

NOTICE !!

To the reader of these pages;

You must realize that I was only 21 years old when I recorded these notes in my Diary. My Dairy was kept in a Message Book, M-20, issued by the Signal Corps, U. S. Army, to all radio operators, regardless of which branch of service they were in.

This book was stored away and not seen for almost (60) years. Nothing in these pages can be classified as "Official" or "Factual". It is just something I wrote down on the spur of the moment, at that time.

The Cities, that are mentioned, I don't even recall, which Nations, they belonged to at that time. The spelling is also not according to the Dictionary. So please keep this in mind as you read.

**W. Harold Plunkett
December 20, 2002**

My Diary, which I started April 1, 1943

We departed New Brunswick, N.J. aboard the S.S. Monterey, a beautiful touring ship, in peacetime. It's usual run was between California and Hawaii. It was now equipped as a troop ship. When we departed we did not know where we were going. The only word we had, was that we were going to Africa, and was a part of a very large convoy, going to combat the Axis.

We had left Lewistown, Montana, knee deep in snow, with all the wool clothes we could put on and boarded a trooptrain. We unloaded in New Brunswick, N.J. and were quaranteed to our barracks, untill we received orders to board ship. We boarded ship wearing the same clothes we had on when we left Lewistown, Montana. We were given a barracks bag, to put all of our possessions in and it was placed in the hold of the ship, with thousands of others.

When we landed at Casablanca, April 11, 1943, the temperature was 110 in the shade, wearing the same clothes we were wearing when we left Lewistown. We were issued, a steel helmet, a 1920 Springfield rifle, a clip of live ammunition, (we were now in a combat zone). We marched down the gangplank, passed a mountain of barracks bags and were told to grab one and keep going.

We marched (very loosley) for five miles untill we were east of the town of Casablanca, untill we came to a very large vacant field. We were told to find a friend and rest. Every man carried a half of a "Pup" tent. So we had to join with another person to make a complete tent. We were all in dire need of a rest room, with none in sight. so we were given shovels to dig slit trenches to relieve ourselves. It was very humiliating to us, untill we noticed, that the people walking or traveling along the highway, were doing the same thing, in the tree row, beside the highway.

We soon had shed the clothes we were still wearing ever since we left Lewistown. Then we were lying down inside our pup tents for some shade and rest. I was at that time a Staff/Sargent, which made me one of the few Noncoms, with hundreds of other GI's. I was soon proded awake by an MP, and told to pick several men to do guard duty surrounding our camp sight, by sunset. I was very unhappy with the assignment, as were the men I picked to help.

We were very scared, not knowing what the enemy might look like at night and carrying guns that we had never fired before. Every once in a while, one of the guards would hear something out in the darkness, make a sound, and BANG, they would shoot towards the sound. The officer of the night watch, and I, would get in a Jeep, and go toward the sound of the shot. When we found the guard, he would be standing there his gun at the ready and shakeing in his boots.

When we asked him what he shot at, he said "I don't know, but whatever made the noise has stopped". The O. D. nor I was willing to go out into the dark to find out, so we waited until daylight. The next morning, we discovered there had been a few dogs shot and one camel.

Tuesday, April 12, 1943

We finally started to get some order in our camp, had some sort of breakfast and started to put up canvas on each side of our slit trenches, so we could have some kind of privacy. We spent the rest of the day trying to find our own barracks bag, by searching throughout the camp, trying to find the man that matched the name on the barracks bag, that I had.

Wednesday, April 13, 1943

We finally felt rested and were issued some clothes that were fitting for being in the heat of N. Africa. Then we started trying to get friendly with our weapons. We had been given a few more clips of ammunition, just in case they would be needed. The French people, were very divided between their allegiance. Some were for Petaine, some were for DeGaule, so we didn't know who were for us or who were against us.

Thursday, April 14, 1943

The O. D. (Officer, in charge for that day), looked me up and told me, that I was to get in a truck, that I was going to the Marakech Air Base. There I met my old crew, Staff/Sargents; (at that time). George Orchard, from Maine; David Tyner, from, N.Carolina; Frank Culligan, from Rhode Island; Harold Thomas, from Washington, (state); George Lundin, from Minnesota; and the Officers; Pilot, Robert O'Neil, from N.Y.; Co-pilot, Duren Spivey, from Georgia; Bombardier, Arkley Bell; Navigator, Stanley White. It sure made me feel good to meet my old friends again. Although we had only been separated a couple of months.

Back in Dec. 7, 1941, my family had returned from Church, had our Sunday dinner and was listening to the "Walgreen Hit Parade", on the radio..... when the program was interrupted and announced that Japan, had attacked Pearl Harbor. I had a friend who was in the Navy at Pearl Harbor. So the next day, Monday, Dec. 8, 1941, I went to the recruiting office and inlisted. The recruiting Sargent, saw me looking at the model airplanes hanging from the ceiling and told me to pick out the one I wanted to fly. So I picked out a fighter plane and she said, "OK, sign right here". (We all know how that works out). It didn't. I was sent to Scott Field, Illinois, to be trained as a radio operator/mechanic.

Upon graduating from Radio School, I was sent to Sebring Air Base in Florida, to be assigned to a crew of a B-17 bomber, as the radio operator. One of the largest airplanes in the world, at that time. The crews were selected, very scientifically. There was a list of names of those just graduated from Pilot training, a list of Navigators, who had just graduated, a list from Bombardier school, etc. They read the name from the top of each list and told them to go to a certain Palm tree, and meet your crew. We trained together, from several different Air Bases, throughout the U.S. until we went to Ephrata, Washington.

While there, our commanding Officer, Capt. Robert E Haines, told us that we would soon be moving to Lewistown, Montana. This would be our last training base in the U.S. From there we would be going into combat.....somewhere. So if any of us wanted to get married before going overseas, have your Brides, meet you there. So I got on the phone to Western Union and sent Betty, a telegram. She got on a train to Lewistown and we were married, Dec. 8th, 1942. We were not the only ones to be married during that time. About three months later, we got word that we would be getting brand new B-17's and go into combat. We were soon given strict physicals, to see if we were able for combat. For some strange coincident, all the men who were newly married.. failed the physical and did not get to go to combat.....at that time. So we got to stay with our new wives, for a couple more months.

Friday, April 15, 1943.

We worked all day washing down the airplane, "Peggy O'Neil" named after the Pilot's Wife. We knew that a dirty plane would have a lot of "drag" and we wanted our plane to fly "Fast". The first physical labor I had done in eight months. I went to bed early, with a broken heart. I had been transferred to the crew of Capt. Roscoe Johnson, Pilot of the "Wiley Witch". He needed a ball turret gunner and being that I was only 5'5" tall and weighed 125#, I would fit in the turret, very well, or any place else on the airplane a person was needed. I did eventually fly in almost every position on the airplane. The radio operator, didn't do much during combat, no transmissions made during combat, unless it was an S.O.S. but the ball turret, was a very busy spot. I had never been in a turret, until we got into combat but I did fit very well in it. Most of the men wouldn't have no part of it because it was a very cramped position and it was the only position on the plane where you couldn't look around and see somebody. In the ball turret, you saw nothing but space.

Saturday, April 16, 1943.

Got acquainted with my new crew; Pilot, Roscoe Johnson: Co-pilot,



Our Wedding Picture, taken Dec. 8, 1942,
in Lewistown, Montana.

Harrison; Waist gunner, Arthur E. Hutchins (Full blooded Indian): Tail gunner. Robert King.

Five of us decided to walk to a nearby small town. We were walking through an Olive Grove, when I noticed two bicycles leaning against a tree and I heard a girl giggling. I told the men to use some of our combat training, surround the tree and sneak up on it, which we did. King, our tail gunner climbed up into the tree. I found a dry creek bed and crawled up under a wild rose bush. King, had crawled out on a limb of the tree and it broke. He fell right on top of the couple. The young Frenchman, jumped up grabbing his clothes, so he could kill that man, who fell on him. The girl had put her clothes on top of the rose bush, I was under. When she saw me, she began to laugh. After the rest of us got up from our hiding places, the Frenchman, seeing that he was surrounded, decided against killing the man who had fallen on top of them. After they had got dressed and got on their bicycles and road away, we went on into the village. Not finding much there, we returned to camp.

Sunday, April 17, 1943

Went to Church, today in a Tent Chapel. Chaplain Allen, was still with us and we had a portable pump organ. We went on a training flight, in the area. The first time I had flown in the ball turret.

