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July 44

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HEADQUARTERS SIXTY-SIXTH FIGHTER SQDN.

A.P.O. 650, U.S.Army,
31 July, 1944.

A.G. 314.7

SUBJECT: Historical Records.

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

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

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

b. Changes in organization:

(1) Change of Commanding officers:

(a) Captain Cortlandt McCoy, Jr. com-
manded this squadron from 5 June, 1944, to 19 July, 1944.

(b) Major Charles C. Leaf, who was D.S.
to U.S.A., returned to take command of the squadron on
19 July, 1944, and remained commanding officer thru 31
July, 1944.

(2) Changes of staff officers:

(a) 2nd Lieut. Herman R. Williams was
made operations officer on 19 July, 1944.

(b) 1st Lieut. Donald A. Smith was made
assistant operations officer on 19 July, 1944.

c. Strength, commissioned and enlisted:

(1) Month of July, 1944:

(a) 1 July:

1. Commissioned: 40.

2. Enlisted: 249.

(b) Net increase:

1. Commissioned: 18.

2. Enlisted: 4.

(c) Net decrease:

1. Commissioned: 3.

2. Enlisted: 4.

(d) 31 July:

1. Commissioned: 55.

2. Enlisted: 249.

Page 1.

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Page 2, Outline History of 66th F.S., July, 1944.

d. Stations:

(1) Name of station:

(a) Alto Air Base, Corsica.

1. Date of arrival:

a. "A" Party: 28 March, 1944.

b. "B" Party: 6 April, 1944.

2. Date of departure: The entire

squadron remained on Alto Air Base, Corsica thru 31 July, 1944.

e. Movements: None.

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 communications.

(3) Number of missions and sorties for the period covered:

(a) Missions: 41.

(b) Sorties: 416.

(4) Results of most important missions:

(a) Mission No. 708 of 1 July, 1944.

1. Destruction of six enemy fighter aircraft in aerial combat (see special account).

h. Commanding officers on important missions:

(1) Mission No. 708 of 1 July, 1944:

(a) Commanding officer: 2nd Lieut.

William R. Hill.

i. Losses in action:

(1) Killed in action:

(a) Name: Claude G. Rahn, 2nd Lieut.

1. Date: 11 July, 1944.

(2) Missing in action:

(a) Name: Calvin S. Hain, Jr., 2nd Lieut.

1. Date: 30 July, 1944.

j. Presentation of awards to past and present members of this organization:

(1) Name: Major Charles C. Leaf.

(a) Basis: Gallantry in Action.

(b) Reward: Silver Star.

Page 2.

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Page 3, Outline History of 66th F.S., July, 1944.

- (2) Name: Captain Cortlandt McCoy, Jr.
 - (a) Basis: Extraordinary achievement.
 - (b) Award: Distinguished Flying Cross.
- (3) Name: Captain Walter H. Henson.
 - (a) Basis: Extraordinary achievement.
 - (b) Award: Distinguished Flying Cross.
- (4) Name: 1st Lieut. Gaston L. Polk, Jr.
 - (a) Basis: Extraordinary achievement.
 - (b) Award: Distinguished Flying Cross.
- (5) Name: 1st Lieut. Warren L. Shaw.
 - (a) Basis: Extraordinary achievement.
 - (b) Award: Distinguished Flying Cross.
- (6) Name: Captain Joseph F. Reynolds.
 - (a) Basis: Extraordinary achievement.
 - (b) Award: Distinguished Flying Cross.
- (7) Name: Master Sergeant Howard D. Beck.
 - (a) Basis: Exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services.
 - (b) Award: Legion of Merit.

2. Inclosed are the War Diary of the 66th Fighter Squadron for the period 1 July thru 31 July, 1944, and Special Account of Mission No. 708 of 1 July, 1944.

Charles C Leaf
CHARLES C. LEAF
Major, A. C.,
Commanding.

Page 3.

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Sheet No. 1., War Diary of the 66th Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650 N.Y.

