

Time Over Targets



THE STORY OF
THE 9th BOMBARDMENT
DIVISION



It is with tremendous pride that I foreword this sketchy story of the careers of 9th Bombardment Division (M). The story is your story and that of those who died in its making. As you read it, let us all reverently salute them. In spirit they are still members of our team.

The Ninth has always had high standards. It is to your everlasting credit that not once have you failed to meet the standards. As a result your record is equal to any—surpassed by none. The Hun knows it to his sorrow.

Your heroism, your quiet endurance of cold, mud and rain, can only be heard at here. The full story can be written only when victory is won. Let us go forward determined to maintain our standards, to let nothing mar our great record, to smother the enemy until he quits.

Again—I salute you all.

Samuel E. Anderson

Major General, Commanding

Name _____

Date Enlisted _____

Assigned to 9th _____

Training _____

Citation _____

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THE STORY OF THE 9th BOMBARDMENT DIVISION (M)

Capt. Edward M. Jennsen, Beaverton, Ore., led a box of Marauders behind a Pathfinder Dec. 23, 1944. The flak-damaged Pathfinder turned back, but Capt. Jennsen headed for his rendezvous with fighter escort. None met him. He led his formation on to the target, sure of meeting enemy fighters. Flak was heavy. The bombardier failed to pick up his aiming point. Knowing the urgent ground situation, Capt. Jennsen swung around for another try. Enemy fighters, twelve abreast and four deep, attacked furiously, but the bombs were away. Capt. Jennsen's plane was on fire. Five of his Marauders were already lost. He knew help could not come for 15 minutes. The enemy attacked again. His gunners destroyed three; others got more planes. For 25 minutes, they battled fighters until they reached friendly territory.

DEC. 22, 1944. For six days the Germans had been driving their great counter-offensive through the Ardennes, flooding around Bastogne, probing toward Brussels and Antwerp, under cover of fog, mist, snow.



PASSED BY CENSOR FOR MAILING HOME

For days, fog held back bombers of 9th Bombardment Division on the ground, and kept this precise and powerful striking force from joining the battle.

Dec. 23 came—clear, blue, sparkling in the winter sun. In tents, eager flyers were briefed. From the line came the roar of engines—crew chiefs pre-fighting ships which ordnance men had bomb-loaded in the bitter cold of the night just ended.

Four hundred bombers rose from French bases to attack roads and railways that fed the growing bulge. This day was to be the greatest since D-Day. For a few moments the weather seemed partly wasted; several Groups could not contact their fighter escort.

Should they follow standard policy and turn back? They kept going. In the area of the targets, prowling enemy fighters spotted the Marauders and came in. Marauder gunners, some of whom had never seen an enemy fighter, gripped their guns for the most furious air battle in Division history. Men were wounded, but they kept fighting. They fired even as their planes fell burning from the sky.

That was not the only fight that day. Thirty-six bombers failed to return, but 21 of 100 Focke-Wulfs and Messerschmitts had been destroyed, five bridges and a railhead blown up or damaged. The remainder of the bombers returned, but not for the day. Ground crews waiting at hardstands rushed at the planes, repaired battle damage, tested, loaded bomb bays and fuel tanks. Flying crews paused for interrogation, grabbed coffee and sandwiches, then headed for another briefing.

Off again, back to the area of the morning's battle, back to smash six fortified communication centers.

The Division had joined in the Battle of the Bulge. Marauders, Invaders, Havocs—all had attacked Germans where it hurt

most: supplies and men moving to the front. This sort of job had made the 9th famous.

For his gallant action Nov. 29, 1943, S/Sgt. William H. Norris, Chattanooga, Tenn., was awarded the Silver Star. While on the bomb run his Marauder was badly damaged by flak. Six enemy fighters bore in, shattering the top turret, disabling the waist gunner. From his tail position, Sgt. Norris shot down one fighter, was thrown by a violent lurch into the waist. Seizing the closest gun, he warded off two other enemy fighters. Then scrambling back and forth, firing one gun then the other, he defended the plane until it reached fighter cover.

