

It is not generally known that the 376th has, within the group, an Air Force all its own. This Air Force is The Yugoslav Air Force, operated by Yugoslav nationals trained in the United States. They made their debut in November 1943 in four B-24 Liberator bombers presented to them by President Roosevelt at Bolling Field on their completion of a year's training in America. Teaming up with the 376th, the Yugoslav's returned on November 16th to bomb hangars, administration buildings and parked aircraft at Eleusis Airdrome, northwest of Athens, Greece. It was from Eleusis that these same Yugoslav airmen escaped in their own planes when Axis troops over-ran Greece in the Spring of 1941. After receiving the Liberators from President Roosevelt, the Yugoslavs ferried them to Cairo, where King Peter officially accepted them on behalf of the Yugoslav exile government. They have fought honorably, bravely and have a distinguished war record. Never have they been called upon to fight against, or attack targets, in their own country. Their losses, for such a small air force, have been extremely heavy. Today only one Liberator remains of the four originally presented to them. The others have been lost in combat against the enemy.

For the benefit, the information, and the morale of those who follow in our footsteps, this condensed history of the 376th Bombardment Group (H) is intended. It is hoped that it may, in part, instill within those persons that common spirit of enthusiasm, devotion, and jealous regard for the honor of the group we now possess. The compilation of this booklet has not been officially ordered, or approved. It is not intended as eyewash, advertising or propaganda. On the contrary, it has been attempted solely for the express purpose of upholding and maintaining the high 'esprit de corps' which this group now enjoys. We have our traditions, our heroes, our honored dead. It is, therefore, to those honored dead that we respectfully dedicate this little history of the gallant 376th.

Captain Jack Preble

Public Relations Officer

The heavy bombardment group, now known as the 376th, comprising the 512, 513, 514 and 515th squadrons, were originally designated as a special task force under the command of Colonel Harry Halverson. The organization was composed of 231 officers and men with a complement of 23 B-24 Liberator bombers. They were assembled at Fort Meyers, Florida, to take off on a remarkable flight---the ultimate destination of which was unknown. Early dawn on the morning of May 20, 1942, saw this hand-picked task force wheel their heavily loaded aircraft into the rising sun. Sixty-five flying hours later the entire fleet of these "Flying Stone Crushers; (as they have been so described by many who have seen them at work), descended June 4th upon the airdrome at Fayid, Egypt. Without the loss of a single hour of flying time, or man, all 23 bombers completed the hazardous journey across the waters of the Atlantic, the fever-ridden swamps and jungles of the Gold Coast, then on into the dry, hot highlands of the Sudan. Thence, they winged on to the land of the ancient Pharoahs. Over 8000 miles of difficult, treacherous and uncharted flying was

accomplished by this organization who called themselves "The Halpros", in recognition of the outstanding personality of their leader, Colonel Harry Halverson.

Only a few days elapsed between the arrival of this force and the call for their first mission, that of bombing and pulverizing the vital Axis-held oil refineries at Ploesti and Constanza in Roumania. This was a far different target than many of the unit had anticipated, for it was generally known that the "Halpros" were destined to fly on to China and from a securely hidden air base, conduct harassing and annoying raids on the forces of the Japanese Mikado.

Their first combat mission was a 13 bomber attack on the Ploesti refineries, on June 12, 1942. Little did they realize that more than two years were to elapse before Ploesti was finally eliminated as a high priority target. Like later missions to Ploesti, this initial one was costly. Five bombers failed to return and were believed to be lost or interned in neutral countries. The dramatic escapes, the exchanges, the diplomacy exercised

on the behalf of the fever-ridden survivors of this, the first of a long series of missions against big "P", will some day form a volume of brave deeds in itself.

Thus, their first mission accomplished, the "Halpros" were eager to get on with the business in Asia. But, disaster faced the heroic British Eighth Army as Field Marshal Rommel and his devastating Afrika Korps, flushed with success, threatened the last stronghold of the Allies in Eastern Africa. Here, close at hand, was urgent need for the pregnant destruction contained within the belly of the B-24. The extreme pleasure of pulverizing the abode of the Sacred Son of a Heaven could come later on. That pleasure was mentally filed under "unfinished business".

