

# War Diary of the 489<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron

## October 1943

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October 1, 1943

The bomb line moved up several times today. Mild elation over the fall of Naples. 489<sup>th</sup> with twelve planes encountered only 3 bursts of ack-ack in successful bombing of intersecting roads outside of Bevento, Italy. The following 2<sup>nd</sup> Lts. after 8 months of combat were finally promoted to 1<sup>st</sup> Lts.: Belcher, Cohen, Demas, Egebjerg, Fallwell, Furman, Gaughan, Gomez. Egebjerg, who had previously been with the RAF, had already been the recipient of the British Distinguished Service Cross.

2<sup>nd</sup>

Heavy rain and stand-down all day.

3<sup>rd</sup>

Stand-down all day and preparation for an imminent move. Catania, which is returning to its former splendor, beckons the men who still have a little money 3 days after pay day.

4<sup>th</sup>

Major Keller, CO of the 486<sup>th</sup>, is assigned to Group as Assistant Operations Officer. Stand-down all day. Lt. Casper, Group defense counsel, tangled with Lt. Murphy, Trial Judge Advocate and Assistant S-2 with the 488<sup>th</sup>, in the trial of Pvt. Rittenger of the 487<sup>th</sup>. Both Lts. Casper and Murphy are graduates of the University of Cincinnati College of Law. From Sgt. Greve's diary: "Fleecy-white cumulus clouds are drifting leisurely under the impetus of a determined breeze. Here and there are bright patches of blue. Mt. Etna, which straddles the horizon to the north of this area and slopes steeply to the sea on the east, is more beautiful than ever with a mantle of clouds reaching far down its sides. The pure and liquid-clear air reveals countless hills and vales at the base of this awe-inspiring mountain from whose burning bowels has poured forth on to the surrounding countryside terrible death and destruction. Cozily tucked away at its feet is the sprawling city of Catania which daily is re-assuming its appealing old world charm which a ravaging war almost succeeded in completely destroying. Today reminds me of October days at home. The more I see of this world, the more I realize how much of it is alike."

5<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day. Capt. Simpson, ALO [Allied Liaison Officer], talked on the Italian and Dodecanese Campaigns. Today marks our 215<sup>th</sup> day overseas. Time marches on, sometimes slowly, but always surely.

6<sup>th</sup>

Mission for today – Road block one and a half miles SW of Vairano Patenora. Unsatisfactory results with the bombs of the 1<sup>st</sup> box hitting short and to the left of the target while the 2<sup>nd</sup> box did not drop their bombs inasmuch as the lead bombardier did not want to take a chance of bombing our own troops. Capt. Wagner, after dropping his bombs on the target area, was forced down at Battipaglio due to engine trouble. This was Wednesday and one of party nights at the Officer's Club. Champagne flowed at \$3.00 a quart. American nurses ( hooray ) from the 807<sup>th</sup> MAETS, an evacuation unit, helped boost morale as can be testified to by Major Parrish, Capt. Kaufmann, Lts. Crawford, Hitchcock, and Bulkely. These nurses, in more ways than one, are certainly making their contribution to the war effort. The “jam” was furnished by our musical ensemble which is composed of Lts. Cutler, Demas, Bulkely, “Gunner,” and the inimitable Sgt. Rovick.

7<sup>th</sup>

Twelve planes took off for fighter landing ground at Yannia (North), Greece as their target. This flight proceeded to a point 20 miles NW of Catania, where it was called back, with no reason given. Lts. Hamilton, Mates, Morisette, Yeargin, and Sgt. Nagby returned from rest camp at Algiers with fantastic accounts of the Shangri-La they had visited. Beautiful and seductive women, steaks garnished with mushrooms, American ice-cream, pie ala-mode, and cigars. (Pity the poor 4-F's at home.)

8<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down and visits to Mt. Etna. Capts. Bunch, Fields, White, and those of lesser rank, both officers and enlisted men, were reported seen at various times at various inns and taverns along the slopes of Mt. Etna in the famous resort-villages of Via Grande, Nicolosi and Acireale.

