



# War Diary of the 340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group May 1944

Transcribed from US Army microfilm and illustrations added by  
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*The 340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group on Corsica  
Photo Credit: 57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing Archives*

May 1, 1944 Monday

In our missions today 24 planes went to bomb the Albinia rail bridge, which alack, they missed, and a low level mission of four planes led by Captain Dyer and Lt. Barnett. Colonel Chapman flew as co-pilot with Captain Dyer. 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 sore spot with the 340<sup>th</sup> ever since it moved to Corsica. We send an airplane 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. The group postal clerks, after more than 14 months of dealing with vociferous mail-hungry G.I.'s, have developed a hostility complex and almost seem glad when, with a frozen smile they announce, "There is no mail today. Rough, ain't it?"

May 2, 1944 Tuesday



*General John K. Cannon  
Photo: 57th Bomb Wing  
Archive*

General Cannon, 1<sup>st</sup> Tactical Air Force boss, was in today with General Knapp, our Wing commander. The enlisted men in S-2 and S-3 always like to see "Uncle Joe" (Gen. Cannon) because he invariably stops to ask them how they are getting along and what they are doing. He is a man about 55 of medium build and light hair; this personality 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. According to the grapevine gossips of the group, he and Colonel Jones, our last C.O., now missing in action, were good friends...Wherever the American soldier goes, there goes swing music. A Jazz orchestra of a colored unit stationed nearby played a hot session tonight before our movie. The mission today was to railroad bridges around Orvieto, and generally good results were obtained.

May 3, 1944 Wednesday

The league baseball season – not to be confused with softball, cry the partisans of American sport – opened this evening with a close game between the 486<sup>th</sup> and 488<sup>th</sup> squadrons. The latter put together five runs to top the 486th's three markers...A new type of telegraphic message from soldiers overseas is now available at the post office at reasonable rates. It is especially liked because the sender can write his own message in his own words, rather than relying on the neutral, stereotyped texts. New crews are continually arriving at the 340<sup>th</sup>, and within five or six days of their arrival often have three or four missions to their credit. This campaign in Italy against enemy communications lines is as mechanical and unvarying as a machine operation in a factory. We hit a bridge near Todi today and damaged it considerably, but the chances are by tomorrow evening German engineers will have repaired it. This

same target will fall to the 321<sup>st</sup> or the 310<sup>th</sup> groups the following day, while we will batter at their targets of two days ago.

[No entry for May 4, 1944]

May 5, 1944 Friday

A melodramatic movie entitled “Seventh Victim” was on the bill tonight at the group theater. General consensus of opinion: “Screwy!” Apparently the picture made very little sense, concentrating all its energies on spine-chilling the audience...There are two boys in one of the squadrons who are the envy of their friends for having been able to enjoy an eight weeks' air tour around the Mediterranean and Middle East theaters with a high ranking British airman, Air Commodore Sinclair, former commander of TBF. The man, S/Sgt. Ted Handzel of Chicago and Sgt. Herman Moltzen of Fairmont, Minn., of the 487<sup>th</sup>, crewed their B-25 while Sinclair flew it on military business trips to North Africa, Egypt, Palestine and Persia. As a parting gift he bought the boys handsome cigarette cases in Cairo and had them engraved with the names of the places on their itinerary...The group enjoyed a stand-down all day today. Yesterday we did a pretty fair job on the Castiglion-Fiorentino rail bridge.



May 6, 1944 Saturday



*Maj. Albert  
Brussell*

There was no mission again today, but the combat lull didn't keep some of our personnel from getting killed. Two officers and an enlisted man of the 488<sup>th</sup> squadron were killed when their low-flying B-25 piled into the hills near Cervione, just northwest of the field. The dead are Lts. Kelly [James F. Kelly] and Gregory [George Gregory], and a crew chief, T/Sgt. Hanlon [Lee D. Hanlon]. Major Brussel, group surgeon, and Lt. Col. Bailey, deputy C.O., heard the crash as they sat at evening mess at headquarters. “Bomb explosion,” someone remarked, and they paid no more heed. Then word came in on the crash and Colonel Bailey sped out in a jeep to the hillside, over which now hung a plume of black smoke...Public relations pictures of the 340<sup>th</sup> personnel by States go on apace, with S/Sgt. Tom Smith of Abbeyville, S.C., snapping an average of two or three a States a day.

