

CHRONOLOGY OF U.S.A.A.F. SERVICE RECORD

GEORGE D. SMITH 43H

SERIAL NO. 14102349 AS AN AVIATION CADET
SERIAL NO. 0811457 AS AN OFFICER

JUNE THROUGH JULY 1942

I TOOK THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS WITH 11 OTHER MEN AT THE CHATTANOOGA POST OFFICE TO APPLY FOR AVIATION CADET TRAINING. ONLY 2 OF US PASSED THE MENTAL TESTS AND THE OTHER ONE FAILED THE PHYSICAL DUE TO COLOR BLINDNESS. I WAS INSTRUCTED TO REMAIN AT HOME AND THEY WOULD NOTIFY ME ABOUT WHEN AND WHERE TO REPORT FOR ACTIVE DUTY. MY ENLISTMENT DATE WAS JUNE 9, 1942. I BELIEVE MY INDUCTION DATE WAS AUGUST 7, 1942.

AUGUST THROUGH SEPTEMBER 1942

I RECEIVED ORDERS TO REPORT TO FORT OGLETHORPE, GEORGIA TO BE INDUCTED AND PROCESSED. AFTER ABOUT 10 DAYS OF ORIENTATION AND GETTING MY EQUIPMENT, I WAS SHIPPED TO MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA AS A PRIVATE UNASSIGNED TO AWAIT MY APPOINTMENT AS AN AVIATION CADET. ALL OF THE OTHER MEN AT MIAMI BEACH AWAITING THE SAME ASSIGNMENT WERE GROUPED TOGETHER. WE STAYED IN A RESORT HOTEL (I THINK IT WAS THE GROSSINGER.)

OCTOBER THROUGH DECEMBER 1942

WE WERE SHIPPED TO THE CLASSIFICATION CENTER IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE TO UNDERGO A BATTERY OF BRUTAL MENTAL AND PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS. MANY OF THE APPLICANTS WERE WASHED OUT AND SHIPPED TO A BASE IN BILOXI, MISSISSIPPI TO BE REASSIGNED. THE DOCTORS THOUGHT I HAD A SYSTOLIC HEART MURMUR AND PUT ME IN THE HOSPITAL FOR EXHAUSTIVE TESTING. AFTER RUNNING EKG STUDIES 2 AND 3 TIMES A DAY PLUS BLOOD WORK AND OTHER TESTS FOR 2 WEEKS, THEY DECIDED MY HEART CONDITION WAS FUNCTIONAL AND I WAS PHYSICALLY FIT AND OTHERWISE QUALIFIED FOR PILOT TRAINING. VIVID MEMORIES I HAVE ABOUT THE CENTER WERE THE TAR PAPERED BARRACKS AND OTHER BUILDINGS SET IN THE MIDDLE OF A GIANTIC MUD HOLE.

JANUARY THROUGH FEBRUARY 1943

MY SOJOURN IN THE HOSPITAL DELAYED ME ENOUGH TO BE PUSHED BACK FROM THE CLASS OF 43-G TO 43-H. MY FRIENDS FROM MIAMI BEACH BECAME MY UPPER CLASSMEN WHEN I WAS SHIPPED TO MAXWELL FIELD NEAR MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA FOR PREFLIGHT TRAINING. I ENDED UP GETTING A LOT OF UNDESIREED ATTENTION DURING THE HAZING BUT I WAS ABLE TO COPE WITH IT AND I STILL CONSIDER THE FELLOWS IN 43-G WHO SURVIVED THE WAR SOME OF THE BEST FRIENDS I HAD.

MARCH THROUGH APRIL 1943

WE WERE SHIPPED TO THE 63RD AAFSTD IN DOUGLAS, GEORGIA FOR PRIMARY FLIGHT TRAINING IN PT-17 STEARMAN'S, A SPORTY, FLN TO FLY, BI-WING PLANE WITH OPEN COCKPITS. JOE THALMAN, A SQUADRON COMMANDER AT THE SCHOOL, WAS MY FIRST INSTRUCTOR. HE WAS A GREAT GUY AND A SUPER INSTRUCTOR WHO SUFFERED WITH ME AND TWO OTHER STUDENTS, PAUL SOWERS AND JULIUS SPENCE. UNTIL WE MADE OUR

MARCH THROUGH APRIL 1943 (CONTINUED)

