

WAR DIARY
1ST EMERGENCY RESCUE SQUADRON
APO 650-U. S. ARMY
1-31 May 1945

1 May 1945:

A large number of promotions today, with many men sporting additional stripes. Bradley, Kieschnick, Tessa, Utley and Wert gained another stripe which elevated them to the grade of technical sergeant. Mitchell and Hayes stepped into the ranks of "1st three graders," while Bragg, Husky, Finney, and Schneider became three-strippers. Freaney, Keesey, McEllothlin, Jones, French, Hariburt, McMillen and Igleheart are now "non-coms," while Kusaynski, Sepich, Berry, Keyte, Owens and Smith earned their first stripe.

Total strength of the organization today is 111 enlisted men and 34 officers.

We are still operating with one operational flight at Falconara, and one at Foggia with Headquarters.

Today the airborne life boat was used for the first time, and was a success. Flight Lt. Raymond H. Veitch, flying a P-51, was hit by flak on a strike on Northern Italy and was forced to bail out. He landed in a mine field near Trieste where a B-17 piloted by Major Ruckman and the B-17 piloted by Lt. McIlordie located him. It was determined that the lifeboat was the only device to use under the circumstances since there were many mines and the sea was rough. Accordingly, the boat was parachuted to the downed flyer and he reached it with no difficulty. The B-17 returned to base and the CA-10 stayed with the survivor in an attempt to guide his boat through the mine field.

An H.S.L. was ordered out to transfer Flight Lt. Veitch, after which Major Ruckman and his crew left for their base and Lt. Kaminski went to the area with his crew to stand by to transfer the downed pilot in the event the sea became sufficiently calm. The B-17's left engine developed trouble however, and Lt. Kaminski was forced to return to base.

This was the third time Flight Lt. Veitch had been rescued in 30 days. All three times he landed in a mine field and three times lifeboats were parachuted to him. The two previous times B-17's picked him up however, after Harwick of the RAF had dragged the lifeboats.

2 May 1945:

Pvt. Cude was promoted to Pfc. today. Cpl. Weber entered the 60th Station Hospital for treatment.

Great news for everyone this evening when the American Expeditionary

2 May 1945 (Con'd)

Station at Foggia announced that all fighting in Italy ceased as of noon today. The armistice was signed Sunday at Caserta and the Jerries surrendered all troops and supplies up to the Brenner Pass and the lower portion of Austria.

The war is moving fast and each hour brings new developments.

3 May 1945:

Sgt. Kalsher entered the hospital today.

Col. Pardue, Capts. Welling and Searfoss, Lt. Soule, Sgts. Loeffler, Ruts, Wightman, Kleschnick and Hughes off on a holiday trip to Cairo and Palestine.

Word was received today that the organization would fill its P/O vacancies at once.

The war is over in Italy and everyone wonders what the future holds. It is assumed we will get to another theatre of operations.

4 May 1945:

Past campaign quiet prevails.

5 May 1945:

Our unit supply section has started to pack. No official word as to movement but Capt. Ogle is going to be prepared for any eventuality.

6 May 1945:

Word has been received from the 323 Wing, RAF, that we are no longer considered operational in this Mediterranean Theatre of Operations.

7 May 1945:

Very quiet, packing and work on records goes ahead.

8 May 1945:

P/O Priest back on duty after a lengthy stay in the hospital.

8 May 1945 (Con'd):

Four men rotated today: Sgts. Lasater and Baker, Cpl Keesy and Pvt. McClintock left in a rush for the 7th Replacement Depot. 12th Air Force asked for three men with longest overseas service and Sgt. Baker, Cpl Keesy and Pvt. McClintock were the chosen ones. Sgt. Lasater had completed his tour of duty but the presentation of the Silver Star award and treatment for a foot injury had delayed his departure.

Today was V-E day!!! The war has finally ended in Europe. Details of the grand climax will be found in other diaries and stories—mention is made here as a matter of record. Celebrations of unusual nature are in abundance, but then, this is the day. Plenty of flares and beer bottles about.

