

# **WW II HISTORY**

**86<sup>th</sup> Fighter-Bomber Group Headquarters  
(For 525<sup>th</sup>, 526<sup>th</sup> & 527<sup>th</sup> Squadrons)**

**February, 1942 – October, 1945**

6481-82  
10 22 42

WAR DIARY OF 86th Fighter-Bomber Group

- Group Headquarters -

10 February 1942

86th Bombardment Group (L) was activated at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma, with four squadrons: 309th, 310th, 311th and 312th.

19 June 1942

Enlisted personnel and officers transferred to the 312th Bomb Group (L) stationed at Hunter Field, Savannah, Georgia.

7 August 1942

Actual training program begun at Key Field, Meridian, Mississippi. Group made up of cadre from the 312th Bomb Group (L), and the 48th Bomb Group (L). Aircraft flown were A-20B, A-20C, and DB 7.

10 September 1942

Unit designation was changed from light to Dive Bombardment Group. A-20 aircraft were replaced by A-24, and A-31 type aircraft, and most of the twin engine pilots were transferred to the 27th and 47th Bomb Groups.

20 November 1942

A-36 type aircraft began to arrive. One of the first orders cut by the 23rd Provisional Training Wing prohibited acrobatic missions and forbid use of dive flaps and dive in excess of 30 degrees. This order was strictly enforced throughout the entire training period. Maximum emphasis was placed on logging excessive hours on aircraft.

19 March 1943

Heavy training period completed and Group left Key Field via train to Camp Kilmer, N. J. for staging for overseas shipment.

29 April 1943

Embarkation on John Erikson, leaving New York Port of Embarkation at Staten Island, via army transport in convoy of approximately 30 ships.

11 May 1943

Arrived at Mers El Khobir, former French Naval Base at Oran, Algeria, after uneventful crossing. Set up at La Senia airport, some 12 miles SW of Oran.

6481-82

18 May 1943

Flying personnel arrived at Mediouna airport, near Casablanca, for training under the Fighter Training Command. Most of ground personnel remained at La Senia. One complete squadron, 309th, went to Marnia airport near Oujda, French Morocco, for one week's training, but returned to Tafaraoui Air Base on 13 June, to join remainder of Group. At Tafaraoui, three weeks of intense training prepared the organization for the combat that was soon to follow.

20 June 1943

311th Squadron transferred from the Group and moved to Sale, near Rabat, French Morocco.

6 July 1943

Flying personnel of all squadrons and ground personnel of 310th and 312th squadrons arrived and began combat flying from Korba base, on Cap Bon, Tunis. 309th Squadron and Group Headquarters in staging area at Carthage for preparation for embarkation for Sicily.

14 July 1943

Advanced echelons arrived in Sicily; set up at Comiso airport. Ordered to Gela West, a newly prepared strip one week later.

21 July 1943

309th Squadron and Group Headquarters advanced echelons arrived Gela West in time to set up for immediate operations of flight echelon which arrived this same day.

22 July 1943

First mission flown from Sicily. Remainder of campaign consisted of strenuous activity in close support of the II Army Corps, working with the 1st Division.

17 August 1943

Messina fell - 86th Bomb Group flew 2375 combat sorties during five weeks of combat, bombing with decisive results at Troina, Randazzo, Milazzo, Cesaro, Messina, and also attacking withdrawal activities along the southern Italian coast.

27 August 1943

Group moved to Barcellona Base, near Milazzo. From here missions were flown against Italy mainland, and air support for Allied landings at Salerno was direct from this point for the Group.

8 September 1943

Designation of 86th Bombardment Group (D) was changed to 86th Fighter Bomber Group, and squadron designation was changed from 309th, 310th and 312th to 525th, 526th and 527th.

10 September 1943

"D" day for in the invasion at Salerno. Advanced Headquarters echelon and complete 527th Squadron, less pilots, arrived at Milazzo staging area for preparation for Italian invasion.

13 September 1943

Advanced echelons arrived in Salerno beach-head - set up at Sele airport, amid constant threat of enemy in close vicinity.

15 September 1943

First mission flown by Group from Italian soil. Aircraft were not kept at Sele airport overnight, but flown back to Barcellona.

22 September 1943

Remaining squadrons arrived at Sele after considerable difficulty in landing, due to enemy shelling of beaches.

10 October 1943

Group Headquarters and 527th Squadron moved to Serretelle Base, near Battapaglia, while 526th and 527th Squadrons moved to Fonigliano airport, near Naples.

13 October 1943

First mission flown from Fonigliano airport.

15 October 1943

Officers' club, bar and mess opened at Serretelle airbase in tobacco factory.

18 October 1943

Negotiations completed for rental of Naples Hotel for use of Group Officers on overnight trips.

29 October 1943

Beginning this date, and for 8 days following, 12 French officers visited the Group in operation at Fonigliano.

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WAR DIARY of 86th Fighter-Bomber Group AAF

- Group Headquarters -

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1 November 1943

William Strand (Chicago TRIBUNE) visited group and wrote stories on this group's activities.

2 November 1943

Set up war room for Capt. Burton of British 10th liaison section, 15th Army Group, and Maj. Ford, liaison officer for Air Support Control of 5th Army Headquarters.  
George Carter, North American Aviation representative, took pictures of aircraft and crews on 100 missions.  
Sgt. Everett, 12th Air Support Command, received story from Capt. Ring on this date's mission planes.

10 November 1943

Visited by Ken Dixon, Associated Press.  
Meeting was held in war room to determine food dropping to our troops on front lines.

19 November 1943

Visited by George Wicks, Plus Network.  
Forward and rear echelons combined as of this date.

22 November 1943

This group was relieved from 64th Fighter Wing.

23 November 1943

Visited by Correspondent Gordon Gammack of Des Moines REGISTER, who interviewed Lt. Anton.

25 November 1943

Air Marshal Cumingham visited operations and war room - also gave a talk to pilots.

28 November 1943

Capt. John C. Agnew of Air Support Control of 5th Army relieved Maj. Ford.

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WAR DIARY of 86th Fighter-Bomber Group AAF

- Group Headquarters -

1 December 1943

Capt. Vessels and Sgt. Everett PRO. visited.

2 December 1943

Lt. Col. Yancey Tarrant group executive officer transferred to the 64th. Fighter-Wing.  
Seven missions were flown on enemy installations.

3 December 1943

Col. Robert C. Paul, group commanding officer, was transferred to the (XII) Air Support Command, being succeeded by Lt. Col. Harold E. Kofahl.

4 December 1943

Lt. Col. Kofahl, took over command of this group.  
Representative of (XII) Air Support Command visited here for a spread on A36's for the Air Force magazine.

5 December 1943

Food dropping missions performed.  
Mr. Geo. Hicks, Blue Network, made Xmas record for U.S. Airforce magazine, also took pictures of A36's in all phases of operations.  
Maj. Glenn A. Stell appointed group operations officer.  
Capt. Paul E. Verseput, appointed group P.R.O. in addition to his duties as Asst. group Intelligence Officer.

6 December 1943

Maj. Charles F. Cassidy, appointed group executive officer.

7 December 1943

Col. Isarel, Commanding Officer, 62nd Fighter Wing visited.  
Capt. Vessels of (XII) Air Support Command P.R.O. and Sgt. Poisis, of Stars and Stripes, visited and received story on food dropping missions.

