

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

S E C R E T

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WAR DIARY

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 await 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

S E C R E T

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and other LST's. This afternoon two P-47's buzzed the ship and gave the convoy the once over. Everyone is trying to figure out where we will go after we land but no one knows for sure. From all accounts a long trip awaits us and plenty of K rations have been provided.

- 16 It is now six-thirty in the morning. The ship passed a peaceful night. At about 4 AM something went wrong with the engine and we were forced to drop out of the convoy but after repairs had been made we managed to overtake it. Talk with one of the officers discloses the fact that we are ahead of schedule and will dock about eight-thirty. That means about twenty-six hours for the trip which wasn't bad at all.

Now it is eight-forty. We are slowly pulling into Marseilles Harbor. Sunken boats testify to the fact that not long ago the "Boche" were here. Now we have docked and soon the unloading begins. In a very short while all motor vehicles are ashore. Twenty men and Captain Calamai will go by train and take the equipment to our destination. The rest of us will proceed by vehicle. We start out but go about a quarter of a mile and stop. Immediately we are surrounded by French people of all sizes and shapes. They want cigarettes, gum, candy or anything, even K rations for which they offer two dollars a box. After about an hour we start again. No one seems to know just where we are going or just how we are going to get there. After winding around blocks and getting lost we finally make our way to a staging area. We now know that we are going to Tantonville, which is south of Nancy. We will leave at seven-thirty tomorrow morning. Now it is time for supper and after that bed. It is cold but not too cold.

- 17 It is now five-thirty AM. The camp is already active preparing for the start of the 447 mile journey. Now we find out that we are not going today after all. It seems that something is messed up someplace. Immediately everyone wants to go to Marseilles. Last night was really cold. Some of the hearty souls slept outside and this morning their blankets were covered with frost. Pancakes for breakfast and now some of us will go to Marseilles to change our money from Lires to Francs and probably other reasons, possibly "cherchez les femmes".

- 18 We are scheduled to leave this morning. Breakfast was at five-thirty and camp is being broke up. Vehicles are lined up and about seven o'clock the convoy starts. Southern France is very picturesque and shows little evidence of war. Scattered burned out M/T can be seen along the road testifying to the accuracy of some Allied aircraft. Some of the vehicles break down and are waiting for the maintenance truck to catch up. We stop for lunch at about twelve o'clock. The menu is K rations. It is cold and windy but not too bad. We go about 170 miles and stop for the night at St. Rambert.

- 19 Another early start. All packed and ready to leave at seven-fifteen. We plan to go as far as Dijon and stay there for the night. Through all the small towns the people smile and wave and the children give us the V for victory sign. The farmers bring us out wine wherever we stop and trade us fresh eggs. The countryside is beautiful and the homes are well kept and

S E C R E T

S E C R E T

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WAR DIARY

and modern. The weather is beautiful and everyone seems to be enjoying the ride very much. We have been having two hot meals a day and X rations for dinner. This part of France seems untouched by war.

20 After traveling all day we stop at Dijon for the night. We made pretty good time and tomorrow should be the last leg of the journey. Most of the men are enjoying the trip and from all accounts they like the country better than Italy already. The French girls seem much prettier and friendlier than the ones we left behind. A good supper is served and then most of the men hit the sack early. The vehicles are holding up good although most of them have seen a great deal of service.

21 Well this is it. The start of the last leg of the journey. Another early start. The bivouac area was really something out of this world. We spent the night in a heavily forested area with a big cement wall around it. The personnel working here tell us it was used by the Germans as a sort of prison. Mud is about three feet deep and there are no dry places to put our cots. No open fires are allowed and it looked for awhile as though we would freeze. However, some of the boys were lucky enough to get beds in French houses. The people are wonderful, giving us wine, a wonderful place to sleep and not accepting any money. Quite a change from the last country we were in. After a hearty breakfast we start out. From all accounts we should reach our destination about one o'clock in the afternoon. We are a few miles from our field and it has started to rain. The weather has been wonderful up to now. When we finally reach the field we are all in for a shock. Mud and more mud. The enlisted men have tents, the officers chateaus, such as they are. However, they are better than tents and with a little work can be fixed up. The pilots who came with "A" party look at the runway and wonder how they can ever get off. It slopes downhill at quite an angle.

22 Well today starts the progress on the field. Small huts are being built to house Operations and Intelligence. Curs is not yet completed but should be in a couple of days. The rest of the outfit is expected tomorrow and our first mission is scheduled for Sunday. Officers and men both are eating in the enlisted men's area and the food has really been good. New maps are being issued and the pilots will have to learn the country all over again.

