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DESIGNATION SECRET

Historical Records

AIR FORCE: Twelfth Air Force

COMMAND: _____

SUB-COMMAND _____

GROUP: 59th 4th Grp

UNIT: 64th 1st Sq

Documents Transmitted: (Period Covered)

X OUTLINES HISTORY: Apr 1945

X WAR DIARY: Apr 1945

1 SPECIAL ACCOUNTS: _____

PHOTOGRAPHS: _____

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: _____

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64th Fighter Squadron
 OUTLINE HISTORY
 April, 1945

64th FIGHTER SQUADRON
 57th FIGHTER GROUP
 APO 650 US Army

SECRET
 By Auth. CO *fw*
 64th Ftr. Sq.
 18 May, 1945

SUBJECT : Historical Records.

TO : Commanding Officer, 57th Fighter Group.

1. Outline History of the 64th Fighter Squadron for the period 1 April to 30 April, 1945.

- a. Present designation: 64th Fighter Squadron, 57th Fighter Group, XXII Tactical Air Command.
- b. Changes in organization: None.
- c. Strength, commissioned and enlisted.
 - (1) Month of April, 1945.
 - (a) 1 April: Commissioned, 60; Enlisted, 243.
 - (b) Net increase: Commissioned, 3; Enlisted, None.
 - (c) Net decrease: Commissioned, None; Enlisted, None.
 - (d) 30 April: Commissioned, 63; Enlisted 243.
- d. Stations:
 - (1) Grossetto Main L. G., Italy.
 - (2) Villa Franca, L. G., Italy
- e. Movement of unit.
 - (1) On 27 April, 1945, an Advance Echelon consisting of 5 officers and 89 enlisted men proceeded by motor convoy to Villa Franca L. G. @ 0830. This echelon arrived at Villa Franca at 0900, 29 April, 1945. Total distance of move, 300 miles by road.
- f. Campaigns.
 - (1) Italian (Po Valley)
 - (2) Duration: 9 September, 1945, still in progress.
- g. Operations.
 - (1) Operations during the month of April were on a scale which is unprecedented in any similar period during the history of this organization. In this time 252 missions were flown totaling 937 sorties, amounting to 2191.30 operational hours. During this same period 466,912 rounds of .50 calibre ammunition, 786 rockets, and 787,320 pounds of bombs were expended.

The first period in April saw operations continue on a routine scale as they had been in past months. The missions varied somewhat in type, as dive bombing to interdict railroad

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lines in the Northern Po Valley, armed reconnaissance missions to search for enemy transportation, bomber escort to accompany B-25's to Northern Italy and in some cases to Southern Austria, and close support missions to attack enemy targets. On about the 10th of April the operational pattern changed considerably and almost all missions were of a close support nature for several days. During this period many sorties were flown and many tons of bombs were dropped on strong points, enemy-occupied buildings, gun positions, highways, and assembly areas. The assessment of damage on this type of target is very difficult, so no attempt to evaluate the work done during this period is given here. However, excellent work was done, many gun positions were hit, buildings knocked out, stores areas damaged, transport destroyed or damaged, and many personnel wounded or killed in bombing or strafing attacks on the targets. As the Army advanced through the difficult terrain of the Appenines this type of work continued, and when the final break-through came some Army targets continued to be attacked with the aid of photographs, forward fighter controls, both in the air and on the ground.

In addition, great stress was laid on recce missions to seek out his transports, both motor-driven and horse-drawn, and on this type mission this Squadron produced excellent results, although not without cost. Nine aircraft were lost away from the field, although eight of the pilots returned, and many planes were shot up by anti-aircraft fire in varying degrees. An assessment of some of the damage inflicted during the month follows: 5 railroad bridges were damaged, 51 railroad cuts were inflicted, 190 railroad cars were damaged, 68 railroad cars were destroyed, 12 locomotives were damaged, 36 barges of various sizes were destroyed or damaged, 428 motor transports of all types were destroyed and 228 were damaged, 11 armored cars were destroyed and 16 damaged, 208 horse-drawn vehicles were destroyed or damaged, 10 motorcycles and 31 tanks were destroyed or damaged, and 18 field guns were destroyed or damaged on the highways. These claims are in addition to the many occupied buildings, gun positions, stores areas and dumps, and strong points and defended areas which were successfully attacked, but on which no accurate claims can be made.

h. Losses in action.

