

765TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H)
461ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
Office of the Combat Intelligence Officer

WFF/jdk

APO 520, NY, NY

31 October 1944

SUMMARY OF THE SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER

The weatherman definitely was on the side of the Axis during the month of October. Of the 27 missions scheduled during the 31-day period, only 8 were completed and on two of those alternate targets had to be attacked. Of the remainder, 11 were cancelled before take off; on four occasions bad weather forced the airplanes to return to the base before arriving at the target; and three times when the objective was reached a heavy overcast prevented the explosives from being released. On two days, the squadron divided its attacking force into two separate units briefed to bomb different targets. When flying was possible a maximum number of airplanes were sent into the sky, which accounts for the fact that 67 squadron airplanes dropped 128 tons of explosives on enemy installations during October. Three of the targets were in Italy; Munich was bombed twice; Vienna and Linz were each visited once; and alternate targets in Hungary bore the brunt of two attacks. On the six days of scheduled stand downs, as many training flights and practice missions as possible were flown with particular emphasis placed on bombing and gunnery. Night navigation and take offs and landings were practiced on several occasions.

One crew is MIA from the month's aerial operations. On October 4th over Munich, Germany, Lt. Waggoner's ship was last seen peeling from the formation with one engine aflame. No word of the fate of his crew has as yet reached the squadron. Friday the thirteenth inflicted its grim curse upon Lt. King's crew. Just after take off, his airplane collided with another in his flight and crashed 10 miles south of the field. Lt. Chalmers' crew was given up as lost when they failed to return from the Munich raid of October 4th. But, having parachuted to safety over Yugoslavia, they were picked up by the partisans and a few days later returned to the organization.

Seven new combat crews and eight aerial gunners, transferred from the 8th Air Force in England, swelled the number of aircrews to 23, a new high. The enlisted men of Lt. Schweisberger's crew, MIA en route to Friedrichshafen, Germany on August 3rd, returned to the organization to await orders shipping them back to the United States. The men had made their way back through 70 miles of territory in northern Italy.

Five new silver Liberators were assigned to the squadron during October. One was the TulsAmerican, a B-24 purchased from war bond subscriptions of the people of Tulsa, Oklahoma. One war-weary airplane was given the organization by the 767th to be stripped and used as a transport. Two battle-scarred ships returned from sub-depots where their wounds had been healed. One was the "Flying Finger", the airplane Capt Johnson had crashed landed in northern Italy, and the other was the "Upstairs Maid", an original combat ship of the squadron that had been badly damaged during the Linz attack of July 25th. On the other hand, three airplanes were lost on combat flights, including the famous "All American", one was transferred to the 764th Squadron, and one was sent to Gola for repair.

Outside of the personnel gained from the arrival of the new crews, the shift in manpower was

predominately negative. Capt. Arbuthnot, T/Sgt. Gore, and Pvt. Stettin were sent back to the United States on a permanent change of station; Lt. Rothberg and T/Sgt. Fraser appeared before the Flying Evaluation Board, which terminated their combat flying in this theater and prepared to return them to the United States; Lt. Norris, having been questioned by the same board, was reclassified into a C-47 pilot; Cap. Specht finished his 50 missions and was placed on DS with the Flight Control Section of the 15th Air Force; S/Sgt. Price, Sgt. Tukey and Pvt. Miller were transferred to the 26th General Hospital in Bari; Capt. Prien became Group Navigator, and five of the men of Lt. Schweisberger's crew were sent home. Offsetting these losses somewhat were the transfer of photographer Van Norstrand back into the squadron; the assignment of S/Sgt Shaffer, a German-speaking radio operator; the assumption of command of the squadron by Lt. Col. Hardy; the assignment of Lt. Whitlock as Assistant Engineering Officer; and the return of Capt Mixson and Lt. Dietrick from rotation to the zone of the interior. Major Rainen returned from the hospital to resume his duties as Executive Officer.

For "extraordinary achievement in aerial flight", Capt. Johnson, Lt. Jenkins, and T/Sgt. Fraser were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Lts Weems, DeRudder, and Moore and T/Sgt. Stringer, all of whom had left for the United States, also came out on orders for this medal as did Lt. Schweisberger, a prisoner of the Germans. M/Sgts Larsen, Bryer, and Martinus, Rice, Gouardi and Chase and T/Sgt. Brown became the first members of the organization to receive the Bronze Star for extraordinary achievement in direct support of military operations. Eight purple hearts and one cluster to this medal were presented to wounded men. Numerous Air Medals and Oak Leaf Clusters were earned. A summary of awards and decorations to date showed that 27 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 2 Clusters to the D.F.C, 2 Soldiers Medals, and seven Bronze Stars had been earned by the members of the squadron.

