

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

## January 1944

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January 1, 1944

New Years Day observed in comparative quiet. Fourteen men of the flight echelon, 9 Officers and 5 EM, their tour of duty completed, left the Squadron for return to the USA for rehabilitation and reassignment. What a way to start the New Year! Of the original flight echelon personnel, all but six have now returned to the USA.

2<sup>nd</sup>

Sunday and a clear day and road through area crowded all day with either curious (or touring) Italians. 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Snow, navigator, left early this AM on first leg of return trip to USA.

3<sup>rd</sup>.

Flight echelon and remainder of stragglers arrived from Foggia #3 today and the Squadron is now all present.

4<sup>th</sup>

Rainy and cold today with mountains and hills nearby covered with snow. Combat crew men who arrived yesterday busy getting settled in new quarters and acquiring information concerning surrounding towns.

5<sup>th</sup>

Capt. Wm. T. Shealy, Sq Ex Off, returned from Naples today with startling (and good) news. While in Napoli he had seen and talked to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. O'Leary who had been missing in action since November 17 and so far we knew was either dead or a POW, in Greece. He (Lt. O'Leary) and Lt. John E. Smith, had bailed out after their ship had been crippled by three direct hits from ack-ack. Both were found and hidden by Greek patriots. Lt. Smith, badly injured it is feared, was turned over to the Germans so that he might receive medical attention. The patriots took Lt. O'Leary and successfully slipped him out of the country via a fishing smack. Lt. O'Leary asked Capt Shealy to keep his story quiet so that he might walk in on his friends in the squadron unannounced. Lt. O'Leary is of the opinion that the other four members of his crew are dead.

6<sup>th</sup>

One new crew, 3 officers and 3 EM, joined Squadron today, attached for duty and rations. Weather clearing, but still cold, and there is a general scavenger hunt for fuel which is rather scarce in this vicinity. Lt. O'Leary returned to duty today after being MIA since 17 November 1943. He failed to surprise his friends, as planned, because the rumor of his safe escape traveled faster than he did.

7<sup>th</sup>

Combat crews busy with week of intensive training which includes practice missions each day, Weather permitting. This naturally has started rumors which have shipped us to: England, Siberia and China.

8<sup>th</sup>

Sq personnel having some trouble with our co-belligerents with a number of Eyties [slang term for Italians] apprehended while helping themselves in our quarters. They seem to be taking this lend-lease business in their own hands.

9<sup>th</sup>

Lt. Col Jones, new Group C.O., visited Squadron this afternoon. Sq personnel's first impression of him was a good one with the general opinion expressed that he would be "A good man to work for." Lt. Col. Jones succeeds Lt. Col. Adolph Tokaz, who in turn replaced Col. W. H. Mills as Group C.O. When Col. Mills was shot down early in May in Tunisia.

10<sup>th</sup>

Latest rumor: The 12<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, not us, will be the ones to go to the Burma area.

11<sup>th</sup>

1<sup>st</sup> Lt. George A. Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lts James L. Black and Frank T. Saunders, Jr., S/Sgts Dean Bryant and Roland O. Lowder were instantly killed this afternoon at 1550 hours when their plane, making its approach to the LG [Landing Ground] after a practice mission, crashed and burned. It is believed the crash was due to prop wash. Lt. Smith, the pilot, came across with our original flight echelon and had completed 42 combat missions over enemy territory.

12<sup>th</sup>

Funeral rites for the crew killed yesterday were held at 1300 hours this afternoon, behind the Squadron Operations building, and the bodies were taken to Naples for burial. Chaplain Cooper officiated.

13<sup>th</sup>

Armament boys busy this afternoon and into the night loading bombs for scheduled mission tomorrow. This will be Squadron's first combat mission since Dec. 26, 1943.

