

16 July 1978

The Rev. Adrian Poletti
Monastery Place
Union City, NJ 07087

Dear Fr. Poletti:

As you may know, I am working on a history of the 306th, and much to my own amazement have actually begun writing, after three years of intensive research.

I have interviewed quite a number of people in person, on the phone and by mail. If you could give me a phone number, and can be reached during an evening or on a weekend, I would like very much to talk with you. At those times I have a WATS line available and can talk for an extended period.

I have a copy of one article you wrote for a Catholic magazine, which is most interesting, and I am wondering if you might have other such materials which I might borrow?

A major question I also have is, Just how many men at Thurleigh married while in England? I have not seen any figures and thought you might have some idea, or perhaps even records on it.

Slowly the picture is taking shape, and I would appreciate any help you might give me as you had a very special relationship to the men of the 306th--something which many of them have mentioned to me. I am enclosing my standard letter, and some other materials which may give you more information. I am also the one responsible for 306th Echoes.

I hope you will be able to give me some assistance.

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong

SIGN

National Catholic Magazine

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June 30, 1978.

OFFICE OF THE FIELD DIRECTOR - UNION 7-6401

Monastery Place - Union City, N. J. 07087

Dear Mr. Strong -

Your letter is at hand and I wish I could be of more help to you. I travel for the SIGN Magazine & my work keeps me on the road most of the time. If you should happen to come to N.Y. City anytime let me know in advance and I'll try and be home - I'll only ten minutes from Time Sq.

As to your question - I married about seventy soldiers of the 306th and attached units. Of course I only handled the Catholic men. The Personal Records should give you a more complete picture. Sorry I can't be of more help - with good best wishes, I am,

Sincerely yours
Father Edmund M. Poletti.



NATIONAL CATHOLIC MAGAZINE


Before the
(P. 677)

Oracle of the Airwaves - Leo Egan

July 1944

Brassil Fitzgerald - John E. Corbin - John C. O'Malley

Price 90c



Bomber Base in England

By

ADRIAN POLETTI, C.P., CHAPLAIN

Capt. Poletti sees off waist gunners Sgt. Harold Thorman of Omaha, Neb., and S/Sgt. Bernard Rupp of Fond du Lac, Wis.

DANGER never made a saint. Nor does a war ever make the Quartermaster Corps issue G. I. halos. Any chaplain can tell you that. It's his business to know. But I say this for the record: more men attend church here than back home. More men here count God in on their plans than is true back in the States. It may be war brings men closer to God. But this is certain: many a man here is asking himself, what's the real purpose of life?

I am Chaplain of a USAAF Bomber Station in England. Day after day I see my men take off on their bombing missions over Europe. Day after day I wait for them to return. Counting the planes. Counting the men. Some days they don't all come back.

Somewhere in the skies taps sounded for them—eternal taps. But they were ready. It's good to be able to write to a widow or a mother, "He was ready."

Back home people often wonder if these are just words, routine words written to give consolation. A Catholic Chaplain knows the truth of what he writes. And it gives him consolation and encouragement to be able to write it.

Here is why the Chaplain can write what he does. Here is why he knows that these young men who roam the clouds are ready to wander into Heaven. Here is an average, typical week at this average typical airfield somewhere in England, the homefield of this Bombardment Group.

Sunday—Unless there happens to be a bombing mission on Sunday morning,

**A Chaplain tells of our men
who fly the skies over invaded
Europe—their hopes and fears**

every man on the post is free to attend services. We are fortunate to have a permanent chapel. It is well furnished and accommodates four hundred. Since it is conveniently located in the community site, any odd hour you may drop in you will find, at least one or two kneeling there, praying, thinking. Masses on Sunday morning are at eight and eleven; Protestant services are at nine-thirty. In all, over seven hundred men attend church on Sunday. The Jewish services are conducted on Saturday morning.

After dinner on Sunday, I return to the office for about three hours. Some of the men find it difficult to get around during the week, so there is always a number of callers. About four I go over to an engineering unit which is without a Catholic Chaplain. For the past ten months I have been saying Mass for them on Sunday evenings; attendance is over two hundred. Be-

sides being the hardest working men in the army, the engineers are also excellent cooks. After supper and a word with the men, the jeep is headed for home.

