

January 1944

[Transcriber's note: Some entries are truncated. Please see the original document for the full details.]

War Diary, 487th Bombardment Squadron, 340th Bombardment Group

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January 1, 1944 Pompeii Airfields

No mission today.....Turkey for dinner at four P.M. this afternoon. Unfortunately, there was little else to go with it except rain and cold. The 489th men say Christmas dinner was equally depressing: they had turkey, potatoes, peas, and rice pudding – and the turkey had gasoline on it. We are beginning to appreciate our mess hall more and more.....Engineering Officer Coyle has made Captain – after sweating out the promotion for months. Several new first lieutenants are wearing the silver.....Movie at the Flagella was “Tennessee Johnson” with Van Heflin. It was an interesting story of the United States vice-president who could neither read nor write until he was an adult, as a run-away apprentice, the man who got drunk at his inauguration. As usual, one looks at movies more objectively over here, where audiences are of mixed nationality. “Forget the history of England” says Mrs. Johnson, “and think of your won for a while.” And the line is brilliant with meaning when the audience contains Britishers (who probably can't understand the language, oddly enough.).....

2nd

No mission today.....Italian Unit No. 1, a song and dance show from Bari, played to a packed house at the Flagello tonight. Lights went out early, before the show. When the nurses entered, on the arms of officers, to take their seats on the floor in the center aisle, hundreds of flashlights beamed down on them and there were many wolf wails. the show was well received, the chorus having tow or three attractive girls. One young blonde girl sang well, in English. Her rendition of “Stardust” got a good hand before and after.....Captain Coyle, Captain Schreiner, and Captain Willhite parked their jeep in front of a barber shop, got out to get a shave, found it gone when they returned.....Operations announced tomorrow's move.....

3rd

No mission today.....Planes of the 487th departed Foggia No. 3 in mid-morning. Trip over the snow-covered Apennines was interesting. Lt. Hammond took pictures of Mt. Vesuvius as Lt. Jackman buzzed the crater. They fund a certain picturesque thrill in flying over the famous mountain, listening to “In the Mood” played on American records broadcast from London.....POP was begun December 10th and is a fine L/G. The spongy volcanic ash absorbs water even after several day's rain. The 340th Group is quartered along a road from one town to another, in houses from which local citizens have been evacuated (and they don't like it.) The 487th is most compact, all quarters except flying officers being located together. The buildings are quaint, but dry and warm. It is our very best break since we have been in combat. Even the mess hall is in a building.....

4th

No mission today, and late this evening Operations announced a stand-down for a week. Explanation: training. Capt. Meriwether says he's superstitious and thinks we will go back to Africa, because his wife has already heard that we are now in Africa. He says they "knew" in the States that Colonel Mills had gone down with his ship – before it happens.....At noon today the BBC announced that forward patrols of the Russian Army had crossed the Polish Border.....Our generator runs during the day, breaks down when night falls.....Our sections and quarters look like stage sets. The S-2 section: housed in a rambling building made of lava rock, with thick walls and rooms at various levels. Steps up to the door, a thick metal-covered affair opening into a room about 18 feet square. Domed ceiling, fenestrated transom with ancient wood shutter. Thick rail-less steps at left lead up to doorway to living quarters. Walls are yellow and mottled – squares of white show where pictures were hung. A small blackboard is pinned against a wall – evidently the room was a school-room. There is one window in the rear, barred, with glass shutters. The stovepipe goes out through a broken pane. Stove is a GI potbelly with a pile of cut wood behind it. There are four wicker straight chairs, bought in Sfax, Tunisia, and dragged along with us. Two long issue file-desks and a folding table cut the room in half. These are littered with letters, a can, magazines, pocketbooks, a chess game. A 8-inch radio speaker is on the wall beside a Mercator map of the Pacific area. On this map, on plastiseal, the Aleutians are marked with a U.S. Flag, and arrow points to New Britain isle with the legend "Attacked December 14th," and various similar annotations appear near the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. On the same wall is a photograph board, now showing photos of General Cannon and individuals being decorated by him. Also on the board is a French newspaper containing a photo of 7A over Sibenik. A "flash" notice at the bottom says "Forward Russian Patrols Cross Polish Border." Front wall contains large map of the present bomb-line in Italy, with German positions listed (in one corner of this is the typed news of the day) and a 1:4000000 map of Europe, mainly showing the Russian lines, but containing such information as "Total German Planes 4854." Side wall has a Reference Key for 1:250,000 maps of Italy, and a map of the Balkan area showing disposition of troops in that area. On the floor on the right side is a series of boxes and cases for officers mess gear, filled with folded maps. In the rear is another table, with shaded electric light above it, and a large gray box containing supplies for the section. Other items to be seen are clip boards, a typewriter, and various items of soldier's equipment left in the room, mostly mess-kits.....

5th

The 487th Squadron Area is in the little town of Poggio Marino. Inhabitants say the buildings bordering the road were dynamited by the Germans. Population is poor. There is a market place, laid out each morning with hand-made baskets, chairs, ladders, etcetera. Baskets of oranges and apples are displayed prettily with green leaves. The small shops are cluttered with cheap merchandise. The women seem to be hardworking and cheerful, but men, young and old, appear cynical and dismayed. The new-born babies look undernourished, but the other kids have plenty of vigor. The 487th area begins on the outskirts of town, with buildings that look as if they were molded in wet lava by a giant-child who tried but couldn't quite get his corners square and lines straight. Roofs are of different levels, sprouting odd little chimneys at frequent and odd intervals. A few are tiled, but most are just rounded off lava. All are old. The main road splits the 487th area, winds on down past the landing field to the town of Terzigno, where the 488th and Headquarters are bivouacked. The 486th is spread out along the road, which is busy with GI vehicles, carts and horses, women with vegetables on their heads, kids, soldiers stringing wires or carrying typewriters. There is a general noise of woodcutting, hammering, yelling children, and the slush of vehicles going through mud.....The 12th Bomber Command, some of whose personnel is being drawn from units within it, was depleted when its former personnel were used to

form the 15th Air Force Hq.....The Calais area has been heavily bombed three times withing the week. Germans say we are after their secret rocket guns, but it looks like invasion may be immanent. 1300 bombers went over first, then “more than 3000 warplanes,” then 1200 bombers.....The Operations Trailer is still on the road, inching slowly along on the winding highways.....A number of vehicles were left behind by the 306th Service Group drivers and materials were swiped when the forward party first came up.....

