

Escort



Lt. G. A. Hubbard

Sixpence

Anniversary Issue
MARCH, 1945



ON FEBRUARY 11, 1944, the 357th Fighter Group became operational. Ours was the first P-51 group in the 8th Air Force. It was up to us, we decided, to make this Mustang group gallop. And so we did! We rode through seemingly impossible weather and flak, we traversed the whole of Europe, and galloped from one great victory to another—until we stand to-day at the top, with our flaming sword proudly illuminating our achievements.

Our pilots flew the planes, but all the individuals of all the units—both ground and air, service and fighter—which make up this base contributed to our great success. This first issue of "Escort" becomes the first written record of the accomplishments and everyday doings of this team. I am sure you will all be as enthusiastic about it as I am. It is something we will all value quite highly in days to come. May those "days to come" come soon!

Irvin H. Dreyfus

*Colonel, Air Corps,
Commanding.*

OUR OPERATIONAL C.O.'S

Colonel Dregne, Operations Officer of the group since the wind and sands of Tonopoh, became group commander when he reported for his second tour. On missions led by Col. Dregne the group has averaged five planes per mission. He is a native of Viroqua, Wisconsin.



Colonel Henry R. Spicer

Colonel Spicer was our first operational C.O. Every pilot will always remember his frequent expression: "Are you all right, lad?" In a very short time he won the full confidence of everybody and brought out the best in fighting spirit. Colonel Spicer is now a P.W. His home town is Hollywood, California.



Colonel Donald W. Graham

Colonel Graham, deputy commander of the group since its activation, assumed command after Colonel Spicer was reported missing. He led the group on its famous mission to the U.S.S.R. Colonel Graham is now back in the States and at this moment might very well be basking in Oakland, California, sunshine.



Lt.-Col. John D. Landers.

Lt.-Col. Landers, having completed tours both in the Pacific and European theaters, took over leadership of the group during the interim between Colonel Graham's departure for the States and the return of Col. Dregne to his second tour with the 357th. He is a mustang rider from way back. Joshua, Texas, is his home.

