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AUG 5 1975

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EO 11652
By AFSHRC
AUG 5 1975

428th Bombardment Squadron History

SECRETSQ-BOMB-428-HI
Appendix to January, 1973

OUTLINE HISTORY
HISTORY OF THE AIR ECHELON, DEC-JAN.

December 8, 1943, the air echelon departed from Phillipville, Algeria, by C-47 transport, for Ghisonaccia, Corsica. The echelon was composed of sixty-three enlisted men and six officers commanded by Major Elmer H. Epperson, Squadron Commander.

The first leg of the journey was completed the first day when we all landed at the airfield in Ajaccio, Corsica. A bivouac area was set up at the edge of the field and we settled down for a short stay awaiting transportation over the mountains. On December 9th the enlisted men were given passes to town. On their return to camp the biggest topic of conversation was the inflation. The franc had no value because of the scarcity of all items. One man was offered sixty dollars for a four-year-old pair of shoes he was wearing.

The following day two new Italian diesel busses picked up the entire group for a ride "deluxe" over the mountains. The pass between Ajaccio and Ghisonaccia was in pretty bad condition so a schedule of one way traffic had been arranged. The trip will long be remembered by everyone for its scenic beauty. After the drab hills of Africa it was a refreshing sight to all to see large snow-capped mountains and green plains. We arrived at our new base around five o'clock in the afternoon. The British were in command of the base and had evacuated all civilians from the town. We were assigned buildings and soon were comfortably quartered. It was very fortunate for us because immediately upon our arrival it began to rain and did not let up for three weeks.

The first mishap as a result of the rainy season was the landslide on this side of the pass. All bridges to Bastia had been blown up so we were literally trapped. Quartermaster had an estimated six days ration kit but no one was very worried. Very soon the simple system was arranged of having the rations brought from Ajaccio to the landslide, carried on foot from

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428th Bombardment Squadron History

Appendix to January, 1944

one side to the other, and then transported to the warehouse.

Christmas was nearing rapidly and the prospects for a merry one were bleak. Major Epperson turned a long room over to the enlisted men to make into a bar and club. Two days later "Ye Old Slab Bar Inn" was completed which would rival many rustic night spots back home. Several men formed a voluntary Christmas committee and decorated the room with a tree, pine boughs and wreaths. The army remembered us and sent up by air all the essentials for an old-fashioned Christmas turkey dinner. Our rear echelon sent a special plane up to bring in an unbelievably large mail call which we had by the tree on Christmas eve. Punch and a light lunch were served that night and everyone agreed that we had as merry a Christmas as was possible away from home.

We all pitched in to prepare the area for the entire squadron. So for the few weeks we had alone the time was taken up by pitching tents, hauling gravel and cleaning the area. On January 31, 1944, the first planes began to arrive and shortly after the whole flight echelon was with us again.

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