Monday, April 18, 1943

Got orders to pack the plane because we were moving up towards the front. We spent all day getting ready. Ran into John Denny, who was in my radio class at Scott Field. He was from Washington, Indiana. The best state of the 48.

Tuesday, April 19, 1943

We move around so much that it is very hard for our mail to catch up to us. So today was special, I received a letter from Betty. It sure did make me feel good to get a letter from my Darling Wife. I also received a letter from my Mother, God Bless her.

Didn't do much today but read and dream, of the future.

Wednesday, April 20, 1943

Left Marakech, today. Stopped at Oran, for half an hour. Then flew on to St. Donat. It had been raining and started raining in earnest, must be their monsoon season. Three of us slept in the plane, the rest went to town.

Thursday, April 21, 1943

It sure was muddy today. We caught a truck and went to the area to eat. our Airplanes, are parked over a large area, away from the administrative facilities, mess hall, sleeping tents, etc. That way if the enemy, tried to destroy the planes on the ground, they wouldn't be grouped together and the personnel wouldn't be close to the planes.

I also met several friends, I hadn't seend since training at Sebring, Florida. There was Springer, Collins, Brown, Demille, Denadio, Brown, Crump and others I can't recall. Then I also got some bad news; Fitch, Poor, Cavalo, had been killed in combat and Conlon, had been sent home badly wounded.

Friday, April 22, 1943

It rained again all day, so we hibernated in the planes. They brought supplies to us in jeeps. Supplies consisted fo "C" & "K" rations, stationary, magazines. They had run out of cigarettes, so they brought pipes and tobacco in tins and pipes, for those who wanted to smoke. I wrote four letters home.

The ground crews came into St. Donat, by cattle car. It's going to be good to have some body to take care of our planes, they know what they are doing. They can do the repair on our planes in a fourth of the time, that it takes us.

Saturday, April 23, 1943

Didn't do much today, washed down the "Wiley Witch", useing 110 octain gaso-line with undershirts. Did a real good job. We sure don't stay in one place very long. We moved east again. Flew over to Chateaudun, Algeria, which will be our new base, who knows for how long.

Sunday, April 24, 1943

The ground crews came over in trucks. For some reason it seems to take those big lumbering trucks a long time to move from place to place, compared to the time it takes us to fly from place to place. What a day we had, handshaking, hugging, pats on the back, yelling....but we got to pitch camp. The Flying Officers, slept in a four man tent, the flying noncom's slept in six man tents. The ground crews slept in all kinds of tents, from pup tents, to six man tents. The administration offices were in tents, the mess hall was a tent....everything was in tents. Those rocks sure made soft mattresses but at least we didn't have to sleep in the planes. The sleeping tents were laid out in a square, about a quarter of a mile each side, with everything else inside the square. We even had a baseball diamond inside the square. Our planes were scatered out about a mile to a mile and a half away from our camping area. Another Sunday, without any Church.

Monday, April 25, 1943

Just worked all day, cleaning our guns, loading our 50 caliber amunition. Making sure that we could defend ourselves, when we encountered the enemy.

Tuesday, April 26, 1943

Our target area was covered with bad weather, so we didn't go anywhere today.

Wednesday, April 27, 1943

It must be the monsoon season in this area, never saw such rain. Another day just sitting around waiting for the sun to shine.

Thursday, April 28, 1943

Went to our first briefing today. Our target was to be the town of Terranova, Italy. The intelignce people wasn't sure of how many enemy fighters might be in the area but not to expect too much anti-aircraft guns (flak) would be shooting at us. While we were over the Mediteranian Sea, we would test fire our guns, to make sure we were ready if we were attacked by any enemy fighters.

We couldn't find our target due to the cloud cover protecting them, so we returned to base with our bombs still on board. Sighting no enemy aircraft. What a let down.....here we were all fired up ready to fire at live targets but none showed up.

Friday, April 29, 1943

Nothing to report today.....but rain.

Saturday, April 30, 1943

Mission scrubed again today because the target area was covered with clouds.

Sunday, May 1, 1943

This is a new month, so maybe our weather will improve, so the Air Force, can do something for this war effort. We did have Chapel, set up so we could have Church, today. We even had enough fellows get together this evening to try to have a Choir, practice.

Monday, May 2, 1943

They issued us all new Rayban, sunglasses and were told to fix the cases so they would fit on our belts. So I sharpened up my knife and started to cut a slit in the back of the case for a belt loop. I was sitting on the ground cross legged with the glass case on my left leg when the knife slipped and I stuck the knife blade all the way into the calf of my right leg. Our entire crew was preparing to do the same thing and as soon as they saw what I did, they called for the Medic. Dr. Levine, heard the call and came running, dressed my wound, put me on a stretcher, put the stretcher on a Jeep and told them to take me to the 2nd Bomb Grp. Hospital. (which was another tent). They told me at the hospital, that the wound wasn't serious but what the Dr. was concerned about was infection, which could be serious over here in N. Africa.

This all happened early in the day and I told my crew, now that I couldn't fly they would call for a mission and sure enough, at 4:00PM, they called for a mission to bomb a certain hill, where the German's, were dug in, in the area of Bizerta, Tunisia. The crew said they didn't encounter any enemy fighters but they did see a lot of flak.

Tuesday, May 3, 1943

They kept me in the hospital all day. Target area was covered with clouds again so no mission.

Wednesday, May 4, 1943

Came back from the hospital but the crew flew without me, on a bombing mission in the Tunis, area and encountered no oposition.

??????? Missplaced my Diary, for a few days.

Sunday, May 9, 1943

This was a bad day, also the first real mission, where I got shot at. It was Mother's Day, and it was our first target that was not a military target. Our mission, was to destroy the city of Palermo, Sicily. The intention was to destroy the morale of the people, so they would be willing to surrender the Island of Sicily, to the Allies. The Red Cross, said that we killed over 18,000 people that day.

One of the duties of a ball turret gunner, was to observe what you see and report it to the de-briefing after the mission was completed. I saw one of our planes fall into the Mediteranian Sea and Bland's, plane landed on the beach at Bone, all shot up.

That evening we had a Mother's Day, service at the Chapel. There was a lot of mixed feelings, at the service.

Monday, May 10, 1943

Our mission for today was to destroy the Bo Rizzo, airfield and we really blasted it. Had a few ME-110's, make a pass at our formation but they didn't do any damage and I don't think we damaged them any either.

Tuesday, May 11, 1943

The international Red Cross, had declared that Palermo, Sicily, for three days would be an "Open City". Which meant that for three days, we were not supposed to bother that city, while they buried their dead. So Robert Lyle, and I checked out a Jeep and went sight seeing in Costantine.

Wednesday, May 12, 1943

We spent most of the day driving around Constantine, before returning to our base.

Thursday, May 13, 1943

Our mission today was to destroy the airfield at Cagliari, Italy. We did a rather good job of destroying, hangers and runways.

Friday, May 14, 1943

I flew with Lt. Valentine's crew, as a Bombardier. All I had to do was watch the lead airplane in our formation, and when the lead airplane dropped their bombs I would throw the switch, that would drop our bomb load. I don't really know what our target was, for all the bombs I saw, hit in the water off the coast of Italy. So it was really a wasted mission, as far as I could tell.

Saturday, May 15, 1943

No mission today. Target was under cloud cover.

Sunday, May 16, 1943

No mission today. Went to Chapel, and the men's Choir, sang. I guess it could not be anything but a Men's Choir.

Monday, May 17, 1943

Flew with Lt. Valentine's, crew again today as a ball turret gunner. Whenever your own crew wasn't scheduled to fly, a person could volunteer to fill in any vacancy on any crew that was flying. When a mission is scheduled, they always

put on the bulletinboard, any crew that had a vacancy that needed to be filled and I usually volunteered.

Tuesday, May 18, 1943

Our target was somewhere in Sicily, today and Gen. Doolittle, flew on this mission but we couldn't find our target because of clouds, so we dropped our bombs into the volcanic Mt. Etna, trying to get it to erupt. We did this more than once but it never erupted until after we had captured, Sicily.

Wednesday, May 19, 1943

No mission today. Just spent the day cleaning our guns. Whenever we were not flying, we were usually cleaning and servicing our guns.

Thursday, May 20, 1943

Our mission today was the airfield at Geusetto, Italy. We really flattened it. Got my gunsights on two different German, Transport planes. Shot several rounds at each one but there was no visible sight of any damage.

