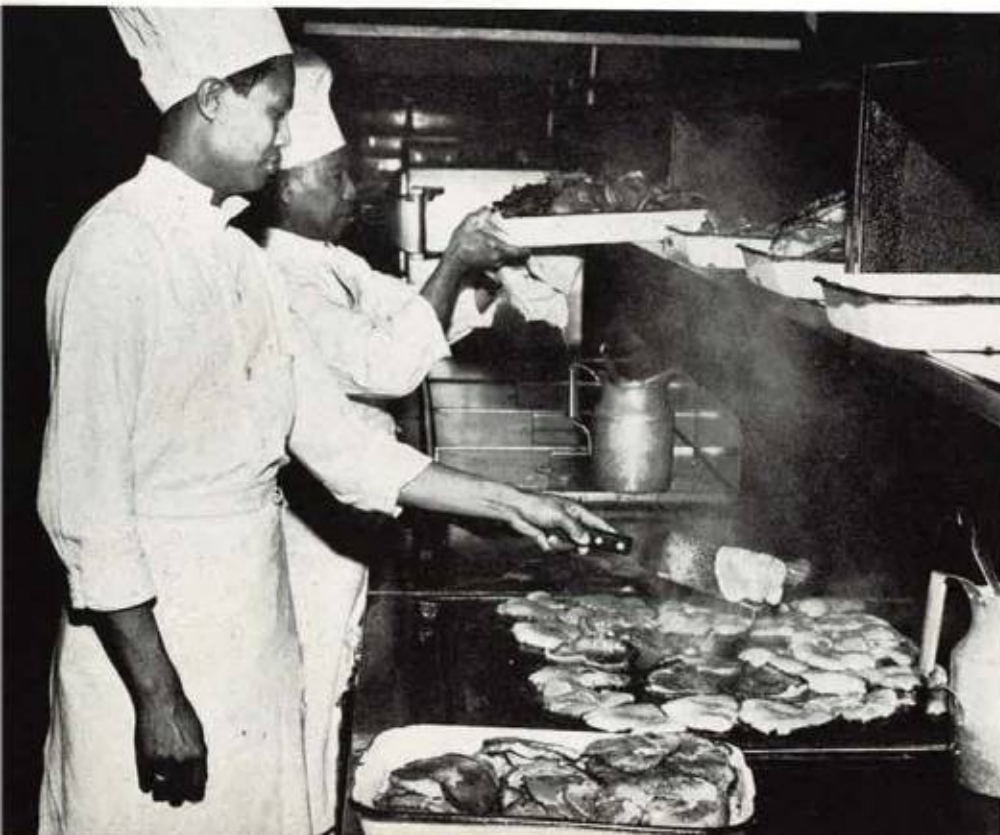
Sonnet to a Steer

Ah, the steaks we used to get,
Thick and juicy, with onions, too!
Three days a week, then only two.

Ah, the steaks we used to get,
Two to a man, to a turn they were done.
Two days a week, and then only one.

Ah, the steaks we used to get,
Tender and mellow, Beef kissed by sun!
One day a week, and now we have none.

War is HELL!

