

September 1943

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

War Diary, 487th Bombardment Squadron, 340th Bombardment Group

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September 1, 1943

No mission today. There is a general feeling that the invasion is about to start. Where? Yesterday's move from the revetments to the Squadron area relieved us somewhat. Living right out on the airfield is not quieting to the nerves. Two "air raids" kept us jumping. News from home says a sign in a restaurant comments: "Don't argue with the help—we've got plenty of customers." Catania hasn't yet woke up. It's been rather hard hit, but only in spots. Some of the damage must have been done by the 340th Group, but a lot of it appears to have been done by artillery or naval guns. The barber shops are functioning, and a few gelati shops, but little else. The streets are being cleared and sewers repaired. Three good men turned up today. Sgt. Markow, Pfc Dugas, and Pfc Mylott, who were left in the hospital back at Kabrit, (oops, mistake). They went to radio school and evidently the thrills of Cairo had distracted them sufficiently that they didn't miss us.

2nd

Mission today to some headquarters in the toe of Italy. Pinpoint 3549. Take off at 0415, time over target 0720. Good pattern over target area. Only casualty was one hole in one plane. The Squadron area is pleasant enough. Part of the tent area is in an old tomato patch, where the rotten tomatoes attract flies and smell to high heaven. Excitement in the afternoon around mess time. 4 ME 109's attacked Catania Harbor. A/A opened up. Some hit slit-trenches, others watched an ME draw away from a pursuing Spitfire. A barrage balloon was knocked down. Al Schacht, baseball comedian, was at the Air Force Theater in Catania, in conjunction with the Sicilian Varieties. The latter was a swell show, in spite of being in Italian. As Malcolm White says: "Vulgarity must be universal." Had two missions today, the second taking off at 1255 to bomb Crotone L/G. The L/G was covered with cloud, so the formation bombed the alternate target at Monasterace Marino. There were 4 direct hits on the tracks. There was no opposition and all planes returned safely. Lt. Sweetser Linthicum and T/Sgt. Goulding returned from the hospital today.

3rd

Mission today: "bomb and immobilize Camigliatello L/G #1 at Z1388." Time up 0625. Each box hit a different target. 1st box probably hit Camigliatello L/G #2 at right angles to runway, bombs falling half way across runway. 2nd box probably hit Camigliatello L/G at western part of field. The field was overshoot with but 20 percent hits on field. The impermanent nature of the L/G/s prevented accurate observations of the results. Even in later photographs, it was difficult to tell which were L/G's. The evidently were abandoned, for only one damaged plane could be seen in the photos. This morning the invasion of Italy took place, at 0430 hours. We had been prepared for this by a talk by the Air Liaison Officer last night at 1815 hours. The Americans evidently are not participating in the show, and everyone wonders what they are going to do next. 1st Sgt. Parkins left for the hospital today. Sgt. Milo Kubat will take over in his absence.

4th

The 340th Group is not to participate in this part of the invasion. No raids today, and we have a stand down. "Ship Ahoy" with Eleanor Powell showed at the Air Force Theater in town. New additions to the Squadron were 2nd Lts. William R. Badgett, pilot' Charles H. Chandler, co-pilot, and Melvin L. Miles, bombardier. They are from Bombardment Training Center. Sgt. Kaszyski finally went to the hospital. He's been sick since Comiso. Some mental disturbances might be troubling him, as well as a weak stomach.

5th

Stand down today. The show in town was Deanna Durbin in "The Amazing Mrs. Halliday." AMGOT is on the ball. A Catania theater is presenting Deanna Durbin in one of her earlier shows, with Italian name and subtitles. Catanians have been waiting for years for US shows, and seem to be flocking to them.

6th

Stand down again today. Show at the hangar was "Syncopation" with Jackie Cooper and Bonita Granville. An oldie, and not very good. New additions today were 2nd Lts. Farly, Duthie, and F/O Moore, with S/Sgts. Kolineck, Morrison, and Fleming.

7th

Target for today was the marshaling yards at Crotone. Crews reported 40% hits and good pattern throughout the yards. Fires were observed burning generally in the area. 1st box was believed to have hit a spur south of the main target area. This was accurate reporting, a characteristic of 487th crews. The photos revealed a pattern across the south end of the yards, lying across the station and sheds. The other box cut the narrow gage track and might have hit the station where transfer was made from narrow to standard gage. Three ships were slightly damaged by ack-ack. Our old friend, Leon Errol, in "Hurry, Charlie, Hurry" showed at the hangar. T/Sgt. Goulding and Cpl McBride returned from the hospital.

8th

Stand down today. But after the evening meal, the ALO told us of the invasion of the Naples area, which was to occur next morning. The 340th would definitely be in on this. Captain Meriwether synchronized with the ALO in announcing the surrender of Italy, which news seemed like cause for cheering. Sgt. Balonis went to the hospital.

