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JULY 1943

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379 BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON

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Jul, 1943379th Bombardment Squadron (M)  
310th Bombardment Group (M), AAF

1 August 1943

**P.R.C.**

SUBJECT: Squadron History for July.

TO : Headquarters, 310th Bombardment Group (M), APO-520.

During the month of July the 310th Bombardment Group flew nineteen (19) bombing missions and our squadron participated in all but two (2) of these. The first eleven (11) of these raids were over Sicily; first, concentrating on knocking out enemy airdromes in the Gerbini group and the Sciacca plus one airdrome target in Sardinia at Milis. All of these operations were in preparation for, and then supporting the Allied invasion of Sicily which took place on 10 July 1943. The scarcity of enemy opposition from the air during this invasion indicates the success of our attacks on enemy airdromes during the first half of July.

The next two missions were directed at the city of Enna in Sicily, first striking the city itself and then the railroads yards, all in support of our forces ground operations now in full swing on this strategically important island.

With the situation well in hand in Sicily and our troops rapidly engulfing the island the Northwest African Strategic Air Force now turned its attention to Italy itself. Our remaining eight (8) missions for this month were therefore directed at Mussolini's backyard itself. Targets were successfully attacked at Vibo Valentia airdrome, Naples railroad yards, Monte Corvino airdromes, Battipaglia marshalling yards, Crotone airdrome, Scalea landing ground, Pratica di Mare airdrome, and Rome Ciampino airdrome.

The raid on Vibo Valentia airdrome on 16 July 1943, was particularly successful. This was a coordinated attack by both the 310th and 321st groups. Damage assessment shown by photographic reconnaissance indicated that fifty (50) out of a total of seventy eight (78) enemy aircraft on this airdrome were destroyed as a result of this attack. The 379th participated in the mission furnishing twelve (12) of the thirty six (36) planes sent out by the group.

On 17 July 1943, we participated in a large scale attack on Naples. Over five hundred (500) planes carried out this mission, thirty six (36) of which were from our group, under the able command of the 379th Squadron Commander, Captain Batten. Our own Squadron's contribution was twelve (12) planes. Again our boys demonstrated the high degree of combat efficiency they have attained when they destroyed the marshalling yards and adjoining installations consisting of an oil storage dump and the royal arsenal. On their return several of our men remarked on the thepyrothechnic display provided by the explosives and fires coming from these latter two targets. In fact the concussion of the largest explosion was distinctly felt at their altitude of 12,000 feet.

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The Rome Ciampino airdrome target undoubtedly provided the highlight of the month. On July 19, 1943, Rome was given its first taste of the sort of punishment "dished out" by our American Air Forces. A total of approximately five hundred (500) American bombers struck at the very heart of Italy on this day. The 310th's contribution was 72 planes, its largest mission to date, of which our squadron furnished eighteen (18). We are proud of our part in making 19 July 1943, a day that will long be remembered by Hitler's down under stooges.

There is a member of our squadron who also will mark 19 July 1943, as a never to be forgotten day. That is our quiet and congenial bombardier, 1st Lt. Howard J. Ross. The raid over Rome was Lt. Ross' fiftieth (50). Congratulations were extended to Howard by all, particularly that night when the quantities of "vino" consumed reached such proportions that even the native French, who drink it like water, were given new records to shoot at.

Just as there are days we long remember, there are also those days we like to forget as quickly as possible. July 20 was one of those days for our squadron suffered its only casualty of the month when one of our planes went down over Monte Corvino airdrome. The crew of this plane, now missing in action, are as follows:

1st Lt. Robert L. Harrop (P)  
 2nd Lt. Carl N. Speidel (CP)  
 T/Sgt. Gilbert E. Henderson (B)  
 S/Sgt. Joseph L. Beaty (G)  
 Sgt. Chester Barton (RG)

The weather at our King's Cross base will not be forgotten very quickly by the men of the 379th. Undoubtedly, down to the last man the punishing heat was a new and most unpleasant experience. Day after day, during the month of July, the temperature rose to heights not infrequently in excess of 120 degrees. As this blistering heat reached its maximum in the afternoon, our planes viewed from some distance away across the landing area became shimmering distorted objects and looked as if they were melting away. Line personnel of the 379th who had the task of working on these planes during these times still claim it was no illusion and that the planes were actually hot enough to melt. To add to our discomfort several days brought us our first encounters with the North African Sirocco, those searing winds which come sweeping up from the desert and seem to singe the very hair on your head. This weather was climaxed by a real dust storm late in the afternoon on 22 July 1943. A terrific wind, estimated by our group weather officer, Captain Cole, at 45 miles per hour, suddenly swept over us ripping down tents and scattering official and personal papers to the four corners of the base. We then found out for the first time, how useful those G.I. goggles and dust respirators could be. Some unfortunates who did not have these items of equipment using typical American resourcefulness, pressed gas masks into use as a substitute and apparently they did the trick.

The entire squadron turned out on 26 July 1943, to pay homage to a number of our combat crew members. A formation was held for the awarding of Air Medals and Oak Leaf Clusters earned by our men. The award of 6th and 7th Clusters to some of the "old timers" was a reminder to the rest of us that time is not far off when many of them will be hitting their coveted fiftieth mission.

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During the month of July we welcomed fourteen (14) new officers and men into the squadron and said so long to six (6) officers and men who left.

The new members were:

1st Lt. David W. Clay  
 2nd Lt. Frank W. Abraham  
 2nd Lt. Thomas J. Hallahan  
 2nd Lt. David Ryder  
 2nd Lt. Thomas H. Phelps  
 2nd Lt. Joseph Moore  
 F/O. Austin E. Chandler  
 F/O. Robert M. McCue  
 S/Sgt. Harry E. McArdle  
 Sgt. Dmere P. Barnes  
 Sgt. Edward J. Anderson  
 Sgt. Stanislaus Ciach  
 Cpl. James Knapp  
 Pvt. Donald J. Fitzgerald

Those leaving were:

2nd. Lt. Arvid A Pamp	Sgt. Lester W. Edwards
T/Sgt. Fred F. Hecks	Cpl. Alvin McNeill
S/Sgt. William P. Horn	Pvt. Edwin Nelson

On 27 July 1943, Major General James H. Doolittle commended the entire 47th Wing on the excellence and effectiveness of its attacks on targets in Sicily and Italy thus contributing very much toward the success of the Allied effort in this theater. Brigadier General C.H. Ridenour added his own commendation to this on 31 July 1943. All in all, we look back at July as a very successful month for the 379th.

ELLSWORTH C. KNIGHT JR.  
 1st Lt., Air Corps.  
 Ass't Sq. S-2

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