

HISTORY

453rd Bombardment Group

Station 144, APO # 634

ORGANIZATION

The 453rd Bombardment Group (H) was organized by the Second Bomber Command, Fort George Wright, Washington, pursuant to the order of the Second Air Force, Colorado Springs, Colorado, dated 22 June 1943. Special orders No. 90, Headquarters Second Air Force, dated 22 June 1943 released Colonel Joseph A Miller, 0-18211, from assignment and duty, said Headquarters, and designated him as the Commanding Officer of the 453rd Bombardment Group (H), Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho. On 29 June 1943, Colonel Miller assumed command of said Group at Gowen Field, under the provisions of AR 600-20. The original activation order provided for or authorized the following details:

1. The 29th Bombardment Group (H), Gowen Field, Boise Idaho, was named as the parent Group of the new organization.
2. Under special order No.180, Par.36 dated 29 June 1943, Air Base Headquarters, Gowen Field, fifty-five (55) Officers and two hundred thirty one (231) Enlisted men were assigned from the 29th Bombardment Group (H), to the new Organization as follows:
 - a. Headquarters Detachment – Eight (8) Officers, including, Lt. Col. Robert L Snider, Deputy Group Commander, and Lt. Col. Leslie D Stephenson, Group Executive Officer, and eleven (11) Enlisted men.
 - b. 732nd Bomb Squadron (H) – Twelve (12) Officers, including Major Curtis H Cofield, Squadron Commander, and Major Haydon A Trigg, Squadron Executive Officer, and fifty-five Enlisted men.
 - c. 733rd Bomb Squadron (H) – Twelve (12) Officers, including Major Robert C. Sears, Squadron Commander, and Major Dana E Smith, Squadron Executive Officer, and fifty-five (55) Enlisted men.
 - d. 734th Bomb Squadron (H) – Eleven Officers (11) including Major Edward F Hubbard, Squadron Commander, and Major George L. Brantingham, Squadron Executive Officer, and fifty-five (55) Enlisted men.
 - e. 735th Bomb Squadron (H) – Twelve Officers (12) including Major Robert F Harris, Squadron Commander, and Major Lee R Crawford, Squadron Executive Officer, and fifty-five (55) Enlisted men.

3. A Command and Staff Cadre planned to consist of fifty-two (52) Officers and eighty-one (81) Enlisted men, to include four (4) model crews, was ordered to AAFSAT, Orlando, Florida, to begin a course of instruction on 9 July 1943. This Cadre came largely from the Officers and Enlisted men then in the Group at Gowen Field as shown by Par. 1 and 2 of Special Order No. 182, Gowen Field. However, many others were ordered directly to Orlando from their previous stations.

Lt. Col. Robert L Snider, designated in said paragraph of Orders No. 180 and 182, as Deputy Group Commander, was transferred upon his arrival in Orlando and he left the Group immediately for a new assignment.

Messages awaited the arrival of Captain Hamilton I Lee, of Texas and Lt. George Lindholm, of California, advising each of the death of his father while these Officers were enroute to Florida. In each instance, the great travel distance prevented the officers from attempting a trip to his home at the time.

HISTORY

453rd Bombardment Group (H)

Station 144, APO # 634

Early training in the states:

The 453rd Bombardment Group (H) was born in the hills of Idaho on 29 June 1943 at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho. Immediately upon their activation the flying echelon proceeded to the Army Air Force School of Applied Tactics at Orlando, Florida where they received training and instruction in heavy bombardment tactics, gunnery weapons, etc.

On the 30th of July they were moved to the Army Air Base at Pocatello, Idaho, where they were joined with their ground echelon. The first phase of training was accomplished there. This included local area flights, bombing, and aerial gunnery practice.

On the 30th of September the 453rd moved to March Field, California to take up further study in Heavy Bombardment and accomplish their second and third phases of training. The training there was more extensive. It included cross country missions, navigation problems, gunnery, bombing and pilot training problems. At this time considerable time was spent in ground school instruction on problems pertaining to heavy bombardment. Training there was completed on the 28th of November and preparations were being made for the 453rd to move overseas and do their part in carrying the war to an earlier end.