Month of July, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Captain, A. C.

DAYEVENTS

- 1 Today the 57th Fighter Group celebrated its second anniversary overseas. The festivities began in the early afternoon, following our release for the day, after each of the three squadrons had flown three missions in the morning. A formation of the group personnel was held at Group Hq. General Cannon was present to decorate pilots of the group and one enlisted man. The group received three citations at this formation. After the formation, which was ended by 1600 hr., everyone went to the 64th Squadron area where supper was served as well as great quantities of beer. This squadron's achievement of this morning served to punctuate the termination of our first two years; our pilots met a flight of German Me-190s and shot down six and probably one other, with no loss to ourselves. (See Special Account) The entertainers for the afternoon were the band of 108 RSU, RAF and a USO Show. In the evening a movie was shown. Three new pilots and one enlisted man joined the squadron today.

- 2 We were released for the morning and our only show of the day took off at 1830 hrs. In the evening there was mail and later a movie was shown in the Group Hq. area.

- 3 Two missions were flown today; both of these were over Italy against lines of communication. Good bombing was done on both of these shows and some MT was strafed and two flammers were scored. No mail today. One new enlisted man joined the squadron today.

- 4 The squadron flew only one mission today. This show was an armed recce to Italy. Lieut. Wilbur P. Bailey scored a direct hit on an 80 ft. barge which went down immediately after the attack.

- 5 The squadron was released for the entire day. This gave the men on the line time to catch up on some maintenance

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Sheet No. 2., War Diary of the 66th Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650.

Month of July, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Captain, A.C.

DAY

EVENTS

work on the airplanes. The weather was fine and clear all day; we could see Elba quite clearly from here. A little mail came in and it was distributed this evening. 1st Lieut. Aldon L. Moore who left the squadron several weeks ago to go on detached service, has left the island to begin his journey back to the States.

- 6 Early take off this morning; 0530 hrs. Shots today at the medical tent. One of our a/c, No. 76, was shot up on mission today and the pilot, 2nd Lieut. Howard W. Cleveland made a forced landing on the sea not far from here. He was picked up by the Air-Sea-Rescue "Walrus".
-

- 7 Three enlisted men left this morning for leave in Alexandria, Egypt. Three men from the squadron are on leave in Rome. Regular leave runs are to be made by the B-25 to both of these places. Two missions today and two a/c were shot up by enemy AA fire, but no one was hurt. Movie tonight at the 65th Squadron.
-

- 8 The first mission took off at noon today and the second went off at 1830 hrs. One of our a/c was damaged when it came in for landing with wheels not fully extended. The ship ground looped but the pilot, Lieut. William H. Emey, was not hurt. Two new pilots joined the squadron today.
-

- 9 Only one mission today which took off at 0600 hrs. After this mission had returned rain began to fall and there was a regular downpour during the morning. The rain made the earth soft and so there was no more flying for the day. Three men returned from passes in Rome today.
-

- 10 Two missions today; Seven men are to leave the squadron tomorrow for passes in Rome. In the evening there was some mail
-

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Sheet No. 3, War Diary of the 66th Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650.

Month of July, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Capt., A.C.

DAY	EVENTS
11	Two missions against railroads in Italy today. The first went off at 0535 hrs. and the other at 1330 hrs. Canteen supplies were sold to the men in their camp area this noon. After dark tonight some night flying training missions were flown. Lieut. Claude G. Rahn took off at 2350 hrs and some of the pilots here, as well as the pilot on duty in the control tower, saw him fly off to the S, loosing altitude as he went, until he went out of sight behind the trees. Lieut. Rahn did not return. A movie was shown at Group tonight and there was a little mail in the early evening. Seven men left for Rome this morning.
12	No missions were flown today. We were released for the day at about 1000 hrs. This gave time for maintenance work on the a/c. The radio department was especially busy making modifications in the a/c radio sets. There is to be an inspection of the personnel tents and departments tomorrow. Lieut. Rahn's body was found this morning. He had crashed in the sea very close to shore. Funeral services for him are to be held this evening.
13	As the a/c were starting up at the end of the runway in preparation for take off on a mission, one of them, No. 86, caught fire. The fire gained way and because of the danger of explosion of the bombs, which hung on the wings, everyone got away from the burning plane. The other a/c which were lined up with No. 86, were taxied away by the pilots as rapidly as possible. The bombs exploded a short time after everyone had reached cover and No. 86 was showered all over the N end of the field in small pieces. No one was hurt. The mission took off a little later.
14	Only one mission went out today. This took off at 1015 hrs. and was ordered off to delouse near Ostiglia, Italy. The flight strafed and damaged two trucks. Twelve e/a were reported near Bologna but no contact was made.

