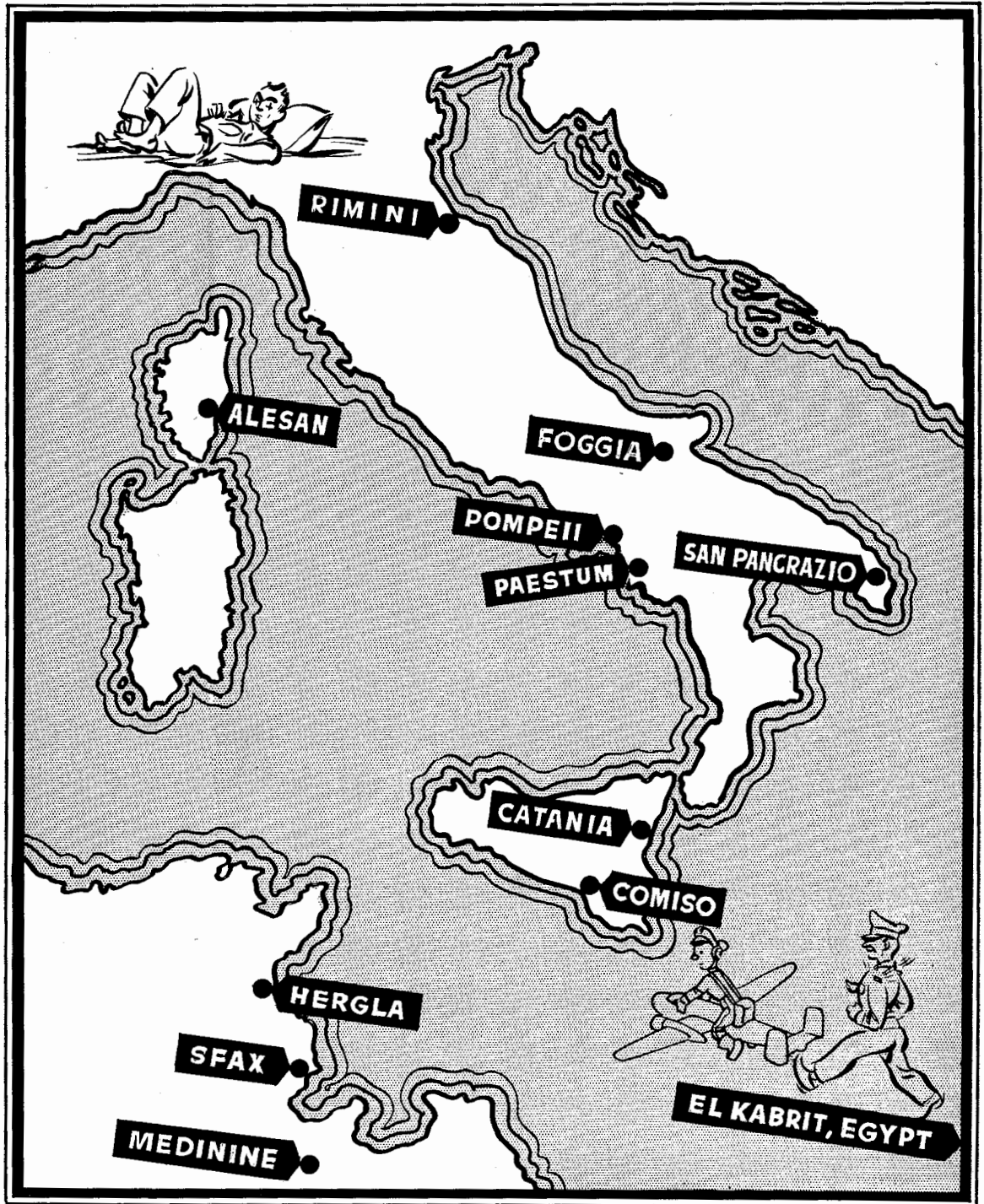


TACTICAL DIARY

- ★ COLUMBIA
- ★ WALTERBORO
- ★ CAMP STONEMAN
- ★ THE WEST POINT
FLIGHT ECHELON LOG
- ★ EL KABRIT
- ★ MEDININE
- ★ SFAX
- ★ HERGLA
- ★ COMISO
- ★ CATANIA
- ★ SAN PANCRAZIO
- ★ FOGGIA
- ★ POMPEI
- ★ PAESTUM
- ★ ALESAN
- ★ RIMINI

★ OPERATIONAL BASES ★



COLUMBIA, S. C. On 3 September, 1942, during the darkest days of the war, a Major and four new 2d Lieutenants gathered in a corner of Colonel (later Brigadier General) Robert D. Knapp's office at Columbia Air Base, Columbia, South Carolina. The corner was separated from the rest of the office by waist-high partitions. In the partitioned corner were a desk, a field table, a typewriter and some paper. On the desk at which the Major sat, and around which the four Lieutenants gathered, was a mimeographed sheet inscribed "Headquarters, Columbia Army Air Base, Columbia, South Carolina, General Orders No. 19, August 20, 1942." This order proclaimed that the "following units are activated":

Headquarters, 340th Bomb Gp (m)
 486th Bomb Sq (m)
 487th Bomb Sq (m)
 488th Bomb Sq (m)
 489th Bomb Sq (m)

The five officers present, one other 2d Lieutenant, then on leave, the desk, table, typewriter and paper comprised the entire 340th Bomb Group. The Major seated at the table studied the paper awhile, then pointing to the line reading "489th Bomb Sq (m)," turned to 2d Lieutenant Dewitt F. Fields and said, "Lieutenant, that is your Squadron."

Thus, VOCCO, the first person was assigned to the 489th Bomb Squadron.

After the conference, Lt. Fields hurried to the station Quartermaster and drew a field table, a typewriter, some typing paper, carbon paper, and blank forms for requisitioning supplies. When the Quartermaster officer refused a request for a field desk, Lt. Fields borrowed a hammer and saw, and proceeding to a scrap lumber pile built a box with shelves and pigeon holes. That afternoon, the 489th Bomb Squadron was set up in a corner of Colonel Knapp's office.

On 5 September, five Privates reported to the 489th Bomb Squadron. They were De Lisa, De Mio, Della Pietro, Dodge and Creeden. On 9 September, the Morning Report of the 489th Bomb Squadron began with the entry, "The 489th Bomb Sq (m) was activated on 20 August 1942 by SO. No. 19, Hq. CAAF, Columbia, S. C. with no personnel assigned or attached." The entry might well have added, "and with no equipment."

The first hectic days were spent in helping form a cadre of personnel from the 376th Bomb Squadron, 309th Bomb Group (m), and requisitioning, begging and borrowing supplies and equipment. By the time the cadre was ready to move in, the 489th Bomb Squadron possessed one whole row of pyramidal tents in "Tent City," complete with cots and mattresses. A make-shift orderly room had also been established.

About 12 September, the cadre moved into the squadron area. S/Sgt. McAvoy was designated First Sergeant, Cpl. Eldridge was made supply sergeant, T/Sgt. Johnson became line chief, Sgt. Burkholder became communications chief. Others were designated to appropriate sections, most of which were not in existence.

For several days after the arrival of the cadre the chief duties were still "scrounging" for equipment, doing K.P., policing the squadron area, flooring tents, and basic training.

However, when a new unit is activated, the unit is not left entirely to its own devices in securing personnel and equipment. All the way up and down the chain of command, certain actions are initiated automatically to furnish necessary supplies and personnel whenever a new unit is activated. By the middle of September personnel began reporting from replacement centers and other organizations, and a trickle of supplies started. The squadron area expanded to two rows of tents, and building space was set aside on the flight line for the squadron.

Then the squadron got a Commanding Officer. 1st Lt. Fred M. Hampton reported and assumed command. He brought with him 2d Lt. William O. Dell as Squadron Operations Officer. Enlisted combat crew members reported (and immediately found themselves on K.P. or police details. These details they performed cheerfully and cooperatively). Then the officers began to arrive—first bombardiers, then pilots, then navigators. Soon 1st Lt. Howard P. Bunch, a non-flying officer, reported, and Lt. Fields gleefully turned over to him the duties of Supply Officer.

During this period, Lt. Fields and an engineering clerk, neither of whom had previous experience with payrolls, laboriously prepared the first squadron payroll which a generous Finance Officer accepted with some qualms. On payday, 30 September, the squadron felt that it was truly an organization.

On 1 October, the first squadron orders were published. Over the signature of 1st Lt. Hampton, the orders proclaimed that 2d Lt. Deel was Operations Officer, 1st Lt. Bunch was Supply Officer and 2d Lt. Fields was Squadron Adjutant. The order also contained the first squadron promotions. Appointed Pfc. were Pvts. George R. Wells, John J. Crockett, Robert E. Helie, Cecil F. Hines, Alan G. Hughes, William Huntsman, Eugene McCrann, Adam A. Syno, and Gus R. Walker. The order also placed on flying duty the following persons:

S/Sgt. William G. Baumgartner
 S/Sgt. Morris Beital
 S/Sgt. William R. Culver
 S/Sgt. Arnold A. Lassen
 S/Sgt. Ray J. Salisbury
 S/Sgt. Eugene L. Kretzer
 Cpl. Cleo A. McIntosh
 Cpl. Charles P. Starks
 Pvt. Thomas G. Bryan
 Pvt. George H. Crook
 Pvt. Peter J. Cusintine
 Pvt. Charles B. Hacker
 Pvt. Frank S. Janik
 Pvt. Horace J. Luchford
 Pvt. Wayne D. McLaughlin

All were made Aerial Engineers.

On 5 October, 1942, the "First Phase" OTU program for the 489th Bomb Squadron officially began. OTU, more commonly called "Overseas Training Unit," meant "Operational Training Unit." The program for a bomb group was ordinarily divided into three phases, the first being equivalent to basic training for air-crew and ground personnel alike. The month of October saw most of the sections of the squadron take form and substance.

With borrowed airplanes, at first, and largely with borrowed equipment, the 489th aircrew training got under way. Tentative Flight Leaders and First Pilots were named, and a few tentative crews set up. Navigation flights, instrument flights, practice landings and take-offs, and practice bombing, among other training, were initiated for aircrews. Gunners were given training and practice in gunnery. The Engineering Technical Supply, Armament, Communications, and Ordnance sections were brought into actual being. A squadron S-2, comprised of 2d Lt. William R. Ziegler and Cpl. McNamara was established. 2d Lt. Robert A. Doak reported as Ordnance Officer. Several Private and Pfc. Ordnance men also reported, but since they were only labeled "basic," no one knew for two weeks that they were Ordnance personnel. Lt. Fields, trying a new scheme for securing K.P. details, doubtfully issued a call for volunteers for duty as "semi-permanent" K.P.'s. When eight of the Ordnance men volunteered, both Lt. Fields and First Sergeant McAvoy were stunned. Soon, however, Lt. Doak found that the K.P.'s belonged to him and the "dream" was over.

2d Lts. William Milloway and Edward Yacko reported as Engineering and Technical Supply Officers, and the flight line began to take shape.

Physical training, including games, hikes, and obstacle courses was inaugurated. Close-order drill and the manual of arms were taught by the Aircrew Officers. Squadron and Group inspections became regular and frequent. The squadron finally established its own mess and supply room. A practice bomb was painted with the squadron number and hung out proudly for all to see. When Lt. Hampton became a Captain, the Squadron swelled with pride. Everyone seemed to work together and delinquencies were few and minor.

About 1 November the squadron area was moved from "Tent City" to the old 376th Squadron Area. Training and administration almost settled into routine as the program assumed form and officers and men became familiar with their duties.

During this period, and immediately following the next move, several new non-flying officers reported. Those reporting

included Captain Kirk S. White, 2d Lts. Saul Cutler and Jack A. Casper, all S-2 Officers; 2d Lt. Mark W. Bowsber, Administrative Officer; 2d Lts. Merle F. Peterson and Robert F. Jordan, Armament Officers; 2d Lt. Barlow, Training Officer; 2d Lt. Walter Scott, Communications Officer; and 2d Lt. Charley C. Nickerson, Statistical Officer.

Among the flying officers now present were: 2d Lt. Leonard Kaufmann, 2d Lts. Kay, Decker, Wagner, Hamill, D. W. Scott, R. D. Scott, Hamilton, Kemp—all pilots; 2d Lts. Zerega and Mates—navigators; 2d Lts. Olson and O'Connell—bombardiers; and Captain John O. Nestor, flight surgeon.

WALTERBORO S. C. On 1 December, 1942, the 489th Bomb Squadron made its first of many moves. The move carried the squadron to Walterboro, S. C., to enter "second phase" training. It soon became known, however, that an early date for departure for overseas had been set and that the second and third phases of training were to be telescoped into one. All training was speeded.

At Walterboro, the 489th Squadron, for the first time, had its own "area," separate from the rest of the Group. A separate flight line section was also established and signs reading "489th this" and "489th that" flourished.

In the training phase, squadron navigators, bombardiers and flight leaders were designated and crews finally established. Training was no longer carried on at the crew level, but progressed to flight, squadron and group tactical training. Simulated combat missions were made on Georgia and South Carolina "targets." Crews were briefed and interrogated in simulation of combat conditions. Hikes, close-order and extended-order drill, chemical warfare training, range firing and practice alerts became daily routine. Continuous physical examinations separated those physically unfit for overseas. Allotments, insurance and bonds "sales" were conducted with vigor. Efforts to bring the squadron to T/O & E strength in personnel and equipment became almost frenzied.

Morale and squadron esprit de corps found a new high. The 489th Bomb Squadron grew out of the infant stage and when the awaited call came, departed eagerly and confidently for war.

At Walterboro, South Carolina, the 489th suffered two of the severest blows of the squadron's existence. On 27 December, 1942, Captain Hampton, the beloved Squadron Commander, was killed in a plane crash near Monroe, Louisiana. Killed with him were the entire crew of the plane including 2d Lt. Thomas A. Johnston, 2d Lt. Henry M. Barlow, 2d Lt. Henry R. Perchall, T/Sgt. Edwin J. Mathews, Sgt. Murray E. Scott, T/Sgt. Robert P. Wiltshire.

On 12 January, 1943, Lt. Arnold W. Kay, "A" Flight Leader, and his entire crew were killed in a plane crash near Savannah, Georgia. Those killed in addition to Lt. Kay were 2d Lt. Floyd A. W. Hale, Jr., T/Sgt. Roy S. Zufall, Cpl. George W. Silva, S/Sgt. Arnold A. Lassen, S/Sgt. Ronald Medlen. In addition to the keen personal loss felt by all members, the squadron was deprived of two of its key leaders almost on the verge of departure for overseas.

Temporarily, Lt. Deel assumed command. Soon, however, a new Squadron Commander, 1st Lt. Alexander H. Parrish, arrived.

In spite of the losses, feverish preparations for overseas departure continued. Late in January, the whole Group staged a "final rehearsal" dress parade. The ground echelon paraded while flight echelons passed in review overhead. The 489th gave a good account of itself both on the ground and in the air. In fact, the air echelon did so well that the new Squadron Commander, who had just that day received orders making him a Captain, was called before the Colonel to explain why his squadron flew so low. Captain Parrish was so scared he put his Captain's bars in his pocket and reported to the Colonel as a First Lieutenant, afraid the Colonel might decide to take his "railroad tracks" from him.

After several days of "we're leaving—we're not leaving" and of "we sail from Norfolk—no, we sail from Frisco," the squadron finally received definite orders. The supplies and equipment were loaded aboard flat cars and box cars to be shipped to Norfolk. The ground echelon boarded "Train No. 2" on 29 Jan-

uary, 1943, and headed for San Francisco. The flight echelon remained behind to depart shortly for overseas by air, via Michigan, Florida and South America. There was some apprehension regarding the probability of the ground echelon, air echelon and equipment being brought together again.

CAMP STONEMAN, CAL., just outside San Francisco, was a busy staging area. The 489th Squadron found itself to be only one of many units making final preparations for overseas duty. The stay at Camp Stoneman was ten days of drill, hiking, obstacle courses, lectures, physical examinations, "showdown" clothing inspections and of last-minute administrative work with insurance, allotments, wills, etc. Practically all the enlisted personnel, however, were allowed passes into town, and the officers were free to come and go after duty hours. Camp Stoneman and San Francisco proved sources of many memories, pleasant and otherwise, for most of the squadron personnel.

WEST POINT. On 14 February, 1943, the 489th marched single file up the gangplank of the transport "West Point" to the accompaniment of a band and a fair-size cheering section of civilians and soldiers. On 15 February, the squadron watched the Golden Gate slip slowly into the distance. Soon, the West Coast disappeared behind the horizon and the overseas adventure was begun.

At first, the squadron was more or less apprehensive on learning that the "West Point" was to sail without escort. This feeling soon faded, however, to be replaced with one of relief at not being tied down to the pace of a convoy. The ship was fast and many bristling guns added to the feeling of security.

Most of the squadron personnel were assigned work details of one kind or another while aboard ship, but work hours were, for the most part, short and work was not so arduous. Some of the remaining time was taken up in "Abandon boat" drills. Movies, stage shows, and libraries helped pass the time. Perhaps the favorite way of spending leisure time was indulging in one of the Army sports of poker, dice, or "blackjack." Much money traded hands, and, on the average, the 489th gave a good account of itself in these sports.

Officers found to their delight that several nurses were aboard and not a few shipboard romances came into being. Orchestras were organized and moonlight dances held on deck. The Yacht Club Boys also entertained.

The forty-two-day voyage from San Francisco to Egypt added much to the store of experiences of the squadron. One-day shore leave in Melbourne, Australia, and two-day shore leave in Bombay, India, added to memories, conversation and the growing collection of souvenirs. When the equator was crossed, most of the squadron personnel learned that they were "pollywogs." After a hilarious ceremony, however, everyone was awarded a certificate making them members of Neptune's Society.

Crossing the International Date Line proved a source of speculation and argument. The squadron went to bed on Thursday night and awoke to find that it was Saturday. "Lt. Fields," asked First Sergeant McAvoy, "What entry should I make in the squadron morning report for Friday?"

"Oh, just make an entry stating we crossed the International Date Line," Lt. Fields replied, trying to look unperturbed.

"But the strength section, sir?"

"Leave it blank." Lt. Fields, so saying, hurried off to ascertain what other squadrons were doing about the "missing day."

Soon, however, another problem became apparent.

"How about our ice cream?"

The ship exchange carried candy, soft drinks and ice cream. These luxuries were rationed out, each unit being assigned a certain day each week on which to be issued these goodies. Friday was the day appointed for the 489th to draw its issue of the longed-for ice cream, so the fact that the missing day was Friday caused more than the expected amount of furor. After some wrangling, however, with the ship's store personnel, the ice cream issue was obtained.

On 29 March, 1943, the long voyage ended. The squadron was put ashore in lighters near Suez, Egypt. The unit supplies

that had accompanied the personnel were unloaded and stacked near the docks. Guards were left with these few supplies and the remainder of the personnel boarded what passed for a train, to continue the journey to the first overseas destination.

While sitting in the station waiting for the train to get under way, Lt. Jack Casper decided to try out his small store of recently acquired Arabic. Taking out the booklet that had been issued prior to debarkation, and turning to the section marked "Useful Arabic Phrases," Lt. Casper inquired of a native:

"What time is it?"

"Half past one," the native replied in perfect Oxford English. This was the first of many similar experiences for the squadron personnel.

FLIGHT ECHELON

I. Pilots' log, Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida, to Cairo, Egypt. All time in this account is G.M.T. First leg, Morrison Field to Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico, 27 February, 1943. T.O. 1245 hrs. Altitude: 8,000 ft. Weather: No serious weather was encountered. At 8,000 ft. we easily cleared all cloud formations. Clouds for the most part were scattered cumulus. On arriving at Borinquen there seemed to be a thunderstorm moving in over the field but it did not bother us. Landed at 1801 hours. Facilities at Borinquen: Fueling and service excellent. Had automatic pilot repaired. Quarters were very good.

B-25C 42-53488

Pilot	Kaufmann, L., Jr.	1st Lt.
Co-pilot	Hamilton, J. M.	1st Lt.
Bomb.-Nav.	Nelson, D. W.	2nd Lt.
Engineer	Vaudry, F. A.	S/Sgt.
Radio Op.	Glick, P. H.	T/Sgt.
Gunner	Berren, A. C.	S/Sgt.
Passenger	Williams, C. O.	T/Sgt.

II. Borinquen Field to Waller Field, Trinidad, 28 February, 1943. (It was our intention to proceed to Atkinson Field but weather forced us to land at Waller.) T.O. 1015 hrs. Altitude: 11,000 ft. Weather: Cumulus clouds with considerable vertical development forced us to fly at 11,000 ft. We were able to clear all weather at this altitude. Landed at 1515 hrs. Facilities at Waller: Service, excellent; quarters were all right.

III. Waller Field to Atkinson, B. G., 1 March, 1943. T.O. 0930 hrs. Altitude: 6,500 ft. Weather: Sky was mainly overcast about 6-7 tenths covered cumulus clouds. At 6,500 ft. we were able to go around all clouds. Upon nearing Atkinson we let down to 1,000 ft. Landed at 1200 hrs. Facilities: Service, excellent. Repair facilities not so hot. Quarters were good. We were delayed one day at Atkinson because of faulty brake accumulator boot. We replaced it with a new one we had in our engineering equipment on the ship. There were no accumulator boots available on the field.

IV. Atkinson Field to Belem, Brazil, 3 March, 1943. T.O. 1315 hrs. Altitude: 700-1,000 ft. Weather conditions: Scattered cumulus clouds ranging from 4 tenths coverings to solid overcast. We followed the coast line to avoid the bad weather over land. We were never on instruments more than 30 minutes at a time. Landed at 1850 hrs. Facilities at Belem: Service—no 100-octane fuel available. Supply ran out the day we arrived. Quarters and meals were good. We stayed at Belem for two days waiting for fuel. Pulled 50-hour inspection on plane.

V. Belem, Brazil, to Natal, Brazil, 6 March, 1943. T.O. 1015 hrs. Altitude: 9,000 ft. for first two hours, 1,000 ft. for rest of trip. Weather: Scattered cumulus 5 tenths sky coverage. Considerable vertical development which could not be cleared at our altitude. Let down to 1,000-ft. after two hours. Encountered occasional showers. Facilities at Natal: Service excellent; meals good; quarters overcrowded; beds had straw mattresses. One of our men found a small snake (or large worm) about eight inches long in his bed; caused considerable excitement for a few minutes. We off-loaded two men and considerable baggage and equipment here to be sent to Accra by transport.

VI. Natal to Ascension Island, 8 March, 1943. T.O. 0920 hrs. Altitude: 9,000 ft. Weather: Scattered cumulus 5-7 tenths sky cover at about 3,000 ft. to 5,000 ft. Landed at 1710 hrs. Facilities at Ascension: Service good; repair—obtained new magnets for right engine. Quarters and meals fair. General: Our fuel consumption was satisfactory on this hop. We landed with about two hours' fuel in our tanks. On approaching the island we were met by two P-39's who motioned for us to let down our gear for the approach. We made this flight with Lt. Stacey in 42-473. Lt. J. Zerega was navigator for the flight.

VII. Ascension Island to Accra, 9 March, 1943. T.O. 0816 hrs. Altitude: 9,000 ft. Weather: Scattered cumulus first part of trip. Nearing coast of Africa we passed through a mild front. Landed at 1710 hrs. Facilities at Accra: Service good. Quarters and meals excellent. We had to wait nine days for our equipment to arrive from Natal.

VIII. Accra, Africa, to Maidurgi, 19 March, 1943. T.O. 1105 hrs. Altitude: 6,000 ft. Weather: High overcast as far as Lagos on coast. Lagos to Kano clear but hazy. Kano to Maidurgi same. Landed 1710 hrs. Facilities at Maidurgi: Service all right; meals good; quarters were good but they were all filled when we arrived so we slept (or tried to) on the floor in the recreation hall.

IX. Maidurgi to Khartoum, 20 March, 1943. T.O. 0920 hrs. Altitude: 9,000 ft. Weather: Clear sky, very hazy up to 9,000 ft. Visibility 4 miles at 1,000 ft. Landed at 1340 hrs. Trip made by way of El Fasher, checked fuel at El Fasher and decided to go on to Khartoum. Facilities at Khartoum: Service all right; meals O.K.; quarters were good. Runway in poor condition. Could not contact tower.

X. Khartoum to Cairo (Heliopolis), 21 March, 1943. T.O. 0503 hrs. Altitude: 5,000 ft. Weather: Clear at Khartoum. Two hours out we encountered poor visibility due to sand storms and scattered clouds at 5,000 ft. Cairo and vicinity were completely closed in by a sandstorm. Facilities at Cairo: Service O.K.; meals fair; ate out of mess kits. Quarters very poor. Most of the beds had no mattresses. On the morning of the 22nd I discovered that all the enlisted men in my crew had been put on K.P. duty. I had to get them off K.P. to get some work done on the plane. We were attached to an Infantry company for quarters and rations at Heliopolis Depot. General: We made the flight from Khartoum in a three-ship formation. 1st Lt. Stacey was leading in B-25C No. 42-53473. The third man in the formation was 1st Lt. McAloon in B-25C No. 42-53463. We had intended to stay in Khartoum on the 21st for maintenance on our airplanes. The Operations Officer at Khartoum ordered us to leave on the 21st. As a result, our crews had to perform the required maintenance during the night in spite of the fact that they had little or no sleep on the night before at Maidurgi. When we got our clearance in the morning at Khartoum they told us that the weather at Heliopolis was good but that we would encounter moderate sand storms enroute. As we approached within 30 miles of Cairo the visibility lowered to about 1 mile in dust. We located the field and started circling with wheels down while receiving landing instructions from the radio station. I was in No. 2 position behind Lt. Stacey and Lt. McAloon was in No. 3 position. After circling the field three times, Lt. Stacey tried to make an approach for landing. At this time I lost sight of Lt. Stacey's ship and so we made a separate approach. After making about six passes at the field, we landed at 1140 G.M.T. Lt. Hamilton was flying as pilot on this trip and made the landing. After landing, we kept our radio turned on and waited for the other ships to land. The other two ships continued to make passes at the field. There were two B-24's and a C-47 circling the field. The operator in the radio station, attempting to control traffic, ordered Lt. Stacey to stand by at 2,000 ft. He complied but warned them that he was low on fuel. The radio station then cleared the B-24's and the C-47 to land. They were aided by flares fired at the beginning of the landing strip. Lt. McAloon, who did not have radio contact with the station, finally managed to land at 1300 G.M.T. At this time Lt. Stacey again called and told them that he had only 30 minutes' supply of fuel left. The visibility this time was down to ½ mile or less. Lt. Stacey made two more passes at the field, failing to land

both times. He was then ordered to abandon ship. We were informed later only four men bailed out. Lt. Stacey and two others went down with the ship and perished. Upon inquiry we discovered that weather conditions had been bad at Heliopolis for 24 hours prior to our arrival. In view of this fact we should never have been cleared from Khartoum. The field at Heliopolis is hard to land on even in good weather because it is hard to see. At the time that Lt. Stacey made the last two passes at the field, the visibility was so bad that it was impossible to make a landing.

LEONARD KAUFMANN, JR.
1s Lt., Air Corps

KABRIT, EGYPT. After a rattling afternoon trip through the desert, the train halted and the command was given to dismount. Personnel lined up beside the narrow railroad track and watched the train pull away. Gradually, laughter and chatter faded as everyone looked around at the spacious, bleak surrounding desert. The view was anything but heartening.

"Almost wish I were back in Walterboro," a whimsical voice said, and the ripple of laughter helped break the feeling of being lost.

Just before despair set in, a jeep came bouncing across the desert and Captain Parrish bounded out to greet, and be greeted by, his ground echelon. The flight echelon had arrived first.

The happiness of the reunion of the flight and ground echelons, however, was marred by the news that one of the planes on 21 March, 1943, had crashed near Cairo, just short of the overseas destination and Lt. William A. Stacey, pilot; Lt. Phil Gould, bombardier, and Sgt. Aldus Cavanaugh, radio gunner, were killed. Those who bailed out were Lt. "Honest Joe" Zerega, navigator, a most colorful character, who was destined to bail out again a few months later; Lt. K. G. Morissette, co-pilot; Sgt. Wakeland, engineer; and Sgt. Schurig, gunner. Some of the other planes were delayed enroute because of weather or mechanical trouble and had not yet reached the new station. Despite this news, however, it was cheering to know that the squadron was together again as a unit and that the team that had trained together would be able to fight together.

Training at El Kabrit, Egypt, was largely operational, although some instruction was given in gas drill, "digging in" tents, etc. Experienced combat personnel from the front were brought back to train the flying personnel in tactics then being employed in the theater. Airplanes were modified to meet the needs of the current campaign.

Among the memories of El Kabrit that are sure to last are: The two-minute haircut-shave routine of the native barbers; the sandstorm during which most personnel abandoned "dust masks" and goggles and donned gas masks; trips, for many, to Cairo and to the Holy Land; the first contact with the "Limeys"; and the bad beer and worse shows.

"The Battle of Kabrit" was a battle for supplies and equipment and of retaining personnel. The happy reunion of the squadron had not included its equipment. Rumors were that the supplies had not yet left the States or that their shipment had been diverted to front line units. However, it was found that other outfits, arriving earlier, had gone forward without their equipment. When their equipment had arrived it had been scattered over and under the desert sands near the Suez Canal. By begging, cajoling, and digging in the sand, the squadron came up with a small amount of supplementary equipment.

Life was even further complicated by the desires of several undermanned outfits to secure replacements from the newly arrived unit.

MEDININE, TUNISIA. However, the squadron survived the dehydrated rations, the sandstorms, and the encroaches of other units, and in April began to move to the battle area. Advance personnel were flown to Medinine, Tunisia, to join the 12th Bomb Group and the British Eighth Army in their assaults on Rommel. Others departed later, by motor vehicle, for the long trip across the desert. A final party was left behind to continue the "Battle of El Kabrit," to complete modification of the planes, to forward whatever supplies could be obtained and to send other personnel forward as requested. 1st Lt. Ward Kemp was left in command of the squadron "rear echelon."

SFAX, TUNISIA. The battle against Rommel progressed so favorably that the advance party spent little time at Medinine. Before any of the motor convoy arrived, the advance party moved on to Sfax, Tunisia, and continued the war against Rommel. Some of the "rear echelon" personnel were flown to Sfax by transport plane to join the advance party.

On 25 April, 1943 (Easter Sunday), at Sfax, the squadron suffered another blow. Major Whittington, piloting "Little Joe," a 489th plane, co-piloted by Lt. William O. Deel, squadron Operations officer, collided in mid-air with "Old Mag Drop," piloted by F/O J. M. Gilbert. The planes had just taken off flying in close formation. Major Whittington was leading the formation when F/O Gilbert's plane came upward suddenly and wrecked the tail of the lead plane. Both planes crashed to the ground and their bombs exploded. Eleven of our squadron personnel were killed. They included: Lt. William O. Deel, flying as co-pilot; Lt. John Allen, squadron bombardier; Lt. Lewis B. Lawter, navigator; Sgt. Hugh E. Allen, gunner; Sgt. D. W. Webster, radio-gunner. Among the members of F/O Gilbert's crew were F/O F. N. Balmes, co-pilot; Lt. J. W. Stetler, navigator; S/Sgt. Clarence Reed, radio-gunner, and S/Sgt. Eugene Galbreath, gunner.

These were the squadron's first combat casualties. They were given a fitting military funeral in a British cemetery in the desert.

To take Lt. Deel's place as Operations Officer, 1st Lt. Leonard Kaufmann was brought back from Group Headquarters, where he had been Assistant Group Operations Officer.

Soon, after a motor convoy trek across the desert that is a story in itself, the first convoy arrived and the 489th Squadron area was set up. 1st Lt. Mark Bowsher was immediately sent back to El Kabrit to bring the remaining ground echelon personnel forward by motor convoy. 1st Lt. Ward Kemp brought the remainder of the flight echelon to the front and for the first time, the 489th Bomb Squadron entered the war as a unit.

The squadron soon learned that it was in the war with a vengeance. Preparations were being made for the "final push" in Tunisia, and the air arm was being given a thorough workout. Almost daily, bombing missions were made against German targets, and after almost every mission, the planes would struggle back to the airfield filled with holes from enemy anti-aircraft, and crash landings were common. None of the combat crews of that period is likely to forget these raids. During this period 1st Lt. Zerega, formerly squadron navigator, then advanced to Group navigator, was shot down while navigating the lead plane of a bombing mission. It was learned, after an anxious delay, that he was alive. He had been wounded and taken prisoner. Later in the campaign he was liberated by advancing Allied units.

The enemy was active on the offense as well as defense. The Luftwaffe was still very much alive, and the harbor at Sfax seemed to be one of their pet targets. Thus, the squadron learned early what the receiving end of an air raid was like.

At Sfax, the first overseas officer promotions were received. Second Lieutenants Casper, Cutler, Farrell, Ziegler and Bowsher, of the ground echelon, were made First Lieutenants. First Lieutenants Kaufmann and Fields were promoted to Captain.

Among the many incidents of Sfax that will live in the squadron memory is the night air raid during which a false gas alarm was sounded. To add to the general confusion, a drunk pushed a tent in on its occupants who, thinking they were attacked by paratroopers, began shooting. Despite the commotion, it was easy to hear a voice ring out:

"Guard, Guard, where are you?"

"I'm over here," came a voice from behind a bunker.

"Well, come over here!"

"I'm not coming till the shooting stops."

HERGLA, TUNISIA. On 4 June, 1943, the 489th Bomb Squadron packed again and moved to Hergla Airfield, between Sousse and Enfidaville, Tunisia, little realizing that Hergla was to become one of the most remembered places in the squadron existence.

At Hergla, the 489th became a "veteran" outfit. The newness of being overseas, the novelty of Africa, and the mysteries

of combat became much less apparent. The end of the Tunisian campaign was greeted almost hilariously as the end of a campaign that had been "rough," particularly to combat crews. The fast, easy victory over Pantelleria helped buoy hopes and spirits. The war looked much better than it did the day the squadron left South Carolina. Home seemed much nearer than it did at Kabrit. Everyone talked eagerly of an invasion of Sicily or Italy and looked forward to it. When the remainder of the flight echelon completed their journey overseas and joined the squadron, they found themselves listening to endless recitals of travel and adventure and to much advice from the "veterans."