- (1) Nine pilots of the organization were declared MIA during the month, but all returned safely to the organization at a later date except 2nd Lt Robert H. Reichelderfer, O-2059355, who was seen to bail out of his P-47 on 23 April and his parachute was not observed to open.
- (2) Information reaching the Squadron during the period changes the status of the following officers MIA on the dates indicated.
 - (a) 2nd Lt Billy E. Adams, O-711893, MIA, 12 October, 1944, now changed to KIA.
 - (b) 1st Lt Charles R. Neumann, O-817082, MIA, 17 November, 1944, now changed to KIA.
 - (c) 2nd Lt Edwin Frierson, O-711983, MIA, 21 November, 1944, now changed to KIA.

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- (d) 1st Lt James A. Graham, O-821482, MIA, 20 January, 1945, now changed to KIA.
- (e) 1st Lt Myers J. Reynolds, III, O-812875, MIA, 12 March, 1945, now changed to KIA.

i. Personnel who have distinguished themselves in action.

- 1st Lt Zane S. Amell, O-1012838 - 1st OLC to AM for mission on 16/3/45 and 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 14/4/45.
- Captain George W. Anderson, O-826352 - 5th OLC to AM for mission on 15/4/45.
- Captain John P. Anderson, O-826354: 4th OLC to AM for mission on 16/3/45 and 5th OLC to AM for mission on 15/4/45.
- Captain William F. Berry, O-820448: 3rd OLC to AM for mission on 9/3/45.
- 2nd Lt Ralph L. Crommett, O-2057572: Air Medal for mission on 5/4/45.
- 1st Lt Jack P. Dano, O-719273: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 25/3/45.
- 2nd Lt Merle R. Diarmit, O-2059749: Air Medal for mission on 19/3/45.
- 1st Lt Henry H. Diers, O-2059239: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 4/4/45.
- 1st Lt Edward L. Dorsner, O-722015: 1st OLC to AM for mission on 30/3/45 and 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 5/4/45.
- 1st Lt Samuel S. Durfee, O-721355: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 18/3/45.
- 1st Lt Forrest L. Fears, O-721364: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 25/3/45.
- 1st Lt Dwight E. Gallagher, O-774105: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 3/4/45.
- 1st Lt Ray J. Garcia, O-721373: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 4/4/45.
- 1st Lt Arthur C. Goettel, O-721382: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 22/3/45.
- 1st Lt Calvin W. Goss, O-774122: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 29/3/45.
- 1st Lt Lawrence G. Grace, Jr., O-821481: 3rd OLC to AM for mission on 18/3/45.
- 1st Lt James R. Green, O-721385: 1st OLC to AM for mission on 16/3/45 and 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 30/3/45.
- 1st Lt Leroy Hall, Jr., O-721388: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 16/3/45.
- 1st Lt Charles H. Harris, O-774146: 1st OLC to AM for mission on 10/3/45, and 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 1/4/45.
- 1st Lt William H. Harse, O-721394: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 29/3/45.
- 1st Lt Edward W. Howard, O-819525: 1st OLC to AM for mission on 29/3/45.
- 1st Lt Robert L. Hubbard, O-721413: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 23/3/45.
- 1st Lt Edward F. Jones, O-714111: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 9/3/45.
- 1st Lt Charles B. Kitowski, O-721429: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 3/4/45.
- 1st Lt Robert D. Loucks, O-827234: 3rd OLC to AM for mission on 20/3/45.
- 1st Lt Joseph M. McGehean, O-830409: 3rd OLC to AM for mission on 17/3/45.
- 1st Lt Ralph D. McDaniel, O-721475: 1st OLC to AM for mission on 29/3/45, and 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 9/4/45.
- 1st Lt Harold H. Maxhimer, O-705599: Air Medal for mission on 16/3/45, and 1st OLC to AM for mission on 29/3/45.
- 2nd Lt Charles E. May, O-778203: Air Medal for mission on 1/4/45.
- 1st Lt Albert B. Nickels, O-721500: 1st OLC to AM for mission on 3/4/45, and 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 15/4/45.
- 2nd Lt Robert N. Nielson, O-2059348: Air Medal for mission on 16/3/45.

