765TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) WFF/jdk
461st BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
Office of the Combat Intelligence Officer

APO 520, NY, NY
28 February 1945

SUMMARY OF THE SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY

During February, the 765th Bombardment Squadron completed eighteen missions against the German war machine, taking maximum advantage of the favorable weather that prevailed during the later half of the month. Again, the emphasis was placed on the destruction of vital Nazi oil installations and Hitler's transportation and supply network. One hundred and nineteen squadron Liberators crossed bomb release lines to drop two hundred and eight tons of explosives on the enemy. This constituted by far the highest monthly tonnage of bombs dropped since August 1944. Targets in Austria bore the brunt of the attacks, being hit on ten occasions. Four of the objectives were located in Germany and two each in Yugoslavia and Italy. On February 24th, squadron airmen flew over Bolzano, Italy on an attempted bombing run. However, no bombs were dropped and sortie credit was not given. On February 13th, the first of a series of cloudless, sunny days at Torretta Field, two separate combat missions were completed, the later one being planned hurriedly during the morning to take advantage of the temporary departure of winter climate. One of the most outstanding missions was that on February 17th to shipyards at Trieste, Italy, where squadron bombardiers not only achieved an excellent bomb pattern on these installations but succeeded in obtaining a direct hit on an Italian battleship anchored in the harbor. February marked the use of nine man combat crews for the first time. In such cases, the navigator assumed the additional responsibility of toggling. Throughout the month, training missions were flown whenever possible with stress placed on air to ground gunnery, practice bombing and instrument flying. General training for aircrew personnel continued in the form of lectures, bomb and link trainer instruction, and classed at gunnery school.

February saw the squadron hit unusually hard by disaster. On February 13th, Lieutenant Kelliher's ship suffered an engine malfunction as he prepared to land and the airplane crashed into a field near the squadron area, bursting in two and bursting into flame. Eight of the nine-man crew scampered to safety but the navigator, Lt. Donald Williams, perished in the fire. Other crewmembers suffered burns and slight injuries. On the 16th of the month, Cpl. Moore of F/O Baran's crew died while at altitude when his oxygen supply failed. The greatest tragedy occurred on February 21st when two aircraft failed to return from a mission to Vienna, Austria. The lead ship flown by squadron commander, Major Baker, and Lt. Woodruff suffered severe damage from flak and radioed in that they were heading for Russian territory. No further word was received on their fate. The other missing ship contained Lt. McMillan and his crew. On this same mission Squadron Navigator Lt. Kassler, hit by flak in the thigh and taken to the hospital. On February 22nd, the flight of squadron airplanes were hit by anti-aircraft fire off the coast of Italy and three men were wounded severely enough to require hospital care.

Four B-24's were lost during the month, two over the target, one on a crash landing near the base, and one resulting from a crack up on the runway. Two new airplanes were assigned to the organization during this period.

Lt. Hayes' crew was the only combat team assigned to the organization during the month. Eight flying officers and seventeen aircrew enlisted men completed their tour of duty in this theater and were returned to the zone of the interior. The squadron had a roster of twenty-four crews present for duty on the last day of the month.

Other personnel changes were very few. Capt. Lund joined the squadron to assist in the handling of S-2 work until his anticipated return to the United States took place; S/Sgt. Underwood, an administrative specialist, was sent down from Wing and given duty as a public relations man. The only ground echelon loss was that of Sgt. Morris of the armament section who was transferred to the Detachment of Patients. In regard to the air echelon, Lt. Phalen, a "mickey" operator was assigned to the squadron; Operations Officer Cooper and Bombardier Sullivan were transferred to the 49th Bomb Wing; and Lt. Fenzl, co-pilot of Lt. Staples crew, was transferred to the Air Service group.

It was almost entirely aircrew members that received promotions during the month. In the air echelon, three second lieutenants donned silver bars in lieu of gold; one flight officer was commissioned; three staff sergeants appeared before the board and were promoted to "tech"; nine sergeants added a "rocker"; seventeen corporals received their third stripe; and one private was given a chevron. In the ground echelon, Adjutant Taylor was promoted to the rank of captain; one staff sergeant made "tech"; one corporal became a sergeant; and ten privates earned a stripe.

