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Operations: April/June, 1943

April 23, 1943 the air echelon arrived at a field near Naverine, Algeria and the first units of the ground echelon arrived on the 25th. The Group immediately set up for combat operations. Due to unfavorable field conditions, the Group received orders on the 26th of April to move to an airfield at Chateau Dun Du Rhumel, Algeria. The morning of the 27th found the Group on its way to the new Base. It then proceeded to set up to begin operations as part of the 12th Air Force.

TERRANOVA, SARDINIA - MISSION NO. 1 - APRIL 28, 1943

Eighteen aircraft, each loaded with 12, 500-lb. GP bombs, took off to bomb Shipping Installations at Terranova. Due to unfavorable weather conditions in the target area, the Group returned to Base with the bombs.

2nd Lt. Robert F. Amos, 20th Squadron, was the Co-pilot on the crew of 1st Lt. Clyde H. Knaggs. Prior to the flight overseas, Lt. Amos was displaced from his crew and was left at Great Falls, supposedly to deploy with the ground echelon. Captain Joseph Triggs, Commanding Officer of the 20th Squadron, took over as pilot of Lt. Knaggs' aircraft, bumping Lt. Amos. On short notice, he was ordered to Kearney, Nebraska and assigned to fly as Co-pilot on A/C #42-5151, piloted by 1st Lt. Delbert Resta of the 96th Squadron. He deployed without any overseas pilotage experience. The following is an account of many missions of Lt. Amos.

"Our aircraft was #42-29613 and crew consisted of 1st Lt. Clyde H. Knaggs, pilot; 2nd Lt. Robert F. Amos, Co-pilot; 2nd Lt. Wade O. Douglas, Navigator; 2nd Lt. Richard W. Howes, Bombardier; T/Sgt. Everett L. Phelps, Engineer; S/Sgt. John J. Phelan, Assistant Engineer; T/Sgt. Paul L. Vezetinski, Radio; S/Sgt. Edward L. Dembecki, Assistant Radio; S/Sgt. Paul A. Simmons and S/Sgt. Louis N. Feierstein, Gunners.

"April 28th our target was shipping and harbor at Terranova, Sardinia. Colonel Thomas led. We followed the 301st Bomb Group. For some reason the Group turned away from the target and we followed. When we decided to bomb our gas was too low, visibility was poor and the target difficult to see. Returned without bombing. I felt quite anxious but don't feel that combat will be too difficult. Crew needs to smooth out and Clyde and I will have formation problems to solve. Clyde did most of the flying. 301st attacked by three fighters.

"May 3rd, target, Shipping at Bizerte, Tunisia. Flying in the Colonel Thomas Squadron. Weather poor. Colonel tried to go through overcast which proved to be 4,000 feet. Group broke up. Dembecki, ball turret, reported one ship missed our tail by feet. Came out in clear and joined formation with Captain Caruthers, 96th CO, and returned to Base. Colonel led approximately ten ships to partially

overcast target. Flak intense and accurate. Ships hit hard. Selling had radio operator wounded. Group hit overcast coming home. Captain Bentley crash landed. Lost ship, crew OK. 99th lost seven planes and at least two to weather.

"May 5th, target LaGoulette, Tunisia, shipping. We flew Colonel's Wing and followed the 97th Bomb Group. Our attack took us over land, out to sea, back over target and back over land coming home. Very heavy flak over target each time. Colonel Thomas did a very good evasive action. Bombing successful. Three fighters came up but did not attack. We had holes in No. 1 engine and stabilizer. Mackenzie had flak frag come through nose and struck his nose gun. Possibly saved his life. Bigham's windshield was broken. No losses or casualties.

"May 9th, target town of Palermo, Sicily (Mother's Day). Very rough mission. We were fourth heavy Group over target. Flew No. 3 off Colonel Thomas. Flak intense and accurate. Bombing good. 97 P-38 escort, no fighters got to us. Flak hit Feierstein's (waist gun) oxygen hose - passed out. Phelps took care of him. Thompson had three engines shot out. Landed in water about ten miles from small Axis held island. Selling damaged stabilizer attempting to drop life raft. We had 45 flak holes. Bigham hit hard. Tail gunner injured. Lt. Seng fatally injured. Our tent's first casualty.

"At critique, Colonel Thomas criticized air discipline. Formation must stay together regardless of who goes down. Thompson and crew, prisoners of war today. "WOIKIN GOIL," first loss.

"May 14, target Civitavecchia, Italy, 40 miles north of Rome. Captain Triggs, 20th CO, led. We bombed in trail and last Squadron over the target. Flak slight but accurate. Gunners called out some fighters but no attacks. Large explosion along docks reported by Dick Howes. Bombing was good. Turn away from target was violent. Simmons, tail gunner, reported terrific explosion when 50 miles from target. No damage, no losses.

"May 18, target Messina, Italy. General Doolittle led. I flew with Triggs. We ran into an overcast and tried to go through. Had to go on instruments. I took over at 12,000 ft. and flew out of overcast with only one ship in Squadron. Headrick tried to rendezvous and assemble Group, but no success. After four hours of flying returned to base, Doolittle very displeased about being sent out in such weather conditions. (Years later I met General Doolittle at an Explorers Club meeting. He was in his 80s but remembered the mission. He said when he got back he 'fired' the 12th Air Force officer for a forecast that indicated we could not get to the target).

"May 24, Terranova, Sardinia, shipping. We were 'Tail End Charlie.' Moderate flak over target, very accurate but we had no hits. Our bombs hit large vessel in harbor. Bombing as a whole was good. Dick made his own bomb run. Jacobson flew as Navigator. First time in a B-17 and first mission. P-38 escort, altitude 22,000 feet, led 301st Bomb Group. We crossed Northern Sardinia, bombed target and then flew out to sea.

"May 26, Comiso Airdrome, Sicily. Encountered very heavy flak over target and fighters, Me-109s. They made numerous close passes. One came within 100 yards and was shot down. Simmons received half credit for it. We returned intact. Phelps put two, 50 cal. shells in our horizontal stabilizer. We had two flak holes. Brass broke Clyde's windshield. Group claimed three enemy fighters. One ball turret gunner killed and one upper turret gunner critically injured. Aerial bombs dropped by fighters scored several hits.

"May 31st, Marshalling Yards, Foggia, Italy. Devine led our element. Fighters dropped aerial bombs on us going into target. Crossed coast north of Naples. Saw Isle of Capri and Mt. Vesuvius. Over Italy about one hour. Attacked by fighters on bombing run. No damage. Covered target. Heavy attack by Macchi 202 and Me-109s away from target. They concentrated close attacks from two and three o'clock. On deck, coming home, surprise attack by fighters off Sicily. Gunners out of position. Vezetinski had gun apart. Fighters dropped aerial bombs and scored hits. Attack lasted 15 minutes.

Simmons reported bullets hitting the water behind our tail. Total fighters, 20 to 30. Flying time, eight hours.

"June 15, Le Spezia, Italy. Bomb load 2/2000#. We tacked onto the 99th Bomb Group. Target was three Italian battleships. Melcher led our Squadron. Clyde feeling bad and I flew most of the mission. Saw one sub. Bombing run was poor. Dick messed up and had to salvo. Flak very intense. One hole in vertical stabilizer. Reports say two ships burning and numerous near misses. No fighters. Returned low on gas.

"June 11, Pantelleria Island. 12/500# bombs. Four heavy Groups took western end of the Island and did barrage bombing, attempting to cover entire northwest end of Island to assist invasion forces. We were to cover part of town. Target was already covered by bombs and shell fire. We took area more inland. Altitude 12,000 feet. Large explosions in town as we approached. The sky and sea were a mass of military activity. Naval vessels littered the area. Barges were approaching the shore. The island surrendered 15 minutes after the bombing. Fighters attacked the 97th Bomb Group. First Axis stronghold said to surrender from our air activity. More bombs dropped by poundage and time than any other spot in the world. Poor weather.

"June 21, Railroad Yard, Naples, Italy. 16/300# bombs. First operation from Ain M'Lila. Headrick led. Lead Squadron carried incendiaries. Echelon by elements at I.P. at Isle of Capri. Bombing run took us directly over Mt. Vesuvius. Flak heavy, not accurate on us. Captain Bentley, with Co-pilot Williams, leading the 429th was hit hard and went down. Four of his Squadron went down and gave cover from attacking fighters. He turned toward an island and made a water landing. Flak hit wing, radio compartment and tail. Co-pilot seat was empty. Remaining four ships attacked by fighters off Sicily, no damage. Information received says most of Bentley's crew are prisoners of war.

"June 24, Messina, Sicily. 16/300# bombs. Clyde and I led Squadron. Held good position. Group was third over target. Bombed the city. Flak at target (box pattern) intense and accurate. Bombed in echelon of elements, our formation off target was good. Me-109 made a mid-air collision between No. 3 and No. 4 engines of Captain Hinsey's ship. Tore wing off. Plane began to spin, broke in two aft of radio compartment. Fighters were numerous and made numerous passes on crippled ship ahead of us. We had one rear attack. Group had three men injured. Tail-end-Charlie of our Squadron turned back at coast, attacked but made it to Tunis. I came home with a 103 fever and was confined to the hospital.

"July 4, Catania Airdrome, Sicily. We started as Deputy Commander, feathered an engine and turned back. The Group encountered opposition of every type. Pasero turned back at coast with two bad engines and landed at GoGo, near Malta. Laich and Yeager-Jacobson-Leighty set on fire by either aerial bombs or 20mm shell fire. Flames coming out of wing vents and radio compartment. Five seen to abandon ship, four chutes opened. Enemy fighters followed first chute down but made no passes. Upper turret was in operation until ship crashed. Two fighters were seen to go down. Wing came off, broke aft of radio compartment, crashed in ocean and exploded. Underwood shot up and landed at Malta, no injuries. A.P. correspondent interviewed Bigham's crew. They were shot up fairly badly.

"July 5, Gerbini Airdrome #6, Sicily. Triggs led. We were Deputy Commander. Triggs flew AFCE (auto pilot). Led good mission. Picked up P-38 escort at coast and Spitfire escort over Malta. I flew bomb run. Dick observed several planes on the field. Just as frags were gone, flak came through window in nose and broke two hydraulic lines in front of me. Glass cut Wade Douglas' leg and chewed up his map. Several fighters made passes at second Squadron. We flew ship #146, 'NINO DIABLO.'

