

# War Diary of the 486<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron April 1944

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## A. Original Unit

(See previous Outline History)

## B. Changes in Organization

None for period covered.

## C. Stations

Moved from Gaudo L/G, Italy to Alesan L/G, Corsica

## D. Strength

1. At beginning period covered: Officers – 71; EM - 308

2. At end of period covered: Officers – 77; EM - 329

## E. Marches

(See War Diary of the 486<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sq for Month of April 1944)

## F. Campaigns

The 486<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sq continued to participate actively in the bombing of targets on the mainland of Italy. A majority of missions were flown in direct tactical support of the 5<sup>th</sup> Army forces.

## G. Battles (Missions)

[Record of the 22 missions can be found listed elsewhere on this site.]

## H. Commanding Officers in Important Engagements

In the month of April 1944, Major Robert M. Hackney, Commanding Officer of the 486<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sq, flew the following combat missions with the Squadron formations:

April 28, 1944 – Target: RR Bridge at Orvieto

April 29, 1944 – Target: Terni Viaduct.

## I. Losses in Action

None

## J. Former and Present Members who have distinguished themselves in Action

(See previous Outline History)

April 1, 1944

Target for today's mission was the RR bridge 6 miles north of Orvieto. Briefing walled [sic. called?] for 0800. Importance of this target is that it carries the main Florence-Rome railroad over the Paglia River....The 488<sup>th</sup> squadron didn't obtain any photographs of the bombing and the earliest picture from the following squadron show the smoke well away from the bridge. There are many bomb craters near the bridge and the freshest of these bracket its south end...The 486<sup>th</sup> laid a compact pattern 3000 feet south of the bridge – just west of the tracks, but the photos from the following squadrons show no hits on the tracks....The 487<sup>th</sup> pattern started 1500 feet short of the bridge. The last bursts are within 450 feet of the bridge....The biggest news today is that the Cairo Cossacks will be home tomorrow. How unfortunate for them, that they missed old Mt. Vesuvius's rampage. Lucky dogs!.....

2<sup>nd</sup>

0800 hours in the briefing room, and today the target was the same as yesterday – RR bridge 6 miles NW of Orvieto. The mission from yesterday, according to the photos taken, did not reveal any definite damage. The lead ship of the 488<sup>th</sup> squadron, due to malfunction, dropped 3 bombs as soon as the bomb-bay doors were opened. Their pattern started more than a mile east of the bridge and the bomb struck within 800 feet. Our bomb pattern started 1600 feet short and to the left and ended within 800 feet of the bridge. Other craters were made farther to the south and still another was west of the tracks....The 489<sup>th</sup> pattern started 1800 feet west of the south end of the bridge...One element of the 487<sup>th</sup> squadron bombed east and the other west of it. Two bombs, one from each element were within 280 feet of it. Part of this pattern, particularly east of the bridge, was obscured by smoke...Please note 1730 hours and the ship from Cairo has arrived – happy day. There is beer sufficient for the whole squadron to at least get one bottle apiece – and what stories – do tell. Lt. Tipton reveals the following: “One day in one of the local beer joints, whilst Capt 'Catnip' Shealy was making many passes at the female he had, a tomcat breezes in the door, and stopping for nothing, makes a beeline for Capt. Shealy's unoccupied hand, which was dangling near the floor. With much tail twitching, the cat proceeds to smell our 'old buddy's' hand. Finally after much fuss and ado, the waiter came and carried the cat out the door. Within a few minutes the cat was back, licking the other hand this time. After much shooing and sprinkling of pepper, the cat was finally persuaded to leave, much to the amusement of the many female patrons and we innocent bystanders. Then of course, there were two elevators in the hotel we lived in, one of which will not be operating until after the war, because of no available parts. That elevator was fixed up by our party soon after arriving in Alex. - mainly due to the efforts of one Capt. Shealy – again.”