The endeavors of many were awarded by promotions during the month. Lts Malita, Gray, Sage and Chalmer added a second silver bar, four "shave tails" became first lieutenants, two Flight Officers were commissioned, one "tech" sergeant made "master", three staff sergeants added another "rocker", eight sergeants earned another stripe, thirty-nine corporals added a third chevron, nine privates first class became non-commissioned officers, and three privates were given \$4 a month increases in base pay. Two corporals lost their rating because of inefficiency and one other was reduced to a private for the unauthorized use of a military vehicle.

The command of the 765th Bombardment Squadron was taken over by Lt. Col. Otha B. Hardy, Jr. on October 25th. He became the sixth squadron commander the organization has had. Major Hoermann reverted to his former duty as Operations Officer; Capt. Baker became Assistant Operations Officer; and Capt. Gray was designated Aerial Gunnery Officer.

A large-scale program of improving the squadron area was undertaken. Winterization of the tents continued. A garage for the repair of the squadron vehicles was near completion by the end of the month. Additions had been made to both the officer and enlisted men's mess kitchens. For the first time since arriving in Italy, the tents of the ground echelon enlisted men contained electric lights. Five men of the engineering department rigged up a power plant from a German motorcycle engine and a salvaged electric generator, and this Rube Goldberg contraption succeeded in furnishing enough power to light all the tents of the engineering department. Other departments made their own arrangements for obtaining electricity.

Olive drab clothing was issued by supply. Each man received two shirts, two trousers, and an overcoat. Also handed out were another blanket, the new type field jacket, a high neck slipover sweater, and additional set of woolen underwear, overshoes, and a folding shovel.

An extensive ground-training program was carried out during October. During the first of the month lectures on aircraft recognition were given combat crew personnel, and during the latter days of October the men were taught to identify friendly and enemy aircraft by the Renshaw system of instruction. Each new crew was briefed on combat intelligence and escape procedure. Pfc. Hallisy spent two weeks at the 61st Station Hospital in Foggia receiving practical experience as a surgical technician. Lt. Campo attended the 15th Air Force Personal Equipment School. Cpl. Arai went to Cooks and Bakers School.

At 0900 on the morning of the first stand down of the week, an inspection of the area and personnel was made by one of the group staff officers. The men dressed in Class B uniform and stood at attention in front of their tent.

Twenty-one officers and fifty enlisted men were sent to the Isle of Capri or San Spirito during the month for a week of relaxation and change of scenery. One Rome trip was scheduled but after take off had to be postponed seven days in a row because the air field in Rome was closed to all traffic, the orders were cancelled.

Two officers and eleven enlisted men were hospital patients in October, a decrease over the total of the previous month. No cases of malaria developed and only one man contracted a venereal disease.

Four men appeared before a court martial board. Pvt. Nevil, who had gone AWOL while on orders to be confined in the 15th Air Force Stockade for just that offense, stood trial again and was sentenced to an additional six months at hard labor. Three men charged with commandeering a government vehicle for private use were acquitted because of lack of evidence against them.

There was a decided improvement in the entertainment provided the men. The motion picture projector survived the entire month without a break down and sixteen pictures, of which five were repeats, appeared on the squadron screen. Broadcasts of World Series games helped pass otherwise monotonous evenings. One party was held in the Officers' Club with two Maltese and one American nurse providing the feminine charm and a jazz band from a neighboring bomb group furnishing the jive. Two stage shows were presented on the stage of the group theater. The Cerignola Music Hall offered several others. Orders were taken for a booklet of group pictures to be published around Christmas time.

By October 31st, the men of the squadron were reconciled to the fact that another long, wet, muddy, tedious winter was approaching. Yet, those who already had spent one winter in Italy knew that it would not be nearly as rough as last March and April. They could look back and remember when tent winterization was unheard of, when a man either fought to get wood to build himself a bed or slept on the ground, when straddle trenches served as latrines, when there was no mess hall and the men had to eat in the open in cold wind and rain that turned food cold before it could reach their mouth. The high spirit of optimism that had prevailed in mid-September had been all but lost. Illusions of a 1944 victory over the Nazis had been all but shattered. No longer were the men talking about the fate of the group following the fall of Germany; they felt there was a long fight ahead of them right at Torretta Field.

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EXTRACTS FROM THE SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER

October 1. For the fourth consecutive day, the twelve **xxx xxx xx** mission had to be cancelled. This time however the fliers almost got underway, as they had been briefed and were standing by their airplanes when the order to stand down came through. A long promotion list was posted on the bulletin board.

October 2. The unflyable weather caused another stand down. In the evening, the engineering tent blew down and severely damaged the O-S1 parked in back of it. A roof was added to the enlisted men's latrine – an improvement that was really needed. Another blanket was issued to each man.