6th

Major Parsons mentioned casually this evening that one of the four B-25 Groups will be sent to Burma to join General Chennault's Fourteenth Air Force. Guess is that it will be the 310th or the 340th.....A new plane came in tonight, making twenty for the Squadron. It has five nose guns, a tail turret, and is a corker – one of the newest D's.....On the night they arrived here, Sgts. Bunn and Padon fell into a well, getting a cold bath on a cold night. No injuries suffered.....Sgt. Harasavich's leg was freed of it's cast today.....Engineering is in a barn (with an ack-ack gun on top). The family owning the barn has a little 12 yr. old girl named Josephina, who has taken a great shine to Sgt. Gross. She won't let him sweep, won't even let him erase marks on the blackboard.....The Eye-tyes seem fascinated by the airplanes taking off and landing, and won't go away. Capt. Coyle shot three flares at a group yesterday, and a guard almost took his gun to another crowd before they would disperse.....Sgts. Dutchick, Spader, Huffman, and Elliott haven't changed their clothes since Christmas Eve and don't see any prospect of doing so. They returned from Naples on leave to discover their tent had been mysteriously burned.....After visiting Naples, one sergeant has broken the Squadron's record by writing home for money. “Send me some money,” he says, “so I can see some more of Italy.”.....Someone thinks the recent “thunderstorm” was a first sign of Spring.....One soldier says he is going to get married as soon as he reaches home, wonders why he didn't do it long ago. “I'm going to get myself well-fixed for the next war,” he says.....Sgt. Buller says his brother has left the States for a third tour, didn't like the training program in the States while he was there.....Someone went out and killed a rabbit a few days ago, had rabbit and fried spuds in his tent. Geese landed near the runway at Foggia, but no one killed any.....Churches in Italy may be magnificent, but congregations are poverty stricken.....A new clipping has been received in the Squadron: “Capt. Donald J. Marcan, lone survivor among the six man crew of a b-25 bomber which was shot down over Tunis last may 6, is recovering from injuries received on that mission at Percy Jones General Hospital, Battle Creek, Michigan. His wife expects to remain with him until he can return home. He is the son of Dr. and Mrs. Carl H. Marcan, 943 No. 33rd St.”.....7X has a picture of Bugs Bunny rampant on its nose, and is called “Old Bugs:.....

7th

The 487th flew a practice mission this morning, with eight ships successfully bombing a road bridge northeast of Foggia. Because interrogation conflicted with lunch (with steak, new potatoes, and gravy) results were only scantily reported.....The 340th Group is reported to have gotten a new commander today...Lt. Col. Jones. He was one of those on the Tokio [Tokyo] Raid and is reported to be A-No. 1.....We have lost one of our Italian kitchen boys – he had a chancre.....”So with my Air Medal and five cents,” one combat crew member avers, “I can ride any subway in New York City”.....A few light bulbs (probably Japanese, and definitely cheap grade) have been bought in Poggia Marino for \$1.20 each.....Group Special Services has obtained the use of a small cinema house in San Guiseppe, a neat little village about five miles from our area. Our first show tonite was “In Little Old New York” with Alice Faye, Fred MacMurray, and Richard Greene.....”I'm always surprised,” says one man, “to find things over here which I had always thought were strictly American.” By that, he means he gets a kick out of seeing Remington typewriters and such items being used over here by the natives. Singer

Sewing Machines and Eastman Kodak Film (if they are American, and we think they are) see to be practically Universal.....The Italians just bundle up when it gets cold. They run around barefoot in this weather, not appearing to mind. If they have any shoes, they are simple wooden clogs with a piece of canvas across the instep.....Our boys are amazed by the industry of the Italian girls, and are prone to compare them with American women. These girls drive cattle-drawn carts, carry loads on their heads, wash clothes, and appear far more hardy than the men-folk.....There seems to be considerable pilfering from the store-house behind the mess-hall. Canned chicken, fruit, and fruit juices disappear right and left. Bread is a favorite item, because it is a basis for late snacks in tents and rooms.....The mess hall boys themselves often cook up a few pork chops late at night, or at least there have been pork chop smells emanating from the kitchen lat at night.....Men who have been with us all the way from Walterboro are beginning to forget about going home, feeling that they are here for the duration. "Home by the end of '45" is gradually replacing "Home by Christmas" now that Christmas has come and gone.....

8th

Briefing was in Squadron today for a simulated bombing attack on a road bridge southeast of Potenza. Eight planes participated, dropping their "bombs" in a good pattern. On the return, the area south of Vesuvius was covered in mist, and the field was difficult to find. A barrage balloon over Torre Annunziata was eventually dragged down, but planes were flying around in the heavy haze, only barely able to see each other. Flying from this field is going to have its difficulties.....7B is now named "Little Isadore" for some reason. Another interesting name is "Princess Nelly Thunder," on of the 310th ships which came in in the middle of December.....Lts. Hollis and Emslie left three days ago, without as usual, saying goodbye. They're off for the U.S.A.....The plane which arrived on January 6th is well-heeled with guns. There are three in the nose and two on each side of the pilot's compartment. There is also a tail turret, plus top turret and waist guns. It is called "Tare Sugar" and has the Morse symbols for T.S. on the side. It has only 85 hours on it and is straight from the States.....The Squadron is flooded with rumors that we are going to England. These come from a feeling that since General Montgomery is going to England, he may want to take with him a couple of the tactical outfits he has had with him the past year.....Show tonite in San Guiseppe was "Thank Your Lucky Stars" with Eddie Cantor and a dozen or so movie stars. Screwy but entertaining.....Frankfurters for supper for first time.....

