

12th Air Force, 57th Bombardment Wing
321st Bombardment Group
History: February 1943



*For my dad,
Colonel John "Jack" Fitzgerald, U.S. Army (retired)*

*"Lil Butch"
John J. Fitzgerald, SMSgt, U.S. Air Force (retired)*

12th Air Force, 57th Bombardment Wing

321st Bombardment Group

History: February 1943

The following is a compilation of the 321st Bomb Group's individual Squadron War Diaries. They have been transcribed word for word, from the Squadron Histories provided by the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA), Maxwell Air Force Base Alabama. At the end of each Squadron's daily entry, the individuals cited in the entry are identified by *full name, rank and duty*, in alphabetical order. The day's entry begins with the Tactical Operations Statement, from the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) Chronology, for the Mediterranean Theater of Operations (MTO). Available mission reports, personal mission logs, journals, and diaries have also been included.

Invitation

Anyone who has documentation pertaining to the 321st Bomb Group or its members, and would like to have it included in this history, is welcome to participate. Copies of: photos (official or personal); orders (promotion, decoration, travel, etc.); Mission Reports; Missing Air Crew Reports; personal diaries, logs, journals, etc; other documentation; or information that will help identify hi-lited individuals will be greatly appreciated, as one of my goals is correctly identify every man and plane assigned to the 321st Bomb Group.

My only interest in this project is to honor those who served by perpetuating their story, and making it available for future generations, particularly the families and friends of our Great Heroes. If you are interested in helping, or if I may be of assistance in finding information about your 321st BG Hero, please contact me at: Lil-Butch@nc.rr.com

Contributors

Agostino Alberti: Professor - historian (Soncino, Italy)

Michele Becchi: aviation history - archaeologist (Reggio Emilia, Italy)

Jack Brellenthin, great nephew of: Brellenthin, Harold Ray, 2Lt, pilot, 446th BS

Cecile Burandt, daughter of: Burandt, Charles Lawson "Chuck", Capt, pilot, 446th BS

Sally Brown, daughter of: Seegmiller, Barnard H., Sgt, armament, 445th BS

Dave Charville, grandson of: Charville, Leighton Daniel "Danny", 2Lt, pilot, 445th BS

Barbara Connolly, daughter of: Ennis, Edward Charles "Salvo", T/Sgt, radar-radio-gunner, 447th BS

Ralph "Monguse" Gimenez: Software Architect, IL2-FB Skinner

Bob Haney, son of: Haney, Vincent M., M/Sgt, flight engineer, 341st BG

Ed Haney, cousin of: Dickson, Gale Monroe, Capt, pilot, 446th BS

Contributors (continued)

- John Hughes, son of: Hughes, John Jerome "Jack", 1Lt, bombardier, 446th BS*
Patti Johnson: genealogist, proofer
- Don Kaiser, son of: Kaiser, Quentin C., T/Sgt, radio-gunner, 489th BS*
John Lanza, nephew of: Lanza, William A., Sgt, gunner, 446th BS
- Lorraine McRae, daughter of: McRae, James Arrington, 1Lt, bombardier, 446th BS*
T/Sgt Rocco F. "Rocky" Milano & daughter Peggy Chatham: Crew Chief of Peg O' My Heart, Lil Butch, and Haulin' Ass, 446th BS
- Bob Ritger, nephew of: Ritger, Frederic Charles, 1Lt, pilot, 446th BS*
1st Lt Frederick H. Smith: Pilot, 447th BS
- Marsha Gurnee Suszan, daughter of: Gurnee, Clarence E. "Shine", S/Sgt, gunner, 448th BS*
Dominique Taddei: author, U.S.S. Corsica (Corsica)
- Vinny White, son of: White, Joseph P., T/Sgt, radio-gunner, 381st BS*

Acronyms & Abbreviations

A/C: Aircraft	NASAF: Northwest African Strategic Air Force
A/D: Aerodrome	NATOUSA: North Atlantic Theater of Operations USA
A/F: Air Field, also Anti-Flak	Nav: Navigator
AA or AAA: Anti-Aircraft (Artillery)	N.B.S.: 448 th 15-21 Jun 43?
abs: absent	NC: Nurse Corps.
ALO: Allied Liaison Officer	NRO: 445 th 16 Apr 45?
Assg: Assigned	NCO: Non-Commissioned Officer
A.R.C.: American Red Cross	OAF: 446 th 10 Jul 45?
ASV: Anti-Surface Vessel (radar)	OD: Officer of the day, also Olive Drab
ATC: Air Transportation Command	OLC: Oak Leaf Cluster
ATS: Air Transport Service	OTU: 447 th Aug/Dec 42 and 27 Oct 43?
Azon: Azimuth only (guided bomb)	PAX: Passengers
BC: Bomber Command	PBS: 447 th 2 June 44?
Bmb: Bombardier	PDI: Pilot Direction Indicator
Bn: Battalion	POE: Point of Embarkation
B.R.L.: Ballistic Research Laboratory	PRO: (packet) 448 th 9 Jun 45?
BSM: Bomb System Maintenance	PX: Post Exchange
CA: Heavy Cruiser	QM: Quarter Master
CAVU: Ceiling and Visibility Unlimited	R/B: Road Bridge
C.B.I.: China-Burma-India Theater	RC: Red Cross
C/D: 446 th 5 Apr 45?	R/J: Road Junction
CE: McRae 9 Apr +several? (re bombing)	R/Y: Railroad Yards
CL: Cannon Loader	Repl: Replacement
CO: Commanding Officer	RMC: Returned to Military Control
CP: Command Post	RON: Remain OverNight
CQ: Charge of Quarters	RR/B: Railroad Bridge
CWS: Chemical Warfare Service	RR/J: Railroad Junction
D/H: Direct Hit	RR: Railroad
DD: Destroyer	SAP: Semi-Armor Piercing
Demo: Demolition	SD: Special Duty
DS: Detached Service	S/E: Single Engine (plane)
E/A: Enemy Aircraft	S.E.: Special Equipment (Shoran)
E/F: Enemy Fighter	S/F: Siebel Ferry
EFM: 447 th 16 Sep 44?	sk: sick
E/M: Enlisted Men	S/M: Submarine
E/V: Enemy Vessel	SO: Special Order
F Boat: Flying Boat	SOI: Standard Operating Instructions?
F/L: Formation Leader - also Flight Leader	Sq: Squadron
FO or F/O: Flying Officer	Sqdn: Squadron
Frag: Fragmentation	SWA: Seriously Wounded in Action
GLO: Ground Liaison Officer (UK)	T/C: Troop Concentration
GO: General Order	T/E: Twin Engine (plane)

GP: General Purpose/Gun Position
GTC: 445th 1 Mar 43?
HE: High Explosive
IAS: Indicated Air Speed
I & E: Information & Education
IP: Initial Point

LC: Landing Craft
L/G: Landing Ground
Lox: Liquid Oxygen
L/S: Landing Strip
L/V: Large Vehicle

LOT: 447th 2 May 44?
LST: Landing Ship Tank
Ltr: Letter
LWA: Lightly Wounded in Action
MACR: Missing Air Crew Report
MATS: Military Air Transport Service
M/G: Machine Gun
M/T: Motor Transport (Truck)
MTB: Motor Torpedo Boat
M/V: Military Vessel
M/Y: Marshalling Yards
MC: Maintenance Crew

TAC: Theater Allied Command
TBF: Tactical Bomber Force
TD: Temporary Duty
TDY: Temporary Duty
TLC: 447th 5 Oct 43?
TO: Take-Off (time), also Technical Order, and Transportation Officer
T/O: Table of Organization
TOT: Time Over Target/Time On Target
Trfd: Transferred
u/i: 448th 26 Sep 44?
VOCO: Verbal Order of the Commanding Officer
W.O.: Warrant Officer
WP: White Phosphorus (bombs)
WT Station: 445th 20 Jul 43?
XC: Cross Country
ZI: Zone of Interior (U.S.A.)

(i. o.): Initials Only (initial is the name)
(NMI): No Middle Initial

Monday, 1 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): HQ 9th Fighter Wing is established at El Kabrit upon arrival from the U.S.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Tunisia, B-17s bomb the harbor and shipping at Tunis and shipping in La Goulette harbor. Fighters escort bombers and cover ground forces in the Sened-Maknassy area. A-20s and P-40s bomb tank and vehicle a concentration near Sidi Khalif.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: No Entry

445th BS War Diary: No Entry

446th BS War Diary: Usual Staging Area activities.

447th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary: The **Ground Echelon** (4829E) continued processing and drawing of material preparatory for Over-Seas Service. **Air Echelon:** The Air Echelon continued with routine activities at DeRidder Air Base.

Tuesday, 2 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): HQ 324th Fighter Group and its 314th Fighter Squadron with P-40s transfers from El Amiriya, Egypt to El Kabrit, Egypt.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Tunisia, B-25s and B-26s, in coordinated attacks, bomb El Maou Airfield at Sfax. A-20s, with P-40s and P-39s escorting, bomb a munitions dump in the battle area. Other fighters fly cover missions for ground forces along the battleline and carry out reconnaissance operations.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: No Entry

445th BS War Diary: No Entry

446th BS War Diary: Usual Staging Area activities.

447th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary: The **Ground Echelon** (4829E) continued processing and drawing of material preparatory for Over-Seas Service. **Air Echelon:** The Air Echelon continued with routine activities at DeRidder Air Base.

Wednesday, 3 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): In Italy, B-24s hit the harbors at Palermo, Sicily and Messina, Italy; one bombs Plati, Italy. The 316th Fighter Squadron, 324th Fighter Group with P-40s transfers from El Amiriya, Egypt to El Kabrit, Egypt.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Tunisia, B-26s attack Gabes and vessels between Tunisia and Sicily. B-25s hit bridges over the river north of Maknassy, damaging the railroad bridge. A-20s hit tanks and vehicles further north, and attack a large howitzer and numerous trucks east of Ousseltia. The 81st Bombardment Squadron (Medium), 12th Bombardment Group (Medium) with B-25s transfers from Tmed El Chel, Libya to Berteaux, Algeria. These units are attached to the XII Air Support Command.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: No Entry

445th BS War Diary: No Entry

446th BS War Diary: Usual Staging Area activities.

447th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary: The **Ground Echelon** (4829E) continued processing and drawing of material preparatory for Over-Seas Service. **Air Echelon:** The Air Echelon continued with routine activities at DeRidder Air Base.

Thursday, 4 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): The 82nd Bombardment Squadron (Medium), 12th Bombardment Group (Medium) with B-25s transfers from Tmded El Chel, Libya to Berteaux, Algeria.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force): The North African Theater of Operations, US Army is established with Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower as commander. (Also see European Theater of Operations above.).

In Tunisia, B-17s hit Gabes Airfield and a landing ground west of the town. Weather prevents completion of a medium bomber mission against a landing ground further southwest. Fighters escort the bombers and C-47s and fly reconnaissance over the battle area.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: No Entry

445th BS War Diary: No Entry

446th BS War Diary: Usual Staging Area activities.

447th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary: The **Ground Echelon** (4829E) continued processing and drawing of material preparatory for Over-Seas Service. **Air Echelon:** The Air Echelon continued with routine activities at DeRidder Air Base.

Friday, 5 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): No Entry

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Tunisia, bad weather cancels heavy and medium bomber missions. Fighters fly reconnaissance missions (strafing trucks near Jabal Ash Shamsi), local patrols and escort for C-47s.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: No Entry

445th BS War Diary: No Entry

446th BS War Diary: Usual Staging Area activities.

447th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary: The **Ground Echelon** (4829E) continued processing and drawing of material preparatory for Over-Seas Service. **Air Echelon:** The Air Echelon continued with routine activities at DeRidder Air Base. 2nd Lieutenant Davies, Ford, McKinney, Plumlee, and Stultz appointed 1st Lieutenants, February 5, 1943.

Davies, Robert D., 1Lt, pilot

McKinney, Charles A., 1Lt, pilot

Stultz, Raymond B., 1Lt, pilot

Ford, Charles L., Jr., 1Lt, pilot

Plumlee, Eldon A., 1Lt, pilot

Saturday, 6 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): The 515th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 376th Bombardment Group (Heavy) with B-24s transfers from Abu Sueir, Egypt to Gambut, Libya.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Tunisia, XII Bomber Command cancels missions because of weather. P-40s and P-39s fly reconnaissance and strafing missions between Sidi Bou Zid and Sfax. Spitfires escort transport and evacuation missions. The Luftwaffe attacks an Allied convoy between Oran and Algiers and badly damages some ships. The 308th and 309th Fighter Squadrons, 31st Fighter Group with Spitfire Mk Vs transfer from Tafaraoui, Algeria and La Senia, Algeria respectively to Thelepte, Tunisia.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: No Entry

445th BS War Diary: No Entry

446th BS War Diary: Usual Staging Area activities.

447th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary: The **Ground Echelon** (4829E) continued processing and drawing of material preparatory for Over-Seas Service. **Air Echelon:** The Air Echelon continued with routine activities at DeRidder Air Base.

Sunday, 7 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force):

In Italy, B-24s hit the harbor at Naples, scoring a direct hit on 1 vessel and hits on others.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Sardinia, over 50 B-17s and B-26s bomb Elmas Airfield and the seaplane base at Cagliari; P-38s provide escort.

In Tunisia, fighters and A-20s fly reconnaissance over large areas of eastern Tunisia; fighters strafe gun batteries in the Gafsa-Maknassy area HQ 31st Fighter Group transfers from La Senia, Algeria to Thelepte, Tunisia. The 307th Fighter Squadron with Spitfire Mk Vs, assigned to the 31st, transfers from Maison Blanche, Algeria to Thelepte. The 58th Fighter Squadron, 33rd Fighter Group with P-40s transfers from Thelepte, Tunisia to Telergma, Algeria.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: No Entry

445th BS War Diary: No Entry

446th BS War Diary: Usual Staging Area activities. After an overseas physical examination, which everyone in the Squadron passed, the Ground Echelon departed by rail for Staten Island, Port of Embarkation, New York City.

447th BS War Diary: After more than a week of inspections of equipment and personnel this squadron was prepared to leave Camp Kilmer, N.J. for the port of embarkation. At 0540 this morning we marched to the train in three platoons in full field equipment and boarded it. By nightfall we were aboard the U.S.S. Elizabeth Stanton standing at the pier.

448th BS War Diary: The **Ground Echelon:** At 14:30 o'clock February 7 – 1943, (4829E) departed Camp Kilmer, N.J. via train enroute to Pier 11 Port of Embarkation, New York, arriving Port of Embarkation at 16:30 o'clock, February 7 – 43. Troops boarded U.S.S. Elizabeth C. Stanton at 17:30 o'clock. **Air Echelon:** The Air Echelon continued with routine activities at DeRidder Air Base.

Monday, 8 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force):

In Italy, B-24s attack ferry installations at Messina.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Tunisia, B-17s bomb the docks and shipping at Sousse; B-26s and B-25s bomb Gabes Airfield, also hitting the nearby marshalling yard. Two forces of A-20s attack a vehicle and troop concentration east of Faid. Fighters escort the bomber missions, strafe the Sened-Maknassy area and the landing ground at Kebili, and fly routine reconnaissance and patrols. HQ 33rd Fighter Group transfers from Thelepte, Tunisia to Youks-les-Bains, Algeria for R&R. The group is short of pilots and has only 13 P-40Fs left after continuous combat since Nov 42. The group's 3 squadrons, the 58th, 59th and 60th Fighter Squadrons, all transfer this week. HQ 97th Bombardment Group (Heavy) and its 340th and 341st Bombardment Squadrons (Heavy) with B-17s transfer from Biska, Algeria to Chateau-du-Rhumel, Algeria.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: No Entry

445th BS War Diary: No Entry

446th BS War Diary: On this date the Squadron set sail on the U.S.S. Elizabeth C. Stanton for overseas duty in North Africa.

447th BS War Diary: When we got up for breakfast this morning our ship had already left the pier and was making its way through New York harbor. Through the mist we could see the Statue of Liberty. There were 22 other ships in the convoy of which we were a part including the escort vessels. One battleship and one cruiser sailed with us. The squadron personnel aboard the ship are all members of the ground echelon. The flight echelon was left behind at DeRidder Army Air Base January 21.

448th BS War Diary: The Ground Echelon: U.S.S. Elizabeth C. Stanton weighed anchor and was underway at 06:00 o'clock, February 8, 1943, destination North Africa. Despite crowded conditions morale of troops excellent. Weather excellent, sea calm, convoy provided. No incidents to report. Mess facilities on board inadequate but food palatable. **Air Echelon:** The Air Echelon continued with routine activities at DeRidder Air Base.

Tuesday, 9 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force):

In Crete, B-25s bomb several airfields. HQ 98th Bombardment Group (Heavy) transfers from Fayid, Egypt to Benina, Libya.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Tunisia, B-17s bomb Kairouan Airfield. Fighters strafe AA and machineguns and trucks in the Faid Pass, buildings near Mezzouna, trucks in the Station de Sened area, and fly escort and reconnaissance missions.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: No Entry

445th BS War Diary: No Entry

446th BS War Diary: En route to Theatre of Operations.

447th BS War Diary: Usual duties aboard ship.

448th BS War Diary: **Air Echelon:** The Air Echelon continued with routine activities at DeRidder Air Base.

Wednesday, 10 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force):

In Sicily, B-24s sent to attack Palermo are forced to abort due to bad weather. They jettison their bombs or return to base with them. One aircraft scores a direct hit on a Sicilian highway.

In Libya, rainfall delays the British Eighth Army assault on the Mareth Line positions at Ben Gardane. HQ 376th Bombardment Group (Heavy) and its 512th, 513th and 514th Bombardment Squadrons (Heavy) with B-24s transfer from Abu Sueir, Egypt to Gambut, Libya.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In the Mediterranean, B-25s attack shipping between Tunisia and Sicily, claiming 1 vessel sunk and another badly damaged.

In Tunisia, weather cancels heavy and medium bomber missions. P-39s and Spitfires of the XII Air Support Command strafe gun batteries, machinegun nests, vehicles and troops in the Maknassy-Station de Sened-Bou Hamran area. The 59th Fighter Squadron, 33rd Fighter Group with P-40s transfers from Thelepte, Tunisia to Youks-les-Bains, Algeria.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: No Entry

445th BS War Diary: No Entry

446th BS War Diary: En route to Theatre of Operations.

447th BS War Diary: A ship news sheet was begun today. Headline news which came over the radio was printed and reporters were selected for each organization represented on the ship. Sgt. John Murdock reported for this squadron—turned out a short column daily.

Murdock, John L., Jr., Sgt, communications

448th BS War Diary: Air Echelon: The Air Echelon continued with routine activities at DeRidder Air Base.

Thursday, 11 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force):

In Crete, RAF Liberators under operational control of the IX Bomber Command are sent against Heraklion Airfield during the night of 10/11 Feb. Severe weather causes them to abort near the south coast of Crete. The 415th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 98th Bombardment Group (Heavy) with B-24s transfers from Tobruk, Libya to Benina, Libya.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force): Bad weather cancels all heavy and medium bomber missions.