Combat losses and completion of tours of duty accounted for the numerous changes in staff personnel that occurred during the month. Capt. Cooper finished up his 35 missions and Capt. Thackston became Operations Officer. The very next day, Major Baker became MIA and Capt. Thackston assumed command of the squadron. Lt. Welton became Operations Officer and Lt. Brady was appointed his assistant. Both Lt. Netzer and Lt. Johnson finished their missions and Lt. Kassler became Squadron Navigator and Lt. Burleson became Squadron Bombardier. When Lt. Burleson failed to return from the Vienna mission of February 21st, Lt. **Xebth** was selected as his successor.

Work on the squadron area continued. The new enlisted men's mess hall was completed and a grand opening was held. Group and squadron staff officers were present and a special menu was served. Other work included the start of a new PX and mail building and the creation of more sidewalks throughout the area.

In Compliance with General Lee's orders, classes on venereal disease were held on consecutive evenings. Training films on the subject were shown; Squadron Commander Baker and Flight Surgeon Nathan addressed the men; and on one evening Chaplain Rasmussen delivered an inspiring sermon.

General Spaatz and members of his staff paid a brief visit to Torretta Field during the month. After a hasty inspection of the line, they retired to Group Headquarters for a discussion of the business at hand.

The S-2 office prepared new type identification cards for aircrew members. They are to be used if they are forced down in partisan or Russian-held territory. Messages confirming their identity as American soldiers were printed on them in all applicable languages; and a small picture of the man was attached.

Men continued to relax war nerves at rest camps during February. Fourteen officers and fifteen enlisted men were sent to the Isle of Capri. Twelve enlisted men spent a week at San Spirito. Three-day tours to Rome were resumed during the month.

During the twenty-eight day period, there was a big increase in the number of men sent to the hospital. Three officers and twenty-two enlisted men became patients during February. Three cases of venereal disease were contracted by men of the squadron throughout the month.

The usual amount of entertainment and recreation existed for the men. Thirteen motion pictures were presented throughout the month. A ping-pong table was installed in the enlisted men's day room and a tournament was held. There was a grand opening of the remodeled Officer's Club and a gala party took place. Guests of honor were members of an all-girl band that is currently touring this theater of operations. Our group band obtained notoriety during February. It made a weekly appearance on "Vapor Trails", a 49th Bomb Wing program over the Foggia radio station. Also, it was selected to accompany the musical show, "Panama Battie" on its scheduled appearance throughout this region of Italy.

February marked the squadron's first anniversary at Torretta Field. Ground echelon men looked back and remembered the area as it had first appeared to them with its scattered tents and barren farm buildings. That first winter had been a rough one with the men sleeping on the ground, eating in the open and utilizing straddle-trench type latrines. Then spring arrived and along with numerous improvements in living conditions came the freshmen combat missions. Combined with the intense satisfaction of participating in the attack against the Nazis was the realization of the cost of war as squadron casualties commenced to mount. The elated airmen began finishing their tour of duty in this theater and returning to the United States; new crews arrived to take their place; and the squadron settled down to its daily routine in true veteran fashion. The first Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays on foreign soil arrived and the men suppressed their feelings of homesickness and did their best to enjoy the efforts of the squadron to bring them some of the atmosphere of these cherished occasions. Throughout the year, the men watched with anticipation the gradual approach of Allied armies to the German border both in the east and in the west; rejoiced when Nazi soil was invaded; and were disappointed when 1944 did not bring the predicted end of the war in Europe. As their second year in Italy began, the men looked around them and considered the changes that had occurred in the squadron area. They looked with approval on the new and remodeled buildings and the neat rows of winterized tents. They realized that a maximum amount of comfort had

been added to their existence during the past year. They looked too at the battle lines on the map with the hope that soon the armies that were attacking in the west would meet with those driving ahead in the east, thus crushing the German war machine in permanent defeat.

765TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) WFF/jdk
461st BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
Office of the Combat Intelligence Officer

APO 520, NY, NY
28 February 1945

EXTRACTS FROM THE SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY

February 1. The need for numerous engine changes permitted but four Liberators to take to the sky to attack the marshalling yard at Graz, Austria. Bombing was by PFF and enemy anti-aircraft resistance was slight and inaccurate. Thirty-one enlisted men received promotions.

February 2. A mission was planned for this date, but it was cancelled during the night and training flights were scheduled instead. An enlisted man found guilty of AWOL by a courts-martial board was taken to the 15th Air Force Stockade. While in Bari, Major Baker's jeep that had been utilized for this transportation, was stolen. Lt. Hayes crew joined the squadron. F/O Hart was commissioned a second lieutenant.

