

THE TOWER

464th BOMB
GROUP

WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS
ON WHICH THE PRINCE OF GLORY DIED,
MY RICHEST GAIN I COUNT BUT LOSS
AND POUR CONTEMPT ON ALL MY PRIDE.

LOW LEVEL MAN GAINS ALTITUDE

COLONEL A. J. BIRD JR. NEW GROUP COMMANDER

This new man in the front office is just what the doctor ordered. When you first meet him, Colonel A. J. Bird Jr. impresses you as a man who knows his job, and his men. He is cordial, and his hearty clean-cut smile sets you immediately at ease. He was born in Georgia, in 1909, and spent the greater part of his youth there. His first contact with the AAF came when he joined the aviation cadet training program in 1931.

Eager to learn, and sure that there was more to an airplane than just flying, Cadet Bird put on his coveralls and set about finding the why of flying as well as the how. His experience later on as an engineering officer makes him appreciate the importance of good ground crew work.

After his graduation Lieutenant Bird followed the familiar peace time path to Panama, where he spent a short time at France Field, then to Honolulu for 1933 and the greater part of '34. Returning to the States he found the Air Corps at low ebb. The Three C's were at their height and in 1935 and '36 he served a year with the triple C's. In 1936 the yen to fly came over him and he accepted a reduction in grade to return to the Air Corps at Barksdale Field in early 1937.

He stayed at Barksdale for some years, with the Third Attack Group. To move from the Reserve to the Regular Army in 1939 he took competitive examinations and accepted another reduction back to 2nd Lieutenant. He became 1st Lt. again in '42, and the promotions were very rapid from there on.

In 1933 he married, and now has two children, Barbara, aged seven, and Richard, two and a half. One of the events the Colonel most enjoys is receiving his almost daily letter from Barbara. Mrs. Bird and the children are at present living in Greenville, South Carolina.

During most of the Colonel's Air Corps time he was trained, and worked as a light and medium bombardment man. For more than two years he commanded the first B-25 RTU to be organized. Their specialty was low level flying. While he had flown thousands of hours back in the States, his first introduction to combat duty and the B-24 came in November of last year. On his arrival in Italy he was assigned to the 49th Wing Headquarters. There he served as deputy wing commander, and A-3 head.

Everyone is naturally interested in Colonel Bird's reaction to the B-24, especially due to his recent change from medium bombardment. He thinks the Baker two four is a good dependable ship, and as far as likes and dislikes go, "A pilot likes the plane in which he has done the most flying." The Colonel is a business man, and flying is his business. Like any good business

THE EARTH MOVERS

Ever since the 464th landed in Italy it has been closely associated with the 1898th Engineers. Sometimes it is the roaring of bulldozers and trucks on the field, sometimes the weaving rhythms of Negro voices at a chapel service. How come? What do they do?

The textbook says that the mission of Engineer Aviation units is "to build, maintain, and defend airfields for the Army Air Forces." In Italy they have had little defending to do, but much other work. They have built access roads, maintained water points, constructed bridges, erected buildings in addition to their main task of laying landing strips and improving landing fields.

The 1898th originated at Eglin Field, Florida in 1943 and Lt. Col. Miller has been battalion commander since October of that year. For a while they worked around northern Florida building most of the outlying fields for the Proving Ground Command.

While the 464th combat crews were making ready for their first operational flights the 1898th was uncrating its bulldozers, graders, and power shovels on the same field and sending them out to speed the completion of the lengthened runway.

(Continued one page 3)

man, he wants to do the best job, the best way. He understands and appreciates a 35 sortie buzz, but in general feels that stunts are not good piloting. The idea is to get there, do the job properly, and return safely.

One quality that all of us will appreciate in our new CO is the fact that his door is always open, and he is readily accessible. He is the type of man who automatically commands your respect. And he has a sense of humor. In closing my interview he told me of one of his former Squadron commanders, now leading a B-25 outfit in China. The old friend wrote, "Gee I'm sorry to hear that you, an old low level man from away back, wound up as an integral part of a packing crate!"

