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66th Fighter Squadron
Outline History, May, 1944

Secret; By Auth CO
66th Ftr. Sq., 31 May, 1944
Initials W. J.

HEADQUARTERS SIXTY-SIXTH F.S.
A.P.O. 650

31 May, 1944

AG 314.7

SUBJECT: Historical Records.

TO : Commanding General, XII Tactical Air Command, A.P.O. 650.

THRU : Commanding Officer, 57th Fighter Group, A.P.O. 650.

1. Outline History of the 66th Fighter Squadron for the period
1 May thru 31 May, 1944:

a. Present designation: 66th F.S., 57th F.G., 87th F.W.,
XII T.A.C., XII A.F.

b. Changes in organization: None for period covered.

c. Strength, Commissioned and Enlisted.

(1) Month of May, 1944.

(a) 1 May: Commissioned, 53; Enlisted, 229.

(b) Net increase: Commissioned, 2; Enlisted, 24.

(c) Net decrease: Commissioned, 14; Enlisted, 7.

(d) 31 May: Commissioned, 41; Enlisted, 246.

d. Stations.

(1) Name of station: Alto L. G., Corsica.

(a) Date of arrival: "A" Party, 28 March, 1944;

"B" Party, 6 April, 1944.

(b) Squadron remained on Alto L. G., Corsica thru
period 1 May to 31 May, 1944.

e. Movements: None for period covered.

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f. Campaigns.

- (1) Name: Italian.
- (2) Duration: Still in progress.

g. Operations.

- (1) Campaign: Italian.
- (2) Nature of operations: Dive-bombing and strafing of enemy lines of communication.
- (3) Number of missions for the period 1 May thru 31 May, 1944: 66. Number of sorties for the same period: 612.
- (4) Results of most important missions:
 - (a) Mission No. 612 of 16 May: Eleven e/a were destroyed on the ground, all flamers.
 - (b) Mission No. 630 of 25 May: Five enemy fighters, FW-190's, were destroyed in aerial combat.

h. Commanding officers on important missions:

- (1) Mission No. 612 of 16 May: Captain Walter H. Henson.
- (2) Mission No. 630 of 25 May: Mission split into two flights after take-off.
 - (1) One flight led by Lieut. George Kriss encountered e/a and destroyed five of these.
 - (2) One flight led by Major William P. Benedict destroyed 17 X MT.

i. Losses in action:

- (1) Mission No. 612 of 16 May.
 - (a) Missing:
 1. 1st Lieut. Robert J. Hunter, O-1633997.
 2. 2nd Lieut. Robert H. Gains, O-812797.
- (2) Mission No. 618 of 19 May.
 - (a) Missing:
 1. 2nd Lieut. Thomas R. May, O-814721.
- (3) Mission No. 630 of 25 May.
 - (a) Missing:
 1. 2nd Lieut. William H. Dickinson, O-812773.
 2. 2nd Lieut. Mervin J. Hitchcock, O-816864.

j. The following named pilot of this organization has been decorated for having distinguished himself in aerial combat against the enemy.

- (1) 2nd Lieut. Donald A. Smith.
 - (a) Engagement: Mission No. 530 of 24 March, 1944.
 - (b) Act: Shooting down of 1 e/a in aerial combat.
 - (c) Reward: Air Medal.

Varlandt M. McCoy, Jr.
 CORTLANDT MCCOY, JR.
 1st Lieut., A. C.,
 Commanding.

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Sheet No. 8, ~~War Diary~~ of the Sixty-Sixth Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650.

Month of May, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Captain, Air Corps.

SPECIAL ACCOUNT*Supporting Document
May 44 (1)*

Account of Mission No. 612 of 16 May, 1944 from Alto L.G., Corsica.

Duty: 15 X P-47's were ordered to dive-bomb the Viterbo Landing Grounds with 30 X 500 lb. cluster incendiaries.

a/c 99, Henson	a/c 02, Wise
a/c 70, Deckert	a/c 98, Ehney
a/c 92, Johnson	a/c 90, Hill
a/c 81, Pridgeon	a/c 72, Gains
a/c 93, Reynolds	a/c 74, Bailey
a/c 88, Irby	a/c 96, May
a/c 84, Bettinger	a/c 79, McCoy
a/c 95, Hunter	a/c 75, Bangiola

