

MAY, 1944
SAN GIOVANNI FIELD
CERIGNOLA, ITALY

May was a beautiful month in southern Italy, as I had mentioned before, the fields were covered with wild flowers, fruit trees, and almond trees were in full bloom. Our only problem was that we all were very tired, The last ten day of April I had flown 5 trips and gotten credit for 7 missions. This was combat air time of almost 40 hours. We were out of bed before 5 am on all these days. The flight surgeon had been giving us pep pills, and they really worked. The problem was sleeping fitfully when we got home.

Our first mission in May was a milk run against the railroad yards at Verona, Italy on MAY 2nd. This time we carried 6 1000# bombs, and had to bomb with a pathfinder (Radar Plane) leading the way. The target was cloud covered, we could not see the ground. Later observations showed that our Pathfinder was not too accurate! This trip took 4 hours and 39 minutes.

On May 5 our crew was not flying, but the group went to Ploesti. The flak was very heavy the group was in flak about 20 minutes in and out of the target, fighters got one plane from our group. Other groups had heavier loss to the fighters. The 455th was still flying good tight formations!

While the group was on a mission, our crew got permission to go to a town on the Adriatic coast about 20 miles away. We all 10 lined up on the road, and hitched a truck to Barletta. This town was very old, the main building on the waterfront was a Crusader Castle in great shape. Centuries of kings, dukes and other nobles had taken pretty good care of the place. Barletta was a British controlled town, as it was jut a few miles behind the British 8th army lines. I think we were the only Americans in town!

There was a sidewalk bar on a side street, and we settled down for cigarettes, whisky, and wild women. We had plenty of cigarettes; no whisky was available, just some local wine. The women were all located down the street in a large British sponsored whorehouse, in front of this bordello, there was a line of British Soldiers about two blocks long! Our crew took the pledge not to go near that place!

There were two middle- aged women running the bar, one spoke some English. She had lived in New York several years, and was very helpful. After a while she brought out plates of fresh made coconut macaroons, and we tore into them. In due time, we got pretty well loaded on the wine and anisette. The bar lady told us that we should go visit the castle before sun down. That sounded like a good idea, we paid the bill and staggered back in history to the castle. Most of the markers on the walls were in Roman type Latin, and even Humphrey Hosmer could not translate for us. Many of the numerals were from several hundred years back. We decided that we had enough culture, and back to the bar we went. After getting settled, we noticed that Sam Backanauskas our Lithuanian bombardier was missing. There was a young boy attached to our bunch shining our

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repeated attacks on our formation, but never got close enough to us to score any hits! We fired a lot of bullets at them,, again I know that our tight formation kept them from hitting us.

This mission took about 6 hours and 30 minutes, and for some reason we were not credited with a double mission! We never did figure out how our operations clerks screwed up so often on mission credits.

MAY 10, 1944

The whole group did not fly from the 7th till today, but we headed for Weiner Nuestad, Austria. This was just south of Vienna, and would surely be a double credit! Coming to the target turning point, we were hit by a great number of fighters. For the first time we saw ME 210s lobbing rockets at us, while they stayed out of our 50 CAL range. This was very impressive, as the twin engine 210s would get parallel to our course, and then turn into us firing rockets! These rockets missed us all, but when they exploded the white cloud was bigger than any 88 mm flak shell! This was a very frightening spectacle, but fortunately they all missed us!

On into the target we were under intense flak fire. This was shot up over the target in a Box pattern, about 1000 feet above and below us, and covering about a mile to the right and left of our course. We were in this flak for ten minutes or so going in and out of the target, it seemed like it was ten hours. Many of the bursts, we could hear as a loud WHUMP! It took a loud noise to be heard over the B-24 noise at 2400 RPM, also we could smell the gunpowder from these flak bursts. We just sat there and gritted our teeth, there was nothing we could do to defend ourselves. Sometimes our gunners would shoot at the flak guns 20000 feet below, when they started this shooting it scared the rest of us, as we thought that our gunfire meant a fighter had sneaked up on us! We told the gunners not to do this, but I can't blame them.

Ten of our planes received heavy damage, and 27 others slight damage. One crew-man Was severely wounded. This was a 6 hour 45 minute trip, and we did get double credit for this trip!

We were tired bunch of fellows, but the mission whiskey went down without a problem. After a lunch, we went to bed. I did not get up till the next morning. We were not on Schedule for today so we loafed and slept all day.

At lunch we heard a rumor to the effect that two of the original crews of the 741st Squadron were to be rotated to the states on a training and bond selling trip of 90 days duration. What GREAT NEWS!! Out of the 16 original crews ,there were about ten crews left.

The scuttle was that the crews would be flight leading crews, This was great news to us, as in our tent(now with three crews) two of us were flight leaders Miles Walter, and Gene Hudson. The squadron had three other flight leaders, Nangeroni, Bowers, and Locatelli .Nangeroni was now a captain, as he started with us as a 1st Lt. The others were all First Lts. It looked like it would be Nangeroni for sure, and another 1st Lt.. You can't trust ANY RUMORS in the ARMY!

The Lead Crews in the squadron were pretty tense about the selection! Just think of it!! I had 26 Missions to my credit, and 24 to go. To get back home with an ETO Ribbon with 4 Battle Stars and an AIR MEDAL with 4 PALMS, and a Distinguished Unit Badge I would be a fat cat at the Tower in San Antonio.

MAY 14, 1944

No word had come through about the orders to the states, but we were rolled out of bed About 5 AM. Breakfast was the usual powdered eggs with a green tint, and soggy pan Cakes. I always ate most of the stuff, as I got pretty hungry during the day.

At briefing we were told that the 5th Army needed some help, and the 15th Air Force would spend a few days supporting them. As far as we were concerned, we would be happy supporting the 5th Army for the rest of the war. Those milk runs add up!!

Our target today would be an airdrome, Piasenza, outside of Rome. The only bad thing About today's trip was that we were loaded with 25# Fragmentation Bombs. These little Babys came in a cluster of ten bombs around a rod. When this was dropped the cluster broke open releasing ten of these daisy cutters. We had a problem with these bombs going off just out of the bomb bay. This was an isolated occurrence, but we were all a bit shaky with these frag clusters. They were designed to kill troops in the open, tear up air planes and anything else on the ground. At any rate our group dropped 9,840 of these eggs on the field at Piasenza, and we all lived through the trip. Took us over six hours as we went a roundabout way, staying away from Rome.

This was a real milk run, no flak was seen, and certainly there were no fighters in this part of Italy. At landing we were all a bunch of smart- ass kids as we lined up at the Red Cross tent for coffee and donuts. As a bit of information-each group had two or three Red Cross girls assigned to the group, Most of them were old women 25 to 40 years old. They wore GI clothing and combat boots so they would not win a Miss America contest, but for us they were good friends, and served good hot coffee and donuts with a smile and a good cheery word for the crews. It was said that some of the senior officers dated these girls. They were always great to us, and most of the combat crews were too tired to think about chasing girls! Our crew was not scheduled to fly for a week, as our plane needed some extensive work, two engine changes and a lot of patching up was done.

MAY 22

The 15th Air Force was still supporting the 5th Army, breaking up ground transport and Shipping. Today we were sent to bomb the harbor at La Spezia, Italy. 35 of our group dropped bombs on and around the harbor, as the target was partially obscured with low clouds. I think that we killed a lot of fish, maybe the starving Italians got something to eat. I know that some of them lost their houses. This milk run took us 6 hours and 30 minutes. There was very little flak, and no fighters were seen, The German fighters in Italy were about wiped out, or had gone North to defend Der Vaterland!

MAY 23, 1944

Another milk run to Nemi, Italy was scheduled; we were pleased to help the 5th Army another day. While the army was being chewed up daily in the mountains of Italy, we Fly- boys were enjoying another training mission.

The first section of 26 planes dropped on the target, but the second section did not drop. Clouds covered the area. There was a little flak in the target area, but was not effective! This was a quickie mission 4 hours and 15 minutes total time. This gave me a total of 30 missions- over half way home!!

MAY 25, 1944

The target today was Piasenzia, Italy again, another milk run! If this keeps up I will be gone back to the states! The German Air Force had a surprise for us today, as we were attacked by a bunch of fighters. We thought the Wiley Hun had been forced up to Austria, but here they were. These fellows were very aggressive, shooting some of our planes up, and wounding several crewmen. One plane struggled back .landing at a British base north of Cerignola.

This taught us all to quit being so confident; we were again reminded that the Krauts were not out of it in Italy. This mission lasted 5 hours and 30 minutes, and we were very glad to get back to the coffee and donuts followed by the mission whisky! After debriefing, and lunch we looked at the mission board, and there we were, scheduled to fly again tomorrow.

MAY 26, 1944

The mission today was bombing the rail- road yards in Grenoble, France. This was in southeastern France, on the western edge of the Alps. This was new territory for us, and there were no clouds in the sky. We could see for miles from our altitude, the Alps in Switzerland were just under our right wing.

We fully expected the fighters to tear into us this far into France, but not a one was seen, just a few bursts of flak. This was almost an enjoyable mission, but a very long one. We were in the hour for 7 hours and 50 minutes. A real tired bunch landed at the field.. After eating we were told that the selection of the crews for the return to the states had been made. Miles Walter and his crew (our tent mates) and Gene Hudson, without his crew would be leaving in a few days! I damn near broke out in tears in front of all. Sam Backanauskas and Humph Hosmer looked like whipped dogs. Our gunners were crushed, and drifted off to the tent . We were speechless and went to our tent.

Gene Hudson went to headquarters for more information, while Hosmer, Sam and I went to the Officers Club for a shot of consolation. Gene came back with the full scoop, I was to take over the crew as first pilot, and finish out the tour. Gene was to check me out as first pilot.. I had been splitting landings with Gene since February, so I felt very well handling the plane. Our co-pilots would come from new replacement crews. The replacement pilot would be my co-pilot and fly with us till I felt that he could take over his crew and be on his own. This would turn out to be a very interesting assignment.

MAY 27, 1944

Our crew was not on the mission for today, they went to an airfield at Montpellier, France right at the Spanish border .The 455th Group was really covering the map.

Maj.Russell Welsh, our squadron operations officer, told Gene Hudson to take me out to our plane and check me out as a first pilot. When we got to the plane, we found that it was fully loaded with twelve 500# bombs, full gas and ammunition! We said what the hell, we fired it up with Sgt. Gilone acting as engineer. We taxied out at 72000# gross, and shot 3 touch and go landings, climbed out of the pattern, pulled back an engine to simulate a feathered engine, and them made a full stop landing with the engine pulled back.

We went to operations, and Welsh signed me off as a certified first pilot! I felt very Confident about my ability as a First Pilot, but I am not too sure about our crew! I told them all not to worry, as I had trained under the best pilot in the squadron, and they were in good hands. I wanted them all to be open to me about their concerns.

Gene, with Miles Walters' crew left, and it was a very sad time for us all, but yet we were happy for them. I never saw any of them except Gene Hudson, and C .W. Stroman the Navigator. After the war I saw Stroman, he was working at Kelly Field. Hudson and I have been very close over the years, I could write a book about him. He did retire as a Major General!

MAY 28,1944

The Mission today was to Genoa, Italy, this was the major seaport in Italy, the group got 38 planes off the ground, and all of them got to the target. The flak was moderate, but very accurate. 14 of our planes were damaged, ours was holed in several places. As first pilot, I was not too shaken by the flak, as I was too busy keeping my three planes in good formation.

The trip today took 6 Hours and 30 minutes, I flew the plane all the way, as we were flying with a lead to the left. It was good to get on the ground, and get the 100 proof fix! I don't think that that I got to the club. The sack was all we were interested in.

MAY 29, 1944

We were rolled out of bed at about 3:30 in the morning. We were all really worried about such an early start. This usually came before a real long mission. Most of our times over

target were at High Noon, this early up looked like a long run. After a pretty good breakfast-had some real salty bacon with the hot cakes. We went down to the briefing room. As the curtain was pulled back we could not believe what we saw. The route tape was just across the Adriatic in Yugoslavia to a small town called Bosauska Krupa. The reason for our early awakening was; we were to bomb TWO towns near each other today! So we were briefed for the other town, Banja Luka. We were to hit Bosauska in the morning then come back for gas and bombs and Spam sandwiches. Take off again and hit Banja Luka. What Deal TWO MILK RUNS IN ONE DAY. Both targets sent up a few bursts of light flak, the accuracy was poor. We saw no fighters, the weather was clear. We had very nice scenic tour of Yugoslavia. This took us only 8 Hours and 5 Minutes flying time. My co pilot (I don't have any idea of his name) had to fly formation on one of the trips. We had to hold to a flight on our right

This was a day for our squadron to take showers, and I think that we all took advantage of the opportunity. When we got back to our tent, Nelson Wurtz told us that the squadron was moving another officer crew to fill in Walters vacated space. That was good news to us all, as the big old three section tent was getting lonesome after five men had gone to the states. The squadron truck arrived with the new tenants. They were a nice looking four men. Like all of our new replacement crews, they were very apprehensive about what they had gotten into. We tried to help them unpack and get set up, I think that they were more concerned about the beds. These beds were just as the last fellows had left them! We took them to supply, and got them new mattress covers. Told that they were damn lucky, as these beds had air mattresses. As both Wurtz and my crew were on the list for flying tomorrow, we took the new guys to the mess hall for supper. The first pilot was to be my co pilot tomorrow. We all hit the sack about dark, at this time of year it did not get dark till around 9 PM, and sunrise was a bit after 4. The new fellows drifted over to the officers club, I warned the co pilot to stay sober, as he was looking at a big day tomorrow.

MAY 30, 1944

We were awakened about 4:00 AM, and I got my new co pilot out of bed. He was a bit groggy from sleep and I think that he must have had a few anisettes last night, he smelled a bit like licorice did not eat very much breakfast, it takes a while to get accustomed to the fare.

The briefing map brought a big groan from the crews. Our target was WELS, Austria, Just West of Vienna. A double credit trip! We usually had fighters and a lot of flak in this area.

I have to digress again, so bear with me .The 15th Air Force had ONE WING of B-17s all The rest of the Air Force was composed of B-24s. The B-17 had a bombing indicated air Speed of 150 MPH. The B-24 flew best at an indicated air speed of 160 MPH. The 17 had A much higher altitude capability around 25,000 feet, the 24 got pretty sloppy with a load

Above 20,000 feet. This problem really increased if we had a flight planned air speed of 150 MPH to accommodate the B-17. On this mission to Wels the B-17 wing would be leading the AirForce. As we approached the turning point, the Air Force leader had gotten off course, and was making some large corrections. This plays havoc with the rest of the formation, and the farther back from the lead these corrections become very great.

Here we are at the turning point, en route to the INITIAL POINT (at the IP we get on the Bomb run) At the IP the lead continues to make erratic corrections to the course. Our group is the last in line, we are having a hell of a time fighting these course changes.

Under these conditions we often put down about ten degrees of flaps. This keeps us Above stalling speed. The idiot leading the run, continued to make turns on the bomb Run Just at bombs away, he makes a sharp correction to the left, and drops the bombs.

The rest of the formation is jumping all over the sky. As the last section approached Bombs away, he had to make an extreme left turn .Nelson Wurtz, my tent mate, was Leading a lower left flight stalled out in the turn , and fell under his wingman as the Bombs were released .Wurtz and his plane went up in a huge explosion. No chutes were Seen from his plane!

Thank goodness my co pilot was a good one. I got him to handle the plane back to Italy. I Put my head down and cried in my oxygen mask. I was a ragged worn out fellow. I did Make the landing .It was a good one. My whole crew was shaken up, as we had met Wurtz and his crew in Salt Lake City in September '43. The flight surgeon Doc Schutneck , hearing about Nelson Wurtz, had the medics give my whole crew a double jigger.

Hosmer and Backanuskas and I hated to go back to the tent, but it was our duty and job to go through all of Wurtz's crew things and sort any thing out that may be hard for the the families. We checked the mail and everything. Wurtz was a real gentlemen, and a blonde Adonis to all the girls in the states. He was also a GOOD FRIEND of our crew.

This was our last mission in May, and we had flown 12 trips for a credit of 14 missions with 71 combat hours.

Austria



France



Romania



JUNE, 1944
SAN GIOVANNI FIELD
CERIGNOLA, ITALY

We, of the original crews, were getting quite tired of this flying so often. New replacement crews were not coming to our group in quantities needed. Some of groups had suffered much greater losses than the 455th! Replacement crews and planes were being sent to other groups. I guess that we were pretty lucky, as our Squadron had lost 5 of the original crews in combat. One crew, Miles Walter's and my pilot were in the states. This left us with TEN CREWS and PLANES OF THE ORIGINAL 16. We were supposed to get 9 planes and crews into the air for each mission. This became almost impossible. The 741st was doing good to get a flight of 6 planes in the air! The original planes were easy to spot, as they were painted in OD, and there were a lot of patches of new aluminum on the old birds.

The few new planes were easy to spot, as they were not painted at all. The bright finish really shined. In fact they were a problem in formation, reflection of the sun off the new birds resulted in a bad glare problem for the pilot staying in formation.

I, and my crew had a mission total of 37, so we were getting well along to 50! This is when the odds started to work on us. Waking up at night in a cold sweat, or shouting out in our sleep was common! The medics gave us pep pills in the mornings, and sleeping pills at night. I stayed away from the night pills anisette did a good job putting me to sleep!

Our first mission in June was on June 2nd to Miscolc, Hungary. This town was in NE Hungary, and we were bombing the railroad yards there. The Russians were pushing the German Army back from Russia, but not yet from Ploesti and Bucharest!

Flak at Miscolc was heavy, but not at all accurate. The group had no injuries, but a few planes were holed. This was a DOUBLE MISSION!! This trip lasted for 6 hours and 35 minutes, the coffee and bourbon at San Giovanni was well received! Our crew was one of the crews with a leading number of missions. But we sure did not want any one congratulating us- Bad Luck!

As we got back to the squadron area, Lt. Liberty (Now, captain)brought a new pilot to Meet me. This fellow was a real sharp looking captain! In fact he had a tie on neatly tucked into his shirt! The weather was getting pretty hot, and a tie was not very common! His khakis were neatly pressed, and HIS SHOES WERE SHINED! Liberty, our assistant operations officer, told me that this new man would fly as my co-pilot tomorrow. He and his crew were set up in a vacant tent, but he was to meet me at breakfast in the morning. Liberty offered to take my navigator, and bombardier and me over to the shower. The new man went there with us. He knew to never miss an opportunity for a shower! I dug a spare towel out for him, and off we went.