9th

A practice formation was to have dropped 100 lb practice bombs on a range located on the famous Salerno invasion beaches this morning, but dull skies and intermittent rains canceled the mission.....Col. Knapp, CO of the XII Bomber Command, of which we are now a part (we are no longer under 57th Wing and XII ASC, effective January 1st), visited today. With him was Lt. Col. Jones, new 340th Commander, who insisted upon being personally introduced to every man in the outfit, clerks and cooks alike.....Since Lt. Wrede is expected to be on his way to the USA when his birthday arrives in a few days, kitchen personnel baked his cake today and allowed him to invite a few of his friends to the mess hall to eat it.....Capt. Stith, 486th S-2, has given us Lt. Frank O'Leary's story of his escape from Greece. Lt. O'Leary was pilot of a plane shot down November 17th over Athens/Kalamaki A/D. Lt. Smith, co-pilot, bailed out, but the Greeks allowed him to be taken prisoner because he had a bad head-gash and to try to smuggle him out might have endangered his life. The Greeks say they'll get him out as soon as he is well. The Germans buried the 4 other members of the crew (there was a tail-gunner that day) with full military honors, including flowers and a 21-gun salute. The Greeks photographed the grave and gave prints to Lt. O'Leary. The Germans evidently were not able to identify the men, but the Greeks said they would mark the graves with information supplied by Lt

O'Leary. Lt. O'Leary was amazed by the efficient system which has been organized by British Intelligence.....T/Sgt. Latady, S/Sgt. Harding, and Sgt. Geers are without a tent since the 7th. It burned after their gasoline stove blew up.....

10th

Col. Jones visited the line today, saying he wanted to know everyone and asking to be introduced to all and sundry. By all accounts he created a very good impression, asking what he could do, what equipment is needed. He said he had heard we had more ships in the air than any one else. One decision we liked: Group Material said we'd have to get authority from headquarters to take the extra strafing guns off Tare Sugar, but he said "You have to fly 'em. You take 'em off if you don't want 'em.".....The 310th is evidently the group going to Burma.....Lt. Coyle is trading off 7R and 7S for two new B-25 H's. Since 7S can't carry wing racks, the new ship will carry 50,000 lbs. more bombs in fifty missions, a considerable amount.....Lts Wrede and Sherbourne left for home. S/Sgts. Longman, Morgan and Beringer left yesterday.....Someone broke into the tent belonging to Truex and Kelly and made off with several articles of value. "Eyeties," they suggest; "or Limey's".....Captain Meriwether was interviewed today by 12th Bomber Command and A-2 and was told to report for duty on the 12th. It is likely to be a more responsible job for him, as a member of the A-2 section.....Shanley received a Christmas card today from little Siok, addressed from Veteran's Administration, Northampton, Mass, U.S.A.....The Squadron is fairly well supplied with coal swiped down by the docks in Naples.....There are many advantages to being near a port, the chief one being that we are eating better than at any time in our history.....

11th

Practice bombing missions went out from the several squadrons in the Group this morning and afternoon. A plane of the 486th got caught in prop wash on landing, flipped over on its back and exploded. Apparently the 100 lb. practice bombs were being brought back for some reason, for the explosion was greater than that of gas tanks. The entire crew was killed.....Lt. Gellman did not brief our crews to twirl the spinners a round, and consequently all our practice bombs were duds. It is difficult to see how bombs can be duds from 9000 feet, and then explode when a plane crashes. Sympathetic detonation after explosion of gas tanks may account for it.....Mt. Vesuvius is a great mound to the North of us, sprinkled with snow. She smokes white at times, then black. Tonight her north side had four trickles of molten lava to about a third of the way down. Snow covered ridges hedge us in all around, except the West, where Torre Annunziata lies on the coast.....Several officers of the Squadron visited the lavish Orange Garden in Naples tonight. It has much of the atmosphere of a night club at home, serving gin, vermouth and several other mediocre drinks. There are enough women (nurses and Red Cross) to make the place ornamental. Although it closes at 10, there seems to be enough time to get stinko. Ground officers have a bellicose attitude toward the Air Corps and the Peninsula Base Section, growing out of the fact that Service Area Command and Base Section frequently have elaborate private clubs in cities, to which the other officers are not admitted.....

12th

Six ships flew a local practice formation flight today. No other operations.....Show tonight was "Pittsburgh" an old one which everyone had seen, but still an improvement over last night's "Omaha Trail" which lowered morale considerably.....The Argus says "The 487th Squadron led the Group in number of sorties flown, number of operational hours, tonnage of bombs dropped, and in bombing efficiency (for the month of December)." That's everything! There were 133 sorties, 300:30

operational hours, and 272.73 tons of bombs dropped credited to the 487th. For the period April, 1943 to December 1943, 487th is credited with 967 sorties, 30016:15 operational hours, and 1663:25 tons of bombs dropped. Says the Argus: "During this period (of our total time in combat) the 488th Squadron led the Group in number of sorties flown and operational hours. The 487th Squadron led in tonnage of bombs dropped and bombing efficiency".....Capt. Meriwether left for 12th BC.....The ruins of Pompeii are about four miles from our base, and almost everyone has visited them. Reactions have been varied regarding the ruins themselves: Some had expected something more astonishing, others want to go back again. The pornography drew considerable comment. The huge Cathedral in Pompeii aroused awed appreciation.....All orders for the Capri rest camp have been temporarily canceled.....There is a general feeling that the Italians in the area are glad to see us.....The Communications section played Santa Claus all by themselves on Christmas Day. They gathered up a pile of candy and cigarettes, put it in a jeep, and went looking for people to give the stuff to. They made a special package which was to go to the "prettiest little girl they found." The little girl turned out to be one with a fractured leg, who deeply appreciated the presents.....Sgt. Hostetler has sent home \$1200 which he won gambling. The First Sergeant is asking his wife for \$300, and says if he gets it he's off gambling for the duration.....Lt. Farley says the "red ack-ack" which the combat crews reported over Greece is magnesium. Bits of it burn enormous holes in planes.....The new flak suits came in today. There are several types, one type looking something like a catcher's protector. The two pieces worn by the bombardier weigh 25 ½ lbs.