14<sup>th</sup>

Some of the boys got down and kissed the Good Earth when they returned from today's mission. It was rough, and some of the men were comparing it to the hectic raids around Soliman South, Tunisia, during the climatic days of that campaign. Nine planes from this Squadron took off at 1315 hours, the target being the marshaling yards and bridge at Pontecorvo, Italy, a vital link in the enemy supply line. The ack-ack was described as heavy, accurate, and intense. The planes themselves were mute testimony to the accuracy of the enemy. One of our ships was seen to go down over the target, a wing shot off and burning. A second ship, badly shot up, limped back across the bomb line with the entire crew bailing out successfully: Maj. Louis E. Keller, Sq C.O., made his third jump from this plane. Ironical was the fate of T/Sgt. Moran, radio gunner. With his plane's inter-phone knocked out, Moran bailed out over enemy territory. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. D. L. Glade, however, succeeded in bringing the crippled plane and the remainder of the crew safely to the home base. A fourth plane, also crippled by the ack-ack, and with the pilot (2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. C. J. Clark) blinded in one eye by flying glass, landed safely at Pomigliano Airfield. Our losses were seven men and two planes. Of the seven planes returning from the raid, all were holed by ack-ack and five men injured, but none seriously. Major Keller's report of his third Jump follows: "Fairy tale No. 3: As soon as we had dropped our last 1000 lb bomb we received a near miss which wounded the pilot, Lt. Swope, and also myself who was riding co-pilot. The flack burst hit the left engine causing the propeller to run away. As Lt. Swope's left arm had been hit I was flying the ship. He, Lt. Swope, immediately feathered the right prop. We then made a right turn to get back into friendly territory trying to do evasive action. It was about this time that we received more near misses, damaging the left engine. I noticed the left oil pressure was fluctuating seriously but as this was the last engine to go on we coaxed it across the bomb line at which time I ordered everyone to abandon ship. Just as Lt. Swope had left the ship the left engine ran away and I feathered the propeller. I then realized how quiet it is with no engines, but time was wasting. I made two turns, one to the right and one to the left. I then looked at my altimeter air speed and rate of climb instruments. My altitude was about 5000', by air speed 185 MPH and my rate of climb about 1000' per minute down. I decided to jump so I then moved over to the pilot's seat and it was pushed back and I couldn't get it forward and then I started between the seats after carefully trimming the airplane and then jumped into broad open spaces. Finito."

15<sup>th</sup>

Six planes went out again today, this time the target being the Foligno marshaling yards. Ack-ack was encountered just before reaching the target, but in contrast to yesterday's ordeal, was described as light, scattered, and inaccurate. The bomb pattern was observed across a road and the marshaling yards. All planes and personnel back safely.

16<sup>th</sup>

Again today this Squadron furnished six planes for a mission, the target being the Terni marshaling yards this time. Six direct hits were observed in the target area. There was no ack-ack over target with only light A/A being met South of Ancona on the return. All planes and personnel returned safely.

17<sup>th</sup>

It was with mingled emotions that this Squadron received communications concerning two of its members – a feeling of genuine regret and a sigh of relief from the First Sgt and Adm. Sect. The letters, both from hospitals, informed us that Cpl Lionel (NMI) Levin was to be transferred to the Zone of the Interior [i.e. the USA] for “further observation” and treatment; and that Pfc. D. Wellington Cameron, had been admitted to the hospital with his admission diagnosis reading “amnesia.” To call these men characters would be an understatement of classic proportions. Their presence in this squadron has been made conspicuous by their frequent absences. Since arriving in Italy the Army has been a mere side-line while they followed more lucrative pursuits. While the Squadron was based at Foggia L/G #3 they were realtors and succeeded in selling the Landing Ground to a gullible Italian for \$400.00. Needing pocket money while on one of their frequent excursions from Squadron duty they sold a parked auto to another trusting Eytie [Italian] for \$100.00. At least, these were the stories going the rounds and neither troubled to deny or stop the allegations. It would appear that Cpl Levin has succeeded in his determined vow to “get home somehow,” and it would also appear that his business affiliate will be right on his heels. We'll miss these men.