AAFSAT

Cots and space were assigned at the school area to all personnel. Class instruction began at AAF SAT on 10 July and continued through 20 July. The daily period, except for Sunday, was from 0800 to 1650. In addition to attending classes on many subjects, advantage was taken of the opportunity to get acquainted and in a short time the "just a big family" idea developed and it was evident that the new Group consisted of determined, capable, and congenial men who would do a job well and get along agreeably. Warm friendships, general to the whole Group, soon developed and confidence grew.

PINECASTLE

Four B-24's were assigned, one for each squadron, and on Wednesday, 21 July, the entire cadre moved to Pinecastle Air Base, located approximately seven air miles directly south of the Orlando Air Base. This Base was an excellent airport, which had the longest runway in Florida. However, general living conditions were rugged and uncomfortable. With only one exception, heavy rains visited the area every day, and the

personnel waded through mud and water to meet their assignments. Mosquitoes were vicious; their long proboscides puncturing every exposed bodily surface and extracting blood, brought forth many expressions, including the one on "The mosquito had decided air superiority on the base". Fortunately, there was no disease in the area and there were no ill effects.

The Pinecastle Air Base was permanently occupied by the 5th Squadron of the 9th Bombardment Group (H), and it furnished additional planes and crews for missions. Other Squadrons were located at Orlando, Brooksville, and Montbrook, all part of AAFSAT. Operational field orders were issued by the 9th Bomb Group, from its Headquarters at Signal Hill, to direct the activities of the four Groups then attending AAFSAT. Those Groups were: the 477th Bombardment Group (L) at Montbrook, the 453rd and 454th Bombardment Groups (H) at Pinecastle, and the 452nd Bombardment Group (H) at Brooksville. These field orders at times provided for joint operations by several of these groups. A total of seven missions were run by the 453rd. A brief account of the details of these missions follows:

23 July 1943

The 452nd, 453rd, and 454th Bomb Groups (H) attacked the dock and warehouse areas at Wilmington. The 453rd dispatched five B-24's. Two of them returned to Base from a point about 60 miles west of Charleston because of bad weather. The other three reached the target, simulated the prescribed attack and returned to the base area from which they were ordered. However, because of weather, they were ordered to proceed to Tampa where they landed and remained until the following day. Fighter interception by P-39's was experienced on this first mission. This mission was planned and briefed by the Group Staff, Commanded by Col. Miller.

24 July 1943

The 452nd, 453rd, and 454th Bomb Groups (H) participated in a simulated attack on the "Schorndorf Synthetic Oil works, on the northwest outskirts of Berlin". The actual target for the simulated attack was the oil refinery and tank farm at Baton Rouge. The 453rd dispatched three planes from this base, all of them made the simulated attack and they also bombed at the Cedar Keys Bombing Range. Shipping was sighted and a blimp was observed. This mission was planned and briefed by the 735th Bomb Squadron Staff, Commanded by Major Harris.

25 July 1943

The 452nd, 453rd, and 454th Bomb Groups (H), attacked the Wharves at New Orleans. Four planes were dispatched by the 453rd. Two of them returned to base from 29 degrees, 45' N. 84 degrees, 42' W. because of weather. The remaining two reached and simulated an attack on the primary target. One plane had bomb-rack failure and bombed at the Cedar Keys Bombing Range. Eight heavy freighters at Panama City and three Naval aircraft 25 miles southeast of Pensacola were observed. The Staff of the 734th Bomb Squadron, Commanded by Major Hubbard, planned and briefed for this mission.

26 July 1943

No mission was ordered for today. After attending to individual Group or Squadron duties, the Cadre was permitted to use the day for personal affairs. The flying schedule had been heavy and the crews welcomed this opportunity for rest and recreation.

27 July 1943

The 453rd and 454th Bomb Groups (H) were ordered to attack the docks and repair ships at Charleston, South Carolina. The 453rd sent five B-24's on this mission. One missed the target; another failed because weather over the target area caused it to return to base, and three made attacks at the South Cedar Keys Range. One plane did not have a bombsight and made only a dry run. Fighter interception by 12 P-47's was experienced. A convoy, much shipping activity and many aircraft were observed. This mission was planned and briefed by the Staff of the 732nd Squadron, Commanded by Major Cofield.

