

WORLD WAR II DIARY

of

Donald J. Tolle

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PREFACE

This "unpublished publication" consists of the actual diary I kept (probably unlawfully) for the major part of the nearly three years I was overseas during World War II as a member of the 47th Bombardment Group (Light), 97th Bombardment Squadron. It also includes some other things I wrote at odd times overseas, such as poetry (many would not call it that) and descriptions of certain special events.

The diary entries themselves are usually quite brief because the pages in the initial diary were 2½" x 4" in size, with only six narrow lines allowed per date. These were penciled notes which faded badly over the years and in some cases could be read only with the help of a magnifying glass and a bright spotlight. This little diary ran from September 1942 to March 1944, at which time I was able to get a bigger book and make somewhat longer entries. However, there were many gaps in the diary over those years, and I'm sorry now that I didn't keep a better record.

Any reader of this account will have to remember that I was writing it mainly for myself (sometimes as a means of just keeping up with what day it was on the calendar). Since I was in the 97th Squadron, it is obvious that most (not all) of the references are to people and events in the 97th.

My main reason for starting to put these jottings in readable form was some pressure from my three children (principally my son) to make them available to the family. Then in 1982, when Joe McGahan of the 84th Bombardment Squadron put his notes and recollections into "A Letter to My Granddaughters" and made his account available to the reunion attendees, I felt that I could do no less than follow his generous example.

One last statement: This is an "expurgated" edition in the sense that I have in a few instances deleted certain descriptions and comments which might even now needlessly cause a bit of hurt. Those types of things were largely due to my own youth and naiveté at the time and should have no place in this "in-house" document. In some cases, an event might be referred to without names attached--for the same reason. My purpose is to provide some information, stir some memories, and perhaps present a fairly accurate (though sketchy) recollection of how we lived, what we faced, how we endured--according to this one person's written notes.

Peace.

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I.

THE START: STATESIDE

Two of my brothers and I had decided during the Christmas vacation after the 12-7-41 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor that we would go ahead and enlist rather than wait for the Draft. Carroll was 31 and a high school teacher, Junior ("Ed") was 18 and a freshman in college, and I was 23 and a secondary school teacher (junior/senior high). We enlisted in Tampa, Florida, on January 5, 1942, and left that night for Camp Blanding at Starke, Florida. We were there about three days, during which time we took the oath (1-6-42), were outfitted with clothing and equipment, and did a good day's work with shovels and wheelbarrows.

On about 1-8-42 we left by train for Sheppard Field, Wichita Falls, Texas. A lieutenant who was a "good Joe" was in charge of us on this trip. (He had fought in major battles in the other war.) We had fine food on the trip (dining cars and hotels), and in Shreveport, Louisiana, he took us to the best hotel in town and had a fine dinner and floor show for us. All this gave a wonderful impression of Army life. . . . Then we hit Sheppard Field! No time was wasted in putting us in our place--but definitely!!! A corporal at this field had about the authority of a master sergeant any place else. The noncoms in general seemed to be jerks who were just tasting the first delights of authority, and it must have tasted pretty good. . . . Everyone here had a cold and was constipated. The dust was terrible and spread the cold germs from one person to another. We were happy to leave after 2½ weeks of poor food and misery.

On about 1-26-42 we left by train for Fresno, California--Hammer Field. Fine place! We got a taste here of living in war conditions--tin hats, gas masks, and all of that. Carroll went into Hq. & Hq. Sqdn.; Junior and I went into the 97th Bombardment Sqdn. After two weeks here (and our first pay--\$20!), we left by train for destination unknown (which turned out to be Oklahoma City). At Sayre, Oklahoma, our train was wrecked by a loose rail. Sabotage was suspected, but there was no proof. We were lucky that no one was killed, although three were injured. All our trucks and airplane tugs on the flat cars were ruined. Jr. and I had been on guard in the caboose a day or two before the wreck. Anyway, we missed the roughest part of the accident.

We arrived at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, at about 12:30 a.m. on February 15, 1942. (At the present writing--April 24, 1942, we have been here nearly 10 weeks, and the items immediately following were some miscellaneous notes made at Will Rogers Field.)

Our Supply Officer is Lt. Robert L. Campbell, an awfully nice fellow from Texas. He's the only pilot I've flown with so far. I've been up with him twice, once in the nose and once in the gunner's seat. He was transferred yesterday (4-24-42) to a tow-target detail in Texas, Ellington Field. I hope to see him again somewhere.

Lt. Sherman W. Long, our Assistant Supply Officer, from California, was killed in the crash of his A-20C while making a practice flight about 30 miles from Oklahoma City (4-23-42). I hated to see him go. He was a swell boy. Junior flew with him the day before he was killed. I was up with Lt. Campbell while Jr. was up with Lt. Long. I remember

saluting Long and speaking to him the evening before he was killed.

Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler Garrison of Oklahoma City had the three of us brothers out to Sunday dinner once, and we had a good time. He was in the last war--a sergeant. Fine people.

Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Tolbert of Oklahoma City had Harold Wright of Hq. & Hq. Sqdn. and Duane Morris and me of the 97th out to Sunday dinner once. He's a lawyer; was a captain (I believe) in the last war. Nice people.

April 25, 1942--I heard today that the 47th Group has been made a part of the 3rd Air Force with headquarters at Tampa, Fla. Boy! That sounds good to me--whether we stay in Tampa permanently or just pass through there on the way across. I surely hope we go.

May 3, 1942--Our Sqdn. Cmdr. (Lt. W. F. Duncan) told us yesterday that we are to go into desert maneuvers for three months in a few weeks, and then it will be overseas for us. That really knocks the props from under our Florida plan. I guess we'll be in one of three countries soon: Libya, Egypt, or Australia. I'd really like to go home just once before we go across, and then I don't care where they send me.

May 13, 1942--(I'm writing this on the 20th of May, so I'm not sure the date is correct.) Two planes collided today, and four were killed--John Pellish, S. W. Dye, and J. D. Davis (enlisted men), and Lt. Toler. Louis Killeen and Lt. Gualtiere were able to bail out safely, but Louis got a broken leg when he landed. Davis got out of the nose of his plane and got his 'chute open, but something from the wreckage hit him and killed him. (The man in the nose of an A-20 has very little chance of getting out alive, and the gunner doesn't have much more.) Louis was lucky--the tail of his ship was cut off about two feet behind him, so he had a relatively easy time getting out. Johnnie Pellish was a favorite of mine--a stocky, freckle-faced, pug-nosed kid of about 18 or 19 from Pennsylvania. He was really a swell boy, and it's hard to get used to losing boys like that. I guess we'll have to get used to it, though, because there will no doubt be many more before this thing is over. We've lost nine men and five planes out of our Group in about a month's time--besides several minor crack-ups. We'd better begin saving something for the Japs and Germans. Sometimes I think we have enemies in our midst--there are too many accidents taking place.

My brother Carroll left for O.C.S. at Miami while we were still at Will Rogers Field; and he made a career of the military service, retiring as a Lt. Col.. He was a bombardier/navigator on B-29's in the Pacific during the war. My oldest brother, Kendall, received a direct commission as a Lt.(jg) in the Navy a few months after the other three of us had enlisted. He became a Lt.Cmdr. but did not stay in the Navy after the war. Junior and I were Staff Sergeants the last two years of the war--he in the 47th Group Photo Section and I in 97th Squadron Operations.

The Group left Will Rogers Field after our approximately 5½ months in training there and spent the next few weeks on maneuvers in the woods near Greensboro, N.C., to get us used to tent life--we had been in barracks previously. While there, my parents and Mary Alice McNeill came up from Florida to see Junior and me. They stayed with friends in High Point, N.C., a few miles from Greensboro. Mary Alice and I had met in the summer of 1937 but had seen very little of each other during the intervening years. We had several dates in High Point, decided it was

"real," and agreed to consider ourselves engaged. I couldn't talk her into marrying me before I went overseas, which shows she was smarter than I was. I was a corporal making about \$36.00 a month and even had to borrow \$10.00 from her to have dates with her while she was there. (I paid her back!) She was willing to be engaged but not to stop dating other boys while I was away. So that was our agreement--and obviously it worked out well, because as of this writing (4-18-87) we have been married almost 42 years.

(From this point on, my regular diary begins, with some gaps in dates.)

Fri., Aug. 28, 1942--Arrived at Fort Dix, New Jersey, from Greensboro, North Carolina.

Tues., Sept. 1, 1942--At Fort Dix, drilling, etc., getting ready for overseas.

Wed., Sept. 2, 1942--Worked all night with Maj. Fletcher getting equipment packed and requisitioning more. (I had been assigned to the 97th Sqdn. Supply Section in the early days at Will Rogers Field and had stayed in it until leaving England in Nov., 1942, at which time I was able to transfer to the 97th Sqdn. Operations Section.)

Thurs., Sept. 3, 1942--Rifles and new equipment issued.

Fri., Sept. 4, 1942--Left Fort Dix tonight for Port of Embarkation. Hiked 3 or 4 miles to catch train for New York. Full packs.

II.

OVERSEAS: TO ENGLAND ABOARD THE QUEEN MARY

Sat., Sept. 5, 1942--Left New York harbor on the Queen Mary. Crowded conditions. No escort. When will we see the Statue of Liberty again?

Sun., Sept. 6, 1942--This is a fast ship (about 36 knots per hr.). We zigzag all the time and change course every nine minutes to confuse enemy submarines.

Mon., Sept. 7, 1942--It's reported that a German radio broadcast said this boat is now at the bottom of the sea. What does that make us?

Tues., Sept. 8, 1942--It's rumored that we turned off course a 1000 miles or so to escape a U-boat nest.

Wed., Sept. 9, 1942--Was on guard over our Sqdn. safe tonight (in the bowels of the ship), got a little seasick, and puked in my helmet. I would have been O.K. if my relief hadn't been 15 minutes late.

Thurs., Sept. 10, 1942--It gives one a lonely feeling to have nothing around but water. This boat is really crowded. We eat twice a day.

