

War Diary of the 488th Bomb Squadron

December 1944

Prepared by: T/Sgt. Don J. Goranson

December 1, 1944

Stand-down for the 488th. Football still the big attraction and each section has its own team and cheering section out on the field back of the Officers' area. A gunner ran wild up in Bastia this afternoon. This is the second time this particular man has gone TARFU since he joined this Squadron. GI colored show at the American Red Cross Club turned out to be pretty interesting. Two new crews in fresh from the States.

2nd

Mission to Roverto rail bridge, Italy was the ops orders of the day but it turned out that due to heavy flak our first box was the only one to bomb the primary target which they hit and got 100% on. The second box bombed Mantua north rail bridge, Italy but didn't get any pictures. It was a "hot" mission. Eleven out of twelve planes were holed and one bombardier slightly wounded.

3rd

Stand-down officially but we had a weather recce take off at 0545 hours. Brrrr. Three chaff ships were scheduled to fly with one of the other squadrons but after a three hour wait the target was changed and chaff no longer needed. NEWS HIGHLIGHT OF THE DAY is Orders to proceed to the US for sixteen enlisted men and ten officers came through late in the afternoon. When the combat personnel have had their "rest" the ground personnel will still be over here to welcome them back for their second tour of duty.

4th

Stand-down. Sixteen planes scheduled to go to two "hot" targets. The boys were relieved to say the least. Lots of celebrations going on due to all the orders coming in for the combat men to go home. Presentation of streamers for the Presidential Unit Citation received for the Tunisian and Sicilian Campaigns. It's rumored that there are two more citation clusters on the way. Show tonight, "Hail the Conquering Hero," pretty good for a flag-waving movie.

5th

Stand-down. Gibraltar plane back today but with no liquor for the Enlisted Men's Club as it's still in Madrid. It looks like a dry Christmas for the Enlisted Men unless something else pops up. Today the 488th touch football season finished up in the "C Ration Bowl" with the gunners playing the headquarters men. The game ended in a 12 to 12 tie making the gunners all Squadron champions with

six wins, 1 defeat and 1 tie. Rumors are floating thick and fast today; no one allowed to ride as passenger in our planes, no planes allowed to land at any of the Rome airfields etc.

6th

Stand-down. First Christmas mail in – forty bags of it. Two mail calls. Rumor has it that the boat in Bastia is just beginning to unload. One of the co-pilots being checked out as first pilot ran 8L into the ditch off the hardstand – at least one new prop and engine needed. Squadron got a load of lumber for building up of tents. It's kind of late for the old men but the fortunate new men can use it. Sgt. Driva and his helpers are building an enlisted mens club on the north end of the football field. Four new crews in and grins are all over the faces of the combat crews.

7th

Stand-down. Dark day with intermittent showers. Mail call at 1730 hours with more packages. Major Cassada, doing a little early morning duck hunting, bagged three. Same setup for tomorrow as for today, 1100 hours briefing, 1030 hours pre-briefing with the same hot target, Colliano rail bridge, Italy. Three officers and seven enlisted men left for home. Cairo ship back. Much excess weight is being worked off on our newly finished basketball court.

8th

Stand-down. Last night prowlers broke into the parachute “prefab” on the line and stole four 'chutes. S-2 gave an E & E lecture this afternoon to the four new crews. They also received a lecture on radio release and Norden procedure. Received a new ground man with thirty-one months overseas time. Seven thousand eggs were brought back on the Cairo ship.

9th

Stand-down. A beautiful sunny day at Alesan. Recce over just about 1330 hours. His vapor trail passes directly over us. There was much arguing as to whether it was a P-38 or Ju-88. Guess quite a few will brush the cobwebs from their slit trenches this afternoon. New crews received indoctrination on the school ship this afternoon which included gas, oil and emergency systems.

10th

Mission to Roverto rail bridge, Italy and got only 90% but with only one hit on the bridge itself. Two Me 109's made a pass at the formation but no damage was done – either way. Package mail call for 1730 hours. Fried chicken and fresh mashed potatoes for supper tonight.

11th

Eighteen plane formation to Motta di Livenza road and rail bridge, Italy with no ack-ack at the target and only one burst on way out over the coast. No mail. No nothing – just plain chilly Corsica winter

12th

Stand-down. Routine. Mail call with both packages and regular mail at 1730 hours. Lt. McDonald is now known as Captain McDonald, also we have 1st Lt. Tarter, Pfeffer and Rosenthal.

13th

Stand-down. The first sergeant had a Christmas tree put up in the Squadron area. Maybe Christmas is really coming to Corsica. Today was a lucky day for Sgt. Knowles of Communications. 8Y brought its bombs back from a mission and Knowles decided to try the intervalometer manually. It worked and only too well as four armed thousand pounders came tumbling out. 8Y was deserted in a matter of seconds.

14th

Mission to road and rail bridge, Italy at Chivasso. 100% of course. 488th beat the 489th in basketball.

15th

Mission to Voghera rail bridge, Italy. We bombed but clouds obscured all picture taking so we got no score. USO entertainers, three guys and three girls, ate with us tonight. Had very good roast chicken. They put on a good show at the Red Cross Club for both Officers and Enlisted Men. Gas mask and gun inspection. New sleeping bags in at supply.

16th

Stand-down. Everybody happy because the target we had was no milk run. Our Christmas tree was trimmed with chaff and it really sparkles when the sun shines on it. Mail!!! Meeting of whole Squadron at 1600 hours and Major Cassada told us we were the only ones to receive a rating of excellent for everything from the XII Air Force inspectors. After this meeting Capt. Mintz, acting adjutant while Capt. Tayloe is in Cairo, read the Articles of War and Capt. Marino gave a sex lecture. And so another exciting day overseas is over.

