

FOREWORD

Operations order number 38, dated February 2, 1943, issued by HEADQUARTERS 15TH FERRYING GROUP, CARIBBEAN WING ATC, MORRISON FIELD, WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA instructed "the following named personnel" to "proceed in aircraft as indicated from Morrison Field" to England. The personnel and the aircraft listed on those orders belonged to the 506th Bomb Squadron. Upon their arrival in England they joined the other three squadrons of the 44th Bomb Group to wage war against the German war machine.

The 506th Squadron did not actually engage in combat until March 22, 1943. In the following twelve months, all but one of those aircraft were lost, either directly or indirectly to enemy action.

By the end of hostilities 22 men or 29% of the Squadron's original air crews were killed in action. Another 13 or 17% had been taken as prisoners of war. One was shot down, evaded capture and spent about 16 months with the French underground. Seven men or 9% had been removed from combat status for medical reasons. One had been court-martialed for cowardice in the face of the enemy. Some of the remaining 31 men had been wounded in action, but remained on combat status until they completed their tour of combat duty. Five of these aircraft commanders were promoted to be field grade officers. They assumed positions of leadership in the Group, Division or Eighth Air Force. A few of the officers volunteered for a second tour. Two of the enlisted men were given field commissions as 2nd Lt.

Some of the men and these planes were with the Group at Kiel, Germany on May 14, 1943. For our actions on that day, the Group was awarded the first Distinguished Unit Citation given to an Eighth Air Force component. This award is given, "in the name of the President as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction." Once again most of the surviving men and planes were with the Group at Ploesti, Romania, on August 1, 1943, when the Group was awarded its second Distinguished Unit Citation.

What follows is the stories of these men and their successors and how they lived and died. I hope to tell how these airmen and their supporting ground crews forged the 506th into a powerful fighting unit that helped the 44th Bomb Group to write air history.

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