

## HELLO AGAIN

Ray Marner's first few entries for the month were:

Sept. 1--More men are coming back from Africa. Rudy and Brad are back. Howard Haaf went down in Lisbon with a ship from the 389th. He has been interned there. (Note: Howard Haaf, was a ground crewman from the 68th. He had been on loan to the 389th Group. The 389th aircraft on which he was a passenger for the return from Benghazi, went down over the English Channel as it was approaching England. His body was never recovered. It is not known if they were attacked by German aircraft.)

Sept. 3--General Arnold was in Hethel to talk to the men who went to Africa.

Colonel Johnson has assumed command of the 202nd Provisional Combat Wing. It's composed of the 44th and 389th. Lt. Colonel Posey is now Group Commander.

On that same day, Joe Warth was celebrating his birthday in a prisoner of war camp in Italy. Joe remembers:

The camp at Sulmona was well organized. We lived in long huts, sleeping on the floor on paillasses. We were fed one bowl of macaroni and 100-grammes of bread each day. Fortunately, we had as much fresh water as we could drink. We also received Red Cross parcels from England, Australia, and New Zealand. I celebrated my 21st birthday in Aquilla on September 3rd, 1943, with rice wine. It was potent and a little bit went to the head!

Ray Marner's diary continued:

Sept. 4--We got in two new combat crews. They just came from the States. We've been pretty lucky so far losing only four planes and 42 men.

Capt. Benton got a card from Capt. Swanson who is a prisoner of war. Bank, Schiefelbush and Myers are prisoners also.

It is unknown who the new arrivals were.

On that same day (Sept 4th) Mark Morris wrote:

We practiced gunnery for two hours, over the Wash. Our copilot, Laudig, made first pilot and is assigned to another crew. We will miss him a lot. Lt. Graham left for home today.

Ray Marner's Sept. 5th account continues with:

Nick (Popovich) gave me a billfold that he got in Marrakech, Africa. He didn't get to go to Tel Aviv, Palestine, but did land in Malta once. Jack Edwards landed in Sicily once while returning from a raid.

Mark Morris wrote on September 6th:

This was a long day. We made a trip to Holland and two trips to France at high altitude. They were cold, miserable trips.

The trip to Holland that Mark recorded was a diversionary mission over the North Sea in an effort to support B-17's that were hitting Stuttgart and other targets of opportunity. It is known that McAtee, flying in Old Crow, went on the diversion and perhaps Bunce. Laudig was also along, accompanied by Ron Allen. The Group put up 18 aircraft, but only 15 flew the mission.

The following day, September 7th, the Old Crow was out again. This time the briefed target was the Bergen/Alkmaar Airfield near Leeuwarden, Holland. The 506th put up four ships. McAtee went, but it is unknown who else went. The 44th joined their new wing mates, the 392nd, on this attack. However, both the primary and secondary targets were covered with clouds. Along the coast of Holland a convoy of naval craft was spotted about 10 miles off the Island of Texel. The two groups dropped their bombs and bracketed the convoy.

Waino Hannuksela's records show that he was on this raid. It is not known who he went with.

The *Flint Journal* reported the action as follows:

#### LIBERATORS ATTACK CONVOY

Liberators, joining the offensive, surprised an enemy convoy off the Dutch coast and bombed it through a medium hail of antiaircraft fire. The article continued with accounts of light and medium bombers striking targets in France.

The next day, September 8th, Ray Marner wrote:

I barely caught the train from London to Norwich. While we were in London we bought a bunch of records and were talking to the owner of the shop. He spent 15 years in the States getting ideas for songs. He wrote "Red Sails In the Sunset", "South of The Border", "Harbor Lights", "Dinner For One Please James", "A Pair of Silver Wings", and others.

Our planes couldn't find their target today and bombed a convoy off the Dutch Coast. When we got to Attleboro, there was an air raid. They dropped a few bombs. Three planes were shot down. When we stopped at Cambridge, they brought the news, on the train, of Italy's surrender.

On September 9th Mark Morris wrote:

The Group split for two missions today. Ours was in the afternoon. It was scrubbed after reaching altitude. Two hours! God, I am tired!

McAtee's crew was not credited with a raid for that day.

In a recent letter Steve Bugyle asked:

Do you remember the two missions we pulled in one day over France? While I was in prison camp I met the enlisted men from the B-24 that we shot down. They were not from the 44th. Also I met one of the officers at a meeting 40 years later.

Steve probably went in the morning to the Abbeville/Drucat Airdrome in France. The 44th put up 19 aircraft that morning with 17 of them bombing the target. Heavy flak was encountered on the bomb run. Our Group bombing pattern was not good, but the 392nd had good results. The aircraft encountered difficulty on takeoff and in assembly that morning because of low-lying clouds.

John Huber was credited with the Abbeville raid. It is assumed that he was with Stevens.

Records maintained by William Novak show that he was also credited with a mission on this day. He believes that he was with Bunce.

Ray Marner wrote on September 9th:

Our planes went out early this morning to Abbeville Field, France. There was no opposition at all. This was the target the 44th first bombed one year ago. Then, two squadrons turned back and another was wiped out. The planes went out again this afternoon, but were called back. Every plane on the island was supposed to go on two missions today. 3,000 planes were in the air. They were thick all day long.

Mr. Five By Five cracked up when they landed this morning. None of the crew were hurt. The nose wheel collapsed. Mr. Five By Five's crew are all in the hospital. They are just shook up. Their ship won't fly again. They have a brand new one, Mr. Five By Five II. (Note: This former 506th crew, Rebich/Hobson, and ship were flying with the 66th when this occurred.)

It was about this time that Jack Edwards of the Old Crow crew got an idea that he thought would produce more enemy fighters shot down from his tail turret. Henry Fetherolf tells about it:

I looked after the turrets and guns on every ship that the 506th had. Jack Edwards was an Armament man and signed up for combat. He was a tail gunner. One day he came to me with a wonderful idea. I was to take all the tracer bullets out of his left gun and replace them with armor piercing incendiaries. I didn't think much of this, but he talked me into it. He said the Germans would think his left gun was not working and come in on that side and he would run up a score. Well I had the job almost done and who but McAtee stuck his head into the back hatch door. He gave me "Glory Amen" and a few other things to think about and then I spent the rest of the night putting the tracers back. On another occasion we spent a whole day taking the bottoms out of bottles so Edwards could drop them over Germany. He said they would scream and scare hell out of anybody who heard them.

The Squadron engaged in combat once again on September 15th. This morning their target is the Airdrome at Chartres in France. It is not known how many of our aircraft went. The Group was scheduled to put 22 aircraft in the air. However, assembly problems in bad weather resulted in only 12 ships continuing to the target area. There, heavy clouds precluded bombing. Chartres was found and bombed with success. There was moderate flak. The three fighters that rose to meet the bombers were shot down by gunners from the 389th.

William Novak was aboard one of the twelve 44th ships that made it to the target. It is believed that he was with Bunce.

Ollie Bowling also received operations credit for this raid. He was with Larson. This was Sortie #103 and they were gone seven hours. There was moderate flak and three enemy aircraft were observed.

Ray Marner wrote on September 15th:

Our planes went out on a mission and hit an airfield. Two of our planes were forced down on other fields, but got back later.

It was about this time that Don Chase reported:

I returned to England in mid-September after being hospitalized with sand fly fever in Marrakech, Morocco, for two weeks.

For the next three months I flew an occasional weather reconnaissance flight. I also made several rail trips to various RAF and AAF airfields throughout Southern England to help return damaged or fuel-starved B-24's back to Shipdham. They had earlier failed to make base following a mission.

New crews arrived frequently. In fact we now had more crews than planes. It was not unusual for two different crews to alternate flying missions using the same Liberator. Sometime in late October I transferred from the 506th Squadron into the 67th.

In mid-November, to my surprise, Ralph Knox limped into my Nissen hut. He had spent many weeks in hospitals recovering from shrapnel wounds. He related the grim facts of the August Foggia mission. Of the four replacement crew members flying that day, two were killed and two were prisoners. Knox was in an Italian hospital when advancing American troops secured the area. Shortly after visiting me, Knox returned to the States for further medical attention.

Perhaps I could have avoided further combat. Squadron Operations certainly didn't pressure me to fly. I was in a non-assigned state of limbo. Maybe it was guilt or pride or shame. Whatever, I decided to, or try to,

complete my tour of combat, 25 missions. But not, if I could help it, with an inexperienced crew.

My opportunity came toward mid-December when, on his 15th mission, the radio man of Lt. James Hill's crew fell, or was blown, from the foot-wide bomb bay catwalk during the bomb run and parachuted into France. This crew had survived the 90 percent Group loss suffered by the 44th in just 3 missions--Ploesti, Foggia, and Wiener Neustadt (another 30 percent loss mission)--and had several E/A credited to their gunners. Fortunately, I flew the next ten missions with Lt. Hill and his battle-experienced crew.

On September 15th Mark Morris wrote:

My furlough is signed. A.G. (Kerns) and Kief left for London. I plan on going to Scotland tomorrow.

Norm Kiefer recalls that trip to London:

We caught the early morning train from Norwich and arrived in London at about 8:30 A. M. It was about 9:00 when we went to the Red Cross Club on Piccadilly Circus. Before we left the base we had been told to go to the Club at least twice a day to see if there were any messages for us.

Sure enough, there, chalked on the Message Board were our names. There was an immediate unspoken agreement between A.G. and I. No Way!!! We Just Got Here! We Are Going To Have At Least One Day!! As we turned to leave, A.G. said, "I'll bet it's Africa again".

We started to look for a place that we could get a drink and in the afternoon we went to a movie. Then it was a few more drinks before we went back to the Red Cross Club. The message was, "Report back to base immediately." The girl at the desk said "There have been quite a few fellows that were told to go back. Something must be up." I think that it was the 11 o'clock night train that we took back to Norwich. There was a truck that was meeting every incoming train.

On the 15th of September, Lt. Frank L. Albert and crew joined the Squadron. With Lt. Albert were Lts. Meredyth F. McGeary, Edmund H. Donnelly, and Paul E. Castellotti. The enlisted personnel consisted of Sgts. Beuford K. Walker, James K.