[No entries for May 6, May 7 or May 8, 1944]

May 9, 1944 Tuesday



*Cervione, Corsica*

*Photo: Quentin Kaiser Collection <http://www.warwingsart.com/12thAirForce/corsicanscenes.html>*

There were two more days of stand-down for the 340<sup>th</sup> yesterday and today, nor did we operate on Sunday, May 7. The combat crews and their supporting personnel would appreciate these “off days” more if they didn't have to wait until 1630 hours for Wing's phone call to put up the shutters for the day. The way it is now – and always has been – everybody has to stand on one leg, then the other, all day, and there are such friendly, comfortable wine shops in Cervione and Bastia. Though towns are out of bounds in Corsica, one is permitted to visit them in pursuing official business. A hell of a lot of official business has developed in the past few days....Several more crews are leaving for the states on a permanent change of station. They fly home in B-25s which are no longer of value as combat planes. Today Captain Homer Willhite of Chicago took off for the native land. He will be remembered by many men in this group as the man who turned down a medal because he thought they were giving them away for next to nothing these days, and to the wrong people in many instances. Honest man....Lt. Colonel Adolph E. Tokaz, our former commander, who has been in 57<sup>th</sup> Wing Operations for the past few months, is also bound for the States in permanent change of station.

May 10, 1944 Wednesday

The mission today against Terni viaduct was a complete bust. The bad weather in Italy seems to have cleared up, so we can't blame the weatherman...Two good movies played last night and tonight at the outdoor theater, "Madame Curie," which was well constructed and intelligently played by Walter Pidgeon and Greer Garson; and "Princess O'Rourke," featuring the G.I.'s ideal of the sweet and lovely lass he'd love to go home to – trim winning Olivia DeHaviland...The Russians are still pushing ahead fiercely, while our troops in Italy are fighting for inches. The big push there is soon to open, they say, after it gets rolling the long-hoped for Second Front will probably come off.



May 11, 1944 Thursday

The C.O., Colonel Chapman huddled the combat crews and staff officers together in the late afternoon and passed on the word that the big offensive in Italy starts tomorrow. We shall probably hit the Cassino area from hell to breakfast. Today we ran a neat one against the Porto Ferraio harbor on the Isle of Elba, messing up things considerably in the target area...Rifle inspections in headquarters and the squadrons are amply demonstrating to us all that the 340<sup>th</sup> is not an infantry outfit...Almost half of the planes on the field, now, - and we have about 100 - are unpainted silver craft, quite beautiful as one looks at them in the brilliant Corsican Sunlight against the blue of the Tyrrhenian sea. One recalls that immediately after Pearl Harbor was attacked, army painters began throwing O.D., desert pink, or other camouflage colors on the planes. Such camouflage is most effective on the ground where the color blends with the topography, though it would seem that silver-colored planes flying at higher altitudes would slightly confuse ack-ack gunners.

May 12, 1944 Friday

The big push in Italy started today, but it was somewhat an anti-climax for us. In the morning we had 60 planes out over Itri near Cassino, but cloud cover prevented bombing. Later in the day we trained on the same targets, a Jerry command post and a road junction. The results were not so good on the former, but good results were obtained on the road block. One ship of the 488<sup>th</sup> squadron went down like a rock in the heavy flak. Missing in action are pilots Gardner [Robert E. Gardner] and Powers [David R. Powers]; bombardier Rogers [Roy E. Rogers], and gunners Bradley [Samuel G. Bradley], Schmidt [Louis H. Schmidt, Jr.] and DeLucca [James C. DeLucca]. Almost all were very new men, and for the last named man it was his first combat ride...A few ground personnel have been ordered home for reasons of health, pressing personal needs or other reasons. The rotation system affecting ground personnel is open to criticism, it would seem. With one-half of one per cent of ground personnel supposed to be returned to the States monthly, healthy, efficient and generally reliable men are invariably passed up in favor of near-Section Eight cases [mentally ill], men in failing health, and men whose importance and value to the organization is nil, for one reason or another. One wonders why these men can't be sent home under other quotas.



May 13, 1944 Saturday



*JU-88 Bombers of Lehrgeschwaders 1 attack Alesan Airbase*

We were brutally hit here at Alesan by the German Air Force last night. A force of FW 190's, ME 109's, JU 88's, and possibly DO 217's and He 111's – perhaps 25 or 30 in number, attacked the airfield proper, the 489<sup>th</sup> squadron area, the operations S-2 building and the nearby gasoline dump. [The author of this diary entry, writing in the immediate aftermath of the disaster is grossly misinformed on many facts regarding the attacking forces. See the Addendum at the end of this month's diary for more details.] The fighter bombers strafed the ack-ack positions during the attack trying to silence them.