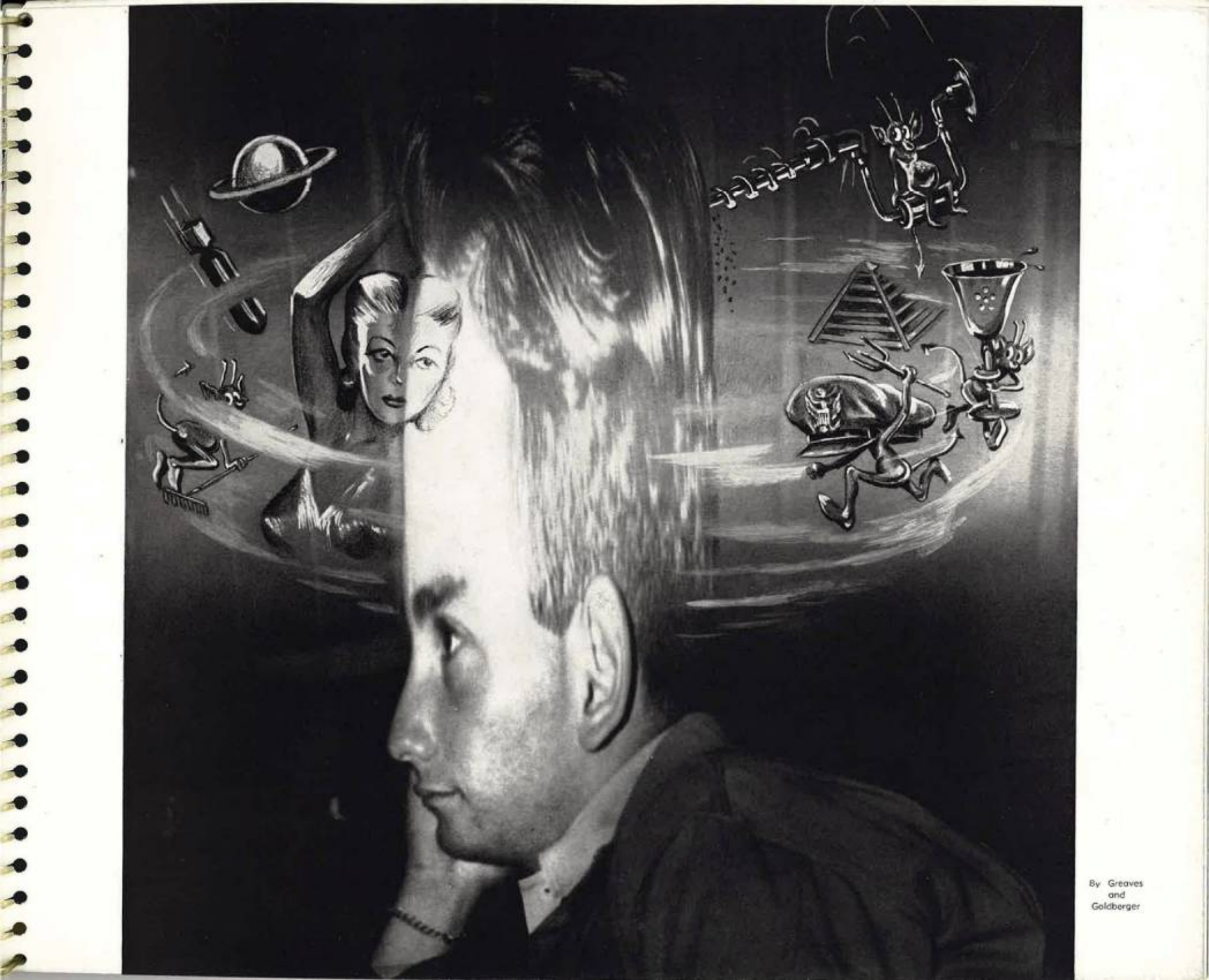






Lt. George B. Wallace, navigator, U. S. Army Air Corps, with more than three hundred combat hours to his credit in the Southwest Pacific war zone, was stationed at Victorville to learn the business of bombing with Sixteen. But his unofficial position was that of a tonic and extra-curricular instructor for cadets in the class. We were justly proud of our one and only Student Officer, not only for achievements here, but especially for those overseas. His related experiences kept the boys in the class spellbound, as we sat around him in the ready room, awaiting our flight.

When we had our problems with navigation, it was Lt. Wallace we turned to for help. He was a swell fellow and he knew all the answers.



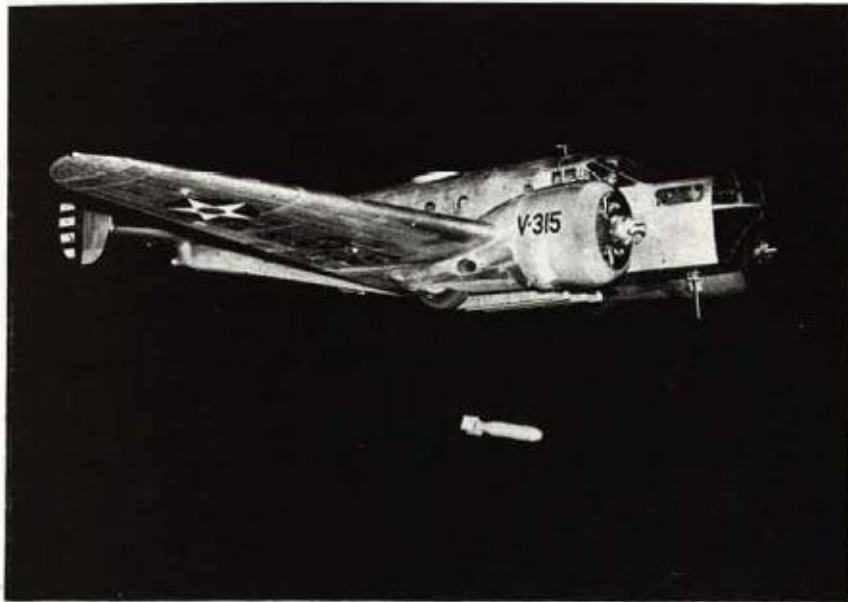
By Greaves
and
Goldberger

New Secret Bombsight Discovered



Prof. C. E. Slaphappe, eminent scientist, has just perfected a revolutionary new bombsight. This sight is unique in that it costs only \$46.98 and includes free with every bombsight a complete book of instructions, 840 pages. Other features include an instrument for telling whether the plane is right side up or not; a crank for use in case of power failure and a special telescope equipped with five sets of cross hairs for synchronized bombing so you just CAN'T MISS. A nickle in the slot brings you the latest dance music and the voice of Frank Sinatra to smooth your nerves. Also a special plastic stool is furnished for the bombardier to sack on. Army officials were amazed at this astounding piece of machinery. They plan to place them in mass production immediately for distribution to the enemy.





