

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

WFF/jdk

APO 520, NY, NY
30 April 1944

SUMMARY OF THE SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL

At dawn on April 1st, the combat crews of this organization were briefed on their first combat mission. The target for the day was the Ancoha Railroad bridge in Northern Italy. Due to adverse weather the mission was “scrubbed.” On the second day of April the 461st Bomb Group flew its “freshman mission.” The target was the Bihac Marshalling Yards in North Western Yugoslavia. We were unfortunate enough to lose two planes over the target area. They were from the 766th and 767th Bomb Squadrons and they collided in mid-air. With its “freshman mission” under its belt, the Group set out to let the “Jerries” know that the organization with the painted cowlings was over here strictly for business; and that business was complete destruction of the enemy.

Our Squadron lost its first ship on April 6th while returning from a raid on Zagreb, Yugoslavia. As the bombardier was salvoing his bombs off the coast of Yugoslavia, one of them exploded, wrecking all the controls and starting a fire in the waist of the ship. S/Sgt. E. D. McGaugh patched up the leaking gas line and extinguished the fire. Through this bravery and that of all members of the crew, they were recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross. Lt. Milne, Lt. Sullivan, and Sgt. Marszalkiewicz bailed out at the first explosion near the coast of Yugoslavia. Our Commanding Officer, Major Applegate and 1st Lt. Specht did a marvelous job in bringing the crippled ship over the Adriatic Sea and into such a position that the remaining members of the crew were able to parachute to safety behind our own lines. Major Applegate, 1st Lt. Specht, and Sgt. Curtin received the Purple Heart on this mission.

A lecture was given by the Squadron Surgeon on precautionary measures to be taken against catching malaria. Attabrine tablets are taken by everyone six days out of the week each week. Mosquito nettings were required on all beds. These were inspected and men were “gigged” if they had them up improperly or didn’t have them up at all.

During the middle of the month the rest of our “pigeons” arrived home. The story of their trip from Morrison Field to here was indeed a sad one. From Morrison Field they went to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, where they stayed about three weeks. Then they boarded a troop transport for a nine-day ocean crossing to Casablanca. From Casablanca they took the famous “40 and 8” railroad train. After riding seven days and seven nights, our weary travelers found themselves in Tunis. A week was spent in Tunis trying to find out where the Group was. Again they boarded the “40 and 8” box cars for three day and night journey. This time they were dumped out in Algiers. After spending many days in Algiers, they were flown to their final destination here at Torretta.

Sgt. Earl Blalock was lost in action while on Detached Service with the 766th Bomb Squadron. While on a mission to Budapest, Hungary, the plane he was in was shot down over the target by flak.

“Big Stinky”, flown by 1st Lt. Nixon and crew was lost on April 24th on the raid on Bucharest, Roumania. It was last seen when it peeled out of the formation with #4 engine on fire. It is believed that everyone had time to bail out as the ship did not appear to be out of control. However, the ship had disappeared out of sight before anyone had a chance to see if they had bailed out.

The enlisted men’s Service Club was opened at 1900 on April 24th. Beer, wine, and sandwiches were served. Some smooth popular music was supplied from the 455th Bomb Group Dance Band. There was some entertainment with the band and some of our local talent showed their stuff. Major Applegate, Major Rainen, Lt. Amoroso and Lt. Campo were guests at the opening. Many of the boys had some big heads to carry around in the morning from the Italian “vino”.

During the month sixteen combat missions were flown; two planes were lost, and fourteen men are missing in action. Nine enemy aircraft were shot down by our gunners. The following men were awarded the Order of the Purple Heart: Major Robert E. Applegate, 1st Lt. John F. Specht, F/O Robt B. Stewart, S/Sgt. Don K. Holliday, Sgt. Peter N. Codine, and Sgt. Joseph S. Curtin. The following officers and EM were recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross: Major Robt E. Applegate, 1st Lt. John F. Specht, 1st Lt. Marion C. Mixson, S/Sgt. Everett D. McGuagh, Sgt. Delmar Day, Jr., Sgt. Jack Aikon, Sgt. Albert S. Dawes, and Sgt. Joseph S. Curtin.

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EXTRACTS FROM THE SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL

April 1. Crews were briefed for their first combat mission. The mission was called off as the weather closed in. The target was to be a RR bridge at Ancona, Italy. EM of the organization were paid.

