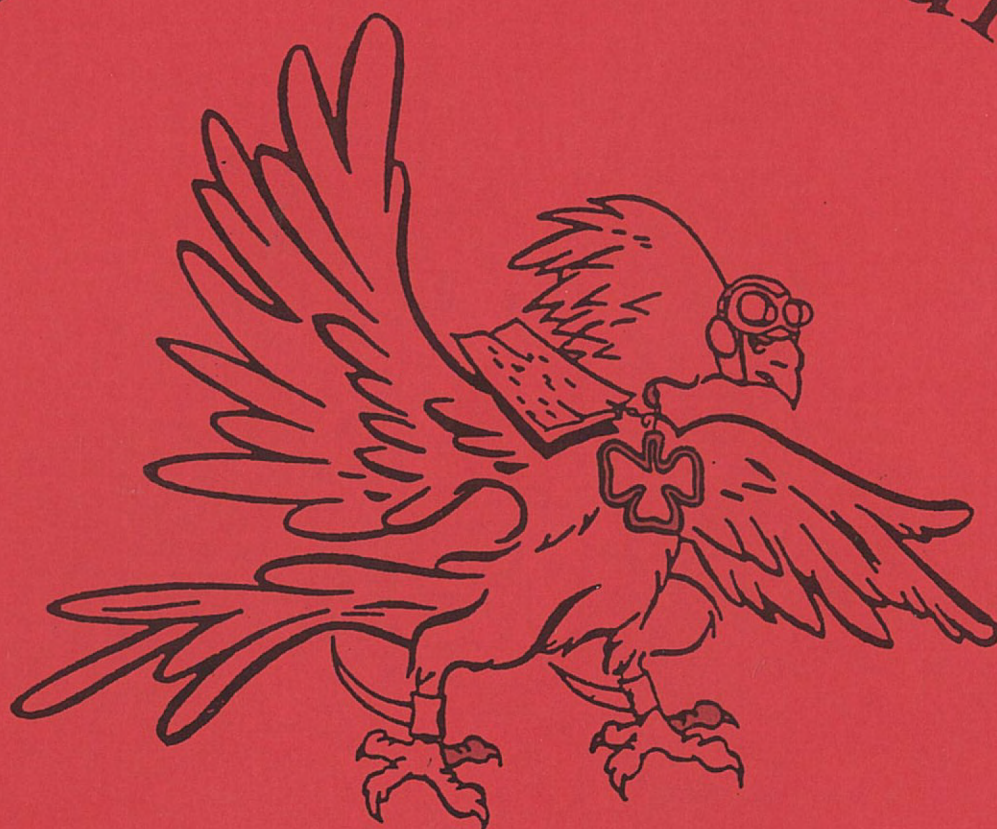


57th Fighter Group

65th Fighter Squadron



Mr. Bill Hahn

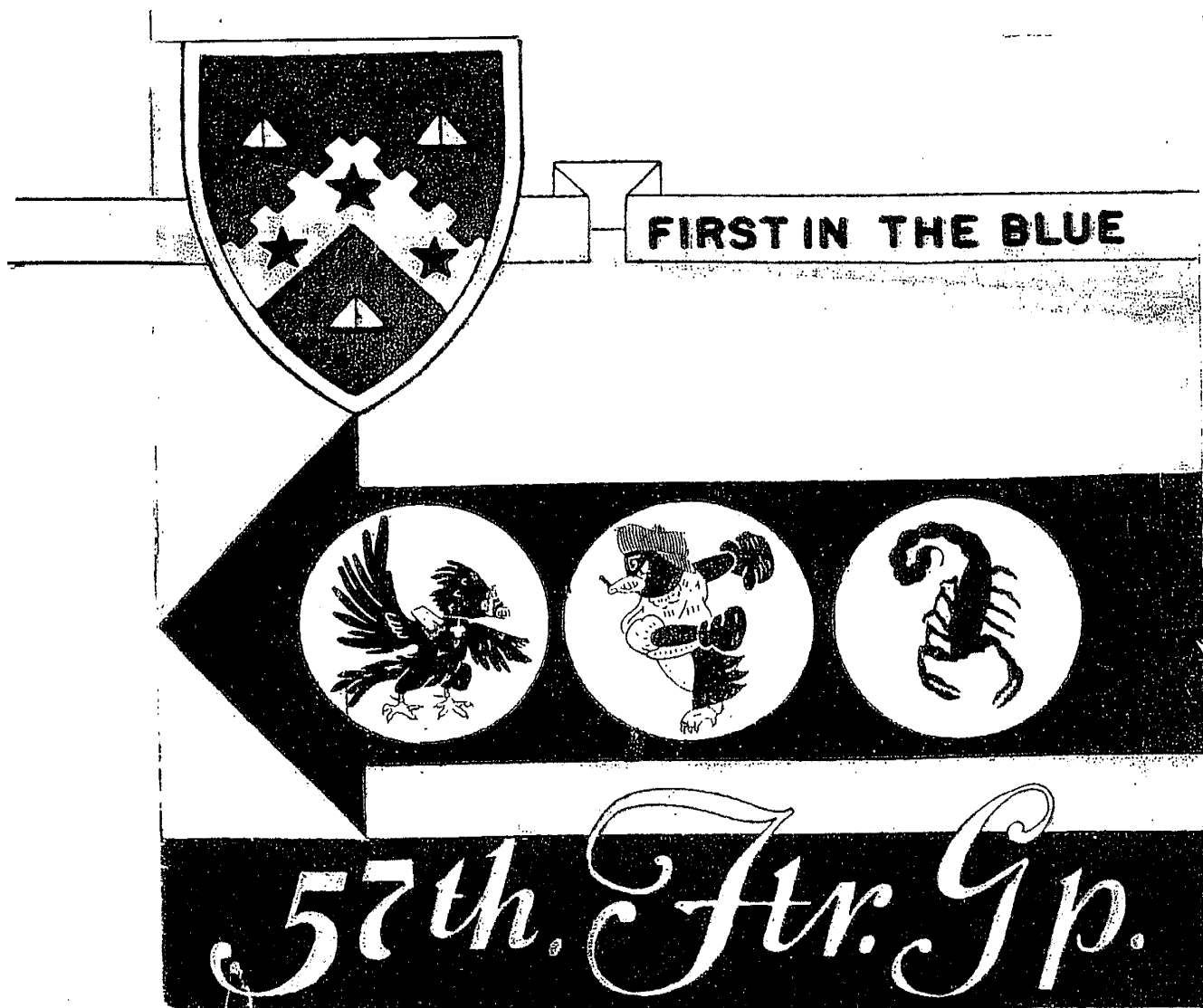
PLEASE RETURN

Mr. Bill Hahn

2

My Perspective of WW11
June 1941 thru September 1945
Palestine-Western Desert
Tunisia-Sicily-Italy

M/Sgt. Bill Hahn-Army Serial 12005907



LOOK SPORT THE G52! NEEDS AN INSIGNE!
 ITS GOTTA BE A FIGHTIN' COCK, SEE!... TOLAH
 READY FOR ANYTHING... CHIP ON THE SHOULDER—
 SILVER SPURS... LOOKIN' MAD! SHAMROCK AROUND
 THE NECK! YOU'LL BE HEARIN OF THIS CROWD—WHEN
 THINGS GET SO PEACEFUL—ON THE CONTRARY...



MILTON
CANIFF

THE BIRTH OF UNCLE BUD — LIEUT. P.G. COCHRAN, OBSTETRICIAN;

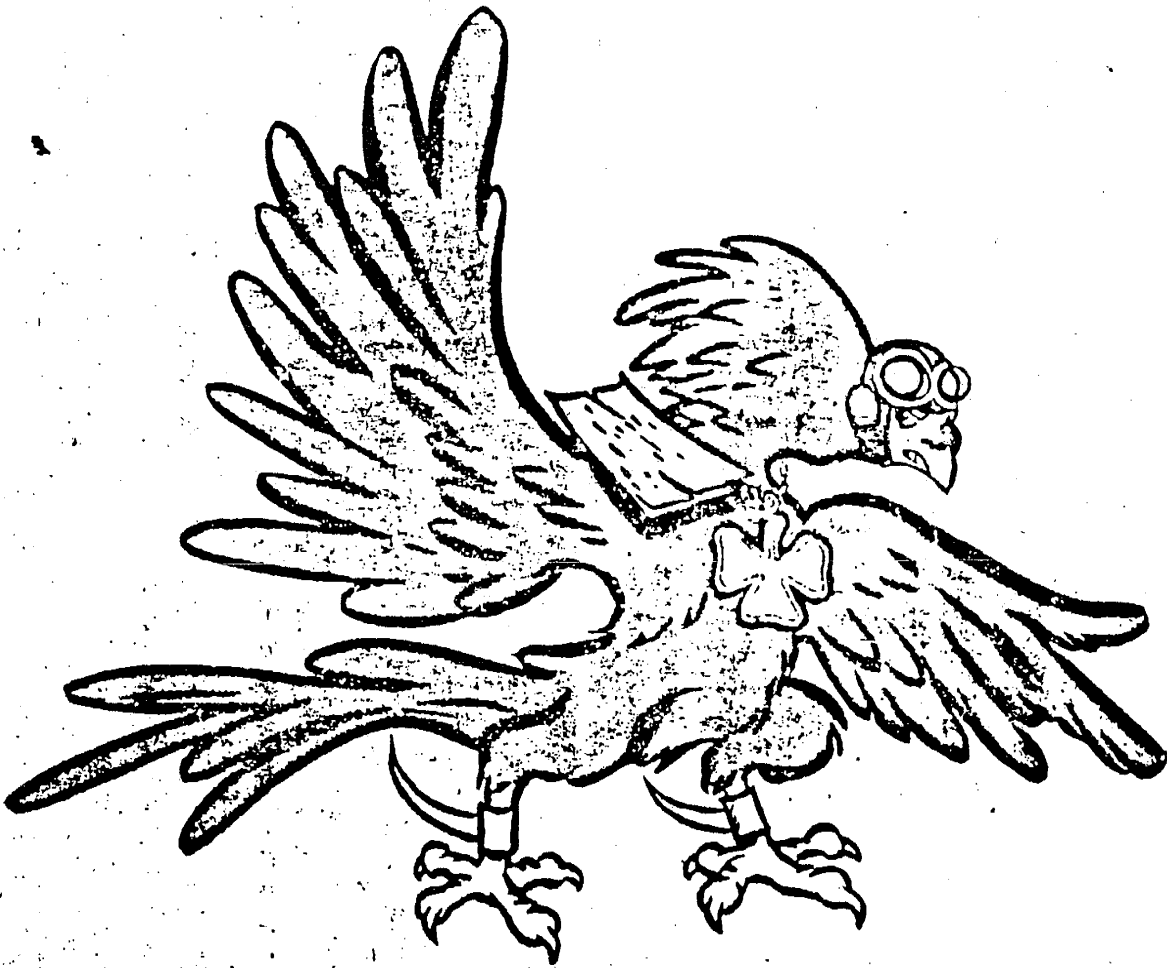
for the great gang in the G52! FIGHTER SQUADRON... Their record since I met them at
 GROTON has been such as to make a land-bound scribbler feel honored to have had a
 small part in the building of the FIGHTING COCK TRADITION.... *lll!*

NEW YORK APRIL 2, 1942.



TERRY AND THE PIRATES
 MILTON CANIFF (1907-1988)
 CANIFF'S ARTWORK LOOKED
 PHOTOGRAPHIC; HIS CHARACTER
 SPOKE REALISTIC DIALOGUE;
 AND READERS IDENTIFIED WIT
 THEIR PERSONALITIES. MOOD,
 EVOCATION, ATMOSPHERE WERE
 HIS TRADEMARKS. THE STRIP
 RAN FROM 1934-1973. THEN
 IT BECAME STEVE CANYON. HE
 USED PHIL COCHRAN AS HIS
 MODEL FOR THE HEROES.

(MIDWIFE!)



DEAR MR. DOE :

THIS IS TO THANK YOU IN THE NAME OF THE FIGHTING COCK SQUADRON FOR YOUR KIND OFFER TO REPLACE THE LATE "UNCLE BUD". WE HAVE DECIDED TO ACCEPT THE GAMECOCK PRESENTED BY THE FATHER OF ONE OF THE FIGHTING COCK PILOTS WHO WAS KILLED IN ACTION LAST YEAR. I AM SURE YOU WILL AGREE WITH OUR CHOICE.

I HOPE THE ABOVE SKETCH OF THE SQUADRON'S INSIGNE WILL SERVE TO REMIND YOU OF OUR GRATITUDE.

CORDIALLY,

MILTON
CANIFF

FOR THE
FIGHTING
COCK
SQUADRON

A poem by Ralph Fink
Written at El Djem, Tunisia 1943

We left our country
We held dear and true
And entered the hell
That is called the blue.

From Alex we started
Right through to Matrué
And from the coast road
Went into the blue.

From seventy five
While the pilots flew
We drove by Gambut
As we crossed the blue.

The siege of Tobruk
We saw to be true
Then stopped at Martuba
a part of the blue.

Passed Barce and Benghazi
You've heard of those two
And into Belinda
Out there in the blue.

El Aghelia to Tammet
And before we knew
They bombed and strafed us
Out there in the blue.

Then on to Hambriet
Beurat we passed thru
When Tripoli fell
We stayed in the blue.

Then rolling by Homs
and Tripoli too
Zuara we stopped
And still in the Blue

Bengardane was next
where the offense grew
for the Mareth line
Right there in the blue.

Soltane and Medinna
while the eighth broke thru
passed Gabes and Chekira
The edge of the blue.

While at El Djem
our pilots score grew
getting seventy four
That day in the blue.

Jerry came at night
for revenge we knew
and bombed us again
At El Djem in the blue.

the fall of Tunis
and Biserta too
while camped at Hani
The rim of the blue.

the next was Cape Bon
where the green grass grew
Pantellera fell
Then back to the blue.

BILL HAHN AGE 25
30 DAY LEAVE FROM ITALY



**For My Children
A Recap of War Experiences
1941-1945**

Preface

Looking back to the year 1941 one has to search one's memory to recall all the action of those four years of challenge and hope. Hope for an end to a despot who wanted to rule the world and encourage ethnic cleansing of Germany and its possessions. I was 21 years old, working in Canajoharie, NY for a sack manufacturer called Arkell & Smiths. My function was Plant Superintendent and we employed approximately 100 people in this small operation. I loved my job and my position, but the recent draft law went into effect, America was preparing for a potential involvement in the war in Europe.

Many of the young men who worked for me were called up in the draft and it began to appear that I, too, would be called. Rather than wait to be called, I together with Gene Vickary, a fellow employee decided to enlist. I am relating here the experiences I encountered during those four years of service in the U.S. Army Air Force. I think our decision to enlist developed into a very smart move on our part.

Beginning with the Declaration of War on December 8th 1941 my life changed completely as did thousands of other young men. Enlisting in the city of Amsterdam, NY on June 24, 1941 we were sent immediately to Ft. Dix, NJ for three weeks of shots and other indoctrination. We were then sent to Hunter Field, Savannah, GA for three months of basic training. Once that three months was accomplished we were transferred to a just completed air-field located in Windsor Locks, Connecticut.

Arriving at Windsor Locks in late September, I was assigned to the Headquarters Squadron as a trainee. That is where my duties changed when the attack on Pearl Harbor occurred. I was made a guard on the flight line. It was not a pleasant job, but necessary. That's where I was the day Captain Frank Mears and 2nd Lt. Eugene Bradley were doing simulated aerobatics and Bradley suddenly blacked out in a tight turn and spun into the ground from about three thousand feet. Eventually the new field was named for Bradley.

When the war was declared the three groups of the 57th were immediately broken up and sent to three airports along the coast to interdict and attack any and all enemy submarines found along the coast. The HQ and 64th were sent to Logan Airport, The 65th sent to Groton, CT and the 66th sent to Quonset Point, RI. We operated in that mode until June 26, when we were instructed to depart to a point outside the continental limits of the U.S.

Bill W. Hahn
Army I.D. No. 12005907

The Early Situation

It was April 1941 and the war in Europe was heating up. Briton was taking a beating. We four young men working for Arkell and Smiths in Canajoharie, NY thought we should enlist. So all four applied for flight training with the Army Air Force. All four were rejected for some small physical defect. Gene Vickary and I were rejected because one eye was 20/25 and not 20/20. Stanley Harvey rejected because he wore glasses and Ray Patowski rejected because he had an under-bite in his teeth. We sat one Saturday morning at Crandall's Restaurant in Canajoharie and discussed possible enlistment with the Royal Canadian Airforce. Why not?

Begging off work on Monday morning that April day we drove to Ottawa, Canada and glibly marched into the RCAF recruiting office. Given a written test and sent to the medical staff for a physical, including eye exam, we were all ceremoniously accept for enlistment and told to return in thirty days. Returning to the States I decided to drive to West Virginia to explain to my parents what I had done. My mother almost had a heart attack. She became so distraught I feared I had really cause her serious health problems. She could not understand why I would engage in a war for another country.

I decided not to return to Canada. George Harvey and Pay Patowski did return. Ray, after flight training was sent to England where he participated in the "**Battle of Briton**" shooting down several German planes and being shot down three times himself, each time being rescued from the channel after bailing out of his damaged plane. Ray was an immigrant from Poland. He had only a fifth grade education, but a serious hatred for the German's. He really loved what he was doing and he survived.

George Harvey was sent to Officer's Flying School and graduated as a First Officer, assigned to flying bombers from Canada to England for the duration. George's father had been decorated an Ace in the WW1 RCAF, so there was a reason for his assignment. George kept volunteering for service in England, but never made it.

Gene Vickary was a printer in the factory, working for me. We had become close through that association. We frequently had Saturday morning breakfast together, George and Ray would often join us. When George and Ray determined to return to Canada, Gene and I decided to join the U.S. Air Corps as enlisted personnel. We traveled to Amsterdam, signed on and were

immediately sent to Fort Dix, NJ. Arriving at Fort Dix we began the indoctrination process with shots, clothes allotment, barracks bag, the whole nine yards of recruitment. We were instructed in marching drills and calisthenics daily. After three weeks we were put on a rail car heading south. We arrived the next morning in Savannah, Ga. The train backed into the West Broad Street Station and as we disembarked I saw a snack bar. I made a b-line for a coke. The young girl behind the counter turns to a co-worker and yells, "a bottle of dope". That was the first time I had heard Coca Cola called dope, but the folks in Georgia knew it was addictive.

Life at Hunter was not all that bad, but the training was fast and tough. We received all our basics and occasionally were sent to the flight line to help do various menial tasks. The Air Force had just received their first A-20 Bombers and Hunter, because of its 10,000 ft. runway was sent the new planes. Pilots were unaccustomed to the new tricycle landing gear, (they had been trained on the conventional tail wheel type.) So often the pilot would land on the nose wheel first, driving the strut up into the fuselage, the nose of the plane would then drop onto the runway and the plane would scoot along nose down, sparks flying. This sealed the escape hatch of the bombardier so that he could not get out. It became necessary to get a rope, wrap the tail and literally pull the tail down, force the hatch open to extract the bombardier. These moments were both serious and hilarious because the poor bombardier would have the poop scared out of him. There was no other way out of that nose section.

Finally, after several weeks of training we attended a meeting where volunteers were requested for bombardier school. Gene Vickary quickly signed for this opportunity to fly. I felt if I could not be a pilot, I did not want to be a part of a crew, so I opted to remain a "GI". Shortly after this an extract appeared on the Bulletin Board assigning personnel to various group operations. I was being assigned to the 57th Fighter Group, newly activated and operating out of Windsor Locks Airbase near Hartford, Connecticut. I, with several other dogfaces was sent by train to Hartford and trucked up to the base.

This was truly a new base. The runway, barracks, hangers were all camouflaged to look like the old tobacco fields that dotted the area. The buildings needed the windows cleaned, fences built, interior painting. It was still a "peace time" army and since each squadron had been allotted only four P-40's the enlisted personnel were designated to make the living area habitable. This was no easy task, but it was accomplished.

I was assigned to Headquarters Squadron and the function of the enlisted personnel was mostly guard duty and KP. I began to wonder if I had made a mistake about the bombardier's offer. We had a First Sgt. who was an old regular army Sgt. and he was hell on discipline. Each barracks had one room and he slept in the room in my barracks. One night someone slipped into his room and buried a 10" butcher knife in his back. The attacker thought Sgt. Rossi was sleeping on his back and he aimed for the heart, but Rossi was sleeping on his stomach and the knife buried in his right lung. We heard the scream, ran to the room, but were afraid to touch the knife for fear of causing more damage.

He was rushed to the medical room where the knife was extracted without further damage. The wound healed and Rossi returned to the Squadron, but during his recuperation the Intelligence Officer's questioned everyone in the Squadron. No lie detectors were available, so we were forced to stand naked in a corner of a room that had been painted a flat black, an intense light was shown on one and if the skin turned pink on questioning, you were sent for further interrogation. No one was ever found guilty and Rossi remained at his post. Someone didn't like his type of discipline.

The activity picked up and I was assigned to the flight line for guard duty. It was there while doing guard duty that I saw the crash of one 2nd Lt. Eugene Bradley. He had only arrived in the Group a week before. He and his wife lived off base. He and Capt. Frank Mears were doing simulated ariel combat at about 3,000 ft. when Bradley went into a tight spin and augered into the ground just northeast of the runway. He was the first casualty of the war for the 57th. I happened to be standing next to a plane in which P. G. Cochran, the renowned Fighter Pilot, was sitting. Cochran was the C. O. of 65th Squadron. He was screaming, "pull-up, pull-up", but it never happened. Bradley was killed upon impact. Several months later the field was named Bradley Field and remains so today as it serves the Northeast as Bradley International Airport.

Training continued for the pilots and in October an order No. 39 was issued directing a planned cross-country flight from Windsor Locks to the McChord Field near Seattle, Washington. The flight was to include 25 pilots flying recently received P-40's and 25 mechanics who would trail the flight in two C-47 Transports. The flight was a total disaster almost from the start. The complete story is told in the "Fabulous Fifty-Seventh Book by Dodds. Our training continued, but not in an urgent sort of way until December 7. I had decided to get a one-day pass (Sunday), and travel to Canajoharie, NY to see my girl friend. It was an eventful trip.

I was hitching rides from Hartford across Route 20 to Albany and on to Canajoharie, having left the base a seven o'clock in the morning I had reached Pittsfield, Mass and was standing at the Junction of Route 7 and 20 when a car stopped to pick me up. It was just about noon. The radio began blaring "Pearl Harbor Attacked", and every soldier must return to base by seven Monday morning. The driver was insisting I get out and return to base. I told him I was going to spend a few hours in Canajoharie and would be back at Base by seven in the morning. That is what I did. Excitement was rampant. I sure had no problem getting a ride back to camp that Sunday evening.

Things were fairly calm on base, but rumors immediately began circulating, but with that a lot of fact, also. Shortly the three squadrons were split with HQ and 64th assigned to Logan Airport, enlisted personnel bivouacked in the Revere Beach Ballroom. This was an auditorium probably 300ft. long by 100ft. wide with about ten toilets in each of the men's and women's area. There were 225 men who put down their cots, head to toe across the entire floor. If one wanted to use the toilet one would stand in line for several minutes. It was almost impossible to wash one's face in the morning. The Brits called this their ablutions, but I called it odiferous. The smell rising from sleeping bodies, passing gas and snoring was unbelievable. The stench that came from the toilets gave one pause to even think of eating breakfast. The breakfast shop on the corner made out like a bandit.

HQ personnel continued to do the guard duty. I spent several nights on duty at the MIT hanger on Logan airport. We were told they were doing experimental work on radar and our function was important. We did have one incident where someone attempted to gain entrance in the early hours one morning. Suddenly, I received a transfer to the armament section of the 64th squadron and met Tech. Sgt. Bell. Sgt. Bell left a lasting impression upon me. He was the first and I think the only regular army soldier who took his occupation seriously. He was fundamentally astute in his knowledge of guns of all description. He held classes every day on the function of the armament personnel. He insisted we learn how to dismantle and reassemble a 30 calibre and 50 calibre gun blindfolded. He insisted we identify vocally every part we handled.

I credit this man with every bit of knowledge I ever needed as an armament non-commissioned officer. This man was good at his work! He also taught us the fundamentals of the 37 MM cannon used on the Bell P-39. That gun was so powerful that when fired through the nose cone of the plane the ship appeared to hesitate in mid-flight. Tanks beware!

The P-39 was used sparingly in the war. It was not a very good combat aircraft. The 57th was supplied with P-40's as we moved to the coastal areas. Patrolling the waters off the New England coast was one of the immediate applications that could be made, knowing that German submarines were hunting in packs all along the East Coast of America and doing damage to our shipping effort in support of England. Each Squadron flew daily sorties out over the Long Island Sound and Boston Harbor. The 65th was protecting the U.S. Submarine base at Groton, CT.

Once I had completed my studies of 30 and 50 calibre guns I felt ready for the flight line. Within weeks I was transferred to the 65th Squadron at Groton. There I met Tech. Sgt. John Dixon, Armament Chief. Dixon was regular army and lazy as all get out. The most important thing he did all day was read a new Dick Tracy comic book. He had comic books stacked in piles in his armament office. One could tell he was really dedicated to his job. In short terms, he was a very poor Non-com and ineffective as a leader.

Dixon had two Staff Sgt. assistant's. They too, were old army and while they did not read comic books, they couldn't have stripped a 50 calibre gun if their stripes depended on it. What a disappointment after having Sgt. Bell as an instructor. Wow! Dixon never assigned any duties, never tried to understand just what the Squadron was doing. He left it to the two Staff Sgt.'s while his time was spent in the office with his comics. I must say I began to detest the guy.

The 65th was moved suddenly from Groton to Brainard Field near Hartford where the Pratt & Whitney airplane engine factory was located. We were there only a week or so when on June 26, 1942 Special order #170 was posted to the Bulletin Board instructing 46 men from each squadron and 12 from Headquarters to proceed to Mitchel Field and upon completion of this temporary duty, proceed by rail to a station outside the Continental limits of United States. Scanning the list I was delighted to see there were eight Corporals among them. I was one of the eight. Totally there were ten armorers listed, sadly one of them was Tech. Sgt. John W. Dixon.

We reported by train to Mitchel where we were processed for over-seas duty. Shots were given, clothes issued, a short course on firing a gun and off we 150 men went by train to Miami Beach on the Tamiami Special. It had been a pretty quick move. In four days we had moved from Brainard, through Mitchel and on to Miami, arriving there on the evening of June 30. We were settled into a beautiful beach hotel and on the morning of July 02 we were told to fall out, load onto trucks and were taken to a hanger at the

Miami International Airport. There on the runway sat seven C-47 (DC3) transport planes.

We unloaded onto the ramp and fell into formation. An officer began reading names and handing out tickets. When I received mine and opened it I was shocked to see it was a Pan American Airline Ticket reading, **Miami to Natal, (Brazil), to Fisherman's Lake, (Liberia), to Accra, (Gold Coast), Khartoum, (Sudan), Cairo, (Egypt)**. The fare printed upon each ticket was \$1,450.00. (my ticket is posted with the 57th display in NEAM.) Once tickets were handed out, we were assigned 20 or 22 men to each plane. The planes were equipped with aluminum bench seats along each wall. I don't recall seeing a parachute. The seats could get pretty uncomfortable after awhile.

Lt. Ed Silks appeared with a Rhode Island Red Rooster in tow. He called out the names of two Corporals, Herb Jorish and Bill Hahn. He handed us the strap on the Rooster and explained this was "**Uncle Bud**" and he was to be delivered to destination unharmed! Bud was the Squadron's new mascot. Herb and I escorted the damn bird from Miami to destination. We shared responsibility for caring for him. Once airborne on the first leg of our trip, Bud flapped his wings trying to crow, but we found that above 10,000 ft. he lost his "crow". He became a frustrated bird and would go along pecking at the legs of the guys on the benches. He was allowed to wander over the cabin during flights.

Our first over night stop was Port of Spain, Trinidad. Next day we flew down to Belem and our third stop was Natal. We are so young and so inexperienced we had no idea what lay ahead of us. Cairo, Egypt was a place one read about in history books, but one doesn't ever expect to travel there. We slept in pyramidal tents five to a tent in Trinidad, bivouacked in a lovely hotel in Belem where some of the guys found houses of "Ill-Repute" quickly and were sorry for it for years after. Proceeding the next day, July 04 to Natal where again we were bivouacked in a nice hotel. It was not exactly what we had in mind for a July 4th celebration, but we couldn't choose.

We were held in Natal awaiting the return of a Boeing 314 Flying Clipper. The hugh four engine flying boat landed on the river at Natal where on July 07, 20 of us we were ordered aboard at about 1800 hours. We were astounded at the luxury of this plane. It was incredible! Jorish and I took "Bud" aboard after some protesting from the crew, but he was finally allowed to board. We found the plane was also carrying four tons of cargo plus the 20 men. Once loaded the First Officer explained he would take the plane

up river, turn and run down river for take off. We must have gone six miles upstream, finally turning and making a take-off run. The plane bounced along like a large fishing boat and after getting up on the step a sharp drop of the left wing to make a turn in the river, finally straightening and we were airborne.

Fourteen hours later one could see in the distance a large lake just a few miles beyond the coastline. That was Fisherman's Lake. It was about ten miles long and probably ten feet deep. We landed and had a long taxi back to the small Pan Am dock house where we disembarked. We saw coming in that the lake was in a jungle area. We also saw a hacked out temporary field some two, three miles from the lake with some C-47's sitting on it. We got our gear and began to portage through the jungle path to "Benson Field", a rough landing strip as close to Fish Lake as they could get it. It was still quite a hike. One dare not stray from the hacked out path because one did not know what manner of vermin lay in wait. We passed through small hut villages where the natives looked curiously at us and we at them. Some spoke English, but most just nodded.

We boarded C-47's again and flew down to Accra where we off-loaded and were set up in a tent area. This was our first introduction to the African mosquito. They were so large four of them could carry one away. The Brits quickly supplied mosquito nets for the bunks. We waited in Accra for our planes. We had not been told they were coming to Africa by aircraft carrier, so we were surprised to see them begin arriving in flights. They had taken off about 100 miles at sea and flew into Accra. From there the C-47's and some B-25's guided them across Africa on the Pan Am Route to Khartoum. Arriving in Accra I went to the Operations Office and sitting there was a British General whom I felt I recognized. It finally came to me that it was General Wavell who had just been relieved in Egypt. He was waiting for transportation back to England. I did not salute, but I should have!

Leaving Accra on July 10 we flew with a flight to Lagos, Nigeria, where we found nothing more than some toilets on this rough strip. We refueled and flew on to Kano, Nigeria where we refueled and bivouacked for the night. July 11 we flew to Fort Lamy in French Equatorial Africa and on to El Fasher, Egyptian Sudan, finally arriving at the Wadi Siedna airport at Khartoum. Once settled into the Motel provided by Pan Am at Khartoum, we learned that one of the pilots from 64, Lt. Robert Barnum, had been forced to make a wheels down landing in a rough clearing in the jungle between El Fasher and Khartoum. Volunteers were requested to fly back the route and attempt to find Barnum. Two mechanics and two armorers agreed

to go. I was one of the armorers who volunteered. George Viox was the other. We boarded the C-47 and took off flying the designated route. Somewhere in that maize of jungle stood a P-40 and a frightened pilot.

When we flew into the zone where Barnum was seen last, we began a low level wide circle search. Finally we spotted the plane in a very small clearing. Our pilot made a simulated landing to see if the C-47 could land and stop short of the trees and brush. He decided we could do it, so in we go. I did not believe he could stop the plane short of the brush. It did take all of the cleared area to stop. There sat Lt. Barnum on the wing. The mechanics went to work and concluded the plane's air intake arm had broken causing the scoop to close, thereby creating an overheating problem. It would be necessary to fly back to Khartoum and weld the arm. Someone would have to stay and guard the airplane. Of course, the two armorers were designated to remain behind while the pilot and two mechanics went to Khartoum.

Shortly after the C-47 took off George and I heard a rustling in the bush behind the plane. Watching for movement, rifles ready, out came about 50 of the tallest black men we had ever seen. Not one was less than seven feet tall. These natives were naked and carried long spears. Looking at these guys we could not believe the length of there "honkers". No wonder every African woman stays pregnant. We hardly knew what to expect. They circled the plane and sat down on their haunches just staring at us. One had a crown of thorns and we assumed he was the chief. We began making hand signs to him and he responded. Soon we were carrying on a sign language that all three of us could interpolate. If it hadn't been so serious it would have been laughable.

It was growing dark and our guest was making no indication of leaving. Finally, I opened a number 10 can of blackberries that the cook at the motel had put in our snack pack. I took a spoon and dip out and ate some indicating he should do the same. He ignored the spoon, made a three-finger cup and dipped into the can. The first taste was enough, he took the can from me and ate nearly half the can before passing it around. Shortly he motioned to me that I should follow him into the bush. George and I hesitated to accept the offer, but I did indicate I would follow him. We strode into the heavy bush and walked about a mile from the plane when suddenly we stepped into a small clearing. There were about ten small grass huts with thatch roofs. One had to crawl through the small opening into the hut

Sitting on the dirt floor were three young women, one was pregnant and two were smoking some foul smelling twig. The chief offered me goat's milk from a leather pouch. I knew I would be sick before morning.

I indicated to the Chief by walking fingers, my desire to return to the plane. He understood and we walked back, arriving just at dark. George was glad to see us! He and I decided we would sleep on the wing of the plane and remain off the ground. We rolled into a blanket and went to sleep. Our "friends" were still sitting in a circle around the plane, not moving. We awoke at dawn to find them still in the same position, this was odd behavior but there they were. We heard the C-47 approaching about ten o'clock. The pilot swept the area hoping to frighten any animals off the landing area, made his approach and made a three-point landing and a quick stop. We had been watching the C-47 and when we glanced around, our "friends" had melted into the bush. They were nowhere to be seen. We never saw them again. We felt they were there protecting us from animals. It was an experience one doesn't easily forget.

The mechanics repaired the air scoop arm and Lt. Barnum took off heading east. We quickly took off and caught up with him, leading him into Wadi Siedna. We arrived at Khartoum on July 11. Bivouacked in the PAA Motel, life was not too bad. We received info that we would hold in Khartoum a few days. Pilots did gunnery practice daily and some simulated combat. We ate daily at the PAA mess hall. We quickly found our waiter, Sala, to be a jovial fat man whom we could bribe for more desserts, more food, so we were never hungry. We often jumped a truck going into Khartoum where there was an English speaking outdoor movie. The PAA folks made certain we had a return ride. We often would be served rich dark brown meat with gravy. We inquired of Sala, "What are we eating"? his reply always was "Camel". We never knew if he was serious.

Khartoum is the confluence of the Blue Nile and the White Nile. If one were unfortunate enough to fall in, the water is so filled with disease one could die in a short time. Definitely not a place one would choose for swimming. While we were at the Motel we met and talked to many South African pilots heading for the front as replacements. They were a jolly lot and just raised hell around the Motel, but not particularly fond of the Brits. One got the impression they felt oppressed, but they were hell on wings for flying.

August 1 we received instructions to mount up and move out. We boarded the planes not knowing where our next stop would be. We learned that the Brits had stopped Rommel's drive to the Suez by forming the El Ale -main line beginning at the Med down the desert to the Quattara Depression. The line was a distance of forty miles and the Depression was so deep and impassable it formed a natural barrier against an end run to Cairo or the Nile. The Brits no longer felt an urgency to have us rush into support them.

Flying north up the Nile River we landed at Wadi Halfa near Cairo. We off loaded and were taken to a lovely old hotel called the **Heliopolis House**. We certainly were impressed, but there were no toilets to sit on. One had to squat over a hole in the floor where one found wall handles and scuff plates. We found that from the third or fourth floor's the pipe let down to the basement. What became of the waste we never found out. The Veranda of the hotel was situated above street level and was a wide expanse where guests would accumulate for a drink or food. It was above ground level to reduce the dust as much as possible.

It was here that we learned of the "Egyptian fly" that was to haunt us for the next year. One did not kill the fly, there were thousands of them. The young boys on the street were selling "swishers", a bunch of horse's tail on an ivory or bone handle. These implements were absolutely necessary. The flies gathered around one's eyes, nose, mouth, anywhere they could find moisture. They became like a scourge that one could not escape. We sat on the veranda swishing the flies and listening to the sounds of traffic. We were soon made aware of the fact that **King Farouk**, ruler of Egypt, lived in the Penthouse of the hotel. That changed our behavior!

Leaving Wadi Halfa the next morning we flew up the Nile and were just East of the Pyramid's. This sight from 5,000 feet was a sight one never expected to see in one's life. We continued north and suddenly beneath our wings was the Suez Canal, a long dark straight streak as far as the eye could see. We did not know it, but were later informed that the flight from Cairo was under strict prescribed corridors at certain heights and throwing off an Identification color of the day as we were vectored through the area. We were just several miles east of the El Alemain line and in hostile territory.

We flew across the canal near Ismailia and across the Sinai desert up to Muqueibila, Palestine. There we were met by a British Contingent of the RAF whom we were told would be our mentors. It was all an exciting new experience for this bunch of green kids from the states. They told us our group in the flying echelon would report to the 211 Royal Airforce Wing at Muqueibila. Palestine was not much improved over the desert we viewed flying over the Sinai. It was pretty rugged. Our guys found that a new Jewish compound of recently resettled immigrants from Germany was located about one mile from the base. Many guys made a b-line for the compound at every opportunity.

Training was begun at the base immediately under the watchful eye of the Brits whom we gathered was not really impressed. We G.I.'s still untried

and green as grass, were equipped with blue denim hat, shirt and pants for a work outfit. The British wore shorts, sun helmets and mosquito boots. The blue denim was heavy, hot and eventually unbearable. We began discarding our dress and traded hats and other items of dress for the more conventional desert dress, cutting off denims to make shorts. The temperature was rocking along at about 110 degrees, but the humidity was low so one didn't find it oppressive, just uncomfortable. **So here we are at destination, or are we?**

Phase two

We were assigned to a bivouac in what at one time was a horse barn. That was not bad. It was inside, clean and fairly open for a breeze. The first morning, however, reporting for breakfast we were handed, **one sardine, one hardtack biscuit and a cup of tea.** The sardine smelled terrible and the tea was awful. One could drink it with plenty of milk and sugar. The tin that held the biscuits had a lead stamp on the cover dating 1919. Evidently the cans were in storage for a few years. The hardtack was a biscuit that had no taste, but did fill the cavity of one's stomach. This was a sample of things to come.

A few days after arrival in Palestine, August 5, an order came down directing several men, armorers and mechanics, to fly on a C-47 to Cyprus to attend planes of 65 that would be flying Interdiction over the Mediterranean seeking German vessels to destroy. We remained on Cyprus for a period of twenty days when ordered back to Muqueibila. Arriving there we found the ground echelon that had sailed from Hoboken, NJ on July 16 had arrived in Port Tewfik on the Red Sea coast and was transported to Muqueibila by train. I felt quite blessed to have been appointed to the air echelon. The trip aboard the Louis Pasteur had not been a fun trip. Thirty one days aboard and the food and living conditions were terrible.

Instructions to strike camp at Muqueibila came about September 14. We were loaded onto the small (so called) 40/8 box cars, 40 men or 8 horses. and began a trek back down through the Sinai to the Suez Canal. The train was old and so slow one could have walked alongside as fast as it ran. The cars had wooden seats so we put our barracks bags on them and sat on the bags. Temperature has to exceed 130 degrees in those steel tubes. That was a really suffocating trip.

We re-crossed the Suez at the Port of Suez and continued on toward Alexandria. Somewhere at a small station before arriving in Alex we were off loaded and put aboard many British "lorries". We were then trucked to a position somewhere along the Cairo, Alexandria highway to a flat place in

the desert, I think it had a name "Ameria", but it also was called LG174. The location appeared to be about 25 miles south of Alexandria. It was just desert for as far as one could see. We dismounted and were told to erect tents. We had not seen the tents before, but along came a British Lorry dropping off these white heavy canvas tents, probably six by fifteen feet. When erected they stood about six feet high with a ridgepole and sides three-foot high. There was also a second overlapping roof section riding about a foot above the original tent that created an air space, supposedly to allow air to blow between the tent top and the overlap, cooling the interior of the tent (?). In heat reaching 130 degrees and higher, we were never certain there was cool air. The tents had been shipped from India.

Someone in the Squadron Adjutants office had drawn up tent assignments, five men to each tent. The men were also, assigned by rank and MO. In other words, all armorers were kept together as were mechanics, etc.. I was fortunate in that my rank of Corporal put me in with four of the finest tent mates one could hope for. Bob Furman, Utica, NY—Harmon E. Alley, Albuquerque, NM—Robert and Elbert Adams (twins), Tyler, TX. They were all clean cut, non-smoking, hard working soldiers.

Once acquainted, we reported to the mess area where we learned of other indoctrination points. A) **We would be rationed one canteen of water per day, this to serve as water for drinking, shaving, cleaning teeth and spit bath's.** B) **Rations would consist of Tea, Bully Beef and Hardtack daily for all meals.** These instructions were a shock to one's constitution. Just thinking about a canteen of water every 24 hours, made one's mouth pucker. We proceeded to the evening chow line and were served our first desert meal of Bully Beef and Hardtack. One can not begin to explain the pungent odor that came off the warmed over beef. First, it was Australian mutton and the fat content had to be 25%. When warm it really smelled awful. One felt it necessary to hold one's nose. However, if one is hungry enough, you will eat it.

We were allowed one canteen cup of liquid for meals. This was almost always water. Occasionally, coffee! We were allowed all the hardtack (1919) we wanted. Evidently there was ample supply of hardtack. We learned quickly to take small packages and put them in our pocket for snacks that we consumed like candy. Our tent group made a pact. Each guy would conserve as much water as he possibly could daily, and every evening before the water bowser showed, we would pour out the content into a steel helmet and every day, one person in the tent got to take a spit bath. Every fifth day it was your turn. Oddly enough after a few weeks of adjustments, we found

the system very accommodating and no one cheated. We had a rule, **no water saved, no bath for you!** We quickly learned that Furman was the chow hound in the tent and he found ways to be first in line at chow time each day.

LG174 was really not an airfield. It was an expanse of flat desert and the area designated as the landing ground was established by setting up 55gallon barrels at each of four corners. The bivouac area was widely dispersed and slit trenches were recommended. Once the group was situated the planes arrived and we experienced our first dust storm kicked up by the planes landing and taxiing. It was hell! We learned quickly to stay upwind of the planes landing or taking off.