8 December 1943

Lt. Col. Woods, Capt. Vessels and eleven Dominion correspondents visited here to observe diving tactics of four A36's over this field.

WAR DIARY of 86th Fighter-Bomber Group AAF

- Group Headquarters -

10 December 1943

General Henry H. Arnold, Chief of the Army Air Forces, at a special ceremony on the line personally awarded the D.F.C. to Lt. Yannel, who completed his 80th mission.

12 December 1943

Al Crocker, St. Paul-Dispatch, (Ridder Op. Pioneer Press).  
Tom Henry, Wash. Star, (North American National Alliance).  
Tom Treanor, Los Angeles-Times, (United Press).  
visited here and received story.

13 December 1943

Capt. H.G. Oldman, Air Liaison Officer, 10th Air Liaison Section 15th Army, this date joined this group and assumes duties in the War-Room relieving Capt. Burton.

16 December 1943

This group has reached the 10,000 combat hour mark.

17 December 1943

Capt. A.J. Fama, Asst. G-2, Fifth Army visited here to discuss damage and assessments.

18 December 1943

Flight Officer Reeves, Fifth Army, P.R.U. visited here to inquire about photos, use and needs.

27 December 1943

Gordon Gammack, De Moines Register, visited here spending three days with us.

30 December 1943

Lt.Col. Sheean, visited and left instructions for group synopsis to present to General Spaatz.

Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Gp.

Outline History Jan. 44

S E C R E T

By Auth CO

Hq. 86th FB Sq

31 Jan 44

Initials FW

HEADQUARTERS 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF.  
APO 650. U.S. ARMY.

31 January 1944

AG 314.7

SUBJECT: Historical Records.

TO : Commanding General, XII Air Support Command, APO 374.

1. Outline History of Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group for the period 1 January 1944 to 1 February 1944.

a. Present Designation: Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group, XII Air Support Command.

b. Changes in Organization: 1st Lt. John F. Dwyer, transferred from Hqs. assgd to the 525th Sq. as Assistant Intelligence Officer on 14 January.

Maj. Glenn A. Stell and Maj. Justus C. Gunnison completed operational tour.

Maj. Jay R. Stout, appointed Group Operations Officer.

Capt. Robert Hood, appointed Asst. Group Operations Officer.

Mr. Hicks, left for the States to attend O.C.S.

c. Strength, commissioned and enlisted:

(1) Month of January 1944

(a) At beginning: 23 officers, 49 E.M. assigned.

(b) Net increase: 1 officer, 2 E.M.

(c) Net decrease: 3 officers,

(d) At end : 20 officers, 51 E.M. assigned.

d. Stations: No changes.

e. Movements: No changes.

f. Campaigns: Continued Italian Campaign.

g. Operations: (See Squadrons).

h. Commanding officer in important missions: Lt. Col. Harold E. Kofahl flew five missions this month. On one day that we were called upon to exert extra effort, he flew three missions.

i. Losses in action: (See Squadrons).

j. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action: (See Squadrons).

2. Inclosed are War Diary, Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group, for the period 1 January to 31 January 1944.

For the Commanding Officer:

*William A. Barrett, Jr.*  
WILLIAM A. BARRETT, JR.,  
Major, Air Corps,  
Intelligence Officer,  
Hq. 86th Fighter-Bomber Group.

Incl:  
War Diary orig & cv

WAR DIARY of the 86th Fighter-Bomber Group AAF

- Group Headquarters -

1 January 1944

Corp. Coes of XII Air Support Command PRO visited this group with two WAC's and took pictures on armoring A-36's on our field.

Maj. Vessels, PRO, and Mr. Ken Dixon, AP, visited here and received story.

Commandant Curtillet and party of three officers, three enlisted men, and three nurses from the 401 Evacuation Hospital, stationed at Acerra, visited here and watched A-36's take off.

10 January 1944

Ernie Pyle visited here and spent two days at the 525th Sq.

19 January 1944

Ernie Pyle visited Headquarters and had lunch at our group mess with Capt. Verseput, Group PRO.

The 27th Fighter-Bomber Group moved to our field.

22 January 1944

Mr. Gordon Gammack, DES MOINES REGISTER, visited here and received story.

24 January 1944

Maj. Vessels, PRO, and Mr. Ken Dixon, AP, visited here and received story.

31 January 1944

Lt. Kanelly from MAAF and Mr. Lynn Heinyelering, AP, visited here and received story from one of the A-36 crew chiefs.

Classification changed to

*unclassified*

By auth. \_\_\_\_\_  
Commanding General \_\_\_\_\_  
Army Air Forces:

BY: *[Signature]*

DATE:

*1 Dec 44* \_\_\_\_\_

CONFIDENTIAL

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Hq. 86th Fighter-Bomber Group  
Outline History February 1944

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By Auth CO  
Hq. 86th Ftr.-Bmr. Gp.  
29 February 1944  
Initials \_\_\_\_\_

HEADQUARTERS 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF  
APO 650

29 February 1944

AG 374-7

SUBJECT: Historical Records.

TO : Commanding General, XII Air Support Command, APO 374.

1. Outline History of Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group for the period 1 February 1944 to 29 February 1944.

a. Present designation: Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group, XII Air Support Command.

b. Changes in organization: Change in T/O.  
New T/O 1-12 29 December 1943.  
In place of old T/O 1-12 1 July 1942.

Capt. Wood, Robert O-663731 transferred from Sp to 526th Sq. where he assumes the duties of Operations Officer

1st Lt. Relyea, Vincent K. O-429443 new Asst. Sp. Oper. Officer.

1st Lt. Fine, William W. O-562999 Asst. Special Service Officer

Capt. Shaw, Jesse W. O-422956 Group Surgeon

T/O Schenk, Earl L. W-2130849 Gr. Engr. Inspector

Maj. Stansbury, Frederick C. O-395924 Transferred from Sp. to Command

c. Strength, commissioned and enlisted.

(1) Month of February 1944

- (a) At beginning: 22 officers, 51 enlisted men assigned
- (b) Net increase: 3 officers, 2 enlisted men
- (c) Net decrease: 3 officers
- (d) At end : 22 officers, 53 enlisted men assigned

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- d. Stations: Pozigliano d'Arco Airdrome, Italy, 1 Feb-29 Feb 1944
- e. Movements: No changes.
- f. Campaigns: Continued Italian campaign.
- g. Operations: The group has flown 104 missions and 787 sorties from 1 February to 29 February 1944.
- h. Commanding officer in important missions: None.
- i. Losses in action: Major Howe, Justus W. O-24030. Killed while in experimental flight testing new type bomb.
- j. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action: Lt. Col. Cassidy, Charles F. O-432047 received the Distinguished Flying Cross. On a dive-bombing mission, after dropping his bombs, he returned and strafed gun positions, knocking out same.

2. Inclosed are War Diary, Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group, for period 1 February 1944 to 29 February 1944, and group newspaper.

For the Commanding Officer:

WILLIAM A. PARROTT, JR.,  
Major, Air Corps,  
Intelligence Officer,  
Hq. 86th Fighter-Bomber Group.

Incl: --  
War Diary orig & copy  
INVADEPS' INVENTORY-NEWS 3 copies

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WAR DIARY of the 86th Fighter-Bomber Group AAF.

