

Life in the service

Echoes of the Army

Diary of Staff Sargent Richard E. Hintz

15th Air Force 304th Bomb Wing 459th Bombardment Group 758th Bomb Squadron

U.S. Army Air Force 1943-1945

(Transcription)

September 12th 1943 finished basic training and went to Armament school at Lowery Field Colorado # 2 December 6th 1943

Graduated from Armament School and went to Flexible Gunnery training in Ft. Meyers florida Buckingham Field.

February 1 1944 Flew as tail gunner on B-17 on routine flight over the Gulf of Mexico.

February 15th 1944 Graduated from Gunnery training as Corporal with 30 hours flight to my credit in flying fortresses.

February 20th 1944 Left for home on ten day delay I will report to 18th replacement wing at Salt Lake City on the 9th of March.

March 1944 I am now a member of the Sea and Air Force.

March 20th 1944 finished another chamber run.

April 5th 1944 flew for the first time in a B-24 flew for 5 hours, flying almost every day now.

April 28th 1944 I made my first cross country flight on a camera mission covered approximately 700 miles.

May 1st 1944 flew to Amarillo Texas and Liberal Kansas 900 mile trip.

May 6th 1944 Turned 30 years old today, I am receiving all kinds of cards and packages from home.

May 7th 1944 promoted to Sargent.

May 8th 1944 flew cross country to Lubbock Texas.

May 15th 1944 Mothers birthday, I sent her a bracelet with a locket, and a box of candy.

May 16th 1944 flew cross country to Ft. Worth Texas.

May 23rd 1944 Flew cross country to El Paso Texas, Thunder storms filled the clouds so we flew on to Garden City Kansas, Stayed there for 4 days.

June 6th 1944 Finished combat training, I will leave the June 9th 1944 the rumor is Topeka Kansas, I will have 160 flying hours to my credit.

June 7th 1944 flew back to Ft. Meyers Florida to attend crew banquet and party. I also received emblems of our ship The Winged Dragon. # 0886

June 10th 1944 left for Topeka Kansas.

June 19th 1944 left Topeka Kansas for Bangor Maine but we were told to land in Grenier Field New Hampshire. We stayed there for 15 days. We were paid there.

July 1st 1944 Left for Newfoundland crossed into Canada at 08:30, I took my last smoke in the U.S., we landed in Gander Field Canada, stayed the night and left at 03:00 in the morning the next day.

July 4th 1944 landed at Lagoa Azores, Bought wine from the Portuguese to celebrate with. It was a 9 hour trip.

July 5th 1944 Landed at Marrakech French Morocco North Africa at 14:00 hours it was a 7 hour flight.

The Arabs are sure a bunch of dirty people; you can smell them for a mile!

July 7th 1944 left for Tunis Tunisia landed at 13:30, the field was pretty well shot up.

July 7th Left for Guida Italy.

July 8th flew over Sicily at 10:00 a.m. Landed at Guida Italy, we lost our ship there the Winged Dragon.

July 9th 1944 the crew of the Moron picked us up and flew us to our base at Giulia Italy.

We are living in tents in an almond, olive orchard and a grape vineyard. The country is pretty nice.

July 14th 1944 I was briefed for my first mission, we were all ready and had taxied out when it was cancelled.

July 15th 1944 the first mission, we flew over to Ploesti Rumania and tore the target apart. Lt McLaughlin and crew were blown out of the sky. Three other planes were lost. 7 1/2 hours combat. 49 more to go!

We received our mail today also, the first since June 8th 1944.

July 17th 1944 Mission # 2 we took off at 09:00 and flew over Cassini at 10:00, Rome at 11:00 and sighted Corsica France, Flew over it at 12:30 p.m. flew into the Rhone Valley, Southern France on the target at 13:30. The target was a railroad bridge. We encountered moderate but accurate flak. Two planes were lost over Avignon France. Colonel Avery and crew went down, 9 men parachuted to safety. I also saw 4 ME-109s but they didn't attack.

July 18th 1944 mission scheduled for Friedrichshafen, Germany we ran into bad weather and after 4 hours had to turn back.

