

885 Bomb. Sq. (H) (Special)  
2641 Special Group (Provisional)

"A UNIQUE Squadron in the 15th Airforce"

Predecessors:

- 122 Bomb. Sq. (H)
- 122 Liaison Sq. / 68 Tactical Recon. Gp.
- 122 Liaison Sq. / 68 Recon. Gp.
- 122 Observation Sq. / 68 Observation Gp.

Add to Roster:-

George C. Doverspike  
910 Emery St.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84104  
Phone 801/595-6654

He was DS from 776 BS 464 BG. 28 Missions in 885th and 22 others. From 13 Oct. 1944 until 18 Jan. 1945 he flew 16 Missions to Yugoslavia, 7 to Italy, 3 to Albania and 2 to Greece.

"Spike" was Co-Pilot in Bob. Gorder's Crew.

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GREAT NEWS!!!

B-17F #42-30500 "Miss Charlotte" was found by Philippe Castellano of Mandelieu France. Along with eleven friends they were able to locate it on Mount Gran Mioul 15 to 18 Kilometers South South/East of Sestriere in NW Italy. 50 Kilometers West of big PO River. They drove to 2500 Meters, Hiked to 2800 Meters to make base camp and at about 3000 Meters were able to locate the crash site. Being it was late, they went back to the base camp for the night and returned the next day. Even with snow at the site they found a few artifacts including the "mae west" that belonged to Pilot John Meyers - identified by his M-2048 mark. This was at: 06° 54' East and 44° 57' North.

He also left a plastic rose and a laminated card of remembrance signed by my family. Being there were 3 peaks with similar names, there was somewhat of a problem for awhile. The Italian map they used showed Gran Miol, Gran Muels & Gran Miuls. The Carabinieri told them the correct spelling on the map for the one peak they were looking for should be Mioul instead of Miol. The plane was found on the north side of the mountain - the theory was that the plane was making another pass on the drop zone on the return trip. Their targets were:

"Abram" E07 44 17  
N44 14 00

and "Seagirt" E07 13 07  
N44 28 00

This was the night of 10/11 Sept. 1944 from Maison Blanche Airfield Algiers.

Our sincere thanks to Philippe and his friends!!!

They had a memorial ceremony and in a crevice in a wall of rock they left a mementoe telling about the plane and honoring the Crew in English and French.

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Found 5 relatives of the "Miss Charlotte" Crew that was lost that night:-

Dorothy Raeburn of Portland, Or. - Sister of Navigator Ian Raeburn.

Jack Stuhlreyer of North Wales, Pa. - nephew of Pilot John Meyers.

Ray Kelln of Dow City, Ia. - brother of Radio-Opr. - Gunner Ernest Kolln.

Dwight Heffelbower of Lexington, Ky. - brother of Co-Pilot Darl Heffelbower.

Francille Aderholt of Oklaunion, Tx. - niece of Gunner Walter Bildstein.

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Our 4th loss was B-24H #42-95376. Routine Engineering test flight - hitting mountain 0920 hours south of Maison Blanche airfield 19 Sept. 1944. (Some records show it #42-95370 and that it crashed 25 Sept. 1944.)

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885th is mentioned in:

"Piercing The Reich" - Joseph E. Persico. Pages 146 & 147 - also 222. (NO mention of B-17's or N. African operations.)

"The OSS in WW 2" - Balentine. Pages 118-125, 136 & 137, 152-55, & 288.

"AF Combat Units WW2" - Maurer-Maurer. (US Gov't Printing Office Wash. DC)

Documentary Stat. Hist. 15th AF Operations Oct. '44 - May '45.

2641st Special Gp. Unit History 1944-45. (All above info from Hal Watson.)

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122 Observation Sq. Louisiana National Guard was called to active duty 30 July 1940 with 150 plus men. Then into Federal service 1 Oct. 1941. Became a member of 68 Observation Gp. 21 Aug. 1941. Flew anti-sub patrols in Gulf of Mexico in O-47's & AT-6's. Lost one AT-6 - pilot & observer never found. Also lost 2 Crews in A-20's between Florida & Puerto Rico 8 Nov. 1942 on the flight to the North African Invasion, including Flight Commander Maj. T. E. Johnson. Flight Echelon of 122 Obsv. Sq. flew 37 A-20's, 2 B-26's, & 2 B-24's to Oran, Algeria from Fla. via S. America, Ascension Island & Gold Coast (now Ghana) to participate in the invasion. The Ground Echelon landed at Fedala, French Morocco in support of the 3rd Inf. Divn. and along with the other squadrons in the group lost a number of men in the invasion. The 68 Observation Group had the distinction of being the first U. S. Air Combat Group to participate in the invasion by land-sea and air.

Pilot 2nd Lt. Bruce D. Figg. Co-Pilot 2nd Lt. William C. Chism. Engr. S/Sgt. Charles C. Fittable. Remains recovered. Full military honors the next day; the American cemetery near the airport. It was jointly conducted by a Protestant Army & French Cath. Chaplain

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Also Log of the Liberators - Steve Birdsell. Pages 235-37. (Should be 8 B-24's and 3 B-17's - NOT 11 B-24's.)