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Sheet No. 4, War Diary of the 66th Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650.

Month of July, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Capt., A.C.

DAYEVENTS

We were released at 1300 hrs. today and many of the men went to villages in the mountains to attend dances and gatherings of the inhabitants who are celebrating Bastille Day. Along the mountain roads there are gatherings of people dressed in their finest clothes. Pigs are roasted over open pits and musicians play their string instruments for the entertainment of all present. Everyone wears a miniature French Tri-colour; French civilians and soldiers, and the American soldiers who are present. Dances are held in every village tonight.

- 15 Two missions were flown today; one took off at 0710 hrs. and the second at 1600 hrs. On the second show two of our a/c were shot up over the target and 2nd Lieut. Louis J. Pernicka, who was flying his first mission over enemy territory, was forced to bail out of his a/c just two miles to the east of this field over the sea. The "Walrus" went out and picked him up and he is back with the squadron after what must certainly have been a trying introduction to combat flying. The other a/c that was shot up on the show made a safe landing here and was taken to the service squadron for repairs. One a/c of the French group on this field, burned and exploded just as one of our a/c did only three days ago. The main topic of conversation these days is the Russian advance and we pay close attention to the radio news.

- 16 Two missions today to bomb bridges in Italy. It would seem that every bridge in central Italy must be blown out for we have had so many missions directed against these, but the pilots are always able to find one that has not been hit. Perhaps an enemy bridge repair job can be found and bombed. This must be disheartening to the enemy engineers and cause mania among those of the enemy who are charged with the job of getting supplies to their army. No mail today nor has there been any for several days. There was a movie tonight at Group Hq. as

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Sheet No. 5, War Diary of the 66th Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650.

Month of July, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Capt., A.C.

DAY

EVENTS

- well as a stage show presinted by a British unit and this was very good. Men returned from Rome today and others left today for leave in that city.
-
- 17 Two missions today and both of these went to Italy. The officers and men who left for leave in Alexandria, Egypt on the 7th day of this month, returned today. No mail to speak of - just a few "V" letters. The weather continues to be fair and today the heat was hard to bare.
-
- 18 Only one mission took off today. We were released in the morning until 100 hrs. and finally the show got off at 1850 hrs. In the evening moving pictures were shown of strafing and bombing attacks made on RRs, MT, etc. by the a/c of this squadron. The army film "Memphis Belle" was shown as well as "Knickerbocker Holiday". A Red Cross girl was on hand at the men's mess to serve coffee and doughnuts at the evening meal. Major Charles C Leaf returned to the squadron today. He has been on leave in the U.S.A. One new enlisted man came in to the squadron today.
-
- 19 One mission over Italy to dive-bomb communications lines and three patrol missions of two a/c each. Our dive-bombing show got off at 0535 hrs, this was our first for the day and our last patrol was back by 2130 hrs. There were a few letters and quite a few packages in the mail tonight. Tonight the men received their first issue of beer. This beer is made in the U.S.A. and comes to us in cans which are a familiar sight in the States, but all too rarely seen over here.
-
- 20 Three patrol missions over this island today of two a/c each and one mission of 12 a/c as escort to 24 B-26s. The bombers attacked road and RR bridges and severe damage was done in the target area. In the late afternoon

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Sheet No. 6, War Diary of the 66th Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650

Month of July, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Capt., A.C.

