

War Diary of the 486th Bomb Squadron

September 1943

Prepared by: 1st Lt. Thomas B. Meyer

September 4, 1943 [sic. No prior dates entered.]

Squadron did not participate in any mission this date, with activities being the usual Sectional duties.

5th

Usual Sectional duties this date, with the Squadron participating in no missions. Promotions (SO 84 9/1/43): T/Sgts Dayton and Whitaker to M/Sgts, Sgt. W.H. Nelson to S/Sgt, Cpls Day, Kuzman and Vaughn to Sgts., S/Sgt. Billington to T/Sgt.

6th

No missions performed. Usual Sectional duties.

7th

No missions performed by this squadron. Per Squadron Order 21 dated 9/1/43, Capt Thabault appointed Squadron Executive Officer (Secondary Duty)

8th

Squadron received news at approximately 1800 hours that Italy had surrendered unconditionally. Six crews briefed at 1930 hours for mission at 0300 hours September 9, 1943.

9th

486th furnished six planes and crews for each of two missions today. Target for both raids being military personnel and installations in Naples area. First take-off was at 0300 hours and all planes returned safely. Take-off for second mission was at 2030 hours and at midnight two of this Squadron's planes had not returned or been heard from: Capt. Shireman and crew and Lt. O'Clock and crew.

10th

Lt. O'Clock and crew arrived safely at approximately 0900 hours after spending night at airfield near Castelvetro. No news as yet from Capt. Shireman and crew. Only mission scheduled for this date canceled due to weather conditions.

11th

No missions this date.

12th

Eleven planes participated in night mission with take-off at 0130 hours. Ten planes returned safely with the squadron receiving news shortly after noon that Lt. Fred E. Blaney had been killed when his plane crashed on the north cape of Sicily, due to engine failure. The remainder of the crew: Lt. Snow, Lt. Click, T/Sgt. Anderson, and Sgt. R.C. Brown bailed out and escaped with only minor injuries. It appears clearly that Lt. Blaney, the Pilot, sacrificed his life that his crew might survive. After the other crew members had bailed out, Lt. Blaney succeeded in getting clear of the plane but too late to save his own life. Funeral rites for Lt. Blaney are to be conducted at 1330 hours with burial in the American Military Cemetery near Gela, Sicily, 9/13/43.

13th

Twelve planes from this Squadron took off for mission at 1015 hours. All returned safely. Two planes returned before reaching target due to engine trouble, with Lt. Fete making one-engined landing at fighter field near home base at Catania.

14th

This Squadron furnished 12 planes in each of two missions yesterday. First take-off being at 0815 and second at 2330 hours. All planes returned safely. Target both times was Battapaglia, in Naples Area, where Germans are attempting to drive wedge and separate our invasion forces.

15th

Twelve planes from the Squadron took part in mission with take-off at 1515, the target being Roccodaspide in the Naples area. All returned safely. Squadron celebrated 1st Anniversary of its activation with big program of games, entertainments and a turkey dinner.

16th

Squadron continued active, sending out twelve planes on mission to bomb road junction in Naples area. Take-off at 1515 hours and all planes returned safely, although several were holed by ack-ack. This was the Squadron's eighth mission in as many days. Still no news concerning Capt. Shireman and crew: 2nd Lt. Stein, F/O Powelson, S/Sgt. Holman, and Sgt. Szklany, missing since September 9.

17th

Twelve planes took off at 1415 hours; the target was MT [Motor Transport] in the Naples area and all planes returned safely. Jack Benny and cast (Larry Adler, Winnie Shaw and Jack Snyder) entertained troops at Air Crops Theatre in Catania at 1830 hours.

18th

No missions today. Squadron informed at approximately 2330 hours that Capt. Shireman and crew had been located and that all were safe. They were down in Italy, no further details available at this time.

19th

No missions today. It was learned that Capt. Shireman and crew bailed out over the sea, near Isle of Capri, after plane had been badly damaged by ack-ack and set upon by fighters. No crew members were injured and all reached shore, (Capri) after spending from four to eleven hours in the water.