Group Headquarters

3 February 1944

19 missions were flown this date, first time that we have had two plane missions, were highly congratulated by Command, as to the success of these missions:

9 February 1944

Lt. Col. Leaby, visited this group:

10 February 1944

Lt. Ornstine and officers of a French Gas Supply Unit visited:

24 February 1944

Col. Whitney, A2 of 87th Wing visited:

15 February 1944

Correspondents from two London newspapers, Mr. Emory Pearce, of the Daily Herald, and Mr. James Cooper of the Daily Express, visited here and received stories from Capt. Versepout, group Public Relations Officer:

17 February 1944

Sgt. Everett and Corp. Coe, of the XIII ASC-P.R.O., visited and received story:

18 February 1944

MAAF photographers took photos of Lt. Col. Kofhal, group Commander and Squadron Commanders:

Major Barrett, group S-2, left for Africa, to attend Aircraft Recognition School for instructors:

19 February 1944

Capt. Shaw, of the 27th Bomb Group and Lt. Fine of 57th Fighter Group, were transferred to this group:

Capt. Shaw, assumes the duties as group surgeon, relieving Major Stansbury, who was transferred to XIII Air Support Command:

Lt. Fine, assumes the duties as assistance Special Service Officer:

Major Thomas, Major Stout, Capt. Versepout and Capt. Ring, attended Major Home's funeral:

20 February 1944

Twenty new pilots were admitted to this group:  
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WAR DIARY of the 86th Fighter-Bomber G. P. AAF.

Group Headquarters

22 February 1944

Sent first monthly consolidated, Purse and Food Kit, report to XII ASC:

MAAF Photographers, took photos of the Group Commander, Squadron Commanders and Flight Leaders, on the Groups 900th Mission:

23 February 1944

A lecture by Capt. Ring, on Briefing and Interrogation, was held at the Officers Club, Capt. Versepud, discussed Escape Procedure, this lecture was held mostly for the benefit of the new pilots assigned to this group:

26 February 1944

The group had a Standown, due to bad weather:

28 February 1944

Lt. Bradly, called Maj. Stout, Group Operations Officer, in regards to Escape Data:

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Hq. 86th Fighter-Bomber Group  
Outline History - March 1944

Hq. 86th Fighter-Bomber Group

HEADQUARTERS 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF  
APO 650

AG 314.7

31 March 1944

SUBJECT: Historical Records.

TO : Commanding General, XII Air Support Command, APO 374.

1. Outline History of Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group for the period 1 March 1944 to 31 March 1944.

- a. Present designation: Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group, XII Air Support Command.
- b. Changes in organization: Major Jay R. Stout, Group Operations Officer, transferred to XII Air Support Command.  
Lt. Col. Edwin A. Bland, Jr., transferred from 525th Sq. to Group Headquarters, where he assumes the duties of Group Operations Officer.  
Lt. Robert C. Townsend, Hq. XII Air Support Command, transferred to Group Headquarters, where he assumes the duties of Cryptographic and Security Officer.
- c. Strength, commissioned and enlisted:
  - (1) Month of March 1944:
    - (a) At beginning: 22 officers, 1 warrant officer, 51 enlisted men.
    - (b) Net increase: 1 warrant officer, 2 enlisted men.
    - (c) Net decrease: 1 officer, 6 enlisted men.
    - (d) At end : 21 officers, 2 warrant officers, 47 enlisted men.

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- d. Stations: Pomigliano d'Arco Airdrome, Italy.
- e. Movements: No changes.
- f. Campaigns: Continued Italian campaign.
- g. Operations: The group has flown 83 missions and 862 sorties.
- h. Commanding officer in important missions: None.
- i. Losses in action: None.
- j. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action: None.

2. Inclosed are War Diary, Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group, for period 1 March 1944 to 31 March 1944, and group newspaper.

For the Commanding Officer:

*William A. Barrett, Jr.*  
WILLIAM A. BARRETT, Jr.,  
Major, Air Corps,  
Intelligence Officer,  
Hq. 86th Fighter-Bomber Gp.

Incl:  
War Diary orig & copy  
INVADERS' INVENTORY-NEWS 5 copies

WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF

- Group Headquarters -

March 1944

- 1 Lieutenant Colonel Harold E. Kofahl promoted to Colonel this date.
- 2 Mr. Emery Pearce of the London DAILY HERALD visited here and received story from Capt. Versepunt, Group PRO  
Col. Turner and Capt. Bunn of XII AAF visited and inspected Group S-2 and the War Room.  
Major Barrett, Group S-2 Officer, returned from DS in Africa. While there, he attended Aircraft Recognition School for Instructors.
- 3 Major Barrett from DS to duty.  
Lt. Robert C. Townsend of Hq. XII ASC assumed duties as Cryptographic and Security Officer.
- 4 Capt. Nick Kasun of this group was picked to broadcast over CBS on this group's dive-bombing activities over the beachhead.
- 5 Master Sergeant Walter Shultz promoted to Warrant Officer.
- 6 Lt. Col. Church of the 505th Antiaircraft Battalion visited.  
Lt. Col. Green, from Washington, D.C., discussed Training Aid with Major Barrett, Group S-2 Officer.
- 7 Mr. Wick Fowler of the Dallas NEWS visited here and received stories from officers and enlisted men from the State of Texas.
- 8 Lt. Col. Dixon of XII AAF gave a lecture to officers of this group on antiaircraft.
- 11 Major Charles F. Cassidy, Jr., promoted to Lieutenant Colonel.  
Colonel Kofahl left for the Isle of Capri.
- 12 Major Edwin A. Bland, Jr., transferred from 525th Sq. CO to Group Operations Officer.
- 13 Major Jay R. Stout, Group Operations Officer, to XII ASC.  
Major Sherry, XII AAF, talked to Major Barrett about Intelligence Officers of this group.  
Major Thuelson, PRO, visited and received story from Capt. Versepunt on dive-bombing the tobacco factory at Battipaglia by this group on the initial invasion of this campaign.

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## WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

March 1944

- 15 New drive on Cassino started today. This group participated by flying six missions over targets. Drive continues tomorrow.
- 17 The group was notified today that General Saville would arrive today to present awards to officers and enlisted men. We all stood by all day - also photographers from MAAF were on hand. Result: we were notified that the general was unable to get here. Better luck tomorrow.
- 18 Again we were informed that General Saville would arrive at 1600 hours this date, but as on previous day we were left holding the bag. Now we are told that he will be here tomorrow at 1500 hours - I hope, I hope. There has been some shake-up in the enlisted men personnel. M/Sgt. Bell, Group Sergeant Major; M/Sgt. Heider, Operations section head; and T/Sgt. Beadle, Intelligence section head, have been transferred from this group to a replacement pool. Col. Harold E. Kofahl has returned to duty after spending seven days at Capri. Col. Robert C. Paul, former Group CO, visited Operations.
- 19 It has been a long five months today since our advance echelon left Serretelle A/F for this present base. Lt. Col. Chamberlain, of Allied Force Headquarters, visited here and highly complimented us on our War Room - also on the group, of what he saw. General Saville arrived at 1615, and a ceremony was held on the line. The first to be presented with a medal was Lt. Col. Cassidy, with a DFC. Second award was a Purple Heart, to Lt. Graves. Then three enlisted men of the 527th Sq. received the Soldier's Medal, namely, Corp. Edward H. Witt, 37427713; Pfc. Ed Milanowski, 36234032; and Pvt. Leon J. Yoscowicz, 32185787. Next the general presented thirty-five Air Medals, the first to receive one being our Group Commander, Col. Harold E. Kofahl. The general pinned the medal on each of the pilot's jackets, shook hands, and congratulated them all. Capt. Fauskin, Group Adjutant, read the citations. A photographer from XII ASC was on hand and took several pictures. Afterward there was a bunch of proud fellows walking around and showing their friends the awards they had received. This was the first opportunity many of our new pilots have had to see the DFC, and they were not slow to pass several comments on it, such as, "Boy, what do I have to do to get one of them?"
- 20 The group ran four food-dropping missions over the Cassino area. These missions were successful, and we were congratulated by V Army Hq., as some of our troops in this area were without food for 48 hours.

## WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

March 1944

- 21 M/Sgt. Reagan, T/Sgt. Poplin, and Corp. Bell left this morning for the States, where they will attend Aviation Cadet School. There was beaucoup hand-shaking and patting on the back and wishing them all luck. Stage show was held this afternoon at the Marigliano Theater, with John Garfield and fellow actors. In the evening at the same theater, a film was shown, FIVE GRAVES TO CAIRO - also a GI short on field sanitation, which was thought very corny by the personnel. Major Corning, A-2, XII ASC, held a lecture for the Operations Officers, Intelligence Officers, and Flight Leaders. Subject was "Choosing Targets and Value of Reporting Accurate Mission Results." Major Barrett, Group S-2, lectured on bombing assessment; also, pictures were shown on previous targets. After this lecture a meeting was held for Intelligence Officers of this group. A-2 intelligence policies were discussed.
- 22 Lt. Relyea, Assistant Group Operations Officer, was promoted to Captain. Because of bad weather we had a quiet day; the group flew two more food-dropping missions.
- 23 Because of bad weather this morning we were unable to operate. Also we had a scare when the Engineering Officer called and said that we would probably have to move our planes, as the wind had changed and was blowing pumice dust from Mount Vesuvius. This would damage our aircraft upon starting of the engines, but fortunately we didn't have to make the move. In the afternoon the weather cleared up, and we ran four missions, three of which were food-dropping and one bombing. Motor trucks from this group helped to evacuate the 340th Bombardment Group from Vesuvius Field.
- 24 This morning the group ran four more food missions and one bombing mission. The squadrons were stood down in the afternoon.
- 25 No missions flown this date on account of bad weather.
- 26 Another stand-down today. The wind was so bad that we expected to see our tents blown down any minute.

## WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

March 1944

- 27 Mr. William Strand of the CHICAGO TRIBUNE visited and expects to spend several days with the group. Last night at the enlisted men's mess hall a stage show sponsored by the Red Cross was held. Several late songs were sung by one of the Red Cross workers, while a couple of "Eye-tie" kids gave out with some tap dancing. Also the orchestra, composed of Italian talent, was very good. Several comments were passed by the men, such as, "....the best we've heard in Italy." This orchestra had just come back from the Isle of Capri, where they spent several days playing at the rest camp. After the show coffee and doughnuts were served. The following officers are visiting this group and are observing and studying tactics of our operations: Lt. Col. Joseph L. Laughlin, O-395514, 379th Fighter Squadron, 362d Fighter Group; Capt. William M. Davis, O-789887, 485th Fighter Squadron, 370th Fighter Group; Lt. Harry D. Knuppel, O-748682, 381st Fighter Squadron, 363d Fighter Group; and Lt. P. M. Rogers, O-744759, 353d Fighter Squadron, 354th Fighter Group.
- 28 This date the group attained 1,000 missions. A party was held at the Officers' Club celebrating the occasion. Ice cream, sandwiches, cake, and coffee were served - also an unknown quantity of beverages. A good time was had by all, as there were many officers that wore dark-colored glasses in the morning and a lot of them remarked that their hats fit awful "tight." A distinguished delegation from "the Fourth Estate" made up most of the following guest list: Ernie Pyle; Bill Strand, CHICAGO TRIBUNE; Jim Kilgallon, INS; Charles Seawood, Acme Pictures; Mr. Newman, INS; Wick Fowler, DALLAS NEWS; Chris Cunningham, United Press; Ken Dixon, Associated Press; Capt. Henry Schwaer, 36th Infantry Division photo interpreter; S/Sgt. Everett, PRC; Sgt. Montgomery, STARS AND STRIPES photographer; Sgt. Cowe, MAAF photographer; Major Vessels and assistant, MAAF PRO.
- 29 William Strand, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, spent the day on the line and received stories - also listened in on briefing and interrogation of pilots. Eleven months ago today we sailed for overseas, an incident we all very well remember.
- 30 Major Thruselson, MAAF, and Lt. Arnold, Intelligence Officer from Corsica, visited the group and obtained stories for magazine publication. We had a movie last night at the "Loew's Marigliano" Theater, the picture being, appropriately enough, BOMBER'S MOON.

WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

March 1944

- 31 The group was stood down because of bad weather. Except for today being pay day, things in general were fairly quiet, although in the evening one didn't have to go far to get into a good hot poker or blackjack game, or other games of skill. An overabundance of beverages flowed at the squadron bars. Major Bland, Group Operations Officer, received his promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. Lt. Goering, Assistant Group Engineering Officer, was promoted to Captain.

SUBJECT: Air Photographs.

SC7/Op/23.

SECRET.

86 Ftr Bomb Gp  
Supporting Document  
March 1944

A.L.O.,  
27 Fighter-Bomber Group  
57 Fighter-Bomber Group  
79 Fighter-Bomber Group  
86 Fighter-Bomber Group  
32d Fighter-Bomber Group  
47 Light Bomber Group

1. It is understood that at most Fighter-Bomber Groups there is a feeling that greater use could be made of large scale photographs for target briefing. The chief limitation at the moment is that these photographs are not available in sufficient quantities at Group Hq.
2. The provision of large scale photographic cover of the whole Fifth Army front, including the bridgehead, will involve an enormous amount of extra work to be undertaken by Group S-2's and A.L.O.'s if any form of an efficient indexed photographic library is to be maintained.
3. In order that A.L.O.'s should see for themselves what photographs are available, and what extra work is involved, arrangements have been made by this unit with P.R.U. by which A.L.O.'s can visit the Photographic Centre, POMIGLIANO, to discuss their requirements with Capt. MacWilliam, O. i/c this centre.
4. The Photographic Centre is willing to meet any reasonable requirements and will, if necessary, make arrangements for extra printing so long as this work does not involve alteration of present priorities.
5. Ideas on this subject can also be obtained by a visit to 86 Fighter-Bomber Group where an extensive photographic library is being used for briefing.
6. It will be the responsibility of the A.L.O. to make arrangements direct with the Photographic Centre for the issue of the photographs required and for keeping the library up to date.
7. It is emphasized that if it is desired to take advantage of the above arrangements, the full co-operation and agreement of Group S-2's must be obtained before any action is taken.

Headquarters,  
Fifth Army.  
13th March, 1944.

/s/J. Hare  
Lt. Col.,  
G.S.O.1,  
A.A.S.C.

Commanding No. 7/9

Copies to:-

O(Air), Hq., A.C.M.F.  
A-2, XIIIth A.S.C.  
P.R.U.  
Air Support Control (U.S.)  
War Diary (3)

A TRUE COPY

Reproduced 20 March 1944 by S-2, Hq. 86th Fighter-Bomber Group AAF

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Hq. 86th Fighter-Bomber Group

Outline History - April 1944

[REDACTED]

Hq. 86th Fighter-Bomber Group

30 April 1944

Initials

[REDACTED]

HEADQUARTERS 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF  
APO 650

CLASSIFIED  
NO. OR 32005

O/PEV/JWq

30 April 1944

AO 314.7

SUBJECT: Historical Records.

