

## 379<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron

### History for the month of January 1945

#### Section I...Outline of Month's Activities

Prepared by Sgt. Albert Sulman

January was a busy month for our combat crews...the battle of the Brenner Pass routes was on in earnest and our bombers did their share in blasting bridges which are the vital links of the enemy communications in Northern Italy. We were assured that Italy is, by no means, an unimportant and forgotten theater of operations. Jerry proved that by his determined efforts to hold the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Armies on the ground, and his anti-aircraft opposition offered our ships on their many missions.

The big news of course was the terrific offensive begun by our Russian Allies, and we feel safe in saying: "This is the beginning of the end."

We still found time off for diversion in the form of movies, reading, USO stage performances, pinochle and ping-pong tournaments, and rest camp trips to Corte, Capri, Rome, Cairo, and Cannes...

Under the Educational and Informational program, lectures and discussions were continued each week and attendance was large. Subjects included the War Situation, Post-War problems, and Demobilization plans.

Combat crews who had completed their tour of duty returned to the States on furlough, while new crews came in to take their place. The ground crews continue to add service to their more than two years overseas service already attained....

This, the first month in a new year, witnessed all Allied Armies and Air Forces striking at the enemy on all sectors. The 379<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, under the able command of Lt. Col. Manford J. Wetzel and Staff Officers, had already achieved an enviable record in the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations, and no one, from our Commanding Officer down to the oldest Private in the organization intends that any other unit shall have ground on which to challenge our superb record.

When this struggle is over, all we have to say is: "Let's take a look at the record!" and that will settle all arguments!

## Section II.....

### Squadron Diary Day-by-Day

1 No mission. More promotions came out for combat men as a New Years Present. Turkey for dinner and all the trimmings. We had our first snow-fall...it was light but still enough to cover the ground. The night was the coldest we had experienced since we arrived on the island.

2 No mission today. We had our semi-annual run through the gas chamber to test our gas masks. Bronze Star awards came through on General Orders.

3 A plane returned from Tripoli with fresh eggs and vegetables for our mess halls. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. John H. Rennels and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Ralph D. Stephens were promoted to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt., while on TD [*Temporary Duty*] at the Capri Rest Camp. Other promotions to 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Included: 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Walter E. Harrington, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Eugene N. Remes, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Glen L Rhodes, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Paul E. Sizemore, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Wesley W. Smith, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. James B. Teter, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Norman A. Vance, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Floyd V. Welch, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Wilbur W. West...

Six aircraft participated in the mission to Canale D'Isonzo Railroad Bridge, Italy. No flak or enemy fighters were encountered.

4 Twelve aircraft participated in the mission to bomb the Lavis Rail Bridge in Italy. Flak was moderate, heavy and accurate.

5 No mission. Usual field duties.

6 No mission. Usual field duties.

7 No mission. We were entertained by a touring USO stage troupe. They put on a grand performance, with several guys and gals doing their share of singing, dancing, and comedy.

8 Twelve of our aircraft participated in the day's mission to bomb the Chivasso Railroad Bridge in Italy. No flak.

Laundry was turned in to Supply. Immunization shots were give at the Squadron Dispensary...

9 Six aircraft participated in the bombing mission against the Crespellano Assembly Area in Italy.

Dental inspection was held in the Group Dispensary...

An inspection of tents and areas is to be held twice a week by Lt. Col. M. J. Wetzel, our Squadron Commander, with suitable penalties for negligence in keeping our living quarters in proper condition.

Movie: "Step Lively," with Frankie Sinatra...no one swooned!



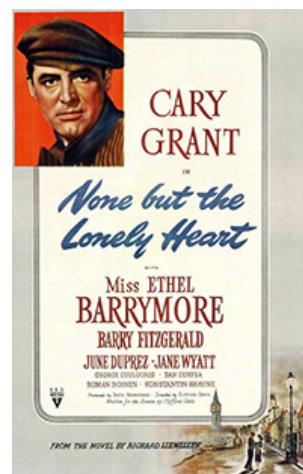
10 Standown...Capt. Byron C. Bailey, Jr., S/Sgt. Henry White, Sgt. Robert E. Scanlon, and Cpl. Emil A. Grippo left on TD to Cape Corse, Corsica. Pvt. John W. Gilmour was passing out cigars today...he received a cable that his wife gave birth to a baby girl.

11 No mission. 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Lloyd D. Gray, T/Sgt. John R. McNally, Jr., S/Sgt. Roy E. Lane, S/Sgt. Everett G. Waldron were relieved from assignment with our Squadron and were assigned to the 7th Replacement Depot for transshipment to the U.S.

