

314 FIGHTER SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

314 Fighter Squadron constituted, 24 Jun 1942
Activated, 6 Jul 1942
Inactivated, 7 Nov 1945
Redesignated 314 Tactical Fighter Training Squadron
Activated, 1 Oct 1986
Redesignated 314 Fighter Squadron
Inactivated 1 Apr 1994
Activated 6 Jul 2015

STATIONS

Mitchel Field, NY, 6 Jul 1942
Baltimore Mun Aprt, MD, 6 Jul-28 Oct 1942
El Amiriya, Egypt, 23 Dec 1942
El Kabrit, Egypt, 2 Feb 1943
Libya, 8 Mar 1943
Tunisia, 14 Apr 1943
El Haouaria, Tunisia, 18 Jun 1943
Menzel Hurr, Tunisia, 3 Oct 1943
Cercola, Italy, 25 Oct 1943
Pignataro Maggiore, Italy, 6 May 1944
Le Banca Airfield, Italy, 6 Jun 1944
Montalto Di Castro, Italy, 13 Jun 1944
Corsica, 15 Jul 1944
Le Luc, France, 23 Aug 1944
Istres, France, 1 Sep 1944

Amberieu, France, 5 Sep 1944
Tavaux, France, 17 Sep 1944
Luneville, France, 2 Jan 1945
Stuttgart, Germany, 3 May-20 Oct 1945
Camp Shanks, NY, 6-7 Nov 1945
Luke AFB, AZ, 1 Oct 1986 – 1 Apr 1994
Holloman AFB, NM, 14 Jul 2015

ASSIGNMENTS

324 Fighter Group, 6 Jul 1942-7 Nov 1945
58 Tactical Training Wing, 1 Oct 1986
58 Operations Group, 1 Oct 1991 – 1 Apr 1994
54 Fighter Group, 6 Jul 2015

ATTACHMENTS

57 Fighter Group, 8 Mar-23 May 1943

WEAPON SYSTEMS

P-40, 1942-1944
P-47, 1944-1945
F-16

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers





Campaign Streamers

Tunisia
Sicily
Naples-Foggia
Anzio
Rome-Arno
Northern France
Southern France
Rhineland
Ardennes-Alsace
Central Europe
Air Combat, EAME Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations
North Africa and Sicily, Mar-[Jul] 1943
Tunis and Cape Bon Area, 18 Apr 1943
Casino, 12-14 May 1944

French Croix de Guerre with Palm

EMBLEM

Over and through a light turquoise blue disc, border black, a yellow-and-orange, caricatured "warhawk," in flight, diving toward dexter base, wearing black aviator's helmet and white goggles, while smoking a cigar, proper, leaving white smoke trail to rear, and grasping in the claws and firing an aerial machine gun, proper, with cartridge belt of yellow and black shells streaming toward rear, two empty cartridge cases falling to base, all in front of a white lightning bolt burst, shaded on under side black. (Approved, 8 Jul 1944)

MOTTO

NICKNAME

Warhawks
Hawks

OPERATIONS

Combat in MTO and ETO, 26 Mar-21 Jul 1943, and 30 Oct 1943-6 May 1945.

The 314 Fighter Squadron shares its heritage with the 315th and the 316th Fighter Squadrons. All three were created by cadres from the 33rd Fighter Group-a cadre from the 58th Fighter Squadron formed the nucleus of the 314, the 59th Fighter Squadron provided the nucleus of the 315th and the 60th Fighter Squadron formed the nucleus of the 316th. Earlier, the 33rd Fighter Group had been created in the same fashion by cadres from the 8th Pursuit Group. It's interesting to note that in January 1942 orders concerning the 33rd Group and its squadrons still referred to them as "Pursuit" units. It was not until July 6, 1942 when orders were cut establishing the 324th that the pursuit designation was dropped in favor of "Fighter" units.

Captain Robert F. Worley was assigned as the first Commander of the 314 and 1st Lt. Clemson N. Page as Squadron Operations Officer.

The activation location was Baltimore Dundalk (Municipal) Airport, Baltimore, MD. However, the runways were considered too short and bumpy to check out the pilots in a P-40 F. Transitioning from an AT-6 trainer to a fighter on such runways was considered too risky, so pilots were sent four at a time to Washington National Airport, Washington, DC for checkout. Further training was then conducted at Baltimore.