G. H. MERRIAM

AVC

If you have been thinking on the problem of veterans' organizations after the war you should be interested in a group which is being formed on this field. The circle is a local chapter of the American Veterans Committee, a new veteran's organization started by and for men of this war.

The early planners of the AVC felt that military defeat of the axis would not automatically produce the brave new world; that the peace for which we fight must be planned and built, politically and economically; and that we who fight should have a voice in how that peace is made. They invited those of like mind to join with them and in two years the AVC has expanded its membership into all branches of the armed forces and among large numbers of discharges.

Here on the hill, a group of men interested in the AVC have begun to hold weekly meetings, for discussion of problems confronting the returning veteran, proposed plans of action for a veteran's group and what it should stand for, as well as general discussion on world events.

Tomorrow night, Monday, at seven o'clock in the chapel, the discussion will be devoted to a more complete explanation of the American Veterans Committee--its history, organization, leadership, aims, and platform.

Your attendance at the meeting is invited, your questions will be welcomed.

SYLVAN GROTTÉ
DALE E SMITH
JAMES R DOHERTY
ROBERT E ELLIOTT

THE TOWER

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the men of the 464th Bomb Group.

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EASTER PARADE

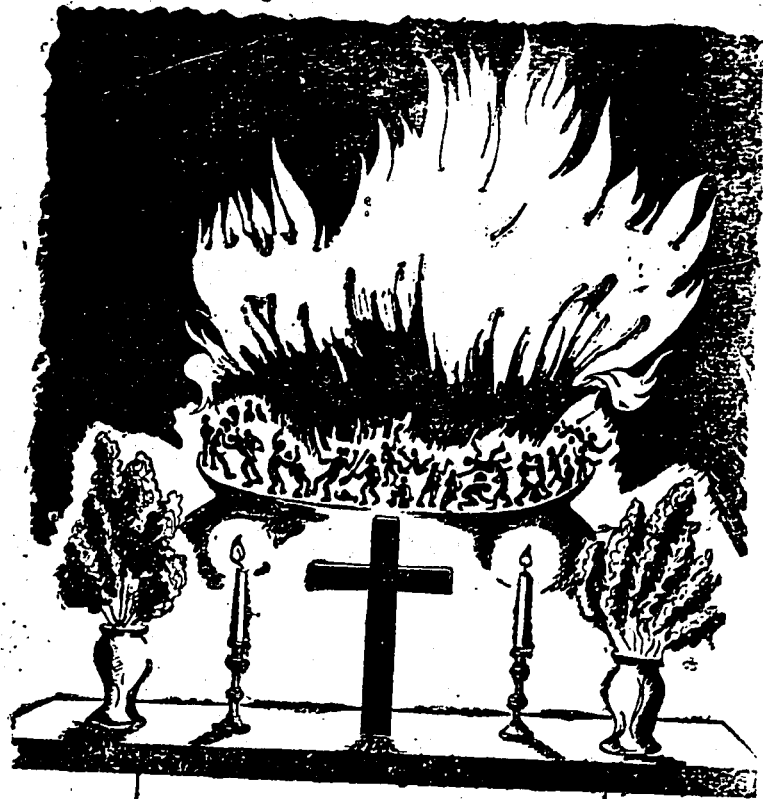
It is at this time each year that our thoughts turn to Easter, with all its old, familiar traditions and customs - Passion Week, Oratorios, Good Friday, and finally the Sunrise Service on Easter Sunday. Who among us cannot remember dyeing hard-cooked eggs every color of the spectrum, and who could have resisted the urge to "put on your Easter bonnet", appearing in public with wife or sweetheart, to see and be seen? It is a time of poignant personal memories for all and as such, a season sacred to all. The best possible way to preserve and respect these memories is to keep right on observing the season, as nearly as possible, the way we used to. And this may not be so difficult - there will be prayer services held each evening Passion Week at 1830. It is at this hour that the chapel is most beautiful, the rays of the setting sun brightening the windows as dusk deepens. On Good Friday, at the same hour, there will be a special Holy Communion Service. Then on Easter Sunday morning at 0530 there will be a special sunrise service held on the hillside between the 464th and the 465th. All four Protestant Chaplains on the field are cooperating to make this a particularly impressive service - we can observe Easter as we have been accustomed.