28 July 1943

The 453rd and 454th Bomb Groups (H) were ordered to attack a convoy reported at a given point in the Atlantic Ocean with certain heading and speed, as a primary target, and the dam and power station at Augusta, Georgia as a secondary target. A slick was released to represent the convoy. The 453rd had five planes on this mission; one returned soon after take off because of engine trouble, one attacked the primary target and four attacked the secondary target. Fighter interception was experienced. Thunder storms necessitated calling the planes back to base before starting the planned searchlight runs. The Staff of the 733rd Bomb Squadron, Commanded by Major Sears, planned and briefed this mission.

29 July 1943

The 453rd and 454th Bomb Groups (H), participated in a simulated attack on the Water Works on the Weser River in Bremen, Germany. The actual target was really in Columbia South Carolina. The 453rd dispatched four B-24's on this mission all of which attacked the primary target. However, only three actually dropped bombs on the Ocala Bombing Range because one plane had no bombardier among the crew members. Much shipping and many aircraft were observed. This mission was planned and briefed by the Group Staff, Commanded by Colonel Miller.

30 July 1943

The 453rd and 454th Bomb Groups (H) were ordered to carry on a simulated attack on Whale Rock Island, located within sight of Yucatan, then to bomb a slick to be dropped 30 miles to the southeast. Four planes took off for the 453rd and all attacked the primary target and bombed the slick. On return to Florida, Three aircraft made two runs each through the searchlight area. Observations included heavy shipping, aircraft, and smudge pots or smoldering fire. This final mission was planned and briefed by the Staff of the 735th Bomb Squadron, Commanded by Major Harris.

By this time it had been definitely determined that the Group would be stationed, at least temporarily, at Pocatello, Idaho. Earlier plans or rumors included Wendover, Utah; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Boise, Idaho. Orders were issued for travel from Orlando, Florida to Pocatello, Idaho, by troop train, by private conveyance and by military airplane, using the four B-24's assigned to the Group.

Travel began on Saturday, 31 July, and was accomplished as specified in the Special Orders pertaining thereto. No unusual occurrence accompanied the prescribed TPA travel or the travel by military airplane. Possible exceptions were that automobiles were strained to make Pocatello by the following Friday, and a maintenance delay held the planes at Fort Worth, Texas, from Sunday night until Tuesday morning. The travel by troop train was made more interesting by the fact that Captain John C. McFadden, in command, missed the train twice, first at Denver and next at Cheyenne, but he managed to make Pocatello with his troops. Someone suggested that he caught his train in one instance by going to the highway and thumbing a ride on a truck.

GOWEN FIELD

The Group Cadre at Gowan Field performed the usual garrison duties from the time the Group was organized until ordered to move. Lt. Col. Stephenson reported that the fishing was poor. During the waiting period the usual rumors prevailed and a future home was reported as likely at the following bases, viz: Wendover, Utah; Bruning, Nebraska; Lincoln, Nebraska; Salt Lake City and Pocatello, Idaho. Finally the orders directed movement by troop train to Pocatello. Wives drove automobiles because TPA was not authorized. Major Hayden A. Trigg, Executive Officer of the 732nd Squadron was train commander. 2nd Lt. James H. Van Swearingen, Property Officer, was still checking property when the troop train left, but he ordered a jeep and caught the train at

the next station. Some confusion developed at this station when a dog selected the train commander as his victim. Headline: "Dog bites Major Trigg, train delayed, Jeep wins race".

POCATELLO

The Base at Pocatello, Idaho was not prepared to take care of an additional Heavy Bombardment Group, but everything possible was done to assign comfortable living quarters and working facilities. The Group Headquarters was located in the old Officers, Club, adjoining the Officers, Mess and across the lot from a new Officers, club. Group Operations was moved to a separate building to afford needed room. Squadron Headquarters were set up in other buildings on the base, but Squadron Operations, Intelligence, Armament, Communications, Medical, and in one instance, Technical Supplies were assigned tents near the ramp for their respective duties. Organization details were quickly completed and arrangements were made to take care of new crews and other personnel to join the Group.