I think our first registered combat mission with RAF 211 Group was probably September 15. The enlisted personnel, armorers and mechanics were sent to various squadrons of 211 group for orientation. One of the first things we as armorers learned was the method of loading 500lb.bombs to the belly of the P-40. Our method was to apply a small crane to the bomb in the "dump" and lift it onto a bomb carrier. When arriving in front of the plane it was lifted again by crane onto a four wheel dolly and supposedly pushed under the belly, jacked up to the shackle and locked. Time to do this per plane, probably fifteen minutes. The problem that developed was, the dolly would sink into the sand and three men were required to push the dolly under the belly of the plane.

We noted, during our orientation, that the Brits of 211 used a hand method whereby they put the bomb on a pipe cradle and four men lifted toe bomb manually up to the shackle. Returning to our camp we quickly built and adopted a similar approach. Then we discovered we could put about ten 500lb bombs on a 6x6 truck, drive along in front of the plane and kick one off, dropping it about five feet onto the ground, then roll it onto a cradle we made using four extended arms. The bomb would then be hoisted manually up to the belly and locked. This process we learned to do in less than five minutes per plane.

This was a huge step forward. We were now loading 12 plane missions in less than an hour. We eventually got it down to 12 planes in about 20 minutes, working in teams. I don't think the Americans could ever have survived so well if it had not been for our mentors in 211. They taught us the means of survival in the desert. Water, ammunition, bombs, food, everything used in the desert must be trucked in or flown in. Water was a desperate commodity. Water bowzers were the life line of the army and air-force. We respected the Brits and we listened to them. The Anti-Aircraft

protection was supplied by our British friends. These guys were good and they really worked to protect us during our drive through the desert. We did not appreciate them as much as we could have when one considers that during every bombing raid, bombs falling on and around the field, they remained at their stations firing ack-ack at the Jerry planes.

LG174 was pretty much a trial run for our push through the desert after October 23, 1942. Our mechanic's learned to care for the engines in the planes, covering exhaust manifolds with tin can, covering air scoops from penetrating sand and learning from 211 just how to use 55 gallon drums to remove and repair engines without the aid of a hoist. That requires a lot of muscle power, but the guys did it every day. They were really superb in their demeanor. I never heard complaints about the difficulty of coping with the sand, even when it was blowing and obscuring vision during their maintenance. The same can be said for the armorers. There were times when the guns became covered with new sand as soon as they were ready to install them in the wings. Frustrating, but not devastating!

Meals at 174 became a real challenge. We certainly were not ready for the mess procedure, but the 211 group explained that we did not put up dining tents. The cook area was enclosed in a tent, but serving tables and eating spots were wherever one could find a seat in the open. The constant dust filling the air would quickly settle on one's food, so we learned quickly to allow the meal to sit for a minute; a crust covered the mess kit, then gently dig a hole in one corner and extract the food from a tunnel under the crust. I think we ate our "peck of dust" during the first week in the desert.

The armament section did receive a covered wagon that was to be used as a "sterile" area for cleaning and repairing the 50 calibre guns. Tech. Sgt. Dixon claimed it for his "fart emporium" and moved in, comic books and all. We cleaned the guns in a wash pan just outside the door of the wagon. We were not allowed in the wagon, but we became adept at getting the cleaning done correctly without Dixon or his two Staff Sgt. flunkies. I must say the armament guys worked pretty much in teams and the whole process worked well without supervision. I always puzzled how a grown man of 25, who had been in the army for two hitches, could be so addicted to comic books. Dixon actually had no interest in what his crew was doing.

The Jerry seemed to know just when we arrived at 174. He paid a visit about the second night, as if to say, "we know you're there 57th". He paid us the compliment of coming several nights a week dropping flares and bombs. The first night when flares dropped, and bombs fell it was a new experience for us, terrifying as well. Flares lit up the area like day. How could the

bombs miss us. I was so scared one could hear my knees knocking together. The bombs fell harmlessly into the desert beyond the planes and dispersal area. That didn't stop him from continually trying to do damage to our planes. Many of the men jumped at any opportunity to ride into Alexandria or Cairo with the supply trucks, but we seemed too busy refueling and rearming the planes to take the time.

We began accumulating more of the Brits clothes; shorts, shirts and sun helmets. We often gave up shirts and soon became almost black from the sun. It was completely opposite of the "Wogs" (Arabs). They wore heavy wraps of cotton clothes so they would sweat and the sweat would act as a cooling process. We were dumb Americans. We did it the hard way. Speaking of wogs, we began to notice that when Jerry was around a tracer bullet would suddenly go off somewhere at the edge of the camp. It was the wogs trying to identify our position, then came the flares. Normally we left them alone and they left us alone. Some guys bartered with them for eggs that they could fry over a small heat.

We quickly learned from the Brits that we could take an empty number 10 can from the mess and fill it with sand, pour 100 octane fuel into the sand and light it. It made a wonderful cooking surface or hand warming pot. Every 100 rounds of 50 calibre ammo came in sealed tins inside a heavy wooden box. Once the ammo was removed the tin could be used for storage of personal items or other. We noted the Brits used some of them as wash tubs, putting a gallon or two of 100 octane fuel into the tin and rinsing one's clothes; hanging them out to dry in the desert air. This kept your clothes in pretty good shape and body odors down.

211 group had been up to Benghazi and back twice in the see-saw battle of the desert, so we were smart enough to listen to their advice and it was most welcome. I made friends with one of the armament fellows from Edinburgh, Scotland (Olde Reekie he called it). His name was George McVie. We continued to correspond for sometime after the war. I eventually lost track of him, but he had been first in India then was transferred to the 211 group and had been overseas for six years. He was a committed desert rat. He and his friends taught the 65 armorers to use masking tape to tape up every open port where shells ejected; made half dollar paper plugs for the orifice of the gun covers that would blow out with the first shot fired.

Jerry was hitting us with two types of Bombers, the JU88 and their HE 111. Both were deadly machines. We began to note differences in the sound of their engines and could forecast just which ones were hitting us. The moon was our enemy, because when the moon was full, our shadows

stood out very clear on the sand. Mechanics turned the planes facing north so the windscreens would not reflect off the moon. We were learning how to deal with the elements every day.

Finally 211 turned us loose and the 57th flew as their own American group. We became recognized as an element of the U.S. Army Air Force attached to the British Eighth Army. By mid-October the group was flying escort mission for 9th AF B-25 Bombers. I think the first air victory by a 57th pilot was Lt. Mobbs on October 9th. One had to marvel at the agility of the maintenance guys who had to do 50 hour inspections, change engines and still maintain a compliment of planes in the air. They were desperate to keep sand out of all the ports; they found it necessary to beat the propellers back into shape after the rocks of the desert banged them up. It was a continuous fight with the elements.

Probably the most distasteful thing and yet one of the most necessary things we had to do was dig latrines (toilets). A detail was assigned to dig a three foot by six foot hole about three foot deep over which were set three or four half-55 gallon drums with tops cut for seats. The Brits were fanatic about keeping their latrine habits and insisted we do the same for health reasons. Frequently new latrines had to be dug and the old ones were covered with lime and filled in. Once the battle began and movement was every few days, we gave up the idea of putting down serviceable latrines.

When we began the move, if a person had to defecate he would take his trench digger, move off into the desert away from camp and leave his waste, covering it with sand. When the camp broke up and moved forward one could see little tufts of toilet paper sticking out of the sand appearing like snow. The winds of the desert probably took care of the remains. That wind never stopped blowing.

Our field was probably twelve miles behind the front. It could have been more, but I don't think so. We could hear the artillery constantly. Our planes began doing close ground support and did engage the enemy aircraft during these sorties. I think by the time of the push our group had flown close to 500 sorties of one kind or other. They bombed the Port of Tobruk, went after shipping trying to get to Tobruk and generally went through a learning curve.

When night fell in the desert and the moon was up it could be beautiful. The stars so bright, when the wind died down, and sounds would carry for miles. When first in the desert we used candles or oil lamps to see at night, but the cook tent was furnished a generator, so we learned quickly that

we could hook into the mess generator and most tents had a single light bulb. It was never sufficient, but like a coal miner one hundred feet underground, that one light was a blessing. We had to be careful that no light escaped the tent, because Jerry could see the smallest light from several thousand feet and he was seeking targets constantly.

We slowly began to realize the new name of the game was **survival** and it was pretty much for every man to look out for number one. While at 174, we suffered through a horrendous sandstorm. One could stand by the planes and watch a tremendous cloud of dust, reaching as high as a thousand feet just rolling across the desert. We had not experienced this phenomenon before, so were not prepared for its results. The planes were protected with the masking tape and other items, but the tents and the human body was not ready. The dust blew into camp and tents that were not well anchored blew down, one's clothes were saturated with sand. Even mess kits that were clamped shut yielded dust when opened.

Dust storms were to plague us all the way to Tunisia. One could reach in his pocket and take out a hand of dust. Once we were experienced, we sometimes would roll up in a bedroll and lie there until the dust stopped blowing. That one storm at 174 probably lasted a total of three days. We now considered ourselves inoculated to the desert and its whims. We were to learn that there were things other than the interminable flies and storms to be aware of. Up pops the desert scorpion. There were black scorpions and white scorpions. The black ones were numerous and they would nest in one's shoes, socks or other unsuspecting places, then they would strike with their tail and the damn sting was painful. The white ones were poisonous, but they were less numerous.

We learned too, the desert winds carry all types of diseases and if one is unfortunate to get a cut or injury the dust can lead to serious problems. One never considers that the dust can be dangerous to one's well being. We just considered it an annoyance. The sand blowing all day makes one feel gritty and unclean. The hair gets matted, the eyebrows get matted the nostrils close. It certainly is not an environment one would chose to live in for life, but the "wogs" endure and some prosper.

We began to notice more activity along the Cairo-Alexandria road. We had not put too much thought into it until about October 21, we heard a rumor of a big push, but no dates were leaked. October 23, 1942 was just like any other day for 65 Squadron with sorties and usual maintenance. That evening at precisely 2140 hours (9:40P) we began to hear terrible rumbling from the west toward the Alemain line and we knew the push was on.

"Up the Blue"

We heard not only rumbling, but the whole sky in front of us was lit up for miles north and south. We stood in awe as we observed this display of fireworks. We later learned that Montgomery had placed 834- 25 pounders (shells weighing 25#) along a 40 mile front, Alemain to Quattara Depression and he was having them fire continuously for five and a half-hours. Once they stopped, the heavier guns hitting at more distance began their barrage. Watching that display was nothing short of amazing. One of the most eerie feelings that could come over one standing and listening to the din was the sudden sound of **bagpipes** as the 51st Highlanders played themselves into battle. Hearing the wail of pipes over the din of the guns sent chills up the back.

The Brits termed the desert as "Up the Blue" because once out there it's like an ocean and looking around one can see for miles, nothing but blue sky that blends with the sand. On clear days it becomes difficult to know where the sky ends and the sand begins. Beautiful but deadly! Montgomery kept up the barrage for twelve straight days. Jerry was not lying down, but fighting back with everything he had, but he was low on fuel and ammo, because of the great interdiction flights 57th and the Brits had done prior to the push.

Three days after the push began, someone in our group got the idea to attack the Fuka airfield about 50 miles west of Alemain. It was determined that Jerry had a large accumulation of aircraft there. Colonel Salisbury decided to put the whole group into a staged pre-dawn attack. This was not a common thing in the desert and not a gentleman's way to fight the war. The groups motor vehicles lined up along the edge of the field (?) and when the signal was given, all turned on their headlights. This outlined the extreme edges of the take-off area.

All twelve planes in the first element took off simultaneously creating a dust storm one could get lost in. The second and third elements followed, they rendezvoused at 3,000 feet and were vectored out to sea. They flew north, well into the Med then west until even with the Fuka airfield. Turning south they came in from the sea, over the low hills and attacked at dawn. What a wake-up call for Jerry! The mission was a complete success and probably accounted for the fact that very little opposition aircraft was seen over the German front during Montgomery's drive. The 57th destroyed the bulk of the German protective airforce on the ground. It was a smart move on somebody's part! The bombardment and clearing of mine fields in front of the 8th Army required about 12 days. The noise never stopped.

Once the Engineers (so called sappers) had begun to clear the minefields, the battle began slowly to develop movement. It has been determined that once the Germans had been stopped at Alemain, the British and the Germans began laying mines in a flurry. It is estimated the Brits laid mines along the entire 40-mile front and the Germans laid a swath ten miles deep in front of the 8th army. Figures have been quoted that up to 180 thousand anti-personnel mines and 100 thousand anti-tank mines were set by the two opponents. Clearing a path through the minefields was a monumental task for the sappers.

The anti-personnel mine (known as bouncing Betty's) was a devastating morale buster. If one was unfortunate enough to step on one, a spring flung the charge into the air at waist high before exploding. It would literally cut a man in half. The sappers had the most terrifying job of clearing these mines before advance could begin. The several previous trips up the blue had been experience for the 8th. The engineers knew the "gen" and how to proceed. The sappers crawled forward in file using detectors and bamboo poles with exciters on the end. These would make contact with the mine and explode it. Life expectancy among sappers was short, but each knew his duty and there was no hesitancy to move forward.

The infantrymen then crawled forward using bangalore exciters that they would shove through the barbed wire and explode it, clearing an area of the wire. They were clearing an area about 24 foot wide. That would allow one tank or two 6x6 trucks, or two 40MM gun carriers, running abreast, to pass through the cleared area. The British planners had assigned certain troops to one of three tracks through the desert. There was Sun, Moon, and Star tracks running parallel to the Med. The Sun track was the deepest into the desert, the Moon a little less and finally the Sun running only about 10 miles off the coast road.

November 4 the 57th received instructions to move out. We had been instructed by the RAF that we move in two parties, A and B. The first party moves forward to occupy an airfield just abandoned, then B party cleans up and moves forward. Many times it was expected the parties would leapfrog one another. This first move I was in A party. We moved north on the Cairo-Alexandria highway for about ten miles where we met elements of the 9th Australian Infantry. We turned left and headed into the area of the minefields. We proceeded through the fields where we found British sappers directing traffic through the 24-foot passage. It was not a straight pass through, so here they were standing in the middle of the mines directing the traffic safely through. I was impressed at their courage.

We were assigned to Moon track and once we had exited the area designated as the minefields we were met by other Australian 9th Corp and five lines were formed. There was a line of Bofor 40MM guns on the two outside lanes. Two lines of infantry aboard lorries and then the 57th were in the center. We had ample protection, but we could hear the battle raging on ahead of us. Passing through the minefields and then as we progressed, we found destroyed vehicles, tanks, field guns with dead bodies still aboard, many bloated and turning black from the desert sun. Flies were everywhere like a scourge. When one landed on one's face, the first thought was, "did it just come from one of the dead bodies?" Not a pleasant thought.

I chose to ride on the roof of our large armament truck watching for German fighters who were seen strafing other areas. I felt somehow safer riding up high than sitting in the truck bed. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when an officer of the 9th informed us we were to proceed on a different compass course to our new airfield, number 75. We noted that everyone continued on except a company of 9th infantrymen who were our protection. We cut off and headed further south into the desert and about an hour later we were suddenly stopped. A Major who told us to "wait here" until they cleared the area ahead. We were stunned to hear shortly, a firefight on the airfield and we got ready to fight, too, not knowing just what was ahead. The Major returned after several minutes and informed that it was now safe to proceed to the field where we found vehicles burning and several burning planes and dead Germans.

We had just arrived and not had time to unload anything before a 65 flight of planes returned from a ground support mission, wanting to refuel, rearm and go out again. They had Jerry on the run and lots of targets of opportunity. We had passed El Daba, Fuka, and found LG75 was somewhere south of Mersa Matruh, probably forty miles into the "blue". We set up shop and serviced the plane's daily while the sorties continued. It was a rout that Montgomery was pursuing vigorously.

November 11 we struck camp and B party moved forward to a field in Lybia called Gambut. The Germans were trying desperately to defend the port of Tobruk. It was a port they needed for resupply. Our interdiction of sea lanes had cut off much of Rommel's supplies. The next port was several hundred miles west at Benghazi. We found the Germans were salting the local wells and rendering them useless. This made our supply as well as the 8th army supply critical. We suddenly began to receive C-47's loaded with a rubber inflatable pouch that carried water from Cairo or Alexandria. Each plane carried several hundred gallons. Water bowser's backed up to the plane

loaded up and headed for the front to replenish the 8th as well as supplying our needs. It was another case of "Yankee" ingenuity. Our guys may not have thought of it, but they devised the way to carry it out. Water was really so vital a substance that a quart of water, as little as it was, sustained us for the day. We heard the men at the front who received insufficient water for a spit bath or washing their body developed lice and vermin that created other problems.

We learned through the rumor mill that the Brits lost 12,000 soldiers on the initial drive through the Alemain line. The Afrika Corps supposedly gave up 40,000 dead and POW. Believe what you want, but we know Jerry is still very much alive and fighting like hell just ahead of us. Those JU88's aren't dropping leaflet's either. Paper doesn't make a noise like we hear.

We were only at Gambut long enough to erect tents when orders came to strike tents and move again. We had passed Sidi Barrani, Halfaya Pass, Solum, and Bardia, arriving at LG3 at Martuba. Before we ever began the drive the Brits had numbered or otherwise identified the fields we should move onto when they became vacated by the Jerry. It was a domino effect. Jerry, leaves one day, we occupy the next. There was always the chance for booby traps. Jerry is fond of leaving little "deadly" surprises for the unsuspecting. A finger or foot here, an arm there even the eyes. We were very cautious in our approach to any thing left behind.

It was about at this point that we learned of the "Torch" invasion of North Africa. We felt that might aid us in our drive, but we actually saw or felt little relief. The 65th had made ten moves in twelve weeks. It was a case of erect tents, attend planes, strike tents, move and a few miles up the desert erect tents again. The British RAF told our C.O. we were the "new" kids on the block. They had been up and down the desert several times since 1940 and were tired. So we were appointed **lead dog** for the time being. Our pilots did welcome the opportunity to mix it up with Jerry, flying at least three missions a day and giving needed close ground support to the advancing infantry of the 8th as well as meeting enemy aircraft.

The armorers had it tough trying to keep the guns clean and firing, but the mechanics were even more hard pressed. They were able to maintain a 72% serviceability of all aircraft in the squadron during the push. To do this in a war zone is almost an impossible task. I think that indicates the quality of the "boys" in our squadron and their dedication to the job. One must remember that during all these moves it was usually done with only half the crew, because the other half was either catching up or moving ahead. Eating meals on the run, eating dust with every meal and trying to shake fatigue.

It appeared one of the toughest jobs for the armorers in the push was to get the planes "bombed up". Each plane had an armorer assigned. When planes returned his first duty was to rearm the plane with 50 calibre shells, check the ejection mechanism, close all ports with masking tape, plug the gun barrel with a paper disc. We then worked up teams of five men who followed the 6x6 truck that was kicking off 500lb bombs in front of each plane. They would roll the bomb onto the cradle, four men crawling under the belly manually hoisting the bomb to the shackle and the fifth man then locked the shackle. Working in teams we could have a second flight ready by the time the plane was refueled and checked for flak holes.

We felt somewhat neglected, because we had to stay along the moon track far from the Mediterranean. Those moving along the coast road got the chance to swim occasionally, but we ate a lot of sand. Striking tents about December 2 we headed west cutting across the desert to Belinda #1 just north of El Agaila. Staying south of the Med we cut a straight line on moon track, by passing Derna, Appollonia, Barce, Benghazi and Agadabia. We were near Msus, where there were absolutely no markers to follow except the tracks in the sand, and our truck developed a hiccup and we needed some repair. Once the repair was made we found ourselves alone and began on the compass heading given us. The driver, Steve Lambaise began following the tracks and not the compass. I was setting on the roof of the truck. I suddenly felt the hair on the back of my neck raise.

I kicked hard on the roof and Steve stopped the truck. I began looking around and there at a forty-five degree angle sat a tank between to sand dunes, not visible from the angle from which we came. I jumped to the ground and all the armorers got out of the truck, standing so they could observe us. I was suddenly to realize we were staring down the gun barrel of a Matilda British tank. There was no action or recognition from the tank crew, so we remounted, reset the compass and took off cross-country toward our destination. Once settled into Belinda #1 we found it was totally undesirable, so on December 5 we moved to Belinda #2, a larger more desirable field just a few miles from #1. One must remember none of these are really airports, just flat spots in the desert that Jerry had once used as an airport.

A couple of interesting notes about Belinda #2. First, it began to rain and it rained torrents for days. Second, we had the worst sandstorm one could imagine. It felt like it would never let up. When one wanted food, it was C-rations heated over the makeshift fire and hardtack. Not much different than mess food, and if one needed to defecate, he took his trench tool,

walked several yards from his tent, dug a hole, left his waste, covered for sanitary purposes. The idea of a squadron latrine was left behind at LG174. There seemed to be no time for the British method and lime was not available. So we did the next best thing. When we left an area one could see tufts of toilet paper sticking up like snow from the outlying area. The Wogs were probably thinking us crazy.

We spent that first Christmas in the "Blue" at Belinda #2. It was not one of the better Christmas', since we endured the rain, sandstorms and then a freezing cold spell. One thinks of the desert as a continually warm place, but I can tell you it gets cold in the desert. The Brits of 211 did teach us how to stay warm during those cold months. First, cut a 55 gallon drum in half and set it in the center of the tent. Remove a 4 inch lid from the top of a bomb detonator can; lay it just under the hole in the drum. Find about 8 feet of 1/4 inch copper tubing from maintenance and attach a petcock. Run the copper tube under the sand to the outside of the tent where a 55 gallon drum has been laid horizontally on an elevated stand. Fill the drum with 100 octane fuel. Allow the petcock to open only to a drip, light the fuel and the heat will permeate the drum and keep the tent toasty warm.

We were very cautious at first, thinking of the 100 octane fuel that might burst into flame from a flash back. Soon we forgot about danger and we never had a bad fire, nor did we destroy a tent. On the flight line we wore all the clothes we had, trying to keep warm. The desert can be very cruel with deceptively warm days and miserable nights, catching the unsuspecting guy in its grip. Just when one feels adjusted to desert life, up it jumps and bites one in the butt. Beautiful and dreadful all at once!

We left Belinda #2 on January 10. Having spent a month in that miserable place we were happy to be on the move. "A" party had moved ahead on December 31, but the forward lines were vacillating and we were being cautious about the move to Hambriet, a spot about 20 or 30 miles south of the port of Sirte. Forward movements had their moments, too. Occasionally a truck would leave the track and suddenly run over a mine set a few feet off the track to catch the unsuspecting driver. It would wreck the truck and sometimes wound or kill the occupants. The sand never stops blowing and one often had to wrap a kerchief around one's face to breathe. Getting off the truck after a trek across the moon track one never knew if he was sunburned or just dust blown.

The flies were so hungry and tenacious that one's arm got tired of swinging the swisher. They came in scores and it appeared they could pick

one up and carry him away. I have never seen so many flies. It is a wonder that we don't have more dysentery or other problems carried by the fly. They are constantly at our food and at moisture on the body. Leaving the El Agelia (Belinda) area we were treading on soil where the 8th had not been before. The foremost drive by the 8th stopped at Fort El Agelia in the 1941 push, I'm pretty sure. We now are leaving the area known as Cyrenaica and proceeding further into Lybia. The October 23rd push was moving very rapidly. We had made 10 moves in 12 weeks. That is a lot of erecting and striking tents as well as servicing planes for missions.

Hambriet turned out to be a spot on the desert floor. We arrived there after a long drive from Belinda. During the run up from Belinda we were on the road two nights, sleeping under the truck or between the wheels, trying to find a spot where the cold wind wouldn't blow your blanket away. It was a miserable, cold trip. Even though one exposed himself to strafing and bombing under the truck, moving too far off the track invited disaster with mines. First it's dust storms for two or three days, then rain in torrents during these winter months. I always felt rain in the desert was a phenomenon. We were ordered to mount up and move forward again on January 19.

Wonder of wonders, we were instructed to take the coast road. We could see the Med for the first time. The scenery was beautiful, but the small communities along the water were pretty much all destroyed. This area had contained hundreds of Italian immigrants. Driving along the road, riding on the roof of the truck (my special spot), I could see many miles in the distance, a huge monument rising several hundred feet into the air. There was nothing around it, and as we drove closer to it we saw the coast road ran through it. The Italians had built it to honor their presence in Libya. The Brits quickly dubbed it "Marble Arch" (similar to the arch in London). The camera bugs got many pictures of that unusual site.

We proceeded west to Misurata on the coast and then turned 90 degrees south on a marked track and soon arrived at a field (?) called Beni-Ulid. This area was somewhat higher than most spots we had been seeing, and the wind was really blowing. We set up camp as usual, but we began hearing rumors that there would be new rations. We had been eating nothing but **Bully Beef, Hardtack and Tea** since arriving at Muqueibila, Palestine in July 1942. It was now January 1943. One could hardly look at his mess kit and note the bully beef. Sgt. Schlemmer, the mess Sgt., really tried every way to camouflage it, but if it looks like bully, smells like bully, you can bet it is bully. The hardtack cans still carried stamps dated 1919. The tea, with plenty of canned milk and sugar was O.K.. Not good, but passable.

The New Rations Caper

The rumor about U.S. rations grew pretty strong and one day shortly after setting up camp at Beni-Ulid a C-47 arrived with what appeared to be small wooden crates of food. We all waited expectantly for some different rations. There were none forthcoming, but it was known from the mess boys that the Officer's did have American chow. Some of the men became angry and decided they would take it upon themselves to gain access to some of the new rations. One dark night they slipped up to the tent where the Officer's rations were stored, cut a slit in the rear of the tent and helped themselves to several cartons of food. There were number 10 cans of various foods that we had not seen in our mess.

They walked away with probably five or more cartons: all they could carry. Now, what to do with it? Surely Major Boyhan, Squadron Adjutant and an old regular army pre-war Sgt. would know how to cope with this theft. So the perpetrators thought themselves smarter than was he. They decided to open the cartons; there was tins of coffee, fruit, jams and canned meats, and bury the cans in the sand and leave a little toilet paper protruding, assuring that the inspectors wouldn't dare probe into those holes.

Sure enough the next morning Major Boyhan along with another Officer and First Sgt. Henry Cipolaro come through every tent using a probe. It was a long stick with a long nail on the end and they made everyone move their bunk as they jabbed the stick into the sand inside the tent trying to hit a tin or a carton. This proved futile, so they finally gave up. The pranksters felt they had outsmarted the old man. In their haste they had forgotten to make a diagram or a layout so they could retrieve the items. We were at Beni-Ulid for about three weeks and when we received orders to move the guys were afraid to probe for the tins themselves, because the area had been used as a spot for latrine waste. Tuffs of toilet paper were strewn over the whole area. So the tins remained buried. Wogs going past there later and seeing the cans exposed by constant blowing of the wind must have thought the Yanks were crazy.

Moving on West

Beni-Ulid was another sorry bivouac. It was awful! The rains, the winds, and the "Kamseen's" (wog talk for sandstorm), seemed to happen every day. It was not unusual for these sandstorms to last three and four days. One found sand in his hair, underwear, shoes! One had look constantly for the damn scorpions they were everywhere. Our only consolation was to remind ourselves that Jerry must be suffering as we are. Finally, we struck camp and moved west, going to Zuara, a few miles beyond Tripoli.

Passing through Tripoli on the coast road we drove along the port area and there was abundant evidence that our bombing missions had been pretty devastating. Burning hulks of ships and warehouse's in shambles. It was also evident that Jerry had depended upon this port for much of his supplies. Again, we moved into the desert several miles to the airport. We had passed Homs, Castle Benito, in Tripolitania. We arrived there on February 24. Up to this point the 57th had flown 400 missions, dropped 210 tons of bombs and flew 1/6th of all missions flown by the allies. 40% of all enemy planes shot down were credited to the 57th.

We had lost some good pilots during the drive. We lost Nichols and Rideout at Alemain, McGoldrick at Tobruk. We lost Taylor and Margolian at Marble Arch, Sneed and Kimball at Zuara. They were all great guys and sorely missed. Some were reported MIA (missing in action) because they had seen their chutes open and others KIA, because no chutes seen.

We remained at Zuara about a month. Jerry had been backed into the country of Tunisia and was receiving fresh troops from Italy. The Americans and Brits from Operation Torch were pushing east from Kasserine and the area of Morroco and Bizerti. The resistance was growing more intense as the defense area of Jerry grew smaller. We struck camp on March 2 and moved into Libya to a small field called Medinene. We had just erected tents when orders were received to move a short distance to a field called Ben Gardane. The 8th was on the march again, hell bent for Tunis and Cape Bon.

We moved again on March 21 to Soltane. Rommel was slowly backing into the tip of Tunisia, but there was still a lot of fight in Jerry. He suddenly attacked the Americans moving up through the western mountain passes at Kasserine. It was a sharp, unexpected attack, catching the "Torch" group off guard and driving them back through the pass. The attack was so successful that we were instructed to strike camp and retreat to Medinene on April 4 to set up a line of defense. There was a little apprehension at this point, but it proved beyond Rommel's ability to sustain the drive because of supplies and equipment. Our interdiction of his supply routes robbed him of needed support and April 11 we received orders to move forward from Medinene on April 11, but we kept on going farther up the neck of Tunisia to a field called Cekhira. Even though we moved swiftly we were quite a distance behind the front.

We heard rumors that Rommel had returned to Germany for health reason's and a new General named Streich was processing the war on the German side. Leaving Cekhira on April 14 we moved up the coast to the area of El Djem. There in front of us was a ruined medieval coliseum.

and within one mile was an airfield. We moved onto the field, erected tents and began operations. Jerry found us the first night. I think they had some "wog" informers who kept the Jerry updated on every allied move. The pilots of those bombers used the coliseum as his marker, because his nightly visits seemed to have a pattern to them and his flares preceded the bombs pretty accurately. We found the dirt/sand in the area much softer than we had been finding, so we dug our slit trenches a little deeper.

Palm Sunday, April 18, 1943

Palm Sunday dawned warm and sunny. Many were planning to get the first mission off and then attend church service while the planes were gone. Rumors began to churn that maybe Jerry would try to leave Tunisia from Cap Bon. We thought nothing of it, because Jerry seemed still very much in a defensive mode. The Americans on the west of Tunisia were pretty much stymied and making little forward progress. New troops had been flown in to support the Germans, so we felt there was no way they would be leaving Cap Bon anytime soon.

I had drawn duty as Sgt. of the Guard for the three to eleven that day. Word came back that several hundred transports, ME109, Me110's were sighted just off the coast in the Straits of Sicily, north of Cap Bon. A gaggle of 47 P-40's from 57th Fighter took off, flying with RAF Squadron 211 as top cover. Evidently they flew past the transports, out to sea. The group was led by, Captain Jim Curl who finding no enemy, turned the group back toward Cap Bon. Suddenly, looking below him he saw all these transports flying just off the water. The 109's and 110's were flying protective cover.

The attack by the 57th group was devastating, shooting down 74 total aircraft in about fifteen minutes. Pilots emptied their guns firing into the transports. They were loaded with troops and as they crash landed on the beach or hit the water, men poured out of them, but they were fully clothed and any of them hitting the water would surely drown. The beaches were littered with plane debris and the water in some areas was on fire. It was truly a massacre. 211 group doing top cover attacked and shot down many of the Jerry. It was an allied success.

Later that night as we were about to change guards, I heard the uneven moan of the engines of several JU88 planes. "Axis Sally" had quickly broadcast, "we know where you are, America's butchers". They were paying us a return compliment. Their intentions were to bomb us into oblivion. I sounded the air raid alarm; then made tracks for a slit trench in the Ordinance bivouac area. I knew Tech Sgt. Charlie Johnson had dug a trench deep enough to stand in. I jumped into the ditch just as the first flare dropped. It

was as bright as day. It had to be pretty low. Charlie was occupying the trench and I jumped right on top of him. We heard the sound of the engines change and knew the bombs were on the way. We heard three very loud detonations and then the fourth one. That one threw dirt all over us. We knew it was very close. The planes made several passes dropping their bomb load and when we heard the sound of motors receding, Charlie was first out of the trench. All I heard was "son of a bitch" and his voice sounded at some distance. I jumped out of the trench, took about two steps and fell into a bomb crater that was about 15/20 feet deep. The soil at the bottom was so hot one could not place one's hands on it without burning.

We both jumped up and quickly, charged up the side of the crater and looked around. The crater we were in was about fifteen feet across. It had landed in the soft dirt near our slittie and the full force went straight up. We only felt the shock, but had the bomb fallen three feet closer we would have been dead from the concussion. We began checking for injuries or deaths and were surprised there were none in 65. 64 squadron had a couple of deaths and some injuries. One pilot was asleep on his cot with only a towel over him. A bomb fell nearby, broke two legs off his cot, put several holes in his towel and he didn't get a scratch. Charlie began looking for his Ordinance truck that was parked about 50 yards from his slittie. There was no truck to be seen. Lying about 100 yards from where the truck had been parked we found one door. Ordinance had a slogan, "the difficult we do at once, the impossible takes a little longer" printed on the door. We searched the entire area for other parts of the truck, but nothing found. It had been a direct hit. Those attacks were vicious. Jerry was very angry. Wow!

Jerry came every night, so the group got instructions to move over to Kairouan several miles west. We could still hear Jerry bombing El Djem every night for a week after the move. The field at Kairouan was formed in an X and the pilots used all four directions for group take-off. A colored flare was used to signal which four planes were to take off. Shortly after arriving there, I was sitting in my jeep at the center of X and watching the planes take off two abreast when suddenly I realized two planes were progressing from two different directions.

There was sure to be a collision when all four planes arrived at the intersection. I backed the jeep up to get away from the crash that I could see coming. The pilots saw their dilemma. Two pulled up sharply on their stick trying to avoid contact. The third flew straight and level, but the fourth jumped on his brakes and nosed up. The prop hit the ground with a thud and the tail stood ten feet in the air. The plane taking evasive action struck the

tail of the crashed ship tearing off a wheel and strut, but getting airborne, (he later made a belly landing). I immediately drove the jeep up to the wing of the crashed plane, jumped onto the wing and found the pilot unconscious. He had close his cockpit canopy to within 6 inches. Sgt. Ed Stevens who had witnessed the crash, joined me on the wing and together we tried to open the canopy, but to no avail. The engine is on fire and we need to extract the pilot quickly.

The canopy has an escape window that opens about a foot, just enough for a pilot to crawl out of in an emergency. The pilot is out cold. We cannot get the canopy open, nor can we get his chute off and the flames are becoming intense. We finally got his straps lose and began pulling him out through the twelve inch space. The chute on his seat was too large and stuck in the opening. Steve on one side and I on the other put our feet on the fuselage and pulled like hell. The pilot, even in an unconscious state groaned at our effort. I'm certain it pulled every muscle in his body, but suddenly he came away from the canopy and we landed on the wing.

Medics took the pilot away as the plane burned furiously. We found he had received a concussion. I was glad Steve was nearby, I could not have extracted the pilot by myself and with flames already in the floor of the cockpit he would have been either burned to death or seriously burned before rescue. The First Sgt. not realizing there was two of us involved, recommended the **Soldiers Medal** for Steve. It was an exciting few moments, but we had several of those and they became routine; after awhile.

Jerry was still pissed about the Cap Bon affair and began bombing us nightly at Kairouan, some nights as many as three different raids lasting until dawn. We certainly must have struck a nerve in their airforce headquarters. The Americans and Brits from the west were making progress toward Tunis. The British 8th and the army of the west were converging and driving Jerry deep into the Cap Bon area. We had arrived at Kairouan on April 21 and we were held there until June 15 when we received orders to move forward to El Haouarie, a LG just above Sousse on the coast, near Enfidaville. Jerry was abandoning North Africa.

Our planes began a bombardment of the Island of Lampedusa, just off the coast of Africa, occupied by Italians. The Island people surrendered, without an invasion. Efforts were then turned to bombing the Island of Pantelleria and they too, surrendered without troops landing on their island. Basically, the war in Africa had come to a conclusion. The Germans who escaped from Cap Bon were building defenses along the southern coast of Sicily for the expected invasion by the allied forces.

Phase Three

June 22, 1943 we received our orders to strike tents and return to Tripoli for a new assignment. We rove back to Zarsis and formed a staging area for the Port of Tripoli. We were going to take a boat ride, destination not known. We boarded all trucks and equipment on a LST on July 02, just a year after leaving Miami Beach. Once aboard we were told our destination was Malta. We began to reflect upon all that had happened in the year as we left out of the harbor. We had traveled across Africa from Fish Lake to Palestine, down through the Sinai desert to El Alemain and then nearly 1500 miles west through a wild, unpredictable and challenging desert. Terrible food, rationed and awful drinking water, no baths, (just spit baths every fifth day). Bombing from Jerry constantly. Primitive toilet habits, **but we were healthy and unharmed!** I don't think anyone was sorry to leave it behind.

LST's are a slow form of travel, but we were not alone. There were several LST's with our convoy and several British Corvettes for escort. Jerry did have submarines in the Mediterranean and was still active. We approached Malta and began a wide circuitous circle completely around the island as the Skipper's wound their way through the minefields protecting the island. One has to recognize that Malta, sitting in the middle of the Med had never been invaded and withstood all the bombings, strafings, food shortages, lack of water, lack of munitions. They were actually defeated, but refused to quit. I recall they still had three old relics of RAF fighter planes and they called them **Faith, Hope, and Charity.**

This island is solid rock and we were told that every ton of soil on the island had been brought in by ship many years ago. Their salvation was, of course, the rocks. They could hide in them and were unperturbed by the bombings. They would not be driven out. We were sent to an airfield called Gozo and began operations, our pilots flying across the Med to points in Sicily. We had daily visits by Jerry, but we all had our favorite rock in which to hide. I don't think he ever did much damage.

We spent fifteen days on Malta. The Brits and the American forces were not allowing the Germans much time to get dug in on the island of Sicily where the mountains would prove a stumbling block and trying to dislodge them would be a task. We boarded LST's on July 19 moving out of Malta as circuitously as we had arrived and headed for the toe of Sicily. We were destined to accompany a group of British Engineers, striking the beach at **Pachino**, right on the very tip or the eastern extremity of the island. The 8th Army had preceded us by a day and was making a mad dash up the east coast toward the Port of Syracuse, a hundred miles north.

The LST's ran the prow of the ship right up on the beach and dropped the forward ramp. The Engineers were first off with their bulldozers and the scrapers. When they had gone about 200 yards off the beach, they dropped the ploughs and began ripping up one of the most beautiful grape vineyards one would want to see. They never slowed down. They ploughed a strip about 500 feet wide and 3,600 feet long. They tore out all the lovely posts and the tremendous grape arbors. We followed them in and were told not to set up tents, but to use "shelter halves", two men to a "pup tent" and erect them among the rows of grapes. That was an indication that we would be moving quickly forward.

The first morning, we didn't go to breakfast. We reached out of the pup tent, plucked a 10# bunch of white grapes and carried them to the mess area where the medics had thoughtfully filled a tub with disinfect and we could dip them and then eat our fill. The poor farmer had lived in Sicily probably all his life and the vineyard had probably been handed down from about three or more generations. The bulldozers had destroyed grape arbors that were 200 years old or more. He sat among the rows and cried like a child. I could not help but cry with him. Jerry and the Italians had been all over Sicily and had not seen fit to destroy his farm, but we did it in an hour. The pity was, we left Pachino in 12 days and moved forward to a small airfield near Scordia. I will never forget the beauty of the orchard, the taste of those huge white grapes and the crying farmer. I often wonder if the allies paid him restitution. War is hell!

It was not all in vain, because as we moved forward an RAF Spitfire Group moved onto the field. We arrived in Scordia on July 31. We drove up the cost road and turned west into the mountains about twenty miles. Scordia was located pretty much in a valley with a fairly short runway, but room to establish tent areas, and a mess area. We could observe Mt. Etna in the distance, it appeared we were about 20/30 miles east of the mountain. They said the volcano never erupts. It was supposedly inactive. We found a mountain stream running through the area about a quarter mile from the tent area. We quickly built a rock dam and made a swim hole. Wow! Now we could bathe. We needed no swim suits; we just went to the water in the buff. What a thrill it was after all those months in the desert, to step into a pool of water that covered the body. We luxuriated daily.

The American 5th army in the west was bogged down in its drive to Palermo and the 8th was also bogged on the East Coast. We figured we would be at Scordia for a period. The fronts were kinda' stymied. Suddenly one morning, the roar of Mt. Etna erupting could be heard.

That old volcano may have been dormant, but it chose to give a real snort and lava and dust was flying from its peak. We were far enough away that we did not worry about any lava flow. We wondered if Jerry had dropped bombs into the crater to create some action. We could see the lava flow for several days and eventually it died down.

Our pilots had gotten info about some ME109's being abandoned on an airfield near Pachino, so they went back with mechanics and worked on a couple to get them flying. Duke Ellington was one of the pilots who flew one, but I remember that something happened and he crash-landed it. We did not see much of them after the first flush, but the pilots did do some aerial simulated combat to determine their vulnerability. The war had settled into the mountains of Sicily and dislodging Jerry was becoming difficult. We felt we, and the 8th Army was poised to do a pincer movement on Jerry. He had to come east on the coast road and attack on them would contain the German army in a pocket. It didn't happen.

We had an opportunity to go up into the mountains to a city called Mazzarino as an expedition. It was several miles west of Scordia and quite high in the mountain. Driving up there we were exposed to the method used by the engineers to get tanks on 40ft. carriers over the hairpin turns in the road. The road was very narrow and the turns were extremely sharp. They drove a 6x6 truck with a winch up to a tree just above the road, wrapped a cable around the tree for anchor and applied engine oil to the road, attached a cable to the rear trucks of the carrier and slid it around the turn. It was a laborious job, but those tank carriers did get over those mountains. I call it "yankee ingenuity"

During our time at Scordia we, Officers and men, were able to spend some part of each day at the little pond we had constructed. One day a young Sicilian man showed up with a wife. He offered her for sex for one can of "C" rations per plug. I won't tell you how many cans of "C" rations he left with, but after about two hours, he picked up his wife, threw her over one shoulder, a sack full of rations over the other shoulder and marched off into the woods. I thought it a terrible thing, but many guys took advantage of the opportunity to have sex after all those barren months. It was sad!

Finally the Germans fought their way to the Straits of Messina and were able to hold off the British 8th and the American 5th as they crossed into Italy. So, we lost an opportunity to cripple the Germans. Their retreat was followed by the British who crossed the Straits into Reggio di Calabria on September 3 and proceed to push up the eastern side of the toe. We struck

During the last few days at Scordia, Colonel Wymond decided to use the B-25 chase plane that had been assigned to us for going after spare parts, to take a trip over to Palermo. The 5th army had really had a tough time capturing the port city of Palermo. I'm not certain why Wymond wanted to go, but he asked if I wanted to go along. There was the mechanic, a co-pilot, Wymond and I. We took off and scooted over to Palermo about 200 miles west of Scordia. We landed at the Palermo airfield and as we dropped out of the bottom hatch, we were greeted by two huge MP's, each in full Class A uniforms, shoes polished like a mirror.