"July 6, Gerbini Airdrome #6, Sicily. Mission much the same as before. P-38s gave close escort. Bombing good. Flak low and inaccurate. Throttle cable of No. 1 broke and assumed automatic setting. Dembecki saw three parachutes on bomb run, origin unknown. P-38s had a big dog fight behind us.

Simmons observed a P-38 go down and several enemy craft. One P-38 came under our formation for protection until he got to Malta. Feathered No. 1 to land.

"July 10, Gerbini Airdrome #9, Sicily. Invasion started. Intense activity along Sicilian coast. Towns and beaches under shell fire. Hundreds of landing craft along beaches from tip of island. Large convoy heading back to Africa already at 8:30. We were up at 3:45. Headrick leading. Entire crew had G.I.s. At the I.P. No. 1 and No. 3 engines began to act up. Clyde had to use steel helmet for nature call. Dick used his bombsight bag. Part of crew had empty ammo boxes. Dembecki couldn't wait, left turret and urinated on waist floor. This urgency occurred just off the target. Engines got us home okay. Flak, fair accuracy. Colonel Thomas' 50th.

"July 14, Marshalling Yards, Messina, Sicily. Headrick led. Had some bombs in the water but covered target well. Observed explosions on bomb run and terrific explosion after turn away from target. Flak moderate, fairly accurate. McIntyre, leading element of 96th behind us, had a direct hit by flak. He got away from target and tried to turn to sea, his two wing men followed. They observed direct hit near radio compartment and numerous holes in right wing. Plane on fire, nine men bailed out. Plane disintegrated. McIntyre (P), Bentley (CP), Morrow (B) and Greathouse (N).

"July 16, San Giovanni Ferry, Italy. Stoeger led good mission. We flew No. 2 with Horn as Navigator. Flew around Sicily and came in from north. No. 2 oil pressure read 40 psi all the way. Flak intense, accurate. Leader ahead of us feathered an engine but went to target. We passed under them just before bombs away. Received big holes in bomb bay, several in wings, tail, oil lines on No. 2 hit and gas tank punctured. Feathered engine and came home on three. Altitude across Italy never less than 19,000 feet.

"July 19, Marshalling Yards, Rome, Italy. My first trip as first pilot. My crew: Thomas Cochran, Co-pilot; Albert Dowsing, Navigator; William Golden, Bombardier; Sgts Crowley, upper turret, Williams, radio, Charles DeVito, ball turret; Moore, right waist; Clepper, left waist; and Meadows, tail. I really sweated! Our plane, #082, 'ZELMA.' Given instructions not to miss target nor have any bombs long or short. The Vatican City was not to be hit at any cost. Flew on Stoeger's left wing. Flak was moderate, inaccurate. Several fighters came up but made no passes. Came home low on fuel. My landing and take-off were terrible. Sky was littered with aircraft. Photos showed no hits in Vatican and negligible damage outside target area. Leaflets dropped on city two hours before target warning people of raid. First bombing of Rome. Were second Group over.

"August 19, Foggia, Italy, 12/500# bombs. Two waves. Our Group first over target. Target was a portion of town and transformer station. Bombing excellent. Flak intense and accurate. Fighters waited for us off target. Pasero, leading our second element, was attacked by fighters. Immediately John Bradley's ship started down followed by Pasero. Both planes crashed over land. Remaining ship was from 49th, hit hard and finally went down just off the coast. Rozzelle was leading second Squadron behind Stoeger. Heavily attacked by fighters. Aerial bombs set 'PRECISION' on fire and exploded in the water. 'BIG JEFF' was set afire. AFCE was set and five chutes appeared. Headrick feathered engine and jeopardized formation by moving under lead aircraft. We missed a near collision. Knaggs lost both windshields by brass. His life raft caught fire and had to be pulled. Caught on stabilizer and he had to pull out of formation. I followed him part way to Palermo. Could not contact him. Simmons had a flak wound. Knaggs landed without hydraulic pressure and a badly battered tail. I rejoined formation. My gunners got one fighter. We had a dozen flak holes. Group confirmed 28 fighters.

"September 2, Railroad Bridges, Trento, Italy. Headrick led. Selling fell out and we led second element. Trento in most northern part of Italy and only ships with Tokyo tanks flew. Bomb load 8/500#, gas - 2,600 gallons. Intercepted by six fighters at coast, one made two very close passes. Over land more than two hours. Target lay between two mountains, country very beautiful. Low mountains, green. The higher Alps, sharp, rugged, snow capped. Forty miles from Swiss border. Target well

covered, bridge over river knocked down. B-17 followed formation half way past Sardinia, then seemingly turned back to Italy. Logged 8:45 hours.

"September 6. Tonight Clyde and I started in #884 to the 99th to fly night formation. Supercharger induction line broke. Feathered engine and landed. Took off in #082. Got on ground just as air raid started. Jerries attacked Bizerte and lost seven planes, only dropped two bombs. One of our aircraft was fired on until he dropped flares, color of the day. We took off after air raid and flew night formation. Got to bed at 2:00 a.m.

"September 8. We stood by at the 99th all day. Had two briefings on secret mission. We had engines running and ready for take-off when mission was canceled at 6:00 p.m. Started to take off and had a flat tire. Headrick brought us home.

"September 14, roads near Battipaglia, Italy. American 5th Army has now established beachhead below Salerno (est. three divisions). British 8th Army coming across from Foggia attempting to pinch off Germans. German forces have been strengthened and driving 5th Army back to sea. Our target was to cut road and hinder Germans' supply and reinforcement lines. 16/300# bomb load. I flew Lt. Robins crew in #947. Stoeger led at 15,000 feet. Group missed target. Heavy crosswind at field and I made two passes, then made a terrible landing. B-26 came in on belly with feathered engine, burned. Crew okay.

"September 15, roads near Battipaglia, Italy. 16/300# bomb load. Headrick led. Had to go back after same target. 5th Army situation desperate. Enemy attempting to dive bomb landing craft shot down. Our altitude, 12,000 feet, no opposition. Hit target. Very late mission and landed after dark. Pattern was a madhouse, made fair landing. Train, 96th, had two engines feathered and bellied in on a field after dark. None injured.

"September 28, Bologna, Italy. Bomb load 12/500#. Two waves, Stoeger led the first wave. Weather bad, overcast and rain. Tacked on to 96th Squadron. Missed weather, got to target but it was overcast. Turned back. Two fighters came up, one made eight attacks on the formation, peeling off at 11:00 o'clock and coming up at our belly. No claims, no hits, no injuries, no flak. Heavy rains over North Africa and field muddy. Made a perfect landing and got to revetment okay. This was Dick's 50th mission.

"October 1, Airdrome and Messerschmitt Factory, Augsburg, Germany. 10/500# bomb load. My 49th. Target was first into Germany, northwest of Munich. Had two waves but only 19 ships. Provisions were made to stop in Sardinia coming back. Going out, ships kept turning back until only 12 were left. Had P-38s to Corsica. One was shot down by a Me-109. Pilot bailed out. Over coast we had very close attacks. Group got as far as the Alps and turned back due to the weather. We brought our bombs back. Four ships in Colonel Rice's wave bombed Bologna.

"October 5, Marshalling Yards, Bologna, Italy. 12/500# bomb load. Two waves. Captain Robinson and Colonel Melcher led waves. Major Triggs led our Squadron. Selling let McAlpine lead element and we had to work all the way. After hitting land, about 30 fighters attacked our second wave. Bombing was excellent. Flak, moderate, intense, accurate. We had a few holes. One of the 49th planes (Fitzpatrick) feathered an engine after bombs away and two others were smoking. He fell back and was attacked by fighters. Called for help and Robinson slowed down but he couldn't catch up. Fighters forced him to abandon ship, 10 chutes opened. They shot down two fighters. Selling overran our formation and we followed. Got back in formation and he overran again. We stayed. Knaggs hit propwash and fell out, forcing us out. Formation nearly collided with us. Selling, at same time tried to pass us and observers said my nose missed his tail by only two feet. I felt propwash. I took Squadron lead and stayed until Corsica. Knaggs feathered an engine over land and another over water. I took his wing and followed him down. He unfeathered No. 2 and I escorted him to Corsica. Everyone okay. Two ships landed at Terranova with wounded men. Fighters used head on tactics and lots of aerial

bombs. We had one close attack. Cosgrove landed in Sardinia with Knaggs. We came home on ARCE. One sergeant in Fitzpatrick's crew had orders to go home awaiting him after mission. Wife had a child, developed uremic poisoning and not expected to live.

"Today was my last. I don't know how I feel. I haven't decided yet. It wasn't a happy ending. A year's service, 50 missions against the enemy, six months overseas and nothing to show for it. Still not promoted.

"Note: My promotion to 1st Lieutenant, dated 27 September 1943, arrived at Group after I departed for the United States."

Captain Roscoe H. Johnson, Jr. was a first pilot in the 49th Squadron. November 25, 1990: "The crew that I took overseas were 2nd Lt. Elias Dahir, Co-pilot; 1st Lt. George L. Johnson, Navigator; 1st Lt. William W. Holland, Bombardier; T/Sgt. Clifford Harris, Flight Engineer; T/Sgt. Donald A. Steussey, Radio Operator; S/Sgt. Arthur E. Hutchins, Assistant Flight Engineer; S/Sgt. Julius L. Lamonica, Assistant Radio Operator; Aerial Gunners S/Sgt. Robert S. King and M/Sgt. Harold M. Jonson.