However, even the elation over the Tunisian and Pantellerian victories and the speculation regarding future operations were not enough to offset several disadvantages of Hergla that could hardly be ignored. And when, after Pantelleria and Lampedusa had fallen, the squadron was placed on a "stand-down" basis and relegated to training only, the lacks and inconveniences of Hergla became even more noticeable.

Hergla was a large desert salt flat on the Mediterranean coast. Although Sousse was nearby and Tunis not too far distant, it was still an isolated place. These towns were not very large and were considerably war-battered. The rest of the surroundings were composed largely of vast stretches of sand. Water was scarce and it was necessary to make long trips to bring in water supplies. Drinking water was chlorinated for sanitary purposes. Hot chlorinated water is far from palatable. The desert temperature was constantly high and the winds kept sand drifting around and into everything.

Since the outfit operated from the Egyptian side of the Tunisian campaign, equipment was largely British and rations almost altogether British, as well as scarce. Hot tea and hot imitation lemonade were the alternating beverages. "C" rations and "bully beef" were standard food items. When, once, an issue of canned Argentine beef was obtained, personnel were considerably cheered and welcomed it as a delicacy. On one memorable occasion, Lt. Mark Bowsher, on a "scrounging" trip, bought a lean, slightly aged cow. Lt. Bowsher and the cow were greeted joyously.

Post exchange items were few and far between. Avid smokers had to resort to the "V" cigarettes and to cigarettes contained in "K" ration packs to tide them over between ration issues. Razor blades and toilet articles became much-sought items.

The abundance and tenacity of the desert flies and the mosquitos did little to add to comfort. When all these woes were capped by a vicious siege of dysentery, life became indeed something less than joyous. For endless days, life became one sprint after another.

Then, as though to prove that life hadn't been so bad, after all, the sirocco came. The winds ceased blowing from over the Mediterranean and began blowing straight out of the heart of the desert, traveling over the parched sands. The drinking water which was already warm, became scalding and could not be drunk. Pistol butts, helmets, mechanic tools, metal desks, etc., became too hot to handle. Those who left their tents to escape the walled-in heat found it even less bearable outside where the direct blast was like furnace heat. By late afternoon, practically everyone was "dunking" in the Mediterranean, exposing only enough anatomy to continue breathing.

Although cheering news was received at Hergla that the supplies and equipment which had been packed and shipped from the States had reached Africa, the news offered only hope for the future. The boat carrying the supplies had docked in Egypt and no transportation was available for forwarding it. The boat eventually was sent on to Tripoli in a move to bring it nearer the front, but the squadron departed Africa before getting any of the equipment. Meanwhile, "scrounging" was the order of the day. German and Italian cars, trucks, motorcycles, power units, communication equipment, etc., was salvaged and put into use. By the time the squadron departed Hergla, its motor convoys consisted of strange conglomerations of war relics.

No chronicle of the stay in Africa would be complete without at least a passing mention of the "Wogs," or natives. The desert tribes seemed not in the least concerned with the war. They traveled behind and between American and German lines with a strange impunity. They seemed to have no horror of

the minefields which abounded in Tunisia, and were only slightly annoyed by buzzing airplanes and speeding vehicles which almost ran them down. Watching these strange people gave one an uncanny feeling that they were apart from the world and ageless. Having been in the path of strife since before even the times of Hannibal and the Carthaginians, war was a commonplace event to them and disturbed their lives to an unbelievable minimum extent.

Hergla proved a good place for watching air raids. With harbors of Sousse and Tunis nearby, and convoys passing just off the coast, the Germans didn't take time to give the airfield any personal attention. The bombings with the attendant anti-aircraft fire could be watched from a comparatively safe grandstand seat although the expectancy of being on the calling list did not help boost morale.

Despite the fact that the consensus of opinion is that memories of Hergla are anything but sweet, there were some saving features. The proximity of the Mediterranean made frequent bathing and swimming possible. A peculiar type of quail that nested in the sparse, short, tough grass that dotted part of the desert furnished sport in the form of a new type of hunting. The birds were hunted by jeep without the use of guns. The procedure was simply to chase the bird about the desert, by jeep, until it became exhausted, then pounce upon it from the jeep. In addition to being sport, this helped offset pangs of hunger.

Also on the pleasant side of the stay were the beautiful, realistic mirages. It afforded much amusement to see all the planes apparently parked in a beautiful blue lake or to watch a jeep race down the middle of a lake, kicking up a cloud of dust.

When bombing operations were resumed, this time against Sicily, morale rose. As more and more American planes appeared in the sky, and as short journeys revealed a constant stream of men and equipment moving into Africa, expectancy mounted.

Finally, the night before the Sicilian invasion, personnel were let in on the secret and told of the invasion plans. It was a beautiful sight the next day to see our own planes join a constant stream of fighters and bombers going to or coming from Sicily. When, in the afternoon, swarms of transport planes, loaded with paratroopers, began to take off from an adjoining field and head toward Sicily, the squadron knew the war had resumed.

On 27 July, 1943, the squadron was divided into "advance" and "rear" parties (in order to insure continuous operations, first from Hergla, then, upon arrival of the "advance" party, from the new location), and the "advance" party loaded on assorted motor vehicles and set out for Tunis. Four days later, they loaded on LST's and sailed for Sicily. The destination was Comiso, an airfield the squadron had just bombed thoroughly.

COMISO, SICILY. On the night of 3 August, 1943, the squadron advance party unloaded at Gela, Sicily, and using blackout lights, or no lights at all, moved out to a predetermined bivouac area beyond the town. All personnel were armed and on the alert. Sentries were posted and word passed around to not move about. This was the first move into the enemy's native territory and the manner of greeting was uncertain. In addition, the enemy had extravagantly scattered mines about, and rumors were that many Italian soldiers, dressed in civilian garb, were sniping behind our lines.

The journey to Comiso the next morning through several small towns, however, helped allay any fears of the natives. All the little children waved, gave the "V" for victory sign and shouted incessantly, "Americano," "Caramella," "Chewn Gum," "Cigarette." Their elders seemed friendly enough, though most of them were concerned more with moving out of caves and holes back into their homes than with the invaders.

Comiso proved a happy experience, coming after Hergla. The airfield itself had once been a beautiful "country-club" affair. The squadron noted ruefully the efficiency of its own bombing. Hangars, barracks, swimming pools, and tennis courts had been ruined. However, the runway and parking spaces were cleared off to make a nice landing field and the surrounding

countryside more than made up for the destroyed luxuries. Comiso was located in the most fertile valley region of Sicily. Orchards and vineyards abounded, eggs and vegetables could be purchased. The quaint rock houses, rock walls and terraces, and the winding mountain roads out of the valley proved the most beautiful and welcome scenery since arrival overseas. For the first time, also, there were pretty "white" girls around.

Shortly after the advance party reached Comiso the flight echelon followed, and later, the "rear" echelon.

Although the front lines were near, the enemy did little to harass the airfield at Comiso. A few paratroopers were dropped at a nearby town, once, and flares were dropped over the field, but the chief sources of worry were the mined vineyards, booby-trapped buildings, and the loose hand grenades and ammunition the enemy left behind.

Another thing contributing to the pleasantness of the stay at Comiso was the progress of the war. General Patton and the Seventh Army were sweeping aside all opposition. The capture of Sicily came quickly and speculation concerning the end of the war was rife. Rumors that Italy had surrendered set off premature celebrations among the natives.

CATANIA, SICILY. As might be expected, however, the stay at this garden spot was comparatively short. On 27 August, 1943, the squadron packed once more, moving north to Catania, Sicily, to continue operations against the Italian mainland.

Due to the fact that parts of the British Eighth Army were still encamped on and around the airfield, no squadron area was available and the squadron pitched a few tents in the airplane revetment area and carried on from there. Beautiful weather made it unnecessary to sleep inside, so a minimum of personnel tents were erected. Most of the personnel slept out under the sky.

The Jerries were still very much in the war as their constant air raids on Catania and nearby Syracuse proved. The squadron was kept rather busy ducking the first few days as German bomb-carrying fighters swept over. The bombs, however, were intended for the harbor and none landed on the airfield. The only injuries resulted from falling fragments of friendly anti-aircraft fire.

Catania and the surrounding area proved a veritable garden of minefields and booby traps. Sappers were constantly busy trying to clear areas for personnel to move into. When the Eighth Army remnants finally moved out, and squadron areas were selected, only hurried checks for mines could be made. It was with some misgivings, therefore, that the 489th moved out into its area in the woods and began clearing tent space and digging holes. No mines were encountered, however.

Catania, in several ways, proved a good location. The nearby town with Italian ice cream, young girls, and wine and "Spumante" was the nearest thing to civilization encountered overseas. The many hospitals in the area proved a boon because nurses could be invited to the clubs which sprang up in tents and in battered buildings. The nearby sea afforded swimming facilities, and the volcano, Mount Etna, provided a place for sight-seeing. A squadron orchestra was organized with Lts. Cutler, Bulkley, Demas, Gunner Egebjerg, and others playing the collection of instruments including a piano, guitar and bass fiddle. Captain Wagner, Lts. Demas and Cutler, and Sergeant Johnny Rovick provided the vocals. Not many of the squadron will forget those parties in the tent club.

Invasion of the Italian "toe" by the British Eighth Army, and later, the Salerno landing with the simultaneous announcement of the Italian surrender raised hopes higher. The rugged, close battle for the Salerno beachhead, however, in which the squadron participated by flying every flyable plane, caused a more sober outlook. It was still expected, though, that the Allies would march right on up the Italian boot, once the Salerno crisis had been solved successfully.

1 September, 1943—There was a stand-by at 0700 hours, then when a mission was finally called (takeoff to be at 1045 hours), the S-2 officers went to Group with the combat crews to attend briefing. The target was troop concentrations at Bouva Marina, Italy. The mission was successful and no ack-ack or enemy fighters were around to harass our planes. By today the shock of losing Lt. Nels Olson, our Bombardment Officer, has more or

less passed off. The opinion in the squadron is that a man in his nervous condition should never have been permitted to go near an airplane. It's just unfortunate that our setup is so inadequate that combat personnel are not relieved of flying when they have "had it."

2—We had two missions today, the first of which was a raid on a high-ranking enemy headquarters in Italy. This was a very rough assignment because the boys were bombing a pinpoint which they could not see from the air, but reports indicated that the raid was very successful. The second mission was a raid against an enemy airdrome in Italy, which was also successful. Speaking of raids, we had a bit of excitement here ourselves. Three ME-109's dived out of the sky and attempted to bomb the harbor of Catania. We were all rather frightened even though the attack was negligible in its effect. There has been quite a bit of talk and speculation as to when Italy will be invaded. We hope it is soon. Some new replacements came in today which made our combat crews happy.

3—There was a mission today at 0630, twelve of our planes going out to bomb the landing ground at Camegliatello, Italy. The mission was successful. The big news of today, though, was the invasion of Italy. At 11:30 last night, Allied Forces landed on the toe. Then larger units followed at 0430 hours this morning. Our Liaison Officer, Capt. Simpson, spoke to us on the invasion and gave us the details of the tactics to be shortly put into action. We moved over to our assigned area today and somehow or other, the 489th managed to get the worst area. A low area, full of mosquito breeding places and the farthest one from the field. Our food has been miserable and all the men are bitching to high heaven.

4—Capt. White, our S-2 Officer, indoctrinated the new men in the use of military grid maps and how to read co-ordinates, etc. Also explained the significance of the well-known bomb line. There was no mission today. The weather has been exceedingly pleasant, much like the autumn weather above the Mason-Dixon Line.

5—There was a mission at 0650 hours of 12 ships from our squadron and 12 from the 88th. The objective was Cosenza, Italy, but the formation turned back before reaching the target on account of bad weather. There was a stand-down the rest of the day.

6—There was a stand-down all day and most of the fellows took off for parts unknown, leaving the 489th area like a graveyard. There are not any events of interest or importance to record.

7—There was a mission at 1300 hours today in which 12 of our ships participated. The target was Crotona, Italy. Our bombers dropped 43,000 pounds of bombs on the objective in a perfect pattern. All planes returned, having encountered no fighter opposition and little ack-ack. Capt. Kaufmann, our Operations Officer, spoke to our combat crews on use of firearms around the area, and other talks of tactical importance were given by various members of the organization.

8—There was an all-day stand-down and some of the time was used in indoctrinating some of our new bombardiers and navigators in dead reckoning navigation, map reading, pin points, keeping of notes efficiently on observations and times of events while on missions, etc. At about 1830 hours we received the exciting news that Italy surrendered unconditionally at 1250 hours today. Later Capt. Simpson, our ALO, came over and spoke to us on the Italian surrender and Allied activities and progress in Italy. We are running a night mission in the Naples area. The time has not yet been given, but there will be six planes from our squadron. Tonight there was a party for all the officers in the Group at the Officers Club. Many British nurses were invited and the affair was quite successful except for the fact that our Commanding Officer had to give a little talk on the proper conduct of an officer at such affairs on account of the riotous antics of some of the attendants.

9—The mission over Avellino, Italy, this morning at 0240 hours was a complete failure and a calamity for the 340th Group as well as for our squadron. On the takeoff, the tail of a 487th plane, unable to get off, crashed into a gun emplacement, putting the ship completely out of control. It finally

crashed into a stone house in line with the end of the runway. All of the occupants, with the exception of the co-pilot, were killed. How he survived is a miracle. One of our planes, crewed by Lt. Ben F. Williams, pilot; Lt. R. D. Scott, co-pilot; Lt. Haller, bombardier; Sgt. Mitchell (his first combat mission), radio operator, and S/Sgt. Adam Syno, gunner, crashed in the sea about one minute after takeoff, killing the entire crew. The effect of this particular tragedy on the men was heavy as Lt. R. D. Scott was one of the best liked and most admired men in the squadron, as was Lt. Williams. Sgt. Syno was a colorful character who always held a warm place in all our hearts. They will never die in our memories. There has been some talk about neglect, which, if corrected, might have prevented these tragedies.

10—There was a mission at midnight but due to lack of coordination by fighters who were supposed to illuminate the target, our planes got there too soon, our bombers returned to the field without finding their objective and were interrogated by Capt. White at 0145 this morning. One ship did not return from this mission. Capt. Decker and his crew: Co-pilot, Lt. Egbjerg; bombardier, Lt. O'Connell; radio operator, Sgt. Rovick, and gunner, Sgt. McMillan, disappeared. We've given them all up for lost and the effect of this loss on our squadron is very heavy. Later this morning we had another mission with some motor transport as our objective. The ships all returned without having found the target.

11—Last night our squadron had a happy surprise. Capt. Decker's crew, which had been given up for lost, returned home safe and sound after a harrowing experience. Lost the night before, their fuel was exhausted before they could find our field. After consulting the other members of the crew as to whether they should bail out or attempt a water landing, they all voted to attempt the latter. Capt. Decker flew along the coast of Sicily and gradually brought the nose down until the waves were lapping at the belly of the plane. The crew waited for the terrific jar which they expected when the ship contacted the water, but they were all very much surprised at the ease with which the landing was accomplished. Before the plane had stopped skidding through the water, the crew was in action. Safety belts off, life raft released, IFF set detonated, parachute removed and the other essential operations under the circumstances accomplished. The crew all got into the dingy comfortably and paddled their way toward the nearest shore, not knowing whether they were in friendly or enemy territory. They were all very much fatigued and decided to try to get some rest. It was extremely cold and in addition their clothes were wet. But with the aid of the one parachute which they had carried with them, they managed to keep warm by all bundling together under the folds of silk. They found in the morning that they were fortunately rather close to our own base and they contacted the nearest Bomb Group which provided transportation for them to their base.

12—There was a stand-down all day and as usual our camp site resembled "the city morgue on Thursday morning." Most of the boys visited the interesting towns on the road up to Mt. Etna and returned with fantastic tales about wonderful chicken dinners, grapes the size of plums served ice cold, and even apples; C'est La Guerre! Lt. Ben F. Williams had a military funeral today at the American Military Cemetery at Gela. Lt. R. D. Scott's body was recovered from the wreckage of his plane today and funeral services were conducted this afternoon for him also.

13—This morning twelve of our Mitchells took off to bomb a road junction in Italy. The mission was very successful. I visited the town of Catania today and was very pleased to note that so many people were returning to their homes, the less fortunate working diligently to repair the havoc that war had brought upon their homes. We didn't have to worry about using flashlights on the base tonight as the brilliant full moon was exerting all its powers upon us.

14—We completed a successful mission today against the town of Battipaglia, Italy. Twelve of our Mitchells participated and they all returned unscathed, probably due to the fact that there was no enemy fighter or anti-aircraft opposition. There was nothing else of particular interest.

15—We received word from TDF that the 340th Bomb Gp. (M) is the only medium bomber outfit which is doing both day and night bombing. They also complimented us on the excellent tactical performance of the Group. There was a mission today against the town of Eboli, Italy. This mission was one of those which the boys call "milk rides." Because no ack-ack or enemy fighters were encountered.

16—There was a stand-down until 1800 hours today. No events of importance to record.

17—At 0115 hours this morning, Capt. White, Capt. Kaufmann and Lt. Mates briefed our crews for a mission scheduled to take off at 0250 hours. This was the first time that our squadron did its own briefing and from an impartial standpoint the results were many times more effective than when briefed by Group. Lt. Mates, our No. 1 navigator, did an excellent job briefing the bombardiers on the navigation problems of a night mission. Not one plane wavered from its course on this particular mission. The crews returned at 0600 hours when they were interrogated by Capt. White. At 1330 hours Group briefed our crews for a mission scheduled to take off at 1500 hours. This mission was successful and returned at 1630 hours to be interrogated by Capt. White. Today was a big day for Lts. Casper and Cutler. After having performed the duties of squadron censors for over five months, they were relieved by Lts. Zeigler and Jordan.

18—There has been much talk today about the consistent pilfering of the mail before it reaches the addressee. This, of course, pertains particularly to packages and magazines. The S-2 section submitted a letter through channels in regard to this criminal practice. The boys "sweated out" a mission today. In fact, they were briefed at 0830 hours but the mission was cancelled and at 1500 hours a stand-down was declared, thereby temporarily increasing the population of Catania by approximately 200.

19—At 0730 hours an immediate stand-by was announced. The crews remained in the vicinity of the Operations tent practically all day before they finally took off at 1530 hours on a raid against Sarno, Italy. Everyone is excited about Capt. Decker leaving for home. He is to leave for Tunis tomorrow from where he will continue to the States.

20—All-day stand-down today. Capt. Decker left today amid a turnout of affectionate good-byes. We're sure sorry to see him go—one can't realize how strong the bonds are which keep us together until someone slips through those bonds and says good-bye. Lt. Nease left with "Deck," flying him to Tunis, and said they had a swell time together. Capt. Simpson, our ALO officer, spoke on the Italian campaign but didn't give us much information. Not his fault—there just isn't any to give.

21—There was a mission scheduled today for which the briefing was held at 0935 hours at Group Operations. The interrogation showed this mission to be unsuccessful in that the formations hit the wrong target. Again Capt. Simpson spoke to us today, this time giving us a little more dope on the Italian campaign. The situation looks a little brighter. At 1600 hours a stand-down was announced which made the combat crew very happy.

22—There was a stand-by beginning at 0800 hours which blossomed into a combat mission which took off for Italy. At 1550 hours there was a meeting of combat crew members. Lt. W. D. Scott spoke to the boys on care of radio equipment. Capt. Bennett, our new Engineering Officer, spoke to the men on keeping planes in satisfactory condition. Capt. Kaufmann also added a few pertinent remarks.

23—Combat mission today went off well. Lt. Casper was called upon today to act as counsel for the defendant in board proceedings to eliminate an enlisted man from the service for medical reasons. Nothing else of interest to record today.

24—At 1000 hours Capt. White attended a briefing at Group Operations for a mission which carried them to Italy. The boys hit the wrong target today. At that they encountered heavy ack-ack which broke up the formation and made the pilots take violent evasive action.

25—An all-day stand-down today once again cleared the area of "stray personnel." There was absolutely no activity during the day, but at 1400 hours Group called in for one plane to fly a "propaganda mission" over Naples. (That is, to drop leaflets.) Lt. Dyer and crew volunteered to accept the assignment. The mission was carried out without any mishaps. There was an all-day trial today. The Government versus Pvt. Arthur Kalapanidas of the 487th, whose case had previously been investigated by Lt. Cutler. As usual, the defense counsel was our squadron barrister, Lt. Casper, who even shocked himself today by getting his "client" acquitted.

26—Another all-day stand-down. Even stand-downs can become a nuisance sometimes. At this point many of the boys are sweating out their 50th mission so they can return home to their wives, sweethearts and families and stand-downs aren't helping them one bit toward achieving that end. I'd like to mention something about Capt. Nestor, our Medical Officer, today. He is outstanding in his firm stand regarding sending men home after they have completed 50 missions. On numerous occasions he has borne the brunt of much criticism on that score, but through it all, he has remained a true patron of our combat crews.

27—Although there has been a stand-by since 0900 hours, no mission was called and finally, at 1700 hours, a stand-down was announced. There was a pretty good movie at the show tonight—Deanna Durbin in "Springtime." It took our minds off war for a couple of hours, anyway. They should send more pictures of that type overseas.

28—Nothing of interest to report.

29—At 0900 hours there was a stand-by which didn't materialize into a mission until about 1400 hours. The target was a road junction at Benevento, Italy, and the purpose of this mission was to effect a road block. At the same time, several thousand propaganda leaflets were dropped over the target area. These were for the German soldiers although what their contents are remains a mystery to the author of this document. We're beginning to hear rumors about moving to Italy. Somehow or other these latrinograms always seem to have some basis for their origin. Perhaps time will tell on this one rather soon. The morale of the men seems higher than usual. I believe that most of this is due to the fine recreational facilities which our enlisted men have developed for themselves. They have three tents lashed together which is their combined mess hall and Enlisted Men's Club.

30—There was a stand-down today, and aside from the fact that pay was distributed (which always is an event of gala importance), there was nothing of special interest worth mentioning.

1 October, 1943—The bomb line moved up several times today. Mild elation over the fall of Naples. 489th with twelve planes encountered only three bursts of ack-ack in successful bombing of intersecting roads outside of Benevento, Italy. The following Second Lieutenants, after eight months of combat, were finally promoted to First Lieutenants: Belcher, Cohen, Demas, Egebjerg, Fallwell, Furman, Gaughan, Gomez. Egebjerg, who had previously been with the RAF, had already been the recipient of the British Distinguished Service Cross.

2—Heavy rain and stand-down all day.

3—Stand-down all day and preparation for an imminent move. Catania, which is returning to its former splendor, beckons the men who still have a little money three days after pay-day.

4—Major Keller, CO of the 486th, is assigned to Group as Assistant Operations Officer. Stand-down all day. Lt. Casper, Group defense counsel, tangled with Lt. Murphy, Trial Judge Advocate and Assistant S-2 with the 488th, in the trial of Pvt. Rittenger of the 487th. Both Lts. Casper and Murphy are graduates of the University of Cincinnati College of Law. From the diary of one of the men: "Fleecy-white cumulus clouds are drifting leisurely under the impetus of a determined breeze. Here and there are bright patches of blue. Mt. Etna, which straddles the horizon to the north of this area and slopes steeply to the sea on the east, is more beautiful than ever with a mantle of clouds reaching far down its sides. The pure and

liquid-clear air reveals countless hills and vales at the base of this awe-inspiring mountain from whose burning bowels has poured forth onto the surrounding countryside terrible death and destruction. Cozily tucked away at its feet is the sprawling city of Catania which daily is re-assuming its appealing old-world charm which a ravaging war almost succeeded in completely destroying. Today reminds me of October days at home. The more I see of this world, the more I realize how much of it is alike."

5—Stand-down all day. Capt. Simpson, ALO, talked on the Italian and Dodecanese campaigns. Today marks our 215th day overseas. Time marches on, sometimes slowly, but always surely.

6—Mission for today—road block one and a half miles southwest of Vairanc Patenora. Unsatisfactory results with the bombs of the 1st box hitting short and to the left of the target while the 2nd box did not drop their bombs inasmuch as the lead bombardier did not want to take a chance of bombing our own troops. Capt. Wagner, after dropping his bombs on the target area, was forced down at Battipaglia due to engine trouble. This was Wednesday and one of party nights at the Officers Club. Champagne flowed at \$3.00 a quart. American nurses (hurray!) from the 807th MAETS, an evacuation unit, helped boost morale as can be testified to by Major Parrish, Capt. Kaufmann, Lts. Crawford, Hitchcock and Bulkley. These nurses, in more ways than one, are certainly making their contribution to the war effort. The "jam" was furnished by our musical ensemble which is composed of Lts. Cutler, Demas, Bulkley, "Gunner," and the inimitable Sgt. Rovick.

7—Twelve planes took off for fighter landing ground at Yanina (North), Greece, as their target. This flight proceeded to a point 20 miles northwest of Catania, where it was called back, with no reason given. Lts. Hamilton, Mates, Morisette, Yeargin, and Sgt. Bagby returned from rest camp at Algiers with fantastic accounts of the Shangri-La they had visited. Beautiful and seductive women, steaks garnished with mushrooms, American ice cream, pie ala mode, and cigars. (Pity the poor 4-F's at home.)

8—Stand-down and visits to Mt. Etna. Captains Bunch, Fields, White, and those of lesser rank, both officers and enlisted men, were reported seen at various times at various inns and taverns along the slopes of Mt. Etna in the famous resort villages of Via Grande, Nicolosi and Acireale.

9—Target for today—gun emplacements on a pin-point northwest of Capua with good results. (The current phrase is, "They looked back and saw many fires burning.") Lts. David and "Ron" Cohen finally arrived from rest camp badly in need of rest. Lt. David, in an exclusive interview, stated "I would have married the resort owner's daughter, but she only had a million dollars." Another talk on the Italian campaign by Capt. Simpson.

10—Lt. Schmidt, who had been hospitalized with yellow jaundice, was welcomed back into the squadron. Stand-down all day. S-2 continued to maintain situation maps on the Italian front and the Russian front, the latter still headlining the news. Combat crews were beginning to wager bets on the duration of the German war. All of us look forward to receiving a copy of the daily "Argus" which is being expertly edited by Capt. Rothwell, ALO.

11—Stand-down all day. 2d Lts. Morisette, Schmidt, Smith, Wagenseller, and Wubbolding received their orders promoting them to First Lieutenants as of 21 August, 1943.

12—Stand-down. The squadron was alerted for night missions. The airdrome was closed because of weather conditions. During most of the stand-downs the men played bridge, poker, and both the enlisted men and officers used their clubs advantageously. Since we were operating under tents, we frequently found ourselves deluged with torrential rains.

SAN PANCRAZIO, ITALY

13—Stand-down all day. Six planes and crews took off for our new base, San Pancrazio, Italy, as part of the "A" party. Moving was a greater problem than usual because of the vast amount

of impedimenta to be carried. Fortunately the squadron had just acquired nine old jeeps which had been used by the American 7th Army in Italy.

14—The "B" party, moving by truck convoy, left for San Pancrazio with Capt. Fields in charge. The trip was to last six days and involved the crossing of Messina Straits in a ferry.

15—Seven planes and crews departed for Gerbini, Sicily, where they were to operate in conjunction with the 12th Bombardment Group (M). This was a last-minute change in plans and most of the men left considerable baggage behind. All in all, the seven flew five missions, some contracted yellow jaundice and malaria, but all reported the food to be an improvement over ours. Lt. King handled the interrogations. Six of our planes took off from Catania with Sparanise, Italy, as the target. All bombs were brought back because of complete cloud coverage which obscured vertical visibility. The S-2 section was notified that we were to leave the following day for San Pancrazio and all S-2 and Operations equipment was packed and labeled.

16—Lt. Cutler, Sergeants McNamara and Greve left for San Pancrazio by plane, while Capt. White and Lt. Casper stayed behind to take care of the S-2 work. Four of our planes took off from Gerbini with a road junction in Sparanise as the target. From the interrogation report submitted by Capt. Shea of the 12th Bombardment Group, it was impossible to ascertain the results except that the bombs were reported to have been dropped on the target area.

17—Nothing eventful.

18—Three Mitchells took off from Gerbini with road junction south of Venafro, Italy, as the target. All bombs were brought back because of solid overcast. Lt. Casper left Catania for San Pancrazio in Major Parrish's plane. Lt. Casper got in "stick time" for the first time. Capt. White left by truck for the same destination. Sergeants Greve, August and McNamara set up the available S-2 equipment at the new base. (S-2 was not to receive the bulk of its equipment for about ten days inasmuch as by mistake it was shipped by boat instead of truck convoy.)

19—Morning report of 19 October reveals that Lts. Snow, Nelson, Wagenseller and Belcher were transferred to the United States per Air Force letter dated 13 October, 1943. All four were bombardiers and were the first in the squadron to complete their fifty missions. A few days earlier they departed for Catania in such a hurry that they had no time to say good-bye to most of the men. The same M/R indicates that Sergeants Rovick, White, McMillan and Boothe were transferred to the United States per Headquarters 12th Air Force letter dated 16 October. They departed this day. Lt. Egebjerg was transferred to the United States per letter of 18 October. We did not get to say good-bye to him as he was already in Tunis where he appeared before a Medical Board. We all lost a grand friend in "Gunner." He was a Dane who had been born in America and had achieved an excellent record with the RAF. Sergeants Hogan and O'Connell returned from a rest camp at Algiers. Three planes took off from Gerbini and bombed the alternate target which was a road junction at Teracina. Mission was successful.

20—Part of the convoy arrived today. The boys with much time on their hands made regular pilgrimages to Lecce where they soon made the acquaintance of one "Anna," who might have been a character out of one of Du Maupassant's novels. She had undoubtedly followed the Group from Catania and caused Capt. Nestor, our Medical Officer, to be quite busy. A punster might remark at this time, "Lecce me call you sweetheart."

21—Remnants of the convoy continued to straggle into our new base and Anna continued to take her toll.

22—Niente.

23—Six planes from Gerbini were to bomb gun positions at Gaet Point, Italy, but all bombs overshot due to malfunction of racks in lead ships. Menu for the day—powdered eggs for breakfast, while spam was the "piece de resistance" for dinner. New crew members came into the squadron. However, they were not to be assigned until 30 October. Capt. Kaufmann, Lts. Gaughan, Casper and Crawford addressed the new crews.

24—Capt. White arrived with the second convoy. With him were Lts. O'Connell and Gomez, who had completed their fifty missions and might have gone home from Catania but wanted to experience the ordeal of a convoy before doing so. Later in the evening Capt. Bunch, Lts. O'Connell, Gomez and Casper dined out together for perhaps the last time in Lecce.

25—Adieu to Lts. Gomez and O'Connell. They will be missed. First mission from the new base with six planes employed. The objective was to create a road block in Frosione, Italy. Interrogation disclosed that our Group, together with the 12th, leveled the town. However, photographs later disclosed that the town was leveled but it was the wrong town. "Old Moe" Hamill was promoted to Captain, effective 9 October. Congratulations were in order but cigars were not forthcoming.

26—M/R indicated that the following officers and enlisted men were assigned to the squadron: Lts. Saxton, Fitzgerald, Johnson, Ammann, Robison and Hutchinson; Sgts. Severud, Murray, Morse, Yohe, Yecca and Riddle. Our squadron furnished one plane which was flown in the 486th formation and bombed the alternate target, a crossroads at Terrace, Italy. Excellent results. Capt. White, Capt. Kaufmann and Lt. Casper spoke to the new crew members, while Lt. Mates confined his remarks to the bombardiers and navigators.

27—Mail and packages arrived to the jubilation of the men who had not heard from home in over a week. Dammit, the squadron mascot, became fornication-minded to the embarrassment of her owner, Lt. Nease. Brownie and Shifty, two dogs whose intentions were strictly dishonorable, lay claim to responsibility for loss of Dammit's virginity.

28—The boys are becoming musically inclined and several of them have acquired accordions. It rained hard during the night and some of the roofs leaked.

29—Lt. Smith, hereinafter known as "Wacky," learned that discretion is the better part of valor in writing home about the weaker sex in our Army. The following officers and enlisted men were assigned and joined the squadron: Lts. MacDermaid, Lynn, Hazlewood, Bowden, Turner, Capson; Sgts. Luzak, Wright, Davis, Viestenz, Little, Erling.

30—"Meatless" Mark Bowsher succeeded "Famine" Farrell as Mess Officer. The spam immediately began to taste better.

31—Twelve planes took off to bomb Ancona, Italy, but returned upon failure of fighters to meet them at the rendezvous point. 2d Lt. Engle received notice of his promotion to First Lieutenant, effective 9 September, 1943. Thanks to a statistical survey made by Bombardier Officer Lt. Shuck, we learn that for the month of October the squadron dropped 214,000 pounds of bombs on the target area, 15,000 pounds were jettisoned, and 125,000 pounds (6,000 due to malfunction) were brought back.

1 November—The sensational news concerned the Moscow conference, attended by Hull, Eden and Molotov, which was expected to lay the groundwork for a meeting in the near future of Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. Capt. White, the S-2 Officer, proved himself either a gourmand or a glutton, when he ate eight orders of chicken in a restaurant at Lecce, which probably explains why immediately thereafter Army authorities announced the closing of all restaurants. Three planes bombed Ancona Harbor. Probably hit one large merchant vessel.

2—No small number of men were becoming afflicted with jaundice and malaria. Twelve planes participated in raid on marshalling yards at Aquilla, Italy. The marshalling yards were not bombed because of cloud coverage, but bombs fell on the railroad and southeast part of town. One plane received two holes.

3—Twelve planes bombed a pin-point north of and adjacent to Cupello, Italy. An excellent pattern was observed, while four of our planes received from one to nine holes.

4—There was to be a mission to Yugoslavia, but this was later changed to a stand-down for the rest of the day. With excellent mess facilities and a large barracks, which also houses Operations, S-2 and the Orderly Room, the majority of the men

were content to spend most of their time in this one structure. The officers lived in the two barracks, and for the first time since we had been overseas, we could enjoy the luxury of a daily hot shower.