13th

Mission today was to Guidonia A/D, about 20 miles east of Rome. Nine 487th planes took off, but one had to return because of mechanical difficulty. This plane reported it had been shot at over Naples harbor. The other eight planes were to bomb the dispersal areas east of the field and did so with good results. Photos show our bombs falling well in the designated area. The field was evidently an important target, because three Groups participated in the attack. All 340th ships returned safely, but one ship of the 12th Group was shot down. Ack-ack was intense, but not very accurate. Lt. Puckett says he dreaded the mission more than any heretofore, probably because he has not flown in a month. He says he almost got sick until the ack-ack began to pop, but that he began to feel alright after they began shooting at him.....Barankovich is crew chief and Ellman is assistant on Tare Sugar. Batelli has been made assistant crew chief on Snow White II.....After looking at these people, their ways of doing things, and their equipment, one wonders how the Italians ever figured they could win the war.....Italian women appear to age much more rapidly than American women. Women of 35 often look like grandmothers (they may be, of course.....24 more new men came in from the 310th Group today. They say the whole Group is being filled up with G's, that nobody knows which way is up, but that there was no rumor in circulation that the Group would go to Burma.....Show tonite was "Lucky Jordan" with Alan Ladd. The patriotic note at the ending made the audience a bit self-conscious.....A number of men have expressed a desire to attend the opera in Naples.....Mickey Schwartz and Nate Crane left today for the good old U.S.A.....

14th

Stand-down today for the 487th Squadron. The other squadrons of the 340th Group bombed the road bridge on the Cassino-Rome road again. The 486th lost two planes over the target, and in another a gunner bailed out, believing his plane was gone after the inner-phone was shot out.....The road to Pompeii is particularly rough. From Poggia Marino, it winds through the less attractive section of the village of Scafati on to the present town of Pompeii, which is much less wholesome than the ruins, which are not populated by cauliflowers, pregnant women, and millions of children. The entrance is clogged with street merchants selling an amazing collection of junk, chiefly colored rayon bedspreads

at \$30.00 each. Another favorite item is ash trays made of lava. Tickets are five lire each, and English-speaking guides charge 150 lire for a party of one to fifteen. The amphitheatre has been damaged in two places by bombs, one crater being in the center of the enclosure. Another bomb landed in "The House of the Dancing Faun".....Chief amazements: That the unearthed town is so large; that another town has been dug up; that another still-buried town lies under Castellamare di Stabia; That the towns were buried under lava-ash carried by the wind rather than flowing lava; that the people were so sexy.....A WAC was being escorted through the ruins, was blushing outside the love-room of the bachelor brothers.....Sad relics of Pompeii's great tourist days: The bombed restaurant of the Albergo del Sole, with a single musician serenading two lone dog-faces; bedraggled awnings over the political inscriptions on the walls; the unexcited attitude of the guide.....

15th

Today the 487th provided six ships and six crews to bomb the marshaling yards at Foligno, Italy. All returned safely and bombs fell with a fair degree of accuracy on the marshaling yards. Crews reported the observation of three single engined enemy fighters on route back but gunners were rather disappointed that they offered no opposition.....Ack-ack was inaccurate and no ships were holed.....After a two weeks absence because of our Service Group remaining in Foggia, the P.X. rations came in today. Being so near to a seaport as large as Naples that handles most of the American supplies, creates a question as to why rations get fewer each week. At Hergla we thought we had hit the bottom as far as rations were concerned, but it now looks as though the Port of Pompeii is rapidly gaining ground and before too long shall take the title. Sgt. Greg Moore, squadron P.X. man, has inaugurated a new set-up where by cigarettes and candy (which has been obvious by its absence for the last month) is meted out every other day, thus conserving the rations. An excellent idea which won't last long if rations continue to be as poor as they have been lately.....Special Service posted a notice today that arrangements were being made to provide tickets and transportation for La Traviata at the world famous San Carlo Opera House. A great number of enlisted men expressed their desire to attend not only for the opera, but mostly to tell the folks at home that they attended a program at the famous theatre.....At the movie tonite was "Omaha Trail."

16th

Six b-25's of the 487th were over the target at 1235 hours today. The marshaling yards at Terni, Italy again felt the weight of the 340th Bombardment Group. Crews reported large explosions in the target area created by a perfect bomb pattern starting at the north side of the tracks to the south side. Ack-ack was nil and there was no other enemy opposition.....Romance has blossomed in the bosom of the war-weary 487th Squadron. Cpl. Bill Dunnerman asked permissions of Maj. Parsons to marry one of the local Signorina's. She's lovely, but can't speak English nor can he speak Italian. However, Bill claims that she can understand him – perhaps it's the international language of love that every human understands. Remark: Love isn't blind, but definitely silent in this case.....Sgt. Carl Serio and a few other Catholic boys in the squadron were rather perturbed about the Italian girls entering the church bare-headed. At 11:30 Mass in the nearby house of worship, Sgt. Joe Walsh served the Mass and Serio delivered the sermon in Italian on "Why a lady should wear a chapeau in Church." Next Sunday we'll know how effective the sermon ala Serio has been.....Since Naples is out of bounds souvenirs being sent home are becoming fewer although Pompeii still has an abundance of the customary junk that GI's are foolish enough to buy.....Early diners imbibed in fried chicken today, fresh from the States while the later chow hounds had to satisfy themselves with hamburgers. Tasty isn't the word for even fresh hamburgers after numerous C-ration menus.....At the show tonite was "Omaha Trail" for the second time. Seemed to leave everyone rather cold.....T/Sgt. E. S. Johnston has given up turret specialist

ground work for the blue. He missed his first scheduled raid today as he was delayed by the Dentist in Naples who is taking an impression to replace some missing choppers.....Lts. Cox, Gavin, Simenitzky, Sgts. Furey and Pinion left for the U.S.A. today.....

