



NOTICE !!!

To the readers of theses pages

You must realize that I was only 21 years old when I recorded these notes in my Diary. My Diary 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 the 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 mention, 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. Its usual run was between California and Hawaii. It was now equipped as a troopship. When we departed we did not know where we were going. The only word we had was that we were going to Africa, and were 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 troop train. We unloaded in New Brunswick and were quarantined to our barracks until we received orders to board ship. We boarded ship wearing the same clothes we had on when we left Lewistown. 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 in 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 and a clip of live ammunition (we were now in a combat zone). We marched down the gang-plank, passed a mountain of barracks bags and were told to just grab one and keep going.

We marched (very loosely) for five miles until we were east of the town of Casablanca; until we came to a very large vacant field. We were told to find a friend and rest. Each man carried half a "Pup" tent, so we had to join with another person to make a complete tent. We were all in dire need of a restroom; with none in sight. We were given shovels to dig slit trenches to relieve ourselves. It was very humiliating to us, until 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. At that time, I was a Staff/Sergeant, which made me one of the few Non-coms with hundreds of other GIs. I was soon prodded awake by an MP and told to pick several men to do guard duty surrounding our campsite, 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 towards the sound of the shot. When we found the guard, he would be standing there, his gun at the ready and shaking 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. (the Officer of the Day) not 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 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 I had.

Wednesday, April 13, 1943

We finally felt rested and were issued some clothes that were fitting for being in the heat of North 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 for DeGaule. We didn't know who were for us or who were against us.

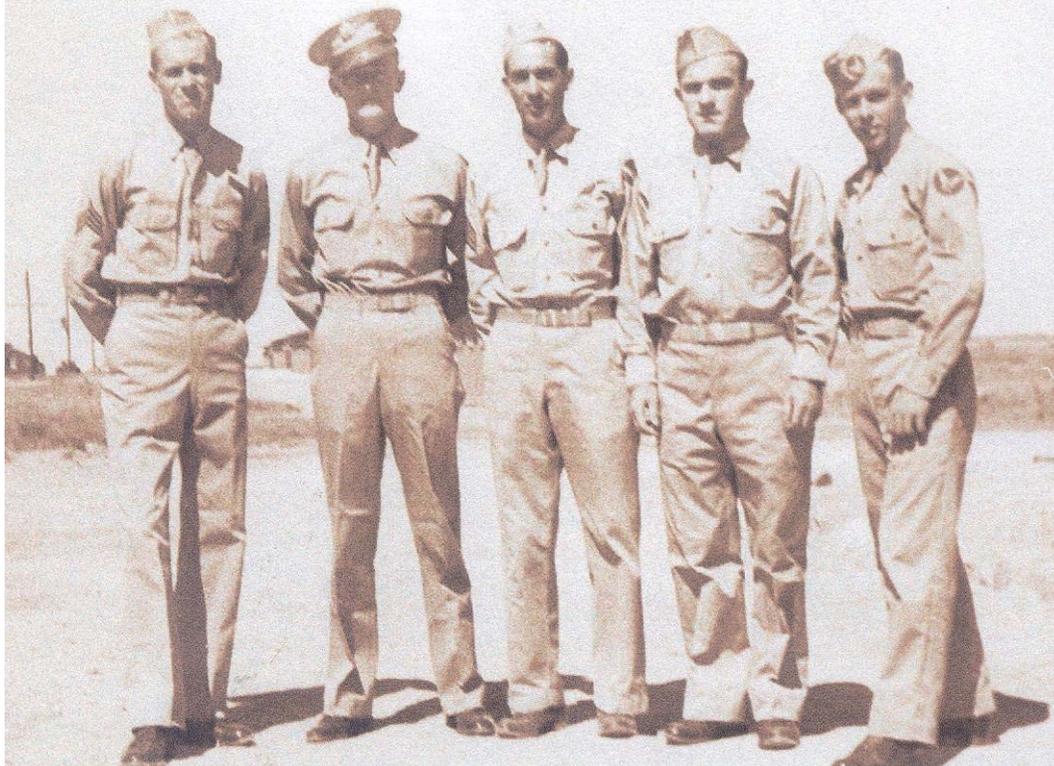
Thursday, April 14, 1943

The O.D. looked me up and told me that I was to get in a truck and that I was going to the Marrakech Air Base. There I met my old crew; Staff/Sergeants (at that time): George Orchard from Maine; David Tyner from North Carolina; Frank Culligan from Rhode Island; Harold Thomas from Washington (the State); George Lundin from Minnesota; and the officers: Pilot Robert O'Neil from New York; Co-Pilot Duren Spivey from Georgia; Bombardier Arkley Bell and 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 on December 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 I went to the recruiting office and enlisted. The recruiting Sergeant 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, "O.K., sign right here." We all know how that works out.) I was sent to Scott Field, Illinois, to be trained as a radio operator/mechanic.



The crew of the "Peggy O'Neil" I trained with in 1942. Standing left to right: Pilot Robert O'Neil; Bombardier Arkley Bell; Co-Pilot Duren Spivey; Engineer David Tyner; and Assistant Radio Operator and Ball Turret Gunner George Orchard. Kneeling left to right: Waist Gunner Harold Thomas; Navigator Stanley White; Radio Operator Harold Plunkett and Tail Gunner Frank Culligan.



The enlisted men in our crew while at Alamogordo, New Mexico, in 1942
left to right: George Orchard from Maine; David Tyner from North
Carolina; Harold Thomas from Washington State; Frank Culligan from
Rode Island and Harold Plunkett from Indiana.

All of these men were a part of our Wedding Party; David Tyner was the Best Man.