In May, 1943, this powerful striking force was the 3rd Bombardment Wing of the Eighth Air Force. It had one Group of Marauders, trained and ready for low-level





operations. May 14, 12 planes took off to attack a power station at Ijmuiden, Holland. They swept in from the North Sea, successfully delivered their first blow. May 17, 10 Marauders again roared over the sea to Ijmuiden. None came back.

Low-level operations came to an abrupt halt. Future of the Wing and of the Marauder itself was in doubt. Some thought the Marauder was too hot, but the men who

flew it were proud that only "men" could handle their plane.

The problem was, how could the plane best be used? An answer had to be found quickly. Other groups were training in the States for low-level operations; two were on their way to England. In June, Maj. Gen. (then Col.) Samuel E. Anderson, Greensboro, N. C., took command of the Wing. The Marauder was to be employed in medium-level operations. The new commander and his staff had to make the plan work. They were ready to try again July 16.

The incredibly tight Marauder formation crossed the Channel for the first time at medium level. The Abbeville marshalling yards were hit hard. The answer had been found. Medium level bombing had a valid future. By the end of August, four Groups were operational, and the Wing had engaged in its first major campaign.

Heavy bombers then were attacking targets in Germany, whittling down the Luftwaffe, tearing at the heart of German militarized industry. But to get there they had to cross a belt of fighter bases. The Wing was assigned the task of keeping those fields under attack. Woensdrecht, Beauvais, St. Omer, Gilze-Rijen were some of the targets, all studded with heavy flak defenses. None had a reputation like Amsterdam-Schipol. None was more important to the Luftwaffe. There, flak was buttermilk thick, and airmen had a healthy respect for German gunners. In a flyer's cartoon a gunner, being dragged to his plane, was shouting, "No—No—Not Schipol!"

By Dec. 13, the Wing was strong enough, clever enough,



battle-wise enough to attack with all its power. Mediums paid for their daring, but the courage and skill of the flyers left half the field in ruins.

First Lt. Rowland G. Thornton, Jr., Scotia, N. Y., received a cluster to his Distinguished Flying Cross Feb. 28, 1944. When

he entered the bomb run, flak tore through his plane, destroying all the controls except the elevator trim tab base. The plane spun down. Lt. Thornton ordered, "Bail out!" At 5000 feet, he pulled the ship out. Bombardier and co-pilot jumped. Lt. Thornton found two gunners still in the plane. Again the plane dived. He pulled out at 100 feet. Alone, he headed his broken craft for England at deck level, skillfully avoiding flak, his gunners still manning their posts. He crossed the Channel in a skid, crash-landed in England. He and his gunners ran from the plane before it exploded.

The daring raid on Schiphol was the climax and nearly the end of the strategic offensive against airfields. Already a new name pointed to the Wing's future. In October the Wing became the IX Bomber Command, under the Ninth Air Force. Marauders were the nucleus of the great American invasion air force that was building for D-Day.

A *Deadly* WEAPON SHARPENED

THE IX Bomber Command had a splendid record in the Middle East where it helped force back Rommel, where it made famed raids like those on Ploesti and Rome. Leaving the planes in the Mediterranean Theater, Command Headquarters came to England to join the renamed Wing in building a tactical bomber force. The job: to work with ground forces as protection from enemy air power, to cut off battlefields from enemy supplies, reinforcements, and attacking troops.

Before that program could even begin, a tremendous threat had to be neutralized. For months the Germans had been building hundreds of sites from which to hurl V-1 bombs against England. Launching points stretched in a giant crescent from the Cherbourg Peninsula to the Pas de Calais, menacing the tremendous invasion preparations. First job, as the invasion bomber force, was to aid in destroying this danger.

