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Director	
Research Staff	
Attn: A. J. Smith	
Maxwell Air, Alabama	

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July
1948

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SECRET
66TH FIGHTER SQUADRON

OUTLINE HISTORY

HEADQUARTERS
66TH FIGHTER SQUADRON
APO 650By Auth CO
66th Ftr Sq
Initials: _____
Date: 25 Oct 45DECLASSIFIED
DOD DIR 5200.9

ABI-A20-1wh

25 October 1945

SUBJECT: Historical Records.

TO: Commanding General
Third Air Force
Drew Field, Tampa, Florida
ATTENTION: Historian

1. Outline History of the 66th Fighter Squadron, 57th Fighter Group, for the period 4 August 1945 to 15 October 1945.

a. Present designation: 66th Fighter Squadron, 57th Fighter Group, Third Air Force.

b. Changes in organization: Squadron and Group removed from command of Twelfth Air Force (MTOUSA) and placed under command of Third Air Force (continental).

c. Strength, commissioned and enlisted.

- (1) Period from 4 August to 15 October 1945, incl.
- (a) At beginning: 38 Off, 245 EM
 - (b) Net increase: none
 - (c) Net decrease: 3 Off, 3 EM
 - (d) at end: 35 Off, 242 EM

d. Stations of Unit.

- (1) Aboard USAT "Sea Owl"
- (a) Date of arrival: 3-4 August 1945
 - (b) Date of debarkation: 18 August 1945
- (2) Camp Myles Standish, Boston, Massachusetts
- (a) Date of arrival: 18 August 1945
 - (b) Date of departure: 20-21 August 1945
- (3) Drew Field Army Air Base, Tampa, Florida
- (a) Date of arrival: 25 August 1945
 - (b) Present station

e. Movements of unit

- (1) From Dock Area, Naples, Italy, to Camp Myles Stand-

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ish, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, aboard USAT
"Sea Owl".

- (a) Purpose: Movement originally for direct redeployment of unit to Pacific Area. With Japanese surrender, unit was diverted to US for redeployment.
- (b) 6 August - 18 August 1945, inclusive
- (c) Water movement
- (d) Weather: variable

(2) From Camp Myles Standish, Boston, Mass., to Drew Field AAB, Tampa, Florida.

- (a) Purpose: Change of station, and movement to assembly area. (Squadron personnel granted RR&R leave of 30 days—later extended to 45 days.)
- (b) 18 August - 23 August 1945
- (c) Rail, TPA, air.
- (d) Weather: variable.

f. Campaigns: None

g. Operations: None

h. Command officers in important missions: No missions flown.

i. Losses in action: None

j. Personnel who have distinguished themselves in action: None.

2. Inclosed is Unit Journal of Events, 66th Fighter Squadron, 57th Fighter Group, for the period from 4 August 1945 to 15 October 1945.

CHARLES C. LEAF
Lieutenant Colonel, Air Corps,
Commanding

1 Incl: as above.

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Unit Journal of Events---66th Ftr Sq, 57th Ftr Gp---Bagnoli, Italy
 Prepared by A.Z. Connor, 1st Lt, AC. 4 August 1945 to 15 October 1945

4.

The squadron was still sweating out movement orders on this, its third day of alertness. They never came. To take advantage of the delay in embarkation, the mail section extended the letter-deadline until tomorrow morning.

Down at the Naples' docks the advance echelon finished its task of loading all the TAT (To Accompany Troops) equipment. The men did an admirable and thorough job. So thorough, in fact, that they committed something of a faux pas. All the instruments belonging to the 57th Fighter Group's dance orchestra---to provide musical escape from the monotony of the projected trip---were crated in boxes marked with distinguishing yellow discs. These were to be hoisted onto the ship last---after all others had been crammed aboard. By some mischievous chance, one of the crates with a yellow disc was loaded first, and plunged to the lower depths of the holds. So---nestling below the water line among tons of supplies is the bass fiddle of the Group band; and since it is too late to remove it from its disadvantage point, the Thunderbolt musicians will play their Pacific dates sans bass.

5.

Tomorrow---sometime in the morning---the Sixty-Sixth Fighter Squadron will board the USAT "Sea Owl" at Naples harbor for a 15,000-mile voyage to the Pacific Theater of Operations.

That was the news given out this afternoon at 1350 hours by Sergeant Mack at a formation of all enlisted men of the outfit. After reveille at 0600 hours, the men will eat, return to their tents for the final packing of their personal belongings, and wait for the order to load on trucks for their last overland ride for several weeks to come. First stop for the ship, Sergeant Mack added, will be at Panama, where the GIs will be permitted to stretch their legs on short passes in one of the Canal Zone's cities.

