

## December 1943

[Transcriber's note: Some entries are truncated. Please see the original document for the full details.]

War Diary, 487<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, 340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group

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December 1<sup>st</sup>

Two targets were originally scheduled for today. Bad weather canceled the first, at 0930. Takeoff for the second was 1430, and the target was a pinpointed area just east of the Garigliano River, near S. Ambrogio, Italy. The 487<sup>th</sup> placed their bombs near the river, in the Western part of the pinpointed area, which was about two miles long and a half mile or so wide. No mention was made of what was contained within the area, but it is presumed that it was a strong point, since it was right on the line....All planes returned safely, only several bursts of A/A were observed, and they were directed at a plane straggling because it was loaded with 8 wing bombs and couldn't keep up. Two runs were made by the formation over the target, but this plane decided not to try it a second time and came home with its bombs....The Ready Room (Officers Club) got under way tonight with a very smoky stove. It was time to go to bed when it heat got to functioning. A good poker game resulted in transferring many pay checks to Lt. McCabe's account....Lt. Sherbourne finished his fiftieth mission. Since fifty missions are now considered merely a check point, and all processing of men going home has been temporarily frozen by a telegram from General Spaatz, it is not known whether he will go back to the States....Apple pie for supper. Creamed chicken and cranberry sauce for dinner....The town of Foggia is badly bombed – more than any town we have seen. Many of the buildings appear to have fallen down from slight concussion, being so old and poorly constructed....Lts. Garret and Loysen have gone back to the States....They want to hit the 1<sup>st</sup> Air Force, if possible....

2<sup>nd</sup>

Two missions today, both to the same target which was bombed yesterday. All bombs landed in the target area in the morning and in the afternoon, and both raids were considered very successful. There was no enemy opposition at all, and all planes returned safely. Lt. McCabe reported that great artillery barrages - “they looked like bomb patterns” - were in progress. There were some fifty dive bombers in the vicinity, and the A-20's laid a cross on our afternoon pattern. Report has it that a formation every five minutes bombed the same area today....NATOUSA headquarters has sent the Squadron an official report of burial of Lt. Sidney Ormsbee. The date of burial was 22 Aug 43, and the place 2 miles NE Faro, Sicily....The Commanding General of the 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force has written a letter commending the B-25's in this area for their strategic work in the Balkans. Special mention is made of the Sofia and Athens raids....The Flagello in town presented “The Naples Revue,” one of the best stage shows to date. Music was very good, with excellent individual performers, especially the piano player and the xylophone player. It was good to see the reflection of colored lights in the chromium instruments again. The vocalists sang in English, but whether they had an inkling of what they were singing is a doubtful matter. A young male sang “Jeepers-Creepers” which must have given any interpreter the fits. The BBC announces today that President Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Generalissimo Chiang Kai Chek have met in the Middle East. No mention is made of Joseph Stalin. But BBC says President

Roosevelt and Churchill have left Cairo for an unknown destination which may be Moscow.

3<sup>rd</sup>

Main target for today was the marshaling yards at Sebinik, in Yugoslavia. Takeoff was at 1130 and our planes were over the target at 1245. The marshaling yards were not hit, but bombs were dropped on port installations and small craft in the harbor. There was some ack-ack, but no fighters. All planes returned safely....BBC announces finally that Joseph Stalin was in the Middle East in conference with Roosevelt, Churchill, and Chiang Kai Chek. Our rumor has so far proved correct. We're wondering about Von Papen and the two JU88's....Eugene Hobart, gunner with Capt. Flack when ship No. 465 went down near Messina on August 16, has been announced as a prisoner of the Germans....Photos of today's raid show two fair sized vessels being completely covered by bomb bursts in the harbor....A cinema was held in the Squadron area, outdoors, tonight - "The Kansan" with Richard Dix. About a hundred men attended, although it got pretty cold before the last cowboy bit the dust....T/Sgt. King is in charge of the Enlisted Men's club, which is located in one of the farm buildings close by. It is small but cozy....combat crews have received some very fine bed rolls. Combat men have had trouble sleeping, and most of them have been rising early, but for the past two mornings, several have been late for breakfast, something heretofore unheard of....Red Cross served donuts and Java out on the line this afternoon....Collections have been made from officers and men for a food fund. Lt. Linthicum and Lt. Farley plan to scrounge for more holiday food....Men returning from the British hospitals lately are dissatisfied with the treatment received there. The rations were worse than those received in our squadron, the tents were cold, and the gonorrhoea patients not only received no treatment (they say) but were called out on work call.

4<sup>th</sup>

No mission today. Had an hours standby in the morning, but a stand-down was declared in the afternoon....Rumor has it that the nurses who were lost in a DC-3 on the day Lt. Cox bailed out of his ship have been located in Albania, protected by Partisans or someone....A road is being put in connecting our field with the main San Sevro highway. It is being made of brick and stone from bombed buildings in Foggia. This rubble is laid down whole and then crushed in place by large rollers. It is not yet in use, but is put down rather rapidly. About 100 yards per day....The field is getting taxi strips and "hard stands" of portable steel. It makes a great noise when used. The work is progressing rapidly, and is being done by British....Group headquarters is about 5 miles from the 487<sup>th</sup> Squadron Area....Many of the men have bought chickens, pigs, and turkeys privately, and plan to save them for the holidays. Their tents look like barnyards....Captain Meriwether is ill and confined to his tent. Perhaps a touch of malaria.