17th

The marshaling yards at Sulmona or Guilianova, Italy, were to have been the targets for six of our planes today, but both targets were completely obscured by clouds and the formation rather than return with their bombs scouted around and finally dropped their bomb load very successfully on the marshaling yards at Chiaravalle, Italy. The pattern landed in the marshaling yards southwest of the town and extended thru the town. No ack-ack or enemy aircraft were encountered and all the planes returned safely to the base.....Cpl. Hurley and Sgt. Moore went to Naples today – Cpl. Hurley to make arrangements for seats to the opera and Sgt. Moore to “check-up” on PX supplies. Both returned in the evening feeling very gay, after having many a drink and dancing with the WAC's. Hurley had the tickets alright, but we never did hear anything about the PX.....A supply of Pyramidal tents arrived at the squadron today and looks very much like we'll have to knock down the ones already up and erect the new ones – always sump'm to take the joy out of living.....Before we know it, when the season is over we'll have GI stoves.....The mail situation is still bad following the Christmas package deliveries. Main bitch is that although everybody received many packages, there are still a great deal yet uncovered. Could be that the fish also enjoyed a festive holiday or else Davie Jones has a locker full of goodies.....That fine Southern drawl now heard on the 487th switchboard is that of Sgt. J. G. Johnston who is now functioning in the message center.....Sgt. Shanlay is now responding to “Stanley” which was brought about by the mess hall personnel.....Rumors: That we move before the 25th of this month. That seven men out of the squadron will be returned to the Continental limits each month. We're all in favor of the latter, but too sensible to believe it.....

18th

Six planes and crews took off at 10:20 today to bomb a Viaduct at Terni, Italy. The mission was not too successful as the entire pattern was laid on the left side of the Viaduct. However, the nearby town which is occupied by German troops felt the brunt of the attack. No ack-ack was encountered over the target, but the formation met a slight barrage on the trip home – two ships, 7E and 7T were slightly holed.....Roast Beef for dinner today – very good, but no seconds.....Lt. Swearingen left the squadron to take up duties as S-2 officer in the 486th Sq. We'll all miss him particularly since he did such a good job with Special Services to say nothing of his excellent work on the diary. Capt. Bugbee is now our Special Service officer.....Cpl. Nelson, our mail orderly had an unfortunate accident today while driving a jeep to Gp. Hq. An Eyetic child received a broken leg – Too bad, but there are so many of these children who are always on the road scurrying back and forth for no particular reason that such things are bound to happen. From all appearances Mussolini's “mama medals” were distributed in large quantities in this village.....Signorina's are calling on the boys in the tent area these nights and they very often get a warm reception – here's hoping the boys don't get too much out of it.....Roy Rogers in “Song of Texas” was the movie tonite. It was well liked by all the boys from Texas, but ??????.....

19th

Today the target for six of our ships and crews was the Airdrome at Rieti, Italy. A 9-ton bomb load was dropped on the Airdrome at 1319 hours with very good results. Black smoke and explosions were observed as a result of the bombing.....T/Sgt. Robert L. King, left this morning for the States after

completing his tour of combat missions and a sojourn in the hospital due to too many gay times between going over the targets. Two trucks loaded to capacity departed at 12:30 for the San Carlo Opera House in Naples to hear La Traviata. Both trucks arrived at Naples in time for all to have a bite to eat and drink some Vino before the performance. Cpl. Bartkus says, "I enjoyed the opera very much but there was too much singing. It gets monotonous hearing them sing all the time. I think they should talk now and then".....Sgt. Pritchard and Sgt. Hetzner were in a festive mood after returning from the opera and after having eaten many spam sandwiches in the mess hall proceeded to one of the local vino shops and consumed two bottles of vermouth. They said it was really good and true it must have been for both boys insisted on serenading around the tent area at a much too late hour.....Capt. Bugbee spent a good part of today in town trying to find out who was the legal owner of the green sedan Major Parsons rides around in. If Major Parsons is not now the legal owner of said machine he will be shortly.....Roy Rogers in "Song of Texas" was repeated at the movies tonite. Area guard was discontinued with a warning that it would be resumed if the men did not cooperate in keeping the civilians as well as the Signorinas out of the area.....

20th

Our target today was PP C-277889, a railroad bridge well above the line. apparently every group in the theatre had the same target as visibility was so poor due to smoke and explosions caused by accurate bombing of the target earlier in the morning. However, the 487th unwilling to bring back their bombs, located another bridge and bombed the hell out of PP G-271890. The six ships of the 487th were over the target at 1306 hours. Ack-ack was heavy, moderate and inaccurate as to height and no ships were holed. 2nd Lt. Eustis, Bombardier on the raid said, "We came close enough to shake the foundations, but the bridges were still standing when we banked to return to the base".....Sgt. Drause, armorergunner, left for Cairo on detached service for one month to attend RAF school. He was wondering if Groppi's is still the place it used to be.....In the mess hall today, La Traviata was being compared to shows put on by Minsky. Another thing that came up was the comparison between New York's Metropolitan and the San Carlo. Cpl. White offered his opinion that there were probably more true opera lovers attending the San Carlo in one season than there were at the Metropolitan through its existence.....The new GI tents that came in the other day are going up gradually in the area. They will no doubt prove to be more comfortable but we sure hate to tear up our happy little homes now for no other reason than to change tents.....Promotions came out today: "Smokey Hostetler made T/Sgt., Sgts. Powell, Wood, Stephenson and Vervacke made Staff, Gammage and Iwan made Sgt. - Gammage started a wet celebration early in the morning....."Quiet Please - Murder" with Gail Patrick was at the movies tonite. Everybody seemed to enjoy it although Gail Patrick always proves refreshing in spite of her role.....Two new officer bombardiers joined the 487th today, 2nd Lt. Paul V. Deneen and 2nd Lt. Frederick Risch.....Baptism of fire for S/Sgt. engineers Parks, Floyd, Longwedel and Padon, flying as tail-gunners.....