Friday, May 21, 1943

Our mission today was another airfield. This one was at Sicassia, Italy, and really flattened it. We had the most flak we had seen yet. We had fifteen holes in our airplane and had a gastank punctured....but we made it back to our base OK.

Saturday, May 22, 1943

No mission scheduled today.

Sunday, May 23, 1943

No mission scheduled today. I guess that since we got so much bad publicity for bombing Palermo, on Sunday they haven't scheduled any missions on Sunday.

Monday, May 24, 1943

Our mission today was the airfield at Terranova, Italy. I guess we tried to destroy what the German's, had tried to repair since the last time we bombed it. Did a pretty fair job again..

Tuesday, May 25, 1943

Went to Messina, Sicily, got jumped by a dozen German, fighters. I am pretty

sure that we got one of them. We got our target taken care of real good to.

Wednesday, May 26, 1943

We went to Comissa, Sicily, today. Encountered German, fighters again. Lt. Valentine's plane, was assigned to the 20th Sqdn. for this mission and got shot up pretty bad. Novak, was injured and Pekkala, got some shrapnel around the eyes. Carl Pekkala, is still living on a ranch at Grass Range, Montana, as of Dec. 2, 2002.

The Second Bomb Group (Heavy), consisted of four Squadrons; the 20th; the 429th; the 96th; and the 49th. My Sqdn. is the 49th. Occasionally if a certain Sqdn. is picked for a specific mission but doesn't have enough airplanes able to fly, they will select a plane from another Sqdn. to fill in the vacancy.

Thursday, May 27, 1943

No mission scheduled for today.

Friday, May 28, 1943

Our mission for today, is the Harbor, at Leghorn, Italy, we really did a good job on the Harbor, our bombs were right on target. We had five German, fighters. C. B. Johnson, our Navigator, got credited for shooting one down. He was useing one 30cal. machine gun. So I think some of our 50's, must have helped. but that's alright, our plane the "Wiley Witch", got the Swastika, painted on it's nose.

We had an outdoor movie this night, "The Male Animal", with Henry Fonda and Olivia DeHaviland. No mail again!. The ship carrying our mail must have been torpedoed.

Saturday, May 29, 1943

No mission today.

Sunday, May 30, 1943

Went to Naples, Italy, and bombed an aircraft factory. Had lots of flak and several German, fighters again.

Went to Memorial Services, at the Chapel, this evening. No 500 mile race at Indianapolis, today.

Monday, May 31, 1943

Monday, May 31, 1943

Our crew didn't get to fly today, because we have had 15 missions and had accumulated 81 hours of flying time. We had a very good ground crew that kept our plane, in good flying condition, so that we did not have to abort a mission because of mechanical problems, as much as other crews. Their target, was something in the Aegean Sea. They really had the German, fighters after them today. We rarely have our own fighter aircraft for support.

Received mail....finally. Got two from my darling Wife and one from Mother. Mother, said that Grandpa Davis, was in poor condition at this time. But it sure was good to get mail from home, even though some times it is not good news.

Tuesday, June 1, 1943

No mission today. We went to town to one of those communal bath houses. It was just a large room, with so much steam that you couldn't see. You just went in and sat down on one of the steps and soaked for ten minutes and then you went to the wall and followed the wall around until someone doused you with a bucket of cold water, as you walked into another room where you could see and there was your clothes. We went to a theater and saw "Ball of Fire", with Barbara Stanwyck and Gary Cooper. Then went back to base and wrote letters home.

Wednesday, June 2, 1943

No mission scheduled today, so Bob Lyle, (one of our armament men) and I got a Jeep and went to Constantine, again and went to the promenade. Back home we would walk up and down Mainstreet, to see people. Over here in Tunisia, they have a promenade, a flat territory, where they walked around to visit people. They also had concession stands around the area. So we got ourselves an Ice Cream Cone. Something we hadn't had for a long time. It sure was good! While promenading I met Paul Mahurin, who I went to High School, with at Tech, at, Terre Haute, Indiana

Thursday, June 3, 1943

Mission canceled because of weather. So we sat around until dark so that we could watch an outside show and saw, "The Santa Fe Trail", with Erol Flynn, and Olivia De Havilland. The film broke about half way through and they couldn't fix it, so we went to bed not knowing how it ended.

Friday, June 4, 1943

No flight today but we were issued, Electric Heat Suits, in exchange for our big bulky Parka's. A heat suit was made of two sets of long underwear glued together with toadter wire running between the two sets. You just plugged them into a rheostat and turned up the heat. They were great, just as long as you had enough electricity on the plane to run them all.

Our Sqdn. Commander, Col. Robert E. Haines and his crew was being sent back to the States, for a Bond Tour. They had covered all the holes in their plane, called "The A-Merry-Can", with gold colored aluminum plates. So our Pilot, Maj. Roscoe Johnson, became Sqdn. Commander. That meant the Officers, of our crew had a Command Car, at their disposal and we had our own Jeep, what a priveledge!

Saturday, June 5, 1943

We went to Spezia, Italy, today after three German, Battleships. We were loaded with 500 pounders. I don't know how the others did but I, watched from my turret and I saw one bomb hit behind the ship we were after, then three hit on deck, then three more hit in front of the ship. I would say that we got ours but it was never verified. Only saw one German, fighter.

Received a letter from my Darling Wife, the first one for a week.

Sunday, June 6, 1943

No flight today. So I worked on my turret all day. I had burned out the barrels of my twin 50's, so I installed two new ones. Went to Chapel, tonight and wrote a letter to Betty.

Monday, June 7, 1943

Went to the Island of Pantalaria, and it looked like we blasted it off of the map. We had P-38, fighters for escort but we still had some German, fighters get through to us anyway.

Tuesday, June 8, 1943

They went to blast another Island, but we didn't get to go. They came back and said that they saw the invasion of Sicily, taking place.

Wrote a letter to my sweet wife.

Wednesday, June 9, 1943

We went to the Island of Pantalaria, again, I thought we had destroyed it before but I guess the Island, is solid rock and the German, fighters are using it for a landing strip for refueling. We took 1,000 pounders today and we had P-38's for support. They knocked down six ME109's. All of our ships got back OK.

Had mail call today, I hit the jackpot, I got eight letters from my sweet Wife and one from Mother. I wrote mail back home. We had some rain today, we hadn't had any rain for a couple of months.

Thursday, June 10, 1943

Got up at 4:30AM, this morning and are going to Pantalaria again! In fact we went there twice today. It must be a hard rock to crack.

Received two letters from Mother and one from my dear Betty.

Friday, June 11, 1943

Our Pilot, Maj Johnson, thinks we ought to fly every mission but we were grounded today and the Sqdn. flew to Pantalaria, again! As soon as our bombs were dropped the Marines, invaded the Island. We went to some river and washed our clothes and took a bath. Harrison, one of our waist gunners, flew with another crew today and came back with a busted ear drum. We got word that Pantalaria, surrendered this afternoon.

Saturday, June 12, 1943

No mission today. With nothing to do, so I shined my wings, buttons, shoes and everything that would take a polish.

Sunday, June 13, 1943

No mission again today, so Lyle, and I took our Sqdn. camera man, Federgreen, to Constantine, for some picture taking. Got held up by an Army, convoy, moving east towards Tunis, so we didn't get back in time for Church. Federgreen, is also our organist for Church. (Portable Organ)

Monday, June 14, 1943

No mission again today. So we all loaded up in trucks and went swimming in the Mediteranian Sea. Wasn't any body there but us so we just used our birthday suits. Boy were we ever tired when we got back, there had been an undertow at the beach all day and we had to be careful not to get too far from the beach. Received my very first "V" mail, from my sweet Wife.

Tuesday, June 15, 1943

We went to bomb an airfield in Sicily, today. Saw two German, fighters and lots of flak. It was pretty hot there for awhile. But we all made it back again. Got to see a "free open air" movie, this evening, it was "Virginia City". It looks like it could rain most any time. Received the best letter from Betty, I ever received, it sure made me feel good.

Wednesday, June 16, 1943

No mission today. I borrowed a book, "I Saw the Fall of The Phillipines" and read it today. We went to a British, Military Base, to a concert by the British Anti-tank Battalion, band. It sure was good.

Got ready to move again today, moving on east closer to Tunis.

Thursday, June 17, 1943

We left Chateau D'un and moved to Ain M'Lila, Algeria. Looks like a pretty good place with lots of grass. Something we haven't seen much of here in N. Africa. It's been mostly desert.

