War Diary of the 340th Bombardment Group
June 1944

Transcribed from US Army microfilm and illustrations added by
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The 340th Bombardment Group on Corsica
Photo Credit: 57th Bomb Wing Archives
June 1, 1944

Captain Anthony J. King, assistant S-2 officer, it is now revealed, was arrested in Naples about two weeks ago for not wearing his dog tags. The arresting M.P. was also scandalized at finding the culprit out of proper uniform and needing a shave. When the report of arrest finally filtered through channels yesterday, the group adjutant, Major Fields, forwarded the papers to Major Kisselman, S-2 officer, with the tongue-in-cheek remark, “Do whatever you think necessary.” Put on the pan by Major Kisselman and the intelligence clerks, the Captain wailed: “It's time for us to pull out and go to France. They've got M.P.'s all over Naples and speed cops all over Corsica...” A report came in to S-2 that four Germans in American uniform are either known or thought to be hiding in the hills behind Alesan. They are equipped with binoculars and signal lights, according to the report. Matter is being referred to C.I.C. [Counter Intelligence Corps] and French authorities...1st Lt. Clarence V. H[illegible], Quincy, Mass., assistant S-2 and the photo interpreter in the 488th squadron, is taking Captain Eggers' place as Group Photo Interpreter while the latter is in Cairo. Pressure from groups consisting of pilots and bombardiers from the squadrons, are trying to get him to pin down direct hits or otherwise report in detail the margin of accuracy or inaccuracy, but he cannily straddles the fence in cautious, marvelously neutral reports...Road bridges at Orte and Narni were objectives of the 340th today, as well as a viaduct at Fossato. The first two targets were well hit, and the Fossato installation was probably damaged too, according to the photo interpreter.

[No entry for June 2, 1944]

June 3, 1944

The Allied armies are pushing forward doggedly on Rome and appear to be on the point of entering it. Although the Germans are resisting bitterly at Velletri and Valmontone their strength here is fast waning, and when they withdraw from these positions they can reform and stiffen north of Rome only, unless they outrage world opinion by attempting a futile defense of the city from within its own confines....The 488th and 489th squadrons have their own rest camp, a sequestered spot on Cap Corse in the small town of Pino overlooking the sea. The establishment is a fairly modern house of some twenty rooms that has among other things to recommend it two flushable toilets and recognizable beds with mattresses, although a few cots had to be brought in to accommodate the fifteen enlisted men from the squadrons who go up there for four and five day rests. A Corsican chef, a waiter, and a 50-year old houseboy do most of the work. G.I. rations brought up from Alesan by the two squadrons are on the menu. “It's a good place to go if you're suffering from nervous breakdown,” said one man, “but dull as hell otherwise.” Recreation facilities include swimming, hill climbing and fishing. There has never been an authenticated report of a 340th man catching a fish, however. While some chaps laze around in the sun or read or catch up on their sack time, others devote their energies to trying to seduce the local girls who, it would seem, are amply protected by Corsican custom and their own infallible intuition....The 486th squadron lost a crew today on an ineffective mission against the Lagaro railroad bridge. The crew of six, all of whom were reported to have parachuted, included 1st Lt. Coleman Sellers, pilot; 2nd Lt. Alfred E. Coons, co-pilot; 2nd Lt. Bradford A. Tupper, bombardier; T/Sgt. Ralph H. Koebeke, radio operator; S/Sgt. John F. McDonough, turret gunner, and S/Sgt. Gerald J. Carey, tail
gunner. Two other missions were flown today, against the Vernio North rail bridge and the Civita Castellana road bridge, with very good results. Yesterday we had two pretty good missions against rail bridges near Foligno and a poor one against a road bridge at Civita Castellana. A nickeling mission of four ships decorated certain areas on the Rome front with pamphlets.