3<sup>rd</sup>

Briefing was at 0830 hours and there were two targets, the first which was to be attacked by the [4]89<sup>th</sup> and [4]87<sup>th</sup> squadrons in that order. This target was the railroad bridge north of Orvieto, the same bridge we attacked the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of April. It was obscured by clouds and both squadrons attempted to bomb a nearby highway bridge but overshot. The exact location of this bridge has not yet been determined...The other target for today was to be bombed by the [4]88<sup>th</sup> and [4]86<sup>th</sup> squadrons respectively. This was the railroad bridge 9 ½ miles southeast of Orvieto. This is also in the main line of the Florence-Rome railroad. Photos show four separate patterns; one across the north end of the bridge, one 1300 feet south of the bridge and another 3000 feet west of the bridge. No photos definitely show strikes on the bridge or tracks. Each squadron furnished 12 airplanes for each of the

two missions mentioned above. The A/A was heavy, meager, and accurate from Viterbo A/D [Aerodrome, i.e. Airport] and eight of the twelve ships were holed....

4<sup>th</sup>

Briefing called at 0830 and target for today is the Perugia A/D. The 486<sup>th</sup>, 488<sup>th</sup>, 489<sup>th</sup> and the 487<sup>th</sup> each furnished six ships in that order carrying 1000 pounders. Take-off was at 0940 and the general weather was poor and visibility nil. They could not see the target because of cloud coverage and the same situation existed over the alternate. All bombs were brought back except for those jettisoned in the ocean. In conclusion it may be said that the target for today will probably be the target for tomorrow due to the unsatisfactory weather conditions...The group officer's club seems to be working out nicely as the boys find it a place to shoot dice, and play cards. Of course you can win anywhere from 1.00 to 1000.00 and then again, if you have that much, you have a very good chance of losing it. Some of the boys in our squadron have won between 300.00 and 500.00 and the next day after the night before, when they were the proud possessor they are now minus due to a little unscrupulous gambling. Then again it all goes into the saying, here today and gone tomorrow....

5<sup>th</sup>

Briefing called for 0830, then changed to 1105 and finally called for 1330 and notified of a stand-down. This is caused by the worst enemy of the air forces of all nations Old Man Weather. As a whole the day was spent in regular squadron duties. There was a truck that went down to the supply depot in Naples with Lt. Wheeler and brought back a 2 ½ ton truck loaded with canned food stuffs that came from broken cartons etc. There is a plentiful supply and we were asked to return and pick up another truck load. This is a very welcomed offer as it sure puts the added touch to army meals. The new enlisted men's day-room also opened for business today at 1900 hours, and 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Dilbeck was feeling pretty well under the weather by 2000 hours. Maj. Hackney, Capt Dozier, Capt Shealy, Capt Wathen and a few more of the squadron's officers also put in an appearance. Maj. Hackney made 60.00 on the first three throws in the dice game and seemed to enjoy taking money from the enlisted men. Free cigars and plenty of good old American whiskey added the final touches to a very fine opening night. Although most of the men had a big head the next morning, I know they all had a big time the night before...

6<sup>th</sup>

Briefing called for 1020 and later changed to 1330. Today's target is the Perugia A/D. The 486<sup>th</sup>, 489<sup>th</sup> and the 487<sup>th</sup> furnished 9 ships each per squadron and flew formation in the following order. 489<sup>th</sup> in the first box of six, 487<sup>th</sup> in the second box of six, 488<sup>th</sup> in the third box of six, 486<sup>th</sup> in the fourth box of six. 488<sup>th</sup> and 486<sup>th</sup> each furnished three ships for the 5<sup>th</sup> box of six. At the interrogation bombs were said to have landed in the SE section of the field. Bombs of three ships landed south of runway, some hitting the taxi strip. It was noted that two large oil fires on the southeast and one on the SW side of the taxi strip were started. One ship was seen to explode when hit by a bomb on the field. Three ships were holed. Bombardier Lt. Wilkerson was cut slightly with plastiglass in face and head....

7<sup>th</sup>

Briefing was called for 1020 and the target for today was the Ficulle RR bridge on which the Rome-Florence RR crosses the Ritorba River. The 486<sup>th</sup> pattern was 2000 feet west of the bridge. Photos taken by the first box over, show that an earlier mission had cratered the south side of the bridge near its center. A/A was light, moderate, and accurate, three of our ships were holed. Interrogation of the crews stated that our bomb pattern started short of the bridge and walked up to the north end with a possible hit on the bridge as it joined the north bank of the stream....Most of the boys in the squadron went to the show and saw the picture Intermezzo – with Leslie Howard. It was the general opinion that the picture was pretty good. Other members partook in the officer's and enlisted men's clubs. Those that stayed behind were giving the boys on the way to Cairo their orders for stones (precious) and other items of intrigue from the America of Egypt.....