Previous models of the Curtis P-40 used the Allison engine, which was not equipped with a supercharger which limited the potential of the P-40 airframe. For this reason the supercharged Rolls Royce Merlin engine, the same engine used by the Super Marine Spitfire made famous during the "Battle of Britain" was selected for the P-40F.

This was a precision manufactured engine and all mating parts were hand fitted, a very labor intensive operation. Demands for the engine exceeded Rolls Royce production methods and the British released the drawings and specifications to the U.S. for mass production by an American automobile engine manufacturer. A major problem arose. All specifications and measurements were in the British metric system! Ford and General Motors wouldn't touch the task of converting the specifications to the American system. Packard Motorcar Corporation accepted the conversion and mass production task. (The Packard manufactured engine was a high quality product and was also selected to replace the Allison engine in the North American P-51 planned to later replace the P-40s. Packard couldn't keep up with this increased demand, and when the P-40 F's were finally phased out the Packard Merlin engines were removed, recycled through overhaul depots and installed in P-51's.)

In the latter part of November 1942 the squadron was ordered overseas. From Baltimore, the pilots were flown from Washington to Miami aboard commercial aircraft. There they boarded U. S. Air Corps C-54's, which took them via Puerto Rico, Trinidad, British Guiana, Belem to Natal, Brazil. There the flight across the Atlantic Ocean to Africa started. The first landing was Ascension Island.

The Ascension Island airstrip was a striking feat of engineering, cut through the mountains which rose steeply on both sides of the runway. It seemed to the passengers on the C-54 that the wing tips might scrape the mountains on landing and taking off. After refueling at Ascension, the C-54's proceeded to Accra, in the African Gold Coast, today known as Ghana..

Most pilots stayed in Accra for several days waiting for crated P-40's to arrive by ship at the port of Lagos, Nigeria. While the planes were being assembled, the pilots spent considerable time on the nearby beaches, some of the most beautiful that any of them had ever seen. When the ground crews began to assemble the P-40's, the pilots were transported to Lagos to slow-time the aircraft for a few hours before starting the journey to the Mediterranean area.

The P-40's did not have sufficient navigational equipment for the journey so they were led by a bomber with a navigator on board. This was not always successful as on occasion even the navigator got lost! Every pilot was then on his own to find a place to land.

Most of the refueling stops were operated by Pan American Airways, which had only recently established the trans-African air route. The first stop was Kano, in northern Nigeria. This flight was a tense one as it was over dense jungle. If a plane went down enroute it is doubtful the pilot would be rescued as the jungle canopy would swallow up any trace of a downed aircraft.

After Kano several airfields in sub-Saharan Sudan and Egypt were used before arriving at Khartoum, Ft. Lamy (famous as a French Foreign Legion base), Maiduguri, El Geneima and El Fashir depending upon weather and fuel supplies at these bases. Supplying fuel to these fields was a logistical problem.

At Khartoum the P-40F's 50-caliber wing guns were loaded with ammunition for the flight to the Cairo area or Palestine. If Gen. Montgomery's Eighth Army had not been able to hold the line at El Alamein we would go to Palestine and it might be necessary to fight our way through. Fortunately, Gen. Montgomery did hold the line, and Rommel's Afrika Corps had just begun its long retreat across the western desert.

We landed at Heliopolis Airport located just south of Cairo. The refueling stop for this leg of the trip was either Wadi Halfa or Luxor. These airfields were operated by the RAF. The refueling operation at Wadi Halfa was very interesting. Gasoline came in five gallon cans similar to the old lard cans. It is believed the fuel came by riverboat to the nearby port and was then transported by camel to the airfield. The RAF used what they called a "bowser" to pump the gas into the planes. It resembled the old hand pumps used by American fire departments years ago. Across the top of the bowser tank a large chamois skin was stretched to filter out dirt and

water. The RAF GI's gashed the tins with a hatchet or knife and tossed the cans up on top of the chamois skin to drain.

The flight to Heliopolis followed the Nile and the scenery was spectacular. The river was full of feluccas and the river banks were a lush green. The green ended abruptly where the irrigation ended. There was no doubt the area beyond was a desert. We would see more of that later. A steep cliff went up to the desert plateau. Camel trails were easily seen on the plateau converging where there was a trail leading down to the Nile valley. These trails must have been centuries old.

Several days were spent in the Cairo area waiting for the ground echelon to arrive. A few pilots were hospitalized with malaria, no doubt picked up while in Accra or Lagos. Others made more ferry flights from Lagos. Most of the P-40's were destined for the 57th Fighter Group and the 79th Fighter Group to replace their combat losses as well as to modernize their fleets.