Friday, June 18, 1943

No mission today, just busy setting up a new camp sight. We got to play a little base ball towards evening. Then went to an open air theater and saw "China Doll" with Gene Tierney and Bob Montgomery. Everybody really liked the show. Received a letter from my dear Betty.

Saturday, June 19, 1943

No mission today but we were told to dig some fox holes around each tent. We didn't see no need of that because we had never been bombed....yet. But we did as we were told of course. Then we had a ball game. We then went into the town of Ain M'Lila, for a comunal bath. The bath was good but the town was no good. Received two letters from my Sweetheart.

Sunday, June 20, 1943

No mission today. Went to Chapel, today and received another letter from my wonderful Wife. We don't usually receive mail on Sunday, but when we do, it is passed out to us.

Monday, June 21, 1943

Went to Naples, Italy, with incendairie bombs. The flak was about as heavy as

we have seen yet. Lost Capt. Bentling's plane, from the 429th Sqdn. Mission was seven hours long.

Tuesday, June 22, 1943

Just another dull day. Took the Jeep, out to the airplanes, cleaned our guns and equipment. You take good care of your equipment, when you know your life depends on it. Saw an open air movie, "The Spoilers", with John Wayne and Marleen Dietrich.

Wednesday, June 23, 1943

The Arabs, are supposed to revolt today, don't know what about but we are on a close alert, for any uprising. They aren't really for either side, the Axis or the Allies. But every time we move and get settled in, the German, artillery, are right on us, untill our own artillery shuts them down. We see the Arab, men sitting on top of a sand dune playing his little flute, not giving it any thought. But we found out that they were sending messages from hilltop to hilltop, giving the German's, our location. That is show they were finding our location. So we began to shoot the Arab's, we found on a hill playing their little flutes.

We went to Phillipville, Algeria, in the evening to see our first Barrage Balloons. And to go swimming in the Medieranian Sea, again.

Thursday, June 24, 1943

Mission canceled today because of sickness. For some reason it seems like every other person came down with the GI's, and we were using our fox holes for the wrong reason. They came around in a Jeep, and gave everybody some white powder pills, which must have done the trick.

Friday, June 25, 1943

We went to Messina, Sicily, again today. While on our bomb run, with bomb bay doors open, I was in my turret, when ever I am not shooting at an enemy plane, I continually rotate my turret, counter clockwise looking for enemy fighters. I saw off of our right wing Capt. Hinsey's plane. I kept on rotating but when I got back to where Capt. Hinsey's plane should be...it wasn't there. All I saw was a big black cloud fadeing away behind us. A German, fighter had flown head-on right into him. It is just a miracle, some of the pieces didn't hit our aircraft

Later that night we had a movie, "Syncopation" with Jackie Cooper and Bonita Grannville. It was a good show, we just didn't seem to enjoy it.

Saturday, June 26, 1943

Another dull day, nothing doing. All we did was clean our guns and our gear, then go take a bath, in a creek somewhere, not too far away.

Sunday, June 27, 1943

Went to Communion in the Chapel, this morning, it has been a l-o-n-g time since we have had a Communion Service.

We drove around all afternoon in our Jeep. Went to the 2nd Bomb Grp. Hospital, to see Harrison, one of our waist gunners. The little white pills didn't seem to help him so he was rather dehydrated but is doing fine now and should be back with us soon.

We went to Chapel, tonight, WOW, two services on the same day. The Chaplain must be wore out.

Monday, June 28, 1943

Mission was Leghorn Harbor, Italy, again today. It looked like we did a rather good job. There are cameras under the floor of the radio room, that we turn on, when we start on our bomb run and it takes pictures, approaching the target, over the target and passing the target. But we never get to see the outcome of the pictures. We just know what we see and sometimes that can be misleading.

Two German fighters, made a pass at us but nothing happened. Accept that we both sent some lead at each other. We were in the air seven and a half hours.

Tuesday, June 29, 1943

No mission today, just another long dull day.

Wednesday, June 30, 1943

The 49th Sqdn. went to Palermo, Sicily, again today but our crew didn't get to go. Since our Pilot, is the Sqdn. C. O., he has a lot of other responsibilities to take care of. So we went on an Arab, raid today. Our camp has guards posted every night for our protection. But since we slept on the ground in our tents, before we went to sleep, we would place our clothes and other possessions beside our beds on the ground and many times we would wake up with our clothes....gone. We had also been missing some food and other equipment. So we went with our Commander, two Jeeps, a big truck, our rifles, a couple of tommy guns and our 45cal. pistols and we went to a neighboring Arab, compound with a high stone wall surrounding it. We drove through the gate and with our guns loaded and drawn, we went searching their tents. They turned a few vicious looking dogs loose on us which we quickly killed. We had no way of

communicating with them, no one in our outfit could speak Arabic, but they seemed to have received the message, when we drove out the gate, with the truck and both Jeeps, loaded with our supplies, they had stolen.

Thursday, July 1, 1943

Many of our missions are coordinated on where our front lines are at, from day to day, so we had no mission today. So some of us went into Constantine, again today and got to go swimming in an Olympic, Swimming pool, it sure was nice. We spent the night in the local Jail. When ever you hitch a ride with someone you hope to get to go back with them. So we were standing at the edge of town waiting for our ride to come by. When ever you are standing along the road when the sun goes down, the MP's, pick you up and put you in the local Jail, for safekeeping. They just don't trust these Arabs, at night.

Friday, July 2, 1943

Didn't do anything again today. Went to Choir, practice to try to have a song for Sunday. It worked out pretty good. We went to the evening, outside show, saw "Panama Hattie", for the third time.

Saturday, July 3, 1943

There was a mission today but we didn't get to go. We just mostly keep our guns and our ship clean but that doesn't take much physical strength, so some of us decided to start taking exercises on our own, to try to build up our bodies. Some of us were beginning to get flabby.

Sunday, July 4, 1943

Went to Catania, Sicily, today. Really was tough, a lot of flak and German, fighter aircraft. I assisted in shooting down two of them. The 20th Sqdn. lost another plane. To date we have 55 men out of our group, that are either lost or missing. Once in a while, after watching parachutes popping out of planes that are going down, some of them survive but we would not know it for weeks or sometimes months later. What a 4th of July, this has been. Lots of excitement but not the kind we liked.

Monday, July 5, 1943

Went to Gardini, Sicily, airfield today. Bombing was a complete failure, missed the entire field. Had several German, fighters, today. Bernd, got credit for shooting one down. Lakers, a waist gunner on another plane, shot the right tail off of his own plane. he was shooting at a German plane descending behind his plane

Our crew flew a different plane today, ours was still under repair and we got this one shot full of holes. I got "killed", today, so my crew thought. The oxygen that I breathe at high altitude is carried in an aluminum canister and a German fighter plane shot away my oxygen can. When the other crew members noticed that my turret wasn't moving anymore and I had quit shooting, they just mentally marked me off the list. After they looked around and saw the holes around the turret and that my canister was gone, they knew I couldn't live without oxygen. But fortunately for me the Germans, were running low on fuel and left us. So the crew members hurriedly got me out of the turret and got me into the radio room. I had already started to turn black. But they put me on raw oxygen and I soon started getting my color back again. So, I lived to fly another day.

Tuesday, July 6f, 1943

The group went to Gerbini, Sicily, again. I hope they do better than we did yesterday. Saw Bland and the boys again today. Cole, is being shipped home on as Hospital Ship, due to injuries. Sure hope he makes it.

Wednesday, Juoy 7, 1943

Our crew didn't fly again today but the group went to Gerbini, again. Must be having a hard time destroying the airfield there. Buczenski, one of our bomb loaders, dropped a 300 pound bomb on his arm, almost cutting it off. So he will be going back to the States. Sure is a rough way to get to go home.

Tuesday, July 8, 1943

We went to Gerbini, Sicily, again today. Had no oposition at all, so we must be doing some good destroying the airfield. We have realliy dropped enough bombs on that place. We flew our own plane today, they finally got it fixed.

Received two letter from my Darling Wife, one from Mother and one from my Brother, Lloyd. He has been in the Navy, for some time now.

Friday, July 9, 1943

Our Crew Chief, found some dirt in one of our gas tanks. So the two engines on that side had to be taken apart and cleaned. So we missed another mission. Some thought it was sabotage, or possibly "Gremlins" there are a lot of them around.

Saturday, July 10, 1943

Went to Gerbini, again and saw that the invasion of Sicily, was now underway. What a beautiful sight that was, just hundreds of Navy, ships as far as the eye could see. I sure hope it doesn't take too long before, Sicily, surrenders.

