

# War Diary of the 488<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron

## May 1944

Prepared by: Capt. Everett B. Thomas

May 1, 1944

Mission to Albinia R.R. bridge. S-2 has had its jeep for 8 days. Evidently that's considered too much (we've had a jeep one month and 22 days since we've been overseas) and it was given to Group to use in setting up an Officers' Club. Yesterday we set a table at the pay line and collected approximately \$1900 toward the "Year Book" at \$10 per copy. We already had \$500 collected from squadron members who have returned home.

2<sup>nd</sup>

Mission to Orvieto R.R. bridge.

3<sup>rd</sup>

Mission to Todi R.R. bridge. First baseball game of the league, 488<sup>th</sup> vs 486<sup>th</sup>. Score 5 to 3 in favor of, naturally, 488<sup>th</sup>.

4<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Castiglione Fiorentino R.R. bridge.

5<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day. Massachusetts and Missouri State pictures in the series taken.

6<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day. Ship on test hop crashed into mountain. Lts. [James F.] Kelly and [George] Gregory and T/Sgt. [Lee D.] Hanlan, the test crew, all killed. This it should be noted is the first time that the 488<sup>th</sup> since its inception, through all the training in the States and right up to date, has lost a plane or any personnel in anything but combat. T/Sgt. Hanlan was the first member of the ground personnel to be lost.

7<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day. S-2 jeep which had been returned to the motor pool was taken out without authority by Cpl. [Alvin N.] Aspenson who works at the Officers' Club and wrecked.

8<sup>th</sup>

They had us on again off again and finally decided on a stand-down all day. We started typing the final draft and page layouts of the Squadron "Year Book." It will be complete and ready for the engraver and printer up to Corsica [sic. Bastia?].

9<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day.

10<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Terni Viaduct. Service Group returned our jeep today in very good condition.

11<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Porto Ferrara on Elba. Very good show, Princess O'Rourke and Olivia DeHaviland was never in better form.

12<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Itri in the morning. Bombs brought back. We sent 15 ships. In the afternoon we sent 12 ships to the same place. We lost 8Y. Pilot [Robert E.] Gardner, Co-pilot [David R.] Powers, BN [Bombardier-Navigator] Roy E. Rogers, Gunners Samuel G. Bradley, [Louis H.] Schmidt, Jr. and [James C.] Delucca. It was Delucca's first mission and most of the other boys were rather new. Ship turned on its back and fell like a plummet. When we first came to Corsica we had three or four alerts every evening from 8 o'clock on but for the last ten days or so our evenings have been undisturbed.

13<sup>th</sup>

We spoke too soon. Last night about 2300 hours we had quite a bit of fireworks up Bastia way and the show they put up was nearly as good as we used to see in Africa. Then things quieted down but about some time around 0300 this morning there was a new flareup and those few that bothered to get out of bed saw the start of some brilliant fireworks which seemingly must have done quite a bit of damage. Flares hung over the spot which seemed to be about Borgo. The noise and illumination rose to a peak and seemed to be moving down the coast toward us. After quieting down it suddenly flared out over our heads after one ship which we thought was a Beaufighter (and which was later reported by ack-ack to be a Beaufighter) went over. Simultaneously there was one burst from what appeared to be a 40 mm

and a flare blossomed out directly over our own dispersal area. Its position could not have been more perfect. From then on things happened fast and we were in the middle of our first full-sized raid. The planes reported to be anywhere from 9 to 15 and to be comprised of one Beaufighter Pathfinder, FW190's and He 177's, possibly Ju 88's, jazzed back and forth over our heads. In the squadron area it seemed that they came down over the hill in a fast dive practically on the deck. They missed our area but raked the '86<sup>th</sup> and '89<sup>th</sup>, particularly the latter, with anti personnel bombs and according to some reports, machine guns. Next you'd hear them coming in from the sea again and the ground shook with explosions as their bombs hit loaded ships and fuel supplies. One ship (8P) fully loaded for the morning's mission simply disappeared leaving only a blackened spot perhaps 50 feet in diameter, a crater six feet deep and eight feet across, and an occasional wrench and screwdriver to show where it had been. Other ships lost sections of wings, ailerons, stabilizers etc burned or riddled with shrapnel. In all a total of 75 to 80 in the group were put out of commission either partially or permanently.