At the same time, the 314 ground echelon was making an entirely different journey. Unfortunately a roster of the officers and enlisted men that made up this echelon has not been found so giving credit to every one of them is not possible. In November 1942 they boarded the SS Westpoint. No one can describe the journey better than John Gimbel who was one of these enlisted men."We traveled by train to Camp Kilmer, NJ where we assembled prior to going to the dock where the West Point was preparing to depart. The 314 and Gp. Hq. were among the last to board. To the best of my knowledge the 316th was boarding about the same time.

There were guys hanging out of every porthole on our side of the ship. They had been on board for a few days. Just before we got to the dock area we passed a dock where the SS Normandie was moored but it was lying on its side. It had been sabotaged and burned. It took on too much water and rolled over. What a horrible sight for a bunch of sod busters getting ready to sail through submarine infested waters. There were troops of all kinds, I remember seeing many officers and nurses whenever we "grunts" were marched up from Hold #3 for our daily exercises. There had to be about 10,000 on board.

H#3 was a cargo hold in the very bowels of the ship. The floor of the hold was the top of the ballast tank and separated from the anchor chain locker by a huge bulkhead. The hold was about 20-25 feet high and filled with bunks arranged in steel pipe racks from floor to ceiling. It was large enough to hold all the 314 and Group guys. It was hot, damp and sweaty and many of the guys never spent the night down there. Each evening when the smoking lamp was turned off there was a steady stream of men carrying their helmets and blankets wearing their life vests climbing three or four stairwells to the main deck where one after another sought a corner to curl up and sleep. This routine increased after the first abandoned ship drill right after we sailed right down the river to the sea.

We left New York harbor very early on the morning of November 1, 1942....I would guess that at least 25% of the troops did not sleep in H#3.

The bunks in the hold were stacked about ten high. I estimate that my bunk was fairly high but still 15 feet below the water line. At night I slipped into a very peaceful sleep to the sound of the bow-wave sliding by, just on the other side of the steel skin next to me.

The open foredeck and sea air was much preferred over a stuffy hold.

We sailed along the East Coast escorted by one destroyer or a corvette at about 22 knots. At the time there were German subs operating off Atlantic City, NJ. There had been many tankers sunk in that area but at 22 knots we were fairly safe unless a sub just happened to be directly in front of us. That ship would be a beautiful prize for a sub captain. I understand there was a million mark bounty offered for the sinking of the Queen Mary while hauling troops.

Two days later the escort broke away off South Carolina and we were on our own heading for Rio Harbor. We stayed at Rio Harbor for refueling and on we pushed around South Africa up the Indian Ocean past the island of Madagascar to Bombay Harbor, 30 days later. It took us two days to unload our gear and board a train which took us to a British rest camp used as a staging area. It was called Deolali about a hundred miles from Bombay....we were put on a boat which took us over to Egypt. It was like a large ferry, we slept in string hammocks on the open deck and ate British Navy food. After we landed in Egypt we traveled across the Nile Delta by train and by trucks and finally dumped off at a spot in the desert west of Cairo. It was Christmas Eve, 1942." This was LG-91!

As one can see from John Gimbel's narrative that the trip on the West Point was far from being a luxury cruise. The moods swung from anxiety of a submarine attack to pure boredom which was relieved by playing poker or black jack and shooting crap. Like most gambling games the amount won was always more than the amount lost. Humorous events also occurred. The 314 Line Chief, a Master Sergeant, won close to \$1,200. When the West Point docked at Bombay the money was burning a hole in his pocket. A street vendor took him to a jewelry dealer where he bought a bag of rubies which he sent to his sweetheart in the States. A few weeks later he received word from her that the rubies were glass!

The staging area, Deolali, mentioned above also created some humor. Bill Trainer in a letter to John Gimbel after the war mentioned that while he was in a VA Hospital in Tucson, AZ he was attended to by a retired WW II British Army doctor. He said that Deolali was a Psycho Hospital and recovery center for British soldiers who had "lost it" while serving in the Crown Colonies during the nineteenth century.