Monday—Monday morning I am awakened at four and laconically told, "Briefing at five." The Chaplain of a Bomber Group has for his first concern the welfare of the combat crews. For that reason he attends every briefing—that is where the crews are told what their target for the day is, are shown maps and pictures of it, and receive information and instructions for the raid. It may come at any time, but is usually early in the morning. The men like to see the Chaplain there. Even though some never go to church themselves, they feel his prayers will help see them through. Again they know that the Chaplain, if he voluntarily gets out of a warm bed at three or four in the morning to be with them and wish them "God Speed," is interested in their welfare. Many reciprocate that interest.

Following the briefing I see the Catholic men, hear the confessions of any who wish to go, and give them all Communion. If anything does happen they are prepared to meet their God, and thus they set out all the better equipped to do the job; they fear nothing, have free and easy minds, and can give their undivided attention to the work at hand. I can vividly remember a pilot named Casey who flew a ship named *Banshee*. He used to be one of the first to see me after briefing. However, the morning of the first Hamburg raid he got up late and did not have time to receive before leaving. We lost several ships that day, and when I saw Casey that evening he said, "Boy, did I sweat that one out! Saw ships going down all around me and all I could think of was, 'My number's up and I didn't go to Holy Communion this morning'; I could hardly keep my mind on flying the ship. But from now on you'll see me every time." Casey made seventeen raids, finally going down over Bremen; he is now a P. W.

After Communion the men go out to their ships to check the guns, bombs, instruments, and motors. Fifteen minutes before take-off they taxi out of the dispersal areas and line up at the end of the main runway. Zero hour and the first ship opens its throttles, darts down the ramp and up into the morning sky. At thirty-second intervals the rest follow; huge four-engined birds weighing twenty-five tons, carrying a crew of ten, tons of bombs, and bristling with guns. As each plane thunders by, the Chaplain waves "good luck" to the crew and gives them conditional absolution. They gain altitude, fall in-

to formation, and come back over the field in a final salute. With their noses pointed toward Germany they are off, to annihilate another part of the Nazi war machine. I return to the chapel to say the seven o'clock Mass, remembering especially those who are off fighting in the skies to protect our freedom of religion.

The planes will be gone anywhere from four to eight hours, during which time you say an occasional prayer that they will all be back; the men call this time "sweating out the ships." About fifteen minutes before they are due back, the ground crews, fire trucks, ambulances, and trucks to pick up the crews, gather at the edge of the field. All eyes scan the horizon, some even have binoculars. Right on the minute the formation appears, grows larger until the individual planes can be counted. The one question is, "Are there any missing?"

Over the field they come in perfect formation. If any have wounded aboard, they fire a flare, come right in for a landing, and are met by an ambulance with the Chaplain and doctor. The formation circles and comes over again, only the second time as it reaches the center of the field the planes peel off one after the other to come in for a landing. As they took off, so they land—at thirty-second intervals. Ground crews begin servicing the planes at once. A good hot meal is waiting for the tired crews; they are then interviewed by intelligence officers, and another raid is over.

I have seen the procedure over a hundred times, yet it is an awe-inspiring sight whose thrill does not wear off, but continually fills one with pride that he is even a small part of this great American show. Everyone is in-

~~~~~  
▶ In prosperity our friends know us; in adversity we know our friends.

—BURTON COLLINS

~~~~~  
high spirits tonight because the photographs show all our bombs hit the target; all our ships returned, and not even one man was wounded. They may be up early again tomorrow morning or they may not take off till afternoon, all depending on the weather. If it is "ceiling zero" they will have ground school. Such is life with the bombers.

Tuesday—Tuesday morning we are up at three-thirty; breakfast, and then briefing at four-thirty. All is in readiness for the take-off when the mission is "scrubbed" at seven because of the weather. All the hours of preparation go for nothing. This is one of the

most trying things for the crews, namely, the many times they get up and put in several hours' preparation and tension only to have it scrubbed at the last minute. (I recall one week last winter when the men got up six consecutive mornings at four hoping for a break in the weather, which never came; but they made up for it the next week by going out five times.) This morning most of the combat men go back to bed. The ordnance men who were out "bombing-up" from twelve to four and have been in bed only a few hours, are now called out again to unload. The planes are never left standing with live bombs. I return to the chapel to say Mass, at which attendance on weekdays averages fifteen.