April 2. Mission #1 was flown today. The target was the Marshalling Yards, Bihac, Yugoslavia. Take off was approximately 0729. All planes returned safely at approximately 1312. S/Sgt. D. Holliday got some glass fragments lodged in his eye when a frag bomb exploded just after leaving the bomb racks. He was sent to the Field Hospital at Cerignola and recommended for the Order of the Purple Heart.

April 3. Mission #2 was flown to the Drnis Marshalling Yards in Yugoslavia. Take off time was approximately 0729. All planes returned at 1205. 1st Lt. Nixon was appointed to the board for recommending NCO's of the first two grades. One EM was transferred from the 34th Field Hospital Cerignola to the Base Hospital at Bari, Italy.

April 4. Fifty-five EM were promoted as follows: nine Sgt's to S/Sgt.; twenty-six Cpl's to Sgt; fifteen Pfc's to Cpl; T/Sgt's to M/Sgt; and one S/Sgt. To T/Sgt. One EM from Hospital at Cerignola to duty. Two civilian employees attached to the Squadron for rations.

April 5. Mission #3 was flown to the Marshalling Yards at Nis, Yugoslavia. Take off was approximately 1107, and all our planes returned safely at approximately 1625.

April 6. Mission #4 was flown to the ME 110 assembly plant at Zagreb, Yugoslavia. The planes took off at approximately 1243. All but one plane returned at approximately 1824. The missing plane was piloted by 1st Lt. Specht and Major Applegate. A frag bomb exploded in the ship. Lt. Sullivan, Lt. Milne, and Sgt. Marszelkiewicz bailed out over Yugoslavia. The rest of the crew bailed out in the vicinity of Foggia and our own base. Some of the men suffered minor injuries. S/Sgt. McGuagh, Engineer, was recommended for the DFC. The 765th destroyed its first enemy plane today when a ME 109 was shot down by S/Sgt. M. D. Williams of Crew #35. One ship landed with its nose wheel up and scraped the nose. Lt. Weem's hydraulic system was shot away and he was forced to run his plane off the taxi strip in order to stop it. One EM from duty to Field Hospital at Cerignola, Italy.

April 7. Mission #5 was flown to the Marshalling Yards at Ferrara, Italy. Take off was 1018 and all planes returned safe at approximately 1604. The group was escorted by P-38 fighters. Three EM from duty to DS at 766th Bomb Squadron.

April 8. Crews were briefed for their sixth mission. The mission was called off because of bad weather. One EM released from assignment and transferred to the General Hospital at Bari. One Sgt was reduced to the grade of Private.

April 9. Crews were briefed for mission #6; the M/Y's at Zagreb, Yugoslavia. However bad weather forced the mission to be called off. Easter Sunrise Services were held by the Group Chaplain at 0600 in the Group Headquarters area. Lt. Sullivan, Lt. Milne, and Sgt. Marszalkiewicz were carried on the morning report as follows: "From MIA to dropped from the rolls." Two EM from duty to DS with Headquarters Detachment, 461st Bomb Group. One EM from duty to Hospital at Cerignola.

April 10. Rain kept all planes grounded today. Combat crews were briefed at 2000 on "Escape Procedure" at Group Headquarters.

April 11. Crews were again briefed for their sixth mission. The weather closed in and the mission was called off.

April 12. The combat crews flew Mission #6 today. The target was the M/Y's at Zagreb, Yugoslavia. All planes returned safe at approximately 1500. Photos showed over 150 hits in the target area.

April 13. Mission #7 was flown to the ME-110 assembly plant at Budapest, Hungary. Take off time was approximately 0905 and all of our planes returned safe at approximately 1615. Three of our gunners shot down three enemy planes. Sgt. Earl Blalock, who was on DS with the 766th, was shot down with one of the 766th planes. He has been carried on the morning report as MIA. One EM from duty to Hospital at Cerignola. One EM from Hospital at Cerignola to duty. One EM from DS at Foggia to duty. The following named officers were appointed Summary Courts Officers for the estates of men Missing in Action, in addition to their other duties: 2nd Lt. Rapp, 2nd Lt. Raymond, and 2nd Lt. Lightbody.

April 14. Crews were briefed for their eighth bombing mission. The weather closed in and the mission was called off.

April 15. Mission #8 was flown to the M/Y's at Bucharest, Romania. Take off time was 0826 and all of our ships returned at 1606. Due to bad weather over the target the bombardiers had to bomb on their ETA. One EM from duty to the Hospital at Cerignola, Italy.