Wymond is wearing a jump suit and had a nurse's hat on that his girl friend had given him. The co-pilot was wearing a jump suit with mesquite boots, the mechanic wore coveralls and a pork pie hat. I wore shorts, a British army shirt and mesquite boots. The MP would not allow us to move from under the belly of the plane. "You are all out of uniform", says he. I think Wymond swallowed a couple of times and said, "What the hell are you talking about?" The MP quickly informed us that General Patton's orders were, "no one in Palermo unless they are in Class A uniforms."

What a shock! We had been overseas for a year and wore nothing but desert boots, shorts and shirt nearly the entire time. We didn't even have a Class A shirt anymore. The MP informed Wymond that if he insisted on leaving the plane we would be arrested. Wymond said, "we're not part of the 5th army or the 12th Airforce." It made no difference. We all laughed at the typical incongruous nature of the order. Patton was a spit and polish soldier, but he was also a whacko. One need only to read the story of his action's during the North Africa invasion to know he seemed unbalanced. **Churchill** had visited our camp in the desert. Our men showed up in blue denim, shorts and shirts, mesquite boot's, pith helmets. **Churchill** looked at the group and remarked, "**This is the most motley crew of men I have ever seen, but what great soldiers.**" Another General referred to us as, "**Salisbury and his thousand thieves.**" This because we were scrounging everything for parts for planes and items to improve daily desert life. It was tough.

We boarded the plane and returned to Scordia, certain that we wanted nothing more to do with 5th army folks. We were at Scordia a total of 43 days. During that time we had watch nightly as the British bombed the harbor at Catania and north along the coast. Several nights there were evidently some dog-fights with German night fighters and the ack-ack at times was deafening. We finally received orders to strike camp and move forward on September 12 to the area around Milazzo, a staging area some ten miles from Messina, from where we would cross onto the mainland.

Up the Boot

During our stay at Scordia there were several happenings. First, Col. Salisbury was transferred to England. Then we found that we were being transferred to the 12th Airforce as of August 22nd. The ninth was moving to England to prepare for the invasion. (Salisbury later visited the Group, flying down to Sicily in a Mesquito bomber.)

Our move to the Messina harbor occurred on September 15. Crossing into Italy we drove straight on to an airfield at Crotone, probably one hundred miles up the coast along the Ionean sea. We did not arrive there until September 18. We were there only four days and were moved forward to Gioia del Solle. We arrived there after another two-day run. Once we were set up, we found that there were Spa's in the rocks around Altimura a few miles distance. Every time we got the opportunity we scrounged a ride over to the Spa's and soaked in the first **hot bathes** we'd had since Natal on July 4, 1942. I swear the outlets in those bathes must have filled with sand that sweated out of our bodies. We were in heaven.

The 8th was pounding Jerry and our planes were bombing the hell out of the airfields around Foggia. There were several airfields in the area and our pilots were taking a toll on them. Our pilot's doing ground support were flying daily missions, trying to move the bomb line north. The American's were anxious to take the airfields at Foggia because the bombers were flying from North Africa and the distance was causing the bombers to lose efficiency. The hope was the bombers operating from Foggia could bomb as far north as the Brenner Pass.

The Foggia area was cleared of the enemy by October 2 and on October 3 we were moving onto Foggia Field No.8. The destructive power of our Group was everywhere. Damage was severe, but the landing strip was intact. The damage was collateral. We service the planes, didn't have time to set up tents before we were ordered to move onto Foggia main about 25 miles north and near the city. We were put on "red" alert, because it was stated that Jerry airforce had received replacement aircraft. HQ felt their FW190 and ME109's could attack momentarily..... (It didn't happen.)

Jerry crossed the Volturno River and determined to make a stand. The forward movement stalled. Our guys worked overtime hanging bombs and servicing the 50 calibre guns with cleaning and ammo. One would say they were definitely over worked, but I never heard a complaint, just the usual GI griping. They were really great guys to work with. Give them instructions and leave them alone. They get it done and it doesn't need to be checked. Their bore-sighting of guns was exemplary. Pilot's confirmed that!

From Foggia main our planes could range north, west and even into Yugoslavia. This airfield was huge and fully capable of handling the B-24 or B-17 without modifications. Moving onto the field only three days after the German's were driven off we was constantly on the alert for booby traps. Jerry was great with his little surprises and they could maim or kill one. Our group was lucky. Except for running over a few mines in the desert that killed some of the crews, and a few casualties from strafing and bombing we were pretty much in tact.

We remained at Foggia main about 21 days with planes attacking the German's every day along the Volturno and an occasional flight of four or eight into Yugoslavia to support the Partisans. On one mission the 66 Squadron caught some Stuka's and shot down six in a quick skirmish. Our pilot's flying further north into the Appennine mountain area and diving down to strafe motor transport in the valley were experiencing a new threat. The German's dug bunkers into the mountain and would shoot down onto the low flying planes with their deadly 88MM flak guns. We were losing a few good pilots to this tactic.

We received orders to move off Foggia main to allow the Bomb Gp to occupy the field. We were moved on October 27 to a small 3,600 foot cow pasture that was situated just off the east end of the long runway of Foggia Main. Those damn bombers taking off were practically coming right over our tent area. Our field was a muddy mess. The runway was grass and dirt. The annual rain seemed to begin just as we settled onto Amendola, (as it was known). We were not informed that we were in a particularly low area. The rain was so severe that we found our planes standing in five or six inches of water and unable to fly. Our tent area, believe it, was awash with little river's running right through the tent and carrying anything stored under one's bunk down the road. We lost mess kits, shoes, changes of clothes and some valuables. Trying to get to the mess tent or latrine was a chore.

This location would, of course, be just the time when Jerry decided to stand and fight. We were destined to remain here for several months. Time was not wasted, however. Since we had joined the American Airforce, paper work had doubled. We didn't have much record keeping at all with the Brits, however, now it was maintenance and flight records among others. Jerry had chosen the Abby at Monte Cassino, a pimple of a mountain, where he could observe action for twenty miles in all directions as his vantage point for defense. Our planes bombed and strafed daily around the area of the Abby at Monte Cassino, but the German's were well dug in. The German's claimed they were not occupying the Abby, but activity around the grounds seemed

to debunk that claim. Maybe they were not inside the Abby, but their Flak guns, their observation posts and their defenses indicated occupation. The 5th decided to attack with a vengeance. They ordered air strikes, artillery and any instrument of destruction that could be thrown at the mountain. The 5th had invaded the mainland at Salerno, but were stymied and the 8th Army could not move either. It was pure frustration.

The months spent at Amendola were probably the worst months for weather since the desert. Cold rain, hard heavy winds, freezing temperatures. We couldn't get warm. Those make shift heaters we used in the desert came in very handy. We received some of our first American rations for Thanksgiving, Turkey and all the dressings. We invited the British Ack-Ack crew near our bivouac to enjoy the feast. They had never eaten like that before, but they stuffed themselves. We appreciated the way they protected us daily. They had been assigned to us since El Alemain. (They were family.)

Arrival of the P-47 Thunderbolt

It was about December 2 when the Group received 12 new P-47D-15 aircraft. We were dumbfounded. This plane was half again the size of the P-40. It weighed 15,000lbs. Was equipped with a 2,000 HP Pratt & Whitney radial engine. The center of the 12' 2" prop stood seven feet above the ground. It was equipped with eight 50 calibre guns and it carried wing fuel pylons for extra fuel tanks that allowed it to carry 375 gallons of fuel. This gave it longer flight times. The radial engine consumed about 130 gallon of fuel per hour. This plane was a monster. Each Squadron was issued four of these planes for training.

The first comments was; Too big! Can't climb fast enough! Sluggish in turns! Too heavy in a dive! Then to top it off, they complained that it was not equipped to be a close support aircraft, but a high altitude fighter plane. The test flights continued. We converted the wing pylons by adding sway braces with adjustments to hold bombs steady. The pylons held a new type bomb shackle and checking the release in the cockpit we found three small tank release toggles on the left side of the seat that the pilot was supposed to pull to release the fuel tanks. Test runs indicated that the toggles were unmanageable. They were situated in a position that required the pilot to pull back on them. This required more leverage than could be acquired while in a dive. Using this plane as a close ground support for infantry was very much in question.

It was January 12 about 2100 hours when the flap on our pyrimidal tent flew open and there stood Colonel G.O.Wymond. He said, "Hahn, this

airplane is no good for close support. It doesn't carry bombs. There is no bomb release." There were four other men in the tent and we were all sorta' unhinged at his excited attitude. T/Sgt. Dixon had been rotated back to the states, (thank God!) and Lt. Silks, Armament Officer had been transferred to Squadron Intelligence. I had been promoted to T/Sgt. and put in charge of the section, so Col. Wymond was looking for the guy in charge. Wymond continued his explanation, "They want to transfer us to England for high altitude escort and I ain't going. You are going to convert this crate into a dive-bomber. Come with me to the flight line." He and I walked to his aircraft and he climbed into the cockpit.

"This is what I want," he said as he sat and reached toward the panel. "I want to be able to put this plane in a dive, take my left hand off the throttle pull the releases as I keep my eye up to the gun-sight. You will change these fuel toggle releases to accomplish that." I explained this was a very difficult requirement to do in field and without some engineering. "His response was, "I want it done in two days. General's Strickland and Brereton will be here and I want to demonstrate this airplane as a dive bomber."

He and I sat on the wing until well after midnight discussing how we could accomplish this change. It was decided that I would take one armorer, Charles Appel and the two of us would work on a modified release of some kind for his demonstration. The rest is history. (I have recorded the process and results in another section of this book). Wymond was ecstatic with the results. When the General's arrived, he took off with two 500lb.bombs that we had loaded with fins but no fuse. The bombs dropped exactly as planned. He began his dive at about 6,000ft.pulled the temporary releases at less than a thousand. His pull out brought him to less than 500ft from the ground, but the bombs fell on target at the end of the runway, burying into the ground about thirty feet. No explosion! Total success!

The General's were so impressed they asked how fast we could have all 24 planes in the Squadron equipped? Wymond, of course, responded we could do it immediately. My response was, "not so fast". What we had accomplished was definitely Rube Goldberg and needed lots of refinement before we send up flights of pilots in this makeshift arrangement. Appel and I began at once to tinker with ideas. We finally pulled the toggles off the floor bracket holding them on the floor, removed the toggle handle, lay the cable forward toward the firewall of the cockpit. We then soldered connectors onto the cable and pinned an extension to the cable with enough length to run along the floor and up the firewall, back to the panel in front of the stick. The pilot need only lean forward to the sight and pull the two handles.

With the development of the P-47 into a ground support aircraft accomplished, we saw the transition of about 60 P-40's out of the theatre, back to North Africa on January 22. We were officially a P-47 Fighter Group. We worked feverishly to equip all 72 planes of the group with the modification of the bomb release. Other requirements were to modify the sway braces so they could tighten down to the bomb and prevent the bomb from rocking. Formerly the P-40 carried one 250 or 500# bomb. This monster could now carry three 500#; two 1000# and a 500# belly bomb; two 1000# and a belly tank full of fuel. All this with a crew of one! The B-25 couldn't carry much more of a load and carried a crew of five. The group dropped approximately 1,300 tons of bombs with the P-40, they surely would exceed that now.

Life at Amendola, because of the weather, was pretty uncomfortable, but we lived through it with the usual bitching. We struck camp and move on March 1, 1943 and went straight across the country to the west coast of Italy and a small village situated about six miles up the slope of Mt. Vesuvius. The village known as Cercola had a short field in a valley where our planes were stashed. Naples was about four or five miles around the bay. The enlisted personnel found an abandoned school in the village about a mile from the field. We claimed it and had the comfort of indoor bivouac for a change.

While the weather was not the best, the group made excellent use of their new bomb release, flying daily in attacks on troops north of Naples. We even saw some pilots from England arrive to learn how the 57th used the P-47 as a ground support aircraft. Jerry learned to fear the "JABO" as they called it. It was a ground-hugging vulture. Jerry feared the P-47 like the Allies feared the Stuka early in the war. Jerry tried numerous times to bomb our area using Vesuvius as his guide, but he normally ended up bombing the harbor of Naples. The New Zealanders, a really great group of fighters, did finally overrun the Abby at Cassino, opening the road north.

It was a bright Saturday evening, March 18, we had just finished chow and were washing mess kits in the yard when the ground began to shake and splashed all the boiling water. The time was just after 5:00P and looking up at the mountain one could see heavy gray ash, stone and dust, shooting several thousand feet into the air. My first thought was Pompeii. We're all going to die of ash suffocation. I was ready to run, but our Officer's insisted we stay until we see the wind shift. Fortunately the wind was blowing the ash out to sea. So we went to the rooftop and watched the mountain all night. Early the next morning we began to see the molten lava coming down the

mountain toward the little community of San Sebastiano and Cercola. The folks were panic stricken. Our Officer's sent word to the motor pool that they were to help people move or escape. We were instructed to stand pat.

We climbed to the top of the school building and through binoculars were watching the mound of lava moving at about one foot an hour. It rolled down the streets, around three sides of a house and suddenly the house with all its belongings was crushed into a molten steaming mess. We were told that the heat from the lava reached 12,000 degrees. I am not certain who took its temperature, but I know none of us were getting that close. It appeared the mountain was beginning to calm down, but our planes had to be flown out because ash was burning all the tail fabric and we didn't want to lose the planes. The lava stopped about half mile from our bivouac. Whew!

We held tight at Cercola as the mountain calmed down and finally on April 2, we received orders to strike camp and move in "A" and "B" party to the Naples harbor. Problem was, Jerry was bombing the devil out of the port every night. We boarded LST's and on April 3 we moved out into the Tyrrhenian Sea, this time bound for the island of Corsica. It was only a night trip as we sailed through the Straits between Sardinia and Corsica landing on the west coast of the island at the Port of Ajaccio. This was to be a new experience. From the deck all we could see was the city and immediately behind it was a high mountain. We were to learn that Corsica had plenty of mountains and narrow roads.

Unloading all vehicles we climbed aboard and began a ride up and over the top of the mountain immediately above the town. We traveled down the east side to the "plains" and settled onto Corsica #1. We had just gotten set up when we were instructed to load up and move to a large airfield just under construction. The engineers were laying interlocking steel mats for the runway and it was a long runway, probably the longest we had seen since leaving the desert. We found, also, the engineers were constructing prefabricated buildings for mess halls and Officer's Bar. That gave us the idea that we were going to be here awhile. We had arrived at **Alto LG**.

The hard-stand and bivouac area for 65 was about 200 yards off the sea. Bastia, the capital city was about 30 miles north. I think we were the first American group on the island. (Eventually there were 20 airfields in use there.) Our mission was to inaugurate the new air offense against the Jerry in a pincer type movement called "Operation Strangle". The determination was to cut off all methods of supply, completely across the country; Rail, motor transport, barge, mule, ship and even foot traffic. The Allies drew a line across the country and set about to totally destroy the enemy supply lines.

Operation Strangle

We were so excited about finding ourselves in such a glamorous setting, we immediately ran down to the beach, stripped naked and swam until forced to get out and receive the Squadron planes arriving from the mainland. Our Mess Sgt. Schlemmer was also excited. He had his first real mess hall since arriving in Tewfik on the Red Sea. Schlemmer was somewhat of a twerp. He was old army; hated draftees and continually stood at the head of the chow line making derogatory remarks to each as they passed. He never accepted the fact that draftees were winning the war. His other dumb and ineffectual remarks was to stand there, roll his cigar around his fingers and say, "fortynine apples fifty men, what do you do? Applesauce." We began to think he was daft, but we heard it for 39 months at least once a day. The old fart could disguise bully beef in many concoctions, making it edible. Believe me that was not an easy task!

One of the problems we had overcome during the development of the bomb release was modifying the gun mounts in order to depress them so the pilot while in a diving mode would be able to strafe effectively. The guns originally were bore-sighted to fire straight and level or slightly elevated. I felt if they were depressed a couple of degrees the bore-sighting would then allow the strafing pattern to be more effective by hitting the ground or hitting the enemy at a better angle. We bore-sighted the six guns to converge at 300 yards. This way, at six hundred yards the spread would still not be more than the width of probably ten feet. A pilot could destroy a house with one burst at those ranges. I feel our armorers were the best at bore-sighting. We would test fire on occasion and they did not miss.

If one drew a line from Alto across Italy, we would be level with Leghorn (Livorno), well above the front line of the 5th and 8th armies. This gave our pilots an advantage of interdiction of supply lines way above the armies and their targets were plentiful. Our bomb loading crews became quite adept at hanging 500# bombs. We were flying two and three missions each day, so we kept the 6x6 trucks loaded with about ten bombs. One man would stand at the rear of the truck and kick the bomb off onto the ground, the crew of four would roll the bomb onto the cradle and hand lift it up five feet to the wing shackle where a fifth man would lock the shackle. We became so adept the crews could load twelve bombs in twelve minutes. They were a great crew of men to work with.

Suddenly one morning a plane returned from his bomb run with a 500# bomb hanging nose down on his right wing pylon. His flight members had told him he had a hung bomb. He decided to land, but once the wheels

touched the runway, the jolt caused the bomb to drop off the wing and bounce along behind the plane. It went nose to tail for a hundred yards, breaking off the tail fin, snapping the delay fuse in the tail in half, pulling the arming wire out of the nose fuse. I waited for the explosion, but none came. Now we had a crisis. There on the runway lay a live, armed bomb and there were seven more planes low on fuel wanting to land. What to do?

The bomb demolition squad was stationed at Bastia 30 miles away, so we didn't have time for that. I quickly drove my jeep onto the runway and stopped next to the bomb. I could see a real problem. With the nose fuse exposed and the tail fuse broken in half that bomb could blow up any time and certainly with an attempt to remove the fuses. Having knowledge of the way the fuse was installed gave me confidence that I could remove the nose fuse very carefully. I did that! Moving to the tail fuse, I wasn't sure if the striker had moved forward, because the wire inside the fuse was severed and movement might cause it to let loose. I began carefully, with sweaty hands to unscrew the fuse. When it had moved about three threads I felt I was close to safety. It came out without the striker releasing.

I hooked a chain on the bomb and dragged it off the field so the planes could land. This situation became desperate, because we had several more bombs hang and I was running the risk of blowing myself to hell by running out on the runway and defusing them. One day as I sat in the jeep just opposite the control tower a plane dropped a bomb and as it bounced down the runway behind the plane I saw what appeared to be a section of the nose fuse fly into the air. I dropped to the ground into a depression I always sat next to for safety. When the bouncing bomb hit the ground on its nose, it exploded! I was probably 300 yards from the explosion. The force of the blast was horizontal, and it occurred exactly opposite the control tower where two men were handling the landing instruction.

The bomb took out the first section of the fifty-foot tower; the tower began to topple. It dropped very slowly onto the runway. The two men riding the tower to the ground were unscathed, but the devastation reaching into the bivouac area of 64 Squadron killed one man. My jeep moved a few feet and other than being a little shaken, I was unscathed. Now, we needed to find this problem of hung bombs, because I began to think I was living on borrowed time. We normally bombed up the planes in the evening for early morning flights. Four o'clock one morning we received orders to change bomb loads from 500# to 40# fragmentation bombs. We would usually remove fuses and fins then pull the release and drop the bombs onto the ground. Suddenly, one hung with its nose down... .. finally a clue!

Close examination, even at that early hour, revealed that the B-10 bomb shackle of the P-47 was not nearly as well constructed as the B-7 shackle on the P-40. The B-7 was manufactured so that each of the two lugs had an individual release mechanism. This was a positive release. To reduce cost the B-10 employed a long six-inch fulcrum incorporated into the front lug, running forward to the clip on the rear lug. When the bomb release was pulled, the weight of the bomb, probably depending on plane attitude, would cause the front lug to release immediately, but the six inch arm could wedge against the inside of the shackle preventing it from dropping. Pilots tried every possible maneuver trying to force the bomb off the wing to no avail. In some squadrons the pilots were told to bail out and let the plane crash. Our pilots always brought the plane home.

The revelation that the B-10 shackle was the culprit began a scavenger hunt all over the North Africa and England landscape for old P-40 shackles. We visited repair depots in North Africa and scrounged up enough for our squadron. I guess the other squadrons did the same. We found the B-7 was not adaptable to the P-47 without some modification to the bracket holding the shackle. Another stumbling block! We had to file or saw a section of the support in order to squeeze the shackle up to the anchor bolt. Once this was accomplished we were **good to go**. From that point the pilots were confident and deadly with their bombing.

One bright day I looked up at a landing B-24 bomber. He was throwing off red flares indicating a problem. He appeared to have a funny nose. It was like a flat wing reaching up over the cockpit and down below the nose wheel. I noticed, too, there was a P-47 flying alongside leading him into the approach. Suddenly I recognized that he had one tail section of a B-24 impaled on his pitot tube and wrapped partially around the bombardier compartment. This was going to be some landing. The P-47 pilot brought him almost to the ground before applying throttle. The B-24 settled on the runway and as soon as the nose wheel touched the huge tail section hit the ground and the plane ran over it as it fell to the ground. Taxiing to a hard stand we found that while flying in formation during exceptional rough approach to target, the plane ahead of him bounce up coming down heading left and he bounced right, suddenly the two planes collided and the tail was impaled on this plane. The other plane went down like a rock, it was said.

Republic Aviation, builder of the P-47 found they could change the large propeller into a wider paddle style and increasing it's diameter to 13 feet a gain in speed up to 450 MPH could be attained. This plane was

in continual modification and improvement. This plane was so sturdy it would bring pilots home almost without guidance. They learned to love "the Jug".

We arrived on Alto April 8 and received orders to leave on September 9. "A" party moved to Bastia where we loaded aboard American LST's. They were the first "Yanks" we had been exposed to. Navy chow going over to the Port of Piombino was exceptional and well received. We off-loaded and were instructed to drive south about 30 miles to a town called Grosseto. The field was a mud bog. We attempted to use it for a few days, but were moved to Grosseto Main where we found almost total devastation. Runways damaged, bunkers ruined. Nearly everything useful had been destroyed.

We learned quickly that there was a small seaside community called "Marino de Grosseto" about three miles from the field. Everyone made a run for a house on the beach. (The place was pretty well vacated.) The armament section claimed a nice two story building; no windows, no doors, but only 100 yards from the sea and 15 minutes from the armament trailer. The building did not have running water, so we had to import that. Shortly after arriving at Grosseto we had a disastrous gully washing rainstorm that washed out the bridge across the canal to the airfield. Since practically the entire group was situated on the beach, we employed many hands to repair the bridge and in one morning we were back in production. We decided to reconstruct that bridge before the Adjutant made us move back to the field. We sure didn't want anyone to ruin our new playground.

Shortly after arriving at Grosseto we had a flight up and I was driving my Jeep back to the armament area. Passing a fuel supply dump I watched a 6x6 truck loaded with ten drums of 55 gallon fuel, back up fast, jam the brakes and allow the drums to tumble off the back in random piles. This was standard procedure, but while watching I saw one of the drums spark off and a fire started. My God, there was at least 10,000 gallons of fuel in that dump. I jumped from the jeep, ran to the burning drum and attempted to roll it away from the others. I couldn't budge it; the drums around it were lodged against it. I was desperate. The drum was burning furiously and my hands were getting burned.

Suddenly I was aware of another pair of hands on the drum. Together we heaved hard and the burning drum rolled free. We kicked it quite a distance, then ran back kicking dirt over the burning ground. We then rolled other drums away from the dangerous area. I had not looked up to see who my savior was. It was Warrant Officer Charlie Filer from Group Inspection.

Charlie was a health enthusiast and had bulging muscles from lifting weights. I had been one of four men lifting those 500# bombs onto the wings and I was in good shape. I think, had either of us been of less bulk it would have been impossible for us to roll those drums out of harms way. If one of those burning drums had blown their lid, we would have been Charcoal in a flash. I'm not even certain anyone else was aware of the crisis that was prevented by us that day. The driver had driven off, not aware that a fire had started. Just another "normal" day at the 57th.

The P-47 was not devastating enough. We received a shipment of wound paper tubes all glued tightly and strapped together in pods of three with wire exciters attached that folded down on a clip. What in hell were these? We soon found out reading the accompanying instructions. They were rocket tubes that we armorers were to attach under each wing, between the bomb shackle and the wheel well. They were arranged so they could be jettisoned after the rockets were fired. This little addition carried six 4.5 rockets. So now we had a really deadly armament platform, the likes of which had never been seen in a fighter before.

5th and 8th armies had bumped up against the "Gothic Line" in northern Italy and Jerry was defending his position desperately. The group began a drive they called "Bingo", designed to harass and destroy all transport, rail and air traffic in or near the Brenner Pass. This became very dangerous for the pilots. The mountains, some ranging up to probably 10,000 feet harbored 88MM gun emplacements that were hard to see and difficult to bomb. The pilot in order to effectively drop his bombs or shoot his rockets had to fly down the valley between the mountains at an altitude lower than the location of the 88's. We lost a lot of good pilots in this area.

One who was shot down was "Spanky" Manda who was seen to bail out. He was captured, a P.O.W. who later returned home. He was a lucky one. This effort around the Brenner Pass was necessary, but costly to pilots. They came back making wise cracks about the little black flowers in the sky. The Germans, it is reported, anchored some 900 ack-ack guns in and around that area. I guess on a good day, one would think he could walk on the little black flowers. Now that is scary.

We arrived at Grosseto Main about September 11/12, 1944 and we received moving orders on April 29, 1945. We had been on Grosseto for 232 days. The siege at the Gothic Line had been rough. The American 10th Mountain Division had been brought in to scale the walls of the mountain and attack the Jerry in his fortress. We moved forward to an airfield at

Villafranca de Verona located a few miles from Lake Garda from where the 57th flew as many as 30 missions each day, catching Jerry in retreat and causing almost a slaughter of infantry, motor transport and rail. The last mission of the group was on May 1. About May 6 there were wild rumors that Germany was surrendering. It was confirmed on May 8. The group had flown some 4,000 missions, dropped more than 11,700 tons of bombs. It is astounding to think that during the last months of the war our planes flew all ground support, never encountering enemy aircraft.

The war had no more than ended when we were called to assembly and told the group was scheduled to travel to the Pacific. They asked for volunteers. Now the enlisted men had all been overseas a minimum of 36 months and here they were being asked to volunteer for an unnamed number of months in the Pacific. No one knew how long that war would last. I decided I would pass on this one and opted out. The volunteers were ordered back to Grosseto at once. Those who did not volunteer were kept at Villafranca for reassignment.

I was sent to a B-25 Bomb group near Rimini on the Adriatic coast as the M/Sgt. in charge of removing, cleaning and storing all armament equipment on the B-25's for shipment back to the States. I quickly got the men together each morning and handed out assignments. I found a lovely beach about one mile from the field and I would drive my jeep over there and swim most of the day. An Italian family lived within 150 yards of my swimming hole. Their young daughter, (18) would come out and join me in my cavorting in the water. She could not swim and I spent hours teaching her how to paddle. I finished the work that was assigned and the B-25 group received orders to move Stateside. I thought, great I'm going home. No such luck!

My orders read to report to the 52nd Fighter Group north of Verona for the same purpose. It was a P-51 outfit and as with the B-25's we had to remove all 50 calibre guns clean them and put them in cosmoline for shipping back to the States. The 52nd moved out and I was still unassigned. I had been hearing that one could get out of the army with 89 points. I had over 108 points and couldn't get a transfer back to the States. Finally orders were cut for me to report to the Replacement Depot at Naples. There must have been a hundred thousand troops awaiting transportation. I felt there was no end to this waiting.

While cooling my heels I saw a notice that the Andrews Sisters and Arthur Treacher would be putting on a show in one of the hangers that afternoon, so I decided to attend. There must have been half of the camp trying to get into the hanger. Guys were climbing the steel beams, sitting in the rafters and just squeezing into every crevice. The show was into its third act and Arthur Treacher was on stage doing a monologue when out came Patty Andrews and threw up her hands for silence. **"I have wonderful news, Japan has just surrendered"**. Pandemonium broke out. Guys cried, screamed and became hysterical. Some in the rafters had to be brought down by engineers using ropes and throwing them over the rafters. One man fell onto the men below. He was not hurt, but the fellow he fell on was carried away.

It was shortly after this, August 12th, I received boarding orders for a trip to the States. Arriving in the States at Baltimore on August 22nd we were off-loaded and bussed to Ft. Meade. It was nearly 11:00PM and as we stepped off the bus we were met by a Major who stated; "All those wanting a discharge fall in left and those wanting to remain in the army form right. I never looked right. My mind was on discharge. I was out of the army on August 26, 1945.

The Totally Unexpected

It was early in November 1944 while we were at Grosseto that we began hearing rumors of possible 30-day leaves to the States on a rotation basis. Suddenly about November 19th I was informed that I was eligible for 30 days in the States. I was to leave at once. Bob Furman had been my bunkmate for all of these 28 months so I entrusted him with all my belongings, expecting I would find them intact upon my return. I boarded a real tub in Naples harbor on November 29. I can't recall its name, if it had one, but this ship, probably three hundred feet long had a very high top deck. It looked almost awkward when standing on the deck and gazing up. The crew informed us this ship had been a Navy vessel and on its maiden voyage it hit a storm. The ship rolled so badly from side to side they thought it would capsize. The Navy rejected it. The Army accepted the ship as a supply and mail ship. There were only 125 soldiers aboard and 33,000 sacks of mail.

Mid-ocean we hit one of the worst winter storms possible. I was frightened as were the other 124. One of the soldiers with us was a Sgt. Dietrick was an infantryman who had been in the lines since North Africa attached to the 24th Division. He was the last man of his Battalion left alive. The army was sending him home. He was a basket case. When the storm became so bad that we had to look up about 30 feet from the deck to see the top of the

waves as the ship rolled side to side. The Captain ordered all of us below deck and the hatches were all secured so they could not be opened if the waves came over the deck. During the first night of the storm, as the waves rocked us violently, the anchor broke loose from its mooring as the ship went down in the trough. The anchor swung out away from the ship, but as it rode the wave up, the anchor crashed against the side of the ship. The first crash sounded just like an 88MM hitting the ship. Dietrick screamed, "88" and dropped to the floor covering his head.

The next thing, he ran up the steps and tried to open the hatch. Since they were locked down he was trapped. His demeanor was something to behold and it had all of us frightened. The voice on the intercom told us what was happening, but it did not calm him until the storm settled down. I can honestly say it was a very heart stopping moment when the first crash occurred and he began his crazy action. That trip to the States was one memorable trip. We arrived in Baltimore in one piece and this after traveling all alone on this tub. No escorts of any kind!

Once unloaded, our 30 days began. The date was December 15, 1944. I was to be back in Ft. Meade January 15, 1945. So off I went by train to Pittsburgh and then to Wva. I arrived home late that afternoon. After being exposed to all that Mediterranean sun I was as black as any Arab one could find. I walked down the sidewalk toward home and my mom was waiting. When she saw me and saw my color, she started to cry. "My God, what kind of a disease do you have?" I had to assure her I was stinking healthy from all my weather exposure, but it took awhile to convince her.

It was great being home, but there was very little to do. All my friends were in the service and gas rationing cut into any car cruising. My mom suggested I go to the local Pharmacy and talk to Shirley Arbogast, daughter of old family friends. When I walked into the Pharmacy I had to stop and catch my breath. Gosh, this gal was beautiful. I met her after work and took her home. Began a relationship that got serious very quickly. We spent much of that 30 days together, in fact just before leaving for camp, I proposed and she accepted. I headed for Meade happy as could be.

Arriving Meade I was told the ship I was to return to Italy on had hit a submerged object in Baltimore Bay and it would be in dry dock for five days and I had a five-day extension. It was a Saturday morning. I called Shirley and suggested marriage. She agreed we would marry on Monday evening. I arrived home Saturday night, my mom made all the arrangements and we married at 6:00PM Monday. I returned to Meade on Wednesday. We were

greeted with word that the ship was not ready. Another ten day extension! I was ecstatic. I would have a few more days with my wife.

On the way home to Wva, I sat in the parlor (bar) car because of the crowded travel conditions. I sat next to a burly civilian who began a conversation with me. It developed he was General Manager of the Kelsey-Hayes Wheel Corp. and they produced 50 calibre guns. I thought this a strange happening. The only 50 calibre guns we had difficulty with were Kelsy-Hayes. I told him so and explained that all the problems were with cartridge ejection from the clip, which caused the gun to jam with the cartridge half ejected. I explained to him that the track in the head cover of the gun had a flaw. He was deeply interested and requested me to come to Detroit and explain it to his engineers.

I told him I would if my wife was willing. She was and we did. I did explain and demonstrate to the engineers the exact spot where the hang up occurred. O'Mahana, the managers name, thanked me, but offered no restitution for my expenses to Detroit. Bum rap! I returned to camp at the end of ten days and was immediately boarded the General Richardson troop ship. It was a monster and there were 6,200 troops aboard. My bunk, (head to toe) and on "B" deck was right at the roof. The feet I was looking at were about size 13 and they smelled. I took my bedroll, went on deck and found a spot behind an air vent that was giving off warm air from below decks. I laid my blankets out, made a claim on the spot and that's where I spent the next five days. My M/Sgt. stripes did pull rank at this time.

Another unescorted trip, but this ship ran at speeds that a sub couldn't possibly catch. Arriving in Naples I was immediately sent back to Grosseto. I arrived there February 15. My 30 days had turned into 50 days at home. I wasn't complaining! I found upon arrival that Furman had sold or traded all my belongings for his own gain. I could have killed him, but he felt I would not return, so he unloaded. End of story!

Gil Wymond's Ingenuity!
Converting the P-47
from high altitude escort
to a ground support
aircraft

65TH FIGHTER SQUADRON
57TH FIGHTER GROUP AAF

APO 525, U.S. ARMY
25 JANUARY, 1944

SUBJECT: REPORT ON P-47 AIRCRAFT

TO: WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

1. THIS REPORT IS SUBMITTED IN ORDER TO PASS ON THE INFORMATION THIS ORGANIZATION CAN GIVE AFTER A MONTH OF OPERATIONS WITH THE P-47. WE WERE REQUESTED TO USE THE P-47 IN CLOSE SUPPORT WORK TO ASCERTAIN THEIR VALUE IN THIS ROLE. FROM ALL WE HAD HEARD ABOUT HOW INADEQUATE THE P-47 WAS BELOW 20,000 FEET, WE ENTERED THE VENTURE FULLY EXPECTING NEGATIVE RESULTS. AFTER ONE MONTHS OPERATIONS, THIS ORGANIZATION GIVES ITS 100% APPROVAL OF THE AIRCRAFT FOR CLOSE SUPPORT WITH CERTAIN LIMITATIONS ON STRAFING, AND THE UNDERSIGNED IS CONVINCED THAT IT WILL PROVE TO BE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL DIVE BOMBER WE HAVE TODAY, TAKING THE PLACE OF MOST MEDIUM BOMBERS.

2. IN THE REPORT THE P-47 WILL BE COVERED AS A FIGHTER UNDER 10,000 FEET; AS AN ESCORT FOR TACTICAL BOMBERS; AS A DIVE BOMBER; AND AS USED IN STRAFING. THE MODIFICATIONS THIS ORGANIZATION HAS MADE IN THE FIELD WILL BE COVERED AND FUTURE MODIFICATIONS SUGGESTED. LAST, A SUMMARY OF WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED SUCCESSFULLY WITH THE AIRCRAFT AND ALSO WHAT THE AIRCRAFT MIGHT DO IN THE FUTURE WITH CERTAIN MODIFICATIONS.

3. IT IS REQUESTED THAT THE READER BEAR IN MIND THAT THIS IS A COMPOSITE REPORT OF THE GROUND CREWS, TECHNICAL REPRESENTATIVES AND PILOTS OF THIS ORGANIZATION, AND IS NOT THE FINDINGS OF ONE INDIVIDUAL ALONE.

GILBERT O. WYMOND JR.
MAJOR, AIR CORPS,
COMMANDING.

A TRUE COPY:

MARVIN D. PARKHURST
CAPTAIN, AIR CORPS.

REPORT ON P-47
25 JANUARY, 1944

1. FIGHTING UNDER 10,000 FEET

WE HAD HEARD THAT THE P-47 COULD NOT COPE WITH THE ME-109 OR FW-190 UNDER 20,000 FT. WE SECURED A FW-190 AS SOON AS WE RECEIVED OUR FIRST P-47'S AND PROCEEDED TO RUN TESTS. A REPORT ON THESE TEST IS IN THE SUPPLEMENT OF THIS REPORT. THE SUMMATION, HOWEVER, IS THAT BOTH AIRCRAFT ARE VERY EVENLY MATCHED, BUT THE P-47 HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF A HIGH SPEED TURN AND FIRE POWER.

TESTS WITH OUR ME-109 WERE NOT VERY EXTENSIVE FOR IT CRASHED SOON AFTER WE STARTED TO WORK WITH IT. THE GENERAL OPINION, HOWEVER, FROM THE DOG FIGHTS WE DID HAVE, WAS THAT P-47 COULD OUT-DIVE, ZOOM AND OUT HIGH-SPEED TURN THE ME, BUT THAT THE ME HAD A BETTER SUSTAINED RATE OF CLIMB, BETTER ACCELERATION IN LEVEL FLIGHT, AND COULD TURN TIGHTER AT SPEEDS BELOW 180 MILES PER HOUR. DIFFICULTY WAS EXPERIENCED, HOWEVER, IN HOLDING IN THIS TURN. IN THE TEST, THE ME PILOT HAD OVER TWICE THE TIME IN THE ME, THAT THE PILOT AGAINST HIM HAD IN THE P-47.

THE SQUADRON HAS HAD TWO ENCOUNTERS WITH ME-109'S, ONE AT 500 FEET AND ONE AT 3,000 FT. IN THE 500 FT. ENGAGEMENT 3-P-47'S ATTACKED 15 PLUS ME-109'S, DESTROYING FOUR. THE P-47'S HAD JUST FINISHED STRAFING WHEN THEY SIGHTED THE ME'S. THEY ATTACKED. IT WAS FOUND THAT THE P-47 COULD OUT-TURN, OUT-DIVE, CLIMB WITH AND IN GENERAL OUT-MANEUVER THESE PARTICULAR ME-109'S. ONE P-47, HOWEVER, WAS BADLY DAMAGED WHILE ENGAGED IN DESTROYING AN ME-109. HE WAS HIT IN HIS TRIM TABS AND HYDRAULIC SYSTEM. ONE WHEEL DROPPED DOWN AND HIS RIGHT WING CAUGHT FIRE, BUT LATER BURNED OUT. DESPITE THESE HANDICAPS, IT WAS FOUND THAT THE P-47 COULD STILL MANEUVER WITH THE 109. HE SUCCEEDED IN DESTROYING A SECOND ME IN HIS CONDITION, BUT WAS FORCED TO BE THE TARGET FOR GUNNERY PATTERNS FOR THE ME'S. HE RECEIVED 15 - 20MM CANNON HOLES AND OVER TWICE AS MANY SMALLER CALIBRE HOLES. THE SHIP RETURNED TO BASE AND MADE A WHEELS DOWN LANDING WITH TWO TIRES SHOT AWAY. NO PILOT IN THIS GROUP HAD EVER SEEN A PLANE RETURN IN WORSE SHAPE.

ON THE SECOND ENCOUNTER THE SAME RESULTS WERE EXPERIENCED. EIGHT P-47'S ENCOUNTERED 10 PLUS ME-109'S AT 6,000 FT. THE 47'S DESTROYED TWO AND DAMAGED ONE. FROM THIS ENCOUNTER ONE P-47 RETURNED WITH A TWO FOOT SQUARE HOLE IN THE TRAILING EDGE OF HIS WING, (SEE PHOTO). THE SHIP WAS VERY EASY TO CONTROL AND THE PILOT HARDLY NOTICED ANY DIFFERENCE IN FLYING CHARACTERISTICS. THIS SHIP CAUGHT FIRE SAME AS THE OTHER WHEN HIT IN THE HYDRAULIC LINES IN THE WING. BOTH SHIPS BURNED THEMSELVES OUT. GIVE A WING FIRE A FEW MINUTES BEFORE BALING OUT, AND BALING OUT PROBABLY WON'T BE NECESSARY. ANOTHER P-47 HAD ITS ENTIRE LEFT STABILIZER SHOT AWAY, (SEE PHOTO IN SUPPLEMENT). DESPITE NO TRIM TABS HE WAS STILL ABLE TO CONTROL IT AND ATTEMPT A WHEELS DOWN LANDING. THE FIRST ATTEMPT WAS NOT SUCCESSFUL, THE TRIM CHANGING FROM STICK FULLY BACK TO STICK FULLY FORWARD. HE BAILED OUT AT 1500 FEET, CLEARING THE TAIL BY AT LEAST SIX FEET.

THE GENERAL ATTITUDE OF THIS ORGANIZATION TOWARD ENGAGING FW'S AND ME'S BELOW 10,000 FEET IS THAT WE ARE ON THE OFFENSIVE FROM THE START TO THE FINISH OF THE DOGFIGHT, AND THAT THE ODDS

ARE VERY DEFINITELY IN OUR FAVOR.

II. ESCORT FOR TACTICAL BOMBERS.

WE HAVE FOUND FROM OUR COMPARISON TESTS THAT THE P-47 SHOULD NOT ENGAGE IN A DOGFIGHT UNDER 250 MILES PER HOUR. B-25'S, OF COURSE, GO OUT AND RETURN AT AROUND 180. IN ORDER TO COMPENSATE FOR OUR SLOW SPEED WE HAVE ADOPTED A FORMATION WITH THE LEAD SECTION WELL IN BACK AND ABOVE THE BOMBERS AND THE OTHER SECTION STACKED UP 1,000 FEET APART. THIS WILL ENABLE US TO ATTAIN THE SPEED OF 250 BY THE TIME INTERCEPTION IS MADE. WE FOUND THAT KEEPING A SPEED OF AROUND 200 IS BEST. THIS ALLOWS A MANIFOLD PRESSURE OF 31 INCHES AND 2000 R.P.M. ANY MORE MANIFOLD PRESSURE OR R.P.M. SHOWS A MARKED INCREASE IN GAS CONSUMPTION. WITH THOSE SETTINGS AND A 75 GALLON BELLY TANK A RADIUS UP TO 250 MILES CAN BE TAKEN. A 150 GALLON TANK IS SUGGESTED AS THE MUCH SUPERIOR FOR ANY TACTICAL ESCORT WORK. MOST OF OUR WORK WITH TACTICAL BOMBERS HAS BEEN "DE-LOUSING". THIS IS MUCH THE BEST, FOR THE P-47 JUST ISN'T SUITED FOR BOMBER ESCORT. IT ATTAINS ALL OF ITS ADVANTAGES FROM SPEED, AND IT CAN NOT ATTAIN THIS SPEED AND STAY WITH BOMBERS. IF IT MAINTAINS 250 MILES PER HOUR AND CROSS-WEAVES IN ORDER TO STAY WITH THE BOMBERS, THEN IT WILL BE SHORT OF GASOLINE LONG BEFORE THEY WILL. IN "DELOUSING" WE CAN COVER ANY AREA AND KEEP UP OUR SPEED, STAY A CONSIDERABLE LENGTH OF TIME, AND THEN TAKE A FAST SHORT ROUTE HOME. OF COURSE, WITH TWO 165 GALLON WING TANKS, SPEED COULD BE KEPT UP AND STILL STAY WITH BOMBERS AND HAVE PLENTY OF GAS, BUT THIS WOULD CERTAINLY REQUIRE EXCESSIVE MANIFOLD PRESSURE.

