

# Atmore Flier Awarded Medal For Exploits With Air Force

## Harry Patterson First To Land Bomber In Europe After Invasion

To Capt. Harry H. Patterson of Atmore, recently awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross at the Mobile Air Technical Service Command, also goes the distinction of piloting the first American bomber to land and take off from the continent of Europe after the Allied invasion.

His story has its beginning back in March, 1942, when Harry Patterson enlisted in the Army as a private, and in the same month was named an aviation cadet. On Dec. 7, 1942, he was commissioned a second lieutenant and donned his silver wings.

Assigned to the Third Air Force at Tampa, he flew transition and operational flights and submarine patrol, until overseas orders came in February, 1944.

### Escapes Plane Fire

At the controls of a B-26 Marauder, Capt. Patterson took off and headed for Scotland. All went well until the plane dropped into a jungle-encircled air field near the mouth of the Amazon River in Brazil.

Serviced and refueled, the B-26 roared down the runway to take off on the next leg of its journey—only to crash at the end of the runway. Though the plane burned fiercely, Capt. Patterson and his crew stepped out uninjured.

After a short wait the grounded airmen were furnished a B-24 Liberator for their run to Scotland. Right here and there, the "Goddess of Luck" moved up from her seat in the rear of the plane and perched on Capt. Patterson's shoulder, for although they were destined to lose four more battle-weary bombers, and complete 65 missions with the Ninth AAF's 397th Bomb Group over France, Belgium, Holland and

Germany—not a crew member was killed or wounded.

On D-Day, Capt. Patterson flew two missions and mere minutes before ground troops hit the beachhead his bombs helped flatten enemy opposition.

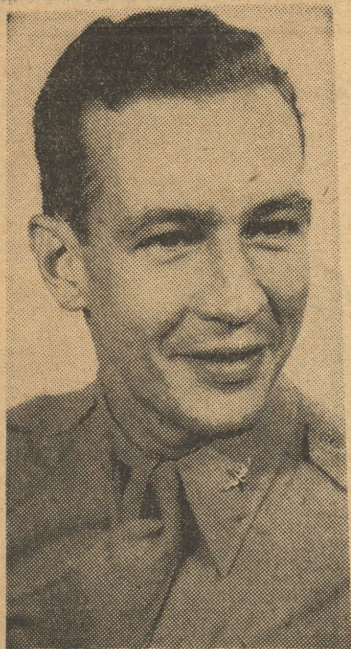
### Punctured by Flak

Two days later, on June 8, the "Princess," a B-26 Marauder piloted by the Atmore flier, with her sides and wings carrying 300 flak holes, had to come down for some "right now" emergency repairs. Six miles west of Caen, France, and one mile behind the front lines, its runways lined on one side by barrage balloons, the little Spitfire fighter strip A-2 offered refuge. The "Princess" came in for a landing, hit the steel matting runway and raised a billowing cloud of dust, which German mortar gunners—who came close but not close enough—used for a target.

Spitfire mechanics patched the B-26 up, borrowed gasoline, filled her tanks and Capt. Patterson took the "Princess" up again, to become the first American bomber pilot to land and take off from continental Europe.

Currently assigned to base operations at MoATSC, Capt. Patterson wears the European Theater of Operations ribbon with six battle stars, the American Theater ribbon and the Air Medal with 12 Oak Leaf Clusters, in addition to the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The son of Mrs. Alexandra Grace Patterson and the late H. H. Patterson of Atmore, Capt. Patterson's two sisters, Mrs. Adeline Golima and Mrs. Reid Wood, reside at 6 Japonica Ave., Mobile, and Point Clear respectively.



**HARRY PATTERSON**

... Lady Luck rode in cockpit