It was a new task for Marauders. An airfield is a target of reasonable size, easy to find. But to locate an ingeniously camouflag-



ed rocket site among woods and fields and villages of Pas de Calais is another matter, and to hit it—!

A blizzard of special maps, photographs, illustrations whirled through the Command, almost burying Intelligence officers and the crews, who were briefed repeatedly on these tiny white squares and oblongs that had to be hit from 12,000 feet.

First missions in November were successful. Targets were smashed. But the job became increasingly difficult. Day after day, reports read "No Change," "Serviceable," "Unknown." But bombing was becoming real pin-pointing now. Bomb craters crept closer and closer to vital buildings, and in February, reports more frequently read "Suspended."

Still, difficulties were enormous. Flak in Pas de Calais was among the worst in Europe, and it was heartbreaking to find, after the struggle through storms of it, that bombs had only straddled vital points and blasted craters in harmless earth. Finally in the spring came the day when five targets were knocked out in one mission.

The Command now was a finished instrument, a scalpel handled by bombardiers as delicately and quickly as a surgeon's. When the program was finished and danger from those sites averted, the Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Air Forces, Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, wrote, "Of all Bomber Forces involved, those of the Ninth Air Force proved to be by far the most efficacious in knocking out these difficult and well-defended targets."


Second Lt. Tommie J. Simms, Hollis, Okla., won a Distinguished Service Cross May 27, 1944. As he

turned his Havoc into the run, flak struck to damage ship and pilot. The plane's right engine was knocked out. The lieutenant's left arm was broken and he was wounded in both thighs. Bleeding, in pain, Lt. Simms kept his plane in formation, dropped his bombs on the target. The craft lost speed and altitude, dropped behind the formation. Afraid of fainting, Lt. Simms ordered his crew to bail out. Alone, barely conscious, one arm useless, and the target of continuous flak, he kept his course to England. Too exhausted even to attempt lowering his wheels, and with a fused bomb in the bomb bay, he guided his plane safely to earth.

Now the Command was fully grown, with Groups of fast, light Havocs and twice as many Marauders. But while still building, it had begun on the programs that were to contribute so much to the invasion success. First missions were rail targets in northern France.

For nearly a century France and Belgium had been building a network of railroads over which troops and supplies now were flowing from Germany. This nerve system had to be paralyzed in less






than three months. Marshalling yards are neither too hard to find nor difficult to hit, but rail lines can be repaired in a few hours. The Division had to hit engine shops, roundhouses, engine depots, repair depots—targets that would deprive the enemy of his means to maintain and repair transport. Lathes, hoists, spares—all the complex and vast apparatus needed to keep trains moving and supplies and men flowing to the threatened west—were destroyed.

Some of the attacks were classics. Creil, Hasselt and Namur are names that bring a glow of satisfaction to crews that did the job. The artery from Germany was hit again and again. Supplies and men for the west were sidetracked and delayed.



There was another job, desperately urgent. Along the French coast stretched the Atlantic Wall, as yet untried, bristling with guns pointed out to sea, waiting for the invading armada. These guns had to be silenced even before they spoke. Again, tiny targets, little circles in the sand dunes, toothpicks along the coast. Action now was stepped up. There were weeks of superb weather, and Marauders and Havocs sped across the Channel twice a day, attacking until the most powerful of the guns were knocked out. Germans, not knowing where the Allies would strike, either stopped construction or dismantled finished sites.



Time was getting short. There was another fling at airfields. Chartres, Beaumont, Lille, Evreux, were only a few that had to be made useless to a Luftwaffe that was sure to come out in full force to repel the liberating forces. The Command hit the fields repeatedly. Later, personnel saw evidences of their success when they occupied and flew from some of these same fields.



D-Day : **BOMBERS**
POUND A PATH

THEN came the final preparation for the great blow. Bridges across the Seine had to be cut to divide northern France in half. Whether the invasion struck north or south of the Seine, German forces had to be divided and isolated. This task was the reward of months of tedious bomb-site attacks, missions that had made the Command a sure, sharp weapon.

