

assume that we were one of the targets. A young sailor on one of the gun crews had been champing at the bit for a chance to shoot at some Germans and here they were but—his gun jammed on the first shot and he never got another off. In the middle of the night we were again wakened by the ships alarm clanging away. There was a sub in the area. I heard there was another alarm toward morning which I slept through. Later that day a sub surfaced but it was one of ours. The rest of the trip through the Mediterranean Sea was uneventful.

We woke up one morning to the sounds of silence. The ships engines were stopped. We all rushed on deck to find a thick white fog and just a few feet from our bow another ship. We were at Augusta, Sicily. We left there and went on to Bari, Italy where we gladly left what had been our home for thirty odd days. That night there was an air raid alert,(yellow).

We boarded some square wheeled Italian freight cars, which I believe had previously carried sheep, for the ride north. We were all issued a few cans of C and packs of K rations. After what we had been eating, this was gourmet stuff. We in the 825th slept on the ground wrapped in pup tent halves and blankets during the first night's drizzle.

It was Easter season and a mass was held in the little chapel near what was to become the headquarters building. A gray haired old man assisted the priest.

And so began the overseas adventures of the Four Eighty Fourth Bomb Group.

Take Care!

Leroy Leach 825 Sq.

Tucson, AZ
Dear Bud

Please find enclosed my diary from overseas duty.

Left January 12, 1945 from Patrick Henry to P.O.E. Sailed on S.S. John Blair. January 13, 1945. Sighted land finally January 27, 1945. Saw Oran, Algiers, and Rock of Gibraltar January 28, 1945. Landed in Naples January 31, 1945. Lots of ships sunk in harbor. Went to Caserta, what a mud hole. Left for Bari on February 3, 1945. Left Bari February 6, 1945 and came to 49th Wing, 484th Group, 824th Squadron. We had to wait 2 weeks for flying equipment.

SORTIES

1) February 28, 1945, Target- Bressanone, Italy, Flak- light, first glimpse of flak. Too new to be scared of it. Saw Alps for first time.

2) March 9, 1945, Target- Graz, Austria . Flak- moderate, Got a few holes in ship.

3) March 15, 1945, Target- Weiner Neustadt, Austria. Flak- none. Milk run.

4) March 16, 1945, Target- Moosebierbaum, Germany, flak- heavy. Got 10 holes in ship. One small piece of flak bounced off my flak suit.

5) March 21, 1945 Air Medal. Target-Progresko, Yugoslavia. Flak- heavy. Made 2 bomb runs over Bruck. Ship stalled out twice. Everyone browned out. Dropped one bomb in Adriatic.

6) March 24, 1945. Target- Budejovice, Austria. Flak- none. Eight bombs hung up in bay. 12 Jerry Jets overhead. Len, Dud, and Joe P. finally kicked bombs out over Alps.

7) April 2, 1945. Target- St. Polten Rail Yards, Austria. Flak- none. Blew the hell out of the yards. Perfect hits Saw bombs land on cars and rails. Passed knocked out German airfield. Fighters and bombers laying all over.

8) April 7, 1945 Target- Klagenfurt, Austria. Flak- none. Could not see ground to observe hits. Clouds very thick. Cold today as temperature was -41 degrees Celsius.

9) April 11, 1945. Target- Bronzolo, Italy. Flak- light. Few holes in ship. One burst lifted tail up.

10) April 14, 1945. Target- Malcontenta, Italy. Flak- moderate. Target overcast. We did not drop bombs so we landed with them.

11) April 15, 1945. Target- Nervesa, Italy. Flak- moderate. Saw Rome on way to target- the Coliseum, St. Peter's Cathedral, and the Vatican City. Also, we flew over the islands of Elba and Monte Cristo. At target we did not drop bombs. Pilot's windshield got cracked by a piece of flak.

12) April 19, 1945. Target- Auisio Viaduct, Italy. Flak- intense. Lots of smoke rising from target area. Flight entirely over land for first time.

13) April 20, 1945. Target- Lusia Road Bridge, Italy. Flak- none. Bridge entirely wiped out. Heard "Good Night, Sweet Dreams Sweetheart" on radio near target.

14) April 23, 1945. Target- Badia Railroad Bridge, Italy. Flak- moderate Saw front lines, artillery shells bursting, our fighters strafing Jerries on bank of Po River They really caught hell.

15) April 25, 1945. Target-Linz, Austria (Main). Flak- very intense. Roughest trip yet. One ship blew up in front of us pieces flew by us. Another ship was hit and dove straight down until wings snapped off. Flak was right down our alley.

May 8, 1945 War in Europe ends. V E- Day as all the German troops surrender.

Sincerely,

Jack D. Messersmith, 824 Sq.

Ebergassing, Austria
Dear Bud:

I send you these photos as a memorabilia of the wonderful days we spent together in Dayton, and once again thank you for everything.

I will write more if Beatrix can find the time to help me. She is very busy now at the Foodstuffs Research Institute. The first year in the E V European Union brings many financial difficulties for the food industry in Austria.

Best Regards,

Jelix Rameder