After our shower, the four of us walked by the 741st Officer's Club, and had a cherry brandy and ice. As we had our drink, we asked the new captain about his back- ground. He did not hesitate in telling us that he was a West Pointer! He had been instructing B-24 pilots transition at Smyrna, Tennessee! We were glad to have him fly with us, as he probably knew more about the B-24 than I would ever know! He had his career all figured out. He was here to get a tour of combat flying on his record, and if he could get through combat, he would be set! Promotions for a combat veteran West Pointer would come through very rapidly. He probably would be a Lt. Colonel in two years or less, he was a classic example of our real professional soldier. I am pretty sure that he was the only regular army officer in our whole group, and maybe the WING!

After breakfast, we went to briefing .It appeared to be a milk run against industrial targets in Northern Italy. June 4, 1944 was a beautiful, warm, clear morning, The new captain co-pilot was a pleasure to have around. His questions were clear and to the point, this guy was a real jewel!

As the crew lined up for inspection, I made a point to have him meet our flight crew as well as Sgt. Gilone and his ground crew. We were a great team, and I wanted the captain to know them all.

As we took our stations, in the plane I told the West Pointer that the flight engineer, Sgt. Beeler and I would handle all of the power, settings, gear and flaps. He was to sit in his seat and carefully observe all that we did on take off. This was our most critical point in the flight, as we took off at 30 -second intervals, Dust was a problem from the gravel runway. Prop wash turbulence was a factor, and on a warm day, we were at a most critical point. I told the Capt to watch Beeler, and learn his procedures. Sgt. Beeler kneeled on the floor between the two pilots, and pulled the gear control, adjusted propellers and throttles, as the climb was started he set up power, and eased the take off flaps up.

The take off flagman gave us the go ahead, I could not see the plane rolling half way down the runway, nor the one leaving the runway, as there was a lot of dust. As we broke ground, we hit prop wash, and #4 propeller started to over speed. My co-pilot yelled "RUN AWAY ENGINE" I said "let run it will settle down!" I had both hands wrestling the wheel in the prop wash, and my Co Pilot reached to the overhead and PUSHED IN THE FEATHERING BUTTON ON # 4 ENGINE! I reached up, pulled the feathering button back to run. As my right hand came away from the button, I hit THE CO-PILOT across the nose and mouth with my gloved back- hand. I was insane with anger If the engine had shut down we most likely would have plowed into the ground to the right. I screamed at the co-pilot " You SOB you could have killed us all. You don't touch anything in this airplane, If you do I am going to blow your head off with my .45 auto."

The poor fellow was bleeding profusely from the nose and mouth. At 10,000 feet he had to put on his oxygen mask with the rest of us. He was a bloody mess, all over his Mae West Life Jacket, and leather jacket. He certainly was not his neat self!

The target was cloud covered, and we went to the alternate, The Harbor At Genoa Italy. The flak was light and inaccurate. Our bomb pattern was a good one. And many good hits were seen. This trip took us 6 hours and 20 minutes, getting on the ground was a good feeling. My co-pilot left the plane like a scalded cat, he did not go to de-briefing, missing the coffee and bourbon. Capt. John Van Lent, the squadron intelligence officer debriefed us. He was quite concerned about the co-pilots misfortune, I was a 1st Lt. and I had struck a Captain, this was a serious situation for me! All I wanted was a shower and a nap!

At our tent, I put on a set of coveralls and headed for the shower. On the way, a Lt. from Group HQ found me. He got me into his jeep, took me back to my tent where I had to put on a clean uniform and tie over my dirty body. Then we went to Group HQ.

I was shown to a large room with table and chairs. My squadron CO, the Group staff and group commander were all seated. At one end was the West Point Captain, still daubing at the blood coming out of his nose!

I saluted the group, and reported to them in a military manner, Col Phil John (from San Antonio) read from a paper that the Captain was charging me with the offence of striking a superior officer. Our Group CO Col. Cool asked me to tell them what happened. I related the over speeding propeller and the attempt to feather # 4, and what I did in striking the Captain.

Col. Cool verifying my statement, told us all "This Meeting Was Over" The West Pointer was transferred to another wing near Taranto. None of us ever saw or heard of him again. All during my days in and around the AAF and the Air Force, I dreaded running into him! Fortunately it never happened.

Group Mission # 59 June 7, 1944 Voltri, Italy.

This was a very memorable day, as the full news of the Normandy Invasion began to come through the radio news and the Stars and Stripes Newspaper. The 5th Army had captured Rome on June 4th or 5th, but was overshadowed by the news from England. Poor General Mark Clark never got the publicity he craved!

For this trip I had a brand new co-pilot, he had brought a shiny new B-24 J model. These planes looked just like H Models, but they were not painted, and had electronic turbo-charger controls. The H models had manual turbo controls, looked just like throttle controls. I was still assigned to fly old # 476, the plane we flew over here in '43. We knew every peculiarity of 476. Each plane had some individual characteristics, some good and some bad. One mission I had to fly a new J model, it was a real dog. The thing was built a bit out of rig, went along at a slightly sideways angle. The plane would exhaust a pilot trying to keep position in formation. This bad bird was lost on a mission and good riddance.

My new co-pilot was a nice young fellow, and he seemed to be very sharp at formation flying. I think that he was with me for only two trips before he got his crew back.. He flew one or two trips before getting shot down on June 13th. We older crews developed an affinity against getting too well acquainted, with the new fellows. We did not want any more lost friends.

I got carried away, and forgot to tell about the mission today. It was a very nice milk run, and we were glad to have it! This mission took only 5 hours and 50 minutes, and gave me a total of 40 MISSIONS!

JUNE 9, 1944

TARGET TODAY—MUNICH, GERMANY

This revelation on the map board brought moans and groans to the crews, as we had been spoiled with the milk runs in the past few days. Our fighter cover today was to be the 99th Fighter Group, the old Tuskegee Airmen! These fellows had been upgraded to P-47 Thunderbolt fighters, and today was their first escort mission. This announcement brought more groans from our crews. The escort met us as we made landfall at the north end of the Adriatic, and they were a welcome sight as this was the first belt of German Fighter defense. The P-47s were loafing along on either side of our wing, like a practice mission! About this time, a number of small condensation trails coming from due north were sighted. The wing leader called our escort, telling them that these con trails were bogies (Enemy Fighters) The P-47 leader answered” Doan worry big brother, we’ll take care of you” At this time a bunch of ME-109’s appeared out of the sun overhead, and tore through the ‘47s. White puffs from the 109 20mm cannons, and drop tanks from the P-47 were mixed together. The P-47 dropped tanks, and rolled into dives getting up speed. I saw one P-47 get hit, but the pilot jumped out. Quite a dog fight resulted, and both sides were headed DOWN FAST! None of the ME-109’s paid any attention to the bombers. We lumbered on up to Munich, where we had about 30 minutes of intense flak.

The target, BMW AIRCRAFT ENGINE WORKS was cloud covered, and we did not know what, if anything, we hit. Our group lost one B-24 to Flak. Other groups lost planes to flak and fighters. This trip consumed 6 hours and 45 minutes. As Munich was a double credit, my score now was **42 MISSIONS. The mission whiskey was getting better. My 42 missions were looking good!**

JUNE 10, 1944

Today’s mission was the Group’s 61st and my 43rd, We were to drop fragmentation bombs on the Airport at Ferrara, Italy.

As I have told before, we were very concerned, dropping these Frag bombs! They had been known to go off as they left the bomb bays! This happened to one of our Squadron Planes. They straggled to the Adraitic, and attempted ditching in the water. A couple of

the crew were wounded when the bombs exploded, and two of the crew were killed in the water landing, Ditching a B-24 was a tough job.

We destroyed a number of planes on the ground at the Ferrara Airport, so we were pleased with the results. This trip took 4 hours and 35 minutes. The crew from our squadron that had to ditch, got back in a couple of days, thanks to the British Air Sea Rescue. Dale Fortson, a tail gunner joined our crew. Dale was a great fellow, he had a huge 6 inch scar along his cheek. When his plane was forced to ditch, a fragment from the 25# fragmentation bombs raked his cheek. When he joined our crew, this was a red ragged scar. No one called him "Scar face"!

JUNE 11, 1944
Group Mission # 62

The Mission Today Was To GIURGIU, ROMANIA in the Ploesti area, and a double mission! The flak was moderate over the target so we had a good pattern of bombs, and many oil fires were started. Seven ME-109 fighters attacked our formation. One fighter, was shot down by our gunners, but we lost one B-24 and 10 men to these fighters. That was a pretty poor trade off!

Here is a quotation from a flight engineer-gunner from our group. "As a flight engineer, I rode in the top turret just behind the pilots. This gave me a good view forward and almost 360 degrees of fire with the two 50 caliber machine guns. Most of the fighters I shot at came from the front, diving through the formation from nine, three or 12 o'clock. While the fighters were attacking you would be in a cold sweat and after they left, you froze all the way back to the base. I could at least shoot back at them. I felt sorry for the pilot and co-pilot who had to sit there and take it."

After 6 hours and 50 minutes we were very glad to get back home to the coffee and donuts, the Bourbon went down quite well. The doc gave us a double ration in honor of my **45th mission.**

On June 12th I was not posted for a mission. We slept to near noon, had a good lunch. The Flight Surgeon sent his ambulance and drivers to us, and the whole crew was taken to the beach at Barletta. The mess Sgt. made up a bunch of Spam and bologna sandwiches for a supper on the beach. The drive was about 30 minutes away to a beautiful beach, the sand was almost jet black. The water in the Adriatic was really cold. We would dig down in the very hot sand, break out in a sweat, and then jump into the cold water. There was a stand on the beach run by some Italians. They sold wine by the bottle, almonds, and the greatest cherries we ever put in our mouths. We ate more cherries than we ever had, it had been a long time since we had fresh fruit. We did not drink too much, as we were on for a mission tomorrow. The hot sand and cold water was a great relaxer for us.

The medics took us back to camp about dark, this is about 9:30 pm. It was a great day. We got to sleep with no pills.

JUNE 13, 1944

We were roused around 4:30 AM. Had a great breakfast real eggs, bacon and hot cakes, a real treat. Most of my crew, and I were having a bit of stomach growling. Think that we had eaten too many cherries yesterday.

At Briefing, we found out the reason for the early reveille, and the good breakfast! Our target was to be Munich again! The toughest flak was around Munich, Vienna, and Ploesti. It was not going to be a milk run today. As we got to the plane, during pre-flight inspection, most of us were having problems! The great cherries eaten yesterday, had given us a severe case of the trots. In a B-24 this is a real problem! Sgt. Gilone and his ground crew scrounged around picking up cardboard cartons, tin cans, and news papers for us to put aboard if we needed them. And we knew that we would need them!!

Our Group got 33 B-24s off, loaded with 1000# Bombs. We were to hit the BMW Aircraft Engine Works.

Near the target several groups of fighters were spotted, and we were really worried. The new P-51 Fighters had replaced the old P-47, and the 51s could go to Munich and stay awhile. The German Air Force was mauled and chased away by those BEAUTIFUL P-51s. No German got near us that day, and I think the 51s had a real turkey shoot.

Flak was another matter, it was very accurate and heavy. The group was in Flak over 20 minutes. One 24 was shot down with ten men, and two crew members were killed, and one seriously wounded by this terrifying Flak! To add to our problems, most of us had severe diarrhea. This was a REAL PROBLEM, until we got down to no oxygen and warmer altitude. The boxes and cans came in real handy, they were used, closed up, then dropped over southern Germany and Austria. Presents from the 741st Bomb Squadron were widely scattered on our route.

This trip took 6 hours and 40 minutes. After landing we skipped the coffee line, and our debriefing was done in the open air. Most of the crew was a sorry sight as well as a smelly bunch. But we did not skip the Bourbon, the medics had to put up with us, but they did get us a truck for a special trip to the showers. This was a great conclusion to the day of my **47th Mission.**

The Air Force had a very well organized Rest and Relaxation for tired aircrews, our crew certainly qualified as a tired one, as we had flown 9 missions in the past eleven days. I went to squadron headquarters demanding leave for my crew. The Operations and Commanding officer agree with me about the need, but they were so short of crews it was sad. They agreed to my men getting to go to the Isle Of Capri right away, but there were no rooms available for officers at this time! We made a trade to allow my men to go to Capri, the three officers would have to stay with the squadron. This posed a problem, all of us except the Bombardier had credit for 47 missions, Sam Backanuskas had missed

three missions with a plugged up ear for a 44 total. The enlisted men would leave the next day for four days of wild living at Capri. Hosmer and I would not fly a mission till the men returned. This was OK with us all. The men left early on June 14th by truck to Naples and then to Capri by boat.

On June 16th HQ called me over, there was another rest camp down in the mountains of far southern Italy. This place was called "VILLIAGO MANCUSCO" it was an old mountain resort in the cool pine forest, no nightlife, good food, good sleeping, and swimming in a mountain lake. No wild debauchery as at Capri. And no WILD WOMEN! At all! Hosmer and I were so tired we figured a bird in hand is better than one in the bush, so we said "YES" to Villiagio Mancusco! We would be flown to Crotone on the coast then trucked to the mountains for three or four days. A B-24 would leave with ten officers after breakfast tomorrow!

The fellows on this trip were a mixed bunch of 1st Lts. Three of us were pilots, two navigators, one dentist, three maintenance officers, and one weatherman. The crew flying the B-24 for the 30 minute trip were from the 742 nd Sq. They turned out to be wild men! These fellows flew us to the coast near Bari, and then buzzed low on the water to Crotone Field. Guess we were pretty wild also, as we fired up one of the waist guns and shot at sea gulls and drift- wood all the way to Crotone! The non- flyers among us got a kick out shooting up a thousand rounds or so. The flight crew was upset with us because we had dirtied the gun, and they would have to clean it when they returned to San Giovanna.

Crotone Field was a small RAF fighter strip, with a squadron of SPITFIRES, These Spit pilots were a bunch of young Enlisted Pilots. While we were waiting for our truck, the Spit Boys, offered we pilots a chance to take one around the pattern! They said "GET IN IT AND GO" I thought about doing the trip, but I chickened out, I knew that I was too heavy handed to try that beautiful SPITFIRE. I have always regretted that decision.

Our truck arrived, and we piled in the thing sitting on the slatted seats of the 6X6 truck. These trucks had to be the roughest riding vehicles ever made. The driver and his assistant got their kicks by hitting every bump and pothole on the trip. There was NO shortage of those! I think that these two idiots knew that they had a captive cargo of officers, and they made the most of the situation. Except for the rough ride and dust the trip was very interesting, we were climbing all the way through mountain top villages, and small towns. The air was getting cooler.(The coast at Crotone was hot and humid), and the pine forests got thicker, At every village and town young children ran after us yelling."Caramella, Cigarette por mi Papa" We Americans had spoiled a whole generation of Ex Facistas! The poverty was appalling, all the people and children we saw looked mal-nourished. Some of these town had streets so narrow, the truck had to scrape the sides to get through. All of the buildings were of stone and red tile roofs. In a lot of villages you could see privies up on the edge of buildings hanging over drops off hundreds of feet. The central plazas were dominated by a big church at one end, and a water fountain at the other. Streets were of cobble- stones, and really rough on our tails. We stood up for most of the trip, hanging on to the truck bed rails.

As we approached Mancusco, it turned out to be, not a village, but a large camp made up of Alpine looking wooden buildings overlooking a beautiful lake. The air was cool and fresh. Typical mountain thunderstorms were building up around us, and the smell of rain was in the air. As we registered at the main building desk, a ten- piece orchestra struck up at very familiar tune. "AMAPOLA" I think all Italians thought that Americans had only three tunes. Amapola, The Isle of Capri, and Funicule Funicular! The music was a delightful change for us. Ex Italian soldiers took our musette bags to our rooms. We washed up in a lavatory of sparkling marble and tile. We sat in a large living room waiting for lunch, listening to the music. Waiters came around getting our drink orders. All was Italian I ordered a cherry brandy with ice. The waiter was shocked, but I told him to get used to that! We Americans had odd tastes! Other guest started coming in. and soon there were thirty or forty of us. Some were British, some Israel, some Aussies, and New Zealanders. The six of us were the only American in sight.

Lunch was a very pleasant surprise. We started off with a delicious soup and great bread, and we changed to a red wine. I don't know what the salad was made up of, I think field greens, mushrooms and TOMATOES., all dressed with Olive Oil. The main course was a huge plate of pasta, and it was good. Dessert was some type of great custard. The meal, brandy, and wine combined with the truck trip made us very sleepy. The man that took our bags came in. He led us to one of the cabins, each officer had a small bedroom. The beds were small, but there were WHITE SHEETS on them. It did not take us long to get our GI shoes and pants off, and into bed.

Hosmer and I slept till almost dark, awakened by the orchestra across the way. It was very cool, and we had slept through a rain storm during the afternoon. In our cabin, there was a large bathroom. With a tub and separate shower. We shaved, and enjoyed the hot water, dug out a clean set of underwear and khakis, and headed back to the main building for drinks and dinner.

We sat at a table with four British army officers, and they filled us in on the camp. This was a joint American, and British effort. The supplies were drawn from British supply, supplemented with some American rations. We were to be charged 30 Lira a day for room and board. The money we used was MPC in LIRA, one lira is one cent..

Our drinks were around 25 Lira, put on a tab. This was a REAL REST CAMP. There were no women available at all, the few that worked here were guarded very closely. The nearest village or town was about 5 miles away, and it was OFF LIMITS!

We could play cards, volley ball, take long walks, and swim in the lake if we could stand the cold water. Our laundry was done each day for another .50 cents. There was a pretty good collection of books and magazines. If one wished, there was a man giving lessons in Italian each morning. Haircuts or a shave were 25 Lira.

Dinner was great, good soup, great bread, fair wine, another great salad with fresh asparagus. The main course was a stew. This was relished by our table mates and Hosmer, but I did not care for Mutton! The gravy was good sopped up by the bread.

We had cake for desert, an almond cherry type, very moist! I passed on the coffee or tea, as I was looking forward to more good sleep!

The breakfast was available to us from eight AM till ten thirty, no early rising here. Coffee and tea was offered at six AM.

We all adjourned to the bar, I had one cherry brandy, and a very good visit with our table mates. We were back in bed by ten PM. What a place!!