Warvel, Lloyd J. Brady, David F. Andello, Carl C. Bolick, and Edward G. Monteleone.

On the 16th of September Mark Morris wrote:

Our furloughs are cancelled. The Adjutant gave me pass to Norwich to locate our crew. I staggered back at 1300 hours. I had found none of my crew, but did bring in Bell (J. R. Bell) and "Chippie" (Francis Chipman). They were two days overdue on their pass. I warned Loftus to come in or call McAtee.

On Sept. 18th he wrote:

The last of our crew came in at 5 this morning. We flew a B-24H to Port Morgan. It was a three hours flight. We were lost in fog for a 1/2 hour. Then it was Port Morgan to Marrakech on a C-54 transport. Lt. Laudig had taken Old Crow to wherever we were going. (Note: I now remember how upset I was that Laudig took our ship. I was afraid that we would not get it back.) Then we rode a C-47 transport for five hours to Oran, then five more hours to Tunis. Then we rode a truck to our final destination. We slept outside overnight, no quarters. Yep, it smells like Africa. (Note: I remember that Ag Kerns flew down as flight engineer for Colonel Johnson. When we arrived Ag shared with us the "goodies" that he had acquired from the survival boxes aboard the Colonel's ship.)

Entries in Ray Marner's diary also helped to close this chapter:

Sept. 16th--"Well the planes took off again. Probably they went back to Africa or to Sicily. We may follow later. Frank Adams got to go".

Sept. 17th--"Nick left today too. I hated to see him go. We were having fun. No news yet on where they went or for how long."

Mark was right. This did smell like Africa, but it was not a duplication of Libya. Here there was sand, but not the red dust kind. Here there was occasional winds, but not every day. Here there were toilet facilities, but they did not involve an open and exposed barrel. Most importantly, here we did not hear talk of practicing at low level.

It was about this time that James H. Clements arrived in

Tunis. However, just like on his trip to Africa in August, he sat around and did not get to go into combat.

The Group hadn't even gotten settled when on Sept. 21st they were assigned lead position on a raid to Leghorn in Italy. There were some abortions. The 93rd and 389th Groups also sent ships. The target was successfully attacked. There was some flak, but no 44th aircraft sustained damage.

William Novak made this mission with Bunce and Ron Allen was with Anderson.

For the Old Crow crew, the first few days were spent in housekeeping. Mark Morris wrote:

On the morning of Sept. 20th we pitched our tent. Then on Sept. 22nd, we went to Tunis and upon our return had to move our tent once again. Tent moves reminds me of the old field artillery "chinese drill". Ugh!

Edwards and Loftus also went into Tunis that day. When the evening truck returned, Edwards was aboard, but Loftus was not. Edwards was more than a little high. Upon questioning, Edwards said that he and Loftus had been drinking and quarreled. The last that he saw Loftus was in town. Loftus was sitting on the steps of some building somewhere in town.

When Loftus did not return on the morning truck from Tunis, McAtee was upset and concerned. Loftus came in on the evening truck. McAtee told him that he would have to load bombs for a couple of missions and that he could not go with us on the next mission.

Charley's punishment might seem rather childish. After all, not being able to go on a combat mission, to some people, might seem to be more of a gift than a punishment. Those people do not understand the bond formed on combat crews. Look at it this way. For a number of hours you have to wait to see if your fellow crew members will come back. If they come back, will they be all together? All the time you are thinking, "If something happens it will be my fault. If I was there maybe things would go right".

What was the reason that Loftus did not return? Well, he had a pretty wild story! He said that he tried to catch the truck back to base the day that he and Edwards quarreled. However, the truck was disappearing down the street when he got to the loading point. He was very concerned because



Tunis was off limits after dark. He sat down and tried to figure out what he should do. He fell asleep.

He was rudely awakened by some violent shaking. A Captain stood over him. The Captain wanted to know what he was doing there. Loftus told him about missing the truck. The Captain asked him if he wanted a ride out to the airfield. Naturally, Loftus agreed. He got into a Jeep and went back to sleep.

Once again he was shaken. The Captain pointed to a road and told Loftus that it would take him to the field. Loftus started walking.

It seemed to Loftus that he had walked a long way. He couldn't tell for sure. It was pitch black out, but the stars were out. Just enough light to see the road. He grew tired of walking. When he found an army tank, he crawled into it and went back to sleep.

When he woke up it was daylight. Outside he could see some mountains and he was in a battlefield. There were destroyed tanks and other equipment all around him. Then he knew that something was definitely wrong. He was a long way from where he wanted to be.

The road that he had been walking seemed to go downhill in one direction and uphill in the other. He reasoned that downhill was the direction that he should go. It was late in the afternoon that he came to a Y in the road. It seemed to him that this was where the Captain had left him off. There was a truck coming down the road. He hailed it. Yes, it was going to the base. He climbed aboard.

Norm Kiefer recalls later in the month, when we heard that we would be returning to England, a number of us decided that we ought to have some souvenirs to take back. We had heard of some battlefields in the vicinity. It was claimed that it was possible to pick up German and Italian knives and guns. We requisitioned a light truck and started to follow our directions for getting to the battlefield.

Charley Loftus was with us. Suddenly, Charley started to claim that this was the road that he had been on the night that he missed the truck from Tunis. We all said, "Yes Charley", without really believing him. It wasn't long and he advised the driver to slow down because of a sharp turn that was not protected by a guard rail. We came to the turn.

He then told us when to expect a burned out half-track. We came to it. From then on we forgot the directions and let him take us to the tank that he had slept in. He got us there! He had really been here before!

Before we left on that souvenir hunt we were warned to be careful of booby traps. The retreating German troops frequently left explosive charges that were set to go off when doors were opened to tool storage areas on tanks and 88-mm guns. These storage areas were favorite areas for keeping Luger pistols. Lugers were prize souvenirs.

On September 22, Ray Marner, back in England, wrote:

The Canadian Air Force was flying over this evening before dark. This was the first time that I'd seen their formation. They fly a spread formation much different than our close formation. You can see Lancasters for miles and miles. Probably headed for Berlin.

At least part of Charley's punishment was shared by all of the crew on the night that Charley returned, September 23rd.

Mark Morris wrote on September 24th:

I helped load bombs last night. I also helped haul them to Pisa today and unload them. There was little flak and no fighters. We had 10 hours combat time.

This was Mission #105. Once again the 44th, 93rd and 389th Groups joined forces to successfully bomb the enemy. The target was the marshalling yards and warehouses at Pisa. All of our ships returned to base.

Slough led the Squadron in A/C #201, with Anderson as Command Pilot. With Slough was Flight Officer R. J. LaCombe, and Lts. Grimes, and Shaw. Also aboard were Sgts. Harbison, Seigfeld, Kennon, I. C, Smith, Caillier, and Griffin.

McAtee flew A/C #283. With McAtee were Lts. Hannuksela, McCash, and Young. Also aboard were Sgts. M. H. Davis, Kerns, Kiefer, G. C. Stoffel, Morris, and Edwards

Bunce flew A/C #370. With Bunce were Lts. Middleton, Gray, and Fisher. Also aboard were Sgts. Klinge, T. E. Davis, Grow, Barnett, Bugyie, and A. G. Daniels.

Larson flew A/C #013. With Larson was Flight Officer

Satterlund, and Lts. A. H. Green, and H. W. Schwab. Also aboard were Sgts. Denley, Holtz, E. L. Shaw Jr., Porter, Dugan, and R. A. Orr.

Davenport flew A/C #833. With Davenport were Lts. Conner, Rispoli, and Hanson. Also aboard were Sgts. Bales, Strait, Yurick, Maloy, J. L. Wilson, and De Wald.

It appears that Olson also went in A/C #857. However it is not known if he was given credit for the mission. With Olson was Flight Officer E. W. Robert, and Lts. R. S. Allen, and H. W. Scott. Also aboard were Sgts. Goodson, Ferkauff, Hearne, R. C. Freeland, Hartney, McMEnamin, and J. R. Bell.

The author remembers that we all craned our necks trying, without success to see the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

Back in England, Ray Marner wrote on September 29th:

It is rumored that our planes will return next week. A few of our planes that were left here have been going on diversions. McKee made Captain. I sure was glad to see him get it.

During the month of September Norm Kiefer mentioned the following in letters to his wife:

"We started to rove the dial of our radio and picked up a recording of the actual announcement of the surrender of Italy as it was made in North Africa. We then picked up the German news and they played up everything that sounded good, but said nothing about Italy."..."We had a little excitement this morning when a fighter shot down a barrage balloon that had broken loose during the night. It went down in flames."..."We used to have a nice quiet little room. Now we usually have four or more fellows listening to the news and music on the radio. Sometimes we can't even lie on our own beds."..."I got into a blackjack game last night and won a pound. That balances the pound that I lost the night before. There is a poker game going on in one of the barracks with a 10-pound ante"..."By now you know that my furlough blew up. Dog-gone these flies. They are the worst yet. Everything else is either the same or a little better."..."Yesterday I took off everything but my shorts. Soaked a towel in water. Lay down on my cot with the towel over me and in real desert comfort, went to sleep."..."Beyond the field is another range of hills. In some places this range is studded with

the ancient ruins of another civilization."..."We got a swell water jug. It is earthenware and keeps the water cool. We got it while on pass in Tunis."..."I went to mass last night. You see, Father Lamb isn't with us anymore and so a priest has to come over here to say mass. He can't make it in the morning, so we have mass at 6:30. Father Lamb is now a Major and has gone to another post."

On October 1st, back in England, Lt. Raymond C. Houghtby arrived flying A/C #42-7647. (George Ramsey recalls that the last three digits of the aircraft that they flew from Lincoln, Nebraska, was 172. His combat record shows that he flew most of his combat missions in this aircraft.) (Web Todd records indicate that aircraft #42-7647 was flown to England by Houghtby. This A/C was salvaged at Shipdham on 11/11/44. His records also show that A/C #42-29172 was assigned to Houghtby.)

With Houghtby were Lts. Patrick W. Gallagher, George K. Ramsey, and William C.K. Brown. The enlisted personnel were Sgts. Wayne M. Warren, Frank P. Phillips, Ladislao C. Castro, Norman L. Dye, Thomas L. Cannon Jr., and James W. Lewis.