IN GENERAL THE AIRCRAFT CAN GIVE GOOD ESCORT FOR THE TACTICAL BOMBERS BEING WAY MORE THAN A MATCH FOR ANY OPPOSITION ABOVE 10,000 FEET. DELOUSING IS BETTER LIKED FROM A PILOTS STANDPOINT FOR HE CAN KEEP THE AIRCRAFT AT ITS BEST PERFORMANCE.

III. DIVE BOMBING.

HERE IS ONE PLACE WE WERE COMPLETELY MISLED. THE P-47 AND ITS TREMENDOUS DIVING SPEED. IN TEST, ONE OF THE THINGS THE PW-190 COULD DO BEST WAS OUT-DIVE IT. THE 47 DOES HAVE A FAST DIVE, BUT IT ALSO HAS WONDERFUL DIVING CHARACTERISTICS. VERY LITTLE RUDDER HAS TO BE USED, NOTHING LIKE THAT USED ON A P-40; HAS VERY LITTLE TENDENCY TO ROLL; AND BEST OF ALL, IT HAS WONDERFUL ZOOM CLIMB.

THE FIRST DIVE BOMBING TESTS WERE MADE WITH NO BELLY TANK AND TWO FIVE HUNDRED WING BOMBS. THERE WAS A 10 MILE PER HOUR WIND AND THE SHIP CLEARED THE GROUND IN APPROXIMATELY 2100 FEET ON A SHORT FIELD. TWO RUNS WERE MADE. ONE FROM 6,000 FEET OUT OF A LEFT TURN, AND THE SECOND OUT OF A COMPLETE SPLIT 3 FROM 6,000 FEET, DEVELOPING BETTER THAN A 60 DEGREE DIVE. BOTH BOMBS WERE RELEASED SIMULTANEOUSLY AT EXACTLY 2,000 FEET. PULL OUT WAS COMPLETED AT 600 FEET WITHOUT BLACKING OUT OR USING EXCESSIVE STICK. BOTH BOMBS, THOUGH NOT ARMED, LANDED SO CLOSE TOGETHER THAT THEIR WERE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY CONCENTRIC.

AFTER THIS SUCCESS, THE MODIFICATIONS INCORPORATED IN THIS TEST PLANE WERE MADE ON THE OTHER SEVEN P-47-D15'S IN THE SQUADRON. (SEE SUPPLEMENT FOR THESE MODIFICATIONS). THE FIRST

OPERATIONAL MISSION WAS ONE SHIP ARMED WITH TWO ONE THOUSAND POUND WING BOMBS AND A 75 GALLON BELLY TANK. THERE WAS LITTLE WIND; IN FACT WE TOOK OFF DOWN WIND TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A SLIGHT DOWN HILL SLOPE. THE SHIP CLEARED IN APPROXIMATELY 2500 FEET. (SEE PHOTOS IN SUPPLEMENT). INDICATED AIR SPEED 110 MILES PER HOUR. A SLIGHT TAIL HEAVY TRIM IS SUGGESTED, AND ALSO A TRIM OF RIGHT RUDDER. BRAKES WERE HELD AT TAKE-OFF AND A FULL 52 INCHES AND 270 R.P.M. DEVELOPED. NO BAD CHARACTERISTICS WERE NOTED. AT 32 INCHES AND 2150 R.P.M. SHE WOULD INDICATE 205 MILES PER HOUR. BOMB RUN WAS MADE OUT OF A TURN ABOUT 8000 FEET, THROUGH AN OVERCAST AT 5000 FEET. TERRAIN AT THIS POINT WAS APPROXIMATELY 1000 FEET. BOMBS WERE RELEASED AT 3000 FEET. HAVING ONLY 2000 FEET TO GET ON TARGET, RESULTS WERE POOR. THE TARGET WAS A SINGLE SPAN BRIDGE. BOMBS LANDED ABOUT 75 FEET TO RIGHT CAUSING LITTLE DAMAGE DUE TO THE HEIGHT OF THE BRIDGE FROM THE GROUND.

SINCE THIS FIRST DIVE BOMBING MISSION, EVERY PILOT IN THE SQUADRON HAS DIVE-BOMBED AT LEAST ONCE. THE SUMMATION OF THEIR EXPERIENCE, AND OPINIONS IS AS FOLLOWS. THE P-47 IS MUCH SUPERIOR TO THE P-40 FOR DIVE BOMBING FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

- A. MUCH EASIER TO CONTROL IN A DIVE BOMB RUN. EASIER TO GET ON TARGET AND STAY ON IT WITHOUT SKIDDING.
- B. CAN CARRY FROM TWO TO FIVE TIMES THE BOMB LOAD, DEPENDING ON THE TARGET.
- C. TWICE THE RADIUS OF ACTION.
- D. MUCH BETTER ZOOM CHARACTERISTICS. TOP COVER CAN STAY AT ALTITUDE AND THOSE DIVE BOMBING CAN USE THEM TO REFORM. REFORMING IS FIVE TIMES FASTER THAN IN P-40.
- E. BOMBS CAN BE DROPPED AT AS LOW AN ALTITUDE AS A P-40. THE BOMB CONCUSSION BEING THE GOVERNING FACTOR RATHER THAN THE PULL-OUT. NO MUSHING EFFECT HAS BEEN NOTED IN DIVE BOMBING BY ANYONE.
- F. NOT ONLY ABLE TO DEFENSIVELY PROTECT ITSELF ON THE DECK FROM ENEMY AIRCRAFT, BUT ALSO BE ON THE OFFENSIVE.
- G. MUCH HANDIER AND MORE POSITIVE BOMB RELEASE WHEN COMPLETE MODIFICATION IS MADE.
- H. ABILITY TO ABSORB AS MUCH IF NOT MORE FLAK AND STILL BRING YOU TO YOUR BASE.
- I. AFTER 18 MONTHS OF DIVE BOMBING IN A P-40 AIRCRAFT WE CAN THINK OF NO ADVANTAGES IT HAS OVER THE P-47

EXCEPTIONAL RESULTS HAVE NOT AS YET BEEN GOTTEN FROM OUR DIVE BOMBING WITH OUR P-47. THIS HAS BEEN DUE TO WEATHER, CAUSING VERY POOR BOMBING RUNS, THE INEXPERIENCE OF THE PILOTS, TROUBLE WITH BOMB RELEASES, AND DIFFERENT EXPERIMENTAL BOMBING RUNS BEING USED. HOWEVER, IT IS UNANIMOUSLY AGREED THAT IT WILL BE A MORE ACCURATE DIVE BOMBER THAN THE P-40 AND WILL ONLY REQUIRE EXPERIENCE AND TIME TO WORK IT OUT.

ON THREE OCCASIONS ONLY ONE 1000 POUND BOMB WAS RELEASED, NO UNROLLABLE EFFECT ON THE SHIP WAS NOTICED, REGARDLESS OF ALTITUDE OF PLANE. ONE PILOT EVEN HAD TO BE TOLD THAT ONE BOMB WAS STILL ON.

IV. STRAFING

HERE IS THE ONLY DISADVANTAGE THE P-47 HAS AGAINST A P-40, AND EVEN HERE AFTER MODIFICATIONS WERE MADE AND TACTICS ARE READJUSTED, IT MAY OBTAIN THE SAME RESULTS. THE P-47, BECAUSE OF LACK OF VISIBILITY AND "DUCK MANUEUVERABILITY", CAN NOT GET LOW ON THE DECK AND CONTINUE STRAFING. IT MUST PULL UP IN ORDER TO FIND ITS TARGET, WHICH, OF COURSE, IS DISASTROUS AS FAR AS SMALL ARMS FIRE IS CONCERNED. WHEN USED TO STRAFE SHIPPING IT IS SUPERIOR BECAUSE OF ITS EIGHT FIFTIES, THE SAME APPLYING TO TRAINS OR ANY TARGET WHERE THERE IS A MINIMUM OF FLAK AND JUST ONE OBJECT TO SHOOT AT. A MODIFICATION HAS BEEN MADE TO RAISE THE GUN SIGHT ABOUT FOUR INCHES. THIS INCREASES THE FORWARD VISIBILITY BY ABOUT 10% AND ELIMINATES 50% OF THE MUSHING FEELING WHEN STRAFING LOW. THIS MODIFICATION WAS NOT PRACTICAL, BUT ANOTHER MODIFICATION PRODUCING THE SAME RESULTS SHOULD MAKE CONTINUED "CLOSE TO THE GROUND" STRAFING POSSIBLE.

THE MUSHING EFFECT IN GROUND STRAFING IS PARTIALLY OVERCOME IN THIS SHIP BY ROLLING THE STABILIZER BACK ONE TURN BEFORE STARTING YOUR STRAFING RUN. WE STRAFE WITH THE P-47 IN A BOMBING RUN AS IT CORRECTS SKID AND HELPS GIVE LATERAL CORRECTION ON TO THE TARGET. THE SIZE OF THE SHIP IS, OF COURSE, AGAINST IT FOR GROUND STRAFING, BUT AGAIN ITS ABILITY TO ABSORB FLAK SOMEWHAT COMPENSATES FOR THIS.

V. MODIFICATIONS.

THE P-47-D15 COMES EQUIPPED WITH WING RACKS. SWAY BRACES FOR THESE RACKS ARE OBTAINABLE; HOWEVER, THE SUGGESTED SYSTEM OF ADJUSTING BOMB IN SWAY BRACE BY SCREWING UP ENTIRE BOMB SHACKLE IS FAR TOO SLOW AND WEARS OUT THE BOMB SHACKLE. THE MODIFICATION WE MADE WILL MAKE POSSIBLE THE ARMING OF TWELVE SHIPS WITH 24 ONE THOUSAND POUND BOMBS IN 45 MINUTES. FOR COMPLETE DESCRIPTION SEE SUPPLEMENT.

THE BELLY TANK SWAY BRACE HAS BEEN DESIGNED SO THAT THE WOODEN SWAY BRACE THAT THE P-47 COMES EQUIPPED WITH ARE ELIMINATED. THE WOODEN SWAY BRACE CANNOT STAND UP UNDER A DIVE BOMBING STRAIN. THE NEW SWAY BRACE, (SEE SUPPLEMENT), FITS EITHER 500 POUND BOMB OR 50, 75, OR 150 GALLON BELLY TANKS. IN TESTS IT HAS STOOD DIVES AND ACROBATICS.

THE BELLY TANK RELEASE QUADRANT ON THE P-47-D15 IS SET AT SUCH AN ANGLE THAT IT IS PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO RELEASE THE WINGTANKS WITHOUT THE USE OF LEVERAGE. FOUR PILOTS WERE PICKED AT RANDOM AND NONE COULD RELEASE A TANK WITHOUT USING THEIR THUMBS AS FULCRUM. WE HAVE MADE A MODIFICATION WHEREBY BOTH WING BOMBS DROPPED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM A CONVENIENT HANDLE WHICH WILL BE LOCATED OVER THE TRIM TABS AND WILL REQUIRE VERY LITTLE PRESSURE TO POSITIVELY RELEASE BOMBS. SEE SUPPLEMENT FOR DISCUSSION.

THE SWITCH TO APPLY WATER ON THE D15'S CAME SET QUITE A WAYS THROUGH THE GATE. IN TESTS IT REQUIRED A THROTTLE SETTING OF OVER 65 INCHES TO GET WATER. WE MOVED THE SWITCH SO THAT WATER IS APPLIED AT 54 INCHES OR THE SECOND YOU GO THROUGH THE GATE; THIS IS WHEN IT IS NEEDED TO ELIMINATE DETONATION.

IN TRYING TO RAISE THE GUN SIGHT TO OBTAIN BETTER VISIBILITY

AND FLYING POSITION THE REFLECTING GLASS WAS TAKEN OFF AND THE IMAGE CAST DIRECTLY ON THE ARMOR PLATE GLASS. (SEE SUPPLEMENT). THIS GAVE THE SATISFACTORY HEIGHT BUT THERE WAS NOT ENOUGH ADJUSTMENT IN THE GUNSIGHT TO BORE SIGHT IT. THE RAISING OF THE GUN SIGHT AS FAR AS WE ARE CONCERNED IS IMPERATIVE. AS LONG AS THE GUN SIGHT MOUNT HAS TO BE MODIFIED THEN THE REFLECTING GLASS CAN BE LEFT ON AND THE WHOLE SIGHT MOVED UP FOUR INCHES. AS YET THIS MODIFICATION HASN'T BEEN MADE.

THIS SQUADRON HAS ADOPTED A BOX FOUR FORMATION FOR ALL TYPES OF WORK. THE LEADER ABOUT 150 YARDS FROM HIS ELEMENT LEADER AND THE WING MEN WEAVING ABOUT 50 YARDS TO THE REAR. THIS GIVES THE FORMATION EXCELLENT MANEUVERABILITY. THE LEADER SELDOM HAS TO CALL ANY TURNS BUT CAN DO AS HE LIKES WITH THE OTHERS BEING ABLE TO FOLLOW EASILY. THE SECTIONS ARE STACKED UP ABOUT 1000 FEET APART AT AN ANGLE OF 45° TO THE REAR.

FORMATION TAKE-OFFS ARE MADE USING ABOUT 45 INCHES FOR NORMAL TAKE-OFF. FOR LANDING A THREE SIXTY TACTICAL APPROACH IS USED, ZOOMING UP TO BETWEEN 1500 AND 2000 FEET. THROTTLE IS CUT AT THIS POINT AND WHEELS AND FLAPS ARE LOWERED. FLAPS ARE LOWERED IN THE TURN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IN CASE ONLY ONE FLAP SHOULD COME DOWN, (P-47D4). THIS WILL GIVE PLENTY OF ALTITUDE TO DUMP FLAPS AND RECOVER. THROTTLE IS NOT USED IN LANDING, BUT CORRECTION IS MADE BY SLIPPING AND FISH TAILING. FOR VISIBILITY OF THE LANDING SURFACE A TURN IS MAINTAINED UNTIL READY TO LEVEL OFF.

VI. SUMMARY.

THIS ORGANIZATION FEELS THAT THE P-47 IS ONE OF THE BEST AIRCRAFT WE HAVE FOR CLOSE SUPPORT, AND WILL PROVE TO BE MORE VERSATILE THAN THE FAMED P-40. ITS BOMB LOAD IS TREMENDIOUS FOR A FIGHTER, AND ITS ACCURACY IN DIVE BOMBING WILL EXCEED THAT ATTAINED BY THE P-40.

ARMED WITH 2 ONE THOUSAND POUND BOMBS AND A 150 GALLON BELLY TANK WE CAN TAKE OFF FROM A DIRT FIELD OF 5000 FEET OR LONGER AND STRIKE ANY TARGET WITHIN A RADIUS OF 300 MILES WITHOUT ESCORT. THIS WILL LEAVE A SAFETY MARGIN OF APPROXIMATELY 150 GALLONS OF GAS FOR FIGHTING.

ON CLOSE SUPPORT WORK WE CAN TAKE 2500 POUNDS OF BOMBS FOR EACH SHIP WITHIN A RADIUS OF 125 MILES, RETURN AND BE SERVICED AND BOMBED UP AGAIN IN ONE HOUR AND FIFTEEN MINUTES. THESE FIGURES ARE BASED ON A 12 SHIP MISSION AND PRESENT EQUIPMENT AND SERVICING CONDITIONS. THEY ARE FELT TO BE CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATES.

IT CAN BE USED FOR STRAFING WITH DEVASTATING RESULTS WITH THE EXCEPTION OF MULTI-TARGETS OVER A LARGE AREA WHERE INTENSE FLAK IS ENCOUNTERED.

THE P-47 CAN GIVE ADEQUATE CLOSE COVER FOR TACTICAL BOMBERS AND IS EXCELLENT FOR DE-LOUSING. IT IS MORE THAN A MATCH FOR ENEMY FIGHTERS ON THE DECK AND GETS PROGRESSIVELY BETTER WITH ALTITUDE.

THE P-47 IS A FINE AIRCRAFT AND SHOULD MAKE A NAME FOR ITSELF NOT ONLY AS A HIGH ALTITUDE FIGHTER, BUT AS ONE OF THE BEST CLOSE SUPPORT SHIPS WE HAVE TODAY.

A TRUE COPY

MARVIN D. PARKHURST
CAPTAIN, AIR CORP.

SIGNED:
GILBERT O. WYMOND JR.
MAJOR, AIR CORP.
COMMANDING
65TH FIGHTER SQUADRON
AAF

Conversion of the P-47D-15
from a high altitude
to a ground support aircraft
January 12-14, 1944

There has been considerable discussion and much interpretation regarding the successful conversion of the P-47 from its original configuration to that of a close ground support aircraft. The 8th & 9th Air Force, the 12th Air Force and Stephen Ambrose, author of "Citizen Soldier", have all been most verbose regarding its ability and destructive power as a ground support unit. The Germans called it "JABO" and were in fear of it! It was never intended to be a DIVE-BOMBER. It was developed for other reasons. Its transformation came about from various experiments by pilots and ground crews in the field of action.

When the P-47C-2 model was accepted by the Air Force in June 1943, Republic Aviation had embodied modifications making provisions for shackles and a release mechanism for external fuel tanks. The shackles were housed in small pylons attached under each wing. The releases for these shackles were mounted on the floor of the cockpit at the left side of the pilot's seat. They appeared to be an "after thought". There was a bracket with three toggles, each toggle attached to a wire rope running to a shackle, left wing, belly tank, right wing. The handle of the toggle was a small 2-1/2" affair that a pilot wearing gloves, could hardly get his fingers around.

When a pilot would go into his dive mode, it was expected he would lean forward, look through the gunsight, reach down arms length with his left hand and release two separate toggles located six inches apart. He was expected to do this while maintaining the plane in a dive on target. It was an exercise in futility. The angle of the bracket holding the toggles was counter to the leverage required to pull the releases. Bombs on each wing needed to be dropped simultaneously and this was impossible with the toggle system as originally installed.

The 353rd Fighter Group, stationed at Metfield, Suffolk, England actually pioneered the "Thunderbolt" as a "fighter-bomber". They did that on November 25, 1943, carrying 40lb. fragmentation bombs in a 500lb. cluster on each wing, for a mission into France. They dove from 15,000 feet to 10,000

feet where they released their loads, flying straight and level. Pilots found it difficult to control the plane in a steep dive. Results of this mission were poor and inaccurate. This method was continued for some time by the 8th and 9th Air Force, many times flying in formation and dropping their bombs like the "heavies" from 5,000 to 10,000 feet. Results were never very described as accurate.

The 57th Fighter Group, stationed at Amendola Airfield, Foggia, Italy in December, 1943, received four P-47D-15 aircraft in each squadron for training and acclimating, including dive-bombing tests. There was much anguish and uncomplimentary remarks made concerning the aircraft ability as a dive-bomber. It was pointed out by all pilots, that releasing the bombs from the wings was a Herculean task. The 65th Squadron Commander assigned four pilots, chosen at random, to sit in the cockpit while the plane was in a hard-stand and release the 500lb. bombs. None could do it without use of leverage. Pilots, also, complained about the guns firing too high when in a level strafing position.

The evening of January 12, 1944 after Lt. Col. Gil Wymond had this seminar with the pilots, he appeared at approximately 2300 hours, at the flap in the pyramidal tent of Tech. Sgt. Bill Hahn, who was in charge of armament for the squadron. He declared, "Hahn, were being transferred to the 8th Air Force in England to do high altitude flying. I ain't going and you are the reason I ain't going". Hahn, sitting perplexed with his four bunk mates listened while Wymond explained the concern of the pilots and bade Hahn to follow him to his P-47 where he would explain in detail the problem with the "damn" release.

Wymond sat in the cockpit, Hahn sitting on the edge. It was graphically displayed why the pilots were having difficulty and Wymond explained to Hahn just how he wanted the releases modified. What Wymond was asking was nearly an impossible "in-field" engineering task. First, the toggles would need to be coordinated. Second, a method would need be devised to extend the wire rope from its present location to a position on the instrument panel, indicated by Wymond. He wanted the toggle located so he could lean forward looking into the gunsight, line up the target, drop his left hand from the throttle quadrant and pull the two toggles simultaneously, returning his left hand to the throttle without ever taking his eye from the target.

He and Hahn decided the armament section could not spare men to do this work, so Hahn agreed to take one man, Sgt. Charles Appel and the two of them would work to convert Wymond's plane as quickly as possible. Much scrounging of parts was necessary. The extra wire rope, proper size. The soldering of parts, the need for non-existent pulleys, correct size. The need to find some aluminum for handles, because arranging the toggles under the edge of the instrument panel, using the wrong metal, could swing the compass and that would spell disaster.

To get the project started, Appel got a welded piece of pipe and they anchored it to the floor of the cockpit, screwed a cross plate to it and used it as leverage to pull both toggles at once. This was accomplished in two days. Wymond appeared to warn that General's Brereton and Strickland would arrive on the next day to observe a demonstration dive bombing that he, Wymond would do. He wanted assurance both bombs would drop simultaneously. It was felt the handle with the leverage would work well. Two 500lb. bombs were loaded without fuses, so they could be dropped harmlessly on the edge of the landing strip.

The General's arrived and Wymond took off, climbed to about 10,000 feet, rolled over and began his dive. He dropped the two bombs simultaneously at 2,000 feet, his pull out was about 600 feet. The bombs landed at the edge of the runway, burying some 30 feet in the ground. Wymond landed and was greeted with, "How soon can you have all the planes in the squadron equipped to dive-bomb?" Wymond was ecstatic, but Hahn was concerned about finding enough material to convert four planes, not 24.

The pressure was on to convert all planes to a release that would work simultaneously, in a dive. Appel and Hahn began in earnest to rework the lines and the toggles forward to the firewall and up to the instrument panel as Wymond suggested. Suffice it to say, it was accomplished and armorers were all assigned to assist in the installation. The belly tank toggle was left on the floor for the time being. It was decided having two four inch aluminum handles situated immediately in front of the "stick", would work well.

Wymond was so happy he decided to see if he could get off the ground with two 1,000lb. bombs. The runway at Amendola was only 3,600 feet, but he

only needed 2500 feet to become airborne. He applied brakes, ran up to 52 inches, released brakes and even with tires almost flat, was able to become airborne quickly. Once in the air, Wymond decided not to waste the opportunity, so he and his three flight companions flew to Split harbor in Yugoslavia and bomb German shipping. The new bomb releases, now situated on the instrument panel worked perfectly. The transformation was a total success. Planes of the squadron and of the group would be converted immediately as material became available.

The second complaint of the pilots, the strafing angle of the eight .50 cal. guns, had to be considered. The armorers found when boresighting the guns that the plane flying straight and level, or even at a depressed angle could not actually get down to ground level. It was decided to make two adjustments. First, the gunsights were replaced with the British sight, the reflector removed allowing the unit to be raised more than an inch and the grid reflected on the windscreen itself. There was doubt expressed that this would work, but it was done with success. Second, the gun mounts in the wings were modified to allow for depressing the barrel of the guns so that the angle when in either level or attack mode would hit the ground. Pilots were very satisfied with this arrangement.

The 57th was transferred to Corsica and began "Operation Strangle". The missions called for dive-bombing nearly every flight. Suddenly, problems developed. Planes were returning with a "hung" bomb under one wing. The release had been pulled and one bomb dropped, but the other, although released was still on the wing. When the plane landed, the jolt of wheels touching runway, would cause the bomb to fall off onto the runway, bouncing along behind the plane in a nose to tail bounce. This caused the arming vanes to fly off, the tail fins to break off and the bomb lay on the runway in a position of detonation if the nose or tail fuse were accidentally bumped. A critical flaw then developed in the release process.

This flaw became serious, because some bombs exploded on contact with the runway and some people were killed. It was suspected that the bomb shackle used on the P-47 was not as well made as the one used on the P-40. The P-40 used a B-7 shackle that had individual lug releases, whereas the P-47 used a B-10 shackle that had a positive release on the forward lug, but a

long (4⁷/₅) fulcrum) arm that was supposed to release when the front lug released. The Problem! The arm allowed side play and with the weight of a 500lb. bomb it occasionally would force the long arm against the side of the shackle and the lug would not release until the jolt of landing.

Pilots tried every maneuver to shake the bomb off, the rear lug was released, however, it took a jolt of the wheels touching runway to force the lug to open. Once it was determined that the B-10 was the culprit, every spare B-7 shackle in North Africa was requisitioned. The difficulty was, all P-40's had been transitioned out of the sector. Finding B-7 shackles required many trips back to salvage depots and storage areas. The solution to all the problems, as stated, took many months of trial and error. It was an "in-field" conversion, maintaining missions, continuing "Operation Strangle" on a daily basis.

Once the "hung bomb" episode was solved; the gunsight/strafing angle overcome; the toggles properly located; the P-47 of the 57th Fighter Group suddenly became the most feared ground support aircraft of the war in Italy.

The Republic Tech Representative, Tony Aritoli, 4613 Hixon Circle, Sacramento, CA 95841, (recently deceased), carried the modifications back to the factory where immediate conversions were begun on factory models with a sophisticated update. These models appeared in England.

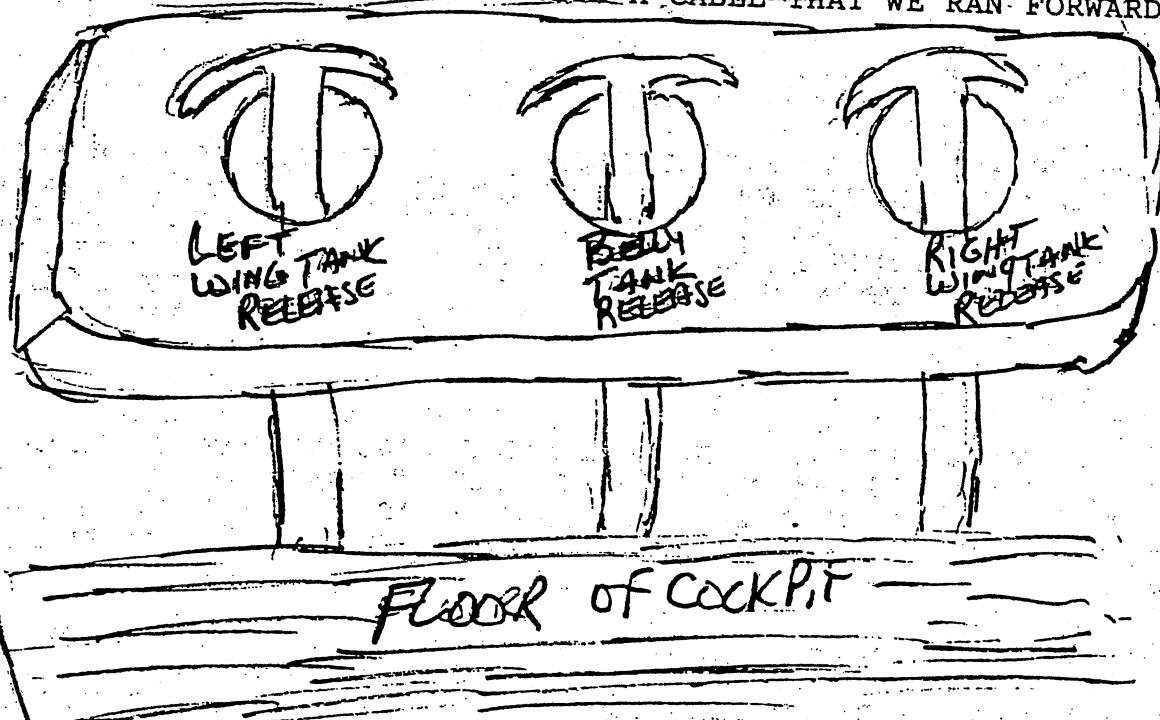
The above situation report has been written to substantiate that Lt. Col. Gilbert O. Wymond was the engine behind the development of this fine aircraft into a "JABO", that struck fear into the German infantrymen on Normandy and those Germans in Italy. Unfortunately, Gil Wymond was killed while flying an F-86 on a training flight just after returning to the states. He has never been properly recognized as the author of this fine conversion.

-1A-

ONE CAN SEE HOW AWKWARD IT WOULD BE TO PULL THE LEFT AND RIGHT WING RELEASE SIMULTANEOUSLY. WE NEEDED TO COMBINE THE RELEASE HANDLE FOR THE TWO WING TANKS IN SOME MANNER.

WE DID THIS ON THE PROTO-TYPE BY LAYING A FLAT STEEL BAR ACROSS THE THREE RELEASES, APPLYING A FULCRUM TO THE FLOOR TO ENABLE THE PILOT WITH ONE PULL, RELEASE THE TWO WING BOMBS. THIS WAS NOT A SATISFACTORY APPLICATION, BECAUSE THE BELLY TANK RELEASE COULD NOT BE USED EASILY.

APPEL AND I DEvised A METHOD OF LAYING THE TWO WING RELEASES ON THE FLOOR. CONNECTING THEM WITH A CABLE THAT WE RAN FORWARD



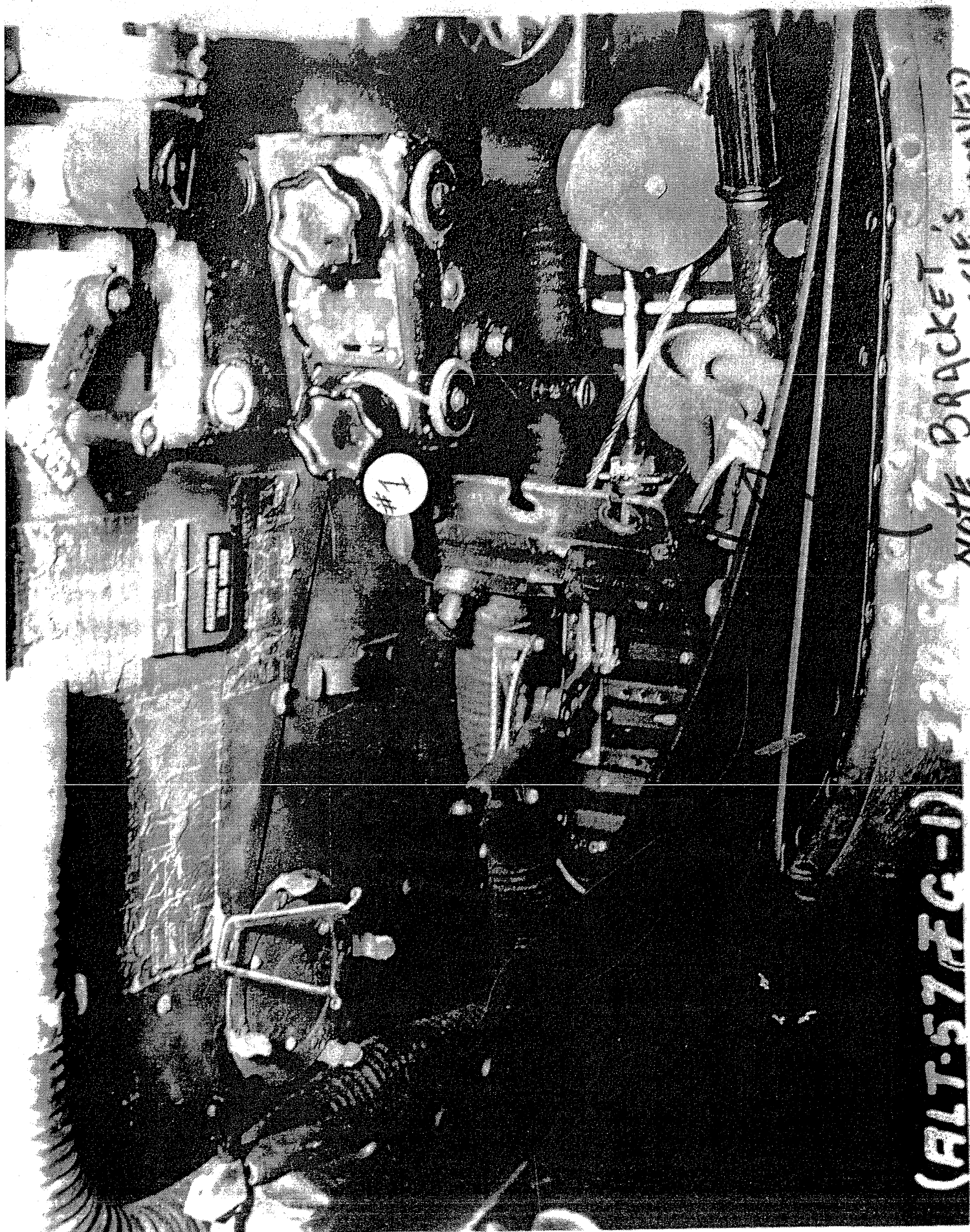
UP THE FIRE WALL AND BACK TO THE INSTRUMENT PANEL. WE THEN ADDED THE BELLY TANK RELEASE. THE PILOT HAD ONLY TO LEAN FORWARD, WATCH HIS TARGET AND PULL THE TWO SMALL TOGGLES ON THE INSTRUMENT PANEL TO RELEASE THE BOMBS.

THIS WAS DUPLICATED IN ALL SQUADRONS UNTIL ALL WERE DIVE-BOMBING. CRUDE BUT EFFECTIVE. LATER IMPROVED UPON BY REPUBLIC AVIATION ON THE P-47D-30 SERIES.

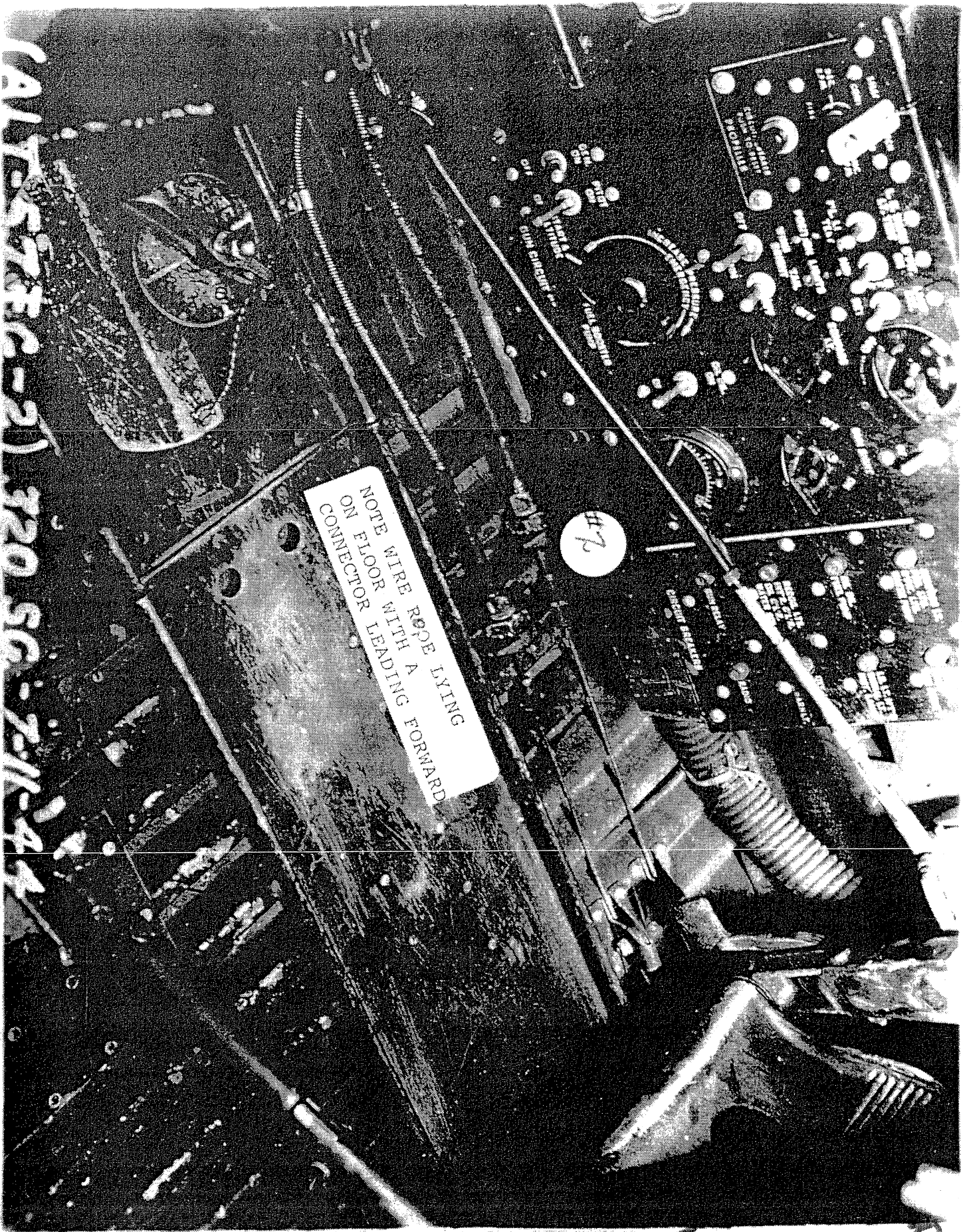
Note in this photo of a P-47 cockpit,
The toggles marked #1 shows how we removed
them from the unusable bracket
and laid them forward on the floor
running to the firewall.

Note #2, second photo depicts the
connection and wire rope extension
leading to and up the firewall, back to
the instrument panel. Two of the
aluminum handles can just be seen
as indicated.

↑ INSTRUMENT PANEL



(ALT-57FC-1) 32050 (NOTE BRACKET'S CLIP REMOVED)



(ALT-575C-2) 720 SC-7-11-44

NOTE WIRE ROPE LYING
ON FLOOR WITH A
CONNECTOR LEADING FORWARD

27

Two Note
Hawkins

Louisvillian Adds 1,000-Pound Bombs to P-47

Gilbert Wymond Tests Plane In Yugoslavia

The P-47 Thunderbolt has been turned into "the war's most potent fighter-bomber" by loading it with two 1,000-pound bombs—a weight previously undreamed of for fighters, Twelfth Allied Air Force officials disclosed yesterday in Naples.

Major Gilbert O. Wymond, of Louisville, 24-year-old squadron commander of the 57th Fighter Group, is credited with doubling the plane's bomb weight. He has been using it with "devastating effect" since January 23 on dive-bombing and strafing missions on the Eighth Army front and over Yugoslavia.

Accompanied by five bombless pilots as observers, Wymond flew the first tests with the high-altitude fighter in an attack on a bridge over the Erka River at Skardln, north of Split, Yugoslavia. When the experiment proved successful, they returned to score a direct hit on a bridge.

Major Wymond, whose parents

lived on Glenmary before moving to Chicago, attended the University of Kentucky. Credited with destroying three enemy planes, he has been awarded the Air Medal.



A SPECIAL LOW RATE TO THE ARMED FORCES ABROAD

CHECK
ACCOUNTING INFORMATION
TIME FILED

WESTERN UNION CABLEGRAM

EXPEDITIONARY
FORCE
MESSAGE

A. M. WILLIAMS
PRESIDENT
NEWCOMB CARLTON
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
J. C. WILLEVER
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT

Send the following message, subject to the terms of the Western Union Telegraph Company, which are hereby agreed to

Thunderbolts now carry Two 1,000 pound Bombs.

MAAF Headquarters, Feb. 25

The American P-47 Thunderbolt, already famous as a pursuit ship, now has been turned into "the wars most potent fighter bomber", one of carrying two 1,000 pound bombs, it was said here to-day.

The Thunderbolt, which went into combat in this theater less than three months ago, made a name for itself immediately as a fighter, scoring a better than 4 to 1 combat record against enemy fighters in its first weeks of combat. It has been used in Italy as heavy bomber escort and for strafing as well as for bombing.

TRIED FIRST ON JAN. 23, 1944

The P-47s have been carrying their 2,000-pound load-greater ever borne by fighter plane, the statement said-since January 23, on that day Major Gilbert O. Wymond, Louisville, Ky., the commander of a squadron the 57th fighter group, took the first plane off the ground with the bomb load.

For weeks the 24 year old Major has been urging his group commander to let him try it. One day the group C.O. was transferred to another theater and Major Wymond took his case to the new C.O. Major Archie G. Knight, a 27 year old West Pointer. "Go ahead and try it", said Major Knight. "It might work."

On the morning of Jan. 23, every man in the 57th was out standing on the field to see what would happen. As Major Wymond climbed into the plane, they noticed that both tires were smashed half way flat by the tremendous bomb load.

"She's UP"

The Major warmed up the motor, taxied lumberingly out to the runway, then revved her up and roared down the field strip. Pilots were gauging the speed of the plane and measuring the distance to the end of the runway.

Then someone yelled "She is up" And she was.

Once airborne, Major Wymond suddenly concluded that the occasion called for something in the nature, perhaps of an unofficial raid on Yugoslavia. So he went over and dropped his bombs at an undisturbed spot behind the German lines where it would do the most good.

From then on, other pilots began carrying the big load and now it is an established institution. I'm now ready to believe, Major Knight says, "that the Thunderbolt can do anything."

Note:- Sent to me by Mr. E. F. Rickelman, Vice President of the Buhl Stamping Company, Detroit who make a large number of the exhaust manifolds and superchargers for the Thunderbolt. The picture was taken from Stars and Stripes.

THE GROUND CREWS AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL

YOUR UNTIRING EFFORTS AND SELFLESS DEVOTION ARE
LEGEND.

YOU GAVE ALL YOU HAD TO KEEP THE THUNDERBOLTS
FLYING, MISSION AFTER MISSION.

YOU REPAIRED OUR BATTLE-DAMAGED "JUGS" WITH SKILL
AND INGENUITY AND MAINTAINED THEM IN FIGHTING
CONDITION AROUND THE CLOCK AROUND THE WORLD.

YOU WAITED IN SILENCE WHILE WE WERE ON MISSIONS.
YOU SHARED OUR VICTORIES.

YOU CHEERED WHEN WE RETURNED, AND WEPT WHEN
WE DID NOT.

WE WILL NEVER FORGET

P-47 THUNDERBOLT

ALEXANDER KARTVELI, DESIGNER

THE THUNDERBOLT WAS THE LARGEST, HEAVIEST, SINGLE-SEAT FIGHTER BUILT DURING WORLD WAR II: A RUGGED, DEPENDABLE, AND HEAVILY ARMED FIGHTING MACHINE, WHOSE ACCOMPLISHMENTS ADVANCED THE ULTIMATE VICTORY OF THE ALLIES.



