

RESTRICTED

SA F.I. 66. HI
JULY - 1955
A

F.R.C. ✓

64 57302

~~SECRET~~

RESTRICTED

✓

6901-16

ST-51-26-41
10-1-45

DESIGNATION SECRET

RESTRICTED

Historical Records

AIR FORCE:

Twelfth Air Force

R

COMMAND:

SUB-COMMAND:

GROUP:

57th Fighter Gp

UNIT:

66 Fighter Sq

Documents Transmitted:

(Period Covered)

OUTLINE HISTORY:

31 July 1945

WAR DIARY:

10.11.45

SPECIAL ACCOUNTS:

PHOTOGRAPHS:

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

SECRET

S E C R E T

66TH FIGHTER SQ

OUTLINE HISTORY, Jul 45

HEADQUARTERS
66TH FIGHTER SQUADRON
APO 650

S E C R E T
By Auth CO
66th Ftr Sq
Initials: ccf.
Date: 1 Jul 45

ABI-ANA/lwh

12AF-ABI-H1

3 August 1945

SUBJECT: Historical Records.

TO: Commanding General
Twelfth Air Force
APO 650
ATTENTION: Historian

1. Outline History of the 66th Fighter Squadron, 57th Fighter Group for the period 1 July 1945 to 31 July 1945.

- a. Present designation: 66th Fighter Squadron, 57th Fighter Group, Twelfth Air Force.
- b. Changes in organization: No change.
- c. Strength, Commissioned and Enlisted.
 - (1) Month of July 1945
 - (a) At beginning: 54 Off, 243 EM
 - (b) Net Increase: 5 EM
 - (c) Net Decrease: 15 Off
 - (d) At end : 39 Off, 248 EM
- d. Stations of unit.
 - (1) Bagnoli, Italy (Staging Area #3)
 - (a) Date of arrival: 15 July 1945
 - (b) Date of departure: present station
- e. Movements of unit.
 - (1) From Grosseto, Italy, to Bagnoli, Italy (Staging Area #3)
 - (a) Purpose: Change of station preparatory to oversea water movement
 - (b) 14 July--15 July 1945.
 - (c) Rail travel.
 - (d) Weather: fair, hot; fairly modern Italian coaches with U.S. engine; travel exceedingly slow.
- f. Campaigns: None.
- g. Operations: None.

66-10000
 OCT 1945
 0002

6991-16

S E C R E T

RESTRICTED

S E C R E T

12AF-ABI-H1

- h. Command Officers in important missions:
No missions flown.
- i. Losses in action: none.
- j. Personnel who have distinguished themselves in action:
 - (a) 1st Lt Richard W. Kruse was awarded the SILVER STAR for gallantry in action while participating in aerial combat in a P-47 type aircraft.
- 2. Inclosed is Unit Journal of Events, 66th Fighter Squadron, 57th Fighter Group, for the period 1 July 1945 to 31 July 1945, inclusive.

Charles C. Leaf
CHARLES C. LEAF
Lieutenant Colonel, Air Corps,
Commanding

- 1 Incl
- Incl 1 - Unit Journal of
Events, 66th
Ftr Sq, 1 Jul
45-31 Jul 45,
incl (quad)

2

S E C R E T

12AF-ABI-H2

S E C R E TGrosseto &
Bagnoli, Italy

UNIT JOURNAL OF EVENTS: 66th Ftr Sq, 57th Ftr Gp.
Prepared by A.N. Apostolou, Capt, AC. Month of July 1945.

1. It was a quiet, balmy Sunday here today. Outside of church services, the morning was relatively still and indolent. Most of the men slept through the hot hours before noon, a few promenaded through Grosseto's lazy vias. In the afternoon the squadron shook off its apparent lethargy --- many GIs boarded trucks of the 547th Service Group for the beach at San Rocco, while still more patronized the ever-popular Red Cross ice-cream bar.

2. Siena, centuries-old walled city sixty miles north of Grosseto, today dipped into the past to display a modern authentic re-enactment of medieval Europe. Among the thousands of spectators milling through the historic town during the "Palio", as the pageant is called, were several men of the Sixty-Sixth, who had travelled to Siena on a Red Cross jaunt.

Highlighting the panorama of the color and life that flourished here over 500 years ago, according to the Squadron GIs who were on hand, was the incongruously-comical sight of an inebriated American soldier perched on the top of a flag-pole, waving gaily in mock-Fascist salutes to the laughing crowd below.