July 19th 1944 Raid on engine factory at Friedrichshafen, Germany completed. We ran into enemy fighters over Northern Italy, M.E. 109's. I saw one fortress get shot down, 9 maybe 10 were seen to parachute to safety. We flew over the Alps and almost into Switzerland. We encountered heavy and accurate flak. Our plane received 7 or eight flak holes including the glass on my turret. Target was wiped out, combat hours 8 ½.

July 21st 1944 Briefed for a mission on Brux, Germany but our generator and Mag. Was out so we stayed on the ground.

July 22nd 1944 the target for today is Ploesti Rumania, one hour from the target we realized that we had been in enemy territory for three hours. Somehow was lost and had to return to base with eggs in the basket. We won't get credit for the mission. We had 6-1000lbs bombs on board. We landed at 765ths base as the crosswinds were real bad. We were brought back to our base by trucks, what a ride 6 hours; we should have got 6 hours combat time for it.

July 28th 1944 Mission on an airfield near Avian, France, we encountered fighters the new F.W. 109s with inline motors. They attacked at the target and on final approach. 2 ships were shot down. The lead ships lead us through heavy flak that cost us 2 more ships. Unexpectedly our bomber group lost Full House, we flew Barrel less. Lt. Kalie Was shot down. Combat hours 8!

July 25th 1944 we flew Jap and Nazi Jinx on a 1066 mile trip into Germany. The target was Herman Gering tank works at Linz. 7 enemy fighters, M.E. 109's were shot down today, I got two of them. My ball turret caught on fire when the main power lead shorted out. We hit intense flak over the target, received 7 flak holes in the ship. The ammo box cover on the ship was blown off by flak. WE hit the target with 1000 lb. General purpose bombs. The Captain was getting a little jittery as more of our planes are missing. 7 hours 40 minutes combat time.

July 27th 1944 we flew 7 hours on a raid to Budapest Hungry, loaded with incendiary bombs 500 pounders. The target was oil tanks and storage dump. Elusta, our ship was too slow so we had to salvo our bombs at the edge of the target; the whole flight did a really good job. We encountered a bunch of F.W. 190s and M.E. 109's; maybe fifty of them. I had another enemy plane in my sights when a P-51 shot him down. I never fired a round at him.

July 28th 1944 we flew 1500 miles round trip. The target an oil refinery at Ploesti Rumania, was hit with by 500 lb. incendiaries. We didn't see any fighters, but the flak accounted for 10 B-24s lost, we lost one from our squadron. 7 hours 15 minutes combat time.

We celebrated our squadron's first anniversary today with a barbeque and free beer. We had a good time but there were no women.

August 3rd 1944 the target was an aircraft assembly plant at Frederikshavn Germany. We had a close call today, # 2 supercharger went haywire over the Alps, and We turned around and headed for home. About 2 ½ miles from land # 3 motor quit, we were losing 1000 ft. altitude per minute. The order came to stand by for ditching, at 400 ft. the motor started working again. We landed safely at the home field. 7½ hours combat time.

August 6th 1944 flying in Cherry, loaded with 500 lb. bombs we were targeting a large railroad bridge in the Rhone Valley, of France. We didn't encounter any flak or enemy fighters. The target was destroyed. 8½ hours combat time.

August 7th 1944 we flew in # 959, we were on another long flight 100 miles south of Berlin an oil plant at Blechammer, Germany on the polish border. The target was covered with a smoke-screen all of our bombs hit in the target area but we couldn't see the results. I almost froze my feet off. The temperature was 42 degrees below zero. Flak was heavy, intense and accurate, but we managed to return all planes. We dropped 500 lb. general purpose bombs. 9 hours combat time.

August 12th 1944 A very bad flight! We flew in Hot and Bothered. We were going to bomb a gun emplacement on the southern France shores. One motor cut out as we hit the target area so we went to jettison the bombs and turn back but the bomb bay doors would not open. The bombs crashed through the bomb bay doors leaving them swinging and open. We threw all excess ammo overboard trying to lighten our load but we were still losing altitude. We decided to try to fix it before bailing out over France. I crawled out onto the catwalk between the open swinging doors and tied myself to the catwalk. Using Arming wire I fished for the doors until I managed to get them closed. The Captain fastened them with more arming wire. We came home on a wing and a prayer. One motor was gone, two others throwing oil, and the Bomb bay doors hanging. The Bombardier did a good job of navigating. 8 hours combat time.