The brunt of the attack was borne by the ground personnel who were quartered on the line and casualties were increased by the fact that many had not dug slit trenches or who had heard "wolf" cried so much that they did not avail themselves of shelter. In at least one case the unhappy feeling of nakedness in an uncovered shallow slit trench overcame the man's better judgment. Leaving the slit trench in search of better protection he was struck and killed. Others huddled in their near-by trench, started to do likewise but were forcibly restrained by Pfc. [Celso B.] Castaneda with probable saving of lives. Later realizing that one of the men had fallen seriously injured near-by Castaneda pressed a weapons carrier into service and during a lull got several wounded men to the dispensary [sic].

T/Sgt. [Eddie H.] Lake, in a slit trench around which frags were hitting on all sides and realizing that two men were in a shallow depression near-by without adequate protection, called to them after each wave to make sure they were alright. Eventually they called for help and he went to them to find one man badly wounded in the leg and bleeding profusely. Heedless of conditions, Lake applied a tourniquet and at the first possible moment got the man to the hospital. Lt. [John M.] Leverett, wounded by shrapnel, died shortly after the first of the casualties reached the dispensary [sic].

The building used by S-2 and S-3 and the message tent directly in back of it sustained direct hits and burned, all records and equipment being destroyed. Jeeps and trucks were in various stages of demolition. Flat tires were general for both vehicles and planes. Immediately after breakfast there was a rush for shovels and pickaxes and even the flying personnel were to be seen in various attitudes of ditch digging. Some weird designs of bomb shelters blossomed all over the place and at the first sound of a jeep back-firing, during the day, many a false start was made toward the trenches, legs moving without any conscious volition on the part of their owners. The squadron as a whole suffered two deaths and 21 casualties, some of a serious nature.

As a thumb-to-nose gesture to Jerry we set off a token raid this afternoon although it was all we could do to scrape up 7 ships.

14<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Arezzo R.R. bridge. Funeral at Bastia for Lt. Leverett and Sgt. [Jack] Oddo.

15<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Ficulle R.R. bridge.

16<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Piombino harbor. The rumor is that the Spitty Group north of us got it the other night just before we did. Seemingly they lost the use of about 80 planes, some permanently. Reportedly they are fighting mad and are going after anything German they see at any time. The story is that one or more Beaufighters trailed the raiders to their base and that P-47's went over and cleaned them up.

17<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Poggibonsi and Ripi R.R. junction.

18<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down. Baseball game between 488 and 489. Score was 7 to 3 in favor of the 488<sup>th</sup> of course.

19<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Arezzo. Finished retyping and paging "Year Book" through Paestum.

20<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down. Had first bomblines in months.

21<sup>st</sup>

Mission to R.R. bridge at Sinalunga. Officers beat E.M. 7 to 5 in baseball game after supper. Offensive started on beach-head going well.

22<sup>nd</sup>

Mission to Rd Jct at Ferentino. Brought bombs back due to complete cloud coverage.

23<sup>rd</sup>

Stand-down.

24<sup>th</sup>

Missions to Poggibonsi and Orvieto road bridge.

25<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Orvieto R.R. bridge. Everybody is damned sick of shuttling back to Orvieto and other R.R. bridges, some of which they swear are in various stages of demolition even before they start their bomb run and with no evidence of any efforts on the part of Jerry to make repairs.

26<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Tivoli and to Cartona R.R. bridge. Maj. [Randall D.] Cassada Capt. [Vincent] Myers and Sgts. [Edward T.] Souve and [Joseph A.] Von Rissen left for the States on a 30-day furlough.

27<sup>th</sup>

Missions to Castiglione Ferentino, Atina Area (nickeling mission) and Pietrasanto.

28<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Bucine Viaduct.

29<sup>th</sup>

Same thing. Maj. Kisselman went to wing to protest returning to same targets already demolished. Case in point was Bucine Viaduct which afternoon mission photographs showed to be out on four spans but they scheduled us to go over again next day.

30<sup>th</sup>

Mission to pinpoint 14 miles south of Bologna. Red alerts tonight.