12 After many false starts the mission was canceled...1st Lt. Philip P. March, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. William A. Bartolo, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Frank G. Uerling left for the Rest Camp at Cannes, France. Lt. Zinberg gave another in his series of lectures on aircraft recognition. The January payroll was signed today. There was a light snowfall during the night...

13 No mission. Plenty of ice and snow on the ground. Movie: "None But the Lonely Heart," with Cary Grant and Ethel Barrymore...better than the run of class "B" films we have been seeing lately.

14 No mission. An electric storm broke over the island, keeping our aircraft grounded...The boys who came overseas in the Rear Echelon observed the two year anniversary today since they left New York Harbor...Lt. Zinberg held another aircraft recognition class...can never tell when Jerry may decide to send up a few fighters to contest our bombings of his Brenner Pass communications lines!



15 Sgt. Robert E. Scanlon returned to the Base from TD at Cape Corse, Corsica...1st Lt. John L. Dillon III, T/Sgt. Marcus E. Boring, and S/Sgt. Joseph S. Pruitt were relieved from assignment with our Squadron and assigned to the 7<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot for transshipment to the U.S...Doris Duke, the tobacco heiress, paid a visit to the boys on the Base today.

**Doris Duke**



Twelve of our planes bombed the Lavis Railroad Diversion, in Italy.

16 No mission...a rainy day. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Thomas W. Miller was assigned from Hq 57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing...Cpl. Kenneth C. Boone was also assigned from Hq 57<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing...

17 F/O Ralph R. Gedbaw and F/O John E. Carroll were appointed 2<sup>nd</sup> Lts...1st Lt. Earl A. Leger was assigned to the 7<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot for transshipment to the U.S. Also 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Wayne D. Whitcomb, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Richard W. Davis, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Thomas Gray Jr., 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Robert H. Porter, and 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. John A. Shaw were assigned to the 7<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot for transshipment to the U.S. Six aircraft bombed the Sacile Railroad Bridge in Italy, with 100% scored in accuracy and efficiency.

18 Rough mission to San Ambrogio, Italy. Flak was moderate, intense, heavy, accurate. Capt. McKanna's crew was lost and Lt. Starr received light wounds (see Casualty Section). Movie: "The Conspirators," a story of international intrigue.

19 No mission. USO stage show, with 3 guys and 3 gals. We enjoyed the show in spite of the rain.

20 Sgt. Malcolm M. Harris was relieved from assignment with our Squadron and transferred to the 7<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot for transhipment to the U.S....Twelve our our aircraft bombed the San Michele Railroad Bridge in Italy. 100% was scored in accuracy and efficiency.

21 Movie: "Rhapsody in Blue," the life story of the immortal American composer George Gershwin. A large theatre crowd was in attendance...Twelve planes participated in the mission to bomb the Rovereto Railroad Bridge in Italy. Flak was heavy, scant and inaccurate.

22 Twelve aircraft went out to bomb the Rovereto Railroad Bridge again...It was a bitter cold night.

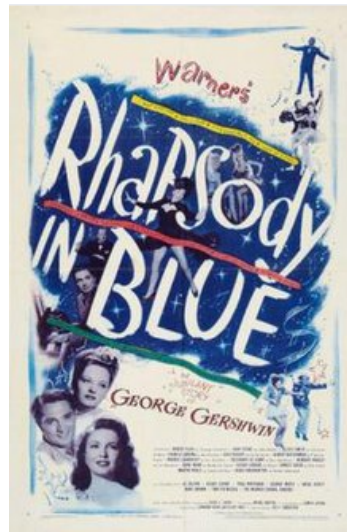


Figure 1: January 22, 1945 attack on the Rovereto Railroad Bridge

23 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Arthur D. Zinberg was appointed 1<sup>st</sup> Lt...The mission started out, but was called back soon after takeoff, and canceled. It was a rainy day. Movie: "Mrs. Parkington," a fine show, with the combination of Greer Carson and Walter Pidgeon again.

24 Pvt. Bartholomew E. Hoyer left on TD with AFHQ in Italy. No mission today...S/Sgt. Stanley E. Milwesky was passing out cigars; he is now the proud poppa of a baby boy!