9th

Night missions started early this morning, and started with tragedy. Take off was at 0230, and the target was Avellino. The first ship to take off was Lt. Kenneth Bell's. He did not clear the trees at the end of the runway, ran into other obstacles, crashed. The plane was destroyed, although the 1000 bombs did not explode. The co-pilot, Lt. Charles H. Chandler, on his first mission, was miraculously saved. He was thrown clear of the plane, and "ran like hell, because I thought those bombs were going off." He was discovered by the medics some distance from the plane, and could walk and talk. After about 3 days in all the Squadron, his brief history with us ended when he was taken to the hospital. All other members of the crew were killed. They were Lt. Bell, Pilot; Lt. Orlando Loera, bombardier; Sgt. Edward Reilly, radio-gunner; and S/Sgt. Spencer O. Hickman, top turret gunner. All were highly regarded in the Squadron. Lt. Bell had just volunteered for a second "tour" of fifty missions. Lt. Loera was one of the best bombardiers. Sgt. Reily was considered a swell fellow. And Spencer O. Hickman was looked upon as a sort of father. He, in fact, had two sons in the service. Funeral services were held at the chapel in the afternoon, Chaplain Cooper conducted. Lt. Bell's ship was the first to take-off. It was an ordeal for the rest of the formation to take off right over the flaming plane. Without the aid of the moon, they went on to Avellino, bombed hell out of it. At 2030 hours same day, there was another mission. Target was Grazzanise L/G #1, and all bombs were dropped in the area of the incendiaries. (night mission). To complete the tragic day, 2 planes did not return from this mission: Lt. Willhite's and Lt. Harley Anderson's.

10th

In the wee hours of the morning news came that Lt. Willhite's plane had landed at an emergency landing ground at Casibile. Everyone was safe. No mission today. The Enlisted Men's "rest home" began functioning today. 20 men went in on two day passes. 2nd Lts. Davis and Evans were attached for rations and quarters. Cpl. Kwolek went to the hospital.

11th

Target today was the highway intersection at Corleto, and takeoff was at 1605 hours. First box reported directed hits on the road south of the intersection. The second box reported 90% hits on intersection making roads south, north, and northwest impassable. Photos showed the first box hit where they reported, but photo cover was not complete on the second box. Lt. Linthicum returned from the hospital.

12th

Today a raid sprang up in a hurry in the afternoon – with only about 10 minutes for squadron briefing. But the mission was the squadron's second over Corrieto, Italy, a little crossroads town deep in the mountains. Primary target was again motor transport on the roads south of the town, with the town itself as alternative target. No M/T were seen, and the town itself was difficult to find. 488th Squadron returned to base with bombs. Although they were leaders of the formation, our squadron did not follow them, but milled around in search of the town. There was no opposition, so they flew low, bombing at about 7800 feet, or about 5000 feet above the town. Both boxes landed squarely in the town, blasting the hell out of it. The object was to block the roads, and must have been achieved. The squadron was cheered by the war news. Taranto and all the heel of Italy was announced as ours, and progress in other parts of Italy was taking place. The Russians were advancing across the Ukraine and were getting close to Maritopol. 4 battleships, 6 destroyers, and 7 cruisers had put into Malta – part of the Italian fleet surrendering. In the squadron, Lt. Sweetser Linthicum has now seemed to have fully recovered from his attack of malaria and First Sergeant Parkins has already returned to his job after having the same disease. It certainly did not affect his booming voice. All enlisted men enjoying their “rest home” in Catania returned after two days, and twenty more men went in. So-so was the comment— food and wine, but no women. And nothing doing in town. Lt. Anderson's plane was still missing from the night raid over Grazzanise L/G in the early morning hours of September 9th, date of the second landing in Italy. One rocker went to the following bucks: Leary, McRae, Larson, and Brownlee. Cpls. Morrison and Seay became Sergeants, and a whole slough of Pfc's made Corporal. Among the latter were Doyle, Ellman, Flynn, Graffius, Grupp, Haddock, Incarbone, Gross, Jenkins, Lozano, Pedersen, Porter, Reuter, and Sobanski.

13th

Big event of the day was the return of the crew lost after Sept. 9th night raid on Grazzanise L/G. the crew, lost on the return, prepared calmly to bail out over an unknown island when their gas supply began to run low. “Moose” Sather, bombardier, landed on the ground, the others in the water. Sgt. Schwartz, radioman, was in the water three to four hours, suffered from extreme nausea and a deep feeling that he as about to die, was pucked up by a fishing boat. He directed them to Sgt. Kiskiel, also in the water. Lt. Egbert, co-pilot, swam for eight hours before a motor boat rescued him. Lt. Harley Anderson, the pilot, was dead when discovered, later in the afternoon. The island on which they found themselves was Lampedusa. In a graveyard there, Lt. Anderson was buried with military honors by the Royal Air force garrison. The 487th Squadron celebrated its first anniversary with short speeches, a good supper of hamburgers, and a girly show. With the squadron assembled on benches outside of the mess hall, Capt. Parsons spoke briefly of the past year, what changes had occurred and what progress had been made, and then described this period as “a seventh inning stretch,” after which, with renewed energy, we would finish up the old ball game. He hoped on our next anniversary we would be tossing hot water bottles out of an American Legion hotel window in New York City. The girls of the Sicilian revue preceded the squadron at the hamburgers, displaying considerable vigor at the table. they seemed to enjoy the real honest-to-God meat, the fine white-flour buns, and the molasses cookies, which they stuffed into their enormous handbags. Their show, staged at one of the hangars, was entertaining. Some did not attend because a night mission was in the air. target for tonight was cross roads just west of the ancient ruins of Pompeii. The purpose was to aid in foiling a proposed counter attack of the Herman Goering Panzer Division forming around Mt. Vesuvius. 12 planes took off like clockwork a few minutes before midnight. 11 planes went unopposed over a well-lit target, nine reported direct hits and two reported near misses to the South – misses which might have been in another crossroads. Lt. Garrett mistook the Island of Ischia for Capri, turned right and buzzed Naples without encountering any