18<sup>th</sup>

Six 486<sup>th</sup> planes took off this morning at 1020 hours to bomb a R/R viaduct at Terni, Italy. It was a milk run and all planes returned safely. Photos showed all four squadrons narrowly missing the target, with the 486<sup>th</sup> pattern the closest....S-2 received a new addition today – Lt. Swearingen, formerly of the 487<sup>th</sup>....Visitor to the ruins of Pompeii are astonished by the sexy attitude of the former inhabitants. The guide does a rush job through the ruins lingers long and dramatically at the house of ill-fame. Interesting is the fact that the amphitheatre has a big crate in the center, and that a stray bomb got the House of the Faun....Show tonight was “Tuttles of Tahiti” with Charles Laughton. Group has requisitioned the theater in San Giuseppe, a nice little pocket-size cinema house replete with balcony and a bar in the lobby. Special Services has a few new records, but they scratch just as bad as the old ones. “Pistol Packin Mama” is a favorite.....An unballyhooed song which men are humming on their own is “Paper Doll.”.....Chicken and dumplings for dinner today, an illustration of how well the 486<sup>th</sup> is eating since moving near to Naples. “Never had it so good.”....Rumor has it that a warehouse in Naples is stocked to the roof with bottled coke.....The 489<sup>th</sup> alternate plane got eager today and flew on over the target, making seven planes in their formation. Should run their bombing efficiency record up.....Mt. Trocchio barrier to Cassino, is in American hands, and troops are within a mile of Cassino. On the Russian front, several towns within the 1939 Polish border have fallen. In England, General Eisenhower has named General Omar Bradley (who is he? Is the opinion here) to head American invasion forces.....

19<sup>th</sup>

The frost was really on the pumpkin this morning. Cold as kraut, but clear. Target for six 486<sup>th</sup> planes was the west half of the A/D [Aerodrome] at Rieti, Italy (alternate: R/R bridge north of Antrodoco). The 489<sup>th</sup> led the formation, made too wide a turn from the initial point [beginning of the bomb run] and threw the 486<sup>th</sup> formation off the assigned heading. 486<sup>th</sup> pattern fell among the hangars on the east side of the field (where the 12<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group was to bomb a few minutes later.) One of the hangars and the workshop were hit and an explosion, probably from oil storage, was observed. No planes were seen on the field. There was no opposition at all, and all planes returned safely.....Lt. Coleman was not so fortunate. His plane dropped bombs on the practice range near Foggia, got shot at by Yank A/A. No harm done, but such goings-on are certainly not cricket.....Group Officers Club opened tonight with a bang. It is in a requisitioned house, with furniture variously acquired in Naples and elsewhere. Eytie liquor flowed freely, and a band from Naples played with considerable spirit.....

20<sup>th</sup>

Six 486<sup>th</sup> planes took off this morning at 1145 to bomb the R/R bridge east of Carsoli, Italy. None of the four squadrons participating hit the bridge (“We made a 360 back over, and there she was – still standing”) but there were hits on the tracks. A/A nil and all planes returned safely.....Information was received tonight that two missions will be flown tomorrow – a glossing over of all supply lines to Rome. All lines are now definitely out. A few persons have been told of plans for a grand allied offensive soon.....The Russians have captured Novgorod, and the offensive in the North looks good after many months of inactivity in that area.....Major Hackney took a plane to Cairo, Egypt, today and will fetch back a stock of liquor for the Group officers club and a supply for our own party. A ten-dollar bite was made on each officer at the mess hall....For several nights Mt. Vesuvius has been flashing brightly. The usual small, dull patch of red widens out intermittently in a shower of sparks. At times this is a column of sparks rising up into the air. From Naples, a long live flow of lava can be seen flowing a third of the way down the side.....Naples is off limits because of a Typhus scare.....

21<sup>st</sup>

Two missions were flown today. First target was the M/Y at Foligno, Italy. The six planes of the 486<sup>th</sup> dropped bombs on ETA, because the target was heavily overcast. There was no a/a, and all planes returned safely. The 2<sup>nd</sup> mission went out almost as soon as the first returned, the target being the M/Y at Avezzano, Italy. Weather was CAVU [Ceiling And Visibility Unlimited] and the 486<sup>th</sup> reported several hits on the west choke point. There was no opposition.....Col. Jones (a full colonel now) revealed to combat crews in the evening that sometimes shortly after midnight the Allies would launch a sea-borne attack on the beaches south of Rome with the object of taking the high ground facing the city. Two divisions and specialized troops, using 83 landing vessels protected by five cruisers, would do the job. Col. Jones revealed that Medium Bombers had completed their part of the job eleven days ahead of schedule. They had been given the task of cutting tail [sic. rail?] communications to Rome, and this was done without arousing German suspicions. As a tailpiece to his talk, Col. Jones criticized the morning's formation, which he described as being spread out over the sky for five miles. He said it was unfortunate that the 340<sup>th</sup> was known among some fighter groups as the Flying Cadets, and that this was going to be changed. The Colonel revealed himself as a brilliant speaker. There are likely to be changes.....Show tonight was “Hit Parade of 1943.” The audience appreciated it.....The Group briefing room is now in the bottom of an ancient church, or monastery, rather than in the tents.....Some

of the gunners can be seen playing volleyball in their electrically heated suits, which are bright blue and look like extra underwear, elaborately stitched.....