Sunday, July 11, 1943

Went to Catania, Italy, today and bombed railroads yards. Looked like we did a pretty good job. Saw an awful lot of flak. Only saw one German, fighter plane.

The Choir, sang at Chapel, this evening, sounded rather good.

Monday, July 12, 1943

Went to Messina, Sicily, and got railroad bridges. Done some beautiful bombing today. Lots of flak but received no damage. Didn't see any fighter planes.

Received two "V" mails from my Darling Wife.

Tuesday, July 13, 1943

Our crew didn't fly today but the Group, went to Milo, Italy. They encountered several fighters but no losses.

Had a movie tonight, Lloyd Nolan, in "Time to Kill"

Wednesday, July 14, 1943

We went to Messina, Sicily, again for railroad yards. Must have got an ammunition train because there was some very large explosions. No fighters but the flak was very heavy. The 96th Sqdn. lost another plane today. McIntire, was the Pilot. I watched nine parachutes leave the plane.

Thursday, July 15, 1943

No mission today, just layed around and done some sewing, on my clothes.

Friday, Jul 16, 1943

We went to San Giovanni, Italy, today. The 429th, lost a plane on take off today. Must have been a new replacement crew. Sometimes the new ones don't know how to fly an over loaded plane. Which we are usually over loaded with bombs. The 301st Sqdn. lost a plane over the target, due to flak.

Received two letters from Mother.

Saturday, July 17, 1943

Went to Naples, Italy, harbor for Navy, ships again today. Had one German,

often when a single German, fighter comes up he will fly, just out of range of our guns, at our altitude and speed and radio that information to the Anti-Aircraft guns, so they will know how to set their guns to go off at the right altitude. We had some damage but lost no planes.....this time.

Sunday, July 18, 1943

No mission today, they said we would have a BIG ONE, tomorrow. We cleaned our guns and the airplane. This African sand, is very destructive to our guns and equipment, so we have to keep them clean. Then we went swimming. Had a good Church, service this evening. Received a letter from my Darling Wife.

Monday, July 19, 1943

They said this mission would be a BIG ONE, and it was! Sometimes we don't know what our target is until we are out over the Mediteranian, then the Pilot; will open an envelope with the instructions. We were going to ROME! Rome was the central railroad hub for all of Italy, and we were to destroy the rail hub. There were B-17's, as far as the eye could see, in all directions, hundreds maybe thousands of them.

Leaflets by the millions had been dropped all over the area of Rome, warning the people we would be there today and what time. Wasn't that nice to tell them here we come, so be ready. That was the real purpose, was to tell the civilian population, to get as far away from the railroads as possible. And apparently they did, so we were told. There was a Cathedral, close by and we never cracked a window but we sure did destroy the railroad yards. We didn't see any fighter planes, nor any flak.....until the instant we got there. Then the flak became so thick, it just looked like we could have lowered our landing gear and landed on it. That black cloud of flak just appeared ahead of us....and stayed there. I don't know many planes we lost that day but I saw several of them going down. The mission was declared a total success. We were in the air seven hours and ten minutes. This was the 32nd mission for our crew.

Tuesday, July 20, 1943

Mission for today was canceled because of weather. The town of Bizerte, Tunisia, had been so totally destroyed while the Germans, had control of it, that some of us decided to get some trucks and go get some lumber, etc., anything that we could find that was useful. I built myself a reclining chair, from some of the lumber. Then we got enough men who knew how to handle a hammer and saw, and built us a "Non-Coms", club house. That meant no officers were allowed, just

Mission over Rome



coms. It turned out so good, the Officers, offered to pay us to build one for them. We had found a real good "L" shaped, highly varnished bar, which was the center piece of our club. We had tables for reading and writing. There was also card tables, that were rather busy for a few days after pay day. We didn't have much spending money, most of it was sent home to our families. There wasn't any liquor available to sell over the bar, so we sold what fruit juices were allotted to us. With that money we would go to town and buy some meat. Our food supply was very scarce sometimes, other than for C, rations and K rations. It seemed like when ever a supply ship came in with food on it, the Navy, got their share first and the Navy, did eat GOOD! Then behind the beaches was the Army, who got their share. The Fighter Planes, were about five miles behind the front lines and they got their share. The Medium Bombers, were about five miles behind the Fighters. Then the Heavy Bombers, were five or ten miles behind them, so they seemed to run out of food when they got to us. When ever we got Hamburger, it was mixed half & half.....one horse and one rabbit.

Wednesday, July 21, 1943

We went to Grosseto, Italy, today but we will have to go again. We never even came close to the target, it was covered with clouds, so we just guessed where it was. After we had passed it, the clouds broke and we could see that we wasted our mission. It was what we called a "Milk Run", no flak and no enemy fighters. But it took us seven hours and it was our 33rd mission.

Thursday, July 22, 1943

We were on alert all day for a "Big" mission but it was canceled. Received three letters from my Dear Betty. One from Mother and one from Mr. Daugherty, a friend from Lewistown, Montana.

Friday, July 23, 1943

Went to Gerbano, Italy, got an airdrome on the heel of Italy. Done a real good job. Had a running fight with Fighters, for 45 minutes. Landed at Tunis, for refueling, it was the longest raid yet.

Saturday, July 24, 1943

No mission today. We went to Batna, Tunisia, were told that we could by rugs there. We never found any rugs but when we got back, we had been issued Army cots. Now we didn't have to sleep on the ground anymore. Went swimming in the Sea again. Received two letters from my Sweetheart.

Sunday, July 25, 1943

Were told that by a cloak & dagger routine, we could get, Country Fried Chicken

and french fried potatoes, at "Charlies Place". But it would be expensive, so five of us decided to go to Constantine, to "Charlies Place". There was no mission scheduled today so we had a Jeep available. We had to go to the "Underground" to find a "Guide". He seemed very hush/hush and motioned for us to follow him. We went down some very narrow streets, down a few alleys and finally down into a basement. We could smell the chicken frying, but it had a strange odor but boy did it look good! Some old guy brought us out each a platter of fried chicken and shoe string potatoes. We just couldn't hardly wait to dive into that chicken. But we couldn't recognize that odor. It was cooked in "OLIVE OIL", not realizing, that was what they cooked in all the time. It looked delicious but we just could not get it down. I don't recall what we paid for it but it was too much.

Monday, July 26, 1943

No mission today. I don't know why but it seems like these no fly day are worse than flying and being shot at ..than not being shot at. At least it seems like when we have a mission, we do accomplish something to help; end this war.

But when mail call came and I got two letters from my Darling Wife, it helped to liven up the day. I washed my clothes and some of the guys, jogged around the camp site, which must be a couple of miles. Went to the show this evening and saw the "Hit Parade of '43".

Tuesday, July 27, 1943

The mission today was an airfield somewhere in Italy, but we couldn't find it because of cloud cover. But it counted as a mission anyway, we still got shot at. We always test fire our guns out over the Mediteranian Sea, before we get over the land just in case we encounter any enemy planes. So that means we have to strip our guns down and clean them.

Wednesday, July 28, 1943

Went to another airfield on the heel of Italy, again today. Had no flak but had some enemy aircraft, that tried to stop us but didn't succeed. Done some good bombing

Thursday, July 29, 1943

No mission today, this is another moving day. We are moving up to the Tunis, area. Received two letters from my Dear Wife, with some beautiful pictures of herself. That sure brought back memories.

Friday, July 30, 1943

Our mission today was to destroy an airdrome at Grotenagnie, Italy. It looked like we did a goo job, from where I was sitting and I had a ring side seat. After we had got back to base, a B-25, taking off from a base about five miles north of us had a problem and tried to make an emergency landing on our base but crashed on landin g. Never did hear any particulars.

Saturday, July 31, 1943

We had been told Thursday, that we were moving and I guess they have been making preparations ever since, so today is the day. They told us to start packing. I found out that Dr. Levine, had a Banjo Mandoline, so I got to do some picking on it today.

Sunday, August 1, 1943

We are now based at Mussicault, in the Medjez-El-Bab, valley of Tunisia. Nothing here but sand, gravel, heat, wind and cactus.