WING SPAN:	40 FT. 9 IN.
LENGTH:	36 FT. 2 IN.
GROSS WEIGHT:	13,500 POUNDS
POWERPLANT:	PRATT & WHITNEY R2800 AIR COOLED RADIAL ENGINE, 18 CYLINDERS, RATED AT OVER 2000 HORSEPOWER, USING CURTISS ELECTRIC OR HAMILTON STANDARD PROPELLERS, AND EQUIPPED WITH GENERAL ELECTRIC TURBO SUPERCHARGER
ARMAMENT:	EIGHT .50 CALIBER BROWNING MACHINE GUNS, AND CARRIED OVER 2000 POUNDS OF ORDNANCE
MISSION:	HIGH ALTITUDE ESCORT AND LOW-LEVEL GROUND SUPPORT
FIRST FLIGHT:	6 MAY 1941
TOTAL BUILT:	15,683
BUILT BY:	REPUBLIC AVIATION CORPORATION

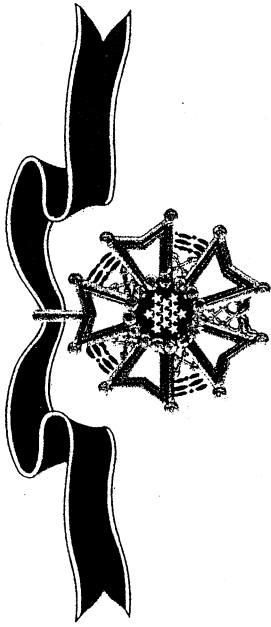
WORLD WAR II COMBAT RECORD

DESTROYED:	11,874 ENEMY AIRCRAFT 160,000 MILITARY VEHICLES 9,000 LOCOMOTIVES
BOMBS DROPPED:	113,963 TONS
SORTIES FLOWN:	546,000
COMBAT HOURS:	1,352,810



TO ALL THOSE WHO BUILT THE THUNDERBOLT
AND TO THE MANUFACTURERS AND SUPPLIERS
OUR DEEPEST GRATITUDE

*Citations, Extracts
Awards
Copies of the
Presidential citations*



THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO ALL WHO SHALL SEE THESE PRESENTS, GREETING:

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
AUTHORIZED BY ACT OF CONGRESS JULY 20, 1942

HAS AWARDED

THE LEGION OF MERIT

TO

STAFF SERGEANT BILLIE W. HAHN

FOR

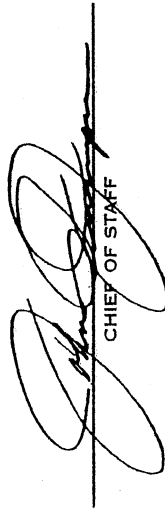
EXCEPTIONALLY MERITORIOUS CONDUCT
IN THE PERFORMANCE OF OUTSTANDING SERVICES

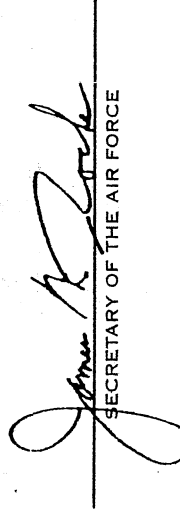
JUNE 1942 TO JUNE 1943

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND IN THE CITY OF WASHINGTON

7 APRIL 2003




CHIEF OF STAFF


SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

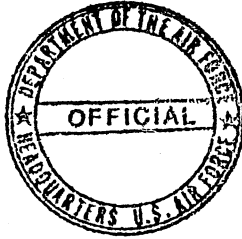
DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC 20330-5020

SPECIAL ORDER
G-160

7 APRIL 2003

BY THE DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT, STAFF SERGEANT BILLIE W. HAHN, 12-005-907, IS AWARDED THE LEGION OF MERIT FOR EXCEPTIONALLY MERITORIOUS CONDUCT IN THE PERFORMANCE OF OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO THE UNITED STATES, WHILE ASSIGNED TO THE 65TH FIGHTER SQUADRON, 57TH FIGHTER GROUPM IN THE EUROPEAN-AFRICAN-MIDDLE EASTERN THEATER OF OPERATIONS DURING THE PERIOD JUNE 1942 THROUGH JUNE 1943.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE



MICHAEL D. CORNELL, COLONEL, USAF
CHIEF, SAF AWARDS AND DECORATIONS BOARD

DISTRIBUTION
EACH INDIVIDUAL
& IAW AFI 36-2803,
TABLE 3.1.

G-160

HEADQUARTERS

TWELFTH



AIR FORCE

The Bronze Star

is awarded

Billie W. Hahn, Master Sergeant, Air Corps

57th Fighter Group

by direction of the President, under the provisions of Army Regulation 600-45 as amended, and pursuant to authority vested in me by the Commanding General, Mediterranean Theater of Operations.

Citation

For meritorious achievement in direct support of combat operations in the Middle East and Mediterranean Theaters of Operations between 9 October 1942 and 31 August 1943. Master Sergeant Hahn's proficiency and devotion to duty reflect great credit upon himself and the Military Service of the United States.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John K. Cannon', is written over a horizontal line.

JOHN K. CANNON
Major General, USA
Commanding

G. O. No. 23, 4 February 1945

List of awards

French Crois de Guerre

Legion of Merit

Bronze Star

European-African-Middle East Ribbon

(with nine Battle stars)

*Egypt – Lybia

*Tunisia

*Sicily

*Naples - Foggia

*Rome – Arno

*Southern France

*Air Combat-Balkans

*North Apennines

*Po Valley

Good Conduct Medal

American Defense Service Medal

Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation

With two Oak Leaf Clusters

E X T R A I T

de la Décision du 29 juillet 1950

Sur la proposition du Secrétaire d'état aux Forces Armées "AIR"

LE MINISTRE DE LA DEFENSE NATIONALE

C I T E

A L'ORDRE DE L'ARMEE AERIENNE

57 th Fighter Group de l'U.S. AIR FORCE

"Unité de chasse d'élite, ayant participé à la campagne méditerranéenne depuis El Alemein jusqu'à la Passa du Brenner. Avec son esprit de corps élevé et sa science éprouvée du combat aérien, a apporté une aide efficace au Corps Expéditionnaire Français durant les campagnes d'Italie et de France. Au cours d'un brillant fait d'armes a exécuté le fameux massacre du Cap Bon le 16 avril 1943, au cours duquel une grande armada d'avions de transport allemands fut interceptée et dispersée, après avoir perdu 72 de ses avions dans la Baie de Tunis. Egalement, le 14 avril 1944, son effort coordonné avec les troupes françaises permit la prise de Rome, grâce à l'arrêt et la destruction sur le front de Florence-Arezzo de la Division Herman Goering qui accourait pour renforcer la garnison allemande de Rome.

Cette unité participa également à l'entraînement de l'escadrille Lafayette (groupes 2/5 et 2/3).

Au cours des années 1943 à 1945, le 57 th Fighter Group accomplit 35000 missions de guerre, pendant 32 mois de combat continu et a, à son actif, la destruction ou l'endommagement en vol de 338 avions ennemis.

CETTE CITATION COMPORTE L'ATTRIBUTION DE LA CROIX DE GUERRE 1939-1945 AVEC PALME.

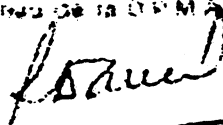
PARIS, le 29 juillet 1950

signé : Jules MOCH

Extrait certifié conforme

Le Colonel DAVID

Chef du Service de la D.M.A.



(TRANSLATION ON OVER LEAF)

The 57th Fighter Group Receives the Crois de Guerre

Dated July 29, 1950

(Translation as near as possible)

**Citation to the 57th Fighter Group by the French National Defense
Minister**

Air Force Order

This composite group participated in the Mediterranean Theater from El Alemain to the Brenner Pass, with great cooperation and combat efficiency as proven in aerial combat. They were aided by a French Expeditionary Corps throughout the Italian campaign and in France. On April 16, 1943 the famous Cape Bon massacre was executed swiftly and efficiently when German aerial transports were intercepted and dispersed, seventy-two of which were shot down in the Bay of Tunis. On April 14, 1944, ground support was given to French troops entering Rome by the destruction of the Hermann Goering Division in the Florence-Arezzo area who were on the way to reinforce the Rome garrison.

Group 2/3 and 2/5 of the French Lafayette Escadrille participated and trained with the 57th Ftr Grp.

From 1943 to 1945 for 32 months in continuous combat, the 57th FG flew 35,000 combat missions, destroying 336 enemy aircraft.

This Citation awards the 57th Ftr Grp the Crois de Guerre with palm.

(We understand there is a red and green piping or fire hose (?) that is authorized to be worn with the ribbon.)

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, 25, DC. 5 JUNE 1944.

GENERAL ORDERS)
NUMBER.....45)

E X T R A C T

IX. BATTLE HONORS. As authorized by Executive Order No. 9396 (Sec. 1 Bull 22 WD 1943) superseding Executive Order No. 9075 (Sec III, Bull 11, WD, 1942) citation of the following unit by the Commanding General, Twelfth Air Force, in General Orders No. 48, 23 April, 1944, under the provisions of Section IV Circular 333, War Department, 1943, in the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction, is confirmed. The citation reads as follows:

The 57TH FIGHTER GROUP is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. Pioneering in the adaption of the high-altitude P-47 as a low-level strafing and dive-bombing aircraft, the 57TH FIGHTER GROUP perfected these techniques to such a high degree of effectiveness that on 30 March 1944 the organization was moved from the Italian mainland to Corsica to operate as a separate task force. Selected to accomplish the interdiction of railroads and communications and the destruction of locomotives, rolling stock, and motor vehicles behind the enemy lines, the group was directed to provide a minimum of 48 fighter-bomber sorties per day and customarily furnish its own top cover. Displaying outstanding efficiency and zeal in surpassing these requirements, the unit, during its nine days of combat operations from 1 to 14 April, 1944, exceeded an average of 80 sorties per day. On 14 April, 1944, the 57TH FIGHTER GROUP distinguished itself through extraordinary heroism, determination and esprit de corps in a flawlessly coordinated group effort which struck a series of devastating blows to the enemy in the Florence-Arezzo area. Flying 91 sorties between 0820 and 1610 hours, the pilots of this group, in six consecutive missions, destroyed two tunnels, one railroad bridge, six locomotives, and a large oil dump. More than 13 trains were attacked, 108 railroad cars were destroyed, damaged or set on fire, and tracks were cut at 9 different points. Five motor vehicles were strafed and left burning and 10 others were destroyed or damaged. With all missions briefed to engage any hostile aircraft sighted, one formation of 16 P-47's attacked more than 32 ME 109's and FW 190's, destroyed 3, probably destroyed a fourth, and dispersed the remainder. Near Ponarance, 16 other P-47's strafed 40 barracks-like buildings, and through flames and explosions which hurled debris to a height of 4,000 feet, repeatedly attacked these installations until 25 buildings had been hit and 19 fires started which threw flames 500 feet into the air. From the days operations, one aircraft is missing and three were damaged. Through the untiring devotion to duty and superior professional skill of its ground personnel, and the proficiency and gallantry of its pilots, the 57TH FIGHTER GROUP has upheld and added to the luster of the highest tradition of the military service of the United States.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF WAR:

G. C. MARSHALL,
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

GENERAL ORDERS)
No. 23)

WAR DEPARTMENT
Washington 25, D.C., 24 March, 1944.

E X T R A C T

Section.

VII

BATTLE HONORS - Citation of Units - - - - -

VII.— BATTLE HONORS—As authorized by Executive Order No. 9396 (Sec. I, Bull. 22, WD, 1943) superseding Executive Order No. 9075 (Sec. III, Bull. 11, WD, 1942), citations of the following units by the Commanding General, Ninth Air Force, in General Orders, No. 39, 25 February 1944, under the provisions of Section IV, Circular No. 333, War Department, 1943, in the name of the President of the United States as public evidence of deserved honor and distinction, are confirmed. The citations read as follows:

* * *

The 57th Fighter Group (S). For outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy in direct support of the British Eighth Army in the Middle East campaign. From the battle of El Alamein to the capitulation of the enemy forces in Tunisia and in Sicily. This group, operating from advanced landing fields directly behind the front lines under the most difficult of desert weather and terrain conditions, carried out continuous and devastating dive bombing and strafing raids against enemy airdromes, ground installations, troops, and supply lines, as well as many fighter patrols and fighter escorts for our own and allied bombardment airplanes, and engaged in repeated aerial engagements with enemy aircraft in which vast numbers of enemy aircraft were destroyed. The pilots of this organization exhibited the greatest bravery, skill, and resourcefulness, while its ground personnel, in the face of repeated enemy attacks, performed all duties with utter disregard for their personal safety. By the superior courage, initiative, skill, untiring efforts, and devotion to duty of all personnel of this organization, despite personal hardships and the most difficult of conditions, the 57th Fighter Group (S) contributed greatly to the defeat of the enemy in the Middle East in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army.

* * *

By order of the Secretary of War:

G.C. MARSHALL,
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

ROBERT H. DUNLOP,
Brigadier General,
Acting The Adjutant General.

"A TRUE EXTRACT COPY"

J H Miller
J. H. MILLER, II
Major, Air Corps

War Department

Distinguished Unit Citations

I

The 57th Fighter Group (S) and the 314th Fighter Squadron are cited for outstanding performance of duty in action against the enemy on 18 April, 1943. On this date, at a time when the operations in northern Tunisia were reaching their culminating intensity, 47 Warhawks of the 64th, 65th, and 66th Squadrons of the 57th Fighter Group (S) and the 314th Squadron of the 324th Fighter Group (S), escorted by a top cover of Spitfires of the Royal Air Force, were dispatched on a fighter sweep over the Gulf of Tunis for the purpose of attacking enemy aircraft in the Cape Bon area. In the course of the patrol, a large force of approximately 100 three-engined enemy transports of the JU-52 type, escorted by about 50 ME-110s, was sighted 6 miles off the coast flying in close formation low over the water. The Warhawk pilots immediately engaged the enemy formation, swooping down from an altitude of 8,000 feet into the midst of the troop-laden transports and wreaking a devastating toll of their numbers. During the ensuing air battle, in which the ME-110s were powerless to stem the ruthless onslaught, the scene became a melee of diving airplanes and gunfire. The transports blew up in midair, dived into the sea, or crashed in flames on the shore, while the beaches and surf below were littered with wreckage and troops from the enemy aircraft. In all, the four fighter squadrons destroyed 72 airplanes, of which 58 were troop transports and 14 were ME-109s and 110s. The outstanding heroism, aerial skill, and fearless initiative demonstrated by these gallant pilots, both individually and as a close knit combat team, contributed in large measure to the destruction of enemy air power during a critical period of the Tunisian campaign, and materially accelerated the collapse of the enemy forces in the Tunis and Cape Bon area. The victorious exploits of these squadrons are exemplary of the highest traditions of the Army Air Forces.

II

The 57th Fighter Group (S). For outstanding performance of duty action against the enemy in direct support of the British Eighth Army in the Middle East campaign, from the battle of El Alamein to the capitulation of the enemy forces in Tunisia and in Sicily. This group, operating from advanced landing fields directly behind the front lines under the most difficult of desert weather and terrain conditions, carried out continuous and devastating dive bombing and strafing raids against enemy armor, ground installations, troops, and supply lines, as well as many fighter patrols and fighter escorts for our own and Allied bombardment planes, and engaged in repeated aerial engagements with enemy aircraft in which vast numbers of enemy aircraft were destroyed. The pilots of this organization exhibited the greatest bravery, skill, and resourcefulness, while its ground personnel, in the face of repeated enemy attacks, performed all duties with utter disregard for their personal safety. By their superior courage, initiative, skill, untiring efforts, and devotion to duty all personnel of this organization, despite personal hardships and the most difficult of conditions, the 57th Fighter Group (S) contributed greatly to the defeat of the enemy in the Middle East in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Army.

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS TWELFTH AIR FORCE

A. P. O. 650

GENERAL ORDERS)

NUMBER 48)

23 April 1944.

[Signature]
Citation of Unit

1. Under the provisions of Circular 333, War Department, 1943, and Circular 6, North African Theatre of Operations, 6 March 1944, the 57th Fighter Group is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy.

Pioneering in the adaptation of the high-altitude P-47 as a low-level strafing and dive-bombing aircraft, the 57th Fighter Group perfected these techniques to such a high degree of effectiveness that on 30 Mar 1944 the organization was moved from the Italian mainland to Corsica to operate as a separate task force. Selected to accomplish the interdiction of railroads and communications and the destruction of locomotives, rolling stock and motor vehicles behind the enemy lines, the group was directed to provide a minimum of forty-eight fighter-bomber sorties per day and customarily furnish its own top cover. Displaying outstanding efficiency and zeal in surpassing these requirements, the unit, during its nine days of combat operations from 1 April to 14 April 1944, exceeded an average of eighty sorties per day. On 14 April 1944, the 57th Fighter distinguished itself through extraordinary heroism, determination and esprit de corps in a flawlessly coordinated group effort which struck a series of devastating blows to the enemy in the Florence-Arezzo area. Flying ninety-one sorties between 0810 and 1610 hours the pilots of this group, in six consecutive missions, destroyed two tunnels, one railroad bridge, six locomotives and a large oil dump. More than thirteen trains were attacked, one hundred and eight railroad cars were destroyed, damaged or set on fire and tracks were cut at nine different points. Five motor vehicles were strafed and left burning and ten others were destroyed or damaged. With all missions briefed to engage any hostile aircraft sighted, one formation of sixteen P-47's attacked more than thirty-two Me-190's and FW-190's, destroyed three, probably destroyed a fourth and dispersed the remainder. Near Ponarance sixteen other P-47's strafed forty barracks-like buildings, and through flames and explosions which hurled debris to a height of 4,000 feet, repeatedly attacked these installations until twenty-five buildings had been hit and nineteen fires started which threw flames 500 feet into the air. From the day's operations, one aircraft is missing and three were damaged. Through the untiring devotion to duty and superior professional skill of its ground personnel, and the proficiency and gallantry of its pilots, the 57th Fighter Group has upheld and added to the lustre of the highest traditions of the Military Service of the United States.

III

The 57th Fighter Group is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. Pioneering in the adaption of the high-speed P-47 as a low-level strafing and dive-bombing aircraft, the 57th Fighter Group perfected these techniques to such a high degree of effectiveness that on 30 March 1944, the organization was moved from the Italian mainland to Corsica to operate as a separate task force. Selected to accomplish the interdiction of railroads and communications and the destruction of locomotives, rolling stock, and motor vehicles behind the enemy lines, the group was directed to provide a minimum of 48 fighter-sorties per day and customarily furnish its own top cover. Displaying outstanding efficiency and zeal in surpassing these requirements, the unit, during its nine days of combat operations from 1 to 14 April, 1944, exceeded an average of 80 sorties per day. On 14 April, 1944, the 57th Fighter Group distinguished itself through extraordinary heroism, determination and esprit de corps in a flawlessly coordinated group effort which struck a series of devastating blows to the enemy in the Florence-Prato area. Flying 91 sorties between 0810 and 1610 hours, the pilots of the group, in six consecutive missions, destroyed two tunnels, one railroad bridge, six locomotives, and a large oil dump. More than 13 trains were wrecked, 108 railroad cars were destroyed, damaged or set on fire, and tracks were cut at 9 different points. Five motor vehicles were strafed and left burning and 10 others were destroyed or damaged. With all missions briefed to engage any hostile aircraft sighted, one formation of 16 P-47s attacked more than 32 ME 109s and FW 190s, destroyed 3, probably destroyed a fourth, and dispersed the remainder. Near Ponarance, 16 other P-47s strafed 40 barracks-like buildings, and through flames and explosions which hurled debris to a height of 4,000 feet, repeatedly attacked these installations until 25 buildings had been hit and 19 fires started which threw flames 500 feet into the air. From the day's operations, one aircraft is missing and three were damaged. Through the untiring devotion to duty and superior professional skill of its ground personnel, and the proficiency and gallantry of its pilots, the 57th Fighter Group has upheld and added to the luster of the highest tradition of the military service of the United States.

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS
AIR FORCES, EASTERN DEFENSE COMMAND
and
FIRST AIR FORCE
Office of the Air Force Commander
Mitchel Field, N. Y.

June 26, 1942.

SPECIAL ORDER)

NUMBER 170)

E X T R A C T

* * * *

23. The officers and enlisted men as shown on the attached roster which is an integral part of this special order are relieved from their present assignments and stations and will proceed without delay by rail, military or commercial aircraft (Sec IV, WD Cir No 12, 1942) to Mitchel Field, New York, reporting to the Commanding General, I Fighter Command. Upon completion of this temporary duty at Mitchel Field, New York, they will proceed by rail from Mitchel Field, New York to station outside the continental limits of the United States.

This is a PERMANENT change of station.

It being impracticable for the Government to furnish rations in kind, meals for one or more men will be furnished under the provisions of AR 30-2215, August 1, 1942, for such meals as the length of the journey may require at a rate not to exceed \$0.75 per meal, or not to exceed \$1.00 per meal per man when meals are taken in a dining car.

In lieu of subsistence, per diem of six dollars (\$6.00) is authorized for any travel by military or commercial aircraft. If travel is performed by air, a delay of not to exceed thirty days at Mitchel Field, New York, is authorized.


The Quartermaster will furnish the necessary transportation.

TDN and is chargeable to FD 31 P-02 A 0425-23; QM 100 P-01 03-07
08 A 0500-23.

* * * *

By command of Major General BRADLEY:

OFFICIAL:


H. B. SEPULVEDA
Colonel, A.G.D.,
Adjutant General.

E. E. GLENN,
Colonel, G.S.C.
Chief of Staff.

1 Incl: Roster

- 1 -

R E S T R I C T E D

H.

ROSTER
HEADQUARTERS 57TH FIGHTER GROUP

FROM BOSTON, MASS: Hq & Hq Sq 57th Fighter Group.

12
Captain Jeremiah A. Chase, O-344792
Captain Paul R. Meyer, O-311994
Captain Wallace W. Barr, O-336500
1st Lt. Howard D. Johnson, O-364350
W.O. Maurice L. Dyer, W-2101844
M/Sgt Morris Krell, 6047450

S/Sgt. James H. Kingsley, 12016401
Sgt. Harold S. Clayton, 12011732
Sgt. James R. Browning, 6877340
Sgt. Seymour E. Potter, 12005248
Cpl. Samuel S. Nemeroff, 33084850
Pvt. 1st Joseph A. Czajkowski, 16044042

FROM EAST BOSTON, MASS: 64th Fighter Squadron.

6
Captain Gerald Karosnick, O-397757
1st Lt. Richard E. Ryan, Jr., O-420644
1st Lt. Peter D. Mitchel, O-433108
M/Sgt. Archer T. Bailey, 6487364
T/Sgt. Buckley Rivers, 6114746
T/Sgt. James K. Bell, 6854719
S/Sgt. John Poluka, 6995438
S/Sgt. Ben C. Hicks, 6926550
S/Sgt. Charles M. Lane, 13005021
S/Sgt. Herman Zubkoff, 12016962
S/Sgt. Amon Squier, 12016326
S/Sgt. William B. Gribbin, 12003419
S/Sgt. John W. Wheeler, Jr., 6996586
S/Sgt. Jesse L. Cook, 15045906
Sgt. Paul H. Dunn, 12023001
Sgt. Alvin R. Hendrickson, 12011657
Sgt. Wilson T. Robinson, 18038063
Sgt. George E. Graham, 12019902
Sgt. Russell W. Plumtree, 18029817
Sgt. Frank Santamaria, 12021697
Sgt. Orin A. Shipp, 18004770
Sgt. Truman L. Wells, 18034877
Sgt. Anthony J. Franco, 12020074

Sgt. Alfred Hansch, 6908010
Sgt. James W. Thrift, 6894617
Sgt. Harry T. Baker, 20467683
Sgt. Thomas Joseph Beck, 12021688
Sgt. George Cichy, 13007609
Sgt. Charles Eaton, 12019008
Sgt. Andrew L. Bromet, 32161494
Sgt. Max I. Segall, 12010737
Sgt. Edward P. O'Loughlin, 32059231
Cpl. Martin J. Hughes, 12005748
Cpl. Donald A. Taylor, 12005881
Cpl. Henry Jacek, 12028424
Cpl. Norris E. Denneler, 12010711
Cpl. John W. Willitts, 12010765
Cpl. Herbert A. Chalk, 12010749
Cpl. James M. Barnes, 38036470
Cpl. Ivor E. Bennett, 2905036
Cpl. William J. Squitieri, 12028259
Cpl. Gaetano Tropea, 12028260
Cpl. Clyde A. Honeywell, 12028916
Pvt. Olin M. Kersey, 32167019
Pvt. Stanley C. Rzucek, 32166738
Cpl. Jack Sinclair, 12028199

FROM BRAINARD FIELD, HARTFORD, CONN: 65th Fighter Squadron.

46
Captain Fred J. Loughron, O-418224
1st Lt. Robert C. Hanning, O-434447
1st Lt. Edward J. Silks, O-434839
M/Sgt. James Boyhan, 6003275
T/Sgt. Daniel R. Posten, 6886075
T/Sgt. Howard W. Long, 6898490
T/Sgt. Foster E. Burkholder, 6065313
T/Sgt. John W. Dixon, 6897839
T/Sgt. Thomas J. Thomas, 6886265
S/Sgt. Charles C. Harter, 6940869
S/Sgt. John J. Fellabaum, 7022367
S/Sgt. Edward F. Rooney, 6947106
S/Sgt. Morris Hankin, 6150622
S/Sgt. Jacob C. Gallick, 6995399
S/Sgt. Emil P. Mistrik, 6994603

S/Sgt. Thomas F. Awkerman, Jr, 6997268
S/Sgt. Woodrow W. Stewart, 18007900
S/Sgt. Vern M. Coe, 6995076
S/Sgt. John Zlomanic, 6945460
S/Sgt. Paul R. Wethington, 6887356
S/Sgt. Miran R. Black, 6895924
S/Sgt. Henry Cipolaro, 32170734
Sgt. Jean B. LaFond, 12005196
Sgt. Luther C. Spencer, 18048099
Sgt. Arthur Casper, 12028183
Sgt. Fred W. Symmank, 18048036
Sgt. Francis C. Welsh, 14023867
Sgt. Kenneth B. Taylor, 12005151
Sgt. William Stroud, Jr., 18016752
Sgt. James B. Rubin, Jr., 18007360

ROSTER, HEADQUARTERS 57TH FIGHTER GROUP, (Cont'd):

FROM BRAINARD FIELD, HARTFORD, CONN: 65th Fighter Squadron, (Cont'd):

Sgt. Arlon L. Tanton, 18007816	Cpl. Herbert Jorish, 32096677
Sgt. Matthew F. Parbell, 6756087	Cpl. Joseph Biermeir, 17030971
Sgt. Claude O. Willette, Jr., 20227803	Cpl. Michael J. Himmugh, 32170032
Sgt. George J. Viox, 32171472	Cpl. Vincent J. DeStefano, 32170877
Sgt. Wilson E. Lord, 12024577	Cpl. Daniel Glass, 32156804
Sgt. Henry J. Southmayd, Jr., 12020417	Cpl. Andrew P. Carrano, 31047571
Sgt. Edward H. White, 12005821	Cpl. Billie W. Hahn, 12005907
Sgt. Charles H. Withoff, Jr., 18010488	Cpl. Alton D. Woodworth, 23310030

FROM HILLSGROVE, RHODE ISLAND: 66th Fighter Squadron.

Captain Mark E. Conan, O-380951	Sgt. Rubin Epstein, 13006303
1st Lt. Patrick E. Rowles, O-434448	Sgt. Winston H. Werner, 18010710
1st Lt. Kenneth B. Skoropowski, O-434831	Sgt. William Tilson, 18035933
M/Sgt. Casey I. Riley, 6638379	Sgt. Joseph Chimenti, 12014578
T/Sgt. Leslie W. Moulton, 12005258	Sgt. Martin J. Howard, 12021088
T/Sgt. Howard D. Beck, 6848695	Sgt. Robert H. Rasconsen, 6995777
T/Sgt. Theodore Przybylek, 6878946	Sgt. Robert P. Stewart, 18038220
S/Sgt. Russell E. Burns, 6976426	Sgt. Jack Bigley, 20743460
S/Sgt. John F. Manor, 12022982	Sgt. Dathol L. Stephens, 18048167
S/Sgt. Gerald E. Smith, 18004029	Sgt. Daryl W. Benson, 20743163
S/Sgt. Henry Price, 18010377	Sgt. Leon A. Strobarczyk, 18025279
S/Sgt. John Ritchie, 6847841	Sgt. Adolph T. Sonnen, 18013907
S/Sgt. Herbert W. Gluckman, 16027697	Cpl. Charles S. Morrison, 12028874
S/Sgt. Clyde J. Sparks, 13041530	Pfc. Michael W. McCormick, 12028346
S/Sgt. George J. Williams, 13005370	Pfc. Jacob A. Amacher, 17030784
S/Sgt. Carl J. Volter, 12016615	Pfc. Earl Boyd, 20802216
S/Sgt. Eddie A. Ryan, 18032671	Pfc. William N. Perry, 13032521
S/Sgt. Foster J. Carman, 12014717	Pfc. Warren K. Anderson, 17028000
S/Sgt. Charles Wasserman, 12020571	Pfc. Edward R. Ward, 31044557
S/Sgt. James E. Smith, 18034763	Pvt. Lester E. Frost, 20833135
S/Sgt. William R. Solenne, 6904410	Pvt. Charles W. Freeman, 14052935
S/Sgt. Leland Pottis, 12016924	Pvt. Charles R. Armstrong, 15073918
Sgt. Parella, Carmine C., 12022301	Pvt. Michael C. Boyda, 16046735

BILL HAHN - 65FS
128 MERCER RD.
SAVANNAH, GA 31401

SEPTEMBER 11, 1997

JOHN:

I AM LISTING BELOW THE PILOTS WHO FLEW OFF THE RANGER. I CAN NOT FIND A WILL E.LATIMER OR CHARLES ZUCKER ON ANY OF THE ROSTERS. THEY MAY HAVE BEEN ROTATED OUT BEFORE THE RANGER LEFT PORT AND SOMEONE WAS SUBSTITUTED. THIS LIST IS IN WAYNE DODD'S BOOK. I, HAVING BEEN ON THE FLYING ECHELON, REMEMBER MOST OF THE 65 PILOTS AS WE MET IN KHARTOUM FOR TRAINING.

HQ	MAJOR	FRANK MEARS	64	2nd	LT. WILLIAM M. OTTAWAY
HQ	CAPTAIN	HARRY FRENCH	65	2nd	LT. ROBERT L. METCALF
HQ	CAPTAIN	ARCHIE KNIGHT	66	2nd	LT. RICHARD B. PAULSEN
66	CAPTAIN	CLERMONT WHEELER	65	2nd	LT. HARRY H. STANFORD, JR.
65	CAPTAIN	ARTHUR SALISBURY	65	2nd	LT. WALTER H. REED
66	CAPTAIN	CHARLES R. FAIRLAMB	65	2nd	LT. LEO B. MARGOLIAN
66	1st. LT.	RICHARD E. RYAN	64	2nd	LT. FRANK E. HERTZBERG
64	1st. LT.	CLAUDE B. BILBY	65	2nd	LT. RICHARD B. KIMBALL
64	1st. LT.	ROBERT A. BARNUM	65	2nd	LT. HAROLD C. RIDEOUT
65	1st. LT.	GORDON F. THOMAS	65	2nd	LT. EDWIN R. WEAVER
65	1st. LT.	THOMAS W. CLARK	66	2nd	LT. RALPH M. BAKER
65	1st. LT.	ROY E. WHITTAKER	66	2nd	LT. JOHN E. TEICHROW
65	1st. LT.	MARSHALL SNEED	66	2nd	LT. DALE R. DENISON
65	1st. LT.	WILLIAM W. O'NEIL	64	2nd	LT. ROBERT J. OVERCASH
65	1st. LT.	GILBERT O. WYMOND	66	2nd	LT. THOMAS M. TILLEY
66	1st. LT.	GEORGE W. LONG	66	2nd	LT. WILLIAM B. WILLIAMS
66	1st. LT.	WILLIAM J. YATES	66	2nd	LT. THOMAS T. WILLIAMS
66	1st. LT.	RAYMOND A. LLEWELLYN	66	2nd	LT. JAMES T. GARDNER, JR.
65	1st. LT.	HORACE W. LANCASTER	64	2nd	LT. MAC M. McMERRILL
66	1st. LT.	JAMES G. CURL	64	2nd	LT. GEORGE E. MOBBS
64	1st. LT.	TRACY W. SMITH	64	2nd	LT. LYMAN MIDDLEDITCH, JR.
65	1st. LT.	DELVERT V. MITCHELL	64	2nd	LT. GORDON L. RYERSON
64	2nd LT.	WILLIAM S. BARNES	64	2nd	LT. ROBERT W. BEALS
64	2nd LT.	WILLIAM S. BECK	64	2nd	LT. GERALD A. BRANDON
65	2nd LT.	ARNOLD D. JAQUA	65	2nd	LT. EDWARD H. ELLINGTON
65	2nd LT.	JAMES L. MORRIS	65	2nd	LT. ROBERT N. NICHOLS
66	2nd LT.	ALLIE W. CLAXTON	66	2nd	LT. LEWIS L. BOWEN
66	2nd LT.	WILLIAM R. CAMPBELL	66	2nd	LT. JOE D. BELL
66	2nd LT.	THOMAS M. BOULWARE	66	2nd	LT. ROBERT M. ADAMS
66	2nd LT.	JOHN J. STEFANIK	?	2nd	LT. CHARLES S. ZUCKER
66	2nd LT.	ROBERT E. GIBSON	66	2nd	LT. HARRY J. HAYDEN
?	2nd LT.	WILL E. LATIMER, JR.	64	2nd	LT. WILLIAM J. MOUNT
66	2nd LT.	ALAN H. SMITH	66	2nd	LT. ROBERT A. HOKE
64	2nd LT.	NICHOLAS P. HARVEY	66	2nd	LT. WILLIAM E. TAYLOR
64	2nd LT.	JACK S. WILSON	64	2nd	LT. ERNEST D. HARTMAN
			66	2nd	LT. JOHN T. GILBERTSON
			66	2nd	LT. ALBERT ZIPSER

ALL 65 PILOTS HIGHLIGHTED. I COUNT 20 PILOTS FROM 65
19 PILOTS FROM 64 (TWO ?)
28 PILOTS FROM 66
3 PILOTS FROM HQ
70 TOTAL PLUS TWO

THE FLYING ECHELON ITINERARY AND AFRICAN CAMPAIGN MOVES.

LV MITCHELL	06/29/42	ARRIVE	MIAMI	06/30/42
LV MIAMI	07/02/42	ARRIVE	TRINIDAD	07/02/42
LV TRINIDAD	07/03/42	ARRIVE	BELEM	07/03/42
LV BELEM	07/04/42	ARRIVE	NATAL	07/04/42
LV NATAL	07/06/42	ARRIVE	FISH LAKE	07/07/42
LV ROBERTS	07/09/42	ARRIVE	ACCRA	07/09/42
LV ACCRA	07/10/42	ARRIVE	KANO	07/10/42
LV KANO	07/11/42	ARRIVE	KHARTOUM	07/11/42
LV KHARTOUM	07/31/42	ARRIVE	CAIRO	07/31/42
LV CAIRO	08/01/42	ARRIVE	MUQUEIBILA	08/01/42
LV MUQUEIBILA	08/05/42	ARRIVE	CYPRUS	08/05/42
LV CYPRUS	08/19/42	ARRIVE	WEST.DESERT	08/19/42
LV W. DESERT	08/26/42	ARRIVE	MUQUEIBILA	08/26/42
LV MUQUEIBILA	09/14/42	ARRIVE	L.G.174	09/15/42
LV L.G.174	11/04/42	ARRIVE	L.G.75	11/09/42
LV L.G.75	11/11/42	ARRIVE	GAMBUT	11/15/42
LV GAMBUT	11/19/42	ARRIVE	MARTUBA	11/20/42
LV MARTUBA	11/31/42	ARRIVE	BELINDA #2	12/03/42
LV BELINDA #2	01/10/43	ARRIVE	HAMBRIET	01/12/43
LV HAMBRIET	01/17/43	ARRIVE	BENI-ULID	01/19/43
LV BENI-ULID	02/23/43	ARRIVE	ZUARA	02/24/43
LV ZUARA	03/02/43	ARRIVE	BEN GARDANE	03/10/43
LV BEN G'DANE	03/21/43	ARRIVE	SOLTANE	03/21/43
LV SOLTANE	04/04/43	ARRIVE	MEDINENE	04/04/43
LV MEDINENE	04/11/43	ARRIVE	CHEKRIA	04/11/43
LV CHEKRIA	04/13/43	ARRIVE	EL DJEM	04/13/43
LV EL DJEM	04/21/43	ARRIVE	EL HANI	04/21/43
LV EL HANI	06/03/43	ARRIVE	EL HAOURARI	06/03/43
LV EL H'RARI	06/15/43	ARRIVE	BU GRARA	06/16/43
LV BU GARA	06/22/43	ARRIVE	ZARSIS	06/22/43
LV ZARSIS	07/02/43	ARRIVE	TRIPOLI	07/02/43
		TO MALTA		
LV TRIPOLI	07/03/43	ARRIVE	MALTA	07/04/43
LV MALTA	07/19/43	ARRIVE	PACHINO	07/19/43
LV PACHINO	07/31/43	ARRIVE	SCORDIA	07/31/43
LV SCORDIA	09/12/43	ARRIVE	MILAZZO	09/12/43
LV MILAZZO	09/15/43	ARRIVE	MESSINA	09/15/43
LV MESSINA	09/16/43	ARRIVE	CROTONE	09/18/43
LV CROTONE	09/22/43	ARRIVE	GIOJA	09/24/43
LV GIOJA	10/03/43	ARRIVE	FOGGIA #8	10/03/43
LV FOGGIA #8	10/06/43	ARRIVE	FOGGIA #1	10/06/43
LV FOGGIA #1	10/27/43	ARRIVE	AMENDOLA	10/27/43
LV AMENDOLA	03/01/44	ARRIVE	CERCOLA	03/01/44
LV CERCOLA	04/02/44	ARRIVE	CORSICA #1	04/03/44
LV CORSICA #1	04/06/44	ARRIVE	ALTO	04/06/44

MY RECORD STOPS AT ALTO.

BILL HAHN - 65FS

AUGUST 29, 1997

JOHN LOUCKS

DEAR JOHN:

I DECIDED TO ROOT THROUGH SOME OF MY OLD FILES AND SEE WHAT I COULD FIND. I AM LISTING HERE SOME RECORDS I MADE WHEN WE BEGAN OUR STINT IN THE DESERT AND INTO ITALY.

RANK	NAME	DOWNED	STATUS	DATE
LT.	NICHOLS, ROBT N.	ALEMAIN	DEAD	10/13/42
LT.	RIDEOUT, HAROLD	ALEMAIN	P.O.W.	10/20/42
COL.	McGOLDRICK, PETER	TOBRUK	DEAD	11/01/42
LT.	TAYLOR,	MARBLE ARCH	P.O.W.	12/08/42
CAPT	MARGOLIAN, L.B.	MARBLE ARCH	P.O.W.	12/08/42
CAPT	SNEED, MARSHALL	ZUARA	DEAD	02/27/43
LT.	KIMBALL, RICHARD	ZUARA	P.O.W.	02/27/43
CAPT	MITCHELL	BEN GARDANE	DEAD	03/15/43
LT.	JAQUA, ARNOLD D.	SOLTANE	DEAD	03/30/43
LT.	RITCHIE, DUDLEY	SOUSSE	MISSING	04/10/43
LT.	BLAKELEY, ROBT. S.	TUNIS	MISSING	04/18/43
LT.	RANDALL, W.J.	TUNIS	MISSING	04/18/43
LT.	COSTANZO, D.F.	TUNIS	MISSING	04/18/43
LT.	KRAMER,	MT.ETNA	DEAD	08/04/43
LT.	HART, JAMES W.	MESSINA	MISSING	08/09/43
LT.	NEWPORT	SCORDIA	DEAD	08/14/43
LT.	REICH,	GIOJA	DEAD	10/06/43
LT.	BARKER, HENRY H.	YUGOSLAVIA	DEAD	11/06/43
LT.	SILVER, MICHAEL	YUGOSLAVIA	DEAD	11/06/43
LT.	BLACKSHAW,	YUGOSLAVIA	MISSING	11/06/43
CAPT	SCHWARTZ, WILIAM	YUGOSLAVIA	MISSING	11/12/43
LT.	BIGELOW,	TERMOLI	MISSING	12/22/43
LT.	MONAHAN,	TERMOLI	MISSING	12/22/43
LT.	GOHMAN, HAROLD R.	AMENDOLA	DEAD	01/12/44 *
LT.	MIHOLICH, PHILIP	YUGOSLAVIA	MISSING	01/30/44
LT.	DRENICK, WILLIAM	CORSICA	DEAD	05/04/44
LT.	OWENS,	NO. ITALY	MISSING	05/24/44
LT.	FORNEIER, WILLIAM	NO. ITALY	MISSING	
F/O	SWARTZ,	NO. ITALY	DEAD	
LT.	MARKHAM,	CORSICA	DEAD	07/29/44

* MY RECORDS INDICATE GOHMAN WAS KILLED FLYING AN ME 109.

MY RECORDS ALSO INDICATE AIR VICTORIES IN AFRICA.

NAME	109	202	JU52	CR42	ME110	TOTAL
MAJ. THOMAS	X					1
MAJ. CLARK	XX	XX				4
CAPT WHITTAKER	X	XX	XXX	X		7
CAPT WEAVER			XX			2
CAPT STANFORD			XXX			3
CAPT REED			XX		X	3
CAPT METCALF		X				1
LT. HERTZBERG	X					1
CAPT WYMOND	X			XX		3
LT. JAQUA	XXX					3
LT. KIMBALL	X					1
CAPT SNEED	XX					2
LT. MARGOLIAN	X					1
LT. COSTANZO	X					1
MAJ. KNIGHT	X					1
LT. HUNZIGER	X					1
LT. SCWARTZ					X	1
LT. MANDA	X					1
LT. FRONING	XXX					3
LT. BARKER	X					1
LT. HADNOT	X					1

TOTAL						42

AIR VICTORIES SOUTHERN EUROPE

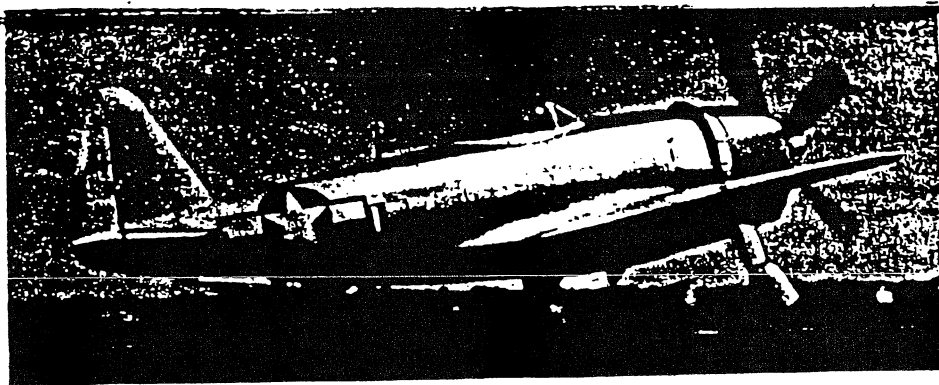
LT. ANDRUS	X					1
LT. MIHOLICH	X					1
CAPT FRONING	XX					2
CAPT HUNZIGER	X					1
LT. MONAHAN	XX					2
LT. LANCASTER				DO24		1
LT. MUSGRAVE			JU88			1
LT. HARE					MISC.	1

I HAVE TAKEN THESE NUMBERS FROM RECORDS I KEPT, BUT I WAS STATESIDE DURING DECEMBER 44/JANUARY 45.