Night Life...

When the sun goes down, the C. E. goes up . . . Night phase has long been notorious as the bombardiers' Waterloo. But Sixteen was a fairly hot class, and we didn't have too much trouble with our bombing. Sure—we had our share of checkrides, toppling gyros, and bombardier malfunctions.

But night phase leaves pleasant memories, too. The stars so clear and so close, and far below each target seemed like a pattern of pearls set in deep black velvet, with emeralds or rubies beside them to point the way . . . And then, the supreme thrill of all—a flash—as our bomb found the center of the pattern.



Shack Busters...



We can't help feeling that our instructors are the real heroes of this war—the men who by virtue of their assignments are denied the greater glory of actual combat. These are the men who soothed and consoled, and fretted over us—who slowly but definitely made us expert in the secret craft of precision bombing.

During those first trying hours as we went praying down the bombing run on the way to the target—it was our instructors who shared the ecstasy of the "shack" with us—or who saw us through those black moments that periodically cast a shadow over every fledgling Bombardier.

It is our collective hope that their reward will be in the reflected glory of our achievements.



Wrong Shack!



↑
A.E.A.

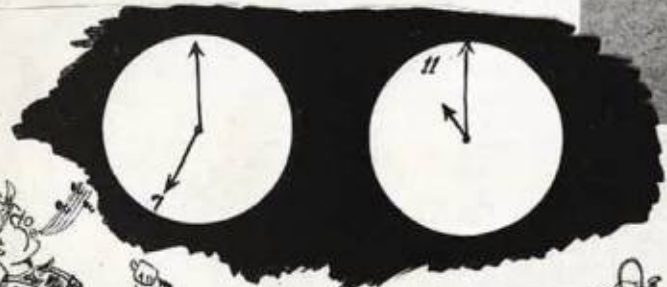
DESERT SCENES... by Brink



WHAT,
NO SHACK?



Never a Dull Moment !

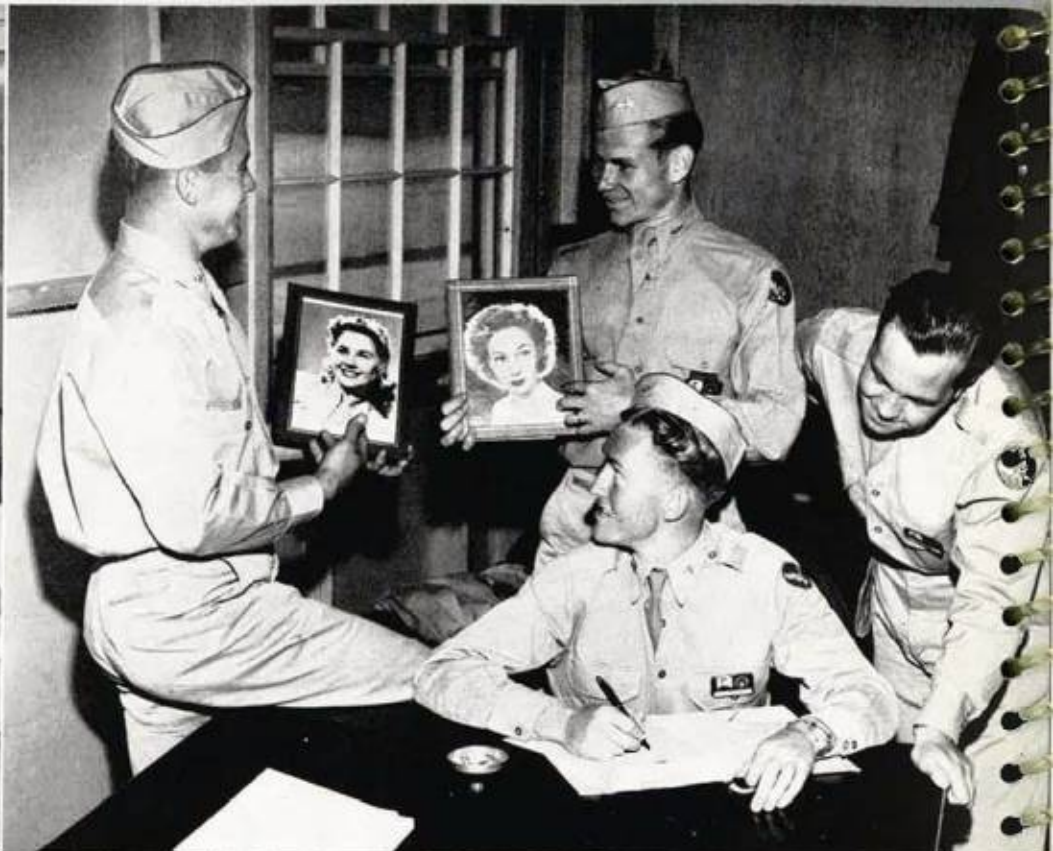


FORGOT THE TRIGGER !



- "7 Come 11" -

SNAFU...