*Joachim Helbig Planned and Led the Attack on Alesan Airfield*

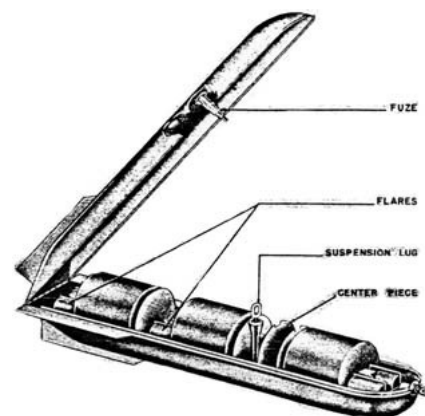
In the light of a big silver moon, at about 0335 hours, a German pathfinder, thought to be a captured Allied Beaufighter, led the attackers in with a flare placed effectively near the center of the field. Then the slaughter began. Many of the engineering, ordnance, and armament personnel, almost all of whom lived in tents on the field, were slow getting out of bed or figured as they had in our past fourteen months of combat that no bombs would be dropped near the 340<sup>th</sup>. 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, through some of the early runs were at about 3000 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 sixteen or seventeen tonight, and will run higher. Almost seventy-five others were hospitalized, and scores more treated by first aid men. Heaviest hit was the 489<sup>th</sup> 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 injured, including a pilot, Lt. Connolly [John G. Connally], who had yet to fly his first mission, having arrived only a few days

before...Blood donations were made today at the 35<sup>th</sup> Station Hospital, where the wounded were received. Slit trenches were dug today by everyone who didn't have one last night. Many other men feverishly improved their old ones...Poretta (British Spitfire) airfield north of us was hit a few hours

before ours, but like geese we watched the distant ack-ack from the movie area, dreaming not at all that the Luftwaffe was destroying about 25 Spits and killing four or five men, and even less that it would be at our throats at 0335. We went to bed, most of us, still believing that air raids were something that happened to others....Late in the afternoon twelve planes were scraped seemingly out of nowhere to attack the Itri tunnel, but the boys missed.

May 14, 1944 Sunday

The 340<sup>th</sup> is burying its dead today, replacing its equipment, rebuilding. Stories of dramatic experiences last night are being told and retold, as they will for months to come. Tech Sergeant Willoughby in the 486<sup>th</sup> was trapped in his tent on the line when the raiders opened up. He had crawled to the flap door of his tent on the line, as frag bombs perforated the area. Then, because the few feet to the slit trench were a few feet too far to negotiate, he hugged the ground and looking out at the flak-filled skies and the general fire and destruction gave a play-by-play description to his mates, too terrified to climb out of bed. Though they had holes in the tent from shrapnel, none was injured. When frags hit the S-2 – S-3 building and set it afire the operations C.Q., T/Sgt. Earl Stevens of Meriden, Conn., and T/Sgt. Ralph Wyland of Spencer, Ia., the S-2 C.Q., took refuge in the dug-in weather tent nearby with the armed area guard, Sgt. James Reynolds of Christoval, Tex. But their luck was bad: a frag made a direct hit on the tent, seriously injuring Stevens and cutting Wyland in the hand and leg. Reynolds died in the hospital....From reports of flashing lights in the hills west of the airfield and other suspicious circumstances it becomes apparent enemy agents helped along the cleverly planned operation...Poor results on the Chiani rail bridge today.



*German AB-70 Cannister Bomb*

May 15, 1944 Monday

The death toll of the raid has now risen to 20 and a couple of other boys are still in a bad way. The enemy suffered some losses too. The heavy ack-ack batteries claim two raiders, one which dove into the sea, they say, and it is said the Beaufighters patrolling the island nailed another pair [This is incorrect. The German raiders did not lose a single aircraft on either of the two raids, Poretta and Alesan.]...The 845<sup>th</sup> 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 the S-2 – S-3 building, and a new one was put under construction the next morning....The mission today was to Ficulle railroad bridge, but owing to cloud cover the ships bombed Piombino harbor, with good results.