8<sup>th</sup>

Briefing called for 1005 and target for today was the RR bridge 4 miles NW of Orte across the Tevere River. The 486<sup>th</sup> furnished 6 ships for the mission. One element of the 486<sup>th</sup> was 240 feet beyond the center of the bridge. The other element could not correct for drift [sic. drift?] so held bombs as the lead bombardier of this element, Lt. Staub, saw a small marshaling yard one mile south of the bridge with a train with engine stopped at the loading platform. This element bombed the small M/Yds striking the platform, cratering the tracks, and hitting the train and probably striking the locomotive. This shows that the boys are using their heads and not wasting their bombs by throwing them away, when they realize that it is impossible to place their bombs effectively. Today Lt. Clark received the DFC, Lt. LeMaster, Lt. Cassady, Lt. Slayton received the Air Medal. Lt. Click, Lt. McCormick, Lt. Gibson received the Oak Leaf Cluster. The following named enlisted men awards are as follows: Air Medals: S/Sgt. Roy C. Brown, S/Sgt. M. Godwin, T/Sgt. Glenn Phipps; Oak Leaf Clusters: S/Sgt. Earl Canon, 3<sup>rd</sup> one, T/Sgt. Nathaniel Cole, 3<sup>rd</sup> one, S/Sgt. Francis Easton, 3<sup>rd</sup> one, T/Sgt. Strunk, 3<sup>rd</sup> one, S/Sgt. Clarence Varnadore, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> ones, S/Sgt. Daniel Quinn, 4<sup>th</sup> one, S/Sgt. Pridgeon, first one.....

9<sup>th</sup>

No mission today, the usual squadron duties performed....Old man weather predominated in the usual method with low ceilings and visibility nil....We were informed today that we are going to move to Corsica. That is the news we hope will mean that the invasion is in its final stage of preparation....Old Jocko, our squadron dog is having a devil of a time with another pet of ours, little Penelope. He tries and tries, but the only result is a squeal and Penelope is off with Jocko right behind. For Jocko's sake we hope that he fulfills his mission someday, the little African orphan....

10<sup>th</sup>

Target was the RR bridge north of Orte. Briefing at 0800 – take-off at 920. The 486<sup>th</sup> had 6 B-25s and bombed 3700 feet beyond the bridge. The squadron was more than just active. Capt. Nafe and Bridges divided their sections so that part would go ahead with A party and a group of maintenance personnel for ships will be left for B party. This is so that we may stay constantly operational. It was learned that Lt. Milloway will go ahead as an advance party. Hdqs and medics will go with A party, along with supply. Motor Transportation, Operations and S-2 will be split so that they'll have an operational force

at Corsica and Guado L/G. The flight echelon will stay for a few days until A party gets settled on Corsica. The thing that really hurts most of the boys is that the mail service will not be active after April 14<sup>th</sup> and it probably will be from 5 to 10 days before the old mail, or should we say, any amount of mail will catch up to us-----

11<sup>th</sup>

No mission and the reason remained the same – weather...Tents on the line started to come down, and trucks were being loaded with equipment. The Orderly Room was also deflated, and it was being operated anywhere between the message center and mess hall. It all added up, that a fairly good area started to take shape, but in the army one learns quickly not to begin to feel too much at home.

12<sup>th</sup>

Target – Bridge across the Tevere River 4 miles north of Todi. Briefing at 0830. Take-off at 0940 hours. The 486<sup>th</sup> led with 6 B-25s and placed a few bombs 800 feet short of the target and another pattern just beyond a highway bridge which is 2000 yards west of the RR bridge...The convoy left with A party, departing for P of E [Point of Embarkation], but were fortunate enough to have coffee and doughnuts before leaving. Thanks to the Red Cross. A party left under the general direction of TQM Capt. Roy E. Adams, at 1400 hours; Capt. Wm T. Shealy in charge of the 486<sup>th</sup> Sqdn movement; reached Salerno about 1630, hot and dusty...EM discovered hot chow with the Navy EM1. Chief dessert served, according to conversation, was cold American beer.