So, "business before pleasure", was the thunderous roar emitted by the spitting engines as they warmed up for the take-off on the morning of June 15, 1942.

It was only their second combat mission but it was, perhaps, the most sensational of any bombing attack ever performed to date. The entire striking power of this small handful of bombers directed towards the powerful Ital-

ian Fleet who were causing trouble in the Mediterranean Sea just east of the Straits of Gibraltar. **Seven** (imagine that!) **Liberators** taking off to do battle with the entire Italian Fleet! How pitiful! How inspiring! How audacious! Yet, so business-like was their performance that day that the proud Italian Navy licked their terrible wounds as they streaked for home and the safety of Taranto Bay. They were never to emerge again as a fleet until their surrender over a year later. So many hits were scored that day that the 376th bombardiers coined the famous expression: "'Twas just like shooting fish in a rain barrel." All our aircraft returned.

Then began the many and tiresome raids (they were called 'raids' in those days) carried on against harbor installations and enemy shipping in Tobruk and Benghazi. These raids became so much of the daily life of this pitifully small U.S. Air Force that a bombing mission to Benghazi was called the 'mail run'. That to Tobruk was called the 'milk run'. But both the 'mail' and the 'milk' were delivered on time, and when most needed. The fact that both 'milk' and the 'mail' were carelessly camouflaged as 500 and 1000 lb bombs does

not alter the general picture. Benghazi first received its quota of "mail" on June 21, 1942. On the 23rd, Tobruk got its "milk". Neither liked it, but, like spinach, it was good for what ailed the Axis. Then on and on, unceasingly from June 21 to Hallow'een Night of the 30th of October. Tobruk, Benghazi, enemy convoys and tankers in the Mediterranean Sea, airdromes and landing grounds in Crete and Greece, were all equally pounded, harassed and blasted without fear or favor.

However, during this time, the enemy under the leadership of Marshal "Desert Fox" Rommel was not unduly lax in their military prestige and endeavors. The advance of the "Desert Fox" towards the rich cities of Alexandria and Cairo made it seem wise for the U.S.AAF to get the hell out of Egypt and head for Palestine. Unbeaten, their shield of battle untarnished, they gracefully withdrew (not retreat, mind you) to an excellent air base at Lydia, Palestine. And, here in Palestine was, for the first time in history, raised the Stars & Stripes. And raised, neophytes all, by the pulling, squawking, lusty infant which was, later on, after a diet of sand, sweat, blood and guts, to be known as the 376th Bombardment Group.

9 Operations were carried on from this new base. But, after the mission of July 1, 1942, the "Halverson Detachment" was reformed into a new unit, The First Provisional Bomb Group. And, (this may surprise some of you) their numbers were augmented by the arrival of several B-17's (Flying Forts) with their eager-beaver crews. These new arrivals, the 9th Squadron, hot off the plains of India, received a hotter welcome at Lydia Airport. Things went on and on from the new Palestinean base.

The 30th day of October witnessed the last mission performed by the 1st Provisional Bomb Group when a formation of 9 B-24's and 6 B-17's started out on their 62nd and 63rd mission to bomb the airports of Maleme and Tymbaki on the island of Crete. Although the results of this attack were unobserved due to poor visibility, all the planes returned to their home air base after fighting off ambitious Axis fliers equipped with the best (at that time) fighter planes.

Came the morning of November 1, 1942. Out of the loins of the pregnant 1st Provisional Bomb Group came the 376th Bombardment Group, sired by the now-famous Halpros. It was a lusty, husky, trouble-making, and highly destructive infant.

No time was lost in celebrating the birth of the 376th. Though young in name they were already veterans of almost six months desert fighting. That same morning of Nov. 1, 1942, saw them winging their way to make another successful attack on the Maleme, Crete airdrome with 8 B-24's.