In Tunisia, A-20s hit Station de Sened. Fighters escort light bombers and transports, and fly reconnaissance and patrols. A detachment of the 111th Observation Squadron, 68th Observation Group based at Oujda, French Morocco with A-20s begins operating from La Senia, Algeria.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: No Entry

445th BS War Diary: No Entry

446th BS War Diary: En route to Theatre of Operations.

447th BS War Diary: We are beginning to get used to the roll of the ship. Navy patrol planes and blimps are circling the convoy on the lookout for subs. Life belts must be worn at all times. Abandon-ship drill held this morning. Naval officer gave instructions on what actions are to be taken in event of the real McCoy.

448th BS War Diary: Air Echelon: The Air Echelon continued with routine activities at DeRidder Air Base.

Friday, 12 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): No Entry

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Tunisia, heavy and medium bomber missions are cancelled due to weather. A-20s attack gun installations west of Station de Sened. Fighters escort A-20s and C-47s, and fly routine patrols. The 347th Fighter Squadron, 350th Fighter Group with P-39s and P-400s transfers from Oujda, French Morocco to La Senia, Algeria.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence:

The 445th and 446th Squadrons were scheduled to leave DeRidder at 0915 and 0930. However; at 0830, the base called and said they had a coded message which was from Col. Meloy of the 3rd Air Force ordering the entire group of 59 planes to proceed to Homestead Field, Fla., instead of Morrison Field, Fla. The group got off before noon, the 445th and 446th Squadrons being only slightly behind schedule. Homestead Field was reached without incident in about 5 hours and 15 minutes; the 445th arriving at about 0230. As soon as the 445th and 446th Squadrons landed, they were ordered to Morrison Field and left immediately. The 447th and 448th Squadrons were instructed by the tower at Homestead Field and proceeded to Morrison Field, without landing.

Meloy, Col, HQ 3rd AF

There was a slight overcast most of the way and heavier clouds near Homestead Field. The planes went down to a few hundred feet to avoid them. Weather was distinctly chilly.

Lieut. Rudolph, 445th Squadron, went into Lafayette, La., with engine trouble; but reached Morrison Field the next day. The right engine of Capt. Bates' plane, 446th Squadron, had a leaking oil-cooler. This was repaired, but on taking off at 2100, the right wheel locked and both tires blew out. New wheels and tires were supplied by the 318th Ferry Squadron (from a crashed B-25), who were very cooperative and the plane reached Morrison Field the next afternoon.

Bates, James P., Capt, 448th BS Rudolph, Raymond L. "Rudy", 1Lt, pilot, 445th BS

Almost all the officers and enlisted men were quartered in hotels in West Palm Beach, Fla.

445th BS War Diary: At 10 o'clock, the flight echelon took off in route to its overseas destination by way of Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida. Thirteen planes took off led by Captain MacFarlane. Lt. O'Harra could not take off because of the necessary change of the carburetor. Colonel Knapp in the fifteenth ship had already proceeded to Morrison field. The weather on the entire flight was excellent with only a few high cumulus clouds. In accordance with directions received before take-off, the planes first landed at Homestead at 17:15. Lt. Rudolph landed at Lafayette while Lt. O'Harra took off at 16:10 and landed at Mobile at 17:45.

Friday, 12 February 1943 (continued)

A/C No. 42-53373

P *Knapp, Robert D, Col, 321st BG CO*
CP *Coffey, Kenneth H. F., 2Lt*
N *Larson, Harold W., 2Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Toy, Joseph R., T/Sgt*
R *Eagan, Joseph E, M/Sgt*
G *Bell, Ernest C., 1Lt (PAX)*
F *Lowery, Bruce, M/Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-29772 "The Wolf"

P *Bonus, Robert H., 1Lt*
CP *Butela, William F., 2Lt*
N *Garrison, Fred H., 2Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Cracknell, Frank K., Sgt*
R *Nicholson, John F., T/Sgt*
G *Reasoner, Eric E., S/Sgt*
F *Lockwood, Patrick B., (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-13201 "Poopsie"

P *Kayser, Robert B., 2Lt*
CP *Kent, William S., 2Lt*
N *N/A*
B *Libel, Ralph K., 2Lt*
E *Lambert, Richard L., S/Sgt*
R *Bryant, James C., T/Sgt (PAX)*
G *Whitmore, Ernest L., S/Sgt*
F *Boyd, Ewell V., S/Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-12924 "Patricia"

P *Clinton, Wayne C., 1Lt*
CP *Walker, James O., Jr., 2Lt*
N *Becker, Virgil C., 2Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Brainard, Walter R., S/Sgt*
R *Curtis, Raymond T., T/Sgt*
G *Arvo, Nillo R., S/Sgt*
F *Nickerson, James E., 1Lt (PAX)*

A/C No. 42-53423

MacFarlane, William V., Capt, CO
Gunter, Macon A., Jr., 2Lt
Wilson, Samuel P., Jr., 2Lt
N/A
Martinez, Elmo J., M/Sgt
Eggers, Rodean R., S/Sgt
Smith, William C. "Doc", Capt (PAX)
Wright, Warren D., Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-13211

McLaughlin, Guy J., Jr., 2Lt
Hanley, Raymond R., 2Lt
N/A
Kazich, Rudolph W., 2Lt
Shattuck, William H., Sgt.
Bruynell, Dennis A., M/Sgt (PAX)
Binkowski, Stephen, J., S/Sgt
Fehr, Robert A., S/Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-13202 "Idaho Lassie"

Grau, Robert B., 1Lt
Hughes, Clark E., 2Lt
N/A
McEnroe, Henry A., 2Lt
Mais, Charles W., T/Sgt
Schell, Stewart I, Sgt
Pierce, William V., S/Sgt
Choka, Andrew J., S/Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-13207 "Oh 7"

O'Harra, Roderick E., 2Lt
Goodwin, Morton, 2Lt
N/A
Evans, James H., 2lt
Martine, William E., S/Sgt
Matthews, Earl L., S/Sgt
Herbert, Richard J., S/Sgt
Killeen, Frank I., S/Sgt (PAX)

Friday, 12 February 1943 (continued)

A/C No. 41-29767

P *Asbury, Wilburn, 2Lt*
CP *Miller, Roy N., 2Lt*
N *N/A*
B *Murzyn, Edward, 2Lt*
E *Adams, Richard G., T/Sgt*
R *Katz, Paul F., T/Sgt*
G *VanHall, Ernest G., S/Sgt*
F *Kmetevicz, Gene C., S/Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-13158

P *Cratin, William S., 1Lt*
CP *Bitner, William H., 2Lt*
N *Anderson, Charles C., 2Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Kilmer, Reid F., S/Sgt*
R *Kneisle, Herman M., 2Lt (PAX)*
G *Sharen, Robert L, S/Sgt*
F *Carson, Donald, S/Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-13198

P *Whiteford, Floyd R., 1Lt*
CP *Mamerow, George A., 2Lt*
N *N/A*
B *Eiland, Claude L., 2Lt*
E *Currie, Alton D., S/Sgt*
R *Cirals, Ted, T/Sgt*
G *Ewald, Paul E., S/Sgt*
F *Criswell, John E., T/Sgt (PAX)*
A/C No. 41-29762 “Arkan ‘Dam’ Saw

‘co se it is’ “ (read it: “Cozy it is)

P *Tipton, Richard Pike “Tip”, 1Lt*
CP *Kelley, Edward T., 2Lt*
N *Bsharah, Norman, 2Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Finn, Robert F., T/Sgt*
R *Chereski, John J., T/Sgt*
G *Klocke, Francis J., S/Sgt*
F *King, Paul F., T/Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-13183

Adcock, Roy D., 1Lt
Johnson, Richard S., 2Lt
N/A
Hill, Raymond D., 2Lt
Owens, Fred S., Sgt
Garner, Argyle R., T/Sgt
Campbell, Theodore, W., S/Sgt
Lawton, Russell W., S/Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-13179 “Booger”

McGee, William N., 2Lt
Hoekman, Robert D., 2Lt
N/A
McKeever, Francis D., 2Lt
Pierce, Richard H., T/Sgt
Hutner, Gabriel, T/Sgt
Zuckerbrod, Saul, S/Sgt
Bell, Wendell J., M/Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-13199 “C’est La Vie”

Rudolph, Raymond L. “Rudy”, 2Lt
Olson, Walter N., 2Lt
N/A
Buckingham, Richard P., 1Lt
Lippincott, Spencer H., S/Sgt
Knight, Irving W., T/Sgt
Lawyer, James E., S/Sgt
Whittaker, William H., Sgt (PAX)

Friday, 12 February 1943 (continued)

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: En route to Theatre of Operations. **Air Echelon:** Formation took off from DeRidder with Col. Knapp leading. Although the destination was Morrison Field, Fla. Which was to be the Port of Embarkation, some planes were forced to land at Homestead field, Fla. They rejoined the others a few hours later. Minor mechanical difficulties were the reasons for some of the planes stopping en route.

Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, 321st BG Commander

A/C No. 42-53377 "Flag Ship"

P *Schwane, Henry H., Capt, CO*
CP *Orrantia, Gilbert D., 2Lt*
N *N/A*
B *McCarter, Elmer H., 1Lt*
E *Knapp, Walter E., S/Sgt*
R *Beach, Louis A., S/Sgt*
G *Reeves, Charles F., M/Sgt*
F *Hixson, Sherman, 2Lt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-13192

P *Porter, Jack G., 2Lt*
CP *Browning, Eugene S., 2Lt*
N *N/A*
B *Marek, Joseph R., 2Lt*
E *Lytle, Logan L., Sgt*
R *Rubidoux, Louis W., S/Sgt*
G *Halko, John J., Sgt*
F *Floethe, Jack A., S/Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-12928 "Buzz Wagon"

P *Bailey, Harold Merle "Buzz", 2Lt*
CP *Bleech, John (NMI), 2Lt*
N *Vink, Virgil F., 2Lt (Bmb/Nav)*
B *N/A*
E *Mitchell, Edgar V., S/Sgt*
R *Haasch, George C., Pvt (Radar)*
G *Grant, Ronald A., S/Sgt*
F *Vogel, Anthony G., Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-13197

P *Taylor, Peter D., 1Lt*
CP *Axson, Ralph L., Jr., 2Lt*
N *Meehan, James M., 2Lt (Bmb/Nav)*
B *N/A*
E *McNair, Luddie L., S/Sgt*
R *Chappell, Jack F., T/Sgt*
G *Edwards, David R., Sgt*
F *Chavez, Louis (NMI), M/Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-13196 "Avenger"

Lovingood, Willard J., 2Lt
Cleary, Philip B., 2Lt
N/A
Cordes, Jacob H., 2Lt
Torres, Alfonso G., T/Sgt
Foley, Gerald M., S/Sgt
Belser, Oscar L., Sgt
Seawell, Virgil L., 2Lt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-12963 "Missouri Waltz"

Bradley, James L. "Jungle Jim", Jr., 1Lt
Williams, Wallace (NMI) "Spike", Jr., 2Lt
N/A
Davis, Sterling, 2Lt
Martin, William L., S/Sgt
Sheldon, Victor W., T/Sgt
Lovell, Curtis L., Sgt
N/A

A/C No. 41-29760

Griffith, Frank J. "Griif", 1Lt
Hileman, Donald L., 2Lt
Caldwell, Herman B., Jr., 2Lt (Bmb/Nav)
N/A
Mitchell, Lance M., S/Sgt
Killam, Lloyd D., M/Sgt
Forsyth, Arthur C., T/Sgt
N/A

A/C No. 41-29771

VanArtsdalen, Charles M., 1Lt
Conner, Clarence H., 2Lt
Harris, Posey T., 2Lt (Bmb/Nav)
N/A
Mencher, Fred S., S/Sgt
Hoffman, Louis E., T/Sgt
Haresign, James M., Sgt
N/A

Friday, 12 February 1943 (continued)

A/C No. 41-13008

P *Schmidt, Frederick C., 2Lt*
CP *Chappell, Howard L., 2Lt*
N *Coe, George A., 1Lt (Bmb/Nav)*
B *N/A*
E *Ludwig, Elvin C., Sgt*
R *Kendall, Charles C., Sgt*
G *Freimuth, Andrew G., Cpl*
F *N/A*

**A/C No. 41-12947 “Arkansas
Traveler”**

P *Bates, James P., Capt, 448th BS*
CP *Carlisle, Howard L., 2Lt*
N *Beyer, William J., 2Lt (Bmb/Nav)*
B *N/A*
E *Walker, Council T., S/Sgt*
R *N/A*
G *Lampasona, John N., Sgt*
F *Pemberton, Francis O., Maj, HQ 321st
BG (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-13203

P *Martin, John K., 2Lt*
CP *Brown, Aud W., 2Lt*
N *Anzalone, Benjamin W., 2Lt (Bmb/Nav)*
B *N/A*
E *Tucker, Gerald T., S/Sgt*
R *Olson, Harold F., Pvt (Radar)*
G *Dykes, Billy (NMI), S/Sgt*
F *Staudt, Howard J., Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-13200

P *Fisher, James B., 1Lt*
CP *Coffey, Noel F., 2Lt*
N *N/A*
B *N/A*
E *Perkins, Lawrence W., S/Sgt*
R *Shields, James A., Sgt*
G *Jaenicke, Reinhart W., 1Lt, HQ 321st BG (PAX)*
F *Strangeman, Everett M., S/Sgt, HQ 321st BG (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-13212

Stine, Donald A., 2Lt
Cox, James L., 2Lt
Brewster, Ernest I., 2Lt (Bmb/Nav)
N/A
Midkiff, Howard H., S/Sgt
Trepple, John J., Pvt (Radar)
Lewis, Thomas A., Sgt
Dugan, Robert W., M/Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-29764

Cosner, Oliver J., 1Lt
Boyd, Kenneth E., 2Lt
Brown, John R., 2Lt (Bmb/Nav)
N/A
Misik, John (NMI), S/Sgt
Maguire, Joseph F., Sgt
Elk, Charles (NMI), Cpl
N/A

A/C No. 41-13208

Garmon, James M., 2Lt
Morris, Richard P., Jr., 2Lt
Manning, Rodney A., 2Lt (Bmb/Nav)
N/A
Mercuri, Ralph W., S/Sgt
Leahy, Richard P. “Dick”, Pvt (Radar)
Wray, Charles E., Sgt
Mougey, Richard B., Sgt (PAX)

Friday, 12 February 1943 (continued)

447th BS War Diary: The flight echelon took off today from DeRidder for Morrison Field via Homestead, Fla. It is a rough day at sea. Most everyone is seasick.

A/C No. 42-53371 "Death Wind"

P Cook, Bailey C., Maj, CO
CP Spikes, Robert F., 2Lt
N Black, Donald "Blackie", 2Lt
B N/A
E Blount, Lloyd L., M/Sgt
R Betmarik, Alois Jr., S/Sgt
G Woodward, Theodore B., Sgt
F Toohey, James E., T/Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-30002

P Bell, Albert R., Capt
CP Lungren, Charles D., 2Lt
N Weaver, Charles M., 2Lt
B N/A
E Horne, Wendell C., M/Sgt
R Henderson, James D., M/Sgt
G Osowiecki, Hendrick, S/Sgt
F Herrmann, Eugene R., 1Lt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-13210 "Buckeye Cannon Ball"

P Seel, Peter B., Jr., 1Lt
CP Batchelder, Stephen H., 2Lt
N Daume, Oscar R., 2Lt
B N/A
E Nittle, Samuel, S/Sgt
R Balsom, James P., T/Sgt
G Jensen, Aage E., S/Sgt
F Davis, Donald A., Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-13176 "Alley Cat"

P Burns, John I., 1Lt
CP Cohagan, McKinley B., 2Lt
N Lingrel, Paul W. "Moose", 2Lt
B N/A
E Perpich, Joseph G., S/Sgt
R Byerly, Lee E., Sgt
G Woody, James A., S/Sgt
F Kittrell, Henry A., T/Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-30000 "Ruff Stuff"

Sampson, Raymond D. "Sammy", Capt
Bugbee, James M., 2Lt
Bodine, Arnold F., 1Lt
N/A
Smith, Douglas P., M/Sgt
Milton, Maurice J., T/Sgt
Desjardins, Patrick, S/Sgt
N/A

A/C No. 41-12930 "SNAFU"

Brinkley, Hamilton M., 1Lt
Brinkley, Wilton R., 2Lt
Hartis, John G., 2Lt
N/A
Coursen, William C., T/Sgt
Stanton, James E., T/Sgt
Gouvin, Henry J., S/Sgt
N/A

A/C No. 41-29759 "Kentucky Ridge Runner"

Morton, William H., 1Lt
Morganti, Clyde J., 2Lt
Colby, John W., 2Lt
N/A
O'Donnell, Vincent T., S/Sgt
Fryer, John R., T/Sgt
Vaccaro, Joseph M., S/Sgt
Armstrong, Robert E., M/Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-13007 "The Harp"

Richardson, Robert W., 1Lt
Hasty, Curtis B., 2Lt
Garrett, Andy K., 2Lt
N/A
O'Connell, Daniel E., S/Sgt
Cantrell, Walter A., T/Sgt
Murphy, Russell E., S/Sgt
N/A

Friday, 12 February 1943 (continued)

A/C No. 41-29775

P *Shapiro, Leonard L., 2Lt*
CP *Hengel, Edward D., 2Lt*
N *Ackley, James H., 2Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Lankford, Raymond D., S/Sgt*
R *Waldrip, Robert L., T/Sgt*
G *Rider, Lawrence E., S/Sgt*
F *Dodds, Roy J., T/Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-12961 "Spare Parts"

P *Fineman, Ernest (NMI), 1Lt*
CP *Jung, Roland W. "Wongy", 2Lt*
N *Allison, John M., Jr., 2Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Nelson, James E., S/Sgt*
R *Jackson, Edward B., T/Sgt*
G *Popowski, Frank A., S/Sgt*
F *Orlando, Alfred V., S/Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-13175 "The Saint-Myrtle II"

P *Fabling, Charles R., 1Lt*
CP *Althouse, Donald I., 2Lt*
N *Ghetia, George, 2Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Sparby, Arnold R., S/Sgt*
R *Gregory, Ralph J. H., Sgt*
G *Murphy, John F., S/Sgt*
F *Nagy, Eugene R., Jr., Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-12997 "Southern Belle"

P *Andrews, Austin D. "Andy", 2Lt*
CP *McGowan, Francis E., 2Lt*
N *N/A*
B *N/A*
E *Murtha, William J., T/Sgt*
R *Small, Myron R., T/Sgt*
G *Boris, Michael, S/Sgt*
F *N/A*

A/C No. 41-13181 "The Sophisticated Lady"

DeMoss, Jack M., 1Lt
Hoffman, Charles W., 2Lt
Joseph, Merwin J., 1Lt
N/A
Joseph, Edward R., S/Sgt
Drogosch, Robert C., S/Sgt
Ludtke, Foster R., S/Sgt
N/A

A/C No. 41-13171 "Trigger"

Duke, Albert, 2Lt
McDuff, Daniel R., 2Lt
Orr, Douglas C., 2Lt
N/A
Govoni, Harold F., S/Sgt
Ennis, Edward C., Sgt
Noble, Francis L., S/Sgt
Manly, Robert W. "Horse", 1Lt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-12925 "Huckelberry Duck"

Grantham, Charles H., 1Lt
Ashley, Wilson S., 2Lt
McCone, Walter G., 2Lt
N/A
Baldrige, Walter M., M/Sgt
Brown, Charles O., Jr., Sgt
Draper, Ralph M., S/Sgt
Nieman, Harry C., T/Sgt (PAX)

Friday, 12 February 1943 (continued)

448th BS War Diary: Air Echelon: At 12:55 February 12, 1943, the Air Echelon departed DeRidder Army Air Base via air for Morrison Field, Florida, arriving without mishap at 19:15, February 12, 1943. Weather clear. Morale excellent. Preparations completed for Over-Seas flight to North Africa. At 09:00 February 15, 1943, the Flight Echelon departed Morrison Field, Florida. 1st Lieutenant Hess remained due to mechanical malfunction of plane # 41-29774. 2nd Lieutenant Davies, Ford, McKinney, Plumlee, and Stultz appointed 1st Lieutenants, February 5, 1943.