Flying missions were run in every Squadron and training for future tasks was the constant call and endeavor. Several flights were made by Group and Squadron Officers to Wendover, Utah to visit O.T.U. Groups, then in second and third phase training, in order to get ideas as to the best methods. Programs for crew and maintenance training, including ground school, were planned and prepared.

14 August 1943

The day of 14 August 1943 will always be remembered by the men in the early days of the 453rd Bomb Group. On this day the Group experienced the loss of a B-24 and its entire crew. Early that afternoon a training and photographic mission was planned in the 735th Bomb Squadron and the following Officers and Enlisted men comprised the crew in ill-fated plane No. 41-29032.

- 1 – Marital Status
- 2 – G-Designates original Cadre at Gowen Field
O-Designates original Cadre at AAF SAT
- 3 – Rank
- 4 – Name
- 5 – Position in crew
- 6 – Organization
- 7 – Home address or that of nearest relative

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
M	O	2nd Lt.	MacGowan, David H.	Pilot	735th	121 Madison Ave. New York City, New York
M	O	2nd Lt.	Kerschner, Allan F.	Co-Pilot	735th	604 Shelby St. St. Paul, Minnesota
M	O	2nd Lt.	Schroerer, Lyle P.	Navigator	735th	622 3rd Ave. East Ashland, Wisconsin
M	O	2nd Lt.	Davis, Royce O.	P.I.	Group	1030 St. Paul St. Denver, 6 Colorado
S	O	T/Sgt.	Warner, Vernon L.	Mech.	735th	241 "A" Ave. National City, California
S	O	S/Sgt.	Hampton, Granville	Cr-Chf.	735th	3518 Howell St. Dallas, Texas
S	O	S/Sgt.	Bradshaw, Jesse P.	Radio	735th	3612 South Adams St. Fort Worth, Texas
M	G	S/Sgt.	Roberts, Herbert W.	Photo	732nd	445 Meadow St. Waterbury, Connecticut
S	O	S/Sgt.	Parkey, William G	Radio	732nd	Shopville, Kentucky
M	O	S/Sgt.	Stock, Chester W.	Clerk	732nd	201 Cullen St. Whittier, California

S O S/Sgt. Baiocchi, Joseph Mech. 732nd 835 La Salle St. Berwick, Pennsylvania

At a point approximately thirteen miles south of Du Bois, Wyoming, this plane was caught in a blind canyon and crashed into the mountainside. Complete destruction of the plane resulted and every member of the crew was killed instantaneously. A forest fire followed this accident, which led to the discovery of the burned wreckage and the bodies of the victims. Considerable difficulty accompanied the recovery of the bodies due to the inaccessibility of the terrain. Colonel Miller, Group Commanding Officer, and Major Lloyd, Group Medical Officer, immediately went to the scene of the accident to personally direct and assist in the rescue work. Everything possible was done to alleviate the grief of the relatives of these excellent men. Their lives were given to the service and their contributions will be forever remembered as one of real, substantial and lasting value. The following is quoted from a letter received from Mrs. Elizabeth C. MacGowan, mother of the Pilot:

“It is with poignant pleasure we read your letter in which you say so many of his friends and comrades were interested in him. Thank them for both of us and for him too. You can be sure if it is possible, that he and the other gallant lads who have given their lives for the Army Air Force, will be flying down the skies ahead of your planes and into combat. They will be there for the skies are eternally theirs.”

GROUND SCHOOL

Twelve (12) man crews, complete except that the navigators were not available, were assigned to the Group under the date of 34 August 1943, SO 256, Paragraph 1, Gowen Field. These crews were assigned to their respective squadrons on the 26th, and on 27 August 1943, Ground School directed by Major Frank E. Sullivan, with 1st Lt. Lindholm, 0404327, as Schools Officer, went into effect. Classes were conducted daily from 0700 to 1730 hours and covered the many subjects for first phase training, with the result that the requirements were reasonably taken care of in that respect for the crews available. Special classes were conducted for the Navigators who were later assigned. The school was conducted on a group basis except that, for the first few days at Pocatello, ground school was conducted by the squadrons for their own crews and other personnel.

