
Sheet No. 1 WAR DIARY, 442nd Bomb Sqdrn., Decimomannu Air Base
Month of January, 1944. Prepared by 2nd John G. Gemmill, 2nd Lt. Air Corps &
Jack C. Howard, 1st Sgt.

DAY

EVENTS

OUTLINE HISTORY FOR MARCH

One crew was dropped from the Squadron rolls as Missing in Action;

The following Officers and Enlisted men were awarded the Purple Heart on General Orders for wounds over enemy territory: Capt. Speegle, Capt. Leahy, Lt. Smith, Lt. Dodelin, Lt. Pincomb, S/Sgt. Garbenches, S/Sgt. Gomez, S/Sgt. Horne and Cpl. Feige.

Number of new crews assigned during the month 6.

Number of Officers completing 40 missions and leaving for home 12.

Number of Enlisted Men completing 40 missions and leaving for home 22.

Sgt. Wesley A. Marvick received credit for one ME.

DAY	EVENTS
1.	No mission was scheduled today. The strength of the 442nd Bombardment Squadron (M) on the first of January, 1944 was as follows: Officers - 72, Flight Officers - 3, Enlisted Men - 281; Private Oliver W. McKeen, 370873 a member of the Squadron who worked with the refuel unit, was accidentally killed by a truck; he was found by the Sergeant of the Guard, who was on his way to the plane area with the guard relief at 0130 hours. One new crew consisting of 3 Officers and 3 Enlisted Men joined the Squadron.
2.	The first mission of the year was to bomb Ventimiglia RR Bridges in north Italy. The Squadron furnished 7 aircraft in a 26 plane formation. Both bridges were hit. No flak. No fighters.
3.	Roccasecca Road Bridge, Italy was today's target. Our Squadron led the Group, Capt. Speegle flying and Lt. Darby, the lead bombardier. 7 of our aircraft flew in the 28 plane formation. Approaches to the bridge were hit. There were no attacks by hostile aircraft but the flak was very accurate. T/Sgt. Henry C. Winstell, was transferred to the Detachments of Patients for Pedal operation. The Sergeants record as a Crew Chief in this organization has been excellent. Capt. Bayramian, Lt. Probasco and Sgt. Harbaugh left for the rest camp at Capri.
4.	The mission today was cancelled because of weather. M/Sgt. James W. Martin, Squadron Line Chief, departed for XII Air Force Headquarters to appear before a Special OCS Board on Engineering Candidates.
5.	Weather again caused cancellation of the mission. Three Officers and three Enlisted Men assigned to this Squadron today. The following named Officers and Enlisted Men having completed 40 missions and having received their orders from Hq., XII Air Force for ABS at Casablanca to sweat out transportation home: Lt. Amundson, Lt. Byram, Lt. Ladd, Lt. Limberg, Lt. Young, and F/O Bougher, T/Sgt. R.L. Martin and S/Sgt. Paul Gad. Promotion to Captain became effective for Lt. Ladd the day prior to his departure. S/Sgt. Gad will be remembered in this Squadron as the 40 year old youngster who came overseas as a mechanic but was eager to become a combat engineer. He took up a job in the Photo-lab where he worked himself into combat as a photographer-gunner, continuing as a photo-technician.
6.	The mission today was to bomb Siena Marshalling Yards, Italy, but weather obscured the target. The Squadron furnished 8 aircraft in a 32 plane formation. There were no encounters with enemy aircraft and no flak.
7.	Roccasecca Road Bridge, Italy was the target again today. The Squadron put up 8 aircraft in a 32 plane formation. A good pattern of bombs covered the target. There were no encounters with enemy aircraft. The flak was accurate over the target, and several of our planes were damaged.
8.	Grosetto Marshalling Yards was bombed in lieu of the primary target, Siena Marshalling Yards, because the latter was obscured by clouds. The result were very satisfactory. The Squadron furnished 7 aircraft in the 28 plane formation. No enemy aircraft were encountered and there was no flak.
10.	Twelve Officers and thirteen Enlisted Men, all combat personnel, were assigned to the Squadron. Strength as of this date is 84 Officers, and 294 Enlisted Men.
11.	Sgt. Harold E. Wilferth, Operations Clerk, was transferred to the Detachment of Patients.