5<sup>th</sup>

Target for today was to be Aquilla, Italy, whose marshaling yards were once before a target of the 487<sup>th</sup>. Due to weather conditions, the formation returned with bombs....Lt. Rosenberg has returned from Bari with tall tales of the bombing there. Twenty-five JU-88's came over early in the evening, and dropped their bombs almost without warning. Some fifteen ships were sunk. An ammunition ship exploded like fireworks, and an oil tanker shook the country for miles around when she went off. There must have been at least a thousand casualties. One Liberty ship ("She held up pretty well under three hits") went down with all the equipment for several complete American hospitals intended for the Foggia area. The nurses are here, however, and the officers of the 487<sup>th</sup> are planning a dance for the holidays. Two carloads of combat crew members left today for Naples and the rest camp on the Isle of Capri.

They will stay a week, and will have an automobile at their disposal....The photo of 7K dropping bombs near the Voltorno has appeared in the November issue of Aeroplane, a British publication. The legend says Mitchell bombers have graduated, because of wing bombs, from the light medium to medium class....Christmas packages are pouring in, most of them in good condition, nearly all containing food, but some containing weird items such as neckties....

6<sup>th</sup>

No mission today, because of weather....Wilkerson has received his promotion to Captaincy....The new sleeping bags are really the cats pajamas....The rates run rampant in these barns at night. They also slip around in the tents, eating candy bares and otherwise enjoying Christmas....Rumor has it that a new bomber command, the 12<sup>th</sup>, may become part of the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force. Further rumor says that the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force will move to Russian bases, there to bomb Japan. The meeting of Pres. Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin in Teheran, Persia, may have touched off this story of air bases in Russia....We are evidently expecting an inspection by someone above the rank of leaf-colonel. Slit trenches are everywhere (very new) and there is a great cry for fire extinguishers in every tent. Even the mess hall has a row of shrubs newly set at the officers entrance. Drilling takes place in the mud just across the road, and officers are reading up on how to properly execute a Military Correspondence. It looks like a good winter....Outdoor movie again tonight. Weather was fairly warm, and fairly dry, and there was a moon. If it had been a good picture ("Night Club Scandals" with long-dead John Barrymore and equally long-dead Lynn Overman) everything would have been O.K.....On the coast near Termoli, some 40 or 45 weired looking trucks whizzed down the highway, paused delicately at waters edge, faltered daintily, settled out on the brine and floated out in the Adriatic....

7<sup>th</sup>

Today was the second anniversary of Perl Harbor. "It doesn't seem like two years," said some; "like a lifetime," said others....Today's target was the road bridge across the river Pescara, in the town of Pescara, Italy. Takeoff was at 1155, in 9-plane formation. The pattern was placed just ahead of and south of the bridge, no squadron hitting it. Ack-ack was black and red, heavy, moderately intense, and accurate. Lt. Forrester got a scratched face from ack-ack which broke throught his windshield. A piece stuck in the bill of his cap, and he has it retrieved and saved....The 310<sup>th</sup> Group has been split and reformed. Two Squadrons are in Corsica, another is in Africa on patrol work, and a third has been stripped to receive all new B-25G planes and crews from the States. Six crews and planes came in to the 340<sup>th</sup> today, and the 487<sup>th</sup> received two officers, 10 enlisted men and one plane....Show tonight at the Flagello in Foggia was "amateur night" and a round of fun for all. The Engineers Band was good, a hillbilly ensemble was called out again and again, and the winner of the prize was a poor fellow for whom every one felt embarrassed and sorry. "Truth and Consequences" drew a lot of laughs, especially when some guy was forced to strip to the skin. His gestures (automatic) when he got down to this underwear – sort of self protection – were a scream....Turkey for supper tonight. The new purchasing committee scrounged far and wide, managed to buy thirty-six turkeys of small weight. It gave out before everyone was served. There were new potatoes, dressing, cranberry sauce (a bit liquid) olives, and chocolate plain cake.....The straw-filled mattress covers are proving very satisfactory for keeping out the cold. The farmer of the hill fills them for a pack of cigarettes, and glad to do it....The Navy announces an attack on the Marshall Island in the Pacific. Russian and Italian fronts are progressing slowly. Crews today reported heavy fighting North of the Sangro....