Conditions becoming more and more favorable in the progress of the Libyan campaign, the 376th was moved to Abu Sueir, Egypt, on November 8, 1942. The ceaseless pounding at harbor installations, fortifications, enemy shipping and convoys, as well as Axis airdromes at Benghazi and Tobruk continued on an ever increasing scale.

After the fall of Tobruk on Nov. 15, 1942, and Benghazi shortly after, the 376th began again their old systematic and methodical bombing of enemy targets. This time it was conducted in newer fields and waters. The enemy had been chased westward to Tripoli, Sousse, Sfax and Bizerta. Here they held their last stand in North Africa, punch-drunk, but still as vicious and dangerous as a wounded panther. These strongly held installations, harbors, pill-boxes and airdromes were bombed consistently until the capture of Tripoli. One of the most

successful missions carried out during this period was the "sharpshooting" of the bombardiers when they attacked the harbor of Sfax on December 16, 1942. This was a feat, new at that time, in precision bombing. Sixty-nine bombs out of 72 carried were dropped exactly in the bull's eye.

The next base of the 376th was into the Western Desert of Libya where they were based at Gambut Main Landing Ground #139 on February 6, 1943. Here the lusty, healthy and rapidly growing 376th continued to show its ill manners by causing wholesale destruction and devastation when visiting over the mainland of Italy and Sicily.

During the month of February, 1943, punishing and destructive missions were carried out against shipping and harbor installations at the ports of Naples, Palermo, Crotona, and Messina. Many hundreds of tons of shipping and vital military stores were destroyed by these raids upon the enemy's dwindling supplies and resources.

On the 27th of February, 1943, the group again moved, this time farther west into the Libyan Desert to a little town of Solluch. This native town was once an important Italian

military outpost, now it had reverted back to its rightful owners. They were of the Senussi tribe and soon came back to town from their hide-outs in the hills and deserts. Solluch was about 30 miles south of Benghazi, the largest city and only port in Libya. Despite the adverse winter weather conditions and the big cloudburst at Solluch, operations were continued against the high priority target of that time-the Messina Ferry Terminal on the north-west tip of Sicily. Due to its strategic value in being the funnel through which troops, arms and supplies were shipped from the mainland of Italy to Sicily, and thence to North Africa, every effort was made to destroy it.

In the middle of April, 1943, the 376th again moved their base to within a few miles south of Benghazi, to the field called Benina No. 2. From this new base the sensational and successful bombing attack on the airdrome at Bari, Italy was carried out on April 26. This mission was led by Colonel Keith K. Compton who had been assigned as the new group commanding officer on Feb. 20, 1943. Previously the group had been commanded by Col. Geo. F. McGuire, who since July

30, 1942, had succeeded in welding his little unit into a hard-hitting, hard-fighting, combination Task Force, Desert Air Force, Tactical and Strategic Bombing Force, and almost every other designation that could be imagined. No job was too tough, no job was impossible for the 376th. Just let one of the "brass hats" mention a nasty little job that had to be done and the 376th boys would actually be "peed-off" if they were not allowed to take a crack at it.

Under Colonel Compton, some of the most audacious and adventuresome missions were conducted. Col. "K.K." thought so much of the versatility, and the destructive potentialities contained in the B-24 that it could, in the hands of expert pilots, be used for almost anything. No one before had thought of using B-24's for low-level bombing. If ever this thought had crept into their minds it had been instantly dismissed as suicidal. Every one except Col. Compton, who thought it could be done, and done well right, IF the right men were available. And he had the right men for the job. Any job!

These men of the 376th were willing to try anything once, so, when it was suggested that in order to destroy the Messina

Ferry Terminal, "skip-bombing" should be tried, they were all for it. The Ferry Terminal was the receiving end of ferries carrying freight and passenger cars across the Straits of Messina. Upon arriving at the Terminal they passed under the Terminal into a tunnel protected by many feet of re-inforced concrete. Impossible to blast from above and thus reach the mechanism that controlled the hauling of the freight trains from the ferries on to the land tracks, it was decided to fly in low and try and skip the bombs into the open mouth of the tunnel. Due to the intense and highly accurate anti-aircraft fire protecting the Straits of Messina, the original "ack-ack alley", it was decided best to make the attacks at sundown, coming in low towards the Ferry Terminal with the sinking sun low on the horizon to blind the ground gunners.