FIRST SOLO FLIGHTS. MIDWAY THROUGH PRIMARY, JOE HAD TO GIVE SO MANY CHECK RIDES TO FAILING STUDENTS THAT HE HAD TO TURN US OVER TO OTHER INSTRUCTORS. I WAS ASSIGNED FIRST TO CAMPBELL AND THEN TO RUMPLER (SPELLING UNCERTAIN). I STILL REMEMBER THOSE WINDY, ROUGH DAYS IN MARCH WHEN SO MANY STUDENTS GOT AIR SICK AND HAD TO JOIN THE BUCKET BRIGADE TO CLEAN UP THEIR PLANES. I UNDERSTAND UNOFFICIALLY THAT 63% OF MY CLASS WASHED OUT DURING PRIMARY.

MAY THROUGH JUNE 1943

WHAT WAS LEFT OF MY GROUP WAS SHIPPED TO GUNTER FIELD NEAR MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA FOR BASIC FLIGHT TRAINING IN BT-13'S, VULTEE'S ALL-METAL LOW WING MONOPLANE. MY FIRST LANDING WITH MY INSTRUCTOR AT THE CONTROLS WAS RATHER ALARMING. WE WERE NOT USING A PAVED RUNWAY AND THE PLANE SOUNDED LIKE SOME ONE HAD PUSHED A WASH TUB DOWN A FLIGHT OF STAIRS WHEN WE TOUCHED THE GROUND. THE BT-13 SOMETIMES HAD A BAD HABIT OF GOING INTO A FLAT TYPE OF SPIN THAT COULD NOT BE STOPPED. I WAS TOLD THIS HAPPENED IN THE CLASS JUST AHEAD OF US. IN TRYING TO BAIL OUT, THE STUDENT PILOT JUMPED OUT ON THE INSIDE OF THE SPIN TO BE KILLED FALLING INTO THE PROP AND THE INSTRUCTOR JUMPED OUT ON THE OUTSIDE TO BE STRUCK BY THE TAIL. MY FIRST SOLO FLIGHT AT NIGHT USING PRIMITIVE FLARE POTS THAT LINED THE RUNWAY WAS ALMOST AS THRILLING AS THE ONE DURING THE DAY IN PRIMARY TRAINING. I ALSO REMEMBER OUR CROSS COUNTRY FLIGHTS WHERE WE GOT LOST (??) AND DRAGGED THE SOUTH ALABAMA RAILROAD DEPOTS AT LOW ALTITUDES SO WE COULD READ THE NAME OF THE TOWNS ON THE SIGNS AT EACH END OF THE BUILDING.

JULY THROUGH AUGUST 1943

MY GROUP WAS SPLIT UP AFTER BASIC AND WAS SHIPPED TO SEVERAL DIFFERENT ADVANCED FLYING SCHOOLS. A FEW OF THE LUCKY ONES WENT TO SINGLE ENGINE SCHOOLS FOR FIGHTER PILOT TRAINING WHICH IS WHAT I REQUESTED. THE REST OF US WERE SENT TO TWIN ENGINE ADVANCED TO BECOME BOMBER PILOTS, TROOP CARRIER PILOTS, TRANSPORT PILOTS, ETC. SOME STUDENTS WERE SHIPPED TO THE TWIN ENGINE SCHOOL AT BLYTHEVILLE, ARKANSAS. MY PARTICULAR BUNCH WENT TO GEORGE FIELD IN ILLINOIS WHICH WAS CLOSE TO LAWRENCEVILLE, ILLINOIS TO FLY BEECHCRAFT'S TWIN ENGINE PLANES MADE OUT OF PLYWOOD. MY INSTRUCTOR WAS LT. WILLIAM R. PEYTON. MY BIG DAY CAME ON AUGUST 30, 1943 WHEN I WAS COMMISSIONED TO BE A 2ND LT. WITH A MULTI-ENGINE PILOT RATING AND A TEN DAY LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO GO HOME AND SHOW OFF MY WINGS. I LIVED IN ECSTASY ON CLOUD NINE UNTIL I GOT TO MY NEXT ASSIGNMENT AT SMYRNA, TENNESSEE. BEFORE I LEFT GEORGE FIELD I WAS INTERVIEWED BY THEIR STAFF AND DECLINED AN OPPORTUNITY TO REMAIN AS AN INSTRUCTOR PILOT.