Hosmer and I slept till about 7:30 the next morning. During the night, there was not a sound. At the base we had planes engines roaring all night, bomb trailers and trucks rattling by, mechanics hollering at each other. About an hour before breakfast, the cooks were very noisy at our mess tent. Here at Mancusco there was not a sound all night long.

We drifted to the main building for breakfast. There were fresh eggs, English sausage, they called them "bangers", great toast and marmalade. The coffee and tea were very good. We ate like we had been starving. The white tablecloth, and white jacketed waiters made us feel like human beings again.

Hosmer and I took a walk to the lake where there was a small pier out in the water. I stuck my hand down in the water, and jerked it right back. The water was ice-cold! Our swim would have to wait till afternoon. Two of our dinner table mates showed up with some willow poles and fishing lines. We caught small frogs, and grass-hoppers for bait. In the clear water we could see trout about 2 feet long swimming by. They ignored our live bait, and this was pretty frustrating, as we all had visions of a trout lunch!

One of the Englishmen had seen some boats down the bank a way. He told us to go get one, he was going to his room, but would be right back with some fishing tackle. The other Brit, Hosmer and I went to the boats, we boarded one, and paddled back to the dock. The Englishman was waiting for us. He was carrying a canvas bag that did not look like fishing tackle. He told his friend to get aboard the boat with him, Hosmer and I were to wait at the dock.

They paddled out about 50 yards, looking for fish. When he saw some, they stopped, and he opened the bag, and pulled out a couple of concussion grenades! Pulling the pins he tossed them into the water. After a few seconds, the grenades went off with a WHUMP, The surface of the lake bubbled up just over the blasts. He and his buddy started picking fish off the top of the lake! Paddling to the dock with six beautiful fish, they appeared to weigh five or six pounds each. Our fish dinner was assured!

Some of the Italians from the office came down as we sorted the fish. And they started talking back and forth in loud voices, and in a very excited manner. The English Officer told the Italians to carry the fish to the kitchen, he spoke Italian, and to prepare them for lunch for us all! This part of Italy was run by British Military Government, and he wanted no back talk from these Italians!.

After a great lunch with broiled trout as the entrée, our English Fisherman told us that this camp and the surrounding area belonged to some member of Italian Royalty. The fellows were caretakers and they did not want us killing the fish. Our English friend told the caretakers to F---- OFF!. The 8th Army took no back talk from Italian officials.

After a good nap, a bunch of us stripped to our shorts and jumped in the lake. It was bone chilling, but the air was warm. We lay around on the pier all afternoon, sipping cherry brandy, rolling off into the water once in a while. What a life!

This idyllic life had to come to an end, we enjoyed the great stay at Mancusco about four or five days. Hosmer and I felt better than we had in months, but we had to get back to the field and fly our tour out. One of our B-24s was to pick us up at Crotone on June 20th. We were not looking forward to the truck ride back! A different driver and helper showed up to take us back. This man, was a much better driver, he slowed down when needed. His helper rode in the back with us and had a good knowledge of all the towns on the way back. He had a map with him, and he told us about points of interest and history as we went along.

Our plane was waiting for us at Crotone, bringing six more officers from the 455th. They were pretty unhappy about not getting to Capri, but we told them how great Mancusco was, and how to fish!

We landed about noon and rushed to our mess tent, getting back to meat and vegetable hash out of a can! Our enlisted men were due that afternoon from Capri. And we were scheduled to fly a mission on June 22nd. Our bombardier Sam had picked up a couple of missions but he was still behind us by about 4 trips.

Sam, Hosmer, and I met our men, the truck drive from Naples was a long, hot, dusty trip. Our men looked exhausted, dusty and dirty. We borrowed a truck and took the men to the shower, they looked a bit better, but I think that they drank and caroused the whole time at Capri, Hosmer and I felt like saints, after our rest at Mancusco. We took the men to the tents, told them to get some supper, and rest up all day tomorrow. We all enjoyed the day off, as it was pretty hot and humid. We had gotten quite a bit of mail, so the afternoon was spent reading mail and magazines.

JUNE 22,1944 Group Mission #65 My # 48

WE were TO bomb THE CHIVASSO MOTOR REPAIR DEPOT LOCATED IN A FARMING AREA NEAR MILAN. (looked like a milk run)

On this mission, we were to have the leader of each 3 plane flight aim and drop the bombs!

On all of our past missions, the section leaders aimed and dropped the bombs, twelve to eighteen planes dropped when the leader did. This gave a great concentration of bombs. This was ok, but the bombardiers were always unhappy, as the only people looking through the bombsight were the two section lead bombardiers. Confusing –no?

TODAY THE WHOLE GROUP WOULD GET IN A LONG TRAIL OF THREE PLANE FLIGHTS. EACH FLIGHT BOMBARDIER WAS TO USE HIS SIGHT, AND HIS TWO WINGMEN WOULD DROP WHEN HE DID

This was an experiment trying to get more bombs concentrated in a 1000 foot circle. There was NO FLAK, our formation was very smooth. We put 82% of the 250# Bombs within the 1000FT CIRCLE !. This was a 15th AF record for bombing accuracy, and the 3 plane sighting was to be used with small lightly defended targets in the future.. This mission bomb photos were published in all of the Air Magazines for years.

This trip took us 6 hours and 30 minutes, as we went out in the Thyrranean Sea in a wide approach to the target.

The coffee and donuts were the same, but good. The medics gave us all a double shot for our 48th mission.

We were not scheduled to fly on the 23 of June, we just loafed around the field and rested up all day. The tension was really building up!

On the 24th of June we were rolled out of bed around 4:30 for a mission. ^(N) We were so up-tight it was hard to get breakfast down. We were hoping for a good easy double mission today to round out 50.

At briefing our hopes came true. We were to hit CRAIOVA, RUMANIA. This was a double credit mission way over in Eastern Rumania. We were to hit the Rail Yards, It was not a oil or aircraft target. There was a possibility of Flak, but there were no fighters in the area! I talked to the crew before we got aboard, told them to be calm, cross their fingers, rub the rabbits foot, hold the left one, and PRAY!

I don't remember who was co-pilot on this flight. My records do not show him, but he was as excited as we were on this trip. Guess he thought that some of our good luck would rub off on him! I was really cautious. I did not horse around, and motioned my wing men to not fly so close to us. Normally I wanted them practically touching my wing tips.

We arrived at the target, the weather was as clear as could be, and we saw very little inaccurate flak. The wing put a good pattern of bombs on the Rail-Yards, there were a lot of explosions and fires. I guess that our last one did some good.

We got back to San Giovanni after flying 6 hours and 15 minutes. The group commander gave us permission to pull a good buzz job after the group had landed. I stayed away from traffic till all else were on the ground. We set up 2450 RPM came across the field at

250 MPH. Old 476 roared like a new plane. We slowed down, pulled up to traffic altitude, and made a beautiful squeaky landing. As we parked, our ground crew, and many other people rushed up. As we got out, about 100 men milled around us pounding on our backs and giving bear hugs. I am not sure, but I think that we were the first crew to finish 50 Missions with the 741st Squadron. After debriefing, the medics gave our crew three bottles of 100 proof whiskey, We gave the crew and the ground crew two, and we took the third for the 4 officers. Most of ours was consumed as we showered. Sam Bakanauskas was not as elated as we were. He had to fly some more trips.

Needless to say, we had a big celebration at the club. The finishing crew had to pay the tab, as it was the end of the month I was broke! Hump Hosmer loaned me a hand - full of Lira for my share of the tab. Just the two of us paid, as Sam Backanuskas had more missions to fly!. Luckily, the squadron was scheduled to fly in the morning, so we did not buy very many drinks.

The next morning, June 25 th, Hosmer and I got to sleep in, but Sam had to make another mission. I think that he needed three more.

The group, and the wing bombed a bridge at Arles, France. There was only small caliber flack there, the Wing decided to bomb at 14500 feet as bridges were very difficult to hit. Thirty-seven bombers dropped on the target area, due to the smoke and dust, the results could not be determined. The flak was light, and none of the planes were hit.

Hosmer, I, Sgt Beeler, Sgt Muse, Sgt Elliot, and Sgt Hamilton were grounded as we had flown our 50. We got to sleep in again, as we were waiting for orders from 15th Air Force for shipment back to the states. After breakfast, we all heard that the group was on a maximum effort to a oil target near Vienna, the town was Moosbierbaum. There was a very large synthetic oil installation there, and it had not been hit before.

Moosbierbaum was to be hit by 575 B-24, 165 B-17, 144 P-51 and 46 P-47s. Our 455th Group was leading the 304th Wing with a total of 161 B-24s. Approaching the IP, our second section, led by Maj. Russell Welsh got behind the lead in a slow turn to the left, and got way out of position. As the German fighters saw this gap, they hit the second section very hard. Major Welsh applied power attempting to close up with the first section, this strung the section out like a shooting gallery. Of the 36 B-24s our group sent out ONLY 26 RETURNED! This was by far the greatest loss to fighters our group had ever experienced, most of the lost crews were part of our original bunch from Langley Field. Had I been on this mission, I would not be writing this horror story. Maj. Welsh violated the original orders from Col. Cool. "KEEP A TIGHT FORMATION" Our very good friend Lt. Julio Locatelli was deputy second section leader flying on Maj. Welsh's right wing. Welsh had been slowly getting behind position with the first section. Quite a way before the turn to the IP, Julio had been pleading with Maj. Welsh to close up to the lead section! No attempt was made until the fighters hit, and then Welsh poured on full power to save his skin, and his formation was strung out-EASY TARGETS for the Fighters!!

When the remains of the group returned, I was on the field. It was a shocking sight, many of the planes were badly shot up, and there were many wounded men aboard. I went with Julio Locatelli to De-Briefing, and he was so shaken, he was unable to tell the story without breaking down in tears. The flight surgeon was very generous with the whisky to all. I got a double shot, and was not even flying.

We got Locatelli and another surviving old crew to the showers, About then Julio came up with the idea of us shooting Major Welsh! I tagged along with Julio, he had his 45 auto, that Italian was out of his head with anger, and the two of us started looking for Welsh. No one had seen him since they landed, our squadron adjutant saw us searching for Welsh. Being rightly concerned, he got word to the CO. Maj. Lanford got a jeep, and disappeared. We heard that he took Welsh to town, had him hidden in Wing headquarters. We never saw Welsh again before we left for Naples and home. Good action!

Around the 5th of July, our orders came through sending several crews to Naples assigned to a replacement depot. The depot would process us for shipment via boat back to the states.

Of the 16 crews in the 741st Bomb Sq. as we left Langley Field in December 1943, I think there were only six of these crews left on the 5th of July! We were a very lucky bunch of fellows.

This is the end of my combat history with the 741st SQ. 455th Bomb Group in 1944.

James H. Smith
Fredericksburg, Texas
April 1, 2003

Germany



ITALY

JULY 1944

Around the 3rd of July, orders came out officially taking us, and three other crews from the 741st Squadron off combat status. We were to be taken to a Replacement Depot in Naples for processing, and shipment back to the States! In Army talk the States was the Zone of The Interior, or ZI. We were to go back by surface transportation (boats).

About 7 AM we all were loaded on some 6X6 trucks, given spam sandwiches, and with full canteens headed for Naples. July in this part of Italy is not hot as San Antonio, but it is quite close. Our route was Via Foggia, on through the mountains of the spine of Italy. Most of the towns and villages we drove through were in poor shape. This area had been badly bombed and shelled less than a year ago, and was a very sad sight. There was no shortage of children along the roads. kids were all over us when we slowed down for the towns and villages. Every one on the trucks had stocked up with mints, and gum at San Giovanna but we ran out before noon. "Hey JOE! Cigarette, Caramella, Gum" was screamed at us constantly. There were three trucks with Air Crews from the 455th Group in the convoy. We stopped at a motor depot for gas, got out and stretched a bit, ate a spam sandwich. There was a grove of trees here offering some shade; we were a dusty bunch, and a sweaty one as well.

Approaching Naples, with Mt. Vesuvius to our left, the area was still quite badly torn up, but the small fields, orchards and vineyards looked pretty good to me, I think there was some irrigation in these areas. Approaching the City of Naples, we were stopped at a roadblock by a bunch of American MPs in spick and span uniforms, white helmets, and white Sam Brown Belts. On one arm -band was MP, and the other read PBS. Found out later that stood for Peninsular Base Section. A huge supply base ran Naples, GIs and Airman were not treated too well by PBS MPs; they were a lot like the Gestapo!! Thank goodness, we had a packet of orders with us, and we were passed on.

Naples is quite hilly till you get to the water front, there was a pretty good highway with a lot of tunnels from the water- front on north. All of these tunnels were not only roads, but were huge air raid shelters as well. People lived in them all the time, as many of the apartments and homes had been destroyed. Not only by bombing, but the Germans, as they left the city, blasted a good part of the waterfront town.

Our destination was a huge tent city around a race- track area. We were dropped off at an area and given tent and street names and numbers. All of us, Officers and Men, had to lug our bags for a good distance, but the sun

was going down and it was not so hot. Our Officers were assigned to one very long street, and our men to another, but adjacent to each other. As we were pretty hungry, out came the mess kits, and in line we got! Things were a bit different here; Officers and Men had separate mess tents and lines. Guess we were really back in the ARMY. After a meal of standard GI canned rations, we drifted back to our tents. Same deal! A canvass cot and one blanket, no pillow. We should have swiped our Air Mattresses! We had held on to our steel helmets, as this was our wash- basin, there was a cool water shower that we enjoyed before going to bed about dark. Soap towels and other stuff was in our little musette bags, but I had left the little radio in the tent at San Giovanna. We were so tired that sleep came easily, but we were awakened before daylight by a damned amplified bugle call of REVILLE! This was a hell of a way to treat COMBAT VETERANS!

There were counter high tables with cut outs to fit our tin helmets, water could be drawn into the helmets, and then the helmets were placed into the cut -outs. This was a pretty good arrangement, as we did not have to bend over to wash up. With face and hands washed, and teeth brushed we were ready for our first day at the replacement depot.

The officer's mess line was open, and we had a pretty good GI breakfast with French toast and syrup. The coffee was pretty good, and there was sugar available. It was getting day- light when we finished breakfast. As we walked back down the street among the tents we were greeted by a bunch of army enlisted men with references to our Air Corps Uniforms. We were in khakis, with out hot pilot caps, and our ribbons and wings. These men were very loudly insulting the hell out of us! Calling us Fly Boys, and Country Clubbers on down the line to the profane! Back at our tent, we visited with other Air Corps Officers, and they told us to just ignore the soldiers, this was normal for these Dog Faces.

At mid morning, I went to the showers, and ran into a fellow from my High School class. Joe was a Tech Sergeant in the 36th Infantry Division. He had been in the lines since September 1943, Wounded three times, he was recovering from his last wound. He would be going back to his unit soon. These guys in the Infantry had no 50 Mission goals, just back to the same terrible existence in the Mountains and Valleys of Italy.

The two of us walked to the PX to get some cigarettes. On the way we passed the area with the insulting GI's. They opened up on me with vigor. Joe turned on these soldiers, and gave them a real chewing out! It seemed that these big mouth boys, were fresh from the States, and had not been in the combat line at all. Joe told them to just wait. The few that would be left will be a lot less noisy very soon! It was very easy to look at an infantryman and tell if he had been in combat or not. From then on, we Air

Corps vets just shot the finger at these rowdy recruits when they spouted off!

A group of Officers went to the office of the replacement depot, checking on what we may expect here and when we may get on a boat for the ZI. A captain was nice, but not very helpful. Officers could come and go at will, as we had a pass from the depot. The Naples Area had a curfew, every person had to be off the streets at 11:30 PM. Violators Would be picked up by PBS MP's and jailed!

At the best, we had a three- week wait for a boat. There were several thousand troops in the depot awaiting shipment! This was sorry news for a bunch of flyers.

The next morning, there were about 20 Air Crew Officers waiting for the shuttle bus to Naples Downtown. The weather was great, clear and warm. The Bay of Naples was blue and sparkling. We all were just a bunch of tourists headed for town.

If one ignored all of the destruction and squalor, Naples was an interesting place for us to see. Our bus terminal was on a major square, there was a Jr. Officers Club on this square where transient officers could have meals and drinks. After a coffee and do nut we scattered and hit the street. Humph Hosmer and I were joined by Jack Blum. Jack was a red headed bombardier from Nangeroni's crew. Hosmer had been in Naples some years ago, and with the aid of a map, became our guide.

Hosmer insisted that we start out at "The GALLERIA" in the center of down town. The galleria was really a covered street about two blocks long with a cross street at the middle. This whole street area had been covered with a glass pane roof about three floors up. Of course, there was no glass left, just the skeleton frame where the panes had been. This was a beautiful version of what we now call a Mall.

All of the ground level was a series of shops and sidewalk cafés and bars. The idea was to get a table at one of these bars, and sip a drink while the whole world passed by. The bulk of the foot traffic was military. Dozens of uniform, and variations of them were a sight. The American uniforms were in the majority, as Naples was controlled by the US Army. Next, were the British and all of their colonial troops, Gurkas from Nepal with their curved knives, Sikhs from India, with the turbans. There were also many of the French Colonial uniforms. The one that surprised me was the Brazilian army, in blue gray. These troops had just arrived, and they were to join the American 5th Army.

Hosmer had us tour several of the world famous churches, palaces, and museums. We spent several days in and around Naples, but went back to the Replacement Depot before curfew each night, and a shower and breakfast the next morning. We devoted a full day to catch a train, and visit the ruins of Pompeii. This was a great visit, but the places to eat and drink were scarce to non-existing. Most of the guides at Pompeii had an idea that all Americans just wanted to see the sex-oriented buildings, and I guess they were right. We were deluged by vendors wanting to sell us winged phallic items. That was the thriving business around Pompeii, phallic items and very poorly made cameos.

Around the rail station, there were a bunch of curio shops bars, and restaurants. The restaurants were sad, as they had very little to offer in the way of food. Italy was extremely short of food, and the people looked very near starvation. At Pompeii, we had a glass or two of very raw wine. This wine was deep purple, set your teeth on edge, and dyed your teeth purple! We wanted to spend the night on the coast in a small village, but we were told that we would have a hard time getting anything to eat. We caught the train back to Naples, and had a good meal in a Jr. Officers Club called "The Orange Blossom Club" This place was on top of a small mountain. We rode a funicular up and down. The view was great, we could see the Island of Capri off to the west into the setting sun. The place was packed with American Officers, and Italian Whores. The fellows with the Peninsula Base Section had no problem with companionship. There was a great band playing on an outside terrace. The music was pure Glen Miller with the Isle of Capri and Amapola thrown in for good measure. We had to leave and get back to the shuttle bus stop before the curfew caught us, but we would be back.