Monday, August 2, 1943

While the administrative affairs was getting settled at our new base, King (our tail gunner), everybody was called by their last name, and I, decided to take the Jeep, and go look over the town of Tunis. We went to the balcony of a large restaurant and was looking down on the sidewalk Cafe. Then we saw two pair of the most beautiful legs, sticking out from under an umbrella. We stood there gazing at those legs untill.....they got up and walked away. They were two English, soldiers, wearing shorts. We wore cutoff khaki's, on base but we were not issued "Shorts", yet.

When we got back to base, we saw that they were loading bombs for an early morning mission.

Tuesday, August 3, 1943

Mission was cancelled because of weather, boy was I mad. Another day away from my Dear Wife and I love her so very much. So we went back to Tunis, to go shopping at the Bazar's. Bought Betty, a real pretty hanky and a pillow case.

We then went down to the docks of Tunis, and watched a large Naval, convoy come in to the Harbor of Tunis. That was very interesting, something I had never seen before.

Wednesday, August 4, 1943

We went to Naples, Italy, hit the City Downtown, boy what a good job from what I saw. Seemed like we had enemy planes everywhere and flak, WOW. The 429th Sqdn, and the 96th Sqdn. each lost a plane. I saw all the men bail out of the 96th plane but none from the 429th plane.

Lt. Bob O'Neill, received a left eye injury. Lt Spivey, Co-pilot, had to take over and bring the "Peggy O'Neill" home. Bonovich and Coneznie (sounds like most of our men were foreigners), were both injured. David Tyner, engineer on the "Peggy O'Neill", shot down an enemy plane.

Thursday, August 5, 1943

Nothing doing today, just another dull day for the flyers. But a very busy day for the ground crews, repairing the injured planes.

Friday, August 6, 1943

Went to Messina, Sicily, for bridges again today. Flak was pretty hot. But we made it back home safe....again. I always carry my New Testament, in my left shirt pocket. After getting our equipment in order and test firing our guns, we usually have about an hour before getting into enemy territory, so I get my New Testament, out and read a chapter. The Captain, new this, so today he asked me to read whatever I was reading, over the intercom, so the entire crew could hear it. Which I was glad to do. The Pilot, of the crew, is usually called the Captain, regardless of his rating.

Saturday, August 7, 1943

No mission today, so we went into Tunis, to go swimming in the Bay, of Tunis. Then we went to a "City" theater and saw "Orchestra Wives". Boy was it good. Had a good afternoon.

When we got back to base, we got real good news. Seven of the men of the 96th Sqdn. that were shot down on the 4th, were back in camp. No information on the rest of the crew.....yet.

Sunday, August 8, 1943

Did my laundry, did some sewing and built another chair today. Went to Church, Then when I received two letters from my Wonderful Wife, it made for a wonderful day.

Monday, August 9, 1943

We went to Messina, Sicily, again for bridges but Gen. Doolittle, went along and messed things up for us. His idea was not to fly over land where we might get shot down. But to stay out over the water and let the wind drift our bombs over to the land. But that just doesn't work out that way. But you don't argue with a

General.

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Tuesday, August 10, 1943

Our crew didn't fly today, but the 49th Sqdn. flew without us. They went some place in Italy. Lt. Elias Dahir, Pilot of "The Forty Niner" had a damaged plane and couldn't get his landing gear down, so he made a belly landing. Done a perfect no wheels landing....no crew injuries. The plane had to be replaced.

Wednesday, August 11, 1943

No mission today, so we went into Tunis, again to see a show. Before the show started, we really saw a show. Must have been some kind of Royalty. Some beautiful olive skinned "Lady" came in with about a dozen body guards and hand maidens, watching her every step. Every body stood and clapped until she took her "Box Seat". Then the show started, "First Love". I don't remember who the stars were.

Thursday, August 12, 1943

No mission again today. We heard that John L. Lewis, had called the miners out on a strike and there wasn't enough coal to run the steam ships that hauled our fuel to us, so we didn't have enough gasoline for our planes to fly. So the miners are striking for higher wages, while our boys on the front lines are being killed because we can't bomb the enemy. What a way to fight a war.

So we worked on our clubhouse. The bottom half of the walls are made of wood while the top half is screen wire, so we can get what breeze there might happen to be. Some of the boys got a good sunburn but Dr. Levine, took care of them.

Friday, August 13, 1943

We went to Rome, again today for more railroad bridges. The enemy fighter planes, must have been occupied at some other location because we didn't see any but sure saw a lot of flak.

Two B-24's, landed on our base for fuel, must be short of fuel at other places in the area also.

Saturday, August 14, 1943

Cleaned my guns and worked on the clubhouse all morning. We had a big show scheduled for this day. Bob Hope, Frances Lankford, Jack Pepper and Tony Romanoe, put on a real good show on our base. I am sure they got rid of some of our frustrations by making us laugh and they really did a good job of

making every one laugh. They sure stay busy traveling all over the world, trying to make the GI's happy. May God, bless them real good for what they are doing.

Received three letters from my Darling Wife. A B-24, crashed while attempting to land on our base.

Sunday, August 15, 1943

Worked all day on the Clubhouse again, since there wasn't any mission scheduled. We have done a very good job on the Clubhouse, so far. Went to Church this evening. Got a letter from my Brother, Lloyd.

Monday, August 16, 1943

Worked all day on the Clubhouse, getting a roof put on it now. Received two letters from my Darling Wife.

Tuesday, August 17, 1943

We finally got to fly again. We went to an airfield by Marsailles, France. Really tore the place up. The 429th Sqdn. lost another plane. We really got a scare last night. We usually watch when ever the German's, make a bomb raid along the coast. We watch the tracers being fired by our own anti-aircraft. It's almost like being at a basketball game. When ever our anti-aircraft, hit a plane and it explodes, a yell goes up all over the base. But one German, bomber got through our defense line along the coast and we heard him comming our way and then he started dropping bombs and we started running for our fox holes and diving in. We had been using our fox holes for junk and trash storage. So this morning we began cleaning out our fox holes and digging them deeper. Then we found out there wasn't any bombs dropped. It was just the artillery around thye Base, that was shooting at the German. We had never heard them shoot before and it sure sounded like bombs to us. The ground really vibrated.

Wednesday, August 18, 1943

Cleaned our guns, getting them ready for the next mission. Received a letter from Mother, bringing me up to date about the happenings around home.

Thursday, August 19, 1943

We went to Foggia, Italy, to knock out a Hydro-electric Plant. We did a perfect job of bombing but we had a rough day. We counted 40 ME-109's, they were everyplace. Lost Lt. Carter's "Geronimo" crew, good bunch of boys, ten of them. The tent next to ours will be empty tomorrow. The 20th Sqdn. lost four planes.

I was "Killed" again today, or so my crew thought. While I was firing at a plane about my 7:00 position, a fighter was coming up at our 3:00 position, who put several bullets through the middle of our plane. One 20mm came into my turret shattering everything, knocking me unconscious. When some of the other crew members noticed my turret go silent, they looked around and saw the holes in my area. One of them looked into the inspection window of my turret and all he saw was blood and black powder and saw that my heatsuit was gone from around my left shoulder and just mentally marked me off as done for. The German fighters, were running low on fuel by this time and departed the fight.

The crew came running and got me out of the turret and into the radio room, where they gave me oxygen and some heat and started cleaning me up. After they had cleaned up the black powder and blood and pulled all the shrapnel, they could find. I wasn't really in too bad a shape. But if they hadn't got me out when they did.....it would have been "Goodbye". After we got back to Base, the medics found some more shrapnel and taped me up, I wasn't so bad.

We had another air raid on our Base that night. Our fox holes were in better shape this time and we enjoyed their safety for about an hour.

Friday, August 20, 1943

No mission today, too many planes needing repair. We just kept busy doing whatever needed to be done.

Saturday, August 21, 1943

Went to Aversa, Italy, railroad yards, east of Naples. Had a lot of flak but no German, fighters because we had 72 P-38's flying cover for 200 B-17's. This was our 42nd mission and 260 hours of flying time. The Medical Profession, wasn't definite yet but they were afraid, that too much flying on "Oxygen" and being around high frequency radio waves, could possibly make a person "Sterile" which was a real concern for us.

Sunday, August 22, 1943

No mission today, so we cleaned our guns and did our laundry. We thought that was what wives were for.....doing laundry but there weren't any wives around. Went to Church, in the evening.

Monday, August 23, 1943

Each of the four Squadrons, of the 2nd Bomb Group, had their own bivouac area. Our Sqdn. the 49th, decided to rearrange its bivouac area, so today we had to

move our tent. When we got our tent set up we installed netting all around the sides and doorway, to help keep the creatures out.