Fri., Sept. 11, 1942--Landed at Gourock, Scotland, on River Clyde near Loch Lomond. Left in blacked-out train for England.

Sat., Sept. 12, 1942--Disembarked from train at Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk County, East Anglia. Stationed three miles away at Rougham.

Sun., Sept. 13, 1942--We're living in Nissan huts ("tin") with cement floors, coal stoves, and steel cots.

Mon., Sept. 14, 1942--A heavy guard is required by Group. That seems a bit odd when we see the British (who have been at war for years) may have one lone guy with a club as their only guard over a big area.

Wed., Sept. 16, 1942--Everybody in England seems to own a bicycle, and lots of our guys are buying them too.

Sun., Sept. 20, 1942--Bury St. Edmunds is an interesting old town. I go in every few days to see a show. Dave Frieze and I generally go around together.

Thurs., Oct. 1, 1942--I think it was this date we moved from Rougham to Horham (still in Suffolk).

Fri., Oct. 23, 1942--Frieze and I left Horham for a 3-day pass to London. Caught train at Diss. Arrived in London about 8:00 p.m. Registered at Washington Club (Red Cross hotel for service men).

Sat., Oct. 24, 1942--Saw "Yankee Doodle Dandy." Went to dance at Paramount Theatre. We dated two sisters. It's difficult not to woo war-time English gals. . . .Saw "Between Us Girls" at Leicester Square Theatre. Cokes and cookies at the Washington Club. Nice beds, clean sheets, and a bath--2⁵⁶P a night.

Sun., Oct. 25, 1942--Went to St. Paul's Cathedral this afternoon. Saw Eleanor Roosevelt this a.m. St. Paul's was beautiful anyway! (Later: that was mean of me; I learned to have a lot of respect for Eleanor Roosevelt.) . . .Saw "Venus Comes to Town"--not bad. Saw "Moontide." Saw Buckingham Palace this morning but missed the changing of the guard. Back to Horham!

III.

TO NORTH AFRICA FROM ENGLAND

Nov. 24, 1942--Left England (Liverpool harbor) on the Derbyshire (British troopship), headed for North Africa. (We had boarded the ship at least one or two days earlier.)

Thurs., Nov. 26, 1942--Thanksgiving service on Derbyshire somewhere between England and Africa.

Sun., Dec. 6, 1942--Left Gibraltar for dash to Africa. Three destroyers; two troopships.

Mon., Dec. 7, 1942--Landed near Oran, Algeria. Hiked a few miles with full field equipment. Trucks picked us up and took us to a mudhole-bivouac at Tafar-Aoui, Algeria.

Tues., Dec. 8, 1942--Rain and mud and C-rations.

Wed., Dec. 9, 1942--(Ditto)

Thurs., Dec. 10, 1942--(Ditto)

Fri., Dec. 11, 1942--Left in rain to catch train to Casablanca to join rest of Group.

Sat., Dec. 12, 1942--A slow, slow journey. Nice French girl named Violet on the train; speaks English. Very interesting to talk to.

Sun., Dec. 13, 1942--And still is slow, slow. Joined 97th Sq. this night at Mediouna, near Casablanca. With Jr. again. (He was with the part of the Group that went directly to Morocco from the States, about two months or so after the advance echelon had gone to England.)

Mon., Dec. 14, 1942--An officer found me sleeping-in today (I was tired from the trip). He said, "Corporal, what have you done for your country today?" I said, "Nothing, Sir!". . . My first bath today in three weeks. It was a salt water shower, but wonderful!

Thurs., Dec. 24, 1942--Left Mediouna, French Morocco, by C-47 (named "Quitchebitchin'") in the morning. Flew by the Strait of Gibraltar down the Mediterranean. Spent Xmas Eve in hangar at Blida, Algeria. (When we had left Casablanca, our plane flew too close to Spanish Morocco, which was "neutral," and a few warning bursts of flak were thrown up near us.)

Fri., Dec. 25, 1942--Ate Xmas dinner above the clouds between Blida and Youks. Dinner consisted of cheese and crackers. Two old-timers got air sick after telling us not to puke on them!

Sat., Dec. 26, 1942--My first bombing experience here at Youks-les-Bains, Algeria. One bomb fell fairly close. The plane was so high we never saw it.

Sun., Dec. 27, 1942--Dug down a little deeper today.

Mon., Dec. 28, 1942--Joined rest of Squadron at Thelepte, Tunisia. They beat us here by one day because our transport (C-47) lost a gas cap and had to land.

Wed., Dec. 30, 1942--Sqdn. ran first combat missions today (two of them). Timm and Georgia nearly got hit by flak.

Thurs., Dec. 31, 1942--Two more missions today.

(Gap in diary.)

Mon., Jan. 4, 1943--Field was bombed this morning (5 JU-88's). . . . Two of our planes were shot down on mission today. Three killed (missing, at least). Three wounded but safe. (Capt. Draper and S/Sgts. Holland and Gasser were killed. Capt. Martin and S/Sgts. Haller and Timm were wounded but safe.)