21st

Two missions today - looks like something's cookin'. The first to take off was up at 08:45 and over Foligno marshaling yards at 1050 hours, but due to heavy cloud coverage returned with their bombs at 1200 hours. Number two took off at 1345 hours and was over the target, Avezzano marshaling yards, at 1500 hours. Bomb pattern was excellent placing the bombs directly into the yards and destroying several buildings within the area. Ack-ack was reported as coming from the airfield northwest of the target. However, it was inaccurate and none of the ships were hit. T/Sgt. Woodrow Peterson upon returning from the raid said that he had never seen so much allied air activity before during his entire tour. Six ships of the 487th participated in each raid.....A meeting of the squadron was called at 1800 to

impart some S-2 information which was eagerly anticipated all day. All were rather disappointed when Lt. Linthicum announced that they had received word to divulge no information until the OK from Group was given, which was expected at any moment. However, it was suggested that those wishing to do so should go to the movies where "Hit Parade of 1943" was unreeling, and the news would wait. Some hung around however until 2030 when the invasion of Italy, north of the line and the Allies intention of taking Rome within three days was announced. This is the first real morale booster in the news since Naples fell.....Changes in mess-hall personnel sent Mess Sgt. Jayne back to his old stamping ground in Communications and Sgt. McMillan is replacing him as Mess Sgt. "Mac" has been cooking in our kitchen almost from time of activation and should prove to be a fine Mess Sergeant.....Our only general duty man, Cpl. William Stewart is now holding forth in the kitchen.....The remainder of the GI tents were pitched as today was the dead-line, everybody is now freezing to death as they have so much more space to heat than our beloved desert tents. Oh! for a steam heated room with an adjoining tile bath.....

22nd

Crews as well as ground personnel were rather anxious today after the information received last nite, and the order that five crews and ships be in readiness to take off at any hour of the nite. However, we were on an immediate standby all morning until the mission was called at 1130 hours. The target was a PP (G-169493) which unfortunately was missed completely. Our pattern overshot the road but with the amount of traffic in the air no doubt the road was destroyed before the day was over. Ack-ack was heavy, 7L, 7C and 7F were holed. 7H lost her nose wheel door, but no damage was done.....Capt. Bugbee admits that the officers are transacting "official" business with regularity at the "Orange Grove," Allied Officer's Club atop the highest hill in Naples. No wonder, it offers blue lights, dance band, drinks, and has all the attributes of a New York night spot. It is one of the few swank tourist rendezvous remaining of the once glorious Naples.....New combat crew member arriving today were: 2nd Lts. Billy Jo Barry, pilot; and Howard F. Stewart, navigator; S/Sgt. Edward F. O'Neill, engineer-gunner; and Sgt. Ernest E. Mathurin, radio-gunner. S/Sgt. Crosby finished fifty-two missions with the 12th Bomb Group last May and after being sent back to the States, volunteered for another tour. Carrying gas masks, wearing helmets and the new ideas of the "Chairborne Command" of what a soldier needs to know was too much for him, after seeing the real thing. REMARK: Maybe we'll all be of the same opinion after we see what's been done with the army we left behind.....Lt. Joe Farley and Sgt. Parkins are entertaining old friends from the 389th Port Battallion this week-end....."Stage Door Canteen" with Gracie Fields, Ray Bolger and Vera Zorina was the flicker tonite. Had a lot of audience appeal and everybody enjoyed it.....Today the boys are on the line to bid good-bye to their friends of the 400th Ack-ack Bn. The gun and circle of sand bags atop the Engineering office will be missed as it served as a land mark for the boys returning to their quarters in the dark.....Biggest issue of the year – Can Roy McKinney outlast Fred Helms with the local Signorinas? They compared records for a half-hour tonite – no decision.....T/Sgt. John Bills' Tuff Stuff (483) is the subject of lots of wagers. His engines with over 450 hours, second highest in the group right now, are drawing bets as to whether or not they'll reach 500 or 600 hours.....

23rd

Target for today was the cross roads at Avezzano. Five 487th B-25's were over the designated area at 1024 hours and returned at 1125 hours with a sad story. Their bombs landed in town starting from southwest corner of the large square and extending through the town on a 120° heading. After having one of the best, if not the best bombing records in this theater it's rather hard to take these near misses. However, when our new crews become more acclimated to combat we expect them to make their

predecessors bombing record look sick.....Our newly acquired P.X. rations went on sale today for enlisted men, with an endless line from 3:30 to 6:30 P.M. Candy was really a treat this time after being without over since Xmas packages went to the cleaners.....Special Service has started in earnest and thus far has received many acceptable suggestions.....Nomination for address easiest to remember: Bombardier, Morton Holzman's female friend at #10 Downing Street, New York City. The young lady's name and apartment number are personal property.....Poor T/Sgt. Gaffney was scared for a while yesterday when the lady with the baby at the Armament gate jabbered away in Italian and Sgt. Rexford "interpreted" that she was accusing George of having seduced her daughter and wanted to know when George was going to marry the "Seduced Girl." "But I never ever went near any of the girls around here," Gaffney pleaded. Actually the lady was looking for laundry.....M/Sgt. Lynch, our real army man, suggested that the 1st Sgt. locate in the Chesapeake Bay area as a gof-horn when hostilities cease.....Barbara Stanwyck put on a "leg show" at the movies tonite in "Lady of Burlesque." Barbara, we find, is still talking out of the side of her mouth although she's a fine actress and always entertaining....."Bet show I've seen since coming overseas," was the remark passed by many after seeing "High Rookie" a completely G.I. show put on in the 486th area today. They came with two trucks, their own equipment and within one hour's time were set up to begin the performance. Small wonder it was a success on it's tour of the U.S. and England.

24th

Intermittent rains caused the squadron to stand-down today.....The Special Service room was well inhabited by those who like to read and many expressed appreciation for having such a place to idle away a few hours on non-operational days.....Officer's P.X. rations went on sale today and all were quite pleased with the variety & quantities, after such skimpy rations for the past two months.....Fire-arms inspection was held today by T/Sgt. Gaffney. 1st Sgt. Parkins tagged along to get a picture of the enlisted men's rifles and we hear he wasn't too well satisfied as many were rusty in whole or in part.....Capt. Bugbee & Lt. Farley went to Catania today to purchase fresh vegetable & fruits to supplement the quartermaster issue, which is entirely too monotonous without our own efforts to make the meals palatable.....Fifteen minutes after the stand-down was declared there wasn't a vehicle to be had in the squadron as many had "official" business to transact in the restricted city of Naples.....The 487th was also well represented at the ruins of Pompeii.....After weeks of preparation and hard work by our carpenter Sgt. Bornstein, squadron hot water showers went into operation today. It's been sometime since most of the boys had a good hot shower and there was a long waiting line.

