

October 4 - 5, 1943 – Monday, Tuesday – Camp Kilmer, New Jersey

Hunter really tied one on, as did Taylor. They put Hunter in a cold shower and he just stood there blinking his eyes, completely unmoved by the icy stream. Amazing.

Some hot rummy games are being played. I lost three bucks to that dog Hagen, this morning.

We're busy censoring the enlisted men's mail. A strange new task that brings a clear picture of the human side of an army, all the emotion, the warmth and coldness of feeling, the gay and sad, poor and rich, ignorant and scholastic, a revealing cross section of the average American boy. His chief thought is of home, his meals, and his money. He reassures loved ones. Each is sublimely optimistic as to his future. The censors' job requires the strictest kind of confidence and complete seriousness of approach.

Morale is ace high. To a man all are anxious to get going and all are confident we are the best damn outfit in the Army, myself included. I never have seen a finer group of enlisted men. They are grand guys, intelligent, ambitious, and unquestioning in their faith that we'll be successful. Surely I am lucky to be a part of such a Squadron.

Prime Minister Churchill announces that in September, the Italian fleet surrendered at Malta.

Expelled from Corsica by French troops, Germany completes their evacuation of troops from the island.

October 7, 1943 – Thursday – New York Harbor

Goodbye New Jersey and, incidentally, the United States of America. We entrained at 1030, boarding the CNJ (*Central Railroad of New Jersey*) #827 pulling twelve cars. Traveled branch lines to Port Reading, then straight in to Jersey City and the noble ferry Bayonne to 43rd Street.

Boarded the U.S.A.T. *Argentina*. She's a good veteran of many war trips and a few running fights. Originally designed for 500 cruise passengers, she was enlarged to hold 4,000 troops, yet we find ourselves double-loaded with nearly 7,000 men. Conditions are really crowded. Men on all the decks, in the scuppers, men everywhere, but no one seems very upset except the 2nd Lieutenants. Poor guys.

The U.S.A.T. Argentina (originally the Pennsylvania) was built in 1929 in Newport News, Virginia, for the Panama-Pacific Line. The Pennsylvania sailed from New York to San Francisco via the Panama Canal, and following a remodel in 1938 was re-christened the Argentina by the American Republics Line. She sailed on a fortnightly schedule from New York to the East Coast of South America.

In 1941 the Argentina began Atlantic convoy duty, with her turbo-electric engines propelling her at eighteen knots to England and the Mediterranean, then back to the United States. Claimed to be a lucky ship by her crew the Argentina carried three-inchers and 20mm anti-aircraft guns.

October 8, 1943 – Friday - At Sea

1:00a.m. - The Empire State Building and all that is New York loom enticingly against a crisp half moon. A beautiful final glimpse of much that we know and love. And so to bed.

7:00a.m. - We're at sea, heading east-northeast to England. It's a thrilling sight to see our fifteen to twenty ships in wide formation. The Battleship Texas is flagship and a group of destroyers ring us. Ours is a fine ship, one of the largest in the convoy. She displaces 22,000 tons; 33,000 tons loaded. The Dining Room Steward tells me he has been on the Argentina since she was built. He provides a marvelous officer's mess. Sets a nice table. We have beautiful weather and calm sailing.

I stood the 1200 to 1800 hold watch with the men. Terribly stuffy down there and cleanliness is a problem, yet morale is still very high.

December 31, 1943 – Friday – Wretham Hall

What a mission! Colonel led first, Major second. I led Yellow Flight with Hunter, Kib, Hagen (Kib out, Hawk in #4 slot). To Paris, support into, at, and out of target area, at 27,000 feet! Bombers in good form. Major did a wonderful job of Essing the whole time. I gave good support. We were hot!

Encountered terrific flak over Paris. My wing went thru the smoke from one burst. Paris was clear, saw the Eiffel Tower, and boy did those bombs blast the smoke! Bogeys everywhere! We could have jumped four bandit decoys (three o'clock low) each, but escorting the bombers came first. Colonel took a crack at four, but they beat it. A swell, exciting mission. We really protected those bombers!

Landed at Manston, refueled, smoked a cigarette, looked at some Typhoons. I'll take a 47! Major Simmons, McGeever, Botsy and my Flight back here at 1545.

June 21, 1944 – Wednesday – Wretham Hall.

Up at 0520. Briefing at 0630. Take off at 0715. Trigger led. Me, Lewis, Janney, and Kosc were Blue Flight. Solid deck of cumulus at 1,000 to 3,000 feet, went thru 'em by Flights and assembled above. Mission: escort 1,350 bombers to Berlin! We picked ours up near landing fields near Kiel area, headed east to Stettin then south to target.

The sky was full of bombers. No enemy aircraft on ours. Lots of aborts, though; we had thirteen, the 370th had six and the 369th had eight.

It was overcast clear to the German coast so we never saw water. Berlin was hidden too, but by huge clouds of smoke. Terrific oil fires at Hamburg still burning from yesterday.

Colonel Tyrrell took White Flight down to strafe an airdrome forty miles from Berlin. Can't understand it! Nuts! He was hit and had to bail out. Lubien hit too but he made it back. Rough. Major Shaw becomes Commanding Officer.

I came home with five ships. Five hours and forty minutes flight time. Whew!

The U.S. 8th Air Force carries out raids on Berlin and the synthetic fuel plants at Leuna-Merseburg.

Hermann Goering, the infamous head of the Luftwaffe, reportedly said, "the day I saw Mustangs over Berlin, I knew the jig was up."

June 25, 1944 – Sunday – Wretham Hall

Wot a mission!

Briefed at 0530. Take off at 0615. Me, Olson, Randy, and Kysely were Red Flight. Shaw middle. To escort B-17s way down near the Swiss border, Lake Geneva, Lyons, etc. Our Squadron took two boxes of B-17s, others did the same but had different "targets." We went to

the little town of Nantua, about 20 miles west of Geneva. The bombers descended to 3,000 feet, took the first Section down with close cover. Our Section stayed at 14,000 feet as top Flight. Beautiful job of escort. The B-17s flew right down the damn valley, dropped not bombs, but parachute loads of supplies. Interesting. Wot a sight. Then climbed back up to 14,000 feet going home.

This was the most gorgeous mountain country, valleys, rivers, blue lakes, rock cliffs, a little lake near Nantua with sheer rock cliffs as walls, chalets, green pocket-handkerchief fields, railway viaducts. Not a cloud in the sky. And the whole vast greatness of the Alps towering out of the eastward haze to 14,000 to 15,000 feet, snow capped and dazzling, an unforgettable sight. Simply breathtaking!!

France clear as a bell, Cliffs of Dover visible from Rouen, flew by Paris. Wonderful trip. Five hours and thirty minutes. No flak, no enemy aircraft, just miles and miles of scenery, the whole of France, its river valleys, towns, like a relief map. Marvelous!

Second mission, took off at 1730. Three hour escort east of Paris. No action.

The British Second Army begins a major offensive in the Caen area.

The Battle of Tali-Ihantala between Soviet and Finnish troops begins, estimated to be the largest battle ever fought in the Nordic countries.