May 16, 1944 Tuesday

At 1000 hours today the men of Company "B", 845<sup>th</sup> Engineers completed our prefabricated S-2 – S-3 building. Identical to the one destroyed in the air raid, it is built veritably on the ashes of its prototype

next to the old cork tree under which the first was built. In the way of office furniture the engineers also built us three sturdy tables. From headquarters we borrowed a typewriter for the joint use of S-2 and S-3. Target maps for our daily missions have been rushed down from Wing. Office supplies have been produced from nowhere...A few minutes after we moved from our temporary tent office to the new structure, S/Sgt. Sylvester Kepp of Elmhurst, Ill., and his assistant brought in another borrowed typewriter and proceeded to tie up all phones getting and consolidating and forwarding statistical information...The mission today to Piombino harbor was again very good...Major Robert Bachrach, former member of this organization who won the DFC with us in Tunisia for bringing home a smashed-up B-25 with a dead pilot, was in today with the news he is going home on a 30-day leave. After serving with the 340<sup>th</sup> group as tactical inspector for several months he transferred to the Air Service Command, with headquarters in Naples...Good news continues to emanate from the Fifth Army front. American tanks advancing. Germans falling back to Pico and the Adolf Hitler line. The Gustav line seems to be pretty perforated...Headquarters men have a dance scheduled in Cervione tonight with local Corsican girls on the menu.

May 17, 1944 Wednesday

The sinister and suspicious continues to hang over Alesan and the 340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment group. Two non-coms from the engineering section of one of the squadrons reported to Major Keller, group operations officer, this afternoon that mysterious fires had been breaking out recently at dusk, and on one occasion at 2300 hours, at the edge of the field near the hardstands. No cause for the fires could be determined immediately...S-2 received in the morning a warning concerning the appearance of a self-identified staff sergeant photographer in the U.S. Army near a rest camp on the island. This man wore khaki shorts, a shirt with staff stripes, and spoke fluent Spanish, Italian and French. He professed to be born in Quebec, but his accent, said the informant, was Corsican flavored....The mysterious lights that appeared several times at night before the raid of May 13 and during the night of the raid are believed to be under investigation by the Counter Intelligence Corps. Corsica may be small but it has its share of saboteurs and spies. Our dance in the Cervione city hall last night was a pleasant success, despite our general poverty in the French language and the girl shortage. Conversation may have been scant and feeble, but there was plenty of energetic milling about on the small "dance floor," and cutting in after a soldier had taken only three or four steps was the order of the night. "Not enough gals to go around," was the chief lament. Our Red Cross girls helped arrange the affair...The group today got direct hits on a rail bridge at Poggibonsi, but in a later mission against a Ripi road junction it did not do very well.

May 18, 1944 Thursday

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. John Galvin of New York City, a 488<sup>th</sup> bombardier who is awaiting orders to return to the States after completing 50-odd missions – in which he didn't get a scratch – went to the hospital today after suffering face bruises when a whirling propeller picked a parachute off the ground and flung it at him. Missing were two of his teeth...A telegram came in yesterday from General Knapp saying that five assistant operations officers should be selected immediately to be sent to the States for a five-week flexible gunnery course, after which they will return to the 340<sup>th</sup>. Captain Fred W. Dyer of Denver, assistant group ops officer, was quick to shout down suggestions that he be one of the number. "When I go home," he said, "I want to stay home, at least for a while." Captain Richard C. Nash of Harriman, Tenn., group bombing officer, will be one to go under the plan...M/Sgts. Harry Dullinger of Washington, D.C., and George Johnston of Anniston, Ala., both of the matériel section, won the envy



and admiration of headquarters section the day before yesterday by catching a string of trout in one of the mountain streams. Johnston said the fish made wonderful eating. The fishing tackle was supplied by the Red Cross, and seems to be one of that organization's standard recreational items for the troops overseas.

May 19, 1944 Friday



The movie last night was "Whistling in Brooklyn," featuring the comic Red Skelton and pretty Ann Rutherford. One sequence of this zany picture dealt with an hilarious baseball game in Ebbets field, Brooklyn, and was hailed with glee by the audience of four or five hundred soldiers. The baseball interlude was very timely, considering the fact that almost half of our group personnel now play almost two or three games per week...PX supplies came in today, headquarters having for its share three candy bars and eight packs of cigarettes per man, plus toilet articles and stationery. There was one cheap fountain pen, which was immediately snapped up by the first man in line. The two khaki face-towels in the consignment were sold to the EM club for bar rags...The Allied ground offensive south of Rome seems to be going along beautifully. Despite strong German resistance our troops have completely destroyed the Gustav line and penetrated the Hitler line defenses for five miles in one place. 340<sup>th</sup> continues to bomb communications. Two 24-plane missions were out simultaneously today, one plastering the marshaling yards at Pontasieve and the west end of a bridge there; the other possibly getting a road bridge in the Arezzo sector.