L/R - Clyde Knaggs, Richard Howes, Robert Amos, Wade Douglas and "Flak"
(Courtesy - R. Amos)



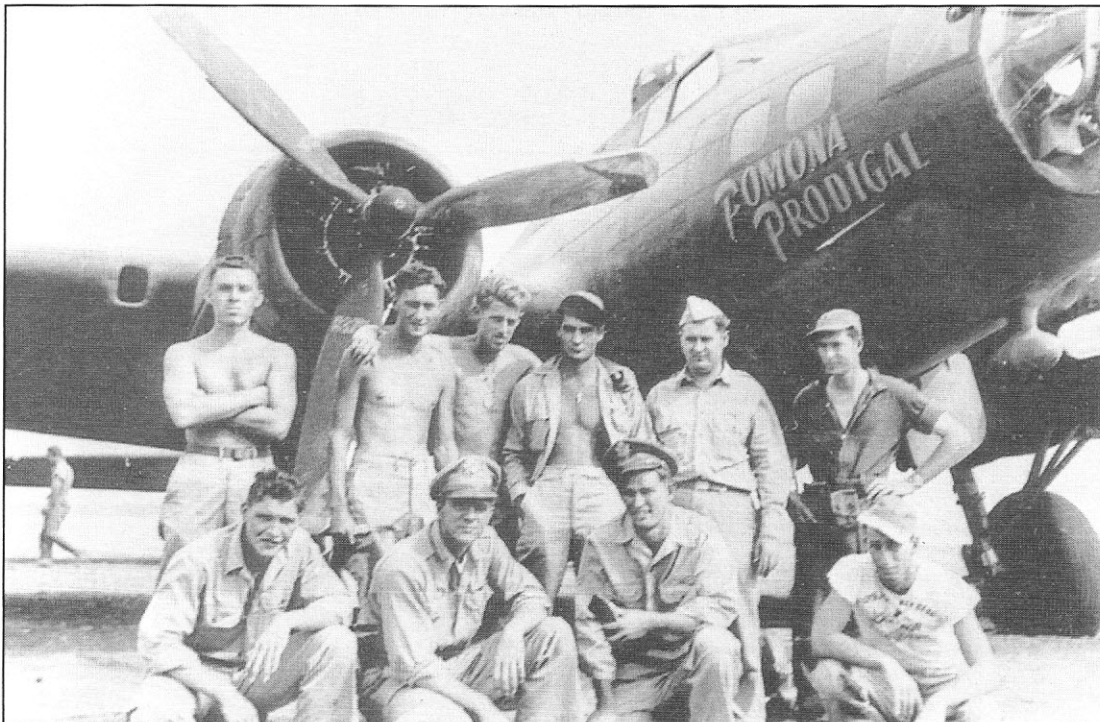
Colonel Ford Lauer (center) and staff - (Photo Section)



Major Richard Headrick - Colonel Joseph Thomas, 2nd BG CO,
20 April/September 3 1943
Colonel Herbert Rice, 2nd BG CO, 3 September/8 July 1943
(Courtesy - Richard Headrick)



American Graves - Casablanca Cemetery, North Africa (Courtesy - M. Moran)



T/R - L/R unknown, T. Ashe, G. McLauchlan, H. Hauser, H. Annex, G. Llewellyn
 B/R - L/R K. Jensen, F. Licence, C. Gathercole, J. Jones
 (Courtesy - Gathercole)

"We named our plane 'WILEY WITCH.' The name was misspelled at Morrison Field by the painter. He thought we were naming it after Wiley Post whom we all admired, but who we had in mind was the heroine of a very risqué poem, *Kathusala*, who was a wily witch, a dirty whore, etc. You get the idea? Our crew was a very informal bunch and we decided against using the name of any living person such as wife, sweetheart, (unlucky?), (unfair?). This ditty was quite popular at the time so we chose her. It was a fortunate selection as we came to call the ship the 'WITCH,' and she became a real person. Never let us down, 53 missions, 300 plus combat hours, no turn-backs and never missed a mission. I understand she flew about 30 more missions, ran out of gas (not her fault) and ditched.

"When we left her she had 197 flak or bullet holes in her fair body and one prop was one inch shorter than the others as a piece of flak took off an inch of one blade and the crew chief, Burliegh Craig, couldn't find a replacement so cut off one inch from the other blades to balance. We used it this way for several missions.

"We only had one casualty, the ball turret gunner, wounded when an armor piercing round went through the ball. We had the usual number of near hits to the crew.

"The 'WITCH' was the only plane we flew. The 'WITCH' had her portrait on one side. She had a Betty Grable body, a skimpy bathing suit (red) and was astraddle a broom. Very pretty. She knew she was pretty and always smiled when the crew would pat her curvaceous shape.

"I recall some other names - Major Haynes', 'A Merry Can,' Bob O'Neill's, 'Peg O' My Heart,' 'Forty-Niner.'

"My tour ended in late 43 and we were rotated home."

Captain Douglas T. Metcalf was a First Pilot and Flight Commander in the 96th Squadron. March 1, 1991: "My crew came to me piecemeal. The Navigator, 1st Lt. Edmund J. Mroz and Bombardier 1st Lt. Herbert McDaniel, were with me in B-17 transition in Sebring, Florida in August and September, 1942, and with me at Salt lake City and Geiger Field, Spokane, Washington. They were permanently assigned, with the rest of the crew, at Ephrata, Washington about November 1942.

"The rest of the crew were 2nd Lt. Ben Turner, Co-Pilot; T/Sgt. Walter L. Sikora, Engineer; T/Sgt. Joseph O. Potvin, Radio; S/Sgt. Mike O. Zahn, Lower Turret; S/Sgt. Howard R. Woods, Left Waist; S/Sgt. Chester P. Bartoszewicz, Right Waist; and Sgt. Charles F. Love, Tail Gunner and Armorer.

"We were assigned plane #42-29639, February 3rd or 4th at Kearney, Nebraska, which we named 'SKYWORM.' We left Morrison Field in March 1943 via Trinidad, Belem, Natal, Ascension Island, Dakar and Marrakech where we awaited the rest of the Group.

"All but two of my missions were flown in #639. My last mission in #639 was Group mission No. 53, August 6, 1943, to bomb a highway bridge at Messina, Sicily. Two other planes I flew, while #639 was being repaired, were #873 on June 10th to Pantelleria and #779 on June 30th to Messina.

"I was picked to return to the States with three other Flight Leaders who had the most missions in B-17 Groups. Never knew why but it was about that time that the A-Bomb Group was formed. No. 639 was one of the five aircraft lost by the 96th Squadron on the Group's 150th mission to Steyr, Austria, February 24, 1943. #639 lasted one year, three weeks in service of the 96th."

BIZERTE AND FERRYVILLE, TUNISIA - MISSION NO. 2 - MAY 3, 1943

Twenty-eight aircraft took off and 13 dropped 39 tons of 500 lb. GP bombs. Fourteen were early returns due to weather. Hits were observed on jetties, buildings, hangars and workshops at Bizerte. Flak was moderate to intense. Five A/C were damaged by flak. Weather, poor. T/Sgt. Theodore F. Ramsey, Radio Operator of A/C #42-29602, 20th Squadron, wounded by flak in two places on the right leg. T/Sgt. Ramsey stayed at his post, trying to clear a jammed gun until Captain Richard

Headrick rendered first aid. Upon landing, T/Sgt. Ramsey was immediately taken to a hospital, but died on May 11, 1943.

Captain Jack Bentley, A/C #42-29580, hit a high tension wire, damaging the right wing aileron. Crash landed in field, No. 1 engine caught fire and extinguished by the crew. No crew members were injured.

S/Sgt. Chester C. Sumner, Ball Turret Gunner on the crew of Captain Donald Stoeger, 20th Squadron. April 18, 1991: "In addition to Captain Stoeger were 1st Lt. Walter C. Laich, Co-pilot; 2nd Lt. Ray U. Shipley, Navigator; 2nd Lt. Charles H. Leighty, Bombardier; T/Sgt. George D. Nesbit, Engineer; S/Sgt. Byrle L. Spillers, Assistant Engineer; S/Sgt. Joseph E. Liney, Radio; S/Sgt. Frederick B. Crutchfield, Tail Gunner; and S/Sgt. Leland Waldie, Gunner.

"Our original radio operator in the States developed an ear problem and was replaced by S/Sgt. Liney. S/Sgt. Crutchfield was wounded on his second mission and did not fly with us again.

"Lt. Laich was replaced by Lt. Robbins. Lt. Laich was lost while flying as First Pilot on July 4th on a mission to Catania, Sicily. If I remember correctly, Lt. Leighty developed pneumonia before he flew a mission and was replaced by Lt. Avery Brunson. Lt. Leighty was lost on the same mission to Catania, flying with Lt. Laich.

"Our second mission was to Bizerte, Tunisia and as we approached the target, we could see the sky ahead of us was covered with flak. From the amount of smoke puffs we could see, we knew we were in for a rough time. Pete Krutchfield, our tail gunner, was hit over the target and radioed he had been hit. T/Sgt. Nesbit, our Engineer, crawled back to the tail position with an emergency oxygen bottle. He found Pete, covered with blood. He had been hit in the right cheek by a piece of shrapnel. Nesbit gave him a morphine shot and bandaged as best he could. Arriving back at base, Pete was removed from the tail and taken to a British hospital in the area.

"Pete recovered from his wounds, had plastic surgery, returned to fly again and complete his missions. He did not fly with our crew again as most of us had finished our missions before he came back.

"On three trips to the Messina Straits, we encountered tremendous amounts of flak. On the first two trips, we approached from the west and bombed the city and harbor with great success. The third trip we approached from the south, right up the Strait between Italy and Sicily. We got flak from both Italy and Sicily as we flew to the target, Messina. We received a large amount of holes, but nothing serious. On a trip to Foggia, we approached from the west and ran into a great number of fighters, and after bombing, ran into fighters again on the way back. We received a hit in our right wing. We were happy to get back! My last mission was September 14, 1943."

Major Rudolph C. Koller, Jr. was the Group Navigator and flew to North Africa with Colonel Ford J. Lauer, Group Commanding Officer. Their aircraft, #42-29595, was named "TADLER." "THRU ALL DANGER LET US RIDE," by Colonel Lauer. January 2, 1991: "Soon after the Group moved from Marrakech to Chateau Dun, the Group Bombardier and I encouraged the new Group Commanding Officer, Lt. Col. Joe Thomas, to make a survey flight of the available bombing and gunnery ranges in Algeria, south of Chateau Dun, about 50-60 miles. Reason - to check out condition of the ranges and see how usable they were.

"We had not done any formation bombing while in the states and, while waiting at Marrakech, had flown only two formation bombing missions. Each aircraft dropped two, 100 lb. Training bombs. We wanted to plan some more bombing training.

"Joe Thomas agreed. On the off chance that the ranges were usable, we loaded up 10/100 lb. Practice bombs, flew to the vicinity of the practice range, searched for the range and finally found it about 4 kms off the main plot. We made several low passes to make sure the range was clear. Then up

to 18,000 feet and made a four bomb drop with 100 feet intervalometer setting. Then around again and dropped another four at minimum intervalometer setting. We observed both patterns. With the bombs left we made a low altitude run, 1,000 feet with intervalometer setting at 25 feet. We had never bombed at low altitude and wanted to see the results. Pretty good! From this last drop we skimmed back to Chateau Dun.

"On May 3, 1943, the Group was scheduled against the docks at Bizerte, Tunisia. Can't remember the size of our formation, probably 36 aircraft. The briefing went OK. Take-off on schedule. The 97th, 99th and 301st were also flying against targets in adjacent areas in and around Bizerte. All Groups were scheduled over their targets within 15 minutes of each other.