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1st Lt Milton H. A. Opheim, O-720921: 2nd OLC to AM for mission on 4/4/45.

1st Lt Jack H. Morgan, O-721579: Air Medal for mission on 7/3/45, and 1st OLC to AM for mission on 3/4/45.

Captain William M. Pribyl, O-695203: 6th OLC to AM for mission on 12/4/45.

1st Lt Myers J. Reynolds, III, O-812875: DFC for mission on 12/3/45.

Captain Robert W. Scheller, O-801783: 4th OLC to AM for mission on 13/4/45.

- i. Enclosed is Unit Journal of Events, 64th Fighter Squadron, for the period 1 April to 30 April, 1945, and a special account of the experience of 1st Lt Albert B. Nickels, O-721500, who was shot down when strafing, 25 April, 1945.

Earl D. Lovick
EARL D. LOVICK
Captain, Air Corps
Squadron Historian

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Sheet No. 1, UNIT JOURNAL of EVENTS, 64th Fighter Squadron, 57th Fighter Group,
Grosseto, Italy.

Month of April, 1945.

Prepared by EARL D. LOVICK, Capt., AC.

DAYEVENTS

1. We had a little party up at the club this evening, served pastries, eggs and french fries. A nice treat and all on the house. It was greatly enjoyed by all.
2. The volleyball team came back from the tournament held at Florence. They made a good showing in the tourney, but got beat out of the title. The man who figured in the road accident a few days ago was fined two thirds of his pay for one month.
3. The men fired their carbines on the range today. For some of us it was the first time since last August that we have fired a gun.
4. I & E meeting was moved up to today in order for us to see a movie entitled "Tunisian Victory". Of course, some of us have seen all of Tunisia we want to see, especially El Djemm.
5. Baseball and volleyball practice got under way this afternoon. The baseball team had plenty of candidates on hand to try out. The team is using a big vacant lot up by the hospital for their workouts.
6. Lt Goss was forced down with engine trouble. He landed at a field north of here and will stay until his ship is repaired.
7. The band, which has been practicing for several weeks, finally gave us a show this evening. The concert was put on in the mess hall and practically everybody attended. The band is in good enough shape to start playing for dances.
8. Rain all morning. We were issued the Good Conduct Medal - the medal itself - those of us who have been good.
9. We were to have had fried chicken for the evening meal, but the worms got to the birds first, so we had spam.
10. Sgt. Cowan fixed up his mail room in regular post office style today, and we now get our mail by calling for it at the window. Some doubts have been raised as to the efficiency of the new system, however. Whereas it used to take a man a half-hour to battle his way through the crowd and reach the mailbox, it now takes him an equal length of time to sweat out the line.
11. Mosquito nets went up today. Most of us complied with the order without any delay. The old heads have seen three malaria seasons in the Mediterranean, and at this stage of the game they want no more truck with the deadly pests.
12. One of the officers' dogs was found to have a case of rabies, and so all the Squadron's mutts have been impounded. We have a very large collection of dogs of all kinds, and we are taking no chances with them, much as we like the pets.

Sheet No. 2, Unit Journal of Events.