October 3. A mission was originally planned but cancelled just before take off. **X.X.** clothing was issued to the enlisted men. Two pilots practiced after-dark take offs and landings **xxxxxxx** to the flight of some night sorties. M/Sgt. King was designated acting First Sergeant. Lt. Crossman's crew joined the organization. Four aerial gunners from Lt. Schweisberger's crew that were MIA en route to Friedrichshafen, Germany on August 3rd, rejoined the squadron. The airplane that landed on a beach in northern Italy and the men had made their way back through 70 miles of enemy territory to reach the Allied Lines. Cpl. Van Nostrand, a photographer, was reassigned to the squadron and placed on DS to the Group Photo Lab. He had been transferred to the 49th Bomb Wing from the squadron several months before.

October 4. At long last, a double mission was carried out. Four squadron airplanes participated in an attack against marshalling yards at Munich, Germany with devastatingly accurate results, while eight other ships bombed a railroad bridge in northern Italy. One airplane aborted from the Munich mission and, of the remaining three, two failed to return. Lt. Chalmers, flying the "All American" was last seen coming back over the Alps; Lt. Waggoner, in airplane #39, was last seen peeling from the formation over the target with one engine aflame. Lt. Platt lectured to Lt. Crossman's crew on combat intelligence and emergency procedure. Overshoes were issued to the men of the engineering department. Field jacket sizes were taken by supply prior to the requisitioning of new type jackets. **Xxxx xxxxxxxx xx** the squadron had seen and was talking about the engineering department electricity generator. Designed and constructed by Sgts Goss, Turner, Bernstein, Shordt and Doutsch (?), it looked like something cooked up by Rube Goldberg. It was made of an old **xxxxxxx x xxxx x xx xxxxxxx xxxx xxxxxx**.

October 5. **Record unreadable.**

October 6. **Record unreadable.**

October 7. **Record unreadable.**

jettisoned their bombs in the Adriatic or returned them to the base. Pvt. Miller, confined in the hospital for months with a seriously injured leg, was transferred from the organization.

October 18. Seven squadron airplanes took off early to attack a target in northern Hungary in advance of the Russian drive, but unfavorable weather caused them to return to the base shortly after they left the ground. Eight aerial gunners, who had 35 missions with the 8th Air Force to their credit, joined the squadron. Night navigation and landings were practiced for the second time. Aircraft recognition classes on the new types of American fighters, including the jet propelled planes, were commenced. Pvt. Sammy Ferraro, cook in the enlisted men's mess, traveled to Harletta to fill out necessary affidavits to wed an Italian girl. Three flying officers were promoted to first lieutenant.

October 19. No combat mission was scheduled for this date. Three squadron airplanes participated in an experimental flight. With a load of six 500-pound bombs, they were to attempt to reach an altitude of 30,000 feet. Confusion occurred though, and the flight never completed its function. Omitted from the squadron history has been the recent award of the Bronze Star to T/Sgt. Larson, line chief; M/Sgts Bryer and Martinas, flight chiefs, M/Sgt. Rice, crew chief of "Piecemaker", M/Sgt. Chase, armament head, and T/Sgt. Brown, ordnance chief. These were the first members of the squadron to be decorated with this medal. Lt. Jenkins earned the D.F.C. for his brilliant pilotage on the Linz attack. Assistant Operations Officer Gray donned bright new captain's bars.

October 20. Mission #119 was flown to an automotive parts factory at Milan, Italy. Squadron bombardiers scored near misses on the objective. No opposition was encountered. Capt. Johnson was awarded the D.F.C. for his brilliantly executed crash landing in northern Italy. S/Sgt. Fraser was cited for this medal because of the bravery he demonstrated by manning his guns and shooting down a German fighter after suffering a severe foot injury. Lt. DeRudder and T/Sgt. Stringer, long since departed for the U.S., received the same award for heroism over Ploesti, Rumania when they were forced to abandon ship. One officer and two enlisted men departed on a permanent change of station to the United States. Pvt. Nevil was brought to the squadron from the 15th Air Force stockade to stand before a court martial board – verdict: six months of hard labor in addition to the 4 months previously adjudged. Three enlisted men of the armament section appeared before the court charged with taking a government vehicle without proper authority. The presiding officer threw the papers out of the window, stating that there was no case against the men.

October 21. The mission for this date was to a little town in Hungary only a few miles from the Czech border. But bad weather caused the sortie to be cancelled before the airplanes left the ground. Further training in night flying took place. Capt. Johnson was appointed fire marshal for the squadron.

