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SQ-BOMB-489-SU-RE-D
War Diary
Sept 43

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CONFIDENTIAL

1 Sep 1943

489TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (M)
340TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (M)
Office of the Intelligence Officer

RESTRICTED

1 October 1943,
APO 520, c/o PM,
New York, New York.

SQ-Bomb-489-HI
Sept 1943

SUBJECT: Squadron History and Diary.

TO : Group Intelligence Officer, 340th Bombardment Group.

1 September - There was a stand-by at 0700 hours, then when a mission was finally called (take off to be at 1045 hours), the S-2 officers went to Group with the combat crews to attend the briefing. The target was troop concentrations at Bouva Marina, Italy. The mission was successful and no ack-ack or enemy fighters were around to harass our planes. By today the shock of losing Lt. Nels Olson, our bombardment officer has more or less passed off. The opinion in the squadron is that a man in his nervous condition should never have been permitted to go near an airplane. It's just unfortunate that our set up is so inadequate in regards to relief of combat personnell.

2 - We had two missions today, the firstof which was a raid on a high ranking enemy headquarters in Italy. This was a very tough assignment because the boys were bombing a pin-point w hich they couldn't see from the air, but reports indicated that the raid was very successful. The second mission was a raid against an enemy airdrome in Italy, also successful. Speaking of raids, we had a bit of excitement here ourselves. Three Me 109's dived out of the sky and attempted to bom b the harbor of Catania. We were all pretty scared even though the attack was negligible in its effect. There has been quite a bit of talk and speculation as to when Italy will be invaded. We hope it's soon. Some new repla cements came in today which made our combat crews very happy. They seem like a nice bunch of fellows.

P.R.C.

3 - There was a mission today at 0630, twelve of our planes going out to bomb the landing ground at Came gliatello, Italy. The mission was successful. The big news of today though was the invasion of Italy. At 11:30 last night, Allied Forces landed on the toe then larger units followed up at 4:30 AM. Our laiason officer, Capt. Simpson, spoke to us on the invasion and gave us the details of the tactics to be shortly put into action. We moved over to our assigned area today and somehow or other, the 489th managed to get the worst area. A low area, full fo mosquito breeding places and the fartherst one from the field. Our food has been miserable and all the men are bitching to high heaven.

4 - Capt. White, our S-2 officer, indoctrinated the new men in the use of Military Grid maps and how to r ead co-ordinates, etc. Also explained the significance of the well known bomb line. There was no mission today. The weather has been exceedingly pleasant, much like the autumn weather above the Mason & Dixon Line.

5 - There was a mission at 0650 hours of 12 ships from our squadron and 12 from the 88th. The objective was Cosenza, Italy, but the formation turned back before reaching the target, on account of bad weather. There was a stand down the rest of the day.

6 - There was a stand down all day and most of the fellows took off for p rts unknown, leaving the 489th Area like a graveyard. There are not any events of interest or importance to record.

7 - There was a mission at 1300 hours today in which 12 of our ships participated. The target was Crotone, Italy. Our bombers dropped 43,00 pounds of bombs on the objective in a per fect pattern. All planes returned, having

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encountered no fighter opposition and little ack-ack. Capt. Kaufmann, our Operations Officer, spoke to our combat crews on the use of firearms around the area, and other talks of tactical importance were given by various members of the organizati on.

8 - There was an all day stand down and some of the time was used in indoctrinating some of our new bomb ardiers and navigators in dead reckoning navigation, map reading, pin points, how to keep notes efficiently on observations and times of events while on missions, etc. At about 6:30 we received the exciting news that Italy surrendered unconditionally at 1250 hours today. Later Capt. Si mpson, our ALO, came over and spoke to us on the Italian surrender and the allied activities and progress in Ita-ly. We are running a night mission in the Naples area. The time has not yet been given, but there will be a six plane formation from our squadron. Tonight there was a party for all the officers in the Group at the Officers Club. Many British nurses were i nvited and the affair was quite successful, except for the fact that our Commanding Officer had to give a little talk on the proper conduct of an officer at such affairs on account of the riotous antics of some of the att endants.