About ten of us, all pilots, went out to (Poliglumiana airfield), just to look at the airplanes, and kick a few tires. The US Army had an area devoted to putting together small Liaison Planes. These were Cubs, Taylorcrafts, and Aeroncas used by the Army as spotter planes. They were shipped from the states in large crates, and here were put together again. There was an Army Captain in charge of this operation, but he was not a pilot, he had requested an Army Pilot or two to test fly these planes. The 5th Army had promised to send some, but weeks had gone by without pilots.

All of us, had flown these small planes years ago in CPT (Civil Pilot Training) while in college, and we saw no reason not to try them out. We each got one of these planes, taxied around a bit, and took them off. After landing a couple of times, we told the Army Captain that we could test fly for him. We would fly around for 30 minutes or so. Then, sign the planes paper work "OK FOR STANDARD FLIGHT" with our name rank and serial numbers. This was all the Army required, so we had a job for several days. We ventured out on longer trips in the Naples Area. We were

not allowed to fly in the dock areas, or very far north, but there were a lot for us to see around here.

A group of pilots, after flying Army planes all day, decided to spend the evening at the depot, as there was a Bing Crosby movie "Going My Way" showing at the open air grandstand theater tonight. The army had the best seats reserved for officers, and after supper, we climbed up in the stands to the good seats. I am going to try and describe the scene to you. The screen was to the south of the grand stand, and a row of hills was to our right or to the west. Just over these hills was the port and docks of Naples. The sun was just setting, and we heard Anti Aircraft Fire from the dock area. German bombers had flown right down on the water, with the bright setting sun behind the planes making them hard to see from the ships and docks. From behind the hills to the west came sheets of tracer shells, firing at the east-bound bombers! Some of these shells were hitting the tops of the hills, and over the hills came 3 German JU-88 twin-engine bombers. These fellows came over the hills, and back on the deck just in front of our grandstand.

We dumb Air Corps types, just gawked at the bombers as they flew by, but the ground soldiers panicked. Some jumped off the grandstand, others jammed together trying to run. It was all over in seconds, but quite a few fellows were hurt in the crush! It took the army about half an hour to haul off the damaged troops, but we Air Corps fellows never left our seats. The air show was better than Bing Crosby, but we did stay and see the movie. It was a pretty good one!

The open area by our tents was quite a large area, I think it was a parade ground. Each night just at sun down, hundred of small tables were set up by the soldiers, each was a small casino. The table owners furnished a couple of candles, and a U shaped back-board. These were crap games, and were very well used by the troops. Remember- the enlisted men could not leave the depot without a pass, and they were bored to death. Some of these tables were set up for blackjack also. The noise from the crap tables was a constant roar! The owner of the tables took a cut out of each pot, and I understand that many of them did very well. This was basic free enterprise.

The games went on every night till Tattoo was sounded, the whole camp had to be in tents for Taps and Lights Out.

One day, several of us pilots had been checking out Army Planes at Paligimiano and as we headed for the bus stop, we stopped by Base Operations to get a drink of water. A Major came by and asked us if we had any time in B-25 Bombers. Our Capt. Nageroni, told him that he had several hundred hours in B-25s back in the states. The Major told

Nangeroni that if we could get 25 crews together, Pilot, Co Pilot. Navigator, engineer and radio operator, the pilots with some B-25 time. These crews would be assigned to TDY- Temporary Duty to the Air Transport Command and ferry these planes to Brooks Field in San Antonio, Texas!!! We almost wet our pants; here was a chance to fly back to the States! Forget the troop ships and 3 weeks jammed up in a slow moving tub.

Capt. Nangeroni told the Major that we would put together these crews tonight and tomorrow morning, be ready for our new assignment. I had no B-25 time in my form 5 (flying time record), but I was determined to get one of these planes to take home.

As we got back to the depot, late that afternoon, I wasted no time in looking up Francis Beeler, and Karl Muse. Beeler was my old B-24 Engineer and Muse was the radio operator. They, with Humph Hosmer the Navigator were all raring to go back to the States in a B-25. In a tent next to us was a small skinny pilot by the name of Stan Pell, I had seen him in the tent for couple of weeks, but did not know a thing about him. He was a very quiet fellow, and quite a loner he had not been in the old 741st bunch. As I told Hosmer about the proposed flight back, Stan Pell brightened up and told me that he had B-25 time! I knew that he had flown his tour as a P-51 Fighter Pilot. He had been a Co-Pilot on a B-25 for several months in the states We dug out his form 5, and sure enough, he had over 100 hours pilot time in a 25. The pilot he had flown with had always split the pilot time with Pell, just as Hudson had done for me! What a break! My crew was fully put together, and we all would go to the ATC office tomorrow for processing. It was difficult getting to sleep, as we were pretty excited about our trip!

There were about four of us crews catching the bus right after breakfast, we all had our record jackets to get us transferred out of the Replacement Depot. At the ATC office we were given a good briefing about our mission to the ZI.

The B-25s that we were to ferry to Brooks, were war weary birds (they had been flying in combat from a group stationed near Mt. Vesuvius). Last March, Vesuvius had erupted quite violently, and these ships had been coated with a good layer of ash.. This ash was pumice, and was very abrasive. The planes had been steam cleaned inside and out, and the engines had been thoroughly washed out. There was a notation in the plane logs about "EXPOSED TO VOLCANIC ASH WATCH FOR EXCESSIVE OIL CONSUMPTION"

The regular ATC ferry crews would always find something wrong with planes, and write a complaint, and refuse to fly them. Any pilot had a right to do this if he felt there was some problem. The hot shots of the Air

Transport Command, basically refused to fly these war weary birds! They were a pampered bunch; most of their ferrying was with factory new planes. In fact each plane had a droopy eared mule titled "War Weary" as nose art.

The ATC Major and our Capt. Nangeroni. took all of the crew members for a good look at the planes. They looked real good to us, having been washed and painted. They looked better than our original B24s at San Giovanni ! We started them, and taxied around the ramp to get the feel of the brakes and throttles. The B-25 was much nosier than the B-24s as the exhaust from each cylinder came out of finger like stacks around the engine. The B-24 exhaust went through the turbo chargers and a single stack, and was MUCH quieter!

All the pilots got the feel of the ground operation, and the navigators loved the nose compartment, as the visibility was great without the nose turret of the 24. The radioman had a roomy desk just behind the pilots, and the engineer had a lot of room, as there was no turret on the flight deck. In fact, the guns and turrets had been removed from the War Wearies!

We spent some time writing down the power settings used, as these were Wright engines, and were run at much slower RPM than the Pratt engines in the 24s. There was no turbocharger on the engines, as on the B-24. For take off there was a gear driven booster in the engines, but at sea level and light weights the boost was not needed.

Nangeroni and I thought that we would like to take our planes over to San Giovanni and let Sgt. Gilone look them over, as Gilone had been a B-25 crew chief before joining the 741st and the B-24. The ATC major thought this was a good idea. We would do this tomorrow morning, and by the next day all of the paperwork and order processing would be done. We would load up and start for home with our first stop Tunis!

On the morning of July 19, 1944 Capt. Nangeroni and his crew and Lt. Stan Pell and my crew were at the ATC Office by 0830. The ATC put out a flight plan for 2 B-25s to proceed to San Giovanni from Poliginiana Naples, and return that after noon. Pell and I flipped a coin and I won, so I got to make the take off to see Sgt Gilone at San Giovanni. The 25 was a joy to fly, with no load it jumped off the ground and climbed like a rocket. The trip was short, our time from take off to shut down was 50 minutes. It had taken us almost all day by truck!

We left the two planes with Sgt. Gilone, as the group was on a mission, we spent the morning visiting with the fellows we knew at 741 HQ, S-2, Dr. Schutnek and his men at the dispensary. In fact, we had an early lunch at the 741st Mess Hall. We said goodbye to all the fellows we had been with

the past eight months, in fact we saw the Italian tent boys and our laundry man as well. It was a sad and joyous occasion for us all.

Back to the flight line about 1:30 Sgt. Gilone and his ground crew reported that both planes looked in good shape, and they would be willing to fly back home in them. This was good enough for us; we loaded up, and headed back to Naples about 2 PM. We wanted to get away from the field before the Group returned from the mission.

Stan Pell made the take off, and did a good job. Back to Naples before 3 PM, the ATC office told that we should all be back in the morning. Our orders assigning us to the ATC, to ferry back to San Antonio would be ready. Also, an ATC truck would be at the depot at 9:00, to load us and our baggage for the trip to the field. This was an indicator as to how ferry crews were treated. We loved it! We all had to stop by supply and buy a couple of sets of khakis. We would be in the tropics all the way back, and laundry may be a problem for us. We packed all of our gear into three bags apiece, plus the little musette bag, had supper at the mess tent. After supper we went to the movie, the sky was pretty light for the first show, and we left before it was over. It was hard to get to sleep, but we managed it. Up before reveille shower and shave followed by a big breakfast, the sun was just coming up! We needed some time to check out of the depot and get released to the ATC, and we figured this would be a hassle. Eleven of us were at headquarters before 8 AM. Capt. Nangeroni had put his Bombardier, Jack Blum, on as part of his crew. He had no duties but he was a friend and good company for all of us. I wished that Sam Backanuskas had finished his tour. He still had a couple of missions to go. His ear trouble had caused him to be grounded a couple of times. Sam was on a crew with Maj. Lanford the 741st CO, and they were shot down about the time we were leaving. They bailed out over Northern Yugoslavia, all were rescued by The Partisan Troops- except Sam, and he landed beside a road, hurt his leg and could not run to the forest. A truck full of German Troops had him tied up in the truck, thirty minutes after hitting the ground. The other crew men were taken to the Island of Vis, by partisans, and were back at San Giovanni in two days.

JULY 20, 1844 NAPLES, ITALY

HEADING FOR HOME WITH THE AIR TRANSPORT COMMAND

At the depot office, the people there were expecting us. All of the paperwork was ready; this was unheard of in the Army! At 9:00 the ATC truck was at the door. We climbed in and went to our tents, loaded our

bags and were out the gate before 10:00. There were just two crews on this truck, as we had rushed the paperwork out.

The ATC Major was very pleased to have us, as our orders transferring us to the Air Transport Command- Ferry Division were all ready. There was a notation with the orders that caught our attention. As we were now Ferry Pilots, we would get an additional pay amounting to \$8.00 per day till we delivered the plane to Brooks Field! That was a lot of money, and we could draw against this at each ATC station that we stopped. This sum was the same for Officers and enlisted men! Sgts. Beeler and Muse thought that they were in heaven. The Naples ATC Operations briefed us for our first leg- Naples to Tunis. At Tunis, we would be under control of the North African Division, Ferry Command. We loaded up the B-25, and found that it was fully equipped for a ferry trip overseas. There were 3 Stanley top quality Thermos Gallon Jugs, two GI wool blankets for each of us. Several cartons of K Rations, as well as 4 boxes of C rations were aboard, and the same medical kit as the one we brought from the states! There was a six- man life raft in the rear compartment, and two four- man rafts in the wing compartments. These rafts were fully equipped with emergency equipment, Gibson Girl Emergency radios, flares, sea dye, and many packages of canned water, hard candies, and other goodies. In the B-25, a crew member had to crawl through a passageway over the bomb bay to get to the rear, so we seldom went back there. Sgt. Beeler made this trip several times on each flight to check the rear of the engines for oil leaks.

On July 20, 1944, after a 2 hour and 30 minute flight we landed at the main airport at Tunis. Being summer, the heat was almost unbearable; it was great change from our stay in Tunisia last January! As we checked in with operations, we were told that there would be an auxiliary fuel tank installed this afternoon and night. The wing tanks in the B-25 did not hold enough fuel for us to fly from Liberia West Africa to Ascension Island, and from there to Natal, Brazil. So we would stop at Ascension for refueling! We had a long trip before we had to worry about crossing the South Atlantic! Also Operations wanted us to take off at eight in the morning, for Marrakech, Morocco. We told them that we were not in any big hurry, and we would not be ready at eight in the morning! The 1st Lt in operations got all upset with us, and our attitude. Our Capt. Nangeroni told him we would leave the planes with him, and get on a C-47 if he got too hard with us. We all remembered the sorry treatment last year in Marrakech, and we did not have to put up with it again!

We were taken to a badly bombed out French barracks for quarters, the showers worked well, and there was no need of hot water, as the cold side came out at about 90 degrees. Our bunks were screened with mosquito netting. This was great, as the flies were swarming. There were German

POWS as orderlies , they kept the fly spray going for us. We felt like kings around these POWS, as they popped to attention any time we passed them, they were real heel clickers!

Inquiring about nightlife, we were told about a spot on the edge of the Bay Of Tunis. It was supposed to be a real hot spot. After an early dinner in the mess hall, we hopped a shuttle bus to town, and then caught a couple of carriages for the hot spot. This club was an open- air place in a grove of trees sitting on a small bluff, and was a bit cooler from the bay water breeze. The flies had disappeared, as the sun went down. A good looking French waitress came to our table, old Humphrey Hosmer carried on a pretty good conversation with her, she also spoke Italian and Nangeroni enjoyed that, I bet that she spoke German as well, but we did not test her. This Club had been a resort before the war, and had stayed in pretty good shape.

The choice of drinks was pretty limited, I selected a gin lemon squash, the others ordered wines, and other drinks. I told the girl that I wanted a cold drink, as it arrived there was one small lump of ice in the glass. The drink was very raw, I think the gin had been made that day, and the lemon tasted like the lemon from a K ration!

After several of these drinks we got pretty loaded, and we started dancing with some of the girls. They all had men with them at the tables. We figured that the girls were all prostitutes, or live- ins with some of the officers. These permanent party men had it made, just like in Naples.

The whole evening was sort of a mess. Several of us got pretty tight on the rotgut. Thank goodness, Stan Pell, my pilot did not drink. It took us over an hour to get carriages back to Tunis. I , as well as Jack Blum got a bit sick, but we did get back in our quarters and bed. It was a hot bad night.

July 21, 1944

We got checked out of the visitor's officer's quarters, about 9 AM, after a good breakfast of sausage and hotcakes, we drifted down to the flight line. A line chief showed us the new gas tank, and checked us out on the valve switching. They had put about 50 gallons in the tank, and suggested we check out the flow and valves today.

At Base Operations, our flight plans to Marrakech had been filed. All details had been taken care of. After a good pre-flight inspection we climbed aboard. I asked Pell to fly this leg, as I was still a bit queasy! After take off, we stayed low, as we wanted to fly by Dejedia, our January, 1944 field.

The runway was still there, but that was all. There was no sign of any occupation at all, war comes and it goes! Most of the wrecked planes, tanks and trucks were still littering the countryside, but just a few shepherders were all we could see. We were going to go to the city of Algiers, and skip Marrakesh, our flight plan would be changed as we got within radio contact with Masion Blanche at Algiers. So much for ATC orders! The new fuel valves and switches worked great, so we were ready for a long hop. We landed at Masion Blanche, Algeria after a quick 2-hour and 20 minute flight. No questions were asked, and transportation was arranged to the city. All of us rode in a truck, but when it came to quarters, the EM and Officers split up.

The Junior Officers were put up in a large hotel about two blocks from the waterfront. All seven of us were put in a large room with cots and mattresses, we had two bathrooms connected to our big room. Our windows opened out to a side street, and the sills were about ten feet above the street, the windows were wide open for ventilation.

There was a large fancy hotel overlooking the harbor just around the corner. The Sgt. at our desk told us to go there, as that was where all of the action was. We could drink and dine there and watch the gals walking up and down the seaside street. However, Jr. Officers could not get a room there as it was for Field Grade officers only, and there were a lot of them around. Algiers.

This hotel had a large veranda overlooking the harbor and a beautiful seaside street, a fair breeze was coming off the water, a great spot to relax and have a few drinks. We tipped the headwaiter, as with per diem pay we were rich, he set up a nice table for all seven of us. This table became our headquarters all afternoon, and into the night. We would drift off in pairs, wandering around looking in shops, checking girls, looking at ships at the docks. Algiers was not as crowded as Naples, the Allies were gradually closing down in Algeria and Tunisia. The main force here was the Mediterranean Base Section, the Military Police with white helmets and belts were just like Naples, but the arm-bands read MBS.

About 8 PM we all went in the dining room for supper, we were a tired bunch, as we put in a long afternoon and early evening being tourists. The food was GI, but it was served very well and the tables had white tablecloths. After dinner, we wandered off to our hotel, took a shower and hit the sack.

The street noises coming through the open windows woke us up a little after 8 AM. Dressed, the mess hall in our hotel was our next stop. The coffee was very good, as well as pancakes and bacon got us off to a new day.

In the lobby, there was a USO girl at a desk she had sightseeing plans and trips for the area. There were beach trips, museum tours, trips through the Casbah (old native quarter), all available for the military visitor. We decided to take the beach trip. This was about a half hour bus trip leaving at 9:30 for a resort hotel on the Mediterranean. Our cost was only \$2.00 for the whole day, including lunch! All seven of us signed up. As we had no bathing trunks, we asked the girl where we could buy a pair. She replied that we could go in our underwear shorts if we wished!

Piling on the small bus, the GI driver was very knowledgeable about the trip. He kept us well informed on the trip. This area around the city of Algiers was predominately French, the natives were laborers or service people. They wore loose fitting white robes, the women kept their faces covered with a head shawl. And the men wore red fez caps or skull-caps. The French people all dressed like our own people. The women wore thick cork soled wedge type shoes. Leather and shoes were very scarce.

Along the coast road most of the homes appeared to be of the wealthy. All houses were behind a wall with a gate, looked a lot like Mexico. On the land side of the road were farms and orchards, the houses were all much smaller than on the beach side. I guess these were for the hired help or small farmers. There were palm trees, date trees, and various fruit trees. The country looked a lot like southern California.

The small resort hotel was behind a wall, just like the homes on the way. Inside the wall, there was a tropical paradise! The sand beach next to a rock point jutting into the blue sea was beautiful! The building was of white stucco with a red tile roof, the grounds were green and covered with flowers. We were shown to two rooms with baths on an upstairs balcony. These rooms looked over the blue sea. The whole place was wonderful, we should have booked a week here!!