August 14th 1944 We flew # 954. As a deputy Lead we bombed gun emplacements in Northern Italy. 1½ hours combat time.

August 15th 1944 we made history today with our first night mission. We went to bed at 9:00 P.M. got up at 11:25 two hours sleep. We really had a time assembling over Corsica France. At dawn on D-Day we bombed the shore installations. We made our run at 07:25 a.m., the troops landed at 07:30 a.m. The troops landed near a small town of LA Cote France. 7 hours 20 Minutes combat time.

August 17th 1944 we went to Ploesti Rumania oil refinery again the flak was very heavy and accurate. I saw one B-24 blow up, only three men parachuted to safety. Our top turret gunner was hit in the face with flak, but it was just a scratch. I flew with Frank Golbourn and Lt. Crawford. 8 hours combat time.

August 17th 1944 I was told today that I was put in for the Distinguished Flying Cross for working to close the bomb bay doors at high altitude, taking risks to save the ship and crew.

August 18th 1944 We were headed to an oil refinery in Campina Rumania when we encountered trouble again one motor gone , two superchargers gone, we were in Rubber Check had to turn back, We bombed a small bridge at a small town but no damage done. We really sweated this one out coming down. Captain Peebles and crew were lost over Yugoslavia but hey are safe. 7 hours 40 minutes combat time.

August 20th 1944 we hit a synthetic oil plant in Dubova Czechoslovakia and really tore it apart. I saw flames and smoke up to 20,000 ft. There was very little flak and no fighters. The best piece of bombing I've seen since I came here. 8 1/2 hours combat time.

August 22nd 1944 we had bad luck again, we got way up into southern Germany and burned out a supercharger. We had to turn back. We dropped our bombs in enemy territory but got no credit for th mission. Lt. Ruff ditched, Lt. Bulibian was lst over the target when a burst of flak hit him in the bomb bay. Lt. Small was lost over Yugoslavia.

August 23rd 1944 I flew Betty Ann with Lt. Carr, we bombed a bridge over the PO River in Northern Italy. The results weren't very good but we started some large fires. I saw 1 plane go down with 5 parachutes. We landed with one flat tire from flak. The flak was very heavy, intense and accurate; also one ship had to open a parachute to slow it down on landing. 4 1/2 Hours combat time.

August 24th 1944 we flew old Barrel Less up to the Czechoslovakia, another refinery job. There was little flak or enemy fighters over the target and still we didn't do a very good job. We heard about Lt. Ruff and crew when they ditched on the 22nd, they got out OK but the M.E. 109 strafed them with machinegun fire killing one of the enlisted men and an engineer that had 49 missions to his credit. All of the officers and 4 enlisted men are safe. Combat time 8 hours.

Rumania surrendered today; it gave us all something to cheer about.

August 25th 1944 we flew in Rubber Check today our tail gunner Shorty Vitale was sick today so we had a new guy that was flying on his first mission. The target was an aircraft plant in Germany. The target was destroyed, there was no flak or enemy fighters. We ran low on gas and had to land on a P-51 field. We got gas and when leaving really buzzed the field. No combat time.

August 26th 1944 we flew up to give the Rumanians help as they took Bucharest this morning, the target was a German barracks. The Germans held an oil field off the edge of the town. We dropped double 100 pounders on their bivouac area. No flak or fighters were seen. 7 1/2 hours combat.

August 27th 1944 flew # 524 with Lt. Rhodes our former co-pilot. This was a new ship and the third raid on Blechhammer Germany oil refinery. We were only 80 miles from the Russian front on the Polish border. We encountered heavy and accurate flak. 8 Hours 35 minutes combat.

August 28th 1944 we flew in # 528 over Ora Italy, We lost a ship out of B flight but all men got out OK. 6 1/2 hours combat time.

