

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

## October 1943

Prepared by: Capt. Everett B. Thomas

October 1, 1943

Stand-down all day. Routine.

2<sup>nd</sup>

Stand-down all day. Simulated mission. Rain and wind started about 1630 and it rained!!!! Nobody prepared and many tent down and beds flooded.

3<sup>rd</sup>

Stand-down all day. Simulated mission. Snow on Mt. Etna. Rain again tonight. Turkey today for dinner with dressing, cranberry sauce etc. Good turkey soup for supper.

4<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day. Simulated mission. Alert warning for move to Italy.

5<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day. Simulated mission. Routine

6<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Cascano at 0845. SNAFU. Formation had trouble from the start. One box dropped North of target. Other on the nose. Two ships holed. No casualties.

7<sup>th</sup>

Mission 0800 to Yannina, Greece with stop-off at Brindisi, Italy to refuel. Called back after take-off. Weather. Had PX today.

8<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day. Routine.

9<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Pontelatone, Italy on Naples map 1:5000,000. could not find target. Cloud coverage.

10<sup>th</sup>

Same mission as yesterday. Found and hit area. No excitement. Everybody has formed the habit of driving the Via Grande, about 15 miles up in the hills for eats. Sgt. Stere found the place and now most of the 340<sup>th</sup> can be found there sometime during the day. A normal meal consists of at least two steaks, two omelets (plain and cheese), oodles of shoestring potatoes and ice cream. Average cost about a dollar. Our food gone to pot again. Well we had two weeks of something besides chili "meat and vegetable hash" and "dehydrated" eggs in seven months anyhow.

11<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day. Everybody off to town or on sack duty. TBF [Tactical Bomber Force] says we will be called only for night missions for a while. Crews not happy.

12<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day. Working like mad on Squadron Diary and History.

13<sup>th</sup>

From 0530 to 2130 solid labor on diary history. Stand-down all day and night. Six ships and crews and ground personnel sent to San Pancrazio, Italy from which we will be operating.

14<sup>th</sup>

Still working on history and diary. Finally finished both. One is an inch and a half thick and the other is a half inch. Bound and completed 1630. Four more ships to San Pancrazio.

15<sup>th</sup>

Four ships to 12<sup>th</sup> Group at Gerbini to operate with them. "A" party left for Italy this morning. Lts. Olian, Hartkopf, Manning, Hardy, Capt. Peyton, T/Sgts. Perry and Corcoran, having finished fifty mission, got their orders to proceed home.

16<sup>th</sup>

Rain. Hanging around in partially dismantled tents with everything packed ready to move.

17<sup>th</sup>

More rain. Nothing to do. What a mess.

18<sup>th</sup>

Clear. Mud six inches deep on the field. Flight echelon left for San Pancrazio. Had to fly at twelve thousand feet on solid cloud. Arrived San Pancrazio about 1330. Had lunch. Everybody jackassed bedrolls and other stuff about quarter of a mile to barracks since there was no transportation. At last we get a roof over our heads or part of one. Barracks and buildings of a construction [whose] flimsiness would put any American contractor to shame was largely wrecked before the enemy left them. But there are good lumber piles since nothing was burned and the scrounging parties will have plenty of material to patch up with. Enlisted men doing well by themselves taking wooden ceilings from the buildings reasonably wooded and making walls and floors for their tents. Most of the Officers can be accommodated in one reasonably sound barracks. There are showers which will take but little work to put in running order with hot and cold running water and whether we can stand it or not, there are flush toilets on which we may be able to learn to sit again. Also a weird type of straddle toilet which has all the ear marks of Italian invention. The Squadron area is concentrated close by, but fear of dust and much of the noise of the field. This is the best set-up we've had yet operationally. Runway is rather short and will have to be lengthened for safety.

19<sup>th</sup>

“A” part arrived this afternoon. Had a fine trip. They left Catania on 15 of October with 68 vehicles and arrived here in Messina about 1500. Had a beautiful drive over good roads except where the bridges were blown out. Ate well the first night, but were bothered by hoards of children watching every forkful and trying to scrounge in the garbage cans and begging, and sniping cigarette butts. That evening Italian women were brought into camp by their husbands and brothers offering to trade their favors for food. On the 16 of October they left Sicily in three boat loads of LCT's arriving at Reggio about 1100 where they ate dinner consisting of a sandwich and left for Necasto. On the 17<sup>th</sup> they broke camp at 0700 and arrived at Necasto about 0830. They passed through some very beautiful mountain country enroute. Women carried every thing on their heads as beasts of burden while my lord carries nothing. Camped at Belveder. On the 18<sup>th</sup> leaving at 0700 they drive over steep mountain roads on a cooling beautiful day. Turning up the east coast toward Toranto. “C” ration lunch at 1100 at Spezzanla leaving again at 1200. Roads gravel and rougher. Arrived staging area at 1630. On the 19<sup>th</sup> the party left at 0800 arriving at Toranto at 0930. Plenty of ships in the harbor and heavy army traffic on the roads. Roads rough until they hit “Black Top,” arrived in San Pancrazio about 1330.