Cpl BILL CAVNESS

KRIEGSGEFANGENE

1st Lt. Philip L. Rudich
2nd Lt. Robert R. Nelson
2nd Lt. Virgil N. Sommers
1st Lt. Archie G. Stein
T/Sgt Richard E. Kaitis
Sgt. John Holt
S/Sgt Walter J. Lepich
S/Sgt Charles T. Hardy
S/Sgt Decoroso Portugal
S/Sgt Earl R. Williams
All the members of Lt. Price's and Lt. Strong's crews are prisoners.

Due to censorship regulations this
paper may not be sent home.



ALMOND BLOSSOMS-A SEETHING CALDRON
AND A CROSS

Wm F. Whitsett - 2nd Lt.
776 - Tent 20

Chaplain's Flimsy

Long, long ago there lived a sensitive youth in an age when the wickedness of men had plunged the world into chaos and war. There was in his heart the tenderness of a lover and the imagination of a poet. His life was dominated by two great facts: his consciousness of God and his love of his people. He was to become one of the great prophets of the Old Testament. His name was Jeremiah. As the hordes of the invader swept down upon his people to raze and kill and destroy, Jeremiah saw two visions. The Lord said unto him, "What seest thou Jeremiah?" and Jeremiah answered, "I see a seething pot". The seething pot which Jeremiah saw symbolized the day of war and destruction which was upon them. His country and those adjoining it were to become a flaming caldron, which would burn with a fury even unto whiteness and the fuel for its hungry flames would be human flesh. His people would struggle for a few brief moments on the caldron's edge then victor and vanquished alike would fall into its consuming depths.

Again the Lord spoke unto Jeremiah saying, "What seest thou?" This time Jeremiah answered, "I see the branch of an almond tree". Through the smoke and darkness of the seething caldron he now saw the bloom of the almond. In Palestine the almond tree is the first to bloom in the spring. Long before other trees have been roused from their winter sleep, the almond puts forth its fragrant flowers. To the Hebrew it was the tree of awakening. God was saying to Jeremiah, "As you have seen the awakening tree, I, your God, will be ceaselessly awake to fulfill my promise unto my people."

"In his first vision Jeremiah saw the wickedness of men and in the second the love of God. The first symbolized judgment and the second mercy. Although the caldron boiled he was assured that God was in control and cared.

Many years after Jeremiah there appeared another young man in Palestine. He too was gentle and kind. He too was sensitive to the will of God and possessed an unwavering love for his fellow men. He taught and healed and befriended. His teachings were sublime and his deeds marvelous in the eyes of men. When he asked, "Whom do men say that I am?" He was told that some thought he was Jeremiah come to life again. But he was not Jeremiah; he was Jesus, the Messiah, the one of whom Jeremiah had spoken. Jesus faced the same old wicked world as Jeremiah. In spite of his beauty and goodness envious men crucified him on a cross. He rose triumphant over death and his cross became the greatest symbol of the church. The cross unites Jeremiah's two visions in one symbol. In the cross we see the wickedness of the world and God's eternal love; our own sinfulness and our Saviour.

For us, these symbols are of tremendous significance for today we are the men who contend upon the caldron's edge. On the hills around us the almond trees are blooming and Good Friday, the day we remember Christ's sacrifice, is here. May the fragrant bloom of the almond remind you that though the caldron of the nations boils, God is in control. Though the world be filled with darkness and our Lord be crucified, forget not that it is the love of God that hangs there in His Son incarnate, and that there is still an Easter morning.

Chaplain EASTWOOD

THE EARTH MOVERS

(Continued from page 1)

When this group moved to the present base, the 1898th went South to build two new runways and many hardstands for other US bomb groups besides doing some badly needed work for a British unit. A shifting of engineer units last summer brought "B" company of the 1898th back to work with the 464th and placed Battalion Hq. not far from this field.

The Battalion is organized in three "line" companies, "A", "B", "C", which do the actual field work of maintaining airfields, and a "Headquarters and Service Company" which furnished the other companies with additional heavy equipment and dump trucks, plus skilled operators and mechanics, according to needs and work priorities.

