Pilot Diary

Dec 8, '43
Left Langley Field 1230; arrived Mitchel Field, N.Y., 1430. 340 mi.

Dec. 14, '43
Left Mitchel Field 1230; arrived Morrison Field—West Palm Beach, Fla., 1945 (EWT). Rough trip with lots of rain & snow. Dist. 1200 mi.

Dec. 16
Left States 0230; over Porto Rico 0830—entire Antilles chain Over Nassau 0345. Arrived Waller Fld., Trinidad 1230 (E). Landed with flat tire. Dist. 1800 mi.

Dec. 17
Left Waller 1000Z; arrived Belem Field, Brazil, 1705Z. Over Venezuela, Georgetown, Br. Guiana; Paramaribo, Du. Guiana; Devil's Island and Cayenne, Fr. Guiana; Amapa, Brazil. Passed over equator 1630Z and Amazon River. 25-hr. inst. Beautiful base. 1280 mi.

Dec. 18 –
Left Belem 1005Z; arrived Natal, Brazil, 1555Z. Over Sao Luiz and Forteleza. Pretty place too. NE Brazil like West Texas. Dist. 987. Rougher'n cob below clouds at 4000'.

Dec. 18-31
Not much doing Lying around all the time. Co-P and Navigator on perpetual drunk. Test hops on 24th and 30th. Several shows. Saw lots of buddies from Cadet days. Saw Wes Hyde. Paid today. Nelson Eddy here on Christmas Eve; Joseph Calliea on 27th. Hope to leave tonight.

Jan. 1, '44 – Left Natal 0415Z; arrived Eknes Field, Senegal, W. Africa 1500Z. No trouble on trip. Flew thru one front. 1800+ st. miles.

Jan 2, '44 – Visited Rufisque. What a hell hole. Saw Jack Sanders.

Jan. 3, '44 – Left Eknes 0730Z; arrived Marrakech, Fr. Morracco, 1500Z Passed over Sahara Desert & Atlas Mts. – Much like Rockies. Marrakech resort town. A-5 worked like dream. 1400 st. mi.

1-4-44 – Visited town twice. Beautiful hotels. Went thru Medina. Had to carry gun. Thank God for the moon or we'd probably not found way out. Similar to Casbad.

1-5-44 Left Marrakech 0915Z; arrived Djedeida, Tunisia, 1630Z in terrible rain & hail. Passed over Oran & Bizerte. Algiers beautiful place. Slept in plane – no tents.

1-6-44 – Still raining. Went into Tunis, 15 mi. Stayed at Capitol Hotel.

1-7-44 – Still in Tunis. Went to see dock area; place really took beating. Good food for 10¢/meal at Officers' Club.

1-8-44 – Went back to dock area again. Met Newby at supper and went to show – Bob Hope x Dorothy Lamour.

1-9-44 – Checked out at hotel; had dinner; and came back to field. Slept in ship again.

1-10-44 – Flew 2:30 of formation. Lots of bomb craters & wrecked airplanes. Bizerte bombed last nite.

1-11-44 – Laid around. Raining again. Moved to tents.

1-12-44 – Went to Tunis again. Saw show and had a couple good meals.

1-13-44 – More rain. Mail call—present from Wini and Christmas card. "Peace be with you" it says. What a joke.

1-14-44 – Tunis again. Saw show. Wallick, Newby's navigator, told me Orin was killed in jeep accident Mon. morning. Quite a shock. Blackout all nite. Calabretta cracked up; Lucky to get out alive.

1-15-44 Got plane in commission. Wrote letter. Still no mail.

1-16-44 – Mail today—eleven letters.

1-19-44 – Russell Odell, Newby's friend killed in crack-up here; four others killed. Babb taken to hospital.

1-24-44 Another crash—no one hurt. Metrik cuts off finger while working on ship. Went to show with ack-ack boys.

1-25-44 Went to Tunis to hospital; saw Falky Metrik & Babb. Saw Ella Logan in town.