DAY	EVENTS
	<p>Group Ops called to inform us that we were to be released tomorrow and for the next four days following tomorrow. The engineers are to begin work on the runway.</p>
21	<p>Some of our a/c took off this morning, before work had been started on the runway, to fly to the field of the 79th Fighter Group so that they could be used during the time our field is unserviceable. The B-25 was taken to that field also, in order that it can be used to make its runs to Italy etc.</p>
22	<p>The engineers are hard at work, taking up the steel mat at the two ends of the runway and the graders are at work in the center of the runway, removing the hump. We have had no mail to speak of in many days and we are, needless to say, anxious to receive some.</p>
23	<p>The area about the runway is alive with activity, even though there is no flying. Work on the field is in progress as well as maintenance work on our a/c and when we begin to operate again in a few days it should be with a clean slate, so to speak; new runway and all a/c in commission. No mail today. Movie at Group Hq. area this evening. Three enlisted men left to begin their journey back to the States on the rotation system. They are S/Sgt. Richard J. Benton, Sgt. Joseph F. White and Cpl. Elmer A. Clark. One new enlisted man came in to the Unit today.</p>
24	<p>We are still released and most of our a/c have been put in commission, with the exception of two or three, one of which is in need of new parts which are not available just now. Still no mail. The weather has been beautiful; ideal for all the work at hand and ideal too for days of relaxation in the camp area. Everyone who is in any way connected with the business on the line has enjoyed a little more free time than usual, because of the suspension of flying.</p>

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Sheet No. 7, War Diary of the 66th Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650.

Month of July, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Capt., A. C.

DAYEVENTS

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- 25 We are still released from flying but the field should be ready for use in at least two more days. A movie was shown at Group Hq. in the evening. No mail.
-
- 26 Today eleven new pilots came in to join the squadron. One of these is a captain and there are two or three first lieutenants, the remainder are second lieutenants. This has been a red-letter day for the men were given their weekly issue of three bottles of Americal beer, their second issue, and mail came in tonight. This combination raised the spirits considerably.
-
- 27 We were told to expect to begin operations this evening, a tentative take off time was given as 1845 hrs. for it was expected that the field should be ready by that time. This mission did not go off for the runway was not completed in time. Our a/c which were taken to the field of the 79th Fighter Group on the 21st day of this month, just before work had begun on the runway, returned late this evening. Our take off for tomorrow has been set at 0845 hrs. We are transferring two a/c tomorrow and they are to be replaced with the new P-47 which has the "bubble" canopy and longer range. We have several of these new a/c and we understand that before long we should be fully equipped with this model. There was a movie tonight at Group; "And the Angels Sing". One new ground officer came to the squadron today.
-
- 28 The mission took off this morning as scheduled at 0845 hrs. We were to have another show at 1800 hrs. but this was called off and we were released for the day at 1430 hrs. This release gave an opportunity to check out the eleven new pilots, who came to the squadron on the 26th of the month. Three of our oldest pilots have been taken off operational flying to await orders to leave for the States. They are 1st Lieuts. W. P. Bailey, J. B. Wise and C. J. Yoder. Mail was distributed this evening.
-

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Sheet No. 8, War Diary of the 66th Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650.

Month of July, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Capt., A.C.

DAY

EVENTS

29 Last evening we were given our take off time for this morning which was set at 0850 hrs. This show did not take off though and we were placed on one hour's readiness. At about 1500 hrs. we were ordered to hang belly tanks and bombs on six of our new a/c, bubble canopied ships, which have greater gasoline capacity than the older models. This was to be a long range mission and because there were no fittings for belly tanks available, the a/c could not be equipped with the tanks and the a/c could not make the mission. At 1600 hrs. twelve of our a/c took off on a dive bombing mission to the Po River Valley. A little mail came in today. At 1930 hrs. a meeting of the enlisted men was held at the orderly room for the purpose of instruction in the procedure of voting in the coming federal election.