I RECORD THE UNIT: (57TH FG) FLEW AUGUST 1, '42/AUGUST 31, '43.
 693 MISSIONS..8,307 SORTIES..LOST 51 AIRCRAFT..
 DESTROYED 127 A/C..PROBABLE 19..DAMAGED 68..
 DROPPED 1,612,420 POUNDS OF BOMBS..(806.21 TONS)



57th FG TR. GRP. - SQD. 64-65-66: IN EUROPE
 SICILIAN CAMPAIGN & ENG 8th ARMY July 3 to Aug 17, 1943
 NAPLES-FOGGIA CAMPAIGN & ENG. 8th ARMY Sept 3-Feb 31, 1944
 ANZIO-ROMA CAMPAIGN & ARMY 5th ARMY Mar 1-25, 1944



Republic Aviation's new version of their deadly P-47 Thunderbolt (above) has more than double the range of the earlier model shown in the picture at top. Note that a "bubble canopy" replaces the "Greenhouse" and that the turtle deck gives way to streamlining

THUNDERBOLT pilots know the P-47 as the fighter that flies higher, and does more damage in more different ways, than anything in its class. Some of the fliers are ready to believe it will do almost everything but talk; and the new version—details of which are being made public for the first time this week—will certainly do that, in at least one sense of the word.

One little-known fact about Republic Aviation's baby is that approximately two thirds of all the U.S.A.A.F. fighter planes in combat over all the theaters of war are Thunderbolts. Another is that this ship—known officially as the P-47, and not yet two years old—is a triple-threat job, having proved its worth as a high-altitude fighter, as a dive bomber, and as a hedge-hopping strafing. But Republic has gilded its lulu. Approximately as of today, the enemy is discovering a new Thunderbolt in the sky, with more than double the former range of 315 miles, more power, and a classy new silhouette.

A comparison of the pictures above will show the obvious changes in appearance. The "greenhouse" canopy and the "ridgepole," or turtle deck, have been eliminated and replaced with a "bubble canopy" and a streamline from there on back. The bulletproof windshield, with its flat front surfaces, gives the pilot better forward vision, and the absence of window frames and the "ridgepole" easily enables him, with a mere twist of the head, to detect "bandits" coming in from the side or behind.

In addition the new version has more horsepower and can pull away from almost anything with wings. Besides relying on its larger engine, the pilot can call upon what is termed "war emergency power." This added spurt of several hundred horses is obtained by water injected into the carburetor. You may have noticed that your car works better at night, when there's more moisture in the air. That's because wet air improves the mixture of gasoline and air.

The new Thunderbolt is equipped with a 30-gallon water tank from which the pilot, by thumbing a button on the left side of the cockpit, can, in an emergency, squirt four quarts a minute into the carburetor. This means that the P-47 can be outrun by Focke-Wulf 190s or

Messerschmitts, which become dead ducks once the Thunderbolt pilot gets them in line with his eight .50-caliber guns. (Incidentally, Republic is now doing another one of those things that couldn't be done: They're mounting in the wings and bore-sighting all eight machine guns even before the wings are attached to the fuselage.)

The increased radius has been brought about by increased internal fuel capacity. The gasoline carried externally can now be used for climbing and for reaching combat areas, and the internal fuel for warm-up, fighting and return to the base.

Without going into statistics, there are a couple of other facts about the Thunderbolt that you may not know: (1) It was the first fighter to be delivered in quantities to the most critical theaters when they were most needed, and (2) there have been fewer "aborts" or mechanical failures among its operational records than in those of any other fighter.

From a squadron of the Twelfth Air Force operating in Italy comes the story of how the Thunderbolt became a practical bomber in a combat area. It started last Christmas Eve when this particular squadron received a couple of dozen P-47s. The pilots liked the ship but there was one fly in the ice cream—they had been operating as fighter-bombers, and the Thunderbolt carried no bombs.

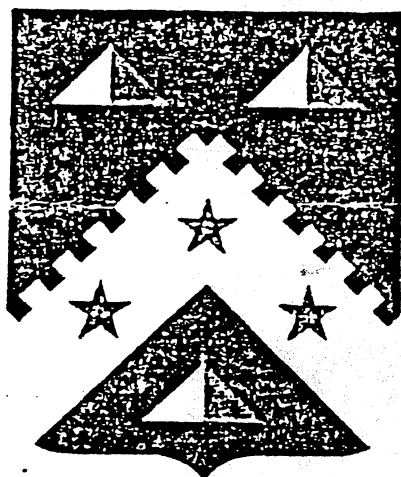
IT WAS Major Gilbert O. Wymond, of Louisville, Kentucky, who first suggested they add a couple of bombs to the ship's load, and it remained for Tech. Sgt. Billie Hahn, and Sgt. Charles Appel (respectively of Wellsburg, West Virginia, and Grand Haven, Michigan) to design an installation and release apparatus.

The squadron's armorers all contributed ideas, and seven days later, with two 500-pound bombs replacing two of the three reserve fuel tanks, and with a copious belly tank full of extra gasoline, a Thunderbolt piloted by Major Wymond successfully did its stuff as a dive bomber. A little later, the major experimentally doubled the bomb load, got away with it, and forthwith began to drop two 1,000-pound eggs on enemy installations here and there.

(Continued on page 53)

INSIGNE. *Shield: Tene on a chevron azure fimbriated of two lightning flashes chevronwise of the last. Motto: CAVE TONITRUM—Beware of the Thunderbolt.* (Approved 4 Apr 1942.)

57th FIGHTER GROUP



Constituted as 57th Pursuit Group (Interceptor) on 20 Nov 1940. Activated on 15 Jan 1941. Trained with P-40's. Served as part of the defense force on the east coast after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Redesignated 57th Fighter Group in May 1942. Moved to the Middle East. Jul-Aug 1942. Trained with RAF. Began operations in Oct 1942. Took part in the Battle of El Alamein and, as part of Ninth AF, supported British Eighth Army's drive across Egypt and Libya, escorting bombers and flying strafing and dive-bombing missions against airfields, communications, and troop concentrations until the defeat of Axis forces in Tunisia in May 1943. Re-

ceived a DUC for performance on 18 Apr 1943 when the group destroyed more than 70 of the enemy's transport and fighter planes in an aerial battle over the Gulf of Tunis. Participated in the reduction of Pantelleria (May-Jun 1943) and the conquest of Sicily (Jul-Aug 1943). Received another DUC for front-line operations in direct support of British Eighth Army from the Battle of El Alamein to the capitulation of enemy forces in Sicily. Assigned to Twelfth AF in Aug 1943 and continued operations in the Mediterranean theater until the end of the war. Supported British Eighth Army's landing at Termoli and subsequent operations in Italy (Oct 1943-Feb 1944) by flying dive-bombing, strafing, patrol, and escort missions. Converted to P-47's early in 1944 and used the new aircraft for interdiction operations in Italy, receiving a DUC for a series of devastating attacks on rail lines, trains, motor vehicles, bridges, and other targets in the Florence-Arezzo area on 14 Apr 1944. Participated in the French campaign against Elba in Jun 1944 and in the invasion of Southern France in Aug. Engaged in interdiction and support operations in northern Italy from Sep 1944 to May 1945. Returned to the US in Aug 1945. Inactivated on 7 Nov 1945.

Activated in Alaska on 15 Aug 1946. Assigned to Alaskan Air Command. Redesignated 57th Fighter-Interceptor Group in Jan 1950. Equipped successively with P-38, P-51, F-80, and F-94 aircraft. Inactivated in Alaska on 13 Apr 1953.

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AIR FORCE COMBAT UNITS—GROUPS

121

SQUADRONS. *64th:* 1941-1945; 1946-1953. *65th:* 1941-1945; 1946-1953. *66th:* 1941-1945; 1946-1953.

STATIONS. Mitchel Field, NY, 15 Jan 1941; Windsor Locks, Conn, 19 Aug 1941; Boston, Mass, 8 Dec 1941-c. 1 Jul 1942; Muqebile, Palestine, c. 20 Jul 1942; Egypt, 16 Sep 1942; Libya, 12 Nov 1942; Tunisia, Mar 1943; Malta, Jun 1943; Sicily, Jul 1943; Southern Italy, Sep 1943; Gioia Airfield, Italy, c. 25 Sep 1943; Foggia, Italy, Oct 1943; Amendola, Italy, c. 27 Oct 1943; Cercola, Italy, Mar 1944; Corsica, Mar 1944; Ombrone Airfield, Italy, Sep 1944; Grosseto, Italy, Sep 1944; Villafranca di Verona, Italy, 29 Apr 1945; Grosseto, Italy, 7 May 1945; Bagnoli, Italy, 15 Jul-5 Aug 1945; Drew Field, Fla, 21 Aug-7 Nov 1945; Shemya, Alaska, 15 Aug 1946; Elmendorf AFB, Alaska, Mar 1947-13 Apr 1953.

COMMANDERS. Maj Reuben C Moffat, c. 15 Jan 1941; Maj Clayton B Hughes, unkn; Maj Minthorne W Reed, 12 Dec 1941; Lt Col Frank H Mears, 1942; Col Arthur G Salisbury, 20 Dec 1942; Col Archibald J Knight, 23 Apr 1944; Lt Col William J Yates, 23 May 1945-unkn. Maj Benjamin H King, 15 Aug 1946; Lt Col Gilmore V Norris, 26 Dec 1946; Lt Col Harry L Downing Jr, 10 Jan 1947; Col Morton D Magoffin, 14 Nov 1947; Col Bingham T Kleine, 22 Jan 1949; Col John W Mitchell, c. Nov 1950; Lt Col Ollie O Simpson, 19 Nov 1951; Col Thomas H Beeson, 21 Nov 1951; unkn, 1 Jul 1952-13 Apr 1953.

CAMPAIGNS. Air Combat, EAME Theater; Egypt-Libya; Tunisia; Sicily;

Naples-Foggia; Rome-Arno; Southern France; North Apennines; Po Valley.

DECORATIONS. Distinguished Unit Citations: North Africa and Sicily, 24 Oct 1942-17 Aug 1943; Tunis and Cape Bon Area, 18 Apr 1943; Italy, 14 Apr 1944.

INSIGNE. *Shield:* Azure, on a chevron embattled or, between three pyramids of the last, as many mullets gules. *Motto:* FIRST IN THE BLUE. (Approved 2 Feb 1950.)

58th FIGHTER GROUP



Constituted as 58th Pursuit Group (Interceptor) on 20 Nov 1940. Activated on 15 Jan 1941. Redesignated 58th Fighter Group in May 1942. Used P-35, P-36, P-39, and P-40 aircraft while serving as a replacement training unit for pilots until 1943. Prepared for combat with P-47's. Moved to New Guinea, via Australia, Oct-Dec 1943. Assigned to Fifth AF. Began operations in Feb 1944, flying protective patrols over US bases and escorting

Japan; China Defensive; Papua; Guadalcanal; New Guinea; Bismarck Archipelago; Western Pacific; Leyte; Luzon; Southern Philippines; China Offensive.

DECORATIONS. Distinguished Unit Citations: Papua [12 Nov] 1942–23 Jan 1943; Bismarck Sea 2–4 Mar 1943; Philippine Presidential Unit Citation. Air Force Outstanding Unit Award: 1 Aug 1960–1 Aug 1961.

EMBLEM. On a disc red, bordered black, a pair of dice tilted at an angle so that the four and three are showing on the top, and the numbers six and five are showing on the tilted front view.

(Approved 9 Sep 1954.)

65th FIGHTER



LINEAGE. Constituted 65th Pursuit Squadron (Interceptor) on 20 Nov 1940. Activated on 15 Jan 1941. Redesignated 65th Fighter Squadron on 15 May 1942. Inactivated on 7 Nov 1945. Activated on 15 Aug 1946. Redesignated 5th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron on 20 Jan 1950. Inactivated on 8 Jan 1958.

ASSIGNMENTS. 57th Pursuit (later Fighter) Group, 15 Jan 1941–7 Nov 1945. 57th Fighter (later Fighter-Interceptor) Group, 15 Aug 1946; 10th Air Division, 13 Apr 1953; 328th Fighter Group, 1 Nov 1957–8 Jan 1958.

STATIONS. Mitchel Field, NY, 15 Jan 1941; Hartford, Conn, 18 Aug 1941; Groton, Conn, 13 Dec 1941; Rentchler Field, Conn, 24 Jun–5 Jul 1942; Muqueibile, Palestine, 29 Jul 1942; Cyprus,

SQUADRONS

5 Aug 1942; Muqueibile, Palestine, 29 Aug 1942; Egypt, 16 Sep 1942; Libya, 12 Nov 1942; Tunisia, 9 Mar 1943; Malta, 27 Jun 1943; Sicily, 19 Jul 1943; Southern Italy, 18 Sep 1943; Gioia del Colle, Italy, 25 Sep 1943; Foggia, Italy, 2 Oct 1943; Amendola, Italy, 27 Oct 1943; Cercola, Italy, 1 Mar 1944; Alto, Corsica, 28 Mar 1944; Ombrone, Italy, 11 Sep 1944; Grosseto, Italy, 24 Sep 1944; Villafranca di Verona, Italy, 29 Apr 1945; Grosseto, Italy, 7 May 1945; Bagnoli, Italy, 15 Jul–5 Aug 1945; Drew Field, Fla, 22 Aug–7 Nov 1945. Ladd Field, Alaska, 15 Aug 1946; 26 Mile Field, Alaska, 20 Sep 1946; Elmendorf Field, Alaska, 23 Jun 1947–1 Nov 1957; Richards-Gebaur AFB, Mo, 1 Nov 1957–8 Jan 1958.

AIRCRAFT. P-40, 1941–1944; P-47, 1944–1945. P-51, 1946–1948; F-80, 1948–1951; F-94, 1951–1953; F-89, 1953–1957.

OPERATIONS. Air defense, Dec 1941–Jun 1942. Combat in MTO, 7 Oct 1942–3 May 1945.

SERVICE STREAMERS. None.

CAMPAIGNS. Egypt-Libya; Tunisia; Sicily; Naples-Foggia; Rome-Arno; Southern France; North Apennines; Po Valley; Air Combat, EAME Theater.

DECORATIONS. Distinguished Unit Citations: North Africa and Sicily, 24 Oct 1942–17 Aug 1943; Tunis and Cape Bon Area, 18 Apr 1943; Italy, 14 Apr 1944. French Croix de Guerre with Palm: Oct 1942–May 1945.

EMBLEM. On a green disc, a red gamecock in fighting attitude, beak and feet yellow, spurred white, wearing a flying helmet black, and carrying a chip of wood on left [right] shoulder, yellow, all outlined black. He is collared with a green shamrock. (Approved 18 Dec 1941.)

65th T

LINEAGE. Carrier Squadron on 12 Dec 1946. Activated 1947. Redesignated Squadron (Me). Ordered to active service on the reserve on active service from active duty.

ASSIGNMENTS.

Group, 12 Dec 1943; 54th Aug 1943; 433d Nov 1943; 403d 20 Feb 1945–27 Carrier Group, 403d Troop; Car 442d Troop C 1957; 403d Troop 1959; 929th Tr Feb 1963–.

STATIONS. Bow

1942; Alliance, N Field, NC, 3 May 19 Jun–14 Jul 19 Guinea, 26 Jul 19 Tsili, New Guinea 1943); Nadzab, N (operated from May–2 Jun 1944 (operated from I Jan–27 Feb 1945 Dulag, L Clark Field, Luzon mond AAB, Va, Mun Aprt, Ore, 1952; Ashiya, Jap 1953. Portland I 1953; Paine AFB, Davis Field, Okla,

Franz Stigler - BF 109 Pilot
with 28 confirmed kills,
may be the only living
German Pilot who participated in
The Palm Sunday Shoot-down,
tells his side of the story.

He also saved a crew of a B-17
On a mission over Germany.
December 20, 1943

He attend ed a meeting of the
8th Air Force at their
Museum in Savannah,
September 1997.

PALM SUNDAY MASSACRE

The exclusive account of the only surviving Luftwaffe fighter pilot
who flew in World War Two's most lopsided aerial battle



By Franz Stigler as told to Robert S. Davidson

"... The Allies again looked at the possibilities of chopping the transports down and cutting off Rommel's badly needed support ..."

IT TAKES FIVE kills to make an ace and it doesn't matter whether these kills are fighters, bombers, observation planes or helpless transports. The name of the game is to take the victim unaware and give him a burst before he knows you're there.

You have to watch bombers because, to a certain extent, they can fight back. Fighters are very dangerous and you want to be very careful because the guy flying it might be as good or better than you and this could get to be very non-habit forming.

Even observation planes like the Storch or our own L-5s could be dangerous to an attacking fighter. They were so damn slow and maneuverable. In fact, there are cases on record where an observation plane has suckered the fighter into flying into the ground. Of course, any fighter pilot dumb enough to do this deserved to get clobbered.

The classic story, concerns the Westland Lysander (armed with one .303 mg in each wheel pant) who, in the early days of WW II, shot down two attacking Bf 109s. Yes, even observation planes could be dangerous under the proper circumstances.

However, the most desirable target for any fighter pilot is a transport plane. It's slow, not very maneuverable, its visibility is usually terrible allowing you to crawl up its tail without being seen and, best of all, it's almost invariably unarmed and unable to defend itself. (The Ju-52's single-gun turret was virtually useless.)

Any fighter pilot lucky enough to get a chance to shoot down an unarmed transport was the envy of his fellow pilots. Any time a transport was spotted it was attacked with great glee.

In the spring of 1943, just before the fall of Tunisia and the end of the North African campaign, the single greatest opportunity for fighter pilots to experience this carefree destruction of enemy planes occurred. Never before or since have so many helpless planes been blasted from the sky in such a short time. It was quickly dubbed the "Palm Sunday Massacre" by the jubilant American pilots.

In the Battle of Britain and in the Marianas Turkey Shoot, a great many enemy planes were shot down in a single day but, in both these battles, the destroyed aircraft were fighters and bombers. Planes that were capable of

a reasonable ability to defend themselves and of inflicting damage. In the Palm Sunday Massacre the majority of the victims were slow, vulnerable transport aircraft loaded with troops, fuel and supplies.

Rommel's troops had consistently made extensive use of transport aircraft for resupply during the see-sawing battle of the Western Desert in Africa. In the fall of 1942 and early 1943, pushed back into Tunisia, aerial resupply became a critical factor for survival. Using tri-motor Ju-52s with a load capability of 1.8 metric tons and the six engined Me 323 "Giant" (see *Air Combat 3/6*) capable of a useful load of 10 tons, a daily fleet of transports became the lifeline of Rommel's embattled forces in North Africa.

In November and December 1942, transports were making about 100 landings a day in Tunisia. By March 1943, the resupply force had grown to nearly 500 aircraft flying supplies in from Italy.

The Allies greedily eyed this fat juicy target during February but Rommel's savage and successful ground offensive through the Kasserine Pass delayed their plans.

Finally, pushing back the German ground forces and squeezing them into a shrinking parcel of land, the Allies again looked at the possibilities of chopping the transports down and cutting off Rommel's badly needed support.

On 5 April, twenty-six P-38s on patrol over the sea between Sicily and Cape Bon in Africa, intercepted a mixed force of 50 and 70 Ju-52s, 20 Bf 109s, 6 Ju-87s, four Fw 190s and one Fw 187. After the action two P-38s were missing, but claims of 11 Ju-52s, 2 Ju-87s and one Fw 187 destroyed were filed by the P-38 pilots.

Allied bombings of airfields destroyed more badly needed transports and then, on the 10th of April, a P-38 sweep claimed 20 Ju-52s and eight fighters. Later that same day, B-25s on a shipping sweep ran into a formation of Ju-52s right on the deck and knocked down 25 of them with their turret guns.

One of the most unique photographs of the war was made from a B-25 during this engagement. It shows the Ju-52s flying low over the sea with B-25s flying alongside while fire from their .50 caliber turret guns slammed

into the 52s and throws up spray from the water.

Next day, P-38s added 26 Ju-52s and five escorting fighters to the rapidly mounting score of transports destroyed. These heavy losses in the air, coupled with losses from the airfield bombings, forced a suspension of transport activities while the *Luftwaffe* regrouped and brought in re-enforcements from other theatres.

Then, on 18 April, Palm Sunday, the obliteration of a large force of transports took place. Jubilant fighter pilots quickly dubbed it the "Palm Sunday Massacre."

Three squadrons of P-40s from the 57th Fighter Group plus one squadron from the 324th Group, with a top cover of one RAF Spitfire squadron, were patrolling the Cape Bon area when they intercepted the massive formation of transports carrying troops, fuel and supplies to Tunisia.

While the RAF Spitfire squadron, showing remarkable restraint, stayed above to protect them, the P-40s with their happily shouting pilots descended in an uncontrolled and uncontrollable swarm on the virtually helpless Ju-52s.

No two accounts of this engagement are the same. Even the official histories are confused as to the number and type of German aircraft destroyed or damaged. As an example: The *Official History of the Army Air Forces in WW II* says: "When the affair ended, 50 to 70—the estimates vary—out of approximately 100 Ju-52s had been destroyed together with 16 Macchi 202s, Bf 109s and Me 110s of the escort. Allied losses were six P-40s and a Spit--."

Another version of the story has an even more impressive score: DESTROYED: 59 Ju-52s, 14 Bf 109s, 2 Me 110s. PROBABLY DESTROYED: 1 Ju-52, 1 Bf 109. DAMAGED: 17 Ju-52s, 9 Bf 109s, 2 Me 110s. This version is in agreement in only one point—six P-40s were lost.

In the confusion of a battle such as the Palm Sunday Massacre, it is inevitable that excessive claims and errors would be made. However, a tremendous number of aircraft were shot down because, even in the restricted information releases of the day, the *Luftwaffe* admitted to the loss of 51 aircraft during the savage few minutes.

“ . . . I even did one skip-bombing mission against a ship and had the fright of my life . . . ”

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Air Classics recently had the pleasure of interviewing the ex-*Luftwaffe* fighter ace, Franz Stigier. Franz is believed to be the only surviving *Luftwaffe* fighter pilot who flew an escort-rank fighter on the fateful mission later to be dubbed the “Palm Sunday Massacre.”

While Franz was not one of the phenomenally high-scoring *Luftwaffe* pilots, his score of 28 confirmed victories against the RAF and USAAF would rank him high among the top Axis aces of WW II. In addition to the 28 confirmed, Franz has over 30 probables. Obviously, he was a formidable fighter pilot.

Durable and lucky, as well as a skilled airman, Franz was shot down 16 times. He bailed out 7 times and crash-landed or ditched the rest. He has a hole in his forehead and another in his leg from .50 caliber slugs fired from a B-17.

Franz flew his first combat in early 1942 and racked up 480 missions during the war, first with JG/27 in the Western Desert where he scored 17 of his confirmed victories, then in the battle for Italy and finally in home defense against the Allied air armadas. A member of Adolf Galland's famed JG/44 flying Me 262 jet fighters, he stayed in active combat until the end of the war.

Franz emigrated to Canada in the early 1950s and now lives in a suburb of Vancouver, British Columbia. Still an ardent and active pilot, Franz is a member of an aerobatic club and is deeply engrossed in building a Stevens Akro homebuilt.

Air Classics is fortunate to present this exclusive interview with Franz, on what it was like to be on the receiving end of the Palm Sunday Massacre.

In February, 1942, I joined the 4th Squadron of JG/27 in Africa and flew my first combat. As the battle for the desert went back and forth, we flew a heavy schedule and I managed to build up my score to 17 against the Hurricanes, P-40s and Spitfires flown by the RAF. In turn, I was shot down a few times by both fighters and *Flak*. Particularly the *Flak*. However, each time I made it back to our own territory and was not captured.

Late in the fall of 1942 I was sent to Germany for a rest and, during the time I was gone, JG/27 was transferred from Africa to Sicily.

I had been promoted to *Oberstfeldwebel* (Flight Sergeant) so when I rejoined JG/27 in February 1943, I was assigned to the 6th Squadron as a flight commander. *Hauptmann* Sinner was my squadron commander and we were stationed at Trapani on the western tip of Sicily.

We did just about everything having to do with a fighter pilot's job. Convoy patrols, escort of transports to Tunisia, escorts of bombers against the Allied troop and, of course, intercept missions against bombers and fighters.

I even did one skip-bombing mission against a ship and had the fright of my life. I came in on the freighter at very low level, maybe 10 or 15 feet above the water, dropped my bomb at what I thought was the proper time, then pulled up and over the ship. As I pulled up over the ship, I looked out my left side and there was my bomb right alongside my wingtip. It had apparently hit the water and then skipped into the air and was now not over ten feet from me. I was nearly frozen with fright, but I pulled frantically on the stick and zoomed up and away from it. They were shooting at me, but that didn't worry me at all. It was the sight of that bomb just a few feet away that scared me very badly. I thought it was going to explode.

We were very busy, flying several missions most days, so if I get a little confused here, please forgive me. If I had my log books I could give an exact account of the missions, but the log books and most of my pictures were taken from me and burned while I was in the detention camp right after the war. Why they burned these I fail to understand, but they did, so I now have to rely strictly on memory and after so many years and missions they tend to blur together. However, I'll do the best I can.

In any event we were quite busy and, during the last of March and early April, I escorted a number of formations of transports to Tunisia without incident. Other missions were intercepted by Allied fighters and badly shot up but my particular escort jobs were uneventful.

As for the Palm Sunday flight, the mission was scheduled the evening before and I knew I would be leading a flight of eight fighters as escorts for the transports.

On Sunday morning I reported as usual to the squadron at 5 a.m. Every-

thing was quiet and we stayed on easy alert. About 1:30 p.m. I briefed my pilots then, a half hour or so later, we were airborne for our rendezvous point near Ustica, 75 miles to the north.

We weren't sure how many transports would be involved but it would be a large number, probably close to 100 and their formation would cover a large area. Our job of giving them close escort would be difficult, so we flew loose formation of *Rottes* (elements of two planes) and *Schwarms* (flights of two *Rottes* or four aircraft). To provide adequate cover was, of course, the primary concern and even with our maximum endurance power settings, our speed in the 109s was over 200 mph compared to about 130 for the transports so we had to spend all our time weaving back and forth over the formation.

We picked up the transports south of Ustica. We stayed at 1000 meters and flew over the formation of 80 or so Ju-52s that were spread out over an area two miles wide by four miles long. Here my memory becomes confused, but I'm certain there were 16 Me 323 Giant six-engined transports flying a couple of miles away to the right rear of the JU-52s. I didn't count the aircraft of course but, all told, there must have been very close to 100 in the formation to be looked after by only eight fighters.

So far as we knew there wouldn't be any additional fighters sent to help us and we would take the transports all the way into Tunisia, land at a forward fighter base for refueling, and get back to Sicily as fast as possible.

Some one else would furnish protection for the transports on the return flight if necessary. However, they would probably fly out as soon as they were unloaded and return as single aircraft without an escort.

Everything went smoothly and, when we passed Sicily, the transports dropped to about 100 feet above the water and altered course towards the south, almost toward the island of Pantelleria. When we came closer to Africa we would alter course again, approaching Cape Bon from the East Northeast. The fighters also dropped to about 100 meters altitude to evade radar detection. Everything was routine and quiet and, when we came to our checkpoint off Pantelleria, the formation altered course for the run into

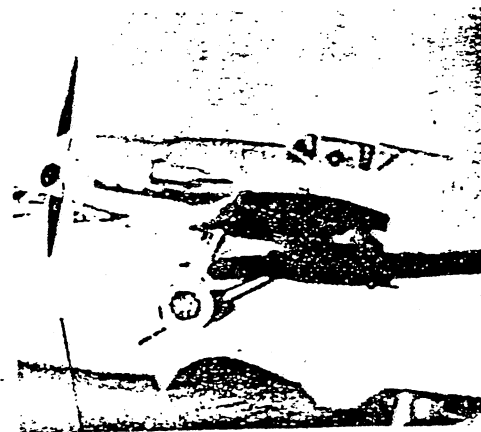
“... I was shocked at the size of the formation ... there were at least four squadrons of fighters ...”



Franz and his squadron mates. Franz is the one in the officer's cap. The other pilots appear to be enlisted men.

Franz is getting out of his Bf-109F after a mission.

Franz's "Yellow 12" in North Africa with the 4th Staffel of JG27. A ground crewman is checking instruments in the cockpit.



" . . A bullet shattered the pipe in my mouth, leaving me nothing but the rubber bit still clenched between my teeth . . ."

landfall at Cape Bon.

Ten or twelve miles offshore, one of my pilots called over the radio, "Fighters at one o'clock high."

I looked up and saw a huge gaggle, at approximately 4,000 meters, flying between us and Cape Bon. Apparently they had not yet seen us, although how they could avoid it was a puzzle because our formation was so large. They were in a gentle turn that would bring them alongside us, but going in the opposite direction.

I was shocked at the size of the formation. I saw at least four squadrons of fighters in the main formation and a thousand meters or more above them I could see the sun glinting off more fighters flying high cover. This high cover, I think, was only one squadron but I really didn't look at the high cover. I was completely fascinated by the big gaggle of fighters. Sort of like looking at a poisonous snake that you know is going to strike and there is nothing you can do about it.

I have been outnumbered many times before and since in combat, but this was unbelievable. There was no way we could protect all these slow helpless transports against this many fighters. We were going to be lucky to come out of it ourselves.

I called over the radio for my fighters to join up in loose formation and to climb at full throttle so that we would have some altitude to work with. Then, as we climbed, I called the leader of the transport formation and told him to get his formation close together for mutual protection. The Ju-52s had a single top swivel gun firing to the rear and if they stayed close together they could perhaps help themselves a little.

To my shock, the transports, instead of closing up, began to scatter wildly. This was the worst thing they could do as far as we were concerned because we could give them no protection for they were spread out all over the sky. I remember screaming over the radio, trying to get them to close up, but they either ignored me or didn't hear me.

Now it was too late. The fighters above had seen the transports and were turning into position for an attack.

It's funny the things that stand out in your memory, even after so many years, but I remember exactly when the fighters spotted the transports. I

think every airplane in the formation cocked up on a wingtip so the pilots could look down on us. You could see the excitement in the way they flew. Every one wanted to get a look at the juicy helpless transports scattering like a covey of quail below them.

By this time, we had climbed to about 1500 meters and the fighters above us were spreading their formations getting ready to make their attack. There was nothing we could do to help the transports at this point. Just fight for our own lives and, by doing this, perhaps break up an attack or two on the transports.

As I watched the fighters separate, I recognized them as Curtiss P-40s. I also made a hurried last look for the top cover and saw a squadron of Spitfires. There may have been more, but I only saw the one squadron.

There were at least 60 fighters against our eight Bf 109s!

Our Bf 109s and Gs were far better than the P-40s and each of us could have handled two or three of them easily so long as we didn't try to turn with them, but seven or eight to one was going to be pretty hard and we all knew it. Fortunately, all the pilots in my flight were quite experienced but it was going to be very tough for the next few minutes.

After the war, I read an account of this battle and couldn't help laughing. It said the *Luftwaffe* fighters protecting the transports were swarming like bees over them and the P-40s had to fight their way through to get at the transports. Well, there were swarms of 109s all right! Two *Schwarms* for a total of eight fighters. I think the P-40s fought amongst themselves to be first to get at the transports.

The P-40s had separated into a fairly widespread formation and then, suddenly, the whole mess seemed to disintegrate into little bunches of two to four aircraft as they raced each other to be the first to hit the transports. Four of them came right at my wingman and me, more by chance than intent I believe. I think they were surprised when they saw us coming at them head on.

Not too surprised to shoot though because all four opened up on us and we on them as we came at each other head on. All of us missed I think, but we passed each other with a separation of only about ten feet. From this point, I lost track of my wing man and

the other pilots in my flight. It was a case of every man for himself and hope for the best.

I came up and around in a steep climbing turn to get more altitude and be able to come down on a P-40 below me. Almost at the top of the turn, I felt the impact of bullets hitting the tail. A P-40 I hadn't seen was turning inside me and getting in a good burst of fire. I tightened the turn and shoved in some bottom rudder so I would skid up. By doing this, I hoped to throw off the pilot's aim. I twisted my head to look back over my left shoulder and a bullet came through the canopy and burned across the bridge of my nose. An instant later, another shattered the pipe in my mouth, leaving me nothing but the rubber bit still clenched between my teeth.

Here I should explain that the helmet I wore was of a knitted material with a throat mike. We had goggles of course, but we seldom wore our oxygen masks when flying low. Holding a pipe in my mouth was simply an affectation. Many pilots did one thing or another like this. Somewhat like the WW I pilots who wore scarves fastened around their necks.

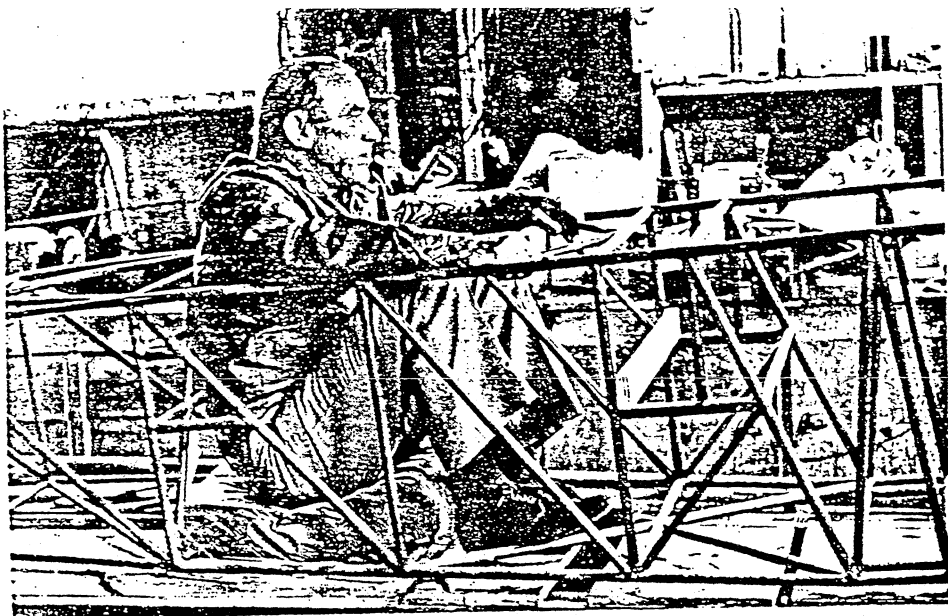
Anyway, just as the slugs came into the cockpit, I saw the plane shooting at me. It was a P-40 about 50 meters behind me to my left and it seemed as though his whole front end was alight from the gun flames.

I snap-rolled down and away and saw another P-40 below me and fired a short snap shot burst at it from a range of perhaps 75 meters. I saw strikes along its left wing root, but couldn't stay lined up on it as tracers went by my cockpit again and I could feel and see some hits on the left wing.

I skidded violently to the right to get away from the fire, then snapped over into a tight right hand turn until I was on the verge of blackout. While I was turning, I caught a brief glimpse of a Ju-52 below me explode in a ball of fire and hit the water. I could see others burning, some had already crashed into the sea and I remember thinking what a shambles it was down there. I could see fighters swarming all over the transports.

There was no way I could help them, because there were fighters all around me too and I had more than I could take care of. Every place I looked I could see a Curtiss fighter.

I pulled up in a vertical climb, then



Franz sits in the cockpit of his Stevens Akro and reflects back to the days of the "Palm Sunday Massacre."

rolled out at the top, I saw a Bf 109 trailing smoke, going down off to one side and in the brief instant I could see it, the pilot jumped and fell away. I didn't have time to watch for a chute because I could feel hits on my plane again. I think he was behind and below me but I'm not sure because I never did see him. I shoved hard on a rudder to skid sideways, then snapped over inverted and was going to split "S" out and dive away.

I started into the split "S" when I realized I was too low and would go into the sea. I shoved hard on the stick while I was still inverted and went into



a "red out" from the negative Gs. After what I thought was long enough, I rolled over and pulled out of what would have been a fatal mistake.

As I rolled over right side up and the "red out" cleared I pulled up into another climb. A P-40 went by not over 20 meters away and I kicked rudder, slipped in behind him and fired a good burst into his belly. It was a three or four second burst and I saw many strikes, so I know the plane was hit very hard.

I didn't get a chance to see what happened to it. My instrument panel blew apart, the engine started to run rough and the whole plane began to vibrate very badly. A big hole had been blown in the fuselage side just

ahead of my right knee. I had stayed too long while I was firing at the P-40 and another one had slipped in on my right and belted me hard enough to put me out of the fight. From here on, it was just try to stay alive.

I pulled up into a steep right hand climbing turn, with lots of bottom rudder shoved in so I would skid. As my speed fell off, I kept in too much rudder, stalled and the 109 snapped over the top into a spin. I stopped it in about a half turn, but kept the nose down and dove away to pick up speed.

I remember thinking I was probably on fire and would have to bail out but, after a minute, when I could neither see or smell smoke, I realized I wasn't. I twisted around in the cockpit trying to see where all the other fighters were, but incredibly, I was all alone and there wasn't one coming in for the final time. A mile or two away I could see the shambles of the fight still going on but, as it can happen so quickly in combat, I was all by myself in my section of the sky.

I quickly leveled out and then climbed a little until the airspeed fell off. The engine was still running although very rough and the whole airplane was shaking. I debated whether to bail out now or try to keep going and decided to hang on. I could see Ju-52s in various stages of wreckage still floating in the water below me and people in life rafts. However, the main fight had moved on closer to shore. I tried to think where to go and finally decided to try for Sicily. It was much farther, but to get to Africa would mean going into the thick of the fighting again. With the 109 in the shape it was, I'd last about 10 seconds before some P-40 tagged me for the last time.

I was flying at approximately 3000 meters, so I headed for Sicily and looked around at the airplane. I had a big hole in the side of the cockpit just above my right knee where the slugs that blew up the instrument panel entered. There were holes on both sides of the canopy from the slugs that burnt my nose and broke my pipe. The left wing had holes all over it and I knew there were more in the fuselage but I couldn't see them. The worst was the instrument panel and the holes along the right side of the engine cowling. The oil pressure gauge was one of the few still working.

(Continued on page 8)

air cla

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Someday, I'd like to know the answer to this absence of the Me 323 Giants in all stories of the "Palm Sunday Massacre."

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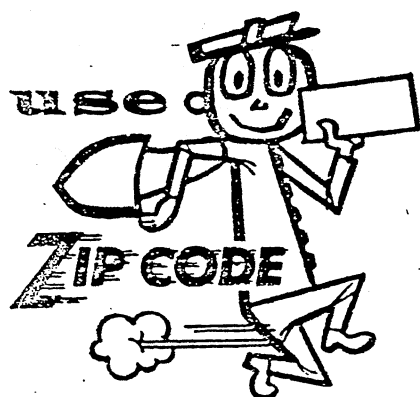


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PALM SUNDAY MASSACRE

(Continued from page 21)

and the pressure was low but steady. Obviously the coolant had not been hit either or I could have long since had a dead engine. Just what was hit and was causing the engine to lose power I couldn't tell, but at least it was still running enough to keep in the air. With luck it might keep on running all the way to Sicily.

If not, I would either have to bail out or ditch and hope to be picked up by Air-Sea Rescue flying boat.

A few long minutes later, I could see Sicily hulking on the horizon and began to think I would make it. It would be close however, because the oil pressure was gradually getting lower and the engine was giving less and less power.

I had to keep losing a little altitude now to keep flying speed and I was too low to bail out. I'd have to ditch if the engine got any worse.

Finally, about five miles from shore, it was almost a relief to have the engine quit and get free of the suspense of waiting for it to stop. There wasn't any choice on how I would ditch. Just go straight ahead and put it down. In a few seconds I was pulling back on the stick trying to settle the 109 as gently as possible on top of a wave. They weren't high, perhaps two or three feet, and I was landing downwind in a five or ten mile an hour wind.

As the 109 settled to the water, it hit just a little wrong and skipped from the top of a wave. I couldn't hold the nose up, and it dropped so we dove into the back side of another wave. Instantly, I was under water and sinking.

The shoulder harness and safety belts kept me from being injured, but I had to get out quickly or drown. I released the belts and chute harness, but unfortunately had forgotten to jettison the canopy before ditching. Now the water pressure was holding it shut and I was trapped in the sinking 109.

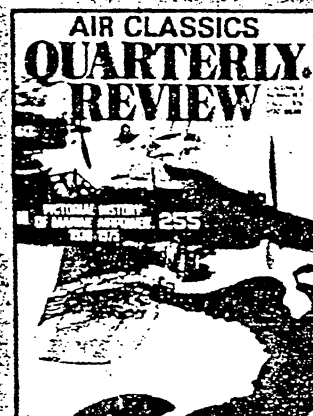
Water was coming in the bullet holes and I was rapidly getting deeper. Finally I remembered and opened the side panel to the cockpit, water rushed in and I opened the canopy then. I had already inflated my life vest and I must have been 50 feet under the water, because I popped clear out of the water like a cork and fell back with a splash.

Getting into the life raft was the hardest part. I inflated it, tried to climb into it and found I couldn't. I kept trying but every time the blasted thing would slip out from under me. Finally,

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MR & MRS STIGLER

SURREY/ 25/10/97

DEAR BILL,

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR
LETTER. I SHALL ANSWER IT RIGHT NOW.

TO BAD WE DID NOT MEET AT THE
CONVENTION OF THE 379 BOMB GROUP,
IN SAVANNAH, GA. I WAS A GUEST LAST
MONTH. I HAVE BEEN ^{UNDER} A HONORARY
MEMBER, AND IN THE MUSEUM OF
THE EIGHT IS AN ACCOUNT, WHY.

