

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

WFF/jdk

APO 520, NY, NY
31 January 1945

SUMMARY OF THE SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY

During January, the squadron did all in its power to supplement its previous destruction of vital German installations, but the weather proved itself too formidable a foe. On twenty-four days out of the month, the operations flight board contained a schedule for a planned mission against the Axis. Yet, on only seven occasions did the big Liberators take to the sky; and on one of these complete cloud coverage of the target forced them to return the bombs to the base. Of the six times that explosives were released over enemy territory, twice it was necessary to attack an alternate in lieu of the primary objective. During the thirty-one day period, thirty-five squadron aircraft were over enemy targets to drop a total of sixty-two tons of bombs. Of the six objectives attacked, three were in Austria, two in Italy, and one in Yugoslavia. On the many days on which combat flying was impossible, training flights were scheduled whenever local weather conditions permitted. New crews were oriented with the terrain surrounding the field and were checked out on combat procedure.

January 20th was an ill-fated day for the squadron. Lt. Yancy's ship was seen to blow up over Linz, Austria and no men were observed parachuting from the stricken aircraft. Also, on that date, Lt. McMillen ran out of fuel while circling the field for a landing and crashed near the base. His navigator, F/O Tenner, suffered two broken legs and internal injuries, and several days later died at the 34th Field Hospital.

Seven new combat crews were assigned to the organization during January, swelling the total number of aerial teams to twenty-nine. Lt. Hughes' complete crew and part of Lt. Marshall's crew, dropped from the rolls as MIA, returned to the squadron from Yugoslavia. Five flying officers and eight aircrew enlisted men, having completed their tour of duty in this theater, began their journey to the zone of the interior.

Four new silver Liberators filled vacancies on squadron ~~xxxxxxx~~ during the month. This more than compensated for the two airplanes lost on January 20th.

In addition to the new combat crews, two officers and four enlisted men joined the squadron in January. Capt. Thackston came down from the 49th Bomb Wing to assume the duties of Assistant Operations Officer, and Lt. Williams augmented the list of "mickey operators". First Sergeant Seaton was assigned from Group Headquarters to take over the duties of number one enlisted man of the organization. Pvt. Bonaccorso, a truck driver, and Pvt. Maddaway, a clerk typist, also made their home with the 765th Bombardment Squadron. S/Sgt. Hines, a gunnery instructor, was transferred into the squadron and placed on Detached Service with Group Headquarters.

On the other side of the ledger, six injured aircrew members and the ailing ground echelon men were transferred to the detachment of Patients during the month. Capt. Pogue, squadron

engineering officer, was placed on duty with Group Headquarters; and Lt. Blake, having completed his thirty-five missions, volunteered for service with the Mediterranean Air Transport Service. M/Sgt. Nyquist, squadron technical inspector, became the first man in the organization to be returned to the United States on rotation. He had many months of overseas service prior to his assignment to the squadron. S/Sgt. Buelette, a gunnery instructor, was transferred to the 766th Bombardment Squadron.

The excellent work of numerous individuals in the squadron was recognized in the form of promotions during the month. Squadron Commander, Robert E. Baker, received his majority; Lts. Platt, Cooper and Pogue “made” captain; Lts. Panagiotopoulos, Welton and Whalen donned silver bars in place of gold; F/O St. John and 1st/Sgt. Pegg were commissioned as 2nd Lts.; S/Sgts. Liebhart and Van Nostrand passed the board and were awarded a second “rocker”; seven sergeants became “first three graders”; eleven corporals added another stripe; and four privates earned their first chevron. One corporal was reduced to the grade of private during January for insubordination.

Several changes in the duties of staff officers occurred during the month. Lt. Whitlock became engineering officer of the squadron. Newly commissioned Lt. Pegg was assigned duty as supply officer and transport officer, relieving Lt. Whitlock of the former responsibility and Lt. Lanigan of the latter. Lt. Taylor became mess officer following the transfer of Lt. Tyson to the Detachment of Patients.