February 3. Squadron flyers were all set to take off on an attack against German installations when the stand down order came in – cause as usual was weather. One officer, having finished his combat flying in this theater, departed for the United States.

February 4. The combat plans of the squadron again could not be put into effect because of the adverse flying weather. A training film on venereal disease was shown to the men.

February 5. Six squadron Liberators took to the sky to attack Nazi oil storage at Regensburg, Germany. Bombing was by PFF and results could not be ascertained. Flak was very slight and no fighters were encountered. Three enlisted men departed for rest camp. One officer and five enlisted men who had returned from Yugoslavia departed en route to the United States.

February 6. Nine squadron aircraft took off with every intention of flying a combat mission. Just after take off, a stand down was called. The planes remained in the air and a practice mission with the emphasis on formation flying was flown. One officer and six enlisted men were attached from the 86th Air Base Unit Section to set up a beam system on the runway.

February 7. Squadron fliers led the group on a mission against the Florisdorf Oil Refinery in Vienna, Austria. Bombing was partly visual and partly by affect procedure, and large columns of black smoke was observed belching forth from the target area. For the first time in combat, some nine men crews were sent into the air. In these ships, the navigator assumed the additional responsibility of toggling the bombs. All ships returned

safely. One enlisted man was released from DS with Group Headquarters and placed on Detached Service with the 680th Signal School **xx xxxxx**.

February 8. Vienna was again visited on this date. This time it was the general repair shops there that bore the brunt of the attack. Six squadron aircraft bombed by PFF, encountering moderate to intense flak over the target. For the second evening, all members of the squadron attended a class on venereal disease. In compliance with General Lee's orders, these classes are to be held for seven nights between the hours of 1900 and 2000. It is part of the Wing program to reduce the V.D. rate in the various squadrons. Speakers have been and will continue to be Major Baker and Captain Nathan. An address by the Chaplain has been scheduled for one evening. Three aircrew officers were placed on DS with Group Headquarters.

February 9. On this date, squadron aircraft were all set to take off on a combat mission when a stand down was ordered. A "mickey" ship from each of the other squadrons of the group attacked the Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery near Vienna, Austria, but the aerial activity of the 765th Bomb Squadron was limited to a practice mission. The venereal disease classes continued with Major Baker speaking to the ground echelon and Capt. Nathan lecturing to the air crews. A radar navigator was assigned to the squadron. Two officers and four enlisted men, having "sweated out 35", departed en route to the United States.

February 10. Crews were all ready to take off on a combat mission when a stand down was scheduled. Training flights were flown in lieu of the bombing attack. Chaplain Rasmussen lectured to the ground echelon men as part of the series of meetings to suppress venereal disease. At the same time, Capt. Nathan was demonstrating the proper manner of taking a prophylaxis to the aircrews. Ono enlisted men volunteered to take the "pro" and one of the medical NCOs administered it to him.

February 11. Again it was the same old story of going through the preparations of flying a combat mission, only to have it cancelled before take off. Numerous training flights were scheduled. Another discussion of venereal disease was given to both ground and air echelons. One enlisted man was transferred to the Detachment of Patients.

February 12. Again a stand down was called as the crews prepared to take to the sky. Major Rainen conducted a quiz on the Articles of War in the EM mess hall at 1000, while Chaplain Rasmussen spoke to the aircrew members. Six officers and ten enlisted men left for rest camps. Two flying officers who had returned from Yugoslavia departed for the U.S.

February 13. It was a beautiful day at Torretta Field and maximum advantage was taken of the cloudless sky to send as many aircraft as possible over enemy territory. In addition to the regularly scheduled mission to control repair shops at Vienna, Austria, an attack on marshalling yards at Maribor, Yugoslavia was planned during the morning. The ships flying to Vienna reached their objective but the bombs were not released there and the formation proceeded to Graz, Austria to attack the marshalling yard there. Bombing was by PFF and results could not be observed. The second mission of the day took squadron

airmen over the marshalling yards at Maribor, Yugoslavia. There bombing was visual and a good pattern of hits was obtained. Anti-aircraft resistance was moderate but accurate. Arriving over the base, Lt. Kelliher's airplane had a feathered engine and a runaway engine on the same side of his ship, forcing him to crash land in a field near the squadron area. The ship broke in two and caught fire as it hit the ground. Eight persons of the nine-man crew scrambled from the wreckage but Lt. Williams, the navigator, failed to reach safety and perished in the fire. Several other of the airmen were injured and bruised, but in no way seriously. Another mournful day in the history of the 765th Bomb Squadron thus came to an end, and coincidentally again on the 13th day of the month. The photo laboratory sent up a photographer who commenced taking pictures of each combat crewmember. These inch by inch and one-half photos are to be attached to a new type identification card to be used if forced down in friendly territory as proof of being an American soldier. The Air Corps picture, "Winged Victory", was shown on the squadron screen.

