

roofs on top of the mountains with no road leading into the town but a small donkey trail. In about 2 hours we were over Constantine. I could see a deep gorge running through the center of the town. There were several high bridges over the gorge. We radioed La Kraub airfield which is located about 15 miles southeast of Constantine and requested landing instructions. Capt. Rogers was at the controls and was instructed by the tower, the field was closed as the dirt runway was a sea of mud. He being a command pilot and no field to land at for several hundred miles chose to land, and with great skill and caution, set the B25 down on the eastwest runway. The plane responded beautifully to his coaxing and come to a stop at the end of the runway. We then taxied over to the operations tower and cut our engines. We radioed the tower to bring up a staff car as the Commanding Officer of the Service Command was there. A jeep came out onto the muddy field and picked us up and took us to operations. There we were met by a staff car and were driven to the St. George Hotel in Constantine. There we transacted our business and had a bite to eat in the restaurant. A beautiful little blonde French girl with dancing blue eyes waited on us. She spoke beautiful English with that certain midwestern drawl. Why she had the midwestern drawl, I don't know. We left the hotel and drove into town. Many French refugees were there. Col. Manning spotted a beautiful French woman he knew as he had been stationed in Constantine a year before. We stopped and talked to her and she was happy to see us. She invited us to come to her apartment but we were flying right back to Italy that afternoon so was unable. We left her and drove to a jeweler friend of Col. Mannings and had a nice visit with him and his son in their apartment. The son was highly educated, being a graduate of the University of Algiers. He spoke English with a decided accent, but we had no trouble conversing. The apartment was the most beautiful I have ever seen. The furniture being of gold Louis XIV and the walls in red satin. On the table was some Algerian oranges and they were offered to us. They were red in color and peeling them the meat was red. To my surprise they were as sweet as a candy bar. A bag of them was fixed up for us to eat on our trip back to Italy. Presently we left and drove back to the airport at La Kraub and took off for Tunis. We landed at Alouina airfield and checked on how a B-17 was coming that was being refitted there for Capt. Rogers to fly back to the United States in finding it not done and that it wouldn't be done for sometime we took off again for Italy.

We flew out over Cape Bone where only a short time ago we sat for 5 days on our boat. We flew over the Island of Pantelleria and in only a few minutes later we were radioing the airfield at Palermo Sicily for a landing as bad weather was setting in and we decided to stay overnight. Being a junior officer I had to stay at a different hotel than the other two and I checked in at Del Sol hotel. I washed and shaved and went out to a small native restaurant and had a spaghetti dinner which was very good and washed it down with a bottle of vino. That night I stayed in at the hotel and had a few drinks in the lounge with another American who was stationed in Palermo. The following morning he took me for a ride in his jeep to see the city and at noon we were back at the hotel. I grabbed another bite to eat and met Col. Manning and Capt. Rogers and we drove back to the airfield in a big Italian car. We signed our clearance papers at the red brick operations building. The enemy planes that had been destroyed at this field were being cleaned up and put in a corner of the field. I saw Me-109's, FW-190's and JU-88's along with Italian Savoia Marchetti's and Macci 202's. Some of the planes were still in tact and looked to me to be in flying condition. We taxied down to the west end of the runway and after checking the engines we firewalled the throttles and were roaring down the runway. We took to the air and circled Palermo and headed for Italy. We flew over the Lepari Island group and hit the Italian mainland. In another couple of hours we were radioing Bari Airport for landing instructions and presently we were on the ground back in Italy, our mission accomplished.

I left the Colonel and returned to my squadron who were still wallowing in the mud and only those who have been in Italy in the winter know what the mud is like. Days followed as we sat in the mud waiting for our bomb group to come. We busied ourselves making things and dodging a few bombs the enemy was dropping around us. On the morning of March 17 I had to have an infected wisdom tooth removed in the field and the infection swelled so that I developed lockjaw and had to be sent to the 26th General Hospital in Bari. After two weeks of treatment I was returned to the squadron who had moved to Torretta Field which was located 10 miles east of Cerignola. Someone had to sign me out of the hospital on the last day and I almost went nuts waiting for Lt. (Doc) Krajec to come down and get me. We returned to the field that night and the squadron was set up in tents. The following morning we got Company F of the 21st Engineers to grade and make roads and hard stands for our planes to park

on. Several days we later received word that our planes were to leave Alouina Airfield at Tunis and were to come in that day, April 6th. We moved our crash trucks out on the field and at 10 that morning the first plane circled the field and landed. The planes followed at 5 minute intervals until all 80 of them had landed and taxied to their hard stands. The crews jumped out and greeted us and questioned us about everything. Where they were? What distance are we from the front? Do the Germans straff very often? After all we were veterans we had been overseas two months before they came and I had had a stretch in the hospital (they didn't know it was a wisdom tooth that put me there.) The crews were taken to squadron area where Lt. Lawrence Ashley and our cooks had been working half the night to feed these men when they came in. Our C ration vittles were received with disgruntled remarks but were devoured heartily.

As all the ships came in we watched and that night we surveyed the fold and the B-24s were all well dispersed. We knew then that our work had started and we were ready to get going. The day was spent by the bomb group members setting up their squadron areas. That night we tuned in on our favorite radio program "Axis Sally" who to our astonishment welcomed the 484th Bomb group to the theatre and that the German airforce and ground air defense would shoot them out of the sky. She also named by rank and name the group commander and squadron commanders. Beck told me she had welcomed us the same way when we moved up but I was in the hospital and didn't hear it.

The next few days were spent in checking and repairing the airplanes and readying them for the coming first mission. That morning broke very suddenly. One morning the planes took off for several series of practice runs over a uninhabited island in the Adriatic. This accomplished with success the group was placed on full battle conditions and the next day we worked feverishly repairing the planes and that night we loaded them with bombs and at the crack of dawn the B-24's were running down the gravel runway and picking up into the early dawn blue, formed and were off to do their share of destruction. We could really think of the song we had learned while in training "off we go into the wild blue yonder, nothing can stop the Army Air Corps."