5—Twelve planes took off for Ploca, Yugoslavia, to bomb shipping and/or docks. All planes returned because of cloud coverage after flying for a considerable period of time at 15,000 feet and encountering temperature of minus 18 C. The men experienced after-effects inasmuch as there was no oxygen in the planes. One of the crews took off for Bizerte, where our planes are being modified. Modification consists of the removal of the lower turret and the addition of waist guns and a stinger. Lt. Bowsher, in final desperation, left for higher headquarters to ascertain when his orders were coming through, so that he could leave for flight training.

6—Dismal, depressing rain all day and naturally stand-down. We were all happy to have Lt. Allan Kile rejoin us after being hospitalized for nearly two months as a result of injuries received on raid over Catanzaro, Italy.

7—Two of our planes flew with the 488th Squadron and one with the 486th Squadron. The target was again a shipping and dock installation at Ancona, Italy. The 488th made an excellent pattern and several direct hits were scored on the docks, dock area, and in town.

8—Stand-down. The men who were approaching their 50th mission began to have visions of "home by Christmas."

9—Captain Hamill and Lt. Peterson departed for the hospital and soon were making desperate appeals for food and the squadron responded graciously with spam and other delicacies. In the evening we had our first movie in over a month. It was a Class B picture entitled "One Thrilling Night," the plot involving the plight of a soldier on his wedding night with only a one-day pass.

10—Stand-down. Major Parrish called a squadron meeting and decried the slovenliness of the dress of various members of the combat crew. He then called Lt. Nease to the front and cited him as one of the best examples of what he had been criticizing and the Major reprimanded him for being out of uniform as he placed a captain's bars on his collar. And thus in dramatic fashion, Bill Nease was apprised of his captaincy, effective October 14th.

11—Armistice Day. Most of the combat crews had no memories of November 11, 1918, but many of their fathers remembered too well. The date was passed unobserved. Lt. Bowsher returned from Tunis and Algiers wreathed in smiles as he proudly displayed a cablegram signed "Arnold," to the effect that he would receive his orders to report to Nashville, Tenn., for flight training. Another movie, starring Lionel Barrymore in "Doctor Gillespie Gets an Assistant."

12—Thirteen planes bombed airfield at Berat, Albania. An excellent pattern was achieved with direct hits scored on the runway. The crews observed four P-38's attack and shoot down an ME-109, while another ME-109 came within 400 yards of our formation, coming from below and behind. Six of our planes shot at it and observed it to be smoking. There was much secrecy in the planning of this mission, as it involved strategic bombing in conjunction with planes from the 321st and 12th Groups. This was to have been one of the biggest raids in which this Group had participated.

13—Again great secrecy in connection with a strategic bombing of Sofia, Bulgaria. The mission was to involve a total of 144 Mitchells, 48 planes from this Group, the 321st and the 12th. At the last minute, the mission was cancelled. In the evening one of the officers' barracks began to go up in flames. As F/O Kindle was pouring kerosene into a stove, he accidentally caused a lantern to ignite same. He burned himself rather painfully in the hand. Lt. Brown, in the same room, upon awakening, observed the fire and began throwing foot-lockers and B-4 bags out of the room. For a while it appeared that both barracks might go up in flames and soon the possessions of the occupants were emptied in the darkness of the night and in helter-skelter fashion. Volunteer firemen, to-wit: Capt. Nease

and Lt. Crawford, did yeoman service and became candidates for the award of Purple Heart as the former ran a nail through his foot and the latter fell down the ladder and sprained his wrist. The barracks remained intact and the rats (any resemblance to the officers who inhabit the barracks is purely coincidental) who dwelled within the walls fled, never to return.

14—Forty-eight planes from the 340th (including 12 from this squadron) and 48 from the 321st bombed Sofia, Bulgaria. Excellent results were achieved in bombing the marshalling yards, although some bombs struck the city proper. This was reputedly the first time Sofia had been bombed. It was rumored that the Bulgarian Cabinet called a special meeting.

15—Kalamaki A/D, Athens. Thirteen planes from this squadron and 48 in all from the Group, with each plane carrying 12 clusters (6x20 pounds each). The 321st, which led our Group, turned back, whereas our squadron and the Group achieved sensational results. Each squadron had its own objective and our squadron dropped its bombs on the dispersal area. Many enemy planes were destroyed on the ground and the photographs taken on the mission bore out the observations made by the crews. Lt. David and Sgt. Schurig completed their 50th mission. This raid should have placed this Group in the "Big Time."

16—Nine planes bombed Eleusis A/D. At the briefing, Col. Tokaz complimented the men on yesterday's raid. Our results were not as sensational as yesterday's, partly because the 486th Squadron cut in front and forced our bomb run farther west than intended. However, fires were observed and the mission was considered successful. *It is interesting to note that this squadron in five consecutive raids bombed five different countries, viz.: Italy, Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria and Greece.* Lts. David, Mates and Wubbolding, and many others who were on these raids, should be mighty proud of their record. T/Sgts. Gagne and Tighe, and S/Sgt. Myers, left for the States after completing their 50 missions. Captain Nestor, Lt. Taylor, and Flight Officers Stegnik and Kindle departed for the rest camp at the Isle of Capri.

17—Nine planes again bombed Kalamaki A/D. Excellent pattern over cross of runway. Many fires and one huge explosion were observed. Enemy activity was pronounced and the 487th was credited with destroying three ME-109's.

18—Stand-down. Lt. Senecal was seriously injured in an accident involving a jeep in which he was riding and a truck. He received emergency treatment in our dispensary and it was feared that he would suffer the amputation of his leg.

19—Stand-down. "Dammit" is showing signs of pregnancy. She is irritable, sulky, and makes frequent visits to Captain Nestor's dispensary. Captain Nease has been treating her like a "fallen woman."

FOGGIA, ITALY

20—Preparations were under way for our move to Foggia the following day. The advance party, headed by Lts. Kemp and Zeigler, left the day before.

21—The 150-mile trip to Foggia was made in one day. The roads were excellent and we saw many olive groves. The weather was bad and a part of the convoy stayed overnight in a town about 20 miles out of Foggia. In Bari the streets were flooded as a result of a torrential downpour. We learned that Lt. Senecal had died while at the hospital. Although he was one of the newer men, he will be missed by all of us. Major Parrish and Captain Fields attended the funeral.

22—Foggia No. 3—Mud! Our jeeps operated as amphibians. There was a shortage of tents and some of us had to spend the first night in the Operations tent. The P-40 outfit had little notice that we were moving in on them and had to depart in a hurry.

23—More rain. Transportation is bogged down. The ground officers and some of the flight members are living in a villa about a mile and a half from the line. The roads are virtually impassable and the jeep is proving its mettle.

24—It is impossible to operate from the field because of the rain, but there will be turkey dinner tomorrow. Rumors are circulating to the effect that Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin are meeting somewhere, possibly in Cairo. Others add that Von Papan is meeting with them to talk peace terms. The big push is under way on the Italian front.

25—Thanksgiving. The menu: Turkey, cranberry sauce, Spanish baked potatoes, turkey gravy, fruit dessert, nuts, grapes and candy. The PX rations today included cigars, a Hershey bar, Tootsie Rolls and cigarettes. Lt. Cutler and his mess staff received congratulations for the excellent repast. Five planes took off for Sarvejo (that's where the shooting started in the last war). All bombs were brought back because of complete cloud coverage. Lt. Bulkeley is hospitalized because of malaria and jaundice. (Mission flown from Foggia Main.)

26—Big push is under way on the Italian front. The sky is literally littered with planes going to and coming from the front. We sent seven planes to bomb gun emplacements west of the bend in road at Lanciano, Italy. The area was covered with a good pattern. Jerry has dug in on top of the ridges and it is absolutely necessary to knock out these gun emplacements before the 5th Army can advance.

27—Ten planes bombed what was believed to be Porto Civitanova, Italy, but actually bombed, according to photographs furnished by Capt. Eggers, the town of San Benedetto Del Toron-to. Although railroad yards were to be the target, only the coast highway was bombed.

28—Stand-down.

29—Eight Mitchells dropped a pattern of bombs over railroad and highway bridges at Giulianova, Italy, with possible direct hits on highway bridge. Several planes were holed. Lt. Gaughan left for the hospital and Lt. Dyers took over as Assistant Operations Officer. During this period and for one week, Capt. White served as Intelligence Officer in Group.

30—Stand-down. Pay-day, and poker.

1 December, 1943—100th mission for the squadron was a pinpoint southwest of Rocca D. Evandra, Italy. We learned later that we bombed about 16 miles within our own lines. Capt. Eggers did a fine job of photographic interpretation. Our boys felt badly about this misfortune since there were several American casualties as a result of this bombing. The error was attributed to an unusual resemblance between the area to be bombed and the area actually bombed. Sgts. Cerone, Hogan and Brown completed their 50th mission.

2—Today the Avengers Group was out in force to blast at the enemy north of Mt. Trocchie, Italy. Nine of our planes were in the first formation which was made up shortly after 0900 hours. About a half an hour later, flying through accurate and intense ack-ack, our bombardiers dropped their lethal loads on hard-pressed Jerry, who is fighting stubbornly but hopelessly. He is contesting every inch of the ground which he eventually relinquishes to us. Faced with overwhelming air superiority, a great portion of which is based here at the web of fields in the Foggia area, the Germans have no choice but retreat—"strategic retreat," a term these word experts have cajoled up for home consumption. The second formation, flying later in the day, hit the enemy while he was still reeling from the morning blows. Promoted to First Lieutenants, effective 16 November, 1943, were R. B. Hitchcock and G. F. Roberts. Also receiving promotions to First Lieutenant were the following, whose orders were effective 17 November: A. O. Alexander, C. P. Barnett, J. R. Q. Brown, J. N. Jeeter, P. B. Neafus, J. F. Shuck and D. J. Teare. For nine men of this squadron 30 November, 1943, was a red letter day, for that day they were officially transferred to the United States. Captains Wagner, Hamill and Scott, and Lt. Falwell, along with T/Sgts. Sorenson, Schurig, Perrin, Raddatz and Moore constitute the lucky nine. We who remain behind are always envious of those returning to the States, for who wouldn't be after serving more than a few months overseas? But those boys leave with our admiration and best wishes. They have done an excellent job courageously, and with a zest and go-devil spirit that never lets us forget that we are unbeatable. The incoming mail sacks are heavy with letters and Christmas packages. Our mail has reached such prodigious

proportions that Cpl. Teitlebaum has been assigned a helper. Not only will Cpl. Teitlebaum be relieved of some of the additional work, but he will not have to run the gamut of questions popped to him every hour of the day. Lts. Furham and Morisette, and Sgt. Abramczyk reached the 50th mission mark today and have already begun to sweat out their orders sending them back to the United States.

3—Today two of our planes, flying with the 487th and the 488th Squadrons, attacked docks and shipping in the harbor at Sibenik. Direct hits were scored on warehouses on east side of neck of harbor, with pattern extending through part of the city and railroad marshalling yards. Lt. Mark W. Bowsher received his orders transferring him to the United States, where he will become a cadet. Lt. Bowsher ranked high in the esteem and respect of all the men who worked with him. He was one man who could win at cards graciously, which he proceeded to do the last two nights before he departed. When Lt. Bowsher reaches the States he will not help America's effort to minimize inflation, for his easily-acquired \$2,500 will flow freely.

4—Today was one of those days which make combat duty overseas difficult. There being a stand-down, the men were free to pursue their own personal inclinations. Some went to town while others remained "at home." But keeping busy on these days requires a lot of ingenuity. Monotony is an insidious enemy with which the soldier overseas must constantly contend. Although the Army is aware of this fact, little effort is expended to alleviate the condition. Constructive consideration of this pressing problem would result in a marked improvement of morale. The movies which Special Services makes available for the Group are meeting the exigencies of the situation very well, but they alone are not sufficient.

5—Our Mitchells today struck hard at an important highway bridge at Pescara, Italy, showering the target area with 44,000 pounds of bombs. Several direct hits were observed on the highway leading up to the bridge, but there were no hits observed on the bridge itself. Violent evasive action was employed and as a result only two planes were holed. Ten men, including Capt. Kaufmann, Jr., left for the rest camp at Capri. We all hope that they will rest up while they are there. Men returning from Bari related accounts of some effective bombing by Jerry.

6—Another day of inactivity from a combat standpoint. However, the men frequently visit Foggia, where the Red Cross dispenses food and entertainment. Several theatres in the town operate nightly, catering to exclusive G.I. patrons. This being about the only entertainment available, the boys flock to town nightly for a few hours of relaxation from the routine and monotony of camp life. As "Dammit" is increasing in size, speculation as to "when" and "how many" is correspondingly growing. Capt. Nestor has been consulted in this matter, but he refuses to commit himself, not being a specialist in canine gynecology. Transportation is the source of considerable trouble for everyone involved: Those who dispense with the means are plagued with requests and entreaties and those who really need transportation for strictly business purposes, as well as those who "need" it for purely personal reasons, find it virtually non-existent. Lt. Jeeter summed up the situation very well one day when he said that "getting transportation is like asking to sleep with someone's wife."

7—Today nine of our planes, and others from the Group, took another crack at the highway bridge at Pescara, Italy, and again that bridge escaped destruction. However, this squadron, and the Group, too, are not alone in their inability to eliminate this tantalizing objective. A-36's have paid more than a few visits to this important target, but they, too, have failed thus far to liquidate it.

8—The marshalling yards at Aquila, Italy, constituted the target for our bombers today. Coming in on the target at 10,000 feet, our bombardiers laid an excellent pattern, starting just short of the yards, continuing through them and hitting a large adjoining industrial plant. Flames covered the target area. The phrase, "beautiful destruction," describes well the kind of job our boys did on this 106th squadron mission.

9—At approximately 1100 hours this morning Flight Leader G. W. Kemp released the brake and set the throttles. His plane

eased down the runway and shortly thereafter the entire formation was headed for the marshalling yards at Terni, Italy. The bombs fell short of the target itself. However, there were several large fires within the yards themselves, probably the result of an excellent pattern over the target by the two flights which preceded ours. Steak was the "piece de resistance" for chow. Lately there have been fewer complaints about the food we are served, and justifiably so, for there has been a definite improvement in this respect.

10—Stand-down, with all the implications which the term implies. Capt. White, Lts. Casper, Kemp and Hamilton made a jeep trip to the 8th Army front. They went beyond the 8th Army's heavy guns and visited Lanciano, which was bombed by this squadron as late as ten days ago. They heard the British guns whistle over their heads and departed just prior to the hour in which Jerry usually opened up with a heavy barrage. One of the ack-ack boys pointed to a building a few yards away which had been shelled only the evening before. Such trips cause one to appreciate the grand job that the ground forces are doing and help to explain why the bomb line does not always move forward by leaps and bounds. War on the "fighting front" becomes personalized, for here you are often literally face to face with the enemy.

11—Today the squadron lost another good man, for Lt. A. E. Kile, Jr., was transferred to the United States. Lt. Kile was severely injured on 31 August in a raid on Cantanzarro, Italy. For a number of weeks he was hospitalized in Africa and when he was discharged and returned to camp he was put on a DNICF status. For a man who delighted in carrying the war to the enemy, this was akin to company punishment. But this raid on Cantanzarro was destined to be his last one for some time to come, since higher headquarters have decreed that he return to "the Zone of the Interior." All of us to a man are sorry to see him go.

12—For the past two days our planes have remained on the ground, except for one or two which were used to carry men to rest camp at the Isle of Capri. Regularly for the past couple of months, combat crew members have been sent to rest camps. As a consequence there has been a noticeable improvement in morale. The weather continues to be rainy and very cold. Today the rain was torrential. The tents, not being of the all-weather type, leak profusely. Operations - S-2 is the popular hangout for the flyers, but today it was virtually deserted, for there was no inducement to remain there; in fact, the tent leaked so badly that it was foolhardy for anyone to be there except those absolutely necessary.

13—Another stand-down. Weather conditions apparently are responsible for this forced idleness. So many packages have been arriving from home that virtually everyone is accumulating a large supply of cigarettes, food and sundry articles. When PX rations are offered for sale, very few draw them. Packages sent to the men who have already returned to the United States, or who are on their way, are distributed to the combat members still here. Since so much food is contained in the packages, everyone is better fed and thus there are comparatively few complaints about G.I. chow.

14—Although our planes were poised and ready to strike at the enemy, it was decreed that the enemy have a respite from our constant hammering. Freed from the prospects of a mission for this day, most of the men scattered to their tents to relax and otherwise enjoy the comforts of home, such as they are. Today more men left for a "Furlough in Heaven," an apt phrase appearing in an article in *Newsweek* for November 15 and dealing with the Isle of Capri. This time the lucky ones were Lts. Barnett, Roberts, Cook, Schuck, Dobberteen, and Sgts. Lydon, Proctor, Hofmeister, Turley and Turpin, all of the flight echelon. Lts. Casper, Farrel and Ziegler of the ground echelon took up residence there for three days, which time they extended somewhat. 1st Lt. Doak and 20 enlisted men were transferred to the 6754th Ordnance Airdrome Service Company. These men, all of whom have been with us since the early days of the squadron, will mess with us until they are completely organized, when they will function entirely independent of us, with Lt. Doak as CO and M/Sgt. Sthele as First Sergeant. This change was effected in order to facilitate the work of Ordnance.

Under the new arrangement, the Ordnance men will service all planes of the Group indiscriminately, instead of servicing only the squadron to which they were assigned.

15—Today our bombers were out in force over Yugoslavia, hitting hard at the Mostar A/D. Flying through heavy but inaccurate ack-ack, our planes reached the target and dropped their lethal loads. Direct hits were observed on the runway and a number of planes on the ground were left burning. TBF determines our targets. The Twelfth Air Force, of which this Group is an integral part, is mainly concerned with tactical bombing, while the newly formed Fifteenth Air Force, operating in the same theatre as the former, directs its efforts toward strategic bombing. But occasionally—in fact, quite often lately—this Group has been assigned targets of a strategic nature, such as today's target over Yugoslavia. With mounting experience gained from this versatile bombing, the 340th Bombardment Group (M) is steadily becoming more valuable in this theatre of operations and at the same time is correspondingly reducing the enemy's ability either to strike back or to resist.

16—Shipping and docks at Zara Port in Yugoslavia constituted the target for today. Flying most of the way through a complete overcast, the planes finally reached the target just as the weather cleared. In just a matter of seconds, 48,000 pounds of bombs were playing havoc with the buildings and warehouses within the target area. Opposition on this mission was practically non-existent, there being no enemy aircraft and very little anti-aircraft. A photograph of the results was printed in *Air Intelligence Weekly Summary*, No. 58, for 27 December, 1943. Public relations has been given considerable attention lately, this partly as a result of the extra pressure exerted on those in charge by the men themselves. Having seen the flattering write-ups which some of our flyers have already received in their home town papers, everyone has become anxious to fill out public relations forms.

17—We ran our 110th squadron combat mission today. Nine of our North American B-25 Mitchells took off at 1350 hours carrying a grand total of 41,000 pounds of bombs. At 1445 hours they were over the alternate target, Pontecorvo, Italy (soupy weather at the primary target forbade any bombing there). From 11,000 feet all the bombs were unloaded on the target area. No enemy aircraft were encountered. Anti-aircraft fire was heavy, accurate as to altitude, moderate, and trailing. Two hours after taking off, our formation droned into sight from out of the north and we all silently breathed a sigh of relief as we counted nine planes. Within a few minutes we were interrogating the crews. The sortie report revealed that the mission was probably successful. The pictures later confirmed this. Generally the information obtained during the interrogation is substantiated by the photographs. All during the month the members of the ground crew have been "stepping out" on three-day passes. Naples appears to be the most popular rendezvous, mainly because one can find there "malto bella signorina."

18—Today we were inactive from a combat standpoint. On the land front here in Italy, just as on the air front, there have not been any spectacular developments. The Allied offensive has bogged down to a creeping advance, exceedingly bad weather being mainly responsible. This slowness of operations has had a decidedly sobering effect on the public outlook (including the rank and file of the military) concerning an early conclusion of the European conflict. You no longer hear such positive statements that the war will be over by the end of the year. Now it is "maybe next spring," "probably next summer." This change of attitude is welcome, because there had grown up an unhealthful and detrimental self-complacency that was harming both those bearing the brunt of the burden as well as those on the home front. Capt. Fields recently issued a timely memorandum which sufficiently warned the members of the squadron against "wishful thinking."

19—The marshalling yards at Terni, Italy, were hit hard today. Routine in the field continues as usual and nothing of particular importance worthy of recording has occurred.

20—Nine crews were put on an immediate stand-by at 0800 hours, but later in the morning a stand-down was called. 1st Sgt. McAvoy returned from Naples where he purchased various kinds of wine for a Christmas Eve party. Although the Yule-

tide Season is almost here, there is little indication of that, except in the continuing influx of Christmas packages.

21—Since the weather is the daily topic of conversation, and since it so completely affects our lives and mode of living, it would not be amiss to give a sketchy statement of it. In November the weather is mild and afternoon temperatures frequently reach between 60 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Sunny days are frequent and on an average there are from eight to twelve days on which brief spells of thundery rain occur. October and November are the wettest months in all parts of South and Central Italy. In December and January the weather continues to be generally mild, rainy and unsettled. There are rainy periods of from 6 to 12 days each month, but they are no longer of thundery type, being lighter and of longer duration. In the south, snow is very rare and can be expected about once a year. And, of course, it was the weather that prevented a mission today.

22—Capt. Fields is on a week's leave. Men of the ground personnel continue to go to Naples, where they spend three days of riotous living.

23—Another day of very little activity, which taxes the originality of the chronicler to the limit. What to write about in a narrative of squadron events is just as much a problem as that which confronts the men themselves on inactive days such as this one. However, such a day is a blessing for the Operations Officer. He does not have to make a new schedule and thus he is relieved of the very difficult task of trying to satisfy everyone concerned.

24—Two words must suffice for today's entry: Nothing doing.

25—Christmas Day in Italy! As days go, overseas, this Christmas was uneventful and not much different from any other day. The field was closed to all flying and no one was required to work. Nevertheless, for the greater part of the day, the sky was dotted with giant B-17 Flying Fortresses forming up for a mission over the Balkans, the Italian front, or somewhere in Germany. And from early morning until late in the afternoon, P-40 fighters patrolled the field in anticipation of the Christmas present with which the Germans threatened us; namely, something that would cause us to have a very unhappy Christmas, which we interpreted as meaning that they would attempt to bomb us. Dinner was served at 1530 hours and was a delectable one, indeed, with turkey and all the "fixin's."

26—First Lieutenants Mates and McAloon, navigator and pilot, respectively, were informed of their elevation to the rank of captains. Both officers have distinguished themselves in action and are deserving of the promotion. A vicious wind with a driving rain played havoc with many of our tents, making some men temporarily homeless. In one respect, however, the storm worked in their favor, for they will not have to dismantle their tents when we move, which, it is rumored, will be in a few days.

27—Another miserable day with plenty of rain. About 1100 hours the combined Operations - S-2 tents caught on fire because of an over-heated stovepipe. Lt. Casper ran out of the tent, grabbed a five-gallon can and was about to throw it into the fire when someone stopped him by asking him what was in the can. That question was sufficient to warn him just in time that the can contained, not water, as he thought, but gasoline. To dimax the day, the generator supplying power for the various tents stopped working. Today we witnessed one of the best "buzz jobs" we have ever seen. Five P-38's leveled our mess supply tent. In this way they introduced themselves to us. They are replacing this Group in the field. Sometime today Cpl. George Andronikos, an AM, died of black water fever. His untimely death is the first one to be sustained by a member of the ground echelon. Radiating a contagious friendliness in his heavy-set way, his smiling countenance will be missed by all of us. Lt. Scott, S/Sgt. Lavender, S/Sgt. Reese and Cpl. Kram-pitz left as the "A" party for our new location.

28—Nine of our Mitchells struck at the enemy, this being the first mission we have run since the 19th of the month. An important road bridge north of Naples was the target. Just before coming in on the bomb run, Jerry threw up a veritable barrage of heavy ack-ack, which followed the planes over the target area and after the completion of the bomb run. Two of

our planes were so badly hit that they were forced to make emergency landings at Naples. Interrogation revealed, and the photographs substantiated, that the target area was well covered. Lt. Charles Engle, flying his 19th mission, was struck and killed by flak as he piloted his plane toward the target. Twenty-seven years of age, a graduate of Drexel Institute of Technology, Pa., and a Second Lieutenant in the Quartermaster Corps before going through Cadet School, Lt. Engle was one of the more recent squadron members, being assigned to us in September while we were stationed at Catania. The loss the squadron has sustained in the unfortunate death of this stalwart flyer cannot be measured in tangible terms for Lt. Engle was a man of no mean accomplishments. War is terrible, striking down the best of the nation's men.

29—Preparations are being made for our next move. The work involved preparatory to moving is prodigious. This will be our seventh move since we arrived at El Kabrit, Egypt, early last spring. Since then we have become very proficient, being able to move quickly and with little confusion. As a unit as well as individually, we have learned much since beginning operations against a determined and resourceful enemy. How many more moves we shall have to make before the one we are all looking forward to remains a matter of pure speculation, but as time wears on our increasing expertness in fighting is hastening the inevitable day when we shall reap the rewards of our efforts.

30—Squadron activity has slowed down to a bare minimum as we await orders to move.

31—This being the last day of the year, it would not be amiss to review in outline form the Allied Nations' accomplishments for the year:

Jan. 13—Russians advance in Caucasus.

Jan. 18—Reds break siege of Stalingrad.

Jan. 24—British take Tripoli.

Jan. 26—Roosevelt and Churchill end 10-day meeting at Casablanca, vow "unconditional surrender" of Axis enemy.

Jan. 27—First all-American aerial assault on Germany.

Feb. 10—Guadalcanal cleared of Japs.

Mar. 29—Axis defenses at Mareth Line in Tunisia collapse.

May 7—Tunis and Bizerte fall.

May 14—U. S. invades Attu.

May 30—Jap garrison on Attu wiped out.

June 3—Provisional government set up for French Empire.

June 11—Pantelleria surrenders after aerial blasting.

July 1—Allies take Rendova.

July 5—U. S. wins naval battle with Japs in Kula Gulf.

July 7—U. S. invades Munda.

July 9—Allies invade Sicily.

July 12—Russians open summer offensive.

July 19—Allies bomb Rome.

July 25—Mussolini ousted; Badoglio becomes Premier.

Aug. 1—U. S. heavy bombers make 2,400 miles round trip to raid oil fields at Ploesti.

Aug. 15—U. S. Forces occupy Kiska.

Aug. 17—Allies complete conquest of Sicily.

Aug. 28—Jap resistance ends on New Georgia Island.

Sept. 1—U. S. Naval Force blasts Marcus Island.

Sept. 3—British invade Italy.

- Sept. 8—Italy surrenders.
- Sept. 9—Americans land near Salerno.
- Sept. 16—Lae falls to Americans.
- Oct. 1—Allies capture Naples.
- Oct. 5—U. S. Navy pounds Wake Island.
- Oct. 12—Portugal gives Allies use of Azores.
- Oct. 13—Italy declares war on Germany.
- Nov. 1—Americans invade Bougainville.
- Nov. 6—Russians take Kiev.
- Nov. 18—Berlin heavily blasted by R.A.F.
- Nov. 20—American Forces invade Gilbert Islands.
- Nov. 22—1,000 R.A.F. planes drop more than 2,300 tons of bombs on Berlin.
- Nov. 28—Eighth Army starts offensive cracking Germany's winter line in Italy.
- Dec. 1—Allies announce conference in North Africa of Roosevelt, Churchill and Chiang Kai-Shek.
- Dec. 2—Germans fall back toward Rome.
- Dec. 4—Moscow announces meeting of Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin at Teheran to decide Big Three political and military strategy.

There we have it—history as it was made in 1943. We did our share to make it, so we know what "blood, sweat and tears" were expended in the stupendous effort to put the Axis on the run. We prepare for 1944 with a sober confidence that we are definitely on the road to victory.

SPECIAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER, 1943

RECIPIENTS OF THE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CROSS LT. FRED W. DYER

6. * * * FRED W. DYER, O-664548, First Lieutenant, 489th Bombardment Squadron, 340th Bombardment Group. For distinguished service, extraordinary heroism and gallantry in action against the enemy in the Middle East Theater on 17 July, 1943. On this date Lt. Dyer was serving as pilot of a medium bombardment aircraft, in a damaging raid on a target in this theater. During the bombing approach, his plane became a focal point for a severe barrage of enemy anti-aircraft fire and received several direct hits, which impaired both engines. He was painfully wounded about the face by flying glass, but despite this handicap, elected to continue on the bombing run over the target. Keeping the crippled plane entirely under control, with disregard for the peril and unmindful of his wounds, he brought his aircraft over the target and bombed it successfully. Such an exhibition of courage and superb airmanship reflects great credit both on himself and on the United States Army Air Forces * * *

1 January, 1944 was ushered in with a bang on this field. Small firearms and heavy anti-aircraft guns furnished the noise. Vino, cognac, and, it is suspected, some American liquor furnished the good cheer. On this first day of the new year, many of us, possessing the inclination, pondered our fate. Not being clairvoyant, we dare not say what the future holds for us individually and as an Allied fighting force. And we cannot make predictions on the basis of what the past 318 days overseas have brought forth, for all phases of combat life are unpredictable. But apprising the future cautiously, we cannot be accused of over-optimism in firmly believing, first, that as a squadron our most difficult days are over and, second, that 1944 will find the Allied armies completely victorious in Europe. There still remain innumerable hardships to be endured and many battles to be fought and won before we can say our work is done. But the heartening fact on this first day of the year is that at last we

look to the future confidently, knowing that from now on, in the broad sense of the term, we are the masters of our fate. Capt. Kaufmann today assumed the important position of Squadron Commanding Officer. Knowing how well he performed his duties as Squadron Operations Officer, we know what to expect of him in his new capacity. In his quiet but firm and forceful way, he has the admiration and respect of everyone. Possessed of a winning personality and real ability, he is a man well able to fill this high position. "Dammit" today presented the squadron with three puppies. She accomplished the ordeal very well under most adverse circumstances. It is too early to make any comments about her brood, but considering their parentage, they will undoubtedly be some pups.

2—Rumors run rampant in the Army at all times. There are a variety of terms covering this G.I. pastime, most of which are not fit for print. One soon learns not to place any credence in this idle talk which so often represents wishful thinking or gross exaggeration of certain statements made just for effect. The most recent one to make the rounds of this squadron is that shortly this Group will be shipped to China. This could conceivably happen. It is not a remote impossibility. But it is worthy of note, because it is so characteristic of Army life.

3—Moving day tomorrow. Consequently today was devoted to all the multitudinous tasks which a move involves. Personal belongings had to be packed as well as squadron equipment. Tents had to be taken down and rolled up. Trucks had to be loaded. The weather was excellent, being sunny and almost warm, which fact made our job considerably less difficult. We are very happy at the prospects of leaving this field and this part of Italy. The field itself is dismal and the town of Foggia has no inducements whatsoever for visiting it. "Buzzing" a field just before we move has become a standard practice with our pilots. Today they did an exceptionally good job, thundering down to within a few feet of the ground. This is exceedingly dangerous both to those in the plane as well as to those on the ground, but the boys defy Group orders and death by continuing to do it. Today Capt. Neese, Lts. Yeargin, David, Crawford, King and Wubbolding, and Sgts. Bey, Abramcysk, Cerone, and Glick left for the States. Most of our original flyers have now gone, and the squadron is no longer the same. The majority of our planes and crews left for Pompei, where we shall meet up with them tomorrow.

POMPEI, ITALY

4—On the move once more. We arose early while white frost still covered the Foggia fields and snow blanketed the mountains. Last-minute details were attended to and at 1130 hours our convoy began the long trek. After leaving the plains of Foggia, we began the difficult trip across the Sannio Mountains. We were subjected to customary hardships of a convoy trip in addition to rain and intense cold. But the sheer mountain beauty with its jagged precipices and deep, verdant valleys, through which tumbling streams rushed in headlong flight to the sea, made the trip seem less arduous. Very late this afternoon we arrived at our destination, a small village on the outskirts of Poggiomarino.

5—Well, the first day at our new location has passed by. It is too early to make any remarks about the place, but here are a few facts. Naples is less than 25 miles away. Mt. Vesuvius, with its smoke-bellowing top, is within easy driving distance and the ruins of ancient Pompei adjoin this immediate area. The town we have taken over was just recently inhabited by Italians who were forcibly evicted from their homes. All of them have not yet completely moved out. It is a pitiful sight to see these poor people struggle with their few belongings, headed for they don't know where. But, nevertheless, we are happy that we do not have to set up personal and operational tents. It will be a pleasure to live and work in buildings.

6—The whole Group has been put on a stand-down for a week in order to provide time for special courses and practice missions. Lt. Demas conducted a "refresher" in navigation and bomb procedure. How well "Public Relations" works is illustrated in a newspaper article appearing in the December 9th issue of the *Charlotte News*, entitled "Local Man Pours It On." The dispatch quoted Lt. Alexander, on a raid to Aquilla, 55

miles northeast of Rome, as saying, "Four or five big fires were started in that railroad town." The opportunity of making the local paper is always available for the boys, but they never utilize it. Thus the burden is upon "Public Relations" to pry the words from them, which often is no small task.

7—Two practice missions were flown by this squadron. We briefed the crews and interrogated them on their return. The men feel that they can learn much from such missions and they have entered into the spirit of the thing with characteristic zest. Today was one of those rare days about which poets so often eloquently sing. Large cumulus clouds, through which the sun played hide-and-seek, drifted lazily out to sea. The air had a stimulating touch that made you step lively. The mountains surrounding us, glistening in their garb of white, stood out in bold relief. On this bright, sunny, brisk day, a quickening sensation permeated the whole atmosphere and made you happy that you are alive. Oranges and nuts are in season and all of us are eating prodigious quantities of them. Prices are still low, by American standards, and will continue to be so, providing we do not become reckless by paying more than we should.

8—The squadron is not the same anymore. A glance at the latest combat crew roster shows just exactly how much the squadron has changed. Major Parrish, now temporarily associated with Group, Capt. Kaufmann, and Lts. Kemp, Dyer and Gaughan are the only officers of long standing who are still with us. Among the enlisted men who have grown up with the squadron, from a combat standpoint, are Sgts. Gahm, Johnson, Bagby, Salisbury, Jay and Gale.