It was also about this time that Duffy and crew arrived. With Lt. William Duffy were Lts. John M. McCaslin Jr., Jim Callaway, and Sherman Dowsett. The enlisted personnel were Sgts. Harold Vickers, William D. Scott, Victor J. Chopp, John H. Stewart, William E. Drumel, and Richard Hershey.

On the same orders were Lts. David E. Sayler, Howard B. McCormick, Allen N. Williams Jr., and Gerald G. Gille. The enlisted personnel were Sgts. Beuford P. Fletcher, Raymond G. Moffett, Warren K. Rohrer, Garnell W. Myers, George W. Reed, and Raymond T. Murray Jr.

These men brought with them the newest model B-24. The Group also began to receive these ships to replace combat and other losses. This model had a turret in the nose and a turret in the belly. There were also radar modifications. These ships, because of the added armament, were slower than the model D that we had flown so far. This required some changes to our previous approach to formation flying when the two types of ships were in the same formation. The comfort level also went down. The front turret allowed air to circulate freely through the ship. We now had a wind tunnel.

Mark Morris commented on October 1st.

Helluva Wiener Roast. Loaded 4,000 pounds of bombs for trip to Wiener Neustadt again.

On that morning the 44th dispatched 26 ships to destroy aircraft factories. One aircraft aborted. The weather was bad, the flak intense and accurate and the fighters persistent. It is known that A/C #283, Z, flown by McAtee and A/C #857, X, flown by Olson, went. Bombing results were poor because of weather, flak and the large number of fighters in the area. The Group shot down 50 enemy aircraft. Seven of our aircraft were shot down in the target area.

Mark Morris recalls:

When I was about 15 years old I lied about my age to see the then adult movie, *Ecstasy*. Somewhere through the years I had been informed that it was filmed in the area of Wiener Neustadt, Austria. True or not, I was again reminded of that bit of trivia when we were briefed on the raid to be made there. That is not all that was familiar about the name. The *Old Crow* had been there before.

The briefing information for expected defenses was that fighters weren't expected to present much of a problem. It was mentioned in passing that there was an advanced fighter pilot training base there.

We had a new crew member. Our previous copilot now had a ship of his very own. We were introduced to his replacement, Lt. Waino Hannuksela. Otherwise, we boarded *Old Crow* with the same crew that she had hauled to and from Ploesti. This time the reduced crew of nine was due to our hatch gunner, Charley Loftus, being hospitalized with sand fly fever.

We faced an approximate 12-hour flight which was extending our fuel limit. The overland part was all at high altitude. We had four 1,000-pound bombs. During the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea, everything was routine. We crossed the European coast, climbed over the mountains in clear weather and remained at high altitude. As we neared the target area we began to receive flak. Our Group seemed to be in excellent formation, but for one exception. I noted a lone B-24 about 1,000 yards out at the 9 o'clock position. It wore the desert camouflage of the group we had been stationed near in Benghazi. I stopped scanning and tried to examine it closely. Something else was peculiar about that ship. I could

hardly believe it! The waist window hatch covers were in place and closed. Mighty comfortable huh! About then the flak, which had been well below us, increased in intensity as well as accuracy. Bursts were at our exact altitude. I caught on fast. I called McAtee on the intercom to report the presence of the alien B-24. I had no doubt that its occupants were supplying a lot of good information to the flak gunners below.

After getting the flak gunners zeroed in, the intruder peeled off and I lost sight of it. The flak was so accurate that it had simply blown the formation apart. In addition to the evasive action being taken by McAtee, we were literally being bounced by concussions.

Kiefer had not yet gone down into the bomb bay when McAtee decided that for survival's sake he had to take evasive action. He was not alone. Every ship in the formation started to rise and fall, but not in unison. They were seesawing up and down. At any one point in time, you were beside someone that was going in the opposite direction.

Mark continues:

Fighters immediately appeared, well before the target, and they were all over us. They were eager to the extent of flying right through their own flak. Unbelievable! When we hit the initial point and bombardier Young took over for the straight and level bomb run, we were sitting ducks. I and all other gunners were firing a lot of rounds. There must have been 30 fighters interested in just us. They would climb above the flak, stabilize to pick a target and then come diving down on us.

Sometime shortly after bomb release, I was suddenly pinned to the ceiling. At the time my thoughts were that the ship or someone at the controls had been badly hit. I was on my side against the ceiling. There was my parachute lying alongside me, also pinned to the ceiling. I reached it and just got a good grasp on it when bang! I hit the floor. I was on my knees. I hit so hard that even with the heavy clothing, I dented the catwalk.

In the bomb bay, the author made a command decision during the violent evasive action. The bomb bay is no place for me! I was standing between McAtee and Hannuksela when a fighter commenced a 12 o'clock high attack. He came in close. McAtee threw the ship into a violent dive in order to avoid a

head on collision.

My thought was, "Here we go again! This is Kiel revisited". This time I was better prepared. I had put on my chute during the evasive action and I was standing where I could see the dive start. I hung on to the armor plating as tightly as I could. Nonetheless, I too was quickly lodged on the ceiling and then slammed to the floor.

Back in the waist, Mark Morris:

Quickly scrambled up and took a quick look around. Kerns, right waist gunner, was also getting up. Jack Edwards, in the tail turret, seemed okay and was pawing furiously at his guns. Surprise, we were still in the air and in a more or less normal flying attitude.

I turned my attention once more to fighting. Big Problem! My gun was jammed! I got it cleared, but our ammunition was all over the floor. Kerns and I broke some of the ammunition into short belts of approximately 20 rounds per belt. They didn't feed well and caught on the waist ledge during each short burst. I couldn't see any other B-24 even near. Not a nice feeling for a bomber crewman. We were all alone after the dive. Any ships still flying had apparently been spread all over the sky. More fighters appeared, but no guns seemed to be firing from our ship. Apparently all positions had the same problem of scrambled ammunition. I knew that must be corrected if we were to have any chance of survival.

Kerns was rummaging around on the floor for ammunition. At least we waist gunners could get at our ammunition. The other positions had a greater problem. The ammunition storage for each waist window was a box fabricated from wood. It was about 30 inches long, 24 inches high and just wide enough for the caliber-50 round to lie in. The ammunition was routed through a metal chute attached between this box and the side of the gun. The box was permanently mounted on the side of the ship about a foot from the waist window and just overhead. There was barely room to get one's head between the curved ceiling and the box. I pushed most of the hanging ammunition back into position. Then I placed my foot on the ledge of the waist window and heaved myself up. There I hung, precariously balanced, one foot practically out the window of a maneuvering B-24, hanging on for dear life, out of breath and half in panic, with oxygen hoses, communication cords,

and other stuff interfering. Chinning myself on the box, I reached in, feeling for the double-link end. We had been taught that the ammunition would not feed unless the double-link end was fed first. I turned all the ammunition over at least three times while searching for the double-link end. After being tossed off the ledge more than once and still not finding it, I was no longer only half in panic.

Remembering what the back of the ship looked like after the dive at Kiel, I (Kiefer) told McAtee that I was going to check the bomb bay and then go to the back of the ship. The bomb bay was clear of bombs and the doors were fully closed.

When I opened the rear bomb bay door I saw Kerns still laying ammunition into the head high wooden box. The individual ammunition boxes were thrown all over. Mark was doing something to his gun. The tail guns coughed a couple of times and then stopped. I don't think that the fellows were at all aware that I was there. Seeing that there were no injuries, I returned to the flight deck.

Mark was still having trouble:

After another unsuccessful try, I decided enough of the technicalities. Instead, I just grabbed a single-link end, fed it down the chute anyway and charged the gun. I had to open the cover and physically place a starting round in the gun to get it charged, but when I pulled the trigger it worked.

Just in time! Three more Me-109's had queued up. They sat just above us at 9 o'clock high and 500 yards out. I called Mike Davis, top turret for help. Hearing no response I called again with greater urgency. Still no response and no gunfire. I began berating "Mike get those fighters, Mike can't you see them, Shoot him Mike shoot!". As I took a quick glance around to Kerns I noticed one of my communications cords hung on the ammunition box. I grabbed and reconnected it. As I did so, I heard Joe Young saying, "Whoever that is screaming into the mike, knock it off.". Now I knew which cord that was. I had a mike, but no earphone. Sorry!

The last three Me-109's that had queued up pulled slightly ahead of our left wing tip, turned in and began raking us. I resumed praying and firing, long bursts of both. They came diving in nose to tail, one right behind the other.



They were so close that they were no more than 50 yards out when they went under and disappeared from my sight. Their formation was so tight that at one point all three were in my ring sight.

I recall accepting the fact that we were going down and it was just a matter of going down fighting. I promised that if God would just get us out, I would make no claims of taking a life. Well maybe I am renegeing a little. Forgive me! Not those pilot's lives maybe, but I'm sure I knocked hell out of those three Me-109's.

Luckily that was the last of the direct attacks on *Old Crow*. We had been under attack for a long time. The entire attack force (later estimated to be 100) must have been about out of ammunition, if not fuel, having attacked before, during, and long after the target.

As I again looked rearward, I became aware that a good portion of the left vertical stabilizer was completely gone. I had been so busy that I will never know just when that happened.

Up on the flight deck McAtee knew when it happened. Control of the aircraft became extremely difficult. He decided to try adjusting the trim tabs. It worked! Maybe we will make it!

Mark Morris continued:

Either flak or fighters had knocked off part of our tail. As things began to get quiet, we went about the task of assessing damage. Again all of the crew was okay. *Old Crow*, however showed signs of wear. In addition to the missing tail feathers, she had a lot of holes and she had taken up smoking. I believe that the gunners on our ship accounted for four enemy aircraft shot down (not including the three that I did not claim).

Olson, flying in X, was under heavy attack. Approximately 125-to-150 enemy aircraft made vicious attacks on the 506th formation. X was hit individually by five Me-109's with nose and passing attacks, very close. Olson dropped his bombs and peeled off to the right and was still pursued by the five fighters. Writing to Will Lundy, Steve Bugyie, ball turret gunner, relates:

I did not normally belong to Olson's crew. I was flying

as a spare gunner for that day only. I was the regular assistant engineer with Bunce.