22<sup>rd</sup>

Six planes of the 486<sup>th</sup> took off after lunch to bomb a road junction north of the little town of Segni, Italy. Photos show one direct hit on the road and crews reported an explosion. The A/A was pretty rough and all planes were holed. Lt. Baker, a new bombardier meeting flak for the first time, was asked how it was. "I'm a newcomer here myself," he said. The route home brought the formation close to the invaded beaches south of Rome. Lt. Hallahan said the operation appeared to be proceeding smoothly and in good order. "It was not like Salerno," he said, "there were no plumes of smoke, and no confusion. The boats were lined up neatly and the cove looked like Naples harbor. Everything must be under control.".....A nickeling mission was over the area around Arce, Italy, at 1355 hours and dropped 50,000 leaflets telling of the Rome landing and asking the Germans to surrender. The English translation: "Allied Landing near Rome! Strong 5<sup>th</sup> Army divisions with tanks and heavy artillery now stand between you and Rome. The MLR (main line of resistance) in the South is turned. Whether you face to the North or South, you have the enemy in front of you and to the rear. The battle in the South becomes a battle of encirclement. Under the protection of heavy naval units and the superior Allied air arm a ring is closing inexorably. With one stroke your situation has become a desperate one. Every attempt at relief or escape can only lead to bloody losses, as at Stalingrad. The immediate future brings you a bloody, senseless Stalingrad, or the running of a cruel gauntlet under a hail of bullets from British and American planes, or else an ordered surrender as at Tunis.".....Only scattered a/a was encountered by the three planes (one from the 486<sup>th</sup>) and all returned safely, all crews breathing easier....Major Keller complains that he is not very well known to the combat crews now in the Squadron, because the old men were nearly all rotated while the Major was absent with Group Operations. These new men won't stand up and bitch back at him, which makes the Major sad.....The 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. says the important event of the day was issuing of candy in the PX rations. Besides the usual Tootsie rolls, Necco rolls, and Life Savers, there were a few real O'Henry bars....Cpl Ceglia and two ordnance men got involved with Naples MP's because they did not have passes. They were released from the jug last night....Cpls Bissette and Walters lead the serving-line choir in the mess hall every day. KP's and others pitch in to turn out some real hillbilly corn.....

23<sup>rd</sup>

Primary target this morning was a road 1000 yards west of the center of the town of Valmontone. Takeoff was at 0905 hours. Principal target was covered completely, and the formation took the alternate, a road/railroad junction west of Avexxano [sic. Probably means Avezzano]. The six planes of the 486<sup>th</sup> lead the formation. Bombs overshot and landed in the open area east of the town. There was no ack-ack or other opposition and all planes returned safely in time for a lunch of pepper-hot soup.....A one-star general flew in the lead ship (Brig Gen Craige), but made few comments on the mission....."Hey, Rookie," advertised as the "funniest GI show in Italy" gave a performance at 1430 hours. The bulletin board listed Sterling Holloway as being in the cast, but if he was there he was unrecognizable. The audience enjoyed it.....The threat of rain gave us a stand-down for the afternoon, and the threat materialized after the show. There was general disappointment in the Squadron, for it was felt that the Group might be needed to aid in the landings south of Rome. "We get a chance to be useful, and then it rains.".....The day was noteworthy because the cooks got into no fights, with either the Eyties or Limeys [Italians or British].....There is considerable speculation about where we are going next. It's about 50-50 between England and Burma. Everyone is more or less resigned to the fact that

it won't be to the U.S.A.....The Eytie waiters in the officer's mess are a bunch of real characters. They nervously bring a plate, cereal bowl, and cutlery, but forget a cup. Then they wait. Upon being questioned, they reveal that the cereal is "finito," flick the bowl away, and wait. Upon further questioning, and a quick search in the kitchen, they reveal that the French toast is also finished, and they take the plate away. They do pass you the pot of coffee, but they give you a shrug of the shoulder when you ask for a cup.....