23 Today the rest of the outfit is due to arrive. They are coming in three shifts about an hour apart. About two o'clock the planes from the 525th came over the field. With them are about six C-47's. About one hour later our planes arrive but no C-47's. The planes of the 527th Squadron have not arrived yet. We wait until dark but twenty planes of the 527th Squadron and some C-47's are missing. All the bed rolls of our pilots are on the C-47's and the pilots are wondering what they are going to sleep on.

24 The weather continued bad today but late it cleared up and the remainder of the outfit arrived. They spent the night at Lyon and from all accounts

SECRET

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WAR DIARY

had quite a time. They tell us that Taylor and Welch are now Captains and that Kenoff, Kneack, and Gloeckler are now First Lieutenants. The 527th Sq. had a tough break and lost one of their pilots at Marseilles. Lt. Kerr landed and the plane that landed behind him crashed into him. Lt. Kerr was a fine fellow and will be missed.

- 25 Our first day of operations. The first mission is a sixteen plane show, a fighter sweep. The second mission is an armed reconnaissance. Our planes all came back. The other Squadrons are not so lucky. The 525th Sq. loses two men. Lt. Stuart bellies his plane in after being hit by flak and Lt. Mather parachuted out. The 527th Sq. lost two planes, with one pilot safe and the other pilot wounded. It's a busy day on the field. One B-24 and one B-17 land here, both having one engine shot out. A P-51 attempts to land on fire but crashes short of the runway. The pilot was dragged out and, although burned on the face and cut, he will live. Quick work by the fire truck saved his life. The pilots are finding out that it's a little tougher here than in Italy. Enemy aircraft are active and all the pilots fly with their head on a swivel.
- 26 One mission flown today. Bad weather and strong winds kept the Group grounded. The first flight sweated out the takeoff with a strong tail wind and a down hill runway. However, they all got off alright and back safely but reported the weather no good. The intelligence hut is finally finished and now we can start setting up maps, installing stoves, and any number of things necessary for operation. Prior to this time the briefing has been carried on at Group S-2.
- 27 Standby for the day. Bad weather kept all the missions on the ground. Back at Pisa, on a day like this, the Group would have been stood down but here Command says "standby until further notice" which probably means tomorrow morning. Show has been very good lately and there have been few complaints. Showers have been installed in the basement of the officers' quarters and both enlisted men and officers have taken advantage of them. There was a little excitement in the officers' quarters. A fire broke out at about six-thirty just as the Intelligence department, namely Capt. Louis and Lt. Wolf, were taking a bath. Smoke was so bad that the two officers could not get upstairs to get clothes. They were forced to run outside in undergarments and it was cold. The fire truck soon arrived and put out the blaze. A meeting of all officers was held and a dance was planned for Saturday night at the opening of the club. The pilots have been working hard on the club, painting and building and from all indications it should be a good job.
- 28 Bad weather in the morning kept the Squadron grounded but just after lunch the sky cleared and our first mission got off. Three missions of thirty-six sorties were flown in just the afternoon. Back at our base in Italy a thirty-six sortie day was considered good. However, as one man put it, "This is the big league and in time the Group will probably be flying up to 144 sorties a day. Awards in this theater are a little easier to get than

SECRET

S E C R E T

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WAR DIARY

than they were in Italy. Air Medals are given for each five sorties of a certain type. As yet there has been no provision made for a theater but rumor has it that we will have one. Things are beginning to shape up pretty good and before long we shall be as comfortable as we were before. Lt. Koftiezer was promoted to Captain and Lt. Heiles was awarded the DFC. Now that they are flying their missions over land most of the pilots have had their dinghys removed from their chutes.

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HEADQUARTERS, 526TH FIGHTER SQUADRON
86TH FIGHTER GROUP, APO 374 N. Y.

AG 314.7

31 March 1945

SUBJECT: Historical Records.

TO : Commanding General, XII Tactical Air Command, APO 374, N. Y.

1. Outline History of the 526th Fighter Squadron, 86th Fighter Group, for the period 1 March 1945 to 1 April 1945.

a. Present designation: 526th Fighter Squadron, 86th Fighter Group, XII Tactical Air Command, APO 374, New York, N. Y.

b. Changes in organization:

(1) Changes in designation: Relieved from assignment to the XXII Tactical Air Command per General Order Number 45, Headquarters Twelfth Air Force, dated 6 March 1945.