IF YOU WANT TO USE
THE ACCOUNT GO ~~FOR~~ THERE, YOU
ARE WELCOME. IF I CAN HELP YOU
OTHERWISE, DON'T HESITATE TO GET
IN CONTACT WITH ME.

FO NOW BEST WISHES


George

Bill Hahn - 65FS



OCTOBER 14, 1997

HERR FRANZ STIGLER



HERR STIGLER:

I AM A FORMER ENLISTED MEMBER OF THE 57th FIGHTER GROUP, 65 SQUADRON. WE WERE ATTACHED TO THE BRITISH EIGHTH ARMY AND PURSUED THE AFRIKA CORP. THROUGH THE DESERT FROM ALEMAIN TO TUNIS AND BEYOND. RECENTLY MY CHILDREN ASKED ME TO RECORD MY OWN STORY OF THE EXPERIENCE. I BEGAN WRITING A SYNOPSIS OF MY EXPERIENCES. ONE DAY IN THE MAIL SOMEONE, AND I HAVE NEVER FOUND WHO, SENT ME SEVERAL PAGES OF COPY CUT FROM A MAGAZINE CALLED "AIR CLASSICS" IN WHICH YOU DESCRIBE YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THE "PALM SUNDAY MASSACRE". A MOST INTERESTING ACCOUNT.

WE HAVE HEARD MANY VERSIONS OF THE AIR COMBAT THAT TOOK PLACE THAT DAY. YOURS HAS ADDED A NEW DIMENSION TO THE STORIES. I WANT TO INCORPORATE YOUR ACCOUNT OF THE FRAY, JUST AS THE ATTACHED COPY RECITES, INTO MY RECAP OF WAR EXPERIENCES. I AM ASKING YOUR PERMISSION TO INSERT, EXACTLY AS SHOWN ATTACHED, YOUR STORY OF THE EVENT. I ALREADY HAVE HAD 65 SQUADRON PERSONNEL REQUEST A COPY OF THESE MEMOIRS, SO IT WILL GET SOME DISTRIBUTION. HOWEVER, NO COPY WILL BE SOLD.

YOU MAY BE INTERESTED TO LEARN THAT A SECTION OF THE NEW ENGLAND AIR MUSEUM AT WINDSOR LOCKS, CONN. HAS BEEN SET ASIDE FOR AN EXHIBIT OF THE 57th FIGHTER GROUP. DEDICATION WILL BE SEPTEMBER 25, 1998. A PAINTING OF THE "PALM SUNDAY MASSACRE" HAS BEEN COMMISSIONED WITH KEITH FERRIS OF SMITHSONIAN FAME AND WILL BE ON DISPLAY AT THE DEDICATION.

I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR PERMISSION TO INCORPORATE THE ATTACHED STORY INTO MY MEMOIRS. I WOULD BE AGREEABLE TO SENDING YOU A COPY OF THESE MEMOIRS FOR YOUR PERUSAL. IT IS ROUGHLY A BOUND THIRTY-FIVE PAGE BOOKLET. A STRICTLY PERSONNEL ACCOUNT.

YOUR RESPONSE WILL BE APPRECIATED.

SINCERELY,

BILL HAHN
FORMERLY-MASTER SGT.
65TH FIGHTER SQUADRON
57TH FIGHTER GROUP

In an Enemy Was a Friend

B-17 was perhaps heavily damaged on return from combat because of the pilot's act of chivalry.

On December 20, 1943, was a typical, overcast winter day. 2d Lt. Charles L. Brown's B-17 was up for takeoff. It was 21-year-old Brown's first combat mission as an aircraft commander with the 448th Bomb Group, the target was a factory at Bremen, Germany, and his crew of 10 were to become participants in an event probably unique at the time—the air war over Europe—that would remain shrouded in mystery for many years.

As the bombers began their 10-minute climb to 27,300 feet, the temperature was low. Flak was heavy and accurate "bombs away," Brown's B-17 was hit that shattered the engine, knocked out the number one engine, damaged number two, and frequently had to be jettisoned to prevent overspeed-induced undetermined damage. Coming off target, Lieutenant Brown was unable to maintain the formation and became an outcast.

Immediately, the lone B-17 came under a series of attacks from 12 to 15 Bf-109s and that lasted for more than 15 minutes. The number three engine quit and would produce only 1,000 r.p.m. Oxygen, hydraulic, and electrical systems were damaged, and controls were only partially effective. The bomber's 11 defenses were reduced by the explosion to only the two top turret gunners. One forward-firing nose gunner and one tailgunner were killed and one of the crew in the rear was killed by wounds or exposure to the frigid air. Lieutenant Brown took a bullet fragment in his chest.

Brown figured the only way to survive this pitifully un-

equal battle was to go on the offensive. Each time a wave of attackers approached, he turned into them, trying to disrupt their aim with his remaining firepower. The last thing oxygen-starved Brown remembers was reversing a steep turn, becoming inverted, and looking "up" at the ground. When he regained full consciousness, the B-17 was miraculously level at less than 1,000 feet.

Still partially dazed, Lieutenant Brown began a slow climb with only one engine at full power. With three engines seriously injured aboard, he rejected the idea of bailing out or a crash landing. The alternative was a thin chance of reaching the UK. While nursing the battered bomber toward England, Brown looked out the right window and saw a Bf-109 flying on his wing. The pilot waved, then flew across the B-17's nose and motioned Brown to land in Germany, which the aircraft commander refused to do. After escorting them for several miles out over the North Sea, the Luftwaffe pilot saluted, rolled over, and disappeared. Why had he not shot them down? The answer did not emerge for many years.

The B-17 did make it across 250 miles of storm-tossed North Sea and landed at Seething near the English coast, home of the 448th Bomb Group, which had not yet flown its first mission. The crew was debriefed on their mission, including the strange encounter with the Bf-109. For unknown reasons, the debriefing was classified "secret" and remained so for many years. Lieutenant Brown went on to complete a combat tour, finish college, accept a regular commission, and serve in the Office of Special Investigations, with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and in other Air Force and State Department assignments until his retirement. He now lives in Miami, Fla., where he is founder and president of an energy and environmental research center.

The image of his strange encounter with the Bf-109 remained firmly embedded in Charlie Brown's memory. In 1986, he began a search for the anonymous pilot. Finally, in 1990,



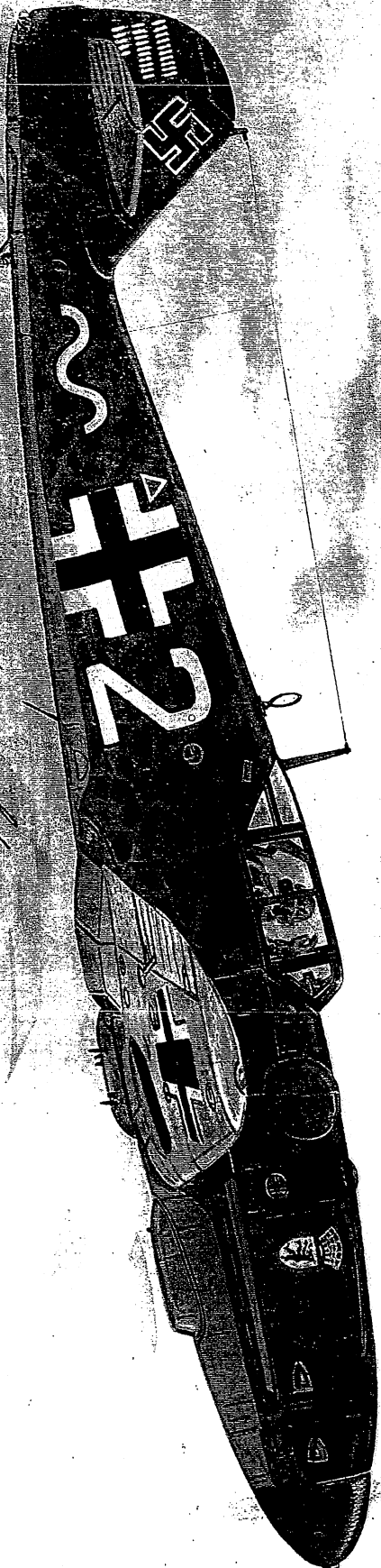
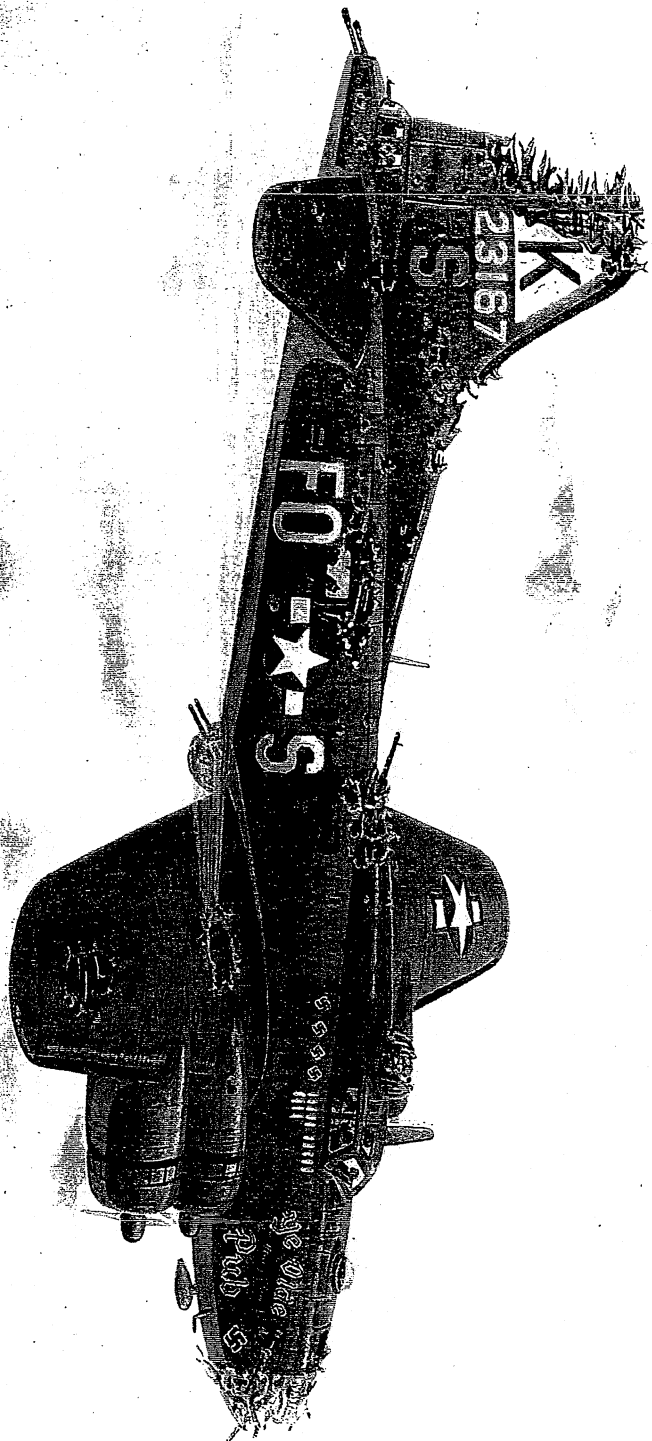
Stigler (left) and Brown met 45 years after the war and became close friends.

Charles L. Brown
1-7-87

former Oberleutnant Franz Stigler, now living in Canada, responded to a notice published in a newsletter for German fighter pilots. By comparing time, place, and aircraft markings, it was determined that Stigler was the chivalrous pilot who had allowed Brown's crew to live. Not surprisingly, Brown and Stigler have become close friends.

On that December day in 1943, there had been two persuasive reasons why Stigler should have shot down the B-17. First, earlier in the day, he had downed two four-engine bombers and needed only one more that day to earn a Knight's Cross. Second, his decision to not finish off the aircraft was a court-martial offense in Nazi Germany and if revealed could have led to his execution. He considered these alternatives while flying formation with the B-17, "the most heavily damaged aircraft I ever saw that was still flying." He could see the wounded aboard and thought, "I cannot kill these half-dead people. It would be like shooting at a parachute."

Franz Stigler's act of chivalry has been justly, though belatedly, honored by several military organizations here and abroad. On the other hand, Charles Brown was not decorated for his heroism over Germany, which never was reported by the 448th Bomb Group at Seething to his commanders. Such are the fortunes of war and its aftermath.



Charles T. Brown
B-29 Superfortress
372nd Bomb

James H. Miller
342nd Bomb

Harper
1-88

A SPECIAL VIEW OF AN UNUSUAL AIR ENGAGEMENT DURING THE
EUROPEAN AIR OFFENSIVE OF WORLD WAR II

“THE ULTIMATE HONOR”

Artist: r. harper

A SALUTE BY GERMAN FIGHTER ACE IN Bf-109 TO B-17 CREW,
AFTER THEIR AIRCRAFT SURVIVED EXTENSIVE DAMAGE DUE TO
FLAK AND ATTACKS BY 15 LUFTWAFFE FIGHTER PILOTS.

December 20, 1943, Northern Germany
U.S. B-17 Pilot/Acft. Cdr.: Charles L. Brown, Weston, W. Va.
527 Sq., 379th BG, 1st Div., VIII Bomber Command
German Bf-109 Pilot: Franz Stigler, 6./JG 27
Source: “THE 13 MINUTE GAP”

On December 20, 1943 the 8th Bomber Command attacked targets in the Bremen, Germany complex. B-17-F aircraft No. 42-3167, of the 379th Bomb Group (H), marked with a large triangle K, was severely damaged by flak on the bomb run. Shortly thereafter the B-17 was attacked by 15 Luftwaffe fighters, with the engagement lasting between 13 and 22 minutes. Somewhat later a single Bf-109 made a non-firing approach to the badly damaged B-17 and ended up flying formation on the right wing. The German pilot visually inspected the damaged B-17, nodded to the American crew, and after about two minutes, saluted, rolled over and departed. Although the B-17 had suffered severe flak and fighter inflicted damage and four crew casualties, it successfully returned to England.

The B-17 pilot and crew feel that the untold story of this unique act of chivalry/camaraderie during combat in World War II, should be recognized and reported. “THE ULTIMATE HONOR” was painted by Robert L. Harper, at that time an air intelligence officer in England, who helped remove casualties from the B-17. The complete details of the mission and post mission activities are covered in the narratives “THE 13 MINUTE GAP” and “THE 13 MINUTE GAP — REVISITED” by Charles L. Brown, the B-17 pilot.

*David Hutton put together
a "Memory Tour" of Italy
beginning March 01, 1998
returning on March 16.*

*It was a trip filled with
many memories and
lot's of conversation.*

*Leon Jansen either had a
fantastic memory or he
kept a running diary with
constant preping by the
Tour Guide-Lorenzo Epifani*

I have decided it to be so well written I
wanted it incorporated in this rough
history of our years overseas. He lends
a different perspective after 56 years.
A good way to end the story!

Revised Edition
March 2000

WW II 57TH FIGHTER GROUP VETERANS

ITALY/CORSICA REVISITED TOUR

MARCH 1998

At the 57th Fighter Group reunion held in St. Petersburg, Florida in September 1997, it was announced that an attempt was being made to set-up a tour to revisit Italy. A show of hands was held in order to determine how many people would definitely be interested in going. Approximately sixty indicated a definite interest. With this information David T. Hutton began serious negotiations with Mr. Van F. Singelis, AAA Travel Services in Palm Beach Gardens, FL. Results of these negotiations ended in a fantastic tour referred to as the "57th Fighter Group Veterans - Italy / Corsica Revisited" tour. The tour itself was handled by TRAFALGAR TOURS. A final count of forty two individuals were in the starting gates when the bell rang that actually set this tour in motion. The tour scheduled dates were March 1 through March 16, 1998. Four individuals began their trip on February 27th. The following summation of the tour as I experienced it is submitted for those who may be interested.

February 27, 1998:

Grady F. and his new bride, Alice (preferably Rusty) Davenport left Tampa approximately the same time as Joyce and I were leaving Miami, scheduled to land at Kennedy International Airport within three minutes of each other, actually it was closer to fifteen minutes. None the less our rendezvous took place and we enjoyed the sights and sounds of a major International Airport in full swing. At 1830 hours we note the sensation of motion and realize we are on our way to Milano, Italy our intended destination. For the next eight hours and a few minutes you have a snack or two, various liquids of your choice, watch a movie, stare out the window if your lucky or sit jammed in your seat like a sardine in a can. Take a nap it is dark outside, unless those two night-time travelers "Arthritis" and "Cramps" came on board with you. WOW! what was that noise? Nothing to be disturbed about, 'twas just the breaking of day. Scan the skies, clear blue, look below, snow covered mountains, the Alps of Switzerland. Check your time, it is already 0800 hours AM in Milano, we will be landing right on schedule, 0830 February 28. I just realized what the letters TWA painted on the side of the airplane means. You have never heard the name "Time Wise Airline"? Nice landing and roll-out. Initial stages of chaos was noted prior to the seat-belt sign being turned off subsequent to the airplane reaching a motionless state at its designated parking place. Finally off the airplane, legs a bit wobbly, sort of like a new-born colt. Four hundred yards to

the main terminal where we met the customs and immigration people. Hey! that was easy, now where do we go from here. Our tour information papers say we are to proceed to the Hotel Forte Agip Asagio. Unfamiliarity and misunderstanding led to two extremely educational experiences. (1) An extended mileage trip from the Malpensa Airport to the Hotel. We traveled three or four times the distance necessary, and (2) we had not studied the currency exchange rate enough to prevent being taken by a New York type cab driver. Experience is one of the fastest teachers in the world. Costly but we are safely at the hotel. Check-in completed, now for a hot shower and, No, who is that knocking at our door. Well bless your pea-picking heart it is none other than a Mr. Lorenzo Epifani who we quickly learn is to be our tour guide. A short conference with Mr. Epifani, who later joined us for dinner in one of the restaurants in the hotel. He inquired of us information relevant to this group of American W.W.II veterans and something about the specific places that was in the schedule as he had never been to these places. Also we were given a briefing as to what was to take place the following day and some suggestions as to how we four might spend our time prior to the arrival and assembly of the other thirty-eight members of the tour who would be arriving the next day, March 1st between the hours of 0730 and 1350 hours Milano time at both Milano airports (Malpensa and Linate)

MARCH 1, 1998 SUNDAY

A new day and totally revitalized by a good nights sleep. Gee! very dense fog covers the area. First off we have some breakfast, a wide selection of edibles which to my satisfaction included Corn Flakes. Biggest disappointment at breakfast was experienced by those who drank coffee. When traveling abroad I would suggest carrying a supply of instant coffee packets. Mid-morning and we four are off to see at least a part of Milano. Of course everybody goes to the Milano Galleria the majestic meeting place for all strangers in the city. Once through the Galleria, you undoubtedly will visit the Gothic Milano Duomo (Milan Cathedral) an architectural wonder with 135 spires covering its roof with a statue atop each of the spires. A total of over 2000 statues set in niches cover the walls of the Duomo. The foundation was laid in 1385 yet it was not completed until 1813. This is the third largest Cathedral in Europe. St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican City at Rome and the Cathedral in Seville, Spain being larger. Also of interest was the world famous Opera House, Teatro alla Scala, (Theater at the Stairs). Due to refurbishing and other interior repairs we were unable to achieve access to this historic building. Several other historic and interesting places were visited, not all were accessible and stamina had began to run low. Hence we returned to the Galleria and found a sort of side-walk cafe in which we rested our weary feet and legs while partaking of some nourishment. Then it was another trip through the Galleria and adjoining shops...looking....looking....looking until time demanded our presence at the predesignated rendezvous point where we joined our tour group that had arrived earlier in the day. Thence assembly at our bus for transport back to the Hotel Forte Agip in Asagio. A pre-planed welcoming party was delayed twenty-four hours

due to the fatigue of all personnel concerned. Dinner was served in one of the hotel's dinning rooms after which for a short period of time chit-chat and eintröduction's of ole! friends took place and soon there after relaxation at the end of a long trip from the other side of the Atlantic.

MARCH 2, 1998 MONDAY

0600 hours, telephonic reveille, luggage outside your hotel room door by or before 0700, breakfast at 0700, board our new diesel-powered air-conditioned bus at 0800.

Led by our tour guide, Lorenzo Epifani, the following personnel were boarded: Paul and Marian Carll - 64; Earl Lovick - 64; Bob and Shirley Loucks - 64; George and Ginny Berglund - 64; James and Phyllis Long - 65; Myron and Eleanor Smith - 65; Gordon and Pat Markle - 65; Wayne and Georgiann Ukena - 65; Bill and Shirley Hahn - 65; Edward "Steve" and Dorothy Stevens -65; Ernest and Jo Kemp - 65; Betty Leaf and Natalie Nichols - 66; Paul Bangiola -66; Cecelia Bangiola -66; Antoinette (Bangiola) Ayres -66; Jake and June Amacher - 66; Hugh and Norma Lee -66; David and Jo Hutton -66; Leon and Joyce Jansen -66; Grady and "Rusty" Alice Davenport -66; Roy Gregg and Gerri Head -66; Harry and Joan Gogan -66; with Wayne and Shirley Dodds -66.

All aboard and the Italy/Corsica Revisited tour is underway right on schedule. Andrea our diesel-powered chariot captain soon makes every one feel at ease by the skill and finesse displayed in maneuvering the bus through rush hour traffic in departing Milan eastbound on the Autostrada della Serentissima (super-highway) skirting the cities of Bergamo and Brescia enroute to our first stop. Geographically this stop was at a place known as a summer resort area located on the southwest corner of Lake Garda. The primary reason in scheduling this stop, herein after referred to as Situation stops, is for the comfort and convenience of the passengers. As every one knows when traveling by automobile or bus "Situations Stops" are necessary in order to maintain passenger comfort or a drastic situation could develop into an emergency.

Prior to departing Desenzano de Garda we skirted portions of the boundary of Villafranca di Verona Airdrome, the last operational landing ground from which combat operations were conducted. The move from Grosetto to Villafranca was made approximately a month before hostilities ended in Europe. Departing the airdrome area we proceeded to the city of Verona. Verona of ancient times remains enclosed by a wall constructed of brick. Transport such as buses or large trucks are not allowed inside the walled portion of the city, however, sightseers and shoppers would be wise to stay alert and keep an eye open for speeding bicycles, motorcycles, mopeds, small automobiles and other motorized modes of transport. Verona presents many points of interest, one could spend a matter of days taking in the numerous points of interest, however, for us it was just a few of the highlights. The Roman Arena of ancient times as well as many other interesting points I am sure,

only got a quick glance. Time was allotted so as everybody could search and seek their own choice of eating place for lunch. Additionally the ladies got a bit of shopping time and of course everybody visited "Juliet's Balcony". Perhaps a bit disappointed that Juliet was missing and neither did we hear any vocal renditions of matrimonial intentions. Another interesting point I should mention was while walking from the bus into the ancient part of the city we saw first hand how the city has been rebuilt over its own ruins. At places we witnessed portions of streets and walkways two or more levels below where we were walking. Verona is a city of several beautiful Cathedrals and Basilicas, such as the Romanesque Basilica of S. Seno the first bishop of Verona and its patron saint. The ancient city was built in a loop of the Adige river, over which several famous bridges span the Adige. Near the river stands the strongly fortified castle (Castel Vecchio) which contains the municipal museum. A fairly large park near the center of the ancient Roman city is filled with statues and sculptures, a most unusual display of art work. Verona is also the point of departure for the Brenner Pass. The major road and railways between Italy and European countries north of the Alps go by way of the Brenner Pass. During W.W.II Verona was severely damaged by the heavy bombing it was subjected to. Being the major transportation terminal at the southern end of the Brenner Pass required the Axis Powers to defend it to the utmost. In retrospect the allied forces had to attack it constantly in an attempt to deprive the enemy of the use of its facilities. Hence many of the Churches and other works of Worship and Art were inadvertently damaged or destroyed. In most cases, historic landmarks have been reconstructed.

With time flying by we were directed back to our diesel powered chariot and were soon taking in the sights of the country as we cruised eastward past the city of Vicenza, hearing brief remarks from some of the former pilots as to memories of bombing the marshaling yards there as well as other targets such as the often bombed railway bridge at Cittadella and various targets in and around Castelfranco Veneto. Soon we were passing through the city of Padova. To-day Padova is frequently mentioned by the American News Media on radio and television due in part to the sizable number of American personnel that are assigned there in connection with NATO. Smoothly Andrea our chariot captain guides our chariot on toward the Queen City of the Adriatic, Venezia (Venice). Venice unlike other Italian cities is not built on the mainland of Italy. A causeway raised above the water level connects the western end of Venice to the mainland. At the eastern end of the causeway you will note a congested area which encompasses the railway terminal and switch yards, very limited parking for motor vehicles, and cramped business establishments serving the needs of the people of Venice. From this location one travels throughout Venice by flat-bottomed gondolas, out-board motor boats and larger motor launches. On our arrival in Venice we departed the bus and following our tour guide, Lorenzo, proceeded to a dock where we were embarked six to a gondola for a tour through some of the canals that connect the more than 120 small mud islands that the city is built on. The Grand Canal which winds through the length of the city in a S-shaped curve more or less divides these small islands

into two groups. There are more than 150 smaller canals that provide the way for going from one of these small mud islands to another. Also there are four hundred bridges that connect the islands. These bridges arch above the canals to let the high-powered gondolas pass beneath. Two famous bridges, the "RIALTO BRIDGE" located in the heart of the city and the only bridge that crosses the Grand Canal and the other famous bridge is the "BRIDGE OF SIGHS". This bridge crosses a canal running between the Doge's Palace and an old prison. The bridge has two passage-ways, one going from the prison to the court rooms in the Doge's Palace and the other from the Palace court rooms to the prison. Do you get the picture?

During our gondola ride through some of the canals of the city. Our bus which had crossed back over the causeway and delivered our luggage to the Antony Venice Hotel located in Venice-Mestre, Italy, was now awaiting our return so as to transport us to the Hotel Antony where we were to spend the night. Subsequent to check-in and a freshening up, the delayed welcoming party was held followed by dinner served in the Hotel restaurant after which you were at your leisure for the remainder of the evening. An announcement was posted on the bulletin board in the hotel lobby informing all of the group as to a 0600 hour wake-up call. Breakfast would be served in the hotel restaurant at 0700 hour with bus departure scheduled for 0800. Tour group's second experience but certainly not the last, with elevators that held either two people plus two bags or four people, no bags. March 2, 1998 has been a pleasant, enlightening and enjoyable day.

MARCH 3, 1998 TUESDAY

Breakfast over and we are on the bus and ready for the 0800 hour scheduled departure. To begin the day we board a private launch at an unknown Marina and cruise down the Grand Canal to a city docking area where we disembarked and began a leisure stroll along the Grand Canal, crossing several small bridges which span small canals. One such bridge spanned the "Canale di Aan Marco" from which you could view the "Bridge Of Sighs" as the Doge's Palace borders on the Canale di Aan Marco. Shortly after viewing the Bridge of Sighs you find yourself entering the Plassa Of Saint Mark which is the center of Venice. The Cathedral Of Saint Mark and the Doge's Palace stand behind the Campanile Of Saint Mark which is a high bell tower overlooking the piazza. In departing the piazza we were led to a glass factory, truthfully it was more of an enclosed show and sales area. Yes we were shown how glass is made, more so as to how they blow and shape a mass of material into beautiful glassware. More time is spent in the sales rooms than in the furnace room demonstrating how the art of glass blowing is done. Many different metals are used in making venetian glassware.

The tour of the glass factory and the Piazza Of Saint Mark plus the numerous shops and points of interest along the Grand Canal consumed our allotted time and the 1100 hour embarkation was slightly delayed, however, without much concern. At

the end of an enlightening trip up the Grand Canal to the Isle di Burano we debarked from the yacht and were escorted from the docks to what I shall call the business section of the Island. During our visit to the Island di Burano we were rather impressed with two factors other than the fabulous lunch we enjoyed. We were told that fishing is the principal occupation of the populace living on the island, and as we were walking to the restaurant we visited an outdoor fish market. Seeing the market I believe most of our group would verify fishing as a major occupation for these people. As we strolled through the streets on our way to the restaurant where we were to eat lunch we were amazed at the varied color schemes used in the painting of their houses. Colors are used as a means of identification of families. Every house or dwelling that has more than one color indicates there are members of two or more separate families living there, also any other dwelling showing the same color identifies the occupants as family members of said families. An attempt is made by painting an outside area to designate what portion of the building or dwelling each occupant or family live in. An ingenious idea I might say. Prior to leaving Burano the ladies were allotted a bit of time for their pleasure. Of course when one is having fun time flies, and true to form the hours had rapidly gone by and it was time we again get aboard our private launch and return to the Marina from which we departed earlier in the day. To the friendly people of Burano we waved a warm and heart felt "Arrivederci".

As on the way to Burano from Saint Mark's piazza numerous points of interest were pointed out and oft times a brief historical summation would be rendered by our very knowledgeable tour guide, Lorenzo Epifani. Upon arrival at the Marina we quickly left the private launch we had enjoyed sailing about the Adriatic Sea and boarded our bus. Punctuality must have been bred into Andrea, he was always where he was supposed to be with the bus at the specified time. Soon we were back at the Hotel Antony our place of residence for the evening and night. Adequate time to freshen up, relax with a refreshing toddy perhaps then at 1830 hours, dinner in the hotel restaurant after which you were at your leisure. A trip to Italy should include a visit to the Queen City Of The Adriatic. One major point I failed to mention in the beginning of our visit to Venice. All of the small mud islands upon which Venice is built lie in a sheltered lagoon that stretches from the mouth of the Piave river southward to the Po river, a distance of approximately eighty miles.

MARCH 4. 1998 WEDNESDAY

0600 Telephonic reveille, 0700 luggage outside room door, breakfast at 0700. 0800 board bus. All present and accounted for as we bid farewell to the people of Venice-Mestre and head westward on Autostrada E70 toward Padova, however, we took the bypass thus skirting Padova which was a time saving decision, as distance to travel versus time allowed was rather critical for to-day. Due to an unfortunate accident Jo Kemp injured a foot and may have to leave the tour. Will have doctor examine it when we get to Florence. As we quietly rolled along enjoying the country

side and frequently listening to interesting comments by our tour guide relevant to this farming area of the Po river valley we were traversing at the time, we suddenly realized we were approaching the Po river and just to our left was the city of Ferrara. To most of the former pilots in the group this city revived a few memories. Personally I recall an incident that I shall probably remember for the rest of my life. On an early morning mission, the assigned target I can not recall, with a flight of eleven other Exterminators, as we were approaching Ferrara I advised the flight to begin evasive action. It was standard operating practice (SOP) to begin varying ones heading and altitude as a defensive tactic against anti-aircraft fire. Having advised the flight, I decided to fly straight and level as we proceeded on course over the city of Ferrara just to see if the enemy gunners were awake and aware the twelve Thunderbolts were passing over their position. Needless to say I soon found out just how awake and aware they were. Thank the Lord, it wasn't a point detonating fused round, had it been this story would never have been told. A large hole in my left wing was evidence of just how awake and aware those 88 millimeter gunners were. Better to change heading and altitude than to encounter the enemy gunners foolishly.

The Po river valley is noted for agriculture and as we rode through this part it was a pleasure to see advancements that technology had brought to the farmers and I am sure the improved farming methods have increased production immensely. The country side as viewed while we rode down the super highways is a lot different than it appeared in 1944 and 1945 when we viewed it from a military fighter plane.

Bologna a major railroad, industrial, and manufacturing center located at the southern edge of the Po river valley and the foothills of the Apennine Mountains now lies just ahead. In as much as no specific points of interest were scheduled in Bologna a route directly through the city was taken, and with the finesse of an expert our bus driver maneuvered our diesel powered bus through Bologna and onward into, through and over the Apennine mountains descending into the hills and plains of the provinces known as Tuscany and Umbria. A thought occurred to me as we were crossing the Apennines, as I could truly see the ruggedness of these mountains, and much worse if snow capped and surface temperatures well below freezing. I thought of those friends of ours, yours and mine, former fellow pilots who unfortunately were shot-down, evaded the enemy, then conquered the obstacles of such terrain during some of nature's most adverse meteorological conditions to return to allied hands. Do or can we visualize and appreciate the tremendous desire, faith and will power those individuals had to possess in order to attain their goal? While still in the hills approaching the city of Florence we exited the Autostrada to visit one of only two United States Military Cemeteries now in Italy. All other US cemeteries have been closed. Remains of those lost during W.W. II if requested by the family have been returned to the US. The remains of all others have been exhumed and interned in one of the two United States Military Cemeteries. The one at Florence and the Rome-Sicily Cemetery. In the event no remains were ever found, there is a "Wall Of The Missing" where the Name, Rank,

Serial Number and date of demise is engraved. The Florence cemetery is located in a beautiful location on a slightly sloping hillside with the Chapel, Monument and the Wall Of The Missing situated at the top of the slope mid-way between the outer boundaries of the cemetery. Twenty-eight former members of the 57th Fighter Group are interned here or their names are engraved on the Wall Of The Missing. Upon our arrival the group assembled near the steps at the foot of the Memorial Monument where a brief explanation concerning the cemetery was given by an official of the cemetery. Following this we placed a wreath at the foot of the Wall Of The Missing, then in tribute to those interned there, Paul Carll - 64th Squadron, Jim Long - 65th Squadron, and myself - 66th squadron read the names of those from each squadron who gave their lives in the defense of freedom after which a prayer given by Harry L. Gogan closed the ceremony.

Leaving the cemetery we continued our trip for the day into the city of Florence where we checked into the Hotel Raffaello for our one night stay in Florence. The afternoon was taken up in the usual tourist manner. Visiting the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Flores a world renowned church and the accompanying Baptistery which has a magnificent solid bronze door. Also there is Giotto's Bell Tower another outstanding architectural structure which draws one's attention when in the vicinity. Florence is the city noted to have a large portion of the various works of art made by many of the world's greatest artists, painters and engravers. While the majority of the group were sightseeing our friends Ernest and Jo Kemp were being escorted to a hospital by our tour guide Lorenzo to get medical attention relevant to her injured foot. After an afternoon of sightseeing and some shopping we returned to our hotel, relaxed a bit, then freshened up and prepared for dinner. Prior to dinner it was announced that Jo Kemp had some broken bones in her foot. She and Ernest would be leaving the tour and return to the United States. An unfortunate event for the Kemp's. Needless to say, the remainder of the group wished them a speedy trip home and a rapid recovery for Jo.

This evening our dinner is not one of those included in the tour price, however, everyone had previously agreed to a highly recommended restaurant that reportedly served the largest high quality steaks in Italy. Under the guidance of our tour director, Andrea masterfully propels our bus from the Hotel Raffaello into the hills surrounding the city of Florence and we soon arrive at a castle like structure sitting atop a hill. Upon entry into the building you were cordially greeted and handed a goblet of champagne, an assisting lift to help you up the two flights of stairs where you then entered a large dining area and escorted to your table. Upon being seated you are immediately served a bottle of effervescent Tuscany White Wine and a bottle of elegant Red Wine, consumption of which remained in your command. Almost as quickly as the "Spirits" arrival comes the Chef's representative seeking your likes of the Chef's delights for the evening. Superfluous to say the entree's were excellent, my choice being a fillet mignon. The appetizers consisted of various types of cheese, Italian Sausages, celery and genuine Italian Olives, all delectably arranged on a bed of lettuce. Next comes one of those famous Italian salads and

accompanying platters of pasta. Almost before the appetizer, the salad and pasta can be consumed the entree arrives. To comply with the rule when socially dining one should partake of nourishment in an atmosphere of pleasantries, hence a young Italian lass with masculine accompaniment presented vocal and musical renditions of American and Italian lyrics for the listening and dancing pleasure of all. Not to be outdone the Master baker delivered a Bono desert that would sweeten and cheer any ole' grouch. After this delightful dinner and entertaining evening the troops settled back in the reclining seats of our diesel-powered chariot with thoughts that, "THE WORLD MAY NOT BE SUCH A BAD PLACE AFTER ALL" as we returned to the Hotel Raffaello. March 4, 1998 has been a great day sightseeing, a day which brought back memories of events many years ago, as well as those emotions experienced in paying respect and honor to our fallen friends and countrymen.

MARCH 5, 1998 THURSDAY

The usual 0600 telephonic reveille followed by the basic routine while on a tour. Breakfasts so far are very similar in fare. The usual complaint can be heard, sure wish I had a cup of American style coffee. Hot tea rapidly became the outstanding substitute. I did not have a problem as I gave up coffee a few years ago. Fresh milk always seemed to be available as were various fruit juices.

Breakfast over and we are on our way to the sea-port city of Livorno. Another memorable place that all the pilots seemed to vividly recall. Our ever thoughtful guide chose a highway that paralleled the well known Arno river which runs from the vicinity of Florence westward to the Ligurian Sea. Most of the former pilots flew many of their sorties against targets located along the Arno river which the enemy used as a natural barrier in slowing the advance of the fifth and eighth armies in their push to the Apennines. Livorno played a major part in the enemies logistic plans and as such was a major target for attack by allied air force units which included the 57th Fighter Group. Arriving in the Livorno harbor area our guide pointed out several of the buildings and other types of structures still bearing the signs of the tremendous bombings during the war. To-day the Livorno harbor is again one of Italy's major sea-ports and many large sea-going vessels and ferry boats come into and depart from the Livorno harbor on a daily schedule. After a short delay during which required paper work was accomplished we began boarding the Corsican Ferry which took us across approximately eighty nautical miles of the Ligurian Sea to the City of Bastia on the northeastern coast of the French Island of Corsica. This was a four hour trip and I believe was enjoyed by every member of our group. As we approached the Corsican coast and the City of Bastia all of us who were there fifty-four years earlier were aghast at the tremendous changes we could readily see. Not only in the harbor but in the entire city and surrounding country-side. Once debarkation was complete and we had boarded the bus we slowly made our way out of the city and headed south along the eastern coast line on a new highway closely paralleling the old road that ran through Folelli and

past the Alto Air Base where we were stationed. Doing some country-side sight-seeing as we continued southward until we arrived at the Residence De La Lagune a sea-side beach Hotel. The location was great, however, we were obviously the first guests of the season as several of the opening tasks were not yet completed, nor had the heat been turned on so as the rooms would be warm. Electric heating units were used and the use of electricity is rigidly controlled on Corsica as it is brought in from France via underseas transmission cable. Corsica evidently does not operate any electrical generating plants on the island. So being hotels are prohibited from turning on electrical power for heating purposes until 1700 hours. This created some discomfort and a few unfavorable comments. Regardless of the discomfort our people coped with every drawback encountered, especially after the bar was opened or each person managed to come up with some sort of a pre-dinner cocktail of their own. Conversation among the group was varied and at times mixed with a huge amount of sign language when conversing with our Corsican friends, Jean Michael Casanova, Dominique Taddei, Jean Santoni and a few others I do not recall their names. Following dinner a few short introductory and welcoming speeches, then a cheery Good-night and off to our rooms for a few hours of peaceful slumber. Another great day.

MARCH 6, 1998 FRIDAY

To-day we began very similar but a bit later and no luggage to contend with. We spent the day sight-seeing and touring this "Ile de la Beaute" Our first intermediate stop was the city of Corte the Old Capital which sits high in the mountains of north central Corsica. The drive up the mountain roads was very enjoyable and interesting. In many areas we drove along side mountain streams that appeared to be a haven for mountain trout. In numerous small valleys we observed plots of land being tilled in preparation for planting and in others deep green colored plants were growing. Also a rather frequent sight was various kinds of livestock grazing in the fields and on the gentler slopes of the mountain sides. Evidence of the destruction of road bridges by the Germans was still quite visible. Snow covered mountain scenes that must have been painted by artists many years ago add to the picturesque beauty as you continue the upward climb to Corte. Suddenly you round a curve and there before your eyes sitting on the upper slopes and pinnacle of a mountain ridge is the city of Corte. We entered the city and proceeded the full length of the main street which was lined with a large variety of stores and small shops. Upon reaching the square at or near the center of the city we departed the bus as the bus was not allowed to remain in the square. Shoppers scattered in all directions. The sight-seers, at least some of them, tackled the steps and stone paved streets up the hill to the University of Corte campus. The University Museum was only available to guided tours so this was passed by. Continuing our unguided stroll through the city we slowly made our way back down the pinnacle the University is located on to the main street of town. Being the clocks of the city indicated mid-day we search about the city to find a place to partake of some food. Peoples selections were varied and therefore chose different eating establishments. Subsequent conversations

indicated all group members were satisfied with their lunch. With half of the day gone it was time to return to the bus and begin the scenic journey down through the mountains to the town of Folelli where we are scheduled to be at 1600 hours. As fate would have it the road which was chosen for our return from Corte just happened to have considerable construction and repair work taking place. Often times mountain roads can be a bit upsetting to some people even under normal conditions, let alone having to contend with areas of construction. A little anxiety was experienced by some of our group as we made our way through several of the road construction areas. Especially those where a single lane on a temporary road bed sometimes required Andrea to stop and back-up in order to get around a very sharp turn. The more intrepid individuals offered to swap seats with those who may have been a bit weak at heart when looking almost straight down a few hundred feet or more. A probability that some spectacular views that could have been seen when looking across the Gorges de la Restonica were missed because of the interest in the road conditions over which we were traveling. A sigh of relief could be heard once we were beyond the areas of road construction. On reaching the main highway running along the east coast we turned left which of course headed us north toward the community of Penta di Cansinca and the little village (as it was in 1944) of Folelli. In 1944 it consisted of only a few small buildings. David T. Hutton who joined the 66th Fighter Squadron on the 25th of July, 1944, and I believe finished off the war at Grosseto, was the originator of this "ITALY/CORSICA - REVISITED" tour. David had been in touch for some time with Mr. Jean Michael Casanova an employee of Air France Airline and Mr. Dominique Taddei who was a mere fifteen year old boy in 1944, who remembered the American soldiers that gave him chewing gum and chocolate candy as well as an opportunity to see some movies was instrumental in arranging the events to take place at Folelli. The news of a possible visit by a group of former American soldiers that had been based at Alto spread rapidly through the community of Penta di Cansinca. The mayor of Folelli Joseph Castelli and Mrs. Donmartini, the college principal did not spare any efforts to make this visit official and to give it all the importance it deserved. Folelli and the community of Penta di Consinca laid on a welcome that every former member of the 57th Fighter Group can be proud of. On our arrival in Folelli at 1600 hours, March 6, 1998 we were met by a crowd of several hundred adults, including a group dressed in well preserved United States Army Air Corps uniforms with appropriate insignia or stripes (one young man was noted to have his stripes on upside-down). Additionally all the school children were a major portion of this reception. Adding to the magnitude of the emotions was the observation of three well maintained U.S. Military Jeeps and a Weapons Carrier, one of the jeeps bearing the squadron markings of the 64th Fighter Squadron. Intermingled were fire-engines and emergency vehicles sonorously sounding their sirens, horns and bells. Engulfed in this emotional reception we were escorted to the spot where the "Control Tower" once stood. Much of the area that was once the runway is now grape vineyards, tomato patches or overgrown in weeds and tall grasses. From this nostalgic spot we returned to the area where the school buildings now stand which is along the northern boundary of the "Alto Airbase". Returning to the Administration

Hall in the school complex the Mayor of Folelli made a formal welcoming speech after which Charles C. Leaf's widow was requested to join one of the students to unveil a marble plaque that is permanently installed in the entry to the school; "Honoring The Airmen Of The 57th Fighter Group Who Fought For Their Freedom". Following the various speeches and unveiling of the plaque, a huge buffet was served by the people of Folelli and the community of Penta di Cansinca to everyone in attendance. Prior to our departure from Folelli we were presented a box packed with food from the buffet for our consumption the next day as we again sail across the Ligurian Sea on our way back to Italy. Leaving the town of Folelli we returned to our hotel, a bit tired, but the men of the 57th Fighter Group being filled with Pride, Emotional Memories and Heart-felt Thanks for a Wonderful Welcome, again bid adieu to ALTO, (Folelli and the community of Penta di Cansinca). March 6, 1998. Truly a Day To Remember.