Improvements to the squadron area were undertaken at an even increasing rate. The orderly room moved into a tuffi block building across from the officers’ club. The dispensary opened for business in renovated offices where the original welding shop was located. The officers’ club took over the old dispensary and made it into a clock room and, at the same time, made a new entrance to the club. Work was continued on the new mess hall for the enlisted men. Sidewalks made from chipped tuffi block were built throughout the tent areas of the squadron.

The supply room issued hoods to the new type field jacket to the men, and those entitled to them received a cluster to the unit citation ribbon.

Various phases of ground training took place during January. Major Baker oriented the new crews with combat procedure and acquainted them with squadron policies. Intelligence lectures were delivered by Capt. Platt, and classes in aircraft recognition were held. Capt. Nathan conducted a series of sex information classes. Lt. Camo explained the use and care of personal equipment to the aircrews. All of the men had their gas masks checked and were marched through the gas chamber. Two aircrew officers went on detached service with the 15th Air Force Headquarters in Bari for special schooling.

Once again a barbershop was established in the squadron, this time in the enlisted men’s day room. Two Italian barbers were procured to serve both officers and enlisted men.

There was a noticeable decline in the eagerness of men to attend rest camp with the wintry weather curtailing vacation activities there. However, quotas were filled and twelve officers and eighteen enlisted men spent seven days of relaxation on the Isle of Capri. Fifteen other enlisted

men rested for a week at San Spirito. Four officers and eight enlisted men flew to Calro, Egypt for a five-day stay.

The number of hospital patients during January was very low considering that it was a month of bitter cold weather. Only two officers and six enlisted men contracted severe enough ailments to be hospitalized. Two new cases of venereal disease were reported during the month.

One enlisted man was court martialed for AWOL during the thirty-one day period. He was sentenced to six months of hard labor at the 15th Air Force Stockade.

The usual amount of entertainment existed for the men. Fourteen motion pictures were shown during January, and a USO unit gave a performance at the Group theater. The bars in both the enlisted men's and officers' clubs continued to do a big business on nights when no movie was presented.

As the second month of 1945 approached, the eyes of the squadron were centered on the Eastern front and the spectacular Russian winter offensive. As Red Army tanks and artillery traveled at a rapid pace along the road to Berlin, everyone wondered just how much longer Germany would hold out. Would the Nazis keep on fighting should Berlin fall? Would the shifting of German troops from the west to the east permit the American, British, and French forces to break through Hitler's West Wall? These were the questions in the minds of all as January came to an end, and interest in news sheets and radio broadcasts of the latest developments in the war reached a new high.

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EXTRACTS FROM THE SQUADRON HISTORY FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY

January 1. A mission was scheduled for this date but was cancelled during the night because of the adverse weather prevailing. Snow fell upon the squadron area for the first time of the winter. A corporal was reduced to the grade of private for insubordination. Eighteen enlisted men received promotions; seven from corporal to sergeant; seven from sergeant to staff sergeant, and four from private to private first class.

January 2. No mission was scheduled for this date. One ground echelon enlisted man was transferred from the squadron to the Detachment of Patients. Two new combat crews joined the organization.

January 3. Another stand down took place on this date because of unflyable weather. Four officers and nine enlisted men departed for rest camp.

January 4. Six squadron airplanes departed from Torretta Field with a marshalling yard at Trento, Italy as their objective. One ship was forced to return early, and the rest went on to bomb the target. Little enemy opposition was encountered, but observed results were considered poor. Capt. Nathan commenced a series of lectures on sex hygiene. F/O St. John was commissioned a second lieutenant. One flying officer, ill with tuberculosis, was transferred to the Detachment of Patients.

January 5. Marshalling yards at Zagreb, Yugoslavia were scheduled to receive a pounding from the squadron Liberators on this date, but the bad weather over the target forced the airplanes to return the bombs to the base. Three flying officers and eight air crew enlisted men, having completed 35 sorties against the Nazis, were not in the least bit sorry to depart from the mud covered squadron area en route to the United States. Lt. Blake left for 60 days detached service with the Mediterranean Air Transport Service.