6.

The seemingly interminable sweating period was over. At 1030 hours, after an early breakfast followed by last packing and poling details, the Sixty-Sixth threw its collective body onto two-and-a-half ton trucks and negotiated its final winding drive through the vine-bordered dirt road from Bagnoli to Naples. Arriving at the port's pier 9, the GIs, perspiring under the burden of their weighty equipment, were served donuts and lemonade by the Red Cross.

Then came the moment for which the men have been waiting since the end of hostilities in Europe on May 12th: the order for embarkation. As their names were called in time-honored Army custom, the squadron members mounted

Unit Journal of Events---88th Ftr Sq, 57th Ftr Gp---Aboard USAF Sea Owl
 Prepared by A.Z. Conner, 1st Lt, AC. 4 August 1945 to 16 October 1945

6. (continued)

the gangplank and made their precarious ascent without incident. Once aboard, they moved into Compartment "D", second deck in Hatch Two, forward.

For the men of the Sixty-Sixth, together with those of the other squadrons of the Group, the ship's mess offered a light, noontime snack of tomato soup---the first fresh broth in years---and equally fresh apples.

Throughout the early afternoon hours troops of other Pacific-destined units boarded the Sea Owl, while those already on the transport lounged along the boat-deck or explored the various sections of the craft that is to be their floating GI home for the next month and a half.

Lines were cast off at 1400 hours, and with a few Italian dock stevedores watching idly from the pier, the Sea Owl was tugged from its berth. The ever-present lucid Neapolitan skies glistened overhead as the ship glided out to the open sea, its rails jam-packed with troops seeking a last nostalgic glimpse of the Iberian Peninsula.

There was no elation, no cheering, no shouting as the sweeping bay of Naples and, later, the shores of MPO gradually blurred into the indistinct blue haze of the horizon. There was, strangely, no melancholy or gloom, either. Only a grim realization that a rugged job lies ahead for the 57th.

7.

Transport life began this morning for the squadron. Breakfast, as well as the two meals that followed, were more than just a partaking of food on this crowded troop-carrier---they were quasi-adventures. Chow lines weaved snake-like over all the upper space on deck, in and through and around hatches and latrines, up and down and inbetween ladders and stairs. Two hours was the average time spent waiting for food. The rest of the daylight hours, the GIs idled lazily topside, sunning themselves, playing cards, hugging the rail scanning the horizon for the last sight of the mainland, which in mid-afternoon slipped into nothingness.

8.

Sixty-Sixth's enlisted men are living in the second hatch of the Sea Owl, on the second deck below the boat-deck. Bunks of the canvas-sack variety are tiered five-deep, with little space between rows. Barracks bags are, for the most part, piled in the open center of the hold.

Altogether, it presents a somewhat disordered, cramped sight---typical of enlisted quarters aboard ships, where all other purposes are only secondary to that of space, or, rather, lack of space.

Unit Journal of Events---66th Ftr, Sq, 57th Ftr Gp---Aboard USAT Sea Owl
 Prepared by A.Z. Conner, 1st Lt, AC. 4 August 1945 to 15 October 1945

8. (continued)

Ventilation, however, is better than average here. Cool air filters through pipes overhead, cutting through the dank mass of warm sweat. Nevertheless, a large number of the GIs have been sleeping on deck, some of the more fortunate ones having located folding cots.

With the Mediterranean waters peaceful---both in tide and military situation---no blackout is maintained. Men are permitted to remain on deck, smoking if they like, during the evening. The SEA OWL glides through the calm sea with lights brightly shining---a marked contrast from the dark, watchful days when the Squadron came overseas, one month and three years ago.

9.

Easily the most popular feature of the OWL is its wonderful cuisine, the latter word a term that would be euphemistic when generally applied to Army chow. Fresh American food is served daily. For the officers and men of the Six-Six, it is a noticeable difference from the chow dished out in Italy and Africa. Today for breakfast the men dug in merrily on: half grapefruit; DRY cereal (Shredded Wheat); scrambled eggs and chopped bacon; coffee, cream, and sugar; marmalade and jelly; and, of all things, an orange.

Mess kits have been happily scrapped for the trip, as the ~~XXIX~~ transport is equipped with trays and cups. An efficient, reasonably-pleasant (despite the heat) dining-room completes the gastronomic side of the ship. And an agreeable side it is.

10.

The waters of the Mediterranean swirled and rolled heavily throughout the day, effecting the first cases of mal-de-mer aboard ship. A few men lined the rail spasmodically making their nauseous offerings to Neptune; others, in the same physiological boat, moaned in their bunks.