The Engineer Aviation Battalion can best be compared to a large road construction company in civilian life. The unit personnel section has every worry of a civilian front office except that of hiring and firing. It deals with pay, promotions, "free hospitalization plan", social security through payroll deductions for insurance and war bonds. S-3 has a surveying crew; can make its own maps and black and white prints; can lay out an airfield complete with hangars and camouflage as required. S-4 procures materials through army channels and supplements US sources by running tufa pits and hiring Italian labor.

On the payroll are skilled operators and maintenance mechanics for tractors, graders, power-rollers and shovels, asphalt distribution, and water purification equipment. There are of course the usual complement of cooks and clerks and general handymen who make it possible for the others to function efficiently.

In off duty hours, the men have organized their own entertainment groups. Two companies have groups which sing over the AES radio. One of them was twice flown to Rome to sing, the other has just returned from Naples. It is widely known in the 464 for its part in the "Christmas for Kids" program and its appearance on the base. The 1898th also has an undefeated basketball team.

Most aviation engineer work is just routine - and a tough grind. To get maximum use from their

PLAY BALL

With the coming of good weather and the pre-season spring we are now experiencing a wave of interest in athletics. On any level spot of ground, or something resembling level ground, one can see men throwing a ball around, kicking a football, or even see a rough and ready softball game going on.

Equipment seems about the only thing holding up the parade. Since Special Service has to sweat it out, what little equipment that is on hand can effectively be used to size up your team for the coming season.

Temporary plans show a group softball and volleyball league. A group baseball team will be organized to play against the other groups in the Wing and Airforce. For development of the above, watch our bulletin board.

Squadron Athletic Officers will organize leagues and tournaments within their own squadron to give everyone a chance to play.

Let's all get into shape and get some of the sun we have all read about in Sunny Italy.

heavy equipment and dump trucks the engineers work 18 hours a day in two shifts. Much stress is laid upon the work of truck drivers and mechanics, for commanders know that upon the skill of these men depends the life of the equipment. The bulldozer is said to be their "secret weapon" but it is the tireless work of the drivers of the "two and a halves" which moves the dirt and gravel needed for runways and hardstands.

Occasionally special jobs stand out through force of circumstances. Recently an airfield was closed for a major overhaul. Air Force operations were held up. Working to a strict time schedule, the engineers rolled back 1500 foot section of steel landing mat. They brought in gravel and tufa fill. They graded and compacted it. Then they rolled out the mat again and joined the two sections - all in three days. Though it was done in conditions of snow and mud, it was hours ahead of schedule.

The secret of airfield building is to raise the surface of the runway or hardstand as far above the water level as possible. By so doing the cone of earth which bears a plane's weight can be as deep and therefore as wide as possible. It involves drainage and building up. "Get the water off and the gravel on" is their motto and without their labors wet weather flying would be a sorry business.

HOBNOBBING WITH HEADQUARTERS

Hurrah - one year overseas - ain't we the lucky fellows - let's have a party - and promptly coals were heaped on the fire. It seems a sure sign of combat fatigue when we take to celebrating our anniversaries away from home. The Big Binge didn't include everyone though - some because they were in no condition for it due to the night before and some because a year from home wasn't a source of much joy to them. Evo succeeded in making the evening a very profitable one though doing away with fully half of the prize money in the bingo game. Sometimes it pays to have your wits about you doesn't it Evo? Cross had the most binges it seems but they were all dry runs. For some reason he was always putting the right thing in the wrong place or something.

Amazingly enough Hermes says he was glad to get out of the hospital. Things got so rough there, according to him, that he had to stagger out of his sick bed and serve chow to patients unable to eat or he would have starved.

What form this Curran guy has. He swings a stick like the great Bambino himself. There is one minor difference - he never hits the ball, which, I understood, is the main objective. It must be admitted Enerson ranks with the best as a pitcher but it is this Hq's opinion that Ed was doing everything but swing the bat to give Curran a hit but all to no avail. No matter how fat and straight the ball came at him Curran just couldn't see it. Better start rounding the lad into shape Cozenzo. He'll never make the grade alone.