It would take many pages to describe these hair-raising, low-level missions against Messina and we have only room for one or two incidents. Jerry DuFour was piloting one of the big Liberators for the entrance of the Ferry Terminal opening on one occasion. He had just skidded his bombs into the

tunnel's mouth when he saw, dead ahead of him, a flight enemy Junkers cruising his way. Both were surprised as it was an accidental meeting. There was nothing else for DuFour to do but plow straight ahead with all his machine guns firing right and left. Right into the middle of the enemy planes he flew, shooting down one and scattering the rest. The enemy was so caught by surprise at seeing this terrible, spitting monster coming at them where none was supposed to be that not one shot was fired at Jerry's Lib!

Then there was the time when Major Norman C. Appold got bored with just merely skip-bombing the Messina Terminal and made a one-plane, low-level strafing attack on a chemical plant, airdrome and railway yards at Crotona, Italy.

The installations at Messina were entirely wrecked by these daring attacks. Came next the systematic pounding of Reggio di Calabria (across the Straits on the toe of Italy), and softening-up and pulverizing of all the supply dumps, harbor installations and airdromes in preparation of the invasion of Sicily. Other notable missions followed, the bombing of the Litterio Railway Yards in Rome is one in

particular. The day before the Rome mission British planes circled over the Eternal City and dropped leaflets telling the inhabitants to get up on their roof-tops next day at noon and see a good example of the American's precision bombing. The leaflets told the natives to keep away from the Littorio rail yards as that was to be the target for the coming day. The next day, July 19, 1943, at high noon the drone of B-24's could be heard over Rome. Swinging surely towards their assigned target, with all the confidence in the world in their ability to squarely hit their objective, the bombs were sent hurling downwards with such grace and precision that the yards were rendered entirely useless for further movement of enemy supplies towards the Americans, Canadians, and British forces.

Then came the most daring and outstanding mission of all time, the historic low-level bombing attack against the oil refineries at Floesti, Roumania, on Aug. 1, 1943. For 14 months, or since June 12, 1942 Floesti had been untouched by warfare. Not only was this attack to be famous on account of its daring and audacious low-level approach, it was also

to signal the re-opening gun of The Battle of Floesti which was only to end a year later with the loss of 276 bombers and 2,200 airmen missing. Historians in years to come will elaborate more fully on this historic attack, and the attacks that followed. Just as the 376th had been cited by the President of The United States for its efforts in North Africa, so was it again to be cited for the devastating bombing attack of Sunday, August 1, 1943.

This low-level attack was planned for a Sunday afternoon when the pleasure-loving populace of Roumania would relax their guard and be indulging in pastimes other than war. The flight across Roumania "on the deck" towards Floesti had its amusing moments. One crew reported passing over a small river where many young men and girls were lolling on the sand after an enjoyable swim. What particularly attracted the attention of the men of the 376th was that these parties were as entirely naked as a jay-bird. Others were engaged in an interesting and highly pleasureable biological act. Imagine, if you can, being caught yourself in this dilemma! Suddenly, out of nowhere, came the first of the thundering herd of eager bombers

directly headed for them, or so it seemed. Never before in all history had the curtain been run down on shorter acts as the lovers scattered themselves like covey's of quail and either rolled into the bushes, or dived into the river, to escape the terrible pre-historic monsters overhead.

In one field a farmer was spreading manure from a farm wagon drawn by two horses when the bombers swept over the tree tops behind him. He and the horses gave one terrified look. Then, the peasant's pitchfork went one way and he headed, full speed, for the shelter of the woods. The horses, being unable to decide which way to run together, decided to part company and go their separate ways, also at full speed, with the wreck of the wagon bumping and trailing behind.