October 22. A mission was scheduled for this date but it was cancelled because of stormy weather. "The Flying Finger", airplane #21 that Johnson crashed landed in northern Italy, returned to the squadron. Another enlarging of the kitchen of the Officer's Club was commenced. S/Sgt. Shaffer joined the organization. He speaks the German language fluently and is to fly on combat missions and interpret the German radio broadcasts that are picked up. Capt. Specht was placed on DS with the 15th Air Force in Bari. He is going to be a member of the Flight Control Section. Captains' bars were in evidence on the shoulders of former lieutenants Sage, Malita, and Chalmers. The five men of Lt. Schweisberger's crew who had escaped from northern Italy departed en route to the United States.

October 23. The squadron participated in two separate missions on this date. Seven airplanes took off to bomb an aircraft assembly plant at Munich, Germany. Two of the Liberators aborted from the formation and returned early and the effectiveness of the rest could not be noted as there was a 10/10

coverage over the target and bombing was done by pathfinder. Four other ships headed for Milan, Italy but were forced to turn back because of weather. Lt. Norris, Lt. Rothberg, and T/Sgt. Fraser left for Bari to appear before the Flying Evaluation Board. One man was reduced to the grade of private for the unauthorized use of a squadron vehicle.

October 24. The first stand down of the week occurred and consequently an inspection of personnel and tents was held at 0900. Lt. Col. Lawhon was the inspecting officer from Group. The first aircraft recognition class using the Renshaw course of instruction was held. Overshoes were issued to the men of the squadron who had not received them previously. Also handed out to each individual was a compact folding shovel. At 1915 trucks took the members of the squadron to the group theater to see a Red Cross stage show.

October 25. For the second consecutive day, no combat mission was scheduled. An aerial training program was carried out with many practice missions flown emphasizing bombing and gunnery. Lt. Col. Otha B. Hardy, Jr. was assigned to the organization as squadron commander. He is the sixth commanding officer that the outfit has had. Capt. Nathan returned from Bari with news of the fate of the men who had appeared before the Flying Evaluation Board. Lt. Rothberg and T/Sgt. Fraser are to return to the United States. Lt. Norris will become a C-47 pilot either in an ATC unit or a troop carrier command.

October 26. A mission was scheduled on this date but was cancelled one hour after early reveille when the rains came. The remaining gunner of Lt. Schweisberger's crew returned to the squadron from Bari. Plenty of entertainment was offered the men of the squadron. Some journeyed to Cerignola to see the 15th Air Force Service Command's "International Revue" on the stage of the Music Hall. At 1930 another 15th Air Force stage show was presented at the Group Theater.

October 27. At 0345 the reveille whistle resounded throughout the squadron area. By 0400 a stand down had been called and weary-eyed airmen and ground maintenance men returned to the sack to continue the sleep they had not fully awakened from. Lt. Whitlock was assigned to the squadron from the 764th, where he had been serving as assistant engineering officer.

October 28. Ten aircrews were briefed to bomb oil storage tanks at Regensburg, Germany, but the mission was cancelled before take off. Lt. Col. Hardy announced the following staff changes: Major Hoermann to be Operations Officer, Capt Baker to serve as assistant Operations Officer, and Capt. Gray to assume the duties of Aerial Gunnery Officer. Lt. Whitlock was assigned duty as assistant Engineering Officer.

October 29. Oil storage at Regensburg, Germany was again scheduled to be the target of squadron Liberators. Sunny sky over Torretta Field indicated that the attack units might succeed in reaching the objective this time. The weather over Regensburg was very different though and the bombers were forced to turn around and head for home at a point one hour from the oil storage tanks. The incendiary bombs were brought back to the base. Major Paine, cured of his yellow jaundice, returned to the squadron to resume his duties as Executive Officer. Capt. Mixson became the first of those sent home on rotation in July to return to the organization. Old #37, "The Upstairs Maid", one of the original combat ships of the organization returned to its hardstand on the line. It had been under repair since the Linz raid of the 25th of July when Lt. Jenkins' crew shot down seven Nazi fighters from its turrets and the ship crash landed at Foggia.

October 30. Two squadron aircraft were scheduled to bomb a gasoline depot in the Prague region of

Czeckoslovakia and nine others were to return to the Herman Goering plant in Linz, Austria, but bad weather caused the airplanes to remain on the ground.

October 31. Things happened slightly in reverse on this date. Instead of a stand down canceling a combat mission, a sortie against the Axis annulled a scheduled stand down. At 1000, group operations called for 7 airplanes to take off at 1045 for a bombing attack against German troop concentrations in Yugoslavia near the Albanian border. However the fliers encountered bad weather as they reached the coast of Yugoslavia and had to return with their bombs. Pay formation was held in the afternoon. A summary of awards and decorations to date showed that the following medals had been received by members of the squadron: 27 D.F.C.'s 2 First Clusters to the D.F.C., two Soldier Medals; and 7 Bronze Stars. Lt. Dietrick returned to the organization from rotation to the U.S.