

War Diary of the 489th Bomb Squadron

November 1943

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November 1, 1943

The sensational news concerned the Moscow Conference, attended by Hull, Eden, and Molotov, which was expected to lay the ground work for a meeting in the near future of Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. Captain White, the S-2 Officer, proved himself either a gourmand or a glutton, when he ate eight orders of chicken in a restaurant at Lecce, which probably explains why immediately thereafter Army authorities announced the closing of all restaurants. Three planes bombed Ancona Harbor. Probable hit on large merchant vessel.

2nd

No small number of men were becoming afflicted with jaundice and malaria. Twelve planes participated in a raid on marshaling yards at Aquila, Italy. The marshaling yards were not bombed because of cloud coverage, but bombs fell on the R.R. and SE part of town. One plane received two holes.

3rd

Twelve planes bombed a pin-point north of and adjacent to Cupello, Italy. An excellent pattern was observed, while four of our planes received from one to nine holes.

4th

There was to be a mission to Yugoslavia, but this was later changed to a stand-down for the rest of the day. With excellent mess facilities and a large barracks, which also housed Operations – S-2 and the Orderly Room, the majority of the men were content to spend most of their time in this one structure. The officers lived in the two barracks and for the first time since we had been overseas we could enjoy the luxury of a daily hot shower.

5th

Twelve planes took off for Ploca, Yugoslavia, to bomb shipping and/or docks. All planes returned because of cloud coverage after flying for a considerable period of time at 15,000' and encountering temperatures of minus 18 C. The men experienced the aftereffects inasmuch as there was no oxygen in the planes. One of the crews took off for Bizerte, where our planes are being modified. Modification consists of the removal of the lower turret and the addition of waist guns and a stinger. [tail gun] Lt. Bowsher, in final desperation, left for higher headquarters to ascertain when his orders were coming through, so that he could leave for flight training.

6th

Dismal, depressing rain all day and naturally a stand-down. We were all happy to have Lt. Allan Kile rejoin us after being hospitalized for nearly two months as a result of injuries received on a raid over Catanzaro, Italy.

7th

Two of our planes flew with the 488th Squadron and one with the 486th Squadron. The target was again shipping and dock installations at Ancona, Italy. The 488th made an excellent pattern and several direct hits were scored on the docks, dock area, and in town.

8th

Stand-down. The men who were approaching their 50th missions began to have visions of “home by Christmas.”

9th

Captain Hamill and Lt. Peterson departed for the hospital and soon were making desperate appeals for food and the squadron responded graciously with Spam and other delicacies. In the evening we had our first movie in over a month. It was a Class B picture entitled “One Thrilling Night,” the plot involving the plight of a soldier on his wedding night with only a one day pass.

10th

Stand-down. Major Parrish called a squadron meeting and decried the slovenliness of the dress of various members of the combat crew. He then called Lt. Nease to the front and cited him as one of the best examples of what he had been criticizing and the Major reprimanded him for being out of uniform as he placed a captain's bars on his collar. And thus in dramatic fashion, Bill Nease was apprised of his captaincy, effective October 14th.

11th

Armistice Day. Most of the combat crews had no memories of November 11, 1918, but many of their fathers remembered too well. The date was passed unobserved. Lt. Bowsher returned from Tunis and Algiers wreathed in smiles as he proudly displayed a cable signed “Arnold,” to the effect that he would receive his orders to report to Nashville, Tenn., for flight training. Another movie, starring Lionel Barrymore in “Doctor Gillespie Gets an Assistant.”

12th

Thirteen planes bombed airfield at Berat, Albania. An excellent pattern was achieved with direct hits scored on the runway. The crews observed four P-38's attack and shoot down an ME 109, while another ME 109 came within 400 yards of our formation, coming from below and behind. Six of our planes shot at it and observed it to be smoking. There was much secrecy in the planning of this mission, as it involved strategic bombing in conjunction with planes with the 321st and 12th Groups. This was to have been one of the biggest raids in which this Group had participated.

13th

Again great secrecy in connection with a strategic bombing of Sofia, Bulgaria. The mission was to involve a total of 144 Mitchells, 48 planes from this Group, the 321st and the 12th. At the last minute, the mission was canceled. In the evening one of the officers' barracks began to go up in flames. As F/O Kindle was pouring kerosene into a stove, he accidentally caused a lantern to ignite same. He burned himself rather painfully in the hand. Lt. Brown, in the same room, upon awakening observed the fire and began throwing foot-lockers and B-4 bags out of the room. For a while it appeared that both barracks might go up in flames and soon the possessions of the occupants were emptied in the darkness of the night and in helter-skelter fashion. Volunteer firemen, to wit Captain Nease and Lt. Crawford, did yeoman service and became candidates for the award of Purple Heart as the former ran a nail through his foot and the latter fell down the ladder and sprained his wrist. The barracks remained intact and the rats (any resemblance to the officers who inhabit the barracks is purely coincidental) who dwelled withing the walls fled, never to return.