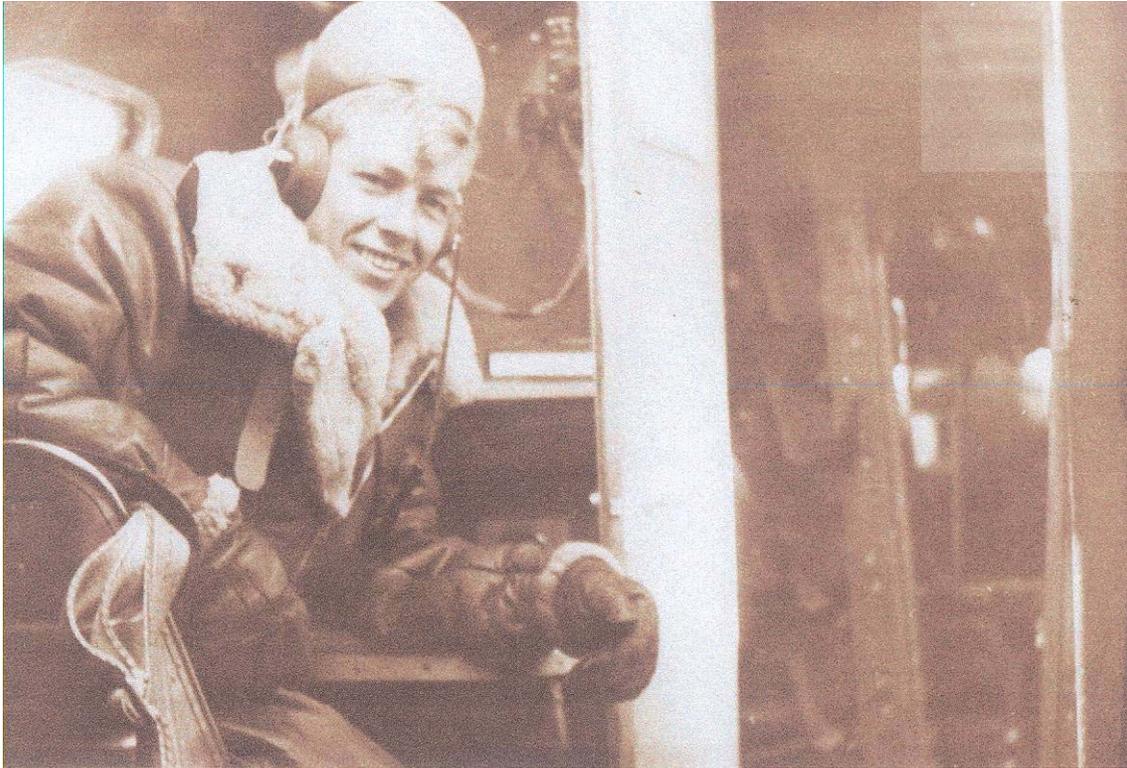
Upon graduating from Radio School I was sent to Sebring Air Base in Florida to be assigned to a crew of a B-17 Bomber (one of the largest airplanes in the world, at that time) as the radio operator. The crews were selected very scientifically: there was a list of names of those just graduated from Pilot training; a list of Navigators and a list of Bombardiers who had just graduated from 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, Captain Robert E. Haines, told us we would soon be moving to Lewistown, Montana. This would be our last training base in the United States. 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 December 8, 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-17s and go into combat. For some strange coincidence 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.



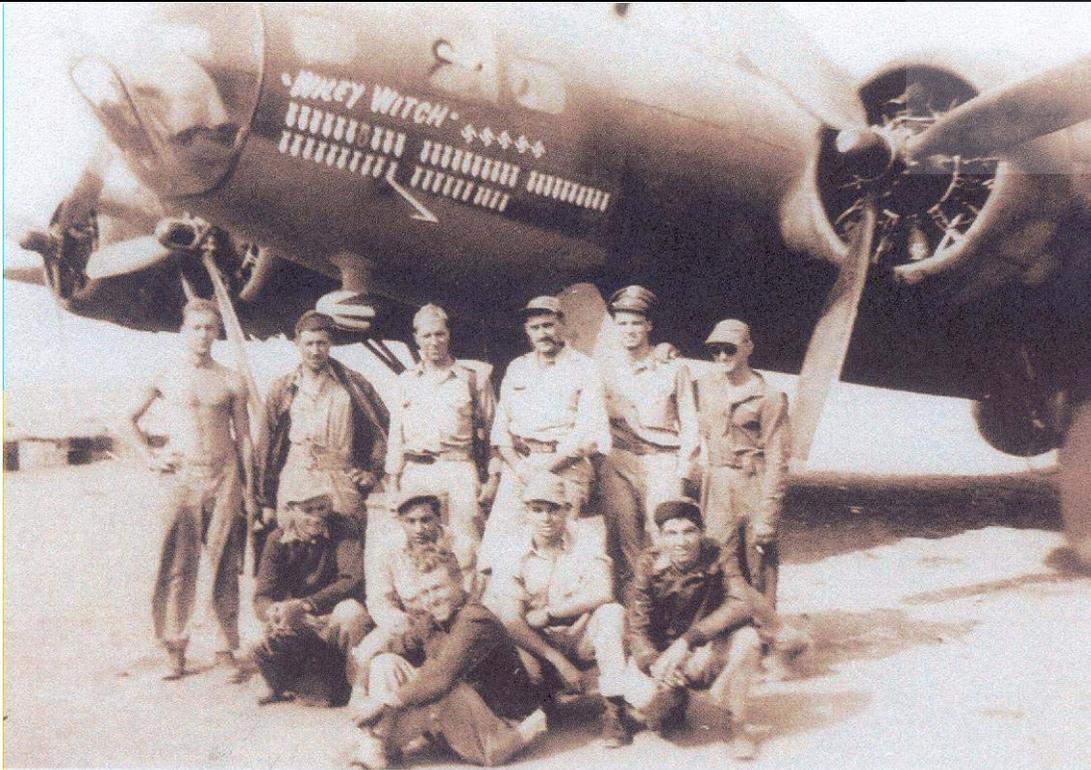
Our Wedding picture taken December 8, 1942
in Lewistown, Montana



This is a picture of me in the radio room of a B-17 looking forward through the bomb bay into the Pilot's compartment in 1941.

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 with a broken heart - I had been transferred to the crew of Captain Roscoe Johnson, Pilot of the "Wiley Witch." He needed a ball turret gunner and being that I was only 5'5" and weighed 125#, I would fit in the turret very well, or anyplace else on the airplane a person was needed. I eventually flew 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 "SOS," but the ball turret gunner was a very busy spot. I had never been in a turret until we got into combat but I did fit very well. Most of the men would 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 anyone. In the ball turret you saw nothing but space.



