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Sheet No. 1, War Diary of the Sixty-Sixth Fighter Sqdn., APO 650.
Month of August, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Capt., A. C.

DAYEVENTS

- 1 Our first mission of the day took off at about 0930 hrs. The show returned two hours later and one a/c, No. 77 piloted by 1st Lieutenant Quenton J. Goss, had landed safely at the 79th Group's field. The electrical system had gone out. An accident occurred this morning at the N end of the runway when an a/c of the French group taxied in front of a 64th Sqdn., a/c. The French ship was chopped in two and the 64th a/c was badly damaged. No one was hurt.
- 2 Two missions to-day; one early in the morning and one which returned to land at 1730 hrs. 2nd Lieutenant Gordon H. Jones did not return from the first mission; he was seen to go into the bomb run but he did not pull up and the a/c crashed near Susa, Italy. Lt. Jones had been with us but a short time, since the first day of June. Beer was issued to the enlisted men this evening, three bottles per man. There was a very small amount of mail to-day.
- 3 We had an early take off this morning at 0700 hrs. and another at 1400 hrs. One of our a/c had mechanical trouble while over enemy territory but the pilot was able to bring his ship back to the island and make a forced landing at Calvi. Men left this morning for passes in Rome.
- 4 Take off at 0530 hrs. this morning. On the enlisted men's bulletin board this morning was a notice to 17 men who had applied for transfer to new B-29 units to be ready to leave soon; 48 hr. notice
- 5 In preparation for the much awaited extensive operations, we were released for the day in order to put the planes in tip top shape. Major Leaf spoke to the men of the line and announced the allocation of duties which was required due to the transfer of many of our men to the B-29 outfits. Capt Skoropowski, Adjutant, assumed the duties of Engineering Officer and Lt. Sexauer, Communication Officer, became our new Adjutant.

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In the afternoon, training flights were conducted for the new pilots. 2nd Lieutenant Robert F. Bittner was killed when his plane stalled out while making his approach of the field.

- 6 As our part of one of the biggest days that the 12th T.A.C. has experienced, three missions of 36 sorties were flown. The first show found us escorting B-26's, whose target (a railroad bridge in the Rhone Valley) was bombed with excellent results; our last two missions were the routine dive bombing of enemy communication lines in the Po Valley. Morale jumped a hundred per cent when the mail clerk announced at chow "lots of mail". In the evening, "See Here Private Hargroves" was shown and the general comment of the men was that it depicted army life in true G.I. style.
- 7 Our first mission was a bomber escort to B-25's, who once again bombed communication lines in Southern France. Fighter bomber pilots have always contended that they obtain more accuracy and better results in their bombing than the mediums, and, in our second and last mission for the day, our pilots substantiated their boast by scoring many direct hits on a railroad bridge in the Po Valley.
- 8 The schedule for the day called for three planes, part of an eight ship group anti shipping mission, which was followed by a twelve ship flight on the milk run to the Po Valley against enemy communication lines. During the last few weeks we have managed to buy for the mess a fair supply of fresh vegetables such as tomatoes, onions, peppers and potatoes. We only hope this treat continues for awhile. The picture "Going My Way" starring Bing Crosby was shown tonight and the squadron movie critics unanimously gave the picture "four stars". We can't see enough pictures of this type.
- 9 Inclement weather forced our planes to return to base when the B-25's decided that the overcast was too thick to fly through. A technicolor picture is being made of the 57th Fighter Group to tell the story of a tactical unit in the

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Sheet No. 3, War Diary of Sixty-Sixth Fighter Sqdn., APO 650.
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same manner that "Memphis Belle" depicted the life of the bomber boys. As yet no name has been given the picture. Camera men and technicians supervised by Lt. Colonel Wyler, one of Hollywood's ace directors, have been roaming through the squadrons filming the various activities of the men. This afternoon the cameras, to catch a twelve ship formation of our squadron were put aboard our B-25, but photographers found this task impractical; later on they filmed a four ship formation with much better results. Six planes from each squadron have special cameras attached for the purpose of shooting pictures of dive bombing runs and strafing runs. Rumor is that the picture should be ready for release in the States around February 1945.