I think that I may have been the last one alive to depart the airplane and possibly the first to hit the ground. I delayed pulling my rip cord until the last minute and this, according to Vic McMenamin, tail gunner, may have saved my life. Vic was adjusting his harness when I came out of the ball turret. He accidentally dropped my chest pack chute down into the ball turret. I had to crawl back into the turret to retrieve it. Victor claims that he pulled his rip cord right away and saw the ship blow to pieces.

Due to the flames from the burning bomb bay tank, we do not know who left the plane last. Lt. Olson may have stayed with the airplane too long as no one ever saw or heard of him again. Bell and Ferkauff, the waist gunners, were already gone.

It may be that reports of only eight chutes accounts for my being reported as missing in action. After I got to the ground, my face felt like I had a bad sunburn. The fires were so intense that there was molten aluminum stuck to my face. The molten metal and exploding aircraft may account for the many holes that I had observed in my parachute.

Up in the nose of the ship, Ron Allen could see the fire in the bomb bay, and was preparing to go out through the nose wheel doors. He snapped on his chest harness chute and moved toward the doors:

Suddenly I was stopped. I had forgotten to disconnect my communications and oxygen equipment. I quickly disconnected them and jumped. The fires singed my wrists, jacket and hair. As I drifted down, I looked up to see my parachute was full of holes. I didn't know if I had pulled the rip cord too soon. The chute may have struck the ball turret guns as I went by. There was also the possibility that the turret gunner may have put a few holes in the chute since he was still in the turret and firing.

On the flight deck, Goodson and Hearne were both burned by the fires that were raging in the bomb bay when they jumped. Goodson also had quite a chunk of skin torn loose when he hit the catwalk in the bomb bay.

Flying with Stanley F. Olson (KIA) were Lts. Edgar W. Roberts (POW), Ronald S. Allen Jr. (POW), and Chester B. Hanson (POW). Enlisted personnel included Walter N. Goodson (POW), Allie T. Hearne (POW), J. R. Bell (POW), Oscar Ferkauff (POW), Steve F. Bugyie (POW), and Victor A. McMenamain (POW).

Norm Kiefer remembers there were a lot of planes, both bombers and fighters, that were burning in the target area. I don't remember ever before seeing so many burning airplanes.

At this same time, Ron Allen and Steve Bugyie were drifting to the ground in their parachutes. Ron reports:

I jumped at 11:45 when our aircraft was at 16,500 feet (we should have been at 22,000 over the target). It was 12:00 noon when I reached the ground. I was hungry, tired and disgusted. I had an escape kit, but it was not intended to be used in this area. It had Francs in it rather than money that was appropriate to this area. I had an apple that I had obtained the night before. That was all I had to eat for three days except for berries that I could scrounge. On that third day, I was in a thinly-wooded area. As I was lying down trying to figure out what to do to get across a road, I suddenly heard a stick pop behind me. When I turned to look, I saw an Austrian army doctor. I later learned that he was on leave from the Russian front.

The doctor was with his family visiting a farm. The doctor could speak English just as well as I could. He sat down and we visited a while. At one point, the doctor said, "Well, the war is going to be over in about 18 months." He then went back to rejoin the others. He didn't attempt to capture me. He told his wife about me and they discussed what to do. He brought me something to eat. He then told me that they had decided, for their own protection, to turn me in. We went to the farm house and they gave me some warmed milk. Having been brought up on a dairy farm, warm milk just did not appeal to me.

One of the farm girls said something and the doctor broke out laughing. He slapped me on the shoulder and said, "Do you know what she said?" I replied, "I have no idea." The doctor then told me, "The girl thinks you are good looking". There I was, unshaven and my clothing was filthy. What did she see?

The farmer sent a boy that was about 12 years old for the local constabulary. They put me in the local jail and all the kids from around that town hooted at me. I don't know whether or not they were making fun of me.

Steve reports:

When I came down, I landed in quite a large pine tree. In order to get down, I had to climb on the shroud lines and broke the top of the tree off. When I hit the ground I am certain that I was unconscious for a short period of time. When I woke up I hid in some evergreens. It was fairly late in the afternoon when I heard the whistles of the Germans who were out searching for me. I took off in a westerly direction heading for Switzerland. It was then that I made the rule that I would only travel at night.

When I stopped, I found a haystack and went to sleep in it. I was startled awake when I heard a blast from an 88-mm antiaircraft gun. There apparently was a German encampment near there. It was daylight, but I went back to sleep and slept most of the day. When I tried to look out of the stack I couldn't see anything. It was mostly an open field in front of me.

As soon as the sun went down I took off again. I was loose for three nights and four days. By walking and trotting, from sundown to sunup, I was able to make 190 kilometers (about 120 miles). The next to last night I was loose I couldn't find any cover so I slept in a small hay field behind a tavern. It was around noon time when I heard some rustling in the grass next to me. When I looked I saw a Water Spaniel smelling me. About fifty yards away was a German hunter, an old fellow with a shotgun. I just lay there and the hunter walked on. When night fell I took off again.

I was weak from dysentery as well as the lack of food and water. It was on the fourth day when I approached some people. I was hoping that I could get some help. I spoke to them in German. After a brief conversation, they spoke to one of the people in Hungarian, or some other language. I thought they were sending for food. Instead, they went to bring the Home Guard. The next thing I knew, I was surrounded. I was taken back to Wiener Neustadt.

On the following day, Lt. Matson, a pilot from the 389th, and I were transported to Dulag Luft. During

interrogation the Germans could hardly believe that I had gotten 120 miles away from Wiener Neustadt after being shot down.

Back on the Old Crow, which was struggling to remain airborne while retreating from Wiener Neustadt, McCash decided that the nearest landing field that we could make was Palermo. Back to Sicily once again! That was where we landed the last time we visited Wiener Neustadt. When we began to relax, we kidded McCash about wanting to go back to pick up the parachute he lost on our last visit. The author began to rack his brain. What was that frequency and call name for Palermo?

Mark Morris remembers:

We knew the approach for the field wasn't easy. The last time we ran out of gas. This time we had to make it with part of the tail missing. The last time McAtee and Laudig had taken us in banking to the right through the pass around the mountain and onto the short 2,000-foot fighter runway. It was a new approach for Hannuksela, but for the rest of us it was *deja vu*.

We were low on fuel, but this time we made it without the engines coughing. McAtee put it down safely and taxied to a stop. There were already four other damaged B-24's sitting on the field. They took us for debriefing in the operations room. I mentioned my close in shots, but remembering my fervent promise, I didn't pursue a claim.

Kerns, Kiefer and I spent the night in the ship. The rest of the crew disappeared. I slept fitfully in the back on the dented catwalk, reliving the whole nightmare over and over. This was probably the worst night of my life. That hard floor, and the dreams.

When we were there before we had been fed at the outdoor mess arrangement that served the troops occupying the airfield. They had no spare mess kits. We ate out of the large gallon cans that their rations came in. They heated the food for us and did all they could to make us feel welcome. As a joke I had packed a mess kit with other belongings in my B-4 bag in the aircraft. I bantered that only I would have one if needed. It served well now!

In the morning of the second day in Palermo, Hannuksela came out to the field to check on how we were doing.

After a while he left. We then went to eat. Afterward, we meandered across the field toward our aircraft. While swinging my mess kit in the air to dry it, I dropped my fork. Just then the wind suddenly came whistling across the field. As I stooped to retrieve my fork a large sheet of corrugated metal came flying right over my back. As I straightened, the wind noise grew to a sound like an approaching locomotive.

The three of us broke into a run for the remaining 200 yards or so and climbed into *Old Crow*. We were in the midst of a tornado. Kerns started the auxiliary power "put-put" and then closed the hatches. We clambered into the cockpit, I, into the pilot seat and Kief, into the copilot seat. We held the foot brakes on and actually flew the *Old Crow* holding her on the ground. She never lifted. The other B-24's and even a huge British Walrus were blown off the fields. The worst part of the wind only lasted about five minutes.

As it cleared we looked around us. A lot of the fighters of the black 99th Fighter Group, stationed there, had flipped over on their backs. A high stucco wall separated the field from a road and many of the aircraft that had performed a ballet past us now rested either against or halfway through the wall. One B-24 had gone into the wall backwards and rested nose down. The tail turret had ridden up over the wall. There 20 feet above the ground was the intact vertical stabilizer which later was to be reassigned to the *Old Crow*.

That night the three of us slept on the cement floor of one of the empty buildings that the ground troops offered. I did not feel like spending another night inside the aircraft. Next day, Lt. Hannuksela came out to the field. He talked to us a bit and then left. Repair of our damaged aircraft was progressing, but I knew we would be there at least another day. I dragged Kief and Kerns to downtown Palermo.

We asked for a place to sleep at the Red Cross, but there was no room. They suggested that I talk to a Colonel that had headquarters in the same building. I reported to him and made the same request. He called for a command car and had us taken to an infantry battalion that was occupying a hotel apartment complex.

The author remembers that when we went in, there was a

Sergeant at a desk in the lobby. When we told him our problem, he said he could take care of us. We followed him to an upstairs apartment. A young woman answered his knock and he started to talk to her in Italian. She started to cry and called back into the room. Little children and an old lady came to the door crying. We asked the Sergeant what was going on. He explained that he had just told them that they would have to leave so that we could have a place to sleep. The three of us objected strenuously and told him that it would only be for a night or two. Don't you have anything else?

**Mark Morris continues**

Along the hallway we had seen some clean vacant beds. We were told that they belonged to hospitalized members who wouldn't be back right away. It was agreed that we would use them.

The infantrymen welcomed us and someone gave us a bottle of "vino". After supper we sat on the curb outside, swapped stories with the infantrymen and retired early. Before we called it a night, we played with the little Italian children that lived in the apartment that they were going to give us.

The next morning we made it to breakfast with our new-found friends. Then we hitchhiked back to the airfield.

The repairs to the Old Crow's tail were completed and she was refueled. During the morning all of the crew appeared except Jack, the tail gunner.

When Mike Davis arrived his arms were full of bottles of "vino". He quickly took the wine up into the ship. Then periodically he found a reason to go into the nose. Occasionally McCash would go with him.

McAtee was very disturbed that Edwards had not turned up. He kept saying, "He better get here soon. I'll go without him!" Every once in a while he would hit his fist into the palm of the other hand and repeat, "I'll go without him."

