

COUNTY MAN IN 51 BOMBER RAIDS Enjoys "Well-Earned" Leave!

By ERIC W. RODGERS, Editor
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Graham T. Johnson, Scotland Neck native, pilot of 51 raids over enemy territory, who rose from the rank of air corps cadet to that of captain, enjoys the quiet of home and the prosaic affairs of a small town.

Back among the folk with whom he was raised, most of whom call him by his first name, modest Graham Johnson is playing down the heroic role which he has enacted for almost eight months despite the fact that on his chest he wears the visible evidence of a nation's appreciation—two service ribbons, an air medal and two oak clusters of the nine he has been awarded. The service ribbons were awarded for piloting a Flying Fortress from America to Africa under constant danger of enemy attack and for his part in the African and Sicilian campaigns. The Air Medal was awarded for his first five successful bombing missions over enemy territory, and each of the nine oak leaves was awarded for five additional successful flights on bombing expeditions. And the Flying Fortress he left behind him when he was returned to the United States for a rest period proudly carries the insignia which testifies to bringing down two enemy attacking planes while engaged in bombing missions. The plane is named "The Battleaxe" and the boys who have carried it through 51 expeditions without losing a man, and with

only three wounded, refer to it as "Ye Olde Battleaxe."

Capt. Johnson's one regret is that he was not allowed to participate in the first bombing of Rome. As a member of General Jimmy Doolittle's 12th Air Force he was among those who might have been selected. But he completed his 50th expedition a few days before the flight over Rome, and under the regulations he had earned a relief period and was scheduled to be returned home for a rest. But the day before the Rome bombing his squadron was scheduled for bombing mission over Sicily, and the flight commander became ill. Captain Johnson was selected to lead this his 51st expedition, and he did it very successfully, but the next day's flight over Rome went to others in the 12th Air Force who had not earned their rest period at home. This is the rule of the Air Corps and Captain Johnson did not expect to be made an exception to the rule—but he still hoped against hope.

Captain Johnson left Scotland Neck in 1940 to take training as an air corps cadet at Fort Worth,

an instructor at Camp Barksdale, Miss. for 14 months. He was commissioned a first lieutenant in the Air Corps in June 1942, and received his commission as a captain about 60 days ago, shortly before leaving his desert base in North Africa. In December, 1942, as pilot of a Flying Fortress he flew across the Atlantic safely, part of the time exposed to fire, and landed his Fortress safely at an unnamed desert air base in North Africa.

Then he went on active duty immediately as a part of General Doolittle's 12th Air Force. His plane took part in the Tunisian campaign and after Africa had been conquered, went on to take part in the Sardinian, Sicilian and Italian campaigns. At least one third of the raids in which he engaged, he says were over the Italian mainland. During the African campaign they shot down the first enemy plane and later over Sicily they shot down the second. In their 51 missions, Captain Johnson was selected to lead the squadron in twenty five, a squadron being several planes to the mission to be undertaken.

Graham Johnson doesn't mind saying that he was plain "scared" many a time, especially at first. It wasn't anything easy to engage planes in active combat way up in the skies, and they engaged planes in combat on virtually every raid. The closest to being shot down was when he was on a raid over North Africa three German planes nose-dived at his formation in what looked like suicide for them—and also death for Americans. By skilful maneuvering they avoided the dashing Germans,

mightily close, said Captain Johnson. On another occasion a metal seat he had fashioned for himself as additional protection was missing from his plane, and that day two big chunks of "ack ack" came through the bottom of the Flying Fortress, between his legs as he piloted the plane and lodged in the top of the plane above him. He brought those two pieces of metal home with him. When he got back to his base the first thing he did, he says, was to fashion another metal seat for the next raid.

Most of the opposition planes they met, said Captain Johnson, were Germans, and they were good fighters. The young officer wasn't any too optimistic about the war being short. He doesn't feel that the Germans are going to surrender in a hurry, and he expects the war to be hard-fought for many months to come. "They will hold on longer than most folks think," he said, when asked his opinion about Germany "caving in" within the next few weeks or months.