24<sup>th</sup>

Col Jones was asked what we did today, and he answered, "We sat on the ground." Reason for the question was that while General Marc Clark lectured to his generals trying to pep everybody up, some Air Force unit dropped a beautiful pattern in the wrong place – about 250 yards from Gen Clark. Reason for our answer: the weather.....One 486<sup>th</sup> plane went on a weather recce to Sardinia, reported weather 3000 to 9000 feet.....Two planes, one of them taking Lt. John D. O'Leary on his first lap back to the States, left today for Bizerte for modification. They were 6S(39) and 6P(591). 6S is a B-25D with 285 hours and 45 combat missions to her credit. She has no name, and was a replacement in at Hergla. She had waist guns and squadron-installed tail gun and armor on the floor of the bombardier's compartment and in the lower-turret well. She is well liked, a fast ship, and ideal wing ship. She has no picture on her nose. Her crew chief is S/Sgt. Addison and assistants are Sgt. Frank Miller and S/Sgt. Kernicki. She's given little trouble and hasn't had an engine change since we've had her. She was shot up some by an ME 109 over Athens in November.....6P is a B-25C crewed by T/Sgt. Flynn and S/Sgt. Doyle. Major Hackney brought her over from Deversoir and named her "Leaky Lucy." She was received in the squadron at Sfax, and has 333 hours and 52 combat missions. Her armor, armament, and her virtues are similar to those of 6S. The picture on her nose is that of a nude woman on a latrine.....A British unit now attached to this field finished widening the runway today and double ship take-offs are now possible....."The Greek" Kalaponidas visited the front lines today, with the purpose of buying a couple of Berrettis [sic. Baretas?]. He got up to the artillery and decided it was time to return.....Show tonight was Barbara Stanwyck in "Lady of Burlesque." Opinion: "I disliked it as much the third time I saw it as the first.".....The Dance Committee spent the day in Naples buying \$3000 worth of liquor and making a door-to-door campaign for women.....The new Colonel has succeeded in getting American pyramidal tents for the Group and they can be seen popping up here and there. He got galoshes, all size eight, but appreciated nevertheless by those whose feet happened to be the right size.....

25<sup>th</sup>

Target this morning was the road junction at Artena, Italy. Six 486<sup>th</sup> planes went to the target, found it 10/10 covered over, came back. Over the field, the formation leader asked operations if the formation should go back, evidently was told to do so. Two 486<sup>th</sup> planes landed, but the other four returned with the formation to bomb through the clouds. Photos were no good, but did serve to show that the pattern probably fell near Gennazzano, which is about three miles northeast of the target. Scattered flak was encountered on both trips. The beachheads could not be observed because of cloud, but radio reports put advance patrols in contact with Via Appia, the closest road leading to Rome.....Crews were briefed for a second mission, the target being the road junction at Villettri, where German forces are concentrating, but the mission was canceled because of weather.....Today's mission was the 85<sup>th</sup> for 6D (316). It is a B-25C, is one of the original ships brought from the States, and has more missions than any other plane in the Squadron. Major (then Capt) Hackney piloted her from the States, other

members of the crew being Lt. O'Clock, Lt. Moody, Sgts. Villard, Arnold, Kramer, and Falter. She received modification at Bizerte, has 417 hours and 15 minutes to her credit, and has had five engines. One engine was shot out Jan 14<sup>th</sup> on the raid on Pontecorvo bridge, when Lt. Glade brought her home with one rudder unusable. On this mission the radio gunner bailed out. She is crewed by T/Sgt. Max I. Hart, S/Sgt. Dellavan Guthridge, and Sgt. Robert Jones. They say she has never gone to the Service Group for major repairs....Officers of the 486<sup>th</sup> gave a party in Naples. "The 486<sup>th</sup> may not do it often, but when they do it ---" Oddly enough, there was plenty of liquor, and plenty of it was drunk. In a spurt of effort, nine officers went down the street to a hospital, lugged a piano down three flights of stairs, down the street for two blocks, and up three flights, and after all this it turned out that the piano player failed to show up.....The girls were not notably beautiful, but some were good dancers. The hall itself was an elaborate affair of gold leaf, painted ceilings, crystal chandeliers, and brocaded walls. Coffee was served from a GI can late in the evening.....