Don't hear much from the Radar men. If any of you have some dope, jot it down and hand it in before each Wednesday. Did pick up this scrap of info on them though. It seems that Charlie Bush got mixed up in the celebratin' the other night and found himself unable to hold his own amongst the one year veterans. Don't know what the score was but they tell me he got the pants licked off him.

If this column sounds a bit bitter you can blame Doc Russell for it. He's after another of my molars.

walker

A Year Ago Remember

That pile of tufa block at the foot of the hill which everyone curiously examined never dreaming of its importance - The first purple snow ever experienced - A rumbling sound in the distance which some called gun fire on the front - Pete Ceccato's bet that bombers would never fly from this field - How good Capt. Hardy's mess hall meals tasted after eating out of individual "C" ration cans - All mustaches and beards being removed - How guards halted each other as well as wild crab apple trees - One shooting up a water truck - Shaving at the well - Bargaining for straw then wondering if you had purchased more than straw - Moving your tent for the third time - chasing moles - And "butterflies" - Trying to sleep in the tent that was put up for the guards.

MOVIE SCHEDULE

Mon & Tues, March 25-26 - STAGECOACH
Claire Trevor - John Wayne.

Wed & Thurs, March 27-28 - IN THE MEANTIME DARLING - Frank Latimer - Jane Crane.

Fri & Sat, March 29-30 - G. I. Movies.

Chow Line Chatter

by A Seventy-Niner

It seems to be a week for congratulations. So much so that we hardly know where to start. First of all everyone is glad to see two bars on Capt Wood. All agree that he has earned them. Then there are the DFCs. Capt Shymanaki, Lts Woodworth, Kaspar, Van Rooy, Livesay and Christensen each won recognition for heroism and extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight. Special mention should be made of T Sgts O'Brien and Blackwell who saved the lives of two of their comrades when their ship's oxygen system went haywire.

Congratulations are also in order, though rather envious ones, in the case of the record size shipment back to the States that left this week. The first lot had a spot of trouble when a tire blew just as they were leaving by air for the Rappelle Döpple, but by now everyone should be on their way to the good old USA. We are sorry to say goodbye to them for many are parting with old friends, but we are sure they are glad to go.

Then Major Chambers had a wonderful time in France at fifty bucks a day. They wouldn't let him break the bank at Monte Carlo but they say he broke the hearts of all the Mademoiselles. He found Cannes "just like home", and is so captivated with C-47s that he would like to fly one.

Liles is having a special War Bond drive. Just watch that boy canvass a chow line. We hear that Capt Timmons is offering a bottle of whiskey to the biggest buyer... Has patriotism sunk so low...?

The week is also tinged with sorrow at the sickness of a leading member of our Squadron. At take off on the morning of the nineteenth Flakman felt tired and gently laid him down to die. The airplane doctors from the Service Squadron were called in and have hope for the patient's life, though he will probably never again dodge the flak over Vienna.

Flakman is the outstanding plane of the Group, a veteran of 74 sorties and 898 combat hours. He has come through all these forays without losing a man, and with only one crew member wounded. Yet seven Nazi fighters and nine "probables" went down before his guns. He is a tractable and well-behaved ship. One day Capt Fowler landed him successfully with a flat tire. Another time, with Lt Bahnsen at the controls, Flakman alone of all the ships in the Squadron completed a certain mission and returned unscathed.

Special credit goes to his ground crew, Hacker, Terry, and Renna. Since they received him last June 3 they have changed 9 engines. All last June and July Flakman led the Group in hours flown per month, and also in low gas consumption. It was also the first ship to have a chaff-chute, which Hacker and his boys installed themselves. For the generally outstanding record of his ship Hacker received the Bronze Star.

It was good of Flakman to lay down on the taxi-strip before take off rather than while landing. A creditable end to a great combat career. We are glad to hear that he will fly again.

SPIRIT OF '76

We're all glad to see the Squadron soft ball team started. Besides furnishing a lot of fun it should provide some much needed exercise and a remedy for that ole' "Spring Fever". While we're still on the subject, why not organize department teams as well as the all inclusive team? By so doing, a greater number of men will participate and more replacements will be available for the Squadron team.