February 14. A maximum effort of nine squadron aircraft on this date paid a return visit to the Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery in Austria. Anti-aircraft fire was intense but inaccurate. All ships returned safely. Reported results indicate that coils of smoke were arising from the objective. Funeral services were conducted for Lt. Williams, who perished in the crash of his ship near the base on the day before. The first rounds of an EM ping-pong tournament were held in the day room.

February 15. The mission on this date took squadron Liberators to the Penzinger Marshalling Yard at Vienna, Austria. Bombing was by PFF and the results could not be ascertained. All ships returned safely but an unfortunate accident caused the death of Cpl. Moore of F/O Baran's crew. At altitude his oxygen supply failed resulting in his death from suffocation.

February 16. Squadron aircraft were briefed to drop "**xxxxx**" tons of explosives on an airdrome for jet propelled airplanes at Neuburg, Germany, but it was completely covered by clouds and a marshalling yard at Rosenheim was bombed instead. The weather permitted a visual run on the objective and returning airmen were enthusiastic about the results. No enemy opposition at all was encountered and all airplanes returned safely. Squadron members of the group band went on temporary duty to accompany the musical show, "Panama Battie", that is touring this section of Italy. Three staff sergeants were promoted to "tech". One officer and one enlisted man, having completed "35" in this theater, departed en route to the United States.

February 17. Squadron aircraft made a late take-off and flew to Trieste, Italy to bombard the shipyards there. Photographs of the mission showed that the airmen were right on the ball and "plastered" the objective with a solid pattern of bomb hits. These photos also showed that the group obtained a direct hit on an Italian battleship anchored in the harbor. This date marked the grand opening of the new Officers' Club. A gala party was held with the 459th Bomb Group band providing the dance music. Unconfirmed reports place the number of women present between six and ten. Reliable sources and personal observation indicated an abundance of drinkable but potent beverage.

February 18. Squadron airmen were well on their way to drop their explosives on German territory when they met with unfavorable weather and were forced to return to the base with their bombs.

February 19. Combat operations were resumed with a mixed up affair that found only three out of the seven squadron aircraft briefed to bomb Vienna, Austria, actually hitting that target. One airplane returned early; others got separated in cloud formations and two attacked Fiume shipyards, a briefed alternate. One ship attached itself to a flight of the 451st Bomb Group and bombed a railroad junction southwest of Vienna. Ship #35 piloted by Lt. Michaelis failed to return from the mission. Hope was expressed that he had landed at Vis, but no definite word on him was received. The group administrative inspector was in the orderly room in the afternoon to hear complaints of any member of the organization. No one made an appearance to register a "gripe".

February 20. Seven squadron aircraft left Torretta Field to bomb enemy installations at Bolzano, Italy. However the ships never reached the primary objective, but instead dropped their explosives on harbor installations at Fiume. Lt. Michaelis' crew that had failed to return from the sortie to Vienna on the previous day returned to the squadron. They had spent the night at Vis.

February 21. The date marked another sad day in the history of the squadron. Six squadron aircraft bombed the south station area at Vienna, Austria, and while doing so ran into intensely heavy and accurate flak. As a result, two 765th planes failed to return. Flying in plane #37 with Lt. Woodruff's crew was squadron commander, Major Baker. This ship was hit over the target and last word from them was that they were heading for Russian territory. Lt. McMillen in airplane #24 disappeared from the formation and none of the returning airmen were able to give any suggestion as to the fate of this ship. Lt. Brewster failed to land with the others, but returned early in the evening, having landed at the emergency field at Para, Yugoslavia. Torretta Field was honored by a visit from General Spaatz, Commanding General of the European Theater Air Forces. He was accompanied by Generals Twining and Ackor. He inspected the line and spent some time conferring at Group Headquarters. He did not visit the squadron area. Adjutant, Alfred B. Taylor Jr., was promoted to the rank of Captain. Operations Officer, Capt. Cooper, was transferred to the 49th Bomb Wing to serve as a member of the A-3 department there. Capt. Thackston became operations officer of the squadron and Lt. Welton assumed duty as his assistant. One flying officer was transferred to the 96th Air Service Group.