31<sup>st</sup>

Up and down several times during night with yellow and red alerts. Mission to Gratta Ferrata just above bomblines.

**Personnel mentioned in the May 1944 History:**

P 4

I. Losses in action

(c) Missing in action

Robert E. Gardney  
Daniel R. Powers  
Ray E. Rogers  
Samuel G. Bradley  
Louis H. Schmidt  
James C. Delucca

P 5

j. Personnel who have distinguished themselves in action.

Vincent (NMI) Myers  
Clark R. Hagerman  
Max A. Mitcham  
Robert H. Perry  
George C. Price  
William J. Bray  
Robert M. Scott

Special Orders: Personnel Assignments

P 7

Carl (NMI) Frankel

P 8

Joseph G. Chrenko  
John J. Swift  
Arthur J. Bertagna  
Joseph A. McGloin  
Robert (NMI) Bland

P 9

Henry L. Breeland

P 10

Edwin A. Nelson  
James C. Deluca

P 11

Henry C. Gross  
James F. Mummey  
Gilbert F. Hartwell  
Jefferson H. Pettyjohn  
Arnold (NMI) Krause  
David R. Powers  
Orville R. Wilson  
David L. Atkinson  
Meoard R. Tafoya  
Joseph E. Bronson, Jr.  
George C. Schneider, Jr.  
Lyman E. Hodgins  
Eugene G. Sallen  
Ray E. Rogers  
Fready G. Boutte  
Fred Mirochnick  
Norman E. Klinkner  
Elmer W. McDonald  
Mauno A. Lindholm  
Martin V. Misevic  
Leon R. Correll  
Robert J. Martin  
Vincent A. Gasparino

P 12

George W. Clifford  
William O. Fischer  
Robert A. McCarty  
Walter S. Goodell  
Alva E. Ewan  
Robert C. Pagh  
Albert R. Panko  
George W. Cognill  
William P. Day  
Bernard E. Gorski  
James E. Cooper  
Jack (NMI) Marino  
Arthur L. Green, Jr.

P 13

Clifford K. Scheppler

P 14

Thomas F. Robertson  
Elmer F. Schweig  
Frank J. Silva  
Clynch D. Strickland  
Walter W. Trott

P 15

Wen W. Wahlstrom  
Robert R. Vertrees  
Richard F. Hirsch  
Charles E. Bowersox  
Hugh C. Kirkwood  
Dalbert F. Johnson  
Herbert F. Robinso [Robinson?]  
Julius (NMI) Fish  
John L. Jeffress  
Frederick F. Wohlstein, Jr.  
Thomas P. Keating, Jr.  
Vernon D. Vincent  
Dale (NMI) Yeater  
Dan L. Wagner  
Irving W. Wildman

P 17

Ralph r. Shipman  
Michael g. Duncan  
Earl C. Moon  
Joseph (NMI) Heller  
Ambrose P. Hughey  
Arthur (NMI) Schroeder  
Harold E. Bartel  
Francis (NMI) Yohannan  
Herbert F. Robinson

P 19

Walter e. Zoller  
Dominick J. Lauriano  
Melvin L. Kelley  
Joseph A. Kimmich  
Bynum (NMI) Kinnard  
Robert E. Kinsella  
Raymond (NMI) Stromberg  
Thomas N. Knslow  
Alex (NMI) Kiski

Elwood M. Kitner  
Carl L. Knepper  
Bernard E. Koch  
Frank R. Pette  
Robert A. Parks

P 21

Roy E. Ostrem  
Thomas O. Pierce  
Bernard C Diekman  
Robert C. Bachtell  
Homer B. Howard  
Peter Kok  
Vincent Myers  
John L. Hughes

**Men mentioned in photo captions History May 1944:**

P 83

Sgt. Driva

P 86

Sgt. Driva  
Jesse Thompson

[Many of these same events are also recounted in the War Diary of the 340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group HQ Squadron, though from a different perspective. The HQ diary can be found here:

[http://57thbombwing.com/340th\\_History/340thGroupHistory.php](http://57thbombwing.com/340th_History/340thGroupHistory.php)

Transcription by Dan Setzer, son of Sgt. Hymie Setzer, 340<sup>th</sup> BG HQ Squadron. June 16, 2015]