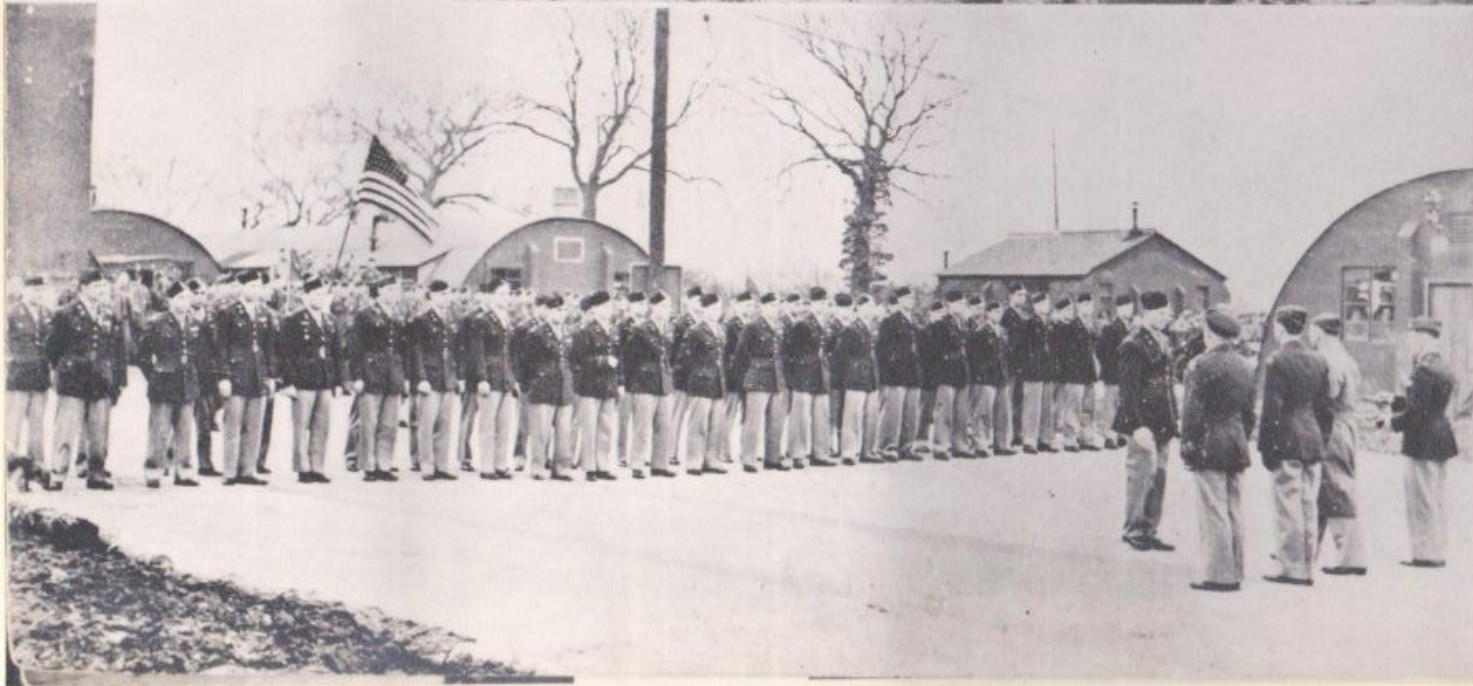


AT FIRST—Combat Conscious
ONCE—The old plane, the old snow, and mud underneath

LATER—All settled down. Second "Home Front" opened
NOW—The new plane, better roads

COMBAT.

Our first enemy—mud. The pilots helped to fight the mud before they fought the Luftwaffe.



DECORATIONS.

And they were decorated for their valor — on clean, white cement.

RECORD BREAKERS—A GROUP HISTORY

By Captain George H. Boswell.

After one year of combat operations this Mustang fighter group has added one of the most brilliant chapters to the history of the Army Air Forces. This article itemizes some of our accomplishments. It is a record which should make all of us swell with pride.

Almost the youngest of the 8th Air Force fighter groups, we are now second in the E.T.O. in the number of enemy planes destroyed in aerial combat. The only group that now stands ahead of us has been operational for almost two years. Here is our record:

586½ enemy aircraft destroyed.

20 enemy aircraft probably destroyed.

98 enemy aircraft damaged.

In the course of amassing these figures, this group has established another record. Forty-five of its pilots have knocked five or more enemy planes out of the air, thus becoming "Fighter Aces." The group has destroyed an average of two planes per mission. In 18 battles more than 10 E/A have been destroyed; in 10 battles, more than 20. It adds up to a little less than 50 planes shot down each month.

Our remarkable combat record reached its crowning peak on January 14th, 1945, the mission, led by Colonel Dregne when, in one of the most vicious air battles of the war, the group destroyed 56½ German planes in the air for a loss of three of our own. One enemy plane on the ground and two locomotives were thrown in for good measure. This is a record for the 8th Air Force and perhaps for the whole United States Army Air Force. Fifty-six of our planes were in this battle and they fought against better than three-to-one odds.

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OUR FIRST VICTORY.

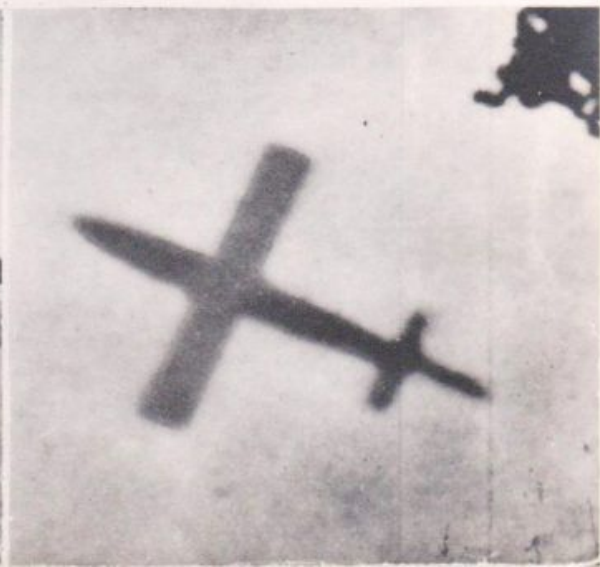
"First he was on my tail, then he overshot me, I let him have it, it was that simple," said Captain Calvert L. Williams after returning from the February 20th, 1944 mission. The ME-109 that Capt. Williams downed on that particular day was the first of the Luftwaffe to feel the deadly sting of the guns of the 357th.