Tues., Jan. 5, 1943--I taught my last day of school in Palmetto, Fla., one year ago today, then enlisted in Tampa, Fla.

Wed., Jan. 6, 1943--Took oath one year ago today at Camp Blanding, Fla.

Thurs., Jan. 7, 1943--We were bombed at dusk by one JU-88. I was caught with my pants down (literally)--at the straddle trench (latrine).

(Gap in diary.)

Sat., Jan. 9, 1943--Junior caught up with me today from Casablanca by transport plane.

Notes for above week--Major Vincent Sheean (author) was in our Operations dugout this week. . . . (General note--During our time at Thelepte "First Time" the Germans had a habit of sending over us at night a JU-88, with its unsynchronized engines, in a kind of war of nerves. It was an effective way to force us into a tight blackout condition.)

Sun., Jan. 10, 1943--Field strafed by four ME-109's. We had a "Hogfight" to liven up breakfast.

Mon., Jan. 11, '43--Four ME's strafed field again. Another show for breakfast. A major across the field was killed.

Tues., Jan. 12, 1943--Seven JU's with ME cover bombed field this afternoon. Got two of our planes on the ground. Rhodes was hit by shrapnel but not seriously wounded. P-40's got a JU and an ME.

Wed., Jan. 13, 1943--Junior and I were caught in the open when several JU's bombed the field, but luckily we weren't hit. We should have hit the ground sooner instead of trying to get to a foxhole. There was a paratrooper scare during the bombing, causing some "anxiety."

(Gap in diary.)

Fri., Jan. 15, 1943--Three attacks today, two by ME's in the morning and one by 10 JU's in the afternoon. All of the JU's were shot down by P-40's. Two or three of the "Peashooters" were shot down in the morning.

(Gap in diary.)

Mon., Jan. 18, 1943--Margaret Bourke-White, Life Magazine photographer bummed a ride to Youks-les-Bain, Algeria. Lt. Brown was the pilot.

Tues., Jan. 19 - Tues., Feb. 2, 1943--(One general entry). Same old stuff every day--bad food, extremely cold nights, Sirocco by day, plenty of work to do, but no raids since the ten JU's were shot down.

Wed., Feb. 3, 1943--Photo-gunner Ed (Junior) Tolle went on his first mission over enemy territory today. He took about 40 pictures. . . . Our field was bombed and strafed by five ME's this afternoon. Damaged some planes; killed two pilots of the French Lafayette Escadrille on the ground. Two (and possibly a third) ME's were shot down by Spitfires.

(Gap in diary.)

Mon., Feb. 8, 1943--Junior went on his second bombing mission today. It was a hot one. One piece of flak missed his head by about 3 inches. About three or four of our planes were hit. Lt. Brown's plane was shot up, but he did a beautiful job of landing it with one wheel not down all the way. He and Thurman and Evans were lucky boys.

(Gap in diary.)

Sun., Feb. 14, 1943--Some planes of the 85th Sq. were shot up in the air by ME's. One crash-landed (1 killed). One exploded over our field (4 killed).

Mon., Feb. 15, 1943--Strafed this morning by about 6 ME's. Two of our planes were ruined on the ground. Five ME's were shot down by Spitfires. I was caught out in the open again by this strafing attack. Rudy Nerich jumped into the cook's slop pit--thought the top of the slop was the bottom of a foxhole; had slop up to his armpits. (That's one time I preferred being on top of the ground.) . . . EVACUATION--Our Sqdn. moved by truck convoy to Youks tonight, supposedly for a "rest." The truck I was in had an accident, and we had to change to another.

Tues., Feb. 16, 1943--Here we are at Youks for our "rest." Frieze and I were first bombed here. Junior got a bath this a.m.

Wed., Feb. 17, 1943--Snow today. . . Are we bait to suck Rommel into a trap this side of Thelepte? We'll see. (Later: We were not!!)

Thurs., Feb. 18, 1943--Jr., Tutt, Frieze, and I worked on our new "home." It will be a luxurious hole when we finish. . . The Sirocco blew all night, with rain toward morning.

Fri., Feb. 19, 1943--Rain & hail & wind today. We finished our shack (underground, naturally), and a lovely sack it is. Our first night in it tonight.

Sat., Feb. 20, 1943--Jerry gave poor exhibition of bombing us today. Missed us a mile. . . Sudden orders to evacuate to Canrobert (Algeria). Broke camp in rain, fog, and cold. Left about 1:00 a.m. in open trucks after waiting six hours.

Sun., Feb. 21, 1943--Arrived at air base at Canrobert at dawn after riding from 1:00 a.m. in open trucks (freezing cold). Dug in again. Leaving our lovely sack at Youks was hardest blow of the war. Visited Canrobert.

Mon., Feb. 22, 1943--Bathed in Ain Beida this a.m.--my fourth bath in three months. Saw a French girl in silk stockings walking down the street of Canrobert! What a sight for tired eyes!

Tues., Feb. 23, 1943--On guard from 2:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m. My feet are still cold at 9:00 a.m.. British plane crashed and burned on our field early this a.m.. Ammunition went off for a long time. Washed all our dirty clothes (first time in three months).