August 29th 1944 we flew our ship # 524 into Southern Germany, the target was the steel mills. we could not see the results as there was under cast skies. 1 B-24 was shot down by a M.E.109 over the target. 4 parachutes were seen, Lt. Flynn and crew of the Rubber Check were lost. They had a gas leak in the bomb bay and ran out of gas and their #3 motor was on fire so they all bailed out southeast of Budapest Hungary. 7 1/2 hours combat time.

August 31st 1944 Stand down and also payday. Someone started a rumor that the war was over, we really went wild. I with my two forty-fives going full blast, it sure was a let down.

September 2nd 1944 We really had a milk run, I would like to have the rest of the time like today. We flew into Nis Yugoslavia. 5 hours 45 minutes combat time.

September 3rd 1944 Targeted a bridge in Hungry, the results were very good, no fighters were seen. Scant and accurate flak, 7 combat hours.

September 4th 1944 Target was a railroad bridge across the Tagliamento river in Northern Italy. Results were very good there. Some of the crews that were lost in Rumania were returned to us with all kinds of Jerry equipment. 6 hours combat.

September 5th 1944 another easy mission, a railroad bridge at Szolnok, Hungry. The target was destroyed. Scant Flak and no fighters in the air. I did see a lot of them on the ground; I guess they are afraid to come up to us. Red took some pictures of the field. Lt. Smalls and two others came back today; I guess the rest will show up in a day or two. 7 hours combat.

September 6th 1944 we flew with Captain Hill as Deputy Lead in # 598. We encountered moderate to heavy and accurate flak. We had A malfunction over Novi Sad Yugoslavia, our bomb bay doors would not open so we brought our eggs back. The target was a munitions factory. The other planes of our group destroyed the target. 5 1/2 hours combat.

September 7th 1944 A practice gunnery mission, The Lt. and co-pilot shot at an Italian farm house. Nobody was hurt.

September 8th 1944 target a railroad bridge across the Sava River at Belgrade. Railroad junction hit, Flak accurate and heavy, we received 5 flak holes but no real damage. The target was destroyed. 5 hours combat.

September 10th 1944 Started on a mission in Trieste, Italy, but we turned around because it was under cast. Same at the secondary target, but we dropped our bombs on the third target. We even had gun boats throwing flak at us, we were not hit. 6 hours combat.

September 12th 1944 We had a long mission up in the Munich area to bomb an airdrome at Lechfeld air base. We had quite a flight, all kinds of dog fights all around us, but we were not attacked. On the way back Lt. Carr crashed landed while the crew bailed out. The tail gunner was killed, both of his legs were knocked up into his body and skull was split. The ball gunner had both his legs broke, the rest got out without injuries. Lt. Carr and waist gunner stayed with the ship, both got out OK. The ship is a complete wreck. 8 hours 35 minutes combat.

September 13th 1944 we were flying in # 524 all the way up in Germany and were forced to turn back. One supercharger was gone and one motor going out. We left our bombs go on the Paka airdrome caused a little damage, one M.E. 109 came up to attack us but decided differently. We lost one motor on the way back. Lt. Guest came back with sixty flak holes in his ship, nobody was hurt. Tow more of the boys died last night luloff and the navigator. 6 1/2 hours combat.

September 15th 1944 I am getting up in the world, I flew with our C.O. Col. Mooney, we went to Greece, the first time that the 15th heavies have went in that direction. We flew # 362, hit flak a little from Lirina Albania, but not too bad. The Airdrome at Athens was sure a dandy target, we destroyed 5 J.U.52's maybe more. The flak was sure accurate and heavy. We received seven flak holes in our ship. Our pilot Lt. Rhodes was hit, a piece of flak came through the flight deck, tore out the generators and sight gage. We also had a bad hole in the left aileron. 6 1/2 hours combat.

September 16th 1944 We stayed on the ground.

September 17th 1944 we spent the day getting ready to go to Capri.

September 18th 1944 we left for Capri Italy with no bombardier or nose gunner. We lost our crew today over Budapest Hungry. Lt Rhodes, Charles "chuck" Huber, our radio man, Red Collins waist gunner, and William "shorty" Vitale our tail gunner. The last the plane was seen it was under control although two direst hits were seen. We all think they are OK in the hands of partisans.

No more missions until Oct. 4th 1944.