The crew I flew with in combat standing left to right: Burleigh Craig (the man in charge of keeping our airplane flying); Radio Operator Don Steussy; Navigator William W. Holland; Pilot Roscoe Johnson; Co-Pilot George Johnson (no relation); Bombardier Oliver Wolf and kneeling left to right: Waist Gunner Robert J. Harrison; Waist Gunner Arthur Hutchins; Tail Gunner Robert King; Engineer Clifford C. Harris and sitting in front: Ball Turret Gunner Harold Plunkett.

The five Swastikas show our crew shot down five German fighter planes. Each bomb represents how many missions we flew. The black bomb is for a mission we couldn't find our target because of the clouds; we had to bring our bombs back with us; even though we were in the air seven hours.

Saturday, April 16, 1943

Got acquainted with my new crew: Pilot Roscoe Johnson; Co-Pilot George Johnson, Waist Gunner Robert Harrison, Waist Gunner Arthur Hutchins (Full blooded Indian) and 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 t 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 the man that had just fallen 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. Once the rest of us had gotten up from our hiding places, the Frenchman, seeing he was surrounded decided against killing anyone. Once dressed, they got on the bikes and rode away and we continued on into the village. Not finding much there, we returned to camp.

Sunday, April 17, 1943

Today we attended church 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. This was my first flight as the ball turret gunner.

Monday, April 18, 1943

Got orders to pack the plane; we were moving up towards the front. We spent all day getting ready. I 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 moved around so much that it is very hard for our mail to catch up to us, so today was very 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 and then flew on to St. Donat. It had been raining and began raining in earnest; must be their monsoon season. Three of us slept in the plane while 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 big 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 seen since training at Sebring, Florida. There was Springer, Collins, Brown, Demille, Denadio, Brown, Crump and others I can't recall. Then I got some bad news: Fitch, Poor and Cavalo had been killed in combat and Colon had been sent home badly wounded.

Friday, April 22, 1943

It rained again all day so we hibernated in the planes. They bought supplies to us in Jeeps. Supplies consisted of "C" and "K" rations, stationary and magazines. They had run out of cigarettes so they bought pipes and tobacco in tins and pipes for those who wanted to smoke. I wrote 4 letters home.

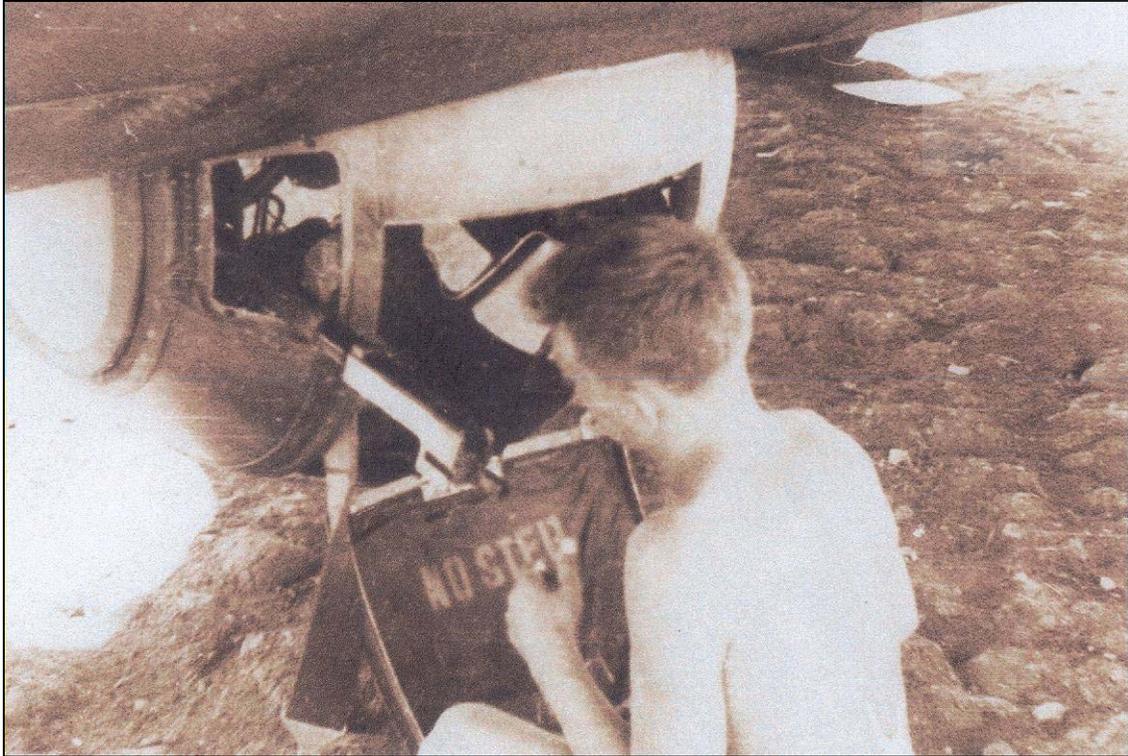
The ground crews came into St. Donat by cattle cars. It's going to be good to have somebody to take care of our planes; they know what they are doing. They can do the repair on our planes in a fourth of the time it takes us.

