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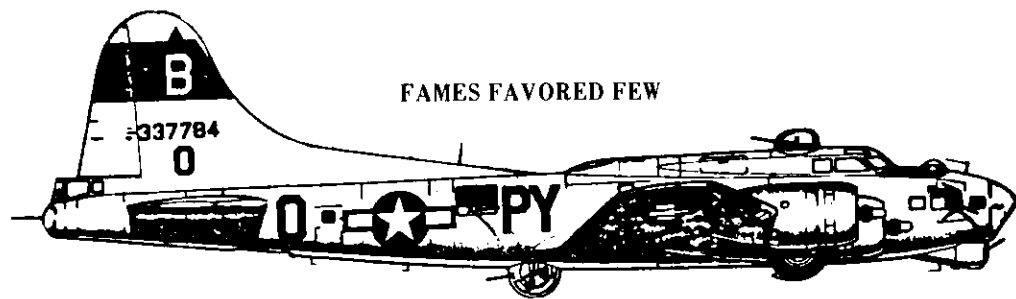
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GROUND POUNDER

by (S/Sgt.) Jim Jackson

The story of any fighting outfit like the 92nd Bomb Group is told in the trials and tribulations of its air crews and this is as it should be. They were the ones who laid their life on the line day after day to carry the fight to Hitler's "Festung Europe". However, there was another part to the story. That was the story of the "ground pounders," the guys who stayed on the ground and did all the million and one little things that were required to get the planes into the air. It was tedious and boring, never thrilling but often funny or interesting. The following is the recollections of one such "grunt" set down some 40 years later. It is hoped that it will raise some memories in others who supported the fighting men.

I was part of a small contingent of Turret Technicians/Armorers who joined the 92nd in June, 1942. We had completed Armorers School at Lowry Field and Turret Technician's School at Emerson Electric Company in St. Louis. We then got our orders and climbed on a troop train to join the 92nd at McDill Field. When we finally arrived, we were told that the group had moved out to "overseas training" at someplace called Sarasota.

In 1942, Sarasota/Bradenton Air Base was a brand new field complete with tents and more mosquitoes than I ever knew existed. We were happy, though, because overseas training in Florida in the summer had to mean that we were going to the South Pacific to get even with the Japs! Well, I was only 19 then and only four months in the Army!

The 92nd sent a truck up to McDill and gave us a free ride to join the group at Sarasota. The first thing that happened to us was that we were sent to another G. . . D. . . school to learn computing gun sights. The school was conducted on the base in a tent with a sand floor by a representative of the Sperry Gyroscope Company named Harry Carmody. I still remember him standing there with sand over his shoe tops, warning us that the Computing Gunsight was a delicate mechanism that should be opened only in a dust free, clean room.

DETOUR — When I graduated from Engineering School in 1950, the only job that I could get was with Sperry as a Test Technician. I got that job because of my Army experience with Sperry equipment! Engineering Degrees were a dime a dozen. One day I heard Harry Carmody paged over the loud speaker system and I called him. He got me a job in his department and we car pooled together for four years. The last I heard, he was still with Sperry at their plant in Charlottesville, Virginia, but that was a number of years ago.

BACK TO OUR STORY — The one other unforgettable (un-forgivable) character that I remember from Sarasota was Sgt. Kologie, our duty sergeant. He kept giving me latrine duty on

Sundays. Later, when I got to know him, I asked why he kept picking on me. His answer was that I was the only one that didn't complain. COMPLAIN? Hell, at that point in my Army career, Sergeants were next to GOD.

In July, the 92nd got its orders to deploy. The air crews took their planes to Maine and then flew them to England. The waterborne contingent was sent to Fort Dix, New Jersey for something called "staging". We had our terminal leave, if you can call 12 hours leave, we had to remove all of our insignia and we filled out those post cards which would be sent to our families when, and if, we arrived at our destination safely. We were also issued weapons. This was a big deal, since I had only had 5 days of basic training and had never had a weapon in my hand in the Army. They gave me a Thompson submachine gun and a short course in how to care for it and how to fire it. We went out to the range to fire one clip of ammunition (15 rounds) at a target. I got 17 hits! It turned out that the guy next to me was firing at the wrong target.

My neighbor on the range that day was Baldachino and he was the group sign painter. I know that a lot of you will remember him because he must have painted names and/or insignia on every bike, jacket and airplane at Bovingdon. He was a lovable little guy from Malta and, when the Germans were working that place over, we all helped Baldy worry about his family on the island.

One hot day at Fort Dix, we were taking a break in the shade when a new Lt. named Paul Maguire started telling us how we were enlisted men because we didn't know what we wanted in life. He knew. He wanted a commission and he got it. This sermon, from a guy who we had heard was a Hollywood actor, did not sit too well. First impressions can be false. Over the next couple of years, Paul turned out to be an "enlisted men's" officer. He always stood up for his men. He eventually was a site commander at Bovingdon with a bunch of students in his site. When somebody goofed off and got extra duty, it was not unusual to see Paul out there after supper, working with the miscreants. When the duty section decided that it was easier to schedule men for KP for longer periods, Paul went up the chain of command and got it back to normal. He was a real good officer.

We finally finished "staging" and, on August 6, 1942, they took us to Hoboken and loaded us on the USS West Point. That picture in the newsletter was the first one I had ever seen of her in war paint. She must have been quite a ship in peace time. We had a cozy little cabin for 2. With us it was even cozier because

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