Those who could stand the pitching of the OWL attended a movie on open deck, aft of the enlisted mens' holds. The film was an entertaining piece starring Monty Woolley and the British entertainer, Gracie Fields.

Books began to circulate, with the opening of the ship's Special Services library. Other SS activities included the inauguration of a daily newspaper, and band rehearsals.

at

Today dusk land appeared to the north---a hazy line of purple mist, probably Spain, or the Balearic Islands. Gibraltar was passed some time around midnight tonight.

Unit Journal of Events---66th Ftr Sq, 57th Ftr Gp---Aboard USAT Sea Owl
 Prepared by A.Z. Conner, 1st Lt, AC. 4 August 1945 to 15 October 1945

11.

Into the choppy mid-Atlantic ploughed the SEA OWL, while thousands of miles to the west, other American ships were making history. The bombing of Hiroshima on Honshu Island by one history- and atom-smashing bomb---and the subsequent report that sixty percent of the Jap war center was flattened---was the talk of the transport. Just what it meant, or what it would mean, was in the realm of conjecture at this time, but it was especially heartening news to this Pacific-bound organization.

Sea-sickness is still prevalent, although it shows no signs of assuming the proportions of an epidemic. A second showing of last night's film took the special services spotlight on deck tonight.

12.

The stirring news of the past few days---Russia's entry into the Asiatic war and the use of the atomic bomb, coupled with persistent, but unconfirmed contentions that the Japanese are suing for peace---has swept through all ranks. Rumors, speculations, and wild guesses are making their play from one end of the ship to another. What is to be the future of the 57th Fighter Group? How has the present turn of events affected this shipment. Many a GI lay awake in his bunk tonight, as the motors whirred constantly, these questions hovering in his mind.

13.

A veil of uncertainty shrouded the international news last night and all of today. Still---almost to a man, the troops aboard the OWL are convinced that the Japs have "had it"---that the war is lingering on last desperate breaths. All activity aboard ship seems to center about the news. Men cluster around the several loudspeakers in the hatches and on deck, waiting for even the barest scraps of developments in the reported-and-denied-and-reported-again statements that Japan has thrown in the proverbial, and much-hoped-for, towel.

But, withal, the SEA OWL is steaming into the soft green waters of the Gulf Stream, plying itself soberly to its set course for Panama. But even while watching the deck shows---musical varieties staged and produced by the enlisted men aboard---the Army passengers are talking and wondering---and, of course, hoping.

14.

It's over. The fantastic, unbelievable, wonderfully crazy news that Japan has surrendered is true. There is peace throughout the world today for the first time since 1931.

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Unit Journal of Events---66th Ftr Sq, 57th Ftr Gp---Aboard USAT Sea Owl
Prepared by A.E. Conner, 1st Lt, AC. 4 August 1945 to 15 October 1945

14. (continued)

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Over the loudspeaker tonight, the mast of the vessel, greying Merchant marinesman Captain Richard Snow crisply told the troops aboard that the President had announced the end of the greatest armed conflict the world has ever witnessed. It was stunning, glorious news. The men yelled, danced, capered, clapped each other's backs, sung, screamed, leaped, ran onto deck, laughing, crying---"...the war is over...over!"

When the first shock of the fateful word had passed into a dim realization, the ship buzzed with rumors. Now that the war is over---all over---, the rumors whispered, what will happen to us? They have no reason to send us to the Pacific. No reason on earth.

Yet the SEA OWL kept on heading into the sun---westward---unmindful of what had happened. Panama lay two days ahead.

15.

Early this morning, at 0830 hours, while breakfast chow lines were taking shape in the half-dark, the loudspeakers suddenly crackled:

"Orders have been radioed in, directing that this transport proceed to Boston harbor, without delay..."

What followed was a fitting anti-climax to last night's V-J celebrations, only slightly more so. The decks rang with a vibrant cheer that arose after the word "Boston" was heard.

Home in three days, furlough, and possibly a discharge for the 50 pointers soon---this now was the prospect for the men of the Sixty-Sixth. In a queer, uncanny chain of stranger-than-fiction events, the very destiny of hundreds of men and pilots aboard this ship was radically altered.

Only seven short days ago the future looked bleak for the personnel of this squadron. The Pacific and an apparently long, rugged fight was ahead. Then, in the incredible space of a week, that entire horizon was obliterated.

The band rehearsal tonight was something to see and hear, when compared with former ones. The men couldn't resist grinning and joking at the least provocation. Home in three days! Oh, God!

16.