25th

Six of our planes took off at 0905 to bomb a road junction at Artana, Italy. The formation was over the designated area at 0945 only to find the target completely obscured by clouds. 7L was carrying two delayed action bombs and the pilot decided to jettison same on the way back, which he did. While circling the field waiting for landing instructions, group operations ordered the planes to make a second run on the target. They were over the target the second time at 1157 hours, but visibility was so poor that they finally dropped their bomb load on a road near the town of Guilianell, but not with success. The pattern was laid to the left of the road and no hits were observed. Ack-ack was heavy, accurate and of moderate intensity, but all of our sips and crews returned safely and a stand-down was declared for the rest of the day.....Ben Harmon, a member of the mess hall personnel has an Eyetie house-boy who is apparently a descendant from a long line of Landscape Gardners. Ben and the other boys in the tent had him lay out a road to the entrance of their domicile and in spite of his youth he did a good job with several of the trees forming an arch from the road to the door of the tent. After many favorable comments, the boys decided their "mansion" should have a name and christened it "Villa Maria."

Rumor has it that Maria is the name of Ben's favorite Signorina.....Joe Wynne who completed his combat tour as a radio-gunner is having a bang-up time while awaiting his orders to go home. He can be found any nite in one of a number of local "taps".....Highland is now relieved of his job as crash truck driver and is back on the line keeping "Rosie" (7U) in shape for the many missions ahead.....

26th

Mission this morning was called off at Group briefing due to inclement weather conditions.....Rain made it a miserable gloomy day, unfit for human or beast. However, it cleared and the sun came out in time for the opera truck at 12:30. The opera offered this week was the "Barber of Seville" which received not nearly the reception of "La Traviata" last week. The Barber is an opera that one more or less has to learn to like as it has produced few tunes familiar to the ear of the ordinary person.....Lt. Hammond was relieved of the duty of P.X. officer by Lt. Eustis and the latter sold rations to the officers today.....A new issue of Special Service Magazines came in today and did a disappearing act about as rapidly. It's difficult to make people understand that they are for the convenience of all rather than a selected few.....Quite a bit of mail came in for a change today. mail is still No. 1 morale booster.....Sgt. W.W. Peterson and Fleming put on the gloves in back of the mess hall tonite after a verbal argument on a combat crew member flying over 50 missions and ruining it for the boys who want to call it the completion of their tour at fifty.....Sgt. Fleming has volunteered for additional missions.....Communications section repaired the phonograph machine which was in operation one day before some active GI mistook it for a wrestling partner while listening to one of the newly acquired jive compositions. Cpl. Fletcher has decided he may enjoy a selection or two occasionally and has condescended to do his best with the machine in the welding shop.....Rumor has it that the men on the line will soon have a frame building containing two rooms constructed for them, to be used as reading, writing, and game rooms.....Angriest man on the line today was T/Sgt. Horwitz who used the stand-down yesterday to clean his ship inside and out and then found that a couple of guards had used the cockpit for a lounge where they drank coffee and spilled in here and there.....

27th

Two missions again today which we hope is more of a headache to the Germans than it is to us. The first was over the railroad junction at Segni-Colleferro, Italy, at 1024 hours. Bombs landed in the field south of the target for another near miss. Ack-ack encountered was heavy, accurate and intense, two ships were holed but all crews returned safely. Second raid took place in the afternoon with the marshaling yards at Orte, Italy, as the 487th formation's target. 7P Piloted by Capt. Willhite ran inot difficulty shortly after takeoff when due to hydraulic failure, 2-1000 lb. bombs dropped thru the bomb bay doors and landed safe. Capt. Willhite flew the plane out to sea and salvoed the remaining bomb, warned the crew to be ready to jump, tested the landing gear and then brought the plane safely back to the base.....The stand-by plane took her place in the formation and they proceeded to the target and dropped their bombs with a small percentage of hits being observed in the yards, but a greater percentage landed beyond the target. No enemy opposition was encountered. A squadron meeting at 10:00 A.M. this morning was officiated by Maj. Parsons who divulged a little information about the Eyeties cutting our communications lines but otherwise was of the customary "get on the ball" variety. Maj. Parsons brought up the subject of our recently acquired allies, the Italians, stealing everything and anything they can get their hands on and that an attempt was being made to keep them out of the area. Sure enough the Provost Marshall's truck was combing the vicinity and from the number arrested we never expect to see another familiar Signorina or wash woman. A lot of the boys are wonder ing hwo they will ever get their laundry back if conditions remain the same.....The Dental clinic trailer, is now gracing the 487th area. Capt. Nozick, group Dentist has set us here to repair the teeth of those who were

in classes other than four after the last dental inspection. The boys have already left quite a deposit of "ivory" there, judging from the increasing number of toothless smiles.....The detail returning from Sicily brought back some "Multi Bono" oranges which are now on sale at the P.X. and going like hot cakes.....S/Sgt. Sherry Kelly who has organized a camera club for the purpose of digging up material and equipment plus developing film for those men on the line who have cameras, is progressing nicely. They say that Kelly is the picture-takingest man in the outfit....."Ox Bow Incident" with Henry Fonda pleased the audience at the show tonite.....