1-26-44 Worked on ship. Ship out for new actuating cylinder in nose wheel. 454th to Italy.

1-27-44 Filled out pay voucher. Had some target practice with pistol, tommy, and carbine. Col. Goes to Italy. Should move soon.

1-28-44 Thirteen letters. Wrote some more.

1-29-44 Went to hospital to see Metrik & Falky; also saw Babb. Got PX rations.

1-30-44 Went to El Aouina to get actuating cylinder for nose wheel

1-31-44 Test-hopped the Wold; first flight in three weeks. Off ground in 23 seconds—fastest since flying 24's. Falk leaves hospital. Sensenbrenner's tent burns down.

2-1-44 Up at 0500. Take-off Djedeida 0815; arrive Black Jack Field, Cerignola, Italy. 1224. Over Cape Bon, Pantelleria, Sicily, & the boot. Pretty nice country, lots of Mts. Over Mt. Etna, an active volcano on Sicily.

2-2-44 Flew to Mandurio San Paneragio, Galatina. Stayed at Falatina for nite. (93rd Bomb Grp.)

2-3-44 Saw Romans and Vickers at San Pan. Took ships on to 98th. Got back at 1700. Letter from Marge.

2-4-44 Fixed different stove for tent. Wired tent for lights.

2-5-44 Cold weather with rain & snow. Went to Cerignola.

2-6-44 Attended two lectures. "You'll enjoy combat"—that's a crock. Moved ship to new parking area.

2-7-44 Up at 0500 for first mission. Cancelled because of weather and poor preparation. Went to Cerignola. Made out pay voucher for Dec. & January. Censored mail for three hours.

2-8-44 Ditto—plus more rain & snow.

2-10-44 Ditto. Alerted for raid. Mission cancelled at twelve—weather. Got three letters; wrote one.

2-11-44 Too much rain to go in town to get paid. Got three more letters; wrote three. Beef for supper. God. It's about time. My promotion for my boys came through—Mac & Strohmeier make Tech; Johnston and Rushmore make Staff.

2-12-44 Got paid in town. $200.00 money order.

2-13-44 Put up tent in new area. Nearly froze. Nearly had to whip a paddle foot. 15 letters.

2-14-44 More work on new home. Scheduled mission cancelled—weather; supposed to "flush fighters." Three more letters & cigarette case.

2-15-44 Cancelled again. Three more letters & Bob's pictures. Finally got two written & m. order mailed. Red Cross donation

2-16-44 Flew about four hrs. Got in one helluva snow-storm with ice. Glad to get down.

2-17-44 Group flew mission to near Carrino. Wrote some letters.

2-18-44 Up at 0400. Wing mission with 3 Grps P-38 escort. Cancelled weather. Check from Skelly.

2-19-44 – Same old story.

2-20-44 Ditto

2-21-44 Likewise. Wrote some letters & censored some mail.

2-22-44 Finally made it. Dropped the eggs on Zara, Yugoslavia. 10-500
3. 5:40.

2-23-44 Scrubbed.

2-24-44 Went to Foggia. Saw Parks, Wargo, Martin, Miliman—waiting to go home.

2-25-44 Went to Foggia again. Saw Louise Albritton, the actress. Cleland missing on raid over jump to Graz, Austria. 454 losses five, possibly eight more.

2-26-44 Got four letters; wrote three tonight. Rained all day. No flight scheduled today.

2-27-44 Went to church. Had big lecture from Grp. More rain. Worked on tent.

2-28-44 Nothing doing. Looks like big plans tomorrow.

2-29-44 Big deal post-poned. Weather. Went to Foggia.

3-1-44 None scheduled.

3-2-44 15th A.F. raid to Beachhead. Dropped 120-20# frags. Flak pretty thick; got piece from ship.

3-3-44 Other crew flew ship on mission. Several letters and papers.

3-4-44 Mission cancelled after 2-hr. flt. Rough one. Made 1st Lt. Effective 3-1.