It was still the same rolling ocean, and no land was yet in sight, but for all the men of the Sixty-Sixth cared, it might have been a mass of luxuriant ambrosia or the entrance to the Elysian Fields. The weather

Unit Journal of Events---66th Ftr Sq, 57th Ftr Gp---Aboard USAT Sea Owl
 Prepared by A.Z. Cenner, 1st Lt, AC. 4 August 1945 to 15 October 1945

16. (continued)

was bright and mild, the sky flecked with scattered lacy clouds. Although it was understood that the American shore would not become visible for two days, the men couldn't resist hanging alongside the rail, searching for a glimpse of home. An impatient excitement could be felt running through the ship in accentuating waves. No one, it seemed, felt like doing much more than day- and night-dreaming about his wife or sweetheart or family. The editors of the ship's daily SEA OWL had rushed out an extra on the day of the Jap surrender and then had quietly washed their hands of mimeograph ink, hurled out the paste-pots, and sunk into happy meditation.

Where before time had rushed past, it now crept miserably along at a caterpillar's pace. Home...home...home...

17.

The day before debarkation at Boston. The happy job of packing up equipment and belongings began, with everyone in an eager frame of mind to complete the task quickly, as if that in itself could draw the OWL closer to the New England coast.

At night clandestine trips were made to the railings topside and tell-tale splashes hinted strongly that the GIs were relieving the barracks and duffle bags of the thousand-odd items that soldiers invariably and inevitably picked up. French and Italian mattresses, foot-lockers, chests---all deemed vitally necessary weeks before the trip for life in the Pacific---were now being surreptitiously dumped overboard. For after all, in a tiny matter of hours, the wonder and comfort of America would be reached.

Time had all but stopped...twenty-four hours seemed never to pass.

18.

Today's homecoming for the men aboard the SEA OWL was like something out of newsreels and glamor-war novels. There was no ticker-tape, no parade, but no one seemed to notice or care. There was too much else to see, and to hear.

When at about eleven in the morning, the ship steamed past a huge "WELCOME HOME--WELL DONE" sign erected aboard an island just outside of the Fort of Boston, a light Army transportation corps vessel drew up to the starboard. Aboard the smaller craft were crammed a band, WACS, GIs, civilian men, women, WAVES, a soldier costumed as Uncle Sam, and dozens of pretty little creatures, all waving and shouting and cheering. As the OWL was sluggishly tugged into its berth, the numerous ships in the harbor let forth their greeting whistles in a deafening screech.

Unit Journal of Events---66th Ptr Sq, 57th Ptr Gp---Boston, Mass.
 Prepared by A.Z. Conner, 1st Lt., AC 4 August 1945 to 15 October 1945

16. (continued)

Colors, music, voices, ship's whistles---all rose in a noisily-blended tone and sight picture for the troops aboard the transport, making the 18th of August a day never to be forgotten by the men of the Sixty-Sixth.

Later in the afternoon, when the novelty and excitement had worn off, debarkation took place. Each soldier descending the gangplank stepped through an arch-way symbolic of home; the personification of Uncle Sam, in the guise of a transportation corps T/5, personally greeted each GI with a firm handshake and a "Welcome home, buddy". In small groups, the gay debarkees were trooped off by WAC guides to wait for the coaches for the ride to a nearby camp. Before train-time, the Red Cross came through the with donuts and milk---the old-fashioned kind that comes in liquid form.

The jaunt to the reception station, Camp Myles Standish, near Taunton, Mass., was short and comfortable. Just the thrill of traveling in an American train after two years and more of African 40-and-8s and wheezing European second and third-class compartments, was enough to make the hour-long journey a milestone.

And after the preliminary work of assigning the men to barracks, issuing bedding, and holding a brief (and surprisingly entertaining) orientation lecture, the Squadron dashed off en masse to the Bell Telephone Building for that first call home.

Dinner that day was, in itself, a notable event. The menu included: pork chops, mashed potatoes, salad with French dressing, peas, cake, ice-cream, coffee, milk, iced-water, rolls, buns, coffee, and tons of butter.

The PXs did a thriving business that day from the influx of Americans hungry Exterminators. Cokes flowed like wine, along with hair-tonics and shaving lotions of the more fragrant groups. And the pinball machines were tilted that day as rarely before.

17.

Equipment and baggage was trundled off to supply this morning, to be shipped by the government to Draw Field Army Air Base at Tampa, Florida, the assigned assembly area for the 66th. The men themselves were busied with the pleasant task of selecting the reception stations nearest their homes, stations which would send them on their final way homeward.