May 20, 1944 Saturday

Colonel Chapman, the Group commander, returned last night by B-25 from Algiers where he had gone on undisclosed business...Today 19 ground personnel replacements reported in, the first substantial batch of replacements we have had overseas. All but one man, a sergeant clerk who was assigned to Group S-2, are line personnel...The group now has 110 aircraft assigned, more than ever before, and only four of the planes are not equipped for combat...Since May 1 we have sent close to 75 combat crewmen home to the States for rest and rehabilitation. Nineteen ground personnel have been rotated under the regular rotation program for ground personnel, and 13 cases are pending. Several flying men, notably prospective flight leaders and bombing leaders, have been sent home on 30-day furlough, and a couple of staff officers as well.

May 21, 1944 Sunday

Majors Bennett, Johnson, and Summers returned today after being "marooned" on Capri, where they went May 6 for a seven-day rest. The same morning Alesan was attacked by the Luftwaffe, German planes mined Naples harbor and the channel between Sorrento and Capri, making Naples Bay traffic impossible until the minesweepers could clean house. The officers managed to return to Naples May 18...Colonel Thomas of the Twelfth Air Service Command reported that the 340<sup>th</sup> has been given

priority over all air force units in Corsica for food and supplies. Mused Major DeWitt F. Fields of Brilliant, Ala., group adjutant, "Are they doing it to bolster our morale after the beatings we took from Mt. Vesuvius and the Luftwaffe? Or, are they fattening us up for a move to another base, perhaps another theater?" Since the raid the number of 40 MM ack-ack guns has been doubled and 40 ack-ack machine guns have been put in....The twenty-first death in our group as a result of the raid was apparently the last fatality....Our group's T/O [Table of Organization] has been changed to allow 24 air crews per squadron and 20 airplanes, but the authorized number of ground crews remains at 16. What the hell? Possibly orderly room clerks will crew the other four planes...Ninety mile winds were reported over our operational area in Italy yesterday, canceling all operations but a supper-time low level attack by six planes on three bridges in the Sinalunga area caused some damage, by bombing and strafing.

May 22, 1944 Monday

The headquarters enlisted men's club is paying off very well, in addition to being the answer to a lonely Corsican G.I.'s prayer. Every night it has been well patronized up to the eleven o'clock closing of the bar and after. Many francs and some occupation lira passed into the till to the tune of \$57.00 on opening night. Last night's figure was \$46.00 and M/Sgt. Paul J. McElroy of Philadelphia, group sergeant major and president of the club, says \$22.00 is the average night's take. The latest wrinkle in the club is a few beach chairs and straight chairs bought in Bastia...The missions today were aimed at creating road blocks at Cave and Ferentino. The first achieved good results, but owing to cloud cover a poor run was made on the second target...A Captain Fred P. Camp, bombardier who had been serving for some months as an administrative officer in Twelfth Air Force headquarters at Foggia, has reported to the group and been assigned to the 487<sup>th</sup>.

[No entry for May 23, 1944]

May 24, 1944 Wednesday

Passes are now being given in headquarters and the squadrons again. S/Sgt. Frank Tureck of Yonkers, N.Y., group supply clerk, returned last night from a three-day pass in Castelmare, Italy, and the charms of his Ida...Headquarters mess, largely because of the officers' predilection for being served by waiters, and the enlisted men's abhorrence of KP, is a good place to eat. These preferences and prejudices cost money, however; contributions for wages of Italian kitchen help being levied on all. Digging down for their francs everybody thought it would be a good idea to throw in a few more leaves and buy supplementary foodstuffs not handled by the Quartermaster. Hence once or twice in a week a B-25 hops to Catania, where in the city market Sgt. Ben "Heavy" Furstein of Brooklyn, chief cook, buys greens and fruits...Officers' club opened last night and successfully too despite the failure of the mess sergeant to provide ice cream as promised. The freezer was available, a home-made contraption put together by M/Sgt. Clay Hunn when the group was stationed at Catania, but the Quartermaster was unable to give the mess sergeant any ice. The situation at the Bastia ice house is temporarily critical...No mission went out yesterday, but three took off today to attack Poggibonsi rail bridge, Poggibonsi viaduct, and the Orvieto town road bridge. Nothing good was done with the first two assignments, chiefly because of cloud cover, but the 489<sup>th</sup> squadron gave a part of the Montepescali ammunition dump an effective high explosive treatment. Clouds hung over the Orvieto road bridge, so the 487<sup>th</sup> picked the rail bridge north of it and claim to have pranged it good, as the English say.