Bridges sometimes are disheartening targets to hit. A perfect cluster of bombs, right on the target—yet the bridge still stands, a bit of superstructure gone, perhaps a hole in the flooring. Bridges are not all alike. Some are solid; others are a web of bracing. Many have thick supports that collapse when a bomb strikes; but others are built so lightly that a bomb can slip between the supports and burst harmlessly in the water. When the double ones are half-destroyed, the other half can be crossed. Only the right bombs with the right fuzes to explode the burst can do the most damage.

First attacks did little harm. The bridges were hit; still they stood. Airmen paused, reconsidered, carefully selected bombs and fuzes. Then they returned and the bridges fell before them, from Rouen to Paris: Bennecourt, Courcelles, Meulan, Poissy, Vernon, Conflans, Le Manoir, Le Mesnil, Maisons-Lafitte, Mantes-Gassicourt, Oissel. In the last three days, seven were cut.

Now the battlefield was isolated; the Allies hurled themselves toward Normandy.

Maj. Paul J. Stach, Rosenberg, Texas, led his formation against a target at Caen D-Day. While approaching his bomb run at 2000 feet through intense light flak, his Marauder was hit by a series of bursts which knocked out his left engine. Nevertheless, he continued his bomb run. The left engine burst into flames. More flak started another fire in the bomb bays. Maj. Stach held his plane in formation until his bombs were away, enabling the remainder of his formation to bomb. He continued to hold his plane straight and level until his crew bailed out. He attempted to escape as the plane

nosed downward, struck the earth and exploded. His parachute had not opened.

JUNE 6, 0200 hours: Marauder and Havoc crews piled out of warm bunks, breathed cool morning air, and sensed excitement in it. In the dark, they hurried to briefings. Inside barn-like buildings, commanding officers faced flyers who already had guessed this was to be the greatest day of their lives.

Commanders spoke tersely, unveiling plans that long had been carefully guarded. Crews, however, were not so self-controlled. They cheered the announcement that they were to open the attacks on Normandy beaches in advance of initial landing parties, that two minutes after their last bombs hit the coast defenses, thousands of Americans would storm the beaches.



Combat crews poured out of huts into the still night. The weather dripped on upturned faces.

"Nuts!" a pilot said. "The weatherman's batting in the Nazis' lineup!"

All combat crews were on the mark, set to go. Two hours later engines turned over, revved up, and more than 400 medium bombers, carrying 2000 men on their biggest assignment, roared across the English Channel in spite of darkness and rain, clouds and ice. As Allied landing barges churned toward the Normandy coast, bombs hurtled down on German strong-points, stunning the defenders and silencing their guns.

Back at their bases, pilots and navigators, gunners and bombardiers scrambled from their bombers and headed for interrogation, for more briefings.



Meanwhile, Havocs were in the air, heading for the beaches. Just behind the lines they shattered road centers—Argentan, Valognes, Carentan, famous names. Now Marauders were out again, striking coastal batteries that were firing on the Navy, hitting bridges and road junctions at Caen, sweeping east to Amiens to make the Germans fear another landing.

Back in England, crews were clamoring for another chance. Before darkness, Marauders and Havocs were out again, bombing railway yards off the right flank of the German defense zone and a bridge at Caen. Flak defenses were the hottest yet, but the Havocs went down on the deck to slug it out with ground batteries.

At nightfall, Marauder and Havoc crews looked over their D-Day record. More than 1000 bombers had lifted from their bases; 4300 men had flown to France to drop 1400 tons of bombs. It was a great day in world history, the greatest day in the Command's.

Capt. Rollin D. Childress, Mascot, Tenn., won the Silver Star June 8, 1944. Piloting a Marauder, he assembled his three other planes in the midst of ominous clouds and gathering darkness. All Groups had been ordered back, but Capt. Childress did not bear the recall and continued toward the Foret de Grimboseq, south of Caen. It was urgent that an ammunition and fuel dump be destroyed. Without fighter protection, flying at 2000 feet through murderous flak, Capt. Childress led his formation to bomb the target. Then, in ceiling zero weather, he led his planes back to their bases, despite one crippled plane. As a result of the attack, ground forces made advances that otherwise might have been difficult and costly.