- 10 8 a/c were off before 0600 to attack gun positions in the Savona area; the second and third shows for the day were repeats on the same target but bad weather forced the last flight to return home. While attempting to form up over the field during the second mission, 2nd Lieutenant James R. Lord dived to catch his leader, misjudged his distance, and plunged into the sea. Arch Bishop Spellman very unexpectedly dropped into Group to celebrate mass and then welcomed the men individually. This was his second visit to the Group, first having been at El Djem, Tunisia. In the evening, a few of the men from the squadron took a trip over to the field of the 86th Fighter Group to watch Joe Louis display a few of the finer points of fisticuffs.
- 11 The heaviest rains of the season rendered the field unserviceable for the day; three shows had been scheduled but all missions were cancelled. Three new men joined the squadron today to replace the three men who left on rotation in June. Two weeks ration of canteen supplies and American beer were issued; six cans of beer at one time is a rare treat but we must now wait two weeks to quench our thirst.
- 12 The field and taxi strips were still unserviceable in the morning from rain but later on in the day three missions were flown against gun positions, the same targets that had been bombed two days previously.

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A B-24, flying near the field, was seen to crash; a few minutes later, ten parachutes were seen floating in the air and all ten crew members landed safely. Ahua, the oldest canine member of the squadron, having joined us in the Desert in January 1943, is now the proud mother of five pups. A thorough investigation is being made by Major Leaf to establish the paternity of the pups but to date, all efforts have been in vain.

13 At the crack of dawn, a group of 36 planes, led by 12 a/c of this squadron, set course to strafe the airdrome at Bergamo, Italy. Due to the depleted number of the once invincible Luftwaffe, pickings were few. Twenty men, three additional names having been added the previous night, left to-day to return to the States before being assigned to B-29 outfits. The tentative plan is that they will be given a short furlough before being sent to school for a brush up course, and then off to parts unknown. Our loss is a great gain for some Super Fortress unit as we have sent many of our best men. In the evening, the picture "Uncertain Glory" was shown.

14 No missions to-day but plenty of hard work to strive for a hundred percent status. At a late afternoon formation, General Cannon officially awarded the 57th Group its third Presidential Citation for the havoc and destruction rained upon enemy communication lines in Italy on 14 April 1944. Majors Leaf and Benedict were presented with the highly coveted Silver Star and Lt. H. R. Williams received the Distinguished Flying Cross. A gen talk was held at group this evening at which Lt. Colonel Knight gave a short talk. Captain League, our new A.L.O., then disclosed the "big picture" for the forthcoming Southern France invasion. Every last pilot and ground man realizes the importance of this attack, and regardless of the long hours and hard work that it may entail, we are determined to do our utmost in inflicting what we feel will be the decisive blow in the crushing of the Nazis.

15 In support of the "D" day invading forces in Southern France, planes of all types and description flew over this island in

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Sheet No. 5 War Diary of Sixty-Sixth Fighter Sqdn., APO 650.

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incredible numbers. One hour before dawn, four a/c, led by Major Leaf, had set course to dive bomb gun installations and then patrol over the beachhead. Immediately following the first take off, plane after plane became airborne and by 0800 hrs., there was seventeen flights of the group in the air. By nightfall, this squadron had flown nine missions—a bloody good show in any man's league.

16 The air arm continues and the day's operations called for three shows: a bomber escort, dive bombing of gun positions, and an armed recce. In the second mission, 2nd Lieutenant Thomas H. Callan, his aircraft badly hit by flak, was forced to ditch his plane near Hyres Island, France; subsequently, he was picked up by a mine trawler, transferred to an L.S.T. which returned him to Corsica.

17 Three shows, two armed recces and a patrol were flown to-day and a fourth scheduled mission was abortive due to weather. While making his bomb run over the target in the Rhone Valley, Captain Roy C. Emerson's aircraft was evidently hit by flak as he was not seen again by other members of the flight. With operations in Southern France advancing far beyond original expectation, with the Yanks closing in on Paris and annihilating the German 7th Army in the process, with the Russians commencing their drive through Prussia, morale in the Squadron has reached an all time peak. An excellent picture, "Show Business" was shown in the evening.

18 Heavy operations continue with a delousing mission and two armed recces becoming airborne. During the third mission, 1st Lieutenant Howard W. Danks' aircraft developed engine trouble and he was forced to land at an emergency landing ground on the beachhead. When returning to the home base, the remainder of the flight encountered torrential rainstorms and their field closed in solid. They were directed to land at Piombino L.G. Italy where 2nd Lieutenant Howard W. Cleveland was killed when his aircraft crashed with that of 2nd Lieutenant James J. Fleming; the latter was not injured. The remaining five a/c returned to land at Borgo. A two weeks ration of mail made its appearance to-day.

