

The Second Was First



The lives and times of the men of the Second Bombardment Group (Heavy) during World War II. Training, deployment, the missions, missing air crews, personal stories, escape narratives, and reflections of the author during combat with the 12th and 15th Air Forces in North Africa and Italy, 1942-1945.

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Cover photograph: "Tail Crazy", a B-17 of the 49th Squadron. A 20mm cannon was installed in the tail, replacing one 50 caliber machine gun. It was an attempt to offset the 20mm cannons in the enemy aircraft. (Picture furnished by Charles Hollenberg, Tail Gunner, 49th Squadron.)

Back cover photograph: Formation of B-17s of the 2nd Bombardment Group over Italy on the way to the target.

Description of emblems on cover (top left clockwise): 20th Bomb Squadron: Approved June 12, 1924. A pirate standing on an aerial bomb and hurling a hand grenade; 429th Bomb Squadron: Approved May 12, 1930. A yellow quatrefoil bordered with red and Indian head in black war paint with three red feathers attached to scalp lock. Indian's arms are holding a drawn bow and arrow in black; 96th Bomb Squadron: Approved March 4, 1924 from World War I emblem. A red devil with a white aerial bomb against a black triangle with white edges; 2nd Bombardment Group: Libertatem Defendimus; 49th Bomb Squadron: Approved March 3, 1924 from world War I emblem. Wolf's head against an orange disc edged with gray.

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