One Liberator came home with cornstalks wedged in the engine cowling, while parts of some black and white bird were found in another. It was either a chicken or magpie with the odds being in favor of chicken. Other Liberators came home with hay and small tree branches and leaves decorating the cowling. Many of the Liberators didn't come home that night.

After Floesti came the bombing attacks on ball-bearing

and aircraft factories in Germany and Austria. The mission to Weiner-Neustadt, Austria, on Aug. 13, 1943, was perhaps, the longest mission carried out from the base at Benghazi.

The war progressing favorably to a point where it was believed the 376th should again move forward, about the middle of September this movement was started. The new base was near Enfidaville, in southern Tunisia, at the base of a range of purple and gold mountains. One of the things most distinctly remembered about this new base was the hunting of chukkar partridges, the beautiful sunsets reflected on the mountains, and another of those terrible, desert cloudbursts.

Operations carried on from Enfidaville took the group again to Weiner-Neustadt, and other targets in that vicinity. As Colonel Compton was still commanding the group, several more requests were made of him to again use his famous low-level, skip-bombing, hit-and-run tactics against several railroad bridges and viaducts along the east coast of Italy. One in particular was the mission of October 19, 1943. The following is a newspaper account of that daring affair:

"Early today, echoing the thunderous blast of exploding

2000-lb bombs aimed at four enemy-held bridges, came Colonel K.K.Compton's terse radio message back to his home air base:

'All bridges busted beautifully!'

"Many times in the past have Colonel Compton's Liberandos been called upon to perform skillful, hazardous and hair-raising jobs. This morning's raid, carried out 'on the deck', or just skimming the crest of the waves, was no exception.

"Breifed to destroy these four bridges, vital links in the only railroad on the east coast of Italy, and the destruction of which would cut off reinforcements to the hard-pressed enemy, the Liberandos struck at dawn.

"Sweeping in from the sea in a surprise attack they skidded their huge bombs into the piers and abutments of four separate bridges, some spanning miniature 'Grand Canyons', and swept out to sea again to escape the awful upheavel that followed. From this operation all our planes returned safely."

On the 17th of November, 1943, the 376th took to the air again. This time it was headed fo Italy for a long stay. The combat personnel, as well as the important ground personnel, were all flown to southern Italy where their new air base was

to be set up. It was during this movement by air that occurred a most laughable and memorable incident. Laughable, yet it had all the possibilities of a disaster save for Lady Luck.

It was this: Two B-24's took off, one shortly after the other, for the hop across Sicily to the new base. The navigator of the second B-24 had no navigational aids other than a map, so he was told by the pilot of the leading bomber, "Just follow us!" Follow they did, until over Sicily they experienced dense cloud cover and each became separated. The first B-24 proceeded on course while the second one took this most inopportune time to have trouble with the radio compass and almost everything else and became lost...utterly lost. It was rapidly getting dark. The plane was heavily loaded with kitchen stoves, pots, pans, kettles and all the 515th Squadron's contingent of Mexican-American cooks and helpers. Imagine their consternation when enemy anti-aircraft guns opened fire on them. They high-tailed it for some other less hostile area. Their next alarm was when two ME-109's came out of the dusk with all their guns winking and blazing at the lost Lib. On board was a crew chief who sprang into action at this new

threat to their welfare and succeeded in driving off the ME₁ 109's in short order. After flying aimlessly around for several hours they eventually got in contact with a friendly ground radio station and were guided in to the new air base where their Odyssey of the Clouds was related to bug-eyed skeptics.

The above true story never before appeared in print, and to protect the reputation of the navigator, his name will not be divulged here. Just call him "Sam". The details of this story are familiar to many of the old "desert rats" still in the group. They still relate this story with great gusto.

On January 8, 1944 the 376th welcomed its new commanding officer, Colonel Theodore Q. Graff. A few years more mature than Colonel Compton, still he had that exuberance of youth about him, combined with a quiet dignity, that endeared him to all. He was the type of man the 376th had been accustomed to, and wanted. First of all they wanted a leader, a combat pilot willing to lead them on any of their "rough" assignments. They also wanted a confidant; a "tough" but "fair" boss; a "brass hat" without too great a show of brass. They got all these qualities in Colonel Graff. Lucky indeed has been the 376th

in getting the "cream of the crop" for its commanding officers.

