

379th Bombardment Squadron

History for the month of March 1944

Section I...War Diary

- 1 Many of the men came in from our detachment in Gambut, Libya, and there were happy reunions after a few months separation. New tents were set up, including large mess tents for the officers and enlisted men.
- 2 In the evening there was a good movie for the boys, including an interesting March of Time.
- 3 Our pilots went up the Corsican coast to Bastia to bring back our planes. In the afternoon, nine ships went out to bomb San Stefano, Italy, but did not drop their load due to complete cloud coverage of the target.
- 4 Sixteen cans of beer were rationed out to each man on credit, to be paid for when we received the rest of our rations during the month. The men from the detachment from Philippeville were paid, having missed the regular payroll on the last day of the past month. Six of our planes went out again to bomb San Stefano, with good results. Flak was heavy and accurate, but our ships returned without any trouble.



Figure 1: March 19th Mission to San Stefano

5 A stormy day, with the first snow storm experienced since our arrival at Ghisonaccia. No mission on this date.

6 No mission. A practice alert against enemy ground attack took place in the early afternoon and was declared to be 100% effective. A public address system was installed in the Squadron Area for official announcements and musical recordings.

7 We were awakened at 7:00 A.M. by the P.A. System blaring forth the Air Corps march, followed by swing music. It was noticed that more men than usual were in the chow line for breakfast! Twelve of our planes again returned to the Italian Harbor of San Stefano and reported direct hits on warehouses and dock installations.

8 Our planes returned early before reaching their target, because of heavy cloud formations. There was a movie in the evening, a fair musical film.

9 No Mission. Fresh roast beef for lunch. The late-comers got hamburgers.

10 P.X. rations were sold today, with the usual line of cigarettes and three chocolate candy bars. Twelve planes again bombed San Stefano, but heavy cloud layers obscured the target and observation of results was impossible.

11 The Enlisted Men's Club and Bar was opened, with plenty of liquors on hand and a capacity of "First Nighters." Twelve planes went out to bomb Leghorn, Italy, but 10/10 cloud coverage obscured the target and the ships returned with their bomb loads.

12 A U.S.O. unit entertained the boys in our Service Club. Two pretty American girls sang our favorite songs, and an accordion player and magician composed the rest of the program. No mission this date.

13 P.X. Rations again. Five dollars worth, consisting of fruit juices, cigarettes, and candy bars, and included the sixteen cans of beer received on the Fourth. Twelve planes went on a mission to San Stefano and results were good. Many of the planes brought back flak holes as battle scars. The group Officer's Club was opened and many of our Squadron's Officers attended.

14 Six of our planes bombed Marina di Pisa, Italy, and hits were scored on a Seaplane factory and canals.

15 A rifle inspection was held in the Squadron and the condition of the guns was generally good. A mission was briefed by Col. [Anthony G.] Hunter, the Group Commander, but our ships never took off due to the weather closing in. The Enlisted Men's Bar was opened in the evening and attendance was good.

16 Mission to Leghorn, Italy. Results were excellent as six of our planes scored direct hits on ship yards and several vessels in the harbor were sunk. The men in the Squadron were saddened by the sudden death of Pvt. Donald R. Nelson, who was found dead in his bed in the morning. Apparently he had suffered a heart attack during the night.

17 No mission. During the evening, we had two air raid alerts and the anti-aircraft guns were spurting red fire into the misty sky. However, no bombs came our way and the alerts were of short

duration. Pvt. Nelson was buried in the American Military Cemetery in Bastia. A military escort attended the final rites.

18 Mission to Leghorn. Twelve planes blasted ship yards and dock installations, with excellent results. Two alerts during the evening made us scurry to our slit trenches with our helmets. However, no enemy planes showed up over the base.

19 Two missions on this date. The first target was Porto Ferrajo, Elba. Twelve of our planes scored near misses on vessels and harbor installations were also hit. In the afternoon, the target was San Stefano, and results were good, as six planes participated in the raid.

20 Mission to San Stefano. Six planes of our Squadron went on this raid. Results were poor as the bombs fell short and hit in the water. In the evening, a swing orchestra from an engineering unit entertained us with an hour of popular music.

21 Twelve of our planes set out to bomb a bridge at Poggibonsi, Italy, but were unable to destroy their objective. However, railroad lines were hit. We were issued brand new gas-masks of the light weight type in exchange for our old ones.

22 Twelve of our planes bombed Leghorn Harbor with good results.

23 None of our planes participated in the day's mission. A number of softball teams were formed in the Squadron and many of the boys were seen practicing during the day for the great contests planned for later on.