9<sup>th</sup>

Target for today – Gun Emplacements on a pin-point NW of Capua with good results. (The current phrase is, “They looked back and saw many fires burning.) Lts. David and “RON” Cohen finally arrived from rest camp badly in need of rest. Lt. David in an exclusive interview stated, “I would have married the resort owner's daughter, but she only had a million dollars.” Another talk on the Italian Campaign by Capt. Simpson.

10<sup>th</sup>

Lt. Schmidt who had been hospitalized with yellow jaundice was welcomed back into the squadron. Stand-down all day. S-2 continued to maintain situation maps on the Italian Front and the Russian Front, the latter still headlining the news. Combat crews were beginning to wager bets on the duration of the German war. All of us look forward to receiving a copy of the daily “Argus” which is being expertly edited by Capt. Rothwell, ALO.

11<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lts. Morisette, Schmidt, Smith, Wagenseller, and Wubolding received their orders promoting them to 1<sup>st</sup> Lts as of 21 August 1943.

12<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down. The squadron was alerted for night missions. The airdrome was closed because of weather conditions. During most of the stand downs, the men played bridge, poker, and both the enlisted men and officers used their clubs advantageously. Since we were operating under tents, we frequently found ourselves deluged with torrential rains.

13<sup>th</sup>

Stand-down all day. Six planes and crews took off for our new base, San Pancrazio, Italy, as part of the "A" Party. Moving was a greater problem than usual because of the vast amount of impediments to be carried. Fortunately the squadron had just acquired nine old jeeps which had been used by the American 7<sup>th</sup> Army in Italy.

14<sup>th</sup>

The "B" Party moving by truck convoy left for San Pancrazio with Capt. Fields in charge. The trip was to last six days and involved the crossing of Messina Straits in a ferry.

15<sup>th</sup>

Seven planes and crews departed for Gerbini, Sicily, where they were to operate in conjunction with the 12<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (M). This was a last minute change in plans and most of the men left considerable baggage behind. All in all, the seven flew five missions, some contracted yellow jaundice and malaria, but all reported the food to be an improvement over ours. Lt. King handled the interrogations. Six of our planes took off from Catania with Sparanise, Italy, as the target. All bombs were brought back because of complete cloud coverage which obscured vertical visibility. The S-2 Section was notified that we were to leave the following day for San Pancrazio and all S-2 and Operations equipment was packed and labeled.

16<sup>th</sup>

Lt. Cutler, Sgts. McNamara, and Greve left for San Pancrazio by plane, while Capt. White and Lt. Casper stayed behind to take care of the S-2 work. Four of our planes took off from Gerbini with a road junction in Sparanise as the target. From the interrogation report submitted by Capt. Shea of the 12<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group, it was impossible to ascertain the results except that the bombs were reported to have been dropped on the target area.

17<sup>th</sup>

Nothing eventful.

18<sup>th</sup>

Three Mitchells took off from Gerbini with road junction south of Venafro, Italy as the target. All bombs were brought back because of solid overcast. Lt. Casper left Catania for San Pancrazio in Major Parrish's plane. Lt. Casper got in "stick time" for the first time. Capt. White left by truck convoy for the same destination. Sgts. Greve, August, and McNamara set up the available S-2 equipment at the new base. (S-2 was not to receive the bulk of its equipment for about ten days inasmuch as by mistake it was shipped by boat instead of truck convoy.)

19<sup>th</sup>

Morning Report of 19 October reveals that Lts. Snow, Nelson, Wagenseller and Belcher were transferred to the United States per Air Force letter dated 13 October 1943. All four were bombardiers and were the first in the squadron to complete their fifty missions. A few days earlier they departed from Catania in such a hurry that they had no time to say good-bye to most of the men. The same M/R indicates that Sgts. Rovick, White, McMillian and Boothe were transferred to the United States per Headquarters 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force letter dated 16 October. They departed this day. Lts. Egebjerg was transferred to the United States per letter 18 October. We did not get to say good-bye to him as he was already in Tunis where he appeared before a Medical Board. We all lost a grand friend in "Gunner." He was a Dane who had been born in America and had achieved an excellent record with the RAF. Sgts. Hogan and O'Connell returned from a rest camp at Algiers. Three planes took off from Gerbini and bombed the alternate target which was a road junction at Teracina. Mission was successful.