There was an American Staff Sergeant in charge of the whole place, he greeted us with open arms. We were the only people slated to be there for today- the place was all ours.

We were taken to a terrace by the beach, and a waiter took our drink orders. All drinks were of local stuff, but the waiter suggested some favorites, one was cherry liquor on ice! This was the same drink I had enjoyed at Villiagio Mancusco last month! Some of our group ordered gin with lemon, and it was much better than the Tunis version. The waiter told us to enjoy our drinks, take a swim and relax, as lunch would be ready in a couple of hours. We carried our drinks to the beach near the rocks, and here came our waiter with beach towels. We were told to get our clothes off and get in the water. We were out of sight from the hotel so we did not need swim trunks, and there was no need to get our shorts wet!

What a deal! We all got naked and jumped in the water, it was cool, but very refreshing. We would swim around a bit, then stretch in the warm sand, take a drink, and get in the water again. We were a funny sight, pale as a dead fish, and most of us were way underweight. I remember buying some khakis at the depot supply. My waist size was 26, and I weighed around 128 pounds.

Our waiter came with word that lunch was about ready, and we should get dressed. He did not have to tell us a second time. Lunch was set up on a porch looking over the garden and sea. It was a beautiful setting, and the table was well set. We started out with a great onion soup and croutons, a fair red wine was available for 25 cents a glass, none of us turned it down. We then had a huge green salad with oil, wine and vinegar dressing. Our main course was a broiled fish. The whole meal was one of the best I have EVER had. It could have been the fact that we were unwinding from a rough six months, but life looked great!

After lunch, we lolled around the porch-most of us took naps. After about an hour, we decided to go back to the beach for a good long swim before going back to Algiers. I guess we laid around the beach for a couple of hours, before our bus departure. At about 5:30 we got back to our Algiers hotel, took a shower and had supper. All of us were back in bed before 9 PM, it had been a great day!

Around mid-night, we jumped out of bed! Anti aircraft guns were going off all around us, it was really noisy. Most of the guns were from ships in the harbor just a block or so away! We pulled on our pants, and bare footed, ran up two flights of stairs to the roof. We could look over harbor and watch all of the tracer shells going up in the dark sky. There was ONE GERMAN photo plane cruising back and forth, he must have been over 20,000 feet high. We could not see him, but we could hear his engines. At intervals, this plane dropped parachute with magnesium flares. These flares lit up the harbor as bright as day. The tracer shells started coming our way, and fragments from the bursting shells started clanking down in the streets and on our roof! We made a speed run for the stairs to our room. It was a real experience for us, but we were lucky not getting hit by the flak fragments! We had never seen an air raid at Cerignola, and now we had seen two of them, Naples and Algiers!

As we were getting back in bed, the desk Sgt. came to our room, asking if we had seen any street urchins in our room. We told him "no", as we had been on the roof for a few minutes watching the action. He asked us to look around and see if anything was missing.

With the lights on, we saw at once something was missing! We all had run upstairs to watch the raid, and left our shoes under our cots. There was not a shoe in the whole room! These street kids had stood on each others

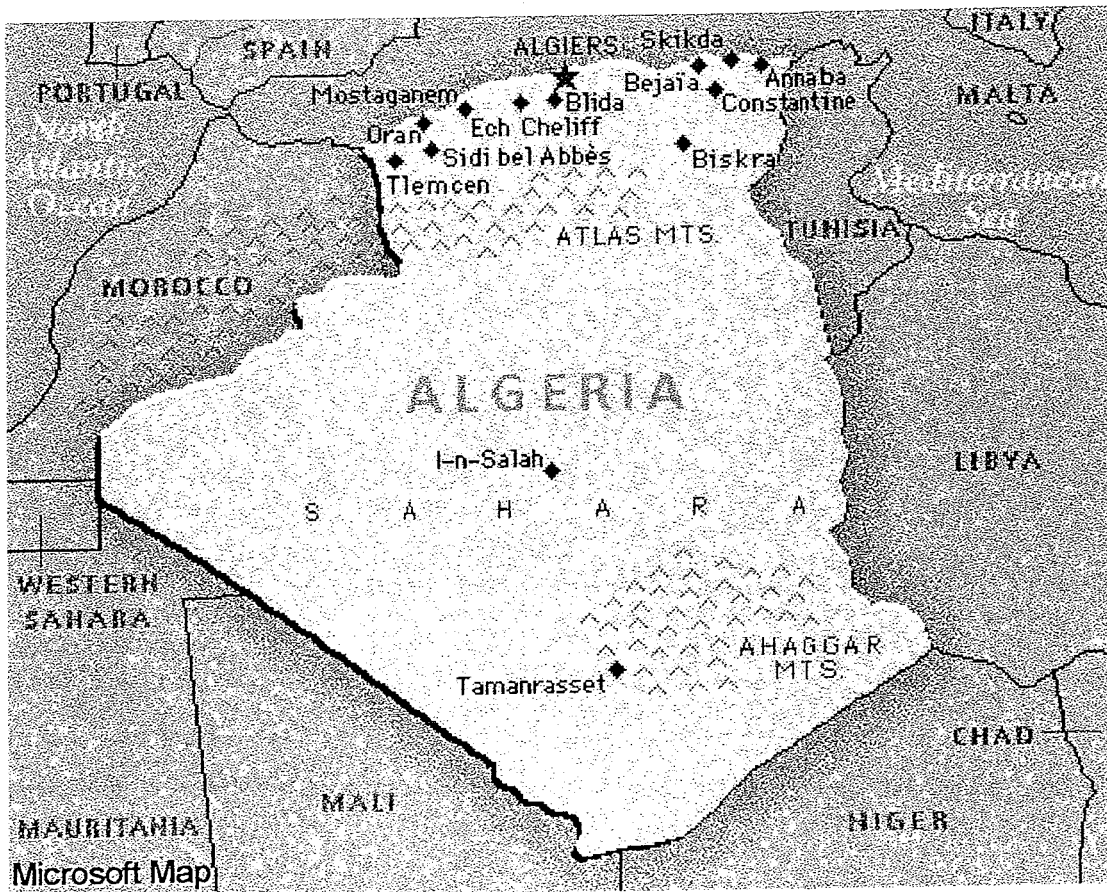
shoulders, and had gotten in our room, and made off with seven pairs of shoes. We went to sleep, and as we did, we discovered that we had gotten a real sunburn, lying around the beach for several hours. And I mean All OVER! We tossed and turned most of the night, one of us had a tube of Vaseline, and this stuff helped the burn, but was pretty greasy.

Going to breakfast in our stocking feet caused quite a bit of chatter till Capt. Nangeroni stood up and related the tale to all! Leaving the hotel, on the way to the PX, we caused quite a stir. Seven- ribbon- decorated flyers walking the streets of Algiers in stocking feet, was not a common sight. The street urchins, most of them were shoeshine boys, followed us yelling "HEY JOE! SHINE?" I am sure that some of these kids had been in on last night's SHOE RAID! They looked a bit better fed than normal. When we got to the PX, the place was closed, but one of the store staff opened up, for the shoeless seven.

Re shod in low quarter oxfords, we went back to our hotel to check on trips or tours. Hosmer, Pell and I signed up for a guided tour of the Casbah, lasting about two hours. The Casbah was the name given to most Arab old town or native quarters. Big OFF LIMIT SIGNS were the main features of Casbahs . We were taking a guided walking tour so we did not have to hide from patrolling MP's. I am sure that we missed some parts of the old town, where the prostitutes were, but those areas were very dangerous, and we did not want to risk getting home. The streets were very narrow and winding, the buildings seemed to close in at the 2nd or 3rd floors. In bright daylight it was very gloomy in the streets. We joked about the movie "Pepe La Moko" set in the Casbah of Algiers. We never did see Hedy Lamar!

The guide took us up hill and down hill through many narrow and twisting streets. If he had turned us loose, I do not think we could find our way out!! He took us to a very exotic inn or tavern. All of the guests sat on the carpeted floors, with leather cushions or hassocks scattered around. He ordered coffee for us all, this was very sweet and mint flavored, but was really good. Suggested a light early lunch, and we agreed. A plate of pastry covered (looked like a fried pie) things they were great, there was highly seasoned chopped lamb in the center. With two of these pies, and a very large plate of very sweet dates, we filled up. The thimble sized cups of coffee kept being filled. The meal was great. The guide told us that the evening meal was better, a large tray with lamb, rice and flat bread with other added goodies took over an hour to wade through. Think this meal was called cous cus or something like that. About 2:30 in the afternoon, we were taken back to the main Casbah Gate, and waddled back to our hotel. This was amazing, as we had no alcoholic beverage at all on this tour.

Algeria



As we were full of food and tired from the Casbah Tour, we flopped down for a nap. This did not last very long as it was pretty warm in our room. Most of us took a shower, and slowly drifted out on the streets to the big hotel on the corner. All of us split up, as some of the good- looking girls were seated at individual tables, and we visited around. I wished that I had Hump Hosmer with me, as I needed some French translated. The girl I sat down with chattered away in French. It turned out that she knew some Spanish, so I tried some Tex Mex, and we were able to communicate well enough. There was a band playing for dancing, and we were off and running. This girl was a better dancer than I was, but we got along very well. She showed me a couple of smaller bars down the street. A bit after dark she had to leave, I suspect to meet her live in American officer. It was a nice afternoon.

On the way to the mess hall and Jr. Officer's hotel, I ran into Sgts. Beeler and Muse. They had been having a great time in Algiers, but wanted to get moving on the way home. They said that Nageroni's men would like to move on also. I agreed with them, and I would meet them tomorrow in the PX. As the officers straggled in to our room, we decided to meet the men in the morning. We gathered at the PX, and we all agreed to load up and go to Casablanca, Morocco around noon today, we checked out of our hotel, the motor pool sent a truck by for us, and we were off.

JULY 23, 1944 OFF TO CASABLANCA

At base operations we loaded our planes, checked them over carefully. Jack Blum told Nangeroni that he had to stop by the Base PX before we left, so we sat there waiting for Jack. Here he came with a French Jeep and driver, and two beautiful French Air Force WACS!

Jack had met these girls yesterday when we all were wandering around town. The girls were being transferred to Casablanca, and Jack was more than willing to take them along!

The girls had gotten two parachutes from operations so they were ready to go! The flight to Casablanca would take several hours, so Jack would have some company in the nose of the B-25. The nose was very popular with the crew- members, as the view was fantastic there. Flying along, the planes stayed in a very loose formation, as the weather was clear, but warm. I was sitting in the pilots seat, holding position with Nageroni, to our left, and his bomb bay doors opened. With the bomb bay open, some dirty clothes blew out of the plane. The door was closed, but some laundry flew out, the natives would be happy with this present from the skies. I hoped that the clothes did not belong to Capt. Nangeroni. Jack Blum, in the nose with the two French WACS mentioned something about thrashing

around in the nose. He had a funny smile on his face as we questioned him about the bay doors opening.

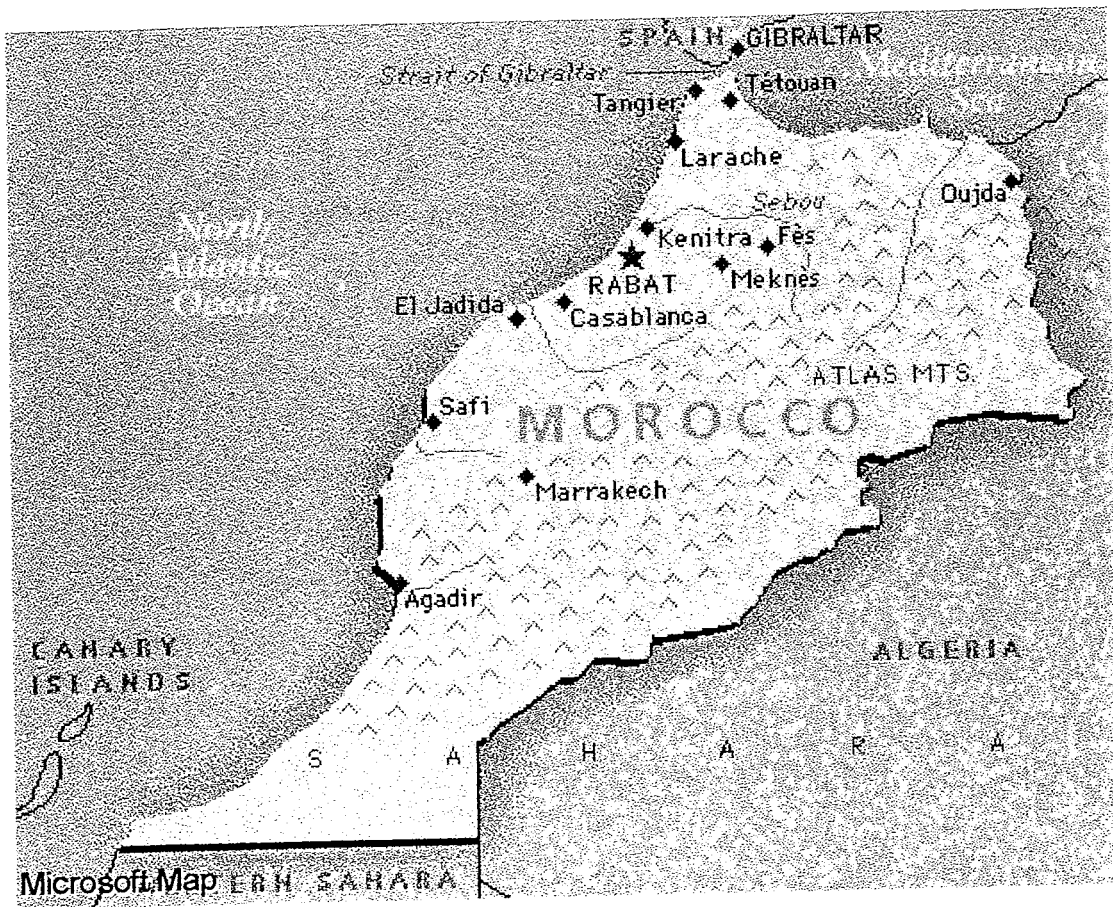
Landing at Casablanca, the operations people were very curious about our proper orders, insisting that we go Marrakech tomorrow, as this is where all the ferry crews operated, . Capt. Nangeroni told them to buzz off, or we would leave them the planes to get back to the states, Nangeroni could be one tough Italian! A big truck was provided to take all of both crews to transient hotels in the center of town. Of course the men and officers were taken to different hotels. There was not much difference in the accommodations, we were put in rooms for four, GI cots had a pad and two sheets and a towel provided. It was quite warm in Casablanca, the shower worked and the water was warm. The hotel desk clerk advised us to have dinner in the mess, there was no safe place for us to eat in town. The mess had a small bar, so we got some bad rum and coke with a little ice before dinner. The tables were nice --with table- cloths. The waiters were local folks dressed in white robes. The food was GI but it was well prepared, and tasty, a soup was served that was made of seafood, not from GI cans, and it was very good.

After dinner, we headed for a local hot spot. Jack Blum got a carriage and returned with not two WACS, but seven girls, and they were pretty good looking! The Night Club was not bad looking, had a live band, and we were having a real party. We all had plenty of money from our \$8.00 a day extra pay. The girls were drinking wine or champagne, the men were drinking anything. There was some beer made out of peanuts, some raw rum. and wines. There were no Coca Colas, but it did not slow us down. We all were the big spenders and tippers. Unfortunately we got plastered quite early in the evening, Capt Nangeroni got a couple of MPs to herd us back to our rooms. I don't remember what happened to the girls!

The next morning we were not too sharp, but some coffee and breakfast helped, along with a cold shower. The desk clerk told us that there was a USO trip to the city of Rabat. This is where the Bey or King of Morocco had his palace, and there was to be a military parade of the Kings guard this afternoon. It was supposed to be a real spectacle, so we all signed up for the trip. The cost was around a dollar, for a reserved seat and transportation!

We left the hotel at 2 PM, for a little over an hour trip to Rabat, we did get to see quite a bit of the city of Casablanca, and the countryside. This area had some agriculture, date palms and fruit trees were the main attraction with cultivated small fields, the buildings were white stucco, with red tile roofs. It was a nice area, compared to the slums of Casablanca.

MOROCCO



The parade ground was decorated with banners and flags, and our seats were in grandstand with a cloth roof. This shade and cool breeze made it quite comfortable for us.

Most of the spectators were standing out in the sun.

The show started with a band mounted on white Arabian Horses, the saddles and other tack were shined to perfection, The members of the band had a white uniform, with a red cape and a red cap. The horses were trained to stay in place while the musicians played various instruments, the drummers had a drum on either side of the horses, and the drummers played both sides waving the drumsticks above them. The brass instruments shined like gold. There were around one hundred members of this band. Behind the band came a troop of camel mounted men, carrying pikes or spears with various colored pennants. Another camel group carried antique curved stock muzzle loading rifles, each man had a curved sword at his waist. The colors of the uniforms, flags and pennants made an outstanding spectacle.

We were a very fortunate bunch to have seen this display. At the hotel, we were told that Americans get ^{to} see this very seldom, so we really lucked into a good deal. We all wished that we had some type of camera to catch some of the scenes, but cameras of any type were a scarce item.

As we returned to Casablanca, our men told us that they were ready to leave, and get on the way home. We officers agreed, and decided that we would take off in the morning, but we would like to stop at a Navy Airfield down the coast on the way to Dakar. This place was a coastal town, Agadir. The locals told us it was a great place for swimming, so we told the men we would leave in the morning.

JULY 25, 1944 To Agadir.

I think that we were all ready to get on the way, and it was just a 90-minute flight down the Atlantic coast. The old town of Agadir was an old fortress on top of a hill over looking the ocean, and the Navy Field was just a couple of miles inland. We landed on nice asphalt runways, parked with Lockheed PV planes, and other Navy planes, used in anti submarine patrol.

We were told that the officers could stay at a resort hotel on the beach, but the men could not leave the base. The Navy was a lot rougher on enlisted men than the army ever was. Our crew- men were not too happy with this arrangement, and we agreed with them.

The men were set up in Quonset huts, with no fans, and it was really hot and humid. The officers were given an early supper, and taken to the hotel on the beach. There was a USO tour to a small town tomorrow. The men

agreed to take this tour, and the officers did the same. The truck with our men would pick us up at the hotel at 10:00 for the tour.