Narrative: The formation crossed the mainland S of Grosseto and then climbed to 14,000 feet over Lake Bolsena and then turned right. 4 a/c bombed the camp area at A 1825 and a large fire was seen - orange flame and black smoke. 8 a/c bombed at A 1425 and set several large fires. 4 a/c bombed the camp area at A 2026 and started several fires. All a/c then strafed the landing ground at A 4420 and destroyed 7 X FW-190's, 3 X JU-88's and one Henschel 126 (a single engine army-cooperation plane, looks similar to one of our liaison ships). The above a/c were flaming or smoking. Many others were damaged. Very intense and accurate HAA and LAA from A 1727 and A 4323 hit many of our a/c. Lt. Gains' a/c was seen to explode at A 4232 as a result of this fire. Lt. Hunter's a/c was also hit and he was last seen at A 1030. One 20 MM Position and 2 heavy MG positions were silenced. 6 a/c hit by flak and are damaged as follows: No. 99 Cat. 3; No. 92 Cat. 2; No. 81 Cat. 1; No. 93 Cat. 1; No. 94 Cat. 1; No. 71 Cat. 1. At A 8515 an unidentified a/c was heard calling for the position of the flight. Four canvas covered MT going S were seen at A 4425. The weather was 7/10 at 5,000 ft. - very hazy. 15 sorties - 2 a/c lost (Lt. Gains - No. 72 and Lt. Hunter - No. 95.)

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Sheet No. 9, ~~War Diary~~ of the Sixty-Sixth Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650.

Month of May, 1944. Prepared by Bigil G. Olsen, Captain, Air Corps.

SPECIAL ACCOUNT-*Supporting Document**May 44 (2)*

Account of Mission No. 630 of 25 May, 1944 from Alto L.G., Corsica.

Duty: 12 X P-47's with 2 X 500 lb. G.P. bombs each to attack targets of opportunity.

a/c 87, Benedict
a/c 91, Hitchcock
a/c 74, Jansen
a/c 73, Irby
a/c 92, Turner
a/c 85, Bracha

a/c 90, Kriss
a/c 98, Ehney
a/c 71, Kaiser
a/c 86, Flood
a/c 82, Dickinson
a/c 94, Garland

Narrative: Landfall was made S of Tarquinia at altitude of 7,000 ft. and all a/c bombed a 3 span concrete highway bridge at F 3372 from 500 ft. 2 d/h were scored on the bridge making holes but the bridge remained intact. The tracks nearby were cut in one place. After the formation pulled up and reformed, it headed N on the deck looking for strafing targets (flying at about 500 ft. altitude).

A formation of 8 X FW-190's had risen from Canino Landing Grounds and attacked our formation diving on them from a low altitude. In the ensuing dog-fight, 4 X FW-190's were destroyed and 1 X FW-190 was probably destroyed. 2 of our a/c, P-47's, are missing as a result of the fight.

Lt. Kriss, leading the flight, dived under the attacking enemy formation, which then did a right turn. Lt. Kriss did a turnabout and caught 2 X FW-190's directly in his sights and fired at them. He then followed them and saw one hit, burning at A 0716, and the other burning at A 0915. Lt. Kriss claims 2 X FW-190's destroyed.

Lt. Flood got a 30 degree deflection burst on a FW-190 coming in on him. This a/c was seen to hit at A 1016, burning, by Lt. Bracha. In the air, pieces were seen flying from the fuselage around the canopy. Lt. Flood claims 1 X FW-190 destroyed.

One of the FW-190's made a 180 degree turn at 500 ft. and dived at Lt. Ehney who, in time turned into the FW-190 and fired. Lt. Ehney followed him and saw him hit the ground and explode at A 0416. Lt. Ehney claims 1 X FW-190 destroyed.

Lt. Kaiser got on the tail of another FW-190 and as the enemy a/c did a left turn Lt. Kaiser fired at him. Lt. Ehney and Lt. Kaiser saw the e/a smoking badly, last observed at A 1218. Lt. Kaiser claims one FW-190 probably destroyed.

Lt. Bracha saw a parachute open at A 0817 (probably Lt. Dickinson's)

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Sheet No. 10, War Diary of the Sixty-Sixth Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650.

Month of May, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Captain, Air Corps.

Account of Mission No. 630 Cont., Page 2.

and saw a P-47 hit nearby in flames. Another P-47 was seen to hit in flames at A 1411. Lt. Dickinson in a/c 82 and Lt. Hitchcock in a/c 91 were last seen in formation by Lt. Irby. Both pilots and their a/c are missing in action.

Our 12 a/c had separated, Major Benedict taking 6 a/c to search for other targets, so that there were only 6 a/c attacked by the enemy formation of 8 X FW-190's. Only one FW-190 was seen to get away.