DAY	EVENTS
13.	The Squadron led the Group today with Capt. Speegle and Lt. Darby in the lead ship. We provided 8 aircraft in a 32 plane formation which dropped frag bombs on Rome Ciampino Airdrome South. The target was covered by an excellent pattern, several aircraft were destroyed on the ground and hangars and buildings were severely damaged. A dozen enemy fighters attacked but we lost no aircraft, and one enemy fighter was shot down. Slight flak damaged one of our planes.
14.	The following named Officers and Enlisted Men having completed 40 combat missions departed for ABS at Casablanca enroute home: Lt. Payton, Lt. Chandler, Lt. Monroe, T/Sgt. Harper, S/Sgt. Andrewson, S/Sgt. Baronet, S/Sgt. Cerchiaro, S/Sgt. Covert, S/Sgt. Godfrey, S/Sgt. Hageman, S/Sgt. Hite, S/Sgt. Trupka, S/Sgt. Cross, S/Sgt. Griffin, S/Sgt. Hall, L.E., S/Sgt. Legutko, S/Sgt. Peck, S/Sgt. Stander and Sgt. Willliams, J.R. Lts. Brast and Freeman and S/Sgt. Yule returned from DS at BTC. Lts. Ratering and Harpster left for 30 days at BTC on DS. Capt. Bayramian and Lt. Probasco returned from rest camp at Capri. The promotion of 1st Lts. Speegle and Leahy to Captain became effective as of the 20th of December 1943.
15.	The target today was Orvieto RR Bridge South Italy, and the Squadron furnished 6 aircraft in a 24 plane formation. The results were good. Fighters attacked over the target, and the flak was considerable and accurate, damaging several of our aircraft. M/Sgt. Martin returned from DS at XII Air Force Headquarters.
16.	Orte Marshalling Yards and RR Bridge was today's target. In a 28 plane formation, the Squadron provided 7 aircraft. The target was well covered. The flak was intense and accurate. We suffered no losses, but two other squadrons each lost planes that straggled to enemy fighters. Cpl. Cayce H. Duncan, bombsight maintenance man, was assigned to the Squadron and was welcomed by S/Sgt. Homrighous, who has been handling that department alone. 1st Lt. Oliver G. Shuh has been designated Squadron Gunnery Officer, and 1st Lt. Vernon O. Darby was designated Squadron Bombing Officer.
17.	The target was Orte again. We provided 7 aircraft in a 28 plane formation. The flak was moderate and very accurate, but there were no enemy fighters, and we sustained no losses, though all but two of our planes were damaged. Bombs plastered the yards and approaches to the bridge.
18.	On today's mission to Piombino Marshalling Yards, we had 7 aircraft in a 27 plane formation. The Squadron led the Group, with Capt. Speegle and Lt. Darby in the lead plane. The bombing was good. There was a little flak but no fighters.
19.	Viterbo Airdrome was the target. We had 9 aircraft in a 36 plane formation. We put a good pattern on the field. There were no enemy aircraft though Jerry tried to shoot at us from Orte without success. Capt. Polk, Squadron S-2 Officer, left for DS at Base Headquarters.
20.	Today's target was Viterbo Marshalling Yards, and we put up 9 aircraft in a 36 plane formation. The yards were practically demolished. There was no opposition.
21.	Orvieto RR Bridges North and South were the targets for the Group. Ours and 443rd was North, and we furnished 9 aircraft in an 18 plane formation. We missed the bridge, but cut the tracks south of the bridge. Our opposition was slight but the 441st lost two aircraft and 444th lost 1 over the target to flak. Lt. John G. Gemmill was assigned to the Squadron as S-2 Officer.