Later in the morning I visit the hospital and spend some time with the men there. There are thirty-two today. Nearly all had mild cases of the flu; in case of anything serious the men are immediately sent to the general hospital some miles away, where they receive every care and attention. I try to visit the general hospital once a week. In the afternoon I answered several letters from anxious parents inquiring about their sons who have been reported missing. Usually nothing can be added to what they already know, but sympathy is expressed, and very often some personal information concerning the soldier when he was at this field can be given that helps alleviate the burden of waiting for definite news.

This evening we had our weekly Religious Discussion Group. This is a rather new venture here. In the several weeks of its existence the interest manifested and the questions asked point to a revival of a religious attitude of mind. The topic of discussion was "The English Reformation." Next week it will be "Religion in Germany."

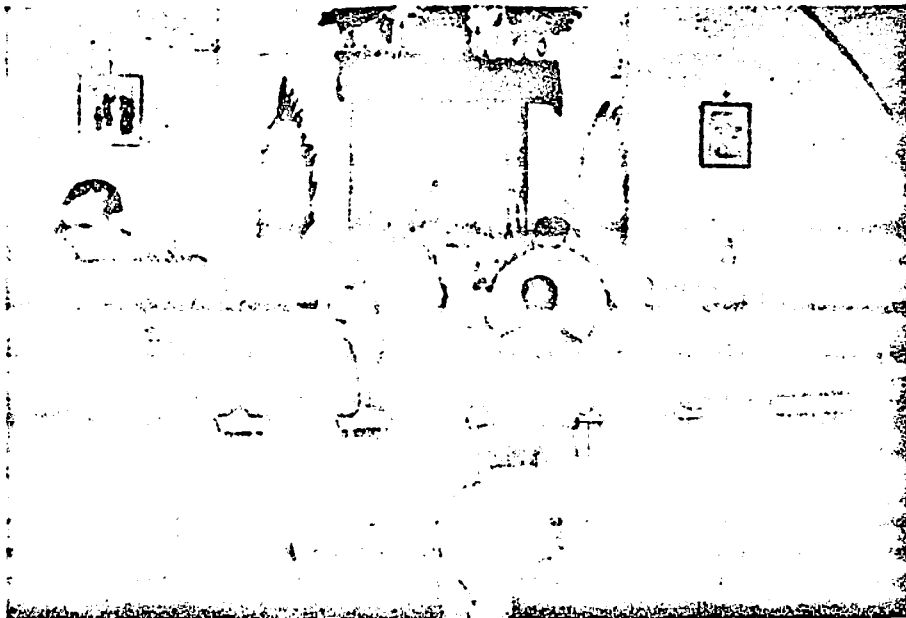
Wednesday—The weather has closed in so there will be no flying today; the men will have ground school. I visited the line this morning, also several of the shops. The men are always glad to see you and pass the time of day. Some take the opportunity to ask about some personal problem or to make an appointment to see you privately. I gave two instructions in the afternoon to men preparing for Baptism; also had several other callers concerning personal interviews. They average about six a day here.

What do the men see the Chaplain about? Here are some of the typical examples: Some want to make arrangements to get married; others wish to discuss the advisability of entering the married state at this particular time (4 per cent of this group have gotten married since coming to England).

Many want him to write their folks to say they are going to church or in perfect health, and they often say, "Mother will believe you and won't worry." A few have asked me to write their wives or sweethearts back home to assure them that their men are all they hoped and believed them to be.

One of the most common questions from the ground personnel is, "What can I do to become a gunner on a Fortress? I came over here to fight." Some want information about continuing their studies through extension courses or a recommendation for O.C.S. Combat men often bring around a letter or some personal effect with the request that if anything should happen to them, it be sent to their folks. Officers often ask the Chaplain's opinion about an individual or the morale of the men or to give a talk to their men. One man who came in today said he had never been baptized, in fact, didn't know anything about religion but thought it was a good thing and would like to learn a little about it. Again, the men worry more about their families back home than they do about themselves. These are but a few of the personal problems that prompt soldiers to see the Chaplain. There are many others. But one thing is noticeably absent in talks with the Chaplain—"gripping." We all know that there is plenty of it done in this man's army, but it means little or nothing. It is just a topic for conversation. It is the G.I. method of letting off steam. He doesn't even take himself seriously, and actually the Chaplain hears little of it, despite the often quoted, "Tell it to the Chaplain."