3. For the large group of the squadron personnel, today was the first day of school---GI style. The two sections that have a bare minimum of skilled men, engineering and radio, this morning began classes to familiarize the newcomers with tasks they will be called upon for in the Pacific mission of the unit. Civilian representatives of the Pratt and Whitney and Republic Aircraft Companies, manufacturers of the P-47, took over the Schooling of the Sixty-Sixth mechanics. Aiding the instructors were several movable charts, models, and diagrams, all explaining the various intricacies of the Thunderbolt. The radio-men attended their first classes in the Group theater, located several blocks from the EM quarters.

4. Sanelly and safely, the men of the Sixty-Sixth spent the Fourth of July in a manner as quiet and peaceful as the drowsy town in which they are quartered. Like all the other holidays which have a poignant home-touch, today brought a flood of memories to most of the GIs here. Uppermost in the minds of the men---especially on such occasions as this---is the question of the route Squadron will follow toward its Pacific destiny: via the States or--(ugh)--direct? Although, at first, it was apparently certain that this organization would head straight for an oriental base near Japland, a hopeful, possibly wishful-thinking, doubt has filtered through the ranks of the GIs

that, perhaps, a stop-over at home would be first on the new itinerary.

5. Notice has been served by the local finance office that the June payroll for the Italians who staff the Sixty-Sixth dining-hall was the last. From now on it will be up to the Squadron to dole out the salaries of the civilian employees. First Sergeant Mack gave this unpleasant bit of news to the men, asking them to think the matter over during the next few days. From the conversations of the GIs here, it is obvious that it would be far better for each man to contribute a few paltry lire to scrape up the required money, rather than to fall back to the sordid and, in fact, nasty, routine of mess-kits, chow-lines, kitchen police, and all the other vulgarities that mark most military chow-halls over seas.

6. Shakedown inspections of the clothing and personal equipment of all the enlisted men in the Squadron---easily one of the most unwelcome of military customs---kept the Sixth-Sixth GIs busy during the daylight hours today. But the inconvenience caused by the unpacking, folding and displaying, and then re-packing of the collective possessions of the men did have its bright side: it meant that another step before this unit departs for Shangri-La (or the States) had been cleared.

Even brighter than this, however, was the signing of the supplementary payroll by the newly-joined members of the organization, who, for the most part, are hitting rocky financial straits.

7. The nags were running at Grosseto Downs today in seven horse and mule races staged by a neighboring US service squadron. Men of the Sixty-Sixth, not adverse to the mild temptation of the GI pari-mutuals, flocked to the track this afternoon, cast bets, and, for the most part, came up with a few winners---the ponies jogged true to predicted form. Overlooking the scrawniness of the racers, the short field, the scant purse of 500 lire, and the clear fragrant Italian sky above---overlooking these slight discrepancies, it was like a few hours spent at Belmont Park or Saratoga Springs, almost.

In the evening, the section chiefs, having interviewed their respective staffs concerning the doubtful fate of the civilian KPs and janitors, cast the opinion in a meeting with the first sergeant, that the eye-tie help should get a new lease on life; the money to pay them now that the finance office has backed out, will come from the pockets of the men, they said. Two dollars and fifty cents per month from each man will foot the bill.

8. It was probably one of the last Sundays in Grosseto for the movement-ready squadron. The latest hint that the organization would soon be underway came today in the form of a memorandum which outlined the policy for exchange of money prior to departure from this theater: Fifty dollars is the maximum sum each man will be permitted to have with him when the Sixty-Sixth packs its duds and travels. Most of the men who read the notice, grinned, and shrugged it off with the acknowledgement that there was little danger of their having more than 5000 lire in a town like this, comes take-off time. Last evening flight surgeon Captain Tattersal checked the EM dog-tags, as quartermaster supply issued ominous-looking trench knives to the GIs of this Pacific-destined unit.

9. Daily missions directed against the Grosseto Red Cross Club are continuing unabated through these steaming July afternoons. Promptly at 1330 hours---after a briefing period during which wallets are checked for a 5-lire note---almost all the Squadron takes off to attack 'targets of opportunity' in and around the ice-cream bar.

Except for the two busiest sections of the Sixty-Sixth, the orderly room staff and the supply crew, these last days here prior to the awaited jump-off for a POE, are comprising a honeymoon stay for the men.

10. As the still-unannounced date for departure of this unit approaches, the tempo of movement preparations is rising steadily with a crescendo-like effect. Processing today kept the majority of the squadron on its toe--last shots were given...men fired the carbine familiarization course...PTAs and money orders were sent through before the deadline...dog tags were corrected and restamped by PBS at Leghorn...last equipment was crated, stenciled.

