

Belgium
March 21, 1945

Dear Mother, Dad & all,

Moved again, but only for a week. A few of us came down here ~~to~~ on detached service, we are to return to our own group in about a week.

Havent received any mail from you for almost two weeks now. Must be tied up again somewhere. Come to think of it, I believe I did get one of your letters about a week ago. I know the package came.

We have been flying about every day, but outside of that there has been very little doing. The first night we came here we went to see "Strike Up the Band" - an old movie but I enjoyed seeing it again. Before the movie started they had a few exhibition boxing matches and a hill billy band. One of the fellows even called figures for a square dance - I enjoyed that cause I havent heard anyone call figures in a long time.

Day before yesterday I received three Xmas cards and here it is almost Easter. Must have been in a bag that was lost or something.

Will you Glenn heard any more about when he is to leave? I don't imagine he will have to wait too long.

Ok, that's about all I can think of just now so I will close. Here is a clipping from Stars and Stripes concerning our squadron and group. Thought you might like to see it. Take good care of yourselves and tell everyone I said "hello."

Love
Four.

Airfields in Reich Used By Ninth TAC Fighters

By Bud Hutton
Stars and Stripes Staff Writer

NINTH AF FIGHTER FIELD IN GERMANY, Mar. 17—American warplanes are flying from airfields in Germany.

Ninth TAC fighters today and yesterday flew from runways stretching between old Nazi field fortifications; in other sectors of the Reich captured by American ground forces, fighter-bombers have moved up to

close-support fields on Nazi soil.

Credit for the first mission from a base in Germany is in dispute. Earliest claim is that of the 363rd Tac. Recon. group. Maj. Olynord W. Hansen, of College Inn, Iowa, and Capt. Leo J. Sommer, of Los Angeles, flew their P51s from one base to Dusseldorf and the Ruhr on Mar. 12.

Ninth AF engineers from the command of Brig. Gen. James B. Newman, Jr., were still working on the taxi strips of this field today as pilots of Col. Ray J. Stecker's 365th Gp. took off from multi-layered steel runways in their second day of operations inside Germany. Six weeks ago the field was in a muddy American artillery area.

Worked in Sea of Mud

To prepare the way for 1/Lt. John H. Rogers, P47 flight leader from Shepherds town, W. Va., who flew back from Hagen marshalling yards and made the first landing here yesterday, engineers led by Lt. Col. Lloyd A. Cutter, of Mexico, Mo., moved in when the ground was covered with snow.

Thaws and rains turned the area—checkered by German trenches and pill-boxes—into a foot-deep expanse of mud. "We needed boats instead of dozers," explains T/5 William C. Young, of Johnson City, Ky., who operates a bulldozer. "But we licked it."

The engineers had to build roads so they could walk to the runway sites—

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2—Tactical aircraft added a new target to their list—German staff headquarters. Last week U. S. planes struck at a headquarters believed to have been Field Marshal von Rundstedt's, battering buildings and wrecking about 150 cars parked in the area.

Airfields ---

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there was that much mud. As the rains turned the alluvial silt into slick, almost bottomless muck, heavy equipment bogged down and the engineers turned to the slogging job of making runways with picks and shovels.

When the American ground forces jumped the Roer and headed for the Rhine, the engineers turned on floodlights and worked 24 hours a day to keep the tactical air cover within shooting distance of the infantry. Yesterday, their job was not done, but the runways were finished and the Thunderbolts landed while graders and 'dozers still labored.

Old Luftwaffe Fields Used

Other Ninth AF sites are completed on what once were Luftwaffe fields. This strip to which Rogers and his flight came yesterday with only what they wore on their backs is the first strip built completely by the American forces.

While for Stecker's group it was the tenth move since D Day, for the engineers it was, as Maj. Lawrence Denny, of Chicago, said, "just another point on a line which began with bomber fields in England, went through the dust of Normandy in June and ought to wind up with repairs to Tempelhof airdrome in Berlin."

At another field, Col. James C. McGehee, of Birmingham, Ala., whose 373rd Fighter Gp. pilots are flying from Vaterland soil, summed it up:

"We've been using onetime Luftwaffe bases since Normandy, and we're damned grateful for the Luftwaffe's enforced cooperation."