Thursday—Thursday morning there was a briefing at four. As usual many of the men came around to receive absolution and Holy Communion. It was still dark and foggy when they took off. I was just finishing Mass when an explosion shook the whole camp. One of the planes trying to return to the field because of engine trouble cracked up in the fog. Two of the crew were miraculously thrown clear, the other eight killed instantly. Three of the men were Catholics. I gave them conditional absolution and Extreme Unction. Then I helped prepare the bodies for burial. It was not a pleasant sight to see the burnt and mutilated remains of men I had been with such a little while before. But the thought of their folks back home kept me there. Their personal effects were put in envelopes to be forwarded to the next of kin. However, some also carried prayerbooks, medals, or rosaries, and these, at the request of the C.O., I took to send directly to their folks. That afternoon all the rest of the



Chaplain Poletti distributing Holy Communion in the permanent chapel built in the community center. More men live up to their religion here than at home

planes returned safely after a very successful raid. I visited the guardhouse after supper; only three prisoners were there. I spent an hour with them.

Friday—Briefing was at six in the morning; take-off at nine-thirty. I visited the hospital before dinner. I went out to the line to meet the planes at three. Two of them fired flares coming in, which meant that they had wounded aboard. Two of the men had superficial flesh wounds from flak, but the third, a Polish lad from Chicago, had a broken arm from a 20mm. shell. When I climbed in the plane to see how bad he was, he smiled despite the pain and said, "Not too bad, Father, only got it in the arm." A little later, in our first-aid station when they were putting a splint on his arm before sending him to the general hospital, he beckoned to me. He asked if I would reach in his hip pocket for his wallet, take out the crucifix, and hold it for him to kiss; the doctor paused with his work while I complied. Then the lad explained, "I always do that before leaving and after returning from each mission; today I couldn't until now, so that completes my fourteenth. Thank you."

I conducted the usual Friday evening services at six; attendance: sixty-two, which is above the average. Later, I stopped at a Squadron party just to pay my respects and thank them for the invitation.

Saturday—Weather prohibits flying today. I said the Requiem Mass this morning for those killed in Thursday's accident. Many of the Squadron attended. We left at one for the funeral in Cambridge American Military Cemetery. The caskets were draped with an

American flag and placed in a straight row over the individual graves. My co-worker, the Protestant Chaplain, conducted the service for the men of his faith, after which I read the burial service for the Catholic men and blessed the graves. While an officer called out the names of those who had given their all for their country, a soldier saluted each casket in turn. A volley was fired and taps sounded, while the large number who had come to the funeral stood with bowed heads and said a final prayer—"May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen." As they had lived and fought side by side, so we left them on that beautiful green hilltop overlooking the peaceful English countryside. What a glorious thing it is that young Americans gladly make even the supreme sacrifice in the defense of truth and freedom. Even in sorrow, their parents, wives, and children, can't fail to be justly proud.

Fortunate is the man called to be an American Army Chaplain. While receiving every help and encouragement from Commanding Officers, he is living and working with the grandest group of men in the world—the American soldier. The Chaplain is the Liaison Officer between God and His creatures, as well as between the men and their families back home. While all around him is destruction, his is a life of helping, advising, encouraging, loving his brother man. And the genuine gratitude of the men in return is almost enough to repay his efforts without the hope of an eternal reward. May the Great Commander-in-Chief make him worthy of his opportunity and calling.

SIGN

526 MONASTERY PLACE
UNION CITY, NEW JERSEY 07087
201 867-6401

OFFICE OF THE
FIELD DIRECTOR

January 5, 1981

Dear friend of Father Adrian M. Poletti, C.P. :

It is with sorrow and the sense of a great loss that I announce to you, on behalf of the Passionist Fathers and Brothers, Province of Saint Paul of the Cross, the death of our brother and dearest friend and my co-laborer in the SIGN CALL department of our magazine. Father Adrian died in Saint Agnes Hospital of the City of Baltimore, Maryland, Christmas Eve, December 24, 1980. Burial was in the Passionist Community section of New Cathedral Cemetery, Baltimore.