14th

Forty-eight planes from the 340th (including 12 from this squadron) and 48 from the 321st bombed Sofia, Bulgaria. Excellent results were achieved in bombing the marshaling yards, although some bombs struck the city proper. This might have been the first time in which Sofia had been bombed. It was rumored that the Bulgarian Cabinet called a special meeting.

15th

Kalamaki A/D [Aerodrome], Athens. Thirteen planes from this squadron and forty-eight in all from the Group, with each plane carrying twelve clusters (6x20 lbs each). The 321st, which led our Group, turned back, whereas our squadron and the Group achieved sensational results. Each squadron had its own objective and our squadron dropped its bombs on the dispersal area. Many enemy planes were destroyed on the ground and the photographs taken on the mission bore out the observations made by the crews. Lt. David and Sgt. Schurig completed their 50th mission. This raid should have placed this Group in the "Big Time."

16th

Nine planes bombed Eleusis A/D. At the briefing Col. Tokaz complimented the men on yesterday's raid. Our results were not as sensational as yesterday's, partly because the 486th Squadron cut in front and forced our bomb run further west than intended. However, fires were observed and the mission was considered successful. It is interesting to note that this squadron in five consecutive raids bombed five different countries; viz. Italy, Yugoslavia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece. Lts. David, Mates and Wubbolding, and many others who were on these raids should be mighty proud of their record. T/Sgts. Gagne and Tighe, and S/Sgt. Myers, left for the States after completing their 50 missions. Captain Nestor, Lt. Taylor, and F/Os Stegnik and Kindle departed for the rest camp at the Isle of Capri.

17th

Nine planes again bombed Kalamaki A/D. Excellent pattern over cross of runway. Many fires and one huge explosion were observed. Enemy activity was pronounced and the 487th was credited with destroying three ME 109's.

18th

Stand-down. Lt. Senecal was seriously injured in an accident involving a jeep in which he was riding and a truck. He received emergency treatment in our dispensary and it was feared that he would suffer the amputation of his leg.

19th

Stand-down. Dammit is showing signs of pregnancy. She is irritable, sulky, and makes frequent visits to Captain Nestor's dispensary. Captain Nease has been treating her like a "fallen woman."

20th

Preparations were under way for our move to Foggia the following day. The advance party, headed by Lts. Kemp and Zeigler, left the day before.

21st

The 150 mile trip to Foggia was made in one day. The roads were excellent and we saw many olive groves. The weather was bad and a part of the convoy stayed over night in a town about twenty miles out of Foggia. In Bari the streets were flooded as a result of a torrential downpour. We learned that Lt. Senecal had died while at the hospital. Although he was one of the newer men, he will be missed by all of us. Major Parrish and Captain Fields attended the funeral.

22nd

Foggia No 3. Mud! Our jeeps operated as amphibians. There was a shortage of tents and some of us had to spend the first night in the Operations Tent. The P-40 outfit had little notice that we were moving in on them and had to depart in a hurry.

23rd

More rain. Transportation is bogged down. The ground officers and some of the flight members are living in a villa about a mile and a half from the line. The roads are virtually impassable and the jeep is proving its mettle.

24th

It is impossible to operate from the field because of the rain, but there will be turkey dinner tomorrow. Rumors are circulating to the effect that Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin are meeting somewhere, possibly in Cairo. Others add that Von Papen is meeting with them to talk peace terms. The big push is under way on the Italian Front.

25th

Thanksgiving. The menu: turkey, cranberry sauce, Spanish baked potatoes, turkey gravy, fruit dessert, nuts, grapes, and candy. The PX rations today included cigars, a Hershey bar, tootsie, and cigarettes. Lt. Cutler and his mess staff received congratulations for the excellent repast. Five planes took off for Sarajevo (that's where the shooting started in the last war). All bombs were brought back because of complete cloud coverage. Lt. Bulkely is hospitalized because of malaria and jaundice. (Mission flown from Foggia Main).

26th

Big push is under way on the Italian Front. The sky is literally littered with planes going to and coming from the front. We sent seven planes to bomb gun emplacements W of the bend in road at Lanciano, Italy. The area was covered with a good pattern. Jerry has dug in on top of the ridges and it is absolutely necessary to knock out these gun emplacements before the 5th Army can advance.

27th

Ten planes bombed what was believed to be Porto Civitanova, Italy, but actually bombed according to photographs furnished by Capt. Eggers the town of S. Beneddto Del Toronto. [sic. San Benedetto del Tronto] Although R.R. yards were to be the target, only the coast highway was bombed.

28th

Stand-down.

29th

Eight Mitchells dropped a pattern of bombs over a R.R. and highway bridges at Guilianova, Italy, with possible direct hits on highway bridge. Several planes were holed. Lt. Gaughan left for the hospital and Lt. Dyer took over as Assistant Operations Officer. During this period and for one week, Captain White served as Intelligence Officer in Group.

30th

Stand-down. Pay day, and poker.

[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 22, 2015]