

# War Diary of the 486<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron

## March 1945

Prepared by: 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. John F. Bahm

### A. Original Unit

(See previous outline history)

### B. Changes in organization

None for period covered

### C. Stations (No change)

### D. Strength

1. At beginning of the period covered:	Officers – 103	EM – 378
2. At end of period covered:	Officers – 94	EM - 364

### E. Marches

(See War Diary of the 486<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sqdn for month of March 1945)

### F. Campaigns

The 486<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sqdn continued to participate in the bombing of bridges in Italy and in close support to the troops in Italy whenever the weather permitted.

### G. Battles ( Missions)

[List of 31 mission can be found elsewhere on this website, or see original War Diary.]

### H. Commanding officers in important engagements

In the month of March 1945, Major Robert M. Hackney, Commanding Officer of the 486<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sqdn, flew one combat mission on March 16, 1945 to Brixlegg Rail Bridge, Austria.

### I. Losses in Action

The following men were reported mission in action during the month of March: 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. L.C. Voelkers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. S.S. Bibich, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. C.H. Snyder, Sgt. A.M. McKinnon, Sgt. S.P. Gelfo, Sgt. A.W. Lundquist, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. E.V. Mack, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. S.C. Caniglio, S/Sgt. M. Granger, Sgt. P.E. Leonneke, Sgt. E.C. Racette, S/Sgt. Z. Zawistowski.

March 1, 1945

Stand-down today, and many of those with little work, took off to Bastia or the smaller hill towns. What with the intense cold every night discouraging outdoor movies there is little entertainment except for these occasional trips for a glass of wine and a shopping tour of the PX.

2<sup>nd</sup>

[No entry]

3<sup>rd</sup>

Another stand-down because of the weather. No rain here, but it looks bad to the north. There are the two usual pokers in the officer's mess: On penny ante (for fun) and one table stakes (pretty slim). The faces at the high priced game seldom change, occasionally a stranger gets drawn in for an evening, is separated from his cash and leaves a poor and wiser man.

4<sup>th</sup>

Twelve ships on a mission today. No casualties but they did observe three ME-109's that followed the formation from the I.P. [Initial Point – Beginning of bomb run] to the target. They were a timid lot however and kept a polite distance. Our I. & E. Officer can't seem to find all those enthusiastic people who had voiced their desire to learn French, now that he has a set of French lesson records.

5<sup>th</sup>

[No entry]

6<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down yesterday with nothing exceptional happening. We did have some chicken for supper last night that was note worthy by virtue of the fact that it was tender, a rare thing these days. Nine ships flew today with dire results for one Jerry bridge and no loss here.

7<sup>th</sup>

The weather seems to be shifting around a great deal but it didn't keep our ships on the ground. Although there was a good bit of cloud coverage here, it cleared up by the time the boys got to the Po Valley and they did a very good job on their target. The Jerries however are getting far too good at repair work, but they will run out of labor and material before the U.S. runs out of bombs, so its just a matter of wearing them down.

8<sup>th</sup>

No mission today, the threatening weather closed in a little too much. Our S-2 section draws a terrific crowd every morn when we type up the BBC "News at Dictation Speed." Then all through the day, there is always a group gathered around the radio listening to the other news broadcasts. We also seem to be a clearing house for all rumors, however fantastic or varied.

9<sup>th</sup>

Major Thabault led a mission to the San Margherita Rail Bridge on the Brenner Line. They did a beautiful job of bombing placing a compact pattern directly on the bridge. Well prepared and tender steaks greeted the returning airmen at mess for supper.

10<sup>th</sup>

An attempt to get to the target was made today, but weather forced them back. The long delay bombs were jettisoned in the water several miles off shore, and will probably cause a few guards to jump at about three in the morning. Our twin pilots having put up a tent of their own, almost burned it down last night after installing what they claimed would be a very efficient and safe stove. No loss was incurred except for some patience.

A few notes came in from the Communications Department covering their activities to date and are presented here. Noticeable around the Squadron area of late has been Sgt. Pittman, with his red and white Capri hat. Not to mention his coveralls, to each trouser leg of which has been added a yard or two of cloth. Sgt. Ackley continues taking nocturnal fishing trips, bringing back flounders and munhens [sic] and other edibles. Grimly pursuing the course in trigonometry which has been promised, Sgt. Cawthon prepared to take on algebra part 2. Sgt. Cravens, troubled with a mysterious face-aching ailment which hits him at night, carries on with one of the medics' favorite remedies, aspirin. He spends the time it takes him to go to sleep morbidly counting his increasing heartbeat. Sgt. Roe disappeared the other afternoon and after the ingoing truck made a tour of all his ships he was eventually found sleeping in a very secluded part of the line day room. A certain member of the section bought a watch one day, wore it proudly until evening, and then lost it in a poker game. Group Inspector Pulos was observed the other day, while inspecting one of the 486<sup>th</sup> ships, discreetly removing himself 50 feet from the plane before lighting a cigarette. The Group Warrant Officer was nearby.

11<sup>th</sup>

Beaucoup flak was the keynote of today's mission. Three of our ships were damaged and no observations of the bomb fall were made, due to the rapid breakaway over the mountains. The sun was out for a short time, but disappeared behind a veil of clouds and the temperature dropped quite a bit. Very good roast pork this evening with all the trimmings. By that we mean apple sauce (dehydrated), mashed potatoes (dehydrated) and carrots (ditto). Quite palatable.

12<sup>th</sup>

The news of the great advance in the west is keeping us all listening to every newscast we can tune in. For the past few days some pretty wild betting has been going on as to when V-E will come. All we can do is cheer the west front on and keep working on this southern front which though less spectacular, was nevertheless, the true second front, and breach in the "Festung Europa."