SEPTEMBER THROUGH OCTOBER 1943

AFTER 10 WONDERFUL DAYS AT HOME, I REPORTED TO THE SMYRNA ARMY AIRFIELD (45TH FT TNG GTD) IN SMYRNA, TENNESSEE FOR TRANSITION TRAINING IN 4-ENGINE B-24D AND B-24E LIBERATORS. THE C.O. AT THE TIME WAS COL. "KILLER" KANE WHO WON THE MEDAL OF HONOR FOR HIS PART IN THE FAMOUS LOW LEVEL RAID ON THE PLOESTI OIL FIELDS IN ROMANIA. THE MESS HALL AND B.O.Q. AT THE BASE WERE VERY NICE. WHEN THE WEATHER AT SMYRNA WAS TOO BAD FOR TRAINING FLIGHTS, WE WOULD FLY TO ANOTHER BASE IN THIS COUNTRY WHERE IT WAS GOOD AND STAY FOR SEVERAL DAYS TO CONTINUE OUR TRAINING. TWO OF THE BASES I REMEMBER GOING TO WERE SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS AND ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO.

NOVEMBER 1943

AFTER WE COMPLETED TRANSITION AND WERE CERTIFIED AS FIRST PILOTS ON B-24 LIBERATORS, MY CLASS

NOVEMBER 1943 (CONTINUED)

WAS SHIPPED ON A TROOP TRAIN TO THE 18TH REPLACEMENT WING IN SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH. ENROUTE WE HAD A 3 DAY LAYOVER IN CHICAGO. (***) LTS. SHAW, STURGEON, WOLFE, AND I MANAGED TO GET A HOTEL SUITE IN THE LOOP WHERE WE SPENT 3 GLORIOUS DAYS LIVING IT UP. THE FACILITIES IN SALT LAKE WERE SOMEWHAT PRIMITIVE. MY GROUP OF PILOTS HAD TO LIVE IN STABLES ON THE FAIR GROUNDS. MEN FROM TRAINING SCHOOLS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY WERE SENT HERE TO BE ASSIGNED TO COMBAT CREWS. I MET MY CO-PILOT AND BOMBARDIER AT THE FAIR GROUNDS. WE WERE ABLE TO FIND AND MEET MY ENGINEER, RADIO OPERATOR, AND GUNNERS LATER ON THE TROOP TRAIN THAT TOOK US TO TUSCON, ARIZONA FOR OPERATIONAL TRAINING AS A COMBAT CREW. OUR NAVIGATOR, LT. MORTON LOVE, DID NOT JOIN THE CREW UNTIL WE HAD BEEN AT TUSCON FOR SEVERAL DAYS.

DECEMBER 1943 THROUGH FEBRUARY 1944

AFTER A LONG RIDE ON AN UNCOMFORTABLE TROOP TRAIN, WE ARRIVED AT DAVIS MONTHAN FIELD NEAR TUSCON, ARIZONA WHICH WAS A FINE BASE THAT WAS LIKE A COUNTRY CLUB COMPARED TO SALT LAKE CITY. WE STARTED OUR O.T.U. WITH THE 32ND HQ AND A.B. SQDN., BUT AFTER A FEW DAYS WE WERE ASSIGNED TO THE 335TH SQUADRON, 466TH BOMB GROUP (HEAVY) AND WE WERE ABLE TO COMPLETE OUR OPERATIONAL TRAINING AS A GROUP WITH THE PEOPLE WHO WERE GOING OVERSEAS WITH US. WE LOST 2 CREWS (20 MEN) IN A MID-AIR COLLISION WHILE FLYING IN FORMATION DURING A TRAINING MISSION. WE SPENT NUMEROUS HOURS REFINING OUR SKILLS IN INSTRUMENT FLYING, NAVIGATION, FORMATION FLYING, PRACTICE BOMBING, AIR TO GROUND GUNNERY, AIR TO AIR GUNNERY, LINK TRAINER, ETC. WE ALSO ATTENDED MANY GROUND SCHOOL CLASSES. DURING THE LAST STAGES OF O.T.U., I WAS ONE OF THE FIRST CREWS TO GET A NEW B-24 ASSIGNED TO ME TO TAKE TO COMBAT. THE SHIP, HOWEVER, HAD SOME SERIOUS FLAWS DUE TO POOR ALIGNMENT BETWEEN THE WINGS AND THE TAIL ASSEMBLY, AND IT FINALLY HAD TO BE CONDEMNED AND RETURNED TO CONSOLIDATED. REPLACEMENT PLANES WERE NOT AVAILABLE SO MY CREW AND I ALONG WITH LT. HECTOR DELANOIS AND HIS CREW HAD TO GO BY RAIL TO TOPEKA, KANSAS TO PICK UP THE B-24'S WE WOULD FLY TO ENGLAND.