ack-ack, attacked a road junction at the north base of Vesuvius. The crew noted a terrific explosion. On the return he felt briefly that he was lost and greeted land with this comment, "Mother Earth, how GLAD I am to see you!" The first surrender to the Group occurred in the afternoon when an Italian Savoia Marchetti 79 bomber came into the field scattering white flares like rice at a wedding. A Captain, two lieutenants, and two enlisted men had seen the Germans coming, hopped into a cold plane and got away with a towel and toothbrush. News of was on other fronts continued to be good. Salamaua was taken—The Russians came within a few miles of Bryansk, and another Italian battleship came into Malta. In the Naples area, the Germans are attacking with what seemed to be some successful pressure, but our plans were already formulating to give them hell on the morrow. New additions to the Squadron today were 2nd Lt. Clyde H. Knapp, Jr., co-pilot, S/Sgt. Jack L. Olson, Jr; S/Sgt. Jack L. Parks; and Sgt. Edward F. Casey.

14th

Another Italian airplane landed on the field today – a three-motored transport with a number of passengers. A frequent comment has been that neat appearance of the Italian officer personnel. A mission took off today shortly after noon. We were told the target yesterday. It is Battipaglia, a town in the Salerno area taken by the Allied invaders, but retaken by the Germans. it aided in rendering useless Allied use of the airfield at Monte Corvino, which is under artillery fire. Today we were told that the town was to be attacked by four Groups of B-25/s, four groups of heavys and two groups of B-26's, and that the fighter escort would also carry bombs and salvo over the target. That meant plenty of hell was to be handed out. Our squadron, with the 488th, dropped their bombs with good results and returned without casualty. F/O McLaughlin described it as a successful "milk run." Berlin announced the fall of Bryansk, but nothing was said by the Russians. Our own forces around Salerno were having a hard time of it, but were striking back strongly. C-47's in formation flew over last night, evidently loaded with paratroopers. Lae, in Southwest Pacific, was also catching it. Our APO 520 has been the the third change in two months and everyone is annoyed because it is being changed so much. The mail has been slowed up somewhat. Letters of August 24 are just betting here, and normally it takes about two weeks. Packages now get here in tow months, however, and they are coming in well and in good condition. One man in the Group has 50 missions. All the combat crews are sweating out what's going to happen to him. His name is Marsh. Word has been received from Lt. Cunningham, who was with Sgt. Sherbourne as bombardier when their plane crashed into the sea after a raid on Pantelleria on May 30th. Others in the plane were Lt. McCabe, Sgt. Berry, and Sgt. Bernstein. All were saved except Sgt. Bernstein, who was drowned and went down with the plane. Lt. Cunningham writes that he is in the States, and that his leg is paralyzed. He will not be able to use it for a year. A new member of the Squadron is 2nd Lt. Floyd E. Hauser, pilot.

15th

T/Sgt. Edward S. Johnson and Sgt. Elinoff may be seen around camp again. They returned yesterday from a Tunisian hospital, where Sgt. Johnson was being treated for arthritis and Elinoff a bad stomach. 487th Squadron had twelve planes over the Italian town of Eboli today. The town has been taking a beating from every group in this area. Pictures reveal our bombs landed square in the town, which is east of Battipaglia about three or four miles, and is a scene of heavy fighting. Our crews reported artillery duels South and East of the town. News came in slowly. The bomb line of the 5th Army in the Naples area, leaving the west coast road free. We don't know exactly where the troops are, or whether the two armies have met, but the bomb lines of the English have heretofore been not very far in front of the forward patrols. Catanians are reading today that Bryansk Conquistada." They read avidly,

walking down the streets with their heads deep in their papers. Watching the course of the war. Evidently they don't think that it is coming back this way soon because the town is filling up, and rubble is being cleared away. The Officers Club was gay tonight with the pop of "champagne" corks. The wine is not champagne but Spumante, bottled in Italy. But the corks fly very nicely. Tomorrow night we have real champagne—black market stuff at \$6 a bottle. Lts. Garrett and Mayer were a bit tight this evening and the former were barking (Section 8?) at the Eytie waiters. Lt. Hollis aimed a cork at Col. Tokas, but his feet turned cold. Captain Meriwether confined himself to ice cream (gelati to you) with meringue. The laundry has been out for two weeks. Otto Stellato took it to Catania, got no results, and took it all the way to Comiso. There re a number of dirty soldiers hereabouts.