13. Lt Zane S. Amell led the I & E meeting tonight with a talk on his adventures at the front, both as a ground observer and as a combat pilot. His talk was racy and full of anecdotes. He gave us a good description of the performance of the Japanese-American regiment, whose record is very outstanding in this theatre.
14. Maximum effort today on the part of all pilots and ground crews. Missions were flown as long as daylight allowed, and the ground crews did not finish their work until long after nightfall. The operations were in support of the Fifth Army drive around Massa.
15. Maximum effort continued today and will go on for many days to come. Captain Berry is M.I.A from one of the missions...Sgt. Sinclair is conducting a program of interviews over the Squadron's public address system. Sinclair conducts the interviews from his script but often ad libs his way through the tight spots. Corn is very much in evidence in his program, but some of his bon mots are pretty sharp.
16. One of our lads was arrested and confined to quarters. He was AWOL about three hours. But he also had some government property in his possession which he was not entitled to. Then there were sundry other things to make a pretty good case against him.
17. Lt Diers was making a landing approach when his ship stalled and went in. Fortunately the Lieutenant was unhurt in the crash and managed to get out of the wreck with a minimum of shock and bruise. This was the fourth time in as many days that Lt Diers has flown home in a damaged ship.
18. Five of our First Lieutenants were promoted to Captain on an order received today.
19. Lt Diarmit was forced to bail out over disputed territory. He was "captured" by our own GI's and sent to the rear. The ship he was flying was a brand-new one which we received a few days ago. It had twenty-five hours on it.
20. We showed an Abbott and Costello movie at the big garage up the street, which used to be the Group theatre. It was the first movie to be shown out here at Marino since last fall. A couple of our men are busy installing a dance floor, booths, bar, orchestra platform, etc. in this building. When finished it will be the best drink and dance shebang north of Rome, and it's all our'n.
21. We clobbered 66 Squadron in a volleyball game today. Our boys are big and husky and show good form, resulting from their clean life in the country and by the seashore, where they can get plenty of wholesome exercise and take the sea breezes. Whereas 66 Squadron has been housed in town these past several months, among the Italian populace, and apparently they have wasted their manhood.
22. The outfit kept up a fast pace all day to help the big push along. One of our missions destroyed over 30 enemy motor vehicles.

Sheet No. 3, Unit Journal of Events.

23. Lt Reichelderfer was killed today when he bailed out of his damaged plane and his chute failed to open. Also, Major Chamberlain crash-landed inside Allied territory near the front and came out safe but slightly battered. His luck is phenomenal, more lives than a cat. He has walked away from more crashes than any other pilot in the Squadron. The fast action up front is taking a heavy toll in our flying stock. At the moment we have only ten planes in commission.
24. XXII TAC began an inspection today of all departments in the Squadron. Our planes still continue to go to the Service Group as a result of the furious action coming off up front.
25. Captain Berry returned today after being forced down in enemy territory. He had been hiding out until the Allied advance caught up with him. Lt Nickels crashed while strafing an enemy convoy. He is listed as missing in action.
26. Many throbbing heads this morning as a result of the party last night at the club. The occasion was the opening of the club under new management. Cpl. Queen, our erstwhile professional scrounger, is the new manager. To put life in the party he had the band give a few numbers and offered free drinks... Major Barnum and Captain Hall were forced to bail out of their ships near Florence, following a reconnaissance mission north of the Po. Both returned to Grosseto that same afternoon... About 6 p.m. we got orders to move. "A" party packed up. There were details like mad.
27. "A" party pulled out bright and early this morning, destination Villafranca, which is north of Verona and within sight of the Alps. The stay-behinds were treated to a color movie, which was shown in the mess hall.
28. Major Robert A. Barnum, our CO, was upped to Lt Col, and a dance was held for the officers in observance of the occasion.
29. The Stars and Stripes carried a headline, "Benito Finito".
30. "B" party men started moving out by C-47 today. Some of the equipment went also. Our new field is at Villafranca. It is a grass field, very large, and we share it with three other Groups, one of them a Spitfire outfit. We threw up camp in a cow pasture and it rained like mad. Lots of confusion, disorder, and lack of comfort, just like the good old days. The country hereabouts is crawling with Partisans, who are busy mopping up stray Jerry outfits. Fourteen misbehaving women in Villafranca received a cue-ball haircut this evening, administered by the patriots.

64th FIGHTER SQUADRON
57th FIGHTER GROUP
APO 650 US Army

SPECIAL ACCOUNT

The following narrative is the story told by 1st Lt Albert B. Nickels, a pilot of this organization, who crashed when strafing, on 25 April, 1945.