MARCH 1944

LT. DELANOIS' CREW AND MY CREW SPENT 3 MISERABLE DAYS TRAVELLING BY TRAIN TO TOPEKA, KANSAS FOR STAGING AND TO PICK UP THE PLANES WE WOULD FLY OVERSEAS. WE GOT NEW COMBAT GEAR, INCLUDING FITTED PARACHUTES, JUNGLE PACKS, MACHETES, TRENCH KNIVES, FITTED OXYGEN MASKS, AND MANY OTHER THINGS TOO NUMEROUS TO BE LISTED HERE. WE WERE ALLOWED TO KEEP ONE SUMMER KHAKI UNIFORM CHANGE TO TAKE WITH US. ALL OF THE REST OF OUR UNIFORMS AND GEAR WAS BOXED UP IN WOODEN FOOT LOCKERS AND SHIPPED TO OUR DESTINATION. THE GENTLEMAN WHO WAS TO BE MY CREW CHIEF OVERSEAS, S/SGT. BERYL L. MOORE, WAS ATTACHED TO MY CREW TEMPORARILY IN CASE WE NEEDED HIM ENROUTE. AFTER WE COMPLETED SOME SHAKE DOWN FLIGHTS TO MAKE SURE OUR NEW PLANE WAS SATISFACTORY, WE RECEIVED ORDERS TO FLY NON-STOP TO OUR P.O.E. AT MORRISON FIELD NEAR MIAMI, FLORIDA. I THINK OUR DEPARTURE DATE FROM TOPEKA WAS MARCH 10 AND OUR CHECK POINTS WERE TOPEKA TO MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE TO BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA TO MORRISON FIELD. WE GOT LOST (??) AND COULD NOT FIND MEMPHIS OR BIRMINGHAM, BUT WE SOME HOW ENDED UP OVER CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE. AS LONG AS WE WERE ALREADY THERE, I DECIDED WE OUGHT TO BUZZ MY OLD NEIGHBORHOOD IN EAST RIDGE.

(***) UNFORTUNATELY, LTS. STURGEON AND WOLFE WERE KILLED IN SEPARATE CRASHES ATTEMPTING TO TAKE OFF IN A VERY THICK FOG ON A COMBAT MISSION IN THE SUMMER OF 1944. I FLEW ON THE SAME MISSION AND HEARD THE EXPLOSIONS WHILE WE WERE WAITING OUR TURN TO TAKE OFF. LT. SHAW SURVIVED THE WAR BUT I UNDERSTAND HE DIED FROM A HEART ATTACK RECENTLY.

MARCH 1944 (CONTINUED)