October 4th 1944 we flew with Lt. Hamilton – pilot, and Major McConnell – co-pilot, in # 622. We went up to Munich, it was a rough one. I saw two planes explode in front of us. We received a few flak holes ourselves. It was 38 degrees below zero. Our navigator was slightly wounded. I received the Distinguished Flying Cross for my duty over France. 7 hours combat.

October 5th 1944 stand down bad weather.

October 6th 1944 stand down bad weather.

October 7th 1944 another rough one! We went to Vienna Austria in rough weather. The target was a synthetic oil plant. I flew with Lt. Hamilton in # 622. The flak was very heavy and accurate; we received ten holes in our ship. The target was destroyed. Buell finished up his fifty

missions and I guess young blood will get his tomorrow. The fire from the oil plant that we hit could be seen for a hundred miles. Anyway I don't think that we will have to go there again. I hope we knocked out the sausage plant also. 7 hours combat.

October 9th 1944 I flew with Lt. Hamilton today in # 622 the target was a bridge in Northern Italy. The weather was very bad but we did drop our bombs. There was a lot of flak. I saw a B-17 blow up in the air today. Youngblood finished his fifty today. We received credit for the mission. 6 hours combat.

October 13th 1944 I didn't think I was going to fly again, I thought I might become a ground grabber. We went up to Szekesfehervar Hungary today. Flak was scant but very accurate; I saw one ship go down. Two parachutes were reported. The target was destroyed. 6hours 40 minutes combat.

October 16th 1944 I flew with Lt Ruff in # 622 a bad day for flying, the target was a ball Bering plant. It was under cast and the dampness in the wind made for some of the prettiest vapor trail I ever seen. We didn't get to the target but hit a target of opportunity. It was cold as the devil 33 degrees below zero.

October 23rd 1944 I flew with LT Ruff in # 382. We flew lead in the Blue Face to Northern Italy with double 100's. It was a very bad under cast, we made two runs at the target but could not see to bomb so we brought the bombs to the house. I saw 3 F.W. 190's but they did not attack. 6 hours 20 minutes combat time.

November 4th 1944 I flew with Lt. Hamilton in # 622. We got a gas leak and had to return. I was really sweating out the landing especially not on my last few missions. I guess I'll get the big one tomorrow.

November 5th 1944 I flew with Lt. Small in # 622 we flew into Vienna Austria, target was an oil refinery. We were lucky as the under cast kept the flak from being accurate, although I came closer today than any other time of getting a Purple Heart. A chunk of flak tore the Plexi-glass inspection plate off of my turret right next to my elbow. The weather was so cold. I even got cold with the heated suit turned up to the high mark. I finished my fifty missions; I even got hoggish and got fifty one. A good place to finish up. 8 1/2 hours combat time.

December 1st 1944 I flew with LT. Smalls in # 622 I was headed for Naples Italy and on my way home. I stayed at the Rail track replacement camp with a bunch of 5th Army boy's.

December 12th 1944 We loaded on board the USS Glen Meigs. 6,000 soldiers and WAC's. We landed at Oran, North Africa and picked up a bunch of sailors. I saw the rock of Gibraltar today
December the 14th 1944.

The voyage home was pretty nice it did get a little rough at times though. We landed in New York City on December 22nd 1944. We were taken to Camp Shanks New York where we were fed our first T-Bone steaks in a long time. It was so good.

December 23rd 1944 I got a pass to go to New York City. I met a gal over on 81st street, we sure had a time. I also rode the subway.

December 23rd 1944 We left this evening for Ft. Bliss Texas it was a long train ride.

December 25th 1944 Christmas day we were in Arkansas it was raining cats and dogs. We stayed in San Antonio Texas for five hours, I had a good time.

December 27th 1944 we arrived at Ft. Bliss today. I was granted a 21 day furlough and left the same night. I slipped in home and surprised the folks, and I met a very nice girl while I was home.

January 26th 1945 I arrived at Santa Anna, California for re-assignment. I went out to see Ray, Lisa and Peggy. I was re-assigned to B-29 school at Denver arrived February 5th 1945. B-29 school was shot down so I decided to go back to B-24's and left for Lyndell Field Florida April 25th.

There were no more entries into the diary.