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

1. Outline History of Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group AAF for the period 1 April 1944 to 30 April 1944:

a. Present designation: Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group, XII Tactical Air Command.

b. Changes in organization:

- (1) Changes in designation: None.
- (2) Disposition of echelons or subordinate units: None.
- (3) Change of commanding officers: None.
- (4) Changes of staff officers:

Deputy Group Commander: Lt. Col. Charles F. Cassidy, Jr., O-432047, relieved from duty 21 April. Lt. Col. Gilbert T. Mulline, O-396299, transferred from 57th Fighter Group, assumed duty 25 April.

Group Executive Officer: Major James K. Thomas, O-917908, appointed 21 April.

Group S-2: Major William A. Barrett, Jr., O-390988, relieved 22 April. Captain Paul E. Versepout, O-562252, appointed 22 April.

Group S-3: Lt. Col. Edwin A. Bland, Jr., O-432034, missing in action, parachuting from his airplane two miles southeast of Sutri, Italy, 16 April. Major Robert J. Kirsch, O-790566, transferred from C.O. 527th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, appointed 17 April.

Changes of other officers:

1st Lt. James C. Collins, O-1549914, transferred from 6630th Ordnance Airdrome Service Co., appointed Group Ordnance Officer 1 April.

Capt. Benjamin W. Kraas, O-268056, relieved as Group Dental Surgeon 3 April and transferred to 154th Medical Dispensary Avn.

Capt. Harold (NMI) Kanter, O-369767, transferred from 154th Medical Dispensary Avn., appointed Group Dental Surgeon 3 April.

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1st Lt. Robert W. Thomas, O-663792, transferred from 527th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, appointed Assistant Group Operations Officer, 17 April.

Major Jack C. Stern, O-434355, relieved as Group Engineering Officer 22 April. Capt. John W. Hendrickson, O-855298, transferred from 525th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, appointed Group Engineering Officer 22 April.

Capt. Alfons (WMI) Valukonis, O-440953, relieved as Group Communications Officer 22 April. 1st Lt. Wilmer E. Bullard, O-560712, transferred from 27th Fighter-Bomber Group, appointed Group Communications Officer 23 April.

Capt. Alexander (WMI) Louis, O-566024, transferred from 525th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, appointed Assistant Group Intelligence Officer 29 April.

c. Strength, commissioned and enlisted:

(1) Month of April 1944:

- (a) At beginning: 22 officers, 2 warrant officers, 47 enlisted men.
- (b) Net increase: 5 officers, 3 enlisted men.
- (c) Net decrease: None
- (d) At end: 27 officers, 2 warrant officers, 50 enlisted men.

d. Stations:

- (1) Pomigliano d'Arco A/D, Pomigliano d'Arco, Italy.  
 (a) Date of arrival: 19 October 1943 (advance echelon - other echelons 17 November 1943).  
 (b) Date of departure: 30 April 1944.
- (2) Marcianise A/F, Marcianise, Italy.  
 (a) Date of arrival: 30 April 1944.

e. Movements:

- (1) From Pomigliano d'Arco A/D, Italy, to Marcianise A/F, Italy.

(a) Purpose: Change of station.  
 (b) Date: 30 April 1944.  
 (c) Means of travel: motor transport.  
 (d) Comment: weather clear and sunny with mild breeze; secondary roads very dusty. New station only eight air miles northwest of old station, the move placing us barely thirty miles from the nearest part of the enemy front lines - to the northwest.

f. Campaigns:

- (1) Name: Italy.  
 (2) Duration: From 12 September 1943 (arrival of our advance echelon in Italy) - campaign still in progress.



**g. Operations:**

- (1) Campaign: Italy.
- (2) Nature of operations: Chiefly rail cutting north of Rome - see squadron histories following.
- (3) Number of missions and sorties for period 1 April 1944 to 30 April 1944: 103 missions and 1,007 sorties for entire group.
- (4) Results of the most important missions: See squadron histories following.

**h. Commanding Officer in important missions:** Two missions flown by Commanding Officer.

**i. Losses in action: 1 officer.**

(1) Mission: 16 April 1944 - target: track breaker. Viterbo-Fabrica di Roma.

(c) Missing:

1. Name: Lt. Col. Edwin A. Bland, Jr., O-432034, last seen bailing out of his A-36A aircraft, parachute opening at 2000' altitude, two miles southeast of Sutri, Italy (A-580043).

**j. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action:** None.

2. Inclosed are War Diary, Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group AAF, for the period 1 April 1944 to 30 April 1944, and two issues (four copies) of fortnightly group newspaper.

For the Commanding Officer:

PAUL E. VERSEPUT,  
Captain, Air Corps,  
Group S-2a

**Incl:**

War Diary orig & copy  
INVADERS' INVENTORY-NEWS 4 copies



WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF

- Group Headquarters -

Pomigliano d'Arco A/D, Italy

April 1944

- 
- 1 The group has had considerable trouble with the civilian population as to cutting of our communication wires. Today this section has put out several signs along fence reading: "Cutting of wire is punishable by death."
- 

First week -

- 2 The group flew five missions today, having a little hard luck on the last one. Lt. Dickison of the 525th Squadron was seen by other pilots to have crashed and burned over designated target. Also Lt. King of the same squadron was seen to bail out into the sea after his plane was hit by flak. Our pilots received new flying boots.
  - 3 Several officers and enlisted men of this group attended the opening of the stage show, THIS IS THE ARMY. Major Barrett of this section was among those attending and reports that the stage show is a bigger success than the movie.
  - 4 Lt. Joseph Manske and two enlisted men of the old 311th Squadron, now stationed in Africa, visited. Movie, A GUY NAMED JOE, shown.
  - 5 Not much activity today, aside from the group's running three missions.
  - 6 Five missions were flown by the group.
  - 7 Brigadier General Anderson, Commanding General of the IX Bomber Command, and his staff visited; they spent the day and night here and left the following day.
- 

Second Week -

- 9 Colonel Profumo, G-2 Air AFII, visited the War Room and highly complimented the group on the set-up that we have, on our map display, and also on our photographs.
-

## WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

Pomigliano d'Arco A/D, Italy

April 1944-----  
Second week (Continued) -

- 10 Mr. McIntyre, war correspondent of the New Zealand Army Film Unit, with the help of four enlisted men from the Airborne Training Center, took movies on parachute dropping of food, ammunition, and packing food kits, at this field.
- 12 General Joseph Cannon, XII Air Force, visited the group on the line this afternoon, spending much time talking with Colonel Kofahl, Group Commander; Lt. Col. Cassidy, Deputy Group Commander; and the three squadron commanders. Colonel Kofahl, Group Commander, and Captain Relyea, Assistant Group Operations Officer, participated on a mission with the 526th Squadron as observers. The target was a railroad bridge, one that we have had trouble knocking out on previous missions.
- 13 General Saville visited the line this morning and held a conference with Colonel Kofahl and the squadron commanders.
- 14 Brigadier General Kincaid, Commanding General of the XIX ASC in England, and Colonel Cella, Assistant Chief of Staff A-2, visited this section this afternoon to observe and study the Intelligence procedure of this group. They asked us all sorts of questions, and were obliged to answer same.
- 15 Colonel Wordworths, ALO section VIII Army, visited the War Room and discussed several things in regard to our type of operations. Captain R. S. K. Brown, G-3 Hq. V Army, is visiting Captain Oldman, British ALO Officer, to observe functioning and tactics of the War Room. The Captain expects to spend several days with this group.