Davies, Robert D., 1Lt, pilot

Ford, Charles L., Jr., 1Lt, pilot

Hess, Robert G., 1Lt, pilot

McKinney, Charles A., 1Lt, pilot

Plumlee, Eldon A., 1Lt, pilot

Stultz, Raymond B., 1Lt, pilot

A/C No. 41-29770

P *Olmsted, Charles T., Lt Col, HQ 321 BG*
CP *Plumlee, Eldon A., 2Lt*
N *Boland, Chester H., 2Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Cunningham, Burlin C., M/Sgt*
R *Smith, Harry V., S/Sgt*
G *Cobb, Dwight K., S/Sgt*
F *Lund, Walter, 1Lt, HQ 321st BG (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-30001

Heinlen, Clayton H., Capt, CO
Bowman, William W., 2Lt
Ligarde, Honore (NMI), 2Lt
N/A
Brisco, Albert S., M/Sgt
Egbom, Clarence W., S/Sgt
Dellwo, Lawrence H., S/Sgt
Pinger, Robert R., Capt, HQ 321st BG (PAX)

A/C No. 41-29765

P *Hardzog, Walter A., Jr., 1Lt*
CP *McCurry, Milton L., 2Lt*
N *Thomas, Leo A., 2Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Ripple, William E., S/Sgt*
R *Featherstone, Charles A., T/Sgt*
G *Wallace, John R., S/Sgt*
F *Gustafson, Wilho E., M/Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-29776

Isaacson, Clayton M., 2Lt
Brandt, Joseph R., 2Lt
Hurst, Joseph B., 2Lt
N/A
Rohleder, Jack J., S/Sgt
Hilborne, Thomas G., Sgt
Vance, Paul S., S/Sgt
Bardell, Kenneth E., M/Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-29774

P *Hess, Robert G., 1Lt*
CP *Buchenau, Harry T., 2Lt*
N *Cheetham, McClain, 2Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Rodgers, Herbert E., S/Sgt*
R *Cookman, Harold F., S/Sgt*
G *Hines, Ralph V., S/Sgt*
F *Iatesta, James G., Cpl (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-13205

Davies, Robert D., 2Lt
Brosnan, Cornelius G., 2Lt
Piasecki, Walter C., 2Lt
N/A
Long, Jephtha D., S/Sgt
Lottes, Richard O., Sgt (ASV)
Yutzy, Eli N., S/Sgt
Lawless, Frank E., T/Sgt (PAX)

Friday, 12 February 1943 (continued)

A/C No. 41-29769

P *McKinney, Charles A., 2Lt*
CP *Campbell, John F., 2Lt*
N *Mims, Joe A., 2Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Lambert, Robert P., S/Sgt*
R *Headings, Boyd V., S/Sgt*
G *McGinnis, Lofton F., S/Sgt*
F *Reiser, Albert (NMI), Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-12995 “Charlie’s Aunt”

P *Ford, Charles L., Jr., 2Lt*
CP *Bruton, John E., 2Lt*
N *Ellington, John H., Jr., 2Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Rodgers, Charles H., Jr., S/Sgt*
R *Jakse, Joseph (NMI), Sgt (ASV)*
G *White, George E., S/Sgt*
F *Haven, Malcolm D., Capt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-13209 “Trouble”

P *Culp, Merle H., 1Lt*
CP *Stewart, John C., 2Lt*
N *Brown, Robert H., 1Lt*
B *N/A*
E *Poynter, Robert A., S/Sgt*
R *Watrous, Roger T., Sgt (ASV)*
G *Ruggere, Mauro, S/Sgt*
F *Royce, James R., T/Sgt (PAX)*

A/C No. 41-29998 “Little Joe”

P *Sinclair, Erwin W., Jr., 1Lt*
CP *Cassels, Richard E., 2Lt*
N *DeMuth, Robert D., 2Lt (Pilot)*
B *N/A*
E *Robb, Earl K., S/Sgt*
R *Orman, Virgil N., S/Sgt*
G *Gurnee, Clarence E. “Shine” S/Sgt*
F *N/A*

A/C No. 41-13172

Urquhart, Donald A., 2Lt
Garrett, Thaddeus D., 2Lt
Mundell, Roy E., 2Lt
N/A
Ratajczyk, Thomas S, S/Sgt
Kilgore, Thomas A., S/Sgt
Turner, Goldburn H., S/Sgt
Braun, Joseph M., T/Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-13170

Stultz, Raymond B., 2Lt
Welton, Mert J., 2Lt
Gibbons, James, Jr., 2Lt
N/A
Connors, Roy W., T/Sgt
Lingenfelter, Richard L., Sgt (ASV)
Mahan, John J., S/Sgt
Marcroft, John L., S/Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-12926

Moore, Leland A., 1Lt
Clough, Bernard L., 2Lt
Petrich, Raymond G., 2Lt
N/A
Polinski, Marvin J., S/Sgt
Teinowitz, Norman P., Sgt (ASV)
Ryal, Clarence M., S/Sgt
Ridgeway, Robert L, S/Sgt (PAX)

A/C No. 41-13163

Veum, Ole E., 1Lt
Conway, John G., Sr., 2Lt
Holt, William E., 2Lt
N/A
Porch, Dean O., S/Sgt
Donnelly, William L., S/Sgt
N/A
N/A

Friday, 12 February 1943 (continued)

448th BS *War Diary of: Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998): “Left DeRidder by Squadrons—ours at 12:45. Had clear weather to Florida, hitting Cumulus at 1500 feet, visibility about 8 miles. Formation was very sloppy and scattered. Took a long time to enter traffic at Morrison Field. Time logged six hours. Morrison Field was ready and quartered us at various hotels in West Palm Beach. There were two complete Groups and one half of another there at one time. One B-25, one B-24 and one half another B-25 Group. Minor repairs were made on each ship, equipment was checked, physicals were taken and per diem money was drawn the next day, Saturday.”*

Saturday, 13 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force):

In Italy, B-24s bomb the Naples area and Crotone Airfield and the city area under storm conditions.

In Crete, RAF Liberators under operational control of the IX Bomber Command attack Heraklion Airfield during the late afternoon and early evening. One Liberator hits the Kastelli-Pediada Airfield on the return trip.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Tunisia, B-26s bomb El Aouina Airfield. Fighters escort the B-26s, strafe tanks near Station de Sened, and destroy several trucks and staff cars in the Faid area. The 59th Fighter Squadron, 33rd Fighter Group with P-40s transfers from Thelepte, Tunisia to Youks-les-Bains, Algeria. The 414th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 97th Bombardment Group (Heavy) with B-17s transfers from Biskra, Algeria to Chateaudun-du-Rhumel, Algeria.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence: The day was spent in briefing, physical examinations, handing in orders, overhauling planes, etc.

The briefing for the trip was good, but a little more hurried than had been expected, as the pilots and navigators felt well repaid for the previous study they had done on the route. Weather quite chilly.

445th BS War Diary: Lt. Rudolph proceeded to Morrison Field from Lafayette and Lt. O'Harra from Mobile to Morrison Field. Necessary clearances, briefings, inspections and preparations were taken care of on this date.

O'Harra, Roderick E., 2Lt, pilot

Rudolph, Raymond L. "Rudy", 2Lt, pilot

445th BS: War Diary of: Seegmiller, Barnard H., Sgt, armament:

02/13/43: 18:30, Aboard the USS Elizabeth C. Stanton in Mid-Atlantic

"Seventh day at sea. Weather calm and fair. Sailing smooth. Most of the men have recovered from seasickness and appear each day on deck where the sun is warm and the sea breeze cool. The first three days of the voyage were rather rough and most of the men were ill. I was not at ease for two days, but managed to retain all but one meal. Our conditions are such that the men are not favorably impressed with the life of a sailor. The general opinion is that only under extreme necessity would any of them go to sea again. The food situation is the most common cause of complaint. We eat oatmeal and grapefruit for breakfast and beans and stew for dinner and supper. The only variation from this I can recall is one time when we had scrambled eggs for supper and beans and

Saturday, 13 February 1943 (continued)

ketchup for breakfast the following day. There is little appetite for eating and one does it more as an essential ordeal than as a source of pleasure. One is not likely to become seasick if the stomach is kept filled with proper food. I knew one fellow to go through the chow line for dinner three times in an hour before he could keep anything down. It requires courage to force oneself to eat when he is almost too sick to stand and it is the men who lack the stamina to do it repeatedly that remain sick the longest.

This morning the Chaplain held services on the deck. It was an unusual and pleasant experience. The sun was bright and the sea calm and a spirit of peace prevailed. Yesterday I got a GI haircut. I decided it was the sensible thing to do. There is little concern or worry about meeting with submarines, though we are in very dangerous water. Everyone seems to trust the efficiency of the navy escorts who seem to be very much on the job. For the most part we sleep well every night. There has been no disturbance as yet, though two of the ships of the convoy collided early yesterday morning and I understand one of them (a large transport) had to turn back. We have been advised of where we are going. I spend much of my time on deck.”

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: En route to Theatre of Operations. **Air Echelon:** Staging Area activities.

447th BS War Diary: Briefing, clearances and movement orders issued to the flight echelon today. The enlisted men were paid here at Morrison Field. Usual shipboard duties such as guard and KP performed by the ground echelon aboard ship.

448th BS War Diary: No Entry

Sunday, 14 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): No Entry

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In the Mediterranean, B-25s on a shipping strike return with their bombs when no vessels are sighted.

In Tunisia, all heavy and medium bomber missions are cancelled by bad weather. Fighters strafe vehicles and gun emplacements in the El Guettar-Sened-Maknassy areas, and hit tanks and trucks near Sisi Saad. A-20s bomb tanks in the Faid Pass, trucks near Maknassy and southwest of Faid, the town of Maknassy, and railroad yards at Station de Sened. Enemy ground forces, both armored and infantry begin a drive, supported by artillery and dive bombers, against Allied forces east of Sidi Bou Zid. HQ 350th Fighter Group transfers from Oujda, French Morocco to Oran, Algeria. The group's 345th and 346th Fighter Squadrons with P-39s and P-400s transfer from Oujda to La Senia, Algeria. The 94th Fighter Squadron, 1st Fighter Group with P-38s transfers from Biskra, Tunisia to Chateaudun-du-Rhumel, Algeria.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence: This day was also spent in a general polishing-up for the trip. In the afternoon, orders were issued to leave the next morning at 0815, for Borinquen Field, Peurto Rico.

445th BS War Diary: Preparations and inspections kept us at Morrison Field for another day.

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: En route to Theatre of Operations. **Air Echelon:** Capt. Schwane gave instructions for the overseas flight, beginning his talk by saying, "Is there anyone here who doesn't want to go to Africa?" All final arrangements were made this date.

Schwane, Henry H., Capt, pilot, Commander

447th BS War Diary: Flight echelon still at Morrison Field. Briefing continued. Usual duties by ground echelon aboard ship.

448th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary of: Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998): "Sunday 2-14-43 was spent drawing emergency equipment, spare parts and missing personal articles. It was announced that we would take off for Borinquen Field, Peurto Rico next morning. Naturally numerous parties were thrown by all members of the Squadron during the week-end at West Palm Beach."

Monday, 15 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): The Desert Air Task Force (DATF) is established with Brigadier General Aubrey C Strickland as Commanding General. Whereas Desert Air Task Force HQ, organized on 22 Oct 42, controlled US Army Mid East Air Force (USAMEAF) tactical operations in the Western Desert, this new organization, with HQ at Tripoli, Libya, supervises, operationally and administratively, all Ninth Air Force units west of, and including, Marble Arch. In addition, General Strickland is commander of US troops in the area. In Italy, B-24s attack the harbor at Naples, scoring direct hits on 2 vessels.

In Libya, British Army ground forces resume operations toward the Mareth Line as weather improves. Colonel Hugo P Rush succeeds Brigadier General Patrick W Timberlake as Commanding Officer of IX Bomber Command, which transfers from Ismailia, Egypt to Bengasi, Libya.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Sicily, B-17s hit the harbor and shipping at Palermo.

In Tunisia, B-25s and B-26s attack Kairouan Airfield. Fighters support Allied ground forces being pushed back from the Faid-Sidi Bou Zid area to positions at Sbeitla, Kasserine and Feriana. Enemy troops, vehicles, gun positions, and tanks are repeatedly attacked. Fighters hit similar targets in the Gafsa-Bou Hamran area. Because of the German advance in Tunisia, the forward air base at Sbeitla, Tunisia is evacuated. The 97th Bombardment Squadron (Light), 47th Bombardment Group (Light) with A-20s transfers from Thelepte, Tunisia to Youks-les-Bains, Algeria due to the German assault.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence: The crews were called at 0500 for an 0815 take-off. However, the breakfast arrangements at Morrison Field were inadequate and caused a delay, which was also contributed to by 9 B-24s taking off ahead of us. The 445th Squadron took off at 0915 and reached Borinquen Field at approximately 1500. Fifty-seven planes took off.

It was cold and partly cloudy for about the first half of the trip, which was made at 2,000 feet. About 200 miles out from Borinquen Field, a cold front was met. Some of the squadrons went down to water level to get through it; and the others climbed to 13,000 feet and went over it. Landfall was made by the 446th Squadron a few miles south of Borinquen Field.

Lieut. Hess, 448th Squadron, had to remain at Morrison Field for a new engine and Lieut. Griffith, 446th Squadron, for a new wing tank.

Griffith, Frank J. "Grif", 2Lt, pilot, 446th BS Hess, Robert G., 2Lt, pilot, 445th BS

Monday, 15 February 1943 (continued)

Enroute, Lieut. McLaughlin, 445th Squadron, had engine trouble and went into Oakes Field, Nassau. The oil-pressure on the engine of Lieut. Richardson's plane failed about 20 minutes out of Borinquen Field, and he had to remain over for a new engine. Orders were issued to take off the next morning at 0715, the 445th and 446th Squadrons, to proceed to Atkinson Field, Georgetown, British Guinea, while the 447th and 448th Squadrons were to go to Waller Field, Trinidad. This was to avoid overcrowding those fields. The group was ordered to fly to Belem, the second day following.

McLaughlin, Guy J., Jr., 2Lt, pilot, 445th BS

Richardson, Robert W. "Big Rich", 1Lt, pilot, 447th BS

The weather was warm and every one changed in khakis. Quinine was distributed to all personnel. A big and well-equipped base.

The B-24s that took off ahead of us at Morrison Field, were left here.

445th BS War Diary: The fifteen planes took off from Morrison Field at 12:15 (GTC), for Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico. Again, weather on the entire trip was excellent with only a few scattered clouds. Captain MacFarlane led the 445th which took off first. Colonel Knapp flew far ahead of the formation. The first ship landed at Borinquen Field at 18:00 (GTC). All ships arrived except Lt. McLaughlin returned to Morrison Field for necessary servicing of his plane.

MacFarlane, William V., Capt, pilot, Commander

McLaughlin, Guy J., Jr., 2Lt, pilot

Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, 321st BG Commander

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: En route to Theatre of Operations. **Air Echelon:** At 0900 hours the formation led by Capt. Schwane took off for the first point in their overseas journey which was Puerto Rico. The formation landed at 1500 hours. TOTAL FLYING TIME: 5½ hours.

Schwane, Henry H., Capt, pilot, Commander

447th BS War Diary: The flight echelon took off from Morrison Field today on the first leg of their overseas flight. Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico is the first stop. Only 14 planes took off as Lt. Charles Grantham's plane developed a leak in the gas tank. On the first leg Lt. W.W. Richardson's plane developed engine trouble but he made a safe one engine landing at Borinquen Field. There was a little excitement aboard ship today. Two of the ships in the convoy collided during the night and had to turn back today because of the damage they suffered.

Grantham, Charles H., 1Lt, pilot

Richardson, Robert W. "Rich", 1Lt, pilot

448th BS War Diary: Air Echelon: Preparations completed for Over-Seas flight to North Africa. At 09:00 February 15, 1943, the Flight Echelon departed Morrison Field, Florida. 1st Lieutenant Hess remained due to mechanical malfunction of plane # 41-29774.

Hess, Robert G., 1Lt, pilot

Monday, 15 February 1943 (continued)

448th BS War Diary of: Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998): “Got up this morning at 04:30 in order to get an early take off for Borinquen Field. Arrived at Morrison, ate at the PX and reported to the “Project Room” for our clearance, weather data and procedures for entering various fields along the route, aids to navigation, auxiliary fields, etc. Breakfast and obtaining our clearances were the greatest bottle-necks of the morning; however we were not delayed more than approximately 30 minutes. CAVU weather over the land and we hit broken Cumulus over water at 1200 feet, top approximately 6000 with Cirrus and Cirrostratus overhead, visibility 8 miles. Lt. Hess remained at Morrison because of an engine change, he will follow later. Major Olmsted followed later today.

Hess, Robert G., 1Lt, pilot

Olmsted, Charles T., Maj, pilot,

We passed over a warm front and through a cold front on the first leg of our journey. Got over the first at 7500 feet, broke formation when we hit the cold front and tried to climb over it. A few got over it at approximately 12000 feet, some went through on instruments and a few went down under it. Broke out of it about an hour out of Borinquen Field. The formation was not completely reassembled before landing. Two ships landed ahead of the rest. Minor repairs were made on ships tonight. Lt. Ford was having a little trouble with one of his props. Other repairs were on instruments, radio compass etc.”

Ford, Charles L., Jr., 1Lt, pilot

Tuesday, 16 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force):

In Crete, RAF Liberators under operational control of the IX Bomber Command bomb Heraklion Airfield during the night of 16/17 Feb.

In Tunisia, the British Eighth Army's 7 Armored Division drives into Ben Gardane, an outpost of the Mareth Line. The 83rd and 434th Bombardment Squadrons (Medium), 12th Bombardment Group (Medium) with B-25s transfer from Gambut, Libya to Castel Benito, Libya. The 345th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 98th Bombardment Group (Heavy) with B-24s transfers from Tobruk, Libya to Benina, Libya.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In the Mediterranean, B-25s dispatched on a shipping mission abort due to weather.