(2) Disposition of echelons and subordinate units: None.

(3) Changes in Commanding Officers: None.

(4) Changes in Staff Officers: Squadron Order Number 2, Par. 6. 1st Lt. Stanley R. Sherk, O-815400, is in addition to his other duties appointed Assistant Operations Officer (Prim Duty). vice 1st Lt. Clyde H. Hailes, O-820407, relieved.

Par. 7. 1st Lt. Clyde H. Hailes, O-820407, is in addition to his other duties appointed Operations Officer (Prim Duty). vice Captain Thomas G. Archibald, O-665157, transferred.

c. Strength, commissioned and enlisted men:

(1) Month of March 1945.

(a) At beginning: 61 officers; 246 E. M. assigned.

(b) Net increase: None ; None.

(c) Net decrease: 2 officers; 9 E. M.

(d) At end : 59 officers; 237 E. M. assigned.

d. Stations: Y-1 strip. Tantonville, France.

e. Movements: None.

f. Campaigns: Sicilian - July -- August 1943.
Naples Foggia - 18 August 1943 -- 21 January 1944.
Rome Arno - 22 January 1944 -- 21 February 1945.
Southern France - 15 August 1944 -- 26 September 1944.
German - 25 February 1945.

g. Operations:

(1) Campaign: German.

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SECRET - SECURITY

S E C R E T

(2) Nature of operations: Combat missions by flights of P-47 type aircraft, on dive bombing, strafing and escort, particularly in attacking enemy communications, and principally of dive bombing and strafing type.

(3) Number of missions and sorties for period:

- (a) Missions: 98.
- (b) Sorties : 778.

(4) Results of important missions:

(a) On 9 March 1945, Captain WALLACE A. HOFTIEZER led a twelve plane formation of fighter-bombers on an armed reconnaissance of Western Germany with a Pineapple priority. Enroute to the target the flight encountered a complete overcast which made the probability of a successful mission doubtful. On arriving over the target area the flight found the area to be covered with an overcast, at about 5,500 feet. The flight found a thirty-five car train loaded with motor transports and large guns which had been damaged but not destroyed. Immediately forming his flight for the attack Captain Hoftiezer led the flight in a perfect bombing run which enabled the P-47's to score direct hits on the train which destroyed at least fifteen rail cars and blew out a section of the track for 150 feet. By strafing and bombing the flight destroyed or damaged forty-two railroad cars, fifteen heavy guns, five light guns, and effected eight rail cuts. From all indications the enemy was attempting to remove these supplies but was prevented from doing so by the accurate bombing of our planes.

(b) On 11 March 1945, Lt. GEORGE E. WOOD led an eight-plane formation of P-47's on an armed reconnaissance of Western Germany. While proceeding to his assigned area the flight was called by Controller and ordered to bomb an ammunition dump close to the front lines. On arriving over the target area Lt. Wood set a perfect pattern of attack in his bomb run enabling his flight to place all bombs in the target area. Large explosions resulted with fire and smoke billowing up to 1,000 feet. The next day a message was sent by the 42nd Division confirming large fires and smoke as the result of this bombing.

(c) On 14 March 1945, Captain WALTER C. TAYLOR, JR., led an eleven plane formation of fighter-bombers in an armed reconnaissance of the area north of Karlsruhe, Germany. Good weather conditions seemed to assure the success of the flight. Controller assigned the flight a seventy car train loaded with motor transports and other supplies. By bombing and strafing the flight destroyed fifty-two motor transports, damaged ten railroad cars, and effected two rail cuts. Nine aircraft expended all their ammunition before breaking off the attack.

(d) On 16 March 1945, Captain WALLACE A. HOFTIEZER led an eight-plane formation of fighter-bombers in an armed reconnaissance of Western Germany. On arriving over the target area the flight observed a train with two locomotives moving north from Speyer. Immediately forming his flight for the attack Captain Hoftiezer led his flight in a perfect bombing run scoring direct hits resulting in the destruction of two locomotives and nineteen railroad cars. All told the flight destroyed or damaged two locomotives, thirty-four railroad cars, two buildings, and blew out a section

S E C R E T

of track for forty feet. This mission helped to cripple enemy communications in this area.

(e) On 18 March 1945, Captain WALTER C. AYLER, Jr. led an eight plane formation on an armed reconnaissance of Western Germany. With a close support mission assigned by Controller as the primary target. Working in close conjunction with Controller, the flight bombed and strafed motor transports and armored vehicles of German troops attempting to move out of the Front Line area. So accurate was the bombing and strafing of the flight that the amazing total destroyed or damaged was forty-two motor transports, two light tanks, and three German jeeps.