Now that the ground echelon was in place the pilots arrived. While the pilots get the praise and publicity they are ineffective without the supporting ground troops so there wasn't any reason for the pilots to arrive at LG-91 before the ground echelon. . Combat training conditions at LG-91 were terrible. It seemed more effort was expended surviving rather than training. Sand got into everything. Maintenance crews plugged up every opening of the P-40 but sand still won. The carburetor air intake of the P-40 was equipped with a filter screen. It was kept closed while the aircraft was on the ground and for takeoffs and landings but sand still managed to get in the

engine. The crowning blow to force us out of LG-91 was a sand storm that lasted over 48 hours. Tents blew over and the only building left standing was a Quonset hut being used as a kitchen and mess hall. Some of the troops even used their gas masks to avoid breathing the sand and dust. Even the food was contaminated with sand.

On February 1, 1943 the 314 moved to El Kabrit located next to the Suez Canal to continue combat training, dive bombing and strafing enemy targets. Likely targets were enemy troops, gun positions, tanks, vehicles, fuel and ammunition dumps, trains, etc. Practice targets were derelict military equipment left behind on the desert by the retreating Germans. All these missions required different techniques.

Finally the 314 had its authorized aircraft and departed on March 1, 1943 to join the 57th Fighter Group at Ben Gardane. (The 316th Fighter Squadron joined the 79th Fighter Group at about the same time. The 315th Fighter Squadron had not yet arrived.) Refueling stops enroute were Gambut II, Libya, Marble Arch, Tripolitania, Misurata and Castel Benito. At one of these bases the corners of the runway were marked by four palm trees. The wind was blowing so hard that the runway was obscured by blowing sand. A pilot had to judge where the runway was by lining up the tops of the palm trees. Upon entering the blowing sand it was instrument flying until touchdown. After that it was focusing on the directional gyro to keep the aircraft on the runway and avoid ground looping. The P-40 was known for its ground looping characteristics. As soon as the pilot was able he turned off the runway quickly as another aircraft would be right behind him.

A few training missions were flown with the 57th Fighter Group to acclimate the pilots to their procedures. The 57th was indoctrinated to combat by the 7th South African Wing. This method had merit and the 57th would use the same procedure with the 314. Senior pilots of the 314 were first sprinkled among the combat experienced 57th pilots as wingmen. The next phase would be a flight of 314 pilots flying with two flights of 57th pilots, thus forming a squadron. Finally a squadron, three flights of four aircraft each, of 314 pilots would fly with the 57th squadrons.

The first 314 combat exposure was on March 13, 1943. It was to be a three squadron fighter sweep over Gabes. The 314 pilots flying were Maj. Bob Worley, Squadron Commander, Capt. Jimmie Phillips, "A" Flight Leader, Capt. John Simpson, "B" Flight Leader and Capt. Les Krause, "C" Flight Leader. Krause describes the mission. "I'll never forget my first combat mission. We all had the Hollywood concept of how a war was fought. Jimmy Phillips and I were assigned to the 57th Group Commander's (Col. Art Salisbury) Flight. Jimmy was to fly on Salisbury's wing (#2 position) and I was to fly on the Element Leader's wing (#4 position). My Element Leader aborted so I then was flying on Salisbury's wing opposite Jimmie. We crossed the bomb line and was approaching Gabes. Suddenly the flak started coming up, black puffs all around us. Any pilot who says he is not tense under these conditions, or even scared, is not telling the truth. Both Jimmy and I closed in to fly close formation on Salisbury. We figured if we were close to him we would be safer since he knew what best to do. Almost instantly he looked at both of us and shouted over the radio, "Get the hell away from me! I'm trying to get out of it too!" Then

we got bounced by a bunch of Me-109's. I think I only saw three or four of them. During the debriefing I found out there were 30+. I about dropped a load in my pants. Where were the others I didn't see! I don't remember what the 57th losses were but Bob Worley was shot down and bellied in but he made it back. However, Capt. Simpson was shot up, bellied in and was captured by the Germans. The morale of everyone, pilots and ground crews, hit a low. All our airplanes are supposed to come back. We learned quickly that Hollywood hadn't fought a war."

In April we left Ben Gardane and leap frogged to Neffetia, then to Medenine, Tunisia. In mid April Rommel's defense at the Mareth Line cracked and he withdrew further into Tunisia. We then moved to El Djem.

As the Germans retreated we moved forward. Our ground support personnel were broken down into two echelons, "A" and "B". "A" Echelon would move forward and prepare a new base while "B" Echelon supported missions out of the old base. When the last mission flew out of the old base the "B" Echelon would then move to the new base. How long a base was used depended upon how fast the Germans retreated. One base was occupied for only two days. Once the Germans didn't continue retreating as fast as anticipated and pilots had to tighten their takeoff and join-up pattern in order to stay out of enemy fire.

