

War Diary of the 486th Bomb Squadron

May 1945

Prepared by: 1st Lt. Thomas F. Warns

May 1, 1945

No mission today again. It is almost certain now that the end of the German Army in Italy is near. The men took advantage of the fine weather to try the swimming out. From all reports the water is fine. The S-2 section had a busy day keeping up with the front line changes. If they don't run out of grease pencils soon they will have the map worn out.

2nd

The long awaited capitulation of the German forces in Italy was officially announced today. It looks as if the complete collapse of Germany can't be far off....Some excitement about the good news but in general the Squadron took it in stride. For the past several days the S-2 news room has been more crowded than usual but today it was jammed. The large European War Map now has a big "Finis" across the Italian peninsula.

3rd

With combat flying at an end – at least for the time being, sports are receiving a lot of attention. Several volleyball games were going at one time today. Swimming as usual was the big drawing card. Pretty poor chow tonight.

4th

Very quiet today. Increasing numbers of men are getting their rest leaves. Most of them are going to Rome.... Everyone anxiously watching the front line changes in Germany. The betting is now that organized resistance will be ended before the month is over.

5th

The Northern German Army Group surrendered today. The end may be closer than at first thought possible. Rumors of peace are becoming more and more frequent. With northern Italy and Austria surrendered it doesn't appear probable that the Germans will attempt any guerrilla warfare. Some members of the Squadron have been sweating that possibility out.

6th

Church this morning – Chicken for dinner. Outside of swimming and volleyball there was little activity. Movies tonight at the Group theatre.

7th

The big news today is the official announcement that the War in Europe is over. Tomorrow, May 8th will be celebrated as VE DAY. The news has been expected for some time. That and the fact that the war with Japan still goes on dampened the enthusiasm to some extent. Signs point toward a brisk trade at the various bars around the area.

8th

VE DAY. The day awaited by so many for so long is finally here. Surprisingly enough, there was little celebration. The day passed quietly. With all planes grounded and the motor pool closed, everyone stayed close to their quarters. There was more excitement the day the war in Italy ended. The big question today in everyone's mind is “When do we go home?”

9th

With the war over now, everyone seems a little bit confused as to what to do next. Several parties are being organized to take a trip through the Brenner Pass. Nearly everyone is anxious to see what such places as Rovereto look like without the usual shower of lead. Lots of mail tonight.

10th

Bacon and eggs for breakfast this morning. Flight training took up most of the morning. This afternoon the I & E Section conducted a survey to determine which academic subjects the men were most interested in. An extensive education program seems to be afoot. Big excitement over the “Point” system. It has been announced that 85 points will be the basis for discharge – if – a man is not considered in the essential category.

11th

Word has leaked out that beginning Monday a new training schedule is to go in effect. Some pessimists have even predicted a 5 A.M. reveille. Everyone busy figuring out their point total. The big worry now is whether many men in the Air Force can be classed as non-essential. The Officers have no worries – the system does not apply to them. Warm weather and bright sunshine made the day ideal for swimming. A good many took advantage of it.

12th

Those who have been up to the Brenner in the past few days report that the rail lines, bridges and marshaling yards are completely destroyed. Some bridges were examples of pin-point bombing at its best....The baseball team had a long workout this afternoon and all signs point to a good season. Swimming and volleyball occupied the rest of the Squadron. Better than average chow tonight.

13th

Things are settling down to normal again. Everyone took advantage of the last day before the new schedule goes into effect to sleep late....Some of the boys who have been up the valley say the Group's targets were really hit hard.

14th

More fine weather today. The long awaited training schedule went into effect at 0730 hours this morning with surprisingly few bitches. Nobody was hurt in the rush for breakfast at 0600 hours. Everyone busy all day either flying or attending class. The most popular part of the day's activities seems to be the athletic period from 1600 to 1800 hours. Everyone enjoyed the swimming especially.

15th

The Enlisted Men's Club opened today after weeks of painting, plastering, etc. The wall paintings were one of the main points of interests, next to the bar. Whoever the artist is has either a good imagination or has "been around" a lot. Nearly everyone showed up for opening night.

16th

Everyone in khakis today. With the temperature going up day by day it will be a relief to get rid of the woollens. Close order drill tonight – officers included.

17th

Signs of movement are becoming more and more evident. Supply is beginning to call in overages. "Jocko" proved to be an expert swimmer this afternoon, carried out 200 yards or better he made it back to shore in record time. At the rate he took off it appears he doesn't care much for water. Had pork chops for dinner this evening. Meat has been very scarce lately.

18th

Today marked the opening of the I & E Section's School. Two courses were started, one in bookkeeping and one in advertising. More are on the way. Flying and drill goes on as usual. Those who have flown the A-26 seem unanimously agreed that "its a pretty good ship." Rumor still has it that the outfit will be home soon, lets hope so.

19th

Another typical day. Transition and instruments in the morning. The squadron seems to want to check out the co-pilots. More classes and drill. The fellows are pretty rusty and not too eager to practice the military. Weather fine for a swim before chow.

20th

Good breakfast this morning, bacon and eggs with pancakes. Smaller attendance than usual, this being a day of rest. Everyone in the squadron seemed to be on the beach this P.M. A good many are really acquiring a tan. Also this afternoon the Squadron had a free showing "To Have or to Have Not," a mighty good picture.

21st

Lots of confusion today in supply. Can't seem to make their mind up whether they want the O.D.'s turned in or not. Several people spent most of the day carrying their woolens back and forth. Training films this afternoon as well as the usual drill. The days are really getting hot but the nights are still cool. No mosquitoes yet, perhaps we won't be plagued with them here.