16th

The show tonight at the hangar was "Powers Model" with George Murphy and Anne Shirley. Benny Goodman played and Dennis Day sang as well as the none-too-good amplifying system would let them. They seemed undisturbed that planes were taxiing about outside, announcements were being made (487th Ordnance had to report outside of the hangar for some reason) and general confusion was reigning. Two bulbs burned out and there was a short intermission while someone went to get another. "Fats" Waller filled in on a scratchy record with "I've got my love to keep me warm," a favorite with the 340th Special Services. The mission today took off at 9 A.M. and bombed the cross roads East of Eboli, Italy. They didn't hit the exact intersection, but they laid a pattern across both roads with considerable effect. There was some ack-ack, inaccurate to the rear. Captain Parsons was complaining of the GI's, but he was seen last night at the Officers Club with a very attractive sister from a British hospital. The Enlisted Men's Club now have a very novel "entertainer" in the person of a girl named Betty from the States. She is of Mexican descent, spent a number of years in the States, and left there in 1940. Her bold vocabulary (profane) seems to be her most astonishing accomplishment, although she evidently has others. The Russians announced the capture of Novorossisk. The 8th Army is only 18 miles from the attacking 5th Army. Australians and Americans are near Lae. Combat crews are sweating out what will happen when they finish their 50 missions. There is a new rumor that they will go for a short "rest" (not in the U.S.) and then be transferred to another Group, or become administrative officers in rear echelons. Announcement was made today that the Isle of Capri was ours. Hope we spend the winter there. How time files. There was a bright young Pfc at Stoneman who suddenly popped up at Sfax as a Sergeant. Then somewhere along the line he became a Staff Sergeant and now today he is Tech. Sergeant Robert B. Driscoll. Tempus fugit.

17th

Today was a big day in these here parts. Jack Benny and company came to town. Rumors of his coming were rampant back in August, but there had also been rumors of Bob Hope and other, so no one put much stock in them. Then last night, the engagement was actually announced. He was to appear at 6:30 P.M. at the Air Forces Theatre (the "Diana") in Catania. The fact that a mission was announced for the night, but no target or take-off time named, kept a number of combat crews in camp. They can see him at Lentini, tomorrow night. Benny's troupe contained four members: Larry Adler, Winni Shaw, and pianist, Jack Snyder. They put on a swell show to a packed house (no Limeys). It was pleasant to see a smooth, professional show again. Wini Shaw sang well, did a nice number with an embarrassed Sergeant whom she had tricked onto the Stage. Larry Adler's harmonica numbers were swell. And Benny's jokes rolled smoothly off the old ducks back. Sample: "A wonderful trip over. It's wonderful to have breakfast in Cairo, lunch in Tripoli and the GI's in Catania." Target for tonight was again the road-railroad junction west of Pompeii. 10 out of 12 planes took off (the other two had mechanical difficulty), found the target well lighted by incendiaries. "Just like the pictures, only clearer," said

Bombardier R. N. Peterson. At least 9 planes must have hit "right on the button." The other may have found the target, although the fact that he was the only one to report ack-ack leads to the feeling that he must have got off a little to the North. There is also the possibility that he was mistaken. All planes returned with out mishap. Reports state that a tremendous tonnage of bombs has been dropped on the relatively small area around Salerno by United States and British planes. On Wednesday, an average of 84 bombs were dropped on each square mile of territory. Pvt. Paul Pitonyak was back on flying status today after three months. He'll be flying again within a few days.

18th

Today we had steaks for dinner – real steaks. No telling where they came from, but they were good. We also had real American cow butter. Mess hall has been serving a sort of cheese spread, but never any real butter until now. Wouldn't it be good on crisp toast? No mission today. Stand down all day long. the combat crews are dejected by the news that they probably won't get to go home after fifty missions. Reason, says the Colonel, is a lack of replacements for the 12th Air Force. Crews will henceforth get 7 days leave after 20 missions, 7 days after 35 missions, and extended leave after 50 missions, but in a rest camp over here. News came through today that Lts. Sherbourne and McCabe were awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received when they landed in the Mediterranean in May. Sherbourne had previously been awarded the DFC. Jack Benny and troupe performed again at Lentini. A number of men went over. On the international front, the town of Lae and the airdrome were captured by the Americans and Australians. Germans were reported to be retreating in the Naples area. Russians are going great guns.

19th

No mission today, stand down all day and night. Most took advantage of the day of rest and rushed off to Catania and other places of amusement. Captain Meriwether organized a trip to Via Grande, about seven or eight miles from Catania, where it is possible to get a splendid steak dinner with all the trimmings. They ate and digested and drank for hours. Vermouth flowed freely. Lts. Hammond and Hague reeled and rocked. Lt. Jackman and F/O Griffiths broke their records for sobriety and staggered into camp in a gay mood. The spaghetti was wonderful, they said. A story about T/Sgt. Joe Buller which took place in Sfax comes to mind now. It seems that Joe made a fireplace out of some bricks, that he found around the area. When he made a fire, his bricks burned. Somewhat later, a bunch of Limeys came to a screeching halt in front of the orderly room, announced feverishly that they were searching for some blocks of high explosive left in the neighborhood. Internationally, things are still bright. In this theater Battipaglia fell to the Allies. This is the town that received the full weight of the 12th Air Force last Wednesday. The show at the hangar was "Bachelor Mother" with Ginger Rogers and a very appealing baby. On Saturday the Jewish men in camp went into Catania for real Jewish services.