Flamers were left as follows (MT): 3 at A 0219; 2 at A 0724; 2 at E 8235; 2 at E 6745; 2 at E 6655; 2 at E 6177; 2 at E 4086; 2 at E 7089. All were travelling S.

Observations: 3 medium tanks and 10 plus trucks, well camouflaged at A 0912; 3 X 100' wooden trawlers at E 6544. Weather: No clouds inland, 15 mile visibility. 12 sorties. Lt. Dickinson in a/c 82 and Lt. Hitchcock in a/c 91 are missing in action.

HAA, moderate intensity and inaccurate, was received from A 1325.

* After rechecking flight with pilots concerned it was decided that the e/a reported "probably destroyed" by Lt. Kaiser was actually destroyed. This was confirmed by the pilots and by the number of fires on the ground after the flight left the area. There were therefore 5 e/a destroyed.

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Sheet No. 1, War Diary of the Sixty-Sixth Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650, N.Y.

Month of May, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Captain, Air Corps.

- | DAY | EVENTS |
|-----|---|
| 1 | <p>Three missions again today; one anti-shipping and the other two were armed-reccees against enemy communications lines in Italy. At a squadron meeting held before pay-call for the men Major Benedict informed the men that the group had been officially cited for our group's outstanding performance in the shooting down of seventy five e/a off Cape Bon, Tunisia on the 18 April, 1943 and for the effective bombing and strafing of enemy rail and road lines in Central Italy during the period 1 April thru 14 April, 1944.</p> |
| 2 | <p>Our two missions of the day produced no startling results although the constant vigilance of our pilots in the designated target areas over the past few weeks of operations has done much to aid in the cutting of the enemy's communications. After a week or so of hard work the officers of the squadron have completed the job of construction of a new mess. It is located on the river not too far from the field. The large prefabricated hut which was formerly used as an officers' club has been turned over to the enlisted men for use by them as a day room. Two enlisted men came in to join the squadron today. Lieut. Joseph F. Reynolds left the squadron today to go to group where he is to be assistant operations officer.</p> |
| 3 | <p>Two missions were flown today over the usual target area in Italy. Mail came in today. No matter how long we remain overseas mail from home will continue to be the number one morale builder.</p> |
| 4 | <p>Poor weather held up our early morning flight but by noon the sky had cleared enough for us to fly an anti-shipping mission over the coast of Italy. Canteen supplies were sold today and in the evening a movie was shown; Hedy La Marr in "Heavenly Body".</p> |
| 5 | <p>Two missions; one anti-shipping and the other the usual armed-recce against RR in Italy. Mail was distributed in the evening. The men have enough room in their camp area for a soft-ball diamond and in</p> |

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Sheet No. 2, War Diary of the Sixty-Sixth Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650, N.Y.

Month of May, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Captain, Air Corps.

DAY

EVENTS

the evening after flying has been concluded for the day games are played by the teams of the various departments of the squadron.

- 6 Two missions today against the RR lines in Italy. On the first show a RR bridge was knocked out by a direct bomb strike. In the evening the movie "No Time for Love" was shown near the 65th Sqdn.
-
- 7 The sky was cloudy and rain fell intermittently all thru the day and so the squadron was released for the day. Yugoslav Co-belligerents have been doing work around the field and some of them are having their meals in our enlisted men's mess.
-
- 8 No flying again today for the weather continues to be unfavourable and we were released at 1530 hrs. In the evening a movie was shown on the 65th Squadron's screen. Four new men arrived here to join the squadron today.
-
- 9 We were released until 1100 hrs by which time the weather had cleared. Two shows went out over N Italy in the afternoon. The enlisted men's bar was open in the evening and a movie was shown at the 65th.
-
- 10 Three missions went out over N Italy today. On the second show four of the squadron a/c were damaged by AA fire. Major Benedict's a/c had over thirty holes in wings, tail and fuselage. Three or four of the men of the squadron are to leave for home on the rotation plan.
-
- 11 Two missions were flown today; one to bomb RR tracks and bridge near Monte S. Savino which was a success for the bridge received a direct hit and the tracks were broken in several places. The other mission went to bomb gun positions on the island of Elba which is clearly visible from here today though too far away to allow us to make out any details. Direct hits were scored in the target area on this mission.

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Sheet No. 3, War Diary of the Sixty-Sixth Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650, N.Y.

Month of May, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Captain, Air Corps.