In Tunisia, all heavy and medium bomber operations are cancelled due to weather. A-20s, in support of hard-pressed Allied ground forces, bomb gun positions west of Sidi Bou Zid. Fighters fly repeated strafing missions against troops and vehicles in the Gafsa area. The 85th Bombardment Squadron (Light), 47th Bombardment Group (Light) with A-20s transfers from Thelepte, Tunisia to Youks-les-Bains, Algeria due to the German assault.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence: Fifty-five planes left Borinquen Field, the 445th Squadron taking off at 0800. Arrangements for leaving were handled well by the base, the only difficulty being the trouble crews had in finding their dispersed planes in the darkness. The 446th Squadron took off at 0815 and reached Atkinson Field, Georgetown, British Guiana at 1445 in six and one-half hours.

A strong wind from the east drifted the formation about 60 miles off course, causing us to meet the coastline of Guinea earlier than we had planned. Scattered clouds with a base at 2,000 feet. The trip was made at 1,000 feet to sea-level. Scattered thunder-showers were met. Both squadrons arrived in good shape. Temperature at Atkinson, about 86°.

A comfortable base with large, airy barracks. Planned to lay over tomorrow for rest and some work on the planes.

445th BS War Diary: Fourteen planes took off at 11:47 (GTC) for Georgetown, British Guiana. The 445th was led by Captain MacFarlane who took off first. The weather was satisfactory all the way except for two bad areas which were completely avoided. The flight landed at Atkins Field, Georgetown 17:50 (GTC).

MacFarlane, William V., Capt, pilot, Commander

Tuesday, 16 February 1943 (continued)

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: En route to Theatre of Operations. **Air Echelon:** Took off at 0830 hours for British Guiana, South America. Landed at 1500 hours. TOTAL FLYING TIME: 12 hours.

447th BS War Diary: The flight echelon took off from Borinquen Field on their second leg. The next stop is Waller Field, Trinidad. Lt. R.W. Richardson remained behind with his plane for an engine change. The rest of the planes landed safely at Waller Field. Usual shipboard duties at sea...ground echelon.

Richardson, Robert W. "Rich", 1Lt, pilot

448th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary of: *Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998): "Another early morning takeoff. Two Squadrons 445th and 448th are going to Waller Field, Trinidad. All squadrons off at 09:00. Visibility unlimited, ceiling of scattered Cumulus at 2000 feet. In general this leg of trip was fairly uneventful and arrived at Waller Field 14:30. We found quarters and Mess very good. That evening some Officers and men went to Port O Spain a town approximately 30 miles from Waller Field and threw somewhat of a party. Some took a walk up the road through the jungle. Some just monkeyed around at the Officer's Grill."*

Wednesday, 17 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): No Entry

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force): The Twelfth Air Force and other organizations of the Allied Air Force are transferred to the North African Air Force (NAAF) which supplants the Allied Air Force. NAAF, in turn, becomes part of the Mediterranean Air Command (MAC), a new air command which comes into existence on this date with RAF Air Chief Marshall Arthur Tedder as commander. MAC also includes the RAF Middle East Air Command (later RAF, Middle East) and the RAF Malta Air Command (later RAF, Malta). The Commanding General of NAAF is General Carl Spaatz, USAAF.

In Sardinia, over 40 B-17s bomb Elmas Airfield; B-25s and B-26s hit the Villacidro and Decimomannu Airfields. In Tunisia, fighters escort bombers and support ground forces in the Sbeitla-Kasserine-Feriana area. The fighters, along with A-20s, attack and destroy numerous tanks, trucks and other vehicles moving against hard-pressed British First Army forces. The two airfields at Thelepte, with 124 operational aircraft on the field, are abandoned because of the German advance. Eighteen unflyable aircraft are burned after 60,000 gallons (227,100 liters) of aviation fuel are poured on them. HQ 31st Fighter Group transfers from Thelepte, Tunisia to Youks-les-Bains, Algeria. The group's 307th, 308th and 309th Fighter Squadrons with Spitfire Mk Vs transfer from Thelepte to Tebessa, Algeria. HQ 81st Fighter Group and its 91st and 92nd Fighter Squadrons with P-39s transfer from Thelepte, Tunisia to Le Kouif Airfield, Algeria. The 60th Fighter Squadron, 33rd Fighter Group with P-40s transfers from Youks-les-Bains, Algeria to Telergma, Algeria. The 71st Fighter Squadron, 1st Fighter Group with P-38s transfers from Biskra, Algeria to Chateaudun-du-Rhumel, Algeria.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: **Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence:** Day spent at Atkinson Field working on planes. Nine B-24s, Col. Beebe commanding, arrived from Borinquen Field.

Beebe, Eugene H., Col, 302nd BG, Commander

445th BS War Diary: The flight echelon remained at Atkins field on this date.

445th BS: *War Diary of: Seegmiller, Barnard H., Sgt, armament:*

02/17/4: 18:00 "Nine days at sea. The chow is very bad. I passed by the officers' mess and saw the thick fat steaks being prepared for them. The old noise about fighting the war for principles of freedom and equality will sound better when the officers eat the same kind of food as the enlisted men. Sea calm, weather fair. This morning I saw one of the scouting planes release a depth charge but was unable to learn the cause or result."

Wednesday, 17 February 1943 (continued)

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: En route to Theatre of Operations. **Air Echelon:** Took off for Belem, Brazil at 06:45 hours, but as one plane needed engine repairs, the formation circled at Paramaribo, Surinam, then proceeded to Belem, leaving #41-13200 at Paramaribo. The formation landed at 1040 hours. TOTAL FLYING TIME: 18 hours 8 minutes.

447th BS War Diary: Flight echelon remained at Waller Field today. Some of the crews went to the Port of Spain sightseeing. Aboard ship the ground echelon was given booklets—"Guide to North Africa". This was our first definite information regarding our destination.

448th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary of: Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998): "A day of rest, nearly everyone slept fairly late and then just milled around the Post. Everyone was briefed at 17:00 about the trip to Belem, Brazil. During an earlier Squadron meeting we talked over time of departure, throttle settings and gas consumption. Most of the pilots used 1650 RPM and 28 inches, some 1850 and 29 inches. Those that used higher settings were "Tail end Charlies". Lowest gas consumption reported by Ford was about 85-90 gallons per hour. Average consumption 100-110 gallons per hour, cruising 1650 28 inches and 170 MPH.

Ford, Charles L., Jr., 1Lt, pilot

Plans for morning are take off 06:00, out of bed at 03:30. Another early morning take off as we are trying to make Belem before 1300-1400 to beat the local thunderstorms in there which last only a couple of hours. Each storm passes down the Amazon River pass Belem in 30 minutes or so. Everyone hit the hay pretty early tonight."

Thursday, 18 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): No Entry

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force): HQ North African Air Force (NAAF) is set up under General Carl Spaatz, USAAF, and the Twelfth Air Force becomes a paper outfit. Six principal subordinate commands are specified, i.e.: North African Air Support Command (NAASC), North African Coastal Air Force (NACAF), North African Photographic Reconnaissance Wing (NAPRW), North African Strategic Air Force (NASAF), North African Training Command (NATC), Twelfth Air Force Units assigned to NAAF described above are: NAASC: XII Air Support Command [33rd and 81st Fighter Groups and 47th Bombardment Group (Light)], NACAF: XII Fighter Command (31st, 52nd and 350th Fighter Groups), NAPRW: 3rd Photographic Group, NASAF: XII Bomber Command [97th and 301st Bombardment Groups (Heavy); 17th, 310th and 319th Bombardment Groups (Medium); 1st, 14th and 82nd Fighter Groups; and the 68th Observation Group], NATC: 15th Bombardment Squadron (Light).

In Algeria, weather cancels heavy and medium bomber operations.

In Tunisia, fighters provide direct support for the British First Army in the Sbeitla-Kasserine-Feriana areas. HQ 1st Fighter Group and its 27th Fighter Squadron P-38s transfers from Biskra, Algeria to Chateaudun-du-Rhumel, Algeria. The 342nd Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 97th Bombardment Group (Heavy) with B-17s transfers from Biskra, Algeria to Chateaudun-du-Rhumel, Algeria.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence: The 446th Squadron took off from Atkinson Field at 0630. They cruised at 1,000 feet and passed over Devil's Island and Cayenne. At 1020, we ran into heavy thunder-storms which lasted for over an hour. Formation climbed in a big spiral to 10,000 feet, visibility almost zero from sea-level up. At 10,000 feet formation became separated and Captain Bates' plane came down to 200 feet and resumed course on instruments, flying through rain and undercast. Captain Schwane continued up to 17,000 feet but even then could not get above clouds, and resumed course on instruments. The 445th Squadron flew through the storm at sea-level.

Bates, James P., Capt, pilot, 448th BS

Schwane, Henry H. "Hank", Capt, pilot, Commander, 446th BS

Previously, Lieut. Fisher's prop-controller went out of order and the flight circled Paramaribo Field, Zandery, Dutch Guinea, leaving him there.

Fisher, James B., 1Lt, pilot, 446th BS

Thursday, 18 February 1943 (continued)

Val de Caes, Belem, Brazil was reached at 1330 B.G. time, a flight of seven hours. The 445th Squadron took slightly over six hours. Of the 29 planes that took off, all except Lieut. Fisher's arrived.

Fisher, James B., 1Lt, pilot, 446th BS

No word was received from the 447th and 448th Squadrons, who were scheduled to fly from Trinidad (Weller Field) to Belem, today. Take-off for Natal is scheduled at 0630 tomorrow. Fuel consumption has been running high - 115 to 130 gallons per hour. At the briefing the previous night, the weather forecast had been the usual "scattered clouds". Climate was hot and muggy.

445th BS War Diary: At 10:25 (GTC), the flight echelon took off for Belem, Brazil. Colonel Knapp led one flight of seven planes and Captain MacFarlane the other seven planes. About two hours out of Belem the formations flew through bad weather, flying on instruments for one and a half hours or more. The front went well up over 15,000 ft. and down below a thousand feet. Those who did not attempt to climb over the storm but flew very low, experienced little difficulty. It is believe that the bad weather was where the "permanent front" is supposed to be located. The pilots reported that it was the worst weather they had ever flown through. The ships landed at Belem at 16:45 (GTC).

Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, 321st BG Commander

MacFarlane, William V., Capt, pilot, Commander

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: En route to Theatre of Operations. **Air Echelon:** Check and repair for continuation of flight.

447th BS War Diary: The flight echelon took off today on the next leg of their overseas flight. The next stop is Zandery Field, Dutch Guiana. Only 12 planes took off. Capt. Albert Bell's ship remained at Waller Field for an engine change. All the planes landed safely at Zandery Field. Usual shipboard duties aboard ship by ground echelon.

Bell, Albert R., Capt, pilot

448th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary of: Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998): "Got up at 03:30 this morning in order to take off at 06:30. Most Squadrons off at 06:30. Stationary front near Belem was pretty active so we cleared off for Zandery Field, Surinam, Dutch Guiana. Enroute we hit a few Cumulus at 1500-2000, visibility 10-12 miles. Urquhart's ship broke an air scoop on take off but it wasn't bad enough to take off. Veum's ship threw quite a bit of oil on the way down. Gaskets on the rocker box torn. Both ships were repaired this evening at Zandery Field.

Urquhart, Donald A., 2Lt, pilot

Veum, Ole E., 1Lt, pilot

Zandery Field was not prepared for us. Some of the crews had to sleep on the ships.

Thursday, 18 February 1943 (continued)

Plans for the next day are for another 06:00 take off for Belem hoping to be able to get through the stationary front. Almost everywhere we stopped someone buys cigarettes, some have as high as thirty cartons, wonder if it's worth it. Nearly everyone is living out of their field bags and not their B-4 bags.

Throttle settings today in general were 28 inches 1750 RPM indicating 170-175 miles per hour, average gas consumption 110-115 gallons."

Friday, 19 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force):

In Tunisia, B-25s bomb the Gabes western area through heavy clouds.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Algeria, weather prevents heavy and medium bomber operations. In Tunisia, fighters and A-20s of the XII Air Support Command are grounded and unable to support ground forces as the enemy opens an attack on Kasserine with infantry and tanks supported by artillery. The 93rd Fighter Squadron, 81st Fighter Group with P-39s transfers from Port Lyautey, French Morocco to Berteaux, Algeria.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: **Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence:** The 445th and 446th Squadrons did not leave for Natal because of weather. At noon, the 447th and 448th Squadrons arrived from Zandery, where they had flown the previous day from Weller Field, Trinidad. They had intended to come to Belem, but lack of a weather-report made them spend the night at Paramaribo Field. Lieut. Fisher had new gaskets put on his prop-control and arrived here with them. Capt. Bell, 447th Squadron, had engine trouble and remained at Paramaribo Field, for a new engine. Fortunately, they had one and he is expected to join the group. There are 54 planes on the field. The five missing, are: Lieut. Hess, 448th Squadron at Morrison Field; Lieut. Grantham, 447th Squadron at Morrison Field; Lieut. Richardson, 447th Squadron at Borinquen Field; Lieut. McLaughlin, 445th Squadron at Nassau; and Capt. Bell, 447th Squadron at Paramaribo Field.

Bell, Albert R., Capt, pilot, 447th BS

Fisher, James B., 1Lt, pilot, 446th BS

Grantham, Charles H. "Granny", 2Lt, pilot

Hess, Robert G., 2Lt, pilot, 448th BS

McLaughlin, Guy J., Jr., 2Lt, pilot, 445th BS

Richardson, Robert W. "Big Rich", 1Lt, pilot

The morning was generally cloudy with heavy cumulus clouds. It commenced to rain at 1300 and continued to rain steadily.

445th BS War Diary: The echelon remained at Belem on this date.

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: En route to Theatre of Operations. **Air Echelon:** Check and repair for continuation of flight. #41-13200, pilot Fisher, rejoined the Squadron at Belem on Feb. 19.

Fisher, James B., 1Lt, pilot

Friday, 19 February 1943 (continued)

447th BS War Diary: The flight echelon took off today from Zandery Field on the next leg of their flight. The next stop is Belem (Val de Caes Airport) Brazil. All planes landed safely. Usual duties aboard ship by ground echelon.

448th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary of: Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998): *“Got up at 03:30 to make another early take off. All planes were off the ground at 06:45. We beat the usual ground fog that encloses the field nearly every morning at about 07:00. We are going to get under the stationary front at approximately 500 feet. Visibility poor due to haze, ceiling about 1300 feet with scattered towering cumulus and alto stratus scud at 1000-1200 feet. We passed Devil’s Island about 08:40 Surinam Time.*

We passed through the inter-tropical front without any trouble. Part of the formation broke up and met at field over Belem. We were assigned quarters which were pretty nice. We were briefed at 18:30 for the trip to Natal, about a six hour trip. Plans are to get up at 04:30 for a 06:30 take off behind ten B-24’s and five P-38’s. All four squadrons of the 321st are here for the night.

Saturday, 20 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force):

In Crete, RAF Liberators, under operational control of the IX Bomber Command, bomb Heraklion and Kastelli/Pediada Airfields during the night of 19/20 Feb. **In Italy**, B-24s bomb Crotone, Naples, Amantea, Palmi, Nicotera and Rosarno.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force): Weather again severely limits operations.

In Tunisia, a handful of P-39s strafe trucks and half-tracks in the Kasserine area as the enemy breaks through the Kasserine Pass and thrusts north and west toward Thala and Tebessa. HQ 33rd Fighter Group transfers from Youks-les-Bains, Algeria to Telergma, Algeria.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence: Left Belem at 0835 and arrived at Natal at 1445, six hours and ten minutes later. Weather was cloudy to partly cloudy at the start, with cumulus and strato-cumulus clouds with base at about 800 feet. About 1030, weather cleared, but later ran into scattered thunder-showers. Made first half of trip at 500 feet and last half at 1,500 feet. East wind most of the way at about 20 mph, occasionally becoming a tail wind. Take-off was scheduled for 0630, but B-24s ahead of us were late and delayed us. All 54 planes arrived.

445th BS War Diary: The echelon took off at 11:08 (GTC) for Natal, Brazil. Colonel Knapp led one flight, Captain MacFarlane led the other. The weather was satisfactory except in spots which were avoided. The echelon landed at Natal at 18:00 (GTC).

Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, 321st BG Commander
MacFarlane, William V., Capt, pilot, Commander

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: En route to Theatre of Operations. **Air Echelon:** Took off at 0759 hours for Natal, Brazil, landing there at 1422 hours. TOTAL FLYING TIME: 24 HOURS 31 MINUTES.

447th BS War Diary: The flight echelon took off today from Belem, Brazil on the next leg of their flight. The next stop is Natal (Parnamirim Field), Brazil. All planes landed safely. At sea the convoy spilt into two parts, one section going to Casablanca, the other in which the ground echelon was traveling heading for Gibraltar.

448th BS War Diary: No Entry

Saturday, 20 February 1943 (continued)

448th BS *War Diary of: Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998):* “Got up at the scheduled 04:30 and after breakfast met at Operations at 05:30 for last minute weather reports etc. The ten B-24’s off by 07:00 but the P-38’s were not ready so we took off next. Our squadron was first to take off and we were off at 07:45. By that time the P-38’s were ready up so they took off next, then the rest of the Group.

Hit low ceiling of Cumulus, then ground fog ceiling rising to 1200-1500 feet. Air is quite rough today and visibility about ten to twelve miles.

Colonel Olmsted is leading our squadron today with Culp and Moore on his wings. Veum’s flight is next then **Ike’s** and Captain Heinlen with Urquhart bringing up the rear. Urquhart is complaining of using too much gas, doesn’t think he can make the Ascension Islands. Arrived in Natal O.K. Time in air 6 hours 30 minutes.

Culp, Merle H., 1Lt, pilot

Moore, Leland A., 1Lt, pilot

Urquhart, Donald A., 2Lt, pilot

Heinlen, Clayton H., Capt, pilot, Commander

Olmsted, Charles T., Lt. Col, pilot

Veum, Ole E., 1Lt, pilot

Sunday, 21 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): The North African Tactical Air Force assumes operational control of the Western Desert Air Force; tactical groups remain administratively assigned to the Ninth Air Force.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Tunisia, B-25s hit the railroad yards at Gafsa. Weather foils 3 attempts by P-39s and Spitfires to furnish support to ground forces battling the German drive north and west of the Kasserine Pass. Only 2 P-39s are able to reach the enemy and strafe tanks and trucks. HQ 31st Fighter Group transfers from Tebessa, Algeria to Youks-les-Bains, Algeria. The 308th Fighter Squadron assigned to the group transfers its Spitfire Mk Vs from Tebessa to Canrobert, Algeria. The 86th and 97th Bombardment Squadrons (Light), 47th Bombardment Group (Light) with A-20s transfer from Youks-les-Bains, Algeria to Canrobert, Algeria.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: The group's ground-echelon pitched its first tents in Africa, at a camp-site five miles from the small village of San Barbe, south of Oran. The echelon arrived after darkness fell and made its way in a heavy downpour. In popular resentment, the site was named "Mud Hill", and "Mud Hill" it will always remain to those who stopped there.