20th

Sgt. Carl Serio has recently returned from a visit with relatives in a Sicilian village – S. Stefano di something. He reported being received with great joy and excitement. The relatives were eager to hear news from their people in the United States, with whom they had not corresponded in several years because of war conditions. Mission today went out shortly after noon for Calabritto, Italy. For a change, considerable flak was encountered (of course, at supper there was a lot of argument as to whether there was "a lot" or just "some." F/O J.C. Anderson took the later view arguing that he "hadn't even received a hole.") Several planes were holed, including the one in which Lt. Gellman was riding as bombardier. He had little comment to make. Sgt. Blume came back with a piece of flak in his

pocket. It had come through the wall, bounced off the other side. Only damage was to the filter on his camera. He also had little comment. Fried spam for supper tonight. The show at the hangar was "China Girl." George Montgomery seemed a bit stupid, Gene Tierney a bit skinny, and buck toothed, and the airplane sequences a trifle ridiculous. Hershey Company has at last come through with our first taste of American chocolate since we've been on this side. PX rations (free) were handed out, and included one bar of Hershey's Tropical Chocolate. The cigarettes were Raleighs, a brand little favored hereabouts. The feeling is that Raleighs take as much shipping space as more favored brands, so why not send the latter. No official answer has been given, but it could be this: that a wide eyed quartermaster buys cigarettes on the basis of the amount and kind bought by these men when they were civilians in the United States. But when they get over here, people who bought cheaper brands at home prefer the higher priced brands when they are here. Either because we are "Up front" (in comparison to headquarters echelons) or because we're "in the rear" (in comparison to forward infantry patrols), we find ourselves helping the Quartermaster get rid of a bunch of unwanted fags. Pfc. Lozano returned from his two day stay in town, reported that he had never enjoyed two days so much before. He visited all sorts of Cathedrals and things. Cpl. Nelson was on guard last night. The "Soldier" was right in there on the ball. The bridge on the road between the Squadron area and the "line" has been repaired. Engineers who fixed it spent most of their time pushing overloaded jackasses out of the rough detour.

21st

Mission today was to bomb S. Severino and the area South of there. The only opposition was scattered A/A to the rear of the formation. Crews reported 80% hits. They also reported a sort of merry-go-round effect when each box went over the target twice, one box coming in the second time from the North and the other coming in from the South. Chicken for lunch today. Mighty fine. It was canned chicken from the States, the first of its kind we've had since being overseas. We've heard how the Army's been buying a bunch of chickens for the boys overseas, but until now it's been only a rumor. The Quartermaster is definitely getting on the ball. Our own cooks are becoming more eager. The hot cakes are improving – the bacon is better – coffee tastes more like coffee – and in fact everything is a little better. Better even, in many ways, than Walterboro. A banana would be a wonderful thing to have. We haven't seen one in months. Lt. Sherbourne says he'd rather see a banana than his wife, but hastily adds that she mustn't be told. 8th Army news today carries a feature about the occupation of Cossensa. "We nosed along cautiously once again and in the distance saw a mass of soldiers of unknown nationality. When they saw us they crept into the woods. We thought this very suspicious but on getting closer we found they were Italians who thought we were Germans. The reception they gave us when we told them we were English could only have been exceeded had we been able to tell them we were Americans. They flung their caps in the air, and yelled, "Comarados." But they still wanted to know when the Americans were coming." Lt. Fonda, whose ship was shot after the July 15th raid on Paterno, Sicily, has been awarded the Silver Star. The rest of the crew have received the DFC. Chance was killed; all others survived. Today we lost Sgt. Max Johnson to the 489th, sent there to jack things up for that squadron. New addition: Pvt. Arthur D. Rice, in hospital. F/O Wver went to the hospital, and the following tripped off to a rest camp for seven days: Lts. Hague, Sather, Egbert, Griffiths, and Sgt. Goulding, Mancini, Schwartz, Kiszkiel, and Zona. Cpl. Boor made Sergeant but we haven't seen any cigars yet.