**Mark Morris continues with how McAtee carried out his threat:**

Engine run up went OK. The weather was checked, McCash plotted the course for Tunis and flight clearance was

secured. Down the short runway, up, up and away. Old Crow was a bird again. Over the Mediterranean Sea she labored along for the few hours to Tunis.

About midway across the Sea, McAtee had not heard anything from the men in the nose of the ship and Mike Davis was off the flight deck the biggest share of the time. McAtee called McCash on the intercom and asked for a course verification. Over the intercom came a slurred response "Whoosh navigating?".

Upon landing Mark recalls:

I was surprised to discover that our Group, the 44th, had left for England. We were to follow. First though, there had to be some repairs.

Charley Loftus, now out of the hospital, sat alone in our tent in the middle of a large expanse of desert. As we approached he came rushing out, stopped short, looked perplexed, but could not quite voice his question. We hurriedly assured him that Jack was okay. Just off on a spree somewhere in Sicily.

Many years later, Henry Fetherolf was to write:

You made an emergency landing while you were in Tunis and Edwards turned up missing when it was time to come back. A short while later he showed up in a sailor suit and with a big bag of wine.

After we got back Charley told us about Olson being shot down. That wasn't the only bad news that he had. Hobson (POW) went down while flying with the 66th. Original 506th crewmen that were with him were Hyde (POW), Cutshall (POW), Tuttle (POW), Williams (KIA), and Kallal (KIA). Also with him was Popovich (POW), an original 506th ground man that had volunteered to fly.

In addition, in the 67th we lost Newbold (POW) and Zwicker (KIA). Also, one of our original aircraft, Earthquake McGoon, was buried in the mud on the beachhead at Salerno, Italy. The 506th had taken a beating at Wiener Neustadt!

Dave McCash recalls:

The October 1st run to Wiener Neustadt as the most frightening operation that we flew. Going up the Adriatic



Sea it all seemed so peaceful with the sun shining and danger so far away. Then that unmarked B-24, that flew along at our altitude off to the right at 3 o'clock, kept us company almost to the target area. I'm sure it was radioing all the altitude and air speed information to the German gunners below. The 44th was low group and "tail end Charlie", as I recall, and the 506th was low squadron in the low group. We were only about 16,000 feet. Since the ground at the target is about at 4,000 feet, we were only 12,000 feet above those nasty 88-mm antiaircraft guns. That's no altitude to be at when people with guns are mad at you. Seeing our wingmen on fire and flames coming from the bomb bay tanks was a sight I'll never forget. The chutes coming out, some of them on fire.

The rumor around the base indicated that intelligence tried to explain the large number of enemy aircraft at Wiener Neustadt and the large number of burning aircraft in the target area. They contended that the German Air Force ordered inexperienced students into the air that day. This was the reason that they were into the flak and all over. It also explained why one or two would singly attack and then they would be followed by formations of two or three. The single attacks were by the instructors who were showing their students how to do it. Thus, lots of enemy fighters, where the morning briefing said that we should have no trouble.

The planes the Germans were given to fly were directly off the assembly line, but before armor plating had been installed over the gas tanks. Thus, they were as easy to set afire as we were with our bomb bay tanks. Lots of burning aircraft.

It is likely that Lt. Parker arrived at about this time. With Richard A. Parker were Lts. David R. Simons, Edward L. Rutherford, and John E. Coffee. The enlisted personnel were Sgts. Harry D. Willey, David L. Lieck, Ivan G. Nyhoff, Joseph T. Covone, Mack Hardwick Jr., and Claude Sorrow.

While these events were occurring in Africa, the replacement crews made a diversionary flight into the North Sea on October 2nd. The number of 506th ships that participated is not known nor is it known who went.

Also on October 2nd Lt. Henry S. Borkowski and crew arrived. With Lt. Borkowski were Lts. Paul E. Blow, Henry C. Mikolajczyk, and Walter Lockett. The enlisted personnel were Sgts. Dale Graef, Henry D. Williams, James D. Redus, Donal J.

Smith, Wade R. Lemon, and Trinidad Gutierrez.

The Borkowski crew brought with them aircraft #41-29 153, Z, Greenwich. The ship was named after the pilot's home town. (Note: Operations Order #170, furnished by James Redus, indicates that this crew brought in A/C #42-63 965. Redus recalls that upon arrival in the Squadron, A/C #965 was taken for modification and the crew was given A/C #153. Most of the crew missions were flown on A/C #153.) As with other new crews, the Borkowski crew spent about a month training while their ship was being modified.

During the next couple of days Ray Marner wrote:

October 3--"Captain Slough's crew came in today and brought nothing but bad news. They were based in Tunis this time and pulled two raids over Italy. Then on Oct. 1st they pulled a raid on Wiener Neustadt near Vienna, Austria.

"The Group lost a lot of planes. Some say 10, others 16. Our squadron lost Lt. Olson's crew, including Captain Allen, and Sgts. Ferkauff, Hearne, Bell, Goodson, and McMenamin. Popovich went down on Hobson's ship. Cutshall, Tuttle, Williams, Kallal and Hyde are gone. I can hardly believe it. Captain McAtee's crew is the only original crew left in the outfit. We still have Slough and Strong who joined us in Salina, Kansas."

October 4--"Major Beam and Anderson came back with Captain Strong today. They brought news that Butler's crew landed in Sicily and is okay. Still nothing about Nick. The 66th and 67th are practically wiped out again. We sent a couple of planes out on a diversion today and lost one ship. Everything is going wrong. It was Lt. Johnston's crew which has only been with us a couple of weeks. The Group lost 2 planes altogether. They shot the wing off one Me-109 and it crashed head-on into Johnston's ship. There was no chance for survival. It sure is tough. One ship came back all shot up and had a couple of wounded men. (Will Lundy's writings indicate that these men were from the 67th Squadron)"

With Lt. Frederick V. Johnston (KIA) were Lts. John Dudrich (KIA), George N. Larson (KIA), and Adrian E. Fredericks (KIA). The enlisted personnel were Sgts. Donald Green (KIA), Eugene E. Andris (KIA), Philip D. Idlet (KIA), David Pest (KIA), Emerson D. Short (KIA), and Eugene H. Funkhouser

(KIA).

Mark Morris continues the story of the *Old Crow* crew by telling what happened on October 7th:

During inspection, the aircraft engineers at Tunis, discovered that *Old Crow* was damaged beyond repair. They found it difficult to believe that she could even have brought us home, let alone survive the stress of two landings and a take off. For one thing the left main wing spar was partially severed by a 20-mm cannon shell that had gone in, remained, and smoldered. That did however, explain one of the large holes we had noticed there.

We scrapped *Old Crow*. We got Bar U out of bone pile. By parts selection, Bar U was fixed to take us home to England.

Charles Norris was one of the ground crewmen that was left behind to ride back to England on the *Old Crow*. He recalls:

The *Old Crow* was in bad condition. It couldn't fly any more. We went to the bone yard and selected the ship that was in the best condition. We then took parts from three other ships and patched up our selected ship.

When it came time to leave, I didn't have a parachute. McAtee tried to convince me that I didn't need one. I told him that I was not climbing into that beat up imitation of an airplane without a chute. After a search, we found one and I agreed to go.

Mark Morris recalls when McAtee test hopped this aircraft.

Jack Edwards and I rode along in the back and got covered with gold dye marker from a capsule that had been broken during the previous flight. The stuff was almost impossible to get off. Finally had to go to the beach at Tunis for a swim. We had to walk and hitchhike rides on trucks. Of course knowing Jack was the world's best hitch hiker, I wasn't worried.

When we were away from our home base for extended periods of time, many of the administrative functions were carried out within the crew.

The censorship of the enlisted personnel mail for example. The pilot usually assigned this distasteful task to one of

the crew officers. Since they didn't like to do it, they often wouldn't look at the letter contents. This allowed us to get away with murder. For example, after the second Wiener Neustadt raid and our unplanned stopover in Palermo, the author wrote:

"We have been off on a little unexpected tour for the last few days."..."I was very surprised to see how contented the people in one of the occupied countries are. They are working for and with the troops that are stationed there."..."The Red Cross has a very nice building. As yet there isn't very much in the way of entertainment, but some day it should be okay."..."We didn't have any blankets or mess gear. First we went to the Red Cross. They didn't have any room for us. We then got in touch with one of the Yankee outfits and explained our situation. They sent a command car and took us to a hotel."..."A whole outfit had their quarters here. Those men didn't have very much, but they couldn't be good enough or do enough for us. They were eating very good food. The surprising thing was that there were also civilians living in the same hotel."..."There were two of the cutest little girls living in the hotel. One was three and she could jabber for minutes on end. We didn't know what she was saying, but we pretended like we knew."..."Oh yes, before I forget it, the mosquitos were bad in Sicily."

The Mark Morris diary continued:

Oct. 8--"Marrakech an eight-hours ride."

On that same day, Ray Marner, in Edinburgh, Scotland, wrote:

The 506th Squadron is one year old today. We went to a pretty classy bar (County Bar) and had a good time. All the boys were there. Harby (Harbison), Fred, Griff (Griffin), Herb, Dan (Kennon), Paul (These were probably members of Slough's crew), and etc. All together there were about a dozen of us up here.

On October 9 the 506th made a raid on Gdynia. No other information is available for the squadron. It is not known the number of aircraft nor who went.

Likewise, on October 10 there was a North Sea diversion. The intent of the mission was to clear the way for the B-17's that were to go to Munster. The 44th put up 19 aircraft.

Several enemy aircraft were sighted.

Ollie Bowling's Flight Record shows that he was on this diversion while flying with Lt. E.T. Johnson of the 67th Squadron. It was a five-hour flight for which they received operations time.

Nothing more is known regarding the 506th participants in this raid.

Ollie Bowling's records also show that he engaged in a nearly four-hour operational mission on October 13th while flying with Harold Laudig. This mission was recalled because of weather conditions. It is not known which other 506th crews were out that day.

Mark Morris wrote:

Oct. 10--Marrakech to England, eight hours flying in lots of fog. We landed at Port Morgan at 2200 hours in fog.

Oct. 11--Our pilot called in for weather and found there is a storm front. We are still grounded.

Oct 12--Port Morgan to home, Norwich.