In the photo Captain Williams is talking over his experience with some line personnel.



D-DAY

D-day recalls fresh war-paint on our Mustangs and the excitement of knowing that the tremendous event had finally arrived. It recalls, also, long hours—which stretched into days—of hard work. Pilots got what rest they could between missions—and missions were long and frequent. The “promised” retaliation did not appear—in the expected form at any rate.

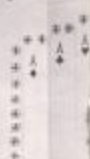




LT. COL. LANDERS



MAJOR PETERSON



CRP



CAPT. SIMPSON



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CAPT. O'BRIEN

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

LT. PIERCE



✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦



LT. T. HOAMS

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

LT. RUDER



✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

LT. OVERSTREET



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CAPT. STEPELTON

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

CAPT. YEAGER



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CAPT. WARREN

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LT. REESE



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T. CARSON

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MAJOR ENGLAND

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MAJOR ANDERSON

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LT. KARGER



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LT. R.C. SMITH

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LT. CORDER



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LT. MAXWELL

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CAPT. SHAW



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LT. TYLER



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MAJOR STORCH

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CAPT. DAVIS



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CAPT. STANLEY

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LT. LINKS



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RECORD BREAKERS—A GROUP HISTORY—continued.

We are the oldest Mustang outfit of the 8th. Our first combat mission, February 11th, 1944, led by Major James H. Howard (now Colonel Howard, of the 9th Air Force), was a furtive sweep nearly into enemy territory. Very shortly, however, the group began making the deepest penetrations in the history of fighter escort. Several of the early missions were led by Colonel Donald J. M. Blakeslee, of the 4th group.

On March 6th, 1944, the group participated in the first successful daylight raid on Berlin. Its thirty-three P-51 Bs set a record of 20 planes destroyed, one probable and seven damaged, for no loss. When lack of oxygen forced some of the planes to the deck in the heart of Germany, they strafed ground installations, including an airfield. Led by Lt.-Col. Thomas L. Hayes, this proved to be one of the most significant missions for the fighters of this war. The indomitable courage of our pilots in braving defences that no one had ever before attempted to overcome demonstrated the overwhelming superiority of the P-51. No target at any altitude was now safe from its blazing guns. Here our pilots set the pace, which gave the group its outstanding reputation.

Eight missions were flown on D-Day in support of the invasion forces. The longest of these was just a little less than eight hours in duration, when the pilots took off through an overcast before dawn to put an end to any ambitions the Luftwaffe may have had.