June 4, 1944

Capt Eggers returned from Cairo last night where he had flown in a B-25 to spend a ten-day leave. Most happy to see him was S/Sgt. John Carraciolo, the S-2 clerk whose job it is to produce the bombfall plot for each mission. The sergeant had to work very late at night while Lt. Haynes of the 488th was substituting for Captain Eggers on photo interpretations, owing to the Lieutenant's unfamiliarity, or possibly lack of experience, with the work.....Colonel Charles D. Jones, our last C.O. before Colonel Chapman, who was shot down during an attack on the Littorio marshaling yards early in March, is a Prisoner of War it has been learned officially here at group headquarters. Everyone was delighted with the news, although for several weeks we were fairly sure he was alive in German hands. In one of her radio broadcasts the propagandist “Axis Sally” reported the capture of a 32-year old American colonel in Italy. We have learned that some of Sally's news can be trusted...Very good results were achieved by our crews today against rail bridges at Vernio and Gricigliano.

June 5, 1944

Two officers from the School of Applied Tactics, Eglin field, Florida, visited the group today and flew a mission with us. They were Colonel Lee Coates, formerly of the 19th Bomb Group, having served when it was campaigning in the Philippines and other southwest Pacific islands, and Lt. Colonel Richard Haus. They dropped a remark to our Colonel Chapman that the B-25s here are doing a better job than the mediums of the other theaters they have visited. Their job is to observe and evaluate tactics in the theaters and suggest modifications if necessary. They also modify the combat training curricula in the States....Rome has fallen! The announcement that Fifth Army troops are in the Eternal City came today but caused hardly a stir among flying personnel, who are getting the workout of their lives these last few days. “So Rome has fallen, eh? When's the next briefing?” No doubt our group very soon will send planes to Rome with passengers eager to see the sights and to shop....There are five missions today, totaling 90 sorties, against the road bridges in the Narni and Orte sectors. Except for one bridge all targets were effectively battered.
June 6, 1944

The SECOND FRONT opened today! This electrifying news we heard over the radio shortly after noon today, and it caused the intense excitement that only so crucial an event, long impending and impatiently awaited, is capable of producing. The early announcements stated that large numbers of parachute troops were landed in western France and that 4000 large navel craft landed thousands of American, Canadian and British troops in the area between Le Havre and Cherbourg. Losses were said to be much lighter than expected. A tremendous air cover of 7500 planes were shuttled back and forth from England to protect the invaders. 11,000 first line Allied planes are available to support the operation, the Allies announced. All day and well into the night personnel of the group clung to radios for bulletins. There was but one subject for conversation, “The boys on the beachhead.” Captain Crossman, the British ALO with the 340th, is absent from the base at a bad time, for whenever a major Allied operation is launched he gives a couple of talks in each squadron outlining the strategy and describing the latest advances or retreats. Presently, he is in Algiers on business....The 845th (Aviation) Engineers are building a rustic refreshment stand between the operations and briefing buildings. Over a framework of two-by-fours bark covered planks have been fitted, and from this woodsy bower, Red Cross girls will pass out coffee and donuts to the combat crews....Enlisted men were ordered to turn in their O.D. clothing, excepting blouse, to the Quartermaster tomorrow. Comments of course from everybody. Rumors started and guesses hazarded. We are to return to the States before winter time, will have our tacky O.D.’s replaced with fresh issue. We are to be packed off shortly to Burma where it is reliably reported that heavy clothing is unnecessary....The operations today consisted of road blocks, at Vetralla and near Montefiascone, and a try for a road bridge south of Orvieto. The blocks were fair, but the bridge mission was quite unsuccessful.

[No entry for June 7, 1944]

June 8, 1944

Everybody is going about asking everybody else how the Allied troops in Normandy are progressing. Tents furnished with radio sets are thronged when the news broadcasts go on the air, and one of the squadrons is “piping in” the news flashes and commentaries from a radio set to the group public address system. The first stage of the invasion appears to be a success, though the Germans are beating back stubbornly as the Allies push their way inland. The German radio through Lord Haw-Haw and other spokesmen claim the Allies have been confined to a very small beachhead less than a kilometer and a half in width and that almost
all of the large number of parachutists dropped on the Cherbourg peninsula have been killed or captured. This is at variance with Allied reports, considerable variance...The ALO returned from Algiers yesterday and today Colonel Chapman flew to Tunis...The 340th group flew its 400th mission today against one of the Bucine viaducts and hit it on the south end and the south approach. A mission to the north viaduct was abortive. Wednesday we flew two against an alternate target, the Cecina road bridge, and did quite well.