And with these final steps came the inevitable flurry of rumors---quickly traveling through the corridors of the Sixty-Sixth building, from one latrine to another. Most prevalent prediction as to the new station of the Exterminators: China!

11. At last the news came out. Early this coming Sunday morning--15 July--the 57th Fighter Group and all its squadrons will load personnel and equipment on for a 12 to 14 hour train journey to the Naples POE Staging Area. Along with this news, which Major McMullin revealed at a Squadron meeting tonight, was an appeal to the men to curtail, for the remaining days at Grosseto, the gay practice of inadvertently tossing empty beer bottles through the nearest window; several civilians have received, the Major said, direct hits, while many near-misses were also reported.

Before the Executive Officer's talk, First Sergeant Mack asked for a voluntary donation by the Sixty-Sixth GIs to aid the status of a young mother, who had been graced with a lasting 'souvenir' (a bouncing bambino) by a now-departed member of the organization. The men came through to pile the sum of approximately 65 dollars into the collection dish.

Following the meeting, AAF medical forms were completed by the men and the Group and Squadron flight surgeons.

12. With only two days to go before leaving for the Naples POE---movement time has been changed to 2100 hours on the fourteenth---the area has assumed the aspect of the proverbial beehive. Men are moving through the halls, loaded with equipment shortages drawn from supply this morning; crating and numbering of the remaining organizational materiel is nearing completion in front of the building; last mail until the staging area is reached was accepted this afternoon for censorship; various details are performing the sundry duties of a military organization about to go overseas---again.

But the biggest problem, from the men's standpoint is this: each individual will be allowed to take only one duffle bag, into which all his belongings must be stuffed. For the GIs who are veterans of long foreign service, during which time they have steadfastly clung to every scrap of issue and non-issue in sight---for these tenacious men it is a heart-breaking process to abandon all their excess, but completely lovable, possessions.

The Quartermaster Supply section masterfully weathered the formidable difficulties of bringing upto-tally the personal equipment of almost all the men today; the only notable exception was one Sergeant Norman Friedman, P-47 crew chief, whose acclaimed nickname "Tiny" only serves to paradoxically stress his size: he stands, stocking feet or otherwise, about six feet one, with a weight of 250 pounds and a 42-inch waistline. There were just no fatigues to fit him.

13. It's almost over, this job of preparing for an oversea shipment. Equipment has all been packed in marked boxes, clothing shortages have been erased, the men have been alerted.

At breakfast the GIs reverted to mess-kit feeding as the kitchen started a gradual shutdown. Shortly after noon, the Flight Surgeon examined the men, finding them free from vermin and communicable diseases. At 1330 the Red Cross threw open wide the doors to its snack-bar and announced via a placard that the ice-cream was on the house and that at 2200 hours tonight, the Grosseto club would cease to exist.

It was also the last evening for the Sixty-Sixth in this slumbering city. To the bars and shops and dancing pavillion in the park the Exterminators said "a rivedierc" to Grosseto. The pacific awaits....

14. Under blazing heat the men of the Sixty-Sixth packed and banded all the remaining squadron equipment. The final step before moving out of this city was the 'policing-up' of the converted schoolhouse; into the court-yard behind the building were heaved an assorted lot of soldier-articles. It was a literal free-for-all, with the GIs tossing from the windows ---in gay delight---footlockers, beer bottles, aged letters, shelves, souvenirs, and snack-bar tickets.

Came the evening and the farewell chants to Grosseto's citizens took the form of a happy escapade at the Officer's hotel. The EXTERMINATOR'S pilots, out on the balcony of their billet over-locking the town's main street, spent two hours enticing the kids on the street below with bits of cigarettes and 'caramella' until the bambini were close enough to be wetted by water showered down by the lieutenants.

And then at 2100 hours, the squadron dragged their supply-laden bodies into waiting trucks, which drove them to the railroad station. Here the Red Cross offered coffee, donuts, and ice cream. Entraining took place at 2200, but it was a full-hour before the cars slowly crept out of Grosseto.

15. The railroad cars carrying the 57th Fighter Group to the Naples staging area lazied their way southward throughout the early morning hours. Six-deep in the second and third-class compartments of the Italian couches, the men draped themselves around the duffle bags, arms, and legs of their fellows for a fitful night's sleep. Shortly after 0700 hours, the train pulled into the station at Rome. Breakfast---this word is used for the lack of another---was served by a Transportation Corps unit (recently and obviously converted from a trucking organization). The meal, which was to be the only cooked food for the GIs until late that night, consisted in a messy-looking and unidentifiable stew, with equally unrecognizable coffee.