The landing strips were made quickly by a grader by scraping aside what little vegetation existed. The ends of the runway were marked by 55 gallon barrels at the corners of the runway. If the area permitted two crossing runways were constructed. This reduced congestion at the takeoff ends of the runways. It also reduced exposure to the blowing dust and sand. Radio silence was maintained and the control tower would signal the Mission Commander when to start takeoff by flashing a green light at him. Then when the leader of the second element saw that the first element was in the air he would start his takeoff even though the runway would be obscured by sand and dust.

While this was considered a good procedure it caused a fatal accident. On May 9, 1943 a two squadron mission was scheduled, a squadron from the 57th Fighter Group and the 314 with the 314 leading. The last flight of the 57th squadron was late getting in to takeoff position on the other runway. A pilot in the last element was taxiing too fast. To avoid colliding with the plane in front of him he slammed on his brakes and nosed his aircraft up at the intersection of the two runways. Due to all the dust the control tower couldn't see this dangerous condition and gave the green light for takeoff to the lead element of the 314. Somehow the lead element cleared the nosed up P-40 but didn't break radio silence to report the nosed up P-40. When the second element saw that the lead element was airborne they started their takeoff. The element leader cleared the P-40 on the left but his wing man hit it dead on and both aircraft burst into flames. The pilot of the nosed up P-40 had long since abandoned his airplane. A Life Magazine reporter and photographer were present and the July 5, 1943 Life Magazine has a picture of the funeral on the cover and as a header for the story, America's Combat Dead. A tragic and unnecessary loss.

A LIFE magazine crew happened to be covering events the day of the accident. Lt. Woodbury's funeral made the cover of the July 5, 1943 issue. Pallbearers were enlisted men, led by 1st Sergeant Ashbock,

The problem in writing a brief 314 history is to make it brief. If all noteworthy missions were included, such P-40 era missions as those flown against Monte Cassino and those flown to save the Anzio Beachhead would be mentioned. During the P-47 era such missions as destroying a large retreating convoy in the Rhone River valley and saving the French forces surrounded at Colmar by viciously attacking German troops would be mentioned. These and other missions were usually a joint effort with the 315th and 316th squadrons as well as squadrons from other groups. However, if only one mission is to be considered "314 Fighter Squadron's Greatest Moment" it would have to be the Palm Sunday Massacre, April 18, 1943 and even this mission was a joint effort.

Intelligence had cracked the German code and were eavesdropping on their communications. It was discovered the Germans were planning a mass air transport evacuation from Tunis to Sicily. In preparation for this mission the 57th squadrons and the 314 were placed on alert as well as a squadron of RAF Spitfires based near Sousse. The 66th Fighter Squadron was the lead and low flying squadron. The 314 was the medium flying squadron, the 65th high flying squadron, the 64th flying top cover and the Spitfires flying above the 64th. The mission was briefed for the 64th and the Spitfires to concentrate on attacking the German fighter escort and the other three squadrons would attack the transports.

The mission was scrambled at 1650 (4:40 PM) and the RAF Spitfire squadron rendezvoused with the P-40's over Sousse and took their position at the top of the formation. Dense flak was experienced after crossing the bomb line and continued until the formation was over the Bay of Tunis. At approximately 1745 (5:45 PM) the mission was on station and patrolling the area from Cape Bon to Tunis. An estimated formation of 100 Ju-52's was sighted with an estimated escort of 50 German fighters. Accounts vary as to the composition of the fighter force. One account says the force was composed of Me-109's, Me-110's and Macci 202's. However, Me-110's had never been seen in the theater and while Macci-202's were in the theater all the fighters shot down were Me-109's. The battle started and one might say attacking the slow performing Ju-52's was a "turkey shoot". Even though the 64th and the Spitfires kept many of the enemy fighters engaged several did break through to the battle taking place with the Ju-52's. There was bedlam and the Ju-52 formation turned east towards land and many crash landed on the Cape Bon beaches. The P-40's and Spitfires returned to their bases at approximately 1900 (7:00 PM). Total claimed victories were 58 Ju52's and 16 Me-109's destroyed. This includes 314 claims of 23 Ju-52's and 2 Me-109's. Needless to say there was a big squadron celebration that night. Since the squadron had been in combat for just over a month that was considered pretty good scoring but the losses still had a sobering effect. The Germans had not forgotten us. They came back the next night and bombed and strafed us with Ju-88's. There was loss of property but no casualties in the 314.