Two mail calls were held today, but nobody was particularly interested in letters. Only a few hours lay between the soldier and his loved ones.

Unit Journal of Events---66th Ftr Sq, 57th Ftr Gp---Boston, Mass, and Drew Fld
Prepared by A.Z. Conner, 1st Lt, AC. 4 August 1945 to 15 October 1945.

20.

Starting this morning, and continuing through the afternoon, men of the Sixty-Sixth pulled out of the railroad station at Camp Standish, en-route to their various reception centers. It had been a long haul, this voyage from Naples to Boston, with the strong scare of a Pacific destination added.

What the future of the squadron and its members would be, no one knew as the men boarded troop trains for the next-to-last lap on their home-coming journey. A small percentage of Exterminator personnel had already been sent to the Separation Center for discharge under the 80-point ruling.

But whatever the outcome, for the present only thoughts of home prevailed, and a determination to remember as little of the Army and Italy and the war as possible during the coming thirty days.

21 August through 15 October

While the officers and men of the Sixty-Sixth were relaxing throughout the country in the luxury of 30-day leaves, measures were being taken in Washington by the Army chiefs to effect a rapid demobilization and a sweeping reorganization of the military now that the war had come to an abrupt end.

The 57th Fighter Group, with its component squadrons, was ordered deactivated at Drew Field---its services no longer required. And separation center began to mushroom from coast to coast to discharge the outgoing flux of personnel. First the critical ASR score was lowered to 80, then to 70, and finally, a droppage to 60 on the first of November was promised.

All these actions gradually but surely hacked away at the squadron. The majority of the men, in the high-point brackets, received discharges after their 45-day leaves. The 60-pointer were sent home again, there to await the lowering of the score in November.

So only a skeleton crew of Six-Six members showed up at Drew Field. Of these, even less were assigned to Detachment X, the base's clearing house for de-activated units, to complete the administrative dismantlement of the group. The others were transferred to other organizations throughout the Third Air Force.

It is only a matter of days now until the squadron and group send in their last morning report. The 57th Fighter Group, thrice-winner of the Distinguished Unit Badge in three years of combat overseas, is about to be officially retired.

It would not be maudlin to say that few members of the Sixty-Sixth Fighter Squadron, past, present, or, perhaps in the future, will ever forget the "Exterminators" or "Calling---Jackpot".

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Page Eight

HISTORY OF 66th Ftr ~~GROUP~~ (OR Squadron)
COVERING PERIOD, DEPARTURE FROM OVERSEAS STATION TO DISBANDMENT, ONLY

[Group histories will cover movement of headquarters personnel only. Squadron histories will be prepared in separate reports and attached to the histories of their respective groups.]

1. What was the last Command to which the unit was assigned prior to return from overseas? Twelfth Air Force.
2. What was last station at which unit operated prior to return to U. S.?
Grosseto, Italy.
3. Give strength of unit at time of departure for return to U. S.
Off. 38; EM 243;
F/O ~~EM~~ 1; WAC's None.
4. Who was Commanding Officer at time of departure for U. S.?
Lieutenant Colonel Charles C. Leaf
5. Movement by Air: No air movement
 - a. Give dates of departure (inclusive): _____.
 - b. Give strength of: Off. _____; EM _____;
Others (specify) _____; No. of Airplanes _____, and
types of airplanes _____, _____, _____, _____.
 - c. Route--List stations where landings were made by most of airplanes
_____, _____, _____, _____.
 - d. Give dates (inclusive) and station of arrival in U. S. _____,
_____, _____, _____.
 - e. Name station to which sent for granting of leaves, furloughs
_____.

6. Movement by Water:

- a. Give Port of Embarkation & date: Naples, Italy,
5 August 1945.
- b. Give strength of: Off. 39; EM 243;
Others (specify) none; name of vessel Sea Owl.
- c. Give Port of Debarkation & date: Boston, Massachusetts,
18 August 1945.
- d. List station to which sent for granting of leaves, furloughs;
and transportation Camp Myles Standish, Taunton, Mass..

7. What was the official date of assignment to Drew Field?

20 August 1945.

8. What was the official date of disbandment? Unit not disbanded at this date.

9. Any information that will add to the history of the unit should be included. Any losses of personnel or airplanes, or unusual delays along the route should be included. Any comments or criticisms of the methods or means used in the return to the U. S.; or in processing at Drew Field should be included, for they may result in the improvement of procedures in the future. A statement of the morale of the personnel may prove invaluable. Particular attention should be given to the recreational activities available on board ship or at Drew Field.

No comment. For above information, refer to Unit Journal of Events which covers unit's voyage, debarkation, and reception in the U.S.