Several hours later, after leaving Rome, the rail-lap of the move was completed with the arrival at Naples. Bags and men changed to trucks for the half-hour push to Staging Area Number Three. As darkness fell, the men of the weary, sweaty Sixty-Sixth hungrily-packed away hot C rations, tumbled into pyramidal, and fell into tired sleep.

16. This overseas staging-area, Six kilometers west of the the port of Naples, lies in a crater-like valley ringed on all sides by high, lush mountains. Despite the hundreds of trees which throw only a broken shade over the camp, it is tropical hot, void of breezes, and dusty. The squadron is housed in winterized pyramidal tents, with eight men occupying each. Beds are double-decked wooden affairs, which, as sleeping places, make wonderful pieces of scrap-lumber. (Cots are unavailable). For the men of the Sixty-Sixth, fresh from the enchantment of bivouac in Grosseto, this pre-shipping installation is a shocking let-down. Said one man petulantly: "Nobody ever located this place. Someone must've fallen in!"
17. Just how many days it will be before shipping time is unknown to the men, but what is completely certain is that there will be details in great quantity until the squadron loads onto its boat. Furnished by the Sixty-Sixth will be: kitchen police guards, latrine and shower orderlies, and policing groups. Faced by this prospect, together with that of a poor stock of food rations, the morale of the GIs---already well-dampened over the directness of the jump-off to La Pacific---has tumbled even lower. The cheeriest note of the day is the issuing of passes to Naples tomorrow.
18. Reveille has started. At 0645 this morning, the men left the hard-wood softness of their sacks, split into the three flights that have been set up for the move, and answered roll calls. For those not on details or working missions, the camp offers several diversions: showers (hot, running water) are nearby; a newly-constructed Red Cross club---"Crater Haven"---presents a library, ping-pong tables, a piano, card playing facilities, and, more important, daily servings of cokes and local spirits. First-hand reports from the men who returned from Naples' passes indicate that a large percentage of Grosseto's female population is, by some strange coincidence in the former city.
19. Once more the GIs of the Sixty-Sixth unpacked their duffle-bags, emptied the contents on their bunks, and went through the boredom of a clothing and equipment check. This was the second show-down inspection for the squadron in as many weeks. Yet shortages still were chalked up by the officers and supply personnel in charge; small items such as knives, spoons, caps, tent poles and the like, predominated.

20. The shortages reported in yesterday's equipment were issued this evening by the Quartermaster Supply section. At the same time each man was given two baggage tickets, to be attached to his duffle and musette bags. The destination, of course, was omitted from the tags, and the when and where questions of this move still remain unknown to the men. Rumors are making their inevitable rounds, with all the GIs having their own (accurate) information. Today's crop of guesses strongly favors a squadron move by the 27th of the month.
21. As the thermometer continues on a steady up-grade, the trucks for "Coney Island" are becoming more crowded each day. The beach, which is manned by EBS personnel and German war prisoners, is sited along a stretch of the Bay of Naples, on the Bagnoli side. Although the sand itself leaves much to be desired---it is a varied collection of stones---the "Island" does possess: a large refreshment house serving iced beer and coca-cola; a check-room; showers (cold, but running water); shaded tables; and the smooth waters of the Tyrrhennian sea, the temperature of which is low enough to relieve the most feverished body, yet warm enough to be comfortable.
22. A feature-article in the local Stars and Strips gave play to a new flood of rumors in the Sixty-Sixth area today. The newspaper story dealt with the landing at Manila harbor of the first troops to be redeployed directly from Italy to the Pacific. It went on to describe the "pearl of the orient" as an embryonic staging-area, to be the massing-place for the predicted land invasion of China and/or Japan, to become in fact, a second Oran or Naples.
- To the men of this Pacific-destined unit, the words of the reported took on an added meaning. Those who have been harping on Okinawa and Iwo Jima as likely operational bases for the Fifty-Seventh have, with the appearance of this dispatch, changed their lyrics accordingly.
23. Adding to the redeployment woes of the men of this unit, the laundry problem has reared its soiled and threatening head. Many of the Italian civilians who made off with bundles of dirty GI clothing---not to omit several bars of much-prized soap---have failed to return to the area; the final disposition of the property, it is safe to say, probably rested with the local "black-marketeers". To eliminate this, the Staging Area authorities have banned all

'lavare-signorine' from the camp. This has left only two alternatives: the QM laundry with its long (a week) delay in handling washing; and the cleansing of his clothes by the individual.