26<sup>th</sup>

Got over to Group briefing this morning at 0810 hours, discovered the Group would have a stand-down for the rest of the day....The Squadron has received 35 planes since it was formed in August, 1942. Four original ships are still with us....A new crew reported in today: 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. John (NMI) Lee, pilot; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. James M. Meazell, co-pilot; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Fred (MNI) Sedach, Bombardier; S/Sgt. James A. O'Keefe, Radio gunner; Sgt. Laurence G. Kaufman, gunner; S/Sgt. Arthur L. Smith, Engineer-gunner. They are replacements from the States, trained in B-26's....A drive is being made to clear the Eyeties out of the area. Telephone wires have been cut (once during red alert), and much wire has been stolen. This will be hard on those who have been keeping women in their rooms....The Germans are making a stiff effort to preserve the 5<sup>th</sup> Army front until something can be done about the Anzio invasion forces. They have counter-attacked and driven some of our forces back across the Rapido River. Losses on both sides have been great. Rumor: a bunch of tanks were wiped out when they tried to break out on the plains back of Cassino....Mail hasn't been coming in well in the past week, probably because of the invasion.....Only a few more days till payday. Sgt. Kraus says he has spent a lot of money at this base – mostly for nuts, oranges, apples, and cakes. Local prices: 20 liras per kilo for apples and tangerines. 50 lire per kilo for walnuts.....An explosion occurred near the area this morning, source still unknown....

27<sup>th</sup>

The 486<sup>th</sup> flew two 6-plane missions today. The morning target was the R/R junction at Colleferro, Italy. All bombs failed to hit the target. A/A was encountered over the defended hill south of Rome and two planes were holed. The afternoon mission was to Orte, where the marshaling yards were the target, and here again all four squadrons failed to make any hits. There was no ack-ack and all planes returned safely. Ack-ack had been reported as intense and accurate from Orte, and crews were nervous when they left, pleased and relieved when they returned.....The 340<sup>th</sup> will soon have a portable shower unit....Col. Jones reports that on two occasions telephone wires between this Group and TBF [Tactical Bomber Force] have been tapped.....A new crew arrived today, but will be sent to the 321<sup>st</sup> Bomb Gp.....There is some criticism among officers of AMG [Allied Military Government. This organization governed the occupied territories.]. Officials are termed "cheap politicians" and "racketeers." It is said that one official in Naples charges five dollars for every job. This may or may not be a Union fee. It is felt that the officials are not only enlarging their purses, but are placing the wrong Italian people,



racketeers themselves, in positions of influence.....There is little real news from the landing at Anzio.....A radio gunner salvoed his hatch in one of today's missions.....General Ira Eaker, new commander of Air Forces in this theatre, has conferred with various commanders, and it looks as if we're getting tired of the slow progress at the front, plan to pick out an area so long and so wide and pound hell out of it.....

28<sup>th</sup>

Target for today was the marshaling yards at Orte, Italy. Six ships of the 486<sup>th</sup> took off at 1345 and were over the North choke-point of the M/Y at 1521. Three squadrons intermingled their patterns in the small area around the choke-point, and at least six hits could be seen on the tracks.....The 489<sup>th</sup> pattern fell short, straddling the river. "It couldn't have been better," said Lt. Hayes, "if we had been standing on a ten-foot ladder." There was no ack-ack and all planes returned safely.....We had hamburgers for lunch, with seconds.....Show tonight was "Oxbow Incident," with Henry Fonda and a good cast. It was hardly a show for soldiers, but it was liked in some quarters....Rotation of combat crew members seems to have stopped momentarily. Talk has it that we are waiting for General Eaker to take over.....Rumor has it that Germany is producing more aircraft than they produced in 1939. BBC says 56 were shot down in Italy today....The day was warm and sunshiny, with the smoke from Vesuvius blowing toward the West. Vesuvius is a barometer, say the locals. Smoke blowing South means colder; blowing East means rain; blowing West or North means warmer weather.....