May 25, 1944 Thursday

A plane of the 489<sup>th</sup> squadron was lost today on a mission against Ficulle railroad bridge. Four and possibly five chutes were seen to issue from the falling plane. The crew included 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Richard L. Ellen of Flemington, N.J., pilot; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Garth B. King of Tyler, Tex., co-pilot; S/Sgt. Pete Vargo, Brownsville, Penna., bombardier; T/Sgt. Henry E. Yocca of Windber, Penna., radio operator; S/Sgt. Cecil W. Wright of Flint, Mich., turret gunner, and Sgt. Russell L. Scott of Richmond, Va., tail gunner. The mission against Ficulle was poor; the one against a road bridge at Orvieto was quite good. Steak and potatoes (fresh) today at noon in the headquarters mess brightened our faces for a while, but they fell again in the evening when M/Sgt. Vandiford had the cook break out the canned meat and vegetable stew. After the meal had been served Van contemplated the container of C-ration meat and moaned, "I just cook it up and throw it out. They walk right by it."...The movie tonight is "Standing Room Only," a comedy with Fred McMurray and Paulette Goddard, which was warmly applauded last night.



May 26, 1944 Friday



*S/Sgt. Howard A. Pinneo, Crew Chief of the McKinley Junior High*  
*Photo: 57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing Archive*

Special service is making many book readers nowadays, or would it be more correct to say that old readers are getting a chance to catch up on their literature? Each squadron and the group special service offices have a good collection of the better type popular magazines as well as many novels and books of humor, short stories, etc., in cheap bindings. Several of the magazines are special issues printed for the Armed Forces overseas and are not to be sold. Special services work in headquarters keeps 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Wilfred Gjertson and Corporal Nelson Becker quite busy. They have laid out a softball diamond with backstop in the corner of the small "plateau" whereon are pitched the tents of the officers and enlisted men of headquarters. They have also laid out volleyball and badminton courts and a horseshoe pitch. Lt. Gjertson is voluntarily coaching the headquarters softball team and to date has given several profitable suggestions regarding batting and fielding...2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. William A. McLaughlin of Sioux Falls, S.D., pilot, and S/Sgt. Howard A. Pinneo of York, Nebr., crew chief, went to Naples today to make a recorded radio broadcast to publicize "McKinley Junior High," a B-25 bomber in the group financed by war bond purchases of student of that high school in Muncie, Ind.

Heavy day operationally today. Good work on the Piteccio viaduct, a road block at Tivoli, and the Cortona rail bridge. The Orvieto rail bridge was missed...A leaflet dropping mission also was flown.

[No entry for May 27, 1944]

May 28, 1944 Sunday

The weather again today was splendid, sunny skies and cool breezes making things most pleasant. We're beginning to forget there is such a thing as rain. Two of the cyphers section clerks have a wager on regarding the precipitation this summer. One of the boys claims it won't rain all summer and has backed the meteorological conviction with a hundred francs...Four public relations men from the group went to the first public relations conference of the 57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing. Traveling to Ghisonaccia by Jeep, our representatives were T/Sgt. Frank Hickey of Chicago, group public relations clerk; Sgt. Markus Fuicks of the 487<sup>th</sup>; S/Sgt. Fred S. Howard of Evanston, Ill., 488<sup>th</sup> squadron, and 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Jack A. Casper of Middletown, O., 489<sup>th</sup>. The men learned something about public relations methods and objectives, and were informed that 20,000 copies of thousands of original news stories were released to papers, magazines and radio stations in the States from the Mediterranean Allied Air Force public relations office in the month of May. If the various air units in the field needle their reporters, production is expected to jump to thirty and forty thousand in the next two months...Another bridge mission today, to Pisa Albavola, with fair results...Four missions yesterday of the same type, to Castiglioni area, Necropoli and Pietrasanta. General results unspectacular.

May 29, 1944 Monday

Headquarters softball team lost a heartbreaker tonight to the 845<sup>th</sup> Aviation Engineers, the outfit who helped us back on our feet after the May 13 raid. Colonel McCrone's ball players made two runs in the 14<sup>th</sup> inning of a scheduled seven inning game and triumphed 5 to 3. Our disappointed worthies trooped into the enlisted men's club nearby, where the bartender of the evening, M/Sgt. Joe N. Kline, Coeur D'Alene, Ida., bombardier, plied them with gin, vino, and brandy, but at the regular rates...Equipment lost in the raid has been replaced rapidly...A C-3 (Speed Graphic) camera was issued to headquarters today to the joy of S/Sgt. Tom Smith, photographer laureate to the group. He takes many of the public relations and engineering pictures...Ballot application cards for voting in the primary and general elections in the States this year have been received in headquarters and many men are calling for them...The north and south viaducts at Bucine were hard hit by the 340<sup>th</sup> today.

