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OUTLINE HISTORY &

Sheet No. 1 WAR 1144, 320th Bombardment Gr. (M) Decimoannu Air Base

Month of January, 1944. Prepared by Murray Sherman, 2nd Lt., A. C.
and E. F. Lkeec, T/Sgt.

DAY	EVENTS
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>OUTLINE HISTORY FOR JANUARY 1944.</u></p> <p>The 320th Bomb Group broke all past records this month for combat activity and results obtained, since its participation in the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations. It also chalked up the first B-26 night mission flown in this theatre in outstanding fashion.</p> <p>During January 1944 the 320th Bombardment Group :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Engaged in 22 combat missions b. Flew 616 combat sorties c. Flew 16 weather sorties d. Dropped 867.67 tons of bombs on targets located in Italy e. Lost 11 a/c; 5 due to flak, 4 due to E/A, and 2 for other reasons f. Destroyed 11 E/A in the air and on the ground, probably destroyed 2 E/A and damaged 2 E/A g. Lost <u>7</u> crews due to flak and fighters <p>Attached to this outline is a sketch drawn by Col. E. F. Kosciuk, of Group S-1, also known as the "Mad Russian," which vividly portrays 320th Bombardment Group history since its activation up to February 1, 1944. Chronologically the following scenes are shown - activation, alligator, clouds and sun, Florida - Troop train to IOW - Fish and Chips, air raid shelter, England - Boat activities, England to Africa - Oran, La Senia, Tafaroui, Relizane and conditions pertaining thereto - Party at La Senia - work with B-17 outfit - P-38's representation, escort - Montesquie, Lassicault, El Bethan and Djedeida - night mission at Decimo, present base, former target - Figure 320 is visible in the sketch.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CONFIDENTIAL</p>

Month of January, 1944. Prepared by Murray Sherman, 2nd Lt., Air Corps
and E. F. McKee, 1st Sgt.

DAY	EVENTS
1.	<p>The strength of the 320th Bombardment Group comprising Group Headquarters and 4 Squadrons, as of this date, numbered <u>334 Officers and Flight Officers and 1184 Enlisted Men</u>. This figure was reduced during the course of the month as a number of Officers and Enlisted Men, who completed their tours of duty, departed for the States for further orders.</p>
2.	<p>Bombing activities were inaugurated today for 1944 by the Group with its <u>first mission of the year</u>. A <u>27 plane formation</u> dropped <u>1000 lb. demos on the RR/Bridges at Ventimiglia, Italy</u>. An excellent pattern of bombs bracketed both bridges and at least 2 spans of the west bridge were reported demolished. Neither flak nor fighters were encountered and all our a/c returned safely to this base.</p>
3.	<p>A Group formation of 28 B-26's took off this morning to bomb the Rocasecca Highway Bridge, Italy. 500 lb. demo's were dropped on the target and heavy accurate flak was encountered. 3 a/c landed at Naples/Pomigliano A/D, 2 seriously damaged by flak and the other acting as escort. The remainder of our a/c returned safely to the base though quite a few were damaged by flak.</p>
4.	<p>'Ole man weather said no mission today. This time Capt. DeVoe was right because the 17th and 319th did get to their targets but returned with their bombs because of 10/10 cloud cover.</p>
5.	<p>Siena M/Y, Italy, was today's target. The Group formation was over the target but no bombs were dropped because of weather. One of our a/c, on returning crashlanded and was destroyed. The crew is safe.</p>
7.	<p>A Group formation of 38 B-26's had a repeater for today and dropped 55.5 tons of 1000 lb. demos on the Rocasecca Road Bridge. There was an excellent concentration of bombs in the target area and all our a/c returned safely, a number of them damaged by flak. Landing of the a/c was momentarily delayed when <u>a 1000 lb. demo, which having hung up, was being returned to this base, fell thru the bombay doors.</u></p>

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Major John C. Montgomery reported to group today to assume his post as Group Surgeon replacing Major Moore who has been transferred to the 15th Air Force.

8.

Today's target was the M/Y at Siena Italy. 28 B-26's dropped 500 lb. demolition bombs on Grosseto M/Y instead because the primary target was totally obscured by clouds. The formation was unescorted and after bracketing the M/Y with an excellent pattern of bombs our a/c returned safely.

10.