Saturday, April 23, 1943

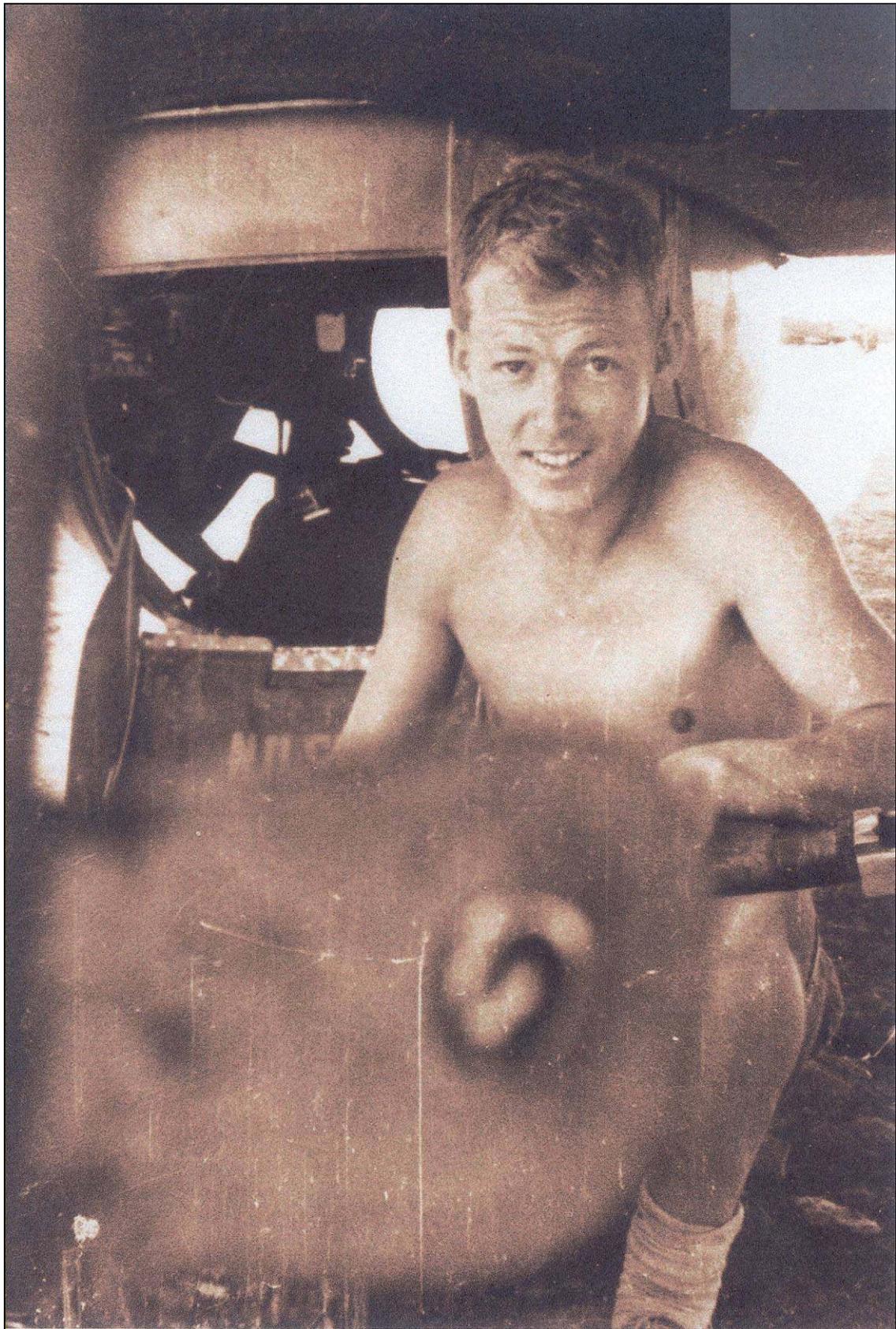
Didn't do much today; washed down the "Wiley Witch" using 110 octane gasoline with undershirts. Did a real good job. We sure don't stay in one place very long. We moved east again; flew over to Chateau dun, Algeria, which will be our new base for who knows how long.

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 non-coms slept in six man tents. The administration offices, the Mess Hall, 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 mile on each side with everything else in the square. We even had a baseball diamond in the square. Our planes were scattered out about a mile to a mile and a half away from our camping area. Another Sunday without any Church.



Me in the Ball Turret





Monday, April 25, 1943

Just worked all day cleaning our guns and loading our .50 caliber ammunition. Making sure 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; I never saw such rain. Another day just setting 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 intelligence people wasn't sure about how many enemy fighters might be in the area but not to expect too much anti-aircraft guns (flak) shooting at us. While we were over the Mediterranean Sea, we would test fire our guns to make sure we were ready in case we were attacked by any enemy fighters.

We couldn't find out target due to the cloud cover protecting them so we returned to base with our bombs still on board, and sighting no enemy aircraft. What a let down.. here we were all fired up and 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 scrubbed 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 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 Group Hospital (which was in another tent). At the hospital they told me the wound wasn't serious but the doctor was concerned about infection; which could be serious here in North Africa.

This 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 4:00 p.m., they called for a mission to bomb a certain hill where the Germans were dug in, near 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 opposition.

????????? Misplaced my Diary for a few days...

Sunday, May 9, 1943

This was a bad day and 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 morals 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 Mediterranean Sea and Bland's plane land on the beach of Bone all shot up.

That evening we had a Mother's Day service at the Chapel. There were 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-109s 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 Palermo, Sicily, would be an open city for 3 days. That meant for 3 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 Constantine.

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 Bombardier. All I had to do was watch the lead airplane in our formation and when they dropped their bombs, I would throw the switch that would drop our bomb load. I really don't know what our target was because 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 as the target was under cloud cover.



Sunday, May 16, 1943

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

Monday, May 17, 1943

I 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 posted on the bulletin board any crew that had a vacancy and I usually volunteered.

Tuesday, May 18, 1943

Our target today was some where in Sicily and General 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. When not flying, we usually cleaned and serviced our guns.

Thursday, May 20, 1943

Our mission today was the airfield at Geusetto, Italy. We really flattened it. Got my gun sights on 2 different German transport planes; shot several rounds at each but there were no visible signs of damage.

Friday, May 21, 1943

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

Saturday, May 22, 1943

No mission scheduled today.



Sunday, May 23, 1943

No mission scheduled today. I guess 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 was the airfield at Terranova, Italy. I guess we had tried to destroy what the Germans' had tried to repair since the last time we bombed it. We did a pretty good job again.

Tuesday, May 25, 1943

Went to Messina, Sicily, and got jumped by a dozen German fighters. I am sure that we got one of them. We got our target taken of real good, too.

Wednesday, May 26, 1943

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

The Second Bomb Group (Heavy) consisted of 4 Squadrons: the 20th; the 429th; the 96th and the 49th. My Squadron is the 49th. Occasionally if a certain Squadron is picked for a specific mission but doesn't have enough airplanes able to fly, they will select a plane from another Squadron to fill the vacancy.

Thursday, May 27, 1943

No mission scheduled for today.