The beach hotel was very modern, and a cool breeze off the water felt great. Since there were civilians at the hotel, the seven of us shopped the gift shop, buying some bathing trunks. They cost us nearly \$10.00, but we figured that we had better not swim in our GI drawers! There was a bar on the beach side of the hotel, and we got going on the wine and brandy! There were several girls at the bar, but they were escorted by Navy Officers, and civilians. We did not make much of an impression, on these girls, the water was great and the waves were just right, the sun sinking over the ocean was a great sight! The Army Air Corps did not make much headway with the girls of Agadir. We drank a lot, but decided to get some sleep around 10 PM.

The beach hotel offered very little food for breakfast; the navy had kept them in coffee and flour. We did enjoy some great toast made with French bread, and navy jams and jellies, with strong coffee, was all we could handle after last nights drinking.

The truck with our men and some Navy people picked us up on schedule, and we were off for Tarodaunt , I am not sure of the spelling. This was a market town about thirty miles inland at a large oasis. The town had no visible running water, but there was a good supply just a few feet under the surface. Large hand dug wells around dry river- bed provided water brought to the surface by donkey driven water wheels. These emptied into a series of small canals serving small farm patches, and clumps of date palms.

The town was a lot like a small Mexican Town. White stucco or rock walls and red tile roofs, around a central plaza. In this plaza were temporary market stalls with tent like sun shelters. There was a small hotel and restaurant along one side of the plaza; a pole and arbor roof shaded the front terrace. Tables and chairs were set up on the shaded terrace. After walking around the market. We headed for the shaded hotel terrace, as it was VERY HOT out in the sun. It was July and we were on the edge of the Sahara.

On the terrace, hanging from the poles were clay water jugs. The water seeped through the clay just enough to cool the jugs by evaporation. We were given glasses of this cool water with a bit of crème de menthe added. This was a very refreshing drink, even if there was no ice within 50 miles at the Navy field. We hoped that the crème de menthe Would kill any bugs in the water. We had a good lunch here with a green salad, and some meat (tasted like goat) good bread and dried dates. None of us had any ill effects from the water or the meal!

The truck took us back to the Navy base, we arrived about 4 PM. My crew was on the trucks, and we all decided to leave tomorrow for Dakar, Nangeroni's group agreed, We would plan to take off around 9:30 in the morning. Hosmer, Jack Blum and I went to the officer's club, thought we would have a drink or two before supper, the club was closed, Seems that the CO got upset with a rowdy promotion party a couple of days ago, I looked at the promotion list, and heading the list was George W. Delavan, promoted to Lt. George and I were frat brothers at UT a couple of years ago, we both were from San Antonio. I asked around for George, he was on TDY in north Morocco. Seemed he was one of the celebrants at the promotion party!

We officers had an early supper in the navy mess, before we took the shuttle to the beach hotel. As we were finishing our meal, a Shore Patrol Lt. at our table asked if any of us would like to go with him and a driver up to the old town on the hill. He had room for three of us, Hosmer, Blum and I agreed to go. The jeep would drop us off at the beach hotel later that night after checking the Casbah for wandering sailors.

About dark we rode the jeep into the old town. This place appeared to have been unchanged in 500 years; the main market was still very busy. Lighted by kerosene lamps and some torches it was very crowded. As the sun went down, the air cooled off, and people crowded into the Casbah market. Our driver stayed with the jeep, and the three of us followed the SP Lt, on a walking tour. The Lt. carried a regular nightstick, and had a .38 cal revolver at his side. We were told to stay close to him. We surely stayed with him!

The streets were very narrow, no room for a car. Donkeys and people were the traffic!

Our Lt. knew a lot of the shopkeepers, as he had been here nearly two years. We felt that we were very lucky to have him as our guide. At one building we went into had a large main room, with some low tables scattered around, this room was very hazy with a pungent smoke. Men were sitting around drinking cups of coffee, smoking water pipes and hand rolled cigarettes. Most of the men were glassy eyed. Some were stretched out on the floor asleep. What a place! The Lt. told us that the men were not drunk, as Muslims did not use alcohol, some were smoking opium, but most of them were high on KEEF or HEMP in the states it was known as marijuana.

We left this front room, and went outside to an enclosed area with small rooms and doors around the three walls. Looked just like one of the cathouses in a Mexican Boy's Town. This is exactly what it was!

As we got to the center, girls started coming out of the rooms. They were dressed in very colorful skirts, and white blouses. The amazing thing about them was, they all had huge necklaces made up of connecting silver coins. Some of these necklaces had 40 to 50 of these coins the size of our silver dollar! We were told that most of these coins were Maria Theresa of Austria over 100 years old! The girls' makeup was something: the eyes were heavily mascaraed, and the palms of their hands were red with henna. Most of them had sandals or were barefooted and the toes and feet were red with henna.

The Lt. told us that most of the girls were of mountain or desert tribes. They were forced into prostitution by the chieftains. They had to work around two years collecting necklace coins for a dowry, they then went back to their homes and married.

As we were leaving the big yard, one of the girls grabbed my hot pilot cap off my head and ran into her room. Our Lt. said that is how they got men into the room. I told the Lt. to tell her to keep the cap! He said HELL NO and went into the room and grabbed my cap! I guess the nightstick and pistol impressed her.

We were all awed by this Casbah, the SP Lt. really did us a great favor, I wrote his name down, intending to send him a thank you note, but it was lost in the shuffle. He and his driver took us back to the beach hotel. We had a couple of drinks, left a 7AM call.

JULY 27, 1944 Back to Dakar

We took the first shuttle from the beach hotel to the Navy Base, had breakfast in the mess. Had a good briefing for Dakar, the weather was clear all the way except for a few tropical showers at Dakar.

All of us were on the planes by 9:30 with about a 7hour flight to Dakar. The Navy had provided us with a gallon jug of coffee, Spam sandwiches, and some oranges. Our other gallon jug and our individual canteens were full of water, as it was all deserts here to Dakar. We climbed up to 7000 feet or so to enjoy the cooler air. After a couple of hours en-route we started talking about our first radio check in -TINDOUF. Most of us had seen the movie with Gary Cooper, "BEAU GESTE", and some one said that Tindouf was the real site of the story. One thing led to another, and as we approached Tindouf we asked if we could land there. They replied "SURELY", we asked them to tell Dakar we would stop for about an hour. This was acknowledged.

The strip was just gravel with old tires on either side we could see from several miles away. Capt. Nagenorni landed first, and reported the field was in good condition as he parked next to the operations shack. When we landed it felt as if we had gone into an oven, the free air gauge showed 112deg F that is hot! As we stopped the engines the cylinder temp gauges did not drop very much. The pilots and navigators got out our circular calculators and determined that at this high temperature and altitude we could not get off the ground! We would have to spend the night and take off early in the morning. The people at Tindouf were glad to have the company, and any magazines or papers we may have. We were told that after 10 pm it was nice and cool! We were led to a stone building for our quarters, it was too hot to stay inside! There was a stairway up to the roof, with a sort of brush arbor to keep the sun off cool water was served out of a lister bag, we took canteen cups and poured the water over our heads and clothes. It helped a bit! As we lounged on the roof, a detachment of Foreign Legionnaires mounted on camels came into the fort a short distance away. These fellows had been out on the desert for a six-week reconnaissance trip. They still looked pretty military, white uniforms with baggy pants. The KEPIS (Caps with a cloth to cover the neck) were proof that, these were Legionnaires!

The American 1st Lt. base commander, showed us our cots inside the buildings. We had our musette bags, so we took a shower, the water was very warm, but evaporation cooled us off a bit.

The mess hall was to open for all ranks, just separate tables, and we had some cold cut sandwiches and canned fruit cocktail. We were told that there was a nightclub in the village, and tonight was the night for a big floorshow, and we should not miss the show. The club was close by near a small lake or oasis, and we should get there soon to get choice tables!

We officers and men loaded up on American cigarettes from our bags, and headed for the club. Several tables were pushed together near the dance floor, and we Americans had choice seats! We all ordered bottles of Algerian wine. The big spenders had arrived! We told the 1st Lt that the party was on us, and we became very popular with the troops, and the Legionnaires as well. Some of the girl entertainers also acted as waitresses, and the party was on! These girls were all natives, and I was sure they were all prostitutes, as they had red hands and feet, just like the girls at Agadir! There were about a dozen of these girls. They were every shade of complexion from almost white to jet-black.

A small orchestra of men started the music, it was typical belly dancer music, flutes, drums. Cymbals, and string instrument all chimed in. The audience was drinking heavily, particularly the Legionnaires. We were buying wine for all.

Our waitresses left the floor, went inside the building, and reappeared dressed in a flowing transparent sheet of a sort. They danced around the floor with the sheets billowing. As they kept time with the music with castanets. The tempo increased, the girls returned from the building each had a lighted candle, and the sheets were gone. The naked girls wiggled and shook still with a lighted candle at hand. The music changed pace, and the girls lay on their backs, inserted the candle in their vaginas, and did bumps and grinds flat on the floor. Needless to say this dance was very erotic for us all, but the Legionnaires were really carried away. These fellows grabbed the girls –candle and all, and disappeared to the date palm grove near the pond! To say the least, this broke up the floor- show! We Americans finished our wine, and drifted off to our barracks. We did not sleep too well, the wine had our cots rolling, and all we could see in our dreams was grinding candles

We got out of bed before daylight, as we wanted to get the cool air for takeoff. The mess hall put together a pretty good breakfast of fried spam and hot cakes. The coffee was very good, and they made us some spam sandwiches for the road. Most all the people at the field turned out, to say goodbye, and to thank us for the drinks last night. Even the French Lt. of Legionnaires was very appreciative of the party!

In the operations and weather office, there was no weather, except for showers at Dakar and south.

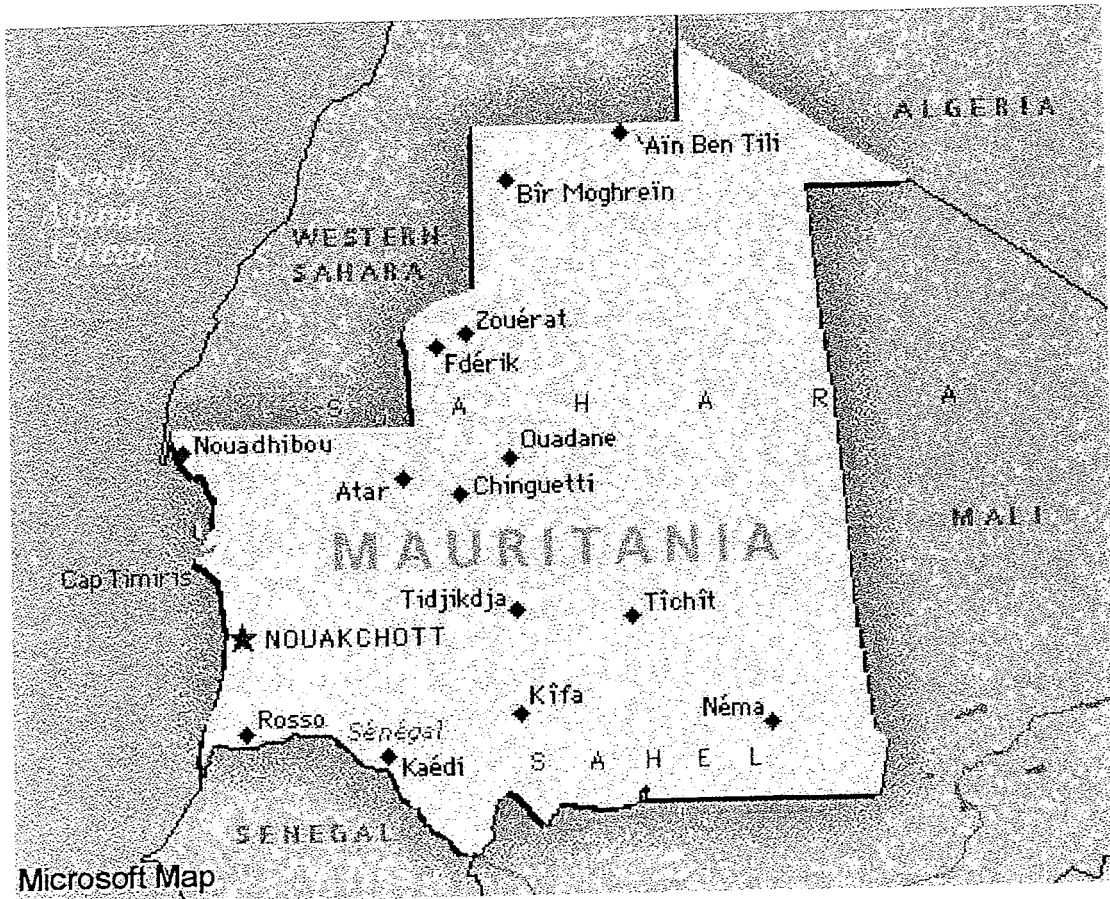
July 28th. 1944 TINDOUF TO DAKAR FRENCH WEST AFRICA

The Sun was coming up over the desert, and we were heading south for Dakar. Both crews were eager to get going, we may be in Miami by mid August, it was still a long way home!

Hosmer and Nangeroni's navigator were talking to each other on the VHF radio, they both agreed there was an interesting emergency field at ATAR, MAURTANIA about half way to DAKAR. Since we were quite early in the day, it was decided to land at ATAR. This would be a quick stop, just to say that we had been there!

The radio at ATAR told us to stop by, there was no problem, and they would advise Dakar that we were stopping for a few minutes. The landing ground looked as if it was 2 miles long, just a slightly bladed strip on the hard desert ground. There was a small town, and an oasis complete with date palms next to the army buildings. This was very similar to Tindouf. After landing, we parked in front of the operations building, five or six Air Corps men were out to greet us, and they also

Mauritania



were starving for reading material. We had given most of the magazines and papers to the men at Tindouf, but we dug out a few items from our own bags for these fellows!

About a block away, across a wire fence, some of the local people had tables under awnings, and were showing hand- crafted trinkets. These were TAUROEG desert people, they wore shawls and robes dyed dark blue. The dye rubbed off on their skins, and they were all colored blue. They were known as "The Blue People of the Desert" The men were supposed to be the best and fiercest desert fighters. The French had never gotten them under control!

I bought a small curved dagger and sheath with the word "ATAR" engraved on the sheath. It was my letter opener for years, but it has been misplaced.

After about 30 minutes, Capt. Nangeroni got us all into the planes, and we took off for DAKAR.

The desert started changing as we approached Dakar, there was some scrub brush, and grassy areas along with water holes. At the edge of the city a large river entered the Atlantic. The airport was south of town and the harbor.

Our total flight time from Casa Blanca to Dakar was, 9 Hours and 40 minutes we had landed 4 times, It was an interesting flight!

DAKAR , FRENCH WEST AFRICA

It was late afternoon when we arrived at Dakar. The men were checked into an enlisted barracks, and we officers were taken to another same style barracks. At five thirty the mess halls opened, and we stopped by the officers club. There was some African rum available mixed with a local cola type drink, it was not too bad. After a couple of drinks, we headed for the mess hall. We were pretty hungry, as we had no lunch the GI canned meat and vegetable hash was pretty good, and desert was the good old fruit cocktail. There was a movie to be shown, but we headed for the sack, as we wanted to get away early in the morning for our last African flight to Roberts Field, Liberia.

The next morning, we all had a good breakfast in the mess hall, pancakes, with sausage and good coffee hit the spot. At the briefing, we were told that we would start hitting tropical showers about an hour south of Dakar, but the would be no problem. Our flight followed the coast of Africa, and

they

Senegal



there was no ATC field till we got to Liberia. The flight would take about 5-½ hours.\

Both planes were in good shape, and we climbed aboard for Roberts Field. On take off, we flew through a sizeable flock of big sea birds, and Nangeroni hit one right in the Plexiglas nose. This knocked a panel out of the nose. Nangeroni radioed to land back at Dakar, and we followed him down. The damage to the nose was a sight! The bombardier's compartment was covered with splattered sea gull and feathers. Luckily, Jack Blum was on the flight deck instead of his scenic seat in the nose. The bird could have hurt him!

The plane was towed to the wash ramp, and hosed out. The maintenance officer did not have Plexiglas on hand, so he put an aluminum sheet in the frame. This cleaning, and metal work would take several hours. The operations officer told us that we would have to put off our departure for a day. This was not well received, but he said that he would get a truck and driver and give us a guided tour of Dakar, but NO STOPPING!

We checked back in to the transient quarters, dropped off our musette bags. Here came the truck and driver, all eleven crewmen of the two planes climbed aboard for the sight seeing trip. Stopping at the mess hall for an early lunch, as there was no food of any kind in town for us to eat.

The town of Dakar was a good-sized place, built up around the river mouth and harbor. There were a lot of fishing boats, and some medium sized freighters at the docks. I had no idea as to what the freighters carried, but the docks were busy loading and unloading the ships. There was a central part of town with a couple of plaza like squares, and a very large market under a big tin roofed building. There were swarms of people all around the market, a few charcoal burning trucks chugged around, but we did not see any private cars.

The people were Senegalese, and were some of the tallest, and blackest people in Africa. The men were in French Colonial branches of the French Army, and we saw them in all of the towns visited in North Africa.

The driver took us out in the suburbs of the town to small fishing villages. He wanted to show us some local color! The amazing part was in the villages many of the women wore no shirts. These gals had fantastic figures, a real sight with a large water jug or pot on top of their head. One hand steadying the jug, and the other carrying a child, or package, with the best looking breasts bared to the world! There were a lot of chickens, and goats around. I wondered about not seeing any pigs, the driver told us the people were Muslim, and pigs were not allowed. It was different, as in

next page missing (25)

saw us come right down the runway! We could not see out the windshield. Back up we went, and ran the approach again! This time the same thing happened again! The tower saw us, but we could not see the runway in the heavy rain!

As we headed back out the range leg, Hosmer showed us a detailed accurate map of the field. He suggested we go out to sea get right down on the water and approach the field flying up the large river that split the town, and ran right beside the field. We could see no cables or bridges on the map, so we got down on the water, and came up the river. I opened my sliding window and I could see much better looking out it to the left.

At the time estimated, there in the rain was the airport out my left window! Holding minimum altitude in a steep left turn with A RUNWAY in sight we landed. I was not sure what runway it was, but we were on the ground! The tower could not see us either. Stan Pell and I were both soaking wet, from the rain, heat and humidity. I had to sit in seat drinking cold coffee, and smoking before I had the strength to get up. I swore that when I got back to the states, I was going to study, and work on my instrument skills, we were really a lucky bunch on that B-25.