February 22. A unique combat mission was scheduled for this date. Each squadron had a separate marshalling yard north of Munich, Germany, to attack. They were briefed to make their bomb run at 12,000 feet, a low level attack for heavy bombers. However, the aircraft got lost in the clouds, saw the marshalling yard through an opening in the undercast, and bombed it with reported excellent results. Not a person among the returning airmen could identify the objective. Returning to the base by themselves, the squadron flight encountered accurate anti-aircraft fire off the coast of Italy and three men were injured and the aircraft shot full of holes. Capt. Thackston became commanding

officer of the squadron, and Lt. Welton was elevated to the position of operations officer. Lt. Brady became assistant operations officer.

February 23. Continuing their attack on German supply and transportation facilities, squadron airmen bombed a marshalling yard at Amstetten, Austria. Returning fliers claimed excellent destruction of the objective. Opposition was practically non-existent and all ships got back without trouble. It was a gala occasion for the enlisted men of the squadron as the supper meal marked the official opening of their new mess hall. Col. Lawhon, Lt. Col. Hardy, and Chaplain Rasmussen came from Group to be present at the event. Fried chicken and ice cream were the highlights of the menu. Not only is the new chow palace with its tile floor and marble topped tables a tremendous and long-needed improvement in the living conditions of the men but the new mess kit laundry functioned for better than any in the past. Three enlisted men, having "sweated out" 35 missions **xxxx xxx xxxxxxxxx xxxxx xx xxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxxxxx xxxxx. Xxx xxxx xxxxx xxxx xxxxxxx xxxxxxxx xxxx xxxxxxx xxxxxx xxxxxx xxxx xxxxx xxxx xxx.**

February 24. The target was Bolzano, Italy but adverse weather prevented it from feeling the tonnage of squadron bombs. The airplanes turned back and brought their bombs back to the base. A credit was given to the crews for this uncompleted mission **x xxxx xxxx xxx xxxxxxxx xxx xx xxxxxxxx**. **Xxxx xxxxx xxxx xxxxxx xxxx xxx xxxx xx xxx xxxx**. The squadroin area hardly appeared the same as it did on Feb. 24, 1944 with its numerous newly constructed and remodeled buildings and its neat rows of winterized tents. Three enlisted men who returned from Yugoslavia were promoted to sergeant, as **xxxx xxxx xxxxxxxx xxx xxx xxxx xxxxxxx xxx xxxx**. This later action **xx xxx xxxxxx xxx xxx xxx xxxxx xxxxxx xx xxx xxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxx xxx** enlisted men to the rank of sergeant if they do **xxx xxxx** rating already. A bombardier who had completed his 35 missions was transferred to the United States.

February 25. Six squadron aircraft flew to Linz, Austria to bomb a marshalling yard there. Although the weather was clear, the target was covered with a protective screen of smoke, making the use of PFF instruments necessary. Very poor results were obtained with aerial photos showing that not a single bomb fell within 2000 feet of the target. All ships returned safely.

February 26. Following a record of 12 days of aerial operations, a stand down was called on this date while crews were by airplanes awaiting take-off. Capt. **Xxxxx** was assigned to the S-2 section of the squadron. Lt. Pegg was interviewed on **xxxx x** with the 15th, a nightly program of the radio station at Foggia. Another member of Lt. McMillen's crew was automatically promoted to the rank of sergeant.

February 27. The marshalling yard at Augsburg, Germany, felt the weight of one thousand pound bombs as seven crews of the squadron flew there on group mission #184. Little opposition was encountered and all aircraft returned without trouble.

February 28. Squadron airmen bombed a marshalling yard at Ora, Italy just south of Bolzano. Anti-aircraft fire, though slight in quantity, was exceptionally accurate and the ships returned with many a flak hole. Reports of the success of the mission were varied

with some claiming hits on the railroad yard and others seeing explosions in the town itself and the nearby valley. A way formation for enlisted men was held at 1330. At the end of the way line were tables where the men were encouraged to purchase bar books and chances on a bond raffle. The officer received their lire at 1815. One enlisted man was promoted to sergeant. Three combat men of aircrews departed for the United States on permanent change of station. Six officers and eleven enlisted men were at rest camps having left the squadron on February 26th.