"While we were en route, the weather began to cloud up. As we approached the target from an IP just north of Tunis, the overcast at 20,000 was getting heavier. When we dropped our bombs we had 5/10's cloud undercast. We had fighter attacks before and after the target and moderate flak over the target. The fighter attacks were heavier on withdrawal and I concentrated on firing the navigator's 50 cal. gun. I had given Joe Thomas a heading off the target back to Base. For about 15 minutes after the target, I was busy with my gun. When the fighters gave up, I looked at my compass - OK, the correct heading but much to my surprise we had about 9/10's undercast, couldn't see a thing on the ground. The last ground fix I had was at Bizerte. We were cruising at about 20,000 feet on a heading, hopefully back to Base. I couldn't see the ground long enough to get a good drift reading on my driftmeter. I could only hold a drift target three or four seconds. What I did get was a drift indication of left drift, but how much? I had no idea. My best reference was our speed out, but in the last hour, at least, the weather had changed drastically. I used the reverse of my ground speed as the return speed and indicated a five degree left drift on the return. I made no course correction.

"There was a 25 watt radio range at Chateau Dun airfield but it had been out for the past day or so, and when it was working you could pick it up at about 30 to 40 miles out. The radio was no help this day! When I reached the ETA for Base we still had 9/10's undercast, couldn't see a thing. I quickly went through a best known position computation. This involved an inputted 10 degrees left drift, 15 mph faster than estimated and 15 mph slower than estimated. Distance, target to Base was 240 miles. We had left the target 1 hour 30 minutes previously. I projected this calculation on the map which allowed me to compute a circle inside of which I had a 90 percent probability of being within. While I was doing this, Joe Thomas called and said he was over a large opening in the clouds and could see the ground. I replied, 'Let's go down and get some bearings but no lower than 3,000 feet.' Why? The Atlas Mountains in that area reached 2,000 feet. So here we went, the lead aircraft with others in tow, in a tight circle down from now 13,000 feet to 3,000 feet. We were in the clear and I could see the mountains to the south and immediately knew we were north of the Atlas range. So, once we were under the undercast, I gave Joe a north 360 degree heading. Minutes later we passed over a good sized Algerian town and Joe said, 'That's Setif.' I said, 'I don't think so.' Setif was about 20 miles west of the Base. We went around again, now at 2,000 feet and a good look at the town. Not Setif! This town had no center town square and Setif did. I looked at my position circle and the town of Batna popped out at me. I said, 'I think it's Batna, stay on a 360 degree heading.' The bombardier said, 'This looks familiar.' I replied, 'Yes, this looks just like the area near the bombing range. If I am correct we will cross a railroad in about two minutes.' While this was going on, I had taken several drifts and obtained a good fix on the wind. I had noted the time we descended and when we leveled off and when we had first sighted what I thought to be Batna. All this gave me ground speed from the target. We crossed a railroad and I called Joe Thomas and said, 'We are OK, about 30 miles south of Base, take up a heading of 335 degrees and we will be there in ten minutes.' Then I prayed - was that really Batna? In ten minutes and 22 seconds we passed to the left of Chateau Dun and there was the airfield on our left wing. It had begun to rain slightly and the ceiling had us down to 1,500 feet. We proceeded to land,

had to get down quickly because if the rain got any heavier, we would have trouble landing on the dirt runways. All but one of the 36 aircraft landed. As we found out later, one of our aircraft got separated, climbed back above the soup and tacked onto the 99th Bomb Group that just happened along.

"Previous experience, flying in the States in 1942, taught me how to work a fix from an unsure position to a sure position. The only drawback to this maneuver was the 2,300 plus mountain range in the south. Anyway, I considered myself damn lucky. Joe Thomas said, 'Glad you got us back.'

"The 97th Group, which had left before us, still hadn't returned and the rain was picking up. Much to my surprise, we, the 2nd Bomb Group, were the only Group on the ground. All other Groups had experienced similar weather difficulties. The 25 watt range was finally back on the air at dusk but reception was poor to bad. The local anti-aircraft units turned on their searchlights vertical in hopes of giving some aircraft something to work with. Finally, around 8:00 p.m., most of the units made it down someplace. The 5th Wing had aircraft on the ground at every available airfield in the vicinity. Some aircraft flew over the Mediterranean and either ditched or bailed out. I can't remember how many aircraft the 5th Wing lost due to unpredictable weather. Somehow or other the figure four comes to my mind, but I can't say for sure. I know several aircraft were stuck in the mud and couldn't be moved until the ground dried out. Our lost aircraft hit a high tension wire and crash landed in a field. No one was injured.

"As I look back, I credit my flying experience in the States, our earlier trip to the bomb range and, I guess, some pretty good navigation on my part, plus what I call, 'dumb luck' that got us back safely to Base.

"For all this I was awarded the DFC."

T/Sgt. Lee W. Anderson, 96th Squadron, continued: "arrived Chateau Dun, April 23, along with plenty of rain and taffy-like mud. I took inspection and unloaded. Had a couple of weeks of combat maneuvers. Oxygen mask didn't fit so got another. Rumor, combat soon. Plane held up well, hope it continues.

"1st mission: May 3, 1943. Bizerte, Tunisia. Naval Base. Bomb load, 12/500#, propaganda leaflets. Flak: H.I.A. (Heavy, intense, accurate). Machine shop hit. One plane hit in No. 2 engine. One radio man and tail gunner hit. Our plane, HOLES!

"3rd mission: May 6th. Trapani, Sicily, Airfields and Shipping. 50 B-17s and P-38 escort. Flak heavy but inaccurate. Maintained good formation. Hit by 35 Me-109s. Seven Me-109s shot down, one P-38 lost.

"4th mission: May 9th. VERY ROUGH MISSION! Palermo, Sicily, Shipping. Flak: H.I.A. Flew at 28,000 feet. One hundred B-17s and 96 P-38 escort. 12/500# bombs. Intelligence gave orders to lay eggs on highest steeple in town. We blew it up, it was an ammo dump. Debris shot 10,000 feet in air. Plenty of German fighters. Our intercooler was shot out. Lost one B-17 west of Palermo. One navigator killed, one tail gunner seriously wounded, two waist gunners slightly wounded.

"10th mission: May 25th. ROUGH MISSION! Messina, Sicily. Flak: H.I.A. I saw two B-17s go down in flames. Engaged enemy fighters for 20 minutes. Our leader, a Colonel, had plenty of guys really mad! Took us twice (stupidly) on our bomb run with a 180 degree turn right through the flak!

"11th mission: ROUGH MISSION! Airfield, Comiso, Sicily. Flak: H.I.A. A Me-109 came at me head on. All his guns were firing and he looked like a Christmas tree all lit up. He was pumping 20mms at me and I ducked. When I looked up he was gone. We engaged FW-190s for 20 minutes and shot down two. In our Group we lost one top turret gunner. A top turret gunner was wounded, the first injured in our Squadron. Earl Kuck was injured and his plane was shot up bad.

"14th mission: May 31st. ROUGH MISSION! RR and Marshalling Yards, Foggia, Italy. Flak: H.I.A. We made our run on target with excellent results. Usually we relax on our way back when we are pretty close to our Base but today we got a surprise. We 'flew the deck,' back keeping about 50 feet

above the water which eliminates watching, except from above for us. We had taken off our oxygen masks and relaxed, having a smoke. The navigator had gone aft to the toilet when suddenly the waist gunner opened up with his gun. We wondered what the crazy guy was firing at. Between the waist gunners there suddenly appeared a cloud of smoke. I thought one of the ammo cans or oxygen bottles had exploded and started to investigate. Suddenly, Lt. Long yelled, 'Hey Andy, get in your turret, there's a shit house full of fighters coming in on us!' The smoke I had seen was from a 20mm shell that had entered through the navigator's plexiglass nose. He was lucky. Running back from the toilet he saw where the shell had entered and all he could do was point at the hole where his head would have been and he turned white. Another shell had dug along the floor, peppered Lt. Long's instrument panel and knocked out our electrical system. Another knocked out our No. 1 engine. A fragment stopped about a foot from Lt. Prieve's foot after plowing through the floor. It was the elite Herman Goering squadron and all the noses were painted a bright yellow. I guess their intelligence had phoned ahead, after our bomb run, so they jumped us from a Sicilian base.

"We clung to the deck, as close as we could, while the Germans dropped 100# demolition bombs in front of us hoping we would fly into water spouts and crash. They sure caught us napping that day! Lt. Long was so excited and mad that he started firing his 45 cal. out of the nose at an incoming FW-190. We were only about 20 miles off the coast and fairly close to home base when they jumped us.

"Miraculously we lost no B-17s. We were all shot up but finally made it back to Base, the Germans chasing us almost to Base. We shot down seven FW-190s, and from that day on, we never relaxed our vigilance until close to our field. The mission itself was successful for we really clobbered the railroad yards.

"15th mission: June 5th. La Spezia, Italy. Battleships in the harbor. Each plane carried 2-2000 lb. Bombs. One intercepting fighter shot down. On the way back we were again intercepted by 35 FW-190s who dropped 100# bombs ahead of us as we flew 'the deck.' We shot down seven of their fighters.

"22nd mission: June 21st. Naples, Italy. Flak: H.I.A. Encountered 30 Me-109s. One B-17 lost.

"23rd mission: June 25th. Messina, Sicily. Two B-17s shot down in flames.

"25th mission: June 28th. Leghorn, Italy, Shipping. This mission represented a long hop for us. One of Italy's most northern ports. Had narrow escape. 97th Bomb Group came in a little late over the target and their bombs missed us by inches and seconds.

"27th mission: July 4th. Catania, Sicily. ROUGH MISSION. LOTS OF FIGHTERS! Hottest mission to date. Seventy-five fighters attacked us, also dropped aerial bombs. Thirty Spitfires engaged them. Our squadron (96th) got a few by air action. I got one, hit another but it disappeared before I could determine the damage - or kill. The Spitfires broke off the attack almost immediately and just simply disappeared. Norm Ferree, a cowboy from Wyoming, in our Squadron, was killed by a piece of flak. Up until the time he was killed, he thought he bore a charmed life and was not afraid. He had participated in many rodeos and had about every bone in his body broken. He had been shot, stabbed and beaten up and said, 'Nothing's going to happen to me.' It was a big blow to our Squadron and plenty of guys did some serious thinking and praying from then on.