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Wing Commander..... Hays, R. F.
 Wing Adjutant..... Peterson, G. W.
 Wing Sergeant Major..... Koerner, F. C.
 Group Major..... Smith, H. H.

Sq. III

Captain.... Jackson, W. C.
 Adjutant... Benton, J. F.

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Flt. Lt.... Bunn, T. A.
 Flt. Sgt.... Beeby, J. F.
 Supply Sgt.. Branch, P. C., Jr.

"B" FLIGHT

Flt. Lt.... Daly, W. F.
 Flt. Sgt.... Ditchey, S. D.
 Supply Sgt.. Dobbs, C. E.

"C" FLIGHT

Flt. Lt.... Glasser, L. H.
 Flt. Sgt.... Emery, B. D.
 Supply Sgt.. Fisk, J. L.

"D" FLIGHT

Flt. Lt.... Green, J. H.
 Flt. Sgt.... Havelaar, H. H.
 Supply Sgt.. Griffiths, S. A.

Sq. IV

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 Adjutant... Martin, J. M.

"E" FLIGHT

Flt. Lt.... Jenks, W. L.
 Flt. Sgt.... Kelley, C. E.
 Supply Sgt.. Korzeniowski, M. P.

"F" FLIGHT

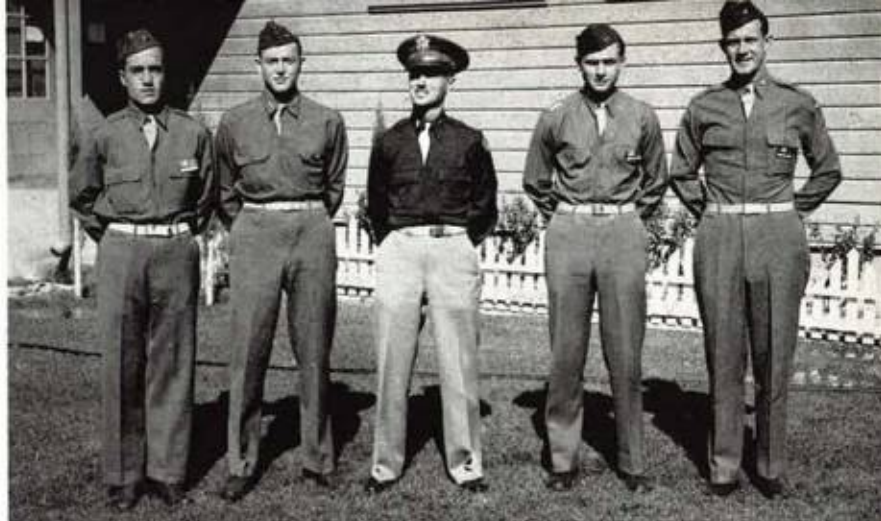
Flt. Lt.... Martin, J. C.
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 Supply Sgt.. Mako, J. P.

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Flt. Lt.... Patrick, B. F.
 Flt. Sgt.... Offermann, R. H.
 Supply Sgt.. Peck, H. M.

"H" FLIGHT

Flt. Lt.... Rogers, G. M.
 Flt. Sgt.... Stohl, R. W.
 Supply Sgt.. Smith, W. T., Jr.