Marshalling Yards,
Hasselt: Before



Hasselt:
The Strike



Hasselt:
After

Close Ups



Generals Marshall, Anderson, Amold



Homing a Lost Marauder in Division Radio City



Mechanics



Gen Eisenhower

To the Flight Line



Last Minute Briefing



Airborne!

AIR POWER *Swings* THE BALANCE

THE Germans, trying to force the Allies back into the sea, were bringing everything they could to the battle. They had to be stopped. First, Marauders and Havocs worked close behind the lines. Each little Norman town was a road center which could be blocked; supply lines at each bridge could be cut.

First job was to cut the enemy off close behind the front at Lessay, Tilly, Villers, Valognes, Littry. The sky was overcast. Pilots dived under the clouds, down to 3000 feet. German ammunition grew short. When Nazis had to dismount, planes hammered them.

The Allies kept building—men, guns, tanks. But they had to have a port; they struck for Cherbourg.

Direct support was another new job. Mediums bombed troops, strong-points, batteries. Then the ground forces stormed in. The Command hit the massive citadel dominating Cherbourg; the ground forces followed. Airmen attacked forts ringing the city. The Germans retreated to the Arsenal. The port commander surrendered. Cherbourg and its battered harbor were in Allied hands.

The Allies had breathing space now; they could strike



south and east. At Caen, the Command attacked in front of British forces, and infantry pushed forward. Progress was maddeningly slow. Germans defended every inch, and in July, for a long rainy month, they held. Allies and Germans were locked in perilous balance, like two fighters who clinch for a moment that seems an age.


Which side would give depended on the greater striking power. The Allies were building; the Germans—?

Far beyond the lines the Command was engaged in a program designed to determine the outcome. Germans could reach the front only by crossing the Seine or the Loire, or by squeezing through the narrow gap between Paris and Orleans. To keep the bridges across the Seine out of service, to cut the railways between the two cities, to break still-standing bridges across the Loire were tasks for the Command. But the Germans had great stores just inside this edge of the battle area, with railways to take them to the front. There were inner bridges to cut, more fuel and ammunition dumps directly behind the lines.

Ninth Bombardment went to work to help upset the balance Germans had achieved. Veteran crews ranged the length and width of the Seine-Loire wedge, breaking bridges, firing dumps, cutting German supply and reinforcement lines, strangling their armies, starving their artillery, their flak guns, even their small arms. Prisoners told how they walked 100 miles to reach battle exhausted. German tanks used up a third of their battle-lives because trains could not get past ruined bridges. Inexorably, German armies were being withered.

By the end of July the balance had been upset. Germans were not stronger but weaker; the Command's operations, more than any other single factor, had prepared their collapse in France. The full weight of Allied air-power was hurled at the Germans before Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army near St. Lo July 25. As the Command's part of the operation, *Marauders* and *Havocs* laid a carpet of fragmentation and high explosive bombs south, southwest, and west of the town. Third Army lunged south to Rennes, turned east to Le Mans, then north. The Germans were surrounded.

Through the rest of July and August, the Command continued to help strangle the enemy. Fuel and ammunition dumps were destroyed. Railways died. Finally, the enemy broke and fled—fled to the bridgeless Seine. Gathered in the great loop at Rouen, Germans jammed together, a mass of men, tanks and trucks. They concentrated their flak, but for two days the Command hit the ruined German armies. As crews flew away for the last time Aug. 27, they looked back on chaos and



despair, the wreck of German hopes for victory in France.