January 6. No combat mission was scheduled for this date. Lts. Marshall and Jarnagin, MIA while returning from Linz, Austria on December 15th, rejoined the squadron. Some men of their crew are safe in Yugoslavia. Lt. Woodruff and his crew plus T/Sgt. Yeager and Sgt. Kramer flew to Cairo, Egypt for a five-day stay. Three new combat crews were assigned to the squadron.

January 7. For the second consecutive day, a stand down was scheduled. American whiskey was rationed out to the officers.

January 8. Seven squadron airplanes took off shortly after 0830 en route to bomb the main marshalling yard at Linz, Austria. Extremely adverse weather prevented the planes from dropping their explosives on the primary objective. The same situation existed at the first

alternate. They then proceeded to the second alternate target, Klagenfurt marshalling yard in Austria, where the bombers discharged their loads on the signal of the lead pathfinder ship. Results could not be observed. Three squadron airplanes landed on emergency fields in northern Italy because of fuel shortage. They remained there overnight. Capt. Thackston joined the squadron from the 49th Bomb Wing where he had been serving as assistant A-3 officer. Four officers and nine enlisted men departed for rest camp.

January 9. The crews were standing by their ships all set to take off on a second attempt to obliterate the marshalling yard at Linz, Austria, when the stand down order came in. Training flights scheduled for later in the day had to be cancelled when bad weather closed the field. First Sgt. John Pegg was commissioned a second lieutenant and assumed the duties of supply officer and transportation officer.

January 10. No combat mission was scheduled for this date. Heavy snow fell during the greater part of the day and night, covering the squadron area with a carpet of white.

January 11. For the second consecutive day no bombing mission against the Nazis was flown. A physical inspection of all personnel was held in the enlisted men's mess hall. The sun came out and the snow began to melt. Rushing against time to enjoy some winter sport while it lasted, numerous snow battles were waged throughout the area. S/Sgt. Buelette, a gunnery instructor, was transferred to the 766th Bomb Sq.

January 12. This date was an uneventful one for the 765th Bomb Sq. As usual the men scheduled to fly arose at early reveille, were briefed, went down to their ships and were all ready to take off when the mission was cancelled. For the third consecutive day not a single letter was received by the squadron mailroom.

January 13. Once again the scheduled mission was cancelled before any aircraft took to the sky. S/Sgt. Hines, a gunnery instructor, was assigned to the squadron and placed on Detached Service with Group Headquarters. Pvt. Bonaccorso joined the organization and was assigned duty as a truck driver.

January 14. For the third day straight, crews briefed to drop explosives on German installations were unable to carry out their mission because of adverse weather. The stand down order came in before any aircraft left the ground. Engineering officer, Pogue, and Operations Officer, Copper, received congratulations upon their promotions to the rank of captain.

January 15. After six days of staying on the ground, squadron Liberators succeeded in carrying out an attack on enemy installations. The scheduled plan called for the bombardment of the south station at Vienna, Austria, but enroute all three pathfinder ships suffered malfunctions of the special equipment contained therein and the formation was forced to turn back. In place of Vienna, the Treviso marshalling yard in northern Italy served as the objective for the tons of explosives. Several direct hits were scored on the marshalling yard and two popular shops there. M/Sgt. Liebrant and Van Norstrand, having appeared before the board, were promoted to technical sergeants. Four officers and nine enlisted men departed for rest camp. The gunner, seriously injured during a crash landing while returning from Blechhammer, Germany on December 17th, was transferred to the Detachment of Patients. The enlisted man was transferred

to Group Headquarters. The Medical Department moved into its new offices located where the original welding shop was situated. The old dispensary was remodeled into a cloakroom for officer's club.

January 16. The squadron reverted once again to what was getting to be a regular routine. Reveille, breakfast, briefing, transportation to the line, and then a stand down. A barber shop for both officers and enlisted men was set up in the enlisted men's day room with two Italian barbers performing the tonsorial work.

January 17. A combat mission was originally scheduled for this date, but the inclement weather caused a stand down to be called. The orderly room moved into new quarters in the tufi block building across from the entrance to the officers' club. One flying officer, having completed his "35" in this theater, departed en route to the United States. One enlisted man was dropped from the morning report as AWOL.