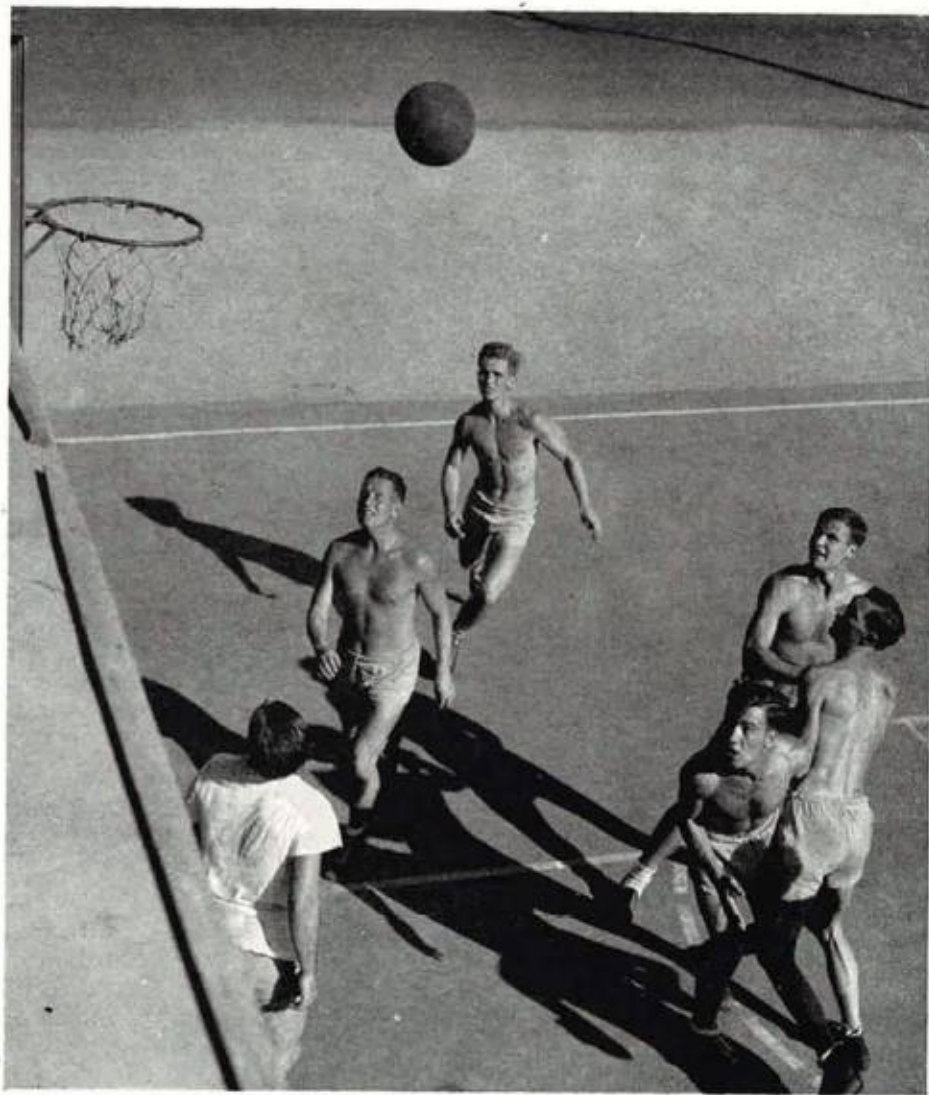
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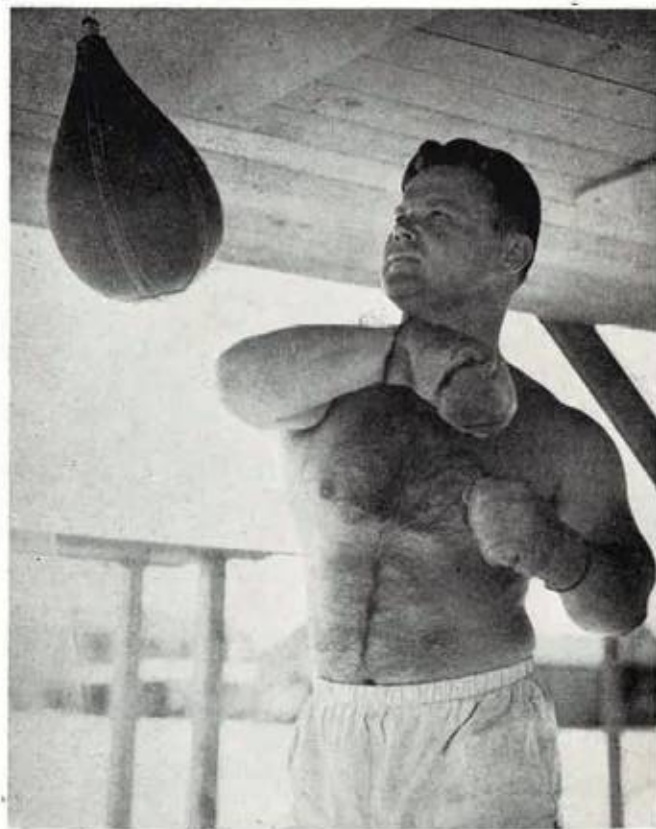
Pvt. Bob Funk..... Producer
 Cpl. Eddie Goldberg..... Photographer

