

S E C R E T

Sheet No. 135. War Diary. 526th Fighter Sq., 86th Fighter Gp., APO 650, N. Y.

Month of February 1945. Prepared by Howard O. Wolf, 1st Lt., above named Sq.

WAR DIARY

- now on what to expect is better than a word spoken too late. Captain Louis gave a talk to the enlisted men last night and the usual bull session followed. Thunderbolt Theater gave a good show entitled "Saratoga Trunk" with Gary Cooper and, despite the fact the show doesn't start until 1930 hours, at 1830 hours the theater was completely filled and standing room only was available. Air Corps Theater presented "Hollywood Canteen" and all in all it was a very good picture. The pups are just starting to open their eyes and in a couple of days should be getting their first look at the world. All the boys are sweating them out and every day brings many inquiries about them.
- 9 Stand down for the day. Rain and overcast skies kept the Squadron grounded for the day. A meeting was held in the officers' quarters which was attended by one officer and two enlisted men from each Squadron. The topic was Education and Information and an attempt will be made to interest all the men in a group discussion. The Air Corps Theater presented a British stage show and it was very good. The theater was filled to capacity and the performers went all out to give the boys a good time. It was a good show and well enjoyed by all.
- 10 Good flying weather today and the Squadron flew five missions. Lt. Held, one of the new pilots, did not return. After coming off the target, his plane had a hung bomb. He was last seen at 7,000 feet but just what happened is not definitely known. Lt. Held was an excellent pilot and was one of the few pilots who obtain a rating of superior from flying school. Thunderbolt Theater presented "None But The Lonely Heart" with Gary Grant. Strong rumors have been going around that we are to leave Italy and go to France. How these rumors get started is something we'll never know. It doesn't take long to make the rounds and soon everyone knows it. However, from all accounts the rumor is correct and before long we shall be moving.
- 11 Good flying weather again today and the Squadron flew four missions of twenty-four sorties. Lt. Hailes had a mission on a sugar refinery and several direct hits started large fires and smoke rose to about 2,000 feet. Thunderbolt Theater presented "My Pal, Wolf" strictly a class B picture. Air Corps Theater presented "Pin-Up Girl" with Betty Grable and, although there wasn't much plot to it, the Grable fans were well satisfied. The rumors we've been hearing about moving to France are true. Orders were issued in the morning to pack our bags and the names of those fortunate enough (?) to go on "A" party were announced. The officers' mess hall was closed, the Intelligence room was torn down and when, the usual thing happened. Yes you guessed it, the orders were cancelled for a couple of days. "A" party will leave sometime in the near future but when, no one knows. Many of the personnel have been seen going around studying a French dictionary and from all indications "les femmes" in France are in for some good "snow" jobs. The mess hall has been reopened and we are now sitting around sweating out the orders.
- 12 Bad weather kept the Squadron grounded for the day. Stand down was not called until 1500 hours when rain and overcast skies made it plain there would be no flying. Preparations still go on for our coming move and everyone is

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running around asking everyone questions which no one seems to be able to answer. The exact date of the departure of "A" party is still cloaked in mystery and no one knows for sure when they will leave. Most of the personnel have started their packing and are taking no chances on getting caught short. Some of the pilots are running around trying to find the correct approach for establishing friendly relations with the young French ladies. Rumor has it that our Group CO, Col. Bates, will depart for the States to attend Command Generals Staff School and that Col. Lee will take over the Group. Everything happens at once. A few days ago everyone would have sworn we would be in Pisa for the duration. However, in just two days everything has changed. As the French so aptly put it "C'est la Guerre."

13 Operations, which have been going full blast for the last few months slowed down today. The rumor that we were going to France proved to be much more than a rumor and according to the latest latrine rumor "A" party will leave tomorrow. Only two or three missions a day will be flown as operations will be leaving soon and they want to keep as many planes in good condition as possible for the trip to the new base. There is much speculation as to where we are going and what we are going to do and destinations run everywhere from France to China, India or Burma.

14 Well, today is the big day. "A" party will leave at 1300 hours sharp for the port at Leghorn. All the pilots baggage and most of the equipment has already been carried away. The officers' mess has been closed and "A" party's last meal in Italy will be at the enlisted men's area.

Our noon meal is over and Major McGoldrick is running around checking jeeps and trucks trying to see if they are numbered properly and that everyone is ready. The signal is given and the convoy starts. Our car, which is number 29, starts off with a bang and we're now on our first leg of the journey. We go for about two miles and for some reason we suddenly stop. Shortly a red jeep comes down the road, its siren screaming. What's happening? About five minutes later a large staff car with five stars goes by. It is General Marshall himself. Now the convoy gets ready to go. We're off again and on to Leghorn. Arriving at Leghorn we line up the convoy and wait orders to load. At about four-thirty the first jeep rolls aboard. In no time at all the boat is loaded, the roll called and we are set to leave. The Naval Officers don't know where we are going, nor do we. One officer believes we're going to Cran on our first leg of the journey to the States. Very optimistic but we soon convince him that is strictly a rumor. At about nine o'clock in the evening we receive word that our destination is Marseilles. The trip will require about twenty-six hours and after that no one knows.

15 It is now six-thirty in the morning. The engines have started and the ship shudders as though reluctant to leave Leghorn. Why anyone should be reluctant to leave Italy I'll never know. Our journey will take twenty-six hours and barring bad weather we should be at our destination sometime before noon tomorrow. The day is beautiful and the sea very calm. Most of the men are sunning themselves or playing cards. Ahead of us are some LCI's