DEPUTY COMMANDER

Major Sears, Robert C. 021906, Commanding Officer of the 733rd Squadron, was given additional duties as Deputy Group Commander
On 16 August 1943. On the following 24th, Captain Kanaga, Robert H. 01699236, recently assigned to the Group, was designated as Commanding Officer of the 733rd Squadron and Major Sears was relieved from such duties, thereafter devoting his time as Deputy Group Commander.

POCATELLO AIR BASE

Major R.H. White, Base Commanding Officer and his Staff and Personnel, continuously cooperated to make the 453rd Bomb Group appreciate the Pocatello Air Base. The result was that this Group will long remember very favorably the time spent and the training that they had at that friendly base.

PHOTO SECTION

2nd Lt. Jess L. Gerding, O-862316, reported to the Group on 31 August and he immediately proceeded with the task of setting up the photographic Section, securing the necessary personnel and equipment for instruction to the crews and particularly the gunners, in preparation for camera bombing and camera gunnery. These programs continued to develop and improve through the succeeding phases of training, and a special school was set up about the middle of third phase training to insure that the gunners were fully instructed in their duties in handling the cameras assigned for their use on the respective missions. A great many pictures were taken in the flying vicinity of March Field, for use in preparation of photographic maps and target charts. The pictures taken afforded targets for camera bombing.

Developing processes were set up to record the results in camera gunnery. Many pictures were secured of targets which were not actually used in the training program, which will be available for other bombardment groups, or units to be trained at March Field. 1st Lt. James I. Shaw, O-724230, Group Bombardier, worked with Lt. Gerding in the selection of points for photography and he chose such targets as were used for camera bombing in the Group missions flown during the third phase. In addition to the foregoing, this section was responsible for the pictures secured for use with the Group and Squadron Histories.

GROUP MOVEMENT

It was assumed and assured that the Group would not remain at Pocatello for second and third phase training, and there was much speculation as to where the organization might be sent. Originally, it was thought that we would move to Sioux City, Iowa. Finally, it rested between Langley Field and March Field, First of fourth Air Forces, with the result that March Field, Riverside, California, was appointed the new home for the 453rd Bomb Group. Colonel Miller, Group Commanding Officer, accompanied by other Staff members, visited March Field and the Headquarters of the 4th Bomber Command and 4th Air Force at San Francisco, California, and gave to the members of this group the picture of what be expected at this new home. The advance party left by troop train on 22 September and proceeded to make what arrangements could be made for the arrival of the crews, planes and main train movements. The 30th Bomb Group (H) was still at March Field at the time the advance party arrived and it was several days before very much could be accomplished. However, when the next Group movement was made the various sections had set up their respective offices and the Group as a whole was ready to function. The entire personnel traveled by troop train or as crew in B-24's assigned to the Group.

NEW CREWS

Many new crews were assigned to the group during the last days at Pocatello and the remainder arrived shortly after Headquarters were established at March Field. These crews were not evenly trained. Some had very little training in the planes and this added to the task of creating a trained Group. The tactical training was planned and handled in the Squadron throughout the first and second phases.

SECOND PHASE

Ground School at March Field, for the second phase, was begun under Group control and supervision. 1st Lt. Benjamin F. Hale, O-560519, was named Schools Officer. Class rooms were set up in the respective hangers occupied by the Squadrons. The several sections assigned instructors for the required courses, schedules were strictly maintained and this method continued until 24 October when the Squadron basis was adopted. Thereafter, for the remainder of this phase of training, which ended on 4 November, ground school instruction was handled as a separate squadron function, each making its own schedule and furnishing its own instructors for the prescribed courses.

THIRD PHASE

Ground school continued for this entire period as a Squadron function. Third phase missions began on 5 November, beginning with Mission No.4, prepared by Group in accordance with the directive of the 4th Air Force. The missions as first planned included fighter interception, actual bombing at Muroc Range, the camera bombing of two or three targets, actual gunnery on the gunnery range, camera gunnery for fleeting targets, and navigation.