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- 19 The heavy rains of the previous days rendered the field un-serviceable for the greater part of the morning. However four missions were flown before darkness crept in. 2nd Lieut. Bobby J. Pridgeon dropped from the "virgin class" to-day when he chalked up an ME 109 to his credit over France. Pay Rockwell, the squadron's favorite Red Cross girl, served coffee and doughnuts in the evening and then left several enlisted men hiding their heads in shame when she decisively trounced them in ping pong. The picture, "Shine On Harvest Moon", was shown tonight.
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- 20 Three dive bombing missions against gun positions in France, a bomber escort and an armed recce into the Po Valley rounded out a full day. The armed recce proved most costly to the Germans when flight leaders reported to the I.O. that they had destroyed four engines, numerous R.R. cars, several M.T. and then called it a day by strafing a landing ground which resulted in four a/c destroyed and four damaged. The Articles of War were read at a squadron meeting of the enlisted men and the First Sergeant then set forth the instructions for the forthcoming move, "A" Party should now be prepared to move on a few hours notice. "Meet The People" was the picture shown this evening.
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- 21 A rather quiet day as the directive called for only two shows. 1st Lieutenant Howard W. Danks returned to the squadron after his forced landing on the beach head. He was immediately be-seiged with questions as to what the country had to offer, was wine and champagne plentiful, what were the French Madamesoilles like, and that question, so vital to the existance of this squadron, " how about the scrounging"
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- 22 That familiar dirge, so dreaded by the mechanics and armorers, of put wing tanks on, no - hang bombs, then back to wing tanks, taxi out, mission cancelled, and taxi back resounded throughout the line during the early part of the morning. The flight, an armed recce and our only show for the day, finally became airborne at 1130 hrs; it was the longest mission this squadron has ever flown, 3:45 minutes of flight. Before the movie "Action in Arabia", was shown Captain League, our A.L.O. gave the gen on the favorable progress of Allied Troops in southern France.

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23 The first of our three shows for the day left the engineering status in rather an unfavorable condition. When a/c #77 was being pre-flighted for the mission, the plane suddenly caught fire and burned to the ground. Returning from the flight, 2nd Lieut. Harry L. Gogan made a belly landing on the field and 2nd Lieut. Louis J. Pernicka was forced to land on the French beach head due to electrical trouble. Before he had climbed out of his cockpit, an old Frenchman was standing by the aircraft holding a bottle of wine out to him; he returned to the squadron later on in the day. The radio announced the fall of Paris to-day. On 5 June Rome was ours, and now ten short weeks later, the capital of another occupied country resounds to the clatter of American G.I.' shoes marching over the cobblestone streets.

24 The day's activity amounted to two missions, both being armed reces. Nine days after the invasion of Southern France still finds us stationed in Corsica. With prospects of a move not imminent, a general feeling of unrest has swept throughout the squadron. During our two years of operations, we have moved at every forward thrust of the bomb line and the men now feel that they are being left out of the big show. However, maybe the day isn't too far in the future when orders will be received for "A" party to leave. In the evening the picture "Double Indemnity" was shown.

25 Two missions, a dive bombing show to Southern France and an attack on a highway bridge in Italy, were flown to-day. A drive to break the German held Gothic line has been started and for the next few days we will once again be operating in the Po Valley in an effort to complete the strangle campaign against enemy communication lines. Once daily we take an Atebrine pill to reduce our susceptibility to malaria and its reaction on some of the men is amusing. Their skin assumes a yellowish hue bringing forth any number of jibes and ribbing, questioning the veracity of their claims to American ancestry.

26 An anti-shipping mission to Savona Harbor and an armed recce in the Po Valley constituted the day's flying activity. A short time back Carbines were issued to replace Springfield M-1903's; sub-machine guns were not exchanged and pilots retained their trusty 45's. In the evening, a number of the enlisted men were taken to the firing range where they

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shot enough rounds to famalarize themselves with the re-
 action of the Carbine. Two treats were in store to-day,
 a two week's ration of six bottles of Rupperts beer was
 issued and two large mail calls were held.