"July 7th. We went to Constantine for a few days leave. Let off steam. Prostitutes had mattresses strapped to their backs. Dirty pictures being sold. We took a truck. 'Moonlight requisitioned' cement, etc. and a piano during a German air raid, to build a NCO clubhouse. Big guy from ground crew played the piano in the back of the truck and we all sang, *Dirtie Gertie From Bizerte*.

"31st mission: July 13th. Milo Airdrome, Trapani, Sicily. Flak: H.I.A. Had plenty of fighters. We were shot up bad. Many narrow escapes from flak. Our plane full of holes.

"32nd mission: July 15th. Naples, Italy. Flak: H.I.A. Our Group shot up bad, also our plane again. Lots of enemy fighters. The 96th lost a ship yesterday on a mission to Messina. Crew of Lt. McIntyre. Phil Zimmerman on crew.

"38th mission: August 4th. Naples, Italy. Flak: H.I.A. They shot at us with 100# rockets! Engaged by 75 fighters. Lost two aircraft, one from the 96th and other from the 429th. Sea Rescue, 'LITTLE FANNIE,' saved four officers and three enlisted men from 96th.

"43rd mission: August 19th. Foggia, Italy. ROUGH MISSION! Flak: H.I.A. Fifty German fighters. Group lost five B-17s. We in the 96th had two men injured.

"46th mission: August 27th. Salmona, Italy. No flak over target. We lost Captain Koch and his crew on the way to target. Flak got them. They were just ahead of us and went down in flames. They caught the flak just crossing coast. Smiley hit in the arm, very slight wound. No. 3 engine shot out. Some fighters.

"51st mission: September 7th. Foggia, Italy. Flak: H.I.A. Engaged 30 fighters. I got a possible. Smiley and Shearin, two possibles. No. 2 engine shot out of #006, 'BETSEY I.'

"52nd mission: September 9th. Cancelli Highway Bridges, Italy. VERY LITTLE FLAK. NO FIGHTERS. Flew #411, 'WHAT A TOMATO.' FINISH!! LAST MISSION!"

LA GOULETTE, SICILY - MISSION NO. 3 - MAY 5, 1943

Target, Merchant Shipping. Twenty-seven aircraft dropped 294 500 lb. GP bombs. Hits on Naval and merchant shipping. Hits on possible ammunition boats, barracks and oil storage. Large fires observed. Five Me-109s engaged. One E/A probably destroyed. Flak: light, moderate, accurate.

Captain George A. Robinson, First Pilot, 49th Squadron. June 1, 1991: "Our crew, along with the rest of the Group, picked up our B-17, #42-5781, in Kearney, Nebraska and received more training there. Just prior to flying to North Africa, we flew to a depot at Oklahoma City for modification. The 49th insignia was a slaving wolf and while there we ran into an ex-Disney cartoonist. He painted, on the nose, the Big Bad Wolf chasing the Three Little Pigs, with Hitler, Hirohito and Mussolini faces, looking over their shoulder and faces in terror.

"My crew consisted of 2nd Lt. Robert G. Flett, Co-pilot; 2nd Lt. Lionel Klaus, Bombardier; 2nd Lt. Edwin A. Young, Navigator; T/Sgt. Ernest V. Teora, Radio; T/Sgt. Dennie L. Lauer, Engineer; S/Sgt. John R. McGrane, Assistant Engineer; T/Sgt. Kenneth A. Kincaid, Assistant Radio; and S/Sgt. Jack L. Barcalow and S/Sgt. Thomas G. Peters, Aerial Gunners.

"I flew my 50 missions as did the rest of my crew. My first was on 5 May and my last was 5 October, 1943. Many of my missions were to Sicily in preparation for the invasion of that island. There were missions to Rome, Naples, and Foggia where we encountered many fighters. We always had flak. I had two missions to Southern France. Our crew was not shot down or excessively shot up. Like most combat, it was long periods of boredom, interspersed with short period of fear.

"I lost track of all but one of my crew while living in Rio, 1945-49, while flying for Pan Am."

TRAPANI, SICILY - MISSION NO. 4 - MAY 6, 1943

Target, Merchant Shipping and Harbor. Twenty-eight aircraft dropped 427 300 lb. GP bombs on shipping, harbor, docks, railroad yards and oil storage. Many fires started with some visible from 30 miles. Flak: moderate, mostly inaccurate.

PALERMO, SICILY - MISSION NO. 5 - MAY 9, 1943

Thirty-two aircraft dropped 360, 500-lb. GP bombs and 16, 300-lb. bombs into the town of Palermo. Fires and explosions were seen and an ammunition ship, or tanker, exploded. Flak was intense and accurate resulting in damage to 25 B-17s. B-17 #42-29614, 20th Squadron, crashed in the water about 55 miles west of Trapani, Sicily. B-17 #42-28651, piloted by 1st Lt. Delbert Resta, 96th Squadron, made an emergency landing at Bone, Algeria due to flak damage. 2nd Lt. Harold W. Seng,

20th Squadron, was mortally wounded by flak. S/Sgt. Frederick Crutchfield received a serious head injury from flak. 2nd Lt. John Karpinal and S/Sgt. Stanley J. Mikula were slightly injured by flak.

Twenty-one attacks were made by German and Italian fighters with no claims made.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT - A/C #42-29614 - "WOIKIN GOIL" - 20TH SQUADRON

1st Lt. Guy A. Thompson, 0-728938, P.	(DED)
1st Lt. Willard M. Parker, 0-791487, CP.	(DED)
2nd Lt. Charles R. Justi, Jr., 0-791598, N.	(DED)
2nd Lt. Lawrence H. Kinnaird, 0-730793, B.	(DED)
S/Sgt. Rubin R. Lighte, 12060882, U/T.	(DED)
S/Sgt. Ellsworth L. Simpson, Jr., 13012198, L/T.	(DED)
T/Sgt. Robert E. Meehan, 16092894, R/W.	(DED)
S/Sgt. William I. Ryan, Jr. 11061979, L/W.	(DED)
S/Sgt. John J. Switzer, Jr., 12098226, T/G.	(DED)
S/Sgt. Harold R. Edwards, 35400452, R/O.	(DED)

This A/C was reported to have crashed in the water at approximately 38-05N - 11-55E at 1255 hours. No. 3 and No. 4 engines were out and No. 1 engine smoking. Lt. Richard Headrick reported that he, Lt. Selling, and two other A/C followed the plane down. Ten life vests were seen in the water. Lt. Headrick attempted to drop a life raft which hit the tail and was destroyed. He also dropped his emergency radio which also bounced off the tail. Lt. Selling dropped one life raft which hit the tail, fouled the controls and nearly caused him to crash. Another attempt to drop a raft was made and was seen to open near the swimmers. They radioed for Air-Sea-Rescue but were forced to leave the area due to gas shortage.

A Navy investigation reported that currents in that area would not drift toward a small island eight miles distant but would drift toward the northern coast of Sicily, 35 miles distant. With water temperatures at 61-63 degrees, men would not remain alive long enough to reach the northern coast of Sicily. In addition, none of these men had been reported as prisoners of war, or interned, and that during a 12-month period which had elapsed, there had been no report that any member of this aircraft had contacted a relative, or friend, and during the month of May, 1943, Allied air and Naval craft had destroyed many enemy ships in the Mediterranean, some of which were possibly carrying captures or survivors picked up at sea.

Lt. Stanley M. Korell, 49th Squadron, War Diary continued: "May 9th, 1943. This was to be our third start. Minor difficulties had grounded us on our first two trips. It was an all out Mother's Day attack on the city of Palermo, Sicily. We were to level the town. It was noted as the worst flak area in this Theater, and possibly the world. It was a good thing it was our first raid because when we saw the wall of black puffs of flak, we thought it was noting unusual and didn't get too worried. Just before bombs went away, a piece came through the window above our heads and showered glass on Mitch and myself but the splinter missed us and lodged in the ship. About ten fighters came up but none attacked us directly. Lt. Thompson's ship went down from flak and all the crew was seen to get out after it landed in the water. Our first raid was over. We picked up seven flak holes.

"May 13th, target Cagliari, Sardinia, docks and city. 1,000 lb. bombs wrecked the city. Fighters came up but P-38 escort took care of them. Saw a Me-109 spin at 10,000 feet and get away from P-38. Dodged flak pretty good.

"May 20th, target Grosseto A/D, Italy, near Rome. Had 500 pounders, wiped out hangar line, other Squadrons used frags. Considered one of the most accurate precision bombing raids of the war. Knocked out 68 planes on the ground. Flak inaccurate and no E/A.

"May 25th, target Messina Railroad Yards. Our second try at this target. We were second Group over. Flak was worst since Palermo. Picked up a few holes. Lt. Valentine nearly shot down by fighters after flak got one engine. Three men injured in his ship.

"May 30th, target Pomigliano Aircraft Engine Factory, near Naples. Mitch is sick and can't go so I dropped the bombs. Really was a thrill to do it! Flak not accurate. Didn't notice much anyway. Too busy getting the bombs away. Everything worked fine. No E/A.

"May 31st, Foggia Railroad Yards, Italy. Almost on eastern coast. Flew almost across Italy and back. Fighters jumped us as we hit coast and attacked all the way to the target. Flak pretty rough over target. Could feel ship lurch from bursts beneath us. Fighters attacked after target all the way to coast. Bombs fell good.

"June 5th, target of opportunity, three battleships in La Spezia Harbor. Too many of our ships over target at same time. Bombs were fair. Did quite a little damage. Was the longest over-water raid of the war and several other firsts. Flak from ships was pretty rough. They can put it up there! No fighters. Carried 2000 pounders.

"June 21st, target Naples Railroad Yards. Carrying incendiaries. They damn near hit our ship when they floated out from the lead of our Squadron. We missed flak but 429th lost Captain Bentley over target. Bombs fair.

"July 4th, target Catania, Sicily. Major Haynes turned back and two ships followed him. We found Group after a screwed up deal. Flak was worst we have had in a long time, lots of holes. Fighters attacked in droves, around 75. Lt. Laich's ship, 20th Squadron, caught fire and went down. Six bailed out. Sure a rough mission!

"July 5th, Gerbini A/D #6, Sicily. Flak still rough. P-38s took care of most fighters although some got through to us. Our ball turret gunner shot one down.

"July 6th, Gerbini A/D again. Bombs were good. One waist gunner knocked down by a piece of flak that tore a hole through the side of the ship and waist window. Two fighters came so close to us we could see the pilots but they did not fire. Must have misjudged or something. They came out of the sun and we didn't see them until they were on us.