[No entry for June 9, 1944]

June 10, 1944

Gradually more of our personnel wounded in the raid of May 13 are returning from the hospital. Only the more seriously injured for the most part are still undergoing treatment...One man in the 489th lost a leg, but is reported to be reasonably cheerful...Many of the combat “old timers” are going home or have already done so. Major Schreiner, 487th operations boss, has left on a permanent change of station, as has Major Parrish, 489th commander. Major Cassada, the 488th C.O., however, is expected back after 30 days rest at home...The group guardhouse, a modest cluster of two tents in the headquarters area, is now encircled by barbed wire, and gives the impression of taking on airs at this late date. The wire was idea of 1st Lt. Richard Kittay of New York, who seems to glow with pleasure when another prisoner [is given] to his charge. He proudly announced the other day that he had a record number of prisoners awaiting trial. This seems to be in keeping with the general spirit of ambition and expansion seizing the group. Squadrons are trying to get as many medals and decorations for their men as possible, and seem to be heroicizing many a routine action in the process. Each unit in the 340th group is trying to raise its bombing efficiency above the other, and the 340th is doing its best to outdistance the other two B-25 groups. Public relations, as a result of Colonel Chapman's interest, is trying to turn out more pictures and stories on personnel than it ever did before. Small wonder the Provost marshal has his eye peeled for more and more lawbreakers...There were four road bridge missions, which misfired because of a rack malfunction. Today our crews got excellent results on the Fano and Rimini marshaling yards, and also on Bucine south viaduct.

[No entry for June 11, 1944]

June 12, 1944

Rain fell with a vengeance here at Alesan last night, pelting down suddenly and continuing for an hour, after skies had turned ominous about eight o'clock. Some of the unlucky drenched were fortunate enough to warm up with vino or rum. Violent as it was, however, it didn't delay our operations; promptly at 0904 this morning planes went out to bomb Bucine north and Arrezzo viaducts. Results on the latter were considerably better than on Bucine, though both targets were hit. Yesterday it was stand-down all day...The invasion of western Europe is going very well, despite the rush of German armor to the sector around Caen. The weight of material and men now ashore on the consolidated beaches must be tremendous. There is a feeling prevalent in some quarters that in a few days, after the enemy has committed himself, another powerful beachhead assault will be made, possibly far from the present one. Fifty-Seventh Wing was finally able to supply us with maps of the Normandy province and now all the squadron S-2's have them posted on their bulletin boards and bomb-lined...Last night some of the men of the Protestant faith got together in the 489th squadron for, according to the
announcement, “an old fashioned hymn sing.” At their 1600 hours mass in the chapel tent, the Catholics learned they would have a new chaplain, one from the 35th Station Hospital. He is to come down every Sunday afternoon at 1500 hours for confessions and mass.

June 13, 1944

A couple of days ago 1st Lt. Joseph Weil, bombardier on the plane co-piloted by Colonel Charles D. Jones, our C.O. Before Colonel Chapman, returned here from the limbo of Missing in Action. Shot down with Colonel Jones March 10th over Littorio marshaling yards (Rome), he is the only man who can give us any information as to what happened to the Colonel and the rest of the crew. Full details of Lt. Weil's experiences are not yet available, but it is known that Colonel Jones parachuted with the others and was taken prisoner of war (Headquarters was officially informed of the latter fact a few days ago). Lt. Weil landed near the target, handed his parachute to a startled Italian boy, shouted “Via Presto!” and made for cover. Soon he turned up in the city of Rome itself and received aid and shelter from sympathetic Italians, one of them a priest who gave him some money. According to Lt. Weil, Allied airman and many Allied ground troops, almost all evaders or escapees, are running around all over Rome staying out of reach of the enemy agents...A P-47 pilot who bailed out in the vicinity of Perugia about the time that the 487th Lts. Ashmore and Finney were shot down with their crew over Perugia, returned to Allied lines with the story that Lt. Finney and others of his crew were safe and hiding out in German territory...Captain King, assistant S-2 officer, is being hospitalized for bursitis. “You've got housemaid's knee, Tony!” his friends crow in delight.