Now that Spring is here - officially, at least, why shouldn't it be possible for Group to run a truck into Bari daily? We realize our Motor Pool is hard pressed to provide essential transportation but, in the last analysis, is there anything more important than morale? And, considering our isolation, and the fact that a neighboring Group does provide this service for their men, is there any good reason why our Group cannot?

We're glad to see "Slick's" house being finished. It has been a blot on the landscape too long. You'd better finish winterization now, "Slick" as there are only 234 shopping days until Christmas from this date.

Let's assume the worst and figure we are going to be here this Summer. In that case, why do we not, as a Group, go over on the Adriatic Coast in the general region of Barietta and grab ourselves one or two, or three or more villas if necessary, and establish a place where our men can spend their days off, their occasional (?) three day passes or their five day rest camp privileges. We could set up a regular mess, arrange for entertainment, etc., and, at least, provide surf bathing and a center of activities for the Group. Will some of the other Squadrons, if they find this suggestion to their liking, get behind it and see if we can't do something in a concerted and joint effort for once in our history? Let's be a Group instead of a number of loosely joined units.

Combat has varying effects on personnel but recently one of the men who fly the big ones topped all displays of emotional re-action. After carefully cleaning the remains of many a good smoke from his pipe, De Walk produced a pan of water and some soap and presently had the tent full of large sized soap bubbles. The remains of the caked tobacco in the pipe imparted gorgeous rainbow like colorings to the bubbles.

The razing of an old land mark - the ill fated shower water tower in the EM's area brought forth a new development in the form of a seepage pit. Perhaps the barrel lined opening will prove to be an efficient booby trap for some of our revelers who still insist on unnecessary noise in the wee, small hours of the morning.

Lt. Graham's crew members are eagerly awaiting the arrival of a set of pin up-girl pictures. Ten of them, no less, from a Dubois, Penna, High School. They are supposed to pick their favorite photo from the ten and carry it with them on their dangerous missions over the most important targets in Europe. Just how are they going to pick their favorite? The feelings of nine girls are bound to be hurt, in any event. The problem is rendered still more acute by the fact that some very sugary letters have been received from the contestants. Boy, am I glad I'm not on Lt. Graham's crew!

The peculiar clank of horseshoes against the pin heralds the approach of warm and balmy weather. How about Special Services holding a contest for the devotees of "Barn Yard Golf"? We have no axe to grind. This correspondent wouldn't stand a chance in any tournament because he has the only "galloping gaited" throw known to mankind and most of the time the shoes prance away as tho the horse was still attached to them.

Glad to see Bill Eckert back from the hospital after his untimely accident. No, there isn't any connection whatsoever, but, we were glad to see Bill return on the wagon. He hitch hiked back from the hospital and rode into the base on the 776 Water Wagon.

In looking over the foregoing, it could be construed to mean that our Bill was a devotee of the God Bacchus. Nothing could be further from the truth. Bill, quiet and easy going, is a universal favorite, and we all heartily welcome him back.

The First Sergeant says - bus tokens are on sale to only the new men; it will be his privilege to point out the location of the P X and the Service Club and to advise (and console) with all men sent into the Squadron. He has had a hard time in establishing a schedule on the bus line but promises that it will be leaving on the hour and half hour regularly before many days have passed.

The combat men have decided it's time to register a complaint! Some time ago the officers' EM who takes care of their water supply and makes himself generally useful received his PFC stripe. So, here and now, we pledge ourselves to champion the cause of Fred Von Throne. He has served us faithfully and well. He deserves a PFC rating, too. To the Powers that be, may we make an earnest prayer? How about it?

The EM's on Lt. Jackson's crew are in line for congrats on the completion of that all important 35th. Others are Danko, Smitheal, and Lts. O'Malley and Fredin.

The Combat Crews' soft ball team has three victories and no defeats to their credit so far. Over an assortment of line men they racked up the following scores, all in their favor; 24-4; 12-4; 17-3; Crowing, eh?

Will the bar close down when Ragdale goes home?

To those interested in joining an up and coming veteran's organization that really stands for something, we extend an invitation to attend a meeting Monday night at 19:00 hours at the Chapel where the organization's platform will be outlined. The slogan "Join up and have your conscience clear twenty years from now".