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DAY	EVENTS
22.	<p>On today's mission we again led the Group with the Speegle-Darby team again in front. The target was Velletri Road Junction, Italy--just inside the beach-head where troops landed this morning. We furnished 9 aircraft in a 34 plane formation. The bombing was excellent; opposition was slight.</p> <p>S/Sgt. Garbenches returned from the hospital with a right arm still very weak from the flak wound sustained last month. Three Enlisted Men Operators were transferred to the 444th Bomb Squadron in this Group.</p>
23.	<p>The target was a road junction between Carsoli and Tagiacozzo, Italy, but no bombs were dropped because of cloud cover. We put up 8 aircraft in a 33 plane formation.</p>
24.	<p>Mission was cancelled due to weather.</p>
25.	<p>Rieti Marshalling Yards today. We furnished 9 aircraft in a 36 plane formation. The results were excellent. No enemy aircraft attacked and there was no flak.</p>
26.	<p>Mission was cancelled due to weather.</p>
27.	<p>The target for today was Terni Marshalling Yards. We put up 9 aircraft in a 34 plane formation. The bombing was beautiful. There were no enemy air attacks and only slight light flak was put up, which didn't touch us.</p>
28.	<p>The Squadron again led the Group, with the pilot-bombardier team of Speegle and Darby in the lead ship, against Orvieto RR Bridge North, Italy. We put up 7 aircraft in the 28 plane formation. An excellent concentration of thousand-pounders bracketed the bridge with direct hits which completely destroyed 2 spans, wiping out 100 feet of the bridge. A troop train of about 50 cars that was standing on the bridge when we came over was knocked into the water. Our photographs showed men running toward old bomb craters just before our bombs landed. Only slight light flak was encountered, and there were no losses.</p>
29.	<p>We furnished 9 aircraft in a 35 plane formation which did a fine job of bombing Manziana RR Bridge, Italy. There was flak from Rome Littorio Marshalling yards as we swung on to the bomb run, which disabled 2 of our planes, #39 was piloted by Lt. Conrad and #41, piloted by Lt. Stephanson. They went on and dropped their bombs on the target, but Lt. Stephanson fell behind on the break-away. Lt. Conrad's plane was hit again on the bomb run by attacking fighters, which knocked out the electrical system, generator box, inverter, one throttle, all cables between the control column and control surfaces and damaged all other controls. Lt. Conrad ordered the crew to abandon ship, but discovered he could fly with one throttle and trim tabs, so he cancelled the order because S/Sgt. Marschke was unconscious and unable to leave the ship. Lt. Conrad left formation and for a time, flew with Lt. Stephanson. A dozen ME-109's and FW-190's attacked the two planes, and just past the coast off Ladispoli, Lt. Stephanson turned his ship, by now on fire, toward shore and 7 parachutes came out before it crashed in shallow water. Besides Lt. Stephanson, the crew was: Lt. Conley, Lt. Mestayer, S/Sgt. Young, Cpl. Strasburger, S/Sgt. Gilbert and Sgt. Carr. They're believed to be prisoners of war.</p> <p>Meanwhile, in Lt. Conrad's ship, S/Sgt. Frank F. Marschke had been badly injured by flak and S/Sgts. Floto and Rodgers had also been injured less seriously. Before leaving enemy territory S/Sgt. Rodgers shot down 2 attacking ME-109's with his tail guns - 1 crashed in the sea and the other blew up in mid-air. Lt. Conrad, with the skill of a veteran, flew his plane to Corsica, where all the crew parachuted safely to earth before the plane crashed into the side of a mountain. S/Sgts. Rodgers and Floto assisted S/Sgt. Marschke in leaving the plane by helping him to the catwalk and placing his hand on the rip-cord handle. The three men were hospitalized, but all will recover.</p>

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DAY	EVENTS
29. (Cont.)	443rd lost a plane and crew, the plane, badly damaged and on fire, blowing up on the way to Corsica. Lts. Baird, Abeln and Miller and S/Sgts. Folger, Eden, Schaus and a ll of whom completed 40 missions received orders to proceed to ABS at Casablanca enroute home. The promotion of Lt. Baird to Captain became effective before he took leave. 1st Lt. Elbert O. Stephanson, 1st Lt. Joseph L. Mestayer, 2nd Lt. Robert L. Conley, S/Sgt. Alfred R. Gilbert, s/Sgt. Howard W. Young, Sgt. George A. Carr, and Cpl. Harry L. Strasburger are listed as "Missing in Action, " this date.
30.	Mission was cancelled due to weather. T/Sgt. Winstell and Sgt. Wilferth, rumored to be well on their way to the States because of disabilities, returned to the Squadron to resume duties.
31.	Again the mission was cancelled because of weather.