-----  
Third week -

- 16 The airplane of Lt. Col. Edwin A. Bland, Jr., Group Operations Officer, was hit by flak on a mission this morning, and his aircraft was seen to be burning by other pilots of this mission. Lt. Col. Bland was seen to bail out over enemy-held territory (near Sutri, Italy). Being one of our original pilots and known to all as "Ed," he is greatly missed.

## WAR DIARY OF THE 85TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

Pomigliano d'Arco A/D, Italy

April 1944-----  
Third week (Continued) -  
-----

- 17 Today we started to grade off a strip of ground beside our present location to erect a large hospital tent so that we can combine the S-2 section with the War Room.  
Major Robert J. Kirsch, 527th Squadron Commander, this date assumed duties as Group Operations Officer.  
Captain Farnham this date assumed the duties as 527th Squadron Commander.  
Three enlisted men from Group Headquarters left this morning for the AAF Rest Camp on the Isle of Capri: Sgts. Lakin, Hunt, and Cook.
- 18 Three missions flown today. On the last mission our planes encountered enemy aircraft, and one of our pilots was shot down.  
Still working on our tent.
- 19 No missions flown today on account of bad weather.  
We finally finished setting up our tent and moved in - looks like a pretty good set-up.  
One of the new pilots, while checking out on one of our aircraft, crashed near Nola - reason unknown.  
Six months today since our advance echelon arrived at this field last October shortly after the fall of Naples. Thus half of our first year overseas (anniversary only ten days hence) has been spent on this one field, Pomigliano d'Arco A/D, Italy.
- 20 Lt. Col. W. R. Nevitt, Headquarters XII Tactical Air Command, visited our Intelligence Section, War Room, and Operations.  
Colonel Newton, C.O. of the 27th Fighter-Bomber Group, spent the day with Colonel Kofahl on the line.  
Lt. Col. Charles F. Cassidy, Jr., this date transferred from the Group.  
Group Headquarters softball team played the 527th Squadron Armament Section, score 7-5 in favor of Headquarters.
- 21 S/Sgt. Lakin of the S-1 Section left for the States on the rotation plan. He had just returned from the Rest Camp at Capri.  
Headquarters Enlisted Men played the Group Officers this evening, score ending 7-6 in favor of the EM.
-

NAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

Pomigliano d'Arco A/D, Italy

April 1944

Third week (Continued) -

- 22 Major Barrett relieved from his duties as Group Intelligence Officer. Major Jack C. Stern this date relieved from his duty as Group Engineering Officer. Captain Alfons Valukonis relieved from duty as Group Communications Officer. Captain Paul E. Versepud, in addition to his other duties, is appointed Group Intelligence Officer. Major James K. Thomas, Assistant Group Operations Officer, assumes the duty as Group Executive Officer. Lt. Col. Gilbert Mullins is appointed Deputy Group Commander. 1st Lt. Wilmer E. Bullard appointed Group Communications Officer. 1st Lt. Robert W. Thomas, in addition to his other duties, is appointed Assistant Group Operations Officer. Captain John C. P. Agnew, V Army ALO, from hospital to duty.

Fourth week -

- 23 Captain Nathan Drier, V Army ALO, arrived today to spend a week or so with this section.
- 24 A meeting was held this evening for all Squadron Intelligence Officers and ALO's. Future plans of these sections were discussed.
- 25 Six missions were flown today; our pilots scored 1 enemy A/C destroyed and also 1 probably destroyed.
- 26 Captain Versepud went to Command to procure escape kits for the group, also taking up the monthly report on same.
- 27 Stand-down because of weather.
- 28 Flight training for all pilots began today. Lectures and instructions were given by Colonel Kofahl and Captain Farnham. Captain Paul E. Versepud, in addition to his other duties, appointed Unit EFM Censor.

## WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

Posigliano d'Arco A/D, Italy

April 1944

## Fourth week (Continued) -

- 29 Big day - the anniversary of our sailing; one long, eventful year completed in foreign service. This afternoon we received word that we are supposed to evacuate this field, which the 79th Fighter will take over. In spite of the news that we had received about our moving, a party and dance was held for the officers of this group. Among some of the visitors were nurses from hospitals located nearby - also Bill Strand, CHICAGO TRIBUNE; Charles Seawood, Acme Pictures; S/Sgt. Arthur Everett and Sgt. Cowe, XII TAF PRO; and Captain McCloskey, 106th Station Hospital. The dance and party were a success and lasted till the wee hours of the morning. A party also was held by the enlisted men at the group mess hall, with plenty of beverages and sandwiches available. By the looks of some of the men, they were feeling no pain.
- 30 In spite of all the celebration last night, everyone was on the job this morning, packing, dismantling, and moving. We are headed for the Marcianise Airfield, formerly occupied by the 79th Fighter and only eight air miles northwest of the A/D and comfortable apartments we are now leaving.

30

Hq. 86th Fighter-Bomber Group  
Outline History - May 1944

HEADQUARTERS 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF  
APO 650

C/PZY/jwq

AG 314.7

31 May 1944

SUBJECT: Historical Records.

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

1. Outline History of Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group AAF for the period 1 May 1944 to 31 May 1944:

a. Present designation: Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group, XII Tactical Air Command.

b. Changes in organization:

- (1) Changes in designation: None.
- (2) Disposition of echelons or subordinate units: None.
- (3) Change of commanding officers: None.
- (4) Changes of staff officers: None.

Changes of other officers:

16 May - Capt. Wilfred W. Ring, O-517901, Assistant Group Intelligence Officer (photo intelligence), transferred to Hq. XII Air Force.

19 May - 1st Lt. Clayton S. Garber, O-917007, transferred from XII Tactical Air Command as Assistant Group Intelligence Officer.

20 May - 1st Lt. James H. Shaw, O-2044352, transferred from XII Tactical Air Command as Flight Control Officer.

25 May - Capt. Jesse W. Shaw, O-422956, Group Medical Officer, promoted to Major.

c. Strength, commissioned and enlisted:

(1) Month of May 1944:

49 enlisted men.

(a) At beginning: 27 officers, 2 warrant officers,

(b) Net increase: 7 enlisted men.

(c) Net decrease: 2 officers.

56 enlisted men.

(d) At end: 25 officers, 2 warrant officers,

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d. Stations;

- (1) Marcianise Airfield, Marcianise, Italy.
- (a) Date of arrival: 30 April 1944.

e. Movements: None.

f. Campaigns:

- (1) Name: Italy.
- (2) Duration: From 12 September 1943 (arrival of our advance echelon in Italy) - campaign still in progress.

g. Operations:

- (1) Campaign: Italy.
- (2) Nature of operations: Armed reconnaissance on motor transportation.
- (3) Number of missions and sorties for period 1 May 1944 to 31 May 1944: 199 missions and 1,576 sorties (for entire group).