27 Communication lines in Northern Italy suffered a few more
 damaging blows to-day when two armed recces rained bombs
 on highway installations. In the afternoon, the enlisted
 men who had not tested their Carbines the previous day,
 were given their chance on the firing range. At a squadron
 meeting of the enlisted men, Major Mallet read a few excerpts
 from the Articles of War pertaining to looting "Scrounging"
 in France should be plentiful and every effort is now being
 made to discourage such actions. F/S Pettis announced that,
 due to a recent memorandum, we would lose our Italian K.P.'s
 on the morrow; the native Corsicans will remain with us
 until we leave the island. The picture, "Mask of Dimetrias",
 was shown in the evening.

28 Three missions to-day, all to Italy; an early morning anti-
 shipping show, a bomber escort and an armed recce. During
 the past few days, fresh fruits and vegetables have made
 more frequent visits to our tables than ever before. We
 owe thanks to our mess sergeant, T/S Frank Cassidy, who has
 spent many hours trading and bargaining with the natives in
 an effort to keep the troops happy on the "Chow" situation.

29 A bomber escort and an armed recce, both to Italy, were the
 extent of our missions for the day. A visit to our Intelligence
 Department will find a "war room" that is comparable to the
 best any fighter squadron can offer. Map coverage and bomb
 lines of every front and theater of operations adorn the
 sides of the tent; a news summary is published daily by our
 Radio Dept. and put on the bulletin board. In accordance
 with a squadron policy, a steady influx of men filter
 through the tent daily to keep informed on the recent de-
 velopment of world activities. A G.I. swing band and the
 picture, "Summer Storm", furnished an excellent evening's
 entertainment.

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- 30 Two routine armed recces were flown to-day; however it was 0200 hours of the following morning before the mechanics "hit the sack". As orders came through late in the evening to hang wing tanks on 16 a/c for an early morning show. Word was received to-day that 2nd Lieut. Mervin J. Hitchcock, who has been M.I.A. since 25 May 1944, is now a P.O.W. A U.S.O. stage show, featuring three American glamor girls, was held this evening.
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- 31 16 a/c were off bright and early to escort B-25's to the Venice Area, Italy. During an anti-shipping mission along the coast of Italy, a 300 foot M/V was sighted camouflaged beneath a submarine net. 1st Lieutenant William R. Hill led the flight in an excellent bomb run which resulted in many direct hits on the vessel; as yet, Tac-R has not confirmed the extent of the damage. Since arriving on this field, we have had the 4th French Fighter Group as our neighbors. To-day their "A" party departed for France and smiles blossomed from the face of every last man as the convoy made its way along the road for their homeland.

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Sheet No. 10, War Diary of the 66th Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650.
 Month of August, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Capt., A.C.

Special Account of Mission No. 795 of 20 August, 1944.

A/C PILOT

89 Davenport
 72 Hutton
 91 Bracha
 78 Goss

A/C PILOT

83 Bettinger
 95 Gogan
 76 Moody
 94 Dodds

Duty: 8 a/c to recce area from Nice to Turin. All a/c with 500 lbs bombs 1/10 delay.

Narrative: Formation headed on course climbing to 10,000 feet coming in over target area at 1800 feet. Lead flight under Lieut. Davenport, accounted for the following: 1 a/c bombed R.R. bridge, being repaired at J24-38 knocking out remaining span. 3 a/c bombed R.R. bridge at J30-44, cutting track on N approach. Flight strafed a string of 10 cars with two engines at J15-39 facing S.W. Both engines were destroyed, 3 M/T strafed and left flamer at J21-43. One engine with 30 cars heading S.W. at J31-45 strafed engine, destroyed. Marshalling yard at J11-36, containing 6 engines, one with steam up and 30 plus R.R. wagons, strafed. Engine with steam up destroyed. The flight with Lieut. Bettinger leading accounted for the following: Road bridge at J33-40 bombed. Two hits on west approach and 6 hits on E approach scored. The L.G. at J23-48 was strafed. Lieut. Bettinger destroyed two Italian bi-planes flamer and damaged one. Lieut. Dodds destroyed one (flamer) damaged two. Lieut. Moody one flamer. Lieut. Gogan one damaged. These a/c were all on the east side of the field. On the N.E. corner, eight additional bi-planes were observed, but lack of gas caused flight to return. Scattered M/T observed in area around Turin. Ground fire from L.G. No e/a. Weather 5/10 clouds from 8 to 10,000 feet. Intense ground haze to 5,000 feet limiting visibility to 6 miles. Scattered clouds over water and Po Valley. All a/c returned safely. 8 sorties.

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