Friday, May 18, 1943

Our mission for today is the harbor at Leghorn, Italy. We finally did a good job on the harbor; our bombs were right on target. We had 5 German fighters. C.B. Johnson, our Navigator, got credit for shooting one down. He was using one .30 caliber machine gun. So I think some of our .50s must have helped. But that's alright; our plane the "Wiley Witch" got the Swastika painted on its 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 20, 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

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 about 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 2 letters from my darling wife and 1 from mother. Mother said that Grandpa Davis was in poor condition at this time. It sure was good to get mail from home even though sometimes 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 en minutes and then you went to the wall and followed the wall around until someone dowsed you with a bucket of cold water. Then 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 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 Main street to see people; 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. That was Gerstmeyer Technical High School in Terre Haute, Indiana.

Thursday, June 3, 1943

Mission cancelled because of weather so we sat around until dark so we could watch an outside show and saw "The Santa Fe Trail" with Erol Flynn and Olivia De Haviland. 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 parkas. A heat suit was made of two sets of long underwear glued together with toaster wire running between the layers. 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 Squadron Commander, Colonel 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, named "The A-Merry-Can," with gold colored aluminum plates. And that left our pilot, Major Roscoe Johnson, as Squadron Commander. That also meant the officers of our crew had a Command Car at their disposal and we had our own Jeep. What a privilege!

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 saw one bomb hit behind the ship we were after; then three bomb hit on the deck; then three more hit in front of the ship. I would say that we got ours but it was never verified; only saw 1 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. Since I burned out both barrels of my twin .50s I had to install 2 new ones. Went to Chapel tonight and also wrote a letter to Betty.

Monday, June 7, 1943

Went to the island of Pantalaria and it looked like we blasted it off 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. When they came back, they said 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-38s for support. They knocked down six ME-109s and all of our planes got back okay.

Had mail call today. I hit the jackpot; 8 letters from my sweet wife and one from my mother. I wrote mail back home. Had some rain today; haven't had any rain for a couple of months.

Thursday, June 10, 1943

Got up at 4:00 a.m. and we are going to Pantalaria again! In fact we went there twice today; it must be a hard rock to crack.

Received 2 letters from mother and one from my dear Betty.



Friday, June 11, 1943

Our pilot, Major Johnson, thinks we should fly every mission but we were grounded today and the Squadron 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, I shined my wings, buttons, shoes and everything else that would take polish.

Sunday, June 13, 1943

No mission again today so Lyle and I took our Squadron cameraman, 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, that is).

Monday, June 14, 1943

No mission again today so we all loaded up in trucks and went swimming in the Mediterranean Sea. Wasn't anyone there but us so we just used our birthday suits. Boy, were we ever tire 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. I received my very first "V" mail from my sweet wife.

Tuesday, June 15, 1943

We went to bomb an airfield in Sicily today; saw 2 German fighters and lots of flak. It was pretty hot there for a while but we all made it back safely. Got to see a free "open air" movie this evening; it was "Virginia City." Looks like it could rain most any time. I received the best letter from Betty that I had ever received. It sure made me feel good!

Wednesday, June 16, 1943

No mission today so I borrowed a book; it was "I Saw the Fall of the Philippines," and I read it today. We went to a British military base to a concert by the British Anti-Tank Battalion Band and it was sure good.



We got ready to move again, today; moving 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 North 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 baseball 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 foxholes around each tent. We didn't see any need of that because we had never been bombed.. yet. 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 communal bath. The bath was good but the town was no good. Received 2 letters from my sweetheart.

Sunday, June 20, 1943

No mission today. Went to Chapel 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 incendiary bombs; the flak was about as heavy as we have seen it yet. Lost Captain Bentling's plane; it was from the 429th Squadron. Mission was 7 hours long.

Tuesday, June 23, 1943

Just another dull day; took the Jeep out to the airplanes and 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 Marlene 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 until 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 they were sending messages from hilltop to hilltop, giving the Germans our location. That is how they were finding our locations so we began to shoot the Arabs 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 Mediterranean Sea again.

Thursday, June 24, 1943

Mission cancelled today because of sickness. For some reason it seems like every other person came down with the GIs and we were using our foxholes 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 I am not shooting at an enemy plane, I continually rotate my turret counterclockwise looking for enemy fighters. I saw off of our right wing, Captain Hinsey's plane. I kept on rotating but when I got back to where Captain Hinsey's plane should be.. it wasn't there. All I saw was a big black cloud fading 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 Granville. 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 some where 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 Group Hospital to see Harrison, one of our waist gunners. The little white pills didn't seem to help him and 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 some times that can be misleading.

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

Tuesday, June 29, 1943

No mission today, just another long dull day.

Wednesday, June 30, 1943

The 49th Squadron went to Palermo, Sicily, again today but our crew didn't get to go. Since our pilot is the Squadron Commanding Officer, 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. Since we sleep on the ground in our tents, before we went to sleep we would place our clothes and other possessions beside our bed on the ground and many times we would wake up with our clothes.. gone. We had also been missing some food and other equipment. We went with our Commander, 2 Jeeps, a big truck, our rifles, a couple of Tommy-guns and our .45-caliber pistols 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 as 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 from day to day; so we had no mission today. 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 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 you are standing along side the road when the sun goes down, the MPs (Military Police) 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 and saw "Panama Hattie" for the third time.

Saturday, July 3, 1943

There was a mission today but we didn't get to go. We mostly keep our guns and our ship clean but that doesn't take that much physical strength so some of us decided to start taking exercises on our own to try to build 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 2 of them. The 20th Squadron 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 like.

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 under repair and we got this one shot full of holes. I got "killed" today, so my crew thought. The oxygen 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 6, 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 a Hospital Ship due to his injuries. I sure hope he makes it.

Wednesday, July 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.

Thursday, July 8, 1943

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

Received 2 letters 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 railroad yards. Looked like we did a pretty good job. Saw an awful lot of flak; only saw 1 German fighter plane.

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

Monday, July 12, 1943

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

Received 2 "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 Squadron lost another plane today. McIntire was the pilot; I watched 9 parachutes leave the plane.

Thursday, July 15, 1943

No mission today; just laid around and did some sewing on my clothes.



Friday, July 16, 1943

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

Received 2 letters from mother.

Saturday, July 17, 1943

Went to Naples, Italy, harbor for Navy ships again, today. Had one German fighter. Often when a single German fighter comes up he will fly just out of range of our guns at our altitude and speed and radios 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 and 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 Mediterranean then the pilot will open an envelope with the instructions. We are going to ROME! Rome was the central railroad hub for all of Italy and we were to destroy the raid hub. There were B-17s as far as the eye could see in all directions; hundreds, maybe thousands of them.