9—Bad weather kept our planes grounded. Had the weather permitted, another practice mission would have been flown. Living under the present conditions with four or five men sharing a room is in many respects similar to the way boys live away from home while going through college. Many of the rooms are attractively outfitted with everything necessary to give that homey feeling, including spicy pictures or photographs of scantily clad women. At night and at various times during the day the boys sit around and read, or write, or just talk. The soldier's conversation is not much different from the student's, except that there is a dearth of academic discussion. Aside from this difference, the conversation runs along the same lines, though interspersed with more forceful figures of speech. Girls, home, past experiences, the future—these are topics regularly discussed. The progress of the war and when it may end come up often, but there is a general lack of information and comprehension concerning the more fundamental problems involved in vital world affairs. Men, who are nothing more than grown boys, act and think the same whether they are pursuing the sedentary task of acquiring the rudiments of an education or the more serious job of fighting a deadly war.

10—Once again the weather has conspired against us, preventing the flying of the practice mission scheduled for today. For the past fortnight there has been a definite absence of war news, so far as we are concerned. Great things are happening, insidiously but surely, and great things are about to happen, but we who are vitally and intimately interested therewith are poorly informed in that respect.

11—More practice flying today. This afternoon a plane belonging to the 486th Squadron crashed in landing, killing the crew. The exact cause of the crash is not yet known.

12—Communications has installed in Operations a speaker which is connected with the radio at the Message Center. Consequently we are in a position to get the latest news, to which the Avengers Group makes its contribution. BBC reports that yesterday a great air battle took place over Germany. More than 700 Flying Fortresses and Liberators took part in this latest 8th Air Force raid. The targets were German airplane factories. A battle lasting four hours was fought and when the last bullet was fired, more than 100 German fighters had been downed to our loss of 59 bombers and 5 fighters! In Italy the 5th Army has continued its slow advance and are now less than four miles from Cassino. Heavy, highly protective-appearing flak suits were issued today. Protected with these new suits and carrying with them money purses and escape kits, our flyers are well able to cope with any exigencies which may arise on a routine combat mission.

13—Here is what the *Stars and Stripes* had to say about today's mission over an airfield 15 miles northeast of the Italian capital. "American heavy and medium bombers struck yesterday at the core of Luftwaffe strength in Italy with smashing raids on airfields in the Rome region. . . . Experimental buildings, workshops, and assembly plants were bomb-plastered at Guidonia, officially described as the chief Nazi experimental station in Italy for testing new types of aircraft. . . . Shortly after the Forts had completed their run, B-25 Mitchells of the 12th AAF shot in through heavy flak and showered the air base with fragmentation bombs which exploded among hangars and parked aircraft." S/Sgt. Waldroup was saved from possible injury when broken glass was stopped by his recently issued flak suit.

14—The Avengers were out in force over Pontecorvo, Italy, with the town and an important bridge leading up to it as their objectives. Although this squadron, and the others, too, missed the bridge, a number of bombs were planted neatly in the town itself. But the mission was a costly one for the Group. The 486th Squadron lost two planes, one going down over the target area, the other crashing this side of the lines; the crew in the former were probably killed, while the crew in the latter successfully bailed out. Our present base surpasses by far any other base we have been at since entering the overseas service. Living conditions as well as working conditions are actually more than can reasonably be expected in the combat zone. The presence of a friendly and numerous civilian populace in addition to variegated local color makes us less vulnerable to the monotony such as we were forced to endure in Africa. Thus on the basis of what we have become used to, our standard of living has risen considerably. May it never fall again! But even if it does, as it may, we shall have had a respite, a vacation, if you will. Lt. Cook, who is president of the Officers Club, has given unstintingly of his time and effort in preparing the club for the opening night. The liquid refreshments which will be available are conspicuous because of their quantity and variety. S/Sgt. O'Connell reached the 50 mark today. The combat tour of duty no longer is set at 50 missions but now depends entirely upon physical conditions. Returning from Capri, Capt. White and Lts. Hamilton and Jeeter were enthusiastic in their praise of this island paradise. A visit to the Blue Grotto and a tour of a British mine sweeper, where they sipped tea and enjoyed Allied good will, highlighted their leave.

15—Except for a raid over the marshalling yards at Foligno, Italy, which appears to have been a successful one, today was typically unexciting.

16—The choke points in the marshalling yards at Terni, Italy, were blasted expertly by our planes in this 116th squadron combat mission. Early this afternoon a red warning reminded us that the enemy still operates an air force in this theatre. But no planes appeared to bother us and thus our clear record of no enemy bombings of any field at which we have been stationed remains unchanged.

17—Briefed to bomb Sulmona or Giulianova, Italy, we chose our own target enroute and bombed Chiaravalle. There being complete cloud coverage over the primary and alternate targets, the lead bombardier picked out Chiaravalle through a break in the clouds and "let her have it." The target was well covered.

18—The viaduct at Terni, Italy, was the objective for today. We did not accomplish the purpose of the mission but some important observations were made of enemy MT movements. Life here goes on pretty much as usual. On days off our boys frequent the surrounding towns, where the Italians are reaping a rich harvest from us free-spending G.I.'s. On sunny afternoons such as today, some of the boys play football in the street while others sun themselves. The Enlisted Men's Club had its grand opening last night. With 1st Sgt. McAvoy and S/Sgts. Lang and Miller mainly responsible as the instigators of this club, those of us who indulge were able to enjoy cognac, rum, cherry brandy, and bianco vino. Before 2000 hours many of the boys had sloughed off the war weariness and felt as free as the breeze. Yesterday afternoon we were pleasantly surprised with the unexpected appearance of Sgt. Stankovich, whom we had assumed had been returned to the Zone of the Interior. After having spent many weeks hospitalized in Africa, he succeeded in rejoining the squadron. He had the choice of return-

ing to 489th or being sent elsewhere, but he chose to continue his association with all of us dubious characters.

19—The weather continues to be cold, but not quite as cold as it has been. The rainy season seems to be definitely on the way out. The days are longer and the sun is not so fleeting. Our 119th squadron combat mission was flown, this one over Rieti A/D, Italy. The target area was well covered with bombs. No opposition whatsoever was encountered. The food lately has been so poor that everyone is complaining again. Lt. Gaughan has started his own personal investigation in an effort to determine just why we are being fed so poorly. It is about time that this "food business" be settled once and for all.

20—Avezzano, Italy, double-track railroad viaduct at G277889 was the target for our 120th mission. We missed the initial point by 15 miles and came in on the bomb run at 275 degrees instead of 315 degrees. The target was missed completely, but planes from another squadron of the same formation scored several hits. This evening our Steak House opened for business with S/Sgt. Turpin at the fire. Handling this voluntary job expertly, Sgt. Turpin turned out a meal that we steak-starved soldiers devoured avidly. For a dollar, officers or enlisted men can augment an unsatisfactory squadron supper.

21—Two missions today. We concentrated again on marshaling yards, which lately has been our specialty. The yards at Foligno and Avezzano, Italy, came in for a heavy pounding today.

22—At early dawn today American forces of the 5th Army made large scale landings on the beaches only 28 miles south of Rome and have already established strong beachheads. This puts Allied men and equipment deep within enemy territory. And it threatens to put in a precarious position the German troops on the main 5th Army front. The bombing this Group has done in the past ten or twelve days has been a part of the softening up process preliminary to the invasion which took place today. The enemy's ability to resist was substantially lessened by the constant bombardment of airdromes, landing grounds, marshaling yards, road junctions, and bridges. Our mission today was in close support of the invasion parties. At 0730 hours Capt. White spoke to the men about the recent invasion just south of Rome. He gave some detailed information concerning the operations involved. For a long time all of us have been anticipating just such a move and have wondered why it was not forthcoming sooner. Yesterday's bombing over the marshaling yards at Foligno was carried out on ETA (estimated time of arrival) because of complete cloud coverage over the target. Reconnaissance later revealed that we partially destroyed a road bridge, although at the time we were unaware of the results. Our boys can hit them even if they can't see them.

23—The road junction northwest of Avezzano bore the brunt of our bombing today. The boys laid down an excellent pattern which fact was verified by the photographs. The Officers' Club and the Enlisted Men's Club are functioning well. For the first time since coming overseas we have been able to set up something having the semblance of a club.

24—Every day since the 13th of the month we have flown at least one combat mission. But today we remained inactive from a combat standpoint. Squadron activity continues on about the same level with nothing of particular interest worthy of record.

25—Shortly after 0900 hours six of our Mitchells, flying in the second flight, lead box, headed for the primary target they were briefed to bomb. Because of complete cloud coverage over the target, the formation returned with its bomb load intact. About five miles from our landing ground they were instructed to return to the target and bomb it or the alternate one. Flying through forbidding clouds our Group headed for Valmontone, Italy, the alternate target, and dropped the bombs through the cloud cover. Results could not be determined but it appears that the purpose of the mission was accomplished; namely, to bomb the road leading into town. S/Sgt. Turley, turret gunner, was injured in the leg by flak.

26—Bad weather kept our planes grounded.

27—The railroad junction east of Ardena, Italy, was the "object of our affections" today. The pattern our squadron laid

down was excellent. The range was perfect, but the deflection was off, causing most of the bombs, if not all of them, to fall several hundred feet to the south of the target. Lt. Gaughan's efforts to improve the quantity and quality of food available for us has produced tangible results. Today he located a huge warehouse about five miles north of Naples where there is an equally huge salvage dump. This warehouse serves the 5th Army and operates on such a scale that it cannot bother with cases of canned food which have broken open. Hence the salvage dump, to which we have been generously given access. Everyone is truly grateful to Lt. Gaughan for his perseverance in this delicate matter. He did more than just complain. Being a man of action, he produced results, the benefits of which all of us will enjoy.

28—Today we ran a successful mission over the Orte marshaling yards, neatly planting 15,000 pounds of bombs on the target. Major Parrish has returned to the squadron bearing his contagious smile and effuse enthusiasm. Now Operations and the Orderly Room resound to his ringing laughter. The Major is highly respected as a Commanding Officer and as a "friend of the men." His rejoining us is most welcome. As of now it is Captains Hamilton, Dyer, Kemp, Scott and Peterson. Each one of these officers is certainly deserving of the promotion.

29—Briefed to bomb one of two targets in the Florence area, our planes missed the target completely and dropped the bombs into the sea. Bad weather was mainly responsible for this abortive mission. The weather still remains very cold but now there is virtually no rain. The skies are most often clear and there is a trace of spring in the air. Tonight a number of good music lovers attended the opera in Naples, where "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "Pagliacci" were presented. Similar performances are given regularly in the Air Corps Theatre, formerly the well-known San Carlos Theatre, as a Special Services feature. The cast, all Italian and professional, played to an enthusiastic audience. The rendition of both operas was second rate but highly entertaining.

30—The road leading into Frascati, Italy, as well as the town itself, was bombed heavily by the Group. The pattern led right through town. Today 2d Lt. Paul R. Gale was assigned to the squadron. He was a navigator with the Air-Sea Rescue Detachment, which was recently deactivated. This detachment, using PBV Catalinas, was the only American outfit doing this kind of work. Lt. Gale was one of four unfortunate navigators who were assigned to this Group rather than returned to the States as were the rest of the detachment.

31—The combat life of a soldier in the Air Corps is one of ease and luxury, comparatively speaking. We live under adverse conditions and according to a standard that is well below what we high-living Americans are used to. But that we expect, this being war in the field. Mention is made of this fact to remind us who are prone to complain that conditions could be and are worse in some branches of the service. Talk with a front line infantryman if you are not convinced.

1 February, 1944—Nervous tension invariably is built up just prior to a mission. It is not openly evident, but it can nevertheless be sensed. Early this morning the boys prepared themselves for flying, but they were destined not to get into the air. The weather closed in over the field and at 1200 hours a stand-down was declared. Today was pay-day. By early evening a number of card and crap games were in full swing and by midnight there had been a very considerable exchange of money. One "character" came out on top with \$1,300. Capt. Fields, who has been adjutant of the squadron since its early days, is no longer associated with us. He has gone to Group Headquarters where he will serve as Group Adjutant. Taking Capt. Fields' place is Lt. Nickerson, who will also have charge of mess. Lt. Cutler now has charge of supply and transportation.

2—A road junction at Marino, Italy, was the target for today. Our bombardiers laid a good pattern commencing in the southwest part of town and extending right through it. The road running into town was well covered with bombs. The flak was intense and accurate, holing four planes. Plane 105, 9J, piloted by Lt. Fields with Lt. Mair at the co-pilot's controls, had its hydraulic system damaged. When it came time to land, it was necessary to crank the wheels down. This they did, but

they were unable to lock them into place. S/Sgt. F. A. Vaudry, engineer-gunner, poured hydraulic fluid into the system, thereby causing the locks to go into place. It was fortunate for everyone in the plane that an engineer was aboard, for only an engineer would have known what to do to lock the wheels. For dinner we had delicious fresh ham. Quite often lately we have had meals that could be correctly classified as good.

3—Weather again was responsible for keeping our planes grounded. The crews were briefed to bomb Orte, Italy, but before they got to the planes, a stand-down was declared. It has been weeks since we have had mail in any real quantity. On January 30 our APO was changed to 650. This is the fifth time it has changed within the past year. I suspect that the reason for the poor mail service lies in the fact that the ships and planes which ordinarily transport it to us have been sequestered for the forthcoming invasion. About the invasion. The radio, the press, and everyone is speculating as to when it will occur. It is virtually assumed that it will come from across the English Channel. Feeling is mounting because it is suspected that it will come sometime next month.

4—This evening the "Barber of Seville" was presented in Naples and a number of men from this squadron attended. Station Hospital No. 262 was the rendezvous point for an Officers' Dance. From all indications those who were there enjoyed themselves immensely. Here are the headlines appearing in today's *Stars and Stripes*: "Ten German Divisions Trapped in the Ukraine"; "Street Fighting Rages in Cassino"; "U. S. Forces Seize Two Strongholds in the Marshalls"; "Sofia Lies in Ruin"; "1,100 U. S. Planes Bomb Nazi Port" (Wilhelmshaven); "Liberators Smash Nazi Rail Lines."

5—Although it appeared that the weather would prevent our flying a mission today, twelve of our planes took off and succeeded in bomb-plastering the marshalling yards at Terni, Italy. We interrogated the crews at Group S-2, where three Red Cross girls who have been assigned to the Group served the flyers and S-2 personnel hot coffee and doughnuts. Today our Operations Officer was ordered to send to the 12th Bombardment Group (M) one pilot or co-pilot with a low number of missions. There were three men who were in this category. Cards were drawn. The unlucky (?) man was 2d Lt. Erbland. I use the term "unlucky" because it is rumored that the 12th Group will be sent to India or some other place in that part of the world. The 12th is now inoperative and very shortly will be on its way. Maybe we shall follow them. Time will tell.

6—Today was one of those days which all of us would like to forget. A tragic accident killed five of our men. We furnished three stand-by ships and crews for the three other squadrons. As is customary, these planes took off and circled while the formation was being made up. Not having to fill in, our three planes started back. Near the Ruins of Pompei, plane 463, 9K, piloted by Lt. Wiltshire, with Lt. Capson as co-pilot, Lt. Karvel, bombardier, Sgt. Luczak, radio operator, Sgt. P. J. Miller, turret gunner, and Sgt. Wellington, tail gunner, crashed. Witnesses revealed that the plane went into a dive and as it fell earthward, a wing came off. Shortly after it crashed, the four 1,000-pound bombs exploded. Lt. Wiltshire miraculously survived—how is not yet known—and will recover from the injuries he sustained. All the other crew members were instantly killed. Fate worked in Sgt. Schmidt's favor and against Sgt. Wellington. The former had been originally scheduled but at the last minute was replaced by the latter. Our 133rd squadron combat mission was a nickelling mission over Atina, Italy.

7—Two missions were run today, both in the Rome area. The morning mission was over Cisterna, Italy, key to the Appian Way and Rome. The M/Y and the town were hit squarely and heavily. Our men are confident that this was one of the most successful missions we have run. The afternoon mission carried our planes to Viterbo, Italy, where they were to hit the north choke point of the south M/Y. This time they did not do so well, although they did hit a section of the tracks and the southeast part of town. On the way back from the target, our formation ran into some enemy ME-109's and FW-190's. They did not attack.

8—We were out in force over Cisterna again. This mission today was every bit as successful as yesterday's mission over the

same target. A few more combat crew members were transferred to this squadron from the 12th Group. Where that Group is going is still a matter of pure speculation. Since it has been overseas longer than we have, where it goes will give us some indication of where we are likely to go eventually—either to another theatre or back to the States. Thus we await anxiously word of their disposition.

9—Appearing in the February 8th issue of the *Stars and Stripes*, daily newspaper of the U. S. Armed Forces for troops in Italy, are two interesting news items, which I make note of now in order later to see how the predictions contained therein work out. One item stated that an Allied victory in Europe this year was predicted last week by a panel of four military experts speaking on one program, with the consensus being that the Germans would collapse within three to six months after the Allies invade the west. The experts held no quick prospects for the war in the Far East. The other item stated that American Army troops overseas will become soldier-students within 48 hours after hostilities end in Europe under tentative plans already drawn up by Army officials. Study and training to prepare soldiers for the return to peacetime jobs will help span the period between the armistice and demobilization.

10—Our squadron was stood down all day. It had been intended that we fly a mission in the afternoon, but late in the morning inclement weather necessitated the declaration of a stand-down. As a result of this status, Operations - S-2 has been virtually deserted. Decorations were awarded this morning by Col. Jones to a number of our men. The ceremony was colorful and impressive even though it was necessarily simple.

11—Again a steady downpour of rain kept our planes grounded.

12—At 1153 hours our bombardiers toggled out 46,000 pounds of concentrated destruction in the vicinity of Campo-leone, Italy. Battling their way through a veritable barrage of flak, our airmen struck a telling blow at the enemy whose position is steadily worsening. This mission was intended to give close support to Allied troops in the Anzio beachhead area, where a ring of steel is inexorably closing around desperately fighting Jerry precariously situated between the main 5th Army front and this new front just south of Rome. Col. Jones telephoned congratulations to Major Parrish for the excellent results obtained in this 138th squadron combat mission.

13—Its top completely screened from view by low-hung clouds, Mt. Vesuvius appeared this morning in a garb of snow reaching from the lower slopes to where it imperceptively merged with the white cloud cover. The Lattar Mountains which rise out of the sea at Sorrento were equally beautiful in their winter dress. At frequent intervals during the entire day, our Mitchells, A-20 Bostons and B-26 Marauders droned gracefully through the cold skies like giant birds. Momentarily forgetting that these were terrible instruments of destruction, one seemed to feel that they were a part of all this natural beauty. Today we struck at the enemy not with bombs but rather with a weapon more subtle and just as explosive. Three of our planes rained down upon him 600,000 leaflets exhorting him to give up rather than prolong what is rapidly becoming a hopeless situation. More decorations were awarded, this time to men who were unable to attend the first ceremony.

14—The M/Y at Perugia, Italy, was the target for today. Capt. Hamilton, flying his 60th mission, led the Group over this dangerous target. We eagerly await the passage of each day. Time seems to be skidding by at a very rapid pace, but it cannot pass too quickly to suit us. Some day in the distant future when our youth and wartime days will be things of the past, we shall be wishing that we could slow up the inexorable scythe of time. In one sense, time right now is running in our favor, for it is bringing us closer to that inevitable day when we can look at all of this in retrospect. The anticipation of big things to come on the international scene continues to be very engrossing. Because we are so vitally affected by what happens all over the world, all of us are following the ever-changing world drama with great personal interest. From day to day we await new developments, following closely the slow but certain defeat of Germany and her nominal ally, Japan. What can be more interesting than history in the making?

15—Today marks the completion of one year in the overseas service. At approximately 1730 hours a year ago today the U.S.S. West Point steamed out of San Francisco's Golden Gate headed for a destination that was to remain unknown to us for many days to come. Standing at the stem of this once palatial luxury liner, scores of us silently watched the gray skyline of San Francisco recede into the distance. Twilight changed to darkness and many of us still stood there alone with our thoughts. We pondered our fate as we slipped away from this land of ours, which even then was taking on a new meaning for us. One year has passed by. Much has happened to us within that period of time. As we begin another year overseas, we are prone to speculate about the ethereal future just as we did that momentous day a year ago. What does it hold for us?

16—An Army regulation requires that at periodic intervals a sex lecture be given to all enlisted men. Even in the combat zone this requirement is fulfilled. Today Chaplain Cooper gave a short talk about sex morality, after which was shown a moving picture depicting the grave dangers of illicit intercourse. All of this advice is timely in view of the amazing ease with which a woman may be acquired. They infest not only the surrounding towns and villages but even the camp area itself. Enemy concentrations in the vicinity of Campoleone, Italy, constituted the target for today. Exceedingly bad weather caused this squadron to miss the area intended to have been bombed. Major Garske, flying with the 488th Squadron, went down in flames over the target area, his plane having been hit and knocked out of control. He was associated with Group Operations in the capacity of Assistant Operations Officer. It is now Major Kaufmann and Major Fields.

17—The Allies struck Berlin the mightiest air blow in history last night as 1,000 British aircraft unleashed well over 2,500 tons of high explosives and incendiaries in a 20-minute raid on the Nazi capital. This was the 15th major assault since the "Battle of Berlin" began last November. Our efforts were directed against an important supply dump and MT concentration in the Anzio area.

18—Today was unusually uneventful. The mission was abortive because of bad weather over the target area. Writing letters is a really difficult task. Censorship regulations are very rigid—of necessity—and consequently one's style is cramped considerably. Sitting down to write our daily letters sometimes—often—is a real ordeal. That will be a happy day when it will not be necessary to correspond.

19—Twice today we struck heavy blows at the enemy in the Anzio beachhead area, giving close support to our forces fighting fierce German counter-attacks. The 321st Bombardment Group (M) preceded us over the target. They ran into difficulties and lost a total of eight planes either from flak or fighters. This afternoon radio-gunners and S-2 personnel attended the first of a series of lectures dealing with airplane identification. It is important that those who fly be thoroughly indoctrinated in the identification of friendly and enemy aircraft. The boys are piling up missions fast. As the weather improves and the days become longer, we are flying more often. The enemy is fighting a losing fight in this theatre (and elsewhere, too), but he is fighting well and with great vigor. He is a master at defensive warfare as well as at offensive fighting. But he is not quite as good as we are.

20—Two missions again today in the Anzio beachhead area. The morning mission was probably successful but the afternoon mission was a complete failure because of bad weather which prevented the bombardiers from dropping any bombs. For about the past month we have been fed better than usual—on the basis of our former standards. As a result there are very few complaints about food. The other day two more men left for the States, namely, Lt. Schmidt and F/O Stegink, both having completed 51 combat missions. Lt. Casper left for Africa to attend a specialized course in airplane identification.

21—Stand-down. Last night Verdi's "Aida" was presented in Naples as a regular Special Services feature. About thirty men from the Group helped make up a capacity audience. For four short hours war-weary soldiers thousands of miles from home were able to project themselves out of the present and into a realm of fantasy.

22—During the morning our planes were over the M/Y at Foligno and in the afternoon we dropped leaflets over Atina and Pontecorvo. Prime Minister Churchill, in an hour and a quarter speech to the House of Commons, gave a concise review of the war up to the present time. He said that he would give no assurances that victory in Europe would or would not be ours this year, but that it may not be far away. For the first time, great fleets of American bombers based in Italy and in Britain launched a coordinated attack on important German targets. For the past four days the Allied aerial bombardment has been the greatest yet. Churchill promised in his speech that the bombing of Germany will be even greater and more terrible in the months to come. Capt. Dyer has gone to Group Operations to take the late Major Garske's place as Assistant Operations Officer.

23—The weather kept our planes on the ground all day. A mission had been scheduled but the crews were called back just before they were briefed. Rumors are still running rampant. The latest rumor, backed by the customary "facts," is that we shall eventually be moved to England. Actually the only certain thing is that sometime we shall move.

24—Our target today was a secret landing ground in the Rome area. From all indications the mission was a successful one. More new combat crew members were assigned to the squadron. They are fresh from the States. For dinner we had fresh pork chops along with fresh butter. This was a real treat for us. Complaints about the food we are fed are practically non-existent now. Of course, the meals are nothing to enthuse about, but compared with what we were getting for some ten or eleven months, they are not bad. And if we do not get enough to eat at the mess hall, we can always buy nuts or fruit, which are still very plentiful.

25—Stand-down because of bad flying weather.

26—Another day of combat inactivity due to inclement weather. For approximately twenty-four hours steady it has rained.

27—All day rain has fallen in torrents. Rainy days such as this one cause us to realize how fortunate we are to be living and working in buildings. Soon we shall have been here for two months. Even if we do not remain much longer than that, we shall have had some respite from the more primitive life to which we have become used to since arriving overseas more than a year ago. Today Lt. Ziegler, squadron censor, left for Algiers where he will assume new duties with another outfit.

28—Three planes of this squadron flew a nickelling mission in the Anzio area, dropping a total of 1,160,000 leaflets which were intended to inform the German soldiers of certain military and political facts about which they might not be aware. For a short time this evening many of us thought that we were in for a heavy enemy raid. Heavy anti-aircraft guns all around the field set up a thunderous noise and red tracer bullets streaked high up into the sky. This was all reminiscent of evenings at Hergla. But we soon found out that this was just practice. It is easy to imagine just how the civilians must have felt, not knowing the real facts.

29—It seemed that bad weather would keep our planes grounded. However, late in the afternoon our crews were called down to Group for briefing. The target was troop concentrations in the Anzio area, where the Germans are fighting desperately, launching one counter-attack after another. The situation has not yet become bad for the Allies. Pay-day. Gambling is always heavy on pay-day and for a few days thereafter. Already a few of the men are not only broke but they are deeply indebted to others.

SPECIAL ACCOUNTS OPERATIONS

The 489th Bombardment Squadron (M), still stationed on the mainland of Italy, struck at the enemy 24 times, making a total of 156 sorties; 463,080 pounds of bombs were dropped within the target area. On four of the squadron missions the enemy was subjected to propaganda leaflets instead of bombs. 1 March, 1944—This first day of the month was especially uneventful. In the morning when we arose it was raining, and it

appeared that there would be no mission. However, briefing time was set for 0745 hours and at that time six of our crews appeared at Group Operations for that purpose. They were briefed, and then they returned to the squadron area to await the call for take-off, which was dependent upon a favorable change in the weather. But instead of becoming better, the weather worsened and finally at 1500 hours a stand-down was declared. Waiting to be called for a mission is almost as trying as flying it. The crews must stay close to Operations in order to be able to leave on a moment's notice.

2—Our mission today was in close support of troops in the Anzio area. It was a rough mission with one slight casualty, T/Sgt. Glos being injured in the thighs from flak. This afternoon there was considerable excitement. Capt. Dyer (pilot) and Lt. Rittenhouse (co-pilot) took up 9N on a transition flight. When they prepared to land, they were unable to get the wheels down. They made every possible effort, but without success, and finally they brought the plane in on its belly. The plane "belongs" to Lt. Gaughan, "A" Flight Leader. He was speechless as he approached his plane lying there on its belly in the middle of the runway. The pilots are fondly attached to the planes they fly and always refer to them in the possessive case.

3—A mission had been planned for early this morning, but the bad weather prevented any combat flying. Today the following men, having completed their tour of duty, left for the States: Capt. Kemp, Lts. Demas and Weaver, and Sgts. Bagby and Johnson. This morning James Gaughan appeared at Operations sporting a set of captain's bars.

4—As has happened so often recently, the weather kept our planes on the ground. Nevertheless, we were on an available status until the middle of the afternoon. Thus the men had to remain close to Operations and "sweat it out." Doing this seems to be about as tiring and nerve-racking as flying the mission itself. Rations were given out this afternoon. Costing \$1.75, they consisted of 3 cigars, 14 packs of cigarettes, 2 bars of candy, 3 packs of gum, and—most startling of all—3 bottles of Coca-Cola. For the first time in well over a year we have the opportunity of enjoying this rare treat. Last night one complete new crew fresh from the States was assigned to the squadron. Since so many old members have been returned home recently, we have been near the critical point so far as crews go. We have been unable to put up a twelve-ship formation for a long time.

5—Again no mission today. It would not be amiss from time to time to interpolate into this war diary "reliable" information as to the course of the war. The following statements and predictions are from recent issues of the *Foreign Letter* and *What's Happening in Washington*, two publications catering to big business: "The war's 1943 climax, the collapse of Fascist Italy, will be overshadowed by the war's 1944 climax, the collapse of Nazi Germany, an event that will occur during the first half of the year. Internal crises, which Hitler has mastered only with increasing difficulty in the past, the terrific Allied air blows, against which the Luftwaffe can put up no adequate defense, together with Allied land attacks on Fortress Europe will precipitate collapse of the Nazi Reich. The Far Eastern Campaign will make much more rapid progress than generally expected. Before the end of the year, mass bombing of Japan proper will be under way. Victory over Japan will come in less than 12 months after German surrender—easier than expected."

6—All day the sky has been overcast and rain fell intermittently from dawn to dusk. Although we were scheduled for a mission, none of our planes got off the ground. However, late in the afternoon, four planes took off for practice formation flying. Even here in the combat zone practice flying and bombing takes place regularly.

7—For the first time since the 2nd of the month we were able to strike at the enemy. Six of our planes, consisting of the second box, unloaded 25,680 pounds of bombs on the Littorio M/Y at Rome. The pattern for the whole Group was compact and excellent. This was about the neatest bit of bombing that the Avengers have done. A newsreel cameraman flew in one of our planes and took pictures of the formation and the target.

8—The M/Y at Orte were heavily raided by this Group. Little opposition in the form of ack-ack was encountered. Our squadron alone dropped twelve tons of bombs. We have struck hard at Orte before, evidence of which was observed by our fliers today. They saw scores of burned and derailed freight cars, twisted rails, and gaping bomb craters.

9—Regularly the boys go into the various towns which infest this section of Southern Italy. They leave early in the morning and return late in the evening. Visit any one of these towns and you will see what is characteristic of all Italian towns. There are narrow and winding streets where the stench of decaying vegetables and human dung leaves nothing to the imagination. Many of these streets or ways are not more than seven or eight yards wide, the two or three-story stone buildings standing at the very edge of the street itself. Next to the flagrantly filthy odors which seem to permeate everything, children of all sizes are annoyingly conspicuous—they think that we Yanks are walking stores—well, as a matter of fact, some of us are. Brothels are as numerous as drug stores or gasoline stations in the States and all the girls are "bella signorina," so they say. All of us have been in Italian towns and cities so often that we shall never be able to forget the local color thus acquired. Sights such as described above are as familiar to us as are our own American environment.

10—The Avengers Group re-visited the Littorio M/Y at Rome, which we so successfully bombed on Tuesday. This mission, too, from a bombing standpoint, was probably successful. But a virtual calamity struck the Group—our popular and esteemed CO, Col. Jones, was shot down. Flying with the 486th Squadron, his plane was hit by flak on the bomb run. It was kept on a level course for a number of minutes after it was hit—long enough for five men to get out. Then it nosed over and plunged to the ground in a mass of flames. Why the other two men in the plane failed to get out is unknown. It will probably be a long time before we find out if the Colonel was among the five who jumped. The loss of Col. Jones has stunned all of us. He was well-liked by everyone. We admired him, because of his affable personality, and because he seemed to possess the qualities of leadership which are expected of a man in his position, but which so often are wanting. Yesterday Lt. Casper returned from Africa where he has been attending an airplane identification school.

11—Today has been one of those days of little activity. The weather affects life anywhere in the world, but this is particularly true of the soldier overseas.

12—We had to shoot "Dammit." Yesterday she appeared to be all right; today she could hardly walk and was foaming at the mouth. What could have caused such a change overnight is not known. For about a year she was with us. Now that she is gone, she will be sorely missed. We still have her three puppies, which are hale and hearty. We were scheduled to run a mission early this morning, but bad weather closed in and made it necessary to declare a stand-down.

13—Six of our planes were over the Perugia M/Y, dropping 1,000-pounders. The mission went off in routine fashion and probably was successful. The Deutsches Reich radio recently reported that a B-25, shot down near Rome the other day, contained a 32-year-old colonel who was taken prisoner. This was undoubtedly Col. Jones. In the absence of more definite information, I believe that it is safe to assume that the colonel is alive.

14—Planes of this Group re-visited the M/Y at Terni early this afternoon. Our bombs missed the yards, landing in town where they caused a number of explosions. At least one of the other squadrons peppered the target area. A move is in the offing. Today Operations and S-2 received orders to itemize and to give the total cubic content of all equipment to be moved. Yesterday afternoon Capt. Nestor talked to the combat crew members about malaria in the area to which we shall move. He warned that the incidence of malaria there is extremely high and that everyone will have to avail himself of all precautionary measures provided for preventing the disease. Again the question on everyone's lips is, "Where next?" And then, "How soon?" In due time those questions will be answered. Mean-

while all we can do is speculate. Corsica? England? India? China?

15—At 0120 this morning we were awakened by the ear-splitting explosions of heavy ack-ack guns. The northwestern sky this side of Vesuvius was streaked with red tracers and, soon after the attack started the heavy drone of friendly fighters could be heard passing overhead. It was evident that Naples, just a short distance away, was intended to receive the brunt of this attack. It turned out to be a very heavy one, lasting about forty minutes. This afternoon some of our men, returning from Naples, reported that there were some casualties and considerable damage. At least two German planes were shot down. Today the heat was turned on Cassino. We ran two missions over this bloody target, where fighting has raged unabated for weeks. Allied troops had been removed from the immediate vicinity of the town in anticipation of a concerted aerial bombardment aimed at completely obliterating it.

16—Our planes were over Cassino again. It is difficult to believe that there can be much left of that town after the devastating raids of yesterday during which over 1,400 tons of bombs were dropped within an area of less than a square mile. Heavy, medium, light, and dive bombers were concentrated on this historic town which has blocked our way to Rome for so long. At 1900 hours last night the regular BBC broadcast from London reported the details of this heavy bombardment. Our squadron took the honors by leading this Group, which was the first over the target.

17—The *Avengers* Group has a new Commanding Officer, Col. Chapman. Today he appeared in the squadron area to give it the once-over. Roccasecca, Italy, was visited during the morning. We plastered the town with 250 and 500-pounders. Not only was the mission highly successful, but it was a milk run for the boys.