June 14, 1944

Sgt. “Heavy” Furstein, the roly-poly headquarters cook from Brooklyn, was up at 0630 hours this morning to get breakfast started when he spied a large convoy on the horizon, about a hundred vessels he claims. Few other headquarters men were abroad at that hour, but if one is to credit “Heavy's” eyesight and veracity it would appear the Jerries north of us are in for another amphibious assault...If the Luftwaffe comes over Alesan again it's going to get a reception it will never forget. In addition to the many guns moved in recently, another radar station has been installed, on the beach in front of the headquarters. A battery of searchlights have also been sited there and other lights are south of the field...Night bombing operations seem to be imminent, as each squadron in turn is putting up ships for night flying. The emphasis is on approaches, takeoffs and landings, and the checking out of pilots on night procedure. Yesterday we had very good results operationally against road bridges near Perugia, but today a rail viaduct and a tunnel mouth at San Marcello were the targets and the bombing was somewhat poor.

[No entry for June 15, 1944]

June 16, 1944

Good progress continues to be made in France by Allied troops. We are now solidly entrenched and battering fiercely at the German opposition the crippled Normandy communications network has managed to feed up to the front. In Italy our headlong advance continues up around Civitavecchia and below Perugia, despite stiffening German resistance. Advances are also being made on the Adriatic
sector. American heavy bombers have begun a shuttle system to Russian bases, smashing at targets deep in Germany on their way from England. Captain Crossman, our British liaison officer, said he was willing to bet a major landing in southern France would come within the next six weeks. “It could be,” murmured listeners hopefully. He also said he “heard a nasty rumor that Monty (General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery) had been killed in an air crash in Normandy.” No confirmation of the rumor was made...A vessel appeared about five miles off the coast last night about 2200 hours and was engaged by searchlights and anti-aircraft fire when it failed to identify itself properly. Today we are wondering whether it was German, Allied or neutral and no one seems able to help us...The missions against the Pietrasanta road a rail bridges today were excellently done. “Nickels” were dropped on the Piombino, Leghorn and Siena areas.

[No entry for June 17, 1944]

June 18, 1944

Weather was good yesterday and today, but no missions were run off by the B-25 groups. The stand-downs were a welcome respite for our crews, for however “hot” their bombing they have been getting a rigorous workout day after day for the past month and a half...Yesterday we spent the day “sweating out” reports from the A.L.O. and the radio newscasters concerning the fighting on Elba, which, seemingly only a stone's throw northeast of our field, was stormed by French troops just after daylight yesterday morning. Little news was given out, our only report being that landings were made at three points, one of which was said to be beaten back at first with 30% casualties. To give close support for operations we stood by from 0530 to 2000 with planes bomb-loaded and crews alerted, but no call was made. Wing sent in a thoroughly enigmatic bomb line that meant nothing because no information was available as to what side friendly troops were on and what side the enemy. An excellent reason in itself for flying no missions.

June 19, 1944

Much has been heard lately of the new German secret weapon, the pilot-less plane or “flying bomb,” numbers of which have been launched since the Normandy invasion began from specially constructed sites in that area and particularly around Pas de Calais. Allied fighters are engaged during the day and night trying to shoot them down and are meeting with some success, according to BBC, which pointed out that difficulty first in discovering one small aircraft in time and second in destroying them with fighter cannon fire on anti-aircraft fire before they go into their final dive. [illegible] BBC is treating the matter with brevity and caution to allay alarm and that the bombs are productive of serious damage and civilian casualties is evident when one reads the secret Allied intelligence summary published weekly by Mediterranean Allied Air Force. Few of the bombs have been intercepted so far, the publication stated, and most of those landing in one metropolitan area of London wrought much harm. These bombs are reported to be of abut 2200 pounds in weight and stabilized by a wing and empennage, the former falling off when the bomb dives at the target. The
bombs are powered in flight by gases on the jet propulsion principle. Apparently the most effective way of neutralizing them is to destroy the launching bases...On the Normandy beachhead American troops have cut off Cherbourg from the rest of the peninsula by slicing across to the west coast. An estimated 30,000 Germans are in the city and environs, busy destroying the port installations we so greatly covet. They will have no opportunity of fighting their way out the south route and less chance of evacuating owing to our air and naval supremacy...The 340th group again flew no missions today.