9 - The mission over Avellino, Italy, this morning at 0240 hours was a complete failure and a calamity for the 340th Bomb Group as well as for our squadron. On the take off, a 487th plane failed to clear a gun emplacement, finally crashing into a stone house in line with the end of the runway. All of the occupants, with the except ion of the co-pilot were killed. How he survived is a miracle. One of our planes, piloted by Lt. Ben F. Williams, Lt. R. D. Scott, co-pilot, bombardier, Lt. Haller, Sgt. Mitchell (his first combat mission), radio oper ator, and S/Sgt. Adam Syno, gunner, crashed in the sea about one minute after take off, killing the entire crew. The effect of this particular tragedy on the men was heavy as Lt. R. D. Scott was one of the best liked and mos t admired men in the squadron, as was Lt. Williams, and Sgt. Syno was a colorful character who always held a warm place in all our hearts. They wi ll never die in our memories.

10 - There was a mission at midni ght but due to lack of co-ordination by fighters who were supposed to illuminate the target, but got there too soon, our bombers returned to the field without finding their objective and were interrogated by Capt. White at 0145 hours this morning. One ship did not return from this mission. Capt. Decker and his crew, co-pilot, Lt. Egbejerg, bombardier, Lt. O'Connell, radio operator, Sgt. Rovick and gunner, Sgt. Mc Millan disappeared. We've given them all up for lost and the effect of this loss on our squadron is very heavy. Later this morning we had another mission with some motor transports a s our objective. The ships all returned with out having found the target.

11 - Last night our squadron had a happy surprise. Capt. Decker's crew, which had been given up for lost, returned home safe and sound after a harrowing experience. Lost the night before, their fuel was exhausted before they could find our field. After cons ulting the other members of the crew as to whether they should bail out or attempt a water landing, they all voted to attempt the latter. Capt. Decker flew along the coast of Sicily and gradually brought the nose down until the waves were lapping at the belly of the plane. The crew waited for the terrific jar which they expected when the ship contacted the water, but they were all very surprised at the ease with which the landing was accomplished. Before the plane had stopped skidding through the water, the crew was in action. Safety belts off, life raft released, IFF set detonated, parachute removed and the other essential operations under the circumstances were accomplished. The crew all got into the dingy comfortably and paddled their way toward the near est shore, not knowing whether they were in friendly or enemy territory. The y were all very much fatigued and decided to try to get some rest. It was extremely cold and in addition their clothes were wet. But with the aid of the one parachute which they had carried with them, they managed to keep warm by all bundling together under the folds of silk. They found in the morning that they were

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fortunately rather close to our own base and they contacted the nearest Bomb Group which provided transportation for them to their base.

12 - There was a stand down all day and as usual our camp site resembled "the city morgue on Thursday morning." Most of the boys visited the interesting towns on the road up to Mt. Etna and returned with fantastic tales about wonderful chicken dinners, grapes the seize of plums served ice col, and even apples; C'es t la guerre! Lt. Ben F. Williams had a military funeral today at the American Military Cemetery at Gela. Lt. R. D. Scott's body was recovered from the wreckage of his plane today and funeral services were conducted this afternoon for him also.

13.- This morning twelve of our Mitchells took off to bomb a road junction in Italy. The mission was very successful. I visited the town of Catania today and was very pleased to note that so many people were returning to their homes, the less fortunate working diligently to repair the havoc that war had brought upon their homes. We didn't have to worry about using flashlights on the base ton ight, but we did have to keep our female dogs and younger personnel pretty carefully guarded as the brilliant full moon was exerting all its power s upon us.

14 - We completed a successful mission today against the town of Battipaglia, Italy. Twelve of our Mitchells participated and they all returned unscaved, probably due to the f act that there was no enemy fighter or anti-aircraft opposition. There was nothing else of particular interest.

15 - We received word from TAF that the 340th Bomb Gp (M) is the only medium bomber outfit which is doing both day and night bombing. They also complimented us an the excellent t actical performance of the Group. There was a mission today against the town of Eboli, Italy. This mission was one of those which the boys call "milk rides", because no ack-ack or enemy fighters were encountered.

16 - There was a stand down until 1800 hours today. No events of importance to record.

17 - At 0115 hours this morning , Capt. White, Capt. Kaufmann, and Lt. Mates briefed our crews for a mission scheduled to take off at 0250 hours. This was the first time that our squadron did its own briefing and from an impartial stand point the results were many times more effective than when briefed by Group. Lt. Mates, our No 1 navigator, did an excellent job briefing the bombardiers on the navigation problems of a night mission. Not one plane wavered from its course on this particular mission. The crews returned at 0600 hours when the y were interrogated by Capt. White. At 1330 hours Group briefed our crews for a mission scheduled to take off at 1500 hours. This mission was successful and returned at 1630 hours to be interrogated by Capt. White. Today was a big day for Lts. Casper and Cutler. After having performed the duties ofsquadron censors for over five months, they were relieved by L ts. Zeigler and Jordon.