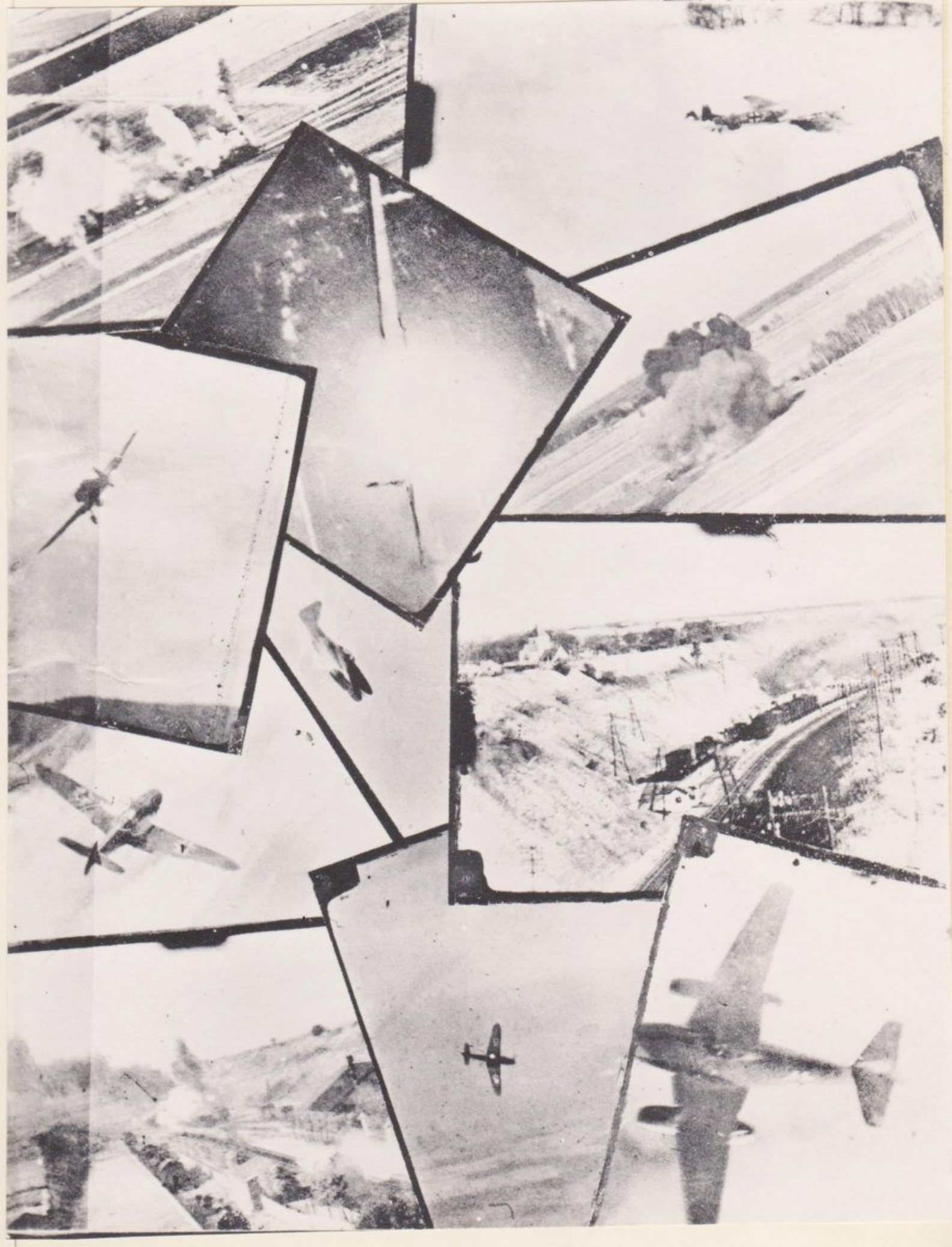
In an attack on a crowded transportation line between Poitiers and Angolieme our pilots made one of the most outstanding ground attack missions of the war. They dropped their belly tanks on their target and ignited the gasoline by strafing. This was the first time belly tanks were used as "fire bombs" in this theater. An ammunition train, almost the entire contents of a marshalling yard and scores of goods cars—much needed supplies for Hitler's armies—were destroyed.

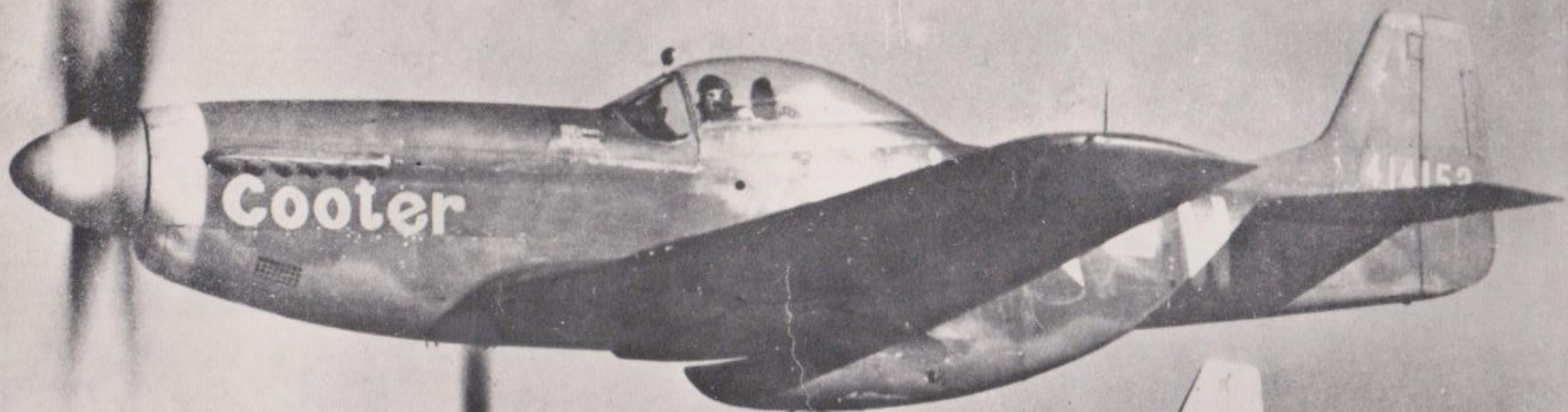
The group's participation in the second—and most successful—shuttle run to Russia is another chapter in its distinguished history. Not a single fighter or bomber