8<sup>th</sup>

Mission today was to bomb and destroy the marshaling yards at Aquila, Italy. These yards were once before the target for 487<sup>th</sup> bombs, but cloud cover at that time saved them. They are part of one of the four main supply channels for Axis forces in Italy. 487<sup>th</sup> bombs could not be accurately identified in the photos, but returning crews were confident they dealt a lot of misery to the yards, and the photos show hits....Show tonight at the Flagello in town was "Five Who Came Back" prefaced by the chants of a group of Negro GI's. Latter were very good on "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."....12<sup>th</sup> AF has forbidden the wearing of flying jackets in Foggia. This will probably cut down on attendance at shows at night. 12<sup>th</sup> AF doesn't have to ride seven miles back to camp in an open truck....Plans have been made for the officers of the 487<sup>th</sup> to have a party for the nurses of the 61<sup>st</sup> and 55<sup>th</sup> Hospitals on December 19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>....The new men from the 310<sup>th</sup> like the chow we have here. "like the 310<sup>th</sup> never dreamed of having." Of course, they came in just as our purchasing committee was beginning to get on the ball.....The engineers stationed hereabouts have a lot of esprit de corps. They sing and have a great deal of fun -- "We're the boys who make the noise in the armeeeee.".....Plans are underway for a baseball team for the 487<sup>th</sup>. There are already many volunteers. And a number of men are interested in a Glee Club which will start out with Christmas Carols.....Morale in the squadron seems to be as high as it has ever been, despite the mud and cold. Adversity seems to raise rather than lower morale.....

9<sup>th</sup>

Mission today was to bomb the marshaling yards at Terni, Italy. Returning crews reported that a few bombs might have fallen in the yards, but the majority of them overshot....Rumor has it that the light bombers (A-20's etc) will leave the Tactical Bomber Force.....Ordnance is confused about the new plans to organize an Ordnance Company separate from the Group. Apparently there will be four officers who will perform all the administrative as well as operational duties of the company, and the same men who now do nothing but load bombs will be cooking, standing guard, doing paper work, and otherwise taking care of themselves. All their equipment will come from the Group, which is very short on many items, such as typewriters. They will separate physically from the Group on our next move. Lt. Doakes will probably command the unit.....The PX has been set up in a tent of its own, and will attempt to function as a permanent store, if possible, instead of having "ration day" and its long line.....Phone service is very poor because of the work progressing on roads, but the roads themselves are doing nicely. A black coating of coke or something has smoothed out the crushed-brick surface.....

10<sup>th</sup>

No mission today, although the weather here was clear in the morning. Rains came at nightfall, and the area was soon slick and covered with a sheet of water....Cpl. Bartkus speaks to a young friend entering the Service: "It is pretty hard to be in the wrong if you are patriotic at heart."....Public relations says pilot replacement have less education, generally, than the men whom they are replacing.....It is noticed by some observant men that President Roosevelt's program for helping service men consists of short-term aids, and says nothing of a strong economic system which will return the soldiers to permanent jobs in industry....More mail and packages today. Many packages include items which come through our PX rations, and recipients are disappointed.....One man even received some canned vienna sausages....Lt. Sumner visited today. He is with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reconnaissance Group of Colonel Roosevelt's Wing, which is now stationed at San Severo. He likes his new job as Group Statistical Officer.....A new B-17 wing is moving to Satellite No. 2 from Africa....Rumor: that Lord Haw-Haw says Air Forces in Foggia area are going to "get it" this week if they don't "lay off."..Fifteen days have elapsed and war isn't yet over in this theatre. The Colonel loses....Lt. Coyle and Lt Myles went to Bari in a jeep

yesterday. They picked up two Italian girls, prostitutes, who confided that they had been run out of Barleta, because they were "malada" and were on their way to Trani. The jeep soon passed a cart containing three other girls, and of course stopped. There was a lot of gay greeting, and these sister of sin piled on the jeep, and all went on to Trani. At that town, the girls forced Lt. Coyle to stop by a cemetery where a funeral was in progress. Each of the girls broke into tears. They controlled themselves after a short while and went on into town. There they introduced the Lts. to another member of their great sorority, a large woman who was fond of Americans. She had pictures of her many lovers, and showed on to Lt. Coyle. The fine American pictured was as black a coal. Ella Logan is expected in Foggia on Christmas Eve....

11<sup>th</sup>

No mission today, because of weather. No rain, but dull skies....Capt. Meriwether is in the hospital, but Lt. Linthicum, his room-mate, refuses to carry his Christmas packages to him. Capt. Meriwether is extremely generous, and would undoubtedly give all his Christmas cheer away if his packages were taken to him.....Beginning Monday, men going into the shows in Foggia must wear their O.D.'s. One man says he won't dress to go in to see even Betty Grable in "Coney Island" (one of the few first-class pictures we have seen over here). He says he wouldn't dress to go in to see Betty Grable herself, undressed....The mud here is the slickest we have encountered. The water refuses to sink in. Roads are rough, rutted, and slick as grease. The new metal taxi-strips, almost completed, are already sinking somewhat...."Coney Island" was preceded tonight by our old friends from Catania, the colored boys of the 8<sup>th</sup> Ordnance Depot, who presented a good show. Jokes were bawdy. Some Southern boys were not used to having dirty stories told by Negroes in the presence of white women, but no particular comment was heard. Probably on one thought about it. The Officers of the 487<sup>th</sup> have engaged the orchestra for their dance on the 18<sup>th</sup>....Sgt. Snaper and Sgt. Bronstein have almost single-handedly erected the Enlisted Men's Club room. It is one of the small roof-less rooms of our community barn, covered with a tarpaulin. They have hauled in white gravel for the floor and have installed a stove and two lights. It should be fairly popular, especially for gambling....Enlisted Men do no work very well together on a voluntary basis for the erection of a club. They expect it to be erected for them (perhaps justifiably). The officers pitch in more eagerly to get theirs together.....