- Wed., Feb. 24, 1943--Junior bought a goat kid from an Arab. Cute kid! It cried all night. Jr. puked tonight. Something he et.
- Thurs., Feb. 25, 1943--Rain today. I puked in my tin hat tonight. Something I et. Junior's goat (Oshit) ran away today. 200 francs gone with the wind.
- Fri., Feb. 26, 1943--Rain and mud. Nasty mud.
- Sat., Feb. 27, 1943--Rain & mud. & hail. Snow on the hill nearby that Jr. & Dave climbed Wednesday. More rain, more hail, much more mud. We are having a rest here as far as work goes, but this nasty mud is hard to enjoy.
- Sun., Feb. 28, 1943--Letter from Mary Alice saying she's in love with someone else. My only drunk this date.
- Mon., Mar. 1, 1943--Went to Ain Beida to look around.
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- Wed., Mar. 3, 1943--Dug lovely new shack today. Better than the one at Youks (even!).
- Thurs., Mar. 4, 1943--Made a few improvements on our home, and now it's swell.
- Fri., Mar. 5, 1943--I'm on guard tonight. Wrote Mary Alice after I came off guard, in answer to her 3 letters today saying she's in love with me again. I'm through.
- Sat., Mar. 6, 1943--Cooked some lovely omelets on the stove Jr. made. Jr. on guard tonight.
- Sun., Mar. 7, 1943--Went to Ain Beida for bath.
- Mon., Mar. 8, 1943--Rain today. Jr. flew today (dry run).
- Tues., Mar. 9, 1943--Sqdn. doing a lot of flying these days preparing to go up to front again.
- Wed., Mar. 10, 1943--Adams and Donahoo bailed out today when they thought Lt. Smith (pilot) had passed out. They felt foolish.
- Thurs., Mar. 11, 1943--I made Sgt. today effective the 1st of March. Jr. sick tonight from headache he got on flight yesterday.
- Fri., Mar. 12, 1943--(Gap in diary.)
- Sat., Mar. 13, 1943--Junior taken off combat crew today as result of sinus trouble. I'm glad.
- Sun., Mar. 14, 1943--Got paid today (1225 francs).
- Mon., Mar. 15, 1943--Mail from home. Yesterday was Dave's birthday--he told us tonight!
- Tues., Mar. 16, 1943--Kendall's birthday (35). Jr., Mac, & I practiced some of Mac's songs which Jr. arranged.
- Wed., Mar. 17, 1943--The big push started just now when our planes took off. Mission not successful. I worked with Armament Section today loading bombs for a mission. Terrific hail, rain, and thunderstorm this afternoon. Mud!
- Thurs., Mar. 18, 1943--Rain again. We were flooded yesterday. Jr. & I on guard tonight. Mud so slippery we could hardly walk.
- Fri., Mar. 19, 1943--Jr. had to move to the line with the photo men. Should be able to move back to our shack in a few days.
- Sat., Mar. 20, 1943--On gravel-loading detail today besides Operations work.

Sun., Mar. 21, 1943--Loaded bombs today with Armament Section. Bombs I helped load the other day probably killed men today. I didn't realize this was Sunday until I saw the chaplain holding Mass.

Mon., Mar. 22, 1943--Bomb loading again today. Fred Bevis flew up in a P-38. First time I'd seen him since on the Queen Mary. He's at Algiers. I gave him our Lakeland Ledgers.

Tues., Mar. 23, 1943--"Hellfire" crashed tonight. Nobody hurt. Gave great blow to the Axis today--60 of us out of the Group were on trash-loading detail for Group Hq.

Wed., Mar. 24, 1943--On guard tonight from 11 to 3 in camp area. Jr. on from 3 to 7--plane guard.

Thurs., Mar. 25, 1943--Took bath tonight in Ain Beida. Mac and I sang belated Xmas carols on truck on the way home.

Fri., Mar. 26, 1943--Gen. Eisenhower landed on our field. He just now went by in a command car guarded by machine guns. Did my washing.

(Gap in diary.)

Sun., Mar. 28, 1943--Went to church service today for first time since Thanksgiving service on board the Derbyshire between England & Africa.

Mon., Mar. 29, 1943--On guard; graveyard shift again. Cold, but yes!

Tues., Mar. 30, 1943--Dental appt. at 2 p.m. One tooth filled. . . Jr. & most of Sq. moved up to Thelepte again. The C.O. wouldn't let me go. . . Saw "Pride of the Yankees" tonight at hangar.

Wed., Mar. 31, 1943--Two more teeth filled. . . With Jr., Dave, & Tommy gone, I'm left alone. Shirk, Mercer, & Klum moved in with me.

Thurs., Apr. 1, 1943--Pay day.

Fri., Apr. 2, 1943--Nasty weather today. Cold wind, rain, & light snow. Before that, dust was blowing all over. . . 86th lost plane, pilot, and gunners on mission. Shot down by an ME. "Georgia's" ship was hit by ME cannon but was not knocked down. (All this is rumor from Thelepte.)