25 S/Sgt. Victor J. Florence and S/Sgt. Leonard R. Kuschel were promoted to the grade of Technical Sergeant...Cpl. Howard B. Aller, Cpl. Samuel A. Blackwell, Jr., Cpl. Arthur J. Holmes, Cpl. Philip R. Jackson, Cpl. William M. Morris, Cpl. Daniel G. Wolfson were promoted to the grade of Sergeant...Pfc Bernard B. Barrett, Pfc Norris J. Williamson, Pvt William Feinstein, Pvt. James C. Gaither, and Pvt. Joseph L. Johnson were promoted to the grade of Corporal...Pvt Kenneth D. Vezey was transferred in grade to the Detachment of Patients, 40<sup>th</sup> Station Hospital.



Six aircraft participated in the day's mission to bomb the Ammunition Stores at Cremona, Italy.

26 No mission. Capt. Byron C. Bailey, Jr., Cpl. Emil A. Grippo, and Pfc Walter h. Smith returned to the Base from TD at Cape Corse, Corsica...Capt. Thomas F. Conway and S/Sgt. Matthew J. Green were assigned to the 7<sup>th</sup> Replacement Depot for transshipment to the U.S...

27 Sgt. Edward J. Barndt and Cpl. Gilbert Maddox left on a furlough for ten days in the Rome area...Twelve of our aircraft participated in the mission to Chiusaforte, Italy, but weather conditions prevented attack, and all aircraft were forced to land at friendly fields in Italy for a few days before returning to the home Base...

28 Our planes were spares today and did not fill in on the day's mission.

29 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Wilson O. Barnes, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Robert J. Clemence, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Wesley W. Smith, and 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Walter S. Stoker returned to the Base from TD at the ETO Rest Camp in Cannes, France...It was a cold day and snow fell for a short while...Six of our aircraft participated in the mission to bomb the Chiusforte Railroad Bridge, Italy.

30 Six of our planes took part in the day's mission to bomb the Trento Marshaling Yards in Italy. Flak was heavy, moderate to intense, and accurate...Out other combat crews returned from Italy where they had made forced landings a few days before due to adverse weather conditions enroute back from their target...The S-2 Section moved into a brick building in the Squadron area.





31 S/Sgt. William E. Durie was relieved from assignment with our Squadron and transferred in grade to the 340<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group...1st. Lt. William E. Birdwell left on TD, with Hq AAF/MTO, Italy...Today was pay day, and various games of chance sprang up...P.X. rations were sold for three weeks in anticipation of a possible move from the island...

Thirteen of our aircraft participated in the mission to bomb the Chiusaforte West Railroad Bridge, in Italy. The bomb pattern cut the Northeast approach and possible hits were scored on the Northwest end of the bridge. No enemy opposition was encountered....

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*Figure 2: William E Durie*

No. of Officers assigned at the end of January, 1945:	99
No. of Enlisted Men assigned at the end of Jan., 1945:	368

### Section III.....

#### Mission Rosters and Mission Reports

*[See the original diary for Rosters and Reports]*

### Section IV.....

#### Casualties

On 18 January 1945, while on a bombing mission to create a Landslide at San Ambrogio, Italy, Capt. Ellis J. McKanna and his crew were shot down by enemy anti-aircraft fire. The full crew was as follows:

Capt. Ellis J. McKanna  
Capt. Edward I Phillips, Jr  
1<sup>st</sup> Lt. George S. Watts  
Capt. Walter J. Rath  
Sgt. Paul A. Basso  
Sgt. Robert B. Stewart  
Sgt. James D. Nelsen

On the mission to San Ambrogio Landslide, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Louis D. Starr was wounded by enemy flak, receiving mild lacerations of the left knee and leg.

## Awards and Decorations

### Air Medal



*[See original General Orders for award of clusters]*

Wilbur A. Johnstone, Jr  
Gordon M. Jacobs  
Francis Roberts

### **19 January 1945**

Lester A Bodden, Jr  
Andrew L Dennis  
Donald N Alsworth  
Philip M Allen  
Herman E White  
James C Gaither

### **25 January 1945**

John E. Calbom  
Walter E Grauman  
Everett S Lewis

### **30 January 1945**

Edward J Letarte  
Everett F Smith  
Philip R Jackson

### Soldier's Medal



[None]



## Distinguished Flying Cross



William G. Davidson

Philip P. March

Richard W Wagner

## Silver Star



[None]

## Bronze Star



[None]

## Purple Heart



Arthur T. Ensley

John E. Calbom

Elden V. Ingram

Section VII....

### Special Items

Following are radio broadcast recordings made under the auspices of our Group Public Relations Section, and also a typical newspaper story which was used for most of the Squadron Personnel during the month of January, 1945...

*[Personnel featured in the Special Items:]*

Robert J. Fitzsimmons

Joe A. Mitchell



*Figure 3: Edward Betts on left*