The 314 returned to Kairouan and was joined by the 316th who had been attached to the 79th Fighter Group. The 315th also arrived and the 324th Fighter Group was reformed on May 22, 1943. From now on references will be made to 324th missions rather than 314 missions.

At debriefing following the Palm Sunday Massacre, Lt. Richard Duffy describes the battle to (L to R) Stout, Goldberger, Hock, engineering officer (above Goldberger), Sutton (at end of Duffy's left hand), Woodbury (above Sutton), Hemphill, D'Antoni.

About the middle of June the 324th moved to a dry lake bed near the tip of Cape Bon, Tunisia. It was so large that for one mission. we sent a 48-ship formation off at the same time. At this time the 99th Fighter Squadron was attached to us for combat indoctrination. Most of the missions were escorting medium bombers to targets in Sicily and Sardinia. Fighter opposition was heavy and we were running into very experienced German pilots. A bad time to indoctrinate a green squadron. Somehow the Germans always knew when we were coming. Since the Germans still occupied Pantelleria Island just a few miles off Cape Bon it finally occurred to someone that perhaps our takeoffs were being relayed to German forces in Sicily. The island was then heavily bombed by fighters and medium bombers and after a couple of days they surrendered.

On July 10, 1943 the invasion of Sicily started. The 324th took off at 0420 (4:20 AM) to arrive before daylight to protect the invasion fleet off the coast at Licata. Unknown to us German bombers had come out of the NW, bombed the invasion fleet and continued SE. Later, C-47's loaded with paratroopers and flying low came from the SE and passed over the fleet on their way to a drop area near Licata. Even though they had radio contact with the fleet and signaled with the appropriate colored flares they were shot at. Many C-47's did not arrive at the drop area. Our fighter cover experienced the same problem several times even though radio contact was made and recognition flares were displayed. Finally to avoid this friendly fire we moved off to the side and out of range of the anti-aircraft guns. The best laid plans can be ruined by just one trigger happy gunner and the results are disastrous. One would think with all the aircraft identification training gunners had they would at least be able to identify a C-47 and a P-40. After the invasion the 324th flew air cover missions for a few days and then was stood down.

Our temporary mission was to give combat training to replacement pilots for other groups as well as for the 324th. This was also the time for the personnel to enjoy a well earned rest and the pleasures that civilization had to offer. The preferred destinations were Cairo and Alexandria. However, closer cities such as Constantine and even Tunis were frequented. Even the Cape Bon beaches were enjoyed, not only for sun bathing but for fishing. The fishing technique was somewhat unique. Since boats were not available the emergency dinghy in the parachute seat was used. German hand grenades called Potato Mashers were in abundance. A small rock was tied to the Potato Masher so it would sink. When it exploded beneath the surface stunned fish would float to the surface and be loaded in to the dinghy. It was exciting when the stone would come loose and the Potato Masher would explode on the surface!

The Group Weather Section hired a couple of native forecasters to assist in forecasting local weather. When September approached the natives warned that the seasonal September rains were due and would flood the dry lake bed. Most of September passed with no rain. After looking at the clouds one afternoon the native forecasters said the rains were on their way. Our forecasters studied their charts and saw no indication of any rain. That night the skies opened up and at day break the P-40's were now parked in a lake. Fortunately there was a high spot in the lake where the aircraft could taxi to and start their takeoff and gain some speed before hitting the deeper water. All the aircraft were able to get off and flew south to Korba on October 2nd where training continued.

The invasion at Salerno was successful and the army pushed the Germans northward past Naples. On October 25th, the 324th moved to Cercola, a field at the foot of Mt. Vesuvius on the Naples side. German resistance hardened and he dug in using Monte Cassino as a strong point preventing Allied forces from moving up the Rapido River valley. Hundreds of P-40 and medium bomber missions were flown against the German strongholds. They were well defended with 40 mm and 88 mm anti-aircraft guns and were dangerous targets.

During this offensive the 324th received several fighter pilots from England. They were experienced pilots in flying fighter escort for bombers. Our instructions were to give them experience in close air support in preparation for the Normandy Invasion. Four of them were assigned to the 314 and we broke them in gradually the same way we were with the 57th. On one dive bombing run on Cassino one of the pilots exploded in mid air and another was shot up pretty badly. They claimed they now knew how to perform the close air support mission and left quickly for England.