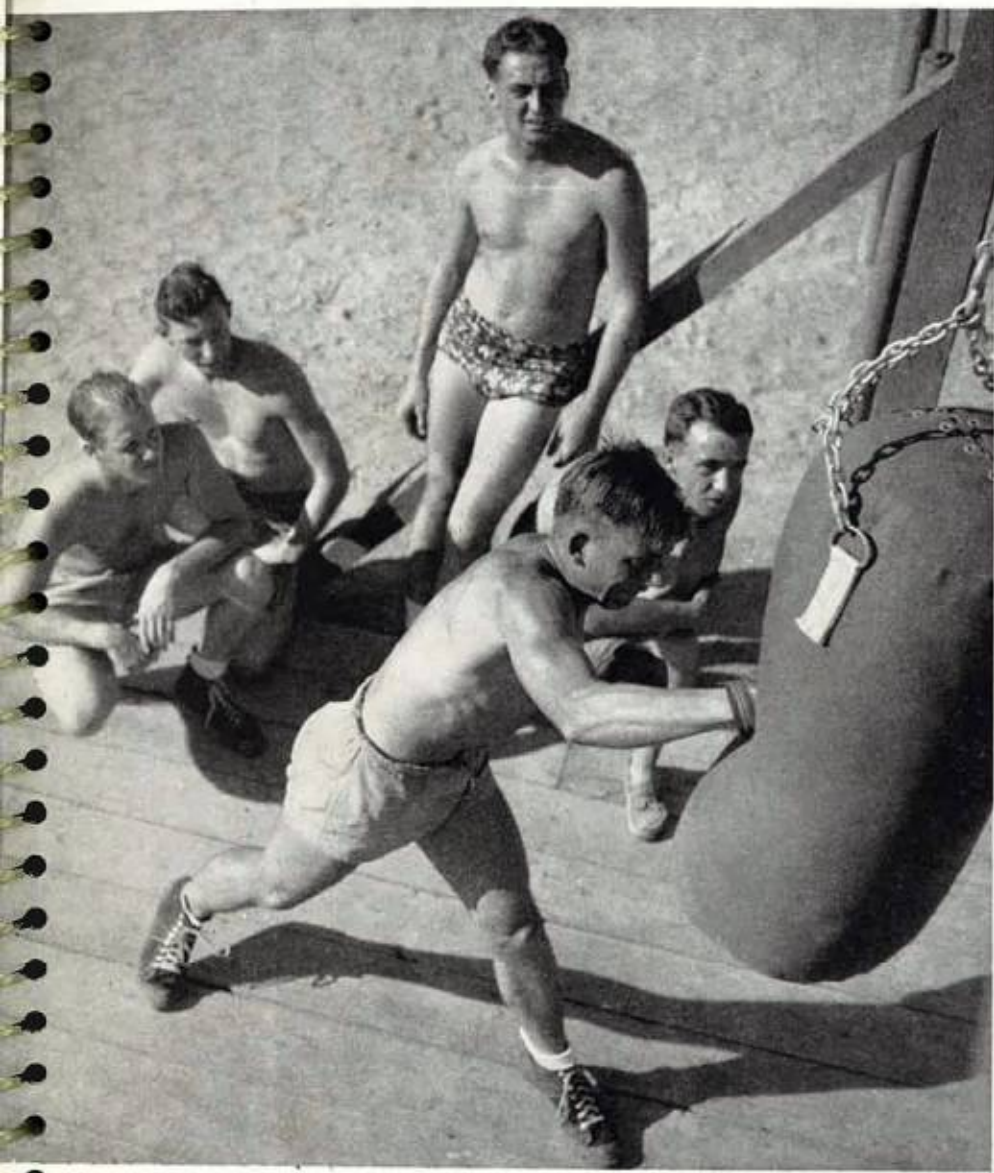
The Cadet Staff deeply appreciates the assistance of Pvt. Funk in layout and production of the book. Thanks to the Base Photo Laboratory and Cpl. Lorin Potter for the excellent portraits and use of the Base Photo facilities. And thanks to Sgt. J. W. Greaves for his gremlin sketching over Baskoff's head.

Sweat and Strain . . .

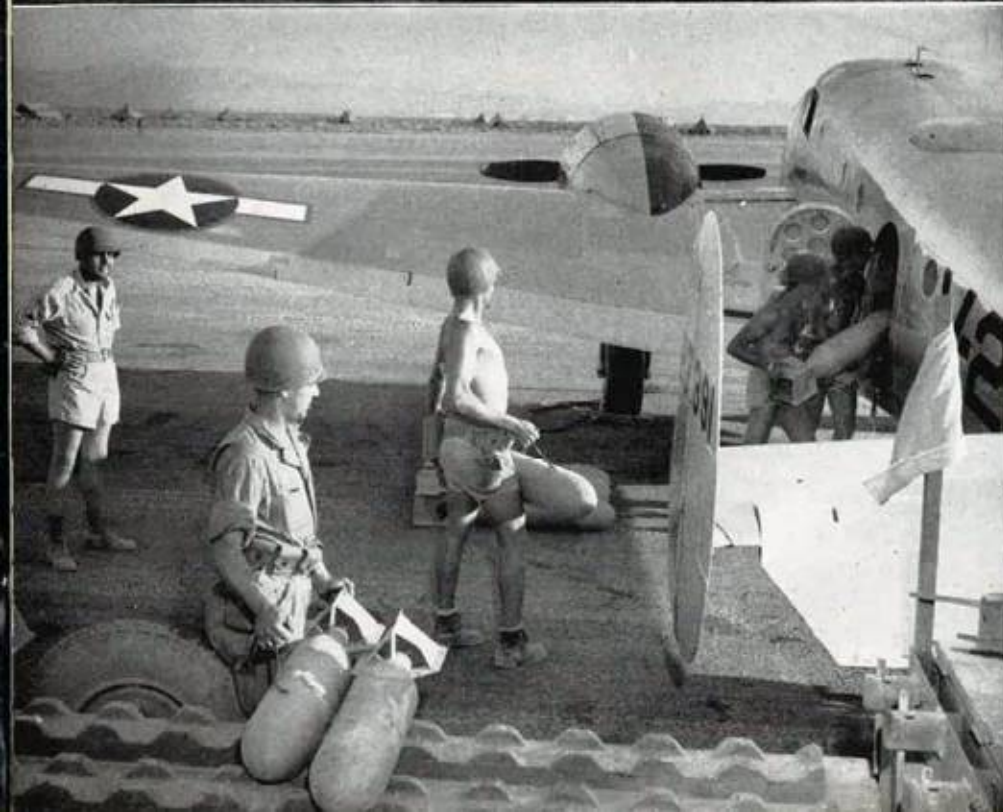


Yep, those P-T periods were really rugged. But we soon noticed our bodies hardening up and turning chestnut tan. And our sense of humor improved, too. Even to the point of appreciating Lt. Anderson's amused glance as he rolled out those back-breaking words "Wind Sprints." And remember Lt. Lewis' big smile, especially when he yelled out "Free Play"? P-T was rugged, but we liked it.