28th

The 487th formation of six B-25's smashed the Orte marshaling yards after their unsuccessful attempt yesterday. They were over the target at 1210 hours and laid their pattern perfectly starting on the east side of the choke point and extending entirely across the choke point to the west side. One of two bursts were observed on railroad bridge north of the target which crosses the Tevere River. Ack-ack was scattered and inaccurate, holing no planes.....Twenty-three of the boys took advantage of a tour to Vesuvius today. They seemed to enjoy the ride to the crater via "The Funicular." Many bought souvenirs and all are glad that they didn't miss it.....A Volley ball court was set up today and soon the boys will be getting more than enough exercise.....Capt. Bugbee decided to throw the ball around for a while and wound up with a sprained ankle and a decision that he would stick to cards and such "sit-down" forms of relaxation in the future.....Lt. Forrester our new Athletic director is getting all kinds of equipment together in preparation for the games in the near future.....Rumor once more says it's quite possible that we might move to England. From all accounts next to going back home, England is the favorite parking spot for this duration.....Cpl. Nelson departed today for the hospital and a tonsillectomy. Nelson says, "I will probably lose a lot of this "gut" since my diet will be limited for a few days." Cpl. Lloyd will pinch-hit in the mail department during "Smileys" absence.....Sgt. Liphardt and Cpl. White both on detached service to Group as Photo Laboratory Technicians have been working hard lately moving the trailer lab. to the other side of the road. Reasons and benefits gained by the move are not known. "Ox Bow Incident" was repeated at the movie tonite.

29th

Today six of our planes set out at 0947 to bomb the marshaling yards at Perugia, Italy, but because the target was completely obscured by clouds the formation proceeded to the alternate target which was the harbor installations at San Benevello and dropped their bomb load from 9700' with very poor results. Most of the bombs fell in the water and a few landed on the beach. No hits were observed on the installations. No ack-ack was encountered over the target, but a heavy accurate and moderate barrage was met at Guilianova. However, all the ships and crews returned safely.....New combat crew members arriving in the squadron are: Capt Geo. B. Birmingham, pilot; 2nd Lt. Gerald U. Ashmore, pilot; 2nd Lt. Everard B. Shemwell, Navigator; T/Sgt. James R. Brooks, Radio-gunner; and S/Sgt. Ivan W. Henderson, gunner. Brooks and Henderson came to us after completing a tour in the Pacific Theater. The latter is the proud possessor of the D.S.C. for shooting down four Jap zeros.....S/Sgt. Richard T. Egan, Engineer, is also a newcomer in the outfit who served in the Pacific.....Lt Hammond, Lt. Wallace, T/Sgt. Taylor and Cpl. Balawedjer were the first to take advantage of the new volley ball court and tossed the ball around for more than an hour. All complained of being a little "stiff," but a few more days will work out the kinks.....The boys on the line apparently had a feast during the nite as several were observed filling their pockets with potatoes stored outside of the mess hall.....Rumor has it that we can expect a big improvement in the menus served at the "Dining Salon," due to the special efforts of the mess officer and his partners in crime.....Susan Haywood in "Sis Hopkins" was the movie tonite. Not very enjoyable because the reel broke down at least a dozen times.....A sword swallower

was a feature at the officer's club Saturday nite show.

30th

Twelve crews were briefed early this morning to bomb a road junction at Frascati, Italy. They were over the target at 1012 hours and due to a complete cloud coverage of the designated area, bombs overshot and hit to the southwest of Frascati. Bomb bursts could not be observed because of poor visibility. Ack-ack was heavy, accurate and intense with a number of red bursts observed. 7N had the left engine and hydraulic system shot out before going over the target and continued to make the run. The ship was brought back to the base for a belly landing by Lt. Forrester, pilot. The only member of the crew seriously injured was S/Sgt. J.E. Blume, photographer, who incurred a broken leg and arm. 1st Lt. Forrester, 2nd Lt. Barry, S/Sgt. Vervacke, T/Sgt. Hurney and Sgt. Iwan were slightly bruised and shaken up with no serious consequences.....Sunday always fines most of the boys attending their respective services either on base or in town.....Cpl. Fletcher appeared today with a bandage over his left eye. Explanation is that he was hit with a piece of steel in the welding shop.....Our original Italian K.P. "Potsa," brought all the way from San Pancrazio has a most limited American vocabulary. However, he can say "Hey Joe" now, with his latest innovation "My naked ass," a 487th standard.....Sgt. Kosak is now forming a pool which is supposed to reach the total of \$700.00 for the lucky one guessing the end of the war to the nearest minute. Of course the \$700.00 goal will only be reached if everyone enters the pool.....S/Sgt. S. Kelly claims the Jerries knew he was up there on his first mission as tail-gunner today. A piece of flak cut through the fuselage two feet away from his gun position.....T/Sgt. Paul Hofmann, who as crew chief, was responsible for "Flying Jenny's" (7N) being one of the best ships we had, almost cried when Capt. Coyle told him that "Jenny" had crashed landed and could not be repaired. "I'll never have another ship like her," he explained.

31st

Today was to have been a big day as far as missions were concerned with the 487th scheduled to participate in no less than three of them. The first crews were alerted at 07:10, proceeded to briefing and were advised that the ground troops had already covered the target area. We were then on standby until noon at which time we were put on a stand-down because the ground troops had made rapid progress and had all the targets for the day well in hand.....Men on the line have formed a Camera Club and held their first meeting tonite. they are all set to operate with Sgts. Horwitz, Floyd, Litwin and Bunn as the "Voices of experience" in the dark room.....Cpl Vincent "Gusta-gust" Bartkus, is passing up the operas this week. He's going to Caserta instead. "I've seen an opera, but I've never seen a palace," he explained.....The vicinity of the volley ball court took on the appearance of a slaughter house today with Lt. Samuels butchering the cow recently purchased by the food scroungers. The next few days should prove to be holidays in the mess hall.....Cpl. Wright liked his group guard detail so well that he has volunteered for the job permanently and has already transferred his cot, etc. to the guards quarters.....Cpl. Dunnerman is another group guard from the squadron. He doesn't mind the transfer too much, but it makes it a little inconvenient for visiting his gal friend. Cpl. Fry who has been on detached service to Group as a guard is now taking over the job of Corporal of the Guard, left vacant by "Beau Brummel" Dunnerman....."in this our Life" with Bette Davis & George Brent was the movie tonite. A good story and although most of the boys saw it before they enjoyed it again.....Effective today Lts. Mayer, Auter, Gellman, Hammond, Hauser, O'Toole and Rosenberg will be sporting silver bars.

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