The Naples area was interesting to us. Many in our squadron were of Italian descent and even had relatives in the area. It was difficult to find an Italian who did not have relatives living in the States. The Isle of Capri was a bit of heaven. The Albergo Morgano, a new resort hotel was designated as our rest camp. The Luftwaffe had used it for the same purpose. The orchestra in the dining room was shocked when we would ask them to play Lili Marlene. We enjoyed that song as much as the Germans did.

While we were stationed at Cercola Mt. Vesuvius erupted spectacularly.. Our field happened to be up wind from the mountain but a B-25 outfit on the down wind side really caught hell. They were pummeled with good sized lava rocks and ash. All the B-25's were ruined. The acid in the ash ate through the fabric surfaces and corroded the metal surfaces. The ash was so heavy that all of the B-25's tails were touching the ground and the nose gear was up in the air. After a mission to the north it wasn't necessary to navigate back to base. One only had to home in on the smoke plume from Mt. Vesuvius.

Even after the heavy bombing of the German defenses around Monte Cassino by medium and fighter bombers the Germans held their positions and the advance towards Rome was stalled. The objective of the amphibious assault at Anzio was to cut off the supplies to the German forces at Cassino and to restart the drive to Rome. However, resistance was heavier than

expected and the Germans were almost successful in showing our forces back into the sea. Air power saved the beach head. Rome was occupied on June 4, 1944.

After the Germans retreated from Cassino, the 324th moved from Cercola to Pignataro Maggiore on May 6th. Again the Hun was retreating and we moved often to keep up with him. We leapfrogged to Le Banc on June 6th, then to Montalto Di Castro on June 14th and to Ghisonaccia, Corsica on July 19, 1944. On the day before the move to Corsica, the 314 brought an end to an era. Eight of the squadron pilots, led by c/o Major James Kirkendall, flew the last P-40 mission for the U.S. Air Force in Europe, an uneventful bombing of a road bridge near Florence with 1,000-lb bombs.

On the move to Ghisonaccia, the P-40's were abandoned in Italy. In Corsica, the Group transitioned to P-47's in seven days, and from there flew fighter sweeps over southern France, bombing radar stations as well as fortified coastal gun positions. Escort was also provided for bombers going after similar targets.

On August 15, 1944 the Seventh Army invaded southern France. Ten days later the 324th moved to Le Luc near Frejus. The Germans were retreating quickly in an effort to escape before being cut off by the Allied forces invading at Normandy. Missions were flown out of Le Luc for only three days before being moved to Istres near Marseilles. It was from here that the 324th participated in a mission that rivaled the Palm Sunday Massacre as the "324th's Finest Moment".

This mission could be labeled "The Valley of Death". The retreating Germans had formed a convoy several miles long near Valence in the Rhone River valley. The lead vehicles were destroyed blocking further movement of the convoy and the vehicles at the rear of the convoy were also destroyed thus blocking their moving back. Several sorties were flown by the 324th as well as other Groups against this trapped convoy. It was found out later that in strafing the convoy that more damage was done to tanks by the 50 caliber bullets than we realized. Apparently the crew compartment was very hot and the tank was considered a fire trap. For this reason the hatch cover was left open. The 50 caliber bullets would bounce off the road or ground and ricochet around the crew compartment killing or injuring the crew as well as damaging equipment. Before our troops could advance bulldozers had to push the charred remains of the convoy off the road.

On September 8th, the 324th moved to Amberieu and the pounding of the retreating Germans continued. The results of the missions flown on the 8th and 9th could qualify as another "324th's Finest Moment". Targets were mostly trains and convoys near and within the German border. Mission results were 64 locomotives destroyed, 19 locomotives damaged, 21 railroad cars destroyed, 24 damaged, 10 trucks destroyed, 9 damaged, 30 horse drawn wagons destroyed and five canal barges destroyed. The intelligence report even included one fast moving haystack destroyed!

Again in order to keep up with the retreating Germans on September 20th the 324th moved to Dole-Tavaux. We received a shipment of napalm which was a new weapon for our inventory. So far as we know we were the first to receive a shipment and we had no experience with it. We were aware it was effective against ground targets but we didn't know how it would perform when dropped on water. Test bombings were done in the marshy area of a nearby river. It burned intensely on the surface for a long time. That gave us the idea it might be very effective against German pontoon bridges when dropped upstream from the bridge. Our assumption was correct. It burned the wooden planking and ropes as well as warping the steel members of the bridge. The battle in the air continued as well, and on September 22nd a 316th mission caught 12 Me-109's on the deck and destroyed six of them.