Blood and Sand...





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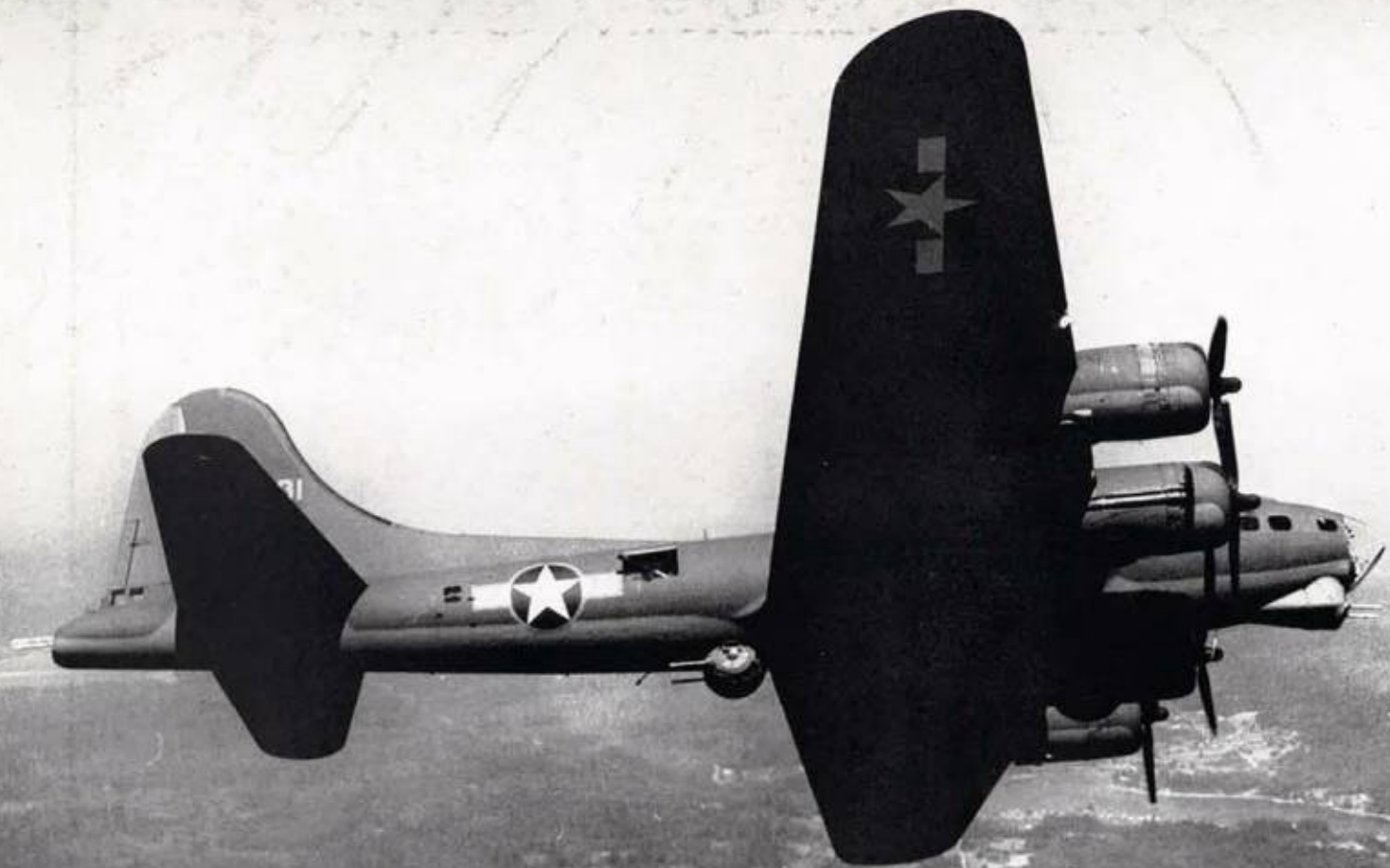


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**Our
One
and
Only**



BOEING FLYING FORTRESS





The Boeing Flying Fortress lifts its nose into the sky, its wheels retract, and into the distance it roars on a bombing mission. Laden with a heavy assortment of deadlines, it is a fearful sight over the Rhineland.

Its five thousand super-charged horses will bring it back, leaving behind a ruined objective, be it in Cologne, Duesseldorf, Hamburg, Wilhelmshaven, or perhaps Berlin.

