

## First Mission Hardest Says Aerial Gunner

"The first mission is the hardest. You want to run in a corner and hide. But you have to stick. And after the first time, you get hardened."

When Staff Sgt. Howard L. Spengler took off on his first mission as photographer and aerial gunner on a B-24 Liberator over enemy territory in the China-Burma-India theater, he was 19



S/SGT. HOWARD SPENGLER

years of age. Now after 11 months of combat flying, he has returned to Bethlehem for a 21-day furlough. He will then report to a rest camp in Santa Anna, Calif.

Son of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Spengler of 946 Main Street, the 20-year-old aerial gunner was a graduate of Liberty High School, class of 1943. Within five months he has received three promotions, the last one just before his return. He wears the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal and cluster, the Asiatic theater ribbon and stars for bombing missions in Burma, as well as the Presidential Unit citation. He entered service in April of 1943.

Among the experiences which made a lasting impression on Staff Sgt. Spengler were those he went through while he was flying high test gasoline over the hump of the Himalayas to serve Chinese airfields during the monsoon season when ordinary flying was made impossible by heavy rains. Flying crews were slated to rest during this period, but the Japs had all highways blocked to China airfields, so the extra effort made by our men saved the airfields.