Oct 16--Rumor: we are going to rest camp.

Norm Kiefer went to the Flight Surgeon, "Doc." Allison, and asking him if there was anything to the rumor. His answer seemed to say that we would be going. Norm then asked "Why? There isn't anything wrong with us." Captain Allison replied, "A number of people think that your crew has gone through a lot of rough moments during the last few months and it's time to take a break."

Charles Norris reports:

While we were in Africa, both in Benghazi and Tunis, we became accustomed to being close to the aircraft. It was much more convenient than in England. In England the Tech. Site was quite a distance from our living quarters. It was too far to walk at all hours of the day and night. You had to depend on transportation by truck.

Now that we are back in England, Charles Higbee and I started to look for a place to call home on the Tech Site. We found a bomb shelter that was out on the field. It was

never used. It was dry and looked as if it had possibilities.

We rigged a barrel stove with a chimney that extended through the air vent. We got some beds and other furniture and set up housekeeping.

One day, I thought that I ought to let someone in on our little secret hideaway. I took Capt. McAtee to see what we had done. I then asked him if it was okay. He said in effect that it was, but don't go around telling everybody.

On October 18 another North Sea diversion was flown. This was a feint intended to protect the B-17's which were going to Duren, Germany.

Ollie Bowling's records show that he was on this six-hour mission with James Bunce on A/C #153. Since 10-to-15 enemy aircraft were encountered, they were given credit for a combat mission.

On the same day, October 18, the Mark Morris diary reveals:

We flew to Blenheim to weigh our new ship. It weighed 5,500 pounds. I got a good look at some Mosquitoes (British aircraft). We buzzed a B-17 field on the way home. We were gone two hours and 300 miles.

Ray Marner recorded:

A bunch more of the boys came back from Africa. Maury came in and said that at least five chutes came out of Nick's ship. Maybe there is a chance yet. Frank Adams is back.

On October 20 there was a French Coast diversion flown by the 506th.

Ollie Bowling was on this two-hour flight with James Bunce. They received only operations time.

Nothing more is known about our squadron's involvement.

On October 21st Mark Morris wrote:

Our mission was scrubbed after takeoff. We flew out over the channel alone for three hours!

On October 22 Ray Marner wrote:

Knox, Jett, Hickerson and some others went 200 miles over mountains on foot when they escaped from prison camp in Italy.

Ray Whitby remembers:

We were in prison for about a month and a half. Late one afternoon we broke a hole in the prison wall and headed south. There were six men in our group. They included Joe Jett, Dale Lee, Tom Purcell, Zimmerman, an Englishman, and myself.

We walked only at night and slept in the daytime. We stayed in the mountains away from the main roads. It was cold in October, so I traded my light coveralls to the Englishman for his wool uniform. I still have that uniform.

Our diet was mainly fresh figs and after a few days, we learned never to zip up your pants or buckle your belt. If you did, there was a good chance you would smell bad the next day.

After 30 days of walking at night and watching for Germans during the day, we got through the lines at a little village west of Foggia. We had a problem convincing the Canadians that we were American P.O.W's. Later we were sent back to England and to the States by Christmas.

Dale Lee has a photo of the hole in the prison wall. He took it many years later on a visit to Italy. He remembers:

The opportunity to escape, which we had been looking for, came on the day that some important Nazi officers arrived at the Camp. There was a big commotion at the gate and everybody in the prison command seemed very excited. The Italian guards left their guard towers to see what the excitement was all about.

One of our British buddies had worked in the power house and he knew that the electric power to the high tension wires, that surrounded the camp, was turned off during the day.

In a section of the cement wall was a small area that contained brick blocks. We decided that this area would

be the best place for us to break through with our crude tools.

After breaking through the wall, we had to contend with the uncharged high tension wires and the barbed-wire entanglement that lay beyond. From then on it was run like hell.

When we could run no more, we slid down off the slope of a steep mountain road. During that slide, we caught brush, trees or whatever we could to slow our progress. Whenever, we could get a good hold, we straddled the object and leaned back against the bank in a sitting position and rested. Some of us even were able to get a little sleep in this position.

Military patrols were out looking for us all night. We could hear them on the road which was about 50 feet above us. It always bothered me that we were not able to go further that first night. However, many years later, to my surprise, I discovered that we spent that night 18 Km from the Camp. We had also gone 4,000 feet higher in the mountains.

Our plan was to head for the high mountains and thus avoid being in populated areas. We decided that each day we would observe the area we were in and then make our plans to move at night. The North Star was our point of reference for navigation. Our destination was the boot of Italy. It was the most likely for the Allied invasion and our escape. We ate what we could find in farmer's gardens.

Occasionally we were able to bargain. One night Joe Jett traded his jacket for a "hunk" of cheese. It tasted so good. We were satisfied with the trade, until morning. That is when we found the worms. Big Fat Worms! However, we were hungry enough that we weren't about to throw away the cheese. Every time that a worm appeared we eliminated the rascal with the flick of the finger.

I had a lot of bad sores on my legs. These were infected and would rupture and become reinfected. They were very painful. Joe Jett believed that garlic was a good "blood purifier" and convinced me to try it. The next garden that we found I looked for garlic. I ate three big ones, the whole thing. Usually we walked in single file and I was the lead man. However, after my "garlic feast" the



fellows changed the order of procession so that I was in the rear. I seemed to have developed an odor.

One night we stopped at a farm house. It was very well kept and looked quite prosperous. "Mama" was cooking spaghetti and it smelled so good. Suddenly I realized that "Papa" wasn't around and I didn't know when he had left. I was immediately suspicious. I told the other fellows that I was getting "the hell out of there". It was hard to leave since we were so hungry, but leave we did. After we were further up the mountain and hid, we saw "Papa" return with a number of German soldiers.

This was just one of our close calls. There was the time that we came to a railroad crossing. We had been skirting this track for two or three days. All during this time there were no trains that passed us. We decided to cross the track. Just as we started, we were surprised to hear a quick "tweet-tweet" whistle followed by a train that barreled around the corner. We flattened ourselves to the train bed bank.

Suddenly the train stopped about 50 feet in front of us and we thought that we had been spotted. The railroad cars were loaded with German soldiers. We felt better when the Germans stayed aboard and two civilians got off. The train departed. When all was quiet again, we made a quick crossing.

Sometimes we misjudged suitable hiding places. There was the time that we spotted an olive grove that looked great. It also looked great to the camouflaged German motorized troops that were encamped there. Needless to say, we beat a hasty and silent retreat.

On occasion there was humor in our efforts to avoid capture. One night we came to a high railroad bridge. We debated whether we would walk under the bridge or retrace our steps and walk around it. The latter choice would mean an additional 10-to-15 miles of walking. We watched the bridge for a day and did not see any guards. That was when we made the decision to walk under it.

We were all tense and more than one of us wondered if we would hear the shot that would kill us. As we got close to the bridge one of the fellows called a halt while he relieved himself. That is when the real Joe Jett was revealed. Joe was such a gentleman. Being cold, hungry,

tired, walking in the dark and afraid of being shot, Joe lost his "cool". He said, "Well wet your pants! You've been wet for a week"

We spent about five days in some brush on a steep hillside. Artillery shells occasionally passed over our heads. They were coming from two directions. We didn't know who was firing on whom. We did know that we were hungry and that there was a small village on the hill above us. We decided to risk coming out of hiding and trying to get something to eat.

There was a high wall that surrounded the village and it led into the middle of town. With our backs flat against the wall we worked our way into the village until we were directly under the bell tower of a church. It was a dark night and the village appeared to be deserted. There were no lights and no people. There wasn't even a stray dog or cat. It was too quiet for us! We went back to our hiding place.

There we felt trapped as well as hungry. We were so unnerved and "jumpy" that a leaf falling to the ground sounded extremely loud.

The next afternoon there was a ruckus in the village above us. Suddenly three German soldiers came running from the village directly toward our hiding place. They were very excited and were carrying parts of a machine gun as well as their side arms. About 100 yards away, they stopped and set up the machine gun. There was a quick discussion among them and then they again disassembled the gun and moved further down the valley. We had the feeling they were running away from something.

We decided to return to the village and investigate. There we learned that the three Germans had their machine gun set up the night before in the church bell tower that we had been under. No wonder it had been so quiet.

Soon afterward a Jeep manned by two Canadian soldiers arrived in the village. They were with the British Eighth Army. We approached them and had a chat. A Most Welcome Chat! They told us to pile in and they would take us to their camp.

On the way to their camp we had to climb a steep slope with the road consisting of six inches of greasy mud. We

were hanging on real good. The four-wheel drive Jeep crept slowly upward with wheels spinning and throwing mud behind us. None of this was made easy by the Germans that were lobbing shells at us. They never did get our range and the shells fell short.

Through all of this I was thinking, "My gosh, I bail out of a burning plane, escape from a prison camp, walk 200 miles through enemy territory. I have been cold and hungry for days. I have been eaten by fleas. Now I am close to the safety of Allied lines and I am going to get it while going up my last hill."

After we reached their camp there was food and coffee--real coffee--HOT COFFEE! It was WONDERFUL! We were so happy to be back with friendly troops. There was a lot of camaraderie with our new-found, friends.

Would you believe it, we were not the big event in their day. Their big hit was out there on the road. They knew something was coming so they lined their guns on the road. At the appropriate time they fired and guess what they got. They blew the guts out of a donkey. They laughed like hell about that.

A Canadian Lt. was the driver of the Jeep that had brought us in. He insisted that he would take us to a dry bed with sheets before nightfall. It must have been at least a two hour drive. It rained all the time we were in that open Jeep. I have always respected Canadians as the result of his kindness. He took us to a place that was like a Red Cross setup. We even had a cot to sleep on and it was dry. PURE LUXURY!

The next day we were taken to the nearest American camp. It was the 47th Fighter Group. They were flying P-40's. We tried to convince them to go and blast the olive grove where we had encountered the German motorized unit. They really didn't believe us. While we were there, one of the pilots happened to have one of his bombs hang up. On his way back to base he swung over the olive grove and got rid of his bomb. He stirred up a hornet's nest. After that, the 47th Group went back in force and had a "heyday".