[No entry for June 20, 1944]

June 21, 1944

The radio today blared with the news that the American fleet Wednesday has won an important battle with the Japanese fleet west of the Marianas islands. Admiral Nimitz announced the battle was primarily an aerial one, with 49 of our planes lost to “several times that many” for the Japs. Our forces claimed sinking three Jap carriers and one battleship, and damaging at least ten other vessels. Our announced casualties were 39 ships damaged....The BBC announced our troops had taken Perugia, which was not news to us, as we generally get reports of tactical activity from three to twenty-four hours ahead of BBC, through the A.L.O. and other intelligence channels. Rain is slowing our progress in Italy, but we are mounting an offensive for Leghorn shortly. Elba, of course, is now wholly ours, and troops on the Adriatic are pushing towards Ancona, their next big objective....Yesterday was another stand-down, making it four consecutive idle days for the 340th. Today our crews gave the Castagno rail bridge a fine pounding, but they missed the Sovana bridge. A third target, Pietrasanta rail bridge, was beautifully battered.

June 22, 1944

Operations were a heller today for the 57th Bomb Wing. The 310th Group lost two ships and crews over Leghorn harbor, another over the Vernio north rail bridge near Florence, and two planes crash-landed at their base and ours. A pilot in another plane was killed and still another man lost an arm below the elbow. The flak was particularly deadly over Florence, which the 340th

proceeded to fly over on the assumption it was an open city. We lost one ship to flak also, over Grigigliana rail bridge, a 487th plane piloted by 2nd Lt. Thomas V. Casey, and 2nd Lt Harry D. George. Other crewmen included 2nd Lt. Edward F. Dombrowski, bombardier; S/Sgt. Russel G. Ahlstrom, radio operator; Sgt. Paul M. Kaplan, turret gunner, and Sgt. George E. Obravatz, tail gunner....Three members of 2nd Lt. Richard L. Ellin's crew, which was shot down by flak May 25 near the Ficulle rail bridge, returned today with an absorbing story of their experiences. They are 2nd Lt. Garth B King, co-pilot; S/Sgt. Pete Vargo, bombardier, and T/Sgt. Henry E. Yocca, radio operator. They reported the pilot, Ellin, was killed in the crash, and the other two men in the crew taken prisoner. They themselves were seized by Italian fascists but when they were being transported in a car by two
fascist guards a Spitfire strafed the road and the guards took to cover. As the plane buzzed away the trio slugged their captors and escaped to the refuge of friendly Italians. They were closely followed by fascists and practically a pitched battle resulted before the three men were got to safety.

June 23, 1944

Plane 7N returned today from Rome with a load of 340th passengers who had had a delightful time for two days and a night in that superb city, so happily spared the physical ravages of war. Two of the enlisted men, including Corporal Louis Capawanna, Passaic, N.J., operations clerk, were present at one of the Pope's large audiences for Allied soldiers. The officers and men spoke enthusiastically of St. Peter's, the Colosseum, the Pantheon and other Roman monuments, and the handsome tree-shaded city with its beautiful and neatly dressed Italian women...There was stand-down today as far as combat operations were concerned...Corporal Bernard R. Burton, gunner in the 487th squadron, reported today at Alesan after successfully escaping the enemy. He was shot down with the crews of 1st Lt. Ashmore April 6 over Perugia. Burton stated Ashmore and two gunners were killed and that the co-pilot, Lt. Finney, and the radio operator bombardier, Lt. Simpson, are still uncaptured in the hills where they are evading pursuit and awaiting the chance to make their way through our lines. Burton stated he had been captured by a fascist, who started to turn him over to the Germans or the fascist police. By a ruse Burton was able to slug and kick the man into submission and make his escape. Many Allied airmen, he said, are hiding out in the hills waiting to make a break for the south and our lines. According to Burton, German patrols would go out after these men between 0400 hours and dawn hoping to catch them sleeping in wooded areas, caves, dugouts, etc. In likely hiding places they would hurl in a hand grenade and move on. The airmen, Burton said, would drink large quantities of [water] at night before going to sleep so that their kidneys would get them up before the patrols started out. Thus they would be awake and alert to any danger. Burton says many Italian sympathizers already have their Allied flags ready to fly when the troops push the enemy out of their sector.