12<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down today....A hall has been procured for the officers dance – the ball-room of the Palazzo del Governo in Foggia – after considerable search. Captain Bugbee and others have gone to Naples looking for liquor, food, decorations, etcetera. They may go on to Malta, or perhaps to Algiers.....Red Alert all tonight. The switchboard phoned to say that a raid on Foggia was expected. Perhaps because of the big full moon, glinting so prettily in the mud and slush in our area, and lighting up the movie screen so much that the show in the area had to be canceled....There is a terrific concentration of air power in the Foggia Area, and it looks as if more may come in....The new 310<sup>th</sup> men speak highly of this Group. They say the 340<sup>th</sup> is really on the ball....No man can make a tent-full of soldiers quiet down and listen like Bing Crosby. His records represent something – beer halls, juke boxes, cigarette haze, sentiment. It's nice that the British like him as well as we do, for it's their BBC broadcasts which we usually get....The Germans are throwing everything they have into the fight in Italy. The going is rough for our boys.....Sgt. Dillingham and Pinion had their photos taken upon the completion of their 55<sup>th</sup> mission.....Packages mailed in the first part of October reached home in the middle of November. Not bad service at all.....

13<sup>th</sup>

The squadron got ready for a mission this morning, but it was canceled just as the trucks pulled up to Group Operations for briefing....The men, or many of them, are disconsolate about having to do more than fifty missions. One Squadron, we hear, has organized a "Fly Till Death" Club. One man says his country has let him down....San Severo, located about 15 miles north of here, is a pleasant little place, unbombed. It may become a bigger favorite than Foggia, which is becoming too much of a headquarters town. You can tell the people there and in Foggia are fresh from Africa because they speak of "francs" and then hastily correct into lires.....We hear that the B-17s were the ones who wrecked Foggia – in about 15 minutes.....Everyone is looking forward to spending a few days in Naples. Swede Holmstrom and others went to Naples and engaged 12 rooms as a "rest" camp. for war-weary mechanics. Bring your own bedding.....The mess hall is doing rather well these days – with fresh potatoes and cabbage frequently.....

14<sup>th</sup>

Target for today was the marshaling yards at Station DiOrti, Italy. Returning crews reported poor results.....Rumor has it that we may move into the Naples area soon. There are further rumors regarding the formation of the 12<sup>th</sup> Bomber Command.....At the Flagella in town, a magician (Italian) did a couple of good numbers, after which James Cagney became enamored of three elderly ladies in "Johnny Come Lately.".....Interest in football is almost nil. It's difficult to find out who is playing in the Bowls this year, or even whether there will be any bowl games.....Jeeps are being lost right and left in other Squadrons these days. Some say the Fighter Groups are swiping them and that every officer in the 57<sup>th</sup> F.G. has personal transportation. It seems hardly fair to court-martial a man for losing a vehicle when it is stolen by someone else in another outfit. In one local case, however, the jeep was not immobilized at all.....Boxes are being placed around the Squadron for contributions for the Italian kids Christmas party being given by the red Cross. Candy and money are being donated rather generously.....Several men are away on pass to Naples. Returning officers from Capri say the rest camp is really sumpn. Meals in bed, bar open all night.....

15<sup>th</sup>

Target for today was the north airdrome at Mostar, Yugoslavia. JU-87's and training planes of the German Air Force, being used against the Partisans, were reported to be stationed on the field, and the 487<sup>th</sup> was given the job of covering the center area part of the south dispersal area with fragmentation and demolition bombs. Photos show the task was well performed, and the total dispersal area was well covered by the three squadrons participating in the mission.....The Partisans are now favored more than the Chetniks. Advices say that Mihailovich himself shows no signs of disaffection for the allied cause, but that some of his satellite units have been known to cooperate with the Germans. Tito is at the head of the partisan, a fighting force of 200,000 men with headquarters at Jajce. The towns of Livno, Bugojino, and Glamoc are in Partisan hands and have been recommended as emergency landing grounds.....Lt. Badgett's ship, 7S, received two holes in today's mission.....We are told that the new Bomber Command Headquarters unit will receive most of its enlisted and officer personnel from the field, and that recommendations have been made from this Squadron of several persons....News reports only infrequently use the term "avengers Group" in describing our activities. They generally say "A B-25 Unit." Sgt. Hickey says 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force may soon allow the full use of "340<sup>th</sup> Group" in publicity.....