(f) On 20 March 1945, Captain SUI J. SETENCICH led an eight plane formation of fighter-bombers on an armed reconnaissance of the battle area with a close support mission to be assigned as the primary target. On arriving at the target area the flight was assigned the task of conducting a reconnaissance from Neustadt to Mannheim. They were unable to find any movement. Controller then called them and told them there was motor transport movement southwest of Kaiserslautern. On arriving at the area the flight could see our own troops advancing southeast out of the town and the Germans moving east about four or five miles away from our troops. Immediately attacking, the flight bombed and strafed the fleeing enemy destroying or damaging forty-seven enemy motor transports, seven horse drawn vehicles and killing a great many enemy personnel.

(g) On 21 March 1945, Captain SUI J. SETENCICH led a nine plane formation of fighter-bombers in an attack upon fortified positions on the northwest side of hill near the town of Fishbeck. Our troops were being held up by these positions. Good weather made the probability of the mission being successful, good. On arriving at the target area, Captain Setencich immediately formed his flight for the attack and led them in a perfect bombing run, putting all the bombs in the target area. Dugout positions and entrenchments were well covered and four strafing passes were made. At the time of the attack friendly elements were only 1,000 yards south of the target. The next day a letter of commendation was received from the 42nd Infantry Division. The letter read in part: "Seasoned veterans state air attack was best close support ever witnessed. Grateful is a weak word for Division's feelings".

h. Commanding Officer and important missions:

- (1) Commanding Officer: Major RICHARD (RLI) TAYLOR.
- (2) Important missions:

(a) On 14 March 1945, Captain WALLACE A. HOFFMEYER, led a twelve plane formation of fighter-bombers on an armed reconnaissance of Western Germany. Controller gave the flight the target of a runway at Gr. Sachsenheim. Major TAYLOR flew as leader of Blue flight. On arriving over the target area, Captain Hoffmeyer led his flight in a bomb run scoring direct hits on the center of the runway and cratering it. Major Taylor's bombs hit the woods and started a large fire. A reconnaissance plane in the area said that a fuel dump had been hit. The fire at the target was very intense and one plane was lost. Missions flown on the following day reported the runway

S E C R E T

well cratered and unserviceable.

1. Losses in action:

(1) ALLAN H. DeBERRY, O-2059236, 2nd Lt., Air Corps, Pilot, failed to return from mission. Plane was seen to crash at R-1669 near Annweiler, Germany. MIA. 14 March 1945.

(2) JOHN H. KUPPERS, O-823093, 1st Lt., Air Corps, Pilot, failed to return from mission. Last seen at R-9542, just north of Gr. Sachsenheim, Germany, at an altitude of 1,000 feet. MIA 14 March 1945.

(3) EDWARD C. MASARIAN, O-708723, 2nd Lt., Air Corps, Pilot, failed to return from mission. Crashed at Q-926321, near Uhrwiller, France, and he was later found by the Chaplain still in his plane. KIA. 15 March 1945.

(4) BUSHNELL N. WELCH, O-759135, Captain, Air Corps, Pilot, failed to return from mission. Plane crashed at R-8134, just west of Wiernsheim, Germany. MIA. 19 March 1945.

(5) WALTER C. TAYLOR, JR., O-821561, Captain, Air Corps, Pilot, failed to return from mission. Plane crashed and burned at R-309662, near Landau, Germany. Captain Taylor's grave was later found by the Chaplain in a civilian graveyard. KIA. 20 March 1945.

1. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| (1) CLYDE H. HAILES, Captain | Distinguished Flying Cross |
| (2) DOUGLAS W. LEADER, 1st Lt. | Distinguished Flying Cross |
| (3) GEORGE E. WOOD, 1st Lt. | Distinguished Flying Cross |
| (4) WALTER C. TAYLOR, JR., Capt. | First Oak-Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross. |

2. Inclosed is War Diary, 526th Fighter Squadron, 86th Fighter Group, APO 374, N. Y., for the period 1 March 1945 to 1 April 1945.

For the Commanding Officer: .

Howard C. Wolf
HOWARD C. WOLF,
1st Lt., Air Corps,
Unit Historian.

- 3 Incls:
1. War Diary
 2. Extract, GO 29, Hq. Twelfth Air Force.
 3. Extract, GO 36, Hq. Twelfth Air Force.