MARCH 7, 1998 SATURDAY

The usual wake-up call, luggage outside your room door by 0700 with breakfast at 0700. Board bus at 0800 - make sure room key was turned in at check-out desk. All room keys accounted for, off we go headed for the Bastia harbor where we boarded a Corsican Ferry for our return to Italy. Upon our arrival at the ferry dock we are obligated to wait for the ship that had just arrived to off-load its passengers and motor vehicles. During the half-hour or so prior to our starting to board, members of our group strode around on the dock taking pictures and mentally recording what they considered as outstanding features or highlights of the city and surrounding area including the harbor and associated activity. As stated when we arrived on Thursday, Bastia and its harbor had changed a lot in the past fifty-four years. Paul Bangiola and I scanned the city several times trying to recall some of the features we remembered in the spring of '44. Embarkation had begun which meant we would soon be underway. Departing the harbor we stood on the deck to wave "Good-bye" to the residents of Bastia and the populace of "Isle de la Beaute", then casting our eyes toward the sun and the cloud streaked skies that lay beyond the bow of the ship. With calm seas the gently rolling ship appeared to turn into a large bassinet for a sizable number of adults. During the crossing from Bastia to Livorno, the pre-packed goodies presented us by the people of Folelli, was consumed without question.

Arriving in Livorno harbor we rapidly debarked from the ferry and boarded our diesel powered chariot. With a satisfactory head count by our distinguished tour guide we were soon motoring north to the city of Piza where we got first hand experience in how to cope with some of Italy's famous hucksters and street sales people, many of them coming from various parts of the world. Safely escaping the efforts of the hucksters we slowly strode into the area which surrounds the famous "Leaning Tower Of Piza". I quickly checked the outside appearance closely to see if pock-marks made by fifty caliber machine gun fire was still noticeable as Theodore "Ted" Matula says he strafed the tower the day he was shot-down. His opponent

obviously hit his target - I saw no pock-marks on the Leaning Tower Of Piza. Sorry Ted. The famous landmark appears to be reasonably safe and secure from falling over. Modern engineers have apparently provided the much needed support in the proper places. After much picture taking and some more browsing through the hucksters offerings we assembled at our means of transportation and again enjoy the sights of the country-side as we continue our sojourn into the province of Tuscany, the land of Chianti wine. Now I know there is a difference between "Diego Red" and good "Tuscany" wine. Diesel-powered buses (Chariots) are equipped with on board rest-rooms, none the less, "Situation Stops" are scheduled at various points along the way. As the miles go by so does the time and as we approach the City of Grosseto we leave the Autostrada and take the road that leads to Grosseto de Marina which is currently a large beach resort area where the officers of the 57th Fighter Group were quartered when the unit first arrived back in Italy from Corsica. A drive through the resort area was picturesque, interesting yet some what disappointing because no one could identify the sea-shore villa they had lived in many years ago. So many more buildings and houses made it almost impossible. A consensus opinion was reached by a few as to the spot "UNCLE BUD" the 65th squadron's mascot met his waterloo. Without further delay we proceed eastward toward Grosseto. WOW! Was that the sound of a Pratt - Whitney R-2800 being run up? No it was just a fleeting memory as we passed the airport area. Forging steadily onward through the out-skirts toward the center of the city looking for places or things we might remember. Amazing!, but Harry Gogan claims he attended church services at this very church which stands in the town piazza at the center of the city. Stop, Park, off load the bus. Gosh! We sure could use the knowledge Ken Lewis had of this city, there were senoritas living in Grosseto even during the war. What is this assembly of people across the street? Oh! Lorenzo is talking with an elderly man, asking if he remembers anything about American airmen flying from the Grosseto airport, response was affirmative, how ever he could not provide any specific information. I picked a hotel I first thought the 66th officers were billeted in but soon determined I was wrong, it faced the wrong direction as well as being to near the center of town. OH! oh! Lorenzo has cornered another Italian gentleman and from the reaction maybe he has gotten a strike (a term often used by avid fishermen when they hope they are going to catch a fish). Yes the man seemed to remember quite well the American airmen who gave him chewing gum and chocolate candy, even lire when he shined their shoes and boots. HE REMEMBERED; the Exterminator logo as painted on the nose of the squadron's airplanes and frequently seen sewn on the military jackets of squadron personnel, the hotel where the squadron officers were billeted, the school building that was used as quarters for the enlisted personnel as well as the squadron orderly-room. Learning this David Hutton, Roy Gregg, Hugh Lee and myself followed Francisco to these various sites, as well as the large office building that housed the administrative functions of Group Headquarters and also provided quarters for the personnel of Headquarters Squadron. Francisco remembered the fact the unit left Grosseto for a short time but returned soon after the war ended. Francisco was a mere ten year old boy at the time the group was stationed in Grosseto. As I write

this summation I am angry with myself for failing to obtain more information from this man who obviously knew a lot more than what David Hutton, Roy Gregg, Hugh Lee and myself got from him during the limited time we were able to converse with him. Time and language difference were obstacles we failed to overcome during the limited time we spent with Francisco. During the time David, Roy , Hugh and I spent with Francisco, the other members of the group boarded the bus and proceeded to the Hotel Lorena, our billets for the two nights we would spend in Grosseto and surrounding area. Nothing the time of day, and had been given directions by Francisco the four of us had to hot-foot it to the hotel in order to prepare ourselves for a special evening. Walking to our hotel enriched our knowledge of the City Of Grosseto as the population has grown to over sixty-thousand people. Adequate time was available for the four of us to remove the soils of the day and restore an appearance suitable to attend a classic Italian restaurant for an unforgettable dinner.

At a pre-set time we boarded the bus and was taken to a special restaurant some thirty miles from Grosseto on the very top of one of those Italian hills, deep in the wine making area of Tuscany. Darkness has settled over the country-side as we travel through the Grosseto area of the Province of Tuscany the place where Chianti Wine is produced. Little can be seen of the country-side due to darkness and the road seemingly belongs to us as there is very little traffic since we exited the autostrada shortly after leaving Grosseto. Approximately forty-five minutes after leaving the hotel we arrive at our destination. Frequently destinations are so located that parking can be a problem, especially for vehicles the size of a forty-nine seat bus. Such being the situation at the time. Departing the bus we enjoyed a muscle limbering stroll up the hillside to the building that housed the restaurant. Once inside only a couple flights of stairs and you find yourself in the restaurant. Truly an interesting place. It struck me as a classic Italian restaurant. One that served unusually good Italian food, yet unknown or unheard of by the masses of people who regularly eat out. It obviously was the type restaurant that primarily catered to customers of the surrounding area plus those others who were knowledgeable of its location and quality of food served. From the Hors d'oeuvres through the desert the food was excellent and of course the wine was superb. The atmosphere and service certainly matched the quality of the food. I must admit that I departed the restaurant with one of the Hors d'oeuvres, a "Wild Boar Sausage" which I retained until just prior to arriving back in the USA, then I ate it because had I not, the Customs Officer would have. With forty happy individuals on the bus we head back to Grosseto. On the way back our distinguished tour guide, Lorenzo, revealed his vocal talents and led the group in a sing-a-long. After fifty plus years these Gals and Guys of the 57th Fighter Group are a fantastic group. The return trip seemed a lot shorter than the one out to the restaurant. Arriving back at the Hotel Lorena everybody check the bulletin board for any changes in the schedule for March 8th. Nothing other than the usual routine. With a few final comments relevant to the sights and events of the day, a pleasant "Good Night" was offered by one and all.

March 7th has certainly been a rather long day. It has been filled with both memories of friends, events, emotional experiences, new experiences, places and many other things we will no doubt recall many times as the dial of time moves onward. March 7th, 1998 a day to remember.

MARCH 8, 1998 SUNDAY

Ring-a-ling Ting-a-ling 0600 hour, cheap watch must be wrong - here is my expensive one, I'll be it says the same, 0600. So what we have been experiencing these early morning departures for more than a week so it's up and at 'em again. What's this "OUT OF ORDER" sign on the elevator? Bunch of rowdy kids playing with the lift last night. Pre and Post-breakfast exercise, good for a person, especially prior to boarding a bus for another day of travel through the Tuscany region to the city of Siena. Like many other Italian cities and towns a lot of ancient and medieval history and art can be seen in this nostalgic city. The area of the old city covers approximately two and one-half miles inside the walls and the plan is centered over three hills which resembles that of Perugia. The pilots of the 57th Fighter Group who flew most, if not all, of their missions over Italy will well remember such names / places as Perugia, Arezzo, Orvieto, Viterbo and Volterra not specifically for the architectural wonders that may be located in a certain city, but other memorable reasons known only to them.

Siena has a renowned University, founded in 1203, which is limited to the faculties of Law and Medicine. A major event held in Siena, twice each year, July 2nd and August 16th, draws a lot of European celebrities. The horse races known as the "Palio delle Contrade" are held in the public square, known as the Piazza di Vittorio Emanuele, which in shape resembles an ancient theater. Siena is divided into seventeen contrades (wards) and every year ten of these contrades, chosen by lot, each sends one horse to compete for the prize. The delle Contrade is very characteristic and the whole festivity bears a medieval stamp in harmony with the architecture and the history of the town. As with most ancient or medieval towns large trucks and buses are not allowed inside the walls of the cities. Hence we were privileged to walk into the inner city, a distance a bit too far for some. Wind and blowing sand lessened the pleasure of walking, none the less those who attempted also succeeded in reaching the public square where some shopping was done and I am sure everyone selected a place and had lunch. After lunch there was an easy stroll through the streets where more window shopping occurred until we rendezvoused in front of the Cathedral at the entrance to the walled city, where again we experienced the discomfort of the wind and blowing sand as we make our way back to the bus. The length of time spent between departure from the public square and our departure point necessitated a situation stop be made before reaching the highway to Grosseto. Once on the highway everyone seemed to relax, lay back and close their eyes or observe the country-side as we rolled smoothly down the highway.

Approximately one hour after departing Siena we again enter the city limits of Grosseto and within minutes Andrea positions us right in front of the Hotel Lorena. Time for a little relaxation, perhaps a five-o'clock toddy, freshen up and "Oh! Yes. Where are we to have dinner to-night? Hotel restaurant isn't open, it's Sunday. We will send out a couple scouting parties and have them report back, things don't look to promising. The main railway station is just across the street but the scouts say they would not rate it as superior, limited menu - Pizza. Hotel Main Desk attendant advises a small restaurant about three blocks from the hotel. Scout report says it will not open until seven o'clock PM. Unable to handle forty people, maybe twenty. By 0845 PM 38 of our group had been served a very satisfactory meal. In fact some local residents were also served meals. As we left the restaurant it was noted that the owner/manager and in all likelihood the chef for the day were counting the receipts of the evening, both wearing a big smile, while uttering a cheery "ARRIVEDERCI". Benefiting by a leisure stroll from the restaurant back to the hotel, comments relevant to the places and events of the day were discussed as this ambulatory group returned to the Hotel Lorena. Finding the hotel elevators to be serviceable on arrival a happy hearty wish for a restful night to one and all with, "GOOD NIGHT MRS. CALABASH" WHERE EVER YOU ARE"

MARCH 9, 1998 MONDAY

Rrrring - a - ling Rrrring -a - ling, it's the telephonic reveille, modern sciences method of advising it is time to begin a blissful morning. No change, bags outside your room door by seven, breakfast at seven and on the bus 0800 hours. Wonder if we'll really get used to this. Everybody seems to be in a great mood. It may deteriorate if the weather does as the forecast indicated. Rain is expected in the Naples area later to-day. The country-side is a picture of farmland, groves of various type trees making a pleasant sight to see. Not quite like it was in 1944. Traveling down the ancient Aurelian Way we by-pass the cities of Orbetello, Tarquinia, at Allumiere we leave the Aurelian Way and take the Autostrada Azzuira which by-passes Civitavecchia and skirts the western and southwestern portions of Rome, passing near the Rome International Airport (Fiumicino). Continuing southeastward on the Autostrada del Sole to a place likened to a US turn-pike plaza in the vicinity of Cassino. This was a dual purpose stop, (1) a Situation Stop, and (2) the clock indicated lunch time. If seated by a window while eating lunch you could observe the Cassino Monastery sitting high on the side of a mountain pinnacle. This was an extremely questionable target during the war. The German Wehrmacht used the monastery as a lookout point from which they had a commanding view of all the approaches to Cassino. Hence the allied forces attempting to take Cassino suffered heavy casualties. As of the present I am told the Germans had vacated the monastery when the order was given to bomb it. This famous Benedictine Monastery on Monto Cassino has been the home of Benedictine monks since A.D. 529.

With our hunger satisfied we again roll onward passing through the outskirts of Caserta and Afragola, onward to the southeast passing by Mount Vesuvius and beyond into the ancient city of Pompeii. With our arrival in Pompeii came the rain. Most of the group donned rain gear of some sort or another and bravely trudged into the ancient ruins. As we advanced among the ruins attempting to hear the remarks of the tour guide while carefully taking steps of uncertainty on water slippery rocks used to pave the streets and walkways, a notably bright streak of lightening crossed the clouded sky followed by a tremendous clap of thunder. Subsequently several of the group aborted the tour of the city and returned to the bus. Those remaining continued through the ruins viewing sights that can only be described with pictures. Even the most selective adjectives fall short if a person is trying to describe what these ruins may have looked like prior to the eruption of Vesuvius in the year 79 AD. Due to meteorological conditions at the time I believe a somewhat shortened tour through the ruins occurred but without a single negative comment. Departing from the ruins of Pompeii we proceed to the city of Salerno, a quaint and historic town located at the northern most tip of the Golfo di Salerno. This is the area in which the U. S. Fifty Army established a beachhead during the big war. Our place of residence for our one night stay in Salerno was booked at the Hotel Jolly. As we departed the bus in front of the hotel we were directed through the lobby to an exit to the outside where we were led down some steps on to a walkway that led to a street which ended up in sort of a public square. Here we spent some time shopping and browsing about before returning to the hotel for dinner. Some how or other our luggage got from the bus to our rooms while we were sight-seeing, shopping and crouching around taking in the sights and activities of a bustling and busy Italian city. Subsequent to a touch up of our personal hygiene we are assembled and directed to a dining area where the pangs of hunger were abolished by the delectable choices of the hotel's culinary staff. With dinner over and the final reminiscence of the day's places and events recorded, it appears feasible to extract some warmer clothes from our luggage as the temperature is likely to lower during the next few days. March 9, 1998 another day I am sure the events and places will be recalled many times in our individual library of memories.

MARCH 10, 1998 TUESDAY

That Rrrring - a - Ling telephonic reveille is certainly accurate, exactly 0600. Luggage sort of re-worked last evening before retiring as cooler temperatures call for heavier clothing. Seems strange - the further south we go the cooler the temperatures. Low to mid-forties (F) this morning, cloudy but no sign of precipitation. Trafalgar Tours seem to have things well organized as these morning routines occur promptly as scheduled. 0600 hour wake-up call. Bags outside hotel room door at 0700, breakfast at 0700 and infrequent minor variations in the departure times. At any rate we are underway with all personnel accounted for with expectations of another enjoyable and enlightening day as we proceed easterly toward the town of Potenza which is located in the mountains about half-way between Solerno and the city of Taranto which lies at the north end of the Golfo di

Taranto on the heel of the Italian peninsula. This is a scenic drive between Solerna and Potenza as mountain drives usually are. Of course these are still the Apennine Mountains but in a different range than those we crossed between Bologna and Florence in the northern part of Italy. The town of Potenza was nearly demolished in 1980 when a severe earthquake struck Potenza and the surrounding area, however, the residents have accepted the challenges of restoring this town in the heart of these mountains in southern Italy. Evidence of the will power, desire and tenacity of the people who live in this mountainous retreat. Rolling onward we descend from the hills toward the Gulf Of Taranto. As we enter the plains that border the Gulf Of Taranto you witness acres and acres of farm land which unimaginable tons of food products are being grown on. Passing through the city of Taranto we observed a once active harbor that shows little sign of International use. Ship building was once a major activity that no longer appears to be active. The loss of a major harbor's activities such as this appeared to be, could only be viewed as having a devastating effect on the financial stability of the surrounding community. Our observance of Taranto was limited as we only saw what could be seen from the moving bus as we passed through the city. From Taranto we diverted from the Autostrada, choosing a highway that took us through more of the farmlands, olive groves, orange and lemon groves as well as fields of tomatoes, and various other kinds of vegetables and grape vineyards. Most of the olive trees in the groves of this area are considered to be young, although they may be as old or older than we were in 1944. It came as a surprise to me when I was shown some olive trees that were well over one hundred years old. In further conversation I also learned that trees over four hundred years old are not uncommon and it is known that some trees over one thousand, yes, I said one thousand, years old are still producing fruit. We observe the lengthening of the shadows and note the sun is beginning to sink behind the Apennines that lay to the west. Shortly our route turns to the east and we observe the sky-line of the city of Bari, a coastal city on the shore of the Adriatic Sea.

Bari is a metropolitan city, and being on the coast draws a lot of visitors from points afar. Upon entering the city it became somewhat evident that the directions to the hotel we were booked for the night were not quite correct. Stopping to get additional information from an elderly gentleman, he merely boarded the bus and directed Andrea to the Grand Ambasciatori Hotel. As we depart the bus everyone is a bit surprised as the temperature was hovering in the lower forties (F) and the wind was blowing at gale force. This hastened everyone's entry into the lobby of the hotel. Shortly the check-in was completed and everyone retired to their assigned rooms to await the arrival of their luggage. Subsequent to a shower and a freshening up people gathered in the lobby of the hotel and discussions ensued relevant to the travels of the day as well as the entire tour up to this point in time. Soon the signal was given to move to the dining room where an enjoyable meal was served in classic Italian style.. After dinner gossip and reminiscence of the day just gone by took up most of the time between dinner and bedtime. A few of the more hardy ventured outside to see and attempt to take pictures of what appeared to be a

Cathedral or large castle adorned with lights sitting atop a ridge to the left of the hotel entrance. With the day drawing to a close it was time to bid one and all a pleasant "GOOD NIGHT". To-day has provided the picturesque beauty of mountain scenery, the groves of trees producing various fruits and the fertile fields showing off the varied growth of plants and vegetables which will in time provide nourishment for such mortal beings as ourselves. Yes it has been another good day.

MARCH 11, 1998 WEDNESDAY

Getting use to this early morning stuff, woke up before the Rrrring-A- Ling aroused me as would have been the case a few minutes later. Appears to be a bit windy yet this morning and the TV says the temperature is hovering in the very low forties and upper thirties, expecting a warm up to the mid forties and low fifties by this afternoon. Long-sleeved shirt and a jacket will certainly be the uniform of the day. Morning activities at the hotel are completed and we are boarding the bus in preparation for our day's travel which is to take us along the Adriatic coast to near a small village called "Trani" where we will join the Autostrada and continue northwestward. Our departure time is set-up a little later this morning as time available versus distance expected to travel is not so critical as it was on the Venice to Florence segment. Not long after leaving Bari we start seeing a marked difference in the appearance of the area in which we have entered. The further we go the more noticeable it became that a great deal of rock is visible on the surface of the land. Equally notable was the fact that all dividers and fence lines were built with these rock. Further down the road we are enlightened by our tour guide that we have entered what is known at the "Trulli" region. This was truly an amazing area. It appears that these dry stones are used in the building of various structures, fences and apparently many other uses. Most unusual are the houses that many of the people live in. Not only are the houses built with these stone but they also have conical roofs. Entering the village of Trulli we stopped to see and visit in some of these unique structures. Why the conical roofs? A two-fold purpose, (1) it helps to retain the heat within during colder weather such as it was at the time, and (2) it reduces the radiation effect of the sun's rays during the hot summer months. A short visit into a couple private homes as well as two or three business establishments occupying structures built in this manner was most interesting. Not only in the construction of their homes and business establishments but to meet and converse with the people who lived and worked there. During our stop in Trulli we chose to eat lunch as lunch time had caught up with us. The restaurant could not seat all of us because of a rather large group of local residents were being served in the restaurant at the same time. This necessitated splitting our group in half with each half dining in a different restaurant. The owner of the restaurant I was sent to extended us a very cordial welcome to his place of business as well as the Trulli community. An interesting point was noted regarding the welcome that was extended in the restaurant. At the completion of the owner's welcoming words the local residents expressed total approval in his actions. It was a notable reaction.

As usual all meals, except breakfast, are served with wine that is produced in the local area. The village of Trulli was no exception. No complaints. What more could you ask for than good Italian bread and locally produced wine. As we departed the restaurant we were greeted with snow-flakes descending from the sky, being whirled about by the wind. All of this taking place at mid-day March 11, 1998 in what is known as Sunny Southern Italy. El Nino's effect must have encompassed a large area. Leaving Trulli we roll onward toward Cerignola and the great Foggia plains. During W.W. II when the lines of battle lay just to the north of the Foggia plains this area became one of the largest concentrations of Allied Bomber and Fighter planes on European soil. The nomadic 57th Fighter Group spent rather short stays in the immediate Foggia area, the first stop being at an airfield known as Foggia #8, then to Foggia Main. As 15th Air Force units began moving forward from North African bases so as to be closer to the battle zone, the 57th was moved to an airbase in the vicinity of Manfredonia (Amendola). We did not stop in the city of Foggia, continuing onward toward Manfredonia which is our pre-planned destination for to-day. As we approach the Manfredonia area we attempt to locate our war-time landing ground. A first hand check with two Italian farmers merely provided us with a couple possible locations. An active Italian Air Force Base is in the same general area but we were unable to determine exactly where the runway was definitely located.

Returning to our pre-planned route we proceed to Parco Nazionale del Gargano (Gargano Italian National Park) and the town of Monte Sant' Angelo which overlooks the city of Manfredonia from an elevation of 3'000 feet above sea-level. The winding road from Manfredonia to Monte Sant' Angelo was a bit disconcerting to some yet amazing and interesting to others. Upon reaching the top everyone became chilled as the temperature hovered only a degree or two above freezing and the wind blowing 25 to 30 MPH. A brisk stroll through the wind swept streets of Monte Sant' Angelo to respite in a quaint little restaurant which provided protection from the meteorological elements. In addition a hastily provided light lunch of salad, pasta, wine and exceptionally good Italian bread was an invigorating experience. After lunch a very interesting excursion was made to a "House Of Worship" which is carved and dug out from deep inside the mountain, entrance and exit being only by a tunneled stairs and walkway.

Having expressed our appreciation and thanks to our hosts while visiting Monte Sant' Angelo we boarded our diesel-powered chariot and began our descent from Monte Sant' Angelo via the curvaceous roadway leading downward toward the shoreline of the Golfo di Manfredonia. Observing with interest the minute well terraced plots of land that are used to grow lettuce, tomatoes and other types of edible vegetables. The Olive tree groves, that seem to cover the country-side below fifteen hundred feet above sea-level, and the majestic intrigue of the sea as you view the vastness of the Golfo di Manfredonia.

Again with the day slowly passing into history we proceed to the Hotel Gargana, our place of residence for the night of March 11, 1998. As usual upon arrival at the hotel, provided adequate time is available, the oft time quick shower, perhaps a physical enhancing toddy in conjunction with a few minutes relaxation prior to preparation for dinner, adds to ones enjoyment of the day. Fascinating sights, exciting experiences and interesting conversations will certainly be the ingredients that will make March 11, 1998 another day to remember.

MARCH 12, 1998 THURSDAY

Truly amazing but factual, twelve consecutive mornings and this group has the ball rolling just like the schedule calls for. An unbelievable group of wide-eyed individuals are accounted for by our tour guide Lorenzo, and Andrea has coaxed our chariot into motion. It is hard to believe that any one of the forty individuals on this tour will say that they have not enjoyed the help and guidance, the witty quotes, the historical summations and the ever present cheerfulness displayed by our tour guide, Lorenzo Epifani, and Andrea, the masterful driver of our airconditioned bus who maintains the vehicle in top condition and is always punctual at the designated points of pickup. They perform their duties in a highly professional manner adding to the over-all enjoyment of each days travel. To-day we will be traveling southwesterly to and around the city of Foggia. As we proceed southwesterly we enter the mountainous region of Abruzzi which takes us to the foot of Mt. Vesuvius and the region surrounding the city of Circola including the village of San Sebastiana. Arriving in the community of Circola there was some conjecturing among those who were based there as to where the landing strip was actually located. This was never decided with any degree of certainty as fifty plus years has made many changes. Of course the little town of San Sebastiano was almost destroyed by the lava flowing from the erupting Mt. Vesuvius in March 1944. During previous conversations with local residents in the area, our tour guide learned that San Sebastiano had been rebuilt on top to the destruction caused by the volcanic eruption in 1944. With this information plus directions on how to get there we proceeded to San Sebastiano. In March 1944 the Officers of the 66th Fighter Squadron were quartered in a villa a short distance outside of San Sebastiano. Driving into the once little town I recognized a section of street that led to our villa. Andrea stopped the bus and our tour guide (Lorenzo) and myself got off and began walking up the street. Meeting an elderly gentleman Lorenzo began asking him questions relevant to W.W. II and the eruption of Mr. Vesuvius. The man recalled there had been an airfield from which American planes flew off of, but the field was no longer there....houses were now all over the area. Thanking him we continued to walk up the street where we met another man who was also a life long resident of the area. When asked about an airport in the area and if American planes operated from such airfield he also confirmed the other man's statement. Lorenzo then told him I was one of the pilots. With this the man grabbed me by the arm and pointed up the street. Walking an additional block and one half we turned the corner and after a short distance he pointed to an open area where there

stood what looked to me like a one and one-half story building, saying that was where the 66th officers had lived in March 1944 when Mt. Vesuvius erupted. Initially I said no, however, in additional conversation through Lorenzo he told me that his father was the caretaker of the villa at the time of the eruption and the 66th's officers were living there. By this gentleman's excitement and my rampaging emotions it was a moment I shall never forget. A closer look at the building and his explanation of how the surface of the surrounding terrain had been changed I had to agree it was the villa from which we vacated during the early morning hours due to the flow of lava crossing our last and only road of escape. Simple math shows us this 62 year old Italian gentleman was a mere 8 years of age in 1944.

Subsequent to this highly emotional meeting with the past we continued into the city of Naples (Napoli) where we spend the next two nights at the Hotel Jolly. The Hotel is located near what was the downtown section of Naples fifty plus years ago. Reasonably close to the harbor area, the harbor of course isn't in shambles as it was in 1944. To-day it is a maze of wharf's, pier's, cranes and facilities used in handling ships of all sizes as well as numerous motor launches and smaller boats. From my room on the thirtieth floor I had an excellent view of Mt. Vesuvius, except during periods when dense fog or low clouds interfered, and the Naples harbor. Hopefully the pictures I took from the window on the thirtieth floor of the Jolly Hotel turn out good so that I can show proof that we were in Naples (Napoli) and the area surrounding Mt. Vesuvius. To-night everyone enjoyed their dinner as well as the view of the city of Naples from the thirty-third floor of the Hotel Jolly. With dinner over and the usual recapping of the sights and events of the day complete, the time had arrived to make preparations for the trip into the land of nod. March 12, 1998 another memorable day in the minds of twenty former members of the 57th Fighter Group, their spouses, family members, and friends.

MARCH 13, 1998 FRIDAY

Friday the 13, to those who may be superstitious this morning may have bore some validity as the skies are cloud infested and areas of precipitation may be experienced. However these conditions are not expected to last throughout the day. With floor space limited (seems to be standard European size) elevators available and during periods of heavy demand, some enterprising people attempted to enter the restaurant for breakfast a few minutes early. This action failed to occur, hence, the calls for both up and down elevator service increased notably. RESULT; those who attempted early (prior to 0700 hr) entry to the restaurant who chose to return to their rooms or some other floor frequently road varying numbers of trips up and down the elevator shaft before getting back to the floor on which the restaurant was located. Other people on different floors had difficulties in obtaining elevator service to their desired floor.

Notwithstanding the elevator experience the days activities were only slightly delayed in the beginning. A short trip to the harbor pier where we were to board a

jet-powered boat that would take us across Naples Bay to the Isle of Capri where we would have hopefully visited the Blue Grotto. As fate would have it, being it is Friday the 13th, controlling authorities had decided the seas were to rough and therefore all tourist vessels destined for Capri had been canceled. With this set back an alternate plan was immediately put into action. Re-boarding our bus we were soon on our way to the city of Caserta which lies approximately twenty-five miles northeast of Naples. During W.W. II Caserta and the area between there and Naples became a major area for logistical units and personnel replacement depots as they were commonly called. Our principal point of interest in visiting Caserta was to see the Royal Palace that was built, or at least began, by Luigi Vanvitelli in 1752 but not completed until 1774. The south front of the palace is 830 feet long and stands 134 feet high with thirty-seven windows in each story. The interior is richly decorated with marble, almost all of which, except the white Carrara marble, are Neapolitan or Sicilian. The staircase, the Chapel, and the theater are sumptuously decorated. Parts of the Palace are now used as a commercial school and an Italian Air Force Officers Academy. The extensive gardens which occupy the hillside behind the palace are adorned with fountains and cascades, the water being brought by an aqueduct more than twenty-seven miles long with three lofty bridges spanning valleys, the largest being the Ponti della Valle near the town of Maddaloni.

Completing our tour of the Palace we proceeded to a pre-selected restaurant where we enjoyed a very good Italian lunch served with the local wine of the area. As stated in this morning's weather forecast, the weather had improved and we are currently seeing sunshine as we leave the restaurant. Lorenzo takes a head count, gives the OK sign to Andrea and we are on our way. It has now been decided that this afternoon will be spent taking the scenic drive from the Naples area to the sea-side village of Malfi which is located on the south side of the peninsula that extends into the Tyrrhenian Sea between the Golfo de Napoli and the Golfo de Salerno. The return to the Naples area was via the same route we traveled on March 9th just four days ago. From the Naples area we continued along the eastern shore of the Bay of Naples to Castellammare di Stabia, then along the shore-line to Sorrento. A "situation stop" was made in Sorrento and as an added feature an opportunity to visit a business establishment where "Cameos" were carved from sea shells and used in making a wide selection of jewelry. This of course was an intriguing stop for the Belle's on our tour. From Sorrento we continue along the coastal road to Malfi. At Malfi we reversed course to Positano at which point we return to the north shore of the peninsula returning via the coastal highway along the Golfo de Napoli to our hotel in Naples. Upon arrival at the Hotel every one showed signs of fatigue and expressed a desire to rejuvenate their exhausted bodies prior to dinner. The evening activities such as dinner and the usual recapping of the days travel and sight-seeing experiences, as well as others noted at different times and places again puts us at the threshold of the end of another day. A day we no doubt will reminisce many times as we continue down the road of life. March 13, 1998.

MARCH 14, 1998 SATURDAY

Ring-a-ling Ding-a-ling, similar to but not quite like "It's Time To Get UP - It's Time To Get Up In The Morning" however the result is the same. 0600 hours. Go through the usual procedure. Dress, stuff the left-over garments and other items into the luggage, position same outside room door. Take a peek out of the window. "WOW" what a beautiful day! Gosh! how come all the lifts are full regardless as to which way they are moving? Must be other tourist groups staying at the Hotel Jolly. Luckily we caught a lift to the desired floor, no wonder the lifts are full, look at that crowd milling around the breakfast buffet tables. A bit surprising all forty of our group managed to get breakfast and boarded the bus in time for the scheduled departure.

In departing Naples I mentally reviewed the happenings of the past two days and tried to compare my recollections of my earlier arrival fifty-four years earlier. To-day there are barely any signs of the devastation and damage caused by the bombings and shelling spent on targets located in and around the city of Naples. Reconstruction has restored many if not most of the larger buildings, and new construction has built in those areas where total destruction occurred. The evidence of modern technology can be seen in practically every phase of life. Naples to-day radiates the signs of being a thriving city, in a rapidly growing commune combating many of the same problems as other cities its size around the world. Yes the memories of Naples, the events that happened in the surrounding communities have surely been enhanced during this visit. As I scan the horizon encircling the city of Naples and snap that last mental picture of Mt. Vesuvius, I must say I am most grateful for the opportunity to have revisited Naples and the surrounding communities.

With Naples slowly disappearing to the rear we roll smoothly along our route which is the reciprocal of the route we traveled southbound from Rome to Naples a few days ago. Passing through the outer reaches of Afragola and the outskirts of Caserta we are well on our way to Rome. Leaving the Caserta area the Autostrada del Sole turns to a more northwesterly direction. We pass through or near the towns of Maggiore and Teano as we continue through the area where some of the most fierce and deadly battles were fought by the Allied forces to overcome the Nazi forces defense of the Cassino stronghold they built in their efforts to delay or deny the allied forces thrust toward Rome, the Arno River and eventually the Po River valley ATW to the Alps and beyond.

Andrea our bus driver maintains a constant 100 kilometers per hour speed which soon positions us closely to the town of Frosinone which we quickly pass-by on our way to the Eternal City. Having traveled less than one-third of the peripheral distance surrounding Rome during our by-passing the city on our southbound journey, it is almost unbelievable the area the city now encompasses. In my estimation the city of Rome to-day covers an area four times larger than it did in

1944-45. As we enter the suburban sections of the Eternal City our tour guide points out many of the highlights of areas in which we are passing through at the time. Like any large city there are traffic snarls that create extensive time delays of scheduled arrival times. Our first destination within the city was the Vatican. Not only is to-day Saturday, there is also a special event of international importance taking place within the Vatican and consequently a huge crowd of visitors are lined up ahead of us for the scheduled tour through the Vatican Palace. No one wanted to miss out on this opportunity therefore we not only stood in line, but we all shared the rigors of masses of people attempting to see world renowned architectural wonders. The Vatican Palace is a group of connected buildings with over 1000 rooms. The various chapels, apartments, museums, and other rooms cluster around several open courts. The Pope's apartment, the offices of the Secretariat of State, and reception rooms and halls occupy one part of the Palace. The remainder is devoted primarily to the Vatican Museum. Many of the Museum rooms are decorated with the works of such great artists as Fra Angelico, Pinturicchio, Raphael, Titian, and Leonardo da Vinci. Some of Michelangelo's greatest paintings decorate the ceiling and one large wall of the "Sistine Chapel". This chapel is a sight to behold. The Vatican Archive contains many important religious and historical documents, and the Vatican Library has one of the world's largest and most valuable collections of early manuscripts and books. Other than the Vatican Palace there are other buildings within the Vatican City, the most notable of course is St. Peter's Church with its stately dome. Contrary to popular belief St. Peter's Church is a basilica rather than a Cathedral. Having completed our tour through the Vatican Palace we assemble at the east entrance to St. Peter's Square where we board our bus and proceed through the streets of Rome to our place of residence for the night, the Grand Beverly Hills Hotel. Following our arrival and check in at the hotel the remainder of the afternoon is at everyone's leisure. This free time gave everyone the opportunity to get something to eat, take a nap, go shopping or begin those repacking tasks in preparation for the return flight/s home come Monday morning. Dinner was on your own and the evening is to your liking. At the end of fourteen memorable days a evening of rest and quiet is welcome as to-morrow's schedule is the finale and what a finale is appears to be. With the sounding of lights out we can again mark to-day down as one to remember. March 14, 1998.

MARCH 15, 1998 SUNDAY

The telephonic reveille call, guess what, the time remains as usual 0600 hour. No luggage to deal with this morning. Breakfast at the usual hour and of course the bus will depart the hotel at 0800 hour.

Rome is truly a historic city and to think a person could see and visit all the ancient and historic places within a week would be unfathomable, let alone in the few hours we have allotted. To begin with is a short ride via bus, then the days sight-seeing truly begins using the ancient mode of transportation, "SHANKS HORSES". Rome harbors countless reminders of hundreds of years since man became an occupant

hereon. It is impossible to visit and see all of the ancient ruins, famous works of art recorded in paintings and sculptures as well as the magnificent architectural structures many of which are still being used. Hopefully everyone is wearing comfortable walking shoes. To begin with this sight-seeing tour has revealed vista of the Grand Piazza Venezia after which we sauntered over to the Roman Forum an area of ruins in which a person needs a very imaginative mind in order to visualize what the area looked like prior to the destruction and ruin. It is difficult to fathom how such large pieces of granite and stone were positioned in the designated places. The hours of toil and sweat by hundreds of slaves relegated to the tasks administered by greedy over-lords. From the ruins of the Forum we saunter over to the Colosseum. This is one of the chief landmarks of ancient, as well as present day, Rome. In this huge, half ruined four story amphitheater Romans watched gladiators battle each other or fight wild animals such as lions. Audiences also saw persecuted Christians killed by lions. Rome can be traced back to at least the year 100 AD as Catacombs were dug by Christians between 100 and 400 years AD during the persecution as a place in which to hide and later many Christians were buried there. We did not visit any of the Catacombs. The most famous catacombs are those of San Chalets, San Sebastiano, and Sant Agnese. The Pantheon is the best preserved of all the remains of ancient Rome. It was built as a temple in honor of all their lords. The triple ARCH OF CONSTANTINE, built about 315 A.D. is also well preserved. It consists of three connected arches side by side, highly decorated with sculptures. There are many other specimens of ruins of ancient Rome that we never visited or saw. With the taking of pictures and the guides rendering enlightening summations time became of the essence and therefore we reassembled in area near the Colosseum and of course continued our tour on "Shanks Horses" to where the bus was parked. Some of our group purchased cold drinks, a snack of some sort and a few chose an ice-cream cone prior to getting on the bus as time had passed mid-day. Others extracted various types of snacks from jacket/coat pockets or other secret hiding places once back on the bus.

With all members accounted for Andrea again maneuvered the bus into and through heavy traffic and soon we were exiting the heavy traffic areas of the city and gleefully enjoying the short excursion from Rome to the Sabine town of Tivoli. In recent years fate has been a bit cruel to the famous gardens that became so renowned. None the less the Tivoli Gardens, the town of Tivoli and its people remain an interesting and worthwhile place to visit. During the rather short drive to Tivoli we were informed of the probable difficulty for some to make the tour through the gardens for which Tivoli is noted for. The town of Tivoli sits on top of a typical Italian hill and the gardens cover a rather steep slope on the side of the hill. There are no electric or powered lifts, just descending and ascending steps and walkways on which you must remain during the tour of Tivoli Gardens. I did not take a count but I believe approximately one-half of the group chose to make the tour through the gardens while the others elected to tour the business area of the city and do some shopping. The tour through the gardens was worth the effort. However, I appreciate the decision of those who chose not to climb walkways and

stairs in returning from the lower end of the gardens. The gardens have, if I remember correctly one thousand fountains of various types, of these there are only one hundred currently flowing. Further I am told the one time lighting system that lit the gardens during the hours of darkness is no longer functional. Monetary reasons are the apparent reasons for the loss of maintenance and non-use of the nighttime lighting system. A beautiful tourist attraction no longer normally included on scheduled tours.

Upon the return of the hardy from the lower levels of the gardens we boarded the bus for the return to Rome and the Grand Beverly Hills Hotel, where we would make adjustments in the packing of luggage for our return home, and prepare for the Farewell Italian Dinner.

What can I say about the dinner? The wines were excellent and I must say plentiful. The hors d'oeuvres, salad and pasta no complaints. The entree's and desert were all superb. The entertainment seemed to have pleased the group, many of them purchased a CD recording made by the entertainers. The farewell dinner I am sure left a sense of satisfaction in everyone's mind, a pleasant taste in their mouth's and a feeling of fullness in their stomach. Arriving back at the hotel after dinner, we wished those who were to leave on early morning flights a safe and pleasant trip home and the hope of seeing them in the coming fall at the Dedication Ceremonies of the 57th Fighter Group into the New England Air Museum, at Bradley Field, Hartford, CT.

Our fifteenth day on tour, perhaps a bit tired and dreading the thoughts of a nine hour or more flight back to our selected airports in the USA. It can be said this was another day to remember. It has been a fabulous tour, and, Thank You Lorenz (our tour guide), Andrea (our outstanding bus driver), and of course David and JO Hutton the instigators of this tour.

MAY 16, 1998 MONDAY

Those scheduled to depart on later flights from Fiumicino (Rome) Airport experienced the usual 0600 call, luggage outside your room door and breakfast at 0700 hours with bus departure at of 0800 hours. Twenty-five members of the tour group whose scheduled flights were to depart between 0701 and 0945 hours were taken to the airport much earlier this morning. At 0800 hours the bus again departed the Grand Beverly Hills Hotel with the fourteen members of the group whose scheduled departures ranged between 1040 and 1145 hours. On arrival at Fiumicina airport we quickly obtained our luggage, bid a warm and friendly "Arrivederci" to our tour guide Lorenzo and his cohort Andrea. Inside the terminal building the group bid one another a hasty Good-bye and best wishes for a safe and pleasant trip home. The usual check-in with the airline, a security check and subsequently boarding the airplane for the flight to New York's JFK Airport. A short delay at the gate, however, the flight plan ETE of 9 hours and 14 minutes

indicated an early arrival at JFK. Nine hours and fourteen minutes after takeoff we touched down at JFK and was parked at the gate a few minutes ahead of schedule. With a connection time of one hour and forty minutes things looked good for an on time arrival in Miami. A one hour mechanical delay in departing JFK was partially overcome enroute to Miami, hence an eighteen day tour ended safely and with many wonderful memories.

This summation of the 57th FIGHTER GROUP W.W. II VETERANS
“ITALY/CORSICA REVISITED” TOUR is as I saw and remember the places,
events and conversations.

ARRIVEDERCI,

Leon E. Jansen
Former Pilot
57th Fighter Group
66th Fighter Squadron

P.S. Comments relevant to mistakes in spelling or grammatical errors
should be directed to the “Chief of Worthless Effort”, for unlikely
action in your place of residence...