16<sup>th</sup>

Mission today was to bomb shipping in the harbor of Zara, Yugoslavia. Three squadrons went over, pasting the harbor pretty thoroughly. The 487<sup>th</sup> was given credit by the Group Photo Interpreter for hitting a ship. His report reads: "The pattern laid by 487<sup>th</sup> Squadron started just south of Bora Cove and extended across the large cargo vessel (520 ft). A direct hit near the bow caused a large explosion. Obliques taken as the formation left the target show numerous fires on both the peninsula and the area east of the harbor." Only he spelled it "harbour," because the report was mimeographed in the Argus, edited by British Capt. Simpson.....Capt. Meriwether is back from the hospital. He says he didn't get enough to eat....Capt. Parsons says elements of General Eisenhower's staff will move to Foggia.....

17<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down today....Lt. Farley's band went in search of liquor for the officers party. Such a bunch of people these Eyetie bootleggers are. One procrastinating lady, surrounded by numerous children including a shy maiden of sixteen years who snuck in and out of the room, said she would have promised maraschino "domane." Upon being pressed, she went outside, returned to say she could hatch out a batch in two hours. Bottles were taken in to the cognac dealer at two o'clock and were ready, with labels and colored tinfoil wraps at five. The Vermouth dealer had his already bottled, appearing to be a much slicker promoter (in trench coat and pork-pie hat) than the dining-room operators. A couple of beardless lads approached the buying party, took them away to an upstairs bedroom where he kept his supply of Spumante originale. The cork failed to pop (everyone was pained and hurt) and the liquid on the inside was 5-cent-per-litre new wine, being sold for two dollars per bottle. Lt. Farley received permission from AMGOT (sometimes called AMG) to purchase ten pounds of scarce cheese, but had it stolen from him ten minutes later....The many children in Cerignola were surprisingly well-formed and good looking....Show in Foggia at the Flagello was Bob Hope in "You've Got Me Covered." "Stranger in town" with Frank Morgan showed at the Red Cross little Theatre.....A formation was drummed up in a hurry today, and General Cannon awarded handsome medals to those who had them coming. Lt. McCabe received the Soldier's Medal. Lt. Sherbourne was given the DFC (with all the little ribbons and lapel pins). Lt. Gavin's DFC was received for him by Lt. Peterson, and Lt. Wrede took Lt. Fonda's Silver Star. Sgt. Pinion took his DFC in person, and Sgt. Berry was on hand to accept his Soldier's Medal.....Our front yard has become a bombing range. This morning, a A-20 dropped a few practice bombs not far away, causing considerable nervousness.....

18<sup>th</sup>

A stand-down today made preparations for the officers dance considerably easier. Lt. Hague borrowed the 489<sup>th</sup> piano and officers club stools and glasses. He finished up the bar, made of glass bricks from the unfinished aircraft factory in Foggia, and placed colored lights outside. The afternoon was occupied with popping corn in the Ready Room and making sandwiches in the mess hall. Lt. May oversaw operations. Lt. Wolkoff sliced bread, Lt. Samuels mixed spam, cheese, almonds, and home-made mayonnaise....The party was genteel and a success. About twenty nurses were present, some in evening dresses. They looked chilly in the unheated hall, with their bare backs. There were only a handful of drunks, most of whom kept their distance. The Spanish brandy disappeared quickly and was supplemented by raw cognac, which was not very good.....The nurses were picked up in jeeps, and froze on the way to and from the dance. But they seemed to have a good time.....The siren swung out several times during the evening, scaring the natives, and the Chaplain made the announcement about a possible air-raid, but nothing developed to disturb the party.....Group is planning a dance for the 27<sup>th</sup>. This will come after our second party on the 24<sup>th</sup>.....Men back from Naples report that the place is

crowded with GI's, and that Italians from six to sixty are trying to sell spaghetti, beefsteak, and senorignas in that order of importance.....Lt. Linthicum came back with several cows this afternoon – enough beef for seven meals. They're tough, and will probably be used only in hamburger.....

19<sup>th</sup>

Today's target was the marshaling yards at Terni, Italy, 487<sup>th</sup> led the 489<sup>th</sup> and 486<sup>th</sup> on a good approach, but our Squadron overshot the yards. 486<sup>th</sup> hit squarely, and the 489<sup>th</sup> hit the tracks east of the choke point. No enemy opposition at all was encountered. One ship got a hole in the upper turret, probably from a bomb spinner, and another ship received a similar hole in the nose glass. All planes returned safely....A major who has his office near the dance hall used last night called this morning to complain. He said the place was a mess, that furniture had been ripped apart, people sick everywhere, mud on floors and walls, and his grief case was strewn all over the ballroom floor. Investigation revealed that someone had indeed got sick in the Colonel's office (his initials are Moose Sather, we hear) but that the rest of the story was exaggerated. The brief case was left on a shelf in the office, and had been turned over to the MP's by Captain Parsons. The great quantities of mud were were only tracks brought in by dirty feet, the story of a torn-open cabinet was obviously fabricated by the embarrassed major, who had secret materials in the brief case. Only good was spoken of the party by everyone who was there, including the women and the invited wheels.....It's going to be a problem getting girls for the Xmas Eve party. All the hospitals are planning Christmas of their own. The Group party for the 27<sup>th</sup> has been canceled (it was decided the hall is too small) and the 488<sup>th</sup> is taking over the hall and band engaged by the committee. This is wonderful, because a dance given by the Group would ruin our reputation forever....Special Services (with the aid of Otto Stellato, who suggested it) has been taking orders for Christmas liquor for the enlisted men. They've ordered about five hundred dollars worth, and have turned over the cash. No guarantees of quality were made, and this point was stressed.....All our planes were moved today to the far side of the runway, where steel hardstands have been built. The line moved yesterday.