January 18. For the second consecutive day, rainy weather resulted in the scheduled mission being cancelled. Another gunner injured during the crash landing was transferred to the Detachment of Patients.

January 19. Squadron bombardiers unleashed explosives on a road bridge at Brod, Yugoslavia with good results. Flak was slight, but accurate.

January 20. Mission #164 was flown on this date. The target was the marshalling yard at Linz, Austria. Seven planes took off as the squadron's quota for the attack unit, but one ship aborted and returned to the base. Plane #35, piloted by Lt. Yancy was seen to blow up over the target. Lt. McMillen was forced to make a forced landing in an open field near the base due to shortage of fuel. His plane was demolished and his navigator was injured. Result photos showed a good concentration of bombs in the target area. T/Sgt. Roy L. Seaton was transferred from Group Headquarters to the squadron to take over the duties of number one enlisted man of the organization. One gunner was transferred to the Detachment of Patients.

January 21. Another mission was scheduled for this date, but was cancelled before the planes got off the ground. Capt. Pogue, squadron engineering officer, was transferred to Group Headquarters. Lt. Hughes and his crew, MIA since November 20th over Yugoslavia, returned to the squadron. A USO show was presented on the stage of the group theater.

January 22. Again the scheduled combat mission was cancelled because of bad weather. Three enlisted men departed for San Spirito rest camp. The enlisted man reported as AWOL on January 17th returned to the organization.

January 23. A mission was scheduled ~~for this date~~, but was called off because of unflyable weather. F/O Tenner navigator who was injured when McMillen's ship crash landed near the base on January 20th, died at the 34th Field Hospital.

January 24. No mission was scheduled for this date. Another new crew was added to the squadron. Intelligence officer, Willie N. Platt, was promoted to the rank of captain. A gunner was transferred from the squadron to the Detachment of Patients.

January 25. A mission was planned for this date, but adverse weather resulted in its cancellation. Four corporals were promoted to the rank of Sergeant. A mickey operator was assigned to the squadron. M/Sgt. **XXXXXXXX**, squadron technical inspector who had many months **XXXXX** service **XXXXXXXX** before joining the 765th Bombardment Squadron, returned to the United States on rotation.

January 26. Again a mission was scheduled, but bad weather still prevailed and kept the crews on the ground. Lt. Blake was transferred to the Mediterranean Air Transport Service in Bari. Lt. Tyson, **XXXXX** officer, was transferred to 15th Air Force Headquarters.

January 27. The scheduled mission for this date was cancelled for the same old reason – bad weather. Pvt. **XXXXXXXX**, a clerk typist, was assigned to the squadron and put to work with the tech supply department. Glistening new silver bars made their appearance on the collars of three flying officers. An aircrew enlisted man was transferred to the Detachment of Patients.

January 28. Combat plans for this date once again could not be carried out because of the weather. Two flying officers were placed on Detached Service with the 15th Air Force Headquarters in Bari to receive special schooling. The enlisted man dropped as AWOL on January 17th was court martialed and sentenced to serve six months in the 15th Air Force Stockade. Rushed to completion was the project of laying sidewalks along the company streets and boarding to the individual tents.

January 29. Combat activities for this date once again could not be carried out because of the unflyable weather. One flying officer, having completed his tour of duty in this theater, departed enroute to the Unites States. Three enlisted men left for rest camp.

January 30. Once again, the weather was so bad that the combat mission could not be flown. Squadron Commanding Officer, Robert K. Baker, was notified of his promotion to the rank of Major. Lt. Baran's crew became members of the squadron, bringing the total number of air crews up to twenty-nine.

January 31. Eight squadron liberators took advantage of a clear, sunny day to drop explosives on the Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery northeast of Vienna, Austria. Bombing was by pathfinder ship and results could not be observed. Two other planes took off on this mission, but were forced to return early because of engine trouble. Lt. Brady landed at Vis on the return flight and remained there overnight. Pay **XXXXXXXX** was held at 1300. Chances on a war bond raffle were sold at the end of the pay line, each chance costing one dollar. The supply room issued hoods to the new type field jackets to the men, and individuals entitled to them received a cluster to their unit citation ribbon.