A 6X6 truck with a canvas top picked us all up, we were a wet bunch, The showers were really welcomed, then we hit the club bar for rum and cokes.

Our khakis were wet, but so was most of the people's. These folks told us that the humidity kept them wet all the time,

We had a pretty good GI supper, but I was too tired to eat much. After dinner some us sat on a covered porch, listening to the rain, also the jungle drums had started up. There were several civilians here tonight, to watch a movie. These people were employees of Firestone Rubber. Liberia was a major source of rubber for the US.

After drinks and dinner, I got to bed, I was tired out, the approach was as bad as a mission over Ploesti!

We were awakened just at daylight, the rains were gone it was a beautiful clear morning. Our clothes were still damp, but we did not want to dig through our baggage in the plane, so wet we went to breakfast and briefing.

ROBERTS FIELD, LIBERIA
TO ASCENCION ISLAND
JULY 31, 1944
5 HOURS

This briefing was a very good one, but there was not a lot to tell us, This flight was over five hours duration ,and all over water. The weather was to be clear all the way, winds were no problem. Our only care was for our Wright engines, and we felt that they were very dependable. One caution was mentioned. German Subs had been known to transmit false signals on the beacon signal of Ascension Island. Use this beacon with caution, or not at all!

My navigator, Humph Hosmer, told me to depend on his great navigation. He assured me that he would put us right down the runway with his super Navigation skill!! After all this Island was about two miles square in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, no big deal for him.

We took off around 9:00 AM African Time into CAVU (Ceiling and Visibility Unlimited) conditions. The engines were running smoothly We had a big jug of coffee, and a good selection of sandwiches had been put aboard, along with oranges. We were set for the Island.

About 4 hours out, there appeared a cloud build up right ahead on our course. In the tropics, clouds build up over islands, due to the rising air from the heat on the island. Hosmer said that we were right on course, and that cloud was our marker for the island. Sure enough, Hosmers directions Put us right in line with the runway!

We contacted the tower about 5 miles out, and they cautioned us to keep a high approach. The runway stopped right at a 400 foot cliff, and we were to stay high away from down drafts. There was plenty of runway there. We touched down a few hundred feet along the runway, but as we taxied the runway seemed to stop. As we slowed down we went over a hill in the runway, and there was about a mile more runway ahead. The rock in the center was too hard to cut out, so there was a small hill in the runway!

As we taxied up to the parking area, which was loaded with two engine planes, there parked was a B-29. The first one we had seen. He had lost an engine en route to India via Africa, and had made an emergency landing on Ascension! The parking jeep put us in a line of sparkling new B-25s, headed for Italy, and India-China. A truck picked up both crews. I did take time to get in my B-4 bag for some dry khakis, as the ones I had on were pretty sour!!

The Island was a very dry red rock, there was no vegetation of any kind in sight. We were taken to billeting office and issued bed passes in a cluster of barracks. These passes had the building number and bunk numbers, and good for just one night. We drew mattress covers, a pillow cover, one blanket and towel. These had to be checked in the morning, as we were in the one night area.

There was a small officers club and mess near by, we had a couple of rum and cokes, and American beer was available. This was the first American Beer we had seen. We had a sandwich at the mess, went to our barracks had a shower and a nap.

Late afternoon back to the club we went, visited with a lot of the fellows going through one way or another. The seven of us had our Air Medal, and ETO ribbons on, a lot of the crew members were curious about flying the B-25 in combat. We hated to tell them that we did not fly the 25s in combat, but the B-24.

As we were going to get away in the morning, we took it easy on the booze. After a real GI supper, it was off to our bunks about dark for us.

Very few plane engines were heard, so we were lulled to sleep by the breakers crashing on the rocks under our building. It made for pretty good sleeping!

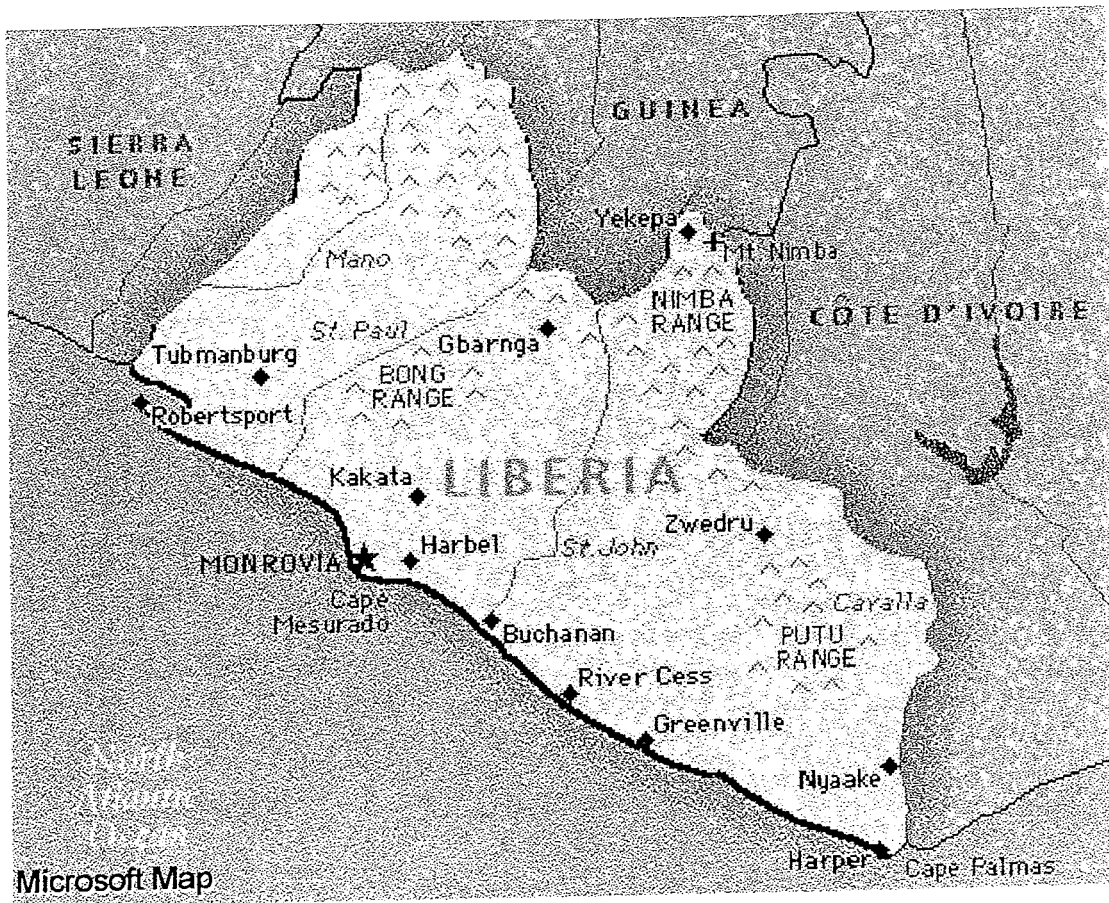
A Pfc. made the rounds getting the early fight crews out of bed. After shaving and another shower (with limited water) we bundled up our checked out items, and signed out of the barracks. The mess Hall specialized in French toast made with powdered eggs. Bacon was also served, so we filled up for a long day.

In operations, we attended a short briefing for west-bound crews. The weather was great again, and the winds were in our favor. The briefing told us that we had it made. The only thing we could see was Brazil about 7 hours away! If we lucked out and stayed in the air, we could not miss it.

We would be in America this afternoon; South America that is, San Antonio and Brooks Field were getting closer!

through our baggage in the plane, so wet we went to breakfast and briefing.

Liberia



AUGUST 1, 1944
ASCENSION ISLAND
TO
NATAL, BRAZIL

We were going to leave this speck of land in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and head west for Natal, Brazil. Our estimated time en route was around 7 hours. Once in Brazil, we would feel like we were almost home. At least, we did not have to cross the Atlantic again.

Humph Hosmer, our navigator, was looking forward to the trip. He could practice his "Sun Shots" all day long. He may never have occasion to do much over water navigation again. Karl Muse, Radio Operator, felt the same way, but was not sad to see long ocean trips a thing of the past. He was very anxious to get home to Boston, as a pro hockey player, he had many girl friends, and they wrote him very often. I have a good story about Sgt. Muse, and radio operating. I was an amateur radio since high school, and was very proficient with Morse code. In fact I listened, a lot on the long-range radio, just to keep my code speed up. At Langley Field. I operated the key a lot, making position reports now and then. One morning at early briefing, Karl Muse told me had a super date that day with a girl on a night shift. She told Karl if he could get a day off, she would love to have him for breakfast and lunch and all that went with it! Her room-mates worked days, and Karl and the girl would have the house all day. Muse asked me if I would stand in for him at the radio desk. He was to make a standard weather and position reports each hour. We asked Hudson, and he agreed to be part of the plot. At the briefing Karl checked me out on the code of the day and all else I had to know to fill in.

We left just before daylight, and took off for an eight-hour over water training trip. The other crewmembers were sworn to secrecy. If the radio operator's absence was discovered, the whole crew would be in hot water.

The day was very boring; we kept our eyes open for subs, shot at drifting garbage targets. I made the radio reports right on schedule for Sgt. Muse. We landed right on time around four pm. At next morning's crew briefing, the Lt. in charge of the radio operators, called Sgt Muse aside, and said he would have go to a six hour training session. This session was to cure him of a FIST with his code. The fist was mine; amateur operators developed a swing to their code sending. The swing was very common among operators, but the military did want any operators with a swing, as enemy listeners could identify such operators. Sgt Muse was pleased to trade a day of bliss for a few hours of fist breaking!

The trip from Ascension Island to Natal was really boring. During the whole, day we saw two or three planes, and one small ship! Navigator Hosmer kept busy with his charts and sun shots, Karl Muse napped between hourly radio reports, Stan Pell, Sgt Beeler and I spent the day cat napping. About an hour out, we saw some small rocky islands off the coast of Brazil. We all started looking for the coast, Hosmer and I discussed the club bar at Natal Field, where Cuba Libres were ten cents apiece!

Just off the beautiful surf line, Natal tower gave us landing instructions, and we flew up the beach line. the water was blue and beautiful. The field did not appear as crowded as it was in December. As we were an ATC Crew, we were parked at a good spot, and a truck was waiting to take us to our quarters. This treatment was quite different from our previous visit! The transient officers quarters were much nicer, and not as crowded. No double deck bunks for ATC crews!!

Hosmer, Stan Pell and I dropped our musette bags off at the BOQ, and headed for the bar, The crowd was much smaller than we expected, The Juke Box was still playing "Drinking Rum and Coca Cola". We each had one or two dollars of American money rat holed. We changed it into Brazilian money, and had a drink. The next order of business, was to go to the finance office and get a partial pay against our per diem ATC money. Hosmer, Jack Blum and I picked up a couple of hundred bucks. We planned to do some serious shopping on the base and in town tomorrow.

We got pretty loaded in the bar, had a big late lunch or early supper. Then, to the BOQ, for a good tepid water shower and bed. We planned a full day in the city of Natal tomorrow!

AUGUST 2, 1944- NATAL, BRAZIL

We must have slept eight or nine hours, and after a real good breakfast, sausage, real eggs, toasts and wonderful coffee, we went to the shuttle bus stop for downtown. Since we were ATC Crewmembers, we could come and go off base. Last December we were not allowed to go off base, just to the beach.

The trip to town was not very interesting, many people lived on small farms, and they appeared to be quite poor. The houses were open-air pole types, with palm roofs, naked children , chickens, and pigs appeared to be the main crop.

The town of Natal was not much to see, palm trees, palm roofs, with a few rusty tin roofed buildings was the norm. The center of the city was a bit better sight, as there were a few plazas, with stone or plaster churches. Very much like towns in Mexico.

We got off on the main plaza, and set up headquarters in a sidewalk café that was well shaded! Since it was still morning, Jack Blum and I had a cup of great coffee. The other fellows scattered around town,

The word got out that the " Rich Yankees" were in town, and vendors started to gather around our table. There must have been a dozen peddlers around us. Neither Jack nor I knew a word in Portuguese; all talking at one time, the vendors became a problem. Jack went over to a policeman on the corner, a man with a little English, asked the policeman to stand at our table. He was instructed to keep the crowd at bay. Letting one peddler at a time come to our table! This worked very well, as we looked at the wares we wanted to see. If we were through with a vendor, a thumb down sign was all we needed to the

policeman and the vendor went his way! This policeman was a very good man, he seemed to know all of the vendors, and his word was law! I suspect that he was getting a tip from the favored peddlers! About 10:30 Jack and I switched to rum and coke, and ordered some mesh baskets to put our purchases in, as we were covered up with purchases! The main buy was Chanel #5 perfume, real silk stockings. There were many polished gemstones of all colors, all guaranteed to be the real stuff! We each had a basket full of super buys, also the rum and coke was showing a real effect on our buying skills! The last purchase Jack Blum made was something! Jack bought the pistol from our policeman! About siesta time, the policeman took us to a restaurant and hotel near by. We got a nice room with a balcony and had a great seafood lunch. We had a long nap did not move till about sun down.

We hired a cab to take us back to the base, as we wanted to store our goodies in the plane, get some clean clothes and a shower. Nangeroni came by just as we were getting ready to leave, We were to go to a briefing at 11:00 AM for our next flight up the line day after tomorrow. Back to town we went to a large night- club on the waterfront, during the day enlisted men only were allowed in the place During the day till 8PM it was for enlisted, men .At 8 pm, the girls put on long dresses and entertained officers till daylight, this was a very busy place! Jack and I got back on the rum and cokes, things got pretty hazy. We became excellent dancers, also great hosts to the girls. The girls all drank champagne, this stuff was about a dollar a glass, and the rum and cokes were around twenty- five cents. We ate small lobsters, and great cold shrimp the girls helped us eat, most of them were really hungry, we with our per deim money were very popular through most of the night. We got a cab back to the base just at sunrise. The driver had to wake us up at the gates to the field. A kind MP drove us to the BOQ the sun was just coming up as we fell into our bunks. We got out of bed around 1 PM, showered and headed for the mess hall. Capt Nangeroni walked up as we were eating, and said that we should leave Natal in the morning. We all were ready to head north and home Briefing for our next flight would be a 3 PM today, so we had a little more rest and recovery time after we ate.

NATAL TO BELEM JULY 5, 1944

Our briefing for the next stop was to be our old friend Belem,Brazil. The trip Natal to Belem would take about 4 ½ hours. They did want us to leave Natal after 9 AM; the good old equatorial thunderstorms would build up after noon. We set our departure up for 8:30, as we did not want to go through the rains we had coming over the first time, back in December. A long time ago!

The trip to Belem was still dull, just as last December . After 4hours and 30minutes we landed at Belem on the Amazon River, just below the equator. The place looked the same. And it smelled the same.

At 4 PM we went to a briefing for our next leg, we were not going to stop at Trinidad, but go to British Guiana on the main land, another 4 hour flight We were to land at Atkinson

Brazil



Field, a typical American Air Base about 30 miles up the coast from the capital , Georgetown. Again, we were told to take off around 8 AM to avoid afternoon rains.

We had a drink or two before a pretty good supper of GI rations! Belem still smelled as bad as it did in December; we were in bed just after dark. After a sweaty restless night, we got up just after daylight had a cool shower, went to the mess hall, but not open yet, but coffee was ready. We sat on the porch of the mess. Drinking coffee, and listening to the wakening noises of the jungle around us, there was a cacophony of noise, birds, insects, and animals all joined in with squeaks chattering and calling sounds, Then we heard the chattering of the little Indian girls, in the mess hall, and we knew that breakfast was soon on the tables.

After eating, we went to operations and weather offices. Everything looked great for our flight to Atkinson Field.

BELEM TO ATKINSON FIELD BRITISH GUAINA A Four-Hour Flight

Our heading was North East across, and down stream on the Amazon River, this is the Delta of the Amazon, the width is over 200 miles. Here the vegetation is swamp grass, as It is flooded a good part of the time. About an hour out of Belem, the jungle growth really begins.

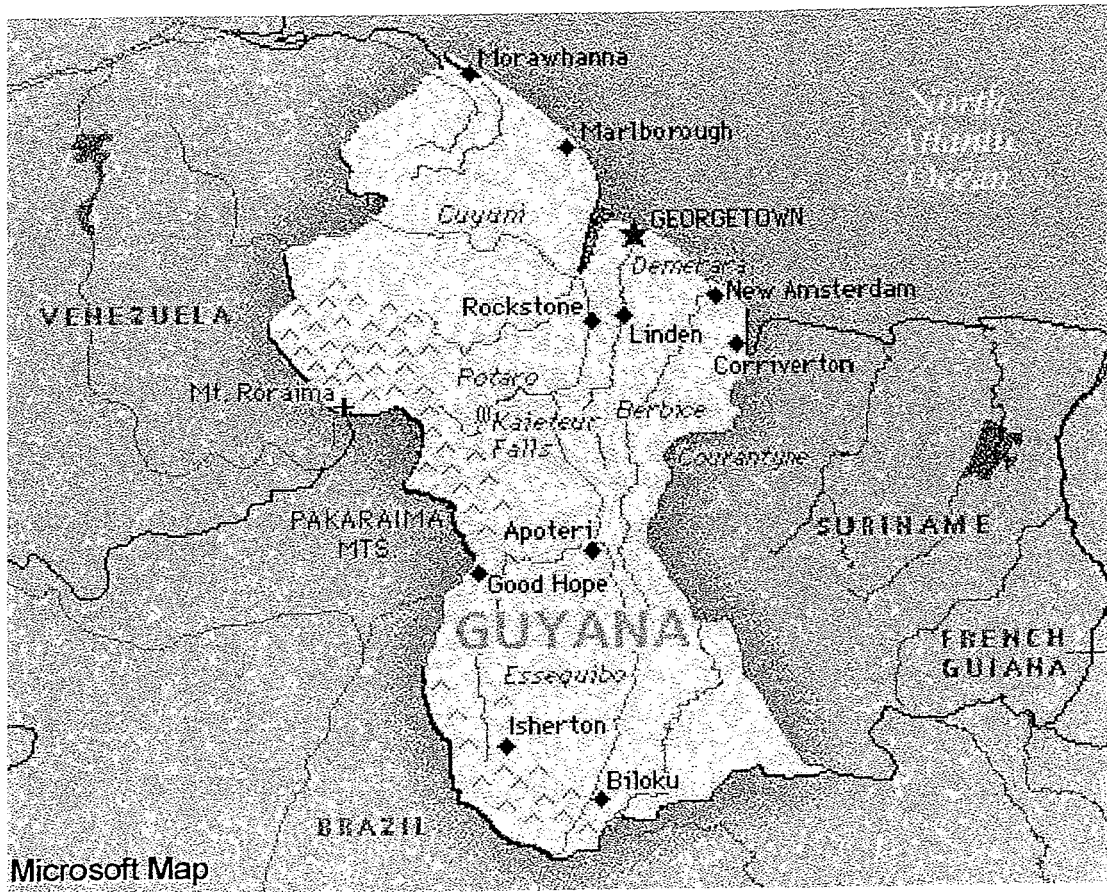
The jungle got thicker, and taller as we got into British Guiana. Coming by here last December, we were in very heavy rains, and saw little or no ground or jungle. We were seeing it now! The trees were near 100 feet tall, and there was a solid canopy of them. in every direction. Atkinson Field was about 50 miles up river from Georgetown, the capitol of the country. This was a large river, about a mile wide, and I cannot remember the name.