In January 1944, the 376th reverted to the close ground-air support tactics developed and conducted a year or more before in the Western Desert. Almost the entire month of January was spent in an extensive training program in preparation of the coming Spring offensive when these tactics would be used.

Then began the missions to the Anzio beachhead where German troop concentrations and gun positions were blasted. Subsequently, one mission was blown against bloody Cassino—on the day when more the 3,000 Allied aircraft participated in an attack against this mountain monastery stronghold.

It was during the many missions flown against enemy positions and troop concentrations that one of the bravest acts of self-sacrifice in the history of the 376th occurred. On May 23, 1944, a mission was sent out to bomb enemy troops and supplies at Frascati, Italy. The anti-aircraft fire was both accurate and intense. Aircraft 85, piloted by Bob Gallagher, received a direct hit underneath the waist windows which traveled upwards and exploded. The entire top of the bomber was blown out from the radio antenna to aft of the waist windows. Two

life rafts and several parachutes were blown out by the explosion and several of his men were wounded. Other serious damage was rendered to the bomber. Here was a choice no man should have to face. Should the unwounded men, and the men with parachutes, bail out and save their own lives while the wounded, and men who had lost their chutes in the blast, remain and go down with the stricken ship?

Anyone who knew Bob Gallagher and his co-pilot, Hollis Fuller, or any of the crew, would know there was no doubt in anyone's mind what they would do. Give up? Sacrifice the wounded men? Every man for himself? No! Not those boys of the 376th. They were going to try and bring the damaged plane to the nearest friendly field with every soul aboard or die in the attempt. And those men died! Every one of them!

Despite the terrible damage inflicted to their bomber, Bob piloted it out to sea and rid himself of his load of bombs and then headed his crippled aircraft for Naples. All went well until within sight of the airfield at Naples, when suddenly, the crippled bomber went out of control and crashed to the ground. The frayed controls could hold no longer. No

survivors was there to tell of those terrible hours in the air. Radio facilities had been blasted out of Gallagher's bomber when it was hit. No one knows the heroic acts that occurred aboard the stricken ship. What went on up there in the air between these doomed men and their God...God alone knows. Our story is based on eye-witness reports of other pilots who tried to escort Bob and his heroic "One for all and all for one" crew safely to a friendly base. Bob Gallagher, the little, happy-go-lucky smiling Irishman received a posthumous award of The Distinguished Service Cross. His crew received posthumous awards of The Silver Star for gallantry in action.

It was dogged, determined, heroic acts like Gallagher's, and Fuller's, and later on Frank Christianson's (The Terrible Swede), who also won the D.S.C. for his unflinching courage and undaunted spirit in combat, that helps make up the traditions, the history, devotion, and the jealous affection for the honor of the group we have. More D.S.C's have been won by men of the 376th than any other group in the 15th Air Force. And more Silver Stars, Distinguished Fly-

ing Crosses, Legion of Merits, and Bronze Star Medals also, if the truth were known. Not all the heroic acts that make up the historic traditions of the 376th were performed by airmen, or in the air. The ground personnel have their share of Soldier's Medals gained by saving another's life at the risk of their own.

Throughout the year, oil installations, ball-bearing and aircraft factories, engine and tank factories, airdromes harbor installations, railway lines, yards and bridges, troop concentrations, and other strategic targets were blasted in Germany, Austria, Hungary, France, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Greece, Roumania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. All these and many more were on the 376th's intensive bombing program.

The group gave air support to the Russian Armies both in Roumania and southeastern Poland when it led the entire 15th Air Force in the attack on the Bucharest railyards. The group participated in the invasion of southern France when coastal batteries, barbed-wire, pill-boxes, mine fields, fortifications and other strongholds were neutralized before the waves of infantry, engineers and artillery swarmed ashore.