20th

One mission today. Twelve planes took off at 1255, target enemy installations in E. Salerno Area. One plane returned due to hydraulic failure, remaining planes completed mission and all returned safely. Other facts not previously recorded: Sgt. Albert M. Callahan, injured in explosion on September 2/43 died on September 6/43 while enroute to hospital, burial at sea. F/O King and Pvt. Luck transferred to 20th Replacement Battalion, Tslergma, 9/12/43.

21st

Squadron furnished twelve planes for mission at 1530, target in Salerno area. All planes returned safely. Major Robert M. Hackney, formerly Squadron Operations Officer, takes over as Squadron Commander, relieving Major Louis E. Keller, who goes to Group as Asst. Gp. Operations Officer.

22nd

No missions performed this date. 1st Lt. Charles W. Bowers, Jr., transferred to 12th A.F. final destination USA, 9/21/43.

23rd

Squadron furnished twelve planes for mission in Salerno area. Heavy ack-ack encountered and several planes holed, but all planes and personnel returned safely.

24th

No missions today, usual Squadron duties performed.

25th

Squadron furnished twelve planes for mission this date. Target was Nocere, in Salerno area, and all planes and personnel returned safely.

26th

No mission today, usual duties.

27th

No mission today. Squadron combat activities curtailed by bad weather further north.

28th

No missions performed this date, usual Squadron Sectional duties.

29th

No combat missions today. Six planes, composed mostly of new crew men, make practice mission.

30th

Twelve planes took off at 1045 hours for mission, target Benevento. Ack-ack was intense and accurate. Lt. Root and crew forced down on fighter field near Reggio, but later returned to base. Lt. Fisher and crew did not return and no word as yet. Other ten planes returned safely, some holed, but personnel uninjured.

War Diary of the 486th Bomb Squadron

October 1943

Prepared by: 1st Lt. Thomas B. Meyer

October 1, 1943

Twelve planes furnished for mission today, and all returned safely. Squadron notified that Lt. Fisher had crash landed in Italy. Tail gunner, radio-gunner and armorer-gunner bailed out and were uninjured. Pilot, Co-Pilot and Bombardier-Navigator came in with ship and were burned badly, but succeeded in leaving ship without aid. They are in hospital in Italy. The crew included: Lt. Fisher, Lt. Murphey, Lt. Parham, S/Sgt. Dunkinson, S/Sgt. Villard, and Pvt. Wood.

2nd

No mission today. Wind and rain storm in early evening caught majority of Squadron Personnel with their tents down.

3rd

No mission this date.

4th

Twelve planes took off at 1020 hours with target railroad and highway junction. All planes returned, but nine were holed and one man scratched on face as a result of ack-ack.

5th

No mission today.

6th

Twelve planes bombed Teano, with good results observed. All planes and personnel returned safely.

7th

No mission today.

8th

Twelve planes took off at 0940 for mission, but did not drop bombs due to lack of visibility over target. All returned safely.

9th through 14th

No missions on these days.

15th

Seven planes took off for mission, one returned early and six went over target. All returned safely.

16th to 25th

No missions, Squadron in process of moving from Catania, Sicily to San Pancrazio, Italy.

26th

Seven planes took off at 1200 hours with target a town well beyond bomblines. One plane returned early due to engine trouble and six went over target. All returned safely, no ack-ack encountered.

27th through 31st

No missions, inclement weather.

War Diary of the 486th Bomb Squadron

November 1943

Prepared by: 1st Lt. Thomas B. Meyer

November 1, 1943

Ten planes took off 1100 hours, target was Ancona, seaport on east coast of Italy, almost due north of Rome. All returned safely. Very little ack-ack. Large fire started.

2nd

Eight planes this Squadron participated in raid on railroad yards at Acquila, Italy. No ack-ack met and all planes and personnel returned safely.

3rd

No missions, usual squadron duties.

4th

No missions, usual squadron duties.

5th

Squadron furnished 10 planes for mission, but due to clouds over target, planes returned to base with bombs. All returned safely.