Sunday, 21 February 1943 (continued)

Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence: Feb 21, 1943 Spent at Natal going over ships. Scheduled to take off tomorrow for Ascension Island at 0515. So many planes that briefing was given in two sections. It was found that a number of the planes were carrying too much ammunition, so this was left there. Getting sandwiches is proving to be a problem. Atkinson Field was last place with PX supplies, nothing to speak of at Belem and Natal, including food and candies. At Atkinson field, we were supplied with one sandwich each. At Belem, they were short of food and would give us nothing. Lieut. McLaughlin, 445th Squadron, who landed at Nassau, was ordered to return to Morrison Field to join the others there. Forecast for tomorrow was good, with usual prevailing head-winds.

McLaughlin, Guy J., Jr., 2Lt, pilot, 445th BS

445th BS War Diary: The air echelon remained at Natal on this date. The ground echelon landed at Oran, French Morocco. They marched six miles in the rain with full pack and bivouacked on Mud Hill.

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: En route to Theatre of Operations. Arrived at Mers-El-Kebir, near Oran, Algeria. Disembarked at 1:30 P.M. entraining for Ste. Barbe du Tlelat from Oran, arriving at 6:00 P.M. From there a six mile march through a pouring rain and mud to the Bivouac Area #1, appropriately tabbed "Mud Hill" by members of the Squadron who spent the night there. **Air Echelon:** Check and repairs to aircraft.

447th BS War Diary: Flight echelon remained at Natal, Brazil. Crews briefed, work done on planes. At dawn this morning the ground echelon came into the harbor at Mere el Kebir a few miles from Oran. After marching about a mile we boarded trucks which took us to the railroad station in Oran. There we boarded a train which took us to the little village of Sante Barbe about fifteen miles south of Oran. Our first bivouac area was located about five miles from this village and we marched this distance in the rain. Our camp site was on the side of a hill and it was very muddy. We arrived there about midnight and had to draw tents and set them up. It was very cold which added to our discomfort. Everyone made himself as comfortable as possible and tried to get a little sleep.

448th BS War Diary: U.S.S. Elizabeth C. Stanton dropped anchor at Mere-el-Kebir, Algeria (Port of Oran) at 09:00 o'clock, February 21, 1943. Distance traveled by water 3,500 miles. Troops disembarked at Mere-el-Kebir at 13:00 o'clock, February 21, 1943, and were immediately transported by truck to Oran RR station and entrained at 17:30 o'clock, February 21, 1943, and arrived Saint Barb 18:40 o'clock, February 21, 1943, detrained and marched six miles to bivouac area # 1 (Mud Hill) arriving 22:30 o'clock, February 21, 1943. Morale excellent, weather rainy. Troops spent night in open. 4829E bivouacked at Mud Hill for four days.

Sunday, 21 February 1943 (continued)

448th BS *War Diary of: Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998): "Spent today on minor repairs on various ships. A plug change for Sinclair's, ignition harness replaced on Hardzog's ship and Urquhart found out that his Engineer had the mixture set all wrong, too rich, so his gas consumption should be O.K.*

*Hardzog, Walter A., Jr., 1Lt, pilot
Urquhart, Donald A., 2Lt, pilot*

Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 1Lt, pilot

Had a briefing at 17:30, we will take off early in the morning after the B-24's for the Ascension Islands, it is 1428 Statute miles. Everyone seems to feel that he can make it O.K. and we will probably be in the air eight to ten hours. We unloaded our ammunition and are going unarmed."

Monday, 22 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): HQ 376th Bombardment Group (Heavy) transfers from Gambut, Libya to Soluch, Libya.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Tunisia, A-20s of the 47th Bombardment Group (Light) and fighters, flying close support to Allied ground forces, aid in repulsing Field Marshall Rommel's drive toward Thala and Tebessa. The 47th flies 11 missions and bomb at minimum altitude; 1 A-20 is lost after being hit by 3 Bf 109s; several aircraft sustain wing damage from ripping antennae off German tanks and trucks. At 1915 hours local the enemy begins a general withdrawal toward Kasserine. B-17s bomb the Kasserine Pass while B-25s hit the nearby bridge and escorting P-38s strafe retreating troops. Other B-25s hit the railway yards at Gafsa. P-39s of the 154th Observation Squadron, 68th Observation Group fly 17 attack-reconnaissance sorties over the Kasserine area destroying 3 tanks and damaging 10 trucks while losing 1 aircraft. HQ 81st Fighter Group and its 91st and 92nd Fighter Squadrons with P-39s transfer from Le Kouif Airfield, Algeria to Youks-les-Bains, Algeria. The 307th and 309th Fighter Squadrons, 31st Fighter Group with Spitfire Mk Vs transfer from Tebessa, Algeria to Youks-les-Bains, Algeria.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence: The 447th Squadron took off at 0610 after B-24s, then the 448th Squadron and 446th Squadron at 0635 and the 445th Squadron followed. Scattered showers began at 0320 and there were occasional showers and a drizzle throughout take-off time. Cumulus clouds and ceiling at about 1,400 feet. The entire trip was made at 1,300 feet just below clouds base. Occasional rain and undercast was met. After three hours, clouds became scattered and were strato-cumulus. Wind was slightly south of east. Radio beacon at Ascension Island could be picked up about 4 hours after leaving Natal. Trip was uneventful and all 54 planes arrived in good order. Sandwiches were available for only about two-thirds of the group. Left Natal 0635. Ascension arrived at 1515, making eight hours and forty minutes. Ascension is on Greenwich time, 3 hours ahead of Natal. Ordered to Roberts Field tomorrow, in Liberia. The island was very crowded with 10 men in a tent. One plane broke through surface at Natal and was left. Lieut. Whiteford, 445th Squadron. The other 53 planes arrived safely.

Whiteford, Floyd R. "Whitey", 1Lt, pilot

445th BS War Diary: The air echelon took off at 10:30 (GTC) for the Ascension Islands. Take-off was delayed by a local rain storm and Lt. Whiteford was unable to take off because his ship got stuck in the mud while taxiing out. After getting out of the local storm the weather cleared up and was excellent all the way to the Ascensions. No difficulty whatever was experienced during the trip. The island came into sight right on

Monday, 22 February 1943 (continued)

the minute of the ETA. The ships landed on the island at 18:55 (GTC). The ground echelon moved from Mud Hill to a supply depot on the outskirts of Oran where they began working as stevedores loading and unloading freight cars. There was a rumor going around that we might be used in guerilla warfare. Our moral was dragging in the North African mud.

Whiteford, Floyd R. "Whitey", 1Lt, pilot

445th BS: *War Diary of: Seegmiller, Barnard H., Sgt, armament:*

02/22/43: On docking at North Africa

"Our ships sailed in the harbor of St. Andrews, Algeria early on a misty February 22 morning. The first sight I had of the port was of the bare rugged heights of the coast crested by a few scattered trees, which presented an unfamiliar silhouette. (My first view of Africa was early the morning before when day broke over the low mountains of Spain on the north and Spanish Morocco on our starboard side. The towering rugged Atlas Mountains were snow capped and beautiful. During the early morning, 4:00 A.M., we had passed through the Straits of Gibraltar.) The ships drew up in a line alongside the newly constructed pier. We were fourth to disembark and there was much confusion aboard ship. Officers contradicted one another with orders given with much shouting. After the usual delay we finally marched down the gangplanks, laden and staggering with equipment.

On the long pier we assembled in columns of three and began marching away. As we passed one of the ships a PA system was blaring loudly, not "The Star Spangled Banner," but such musical hits as men had been humming for days aboard the ship. Among them were "Mr. Five by Five" and "Johnny Doughboy Found a Rose in Ireland." As we passed the boat on which some American nurses crossed, everyone turned their eyes to the top deck and fished for the smiles that were ready for them. It seemed in each boy's mind to say "Good-bye to America" as he waved good-bye to the last American women he was to see for a long time.

We marched thirty minutes through the small village streets and sometimes the swarm of native children that begged in pidgin English for cigarettes and chewing gum, almost blocked our way. Oddly dressed natives and carts drawn by three horses hitched in tandem were among the strangely interesting pictures. The less strange sights were the ever-present signs advertising American gasoline and oil. We were loaded in trucks and taken about six miles to Oran, Algeria. En route we passed through a long tunnel which was in all ways comparable to the one at Zion canyon. Along the entire six miles, the highway, which led us through the main part of the city of Oran, was lined with pastel colored houses of French design. Hanging gardens of apparently well to do Frenchmen occupied the face of the escarpment overlooking the sea. The railway station at Oran was ornate and modern. The trains were narrow gage European style, small, but adequate and comfortable, and soon we were smoothly on our way to St. Barbe, a place of about 3000 inhabitants. We ate a meal from our "C ration" while on the train.

Monday, 22 February 1943 (continued)

By the time we had reached our destination, darkness was setting in and the rain was falling heavily. In such conditions we began the four-mile hike to the spot selected for bivouac. Our path was an excellently surfaced roadway, which was lined on either side with a new growth of an attractive species of small tree unknown to me. I was much surprised by the prosperous appearance of the countryside. Near the city limits were small gardens with the space carefully utilized in growing some sort of cabbage-looking plant that seemed to produce profusely, and various other edible greens that I did not recognize. Farther from the town, the fields stretched into large tracts green with grain and a sort of forage that appeared similar to clover or lespedeza. Also there were newly planted areas of row crops that appeared to be some type of sorghum. This growth was, I judged, about two or three weeks old. It is my opinion that some 85% of the land is under cultivation. The hillsides, though sometimes quite steep, are devoted to the industrious culture of the grapevine. The vines are well pruned and cultivated and planted in carefully straightened rows. Spaced in intervals of two or three miles along the road were beautiful villas in which the proprietors probably lived.

We made camp on the top of a limestone knoll. The rain having ceased, it was not long before the moon came out and the night became calm and enchanting. After considerable fussing around over the tents and other equipment we went to bed, and tired as we were, it was not long before we were asleep. I was awakened at daylight this morning by the song of a bird, which reminded me of the exhilarating note of the mockingbird at home and the red birds of Missouri. The day broke clear and beautiful over one of the most peaceful and pleasant valleys I have ever seen. In the distance were rolling hills and further back the dim outline of higher mountains. I was very consciously reminded of the time I was in California.”

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: Left “Mud Hill” by truck for La Senia Airdrome near Oran. During our twelve day stay at La Senia the Ground Echelon worked as Alert Crew for the Airdrome. **Air Echelon:** Took off at 0645 hours for Ascension Island, which was the longest phase of the flight. Arrived 1542 hours. TOTAL FLYING TIME: 24 hours 31 minutes.

447th BS War Diary: The flight echelon took off today from Parnamirim Field on the next leg of their flight. The next stop is Lawyer Field, Ascension Island. All planes landed safely. The ground echelon rearranged tents setting up a company street, dug latrines and began to get settled down.

448th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary of: Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998): “Took off 09:35 GCT. The 447th then the 448th, the other two squadrons were not quite ready. We have a head wind of approximately 15-19 knots per hour, ranging from 80° to 120°.

Monday, 22 February 1943 (continued)

Hit showers and low overcast immediately after take off. This cleared up to a ceiling of scattered fractostratus cumulus at 2200 feet, visibility unlimited. We flew in trail just about in sight of the plane ahead and gave OK signs over VHF every on half hour on the hour and one half past. Time now 14:45 GCT, position 23° 07' W and 07° 15' S.

The whole Group landed at Wideawake Field, Ascension Island OK. Time in the air 9 hours and 30 minutes. No one had any trouble with gas consumption; some even had four and one half hours fuel left. Most of them averaged around 200-300 gallons through. The weather cleared up fine about 400 miles out of Natal to practically Cavu. After arriving at Wideawake, we ate and hit the hay, everyone's ship was OK. No maintenance work was done that I know of.

There were not enough quarters for the men in the Group here, so many slept on the planes. They were not bothered by insects.

We didn't see any surface vessels or subs all along the trip. Submarines have been reported along that leg of the route."

Tuesday, 23 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): In Italy, B-24s attack the Messina ferry slip, scoring direct hits and leaving the target area burning.

In Tunisia, B-25s hit Arram in the Mareth Line during the late evening.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In the Mediterranean, B-25s attack shipping north of Cap Bon, claiming 1 vessel sunk.

In Tunisia, B-17s bomb Kairouan Airfield and hit troops retreating through the Kasserine Pass. B-25s and B-26s hit the Kasserine Pass and the bridge nearby. A-20s and fighters also attack retreating columns in the Kasserine area. The 3rd Air Defense Wing arrives at Oran, Algeria to control air defense units in the Oran area as part of the North African Coastal Air Force. HQ 99th Bombardment Group (Heavy), a B-17 unit, arrives at Navarin, Algeria from the US.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence: The B-24s took off ahead of us for Accra. The 446th Squadron took off at 0905 for Roberts Field, Liberia. Sandwiches were not available, so each person received one Army Field Ration D. Arrived Roberts Field at 1440. The weather was cloudy almost all the way, mostly an overcast with base at 1,200 feet. Occasional rain was met and at times, undercast almost to sea-level. The field was crowded, and only wing-tanks were filled.

445th BS War Diary: The echelon took off at 10:30 (GTC) for Roberts Field, Marshall, Liberia. There were thirteen planes on this flight since Lt. Whiteford had not caught up yet. There were scattered clouds overhead. The water below was visible at all times. There was a light fog near the coast but the visibility was satisfactory for landing. The ships landed at Roberts field at 16:00 (GTC). Our first meal in Africa was very good and was served to us by black, shiny natives.

Whiteford, Floyd R. "Whitey", 1Lt, pilot

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: Regular garrison duties. Capt. Schwane promoted to Major, effective today. **Air Echelon:** Took off at 0900 hours for Monrovia, Liberia, sighting land at 1410 hours, landing in Africa for the first time at 1442 hours. TOTAL FLYING TIME: 39 hours 48 minutes.

Schwane, Henry H., Maj, pilot, Commander

Tuesday, 23 February 1943 (continued)

447th BS War Diary: The flight echelon took off today from Lawyer Field on the next leg of their flight. The next stop is Roberts Field, Marshall, Liberia. All planes landed safely. Thus the flight echelon reached the continent of Africa just two days after the ground echelon arrived. The ground echelon drew British rations today. No messing facilities have been set up yet. The ration is issued to the men in groups of eight and they heat it themselves.

448th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary of: Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998): *“We got up at 06:00 GCT, ate, then were briefed for the trip to Roberts Field, Marshall, Liberia, on the western coast of Africa. We got off the ground at 09:30; the B-24’s took off ahead of us. Weather was clear, ceiling 1800 feet of scattered fractostrata cumulus, visibility unlimited. We were flying formation today. The trip is 1017 miles. We have to pass over the inter-tropical front again, and will probably find visibility cut down to 8-10 miles by haze. Passed through the front OK. Time in the air 6 hours.*

Roberts Field had quarters for everyone. They were very slow gassing up, took most of the night and nearly all next morning to gas all the ships.”

Wednesday, 24 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): No Entry

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In the Mediterranean, B-25s sink several barges northeast of Cap Bon.

In Tunisia, B-17s bomb Kairouan Airfield. B-26s and B-17s bomb enemy columns in Kasserine Pass and hit the town of Kasserine, while B-25s attack highway traffic near Sbeitla. A-20s and fighters hit motor transport in a wide area around Kasserine and Sbeitla. HQ 81st Fighter Group and its 91st and 92nd Fighter Squadrons with P-39s transfer from Youks-les-Bains, Algeria to Le Kouif Airfield, Algeria reversing a move made last Wednesday. The 154th Observation Squadron, 68th Observation Group with A-20s transfers from Oujda, French Morocco to join its detachment at Youks-les-Bains, Algeria. Prior to WWII, the 154th was an Arkansas National Guard unit.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: **Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence:** Heavy ground-fog delayed take-off which was scheduled for 0600. Gassing of planes was not completed during the night and will not be finished until about 1100 today. The 446th Squadron took off at 0950 and reached Rufisque Airfield at 1405, making four hours and fifteen minutes flying time. Weather was cloudy all the way, and hot. Clouds varied from strato-cumulus to overcast at about 1,500 feet or lower. Slight head-winds all the way. The 447th Squadron's gassing was not completed until 1300. Capt. Bell, 447th Squadron, who was delayed at Zandery, reached Roberts Field. Lieut. Veum, 448th Squadron, had carburetor scoop torn. The PX was well-supplied, the first one since Atkinson Field.

Bell, Albert R., Capt, pilot, 447th BS

Veum, Ole E., 1Lt, pilot, 448th BS

445th BS War Diary: The thirteen ships took off from Roberts Field for Dakar at 09:39 (GTC) and landed at Dakar at 13:35 (GTC). The weather was good except for haze and fog over the vicinity of Roberts field.

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: Regular garrison duties. **Air Echelon:** Took off at 1007 hours for Dakar, French West Africa, arriving at 1419 hours. TOTAL FLYING TIME: 43 hours.

447th BS War Diary: The flight echelon took off today from Roberts Field on the next leg of their flight. The next stop is Rufisque Field, Dakar, French West Africa. Five of our planes were delayed in taking off because of inadequate servicing facilities but these five led by Capt. Sampson took off later in the day. All planes landed safely at Rufisque Field. Usual garrison duties for the ground echelon.

Sampson, Raymond D. "Sammy", Capt, pilot, Commander

Wednesday, 24 February 1943 (continued)

448th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary of: *Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998):* “Spent most of the morning doing nothing. We were called at three AM by mistake and finally got off the ground about 1130 GCT. Had a ceiling of about 500 feet for the first 45 minutes, then it cleared up. Haze cut the visibility down to one and one-half miles. We are flying this way to Dakar around 500 feet as we have the last two legs of the trip. Should make Dakar, French W Africa this way. The field at Dakar is new to American ships. Arrived OK and found out we are going on to Marrakech in Morocco. We were to take off at 07:00 GCT.”

Thursday, 25 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force):

In Italy, B-24s bomb Naples harbor and Crotone during the night of 24/25 Feb.

In Tunisia, B-25s attack motor transport on the Arram road. The 512th, 513th and 514th Bombardment Squadrons (Heavy), 376th Bombardment Group (Heavy) with B-24s transfer from Gambut, Libya to Soluch, Libya.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Tunisia, B-17s bomb El Aouina Airfield. Fighters and A-20s hit troops and military traffic in the Thala-Kasserine-Sbeitla areas and along the Gafsa-Feriana road. Other fighters carry out widespread reconnaissance and patrol missions. British First Army and US troops of the II Corps occupy Kasserine Pass. HQ 31st Fighter Group and its 307th Fighter Squadron with Spitfire Mk Vs transfer from Youks-les-Bains, Algeria to Kalaa Djerda, Tunisia. The 308th Fighter Squadron also with Spitfire Mk Vs transfers from Canrobert, Algeria to Kalaa Djerda.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence: The 446th Squadron took off for Marrakech at 0800. The 445th Squadron got off about 0730, but gassing of the 446th Squadron was not completed until 0800. Strong winds blew all night, but there nevertheless was ground-fog in the morning. Head-winds at the start. Flew in formation at about 7,000 feet across the desert to Tindouf and then through a pass in the Atlas Mountains. Arrived in Marrakech at 1505, making seven hours and five minutes flying-time. Lieut. Veum was able to repair his plane at Dakar and came with his squadron. Apparently, PX announcing our arrival was delayed and arrangements for us were not complete, some officers having to sleep in hangar and planes. Fifty-three planes arrived safely. Head-winds and clouds most of the way, and dust-haze about 5,000 feet. Cleared before reaching mountains, with clouds at 10,000 feet over the mountains and pass. Flew under cloud-base. No order here for next move.