20<sup>th</sup>

Principal target for today was to have been 27 ships observed in the harbor at Travenik, Yugoslavia. Reconnaissance this morning couldn't find them, however, and the mission was canceled shortly before takeoff....Captain Baldwin, 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historian, calls the 487<sup>th</sup> War Diary "a little gem.".....Combat crews are being supplied with new escape belts – canvas belts inside of which are a silk map of the Mediterranean area and a small compass....No one knows yet whether we are going to have Turkey for Christmas. But no one is excited. That's how much we trust Uncle Sam....Lts. Duthie, Weiss, F/O Anderson, Sgts. Morthimer, Erceg, and Chalmers have been transferred to the 68<sup>th</sup> Reconnaissance Group, and left today....The Squadron was called together this afternoon at three and given lectures on sex and the articles of war....Many of the officers who slept past breakfast yesterday, due to the party, rushed into Foggia for coffee at the Red Cross. It reminded one of old times in the States. Hamburger at noon today. Mighty fine stuff – with ketchup. Hash for supper. Lt. Farley has been unanimously acclaimed Mess Officer. His friends have voted him in, with placards, crooked ballot boxes, and everything else except free beer....Sample questions which S-2 is asked: When was the Bonus Bill passed? When was the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment repealed? When did the Sicilian campaign begin and end? What's at the show tonight? What position did Winston Churchill hold in the last war? Was there any mail today? When's pay call?....



21<sup>th</sup>

We had stand-by until mid-afternoon today, and later discovered we were supposed to be on stand-down....Rumor says we are going to move to the Naples area soon because the Strat boys want this field....One man has been writing Christmas Greetings on bombs: "Merry Xmas from Sugar" etc. The bitterest pill for the soldier to swallow seems to be his wife's or girl friend's joining the Army. They can't imagine how she can remain virtuous...."The boys over there think it's all glory flying. I get up there and I think how nice it would be to pull permanent KP in the States, or to be popping soda at Walgreen's. Back on the ground my chest puffs out a little, but it goes down when I see my name on the crew list again." A bath truck goes in to town every afternoon at two o'clock, and afterwards drops by the Red Cross for coffee and donuts, to delay the long ride back in the cold. It's cozy and comforting to be clean and to sit and have a cup of hot java....Information comes in that the Germans are jittery along the Italian coast south of Ancona, expecting a seaborne invasion....Men returning from Naples say it was the 24<sup>th</sup> Division which was hit by the 489<sup>th</sup> Squadron when they bombed the Voltorno instead of the Garigliano river the first of the month. The whole 340<sup>th</sup> is getting the blame. A number of vehicles were ruined, and there were a number of casualties....From Algiers comes a story that a third of General Eisenhower's WACS are going to England, a third to India, and a third to Naples....

22<sup>nd</sup>

Stand-down again today- because of weather....Enlisted men are placing orders with Otto Stellato for Christmas wine and cognac....Lt. May says he has been invited by an Italian family to have Christmas dinner on a "you bring the sugar" basis. He turned down the invitation nicely, figuring he'd eat better on that glad day than the Eyties would....The officer's party scheduled for the 24<sup>th</sup> has been canceled, due to the fact that it looked as if no women were going to be present....

23<sup>rd</sup>

Stand-down again today....Out of a clear sky the Quartermaster issued dressed chickens to the Squadron, and the mess hall boys fried them. It was our first fried chicken, and was wonderful. It didn't go around for everyone, and steaks (somewhat tough) were fried for those who came late. Back from a long siege of AWOL comes Lt. Mayer. Like many others who finished fifty missions, he felt his flying days were over for the nonce (or something), so he took off for Naples, Algiers, and points South, staying about two weeks. Such action has more or less been condoned in the past, but the axe may suddenly fall on Lt. Mayer....Into the mess hall tonight came Capt. Bayless, giving forth with a loud "Ten-shut." Cause for all this was not the presence of General Arnold, but Major Parsons, newly wearing his gold leaves....We hear tell that General Cannon is taking over the 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force, and that promotions are frozen until January 10<sup>th</sup>, when he will be able to sign them. Promotions are definitely in order in our Squadron, which is outranked in other groups, such as the 12<sup>th</sup>....The parachute boys visited one of the ack-ack units tonight and drank their spirits until the wee hours of the morning. "My British Buddy" (who gets liquor rations)....Wine and cognac orders taken by Otto Stellato were delivered today. The transactions were something of a headache, since records were askew, and additional dimes had to be collected to take care of breakage. Spumanti and vermouth were the favorites, with only a few bottles of cognac ordered....