Arrangements were made to transport us from the 47th Group in an army truck. The Commanding Officer wanted us to guard some German prisoners of war on our way back. We didn't think much of that idea. When the C.O. persisted,

I said, "Hell Yes! Give us some guns, but I doubt any of those S.O.B.'s will make it all the way." Other plans were then made. We didn't do guard duty.

We spent several days with the 101st Air-borne. They had Italian prisoners of war working in their mess hall. One day I went back for a second helping. One of the P.O.W.'s refused to serve me. I blew up! I grabbed him around the neck and we went round and round. Pots and pans were strewn all over the place. The Air-borne troops stood by watching and cheering me on. GREAT GUYS, in the 101st.

We got a flight from there to Africa. We landed close to Tunis. We had a difficult time convincing anyone of our identity or our story. We were the first escapees! They feared that we were spies. We kept bugging a Major, trying to convince him.

Finally he became irritated with us. He said, "You guys claim to have been on the Ploesti raid. I happen to have a list of the decorations that were given that day. Now I've got you!" We told him to dig it out and look. When he found our names on the list his attitude changed and our story was accepted.

When word got around that we had been on the raid, but were in prison camp when the decorations were passed out, the decision was made to give us our medals then and there.

At that time, General Doolittle was at the 12th Air Force Headquarters. His schedule was arranged so that he would have five minutes to personally make the presentation. The five minutes stretched into nearly an hour as we told our story. We asked him about his raid on Tokyo. He replied, "That was nothing compared to your raid on Ploesti". He continually came back to this subject. He was very friendly and easy to talk to. I consider him to be one of the greatest men I have known.

General Doolittle wrote our return orders to England and the States. They were marked SECRET and signed by him.

After we got to England we went to a mess hall to eat. Some Sgt. read us the riot act and refused to serve us unless we had mess kits. He sent us to the Supply Sgt. who was even more obnoxious. The Supply Room had the usual half-door with the counter-like top. Joe Jett was

the first to approach the door. The Supply Sgt. proceeded to give us "hell" for losing our mess kits. After a few minutes of his vile and berating lecture, Joe Jett leaped across the half-door. He grabbed that Sgt. by the neck and forced him back into the corner. He started to beat the Sgt.'s head against the wall with these words, "You God Damned S.O.B. When I bailed out of that damned burning plane the last thing I thought about was my mess gear". Joe Jett then became a gentleman once again and dropped "Sgt Bad Mouth" to the floor. We got our mess kits.

We returned to the 8th Air Force Headquarters in London for interrogation. Afterward, we were sent to a number of military camps to speak to the troops about our experiences, particularly about our time behind enemy lines. Then it was back to the 44th in Shipdham before being shipped back home to the States.

In retrospect I am so thankful for the many outstanding people that I was commanded by, that I flew with, that I walked across Italy with, and some of those that I encountered along the way. Last, but not least, my family and friends that nurtured me through some trying moments after I returned home.

#### Joe Warth tells about his escape:

We knew we would be moved to Germany when the Allies invaded Southern Italy so everyone was thinking of one thing: escape. It was debated for days. In the mass of confusion a lucky chance came up. One morning our Italian guards, hearing that the British Army was coming, left the gates open and scurried around. Planes had flown over the camp the day before. There was no way to identify the camp. In the confusion a few of us managed to escape. We spent a day or two together and then decided that it would be better to split up into smaller groups. That way it would be easier to live off the land and to avoid detection.

I took off with Barry Shillito, a British commando. None of us "Yanks" had been trained in escape and evasion procedures and I could think of no one better equipped for survival than the commando. (All six of my crew got out of Aquilla [the prison camp], but curiously, only about ten British got out.)

Shillito and I roamed around on our "lone" for several days. Then, by chance we ran into some Italian partisans who surprisingly, were pleased to see us. They took us in and took good care of us. They had been given orders to aid any Allied fliers that they happened to meet. The leader had been one of Al Capone's mobsters and had lived in Chicago until he was deported. He was willing to do anything to help an American get away to further his cause to return to America after the war. He took us down the mountains to Castellini Sul Berferno (Castle by the River Perferno).

By this time I was pretty sick with malaria, yellow jaundice and dysentery. My commando friend knew it was time to get some rest because I was down to under 100-pounds. I could not walk a hundred yards without having to stop. Arrangements were made by the leader for me to be taken to an Italian home. I must have passed out and was out of it for a day and a night. This upset the family I was with. They were afraid to get a doctor for me since the Germans would be promptly notified.

I must have survived with their attention since I awoke and found that I was in a bed with beautiful white sheets and pillows. It was a small room and there were several Italian women watching me. They were crying and seemed very upset as they were certain that I was dying. I too wasn't certain that I wasn't dead and in heaven.

When we all realized that I was alive, the women screamed, "He's alive not morte". One of them went to the door to let in several young girls who carried baskets of flowers and bottles of wine. That is when I knew that I was in heaven. I stayed with them several days. Eventually I was able to get out of bed and roam around the house. I am certain that I could have received no finer care anywhere. I shall always remember my Italian family.

During my recuperation period I joined in the daily household activities. I learned how to prepare pasta, dry tomatoes and to use scraps of food to feed a family and the passerby in their lives.

I stayed for more than a week and the rest restored my health. The Germans came to the house every morning at 8 o'clock and issued their demands for food rations. The Germans did not bring their own food in from Germany--they got it from the land they lived on. Every afternoon at

about 5 o'clock a German truck would call to pick up the food.

Several people in the village knew I was staying at the house. My British friend had left several days earlier. One of the Italians, who was evidently a Fascist, decided it was time to report me to the authorities.

The Germans returned late one night and started a house-to-house search. Word spread within moments of the Germans arrival at one end of the town. One of the girls in the family I was staying with guided me out the other end of town. We went down the mountain to a small farm several miles away. It was a heavily-wooded area. I was pointed in the right direction and proceeded alone for about four days.

Years later I was told by the villagers that the German troops returned from their search for me and reported that I had been captured and executed as a spy and secret agent. After all those years, when I returned to that village, the local people were astounded to find me alive. They had a special festival for us to commemorate the occasion.

After being left alone, I finally reached a little valley. On one side the Germans were shelling the British on the other, and vice versa. I stayed in the bottom of the valley and waited for the shelling to stop. At the end of the battle I went up, to what I hoped was the British side.

I entered a small village at the same time as a British patrol. They were engaged in a house-to-house battle with the Germans. The Germans held the higher buildings which they were using for observation posts. In a nearby church steeple was a German machine gun crew. I saw it disappear in one blast.

This ragged American approached the advancing "Desert Rat" patrol from the British 8th Army as it was engaged in a life and death struggle. I was carrying a couple of raw eggs for my defense. Nevertheless, the Canadians were a very welcome sight to a 21 year-old kid from Kentucky.

The British patrol was surprised to see me, but luckily they were able to see that I was on their side. They shuffled me back down the street to a safer location while

they took the village. The next morning I told my story to the British Commander and their Intelligence.

From then on I was okay. I went home via Sicily and North Africa, where I was admitted into a hospital for eight days. Early in November, when I was fit to travel again, I was dispatched to the West coast of Africa where I boarded an aircraft for London. I was met by Mi6 (British intelligence) and underwent heavy interrogation for two days. They checked my story repeatedly because at this stage in the war very few prisoners of war had gotten back to England. The 44th Bomb Group at Shipdham was contacted to verify that I was a bona fide airman. Colonel Leon Johnson sent a driver to London to pick me up. I stayed at Shipdham for one day and then returned to London for transportation back to the USA. I was home by Christmas, arriving in Miami on the night of December 25th.

Robert Mundell was another escapee, but he did not go at the same time as the members of the Austin crew:

We were in the prison camp about three weeks when the Italians surrendered. The gate was open and there were no guards around. We fled into the hills. I spent the first night with "Slats". (I had forgiven him for ruining the oatmeal.)

The next day we decided it was safe to walk back down to the prison. There was no sign of any guards and a lot of Italian civilians were coming in and looting food from the Red Cross building. I picked up a few things, including a mess kit and a can of pudding. I spent most of the day beating the can against some rocks to get it open.

The Italian mayor of the town below the prison had said that we could all stay around until we were rescued if we wanted, but "Slats" and I decided to take our chances elsewhere.

During our time in prison, "Slats" had talked with an Englishman named Duffy. He had been a Commando or something and "Slats" had a lot of confidence in him being able to get us out of there. Duffy and four other Englishmen invited us and another American (I can't remember his name, but he was from Kentucky) to team up with them. We did and the eight of us took off.

The English had been in prison for a while and had mess



kits, matches, cigarettes and other supplies. We traveled mostly at night and ate potatoes which we dug up from the fields. Once in a while we would find some tomatoes. Sometimes we begged some bread (and occasionally figs) from the local people.

The terrain was pretty mountainous and there was a lot of brush. It seemed like every step was uphill. The English were in better shape than we were and kept up a pretty good pace. At one point I was about to ask if we could slow down a little, but "Slats" beat me to it.

One day we ran into another group of former prisoners digging potatoes in a field. I remember Tom Purcell was in the group. It was the only time we saw any of the other Americans from the prison.

One of the Italians said he could get shoes for all of us if we went into town with him. He was acting a little funny. When we got into town a lot of the local people were giving us dirty looks. We decided that he was trying to turn us in to the Germans so we took off.

The eight of us were together about two weeks when something happened that split us up.

We were all sleeping in a shack near a train station when a bunch of kids hit the door in the middle of the night screaming, "Tedesco!" It turned out that a German troop train had pulled into the station. Everyone ran like hell and the group got separated. I ended up with an Englishman named Jesse Goldspink.

Jesse had been a prisoner for more than a year and could speak a little Italian. He had been shot through the mouth fighting the Italians in North Africa and wasn't too fond to them.

We continued as before, traveling mostly at night and eating potatoes, bread and occasionally figs or tomatoes at homes we came to. At one of the farms we did some work in the field in exchange for board and room that night.

At one point Jesse decided that it would be better if we got rid of the army clothes we were wearing and got some Italian clothes. One of the farmers gave us some clothes; black pants and gray shirts. My pants were about six inches too short. I got an old woman to sew on some more

to the legs. I don't know who we fooled. I was 6'2" and 195-lbs. with black hair. Jesse was 5'6" and 145-lbs. with red hair. I wore a hat and he didn't. We looked more like Mutt and Jeff than a couple of Italians.