13<sup>th</sup>

Target was the RR bridge NW of Ficulle with alternate Terni M/Yds. Briefing time was at 0800. Take-off at 0856. The boys went without breakfast as it wasn't decided what organization of the 321<sup>st</sup> we were to mess with. The 486<sup>th</sup> bombed a highway bridge 4 miles NW of the target. Several bursts were very close to the north end of the bridge...We are going to mess with the 447<sup>th</sup> which is a bona deal as our past experience of the days when Mt. Vesuvius orphaned us proved. The news in A party is that at 7 AM a few officers and a small number of enlisted men got to bed after a night of loading the Thruster, a British LST. What a night! Pulled out of the harbor approx. 1500 hours in company with the 487<sup>th</sup>, on Bruiser, sister LST to our ship. A light British cruiser gave comforting escort in U-boat waters.....

14<sup>th</sup>

Target was Viterbo A/D. Briefing was at 0800 and take-off at 0912. The 486<sup>th</sup> pattern was just north of the 488<sup>th</sup>'s pattern and went well across the dispersal area, destroying at least one plane. The last box which was composed of the 486<sup>th</sup> and 488<sup>th</sup> bombed along the northern edge of the field and destroyed two planes...Chow at the 447<sup>th</sup> was excellent and the boys really commented on the coffee, it's plenty good....A party had a very pleasant voyage. Everyone enjoyed the Sardinia coast line and rocky islands off Corsica. Arrived at Porto Vecchio at 1300 hours. Began unloading at 1500 hours. Bivouacked in cork-oak grove just out of the port city. The woodland, pastures, flowers, and civilians were a relief to what we had been accustomed to for so long....

15<sup>th</sup>

Target – RR bridge at Marciano. Briefing at 1200, take-off at 1310. 6 B-25s from each squadron took part in the mission. The 486<sup>th</sup> pattern hit the RR track about 200 feet south of the bridge. Our squadron area sure seems deserted, all we have left is the Officer's row and the enlisted combat crews living in a house supposedly belonging to Mussolini. A party had a night of music, shall we say, by the kitchen gang (Walters, Bissette and Co) and the negro truck drivers. A good rest and we were ready to go again. At 0800 hours pulled out for –? camp? Pleasant journey. It really is a pretty country for a ride, but all but one of the bridges were blown up by Jerries demolition bombs. We arrived at our new camp and found it to be swell. Lt. Milloway and 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Dilbeck were on hand to show us the area. We were all set up by sundown...

16<sup>th</sup>

The target was the RR bridge 5 miles north of Todi. Briefing was at 0830, take-off at 0957 hours. Each squadron furnished 6 B-25s. The 486<sup>th</sup> bombed 200 yards north and south of the tracks on the west side of the bridge...Nothing exciting happened at Guado L/G, 486<sup>th</sup> area. A party hasn't much to report, but the following is found to be interesting. The Sabbath rainy, weather cold, no chapel and no chaplain. Every man and officer worshiped as he wished...Refinement of camp continued, emphasis on slit trenches....

17<sup>th</sup>

Same target, RR bridge 5 miles north of Todi. Briefing at 0800, take-off at 0920. We had 6 B-25s on the mission. Our pattern was scattered, from 200 yards northeast of the bridge, straddling the tracks up to the northeast corner of the approach to the bridge.....Squadron activity at Gaudio was routing. However most of the officers and enlisted men went to the 321<sup>st</sup> Group Theatre and saw "The Miracle of Morgan's Creek." This was an exceptionally good picture and well appreciated by all....At Corsica A party reported that the Administration offices were set up, and put in operational order. Foxholes became regular dug-outs....