S/Sgt. John L. Wagner, Carbinville, Ill., was flying as tail-gunner of a Marauder on Dec. 2, 1944. A flak burst nearly split his plane in two; three spans and three feet of skin held the tail section to the fuselage. Preparing to jump, he discovered the radio-gunner lying at the edge of the hole, seriously wounded. He pulled the wounded man away, removed his own parachute, and began first aid, lashing down the delirious gunner.

He waited for a crash-landing with a full load of bombs, knowing that the landing might well hurl the tail hundreds of feet. Sgt. Wagner quietly packed both parachutes and all available clothing around his friend to cushion him from shock. The pilot made a miraculous landing. When the ambulance arrived, the wounded man was ready for immediate evacuation.

LATE in August, four Marauder Groups moved to Normandy. They were the first Allied bombers to operate from French bases. First Command mission was to help reduce Brest, greatest harbor on the Atlantic coast. The Allies had to have it. Day after day, the Command flung its forces at forts, bridges, gun emplace-

ments, bombing at far below the usual level, bombing in the rain. After each attack, infantry stormed the stunned defenders. With their supplies cut off, inner communications torn apart, forts reduced to rubble, Germans surrendered.

In this operation a new plane, the Invader, was tested for combat. It was up to the Command to prove this new, fast light bomber. Here was another unique task: to introduce a new type of plane in the midst of combat operations. Tests were successful. Now the Command had another weapon, the third plane to use medium level tactics successfully.

Another change came in late September. The Command was renamed 9th Bombardment Division (M).

While the Brest attacks continued, the Division was getting ready for a complete move to France. In September and early October, Groups came to their French bases. Often they moved to airfields they had bombed. Once, a squadron moved to an area where its own crewmen had been shot down. French villagers had rescued the bodies from shallow German graves and had buried them reverently in their own graveyard.

First Sunday after the Group arrived, Americans and



French held a memorial service. The FFI and French veterans laid wreaths on the graves, not the first flowers to be put there in gratitude and sorrow. Men of the Group, remembering what had been done, the cost, what they had still to do, paid soldierly honor to their fallen comrades.

Weather **MAKES DOUBLE-TROUBLE**



THEN they turned to new tasks. Division bombers had to work with ground forces in the drive into Germany. In September, Division aircraft had first bombed the Reich at Merzig, attacking the famous Siegfried Line defenses. Now bombers were everywhere, pounding troop concentrations and forts near Metz, swinging north to attack bridges to Walcheren, working with British, Canadian, French, brother Americans. Everything was ready for a major aerial offensive. Then the weather closed in.



From D-Day, bad weather had been as ugly an enemy as the Germans, but as early as January, 1944, the Division had been working on an antidote. A new method of blind bombing had been developed—on paper. First the Division had to make

it work in practice. Forseeing the tremendous value of a blind technique which could partially defy North European weather, the Division formed its Pathfinder Squadron, provisionally, and fought hard to make it a permanent unit. That could not be done, and the squadron embarked on a career of begging and borrowing to keep alive.

Months of practice, of trial missions, of intense study followed. Personnel had to be specially trained, ships had to be elaborately equipped. At one point the whole project hung in the balance. Should it continue? It was a drain on resources; there were so many things to be done. Then the latest results were determined, and it was clear that the Squadron, overcoming every difficulty, had triumphed. The Division had a new and priceless technique.

In May, Pathfinder planes were leading Division formations on successful attacks from above the clouds.

Six formations were led by Pathfinders June 6. During the following summer, Pathfinder planes led Marauders to fuel dumps and communications targets, and on night flights to targets in France. The Division ran several night missions to Beaumont-le-Roger airfields, to the Laval fuel dump where huge fires were started. It was a costly pioneering effort, but it developed into a force that could attack at night with precision bombing.

With the autumn clouds covering the sky, Pathfinders, who were doing so well with so little, showed their true value and "salvaged" many days that otherwise would have been lost.

Nor were they the only counter-measures to combat weather. Mustangs formed a Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, also provisional. They flew through all kinds of climate—even on days when flying seemed impossible—to spot weather over enemy territory. Because of these skillful pilots, the Division could determine with certainty whether to bomb blind, visually or not at all.