6th

No mission, bad weather.

7th

Squadron furnished seven planes for another mission on port of Ancona. All planes went over target and dropped their bombs. Lt. G. A. Smith made one-engined landing at Termoli L/G near front, when explosion wrecked one of his engines. Fragment from engine went through navigator's compartment. No one injured.

8th

No mission today. BBC broadcast report that Germany had offered to withdraw troops from Low Countries in return for promise of neutrality from the conquered countries. This report is unconfirmed.

9th through 11th

No missions, weather.

12th

Eleven planes this Squadron participated in mission with target being airdrome at Berat, Albania. Altogether 135 B25's from 340th, 12th and 321st Groups, took part in raid. Fragmentation and demolition bombs dropped. All our planes returned safely, with only one being holed by ack-ack.

13th

No mission on this day.

14th

Ten planes from this Squadron participated in mission on marshaling yards at Sofia, Bulgaria. All returned safely. This was the first raid of the war on the Bulgarian capitol.

15th

Eleven planes from this Squadron took part in smash at Kalamaki Aerodrome, Athens, Greece. Enemy fighters were encountered but were taken care of by our escort of P-38's. All our planes returned safely, although four were forced to land at forward fields due to gas shortage.

16th

Nine of our planes from this Squadron participated in second mission over another aerodrome in Athens area. Results were good and all our planes returned safely.

17th

Nine planes took part in another raid on aerodrome at Athens, Greece. Intense ack-ack and fighter opposition encountered and one of our planes is presumed lost. The crew of the plane, last seen in a dive in the vicinity of the target, was: Lts. O'Leary, Smith, J.E., Duszkiwicz, S/Sgts Williams, F., Macdougall, and Sweeney.

18th

No Combat missions. Squadron advance party left for move to Foggia L/G #3.

19th

No combat missions. Ground echelon moved to Foggia today.

20th to 24th

No missions these days. Squadron busy getting set up in new area. Original area too muddy to operate in and Squadron moved approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to new area with farm house and buildings.

25th

Squadron furnished two planes for mission this date and both returned safely. Big Thanksgiving Dinner with turkey and all the trimmings put on the board and festivities were under way at 1500 hours.

26th

Squadron furnished three planes for mission with target being Fassacessia, Italy, just above the bomb line. All returned safely.

27th

Six planes this squadron took part in mission with target being Poseto, Italy. Original target was Trevnik, Yugoslavia, but weather forced planes to hit alternate target at Poseto,. All returned safely.

28th

Six planes from this Squadron took part in raid on enemy shipping and installations at Dubrovnik Harbor, Yugoslavia. All returned safely.

29th

Railroad bridges near Guillianova, Italy, were the target today and five planes from the 486th participated in the raid. Direct hits were observed. All our planes returned safely.

30th

No missions today. Usual squadron duties.

War Diary of the 486th Bomb Squadron

December 1943

Prepared by: 1st Lt. Thomas B. Meyer

December 1, 1943

No mission this date. Usual squadron duties.

2nd

Furnishing alternate ships for the 487, 488, 489 squadrons, the 486 sent out nine planes this day, the targets being enemy gun emplacements in their winter line. All our planes returned safely.

3rd through 5th

No missions this date. Usual squadron duties.

6th

No missions this date. 15 replacements, 7 officers and 8 enlisted men, assigned on the 6th (all combat crew men). 16 replacements, 6 officers and 10 enlisted men, assigned on 7th. The squadron for the first time in months is nearing full strength.

7th

No missions this date. Usual squadron duties.

8th

Eight planes from this Squadron took part in raid on Railroad M/Y [Marshaling Yard] at Acquila, Italy. Visibility was good and many hits were observed in the target area.

9th

Squadron furnished eight planes for raid on railroad and M/Y at Terni, Italy. Visibility was poor but hits were observed in target area. All planes and personnel returned safely.

10th and 11th

No missions this date.

12th

No missions this date. 4 officers and 7 enlisted men left for rest camp at Capri today.