"July 19th, Rome Railroad Yards. We were about the 10th ship to bomb it. Bombing had to be good. Didn't want to bomb churches. It should have been rough but flak was terribly inaccurate. Bombs hit good. Only six fighters encountered. Had a scare, lost No. 1 engine on the run and it could have been rough but we got out okay.

"August 4th, target Naples. All out and we were last ship over target. Ten Me-109s attacked our ship while on bomb run. Tracers and 20mm's were streaming by our nose. We were terribly afraid! The first attack knocked out elevator and controls, all of the radio, hit the tail gunner and injured him. Put a big hole in the vertical stabilizer and a huge hole through the wing spar, small holes in two fuel tanks and other wing. By all rights we never should have stayed in the air. We fought them for 45 minutes before and after bombs away. Two ships from Group went down, one from flak and one from a 20mm in gas line. Something beside the ship brought us back this day! Our ship will be out for repairs for over a week.

"August 19th, target Foggia Power Station. Target completely demolished. Flak pretty rough. Fighters by the droves. Group lost five ships, one of our Squadron, four from 20th.

"September 19th - October 3rd. Transferred into special service with 5th Wing flying with Allied Commandos but never got to fly. Promoted to 1st Lieutenant.

"October 5th, target Bologna Marshalling Yards. Fighters on us for over an hour. Flak terribly accurate. Lost one ship from our Squadron, Lt. Fitzpatrick. FINI FOR ME!"

BO RIZZO, ITALY - MISSION NO. 6 - MAY 10, 1943

Twenty-one aircraft dropped 2,942, 20-lb. Fragmentation bombs on this airdrome resulting in several fires observed among planes on field and buildings. Flak was heavy, slight, inaccurate. No losses, no injuries.

MARSALA, SICILY - MISSION NO. 7 - MAY 11, 1943

Twenty-three aircraft dropped 138, 1,000-lb. demolition bombs on harbor installations. One ship observed on fire. Smoke visible 100 miles away. Hits on warehouse and dock area. Flak light and inaccurate. No injuries, no losses.

CAGLIARI, SARDINIA - MISSION NO. 8 - MAY 13, 1943

Twenty-eight aircraft dropped 56, 2,000-lb. demolition bombs on the harbor and town. Area was left burning with fires seen from 100 miles. One ship in harbor exploded. Flak light. One E/A was seen, no claims, no losses.

CIVITAVECCHIA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 9 - MAY 14, 1943

Twenty-three aircraft dropped 276, 500-lb. demolition bombs on harbor and shipping. Entire area was well covered. Fires still burning and explosions occurring after leaving target. Flak light, no losses.

MESSINA, SICILY - MISSION NO. 10 - MAY 18, 1943

Twenty-eight aircraft took off. Five A/C returned early. Bomb load per ship, 12, 500-lb. demolition bombs. Bad weather and icing conditions prevented Group from reaching target. Gen. James Doolittle flew with Major Haynes.

GROSETTO, ITALY - MISSION NO. 11 - MAY 20, 1943

Twenty-eight aircraft dropped 1,842, 20-lb. fragmentation bombs and 150, 500-lb. demolition bombs on the Airdrome at Grossetto. Fires and smoke were visible for 50 miles. Probably 10 to 35 aircraft, on ground, destroyed. Flak slight, inaccurate. No losses.

SCIACCA, SICILY - MISSION NO. 12 - MAY 21, 1943

Twenty-five aircraft dropped 3,600, 20-lb. fragmentation bombs on the Airdrome at Sciacca. The Airdrome was fairly well covered. No encounters, little flak, no losses.

TERRANOVA, SICILY - MISSION NO. 13 - MAY 24, 1943

Twenty-eight aircraft dropped 336, 500-lb. GP (general purpose) bombs on installations and shipping. One ship in harbor seen to blow up. Warehouses and ammunition dumps blown up. Fires visible for 50 miles. Light flak, no encounters, no losses.

MESSINA, SICILY - MISSION NO. 14 - MAY 25, 1943

Twenty-eight aircraft dropped 324, 500-lb. GP bombs on rail installations. Target area well covered with fires seen for 50 miles. Flak heavy. One A/C damaged. Four enemy aircraft encountered. No claims, no losses.

COMISO, ITALY - MISSION NO. 15 - MAY 26, 1943

Twenty-three aircraft dropped 114, 500-lb. GP bombs and 1,584, 20-lb. fragmentation bombs on the Airdrome at Comiso. Target area well covered, fires seen at 20,000 feet. Heavy flak and fighters

encountered. S/Sgt. Joseph Myers, 12081411, 429th Squadron, killed by enemy aircraft fire. Three crewmen wounded. Three E/A were claimed destroyed and three damaged.

S/Sgt. Joseph Brager, 20th Squadron airplane mechanic, died of burns about the face and hands while servicing an aircraft of the 20th Squadron.

LEGHORN, ITALY - MISSION NO. 16 - MAY 28, 1943

Twenty-six aircraft dropped 312, 500-lb. GP bombs on harbor installations. Target area well covered with large fires and heavy black smoke visible for 90 miles. Flak heavy and six E/A encountered. Three E/A were claimed as damaged. No injuries, no losses.

NAPLES, ITALY - MISSION NO. 17, 1943

Thirty-four aircraft dropped 404, 500-lb. GP bombs on the Pomogliano Aircraft Factory. Target area well covered with fires visible at 23,600 feet. Flak heavy and 12 E/A encountered. There were no claims, no injuries, no losses.

FOGGIA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 18 - MAY 31, 1943

Twenty-six aircraft dropped 312, 500 GP bombs on the Marshalling Yards. Target area well covered with fires visible at 20,000 feet. Flak heavy. En route to target the Group was jumped by enemy fighters and again leaving the target. The latter fighters dropped aerial bombs. Gunners claimed two E/A probably destroyed. Seven B-17s were slightly damaged. No injuries, no losses.

No mission was assigned for June 1st. A Wellington bomber, designed as a transport, flew in from Gibraltar carrying Sir Winston Churchill, Gen. Marshall, Gen. Arnold, Sir Archibald Wavell, Sir Anthony Eden, and two, unidentified French Generals. General Doolittle and General Spaatz met the plane.

LA SPEZIA, ITALY - MISSION NO. 19 - JUNE 5, 1943

Thirty-one aircraft arrived over the harbor to bomb three battleships in the harbor. Thirty aircraft dropped 60, 2,000-lb. bombs from an altitude of 23,000/26,000 feet. One A/C returned its bombs due to a bomb bay door malfunction. Strike photos showed probable hits and near misses on the ships. Flak was heavy and two E/A encountered. No claims, injuries, no losses.

Major Joseph P. Gerace, Navigator, joined the 429th Squadron in May, 1943. October 18, 1991: "After a long span of years, it is difficult to remember who you flew with, when and what missions, but some instances stand out, not necessarily because they were important or of any earth shaking significance.

"One time while returning to Tunis after a milk run over Italy. Everything was quiet and we were in that semi-comatose state, waiting for the time and miles to pass so we could land, debrief and hit the sack. All of a sudden the lead navigator opened fire with his 50 caliber. Naturally we all came awake and looked to see what he was shooting at. The sky was a clear Mediterranean blue. There were no fighters visible. After two or three minutes, the firing ceased. It turned out that 'Satch' Humphries, the lead navigator, looked up suddenly, saw a fighter a good way out at his 10 o'clock position and opened up on it. The 'fighter' turned out to be a speck of dirt swinging on the end of a cobweb. We didn't razz 'Satch' too much as it could as well been one of us seeing things that weren't there.

"On another occasion, halfway to the target (I think we were going to LaSpezia), I noticed that my gold ring, which had belonged to my father, was missing. I didn't think too much about it. It was probably back at the base. I was using an empty 50 cal. cartridge box for a seat (we went first class in

those days). As we came up on the I.P., the sky was beginning to blacken with flak. We didn't worry about the bursts you could see; it was the ones you didn't see that hurt.

"Once past the I.P., if there were no fighters in the area, I would usually step over to the driftmeter, crank it around, pick up the bomb bay doors and follow the bombs for as long as they were visible. This time, as I left my cartridge seat and started to operate the driftmeter, a piece of shrapnel came through the bottom of the plane, hit the cartridge box and tore it up. I swung my head around to see what was happening and another piece of shrapnel demolished the outside lens housing on the driftmeter. I didn't discover that until I tried to look through it again. It is funny how the mind works. I immediately attributed the two facts that I did not have the ring on my finger.

"Later that day I found the ring in my back pocket. After that, I never flew without the ring securely on my finger. That's superstition for you. I went on to finish my missions in December 1943."

PANTELLERIA ISLAND - MISSIONS 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 - JUNE 7 - 11, 1943

Mission 20 was to destroy the town of Pantelleria. Twenty-one aircraft dropped 251, 500-lb. GP bombs on the town. The target was well covered. Flak was heavy and two E/A were encountered. There were no claims, no injuries, no losses.

Mission 21 was to bomb gun installations. Twenty-six aircraft dropped 149, 1,000-lb. GP bombs from 16,250/17,800 feet. The target was well covered. Flak was light and there were no encounters with E/A.

Mission 22 was to again bomb gun positions. Twenty-eight aircraft dropped 168, 1,000-lb. GP bombs from 16,000/17,000 feet. The target area was covered. Flak was slight, heavy, inaccurate as to altitude and deflection. No injuries, no losses.

Mission 23 was to bomb gun position #9. Thirty-six aircraft dropped 395, 500-lb. GP bombs on the target from 15,500/17,000 feet. No direct hits were observed. Bombs covered general target area. Flak was slight, heavy, inaccurate. No injuries, no losses.

Mission 24 was to bomb gun position #10. This was the second mission on this date. Thirty-seven aircraft dropped 432, 500-lb. GP bombs from 13,860/15,200 feet. The target area was well covered with direct hits. Flak was slight to moderate, light and heavy, both accurate to altitude, poor to fair to deflection. No injuries, no losses.

Mission 25 was to bomb the town of Pantelleria. Twenty-five aircraft dropped 293, 500-lb. GP bombs from 9,000/11,000 feet. The target was well covered, large explosion observed in eastern part of town. Black smoke and flames visible from 40 miles. Flak was slight, heavy and light, accurate to altitude, inaccurate to deflection. No injuries, no losses.

Crews reported seeing landing craft and escorting Naval vessels approaching the Island. They also noticed, as they turned off the target, the white cross of surrender being placed on the airfield on the Island. This was a historical first for the Air Corps; the total destruction of an Axis stronghold due to Allied aerial action.