AT A VERY LOW ALTITUDE IN A COMBAT READY B-24. THIS I DID AND I REMEMBER FLYING DOWN RINGGOLD ROAD TO SEE CARS STOP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD AND ALL 4 DOORS WOULD FLY OPEN TO DISGORGE PASSENGERS WHO WANTED A BETTER LOOK. AFTER OUR FINAL PASS, WE CLIMBED BACK UP TO OUR DESIGNATED ALTITUDE AND SET OUR COURSE TO FLY DIRECTLY TO MORRISON FIELD. ON MARCH 14 WE WERE BRIEFED TO FLY TO BORENQUEN (SPELLING UNCERTAIN) AIR BASE IN PUERTO RICO. I WAS GIVEN SEALED SECRET ORDERS REVEALING OUR DESTINATION THAT WERE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE OPENED UNTIL ONE HOUR AFTER WE TOOK OFF. THAT HOUR PASSED VERY FAST BECAUSE 15 MINUTES AFTER WE TOOK OFF, I OPENED THEM AND ANNOUNCED TO THE CREW THAT WE WERE TO PROCEED FORTHWITH TO HOLYHEAD, WALES IN ENGLAND VIA THE SO-CALLED SOUTHERN ROUTE. AS I REMEMBER IT, I FLEW FROM PUERTO RICO TO GEORGETOWN IN BRITISH GULIANA TO BELEM IN BRAZIL TO NATAL IN BRAZIL TO DAKAR IN WEST AFRICA TO MARRAKECH IN MORROCO TO HOLYHEAD. I REMEMBER FLYING FOR HOURS OVER SOUTH AMERICA AND SEEING NOTHING BUT GREEN JUNGLE BELOW US THAT WAS DEADLY IF WE HAD TO BAIL OUT INTO IT. THEN WE FLEW FOR ALMOST 12 HOURS AND SAW NOTHING BUT OCEAN FROM NATAL TO DAKAR. WHEN WE LANDED AT DAKAR, WE HAD BARE FOOTED FRENCH SENEGALESE WARRIORS WITH TEETH FILED TO SHARP POINTS THAT GUARDED OUR PLANES. AT VARIOUS TIMES DURING THE DAY WE COULD SEE ARABS ALL OVER THE AREA ON THEIR KNEES PRAYING AND BOWING TOWARD MECCA. WE HAD TO FLY OVER A SEVERE SAND STORM BETWEEN DAKAR AND MARRAKECH THAT WE BARELY CLEARED AT 14,000 FEET AND IT LASTED UNTIL WE REACHED THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS. THE MOUNTAINS WERE HIGHER THAN OUR FLIGHT ALTITUDE SO WE HAD A FEW ANXIOUS MOMENTS FLYING THROUGH A PASS WITH SEVERAL TURNS, HOPING WE WOULD NOT FLY INTO A BLIND ALLEY. AS FAR AS I CAN TELL FROM MY 201 FILE, MY CREW AND I REPORTED TO STATION 174 NEAR SUDBURY IN SUFFOLK COUNTY IN ENGLAND MARCH 27, 1944. THIS WAS ONE OF THE MANY AIR BASES BUILT FOR THE AIR OFFENSIVE AGAINST GERMANY AND IT WOULD BE MY HOME UNTIL I FINISHED MY COMBAT TOUR THE FOLLOWING SEPTEMBER. IT WAS ABOUT 50 MILES NNE OF LONDON AND WAS A TYPICAL HEAVY BOMBER BASE COMPOSED OF NISSON HUTS FOR BARRACKS AND HEADQUARTERS DISPERSED THROUGHOUT THE ENGLISH FARMLAND. MY ADDRESS DURING THIS PERIOD WAS AS FOLLOWS:

835TH BOMB SQUADRON
486TH BOMB GROUP - HEAVY
A.P.O. 559 C/O PM
NEW YORK CITY

WE WERE IN THE 92ND COMBAT WING OF THE 3RD AIR DIVISION OF THE 8TH AIR FORCE. DOLITTLE WAS THE C.G. OF THE 5TH A.A.F., LEMAY WAS THE C. G. OF THE 3RD AIR DIVISION, AND COL. HUGLIN WAS C.O. OF THE 92ND COMBAT WING

APRIL THROUGH JULY 17, 1944

FROM MARCH 27 TO MAY 6 WE FLEW TRAINING MISSIONS WHILE WE WAITED FOR THE REST OF OUR GROUND FORCES WHO CAME BY BOAT. THEY ARRIVED AROUND THE MIDDLE OF APRIL. I WAS IN THE FIRST MISSION THE 486TH GROUP FLEW IN COMBAT ON MAY 7, 1944. I ALSO FLEW MISSIONS ON "D" DAY (JUNE 6, 1944) AND THE DAY AFTER THE BIG INVASION IN DIRECT SUPPORT OF OUR GROUND FORCES. THE 486TH GROUP AND OUR SISTER GROUP, THE 487TH, WERE THE ONLY BOMB GROUPS FLYING B-24 LIBERATORS IN THE 3RD AIR DIVISION OF THE 8TH AIR FORCE. THE OTHER GROUPS FLEW B-17 "FLYING FORTRESSES" THAT COULD FLY HIGHER THAN US BUT THEIR CRUISING SPEED WAS 10 MPH SLOWER. THIS CREATED PLANNING NIGHTMARES WHEN THEY TRIED TO SCHEDULE OUR POSITION IN THE BOMBER STREAM. INVARIABLY, WE WOULD END UP OVER THE TARGET WITH THE B-17 FORMATIONS ABOVE US DROPPING THEIR BOMBS THROUGH OUR GROUPS THAT WERE SEVERAL THOUSAND FEET BELOW THEM. FURTHERMORE, WE WERE THE EASY TARGETS FOR THE GERMAN ANTI-AIRCRAFT BATTERIES AT OUR LOWER ALTITUDE SO WE ENDED UP CATCHING MOST OF THE FLAK. THE DILEMMA GOT SO BAD AFTER I FLEW 21 MISSIONS IN B-24'S, THAT HEADQUARTERS DECIDED ON JULY 17, 1944 TO SHUT THE 486 AND 487TH GROUPS DOWN AND CONVERT THEM TO B-17'S. ALL OF OUR B-24'S WERE TURNED OVER TO THE 2ND AIR DIVISION OF THE 8TH A.F. AND NEW B-17-G'S WERE FLOWN IN TO REPLACE THEM.