Today's Group mission was unique for it marked the first time a B-26 night mission was flown in the Theatre of Operations. At 2000 hours 3 B-26's, unescorted, took off to bomb Piombino Iron and Steel Works, Italy. They dropped 24 x 500 lb. demolition bombs on the target at 2143 hours from 8500' and returned safely at 2258 hours. All the bombs landed in the target area with direct hits scored on the blast furnaces and iron and steel works building. On the breakaway, a large explosion lighted up the target area and it was aflame as the formation left the Italian coast. Lt. Col. Fletcher was Flight Commander and the other Headquarters personnel participating were Capt. Brewer, Capt. Cook, Capt. Lalsbury, Lt. Farberow, Lt. Fargo, Lt. Fields, and Sgt. Zupanc.

11.

The Headquarters Enlisted Men's Club had its gala opening tonight. "Oasis" stood true to its name and the evening was a howling success. It will serve as an excellent source of relaxation and diversion for the men in their spare hours. Officers of Group Headquarters and Base and Red Cross personnel were guests of the Club and a grand time was had by all.

Several Officers assigned to the A-2 section of the 9th Air Force in England, visited Group today. They were particularly interested in gathering information regarding the mobility of our unit, for they were extremely well impressed with the efficiency of our Operations and with the

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11.	<p>manner in which he moved from station to station without disrupting Operations. The facts they compile should serve them in good stead for the contemplated invasion of France where mobility and efficiency of a unit would be dominant factors towards the success of an operation.</p>
13.	<p>Rome/Siampino A/D, South, was hit today. A Group formation of 36 B-26's, unescorted, gave an excellent pattern of "frags" across the A/D. Several a/c, a number of buildings and hangars were either destroyed or severely damaged. Several of our a/c were damaged by flak and 2 men were slightly injured. All our a/c returned safely to this base after encountering several enemy a/c and destroying one ME-109.</p>
15.	<p>26 B-26's took off this morning to bomb Orvieto Rd Bridge, South. They were unescorted and bracketed the bridge with an excellent pattern of 1000 lb. demolition bombs, scoring probable hits on the bridge and the approaches. Flak was intense and accurate and though 16 of our a/c were damaged, all returned safely to this base.</p> <p>Lt. J. R. Edwards of Group 2-1 was promoted to the rank of Captain today.</p>
16.	<p>Orte L/Y and Rd Bridge, Italy, was today's target. A formation of 27 B-26's dropped a good concentration of 1000 lb demos in the L/Y but missed the bridge. Flak was heavy, intense and accurate and several ME-109's attacked the rear of the formation. <u>The lead ship piloted by Lt. Green, with Major McGrery as Flight Commander, was hit by flak 20 seconds before bombs away and caught on fire. The pilot continued his bomb run, dropped his bombs and then fell below the formation and 7/8 chutes were seen to open.</u> Lt. Spack's a/c after fighter attacks was seen with both engines smoking and headed south in the vicinity of Lake Vico at 4,000' apparently under control. 1 ME-109 was probably destroyed and 1 ME-109 was damaged. Our Group lost 2 B-26's, 14 crew members, and 5 men were slightly injured.</p>

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17.	<p>Once again Orte RR Bridge, Italy, was the Group target. A Group formation of 28 B-26's dropped 1000 lb. demolition bombs on the target with an excellent concentration across the approaches and several hits scored in the north portion of the M/Y. (Flak was moderate and accurate and 20 B-26's were damaged and 6 crew members were injured therefrom. <u>Lt. Col. Fletcher, Group Commanding Officer and Flight Commander on the mission received a head injury due to flak over the target.</u></p>
18.	<p>27 B-26's of the 320th Group took off to bomb Piombino M/Y, Italy. 1000 lb. demos and 500 lb. demos with 6 to 24 hour delay fuses were dropped on the target in an excellent pattern. Large explosions were observed and a good number of rolling stock were destroyed. All our a/c returned safely after encountering moderate accurate flak which injured 1 crew member and damaged 7 a/c.</p> <p><u>Captain Duncan reported for duty today with Group S-2 in the capacity of Army Liaison Officer. His outfit is the Glasgow Highlanders, a British unit and he has a broad background regarding ground troops.</u></p> <p>Lt. J. E. Kenzig who was on detached service at Group Headquarters, setting up the Group mess returned to his Squadron.</p> <p><u>Lt. John C. Edwards was appointed as Acting Commanding Officer of the 444th Squadron, replacing Major McCrory who is Missing in Action.</u></p>
19.	<p>Viterbo A/D, Italy, was the Group target for today. 36 B-26's took off and dropped 500 lb. demos in a good concentration across the A/D. Slight flak was encountered and all our a/c returned safely.</p>
20.	<p>A Group formation of 36 B-26's hit the Viterbo M/Y today. An excellent concentration of bombs covered the yards and large explosions were visible for several minutes after the formation left the target. About 25 RR cars were destroyed and a number of buildings hit.</p>
21.	<p>A familiar target was the mission for today. 36 B-26's hit the RR Bridges north and south of Orvieto, Italy. Both bridges were well bracketed</p>

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with bombs but very accurate flak at the South bridge took a heavy toll. When the final count was taken it showed, 2 B-26's lost; 1 B-26 missing; 11 B-26's damaged and 8 crew members injured by flak. This was the roughest day the Group has had in about 6 months.