9 May 1945:

Today officially celebrated as V-E day. Everyone confined to post.

10 May 1945:

Movement is definitely in the air, "A" flight directed to move to Poggia, PBYS and the B-17 carrying the personnel and equipment.

A copy of "PCM" (Preparation for Overseas Movement) arrived today.

The officers and men who went to Cairo and Palestine returned today.

11 May 1945:

A "PCM" inspection team arrived today from 12th Air Force. They were bearers of good news—we are going to the Pacific, but we are going home first.

Lots of work to be done and everyone is walking around with smiles, hunting for something to do.

12 May 1945:

Two B-17 crews in today from 301st Bomb Group.

Today the organization received two battle participation awards. This is four stars the unit is now authorized. The new campaigns are North Apennines and the Po Valley.

Points for possible discharge received today. 65 is announced as the "critical" score. Plenty of talk about it but how many will be affected is a question.

13 May 1945:

Everyone is working. Plenty of rumors but no movement date as yet.

14 May 1945:

Last minute promotions for officers saw 2nd Lt. Fox, McIordie and Shiphorst promoted to the silver bar, while P/O's Fries and Goodlet became 2nd Lt. today.

15 May 1945:

47 enlisted men from the 51st Bomb Wing in today to fill T/O vacancies. The personnel section waiting as the records are all in a mess and all have to be processed for an inspection before departure for the United States.

16 May 1945:

All busy - - no news yet.

17 May 1945:

Still preparing for the return trip home.

18 May 1945:

Cpl. Weber transferred from the unit. His illness is of a nature which renders him unable to join this organization before we depart the theatre, hence the transfer.

J. P. Hart, our communication officer, today donned his Captains' bars.

19 May 1945:

All working to be ready for our orders to move.

20 May 1945:

Although we are non-operational, the 1st ERS is always ready to answer any call of distress. At supper time a call from 323 Wing asked Col. Pardue to go on a search for the crew of a B-17 which had ditched. Collecting a crew, the

20 May 1945 (Cont'd):

FBY took off and arriving at the fix almost at once, found two men in a dinghy. Picking these two survivors up, it was found that there were four more men around. A search was made but no one else could be seen. Taking off, sea marker was spotted however, and another landing was made. By this time it was dark and it was decided to have FBY crew members take dinghies from the Catalina and search for rest of the downed B-17 men.

Capt. Scarfoss, Sgts. Utley and Bragg set off in a life raft and gathered up three more crewmen in a matter of two hours. Using flares the FBY located the P-Boat crew and survivors. It was impossible to take off in the darkness and it was necessary to stay on the water all night. During the trip to the fix the radio had gone out and at day break an American H.S.L. and a FBY with a Warwick were searching for the floating P-Boat. At this hour the FBY took off successfully and return to base was made uneventfully.

We are still waiting for movement orders. Final check by the FOM team and they seem satisfied.

21 May 1945:

Capt. Haskins and Sgt. Giza have been relieved from this unit today. All men on temporary duty from this organization were relieved by a blanket directive from Washington. We are all hoping that Capt. Haskins can join us in the States.

22 May 1945 - 23 May 1945:

Very quiet - not a thing.

24 May 1945:

At last! Flight crews were ordered to the Staging Airfield #1 at Gioia. We are taking nine FBYS and 4 B-17s to the States with us. Those going by air are:

(see attached roster)

25 May 1945:

Four men who had over 85 points under the readjustment plan, and who wanted to leave the unit for discharge were transferred today. They are: Schirza, Godwin, Huriburt and French.

At 2030 the water echelon boarded a troop train at Bivio Cervaro about 5 miles outside of Foggia. This is the start of the long trip home.

26 May 1945:

Arrived in Naples at 0700 and were loaded on trucks to the staging area #1 at the Naples College. Processing started at once.

27 May 1945:

Still in staging area and being processed. Last minute arrivals to fill T/O vacancies met us here.

28 May 1945:

Processing completed and everyone is giving Naples a last look.

29 May 1945:

Waiting now. Orders relieving us from 12th Air Force arrived today.