We had "Ice Cream" today, all we could eat.....what a treat and it was FREE!

Tuesday, August 25, 1943

No mission today, so we worked on completing making our tent livable and and digging new fox holes. A little larger than before.

Wednesday, August 26, 1943

The 2nd Bomb Group, went to Italy again but our crew didn't go. So we went into Tunis, to the theater and saw, "A Girl, A Guy and A Gob", with Lucille Ball, and George Murphy.

Thursday, August 26, 1943

We didn't go again today. Since our Pilot, is the Sqdn. Commander, he always takes our crew, on the toughest missions and we stay home on the week ones. The intelligence people can usually pretty well tell how much interference, we will encounter before you get there. So quite naturally, we went to the beach again today and enjoyed ourselves.

Friday, August 27, 1943

George Orchard, from O'Neill's crew, who also stood up with Betty & I, at our wedding, went with me to Tunis, to spend the day. Our Sqdn, didn't go but the 96th, lost another plane today. That meant ten men, won't come back.

Saturday, August 28, 1943

Worked on the plane all day today. It hadn't flown for three days and we were afraid it might get rusty or maybe.....lonely.

Sunday, August 29, 1943

Played base ball most of the day. Went to Church, this evening, then while writing a letter to Betty, I got sick. I don't know what it was unless, I began to be concerned, knowing that we only had a few more missions to go and the percentages of not making it, grows with each mission .

Monday, August 30, 1943

Had a big celebration today!

Joseph Obradovich, who went to radio school, with me at Scott Field, in 1942, WALKED, into camp today and WHAT A STORY HE HAD TO TELL!! Ernie Pyle, war correspondent of WW2, related his story in his book, "Here Is Your War", published December 1943.

Joe, was the radio operator, for Lt. Harry Devers, crew. They had just flown in to N. Africa, from the U.S. They hadn't even been assigned to a combat unit yet. Had not even put a name on their new plane yet. A flight of three B-17's, were flying from west Africa, to the east to be assigned, when some German, fighters jumped them, shooting one of them down. The other two planes then turned south to get away. One of the two planes then crash landed in the desert and Lt. Devers, then climbed to 11,000ft and flew until they ran out of fuel, then told the men to bail out. There were nine crew members at that time. Two days later all nine men were together again.....out in the desert.

The plane that crash landed was discovered, twenty five years later, by an oil exploration crew, mostly buried in the sand..

Joe, said they were eventually captured by the German's and put in a prison camp. While in the prison camp they were bombed by our own planes. The ones who survived, were put on a submarine, to be taken to Italy. We then bombed the sub and sunk it. But still some of his crew survived.....and here was Joe. He didn't know about the others of his crew, at this time. He might have found them later but I never did know.

Tuesday, August 31, 1943

Our mission today was an aircraft manufacturing plant at Pizza, Italy, where the famous leaning tower is. Also hit some railroads. Had three fighters jump us but didn't stay long. Our lead, was just too hot for them.

Wednesday, September 1, 1943

No mission today, just worked around camp all day. Received a wonderful letter from my Darling Wife.

Thursday, September 2, 1943

No mission and our work was all caught up, so we went to the beach at Tunis. Talked to an English sailor and two English girls. It sure was strange talking to a girl, that could speak English.

Friday, September 3, 1943

Our crew did not fly today, so I went with some buddies, to the ancient city of Carthage, seen some ancient ruins and some more recent ruins.

Received a box of peanuts, from my Sweetheart.

Saturday, September 4, 1943

Our mission today was an airfield at Terracini, Italy. My ball turret finally wore out, guess it will take a new motor. I kept my turret in motion by manually cranking it. That way if the enemy came around and saw the turret in motion, he wouldn't know it was out of service.

Sunday, September 5, 1943

We went to Venturus, Italy, an aircraft manufacturing plant. This was our 45th mission, five more and we can start planning on going home, to my own Dear Wife.

We came back with two dead engines and one smoking and my turret still on the blink. So we were singing the song, "Comming Home On A Wing And A Prayer". After we were sure we had our base in sight!

Monday, September 6, 1943

Grp. went to Naples. Worked on my turret and guns all morning. Went to Carthage and got a face put on my watch. Took some pictures of the ancient part of Carthage. When we got back to Base, we had a mail call and I hit the "Jackpot". There on my cot, was a cablegram and two letters from my sweet wife, a letter from her Mother, a letter from her sister, Rosemary and one from my Brother, Lloyd. That was some GOOD, reading.

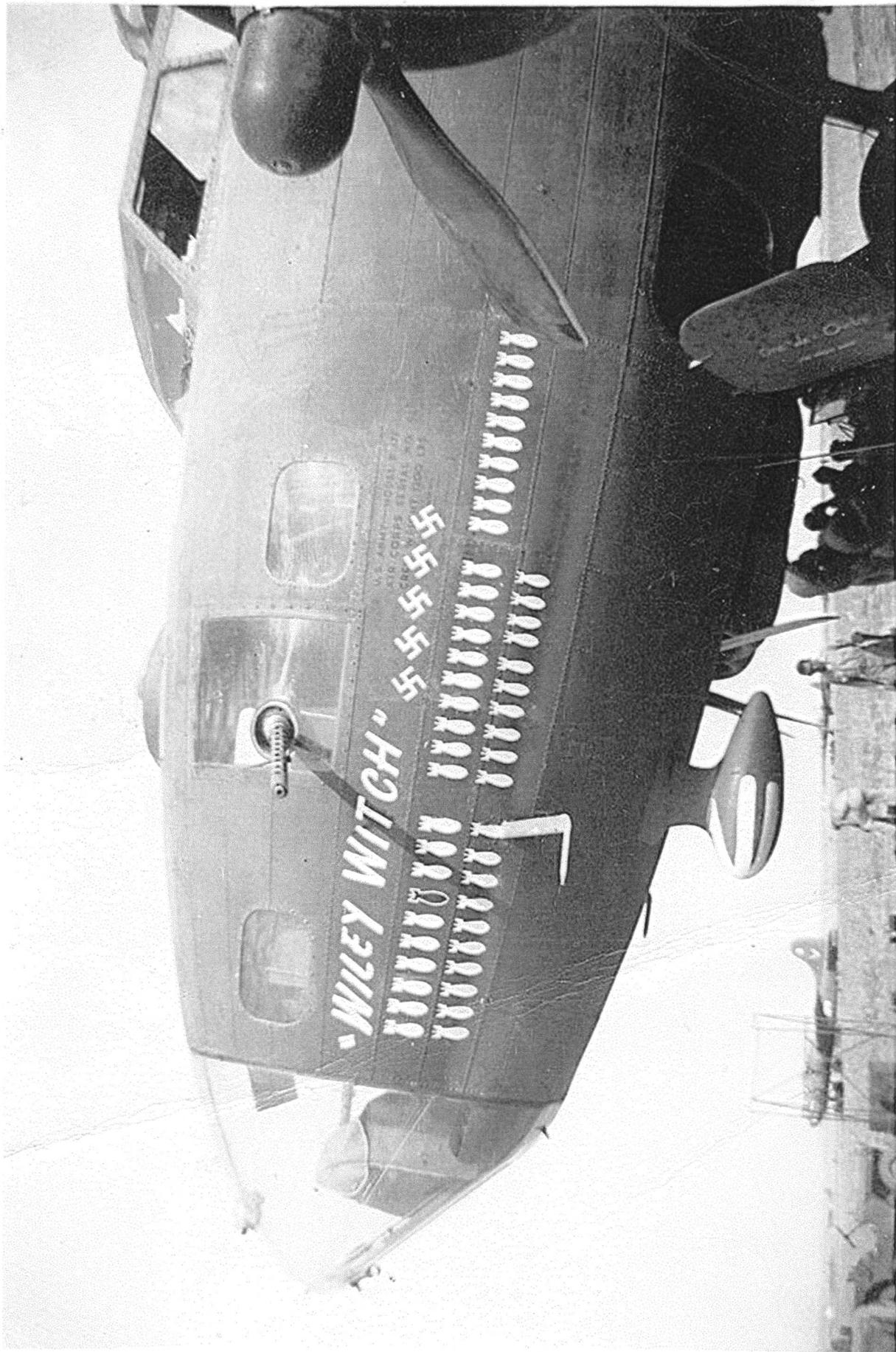
We had another air raid tonight and we got acquainted with our fox holes again.