22nd

Rumors flying thick and fast today about the coming movement. Everyone seems to agree that the outfit is going home, the big question is when....The I and E section busy all day moving classes into the Squadron's new school house. Lots of new enrollers, wonder why?

23rd

Windy all day. It cooled things off considerably but the sand and dust was so thick its a question whether the heat wasn't better. The S-2 building in particular seems to be the target for most of the sand in the area. Signs of departure becoming more evident. The S-2 personnel busy most of the day burning target charts, etc and the squadron carpenters spending the whole day making crates. The Group theater was crowded tonight, especially with mosquitoes. If they crowd any more in there won't be room for the men.

24th

Still too cool for good swimming but it was a break for those flights that had drill this afternoon. More men are getting a chance to fly the A-26 and so far all like the way it handles. Lots of mail this evening. The boys must be writing more. It's a relief to the censors and the men alike now that unit censorship has been abolished.

25th

Cloudy all day. About 1600 hours a slight rain fell interfering with the drill schedule. No one's heart was broken....Had chicken for dinner tonight, a good meal....Both the Enlisted Men's and Officer's Clubs were packed tonight even more than usual. It must be the salt in the air around here that makes everyone so thirsty.

26th

Practice mission took off this morning in fine weather. The 486th furnished two boxes. Round Robin to Venice, 42 ship formation....Clouded up again this afternoon in time to prevent any swimming...No classes today but the combat crews heard a very interesting talk by Col. Chapman who has just lately returned from the Brenner Pass where he interviewed several High-Ranking German Officers. Some of the AA crews up there were the best in the German Army.

27th

Clear weather all day, but windy. Little or no activity. Good chow tonight --- chicken and ice cream with strawberries for dessert.

28th

Today marked the start of the inter-squadron bombing competition to last the entire week. The winners are to receive a prize of some sort. Rumor has it that it will be of a liquid nature....This afternoon half the Squadron stood retreat – first time in a good many months. From here on in it will be a daily affair.

29th

Sunshine for a while this morning but still cool. Later it clouded over spoiling the swimming. Classes as usual all day.

30th

Memorial Day --- half holiday this afternoon. All classes and formations were canceled. Everyone took advantage of the occasion to get in some sack time. Pork chops for dinner tonight.

31st

The end of the month and payday again....No interruption in the regular schedule.....The usual movies this evening along with beaucoup games of chance.

J. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action.

[See original War Diary for rank and decoration.]

<p>Aloysius L. Bahen Lloyd S. Canon Leroy C. Edwards Francis J. Gowiski Michael Soltis Gerald P. Rahatz Kenneth B. Naatz George A. Quinby Clyde F. Miller Paul E. Paddock John W. Perry Richard L. Perry Albert L. Senn James K. Martin Frank A. Watson Richard L. Reed Edward L. Van Cleave Domenico M. Robbe William L. Overly Ernest J. Engstrom Cornelius H. Harth Stewart W. Miner Howard C.J. Schwinn Fred N. Sedach John G. Schnobrick Leslie J. Tremaine Joseph S. Zukauskas Cecil H. Snyder Oscar L. Senft</p>	<p>Ellis B. Noah Roy D. Witte Edward C. Allison Donald H. Morris Marvin S. Odle Charles W. Watson Dewitt J. Macklem Robert E. Abel George W. Patterson Lyle R. Cazel Norman B De Maestri John C. Eddy Robert R. Nelson Raymond C. Adam Donald L. Allen James W. Clarke Robert M. Harbough Lewis J. Tremaine Thomas J. Hensler Edward L. Van Cleave Charles M Morris Raymond A. Groom Bernard J. Ockershausen Gerald K. Perkins Webster T. Pringle Harold E. Raloff James M. Stark Marvin Trier Robert A Commee Rudolph A. D'Amico Jesse P. Dean Jr. Burton E. Garber Eugene Grabowski Emil M. Radakovitch Jack M. Stark Theodore W. Fogle Dexter D. Brostrom Robert J. Costello</p>	<p>Paul J. Domarotsky Abraham J. Goldberg James D. McHenry Andrew Payer Anthony V. Radice Jack E. Smith Raymond W. Stevenson Walter D. Winkles Raymond P. Risher Alexander Morrow James B. Tolliver John Kelmel John W. Sterett Wlvie A. Swalec Frederick E. Disbrow William E. Willis James W. Clarke James G. Harris Fred N. Sedach Donald V. Wheeler Merlin R. Flora</p>
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June 2, 1945

C: Photographs as follows: 486th Bombardment Squadron, 340th Bombardment Group (M), Rimini Airfield Italy. May 1945.

1. Donuts and coffee, provided by the Red Cross are always welcome after a long combat mission.

2. Captain William T. Shealy being presented the D.F.C. [Distinguished Flying Cross] by General Knapp, Commander, 57th Bomb Wing.

3. & 4. Two views of the Orderly Room and Operations building at Rimini Airfield, Italy.

5. & 6. Engine changes are made in a hurry by this engine change crew headed by Sgt. Swanson, man on right in picture #5.

7. Checking their plane over after a long mission, Sgt. Earl Leising and T/Sgt. Warren Sellers.

[The following individuals are mentioned in the June 1945 War Diary as having distinguished themselves in action. See that Diary for rank and decoration.]

Harold G. Smith
Robert L. Helferich
Beryl Burdett
Francis S. Driscoll
Cornelius M. Harth
Leonard W. James
Wilbur E. Somers
Charles W. Bowers
Robert O'Clock
Joseph F. Skipper, Jr.
Rex A. Estes
George J. Look
Edwin C. Masten
Fred E. Mayhew

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

http://57thbombwing.com/340th_History/340thGroupHistory.php

Transcription by Dan Setzer, son of Sgt. Hymie Setzer, 340th BG HQ Squadron. May 3, 2015]