Fri., Apr. 2, 1943--Nasty weather today. Cold wind, rain, & light snow. Before that, dust was blowing all over.

Sat., Apr. 3, 1943--Traded Arab for 40 eggs. Fixed stove so we can cook again. Kind of lonesome without Jr., Dave, & Tommy around.

Sun., Apr. 4, 1943--Heavy frost this a.m. but a lovely day since then.

Mon., Apr. 5, 1943--On M.P. duty in Canrobert last night. . . Richard Wenham killed in strafing at Thelepte today by FW-190. Gallahan seriously wounded; Sturgis, Laborde, & Statts wounded. One 86th boy was killed and two wounded. Colwell had leg blown off. Seven planes ruined by the strafing. A tough day.

Tues., Apr. 6, 1943--Saw "Gentleman Jim" at hangar tonight. Junior came up from Thelepte to spend night. Gave him his half of package from home which came today.

Wed., Apr. 7, 1943--Dental appt. 4:00 p.m. Another tooth filled. . . . Capt. Sharpless, Breining, and Roarke shot down by ME near Faid Pass. They may have escaped. Garrison and Shepard bailed out of Lt. Smith's plane when they thought he was crashing while trying to lose a German fighter. Elmer's chute opened just in time, but Shep's didn't. Elmer was injured; Shep was killed.

- Thurs., Apr. 8, 1943--Moved Ops. tent from line to Sqdn. area. Jr. went back to Thelepte. . . On yesterday's mission, Capt. Sharpless, Roarke, & Shepard were killed. Garrison bailed out safely; Breining missing.
- Fri., Apr. 9, 1943--Been awfully windy and cold for two or three days. I get to go to Thelepte tomorrow; I'm glad of that. . . Mary Alice and I are "that way" again--Bless her.
- Sat., Apr. 10, 1943--Some more of the Sqdn. and I moved up to Thelepte again, for first time since Feb. 15th. Pitched Ops. tent. Slept with Dave in Armament tent. Will dig a home tomorrow.
- Sun., Apr. 11, 1943--Dug foxhole by Ops. tent. Worked all day typing mission and enemy action reports. Saw Jr. for a few minutes this evening.
- Mon., Apr. 12, 1943--Dentist 3:30--couldn't keep appointment because I had moved (from Canrobert to Thelepte). Had three alerts today but no raids.
- Tues., Apr. 13, 1943--Still sleeping in Armament tent with Dave.
- Wed., Apr. 14, 1943--Lots of back work has been keeping me busy for several days.
- Thurs., Apr. 15, 1943--Moving to Souk el Arba tomorrow morning early (30 miles from the front). Have seen Junior only once since I've been here this time.
- Fri., Apr. 16, 1943--Found that Jr. had left for Souk el Arba 4 days ago. I left Thelepte in British truck packed with our officers and men. Arrived at Souk el Arba (1930) ~~right~~ after a bombing. Slept in open this p.m.
- Sat., Apr. 17, 1943--Much warmer here--500 ft. above sea level. 30 or forty miles from enemy. Set up Operations. Got two letters from home. Couple of alerts. Enemy planes overhead tonight. Sky was alight with tracers and flak 3 times. . . Young, Chester, and I are sleeping in Ops. tent here at Souk el Arba. The weather these days reminds me of Florida.
- Sun., Apr. 18, 1943--Couple of alerts today. Bombs dropped on field next to ours. I've been doing lots of work since Klum was transferred out. Work about 12 hrs. a day usually.
- Mon., Apr. 19, 1943--Two or three alerts today; no raids. Weather very warm here with nice, cool evenings.
- Tues., Apr. 20, 1943--Went into Souk el Arba to take a steam bath. . . Had a couple of alerts. No raids.
- Wed., Apr. 21, 1943--Rain poured down. Sticky mud. . . Working as hard as I ever want to these days.
- Thurs., Apr. 22, 1943--The big and final (we hope) push in Africa started last night. Lt. Gualtiere was shot down by flak today but crash-landed in friendly territory.
- Fri., Apr. 23, 1943--A British officer, F/L D. G. Hatchard, was killed in Lt. Gualtiere's crash-landing yesterday. Sgt. Limoges (RCAF) and Lt. Gualtiere were wounded by flak before the crash.
- Sat., Apr. 24, 1943--Alerts; no raids today. Jerry must be "pooping out."