13th

No missions this date.

14th

Eight planes were scheduled for mission with target being railroad south of Orte. Three returned early and one did not take-off because of taxi accident. Of the planes that went over the target all returned safely, with one plane being holed. One officer and 16 enlisted men, Ordnance Section, were transferred to the 6754th Ordnance Airdrome Service company. This company was formed from the Ordnance Sections of the four squadrons of this group.

15th

Eight planes from this Squadron participated in raid on Mostar Aerodrome, Yugoslavia. Ack-ack was intense and four of our planes were holed. All returned safely, however, and no personnel were injured.

16th

4 Officers and 4 Enlisted Men returned after week at rest camp on Capri. There were no combat missions this date. Five Officers and one Enlisted Man were attached to Squadron for duty, rations, and quarters, to be assigned later.

17th

Seven planes from this Squadron took off for mission with target the Terni M/Y's, but returned before reaching target. They failed to join rest of formation because of poor visibility and turned back when near town of Donato, 10 minutes north of Naples.

18th

No combat missions this date. Usual Squadron duties performed.

19th

Eight planes from this Squadron participated in raid on Terni M/Y's. Weather was hazy but target was well covered with hits. Nine men, 4 Officers, and 5 Enlisted Men left for rest camp at Capri.

20th

Six men (Lts. O'Leary, Duszkievicz, and Smith and S/Sgt Williams, Sweeney, and MacDougall), missing since raid over Greece on November 17, 1943, dropped from rolls. This is second complete crew lost since this Squadron went into combat in April 1943.

21st

No combat missions this date. Squadron personnel walking around with limp arms today as Medics sharpened up their needles and administered a variety of "shots." We've now been inoculated against everything but yellow jaundice and the GI's.

22nd

If convenient, cigars would have been passed out today by F/O Curl, whose appointment as 2nd Lt. (eff Dec 19) came through today. Sgts Brown, Kelsey, Skertic and Wood were promoted to S/Sgts and Pfc Holmes was promoted to Cpl (eff Dec 21). No combat missions today.

23rd

No combat missions today. Usual squadron duties.

24th

No unusual activities today. A few of the fellows got an early start in their Christmas celebrating and were put quietly to bed.

25th

The Squadron spent its first Christmas overseas today (Christmas '42 was observed in Walterboro, S.C. In preparation for the overseas jaunt). After church services in the morning, Squadron personnel adjourned to the Mess Hall for a turkey dinner and all the trimmings. No combat missions with the entire squadron being on "stand down."

26th

1st Lts. Stemple and Silvey's promotions to Captains (eff Dec 15) came through today. Eight men, 6 Officers and 2 Enlisted Men left for rest camp at Capri, to be gone 7 days. Squadron notified in the afternoon that it would move to Pompei Airfield, Southeast of Mt. Vesuvius, on December 28.

27th

Five men left this morning (advance party) for Pompei Airfield, remainder of Squadron busy preparing for the move. A strong wind blowing with rain, sleet and snow didn't do much good for anyone's morale.

28th

Squadron personnel, with exception of flight echelon, left Foggia #3 at 0900 hours and arrived at Pompei Airfield (distance approximately 90 miles) at 1730 hours. The usual confusion of unloading at a new bivouac was shattered by a terrific explosion nearby (blasting an obstruction at the end of the runway). Everyone was a bit startled but the fur-line molasses jug went to a tall, colored truck driver from the Service Group who, with a nod toward nearby Mt. Vesuvius, nonchalantly explained "Ah didn't pay no attention to it; Ah just thought it was that volcano acting up again."

20th to 30th

Squadron area is a half mile stretch of the road between Terzingno and Poggia-Marino and these days were spent in assignment and moving into the small, cold and dark I-tie [slang for Italian] houses in that area.

31st

T/Sgt. Wiechman and S/Sgt. Fox received their order assigning the to Personnel Center #1 for trans-shipment to USA and departed this Squadron same day. They completed their combat tour some weeks ago and were eager beavers to be gone.

[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. March 25, 2015]