24 P.X. Rations were free today, with the usual line of cigarettes and candy. Twelve of our planes went out to bomb Leghorn, but cloud coverage was heavy and results were impossible to observe. Capt. [Thomas O.] Plummer, our medical officer, lectured briefly on sexual precautions and the impending issuance of Atebrine Tablets each day as a precaution against Malaria. A movie was seen after dark, "Girl Crazy" with Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland.

25 No mission. Routine activity.

26 No mission. A softball game was played between the officers and the Enlisted Men. The winner, the Enlisted Men!

27 Mission to Grossetto. Eleven of our planes blasted a railroad bridge and a road bridge as a result of excellent bombing. A softball game between Officers and the Armament Section was played, with the Officers coming out on the winning side.

28 One of our planes filled in as a spare to bomb a railroad junction at Montepescali. Results were good. Another movie outdoors in the evening; "Flesh and Fantasy."

29 Two softball games were played. In the afternoon, the Enlisted men defeated the Officers. In the early evening, the Officers defeated the Enlisted Men 4 to 2. The day's mission was to railroad



junction at Certaldo, Italy, but 10/10 cloud coverage made it impossible to see the target and all bombs were brought back.

30 Another softball game today between the Clerks and the Combat Enlisted Men's team. The Clerks won 25 to 5! Mission to Leghorn, Italy in which twelve of our planes successfully bombed dock installations.

31 PAY DAY!!!! The payroll was unusually high, for most of the men received two months pay. Dice games and poker were plentiful and furious, and money changed hands fast and often. P.X. Rations were issued and again were free. The softball team of the Officer's "Old Timers" were defeated by the E.M. "Dogfaces" of the Engineering Section. The score was 10 to 8. No mission.



Thus ended another month of intense combat activity, with targets in Italy bearing the brunt of excellent bombing from our combat crews.

General Orders

18 March 1944

SECTION I – REASSIGNMENT OF UNIT.

Effective 20 March 1944, the following unit is relieved from assignment to the XII Fighter Command and is assigned to the 57th Bombardment Wing:

310th Bombardment Group (Medium)

By Command of Major General Cannon

Section II.....Operations

Total Sorties	180
Brought forward	1365

Total	1545
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Total Squadron mission for month	19
Brought forward	233

Grand total	252
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Section III....Personnel Changes

[Only names are listed here. See original Diary for detail.]

Allison, Royal B

Baird, David H
Swank, Ralph T
Ellis, Gerald V
Grove, Joseph P

Cadwallader, John S
Spackey, William G
Strahlem, George W
Woody, John H Jr
Graham, Anzie B
James, Robert L
Davilla, Ray I
Eickoff, Herbert J
O'Toole, Patrick F
Gianforte, Joseph
Oie, Melvin P
Hayman, Marvin
Johnson, John A

Persson, John G
Schnieder, William J
Conway, Thomas F
O'Meara, Benedict J
Rath, Walter J
Tozier, Everett L
Dorman, Reynold C
Fletcher, Ray F
Whitcomb, Wayne D
Axelson, Edwin D
Butori, Dino
Campbell, Chas A
Elves, Ken M
Barney, Arthur J
Coleman, Roy L
Young, Charles C

Joiner, Alva A Jr
Drzewiecki, Edward

Anderson, Robert W

Ferguson, Volney B

McLean, John B

Fletcher, Roy F

Wetzel, Manford J

Allison, Royal B

Joiner, Alva A

Knight, Ellsworth C Jr

Axelson, Edwin D

Campbell, Charles A

Elves, Ken M

Barny, Arthur J Jr

Allord, Harold J

Chapman, Fred I

Edwards, Lester W

Grove, Joseph P

Nelson, Donald R

Campbell, Charles A

Axelson, Edwin D

Elves, Ken M

Barny, Arthur J Jr

Allord, Harold J

Chapman, Fred L

Edwards, Lester W

Campbell, Charles A

Sims, Robert T

Bundy, Leonidas E

Gonzalez, William M

Axelson, Edwin D

Elves, Ken M

Barny, Arthur J Jr

Tinnin, Camp F

Harrold, William V

Vezey, Kenneth D

Glaser, Rudy

Persson, John G

O'Meara, Benedict J

Butori, Dino

Coleman, Roy L

Weinstein, Jess

Total number of Officers	71
Total Enlisted Men	318



Figure 2: L-R: William H Neubauer, Manfred Wetzel, Ellsworth Knight