One family was really good to us and we ended up staying with them for about five days. They fed us well and we even had sausage one time. It was the only meat we got during this time. We didn't have any way of repaying them for their kindness so we gave them our overcoats when we left.

We were crossing a river one day and Jesse lost his shoes. He was pretty upset about it since it was now October and winter was coming on. An Italian farmer made him some wooden slabs. From then on he walked with a "clomp, clomp" sound.

Since I didn't speak any Italian, Jesse would always be the one to ask for food. I thought that I was depending on him too much and wasn't pulling my share of the load. One evening I told Jesse I would go ask for food. I knocked on a farmhouse door and asked an elderly woman for some bread. She looked at me and let out a blood-curdling scream that could be heard for miles. I looked around and saw Jesse already in full flight. I quickly caught up with him and we ran for what seemed like miles. We decided that Jesse would do the begging after that.

Jesse had a wife and three kids at home in Hull, Yorkshire. He told me about another guy in Hull. He and Jesse hated each other and they swore to each other that when they got back from the war they were going to have it out. Jesse wasn't very big, but he was tough as nails and I knew he'd do pretty well in a fight.

We encountered Italian soldiers or Englishmen (that had been in prison at Sulmona) almost every day. They were usually traveling in pairs. They would tell us that the Germans were bumping off everyone they caught. I don't know if this was true. From our various hiding places we could see Germans on the road every day. Also, we would hear shots being fired at numerous times, sometimes pretty close by. However, with the mountainous terrain and all the brush around there, it was hard to know what they were shooting or where it was coming from.

We came within a few miles of a town named Casacalenda

that was being shelled every night. A woman told Jesse that it was held by the Germans and being shelled by the English. About three days later we were told that the Germans had pulled out the night before and the English had taken over. The town was located on top of a high hill and there was no way we could tell who held the town.

We started walking up the road toward the town when a couple of Englishmen came running up. They told us the area was thick with Germans and that they were bumping everybody off. Jesse decided that we would go on in. I thought about it and decided to stick with Jesse. After all, I had come this far with him.

It was great to see that the English army was sure enough there. They were in the process of setting up their machine gun nests, communications, etc. I believe that it was October 16. We found the kitchen area right away and we each grabbed a large handful of bacon that they were cooking. We wolfed it down like a couple of dogs. God, it tasted good!

We rode an English truck down to Bari and were there for two or three days. I said good-bye to Jesse and caught a ride on a C-47 to Naples to rejoin the American Forces. It was great to see the Stars and Stripes flying in the breeze and to know that you were going to be useful again.

From Naples I flew to Tunis where I spent a couple of days before leaving for London with a stop at Gibraltar.

While in London I received the Air Medal from General Ira Eaker. Then I went back to Shipdham and opened a bottle of Scotch that I had picked up in Gibraltar. Everybody gathered around and the bottle didn't last long. It was great to see those guys again.

I hung around a couple of days, but they were flying missions and I wasn't. I felt a little funny about that so I went back to London before heading back to the States.

Horace Austin also escaped:

He was in a different part of the prison camp. After his enlisted personnel had escaped, Austin and other prisoners from the Sulmona camp were marched to a railhead. There they were loaded on a train that would take them to prison

camps in Germany. Austin left the train about ten kilometers from Bologna. It took him eighteen days to work his way down the boot of Italy to about four kilometers south of Palata where he was picked up by the British Eighth Army.

On October 22nd Ray Marner mentioned, "We have 17 crews now and about 520 men."

Then on October 23rd he wrote:

Joel Parker (Maynor crew) just came back from Africa. The Air Transport Command ship he was on cracked up in Algiers. The rest of the crew are still down there."

In the December 1988 issue of *The Fighting 44th Logbook* one of Maynor's crewmen, Arnold L. Gray, tells of his early days with the 506th and the return of the crew to England-- two times.

Hardly had we arrived in England, in early August, and began our orientation training, than we received orders to report to the 44th BG which was temporarily based in North Africa. Heavy losses had been sustained by the Group on a low-level attack on the Ploesti, Romania, oil fields and replacement crews were urgently needed.

So, it was on to Prestwick, Scotland, by rail and then to our destination via Air Transport Command. This time it was bucket seats and extremely uncomfortable. Three days later, on 13 August, we arrived at Benina, Libya, a nondescript airstrip in the desert surrounded by tents set up as living quarters. Oppressive heat and blowing sand seemed to prevail twenty-four hours a day.

Hardly had we settled in and been regaled by the tales of adventure and the perils of combat flying, when the outfit was ordered to return to Great Britain. The main contingent left on 25 August, but those of us without transportation were left behind.

Although our wait was to be only a week, it seemed like ages considering the unbearable living conditions. Our principal duty was to "police" the area daily. What could be more absurd than the sight of trained bomber crews scouring the desert to pick up litter.

We left Benina on Sept 1st. Once more it was by ATC

(C-47) on to Marrakech, by way of Tunis and Algiers. Then to Preswick, Scotland on a C-54.

After an overnight rail trip, we arrived at Shipdham on 8 Sept. At last we had reached what we believed and hoped was to be our permanent base for the duration of our stay in combat.

However, the changing complexion of the war in the area that we had recently departed dictated otherwise. The Allied invasion of Southern Italy had bogged down. Air power again was needed to assist, so the 44th BG was ordered back to North Africa.

This time our crew had its own B-24. We left Shipdham on 16 Sept and flew all night, arriving at Marrakech the next day, then proceeding to Tunisia. Our base here was located at Ounda #1, fifteen miles South of Tunis. It was the desert all over again, with life in a tent community.

Within two weeks, the American and British ground troops, with the help of our air power, improved and consolidated their foothold in Italy. So on 2 October, the 44th BG under new orders, left Tunisia to return to Shipdham. Because our B-24 had been rendered inoperative upon return from the Wiener Neustadt mission, our crew was left behind. Once again we were to become passengers.

One week later, a C-47 arrived, picked us up for our return, but our troubles were just beginning. A defective engine forced us to land near a British artillery camp near the town of Bougie, between Tunis and Algiers on the North African Mediterranean coast.

Although the aircraft's engine was temporarily repaired, it had to be returned to Cairo, leaving us stranded. Our British hosts were most gracious in taking care of our needs, but the town had little to offer, and time was hanging heavy on our hands, boredom set in once again.

After five days, we managed to secure space on a British lorry bound for Algiers. Our hopes, which rose dramatically with our arrival there, were quickly dashed upon a visit to the Mediterranean Air Transport Service office. We learned that there was a huge backlog of passengers awaiting air travel to Marrakech and that we would have an indefinite wait.

Daily visits to the office and incessant pleading proved fruitless, and our resignation deepened. The only relief afforded us was the several movie theaters and activities at the Red Cross Club. At this point, I became quite firmly convinced that we were doomed to spend the duration of the war here.

But finally, on Sunday, 24 Oct., our persistence paid off and we left Algiers, flying to Preswick by way of Marrakech, and then back to Shipdham by rail. We arrived there most thankfully, on 27 Oct.

At that point in time, although we had been a part of the 44th for seventy-five days, we had spent forty-two of those days in transit or waiting for transportation between bases.

These frustrations of waiting proved to be helpful when we were shot down and became prisoners of war.

On October 23rd Mark Morris showed in his diary that we went on a two-hour practice mission.

It was about this time that Charleston Miller was transferred:

He and a number of the other ground men were transferred to another airfield to help form a new group. The group did not last long. On two raids we lost about 20 planes. They then broke the group up. I finally was sent to a night-flying outfit as ground crew at Tring, just north of London. I came home in July of 1945, on the ship that I crewed. I was a mechanic.

Then on October the 26th Mark entered:

Truck to Norwich. Destination unknown. Train to Chorley. Crew split. Enlisted men station wagoned to Bucklands Manor rest home.

In letters to his wife, Norm Kiefer described the rest home experience:

I am in a rest home. It is a large hotel. Not large in comparison with those at home, but it is big for over here. Do you remember the manors that you see in movies? That is what it is like.

The first thing that we did after we arrived was to check out a bike. The next was to get civilian clothing. Yes, you are reading correctly. I have a pair of dark blue trousers, a blue and white print shirt, a light blue crew shirt, a red wool sweater and a pair of tennis shoes. How would you like to see me now? This is the first time in two years that I have been out of uniform.

The only thing that is required of us is that we dress for supper.

I am going horseback riding in the morning. It will be the first time that I have ever tried riding. Soooo Looook Out! Anything can happen. Probably I will be like you on a bike.

-----In later letters I said:

I am okay except for being a little sore.

Do you know that they are going to have to give us a seven-day pass when we leave here? Why? Well it is going to take that long to rest and recuperate.

Yesterday morning was taken up playing ping-pong and tennis. My game of ping-pong is improving right along as I practice. The tennis was terrible. Of course it has been a long time since I tried my hand at it. Then too, they have dirt courts over here, not the cement ones that we have.

In the afternoon I sat in front of the large fireplace and read a couple of magazines. Then I put on my uniform and went into town to get a haircut.

The evening was spent seeing the movie titled *Berlin Correspondent*. After that there was a dance. It was one of those rare occasions that there were just as many girls as there were boys. It must have been planned.

Although no supporting records can be found, Ollie Bowling's Flight Record indicates that he was on a seven hours operational flight with Gordon Stevens on October 30th.

Other letters that Norm Kiefer wrote to his wife during the month of October contained the following:

"How is the sugar ration at home? Do you have a little

left over? Now I don't want you folks to go without, but if you have some, I would like some home made fudge."..."We spent the biggest part of the day cleaning out our room. A lot of the boys put their things in it, for safekeeping, while we were gone. We can lock our door."..."This morning we cleaned the soot from the chimney. After that we fixed the stove so that we have a better draft. Now all we have to do is start to practice swiping coal again."..."Gee! It is on nights like this that I miss "Willie". (This was Richard Williams who was shot down at Wiener Neustadt)..."You asked if I could get milk. I haven't seen real milk since I left the States."..."Are your stockings still as hard to get as they used to be? You "Gals" back there ought to see the silk clothing we wear."

It was some time in late October or early November that Gail Larsen arrived.