18<sup>th</sup>

Briefing called at 0830, take-off at 0920. The boys went over the bomb-line and ran into closed in weather, cloud coverage, overcast, rain. They circled and returned. Lt. Lewis' ship had small arms fire pierce his bomb bay and straight on through the top of the ship.....Tents were pulled and 6 planes left. Major Hackney led the flight to Corsica....Report from Corsica was that the barber shop was operational. Everybody needed Josies help. They got it. Good food all the time. The PM and 486<sup>th</sup> planes arrived. They brought us welcomed mail from our loved ones at home. This meant more tent pitching and more burrowing.....

19<sup>th</sup>

No mission from Gaudio today, but the Corsicans were to become operational today. The boys at Gaudio were up at 0700 and tents started to go down before breakfast. Trucks loaded equipment taken to the planes....Take-off at 0900 hours. The planes were really loaded from the bombardier's compartment back to the tail-gunner's position. After flying 1 ½ hours the coast of Corsica loomed up on the horizon and our new home was spotted. We were all together again at 1100 hours. One happy family! What a supply of PX goods! That's OK Mr. PX Officer....Mission of six planes to port Piombino. One ship returned at Elba due to turret trouble. The docks and auxiliary installations were properly plastered by all sqdns plus the force of the 310<sup>th</sup> Group....

20<sup>th</sup>

No mission today...The flight echelon got itself settled, digging foxholes and fixing up tents. Some of them outdo others, but in general they area all quite ideal....The horse shoe players are here and the game is under full swing. The PX opened at 1300 – everybody!...Lires are being exchanged for francs. What a headache that is for our finance officer, Lt. Thomas B. Meyer....

21<sup>st</sup>

Briefing called for 0645 – postponed till 1300 – finally a stand-down...Old man weather had cause to intervene...Plans are being made for another trip to Cairo. Captain Nafe also mentioned that several planes for modification had to be flown to Foggia...Several of our bombardiers are going to Bari...It's possible a little pleasure with business may be combined....

22<sup>nd</sup>

Target was the RR bridge 2 ½ miles northwest of Ficulle. Briefing called for 0645 – Take-off time was at 0840 hrs. The 486<sup>th</sup> led and bombs were dropped across road at A-1971. The 489<sup>th</sup> hit the bridge. The squadron transportation officer has learned that we are getting two new jeeps and a new 2 ½ ton truck. We also will receive a third jeep which is completely reconditioned. It is possible that hq and S-2 might get the jeeps. Most of the boys went to the outdoor theater and saw “Thousands Cheer.” Consensus of opinion was that it was very good, but a little long. The boys came home at 0015 hrs. April 23....

23<sup>rd</sup>

Target was bridge north of Orvieto. Briefing called at 0845 hrs. Take-off at 1008. - The 486<sup>th</sup> bombed the bridge NW of Ficulle, getting one hit on the track just south of the bridge. Our photos show the damage done on our mission of 22 April. The tracks were cut just south of the small bridge – which is 250 feet south of the target. Major Hackney and Captain Shealy went to the QM to get supplies. They came back with shoes, fatigues, field jackets, OD pants and shirts and other shortages. They also were successful in obtaining lumber for a mess hall. This should be a Bona deal when completed.....

24<sup>th</sup>

Target for today was RR bridge of Orvieto. Briefing was called for 1230 hours. Take-off was at 1352 hrs. The 486<sup>th</sup> bomb pattern was across the bridge with some direct hits on the bridge. We received our reconditioned jeep today in S-2. Major Hackney and Capt. Shealy took the new jeeps. The squadron continued on in its usual routine methods....Many of the boys went down the road to the engineers to take a shower. Many of them came out dressed in sun tans. The weather was beautiful and warranted the change from O.D.s. At 1800 hrs, we had a squadron meeting, Major Hackney spoke on the necessary care of personal equipment, motorcycle riding and buzzing the field. He also complimented the boys on the efficient method of the last two moves. Lt. Meyer, the adjutant, spoke on maintenance of the squadron vehicles - - the appropriation of mess hall ingredients and the use and assignment of vehicles to Section Heads, out of bound towns and necessary passes to clear personnel if they wish to visit them. Captain Stith spoke on censorship and at 1840 hours introduced the Group ALO [Allied Liaison Officer] for a brief on the war situation in all parts of the world. The ALO said he wouldn't say or didn't know the date of the invasion, but wouldn't be surprised if it occurred within the next month....