3-5-44 Weather again.

3-6-44 Likewise with early morning snow. Getting to be a habit.

3-7-44 Unloaded 10-500's on airfield at Fabrica de Roma. Not so much flak this time; a few fighters.

3-8-44 Had charge of 30 men on detail.

3-9-44 Rain

3-11-44 Went to Foggia. Saw stage show in Cerignola.

3-12-44 Went to Wing Hdq. For link at 0800 this morning. Rain—

3-15-44 Double sortie to Cassino with 1000 lb. Jobs.

3-17-44 Dropped 40 incendiaries on Vienna. Flak so heavy it looked like a cloud. 6:45 flying time.

3-18-44 Dropped 120 frags on Magiano airdrome in Po Valley at foot of Alps. 5:30 flying time.

3-19-44 Dropped 40 incendiaries on Graz, Austria. Jumped by about 70 fighters. Rough day. 454 lose 11 ships. Lundwall & Pidcock collide over Adriatic; all lost. 5:15 flying time.

3-20-44 Went to Foggia. Saw Pirtell & Maj Cunningham. Have two-day pass.

3-22-44 Group put 500#s in freight yds at Bologna.

3-24-44 Steyr mission cancelled over Alps. Dropped 40x100 incendiaries on Rimisi. What a rat-race. 5:25 time. Good work on Vienna confirmed by German radio.

3-26-44 Keefer flew ship & crew. Bercik & I went to Foggia. Saw John Garfield stage show. Saw Nat Taylor in Cerignola at Officers' Mess.

3-28-44 Raid on Verona. Good bombing; about 50 E/A.

3-29-44 Dropped 10-500's on Milou in Po Valley. Beautiful job. 5:50 time.

3-30-44 Grp went to Sofia, Bulgaria. Terrible. Went to Foggia.

4-2-44 – 10-500's on Steyr, Austria, #1 priority target in Europe. Fighter attack for 2:20; flak terrific. Kolbe & Johnston each get one. Powers, Pardoe, Brunson, & Cheeseman go down. Several others badly shot up. 6:50 flt time.

4-3-44 Grp goes to Budapest. Ackerman killed by flak; Nash & Gaengle hit badly. 6:10.

4-4-44 Blew hell out of Bucharest; whole city on fire. Flak intense but inaccurate. Battle with fighters. 10-500's. 7:05 time.

4-5-44 Two-day pass. Went to Foggia.

4-6-44 Curtis killed on test-hop.

4-7-44 Group bombed Bologna.

4-8-44 Played two baseball games. Windy & Rush awarded Purple Heart. Saw "Claudia."

4-9-44 Sprained ankle in ball game. Went to church in morning.

4-12-44 Censored mail; worked on ball diamond. Test-hopped ship.

4-13-44 Went to Budapest (Tokol A.D.) with 40-100# G.P.s Lotsa flak & a few fighters. #15 5:55 time.

4-15-44 Ten 500's on marshalling yds. At Bucharest. Flak slight. 38's took care of fighters. #17. 6:45 time.

4-16-44 Ten 500's on yds & airdrome at Turnul Severin, Rumania. Milk run. #18. 5:45.

4-20-44 Rated Col's. left wing to ship yds Monfalcone, Italy. 10-500's/ About 30 S/E fighters jump us. Sampson goes down over target; Shorty Adams with him. 5:00. #19—

4-21-44 On pass. Gp goes to Bucharest & get shot to hell. Wallick, Norgard, and Jones go down near target. Banty from Wichita on Norgard's crew. Haner with Wallick. Willie Moore's boys bail out in mts. North of Foggia. Slater & Callan downed by flak at San Stefano.

4-23-44 Group goes to Bod Voslau, Vienna. Went to church.

4-24-44 Went to Bucharest for third time. Had 10-500's. Flak intense but in-accurate. No fighters. 7:20.

4-25-44 "Wolf" missed Turin raid because of broken starter.