18—This morning our planes paid a visit to Foligno, Italy, hitting the city with 1,000-pounders. This afternoon we were over Avezzano, but with leaflets rather than with bombs. Lt. Nickerson, who has been Adjutant since Major Fields went to Group Headquarters, has left for another outfit to serve in some other capacity. As yet he has not been replaced. Tonight Mt. Vesuvius presented one of the most beautiful sights I have ever witnessed. A mass of wild fire poured from its open top and fingered the somber sky with savage strokes. Vividly outlining the western slope which runs down to the sea was a continuous line of dancing fire. And drifting away to the southwest were huge clouds of smoke. Here was nature in its most awe-inspiring garb.

19—Briefed to bomb the M/Y at Orte, Italy, the boys blew up an important bridge instead. This bridge was situated just outside the yards. Mt. Vesuvius continues to pour out fire and smoke and lava in huge quantities. The sky above the eastern slopes of the mountain are an azure hue, and the western sky is screened as far as one can see by an ominous cloud cover of smoke.

20—Briefed to bomb Perugia M/Y, our boys were unable to unload there because of cloud cover. So they wheeled their planes around and headed south for the M/Y at Terni, where they dropped the 1,000-pounders through clouds. Here is what the *Stars and Stripes* has to say today about Mt. Vesuvius, which continues to erupt with great ferocity: "Three great streams of molten lava poured down the sides of Mt. Vesuvius today, marking the volcano's greatest activity in 15 years. The column of lava which Neapolitans could see was described as a mile and a half long and appeared like a great river of fire by night while smoke from burning vegetation revealed its path by day. . . . The last heavy eruption of Vesuvius was in 1906. . . . A number of houses are within a mile of the creeping avalanche and may have to be abandoned before Tuesday afternoon, it was feared."

21—The following excerpt from a letter written by one of the boys to the people back home throws an interesting light on the difficulties attendant upon correspondence: "I must confess that I am completely at a loss as to what to write about. If only I could tell you about day to day events—then I would have something of interest for you. For me it would merely be the

statement of an endless monotony. I am positive that you can have no conception of how we live, what we do, for actually this life is not as it is pictured in newsreels, in magazines, and in papers. Movies, pictures, and articles show the highlights, dress everything up, but fail, of necessity, to catch the real substance of combat life overseas. Were it possible for you to spend a full twenty-four hours with me, you would be very much surprised. And that is exactly what you would have to do to catch the intangibles which neither pictures nor words can convey. Writers like Ernie Pyle, whom we all read, are doing an outstanding job, within the limitations of words, of enabling the people at home to experience, vicariously, a bit of our daily life. But they don't tell you about oppressive monotony, headaches, infection, upset stomachs, fleas and bedbugs, and the innumerable other physical and mental discomforts. That doesn't make interesting reading, it isn't unusual because it is something we contend with day in and day out—every day. . . ."

PAESTUM, ITALY (GUADO AIRFIELD)

22-31—During this period much has happened to us. Mt. Vesuvius "blew its top"; we evacuated the base in great haste, moving to an airfield southeast of Salerno, from which field we have already flown four missions.

The volcanic disturbance became steadily worse with more molten fire overflowing the top and running down the mountain-sides. Shortly after midnight of March 23, we were awakened by the noisy fall of cinders on our flat-topped stone roof and on the pavement at our front door. By 0700 hours there was a steady downpour of cinders—exactly that. Big chunks the size of a man's head crashed to the ground, cutting communication wires, smashing through jeep and truck windshields, ripping through the canvas tents on the line, and destroying our precious airplanes. This frightening downfall continued unabated throughout the entire day. Protected by steel helmets, none of us were injured. But civilian casualties were high, causing Doc Nestor and his medics to be very busy. By noon it was evident that all the planes of the Group would never be flown again. The weight of tons of cinders on the wings created a destructive stress. The plexiglass in the upper turrets and pilots' and bombardiers' compartments were shattered.

Early in the afternoon of the 23rd, the first evacuating party left, most of the transportation being furnished by the 306th Service Group, which was called upon to help out during the emergency. The men carried only bare essentials, for there was neither time nor room for more than that. The prime objective was to clear out of this dangerous area as quickly as possible. Throughout the entire afternoon more men left, and by early evening the squadron had been completely evacuated, except for a few men who remained behind to guard all the squadron equipment and personal belongings. The Italians were everywhere like parasites, which is precisely what they have been around the camp.

For miles on end the main roads were choked with fleeing trucks, jeeps, and other vehicles. It was necessary to pull through the deep bed of cinders and dust in low gear. The roads were crowded with stalled passenger cars belonging to evacuating Italians and British trucks; we commented that American G.I. equipment in characteristic fashion always gets through. Shortly after midnight we arrived at Guado Airdrome 22 miles southeast of Salerno. Exhausted, we set up our cots in a large, stone-constructed tobacco warehouse from whose ceiling still hung drying tobacco leaves.

The 24th and the 25th were miserably cold and rainy days during which time we did nothing whatsoever. We messed with a squadron of the 321st Bombardment Group (M), which is situated on this field. The food was both poor and scarce. We all suffered from colds, headaches, and upset stomachs.

All of us had expected that the Group would be inoperational for at least a few weeks. Thus we were surprised when we were assigned six ships and were alerted for a mission on the 27th. That mission took us to a railroad bridge east of Perugia. We knocked out the west approach.

On the 28th we struck at the same target near Perugia, this time completely demolishing the bridge, but at a terrible cost to us: Five of our flyers, radio operators and gunners were hit by flak over the bomb run and were seriously injured. One of

the casualties, young and popular S/Sgt. H. H. Waldroup, died the next day.

On the 29th, five of our Mitchells staged an uneventful raid on the airdrome at Viterbo, Italy. Bad weather prevented any bombing on the 30th and the 31st.

S-2 and Operations are now located in separate tents. This is the first time in the history of the squadron that the two sections have been separated.

1 April, 1944.—The first day of another month has come and gone. Time follows its inexorable course and life here in the overseas service continues as usual in the same monotonous manner.

2—The target for today was the same one that we had yesterday, namely, a railroad bridge a few miles outside of Orvieto, Italy. Because of intervalometer malfunction, we completely missed the target. For the past five or six missions we have been using the highly secret Norden sight, a precision instrument made famous by the "heavies" in raids over Germany and Occupied Europe. Practically all of our bombing recently has been strategic rather than tactical. Thus the Norden sight is the logical one to use.

3—Again our target was the railroad bridge just outside of Orvieto. And again we missed it. This time weather was the contributing factor.

4—The Perugia Airdrome was slated for a heavy bombing by this Group. We reached the target area but were unable to drop any bombs because of complete cloud coverage.

5—Six of our crews were briefed to bomb the airdrome located at Perugia but weather prevented any combat flying. However, there was another low-level training flight. Three crews have volunteered to train for low-level bombing which is highly dangerous.

6—We sent off nine planes this afternoon to strike at the Perugia Airdrome. As I make this notation the planes are peeling off and are coming in. Three of the nine returned early because of mechanical trouble. Whether the remainder got to the target remains to be seen.

7—Carrying a total of twelve tons of bombs, six of our Mitchells struck out for the railroad bridge at Ficulle, Italy. Using a Norden sight, they scored two direct hits on the west trestle of the bridge. On the way back, 9N, with Lt. Roberts in the pilot's seat, was badly shot up and Capt. Corcoran, co-pilot, was seriously injured. The plane made an emergency landing at Pomigliano L/G. The Italians are busy in the surrounding fields ploughing and planting. In characteristic fashion the women appear to be doing most of the work. The men make their women work hard in this country. It is not an uncommon sight to see a couple walking down a rural lane, the woman carrying a heavy bundle atop her head and both arms heavily burdened with luggage while the man next to her walks leisurely without any load at all.

8—From 9,200 feet and at an indicated air speed of 210 m.p.h., six planes from this squadron unloaded twelve tons of bombs in the vicinity of a railroad bridge north of Orte. One direct hit demolished the southwest corner of the bridge.

9—Today is Easter, but for us overseas it is just another day. A mission had been scheduled but shortly before noon a stand-down was declared. Another move is in the air. Rumor has it that we shall be up and gone from here by the end of this week. As usual our destination is unknown, but we are inclined to believe that we shall remain in this theatre.

10—Our planes returned to bomb the bridge at Orte. This time direct hits were scored on the bridge itself, completely demolishing it. Last night there was a heavy rainfall and during the morning the weather was threatening. Later in the day the sun came out and warmed things up to the point where it was not necessary to wear any sweaters or jackets. Spring is here; that is an unmistakable fact now.

11—Threatening weather prevented any combat flying. However, we did send a plane to Corsica, which will be our next

place of residence. An advance party from Group and two other squadrons left this morning for the new field. We shall probably follow before the week is over.

12—The 182nd squadron combat mission was a railroad bridge five miles north of Todi, Italy. The lead box missed the initial point on the first approach. And on the second approach the bombs were dropped short of the bridge.

13—The marshalling yards at Terni received a pasting today by planes of this Group. The damage done was probably considerable, although this mission was not among the best ones we have flown. Close to our area is Mt. Soprano American Cemetery, where are buried over a thousand of our boys who died here during the bloody Salerno invasion. The regularly spaced, simple white crosses are an impressive and thought-provoking sight. Lying here at the base of Mt. Soprano are the torn and beaten bodies of men who have made the supreme sacrifice for their country. And back within the protecting confines of the United States are USO commandoes who are crying their hearts out because of the "terrible" army life they are leading, and youthful male civilians who boastfully manage to remain such and continue to shirk their rightful duty. For these culpable, worthless friends of the enemy I have nothing but invective. They should see these silent, simple graves. They should experience the anguish and emptiness of heart when our buddies fail to return from a mission. That would be to them but a faint hint of what war really is.

14—Viterbo A/D, forty miles northwest of Rome, was the target for today. Thirty-six ships bombed the dispersal areas northwest and north of the field with 4,668 twenty-pound frags and 160 250-pound bombs. There were at least ten parked planes on the field and the patterns covered at least eight of them.

ALESAN L/G, CORSICA

15-16—On the move again. All day the various sections were busy preparing for the change of location. Every move always entails a great deal of work. Sunday we arose at 5:00 o'clock and immediately went to work pulling down tents, loading trucks, and doing all the multitudinous tasks attendant upon a move. Shortly before noon our convoy pulled out, leaving the flight echelon behind. The ride to Salerno was a rough and dusty one. Later in the afternoon we arrived at the docks. We had a hasty meal along the seaside and then lugged our baggage and equipment aboard the English LST which is to carry us to Corsica.

17-18—At 4:00 o'clock Monday afternoon we steamed out of Salerno Harbor. A destroyer escort accompanied us for this dangerous journey. The trip turned out to be uneventful. On Tuesday we landed, unloaded our baggage and squadron equipment and moved inland about three miles to a staging area where we shall spend the night.

19-23—Moving entails so much work that it is necessary during that time to neglect these daily diary notations. Now we are set up and ready to operate.

24—Corsica is an island of wild and jagged mountains, of deep, shadow-covered valleys. A shimmering, ever-curving seashore lends its bountiful share of beauty to this French-inhabited island where Napoleon was born.

25—This afternoon we ran our 193rd squadron combat mission. The railroad bridge south of Ficulle, Italy, was the target. Sixteen and one-half tons of bombs were dropped by nine of our planes, but the bridge remained unscathed. Today we received our first generous share of mail in weeks. Since arriving at this location, we have had daily enemy aircraft alerts. Most of them have occurred at night just after sundown.

26—Rain all day—stand-down.

27—Again rain kept all of our planes grounded. Our food has become progressively worse. Meal after meal consists of the hated C rations. Except for an occasional fair dinner or supper, breakfast is the only half-way decent meal.

28—We had an early morning mission. The targets were railroad bridges in the Orvieto area. Possible hits were scored on the approach to one of the bridges, the other one was untouched. This afternoon two missions were flown. The crews have not yet been interrogated.

29—This morning we flew a very successful mission over the Terni Viaduct.

30—The mission today was in the Orvieto sector, and important railroad bridge which no longer exists; the boys hit it squarely.

SERIOUSLY WOUNDED

Mission—Railroad bridge northeast of Orvieto, Italy.

S/Sgt. Kellerski, radio-gunner.

OUTLINE HISTORY FOR PERIOD 1 MAY, 1944, TO 31 MAY, 1944, ALESAN L/G

CAMPAIGN: Italian (still in progress).

(1) The 340th Group was engaged primarily in the "Operation Strangle" during the period of this outline history. This operation, conducted by the 1st Tactical Air Force, was designed to expedite the fall of Rome by starving the enemy of supplies and reinforcements, and as such may be considered to have begun early in January, 1944. The "Operation Strangle" was supposed to have facilitated the quick destruction of the Gustav and Adolf Hitler lines below Rome and the drive of the Anzio beachhead forces on Rome after they had linked up with the Allied Forces pushing at Cassino. Fierce opposition by the enemy on the Gustav line and his sealing off of the beachhead for four months caused the "Operation Strangle" to be considerably drawn out. The operation was not completed at the end of the period covered by this outline history, 31 May, 1944.

(2) Secondly, the 340th Group was employed on Army support operations (bombing of troop concentrations and creating of road blocks close to the enemy's front lines). Towards the end of the month of May it flew several missions against road bridges in central Italy and knocked many out. This aided fighter bombers to destroy bottled motor transport.

(3) Specifically, the "Operation Strangle" consisted of intensive repeated attacks on railroad installations in central and north-central Italy.

(4) The 340th Group in the period covered by this outline flew 46 missions totalling 848 sorties.

(5) **OUTSTANDING MISSIONS:** Though each mission was important less in itself than in the overall operational plan, one or the other missions stand out by reason of their nature or their success. Such a one was the 340th mission against the Buccine south rail viaduct on 29 May, 1944. Two formations of 23 and 24 planes attacked the target in the late forenoon—Buccine north rail viaduct being the target of part of the first formation. Three spans, at least, of the south viaduct were knocked out, the first time 340th was assigned this target. For several weeks previously B-26 bombers had attacked the target without creating any considerable damage. Another mission out of the ordinary, a low-level attack, was directed against rail bridges near Aquaviva, 1 May, 1944. Another was made on three bridges near Sinalunga 21 May, 1944. The skip-bombing technique on the very small targets chosen was no easy one to master, though many of the bombs were slammed into the masonry accurately. They deflected, however, and when they exploded a few seconds later, did not achieve great effectiveness, though much damage was done to the installations and other damage wrought by strafing of targets of opportunity to and from the target. Both Col. Chapman and our own Capt. Dyer were instrumental in devising the technique for low-level flying.

(6) Col. Jones, missing in action since 10 March, 1944, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary aerial achievement as Flight Commander of 340th formation attacking Littorio marshalling yards 10 March.

1 May, 1944—We began the month of May with an unsuccessful attack on one of the bridges at Orvieto, Italy. Entire Group missed this target. Our own Capt. Dyer, now in Group Operations, together with Lt. Barnett, lead low-level mission. Col. Chapman flew with Capt. Dyer as co-pilot. Each plane took a different bridge at Aquaviva. The two target bridges were missed, but bombs did hit, at least, one nearby road bridge. The Group movies seem to be increasingly well attended. The screen, a canvas-covered wood frame about eight by seven feet, is at the bottom of a somewhat weedy and stony hill. Consequently, folding chairs, small metal drums, or wooden boxes are a sine qua non. Mail service has been a disappointment ever since our arrival at Corsica. The Group sends a courier to Naples every day to pick up bags of mail, but either the stuff picked up is for other Corsican units, or worse still, there is no mail at all.

2—With Capt. Teare as lead pilot and Lt. Scofield as lead bombardier, the north approach to Orvieto bridge was blasted. This was Teare's sixtieth mission and he is finito. A colored A/A orchestra entertained prior to the movie. They were rather good but the movie starring the Andrews Sisters was a stinkaroo. Jerry is over virtually every night. The A/A boys call them "p—call" because each 2 A.M. they are compelled to man their guns. General Cannon, 1st Tactical Air Force boss, was in today with General Knapp, Wing Commander. General Cannon seems to take a keen interest in the enlisted men. And, of course, he is commonly known as "Uncle Joe." He appears to be about 55, of medium build and light hair; his personality is somewhat fatherly. The General's favorite airplane, or, at least, the one he generally uses when he flies in to see us, is an A-36 Invader. He and Col. Jones were excellent personal friends.

3—Brown and Whitcomb teamed up to hit the north Todi bridge. The entire Group did a very effective piece of work. The beach here continues to remain very popular. If there were some women around, the boys could easily forget Miami Beach. Many of the boys are making visits to Ajaccio, the birthplace of Napoleon. It is about a 110-mile trip by jeep from this base. The scenery is fantastically beautiful. While the sun shines, the snow glistens from the mountain tops. The entire trip is one continuous series of S's. Any carelessness can result in a drop of hundreds of feet over the precipice. Along most of the road run small streams with here and there miniature waterfalls. A new type of telegraphic message from soldiers overseas is now available. The sender can write his own message rather than rely on stereotyped messages. New crews are continually coming in and within a few days have three or four missions to their credit. This campaign in Italy against enemy communications is as mechanical and unvarying as a machine operation in a factory. We hit a bridge today and tomorrow Jerry has it replaced. It is a battle between the American Air Corps and the German Engineers. Under a new ground-air plan we exchange personnel with the Infantry so that each branch can better understand the other. We sent a whole crew either to Cassino or the beachhead and, in turn, our squadron got about a half dozen officers from the 88th Division. The Lieutenant Colonel from the Infantry knows his poker.

4—Whitcomb and Brown again leading. Couldn't locate the I.P. and as a result missed the I.P.

5—Ajaccio has apparently not changed much during the years. In Napoleon's home the rooms are replete with mirrors. Apparently at a very early age, the Little Corporal experienced delusions of grandeur. The officers billet at the Continental Hotel. PX supplies appear to be plentiful. The Corsican women here are clean and attractive.

6—Stand-down today but the combat lull didn't keep some of the personnel from getting killed. Two officers and an enlisted man of the 488th Squadron were killed when their low-flying B-25 piled into the hills near Cervione, just northwest of the field. Group Public Relations is taking pictures of personnel according to states.

7—Another stand-down. Gaughan, Dobberteen, Teare, Jeeter, Brown, et al, left for home in B-25's which are to be remodified in the States. Thus they come and go but the ground forces seem to remain forever. During these stand-downs the

nature lovers journey to the beach. Basking in the sun while nude is both enjoyable and healthy. The Red Cross girls swim at the beach near Group headquarters—but not in the nude.

8—The boys went to briefing but later a stand-down was called. The combat crews and their supporting personnel would appreciate these "off days" more if they did not have to wait until 1630 hours for Wing's call that it was all a mistake. Lt. Col. Adolph E. Tokaz, our former Commander, who has been with Wing Operations for a few months, is bound for the States in a permanent change of station. "Madame Curie" was the movie of the evening.

9—Stand-down. Weather. Capt. Bunch, together with Major Cover of the 488th, have established a rest camp for officers and enlisted men about 75 miles from here. We set up our own laundry. Natives are to operate same.

10—Target today was bridge at Terni which we destroyed about ten days ago. Mission was a failure. The Russians appear to be making vast strides on Eastern front, while in Italy the advance, if any, is by inches. Capt. Nestor is all worked up over his Congressman from New Jersey. It seems that the good Captain wrote him a letter criticizing his activity in Congress. Nestor used the initials M.C. after his name indicating Medical Corps. The Congressman, thinking "M. C." was the abbreviation for Marine Corps, addressed a reply to the top brass in the Marine Corps in which he objected to the practice of personnel in the Armed Forces writing such letters.

11—The C.O., Col. Chapman, huddled the combat crews and staff officers together in the late afternoon and passed on the cheering words that the big offensive in Italy starts tomorrow. We shall probably hit the Cassino area hard. Earlier today we bombed an alternate target—the harbor of Porto Ferrario, Elba. Mission was 92% effective with hits scored on plants and railroad tracks. Aircraft identification courses are under way with Lt. Casper in charge for the entire Group. Apparently tonight will be H hour of D day. We defeated the 324th Service Squadron in a baseball game.

12—The big push in Italy got under way today, but it was rather anti-climax for us because the weather interfered with our missions. In the morning, Group sent up 60 planes as our contribution to the offensive. Target was one of the Itri roads near Cassino. Another target was an enemy division command post near Itri. The entire mission was virtually abortive because cloud cover prevented bombing by all but a few planes. Frags were carried by some of the planes and 500-pounders by others. Later in the day we again trained on the same targets. Good results on the road block. One plane from 488th went down in the heavy flak. The rotation system is greatly criticized. Instead of the deserving and efficient receiving consideration, it is usually the hopelessly inefficient or near section eight cases who receive the call.

13—The big event of today was, of course, the brutal enemy raid on our airdrome and dispersal areas. (This raid is treated elsewhere in this book under special events.) Obviously, the enemy was seeking to neutralize our fields in an effort to thwart the offensive in Italy. A force of FW-190's, ME-109's, JU-88's, and possibly others, about 25 or 30 in number, attacked the airfield proper, the 489th Squadron area, the Operations and S-2 buildings (Group) and the nearby gasoline dump. The fighter bombers strafed the ack-ack positions during the attack trying to silence them. In the light of a large silver moon, at about 0335 hours, a German pathfinder, thought to be a captured Allied Beaufighter, led the attackers in with a flare placed effectively near the center of the field. Then the slaughter began. Many of the Engineering, Ordnance and Armament personnel, almost all of whom lived in tents on the field, were slow getting out of bed or figured as they had in the past 14 months of combat that no bombs could be dropped near the 340th. For them it was sudden death, painful injuries or, at least, the most terrifying experience ever to befall them. The planes seemed to come in only a few hundred feet off the ground, though some of the early runs were at about 3,000 feet. The runs seemed to be made on two courses, roughly northwest to southeast, and from the sea northeast to southwest. Frags and light demolition bombs were thickly sown on the targets and caused great

damage and extensive casualties. Of approximately 90 planes on the field, 65 were put out of commission, of which 30 will be totally lost to the Group, though parts of approximately 24 of them can be salvaged. The death toll is at 16 or 17 tonight, and will run higher. Almost 75 were hospitalized, and scores more treated by first-aid men. Heaviest hit was the 489th Squadron; this unit had both its airfield area and squadron bivouac area saturated with fragmentation bombs. Even some men in slit trenches were killed or wounded. Some of the men had only a few hours earlier arrived in the squadron. Blood donations were made today at the 35th Station Hospital, where the wounded were received. Poretta (British Spitfire) Airfield north of us was hit a few hours before ours, but like children we watched the distant ack-ack fire from the movie area, dreaming not that the Luftwaffe was destroying our much-needed Spits (about 25) and killing four or five men, and even less that it would be at our throats within a few hours. Axis Sally spoke of our utter destruction, but Sally notwithstanding, and to the contrary, the Group somehow scraped together a token force of 12 planes out of the nowhere to attack the Itri tunnel, but the boys missed. One plane from 486th is missing from this mission. The fact that we were able to send up any planes at all is a tribute to the men of this Group. One is reminded of what Heywood Broun once wrote: "There is resilience in the soul of man. He may lie down to bleed awhile, only to arise refreshed." Thus man in the form of Jerry sought to be not outdone by nature for only a few months earlier this same Group was the victim of the Vesuvius volcanic eruption at Pompei. Much that is written here is perhaps redundant but the event is so important that no details should be overlooked. Written below are the thoughts of one of our men while experiencing a first bombing: "At 2300 hours last night there was one of the usual alerts. Soon we heard ack-ack at a distance. Outside the tent, I saw flares at a distance as though over Bastia (actually these flares were over Poretta Airfield). It was a beautiful moonlight night—a bomber's night. Then a brilliant flash as though a plane going down. At 0330 hours this morning more ack-ack—this time nearer. We are alerted and hit slit trench. Again more flares—this time apparently over the 57th Fighter Field about 20 miles north of here. I am nervous and alone—the slit trench is not very satisfactory. At 0400 hours another alert. This time we are the target. I hit a slit trench—this time a deeper one. I am alone in the trench and very lonely. Strangely, I am self-possessed and calm. I feel that I am doing all in my power to protect myself. The rest is up to God or chance. I sometimes lie on my back in the trench and hear the thunder and see the flashes from our 90 millimeter guns. Can see brilliant flares over the field. Could this be our field after going 15 months unscathed? Vesuvius was bad but man wreaks much greater destruction than nature. One or two planes catch on fire and seem to explode almost immediately. . . . Light A/A whistles by and it seems as though the flak drops into my trench as it spends itself. The field is illuminated by a brilliant moon but the flares make the field appear as though there is a night baseball game being played back home. Never having experienced a bombing and always having watched it from a distance as at Sfax and Hergla and Catania, it is difficult for me to distinguish between bombs dropping and the thunder of our heavy guns. I can hear planes overhead but cannot see them. . . . Planes continue to burn; it is a holocaust although an awe-inspiring one. . . . I hear a cry for help from the officers' area (later learn this was Lt. Crosby, who was badly injured). . . . Apparently Jerry is coming over at one minute intervals just as our boys do on night missions. There seemed to be, however, three different periods during the attack which lasted nearly an hour. After each period there is a short lull when there appear to be no planes overhead. Finally it is over. Then the ambulances began to take over. There were a total of about 60 casualties in our squadron alone; nearly 15% of our total strength. Connally and Friedman are dead. So is Paarlberg, who had an Army classification score of about 150, probably the highest in the Group. Friedman was killed after being hit while lying in bed and then rising only to receive another frag hit. Three new crews had come in only the night before. This was their reception. They had had no time to 'dig in.' One of the new men, Lt. Keljik, ran out of movie film just as he was beginning to take pictures of the raid. This Group had always been careless about 'digging in.' Any talk

of wearing of helmets and digging of slit trenches was considered almost cowardly. From a professional point of view the Germans did a great job. The mission was very well briefed. They employed primarily frag clusters. Each frag only weighed about three pounds and thus each plane could carry nearly one thousand of them. Group Headquarters was bracketed but not hit. Dr. Nestor and his enlisted personnel did a magnificent job and braved danger. A/A men claimed they destroyed two planes definitely. We question this. One train of frags dropped right over the squadron officers' area. It seemed as though the Orderly Room which was housed in a white-topped tent was used as an aiming point. It was concluded that if the men had built covers over the slit trenches they would have been protected against the frags. Some of the destroyed planes were brand new. Most of the tents in the squadron area looked like sieves, there were so many holes in them. Jerry also strafed. Have we learned a bitter lesson?"

14—The 340th is burying its dead today, replacing its equipment, rebuilding. If Jerry comes over tonight, he will find us dug in. Stories of dramatic rescues are being told and retold. More casualties died. Others are critically injured. Some of the hospitalized are men whose names we do not even know. They had just arrived. The Group sent up 24 planes including 6 from this squadron. Target—railroad bridge three miles west of Arezzo. We came closest to hitting target. Range was good but deflection off about 100 feet to left. Tonight card playing. Game broken up several times because of rumored alerts. Some damned fool this morning flying in an A-20 let loose with his fixed guns and everyone hit the floor. Apparently mistook our area for skeet ring.

15—Death toll for Group has now risen to 20. A/A boys still claim two enemy planes shot down while the Beaufighters patrolling the island claim another pair. The 845th Aviation Engineers did an excellent job of restoring the field to operational status. Before the sun was up on the morning of the raid and while ambulances were still taking out the casualties, their men were filling in a bomb crater near the edge of the runway and policing up the debris all over the field. Soon a bulldozer was scraping away the still burning remains of Group S-2 and S-3, and a new building was put under construction the next morning. Piombino Harbor on the west coast of Italy was bombed successfully. New planes are pouring in from Telerigma. All of our flight leaders are finished and the squadron has been caught short.

16—Good news continues to emanate from the Italian front. Germans falling back to Pico and the Adolph Hitler line. The Gustav line seems to be perforated. Piombino again the target (alternate). Only 5% efficiency. We have inexperienced flight leaders and sorely miss Brown and Teare. With more experience the new flight leaders will improve. Only three days after the raid and there is no security discipline. Trucks drive about with lights on. Then some drunks will start shouting "lights out" at all hours of the night. This has a bad psychological effect since many of the men have been visibly affected by the raid of the 13th. "Gee-Gee," the Eytie KP, went berserk only last night. More new crews pouring in. Difficult to learn all of their names.

17—Missed target again. New T/O calls for 24 crews. All new planes are silver-colored B-25 J's. Mysterious lights that appeared several times at night before the raid of 13 May and during the night of the raid are believed to be under investigation by the Counter Intelligence Corps. Corsica has its share of saboteurs and spies. The raid was almost too well planned.

18—Lt. Hastor is proving an excellent flight leader. Today he and Scofield, our bombardier, teamed up to destroy a new target—a large railroad bridge at Viareggio. More new crews. Some of them were in Capt. Decker's squadron at Greenville. The boys are still getting their beach time.

19—Bombed a target just east of Florence—our most northerly target to date. A generous supply of PX articles arrived today. Despite strong German resistance, our troops have completely destroyed the Gustav line and penetrated the Hitler line defenses for five miles in one place.

20—The Group now has 110 aircraft assigned, more than ever before, and all but four are equipped for immediate combat duty. Col. Chapman returned from a mysterious trip to Algiers. Aircraft identification courses are still being given by Lt. Casper. Stand-down.

21—Some men are being sent home on 30-day furloughs. Mostly combat men with a few selected staff officers. Stand-down. Ninety-mile gale reported over Italy. Cpl. Teitelbaum received a letter saying that MBC broadcast news of the raid of 13th of May a few hours after it occurred. Col. Thomas of Twelfth Air Service Command reported that the 340th has been given priority over all Air Force units in Corsica for food and supplies. Since the raid the number of 40 mm. ack-ack guns has been doubled. The 21st death in our Group as a result of the raid was apparently the last fatality. Our Group's T/O has been changed to allow 24 air crews per squadron and 20 airplanes, but the authorized number of ground crews remains at 16.

22—Forty-eight planes were to create road block at Cave, Italy. Almost complete cloud coverage over target caused same to be missed and the planes to come limping home nearly out of gas. We sweated them out until 2100 hours. Barbed wire is being placed along the beach. Anti-personnel mines are being sown. Movie—"Battle of Russia" with fascinating scenes of battle of Stalingrad and Leningrad.

23—Stand-down.

24—Whitcomb as lead bombardier caused huge explosion at an ammunition dump. Our Group is sending up nearly 48 planes each day. We send planes regularly to Catania, Sicily, for fresh eggs, etc. Many of the old gang are now in Greenville, Miss. They include Kemp, Decker, Smith and King.

25—S. Ficulle was the target. Everything went wrong. Lt. Ellin's plane crashed. Five parachutes observed. He may have landed it. S-2 had issued the crew a double set of escape kits and purses. They also had been indoctrinated with escape information. The crew consisted of Lt. Richard L. Ellin of Flemington, N. J., pilot; Lt. Garth B. King of Tyler, Texas, co-pilot; S/Sgt. Pete Vargo, Brownsville, Pa., bombardier; T/Sgt. Henry E. Yocca of Windber, Pa., radio-gunner; S/Sgt. Cecil W. Wright of Flint, Mich., turret gunner; and Sgt. Russell L. Scott of Richmond, Va., tail gunner. Yocca is reputed to have a relative in the vicinity of where the plane went down.

26—Whitcomb again leading and again successful, this time knocking out a viaduct. Planes are overhead constantly. The entire Group's record was sensational today. There were two missions of 48 planes each—believed to be a record for Group. Beachhead and main forces joined up today. Everyone is tired but morale is high. The bomb line has finally moved and everyone is watching the situation map.

27—Again 96 planes flew today. Whitcomb bracketed a bridge. Jerry is in full retreat and his bridges are burned behind him. Over 12,000 prisoners taken since the offensive. Knocking out bridges instead of marshalling yards are paying off dividends. Congrats to Group from Generals Eaker, Cannon and Knapp.

28—Weather again today was splendid, sunny skies and cool breezes making things most pleasant. We're forgetting there is such a thing as rain. Lt. Casper attended a Public Relations conference at 57th Bomb Wing. The Group and the personnel are getting a considerable amount of publicity back home.

29—The north and south viaducts at Buccine were hard hit by the 340th today.

30—Memorial Day. Just another day over here.

31—Alerts have become a regular occurrence once again. Target was troop concentrations east of Lake Albano.

1 June, 1944—We began the month with a highly successful attack on a road bridge northeast of Orte. Direct hits were observed on the bridge and the approach leading up to it. Lately this squadron has been sending a plane with a full load of passengers to Malta. Those who are fortunate enough to be sent there for a rest find it to be a virtual island paradise. Good

food, a variety of drinks ranging from goat's milk to beer, and a friendly, English-speaking people combine to make this a haven for war-weary soldiers. In comparison with the typical Italian cities and people, here one finds a high and admirable degree of cleanliness and respectability. Practically everyone speaks English. Prostitution is virtually unknown, except in the notorious "Gut." There is one price for everyone. And best of all, G.I.'s are conspicuously absent.

2-5—This has been a period of great activity. Six times we struck at the enemy, blowing up his roads and bridges over which he must move his supplies, equipment and troops to the front lines. The war in Italy has assumed climactic proportions. On the evening of the 4th, Allied Armies poured into Rome. The Germans evacuated the city without subjecting it to their customary destruction. At this late stage of the war the Germans yielded to world-wide public opinion and left the city intact; this is surprising in view of the fact that they have had no qualms in that respect in the past. The capture of Rome should have far-reaching effects on the progress of the war in Italy, and it should cause important political reactions in satellite Axis powers.

6—D-Day, towards which all of us have been looking for so long, at last has become a reality. Early this morning, a huge armada of Allied ships set out across the Channel to storm Hitler's Festung Europa. An equally formidable armada of aircraft carried troops and supplies to be landed well behind the Channel Coast in France. Details of this momentous event are not yet available for public consumption, but when they are revealed we shall be amazed at the magnitude of the operations. For approximately a year speculation has been rife as to when and where the mighty blows would be struck. Now we have the answers to those questions.

7—Major Parrish is no longer with us. He is returning to the States for some specialized study. Replacing Major Parrish is Major Kaufmann, who has done such a splendid job as Operations Officer. As Commanding Officer of this squadron he will fill an important position which he is well qualified to hold. More replacements have been assigned to us. Cpl. William Robinson has joined us in S-2. Other sections, including the Orderly Room and Operations, have had additions made to their staff.