DAY

EVENTS

This squadron dropped eleven tons of bombs on the enemy today. Canteen supplies were sold to the men in their day room today. In the evening a movie was shown in the 65th area. The movie was preceded by an interesting talk given by Captain Crosby. He told us of the plan of attack which is to begin at 2300 hrs. tonight on the 5th Army front.

12 Three missions today all of which were against communications in Italy. Fourteen MT were destroyed and an electric engine was strafed and set afire and many breaks were made in the RR tracks as well as a direct hit on a RR bridge. The squadron dropped 17 tons of bombs today. One enlisted man, Cpl. A. J. Byron left the squadron today to return to the U. S. A. on the rotation plan.

13 No one got much sleep last night but everything went well today. Last night flares were dropped N of here at about 2230 hrs. and e/a were heard overhead and much AA was seen. Flares were also dropped to the S of here and it seems that the most intensive attack was made there. This went on until early morning and shortly after the Germans left the area for their home landing ground our crew chiefs were on the line pre-fighting our a/c in preparation for a 0545 hrs. take-off. Two men left the squadron today to return to the States. They are S/sgt. E. A. Ryan and Sgt. A. Schoenfeld. In the early evening there was a meeting of the men and the first sergeant discussed with them plans for better disbursal of the camp. Following this meeting the bar in the men's day room was officially opened. The band of the 317th Engineers was present to provide music for this affair.

14 Three missions to bomb and strafe in Italy. Two against RR targets and one against a suspected enemy fuel dump. The suspected enemy fuel dump was bombed and strafed and some fires were started. When one building was struck by a bomb black smoke went up to 1,000 feet. The men signed the payroll today. Two new pilots, Lieut's. Vincent J. Bracha and Mervin J. Hitchcock joined the squadron today. Lt. W. W. Sorn, transportation officer, left the squadron today. He joined us at Fort Dix, N.J. just before we left the States. He is going to a troop carrier unit.

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Sheet No. 4, War Diary of the Sixty-Sixth Fighter Squadron, A.P.O 650, N.Y.

Month of May, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Captain, Air Corps.

DAY	EVENTS
15	One one of our two missions of the day to Italy our pilots saw a B-25 explode and saw the crew bail out and land in the sea. Our a/c circled for half an hour over the area of this crew's landing until some of the survivors were picked up by the air-sea-rescue "Walrus" a/c. After leaving that place the flight proceeded to the target in Italy and did their bombing. On the return trip three men were seen below in the sea and four of our a/c stayed to patrol over that area until the men were picked up by a launch.
16	Three missions went out today and so with the moving of the camp of the enlisted men in addition to the regular duties which are the men's part on any normal flying day everyone was kept quite busy. On the last mission of the day, which was sent out to bomb and strafe Viterbo landing grounds, two of our pilots were lost. They are Lieut. Robert H. Gains and Lieut. Robert J. Hunter. Lieut. Gains had been with the squadron since Cercola L. G., Italy and Lieut. Hunter joined the squadron about the first of this month. Several other a/c were shot up today but they returned to base. The enlisted men have moved to a site about a quarter of a mile above the officers' camp on the river. (For account of mission to Viterbo see special account which is appended.)
17	Two missions to bomb RR's in Italy and one anti-shipping show to the Italian coast. One a/c was damaged (Cat. 2) when a tire blew-out in landing but the pilot was not injured. The men had breakfast in their old camp area for their kitchen was not moved to the new area until this morning. Lieut. Billy M. Head left the squadron today.
18	Two missions were flown today. On the first show which was to dive-bomb RR tracks, e/a were reported following our flight so all bombs were jettisoned but no e/a could be found and the flight returned to base. The second mission went out to bomb RR's near Vernio. Canteen supplies came in today. There was a movie to-night and the evening's program was augmented by a negro band which played for over an hour and Red Cross coffee and doughnuts. Men left today for three day passes in Corte where this squadron has a house.

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Sheet No. 5, War Diary of the Sixty-Sixth Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650, N.Y.

Month of May, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Captain, Air Corps.