30 Last evening we were given a take off time for this morning's mission but again, as on yesterday, the show did not get off for we were given a show for later in the morning. Our first mission for today got off at 1100 hrs. and the last mission took off at 1710 hrs. 2nd Lieut. Calvin S. Hain, Jr. did not return from the first mission. His a/c was seen to belly-land and burn near Port Albera, about 15 mi. SW of Lodi, Italy. Lieut. Hain had been with the squadron only a short time and had flown 28 operational sorties. One other a/c on this mission was shot-up but the pilot, 1st Lieut. Quenton J. Goss, landed safely though one 500 lb. bomb was hung up on one wing.

31 Two missions; one of four a/c, which a/c were part of a group formation and the other a 12 ship show. We traded 7 a/c for 6 a/c with the other squadrons. The ships we received from them are "bubble" jobs and before long we should be fully equipped with them for long range. Four new pilots arrived to join the unit today. In the evening there was an assembly of the men at the

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Sheet No. 9, War Diary of the 66th Fighter Squadron, A.P.O. 650.

Month of July, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Capt., A. C.

DAY

EVENTS

orderly room. Major Leaf spoke to the men on the prospect of operations in the near future. The first sergeant gave the men an outline of the squadron's financial status and it was decided that each man should contribute two dollars fifty cents for employment of KPs and for the purchase of vegetables; an increase of one dollar per man. Pay call was held after the meeting and following this, coffee and doughnuts were served by the Red Cross. The officers' mess is being moved from the river bank up on to higher ground. A very small amount of mail came in today.

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Sheet No. 10, War Diary of the 66th Fighter Sqdn., A.P.O. 650.

Month of July, 1944. Prepared by Eigil G. Olsen, Capt., A.C.

Special Account of Mission No. 708 of 1 July, 1944.

<u>A/C</u>	<u>PILOT</u>	<u>A/C</u>	<u>PILOT</u>	<u>A/C</u>	<u>PILOT</u>
91	Hill	89	Johnson	84	Jansen
77	Ehney	02	Davis	72	Tench
93	Rahn	88	Bettinger	70	Ridley
85	Hain	86	Cleveland	73	Moody

Duty: 12 a/c of 66 Sqdn., each with two 500 lb. bombs to attack RR bridge at Bondeno, Italy.

Narrative: The formation took off from Alto Air Base, Corsica and flew NE, climbing to 10,000 ft. and making land-fall N of Massa. The bridge was bombed from 1,000 ft. No hits were scored on the bridge, but two hits were scored on each approach, breaking the tracks in as many places. The flight then strafed the RR yards at Bodeno, where 15 plus RR wagons were attacked. Three fires were started in this attack. Four 60 ft. barges were strafed and left smoking in the canal just SE of Bodeno. Two MT were strafed, all flamers, at S. Agostino. As the flight was returning, flying just SE of Reggio L. G., it encountered 14 plus Me-109Gs. Two flights of e/a were encountered, one of 6 a/c and one of 8 a/c, all flying at from 4 to 6,000 fr. and coming out of the sun. Our formation attacked, and in the ensuing fight, accounted for 6 e/a destroyed and 2 e/a damaged. Claims are as follows: Lieuts. Stephen L. Bettinger, Thomas D. Davis and Claude G. Rahn each one e/a destroyed; Lieut. Howard W. Cleveland two e/a destroyed; and Lieut. Richard L. Johnson one e/a destroyed and 2 e/a damaged. Three of our a/c were damaged as follows: No. 02 cat 1; Nos. 91 and 98 each cat. 2, all as a result of the encounter with the e/a. Light AA, light intensity and inaccurate from the target area. Weather very hazy, with 5/10 clouds at 8,000 ft. over mountains, closing to 3 to 5/10 at 4,000 ft. over target. One a/c returned early, no sortie. All a/c returned safely. 11 sorties.

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