Leaflet 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? The real purpose was to tell the civilian population to get as far away from the railroads as possible. And apparently they did, or 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 looked as if we could have just 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 how 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

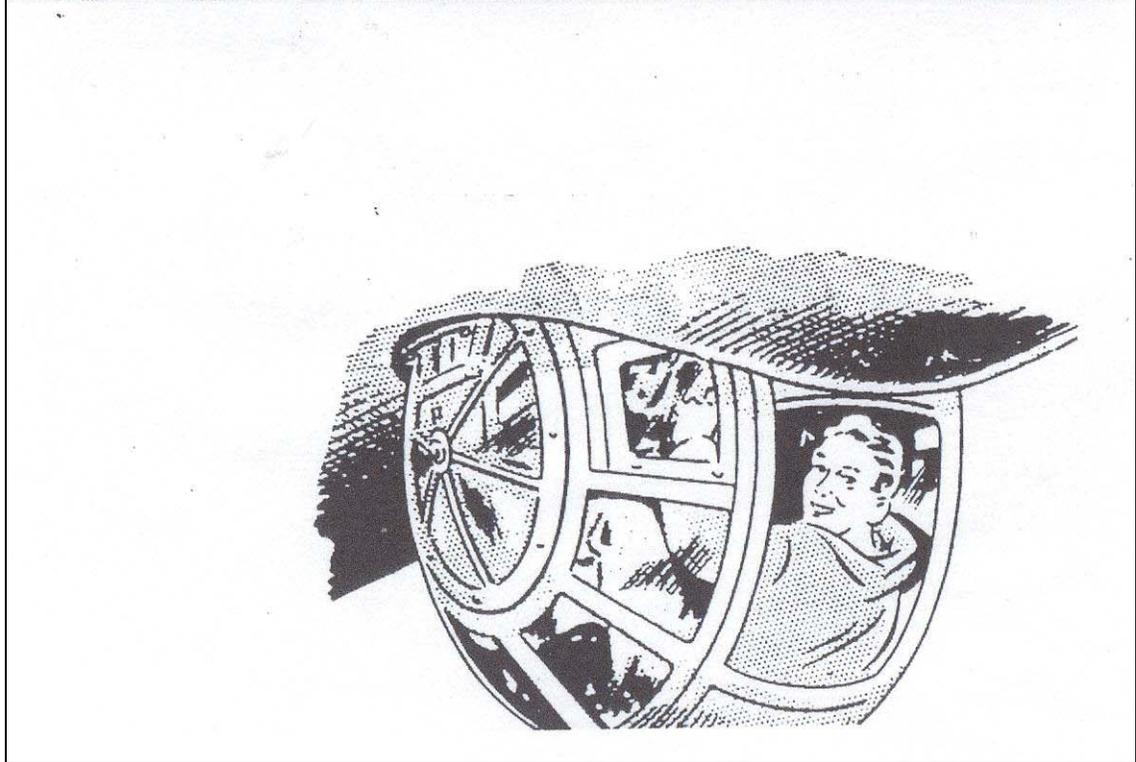
Mission for today was cancelled because of weather. The town of Bizerte, Tunisia, had been so badly destroyed while the Germans had control of it that some of us decided to get some trucks and go get some lumber, etc.; anything that we could find that was useful. I built myself a reclining chair from 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 Non-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 table for reading and writing. There were also card tables that were rather busy for a few days after payday. 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" and "K" rations. It seemed like whenever 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 to ten miles behind them, so they seemed to run out of food when they got to us. Whenever we got hamburger, it was mixed half and 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 cancelled. Received 3 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. We were told we could buy 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 2 letters from my Sweetheart.

Sunday, July 25, 1943

We were told that by a 'cloak & dagger' routine, we could get Country Fried Chicken and French fried potatoes at "Charlie's Place." But it would be expensive so five of us decided to go to Constantine to "Charlie's 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 bought us each out a platter of fried chicken and 'shoe string' potatoes. We could hardly wait to dive into that chicken but we couldn't recognize the 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 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' days 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 cal came and I got 2 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 Mediterranean 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 2 letters from my dear wife with some beautiful pictures of herself. That sure brought back some memories.

Friday, July 30, 1943

Our mission today was to destroy an airdrome at Grotenagnie, Italy. It looked like we did a good job from where I was sitting and I had a ring side street. 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 landing. 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 Mandolin 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 were getting settled at our new base, King, our tail-gunner, (everyone is 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 were looking down on the sidewalk Café. Then we saw 2 pair of the most beautiful legs sticking out from under an umbrella. We stood there gazing at those legs until.. they got up and walked away. They were 2 English soldiers wearing shorts. We wore cutoff khakis on base but we were not issued 'shorts' yet.

When we got back to base we saw 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 much. So we went back to Tunis to go shopping at the Bazaars. 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 into the harbor of Tunis. This 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 and the 96th Squadrons each lost a plane. I saw all the men bail out of the 96th's plane but none from the 429th.

Lt. Bob O'Neil received a left eye injury. Lt. Spivey, co-pilot, had to take over and bring the "Peggy O'Neil" home. Bonovich and Coneznie (sounds like most of our men were foreigners) were both injured. David Tyner, engineer on the "Peggy O'Neil" 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 knew 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 Squadron, 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 2 letters from my wonderful wife it made for a wonderful day.

Monday, August 9, 1943

We went to Messina, Sicily, again for bridges but General 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. You don't argue with a General.

Tuesday, August 10, 1943

Our crew didn't fly today but the 429th Squadron 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. Everybody stood and clapped until she took her 'box seat.' Then the show started. "First Love," and 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. 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-24s landed on our base for fuel; must be short of fuel at other places in the area.

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 Romano put on a good show on our base. I am sure they got rid of some of our frustrations by making us laugh and really did a good job of making everyone laugh. They sure stay busy traveling all over the world trying to make the GIs happy. May God bless them for what they are doing.

Received 3 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 2 letters from my darling wife.