ADRIAN of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Arthur M. Poletti; Emile, and Abigail
Mead; Born September 8, 1907, Union
City, New Jersey; professed a Passionist,
August 15, 1928; ordained a priest,
April 28, 1934.

+ Let us pray

Father, source of forgiveness
and salvation for all people, hear our
prayer. By the prayers of the ever-
virgin Mary, may our dear friend and
brother, Adrian, who has gone from this
world come to share eternal happiness
with all your saints.

Amen +



Brother Terence, C.P.
Father Adrian's co-worker

Aug 41 report

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Name POLETTI, Adrian M. Home address St. Joseph's Monastery, Baltimore, Md.
Place of birth Weehawken, N. J. Date Sept. 8, 07 Race W. Marital status Single.
Dependents (list by name and age) None.

Emergency addressee - V. Rev. Fr. Provincial, C. P. - St. Michael's Monastery, Union City, N. J.
Parents Mr. & Mrs. E. J. Poletti, 203 Oak St. Weehawken, N. J.

Denominational affiliation - Catholic.

Ordination (date, place and ordaining authority) April 28, 1934 in Scranton, Pa. by Rt. Rev. Patrick J. O'Reilly, D. D.

Education High school College Seminary Other
Name of institution Holy Cross Passionist Monasteries
Location Dunkirk, N. Y. Boston, Jamaica, Scranton.
Dates 1922 - 1927 1928 - 1934.
Degrees received A. B., B. A., Ph. D.

Honorary degrees None.

Special training - In conducting missions.

Parishes served and dates St. Joseph's Monastery Parish, Baltimore, Md. 1936 - 1942.

Community activities including membership in fraternal and civic organizations
Member of the K. of C.
District Chaplain for Boy Scouts.
Diocesan Chaplain for Girl Scouts.
Conducted a summer camp for six years.

Civilian occupation prior to ministry (if any) None.

Hobbies and special talents - Photography and people.

Date of appointment as chaplain March 21, 1942. Date of acceptance March 23, 1942.

Date of entry on active duty April 21, 1942.

Army assignments Date
Present Hq. 306th Bomb. Group. October 8, 1942.
Past Fort Monmouth, N. J. April 21, - June 30, 1942.

Present grade Captain. Date of advancement in grade March 3, 1943.

Decorations received - Presidential citation to Group.

Is your photograph on file in the Office of the Chief of Chaplains? Yes No
If No, when may it be expected? **NO**

Date 31 August 1944. Signed Adrian M. Poletti.

Note: Additional information may be written on the reverse side of this sheet.

THE CHAPLAIN SPEAKS --

There were many chaplains at Thurleigh, of all religious denominations, but none was with the Group as long as Captain Adrian M. Poletti. At the request of the author, he has consented to contribute an "In Memoriam," to this book.

TO ALL FORMER MEMBERS OF THE 306TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP:

I arrived in England August 17, 1942, and shortly found myself at Poddington with the 15th Medium Bomb Group. A few weeks later there came a phone call from Division that a new Group was due at Thurleigh and would I arrange for the Catholic Services there. But where was Thurleigh? Getting a map I finally located the place and Sunday morning set out to find it. At the field no one knew where anything was, but we came to the British USO NAAFI and there found Chaplain McLeod, Group Chaplain, who had the place already arranged for services and about two hundred men waiting for Mass. A few weeks after that I was assigned to the 306th, and the next three years were some of the happiest of my life. Working for and with the men of the 306th., 39th. Service Group and 4th Station Complement and associated Units was not work or hardship but a pleasure.

There was always a Protestant and Catholic chaplain at Thurleigh, the Jewish men being sent to their own services in town and later having services in the chapel Saturday mornings, conducted by a visiting chaplain from Division. Because of the cooperation and support of our C. O.'s I doubt that any Group received better religious attention than ours. As the Naafi was unsuitable for services, Chaplain McLeod and I

went to Col. Overacker and asked for a building that could be fitted up for a permanent Post Chapel. He at once agreed and we were soon set up in a wing of what was later to become the Red Cross Aero Club. An altar was built, suitable benches installed, daily services inaugurated, until it was a fair approximation of what the men were used to back home. There we remained for about ten months when a larger place was required and we moved across the street, with the help of Col. Putnam, into a large Nissen hut, built for a recreation hall and ~~that was~~ ^{was} accommodated up to four hundred. Post Utilities lent a hand by installing a raised platform for the altar, putting in a beautiful altar rail and making improvements until the place was more like a parish church than a chapel. Finally a small steeple complete with bell was erected on the front, and here the Post Chapel remained until the 306th left Thurleigh.