With two such invaluable aids the Division was ready for winter, resolved to make every possible flying day count, despite muddy fields or runways disintegrating from frost and rain.

There were two jobs now. Ground forces were up against the Siegfried Line, against Germans bitterly determined to defend their "sacred soil." Into the Line Nazis had welded villages, stone and concrete, capable of vicious defense on every road to the Rhine. Mid-November, the Division bombed some of these towns for three days. But the Germans stuck.

The same thing was happening at the Roer River. To cross, ground forces had to control dams which the enemy defended fanatically. Again the Division worked directly with ground forces, bombing positions, trenches, emplacements. Again the Germans held.

At the same time, the Division worked on a new strangulation program, inspired by the Normandy success. Between the front and the Rhine stretched a great com-





plex of supporting installations. Bombs were poured into these places to blow them up, to destroy them, to cut them from the front. Bergzabern and Landau are names to remember.

The front and the depots were served by a network of interlacing roads and railroads running through the mountains and across bridges built for war. At these bridges 9th Bombardment struck, through clouds and in clear skies, on those rare—very rare—days when the sky was clear.

Still the enemy held—held and prepared for one last tremendous offensive. Dec. 17 Germans struck through the Ardennes. Next day, the Division bombed in front of the Roer dams, and then fog closed in—deadly fog

that paralyzed air power while the Germans raged through the Ardennes toward the Meuse.

Second Lt. Arden D. Connick, Fortuna, Calif., piloting an Invader, bombed a concentration of vehicles, Jan. 23, 1945, then descended to tree-top level to destroy a machine gun nest and strafe a village. Returning, with a damaged rudder, he attacked a gun emplacement and then machine-gunned a half-track and two trucks. He attacked the target again. His left engine blazing, gasoline streaming out of a main tank, he destroyed the emplacement and inflicted heavy casualties on nearby troops. His right engine also on fire and tail tank shot out, Lt. Connick strafed three more trucks, then landed his damaged aircraft on a hillside, despite flaps and rudder no longer working.



"Smash THE ENEMY UNTIL HE QUILTS"

DEC. 23, 1944: After days of anxiety, the Division was in the battle. The task: to keep advancing Germans from getting supplies and, when thrown in retreat, prevent their escape. Vital railway lines led into the German bases at their jump-off line. Bridges on each of these, from Euskirchen south to Kaiserslautern, were destroyed. Soon only one line was left open.

At the same time, the Division was attacking close to the front. Only two good roads led into the heart of the Ardennes—through towns like Laroche, St. Vith and Houffalize. Planes struck repeatedly, destroying these communications centers, filling roads with rubble and bomb craters.

This was attacking the enemy at his weakest point; the German had to have fuel for tanks and trucks to carry out his plans. In a matter of weeks ground forces attacking from the flanks and air forces attacking from the rear stopped him, turned him back. Now the enemy could think only of escape.

To get away, the Nazis had to cross the Our River on the Luxembourg-German border. They had no

choice. It was a small river, but its banks were high and steep, and they had to use the bridges.

At Dasburg Bridge, they had jammed the roads. Their vehicles were building up tremendous pressure, but only a thin line was trickling across the bridge. Fighter-bombers were there, shooting up a mass of transport. But too many German vehicles were getting away. The 9th Bombardment mediums came at 12,000 feet. Bomb bays opened. Bombardiers made precise, delicate adjustments. Tons of steel and high explosives plummeted earthward—bombs that blocked the Germans' only escape.

S/Sgt. Eugene F. Molloy, Nashua, N. H., was serving as engineer gunner on a Marauder Feb. 24. On the bomb run, intense and accurate flak bit the plane and severed the hydraulic line. Although anti-aircraft fire was thick, Sgt. Molloy took off his flak suit and parachute to search for the line cut. He found it in the nose wheel well. Fluid was escaping, and he knew that the fluid was necessary to make a safe landing. Despite the danger, the intense cold, his cramped position, he held the damaged line in his hand until the Marauder returned to make a normal landing.