18 - There has been much talk today about the consistent pilfering of the mail before it reaches the addr essee. This, of course, pertains particularly to packages and magazines. The S-2 section submitted a letter through channels in regard to this criminal practice. The boys "sweated out" a mission today. In fact they were briefed at 0830 but the mission was cancelled and at 1500 hours a stand down was declared temporarily increasing the population of Catania by approxima tely 200.

19 - At 0730 an immediate stand by was announced. The crews remained in the vicinity of the Operations Tent practically all day before they finally took off at 1530 hours on a rai d against Sarno, Italy. Everyone is excited about Capt. Decker leaving f or home. He is to leave for Tunis Tomorrow from where he will continue to the States.

20 - All day stand down today. Capt. Decker left today amid a turn-out of affectionate good byes. We're sure sorry to see him go - one can't realize

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how strong the bonds are which keep us together until someone slips through those bonds and says good by. Lt. Nease left with "Deck", flying him to Tunis and said they had a swell time together. Capt. Simpson, our AIO officer, spoke on the Italian Campaign but didn't give us much information. Not his fault - there just isn't any to give.

21 - There was a mission schedule d today for which the briefing was held at 0935 at Group Operations. The interrogation showed this mission to be unsuccessful in that the formations hit the wrong target. Again Capt. Simpson spoke to us today this time givin g us a little more dope on the Italian Campaign. The situation looks a little brighter. At 1600 hours a stand down was announced which made the combat crews very happy.

22 - There was a standby beginnin g at 0800 hours which blossomed into a combat mission which took off for Italy. At 1500 hours there was a meeting of combat crew members. Lt. W. D. Scott spoke to the boys on care of radio equipment. Capt. Bennett, our new engineering officer, spoke to the men on keeping planes in satisfactory condition. Capt. Kaufmann also added a few pertinent remarks.

23 - Combat mission today went off well. Lt. Casper was called upon today to act as council for the defendant in board proceedings to eliminate an enlisted man from the service for medical reasons. Nothing else of interest to record today.

24 - At 1000 hours Capt. White attending a briefing at Group Operations for a mission which carried them to I taly. The boys hit the wrong target today. At that they encountered heavy ac k-ack which broke up the formation and made the pilots take violent evasive action.

25 - An all day stand down today once again cleared the area of "stray personnel". There was absolutely no activity during the day, but at 1400 hours Group called in for one plane to fly a "propoganda mission" over Naples (that is, to drop leaflets). Lt. Dyer and crew volunteered to accept the assignment. The mission was carried out without any mishaps. There was an all day trial today. The government versus Pvt. Arthur Kalapanidas of the 487th whose case had previous ly been investigated by Lt. Cutler. As usual, the defense council was our squadron barrister, Lt. Casper, who even shocked himself today by getting his "client" acquitted.

26 - Another all day stand down. Even stand downs can become a nuisance sometimes. At this point many of the boys are sweating out their 50th mission so they can return home to their wives, sweethearts and families and stand downs arn't helping them one bit toward achieving that end. I'd like to mention something about Capt. Nestor, our medical officer, today. He is outstanding in his firm stand regarding sending men home after they have completed 50 missions.

27 - Although there has been a stand by since 0900 hours, no mission was called and finally, at 1700 hours, a stand down was announced. There was a pretty good movie at the show tonight - Deanna Durbine in "Springtime". It took our minds off war for a couple of hours anyway. They should send more pictures of that type overseas.

28 - Nothing of interest to repor t.

29 - At 0900 hours there was a stand by which didn't materialize into a mission until about 1400 hours. The target was road junctions at Benevento, Italy, and the purpose of this mi ssion was to effect a road block. At the same time, several thousand propoganda leaflets were dropped over

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the target area. These were fo r the German soldiers although what their contents are remains a mystery to the author of this document. We're beginning to hear rumors about moving to Italy. Somehow or other these latrinograms always seem to have some basis for their origin. Perhaps time will tell on this one pretty soon. The morale of the men seems higher than usual. I believe that most of this is due to the fine recreational facilities which our enlisted men have developed for themselves. They have 3 tents lashed together which is their combined mess hall and enlisted men's c lub.

30 - There was a stand down today, and aside from the fact that pay was distributed (which always is an event of gala importance) there was nothing of special interest wor th mentioning.

SAUL CUTLER
1st Lt., Air Corps

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