Tuesday, September 7, 1943

Checked my turret and guns to make sure they are ready for the next mission. Started checking everything in my barracks bag, to make sure that all of my souvenirs, were all accounted for and all my clothes were in order to take home. Then I wrote Betty, a six page letter of what we were going to do when I got home again.

Wednesday, September 8, 1943

Our mission was a very secret target. We finally found out the location was



We were in the States

Our mission was a very secret target. We finally found out the location was supposed to be the German High Command, in Italy. We encountered a lot of flak and a lot of German fighters. King, our tail gunner was credited for shooting one down. Often when our planes are in a tight formation that several gunners will be shooting at the same German plane, that we are not sure who may have actually shot one down. But there are times when you know for sure that you are the one who got him. I know several times when I saw a German plane, pass under our plane that they always go inverted before they go underneath and I have watched my tracer bullets bounce off the bottoms of their planes. And there are four more bullets, between every tracer.

The 96 Sqn. lost another plane and Friscati, a boy from the 96th, got a leg blown off. This made our 46th mission, with 289hrs in the air.

This made our 46th mission, with 289hrs and 15min. in the air.

Thursday, September 9, 1943

Our mission today was bridges at Cantello, Italy. We had very little interference today. Our 47th mission. 292hrs, of flying time. Three more missions to go!!

Friday, September 10, 1943

We went to Cinchiatura, Italy. We came back with a feathered prop but not from enemy action, it was a broken oil line.

Saturday, September 11, 1943

Our crew didn't fly today. So we made sure our plane was ready for tomorrow. The day wasn't wasted because I received six letters. Four from Betty, one from Mother and one from Lloyd. Whenever you hear from home, it is not a lost day.

Sunday, September 12, 1943

Went to Benevuenta, Italy, for more bridges and done a real good job. Did not encounter any enemy aircraft but had some flak bursts around us.

Monday, September 13, 1943

We sat around all day waiting to fly our last mission.....but it was finally called off. So we started to sorting and packing our belongings.

Tuesday, September 14, 1943

Went to Battipaglia, Italy, for bridges today. Trying our best to slow down the German, supply lines. Had a lot of flak and fighters today. I watched a B-17, go down in the Straights of Messina. Where the Mediteranian Sea, goes between Sicily and Italy. (We found out months later, that the Germans, came out in a ship from Italy, to capture them and the British, came out in a ship from Sicily, to rescue them. The two ships began fighting between themselves and a Navy, PBY, flew in and rescued the crew).

This was mission number "50", FINISH!!! There is nobody in this world any HAPPIER, than I am this day!

Wednesday, September 15, 1943

Didn't do much today, just roamed around not realizing that we were done flying. We did take all of our equipment to the supply tent, so we would be ready to go home, when the time came.

Thursday, September 16, 1943

Surprise! Surprise! We were told to check out our equipment again, because we were going to get some railroad at Caserta, Italy. This was mission number "51".

Friday, September 17, 1943

George Orchard and George Lundine, of the "Peggy O'neill" crew and I loafed around together all day and went to Choir practice. For the last time....I hope.

Saturday, September 18, 1943

I just went down to the flight line, to watch some B-24's, come in for refueling. Received a telegram from my Sweatheart, telling me to hurry home. I am trying. I am trying!

After being told that all who were still alive after 50 missions, would be rotated back home....and we believed them. But after packing and unpacking....I mislaid my Diary. And one day just ran into another day.....
But one morning we were all told to go to the Bulletin Board, and read the instructions. There was a notice, that because the invasion of Italy, at Salerno, was going from bad to worse, all available airmen would not be released until the invasion was successful.

So we loaded every airplane available with 100lb anti-personell bombs. They were slender bombs with a long nose on them. They were just very large grenades. They were made to go off above the ground and just destroy everything above the ground. The planes would string out wing tip, to wingtip, approaching the beach-head at a low altitude and beginning at a certain color coded flares,

We would string our bombs in-land for about a mile. Then the ground troops would move up on the beach a mile. We would then go back to our base in Tunisia, to get another load of those bombs, come back and do the same thing again. So each time the ground troops would advance again. We did this twice a day for three days and then.....we were told to go home.

For a year and a half during training, I had a problem with air sickness, which is the same as sea sickness, or actually motion sickness. Our Flight Surgeon, told us it was only in our head. But on the boat going over to N. Africa, he was sick the entire trip. But he was partly right. The radio operators had the most problem with it because during bad weather, whenever you would try to send or receive a message (all messages were sent Morris Code, no voice transmissions) and trying to decipher the code from the static, was very frustrating and often times that would bring on air sickness. And as soon as the radio operator got sick, then the others would take turns getting sick.

During one of our first missions, I was curled up in the ball turret, when I started getting sick, I took my helmet off of my head to use and I grabbed for my oxygen mask, then I remembered what we were told at our briefing, that if we took our oxygen mask off for any reason at 25,000ft, we only had so many seconds to live. I put my helmet back on and never got sick again.

Tuesday, September 21, 1943

We were given written orders saying that we were Air Corps Unassigned and a pay pass book. Which meant that we were free to go to any U.S. Air base, in the world and get paid, once a month. But the big problem was that we had to arrange for our own transportation. We wanted to go west towards home and all military traffic was going east towards the invasion. Our Headquarters, was trying to work out a deal, where we would be given two large trucks, so we could drive 24hrs a day, untill we got to Casablanca. Then we would report to the Port Commander, requesting to board the first ship going to the States.

Wednesday, September 22, 1943

The trucks were acquired and we are making arrangements to depart.

Thursday, September 23, 1943

This morning, I saw two DC-3's (the flying workhorse of all the military) land on our base, So I got in a jeep to go see what they were here for. They said they were refueling, on their way to Casablanca, to pickup medical supplies for the

invasion and they were EMPTY!! When I asked them if they were allowed to take any "hitch hickers", they said they would take (?so) many, if they could be there in 15min. with no baggage but their shaving kits. I got on the base P.A. system and told the men that we had transportation to Casablanca, if they could be here in 15min. with no baggage but their shaving kits. And here they came a flying. Some running as fast as they could, a couple had bicycles, the rest came in Jeeps. I don't remember how many there were but the two planes held us all. The Officers, didn't come with us. I know some of them found some B-17's, that were air worthy but not combat worthy any more, and flew them home. We left our barracks bags, with all our souvenirs and trinkets (all our valuables) and all our other clothes we had to leave behind. We just knew that 10min. after we were airborne, the guys at the base were dividing up the spoils. But we were on our first leg HOME!

When we reported to the Port Commander, he interviewed us. When he found out we were all "Gunners", a big smile came over his face, and he said "boys we were just waiting for you, you are an answer to our prayers". There was a hospital ship at the docks, full of Gen. Patton's, 3rd Army, waiting for some gunners to man the guns. It was British ship, "The Empress of Scotland" with thousands of injured GI's, on the way back to the States. If we would just take an oath to Her Majesty the Queen, we would be on our way by morning.

We were taken to a large room and took our oath of allegiance and told us that we were to man the guns on this ship. It was a rather fast ship if its day and was going to make this trip by herself, no convoy, no support, no nothing. It took a submarine (15min?) after sighting a target before it could launch a torpedoe, so every (15min?) we would change course, I don't know how many guns the ship had but I was put in charge of a 12lb gun on the port side of the bridge. Was given a crew of six men, one would crank the azimuth control, one would crank the verticle control, one would load the 12lb projectile, one man to load the charge, one man to take out the spent cartridge and I with my microphone and earphones, would tell them when to fire, whenever I got the order to fire from the bridge. And we had never fired anything but 50cal. machine guns.

Friday, September 24, 1943

When we woke up this morning we were at sea. We must have really been tired not to even know that the ship had been moving. We were not permitted to go below deck because of the the odor, of the injured and dying and all the medication. We had a practice gun drill the first thing. Whenever the bridge saw anything floating on the water, they would call me and tell me to get ready to fire and when we were on target.....stay on the target untill told to fire.

Friday, October 1, 1943

It was a very interesting and exiting seven days but we were back in the good old USA. I got to see the Statute of Liberty, coming and going.

My Mother, Anna Davis Plunkett and my Dad, W. Luther Plunkett, raised five children:

W. Harold,	Born	Feb. 27, 1922
Lloyd H,	"	Nov. 11, 1924
Rosalee P.	"	Aug. 21, 1927
Donald G.	"	July 7, 1930
Robert R.	"	Nov. 22, 1939

All four Sons, volunteerd to serve their Country, at the appropriate time in their lives.