It was found that all these activities could not be worked into a satisfactory six-hour mission. Therefore, beginning 7 November, the missions were planned and executed to eliminate actual gunnery. To accomplish this and still give complete training, only three squadrons in a planned rotation participated in the two daily Group missions, while the other squadrons had squadron missions involving chiefly actual gunnery and bombing. In addition to this, each of the three squadrons participating in the two daily Group missions planned and executed another six-hour mission daily. One Group mission was briefed and led by squadron personnel, rotating the duties to give as many as possible experience in these functions.

Many interesting and instructive missions were used. Points of special interest for camera bombing included Lincoln Field, Consolidated Plant, Docks and other installations at San Diego; The Douglas Aircraft Plant, Airfield, Dummy and other installations at Los Angeles; Oil tanks, Round houses and bridges at Bakersfield; at the point on Catalina Island and Guadalupe Island. Several camouflaged targets were used.

Mission folders, target charts, target approach charts, photographic maps and actual photographs were prepared and used to aid in these missions. A Beloptican was used as an aid at briefings to show charts, maps and pictures. Mission plans in detail and mission route overlays held for Airplane Commanders, Pilots, Navigators, Bombardiers and Radio Operators, and frequently special instruction was conducted for gunners after the main briefing. The main briefing was attended by all crew members who were to participate in the mission.

NEW DEPUTY GROUP COMMANDER

Major Robert C. Sears was assigned as Commanding Officer to the 735th Squadron and Major Robert F. Harris was relieved of such duties and named as the new Deputy Group Commander. This exchange of duties became effective on 13 October 1943. On the same day , Major Harris was named as Group Air Inspector.

P.O.M. INSPECTION

The Group P O M Inspection was held on 13 and 15 November. On 16 November it was announced at Group Staff Meeting that it had been successfully passed. It was understood that rigid training would continue and the regular third-phase plans were carried out during the remainder of the time at March Field.

O.T.U.

Operational Training Supervisory Unit No.1 was provided by the 4th Air Force as an aid to our training at March Field and consisted of Colonel Robert C. Cork and the Officers and Enlisted men of his command.

The contacts which these Officers and Enlisted men had at March Field, with 4th Bomber Command and 4th Air Force, together with their zeal and effort to be helpful in the many problems involved in the training schedule at March Field, did much to help the 453rd Bomb Group (H). Some slight friction developed at first in some sections but they were quickly remedied. An understanding of the desire and effort of all involved to make the 453rd an efficient and well trained unit was all that was necessary for complete harmony. The consensus was that the O.T.U. idea is good and that it functioned well in this experiment. The personnel of the 453rd Group will long remember favorably O.T.U. No.1 and its personnel. Colonel Cork and his excellent staff have merited this expression of approval and confidence.

MARCH FIELD

Accommodations at March Field were very good. Each squadron had a separate hangar affording necessary office space for all functions. Orderly rooms, Supply rooms, Mess hall, and E/M barracks were assigned to each squadron near its hangar. All Officers were housed in a large BOQ formerly used by enlisted men, and an Officers mess was set up in the same building. Group Headquarters was on the line and conveniently located with the 735th Squadron, next to it, followed by the 734th, 733rd, and 732nd Squadrons, in that order. Because Group Headquarters, originally used as Base Headquarters, was not wholly for use of the 453rd, the S-2 and S-4 offices were located in a one story building across the street and off the line. All accommodations were satisfactory and much better than usually expected.

March Field, an old Base, offered many facilities for recreation and entertainment, in fact many more than the busy 453rd Bomb Group had time to use.

Colonel Charles R. Melin, his Base Headquarters and its Personnel offered excellent cooperation in all matters pertaining to Group training and comfort. This was much appreciated and long remembered.

OVERSEAS MOVEMENT

The Commanding Officer, Colonel Miller, conferred with Headquarters, 4th Air Force, San Francisco, regarding our overseas movement and thereafter on 25 October 1943, Major Robert F. Harris, Major H.B. White, Major Harvey L. Lloyd, and Lt. Walter R. Beckett, accompanied by S/Sgt. Frank C. White, went to San Francisco to acquaint themselves with the general situation, traveling pursuant to Group Special Order No. 85, Par.1.