IN the latter part of January and in February, 1945, the Division had one purpose: to disrupt the German defensive organization. Bombers swept incessantly over the area between the front and the Rhine. Beyond the river lay an area rich in opportunity but strong in flak. The day came when the 9th struck far east of the Rhine.

In January, the Red Army stormed across the Vistula, smashed towards Breslau and the Oder. To meet this threat, Hitler ordered divisions from the Western Front to the Eastern.

Between Cologne and Frankfurt run railway lines. Cutting these lines to the east would delay German movement, speed the advancing Reds. The Division was ordered to the attack and struck at four bridges on the vital railways.

Meanwhile, 9th Bombardment continued to hit bridges and communication centers in the west. The Germans were trying to shuffle their depleted divisions into a defensive line. They knew that it was only a matter of weeks before the Allies would begin a drive to the Rhine. Von Rundstedt had to send his troops north and south, east and west. But how could they move rapidly and efficiently with their railways cut, their road junctions destroyed, their stock of trucks smashed and smashed again when as far east of the Ruhr as Unna repair depots, precious tools and parts were shattered?

Again the Division was doing the job for which its accuracy and experience were so perfectly suited: strangling the enemy, starving him, destroying his communications, disorganizing his defenses, his roads, his railways.

At the same time, since December 1944, the Division had been secretly preparing an operation that was unparalleled in its history. In small huts and in tents, target officers were showing crewmen a daring plan which demanded intense study. Week after week, they concen-

trated on maps, on photographs of untouched targets deep in Germany. Fifty places had to be sorted out and assigned. All were to be attacked in a single operation. Flak-free routes had to be plotted. Navigators had to learn a dozen places to lead their formations. Almost every bombardier had his own target. There were 81 aiming points.

THEN came the order! Feb. 22, 1945, 500 Marauders, Invaders and Havocs rose from France, headed east. Five hundred bombers spread out over south-western Germany, east to Wurzburg and Gottingen, north almost to Hanover, south nearly to Stuttgart. It was an enormous area, 200 miles from the nearest target in the west to the farthest in the east, 635 miles from the northernmost target to the target farthest south. Railroad bridges, marshalling yards, stations, railway junctions, roundhouses were listed for the attack.

Of the 50 different targets, bombs dropped on 45. This was skilled navigation and bombing, developed by training, coolness and courage. There was nothing left to luck or accident. It was the employment of a sharp weapon, slashing from the sky into the body of the Reich.

Results justified the effort. Railroad lines were cut at 48 places. One bridge, probably seven others were destroyed. Roundhouses, turntables, railway stations, a fuel dump, 21 warehouses, locomotives, hundreds of goods wagons were smashed, left burning, damaged or destroyed.

That was not all. From the normal altitude, two miles

up, planes dived to deck level. Invaders and Havocs had strafed recently, but not since May 17, 1943, had Marauders gone down to tree-tops. Hundreds of them accompanied by waves of Invaders and Havocs swept the Reich, cutting, stabbing German railways. All over southwest Germany strafing planes set afire, riddled and destroyed locomotives, a tank train, goods wagons, fuel tanks, warehouses, barracks, other buildings, barges, trucks and railway stations.

Skill and knowledge on the line, in shops, in offices, in operations rooms and at briefings lifted bombers into the skies. There, pilots and gunners, bombardiers and navigators, hurled their power at the Germans.

That is the story of men and bombardment, but it isn't complete. As General Anderson pointed out... "The full story can be written only when victory is won."

Men of the Division are living the full story at this very minute—in the air, on the ground—to smash the enemy until he quits."



Direct Flak Hit



Flak Pattern



**German Heavy
Flak Gun**

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BEYOND THE
CLOUDS

Victory.