22nd

Target today the pinpoint at N5231379 - railroad and road crossings near Nocera. The boys reported doing rather well. 10 bombs were considered hits, and the others near misses. Some flak was reported. Gavin got hit in the head, but had his helmet on. He swears that he magnetizes that stuff. Everyone will wear helmets tomorrow. The show tonight was "Lady in a Jam" with Irene Dunne and Patrick Knowles. Old stuff, but damned nice comedy. General comment was that she definitely needed a section 8. Cherry pie for supper tonight. The crust was dee-wonderful, and there was plenty of cherries. Mess hall is very much on the ball. Everything's OK on the fighting fronts. Funny names are being captured right and left. Corporal Hurley has originated a sheet for the bulletin board called "One year ago today." It is attracting considerable attention. Master Sergeant Lynch and others were being authorized to taxi aircraft, even though we didn't have any aircraft. That's confidence for you. Local inhabitants are selling peaches these days. 8 to 10 for a "shee--leeng." Today the 487th officially lost some old landmarks. The following then, who have been absent in one place or another for some time, were dropped from the organization:

First Lieutenant Edward J. Cunningham: while the squadron of this holding Memorial Day Services at the graves of Major Whittington and others in the Sfax cemetery on May 30th, Lieutenant Cunningham was toggling bombs over Pantelleria. The plane was lagging behind the formation because of mechanical difficulty, but the plane went over the target, got hit. It went into the water between Pantelleria and Tunisia. Lieutenant Sherbourne and McCabe were scratched up a good deal, but soon returned from the hospital, with Sergeant Berry. Top Sergeant Bernstein was killed and went down but the ship. Lieutenant Cunningham did not return from the hospital, but was sent to the States.

Lieutenant Robert F. Seymour: He was the bombsight maintenance man who was doomed to be a Second Looie for the duration. Then all that once he got a chance, as the Armament Officer replacing the officer left in the Melbourne hospital, to become a captain. Then misplaced passion sent him to a hospital. Alas. We'll remember him as a fine fella.

PFC Stanley Siok: 'Little Schuck', the squadron darling, he was finally sent away when he saw too many pretty birds on the birdless deserts of Africa.

Sgt. Kaszyski: One of the hardest workers and most conscientious men in the Squadron.

1st. Lt. Ross A. Brophy: He went to the hospital in Kabrit and never caught up with us.

23rd

Orders have come through awarding Sgt. Goulding the Silver Star. He bailed out of Captain Flack's ship over the Messina Straits, landed on the tip, spotted a machine gun nest, came back with infantrymen to capture them. From the way he tells it, he had lots of fun. There was no mission today – stand down day and night. Rumor already has it that we are going to move to Foggia. This is outside our present bomblines. Capturing the field, repair of damage, clearing of mines should take perhaps three weeks, so we should be here at least two weeks more. Brindisi is offered as a possibility, but no bets are laid on it. Ordnance section visited Messina yesterday, stayed briefly, acquired a little dog named "Vivian" whom they promptly put on a leash because she chased the little boy dogs around. One unnamed man in the squadron visited in Catania, talked to a husband while wifey suckled her child in the background. He was somewhat embarrassed. The wife told him in Italian that there was a shortage of milk from one bosom. Thinking he did not understand, she proceeded to show him by demonstration. Show last night was the "Meanest Man in the World." Not bad. Jack Benny had black hair for a change. New additions: Pilot B. R. Langlois, 2nd Lt.; S/Sgt. H. A. Pinneo.

24th

Mission today was to Serino, Italy. It was difficult to find, because it was spread around over the countryside. The boys reported that the 489th had bombed the top of a hill, that the 489th planes had slipped underneath them just as the 487th was about to bomb, that the 487th had hit the town proper, the northern section of town, and the road leading out of the town. No flak was encountered. This after Group Intelligence had told them to expect a lot, a bit of warning which set them on edge and made the mission more unpleasant. Show last night was "Million Dollar Baby" with Priscilla Lane. The bomb line today moved up to Foggia. This sounds as if we might move in a couple of weeks, if things go well. Foggia should be a nice field. Everyone wants to go to Rome, but perhaps we'll go there, too. The Sicilian carts are up all night. They have a peculiar crackle as they roll over their torn up roads. Sounds like the distant pop-pop-pop of pumps in an oil field. Rather lonesome late at night. Everyone has been sending home medals lately. Sgts. Snaper and Walsh found a sack of medals in the Enlisted Men's Club downtown, former headquarters of the Fascist Union for Larger Families. They are struck in great quantity from some cheap alloy, have green and blue ribbons with tiny silver bows pinned to the ribbon. the medals are given to mothers and each little bow represents a child. There are also diplomas or certificates. And there are small diamond shaped pins "for trying." They are stacked in a corner of the orderly room and are available for everyone.

25th

Mission today was an area Southeast of Serino – troop concentrations. No A/A was encountered going or coming. Crews reported excellent patterns by both boxes in target area. Both roads were hit by bombs, and several small explosions were noted in the target area. Chief gripe in the squadron these days is guard duty. There are two planes per guard and sometimes three. The men feel that a roving guard of four or five men would be sufficient for all the planes. They feel that we're only protecting our tools from the sticky hands of other squadrons. Chief gripe among combat crews (who don't usually gripe as much as ground men) is the fact that they probably won't get to go home after fifty missions. Col. Tokaz has told them there will be only 100 replacements for the entire 12th Air Force in the coming four months. From the 488th comes a poem, reprinted in the Argus, and put in here to fill space:

We're war weary boys of the 488th;
The food we have is the poorest we've ate;
Our planes are worn out, one's nerves are all shot,
At 50 we go on cause we cannot stop.

On the darkest of nights, without any lights,
We take off on runways with rest camp in sight.
If ack-ack don't get us and the night fighters miss,
Surely we'll get home, if we live through all this.