30 May 1945:

No word as yet of our departure. Lt. Stensifer left as advance party to the United States, via ATC. He will arrange for our leaves at the port where we are to debark.

31 May 1945:

All ready to go. Our organization is composed now of full T/O strength: 174 enlisted men and 51 officers,

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Lt Col Littleton J. Fardoe
Maj Thomas M. Ruckman
Capt Charles F. Eisman Jr.
Capt George F. Coolts
Capt Irving L. Cuss
Capt J. P. Hart
Capt Walter B. Milburn Jr.
Capt John H. Hork

Capt William B. Helling Jr.

1st Lt. Arthur E. Ashland

1st Lt. Carl E. Bass

1st Lt. James C. Busby

1st Lt. Floyd R. Byerly

1st Lt. Redmond W. Colman

1st Lt. Jay W. Cristy

1st Lt. Jackson S. Dunn

1st Lt. George E. Fox

1st Lt. Graham A. Hyde

1st Lt. Frederick C. Lann

1st Lt. Charles Luger

1st Lt. Charles J. McIordie

1st Lt. James E. Crossi

1st Lt. John G. Schnobrick

1st Lt. David F. Shiphorst

1st Lt. Walter H. Sorenson

2nd Lt. Don C. Bartley

2nd Lt. Floyd A. Carlson

2nd Lt. Thomas T. Christiansen

2nd Lt. James H. Goodlet

2nd Lt. Edward J. Haminski

2nd Lt. Theodore A. Lantry

2nd Lt. Joseph D. Murphy

2nd Lt. Daniel B. Fredist II

2nd Lt. Robert V. Seater

2nd Lt. Wiley Seward Jr.

2nd Lt. Robert F. Soule

2nd Lt. Lester D. Stevall

2nd Lt. William H. Wendlandt, Jr.

1st Sgt Emanuel J. Loeffler

1st Sgt Allen B. Cox

1st Sgt Paul H. Futs

1st Sgt Edwin Moore

1st Sgt Culver A. Wightman

1st Sgt Arthur M. Benson

1st Sgt Orville G. Blaisner

1st Sgt Ben C. Brown

1st Sgt James E. Conroy

1st Sgt Gus H. Kieschnick

1st Sgt Robert L. King

1st Sgt William J. Lardier

1st Sgt Bernard E. Lanning

1st Sgt Joseph C. Morris

1st Sgt Joseph P. Tesora

1st Sgt Billy E. Utley

1st Sgt Allen J. Wort

1st Sgt Gerverino T. Andreatta

1st Sgt Robert J. Brower

1st Sgt Jess L. Brooks

1st Sgt Robert B. Carrott

1st Sgt Walter J. Davitt

1st Sgt Albert E. Feliksa

1st Sgt Rothwell E. Huff

1st Sgt Pat J. Hughes

1st Sgt Leroy J. Kephart

1st Sgt Edwin R. Lorn

1st Sgt Arlo C. Martin

1st Sgt Emerson E. Mitchell

1st Sgt John J. O'Brien

1st Sgt Kenneth E. Pettie

1st Sgt Elmer C. Rhodes

1st Sgt Robert L. Selby

1st Sgt Samuel H. Speransa

1st Sgt Chester R. White

1st Sgt Gordon H. Forts

Sgt Paul G. Yancey

Sgt Paul G. Anderson

Sgt Melvin D. Andrews

Sgt Marion F. Beil

Sgt Raymond E. Boyer

Sgt Paul E. Bradley

Sgt George D. Bragg

Sgt Francis A. Buckley

Sgt Joseph R. R. Collette

Sgt Alfred M. Cook

Sgt Warren J. Feeley

Sgt George L. Finney

Sgt Allen Fonoroff

Sgt Joseph Mansa

Sgt Arthur J. McSwaney

Sgt James E. Moling

Sgt Robert A. Nelson

Sgt John F. Schneider

Sgt Donald G. Shelton

Sgt Joseph T. Buis

Sgt Donald L. Rotts

Sgt Charles E. Tanne

Pfc Glenn L. Madison