Illustrating the deception practised by Germany is this incident which occurred on the transport which brought him back to the United States. There were a large number of German prisoners on the vessel, and the first mate happened to be a Norwegian who spoke German fluently. With the Americans returning home as audience he constantly engaged the Germans in conversation, and the prisoners were amazed to learn that the vessel would land in New York City. Why, they said, were Americans must be master engineers because you could hardly re-

Monday Morning

On Monday, August 30th, the Weldon High School began session for their 1943-44 school year in the recently completed gymnasium. Exercises were conducted and three new teachers were acknowledged. They were: Miss Delma S. Finch of Farmville and Miss Louis Ward of Edenton, in the High School faculty list, and Miss Clara Lee Hales of Pikesville in the elementary department.

Other teachers in this school will be Mrs. W. W. Wallace, Eva Irene Peele, Elizabeth Johnson, Margaret H. Joyner, Sally Anderson, Ido Mae Cheatham, Francis Smith, Gladys B. Neal, Elizabeth Wyche, Evelyn Griffin, Ida H. Vick, Olivia Bridges, Fay R. Taylor, and Elizabeth Harris.

Pfc. Chester Simms of Camp Rucker, Ala., spent last week here with Mr. and Mrs. Luther Simms.

Mrs. J. Markham and daughter Sybil Jean, have returned to Portsmouth.

Misses Eileen Barnette and Helen Starke attended a formal U. S. O. dance Friday at Camp Butler.

build New York that quickly. Questioned on the point they said their higher-ranking officers had told them, and the German radio had broadcast, that the United States had been severely bombed and both New York and Boston had been destroyed almost beyond repair. They were hard to convince, even when the Statue of Liberty came into view in New York harbor, so great was their faith in their German leaders.

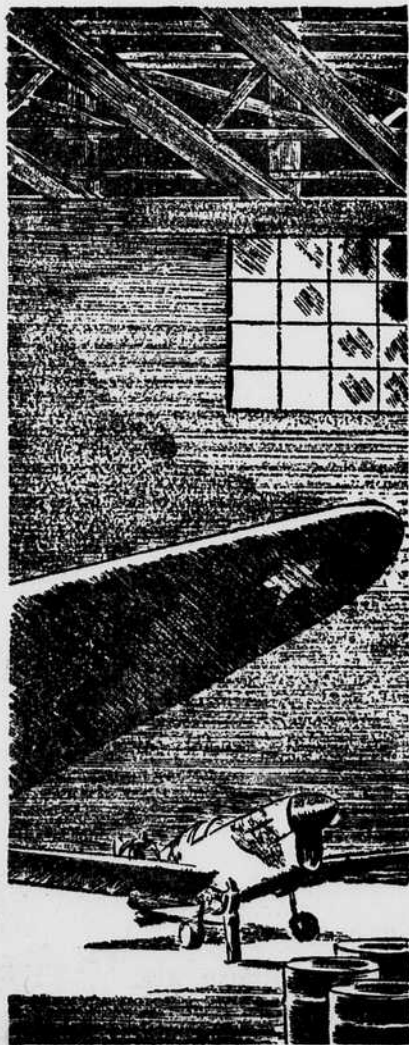
IT'S PEOPLE WHO WILL WIN THIS WAR!

***MEET MARY...** Mary comes from the Ozarks . . . Square Corners, Missouri to be exact. From three years of teaching and correcting school papers, she is now checking plane parts. Three months and two days after Pearl Harbor Mary was in school again — But this time to learn the skill of war. Today Mary is an important person in Los Angeles. Her okey is necessary before giant Liberators can go to war

Mary is one of over 2,500,000 women who have given up the soft life of yester-year so that the child they will some day hold in their arms can proudly say . . . "I am an American."

It's people like Mary, millions of them, who are winning this war. And it's Trailways' job to help them by seeing that they get where they're needed when they're needed. Over a nationwide network of America's highways, the thousands of buses of the 43 member companies of the Trailways System are rolling — from coast to coast — carrying people where manpower is needed most

Somewhere your skill or ability — whether great or small — is needed in the Battle of Production. So go to your local U. S. Employment Service Office today. They'll tell you just what you can do to help Uncle Sam win this war.



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