25<sup>th</sup>

Target for today was Ficulle South RR bridge. Briefing called for 1320 hrs, take-off was at 1449. Each squadron furnished 9 ships. The 486<sup>th</sup> bombed northwest of the RR bridge, north of Orvieto. The last box consisting of three 486<sup>th</sup> and three 488<sup>th</sup> ships bombed S[outh] of the east end of the bridge and is not complete on the photos. Three ships in this last box were holed. In 6H the radio gunner, Sgt. Bills, was wounded. This ship had about 8 holes. Sgt. Dilbeck the 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt was along as an observer for his first combat mission - rough. Ship 6F piloted by Lt. Sellers, Co-pilot Hartsock, Bombardier Olson, tail gunner Burnette, turret gunner MacDonald, radio-gunner Damaini, had 195 large holes in the wings and fuselage, right engine out and right prop feathered, but Lt Sellers and crew all arrived back at Alesan L/G safely. Ship 6Y was also holed, but not as badly as 6H and 6F. Other misfortune of this eventful day of April 25, 1944, was when Lt. McMillan was injured when he turned over in the S-3 jeep, fortunately, he was only badly bruised. After chow, there was a meeting of all combat crews and Captain Dozier and Captain Stith were the speakers. Caution was placed on the crews making sure that gas cap covers were on the tanks on the planes. All crews will report a half hour before take-off time to the pilot and learn ship regulations.....

26<sup>th</sup>

Briefing called for 1300 then 1520 and finally a stand-down. Weather was nil, last night the wind blew, thunder and lightning and we were enveloped by mud and all of its unpleasant characteristics. The mess tent and barber's tent were blown down and except for limited activity and routine Squadron duties, a lot of the boys got plenty of sack time. Tonight more wind and rain and it looks like tomorrow will let fury rest in peace. Old man weather sure isn't cooperating in the war effort, but nature has its reasons and we must abide by them.....



27<sup>th</sup>

Briefing called form 0830 – postponed to 1330 – then called to a stand-down...The regular squadron duties performed...Boys have put up the volleyball net and are participating quite vigorously...Received word today that the ship in Cairo met with a little difficulty when landing. TWX [TeletypeWriter eXchange] from Lt. O'Toole said the nose wheel failed and date of return not known...The line personnel are glad, in a way, that there isn't a mission today. This gives them a opportunity to get necessary work accomplished. Captain Bridges and his section have worries in trying to put armor plate in these new J's and D-1's. Capt. Nafe and Capt. Bridges can't understand why these ships don't come in already modified and armor plate in the Bombardier's, Pilot's and Gunner's compartments. This would save a great many headaches and make life a lot easier all the way around....

28<sup>th</sup>

Target was the Main Orvieto RR Bridge. Briefing called for 1420 – take-off at 1540 hours. The 486<sup>th</sup> hit a truck near the bridge and [bombs] walked across the road bridge. The road was severed. The second element hit the M/Yds in Orvieto...The mail situation hasn't been too good lately and it really can be seen, what affect this has on the Squadron morale. The subject of invasion is thought about – speculated – and bets are high and furious. We are all in great hopes that it shall be soon....

29<sup>th</sup>

Target was Terni Viaduct. Briefing was at 0645 – take-off at 0755. The 486<sup>th</sup> pattern straddled the tracks to the viaduct. The second element bombed a bridge across the canal about 100 yds to the left of the target.....The Squadron received the laundry back from QM and a great many of the members turned out this afternoon in Khaki....Captain Dozier, Lt. “Chief” Glade, S/Sgt. Roy C. Brown and T/Sgt. Thomas Moxon departed today for a furlough in the good old USA. This will give them 30 days there and they will return to us later. This new method has its pros and cons, but as a whole most of the boys are more than willing to take this, and hope the war will be over in Europe before their leave is up....

30<sup>th</sup>

Target was Marciano RR Bridge. Briefing at 1430 – take-off at 1546. The 486<sup>th</sup> bombed across the south approach to the Bridge. The second element bombed the warehouse and observed black smoke arising from them at a point immediately south of the bridge.....

[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. April 9, 2015]