29<sup>th</sup>

Primary target this morning was Perugia M/Y, Italy. Crews were briefed elaborately, and bombardiers were furnished with the new check sheets. On the last minute before take-off, an alternate was rushed in – San Benedetto – but it was not clear just what in or around the town was to be bombed. The formation went over to the East coast and out and up over the water. They turned in over land, but found the primary target covered over in the valleys. The formation got a little out of hand, and most bombs fell in the water off San Benedetto. Some flak was encountered, after "we woke up everything in Northern Italy," but all planes returned safely....The officers club served a watery beer this evening. It came from Africa, and was the first we've had since last July.....Pistols belonging to combat enlisted men have been taken up and will be issued in S-2 when missions are flown. Reason: the boys have been shooting up the little towns hereabouts.....The Group has got a new APO [Army Post Office address] today – our fifth – and no one is happy about the change. First APO, issued in Walterboro, was 3447. In Hergla in July we got 616, the Heliopolis APO. In Comiso, we got 393, and shortly thereafter, in Catania, we received APO 520. Such shenanigans screwed up the mail for several months.....One of the combat crew members reveals how he calculates forces in the field. If we have three divisions in the Anzio beachhead region, that should be about 40 or 45 thousand men. The football stadium at Los Angeles will hold about twice that many, and he has seen it full. Now he fills the stadium half full, and then spreads all the people over an area six miles square.....

30<sup>th</sup>

Target for this morning was a road junction at Frascati, southeast of Rome. Two squadrons sent twelve planes, and two squadrons (including the 486<sup>th</sup>) sent six planes each. Considerable confusion existed about the results of the raid, but better opinion said they got the wrong town and missed the junction.

All 486<sup>th</sup> planes returned safely, but one of the 487<sup>th</sup> ships was hit, came in for a crash landing, wound up in a twisted mess well off the end of the runway. The photographer was the most seriously injured, with a broken leg...Lt. Cassidy was asked if he regards flak as something shot at him by Germans or by "guns." He guesses he regards the stuff simply as gun-fire.....Col. Jones has ordered the erection of several large black and yellow signs reading: "340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group. The Best Damned Group There Is. Product of the U.S.A." He says he means it.....Major Bennett, the new Group Executive Officer, has visited the squadron. He replaces Major Murray, who goes to the 12<sup>th</sup> Bomber Command.....

31<sup>st</sup>

Crews were up early, had a fine breakfast of fresh eggs, were at Group Operations for 0730 briefing. Target was to be the road junction at Vallettri, but the mission was postponed, and then later canceled. The bomb line moved up to within a few yards of the town, and perhaps this accounts for the cancellation.....In the afternoon, three planes of the 486<sup>th</sup> flew a nickeling mission to the Cassino Area. They dropped pamphlets revealing to German troops that today was the anniversary of the battle of Stalingrad, and reviewing the present situation for the boys. The 12<sup>th</sup> Group has been dropping all pamphlets heretofore (except infrequently, when we helped) but the 340<sup>th</sup> will now assume this job. Is the 12<sup>th</sup> Group getting rid of its additional chores, preparatory to moving from the theatre?.....The Squadron last had fresh eggs about three weeks ago. They were obtained through an agreement whereby our transportation carried certain agricultural supplies for the farmer who gave us the eggs. This practice was discontinued after being frowned on by inspectors, and after a couple of lads, working on their own in the grain-hauling business, got into trouble.....For lunch we had two good hamburgers and some fine pudding with walnuts. Mess hall is definitely on the ball by fair means or foul.....The day passed without paycall, which will be tomorrow....Captain Pearlstein is being transferred to 12<sup>th</sup> BC and Captain Fields of the 489<sup>th</sup> is taking his place as Group Adjutant.....The Red Cross will dish out coffee and donuts in the old monastery by Group Operations. This is so fine.....F/O Blakely and F/O Liggett have a housemother these days. She lives with them, sleeps now with one and now another, washes their backs, and has her own back washed in turn. She seems to be very happy.....Movie tonight was a Bette Davis melodrama called "In This Our Life," with George Brent. Enjoyable.....

Photos:

A photo was included with this diary. Captioned: Crew of a B-25 Mitchell bomber, 486<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, 340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, at Pompeii Landing Ground, Italy, January, 1944. Standing left to right: S/Sgt. Dean Bryant; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. James L. Black; Cpl. Robert W. Holmes; 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. George A. Smith; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Robert B. Schnur; sitting. S/Sgt. Roland O. Lowder.

[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. March 25, 2015]