8—Eighteen of our Mitchells struck at the north Buccine viaduct. No flak or enemy opposition from the air was encountered. The 2nd box of our formation placed bombs directly on the viaduct. The following are excerpts from the A.L.O.'s daily news bulletin: "Closely following our capture of Rome came the great news that the invasion had started. The magnitude of the operation, in which thousands of ships and planes are assisting the landing of thousands of men, guns, vehicles, etc., necessarily means that to start with we cannot look for large territorial gains. . . . It is apparent that so far our losses have been far lower than expected during the initial landings but the hardest battles are yet to come with Rommel rushing up with his mobile reserve divisions to the area of our first landings. We entered operations officially April 19, 1943. In less than 365 operational days we have accumulated a total of 400 missions, the two missions sent out this morning constituting the Group's 399th and 400th combat mission. It is believed, although as yet we have no confirmation of this, that this total of 400 missions is more than the total missions of any respective Group under the 57th Wing, notwithstanding that these other Groups have been in operation longer than we have."

9—Again we ran another successful mission, this time to a road bridge northwest of Centeno, Italy. When our planes had left the target, four spans of the bridge were down.

10—The Italian bomb line is changing rapidly, which is very heartening to us here in Corsica, where we have been so dangerously exposed to enemy attack. Soon we should have friendly troops opposite us on the Italian coast. This will considerably lessen the danger of an invasion of the island, although we may still be harassed by Jerry paratroopers. To cope with such possibilities, we are planting machine guns in many places in the squadron area. A security plan is being drafted and other steps are being taken to minimize the danger accruing to our present location.

11—Inclement weather kept our bombers inactive. A hot morning was followed this afternoon by a cooling thundershower. Our meals continue to consist mainly of the hated "C" rations. Our stomachs are taking a nasty beating. Although some of us are already suffering from the ill effects of bad food, later in life most of us will be afflicted with stomach ailments. The mosquitoes here are vicious. Corsica is notorious for being ridden with malaria-carrying mosquitoes. Every day we take one Atabrin tablet, which may keep malaria at a low level.

12—Soon the sun will fall below the mountain ridge in the west and another day will have passed into oblivion. Time is taking its toll. And as the days pile up, we are able to answer more and more of the questions which we have projected from time to time since entering the Army. All the questions have not been answered, but gradually the list is becoming smaller. The most recent question which has been answered is: When will the Second Front be opened? Now that we know the answer to that one, the next question in logical sequence is: When (and how) will Germany collapse? We hope to have the answer to that one by late November of this year. Our mission today was a successful one in the Florence area. We have been doing consistently good bombing for a number of weeks. Overwhelming air superiority plus precision bombing played a very important role in the great battle for Rome. Likewise it helped lay the foundation for the all-out assault on Festung Europa.

13—The following excerpt is from a letter which one of the boys wrote home. It is characteristic of a strong feeling prevalent among most of the boys: "And when the end (of the war) comes, won't the panti-waists, the USO commandos, the brave soldier boys who fought the war from the confining safety of the United States be proud of what they did in bringing about victory! They who see their girl friends and their wives regularly; who eat well, sleep without interference; who enjoy clean living; who do all of this while others are slugging it out in a bloody, inglorious way—those boys can be proud of themselves. If they want to avoid a veritable barrage of contempt and obscenity, they had better stay clear of those of us who have been fighting this war for them. We have no respect whatsoever for them, and we do not intend to show them any when we return. I mention all this to you, not because I am a chronic complainer, but because it throws some light on what we in the overseas service talk about whenever we have time to indulge in extracurricular conversation. We feel strongly about this matter, and we do not intend to pass it off lightly when we return."

14—Air activity over the east coast of the island continues as usual. Just a moment ago the fighter patrol which helps to guard this vulnerable spot streaked by. Flying in pairs, these planes stand guard night and day. Throughout the day giant C-47's have been winging gracefully up and down the silvery shores of the island. We have been curious to know where they go and what they carry. For the last week they have been making numerous and regular trips. This may be the forerunner of an invasion.

15—We struck again at communication lines in Northern Italy, but we failed to knock out our objective, a rail bridge.

16—Just after nightfall, the big guns all around the field opened up with a terrific barrage. Every one hit the trenches in short order. For about 15 minutes the guns maintained an almost continuous bombardment, which was directed out to sea. When the all-clear was sounded, we felt relieved. This morning the ack-ack boys gave us an explanation of the excitement. An unidentified ship out at sea failed to give the proper signals, and thus it was assumed to be an enemy vessel, as it probably was. The mission today carried us to Northern Italy. Bad navigation caused the formation to miss the initial point, thereby causing the mission to be abortive. Very seldom is a mission unsuccessful because of poor navigation. Our navigators are doing a splendid job of finding the targets, which for months have been minutely small. S-2 has a new Intelligence Officer. His name is Dale G. Kesterson. This section is still far under T/O strength.

17—Reveille was at 0400 hours. The stand-by became immediate at 0500 hours. But as the hours wore on there was less

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likelihood of a mission, for the weather clouded up and finally early in the afternoon there were thundershowers. At 1700 hours the skies cleared and a call came through for immediate briefing. The crews went down to Group Intelligence, but no sooner did they arrive there than a stand-down was declared. That in broad outline is what occurred here. But there were definite underlying factors which entered into the situation and which were determinative of our status. Before daybreak French invasion forces landed on Elba, which is just across the sea from us. Throughout the night there was a continuous bombardment of the island, which we could hear clearly, and shortly before dawn the skies were filled with fighter planes providing cover for the landing parties. All of this accounts for our day-long stand-by, for it was intended that we provide close support should it be necessary.

18—A cold, determined rain has been falling for many hours. The regular cadence of the falling drops on the tent top is soothing to the nerves. This weather kept our planes grounded all day. S-2, with its situation maps of the various fighting fronts all over the world, is a main center of attraction during these tense, vital days. All day we are fired with a barrage of questions concerned with the progress of the war.

19—No mission today—bad weather. Today Elba fell to Allied hands. Prisoners taken amounted to 18,000, which is a good-sized haul from an island the size of Elba.

20—Again weather is responsible for keeping our planes grounded. A year ago we were suffering from the energy-sapping heat of North Africa. From all indications Corsica enjoys unusually mild summer weather. All day a cool breeze has been blowing in from the sea. Now just before darkness closes in on us it has become chilly. By midnight it will be cold.

21—The long spell of enforced combat inactivity was broken late this afternoon when 48 planes of the Group took off to bomb a viaduct in the Bologna area. The results of the mission are uncertain, but it is probable that direct hits were scored. This morning Tom Gossack and Matthew Finneran went home under the rotation plan.

22—General Knapp, Commander in charge of the 57th Bomb Wing, has issued an order requiring all combat crew members to fly a total of 70 missions or be overseas a full year before they may be eligible for assignment back to the United States. Up to now the policy has been to ground an airman at about 50 missions and return him to the States. In the great majority of cases, none of them have had to remain overseas longer than seven or eight months. The question which all of us are asking is: Will we go back to the States when Germany is defeated, or will we be sent immediately to another theatre?

23—We were pleasantly shocked today. Three men whom we had never expected to see again suddenly made their appearance, walking in on us like ghosts. On May 25, plane No. 659, 9W, with Lt. Ellen as pilot, Lt. King, co-pilot, Sgt. Yocca, radio operator, Sgt. Wright, turret gunner, and Sgt. Scott, tail gunner, was hit by flak over the target, a railroad bridge two and one-half miles southwest of Ficulle, Italy. It lost altitude fast, crashing into the side of a ravine. Today we got a detailed story of just what happened to the crew. The fortunate three who returned, King, Vargo and Yocca, had this to say: All of them were able to get out of the plane before it crash-landed. But not all of them survived the jump. Lt. Ellen's chute failed to open. Wright was shot and killed by Italian Fascists as he parachuted towards the earth. Scott reached ground safely but was taken prisoner, as were King, Vargo and Yocca. The last three named men managed to escape and eventually reached the safety of friendly territory, but only after many harrowing experiences. All of us were thrilled at the unexpected appearance of these men.

24-30—During this period activity has been on a reduced scale. On the 27th, Cherbourg, third largest French port, fell before the Allied onslaught after many days of fierce fighting. Thus is completed the second phase in the great struggle for the liberation of Europe. On the 29th and the 30th we flew missions to Northern Italy, the first combat activity in about a week.

On 9 June twelve Mitchells of this squadron dropped 24 tons of bombs on the bridge just northwest of Centeno, Italy. Direct hits were scored; the photographs later revealed that the bridge was damaged beyond repair. Helping to feed supplies to the German front lines, this bridge affected the ability of the Germans to resist the savage onslaught of the Allied armies.

On 10 June we duplicated the success of the previous day, this time putting out of commission the S. Buccine viaduct, which was important to the Germans for supply reasons.

Of the 21 assigned targets, 15 were destroyed, two were missed, and near misses were made on four.

1 July, 1944—Half of 1944 is out of the way. It was an eventful six months for the Allied cause; within that period of time we saw the Germans pushed closer to the ultimate disaster which they are sure to suffer. This morning our planes attacked a rail bridge in the Florence area; it is doubtful if the target was destroyed. The movie showing this evening is "Up in Arms," a hilarious musical in technicolor.

2—We are not allowing the enemy any respite from our incessant hammering. He is retreating to Northern Italy in great haste, and we are hampering that retreat just as much as possible by destroying his bridges, his viaducts, his marshalling yards, and his road junctions over which he must move. With complete air superiority, we are making his position in Italy very tenuous. Today we directed our efforts towards a railroad viaduct at Borgo San Lorenzo, scoring possible hits on the west approach. All squadrons are running transition flights for night missions. Very shortly we shall be hitting Jerry by night as well as by day. This morning Lt. Rittenhouse, Operations Officer, left for the States on detached service. He will rejoin us later this summer. There has been a recent improvement in our food, there being more fresh meat and butter. Food has been consistently poor since our arrival on the island. Thus any change for the better, however small it may be, is welcome. The officers have moved into their new, rustic mess hall which they built atop the hill. It appears that this attractive club house is destined to become a popular rendezvous for dignitaries of the Group and for celebrities.

3—Although the Krauts no longer flank this island on the east, nevertheless they still constitute a dangerous menace to us. We remain only a few minutes' flying time from enemy airplane fields in Northern Italy and in Southern France. Last night we were reminded of just how close we still remain to the war. Shortly after midnight we were awakened by the boom of big guns, and above this resounding noise could be heard the unsynchronized throb of twin-engine German fighter-bombers, interrupted frequently by the rapid fire of machine guns. Everyone was awakened by the commotion and expected an attack on the field momentarily, but none came. Apparently the engagement was a naval one not far off shore. Today we struck at a fuel dump four miles north of Ferrara, Italy. The target was well covered with demolition and incendiary bombs, but the Group paid dearly for the attack. The 488th Squadron lost a plane to flak. Capt. Crossman, the Group's English ALO, went down with the plane. Everyone of our planes were holed, and T/Sgt. Hunt, radio-gunner, was seriously injured in the leg.

4—Another 4th of July spent in the overseas service. For us it was nothing more than another work day, but not a difficult one, because there was a stand-down. Under what circumstances shall we spend the next Independence Day? Now we know the answer to the same question which we posed just one year ago today. The latest BBC news: The Russians have captured Minsk, capital of White Russia. They have already pushed spearheads 80 miles to the southwest along the main railway which runs from Minsk to central Poland. In Normandy the American forces have started a new drive on the western side of the Cherbourg Peninsula against stubborn German resistance. In Italy French troops of the 5th Army have occupied the city of Sienna. More than five hundred American bombers were out again yesterday pounding oil targets in Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia. In the Southwest Pacific, American troops have

landed on Noemfoor Island in the Geelvink Bay area of Dutch New Guinea and have already captured one of the airfields.

5—Once again I must report that we had a stand-down all day. In the afternoon many of the boys went to the beach, which is one of the most healthful means of recreation we have.

6—Today this squadron completed its 250th combat mission. Eighteen of our planes flew to the Po Valley and unloaded 1,000-pounders on a rail bridge northwest of the city of Parma. Eighty-two per cent of the bombs fell within the target area, making this a highly successful mission.

7—Late last night a stand-down was declared. Taking advantage of this free time, many of the boys are sleeping, many more are in Bastia for the afternoon, and many are at the beach. There is a feeling among us that the present location is very much like a summer resort. With the beach, the mountains, and the ideal weather, and a little imagination, you are warranted in calling this just that. And compared with what we had a year ago, Corsica is a paradise. Naturally we do not enjoy the gay and happy air of vacationists, but considering what our lot might be, we must be thankful to be where we are—and this in spite of many not so attractive features of the location.

8—This evening the Enlisted Men's Club opened with Italian-purchased liquor available in quantity. The affair was noisy but orderly. At the same time the Officers' Club had its official opening which was celebrated more quietly but with just as much enthusiasm.

9—At twelve o'clock the stand-down for the day became official. At two this morning we flew another night practice mission. Soon we shall be striking at the enemy by night. Heavy thundershowers have continued throughout the afternoon and the evening. Unlike North Africa in the summer season, the weather is not monotonously good; at frequent intervals cooling rains drench the countryside. Today one of our planes left for Cairo, about 1,700 air miles distant, with a load of men who will enjoy rest and recreation at this huge African metropolis. No place in the Mediterranean area is too far away for our planes. Almost every day we have at least one plane on a cross-country to Africa, Sicily, or Italy, bound on pleasure or business.

10—Our bombers were over the M/Y at Rovigo in the Venice area. At the time of this notation the photographs have not been developed, but interrogation disclosed that the mission was probably successful. The latest BBC news from London reveals that Caen, Normandy, was liberated by United Kingdom and Canadian troops. The Germans still hold the suburb on the farther bank.

11—Today we ran two missions; neither one was successful. For dinner we feasted on fresh beef, fresh potatoes and vegetables, fresh butter, and pudding. At supper we enjoyed steak and more fresh vegetables. Beer was rationed and many of us drank it with our meal. We are seeing results from the four dollars which we recently contributed to a mess fund that has been set up to augment our regular quartermaster rations. The present supply of food, which included three thousand fresh eggs, was purchased at Catania. We intend sending a plane there regularly.

12—This morning we sent one plane along with a formation of other planes from the Group. It carried a full crew and two photographers who photographed the bombing. Just before reaching the target, our plane, which was tailing the formation, was attacked by 16 enemy fighters. At least one of the fighters was shot down by our waist and turret gunners. In the afternoon 18 planes from the squadron flew to the Venice area of Italy to strike at a railroad bridge at Chiavari. Possible hits were made on the bridge. Shortly before reaching the target, Lt. Mitchell's plane developed left engine trouble. He proceeded to the target and the bombardier dropped the bombs. Just after turning off the bomb run, the right engine failed. The left engine continued to miss badly, finally making it necessary for the pilot to ditch the plane at sea. Five members of the crew of seven got out before the plane sank. They climbed into their raft which the plane carried and undoubtedly will be

picked up by the Air Sea Rescue Command. T/Sgt. R. E. Winjum, radio operator, and S/Sgt. W. E. MacRitchie, tail gunner, parachuted from the plane before it was brought down on the water. Immediate search planes took off but they were unable to locate the two gunners. All of these events leading up to the ditching were observed by the crew of one of our planes which circled the stricken men.

13—Occasionally we have an opportunity of visiting Ajaccio, about 110 miles distant by road. Going by way of Ghisonaccia and Vivario, you follow a shimmering band of sea for 40 or 50 miles. Then begins the long climb through the precipitous mountain range which straddles the island. Sky-embracing and serene, they present an unforgettable picture of Nature at its best. The narrow, devious road carried us through sweet-scented pine forests which blanketed vast areas of this rising and falling land. Vistas of breath-taking beauty unfolded with every turn of the road, which occasionally carried us through quiet, windswept mountain villages that are existing in a world apart from us. The Ferrara railroad bridge was again the target. Our second box dropped across the tracks, possibly cratering them.

14-20—During this period we have been unusually active, striking hard and relentlessly at targets in Northern Italy. On the evening of the 19th, Lt. Bulkely rejoined the squadron after spending thirty days at home. He is the first one to return under the rotation plan put into effect a number of weeks ago. On the 20th, Sgt. Arthur Pape of Operations, and Cpl. Bobby Reinhold of the Parachute Department, left for the States.

21—Great events are happening all over the world, events which are shaping the future course of the war. On the other side of the world in Japan there has been a shake-up in the War Cabinet. On the 18th of the month, General Hideki Tojo was removed as Chief of the Japanese Imperial General Staff. The reason given for this change was the recent favorable turn of events for the Allies in the Central and Southwest Pacific. Yesterday in Germany an attempt was made to assassinate Hitler and some of his close henchmen. Hitler was only slightly injured. To assure the people that he is still alive, he spoke to them last night. Members of the military clique that attempted this unsuccessful assassination have already been shot. Within the past few days Ancona and Leghorn, important Italian ports, have fallen to the Allies. The Russians are advancing at a pace unprecedented even for them. In Normandy our troops are advancing against stiff enemy resistance. There has been a stand-down all day. This status can probably be attributed to unfavorable weather conditions in Northern Italy.

22—The Ronco Scrivia bridge in Italy was effectively bombed by planes of this Group. Taking off late in the afternoon, our boys were over the target at 6:27. Neither enemy aircraft nor ack-ack was encountered. On the way back a number of observations were made concerning enemy railroad traffic, shipping, the condition of bridges, airdromes, and motor transport movements.

23-26—During this period we have been operating to the fullest possible degree and there has been no time available for anything but work. Capt. Hastings left for the States on Tuesday. Just recently a new Adjutant, Lt. Guy Verger, was assigned to the squadron; he replaces Capt. Anderson, who now is in charge of squadron Supply and the Motor Pool. The other day Capt. Scott of our Communications section, and Lt. Cutler, formerly in charge of Supply and Transportation, were injured seriously in a jeep accident.

27-29—On the 27th, six Mitchells of this squadron, with other planes of the Group, struck at a road bridge in Northern Italy, destroying it completely. At noon the Group (and all the other Groups and forces on the island of Corsica) was alerted for a possible invasion by the enemy from the air and the sea. Higher Allied Intelligence has acquired certain knowledge which indicates the imminence of a large-scale attack from Southern France or from Northern Italy.

30-31—Since the 27th we have been on a stand-down. The danger of an invasion of the island still remains. Fighter planes race back and forth over the island day and night. We continue to carry guns and gas masks and remain alerted for any emergency.

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(a) On 3 July, 12 planes of this squadron were sent to destroy a fuel dump four miles north of Ferrara, Italy. Incendiaries and high explosives were flung on the target; the central group of fuel tanks was covered by the pattern and many fires were started. Ack-ack was heavy, intense, and accurate; all 12 planes were holed, and T/Sgt. E. V. Hunt was seriously injured in the leg.

(b) On 12 July, 18 crews of the squadron were briefed to bomb the railroad bridge at Ferrara, Italy, but bad weather necessitated that they bomb the alternate, the railroad bridge at Chiavari, Italy. The target was missed, but the near-by marshalling yards were hit. Lt. Mitchell's plane developed engine trouble just before reaching the primary target, and shortly thereafter it was necessary for him to ditch the plane. T/Sgt. R. E. Winjum, radio operator, and S/Sgt. W. E. MacRitchie, tail gunner, parachuted from the plane before it was brought down on the water; with the exception of these two men, the crew was rescued and was returned to the field the same day.

(c) On 12 July, one plane of this squadron flew a photo mission in conjunction with the mission noted in (b) above. As the plane approached the initial point to turn into the photo run, it was attacked by sixteen FW-190's. Our gunners may have shot down one enemy aircraft.

(d) On 14 July, 12 Mitchells of this squadron went for targets in Northern Italy. The 2nd box bombed the primary target, a railroad and road bridge; direct hits were scored. Enemy aircraft attacked our formation and our gunners accounted for one destroyed and two probably destroyed. E. B. Fetherston and P. E. Walters, Staff Sergeant gunners, were seriously injured by flak.

1 August, 1944—The long spell of inactivity was broken today with an attack on a railroad bridge at Canneto San Oglia, Italy. The bombs bracketed the target but failed to destroy it. The Group remains alerted for a possible German invasion of the island. Packs of American Spitfires, Mustangs and Thunderbolts continue to rove the sky night and day. We are still under orders to carry arms and our guard detail is at double strength.

2—A railroad bridge east of Nice, France, was our target for today. This, our first mission over France, turned out to be an unsuccessful one. TBF will probably send us back there tomorrow. This morning about 200 heavy bombers of the 15th Strategic Air Force passed high overhead on their way to France. It is a thrilling sight to see scores and scores of bombers, the formations stringing out for miles, as they drone by with their slick and silvery bodies flashing in the sky.

3—The old order changes. This afternoon Capt. White bid us farewell and boarded a plane for Naples. He is headed for the United States and home. Rotated on the over-age plan, he leaves us after almost a year and a half overseas. Our mission today was the railroad bridge east of Nice, France, which we missed yesterday. This time we hit it. The boys have "sweated out" these French missions, believing that any mission over the southern part of that country would be very hot. They were pleasantly surprised not to run into any flak or fighter opposition. Everyone is hoping that they will continue to have "milk runs."

4—Today was a stand-down for the squadron. Of late the policy has been to fly three squadrons and to allow one squadron to rest.

5—Unfavorable flying weather over France prevented any combat flying. For a short time late in the afternoon it rained here. As the war continues at an ever-increasing pace, morale takes a corresponding jump. Everyone is following events closely, anticipating an early collapse of the Reich. The latest world news is broadcast to us many times a day over the loudspeakers which are located in the area; thus everyone is well posted in regard to the progress of the war. In Italy the Allies are at the suburbs of Florence. In France the Germans are falling back before the tremendous onslaught of the Americans, the English

and the Canadians. On the Russian fronts, troops of Stalin's armies are pressing on towards Germany proper. In the Central and the Southwest Pacific the Allies continue to maintain their powerful offensive and to penetrate into Japan's inner defenses.

6—Early this morning we sent our planes out to destroy a railroad bridge in Southern France. Mission efficiency was 96%. This afternoon, 18 planes of the Group, six of them from this squadron, went to another target in France. The mission was abortive, the efficiency being only 32%. The heavies of the 15th Strategic Air Force were out in great strength today. For miles and miles the sky was filled with formations of these high-flying giants of the air. Their flashing bodies and the heavy drone of their multi-engines always thrill us. They, too, were headed for France.

7—At 0740 hours 12 of our planes lined up for takeoff. Carrying a total of 48 thousand-pound bombs, they plastered the Drome River railroad bridge, scoring 100% accuracy. The target was in France. Here is what a recent *Air Intelligence Weekly Summary* had to say about the Tactical Air Force of which we are a part: "At the beginning of the week (24 July) Tactical mediums concentrated their effort on bridges in the Po Valley. Weather restricted some operations but results were excellent on targets bombed. . . ." This Group and the squadrons composing it are operating at peak bombing efficiency. It took a long time to acquire all of the experience necessary to put us in this position. We have learned much since we began operating well over a year ago; and a good portion of that has been learned the hard, expensive way.

8—The target was the railroad bridge across the Rhone River near the city of Avignon. All bursts were on or near the north end of the bridge. No photos reveal the damage done. Three ships preceded the main formation with chaff and fragmentation bombs. The frags were dropped to the north of the bridge and in the city. Over the target a 488th plane was hit by flak and went down flaming. Five chutes were seen to open. It had just been revealed that about 20 men of this squadron have been picked to leave as a cadre for a new Very Heavy Bombardment Group made up of the B-29 Superfortress. It is almost a certainty that they are being returned to the States. All the men in the cadre, with one or two exceptions, are skilled technicians. For a number of days our food has been particularly poor. There can be no doubt that most of us are going to pay dearly in poor health later in life as a result of the food we have been receiving overseas. Here in Corsica, unlike in Italy, the civilians have no food for sale.

9—The squadron was on a stand-down for the day; the other three squadrons of the Group flew a mission.

10—During the night or the early hours of the morning a tragic accident occurred. Cpl. John Bayne, a mechanic in the Motor Pool, was killed when his truck plunged off the road and crashed into huge rocks many feet below. Just a second of carelessness resulted in his untimely death, the second of its kind within the last fortnight. The nearby military hospital has an appallingly high percentage of inmates who have been injured in auto accidents. The squadron was scheduled for a mission late in the afternoon, but shortly after dinner a stand-down was declared because of weather.

11-12—These two days have not been particularly eventful. On each day we flew a mission over Southern France.

13—Today we went for gun emplacements on the island of Verte, one mile south of La Ciotat, France. Good results were obtained. This morning 23 men left us for parts unknown. It is believed that they will be returned to the States to help form a Very Heavy Bombardment Group. Gradually but surely the squadron is changing. For the first time this summer we suffered from the intense heat. Hardly a breeze stirred. Fortunately we are able to cool off in the sea.

14—We struck at Southern France again but failed to demolish the target. Visibility over the target was bad and was mainly responsible for the failure of this mission. This evening we were given some advance information of a momentous nature. Tomorrow morning at 0800 hours Southern France will be invaded. The Twelfth and the Fifteenth Air Forces will be out

in full strength. This Group alone is sending up at least 72 planes. The day which all of us have been anticipating is about to come at long last. If everything goes well, perhaps we shall move to France within the next month. All of us will be glad to move, although this is an ideal location. We have been here longer than we have been at any other place. Accustomed to being on the move about once a month, we have become restless now that we have been in this one spot almost four months.

15—H hour of D day was at 0800. At 0528 hours the first of 18 planes of the squadron took off. One hour and twenty-five minutes later they were on the bomb run dropping high explosives and incendiaries on gun positions where the invading forces were to land at 0800 hours. This mission fitted in as an intricate part of the huge invasion plan. In the afternoon we sent out 18 more planes to blast at a road bridge in the Avignon area. The second mission cost us one plane and one crew. After dropping the bombs and starting for home, it fell out of the formation, but it remained under control. This was the last that was ever seen of it. From the 1st of August to the 15th, the planes of this squadron consumed 52,610 gallons of gasoline, the greater portion being used for 12-ship formations on combat missions. Multiply this number by four and you have a very formidable figure for the whole Group. Keeping our planes flying is no small task from the supply standpoint alone.

16—Here is the 0900 hours BBC news from London: "Allied troops landed in Southern France yesterday and are now firmly established on beachheads between Marseilles and Nice. Substantial numbers of troops are ashore and some of them have been pushing on to high ground inland. German opposition so far has been weak. The Russians have beaten off German counter-attacks on the northeastern approaches to East Prussia and also near Warsaw. In Italy, 8th Army patrols have crossed the River Arno into the northern part of Florence as well as a little to the west of the city. Allied bombers have again pounded the Japanese island base of Halmahera between New Guinea and the Philippines."

17-18—It would not be a glaring inaccuracy or misstatement to say that yesterday is tomorrow, so unchanging are the days. With slight variations, every day follows a set pattern. We work, eat and sleep, read and write, listen to the war news, talk about oft-discussed subjects, such as how Germany will be defeated, when the war will probably end, the likelihood of our getting back to the States in the near future. Time is passing on slowly but relentlessly. Each day gone by is one less day to be endured. Much rain has fallen during this period. No missions were flown although each day the crews were briefed. Today (Friday) they even got into the air and started for the target, but weather forced them back, saving the enemy only temporarily from the trouncing he is unrelentlessly receiving. Under unusual circumstances, Lt. Lewis Bulkely was married to Lt. Mary Smith. The couple met less than a year ago when both were stationed at Catania, Sicily. Their romance grew until it was consummated today by Chaplain Cooper at the Red Cross Club here in the Group area. The ceremony was impressive because of its simplicity.

19-20—Daily life continues along the same general pattern that has prevailed for a very long time. We continue to destroy bridges over which vital supplies, materials and men are fed into Southern France. Many of the bridges are fiercely defended by seasoned gunners who cause the missions to be anything but milk runs. But systematically and surely we are making Jerry's position on this new front more and more precarious.

21-24—This period was one of ordinary activity with nothing special to note.

25—Today marked the second anniversary of the activation of this Group. We were put on a stand-down for the occasion and everyone was given the day off. In the afternoon Brig. Gen. R. D. Knapp, Commanding General of the 57th Bomb Wing, in a simple ceremony at Group Operations, presented numerous awards to members of the organization. At the end of the ceremony everyone retired to his respective squadron to celebrate. In ours, the drinks were plentiful and were all "on the house." The sensational news of the day is the unofficial but reliable an-

nouncement that Paris, Europe's second largest city, has been taken by Allied Forces.

26—Knowing that most of the boys would celebrate in a big way, Wing put us on a stand-down for the day, thereby allowing everyone to recover from yesterday's celebration.

27—From early youth Americans are indoctrinated in the greatness of this nation; everyone gives lip service to the high standards of living which characterize America the world over. It is an accepted fact, a universal truth, that our country has more to offer its citizens than any other country in the world. But how many Americans actually appreciate the full import of these patriotic phrases which are thrown about by young and old alike? Having lived in foreign countries for more than a year and a half, we have acquired a realistic perspective of our own nation, one that is denied to those who have never been able to view the nation from foreign soil. The time-worn and hackneyed phrase, absence makes the heart grow fonder, can have no better application than to absence from the U.S.A., and it expresses well what every thoughtful serviceman overseas feels. If anyone is suffering from pseudo-patriotism, that is eventually removed after living outside the continental bounds of the United States. The foundation upon which our democracy is so firmly established, the Constitution, takes on a real and deeper meaning for those whose travels have been worldwide.

28—Rumania has become a co-belligerent of the Allies. After much vacillation, that country decided to climb on the bandwagon before it is too late. The Rumanian government has agreed to accept the Russian terms and is already seizing German troops and equipment that still remain inside the confines of her country. Other Balkan countries, particularly Bulgaria, are showing very definite signs of quitting the Axis camp. A railroad viaduct at Tarare, France, was assigned to us as our target for the day. Haze, with 1/10 cloud coverage at 4,000 to 5,000 feet, made it impossible to sight the viaduct and all the thousand-pounders were brought back.

29-30—Weather kept our planes grounded during this period.

31—Finally we ran a mission. After a number of dry runs, we got our planes into the air and gave Jerry a sound pasting. We hit him this time in Northern Italy and left one of his bridges scattered in the river it once spanned.

LOSSES IN ACTION

(On mission on the day of D-Day, Southern France.)

1st Lt. Thomas Baxter
2d Lt. Fred C. Swanson
2d Lt. George H. England
T/Sgt. John J. Buchanan
S/Sgt. William F. Williamson
Sgt. Luther S. Craver

LOSSES NOT IN LINE OF DUTY

(Death due to auto injuries.)

Pvt. Paul H. Fisher
Pvt. John W. Bayne

1 September, 1944—No mission today. There have been numerous stand-downs and abortive missions. Both the officers and enlisted men have exceptionally fine clubs which are well attended. Today marks another anniversary of World War II which got under way on September 1, 1939.

2—Missed railroad bridge east of Milan. The objective of the present campaign in Italy is the Gothic line. The Northern and Southern France bomb lines are moving so rapidly that it is difficult to keep the situation map up to date. Awards are being written in behalf of Lts. Thomas, England and Swanson and Sgt. Buchanan, who escaped from Italy.

3—One of the Po River bridges was knocked out. There was nearly a mid-air collision on the part of our planes. Five years ago England declared war on Germany.

4—Labor Day—so what! Group sent up 62 planes against two different targets. Probably successful.

5—A plane-load of officers and enlisted men took off for Cairo today. After being airborne for four hours we landed at Benghazi to refuel. This base has been taken over by the British and is used primarily for emergency purposes. The place is very quiet and one is almost unmindful of the fact that some great battles were fought here early in the war. Took off about an hour after we landed and hugged the coast of Africa until we landed at Payne Field, Cairo. This is one of the most modern fields in the world. As soon as we arrived, we headed for the restaurant and had hamburgers and cokes. This repast alone was worth the 1,700-mile trip. Had to get clearance in order to take off for Alexandria.

6—Alexandria is a beautiful cosmopolitan city. Here is the melting pot of the world as virtually every nationality is represented. The food and women are excellent. It reminded one of home to see Shell gasoline stations dotting the streets. American automobiles are much in evidence. Egypt has been technically neutral throughout the war although the Germans were virtually at the gates of Alexandria before they were thrown back by Montgomery at El Alamein.

7—Alexandria is a famous resort city. There are beautiful hotels and excellent food is plentiful. The Red Cross conducts tours of the city. Visited the famous catacombs where secret burials were made by the Christians in the beginning of the Christian era. These catacombs are similar to the ones in Rome. There are reputed to be $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles of these underground passages at varying subterranean levels. The weather is mild and since Alexandria is by the Mediterranean Sea, we naturally got in some beach time.

8—There are numerous curio shops where one can easily spend all of one's money in short order. All of the girls here claim to be countesses. Some of them are no-accountesses.

10—Took off for Cairo which is about as bad as Bombay. Small urchins urge you to buy a shine. If you don't, they throw dirt on your shoes and then you have no alternative. In Cairo one finds filth and squalor alongside beautiful homes, modern customs, etc. Cairo is the cross-roads of the world and forms a mosaic of the ancient and contemporary. Here are a people who thousands of years ago boasted the finest culture of that era. Today Egypt is a weak and decadent nation. The famous Sheppard Hotel is a landmark in Cairo.

11—Depart for an overnight trip to Tel Aviv, Palestine. Here is an all-Jewish city which has been built in the last quarter century. Everything is new and modern and is a marked contrast to bleak, desolate countryside about it which is the Arab world. The Jews have achieved miracles from this barren ground through the use of irrigation and 20th century skill and science. Most of the inhabitants of Tel Aviv are refugees from Europe. This city reminds one of any clean city at home.

12—In a matter of days we have covered three continents: Europe, Africa and Asia. Departed for Alexandria.

15—Our leave is up so we depart for Benghazi loaded down with cases of beer and PX stores. In a matter of ten days we have covered about 5,000 miles.

16—For the past ten days the squadron has performed remarkably well and has destroyed many targets. Many of the crews have finished their tour of duty and have gone home. Dyer with Group Operations is relating his experiences of visits to Paris and London.

17—Target was a troop concentration in the Rimini area. Target well covered.