Veum, Ole E., 1Lt, pilot, 448th BS

445th BS War Diary: The thirteen ships took off from Dakar at 07:34 (GTC) for Marrakech. There was instrument flying for about an hour after takeoff. From Dakar to Marrakech we flew over the Sahara desert. The weather was very good except for very slight haze. The formation flew at about 11,000 ft. through the Atlas mountain pass. There were long hanging cumulus clouds over the snow covered mountain peaks. The ships landed at Marrakech at 14:30 (GTC)

Thursday, 25 February 1943 (continued)

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: Regular garrison duties. **Air Echelon:** Took off at 0820 hours for Marrakech, Morocco. Landed at 1520 hours. TOTAL FLYING TIME: 50 hours. This was the first time an entire Squadron had flown a single formation from the United States to North Africa, a feat which is especially noteworthy, inasmuch as only 10 days elapsed en route.

447th BS War Diary: The flight echelon took off today from Rufisque Field on the next leg of their flight. The next stop is Marrakech, French Morocco. Five planes were delayed again to be serviced and took off later in the day led by Capt. Sampson. All planes landed safely. The ground echelon moved today to La Senia. It began to rain as soon as the tents were taken down and continued throughout the whole move. Our new camp site is a race track just outside the village. We are about a mile from the airport.

Sampson, Raymond D. "Sammy", Capt, pilot, Commander

448th BS War Diary: At 19:00 hours February 25, 1943, 4829E departed Mud Hill via truck convoy for La Senia Army Air Base, arriving La Senia 20:00 hours, February 25, 1943. Weather rainy, Morale excellent.

448th BS War Diary of: Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998): *"Finally got off ground at 08:36. We climbed to 8500 feet and headed for Marrakech, we had a haze up to this altitude, visibility very poor. Veum broke his air scoop yesterday, got it fixed last night. Many ships need 50 and 25 hour inspection pretty badly, some have instruments out and numerous other things.*

Veum, Ole E., 1Lt, pilot

Arrived in Marrakech OK, spent practically five hours over desert, crossed the Atlas Mountains just before reaching Marrakech."

Friday, 26 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force):

In Tunisia, P-40s carry out fighter-bomber missions as ground forces maintain pressure on the enemy along the coast and on the Gabes road. B-25s attack roads and motor transport in the Arram area during the night of 26/27 Feb. General Bernard L. Montgomery sets 20 Mar as D-Day for an attack on the Mareth Line. The 328th, 330th and 409th Bombardment Squadrons (Heavy), 93rd Bombardment Group (Heavy) cease operations from Gambut, Libya with B-24s and return to their base at Hardwick, England.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force): Lieutenant General James H. Doolittle assumes command of the XII Bomber Command.

In Tunisia, B-17s, with P-38 escort, attack the docks and shipping at Bizerte after RAF Wellingtons hit the same target the previous night. Fighters hit trucks in the Pinchon-Ousseltia area and fly numerous reconnaissance missions. Colonel-General Jurgen von Arnim's 5th Panzer Army opens an offensive on a broad front toward Bedja and Medjez el Bab. The 309th Fighter Squadron, 31st Fighter Group with Spitfire Mk Vs transfers from Youks-les-Bain, Algeria to Kalaa Djerda, Tunisia.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: **Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence:** Lieut. Whiteford, 445th Squadron, arrived from Dakar. There are now 54 planes here. Most of the officers are quartered in town.

Whiteford, Floyd R. "Whitey", 1Lt, pilot, 445th BS

445th BS War Diary: Lt. Whiteford who was left at the Ascension Islands arrived in Marrakech today making the flight echelon complete except for Lt McLaughlin's ship who had to turn back at Nassau. Lt. Whiteford landed at Tindouf before reaching Marrakech.

McLaughlin, Guy J., Jr., 2Lt, pilot

Whiteford, Floyd R. "Whitey", 1Lt, pilot

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: Regular garrison duties. **Air Echelon:** Check and repairs. Waiting to set up at a Base.

447th BS War Diary: The flight echelon remained at Marrakech awaiting orders. Lt. Ernest Fineman's plane was damaged when a B-17 taking off came over the parking area too low. The props on the B-17 cut the vertical surface of the tail on the B-25. Usual garrison duties for the ground echelon....getting the new camp into shape.

Fineman, Ernest, 1Lt, pilot

Friday, 26 February 1943 (continued)

448th BS War Diary: No Entry

448th BS War Diary of: *Sinclair, Ervin W., Jr., 2Lt, pilot (plane # 41-29998):* "2-26-43 to 3-2-43: We spent this time in Marrakech, quarters were hard to get so some of the boys slept in their airplanes. Most of us stayed in town at hotels. Hotel Le Manounia was taken over by the Army and used for an Officer's Club. We spent most of our time bargaining with the Arabs, sightseeing etc. There are two sections to the town Arab and French. The field was only sixty days old.

Saturday, 27 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force):

In Tunisia, P-40s fly top cover, strafing, and fighter-bomber missions against positions along the Mareth Line. The 515th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 376th Bombardment Group (Heavy) with B-24s transfers from Gambut, Libya to Soluch, Libya.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Sardinia, B-17s bomb the Cagliari area and ships north of Capo d'Orlando.

In Tunisia, RAF Wellingtons hit Bizerte. Fighters fly sweeps and reconnaissance, attacking ground forces at points along the battleline, including the Medjez el Bab area where the enemy advance is being halted. The 37th Fighter Squadron, 55th Fighter Group with P-38s arrives at La Senia, Algeria from the U.S. This squadron will become the third squadron of the 14th Fighter Group when it is reassigned to the 14th on 1 Mar. The 85th Bombardment Squadron (Light), 47th Bombardment Group (Light) with A-20s transfers from Youks-les-Bains, Algeria to Canrobert, Algeria. A detachment of the 111th Observation Squadron, 68th Observation Group with A-20s ceases operating from La Senia, Algeria and returns to its base at Oujda, French Morocco. Prior to WWII, the 111th was a Texas National Guard unit.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence: Friday, Marrakech.

445th BS War Diary: The flight echelon remained another day at Marrakech.

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: Regular garrison duties. **Air Echelon:** Check and repairs. Waiting to set up at a Base.

447th BS War Diary: The flight echelon remained at Marrakech awaiting orders. Slit trenches were dug by the ground echelon and SOP outlined in event of an air raid.

448th BS War Diary: No Entry

Sunday, 28 February 1943

USAAF Chronology: MEDITERRANEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (MTO):

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Ninth Air Force): No Entry

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN (Northwest African Air Force):

In Tunisia, fighters and fighter-bombers hit troops, tanks, and motor transport along the Tunisian battleline southwest of Maleur, at Sidi Nsir near Pont-du-Fhas, northeast of Bedja, and in the Goubellat area. The 17th Bombardment Group (Medium) sends 9 B-26s to destroy the La Hencha Bridge between Gabes and Sfax. Their escort is jumped by Bf 109s and the bombers turn back. HQ 325th Fighter Group and its 317th and 318th Fighter Squadrons with P-40Fs arrive at Tafaraoui, Algeria from the U.S. The 48th Fighter Squadron, 14th Fighter Group with P-38s transfers from Berteaux, Algeria to Mediouna, French Morocco for R&R.

HQ 321st BG War Diary: Flight Echelon Log submitted by Group Intelligence: Marrakech, Lieut. Fineman's plane, 447th Squadron, tail struck by B-17 taking off. Ordered to proceed to Oujda, temporarily instead of Oran.

Fineman, Ernest (NMI), 1Lt, pilot, 447th BS

445th BS War Diary: The flight echelon still remains at Marrakech. The crews are taking advantage of the lay-over and enjoying passes which enabled them to go to town and ten of the enlisted men visited the palace of the Sultan of Marrakech.

446th BS War Diary: Ground Echelon: Regular garrison duties. **Air Echelon:** Check and repairs. Waiting to set up at a Base.

447th BS War Diary: The flight echelon remained at Marrakech awaiting orders. Details are taken daily from the ground echelon to make up labor battalions. Lt. James F. McGill took some of the enlisted men to the docks in Oran to locate and guard our supplies. Ten percent of the men were given passes to go into Oran.

McGill, James F., 1Lt, Adjutant

448th BS War Diary: No Entry

February 1943

HQ 321st BG War Diary: Additional Narrative for February 1943: We received final issues of sand-fly mosquito bars, Thompson sub-machine guns, rifles and everyone stocked up on candy, cigarettes, soap, toilet articles and other items that we believed could not readily be purchased overseas. The restrictions at Camp Kilmer prohibited all telephone messages, except on official business and no passes were issued for reasons of security. We all got into “chow lines”, the length of which we had never seen since our days of basic training at Jefferson Barracks, Sheppard Field and Keesler Field. Because of the rigid restrictions placed on us, none of us were reluctant to leave on Sunday, February 7, 1943 when entrained for Staten Island, New York.

Ground Echelon: We took the ferry to the shoving-off place and boarded the USS Elizabeth C. Stanton. We were assigned to our quarters, which were pretty well-cramped. At 0545, on February 8, 1943, we sailed for overseas.

Since our departure from the Air Echelon at DeRidder, Major Lowell assumed command of the Ground Echelon and Mr. Ulmer assumed the duties of Group Adjutant. The squadron adjutants assumed command of their respective squadrons. Officers and enlisted men entertained themselves on board ship in diversified ways. A few crap-games and black-jack games were broken up from time to time, as gambling is prohibited on Navy vessels. The American Red Cross presented each man with a cloth bag containing such items as Pocket Editor, books, soap, razor blades, stationary and sewing kits. The men made a practice of exchanging their books when they were through with them, so there was more than enough to read on the way across.

Lowell, William A., Maj, Group Adjutant

Ulmer, Edgar F. "Tiger", CWO, Group Personnel Officer

Morale on board ship was excellent in spite of the crowded quarters and food that was below the usual GI standard. A few officers and enlisted men clung to the rail for other reasons than to watch the schools of porpoises swimming along side the ship. The ship we came over in had been dubbed “Lousy Liza”, but after several crossings and having seen action and coming out unharmed, she earned the title of “Lucky Liza”. The sea was unusually calm during the entire trip, except for a squall now and then. Many men slept on deck on top of the hatches during the calmer parts of the trip. A Great many decided to stay up the night we were to go through the Straits of Gibraltar. That night, we saw land for the first time in twelve days, when we saw the city of Tangiers in Spanish Morocco, all a blaze with lights, we were all anticipating the sight of “the Rock”, but we were all more or less disappointed when we did see it. It was all shrouded in mist and fog and one could barely discern its outline. Although there was very little tension among the men the last few days of the trip, nearly everyone did expect to see a little action.

After fourteen days at sea, we finally arrived at Mers-El-Kebir, just outside of Oran, in Algeria, on February 21, 1943. The sight of land that day, and the view presented by the harbor, was one of the most impressive sights that most of the men had ever seen. It was a beautiful day and the sun shone warmly on the hundreds of men on deck eager to set foot on terra firma. High above the harbor and perched on a high cliff, was an impressive-looking fort. The city of Oran is built on hills, as are so many North African cities; and from the harbor, it presented a very interesting and fascinating sight.

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We had traveled about 3,500 miles by water and we were all anxious to try out our “sea legs” on land. All geared up with our helmets, gas-masks, guns, ammunition, musette bags, blankets and overcoats, we marched about a mile or so to a point where trucks picked us up to bring us to the railroad station. We entrained at Oran for Sainte Barbe, at which place we arrived around six o’clock in the evening. Then, the Ground Echelon marched the distance from Sainte Barbe to Bivouac Area Number 1, was better known and more appropriately known (at least in rainy weather) as “Mud hill”. We put up our pyramidal tents in the dark and ate our first C-rations and liked them.

The 445th Squadron left after a day or so and went to Oran, where they were attached to the In-transit Sub-Depot Number 11, for ten days during which time they took over guard-duty, warehouse-details and the usual camp jobs. The 446th Squadron left about the same time for Le Senia Airport, just outside of Oran, where they worked as “alert crew” for the airdrome. A few days later, the rest of the Ground Echelon went to Le Senia Airport and remained for approximately a week. In the meantime, we had been hearing an assortment of rumors and it was difficult to decide what was and was not to be believed. The most persistent rumor was that we might be broken up and no longer remains as a group. So, it was with relief that we saw Colonel Knapp come up to our tents on the race-track at Le Senia Airport, and learn that the Air Echelon had arrived intact. Preparations were then made for our next move, to Oujda, French Morocco and not far from Spanish Morocco. We slept upright in our railway coaches and were very cramped, but every discomfort was forgotten when we took time out to view the beautiful passing scenes. We had visioned Africa as a place with vast desert wastes and jungles for the most part. Even those who had thought of Africa as being other than desert or jungle were in for several surprises. Our trip to Oujda took us through magnificent country, mountain ranges and a few rolling plains. We saw some of our first groves of olive trees, terraced mountain-gardens and rows of orange, tangerine and date trees. The country boasted many beautiful vineyards laid out with an almost geometric accuracy. We stopped at just about every little village en route, but we finally arrived at Oujda, French Morocco, a neutral nation in this War. Here, we met up with the Flight Echelon and they have a brief history that we must catch up on.

Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, 321st BG Commander

Flight Echelon: So, our history now takes us back to February 12, and to DeRidder, Louisiana.

The following is narrated by Staff Sergeant Everett Strangeman, a passenger with the Flight Echelon, left behind by the Ground Echelon when he entered the hospital at Camp Polk, Louisiana, for an emergency operation:

Strangeman, Everett M., S/Sgt, operations

The flight echelon of the 321st Bombardment Group (Medium), Army Air Forces, composed of first pilots, second pilots, combat crew enlisted men and miscellaneous ground officers and enlisted men from Group Headquarters and the four squadron, left its last base in the United States, DeRidder Army Air Base, DeRidder, La., on Friday, February 12, 1943. The first plane took the air at 1000, and within shortly over half-an-hour, the planes taking off at thirty second intervals, the entire group of 59 planes, was in

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the air. Colonel Robert D. Knapp, commanding officer of the 321st, led the flight at the head of the 445th Squadron.

Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, 321st BG Commander

A course due south was pursued till the group was about 100 miles out in the Gulf of Mexico, after which a 90 degree turn to the east, was made. This over-water flying was new to but few of the men aboard the various ships, but it was a brief foretaste of what was to come. Parachutes were at hand, but “Mae Wests” life-jackets were hardly thought of, for should there have been trouble for any ship, land was not very far away as reckoned in air-minutes.

After an uneventful flight, about half of the total of ships landed at Homestead Field, Florida, leaving there an hour later to fly to Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida, where the other ships had gone. Morrison Field was to be the Port of Embarkation and the processing area for the Group’s foreign service. (FLYING TIME THUS FAR: 6 Hrs-5 Mins).

Morrison Field, we found, was a large and handsome place, with first-rate facilities and accommodations for aircraft and men alike. After registering and filling out APO cards to be sent home, many of us were sent to trucks to town, for whatever available barracks there were, had all been assigned to the personnel coming in first from the ships. For once, those in line did not get the best, to be offered. About twenty of us drew the Royal Palm Hotel, one of the best, though not among the largest, hotels of West Palm Beach. There, hot showers, comfortable beds and excellent meals in the palm-decorated dining room, contributed to our enjoyment.

Early the next morning, Saturday the 13th, trucks called for us and we rode back to Morrison Field, for processing. Pilots and combat-crew members had to be briefed, while all personnel in the flight echelon had to pass a final physical examination to qualify them for overseas combat duty.

The Post Exchange at Morrison Field was open 23 hours a day and served good meals at all hours. Our men, to the limit of their financial ability, stocked up on cigarettes, candy, soap, shaving and toilet articles and other necessities or luxuries, which they were fairly sure would be unattainable while enroute or after reaching their ultimate destination.

Sunday, February 14, was our last full day at the field. Routine necessities, including the issuance of supplies not obtained at DeRidder, were completed, climaxed by squadron meetings in the late afternoon, at which instructions for the next day’s take-off, were given by the squadron commanders. Capt. Henry H. Schwane, commanding officer of the 446th, to which I had been attached from group headquarters for flying, started his talk by asking, with a broad smile, “Is there anybody here who doesn’t want to go to Africa?”

Schwane, Henry H., Capt, pilot, Commander, 446th BS

It appeared that no one dissented, so he began his instructions. Those concluded, we were dismissed for our last night in the United States. Our co-pilots gave out per diem money, for there were hotel bills to be settled, extra cartons of cigarettes to buy, and meals to get. According to their likes, the men of the group spent their last free night in

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various ways. A good meal at the hotel, a walk about town and a cup of honest-to-goodness American coffee at a Walgreen Drug store.

Monday, February 15th, we were up early and soon were ready for our departure. Breakfast at the post exchange took somewhat longer than was expected, but by 08:30 everyone was at his ship and just before 0900, Colonel Knapp took off. At the usual 30 second intervals, all ships of the four squadrons flew up after his and we were on our way to Puerto Rico, on the first leg of a hop that was to take us some 10,000 miles; to ten airfields located in six countries and three islands; before we set down at our final field in North Africa. It was a beautiful day for flying with the sun out brightly and not a cloud in sight. As our great, pink birds lifted from the ground at high speed and zoomed off into the sky, adventure and the flight ahead, held us in their firm grip.

Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, 321st BG Commander

The flight progressed smoothly through the morning and afternoon hours, and at 1500 our ship set down at Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico, after a hop of five and one-half hours. (TIME OF OVERSEAS FIGHT THUS FAR: 5 Hrs-30 Mins). We were taken in trucks to spacious, concrete barracks set on a campus-like field. Supper and a shower were appreciated, but further viewing of the field was stopped when, at 1900 a black-out suddenly went into effect.

Called at 0400 the next morning, Tuesday, February 16th, we were off at 0830, flying southeast, our squadron and the 445th headed for British Guiana, South American; and the 447th and 448th squadrons for Trinidad, British West Indies. Till our plane met the two latter squadron at Zandery Field, Surinam, Dutch Guiana, I'm afraid you won't hear much about the 447th and 448th in this narrative.

This was another over-water flight, and an hour shorter than our previous hop, it ended at 1500 when we landed at Atkinson Field, British Guiana, a base literally carved out of the jungle, and went through the by then usual procedures of registration for bunks and meals. We were charged for beds and meals, our first experience at paying for Army sleeping accommodations and food, and to say that it struck us as novel, is saying it mildly. However, as we ere on a per diem basis, no one lost by the method. (FLYING TIME: 6 Hrs-30 Mins). (TIME OF FLIGHT THUS FAR: 12 Hrs.).

At 0645 on Wednesday, February 17th, we went up again and headed for Belem, Brazil; abut six hours' flight from Atkinson Field. When our ship, 41-13200, was up for just about an hour, the writer remarked to Sarver, the turret-gunner, on the plane's frequent lurching and tossing. "The pockets are pretty bad today, aren't they?" I asked. "Hell, that's not pockets!" he said, "Look at the right engine!" I looked. The engine was bathed with spouting oil.