13<sup>th</sup>

Missions on both yesterday's and today's targets got by with practically no opposition from the enemy, but were somewhat bothered by clouds. Nevertheless, the TNT was neatly placed where it would do the most damage. Corned beef is becoming a staple for lunches (or dinners), but as long as the pork chops are as good as they were tonight, there won't be many complaints around here.

14<sup>th</sup>

The rumors concerning our impending move are getting thicker and less reliable as to time of the move and destination. The safest attitude is to lend a deaf ear, and await developments. There was a movie this evening and according to those who attended it was thoroughly enjoyable light comedy, provided you were dressed warmly enough to avoid pneumonia.

15<sup>th</sup>

The target today was the Mori Rail Fill and it turned out to be a pretty hot one. Although the flak was of moderate intensity, what there was of it was most accurate damaging three planes. There were possible hits on the tracks.

16<sup>th</sup>

Today was a gala occasion with the Squadron flying it's first mission to Austria and it's first mission with special equipment (SHORAN). Both missions were highly successful. In Austria the bridge attacked was definitely hit, and the SHORAN blew the hell out of an ammo dump at Spillemergo. Smoke went up to 12,000 ft. All in all a very satisfactory day.

17<sup>th</sup>

Today's mission went to the Aldeno Fill, along the lower Brenner Line and proved to be a very hot target. Our Squadron was a bit lucky because we just received two holed ships; however the 489<sup>th</sup> had the misfortune of losing one ship. Six chutes were observed and we can hope for the best.

18<sup>th</sup>

[No entry]

19<sup>th</sup>

Yesterday was one of the warmest we have had so far and when the wind wasn't blowing it was comfortable enough to induce some fellows to take sunbaths. Missions were flown both yesterday and today, with a near miss on the block ship in La Spezia harbor yesterday and possible hits on the Perca Rail Bridge, today.

20<sup>th</sup>

The Squadron suffered a major loss today when 6B failed to return. The crew of six were some of the best liked men in the outfit. They were: Lt. Mack, Pilot; Lt. Caniglio, Co-pilot; S/Sgt. Granger, Bombardier; Sgt. Leonneke, Radio-gunner; Sgt. Racette, Turret gunner; and S/Sgt. Zawistowski, Tail gunner. The 488<sup>th</sup> also lost one plane and we had eight men with minor wounds. Spirits are pretty low tonight.

21<sup>st</sup>

Weather over the southern Alps forced our formation to bomb it's alternate target, and the bridge appeared impassable after the smoke had cleared. The Perry twins tried again without success to burn down the area with their "Stove of the Future." They came out of their fearless battle with the flames looking more like the "Gold Dust Twins" than B-25 pilots.

22<sup>nd</sup>

Back to Austria today and the boys finished off the rail bridge. The photos tonight showed the entire thing down. The fellows on the mission said that they could see Munich from the target and were wondering how long it would take General Patton to capture it.

23<sup>rd</sup>

It seems pretty definite that we are going to move next month. Eyewitness reports from those who have already seen the new location, have it that we will all be living in buildings and that there will be lots of office space available for the various sections. Two missions today, both on the Brenner Line.

24<sup>th</sup>

The armies in the west seem to have gone wild, ripping through the German defenses with breath taking speed. It is almost impossible to keep up with them on our war map, and we are continuously being heckled by characters with wild rumors concerning the position of our troops. Nobody here was prepared for so general a breakdown of the German's Rhine defenses. The mission today on the Perca rail bridge was not too successful due to radio release malfunction. Now a few notes from the Communications Section: This is said cautiously, Sgt. Warren Slaybaugh is again at the hospital and may go home this time. Sgts. Brune and Cravens are sojourning at the Isle of Capri. The outcome should be interesting. Brune has promised to lead Cravens astray, and Cravens has promised to keep Brune straight.

25<sup>th</sup>

[No entry]

26<sup>th</sup>

Rain yesterday and very low clouds today brought about a cancellation of missions. Although the rest is welcome, to many of the combat crews, there is still a feeling of unrest, because they know that these days of respite allow the Germans to repair the damage done on previous days with greater freedom.

27<sup>th</sup>

Again a stand-down because of the weather. Rumors that we would no longer be getting fresh meat while on the island were squelched by the appearance of juicy steaks for the evening meal tonight.

28<sup>th</sup>

[No entry]

29<sup>th</sup>

We have had two beautiful Spring days here and yet no missions were flown. Although the reason must be bad weather on the mainland, many people try to attribute this inactivity to other causes, such as peace talks, collapse of enemy resistance, etc... While pinochle and sack time are popular with many on these stand-down days, letter writing also intensified. This is especially noticeable to the censoring officers and the mail clerk.

30<sup>th</sup>

Two men were pretty badly hurt by flak on the target today, and three planes were damaged. The results of the bombing were not observed so we will have to wait until the photo-interpreter has rendered a verdict.

31<sup>st</sup>

The end of another month, and it looks like the near end of our year stay on Corsica. Prefabricated buildings are starting to be taken down and the men are getting their luggage ready to be sent over. Although we have lost some very fine friends and suffered a number of injuries, this month has been marked by the heavier loss by the Germans and an astounding series of victories by the armies on the Western Front, to assure us that final victory in Europe is not too far off.

[Many of these same events are also recounted in the War Diary of the 340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group HQ Squadron, though from a different perspective. The HQ diary can be found here:

[http://57thbombwing.com/340th\\_History/340thGroupHistory.php](http://57thbombwing.com/340th_History/340thGroupHistory.php)

Transcription by Dan Setzer, son of Sgt. Hymie Setzer, 340<sup>th</sup> BG HQ Squadron. May 2, 2015]