- Sun. Apr. 25, 1943--Easter Sunday; and I went on a bombing mission over enemy tanks & trucks. Rode in nose as "observer." Couldn't see much because half of nose was painted. They say there were enemy fighters and flak, but I couldn't see them. Our bombs covered the target area. (Lt. Deaton, pilot; Haller & Easterling, gunners.)
- Mon., Apr. 26, 1943--Made a wooden bunk to get up out of the dust & bugs.
- Tues., Apr. 27, 1943--Round-Boy Adams killed on mission today by a piece of flak. He was a swell kid. Everybody liked him. . . . I was sick and vomited tonight.
- Wed., Apr. 28, 1943--Our Sqdn. was the only one out of five to hit the target today. B-25's accidentally bombed American troops.
- Thurs., Apr. 29, 1943--86th ship burning on the ground right now (14:00). Ammunition going off in all directions. Bombs will go off soon. Don't know how fire started.
- Fri., Apr. 30, 1943--Stood down for whole day (no operations). I caught up on some work and did some reading. Rain last night.
- Sat., May 1, 1943--Stood down again today! Saw Burns Yates for first time since I left the States. Lightning, thunder, wind, and rain tonight.
- Sun., May 2, 1943--Another busy day for me. Only one bombing mission today for Sqdn.
- Mon., May 3, 1943--On guard tonight (graveyard shift); heard some bombs drop quite a distance off.
- Tues., May 4, 1943--Going to see "Footlight Serenade" tonight (Betty Grable).
- Wed., May 5, 1943--Three ammunition dumps blew up today and were going off spasmodically all afternoon. We hit the dirt several times as bombs and shells exploded. Heard one piece of shrapnel sing by the tent. (Sabotage was probable cause.)
- Thurs., May 6, 1943--Was up at 3:00 a.m. to get combat crews off on early mission, which started the last big drive for Africa. Three missions by Sqdn.
- Fri., May 7, 1943--Letter from Mary Alice today.
- Sat., May 8, 1943--Sqdn. ran 4 missions today. Germans are about finished in Africa--and I'm glad!
- Sun., May 9, 1943--Mother's Day. Many Germans surrendered in Tunisia today. It can't be much longer. (30,000 surrendered.)
- Mon., May 10, 1943--Train load of German prisoners went through Souk el Arba today. Hank Pollock talked to some of them.
- Tues., May 11, 1943--Eddie Rickenbacker flew in and talked to us this evening. Very interesting.
- Wed., May 12, 1943--Group stood down today. African campaign over today except for mopping up some scattered troops. Lovely letter from Mary Alice.

- Thurs., May 13, 1943--The African Campaign is ended. Thousands of prisoners have been going by all day. One truck broke down loaded with Italian officers. I stopped and gave the Italians the once over. They don't seem sad about being captured. One British boy not even wearing a gun was their guard. One Brig. Gen. was in the truck.
- Fri., May 14, 1943--Went to Tunis in command car. Saw thousands of prisoners on the way, dozens of destroyed American light tanks. At Tunis airport there were dozens of destroyed Nazi planes.
- Sat., May 15, 1943--Got stranded in Tunis; spent night in Hotel Nacional last night. Met Junior on street this morning. He was stranded too. We spent night at same hotel tonight.
- Sun., May 16, 1943--No amusement in Tunis at all. No water or light in hotel. We finally got a ride back to camp with an Ordnance capt. in a command car.
- Mon., May 17, 1943--I expected to be busted, but nobody seemed to miss me except Collins.
- Tues., May 18, 1943--Jr., Mac, and I did a little harmonizing this morning on Mac's "The Girls Back Home" which Jr. arranged this morning.
- Wed., May 19, 1943--Went to Constantine today; long truck ride over mountains all the way. Lovely country. Eight-hour ride.
- Thurs., May 20, 1943--Staying at Air Force Transient "flophouse". Lovely ladies to look at here in Constantine but nothing to do but go to movies at Red Cross.
- Fri., May 21, 1943--Walked across suspension bridge--2nd largest in world. Quite a gorge for a bridge to span.
- Sat., May 22, 1943--Left at noon to go back to Souk el Arba. Arrived at 9:00 p.m.
- Sun., May 23, 1943--Caught up on some back work. Didn't realize it was Sunday till this evening.
- Mon., May 24, 1943--Several letters from home today.
- Tues., May 25, 1943--Will almost be glad when we get back to combat duty. This quiet is getting me down.
- Wed., May 26, 1943--Dust storms & flies.
- Thurs., May 27, 1943--More dust. Flies and bugs are getting bad. Puked this afternoon.
- Fri., May 28, 1943--Chills on guard last night. "G.I.'s" (dysentery) today. Weakest I've ever been. Missed four straight meals.
- Sat., May 29, 1943--Birthday today. Feel much better today.
- Sun., May 30, 1943--Group moving by bits to Soliman. Dusty and hot.
- Mon., May 31, 1943--Very hot today. Took bath in my "tub." Moving tomorrow.
- Tues., June 1, 1943--We moved up to an olive grove near Grombalia & Soliman today. About 20 or 25 miles from Tunis.

Wed., June 2, 1943--Got set up in our new camp. Saw and heard Prime Minister Churchill and Foreign Secy. Anthony Eden speak today at Grombalia airdrome (from rear end of a British lorry).

Thurs., June 3, 1943--Where is the mail?

Fri., June 4, 1943--Took two "shots" and a vaccination today.

Sat., June 5, 1943--Lovely fried steak for dinner! Also ice cold orange juice. Lovely! Lovely!

Sun., June 6, 1943--Helped load bombs today for mission tomorrow. Flies are terrible these days. Letter from Mary Alice.

Mon., June 7, 1943--Mission today over Pantelleria for Sqdn. Two of our planes hit by flak.

Tues., June 8, 1943--Mission over Pantelleria again.