June 24, 1944

Today was another day of stand-down, though we were ready to operate under Plan “A” or Plan “B” all day. Both plans call for important rail bridge attacks, with “A” the more exciting and probably the more dangerous. As a result of the idleness everybody in operations and intelligence knocked off early and retreated to the tent area to sleep or read, or to the beach where a very sizable crowd were dispersing themselves in both the fresh and the salt water. There were no nurses present as there have been on occasions in the recent past, so 95% of the men were nude. Some officers have been inviting nurses and Red Cross girls down to the beach, which has meant the men without trunks have to lie low. This annoys the swimmers no little bit, and many a disgusted remark is passed around when a girl shows up on the beach...Sgt. John Dunlap, a cypher clerk in headquarters, has gone home on the regular rotation scheme after serving two years overseas. He is the first man in headquarters to be returned to the States under this plan and was given priority because he had served in the desert in Egypt and Libya several months before the 340th arrived on the combat scene. When his orders came in Dunlap was enjoying a three-day pass at Malta. As he walked into his tent upon his return the boys met him with the good news, but Dunlap, who had begun to think his feet were rooted in the Old World and would soon sprout green twigs, couldn't believe he was homeward-bound at last.

[No entry for June 25, 1944]
June 26, 1944

The German general in charge of troops defending Cherbourg surrendered today to American forces pressing into the city, according to a news report. This gives our beachhead forces one of the finest deep water harbors in Europe, although extensive German demolitions have been carried out in the last fortnight....This evening the headquarters enlisted men's softball team (with Captain Joseph Robb of Pittsburgh at third base and Captain Varnol Farmer of Indianapolis at short field) lost to the 489th officers' team, 5-0, in the opening of the inter-group tournament. Weak hitting in the pinches and wild throws by fielders and the catcher cost the enlisted men the game. The team will play again Wednesday night...Bad weather again today resulted in the fourth consecutive day of stand-down.

June 27, 1944

Loud arguments in the enlisted men's club last night. M/Sgt. Harry Dullinger and M/Sgt. Joseph Kline, both of Washington, D.C., exchanged insults with S/Sgt. Ed Lorenz of Detroit and Corporal Nelson Becker of New York City on the subject of “the old army and the old army man.” Becker and Lorenz are draftees, the other men Regular army personnel with four or five years' service. The boys were parted before any bottles were hurled but a blue, sulfur-scented pall hung over the tent for 45 minutes afterwards. Lorenz and Becker lodged the old charge against the Regular army men that they were incapable of holding a job in civilian life and that the peacetime army existence was a lazy, idle one. Kline and Dullinger, enraged, told how hard they worked in the army before the war and denied that work in civilian life was more demanding than army tasks. And so on, far into the night, to the discomfiture of the officers trying to sleep in their tents. If it isn't loud arguments, it's hilarious singing. The officers' fervently wish the enlisted men's club was as far removed from the tent area as their own club is. The latter is about three-quarters of a mile away from the nearest bivouac area...The 1903 Springfield rifles are being picked up by the Quartermaster and .30 cal. carbines, as light as a feather, issued to all enlisted men and some officers. Most of the .45 cal. pistols are being picked up also...Cloudy weather again today, so no combat operations.
June 28, 1944