20—Numerous stand-downs. Taylor, Keljik and Casper are working daily on the yearbook.

22—Twelve planes bombed railroad bridge across Piave River in Italy. Lt. Schrameck made a fine single-engine landing at Fano, Italy. Spear, Witty, Marzulla, Thomas, Robinson, Haster, Jones, O'Connell, Lang and others are leaving. Awards are being turned out in mass production. The matter of awards

is a very touchy subject. Different policies have governed at different periods and as a result many deserving men have gone home without even an air medal. What has been needed from the very beginning is a uniform policy.

23—The boys did a great job in bombing the Italian cruiser "Taranto" in the harbor of La Spezia. Three different squadrons hit their respective aiming points: bow, stern and amidships. Our squadron also hit an 8,000-ton smaller vessel lying alongside the cruiser.

24-25—Stand-downs. The boys are indulging in a lot of "sack-time" and also are frequenting the beach. Card playing goes on continually during these lulls.

26—Rome is still the great attraction during leaves. Many of the boys are also taking in Malta.

27—In Rome the Italian signorinas have the run of the hotels and some of them apparently never see daylight. The Italians are simply hungry and these girls are to be more pitied than condemned. The Air Force has gone all out to assure its personnel a happy and memorable leave. The Red Cross conducts tours of the city and one can find anything one wants here including wine, women and song.

29—Stand-down because of rain. Whitcomb has been informed that he gets to go home on a thirty-day leave.

30—First mission in five days. Target was Borgoforte over the Po River. General Knapp attended interrogation. The Group is now employing radio release of bombs. It was developed to a great extent by Major Berenson and his staff in Group Communications. This technique permits a more compact bombing pattern and virtually eliminates human error on the part of the bombardiers flying on the wing. However, there are still many bugs to be eliminated. Col. Chapman is elated over the consecutive number of hits by this Group.

1 October, 1944—Twice today we were out in force over Northern Italy, blasting targets of great importance to the enemy. Both times we accomplished our objective, leaving the Germans just a little less able to continue their stubborn resistance to our hard-hitting ground forces. The latest headline news is as follows; it appeared in the *Basic News*, a United Nations news service put out by the Psychological Warfare Branch of AFHQ: "British repulse counter-attacks as battle for Holland rages; 37 ships of the German merchant marine sunk by Royal Navy subs; 5th Army in Italy advances closer to Bologna; Reuter says Red Army massing for drive into Germany; U. S. heavy bombers hit Jap supply ports." We have another Assistant S-2 Officer. Lt. Robert M. French replaces Lt. Dale G. Kesterson, who is now assistant to the Transportation Officer. Lt. French also holds the position of Squadron Navigation Officer and has over fifty combat missions to his credit. He is the first S-2 Officer we have had who is on flying status, which makes him valuable to this office.

2—Strong winds and threatening skies made combat flying impossible.

3—Eighteen planes of the squadron were sent to the Magenta railroad bridge and gun positions nearby. Dropping high explosives and incendiaries in the face of fierce enemy opposition, we failed in our objective. Numerous airplanes were holed, and there were some close brushes with death. A gunner had an experience which should give him something to think about, and he should consider himself living on borrowed time. A large piece of flak went completely through his flak suit and half-way through a Bible which he carried in his left shirt pocket. Lt. Bulkely brought his plane in safely on a single engine.

4—Our crews were briefed to strike at the Magenta railroad bridge again. All the planes took off and were forming up when they were called in because of poor weather over the target. The following extract is from an Intelligence report for 4 October: "Ground sources report that the attack by 340th Group, 16 September, on the M/T park and repair area at Bologna was most successful. The M/T Center and nearly all the vehicles including 30 motor tank trucks were destroyed. There were 130 German casualties." Mail service from home

it is by far the worst that it has ever been. Explanations for this situation are not forthcoming. The meals lately have been neither good nor bad. Occasionally, about three times a week, we have fresh meat and fresh butter. The diet is mainly deficient in fresh vegetables. We have eaten much more poorly, and we have eaten much better.

5-6—This has been another period of stand-downs, of heavy rains, of very high winds, of long days and longer evenings. The dry river bed where once most of the linemen lived has angry torrents rushing along its course in haste to reach the sea. It seems that ever since coming overseas we have had to contend with the fickle elements. Heat, cold, dust, sand, wind, rain, have been consistently conspiring against us, with the possible exception of this summer in Corsica. Living under the conditions that we do, we are made more acutely aware of our physical environment.

7—Early in the morning there was promise of a good day. Although the weather continued to be auspicious, there was no mission, probably because of unfavorable flying conditions over the target area. In line with the policy to fly practice missions whenever the opportunity presents itself, we sent up a number of planes today for that purpose. Capt. Rittenhouse has just returned to the squadron after having spent a number of weeks in the U.S.A. He has assumed his former duties as Operations Officer. Virtually everywhere in Europe the war has bogged down to a snail's pace. A Soviet writer, Col. Tolchenov, declared: "The present period of military operations may be regarded as a period of accumulation of forces for the last decisive storming of Germany." Aside from official military Intelligence reports, we are kept informed of the progress of the war through two sources: (1) the radio, and (2) the "Stars and Stripes," an Army newspaper written and published in the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations and circulated widely to all military personnel. This squadron has flown to it, each day, a number of recent issues. Thus we are kept fairly well informed.

8—Everything was readied for a mission this morning, but it did not go off—another weather difficulty. However, the weather over the island was not so bad that we could not fly a practice mission.

9—Weather as usual prevented any combat flying. Here are some revealing statistics concerning the 340th Group: To date we have flown 578 missions; 11,400 sorties, of which 9,923 are classified as effective sorties; we have dropped 16,251.905 tons of bombs; and we have lost 75 airplanes to enemy flak. This is a formidable array of figures. It shows that we of the 340th have been doing our part to destroy the Axis. But it does not show the man hours and the energy and the hardship and the material and the money and the scores of other tangibles and intangibles which have made possible these imposing statistics. When no missions are run, the days drag by. Add to this, longer evenings of darkness, and you have two good reasons why time lately appears to be passing so slowly.

10—It is the same old story: bad flying weather, no mission.

11—Finally we got a mission off. Leading the Group, 12 of our big bombers struck at the Canneto railroad bridge in Italy. The bombs were radio released from our first box. There were possibly two direct hits on the bridge, but the majority of the bombs fell short. Today we received from Group S-2 target charts covering targets in Southern Germany and in Austria. This is a fairly good indication of things to come. Perhaps before long we shall be operating against these two countries.

12—The mission today carried us to Northern Italy.

13-14—This has been another period of inactivity. Weather continues to work against us and to the advantage of the enemy.

15—It is the middle of the afternoon of a fall day. Outside across the road the peasants are gathering their harvest grain and in the distance the sea is placid in its azure hue. The air has just a touch of chillness to it, and the sun is reluctant about making an appearance. Outside of this S-2 tent some boys are playing touch football as relaxation from a strenuous morning of flying. Down from the dispersal areas on the line comes the mighty roar of airplane engines as the crew chiefs fondly check

for information, or just for the purpose of engaging in conversation. As the war wears on and our overseas service accumulates, the passage of time seems to become progressively slower. Days, weeks, and months have an aggravating way of lingering, of refusing to pass and to get out of the way as soon as possible. We ran a mission today to Northern Italy. The photographs are not yet available, but indications are that the mission was a successful one.

16—A mission was scheduled. The boys piled on the trucks, and then Group called in with the announcement of a stand-down. Operations, S-2, and the Parachute Department are now housed in a long, low prefabricated building which was just recently erected. All of us are happy that our offices are in a building. The tents which we were in were anything but conducive of work. They leaked, they were dirty and dusty, and the light was poor. In this camp area and in the camp areas of all the other squadrons changes and improvements are being made in anticipation of our spending all winter right here. Major Bunch, Squadron Executive Officer, is expected to leave tomorrow to spend 30 days in the States. He will then return to the squadron in his present capacity. He is the first ground officer to be granted a furlough to the States. It is hoped that this privilege soon will be extended to ground enlisted personnel.

17—For the second day running we were unable to carry a load of bombs to the enemy; it was the weather again.

18—Early in the morning 12 crews started for Group S-2 to be briefed. But before they arrived there, a stand-down was declared for the rest of the day. But Wing, undoubtedly unintentionally, fooled us, for just after dinner they informed us of an immediate stand-by. A few minutes later we were sending the crews down for immediate briefing. The planes took off, formed up, and started for the target in the northern part of Italy. When they arrived at the target, they were unable to drop any bombs because of complete overcast, and they returned to us with a full bomb load.

19-20—Flashing in an azure sky, our planes are circling overhead and are joining up for a flight to Northern Italy. Everyone in Operations and in S-2 ran out to view this common sight, something that is never tiring, no matter how often you have seen it. Huge and opstrepous and associated with an element of danger, airplanes have an everlasting appeal. Airplanes and flying have become so much a part of the lives of most of us that when the day does come for us to give all of this up, we shall undoubtedly sorely miss it. Yesterday the mission to the road and railroad bridge at Magenta, Italy, was unsuccessful, many of the bombs not even falling within the target area. Results are not yet forthcoming for the mission to Northern Italy. But in a very short time we shall be hearing the boys radioing in the results as they return to the base. Today it was announced that the Philippine Islands have been invaded by the forces of General Douglas MacArthur. Details are not yet forthcoming, but indications are that present activities are proceeding according to plan.

21-22—No mission—weather as usual.

23—Weather again prevented any combat flying. However, in spite of poor flying weather, we ran a practice mission. No matter how experienced the boys become, there is always room for improvement.

24-26—Unabated rain has been pouring furiously the past three days. Accustomed as all of us are with the worst kind of weather, yet none of us have seen anything quite as bad as this. The countryside has been flooded, and raging torrents are rushing down the mountain-sides to the sea. Very few of our tents did not leak, and some of them were levelled for lack of secure support. If this is but a taste of what is to come, as it certainly appears to be, then the hardships of last winter in Italy will be dwarfed by comparison. But in spite of these great difficulties one seldom hears anyone complaining. It is all taken in a good-natured spirit.

27-31—Bad weather has prevented all combat flying. But weather did not prevent our running a number of practice missions.

1 November, 1944—The important bridge near Villafranca di Asti came in for a heavy pounding from the Group today. Thirty-four tons of thousand-pounders were unloaded within the vicinity of the target. It will not be necessary for us to return there. Bad weather is still working against us. But it has not prevented our flying practice missions. For every combat mission we fly we run off at least five practice missions. Capt. Crittenden is the Squadron Training Officer, who is kept busy in this important capacity.

2-3—This has been a period of disappointing stand-downs. Briefing time is set, preparations are made for a mission, and then the stand-down.

4—The important railroad bridge near Villafranca di Asti came in for a heavy pounding from the Group today. Thirty-four tons of thousand-pounders were unloaded within the vicinity of the target. It will not be necessary for us to return there. But we paid dearly for the success of this mission. One of our planes, 9E, was hit by flak a few minutes off the target and crashed into the city of Alessandria. The ill-fated crew consisted of Lt. Rossler, pilot; Lt. Gittings, co-pilot; Lt. Newman, bombardier; Sgt. Harris, radio operator; Sgt. Corle, turret gunner, and Sgt. Mallicoat, tail gunner.

5—Today we sent twelve planes to the Padua South railroad bridge. We dropped 48 thousand-pounders and were credited with a mission efficiency of 83%.

6—Twelve of our aircraft went for the Trento Transformer Station in Northern Italy. The 500-pound bombs were released by radio, but failed to find their mark.

7—The target was the Ala railroad bridge. It was a double track two-span steel bridge only 100 feet long. Our first box scored at least two hits, one on the center and one near the north end. The second box of our planes dropped short and to the left.

8-10—During this period we ran only one mission, which was disappointingly unsuccessful. Camp life continues along the same general plane. It is a day to day existence, with an occasional leave to look forward to. Improvements in the area are being made in anticipation of our remaining here for the winter. Life in the combat zone, happen what may, is a routine matter that defies adequate description. It must be experienced to be appreciated. As time wears on in its inexorable way, and as we see ourselves inch on towards victory, we over here become more acutely aware of the immensity of the whole conflict. It has been an uphill fight for us from the time we landed in Egypt to the present moment. We have had no easy victories, and we have paid dearly every time we have taken the enemy to task. The war for us is a highly personal affair that we are anxious to be done with as soon as possible.

11—Flying in the 1st and 2nd boxes of the lead flight of 18 aircraft, this squadron bombed the Cittadella railroad by-pass. The first box released by radio and put its pattern across the center of the by-pass, scoring several hits. The second box started 200 yards short and walked into the smoke of the first pattern.

12-13—On the 13th this squadron put up 18 aircraft to bomb a road bridge at Faenza, Italy. Heavy cloud coverage over the target made observations of the results impossible.

14-20—Six of our planes on the 17th went back to the Faenza road bridge on the Eighth Army Front. Probable hits were scored. On the 18th we led a flight of 18 aircraft to the Novska railroad bridge in Yugoslavia. The bombing results were excellent. The mission was an exceedingly long one, lasting four hours and fifty-three minutes.

21-27—The Faenza defense area in Italy came in for a heavy pasting on the 22nd. Fragmentation bombs were dropped and probably caused considerable damage.

28-30—This was a period of heavy rains, cold winds, and monotonous stand-downs.

1 December, 1944—We put six airplanes into the air and sent them to Villavernia to bomb a bridge just outside of town. The bomb pattern, instead of covering the bridge, was laid directly

across the town. The inhabitants probably paid dearly in destruction of property and in loss of life as a result of the town's fateful proximity to the bridge.

2-3—Before our airplanes finally got into the air, there was much uncertainty as to just what the target would be. Originally the crews were briefed to bomb a bridge in the Po River valley, but after they were taken out to the airplanes, they were called back to Operations to be briefed for a target in Yugoslavia. Then at the last minute before the second briefing, orders came through from Wing to send the mission to the Canneto railroad bridge in Northern Italy. Right now at this time the heavy drone of 96 engines is vibrating the air as the planes pass overhead on their return from the mission. In just a few seconds they will be peeling off preparatory to coming in on their base leg and landing. This will make our 350th squadron combat mission. Everyone is concerned about the kind of weather to which Corsica is subjected in the wintertime. There has been speculation here as to whether winter here is as wet, windy, and cold as it is in the southern part of Italy. If the past two or three days are typical of the average winter days in Corsica, then we shall not have to endure another winter as bad as the last one we endured, for these past few days have approximated the ideal. Although the air is cold and penetrating, the skies are clear and dry.

4—This afternoon the Group officially received the Presidential Citation which was awarded for the outstanding job performed in Africa and in Sicily. Maj. Gen. Cannon, Commander of the Twelfth Air Force, and Brig. Gen. Knapp, Commander of the 57th Bomb Wing, made the formal presentation at a formation held at Group Operations. Bad weather in Northern Italy prevented any combat flying. The weather here in Corsica was fair. The skies were clear and the sun was almost generous with its warmth.

5-6—These have been days of stand-downs. For us it seems that the war has virtually stopped. There is even far less discussion of it than there ever has been before. Practically everyone feels that it will drag on until next summer. Recently about a dozen combat crew members have left for the States. They have already been replaced by new arrivals in the squadron. Today, the 6th, Christmas packages literally overwhelmed us. One truck after another brought in gifts from home.

7—Three years ago today Japan made its infamous attack on Pearl Harbor. We were caught unprepared, and we were almost brought to the brink of disaster. But we rallied, licked our deep wounds and with extraordinary effort recovered to the degree that we could carry the war to the enemy. Now, three years later, we are striking mortal blows at this ruthless foe. The end is not yet in sight, but the eventual outcome is certain. Today has been uneventful. Briefing time had been set for eleven o'clock, but we were put on a stand-down just after breakfast. More Christmas packages arrived. All of us to a man are eating well right now. Practically all packages contain at least some food, which is really welcome.

8-9—This has been a period of stand-downs. Camp life continues on the same general level. Life in the combat zone, happen what may, is a routine matter that defies adequate description. It must be experienced to be appreciated. As time wears on in its inexorable way, and as we see ourselves inch on towards victory, we over here become more acutely aware of the immensity of the whole conflict. It has been an uphill fight for us from the time that we landed in Egypt to the present moment. We have had no easy victories, and we have paid dearly every time we have taken the enemy to task. The war for us is a humdrum and highly personal affair that we are anxious to be done with as soon as possible.

10-11—In two days we ran two missions, which is something of a recent record for us. The mission on Sunday, which carried us to our regular bombing ground, Northern Italy, was rough. About six of our planes were holed, Capt. Neafus was forced to land with a single engine at Pisa, and one of our gunners was seriously injured. In spite of terrific enemy ack-ack and fighter opposition, the objective of the mission, to create a railroad fill, was accomplished. Today we sent our airplanes out to destroy a railroad bridge in Northern Italy. At this moment

the photographs are not yet available. No opposition was encountered. The weather continues to be very fair and mild.

12—Stand-down. A drive through the Corsican mountains is beautiful at any time; today was no exception. The sky was spotted with low-hung cumulus clouds that drifted lazily over the jagged mountain peaks. There was a feeling of chill to the air, but the generous sunshine kept us from being cold. As one travels over the country roads one is apt to comment about the appearance of the countryside. Early in the summer the rolling fields were green, the trees were in full foliage, the air was warm, and nature was approaching its zenith. Now, many months later, one may drive through the same countryside, but it is wearing a different garb. Winter has come. The trees are leafless, the fields are no longer a bright green, and life seems to be at low ebb, as actually it is.

13-20—Except for a mission on the 15th, this has been a period of stand-downs. As was the case last year, weather again is an ally of the enemy. Local weather, with the exception of the past two days, which have been rainy, has been very good. There has been plenty of sunshine and at no time too much cold.

21—The skies are overburdened with grief. Like yesterday and the day before, today has been an exceedingly wet one. The steady beat of rain on this Operations-Intelligence building has been unremitting. The road over which we must travel to Group is virtually impassable in places. At a couple of spots a torrent, rushing down from the mist-enshrouded mountains, has completely overrun the road. The airfield is closed and activity in general is at low ebb. This is Italy in the wintertime all over again, except that thus far it has not been quite as bad, or perhaps I should say that we are equipped to face the elements better than we were last year at this time. Our offices and our living quarters are better housed, and we have more clothing to withstand the cold and the dampness.

22—For a change there was no rain. But it has been bitterly cold with a high wind that tossed our airplanes about the sky like a boy's kite. A mission was run to a rail bridge north of Trento in Italy. For over three hours our crews flew in sub-zero weather, but to no avail. The primary target could not be located, because of ground haze, and the alternate target was not bombed for the same reason.

23—Winter has come to Corsica. Borne on a cold and cruel wind sweeping down from the north are the first snowflakes of the season. The mountain barrier to the west is a solid white in its winter garb, and the skies are overcast as they are at home at this time of the year. Just a few days ago we were issued sleeping bags. These are standing us in good stead now. Crawl into one, zip up the side, pull on the hood, and you virtually are locked out from the cold.

24—Late in the afternoon of this day before Christmas, I am making this notation at S-2. There is no activity here. Rain is beating fiercely on the roof top, and a cold wind is whistling through the prefabricated sections of the building. This is a miserable day, and it appears that the morrow will be no better.

25—Christmas Day has come, and in just a few more hours it will be "last Christmas." Already my thoughts and the thoughts of everyone else are poised toward Christmas, 1945, and there arise in our minds the same questions which we asked ourselves on every holiday since coming overseas: Where shall we be a year from now? What shall we be doing then? Now we have the answers to those same questions which we asked last year. Today for us has been a quiet and uneventful one. Some of us felt light-headed as a result of the night before. And some of us continued to have no feelings even today. Christmas dinner was better than could be reasonably expected. In fact, it was very good. There was plenty of everything which is customary on Christmas: delicious turkey, dressing, and all the fixing necessary to make this an excellent meal.

26—"Beau coup" Christmas packages arrived today. Virtually everyone contained food of one kind or another. A soldier overseas cannot receive more practical gifts than canned food of the variety that we have been receiving. The mission to Northern

Italy was a complete failure. There is belief that the Germans did some "jamming," causing our radio-controlled bombs to release at the wrong time.

27—Recently there has not appeared in this diary any world news, mainly because this life has become so much of an organized bore that few of us have any desire to follow even the vital and important events that are happening from day to day. However, there has been no stagnation of activity on the far-flung battlefields. As a matter of fact, an exceedingly serious situation for the American First Army has developed on the Western Front in Belgium. About nine days ago the Germans launched a large-scale counter-offensive, which broke through the American lines, and which has not yet been checked. Very little information has been forthcoming, but the Allied Nations, and particularly the United States, have been warned of the gravity of the situation. It has been intimated that our losses in life and materiel have been appallingly high. We have been advised that this successful German breakthrough may result in an appreciable lengthening of the war. The Russian winter offensive is over a month late. On the Italian Front there is little activity, because of poor weather. The American offensive in the Philippines is going along "according to plan." Our mission to the Brenner Pass line was a highly successful one. The target, a railroad bridge, was completely destroyed. It was the same bridge we missed yesterday.

28—The following news item appeared in a recent issue of the *Stars and Stripes*: "The 12th AAF was congratulated today on completing 350,000 sorties in 25 months of operations. . . . General Eaker described the 12th AAF as 'the scourge of the German soldier in the Mediterranean,' which had severed enemy lines of supply and attacked his troop concentrations and equipment in the front lines as well as destroying or damaging a total of 4,914 enemy aircraft. During its more than two years of operations, the 12th AAF has operated from bases in Africa, Pantelleria, Sicily, Italy, Sardinia, Corsica, and Southern France, and has dropped more than 175,000 tons of bombs on enemy targets in twelve countries. In this period the 12th AAF suffered losses of 2,277 American planes. The 12th AAF was first composed of strategic and tactical aircraft, and formed the American and major part of the Northwest African Air Forces. After the Italian invasion and the formation of the MAAF, the 12th AAF was split and its heavy bombers and escort fighters were incorporated in the 15th AAF. . . ."

29—Some Allied military strategists now tentatively add three to six months to their estimates of the time required for victory in Europe as a result of the present Nazi counter-offensive. During the past few days this squadron has had assigned to it five crews that have just arrived from the States. Recently we lost approximately the same number—men who were lost to the States.

30-31—These two days can be disposed of by the word "un-eventful."

1 January, 1945—Today it was "business as usual." We sent fifteen aircraft to pinpoint bomb a railroad bridge in Northern Italy. Our photographs taken on the bomb run are not yet available, but interrogation indicates that the bridge was damaged, if not destroyed. All day a bitterly cold wind of gale proportions has whipped down the coast from the north. Right now as this notation is being made, this prefabricated building is being shaken by a violent wind. The mountains are snow-clad, but this littoral region remains clear. If winter in Corsica is no worse than it is now, then we shall have no grounds for complaint. Our dinner meal consisted of turkey, dressing, hot rolls, fresh butter, and coffee. Everything considered, it was a good meal.

2—The wind continues unabated. All day long it has swept down the island and has threatened to level the camp area. At the present moment this building is shaking dangerously. Today has been a quiet one, for the field was closed to all flights. Meals continue to be fairly good. Once a day (usually) we have fresh meat. Breakfast generally consists of french toast or pancakes, often fresh butter, coffee, sugar and cream.

3—At 0954 hours the first of fifteen of our planes took off to bomb the primary target, the Lavis viaduct rail diversion in

Northern Italy. Three planes of the formation carried chaff, which is tinfoil dropped a few minutes ahead of the bombing formation to upset the enemy anti-aircraft fire. The second box bombed the primary target, but the first box was unable to, because of radio-release malfunction. But one plane of the first box succeeded in dropping four 1,000-pounders on the alternate target, the Mantua North causeway. Both targets were probably destroyed or severely damaged. Thus the mission was doubly successful in spite of the malfunctions.

4—An exciting bit of news—but, unfortunately, not for us—the 319th Bombardment Group (M) will soon be on its way home. This Group, one of the four comprising the 57th Bomb Wing, has been overseas approximately twenty-eight months. Now they are being returned to the United States, probably for training in a very heavy bombardment group. All of us are hoping that a similar good fortune will befall us. Many of our planes were out early this morning headed for Northern Italy. The mission was a complete failure. The bombs dropped everywhere but within the target area. This was probably the poorest showing that we have ever displayed.

5—All day long a heavy and persistent rain has been beating out its steady cadence on this roof top. Because of the weather, the scheduled mission was cancelled.

6—There is nothing worthy of recording.

7—As usual it was a stand-down. Perhaps we may be able to get a mission off soon, for the weather shows signs of clearing.

8—President Roosevelt in his "State of the Union" message to Congress on the 6th said that despite a setback for the Allied Armies on the Western Front at the end of 1944, there is no question of ultimate victory over Germany and Japan. Said the President: "This new year can be the greatest achievement in human history. The new year can see the final ending of the Nazi-Fascist reign of terror in Europe as well as the closing-in of the forces of retribution about the center of the malignant power of imperialistic Japan. . . . We have seen a year marked on the whole by substantial progress toward victory even though the year ended with a setback for our armies. Our German enemies have sustained considerable losses while failing to obtain their objectives. . . ." The Italian front is at a virtual standstill. The Russians are not making the progress that they have in previous winter campaigns. On the Western Fronts we are recovering from the recent German counter-offensive. In the Pacific the immediate picture is brighter; progress there is steady and encouraging.

9-11—Continued stand-downs as a result of persistently bad weather all over Italy. Mail service continues to be almost non-existent; in fact, it's the poorest that it has ever been.

13—Stand-down—weather. The mountains are completely covered with snow almost down to their base. The littoral region, however, remains free of any snow. Precipitation here falls in the form of heavy rain, which seems to be the general order of the day. Appearing in the January 9th issue of the *Stars and Stripes* was this pertinent article: "For blasting and sinking the Italian cruiser *Taranto* on September 23 in La Spezia Harbor, the 340th Bombardment Group has been awarded its second War Department citation. Reconnaissance photos had indicated a German plan to scuttle the ship at the mouth of the harbor and block any possible Allied entry there. So a formation of 24 B-25 Mitchells from the 340th were sent out from their Corsica base with the job of bombing the cruiser at its berth. Despite a concentration of 48 ack-ack guns, the first three boxes laid a perfect pattern on the ship and left it burning and sinking. Not a plane was lost. . . ."

14—Stand-down; weather. Last night early a heavy thunderstorm blew in from the north. All through the night and the early morning the storm raged. Camp life was at low ebb.

15—We finally got a mission off today. The weather, at least temporarily, has taken a turn for the better. The sky was clear, and there was an almost complete absence of chill to the air. Comparatively speaking, this winter in Corsica has not been as bad as we had been prepared to expect.

16—Yesterday the Russians opened a mighty winter offensive. About 600,000 troops have made an advance of 16 miles in south-central Poland and have driven to within 62 miles of Silesia in industrial southeastern Germany. Berlin said that two mighty Russian offensives are in progress in Poland apparently aimed at taking Warsaw and at encircling East Prussia by driving north to Danzig. The operation is in progress along a 600-mile stretch from the Baltic to Budapest in what Berlin described as "the greatest Soviet offensive of all time." The Russian press hailed the offensive as the mightiest blow yet struck for the utter defeat of Hitler and scoffed at any doubts that the war might be prolonged into 1946.

17—Finally we succeeded in getting twelve airplanes into the air. But they might just as well have stayed on the ground, for bombing accuracy was only twenty-one per cent. The Roveretto railroad bridge in Italy remains standing.

18-19—There is nothing of special interest to record for these two days.

20—We sent a total of fifteen aircraft to the Trento marshalling yards. Three of these aircraft carried chaff and 100-pound phosphorus bombs. The other twelve planes each carried four 1,000-pounders. There were a total of fifty-four aircraft in the Group formation. It was necessary to fly through heavy, intense, and very accurate ack-ack (six planes were holed) before the bombs were away. But in spite of this opposition, our bombardiers laid an excellent pattern and undoubtedly, according to Captain Eggers, Group Intelligence Photographic Interpreter, destroyed a high percentage of the 400 units of rolling stock in the yards at the time of the mission. The 487th Squadron lost one plane to flak directly over the target.

21—The mission to Pontedidone, Italy, was successful. The 488th Squadron lost a plane over the target.

22—The mission to Northern Italy was a complete failure. We shall probably be sent back there tomorrow, the weather permitting.

23-26—The war news is sensational. On the huge Eastern Front the Russians are making a spectacular drive into Germany and at one point have advanced to within one hundred and twenty-five miles of Berlin. On the Western Front the Allies have regained all the territory which they recently lost in the great German counter-offensive. In the Philippines important Clark Field has been captured from the Japs. The overland route from India through Burma into China is open once more. The Allies have complete air superiority over China. The Bonin Islands have been subjected to a tremendous air and sea bombardment by American forces which is probably a prelude to invasion. Only the Italian Front is comparatively inactive, a fact due to weather, which has kept our tactical bombers grounded.

27—Stand-down. It appears that a move is imminent; this is not a loose rumor but a fact that may materialize sometime within the next month. It is believed that we shall operate from a field not far behind the front lines on the Adriatic side of Italy.

28—Today has followed the usual pattern. Right now we have twelve aircraft winging their way through adverse weather to an important target in Northern Italy. The weather here at Alesan is threatening; we may be in for more rain.

29—This Group was out in force again, striking effectively at communication lines on the Northern Italy border.

30—Two missions were run today: one a bombing mission, the other a "nickelling" mission. Interrogation revealed that both were successful.

31—Today's routine has been such that it does not justify recording.

1 February, 1945—No mission—weather. General morale of personnel of the squadron as well as of the Group continues at a very high level with the Russians relentlessly pushing westward toward Berlin; they are now only forty-five miles away at one point. Hope as to the early end of the war is as high as it was last summer when the Allied Armies were overrunning France, if not higher.

2—Carrying forty-four 1,000-pounders, eleven of our planes plastered the Chiusaforte (west) railroad bridge in Northern Italy. Mission efficiency was 86% and bombing accuracy was 100%. Another new crew arrived fresh from the States.

3—Here is what the latest BBC news has to say as to the progress of the war: "The Russians now are ten miles from the River Oder between Frankfort and Kustrin and are approaching the river on a front of more than sixty miles. On the northern flank they've captured a town thirty-five miles from Stettin. The trapped German troops in East Prussia and at Posnan and Schneidemulehl are suffering heavy losses. French and American troops have broken into Colmar. Allied aircraft have been smashing retreating columns . . . During the last thirty-six hours the RAF has dropped more than 4,750 tons of bombs on German rail centers behind the Western Front. Last night more than 1,200 bombers attacked Wiesbaden, Karlsruhe, and Wanne-Eichel. American troops on Luzon converging on Manila now control all the major roads and railways in the central plain. American bombers have sunk a Jap destroyer. In Italy there have been sharp patrol clashes all along the front."

4—The weather in Corsica is surprisingly mild. Occasionally both the days and the nights are uncomfortably cold; but this is only occasionally. Rain and wind are generously interspersed with clear skies and considerable warmth. If I were asked to express my opinion of winter in Corsica, I would say that it is much better than one could reasonably expect in view of the position of this island.

5—There is nothing particularly worthy of record.

6—Last night we had some surprising news; namely, that the impending move to Italy has been postponed for thirty days. No reasons have been given. Most of the men are disappointed, for they are anxious to get off the island.

7—Following is an Intelligence Summary of operations of the 57th Bomb Wing for today: "Continued excellent flying weather prevailed over rail targets on the Brenner Pass line and in northeast Italy, and for the fourth consecutive day all of the missions dispatched reported good results. Bombing was particularly accurate against the targets on the important Piedicolle and Tarvison lines to Austria, where three spans were observed out after the attack on the Canale D' Isoniza railroad bridge, while direct hits were scored on the Dagna and Chiusaforte rail bridges. Three ME-109's made an unaggressive pass against the formation bombing the Lavis rail diversion bridge, but there were no claims. One B-25 is missing over enemy territory."

8—We sent nine aircraft to the Piacenza railroad bridge, Italy. The bridge and probably the approaches leading up to it were well covered.

9—Somewhere between here and the target area the flying weather was poor enough to prevent a mission. Over the island we enjoyed ideal weather.

10—Stand-down. The war news continues to keep our morale on a high level. All over the world the Allies are making remarkable progress in the sure and steady beating down and subjugation of the enemy. At the present moment the Big Three, Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill, are meeting at some undisclosed place in the Black Sea area, where they are making plans for the final effort against the Nazi enemy and for the eventual peace.

11—Stand-down—weather.

12—We sent fifteen planes to our familiar hunting grounds in the northern part of Italy and probably knocked out another railroad bridge. This afternoon Brigadier General Knapp formally decorated a number of our personnel with Air Medals, Distinguished Flying Crosses, Legion of Merit Medals, and Bronze Star Medals.

13—Here is the latest BBC news as it was broadcast at dictation speed for Allied forces in the overseas service: "On the Western Front, United Kingdom and Canadian troops are fighting southeast of Nijmegen. There has been fierce fighting in Cleve where Scottish troops have cleared the western part of the town. The northern parts are also in our hands. Our troops are more than half-way through the Reichswald forest . . . In northern Alsace,

American 7th Army troops have consolidated their bridgehead over the Moder and driven back strong counter-attacks. Marshall Koniev's Russian forces have crossed the Oder on a hundred-mile front and got nearly one-third of the way to Dresden in Saxony . . . On the 8th Army Front in Italy Allied patrols have been active along the whole of the River Senio and 5th Army patrols have probed deep into the German lines . . ."

14—Reports on the mission dispatched to Northern Italy are not as yet available.

15—Stand-down—weather. Today marks the completion of our second year overseas. There was nothing unusual about it, the occasion not even being celebrated. With a stand-down the order for the day, camp activity was at a minimum.

16—Stand-down—weather.

17—Our planes were sent to the Bressanone South railroad bridge, which went down as a result of well-placed thousand-pound demolition bombs. After leaving the target, the formation was attacked by six ME-109's, which made feeble passes but failed to inflict any damage on our bombers. The P-47 Thunderbolt escort took up pursuit, but failed to make contact.

18—The mission to Italy today was completely abortive. The lead bombardier failed to pick up the target soon enough to get a sight on it. All planes returned with their full bomb load, except for bombs having a delayed fusing.