17th

Stand-down due to weather in Italy. However it was a beautiful day here. Two of the squadron pet dogs were killed this morning – playing in the middle of the road. Rome trip off. S/Sgt. Storey, ground crew man from Communications left for the States.

18th

Stand-down. Rainy and dark all day. Mail and packages in.

19th

Stand-down. Rain all day. Mail. Capt. Kok, Squadron Bombing Officer left for home today.

20th

Stand-down. Rain all day. Lt. Duda started a class in navigation for nine enlisted men.

21st

Sun, wind and cold all day AND a mission. Twelve aircraft to our second alternate, Chiari rail bridge, Italy. 100% bombing accuracy. 8N landed with a flat tire and a wounded tail gunner. A piece of flak creased the gunner's helmet and went right on through. If it wasn't for that helmet he wouldn't be here today.

22nd

Stand-down. Rain all day. Three aircraft were "sweated in" this morning through the poor visibility.

23rd

Stand-down. Engineer-gunners were given their choice of a good thing today – to finish their tours of duty, go home for a thirty day furlough and then return and fly a thousand hours as a second tour with the ATC [Allied Tactical Command] getting time and a half credit for their combat hours. Package call at 1730 hours. Rain.

24th

Stand-down. Rain and snow, wet snow. Mail and packages. "Christmas cheer" started to flow in the afternoon and continued well into the night. The new Enlisted Mens Club was in full swing from 1900 hours on. American liquor helped the Yuletide spirit soar. Several 'Friendly' fights just kept the party going. Midnight mass at the Red Cross Club. One officer cracked up a jeep.

25th

Christmas Day!!! Complete stand-down. A few black eyes and a bandage here and there but all in good spirits. Delicious turkey dinner in the afternoon. Movie canceled due to weather.

26th

Mission to Colliano rail bridge, Italy. Missed. Got 66%. Knocked our bombing accuracy average in the head. Now it's only 91.66%. An epidemic of the GI's mixed up the schedule but finally everything was set. Paper bags, boxes, pails, helmets – anything that could be pressed into service was taken along – and some were used. Huge mail and package call at 1730 hours.

27th

Two missions today, first one to Morovnica rail viaduct, Yugoslavia and second to Colliano rail bridge, Italy. Both 100% missions. One engineer gunner transferred to 57th Wing to act as engineer with ATC.

28th

Mission to Borovnica rail viaduct, Yugoslavia but weather too bad so bombs brought back. Four more combat men received their orders to depart for the US within seventy-two hours. Gibraltar plane left to pick up the liquor, hope they make it this time. One new crew in from the States.

29th

Motta di Livenza was the target today on which 100% was scored. Our medics lost four men to Group due to change in T/O [Table of Organization]. Mail and packages in. Eighty-seven crew members saw movie on ditching procedure.

30th

Colliano and Crema rail bridges were bombed today with two 100%. S-2 briefed the new crew on E and E material. Five officers left for home.

31st

Our first box bombed Mantua rail bridge, Italy and missed but didn't get any pictures and so were saved. The second box bombed Colliano rail bridge, Italy and got 100%. Five enlisted men left for home and orders came in for two officers. We now have Capt. Gross and 1st Lt. Garanson. Mail and packages again.

For the month of December the 488th has flown 14 missions with 161 sorties and has dropped 495,200 pounds of bombs for an accuracy average of 93.51%.

Men mentioned in the December 1944 History, excluding crew lists:

I. Losses in action.

(b) Wounded

Gilbert F. Hartwell

j. Personnel who have distinguished themselves in action.

Saleem Aswad

Benjamin L. Kanowsky

Martin V. Misevic

Edward E. Bardnell

Edward J. Kirk

James M. Tayloe

Leonard N. Hanton

Daniel A. Kochersperger, Jr.

Edward S. Bryk

John W. Lippert

William C. Hemmerling

Special orders:

P 8

William S. Hall

Jack B. Willingham

Harold R. Wood

Richard K. Demero

Jesse J. Hart

Arthur H. Lloyd

Raymond F. Fassinger

John J. Jaros

Schyuler F. McClure

P 9

Kenneth W. Mooney

P10

John P. Wilkinson

Robert V. Denton

Warren H. Klees

Richard Mautner

Carroll E. Gray

Aubrey B. Porter

Emmett W. Hughes

Hiram L. Tribble
William E. Ozias
Joseph G. Tardiff
Gerald M. Rosenthal
Charles J. Kirklosky

P 11

Victor M. Ramirez
Hardy D. Narron
James D. Wilkerson
J.H. Newsom
Doyle G. Shipley
Robert J. Jackson
Ferdinand M. Merta
James E. Jacobs
Frederick J. Ellis, Jr.
David R. Mackey
William L. Marshall, Jr.
Joseph Kuka, Jr.
William H. Yengel
Geroge W. Hallbach
Paul R. Boone
Samuel A. Jones, Jr.
Bill H. Spafford
Thomas R. McCabe
Clayton Chambless
George T. Webb
Alvin Silverman
Wilfred L. Proulx
Herbert Barclay
Robert B Norris
Charles R. Patterson

P 13

Harry K. Schakelford, Jr.
Raymond E. Neil
Robert G. Rae, Jr.
Fred B. Hicks
Richard Miller
Donald Dussi

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

http://57thbombwing.com/340th_History/340thGroupHistory.php

Transcription by Dan Setzer, son of Sgt. Hymie Setzer, 340th BG HQ Squadron. July 6, 2015]