15th Airforce Story - Kenn C. Rust. Pages 34 & 35 and also under "Other Units" near end of book. (Should be 8 B-24's & 3 B-17's.) (Info from Charlie Ampagoomian.)

B-17 Magazine by H. P. Willmott. Mentions 68th Recon. Gp. & their 6 Squadrons - page 60.

Anybody know of others?

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Later the 68th flew anti-sub patrols in the Mediterranean from the middle of November until March 1943 and sank four subs.

The 68 Obsv. Gp. became 68 Recon. Gp. May 1943 and 68 Tactical Recon. Gp. Nov. 1943.

The 122 Obsv. Sq. became 122 Liaison Sq. 31 May 1943 and 122 BS (H) 18 March 1944 - attached to Headquarters 15th AF for administration, supply and maintenance but operational control remained under AAF/MTO (MAAF).

122 BS (H) operated as a lone squadron out of Blida, Algeria and then on 12 May 1944 became 885 BS (H) (Special).

(MY THANKS to L. A. "Bobby" Brooks and John Freche for their contribution to the early history of the 122nd.)

The 68th was part of the 12th AF in the early days in N.A. but does anyone know if this continued up until the 15th took over on 1 November 1943?

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The "Special Flight Section" with 3 B-17's began in October 1943 with Col. Richard H. Smith as the C.O. at temporary headquarters at Massicault, Tunisia. This was in the area with 2nd Bomb. Gp. of the 5th Wing. They were then modified at El Aouina airport. On 18 October 1943 the 1st Mission to the Underground was a night one to Corsica with 1 or 2 B-17's. The 2nd Mission was to Lake Geneva, France on 19 or 20 Oct. '43. (Believe 20th is the correct date.) 1 or 2 B-17's took part in this mission also. (Official records corrected our 1st Mission to Corsica instead of Lake Geneva.) "Miss Charlotte" was definitely on the Lake Geneva Mission.

In early Nov. 1943 3 B-17's went to Blida, Algeria under command of Capt. Paul V. Callis. Then a move to Oria, Italy in Dec. '43 near 47th Wing field at Manduria. For a short time the 68th used 13 B-25's from Manduria in supplying the Underground in the Balkans and Northern Italy late '43 or early '44. This proved unsuccessfull and was discontinued after a loss of 2 B-25's. Unfortunately I cannot find anymore information on this.

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1 DECEMBER 1944 - A SPECIAL DAY FOR 885: PRESENTATION OF DISTINGUISHED UNIT CITATION!!!

The squadron was divided into 4 flights - Headquarters under Capt. Wood, Combat Crews under Lt. Gorder, Armament & Transportation under Lt. Hecht, and Engr. under Lt. Rollins. Enlisted men were in the first three ranks, with the officers in the fourth. The color guard consisted of M/Sgt. Strubeck, S/Sgt. Baird, Cpl. Post and Cpl. Wilbourne. At 1315 the Squadron was formed by Capt. Van Tuil near the flag pole, marched to the "line" with B-24's in the background. The band then arrived from Bari in a B-24 and General Nate Twining in a C-53. He was met by Col. MacCloskey and his staff - Maj. Bradford, Capt. Hanson and Capt. Van Tuil.

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Col. MacCloskey took over 10 April 1944 and moved to Blida with the following officers:

Major John F. McCrady - Executive Officer.

Capt. Norman V. Kinsey, Jr. - Adjutant.

Capt. Edward H. Bradford - S-2.

Capt. Paul V. Callis - S-3.

Capt. Richard D. Allen - S-4.

Capt. Jack E. Van Tuil - Communications Officer.

Capt. Philip W. Dorsey - Medical Officer (Flight Surgeon).

Capt. Herbert E. Rieke - Chaplain.

While there our outfit designation changed from 122 BS (H) to 885 BS (H) (Spl.). Moved to Maison Blanche (Algiers) 25 Aug. '44 and then to Brindisi, Italy 2 Oct. '44. (An advance party of 7 B-24's left on 22 Sept. '44 and one B-24 on the 23rd. under Capt. Feilner as commander, Capt. Ellison as Intelligence Officer and Capt. Pulliam as Ass't Operation Officer.)

Ground personnel left 2 Oct. '44 and arrived Brindisi a month later. (Ground Operators left 2 Oct. '44 one in each plane. I rode with B-24 "Wait For Me Mary".)

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A brief ceremony followed. Colors were brought forward and saluted. The text of the Citation was read by the Adjutant Capt. Kinsey. Gen'l. Twining commended the Squadron for the night of August 12th - Air Crews and Ground Crews: "For the willing and cooperative spirit displayed by all personnel in making these accomplishments possible". The General then pinned the battle streamer upon the 885th standard. The Squadron then passed in review, led by the band. Individual ribbons were awarded to all members of the command after the formation. The presentation had been a fitting culmination of the hard and skillful work of many months.

for \ A special THANKS to Bill Zinsser/above

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Red and Margaret Bearden dropped in a couple months ago to visit awhile. He was one of my room mates at Brindisi and later at Castiglioncello Castle (Rosignano). His phone is 608/222-7168.

"JKM" 15 Sept. 1992  
T.F.T. #4

J. K. Mattison - 1421 23rd St. Peru, Il. 61354