19—The tremendous Russian winter offensive has temporarily slowed down. The Eastern Front is well within the German border. There will probably be a short interval before the final knock-out punches are delivered. The most recent meeting of the Big Three in the Black Sea area was more concerned with the forthcoming peace than with the last phase of the defeat of Germany, which undoubtedly was settled at the previous conference of the great Allies. Stand-down.

20—Here follow a few casual remarks which are set forth as they occur: The canine population continues to be on the increase. Every few days there appears a new face—and what a variety—huge hounds, small mites, thoroughbreds and mongrels. One of our flight leader captains is master of three dogs and probably will acquire another one before he is through combat flying. A number of the boys are enjoying themselves immensely by indulging in their favorite sports. Some of them are regular fishermen, bringing in real delicacies which they cook in regal style; some of them hit the trails many times during the week; still others play basketball on the fine court which has been laid out in the area. We ran a successful mission to Northern Italy, knocking out another bridge.

21—This squadron put 18 airplanes into the air to bomb the Udine marshalling yards, an important center through which the Germans feed supplies and men to their Italian front. Weather prevented the dropping of any bombs.

22—Today, the 22nd, our airplanes were out in force again. The other Groups of this Wing put forth a big effort. All morning these Corsican skies were filled with formations of Mitchells headed northward for Italy.

23—The Group, including this squadron, ran off another mission. Interrogation reveals that the bombing was probably successful, but we shall not know for sure until the photos and P.I. Report are available.

24—The target for this squadron was a 700-yard length of track where the San Michele diversion closely parallels the main Brenner Pass line. The second box bombed on the first pass and probably cratered both lines. The other two boxes bombed on a later pass but no photos show their patterns.

25—Today stark tragedy struck, not once but three separate times, when three of our planes were hit by flak over the target, a rail bridge less than 15 miles from the Italian-Austrian border. One plane sustained a direct hit in its loaded bomb bay while it was making the bomb run; it blew up. Another plane was hit by flak and crashed into a mountain-side. The third plane to be lost to us had one engine shot out and when last

seen was headed for neutral Switzerland, where we hope it will make a safe landing.

26—Today four new crews arrived. And we got three new airplanes to replace the ones we lost yesterday. The Air Force operates fast when it comes to replacing airplanes.

27-28—These two days brought forth nothing worthy of record.

MISSING IN ACTION

(Mission—Railroad bridge on 25 February.)

Scott Herrin	Louis F. Beckwith
John Butler	Joseph D. Crenczi
James A. Hurd	John C. Frisch
Ralph W. Jefferys	Gayle C. Gearheart
Thomas Manwell	Wendell H. Beverly
Lawrence E. Griffin	James J. Clayton
James F. Machette	Harold Schoenholtz
Albert L. Spann	Albert E. Van Overberg
James P. Westra	Charles J. Taylor

1 March, 1945—Weather caused the Group to be put on a stand-down shortly before briefing time. For the first time in weeks, the Corsican skies were threatening, but as yet no rain has fallen.

2—Weather again—stand-down. The Group has instituted a courier service to Rome for all 340th personnel; one ship makes three trips per day. A similar service is being contemplated for Cairo, with necessary modifications. Cairo is approximately eight hours distant by air, and thus the flights would not be quite so often as the ones to Rome. This morning a plane left for Tunis in order that fresh food can be purchased to supplement the G.I. diet. Something about the war. The tremendous Russian winter offensive apparently has come to a halt. But in the west, the Allies are grinding forward with renewed impetus after a number of stagnant weeks. The air offensive over Germany continues in full fury; Berlin last night was subjected to its tenth consecutive night of bombing. In Italy activity is confined to sharp patrolling. The war in the CBI Theatre is progressing rapidly in favor of the United Nations.

3—One of the men received a card just recently from Kirks S. White, formerly a captain, now Mr. White. While the people in the Middle West and in the East are suffering from one of the most severe winters in the history of the nation, we "Corsicans" are enjoying fair weather. One could not ask for more perfect winter weather than is to be found here. Considering what is to be found in Southern Italy, such as we experienced around Foggia, this is a break for us. Everyone has a cozy tent, and although conditions are by no means ideal, we could be much worse off than we are. There are many others in this theatre who would be glad to trade places with us.

4—Today we sent twelve airplanes to bomb the railroad overpass at San Ambrogio. This was the 399th squadron combat mission, which turned out to be a successful one.

5—There is nothing unusual to report for today.

6—The Enego railroad bridge was attacked by twelve aircraft from this squadron. It was passable before bombing. On the first pass only four bombs were dropped, and they struck 200 yards west of the bridge. On the second pass, the first pattern fell west of the bridge, very close to it and the second fell across the south approach, probably cratering the tracks and the highway.

7—Twelve of our crews were briefed to bomb the Peri rail fill, but the mission was destined to be unsuccessful. On the bomb run the lead plane received a direct hit in the left engine, and shortly thereafter the left wing broke off and the plane spun, crashed and exploded. Five parachutes were seen to open shortly after the plane was hit. Flying as co-pilot was Major Rittenhouse, Operations Officer. Lt. Daniels was piloting the plane; Lt. Lynch was flying as bombardier, Lt. Dunn as navigator, and Sgts. Wheeler, Spencer and Gilmore as gunners.

8—The target for today was the Ala railroad bridge. It appeared to be passable to single track traffic prior to the attack. The only pattern dropped struck east of the south approach with two probable hits on the serviceable track. There was no apparent damage to the bridge.

9—Again we struck at the Ala railroad bridge with questionable results. Life in camp goes on as usual with nothing of particular interest to report.

10—We were scheduled for two missions today, but due to bad weather over the target areas, both missions were abortive.

11—The Staz di Ceraino rail fill was the target. Neither the fill nor the trackage was damaged. Mission efficiency and mission accuracy were down to 31% respectively.

12—The mission carried our planes to the San Michele diversion bridge. There was no opposition whatsoever, mission efficiency and bombing accuracy both being 100%.

13—The Perca railroad bridge was hit by two patterns on the east span, two patterns hit over, one pattern cratered the track to the west, and the last pattern possibly cratered the east approach. The bridge and the trackage appeared passable prior to the attack, but after the bombing the photos show that the east span had been damaged although it is not down.

14—This evening our outdoor moving picture was "A Song to Remember," which depicts the life of Frederic Chopin. With bomb stands as seats, coveralled airplane mechanics, pilots, bombardiers, gunners, administrative personnel, and many others necessary to keep our planes in the air gathered on the sloping mountain-side for an evening of open-air entertainment. Spread out before us was the quiet Tyrrhenian Sea. Occasionally one of our big bombers raced by overhead with its riding lights revealing its exact location. In the distance could be heard the steady drone of our mobile gasoline generators which supply the electric power. Here was a scene commonplace to us veterans, but one we shall never forget.

15—Last night the officers of the squadron had a dance at a rest camp on the northeastern part of the island. In order to give the enlisted men a break, today was declared a holiday. The squadron was put on a stand-down, and everyone had the opportunity of resting. The news of the war is heartening. One cannot be accused of over-optimism in expecting a sudden end to the European conflict. Jerry may fight on for a number of months, but even if that should happen, the end is appearing in sight.

16—The squadron ran two six-ship missions to Northern Italy. One box was dispatched to a powder filling plant. Using special equipment, highly secret and newly developed, the bombs were placed directly on the target. Huge fires were started, with smoke rising hundreds of feet into the air. The other box, using regular radio-release equipment, struck at a railroad bridge, but the mission was not completely successful. This Group sustained its first loss on takeoff since we were stationed at Catania. A 488th Squadron plane, loaded with bombs, just got its wheels up when both engines failed. It nosed into the sea and exploded. All afternoon an Air-Sea Rescue plane patrolled the waters adjacent to this area, but neither bodies nor survivors were found. The cause of this double-engine failure is unknown, and will probably remain so. There is a possibility that the crash was due to pilot error.

17—Another squadron jeep has been wrecked. We have sustained a number of jeep accidents since coming overseas, and a great many of them have been accused by flight personnel. Used to speed, they forget themselves when they get behind the wheel of an automobile. Fortunately, the driver in this particular instance was not even scratched. Joe Perez, S/Sgt. in Operations, was made a very happy man this morning. He received his orders returning him to the U.S.A. In just a few days he will complete his 29th month overseas, and it is on that basis that he is being sent back. Another man, Sgt. Fuss, is leaving tomorrow with Perez. He is going back on the 30-day rotation plan. His mother recently died, and he is being given the opportunity of going back to settle his affairs. Slowly but surely the "old" men (in point of time in the overseas service) are being

sent home for one reason or another. The squadron has undergone a great change in personnel during the past 25 months.

18—This afternoon another Group plane went down. As the 486th planes were going up over the island in soupy weather, one of their planes plunged earthward and crashed, the result of the formation of ice on the wings. The Group lately has sustained severe losses, not only from the enemy, but from other causes. Today we ran two separate missions, one to a bridge on the Brenner Pass line, the other for shipping in La Spezia Harbor. The first one was probably successful, the second one probably not.

19—Twelve squadron planes were sent to Muhlendorf in Austria to bomb a railroad bridge. This was our first mission to that country. Our planes flew with 12 planes of the 487th Squadron. The mission efficiency of this 24-ship formation was 82%, and bombing accuracy was also 82%.

20—Misfortune struck the Group again. An unofficial total of five aircraft are missing in action, with at least two crews going down over the target area, a rail bridge on the Brenner Pass line. As the war draws closer to an end, the Germans are fighting more fiercely than ever. And our Group losses are on the upgrade.

21—A formation of 12 planes from this squadron and 12 from the 487th carried a load of thousand-pounders to the Brennero marshalling yards on the Italian-Austrian border. Bombing accuracy was way off, and the mission was unsuccessful.

22—A change of locations for the Group is impending. It is believed, with good grounds for that belief, that we shall move shortly after the first of next month.

23—Today there was a presentation of awards to various members of the Group. General Ira Eaker presided.

24—The Group continues to pile up missions. With good weather prevailing, we are flying every day. The great bulk of the missions are still of the rail and/or road interdiction type. By destroying the enemy's bridges, rail and road alike, as well as his marshalling yards, we are making it more difficult for him to hold his Italian front. War news all over the world is exceedingly good. Indications are that preparations are in progress for a final all-out assault on Germany from all sides. Food is not as good as it used to be. We get more canned food, much less of the fresh stuff.

25—We were out in force today, hitting a target in our favorite hunting ground in Northern Italy.

26—For the first time in many weeks, there was rain. Steadily all day rain has been falling. For a change it is welcome. The following article appeared here in the *Stars and Stripes*: "High officials here (Washington) expect the German Army to begin to disintegrate soon, according to an Associated Press report issued today (March 24). This is the basis for the widely-held belief that the next few weeks will see the European war won. The prospects as seen in Washington is that surrender of large forces may be expected."

27—Throughout last night and during most of today the rain continued to fall. Because of weather, we were on a stand-down. The war news remains spectacular, particularly on the Western front, where tremendous gains are being made. All of us are following the news closely, listening to the radio at every possible opportunity. As a result of the great progress, we are all experiencing high morale, for there are good grounds to believe that the end now may not be very far off. Taking the place of Major Rittenhouse as Operations Officer is Capt. P. B. Neafus, a man who is well-qualified to fill this important position. Lt. Ver Keljik is Assistant Operations Officer.

28—The Group move to Italy is not far off now. This morning Operations and S-2, as well as the other sections, packed everything but minimum operating essentials. The enlisted men's mess hall has been torn down, and our Operations - S-2 building has been cleared preparatory to a similar action tomorrow.

29—This has been an uneventful day with nothing worthy of record.

30—The dismemberment of our camp continues systematically and surely. Practically everyone is doing his share willingly without complaint. All the buildings have been taken down, all wooden floors have been removed from the tents, much of our equipment has been loaded on trucks, and everything in general has been prepared for the move. All of this has been no small task, the result of our having been in this one spot almost a whole year.

31—We are all prepared for the move. This will be another milestone on the way home, so let it come.

MISSING IN ACTION

(Mission to Aldena railroad fill on 17 March, 1945.)

2d Lt. Charles C. Parker
2d Lt. Lawrence E. Proffitt
2d Lt. Howard R. Bradley
S/Sgt. William N. MacEachon
S/Sgt. Kenneth E. Lower
S/Sgt. James R. Ehrsam

1 April, 1945—All day the final packing of squadron equipment has been taking place. Since we have been located here so long, the job of pulling up has been a huge task. Now we are just about ready to leave. We are supposed to start rolling at 9:00 tomorrow morning.

RIMINI L/G, ITALY

2—This is our last day on the island of Corsica. For many of us, this interim of our lives has been the most pleasant we have enjoyed since coming overseas. True enough, we have been beset with monotony, food has not always been good, we have seen many of our buddies killed, and occasionally we have been in great danger. But many things helped to offset the dangers and the hardships, to make us feel as we do in regard to Corsica. Many of us made the acquaintance of civilians who have become good friends of ours. Then there was all the natural beauty about which so many of us are so enthusiastic. The climate, temperate and healthful, also made its contribution to our warm feeling for Corsica. Our motor convoy pulled away from Alesan about 10:00 A.M. By nightfall all personnel and equipment had been loaded on boats in Bastia Harbor. The flight personnel will remain behind and will join us later at our new place of operations.

3—Sometime shortly after daybreak we pulled out of the harbor at Bastia. Now we are steaming eastward toward Italy; we will disembark at Leghorn. Late in the evening we put up at a staging area just outside of Florence.

4—Early this morning our convoy started out on the last lap of our journey. We were only on the road a very short time when we began the long haul through the beautiful San Benedetto Alps. The road rises precariously heavenward, presenting vistas of rare alpine beauty. From the summit down toward the Adriatic side there is a duplication of what you have just seen on the way up. By the time that Rocca S. Casciano is reached the countryside has become just pleasantly rolling and remains that way until Forli is reached. From there on to Rimini you travel over plain country; and from Rimini on to Riccione, our destination, the road skirts the sea.

5—All day everyone was busy getting set up. Moving always entails a very great deal of work and this move was no exception to the rule.

6—The establishment of the squadron at this new area is progressing rapidly and satisfactorily. No missions are being run from here, but we are hitting at the enemy from Alesan, Corsica, where a skeleton ground force is "keeping 'em flying." Very shortly, perhaps in the next day or so, all personnel and all our airplanes will be located here. Being considerably closer to the extreme northern part of Italy, Austria, and Southern Germany, we should be able to run more missions than we were running from Corsica.

7—Another day has slipped by, and we are now another day closer to the end of this conflict. Today the remainder of our personnel arrived. The field in Corsica will soon be covered over with grass and underbrush. This is by far the finest living quarters we have ever had since coming overseas. The squadron is set up in what was once a ritzy residential section adjoining the resort town of Riccione. The houses the personnel are living in are in fairly good condition. From Rimini south to Riccione the bordering seashore has been developed into a huge playground, which in time of peace was one of Europe's famous resort centers. Now it is run down and badly battered as a result of the war. But some day it should assume a holiday semblance again.

8—Today we ran our first mission from this field, the Rimini Airdrome. The target was the Vo Sinistro rail fill. The results were not particularly successful, although some damage was probably done. Indications are that this will be the most comfortable place at which we have ever been located. Here are a few reasons for this feeling: We live in attractive houses in a residential community where many of the civilians are still living. Many of the residences are equipped with fine furniture, and practically all of them have running water with toilets and baths. Our offices, too, are in buildings. Very close by is the seashore, which we should be able to enjoy this summer if we are still here.

9—In close support of the British Eighth Army, which constitutes this side of the Italian front, we bombed artillery positions in the vicinity of Imola. This was a close support mission, our bombing being just forward of the front line. It is doubtful whether the mission was successful.

10—Again in close support of British Eighth Army troops, this Group put forth a maximum effort with two missions today. Both were aimed at troop concentrations at the front line. The results are not yet available at the time of this writing.

11—A ride through the rolling countryside surrounding this area is revealing. Spring has just come here. In startling contrast to the happy landscape are the terrible evidences of death and destruction. Here surrounded by new tender grass is a burned-out tank; over yonder is a downed airplane. Here is a farmhouse, now a heap of rubble; there at a bend in the road is a grave marked by a white German cross. Everywhere in this smiling countryside are evidences of fierce battles just recently fought. Like Anzio, the fighting in this vicinity was bloody and prolonged. Even remote hamlets did not escape the horrors of war.

12—Close support continues to keep us very busy.

13—This morning the radio aired some exceedingly sad news: President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died at the age of 63 from a cerebral hemorrhage some time late yesterday afternoon. His loss to the Allied cause is a great blow. From mortality he has passed into immortality and will go down in history as one of the greatest men of all time.

14—We ran a morning and an afternoon mission. Located as we are, we are experiencing missions around the two-hour mark instead of the four-hour mark as was the case in Corsica.

15—Here is an article that appeared in the April 14th issue of the *Stars and Stripes*: "High Army officials told Senators today (April 13) that the end of organized fighting in Germany probably will come within a few days. Describing the pell-mell dash of the U. S. Armies across Germany, general staff officers expressed the opinion to members of the Senate Military Committee that a collapse of Nazi arms is imminent. . . ." Late this afternoon we sent out 20 aircraft from the squadron to bomb targets in the Bologna area. At this writing they have not returned.

16—We put forth a maximum effort, but achieved very poor results. Our missions were intended to be in close support of Eighth Army troops, but weather over the target area nullified our efforts.

17—Life here continues as usual with all efforts being directed toward hitting the enemy as hard as possible as often as possible.

18—We got off one mission today, one in close support of Eighth Army troops. Good results were obtained. The big push in Italy is on. Both the American Fifth and the British Eighth Armies have begun their spring offensives. Good progress is being made against stubborn resistance. Squadron life has settled down to a normal routine. The men are more contented than is generally the case, for they have places to go, things to do. Living among civilians, with a resort town well-outfitted nearby, there can be no reason for boredom as there was for most of the men in Corsica. This is the closest thing to being stationed in the U.S.A.—in some ways better.

19—There is nothing of particular importance to report.

20—The mission today carried our planes to San Ambrogio, but it was an unsuccessful one. A malfunction in the lead plane prevented the dropping of bombs, and thus none of the other planes in the formation dropped. Airplane 9K, returning from the mission, crashed on the field. Approaching the field with engine trouble, the pilot called the tower and informed them that he was coming in for an emergency landing. As the plane was being brought down, one of the engines coughed and cut out. Before the pilot could do anything to correct this condition, the plane lunged over and crashed, just missing a farmhouse near the runway. The plane was destroyed beyond repair, but miraculously there were no casualties, except a slight head injury to the tail gunner. One engine and the bombardier's compartment were completely sheared off.

21—Sometime today the great Northern Italian city of Bologna fell to Allied troops. All winter the Germans held their Bologna defenses, but with the coming of the spring offensive they were driven back. The Allies are on the move again in Italy, and this should be the last offensive in Italy, and this should be the final chapter in the Italian campaign. The fighting front has now advanced so far to the north that we no longer hear the big guns exploding, nor do we see at night the huge flashes of exploding shells. Two missions went off, one this morning, one this afternoon. The Group continues to put forth a maximum effort and, of course, this squadron is doing its share in the matter. We now have a grand total of 459 combat missions.

22—More crews arrived in the squadron fresh from the States. Although the war appears to be almost at an end, the Army must not operate on that assumption; hence the continued influx of new personnel. The Group and this squadron were out early this morning striking hard at the enemy who seems to be making a determined effort to get out of the country as quickly as possible with as little loss to himself as possible.

23—Today all of us were surprised to have bombardier Lt. Lynch reappear. He had been given up for dead on the disastrous mission of the 7th of March. He escaped from the Krauts.

24—We learn from Lt. Lynch that Major Rittenhouse is safe in a German prisoner of war camp. That is indeed good news. Four distinct missions were dispatched today. The retreating Krauts are catching hell from this Group, which is one of many that are hitting hard at the enemy.

25—Stand-down.

26—The war news has become more sensational than ever. The Russians are fighting in the heart of Berlin; it will only be a matter of a day or so before the Nazi capital will have been completely subjugated. The mission for today was again in line with our specialty: the destruction of a railroad bridge. It was probably successful.

27-30—This has been a period of stand-downs because of weather. The radio reported today that Mussolini has been shot and killed (April 29) by Partisans. The war has now progressed to the point where false peace rumors are the order of the day. Here in Riccione yesterday (April 28) the people celebrated the "end" of the war, until they had been fully convinced that there was no truth to it. Likewise in Washington, D. C., and other places the news spread that the European conflict had ended.

1 May, 1945—Hitler is dead! This sensational news is welcome; but there is doubt in the minds of many whether there is any veracity to the announcement. It is reported that he died at his battlepost in the Reich Chancellery this afternoon. He is said to have appointed Grand Admiral Donetz as his successor. With each passing day morale is rising to unprecedented heights, for everyone is sure that V-E Day will soon be here. Weather again kept our planes grounded. Although there are probably no more Italian targets, we still can bomb a few places in Austria.

2-6—It appears that this squadron will fly no more missions. Early each day we are put on a stand-by status, only to have it changed to a stand-down later on in the day.

7—*The war is over.* Germany sometime today surrendered unconditionally. It has already been announced that tomorrow will be celebrated as V-E Day. For most of us anticipation of the event was greater than the event itself. Now that it has come, there is an empty feeling. It is over, so what?

8—Today, V-E Day, has been a quiet one for most of us over here. Many of us have been down to the beach to enjoy the water and the sunshine. Work was strictly forbidden. It seems that there ought to be something dramatic to fit the occasion. After such long anticipation, there has been a tremendous let-down. Germany has been defeated. Now what? One would like to celebrate, to shout for joy. But somehow few of us can bring ourselves around to that. At 3:00 o'clock this afternoon Prime Minister Winston Churchill broadcast a victory message to the world. Short and concise and full of meaning, it will undoubtedly go down in history as one of the great speeches of this epic period.

9—Now that the war is over, Operations and Intelligence are to a certain extent out of business. Operations is putting airplanes into the air for "Blue Death" missions. There are morning flights and afternoon flights.

10—Preparations are being made to put into effect an educational program. Captain Olsen will be the officer in charge, and Sgt. Bill West will assist him. While we are awaiting movement either to the U.S.A. or to another theatre, we shall be subjected to a regular routine. From all indications we shall be here for some considerable time. The weather is fine. Many of the squadron personnel are taking advantage of the excellent beach by spending a great deal of their time there. No one could reasonably ask for a better beach than this one.

11—Another day has gone the way of all days. Time does not seem to be passing as quickly as it used to. Perhaps this is due to the fact that we are impatient for action. If we are going to go back to the States, then we would like to go there immediately; if we are going to the other theatre, then we would prefer being on the move at once.

12—More men are leaving for the U.S.A. very soon. There now are comparatively few original men in the squadron. The educational program is about ready to be put into effect. Capt. Olsen and Sgt. West have spent considerable time and effort on the project, which should be of great benefit to the men. Here is an opportunity to acquire knowledge on Government time and expense.

13—This Sunday is the first one after V-E Day. In England and in America people are reverently giving thanks that half of our war-time job is over. And, of course, they are not forgetting to pray for the men who have so gallantly died on the battlefronts that this victory might be possible.

14-17—Operations and Intelligence have moved to "The Character's College of Intricate Knowledge," which is located in a large house facing the beach. From our Intelligence Office can be seen the blue Adriatic, which at the present moment is dotted with the colored sails of fishing boats. A persistent sea-breeze coming in from off the water has made this a pleasantly

cool day. In this same building will be held the school classes. Today is registration day, and the soldier-students are filing in to sign up for the courses in which they are interested. There may be something good in the air. By the 18th of this month all surplus clothing and equipment must be turned in to Supply. This may be indicative of an impending move—perhaps to the States.

18—Col. Jones paid us a visit. Just recently released as a prisoner of war, he chose to return to the Group long enough to pay us his best wishes before returning to the States.

19—The first classes were held today. A complete schedule has been worked out whereby there will be flying in the morning, classes and training films in the afternoon. Sometime during the day there will be military training. Rumors, rumors, rumors—they are rampant. We are going home soon; we are leaving on such and such a date, etc., etc. There is something in the air, and eventually we shall move, but at the present time all this that we hear is nothing more than cheap talk.

20—There has been nothing unusual about today. It was very ordinary as days over here go. It seems rather strange to listen to radio newscasts and not to hear about fighting in Europe.

21-24—The daily routine continues on along a set pattern. During the course of a day, there are a number of things that are accomplished: flying, training films, school, drill formations. All indications are that the next move the Group makes will be to Naples. There we shall probably remain for about a month, being processed during that time for a return to the States. Just as soon as we depart from here, I feel sure that Army life will become very uncomfortable.

25—It is now Major Paul B. Neafus, Operations Officer.. He was fortunate that his promotion got through. A number of men, officers and enlisted alike, were not so fortunate, for all ratings were frozen as of the 22nd of this month.

26-31—The weather continues to be fair and mild. The days, except for two or three, have not been uncomfortably hot. The nights are on the chill side. Many of the men have acquired a good sun-tan as a result of spending considerable time on the beach. During this period, S-2 burned all target and tactical charts as well as all maps. All of us have been waiting a long time for this—at last it came. S-2 is practically "out of business."

1 June, 1945—Today ushered in another month. What it holds in store for us remains to be seen. There are rumors that we may be on the move within the next two weeks. About one thing we are all fairly certain: that we are going back to the States rather than directly to the other theatre. Eventually many of us may wind up there, but not until we have had furloughs.

2—The war against Japan continues at a heightened pace. The headline in today's issue of the *Stars and Stripes* reads: "450 Super Forts Pour Fire Bombs into Busy Osaka." This second largest city of Japan was struck with the same destructive force that virtually knocked out Tokyo. Systematically, Japan's important industrial cities are being levelled.

3—Today being Sunday, there was no official work done. All day long the men rested or relaxed. Many of the men spent their leisure time at the beach. This beach is a fine one, and today it was dotted in all directions with civilian and military bathers. A cool breeze blowing in from the sea kept the hot June sun from becoming unbearable.

4—The Army's Education Program as it is operated here in the squadron continues to function. There remains a healthful interest in the program by both instructors and students. Certainly some few students are going to find this to be of life-long good to them. And regardless of benefits derived, time is made to pass more quickly.

5—All day everyone has been excited. An order came down from higher headquarters asking for the following information from every man having 85 or more points: Do you want to stay in the Army? The great majority of men answered: No. What the actual implications are remain to be seen.

6—Passes are still being issued and many of the men are visiting Venice and other points north of here. The main roads leading out of Rimini northward are still choked with military traffic, and thus no difficulty is experienced in obtaining a ride to your chosen destination.

7-9—During this period the instant chronicler has been on pass. From his personal diary appear the following excerpts, the inclusion of which can be justified here because so many men of the squadron are making similar trips: "Early Wednesday morning we headed north in 'Baby Doll.' Our first stop was to be Venice (Venezia), the famous city of canals and gondolas. We arrived there at noon. Venice has all of the romantic appearance which I have ever associated with it. You may drive to the outskirts of the city by motor vehicle. There a huge building is available for parking purposes. Into the heart of the city, it is necessary to travel by gondola, a ride of 30 minutes, part of it over the beautiful Grand Canal. The first night out we slept in a private home in Padova, not many miles from Venice. The next morning after a breakfast of eggs, bread, and wine, we began the second leg of our trip. Over a super-highway in an excellent state of repair, we breezed through the Po River Valley. Here are fertile farmlands, rich at this season of the year in fruits and grains and in other farm produce. The stone farmhouses are neat and well-kept, and the people are independent and prosperous-appearing, which is in direct contrast to the poor and servile farmers of Southern Italy. As we proceeded north by east we approached closer to the foothills of the Alps, which fringe this sprawling river valley. Finally we reached Vicenza, a city that intrigued us so much that we decided to spend all day and the following night there. Here, too, we slept and ate in a private home. This being British Eighth Army territory, we Americans were a rarity and were treated as such; everywhere the people went out of their way to accommodate us. Vicenza stands out in my mind as a city of comely signorine and quiet sophistication. The buildings and the layout of its streets have the unmistakable old-world appearance, but there is an air about it of hustling modernity. From Vicenza we three men in a jeep struck out for Rovereto, southern extremity of the famous Brenner Pass. The route led us through the precipitous Alps, which extend down from Austria. Heaven-embracing, the upper reaches of these mountains are garbed in a perpetual mantle of snow. Deep valleys are unspoiled by the footsteps of man; here nature is at its loveliest. At Rovereto we turned southward, following the Adige River, which has its headwaters far to the north in the Alps. About two hours later we entered Verona, which is just east of beautiful Lake Garda. We remained in Verona only long enough to visit the tomb of Romeo and Juliet, and then we proceeded towards Vicenza, where we spent the evening. After dusk we departed for Padova, where we struck out for Riccione, arriving there late in the afternoon. . . ."

10—Sixty-seven men of the squadron left for the United States. Included in that number were the officer personnel of S-2, namely, Capt. Jack A. Casper and Lt. Israel Polonsky. Now there are only a little more than a score of the original men of the squadron left. A directive came through yesterday alerting the Group and stating that we are to be moved sometime in July.

11—The war against Japan is progressing satisfactorily. There is no doubt as to the outcome, but it may be a long time before Japan is brought to unconditional surrender as Germany was. The weather continues to be hot and fair.

12—Today has been another quiet one. The Educational Program has folded up as a result of so many men being returned to the States recently.

13-14—These two days have been strictly routine. There has been some work in the morning; in the afternoon many of the men go to the beach to swim and sun bathe.

15—Half of the month has been spent. Time appears to be passing more quickly than it did right after V-E Day. It is currently believed that we shall move shortly after the first of next month.

16—We learned today that three of the men who left the outfit for the States about a month ago are now civilians. All three were airplane mechanics who came overseas with the squadron in 1943. Many men, it appears, are going to be surprised by being discharged from the Army much sooner than they ever expected would be the case. Time seems to be passing too slowly to suit us now that we are anxiously awaiting a move. Days are monotonous, regardless of what we do. This "sweating it out" is nerve-wracking. The weather continues to be warm and fair. Unlike the climate in many of the northern United States, there are no great fluctuations. The temperature remains fairly even from day to day, and there is virtually no rain. The nights are generally cool and clear. This is a healthful and ideal climate for those who seek a pleasant outdoor vacation close to nature.

17—Another Sunday has come and has gone. Like previous ones since V-E Day, it has been a quiet one.

18-19—So routine have been the past two days that they do not warrant separate entries. Preparations continue for our departure. Records are being completed, equipment is being turned in, and other steps are being taken which are necessary before we can shove off for the States.

20-21—Certain of the sections are now completely "out of business." Operations activity—and likewise Intelligence—is at a low level. Supply and the Orderly Room right now are putting forth a maximum effort, for their work is mainly concerned with the forthcoming move.

22-23—Two more days are out of the way. A day is hardly begun but that we anticipate the next one. Five men from this squadron who have less than 85 points are being transferred out for direct shipment to the other theatre. A rumor is about that men with more than 85 points will be transferred to another bomb group and with that group will return to the States.

24—The Enlisted Men's Club continues to be a favorite spot to spend an enjoyable evening. Every other night there is music and dancing. Each member of the squadron is entitled to bring an Italian guest.

25-26—A complete dearth of activity makes it necessary to combine the notations for these two days. More men are being transferred out of the squadron for the U.S.A.; and others are being transferred to groups which are slated for the C.B.I.

27—Early in the afternoon more men with less than 85 points were flown by C-47's to another base. It has been rumored that men with more than 85 points will be transferred to another bomb group, but will remain in the squadron on temporary duty until the squadron leaves for the States, at which time we shall be sent to the other bomb group to "sweat out" our return to the States.

28—The rumor materialized; men with more than 85 points have been transferred to the 310th or the 321st Bomb Groups, but will remain here on T.D. until this group leaves. This morning and then again in the afternoon, men went out to the Group rifle range to shoot the 45, the carbine, and the Thompson sub-machine gun.

29-30—This has been another period of inactivity approximating "suspended animation."

DESTINATION—U.S.A.

Points! Points! Points! If you had them, you were on your way. Amidst the greatest confusion of the entire war, preparations were finally completed to send the lucky ones home. And so on 1 July, 1945—865 long and arduous days after the squadron embarked from San Francisco on 15 February,

THE SQUADRON WAS REALLY GOING HOME!

The squadron convoyed down to Rome the first day and slept at a rest camp. Naples was the second leg and here the men sweated out a ship for nine long and tedious days. But what did it matter—we were going HOME!

The air echelon took off and proceeded home on the following flight schedule:

- 4 July—Rimini to Naples.
- 6 July—Naples to Tunis.
- 8 July—Tunis to Marrakech, French Morocco.
- 9 July—Marrakech to Dakar, French West Africa.
- 12 July—Dakar to Roberts Field, Liberia.
- 13 July—Roberts Field to Ascension Island.
- 14 July—Ascension to Natal, Brazil.
- 15 July—Natal to Belem, Brazil, to Atkinson Field, British Guiana.
- 16 July—Atkinson Field to Borrenquin, Puerto Rico.
- 17 July—Borrenquin to Morrison Field, Florida.
- 19 July—Morrison Field to Hunter Field, Georgia.

Upon their arrival in the States the flight echelon were ordered to 30 days TDY at home and then to Seymour Johnson Field, Goldsboro, N. C.

The ground echelon boarded ship on 27 July, 1945, at the Naples harbor. It wasn't the West Point this time but the men would have gladly swum home. At dusk they pulled out from the pier and before dark steamed out. In the distance was the Isle of Capri which spelled memories of joyous rest leaves. Farewell was also bade to Vesuvius, which belched forth its salute as it had for generations past. And so, it was not without a feeling of nostalgia that they left the Italian mainland.

The homeward journey was uneventful and in the nature of anti-climax. The men realized that behind them were months of war; they had their memories, sad and glad, and also they experienced the feeling that they were also leaving behind their youth.

There was little excitement except the usual crap games; and money now seemed to have value once again. On the 7th of August early risers could scan the Virginia capes.

By mid-afternoon debarkation was completed and the men were enroute to Camp Patrick Henry where all personnel were ordered to temporary duty at home pending reassignment to Seymour Field, Goldsboro, N. C.

Those with sufficient points were separated from the service; the others finally reported to Columbia Air Base where the Group had been activated in the first instance.

At Columbia one day in November, 1945, the books were closed and the 489th ceased to exist and became a memory albeit a pleasant one.