JULY 18 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 15, 1944

WE SPENT JULY 18 THROUGH JULY 31 IN TRAINING TO FLY THE NEW B-17S. ON AUGUST 1 WE WERE READY SO I FLEW MY FIRST MISSION IN MY B-17 AND IT WAS A DREAM MISSION COMPARED TO WHAT WE HAD TO COPE WITH IN THE B-24S. NOW WE COULD FLY HIGHER IN TIGHTER FORMATIONS THAT DISCOURAGED ENEMY FIGHTERS FROM ATTACKING US IN THE BOMBER STREAM. THE FLYING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE B-17 WERE A TREMENDOUS IMPROVEMENT OVER THE B-24. I WAS ABLE TO COMPLETE MY REMAINING 13 MISSIONS IN THE B-17 AND SURVIVE THE WAR. I HONESTLY FEEL THAT I WOULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED IF WE HAD CONTINUED ON IN THE B-24S. I FLEW MY 34TH AND LAST MISSION ON SEPTEMBER 10 WHICH WAS A DEEP PENETRATION INTO GERMANY TO BOMB A JET AIRDROME NEAR GIEBELSTADT. ON MY RETURN THE TOWER GAVE ME PERMISSION TO BUZZ THE FIELD AS A FAREWELL TRIBUTE. AT SOMETIME DURING THE SUMMER I WAS ASKED TO VOLUNTEER TO STAY AFTER MY TOUR AND TAKE AN ASSIGNMENT TO WORK IN THE WAR ROOM OF THE 92ND COMBAT WING HEADQUARTERS AS AN OPERATIONS OFFICER (CONTROLLER) TO PLAN MISSIONS FOR THE BOMB GROUPS IN ITS COMMAND. IT WAS A SAD DAY WHEN I HAD TO WATCH THE REST OF MY CREW LEAVE TO RETURN TO THE STATES FOR 30 DAYS OF R. & R. LEAVE AND REASSIGNMENT TO SOME PLUSH TRAINING POSTS WHILE I HAD TO STAY BEHIND.

SEPTEMBER 16 THROUGH NOVEMBER 14, 1944

MY NEW ADDRESS DURING THIS PERIOD:

92ND COMBAT WING (H)
A.P.O. 559 C/O POSTMASTER
NEW YORK, N.Y.

STATION 174 IN THE 3RD AIR DIVISION (COM-
MANDED BY GEN. PARTRIDGE) OF THE 8TH
AIR FORCE (COMMANDED BY GEN. DOLITTLE)
COL. H.Q. HUGLIN WAS C.O. OF THE 92ND C.W.

WORKING AS CONTROLLER IN THE WAR ROOM WAS INTERESTING. WHEN A MISSION WAS DECIDED ON BY THE 8TH A.F. HEADQUARTERS, THEY SELECTED THE TARGETS AND SENT INSTRUCTIONS TO EACH OF THE THREE AIR DIVISIONS. EACH AIR DIVISION SELECTED THE TARGETS TO BE ASSIGNED TO EACH OF THEIR COMBAT WINGS AND THE WINGS DECIDED WHICH OF THEIR GROUPS WOULD FLY AND WHICH WOULD BE STOOD DOWN FOR TRAINING AND BATTLE DAMAGE REPAIRS. AS CONTROLLER, I WOULD REPRESENT THE 92ND COMBAT WING IN CONFERENCE CALLS ON SCRAMBLER PHONES WITH THE CONTROLLERS OF THE OTHER WINGS IN THE 3RD AIR DIVISION. DIVISION GAVE US TARGET DATA, BOMB LOADS, GASOLINE LOADS, ROUTES TO AND FROM THE TARGET WITH CHECK POINTS AND TIMINGS, ETC. AFTER WE DIGESTED THIS INFORMATION, I SET UP CONFERENCE CALLS ON SCRAMBLER PHONES WITH THE BOMB GROUPS IN OUR WING AND RELAYED THE INFORMATION TO THEIR CONTROLLERS. THEY IN TURN PUT THEIR SQUADRONS ON COMBAT ALERT SO RED BOARDS COULD BE PUT ON THE BULLETIN BOARDS IN CRITICAL AREAS SIGNIFYING THAT A MISSION WAS TO BE FLOWN SOON. DURING LATE OCTOBER, THE 8TH AIR FORCE DECIDED TO DISBAND THE 92ND COMBAT WING AND ASSIGN THE 486TH AND 487TH GROUPS TO THE 4TH COMBAT WING. SOME OF US WERE TRANSFERRED TO THE 4TH WING HEADQUARTERS TO CONTINUE IN OUR PRESENT DUTIES, WHILE THE OTHERS, INCLUDING COL. HUGLIN, WERE SENT TO TAKE COMMAND OF THE 13TH WING.