24<sup>th</sup>

The bulletin board carried the following information this morning: “Attention!!!! Actung!!!! Attention!!!! The German Headquarters in Italy today broadcast the fact that it has been particularly annoyed and distressed by the action of the 340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group. It states that this particular group has shown extreme vindictiveness in its attack on the noble German arms and that such activities are never allowed to go unavenged. German Headquarters further stated that Christmas was a fitting time for retribution to overtake this Group and that we could expect a visit from the Teutonic Santa Claus carrying a sackful of bombs. If you have not dug your slit trench as yet, dig it now because you know Santa Claus originated in Germany. S-2: Note: This is probably typical German propaganda but let your conscience be your guide and do not get too drunk. (signed) Gilmer Meriwether, Jr. Captain, Air Corps, S-2.....Christmas Eve was rather wet. Considerable very good cognac and fairly good vermouth got its just deserts. And yet there were a number of men who went to midnight Mass in Foggia....Mess hall served a pork chop for dinner. Mighty fine, but no seconds....A fine quartet could be heard singing “Cats on the roof-top” at a very late hour tonight....President Roosevelt's speech was received here, and the change of command was interesting....

25<sup>th</sup>

The 340<sup>th</sup> Group was given a stand-down in advance today. Looked as if there might be no bomb dropping on Christmas Day, but in the morning the 17's came over in formation, going someplace....The morning was blasty, with showers, and cold. The sun just peeked out now and then throughout the day. Breakfast was from 7:30 to 8:30, and lunch was forgotten. Sgt. Blume, Sgt. Schwartz, Lt. Hague, and other officers and men spent the morning decorating the mess hall. Tables were covered with paper donated by the parachute section (on condition that they get the leftover turkey). Green leaves and pine branches were hung on tent ropes in the ceiling, and a tree (a long gangling ornamental cedar that must have come from a neighboring cemetery) was decorated with scraps of green and red crepe-paper, and chains of white paper like those we made in first grade. Sgt. Schwartz did up a large Xmas package, with candles and Santa Clauses topping it. Lt. Hague erected a green and red crepe-paper sign “Merry Christmas.” Tables held candles, green leaves, and platters of hard candy, almonds, and dried figs. Supper itself came at 4:00 o'clock. The turkey was very good, the dressing was good, the fresh mashed potatoes were good. Desert was apple pie with American cheese and coffee....Lt. Boston brought a nurse to dinner, and Chaplain Cooper was present....The wine served before and after the dinner was a present from Lt. Col. Tokaz....Ella Logan's show was preceded by a trio of colored boys who poured out some good boogie woogie. Ella sang well, and the accordionist with her was obviously expert. The tap dancer was somewhat tight....Our first Christmas overseas found many of the boys blue and wanting to go home, but it was one they will not soon forget....

26<sup>th</sup>

No mission today....Word came in this afternoon that the Squadron ground echelon would move on Tuesday. Rather short notice....We hear tell that Catania is really the town these days – Street cars, taxis, good-looking women with silk stockings and fur coats. Cigarettes are selling there at eight dollars a carton....The evening show truck still has quite a few occupants, in spite of increasingly cold weather....Lt. Gen. Mark Clark has promised his men that this will be the “last combat Christmas.” General Eisenhower is quoted as saying “we will win the war in 1944.” Captain Meriwether says Germany will ask for an armistice within three months after a Western invasion....The air medal is no longer to be given for five combat missions. It will require some additional outstanding action. Lt. May wants to know how you get the Good Conduct Medal....The Red Cross has moved its Foggia club

into larger quarters next door, and is performing a needed service in selling sandwiches (almost amounting to a meal) and coffee at a sum just large enough to cover the cost of hiring help....Morale has been ruined in the Squadron by the return of promotion papers for apparently trivial reasons. promotions in the 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force came through promptly, but there has been a great deal of technical difficulty recently in the 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force. Papers were returned once because promotions were put in in AUS(AC); these same ones were corrected to AUS, but have been returned for correction to AUS(A C). Lt. Gellman, the man who was prepared to volunteer for a second tour, and whose morale has always been the highest in the Squadron, is now ready to throw in the towel after the fiftieth mission....

27<sup>th</sup>

No mission again today....Packing up began today when the trucks from the 306<sup>th</sup> Service Group came in around noon. We have more transportation than we have ever had.. Everything is being moved, including floors, fire-wood, coal. We are moving to a new field just North of Pompeii, and no one expects to find anything useful there. This is our first back-ward move – backward because we will be farther South there than we are here. Rumor has it that the whole Tactical Bomber Force will move into the Naples area, and give the Foggia area to Strategic. Lt. Hollis says that Group headquarters is engaging a large building in Pompeii for living quarters. This is fortunate for the Squadron because it means that one of the Squadrons will now get the best tent area....The Ordnance Company is now administratively separate from the Group, and will probably be physically separate at the new base. Lt Jung says we are all moving to England soon....Lt. Willhite is wearing double tracks and is still conversing with people. His mustache is gone, in case anyone has been wondering what's wrong with his face....Lt Winebrenner has returned from a long stay in the hospital at Naples....