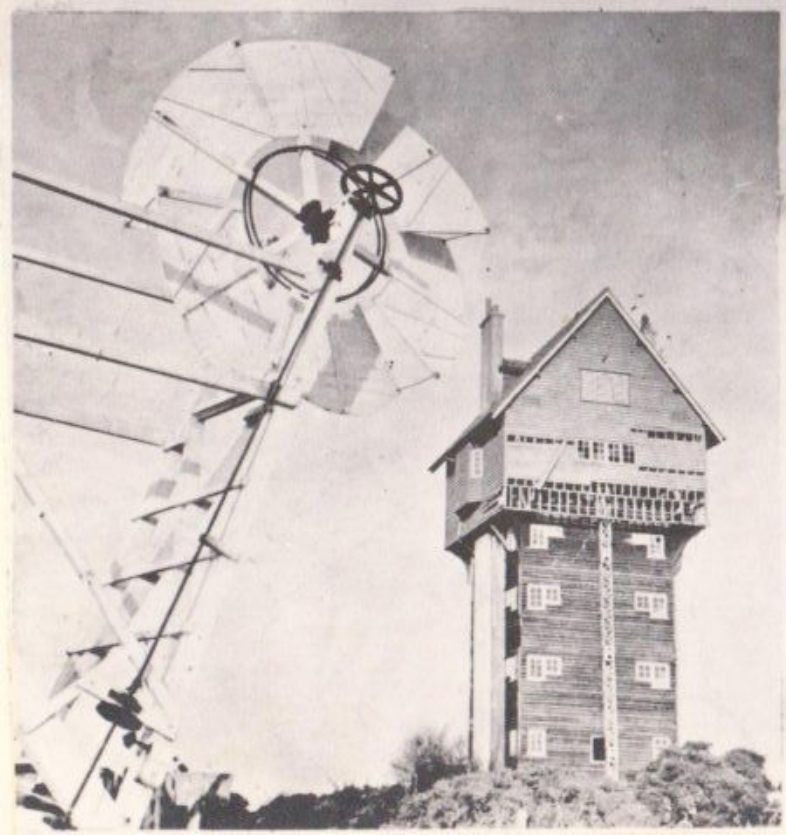
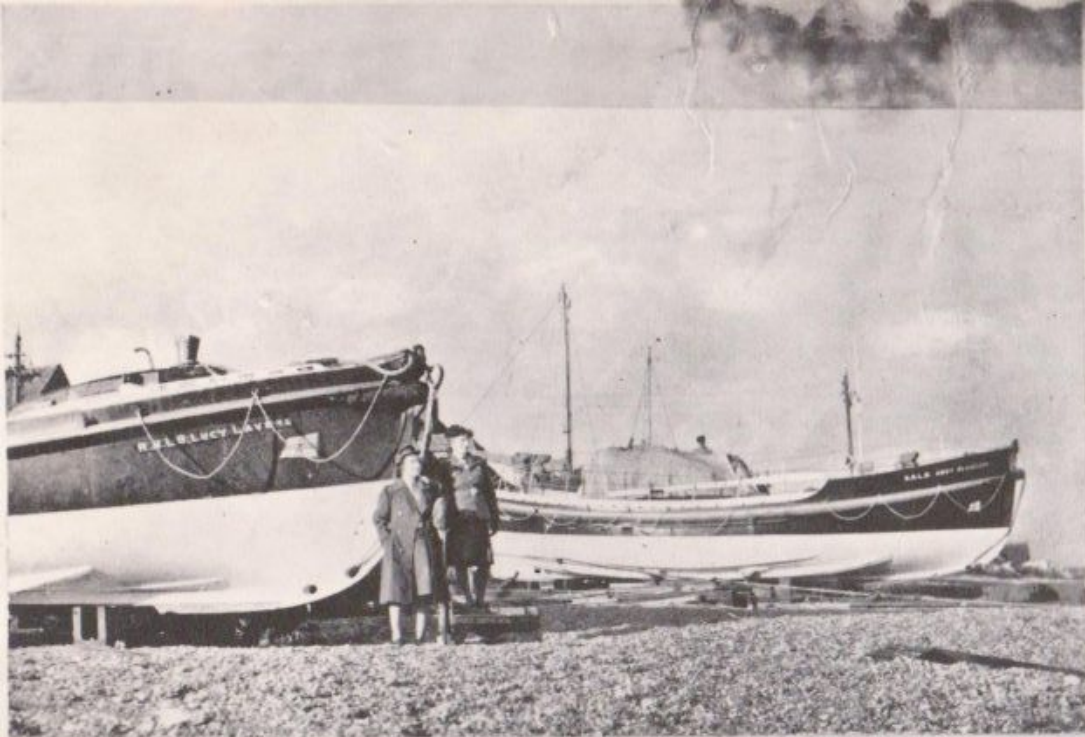
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FOR YOUR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE IN DESTROYING 57½ ENEMY AIRCRAFT ON JANUARY 14TH MISSION I AM RECOMMENDING THE 357TH FIGHTER GROUP FOR THE AWARD OF THE INDIVIDUAL UNIT CITATION.