NOVEMBER 15 THROUGH FEBRUARY 15, 1945

MY ADDRESS DURING THIS PERIOD

4TH COMBAT WING (H) PROVISIONAL
A.P.O. 559 C/O P.M.
NEW YORK, N.Y.

STATION 468 COMMANDED BY BRIGADIER
GENERAL CASTLE

THE BEEFED UP VERSION OF THE 4TH WING WITH EXTRA BOMB GROUPS WAS ESTABLISHED BY THE AIR FORCE AS A PATTERN TO BE FOLLOWED TO TRANSFER UNITS OF THE 8TH A.F. TO JOIN THE WAR AGAINST JAPAN AS THE AIR OFFENSIVE AGAINST GERMANY BEGAN TO WIND DOWN. WE WOULD HAVE BEEN THE FIRST OF THE 8TH A.F. UNITS TO MOVE EN MASSE TO THE PACIFIC THEATER. UNFORTUNATELY, GENERAL CASTLE WAS KILLED AS HE LED A MASSIVE AIR ASSAULT ON DECEMBER 24, 1944 TO SUPPORT OUR BELEAGUERED GROUND TROOPS DURING THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE. GERMAN FIGHTER PLANES IN UNEXPECTED LARGE NUMBERS ATTACKED

JANUARY 15, 1944 THROUGH FEBRUARY 15, 1945 (CONTINUED)

THE GROUP HE WAS LEADING HEAD ON. HE WAS A RISING STAR DESTINED TO GO FAR AS A LEADER IN THE AIR FORCE. THE PLANS TO MOVE THE 4TH WING TO THE PACIFIC APPEARED TO FALL APART AFTERWARD; BUT I AM SURE NOW OUR LEADERS BELIEVED THE ATOMIC BOMBS TO BE DROPPED ON JAPAN IN THE NEAR FUTURE WOULD MAKE OUR PRESENCE IN THE PACIFIC UNNECESSARY. SOMETIME DURING LATE JANUARY I FLEW THE UC-78 ASSIGNED TO US TO VISIT MY FRIENDS WHO WERE ASSIGNED TO THE 13TH COMBAT WING. DURING MY VISIT GENERAL HUGLIN AND COL. McLAUGHLIN CAME INTO THE WAR ROOM. GEN. HUGLIN ASKED ME IF I WAS INTERESTED IN TRANSFERRING TO HIS WAR ROOM AS A CONTROLLER. I ASSURED HIM THAT I WAS AND ALMOST BEFORE I KNEW IT I RECEIVED ORDERS ASSIGNING ME TO HIS HEADQUARTERS.

FEBRUARY 16, 1945 THROUGH JUNE 22, 1945

MY ADDRESS DURING THIS PERIOD

13TH COMBAT WING (H)
A.P.O. 559 C/O POSTMASTER
NEW YORK, N.Y.