Many happy memories are associated with our Post Chapel. I recall our first High Mass overseas with Sgt. Lehman at the organ and Sgts. Praederio, ^{Henry} Arruda, ^{John} Cassidy, ^{Albert} McHale, ^{Wm} Bob, ^{George} and Sweeney and Joyce as the choir. ^{Leo} Vincent

The first Catholic mission for American troops in England was conducted in this chapel. Following the closing exercises a communion breakfast (arranged with the always gracious cooperation of Captain Hull) was served to over three hundred men. Seated at the head table was General Armstrong who had just received word of his promotion that day. He had promised to be present if it was possible but when I heard the glad news of his promotion I honestly did not expect him. However, true to his word General Armstrong walked in just as we were sitting down; an officer and a gentleman in the truest army sense. When the General rose to speak amidst a thunder of applause, he modestly began, - "Men, you all know me so there is no use pretending, but I honestly want to say that I was never mixed up with so much religion in my life." (and he pointed to the ten chaplains

at the head table) He then seriously told the men that he admired them for making the mission every night of the past week and urged them to continue living up to their faith, for it would make them better men and better soldiers, and he would do anything he could to encourage them to this end. So enthusiastic and successful were the results of the mission that eventually every field in 1st, Division followed suit, as well as many in 2nd, and 3rd. Once again the 306th had led the way.

Here The first Protestant revival for Americans in England was likewise held in the Post Chapel of the 306th. Arranged by Chaplain McLeop, it was scheduled for Holy Week, 1943. The last night, Chaplain Maurice Reynolds, Chief of Chaplains, ~~8th~~ ^{Eighth} Air Force, delivered the closing address. Shortly after Chaplain McLeop was promoted to a higher position and reluctantly left the 306th after having been with it since it was organized at Wendover. His place was taken by Chaplain Denleger, who was with us only a few months, and was followed by Chaplain Ralph E. Simester. Chaplain Simester stayed with us until June 1945 and endeared himself to all by his jovial disposition and his genuine desire to help everyone.

Also on the pleasant side of the ledger are the many Christmas parties for evacuated children made possible by the generosity of the men of Thurleigh. Three parties were given that first Christmas 1942 and were such a success not only for the children, but also so gratifying to the men who went along to help, that they increased each year. The second year six parties were conducted in Bedford, Kettering, and nearby area. The third year there were eight Christmas parties, entertaining over two thousand children, and then it was necessary to announce at Sunday services that no more candy, crackers, or gum was desired as there was already more than sufficient voluntarily contributed from the men's weekly P. X. rations; all of which speaks volumes for the charity and generosity of the Americans and particularly the men of Thurleigh. These parties were not only the best means

of solidifying Anglo-American relationship, but what they mean to the children can be gathered from ~~the following~~ ^{AN} article from a Kettering paper: ^{he said} "Father Christmas Safe" X Sgt. Joseph Fiddes, 367th, played Santa Claus at the Christmas parties and some weeks afterward failed to return from a mission over Germany. Hearing of it the children immediately began praying for his safety and inquiring constantly for news. When word finally came through that he was a prisoner of war, they had a celebration as though their own long lost brother had just returned.

How easy it would be to go on and on recalling the many happy incidents that filled those three years; the missions on which no ships were lost (not even from the 367th); the day of the two hundredth mission and party that followed; the three pilgrimages to Walsingham, the last from the whole Division led by the 306th, on which occasion the first mass in four hundred years was said on the original site; V-E Day and the grand party on the ball-field; the many nights I enjoyed bacon and eggs with Sgt. Sweeney and his gang in the E-M Club; the numberless fine friendships with the men of the Group, etc. etc. But there is something much more important. For us, the fortunate ones, who came back home, these are all pleasant memories but many of our companions did not come back. In the hundreds of missions flown by the 306th, two hundred ships were lost, which means that approximately two thousand men went down. Final records showed that about half of these had been killed, the rest were fortunately prisoners and now safely back home. The war is over. England, Thurleigh already seem like a long time ago, and I wonder how often we give a thought to the hundreds of our Group, our buddies and friends, we left "over there." Personally, I never think of Thurleigh, and that is often, without thinking of two in particular, Capt. "Pappy" Check and Lt. J. Becker of 367th. Both were killed on their last mission. The "Stars and Stripes" described "Pappy" as the most popular man on the base, and no one would dispute ^{the} statement. He did not have to die to be a hero, for he was just that