Wed., June 9, 1943--Darn the flies!

Thurs., June 10, 1943--Dysentery is still hitting half the men in camp. I haven't had it again (yet), thank Goodness.

Fri., June 11, 1943--Mission over Lampedusa today. Pantelleria gave up. I'm toying with the idea of going on another mission.

Sat., June 12, 1943--One letter from Mary Alice (finally) and three from home. Mary Alice's birthday; Mama and Daddy's wedding anniversary.

Note for the above week: Dam the flies!!

Sun., June 13, 1943--I think our flying days in Africa are about over. Pantelleria & Lampedusa have both fallen & there's no place else to bomb.

Mon., June 14, 1943--Killed snake with Tommy gun.

Tues., June 15, 1943--Junior was around for awhile.

Wed., June 16, 1943--Went to Tunis on pass. Had pretty good time. Came back at dark. On guard from 0100 to 0400 this morning.

Thurs., June 17, 1943--Slept late. Worked in afternoon.

Fri., June 18, 1943--Work.

Sat., June 19, 1943--Review this morning by King George VI. Rode by us in jeep. . . I took over-water hop this afternoon--Capt. Willard, pilot, Lt. Tippins, navigator, "Shorty" Goodwin, gunner. I rode tunnel gun position. Low level over water at about 2 to 15 feet at 225 miles an hour.

Sun., June 20, 1943--Mail and pictures from folks. Two letters from Mary Alice.

Mon., June 21, 1943--More training flights every day. Calisthenics and drill in the mornings. Inspections by Col. Roberts (Gp. Hq.).

Tues., June 22, 1943--Nothing of interest. Usual stuff.

Wed., June 23, 1943--Work & flies.

Thurs., June 24, 1943--Spent day in Tunis. Saw stage show and double-feature movie. Talked to two or three French men and women who speak English. Interesting day.

Fri., June 25, 1943--Got bawled out for error on my part (forgetfulness). Sometimes it doesn't pay to get up. The C.O. made an even worse

error; so I hope that he understands humans are fallible.

- Sat., June 26, 1943--On guard tonight. Paratroopers reported in area. Maybe we'll have a little excitement for a change. Graveyard shift again--6 out of my last 7 guard duties have been that shift.
- Sun., June 27, 1943--Heard Jerry bombing Korba last night. On guard today from 1200 to 1400 on planes, in jeep.
- Mon., June 28, 1943--Paratroopers supposed to be dropped tonight here. Alert about 1:00 a.m. but nothing happened.
- Tues., June 29, 1943--Paratrooper alert again.
- Wed., June 30, 1943--Paratroopers on our field last night, but no damage done. They got away.
- Thurs., July 1, 1943--(Gap in diary.)
- Fri., July 2, 1943--Went to Tunis today on pass.
- Sat., July 3, 1943--On guard from 0400 to 0800 this morning and from 1600 to 2000 this evening.
- Sun., July 4, 1943--One plane from 85th and one from 86th shot down over Sicily today. Besides that, Hinkle was killed & Dodds wounded.
- Mon., July 5, 1943--(Gap in diary.)
- Tues., July 6, 1943--Lt. Beet, Lt. Gavalas, Cahill, & Carithers shot down in plane 390 over Sciacca Airdrome, Sicily. Crashed & exploded. All of them good guys.
- Wed., July 7, 1943--Went to Tunis today. Saw "Orchestra Wives" at Capitole. Ate supper with the DiPasquale family; rich Italian food.
- Thurs., July 8, 1943--Loaded bombs tonight for mission tomorrow.
- Fri., July 9, 1943--Lt. Artz, Stankiewicz, and Parenteau shot down over Sicily. Lt. Smith, Lt. Eastham, Donahoo, & Endthoff are missing. Some of our best fellows. (Endthoff's first mission.)
- Sat., July 10, 1943--Invasion started on Sicily this morning. We'll probably be moving over there soon.
- Sun., July 11, 1943--On guard in the morning from 0400 to 0800 a.m.
- Mon., July 12, 1943--On guard from 1200 to 1600.
- Tues., July 13, 1943--Went to Tunis today on over-night pass. Spent night at the DiPasquale's. . . Lt. Smith, Lt. Eastham, and Donahoo safe after being shot down Friday. Endthoff drowned when plane went down.
- Wed., July 14, 1943--Back to camp this evening. Saw stage show in Tunis before leaving.
- Thurs., July 15, 1943--Mail today.
- Fri., July 16, 1943--Hot weather is getting fierce.
- Sat., July 17, 1943--Up at 2:15 a.m. to get training flight off for night flying.
- Sun., July 18, 1943--Up at 1:30 a.m. to get night mission off to Sicily.
- Mon., July 19, 1943--I drove Capts. Young and Garside and Mac to Houaria for a 13-plane alert today. 53 miles of terrible road. Came back this evening in 1½ hours.

Tues., July 20, 1943--War seems to be going well in Sicily. I can't figure why we haven't moved there before now.

Wed., July 21, 1943--Flying to Malta tomorrow. Jr. isn't going. Will probably meet him later in Sicily or Italy.