There was a Group meeting tonite of all Officers of the various Squadrons. Excitement ran high as Col. Austin of the 42nd Wing told about the new Allied landings to be made at dawn tomorrow south of Rome. Capt. Duncan in interesting fashion covered the ground situation pertaining to the landings and Col. Austin stating he was pinch hitting for Lt. Col. Fletcher, very instructively discussed the part the Air Corps would play in the Operation.

22.

Capt. E. H. Brewer, Ass't. Group Operations Officer, was appointed Commanding Officer of the 444th Squadron to fill the vacancy of Lt. J. C. Edwards, who is Missing in Action.

Today's target was aimed at isolating the new bridgehead and prevent the enemy from pouring in reinforcements. 34 B-26's dropped 500 lb. demos on the Road Junction at Vellitri, Italy, weaving an excellent pattern over the target. 1 B-26 crashed on take-off and was destroyed; crew is safe, one man suffered a broken arm and leg. All our a/c returned safely from the mission.

23.

A group formation of 33 B-26's took off to bomb the Road between Carsoli and Togiacozi, Italy. After reaching the target area they returned to this base with their bombs because the target was totally obscured by clouds.

24.

Major Macia, Group Executive Officer, who was on leave to the States after completing a combat tour of duty, returned today.

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25. Terni M/Y, Italy was the Group target but due to cloud cover Rieti M/Y was bombed. An excellent concentration of bombs bracketed the center of the M/Y, cutting the entire width of the yard, destroying upwards of 20 RR cars in addition to the RR station and warehouses which received direct hits. Some of the a/c were not in a position to drop and all our a/c returned safely.
26. Lt. W. T. Rucker of the 443rd Squadron has taken over his new duties as Ass't. Group Operations Officer, replacing Capt. Brewer who is now 444th Squadron CO.
- Group Headquarters opened its new mess hall today. It is well constructed of brick and has 3 sections; the Officers Mess, the Enlisted Men's Mess, and the Kitchen, and the new setup will afford greater comfort in messing, especially in inclement weather. It would be opportune to mention that Major O'Toole, Adjutant, has an uncanny way of keeping it most Secret within Group Headquarters, whenever steak is on deck, which is not often, so as to avoid a sudden flow of visitors, all most welcome, be assured, but that would tax the limited facilities of the mess. On very rare occasions somehow the news does leak out.
27. A Group formation of 34 B-26's hit Terni M/Y, Italy, today. An excellent concentration covered the yards and considerable rolling stock was destroyed. One string of bombs landed directly on the Iron Works. Slight flak was encountered and all our a/c returned safely.
28. 28 B-26's took off this morning to bomb Orvieto RR Bridge North, Italy. They were unescorted and dropped 1000 lb. demo's on the target. It was really a bang up job. 100' of the Bridge was wiped out and a Troop Train of 40/50 cars received direct hits, destroying 10 cars, derailing 3 and the remainder buckled up in an arch. All our a/c returned safely.
- The following message was received from the Commanding General of the 12th Air Force: "Very many congratulations to you and the 320th Bombardment

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28. contd. Group on splendid attack today on Orvieto Bridge. Photographic Reconnaissance Unit confirms bridge completely out in 2 places and 2 fires burning at 1400 hours."

29. Today's target was the Manziana RR Bridge, Italy. 35 B-26's were over the target and an excellent concentration bracketed the target with 1000 lb. demolition bombs, with several direct hits on the bridge and on the approaches. 3 B-26's and 2 crews were lost due to flak and 10/12 ME-109's which attacked the rear of the formation. A/c #39 piloted by Lt. Conrad, was badly shot up but thru skillful pilotage he reached Corsica, where the crew bailed out and the ship crashed in the mountains. A/c #41 hit the water off Ladispoli and 7 chutes were seen to open. A/c #68 was seen to explode enroute to Corsica and no chutes were seen. 2 ME-109's were destroyed and 1 ME-109 was probably destroyed.

31. As the month came to an end the combat strength of the Group was as follows:

SQUADRON	NO. OF CREWS	NO. OF A/C
441st	17	18
442nd	20	17
443rd	18	18
444th	16	18
		<u>71</u>