DOOLITTLE.









RECREATION

Unit parties, Shows, U.S.O. and otherwise, Red Cross Dances, Boxing, and Music by the Buzz Boys. Other important recreational activities are not pictured here.



was lost to enemy action during the trip which took the Mustangs to Russia, Yugoslavia and Italy. Led by Col. Graham, our pilots were gone for a week. As a result of this trip we became known as the best of the fighter escort groups in this theater. The number of "Big Friends" saved through our efforts from Jerry fighters during our first operational year would be impossible to estimate.

Our ground attack record is as outstanding as our aerial combat record. The group has destroyed scores of locomotives, hundreds of goods cars, oil cars, light and heavy tanks, factories, artillery, ferry boats, lorries, flak towers, hangers, oil dumps, ammunition trains, troop trains, barrage balloons, bridges, tunnels, personnel carriers, staff cars, half tracks, warehouses, and Germans.

Our pilots have fulfilled every mission assigned, whether it be protecting the bombers or ground attack. Often on the way home from an escort mission they have assigned themselves an extra operation on some part of the German military machine—the destruction of anything that looked as if it might benefit Germany's war effort.

On 264 missions from the Baltic Sea to Switzerland and from Brest to Russia, the 357th has ravaged the Luftwaffe and the Wehrmacht. Wherever a concentration of German military or industrial power is located you will find the lads of this outfit have left their imprint. Every obstacle has been surmounted and a fighting team has emerged which believes in one thing—Victory.

"ESCORT."

MARCH, 1945.

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It is a great record. Every man at this station should certainly be proud of whatever part, however small, he may have played in it. It is perhaps the greatest record of achievement ever accomplished by a fighter unit in a similar period of time. Every member of the team deserves credit—the brave lads who gave their lives, the others who risked their lives every day, the clerks in the offices, the K.P.'s in the mess hall, the truck drivers who made the job easier, all the leaders who have come and gone, but who have all carried on the tradition of "FIGHTERS FOR VICTORY."