20<sup>th</sup>

Everybody has colds, sniffles and coughs. Have nice office setup already to to to work, but no work.

21<sup>st</sup>

Cooler. Captain Cover flew to Naples with Major Kisselman as another passenger. They were fired on by our navy over the harbor. No hits one error. We find that Lecce about twenty miles from here, has pretty good shops and fair food. Prices as usual as soon as we step in have started sky-rocketing.

22<sup>nd</sup>

Nothing doing today. Grabowski who went down with Corbin, is stated by the Adjutant General to be a P/W. About 2000 hours a ship crashed and burned about four or five miles from here.

Shortly after we located it Lt. Tedford of the 486<sup>th</sup> walked up to the wreck. He had bailed out and thought that Major Keller had been able to. They were the only two in the ship and the Official story was that they had started for Gerbini, ran onto bad weather and had turned back. They were over the field for some time, but since they have no recognition lights, landing lights were not first turned on.

23<sup>rd</sup>

14 B-17's landed here to stay overnight, gas up and take off for a mission into Austria tomorrow. Nights cold. Have the area wired, but there are only about three bulbs available all the others being on the convoy still on the way.

24<sup>th</sup>

The B-17's took off at 0800 hours. The jeeps of the "B" party arrived this afternoon. Report that the trailer with the Officers' club equipment broke loose and went over a thousand foot cliff.

25<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Frosinone. Plenty of ack-ack. S/Sgt. Jack Hollis got a scratch on his knee.

26<sup>th</sup>

Mission to Frosinone, same as yesterday. Otherwise routine.

27<sup>th</sup>

Mission to \_\_\_\_\_, called off on account of weather. Stand-down from early afternoon. Got a new portable typewriter today after waiting only seven months. An "Eye-tie" coming over the fence was shot and killed by a guard.

28<sup>th</sup>

Mission to \_\_\_\_\_ called off on account of the weather. Most everybody went to town (Lecce). Chicken dinners with good soup, fair amount of chicken and some gosh awful quince apple's baked. All about a dollar and fifteen cents. Rain all day. Came home to find barracks flooded, and many beds soaked. A dreary mess.

29<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day. Weather, raining cats and dogs. Many scrounging around for material to make stoves, but chimney items scarce and most succeed only in providing good Indian smoke signals. Lts. Olson and Touchstone got captaincys today. Special mention: pan cakes for breakfast, macaroni for lunch and creamed chicken for supper, man have they possibly run out of chili.

30<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day. Unpacked S-2 and Operations equipment. Capt. Thomas boasted that he's made a record – has all his Christmas cards addressed. Found some weird designs in Lecce.

31<sup>st</sup>

Mission to shipping at Ancona. Called back due to weather. Lt. R.M. Johnston struggling with ideas for Year Book illustrations. Watched take off this afternoon and sweated out the 24 planes. A ship from 487<sup>th</sup> had overshot and was bogged down at the very end of the runway. All ships were loaded to the limit with gas and bombs for a four hour and a half run and there were some tense moments when the ships came down the too short runway, skimmed the mired ship and raised the bushtops. No mishaps.

[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. May 29, 2015]

## Troop Assignments October 1943 History

Pages 5 and 6

James M. Burns  
Gordon V. Smith  
Edward A. Link  
Lawrence F. Kepler  
Edwin E. Tullis  
Austin E. Dunaway  
James E. Turtle  
Walter S. Mazor  
Joseph B. Ross  
George C. Price  
Jack L. Pearson  
Layton A. Daniels  
George L. Wells  
James V. Crowe Jr.  
Howard G. Reichard  
Charles A. Wood, Jr.  
Frank J. Lapoint  
Laurence F. Brooke

Benjamin L. Kanowsky, Jr.  
Frederick J. Mcfadden, Jr.  
Herbert J. Chaplin  
Russell A. Kerkhan  
Edward T. Souve  
David (NMI) Schwartz