The Fortress firepower is tremendous. And now, something new has been added . . . deadly "whiskers". The new B-17G model has a "chin turret", mounting two 0.50 calibre machine guns.

The Boeing Flying Fortress, if need be, can clear its own path without fighter escort, blow up a pin-point target by daylight, and bulldoze its way home to the death-waltz of its thirteen powerful guns . . . Any wonder that Bombardiers like the 17?

The Exploit of a Bombardier

By PAUL GALLICO
Courtesy, Esquire Magazine

The mystery about First Lieutenant Jack Mathis, bombardier of the Flying Fortress, The Dutchess, is not how he died, but when he died. The "How" is answered simply in the performance of his duty. It is the "When" that takes us into the wonderful, unfathomable realm of the spirit of man.

Texas Jack Mathis had earned the title "hero" long before his last ride over Germany, depicted in this second canvas of the epic series of the men of America at war. He had already flown fourteen missions over enemy territory. It was on the fifteenth that he achieved immortality.

When The Dutchess smoked the English runway with her big wheels after the punishing raid on the U-boat works at Vegesack, near Bremen Germany, the body of Bombardier Lieutenant Mathis was taken from the shattered nose of the huge battle bird. A burst from a "Flieger-Abwehr-Kanone," the dreaded "Flak," had knocked him away from his bombsight just as Pilot Captain Harold Stouse guided the ship in the steady bombing run over the sprawling target below.

The doctor who examined the dreadful wounds in chest, side and back, of which he had died, said that they must have killed him instantly, that he could not have survived the impact of the metal that struck him down. The boy, he deduced, never knew what hit him. One moment he was bent over his bombsight weaving the cross hairs into the target; the next, a black burst, a searing blow and eternal darkness.

Medically, and perhaps factually, the diagnosis was correct. But spiritually and equally factually there is another story, and the story has a witness, First Lieutenant Jesse H. Elliott, the navigator of the Flying Fortress, who occupied the nose compartment with Lieutenant Mathis.

And there were still other witnesses. There was Pilot Captain Stouse who heard a word

sing through his ears on the interphone. And there was the crew of the Fortress next in formation who saw the deadly spawn come tumbling out of the belly of Mathis' ship to split the target and send it heaving in chunks up into the smoky air.

And that was seconds after Bombardier Mathis had been struck and knocked backwards out of his shattered bombing seat.

During those seconds, Navigator Elliott watched Mathis roll himself over onto his hands and knees and crawl forward again to his unharmed bombsight. His movements were slow, almost reflective, and had about them a kind of irritated, dogged stubbornness, the resentful movements of a man who has been unreasonably interfered with in the performance of an important and interesting piece of work.

Mathis reached the bombsight. He knelt and squinted through the eyepiece. The navigator thought it was queer that he worked the control and sighting knobs with his left hand until he noticed the right hanging limp.

The target was in line. The navigator glanced at his watch to time the flight of the bombs. The bombardier removed his left hand from his knobs. His fingers reached for and found the solenoid switch. His head took the characteristic little bombardier's hunch forward at the kill as he pressed his eye still tighter to the finder. He touched the switch. The Dutchess bucked, freed from the ton load.

"Bombs . . .", said Lieutenant Mathis over the interphone. The pilot and the co-pilot heard him, the navigator at his side, the gunner parked in the tail and the gunner in the belly blister, the engineer and the radio operator. "Bombs . . ." but not "Bombs away!" which is Air Force and Regulation.

Only the navigator at that juncture knew what had become of the missing word and too, what had become of Bombardier Mathis.

He looked up in time to see him reach for the lever to close the bomb bay doors, push on it and fall over backwards.

The enemy cannoners on the ground had killed him. But Bombardier Mathis had also destroyed his target and completed his mission.

Heroism is natural to war. During those mysterious seconds from the time that he was struck his mortal blow until his dead or dying finger pressed the switch, this twenty-two year old boy transcended heroism, for in what he did was no longer heroism, but only the purest manifestation of the indomitable will and spirit of an American.

Into the broken nose-cubicle of the bomber swept not only the winds from enemy skies, but the divine breath that animates the youth of our country.

No man can tell the thoughts of young Mathis in the greatest and most beautiful moment of his brief life, but one may guess that perhaps there were no thoughts at all, but only that rising gorge at being balked at the moment of accomplishment and victory, the instinctive reaction to the inextinguishable flame of competition, the same unconquerable will to win that brings a fighter up from the floor, that hurls an exhausted, fatigue-blinded runner five more strides to the tape, that sees the downed ball carrier fight for that last forward inch of ground.

In the slow, agonizing progress he made back to his post, in the will to deny the death that had come to him until he had rung up the score for his team, Mathis was speaking for his kind, the millions upon millions like him, the men of this country.

The "How" and the "When" of his passing in the light of this story somehow becomes less important, or what the doctor said, or where he lies today, for perhaps the truth might well be that young Mathis did not die at all, nor ever will . . .