There was but one thing to do, or rather to try to do. Fortunately, we were able to do as the pilot wished, and at 0920 on orders from the Squadron Commander we landed at Zandery Field, near Paramaribo, Surinam, with the field's fire engine, crash-wagon, ambulance and miscellaneous service vehicles rushing to our plane as soon as it stopped. Luckily, the engine did not catch on fire and ground crews took over to examine and clean the affected engine. (FLYING TIME: 1 Hr-35 Mins). (TIME OF FLIGHT thus far; 13 Hrs-35 Mins).

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As we remained around the ship while she was being conditioned, we were surprised about two hours after we had landed, to see two squadrons of our ships come over the field. At first, we thought it might be our flight returning because of bad weather ahead. It was not they, however, but rather the 447th and 448th led by Maj. Bailey C. Cook, the group operations officer. The squadrons had flown in from Trinidad, their first stop after leaving Puerto Rico. They were surprised to see us, but not as much surprised when they learned why we had landed.

Cook, Bailey C., Maj, pilot, Group Operations Officer

The men at this field, we learned, had a great monetary advantage, for besides the 20 per cent additional pay that the Army gave them for foreign service, they got an extra 30 per cent of base-pay from the Surinam government and to top it all, an American dollar was worth just \$1.87 in Surinam guildens. The catch was that there was practically nowhere, nor any way in which to spend money. The town was a long distance away and rather inaccessible. Men, we were told, were given revolvers to take along when they got a two-day pass, which was necessary because of the distance to go into town.

It might be noted that when the field personnel saw that two squadrons were about to land, they found it expedient to close the Officer's Club and the Non-Coms' Club in order to prevent their limited supplies of beer from being depleted. Because sleeping accommodations were strained, many of us slept around or in our planes that night, and in the morning, Friday, February 19th, we were up early for the take-off to Belem, Brazil. We made our earliest take-off of the flight, taking to the air at 0607, in company with the other two squadrons and again we pursued a southeasterly course; this time cutting across the northwestern corner of Brazil, which we soon reached on our way to Belem.

Great jungles, lush with tropical growth and vegetation, lay below us and we all, sitting by the open side panels, where waist guns would soon be mounted, enjoyed the ride and the view immensely. It took us some time, exactly how long I can't estimate, to pass over the various mouths of the huge and sprawling Amazon, giant of water that makes our own Mississippi seem, by comparison, to be a little mud puddle. Eventually, however, we landed and came down at the airport at Belem at 1040. (FLYING TIME: 4 Hrs). TIME OF FLIGHT THUS FAR: 18 Hrs-8Mins).

The Khaki summer uniforms that we dug from our bags at Puerto Rico, the while stowing away our Dos and our winter flying clothing, stood us in good stand at Belem, for there it was hot, with summer having about another month to run. We made for the post-exchange after registering for tents and meals, hoping for cokes; but there were none. We learned from men of the two squadron that had arrived the day before, that we'd had our last cokes at Zandery Field, Surinam.

Instead of cokes, we got a Brazilian concoction called "Suarana", and labeled a champagne. It was pretty poor, water stuff, however, it was a cold drink and we bought it.

At post-exchange, the Colonel remarked very enthusiastically to Lieut. Jaenicke, "This is the best group I've ever had!" and he went on to explain why he liked his organization so well. I knew, from hearing the pilots' talk, that we had set an enviable record back at Morrison Field. We were the first ever to leave as a complete group; we left with more airplanes than any other outfit ever had taken at one time; we set a record

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by going through the complete processes there in just two days and had beaten the former normal clearance time by ten days. The 321st was able to go through so quickly, because it had come to Morrison as fully prepared for departure as was possible, and it amazed those in authority there, by the fullness of its preparations and the accuracy of its records and data.

Jaenicke, Reinhart W., 2Lt, engineering

Now, as we have progressed along our route, we really have surprised these airfields, for where they have been used to receiving 8, 12 or at the most 15 planes at a time, our whole group of 57 ships (we had to leave one at Morrison and one remained at Trinidad, though both eventually caught up with the group in Africa) came sweeping down out of the skies at once, landing by squadrons, each ship only 30 seconds behind its predecessor. Because of this mass invasion on our part, we have strained sleeping and eating accommodations at the field, often to their utmost. In general, though, we have been taken care of quite well, considering the handicap under which we placed the Air Transport Command at the field visited.

Belem turned out to be another one-night stand, where we were served by native boys at the mess-hall. We learned such words as “mais” (spelling not guaranteed) for “more”, “lech” (ditto) for “milk” and “obbligato” for “thank you”. We had fairly good meals there, but the coffee was disappointing. We had expected, of all the places visited, to find excellent coffee in Brazil, but that was not the case, to our surprise.

Up at our usual hour on Saturday, February 20th, our ship took off at 0759 for Natal, Brazil, our last stop on this side of the ocean. It was again a beautiful day and we saw hundreds of miles of jungle-land and farm and range lands during our hop to the southeast. Like most of those we made, the flight was without untoward incident, except for a storm through which we rode for awhile, and our ship landed at the airport there at 1422. (FLYING TIME: 6 Hrs-23 Mins) (TIME OF FLIGHT THUS FAR: 24 Hrs-31 Mins).

Waiting for the best possible weather, we lay over at Natal on the next day, Sunday, February 21st. It was very hot out in spite of that, ships were serviced and checked, so as to be in complete readiness when the Colonel should give the word that we were to go.

The word was given for the next morning. We rose early for what was by far the most crucial hop of our entire trip. We had to cross 1,445 miles of blank ocean, going almost due-east and try to hit Ascension Island way out there in the Atlantic, right on the head. “Mae Wests” were put on as soon as we had taken off at 0645, and were kept on. The lifeboat in our ship had been taken down and was ready to be thrown overboard, if necessary. Every pilot was on his toes, for authorities at Natal had ordered that, if any of our planes had to turn back after starting, that ship would be searched completely and if any unauthorized weight in the form of personal baggage or belongings were found, there would be severe penalties for the offenders. Despite the fact that all of the personal and military baggage of the writer was aboard our ship (but only because it has to be, since my reassignment to the group having come too late to place any of my baggage with the ground echelon) and other planes perhaps have miscellaneous articles that hardly could

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have been called authorized, no plane failed to take-off and, as it happily eventuated, no plane had to turn around and deliberately head back for Natal.

We sighted Ascension Island at 1530 and landed at 1542. As soon as we all climbed out, Shields, our radio-man, kissed the left prop in grateful token for its having brought us in safely. The island, we found, is 38 miles square, composed of lowland topped by several extinct volcanoes. The ground has the dark red color of dried lava. (FLYING TIME: 8 Hrs-48 Mins) (TIME OF FLIGHT THUS FAR: 33 Hrs-14 Mins).

Shields, James A., T/Sgt, radio-gunner, 446th BS

Without layover, we took off again the next day, Tuesday, February 23rd, headed almost north, for Robert Field, Monrovia, Liberia at 0900. Nothing as long as the previous day's flight of 8 hours and 48 minutes lay ahead of us, and at 1240 we sighted land. At 1415, we passed over African soil, seeing dozens of native villages ranging in size from a very few huts to scores. The larger areas seemingly having been laid out in a rather careful plan, and we landed at 1435. Following the taxiing to position in line, we stepped on African Soil at 1442. (FLYING TIME: 5 Hrs-29 Mins) (TIME OF FLIGHT THUS FAR: 39 Hrs-48 Mins).

At Roberts, where it was as hot as Brazil if not actually hotter, we were allotted cots in long barracks and made good use of the cooling outdoor showers. Officers and men used them freely, mingling together, for there were no separate facilities. Consequently, we had been assigned indiscriminately with the results that officers and enlisted men slept in the same barracks and as it turned out, no serious or even slight harm was done by the democratic act. The officers' songs and humor, mostly about girls from Vassar, was lost on many of the enlisted men' but there were a few without bars who knew what Vassar is, believe it or not.

Some of us went, late in the evening, back to the mess-hall and found that another meal was being served. Nothing to lose, we sat at the tables and got food and coffee from the native serving-boys. These boys, because of their schooling, spoke very good English and a number of them, were quite intelligent. As for the meal, we didn't quite understand why a complete, extra meal was being served at eleven o'clock at night, but it was, and we ate it with relish.

At 1007 the next morning, Wednesday, February 24th, we took off on our next flight headed mainly north, and passing over more jungle-land, we arrived at Dakar, Senegal, French West Africa at 1419. FLYING TIME: 4 Hrs-12 Mins) (TIME OF FLIGHT THUS FAR: 43 Hrs).

The negroes there, as in Liberia, were blacker than any we ever saw in the United States, and were a great deal different, physically from the American negro. They were not at all reticent about showing their emotions and desires, a group of us riding in a truck to mess learned, for we saw one large, fat black women suddenly yell, "zig zag", and weave her hips in a Fatima-like crotch and gesticulate with her hands. Other women came to the barracks doors, during the evening and chanted their "zig zag" call, but of course, they did not dare to enter the barracks.

Another long flight lay ahead of us for the following day, the longest since our hop to Ascension. We took off at 0820 on Thursday, February 25th, heading approximately north for Morocco. Our exact destination therein, was Marrakech, one of

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the three holy cities of the Mohammedan religion, and a large, bustling city of nearly 200,000 people. At 1520, after a seven-hour flight, we set down there. (FLYING TIME: 7 Hrs) (TIME OF FLIGHT THUS FAR: 50 Hrs). Marrakech, we learned, had been in German hands just two months before, and we found on going into the city, that it was a decimated town, having been stripped of its livestock, good wines, food stores, and everything that would be of any value to the invaders. The Café Rex, once a world-famous restaurant in the “travelers” guides, was now only able to serve omelets, potatoes and occasional vegetables.

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445th BS War Diary: Additional Narrative for February 1943: From January 1, 1943 on, the main topic for rumors was the time for leaving for some combat zone overseas. Eventually the day arrived. On January 21 the ground echelon pulled out on a train headed for Camp Kilmer, New Brunswick, New Jersey. However, it was not till February 12 that the air echelon left for Morrison Field, the port of embarkation. Shortly after takeoff we were advised that the formation would land at Homestead. However, when we arrived at Homestead we were then directed to proceed to Morrison Field.

Ground Echelon: The moaning came to an end on Sunday, February 7 when the men lined up in full regalia and marched to the train that took them to the ferry at Elizabeth, N.J. Most of the men will never forget that painful trek from the train to the ferry when they had to carry both their heavy barracks bags on that seemingly endless trek.

The ferry ride took us past the sights of New York and all the men took a long last look at the Statue of Liberty fading behind the wake of the ferry.

The men boarded ship on the same afternoon and the next day were under way across the Atlantic with a strong escort of a battleship, two heavy cruisers, a number of destroyers on the sea; and blimps and aircraft overhead.

The weather during the two-week trip was for the most part excellent. The going was rough and many of the men spent the trip on the flat of their backs.

The men will best remember the crowded living conditions in the hold where the bunks were stacked six high; the many craps and card games in the hold; the G.I. chow; many practice sessions held by the gunners on the ship; the familiar "Now hear this" voice on the loudspeaker system; the countless number of candy bars consumed; the church service held on Sunday under sunny skies and surrounded by sparkling waters; the various rumors about submarines; the bull sessions on deck during the day and "after the smoking lamp is out"; and the first sight of Africa after a constant diet of the Atlantic and Mediterranean.

The men docked at Oran on February 21st and slowly made their way down the gangplanks with full field equipment and barracks bags to good old terra firma to the tune of Harry James records played by one of the other ships.

They were marched off the dock and through a nearby town where they got their first glimpse of African life. Scores of small children were begging while the older inhabitants just stood and watched. Later the men loaded onto trucks and were taken to the railroad station.

They rode the famed 40 and 8 cars for about a half hour and disembarked from the train at a small town named St. Barbe du Tlelat in the midst of a downpour. From here the men marched through the rain with full field pack a total of 5 miles to a place appropriately dubbed "Mud Hill". It was already dark and the men had to drop their luggage and erect tents to sleep on the cold, wet ground for the night. The next night they went to a foundry in Oran where they acted as stevedores

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Air Echelon: The main activity at Morrison Field consisted of drawing the necessary equipment for the overseas trip, turning in some equipment which was not necessary, taking physical examinations, filling out various records and having a good time at the bars down town and making forbidden telephone calls to the girlfriend or someone else back home. Some things that will be remembered about the short stay at this base are: daily rumor that the formation would take off the next morning. The speculation as to where the Group might really be going in view of the fact that orders came out to take only winter clothing. The briefing finally came and outlined the route to Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico. The long line which waited for breakfast on the morning of February 15 when the Group was scheduled to leave. There were only two or three clerks behind the counter attempting to serve several hundred people some of whom had to wait two hours before they could finally get us a fried egg.

At 08:15, the 15 planes of the 445th Squadron took off from Morrison Field for its overseas destination and it was to be a long time before they saw the United States again.

The 445th Squadron was the first squadron in the Group to leave Morrison Field en route to its overseas destination. Capt. MacFarlane led the formation, while Colonel Knapp flew out ahead by himself. The first ship landed at Borinquen at 14:00 and all the ships arrived except Lt. McLaughlin's. He had returned to Nassau because of difficulty with one engine.

Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, 321st BG Commander

MacFarlane, William V., Capt, pilot, Commander

McLaughlin, Guy J., Jr., 2Lt, pilot

The Squadron remained at Borinquen only until the next morning. However, it will always be remembered by the men as one of the most beautiful places which they saw. The dark-skinned girls who acted as clerks in the large and well-stocked PX stores did not detract from their enjoyment of the place. Some of the men did some swimming in the very blue water for which Puerto Rico is famous.

So far the trip had gone well, the weather had been fine and the spirits of the men were high. They were full of anticipation as to what the next leg of the journey would hold.

The following morning, February 16, the 14 ships of the Squadron took off at 11:47 (GCT) for Georgetown, British Guiana. This Squadron was again the first one to take off. Except for two bad areas, which were completely avoided, the weather was satisfactory all the way. There were no mishaps of any kind and the flight landed at Atkinson Field at 17:50 (GCT). This base had been practically cut out of the jungle and it reminded one of sets in moving pictures depicting life in the tropics. The barracks consisted of a large room in which numerous cots were lined up. The room was clean and the beds were made by black natives. The building was elevated and built up off the ground on poles as a protection against vermin and reptiles. The men were all surprised to find a fairly good PX, with coca cola and beer and a first rate mess which some of the men felt was better than the one they used to have back at Walterboro.

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The only method of getting to town – that is Georgetown – was by an old river boat which labored slowly along like a broken down old ferryboat. Some of the men who went into town that night found the boat crowded with dark-skinned girls who lived in the town and worked during the day around the base.

The Squadron remained at Atkinson Field over February 17 and on the following morning at 10:25 (GCT) it took off for Belem, Brazil. Col. Knapp led one flight of seven planes and Capt. MacFarlane led the other. About two hours out of Belem, the planes ran into extremely bad weather. It was the area which was referred to as the “permanent front”. Many of the pilots said that it was the worst weather they had ever flown through. The ships were flown on instruments for over an hour and a half. The front, with dark, heavy clouds and pouring rain, went well up over 15,000 ft. and down to below 1000 ft. Some of the ships attempted to climb over the weather with painful results. None of them succeeded. However, those who promptly lost altitude and went underneath the storm fared very well. There were some shaky moments for some of the crews. In particular Lt. Gunter, who was flying co-pilot with Capt. MacFarlane, prevented the ship from getting too close, if not into, the water. All the ships landed at Belem at 16:45 (GCT).

Gunter, Macon A., Jr., 2Lt, pilot

Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, 321st BG Commander

MacFarlane, William V., Capt, pilot, Commander

This base was even more tropical than the one at Atkinson Field. The Officers were billeted in small barracks which were attended by black, shiny natives. All of the beds were covered with mosquito nettings. There were mahogany, banana and other tropical trees. There were coffee bean bushes. There was the jungle around the outer fringes of the camp, in which there were small, thatched huts where the natives lived. There was a fine Officer’s mess with tablecloths on the tables and plenty of bananas. The natives waited on the tables. There was an Officer’s Club in which Lt. Rudolph, Lt. Olson, Lt. Tipton and Lt. Buckingham played poker. Just off the room where the boys played poker there was a bar which did a thriving business.

Buckingham, Richard P., 2Lt, bombardier

Olson, Walter N., 2Lt, pilot

Rudolph, Raymond L. "Rudy", 1Lt, pilot

Tipton, Richard Pike "Tip", 1Lt, pilot

There was considerable tropical rain at Belem and it was necessary for the Squadron to remain over on the 19th. However, at 11:00 (GCT) on February 20, it took off for Natal, Brazil. Once again there were two flights. Col. Knapp led one flight and Capt. MacFarlane the other. There was no weather which could not be circumvented. The Squadron landed at Natal at 18:00 (GCT).

Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, 321st BG Commander

MacFarlane, William V., Capt, pilot, Commander

There was considerable excitement in the air when the men arrived at Natal for they knew that this was the jumping off place for the long hop across the South Atlantic,

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and that it would not be long before they would be on their way from the Western Hemisphere to the shores of Africa.

The flight from Belem to Natal had taken the planes over the mouth of the great Amazon River, in which the Isle of Marajo lies. The men were very interested in this large island and passed around stories that it was owned by one rich man. The planes flew low over the place and saw numerous head of cattle and other signs of prosperity.

Natal will be remembered by the men in the Squadron for the South American boots which they purchased for \$4.00 a pair; for the typhoid fever which was given as the reason for their restriction to the base; for the stories about the Germans who were supposed to have been active in this area a short time ago; for the Pan-American buildings on the field; and for the ceaseless winds which blew off the South Atlantic.

The Squadron remained at Natal on February 21 and on the following morning at 10:30 (GCT) took off for Ascension Island. Just about the time the planes were getting ready to taxi out to the runway, a local rainstorm came up and drenched the field. Lt. Whiteford was unable to take off because his ship stuck in the mud while he was taxiing out. The storm had abated but had not cleared at the time the planes took off, but after a short distance out to sea the weather cleared and was excellent except for a few scattered clouds all the way to Ascension Island.

This flight to Ascension was the longest which any of the men had taken and there was some apprehension as to whether the gasoline would be adequate. There was also some apprehension as to navigational difficulties but they were quite unfounded as the powerful radio beam on Ascension was picked up a short distance out to sea and followed all the way to the island. The island came into sight right on the minute of the ETA estimated by Lt. Larson, the navigator in Col. Knapp's ship.

Larson, Harold W., 2Lt, navigator

Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, 321st BG Commander

After 8 hours and 25 minutes of flying over nothing but the endless spaces of water, the little island, which jutted up out of the ocean, looked mighty good to all the men in the planes.

The following morning, February 23, the Squadron took off at 10:30 (GCT) for Roberts Field, Marshall, Liberia. There were scattered clouds overhead but the water below was visible at all times. There was a light fog near the coast but the visibility was satisfactory for landing and all the ships came down at 16:00 (GCT) with no mishaps. Col. Knapp pulled out a bottle of whisky and celebrated the successful arrival in Africa with a short snorter.

Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, 321st BG Commander

The men here got a good opportunity to see some of the famous blacks of Africa. They worked around the base and acted as waiters in the Officer's mess. The men will remember their shiny, black faces and their attempt to get larger tips. Lt. Buckingham found out that an educational program had been sponsored for the natives in this particular locality and that some of them were using all the money they could get to attend the schools, no matter how old they happened to be.

Buckingham, Richard P., 2Lt, bombardier

February 1943 (continued)

The next day, February 24, the Squadron took off for Dakar, the port in French West Africa which had become famous through the attempt of the British to capture it and from the rumors that the Germans had intended to use it as a jumping-off base for an invasion of South America. The planes took off at 9:39 (GCT) and landed at 13:35 (GCT). Dakar is more famous to the men in the 445th Squadron because it was the first as well as the last place in Africa where they obtained “The pause that refreshes” – a bottle of Coca Cola. Dakar will also be remembered as the place where Capt. MacFarlane called all the Officers into one of the barracks and gave them a stern lecture on their failure to act as good Officers because they had gone into the mess to get something to eat instead of standing by their planes in accordance with his directions. Some of the men considered that the accusations were unjust and that Capt. MacFarlane had gone away and forgotten that he had left the men waiting in the field.

MacFarlane, William V., Capt, pilot, Commander

On February 25, the Squadron took off from Dakar at 7:34 (GCT) headed for Marrakech, French Morocco. There was instrument flying for about an hour after takeoff. Then there was a long flight over barren, desert land. The men will never forget the sharp contrast of flying over this desert waste into the Atlas mountain pass. Here there were low-hanging white cumulus clouds over snow-covered mountain peaks. The planes flew at about 11,000 ft. through this pass and on either side the mountains soared up to higher altitudes, the ships landed at Marrakech at 14:30 (GCT).

This town gave the men their first contact with the Arabs of whom they were to see so much during their stay in the North African Theater of Operations. The men visited the famous Medina and saw the Arabs living in their natural habitat. They also bought some of the best oranges they had ever had.

It was at this base that the Squadron heard that there was some debate as to what its future in combat might be. There were rumors discussed by the men that the Squadron might be broken up and eventually the men would wind up as replacements in other units but that Col. Knapp made a special trip to see Gen. Doolittle and succeeded in forestalling any such plans.

Doolittle, James Harold "Jimmy", Maj Gen, 12th AF, Commander

Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, 321st BG Commander

JAMES E. NICKERSON
Captain, Air Corps,
Squadron Historian.

February 1943 (continued)

446th BS War Diary: Additional Narrative for February 1943:

446th BS War Diary of: Williams, Wallace (NMI) "Spike", Jr., 2Lt, pilot: "To begin with, I came over as co-pilot to "Jungle Jim" Bradley. Capt. Bates of the 448th took my plane. At Morrison we prepared for the trip and on the 15th took off by squadrons. This incidentally was the first complete group to ever come over and not lose an airplane. Lot of credit to Col. Bob, but more to his fine bunch of pilots and navigators. Jim and I took off with an overload of 34,000 lbs. on a beautiful morning. Funny feeling to see the shore of Fla. Fade away. First leg to Puerto Rico. Quite a bit of weather, but not serious. Flew about 500 ft. all the way. About 5 hours and landed at Borinquen Field, San Juan. Puerto Rico is a pretty island with almost tropical vegetation. Took off next morning for Georgetown, British Guiana by way of Trinidad. Rather long flight, about 6 hours. Field was cut in the jungle. Real jungle. Spent two nights here. Buck Hileman and I got a native canoe and paddled up an inlet. Both too scared to go far, the densest jungle you could imagine. Hot as the devil.

Bates, James P., Capt, pilot, 448th BS Bradley, James L., Jr. "Jungle Jim", 1Lt, pilot
Hileman, Donald L. "Buck", 2Lt, pilot
Knapp, Robert D., Col, pilot, HQ 321st BG Commander

Took off early and ran into a tropical front. Never saw it rain so hard. Beat all the paint off our props and leading edges. Lasted about 2 hours with instruments. Jim and I took turns. After about 7 hours we landed at Belem. Belem was quite a place. We went in town and spent the afternoon. Mostly Portuguese and Spanish.

From there to Natal in about 7 hours. Crossed the Amazon and the Equator. Stayed 2 days checking planes etc. Natal to Ascension Island was a 9 hour trip. All across water at altitude of 500 ft. We let the AFCE do all the work and he is a pretty good pilot. Got to Ascension about 5 in the afternoon.

It is just a mountain sticking out of the water with a runway built on the side of it. Stayed only one night. From there to Roberts Fld. In Liberia. There we visited a real native village like you read about in National Geographic. Very interesting. Really in Africa now. Next hop after one night to Dakar. Had to fly at 10,000 ft. cause of weather. Came down on steel mat runway there. Hottest day we'd seen til then. It was terrific after being at 10,000. Most everybody was sick, but we took off next morning for Marrakech. Interesting trip, past Tindouf furthest outpost of Foreign Legion. Crossed Sahara desert. Awful looking place. Barren mountains and sand. Then came the real mountains. Up to 14,000 ft. all around. Snow capped. We went thru the pass and came out in a beautiful valley with Marrakech in the middle of it. Marrakech is part Arab and part wealthy French. This was our rest. All of us dead tired. Stayed here 4 days. Lived at Hotel Manounia. Beautiful place. Buck Hileman and I roomed with Don next to Martha Raye. She was right nice kind of a gal. Gen. Clark and Patton had dinner at the hotel first night of our stay. Visited Arab market and so forth. They wear anything they get hold of. Old sacks, burlap bags, anything. Never wear shoes. Left next for Oujda. Stayed a week or so and practiced bombing runs and formation. That's where I got my old plane "47" back. "The Traveler."

Hileman, Donald L. "Buck", 2Lt, pilot

February 1943 (continued)

Met Eric Linden of 310th, friend of Mr. Ryder's from Rye, N.Y. 16 missions and going home.

Linden, Eric O., 1Lt, pilot, 381st BS, 310th BG

Next moved up to Ain M'Lila and that is where the real work began."

February 1943 (continued)

447th BS War Diary: Additional Narrative for February 1943:

The ground echelon got orders to embark the morning of February 7. This was what all the men had known for months was coming and yet it all seemed a little strange. It was an entirely new experience for all of them.

Personal belongings had to be loaded into an ordinary day coach and the same coach had to accommodate some sixty men in full field equipment. It was a very tight squeeze but the trip to the port wasn't a long one.

From the railroad station the men had to march about a half mile to the ferry carrying barracks bags in addition to full field equipment. They were packed on the ferry so close together that all had to stand. When everyone was aboard the ferry made its way across the harbor to Staten Island.

The ferry pulled up to the dock adjoining an enormous warehouse, fully 2000 feet long with a sixty foot ceiling. The squadron reformed in passenger-list order in the warehouse and stood around in platoons awaiting its turn to board the ship. Other units were passing up the gang plank rapidly and they could be seen boarding the ship through the large door at the side of the warehouse. The squadron finally filed up the gang plank as each man was checked off on the passenger list roster.

The ship was the U.S.S. Elizabeth Stanton – a fairly new freighter which had been taken over by the Navy and converted into a troop transport. Bunks were packed tight in the holds in tiers six or seven bunks high. The men had to find room for their personal luggage in these holds also and conditions were very cramped.

Early the following morning the ship steamed out through New York harbor. It was in a convoy of twenty-three ships altogether. The Statue of Liberty could be seen through the morning mist and most of the men were on deck to watch it slip away in the distance.

The voyage across was uneventful. There were two or three rough days, the usual number of seasickness cases and the convoy changed course several times to dodge submarines but there was never any attack on the convoy.

Early on the morning of February 21 the ship slowly came into the harbor at Mere-el-Kebir a few miles from Oran. French tugs came out to meet the ship and brought it into place alongside the quay. All the men had brought their belongings up on deck and at last were given the order to disembark. We marched about a mile to an area where trucks were waiting for us. These trucks took us to the railroad station at Oran where we boarded a train for Sante Barbe, a little town about fifteen miles south of Oran. From this town we marched about five miles to the bivouac area which we were to occupy. It was raining and the hill where we were to camp was a slippery mess. We were given tents and a few bales of hay and these were set up all over the side of the hill. Thus our first day in North Africa wasn't a very happy one.

The tents were taken down the next day and a squadron street set up. Messing facilities were set up and "C" rations seemed very adequate to us at that time. After the usual and necessary measures for setting up a bivouac area were completed we began looking around us and taking stock of the scenery. We were surprised at what we saw because the gently sloping hills, verdant pastures, and lack of cactus were so different

February 1943 (continued)

from the deserts and jungles always associated with the “Dark Continent”. Many of the men said that the view afforded looked like some sector of their own state. The novelty of little Arab children begging for “chewing gum”, “bon bon”, and “sigareet” soon wore out and the French term “Allez”, meaning “Scram”, was heard continuously from then on.

About dusk on February 25 we were packed and ready to move again. It began to rain about the time all the tents were down and continued to pour until the move had been completed. We set up camp near the air base at La Senia which is about eight miles from Oran. We remained at this site until March 6. Slit trenches were dug to accommodate all the men in the squadron and we got one issue of fresh meat while here – our first in North Africa. Passes were issued the men daily so that they were able to visit Oran.

February 1943 (continued)

448th BS War Diary: Additional Narrative for February 1943: Over and over again, the question of “Our ultimate destination” was discussed. Points like “Shots for Cholera as a sure sign we were going to India” were opposed to the arguments that “Since they had taken away our khakis it was a cinch that we were going to Iceland”. The majority still hung to the theory that they were going to North Africa or England.

Thus passed two weeks of anxious waiting. Then on February 6, 1943, the squadron received orders that it would embark within forty-eight hours. At 14:30 o'clock on February 7, 1943, the orders were given to proceed to Pier 11 Port of Embarkation, New York. With the rest of the Group they boarded a train and after a short ride of twenty miles left the train and boarded a Ferry for Staten Island. Upon arrival everyone shouldered their barracks bag and marched through the long shed to the Gang-Way of the U.S.S. Elizabeth C. Stanton. The Squadron boarded their ship at 17:30 February 7, 1943. Lts. Wallnau and Stannard and fifteen Enlisted Men were required to board another ship due to the overcrowded condition.

To the tune of “Lower Number Four, Upper Number Two, Lower Number Two,” the men marched aboard and down into the bowels of the ship. There they were assigned their homes for the next two weeks. In five tiers with only twenty inches between, they were pushed into what the Navy called bunks. They thought longingly of the roominess and comforts of a sardine can.

The first evening was spent in getting acquainted with the ship, life-belts and the idea of sleeping in a bed six feet long with hardly enough room to turn. The question of Mess was not mentioned as everyone had sandwiches to eat. The Officers, although not so crowded, faced much the same situation.

At 06:00 o'clock everyone was awakened by a slight vibration throughout the ship and the beginning of a dull thumping which was destined to last throughout the voyage. The Ground Echelon was on its way. Silently the vessel slipped through the crowded New York Harbor and in a few hours was well out of sight of land. From all sides ships were congregating to form the convoy. One battleship, two cruisers and several destroyers formed the escort.

The first day out was a typical forerunner of the fourteen to follow. Twenty-four hundred men in line for chow, was the routine procedure at mealtime. Lines for eating, sleeping, PX and etc; men lying on deck catching the dim sunlight of the wintry Atlantic, curious soldiers watching the sailors and gun crew go about their work were soon typical sights throughout the vessel. Always there was the ever present danger of submarines. At last the knowledge that the Group was going to North Africa was given to all when the soldiers Guide was distributed. “Now hear this” and “Chow is down for the troops” accompanied by the Boson's whistle was a familiar sound over the loud speaker. The call to General Quarters and alerts were held frequently. There were many complaints about the “Chow” and the slippery, oily smelling Mess Hall in hold number three will remain a vivid picture in the minds of all who ate there. The Army blamed the Navy and the Navy blamed the Army.

Days passed with no outward change except the gradual change in the weather which had been quite cool and now turned pleasant. However frequent switching of the Convoy's course gave proof to the fact that submarines were somewhere in the vicinity.

February 1943 (continued)

Two ships a Tanker and Transport collided during the night of February 14th due to negligence of one soldier who allowed himself to fall overboard. Both vessels had to return to Port.

On February 18th part of the Convoy split off from the main body for Casablanca. The remainder continued eastward and early on the morning of February 20th passed through the Straits of Gibraltar and continued their voyage under the escort of four British Corvettes. On February 21st at 09:00 the U.S.S. Elizabeth O. Stanton dropped anchor at Mere-el-Kebir, Algeria (Port of Oran). Without further delay the troops disembarked and after a brief roll call by Lt. Knievel, the men shouldered their packs and marched away from the ship. Almost immediately they were besieged by countless numbers of Arabs and Arab urchins begging the inevitable bon-bon, cigarette for papa, chewing gum, etc. Their knowledge of the English language, at least the coarser epithets was phenomenal. After a short hike of about two miles up the hill from the docks, trucks picked up all personnel and drove through a blinding rain to the Oran Railroad Station. They're slightly wet but cheerful the troops boarded the Third Class French Wagonlits for a short ride of twenty miles to the town of St Barb. Disembarking there they marched through the rain and gathering darkness to a campsite known as "MUD HILL" (bivouac area # 1). As darkness had fallen, the few tents that were issued were spread out upon the mud and the thoroughly tired, chilled men lay down for their first night in Africa.

Knievel, Arthur W., 1Lt, executive, 448th BS

The next day everyone turned to the task of setting up camp with the facilities at hand. British canned rations were cooked in "GI" cans and oil drums which had been split in half. Although the food was not as good as what everyone was accustomed to, it was far superior to those described by the sailors on the voyage over.

The Squadron found itself camped on a long sloping mud hill which served as a bivouac area for incoming troops. By nightfall everyone was fairly well situated in tents. The moral was excellent despite the uncertainty of their future. Rumors were rampant as to their destination. Some expected German raids almost hourly, but still no word had been received from the Flight Echelon.

Five days passed in this fashion with little happening except for the gathering of equipment from the Docks. Then occurred the event that was to become S.O.P. in the 448th. On Sunday night in pouring rain, the Squadron received immediate Orders to move to La Senia Air Base. There they were to supply men for details around the Airdrome while awaiting their airplanes and equipment.

At the new camp site, the Squadron began to really make itself at home. "B" Rations from "The States" assured a very adequate Mess and the constant stream of equipment eased the situation in regard to tents, cots, blankets and cooking equipment. Trips to Oran were scheduled and everyone had an opportunity to visit their first large African City. The first "Mail Call" was sounded and brought an immediate lift in Morale.

The Arabs who even at this early date were making themselves obnoxious by their persistent begging and stealing, produced a great problem and forced guards to be stationed with Orders to shoot if necessary.

February 1943 (continued)

The Air Echelon: After several false alarms, the squadron left DeRidder on February 12, 1943 to go to Morrison Field, the Port of Embarkation. Major Cook of Group was in command of the flight of the squadron. The wives of the officers came out on the field to say good-bye to their departing heroes. All took off successfully with the large overload except Lt. Fabling who gave everyone a few uncomfortable minutes. As he took off his seat slipped back. At the same time his co-pilot's, Lt. Althouse, seat also slipped back. Neither one could reach the controls and the plane swerved off the runway toward the hangar. Lt. Fabling, however, got partial control by using the trim tabs and Lt. Althouse quickly pulled his seat up and took control.

Althouse, Donald I., 2Lt, pilot

Fabling, Charles R., 2Lt, pilot

Cook, Bailey C., Maj, pilot, HQ 321st BG

Everyone had a good time at Morrison Field for two days. On February 15, 1943 the Squadron took off on the first leg of the crossing. Everyone got up at six o'clock to get an early start. However, the mess hall at the field was not adequate to feed the entire group and it took about three hours to get breakfast. Sgt. Ennis was almost left when he was sent for sandwiches and did not come back until his plane was taxiing out. T/Sgt. Stanton left his dog but as his plane was taxiing out Lt. Grantham, who stayed over until February 25, 1943 because of a leaky gas tank, came out in a jeep with the dog. When the plane opened its hatch to take the dog all of the secret orders and route guides blew out. Lt. Grantham ran all over the field picking them up and got them back to the plane just before it took off.

Ennis, Edward C., S/Sgt, radio-gunner, radar

Grantham, Charles H., 2Lt, pilot

Stanton, James E., T/Sgt, radio-gunner

On the way over the high points were the day and night spent in Port of Spain, Trinidad, February 16th. The wild ride to and from the city on the left side of the road with swarms of natives on the road, the bar at the officer's club, and the Calypso Singers are still remembered.

Then Zandery Field in the jungles of Dutch Guiana with its muggy heat, flies, cramped quarters, and bar which closed as soon as we arrived will gladly be forgotten.

On the way to Belem the formation got scattered. Lt. Shapiro got left behind and flew over Devil's Island taking pictures all the way. At Belem on February 20th the men were forbidden to go into town. However, some men made a "mistake" and got on the wrong bus and got into town quite by accident.

Shapiro, Leonard L. "Shap", 2Lt, pilot

At Natal the men were also restricted to the post but everyone was too worried about gas consumption on the trip to Ascension Island to care. The night before the hop all excess equipment was thrown out of the planes. Everyone got to Ascension with plenty of gas.

At Roberts Field, Liberia, on February 24th, some of the men went to a native village near the field to see some native dances which were on the sensuous side.

At Rufisque Field, some of the men bummed rides to Dakar where the main attraction was the officer's club which was a refined house of prostitution.

February 1943 (continued)

It was at Marrakech where the men first saw Arabs in quantity. The smell of the rancid olive oil in the native quarters, the Casbah, was overpowering. It was very hard to get any quarters in town. Some of the officers were lucky enough to be invited to a retreat ceremony of the Second Regiment of the French Foreign Legion. The band was wonderful. The Regimental song was Frere Jacques, the nursery song.

At Oujda where the flight echelon arrived on March 2nd, the first few nights were spent sleeping on the stone floors of the French barracks. There were rumors that the Squadron's planes would be taken away. Rumors flew thick and fast.

February 1 – 28 – 43: Ground Echelon: No Officers or Enlisted Men assigned or joined during this period. Private Malle transferred to Task Force Replacement Pool., Camp Kilmer, N.J.

Malle, Joseph R., Pvt, ordnance, 445th BS

February 1 – 28 – 43: Air Echelon: The Air Echelon continued with routine activities at DeRidder Air Base. At 12:55 February 12, 1943, the Air Echelon departed DeRidder Army Air Base via air for Morrison Field, Florida, arriving without mishap at 19:15, February 12, 1943. Weather clear. Morale excellent. Preparations completed for Over-Seas flight to North Africa. At 09:00 February 15, 1943, the Flight Echelon departed

Morrison Field, Florida. 1st Lieutenant Hess remained due to mechanical malfunction of plane # 41-29774. 2nd Lieutenant Davies, Ford, McKinney, Plumlee, and Stultz appointed 1st Lieutenants, February 5, 1943.

Davies, Robert D., 1Lt, pilot

Hess, Robert G., 1Lt, pilot

Plumlee, Eldon A., 1Lt, pilot

Ford, Charles L., Jr., 1Lt, pilot

McKinney, Charles A., 1Lt, pilot

Stultz, Raymond B., 1Lt, pilot