PALERMO, SICILY - MISSION NO. 26 - JUNE 12, 1943

Eighteen aircraft dropped 2,574 fragmentation bombs on the Bocca Di Falco Airdrome. The target area was well covered with fire and black smoke seen from 250 miles at 18,000 feet. Flak was moderate to intense, heavy, accurate to altitude and deflection resulting in damage to ten B-17s. Some enemy aircraft made passes at the rear of the formation with P-38s of the 14th Fighter Group engaging them. There were no claims, no injuries, no losses.

CASTELVETRANO, SICILY - MISSION NO. 27 - JUNE 15, 1943

Twenty-six aircraft dropped 96, 300-lb. GP bombs and 2,880, 20-lb. fragmentation bombs on the Airdrome in this city. Direct hits were observed on runways and the dispersal area was well covered. Several large planes were observed on fire, one on the runway and others in dispersal areas. Flak was slight, heavy, poor to altitude and deflection. There were no injuries and no losses. The First Fighter Group provided cover.

On June 17, 1943, the Group moved from Chateau Dun to Ain M'Lila, a distance of about 30 miles. The truck movement was started at about 0800 hours and was completed by 1800 hours. The air crews flew their planes to the new base. The bivouac area was located at the southwest edge of Ain M'Lila in a grassy, level pasture which made an ideal campground. The landing ground was about two miles to the southwest. Many of the engineering and Armament personnel had their quarters on the line near their aircraft.

NAPLES, ITALY - MISSION NO. 28 - JUNE 21, 1943

Twenty-nine aircraft dropped 84, 500-lb. incendiary clusters and 382, 300-lb. GP bombs on the Marshalling Yards. The target area was well covered with fires seen in the target area. Flak was intense, heavy, accurate to altitude and deflection. Plane #42-29605, piloted by Captain Jack L. Bentley, 429th Squadron, was hit by flak and then attacked by fighters. It was last seen heading in the direction of the Island of Ischia.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT - A/C #42-29605 - "HONEY BUN" - 429TH SQUADRON

Captain Jack L. Bentley, 0-23880, P.	(POW)
2nd Lt. John D. Williams, Jr., CP.	(KIA)
Captain Charles W. Grooms, 0-353848, N.	(POW)
1st Lt. James H. Heaberg, 0-661625, B.	(POW)
T/Sgt. Norman C. Moore, 16044316, U/T.	(POW)
T/Sgt. George F. Immonen, 612972, L/T.	(POW)
Sgt. Roy D. Musser, 13045838, R/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Harold Marlow, 31468691, L/W.	(POW)
S/Sgt. Walter S. Thompson, Jr. 32385433, T/G.	(KIA)
T/Sgt. Urban M. Heinen, 37614462, R/O.	(POW)

Statement of 1st Lt. Burton Thorman, Navigator on B-17 #42-29579 after the mission: "At 1335 hours, Captain Bentley left the bomb run and started into a steep glide. We went through a heavy flak belt and a fighter got on his tail just after leaving the coast and fired for approximately 15 seconds, dead astern. Captain O'Connor moved our aircraft into position and we covered the E/A with concentrated firepower. I saw a hole in the left elevator of Captain Bentley's aircraft. The A/C seemed under control. Captain Bentley headed for Ischia Island, east and a little south at approximately 90 degrees heading, at 1350 hours. I noticed that the No. 3 engine was out. Captain Bentley went from 22,000 feet to 4,000 feet in 15 minutes. His steep glide flattened out as he headed for Ischia Island. We left Captain Bentley at about 4,000 or 5,000 feet. I noticed bursts coming from Ischia Island. This was at 8,000 feet."

Statement of Captain Marion Caruthers, Pilot of B-17 #42-5776, Commanding Officer of the 96th Squadron: "I was just above Captain Bentley's element at an altitude of 23,000 feet when Captain Bentley started going down. I followed down with Captain Bentley's element. I was further back and above his element. In observing Captain Bentley's aircraft, it seemed like the gas tanks on the right side were hit because he was trailing white and black smoke. Fighters were on his aircraft on the way down."

His aircraft did not seem to be out of control. I last saw him at about 8,000 feet heading for Ischia Island. I am reasonably sure that Captain Bentley landed at Ischia Island and couldn't have possibly made Naples."

Statement of Sgt. Roy D. Musser, July 1, 1944, after return to Allied control: "After coming off the target the airplane was hit by heavy flak which destroyed No. 3 and No. 4 engines. It was then attacked by a Ma-202 fighter which destroyed No. 2 engine. The airplane then crashed off the Island of Ischia.

"Captain Bentley was last seen by me 3 June 1943, in Naples being taken to prison camp. 2nd Lt. Williams was killed by flak. Captain Grooms was wounded in the right leg and seen going to American Officers Camp 27 August 1943, and now a POW. 1st Lt. Heaberg, last seen 21 July 1943, in hospital, suffering with a wound in left hand. Now a POW. T/Sgt. Moore last seen 21 July 1943 in hospital, suffering from a wound in left thigh. Now returned to duty. T/Sgt. Heinen, last seen 11 March 1944, recaptured by the Germans. Believed to be a POW. Not injured in crash. T/Sgt. Immonen, unknown. S/Sgt. Marlow, last seen 11 November 1943, in prison camp. Believed to be recaptured and taken to Germany. S/Sgt. died of wounds 21 June 1943 in hospital in Ischia. Grave not known. I was a waist gunner and wounded by shrapnel in the left arm and shoulder.

"When the plane crashed we all climbed into a dinghy, except the co-pilot who was dead, and went down with the airplane. We paddled to shore and two rescue boats came out and all but T/Sgt. Heinen, T/Sgt. Immonen and Captain Bentley were taken to a hospital on the Island of Ischia. They were confined in a cell in Ischia. S/Sgt. Marlow, Lt. Heaberg, Captain Grooms, T/Sgt. Moore and myself were given tetanus shots. Medical treatment was fair.

"The following morning all but S/Sgt. Thompson, who had died, were taken to Naples to a Naval Hospital where T/Sgt. Moore and myself were put in the same room. We remained there for two days. Captain Grooms, Lt. Heaberg, T/Sgt. Moore, S/Sgt. Marlow and myself were taken to an Air Corps quarantine camp for 15 days. We were well treated and I departed 21 July 1943 for a prison camp at Capua. We were fed one meal a day but Red Cross parcels were available, one per person per week.

"On 21 August 1943 I was taken to camp No. 65, arriving 29 August 1943 at Cervigliano. I remained there until 14 September 1943 when the Italians opened the gates and about 2,000 prisoners were released. Captain J. R. Derek Miller, a British medical officer in command, instructed the men to head southwest and remain in the mountains for four or five days and not try to pass the lines as he was certain Allied forces would overtake them. T/Sgt. Heinen, T/Sgt. Immonen, myself, T/Sgt. Shafron, 99th Bomb Group, Sgt. Delbert Grantham, 99th Bomb Group, Sgt. Ernest English from a B-26 Group, arrived at (not legible) 15 October 1943, living in the hills until 8 November 1943 when we moved into a home of a friendly Italian family.

"Previously, on 22 September 1943, a party of German soldiers searched the area, capturing over 30 soldiers. Sgt. English departed one night in the middle of October and was not seen again.

"On 11 March 1944, Sgts Heinen, Grantham, Shafron, an infantry soldier and two others were captured by a German officer and noncom and observed walking down the side of a road. I was then required to hide in the caves as the Germans were threatening to kill everyone, as well as those harboring them.

"I remained in the caves until 25 June 1944 when we learned that the Allied forces had taken (not legible) about 10 miles away. On 26 June I met a party of partisans and so found we were in Allied territory. Allied forces were unprepared to handle evaders so we were put into a south bound vehicle to Pescara and then through a repatriation organization by truck to Foggia, Italy."

1st Lt. James H. Heaberg, Navigator on A/C #42-29605. February 11, 1993: "We were rescued from the sea by an Italian Naval vessel and taken to the Island of Ischia for an overnight stay. Next day I was taken to the Italian Naval Hospital at Caserta for recovery of my wounds. I remained there until late September when I was evacuated to the German Interrogation Center at Frankfurt, Germany. After seven days of solitary confinement and interrogation, I was sent to Stalag Luft III in Poland, Grooms and Bentley were both there.

"I remained there at Stalag Luft III until late January 1945 when the Germans evacuated the entire camp to escape the advancing Russians. We wound up near the town of Moosdorf, northwest of Munich, where we were imprisoned until liberated on 29 April 1945 by the American 14th Armored Division. It was a huge camp, over 100,000 POWs of all nationalities. After liberation, I was evacuated to the United States in early June 1945.

"I remained in the Air Force for 30 years and retired as a full Colonel. As for the rest of my crew, Bentley, Grooms, and Musser are dead. I have no record of the others."

MESSINA, SICILY - MISSION NO. 29 - JUNE 25, 1943

Thirty-nine aircraft dropped 14, 2,000-lb. GP bombs and 512, 500-lb. GP bombs on the town. Flak was heavy, intense, accurate as to altitude and deflection. The target area was well covered.

Approximately 30 enemy fighters attacked the formation while over the target and off the coast of Trapani. These attacks came from all angles. B-17 #611 was attacked by an Me-109 and the top turret gunner opened fire, using 100 rounds or more. The E/A never swerved from course and crashed into B-17 #615, clipping off the wing of the bomber. The E/A exploded upon colliding and the E/A and bomber went down together. Major Haynes, Pilot of #611, states, "E/A rolled over slightly just before the collision and I could see the pilot of the E/A and I believe my top turret gunner killed him."

B-17 #579 was heavily attacked resulting in injuries to 1st Lt. Burton Thorman, 2nd Lt. Richard R. Morrow, Captain Roderic O'Connor, and 1st Lt. Harry F. Kinyon. One other E/A was claimed destroyed and the probable destruction of three others.

MISSING AIR CREW REPORT: A/C #42-29615 - 49TH SQUADRON

Captain	Albert D. Hinsey, 0-1699416, P.	(KIA)
1st Lt.	Jack J. Evans, 0-728845, CP.	(KIA)
1st Lt.	Walter C. Hopp, 0-791592, N.	(KIA)
1st Lt.	Jacob W. Hershey, 0-728843, B.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Urban B. Lavoie, 11069929, U/T.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Frederick W. Radefeld, 37209041, L/T.	(KIA)
Sgt.	Harold (NMI) Thompson, 32077106, R/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Jess W. Post, 18116760, L/W.	(KIA)
S/Sgt.	Leo H. Valentine, 19060513, T/G.	(KIA)
T/Sgt.	Jack K. Hildt, 15075965, R/O.	(KIA)

Observers report that an enemy Me-109 collided with this B-17, clipping off the wing of the bomber and exploding. Both aircraft went down together and crashed. One parachute was seen to come from the B-17.