Amid all the carnage, there were still come humorous incidents. One occurred on the move to Dole-Tavaux. The 314 bivouac area included a large building which had housed about 50 mental patients whom the Germans had released when they retreated. There was a mad scramble to get an indoor bunk since cold weather was approaching. After the first night everyone moved out and appreciated the old Army tents again. The reason? The building was infested with fleas!

Orders were received on New Years Eve to move again. Our base was now Luneville, France. Again our mission was to destroy German front line defenses, troops, trains, rail lines, convoys, etc. Attacking trains was a dangerous mission as some were camouflaged flak trains. We learned from experience that the best way to attack trains was at a 90 degree angle to the track. Some units attacked trains down the track and they paid dearly for it. Perhaps "324th's Finest Moment" from Luneville was saving the Free French army at Colmar. They were surrounded by superior German forces. Their survival was attributed to our support missions. The 324th received the French Croix de Guerre in appreciation.

It was like something out of the twilight zone on the ramp; scores of mechanics pilots refuelers and armament people and others craned their necks skyward to look at the strange aircraft entering the pattern at Arizona's Luke Air Force Base. If only briefly, work stopped on the modern F-16s and F-15s as a gleaming 45-year-old Curtis P-40 Warhawk dropped out of the morning sun and taxied, props spinning, to the point adjacent to an F-16. The vintage Allison engine coughed into silence leaving just a hint of blue smoke from the horizontal row of exhaust stacks. From the cockpit emerged the pilot decked out in a leather flying jacket, leather helmet and goggles. It was as if a time machine had been transported to this point in time and space by some sci-fi time warp. Actually, the airplane was brought to add nostalgic to a strilingly unique squadron activation ceremony. There to meet the World War II fighter were members of the original 314 fighter squadron inactivated in 1945 and being activated again on this date; October 3, 1986. It had been in a long time. Lieut. Col. Arthur C. Carlson III was responsible for this unusual event. The 314's new commander had contacted every living member of the original squadron and arranged for them to be on hand for the activation ceremony. What may seem like a lot of trouble to go to for a simple squadron activation Col Carlson was happy to do it. And if the F-16 pilot seemed a bit choked up when he accepted the squadron colors maybe it was because the old soldier who passed those colors to him flew P-40s and P-47s during the war. More likely though it was because many of the old soldier's missions involve providing

fighter escort for the new commander's father Arthur C Carlson, Jr. who flew B-25s out of north Africa to strike targets in France, Italy and Germany. It was a fitting moment. Later at a celebration at the officer's club young fighter pilots mingled with old ones to swap tales of current technology and former glory. Now equipped with the F-16C and designated the 314 TFTS. The old 314 pursued Rommel across Africa, supported the invasion of Sicily and augmented the assault in the infamous monastery at Cassino in northern Italy. Distinguished unit citations and French citations decorate the unit colors. The new 314 will train today's fighter pilots to fly the F-16.

Six F-16 Fighting Falcons from Luke AFB, Ariz., arrive in formation at Holloman AFB, N.M., June 16, 2015. The 314 Fighter Squadron and its F-16s have moved their base of operations to Holloman as a tenant unit, along with other squadrons from the 54th Fighter Group. The 314 FS will officially stand up on July 14 and will immediately begin training instructor pilots. Shortly after the instructor pilots complete their training, the squadron will begin training student pilots. 2015

The Air Force activated the 314 Fighter Squadron during a July 14 ceremony at Holloman AFB, N.M. The squadron, which first activated in July 1942, is tasked with training the next generation of F-16 Fighting Falcon pilots. Lt. Col. Andrew Caggiano will lead the squadron and its more than 30 members. 2015

An F-16C from Holloman AFB, N.M., crashed during a training sortie over the White Sands Missile Range last week, officials announced. The pilot successfully ejected before the jet impacted rugged terrain approximately 70 miles northwest of the base, near Truth or Consequences, N.M. The 314 Fighter Squadron pilot was rescued in "good condition" and taken to a local medical facility for evaluation after the Nov. 25 incident, according to an Air Education and Training Command report to the 56th Fighter Wing at Luke. Loss of the aircraft is \$25 million, and officials are convening an official inquest to determine the cause of the crash. 2015

USAF Unit Histories
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