It looks as if the 340th group isn't in the bombardment business any more, if the recurrent days of stand-down are any criterion. Today, for the sixth consecutive day, we ran no combat mission...The group is far from idle operationally, however. Formations go out almost daily to do practice bombing on a nearby range, and for almost a fortnight night flying training has been going on, each squadron in turn being allotted a night to practice various night procedures. A Link trainer device has been set up for the instrument training of all co-pilots and pilots. Lead bombardiers in the squadrons and many wingman bombardiers are being constantly given practice on the bombing trainer device. This is a tall motor-powered platform on wheels mounting a bomb sight and piloted by another man, who guides the vehicle according to corrections from the bombardier. The device, so piloted, advances up to the target, a small wood box with a paper bull's eye target over it...With most of the players hitting the ball for a change, the headquarters enlisted men's ball team won out over the 489th squadron enlisted men, 11-4. It was the first league victory for the headquarters team....1st Lt. Gjertson, Special Service officer, returned recently from Naples where he had been taking a ten-day course in army orientation training. Armed with maps of the various war fronts and propaganda bulletins on the character (bad) and aims (bad) of the enemy, he will set up displays in the various squadrons and attempt to create a better appreciation of the daily progress of the war and the significance of the war itself...

June 29, 1944

Once again we are to get beer in the 340th group, this time from an Italian brewery in Naples that has been operated by the U.S. Army for the past four or five months. We read in the Stars and Stripes of this brewery some time ago, now it was supplying the Anzio beachhead troops with beer and would continue to do so until production was boosted to take care of rear units. Apparently production is up to snuff. The Bootleg Express flew back here from Naples with several cases a couple of days ago. Some cases will go to the officers' club, others to the enlisted men in headquarters and the four squadrons. Ration for the enlisted men, so they say, is 1 and 1/3 bottles (16 or 18 oz. each) per man per week. The last time the 340th was issued beer was in May, 1943, at El Maou airfield, Sfax, Tunisia. At Hergla, Tunisia, the squadrons and headquarters used to send trucks several times a week to the Stella brewery in Tunis for kegs of beer and ice. The Tunisian draught beer was superior to the bottled beer now issued from Naples, or was it just that on evenings after a day of 120* Fahrenheit, iced beer bubbling out of a spigot looked like heaven on earth?...The stand-down ended today with two beautifully executed attacks on railroad bridges at Imperia and Cervo in Italy, about 30 miles east of Nice, France. The photo plot of the bombs showed that patterns lay heavily and compactly on both bridges. It was the first sally of the 340th to the vicinity of France.

June 30, 1944

Half amused, half bored with many and startling rumors floating about the 340th, the group adjutant, Major Fields, concocted a list of some of them with appropriately dry marginal notes. The finished product was drawn up in the form of an official letter from the Latrine Section of the 15th Rumor Command, and posted on the Special Services bulletin board. It was characterized by the usual hash: “The 340th is to be relieved from combat service and sent back to the States within three months to train other combat units,” - “The group is to go to the Far East and check out on B-29's,” - “Ten percent rotation per month of ground personnel is about to start,” etc....Favorite places to spend three-day passes are Rome, Naples and Malta. Some of the boys are going to Cairo and Algiers for five, seven
and ten days. Rome, however, seems to be the favorite, despite the high prices there....For the past month the group operations officer and some communications technicians have been working on a new type of bombing technique which if it works out can be used with unprecedented effect on certain types of targets. The idea was proposed to Colonel Chapman by S/Sgt. Worden W. Mann of Arlington, Tex., a radio specialist. In civilian life his hobby was inventions...Our two missions aimed primarily at Canneto (Italy) railroad bridge and tunnel mouth ended up in an attack on the Pietrasanta road and railroad bridge, with unsatisfactory results. Cloud cover and inability to pick up the primary target in time sent the formations on to the alternate. A leaflet mission also was flown, the planes landing at Ombrone, Italy, to pick up the nickels.

[Editor's Note: This ship was purchased with war bonds raised by the students of McKinley Junior High School in Muncie, IN. See the May 26, 1944 entry in the War Diaries. Unfortunately, it was shot down over Griciliana, Italy on June 22, 1944. The pilot, Lt. Thomas Casey, the turret gunner, S/Sgt. Russel G. Ahlstrom and the radio gunner Sgt. Paul M. Kaplan were killed.

The co-pilot, Harry George survived an wrote a book about the incident and how he evaded capture with the help of Italian partisans.]
Georgio Italiano
An American Pilot’s Unlikely Tuscan Adventure

HARRY D. GEORGE AND HARRY D. GEORGE, JR.