HISTORY

453rd Bombardment Group (H) Station 144, APO # 634

Transfer of Group to the ETO:

The 453rd Bombardment Group, Composed of the 732nd, 733rd, 734th and the 735th Bombardment Squadrons left March Field, California by rail on 2 December and arrived at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey for POE on the 7th of December, 1943. They were quickly put through the final processing and boarded their ship, the mighty Queen Elizabeth on the 13th of December. After an uneventful voyage they arrived in the British Isles on the 21st of December, 1943. The remainder of the trip was made by train and the first section arrived at Station #144 on the morning of the 23rd of December, the second section arrived the next day. After a day or so of getting settled the 453rd was beginning to set up its new home for operations against the Axis.

While the ground echelon was moving overseas by boat, the air echelon traveled to Hamilton Field, California, was processed there and received their new airplanes. From Hamilton Field the air echelon moved brokenly across the Southern sector of the United States and flew to their new Station by the Southern Route. This was quite an event for everyone because they saw many things that were new to them and were very interesting. Terrible weather conditions caused some delay at different points along the route but the first contingent arrived at Station # 144 soon after the first of the year and the last crews arrived by the first of February.

The crews began training immediately and are now participating in full strength on operations against the Axis as a new part of the American contribution to the Allied air effort.

DECEMBER 1943, JANUARY AND FEBRUARY, 1944

On Dec.1 1943 the Air Transport Command flew Lt. Col. Leslie D. Stephenson, the Group Executive Officer; Major Frank C. Sullivan, the Group Operations Officer; Captain Victor F. Sieverding, the Group Intelligence Officer, and Captain John S. Braun, the Group Communications Officer from the States to Station # 144 in England. They left early to make preparations for billeting the Group upon its arrival. Station # 144 is located near Old Buckenham, which is about 80 miles from London, and 15 miles from the City on Norwich.

The 467th Sub Depot, 1792nd Ordnance Company, 1231st Quarter master Aviation Detachment (A), as well as a Royal Air Force Detachment were there to greet these Officers on their arrival. Lt. Col. John H. Johnson, the highest ranking officer present, acted as Base Commander until Major Robert Sears arrived. Maj. Sears acted as Base

Commander until Col. Joseph A Miller, the Group's actual Commander arrived on Jan 23, 1944.

The ground echelon arrived at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey on Dec. 7, 1943, where they were processed for their journey to the British Isles. They arrived at Gourock on the Firth of Clyde near Glasgow, Scotland on the 21st of December 1943. The vanguard of the ground echelon arrived at their final destination, Station # 144, on the morning of December 23rd. The Following day, the remainder of the ground echelon arrived.

(See "Journey to Old Buck" in the "Memories" Section)

During this time the air echelon was making final preparations at their P.O.E., Morrison Field, Florida for their departure overseas. The men were busy getting processed and the planes were being put in tip top shape for the long journey overseas by the southern route Crew # 43, piloted by Lt. Samuel Dean of the 734th Squadron, crashed on take-off as the Group was leaving. There were no survivors among the crew or the passengers they had been carrying. After the crash, the passengers the other planes had been scheduled to carry were removed and sdiverted by Air Transport Command through La Guardia Field, New York City as their P.O.E. to fly the northern route. All planes of the Group completed their journey to their overseas destination by the 5th of February 1944.

The arriving men of the 453rd Bombardment Group found their new base in turmoil. The prevailing weather conditions of rain, snow and cold winds made the base a quagmire. Minor cases of colds and flu took a big toll. Men were issued overshoes to counteract the mud.

As each squadron came in, they set up their own operational offices on the line. All departments had their own separate installations except Intelligence and Communications which were consolidated at Group Headquarters.

During this time the field was supervised and guided by the Royal Air Force with Squadron Leader L.E.Archer, Commanding. This detachment acted as a liason unit to help set up Station #144. On the 5th day of February, this guidance ceased. The Union Jack was brought down and the Stars and Stripes was raised. The field was turned over in a colorful ceremony at which time Col. Miller accepted it on behalf of the United States Government from Squadron Leader L.E.Archer.