5-1-44 Weather too bad to bomb Verona. 4:40-rat race. Blow out with 6-1000's.

5-5-44 Ploesti oil works with 500's. Beautiful job. Beck knocked down by fighters. 7:00 time. #25.

5-10-44 Aircraft factory at Wiener Neustadt, Austria. Worst flak ever encountered. 10-500's. 6:45 time. 456th lose six. Won ball game with 56th.

5-12-44 The big push in Italy. Target this morning—Leghorn docks. Feathered #3 up the pike north of elba Isle. Time 4:30.

5-14-44 Target today: Piacenza Airdrome with 240-20# frags. Milk run. 6:20.

5-15-44 Stand-down. Went to Foggia. Saw Roach and Cliff Stone.

5-19-44 Bombed Genoa docks. 10-500's.

5-26-44 Target Grenoble, France, with ten 500's. Feathered #2 at French coast on return. 7:30 time.

5-29-44 Left for Isle of Capri.

6-5-44 Returned to Naples. Spent two nites there. Visited Pompei on Tues, the 6th. Returned to base June 8th.

June 9. Lived through raid on Munich, Germany. Carried 6-1000's. Ship hit hard by flak. 6:50 time.

6-10-44. Bombed Ferrara, Italy, airdrome with 240-20# frags. 4:45 time.

6-16-44 Second trip to Vienna with 15-250's for oil refinery. Flak terrific. Wurtz with McWilliams receive direct hit over target. Worked over by fighters. 6:30 time. #37.

6-22-44 No missions for a week for weather. Best bombing Gp has done with 18-250's at Chivasso, Italy, motorworks. Time 6:40.

6-23-44 Started for Bucharest. Flew around in clouds over Yugo. 3:55 time.

6-24-44 Beat out of trip to Rome. Flew Murphy's crew to Craiova, Rumania. M/Y with 10-500's. 7:00.

6-26-44 Grp. Knocked to hell by E/A on raid near Vienna; lose ten shops. Sensenbrenner, Jackson, L Montgomery, Brown, Archibald, Keogh, Lebsock among them. Ralph, Bill Jackson, & Monty on last raid.

6-28-44 Hit Karlova, Bulgaria, airdrome with 40-100's. 6:20 time. Ran into about 50 fighters.

6-30-44 Scheduled for refinery in Poland. Bad weather over Lake Baleton in Hungary. Several 24's blown up by fighters. 5:25 time.

7-1-44 Took second trip to Budapest. Flak & E/A bad. George Tanner killed by flak; Lackner cracks up on take-off. 12-300's on Shell Refinery. 6:50 time.

7-3-44 Make fourth trip to Bucharest. 10-500's on locomotive works. 7:10 time.

7-4-44 Stand-down for weather. No celebration.

7-6-44 Target for today: Oil refinery & storage tanks at Trieste. Milk run. 10-500's. 4:50. Two new crews in today

7-7-44 Longest haul into Germany. Target: Synthetic oil works at Odertal. Good coverage. Carried ten—500's. Chadwick went down to flak. Time 8:00.

7-8-44 Munchendorf A/D at Vienna with 240-20# frags. Intense flak & lots of E/A. Mission #Fifty. 6:35.

7-15-44 Air Force makes all-out effort on Ploesti. Roy Johnson hit by flak over target. Last seen bailing out over Yugo with two feathered. On last mission.

7-17-44 Brimage goes down to flak over Avignon, France.

7-18-44 Went to Rome.

7-19-44 Went thru Vatican City. Saw the Pope.

7-21-44 Major Lanford, 741st C.O. failed to return from mission into Sudetenland.

7-22-44 Planes crashing all over the place—one south of field (3 killed), one outside Cerignola (all hit silk); and one in bomb dump south of field—10 on ship killed, Bombs going off for two hours. Russell & some one collide in mid-air over Bor, Youg. Russell with Murphy's crew on 47th mission to Ploesti.

7-24 Leave for Naples and home.