[No entry for May 30, 1944]

May 31, 1944 Wednesday

Training films have been obtained for the group and the special service movie operator, Corporal Nelson Becker, projects them in the group briefing room, a prefabricated building which has been thrown up beside the S-2 – S-3 building. Yesterday and today he ran off a first aid film before an audience of combat crewmen, and another dramatizing the potentialities of air power. The latter film

was built around the Pantellaria island campaign, and our boys were delighted to spot a 487<sup>th</sup> squadron ship flying in one of the B-25 formations, obviously the 340<sup>th</sup> group's...A public address system has been set up in the headquarters and squadron areas, and also the operations area. It is proving to be an excellent means of delivering messages in a hurry, and especially valuable in the event of air or gas alarms. Most of the day the loudspeakers are pouring out both classical and swing recordings...Two pretty good missions against troops east of Lake Albano and a road block at Grottaferrata. Yesterday we had a poor road-blocking mission against Guarcino, but bridges at Lagara and at a point above Castigliocolle were well hit.



*Devastation Following the German Attack*  
*Photo: Hymie Setzer Collection*



# Addendum

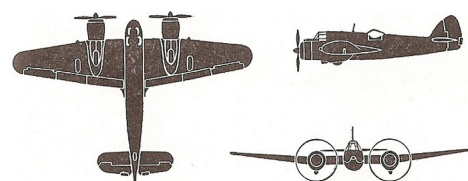
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## Special Report

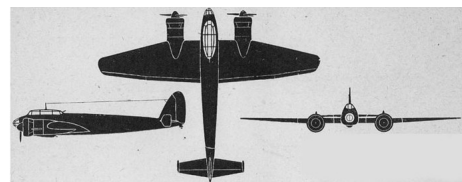
June 28, 1944

### Bombing of Alesan Airfield 13 May 1944

1. The base of the 340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (M) AAF, Alesan airfield, Corsica, was attacked in the early morning hours of 13 May 1944 by the German air force. Extensive damage to planes and other equipment and many personnel casualties resulted. The operation gave every indication of being thoroughly planned and carried out accordingly. The gun control room of the anti-aircraft units defending the airfield reported the first enemy plane was plotted at 0335 hours. Aircraft spotters identified the craft as a Beaufighter (presumably captured by the enemy for Pathfinder use), though this identification has never been proved and the identification never announced as verified.



*British Beaufighter*



*German JU-88:*

*Note the similarity in design*

2. Some few minutes after this craft was plotted it dropped a flare on the airfield and almost immediately other enemy planes attacked, dropping more flares, which thoroughly illuminated the area, and loosing demolition bombs and anti-personnel bombs. As the attack progressed the enemy planes were identified as JU-88's, FW-190's and possibly ME-109's, DO-217's and HE-111's. Some of the fighters strafed ack-ack positions on the beach bordering the airfield and on the ridges north and west of the field. The attacking force was estimated at from 20 to 30 planes.
3. The specific targets attacked were the airfield proper, the gasoline dump and the ground radio station trailer due west of the center of the field, just west of the highway, the operations-intelligence building close by, and the 489<sup>th</sup> squadron area about three-quarters of a mile north

of the field. A pattern of fragmentation bombs intended for the headquarters tent area, a mile and three-quarters north of the field, fell a few hundred yards off shore in the sea.

4. The attack lasted about an hour and fifteen minutes, counting from the time the first enemy aircraft was plotted until the last one departed. Attacking the airfield the planes seemed to come over first at about 3000 feet, but when the field was well lighted by flares and burning aircraft and the anti-aircraft barrage found to be ineffective, they dove down as low as 75 feet on strafing runs. Two courses were flown in the attack, though some of the planes seemed to come in from different directions after circling off the target. These courses were approximately northwest-southeast and southeast-northwest.
5. Most of the 340<sup>th</sup> engineering personnel, armament men, and ordnance men had their tents on the airfield proper, and although many had slit-trenches dug casualties were high. Some men did not wake up in time; others who did, regarded the air alert as a false alarm until the bombs began dropping. Some took shelter in slit trenches, ditches, or under vehicles. Others were too terrified to run a few feet to shelter once the anti-personnel bombs began to explode near them. Some of the men were even injured in their slit trenches as a result of the thick carpeting of the area with these bombs. Personnel detailed to the airfield crash truck started to put out a fire before the last attacking planes had left and most of these men were injured. In the 489<sup>th</sup> area north of the airfield extensive casualties were caused. There were fewer slit trenches per tent here; consequently a large number of men who might otherwise have protected themselves were killed or injured. It was reported that a pilot who had jumped into a slit trench with two others was killed by a piece of shrapnel. The other two men were also hit. None apparently had been completely below the level of the trench. Some frag bombs fell into trenches and killed or wounded other personnel.