1st Lt. Burton B. Thorman was a member of the 429th Squadron and Navigator on the crew of 1st Lt. Joseph Mitrovi. January 17, 1992: "Our plane, #579, was named 'BABY' over my objections, because the pilot, Joe Mitrovi, called his girl friend that. Despite the un-war-name, #579 flew well into 1944. I heard a successor crew had to ditch in the Adriatic near a small island and the crew walked

ashore. As far as I know, she never lost a crew. Several of us earned Purple Hearts, and no terribly wounded personnel flew in her.

"No. 579 was one of the planes assigned to the Group when we got to Kearney, Nebraska. She lost her virginity on a cross country flight when Mitrovi wanted to switch flight formation with a wing man and came up too soon, losing six inches of vertical stabilizer on the wing man's prop. She flew to Laurel, Mississippi, then on to Mobile Air Depot, Alabama. Two weeks were spent there getting repairs.

"Her next big event was the long hop from Natal, Brazil to Ascension Island, en route to North Africa. Two hours out of Natal, one engine started losing oil pressure, so back to Natal. Another engine developed a problem before we made landfall. Two superchargers had to be replaced, sent down from the States, which kept us in Brazil for three weeks.

"After about five missions, Rod O'Connor replaced Mitrovi as pilot of our crew and by early June, Rod became Squadron Commanding Officer and I became Squadron Navigator, so #579 was usually in the lead position. We had the usual engine problems and I figure in 50 missions, I came back seven times with an engine out and once with two engines out. On that occasion, with Captain Kutschera as Pilot, #579 lost No. 1 engine before we left the Italian coast, north of Rome, and lost No. 4 shortly after we left the coast, and it was back to Tunisia with the 429th Squadron trailing us.

"No. 579 was cannibalized and sat sadly without engines for weeks. On one occasion, with one engine out, #579 was landed by O'Connor with a tire flattened by flak.

"The most worrisome engine loss occurred shortly after O'Connor took over the crew, when we lost No. 2 on take-off. While the Group was forming up we managed to get No. 2 started again and Darrell Jones, the Flight Engineer, said we could keep it going if we used a richer mixture. The crew was all for joining the formation and Dick Morrow, the Bombardier, went back and re-connected the arming wires on the bombs, which we had previously cut if we had to salvo. The target was near Naples and as we left the target area, there went No. 2 engine. But there was a new problem; running on rich had run our fuel supply down and the nearest airfields were in Sicily, enemy territory. Doing some quick calculations, I figured we could make it to Bizerte, which had just been liberated and at least we could ditch close to the coast of Tunisia. Darrell and I kept working the fuel consumption all the way to Bizerte and we landed with red lights flashing to show empty fuel tanks.

"There was nothing operational on the field but a lot of wrecked Jerry planes. An engineering officer came up and asked us what was going on. He was in charge of cleaning up to get the airfield operational. We told him our problems and asked if he could get us 1,400 gallons of 100 octane fuel, at which he blanched and asked if we could get back to Algeria on any less. He left and after a while came back with a 55 gallon drum and about 100, five gallon cans, all of which the whole crew poured into the tanks by hand. The biggest hazard was slipping when the composition soles on our shoes came in contact with the spillage. However, we had enough to get back to Ain M'Lila.

"The invasion of Sicily took place on July 10th, 1943, and in the weeks before that the 2nd Bomb Group, and other Groups, had been 'softening up' the place. It was in this period I was accused of being allergic to flak. I was wounded the first time on June 25th, over Messina. Messina is the closest point to the Italian mainland and an important Ferry link to Italy. It was a strategic point to the Germans who were probably expecting an invasion of Sicily. Thus, it was heavily defended by flak batteries.

"Our Pilot was Rod O'Connor, who recently became Commanding Officer of the 429th Squadron, and we were in the lead position. We were met by a hornets nest of Me-109s and were almost relieved to get into the flak zone to get relief from the fighters. With less than 30 seconds from bombs away, a burst of flak sent steel fragments into the nose of the plane and caught me in the shoulder, and the pilot and co-pilot were sprayed with windshield chips. Most seriously wounded was Dick Morrow who caught a fragment in his elbow that wrecked his humorous bone and earned him a disability discharge. Dick was on his knees, almost in a ball, and the impact knocked him backwards, away from

the bombsight. I could see the indices coming together but couldn't reach over him to reach the trigger, so I reached down and flipped Dick up to his operating position. He was able to trigger and it was bombs away immediately.

"Directly out of the flak zone, our Me-109 'friends' were back and Dick and I joined our gunners with our nose guns. After the fracas was over we had a chance to tend to Dick who was in considerable pain from his 'funny bone' wound. I was bleeding but not in extreme. Both of us were ultimately awarded the Silver Star and the Purple Heart.

"My Silver Star was pinned on by General Doolittle in a ceremony in Tunis where a couple of others, from the Group, got awards.

"I was wounded again on July 6, 1943 while we were bombing the Gerbini airdrome and again it was flak. Ironically, flak vests were delivered to the Squadron on the day that I flew my 50th mission, the day before Thanksgiving, 1943.

"That last mission was rather memorable to me for another reason. The target that day was to bomb the sub pens at Toulon, France. Major Kutschera, Squadron CO, was to lead the second element of 18, with Colonel Rice, Group CO, leading the whole formation of 36. We were to fly north to Massicault, Tunisia and then turn west until reaching the Initial Point and then turn north for the run in. There was a heavy cloud cover at 20,000 feet and about 20 miles from the IP, Walt called me to be ready to tell him when to turn because he was having a hard time keeping the lead element in sight. I had a good ground speed check and had him turn north. Lt. Barron, the Bombardier, was having trouble seeing anything but clouds until the last minute when we had a break, lined up and dropped. Turning south, heading for home, Walt called me to verify his recollection that we were to be the last ones over the target and who were those B-17s heading into the target area, too far away to read the markings? Meanwhile we were looking for the first element that was supposed to be ahead of us, or on the ground as we came over the Base.

"We landed and were climbing out of our planes when the first element came over the field with lots of red flares for emergency landings. Colonel Rice came raging over to us, demanding to know where we had gone and accusing us of desertion in the face of the enemy. When we advised him we had bombed the target he was livid because, 'No one could see the target.' I explained to him that we were much lower and that we got a break in the clouds long enough to drop. Fortunately our cameras captured the target with the bombs striking. It appeared that Colonel Rice had made two runs over the target and then went looking for a target of opportunity, at which time they ran into enemy fighters.

"Two weeks later I was assigned to Headquarters, 15th AF as an Assistant Operations Officer, moving with them from Tunis to Bari, Italy in time for the surprise attack, by German bombers, on Bari Harbor with Allied shipping catching hell."

June 26, 1943. The Arabs were really creating a problem in the area, especially down on the line where Engineering and Armament personnel have their tents. Last night, I was CQ (Charge of Quarters). It was a boring job but at least I had a good place where I could write letters to my family. It was about midnight when sounds of gunfire erupted in the direction of the flight line. There was no sounding of an air raid alarm nor anti-aircraft fire so had no idea of what was happening. I thought of saboteurs but heard no explosions nor could see any fires in the direction of the flight line. I immediately notified the OD (Officer of the Day) and he took off in the direction of the shooting. Within a short period of time, a truck pulled up to the tent, two fellows got out, went to the rear of the truck and pulled out the body of a dead Arab. They proceeded to haul the body into the tent and threw a tarp over him. They informed me that one of the fellows had been awakened by the sound of his tent ripping, sounded the alarm to the others in the tent. They jumped out of bed, grabbed their firearms, rushed out of the tent and saw some figures fleeing across the field. They opened up with rifles, pistols and machine guns.

They dropped one, and this was the one they brought to the tent. After all the excitement was over, I went back to my letter writing but it was an eerie feeling having that body in the tent. I was told later that another body was found later, out in the field, and another wounded Arab was found in town. The following story is not related to this incident, but is typical of what was happening in this area with the Arabs.

M/Sgt. Robert D. Fillingame was a Crew Chief in the 20th Squadron. January 2, 1991: "There are so many stories that I could tell since I joined the 2nd Bomb Group but that would take a whole book so I will tell of one in North Africa.

"At Ain M'Lila, Algeria a situation showed up with the natives around there. They were the best at stealing that you would ever see. It got to the point that our guards couldn't control them at night. We had no Personnel Tent at the time and the parachutes and the like were left in the planes. Now those Arabs found it out and would try to slip in there at night and steal one of those parachutes. Now that silk canopy was priceless and worth a pile of money. That silk was the best you could find. Well, we took an old waist gun from an old fuselage, a 30 cal. machine gun, and mounted it on the back of a jeep, between the two seats in the back and the man who operated it would fire over the driver's head.

"Well, we would take that thing at night and patrol the area around there where the planes were, and if we saw one of those Arabs around there we then took after him, firing as we went.

"The situation got to the point that they were stealing clothes from the tents, and this actually happened to me. I had three barracks bags, blue draw string bags, and I took them and put them under my bunk so that I was sleeping directly on top of them. Well, I woke up one morning and I looked at the tent and there was a slit all the way down one side. The first thing I thought about was my clothes. Well, they had slit the tent during the night and got all my clothes and I didn't know anything about it. So I had to go to Supply and get another batch of clothes.

"We had a Catholic Chaplain in the outfit who said they weren't about to get his stuff. What he did was take his communion and other paraphernalia and all he used for Masses and he put it in his tent, by his head, and turned his bunk away from the door. He got one of those jungle type knives, machete, and laid it top of everything, right by his bed where he could grab it. Well, he woke up one morning and they had cleaned him out, his Mass material, machete, everything else, his clothes and all. They did leave him his mattress and bunk. So it goes to show that when they took a notion to steal, they did a good job of it."

LEGHORN, ITALY - MISSION NO. 30 - JUNE 28, 1943

Twenty-three aircraft dropped 368, 300-lb. GP bombs on the city. The target area was well covered. A large explosion, belching black smoke, was observed from 20,000 feet. Flak was heavy to slight, inaccurate to altitude and deflection. One E/A was encountered. No claims, no injuries, no losses.

PALERMO, SICILY - MISSION NO. 31 - JUNE 30, 1943

Twenty-one aircraft dropped 252, 500-lb. GP bombs on the town. Flak was encountered over the target with no injuries, no losses. No E/A encounters.