(4) Results of the most important missions: See squadron histories following.

h. Commanding Officer in important missions: Seven missions flown by commanding officer, who participated on 24 May in mission that destroyed or damaged 58 enemy motor vehicles.

i. Losses in action: None.

j. Former and present members who have distinguished themselves in action: None.

2. Inclosed are War Diary, Headquarters 86th Fighter-Bomber Group AIF, for the period 1 May 1944 to 31 May 1944, Administrative Data Sheets (for Hq. 86th Fighter-Bomber Group and 311th Bombardment Squadron), five messages of commendation and appreciation, and one issue of fortnightly group newspaper.

For the Commanding Officer:

PAUL E. VERSEPUT,  
Captain, Air Corps,  
Group S-2.

Incl:

- 2 copies - War Diary
- 9 Supporting Documents:
- 2 Administrative Data Sheets
- 5 Messages of commendation
- 2 copies - INVADERS' INVENTORY-NEWS

GP-86-111-KF-D  
MARKER

WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF

- Group Headquarters -

Marcianise Airfield, Italy

May 1944

-----  
First Week  
-----

1 Our first day on this field. Lucky that our group is on a training period, for this enables us to make our set-up without much difficulty. We are setting up our offices in this order: War Room and ALO's; Intelligence; Operations. Directly across is the Communications and Crypt Office. We feel that being set up in this order will enable us to function more efficiently.

Our first night we witnessed a fatal take-off by a Beaufighter at about 2000 hours. After raising the plane to about 50 feet, the pilot crashed and burned at the end of the runway - cause unknown.

2 We owe many thanks to our mess officer and his staff, since, during the entire movement, we didn't miss a meal. Everyone is still pitching tents and getting organized.

3 Today the group lost Lt. Wheeler, 526th Sq. pilot, on a training flight. Otherwise things are about the same as the previous date.

4 Col. Robert C. Paul, former Group Commander, visited. Capt. Versepud, Group S-2, drove to Command to receive information on targets and to procure more escape purses. Today is the end of our training period - ready to resume operations.

5 Col. Harold E. Kofahl, Group CO, flew a sortie with the 526th Sq. Capt. Ring, Asst. Group S-2, drove to the Third Photo Unit at Pomigliano. Capt. Versepud, in addition to his other duties appointed Base Security Officer, is having some time driving the natives from the field. Only Italians permitted on the field are laundry women who have passes signed by Capt. Versepud. One A-36 of the 527th Sq. bellied in on the field. Escape knives distributed to Squadron Intelligence Officers.

648-55

WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

Marcianise Airfield, Italy

May 1944

- 
- 6 Returning from a morning mission, Lt. Charles R. Womack of 526th Sq. was seen to crash into the sea 15 miles off Anzio. The men are now having their Coca-Colas brought to them twice a week, along with other PX rations, at Capt. Jack B. Gross's Special Service tent.

---

Second Week

- 
- 7 2d Lt. Marvin R. Cain failed to return from a late afternoon post-holing mission - last seen about A-3311.
- 
- 8 Capt. Paul E. Verseput, Group S-2, formally appointed Base Security Officer of Marcianise Airfield.  
Lt. Col. Gilbert T. Mullins also appointed Base Deputy Commander.  
Capt. Jesse W. Shaw appointed Base Malaria Control Officer.  
Company A, 366th Infantry (colored troops), ordered to the field to be attached to the Security Battalion.
- 
- 9 Sgts. Unger, Lovett, and Sobina left for the AAF Rest Camp on the Isle of Capri. Sgt. Sobina is the second EV from this section to go. Brigadier General Gordon P. Saville, CG XII TAC, visited.
- 
- 10 2d Lt. David A. Waterman of the 527th Sq. landed safely in enemy-held territory, 5 miles SW of Manziana, after being hit by flak. Lt. Waterman waved to the flight after his landing, and no enemy troops were observed in the vicinity.  
General Saville again visited the organization.
- 
- 11 Today we shall never forget. On this date last year the 86th landed overseas at Oran, Algeria, on the north coast of Africa, after a weary, crowded 13-day voyage on the former Swedish ship, THE JOHN ERICSSON.  
As an anticlimax of the anniversary all missions were scrubbed on account of weather.
-

## WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

Marcianise Airfield, Italy

May 1944

- 12 Ken Dixon, AP; Bill Strand, CHICAGO TRIBUNE; and Sgt. Cowe, MAAF PRO, visited.

Today is D-Day of the new Big Push in Italy, H-Hour being eleven o'clock last night. In the mess tent in the evening, just before the semi-annual reading of the Articles of War, Capt. Versept "briefed" the Hq. enlisted men on the strategy and objectives of the new Allied offensive, illustrating with a map of the Cassino-Garigliano River areas.

The group received two flattering messages of commendation today, one from General Saville and the other from VIII Army Hq. Throughout the day the men could hear the low rumble of artillery less than three dozen miles over the northwestern horizon. Lt. Dean of the 527th Sq. crashed about ten miles west of the field, near the mouth of the Volturno - reason, oil leak. His body was found in the wrecked ship.

An unusual visitor called at the line in the afternoon, a certain Mr. Jones, head of the AAF Statistical School at the Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University. Mr. Jones, though a civilian, was dressed in officer's clothes and would be entitled to the privileged treatment of a colonel if the enemy should ever capture him.....

- 13 Capt. W. W. Ring, Asst. Group S-2, flew to Foggia to confer with A-2, XII Air Force.  
For a change, a movie both new and good was shown at the Air Corps Theater in Caserta - JACK LONDON.

Third Week

- 14 Before Mother's Day was four hours old, 25 enemy aircraft raided Naples harbor, about 14 air miles south of us. Since it was the first raid in our vicinity in our first fortnight at this field, most of the boys crawled out of their cots to watch the show.  
Later, in daylight, "Photo Freddie" made his most conspicuous appearance to date, with everyone turning out to look at the long, thick vapor trails.  
W/Sgt. Ralph H. Bell, until recently Group Sergeant Major, came out for a little visit en route from Africa to Bari on assignment.

## WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

Marcianise Airfield, Italy

May 1944

- 
- 14 At lunch two new Red Cross girls, a blonde and a brunette, stood at the end of the chow line and served doughnuts and coffee, later eating with the EM.
- 
- 15 Sgt. Blackburn, MAAP PRO, visited, seeking stories on our group's activities. Capt. Ring returned from Foggia only to pick up his things and tell us all good-bye. He went for a conference and ended up with a transfer. We shall all miss our affable and picturesque censor. Two correspondents visited, Wick Fowler of THE DALLAS NEWS and Gordon Grant of THE TAMPA TRIBUNE. The latter secured the names of all Florida men in the organization and interviewed Capt. Vincent K. Relyea, our Assistant Group Operations Officer from Lakeland, Florida. The versatile Mr. Grant also drew a pencil sketch of his subject, whom he instantly dubbed "the Flying Parson" (Capt. Relyea used to be a Nazarene preacher in Long Island and the New England States). Brigadier General Chidwell, C/S of XII TAC, visited Group Operations. Major Charles W. Kruck, from the XII AF Replacement, is assigned to this organization as Assistant Group Operations Officer. The day was rounded off with a rousing comedy at the Caserta cinema, ANDY HARDY'S BLONDE TROUBLE, and, for those so foolish as to remain at the field, a two-hour red alert that never materialized into anything more than very distant horizon flashes, but nevertheless forced us to turn off all lights during the early evening.
- 
- 16 Corp. Fred R. Troll, 33200399, transferred to Group Hq. and Group S-2 from Hq. V Army Air Support Control Section. Corp. Troll has worked for some time as the clerk of Capt. Agnew, the American ALO in the War Room, and specializes in photographs. Capt. Ring said a final good-bye and headed for Foggia. Photographers from XII Combat Camera Unit came to take pictures of demonstration flights by the 527th Sq. This unit also took similar photographs of our planes when we were at Gela, Sicily. Just after supper Capt. Jesse W. Shaw, the Group Surgeon, assembled the Hq. officers and EM in an outdoor semicircle behind the kitchen tent for a brief lecture on malaria control. Afterward there was the usual rush for the evening's volleyball game.
-

WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

Marcianise Airfield, Italy

May 1944

- 
- 17 In mid-morning Colonel Kofahl rushed into the S-2 tent to report that German prisoners were streaming out of the tenacious Montecassino Abbey.  
General Saville visited again.  
Major Jay R. Stout, our former Group Operations Officer, visited and informed us that he will shortly go to Corsica as A-3 of the 87th Fighter Wing.  
In the late afternoon we were electrified to learn that Lt. Drew, pilot of the 525th Sq., had returned after being missing for months in the hills behind the enemy lines.
- 
- 18 All officers and men were ordered to go through the gas chamber this afternoon and check their gas masks.  
Reported at long last - fall of the Abbey and Cassino.  
The mess officer, Capt. Gross, issued "chow tickets" for those authorized to eat at Hq. mess, with special arrangements for early chow. There have been too many "guests," 'twould seem.  
Sgts. Sobina, Lovett, and Unger back from Capri after more than a week (instead of three days) there; Jerry helped by mining the Bay of Naples.
- 
- 19 Today the group gained six enlisted men and one officer, 1st Lt. Clayson S. Garber, assigned as Assistant Group S-2.  
Flew only four missions today, being stood down for part of the day on account of bad weather over targets.
- 
- 20 William Randolph Hearst, Jr., and Major Wesley of AAF/MTD Photo Officer, visited Group Operations and Intelligence. They also had lunch at our group mess with Major Kirsch and Capt. Verseput, spending the rest of the day around the field.  
Afternoon missions were scrubbed on account of rain, but after the weather cleared, one of the squadrons flew a nightcap.  
Capt. Verseput, Group Intelligence Officer, and Capt. Oldman, British ALO, gave a talk to the 321st Squadron this evening. They surveyed the present ground and air situation in Italy, presenting a sort of orientation on the current offensive.
-

## WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

Marcianise Airfield, Italy

May 1944-----  
Fourth Week

- 21 General Cannon, accompanied by Lt. Col. Mullins, Group Deputy Commander, visited this group. Today's No. 1 project was a new latrine built by the enlisted personnel of the operations and intelligence sections. The old one did not come up to the specifications of Capt. Shaw, the Group Medical Officer - "hope this one does."
- 22 A new shower for the personnel in this area has been erected across the road from us. It will save us a lot of time in running up to Caserta.
- 23 Regardless of bad weather over targets, the group flew ten missions. One P-40 of the 527th Sq. crashed on runway when the landing gear collapsed. Pilot was not injured.
- 24 General Cannon visited the group and congratulated us on the splendid job we did today. Our successful bag included 134 enemy motor trucks destroyed and 74 damaged. Col. Kofahl flew a mission. A commendation was also received from General Saville. Lt. Plowden returned after being absent over enemy territory since December 9, 1943.
- 25 Capt. Shaw, Group Medical Officer, promoted to Major. The group had another field day, one of the best we've had in this campaign. Our pilots destroyed 216 M/T's and damaged 253. This is the sort of days we want, as the morale among the officers and enlisted men is tops. Our losses for today were two aircraft and one pilot, Lt. Wood. Lt. Delny is safe at a hospital somewhere on the former Anzio beachhead (the two front lines were joined this morning).  
Effective today the Group Intelligence will receive the Bomb Safe Line instead of Group Operations. In turn, our section will notify Group Operations, the ALO tent, and all Squadron S-2's. By the way, the Bomb Safe Line is taking gratifyingly big leaps forward along the western Italian coast after these months of stagnation at Cassino and along the Garigliano River. In fact, we have to change the BSL almost hourly now.  
Total sorties for the group today was 86 - highest since October 30, 1943, more than half-a-year ago.

WAR DIARY OF THE 86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP AAF (Continued)

- Group Headquarters -

Marcianise Airfield, Italy

May 1944

---

26 Capt. Tyson, flak intelligence, MAAF, and Lt. Curry, from MAAF Intelligence and Air Summary Section, visited here. The group flew nine missions and seventy-two sorties and had another successful day, destroying 112 enemy trucks and damaging 136. A lecture on chemical warfare scheduled for this evening was cancelled. Mr. Green and a British officer from MAAF, Ops Analysis, visited Group S-2 and talked with Capt. Verseput.

---

Fifth Week

---

28 Lt. Garber joined the Group S-2 section after hospitalization.

---

29 This morning General Saville came to lecture to our pilots in the War Room. Tonight at sundown we inaugurated "home movies" on the outdoor screen in our area - a genuine novelty to mark the completion of our thirteen months overseas today.

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30 This evening a lecture by Major Shaw on chemical warfare was held in our bivouac area.

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31 Major Sherry, Assistant A-2, XII Air Force, visited S-2 section.

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HEADQUARTERS FIFTH ARMY  
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL  
APO USA

*No 86 For Bomb Gp  
6th Div (1)  
May 44*

5 June 1944

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : Commanding General, Twelfth Air Force

THROUGH: Commanding General, XII Tactical Air Command

1. I wish to convey to you the Fifth Army's appreciation and admiration of the magnificent air support which we have received throughout the offensive operations which have resulted in the capture of Rome and the destruction of so much of the enemy's forces and material.

2. From my point of view this has been a demonstration of air support to the ground forces approaching perfection. The XII Tactical Air Command and all other units of your command which have engaged in these operations have at all times given immediate response to every call for assistance with prompt and effective results, which have caused great damage to the enemy's supply lines and troops. The splendid aggressive action of the supporting air units has enabled us to show the enemy how irresistible the air-ground combination can become.

3. I shall be very grateful if you would convey my personal thanks and those of the Fifth Army to all elements of your command who have been involved in this victory.

/s/ Mark W. Clark  
MARK W. CLARK,  
Lieutenant General, U.S.A.  
Commanding.

A TRUE COPY

*Herbert S. Warwick*

HERBERT S. WARWICK  
1st Lt., 4.C.,  
Historian.

1st Inf.

HEADQUARTERS, XIII TACTICAL AIR COMMAND, APO 374, US Army, 5 June 1944

TO: Commanding General Twelfth Air Force, APO 650, U.S. Army

1. This expression of the effectiveness of ground-air cooperation from the ground force point of view is but one side of the picture. The splendid and whole-hearted cooperation of the Fifth Army with Air Force programs is, and has been, a model of perfection and completes the picture.
2. The Ground-air team, in a coordinated effort, is a battle-winning and campaign-winning combination in all land operations.

/s/ Gordon P. Saville  
GORDON P. SAVILLE  
Brigadier General, U. S. Army  
Commanding.

A TRUE COPY:

*Herbert S. Warwick*  
HERBERT S. WARWICK,  
1st Lt., A.C.,  
Historian.