How was the join up? How was the climb?
The take-off was O.K. but wasn't on time.
There were three P-40's, one-half for each man;
We hit the target but does the Group give a dam?
Hell, No.

Mrs. Roosevelt is back home after a 26,000 mile tour of the war fronts. Lt. Linthicum feels that the President should put her in the family home so she will stay home. On the international front, the Germans announce the evacuation of Smolensk. The 5th Army has the high ground overlooking the plains of Naples. The Japs have taken a sea beating. At home, Edward R. Stettinius has replaced Sumner Wells as Under Secretary of State. Wells resigned. New addition: 2nd Lt. Puckett. Dropped: T/Sgt. Williams.

26th

No mission today; stand down all day and night. Chief diversion was a trip by two carloads of men to Via Grande, a little town in the hills at the base of Mt. Etna. S/Sgt. Blume was the first to find the restaurant there, and frequent trips have been made since. The roads up to the town are quite narrow, and cluttered with wagon loads of furniture being brought out of the hills to home again in Catania. Evidently these poor people feel the war is over for them, and life, love, and business can go on as usual. Roads are lined with pleasant old buildings whose architecture is surprisingly better than a similar class of village buildings in the United States. The stonecutters and iron workers had good taste and were plentiful enough that their works were inexpensive. Doorways and windows have good lines. Gateways (to orchards as well as to patios) are even elaborate. Perhaps an explanation lies in the fact that these poor-man's houses were erected by barons with money and taste, and have since fallen to their present occupants. The little churches or shrines show a great deal of taste. And time has made them extremely picturesque. The restaurant was small but shuttered in – there was little on the outside to show that steaks and chicken and ice cream were obtainable within. There were a number of soldiers there, mostly officers, and some civilians. We waited a good while until a table was set up for us, then waited even longer while steak was being fried. After this bit of meat went the way of all good portions, we had another round, plus chicken. Then we ordered fried eggs. Then ice cream. All was washed down with light dry wine of considerable potency. Conversation waxed strong, chiefly about the United States and the individual home states. This morning, the rumor spread that Lt. Gavin had got polluted, had had Lt. Garrett (ditto) to pull a front tooth with a pair of pliers. Truth came out late in the afternoon. It had been a false bridge that was yanked out. Show tonight was “Spring Time Parade” with Diana Durbin. The Russians seem to have crossed the Dnieper in several places. Finchaven, in the Pacific, has been surrounded. Some progress is being made by the 8th and 5th Armies. New additions: Pvt. M. L. Gammage and Pvt. K.C. Grantham. Transferred: “The Greek,” Kalapanidas, the baker, to the 486th.

27th

Time, for some reason, has been changed by an hour. We have set our clocks back an hour; and consequently everyone just gets up an hour earlier. No one seems really to appreciate an extra hour of sack time. Lt. Wilkerson is taking lessons in Italian in town. From a woman, too. Lts. Peterson, D. R. and Henderson are the Casanovas of Catania these days. There is a story to the effect that some relative has loaned Lt. Peterson a jeep, and the two Don Juans may be seen either before the mirror or in their buggy. Our listening posts have not yet reported on their activities. Stand down all day today. After Deanna Durbin's movie, ENSA gave us a stage show. Only one member of the cast displayed the easy intimacy which American audiences like, are accustomed to, and appreciate. The hectic pacing of good American shows was also absent, so that the show gave an impression of being staged in the basement of the local church, with the girls of the congregation in charge. The M.C. was typically precious. His jokes were long and labored and not really worth the length of time spent on them. To audiences accustomed to crack coming so close to each other that two good ones can hold up a weak one in the middle, the humor was indeed mild. To most Americans the most surprising thing was the

number of American songs played, and the fact that the audience of Britishers participated with great familiarity. They seem to know and like all our standard songs, and many of the old ones. Evidently they have a greater loyalty to songs that we, for they still like such ancients as "Blue Heaven," "Me and My Shadow" and so forth. It seems odd to hear British tommies singing "Is It True What They Say About Dixie," "Carolina Moon" and "Basin Street." New additions: Cpl. Herbert Cronwell and Cpl. Paul A. Wright.

28th

Lt Hubert D. Sumner, general handy man around the squadron for lo, these many months, has received word that he will be transferred tomorrow to an A-36 Group someplace in Italy. It's more or less at his won request – he ma have an opportunity for a Captaincy, and he'll be doing a single job – statistical work – for which he was trained. We'll probably miss him. There was a stand-by (immediate) today. About 3 P.M. a target busted thru everyone got in a hustle, then five minutes later it was canceled. Another five minutes and we got a stand down for the rest of the day and night. A truck screamed out to Via Grande for supper. The rainy season is about on us. It hasn't rained yet, but its "in the air" and there's been lightning. And there's a touch of autumn in the air. Looks like OD weather before long. Everyone talks of going home. "Home by Christmas is like "Remember the Alamo." We've been singing "White Christmas" since we got here, but there seems to be more prospect now than every before. The Russians are crossing the Dnieper in several places: the Germans should know that there is no natural defensive position west of the river. The Russians have known this and that's why they've wanted parts of Poland, Estonia, Latvia, etc. The Germans know by now that they don't eat this winter, because the wheat crop of the Ukraine had to be left. Their industrial area of Poland and Eastern Germany will soon be within easy bomber reach of the Allies. Unless they bargain while they have some strength left, they'll not be able to bargain at all. They can't bargain without getting rid of Hitler, so it should occur to the Army that that's the first step. The bet is that he'll fall before Christmas. Naples has not yet fallen, but a 489th plane dropped pamphlets yesterday, stayed over the city for seven minutes without receiving any opposition. F/O Jerry Over returned from the hospital still sporting a bandaged hand.