*Tent Perforated by Fragmentation Bombs*

*Photo: 57th Bomb Wing Archive*

6. Medical men and surgeons from the squadrons rushed to the field as soon as the raid was over and gave first aid and superintended the removal of more seriously wounded casualties to the 35<sup>th</sup> Station Hospital about four miles northwest of the airfield. The total number of casualties was 21 men killed, about 69 or 70 wounded seriously enough to be hospitalized, and scores more treated for superficial wounds. Six planes were completely destroyed and at the date of this report nine of the more seriously damaged planes had been turned in for salvage. Two more planes may be salvaged. Many more planes were knocked out of commission, some of them for several weeks. Of the 90-odd planes on the field about 65 were damaged. Other damage included the destruction of the operations-intelligence building and all equipment in it (by fire). Lost also were all operations and intelligence records, the historical files of the organization, typewriters and other office equipment, and maps and intelligence data. Some half dozen vehicles of various types on the field and in the squadron area were so badly damaged they had to be salvaged. The tents on the field and in the 489<sup>th</sup> squadron area were

badly perforated. The ground radio station trailer and antenna were slightly damaged. Some gasoline in the gas dump was set afire.

7. The attack was preceded by a raid on Poretta about fifteen miles north of Alesan field at 1000 hours during which it is said 25 Spitfires were knocked out and about four men killed. Other casualties in the raid on the 340<sup>th</sup> group included two dead and a few wounded in the 324<sup>th</sup> Service Squadron and one dead in the anti-aircraft organization.
8. From reports of flashing lights in the hills south of the village of Cervione and west of the airfield, both on the night of the attack and in the weeks previous it would appear that enemy agents aided or attempted to aid the attackers.
9. Anti-aircraft artillery personnel defending the field are reported to have claimed shooting down two of the aircraft in the attack. A similar report had it that Allied Beaufighters destroyed two others.

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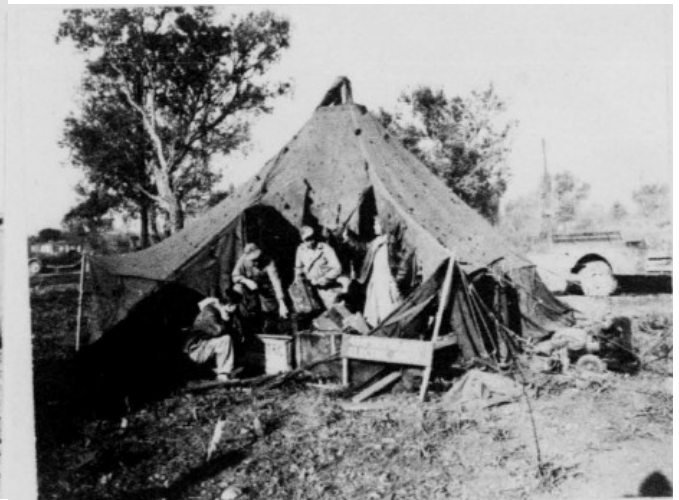
### **German Account of the Missions to Borgo- Poretto and Alistro (Alesan)**

German first-person accounts of the raids on Borgo-Poretta and Alesan differ considerably from the official USAAF accounts.

For a description of the raid from the viewpoint of the members of Lehrgeschwaders 1, see:

<http://home.comcast.net/~dhsetzer/taghon/Taghon.pdf>

## Photo Gallery



*Electrical Shop, 488th Squadron perforated by shrapnel*



*Soldier Inspects Destroyed B-25*



*Unexploded German Canister Containing Fragmentation Bombs*



*B-25 Engine Thrown 150 Yards to Side of Field by Explosion*



*Wing Torn from Plane by Fragmentation Bomb*



*Rubble Still Smoking on Airfield at Sunrise after the Raid*





*Parts of Exploded B-25's Landed in Treetops*



The 845<sup>th</sup> Aviation Engineers Repair the Runway



All photo are from the 57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing Archive