28<sup>th</sup>

After a very poor meal with the 489<sup>th</sup> Squadron, crews took off at 1255 to bomb a bridge on the important Cassino-Rome highway (pinpoint G706260). Because of clouds and mechanical difficulty in the lead plane, the 486<sup>th</sup> brought their bombs back, but the 489<sup>th</sup> and 487<sup>th</sup> went on. Neither hit the target. The 487<sup>th</sup> pattern fell Southeast of the town of Isola, with hits on the road and railroad, and doing some good. Flak was Heavy, very intense, and very accurate. Eight of our nine planes were holed with from 2 to 12 holes, with four of them put out of commission for a few days. The bursts of A/A came so close that crews could easily see the little balls of fire in the bursting shells. Two planes of the 489<sup>th</sup> made emergency landings in Naples, and the pilot of one of the planes, Lt. Ingles died of wounds....Briefing this A.M. was at 1155 in the 2 American tents at Gp Operations, where a large map board is set up at one end, on a platform, and bomb containers are arranged in front for seats. 487<sup>th</sup> came early and waited. No tenseness could be observed among the crew members. It might have been a meeting to vote on the establishment of an officer's club, except that such a meeting would have had more of a "special" atmosphere. Men sat in bunches of three or four, smoked, talked, etc. As the tents filled, words became less audible, with only now and then a phrase working itself out over the hub-bub: "I-don't-want-to-sit-by-you-you-got-a-running-nose." "What say there?" "Hear what he called you?" "Well, this guy spells his name exactly like you." "Tenant Pitkin!" "Got any chewing gum, George?" Some don't talk – just sit. One or two look at their watches, probably out of habit. The dress of each man is different: there are flying caps, garrison caps, service caps, and a considerable number of tousled coiffures flying loose in the wind. Somebody in a flying jacket has decided he's going to see for himself whether you can get a parachute on over it....Major Garsky on the stand: Primary target, a bridge at G706250. Ya got that? First alternate, a pinpoint at G853210. We get that to be bout in middle Cassino. 2<sup>nd</sup> alternate, 489<sup>th</sup> gets road block at....Route out, to Capua and then left of main road to target. The Navigation officer, not on the platform, can hardly be heard. Run's almost East to West.

major Garsky resumes – 4465 Air Ground Shortloap, a second release, altitude target 300 feet. Navigators and Bombardiers will wait for the weather. Oh yes, it's a very important target....

29<sup>th</sup>

No mission today....The Air Echelon is left by itself in Foggia #3, and will join the ground echelon when bombs and gasoline become available at the new field. There is some talk that the runway there is not yet completed....Lt. Winebrenner has left a generator behind, and there are lights in the operations and S-2. The fires there make those two places popular in the evenings....Those who went in to town on the bath-truck at 1400 hours stayed in town for the movie at 1900 hours (“Somewhere I'll Find You” with Gable and Turner). Capt. Schreiner was upset....A fine new road is being built in front of the Squadron area, now that we are moving....Capt Wilkerson returned tonight with orders for nearly everyone to go home. They should be cut by tomorrow or next day....According to the radio, Naples is out of bounds because of an epidemic of typhus among civilians. This is just our luck, now that we are moving into the neighborhood.

30<sup>th</sup>

Mission today went to Falconara, where the Marshaling Yards were the target. Takeoff was at 1155 and nine ships of the 487<sup>th</sup> were over the target at 1400. There was a fail run on the target, but 487<sup>th</sup> bombs fell in the water bordering the marshaling yards....Rumor has it that there are buildings at our new field. This is wonderful news....Not many are up at seven o'clock for the breakfast truck. Lt. Jung takes a large contingent to the Red Cross for coffee. There are those who stay for sandwiches in the afternoon, finding their chow superior to that at the 489<sup>th</sup>....Lt Pirnie, back from the hospital, says the Infantry lads were cursing the Air Corps. No discipline – easy life. Then when the announcement was made the applications would be accepted for the Air Corps, they flocked in with their papers....There is a great respect in the Air Corps for the boys in the “Queen of Battle” especially when it gets muddy and cold, as it is now. Our comforts at the moment are very few, but they are enough to point up the real difficulties of the boys at the front. We have no men with frozen toes or fingers, and at present we have no men with oak leaf clusters to their purple heart....

31<sup>st</sup>

Stand-down today....Lt Hammond paid off the troops at Foggia Satellite No. 3 and made a special effort to pay in advance those fortunate men who are pulling out today on the first leg of their journey home. Last night at chow orders came for the 10 or 12 men who have finished their tours to go home. They are excited and very happy. Lt. Sather: “I didn't sleep last night; I know I won't sleep tonight.” Lt. Egbert: “I'm gonna get drunked up.” A few of the bombardiers and navigators hope to take pilot training. An unknown wag says: “I'd rather go to West Point – it takes three years.”...New years Eve passed without incident in our Squadron. We had no liquor. There was considerable gambling (payday), and at midnight a number of forty-fives were discharged in the air. Flares could be seen on other parts of the field. The big guns at the front vibrated. The ack/ack remained silent, surprisingly....