April 16. Mission #9 was flown today. Take off time was 0720. Due to bad weather some of the planes returned at 1100. The target was Brasov, Romania. Because of bad weather over Brasov the secondary target, Belgrade, Yugoslavia was bombed. The rest of our planes returned at approximately 1315. Sgt. Blalock was carried on the morning

report as: from missing in action to dropped from the rolls. Six enlisted men returned to duty from DS, AAB Hammer Field, California.

April 17. Crews were briefed for Mission #10. All the planes returned. The mission was not completed because of bad weather. The bombs were jettisoned in the Adriatic Sea. 2nd Lt. Gold was released from his assignment to this Squadron and transferred to the 26th General Hospital at Bari.

April 18. There was no mission today. One EM from duty to DS at Headquarters, 461st Bomb Group. 2nd Lt. W. M. Platt, Assistant Squadron Intelligence Officer, was sent to the 461st Bomb Group S-2 on Detached Service. Lt Platt replaced one of the Group S-2 Officers who is missing in action. Ten EM from DS, AAB Hammer Field, California, to duty.

April 19. No mission was flown today. One was proposed but was called off. One EM went from duty to D.S. with Signal Hq & Hq Company, XII Fighter command for approximately thirty days. One EM from DS at Hammer Field, Calif to DS with Hq Detachment 461st Bomb Group. Three civilian employees were attached to this organization for rations only. Twelve officers and 18 EM were released from attached for rations and quarters. Twelve officers and 17 EM were assigned to this organization from the XV Air Force.

April 20. Mission #11 was flown today. The target was Ferrara M/Y's. Due to cloudiness over the target the group continued on to the secondary target, Taglimento/Casara, Italy and bombed it. Take off time was approximately 0958 and all ships returned safely at approximately 1600. Photograph showed the target was well hit by our bombardiers.

April 21. Crews were briefed for the 765th's combat mission #12. The target was Bucharest, Romania. Take off time was 0840. All planes returned safely at 1630. Due to bad weather the target could not be seen and the bombs were jettisoned in the Adriatic Sea. Sgt. E. P. Ward, a tail gunner, shot down one ME 109.

April 22. No missions were flown today.

April 23. Today the Squadron flew Mission #13. Take off time was 1016. All planes returned safely at 1740. The target was Bad Veslau A/D, Austria. Photographs taken on the mission showed complete coverage of the target. One EM from DS at XII Fighter Command. One EM from duty to Hospital at Cerignola. Three of our gunners shot down three enemy planes.

April 24. The 14th mission was flown today to the M/Y's at Bucharest, Romania. Take off time was 0832. All but one of our planes returned safely. The missing ship was, "Big Stinky." The ship was crewed as follows:

1st Lt. F. D. Nixon (Pilot)
2nd Lt. R. Lindgren (Co-Pilot)
S/Sgt. J. W. Wick (Eng)

2nd Lt. S. A. West (Bomb)
2nd Lt. C. D. Spangler (Nav)
Sgt. J. C. Brlansky (RO)

Sgt. L. E. Slayton (AEG)
Sgt. E. P. Ward (Tail Gnr.)

Sgt. J. Householder (Gnr.)
S/Sgt. C. M. Martin, Jr. (ARO)

The ship was last seen when it fell out over the target with #4 engine on fire. Sgt. Massie of Crew #39 shot down one ME 109. At 1900 the Enlisted Men's Service Club was opened. Music was supplied by the dance orchestra from the 456th Bomb Group. Major Applegate, Major Rainen, Lt. Amoroso, and Lt. Campo were guests at the opening.

April 25. Eight EM were reduced to the grade of Private. Three EM were promoted from the grade of Private to Corporal. Crews were briefed for a mission but were kept grounded because of the bad weather.

April 26. One EM from duty to General Hospital at Bari. One EM from duty to the Field Hospital at Cerignola, Italy.

April 27. One EM from duty to hospital at Cerignola. Crew #30 was carried on the morning report: from MIA to dropped from the rolls.

April 28. One EM transferred to the 764th. One Sgt. Reduced to the grade of private. It rained mostly all day.

April 29. Mission #15 was flown today. The target was the harbor at Toulon, France. Take off time was approximately 0735. All our ships returned at approximately 1510. They had a lot of trouble bombing the target because of German smoke screens.

April 30. The final mission for the month of April, #16, was flown today. The target was the M/Y's at Alessandria, Italy. Take off time was approximately 0830. All our planes returned safely at 1600.