Two of us were flying on an armed reconnaissance mission on 25 April, 1945. We sighted a concentration of enemy movement and began making strafing passes at it. We made four passes on this group of trucks and horse-drawn vehicles, and as I was coming in for the fifth pass the plane was hit in the engine by small arms fire. Smoke and a ball of flame shot out the left side of the engine. I looked at the air speed indicator and it registered 300. I pulled back on the stick and just then the right wing caught in a row of trees. These trees were mowed down for two or three hundred feet. I then got above the tree tops and the right wing rolled over and the plane nosed into the ground. This was at 12:50, I found out later. I was momentarily stunned when it hit, and was also blind when it stopped. I could not find the catch for the safety belt, so I tried to find my knife or gun, but without success. Finally I managed to open the safety belt and got out, but there was fire on every side. The only thing to do was to go out through the fire, and in doing so I was burned on the arms. After taking a few steps I fell down and could not get up, so I rolled as far as possible, probably about 100 feet, for the heat from the burning plane was still intense. There I lay, waiting to regain my strength and restore my sight.

After laying there for an estimated 30 minutes, two Germans came up and when about 10 or 15 feet away shot at me twice. One shot hit beside my head and ruptured my left ear drum. The other grazed the right side of my forehead. They then went away. I still could not see. After a short time about eight more came by and they started talking to me. I speak German and asked them to take me to a Doctor, as I was very sick. They replied there were none near and if there were they would not take me to him anyway. They then started lamenting because we had been strafing so many of their trucks and supplies and saying that it was inhuman the way we had been shooting up horses, etc. However, one of them finally got out a First Aid packet and started to dress my wounds. He also gave me some vino from his canteen, but took my ring from my finger and my wrist watch. Some of the others went through my pockets, but the only thing they took was a small Bible I was carrying. That was the only thing of value I had, and it was strictly of sentimental value. About this time partisans started shooting at the group, so all of them took off except one. He talked with me a short time and told me he was from Vienna, Austria. He finally walked off, and when about 25 or 30 feet away turned and fired twice in my direction. These shots hit several feet from me. By this time the swelling around my eyes had subsided somewhat, so I was able to see a little.

Special Account - page 2

I laid there for what seemed to be about an hour and an Italian came up with four children. He carried me to a bicycle and put me on it and took me to his house, which was approximately three-fourths of a mile away. As he carried me to the bicycle I got a brief look at the plane. This was the only time I ever saw it. It lay in bits scattered over a large area. After arriving at this Italian's house he put me to bed and gave me water to drink, but nothing more.

After being in bed for an hour or more a horse-drawn cart covered with a canvas came. They loaded me on this and took me into a small town to a Catholic hospital. Here they had nothing but home-made bandages and camphor. They dressed my wounds with these and put me to bed. Apparently the news that I was there spread rapidly, for many people came in just to look at me. Among these people was a Greek who spoke fluent English, and he acted as interpreter. I was instructed to act dumb if the Germans came. Three nurses were with me constantly and they took excellent care of me. They tried to give me vino continually, but I could not hold it on my stomach. I remained here one day. The Greek met an English Captain whom he brought to the hospital, and he arranged for an ambulance to come up, for by this time the front lines had advanced beyond where I was, although the Americans had gone around and not through the town. The ambulance arrived, but with no qualified medic, and they would not move me for fear of serious internal injuries, possibly a broken back, for I was spitting so much blood. A medic was brought back and they took me away. There was quite a crowd to see me off, nurses and civilians.

I was taken to a medical aid station in Parma, from there to an Evacuation Hospital for one day, and then to the 24th General Hospital. Now I realize that I would live. The first day I knew I wouldn't. My body ached and pained, and it just isn't possible for a man to live after hitting the ground upside down in a fighter plane when doing 300 miles an hour. The assessment of my injuries was as follows: slight cerebral concussion, steel splinters in hands, cuts on both legs, bruises on both hips, internal injuries, broken middle finger on left hand, broken forefinger on right hand, ruptured left eardrum, bullet wound on right forehead, and scattered scratches and bruises. However, I'm here and feeling fine. Hope to be ready to fly in a month.