just that to his crew, the ground crew, and everyone who knew him. I recall it was a Saturday morning. It was a late briefing and about eight when we came out, and the men stood in front of Headquarters (the briefing room was then directly behind Headquarters) waiting for the trucks. Five or six of us were talking with Check; several had wanted to go as his co-pilot and Colonel Wilson had won the honor. There was a party scheduled for that night, and one of them said to Check, "Boy, will you celebrate to-night, but we'll have to carry you home." I said, "Don't forget to-morrow is Sunday and Mass is as usual." Check just looked at me with his perpetual smile and said, "Don't worry, Father, I haven't missed yet, and I'll be there to-morrow morning." The ships took off and they came back, not one missing; not a flare was fired as they circled the field and everyone awaiting their return was in high spirits. The first one in, "Chenault's Pappy III," touched down, ran the length of the run-way and turned off on the grass. I was with Captain Manning standing in front of one of the ambulances and we watched puzzled. Then two men dropped out of the nose and motioned to us. We drove over and with electrifying finality, they said, "Check is dead." The news raced over the field, and a pall descended on Thurlough. The day we lost ten ships over Hamburg did not affect the rest of the men nearly as much as this. Check, who loved life so much, who was everybody's friend, "the finest pilot and greatest guy on the field," He's dead? No, we don't believe it. But a fighter coming out of the sun had caught them unawares and a bullet just nicked Check's head enough to be fatal. The straight-living, lovable Raymond J. Check was honored by more than men; he had run a long course in a short time, he was ready for a heavenly reward, and so the Great Pilot had called him home. There was Mass as usual the next morning and while Check wasn't there (at least visibly) it was said for him, and many of his Squadron attended.

I remember Lt. Becker graphically too, because he used to wake me up for briefings and was always the first one in the chapel. He received

Holy Communion before every mission and then would devotedly kneel before the Shrine of Our Lady in the Post Chapel and light a candle. Toward the end of the war, the custom began of the combat men's leaving their wings here when they finished their missions and went home. It was the morning of the first daylight and first big American raid on "Big B," it was also Becker's last mission, his 35th. He came to me before he left the Chapel and said, "Well, Father, this is it, my last one; to-night you can pin my wings up there with the rest." The ships took off with Becker flying "Rose of York." The ships came back, and among the missing was "Rose of York." It had blown up over Berlin and the crew didn't have a chance.

These are but two out of the hundreds, but every one of us can recall these and many more similar incidents. This is what Victory cost. Because it is human to forget, a perpetual bequest of masses has been arranged at Holy Cross Monastery, Dunkirk, N. Y., in memory of all the men of the 306th who made the supreme sacrifice. Long after we forget, even when everyone forgets, masses and prayers will still be said for our comrades as long as the world goes on. I know that all the men who contributed to this Memorial Fund will be glad to know that it went over the top and final arrangements were completed three months ago. May they all rest in peace.

In closing, may I hope that this finds all former members of the old Group well and happy in whatever line of civilian occupation ^{+ they} ~~you~~ have chosen. It will always be a pleasure to meet any of you and talk over the old days, as just happened last week when I joined the American Legion in Greenville, N. C., and met Sgt. Lewis of the old 39th and 4th Station Complement. But in thinking of those days and our friends who didn't come back may we also recall the prayer that was read over their grave -

"Grant, O Lord, we beseech Thee, that whilst we lament the departure of our brother out of this life, we may bear in mind that we are most certainly to follow him. Give us grace to make ready for that last hour by

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a devout and holy life, and protect us against a sudden and unprovided death. Teach us how to watch and pray that when Thy summons comes, we may go forth to meet our Heavenly Father and enter with Him into life everlasting. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

Asking God to bless you and yours, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Father Adrian M. Poletti, C. P.
Box 403, Greenville, N. C.

Former Chaplain of 306th Bomb
Group.