For the outstanding and highly successful mission on June 16, 1944, when the entire set-up of tanks, oil refineries, distillation and cracking plants at Bratislava, Czechoslovakia were utterly destroyed, the 376th won its third citation as a distinguished unit.

During the period from July 10 to September 27, 1944, while Col. Graff was on leave, the 376th was commanded by Lt. Col. Richard W. Fellows. Under his outstanding leadership the group soon led the entire 15th Air Force in precision bombing. Rail installations along the Brenner Pass railway lines, as well as bridges, supply dumps and troop concentrations in Hungary and Yugoslavia were repeatedly attacked. On No. 8, Col. Graff led a successful mission to destroy troop concentrations at Prijepolje, Yugoslavia. Just as a sample of precision bombing dealt out to other targets, this day the 376th dropped every bomb directly within a 1000 foot circle and scored a 100 per-cent record. How this perfect record affected the enemy troops concentrated in that 1000 foot area is no great military secret for those enemy troops are long past caring.

On February 1, 1945, another milestone in the long and gallant career of the 376th was set up when Colonel Graff led the unit on its 400th combat mission. It was also the Colonel's last sortie against the enemy before being eligible to return to the United States for reassignment. The group felt his loss very keenly as he had been responsible for building up his group to a high state of efficiency.

On February 22, 1945, Colonel Robert H. Warren assumed command of the 376th Bomb Group. Colonel Warren comes to the 376th, not as a stranger, but as an old friend, as he commanded the 515th Squadron for several months early in 1944. He is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, and won his pilot's wings at Maxwell Field in March, 1941. Col. Warren, like his predecessors, is a strict and most fair officer; a 'brass hat' without ostentatious display of brass.

He has stated he will make no change in the policies of the 376th, but will ever strive to uphold and maintain the same high standards; standards and achievements which have given the 376th its glory, its history, its traditions and its honors.

As this short history goes to press the enemy has been defeated on every front and now fights with his back to the wall in Germany, parts of Hungary and Austria, and northern Italy in the Po River valley. The 376th has advanced a long ways from Egypt, Libya, Tunisia to Italy. It has aided in the liberation of those countries as well as Greece, Crete, Bulgaria, Roumania, Albania, France, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Sicily and more than half of Italy. Three times it has been cited as a Distinguished Unit, and has been awarded 9 campaign, or battle stars, and is now expecting the 10th. Veterans of the 376th who joined the group in Palestine or Egypt and are still with the group are authorized to wear these nine campaign stars. They are as follows:

EGYPTIAN-LIBYAN: For those who were with the group up to and including February 12, 1943.

TUNISIAN: November 8, 1942 to May 13, 1943.

SICILIAN: May 14, 1943 to August 17, 1943.

FLOESTI: August 1, 1943. Only men associated with the group at this time may wear the star for "The Battle of Floesti".

NAPLES-FOGGIA: September 9, 1943 to January 21, 1944.

SOUTHERN FRANCE: August 15, 1944 to September 14, 1944.

ROME-ARNO: January 22, 1944 to (date still open).

NORMANDY: June 6, 1944 to July 21, 1944 (Strategic support).

AIR OFFENSIVE OVER EUROPE: July 4, 1942 to June 5, 1944.

The LIBERANDO shield insignia of the 376th Bomb Group, although still unofficial, is yet the unanimous choice of all personnel. The winged Sphinx is symbolic of the Middle East where the group commenced operations. It is depicted in yellow. The blue background of the shield is for the blue of the Air Force as well as for the intense blue of the African sky at night. The terra-cotta red beneath the Sphinx is for the red soil of the Western Desert around Gambut, Solluch and Benghazi. LIBERANDOS are members of the 376th Bombardment Group. The bomb is self-explanatory. The circle, pyramid, diamond, and the square on the bomb represent the four squadrons that make up the 376th Bomb Group.

During its career, the 376th has been a unit in three different Air Forces. First the Ninth Air Force, then the 12th Air Force, and at the present time, the 15th Air Force.