Tuesday, August 17, 1943

We finally got to fly again. We went to an airfield by Marseilles, France. Really tore the place up. The 429th Squadron lost another plane. We really got a scare last night. We usually watch whenever the Germans' make a bomb raid along the coast. We watch the tracers being fired by our own anti-aircraft. Its almost like being at a basketball game. When our ant-aircraft hit a place 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 coming 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 the 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 our 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 E-109s; they were every place. Lost Lt. Carter's "Geronimo" crew; good bunch of boys - all ten of them. The tent next to ours will be empty tomorrow. The 20th Squadron lost 4 planes.

I was 'killed' again today or so my crew thought. While I was firing at a plane about my '7 o'clock' position, a fighter was coming up at our '3



o'clock' 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 heat-suit 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 of 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 n German fighters because we had 72 P-38s flying cover for 200 B-17s. This was our 42nd mission and 260 hours of flying time. The Medial 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 4 Squadrons of the 2nd Bomb Group had their own bivouac area. Our Squadron, the 49th, decided to rearrange our 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 24, 1943

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

Wednesday, August 25, 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 up again today. Since our pilot is the Squadron Commander, he always takes our crew on the toughest missions and we stay home on the weak ones. The Intelligence people can usually 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'Neil's crew, who also stood up with Betty and I at our wedding, went with me to Tunis to spend the day. Our Squadron didn't go but the 96th lost another plane today. That meant 10 men won't come back.

Saturday, August 28, 1943

Worked on the plane all day today. It hadn't flown for 3 days and we were afraid I might get rusty or maybe.. lonely.

Sunday, August 29, 1943

Played baseball most of the day. Went to Church this evening and 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 WWII related his story in his book, "Here is Your War," published in December 1943.

Joe was the radio operator for Lt. Harry Devers' crew. They had just flown into North Africa from the United States. 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 3 B-17s were flying from west Africa to the east to be assigned when some German fighters jumped them, shoot one of them down. The other 2 planes then turned south to get away. One of the 2 planes then crash landed in the desert and Lt. Devers then climbed to 11,000-feet and flew until they ran out of fuel; then told the men to bail out. There were 9 crew members at that time. Two days later all 9 men were together again.. out in the desert.

The plane that crash landed was discovered 25-years later by an oil exploration crew, mostly buried in the sand.

Joe said they were eventually captured by the Germans and put in a prison camp. While in 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 located. Also hit some railroads. Had 3 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 2 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 – 5 more and we can start planning on going home to my own dear wife.

We came back with 2 dead engines and one smoking and my turret still on the blink. So we were singing the song, "Coming Home On A Wing And A Prayer." After we were sure we had our base in sight!

Monday, September 6, 1943

Group went to Naples. Worked on my turret and guns all morning. Went to Carthage and to 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 2 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 my souvenirs were all accounted for and all my clothes were in order to take home then I wrote Betty a 6-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 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 the 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 96th Squadron lost another plane and Friscati, a boy from the 96th, got a leg blown off. This made our 46th mission, with 289 hours in the air.

Thursday, September 9, 1943

Our mission today was bridges at Cantello, Italy. We had very little interference today. Our 47th mission 292 hrs 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.....it was finally called off. So we started to sorting and packing our belonging, to turn in to Supply.

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 Mediterranean 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 2 ships began fighting between themselves and a Navy PBY flew in and rescued the crew.)

This was mission number "50"! FINISHED!!! 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 do home when the time came.

Thursday, September 16, 1943

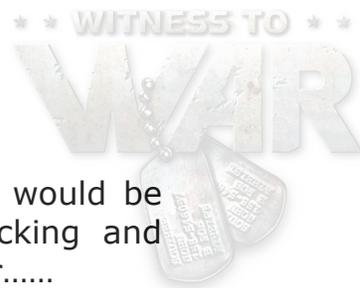
Surprise! Surprise! We were told to check out our equipment again because we were going to get some railroad at Caserta, Italy. This was mission number "51."

Friday, September 17, 1943

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

Saturday, September 18, 1943

I went down to the flight line to watch some B-24s come in for refueling. Received a telegram from my Sweetheart 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.....

But one morning we were all told to go to the bulletin board and read the instructions. There was a notice that because of the invasion of Italy at Salerno was going from bad to worse, all available airmen would not be released until the invasion was successful.

We loaded every airplane available with 100-pound anti-personnel bombs. They were slender bombs with a long nose on them. They were just very large grenades. They were made to go off (explode) above ground and just destroy everything above the ground. The planes would string out, wing-tip to wing-tip, approaching the beach-head at low altitude and beginning at a certain color-coded flares, we would string our bombs inland 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 North Africa, he was sick the entire trip; however, he was partly right. The radio operator had the most problem with it because during bad weather, whenever you would try to send or receive a message (all messages were sent in Morse Code – no voice messages) 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, the others would take turns getting sick.

During one of our first missions, I was all curled up in the ball turret when I started getting sick. I took my helmet off my head to use and I grabbed for my oxygen mask when I remembered what we were told at our briefing.. that if we took off our oxygen masks for any reason at 25,000-feet, 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 to haul the Non-Coms to Casablanca. We could get fuel at any transportation depot we came to along the way. So we began to set up a driving schedule so we could drive 24-hours a day until 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 2 DC-3s (the flying workhorse of 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 pick up medical supplies for the invasion and they were EMPTY!! When I asked them if they were allowed to take any 'hitch hikers' they said they would take (?so) many if they could be there in 15-minutes 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 15-minutes with no baggage but their shaving kits. And here they came in 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 2 planes held us all. The officers didn't come with us. I know some of them found some B-1s 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 10-minutes after we were airborne they 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 "Gunnery," a big smile came over his face and 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 General Patton's 3rd Army, waiting for some gunners to man the guns. It was British ship "The Empress of Scotland" with thousands of her injured GIs 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 for its day and it was going to make this trip by herself, no convoy, no support, no nothing. It took a submarine (15-min?) after sighting a target to launch a torpedo, so every (15-min?) we would change course. I don't know how many guns the ship had but I was in charge of a 12-pound gun on the port side of the