DAY	EVENTS
19	Two missions against enemy RR lines in Italy. On the first mission a 500 ft. RR bridge was dive-bombed and one span was completely blown out. On this mission Lieut. Thomas R. May made a forced landing in enemy territory. He called the other members of the formation and announced calmly that his engine had stopped and that he was landing.
20	Released for the day. Rain fell intermittantly thruout the day. Most everyone spent the afternoon in camp. The men worked at building their mess and after this job had been completed the Red Cross was on hand to serve coffee and doughnuts. Mail in the evening.
21	On the last of our two missions of the day three of our a/c were shot-up and Lieut. James B. Wise returned early to make an emergency landing. All of the instruments in his a/c had been put out of operation by AA and a piece of spent flak had grazed his head leaving a lump there.
22	A 75 ft. trestle bridge was bombed on one of our two missions of the day and it was broken by a direct hit. A 200 ft. highway bridge also received a direct hit but it was not seen to have been broken. Two new men joined the squadron today and Lieut. Stanley B. Farley, Jr. left the unit after only about one month with us to return to the States.
23	One mission in the morning and another which was scheduled for take-off in the afternoon was not flown because of unfavourable weather reports. Captain Crosby, Group ALO, came to Ops in the afternoon and gave an interesting talk, as is usual with his "gen talks, to thoes who were on the line. A Red Cross girl was present and she served coffee and doughnuts. A large ammount of mail came in this afternoon. One new man came in to join the squadron today and two old men left to go home on rotation. They are Sgt. A. Goldberg and Cpl. R. Corio.

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Sheet No. 6, War ^DDiary of the Sixty-Sixth Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650, N.Y.

Month of May, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Captain, Air Corps.

DAY	EVENTS
24	Five missions today, one of twelve a/c, two of eight a/c and one of four a/c. Many MT's were seen and the pilots had a field day. The total score for the day; 71 flamers, 2 RR engines which exploded, and a break in a 300 ft. steel bridge as well as much MT damaged. 15 enlisted men came in to join the squadron today.
25	Very busy day today for in addition to the activity of our own group's a/c there were many P-38's and P-51's landing here to be refueled and so planes were taking-off and landing all day. One of the squadron's four missions of the day ran into eight Fw-190's and five of these were destroyed. (See appended special account) Two of our pilots did not return from this mission. They are Lieut. William H. Dickinson and Lieut. Mervin J. Hitchcock. The last mission of the day was an air-sea-rescue show over the sea between this island and S France. Two B-24's were reported down in that area but our flight was unable to locate the crews of these a/c. For dinner this evening the men enjoyed chicken etc. and apple pie and ice cream. The ice cream was served by a Red Cross girl whose presence lent a domestic atmosphere to the gathering. Captain Walter H. Henson left the squadron today to return to the U. S. A. Captain Henson joined us at Hani Main L. G., Tunisia just about a year ago. He flew 132 sorties and 230.05 Operational hours during that time.
26	Very large formations of bombers were going over here most of the day. They were going in the direction of France. More fighters landed here to be refueled today. It is quite thrilling to see such a display of air power. Our squadron flew two missions over Italy. Two direct hits were scored on RR tracks.
27	Two missions today against RR's in Italy. On the second mission of the day the flight ran into intense and accurate AA fire, as usual, and Lieut. Paul Bangiola was severely injured when a light AA shell exploded in the cockpit of his a/c. The control stick was cut off and only a stub about eighteen inches long was left. Though wounded and flying a badly damaged a/c he managed to bring his ship back to the island and make a belly landing. He was

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Sheet No. 7, War Diary of the Sixty-Sixth Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650, N.Y.

Month of May, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Captain, Air Corps.

DAY

EVENTS

taken to a field hospital. We have been informed that the chaplain of the French unit, which is also on this field, is going to conduct lessons in French in our group's chapel tent each Monday evening beginning Monday the 29th May. The squadron received two new a/c today. These a/c are both "silver", or unpainted and one is the latest model P-47. This ship has a "bubble" canopy and this and other changes in the fuselage give it a different appearance than that of the older models. The a/c was purchased by employees of the Republic Corp. and it bears an inscription on the side and the number "45". A bomb line received early today which ran thru Rome has been pulled back and it is now about ten miles from the city. There are good reports from the operations on that front.

28 Two routine missions today to bomb RR's. All the men are to turn their OD's into quartermaster supply to be stored until they are needed again.

29 The men are building a new day room in their camp area. It is being built at the edge of the stream and there is a porch which overhangs the water. The opening is to take place in two or three days. Two missions to Italy and some good bombing was done on these missions.

30 Two missions today. In the evening a practice allert was sounded for aerodrome defense and the officers and men assembled at points in their respective camp areas with gas masks, helmets and firearms. From the assembly points the individuals were disbursed to vantage points where they remained until the all-clear was sounded.

31 Today the squadron had two routine missions. Major Benedict flew in a B-25 to Catania where supplies were picked up for the officers' mess and enlisted men's day room. Ice cream and chicken again tonight for the enlisted men. Pay call was held for the men in their mess tonight.

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