29th

No mission today - another stand down, day and night. Squadron special service arranged a sight seeing excursion in the afternoon. Two trucks of men and went up to the town of Marcali, were a flow of lava and buried the town in 1928. Nothing could be seen except the flow of lava, since the town was still buried, so there was little that was startlingly interesting. The lava was crumbly on top, like coke, but the lower surfaces were like flint. It was all quite ugly. A little Sicilian boy leading us about said his father was an American for nine years. He didn't like Tedescos (Germans). He showed us where an English Spitfire had killed 50 Germans in an attack on a convoy. He also pointed out where the Germans had blown up some railroad and road bridges. A barber from whom we asked directions spoke very fluent Americanese, said he had been wanting to see the Americans, said he was an American citizen, immediately produced to citizenship papers and his certificate as a fireman in New York City. He plainly wanted to get rid of his customer, an English Tommy, so he could squire us on our tour of the lava flow. After having gelati (ice cream, of sorts), we headed back towards Catania, stopping at a little fishing town, where we took small boats and rode out to the Isle of Achea, or poetically, la Isla de Ciclopi, meaning the isle of the Cyclops. It was an enormous hunk of volcanic rock with a smattering of the vegetation on top. Cracks and crevices in the side gave it a precipitous, dangerous look. A lover's leap appeared for the romantic element; a little building with specimen bottles provided scientific interest. But we were principally interested in finding Cyclops Cave, where

Achilles had so much difficulty. The only cave we came across was much too small for a bunch of men and sheep. And we couldn't help but wonder where the sheep grazed on that tiny, barren protuberance. The tourists reached the camp late for supper. They ate and rushed off to the cinema to see "How Green was my Valley." Sgt. Hickey, who some time ago went up to the headquarters to take over the 340th group publicity, has now been assigned to the headquarters section.

30th

Mission today was to Benevento. Target pinpoint was a road intersection in southern entrances to town to orient take all wasn't at 1045. One box made a pattern across the pinpoint, the other box landed west of the town, probably destroyed a road bridge, and might have hit the railroad. Some of the boys described Benevento as 'another Messina' because of the intense flak to the northeast of town. Coming in to the south, the 487th formation took a left turn off the target, and avoided most of the flak. But the 486th turned right, got into a lot of it. Two of their planes were reported missing, but evidently turned up later. One of our ships was holed according to Lieutenant Rosenberg. All returned. Lieutenant Henderson has made to support the mission, and is now entitled to the DFC. That's the medal he says he's been wanting. Lieutenant White saw his 49th mission today, has only one more to go. Lieutenant Sumner set out early in the morning on a DC3 for his new group, traveled to Foggia, found a Spitfire Group stuck out on the field, could get no directions to his group, found no communications or transportation, decided to come home. When he got here he found the orders had been rescinded anyway. He'll be around for awhile. On September 1st a forward was written by General Brereton as preface for pamphlets entitled '24 Hours of Hell' written by S/Sgt. James Q House and illustrated by Sargent Gregory C. Moore, describing the activities of the 340th group on May 6 1943 (the date Tunis fell). "The Avengers have fought valiantly. In their brief but active career as a medium bombardment group of the 9th Air Force as established an enviable record. It is a record of long and arduous missions; of operations under pioneering difficulties in the early part of their existence. It is a record not unattended by misfortune, including the loss of a gallant commander in action over Tunisia. They began independent operations as the 340th precipitately in the midst of a desert and in the midst of a campaign with begged, borrowed, and improvised equipment. Early struggles and the fortunes undoubtedly did much to create the fine esprit d'corps which is so marked in this group. Their career as an independent group in the 9th from April 19 to the fall of Sicily spanned the most active in the history of the Air Force. It is an outfit of which any commanding general may well be proud. No fairly reported story of this group could lack for interest. Their's is a record which needs no embellishment. I heartily commend their good works and endorse any written account of them."

Signed/ Lewis F. Brereton,
Major General, AAF
Commanding, 9th US Air Force.

Today was a payday, a great day in any country or clime. More people are broke than at any other time since we've been overseas, probably because Sicily has given us more to buy, and because Christmas presents are being purchased. German radio says civilians in Sicily are starving. That's a lot of hoc. From the rest camp in Algiers Lts. Sather and Egbert, Sgts. Mancini, Schawartz, Kiszkiel, and Zona have returned. Comment: Beaucoups of WAACS.