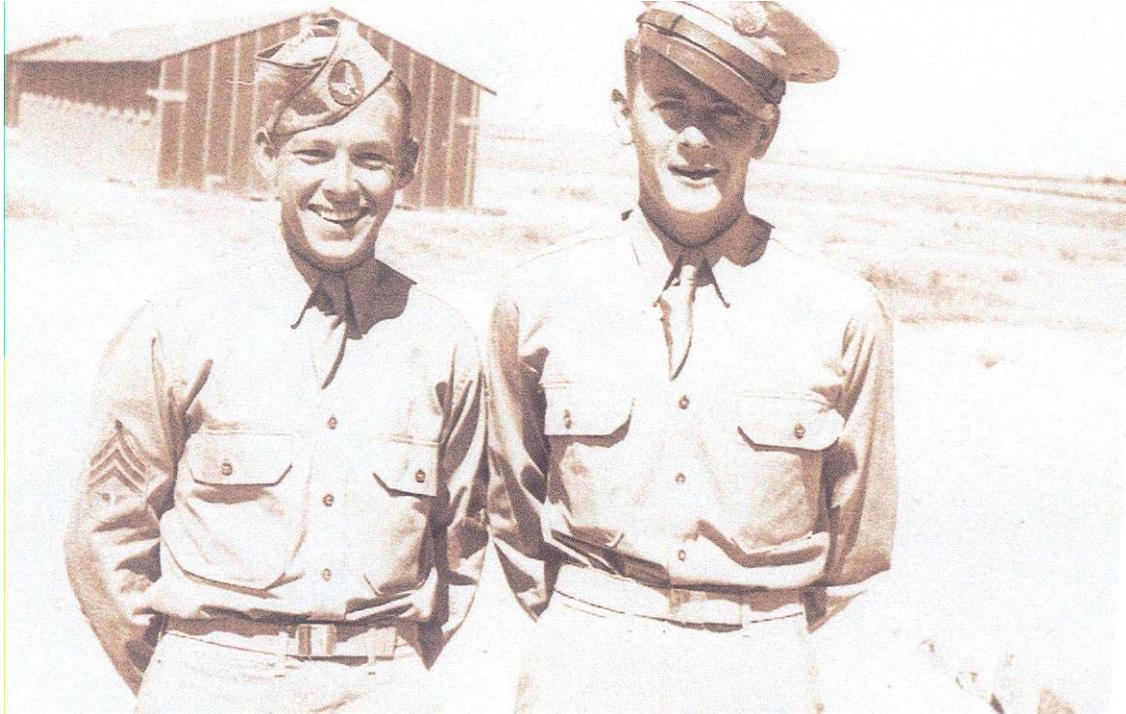
bridge. Was given a crew of 6 men; one would crank the azimuth control; one would crank the vertical control; one would load the 12-ound projectile; one man to load the charge; one man to take out the spent cartridge and I with my microphone and earphones would tell them when to fire whenever I got the order to fire from the bridge. And we had never fired anything but .50-caliber 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 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 until told to fire.

Friday, October 1, 1943

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

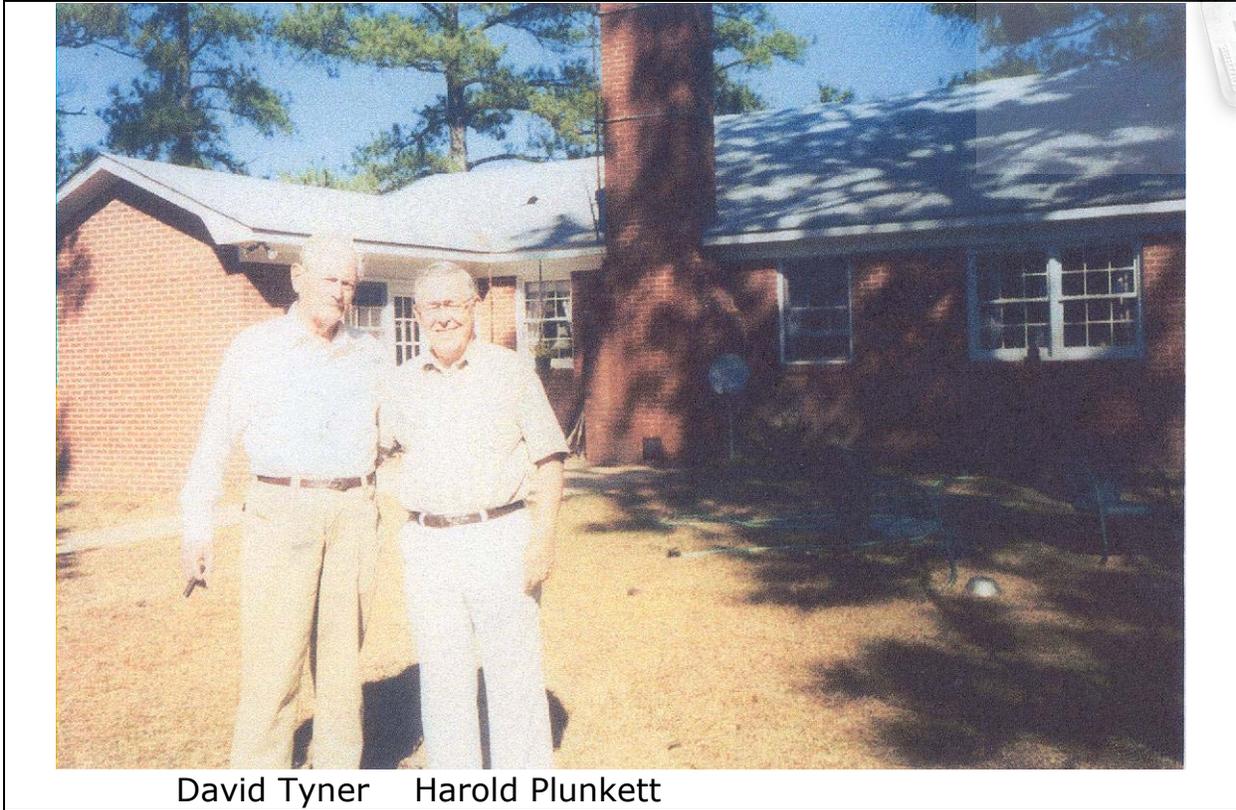


Harold Plunkett

David Tyner

Picture taken at our base in Alamogordo, New Mexico in 1942.

Take a good look at this photo before going on to the next page.



David Tyner Harold Plunkett

Picture taken 60 years later in 2002 at David's Plantation in North Carolina. Fort Bragg is located on part of David's Plantation.