The airport on the north side of the river, was a very nice looking place from the air. The jungle had been cleared, just like a golf course or park, the runways and ramps looked great. We found out, that it required constant mowing to keep the jungle away. The river was the main source of transportation for the area. Most of the military came and went by air, the natives went by canoe or boat.

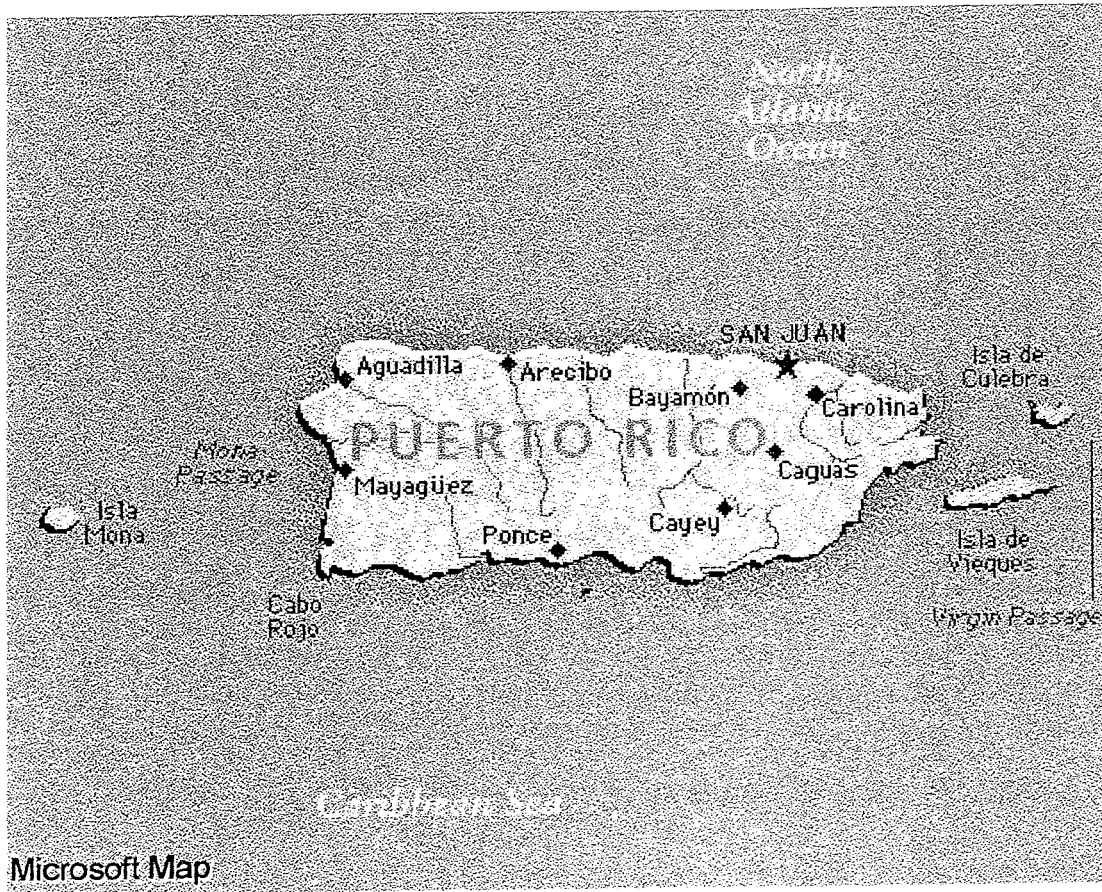
As ATC Crews, we had trucks waiting at the parking area, and we were checked in to the Transient Quarters promptly. The climate was very hot and humid, the quarters had large fans to stir up the humid air. A cool water shower felt great, but we were dripping wet almost at once. The desk clerk, told us to go to the Officers Club and Mess on the riverbank, as the fans were bigger there!

Hosmer, Pell, and I started walking around, and we saw a couple of US Navy Blimps in a Hangar. The Navy used Blimps all over the world for anti sub patrol. We had seen blimps at a distance, but this was our first chance for a close up look!

Guyana



Puerto Rico



We went to the Club and mess, the bar was closed till 5 PM, so we settled for a late lunch. Our Cuba Libres would have to wait till bar opening time. We had a pretty good lunch, great soup, some GI hash, and lots of fresh fruit. We sat at a table with two Navy Blimp Pilots. They had many boring hours cruising around at ten to twenty miles an hour looking for submarines, after about a year of this thrilling work, they were waiting for a flight back to Florida for leave and re-assignment. Both of these men Lt Jg same as our first Lt rank. As we were to go to briefing this afternoon, we were not sure of our next stop. But we knew that we would get to Florida soon. Told the Navy Pilots, that we will check our route. and be glad to take them along. They said, "If you fellows have flown those B-25s all the way from Italy, we think you can make to Florida" We told them to meet us at the club at 6PM after we go to briefing.

The route was very simple. We would go to Puerto Rico tomorrow. And then to Florida. Our take off would be around 8:30 in the morning!

We then had a few Cuba Libres before a good dinner and in bed around 9:00 PM.

BRITISH GUIANI
TO PUERTO RICO
AUGUST 9, 1944

The Navy Pilots met us at Operations. They had gotten a couple of chutes, this complied with regulations, so they were legal. They had to ride in the back, as there was no room on the flight deck, we made sure that the intercoms were working before start up. On this leg of flight, we would seldom be out of sight of an island, we were going by Trinidad. And on up along the beautiful islands in route to Borinquen Field, on the Western tip of Puerto Rico. The day was clear as a bell, we stayed pretty low for best sight seeing, and it was a beautiful trip. The seas were sparkling blue, the islands were green. The NAVY Guys in back, had flown most of these islands, and they gave us a running account of all the sights as we went by.

Puerto Rico is a very long island from east to west, and we flew the length, we wanted to stop in San Juan, but the good old Navy allowed no Air Corps to land there, as it was Navy playground!

After a flight of 4 1/2 Hours, we landed at Borinquen. This field was the Jewel of the Air Corps. Everything was new, all brick buildings, beautiful hangars, and the transient office

ers quarters were a two-floor brick building. Covered walk way went from room to room. Each room had twin beds with Simmons Mattresses, tile bathrooms, and a small kitchenette with refrigerators, stainless steel sinks. The buildings were arranged to get full benefit of the prevailing breeze.

The officers club and mess took the prize, situated on a rocky cliff above the Atlantic Ocean, outside tables were right on the edge of the cliffs, with your drinks the roar of the Surf, made it hard to talk. Frozen Daquiri Cocktail were 10cents during happy hour 6-7.

Regular hours drinks were 50 cents, beer 25 cents. No wonder so many folks became Alcoholics!

In the club there were around 100 Slot Machines, these machines paid most of the club Overhead. The food in the club was just like New York City, but much cheaper. There Were all types of steaks, seafood, Chinese foods, and Italian dishes, Salads were huge and popular, the deserts were amazing; I had my first ice cream since last fall! We all were trying to figure out how one could get stationed at such a great place.

The next morning, August 7th, the two navy guys got a cab to take four of us to a near by Town, I think the name was Auguadilla, The base liquor store would sell us just one bottle of booze. We all wanted a case to take back to the states !

The cab trip was a thrill, the drive was a frustrated fighter pilot, around curves on the wrong side, passing on hills was his specialty. We scattered chickens, dogs and kids all the way into town, the ride was a real thrill, I was worried about getting back to the base in one piece. At the liquor store we all had a sample drink or two, I bought A case of I.W. Harper 100 Proof Bourbon, my favorite drink, at about \$24.00. In San Antonio, this grade of whisky was not available at any price.

The ride back to the base was not at all hair raising, think the samples at the store made the trip back easier!

The driver got us back to the flight line, and the whisky was hidden in a luggage container, in the bomb bay. We put dirty clothes over the cases, hoping to hide the loot!

Life was so good in Puerto Rico, we just lounged around the fresh water pool, there was no swimming in the ocean, as the surf and currents were very dangerous. After several days, we decided to get back in the bird, and head for Florida. Went to route briefing on 12th August, we were to go to the 36th Street Airport in Miami, this leg will take around seven hours.

BORRINQUIN FIELD Puerto Rico
TO
MIAMI, FLORIDA, AUGUST 13, 1944
7 HOURS

After an early breakfast, we checked out of our luxurious BOQ, driven to the flight line, loaded and preflighted the plane. Sandwiches, coffee and goodies were loaded by ATC service crews. (what a nice service the Ferry Crews enjoy!)

We were off the ground before 8 AM, goodbye to luxury! It was a great summer day, we could see for miles and miles! Our route took us by Hispanola, Cuba, and the Bahamas. Around noon, we started to pick up regular broadcast stations from Florida over the radio compass set. Things had not changed at all, as there were soap operas on, Ma Perkins,

Lum and Abner were coming in loud and clear.

The coast and all the Miami Beach hotels were a real sight. Since we departed Florida in the middle of the night last December, we had no idea that Miami was so built up!

The tower directed us to park on the Customs Ramp, and the men came aboard, giving us a spray job. We had to stay in the plane with all windows and hatches closed while the sprayers did their duty. It was real hot and humid we were dripping sweat, and choking from the spray. It was a pleasure to get out of the plane into some fresh air.

The customs people told us that our baggage would be inspected on the plane, and we would not have to carry it into the office. This was a relief, as we had a lot of junk aboard. As pilot, I had to stay with the inspector as he looked us over. He knew just where to look, as the luggage rack with the dirty clothes got his attention. The several cases of liquor were exposed, and his eyes lit up! I told him that the I.W. Harper was mine. He said it had been a long time since he had enjoyed I.W. Harper. I took a bottle out of my case, wrapped it in a dirty shirt, he stuck it under his shirt, and then stamped our paperwork as CLEARED. We shook hands and both went on our ways.

The quarters assigned us at 36th Street, was a come down from Puerto Rico. We were put in a plain GI barracks, each officer had a small room. One window provided a bit of very hot and muggy air, plus plane and truck noises were loud.

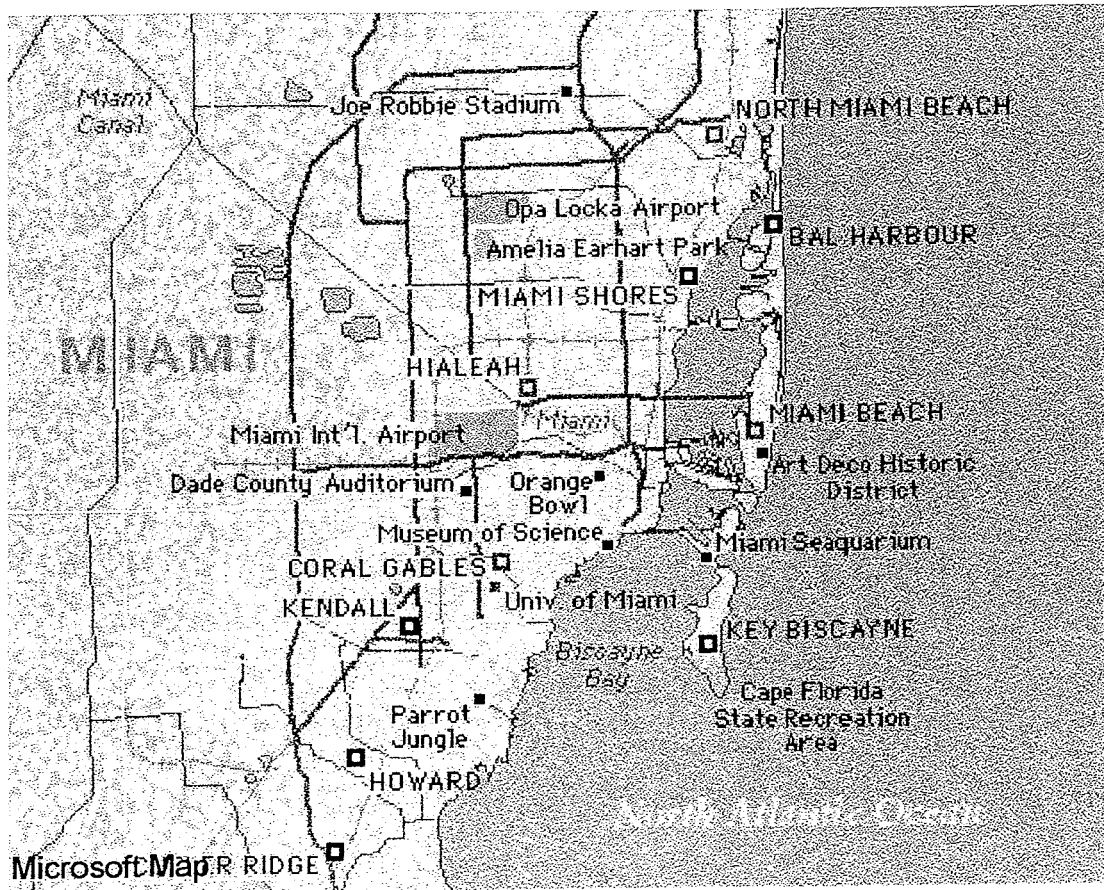
We were all to meet for an information meeting at 4:00PM, so we put our gear in our room

Sgt Beeler and I were allowed to leave our stuff in the plane, as the two of us were to fly the plane on to Brooks Field. On domestic day flights, the full crew was not required. We all had to attend a meeting in the morning, and the men not flying to San Antonio would get plane tickets, as they lived on the east coast, Just Beeler and I would go to San Antonio, as a two man crew.. The other pilots and engineers had to go to San Antonio, with the planes, regardless where they called home.

Jack Blum and I went into Miami Beach, rented an air conditioned hotel room, the barracks were just too hot! After the Friday morning meeting, I told Sgt Beeler we would leave on Sunday, as I wanted to see Miami Friday and Saturday!

The Friday meeting was short and sweet. My orders granted me a thirty-day leave in San Antonio, and to report to a rest and re-assignment hotel in Santa Ana, California! Sgt Beeler was to go home to Houston, enjoy a thirty-day leave, and report back to a rest and re assignment hotel in Miami Beach! The Army worked in wondrous ways. I said good-bye to Humph Hosmer, and Karl Muse they were headed for Boston! Stan Pell was going to New York City. Hosmer and I stayed in touch with each other for many years.

Miami



Red head Jack Blum lived in Steubenville, Ohio and was in no hurry. After all the leave taking. Jack and I went to Miami Beach , where we had a lost Friday and Saturday. Think that we had a roaring time! We burned the candles at both ends!

Sunday morning, I got an early start, had breakfast at the airport, and looked up Francis Beeler. The B-25 checked out very well, loaded coffee and sandwiches and headed for TEXAS.

MIAMI, FLORIDA
TO
BROOKS FIELD
SAN ANTONIO
AUGUST 17,1944
5 HOURS

This was a typical summer day along the Gulf Coast, a few broken clouds below us. Visibility was unlimited, very little wind aloft. I was cruising over 220 mph.

Beeler and I took turns holding the plane on its headings, as we checked in with Air Ways radio stations. Being Sunday, there was very little traffic in the air. There was no operating auto- pilot, but in smooth air the plane practically flew itself, and Sgt Beeler stayed on course, as I cat napped, or sipped coffee, with cigarettes, and listened to broadcast stations. We tuned in stations on our route, with the auto direction finder we checked off one town after another. We had flown from Miami to the west coast of Florida. We could just fly a curving course along the gulf coast.

As we got to New Orleans, we thought about stopping for lunch, but things were just too pretty to stop.

As we approached Houston, I decided to land at Ellington Field and let Sgt Beeler off at his home- town. He was worried about me getting in trouble with only a pilot aboard, and no engineer! Told Beeler he did not have to go to San Antonio, and sweat the bus back to Houston. We landed at Ellington. I got the Duty Officer to help us with Beeler's stuff!

The duty Officer asked me about my co-pilot, said I was going to taxi near the PX and pick him up. Away I went, heading west for San Antonio, less than an hour away. I hoped that all worked when I landed at Brooks Field. Total flying time since Italy about 55 hours

The Brooks Tower told me where to park, near a hangar for War Weary Birds. I asked them to send me a truck and driver, as I had a lot of luggage .A Pfc. Driver came out after I had gotten most of the loot out of the plane. We came close to filling up the weapon

carrier truck. I took the 4-man raft, 10 blankets, thermos jugs, and my three bags and case of I.W.Harper. Told the driver I would check all the stuff in tomorrow- he could care less.

I borrowed a phone, called the folks. Told them that my driver would take me downtown. I would come to Dad's store on Main Ave. It took about the same time for me to get there, as it did for Mother to get down town.

Here, we put most of my loot in the store basement; there was not enough room in the car!

I had never seen the house Mother and Dad had fixed up. Our home on Morningside Drive had caught fire in January, Dad bought an old farm on Eisenhower Road and Salado creek, sold the Morningside house, and remodeled an 85-year-old farmhouse, on 100 acres!

My bedroom was upstairs, had good breezes day and night, and I slept and ate home cooking for about a week! I was really tired.

This concludes my "GRAND ADVENTURE"

Job well done Jimmy Smith
and thanks for your service to
our country and others. God
Bless You.
-Lawrence H. Jackson
Sadie's Birthday Jan. 2010