20<sup>th</sup>

Part of the convoy arrived today. The boys with much time on their hands made regular pilgrimages to Lecce where they soon made the acquaintance of one "Anna," who might have been a character out of one of Du Maupassant's novels. She had undoubtedly followed the Group from Catania and caused Capt. Nestor, our medical officer, to be quite busy. A punster might remark at this time, "Lecce me call you sweetheart."

21<sup>st</sup>

Remnants of the convoy continued to straggle in to our new base and Anna continued to take her toll.

22<sup>nd</sup>

Niente. [Italian = Nothing]

23<sup>rd</sup>

Six planes from Gerbini were to bomb gun positions at Gast point, Italy, but all bombs over shot due to malfunctions of racks in lead ships. Menu for the day: powdered eggs for breakfast, while spam was the "piece de resistance" for dinner. New crew members came into the squadron. However, they were not to be assigned until 30 October. Capt. Kaufmann, Lts. Gaughan, Casper, and Crawford addressed the new crews.

24<sup>th</sup>

Capt. White arrived with the 2dn convoy. With him were Lts. O'Connell and Gomez who had completed their fifty missions and might have gone home from Catania but wanted to experience the ordeal of a convoy before doing so. Later in the evening Capt. Bunch, Lts. O'Connell, Gomez and Casper dined out together for perhaps the last time in Lecce.

25<sup>th</sup>

Adieu to Lts. Gomez and O'Connell. They will be missed. First mission from the new base with six planes employed. The objective was to create a road block in Frosione, Italy. Interrogation disclosed that our Group together with the 12<sup>th</sup> leveled the town. However, photographs later disclosed that the town was leveled but it was the wrong town. "Old Moe" Hamill was promoted to Capt., effective 9 October. Congratulations were in order but cigars were not forthcoming.

26<sup>th</sup>

M/R indicated that the following officers and enlisted men were assigned to the squadron: Lts. Sakton, Fitzgerald, Johnson, Ammann, Robinson, and Hutchinson, Sgts. Severud, Murray, Morse, Yoho, Yecca, and Riddle. Our squadron furnished one plane which was flown in the 486<sup>th</sup> formation and bombed the alternate target, a crossroads at Terracea, Italy. Excellent results. Capt. White, Capt. Kaufmann, and Lt. Casper spoke to the new crew members, while Lt. Mates confined his remarks to the bombardiers and navigators.

27<sup>th</sup>

Mail and packages arrived to the jubilation of the men who had not heard from home in over a week. Dammit, the squadron mascot, became fornication minded to the embarrassment of her owner, Lt. Nease, Brownie and Shifty, two dogs whose intentions were strictly dishonorable, lay claim to responsibility for loss of Dammit's virginity.

28<sup>th</sup>

The boys are becoming musically inclined and several of them have acquired accordions. It rained hard during the night and some of the roofs leaked.

29<sup>th</sup>

Lt. Smith, hereinafter known as “Wacky,” learned that discretion is the better part of valor in writing home about the weaker sex in our Army. The following officers and enlisted men were assigned and joined the squadron: Lts. MacDermaid, Lynn, Hazelwood, Bowden, Turner, Capson, Sgts. Luczak, Wright, Davis, Viowtenz, Little, Erling.

30<sup>th</sup>

“Meatless” Mark Bowsher succeeded “Famine” Farrell as Mess Officer. The Spam immediately began to taste better.

31<sup>st</sup>

Twelve planes took off to bomb Ancona, Italy, but returned upon failure of fighters to meet them at the rendezvous point. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Engle received notice of his promotion to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt., effective 9 September 1943. Thanks to a statistical survey made by bombardier officer Lt. Shuck, we learn that for the month of October the squadron dropped 214,000 pounds of bombs on the target area, 15,000 pounds were jettisoned, and 125,000 pounds (6,000 due to malfunction) were brought back.

[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. July 17, 2015]