STATION 119 COMMANDED BY BRIGADIER
GENERAL H.Q. HUGLIN

MANY IMPORTANT EVENTS TOOK PLACE WHILE I WAS WITH THE 13TH WING. I WAS PROMOTED FROM FIRST LIEUTENANT TO CAPTAIN ON MARCH 1, 1945. THE GERMANS SURRENDERED MAY 7, 1945. I PROPOSED TO MY FUTURE WIFE BY MAIL AND SHE ACCEPTED. I RECEIVED ORDERS RETURNING ME TO THE STATES FOR 30 DAYS OF R. & R. LEAVE AFTER WHICH I WAS TO REPORT TO MIAMI, FLORIDA TO REJOIN THE 13TH COMBAT WING AND RE-EQUIP FOR IMMEDIATE TRANSFER TO JOIN THE WAR AGAINST JAPAN. FORTUNATELY FOR ME, THE ATOMIC BOMBS DROPPED ON JAPAN CHANGED THESE PLANS. AFTER A SAD FAREWELL TO MY FRIENDS IN THE 13TH WING, I LEFT ENGLAND AND RETURNED TO THE STATES IN A WAR WEARY B-17. WE FLEW FROM A BASE IN SCOTLAND TO ICELAND TO GOOSE BAY IN LABORADOR TO BRADLEY FIELD IN CONNECTICUT.

JUNE 23 THROUGH AUGUST 21, 1945

WE WERE SENT IN A TROOP TRAIN FROM BRADLEY FIELD TO CAMP MILES STANDISH IN MASSACHUSETTS. AFTER STAGING AT CAMP MILES STANDISH WE WERE SHIPPED TO FORT McPHERSON IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA ON THE WORST TROOP TRAIN I EVER RODE ON DURING MY MILITARY TRAVELS. IT HAD HARD WICKER BACKED SEATS; IT WAS PULLED BY A COAL BURNING LOCOMOTIVE; AND OUR CAR WAS CONSTANTLY FULL OF SMOKE BECAUSE WE HAD TO OPEN OUR WINDOWS FOR VENTILATION. WE WERE ON IT FOR 3 LONG DAYS AND NIGHTS. I WAS SUPPOSED TO START MY 30 DAYS OF R. & R. FROM FORT McPHERSON, BUT THEY ASKED ME IF I WAS A NIGHT FIGHTER OR A B-29 PILOT. WHEN I TOLD THEM I WAS NEITHER, THEY SAID WITH ALL THE DISCHARGE POINTS I HAD ACCUMULATED THAT I COULD BE RELEASED FROM ACTIVE DUTY AND RETURNED TO CIVILIAN LIFE IF I WANTED TO. I ACCEPTED THEIR OFFER AND I ENDED MY MILITARY CAREER ON JULY 6, 1945. SINCE I HAD ACCUMULATED ONE MONTH AND 14 DAYS OF LEAVE, I WAS NOT OFFICIALLY MUSTERED OUT UNTIL AUGUST 21, 1945. I ARRANGED TO RETURN TO GEORGIA TECH FOR THE FALL SEMESTER BEFORE I LEFT ATLANTA TO GO TO CHATTANOOGA. MY LOVELY FLANCE, MARY JO RHINEHART, AND I DATED STEADILY. WE DECIDED TO GO AHEAD AND GET MARRIED INSTEAD OF WAITING TILL I GRADUATED FROM GEORGIA TECH. AS IT TURNED OUT, I SURRENDERED IN A BIG CHURCH WEDDING ON THE SAME DAY THE JAPANESE DID ON AUGUST 14, 1945 AND I HAVE BEEN A WILLING PRISONER EVER SINCE.

PROMOTIONS

TO: 2ND LIEUTENANT. AUGUST 30, 1943 PILOT WITH MULTI-ENGINE RATING

TO: 1ST LIEUTENANT JULY 8, 1944

TO: CAPTAIN MARCH 1, 1945

TO: CIVILIAN AUGUST 21, 1945 I NEVER GOT INTO THE ACTIVE
RESERVES TO CONTINUE MY FLYING
CAREER.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS
AIR MEDAL WITH 4 OAK LEAF CLUSTERS
EUROPEAN THEATER RIBBON WITH 6 BATTLE STARS
 AIR OFFENSIVE AGAINST GERMANY
 "D" DAY INVASION
 BATTLE OF NORMANDY
 BATTLE OF NORTHERN FRANCE
 BATTLE OF CENTRAL EUROPE
 BATTLE OF GERMANY
AMERICAN THEATER RIBBON
VICTORY MEDAL
GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL

LETTERS OF COMMENDATION

BRIG. GEN. HAROLD Q. HUGLIN - 13TH COMBAT WING - JUNE 16, 1945

COL. GLENDON P. OVERING - 486TH BOMB GROUP - SEPTEMBER 13, 1944