HISTORY

453rd Bombardment Group (H)
Station 144, APO # 634

ROSTER OF STAFF HEADS AND KEY PERSONNEL HEADQUARTERS

<u>RANK AND NAME</u>	<u>DATE JOINED GROUP</u>	<u>DUTY</u>
<u>COLONEL</u>		
Miller, Joseph	6/22/43	Commanding Officer
<u>Lt. Colonel</u>		
Stephenson, Leslie D.	6/29/43	Executive Officer
<u>MAJORS</u>		
Kemp, Edward K.	8/28/43	Group S-4
Lloyd Harvey L.	6/29 43	Group Flight Surgeon
Sears, Robert C.	6/29/43	Group Deputy Commander
Sullivan, Frank C.	6/29/43	Group Ops. Officer
White, Harold B.	6/29/43	Group Adjutant
<u>CAPTAINS</u>		
Sieverding, Victor F.	7/1/43	Group S-2 Officer
Smith, Clayton H.	8/18/43	Group Dental Officer
<u>1st LIEUTENANTS</u>		
Fairhurst, Kirk S.	7/2/43	Group Eng. Officer
Hale, Benjamin F.	8/7/43	Special Serv. Officer
Kellow, Clifford C.	6/29/43	Group Comm. Officer
Lieb, Harry K.	6/26/43	Personnel Officer
Lindholm, George F.	6/29/43	Group Nav. Officer
Nixon, Forrest D.	6/29 43	Asst. Ops. Officer
O'Dell, Willard M.	6/25/43	Asst. Gp. S-2 Officer
Shaw, James I.	8/27/43	Group Bomb Officer
<u>2nd LIEUTENANTS</u>		
Gerding, Jess L.	8/27/43	Group Photo Officer
Held, Shirley L.	8/12/43	Group Weather Officer
Pringel, Reed A.	6/29/43	Group Stat. Officer

ROSTER OF STAFF HEADS AND KEY PERSONNEL (Continued)

<u>RANK AND NAME</u>	<u>DATE JOINED GROUP</u>	<u>DUTY</u>
<u>732nd BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)</u>		
<u>MAJORS</u>		
Cofield, Curtis H.	6/29/43	Commanding Officer
Trigg, Hayden A.	6/29/43	Executive Officer
<u>1st LIEUTENANTS</u>		
Crowley, Joseph N., Jr.	6/30/43	Sq. S-2 Officer
Klockow, Willard E.	6/29/43	Medical Officer
Webster, Frank R., Jr.	6/29/43	Operations Officer
<u>733rd BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)</u>		
<u>MAJOR</u>		
Smith, Dana E.	6/29/43	Executive Officer
<u>CAPTAINS</u>		
Kanaga, Robert H.	6/22/43	Commanding Officer
McFadden, John C	7/1/43	Sq. S-2 Officer
<u>1st LIEUTENANTS</u>		
Coggeshall, Robert D	8/14/43	Operations Officer
Kammen, Leo	7/1/43	Medical Officer
<u>734th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)</u>		
<u>MAJORS</u>		
Hubbard, Edward F.	6/29/43	Commanding Officer
Brantingham, George L	6/29/43	Executive Officer
<u>1st LIEUTENANTS</u>		
Currin, Richard L.	7/1/43	Medical Officer
Lawrence, Winston J.	6/29/43	Sq. Ops. Officer
Smith, Vernon L	7/1/43	Sq. S-2 Officer

ROSTER OF STAFF HEADS AND KEY PERSONNEL (Continued)

<u>RANK AND NAME</u>	<u>DATE JOINED GROUP</u>	<u>DUTY</u>
<u>735th BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)</u>		
<u>MAJORS</u>		
Harris, Robert F.	6/29/43	Commanding Officer
Crawford, Lee R.	6/29/43	Executive Officer
<u>CAPTAINS</u>		
Lee, Hamilton I.	6/30/43	Sq. S-2 Officer
Tucker, Albert M.	6/30/43	Medical Officer
<u>2nd LIEUTENANT</u>		
Clingan, Wilbur L.	8/20/43	SQ. Ops. Officer

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