24. Ten days, the usual length of a unit's stay at a staging area, have elapsed since the Squadron's arrival in the "Crater", and---still---no alert has been called. For all intents and purposes, the Sixty-Sixth---like the man who came to dinner---is here for a protracted visit, a condition that has caused no small displeasure among the men. Living in pyramids without any light or electricity, sleeping on bunks of warped, wooden slats, literally boiling under a skin-burning sun---subjected to these conditions, the men certainly have little love for Staging Area Three. Mix these ingredients with the factor of uncertainty which hangs over the Exterminator's future, and you have a set-up that is, to use the vernacular, snafu-ed.

25. Ernie Pyle's gripping, human portrait of the combat veteran---GI Joe---was shown to the men of the squadron this evening behind the tent area in one of the first showings of the film overseas. Living up to its advance publicity raves, the picture depicted true-to-life the simple tale of the men who fought in this theater from the gloomy days at Kasserine to the victorious hours at Rome.

Reactions of the men in the movie area (which some witty GI has christened the 'Pacific Theater') varied from "...it was damn good..." to "...about time a picture like this was made!". Best liked, perhaps, were the small insignificant touches of Italian life---the pathetic refugee children...wildly gesticulating civilians...the lady of joy who waited for the oncoming Allies...the rubble and chaotic mass of destruction that is Italy today; for in such shots the men of the squadron saw themselves.

26. These hot Neapolitan days constitute a double period of "sweating it out". The weather, for one thing, continues sultrily on its unabated heat wave, unbroken for months by any rain or cloudy spells. And then there is the figurative "sweating", the waiting for an outgoing transport, and the Pacific to which it will steam. As yet the only sure and well-defined prospect for the GIs of the Sixty-Sixth is that the scorching Italian weather will either remain at its high point of climatic suffocation, or will take the only alternative and rise even higher. When the unit will take to the gangplank is shrouded in heavy mystery.

The days themselves are passing uneventfully. After morning reveille and roll-call, and those unfortunates whose names had unhappily popped up for KP or guard-duty have departed, the remaining members of the squadron loll in their slatted bunks, write letters at the Red Cross, give the streets of close by Naples a whirl, or at best engage in athletics. Latest addition to the Red Cross Club in Staging Number 3 is a donuts-and-lemonade snack bar (Bring your own canteen cups...)

27. The first double-feature program in many months for most of the GIs of the Sixty-Sixth was unveiled at the "Pacific Theater" tonight with the overseas-premiere of the two latest prints to reach the MTO: "Back to Bataan" and "A Bell For Adano". That the pictures were vitally related to the squadron was clearly evident to the capacity-crowd who lolled in the sandy movie area behind the company streets. The latter of the two photoplays dealt with the past---the days is Sicily; the former was, perhaps, a glimpse of the future and the Philippines.
28. Comforters came to the squadron area early this morning but they got no farther than the Quartermaster Supply tent. They had been intended for issue to the back-weary men of the squadron, but a change of plan was effected by the supposition that the entire group would be alerted within the next few days. So the comforters went back to the Staging Area warehouse and the GIs went back to the pine-board bunks.
29. Ranking officers from Group Headquarters paid the squadron area an official visit today in an inspection of the bivouac. The only defection noted by the officers was the need for policing-up of the Sixty-Sixth's end of the camp. Outside of this, it was quiet, dormant, and--of course--not in the tents of the exterminators.
30. Long delayed because of the annoying exigencies of movement, the promised Squadron Beer Party will be held tomorrow evening, Sergeant Mack announced at this morning's reveille formation.

In the afternoon came word that Lieutenant Richard W. Kruse, a German prisoner since he was shot down over the Brenner Pass last winter, had been awarded the Silver Star for gallantry in action on his last flight. |

31. It was the kind of party that defies all description. At seven o'clock tonight the GIs of the Sixty-Sixth, looking somewhat strange in clean, freshly-pressed sun-tans, piled into the PBS Bayside Club in downtown Naples. From thenon---until

closing time at eleven---it was strictly a hilarious stag-affair in which few holds were barred and beer flowed like tears through the mouth, the thirsty mouth, of the Squadron.

Colonel Leaf gave the party its initial momentum by introducing to the applauding enlisted men the fighter pilots of the Sixty-Sixth. But after that Nature ran along its own natural and unperturbed course. Next to beer ranked an eight-piece Italian orchestra (led by a former Bostonite, no less) and a floor-show featuring two provocative dancers.